

Nursing English: A subject evaluation and discussion of classroom interaction.

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Abstract : This survey elicited the first year nursing students' attitudes about Nursing English. Their responses were then analyzed. Valuable insights into the learning needs of the students and the effectiveness of teaching strategies and facilities were gained. The findings indicate that the subject is viewed as relevant and interesting. The results of the survey will be used to inform future developments in the subject and to better meet the needs of Nursing students undertaking this subject.

Key words : subject evaluation, learning styles, classroom interaction

要旨 : この論文は日本赤十字秋田短期大学看護学科1年生を対象とした英語学習、特に看護英語に対する興味および授業評価に関するアンケート調査を分析した初期段階の研究である。その結果、学生が看護英語学習のためになる、もしくは興味深いと感じていることが明らかになった。看護英語に対する学生の学習ニーズについて述べると同時に、この結果は今後の同科目の発展及び充実のための指標とされる。

キーワード : 授業評価、学習方法、教室内における相互作用

At the end of semester one in 2001 it was decided to perform a subject evaluation of the Nursing English subject taught at the Red Cross Junior College of Akita. The purpose of that evaluation was to investigate the effectiveness of the teaching program and to attempt to gain some feedback as to the student's feelings about the interaction style used in the classroom. The first part of this article will report the findings of the subject evaluation and the second will discuss the findings regarding classroom interaction and active learning.

Subject evaluation serves a number of purposes. Its primary role is to determine the effectiveness of the education that students are receiving (Ewan and White 1984). While assessment of student performance is an essential component of helping students learn, assessment of teaching is an essential component of helping teachers to offer better subjects and courses. There are three main areas in which a subject or course should be evaluated; effectiveness, acceptability and feasibility. Effectiveness involves the achievement of course objectives, retention of learning and occurrence of expected and unexpected outcomes. Acceptability involves the appropriateness of objectives, student satisfaction with resources and teaching methods, the learning environment and whether assessment methods were appropriate. Feasibility involves the time required for development, teaching and study of the subject as well as cost and facilities required (Ewan and White 1984). The topics covered in this subject evaluation address the issues of effectiveness and acceptability.

Evaluation is a mutual effort between the teacher/s involved with the subject and the group being evaluated (Billings and Halstead 1998). Therefore it is important that the students be informed as to the purpose of the evaluation and its potential benefit to them as consumers of learning. The students were informed that the subject evaluation would be used to assess the effectiveness of the subject content and presentation with the aim of improving the subject both for them and for other students in the future.

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The subject survey used in this evaluation is based on the 400 item subject evaluation form used at Monash University in Australia. From these 400 possible questions a number of questions are chosen that best reflect what the teachers need to know about how the students experienced the subject. As well as these questions information about demographic data and previous English language education and exposure was sought. A further part of the questionnaire dealt with teaching style and student participation and the findings of this section of the questionnaire will be discussed later in the article.

Demographic data and English study history

The survey was undertaken by 86 first year nursing students enrolled in the Nursing English subject. 80 female students (93%) and 6 male students (7%) participated with the youngest student being 18 years old and the oldest 39 years of age. 85% of students had studied English with native English speakers while at high school and 14% had not. This reflects the Japanese Education Department's increased use of assistant language teachers (ALTs) in schools over the last 10 years. Students were asked how long they studied English for at home with 22% saying that they studied for less than 30 minutes, 71% studying for 30 minutes to one hour, 5% studied for more than 2 hours and 2% did no English study at home. 29% of students studied English using the television or radio and 79% did not. Only 9% of students had studied English at a special language school.

The students were asked about what part of studying English was hardest for them. 57% reported that listening and speaking were hardest, with 37% listing writing as the hardest element of English study and 6% listing reading of English as the hardest skill. The results of this question have had a direct result on teaching methods utilized, and skills practiced, in this subject. Students were asked if they had talked to foreigners other than the ALTs employed by their schools. 50% had spoken to foreigners, 49% had not and 1% were not sure. Since the subject uses a variety of native speakers, both in the classroom and on tape, this question is significant. Listening to a variety of accents can increase the students' listening and comprehension skills, an area that was identified as a source of difficulty in an earlier question. 77% of the students have taken the EIKEN (The Society for Testing English Proficiency-STEP) test while 23% had not. 35% of those who had taken the test took it in 3rd grade, 22% in pre 2nd grade, 15% in 4th grade, 4% in 2nd grade and 1% in 5th grade. An important area of future research might involve the usefulness of STEP test results as an indicator of success in this subject. 91% of students enjoyed watching American movies or listening to American music but experience in this subject indicates that most foreign movies are watched with subtitles. Only 24% of the students have traveled abroad, further limiting their exposure to native English speakers. This information has proved valuable in planning class content and activities.

