

ESP Vocabulary Instruction: Investigating the Effect of Using a Game Oriented Teaching Method for Learners of English for Nursing

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Abstract—Among several important separate components which make especial English distinct from general English, vocabulary is a major part of all English for specific purpose (ESP) teaching courses. In addition to general and semi-technical vocabulary items, nursing genre contains the specific jargon to be learnt if the aim is to introduce the concepts to the students who attend the courses to become insiders to the genre. Medlin(2009) refers to nursing genre as a complex and crucial factor in future professional achievement. The present study attempts to investigate applying games in getting students of an ESP course of vocabulary involved in learning activities. To do so, 40 L2 learners majoring in nursing in Shahrekord Azad Universitywere randomly selected and assigned into two groups through Nelson Test (1976). During a 5 week treatment, the first group benefited from games, and traditional teaching methods were applied for the second group. To collect the data, two vocabulary tests were administered and a covariate analysis was conducted on the pretest-posttest vocabulary test scores. A questionnaire was also given to the learners which assessed their attitudes toward learning vocabulary. The obtained results revealed that students of the game oriented class had a fairly effective tendency and positive performance toward vocabulary games, greater than what was observed in the traditional group.

Index Terms—ESP, vocabulary, game oriented teaching method

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning a foreign language is closely related to vocabulary knowledge. According to Schmitt (2000), learning vocabulary is a complex and multidimensional issue. Therefore, there are different considerations for both L2 teachers and learners in this field. Vocabulary knowledge is an important consideration especially for those who need to learn it for specific purposes such as learners at college level. Besides, Blachowicz and Fisher (2005) maintain that words allow the learners to extend their understanding of the world around them and to access to completely new worlds. They argue that in addition to affecting reading performance, vocabulary knowledge affects a student's ability to participate fully in both social and academic classroom routines. They also believe that all students can benefit from vocabulary instruction, especially if that instruction is conducted according to their strength and needs.

Richards (2003) offers three important changes on language teaching: the traditional approaches (up to late 1960s), and a move toward classic communicative teaching (1970s to 1990s), and current communicative language teaching (CLT, 1990s to the present) respectively, which shifted L2 researchers' focus from traditional lesson formats toward using toward innovative tasks such as pair work activities, role plays and group work activities. These trends led to ESP movement in 1970s and 1980s. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) assert its practical domain driven by people who needed English for specific purposes such as reading academic textbooks or business objectives. Also, Dovey (2006) states specific courses preparing learners for their workplace with objectives distinct from other course plans.

Zengin, Erdogan, and Akalin (2007) point out that eighty-five percent of all information in science and engineering throughout the world is in English and this implies the significance of ESP in language teaching programs. In various versions and views of ESP course plans, vocabulary teaching programs are needed to expand learners' potential in extracting meaning and to develop the knowledge of the jargon of the genre. Since ESP in nursing courses largely consists of medical terminology and abbreviations, incorporating theses terms is an indispensable part of ESP course plans for nursing learners at college level. Also, according to Nettina (2006, p. 5)“ the Nursing Process is a deliberate, problem-solving approach to meeting the health care and nursing needs of patients”. Therefore, the essential question is how to make instruction effective by choosing a teaching procedure which can facilitate VL of ESP L2 learners.

Watts-Taffe and Truscott (2000) suggest that providing rich explanation to elaborate and contextualize word meanings, using nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, illustrations, and other visuals can support word

learning. Students usually only acquire new vocabulary through new words in their textbooks or those given by their teachers and classmates in the classroom. According to Blachowicz and Fisher (2005), limited knowledge of English vocabulary may affect the performance of English language learners in at least four ways: the development and maintenance of social relationships with other students, participation in academic learning routines, comprehension as a part of reading instruction, and comprehension as a part of content area instruction. By taking into account the importance of ESP vocabulary and the problems learners may encounter through their lack of knowledge in workplace settings, successful vocabulary programs are needed to expand the learners' level of knowledge.

Bosher and Smalkowski (2002) report a research on need analysis of nursing learners and stress the significance of providing the best way to maximize the learners' communicative ability through medical terminologies in real-life hospital situation. In a similar study, Medlin (2009) proves that providing an adjunct course for nursing learners requires assigning attention to complexities inherent in nursing curriculum development such as material development, essential terminology and decision making. Also, Yarmohammadi (2005) analyzed and evaluated a selected number of ESP textbooks in Iran, and offered some suggestions with regard to the ways ESP methodology and material production should proceed.

