



Voices from the Virtual Classroom: Experiences of English for Nursing Lecturers in Online Teaching

Syauqiyah Awaliyah Alfiani Nur^{1*}, Pujalinda Mandarsari², Nurfaeni Asjuh³,
Insani Nurchintyawati⁴, Siti Nurul Ilmi HL⁵

*Corresponding author: syauqiyahalfiani@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study explores how English for Nursing (EfN) lecturers experienced, adapted to, and reflected on online teaching practices during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a qualitative descriptive design using thematic analysis, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five EfN lecturers from universities and health polytechnics in Indonesia. The findings revealed four major themes: (1) General Background, which highlighted lecturers' diverse experiences and gradual adaptation to online instruction; (2) Teaching Practices and Strategies, showing that interactive and case-based learning were considered the most effective methods to engage nursing students virtually; (3) Challenges and Adaptation, which included issues such as limited digital access, low student participation, and difficulties in evaluating clinical communication skills; and (4) Reflection and Professional Insights, where lecturers reported personal and professional growth, emphasizing empathy, creativity, and flexibility as essential teaching qualities. The study concludes that online teaching not only transformed pedagogical practices but also redefined lecturers' professional identities in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts.

Keywords: *English for Nursing, English for Specific Purposes, Lecturer Experience, Online Pedagogy*

Introduction

The rapid expansion of online and blended learning in higher education has transformed how tertiary courses are designed and delivered, prompting educators across disciplines to re-evaluate pedagogy, assessment, and student engagement in virtual environments. Recent studies reveal that online education provides distinct advantages, including enhanced flexibility, increased accessibility, and opportunities for varied multimodal learning experiences; however, it also poses ongoing challenges, such as digital disparities, technical issues, and concerns regarding student engagement and academic integrity (Yan & Pourdavood,

¹ Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan YAPIKA Makassar, South Sulawesi, INDONESIA. Email: syauqiyahalfiani@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3730-0633>

² Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Bone, South Sulawesi, INDONESIA. Email: ilmihaling@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9524-6123>

³ Email: nurfiaeni.asjuh@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3176-0021>

⁴ STAI DDI Pinrang, South Sulawesi, INDONESIA. Email: insaninurchintyawati@gmail.com

⁵ Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Bone, South Sulawesi, INDONESIA. Email: ilmihaling@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9524-6123>

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2024). Consequently, as institutions increasingly integrate online modalities into regular teaching practice, both lecturer and students continue to navigate a landscape marked by opportunities and tensions, where experiences of online teaching remain complex and highly context-dependent.

The transition to online and virtual learning in health professions education, especially in nursing, has significantly transformed the teaching and assessment of theory, clinical reasoning, and practical skills. Nursing programs have progressively embraced remote methodologies, encompassing entirely online theoretical education and virtual simulations for clinical practice, providing significant benefits such as enhanced flexibility, scalability, and innovative resources that assist working students and improve learning accessibility (Langedård, Kiani, Nielsen, & Svensson, 2021). However, these digital revolutions provide significant pedagogical issues, including apprehensions regarding students' clinical preparedness, the sufficiency of virtual approaches in cultivating practice-based competencies, and the potential erosion of a sense of belonging within the professional community. Nursing education is continually evolving, aiming to harmonize the incorporation of digital technology with the fundamental objectives of enhancing clinical competence, professional identity, and significant participation in both virtual and real-world environments.

An expanding body of research has recorded the experiences of nurse educators who were necessitated to swiftly convert to online education during and after the COVID-19 epidemic, highlighting the challenges and adaptive reactions that defined this change. Numerous lecturers encountered significant learning challenges in integrating digital tools, augmented workloads from course redesign, and intensified stress from indistinct work-life boundaries, compounded by frustrations arising from technological constraints or unequal student access that impeded educational objectives (Albloushi, et al., 2024). At the same time, research underscores examples of creative adaptation, professional development, and advancing instructional innovation as educators traversed unfamiliar virtual landscapes (Mokoena-de Beer & Moloko, 2022). These findings highlight the necessity of comprehending nurse educators' personal views to guide the formulation of supportive institutional policies and focused faculty development programs that enhance resilience and efficacy in online teaching.

