
STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH THE ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES COURSE

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DOI: 10.24411/2500-1000-2021-1003

Abstract. *Language training at higher education institutions accompanies education in various professional fields - medicine, economics, law, engineering, etc. This paper provides a review of Nursing and Midwifery students' motives that will inevitably lead to improvements in both the language and vocational training of future medical professionals as well as explores the level of satisfaction with the English for specific purposes (ESP) course. After analyzing the results of the survey, the students in the two specialties demonstrated high levels of satisfaction with their achievements in the ESP course regarding their basic language skills for the Nursing students (48,15%) and knowledge acquisition in the chosen area for the Midwifery students (46,10%). The main incentive among the students in the study of English for specific purposes is the successful professional realization and the development of basic communication skills.*

Keywords: *English for specific purposes, students, professional realization, satisfaction*

Introduction. There are many different reasons why people learn foreign languages. For some it is the need to enrich their common culture, for others it is the thirst for knowledge, still others want to get to know different worlds and cultures, to find new friends and followers. Contemporary living conditions require good command of a foreign language for the purpose of professional and personal realization. The purpose of modern foreign language learning is to acquire lexical and grammatical knowledge and skills that can be used effectively by the learner in various communication situations. When learning a language for specific purposes, to this end is added the acquisition of specific vocabulary and basic grammatical constructions related to the chosen area, through which specialists communicate at different levels. Language training at higher education institutions accompanies education in various professional fields - medicine, economics, law, engineering, etc. Foreign language training will inevitably lead to improvements in both the language and vocational training of future medical professionals. The combination of traditional and new teaching methods and approaches and mastering the foreign language material opens

new perspectives for the students to acquire new knowledge and skills and strengthens their motivation to self-improve and overcome the challenges of modern society [1].

The conditions of globalization have turned English into the present-day *lingua franca*, which facilitates communication and collaboration between professionals from different fields. Foreign language teaching is widespread in Bulgarian education, but there are significant differences between general English and ESP, as the latter is taught at tertiary level. ESP focuses on mastering specific language skills, which are an indispensable part of successful professional development. The Nursing and Midwifery students at the affiliate of the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" in the city of Shumen study ESP for the first two semesters of their training in order to learn basic terms related to their chosen area along with language enrichment. This course of study is designed for 60 academic hours and aims at preparing the future medical professionals to understand and utilize the foreign language in order to communicate in the field of medicine and develop professionally. The ESP teacher will clearly teach language. This will include the

common-core lexis of the academic or professional worlds, and the language related to the key genres that learners will need to be able to use. But ESP teaching goes beyond teaching just language, it also involves teaching skills involved in the macro-skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, such as the importance of listening or reading for meaning, the importance of writing for an audience, and developing learners' awareness of communicative strategies involved in the activities that they undertake [2; 3]. ESP is a tool that bridges professional to language training rather than a barrier. The competencies that students acquire will help them communicate in real situations, but the level of individual progress depends on a number of interrelated factors such as motivation, perseverance, time and conditions for learning, knowledge of general English and others. Despite the many challenges teachers and learners face with regard to ESP, the satisfaction

with the achievements and the doors that the language opens are worth the effort, work and time.

Aim. The overall aim of the study was to determine the level of satisfaction of second- and third-year Nursing and Midwifery students with the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. The study also sought explanation of what motivated students to learn ESP.

Materials and Methods. An anonymous survey was conducted through a direct anonymous questionnaire among second- and third-year students in the Nursing and Midwifery specialties in December 2019.

Results and Discussion. After analyzing the results of the survey, the students in the two specialties demonstrated high levels of satisfaction with their achievements in the ESP course regarding their basic language skills for the Nursing students (48,15%) and knowledge acquisition in the chosen area for the Midwifery students (46,10%) (Fig. 1).

