Take Care

Communicating in English with U.S. Health Care Workers

INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES

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Introduction

Instructors who use this textbook are in a position to help nursing students, certified nursing assistants, practicing nurses, and other health care workers better communicate with patients, supervisors, and co-workers. Although knowledge of health care is not required for instructors who use this textbook, these notes provide some additional resources to address some content issues should they arise in the classroom. Likewise, a background in English language teaching is not required to use this textbook effectively, but some additional guidelines and suggestions are given for medical professionals who are teaching in a workplace setting.

Notes to Instructors with No Language Training

It is generally assumed that students have some sort of knowledge of common medical and health care terms. The text does not attempt to teach medical terminology and is used primarily to review and/or be used in the context of communicating effectively in a health care setting. In that way, instruction will differ from what is usually encountered in a health care classroom. Often, you will function not as a lecturer, but rather as a guide or facilitator to practice dialogues, discuss strategies, encourage role-plays, and analyze situations and culture points commonly encountered in health care settings.

Although students may know the terminology or have nursing or other medical textbooks, you may need to keep students focused on English training rather than health care training. For example, there are Vocabulary sections in each unit. It is important that students not worry as much about the medical nuances, but rather focus on how the words and terms will be used to more effectively communicate at work. Students should be encouraged to study medical words more in-depth using their nursing and health care textbooks and reminded to concentrate more on communication in the English classroom.

The textbook is divided into 12 units and each of those units has two parts with the following sections and exercises: Listening to the Action/Listening for Language, Dialogue, Vocabulary, Communication Strategy, Pronunciation, Dialogue Review, and Role-Plays. Each unit ends with an End-of-the-Unit Discussion and a Culture Point. Details about each section and exercise can be found in Notes on Using the Exercises. In general, the activities allow students to familiarize themselves with the topic, communicate in pairs and small groups, learn relevant words and phrases, practice pronunciation, and apply newfound language to discuss health care situations.
Some common methods to implement and encourage participation in an ESL classroom setting follow.

**Focusing on the Topic**
Introduce the unit-opening and part-opening text. You can do this by asking students to read silently, reading it aloud and asking them to follow along, or soliciting a volunteer to read. Students who jump immediately to the first activity won’t perform as well without the context of this introductory material. Consider asking general questions related to the material. For example, you can ask *Have you ever been in a situation like the one described? What kind of language you think a health care worker might hear in this type of situation? What kind of language do you think a health care worker might need to use? What might be an inappropriate response? What might be the best response?* Remind students there is no one correct answer. If time allows, write questions on the board and ask students to discuss in groups. Then ask a member of each group to summarize what was discussed.

**Using Small Groups**
Putting students in small groups is an effective way to encourage discussion and ensure that more students participate. As students discuss, circulate to offer feedback, ask questions, provide additional input and information, and listen to make sure students are on topic. Group size depends on the size of your class and the activity. Ideally, groups of three or four work best in order to allow participation from more students. Working in groups often makes students more comfortable, fosters a sense of community, and gives quieter and lower-level students a chance to more actively participate.

**Incorporating Pair Work**
Incorporating pair work allows students to practice dialogues and discuss issues in-depth. In general, pair work increases actual language practice since students have more talking time to implement the newly acquired language forms and discuss which words and phrases work best for them. Additionally, pair work boosts confidence in speaking inside and outside the classroom. Many students agree that group work and pair work are simply more interactive, making learning more of a pleasure.

**Soliciting and Checking Answers**
Although it isn’t always necessary, it can be beneficial to allow time to go over answers, discuss ways to adapt the language, and/or analyze situations in the text or from students’ experiences. If time is limited, you can simply provide answers from the answer key and address any questions. If time allows, there are a variety of ways to go over answers. For example, ask pairs or small groups to compare answers and discuss differences. Then one group member can present the group’s answers to the rest of the class.
Multi-Level Classrooms

An ESL classroom may have students from a variety of levels. In cases of extreme differences between higher- and lower-level students, there are some strategies to implement in the classroom.

—Vary groups so that sometimes higher-level students are grouped with lower-level students. Assign a higher-level student to be the group leader for the day. This allows the higher-level student to develop leadership skills and puts less pressure on lower-level students.

