

Perception of Healthcare Professionals on the Importance of English Training in Medical Contexts

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Abstract—As globalization continues to accelerate, the need for English proficiency among healthcare professionals has become increasingly crucial, especially in the context of international and multicultural healthcare services. This study examines healthcare professionals' perceptions of the importance of English language training in their professional practice in Indonesia. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and administrative staff, working at two international hospitals in Jakarta. The main objective of this study is to understand the need for English language training, the challenges faced in acquiring language proficiency, and recommendations for improving English language training programs tailored to the medical context. The results of the study show that most participants acknowledge the important role of English in enhancing patient care, workplace efficiency, and professional development. The main challenges identified include the lack of specific English for Medical Purposes (EMP) programs, limited time due to busy work schedules, and psychological barriers such as lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes. While general English courses are available, participants highlighted their inadequacy in meeting the specific language demands of the medical field, such as medical terminology, patient interactions, and professional communication. Participants recommended the development of EMP courses tailored to real-world medical scenarios, flexible training schedules, and collaborative learning methods such as role-playing. They emphasized that addressing these gaps in training would not only improve communication skills but also contribute to better healthcare outcomes. This study provides valuable insights into the role of English in the medical field and stresses the need for evidence-based curriculum design that accommodates the unique needs of healthcare professionals. Additionally, the study offers practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, and hospital administrators to enhance the effectiveness of English language training programs in medical institutions.

Keywords: English for Medical Purposes, English Language Training, English Proficiency, Healthcare Professionals, Professional Communication.

I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has significantly reshaped the healthcare industry, driving increased cross-border interactions among professionals, patients, and stakeholders. In this context, English has

become the global language of medicine, essential for communication in international hospitals, research sharing, and professional development (Crystal 2012; Ferguson 2013). For medical professionals, English proficiency is no

longer just a supplementary skill but a critical necessity that directly influences both patient care and career progression. Research has demonstrated that effective English communication reduces medical errors, enhances patient satisfaction, and improves overall healthcare outcomes (Crystal 2012; Ferguson 2013). Furthermore, studies highlight that proficiency in English opens doors to greater access to international training and career advancement opportunities in the medical field (Basturkmen 2010; Robertson 2017).

The role of English in medical settings is multifaceted, extending beyond direct patient interactions to include understanding and utilizing medical literature, engaging in international conferences, and collaborating with global teams. Effective communication in English is essential in situations such as explaining complex medical conditions to patients, coordinating with international colleagues, and ensuring accurate documentation. Insufficient language skills can lead to misunderstandings, treatment errors, and compromised patient safety. Research by (Toth and Rees 2015) underscores the critical impact of language barriers, showing that miscommunication between healthcare providers and patients can result in diagnostic errors and negatively affect the quality of care (Toth and Rees 2015).

In Indonesia, the demand for English-speaking medical professionals has surged, driven by the growth of medical tourism and the establishment of international hospitals. According to a report by the Ministry of Health (2021), the medical tourism sector in Indonesia has experienced an annual growth rate of over 10%, fueled by an influx of patients from neighboring countries and the growing reputation of Indonesian healthcare services. Research by Soesanto and colleagues (2020) further highlights that international hospitals in Indonesia serve a diverse range of patients, including expatriates and medical tourists, who often rely on English as their primary language of communication. As a result, proficient English communication skills among medical staff have become essential to meet patient expectations and ensure high-quality care. However, many Indonesian medical professionals do not possess the level of English proficiency required in such settings. This gap emphasizes the urgent need for specialized English language training tailored to the medical field.

Existing research underscores the significant benefits of English for Medical Purposes (EMP) training in improving communication skills within medical contexts (Basturkmen 2010; West 2014). EMP courses are tailored to address the unique linguistic challenges healthcare providers encounter, including mastering medical terminology, conducting patient interviews, and writing case reports. According to Basturkmen (2010) and McGrath (2016), these programs must be carefully designed to meet the specific needs of the medical community, ensuring that healthcare professionals acquire both general English proficiency and specialized language skills for medical contexts (Basturkmen 2010; McGrath 2016).