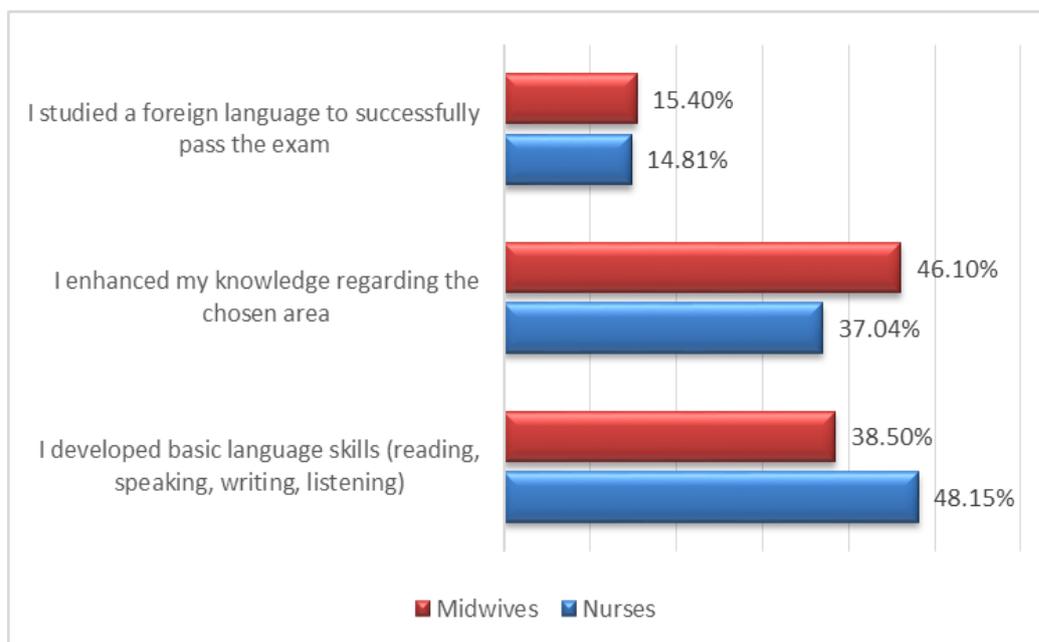


Fig. 1. ESP learning achievements

Many of the surveyed students indicated that they have enriched their knowledge related to their chosen field, respectively for the Midwifery specialty (46.10%) and the Nursing specialty (37.04%). Their answer correlates with the specifics of ESP, which focuses on specialized texts, terms and particular constructions in order to prepare the future specialists for successful

communication at a professional level. The share of the respondents who studied ESP only to pass the exam in both the Nursing and Midwifery specialty is very small (14.81%) : (15.40%).

The results of the study revealed that the majority of respondents had studied English at school. Thanks to the established positions of foreign language teaching in secondary

education and the numerous opportunities for inclusion in foreign language courses at different levels, there is a relatively low share

of absolute beginners for whom the language for specific purposes is a challenge (Fig. 2).

