

ON-JOB COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCIES OF DENTISTS IN PONDICHERRY

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Globalization nowadays has significantly influenced the activity and endurance of organizations around the world; the business of dentistry has not been resistant. Dentists are the people who have to deal with various individuals during their practice, have to explain the treatment plans, instructions if any to the patients, and so on. Patients with multicultural backgrounds would need to be explained in the common connecting language; in India English is the connecting language. The difficulties faced by the dentists are that they are fluent in medical terms but have to be trained appropriately to explain in layman's terms to the patients for their better understanding in a place like Pondicherry (the study area) have patients from other countries also as it is one among the few places of Dental Tourism in India. Apart from this, there is no separate course in English prescribed for dental students in India. The General English Course which the students study till their senior secondary schooling would not be sufficient to understand a language like English and communicate. A Specific English course has to be the need of the hour for Dental students so that it could be useful and prepare them for their professional excellence. Hence, a study of this kind aims to identify the required communicative competencies for Dentists in practice. The findings will help in deciding the required skill sets for the recommendation of the ESP curriculum prescribed for Dentists.

Keywords: communication, competencies, ESP, dentists, curriculum, etc.

Introduction

Globalization has significantly affected the activity and endurance of organizations around the world; the business of dentistry has not been resistant. Dentists are the people who have to deal with various individuals during their practice, have to explain the treatment plans, instructions if any to the patients. Patients with multicultural background would need to be explained in the common connecting language, in our country English is the connecting language. As well the difficulty faced by the dentists is that they are fluent in medical terms but have to be trained properly to explain in the layman terms to the patients for their better understanding, places like Pondicherry have patients from other countries also as they are among the few places of Dental Tourism in India. Apart from this there is no separate subject of English for dental students. The General English Course, what the students study till their senior secondary schooling would not be sufficient to understand the language and communicate. A Specific English course has to be made for the Dental students so that it could be useful and prepare them for their future practice. To know the importance and need of English for Medical Purposes course this research is conducted.

Researchers in communication studies, medicine, dentistry, and dental hygiene stated that communication is central and fundamental to the patient-provider relationship, to patient motivation, to prevention behaviour, and to patient satisfaction, compliance with treatments and prescriptions, and health outcomes.

Competence in communication is vital for our health, our relationship, and indeed for all of the activities in which we engage as functioning humans (Hannawa & Spitzberg, 2015). In the medical field, communication skill became one of six required competencies by the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education in 2003. Kalkfwarf (1995) called for dental faculty to become culturally competent so they can pass the knowledge on to staff and students and, ultimately, to practicing dentists. Jameson (2002) showed that competent communication could help control stress in the dental office, decrease burnout and dropout, improve relationships among team members, and increase productivity.

Dentistry is a people-focused profession, in which effective communication skills are increasingly important. The increasing importance of communication in the domain of dentistry has paved the way for the identification of the required productive skills for the effective functioning. In order to understand the competencies required for the dentists, a study has been intended to identify the required reading competence for the dentists working in Pondicherry.

Review of Literature

Learning a second language is a different process than acquiring the native or first language that is the factors which affect the second language acquisition is different from that of the native language. Special care needs to be given for those factors governing second language acquisition. Except few, for many, English is not the native language of health care workers. But the need to communicate the clinical findings, research results, idea sharing and publishing the clinical scenarios need to be done in English language. So health care workers particularly doctors need to be proficient in English to communicate and get information to be updated in their field.

The trend in medical and dental health care sector is changing. The paternalistic approach of (father knows better) treatment has gone. In which clinician will choose the treatment option for the patient, he need not explain it to patient and patient becomes a passive receiver treatment without knowing even what treatment is being done. So a specific curriculum needs to be given for clinicians, As Munby (1991 cited in Silva, 2002) states, needs analysis is an important factor in the specification of an ESP course. Assisting teachers to identify particular needs of the learners and adopt appropriate teaching strategies, satisfying the learners' learning needs and motivating the learners to function language communicably are the main benefits of needs analysis.

Sara M. Atteya et al. (2017) conducted a study at Alexandria university and Pharos university to compare the attitudes of dental internship students towards need of communication skills in dental profession. A modified Dental Communication Skills Attitude Scale which is derived from Communication Skills Attitude Scale (CSAS) originally developed for medical students. The instrument of assessment was questionnaire in this study. Brian Laurence, D.D.S. et al., (2012) state that training communication skills could be improved, and lack of practice for a prolonged period can significantly affect the communication skills. We need to note here that if not reinforced even the interest to learn and practice proper communication technique diminishes. American Dental Education Association (ADEA) also mentioned that communicative and interpersonal skills are one of the areas where the future dentists must improve their knowledge and practicing ability.

Dentists are not only treating patients, once they finish their under graduation they become clinical tutors helping the under graduation students in some colleges, after finishing post-graduation they become assistant professors and further on. In a course like that of dentistry where demand for professional skills like clinical skills in which artistic precision is of utmost important, students are concerned over their

clinical skills much which would help in their future practice. But it is noteworthy that even effective communication is also one of the skills needed for their practice.

These studies have indicated a growing interest among researchers in the medical and health-care unit in English language learning, teaching, designing courses and setting instruction strategies, and knowing the classroom discourse in ESL/EFL framework.