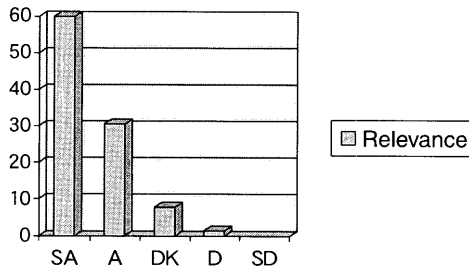
Relevance

Two questions in the subject evaluation can be grouped under the heading of relevance, in which information was sought as to how relevant the subject was to the students involved in studying the discipline of nursing. The first question was 'the subject was relevant to the requirements of my profession' (graph 1) and the second was that 'the subject was challenging' (graph 2). 90.5% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the first statement and 88% agreed or strongly agreed with the second.

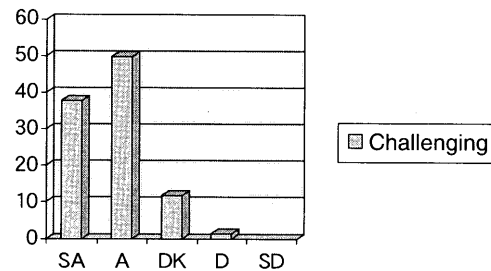
Legend: The legend used in graphs 1 to 18 is as follows

SA= strongly agree, A= Agree, DK= neither agree nor disagree, D= disagree, SD= strongly disagree) 強く思う、思う、どちらでもない、思わない、まったくそう思わない

Graph 1. The subject was relevant to the requirements of my profession.
講義は自分の専門分野に沿った内容であった。



Graph 2. The subject was challenging. 講義は難しかった。

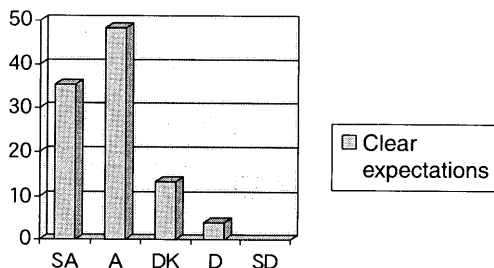


These findings indicate that the subject was both relevant and interesting to the students involved.

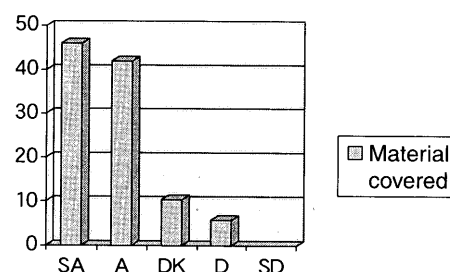
Organization

Several questions dealt with the topic of organization in which the lecturers sought information as to whether the subject has been presented in a logical and clear manner. 83% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the lecturers had clearly explained what was expected of students (Graph 3) and 88% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the amount of material covered in the subject had been reasonable (Graph 4). 82% of students felt that the lectures were well organized (Graph 5) and 95% agreed or strongly agreed that the explanations given in class had provided sufficient detail (Graph 6). To the question regarding organization of the teaching of the subject 94% agreed or strongly agreed that the teaching of the subject had been well organized (Graph 7) and 86% of students felt that the number of students in the classroom was appropriate for effective student participation (Graph 8). The result of these questions will influence planning of future subject plans.

Graph 3. It has been made clear what was expected of students.
学生が学ばなければならない内容が明確にされていた。

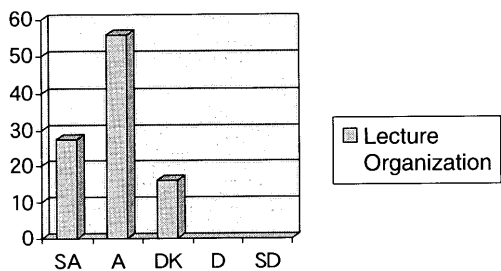


Graph 4. The amount of material covered has been reasonable.
講義中使われた教材は十分な量だった。



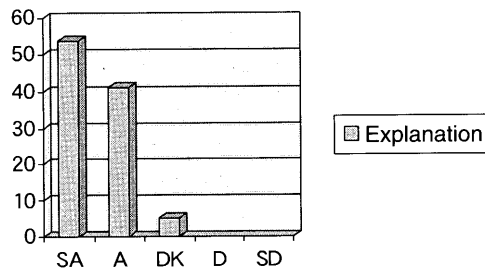
Graph 5. The lectures were well organized.

