

Nurse-Patient Communication: An Examination of Student-Nurses of Post Basic Nursing Anesthesia (PBNA) and Peri-Operative Nursing (PON) of Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH), Plateau State, Nigeria

Komunikasi Perawat-Pasien: Tinjauan terhadap Mahasiswa Post Basic Nursing Anesthesia (PBNA) dan Peri-Operative Nursing (PON) di Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH), Plateau State, Nigeria

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Keywords

English; challenges; proficiency; relevance; strategies.

Abstract

Effective nurse-patient communication is essential for providing high-quality healthcare and ensuring patient safety and satisfaction. Proficiency in English is crucial for nurses to effectively interact with patients, families, and other healthcare professionals. However, many nurses face challenges in using correct grammar and language, which can impact communication and care delivery. This paper explores the relevance of English proficiency in nurse-patient communication, examines the grammar challenges nurses face, and suggests potential strategies to overcome these challenges. A total of 35 student-nurses were randomly selected from the Post Basic Nursing Anesthesia (PBNA) and Peri-Operative Nursing (PON) program at JUTH. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. Among other challenges, the study discovered that nurses face problems in the areas of tenses, choice of words, sentence construction, and patients' poor grasp of English. The study suggests that language training and support, and continuous professional development, etc. can help improve the communication among nurses and with patients. The study thus concludes that proficiency in English and proper grammar usage are essential for effective nurse-patient communication, and overcoming language and grammar challenges can improve patient safety, satisfaction, and healthcare outcomes.

Kata kunci

bahasa Inggris; tantangan; kemahiran; relevansi; strategi.

Abstrak

Komunikasi perawat-pasien yang efektif penting untuk memberikan perawatan kesehatan berkualitas dan memastikan kepuasan pasien. Kemahiran berbahasa Inggris sangat penting bagi perawat untuk berinteraksi secara efektif dengan pasien, keluarga, dan tenaga kesehatan lainnya. Namun, banyak perawat menghadapi tantangan dalam menggunakan tata bahasa yang benar, yang dapat berdampak pada komunikasi dan pemberian perawatan. Makalah ini mengeksplorasi relevansi kemahiran bahasa Inggris dalam komunikasi perawat-pasien, memeriksa tantangan tata bahasa yang dihadapi perawat, dan menyarankan strategi potensial untuk mengatasi tantangan ini. Sebanyak 35 mahasiswa dipilih secara acak dari program *Post Basic Nursing Anesthesia* (PBNA) dan *Peri-Operative Nursing* (PON) di JUTH. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian yang menggabungkan metode pengumpulan dan analisis data kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa perawat menghadapi masalah di bidang *tenses*, pilihan kata, konstruksi kalimat, dan pemahaman bahasa Inggris pasien yang buruk. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pelatihan dan dukungan bahasa, serta pengembangan profesional yang berkelanjutan, dan lainnya dapat membantu meningkatkan komunikasi di antara para perawat dan pasien. Dengan demikian, kemahiran berbahasa Inggris dan penggunaan tata bahasa yang tepat sangat penting untuk komunikasi perawat-pasien yang efektif, dan mengatasi tantangan bahasa dan tata bahasa dapat meningkatkan keselamatan pasien, kepuasan, dan hasil perawatan kesehatan.

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A. Introduction

Nurses play an important role in patient care. Good English communication skills are of utmost importance for nurses as they have to communicate not only with patients but also a host of different people from doctors, support staff such as pharmacists and technicians and the patients' friends and relatives (Nettina, 2006). Communicating with the doctors, patients and their relatives is vital for nurses to not only better understand the patients' condition but also provide them with better care. When patients have to pay hefty sums for their treatment, they expect and demand excellent services from the nurses who take care of them.

Communication can be considered as the basis of the nurse-patient relationship and is an essential element in building trust and comfort in nursing care. Effective communication is a fundamental but complex concept in nursing practice. Communication plays a vital role in professional disciplines such as nursing. Usually, establishing an effective communication with patients is an essential aspect of nursing care. Nurses, through communication skills, can recognize the patient's healthcare needs, as a meaningful communication with patients enable nurses aspire to enhance a thorough knowledge of individual patients and their personal characteristics.

