

Exploring English Learning Experiences among Health Administration Students: Challenges, Role-Play, and Digital Readiness

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Abstract

In increasingly multicultural and technologically advanced clinical environments, English proficiency is a key competency for healthcare students. This qualitative exploratory study examined the English-learning experiences of four purposively selected Health Administration students at Universitas Mbojo Bima, Indonesia. Data from semi-structured interviews were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis. The results revealed four interconnected themes: (1) affective and linguistic barriers in language learning, (2) experiential changes through public health role-play simulations, (3) technological integration and underlying digital skepticisms, and (4) instrumental motivation and self-directed learning for future professional development. Students encountered ongoing challenges with pronunciation, vocabulary comprehension, and speaking anxiety stemming from prior passive learning. However, role-play simulations helped bridge the gap between general English and professional communication while enhancing cultural awareness. Additionally, digital readiness involved more than technological literacy; it included a critical understanding of the opportunities and limitations of AI and digital tools. Motivated by instrumental reasons, students pursued self-directed learning, viewing English proficiency as an essential asset for their future careers in health administration. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction. To better prepare students professionally, curricula should incorporate authentic communication, simulation-based learning, supportive teaching approaches, and critical digital literacy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

English proficiency is crucial for academic and professional achievement in the twenty-first century, particularly in healthcare-related fields. English facilitates international communication, collaboration, and participation in global professional and academic networks (Sun, 2023). Limited opportunities for authentic English communication, combined with speaking anxiety, continue to impede students' confidence and engagement in oral interaction (Quvanch et al., 2024). Language anxiety persists as a barrier to students' participation and language development, emphasizing the significance of establishing supportive and anxiety-mitigating learning environments (Bajri & Elmahdi, 2024). Speaking anxiety remains a persistent challenge in EFL learning, as it reduces students' confidence, participation, and fluency in oral communication (Alhasan et al., 2024).

Proficiency in English enhances employability, broadens access to global career opportunities, and supports professional advancement in increasingly internationalized workplaces (Rana & Shaikh, 2024; Taufik, 2024). The challenges posed by language barriers in healthcare highlight the need to enhance future healthcare professionals' English communication skills and intercultural competencies (Correia, 2025). Medical English education faces multiple challenges involving instructors, students, curriculum design, and technology integration, emphasizing the need for more interactive, technology-enhanced learning methods (Zolfaghari et al., 2025). Despite the growing importance of English proficiency, many students in non-English-speaking contexts continue to struggle to develop the required language skills.

Mastering English unlocks the world of modern medicine by enabling access to cutting-edge research, precise patient documentation, the use of new technologies, and global collaboration. The adoption of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in medical education opens global opportunities and deeper learning for students. However, it presents distinct challenges for non-native speakers (Alanazi, 2026). To turn these into stepping stones, higher education institutions must equip students with vital English skills for academic and professional success. Building upon this foundation, consider entering a healthcare classroom today: the global transition is evident as education now emphasizes English for Specific Purposes (ESP) over general English, thereby better preparing students for the communication demands of the professional and academic spheres influenced by globalization, the predominance of English in medical research, and the increasing prevalence of English-medium instruction (Aarvidurai et al., 2025; Ferguson, 2025; Stötzer & Farkas, 2024).

The communication demands of modern healthcare emphasize the importance of English language development among health administration students. The growing importance of English in healthcare underscores the need for targeted language training to enhance healthcare professionals' communication skills across local and global medical settings (Shanavas et al., 2024). To address language barriers, healthcare workers use mobile apps rather than official interpreters, which helps but also poses safety risks (Chang, 2026). However, the risks of relying on mobile translation apps underscore the need for professional language support in healthcare environments. Access to qualified interpreters is important to ensure that patients with limited English proficiency can understand healthcare information and receive appropriate treatment (Jeter-Prince et al., 2023). These considerations underscore the need for health administration students to develop adequate English communication skills, enabling them to support effective healthcare communication in linguistically diverse settings.