Likewise, in a CLT classroom, playing vocabulary games is one the activities which requires learners to actively interact with their classmates. According to the Wikipedia (2011), the games are defined as:

A game is structured playing, usually undertaken for enjoyment and sometimes used as an educational tool. Games are distinct from work, which is usually carried out for remuneration, and from art, which is more often an expression of aesthetic or ideological elements. However, the distinction is not clear-cut, and many games are also considered to be work (such as professional players of spectator sports/games) or art (such as jigsaw puzzles or games involving an artistic layout such as Mahjong, solitaire, or some video games).

In a CLT course of English teaching, playing vocabulary games which is used as an instructional tool is one alternative available for the course involving students in an active interaction with their fellow classmates. Lewis (1999) states that through games children experiment, discover, and interact with their environment. Therefore, games give learners the opportunity to practice language in a variety of language areas, such as spelling, grammar and vocabulary. Tyson (2000) suggests that a game should involve "friendly" competition, keep all of the students involved and interested, and give students a chance to learn, practice, or review specific language material. This is confirmed by Krashen and Terrell's (1983) comments that "All human beings can acquire additional languages, but they must have the desire or the need to acquire the language, and the opportunity to use the language they study for real communicative purposes" (p. 17).

Nguyen and Nga (2003) report a research that learners stated that they liked the relaxed atmosphere, the competitiveness, and the motivation brought to the class by the games and they could learn the material quickly in a non-stressful environment. Learners liked game-oriented activities and were greatly motivated. According to August and Collins (2005), rich instruction for ELL students includes the same components relevant to native language speakers, definitional, contextual, and usage information, with the addition of further elaboration. Many experienced textbook and methodology manual writers have argued that games are not just time-filling activities but have a great educational value.

On the other hand, traditional activities get students involved in a boring process of memorization of long vocabulary lists, derivations, repetition of words, translation, fill-in-the-blank exercises, etc. Scrivener (2009, p. 241) states that the long list of words and their translation seems to defy memory and even when we can recall the word we want, it doesn't seem to fit comfortably into our sentences. He believes that the action of noting down a list of lexical items makes no guarantee that remembering will take place. Therefore, from a pedagogical point of view, there is a need for research that helps to identify the proper activities that provide optimal opportunities for L2 VL.

Taken together, incorporation of VL in ESP courses is an important part of EFL curriculum planning. There are difficulties in L2 courses which can be a daunting task to successful L2 learning. Therefore, solving these problems helps both EFL and ESP teachers and learners. This study might be a step to solve the problems of many Iranian EFL learners and teachers in ESP courses to learn field related items. Furthermore, the results of the study could probably affect Iranian teachers, syllabus designers, and learners' perspectives to implement the games more effectively in EFL curricula. This study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Are game-based methods more effective than the traditional ones in L2 ESP vocabulary teaching?
- 2) Do games reduce frustration and difficulty in ESP language teaching?

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

A sample of 40 female ESP students was randomly chosen from 60 senior students majoring in nursing field in Shahrekord Azad University. Through the Nelson Test (Fowler & Coe, 1976), they were divided into two groups of 20 learners: one game and one traditional group. This procedure ensured us of the existence of a fair degree of homogeneity.

B. Materials

Three instruments were utilized in this study. The first one was a Nelson Language Proficiency test which was used as a standardized measure to check the homogeneity of subjects in terms of language proficiency. The second instrument was an 18 item multiple-choice and 12 matching item test of medical and semi-medical vocabulary, which was developed by the researchers. Two major steps were used to standardize the test. In the first step, the test was administrated to a pilot group of 15 learners. In the second step, the revised test was administrated to another pilot group of 15. Item difficulty and item discrimination of each test items were estimated. The final test was used as the assessment tool in the pretest and the posttest phase of the study. The reliability of the tests was investigated by the use of Cronbach's alpha formula through SPSS. Also, the validity of the vocabulary tests was investigated by the expert judgments (see appendix A).

A standard language learning attitude questionnaire was another instrument being applied to both groups as a post-test to evaluate the learners' attitude toward learning ESP lexical items. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items focusing on the learners' attitude toward learning ESP. The reliability index of the questionnaire was investigated by the use of Cronbach' Alpha formula (about .81), which was satisfactory for the purpose of the study (see appendix B).