However, the integration of EMP into professional development programs in Indonesia remains limited. Studies by Sari (2017) and Yamin (2014) reveal that many of the English courses available to medical professionals are generic and do not address the specialized demands of the medical field (Sari 2017; Yamin 2014). Additionally, Sukisno and Ahmad Wildhan W. Wardaya (2021) stress the importance of designing specialized English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbooks based on needs analysis, which can help develop more effective and context-specific English training programs for healthcare professionals (Sukisno and Ahmad Wildhan W. Wardaya 2021). Sukisno (2019) also emphasizes the value of using the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model in evaluating ESP textbooks for pharmacy students, highlighting the need to assess educational materials to ensure they meet the distinct needs of learners (Sukisno 2019).

Medical professionals often encounter several barriers to acquiring English proficiency. One of the primary challenges is time constraints, as demanding work schedules leave little room for language training. Many practitioners struggle to find time for language development amid their clinical and administrative duties (Brown 2015). Additionally, psychological barriers, such as fear of making mistakes and a lack of confidence, further impede their ability to effectively use English in professional settings (Golombek and Jordan 2005). These obstacles highlight the need for innovative and flexible training methods that cater to the unique circumstances of medical practitioners. Research by Nunan (2009) and Richards (2015) suggests that blended learning and task-based approaches can provide the

necessary flexibility and practicality to enhance language skills among busy professionals (Nunan 2009; Richards 2015).

The significance of English training in the medical field goes beyond individual competency, with far-reaching implications for healthcare quality and safety. Clear communication in English plays a crucial role in preventing medical errors, improving patient satisfaction, and enhancing the overall efficiency of healthcare delivery. For example, a doctor's ability to accurately explain a diagnosis in English enables international patients to make informed decisions about their treatment. Similarly, nurses and administrative staff who are proficient in English can streamline operations and ensure smooth coordination in multicultural healthcare settings. Research by Stone (2016) emphasizes the critical link between effective communication and patient safety, highlighting that medical errors often stem from miscommunication, especially in culturally and linguistically diverse environments (Stone 2016).

In response to these needs, some international hospitals in Indonesia have begun offering in-house English training programs. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives varies significantly. Many of these programs lack a structured curriculum or fail to address the specific needs of medical professionals. Feedback from participants frequently highlights the demand for more practical, scenario-based training that mirrors real-world medical situations. This gap points to a critical need for evidence-based curriculum development and policy interventions to enhance English language training in the medical sector. According to Johnson and Swain (2019), the design of ESP programs should be guided by both the theoretical frameworks of language acquisition and the practical needs of professionals, ensuring that the training is both relevant and effective (Johnson and Swain 2019).

Until now, no research has been found that is fully identical to this study; however, several relevant studies have been conducted on related topics. Research by (Irsyadi, et al., 2023); (Sofyan, Firmansyah, et al. 2022); (Karuru et al. 2023); (Merizawat et al., 2023); (Suryanti et al. 2023); (Sofyan et al., 2024); & (Suryanti et al., 2024) primarily focuses on language acquisition and learning, exploring various techniques for studying language while emphasizing its significance in everyday life.

Meanwhile, studies by (Muta'allim,

Sofyan, and Haryono 2020); (Muta'allim et al. 2021); (Yudistira et al. 2022); (Sofyan, Badrudin, et al. 2022); (Akhmad Sofyan et al. 2022); (Muta'alim 2022); (Muta'allim et al., 2022); & (Irsyadi et al. 2022) place a stronger emphasis on the role of language in social contexts. These studies examine the role of language in daily social interactions. On the other hand, research conducted by (Badrudin et al. 2023); (Haryono et al., 2023); (Yudistira, R. 2023); (Asfar 2024); (Daulay et al. 2024); & (Tiwery et al., 2024) discusses linguistic diversity and the importance of using and understanding language according to its context. These studies offer insights into the variation in language usage across different situations and cultural backgrounds.