Despite the expanding body of literature on online nursing education, there remains a paucity of research examining the experiences of instructors teaching English for Nursing—an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course tailored to address the communicative and professional requirements of nursing students—in virtual learning environments. English-for-Nursing training include the teaching of specialist language and communicative skills, including medical terminology, patient engagement techniques, and professional documentation practices, all of which are intricately connected to practical healthcare settings (Puspasari & Agustina, 2025). Recent reviews emphasize the growing incorporation of digital and AI-assisted tools in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction and a renewed emphasis on discipline-specific language acquisition; however, they also indicate that much of the current research favors student outcomes over instructors' pedagogical experiences (Yan, 2025). As a result, insufficient attention has been directed towards how English-for-Nursing instructors navigate the specific advantages and limitations of online teaching, highlighting the

necessity for targeted qualitative research into their lived experiences, pedagogical approaches, and professional adjustments in digital learning contexts.

In this changing educational environment, teacher identity theory is a useful way to look at how teachers build, negotiate, and adapt their professional sense of self in response to changes in their environment. Teacher identity is understood as a dynamic, socially constructed, and perpetually evolving process influenced by individual beliefs, institutional circumstances, and pedagogical experiences (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). In online education settings, identity negotiation is especially pronounced when instructors transition into roles as facilitators, digital mentors, and emotional supporters for students (MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2020). For English for Nursing instructors, this identity work is particularly intricate, since they integrate linguistic, pedagogical, and healthcare-related competencies. Comprehending the impact of online teaching on their professional identity and pedagogical reflection can elucidate how educators maintain motivation, resilience, and professional development in the changing realm of ESP instruction.

Despite the increasing scholarship on online education, few studies focus on the perspectives of English for Nursing lecturers regarding their experiences in the virtual classroom, including the strategies they employed, the challenges they faced, and their interpretations of online interactions with nursing students (Baskici, et al., 2024). Documenting lecturers' narratives is crucial to elucidate the implementation of educational decisions, the exercise of professional judgment amidst technological and institutional demands, and the potential supports that could enhance future practices.

This study aims to document and analyze the experiences of English for Nursing lecturers teaching online, focusing on their descriptions of practice, the challenges and advantages they encounter, and the implications of their accounts for curriculum design, faculty development, and student learning in health-professional language courses. This study utilizes recent empirical and review literature to contextualize its objectives within current discussions regarding online pedagogy in higher education and nursing. To guide the inquiry, the following research questions are posed:

1. What teaching practices and strategies do lecturers use to engage nursing students in an online learning environment?
2. What challenges do English for Nursing lecturers face during online teaching, and how do they adapt to these challenges?
3. How has online teaching influenced the professional reflection and pedagogical perspectives of English for Nursing lecturers?

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the lived experiences of lecturers teaching English for Nursing courses in an online learning environment. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of participants' perspectives and contextual experiences (Creswell & Poth,

2018). The descriptive design focuses on capturing participants' voices as they naturally occur, emphasizing their own interpretations and meanings of online teaching (Sandelowski, 2000). This approach is suitable for education studies where the goal is to describe and interpret lived experiences rather than test a theory (Kim, Sefcik, & Bradway, 2017).

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of five English lecturers who taught English for Nursing courses at universities and health polytechnics in Indonesia. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on those who had at least one year of online teaching experience in nursing education. Purposive sampling enables the selection of participants who can provide rich and relevant data for understanding a specific phenomenon (Palinkas, et al., 2015). The inclusion criteria required participants to (a) have at least one year of online teaching experience, (b) teach nursing-related English courses, and (c) consent to participate voluntarily. The diversity of institutions and teaching experience allowed the researcher to capture varied yet comparable perspectives.

Table 1. Participant Profile

Participant	Gender	Teaching Experience (Years)	Online Teaching Experience (Years)
L1	Female	6	6
L2	Female	5	5
L3	Male	5	5
L4	Female	7	6
L5	Male	4	4

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, which allowed the researcher to explore key topics while providing flexibility to probe emerging issues (Kallio, Pietilä, & Docent, 2016). The interview guide included questions about lecturers' perceptions, teaching strategies, challenges, and reflections during online instruction. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted via Zoom or Google Meet, depending on participants' preferences. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis followed six phases: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This systematic process ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the participants' authentic experiences while identifying recurring patterns and meaningful insights.

Results and Discussion

This section presents and interprets the findings of the study. Four major themes emerged from the data: (1) General Background, (2) Teaching Practices and Strategies, (3) Challenges and Adaptation, and (4) Reflection and Professional Insights. These themes illustrate the lecturers' evolving experiences—from their initial adaptation to digital platforms, through their pedagogical innovations, to their reflections on professional growth and institutional support.

