



**Title of Report:** Professional English Course for nurses and healthcare Professionals

**Case Report Author:** Cuca Righini, Academic Coordinator and Vinicius Nobre, Product Manager

**Training Organization:** [Associação Cultural Inglesa São Paulo](#)<sup>1</sup>, São Paulo, Brazil

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## **1. Identify and describe the training program.**

The increasing number of foreigners coming to São Paulo, Brazil who are seeking high quality medical treatment and hospital care has generated a pressing demand in recent years for nurses and healthcare professionals to communicate in English more competently and effectively. Therefore, in almost all the well reputed hospitals in the city, there is an urgent need for the professional knowledge and skills, which once could be easily provided solely in Portuguese, to be transferred very rapidly into English. Communicative competence in English has become a very important qualification for healthcare professionals and nurses.

As a result of this context, clients' expectations have been for a short duration (e.g., six months) English course with linguistic content intimately related to the nurses' daily job activities. They also desire quick results that could be easily verified and are measurable in practice.

The Professional English Course for Nurses and Healthcare Professionals lasted for sixteen weeks. It consisted of forty-eight hours of face-to-face lessons, and twelve hours of programmed self-study, for a total of sixty hours. Both teachers are very experienced teaching practitioners with international qualifications in EFL and university degrees. The main course tutor also holds a PhD in Biomedicine.

## **2. Describe the target audience for the training programs.**

The Human Resources Department at HCor (Hospital do Coração – The Heart Hospital) in São Paulo, Brasil asked Cultura Inglesa São Paulo to design a tailor made ESP course. The participants were a group of twenty hospital staff members who were nurses and healthcare professionals.

## **3. Describe the needs assessment procedures utilized to develop the program.**

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The course objectives were defined based on a needs analysis interview with the chief nurse in charge of the training program for in-service qualified nurses. The questions for this interview are listed below.

1. Who is the target public for the course? What are their professional qualifications? How many participants in the class?
2. Where will the lessons take place? What are the resources available?
3. How are the results of the course going to be measured? How will progress and performance of participants be assessed?
4. What are the expectations of the hospital vis-à-vis this program?
5. What is the time frame available?
  - a. How much time do participants have for self-study?
  - b. How many lessons are there per week?
  - c. What is the expected time frame for the achievement of the desired objectives?
6. What is the participants' availability for a placement test and oral interview?

Based on the initial needs analysis, the syllabus was structured around three main elements: (1) lexis to describe parts of the body, body functions and body systems; (2) lexis to describe the main ailments and diseases, the main symptoms of pain and exam procedures; and (3) functions and speech moves of the typical communicative interactions between patient and healthcare professionals.

#### **4. Explain the English language training program's over-arching goals and specific objectives.**

As a result of the needs assessment process, the course objectives were defined by a four-fold statement. That is, by the end of the course nurses will be able to:

1. Refer to the human body and its system more confidently in English.
2. Describe and ask about ailments and diseases and their symptoms in English more confidently.
3. Describe and explain procedures to prepare for an exam and procedures and routine for the administration of medicine in English more confidently.
4. Carry out their routine tasks and communicate with the patients in English more confidently and effectively.



At the end of the course, participants should be better able to interact effectively with a foreign patient in English in order to obtain a precise diagnosis of the complaint. Participants should be better equipped linguistically to do the following in English:

- Carry out a pain assessment efficiently.
- Carry out an anamnesis and take a medical history.
- Obtain from the patient precise information about symptoms.
- Communicate with the patient, keeping the right balance between warmth and formality.
- Refer to all the parts of the body, internal organs, and systems with confidence and precision.
- Clearly and objectively describe routine hospital procedures.
- Explain exam procedures.
- Give instructions on the administration of medicine, as well as on the most usual pre-operative and post-operative care procedures.

#### **5. Describe the teaching methods and training procedures used in the program.**

Descriptions of twenty real-life cases of patient encounters were produced by HCor to be used as simulations during the course and in the final assessment. In addition, hospital forms and institutional manuals used by these professionals every day were provided by HCor and analyzed by the course designer.

The course designer produced the first draft of the course program to be approved by the chief nurse in the training department at the hospital. Then the course designer researched different potential resources to be used in the class.

#### **6. Describe the teaching materials used in the program.**

Both the spoken and written texts used in the course were selected from a range of published materials and websites. A course book was suggested as main support material and had to be acquired by all the students. This was *Professional English in Use – Medicine* (published by Cambridge University Press and written by Eric H. Glendinning and Ron Howard).

Some video snippets were taken from the TV series E.R., but almost all visual and audio materials were taken from websites such as the following:

<http://www.nhs.uk/>  
<http://www.nursingtimes.net/>  
<http://www.youtube.com/>  
<http://health.nytimes.com>  
<http://health.yahoo.net/>



<http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/>

Other support materials included two course books: *Cambridge English for Nursing – Pre Intermediate* by Virginia Allum and Patricia McGarr, and *Oxford English for Careers – Nursing* by Tony Grice.

## **7. Explain the content of the English language training program.**

### **A. What written and spoken genres are covered in the training program?**

The course focuses mainly on spoken genres. The privileged genre was certainly carrying out interviews, but the course also tackles describing procedures, giving instructions and explanations, and obtaining information about symptoms. As far as writing is concerned, participants are exposed to a more limited scope of genres specific to the job and not intended to be explored in depth. Some examples are: discharge papers, forms, emails.