English Language is widely used in the healthcare sector. In Nigeria, in many hospitals especially in the private ones, staff and patients use English language for communication purposes. Nurses have to communicate with doctors, patients, and patients' relatives, other nurses and other hospital staff, like the technicians and pharmacists. They are required to give instructions, follow instructions, converse and write well in English. Even though medical staff in hospitals have to use English extensively, a major group of the staff, especially the nurses are known to have problems communicating in English.

In nursing care, communication in the English language is essential as the instructions are often given in English. If the nurses are not well-versed in the communicating in English, it may interfere with their work, making it difficult for them to perform their duties well. The nurses may face difficulties in communicating with doctors, patients and co-workers, writing nursing reports in English and voicing out their views and opinions. Robinson & Gilmartin (2002) argue that nurses who are not fluent in communicating in English are stereotyped by the patients. Nurses who hesitate while speaking or have difficulties in pronouncing English words are seen as incompetent. Though they try their best to convey the message, patients tend to classify them as people with lower intelligence. Nurses whose English is a Second language reported that they could not find the right words when expressing themselves to the patients and doctors (Choi, 2005). The nurses who hesitate when speaking in English know that patients are judging them based on their communication ability (Robinson & Gilmartin, 2002). These nurses need time to think in their mother tongue and respond in English to the patients (O'Neill, 2011). O'Neill also pointed out that usage of fillers and extended time to reply to patients show that the nurses have problems in spontaneous speech, proficiency and fluency while communicating in English and this irritates the patients. Nurses felt guilty when they could not respond spontaneously when communicating in English (Bolster & Manias, 2010). However, O'Neill (2011) stated that nurses working in an English speaking environment will improve their English language proficiency over time.

Patient engagement and perceptions of quality of care can both benefit from an understanding of nursing culture, communication, and practices, particularly in relation to nurse-patient communications. According to Riley, both nurses and patients bring their individual respective knowledge, attitudes, feelings, experiences, and patterns of behaviors to the relationship in nurse-patient interaction (Riley, 2008, p. 20). In order to meet the various healthcare expectations and requirements of patients and their caregivers, various communication strategies must be utilized in light of these individual-based behavioral patterns and perceptions of healthcare realities. It is argued that in healthcare interactions between nurses and patients, effective communication has therapeutic effects (Riley, 2008; Samovar et al., 2010). According to Riley (2008, p. 27), when care is client-centered and based on caring conversations, quality of care improves in a hospital setting. Therefore, practicing nurses are encouraged to communicate with patients in a respectful and empathic manner. Rutherford (2008) asserts that nurses should use appropriate nonverbal communication cues for the circumstances of the care they provide, avoid professional jargon, and be attentive listeners. Negative interpersonal interactions between healthcare professionals hinder both the provision of high-quality patient care and the efficiency with which patients' needs are communicated (Laschinger, 2014, p. 288).

Several theories have investigated how health perceptions, communication, and culture influence interactions between nurses and patients. This is because culture has an impact on health communication and social interactions. These theoretical frameworks include Peplau (1992, 1997), Theory of Interpersonal Relations, Leininger's Cultural Care Theory (2002, cited in Kivisto, 2013), and Goffman's (1958) Theory of Face.

In nurse-patient interactions, communication is so crucial that different studies of provider-patient communication may come to different conclusions depending on how it is conceived (either as the transmission of information or as a ritualistic relational engagement) (Rimal, 2001). Communication, as noted by Ruben & Gigliotti (2016, p. 469), entails a complex exchange of verbal and nonverbal, planned and unplanned, and

intentional and unintentional messages, with the sent message generally not being interpreted the same as the received message. As a result, the processes of message creation, exchange, and interpretation in interpersonal communication—as seen in the healthcare setting—are influenced by a number of factors and involve interaction rather than simply the exchange of information. In addition, Peplau (1992, 1997) made the observation that the caring practice of nursing necessitates the development of relationships with patients and the interaction of nurses with patients, their families, other nurses, and physicians. As a result, the term "communication" as used in this review refers to all kinds of interactions—verbal, nonverbal, and otherwise—in which messages and meanings are created to influence the nurse-patient relationship.

