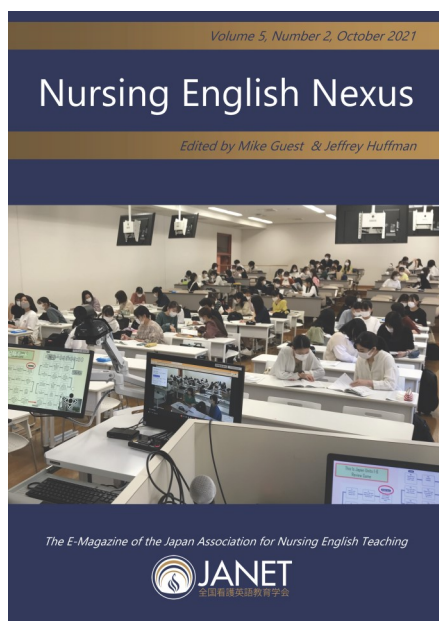


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Embedding Nursing English Education in a Global Nursing Curriculum

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Abstract: *The growing influx of foreign patients poses challenges for medical institutions and healthcare professionals in Japan, where so far only about a hundred medical facilities have been accredited to provide healthcare services to international patients. Such services include culturally appropriate care, healthcare interpreters, and healthcare delivered by professionals who speak other languages (Japan Medical Education Foundation, 2021). Amidst the rising demand for health professionals who speak other languages, and considering that nurses are the health professionals known to spend the most time communicating with patients, this article describes the experience of how a university embedded nursing English education in an undergraduate global nursing curriculum.*

Keywords: nursing English education, global nursing, curriculum design

Global Nursing

Until the mid-2000s, international nursing was understood either as international collaboration in the field of nursing (Tashiro, 2016, p.3) or as nursing practice in other countries. In Japanese, the term *kokusai kango* [international nursing] refers to the field of nursing dealing with international health as well as health care issues related to nursing in different countries.

Moreover, a quick search of the internet using the term “international nursing” retrieves entries on travelling nursing, migrant nurses, study abroad programs for nursing students, nursing education programs that can be used across borders, nurses’ international placement, etc. Thus, it is necessary to clarify that the subject of international nursing as currently used in Japan would be the equivalent of global nursing or global health nursing subjects delivered in the nursing curricula of other countries.

The field of international nursing was included in the Japanese curricula of basic nursing education for the first time in 2009. (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2009). Although a wide range of international nursing subjects are now present in Japanese nursing education, consensus about educational content has not been achieved yet and the content of *kokusai kango* courses often depends on the aims of each

nursing educational institution and the experience of the instructors in charge of delivering them. International nursing textbooks published in recent years include chapters on the healthcare of migrants in Japan, asylum seekers, refugees, and disaster nursing, showing how the scope of the international nursing concept has evolved.

Global nursing is defined as nursing care delivered to maintain and promote health and equity for all people, integrating both local and global health. Global nursing practice envisions health for the world’s people and is grounded in respect for human dignity, human rights, and cultural diversity (Bauman, 2013). Universities and other educational institutions offering global nursing or international nursing courses need to consider the scope of this definition and the aims of their nursing programs in order to cultivate in future global nurses the competencies that will be required of them. Several global health competencies that could inform nursing education curricula have been identified for nursing and other health careers. *Communication* is one of 12 global health competencies compiled by Clark et al. in 2016, where it was defined as, “having comprehensive knowledge of languages, writing skills and the ability to communicate effectively across cultures” (p. 177). This is a primary objective of the curriculum that is the focus of this

article.

Global Nursing and Nursing English Education

The *Model Core Curriculum for Nursing Education in Japan* (MEXT, 2017, 2018) included a competency component directed at understanding diversity and the needs of foreign patients. Its description does not refer to competencies specifically related to communication in foreign languages. While both public and private Japanese universities acknowledge the necessity of providing English and other foreign language education to nursing students, the number of credits allotted to foreign languages, including English or nursing English education, and their content vary greatly among universities (Porter, 2018). Nursing educational institutions commonly deliver only one required English course and offer one or more elective English courses (Kuchimoto, 2009), leaving English education largely up to the individual.

