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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ESP ROLE-PLAYING IN NURSING ENGLISH INSTRUCTION

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Abstract

The purpose of this study intends to investigate the effectiveness of using ESP role-playing in nursing English instruction. The instructor utilized the textbook "Nursing English for Pre-professionals" as a basis to ask learners to assimilate and fabricate their own conversations in contexts as part of the requirement for course fulfillment. The pre-professionals had the option to change their assigned topics if they wished. Topics were assigned through lots drawings. After the midterm exam, all written assignments were collected, checked for grammar errors by the English teacher, and then recorded on video by the junior nursing students themselves. The evaluation criteria included 40% for nursing content (including the appropriate application of nursing skills, procedures, and medical terminology), another 40% for content innovation (encompassing the richness and originality of the content and English performance), and 20% for multimedia skills (such as photography, editing, special effects, and background music). Based on assessments from both the nursing and English teachers, it was found that nursing students benefited significantly from the multimedia videos (MVs), particularly in terms of overall English competence, understanding of nursing medical theories and procedures, peer relationships, and multimedia skills. The outcomes also indicated that the pre-professionals not only improved their comprehension of the nursing textbook content (93%) but also felt that their nursing knowledge and theories were gradually enhanced (88%). Additionally, the MV project enhanced the enjoyment and diversity of the courses for the learners (93%), fostered stronger friendships among them (95%), and strengthened their multimedia skills (92%). Overall, participants expressed a higher preference for nursing English courses when engaged in this nursing project (95%).

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Introduction

Role-playing is an instruction approach in which learners take on different roles and engage in scenarios to practice their language abilities. According to Brown (2000), role-playing involved assigning roles to participants and establishing goals for them to achieve. It can be conducted individually, in pairs, or in groups, with each person assuming a specific role to accomplish a goal. Tompkins (2001) defined role play as "it is one of the classroom

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teaching techniques that encourage students to participate actively in the process of learning English. Therefore, foreign language students practice the target language in a context similar to real-life situations where stress and shyness are removed” (p. 1).

Role-playing can be viewed as a conscious problem-solving method that allows students to briefly embody characters and identify with them (Smith, 1981). Kenneth (2008) defined role play as the behavior of students in a particular context. In teaching, role play involves conscious practice and discussion of roles within a group, enabling students to confront challenges and identify with their assigned roles. Role-play activities provide insights into how students behave in specific contexts and situations, representing a teaching methodology that involves conscious role representation and group discussion (Kenneth, 2008).

Krebt (2017) emphasized the importance of students taking responsibility for their roles and maximizing their outcomes within the given context for effective imitation to occur. Whole-class engagement in role-play can be interesting and contribute to improved language teaching and learning. Participation in role-play techniques, as highlighted by Cornett (1999), enhanced students' fluency in language, oral interaction skills, and nonverbal communication during face-to-face interactions. These techniques are particularly valuable for foreign language learners who may have limited opportunities to speak English at home, as they provide a chance to use the language and improve fluency (Cornett, 1999).

Holt and Kysilka (2006) noted that the role-play technique was not only fun but also promoted learning and student-student communication. It helps English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students understand the significance of cooperation and fosters an interest in learning. Harmer (1984) identified role-play as one of several techniques to develop speaking skills. In role-play activities, various social contexts and interactive roles are created, with the teacher providing topics related to thoughts and feelings of specific roles. The interaction was considered a co-constructed process where both listeners and speakers built their utterances based on the influence of their conversational partners.

In summary, role-playing in language instruction offers learners the opportunity to practice language skills by assuming different roles and engaging in scenarios. It facilitates active participation, improves fluency, promotes cooperation, and creates an engaging and enjoyable learning environment. By embodying characters and exploring various social contexts, students develop a deeper understanding of human behavior and enhance their communication skills in the target language.

ESP Role-Playing in English Instruction

ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is a branch of English language instruction that focuses on teaching English to learners who require it for specific purposes, such as business, medicine, or engineering. Role-playing is commonly employed in ESP courses to enable learners to practice their language skills in real-life situations relevant to their specific field. As shown, role-playing and simulation activities provide students with opportunities to use language in context and helped develop their communicative competence in various professional and academic settings. Consequently, role-playing proves to be a valuable tool in ESP courses, allowing learners to practice their English in simulated real-life situations specific to their field of study.

