

# **Simplifying Clinical English for Japanese PT and OT Students: Developing a Learner-Friendly Set of Rehabilitation Expressions**

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# A massage therapist in Taipei knew only four Japanese expressions.



あおむけ Face up.

痛い? Painful?

うつぶせ Face down.

おしまい Finished.

*He communicated with me almost perfectly.*

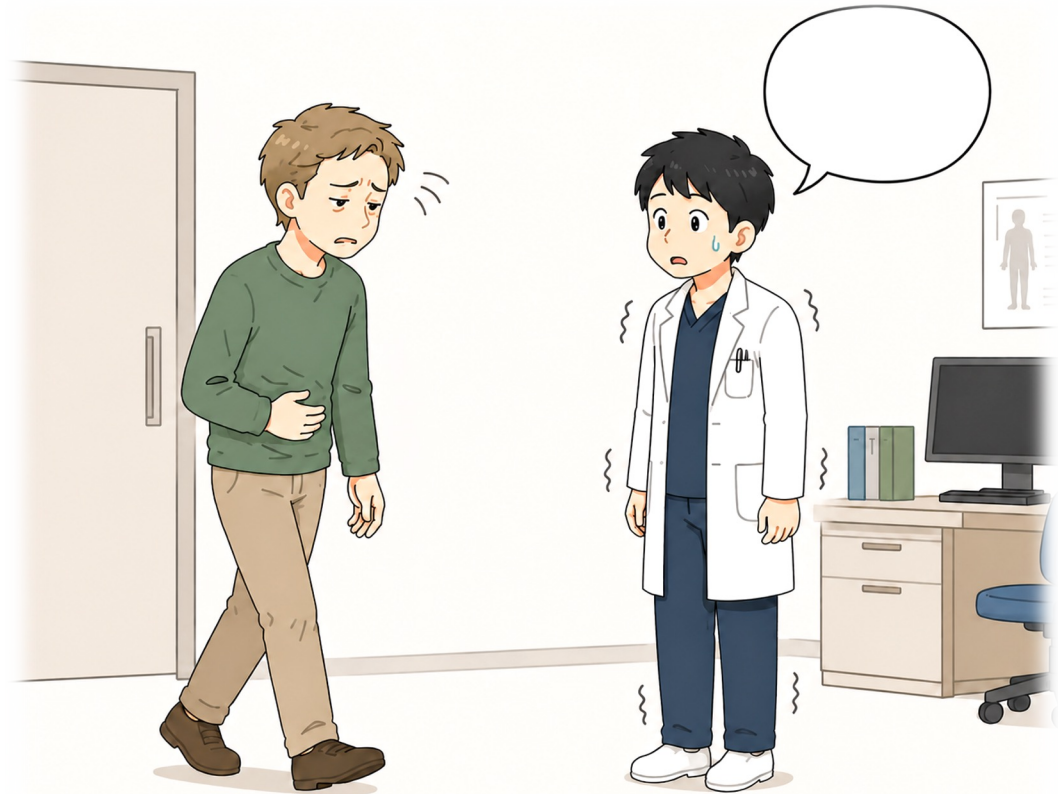


# What kind of English do healthcare professionals really need?

~~comprehensive phrasebook~~

## Expressions

- ✓ easy to learn, easy to pronounce, and easy to remember.
- ✓ natural, polite, and practical.



# How can we develop such an expression list?

- ☐ **Corpus from real clinical conversations**
- ☐ **Delphi study with clinicians**
- ☐ **Textbooks and published expression lists**
- ☐ **Rehabilitation videos and clinical manuals ...**

Ideally: combine all of these.  
But first—a prototype.

# Games based on the expression list

**Instead of waiting for a perfect list, we decided to build a practical prototype first, use it in class, and keep improving it.**



# Data Collection

## Step 1

Expressions were collected from rehabilitation English videos.

Expressions for missing clinical situations were added from textbooks.



Source: Aichi Physical Therapy Association, "Clinical English for physical therapists – summary: back pain" (YouTube)

# AI-assisted refinement

## Step 2

The author refined every expression through repeated discussions with AI.