This study aims to investigate the communication dynamics between student-nurses of Post Basic Nursing Anesthesia (PBNA) and Peri-Operative Nursing (PON) and their patients at Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH), Plateau State, Nigeria, to identify barriers and facilitators to effective communication, and examine its impact on patient satisfaction, anxiety, and outcomes. By exploring the current state of nurse-patient communication in these specialized settings, this research seeks to inform evidence-based strategies to enhance communication skills among student-nurses, ultimately promoting high-quality, patient-centered care and advancing nursing education and practice.

B. Method

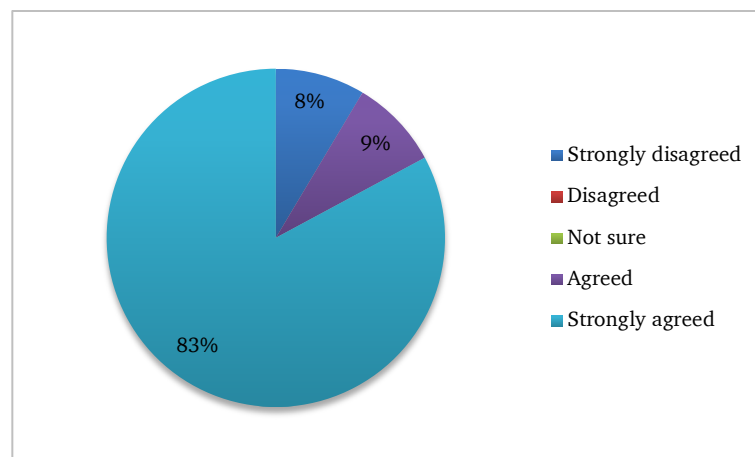
This study was conducted among 35 student-nurses at Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH) to investigate the importance of English language proficiency in nurse-patient communication and the grammar challenges faced by JUTH nurses. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. A total of 35 student-nurses were randomly selected from the Post Basic Nursing Anesthesia (PBNA) and Peri-Operative Nursing (PON) program at JUTH. Participants were informed of the study's purpose and their consent was obtained prior to participation. The sample was chosen to represent a diverse range of experience levels and backgrounds. Data was collected using a survey. A structured survey was distributed to the participants to assess their self-reported English language proficiency and the challenges they face in nurse-patient communication. The survey included questions on the relevance of use of English to nurses and the perceived areas of difficulties in communication. The data collected from the survey were analyzed using the following methods, (1) quantitative analysis: descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize the survey responses and identify trends in language proficiency and challenges faced; (2) qualitative analysis: data was analyzed to identify common themes and patterns in the experiences and challenges described by the participants. The study's sample size was relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research with a larger sample size and more diverse participants may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Data Presentation

The following data is from a survey conducted among 35 student-nurses.

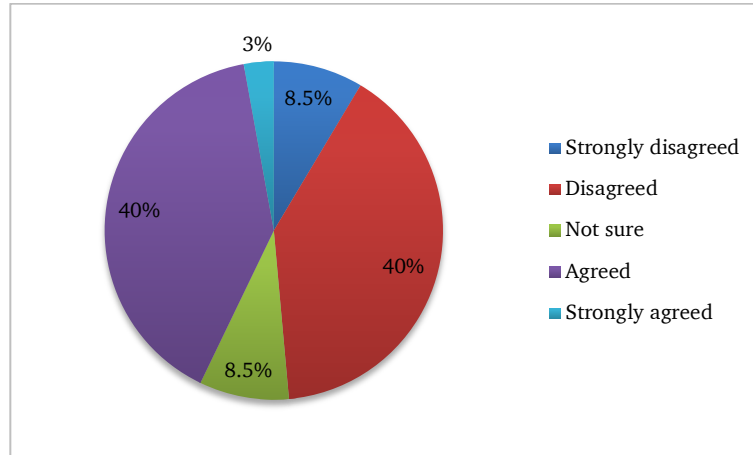
a. Communication skills important for nurses



Picture 1. Respondents' responses to questions about communication skills important for nurses

From the chart, 29 respondents equivalent to 83% strongly agreed and 3 respondents equivalent to 8.5% argued that communication skills is important for nurses while 3 respondents equivalent to 8.5% did not think communication skills is important for nurses so they strongly disagreed.

