

NEEDS ANALYSIS OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL'S ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Abstract

Globalization brings new challenges for education and training program as it demands new skills, awareness, approaches, and training. This demands medical personnel to serve clients who come from other countries around the world with effective English communication skill. In a more specific purpose in a job setting, an employee will need specific English related to his job description. As far as medical profession is concerned, medical personnel need English language in their professional settings. The demand for English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) grows proportionally to the universal demand for employees, who can function in English, in their fields of specialization. It therefore demands medical personnel to acquire English competences to meet with their desired level of English proficiency skills. What English competences are needed and whether they need English training program will determine the urgency needs analysis on the medical personnel English communication skills. This study is aimed at investigating the communicative needs of medical personnel at professional level in survey-based research. The data were collected, analyzed and interpreted qualitatively by administering observational notes, interview, and questionnaire among medical representatives. Further, this study is expected to gain beneficial outputs such as research report, proceeding after having been presented in national or international conference, and could be further developed into learning module for training program.

Keywords: *English communicative skills, Needs Analysis, Medical Personnel,*

INTRODUCTION

Globalization entails an expansion in the circulation of products, employees, currencies and intellectual property across national and regional borders. Consequently, the future corporation demands employees who can compete internationally. In the open global communication, medical personnel will have to communicate with clients, doctors, or pharmacists that may come from English speaking countries all around the world. This demands the medical personnel to serve them professionally with effective English communication skill.

English is considered a language of communication as well as language of business for employees in some International Corporations in Indonesia. It is taught in different institutions to meet specified academic and professional needs of learners. When English is taught for specific needs of profession, it is called as ESP (English for Specific Purpose). In a more specific purpose in a job setting, an employee will need specific English related to his job description. As far as medical profession is concerned, medical personnel need English language in their professional settings. The English used in this context is called EOP (English as Occupational Purposes). medical personnel as a professional use specific English instead of General English as medical and pharmacy have a very specific terminologies.

The demand for English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) grows proportionally to the universal demand for employees, who can function in English, in their fields of specialization. It therefore demands medical personnel to acquire English competences to meet with their desired level of English proficiency skills. What English competences are needed and whether they need English training program will determine the urgency needs analysis on the medical representative English communication skills.

Needs analysis is used to answer whether the training program is precise and appropriate for the learners, curriculum and situations where English will be used. From the research, problems encountered in reaching the objective of learning will be revealed. Crabbe (1994) mentions that information was discovered from needs analysis such as local conditions where program executed including classroom layout, availability of learning media. The specific objectives are to design a syllabus for EOP, by having the real picture of the materials needed by the medical personnel and to show them what subjects they have to communicate with doctors. In respond to the above issues, the problems to be analyzed in this study are formulated in the following research questions:

1. Is there a gap between the acquired English competences of medical personnel with their desired level of English proficiency skills?
2. Are there any significant needs for medical personnel to have specific training on English communication skills?
3. What English competences are needed by medical personnel in order to conduct effective communication?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

One may question the difference between the ESP and General English. At the time, teachers of General English courses, while acknowledging that students had a specific purpose for studying English, would rarely conduct a needs analysis to find out what was necessary to actually achieve it. Teachers nowadays, however, are much more aware of the importance of needs analysis, and certainly materials writers think very carefully about the goals of learners at all stages of materials production. Perhaps this demonstrates the influence that the ESP approach has had on English teaching in general. Clearly the line between where General English courses stop and ESP courses start has become very vague indeed.

According to Crystal (1999), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can be simplified as the use of a particular variety of the language in a specific context of use. In addition, Robinson (1991) has talked about ESP as a 'language in context' and the courses are designed based on the learners' communicative needs (Munby, 1978). Robinson (1991:20) has also stated "ESP courses are those where the syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of communicative needs of the context."

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English for Occupational Purposes (EOP)

English for Occupational Purposes is a branch of [ESP](#) (English for Specific Purposes) and covers situations in which learners are studying English for work related reasons (Swift, 2019). The courses are based on an analysis of their specific communicative needs in their work. For example, a waiter dealing with foreign clients might need to describe the content of dishes on the menu and the way they are cooked (*It's pasta with seafood cooked in a white wine and cream sauce*), understand and respond appropriately to requests and orders (*Can we have a bottle of the house white?*), ask about requirements (*Would you like coffee?*), etc..