- ✓ **Shorter expressions**
- ✓ **Simpler grammar**



# The development process in five steps

## Step 3

Review by a native English speaker (coauthor):

**Was it natural?**

**Was it polite?**

**Could it be misunderstood?**

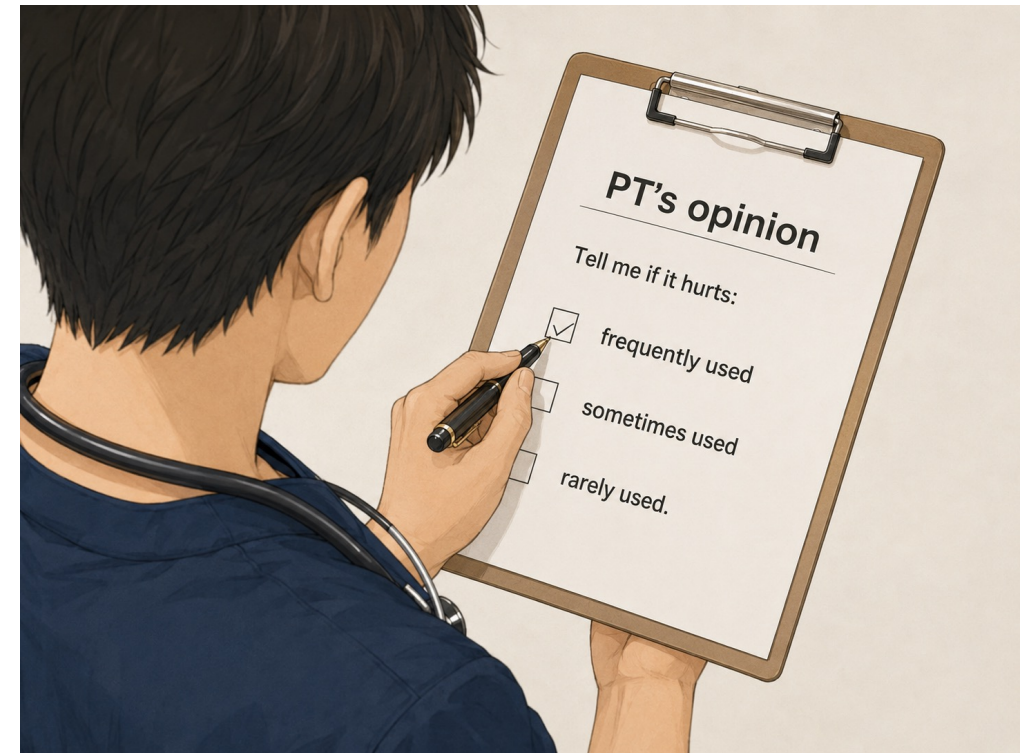




# The development process in five steps

## Step 4

PT & OT (coauthors) classified each expression as **frequently used**, **sometimes used**, or **rarely used** and suggested additional situations.



# The development process in five steps

## Step 5

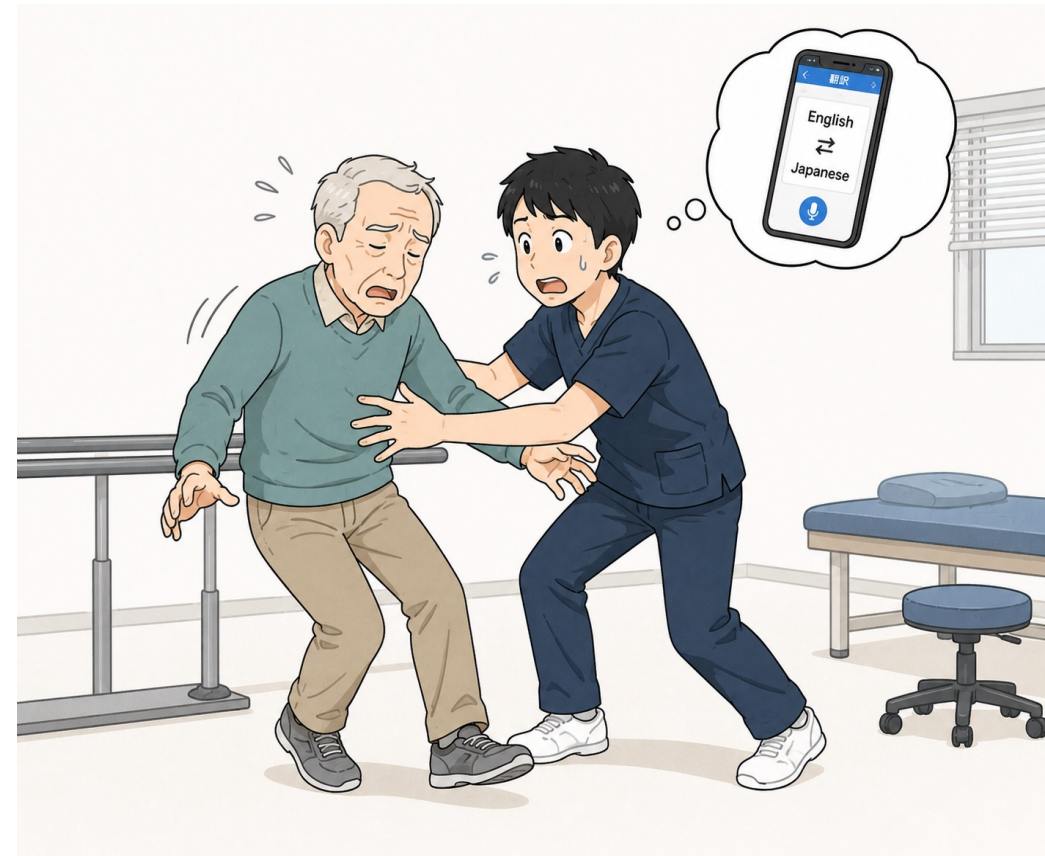
Medical English educator, native English speaker, PT, and OT discussed every remaining issue together, **until all four of us were satisfied.**