C. Procedure

Having selected homogeneous learners, and having pre-tested nursing students for ensuring lexical homogeneity, we divided them into two classes of learners. Both the game and traditional groups enrolled in an obligatory ESP course specific for nursing learners for five sessions of treatment (two hours a day, once a week). Both groups were instructed by the same teacher, who was a full time EFL teacher with experiences in teaching ESP in nursing and other various fields. During the whole course, 75 medical words, each session 15 terms, were taught through methods of activities which were different for each of the two classes. Whenever possible, in both groups code switching to Persian was applied to facilitate learners' understanding. The textbook utilized for both classes was *Birmingham Medical Terminology*, the items for the treatment were chosen from the beginning five chapters; surgery, blood and immunity, respiration, digestion and urinary system.

As for the traditional group the syllabus for the instructional activities focused on learning roots and affixes relevant to each organ and then learning new lexical items comprising theses affixes. The teacher was the sole speaker most of the time and the students' tasks were to listen and to take notes. The rest of the class time was devoted to asking the learners to list the new terms and memorize them in a specific time limit. Then, some exercises were offered to the learners which focused basically on fill in the blank, matching exercises and identifying the comprising elements of the new items. To help them master learning the new words, they were needed to write new words on particular cards along with their equivalents in Persian (flash cards). The learners' assignment at home consisted of memorizing the new terms; finding the underlying meaning of some new ones and finding other medical terms relevant to the topic of the chapter.

The treatment for the game group, involved teaching the new medical terms in each chapter through the use of three types of games. In each session, 10 technical words were chosen to be presented and learnt in class; affixes, roots, or medical terms were introduced with their definitions in English so that the students would try to make guesses and remember the words intended to be learnt. The rest of the class time was devoted to manipulating 3 main games to practice and review the materials.

- **Relay Word Building:** In each session, to review the previously taught terms, the class was divided into two teams. Each team was given a sheet of paper and pencils. Either or both of the affixes or roots were written on the board and the students were asked to write the correct item in a specific time limit. A group with more items in less time was considered to be the winner. (see appendix D).

- **Crossword Puzzles:** In this game, the class was divided into two teams with about ten members. Each team received a crossword puzzle containing English definitions of affixes, roots or medical terms. The students were encouraged to solve the puzzle within a specific time limit. These puzzles consisted of some horizontal and some vertical blanks. Each puzzle focused on one organ of the body. An initial, middle, or final key letter was given which could help the students to figure out or guess at the word in question. The two team's competition to solve the puzzle accurately and quickly was considered to be the goal of the game (see appendix E).

- **Guessing Game:** The class was divided into four teams. Each team received a card containing definitions of medical terms in English. The next group had to ask up to 10 questions and attempt to discover the term in question. Receiving yes/no answers would be the only guidance available. The teacher's interference was minimal and the members of the team would have to try to convey the definition to the other group and help them discover the term. The process continued until one team defeated the others and was selected as the champion (see appendix F).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data were collected and analyzed by SPSS software, and the findings were reported. The number of participants was ($n = 20$) the same in two groups. As Table 1 demonstrates the pretest mean scores of the two groups were not much different from each other before the treatment. The pretest mean score of the first group (Game) was 14.80; and in the second group (Traditional), the pretest mean score was 14.08. But the posttest mean score indicated a greater difference after the treatment. The greater posttest mean score belonged to the game group ($M = 16.65$), and it was 14.42 for the traditional group.

TABLE 1.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF GAMES AND TRADITIONAL GROUPS

Variable	N	Pretest		Posttest	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Game	20	14.80	1.88	16.65	1.79
Traditional	20	14.08	2.12	14.42	2.17

In order to address the first research question, it was important to make sure that all groups had normal distribution. A Levene's test of equality of error variance in SPSS was applied in order to demonstrate the normality of the groups.

TABLE 2.
TEST OF EQUALITY OF VARIANCE

Test	F	df	Sig.
Levene	.45	1, 38	.51

According to table 2, the significance value was ($p = 0.51$). Therefore, the assumption of the equality of variance is not rejected at 0.05. As a result, according to the Levene's test, the two groups had normal distribution.