General Background

The participants in this study were lecturers who have taught *English for Nursing* (EfN) courses both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most had several years of experience teaching ESP courses and were compelled to transition to online or blended formats due to institutional mandates during the pandemic. One of the lecturers, for example, responded *“I have been teaching English for specific purposes for more than six years, and English for Nursing is one of my main areas.”* Their previous familiarity with digital tools varied, yet all participants noted that the pandemic accelerated their digital competence and pedagogical flexibility.

Many lecturers described their initial transition to online teaching as “sudden” and “stressful,” echoing the global trend in higher education where teachers were forced to adapt rapidly (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). Despite the sudden transition, the majority indicated favorable long-term effects, encompassing enhanced digital literacy and more capacity for innovation in content delivery. A lecturer, for example said, *“My experience with online teaching started suddenly in 2020. I had to learn how to use internet platforms very quickly. At first, I had trouble with technology and getting students interested, but after a few semesters, I found a way to make it work.”* Numerous participants highlighted that the online format expanded their pedagogical outlook, rendering them more reflective and responsive to students' varied learning circumstances.

This finding aligns with , Nugroho, Trianab, & Zulaiha (2022) who found that Indonesian ESP lecturers reported greater awareness of learner autonomy and accessibility issues after the online teaching period. The general background of the participants thus provides insight into a generation of ESP educators who have developed a hybrid identity—combining traditional teaching values with digital flexibility.

Teaching Practices and Strategies

The results showed that teachers used a variety of methods to get students involved and help them learn in a meaningful way during online English for Nursing programs. The most prevalent method indicated was using case studies and real-life nursing simulations, which the participants said worked best to get them to participate. One lecturer said, *“I focused on restructuring my face-to-face materials to suit the digital environment. I divided lessons into smaller units and added interactive slides, videos, and case studies related to hospital communication.”* Digital case-based exercises allowed students to connect English learning to real-world professional situations, which increased both their motivation and their ability to remember what they learned. This technique corroborates the findings of Mustari & Arnika (2025), who underscored that context-based and scenario-based learning enhances engagement in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) within health sciences.

Lecturers also used a variety of teaching tools, such as learning management systems (LMS), multimedia platforms, and collaborative apps like Google Docs and Padlet. As a lecturer shares, *“For writing, students collaborated in shared Google Docs.”* These tools made it easier for people to talk to each other, have group conversations, and learn by thinking about what they had learned, making up for the fact that they weren't there in person. Some teachers said they used both live Zoom sessions and asynchronous discussion boards to provide students more options based on their schedules and access.

Another new method was to combine activities that let students make their own decisions with activities that make them think. Lecturers purposefully promoted self-directed learning and peer evaluation to foster learner autonomy. This is in keeping with Kustini's (2022) findings that when teachers take on a facilitative role instead of a directive one, online ESP training helps students learn how to control their own behavior and think critically.

Overall, the theme shows a transition in teaching from teacher-centered to learner-centered, technology-enhanced practice. This is a good change for online ESP education.

Challenges and Adaptation

Despite the creative adaptations, all participants recognized many problems encountered during online English instruction for Nursing. The predominant challenges included insufficient student participation, technical instability, and difficulties in evaluating communication abilities (Yan & Pourdavood, 2024), especially in speaking and clinical interactions. One lecturer shares how technical instability becomes a challenge in teaching, such as an unstable internet connection, stating *"The biggest challenge I faced was unstable internet connections, both on my side and the students'. Many students live in rural areas where the signal is weak, so they often missed parts of the lesson or could not join live sessions."* Numerous instructors indicated that "teaching speaking online appears less natural" owing to inadequate internet access and students' hesitance to communicate via cameras.

Similar challenges were documented in Rasmitadila, et al. (2020), who reported that Indonesian higher education instructors struggled with maintaining motivation and interaction in virtual classrooms. In this study, lecturers coped by diversifying communication channels—using chat functions, breakout rooms, and voice notes—to maintain student participation. Some also emphasized empathy and emotional check-ins as part of their pedagogical adaptation, reflecting the human-centered approach (Cutri, Mena, & Whitinga, 2020).