講義はよく構成されていた。



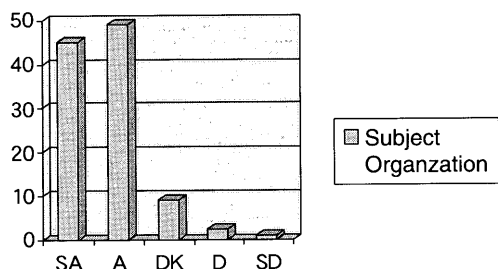
Graph 6. Explanations have provided

sufficient detail. 講義の説明は詳細になされた。



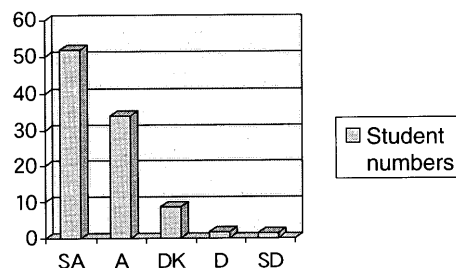
Graph 7. The teaching of the subject was well

organized. 講義の指導点はよく構成されていた。



Graph 8. The number of students in the classroom was appropriate for effective student participation.

学生の積極的な参加という点でクラスの学生数は適当であった。

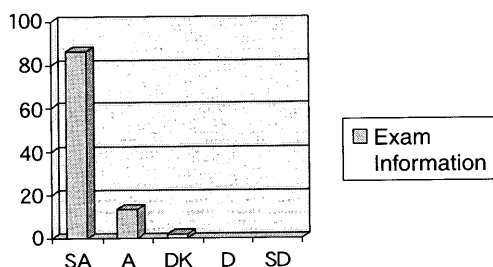


Assessment

A number of questions related to assessment of the subject were included in the subject evaluation form in order to determine how effectively the lecturers had evaluated the subject in terms of amount and quality of assessment. When students were asked to judge whether or not they had been given enough information about the exam to enable them to have a clear understanding of what was expected of them during assessment of this subject 99% of students felt that they had been adequately informed (Graph 9). 97% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the examination was a fair assessment of the subject (Graph 10). 97% of students felt that the exam was a fair test of the subject as it had been taught and 83% agreed that the exam was a fair test of their knowledge about the subject (Graph 11). When asked about grading of the examinations 87% felt that they were graded fairly and carefully (Graph 12) and 88% agreed or strongly agreed that the examinations covered the important aspects of the subject (Graph 13). These results were very gratifying for the lecturers and provided valuable information in relation to assessment activities in the future.

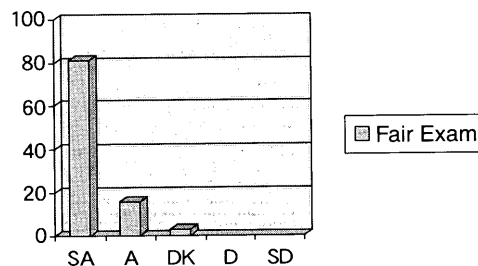
Graph 9. Sufficient information was given about the exam format.

試験方法については十分な説明があった。

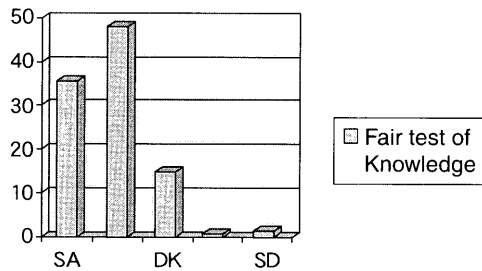


Graph 10. The exam was a fair test of the provided subject as taught.

