

Dealing with Global Clients: Real-life Stories of BSEd English Major Graduates Working as Virtual Assistants

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ABSTRACT

This study addressed the gap between the preparation of Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English graduates and the communication demands of medical virtual assistant work. It aimed to explore the lived experiences of eight BSEd-English graduates who were working as medical virtual assistants using a qualitative phenomenological research design. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and were analyzed thematically to identify recurring experiences and coping practices. The findings revealed the following major themes: economic and practical motivations for career shift, challenges and limitations in the teaching profession, transferability of skills and search for professional fulfillment, linguistic and comprehension barriers, cultural and contextual communication differences, personal readiness, confidence, and technical constraints, strategic clarification and problem-solving approaches, self-initiated

learning and continuous skill development, and adaptive communication and interpersonal adjustment. Participants experienced difficulties related to medical terminology, communication with foreign clients, and limited work exposure during their adjustment period. They managed these difficulties through continuous learning, communication adjustment, clarification strategies, and guidance from experienced individuals. The findings implied that educational institutions needed to strengthen industry-related communication training, digital readiness, and foundational medical knowledge to prepare graduates for emerging career opportunities outside the teaching profession. The study also implied the need for employers to provide structured onboarding, workplace guidance, and accessible learning resources for newly hired medical virtual assistants. The study concluded that integrating healthcare communication exposure and medical terminology support in English education programs could help graduates transition more effectively into medical virtual assistant work.

Keywords: *BSEd-English graduates; Coping strategies; Medical virtual assistance*

INTRODUCTION

Working with clients from different parts of the world creates both opportunity and pressure for Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) English major graduates who enter virtual assistant work. Their background in communication supports their ability to manage conversations, yet the demands of the job extend beyond basic language use. They are expected to learn quickly, adjust to workplace systems, and maintain professional standards while handling medical-related tasks. However, many experience difficulty in adapting to medical terminology, unfamiliar communication demands, and high-performance expectations in global work settings.

The expansion of remote work has increased the demand for virtual assistants who communicate with international clients. Lehewych (2022) noted that global remote work growth created wider opportunities for online communication-based jobs, yet it also increased expectations for accuracy and clarity in cross-cultural interaction. For BSEd-English graduates entering this field, communication barriers often arise from accent variation, different

communication styles, and unfamiliar technical terms. These challenges affect confidence and limit smooth interaction with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds.

In the Philippine setting, English graduates entering global work continue to experience communication-related difficulties. Bugay (2020) found that BPO workers struggle with pronunciation, syntax, and sentence construction when interacting with foreign clients, which affects clarity in communication. Giray et al. (2022) reported that English users often experience anxiety and lack readiness when faced with professional communication demands in real-time settings. Although English competence is developed in academic training, gaps remain in meeting workplace communication expectations in international environments.

In the Davao Region, similar conditions are observed among workers in client-based industries. Rokicki-Parashar et al. (2021) found that workload, workplace support, and working conditions influence employee performance in BPO settings in Davao City. These factors also reflect the experiences of BSEd-English graduates working in virtual assistant roles in Davao del Norte and nearby areas, where they are required to balance communication skills with fast-paced and culturally diverse client demands.

Despite the growing number of English graduates entering virtual assistant and BPO-related work, limited studies have explored how they manage communication barriers in medical virtual assistant roles and what strategies they use to meet international communication expectations. This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of BSEd-English graduates working as medical virtual assistants and to identify the challenges and coping strategies they used in handling communication demands in global work settings. The findings of this study were expected to contribute insights for improving English education programs and workplace readiness training for future graduates.

METHODS

This chapter outlined the methods and procedures used in collecting and analyzing the data for the study. It described the steps followed to ensure the systematic gathering of relevant information. It also explained how the data were processed and interpreted to address the research questions.

Research Design

This study used a narrative research design to explore and understand the personal stories of BSEd English major graduates working as virtual assistants. The approach aimed to capture their lived experiences in dealing with global clients, presenting their individual journeys through storytelling. Narrative research allowed the researcher to gather detailed accounts that reveal how these graduates adapt their language background, communication strategies, and professional skills in a virtual work environment. Through this design, the study focused on the meaning and development of their experiences over time, rather than on general patterns shared by all participants. It fitted the study because the goal is to give voice to each graduate's unique perspective, highlighting how their education, communication practices, and interactions with global clients shape their professional identity and growth in the virtual workspace.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants of this study were eight (8) Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English graduates from various Higher Education Institutions within the Davao Region who were currently working as full-time medical virtual assistants. They had not more than two years of work experience, were engaged in healthcare support roles, and handled direct international clients. They were assigned to either voice-based or non-voice-based tasks and were within the age range of 20–35 years old. Both male and female participants were included in the study.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who best fit the inclusion criteria. The study focused on individuals who were still adjusting to the demands of medical virtual assistant work while communicating with clients from different countries. Their experiences reflected the challenges they encountered, the strategies they used, and their ongoing learning process in a work environment that required strong

communication skills and cultural awareness. Only participants who met the inclusion criteria were included in the study. Graduates of programs other than BSEd-English, individuals with more than two years of experience, and those working in other virtual assistant niches such as real estate, social media management, e-commerce support, general administrative freelancing, and technical support were excluded. These criteria ensured that the study remained focused on medical virtual assistants with relevant and comparable experiences. Kim (2016) stated that narrative inquiry typically involves a small number of participants, usually between six and twelve, to allow an in-depth exploration of individual experiences. A smaller sample size allows a more detailed understanding of participants' stories, emotions, and meanings attached to their experiences. In line with this, the inclusion of eight participants was sufficient to capture rich and meaningful accounts of the phenomenon under study.