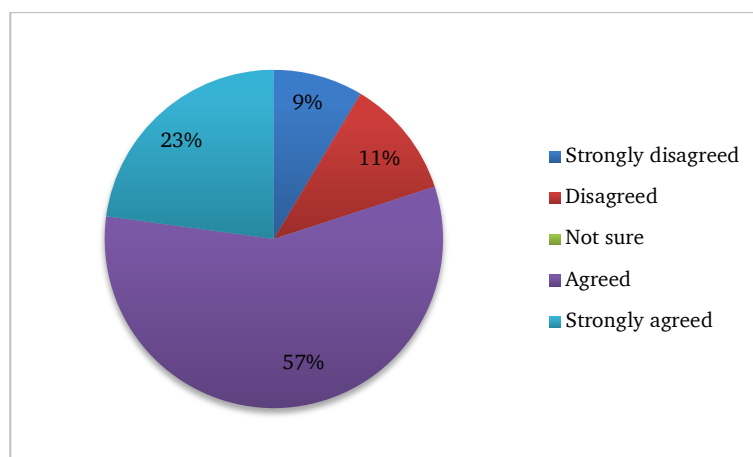
b. If student-nurses Use of English course, they should be allowed to continue with their nursing school program.



Picture 2. Respondents' responses to questions about if student-nurses Use of English course, they should be allowed to continue with their nursing school program

In response to the question whether student-nurses should be allowed to continue with their nursing school program even if they fail their Use of English course, the respondents responded as follows: strongly disagreed – 3 (8.5%), disagreed – 14 (40%), not sure – 3 (8.5%), agreed – 14 (40%) and strongly agreed – 1 (3%). The responses indicate that the student-nurses are divided majorly but with those in disagreement, that is, SD and D in the majority thus placing less relevance to the need for effectiveness in nurses' improvement in the use of English a criterion for improvement in nurse-patient communication as key to enhanced healthcare delivery. However, 15 respondents (A and SA) consider success in the Use of English course as central to the effectiveness of nurses in their service delivery.

c. Poor use of English affects nurse-patient relationship

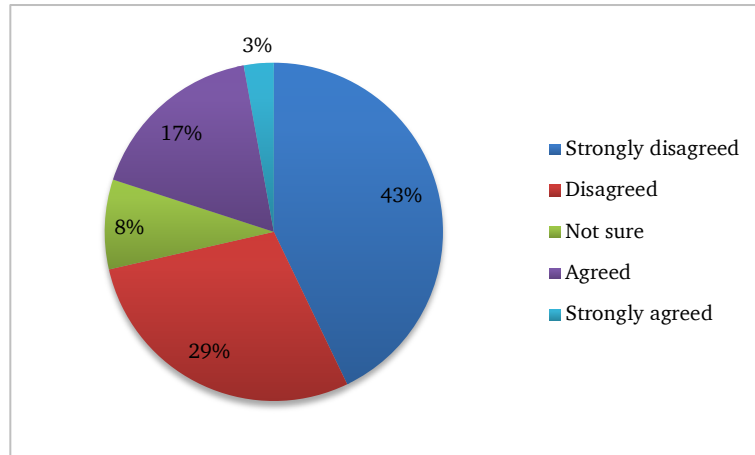


Picture 3. Respondents' responses to questions about poor use of English affects nurse-patient relationship

In answering question 3, the respondents provided these answers: strongly disagreed -3 (9%), disagreed – 4 (11%), agreed – 20 (57%), and strongly agreed – 8 (23%). What this translates to is that 28 respondents (20 and 8 representing 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed') are in full agreement that poor use of English can mar the

communication between nurses and their patients. This calls attention to the fact that there is need to consciously design programs to help enhance the nurses' use of English.

