

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Mandarin for Nursing Students**

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### **1 Introduction**

This proposed language for specific purposes (LSP) course is designed for nursing students in a two-year nursing degree program at a community college. Within this LSP context, the course is tailored to train foreign language learners to apply their professional knowledge and skills within their specialized field in the target language. The course therefore aims to train students with limited knowledge of Chinese to be able to communicate with and to provide timely assistance for Chinese-speaking patients in a medical setting.

Limited staff in nursing and health care professionals in developed English-speaking countries (e.g. the U.K., Australia, and the U.S.) has increased the demand of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses such as “English for nursing” or “English for health care professionals” (“Nursing Shortage”, n.d.), and an abundant amount of ESP textbooks, dictionaries, and web resources for health care professionals have been developed to meet this

need. For most ESP courses for nurses, the target learners are immigrant nurses working in an English speaking environment, and the topics are centered on acculturation—to teach the immigrant nurses how to better communicate with their colleagues and the patients in the mainstream culture. For this project, however, the target learners of this proposed LSP course are English-speaking nursing students who work in an English-speaking environment but regularly interact with second language speakers of English. To that end, the objective of this course is to train future nurses to communicate with Chinese patients in the patients' language.

While there are many well-established ESP programs to satisfy English as a Foreign or Second Language (EFL/ESL) learners' communication needs in various professions at different levels, few LSP projects—especially those of less commonly taught languages—are as systematically organized or as long-established as their ESP counterparts. Since LSP projects are inherently need-based, it is not possible to establish a standardized LSP project in a given expertise and then have it to be adopted for any language. The design of any LSP project has to consider all stakeholders' needs and also has to adjust itself to any change in the specialized field (e.g., learners' language proficiency, teaching materials, work policies). Although existing ESP courses for health care professionals might share some common ground with this LSP project, the target learners' social identities in this context may restructure the design and content of the course. In designing this LSP project, several crucial elements such as the difference between the nurses' and the patients' culture, the collection of authentic teaching materials, learners' needs and so on cannot be simply borrowed from similar LSP projects in other languages. Therefore, the present LSP project attempts to illustrate why a project for nurses in Mandarin is necessary despite the fact that there are already many similar ESP projects for nurses in existence.

## 1.1 Institutional Background

In addition to accommodating the uniqueness of the target language and learners, the proposed LSP project has important implications on the foreign language courses offered at my institution, Queensborough Community College (QCC), as well as the welfare of new immigrants in the community.

Queensborough Community College is a two-year community college under the system of the City University of New York (CUNY), and it confers A.A.S. degrees on nursing majors. Since 2004, the Chinese program at QCC has grown both in size and scope, from 28 students to approximately 450 students today. The demand for language courses is increasing and also becoming more diversified. Many students express their interest in courses such as business Chinese, nursing Chinese, and legal Chinese. The college is also promoting “service learning” courses, which encourage students to apply their professional knowledge in assisting with community affairs. While the need for LSP courses is clear and immediate, currently QCC only has one LSP course, “Business Chinese for Advanced Speakers”.

From the community’s perspective, QCC is located in an Asian immigrant community, with 44.3% of the population being of Asian descent and more than half of those Chinese. Many clinics in the community need health care assistants and/or nurses who can communicate in simple Mandarin. In addition to Chinese immigrants, there are other immigrant groups that call for bilingual or multilingual health care professionals.

The nursing program is regarded as one of the most demanding and top programs at QCC. Although foreign language courses are not required by the nursing program, many nursing students choose to take one or even two semesters of foreign language courses because they believe that knowing a foreign language may enhance their employability. Considering that nursing majors who take foreign language courses would usually take two courses and there are many heritage speakers of Chinese at the college who express interest in learning the heritage language for professional purposes, the proposed course will be designed as an alternative to the second semester of elementary Chinese. The prerequisite of this course is therefore only one semester of elementary Chinese or equivalent.

