

CHAPTER 7

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that nurses working in both government and private hospitals in Bangkok have needs for English in the practice of their profession. These needs for English vary depending on the type of hospital where they work. As shown in Table 3, the most used skill in both government and private hospitals is reading but the table also indicates that nurses working in government hospitals use writing skill the most while nurses working in private hospitals use reading the most which is in agreement with the most used skill in private hospitals. However, it is interesting to note that reading is the most used skill in government hospitals but nurses in government hospitals use writing skill the most and reading skill the second. Although reading skill is ranked only second by nurses working in government hospitals, it is apparent that generally speaking, reading skill is the most used skill in the practice of their profession because nurses have to read both general and professional literature to learn more and get more knowledge about specific information related to their work. In order to keep abreast of the latest developments in medicine, nursing care and management, science and technology, nurses as well as

other health care professionals have to read not only medical and nursing journals but other literature related to their work. This is supported by a study conducted by Barbara Gessner, et al⁽³⁶⁾ which shows that nurses spend much time reading not only general literature but also professional literature. The study also shows that most of the reading time is devoted to clinical journals, followed by clinical books and newsletters. Songsri Soranastaporn says in her article about her experiences in English Education for Health Care Professionals that English is used in day-to-day routine work like reading textbooks, journals, patients reports and laboratory reports⁽¹⁰⁾.

In a related study conducted by Maliwan Wanasiree⁽²⁶⁾, she also finds that medical residents in Ramathibodi Hospital have great needs for English in reading.

The least used skill in government hospitals is speaking while the least used skill in private hospitals is listening. However, nurses working in both government and private hospitals use speaking skill the least. It is apparent why these two skills, listening and speaking, are hardly used by nurses in both government and private hospitals because both government and private hospitals in Bangkok cater to Thai

patients in general. Foreign patients who seek medical service in Thai hospitals are few except for those hospitals located in tourists belts and if ever nurses use English, it is used at minimum degree.

As indicated in Table 3 nurses working in government hospitals consider writing skill as the most important skill in their work while nurses working in private hospitals consider speaking skill as the most important skill in their work. Since most foreign patients prefer to use the medical service of private hospitals, nurses working in these hospitals especially those located in the tourists belts see the importance of the speaking skill because they have to use English in conversing with foreign patients while nurses in government hospitals have to cater to mostly Thai patients so they do not see the importance of this skill to their work. On the other hand, nurses working in government hospitals have to cater to thousands of Thai patients everyday, therefore, they have to write more patient reports and laboratory reports which are in contrast to nurses working in private hospitals who consider writing as the least important because they cater to fewer patients and therefore, write fewer patient reports and laboratory reports. Another reason is maybe because most patient reports are written by doctors themselves in private

hospitals.

Since in general, nurses use speaking skill the least, they will have problems in its use because they seldom or hardly practice speaking English or not use it at all with their patients who are mostly Thai. Because reading is the most used skill in the practice of their profession, they find least problem in the use of this skill. Besides, English Course for Nursing Students emphasizes more on reading and writing and less on speaking and listening.

As shown in Table 5, the activities in which more than 50% of nurses in government hospitals find great use of English are:

1. reading medical order and prescription (89.43%)
2. reading texts, journals and medical papers (73.17%)
3. recording nursing activities (52.03%)
4. watching medical films (51.63%)

The activities in which more than 50% of nurses working in private hospitals find great use of English are:

1. reading medical order and prescription (94.44%)
2. conversation with foreign patients (80.86%)
3. reading texts, journals and medical papers (77.16%)
4. recording nursing activities (73.46%)

5. watching medical films (56.52%)

Regardless of which type of hospitals nurses work, it can be seen that they find great use of English in activities which they do routinely like reading medical order and prescription, reading texts, journals and medical papers, recording nursing activities except for watching medical films. At the same time nurses working in private hospitals also express great use of English in conversing with foreign patients because there are foreign patients who utilize the medical service of private hospitals more than government hospitals. Only 38.84% of nurses in government hospitals find great use of English in this activity since there are very few foreign patients who seek medical service from government hospitals.

The activities in which nurses working in both government and private hospitals encounter problems in the use of English are activities involving listening and speaking skills as can be seen in Table 6. The activities in which they find least problem in the use of English are those activities which they do routinely as can be seen in Table 5. However, most nurses in government hospitals also find great problem in the use of English when attending conferences and seminars while nurses working in private hospitals note only moderate problem in the

use of English in this activity. This is probably because nurses working in government hospitals are given less chance to attend international conferences and seminars than nurses working in private hospitals do. Both nurses in government and private hospitals do not find much problem in the use of English when participating in special training. This is probably because most of these trainings are conducted in Thai and sponsored by local organizations or hospitals.

With reference to the type of English course nurses prefer for nursing students, majority of the nurses say that all the four English language skills should be given equal emphasis in an English course with percentage of responses which does not vary greatly. This may mean that even though they use the four English language skills at varying degrees in their place of work, they prefer that all the skills be emphasized equally in an English Course for Nursing Students because majority of nurses consider these four skills essential not only in carrying out their routine work but also in engaging in other nursing activities in which English is required.

A great majority of nurses prefer a combination of general and medical English as shown in Table 9. Nurses need both general and medical English in general conversaton with

foreign patients and foreign specialists or foreign technicians, reading general texts, books, newspapers, journals, magazines and newspapers for relaxation, watching English films and other social uses of English.

Regarding teaching and learning modes most nurses prefer the in-class combined with self-study method of learning English for nursing students. This implies that in-class method is inadequate for this group of learners. The self-study method should also be incorporated into the English curriculum for nursing students due to their time scheduling problem especially when nursing students do their ward practice.