Methodology of the study

Dentists working in the private hospitals in Pondicherry have been selected as population of this research. In facilitating this sampling by using a handle that if the subject is less than 100, better taken all so that the research is a population study. The samples have been chosen according to the convenient of the participants and the researcher. A questionnaire has been used as a research instrument in this research to collect the responses from the dentists working in the hospitals in Pondicherry. The contents in the questionnaire have been extracted from the selected Essential Skills Profiles comprehensively documented by ESDC, Canada. The ability descriptors of the dentists were converted to 'need to' statement in order to identify the required communicative competencies of the dentists. In order to validate the research instrument, the researcher piloted the questionnaire on twenty (20) dentists within the Pondicherry hospitals. In this study, the data was collected by using a questionnaire floated among 121 dentists working in different hospitals in Pondicherry region. The researcher was able to collect only 100 responses. 21 responses are found incomplete and duplicate; hence they were eliminated from the research.

Results and Discussion

The data for this study was analysed using Statistical software known as SPSS (version 22). In this research, the frequency analysis has been deployed in order to identify how frequently the dentists use these communicative competencies when they are on job. The findings of the frequencies help the researcher to identify the most important competency to the least one.

I need to read short explanations and instructions on labels of drugs and dental materials

	Frequency	Percentage
Most often	26	26.0
Often	54	54.0
Less often	19	19.0
Not at all	1	1.0
Total	100	100

It is understood from Table-7 that the majority of the dentists i.e., 54 responded that they often need to read short explanations and instructions on labels of drugs and dental materials.

I need to read memos from co-workers and letters from colleagues and patients

	Frequency	Percentage
Most often	17	17.0
Often	49	49.0
Less often	29	29.0
Not at all	5	5.0
Total	100	100

It is found from Table-8 that there are 49 dentists (49%) read the instructions often show their professionalism reading the memos from their colleagues and patients in particular.

I need to read previous treatment records prior to clinical assessment and treatment

	Frequency	Percentage
Most often	52	52.0
Often	39	39.0
Less often	8	8.0
Not at all	1	1.0
Total	100	100

It is observed from Table-9 that there are 52 dentists with a percentage of 52% responded that they most often read previous treatment records prior to clinical assessment and treatment.

I need to read legislative changes and technological advances in dentistry to keep me updated

	Frequency	Percentage
Most often	43	43.0
Often	42	42.0
Less often	12	12.0
Not at all	3	3.0
Total	100	100

It is identified from Table-10 that there are 43 dentists (43%) responded that they read the legislative changes and technological advances in dentistry to keep them updated. There are similar number of dentists (42%) responded that they often read technological advances in the field of dentistry.

I need to read text books related to dentistry throughout the course of my practice that is even after the completion of my under graduation

	Frequency	Percentage
Most often	39	39.0
Often	45	45.0
Less often	15	15.0
Not at all	1	1.0
Total	100	100

It is seen from Table-11 that the majority of dentists i.e., 45 (45%) responded that they often read textbooks related to dentistry throughout their practice even after their studies.

I need to read wide range of academic journals, newsletters

	Frequency	Percentage
Most often	39	39.0
Often	49	49.0
Less often	12	12.0
Not at all	-	-
Total	100	100

It can be understood from Table-12 that the majority of dentists i.e., 49 (49%) responded that they often read wide range of academic journals, newsletters to keep them updated about the new treatment options for diseases, injuries, disorders, dysfunctions related to oral tissues.

I need to read flyer, notices about conferences, academic meetings, and presentations

	Frequency	Percentage
Most often	27	27.0
Often	54	54.0
Less often	17	17.0
Not at all	2	2.0
Total	100	100

It is understood from Table-13 that the maximum number of dentists i.e., 54 (54%) responded that they often need to read flyer, pamphlets about conference, academic meetings and presentations done in workshops, and so on.

I need to read feedbacks given in English from patients, laboratory staff and others

	Frequency	Percentage
Most often	26	26.0
Often	46	46.0
Less often	23	23.0
Not at all	5	5.0
Total	100	100

It can be observed from Table-14 that there are 46 dentists with a percentage of 46% responded that they read feedbacks given in English from patients, lab staff and others about the treatments.

Findings of the study

The identified reading competencies are hierarchically arranged according to their mean value in terms of the most required to the least required when the dentists are on job.

1. I need to make presentations in conferences, workshops to colleagues and community members (2.27)
2. I need to read memos from co-workers and letters from colleagues and patients (2.22)
3. I need to write short notes from medical and dental text books, websites to update myself to current treatment options (2.04)
4. I need to make presentations in English in order to create general dental awareness in educational institutions such as schools, colleges (2.02)
5. I need to read short explanations and instructions on labels of drugs, dental materials (1.94)
6. I need to read text books related to dentistry throughout the course of my practice, that is even after the completion of my under graduation (1.78)
7. I need to read legislative changes and technological advances in dentistry to keep me updated. (1.75)

8. I need to read wide range of academic journals, newsletters to keep me updated about the new treatment options for diseases, injuries, disorders, dysfunctions related to oral tissues (1.73)
9. I need to read previous treatment records prior to clinical assessment and treatment (1.58)

The arranged reading competencies after due statistical analysis as findings can be used to decide the training packs for developing the reading competencies of dentists working in Pondicherry hospitals. The findings can be used to prepare training modules for the freshers in the domain. The findings can be used communication skills experts including the competencies to be tested during in-service training.

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