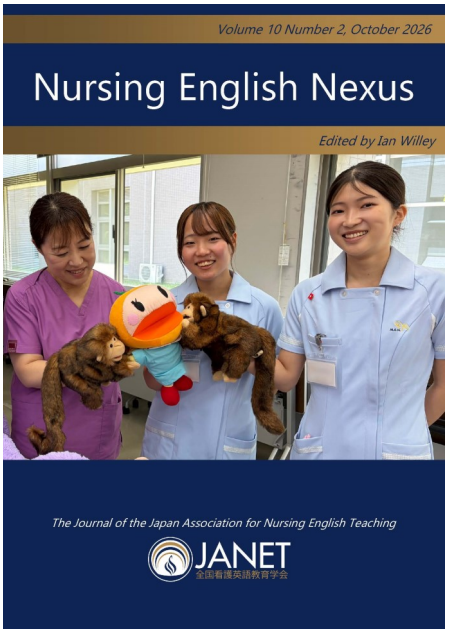
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Using TED Talks to Enhance Listening Comprehension in a Nursing English Course

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About the Author: Su-Jen Lai is an Assistant Professor at Chang Gung University, Taiwan, specializing in English for Specific Purposes. She earned a Ph.D. in Linguistics from Lancaster University, UK, and has published research on EFL and ESP teaching in such journals as the Journal of Asia TEFL, Asian ESP Journal, and Nursing English Nexus.

Introduction

TED (Technology, Entertainment, and Design) Talks have emerged as a leading global platform for concise and engaging presentations on a wide range of topics. In language education, they are widely used as sources of authentic language input and are often accompanied by comprehension exercises and discussion activities that promote active learning. Previous research has shown that TED Talks can significantly enhance learners' listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and critical thinking skills. However, their application in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts remains relatively underexplored (Al-Jarf, 2021; Humeniuk et al., 2021; Nurhidayat & Syarifah, 2022; Wu, 2020). This gap is particularly evident in English for Nursing Purposes (ENP) in EFL settings, where access to authentic, discipline-specific language input is essential but often limited (Hillier et al., 2020). This paper aims to provide practical teaching tips for integrating TED Talks into university-level Nursing English listening instruction in Taiwan.

The Nursing English Course

The Nursing English course is a required component of the School of Nursing curriculum. Designed for third-year undergraduate EFL students, the course aims to develop learners' listening and speaking skills in professional nursing contexts. Students enrolled in the course possess foundational knowledge of nursing and healthcare, and their English proficiency ranges from CEFR B1 to B2. The course is offered over a 16-week semester, with an additional two weeks reserved for flexible scheduling, and includes two hours of instruction per week.

The primary instructional material for the course is the commercially published textbook English Communication for Nursing (CEFR B2 level), which covers a range of topics, including general medicine, surgery, medication administration, pediatrics, pain management, orthopedics, gastroenterology, and cardiology (Zeff, 2024). To enrich the curriculum, supplemental materials were incorporated, including adapted content from nursing-related publications (Cheng, 2019; Putlack, 2017) and selected TED Talks. Classroom activities included listening practice, group discussions, dialogue exercises, and role-plays, all of which were designed to cultivate practical communication skills relevant to professional nursing practice.

Instructional Procedures for TED Talks

TED Talks were integrated into the Nursing English course to enhance students' listening comprehension and increase their exposure to authentic spoken English. The following criteria guided the selection of the videos:

1. Topic Relevance: Videos were selected based on their relevance to major medical fields, including general medicine, surgery, pediatrics, pain management, orthopedics, gastroenterology, and cardiology.
2. Language Level: Videos were appropriate for high-intermediate EFL learners.

3. Length: Each video was 5-10 minutes long to maintain student engagement while ensuring a manageable cognitive load.

The instructional procedures consisted of the following five steps:

Step 1. Activating Background Knowledge

Before viewing the selected TED Talk, the instructor provided a brief overview of the topic to activate students' background knowledge. Key vocabulary and medical terminology were introduced, and guiding questions were presented to direct students' attention to the main ideas.

Step 2. First Viewing: Understanding the Main Idea

Students watched the TED Talk with English subtitles while taking notes in response to the guiding questions. At this stage, the primary objective was for students to understand the main idea and the speaker's overall message.

Step 3. Second Viewing: Focused Listening

Students watched the TED Talk a second time while completing targeted listening tasks, such as answering comprehension questions, identifying supporting details, and noting key medical terminology. Chinese subtitles were provided during this viewing to scaffold comprehension and strengthen form–meaning connections.

Step 4. Comprehension Check and Discussion

The instructor conducted a brief comprehension check through whole-class discussion or small-group sharing. Students discussed the content, clarified misunderstandings, and connected the ideas presented in the talk to authentic nursing contexts, such as patient communication and interprofessional collaboration.

Step 5. Transcript-based Mini-Lecture

Following the group discussions and class sharing, the instructor delivered a transcript-based mini-lecture to clarify key concepts, language use, and useful expressions. This activity further enhanced students' comprehension, promoted critical reflection, and facilitated the development of professional listening strategies applicable to future clinical communication.

Student Feedback

At the end of the semester, the 21 nursing students enrolled in the Spring 2026 Nursing English course completed a three-item student questionnaire, one item of which assessed the extent to which TED Talk videos had improved their English listening comprehension. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 summarizes students' perceptions of the extent to which TED Talk videos supported their English listening comprehension. Among the 21 respondents, the majority (57.14%, n = 12) reported that the videos were very helpful, indicating a strong positive impact on their listening development. An additional 23.81% (n = 5) considered the videos somewhat helpful, indicating a moderate benefit. In contrast, 19.05% (n = 4) reported that the videos were not helpful.

Overall, the findings indicate that more than four-fifths of the students (80.95%) perceived at least some improvement in their listening comprehension as a result of using TED Talk videos. These results suggest that TED Talks may serve as an effective supplementary resource for

Table 1

Student Responses to the Questionnaire

To what extent did TED Talk videos help you improve your English listening comprehension? (N=21)		
Response Category	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Very helpful	12	57.14%
Somewhat helpful	5	23.81%
Not helpful	4	19.05%

enhancing listening skills in EFL nursing education contexts.

Pedagogical Implications

Integrating TED Talks into a Nursing English course offers valuable opportunities for language development. Previous research has shown that TED Talks can enhance learners' listening comprehension, pronunciation awareness, vocabulary acquisition, and speaking confidence when appropriately selected and adapted to learners' proficiency levels (Al-Jarf, 2021; Nurhidayat & Syarifah, 2022; Wu, 2020).

Carefully selected TED Talks expose students to authentic spoken English in medically relevant contexts, helping them develop listening skills, become familiar with professional discourse, and expand their medical vocabulary. A structured sequence of activities before, during, and after listening further supports comprehension by activating background knowledge, guiding active listening, and encouraging reflection and application.

Subtitles can also be used strategically to scaffold learning. For Chinese-speaking learners, English subtitles strengthen connections between spoken and written language, while Chinese subtitles support comprehension of specialized medical terminology. In addition, discussion-based activities and transcript analysis reinforce both language and content learning by promoting critical reflection, highlighting useful expressions, and increasing awareness of effective listening strategies.

Overall, the scaffolded integration of TED Talks can enhance students' listening proficiency while preparing them for English-mediated healthcare communication. This paper provides practical guidance for integrating TED Talks into English for Nursing Purposes (ENP) courses, with implications for Nursing English education in Taiwan, Japan, and other EFL contexts across Asia.

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