The objectives of the course have to be consistent with other foreign language courses offered at QCC, that is, students are expected to be able to listen, speak, read, and write the target language at the corresponding level. Likewise, since many nursing majors plan to transfer to a four-year college within the CUNY system, and nursing majors at QCC may take one semester (approx. 16 weeks) of foreign language class (3 or 4 credits) as a liberal arts elective, in order to align with the CUNY's standardized curriculum, the proposed course will be listed as a 3-credit, elective in the course catalogue so that students taking this course can transfer the credits to other CUNY colleges.

The course will be taught in a traditional classroom setting. The instructor(s) will be from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. According to the current student population at QCC, the linguistic profiles of students who will take this course are predicted to be mixed—one-third of the students are likely to be L1 Spanish learners while one-fourth of the

students are likely to be L1 Korean learners. Due to administrative reasons, students of all majors will be allowed to take this course either as an elective or to fulfill their foreign language requirement.

## **2 Needs Analysis**

The needs analysis will be carried out in several ways and gather information about the needs of all possible stakeholders. The first step will be to distribute questionnaires to instructors in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, faculty in the Nursing Department, and the nursing majors respectively. The questionnaire for foreign language instructors will focus on their experiences teaching nursing majors. Job-related questions and/or specific vocabulary or phrases commonly asked for by nursing majors in the foreign language classroom will be a great indicator for future development of teaching materials. The instructors can also provide cultural insights in developing the curriculum and learning outcomes.

The questionnaire for nursing faculty will investigate what aspects of the healthcare system, the medical process, and situations in the workplace would benefit most from language assistance. It will also ask nursing faculty to provide medical terminology and explanations that are most frequently used when nurses provide medical assistance to the patients. While there have been demands from nursing students at QCC that they want to learn “more practical” dialogues and frequently used words in clinics or hospitals, it is not clear how much training and materials are necessary or to what extent the proposed LSP course should provide these to meet the students’ needs. To help answer these questions, a survey will also be given to nursing

majors. In addition, students who work as clinic receptionists or in any medical setting might also provide useful data for needs analysis.

In addition to the questionnaires, several other sources of information will also be used in identifying the needs of the course. The administration's concerns and expectations, such as the numbers of enrollment, mission of the institution, and financial support will also be explored. As well, interviews with Chinese immigrants in the community, especially opinions and feedback from local charity organizations and minority groups, will also be included. Other possible information sources might include interpreters, doctors, in-service registered nurses, and interns who work for local hospitals.

The results will be reported in written form to the chairs of Foreign Languages and Nursing departments, as well as to the Dean of academic affairs. After a consensus is reached at the college, a proposal will be sent to local minority organizations to seek opportunities for external funding.

### **3 Student Learning Outcomes**

Since the needs analysis has not been carried out yet, the design of student learning outcomes (SLOs) is based on the standardized course objectives at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at QCC, similar LSP courses in other languages, feedback from colleagues, and my students majoring in nursing.

As this course is an alternative for the second-semester course in Elementary Chinese, some of the SLOs are designed to be in line with the outcomes for that course, such as:

1. Master the “pinyin” phonetic system, four tones and intonation patterns in Mandarin
2. Provide basic information about themselves, their classmates, family, and hobbies
3. Participate in simple conversations on everyday topics and express preferences

In addition to the above, the course should provide further practice in speaking and listening skills at the elementary level, especially conversations in the medical setting. It will also help students to recognize and write simple medical instructions and signs in Chinese characters. Another important objective of the course is to raise students’ cultural awareness so that they could avoid cultural misunderstanding and understand taboos in the patients’ culture. The following outcomes describe the language skills, performances, and culture competencies that are peculiar to the proposed LSP course. By completing this course, students are expected to be able to:

4. Understand urgent medical needs by recognizing key words and/or phrases in the target language
5. Translate printed or written simple medical instructions from English to Chinese orally
6. Conduct simple conversations in the medical settings, such as checking in patients and acquiring basic information from patients
7. Relay simple information from the doctor to the patients
8. Recognize and understand the interactions patterns in Chinese language and culture