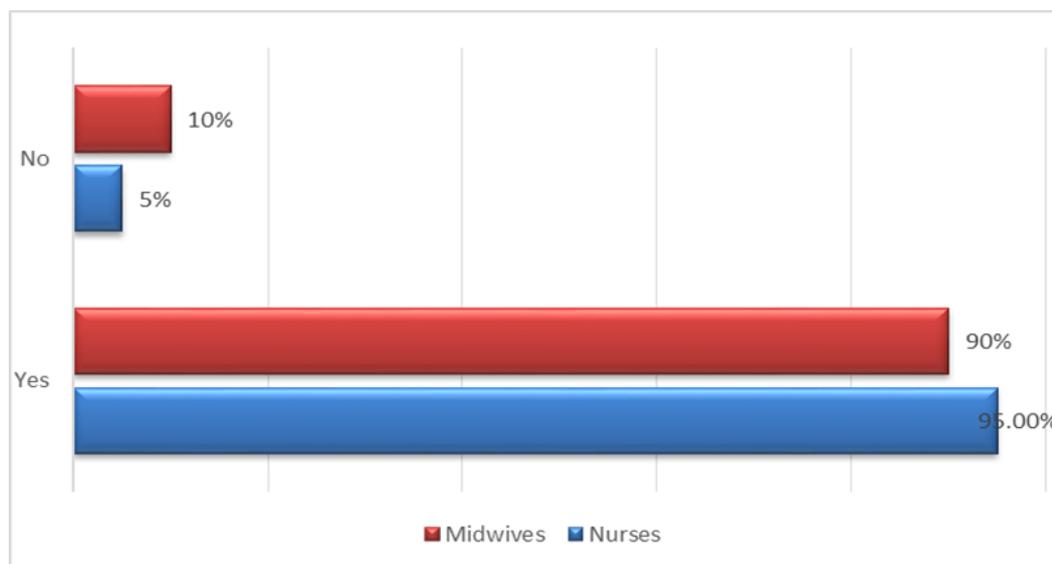


Fig. 2. Students who had previously studied English

Good language preparation is a prerequisite for further development of the four basic skills and upgrade of grammatical knowledge and the acquisition of new vocabulary. The share of the respondents with previous language training in the Nursing specialty is higher (95%) and relatively lower in the Midwifery specialty (90%). Foreign language learning is widespread in Bulgarian secondary education, especially after Bulgaria's accession to the European Union. The fact that students have different language levels is dictat-

ed by the varying tuition hours of the schools that students graduated from. The use of diagnostic tests determining the level of language proficiency at the beginning of the ESP course will also allow us to determine whether there are *false beginners* or *absolute beginners* who require a different individual approach to learning.

We tried to find out if the students' interest in general English increased as a result of the ESP training (Fig. 3).

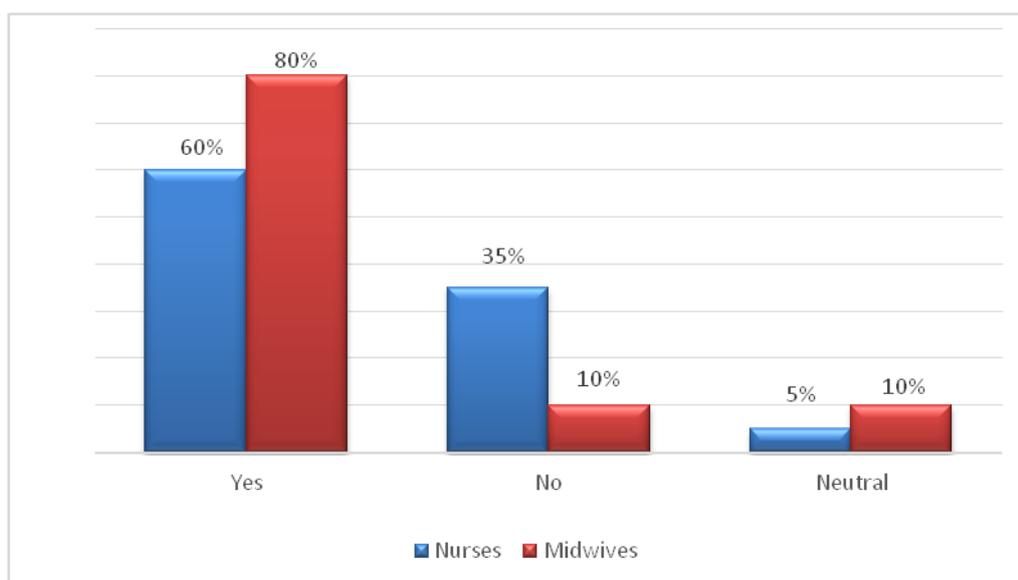


Fig. 3. Increased interest in English

The increased interest in the foreign language is a sign of ambition, perseverance and desire for self-improvement, qualities without which success and personal development are impossible. Foreign language fluency breaks

down barriers and fosters collaboration between professional communities.

Our findings provided evidence of what aroused interest in ESP among the students of both specialties (Fig. 4).

