

Affordances of an English for Nurses Course at Naresuan University Language Centre

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Abstract

This study explores the perceptions and experiences of undergraduate nursing students from the Faculty of Nursing who successfully completed the English for Nurses Course at the Naresuan University Language Centre (NULC). The aims of this study are to understand the perceptions of the students about the course and to identify recommendations for succeeding courses in the future. The researcher used quantitative and qualitative data which were obtained by asking students to answer a questionnaire at the end of the course. The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions about the course, teacher, and student that can be rated using a 5-point Likert scale; and 2 spaces for comments and suggestions. The quantitative data were analyzed by mean and standard deviation. The qualitative data were analyzed using Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (S.W.O.T.) Analysis. The results of the study showed that the students have high perception of the course and the teacher alike. S.W.O.T. Analysis revealed that the strengths of this course are the new information learned and the knowledgeable teacher who makes the class fun and enjoyable. The opportunities are the length of time of the class and the schedule which is in the evenings. Opportunities include changing the hours and length of the class to suit the students' preferred schedule. The threat is if students will not sign up for future offerings of this course due to scheduling constraints and loss of interest to sign up for the course.

Keywords: English, Nursing, ESP, Quantitative, Qualitative, Perceptions, S.W.O.T Analysis

Introduction

Medical Tourism is a vital source of employment and livelihood for developing countries especially in Thailand (Caballero & Mugomba, 2006). The popularity of medical and aesthetic treatments in Thailand (Picazo, 2013) have increased in the recent decade because of the quality (Paffhausen, Peguero & Roche, 2010) as well as the relative affordability (Smith, 2006) of these procedures compared to those in developed countries (Sarwar, Manaf & Omar, 2012). However, there is still a need for Thai nurses to improve their communicative English skills (Waidarp, 2011) in the workplace.

A lack of English competence can be a cause for a lot of confusions and misunderstanding (Allan, Larsen, Bryan, & Smith, 2009) between patients and nurses, bringing possible dangers to patient wellbeing and outcomes (Kawi,

2009; Crawford & Candlin, 2012). This could be avoided if nurses will have the proper English communication training before they work in hospitals. Since more foreign patients and clients seek these medical treatments in Thailand, it is therefore imperative that Thai nurses be equipped with the necessary communicative English skills needed to transact, deal and treat these foreign patients and clients.

Background

The English for Nurses Course was designed to equip nurses with communicative English for servicing foreign patients in hospitals. The goal of this course is to improve nurses' ability to use English in their profession and to familiarize them with scenarios that they might encounter in their daily work in hospitals. The lecturer-researcher from Naresuan University Language Centre (NULC), who is a Registered Nurse from the Philippines, sourced the topics from two

books: English for Nursing and Health Care (Bradley, 2008) and Oxford English for Careers Nursing 1 (Grice, 2007) and Oxford English for Careers Nursing 2 (Grice & Greenan, 2008). The course had 7 units that were taught for 9 days and on the 10th day was the final exam and awarding of certificates. There were 18 Nursing topics and 18 English topics that were chosen from these books as shown on Table 1.

These nursing topics were selected for their relevance in dealing with foreign patients and clients. The English topics were specific to the nursing topics that will be taught on that week. For example, in unit 1 the Nursing topic was The Hospital Team therefore the English topic was Introducing Yourself and the Hospital Staff. The lecturer–researcher purposefully made sure that the topics coincide with each other to ensure that the knowledge will be retained well and will be applied in practice when they work in the hospitals. It was also noted that differences between American English and British English were taught and explained further to avoid confusion, for example the use of the words ‘gurney’ (American) and ‘stretcher’ (British). The lecturer also made sure that the students practice their English–speaking skills in every session through games, demonstrations and oral presentations. The students were also encouraged to ask questions to the lecturer–researcher on topics that were not covered in the course, this way the students can practice their communications skills.

Table 1. Course Topics

Unit No.	Nursing Topics	English Topics
1	The Hospital Team In and Around the Hospital Hospital Admissions	Introducing Yourself and the Hospital Staff Different Countries, Nationalities and Languages Prepositions and Expressions
2	Accidents and Emergencies Admissions by Referral	Giving Instructions Polite Phrases Getting Verbal Consent

	Outpatients	
3	Signs and Symptoms Monitoring the Patient Medications	Questions Forms Describing Readings Passive Form
4	Mental Health Nursing Neurology	Present Perfect vs Past Simple Past Participles
5	Nutrition and Obesity Hygiene	Should/ Shouldn't Giving an Advice
6	Blood Coronary	Zero and First Conditional Reading an Article / Case Study
7	Pain Management Death and Dying	Phrasal Verbs Making Comparisons

Methodology

The course was offered to 3rd year nursing students from the Faculty of Nursing of Naresuan University in Phitsanulok, Thailand. It was taught daily in 3 hour–sessions for a duration of 10 days. There were 17 students who signed up and started the course but only 8 students were able to successfully complete the 30–hour course. On the 10th day, the students sat on a final exam and were awarded certificates. They were asked to answer a questionnaire with 10 questions, 4 course–centered (1–4), 2 teacher–centered (5–6), 4 student–centered (7–10), that can be rated using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). They were also asked to write short sentences for comments and suggestions. The responses from the questionnaire were analyzed by the researcher using descriptive statistics. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (S.W.O.T.) Analysis was used to deduce the responses from the comments and suggestions. The verbalized comments from the students were also noted. The combined inference from the quantitative and qualitative data were the basis for the improvement of the succeeding courses in the future.