The demand for English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) is deemed to grow proportionally to the universal demand for employees, who can function in English, in their fields of specialization. Therefore, training in higher education institutions, which aims to produce students with a vocational skill set, should ideally include the teaching and learning of EOP. The focus of this study is on the recognition of the role of EOP in facilitating effective communication for medical representative in their job setting.

Needs Analysis

Today's work environment requires employees to perform complex tasks professionally. Training (a performance improvement tool) is needed when employees are not performing up to a certain standard or at an expected level of performance. The difference between the actual level of job performance and the expected level of job performance indicates a need of training. In the job setting where International language is used, needs for acquiring English ability become one of the expected standards for effective communication.

Needs Analysis is a formal, systematic process of identifying and evaluating training that should be done, or specific needs of an individual or group of employees, customers, suppliers, etc. Needs are often referred to as 'gaps', or the difference between what is currently done and what should be performed. Jordan (1997) claims that needs analysis is the preliminary stage of designing courses, syllabuses, materials and the sort of educational activities that take place. Needs analysis has several sub-branches according to the aim and function of the analysis. It covers target situation analysis, present situation analysis, deficiency analysis, strategy analysis and means analysis, etc. (Jordan, 1997)

Medical Personnel

A medical personnel's job is to promote and sell their company's products, whether that's pharmaceutical drugs or medical equipment. Customers can include doctors, nurses and pharmacists. The medical personnel will increase product awareness, answer queries, provide

advice and introduce new products. medical personnel are the key point of contact between pharmaceutical and medical companies and healthcare professionals. Their key responsibilities include 1) organizing appointments and meetings with community- and hospital-based healthcare staff; 2) identifying and establishing new business; 3) negotiating contracts; 4) demonstrating or presenting products to healthcare staff including doctors, nurses and pharmacists; 5) undertaking relevant research; 6) meeting both the business and scientific needs of healthcare professionals; 7) maintaining detailed records; 8) attending and organizing trade exhibitions, conferences and meetings; 9) managing budgets; 10) reviewing sales performance; and 11) writing reports and other documents.

METHOD

The approach used in this study is qualitative in order to get comprehensive and real description of the objects of the study. Data collection was done by direct interaction with the medical personnel as the research target. Creswell (2014:32) states, “Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”. From the statement it can be stated that qualitative research deals with investigating human’s problems including their behavior or attitude and their social life. While according to Sugiono (2017) qualitative method is said to be a new method since it is based on post positivism philosophy. This method is also called an artistic method because the process of research is likely to be artistic (less-patterned), also called interpretative method because the data as the result of research in the form of interpretation of the data found in the field. To collect the data for this research, some research activities have been conducted that include observation, interview, and questioner.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents’ Background

The respondents are the medical personnel who have been working for pharmaceutical industries for more than 5 years. Their educational background varies from pharmacy, economy and social science as well. They were given training on marketing strategy and also products and also products’ knowledge. Based on the questioner given, most of them have got English lesson before at least at their past school and university. They have been learning English at least when they were at junior and senior high school and at the university. However, based on their answers, they admitted most of the language learning they got at schools focused mainly on language knowledge or grammar. It means that little or almost no language skills such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing were trained. When asked whether they master medical terms, they admitted that they still have difficulty to understand the terms as all of them are in English.

Regarding their interest in learning English, most of them like to learn English as they know that English is lingua franca that is used to communicate internationally. Some of them were motivated because English is often used in medical information on medicines and medical devices. However, a few complained were not interested because they still found English was difficult for them.

Students’ Need for Learning English

Most of the respondents stated that they need English to support their job. When they were asked about the importance or the need of English in their job setting, they admitted that English had been needed to understand medical and pharmaceutical articles for instance, development of medicine circulated in home country or abroad, which medicines are allowed to be similarly circulated in certain countries and the reasons. English is also needed to keep abreast of new drug development to consider possible marketing in Indonesia. Pharmacy is one

of the highly regulated fields due to the fatal impact to public health that may occur if the rules are not strictly followed. That is why ability to understand English medical articles is essential.