Nurses who prefer the in-class method rank listening and speaking as first and second skill to be emphasized in an English class for nursing students. It is interesting why they rank these two skills as first and second because in general nurses do not have immediate use of these two skills in the practice of their profession. This may be due to three factors. First, for second/foreign language learning, listening comprehension is viewed as one of the most difficult skills for students to acquire. Second, nursing students in Thailand have not been exposed to a properly conducted

listening comprehension course. Third, nursing students might need these two skills in engaging in other social activities. In fact speaking and listening skills are regarded as reciprocal. This same finding is supported by a study conducted by Boosakorn Vijchulata and Gan Siowck Lee at Universiti Pertanian Malaysia⁽¹⁷⁾ wherein students rank speaking skill as the most preferred skill. The two skills can be integrated in a course that is designed to attain the objectives of teaching English for communicative purposes. Reading and writing skills are ranked third and fourth respectively may be because the present English curriculum for nursing students already gives more emphasis on these two skills.

The number of hours nurses prefer for in-class method of learning English is 3-4 hours per week which means 1-2 hours per day. The number of hours and credits depends on the requirements of both the institution and the Ministry of University Affairs. But if students need to improve their English more, they have to take special courses outside the class because no institution can provide all their English needs in a few semesters or in a short time.

Small group discussion and class participation are

considered appropriate for learning English while lecture method is preferred least. Second/foreign language learning can be best acquired if various teaching techniques are utilized. And the four English language skills can be best acquired by practice. As pointed out by Guilbert JJ, learning takes place through the active behaviour of the student, it is what he does that he learns, not what the teacher does⁽³³⁾. To help students learn, the teacher should keep a low profile letting students maximize their participation in class. Teachers should not be confined to only one teaching technique. In a study conducted by Nartaya Wiputsiri, students want the English teacher to use other teaching techniques other than lecture because students say lecture is boring⁽³⁴⁾. In a study of techniques used in teaching communicative English by Amporn Sribunruang⁽³⁵⁾, most English teachers report that they use word cards, pictures, sentence cards and tape recorders. However, they say that these instructional media are not adequately available to serve the teachers' needs.

Nurses who select the self-study method of learning English rank listening and reading as the first two skills to be emphasized. These two skills can be learned and improved outside the class by listening to English recorded tapes, watching English movies, reading books and other relaxing

materials when they have free time and these two skills can be acquired at the students' own pace. Speaking and writing are two skills which can be learned with the guidance of a teacher, the probable reason why nurses who prefer the self-study method for learning English for nursing students rank these two skills as third and fourth respectively.

As for student evaluation, most nurses prefer final examination and in-class examination which are the two most probably known forms of evaluation to students and which are still determined by the institution.

Most nurses prefer less than 10 students in an English class for Nursing Students. This is contrary to the present situation because the number of students in each class is largely determined by the institution and the requirements of the Ministry of University Affairs.

The reading materials most nurses prefer for nursing students in an English class are medical and nursing journals and nursing texts because these are the materials they mostly read in the practice of their profession.

Table 18 presents results pertaining to the types of writing skills that are ranked according to importance. Among

the five writing skills, report-writing receives the highest response (37.8%) maybe because nurses have to write patient reports in English. On the contrary, a small percentage of nurses (4.5%) rank letter-writing as the least important. This is not surprising because nurses seldom use this skill ; they rarely write letters in English.

CONCLUSION

The details of the components of English Course for Nursing Students based on the survey of English language needs of nurses working in government and private hospitals in Bangkok are as follows:

Objectives:

1. To use general and medical English.
2. To understand medical and nursing journals.
3. To write short patient report.
4. To converse with foreign patients using simple English

Content:

Combination of medical and general English

Medical : medical and nursing journals, nursing texts

General : newspapers and magazines, light

reading materials

Learning Experiences:

Listening

- a. Listening to authentic conversation
- b. Watching English movies
- c. Listening to English Programs on radio

Reading

- a. Reading medical and nursing journals
- b. Reading newspaper and magazines

Speaking

- a. Doing dialogues
- b. Doing pronunciation drills
- c. Doing drills in the language lab

Writing

- a. Doing grammar exercises
- b. Writing sentences
- c. Writing essays

Instructional Media

- a. Audio-visual Aids
- b. Language Lab

Methodology

Combination of in-class and self-study method

- a. Small group discussion

b. Class participation

Evaluation

Formative Evaluation

Use of self-assessment tools (checklist)

Summative Evaluation

- a. In-class examination
- b. Final examination

Since the English language needs of nurses vary, it is suggested that an English core course with equal emphasis on the four English language skills be provided for all nursing students and elective courses be made available in the English curriculum so that nursing students who would like to enhance specific language skills can enroll in these electives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The course model is designed as an appropriate core course which gives equal emphasis on the four English language skills (see Appendix 1). However, several elective courses in the four skills should be provided for additional training that will help nursing students in their future profession.

2. A placement test can be conducted to determine the level of the students. A student who cannot reach the standard set by Department of English of the institution has to take Remedial English Courses.

3. A further study of societal needs is carried out to get detailed information on the English language needs of nurses.

4. A survey of different English curriculum for nursing students offered in Thailand is made to determine whether these curriculum work or not.

5. Some guidelines provided by this study can be helpful in the preparation of learning materials in the form of self-study packages in mini-courses.

6. Since this study focuses mainly on the input stage, studies can be done regarding the later phases which are implementation and evaluation stages.