Results

Table 2. Questions and Scores

No.	Questions	Total Score	Mean Score	STDEV
1	I have learned new things in this course.	38	4.75	0.46291
2	The course topics are useful to me.	40	5	0
3	The course materials are appropriate for the topics.	31	3.875	0.53553
4	The activities in class help me learn about the topics.	35	4.375	0.517549
5	My teacher is knowledgeable about the topics.	36	4.5	0.534522
6	I could understand my teacher well.	35	4.375	0.517549
7	I enjoyed learning in this course.	39	4.875	0.353553
8	I like coming to class and learning in this course.	36	4.5	0.534522
9	I am confident of my English skills after I learned in this course.	34	4.25	0.46291
10	I would recommend this course to other people.	35	4.375	0.517549
	Total Score and Total Mean	359	44.875	1.95941

Table 2 shows the 10 questions with the total scores and the means of the responses for each question. It also shows that the question which got the highest score is question 2 followed by question 7 and 1; the lowest scores were given to question 3 succeeded by question 9. The respondents think that the course topics were highly useful to them and that they enjoyed learning and have learned something new

in this course. Meanwhile the respondents gave the lowest score to the course materials being appropriate to the topics and their confidence of being able to use their English skills after the course. The total score given by the students is 359 out of 400. The mean of the total scores is 44.875 out of 50 which suggests that the students had a high degree of satisfaction with the course.

The student's responses to the comments and suggestions have shown a positive affordance with regard to the course. Some of the responses that showed positive perceptions from the comments are shown below:

"First of all, I appreciate what you have taught us. I learned many things and really enjoyed learning in this course."

"Teacher teach me easy to understand."

"I like the games and presentations it's made me enjoy and practice skill."

"I enjoyed learning in this course, it made me fun."

The positive comments indicate great interest in learning with the lecturer. They also indicate that they enjoyed the course and had fun. They emphasized that they enjoyed the activities done in class and that they made the class more interesting. However there was one negative comment that is shown below.

"I like to learn but time of learning is too late."

This comment emphasized that the student liked the class but the time, which was in the evenings, was inconvenient. For the suggestions, most of the students skipped answering this part but the two responses are shown below.

"Decrease time for learning, increase days for learning. 3 hours I am tired."

"Time of the class is hardcore."

The negative comment and the suggestions are similar in a way since they talked about time. This could be attributed to the schedule of the course which was set in the evening from 5 to 8 PM. Also, the students were having regular classes from the morning until the afternoon so they were tired when they come to the evening class. The length of time, 3 hours, was also noted to be tiresome for the students. Some students

verbally mentioned to the lecturer that their friends were not coming to class because they need to finish their homework or they need to study for a test the next day. This is the main reason why the students' attendance decreased and eventually half of the students did not finish the course. On the last day, the lecturer–researcher suggested to the students to enroll for the second English for Nurses course but they were hesitant since it is almost time for exams. However, the students said that they will be willing to attend the next course whenever their class schedule is not full which is during the summer semester.

Table 3. S.W.O.T. Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
The course topics were perceived to be useful.	The time of the class was in the evenings and it was for 3 hours.
The students enjoyed learning in this course.	The number of students who didn't finish the course.
The teacher was fun.	
Opportunities	Threats
The class hours should be reduced.	The students might lose interest if their friends will not come.
The course should be moved in the daytime.	The students might think the course is bothersome and unimportant.

As seen from the responses of the students, the strengths of this course is the new information that they have learned, the perception that the topics learned were useful to them, and how they enjoyed and had fun in class with the teacher. The weaknesses, on the other hand, was the time and schedule of the course. The opportunities that was inferred from this analysis are that it will be better if in future the class hours be reduced, and the number of days be increased. It will also be beneficial for both the teacher and students if the time of the class will be changed from evenings to daytime. The threat foreseen is students will not be interested to continue coming to class because they will be influenced by their peers. They could also think that attending this course is bothersome since they have regular classes during the day.

Aside from that, knowing that it's not a required course, the students will think that it is not important and will not be interested in signing up.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The English for Nurses Course was perceived to be a helpful and enjoyable course by the students. The students particularly learned new information from this course which they can use in their jobs in the future. The teacher was also mentioned to be fun and knowledgeable and for this reason the students enjoyed their time in class. The downside of this course are the length of time of the class, the timeslot and the schedule conflicts with their regular classes. This course was offered in the first semester in which the junior nursing students are having their lectures during the daytime, while at night they do their homework or study for tests which is their priority. This situation made it difficult for almost half of the students who signed up to continue going to class and eventually failed to finish the course.

It is therefore recommended by the lecturer–researcher that the course be offered when the students have more free time, specifically during the summer semester. It will also be beneficial for both the teachers and the students if the schedule of the class be moved to the daytime and for the length of time to be reduced to around 2 hours for each session. By doing so, the students will be eager to come to class and will not feel exhausted and discouraged. The end goal of this course is to improve the students' English communication skills but it should be considered by NULC to prioritize the students' convenience of attending the class so they could eventually join the class and complete the course. The lecturer–researcher also suggests that the English for Nurses course be offered as a required class to graduating students of the Faculty of Nursing of Naresuan University to make sure that future nursing graduates will have competent English communication skills in dealing with foreign patients in the hospitals that they will work at. Being able to communicate effectively in English is a skill that can be improved through practice and if Thai nurses will be confident with their English communication skills then they will have plenty of opportunities for employment not only here in Thailand but also abroad.

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