Research Instrument

The main instrument for this study was a set of self-made interview questions created to explore the experiences of BSEd-English major graduates working as Medical Virtual Assistants. The questions focused on their reasons for choosing the career, the challenges they face when communicating with international clients, and the strategies they use to handle these challenges. They were designed to encourage participants to share detailed accounts of their personal and professional experiences so the researcher could gather meaningful information for the study. Before the interviews, the questions were checked and validated by experts in English education and qualitative research. Feedback from these experts helped improve the clarity and relevance of the questions and make sure they cover the main topics of the study. The final set of questions guided the in-depth interviews, providing structure while giving participants the chance to tell their experiences in their own words. This approach helped the researcher gather consistent and honest data about their work and interactions with global clients.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data for this study were collected through a structured and ethical process that ensured accuracy, confidentiality, and participant comfort. After securing permission from the College President through the College of Graduate and Professional Education (CGPE) Dean, the researcher identified and contacted eligible participants and explained the purpose of the study. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation, emphasizing voluntary involvement and confidentiality. In-depth interviews were then conducted based on participants' availability, using a hybrid approach that included both face-to-face and online sessions depending on location and preference. Interviews were audio-recorded with permission and supplemented with field notes to capture relevant details. The recorded data were transcribed, and participants were given the opportunity to review and verify their responses through member checking to ensure accuracy. All data were securely stored and used solely for research purposes.

Data Analysis Procedure

This study used thematic narrative analysis to examine the experiences of BSEd English major graduates working as medical virtual assistants with global clients. The analysis focused on identifying recurring patterns across participants while preserving the flow and meaning of their personal narratives. The process involved repeated reading of transcripts, initial coding of meaningful statements, grouping of codes into categories, and development of emergent themes that reflected participants' communication practices, adjustments, and professional growth. To strengthen the analysis, Colaizzi's method was also applied. Significant statements were extracted from the narratives, meanings were formulated, and these were organized into theme clusters. A comprehensive description of the phenomenon was then developed and validated through member checking, where participants reviewed their transcripts and interpretations to confirm accuracy and authenticity.

Trustworthiness was established following Lincoln's (1985) criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement with participants, careful interview facilitation, and member checking to verify the accuracy of responses. Dependability was maintained through a consistent interview guide and systematic documentation of the research process to ensure replicability. Confirmability was achieved through an audit trail of transcripts, recordings, and notes to ensure that findings were

grounded in participants' accounts rather than researcher bias. Transferability was addressed through thick description of participants' backgrounds, experiences, and work settings, allowing readers to determine applicability to similar contexts such as other English graduates in virtual assistant roles.

Ethical Considerations

This study was reviewed and approved by the Davao del Sur State College (DSSC) Research Ethics Committee (REC) to ensure compliance with ethical standards. Formal permission was obtained from the College President through the Dean of the Institute of Graduate and Professional Education before data collection. Informed consent was secured from all participants after they were fully informed about the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participant protection was ensured by conducting interviews in a respectful and non-judgmental manner, scheduling sessions based on participants' availability, and minimizing any potential discomfort. Confidentiality was strictly maintained by removing all identifying information, while all data such as recordings, transcripts, and notes were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes. After completion of the study, all materials were properly disposed of in accordance with data protection principles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presented a comprehensive analysis of the data gathered, highlighting patterns, relationships, and significant findings relevant to the study. The interpretation of these results provided deeper insight into the research questions and established the foundation for meaningful conclusions.

Career Motivations of English Major Graduates in Pursuing Virtual Assistant Roles

Understanding the career motivations of English major graduates in virtual assistant roles provides insight into how academic preparation connects with emerging opportunities in the digital economy. It highlights the factors influencing their entry into the field, including communication skills alignment, flexible work arrangements, and opportunities for professional growth in remote settings. It also reflects the practical and personal reasons that shape their career paths in online work. The themes that emerged from this analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Thematic analysis on career motivations of English major graduates in pursuing virtual assistant roles

Major Themes	Clustered Themes
Economic and Practical Motivations for Career Shift	Desire for Higher Income and Financial Stability
	Work Flexibility and Work-from-Home Setup
	Job Security and Career Growth Opportunities
Challenges and Limitations in the Teaching Profession	Low Compensation and Financial Struggles
	Employment Barriers and Job Saturation
	Work-Related Stress and Demotivation
Transferability of Skills and Search for Professional Fulfillment	Application of Communication and Language Skills
	Professional Growth, Learning, and Career Advancement
	Personal Fulfillment and Meaningful Work

Economic and Practical Motivations for Career Shift

This main theme presents the economic and practical motivations for career shift. English major graduates often choose virtual assistant roles because of strong economic and practical motivations. Many see this career path as a way to secure higher income, flexible working conditions, and long-term stability compared to teaching. The

surge of Filipinos joining digital platforms after the pandemic illustrates how remote work became a practical solution for graduates seeking better pay and sustainable employment.

