



# Revisiting Indonesian Nursing Students' Needs and Perceptions on English Learning in Post-Pandemic Era

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## Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly altered teaching and learning methods, making it necessary to reassess students' needs to understand their current academic circumstances. In response, this study surveyed D3 nurses pursuing their bachelor's degree to identify specific English language requirements and assess the perceived importance of these skills for curriculum development. Guided by the framework of Hutchinson and Waters (1987), the research explored the English language needs and sub-skills essential for nursing students in the post-pandemic context. It also examined students' perspectives on the relevance of the English courses offered. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. Findings indicate that students viewed the fully online English courses as having a substantial impact on their professional development. Participants reported higher proficiency in Listening (Grand Mean = 4.1) and Reading (Grand Mean = 4.07) than in Writing (Grand Mean = 3.97) and Speaking (Grand Mean = 3.92). Although students generally found the English courses relevant, the results highlight a need for improvement in Writing and Speaking instruction to better support their academic and professional growth.

**Keywords:** *Nursing Students, Need Analysis, English Learning, Post-Pandemic*

## Introduction

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has presented numerous obstacles to human existence on a global scale. The virus's spread not only affects the healthcare sector, but also has repercussions in educational domains. Due to its adaptability, e-learning experienced a surge in popularity during the coronavirus outbreak. Electronic and online materials have become indispensable because they aid learners in understanding online subjects and assist instructors in knowledge

transfer and learning objectives attainment (Coman et al., 2020). Besides that, multiple educational platforms such as Zoom Meeting, Google Meet, WhatsApp, Edmodo, and Quizlet were employed during the remote learning process to accommodate the online learning methods (Madya & Abdurahman, 2021).

Despite its revolutionary nature, E-learning in the education sector nevertheless gives rise to irrefutable challenges. Gemiharto & Priyadarshani (2022) argue that the lack of preparation in Indonesia's communication technology infrastructure is a significant hindrance to online learning, which necessitates a reliable internet connection. Therefore, it may not be favourable for the implementation of full online learning. Wiratman & Rahmadani (2020) discovered additional barrier to online learning at home, which were mostly influenced by factors such as the individuals' digital literacy and proficiency, socioeconomic level, geographical location, and the teaching techniques used by their lecturer. In response to this issue, Hollister et al. (2022) mentioned that online learning provides students with the opportunity to have more time and flexibility, enabling them to accomplish their obligations that would otherwise be difficult to accommodate.

In the context of nursing education, e-learning is not new. Extension programs, which enable D3-qualified nurses to earn a bachelor's degree, have long used hybrid learning formats. These programs aim to strengthen clinical reasoning and analytical skills in response to growing demands in the healthcare sector. Many nursing students enrolled in such programs are also full-time healthcare workers, often experiencing high stress and burnout—especially during the pandemic when workloads and working hours increased substantially (Hrelc & Anderson, 2022; Dabney et al., 2023).

Given these circumstances, reassessing students' educational needs in the post-pandemic era is essential. The conditions under which students now study have changed dramatically, requiring curriculum updates that are informed by their current realities. This study focuses on the specific English language needs of D3 nurses pursuing a bachelor's degree at Pelita Harapan University, Indonesia. English proficiency is vital in nursing education, as much medical communication and literature are in English (Sudusinghe & Gamage, 2023).

Nurses must master a range of language skills such as reading technical literature, writing reports, using medical terminology, and presenting in professional settings (Wahyuni, 2021). Before the pandemic, English instruction for nursing students followed a hybrid model, combining asynchronous online tasks with synchronous sessions and limited in-person meetings. After the outbreak, instruction shifted fully online. Currently, English courses emphasize speaking skills, especially for communication with international patients, which is seen as essential for nursing practice.

In addition to identifying language needs, this study also explores students' perceptions of the relevance of the English courses they have taken. As noted by Abednego et al. (2023), students' perceived relevance of a course significantly affects their motivation and learning outcomes. Understanding these perceptions can help lecturers develop more targeted strategies to support students' language development and professional readiness (Setyawati et al., 2022). In the context of ESP, an analysis of students' needs for post-pandemic English language learning was once conducted by Ningsih (2021).