As a pedagogical response to these challenges, peer simulation role-play enhances healthcare students' communication skills, empathy, and learning experiences, making it a valuable approach in healthcare education (Dalwood et al., 2020). Simulation-based interprofessional learning provides meaningful learning experiences that strengthen healthcare students' communication skills, teamwork, and professional development (Elsayed et al., 2024). The inclusion of English-speaking interactions enhances simulation-based learning experiences. Exposure to simulated patient interactions conducted in English promotes healthcare students' communicative competence, intercultural sensitivity, and preparedness for practice in increasingly internationalized healthcare settings (Ashida & Otaki, 2022).

Equitable healthcare delivery relies on healthcare professionals' capacity to incorporate cultural competence, language support strategies, and collaborative communication practices into patient care (Ahrens & Elias, 2023). Peer-assisted language

learning appears to strengthen students' confidence and readiness for patient communication in clinical contexts (Ismail et al., 2023). There is a demand for ESP courses that focus on communicative competence, collaborative learning, and technology-enabled instruction to equip healthcare students for effective professional communication in increasingly complex healthcare settings (Mohamed et al., 2024). Technology-enhanced learning environments contribute to language development by creating engaging experiences that foster motivation and digital learning readiness (Namaziandost, 2025). Digital technologies offer valuable opportunities for language growth and engaging learners. However, their success relies on sufficient digital skills and access to necessary resources (Shoir Qizi, 2024).

Understanding digital readiness is especially important in higher education, where technology plays a key role in instruction and support. Preliminary observations in English classes at Universitas Mbojo Bima indicate that Health Administration students have varying levels of English proficiency, which may influence their participation in English learning activities and their readiness to engage with technology-enhanced learning. Although role-play and digital learning have been widely recognized as effective approaches for developing communication skills, limited research has explored how Health Administration students experience English learning challenges, engage in role-play activities, and develop digital readiness, particularly in regional contexts such as Bima, West Nusa Tenggara.

Addressing this gap is crucial because students' perceptions and experiences offer valuable insights. These insights help shape English instruction that directly supports communicative competence and professional readiness. Exploring students' perspectives also influences the development of ESP curricula that include authentic communication and technology-supported learning. This study explores English learning among Health Administration students. It examines learning challenges, role-play activity experiences, and digital learning readiness. By qualitatively analyzing students' perspectives, the study contributes to the literature on English language learning, ESP, and healthcare education. It clarifies how students experience, interpret, and respond to current English learning environments.

2. METHOD

Research design

This study used a qualitative, exploratory design, employing in-depth, semi-structured interviews to explore the complex English-learning experiences of undergraduate students (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). An exploratory approach was deemed highly suitable, as it allows a thorough, contextually grounded examination of a little-studied phenomenon: the intersection of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) challenges, teaching methods, and digital adaptation within a health-related curriculum.

Participants

The research was carried out within a Health Administration program, a specialized academic environment where English instruction emphasizes professional medical and public health communication. To collect precise and pertinent data, a purposive sampling method was used, guided by three specific inclusion criteria: (1) enrollment in the Health Administration program, (2) completion of an English course featuring public health role-play simulations, and (3) diverse prior communication skills and linguistic backgrounds. As a result, four students were chosen as primary Students—one male and three females—using pseudonyms Student M, Student H, Student N, and Student R to maintain strict anonymity and ethical standards.

Data Collection Method and Instrument

Data was gathered via face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted in a private academic setting, aimed at reducing participants' situational anxiety. The interviews followed a flexible, open-ended protocol that covered four key thematic areas derived from the research goals: past and current challenges in learning English; emotional experiences, such as joys and sorrows, in language learning; pedagogical reflections on public health role-play simulations; and digital preparedness regarding AI integration. To promote open self-expression and verify data authenticity, the dialogue took place in participants' native language (Bahasa Indonesia). Each session lasted 6 to 15 minutes, was audio-visually recorded and later transcribed verbatim for detailed analysis.