Desire for Higher Income and Financial Stability

This emerging theme revealed that the pursuit of better financial opportunities was a central factor in their decision to leave teaching and enter virtual assistant work, ranging from 60, 000 – 120, 000 pesos per month. They described how the compensation in education was insufficient to meet their needs and how the virtual assistant industry offered more competitive pay.

“The salary... is really competitive compared to being a teacher, and aside from that, there is the flexibility of time.” (P1)

“Financial stability — While I value my education background, I also wanted a career that could provide consistent income and opportunities for growth, especially since I am the breadwinner of the family.” (P6)

“My income was still not enough. Because of that, I started looking for online jobs. I found medical virtual assistance, and I saw that I could work from home and earn more.” (P8)

The responses reveal that financial reality became one of the strongest reasons why BSEd English graduates entered the field of virtual assistance instead of remaining in traditional teaching-related work. Studies reinforce these accounts by showing how economic necessity drives career transitions. Janagama (2025) explained that financial considerations are central to career decision-making, and that income stability and autonomy are key attractions of remote work.

Work Flexibility and Work-from-Home Setup

This emerging theme indicates that flexibility and the ability to work remotely were identified as important reasons for choosing virtual assistant roles. Graduates valued the freedom to manage their schedules, work from any location, and balance personal responsibilities with professional tasks. This autonomy made the career more appealing compared to the rigid demands of teaching.

“Flexibility of time - there is the ability to work anywhere you want. You can work at home or travel while working.” (P1)

“I found medical virtual assistance, and I saw that I could work from home and earn more.” (P8)

“Looking for a role that is more flexible but still meaningful.” (P7)

Flexibility became more than just a workplace advantage because it influenced how they managed their daily lives, responsibilities, and career decisions. Studies reinforce these perspectives by noting how remote work arrangements attract professionals seeking autonomy and balance. Schedule control and independence are key motivations for leaving traditional roles. Anakpo et al. (2023) observed that companies with strong digital systems recovered faster during the pandemic, highlighting the growing acceptance of flexible work setups.

Job Security and Career Growth Opportunities

This emerging theme highlights that the promise of stability and professional advancement was another strong motivation to pursue virtual assistant roles. They recognized that certain industries, particularly healthcare support, offered consistent demand and opportunities for long-term growth. This sense of security made the transition appealing compared to the uncertainties of teaching.

“Healthcare jobs are consistently in demand, which can make the field more secure long term. And then there is skill transferability.” (P5)

“I was motivated by the need for a more stable income and a work-from-home setup.” (P6)

“I wanted to move into a field that has strong demand and long-term growth, and the healthcare industry offers that.” (P7)

These responses reflect a shared real-life journey shaped by the need for stability, growth, and adaptability in work that connects them to global clients. Education graduates often seek alternative careers when teaching fails to provide long-term security (Keller, 2023). Transferable skills allow graduates to adapt to industries with stronger demand, such as healthcare and digital services.

Challenges and Limitations in the Teaching Profession

Low compensation, job saturation, and the stress of handling diverse student needs created barriers that limited their professional growth and satisfaction. Many expressed frustrations over the difficulty of securing stable teaching positions and the exhaustion brought by heavy workloads. These constraints pushed them to explore alternative careers where their skills could be better valued. Education graduates frequently seek alternative pathways when traditional teaching opportunities are scarce.

Low Compensation and Financial Struggles

This emerging theme centers on graduates who described how the teaching profession left them financially strained, making it difficult to sustain their needs and responsibilities. They emphasized that the low salary was not proportional to the workload, which created frustration and dissatisfaction. This struggle with compensation became a major factor in their decision to explore alternative careers.

“It's quite tiring and exhausting, most especially financially. I was really trying to cope with that type of situation and I took it as a challenge.” (P1)

“I was tired and felt that it wasn't worth it because the salary was just too small.” (P6)

“When I was teaching, I worked long hours but still struggled with my daily expenses. I remember feeling tired from checking papers and preparing lessons, but my income was still not enough.” (P8)

Across the participants' accounts, a clear pattern of exhaustion tied to financial strain emerges from their earlier work experiences before entering virtual assistance work with global clients. Low compensation is a persistent issue in the teaching profession. Janagama (2025) noted that many education graduates leave teaching due to inadequate pay and limited opportunities. Patalinghug et al. (2025) observed that digital platforms became attractive alternatives because they offered higher earning potential compared to traditional teaching roles.

Employment Barriers and Job Saturation

This emerging theme indicates that entering the teaching profession was hindered by systemic barriers and the oversupply of educators. The long waiting periods for government positions, the intense competition among licensed teachers, and the scarcity of permanent roles created discouragement.

“It still takes a very long time to earn a position in DepEd. It's quite tiring and exhausting.” (P1)

“There is a lot of competition... many licensed educators without positions.” (P4)

“The competition in applying to government positions and waiting for an item is really difficult. Even if you graduate with high honors or have significant achievements, it's still not a guarantee.” (P6)

The participants described a slow and exhausting process of trying to enter permanent positions in the public education system, where stability feels uncertain despite strong qualifications. Research has shown that these barriers are common among education graduates. Many graduates seek alternative careers when teaching

opportunities are scarce (Kassi & Lehdonvirta, 2021). Keller (2023) observed that digital platforms have expanded employment options beyond traditional schools, offering new pathways for graduates.