—Vary groups so that sometimes students of similar proficiencies work together. This dynamic allows lower-level students to move at similar speed and allows higher-level students to progress faster. Consider assigning additional tasks to the higher-level groups. For example, in a role play or discussion, the lower-level students can be charged with including a certain amount of vocabulary from the unit. Challenge the higher-level students to include two or more extra vocabulary ideas into their role play or discussion.

—Call on lower-level students when answers are shorter to alleviate the stress of speaking at length in front of others. Call on higher-level students when answers are longer or more detailed.

—Solicit volunteers rather than requiring students to participate in challenging activities.

—Ask higher-level students to read text aloud or perform role plays first in class. Ask lower-level students to read prepared dialogues first since those will be easier and more manageable for them.

—Assign study partners to work with each other. Often higher-level students paired with lower-level students allow the higher-level students to monitor and help the others.

—Begin with a whole-group discussion before breaking into groups. Introduce the topic or activity to the whole class, then break students into groups for leveled pair or group work. Generally plan to end the class with another whole-group discussion to summarize the pair or group work.

—Use gestures and other non-verbal language to support your spoken words so lower-level students can more easily follow your ideas.

—Prepare extra role plays or activities for the students who finish first.
General Classroom Management Strategies

Second language learners are sometimes hesitant to participate and are overly concerned about making mistakes. Some general management strategies can help combat these issues.

— Assure students that even native speakers make mistakes and that communication with breakdowns can be corrected.
— Correct only mistakes that are relevant to the particular lesson or communication in health care settings.
— Allow some correction-free practice in order for students to best discuss the situations without worry of grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary correction.
— Provide clear objectives, expectations, and policies for each class.
— Establish an English-only policy for the classroom.
— Administer a needs assessment to determine the skills students need most.
— Plan for the whole class to be working on the same topic at all times.

Notes to Instructors with No Medical/Nursing Training

As mentioned in the Introduction, knowledge of the health care field is not required to use this textbook. The content of the book is language-based, not industry-based. The medical terminology, for the most part, is easy to understand. Wherever possible, the language is used in context and additional definitions are not necessary for students to comprehend the language points being taught. The textbook does not attempt to teach medical terminology and students can and should be referred to their nursing textbooks for detailed definitions. Most of the strategies you already know about teaching English can be used in teaching this course.

Remind students that this textbook is not teaching them how to be nurses or health care workers; rather it is teaching them how to communicate. Some of the situations and activities will call for their experience in or knowledge about health care settings. They will bring their own body of knowledge from work experience and/or health care classes. Encourage students to use that knowledge in the group work, activities, and discussions. It is the hope of the authors that you will be functioning as an English teacher and can guide practicing nurses and/or health care students through the book and help them grasp the phrases and communication strategies they need in order to successfully communicate in health care settings.
Understanding Medical Terminology

The textbook uses some health-care related words. In many cases, the instructor need not know the exact definition or could provide a non-medical description to explain what the word means. A non-medical definition or description should be enough to answer brief questions so students can focus on language. Students should use their nursing textbooks as a primary source; however, definitions for terms not defined in the text can be found in a variety of sources.

Online:
- Medical Dictionary Online: http://www.online-medical-dictionary.org/
- WebMD: http://dictionary.webmd.com/

Print:
- McGraw-Hill Nurse’s Dictionary
- Mosby's Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing & Health Professions
- Stedman's Medical Dictionary for the Health Professions and Nursing
- Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary

Notes on Using the Sections

Listening to the Action/Listening for Language

The first activity has three short dialogues that employ vocabulary or language from the unit. Students are asked to try to identify those key words or phrases. Depending on the students’ level, there are ways to vary your approach to this activity.

—Ask students to write only the word or phrase being taught rather than attempting to write the entire sentence.
—Ask students to take dictation (during the first or second listening) in an attempt to write the entire sentence.
—Listen more than one time if necessary.
—After going over the answers, initiate a discussion about which words or phrases students already know.
—Remind students that the definitions and explanations will be clearer as they move forward through the unit.
—Ask students to check their answers with each other before giving answers to the class.
—Ask students to predict what other phrases might be used in the same situations.
Dialogue
The dialogues take place in a medical setting and contain examples of the vocabulary or language from the unit.
—Remind students that the definitions and explanations will be clearer as they move forward.
—Encourage students to use the dialogues to practice pronunciation (stress, rhythm, intonation, and segmentals).
—Ask students to record themselves for practice. Recordings can be used for self-improvement or collected for feedback and/or individual meetings with the instructor.
—Schedule time for students to perform the dialogues for the class.
—Discuss ideas about the best stress, tone, and alternate wording that can be used in the situation.
—Challenge students to write their own dialogues to read for the class.