Another major challenge was workload management and emotional well-being. Participants described online teaching as "mentally exhausting" due to increased preparation time and blurred boundaries between work and personal life. However, most also reflected that this period strengthened their resilience and self-awareness as educators. Thus, while online teaching introduced notable challenges, it also catalyzed innovation and professional growth, with lecturers evolving from "content deliverers" to "learning designers."

Reflection and Professional Insights

In reflecting on their experience, lecturers unanimously agreed that online teaching had transformed their role and pedagogical identity. Many reported a shift from being "knowledge transmitters" to facilitators, motivators, and co-learners. This aligns with the constructivist paradigm that views teachers as guides in learners' meaning-making processes (Richards & Farrell, 2009).

Several participants highlighted that online teaching enhanced their empathy, flexibility, and communication awareness. They became more conscious of students' personal challenges and learned to balance academic expectations with emotional support. As one lecturer noted, *"Online teaching made me realize that teaching is not only about delivering lessons but also about understanding human connection through the screen."*

The lecturers also expressed optimism toward blended learning models, suggesting that institutions maintain a mix of online and face-to-face modes to maximize flexibility and interactivity. However, they called for stronger institutional support, including continuous digital pedagogy training, improved infrastructure, and interdisciplinary collaboration between English and Nursing departments. This recommendation is consistent with Tahir & Rachman, (2025), who stressed that institutional readiness and ongoing professional development are crucial for sustainable ESP digital education.

Finally, the lecturers reflected on their professional growth: they saw themselves as lifelong learners, adapting to technological change while upholding the values of communication, empathy, and student engagement. The online experience, though challenging, ultimately deepened their understanding of what it means to teach language for professional purposes in the digital age.

Conclusion

This study explored the experiences of English for Nursing lecturers in online teaching and found that while the transition from face-to-face to virtual classrooms was initially challenging, it also led to growth in digital literacy, creativity, and pedagogical flexibility. Lecturers adopted interactive and case-based strategies to engage students, though they continued to face issues such as unstable internet access, low participation, and difficulty in assessing clinical communication skills. Integrating blended learning models could enhance future English for Nursing instruction by combining the strengths of both online and in-person learning. Overall, online teaching was seen as both demanding and transformative, reshaping lecturers' professional identities and highlighting the importance of empathy, adaptability, and institutional support.

The findings highlight the necessity of redefining the lecturer's role in online English for Nursing education from merely conveying information to enabling professional conversation and reflective learning. EfN teachers need to combine real-world knowledge with digital teaching methods. They need to balance teaching language with professional simulations that are true to what happens in a clinical setting.

Universities and health polytechnics must progress beyond temporary solutions to achieve systematic integration of blended learning frameworks. The lecturers' stories show that good online teaching depends on more than just the effort of each student. It also depends on the school's systems, such as its technology, task management, and professional support.

To make sure that blended learning in English for Nursing education is both long-lasting and useful, schools and policymakers should set clear rules that support both the quality of teaching and the health of the teachers. This includes creating standard frameworks for designing blended courses, making sure that teachers keep learning about digital pedagogy, and encouraging language and nursing teachers to collaborate together. Policies should also make sure that both teachers and students have equal access to digital resources, balance their workloads, and get the right technical and institutional help. By making these steps part of the

system, blended learning can become a reliable, open, and high-quality way to teach professional language.

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Biographies

Syauqiyah Awaliyah Alfiani Nur is a lecturer at Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan YAPIKA Makassar with research interests in ELT, ICT, Hybrid Learning, and CALL. Her publications explore vocabulary, reading, speaking, and the use of educational technology in English language classrooms

Pujalinda Mandarsari, a permanent lecturer at Institut Hasan Sulur since 2022 until now. Bachelor (S1) and magister (S2) of English Education Department of Universitas Negeri Makassar in 2012 and 2017 respectively.

Nurfiaeni Asjuh is English and Indonesian (for non-native speaker) tutor since 2013 until now. Bachelor (2012) and Magister (2017) of English Education Department in State University of Makassar.

Insani Nurchintyawati, a permanent lecturer at STAI DDI Pinrang since 2020 until now. Bachelor (S1) and magister (S2) of English Education Department of Universitas Negeri Makassar in 2012 and 2017 respectively.

Siti Nurul Ilmi HL, a permanent lecturer at IAIN Bone since 2020 until now. Bachelor (S1) and magister (S2) of English Education Department of Universitas Negeri Makassar in 2012 and 2017 respectively.