Research conducted by (Hairus Salikin et al. 2021); (Muta'allim et al., 2021); (Muta'allim et al., 2023); & (Ago et al. 2024) highlights the crucial role of language in cultural, promotional, and social contexts. These studies explore how language functions as a tool for promoting cultural values and strengthening social relationships within communities. On the other hand, studies by (Muta'allim et al., 2022); (Muta'allim et al., 2022); (Sutanto et al. 2022); (Pathollah et al., 2022); (Julhadi et al. 2023); (Mahardhani et al. 2023); (Dumiyati et al. 2023); & (Kamil et al., 2023) focus more on the role of language in enhancing learning, well-being, politeness, moderation, and other aspects. These studies delve into how the appropriate use of language can contribute to improving the quality of education, fostering more respectful social interactions, and promoting moderation in communication.

Based on previous studies, no research has specifically investigated the perception of healthcare professionals on the importance of english training in medical contexts. This study offers several advantages (novelty), including the use of a deep multidimensional approach. This approach not only focuses on the importance of English communication skills in patient interactions but also covers communication among healthcare professionals, personal development, and access to international medical literature. Furthermore, this research explores the differences in perceptions regarding English training in both local and global contexts, taking into account the varying training needs in different countries or regions with diverse healthcare systems. The impact of technology and globalization, which drives medical advancements, further underscores the relevance

of English, both in understanding scientific literature and in facilitating international collaboration.

The study also examines the differing perceptions among healthcare professions, such as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and medical technicians, concerning their specific needs for English training. As a significant contribution, this research not only evaluates existing English training programs but also identifies the most effective training methods for healthcare professionals, aiming to design curricula or training programs better suited to their needs. Therefore, this study provides a comprehensive insight into the importance of English training in medical contexts and offers great potential for improving the quality of healthcare services in the future.

This study aims to explore the perceptions of medical professionals in Indonesia regarding the importance of English training in their professional contexts. By identifying their specific needs, challenges, and expectations, the research seeks to provide actionable insights for designing effective EMP programs. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of English in medical practice and inform strategies for enhancing language training in healthcare settings. Through a qualitative approach, the study captures the lived experiences and perspectives of medical practitioners, offering valuable implications for educators, policymakers, and healthcare administrators. This research is expected to bridge the gap between academic theory and practical application in medical English training, offering insights for improving both curriculum design and training delivery.

The following sections of this paper discuss the existing literature on EMP, outline the research methodology, and present the findings and their implications. By bridging the gap between linguistic theory and medical practice, this study seeks to highlight the critical role of language in achieving excellence in healthcare. The ultimate goal is to ensure that medical professionals are equipped with the communication skills needed to thrive in an increasingly globalized and multicultural medical landscape.

II. METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the perceptions of healthcare professionals about the role of English language

training in their work. A total of 20 participants, including doctors, nurses, administrative staff, and allied healthcare workers, were selected from two international hospitals in Jakarta. These participants were chosen through purposive sampling to ensure diverse perspectives on the relevance of English for different roles in healthcare. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow participants to freely share their experiences and opinions. The interview questions focused on how English is used in their daily tasks, the challenges faced, the importance of English proficiency in healthcare, and the effectiveness of existing English training programs.

Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed thematically. The thematic analysis involved reading the transcribed to identify key themes related to English language use and training needs in healthcare. Codes were generated from significant phrases or responses, and these were grouped into broader themes to capture participants' experiences. Member checking was used to verify the findings by having a subset of participants review the initial analysis. Ethical approval was obtained, and informed consent was given by all participants, ensuring confidentiality throughout the process. While the study provides valuable insights, its findings are limited to the two hospitals and a small sample size, which may not fully reflect broader trends. However, the study offers useful insights into the challenges and needs for English language training in Indonesian healthcare settings.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Perceived Importance of English Training

The study revealed that all participants, including doctors, nurses, and administrative staff, recognized the importance of English proficiency in the medical field. Participants emphasized that English is crucial for effective communication with international patients, particularly in explaining diagnoses, treatment options, and medical procedures. As one nurse stated, "In our hospital, many patients speak English, and being able to explain their condition or treatment improves their experience and outcomes." Additionally, English proficiency was deemed essential for professional development. Participants noted that access to global medical resources, such as journals, research articles, and international conferences,

is predominantly in English, limiting their ability to stay updated on the latest medical advancements. A doctor shared, "I can only stay updated on the latest medical advances through journals and conferences conducted in English." Moreover, administrative staff highlighted the role of English in managing medical documentation, interacting with international suppliers, and coordinating with foreign stakeholders. One administrator noted, medical records are mostly in English, and being proficient in the language makes my job smoother and more efficient.

Challenges in English Proficiency

Despite recognizing its importance, participants reported several challenges in achieving the necessary level of English proficiency. One major challenge was the lack of specialized training programs tailored to the medical field. Participants indicated that the available English courses were often general and did not focus on medical terminology or the language needed for healthcare-specific communication. As one nurse observed, "The English courses I've taken were useful, but they didn't focus on the technical terms we use in the hospital." Another significant barrier was time constraints due to the demanding nature of healthcare work. Many participants expressed difficulty finding time for language learning while balancing their professional responsibilities. A doctor explained, "I would love to improve my English, but it's hard to find time when I'm always on duty." Furthermore, psychological barriers, such as fear of making mistakes and a lack of confidence in using English in a professional setting, were also identified. One participant admitted, "I'm afraid of making a mistake when explaining something critical to a patient, it could harm their trust in me."

Recommendations for Effective Training

The participants provided several recommendations to improve English training in the medical field. They suggested offering specialized English for Medical Purposes (EMP) courses that focus on medical terminology, patient communication, and report writing. One doctor noted, "We need more targeted programs that teach medical vocabulary and how to communicate with patients and colleagues in English." Participants also emphasized the need for flexible training schedules, such as online courses or modular programs, to accommodate

the unpredictable work schedules of healthcare professionals. An administrator mentioned, "If there were more online programs, it would be easier for us to learn during our free time." Additionally, incorporating role-playing scenarios and group activities was suggested to provide more practical and engaging language practice. One nurse shared, "Role-playing scenarios, such as mock patient interviews, would help practice English in real situations." Participants also recommended providing ongoing resources, such as online materials, medical English glossaries, and peer support networks, to support continuous language development.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide an in-depth exploration of the perceptions of medical professionals regarding the importance and challenges of English proficiency in healthcare settings. English, as a global lingua franca, plays a crucial role in the medical field, enabling healthcare workers to communicate effectively with patients and colleagues, access essential research, and engage in global healthcare initiatives (Jenkins 2015). Medical professionals, including doctors, nurses, and administrative staff, universally acknowledged the importance of English in their day-to-day tasks. These findings are consistent with previous research, which has shown that English is vital for improving communication, particularly in medical contexts that involve complex terminologies and concepts (Canagarajah and Costa 2016; Jenkins et al. 2015). This study affirms the critical role of English proficiency in the medical field, as it enables professionals to engage with international research, collaborate with peers across borders, and provide high-quality care to patients from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Despite this universal recognition of the importance of English, the study also reveals several significant challenges that medical professionals face in mastering the language. One of the most prominent obstacles identified by participants was the lack of specialized training programs tailored to the specific language needs of healthcare professionals. While general English language courses are available, they do not adequately address the specialized terminology and communication skills required in medical settings. This finding aligns with the work of Anderson and Riel (2016), who argue

that general language programs are insufficient for healthcare workers who require specific language skills for their professional tasks (Anderson 2016). As the study participants pointed out, many available English courses focus on general language skills, which may not cover essential aspects such as medical terminology, patient communication, or professional documentation. This gap between the available courses and the language requirements of medical professionals suggests a pressing need for more specialized English for Medical Purposes (EMP) programs that focus on the vocabulary and communicative practices specific to healthcare.