# Principles behind the expression list

## Clinical usefulness

Frequently used expressions are important, yet **some expressions used only sometimes may be essential when that moment comes.**



# Principles behind the expression list

## Simplicity

Short words,  
short sentences,  
simple grammar, and  
easy pronunciation.



Easy to learn,  
easy to remember,  
and easy to say

***Even under pressure***

# Expressions in our list vs those in textbooks

|                              | Total number of sentences | Average sentence length | Average word length |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Rehab English Textbook A     | 144                       | 7.31                    | 4.57                |
| Rehab English Phrasebook B   | 171                       | 7.12                    | 4.61                |
| <b>Our Rehab Expressions</b> | <b>121</b>                | <b>4.41</b>             | <b>4.25</b>         |



## Shorter, but Still Clear

*“Do you feel any pain when you try to move your leg?”*  
(11 words)

➡ ***“Any pain when moving?”*** (4 words)

- ✓ Clear / Natural / No misunderstanding  
— *never compromised*

# One Word, Several Reasons

***“Extend your knee.”***

straighten / **extend** / stretch

- ✓ Familiar from anatomy ("extension")
- ✓ Easy to pronounce
- ✓ Understandable in context
- ✓ Clinically accurate.

# One pattern, many expressions

***Any + noun ...? → “Any pain at night?”***

***Please + verb → “Please lie on your back.”***

***Let me + verb → “Let me check your strength.”***

Learn the pattern once  
—produce many expressions.

# Does It Really Work?

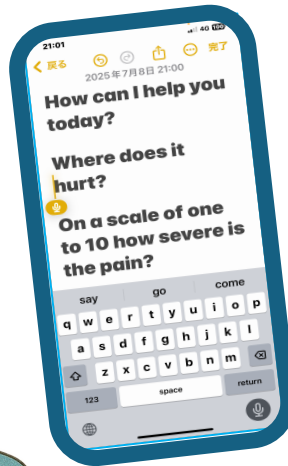
**Not yet.**

**April 2026 — list introduced in class →  
(future) learning speed & retention study**

A list alone changes nothing.  
Use it—again and again.

# Next stage: Gamification

## Rehab Read-aloud Karuta (2025)



## Team Pronunciation Battle (2026)



Enjoyment → Automaticity



## For exams

Long sentences  
Short-lived  
On the surface  
Isolated words

vs

## For patients

Short expressions  
Long-lasting  
Deep in the body  
Right phrases, instantly



**A massage therapist in  
Taipei knew only four  
Japanese expressions.**

***The right  
phrases  
at the right  
moment.***



# References

1. Aichi Physical Therapy Association. Rigaku ryohoshi ga rinsho de tsukaeru eikaiwa: yotsu (matome dogu) [Clinical English for physical therapists – summary: back pain] [Video]. YouTube; 2025 [cited 2026 Jul 9]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJ67TPyiMrg> (in Japanese) This summary video compiles the three source videos on history taking, physical examination, and treatment.
2. Miki T, Imamoto D, Okayauchi M. Practical English conversation for PT and OT. Tokyo: Medical View; 2018. (in Japanese)
3. Kakuda W, Shimura K, Yamaguchi K, Oishi A, Florescu MC. Kantan rehabili eikaiwa key phrases 600+ [Simple rehabilitation English conversation: 600+ key phrases]. Tokyo: Shinkoh Igaku Shuppan; 2019. (in Japanese)

