

การพัฒนาทักษะภาษาอังกฤษในการศึกษาพยาบาล:
แนวทางการเรียนรู้แบบมุ่งเน้นงานเพื่อสร้างแรงจูงใจและทักษะแห่งศตวรรษที่ 21
Fostering Motivation and 21st Century Skills in Nursing Education:
A Task-Based Approach to English Proficiency

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจมุมมองของนักศึกษาพยาบาลเกี่ยวกับการพัฒนาความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษและทักษะแห่งศตวรรษที่ 21 ผ่านการเรียนรู้แบบมุ่งเน้นงานของนักศึกษาหลักสูตรพยาบาลศาสตรบัณฑิต วิทยาลัยพยาบาลบรมราชชนนีนี จังหวัดเชียงใหม่ โดยเลือกกลุ่มตัวอย่างแบบเจาะจงจำนวน 30 คน แบ่งเป็น 2 กลุ่มตามระดับความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษ ได้แก่ กลุ่มระดับเริ่มต้น-พื้นฐาน และกลุ่มระดับกลาง-สูงกลาง การเก็บข้อมูลใช้การสนทนากลุ่มโดยใช้แบบสัมภาษณ์กึ่งโครงสร้าง บันทึกเสียง และถอดความอย่างครบถ้วน และวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยวิธีการวิเคราะห์แก่นสาระ

ผลการศึกษาพบประเด็นสำคัญ 3 ประการ ได้แก่ 1) ความคิดเห็นของนักศึกษาในการเรียนรู้แบบมุ่งเน้นงาน 2) แรงจูงใจในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ และ 3) การตระหนักถึงทักษะแห่งศตวรรษที่ 21 โดยเฉพาะการคิดเชิงวิพากษ์ ความรู้ด้านดิจิทัล และการทำงานแบบสหสาขาในบริบทของการดูแลสุขภาพยุคใหม่ ความต้องการในการพัฒนาตนเอง และวิชาชีพอย่างต่อเนื่อง โดยมีความตั้งใจที่จะพัฒนาทักษะด้านภาษาและวิชาชีพอย่างต่อเนื่องเพื่อรองรับการปฏิบัติงานในอนาคต การศึกษานี้พบว่า การนำเนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการพยาบาลมาบูรณาการในการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษช่วยเพิ่มความเชื่อมโยงระหว่างทักษะด้านภาษาอังกฤษ และการนำไปใช้ในวิชาชีพพยาบาล จึงควรให้ความสำคัญในการพัฒนาโปรแกรมการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้นวัตกรรมที่หลากหลาย เพื่อตอบสนองต่อความต้องการของนักศึกษาพยาบาลในศตวรรษที่ 21 ทั้งในด้านทักษะทางวิชาชีพ และทักษะทางสังคมที่สำคัญต่อการทำงานในสภาพแวดล้อมทางการดูแลสุขภาพที่มีการเปลี่ยนแปลงอย่างรวดเร็ว

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Abstract

This qualitative study aimed to explore nursing students' perspectives on the development of English language proficiency and 21st-century skills through task-based learning. The participants were 30 students enrolled in the Bachelor of Nursing Science program at Boromarajonani College of Nursing, Chiang Mai, selected through purposive sampling. They were divided into two groups based on their English proficiency levels: beginner-elementary and intermediate-upper-intermediate. Data were collected using focus group discussions with a semi-structured interview guide. The discussions were audio-recorded, fully transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis.

The study revealed three key findings: students' opinions on task-based learning, motivation in learning English, and awareness of 21st-century skills, particularly critical thinking, digital literacy, and interdisciplinary collaboration in the context of modern healthcare. There is a strong desire for continuous self-development and professional growth, with a clear intention to consistently improve both language and professional skills to prepare for future work. The study found that integrating nursing-related content into English instruction enhances the connection between English language skills and their application in the nursing profession. Therefore, it is important to emphasize the development of English language programs that incorporate a variety of innovative approaches to meet the needs of 21st-century nursing students- addressing both professional and social skills that are crucial in the rapidly evolving healthcare environment.