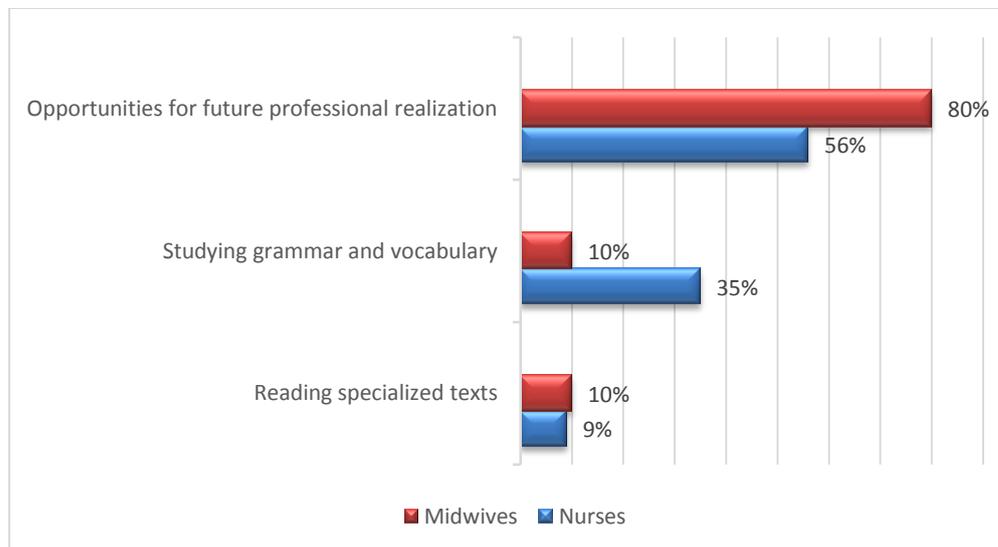


Fig. 4. Reasons arousing students' interest in ESP

The results indicated insignificant differences in terms of the reasons that arouse interest in ESP in the two groups of respondents. The leading reason they pointed is “the opportunities for future professional

realization” among students from the Nursing and Midwifery specialty (56%) : (80%).

The surveyed students of both specialties highly appreciate the benefits of ESP as a discipline (Fig. 5).

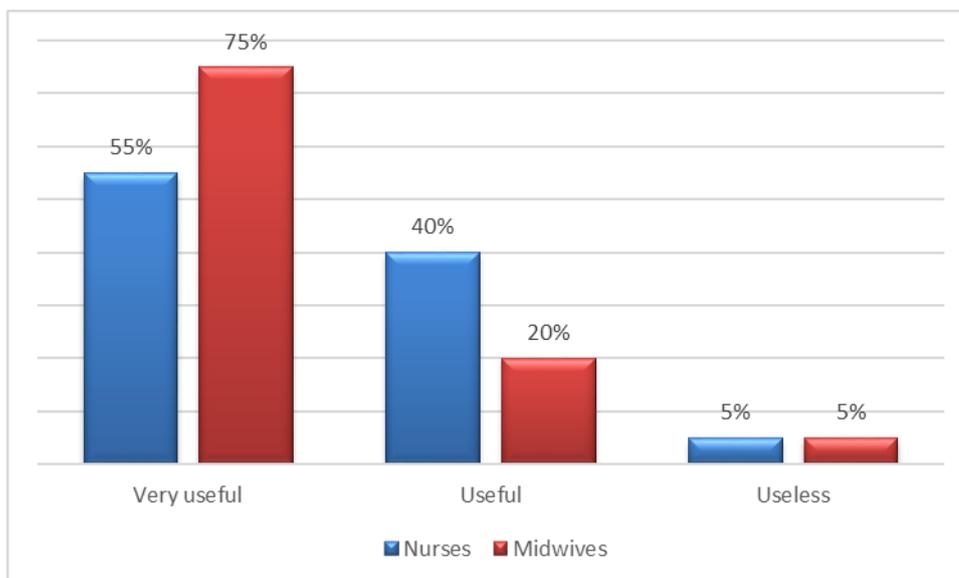


Fig. 5. Benefits of ESP as a discipline

By comparing the results, we noticed similarities in the respondents' opinion about the benefits of ESP. Greater number of Midwifery students stated that the discipline is “very useful” (75%). More than half of the Nursing