In brief, role-playing is an effective approach in ESP instruction as it offers learners the chance to practice their language skills in an interactive and enjoyable manner. It prepares them for real-world situations in their specific field, helps them develop effective communication skills, and enhances their overall English language learning experience. Additionally, role-playing promotes learner engagement, creativity, confidence, feedback provision, and cultural awareness.

Literature Review

The Origin of English for Specific Purpose

Originating from the concept of need, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) emerged as a new approach that focused on learners' understanding of why they were learning a language (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). Traditionally, linguistics aimed at describing the grammatical rules of English, but ESP research shifted the focus toward using language for real communication (Widdowson, 1987). The question arose: How could we encourage learners to learn languages through authentic communication? Needs analysis studies became helpful in understanding students' needs and increasing their motivation to learn, as they believed that what they learned would be useful in their future

or daily life. However, identifying the needs of nursing majors alone was not enough. The core issue lay in the lack of appropriate teaching materials that catered to students' abilities and specific needs, such as nursing conversation, medical records, skills, theory, and articles. Therefore, designing ESP courses required content-based instruction.

Content-Based Instruction

ESP, a branch of language for specific purposes, shared a theoretical foundation with content-based instruction. Content-Based Instruction (CBI) referred to a teaching method in which language instruction revolved around the content or information that students would acquire, rather than focusing solely on linguistic aspects. Richard and Rodgers (2001) stated that CBI was guided by two principles: first, it aligned with learners' needs for acquiring a second language, and second, learners were more successful in language acquisition when they used it as a means of acquiring information rather than treating it as an end in itself.

According to Richard and Rodgers (2001), the language theory underlying CBI was that language was text and discourse-based; language use drew on integrated skills, and language was employed for specific purposes. The learning theory of CBI suggested that:

- (1) learners acquired a second language best when the knowledge they were acquiring was regarded as interesting, practical, and leading to a desired goal;
- (2) instruction was most effective when it met learners' needs; and
- (3) teaching was built upon learners' prior knowledge.

In most CBI courses, the syllabus was developed from the content area because language acquisition in CBI often involved content learning. Additionally, CBI followed a theme-based approach that had been widely used since the 1980s, where content and instructional sequence were selected based on language learning objectives (Richard & Rodgers, 2001). However, Richard and Rodgers (2001) cautioned that most language teachers were trained to teach language as a skill rather than a specific subject in CBI. This highlighted the importance of English teachers who taught ESP courses as part of an English curriculum to familiarize themselves with the subject matter, such as medical terminology or procedures.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was a branch of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) that emerged from the same theoretical foundation as content-based teaching. The purpose of ESP was to meet the language needs of students who required language skills for specific roles, such as nursing students, clinical staff, technicians, and doctors. Rather than focusing on mastering the language itself, ESP aimed to help students acquire content knowledge and practical skills through the use of a second language (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

During the rise of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the 1980s, language teaching theories began to emphasize students' needs and the language used in real workplace situations. ESP theories specifically aimed to meet the linguistic needs of particular roles (e.g. nursing students, clinical staff, technicians, and doctors). These students, therefore, needed to learn content and practical skills using a second or a foreign language rather than becoming fluent in the language for its own sake (Brown, 2000; Richards, 2001). In this study, the term ESP referred to concerns with the teaching and learning of content and practical English skills in a setting where English was a foreign language.

Target Needs

Target needs in ESP could be categorized into wants, lacks, and necessities. Necessities referred to the needs determined by the demands of the target situation, which were necessary for learners to perform effectively in that situation. The gap between learners' current proficiency and the required proficiency level could be referred to as their lack. On the other hand, learners' wants reflected their subjective needs, which might differ from the objective demands identified that emerged from researchers' needs analysis (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Goal-Oriented Approach

ESP was typically characterized by its goal-oriented nature, with ESP courses developed based on a needs analysis that precisely defined what students needed to achieve through English.