Keywords: 21st Century Learning, Nursing Education, English Language Proficiency, Learning Motivation, Task-Based Learning

Introduction

In the modern healthcare environment, strong English language skills are crucial for nursing students. Mastery of 21st-century English not only facilitates academic success but also enhances the quality of patient care and professional development. A significant portion of nursing education and literature is available in English. Proficient English skills enable students to engage with essential academic resources, including textbooks, research articles, and online

learning platforms. This access is vital for staying updated on best practices, innovations, and evidence-based approaches in nursing (Garcia, Garcia, & Barrera, 2020).

Effective communication is a fundamental component of nursing practice. Nurses must convey complex medical information clearly and compassionately to patients, families, and interdisciplinary teams. Strong English proficiency allows nurses to accurately document patient histories, provide clear instructions, and advocate for patients' needs. Studies have shown that effective communication improves patient outcomes and satisfaction, builds trust, and fosters collaborative relationships (Aragon, Gaber, & Pomeroy, 2022; Vardaman, Gibbons, & Pomeroy, 2021). As healthcare becomes increasingly globalized, the ability to communicate in English opens opportunities for international collaboration and experience. Nursing students with strong English skills can participate in global health initiatives, engage with diverse populations, and adapt to various cultural contexts, thereby broadening their professional horizons and enhancing their cultural competency (Aragon, Gaber, & Pomeroy, 2022).

In the 21st century, nursing competencies extend beyond clinical expertise to include critical thinking, digital literacy, and collaboration skills that are vital for effective healthcare delivery. These competencies are essential as healthcare systems increasingly integrate technology, requiring nurses to navigate electronic health records, telehealth services, and interdisciplinary collaboration effectively. Digital literacy plays a crucial role in modern nursing, as it enables nurses to engage with evolving technological tools and improve patient care outcomes (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2021). Furthermore, English language proficiency is a key factor in nursing education and practice. Proficiency in English allows nursing students to access up-to-date medical literature, participate in international research collaborations, and communicate effectively in multicultural healthcare environments (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2021). Research suggests that English proficiency enhances nursing students' ability to engage in evidence-based practice and deliver high-quality, patient-centred care (World Health Organization, 2020).

By integrating 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, digital literacy, and English language proficiency into nursing curricula, educational institutions can better prepare students to navigate the complexities of modern healthcare. These skills not only enhance adaptability and problem-solving capabilities but also contribute to the advancement of the nursing

profession (Smith, White, & Lee, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020). As the global demand for skilled, communicative, and culturally competent nurses continues to rise, strengthening these competencies is essential for ensuring quality care in diverse healthcare settings (Nielsen, Hørdam, & Kristensen, 2022).

In Thailand, the Praboromarajchanok Institute of Health Workforce Development is currently transitioning to a four-year Bachelor of Nursing Science (BNS) curriculum, primarily delivered in Thai with select English components. Despite this bilingual approach, many nursing students struggle with English comprehension, which negatively impacts their academic success (Wang & Wang, 2019). Although students typically receive three to four hours of English instruction per week during secondary education, they often enter university lacking fundamental English proficiency. This inadequacy is frequently attributed to factors such as low classroom participation, limited exposure to authentic English usage, and heightened language anxiety particularly fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension (Srichai & Rattanapong, 2021).

Boromarajonani College of Nursing, Chiang Mai, has actively sought to enhance students' English proficiency in alignment with national policies. However, recent data indicate that English language competency among students remains relatively low. In 2020, 2021, and 2022, only 20.51%, 21.11%, and 32.05% of students, respectively, passed the PBRI English test, with more than half performing at an elementary level. Recognizing the challenges posed by these statistics, the college launched the 21st Century English Language Skills Enhancement Project in 2022-2023, adopting a task-based learning (TBL) approach to strengthen students' writing, listening, reading, vocabulary, and speaking skills. Task-based learning has been widely recognized as an effective approach to language acquisition, as it emphasizes real-world language use and meaningful communication (Zhang, 2020).

This project was designed to integrate nursing-specific content into English instruction, ensuring that students develop language skills within realistic healthcare contexts. Through task-based learning, students engage in interactive activities such as role-playing patient interactions, conducting nursing handovers, and documenting patient information, allowing them to apply English in practical, profession-related scenarios. Group discussions and case-based exercises further encourage collaborative learning, critical thinking, and effective communication, which are essential for professional success in healthcare settings (Muntriakao & Poonpon, 2022).