The findings indicated that out of the 97 English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students at Al-Azhar Islamic University, a majority favoured a personalized instructional approach. This approach allowed students to address their individual language learning requirements, leading to a sense of fulfilment and enhancing their positive emotions and self-assurance. Meanwhile, in the nursing-specific research, Sofyan and Wati (2022) studied 85 second-year nursing students at STIKes YPIB Majalengka, Indonesia. The study discovered that the pupils required additional assistance with the internet and online learning tools. They also underlined the need of improving vocabulary, sentence organization, and competency in all four English abilities.

Furthermore, most students expressed a desire for motivation to improve their confidence in online education. Despite the valuable insights provided by prior studies, there remains a substantial gap in the literature specifically addressing the post-pandemic English language needs and perceptions of ESP students, particularly in the nursing field. The limited number of research studies highlights the urgency for further investigation to understand and cater to these evolving needs. Addressing this gap is essential to developing effective educational strategies that enhance both academic and professional outcomes for nursing students in the post-pandemic era.

## **Research Questions**

1. What is nursing students' perception of the English language course they took at the university, specifically after COVID-19 Pandemic?
2. What are their needs of English language skills after COVID-19 Pandemic?

## **Literature Review**

### **Online Learning**

Online learning is an unavoidable result of the capacity to demonstrate advanced learning through the collaboration of instructors and technology (Dhawan, 2020; Gultom & Suhartini, 2021). The Covid-19 global epidemic has rendered online learning a feasible alternative for existing instruction and education. It serves as a dependable approach specifically built to minimize the

spread of viruses by enabling students to engage in remote study. For approximately two years, The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture has enforced a mandate for online learning as a precautionary measure against the spread of Covid-19.

Teachers confront difficulties while shifting from traditional classroom teaching to online teaching due to their limited knowledge of online pedagogy. During the in-service training, they lacked the necessary computer skills and knowledge of online proficiency (Bhuana & Apriliyanti, 2021; Ahmad, et al., 2021). Although some educational institutions and instructors are adept at delivering online training, many students face their own set of difficulties. Due to their insufficient computer skills, they could struggle to participate in the online learning process. This issue was especially widespread among persons who did not have the essential resources to support online education, such as computers, laptops, or cell phones, as well as those who had limited internet access and restrictions.

### **Need Analysis**

Need analysis is a vital component of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as it serves as a tool for designing language programs (Kaya, 2021). The significance of students' point of view in establishing the curriculum principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has also been acknowledged by many experts. They contend that the students' point of view primarily encompasses the domain in which they will apply their English proficiency in the future. Furthermore, it is imperative to do research on the needs of language learners through surveys and interviews.

The survey and interview are administered to both students and faculty members in order to gather information about their backgrounds and specific objectives (Pranoto & Suprayogi, 2020). Presently, needs Analysis is an essential and indispensable tool used for guiding and evaluating language education courses. It enables the facilitators to identify the specific abilities that pupils have already acquired, as well as the skills that they need to enhance and refine. A needs analysis involves many techniques, including collecting data on students' perspectives, desires, learners' needs, hopes, beliefs, and attitudes (Lee, 2016).

### **English for Specific Purposes**

Throughout its extensive history, English has emerged as one of the most frequently spoken languages. In the mid-1960s, the impact of global development on numerous sectors led to the establishment of English as the new lingua franca by non-English speakers, which contributed to the process of globalization (Rao, 2019). Additionally, the number of students studying English as a means of establishing a global presence is on the rise due to the globalization of the economy (Adawiyah & Gumartifa, 2022).

The emergence of ESP was a result of the high demand for English language proficiency and the rapid advancement of technology, which was necessary for global communication. At the outset, Hutchinson, T., & Waters (1987) suggested that ESP is the language learning concept that prioritizes learner requirements. To achieve specific objectives, the ESP approach to English language instruction was elaborated. The analysis of learners' requirements was the primary focus of ESP, as learners were distinguished by their work or specialization (Jubhari, et al., 2022).