Data Analysis

To ensure data trustworthiness and rigor, member checking was performed by returning transcripts to participants to confirm accuracy, supported by investigator triangulation during the initial coding process. The qualitative data were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis following the systematic six-phase framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analytical process began with data familiarization through repeated reading of the transcripts, followed by the generation of initial codes that captured both semantic and latent meanings.

These initial codes included specific experiential markers such as "articulation anxiety," "past pedagogical passivity," "ESP vs. General English discrepancy," and "AI skepticism." The generated codes were conceptually clustered into sub-themes and continuously reviewed against the entire dataset to construct coherent, overarching themes that directly addressed the core research questions. Finally, a crucial statement of researcher reflexivity is acknowledged: given that the researcher simultaneously served as the course instructor, proactive measures—including critical self-reflection, peer debriefing, and avoiding leading questions during interviews—were strictly maintained throughout the research process to neutralize potential power asymmetries and minimize social desirability bias.

3. RESULT AND DUSCISION

The reflexive thematic analysis of the verbatim transcripts yielded four interconnected themes reflecting the English learning experiences among Health Administration students: (1) affective and linguistic barriers in language learning, (2) experiential shifts through public health role-play simulations, (3) technological integration and underlying digital skepticism, and (4) instrumental motivation and self-directed learning for future professional alignment.

Theme 1: Affective and Linguistic Barriers in Language Learning

The findings revealed that students faced substantial linguistic and psychological hurdles that hindered their speaking and reading capabilities within the university setting. A major linguistic challenge centered on phonetic articulation and anxiety about pronunciation. Student M explicitly highlighted that mastering accurate articulation and correct reading techniques was highly difficult due to her limited baseline proficiency. When prompted about her core linguistic challenges, she stated:

Oke, baik, ee, Bismillahirrahmanirrahim, langsung saja, Miss. Ee, tantangan Saya, salah satunya itu di bagian, ee, artikulasinya itu, cara bacanya yang tepat, itu menurut Saya, bagi Saya sulit di situ... Ee, sama, sama Saya juga belum terlalu ngerti bahasa Inggris, gitu... Karena Saya belum terlalu, apa namanya, belum terlalu bisa bahasa Inggris, jadi banyak, ee, arti-artinya belum Saya tahu, gitu.

[Okay, well, ee, Bismillahirrahmanirrahim, just go right away, Miss. Ee, one of my challenges, one of them is in the part, ee, the articulation, the right way to read, that's in my opinion, for me it's difficult there... Ee, same, same I don't really understand English either, that's right... Because I haven't been very, what's the name, I don't really know English, so a lot, ee, I don't know the meanings yet.]

The significant difficulties with pronunciation, articulation, and vocabulary comprehension experienced by student M drastically limited her confidence and ability to use English effectively in the classroom. This empirical finding aligns with the established literature, which emphasizes that pronunciation and articulation difficulties are commonly reported as core linguistic barriers in EFL contexts, heavily contributing to reduced intelligibility and speaking confidence (Alaraj, 2024; Mahdi, 2024; Malik et al., 2021). The anxiety articulated by student M during oral tasks demonstrates that phonetic struggles are not merely technical linguistic errors; rather, they serve as psychological friction that triggers self-doubt, ultimately impeding the student's overall communicative competence.

Similarly, Student N noted that managing complex linguistic structures and varying vocabulary lengths frequently led to confusion during oral production. She remarked, "Paling yang susah itu kadang kalau pronoun-nya terlalu panjang-panjang. Kadang Saya masih suka bingung sama pengucapannya... Itu sih paling pengucapan aja. Masih, kalau ada yang sama itu, masih suka bingung cara ngucapinnya." *[The most difficult thing is sometimes if the pronouns are too long. Sometimes I still like to be confused by the pronunciation... That's the most pronounced. Still, if there is the same thing, I still like to be confused about how to say it.]*

Student N reported that complex vocabulary and long lexical items often caused pronunciation problems, which directly affected their fluency and confidence in speaking. This finding aligns with existing research, indicating that pronunciation issues in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are often associated with lexical and phonological complexity. Specifically, intricate word structures and complex lexical chunks can challenge students' articulation in real-time speech (Abugohar & Yunus, 2018; Gilakjani, 2011; Palomargareta & Astutik, 2024). Additionally, the decline in fluency and confidence observed among participants is well documented because of these linguistic challenges, often exacerbated by native-language interference and limited exposure to authentic speech (Manorom et al., 2024; Rusdin & Purwati, 2023; Sabih-Ul-Hassan et al., 2023).