Structured writing tasks and guided reading activities help students improve their ability to comprehend and produce medical texts, enhancing their overall language proficiency. Faculty members play a key role in facilitating these learning experiences by using student-centered approaches that emphasize active engagement and real-world application (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Despite the implementation of this project, there is still limited research on how Thai nursing students perceive task-based learning and its impact on their motivation and language development. Given the increasing demand for proficient English communication in healthcare, this study seeks to explore students' experiences and perspectives on the effectiveness of task-based learning in enhancing their language skills. The findings from this research will contribute to the improvement of English language instruction by informing the development of more targeted and contextually relevant teaching strategies. By integrating nursing-specific content into English courses and refining task-based instructional methods, this study aims to support nursing students in becoming more confident and competent English users in both local and international healthcare settings.

Objective

To explore Thai nursing students' perceptions of an enhanced English language program and its impact on their English skills, motivation, and 21st-century skills development at Boromarajonani College of Nursing, Chiang Mai.

Conceptual Framework

The 21st Century English Language Skills Enhancement Project integrates Task-Based Learning (TBL) as its core instructional method, a strategy deeply rooted in the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Thompson & Millington, 2021). Rather than focusing solely on the isolated teaching of linguistic components, TBL emphasizes learning through interactive and authentic tasks. In this approach, students are assigned meaningful tasks that require active engagement with the target language, thereby shifting the focus from mere linguistic acquisition to achieving a comprehensive, practical outcome. This method mirrors real-world language use and encourages learners to apply their skills in contexts that are both

relevant and dynamic. Research indicates that such task-based engagement significantly enhances students' self-confidence and overall language competence, enabling them to navigate and complete challenges that simulate everyday communication (Owen & De Oliveira, 2022). Consequently, TBL offers an effective framework for enhancing English language skills by fostering an environment where language is learned and used as a tool for real-life interaction.

Methods

This descriptive qualitative study employed two focus-group discussions to explore the perspectives of nursing undergraduate students regarding their English language development. The research was conducted between May 2021 and July 2023 at Boromarajonani College of Nursing, Chiang Mai.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of nursing students enrolled in the Bachelor of Nursing program at Boromarajonani College of Nursing Chiang Mai in the 2022 academic year. While many methodological guidelines suggest that focus groups typically consist of 6-8 participants (Krueger & Casey, 2015), this study deliberately expanded the group size to 15 students per session to capture a broader range of perspectives and experiences. Research supports the use of larger focus groups in cases where participant homogeneity is maintained and when the aim is to explore diverse viewpoints within a specific population (Morgan, 1997). In this study, purposive sampling was employed to select 30 students who were then categorized into two distinct groups based on their English proficiency levels, as determined by the descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2020). Proficiency levels were defined as follows: Beginner (A1) with scores ranging from 0 to 20, Elementary (A2) with scores ranging from 21 to 40, Intermediate (B1) with scores ranging from 41 to 60, and Upper-Intermediate (B2) with scores ranging from 61 to 80. Consequently, in Group 1, 15 students were classified as Beginner to Elementary (score range 0-40), while the remaining 15 were categorized as Intermediate to Upper-Intermediate (score range 41-80), in Group 2. This approach ensured a comprehensive representation of various proficiency levels, thereby

providing a nuanced understanding of the students' experiences and motivations in language learning.

Measurement

The primary data collection instrument for this study was a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher. The interview questions were designed to explore several key areas related to the study's objectives, including students' experiences with task-based learning in the 21st Century English Language Skills Development Project, the factors that stimulate their interest and motivation in learning English, and their self-perception of English proficiency within the context of competitive societal demands. In addition, the interviews gathered feedback on the effectiveness of the task-based learning model in enhancing English language skills.

Validity and Reliability of Measurement

The content validity of the interview instrument was reviewed by a panel of English language experts and three nursing professors. The resulting Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was 0.97, indicating strong alignment between the questions and the research objectives (Brinkmann, 2014).

Data Collection

Scheduled from May 2021 to July 2023, the programme consists of 15 academic English courses, each 6 hours long. TBL was utilized to develop a range of skills in students, including speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary acquisition, and professional English. Students voluntarily formed teams to facilitate collaborative learning and peer support. Each group received guidance on interpreting the project's theme and expressing their perspectives on the role of nursing in society. This collaborative process culminated in presentations, where students shared their ideas with the class. Following their presentations, they participated in interviews, responding to guided questions related to their topics. Such hands-on experiences not only reinforced their language skills but also deepened their understanding of nursing's significance within the broader healthcare context (Gonzalez, Gibbons, & Sullivan, 2023).

