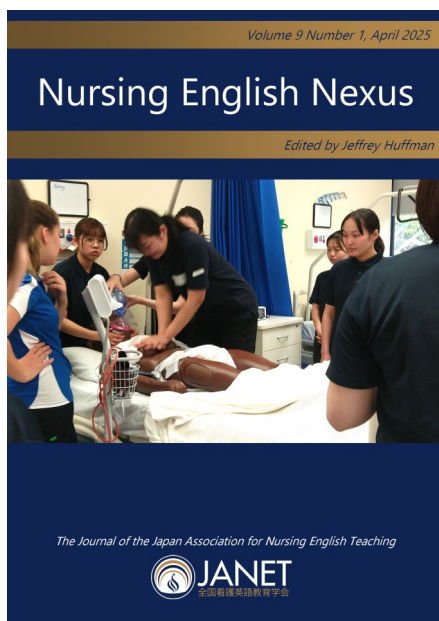


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Su-Jen Lai

Chang Gung University



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EFL Nursing Students' Perceptions of Teaching Materials and Classroom Tasks

Su-Jen Lai (janelai@mail.cgu.edu.tw)

Chang Gung University, Taiwan

Abstract: *The teaching of English for Nursing Purposes (ENP) has gained increasing attention in EFL contexts worldwide. This study examines Taiwanese EFL undergraduate students' perceptions of the teaching materials and classroom tasks used in a compulsory Nursing English course at a university's School of Nursing in Taiwan. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The findings highlight the effectiveness of teaching targeted linguistic features, practical language tasks, and communication skills relevant to nursing within an EFL framework. The results also underscore the importance of aligning input materials with output activities to enhance learning outcomes. Based on these findings, this paper provides pedagogical recommendations grounded in a learning-centered approach and suggests directions for future research.*

Keywords: nursing students, teaching materials, classroom tasks, ESP, ENP

About the Author: Su-Jen Lai is an assistant professor at Chang Gung University, Taiwan. She earned her PhD in linguistics from Lancaster University, UK. Her instructional expertise encompasses ESP courses including Nursing English. She has published articles on EFL/ESP pedagogy in the *Journal of Asia TEFL*, *Asian EFL Journal*, and *Asian ESP Journal*.

English is the primary international language of communication across various countries and professional fields, including medicine, engineering, and science. In recent years, the demand for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction has rapidly grown in higher education in Taiwan. Many universities and technical colleges now offer a wide range of ESP courses, such as English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), English for Business Purposes (EBP), English for Medical Purposes (EMP), and English for Nursing Purposes (ENP). These courses, available as either compulsory or elective options, are designed to equip students with language skills and content knowledge relevant to their future careers. Within the field of nursing, ENP has emerged as a specialized branch of ESP (Bosher, 2013). While several studies have examined ENP instruction in Taiwan (e.g., Chien, 2019; Lai, 2016; Lee, 1998; Lu, 2016; Yang, 2005; Yang & Su, 2003), research specifically focusing on ENP course design remains limited (Bosher, 2013). To address this gap, this study explores EFL undergraduate students' perceptions of the effectiveness and usefulness of teaching materials and classroom

tasks in a Nursing English course at a university in Taiwan.

Literature Review

Research on English for Specific Purposes

Since the 1960s, English language teaching has increasingly emphasized English for Specific Purposes (ESP). A large body of research explores its history, language features, and curriculum design (e.g., Cheng & Anthony, 2014; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991; Kirkgoz & Dikilitas, 2018; Paltridge & Starfield, 2013; Richards, 2001; Sulovska, 2023).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) introduced a *learning-centered* approach to ESP, emphasizing the importance of analyzing learners' needs. They argued that ESP courses should be flexible and adapted to the target learning environment, ensuring that classroom activities align with students' evolving requirements.

Johns and Dudley-Evans (1991) defined ESP as a structured approach that includes research, material development, and instruction for adult learners. They highlighted two key aspects of course design: needs assessment, which evaluates

learners' goals and language requirements, and discourse analysis, which examines language use in specialized fields like medicine, business, and engineering. They also identified three factors behind ESP's global importance: its role in communication in Africa and Asia, the dominance of English in science and technology, and its relevance in business and academia. However, they noted a lack of empirical research on ESP's effectiveness and called for further studies on language use in professional and academic contexts.