It is not uncommon to find general English courses listed under the name of "Nursing English" or courses under the title of "English" that are nursing oriented in practice. Some educational institutions still prefer terms such as "Medical English" or "English for Health Sciences" over "Nursing English". While the curricular trend of English education in nursing faculties in Japan deserves further attention, there are compelling reasons to emphasize the value of nursing English to increase the capabilities of future nurses to respond to the health needs of diverse people who may be left behind due to language barriers.

Embedding English Education in a Global Nursing Curriculum

In 2019, a new faculty of nursing was established in our private university located in the Kansai area. The new Faculty of Global Nursing intends to graduate nurses equipped with global health and nursing competencies. Among other global health competencies, verbal and written communication competency in English are

considered to be among the necessary components of a global nursing curriculum that prepares students to provide appropriate nursing care to non-Japanese patients who are native English speakers or have English as a second or foreign language, contributing to equal access to healthcare. Respecting the right to access health care implies that no tourist or migrant visiting or living in Japan would be left behind.

This global nursing curriculum includes four required nursing-oriented English seminars to ensure that all students acquire and improve necessary English communication skills. A seminar format was selected in order to ensure a low number of students per class and to facilitate pair and group interaction. Prior to the beginning of the first academic semester, all students take a placement test and are divided into groups of 25 to 30 students to allow them to learn with peers of similar English proficiency levels (Table 1). In addition, two elective courses in English are offered during the fourth year, and additional elective English courses are available for students who want to improve their performance. The third-year curriculum includes a short study abroad placement at universities and health facilities in 5 countries where students will learn about the nursing systems and nursing education of those countries in English.

Three required seminars on global nursing, conducted in both English and Japanese by faculty licensed in nursing and midwifery, are taught from the first to the third year. Seminars focus on global nursing issues of foreigners visiting and living in Japan, and nursing communication skills necessary to work with foreign patients. During global nursing seminars, students are not classified according to their English proficiency so they have the chance to practice nursing communication skills with each other regardless of their proficiency level. Seminars provide students with opportunities to use English using bilingual questionnaires, to role play with

Table 1
English Subjects in the Global Nursing Curriculum

Semester	Subjects	Teaching Methodology	Instructors
Semester I	Practical English for Nurses I ¹ 15 sessions, 1 credit	Students of similar English proficiency level. Classes of 25-30 students Pair and group work	One native English-speaking instructor per class
	Practical English for Nurses II ¹ 15 sessions, 1 credit	Selected English and medical English textbooks	
	Basic English Exercises and TOEIC ² 8 classes, 1 credit	Students of mixed English proficiency level Support for low proficiency level students English grammar exercises and preparation for TOEIC	Two Japanese instructors
Semester II	Global Nursing Seminar I ¹ 8 sessions, 1 credit	Students of mixed English proficiency level. Classes of 38-40 students Class topic explanation in English; additional explanations, feedback and group discussion on health and cultural issues in Japanese Pair work, bilingual medical questionnaires, nursing English textbook Preparing for the Examination of Proficiency in English for Medical Purposes	Nurses, midwives and public health nurses 3 to 4 instructors per session
	Listening and Speaking in a Global Society ³ 15 sessions, 1 credit(*)	Students of similar English proficiency level. Classes of 25-30 students Pair and group work, role-playing, discussion Selected nursing English textbook	One native English-speaking instructor
	Basic Communication in Global Context ³ 15 sessions, 1 credit(*)	Students of similar English proficiency level. Classes of 25-30 students Pair and group work, discussion and presentation. Emphasis on listening comprehension and speaking. Selected textbook	One native English-speaking instructor
Semester III	Global Nursing Seminar II ¹ 8 sessions, 1 credit	Students of mixed English proficiency level. Classes of 38-40 students Class topic explanation in English, additional explanations, feedback and group discussion on health and cultural issues in Japanese Nursing skills in English, pair and group work. Inpatient care role-playing Preparing for the Examination of Proficiency in English for Medical Purposes	Nurses and midwives 3 to 4 instructors per session
Semester V	Global Nursing Seminar III ¹ 8 sessions, 1 credit	Students of mixed English proficiency level. Classes of 38-40 students Explanation in English, additional explanation and feedback in Japanese Health and cultural issues discussion in English Working with simulated patients in English Preparing for the Examination of Proficiency in English for Medical Purposes	Nurses and midwives 3 to 4 instructors per session
	Academic Writing and Debate Seminar ¹ 15 sessions, 1 credit	Students of similar English proficiency level. Classes of 25-30 students Reading and understanding academic papers. Writing an abstract.	One native English-speaking instructor per group
	Examination of Proficiency in English for Medical Purposes 3 sessions, noncredit course	Students of mixed English proficiency level. Classes of 38-40 students Simulated exams, feedback and explanations in English and Japanese Online tests and self-study materials	Nurses and midwives 2 to 3 instructors per session
Semester VI	Global Nursing Clinical Practice III ¹ 5 countries, 7-10 days, 1 credit	Short-term placement in foreign clinical and educational facilities Interacting in English with health professionals, students and patients from other countries Attending lectures and simulation laboratory sessions in English Presentations and reports in English	Clinical instructors in hospitals and universities Accompanying instructors