After finished the programme, data were collected through two focus-group discussions, each lasting between 50 and 60 minutes. The sessions were conducted in Thai to ensure that participants could express their thoughts freely and accurately. Discussions were recorded using

MP4 devices, and the recordings were later transcribed verbatim in Thai and translated into English. To ensure translation accuracy, the researcher collaborated with an English instructor. The discussions were guided by a semi-structured interview protocol addressing topics such as experiences with the 21st Century English Language Skills Development Project, motivation for learning English, self-assessment of English proficiency, and opinions on task-based learning.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using a combined manifest and latent content analysis approach, following Bengtsson's four-step process. In the decontextualization phase, the researcher immersed in the transcripts through repeated readings to become thoroughly familiar with the content. Because the study's issues were pre-defined such as participants' experiences with the project and their motivations for learning English a deductive reasoning design was adopted. An initial coding list was developed before commencing the open coding process, providing a structured framework for identifying relevant meaning units.

Following this, during the recontextualization stage, the researcher revisited the original transcripts to ensure that all extracted meaning units retained their intended context. At this point, preliminary findings were shared with several participants in a member-checking process, which helped verify that the interpretations and coding accurately reflected their intended meanings and experiences.

Next, the analysis moved into the categorization phase, where the identified meaning units were systematically organized into broader categories. This step involved both manifest content analysis, which grouped observable and explicitly stated data, and latent content analysis, which delved into the underlying meanings not immediately apparent in the text.

In the final stage of the process, the compilation phase, the researcher synthesized the categories into overarching themes that best represented the data. To further enhance the trustworthiness of the research, an inquiry audit was conducted. An external qualitative research expert reviewed the entire coding process and theme development, confirming the dependability, confirmability, and overall rigor of the findings.

Ethical Consideration

This study was conducted according to three ethical principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The principle of beneficence was upheld by ensuring that the study posed no harm or risk to the students. The principle of justice was observed by ensuring that the benefits and burdens of the research were distributed equitably among all participants. The study protocol and data collection instruments were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Boromarajonani College of Nursing Chiang Mai (Ethical Approval No. BCNCT17/2563).

Results

The qualitative analysis revealed significant insights into nursing students' perspectives on English language learning through task-based learning (TBL). The discussions highlighted both the challenges and motivations influencing their language development. Four key themes emerged, reflecting students' academic priorities, awareness of essential skills, language barriers, and personal aspirations. These findings provide a deeper understanding of how nursing students navigate English learning and emphasize the need for a more integrated and supportive approach to enhance their proficiency.

Theme 1: Students' Opinions on Task-Based Learning (TBL) Implementation

This theme explores students' experiences with the enhanced English skills project, which employed TBL to improve language acquisition in nursing education. Focus group discussions revealed both challenges and advantages students encountered throughout the project. Students stated,

"...the program let us practice making sentences. It is considered that we have learned from this vocabulary and know that we will have to make a sentence and how it is used in communication and pronunciation. So, we can use it correctly..." [Lower Intermediate]

"...the program had a variety of teaching techniques. For example, it let students give hints by drawing a picture for friends to guess in English and learn English through games. It was a fun class. I think these activities can help us practice thinking about new words and improve our vocabulary and speaking skills. I enjoyed this course." [Lower Intermediate]

"For me, if it is reading and writing, I want to study with Thai teachers because they can explain more clearly, but for speaking, I would rather learn with a native speaker because they know how to pronounce words or sentences more clearly." [Upper Intermediate]

"It was a beneficial project. Personally, I like to study in a program that offers various teaching methods, such as games, singing songs, practicing real-life English conversations, or incorporating media and technology into teaching. Many activities could help us improve our English-speaking skills and motivate us to communicate more easily and effectively." [Lower Intermediate]

Sub-theme 1: Language Proficiency Concerns

Many students reported struggling with English due to weak foundational knowledge, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes. Group 1 emphasized the need for preparatory lessons to boost confidence for presentations, while Group 2 expressed concerns about time constraints and anxiety when speaking in front of foreign teachers. Students shared,

"Before this, we were afraid to speak English with foreigner, but structured tasks and practice helped me feel more comfortable." [Lower Intermediate]

Another noted, "I still struggle with grammar, but practicing with my peers through TBL gave me the confidence to present in English. However, I felt nervous and avoided communication with foreigner patients due to fear of making mistakes like my friends " [Upper Intermediate]

These responses suggest that while TBL presents initial challenges, it ultimately aids skill development.