Work-Related Stress and Demotivation

This emerging theme showed that the teaching profession often left overwhelmed and emotionally drained. The challenges of managing diverse student needs, the pressures of online teaching, and the repetitive demands of lesson preparation and paper checking. These experiences created fatigue and reduced motivation, leading them to question whether teaching was sustainable as a long-term career.

“It was really quite challenging, knowing that you would be handling different types of students while, at the same time, support was quite lacking.” (P1)

“When I was teaching online, that's when I realized how draining it is to teach.” (P6)

“I remember feeling tired from checking papers and preparing lessons.” (P8)

The participants' narratives reflect the demanding and often exhausting realities of teaching work that eventually shaped their transition toward virtual assistance work with global clients. Stress and demotivation are common among educators. Lee (2022) explained that heavy workloads and limited support systems often lead to burnout. Coping strategies and self-regulation are essential for managing stress in professional environments.

Transferability of Skills and Search for Professional Fulfillment

Beyond technical competence, many emphasize the sense of fulfillment they gain from helping patients and supporting healthcare professionals, which mirrors the purpose-driven aspects of teaching. This blending of skill transfer and personal growth reflects a search for both professional advancement and meaningful work.

Application of Communication and Language Skills

This emerging theme highlights that the training in communication and language became a vital asset in the transition to virtual assistant roles. Clear expression, proficiency in English, and strong comprehension skills were not only transferable but also essential in remote work environments. These abilities allowed them to interact effectively with clients, produce professional outputs, and maintain accuracy in their tasks.

“My background in English really helped me communicate clearly with clients, especially in emails and calls.” (P2)

“English is the universal language and one of the key aspects of communicating with the global community.” (P3)

“My background in English education has helped me develop strong communication, reading comprehension, and especially attention to detail skills — particularly on the verification side of my current work.” (P6)

The participants highlighted how their background in English education became a strong foundation in handling communication demands when working with global clients in virtual assistance settings. Communication and language skills are critical in digital and service-oriented professions (Castro, 2024). emphasized that communication competence and adaptability are essential in navigating digital environments.

Professional Growth, Learning, and Career Advancement

This emerging theme centers on the opportunities for growth and advancement that motivated BSEd English major graduates to pursue virtual assistant roles. They valued the chance to take on leadership responsibilities, attend seminars, and continuously learn new systems and skills.

“I was also looking for opportunities that allowed me to grow, to be flexible, and to take on leadership responsibilities.” (P6)

“I joined those seminars, which helped me build my career and portfolio back then.” (P3)
“I also enjoy learning new systems and skills, which pushed me to explore this career path.” (P7)

A shared direction toward growth and continuous learning can be seen in how the participants described their career movement into virtual assistance work with global clients. Opportunities for leadership, training, and skill acquisition contribute to both career satisfaction and long-term success (Milne-Ives et al., 2021). This suggests that career guidance should encourage graduates to pursue paths that foster continuous development, ensuring they remain competitive and fulfilled in an evolving labor market.

Personal Fulfillment and Meaningful Work

The emerging theme suggests that becoming virtual assistants provided graduates with a renewed sense of purpose and satisfaction. The tasks, particularly those involving patient support and healthcare assistance, gave meaning to the work. Beyond financial stability, they valued the opportunity to contribute to others’ well-being while simultaneously advancing their own professional growth.

“I noticed that there is fulfillment in being a virtual assistant, and also in the earnings.” (P3)
“Feels like I am teaching patients.” (P3)
“For me, it’s passion for healthcare and purpose. Some people realize they feel more fulfilled helping patients directly, especially in roles that involve improving health or caring for sick people.” (P5)
“Being a medical virtual assistant allows me to support healthcare professionals while continuing to grow professionally.” (P7)

The participants expressed a sense of meaning and satisfaction in their work as virtual assistants within healthcare-related settings, especially when serving global clients and professionals in the medical field. Meaningful work is a strong motivator in career transitions. Pontillas and Fajardo et al. (2023) explained that communication competence and adaptability allow professionals to find fulfillment in digital environments.

Challenges Faced by BSEd Graduates Working as VAs in Communicating with Global Clients

Exploring the communication challenges faced by BSEd English graduates working as virtual assistants reveals the complexities of interacting with global clients in virtual work environments. It highlights the difficulties they experience in handling unfamiliar accents, unclear instructions, cultural communication differences, time zone pressures, and technical issues during client interactions. These experiences show that virtual communication requires constant adjustment, emotional control, and effective decision-making beyond grammar and English language proficiency. The themes that emerged from this analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Thematic analysis on challenges faced by BSEd graduates working as VAs in communicating with global clients

Major Themes	Clustered Themes
Linguistic and Comprehension Barriers	Difficulty with Technical Language and Jargon Accent, Pronunciation, and Speech Pace Challenges
Cultural and Contextual Communication Differences	Differences in Communication Styles and Tone Cultural Norms and Interpretation of Behavior
Personal Readiness, Confidence, and Technical Constraints	Lack of Confidence and Communication Anxiety Limited Experience and Learning Curve

Linguistic and Comprehension Barriers

These barriers emerged through difficulty in understanding technical terms, unfamiliar expressions, fast-paced speech, and different English accents used by international clients. Some graduates experienced confusion when clients used idiomatic expressions that was not commonly encountered in academic settings.