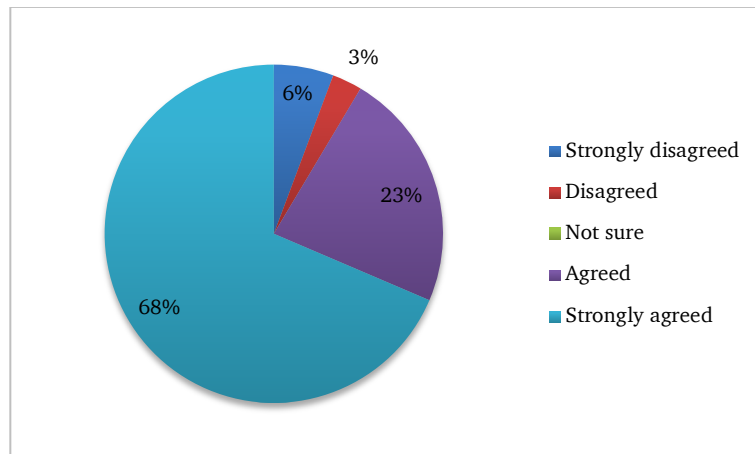
d. You are not competent enough in your use of English in your communication with patients



Picture 4. Respondents' responses to questions about competence in the use of English for communication with patients

In response to this question, the respondents' responses were strongly disagreed – 15 (43%), disagreed – 14 (29%), not sure – 3 (8%), agreed – 6 (17%), and strongly agreed – 1 (3%). Though a number of the respondents feel they are confident enough in their use of English and communication skills with their patients, there are still others who are not in that line who are either not sure or completely accepted that they are not competent enough. This gives room for the need to encourage programs to help the nurses in their use of English and communication skills for effective nurse-patient relationship.

e. Your use of English and communication skills course as a student-nurse has benefited you immensely



Picture 5. Respondents' responses about the benefits of using English and communication skills courses

The following were the Respondents' responses to this question of how beneficial their Use of English and communication skills course was to them: strongly disagreed – 2 (6%), disagreed – 1 (3%), agreed – 8 (23%) and strongly agreed – 24 (68%). From the responses, the course has been largely beneficial to the student-nurses.

f. Can you identify some challenges in using English when relating with patients?

Nurses encounter various challenges in using English effectively, especially when communicating with patients. The following responses were drawn from the survey as responses from question six:

- (1) *Tenses*: Nurses may struggle with choosing the correct tense to convey past, present, or future events accurately. Incorrect usage could lead to confusion or misunderstandings.
- (2) *Idiomatic Expressions*: Understanding and using idiomatic expressions can be challenging, especially if they are not part of the nurse's native language. Misinterpretation may occur if idioms are misunderstood.
- (3) *Pronunciation/Intonation*: Pronunciation and intonation affect clarity and understanding. Nurses need clear pronunciation and appropriate intonation to convey messages effectively, especially when discussing sensitive medical issues.
- (4) *Patients' Poor Grasp of English*: Communication breakdowns can happen when patients have a limited understanding of English. Nurses must find alternative ways to convey information, such as using visual aids or simple language.
- (5) *Choice/Appropriateness of Words*: Selecting the right words is crucial for conveying information accurately and sensitively. Nurses must choose words that patients can understand and that are appropriate for the medical context.
- (6) *Difficulty Explaining Medical Terms*: Medical terminology can be complex and unfamiliar to patients. Nurses must find ways to explain medical terms in simple, understandable language to ensure patients comprehend their condition and treatment.
- (7) *Cultural Differences*: Cultural differences can affect communication styles and understanding. Nurses must be sensitive to cultural nuances to avoid misunderstandings and provide culturally competent care.
- (8) *Sentence Construction*: Nurses need to construct clear and coherent sentences to convey information effectively. Poor sentence construction can lead to confusion or misinterpretation.
- (9) *Environmental Factors*: Noise, distractions, and other environmental factors can hinder effective communication. Nurses must adapt their communication strategies to overcome these challenges.
- (10) *Poor Vocabulary*: Limited vocabulary can impede communication. Nurses need to continuously expand their vocabulary to effectively convey medical information and address patients' concerns.
- (11) *Fluency in English*: Fluency in English is essential for seamless communication. Nurses must strive to improve their English proficiency through practice and ongoing learning.
- (12) *Use of Pidgin*: In some cases, patients and nurses may resort to using pidgin or simplified language to communicate. While this may facilitate basic communication, it may not be suitable for conveying complex medical information.
- (13) *Ambiguous Expressions*: Ambiguous expressions can lead to misunderstandings. Nurses should strive for clarity and precision in their communication to ensure patients understand their instructions and explanations.
- (14) *Poor Sentence Coordination*: Poor sentence coordination can hinder the flow of communication and lead to confusion. Nurses should structure their sentences logically to convey information effectively.
- (15) *Registers*: Nurses must be aware of different registers or levels of formality in language and adjust their communication style accordingly, whether speaking with patients, colleagues, or other healthcare professionals.
- (16) *Writing Patients' Reports*: Writing clear and concise patient reports is essential for effective communication within the healthcare team. Nurses must accurately document patient information, including symptoms, treatment plans, and progress notes.
- (17) Navigating these challenges requires nurses to continuously improve their language skills, cultural competence, and communication strategies to provide high-quality care to diverse patient populations.

2. Findings

a. Grammar Challenges Faced by Nurses

- (1) *Complex Medical Terminology*: English medical terminology can be difficult to master for non-native speakers.
- (2) *Varied Patient Demographics*: Nurses must adapt their language to accommodate patients from different backgrounds and education levels.
- (3) *Verb Tense and Pronoun Usage*: Proper usage of verb tenses and pronouns is essential for clear communication about past, present, and future care.
- (4) *Sentence Structure and Clarity*: Complex sentence structures can hinder understanding; concise, direct communication is preferred.

b. Impact of Grammar Challenges

- (1) Miscommunication: Incorrect grammar can lead to misunderstandings, impacting patient care and outcomes.
- (2) Lack of Confidence: Nurses who struggle with English may lack confidence in their communication skills, affecting their performance.
- (3) Cultural Barriers: Nurses may face additional challenges in navigating cultural differences that influence language and communication styles.

c. Strategies to Overcome Grammar Challenges

- (1) Language Training and Support: Providing nurses with language courses and resources can improve their proficiency and confidence.
- (2) Continuous Professional Development: Workshops and training sessions focused on communication skills can help nurses refine their language abilities.
- (3) Mentorship and Peer Support: Experienced nurses can mentor others in effective communication, providing guidance and feedback.
- (4) Use of Interpretation Services: In settings with diverse patient populations, interpretation services can aid communication and understanding.

d. Relevance of English Proficiency

- (1) Clarity and Understanding: Nurses must communicate clearly and accurately to understand patient concerns and provide clear instructions.
- (2) Patient Safety: Misunderstandings due to language barriers can lead to medical errors or incorrect treatments.
- (3) Patient Satisfaction: Effective communication builds trust and improves patient satisfaction with their care.
- (4) Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Nurses need to communicate with other healthcare professionals, often in English, to provide coordinated care.

D. Conclusion

Proficiency in English and proper grammar usage are essential for effective nurse-patient communication. Overcoming language and grammar challenges can improve patient safety, satisfaction, and healthcare outcomes. Investing in language training and support for nurses can enhance the quality of care and strengthen the healthcare system as a whole. This paper emphasizes the importance of English language proficiency in nurse-patient communication and explores the challenges nurses face regarding grammar usage. By addressing these challenges and providing support and training, healthcare organizations can improve the quality of care and patient outcomes.

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