

Role-play as a community service strategy to improve english communication for nursing students

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Received: 05 July 2025

Revised: 05 August 2025

Accepted: 01 September 2025

Published: 10 September 2025

ABSTRACT

Communication skills in English are an essential competency for nursing students to face the challenges of globalization and international healthcare services. However, many students still struggle to express themselves confidently in real clinical contexts. This community service program aimed to enhance the communication ability of nursing students through English training using the role-play method. The training was conducted with final-year nursing students at Politeknik Sandi Karsa and applied a participatory approach consisting of lectures, demonstrations, role play simulations, group discussions, and reflective evaluations. Various clinical scenarios were designed, such as explaining medication usage, calming anxious patients, and describing vital sign procedures. The program was implemented over two days, with the first day focusing on interactive material delivery and facilitator demonstrations, while the second day emphasized practical role-play performance with direct feedback. A total of 23 students participated actively in this activity. The results indicated a significant improvement in students' confidence and ability to use English in professional healthcare communication. Participants expressed positive responses toward the method, highlighting that role play reduced speaking anxiety, increased motivation, and fostered readiness for real clinical interactions. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) confirmed that this method not only improved English proficiency but also enhanced soft skills such as empathy, teamwork, and therapeutic communication. The outcomes suggest that role-play-based English training is an effective strategy to support nursing education and should be integrated regularly into the curriculum to prepare graduates for global healthcare demands.

Keywords: communication, English, nursing students, role play, training.



INTRODUCTION

Communication skills in English are crucial competencies for nursing students in the era of globalization and society [1]. This competency includes oral and written aspects that are indispensable in dealing with the world of work that demands professional interaction with patients, medical personnel, and other hospital parties [2]. In the context of international hospital accreditation, the demand to be able to communicate in English is becoming increasingly urgent. However, many nursing students in Indonesia still face obstacles in the active and contextual use of English, especially when dealing with complex clinical situations [3].

One of the approaches that is considered effective to overcome these problems is the role-play method. This method allows students to practice English in a context that resembles real situations, such as conversations between nurses and patients, communication during physical examinations, and discussions between medical personnel [4]. Research shows that role play improves the communication skills of nursing students because it provides an opportunity to speak in situations that are close to real clinical practice, increases confidence, and expands the mastery of relevant technical vocabulary [5]. Role play can build courage, creativity, and fluency in speaking, and support the appropriate use of English-language medical terminology [6].

In learning English for special purposes, such as English for Nursing, contextual and practice-based approaches are more effective than conventional methods. Role play provides an interactive space for students to use English as a functional communication tool, not just memorization [7]. This activity has been proven to increase learning motivation, reduce speech anxiety, and strengthen mastery of language structure and technical vocabulary. In addition, this method also contributes to the development of soft skills such as empathy, teamwork, and therapeutic communication, which are important elements in nursing services [8]. Students who were actively involved in role play showed significant improvements in delivering instructions, explaining medical procedures, and clarifying patient complaints in English [9].

Unfortunately, the common problem that is still faced is the limited space for active English communication practice in the classroom. Many students are still focused on grammar and reading exercises, while speaking and listening skills in clinical contexts receive less attention. This leads to awkwardness when interacting with foreign patients or when undergoing clinical practice at international referral hospitals [10]. Thus, role play can be a learning strategy that forms a collaborative, creative, and fun learning environment. Students are not only required to speak, but also to play roles according to certain characters, so that their understanding of the professional context is stronger [11]. Nursing students who received training through this method showed better interpersonal communication performance, both in Indonesian and English [12].

Based on this background, this community service activity is carried out as a form of academic contribution to improve the quality of nursing graduates, especially in English communication skills. Role-play-based training is expected to be able to increase students' confidence, speaking skills, and readiness to face the increasingly global demands of the nursing profession.

METHODS

This training activity uses a participatory and practice-based approach, so that students not only receive the material theoretically, but also actively play a role in simulations that resemble real clinical situations. The implementation of the program consists of six main stages, namely:

Preparation Stage

The service team conducted a needs survey through observation and brief interviews with final semester nursing students at the Sandi Karsa Polytechnic. This survey aims to identify the main weaknesses in English-language communication, both in terms of medical vocabulary, grammar, and confidence when speaking.

Coordination of the Service Team

The team systematically developed the training structure, designed realistic role play scenarios (e.g. simulation of nurses providing medication information to foreign patients), and established indicators of training success that included aspects of speaking skills, accuracy of medical terminology, and increased student confidence.

Preparation of Training Materials

The material prepared includes basic English for Nursing expressions, practical grammar, pronunciation exercises, as well as the use of medical vocabulary relevant to clinical practice. The material is arranged in the form of a concise module so that it is easy to understand and can be directly applied in simulations.