Difficulty with Technical Language and Jargon

This emerging theme reflects that difficulty with technical language and jargon emerges as a key communication barrier among BSEd English graduates working as virtual assistants, such as claim adjustment reason code, modifier 22, and unbundling. This challenge appears when graduates encounter unfamiliar medical terms and specialized codes that are not part of their prior training.

“I have a hard time communicating with my client, most especially if they use specific jargon or medical terms that I don't immediately understand.” (P1)

“They use a lot of CPT codes for diagnoses that I did not understand at first.” (P3)

“I encounter like deep medical terms that I have to have a research first, especially when it's on the spot. And then I'm not really that familiar with it until now.” (P5)

The participants described a common challenge they encountered when working with global clients in healthcare-related virtual assistance tasks, particularly in dealing with complex medical language and unfamiliar technical terms. Communication in specialized fields depends on understanding both language and domain-specific knowledge. Research shows that virtual assistants must interpret technical instructions accurately to perform tasks effectively (Kruse et al., 2020).

Accent, Pronunciation, and Speech Pace Challenges

These challenges arise when spoken English varies in sound, rhythm, and clarity across different speakers. Graduates often need to adjust to unfamiliar accents and fast-paced speech during real-time communication. Mishearing or misinterpreting words can lead to incorrect task execution and confusion.

“I misunderstood one phrase because it was not commonly used in my environment. As a result, I completed the task differently from what was expected.” (P1)

“Different accents and communication styles can be challenging at times.” (P2)

“One of the most challenging parts is ensuring that my message is both clear and correctly interpreted, especially when there are differences in accent, tone, or communication style.” (P7)

A recurring communication difficulty was evident in the participants' experiences when working with global clients, particularly in relation to language interpretation and differences in expression. Studies explain that communication in global environments involves variation in speech patterns and interpretation. Research shows that differences in accent and pronunciation can affect how messages are understood in virtual interactions (Quinto & Cacanindin, 2023).

Cultural and Contextual Communication Differences

This main theme showed how varied norms and expectations affect interactions between BSEd English graduates and global clients. These differences appear in how tone, directness, and meaning are expressed and interpreted across cultures, which can lead to confusion or unintended reactions during communication.

Differences in Communication Styles and Tone

This emerging theme shapes how BSEd English graduates interpret and respond to global clients in virtual settings. These differences appear in how direct or indirect messages are expressed during interactions. They often encounter clients who prefer clear and straightforward communication, while others expect a more polite and indirect approach.

“Some clients prefer very direct communication, while others expect us to be more polite, and some prefer more specific or detailed explanation.” (P1)

“Some of them are very direct, and at first, I felt like they were being rude.” (P8)

“Cultural and language differences can affect tone, expectations, and how messages are interpreted.” (P7)

Differences in communication style were experienced by the participants as a recurring adjustment when working with global clients in virtual assistance settings, where meaning is shaped not only by words but also by tone, culture, and expectation. Communication styles differ across cultures and influence interpretation (Chae et al., 2023). Some cultures prefer direct communication while others value indirect expression, which may lead to misunderstanding in global interactions. Other studies note that tone and communication expectations affect how messages are perceived in professional settings (Chen, 2024).

Cultural Norms and Interpretation of Behavior

This emerging theme influences how BSEd English graduates understand and respond to global clients in virtual work settings. These norms shape how actions, humor, and expressions are perceived during communication. Graduates often encounter situations where behavior that seems normal to one culture may carry a different meaning in another.

“Filipinos tend to overanalyze words or sentences, while for them, it is just normal. Sometimes it may appear sarcastic to us, but it is actually just their usual way of speaking.” (P4)

“Sometimes they make jokes, and if you do not realize it is a joke and do not respond, it might unintentionally offend them. That is part of how language differences affect communication.” (P1)

“The challenge arises when speaking with native speakers.” (P5)

A recurring challenge in working with global clients was the difficulty of interpreting meaning beyond the literal use of words, especially when cultural communication styles differ. Cultural background shapes how behavior and communication are interpreted. Differences in cultural norms influence how messages, humor, and actions are understood in global interactions (Ogbogu et al., 2022). National cultures affect perception of politeness, tone, and intent in communication (Giray et al., 2022).

Personal Readiness, Confidence, and Technical Constraint

This main theme showed how BSEd English graduates manage communication with global clients in virtual work settings. Many graduates experience hesitation and uncertainty when handling real-time interactions, especially when they lack experience in client-based tasks. Limited exposure to the field and unfamiliar work processes create a learning curve that affects how they respond and express ideas clearly. These factors show that communication is shaped not only by language ability but also by confidence and preparedness in handling professional tasks in virtual environments.

Lack of Confidence and Communication Anxiety

This emerging theme affects how BSEd English graduates engage with global clients in virtual work settings. These issues appear when graduates feel uncertain about their ability to speak clearly and respond accurately during real-time interactions. Fear of making mistakes or misunderstanding instructions often leads to hesitation in communication. This reduces their willingness to participate actively in conversations with clients. Confidence becomes a key factor in effective communication performance.