Regarding English skill required, they mentioned that speaking is more important than other skills, but they also agree that reading is needed too, and the others. They do not write report in English but they need reading skill to understand products information, medical articles on medicines and medical devices, prescription, medicinal uses, expired medicines, drug composition, drug etiquette, they also confessed that they have difficulty to understand manuals of medical devices, SOP, and training materials which are mostly in English.

From the survey it was found out that medical personnel need speaking as the anticipation of this global era or free market. In this era variety of products from many countries are coming into Indonesian market. Most of the products use English in the labels and products information. Reading competence is also needed in order to study competitor's products. Besides, medical personnel must also be able to communicate their products superiority to medical doctors in particular those who usually prefer to use medicines from international companies. They need to have good strategy and their English-speaking proficiency play important role to convene medical doctors. The English needed for communication with medical doctors is a specific English for medical field of work which is called English for Occupational Purposes (EOP).

It shows that there were 80 % said that they need grammar as the basic knowledge able to speak English and they need specific vocabulary for medical terms, jargons and also the culture so that they can perform themselves as professional. They are expected to be able to promote their exclusive products which always use some pharmaceutical terminology such as: ingredients, composition, indication, contra indication, expire date and many others. In a dialogue with medical doctors they must be able to convince doctor that the products are made based on Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) which is one of the most important processes in manufacturing the products.

Mastering those technical terminology will increase Medical personnel confidence. Vocabulary will support medical representative to be able to discuss with medical doctors. To be able to master the medical terms they need materials and activities that include the pronunciation of the names of prescription medications and discussions about the medications.

Medical Personnel's Needs for Training and Module

Needs analysis in this research is conducted to reveal whether there are 'gaps', or the difference between what is currently done and what should be performed. It is also intended to identify what requirements the staffs or employees must have to perform their job so that they can give optimum service in their job setting. The questioner and interview results show that the respondents are lack of motivation in learning English due to their inability in mastering some important aspects of English such as difficulty in pronouncing and understanding medical terms, inability to construct sentences due to poor grammar. These points are identified to be the cause of unconfidence in speaking. It is revealed, therefore, that English Training and appropriate module for medical personnel are essential to be provided in order that they can perform their job with effective English communication skills.

Needs on suitable module and English Training for Medical Personnel are reflected from their responses to the questioner. When they are asked whether English support their job's daily routine, they answer that English support their job very much although they confessed it was quite difficult for example to read medicine etiquette, to read manuals on how to use medical devices which are mostly in English. Further they admit that job procedures are also mostly in English. Besides, training materials and presentation slides are

procedures are also mostly in English. Besides, training materials and presentation slides are often written in English. When asked ‘In what way can English help you?’, they answer that they need English to help them read articles, read labels of medicines or medical devices, or to read work procedure and when they have to explain the use of medicines, expired dates, composition, the differences between one medicine with other medicines.

Considering that most of the background knowledge and skills in English of the medical personnel are General English, a more specific and appropriate English Training Programmed and module for medical personnel are required for their effective communication. The English training and module should be emphasized on their weak points such as vocabulary on medical terms or medical jargons, models of situational dialogues related to their job setting, reading comprehension on medical issues, guided presentation and discussion and carefully graded grammar knowledge when necessary.

CONCLUSION

The demands that the medical personnel must serve their clients professionally with effective English communication skill are unavoidable in this era. Medical personnel in this research are those who work in medical companies such as hospitals especially those who often deals or communicate with foreign doctors, employees or who work in international medical companies where English is vital as their daily communication. In the open global communication, medical personnel are demanded to master English as international language to communicate with clients, doctors, or pharmacists that may come from English speaking countries all around the world.

The study reveals however there are still gaps between the required knowledge and skills for effective English communication with the students’ performance (in this case medical personnel). To solve the problem, needs analysis has been conducted through questioner and interview to identify their needs for suitable English training and appropriate module. Based on the students’ background and students’ need for learning, Specific English training program needs to be formulated and appropriate module is required to equip them with proper knowledge and skills on English communication skills.

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