This is to say that English for Specific Purposes emerged as a movement that aimed to teach English to learners in accordance with their specific profession or occupation. The objective of teaching ESP is to designate students' specific themes that address their needs in order to learn English (Fitria, 2023). ESP instruction involves encouraging students to acquire English in a specific context through a course that is specifically designed to meet their requirements.

## **Method**

This study examines the English language learning needs of nursing students using the needs analysis framework proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). This approach is particularly suited to identifying specific linguistic requirements of particular groups in professional contexts, allowing for the development of targeted educational interventions. Hutchinson and Waters emphasize that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a learner-centered approach, wherein the content and method of language instruction are based on the learners' specific needs.

The participants in this study were 33 D3-qualified nurses currently enrolled in the Bachelor's degree program at Pelita Harapan University in Tangerang, Indonesia. They were selected using convenience sampling, as they were accessible and willing to participate during the post-pandemic academic term. From this group, seven students were selected for interviews using purposive sampling to ensure variation in work experience and academic performance.

Two research instruments were employed: a questionnaire and an interview guide. The questionnaire aimed to gather quantitative data regarding the students' English language needs and their perceptions of the relevance of the English courses they undertook during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first section of the questionnaire consisted of 10 items designed to measure students' perceptions of the course's effectiveness in meeting their English learning needs (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The second section included 26 items covering the four main English language skills: 7 items on reading, 6 on writing, 5 on listening, and 8 on speaking. Students rated each item based on its importance to their academic and professional needs (1 = not important to 5 = very important).

The questionnaire items were developed based on Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) needs analysis framework and adapted from previous ESP studies to ensure content relevance. The instrument was reviewed by two ESP lecturers to

ensure face validity and clarity before distribution. Prior to the data collection, participants were informed about the study’s objectives, and written consent was obtained to ensure voluntary participation and ethical compliance. Ethical clearance was granted by the research ethics committee of the university.

The interviews were conducted after the completion of the questionnaire to provide deeper qualitative insights. The interview guide consisted of two key sections: the first explored students’ current and future academic language needs, and the second focused on their perceptions of the relevance of English courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed for analysis.

The quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, mean, and standard deviation. For qualitative data, a thematic analysis approach was applied to identify recurring patterns and insights related to students' language needs and perceptions.

**Results**

**1) Nursing Students’ Needs of English Language Skills**

To assess students' English learning needs post-COVID-19, participants completed a Likert-scale questionnaire (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) covering four core skills: reading, speaking, writing, and listening. Table 1 presents the mean scores for each sub-skill.

Table 1. Participants self-evaluation of English Needs (N=33)

	<b>My English courses at university should focus on</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>. Std Dev</b>	<b>Grand Mean</b>
Reading	Reading medical text	3	5	4.06	0.496	4.07
	Read instructions of medical instrument	3	5	4.06	0.496	
	Read course pamphlet	3	5	4.06	0.496	
	Read medical notes	3	5	4.09	0.469	
	Read drug instructions	3	5	4.15	0.442	
	Reading medical manuals	3	5	4.09	0.522	
	Reading nursing reports written by a doctor	3	5	4	0.559	
Speaking	Asking questions in class	2	5	3.73	0.719	3.92

	Exchanging opinions about a nursing issue in a meeting	3	5	3.88	0.6	
	Giving instructions orally on how to operate a nursing device	3	5	3.97	0.529	
	Giving instructions orally on how to follow medication procedure	3	5	4	0.5	
	Phone-calling for assistance in emergency situations	3	5	3.97	0.585	
	Communicative functions such as requesting, advising, etc.	3	5	3.97	0.529	
Writing	Write patient history and prescription	3	5	3.97	0.585	3.97
	Write articles/ research reports	3	5	3.94	0.556	
	Writing instructions of medication procedures	3	5	3.97	0.529	
	Write notes	3	5	4	0.559	
	Writing class assignments	3	5	3.97	0.529	
	Writing project	3	5	3.97	0.529	
Listening	Listening to medical lectures	3	5	4.09	0.522	
	Listening to recorded lessons	3	5	4.12	0.485	
	Listening to instructions and explanations of medical instruments	3	5	4.12	0.485	
	Listen to presentations at conferences	3	5	4.1	0.522	