Medical professionals require more than just conversational English. They must possess a comprehensive understanding of medical terminology, diagnostic language, patient communication, and medical documentation in English. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) research supports this notion, arguing that ESP programs should be designed to meet the unique needs of learners in specific fields such as medicine (Basturkmen 2010). ESP programs should incorporate medical-specific content, including terminology, cultural nuances, and communication techniques, to ensure healthcare professionals are well-equipped to perform their tasks effectively in English. The study's findings highlight the urgent need for tailored language courses that can bridge this gap, ensuring that healthcare workers are not only proficient in general English but also equipped with the specific language skills necessary for their daily professional activities.

Time constraints were another significant challenge highlighted by participants. Healthcare professionals work in demanding environments, often involving long shifts, irregular hours, and a high level of responsibility. This leaves little time for attending additional language courses or engaging in language development activities. The time constraints faced by healthcare professionals reflect broader challenges in adult education, particularly in fields where work schedules are demanding and unpredictable (Bassiouni 2023). Many healthcare workers expressed frustration about the difficulty in balancing their work responsibilities with the need for continuous professional development, including language acquisition. This finding is consistent with research on adult learning, which indicates that learners often face barriers related to time, particularly in professions that require

long hours and high levels of engagement (Jenkins et al. 2015). Given that medical professionals must maintain and improve their language proficiency, it is essential to develop flexible and accessible training options that accommodate their demanding schedules.

The importance of flexibility in language learning programs cannot be overstated. Participants in the study emphasized that the ideal English language training programs for healthcare professionals should offer flexible learning options, such as online courses or self-paced modules. These options would allow healthcare workers to study at their convenience, without disrupting their professional obligations. Online learning platforms, as discussed by Ally (2008), provide a viable solution to this challenge by enabling learners to access content remotely and study at their own pace (Jenkins et al. 2015). This is particularly beneficial for professionals who cannot commit to fixed schedules due to their work commitments. The incorporation of flexible, digital learning tools in ESP programs is a promising approach to overcoming the barriers posed by time constraints, allowing healthcare workers to engage with language learning without the need to attend traditional in-person classes.

Another notable challenge identified by participants was the psychological barrier to language use, particularly in high-stakes medical settings where communication errors can have serious consequences. Healthcare professionals, particularly those working directly with patients, expressed fear and anxiety about making mistakes while speaking English. This fear was particularly pronounced when they were required to explain complex medical procedures or diagnoses to patients, as the stakes in these situations were high, and mistakes could result in miscommunication or even harm. This finding aligns with the work of Williams and Perkins (2003), who argue that anxiety and a lack of confidence are major obstacles to language use in professional settings (Perkin 2003). In healthcare environments, where accurate communication is vital for patient safety and well-being, the fear of making mistakes can lead to reluctance to speak in English, even when it is necessary. This can have serious implications, as failure to communicate effectively could lead to misunderstandings or misdiagnoses.

Addressing this psychological barrier requires the creation of a supportive learning environment that encourages practice,

experimentation, and making mistakes as part of the learning process. In ESP programs for healthcare professionals, fostering a non-judgmental, constructive environment can help alleviate anxiety and boost confidence. Role-playing and simulation-based learning can be particularly effective in helping learners practice English in realistic scenarios, thereby reducing anxiety and building confidence. Role-playing scenarios allow learners to simulate real-life situations in a low-stakes setting, making them feel more comfortable using English in actual patient interactions. This approach is supported by Van den Branden (2006), who advocates for the use of task-based learning and role-playing activities to help learners build confidence and competence in their language skills (Branden 2016).