In summary, ESP learning offers significant benefits to learners as it enables them to develop language skills specific to their field or area of interest. By tailoring the language learning experience to meet learners' specific

needs, ESP makes language learning more relevant and engaging, thereby helping learners acquire language skills more effectively and confidently in their professional or academic settings. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of ESP role-playing in nursing English instruction. The research questions for this study are as follows:

- (1) Which part of the learners' English skills improve the most in the MV project?
- (2) How does the MV project improve learners' English proficiency?
- (3) How effective are the use of MVs in nursing English instruction?
- (4) What other activities can be used in nursing English instruction to improve learners' English skills besides the MV project?

Methodology

Participants

The approach employed in this study involved selecting two nursing classes, comprising approximately 100 students in total, as the subjects for experimentation. Specifically, junior college students were instructed to modify their nursing English scripts based on the textbook "Nursing English for Pre-professionals" for a musical video (MV) competition. Each group was assigned different nursing topics and tasked with creating their own MV based on the adapted scripts. From these submissions, the school selected four exceptional groups to participate in a national MV competition, where winners were awarded certificates and prizes. The top prize consisted of a gift voucher worth NT\$ 3000, followed by NT\$ 2500 for second place, NT\$ 1500 for third place, and NT\$ 800 for the best artistic work.

Procedure

For this study, two out of six classes, comprising a total of 100 students, were chosen as the experimental subjects. At the beginning of the semester, each group of five or six students was instructed to modify their nursing dialogues based on the textbook "Nursing English for Pre-professionals." Students were allowed to incorporate nursing strategies like PQRST, MP, CTMS, and other relevant skills into their conversations. Each group had to adapt their scripts according to assigned topics and then record their performances on video. The school then selected four exceptional groups to compete in a national nursing English contest, where the winners received gift vouchers and had the opportunity to showcase their impressive performances during the school anniversary celebration.

Instrument

In this research, three different instruments were utilized: the "Nursing English for Pre-Professionals" textbook, an open-ended questionnaire, and a computer for evaluating the participants' MVs.

Data Collection

At the beginning of the semester, a group of 100 junior students would be given the task of adapting their nursing English scripts based on the "Nursing English for Pre-Professionals" textbook. The English teacher would then review and revise these scripts. After the revision process, each group of five or six students would create their own nursing MV, which would be evaluated by both English and nursing teachers. The evaluation of learners' MVs would be based on three criteria: (1) nursing specialty, nursing skills, and the use of appropriate medical terminology, accounting for 40% of the score; (2) content, creativity, intonation, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, body language, and time management, accounting for another 40%; and (3) film photography, film clipping, special effects, and musical background, accounting for the remaining 20% of the score.

Results

In relation to the first research question, "Which part of the learners' English skills improved the most in the MV project," the findings presented in Table 1 indicated that the majority of learners expressed the belief that the MV project had a positive impact on their English speaking and listening skills. Specifically, learners perceived the greatest improvement in their speaking skills. This improvement was attributed to the necessity of memorizing lines from the script and engaging in script rehearsals prior to acting out the scenes, which contributed to enhancing their speaking abilities. For these ESL learners, the process of memorization and imitation of the target language served as initial steps towards developing their speaking proficiency, as they had to internalize and imitate specific sentence patterns before being able to effectively communicate in the language.

Table 1: The Result of the Learners' English Skills Improving the Most in the MV Project (N=100)

Items	Agree
Listening	24
Speaking	58
Reading	7
Writing	11

Regarding the second research question, which focused on how the MV project improved learners' English proficiency, the survey findings presented in Table 2 demonstrated various aspects of progress. Among the participants, 51% expressed that continuous script rehearsals with their peers played a significant role in enhancing their English speaking skills over time. Additionally, 23% of the learners indicated that maintaining close attention to their conversations was crucial for developing fluency in communication, leading to gradual improvement in their listening abilities. Furthermore, 14% of the learners believed that their reading comprehension skills improved as a result of practicing reading the script while creating the MVs. Finally, 12% of the participants felt that their writing skills showed improvement due to the requirement of revising their scripts multiple times.

Table 2: The Result of MV Project Improving Learners' English Proficiency (N=100)

Items	Agree	Reasons
1. Listening	23	While capturing MVs, it is necessary to attentively listen to the dialogues of our partners to effectively respond, leading to an unconscious and gradual enhancement of our listening skills.
2. Speaking	51	Through regular practice of conversing with our partners and rehearsing scripts during MV photography, we enhance our speaking proficiency.
3. Reading	14	To achieve a smoother language flow during MV filming, it is necessary to engage in script reading practice, which consequently enhances our reading skills.
4. Writing	12	Prior to capturing MVs, it is essential to extensively revise the scripts, leading to an enhancement of our writing skills.