According to the data in Table 1, students believe that listening abilities are more essential (Grand Mean = 4.1) compared to reading skills (Grand Mean = 4.04). Despite speaking capabilities (Grand Mean = 3.92) and writing skills (Grand Mean = 3.97) being comparatively lower than other skills, students generally acknowledge the necessity of these four skills for nursing students (Mean > 3). Students were also requested to assess their requirements for the subsidiary abilities associated with the four language skills.

Two sub-skills of hearing that are particularly important for students are listening to recorded teachings (M=4.12) and listening to directions and explanations of medical instruments (M=4.12). When students were surveyed about the significance of different sub-skills related to their second most important talent, namely reading, they indicated that reading drug instructions (M=4.15), reading medical notes (M=4.09), and reading medical manuals (M=4.09) are of great relevance in their health profession. Conversely, they regarded reading nursing reports authored by a doctor as the least significant sub-skills of reading, with a mean score of 4.

The findings indicate that the most significant speaking sub-skills were providing oral instructions for following medication procedures (M=4), providing oral instructions for operating nursing devices (M=3.97), and making phone calls to seek help in emergency situations (M=3.97). The students exhibited the lowest level of interest in posing inquiries during class (M=3.73). With respect to the sub-skills of writing, students demonstrated a relatively high demand for notetaking (M=4) and perceived writing articles/research reports as the least significant (M=3.94).

The interviewed students were also asked which English skills they found most important. Most of them agreed that all four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—are necessary, but they emphasized different priorities based on their experiences. One student highlighted the importance of reading and writing, as these are frequently used in academic and clinical documentation. Another student noted that while all skills matter, reading comes first, followed by listening and speaking, especially when it comes to understanding medical texts and communicating with patients.

A different student pointed out that listening and speaking were most essential in her clinical work, particularly for building therapeutic communication with patients. She explained that reading and writing in English are used less often in direct patient care. Another interviewee added that reading and listening are especially important because they help build the vocabulary needed for speaking and writing.

Overall, the interview data support the idea that listening is viewed as one of the most critical skills, especially in clinical settings where understanding patients' needs and instructions is essential. Reading also plays a key role in helping students understand medical materials and stay informed about procedures and treatment guidelines. Together, strong listening and reading skills help nursing students communicate effectively, provide safe and accurate care, and contribute positively to patient outcomes.



**2) Students' perceptions regarding the importance of the English language courses they have taken**

The second section of this research questionnaire consists of 10 questions aimed at determining the appropriateness and relevance of the English courses taken by students at universities to their respective fields. Students are required to assign a rating on a scale of 1, indicating "Strongly Agree," to 5, indicating "Strongly Disagree." Table 2 displays their responses to completing the questionnaire.

Table 2. Students perceptions of the relevance of English courses they took at the university (N=33)

<b>The English language courses I took</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>.Std Dev</b>	<b>Grand Mean</b>
equipped me with enough skill /knowledge of medical English	3	5	4.64	0.549	4.09
were adequate for my profession as a nurse	1	5	4.45	0.794	
met my language needs to function successfully in my academic studies	3	5	4.27	0.674	
helped me to cope with the content of the nursing textbooks effectively	3	5	4.39	0.609	
met my language needs to function effectively in my future career	3	5	4.36	0.603	
require no change in structure	2	5	3.58	0.708	
increased my learning motivation	3	5	4.09	0.631	
Developed my general skill/knowledge in English	3	5	4.27	0.575	
Be replaced by more relevant courses such as TOEFL or IELTS	1	4	2.85	0.939	
Be supplemented by English courses related to our field	3	5	4.09	0.522	

The first five items in the questionnaire were designed to evaluate whether the English courses students had taken were effective in preparing them for their future careers in nursing. Based on the results in Table 2, students generally expressed a strong level of satisfaction, with an overall grand mean of 4.09. The highest-rated statement was that the English courses had provided sufficient medical English knowledge (Mean = 4.64), followed closely by the belief that the courses were relevant and useful for their future profession as nurses (Mean = 4.45).