9. Understand beliefs and customs related to the medical setting and situations in Chinese culture

Considering the main goal of the LSP course—to train beginning learners of Chinese to provide timely and basic assistance in the medical setting—the minimum requirement for the learners to achieve the goal is to be able to understand and interpret high-frequency medical terms, which are described in outcomes (4) and (5) above. Outcomes (6) and (7) are extended from the standardized outcomes (2) and (3). Since the students are required to be able to conduct basic conversations and provide information, they are expected to have the proficiency to conduct simple conversations and exchange information in the medical setting as well. It is without any doubt that cultural competence and understanding are an integral part of a foreign language course; the expected learning outcomes (8) and (9) are essential to the LSP course not only because they address the importance of culture but also because cultural sophistication (e.g., taboo in the target culture) may benefit the interaction between the healthcare professionals and the patients.

#### **4 Materials**

Since there are not many Chinese language courses for nurses or healthcare professionals, the compilation of course materials must start from scratch. The information collected from nursing professors during the needs analysis might serve as a good source for teaching materials (see above). Field observations will also be conducted in order to collect real-life linguistic samples of nursing Chinese. Through discourse analysis of the collected linguistic samples, I hope to construct a list of sentence patterns, words, and phrases that are frequently used in the

medical setting. English for specific purposes or other LSP textbooks for nurses and healthcare professionals will also be examined for possible adaptation for the course. Forms, signs, posters, and written documents alike from hospitals and clinics can also be used as authentic materials for the course. Lastly, role-play scripts will be prepared with consultation from nursing professors, in-service nurses, doctors, and volunteer patients.

### **5 Assessment and Evaluation**

Since this course is the second course for students of Chinese at the elementary level, it is assumed that the variation in students' linguistic abilities will not be too significant. However, because this course will be offered as the first LSP course for beginning learners at QCC, an early assessment of reading, speaking, and listening knowledge and an evaluation of the course by foreign language and nursing faculty and by the students will be considered after the first month of teaching. The early assessment and evaluation will help ensure learners' needs were properly identified and allow for necessary adjustments to be made appropriately. During the semester, quizzes in the form of short sentence translations and conversations will be used to assess the students' reading, speaking, and listening skills. An achievement assessment in the form of a final exam will be utilized at the end of the course. The assessment might be conducted in the form of controlled role-play situations, translations, and a written test on cultural knowledge. The results of the assessment will be analyzed and incorporated into future revision of the course design.

A post-course survey that investigates the students' feedback will also ask the students to self-evaluate their performance in this course. In addition, class observations will be made by

foreign language professors and nursing professors. The results of the assessments, survey, class observation, and the instructor's teaching log will be reviewed by all engaged members (including sponsors) of the LSP project. If possible, health care organizations and/or schools that offer similar LSP projects will be asked to also help evaluate the course.

## **6 Conclusion**

This LSP project will be a pioneer project at QCC and might be used as a template for other LSP courses offered in the future. It is hoped that this LSP project can be partially applicable to projects in the same area of expertise as well as other LSP projects in Mandarin. The LSP project will increase nursing students' competitiveness in job market and in applications for nursing programs in a four-year college.

Although this proposal tries its best to explore all existing sources and to consider all stakeholders' needs, the outcome is never known until the course materializes. One of the biggest challenges to teach at a community college is that students' learning attitudes and abilities vary to a considerable extent every year. It is often found that the design of a course does not meet students' expectations or the other way around. Another constraint is the college's support. Due to budget cuts, the administration expects high enrollment for every course, which is not easy for a newly offered course. Another possible obstacle is that close collaboration between different departments, units, and teaching faculties might not be easily achieved.

As a foreign language instructor and researcher, designing language courses, writing lesson plans, and assessing students' linguistic performance are familiar to me. However, writing

this project made me realize that factors that may influence the construction and execution of a course are far more than I originally assumed. The development of LSP projects is an ongoing process. Although all LSP projects probably find some common ground in the process of course design and share similar issues, the needs-based and needs-driven characteristics of LSP projects mean that every LSP project is one of a kind.