### **B. What communicative functions are covered in the training program?**

Since the course was designed on a more functional framework, a very wide range of functions are covered. Each lesson revolves around a specific function, which allows participants to be exposed to about 40 different functional features of the language for their professional context. Some examples are:

- Explain procedure for admissions in the hospital and give directions on how to get to different departments,
- Interview a patient in order to fill in the first 4 fields of the Initial Evaluation form: vital signs and anthropometric data,
- Give instructions on body movements and main body positions to a patient,
- Explain main respiratory conditions,
- Carry out an interview with a patient in order to take his/her medical history,
- Explain how to use medication to a patient: Types/ Methods/ Dosage,

### **C. What speech events are covered in the training program?**

Important speech events covered in this curriculum include initial patient evaluation and triage, anamnesis and physical examination, pain assessment, and instructions on hospital routine, safety procedures, and functioning of equipment. Explanations of procedures for exams, pre-operative procedures and post-operative care are also covered.

## **8. Explain the delivery mechanisms employed by the program.**



The course was designed to use forty-eight hours of face-to-face tuition in class with a teacher on the HCor premises. There are also twelve hours of programmed self-study online.

**9. Explain the assessment procedures used in the program.**

In order to guarantee the success of the program in the time span established by the hospital, it was agreed that the candidates should have an entry level of linguistic knowledge of general English equivalent to CEFR level B1. Therefore, candidates took a written placement test online and a face-to-face oral interview with teachers from the Cultura Inglesa. Only ten candidates were accepted.

Nurses were assessed based on their performance in simulated situations in class to replicate real-life encounters with foreign patients in the hospital. The assessment tasks and assessment criteria can be found in Appendix A.

**10. Explain the program evaluation mechanisms used.**

Participants answered a satisfaction survey questionnaire twice. First, during the course and later, at the end of the course, they gave feedback on the course objectives, the lessons, the resources used, and their own performance and progress.

**11. Discuss the challenges involved in offering this English training program.**

In order to achieve the required results in such a short span of time, we decided to move away from teaching language traditionally, through grammar patterns and vocabulary items. Instead, we followed a lexical approach to teaching whole chunks of language. That choice entailed exposing students to authentic audio and written texts in their field of expertise, and helping them observe the main lexical phrases and patterns of interaction. They were subsequently offered opportunities to experiment with the new language in simulated situations in the classroom, supervised and aided by the teacher.

We knew that this format would be challenging for students who are not used to being independent risk takers. It was also very challenging for the teachers, who were sometimes overwhelmed with the idea of teaching English on a subject they had not mastered. However, it was clear that tapping into the professional knowledge and expertise of the nurses and other health care professionals, and having the teachers as the language/communication experts and facilitators of learning (rather than the providers of information), was the most effective way of achieving the desired results in the time frame.

It took some time for both parties to adapt to this new approach to language learning and teaching. However, the resulting positive outcomes soon convinced the participants of the validity of such an approach.



**12. Describe the successes of the program and explain how they are documented.**



The success of this course can be measured partially by the high marks given by the participants in the satisfaction survey. More qualitatively, the testimonials from the participants themselves were informative. One such comment is transcribed below, in an email sent to one of the teachers (translated from the original Portuguese):

*“Dear teacher,  
Yesterday I had to use my English with a tourist from London! I was very nervous!!!! As usual, I sweated a lot! But it was a big success! He came to Brazil to spend Carnival in Rio and to São Paulo to visit some friends. Then, all of a sudden, he had a very strong renal colic. He took a taxi and arrived at the Emergency Room. Guess who they called to talk to him? Me! It was really good! We managed to understand each other very well. I thank you once again, my dear teacher and friend!”*

This course has now been adapted and it is being offered on a B-to-C basis (Business to Consumer) in one of the branches at Cultura Inglesa São Paulo for a wider spectrum of healthcare professionals. In other words, it has evolved so that we could sell it straight to our individual clients/students, whereas it was originally designed to be sold only to other businesses such as hospitals and med schools (a B-to-B model).



## Appendix A: Final Assessment Task

 Ingles é mais que Ingles. É cultura.		<b>Oral Assessment_CA3</b>
HCor: English for Nursing		

### CA3\_ Description of Task

1. Obtain all the necessary information from a foreign patient in order to fill in the Initial Patient Evaluation Form.
2. Interact with a foreign patient in the situations below, following the routine procedures of the hospital:
  - a. The patient has pressed the bell to inform that he/she is feeling out of breath after coming back from the toilet.
  - b. A diabetic in-patient needs to be informed of the correct procedures on how to apply insulin.
  - c. An in-patient is about to go through a catheterization. Explain the steps of this procedure all the safety measures involved in it.
  - d. An in-patient is about to be discharged from hospital. What are the procedures? What are the important aspects to be checked? What are the important instructions that should be given to the patient?

### Features to be assessed:

- Clarity of pronunciation and intonation.
- Appropriate use of lexical items and structure.
- Appropriate tone and register (warm but formal) when interacting with the patient.
- Clarity and precision in giving information to patient and making sure the patient has understood the information correctly.
- Asking for clarification appropriately and making sure that the information obtained is actually correct.