Furthermore, these challenges were closely linked to students' previous secondary school learning environments, which they viewed as passive, unmonitored, and task focused. Student M compared her current university setting with her high school experience, noting that her past teacher rarely explained the material and mostly assigned monotonous tasks without proper oversight or ongoing feedback.

Karena, Miss, di SMA tuh kita belajar bahasa Inggrisnya tuh enggak, enggak terlalu yang kayak gini nih. Beda banget sama di kuliah tuh kayak... Karena kan kita tuh disuruh kasih tugas, tugas gitu... Kita kan, apa namanya, pakai... kita kan enggak dijelasin, enggak terlalu dijelasin, Mis, karena apa, jarang banget, karena dari gurunya juga mungkin. Jadi kita kayak yang... makanya kita banyak enggak tahu tuh, Miss. Jadi enggak terlalu diseriusin, gitu... Kayak udah kasih tugas gitu, kita jadi kurang... enggak dipantau gitu, ya.

[Because, Miss, in high school, we learned English, not too much like this. It's very different in college as... Because we are told to give you tasks, tasks like that... We're right, what's the name, wear... we are not explained, not explained too much, for example, why, very rarely, because from the teacher it is also possible. So we are

like that... that's why we don't know a lot, Miss. So it's not too serious, that's it... Like I love that job, we are lacking... Not to be overlooked, yes]

Student M shows that students' current language challenges are deeply rooted in their prior learning experiences, characterized by minimal teacher guidance, limited feedback, and strictly task-focused instruction. This passive instructional approach in the past directly constrained students' long-term language development. Such restrictive learning environments significantly contribute to emotional and linguistic barriers by diminishing opportunities for meaningful language use, authentic communication, and practice enriched with feedback (Călinescu, 2024; Moafa, 2024; Zhang & Hasim, 2023). Consequently, this historical lack of interactive learning not only hampers actual language acquisition but also adversely affects learner motivation, self-confidence, and their willingness to participate in real-world English tasks, as evidenced by participants' anxiety during university-level public health simulations. Nevertheless, the results also show that when university instructors used lively, engaging, and supportive teaching methods, students experienced significantly less classroom anxiety and became more enthusiastic about learning English. Student M expressed:

Yang pasti ada, walaupun sedikit, Miss. Saya jadi tahu, ee, gimana cara baca yang benar, terus apa arti maksudnya, itu misalnya satunya... Oke, ya, semuanya pasti pengen pembelajarannya tuh yang asik, yang seru, karena menurut saya kalau pembawaannya seru pasti gampang gitu, masuk di otaknya, Miss.

[What is certain is that there is, even if it is a little, Miss. I have come to know, ee, how to read correctly, and then what does it mean, that's for example... Okay, yes, everyone will want to learn something fun, which is exciting, because I think if the performance is exciting, it must be easy, it will enter their brain, Miss.]

Student M observed that enjoyable and engaging learning experiences contributed to enhancements in her pronunciation and her understanding of English vocabulary. Positive emotions, such as enjoyment, significantly augment learning outcomes in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting. Notably, foreign language enjoyment (FLE) mediates the relationship between student engagement and vocabulary acquisition, thereby fostering resilience and broadening overall learning capacity (Soleimani et al., 2026). Furthermore, enjoyment is a crucial factor in enhancing student engagement during receptive and productive activities such as listening and speaking (Zeng et al., 2026). To foster this positive effect, activities that diminish anxiety and cultivate a stress-free, engaging environment—such as vlogging—have been demonstrated to directly enhance speaking proficiency, vocabulary acquisition, and students' willingness to communicate (Jin, 2024).