Vocabulary
Each unit includes 10 to 30 lexical items. It is likely that students will be familiar with many of the words from work experience or health care studies. Additional practice can be included if level- or time-appropriate.
—Ask students to complete exercises that follow the vocabulary explanations. Review answers before moving forward.
—Ask students to write sentences using the vocabulary in context.
—Ask students to write sentences that leave a blank line for the vocabulary word. Collect the sentences, and make a quiz for the class.
—Encourage use of a vocabulary log that allows students to write their own definitions, translations, or sentences.
—Make sure that class discussions require students to use the vocabulary. Write questions on the board or have students write questions for each other. For example, in Unit 1, you may ask a student Have you ever visited a dermatologist? A reply such as No, but I don’t have any skin problems. should be elicited.

Communication Strategy
The strategies in the book are crucial for successful interaction in health care settings. Strategies include speech acts, nonverbal cues, and tools for repairing an interaction.
—Make sure students understand the meaning behind the strategy before beginning the exercises.
—Spend extra time on idioms or slang if necessary.
—Go over the answers to the exercises, and make sure everyone understands them before moving on.
Ask students to think of other words, phrases, or cues to add to the lists given in the book.

Give students time to write short dialogues or talk about situations in which they have heard the strategy in use.

Challenge students to think about which strategies may be more acceptable in other settings.

Begin a discussion about when and where they have used or will use the given strategy.

### Pronunciation

These sections primarily cover the main suprasegmentals (intonation, stress, and rhythm) of English. Some sounds are also practiced. The IPA and use of technical vocabulary in context is avoided, so students can better concentrate on communication.

- Model the pronunciation of examples.
- Record yourself (or a native speaker) to play for the class.
- Point out the rule, and make sure students can recognize it in your pronunciation.
- Ask students to complete the provided exercises, and review answers.
- Draw attention to black dots and bold type when provided to make it easier for students to focus on particular sounds or syllables.
- Ask students to add other examples or technical examples to the lists in the book.
- Record students so they can hear themselves. You can also use the recorded version for individual feedback.
- Ask students to write dialogues that will allow them to practice the pronunciation rules.

### Dialogue Review

This section serves as a bridge between the Dialogue and the Role Plays. The students revisit the dialogue from the beginning of the section and identify featured vocabulary and language items.

- Give students time to compare answers before going over the answers with the class.
- Ask students to rewrite the dialogues inserting other vocabulary and language items. Allow time for students to perform their new versions for the class.

### Role Plays

Role-play sections contain seven scenarios. There are several ways to implement the role plays in class depending on class size and schedule.
—Ask students to read and practice all scenarios.
—Circulate as students practice and choose one group to perform each role play.
—Assign groups to one scenario so that it can be practiced in depth.
—Video record the performances.
—Randomly assign students to perform a role play for which they have little or no preparation time in order to more closely mimic a real-life situation.
—Challenge students to add one new role play idea to the list. Collect those ideas and assign those to another pair or group.

End-of-Unit Discussion
This exercise offers students the opportunity to produce the language features more naturally rather practicing them in a contained exercise.
—Encourage opinions in addition to facts.
—Elicit stories about real-life work experiences or personal experiences the students don’t mind sharing.

Culture Point
The Culture Point is a short scenario at the end of each unit. After the reading, a question is posed and students are asked to determine why the interaction was flawed. Some possible explanations are offered on pages 231–32.
—Ask students to compare and contrast their own cultures to the situation in the book.
—Encourage the use of graphic organizers, such as T-charts or Venn diagrams, to compare/contrast, list pros and cons, or detail information.

Notes on Using the Audio
—Create additional audio yourself (or with student samples).
—Choose the best way to play the audio. Ideas may include: playing each conversation one at a time or playing them all together but playing them more than once.
—Use the transcripts to create cloze quizzes.
—Encourage students to create their own script by taking dictation.
—Provide copies of the audio scripts, and ask students to read and practice before listening.
—Record them so they can later compare themselves to the provided audio.

The transcripts are available at www.press.umich.edu/esl/tm/.