In order to see the effect of the first method of instruction (i.e., game) on L2 VL scores the analysis of covariance was conducted.

TABLE 3.
ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE ON THE POST-TEST SCORES FOR THE EFFECT OF THE METHOD

Source	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	eta Square
Game	1	42.93	10.79	0.002	.23

As Table 3 demonstrates, the effect of the treatment was significant on the posttest scores: $F = 10.79$, $p = 0.002$ ($*p < 0.05$). This result indicates that there was a significant difference in the game group. That is, two method of instruction did not have the same effect on the posttest scores.

Also, to answer the second research question, a Levene's test of equality of error variance was used.

TABLE 4.
TEST OF EQUALITY OF VARIANCE

Test	F	df	Sig.
Levene	1.50	1, 38	0.10

As Table 4 displays, the significant value of this test is $p = 0.10$, therefore, the assumption of the equality of variance is not rejected at 0.05. Beside, in order to see the effect of applying games on learner's motivation, the mean scores were reported.

TABLE 5.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF PRETEST-POSTTEST FOR THE EFFECT OF MOTIVATION

variable	N	Pretest		Posttest	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Game	20	16.40	5.60	28.50	5.19
Traditional	20	16.25	4.87	15.70	4.77

As Table 5 reveals, the mean score of the first group (i.e., game) is greater than the second group (i.e., traditional), $M = 28.50$, therefore, the findings support the idea that ESP vocabulary teaching through game affects the interest and motivation of L2 learners in a positive way.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Teaching new L2 words is one of the most important issues for L2 teachers, and syllabus designers. Since L2 learners need a large number of L2 new words, the use of different kinds of activities and games might increase the interest and motivation of L2 learners to learn L2 new words better. Therefore, there are various considerations for both L2 teachers and learners in this field to promote the vocabulary knowledge of L2 learners. Successful communication in occupational environment is due to considerable attention being placed on ESP. In this respect, game pedagogy can be really effective in teaching ESP terms to EFL learners.

This study investigated the role of games in enhancing ESP vocabulary to EFL learners. Meanwhile, Sifakis (2003) points out the role of teachers to satisfy students' needs and enhance their self-confidence and motivation towards English learning. According to the results in table 1 in pretest mean scores of the two groups were not much different from each other before the treatment. But the posttest mean score indicated a greater difference after the treatment.

Table 4 demonstrates, the mean score of the first group (i.e. game) is greater than the second group (i.e. traditional), therefore, the findings support the idea that VL through game affect the interest and motivation of L2 learners in a positive way. So, the results of the present study are, in part, in line with Nguyen and Nga (2003) research. They carried out a study on the effect of game to teaching general language skills. The results obtained by theses researchers indicated a significant improvement in learners' language knowledge. They reported that the learners like the

atmosphere, friendly competition and the motivation brought by the games to the classroom. This promotes CLT approach which paves the way for successful teaching and learning and improves learners' "Communicative Competence" by putting them as part of the lessons themselves.

Higher motivation toward ESP was another outcome of the study especially for those who were not willing to learn. Considering the importance of ESP and frustration viewed in ESP classes, games provided a relaxed atmosphere for the learners. The learners were more willing to participate actively in class games and conquer their opponents. Their friendly competition helped them to work together and communicate via ESP terms.

Games had an important role in teaching or learning the new L2 words in ESP courses for the EFL participants of this study and were more effective than traditional procedure in promoting ESP VL at the college level. Considering English as a foreign language in Iran, most learners specially ESP ones encounter problems in learning technical terms in English. Therefore, providing effective games can reduce their anxiety toward learning and retaining new words.

In some games (guess game, and crossword puzzle) learners could learn how to produce and comprehend new ESP terms via their English knowledge and this leads to interactive classroom which Savignon (2002) has marked as an aid to language learning. He refers to games, tasks, juggling, and jazz as innovations in curriculum planning which provide communicative opportunities for learners.

Moreover, Previous studies performed on game and learning were mostly conducted on children (e.g., Lewis, 1999) and their objectives were mostly on general language ability while the focus of this study was on adults on ESP vocabulary learning. Sometimes, adults worked harder to learn new terms and their previous skills in EGP and EAP permitted them to learn efficiently. In Fiorito's point of view (2005) ESP learners view their English training completing their education and this enables them to identify a real context for ESP vocabulary and structure.

