



## Low Self-Esteem of ESL Nursing Graduates and Nurses and its Influence on Communicative Efficacy

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### ABSTRACT:

Self-Esteem, an important factor of human affective domain is found to play a key role in Second Language Acquisition. Many learners regard foreign language learning as an anxiety-provoking experience which affects their language performance in one way or another. These negative perceptions result in low self esteem. *In India, though English is moving on to be home language, yet it is still a foreign tongue for all of us. Every English language learner desires to be successful in the acquisition of the language, unfortunately, failures are encountered. This has a high impact on personal and professional well being. This study explores the lack/ limited English proficiency of ESL (English as a Second Language) student nurses which has a deep impact on their clinical practice. Nursing being a profession that counts on good communication can never look at English language skills as optional. In fact, miscommunication and inefficient communication has been linked to increased medical errors and unsuccessful clinical practice. In circumstances when the English proficiency of these students is not honed, there is a steady dip in the self esteem. This is highly felt when they take their position as staff nurses, especially when they work with a team of doctors. Thus their low self esteem aggravates further, mounts anxiety and a high job stress on them;* this not only affects their personal health but also the professional efficacy and their quality contribution to the health industry. This study reviews literature to analyses how low self esteem influences the learning and clinical activities of student nurses and staff nurses. It also discusses the strategies that are recommended by the studies reviewed to improve the self esteem of nurses.

English is a global language, moving on to be home language in India, yet a foreign tongue for all of us. Every language learner desires to be successful in the learning. As teachers we also find new approaches and ways to enrich our students. Even in spite of using time tested strategies it could be hard to motivate a student to do a speaking task in the class without encountering failures. The quote 'taking the horses to the water but cannot make it drink' is very true in many of our English language learning experience. It is not that the students are always indifferent to the learning. In other words, it is not new to observe or watch a regretful student brooding over their failure to perform well in oral test. Studies on language acquisition insist that successful language learning can happen only when it is seen from affective point of view along with cognitive. The affective, the intrinsic quality of language learning plays an important role in motivating the learners to acquire the language, giving them the willingness to take part in a discussion or prepare them for the journey of language proficiency development. Studies on Self-Esteem and Foreign Language Learning, edited by Fernando Rubio (2007) identifies positive learning experience as a greater motivation for learning that allows active involvement whereas the negative experience stands as an obstacle posing greater challenges. These positive or negative experiences are formed through the influences of other human beings, say their teacher and classmates but all the more through the perception of the learners. Understanding how students respond to these circumstances and value each of this language learning experience is highly important to motivate them to enhance their language learning.

It is indeed an eye opener to understand that any ESL (English as a Second Language) learners identify learning of English to be stressful and anxiety building experience. Many learners regard foreign language learning as an anxiety-provoking experience which affects their language performance in one way or another. Hence, the role of anxiety on foreign language learning has been in particular been explored giving importance to language learning strategies, beliefs, among Asian learners of Japan (Andrade & Williams, 2009), Taiwan (Thi Tuyet, 2013), Vietnam (Linh, 2011), and many others. Apprehension and nervousness are commonly expressed by second language learners in learning to speak the targeted language. Unlike learning the mother tongue, the second language acquisition doesn't happen with a smooth transition, everyone tries to get through with many obstacles. These feelings are considered to exert a potentially negative and detrimental effect on communication in the target language. These negative perceptions results in low self esteem. Students' judgments of themselves are likely to affect the kind of strategies they use for learning.

Self- Esteem, one important factor of human affective domain is found to play a key role in Second Language Acquisition. Although the development of self-esteem continues from childhood it is shaped by contributing factors i.e. interaction with the family and the social environment, the school and work. According to the study of Brown, H. D. (1980), on ESL learning it is the personality of a learner, i.e., the ego centric aspect of how he/she views oneself has an important impact on motivational factor.<sup>1</sup> Kamal Heidari Soureshjani (2011) in his study on Iranian English as a Foreign Learner (EFL) defines self esteem as how we value our own selves to the world and people around us. He states that a positive self esteem gives the confidence to correct mistakes and prepares them to face the subsequent events in a learning, whereas, a negative self esteem may create a failure symbol within and hinder them from progress by magnifying their fear of being ridiculed.