Cheng (2011) conducted a classroom-based study exploring how language and context shape ESP instruction. He emphasized factors such as social context, course objectives, teaching approaches, learning tasks, and assessments. His findings highlight the importance of understanding target learners' needs and how students apply course objectives to their learning.

In *The Handbook of ESP*, edited by Paltridge and Starfield (2013), researchers conducted studies across various ESP fields, including English for Academic Purposes (EAP), EBP, EMP, and ENP. They emphasized the importance of ESP practitioners engaging with and contributing to research to enhance their teaching practice. Additionally, they highlighted that ESP is steadily developing a knowledge base that supports instruction, empowering learners to take ownership of English, strengthening their linguistic and cultural skills, and expanding their opportunities.

Similarly, Kirkgoz and Dikilitas (2018), in their book *Key Issues in ESP in Higher Education*, compiled relevant studies from diverse global contexts. They examined future developments in ESP and identified key challenges, such as teachers' limited expertise, a shortage of content-specific materials, and insufficient professional development opportunities.

In Asia, Cheng and Anthony (2014) explored the growing role of English in academic and professional settings. They examined the rise of

English-medium instruction (EMI) in universities, the expansion of ESP research, and the emergence of ESP-focused journals and conferences. Their analysis highlights the diversity of ESP approaches and their impact on Asia's changing linguistic landscape.

Research on English for Nursing Purposes

English for Nursing Purposes (ENP) is a branch of ESP that focuses on how nurses use English in clinical settings and nursing education (Bosher, 2013). The instruction of ENP aims to equip learners with the language skills necessary for nursing contexts (Lai, 2016; Lee, 1998; Yang & Su, 2003). Due to the complexity of medical terminology, which often includes prefixes and suffixes, specialized ENP courses must be carefully designed (Yang, 2005). To succeed in clinical environments, nursing students need proficiency in specific language tasks and communication skills (Bosher, 2013; Ching et al., 2020; Havery, 2024; Huang & Yu, 2023; Isoda & Kondo, 2022; Kirkgoz & Dikilitas, 2018; Mitchell, 2018; Nurindah & La, 2019; Paltridge & Starfield, 2013; Taupan, 2019).

In Australia, for example, Hussin (2002) identified key language tasks performed by migrant nurses, such as taking medical histories, giving handovers, and handling phone calls. Effective communication is essential for building relationships with patients. Hussin also emphasized the importance of expressing empathy, using nonverbal communication, practicing reflective listening, and sharing personal opinions. These insights can inform ENP teaching materials and assessment strategies.

More recently, Havery (2024) studied how novice English learners in nursing developed reading skills for patient documentation during work placements. Analyzing interactions between 16 students and their supervisors in Australian hospitals, the study found that students relied heavily on supervisor guidance. Havery

recommended that ENP courses focus on both written and spoken communication and that nursing educators collaborate with language specialists to train supervisors in teaching documentation reading skills.

In Asia, Yang and Su (2003) examined the language needs of nursing students and clinical nurses in Taiwan. They found that pronunciation was the biggest challenge for students, while both students and nurses prioritized patient communication, reading skills for nursing knowledge, and writing skills for note-taking. Later, Yang (2005) studied medical terminology learning strategies among Taiwanese nursing students, revealing that high-level learners used vocabulary learning strategies more frequently than low-level learners. Based on these findings, Yang recommended that teachers introduce vocabulary learning strategies and guide students in applying them effectively.

Lu (2016) investigated how nurses' experiences within the nursing community influenced their perceptions of nursing English courses. Conducted at a medical center in Taiwan, this study provided valuable insights for English instructors, helping them design ENP courses that address the growing need for English proficiency among nurses. The findings also enhanced educators' awareness and offered key perspectives on improving nursing English education. Similarly, Lai (2016) explored how nurses in Taiwan's hospitals used English and what they needed to learn. Based on a study of 73 nurses in a two-year bachelor's program, Lai's findings provided useful insights for designing nursing English curricula, teaching materials, and instructional approaches. Lai also recommended using a combination of questionnaires, interviews, and observations in future research.