Note.¹ Required subject. ² Elective subject. ³ One of these two subjects is compulsory.

instructors who play the role of foreign patients, and to experience learning through simulated scenarios with foreign residents who reside in communities near the university.

To create an environment that supports English learning, nursing instructors of courses such as Fundamentals of Nursing and Adult

Nursing teach technical terms in English during laboratory practice, introduce short dialogs and videos in English, etc., and the global health department organizes exchange activities online with nursing students from partner universities.

All students prepare for the Examination of Proficiency in English for Medical Purposes (PEMP)

Level IV, administered by the Japan Society for Medical English Education. Self-study materials and mini-tests are available in the faculty's e-learning platform and all students join three study sessions organized to prepare for the exam. Level IV is the basic level of the examination; it assesses basic medical vocabulary knowledge and short reading comprehension. The EPEMP was introduced as an extra-curricular activity to motivate students to study medical terminology, to encourage them to practice short paragraph reading comprehension, and to establish a reference point for further self-study (although, needless to say, a nursing English proficiency exam would be a better option). All students take this exam during their third year of studies. The first group of students took the EPEMP in June, 2021.

Challenges of Embedding Nursing English Education in a Global Nursing Curriculum

English education and nursing English education have been embedded in our university's curriculum and these elements are being constantly assessed and improved. Adding nursing English educational content to the already crowded global nursing curriculum has been administratively challenging, but English subjects are considered worthy to support students as they pursue nursing training.

However, we have learned that institutional efforts to provide nursing English education across the curriculum, as well as limiting the number of students per class, does not necessarily translate to improvement in students' ability to communicate confidently in English. Third year students' reflections after seminars revealed that most students failed to make small talk in English with simulated patients, and few of them could explain nursing procedures in plain language or give instructions to patients. Further research is needed to establish which strategies are most effective in supporting learning in these fields.

Another ongoing challenge is that, in spite of

students being allocated to different groups based on a placement test, the test is in a written format and therefore does not evaluate general communication skills. The wide range of student proficiency levels also remains a challenge, so instructors need to use inclusive approaches that reach students at all levels.

Because global nursing curricula prepares nurses to deliver nursing care for the world's people, both locally and globally, nursing English education is particularly relevant in global nursing education curricula that recognize multilingual communication as one of the important competencies global nurses should acquire during their formative years. Specific guidance from the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare and the Ministry of Education is desirable and would help establish nursing English education standards at the national level.

The new curriculum is expected to produce better-equipped nurses whose professional competencies, including awareness of language and cultural barriers and the ability to overcome them, lead to a higher quality of care for a more diverse range of patients, thereby achieving health equity.

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