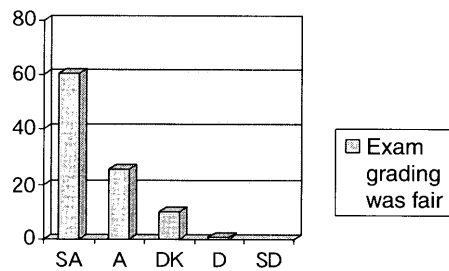
試験は講義の内容に沿っていた。



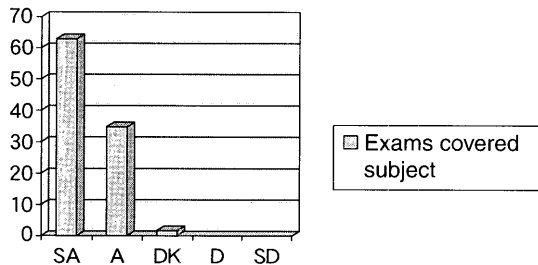
Graph 11. The exam was a fair test of my knowledge. 試験は自分の知識内のものであった。



Graph 12. The examinations are graded very carefully and fairly. 試験は正確かつ公平に成績がつけられていた。



Graph 13. Examinations have covered the important aspects of the subject. この教科の重要点が試験に出されていた。



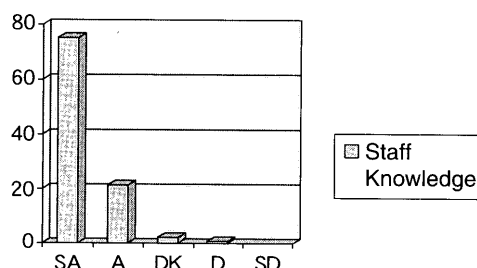
Teaching staff

Three questions were asked about the teaching staff of this subject, with the intention of gauging student satisfaction with the style of teaching and the interest level shown by the teaching staff. 72% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the lecturers gave them sufficient assistance when asked but 35% of students did not express an opinion on this matter (Graph 14). Efforts have been made as described above to make the students aware of how they can access the teachers for assistance. 96% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the teaching staff exhibited sound knowledge of the subject matter (Graph 15). 74% of students felt that the lectures stimulated their interest in the subject while 19% neither agreed nor disagreed and 7% disagreed with the statement (Graph 16).

Graph 14. The lecturers gave me sufficient assistance when asked. 教師の説明は十分なものであった。

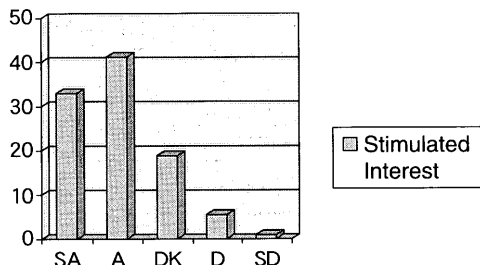


Graph 15. The teaching staff exhibited sound knowledge of the subject matter. 教師陣は教科についての十分な知識を持っていた。



Graph 16. The lectures stimulated my interest in the subject.

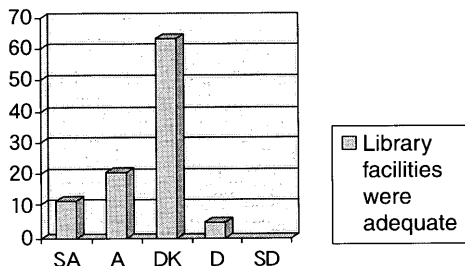
この講義は自分の看護英語に対する興味を刺激してくれた。



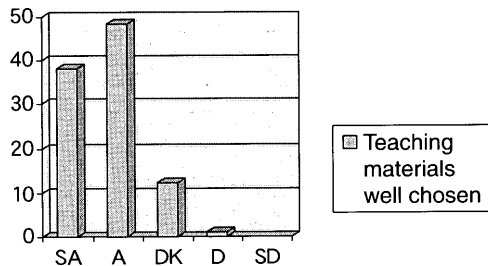
Facilities

In an attempt to access the level of satisfaction with the facilities provided for this subject two questions were included which dealt with this issue. 33% of students felt that the library facilities for this subject were adequate but 49% of students did not express an opinion which leads the lecturers to suspect that they had not made any effort to utilize the library as a learning resource for this subject (Graph 17). For the question related to teaching material choices and preparation 96% of students felt that they were well prepared or chosen (Graph 18). The lecturers involved in this subject will attempt to inform the students of the library facilities and encourage them to make better use of them in the future.