Chien (2019) studied the learning needs of Taiwanese nursing students in both two-year and five-year programs. Based on responses from 60 nursing students, the study found that reading

exercises were a top priority. Key learning needs included reading journals, note-taking, learning medical terminology, and acquiring medical information. Chien recommended that course design should prioritize essential learning needs rather than attempting to cover all possible language exercises.

Ching et al. (2020) used qualitative research to explore how transfer nursing students in Hong Kong perceived their English needs and challenges. The study revealed that students struggled with general and nursing-specific English but lacked motivation to improve. The researchers suggested that nursing English courses should focus on practical communication skills essential for students' future careers.

Isoda and Kondo (2022) examined the motivation and learning needs of Japanese nursing students through an online survey of 167 participants. Most students learned English for daily activities like travel rather than professional purposes. However, those who joined study abroad programs were more motivated to study English. The researchers recommended curriculum improvements to emphasize the importance of English in clinical and professional settings while fostering student interest.

Huang and Yu (2023) analyzed role-play conversations among 100 nursing students in China simulating patient injections. While students demonstrated awareness of patients' concerns and could explain procedures, they relied heavily on memorized phrases and struggled to adapt to different situations. The study highlighted the need for learner-centered instruction tailored to the challenges of patient-centered care in global healthcare settings.

Despite this growing body of research on ENP, few studies have examined instructional materials and language tasks in Nursing English courses within EFL settings, particularly in East Asia. To address this gap, this study explores how Taiwanese undergraduate nursing students

perceive the teaching materials and classroom tasks used in a required Nursing English course at a university's School of Nursing.

Overall, the research questions guiding this study were:

1. What types of teaching materials and classroom tasks did the nursing students like or dislike?
2. How useful did the students find the teaching materials and classroom tasks for their future careers in professional settings?

Methodology

Research Context and Participants

This study was conducted at a university in northern Taiwan. The participants were 23 third-year EFL undergraduate nursing students enrolled in a compulsory Nursing English course during the Spring 2024 semester. Their first language was Mandarin Chinese, and they had prior knowledge of nursing and healthcare.

An Overview of the Nursing English Course

The compulsory Nursing English course is designed for third-year EFL students at a university in Taiwan to enhance their listening and speaking skills in a nursing context. The course runs for 16 weeks, with two additional flexible classes, and consists of two hours of instruction per week.

The main textbook, *Cambridge English for Nursing* (Intermediate Plus Level), covers key nursing topics such as patient admissions, respiratory issues, wound care, and diabetes care (Allum & McGarr, 2008). Lessons focus on essential communication skills, including taking medical histories, active listening, and giving clear instructions. Supplemental materials, including nursing-related books (e.g., Cheng, 2019; Putlack, 2017) and TED Talks, further enrich the learning experience.

Table 1
Weekly Schedule

Week	Planned Schedule
Week 1	Course introduction (requirements, grading criteria, grouping)
Week 2	Unit 1 – Patient Admissions; Taking medical history; Using active listening strategies
Week 3	Supplementary Materials (1) – <i>Real English for nurses</i> (Putlack, 2017); Group 1 oral report
Week 4	Unit 2 – Respiratory Problems; Using medical equipment
Week 5	Quiz 1 (Units 1-2); Unit 3 – Wound Care (1); Discussing wound management
Week 6	Unit 3 – Wound Care (2); Asking for advice
Week 7	Unit 4 – Diabetes Care; Empathy in communication; Giving advice sensitively
Week 8	Supplementary Materials (2) – <i>Nursing English for pre-professionals</i> (Cheng, 2019); Group 2 oral report
Week 9	Unit 5 – Medical Specimens; Asking for clarification; Group 3 oral report
Week 10	Quiz 2 (Units 3-5); Unit 6 – Medications; Performing medical checks; Group 4 oral report
Week 11	Role Play and movie discussion
Week 12	Unit 8 – Pre-operative Patient Assessment; Conducting pre-op checks; Group 5 oral report
Week 13	Unit 9 – Post-operative Patient Assessment; Conducting post-op checks; Group 6 oral report
Week 14	Quiz 3 (Units 6-9); Unit 10 – Discharge Planning; Telephone communication skills; Group 7 oral report
Week 15	Final individual oral exam (Units 1-10)
Week 16	Final individual oral exam (Units 1-10)