Training Implementation

The training was held for two consecutive days with three sessions per day. The first day was focused on delivering materials and demonstrations by facilitators, while the second day was devoted to role-play practices by participants. Each session comes with live feedback so that students can correct communication errors immediately.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

After the implementation of the role play, participants took part in an FGD facilitated by the service team. This discussion was used to reflect on learning experiences, identify difficulties faced, and evaluate the benefits of role-play methods in improving communication skills and confidence.

Evaluation and Follow-up

Evaluation was carried out through assignments in the form of individual reflective journals and the creation of short videos of English conversations. The results of this evaluation are used to measure learning outcomes, document activities, and become the basis for follow-up recommendations for strengthening the English skills of nursing students.

RESULT

Table 1. Pretest vs Posttest Results

Category	Pretest (Average Score)	Posttest (Average Score)	Improvement (%)
Confidence in Speaking	55	82	49.1
Use of Medical Vocabulary	50	78	56.0
Fluency & Pronunciation	52	80	53.8
Active Participation	48	85	77.1

The results indicate a significant improvement across all measured categories after the role-play-based training: Confidence in Speaking increased by nearly 50%, showing that participants became

much more comfortable in expressing themselves in English. Use of Medical Vocabulary improved by 56%, highlighting better mastery of technical nursing terms. Fluency and Pronunciation improved by 54%, reflecting clearer and smoother communication. Active Participation showed the highest growth of 77%, meaning students were far more engaged and proactive in communication exercises. Overall, the training was effective in enhancing students' English communication skills, particularly in clinical and professional contexts.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of role play as a training method for improving English communication among nursing students has shown significant results in both cognitive and affective aspects. The findings of this community service project are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the effectiveness of interactive and contextual learning strategies in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) settings, particularly in nursing education.

One of the most important outcomes of this training was the increased self-confidence among participants when speaking English. At the beginning of the program, students were hesitant and often struggled to construct sentences in a clinical context [13]. However, through repeated practice in role play activities, they gradually overcame their anxiety and were able to engage in dialogues with greater fluency. Reported that role play reduces foreign language anxiety and fosters willingness to communicate in English [14]. The improvement in confidence was also supported by immediate feedback from facilitators, which enabled students to correct their mistakes and reinforce their learning. Furthermore, the role play method proved effective in enhancing not only language skills but also soft skills, such as empathy, active listening, and professional interaction [15]. These elements are crucial in nursing practice, as communication is not merely about transferring information but also about building trust and therapeutic relationships with patients [16]. The ability to deliver instructions clearly, reassure anxious patients, and explain medical procedures in English is particularly valuable in the context of international healthcare services [17]. Previous research by similarly highlighted that role play helps nursing students practice both technical vocabulary and interpersonal skills simultaneously, making the method highly relevant to their professional needs [18].

Another notable finding was the students' positive perception of the training approach. Many participants expressed that the interactive and practical nature of role play made the learning process more enjoyable and less intimidating compared to traditional grammar-based instruction [19]. The activities allowed them to apply theoretical knowledge directly in simulated clinical scenarios, which created a sense of authenticity. Who stressed that role play encourages creativity and reduces communication barriers in second language learning [20].

Despite the positive outcomes, the training also revealed certain limitations. Some students still relied heavily on memorized phrases, which restricted their ability to respond spontaneously in unexpected situations [21]. This indicates that while role play is effective in creating a foundation for communicative competence, it needs to be complemented with continuous practice and exposure to diverse medical contexts [22]. Moreover, the short duration of the program (two days) limited the extent of language immersion. For more sustainable results, the integration of role play into the nursing curriculum as a regular activity is strongly recommended [23].

The role play method has demonstrated clear advantages in fostering English communication competence, confidence, and professional readiness among nursing students [24]. It provides a bridge between classroom learning and real-world clinical interaction, addressing both linguistic and affective barriers [25]. To maximize its impact, institutions should consider adopting role play as a routine pedagogical strategy and collaborating with healthcare facilities to design authentic case-based

scenarios. By doing so, nursing students will be better prepared to meet the demands of globalized healthcare environments..

CONCLUSION

The English language training program using the role-play method has proven to be an effective approach in enhancing nursing students' communication skills. This activity not only improved the participants' speaking ability in professional contexts but also significantly strengthened their confidence in using English. The interactive and practice-based nature of role play created a supportive learning environment that encouraged active participation and reduced anxiety in speaking. The positive responses from participants indicate that role play can serve as an alternative and practical learning strategy within nursing education. Furthermore, the training demonstrated its potential to prepare students for real clinical communication, making them better equipped to meet the demands of globalized healthcare services.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Politeknik Sandi Karsa for providing full support and facilities throughout the implementation of this training program. Special thanks are also extended to the nursing students who actively participated and contributed to the success of the activities. The authors also appreciate the valuable assistance of fellow lecturers and colleagues who shared their time, expertise, and encouragement during the program.

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