In relation to the third research question, which examined the effectiveness of using MVs in nursing English instruction, the findings presented in Table 3 indicated that all learners participated in the MV project. A significant majority, 93% of the participants, reported that adapting and filming nursing scenario videos helped them gain a better understanding of the nursing content. Furthermore, 88% of the learners believed that the MV project facilitated the development of their nursing theory knowledge. The project was perceived by 93% of the participants as a means of making the course more active, creative, and enjoyable. Moreover, 95% of the learners felt that their friendships grew stronger as a result of engaging in the project, while 92% acknowledged that their multimedia skills were enhanced. Finally, 95% of the participants expressed a preference for the course due to the inclusion of the MV project.

Table 3: The Result of the Effectiveness of the Use of MVs in Nursing English Instruction (N=100)

Items	Agree	Disagree
1. Are you responsible for modifying the nursing English script for Pre-Professionals and capturing MVs?	100	0
2. Do you find that adapting nursing English and filming MVs helps you grasp the content of each unit better?	93	7
3. Has your nursing knowledge and understanding of nursing English improved to some extent through the process of adapting nursing materials and participating in MV photography?	88	12
4. Do you believe that the adaptation and filming of MVs make the course content more interesting and diverse?	93	7
5. Has your participation in this nursing project contributed to the strengthening of friendships?	95	5

6. Have your multimedia skills been reinforced as a result of your involvement in this nursing project?	92	8
7. Do you find yourself developing a greater liking for Nursing English as you engage in the adaptation of nursing materials and MV production?	95	5

Concerning the fourth research question, which explored alternative activities that could enhance learners' English skills in nursing English instruction apart from the MV project, the findings depicted in Table 4 indicated various preferences among the learners. Approximately 42% of the participants expressed a desire to transform nursing conversations into songs, while 15% favored presenting them in the form of a summary. Another 15% of the learners expressed an interest in converting nursing conversations into storytelling, while 13% indicated a preference for adapting them for a speech contest. Moreover, 10% of the participants expressed a willingness to give presentations using PowerPoint, and the remaining 3% expressed a desire to edit the nursing conversations for a poetry contest.

Table 4: The Result of Other Activities Used in Nursing English Instruction (N=100)

Items	Agree	Reasons
1. Songs	42	Incorporating songs into nursing English teaching materials.
2. Powerpoint	10	Utilizing PowerPoint to integrate with nursing English instructional materials.
3. Storytelling	15	Integrating storytelling with nursing English teaching materials
4. Summary	15	Incorporating summaries into nursing English instructional materials
5. English Poetry	3	Using English poetry to integrate with nursing English instructional materials
6. Speech	13	Incorporating speeches into nursing English instructional materials
7. Others	2	

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of ESP role-playing in nursing English instruction. Based on the aforementioned findings, it was evident that role-playing in the MV project primarily enhanced learners' English speaking and listening skills. Role-playing played a crucial role in this project and proved to be an effective method for improving speaking and listening abilities as it provided opportunities to practice real-life situations that may arise in English-speaking environments. Through role-playing, learners were able to enhance their speaking skills by practicing new vocabulary, expressions, and grammatical structures in an interactive and communicative manner. Engaging in role-playing activities also facilitated the improvement of learners' listening skills. By actively paying attention to their partners' speech and responding appropriately, learners practiced listening for specific information, such as details about a situation or task, and improved their ability to follow instructions and responded accurately.

Regarding the effectiveness of using MVs in English nursing instruction, role-playing in the MV project proved beneficial in helping learners grasp the content of the textbook they were studying. By actively engaging with the material through role-playing scenarios, learners gained a deeper understanding of the subject matter. They were able to put concepts into practice and experience the content in a tangible manner. Moreover, role-playing activities stimulated critical and creative thinking among learners regarding the content they were studying. By assuming different roles and perspectives, learners approached the material from various angles, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of the concepts.