The study also revealed several recommendations for improving English training for healthcare professionals. Participants emphasized the importance of developing specialized English for Medical Purposes (EMP) programs that focus on medical terminology, patient communication, and medical documentation. These programs should be designed to meet the specific needs of healthcare workers and include content that is directly relevant to their work. Basturkmen (2014) supports this approach, noting that ESP programs should focus on content that is tailored to the professional context, ensuring that learners acquire the language skills they need for their specific tasks (Basturkmen 2014). Additionally, incorporating role-playing, case studies, and simulations into training programs would provide learners with opportunities to practice using English in realistic, job-specific contexts. By integrating these interactive elements into training, healthcare professionals can develop both their linguistic competence and their professional skills in a safe and supportive environment.

Another recommendation from participants was the need for continuous learning opportunities that are flexible and adaptable to the schedules of healthcare professionals. Given the unpredictable nature of healthcare work, offering online and self-paced learning options would allow professionals to engage in English training without compromising their work responsibilities. As highlighted by Ally (2008), online learning provides an effective and accessible solution for adult learners, particularly in professions that require irregular work

schedules (Jenkins et al. 2015). Online modules and digital platforms can be designed to accommodate learners' diverse schedules, ensuring that healthcare professionals can continue developing their English proficiency throughout their careers.

The contributions and implications of this study are highly significant across various aspects. Theoretically, this research deepens the understanding of how healthcare professionals perceive the importance of English proficiency, not only for patient communication but also for career development, access to global medical literature, and international collaboration in the medical field. This study fills a gap in the existing literature, particularly in the area of English training in the healthcare sector, which has largely focused on general English proficiency rather than the more specialized medical context.

Practically, the findings from this study can serve as a foundation for designing more relevant and needs-oriented English training curricula for healthcare professionals, whether in hospitals, clinics, or medical education institutions. The findings can also assist policymakers in the healthcare sector in developing more structured and contextually appropriate English training programs aimed at improving communication among medical professionals, as well as between healthcare providers and patients, especially when dealing with patients who speak foreign or multiple languages.

Another significant implication is the potential improvement in the overall quality of healthcare services. By enhancing the English language skills of healthcare professionals, this research has the potential to elevate the quality of medical services, expand access to the latest medical literature, and facilitate more effective international collaboration. Additionally, this study could spur further evaluation of how English training impacts the performance of healthcare workers and patient satisfaction, while raising awareness of the importance of communication skills in the medical context on a global scale. Therefore, this study not only provides a significant contribution to academic development and educational policy but also holds the potential to positively impact the quality of healthcare services at various levels.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the crucial role of English proficiency in the healthcare sector

and the challenges faced by medical professionals in mastering the language. English is essential not only for communication within the healthcare team but also for engaging with international research, collaborating across borders, and delivering quality care to patients from diverse linguistic backgrounds. However, the study has also underscored the significant barriers to language acquisition, including a lack of specialized English for Medical Purposes (EMP) training, time constraints due to demanding work schedules, and psychological barriers such as fear and anxiety about making mistakes in high-stakes situations.

The findings suggest a pressing need for tailored language training programs that address the specific language needs of healthcare professionals, particularly in terms of medical terminology, patient communication, and professional documentation. Flexible and accessible learning options, such as online courses and self-paced modules, are essential to accommodate the busy schedules of healthcare workers. Furthermore, fostering a supportive learning environment where professionals can practice without fear of judgment is vital for overcoming psychological barriers and enhancing confidence in language use.

The study's insights contribute to the growing body of literature on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in healthcare, providing a foundation for future research and the development of effective language training programs. By addressing the unique challenges identified in this study, healthcare institutions can help equip their staff with the language skills needed to communicate effectively, improve patient care, and contribute to the overall success of the healthcare system. Ultimately, providing healthcare professionals with the tools they need to succeed in English will enhance the quality of care and support the global movement towards more integrated and accessible healthcare systems.

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