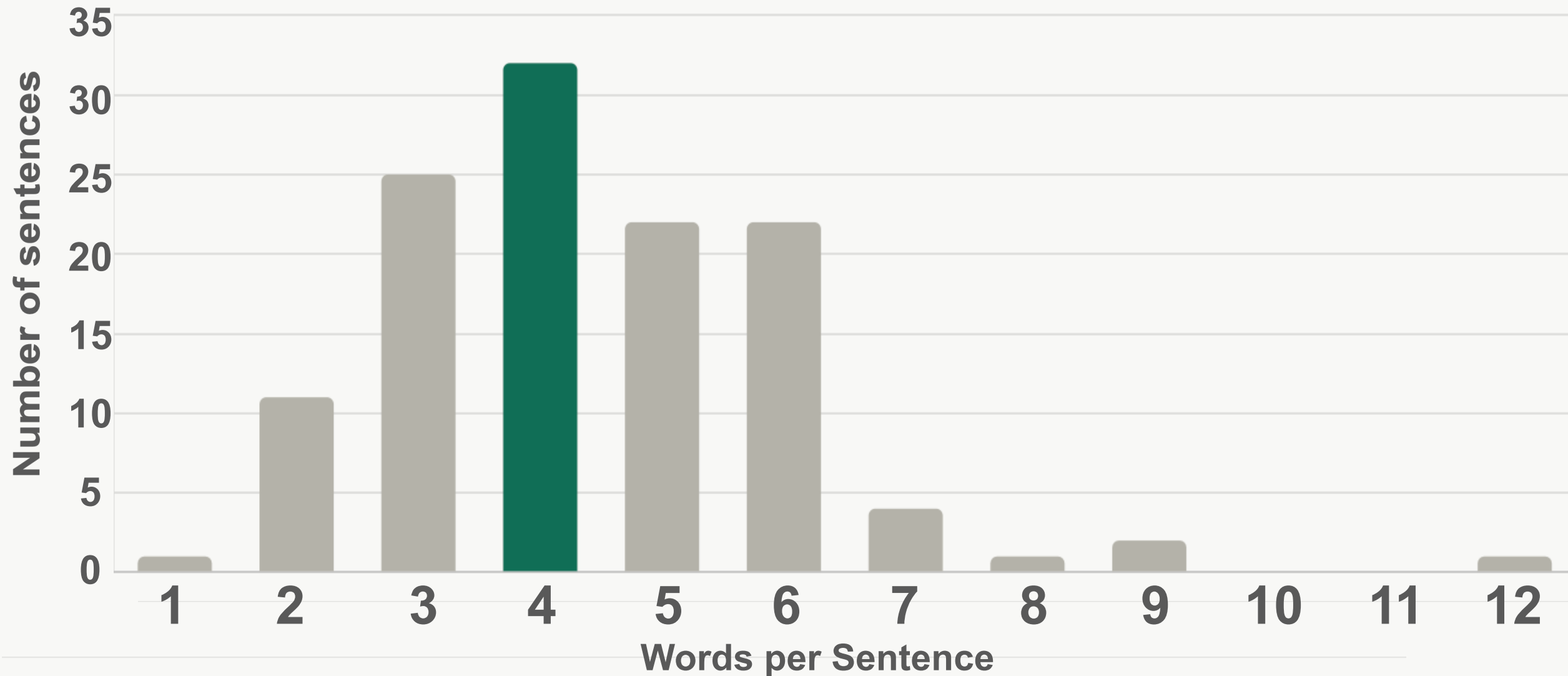
Some illustrations and images in this presentation were generated by the author using ChatGPT (OpenAI, <https://chatgpt.com>). Photographs of Taipei were taken by the author.

*Thank you.*

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# Sentence length distribution (n = 121)



Mean = 4.41   Median = 4   Mode = 4   57% of sentences  $\leq$  4 words