Graph 17. Library facilities (e.g. availability of books, subject librarian, etc) were adequate for this subject. 図書館の設備（本の貸し出し状況や参考文献など）は十分だった。



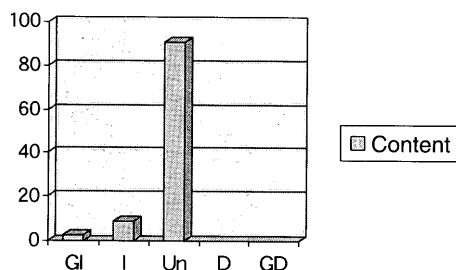
Graph 18. Teaching materials appear to have been well prepared or chosen. 講義で使用された教材は内容が吟味されたものであった。



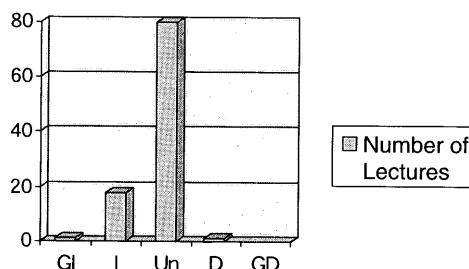
Workload and ease of understanding

The remaining questions in the survey dealt with the areas of student workload and how easy or difficult the students found it to understand the subject content. In answer to a question regarding the amount of material covered by the subject 10% of students felt that the amount of content should be increased or greatly increased while 90% felt that it should be unchanged. No students expressed a need for the content to be reduced (Graph 19). 80% of students felt that the number of lectures should remain unchanged and 19% felt that the lectures should be increased. Only 1 student felt that the number of classes should be reduced (Graph 20). Due to timetable constraints and the demands of other subjects it would not be feasible to increase the number of classes in this subject and the majority of students are satisfied with the current situation.

Graph 19. The amount of content presented in this subject should be...
講義の内容量を・・・すべきである。



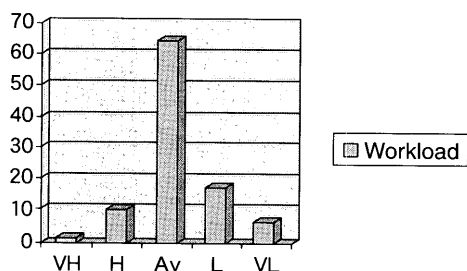
Graph 20. The number of lectures should be ... 講義数を・・・すべきである。



Legend. GI= greatly increased, I= increased, Un= unchanged, D= decreased, GD= greatly decreased、もっと増やすべき、増やすべき、このままで良い、減らすべき、もっと減らすべき

65% of students said that the workload for this subject was average, 11% felt that it was heavy or very heavy and 25% felt that it was light or very light. This has led the lecturers to increase the amount of individual study and homework required of the students in the second semester of this subject.

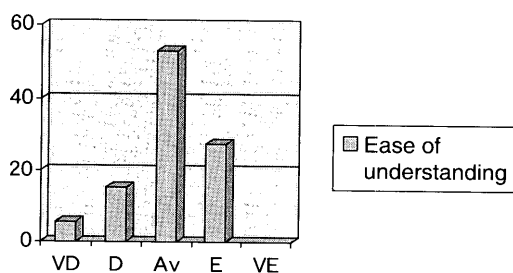
Graph 21. Overall, the workload for this subject was...
全体に、この講義の学習量は・・・



Legend: VH= very heavy, H= heavy, Av= average, L= Light, VL= very light
かなり多い、多い、普通、少ない、かなり少ない

The subject was felt to be easy to understand by 20% of students and of on average level of difficulty by 53% while 27% felt that it was difficult to understand. This is not an unexpected finding given the variety of English experience noted in the demographic data earlier in this article.

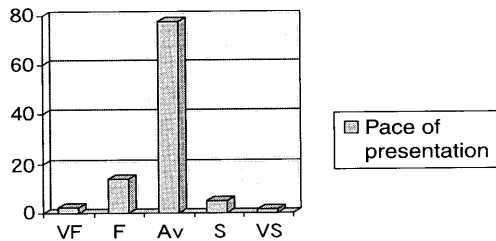
Graph 22. In terms of ease of understanding, the content of this subject was...
理解のしやすさの点ではこの講義内容は・・・



Legend: VD= very difficult, D= difficult, Av= average, E= easy, VE= very easy
 大変難しい、難しい、普通、簡単、大変簡単

79% of students agreed that the pace of presentation of material was average while 16% found it very fast and 6% found it slow. This again is probably due to a variety of English proficiency skills within the class but the majority of the class was able to deal with the pace of presentation without difficulty.