“I was hesitant to accept the call.” (P6)

“There are times when I don't fully understand what's being said and I just nod and say yes.” (P6)

“I was a little bit intimidated. That's why I didn't accept the call when he was trying to reach me, because I wasn't sure if I could answer or understand him.” (P6)

A clear manifestation of communication anxiety and hesitation in real-time interaction is evident in Participants' experience when dealing with global clients. Hesitation in accepting calls shows an initial fear of not being able to respond accurately or keep up with the pace of conversation, especially when dealing with unfamiliar accents or fast speech. Research shows that non-native English speakers often experience self-doubt when communicating with fluent or native speakers (Sajulan, 2025).

Limited Experience and Learning Curve

This emerging theme reveals that the transition of BSEd-English graduates into medical virtual assistant work often involves a period of adjustment shaped by limited prior exposure to healthcare-related tasks and virtual work systems. Many graduates enter the field with strong communication training but little experience in medical administration or digital healthcare platforms.

“I was still new... I don't know what you're expecting me to do.” (P1)

“I started from scratch. I didn't have my own gadgets to work with. Since my journey as a teacher left me with a lot of bills to pay.” (P3)

“Adjusting to this field required effort and learning.” (P3)

A recurring struggle among the participants was the difficulty of starting in virtual assistance work with limited experience, resources, and clarity of expectations, which shaped their early adjustment period with global clients. Kruse et al. (2020) explained that healthcare support roles require structured training due to the complexity of medical systems and documentation processes.

Coping Strategies Used by BSEd Graduates Working as VAs to Overcome the Challenges

Examining the coping strategies used by BSEd-English graduates working as virtual assistants provides insight into how they adjust to the demands of remote healthcare work. It highlights the approaches they use to manage communication difficulties, workload pressure, and unfamiliar tasks through communication adjustment, self-discipline, and continuous learning. The themes that emerged from this analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 2: Thematic analysis on coping strategies used by BSEd graduates working as VAs to overcome the challenges

Major Themes	Clustered Themes
Strategic Clarification and Problem-Solving Approaches	Clarifying and Confirming Information
	Seeking Support and Escalation
	Reviewing and Correcting Work Processes
Self-Initiated Learning and Continuous Skill Development	Independent Research and Knowledge Building
	Practice and Exposure to Language
	Use of Technology and Learning Tools
	Adjusting Communication Style Based on Client
Adaptive Communication and Interpersonal Adjustment	Simplifying Language and Avoiding Misunderstanding
	Building Rapport and Cultural Adaptation

Strategic Clarification and Problem-Solving Approaches

This main theme reflects how BSEd-English graduates working as virtual assistants manage communication difficulties and task-related uncertainties in a structured manner. This major theme shows that participants do not passively respond to confusion but actively seek clarity, verify instructions, and coordinate with others to ensure accuracy in their work.

Clarifying and Confirming Information

This emerging theme suggests that it is a coping strategy used by BSEd-English graduates working as virtual assistants when dealing with unclear instructions or task expectations in a remote work environment. This approach involves actively seeking details, restating instructions, and verifying accuracy before proceeding with assigned tasks.

“I also use words that I clearly understand, avoiding slang that might confuse me further. After that, I ask the client to confirm if my understanding is correct.” (P1)

“I make sure to ask questions and confirm details before doing the task. I also repeat the instructions to ensure I understand correctly.” (P8)

“I also restated my understanding of the task to confirm alignment. After that, the workflow became smoother. That experience taught me the importance of not assuming and always confirming the details.” (P7)

Coping strategies emerged among the participants in managing communication clarity when working with global clients, particularly through confirmation, simplification, and active clarification of instructions. In virtual and healthcare-related support roles and verification of instructions are essential to prevent errors and maintain service quality. In cross-cultural communication, misunderstandings often arise from differences in interpretation, making clarification strategies necessary for effective interaction (Lehewych, 2022).

Seeking Support and Escalation

This emerging theme indicates that it is used by BSEd-English graduates working as virtual assistants when they encounter complex tasks or situations that go beyond their individual understanding. This approach involves reaching out to supervisors, team members, or relevant professionals to ensure that decisions and actions are accurate.

“I verify the information, coordinate with the team, and contact the clinic if needed.” (P2)

“The first step I usually take is to ask someone reliable, such as my supervisors, doctors, or other medical professionals involved in the client’s case.” (P5)

“If the issue cannot be resolved, I will escalate it to the appropriate person, such as my supervisor or team leader, to ensure the client receives accurate assistance. These are the steps I plan to follow in the future.” (P6)

Careful coordination and layered decision-making can be seen in how participants manage tasks for global clients in healthcare-related virtual assistance work, especially when accuracy is critical and mistakes can affect client outcomes. In digital healthcare environments, escalation procedures are essential to maintain accuracy and patient safety when tasks exceed individual competence (Quinto & Cacanindin, 2023). Virtual assistants working in medical settings often rely on team coordination to handle complex administrative responsibilities.

Reviewing and Correcting Work Processes

This emerging theme indicates that flexibility and the ability to work remotely were identified as important reasons for choosing virtual assistant roles. Graduates valued the freedom to manage their schedules, work from any location, and balance personal responsibilities with professional tasks. This autonomy made the career more appealing compared to the rigid demands of teaching.