Sub-theme 2: Mixed Language Use and Self-Discovery

Some students relied on both Thai and English when completing assignments, while others were surprised by their ability to conduct research and present in English. Despite these challenges, most students supported the continuation of TBL, recognizing its benefits for language learning. A student reflected,

"The teacher used engaging methods, such as games and drawing exercises, to help us think of new words and practice speaking. It made learning more enjoyable and effective." [Upper Intermediate]

Another student noted, "At first, I didn't think I could present in English, but this experience showed me that I could." [Lower Intermediate]

These findings highlight how active learning strategies within TBL can enhance motivation and confidence in language use.

Theme 2: Motivation for Learning English

Students exhibited both instrumental and integrative motivations for learning English, driven by specific academic and professional goals. Both students in Upper Intermediate and Lower Intermediated stated,

"If thinking about the skills required in the 21st Century, communication is one of the most important skills because we must use it in our daily life. There are many foreigners entering Thailand, whether for business, traveling, or job applications. Moreover, the English language qualification is the basis for people to apply for jobs. The new generation must learn another international language besides Thai."

Sub-theme 1: Passing the English Test as a Primary Goal

Group 1 students primarily focused on passing the Praboromrajchanok Institute (PBRI) English test, viewing it as a crucial graduation requirement. This goal often overshadowed broader language skill development. Most participants stated,

"We all share the same view that the primary motivation is to pass the PBRI English test. For example, my friends and I are currently not focusing on 21st-century learning because we need more practice to pass the exam." [Lower Intermediate]

"For me, the most important motivation is to pass the PBRI English test. Now, I am not thinking about improving my language skills to achieve 21st Century learning because I need to do a lot of practice. I still have not passed the English test and could not do it well. If I could not pass the English test, it may affect my graduation. This thing is a major concern and led me to be motivated to learn English." [Lower Intermediate]

This indicates a strong emphasis on short-term academic requirements over long-term language proficiency.

Sub-theme 2: Communicative Competence for Career Advancement

Group 2 students were motivated to improve English proficiency for career growth, recognizing the value of communication skills in securing better job opportunities. Seven students remarked,

"My motivation for learning English is getting a good job and a higher salary. I think knowing English involves not only producing language correctly but also using language for particular purposes. For example, in addition to competence in the nursing profession, if we have good English language proficiency, we may have the opportunity to get promoted or do more of a challenge than others as we have the ability to communicate with foreigners." [Upper Intermediate]

"If we have strong English skills, we can get better job positions and communicate with foreign colleagues more effectively." [Upper Intermediate]

Another added, *"English is not just about passing tests; it's about real-life applications in nursing and patient care."* [Upper Intermediate]

These insights suggest that while Group 1 focuses on immediate academic needs, Group 2 understands the long-term benefits of language proficiency in healthcare.

Theme 3: Perspectives on 21st-Century English Language Skills

Students expressed a desire to improve their English communication skills but felt hindered by a curriculum that prioritized grammar and vocabulary over practical usage. They also faced challenges integrating 21st-century skills into their language learning due to a lack of awareness and inadequate learning resources. Some Students asked,

"I would not really understand the skills required in the 21st century. What does society expect of today's students? We study nursing, so what's important is society needs nurses with good performance, isn't it? I wonder, if we are not good at English, will this make us less of our values? We may not be able to make ourselves good in every way, especially English which we rarely have a chance to use in our daily life as we should." [Lower Intermediate]

Sub-theme 1: Limited Understanding of 21st-Century Skills

Many students were unsure about the specific skills required for success in modern nursing and questioned whether English proficiency would significantly impact their careers. Some students asked,

"We are nursing students- what does society expect from us in terms of 21st-century skills? Is English really that important?" [Lower Intermediate]

This suggests a need for clearer guidance on the role of English in their professional development.

