

The Importance of English Language in Nursing Studies in France

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Although English may seem to be of a lesser importance in nursing practice, as compared to other different subjects studied at nursing schools in France, it remains nonetheless a major asset to nurses who manage to understand, write and speak English more or less fluently.

Nurses are unquestionably the eyes and ears of doctors, as they are the front-line workers with patients in hospitals, and a link between specialist caregivers and patients. They must sometimes give advice to patients, explain a procedure, or simply communicate with both patients and doctors. It has been noticed that, even though nurses use English very rarely in their practice of care giving, they sometimes need to communicate in English when dealing with a patient, from a different country, who speaks “globish” English and needs to get information, to understand, and to be reassured about his/her condition. Thus, the simplest terms such as *“Hello, I’m nurse Jane”*, or *“Don’t worry, everything is going to be fine!”*, or *“Since when have you had this pain?”*, or *“I’m going to examine your blood pressure”*, or *“You must avoid eating butter and eggs”*, or *“You’ll feel better after you’ve taken this medicine”*, or else *“What brings you here?”*, must not only be mastered phonetically and meaningfully as they follow a linguistic pattern, but also spoken with a confident tone of a voice and a relaxed facial gesture, with a slight smile that, from the outset, puts the patient in a relatively comfortable state regarding his/her condition.

As nurses learn the essential general and technical English during their studies, they also carry out researches related to specific domains, such as “end-of-life care” and “palliative care”, or “ethical issues”. Hence, they must do literature reviews and read specialized articles in English, which sometimes requires translating a part of them, summarizing or giving an account on them in the course of their graduate and/or post-graduate studies and practice in order to acquire a higher diploma and eventually become a Specialized Nurse! Moreover, they might be required to supervise nursing students and/or escort them to other European countries as part of their courses in the exchange-student program known as Erasmus in Europe.

Therefore, it turns out that mastering English is significant in higher studies, as well as in nursing practice, law, ethics, or any other field of studies and practice, as frontiers seem to disappear among countries within the European continent in particular, and across the whole world in a general manner.

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Former teacher of English at the University of Lorraine (faculty of medicine, law and economics, letters and human sciences – 2006-2013), currently teacher of English at the schools of nursing in Nancy, France. Born in Lebanon in 1966, I was also a teacher of English and of experimental sciences in private high schools, and have always worked in a multicultural environment that gave me the opportunity to deal with, and understand, the many cultural and ethical differences related to work and to language, as I perfectly master English, French, and Arabic as a native language.