Unfortunately, the findings demonstrated that some learners avoided participating in class games due to their individual differences. Considering these differences before applying game procedure is obligatory while preparing the ultimate design for L2 teachers and syllabus designers.

To conclude, the results also can be effective for EFL teachers to make ESP classes fruitful and at the same time fun. In summary syllabus designer can provide programs to insert games in all EFL classes; EAP, EGP or other language related courses. However, planning the class to achieve final objectives is really important since playing games and controlling class time takes too much time and following the exact lesson plan might be neglected.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors are grateful to the faculty of nursing and nursing students in Islamic Azad University, Shahrekord Branch, for their support.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE TEST

A: Choose the correct answer:

1. Endocardium is
 - a) Membrane inner surface of heart
 - b) Inflammation of heart muscle
 - c) Cutting inner valves of heart
 - d) Enlargement of heart muscle
2. Mastectomy is
 - a) surgical incision of breast
 - b) displacement of the breast
 - c) excision of breast
 - d) rupture of breast
3. Maria is a at the hospital. Every Tuesday, she helps the doctors and nurses, but she doesn't get paid.
 - a) manager
 - b) volunteer
 - c) businessperson
 - d) pilot
4. Andy is much thinner now. He has lost a lot of
 - a) weight
 - b) height
 - c) length
 - d) width
5. Hyperproteinemia is
 - a) excessive protein in the blood
 - b) deficiency of protein in the blood
 - c) excessive protein and blood in an organ
 - d) lack of protein in an organ
6. There is a/an against some diseases for a short time only. You may still catch them if you are not very careful.
 - a) immunity
 - b) precaution
 - c) treatment
 - d) vaccination
7. Color – blind persons see objects as lighter or darker. They are also unable to the shades.
 - a) design
 - b) deceive
 - c) distinguish
 - d) decay
8. Dentists strongly suggest brushing teeth using toothpaste to them from decaying.
 - a) defer
 - b) protect
 - c) waste
 - d) correct
9. A kind of disease which is marked by strong contractions of the muscles of the throat and consequent inability to drink water. It is
 - a) cholera
 - b) varicose
 - c) cataract
 - d) hydrophobia
10. Scientists believe that about half of the world's do not have enough to eat.
 - a) information
 - b) resources
 - c) government
 - d) population

11. Another term for Gallbladder is

- a) cholelithiasis b) cholecystectomy
c) cholecyst d) cholectasis

B: Choose the best synonym for the given words or definitions:

12. Specialists are trying to control the new disease; it may happen over a wide area.

- a) contagious b) widespread c) alimentary d) ventilated

13. Using needles has been proved to be a good way for chronic pain.

- a) slight b) not serious c) lasting a short time d) lasting a long time

14. I didn't know the Smiths are growing tomatoes in their small farm.

- a) raising b) grinding c) selling d) enjoying

15. What is the most important reason for the world hunger?

- a) possible b) common c) major d) second

16. Another **defense** against disease is the use of medicine or drugs.

- a) education b) production c) association d) protection

17. They didn't earn the same **amount** of money because they had different jobs.

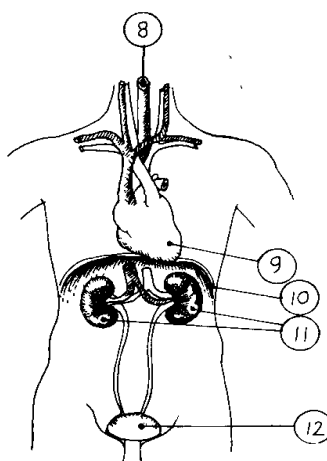
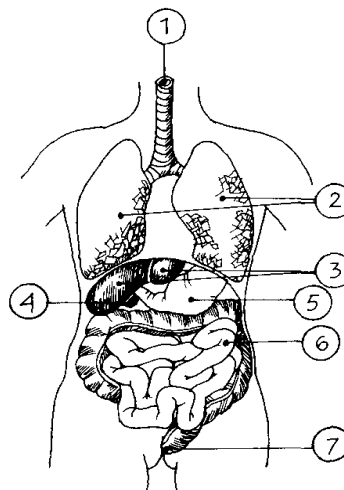
- a) area b) quantity c) cost d) event

18. What is the best term for enlargement of the liver?

- a) cystocele b) cephalodynia c) neuropathy d) hepatomegaly

Write the number of each drawing next to the correct word.

diaphragm	.....
gall bladder	.....
rectum	.....
intestines (bowels)	.....
bladder	.....
windpipe (trachea)	.....
gullet (esophagus)	.....
liver	.....
heart	.....
lungs	.....
kidneys	.....
stomach	.....