students gave a positive evaluation of the discipline (55%). Equal share of the respondents in the two groups considered the discipline “useless” (5%). Foreign language learning also promotes critical thinking skills. Through

the learning process, the students undergo the entire Bloom's Learning framework – they must remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate and synthesize information. The cognitive processes mandate that foreign language learning start with knowing and understanding grammar rules, vocabulary, different contexts and uses, and pronunciations. As students comprehend the basics, they start to apply learned concepts by analyzing word choices and building sentence structures. Ultimately, students start to synthesize their thoughts and translate them coherently and

cohesively in a new language. As critical thinking is essential for success in higher education, it is a short leap to connect foreign language learning to greater academic competency and job performance. Because the foreign language learning process replicates the critical thinking process, it should be considered part of a core curriculum rather than an elective course [4].

The interpretation of the findings clearly outlined the students' recommendations for the ESP course (Fig. 6).

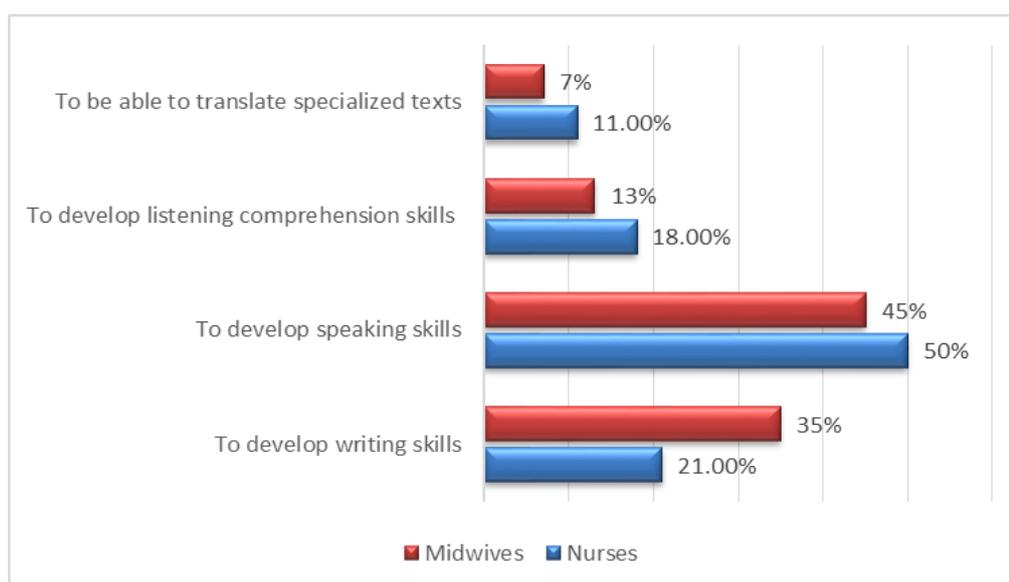


Fig. 6. Students' recommendations for the ESP course

The data from the comparative analysis reveal insignificant differences in the respondents' recommendations for the course. Developing speaking skills is the leading suggestion among the Nursing and Midwifery students (50%):(45%). The high percentage suggests that the students are aware of the fact that language is a way of effective communication that would be impossible without proficiency in a foreign language. Developing speaking skills is followed by developing writing skills among Midwifery (35%) and Nursing students (21%). Mastering writing

skills goes beyond just conveying ideas in a written text. The written text is an effective way of expressing empathy, as well as sharing language in context, which goes beyond the notion of written discourse. Moreover, it could be a measure of success and achievement.

We aimed at exploring the students' difficulties in the ESP learning environment and identified some of the current challenges that the students may encounter in the process of studying ESP (Fig. 7).