“I review the instructions again... to identify the source of confusion.” (P1)

“Once clarified, I apply the correction immediately and update documentation.” (P7)

“Before I send an email or confirm an appointment, I read my message again to check for mistakes. I also watch videos and learn new things to improve my communication skills, which helps me do my job better.” (P8)

A consistent pattern of self-correction and attention to accuracy emerged in how participants manage tasks when working with global clients in virtual assistance roles, particularly in ensuring that misunderstandings are quickly identified and corrected. Reviewing procedures in digital healthcare work is essential to minimize documentation errors and ensure service reliability. Cabugsa (2022) explained that self-monitoring practices improve efficiency and reduce communication breakdowns in online professional environments.

Self-Initiated Learning and Continuous Skill Development

It highlights their use of various learning tools and exposure-based strategies such as online platforms, media resources, and technology-assisted learning to strengthen their communication and task performance. These actions reflect a consistent effort to close knowledge gaps and adapt to evolving work requirements in a virtual environment.

Independent Research and Knowledge Building

This emerging theme involves actively seeking information beyond provided instructions to improve understanding and task performance. It reflects their initiative to fill knowledge gaps through self-directed effort rather than relying solely on supervisors or teammates. It shows how graduates gradually build competence through continuous exposure.

“I write down unfamiliar words or sentences and search for them online so that when I encounter them again, I already understand their meaning. This is especially important when speaking with doctors, as they often use specialized terms.” (P4)

“I do my own research or refer back to my previous training. Once I have a clear understanding, I proceed with the necessary steps.” (P5)

“When clients mention medical terms or jargon I don't know, I try to learn them. I Google things online, do my own research, and I usually keep a notebook where I write down unfamiliar words or terms.” (P1)

Independent learning and continuous knowledge-building emerged among the participants when dealing with unfamiliar medical terms and client instructions in virtual assistance work, particularly in healthcare-related tasks for global clients. Veto et al. (2025) explained that self-directed learning is essential for graduates entering digital work environments where formal training is not sufficient for task demands. Healthcare-related virtual roles require continuous knowledge building due to the complexity of medical terminology and procedures.

Practice and Exposure to Language

This emerging theme involves engaging in regular speaking, listening, and reading activities to improve fluency and confidence in English use. It reflects their effort to enhance language competence through real-life exposure rather than relying only on formal instruction. In virtual healthcare work, where communication with global clients is constant, consistent practice becomes essential for clarity and effectiveness.

“I always do is try to converse with my friends, practice speaking, read books, and watch movies. I also try to slowly teach myself how to properly pronounce words and how to build sentences and paragraphs.” (P1)

“I did talk to native English speakers a lot. I also practice phrases and workplace phrases that could serve as cues whenever I have to talk to someone or deliver information.” (P5)

“I built my confidence with the help of Free4Talk because they give you time to speak. When you're done speaking, you turn off your mic and give the floor to another person in the group.”
(P3)

A consistent emphasis on self-improvement and confidence-building in spoken communication emerged from the participants' experiences, particularly in preparing themselves for interactions with global clients in virtual assistance work. Language development among graduates improves through consistent exposure and active use of communication skills in real-world settings. Communicative competence is strengthened through practice-based learning, especially in digital and global work environments (Veto et al., 2025).

Use of Technology and Learning Tools

This emerging theme is an approach that involves relying on digital applications, online platforms, and artificial intelligence tools to improve understanding and efficiency in completing tasks. It reflects their ability to integrate technology into their daily workflow to address communication difficulties and skill gaps.

“I use AI tools that helped me when it comes to giving advice on how to make my messages or anything I'm going to post on our Slack channel sound more professional and polished.” (P6)
“To make sure I do not forget these ideas, I use Google voice recording after meetings, and she reviews them and gives feedback once she listens.” (P3)
“I've recently been watching videos on YouTube on pronouncing words properly or how to communicate with your team, things like that. So that's the algorithm of my YouTube and even my Facebook. Watching those has helped me learn a lot of things that I think I can improve on when talking to my agents or clients in the future.” (P8)

Digital-assisted learning and continuous communication improvement emerged from the participants' experiences in preparing for and performing tasks in virtual assistance work with global clients. Rodriguez (2023) explained that digital tools play a significant role in developing communication and technical skills among remote workers. Shonfeld et al. (2021) noted that technology-assisted learning improves adaptability and efficiency in virtual work environments.

Adaptive Communication and Interpersonal Adjustment

This major theme highlights their ability to adjust tone, word choice, and communication style depending on the client's preference and cultural background. It also reflects their use of simplified language, clear expressions, and direct messaging to reduce misunderstandings in virtual interactions.

Adjusting Communication Style Based on Client

It involves modifying tone, word choice, and message delivery depending on the client's preferences, behavior, and communication patterns. It reflects their awareness that different clients require different levels of formality, clarity, and interaction style to achieve mutual understanding. It also shows how graduates develop sensitivity to client needs as part of their professional adjustment in global work.

“I adjust my tone and speak clearly depending on the client.” (P2)
“I match the client's comfort level while remaining kind and professional. I avoid using jargon and instead use clear and simple language to ensure understanding. Being patient and respectful also helps build rapport and prevents misunderstandings.” (P6)
“I make sure to listen carefully and observe the client's communication style. It is important to know their nationality, such as whether they are American. I stay polite and adjust my tone, pacing, and word choice depending on the client.” (P7)

Adaptive communication emerged from the participants' experiences in working with global clients, particularly in adjusting tone, language choice, and delivery to match client expectations in virtual assistance work.