Low self esteem caused by language learning sets in due to other reasons such as comparison of self image with that of ideal image. Generally, ESL learners are likely to have variations in their language proficiency due to unequal exposure to the language learning and practice opportunities. These variations may make a low proficient performer to feel inferior in the presence of a better performer. Sometimes they may even have a highly unrealistic ideal that may make them to consider the little progress that they make to be insufficient (Sander Pendlington, 2004). Extreme level of low self esteem may influence the learners to drop out of the learning programme and even to commit suicide (Armand Chatard et al., 2009).

This study reviews literature on *lack/ limited English proficiency of ESL (English as a Second Language) student nurses which has a deep impact on their clinical practice thereby affecting their self esteem. Nursing being a profession that counts on good communication can never look at English language skills as optional. In fact, miscommunication and inefficient communication has been linked to increased medical errors and unsuccessful clinical practice.*

A cross -sectional study on perceived self-esteem amongst 44 first-year student nurses done using Rosenberg's self-esteem scale (RSES) brought out different levels of low self-esteem (Eva Chris et al., 2012). Reviewing the learning experience of ESL student nurses exposes feeling of shame to seek help or support from faculty and peers due to lack of understanding of nursing concepts and intervention. (Rosann Colosimo, 2006).

A study on the perception of student nurses from non – English speaking background has identified that clinical placement and experience to be highly challenging due to their poor verbal skills (Fran Rogan et al., 2014). This could be a significant contributor to anxiety that results in low esteem. Also studies on impact of self esteem in nurses on professional behaviour point out decreased level of empathy and efficacy when they collaboratively work with colleagues and patients due to their own anxiety and stress caused due to communication difficulties (Alexandra Dimitriadou et al., 2014)

News on Indian students being deported from Australia for lack of expected language proficiency score has also been cited in an e newspaper (Times Global, dated August 10, 2010). There are literature reviews that show the consequences of low self esteem of nurses and nursing graduates and its influence on professional efficacy. According to which *the lack of English proficiency has a deep impact when the ESL student nurses take their position as staff nurses. Their low self esteem aggravates further and mounts anxiety and a high job stress on them, especially when they work with a team of doctors.* There could be innumerable reasons why low self esteem creeps in for a nurse but language barriers significantly contribute and heighten it. This not only affects their personal health but also the

professional efficacy and their quality contribution to the health industry. Miscommunication and inefficient communication has been linked to increased medical errors.

Communication difficulties between hospital doctors and nurses are well documented. Impediments in the flow of communication, perceived as difficulty in team work between nurses and doctors have been documented. A survey result of the study on the contributing factors to ineffective nurse – physician communication places abundant evidence on the inefficient communication. The study reports the physicians complain of nurses' inability to take decision on non-urgent matters. To add to the worse the power difference and educational dominance complicates the communication process. The review points out clearly to the intimidated feelings of nurses when communicating with doctors. Among the relational changes with the physicians a significant portion of samples have mentioned the lack of common language (Norma Ponzoni, 2014).

Coping strategies to enhance the clinical communication skills of ESL nurses are highly recommended. Also, studies advocate psychological strategies that would build in positive coping style to overcome low self esteem. A study on the Chinese female nursing students coping strategies correlate help seeking behavior, adaptation of new study methods and a sense of self contentment increased self esteem among the participants (*Chunping Ni et al., 2012*)

Studies also insist on self trust and developing beliefs on one's ability to come out successfully. Usually there is a tendency to give up efforts to acquire the targeted English proficiency but if a change in attitude is built in to face difficulties and proceed persistently without a consideration to give up can boost the self esteem.

Coping strategies mentioned in the reviewed studies also signify the contribution of the language teachers' support. A healthy relationship with students especially in manners which exhibit care and concern builds a help seeking behaviour in students (Mary C. Keane and Barbara S. Morgan, 1991). More importantly, a well -planned lesson with simple approach and easy instructions on specific language need helps in students' progress (Susan Sanner, 2008).

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