The findings also indicated that 93% of learners believed that the MV project made the course content more interesting, engaging, and enriched. This was attributed to the project providing learners with an interactive and captivating learning experience. Role-playing activities transformed learners from passive recipients of information

into active participants in their own learning process. Furthermore, role-playing fostered an active learning environment by promoting collaboration and communication among learners. Through teamwork in role-playing scenarios, learners enhanced their communication and cooperation skills, which could be transferred to other areas of their lives.

Additionally, 95% of learners reported that their friendships grew stronger as a result of participating in the nursing project. This finding aligned with a study by Peterson (2012), which revealed that role-playing positively influenced learners' oral performance and social interactions, fostering the development of friendships. Role-playing in the MV project involved individuals assuming different roles and enacting scenarios, making it a fun and effective way to deepen friendships.

Regarding activities beyond the MV project that could enhance nursing English instruction, 42% of learners expressed interest in transforming nursing conversations into songs. This indicated the captivating effect of song instruction on learners. Listiyaningsih (2017) also found that learners generally held positive perceptions of song instruction, as it helped improve their listening and speaking skills while boosting motivation and engagement in language learning. The benefits of song instruction could be summarized as follows: (1) Engaging and entertaining: Songs made learning enjoyable, motivating students to retain information; (2) Authentic language input: Songs exposed learners to authentic language input, including pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm, aiding in the development of listening skills and overall comprehension of English; (3) Vocabulary and grammar practice: Songs often contained repetitive language patterns, allowing learners to practice and memorize vocabulary and grammar structures; (4) Cultural awareness: Songs exposed learners to different cultures and perspectives, enabling them to learn about customs, traditions, and values from various English-speaking countries; (5) Confidence building: Singing in English helped learners build confidence and develop speaking skills, contributing to increased comfort with the language in other situations.

Based on the findings presented above, it can be concluded that ESP role-playing is a valuable and effective strategy for nursing English instruction. It aids learners in enhancing their speaking and listening skills, deepening their comprehension of the subject matter through active engagement, facilitating the application of knowledge in practical contexts, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and making nursing English instruction more enjoyable and captivating. Therefore, ESP role-playing is an activity that English teachers should not overlook and could consider incorporating into their courses.

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Appendix I: Grading

Groups	Nursing 40%(includes nursing skills, nursing procedures, and medical terminology)	English 40%(includes content innovation, accuracy on grammar and sentences, English pronunciation and fluency)	Multimedia 20%(includes video shooting, clipping, special effects and background music)	Total Score
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Appendix II: Questionnaire

Department: _____

Class: _____

1. Did you assign to modify nursing English conversation based on the textbook “Nursing English for Pre-Professionals?” ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. What’s the specific subject or topic that your group chose for the adaptation of Nursing English?

<input type="checkbox"/> Respiratory and Thoracic Unit	<input type="checkbox"/> Infectious Disease Unit	<input type="checkbox"/> Neurology Unit
<input type="checkbox"/> Cardiovascular Unit	<input type="checkbox"/> Oncology Unit	<input type="checkbox"/> General Surgery Unit
<input type="checkbox"/> Gastrointestinal Unit	<input type="checkbox"/> Renal Unit	<input type="checkbox"/> Pediatrics
<input type="checkbox"/> Hepatobiliary Unit	<input type="checkbox"/> Urology Unit	<input type="checkbox"/> Gynecology
<input type="checkbox"/> Endocrinology Unit	<input type="checkbox"/> Proctology Unit	<input type="checkbox"/> Obstetrics

3. Which part of the English skills improved you the most in the MV project?
☐Listening ☐Speaking ☐Reading ☐Writing
4. Please explained in detail how the MV project improved your English proficiency.
5. In your participation in adapting nursing English conversation and filming MVs, what left the biggest impression on you? (Please explain in detail)
6. What other activities could be used in nursing English instruction to improve your English skills besides the MV project?
☐Incorporating songs into nursing English teaching materials.
☐Utilizing PowerPoint to integrate with nursing English instructional materials
☐Integrating storytelling with nursing English teaching materials
☐Incorporating summaries into nursing English instructional materials
☐Using English poetry to integrate with nursing English instructional materials
☐Incorporating speeches into nursing English instructional materials