Sub-theme 2: Difficulty in Comprehending English

Students desired to communicate effectively but struggled due to a curriculum that emphasized grammar over real-world application. Many relied heavily on dictionaries and translation apps, indicating insufficient resources for English learning. Some students admitted,

"We would love to communicate in English without serious problems, but the tests have focused on topics like correct grammar, vocabulary, and other skills that might not be truly necessary for communication. For me, I still need to use a dictionary or translation application for writing and reading English texts to complete the tasks. The resource of English learning database is insufficiently provided to support us, which limits our ability to gain good understanding and skills." [Lower Intermediate]

"We still have to use translation apps to complete tasks because I don't have enough resources to improve my comprehension." [Lower Intermediate]

This highlights the need for enhanced instructional support and materials tailored to nursing students.

Sub-theme 3: Personal Growth and Career Aspirations

Despite these challenges, many students acknowledged the importance of English proficiency in interacting with diverse populations in nursing. Students noted,

"If thinking about the skills required in the 21st Century, communication is one of the most important skills because we must use it in our daily life. There are many foreigners entering Thailand, whether for business, traveling, or job applications. Moreover, the English language qualification is the basis for people to apply for jobs. The new generation must learn another international language besides Thai." [Upper Intermediate]

"I think it is necessary to communicate with foreigners because in our profession we cannot choose our clients to be only Thai. English is already an international language. We need to learn more than one language. We should understand what they [patients] want to communicate with us or with what they want us to help. Then we can provide them with good care and meet their needs. Nurses must have the knowledge and skills to care for their

patients effectively. It should be together with the knowledge of nursing and effective English skills." [Upper Intermediate]

"Communication is essential in a globalized society. We must be able to interact with foreign patients and colleagues." [Upper Intermediate]

Another added, "English and nursing knowledge must go hand in hand to provide effective patient care." [Upper Intermediate]

These statements highlight the recognition of English as a vital skill in the nursing profession.

Key Findings and Insights

The findings from this study highlight four key themes that shape students' perspectives on English language learning through task-based learning. First, there is a critical need to pass mandatory English proficiency tests for graduation, which often serves as the primary motivation for many students. Second, students recognize the importance of 21st-century competencies, including critical thinking, digital literacy, and collaborative problem-solving, particularly in the context of modern healthcare. Third, challenges persist due to weak foundational knowledge of English, which affects students' confidence and ability to engage in complex language tasks. Lastly, students demonstrate a strong intrinsic desire for self-improvement and professional development, particularly in preparing for future career opportunities where English proficiency is valuable.

Challenges in implementing TBL were evident, particularly in terms of confidence and preparation. Lower-intermediate students required additional preparatory lessons, while upper-intermediate students struggled with time constraints and presentation anxiety. Additionally, some students relied on Thai during TBL activities, indicating the need for gradual language immersion strategies. Regarding teaching methods and effectiveness, students responded positively to interactive strategies, such as games and role-playing, which reduced anxiety and improved vocabulary retention. They also expressed preferences for Thai teachers in reading and writing instruction, while native English-speaking teachers were preferred for speaking practice, suggesting that a balanced instructional approach may be beneficial.

Motivation for language learning varied between groups. Group 1 was primarily driven by instrumental motivation, focusing on passing exams, whereas Group 2 exhibited integrative motivation, aiming for long-term career growth. These differences indicate the need for a dual-focused curriculum that accommodates both immediate academic needs and future professional aspirations. Overall, the findings suggest that while students acknowledge the importance of English proficiency, their motivations and challenges differ based on their proficiency levels. A more balanced approach that integrates both exam preparation and real-world language application could enhance English learning outcomes in nursing education.

Discussion

This study explored nursing students' experiences, motivations, and challenges in developing English proficiency through task-based learning (TBL). The findings revealed that while students acknowledged the importance of English in their nursing education, they faced several barriers to language acquisition, particularly in speaking and writing. Many expressed that their limited vocabulary, difficulty in sentence formation, and lack of grammatical understanding hindered their confidence, leading to reluctance to participate in class. Despite these challenges, students recognized the potential of TBL in providing meaningful language practice within a nursing-specific context (Zhang, 2021).