Successful cross-cultural communication depends on the ability to adjust communication styles according to cultural expectations and interaction norms. Flexibility in communication is essential in virtual teams where members come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Rodriguez, 2023). Ogbogu et al. (2022) emphasized that adapting communication style improves clarity and reduces misunderstanding in digital professional settings.

Simplifying Language and Avoiding Misunderstanding

This emerging theme shows that BSEd-English graduates working as virtual assistants use simplifying language and avoiding misunderstanding as a practical coping strategy when dealing with global clients in a virtual healthcare environment. Communication in this setting often requires precision, and unclear wording may lead to errors in instructions or delays in task completion.

“I also make sure to use simple and clear language, especially when there are language differences, and I avoid slang or ambiguous phrases to prevent misunderstandings.” (P1)

“I adjust how I speak depending on the client or patient. If the person is not fluent in English or is elderly, I speak slowly and use simple words.” (P8)

“Being direct helps clients understand immediately.” (P3)

In working with global clients in virtual assistance tasks, the participants consistently demonstrated that effective communication depends on deliberate simplification and awareness of the client’s language capacity and background. ensure accurate understanding across diverse global clients. Studies by Rokicki-Parashar et al. (2021) explain that clarity in communication is essential in virtual work where cultural and linguistic differences exist.

Building Rapport and Cultural Adaptation

This emerging theme indicates that BSEd-English graduates working as virtual assistants develop building rapport and cultural adaptation as a coping strategy to maintain positive and effective relationships with global clients. This approach involves understanding client backgrounds, respecting cultural differences, and adjusting behavior to match professional expectations in diverse settings.

“I study the client’s culture, lifestyle, and interests to build rapport.” (P1)

“I respect my client’s busy schedule and adjust communication.” (P3)

“Being patient and respectful also helps build rapport and prevents misunderstandings.” (P6)

Building rapport with global clients emerged as a relational skill shaped by cultural awareness, time sensitivity, and consistent professional behavior in virtual assistance work. Shadiev et al. (2021) explain that cultural awareness is essential in virtual teamwork because it improves trust and cooperation among international members. Ogbogu et al. (2022) emphasize that understanding cultural differences helps reduce miscommunication in digital professional environments.

Proposed Glossary of Medical Terminology for BSEd-English Graduates in Virtual Assistant Work

The proposed glossary of medical terminology was developed as a response to the communication and comprehension difficulties experienced by BSEd-English graduates working as medical virtual assistants in international healthcare settings.

Table 4: *Glossary of medical terminology for by Virtual Assistants*

Terms	Definition
Acute Condition	Sudden and short-term illness.
Admission	Entry of a patient into a healthcare facility.
Clinical Notes	Written records of patient care.
CMS (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services)	U.S. agency overseeing Medicare and Medicaid programs.
Discharge Summary	Report given when patient leaves care.
DOS (Date of Service)	Date when medical service was provided.
Dosage	Amount of medication prescribed.
EAP (Employee Assistance Program)	Program offering support services to employees.
EHR (Electronic Health Record)	Shared digital patient record across healthcare systems.
Fax	Method used to securely send medical documents.
Follow-up	Checking patient condition after treatment.
HRA (Health Reimbursement Arrangement)	Employer-funded account for medical costs.
HSA (Health Savings Account)	Savings account for medical expenses.
ICD Code	Code used to classify diseases and diagnoses.
Immunization	Protection against disease through vaccines.
Insurance Verification	Checking patient insurance coverage.
Intake Questionnaire	Form used to gather patient details.
Lab Results	Findings from medical tests.
Late Cancellation	Canceling an appointment close to schedule.
Medical Transcription	Converting recorded notes into written form.
Modifier	Code added to CPT codes to provide additional information.
No Show	Patient who misses a scheduled appointment.
NPI (National Provider Identifier)	Unique ID number for healthcare providers.
Out-of-Network Benefits	Coverage for services outside the network.
Out-of-Pocket Maximum	Maximum amount a patient pays before full coverage.
Prognosis	Expected outcome of a disease.
Provider Coordination	Communication between healthcare providers.
Referral	Directing a patient to another provider.
Release of Information	Authorization to share patient records.
Rescheduling	Changing an existing appointment.
Subscriber	Person who holds the insurance policy.
Supplemental Plans	Extra insurance covering additional costs.
Telehealth	Remote healthcare services via digital platforms.
Treatment Plan	Outline of patient care.
Verification of Benefits	Confirming insurance coverage details.

CONCLUSION

This study contributed to the understanding of how BSEd-English graduates transition into medical virtual assistant roles by showing that success in global virtual work depends not only on communication competence but also on adaptability to medical tasks, technical demands, and cross-cultural communication. It highlighted how graduates develop readiness through experience-based learning and self-initiated skill development in non-teaching

career paths. The findings imply the need to strengthen English education programs through integration of industry-related communication training, basic medical terminology, and digital literacy. In practice, employers may improve onboarding, structured training, and continuous learning support to help new virtual assistants adjust effectively. Future research may explore long-term career development and other virtual work specializations among English graduates.

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