Theme 2: Experiential Shifts Through Public Health Role-Play Simulations

The public health role-play simulations served as an experiential bridge, helping students differentiate between high school General English and the formal, structured demands of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Health Administration. Student N noted that university English was significantly more formal and expansive compared to the everyday communication taught in secondary school:

Bahasa Inggris yang biasa kita pakai di SMA itu... cukup ada perbedaan dengan bahasa Inggris, Miss. Mungkin dari bahasa Inggris, Miss, itu kita lebih baku bahasanya... sedangkan kalau kayak bahasa yang kita pakai di SMA tuh kayak bahasa Inggris sehari-hari

[...The English we used to use in high school... There is quite a difference in your English, Miss. Maybe with your English, Miss, the language is more formal... whereas the language we used in high school was like everyday English]

Student N emphasized the distinction between the informal, colloquial English acquired during high school and the more formal, academic English required at the university level. Students perceived a transition from everyday English learned in secondary education to more formal, academically oriented language practices in higher education (Bunch et al., 2025). This transition from fluid to accurate communication was echoed by Student H, a former tour leader, who had to reconcile his practical "field grammar" with the rigors of academic accuracy. He observed a clear disconnect between the flexible language of daily practice and the strict grammatical rules tested in higher education: "...Jadi beda grammar yang di kuliah belajar itu sama dengan sehari-hari yang kami dengar dan ucapkan Grammarsnya yang amburadul gitu, Jadi kalau ngobrol tuh yang penting apa yang diucapkan paham, kalau di lapangan itu." [*So, the different grammar that we learn in college is the same every day that we hear and speak... The grammar is so messy... So, when you talk about it, it's important to understand what is being said on the field*].

Student M's experience highlights that authentic language use is judged more by meaningful exchanges than strict grammar accuracy. It was commonly observed that effective everyday communication prioritizes mutual understanding over perfect grammatical correctness. However, leaning too much on conversational ease (fluency) can lead to neglecting the formal linguistic skills necessary for academic and professional settings. Learners with high proficiency tend to be more conscious of grammatical correctness, which becomes increasingly important in advanced language stages (Dimitrieva-Gjorgievska, 2025).

The simulations effectively contextualized these professional nuances by merging dialogue memorization with broader vocational competencies, such as professional demeanor and body language. Student R explained that complete comprehension of contextual meanings allowed them to practice professional communication automatically, while student N learned to manage healthcare administrative duties calmly, "...keadaan seorang admin tuh tetap... tenang... So, belajar bahasa Inggris tuh bukan hanya belajar pengucapan, tetapi belajar... body language, gitu ya. Jadi sebenarnya belajar bahasa itu adalah belajar budaya." [*... An Administrator's Position Is Still Up... Relax... Learning English is not only about speaking English, but also about learning English. Body language, that's for sure. So actually, learning a language is learning culture.*"]. Language learning was perceived as a holistic process encompassing verbal communication, body language, and cultural competence rather than merely the acquisition of linguistic forms. The Multi-Stratal Model of Language Processing (MSMLP) conceptualizes communication as a complex, multidimensional phenomenon, emphasizing the integration of gestural behavior, emotional expression, and social interaction as fundamental elements of effective language education (Elleuch, 2024).

Theme 3: Technological Integration and Underlying Digital Skepticism

Although participants generally recognized the significance of technology in modern learning settings, their responses revealed a complex relationship between digital engagement and self-assurance. One participant highlighted the benefits of digital media for language acquisition but also expressed considerable anxiety when speaking in technology-driven situations. Student M noted that speaking in front of a camera caused more nervousness than in-person conversations, often leaving her feeling less confident and forgetting her words, "Eh, eh, pernah, tapi cuman beberapa kali aja, nggak sering, Miss. Jujur, saya nggak pede ngomong di depan kamera. Kalau ngomong langsung gini tuh bisa, tapi kalau udah dihadapkan ke kamera tuh kayak hilang semua, jadi susah." [*Uh, yes, I have, but only a few times, not often, Miss. Honestly, I am not confident speaking in front*

of a camera. I can do it when speaking face-to-face like this, but once I am in front of a camera, it feels as if everything disappears from my mind, so it becomes difficult."]

