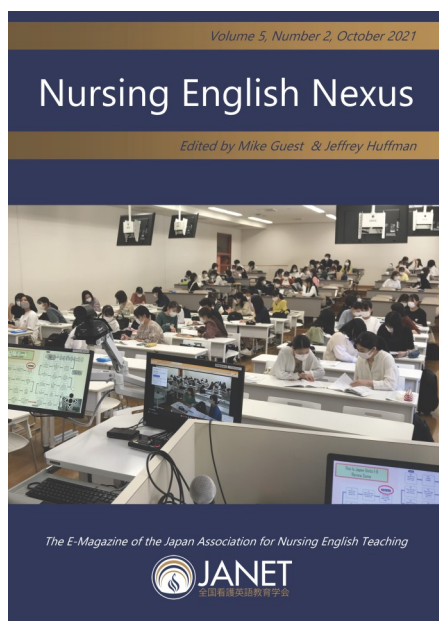


# Review of *Caring for People*

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## Review of *Caring for People*

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*Book information: Caring for People by Michiko Mayuzumi, Tamiko Miyatsu, Philip Hinder, Kyoka Shida, Masako Sugita, Iwao Yamashita, & Takao Okada. Tokyo: Cengage Learning K.K., 2014. pp. 88. ¥2,100. ISBN: 978-4-86312-256-7*

In this review, I share my experience using *Caring for People* as the core textbook of a nursing English course at a Japanese university. The review begins with a basic description of the textbook in terms of its English level, structure, contents, presentation, and supplementary materials. I introduce the criteria I applied in selecting the textbook and present quantitative student feedback from an end-of-course questionnaire. The review concludes with my own impressions from a teacher's standpoint.

*Caring for People* is an English for healthcare purposes textbook for Japanese learners at a TOEIC (Listening & Reading) level of 380–650. It comprises 12 units with topics revolving around interactions between nurses and patients. Each unit is 6 pages in length and consists of the following sections: key expressions, vocabulary, a main dialogue (with a listening cloze), multiple-choice listening comprehension questions, useful expressions, two additional dialogues for pair work, and medical terminology with Japanese translation. The textbook also contains three supplementary readings, with two essays on the health effects of various beverages and one on the benefits of organic food. Each essay is a single page.

The text is presented in black and white with simple illustrations, a few pictures with the readings, and some charts (e.g., patient profiles) and diagrams. Japanese is used sparingly throughout the textbook to frame the activities and to provide translation of key expressions and

vocabulary. The text is written in American English and the speakers in the audio recordings have a North American accent. Audio is available on two teacher's CDs and also online as downloadable mp3 files. The teacher's manual, which is not for sale but available from the publisher, contains Japanese translations of the dialogues, answers to comprehension questions, quizzes, and additional dialogue transcripts.

I currently use the textbook for a university nursing English course, which students take in their second year after having taken a general English course in their first year. Nursing English is a 15-week course that meets once a week for 80 minutes. Classes are of mixed ability with most students at a mid-to-high CEFR A2 level. Class size averages about 25 students.

In selecting a textbook for the course, I was looking for an affordable one that would provide a good introduction to English for healthcare. Ideally, I wanted content that was relevant to Japanese learners, focusing on domestic scenarios. From my discussions with nursing students prior to selecting the textbook, I gathered that many wanted to focus on oral communication as they expected the main way they would use English in the workplace would be when speaking with non-Japanese patients in Japan. Accordingly, in addition to introducing healthcare vocabulary, I sought a textbook that emphasized speaking and listening skills. *Caring for People* ticked all of these boxes.

In 2020, the course was shifted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the textbook does not come with any digital classroom teaching tool, it was relatively easy to teach online. See Patterson (2020) for a sample lesson plan and a description of how I adapted the textbook for online teaching.

In 2021, classes returned to the face-to-face setting, and at the completion of the course, 54 students were surveyed on their impressions of the textbook, with a response rate of 79.6%. Of the respondents ( $n = 43$ ), the vast majority agreed that it was overall a good textbook (93%) and that it had a clear design (91%), nice appearance (95%), interesting topics (91%), interesting dialogues (81%), useful vocabulary (91%), and useful expressions (93%). When asked about the level of the textbook, more than three-quarters (77%) said it was appropriate to their English level, while 14% reported that it was easy, 2% indicated that it was "too easy", and 7% felt it was difficult.

Students commented that they liked the simple design because it was easy to read and follow. Some commented that the language summary with key vocabulary and expressions at the beginning of each unit was helpful. Significantly, a few commented that it was easy to imagine themselves as the nurses in the dialogues. There was little criticism, but some would have liked additional pictures and colour inside the text.

As a teacher, I found the text easy to use. Because units are short and not too tightly structured, it is easy for the teacher to pick and choose activities and move through the text at a quick pace. Topics are presented in a logical order, starting with meeting patients, and there is a nice variety to choose from, making it possible to jump around. While the structure is easy to follow, it may be a bit repetitive for some. From a communicative language teaching standpoint, I would prefer more information gap activities and more chances for students to personalize the text. Also, while the supplementary readings on beverages and organic food are appreciated, since the text is targeted at Japanese learners, a reading about a Japanese nurse who used English at work might be motivating for learners.

The text is not too dense, which may be either a selling point or a drawback, depending on

whether you prefer textbooks to be jam-packed with information and activities. The scenarios are general enough that, while the dialogues all feature nurses, they may still be of interest to other healthcare students. For example, units on assessing pain, improving mobility, and maintaining a good diet may be of interest to students in rehabilitation or nursing care work.

In terms of representation, reflecting the predominance of female nurses in Japan (Japan Nursing Association, n.d.), 11 of the 12 main dialogues feature female voices for the nursing characters, and one unit features a male voice. Notably, explaining cross-cultural or medical differences around the world is beyond the scope of this text. Further, it does little to prepare students for interacting with patients and nurses from a variety of backgrounds; most of the patients have names of European origin and all of the Japanese nurses have common Japanese surnames (e.g., in Unit 1, Nurse Sato meets Mr. Smith).

No textbook is likely to be perfect as different teachers and classes will have different needs and preferences (McDonough, Shaw, & Masuhara, 2013). However, as a jumping-off point, the text serves well. I was able to draw upon the themes of the text and pose questions to the students via Google Classroom to personalize the text. The language is practical, and there is a fair amount of language recycling. The grammar and basic vocabulary are within reach of most students. The medical knowledge sections, which contain more technical vocabulary, can be incorporated as deemed appropriate.

To sum up, *Caring for People* is a compact introductory nursing English text suitable for high beginner students in Japan. While limited in its supporting materials, it is a good starting point for practicing patient-nurse conversations and acquiring healthcare-related language.

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