Graph 23. The pace at which the subject content was presented was... 講義の進み具合は...

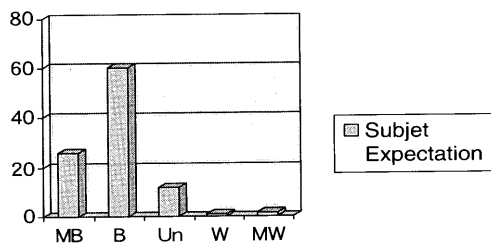


Legend: VF= very fast, F= fast, Av= average, S= slow, VS= very slow
 かなり速かった、速かった、普通、遅かった、かなり遅かった

The last question in this section of the questionnaire dealt with student expectations of the subject. 87% of students said that they found the subject better than their initial expectations while 12% found it met their initial expectations and 13% were disappointed in the subject. This result is of concern to the lecturers and further efforts will be made to better understand why these students were not happy with their experience of the subject. The majority of students were happy with the subject as it is currently presented but improvements can always be made.

Graph 24. Compared to my initial expectations, this subject has proved to be...

当初考えていたよりもこの講義は...



Legend: MB= much better, B= better, Un= unchanged, W= Worse, MW= much worse
 かなり充実していた、充実していた、変化なし、あまり充実していなかった、全く充実していなかった

Classroom Interaction

Students were also asked these questions as follows:

1. Do you think studying Nursing English helps you to learn about Nursing? 92% of students answered yes, 3% answered no and 5% were not sure. Among the students who answered no, one said she doesn't think it is useful as it is something she studied upon taking the entrance examination. The other two answers were that they think

there will not be any opportunities for them to use English in the workplace setting. On the other hand, 23% of students strongly believe that they enjoy learning nursing English as the English proficiency is necessary in working with non-Japanese patients. The majority of the students (77%) agree that they find the subject interesting because the class contains pair-work, classroom presentations and conversational English as well as learning about nursing and medical terminology.

The second question asked students whether they had noticed changes in the classroom interaction compared to their high school classes.

2. Do you have the impression that there has always been a silent moment during the class? 36% of students answered yes while 47% said no and 3% were not sure. The third question asked about contributing during class.

3. Are you comfortable in the classroom or do you find it awkward to give comments in front of other students in the classroom? Some of the reasons given by those students who answered that yes they had been rather quiet included the following:

- | | |
|--|---------|
| - I was concerned about disturbing other students | 9 (25%) |
| - I didn't prepare for the class | 8 (22%) |
| - I was not confident | 8 (22%) |
| - There's always somebody who answers the question | 5 (14%) |
| - I didn't know when to interrupt the teachers | 5 (14%) |
| - I was tired | 1 (3%) |

It was revealed that 25% of students find it awkward to raise a hand in the classroom. They answered that they felt uneasy about standing out among other students especially when they did not know each other well at the beginning of the semester. As mentioned earlier in this paper, this questionnaire was administered at the end of the first semester, so there will probably be more positive answers towards the end of the year.

Lack of confidence and preparation for the class was the second most common answer. Of the 86 students, 32 said they were always prepared for the class, while 54 said they were not. This number clearly indicates that the students can become very quiet when they are not ready for the class, and therefore lose confidence instantly. 8 students answered that they find it quite challenging to take risks and to give his/her opinion as they are afraid of losing face in front of others if their answer is wrong. One of them also mentioned that she gets nervous and quiet when she is being called on.

14% of the students said they were not sure when to interrupt the teachers and ask questions. It was interesting to learn that they find it extremely difficult to judge when to start reading the text out loud. Most said they did not want to be the first one to read as they feel embarrassed if their pronunciation is not correct. They said it would be much easier if the instructor encourages them to read the text altogether by showing them when to start.

One female student said that she was often worried about disturbing her classmates. She was obviously one of the most talkative students. Those who answered that they did not know when to interrupt the teachers said the classroom atmosphere did not allow many students to talk at the same time, so they had to think that there would always be someone to answer the question.

Overall, most students have given a positive answer about learning English through Nursing English, but at the same time, this questionnaire has given the teaching staff many insights, leaving us with extra objectives to achieve. First of all, we need to remember that it is important to let them talk freely in a relaxed environment. It is also necessary for us to show them that their learning style can be changed in this English class. Most of them have been used to the passive way of learning English throughout high school, but in this English class, students are expected to be more flexible and to find ways of participating in the class voluntarily.

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