A prominent challenge in digital speaking activities was students' lack of confidence when performing in front of a camera, despite feeling relatively comfortable in direct conversations. Students frequently experience increased anxiety and heightened self-awareness when addressing an audience via a camera, stemming from fears of adverse judgment, concerns about self-perception, and unfamiliarity with digital communication formats (Tauchid et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2025; Quinto et al., 2025). This finding suggests that digital readiness does not necessarily translate into confidence in online communication. Despite participants' familiarity with digital tools, psychological factors such as communication anxiety and self-awareness remained significant barriers to active engagement.

At the same time, the participant expressed a positive attitude toward integrating emerging technologies, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI), into educational settings. She viewed technological literacy as vital for keeping up with modern developments and avoiding exclusion from an increasingly digital society. However, her response also reflected a degree of critical awareness of AI use. While acknowledging its benefits, she emphasized the importance of maintaining human judgment and avoiding excessive dependence on technology, "Setuju banget, Miss, karena kan di... era sekarang nih, apa-apa tuh teknologi, AI, gitu-gitu. Jadi kita perlu tahu juga biar nggak ketinggalan... Padahal yang buat... AI teknologi itu tuh kan manusia, jangan sampai kita tertipu lah, Miss, gitu." [*"I really agree, Miss, because it's... In today's era, what is technology, AI, and so on. So we also need to know so that we don't miss out... Even though the one who made it... AI technology is human, don't let us be deceived, Miss, that's it."*]

The student's response suggests that digital readiness encompasses not only a willingness to adopt emerging technologies but also the ability to critically assess their reliability and limitations. While the participant acknowledged the importance of understanding AI and other digital innovations to remain relevant in a technology-driven era, he/she also emphasized the need for critical judgment to avoid being misled by technology. This finding indicates that digital readiness involves a balance between technological openness and critical digital awareness. Readiness is not merely positive attitudes toward AI or digital tools but also includes a critical appraisal of outputs, biases, and limitations. Nursing education and healthcare contexts show that while respondents often express interest or optimism about AI, they also flag concerns about data integrity, safety, and governance, indicating the necessity of critical digital literacy alongside adoption readiness (Raposo, 2025; Patel et al., 2026; Simone et al., 2022).

Theme 4: Instrumental Motivation and Self-Directed Learning for Future Professional Alignment

The final theme highlighted the students' internal and practical motivations, as well as their self-motivated efforts to learn English despite academic challenges. The results showed that students did not see English just as a school subject, but as a vital global skill and an essential tool for their future careers in health administration. She also clearly connected this skill to her future professional identity, saying, "Karena kan nanti tuh di administrasi kesehatan tuh pasti ada bahasa Inggris, kan, Miss... jadi penting menurut saya, penting banget-banget, Miss... takut ditanya tiba-tiba, enggak... bisa. Aduh, malu." [*"Because later on in health administration there will definitely be English, right, Miss... so in my opinion, it is very, very important, Miss... I'm afraid if I am suddenly asked and I... cannot answer. Oh, it would be so embarrassing."*]. Student M stressed the worldwide importance of the language, noting that English skills are crucial to avoid embarrassment

when communicating with international communities. English proficiency and intercultural communication skills are essential for effective interaction in multicultural healthcare settings (Richly, 2025).