Note: Flexible class (1) was scheduled for Week 10 and covered a nursing-related movie, *The Good Nurse* (Lindholm, 2022). Flexible class (2) was scheduled for Week 11 and covered Unit 7 – Intravenous Infusions.

Table 2
Grading Criteria

Evaluation Component	Percentage
Attendance and Participation	10%
In-class Activities (including role-playing and group oral report)	30%
Quizzes 1-3 (primarily focused on listening comprehension)	30%
Final Individual Oral Exam	30%

Note: Attendance and participation involve arriving to class on time and actively engaging in discussions.

Classroom tasks include listening and speaking exercises, group discussions, role-playing, group oral reports, movie viewing (Lindholm, 2022), quizzes, and a final oral exam. The weekly schedule and grading criteria are outlined in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively.

Data Collection Instruments

The main aim of this research was to identify the types of teaching materials and classroom tasks that the nursing students liked and disliked and to explore the extent to which these students found the teaching materials and classroom tasks useful for their future careers in professional settings in Taiwan. Questionnaires and interview transcripts were the primary data sources (see Appendices A and B for the questionnaire and interview questions).

I informed the 23 nursing students of the main purpose of the questionnaire and asked if they were willing to complete it anonymously. With their consent, I collected the responses, which provided a preliminary understanding of their learning experiences. To gain deeper insights into individual learning experiences, I invited six students from the original group — those who exhibited high levels of motivation and engagement — to participate in interviews. All six students eagerly agreed. The interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes and were conducted in Mandarin Chinese. I later translated the transcripts into English. To ensure accuracy, the translations were cross-checked with the participants — an essential step in maintaining the validity of the research (Cohen et al., 2007; Seliger & Shohamy, 2001).

Results and Discussion

In response to the research questions, I will discuss the results of the questionnaires and interviews in light of previous research on ESP and ENP.

Nursing Students' Preferences Regarding Teaching Materials and Classroom Tasks

Table 3 presents the nursing students' responses to the questionnaire regarding the teaching materials and classroom tasks used in the course.

As shown in Table 3, 15 out of 23 nursing students (65.22%) liked the commercially published textbook, while 3 (13.04%) disliked it. In contrast, 22 students (95.65%) liked the supplementary handouts covering nurse-patient conversations and TED Talks. Regarding classroom tasks, all students enjoyed watching a movie closely related to the nursing content, and 20 students (86.96%) liked listening practice that focused primarily on dialogues between nurses and patients. One questionnaire respondent noted in English: *"I liked the movie. Watch [Watching] the movie helped me learn English*

Table 3
Student Responses to the Questionnaires

How much do you like each of them? (N=23)	Like	Neutral	Dislike
Teaching Materials			
Textbook	15	5	3
Supplementary materials	22	1	0
Classroom Tasks			
Listening practice	20	3	0
Group discussions	15	5	3
Dialogue exercises	21	2	0
Role-Play	21	2	0
Group oral report	18	5	0
Movie viewing	23	0	0

better."

Regarding oral practice, Table 3 shows that among the 23 nursing students, 21 (91.30%) liked engaging in role-play and dialogue exercises, 18 (78.26%) enjoyed group oral reports, and 15 (65.22%) enjoyed group discussions. During my teaching, I observed that these students predominantly used Chinese when discussing with their peers in class, as they found it challenging to express their ideas in English within a short timeframe. This observation aligns with the findings of Yang and Su (2003), who identified poor pronunciation and communication skills as significant challenges Taiwanese students faced when speaking English, which is not their native language.