Among the ten perception-related items, only one—"the course requires no change"—received a relatively lower mean score of 3.58. This suggests that while students were generally satisfied, some still felt improvements could be made.

Another notable finding is that students did not support the idea of replacing their English classes with more general English proficiency courses such as TOEFL or IELTS preparation (Mean = 2.83). This preference reflects a perception that such tests do not align with the practical language needs of nursing students, as they focus on broad, academic English rather than the specialized vocabulary, communication skills, and documentation practices required in healthcare.

This perspective was reinforced in student interviews. One student rated the course 4.5 out of 5 and said it had equipped her with the necessary language skills for nursing. She felt the course was well-designed but suggested that adding more clinical, real-world communication activities would make it even better. Another student shared similar thought, saying the course helped him improve his understanding and use of medical terminology. He believed the content was strong but could be enhanced by including more interactive and scenario-based learning tasks that mirror actual healthcare settings.

## **Discussion**

### **1) Skill-Based Needs in a Post-Pandemic Context**

The data clearly show that all four macro-skills—listening, reading, writing, and speaking—are perceived as necessary, but to differing extents. Listening and reading emerged as the most critical, with the highest mean scores (4.10 and 4.07, respectively), reflecting students' reliance on these skills for understanding lectures, instructions, and written materials in both academic and clinical settings. These results align with previous studies that emphasize receptive skills as foundational in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) courses for healthcare professionals (Hidayati & Meisani, 2023).

Interestingly, writing and speaking, though rated slightly lower (3.97 and 3.92), are not seen as unimportant. Their lower scores may reflect the limited opportunities for productive language use in online environments and clinical placements, particularly in a second-language context where confidence and fluency can be barriers. Interview data confirm this: students cited listening and reading as “daily necessities” in both coursework and hospital routines, while speaking and writing were often described as “situational” or “nerve-wracking,” especially when used with foreign patients or supervisors.

Notably, some students reported greater difficulty with speaking than writing, despite the widespread assumption that oral communication is more intuitive. This discrepancy may point to a lack of structured, real-life speaking practice in their training, which was often delivered asynchronously during the pandemic. While most responses consistently prioritized listening and reading, a few notable outliers emerged. One participant placed higher value on speaking, citing daily interaction with international patients in a clinical setting, while another emphasized writing due to their involvement in patient documentation and academic assignments. These patterns highlight how individual workplace

contexts and academic responsibilities shape skill priorities, underscoring the need for a more customized and flexible ESP curriculum that accommodates diverse learner needs.

## **2) Perceptions of the English Courses**

Students reported generally positive perceptions of the English language courses they completed during the pandemic. High mean scores, such as 4.64 for acquiring medical English knowledge and 4.45 for preparing for professional work, indicate strong satisfaction with the content. However, the perception that “no structural change is needed” received a relatively lower score (Mean = 3.58), pointing to a clear interest in improvements and updates to the existing curriculum. Interview data provided richer insight into these perceptions, revealing three key themes.

### **Theme 1: Relevance to Clinical Practice**

Students appreciated that the courses included lessons directly related to their field, such as medical terminology, patient communication, and nursing scenarios. These components were seen as directly transferable to real-life clinical interactions, helping students build confidence when communicating in English with patients, doctors, and peers. This emphasis on domain-specific vocabulary and tasks reflects the central principle of ESP: that language instruction should be tailored to learners' occupational or academic needs.

This theme aligns with findings from Daar & Beratha (2025), who emphasized the value of occupationally-relevant English materials in improving healthcare students' engagement and confidence. Similarly, Xatamova & Ismatullayeva (2024) found that ESP courses designed around job-specific scenarios were more effective in preparing students for the linguistic demands of their future workplace.