This clear understanding of future professional needs motivated students to pursue self-directed learning and seek external educational support beyond their formal university hours. Student N showed a strong commitment to learning through taking private English courses for nearly three years during her earlier education, driven solely by her admiration for the language, "Kalau Saya pribadi emang dari dulu suka bahasa Inggris," Miss... Dari SD kelas 4 sampai SMP kelas 2 itu Saya les privat terus, Miss... Karena emang suka denger orang ngomong bahasa Inggris tuh kayak keren aja, gitu." ["Personally, I have always liked English, Miss... From 4th grade of elementary school until 2nd grade of junior high, I took private lessons continuously, Miss... Because I just love hearing people speak English, it feels cool."]. A learner's emotional connection to the language, such as admiration or pride, can foster a deeper commitment to learning. This emotional engagement often leads to better outcomes and a more fulfilling learning experience (Ross & Stracke, 2016; Al-Jarrah et al., 2024; Sulis et al., 2025).

During the role-play preparation, she also actively managed her own learning by systematically memorizing dialogues and continuously sharing insights with peers. Similarly, Student R practiced self-directed vocabulary enrichment via digital devices, checking pronunciations and cross-referencing meanings independently to ensure smooth dialogue execution, "Caranya, ee, saya, ee, cari di Google Translate, terus dipahami artinya, terus cara bacanya juga didengerin biar pas maju tampil itu nggak salah pengucapannya, Miss." ["The way is, ii... searches on Google Translate, then understands the meaning, and also listens to how it is pronounced so that when performing in front of the class, there are no mispronunciations, Miss."]

Self-Directed Learning (SDL) is emphasized in healthcare education as it fosters critical thinking, independence, and problem-solving skills, which are essential for professional practice in dynamic healthcare environments (Wong et al., 2021; Li et al., 2024; Mondal, 2025). Instrumental motivation was especially apparent in students' anticipation of ongoing English instruction, which they regarded as vital preparation for future workplace communication in healthcare environments. Reflecting this concern for future professional readiness, Student H strongly preferred that English courses be offered through the end of the semester.

Kalau bisa, Miss, jangan cuma di semester satu aja ada bahasa Inggris. Kalau bisa sampai semester akhir, Miss. Karena kami ini kan pelayan masyarakat nanti di rumah sakit atau puskesmas, pasti ketemu pasien atau instansi luar yang pakai bahasa Inggris.

[*If possible, Miss, don't just have English in the first semester. If you can make it to the end of the semester, Miss. Because we are community servants later at the hospital or health center, we will definitely meet patients or outside agencies who speak English*]

The student's response above illustrates how future professional expectations shaped a strong desire for continuous English learning, reinforcing the perceived importance of language proficiency in healthcare service environments. Integrating English language instruction into medical education and workplace learning settings is considered essential. Evidence from international medical programs and specialized language courses (e.g., medical Spanish) indicates that these initiatives can substantially enhance learners' language proficiency and confidence, thereby preparing them for future professional requirements (Chan et al., 2022; Punnilath Shanavas, 2025; Herber-Valdez et al.,

2026). Overall, the results indicate that students see English proficiency as a long-term career investment rather than just a short-term academic need. This forward-looking view promotes ongoing learning and underscores the importance of English for effective communication and career success in health administration.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that English learning among Health Administration students is shaped by the dynamic interplay of linguistic challenges, affective factors, experiential learning opportunities, and digital adaptation. Although students encountered persistent barriers related to pronunciation, vocabulary comprehension, speaking anxiety, and the legacy of passive prior learning experiences, they also showed strong motivation to overcome these constraints through self-directed learning and active engagement with technology. Public health role-play simulations emerged as a particularly valuable pedagogical strategy, enabling students to bridge the gap between general English and professional healthcare communication while fostering awareness of cultural competence, body language, and workplace communication practices.

The findings further reveal that digital readiness extends beyond technological familiarity to encompass critical digital literacy, particularly in the responsible use of artificial intelligence and digital learning tools. Most importantly, students viewed English proficiency not merely as an academic requirement but as a strategic professional asset essential for effective communication in increasingly globalized and multicultural healthcare environments. These findings underscore the need for ESP-oriented curricula that integrate authentic healthcare communication tasks, simulation-based learning, supportive learning environments, and the development of critical digital literacy to better prepare future health administration professionals for the linguistic, intercultural, and technological demands of contemporary healthcare practice.

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