Despite these challenges, the students enjoyed role-play and dialogue exercises (see also Lai, 2024). One questionnaire respondent wrote in English: *"I like role-play because I could apply clinical conversation in our role-play. It's a special experience for me."* Another respondent wrote in Chinese: *"I liked the role-play activity as it allowed me to practically apply what I've learned in class. This practice made me more confident in communicating with foreign patients and their families in the future. I found it very useful!"* (author's translation). These responses suggest that students gained valuable insights through role-play dialogues between nurses and patients in various nursing-related scenarios (Huang & Yu, 2023). The results support Cheng's (2011) findings, which emphasize the importance of aligning input materials with classroom activities when

designing ENP courses.

The Usefulness of Teaching Materials and Classroom Tasks for Nursing Careers

To gain a deeper understanding of the nursing students' learning experiences, I conducted interviews with 6 out of the 23 questionnaire respondents. These interviews aimed to explore their perspectives on the 16-week Nursing English course and assess the usefulness of the teaching materials and classroom tasks for their future careers in Taiwan's nursing communities.

Table 4 briefly summarizes what the six nursing students (S1-S6) mentioned in the interviews regarding the usefulness of the teaching materials and classroom tasks in preparing them for their future careers.

As shown in Table 4, the six nursing students found both the teaching materials and classroom tasks useful to their future careers in professional settings. Most participants (S1, S4, S5, and S6) acknowledged that the teaching materials covering various nursing-related topics helped them improve their English listening and speaking abilities. One participant (S2) noted that she gained more confidence in her English communication skills after completing the course. Additionally, two participants (S4 and S5) found the teaching materials particularly useful as they could apply what they had learned in class to their professional training in the hospital.

One of the students (S5) mentioned in the interview that she learned a great deal from preparing for the oral examination. She expressed it this way:

Researcher: *Do you find the classroom tasks helpful for your future nursing career?*

S5: *Yes, very helpful.*

Researcher: *Which classroom tasks do you find most beneficial for your future career?*

S5: *Mm, role-play, and especially the oral*

Table 4
Student Interview Responses

The Usefulness of Teaching Materials and Classroom Tasks (Author's translation from Chinese)	
S1:	<i>In my view, the teaching materials are highly beneficial for my future career. The listening tasks, in particular, have significantly enhanced my understanding of nursing, enabling me to apply this knowledge in the dialogue presentation and role-play activity.</i>
S2:	<i>I think the teaching materials are extremely beneficial for the career of nursing. The listening and speaking tasks have significantly increased my confidence in communicating with foreign patients.</i>
S3:	<i>I found the teaching materials beneficial for my future career. I particularly enjoyed the role-play activity, where we collaborated to create and present dialogues. I found this activity very useful, as it will help me communicate effectively with patients from different countries in the future, thereby enhancing my communication skills.</i>
S4:	<i>The teaching materials, especially the listening exercises related to nursing, are quite practical. I found the nursing conversations particularly helpful. Drawing from my firsthand experience of professional training in a hospital, I could apply the dialogues I practiced in class to provide post-operative care and manage wound care for foreign patients. This experience brought me great satisfaction.</i>
S5:	<i>The teaching materials enhanced my English listening and speaking skills. I found the dialogues between nurses and patients particularly beneficial. I recall a situation during my professional training in the hospital where I had to give English instructions to a patient with asthma. The dialogue I had learned in class proved very effective in communicating with the patient.</i>
S6:	<i>From my point of view, both the textbook and supplementary handouts are highly beneficial, as they cover numerous topics closely related to the nursing context. I found the role-play activity to be the most enjoyable and practical.</i>

exam.

Researcher: *Don't you find the oral exam stressful?*

S5: *Although taking the oral exam was very stressful, I believe it did help me improve my English speaking skills. I spent a lot of time preparing for the oral exam, and in the end, it also boosted my confidence.*

(Author's translation from Chinese)

At the end of the interview, this student (S5) suggested, *"If the teacher had taught us the origins of medical words such as suffixes, prefixes, and affixes, I might have been able to memorize medical terms more easily, leading to more effective learning."* (author's translation from Chinese). What S5 mentioned aligns with Yang's (2005) research, which suggests that medical terminology, especially prefixes and affixes, should be incorporated into ENP courses.

