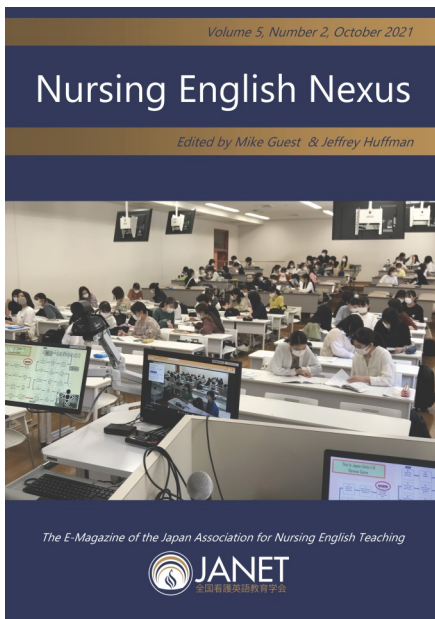


Twenty Years of Teaching Nursing English – What Stands Out?

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Twenty Years of Teaching Nursing English – What Stands Out?

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Note – Michael Guest is stepping down as Co-Editor of Nursing English Nexus as well as from his position as Associate Professor of English in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Miyazaki at the end of summer, 2022, to start the next chapter of his life. Here, Guest sums up what he has found most memorable from his Nursing English classes.

Friday afternoon classes are nobody's favourite. Both teachers and students are worn down, eyes and minds turned towards the upcoming weekend. Lessons can quickly feel like the final hurdles of a steeplechase, a last-ditch effort to propel oneself over the finish line.

And yet, I never once dreaded those classes. On the contrary, I usually felt uplifted by them – and it was the students, not my own efforts, that provided me with the lift. That's because Friday afternoons were the periods of my first-year nursing classes. The brightest, most ineffably cheerful class of the week.

The differences between medical students and nursing students are numerous. The medical students are often older, more world-wise, come from all across the country, occasionally with impressive English proficiency, and wear a decidedly more academic fragrance. But the nursing students, almost all 18 years old, straight out of high school, either from here in Miyazaki or the surrounding prefectures, 90% female, and most with very little or no international or English-speaking experience, are invariably the most personable and positive English learners in the university.

Perhaps due to so many having common backgrounds, there were rarely any cliques or "difficult" students, few stood out either positively or negatively in terms of English skill, and to be honest, because of the similarities, it was often hard to remember names (sorry to all the students

named Akane, Ayano, and Ayaka whose identities I mixed up). But that same sense of collectivity meant that there was always a joyous vibe permeating Room N201, even on the darkest of days.

This invigorating air extended even beyond the classroom. In 2020, and again early in 2022, I was hospitalized briefly in our affiliated hospital. I cannot tell you how much it meant to have the new duty nurse enter my room and exclaim, "Sensei! O-hisashiburi!" – I was now under the charge of one of my graduates. Even more compelling was the comfort taken in hearing a buzzed and blurry, "Ah! Mike-sensei!" when I was on the operating table with the anaesthetic quickly kicking in. Hearing this was a dose of reassurance – a spiritual elixir. And it was one of my former students who helped to deliver my second daughter – Y-san, do you know that yours was the first face she ever saw?

Some of these students I will remember long after I'm reduced to nursing home status myself. K-san – from a family of seven children, raised by a single mother – my utmost, deepest respect goes out to you. A-san – who took time to communicate with me from the frontlines of an infectious diseases ward in a Fukuoka hospital when Covid-19 was having its deepest impact – you are a hero. Small town M-san – who made every effort to learn about the world and to master English so that you could experience life abroad, now working as an RN in Australia – congratulations, you lived out your dream.

For all the effort we put into classroom theory and practice, it is somehow ironic that after twenty-plus years of teaching nursing students that this is my most poignant takeaway. Yes, it has been you, my nursing students, who made my Friday afternoons more than just tolerable – you

actually boosted my spirits. I can only hope that I did the same for you. And if we meet again, perhaps on the operating table, ... yoroshiku.

Last but not least, as I head towards the Nexus editor's exit, I wish to thank all the contributors and review editors who have helped put our modest magazine on the map. Special thanks must also go to Mathew Porter for his editing, proofing and layout skills – I hope I didn't cause you any lost sleep with my oversights, Mathew – and Jeff Huffman, who looks to be more than a capable replacement for Nexus. Finally, a big thanks to Simon Capper for establishing and maintaining JANET with such enthusiasm and good humour. I'm honoured to have been a part of it.