APPENDIX B: ESP VOCABULARY LEARNING MOTIVATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Please read the following questions about the effect of teaching academic English on your learning. Please use a check mark.

row		Completely agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	Completely disagree
*	During the five week ESP vocabulary learning I found that					
1	Learning new medical items has gotten easier for me.					
2	The ESP educational course has been a pleasant continuum for me.					
3	I have achieved a significant progress in learning new lexical items.					
4	I have got a good feeling toward learning ESP vocabulary.					
5	I think that I can get better grades in learning ESP vocabulary.					
6	I have a good mastery of medical terms in hospital					
7	Learning medical vocabulary is not as frustrating and difficult as I believed.					
8	I would like to learn English.					
9	I feel that I can achieve high success with learning the new lexical items in my life.					
10	My ESP lexicon has grown significantly.					

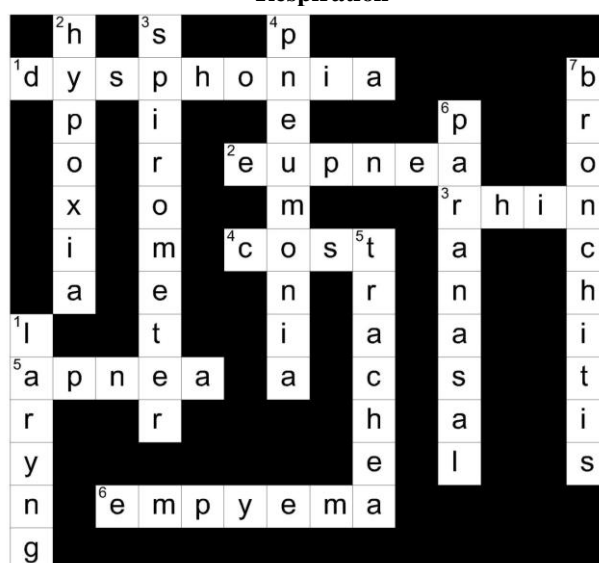
APPENDIX C: SAMPLE OF RELAY WORD BUILDING

Respiration

Root or Affix	Definition	Possible Examples Offered by Learners
pnea	Breathing	eupnea, dyspnea, hyperpnea, trachypnea, bradypnea, apnea, orthopnea
oxia	Level of oxygen	hypoxia, anoxia, oximetry, oximeter
phonia	voice	dysphonia, aphonia, egophonia, bronchophonia
rhin/o	Nose	rhinorrhea, rhinitis, rhinorrhagia, rhinoplasty, rhinostomy
laryng/o	Larynx	laryngoscope, laryngeal, laryngoscopy, laryngitis, laryngotracheal, laryngomalacia, laryngospasm
trache/o	Trachea	tracheostomy, trachea, trachomalacia, trachoma, laryngotracheal, trachypnea, tracheoesophageal
Pleura/o	Pertaining to the ribs	pleurodesis, pleuritis, pleural, pleurodynia
Pneum/o	Pertaining to the lungs	pneumonia, pneumothorax, pneumococcal, pneumonitis

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE OF CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Respiration



Horizontal →

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Difficulty in speaking | 5. Temporary cessation of breathing |
| 2. Easy normal breathing | 6. Pus in pleural space |
| 3. Nose | |
| 4. rib | |

Vertical ↓

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Larynx | 5. Air passage extending from larynx to bronchi |
| 2. Decreased oxygen in the tissue | 6. Near nose |
| 3. Instrument for measuring breathing | 7. Inflammation of bronchi |
| 4. Inflammation of lungs with consolidation | |

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE OF GUESSING GAME

Group A: (holding the card)
 Group B: Is it an instrument?
 Group A: yes
 Group B: Is it used to crash stones in urinary system?
 Group A: no
 Group B: Is it used to examine urinary system?
 Group A: yes
 Group B: Is it cystostomy?
 Group A: no
 Group B: Is it cystoscope?
 Group A: Yes, that's right!

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