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

This paper explores the perceptions of Taiwanese EFL nursing students regarding the teaching materials and classroom tasks used in

the Nursing English course at a university in Taiwan. The results reveal that these nursing students rated the supplementary handouts on nurse-patient conversations more favorably than the commercially published textbook. Regarding classroom tasks, most students favored the role-play activity, and all of them enjoyed watching the nursing-related movie.

Importantly, the findings emphasize the importance of effective language instruction that integrates key skills, practical tasks, and a clear link between learning materials and application. This is consistent with the research of Hussin (2002) and Ching et al. (2020), who emphasize the significance of teaching language tasks and communication skills essential in the nursing context. These tasks and skills offer significant opportunities for developing teaching materials and assessing competencies in English for nursing (Hussin, 2002). Additionally, the findings corroborate Cheng's (2011) emphasis on the importance of connecting input materials with output activities.

Overall, based on the research findings, it is suggested that when designing ENP courses, both communication skills (e.g., taking a patient's medical history, asking for clarification, giving instructions effectively, and giving advice sensitively) and medical terminology, including prefixes and affixes, should be carefully considered (Taupan, 2019; Yang, 2005). Importantly, an effective approach to teaching nursing English should be learning-centered, closely considering "the needs and expectations of *all* the parties involved in the learning process when designing courses and selecting methodology" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 108; their emphasis). In this regard, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) explain:

The learner-centred approach is based on the principle that learning is totally determined by the learner. As teachers we can influence what we teach, but

what learners learn is determined by the learners alone. Learning is seen as a process in which the learners use what knowledge or skills they have in order to make sense of the flow of new information. Learning, therefore, is an internal process, which is crucially dependent upon the knowledge the learners already have and their ability and motivation to use it... For this reason we would reject the term a learner-centred approach in favour of a learning-centred approach to indicate that the concern is to maximise learning. The learner is one factor to consider in the learning process, but not the only one. Thus the term learner-centred would for our purpose be misleading. (p. 72)

More specifically, they emphasize that "the course design process should be much more *dynamic and interactive*. In particular, factors concerned with learning must be brought into play at all stages of the design process" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 77; italics added).

In conclusion, this paper presents a classroom-based study exploring EFL undergraduate students' perceptions of the teaching materials and classroom tasks utilized in a compulsory nursing English course at a university in northern Taiwan. Although the limited data collection may affect the generalizability of the study, it does not diminish the significance of the findings or their pedagogical implications. These findings can be considered a preliminary step toward further research on ENP teaching and learning. Given that English teaching is socially embedded in ESP instructional contexts (Cheng, 2011), future research could examine how English instructors design ENP courses and teach essential communication skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (see e.g., Boshier, 2013; Havery, 2024; Mitchell, 2018). Additionally, researchers might investigate how different

groups of students learn nursing English in EFL contexts across Taiwan, Japan, or other Asian countries.

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Appendix A
Student Questionnaire

Please evaluate your preference for the following teaching materials and classroom tasks. To what extent do you like each of them? Please tick (✓) one of the options—Like, Neutral, or Dislike—for each item.

Teaching Materials & Classroom Tasks	<i>How much do you like each of them?</i>		
	Like	Neutral	Dislike
Teaching Materials			
Textbook: <i>Cambridge English for Nursing</i>			
Supplementary handouts: Conversations for Nurses, TED Talks			
Classroom Tasks			
Listening practice (dialogues in nursing contexts)			
Group discussions			
Dialogue exercises			
Role-Play			
Group Oral Report			
Movie (related to nursing contexts)			

Other comments on the teaching materials and/or classroom tasks:

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. Do you find the teaching materials useful for your future career in nursing?
2. Which teaching materials do you find most useful for your future career?
3. In which ways are the teaching materials useful?
4. Do you find the classroom tasks helpful for your future nursing career?
5. Which classroom tasks do you find most beneficial for your future career?
6. In which ways are the classroom tasks useful?