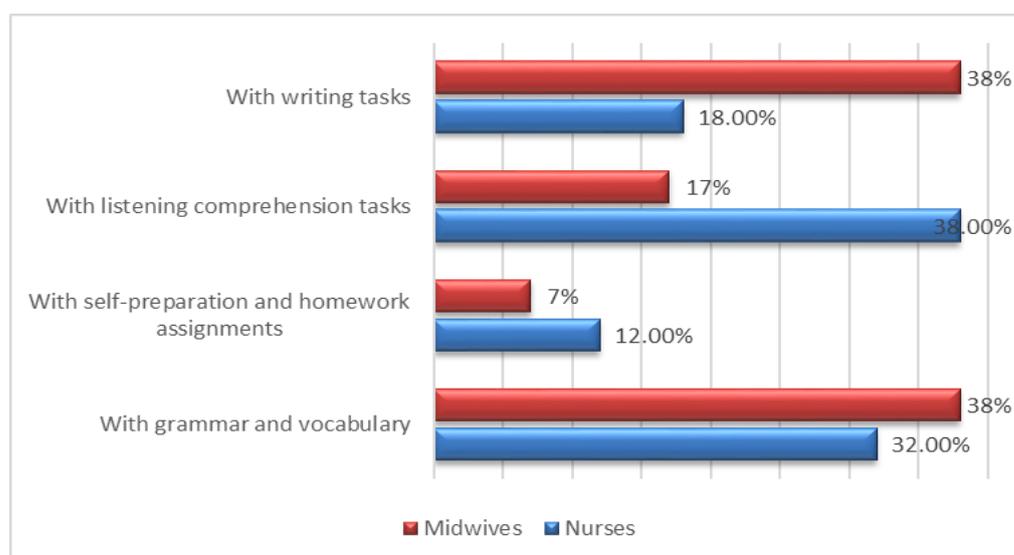


Fig. 7. Students' difficulties in the ESP course

Nevertheless, these difficulties should be viewed as challenges and the most challenging task for student midwives is acquiring grammar and vocabulary (38%). A relatively large proportion of Nursing students found it difficult to complete listening comprehension tasks (38%). The same number of Midwifery students faced challenges with writing tasks (38%).

Implications:

– A relatively large part of the surveyed students indicated that they enriched their knowledge related to their chosen field, respectively for the Midwifery and Nursing specialty (46.10%) : (37.04%).

– Minor differences were noticed in the reasons that arouse interest in ESP among the two groups of respondents. Interest in learning ESP is generated by the “opportunities for future professional realization” among the students of both the Nursing (80%) and Midwifery specialty (56%).

– The data of the comparative analysis suggest insignificant differences in the respondents' recommendations for the discipline. Students' preference to develop speaking skills is the leading recommendation for the discipline for student nurses (50%) and student midwives (45%).

Conclusion: According to scientists, learning a foreign language helps improve concentration, protects the brain from ageing, and develops a number of skills, most important of which is the ability to learn. The main incentive for Nursing and Midwifery students to study ESP is the successful professional realization and the development of basic communication skills. Higher education institutions have established positions in foreign language teaching. Building language culture is a prerequisite for young professionals because language is a phenomenon without borders in the world of globalization.

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УДОВЛЕТВОРЕННОСТЬ СТУДЕНТОВ КУРСОМ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ДЛЯ СПЕЦИАЛЬНЫХ ЦЕЛЕЙ (ESP)

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***Аннотация.** Языковая подготовка в высших учебных заведениях сопровождает образование в различных профессиональных областях – медицине, экономике, юриспруденции, инженерии и т. д. В данной статье представлен обзор мотивов студентов, получающих образование по специальностям «сестринское дело» и «акушерство», которые неизбежно приводят к улучшению как языковой, так и профессиональной подготовки будущих медицинских специалистов. В работе также исследуется уровень удовлетворенности студентов курсом английского языка для специальных целей (ESP). Проанализировав результаты опроса, можно сделать вывод, что студенты двух специальностей продемонстрировали высокий уровень удовлетворенности своими достижениями в курсе ESP в отношении базовых языковых навыков (студенты-медсестры – 48,15%) и углубленных языковых навыков по выбранной специальности (студенты-акушеры – 46,10%). Главным стимулом для студентов в изучении английского языка для специальных целей является успешная профессиональная реализация и развитие основных коммуникативных навыков.*

***Ключевые слова:** английский для конкретных целей, студенты, профессиональная реализация, удовлетворение.*