Students generally perceived TBL as an engaging and practical approach to language learning. Unlike traditional lecture-based methods, which often focus on rote memorization, TBL encouraged active learning through tasks such as medical role-plays, patient interviews, and case discussions. Many students found this method effective in helping them apply English in realistic nursing scenarios, reinforcing both their language skills and professional knowledge (Tang, Lim, & Lai, 2022). However, some students felt that the project duration was too short to see significant improvements, emphasizing the need for extended exposure and additional practice opportunities. The interactive nature of TBL facilitated collaboration among students, allowing them to learn from their peers while improving their speaking and listening skills. This aligns with previous research, which found that language acquisition is enhanced when learners engage in authentic tasks that require meaningful communication (Samuda & Bygate, 2018; Shin, 2019). Studies have highlighted the effectiveness of TBL in motivating students and fostering

greater participation in language learning, supporting the idea that structured task-based activities provide a more immersive and engaging learning experience.

Motivation played a significant role in students' engagement with English learning. Many participants viewed English proficiency as essential for academic success, particularly for passing English competency exams required for graduation. This external motivation often outweighed intrinsic motivation for language learning. However, some students recognized the long-term benefits of mastering English, particularly for career advancement, international opportunities, and improved patient communication (Tang, Lim, & Lai, 2022). Students exhibited different motivational patterns based on their language proficiency levels. Those with higher English competency expressed greater enthusiasm for developing their language skills, while lower-intermediate students were more focused on meeting minimum academic requirements. These findings align with Papi, Bondarenko, & Mansouri Nejad (2019), theories suggesting that motivation in second-language learning is influenced by both personal aspirations and external pressures.

The study also highlighted students' struggles with English communication during clinical internships. Many reported feeling anxious and hesitant when speaking with patients, supervisors, and foreign medical staff due to their limited proficiency. The fear of making mistakes often resulted in avoidance, leading to missed opportunities for practical language use. These findings are consistent with previous research, which found that nursing students with weak English skills faced significant challenges in clinical settings, affecting their confidence and overall performance (Cheng, Kuo, Lin, & Lee-Hsieh, 2018; Namaziandost, Abedi, & Nasri, 2021). Despite these difficulties, students who had prior exposure to English-speaking environments or supportive instructors showed greater confidence in using the language during their internships. This suggests that creating structured opportunities for clinical English practice such as simulation exercises and guided patient interactions could help bridge the gap between theoretical language learning and real-world application (Lee & Lin, 2020).

One of the most significant findings of this research was the positive impact of TBL on students' engagement and skill development. Unlike traditional English courses that focus primarily on grammar and written exercises, TBL provided a more immersive learning experience, requiring students to think critically, communicate actively, and solve problems in a

nursing context. Students appreciated that TBL mirrored real-world nursing situations, making English learning more relevant and meaningful (Rahman, Pandian, & Kaur, 2020). This approach aligns with the idea that effective language acquisition occurs when students perceive learning as directly applicable to their professional goals. Additionally, TBL fostered collaboration, with students supporting one another in completing tasks, which contributed to a more encouraging learning environment.

Implication

While students found TBL beneficial, they also expressed the need for additional support, including more structured speaking practice, clearer guidance on professional English usage, and access to diverse language-learning resources. These insights reinforce the importance of continuously refining English language instruction in nursing education to better meet students' needs. The findings suggest that incorporating TBL into nursing curricula can significantly enhance English proficiency by making learning more interactive and professionally relevant. Future implementations should focus on extending project durations, integrating clinical role-play, and providing targeted support for students with lower English proficiency. Additionally, nursing educators should emphasize the connection between English skills and 21st-century competencies, ensuring that students understand the broader professional implications of language proficiency in a globalized healthcare environment.

Recommendations for Further Study

Future research should explore the long-term impact of task-based learning (TBL) in enhancing Thai nursing students' English proficiency and 21st-century skills. Expanding project duration and incorporating targeted tools such as digital resources, speaking practice platforms, and nursing-specific vocabulary exercises may improve learning outcomes. Studies should also examine the effectiveness of medical English modules and scenario-based training in building confidence and communication skills. Given students' varied language backgrounds, further research could investigate differentiated instructional strategies, including peer mentoring systems and scaffolded support for lower-proficiency learners. Exploring how to explicitly integrate 21st-century competencies into English instruction through reflective activities or interprofessional

collaboration may also prove beneficial. Finally, future studies should assess faculty development programs that train educators to teach English effectively within nursing curricula. As English remains essential in global healthcare, continuous efforts to enhance nursing students' language skills are vital for academic and professional readiness.

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