### **Theme 2: Desire for Practical Engagement**

While students appreciated the content, many felt that the delivery lacked practical, real-world engagement. This was especially evident in speaking tasks, which were described as too theoretical or classroom-based. Several participants suggested integrating simulated conversations, clinical role plays, or emergency communication scenarios, which they believed would help them speak more naturally and confidently in professional settings.

This observation echoes Budianto & Mason (2021), who found that ESP learners in health-related programs benefit more from interactive and experiential learning methods than from passive content delivery. Additionally, Hayati et al. (2020) noted that students trained through simulations and clinical dialogues showed improved oral fluency and communication confidence in internships.

**Theme 3: Need for Field-Specific Writing Practice**

Although students acknowledged that general writing skills were taught (e.g., essay and report writing), they noted a lack of focus on nursing-specific writing tasks. Several mentioned the need for training in SOAP notes, nursing documentation, shift reports, and patient record summaries—forms of writing they use regularly in both clinical practice and coursework. Without targeted writing instruction in these areas, students reported feeling underprepared for real-world documentation responsibilities.

This concern is supported by research from Trang (2025) which highlighted a gap in many ESP curricula, especially in improving students' linguistic needs in healthcare settings. Ashipala & Matundu (2023) also reported that nursing students often struggle with professional documentation in English due to limited exposure during training.

Taken together, these themes highlight that while the current course structure succeeds in building a foundational understanding of medical English, it falls short in offering interactive, skill-specific, and clinically oriented language practice, particularly in speaking and writing. These findings reaffirm the need for ESP instruction to be not only context-specific but also task-based and performance-oriented, especially in fields like nursing where language use is directly tied to patient safety and care quality.

**3) Online Learning Limitations and Lingering Gaps**

The shift to fully online learning during the pandemic significantly shaped how English was taught and practiced. Instructional formats largely relied on asynchronous recorded lectures, downloadable materials, and forum-based discussions, which—while accessible and flexible—tended to prioritize receptive skills like reading and listening. These modes offered limited opportunities for interactive practice, real-time correction, and peer communication, all of which are essential for developing speaking and writing proficiency.

Interview data supported this pattern: students reported that speaking tasks were often optional, scripted, or submitted as recordings, while writing activities were limited to academic-style assignments with minimal feedback. As one participant described, “We rarely spoke live in English—just wrote answers or watched videos.” Another noted that “writing tasks were mostly essays or reflections, not what we do in hospitals.”

These learning constraints may explain why speaking ( $M = 3.92$ ) and writing ( $M = 3.97$ ) were rated lower than listening and reading. While the gap is not large, it signals that productivity-based language skills were less effectively developed during this period, potentially leaving students underprepared for the interpersonal and documentation demands of clinical settings.

Interestingly, despite these shortcomings, students were not in favor of replacing ESP courses with standardized English test preparation (e.g.,

TOEFL/IELTS). The low mean score for this suggestion (2.85) underscores a clear preference for contextual, job-specific language training over general proficiency exams. This supports the findings of Usman & Mahmud (2024) who argued that healthcare learners are more engaged by practical, career-oriented language instruction than by abstract, test-driven curricula.

The lingering effects of pandemic-era instruction suggest a need to recalibrate ESP courses in the post-pandemic context. More synchronous, feedback-rich speaking and writing practice—ideally embedded in clinical or simulated tasks—may help close these gaps and better prepare students for the communicative realities of their field.

## **Conclusion**

This study shows that online English classes played an important role in helping nursing students develop their language skills during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Using Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) needs analysis framework, the research found that students felt more confident in listening and reading than in speaking and writing. This was likely due to the format of online learning, which focused more on recorded lectures and reading materials, with fewer chances for real-time communication.

Overall, students appreciated the English courses—especially lessons that introduced useful medical terms and communication strategies. However, many felt that the courses needed more practical elements. They wanted more chances to practice speaking in realistic situations and to improve their writing skills for clinical tasks like patient reports and notes.

The findings highlight the need for English courses that are more closely tied to the real-life demands of nursing. This means offering lessons that not only teach language, but also prepare students for everyday communication in hospitals and clinics. Updating the curriculum in this way will help ensure that nursing students are better prepared—both for their studies and their future work in healthcare.

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