

Article

栄養士・管理栄養士養成校における英語教育の実態調査

**Learning Situation Analysis of EFL Education at Nutritionist and Managerial
Dietician Training Schools in Japan**

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ABSTRACT

Food education in schools has been historically emphasized in Japan, with the Basic Law on Food Education coming into force in 2005. Its main policy includes international exchanges on food safety, nutrition science, and nutritional lifestyle. Dietitians must take a leading role in food education for all Japanese residents, including English-speaking residents; however, English for specific purposes (ESP) training for dietitians has rarely been considered in Japan. A nationwide survey targeting decision makers in English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching revealed that wide gaps exist in the attitude between EFL and specialist teachers toward ESP for dietitians. Further, specialist teachers tend to be more aware of the future English language needs of dietitians than EFL teachers. Finally, more than 60% of institutions do not provide ESP for dietitians, and more than 80% of teachers consider students' EFL proficiency to be problematic when teaching the language. To provide better ESP programs, collaborations between ESP and specialist teachers are required, as is further needs analysis.

INTRODUCTION

In Japan, food and nutrition experts are educated in food and nutrition departments or majors at around 300 universities and colleges. Nutrition students play an active role in a variety of fields after their graduation. Many go on to work as nutritionists and managerial dietitians in the fields of healthcare, medical services, and welfare. Some, however, become researchers and conduct education and research activities in universities or research institutes, while others train to become nutrition teachers, make use of their knowledge of food and nutrition in the food industry, or give coaching on nutrition in developing countries.

The Basic Law on Food Education¹⁾ came into force in Japan in 2005, one of its key aims being to “promote research and studies on food safety, nutrition science, and other areas of dietary lifestyle, and to promote international exchanges and information sharing” (author’s emphasis). As nutrition students will play a leading role in food education, it is thought that they will have greater opportunities after graduation to use their expertise to contribute to local communities.

Currently, the number of foreign residents in Japan is increasing, and sites of healthcare, medical services, welfare, education, and research are rapidly becoming more internationalized; it is thus assumed that English will be increasingly used in nutrition teaching and food service. In 2008, the 15th Conference of the International Confederation of Dietetic Associations was held for the first time in Japan, providing a venue for international academic exchanges between nutritionists. Nutritionists and food studies students came from various regions around the world to participate, and research presentations and exchanges of opinions took place on matters such as nutrition issues, nutrition policies, nutrition education, and nutritionists’ activities. As

with other professions, it was considered that nutritionists will in the future need to “be able to use English in the workplace.” To meet the diverse range of needs, different levels of English will be required, ranging from conversational to specialist-level English. For example, with regard to conversational English, as Japan will have many foreign hospital patients, parents of nursery, kindergarten, and elementary school pupils, and company trainees who do not speak Japanese, nutrition teaching will need to be conducted in English as the lingua franca. Specialist-level English will on the other hand be required for research purposes, for instance, to obtain the latest research findings from overseas by reading a dissertation in English or attending an international academic conference. However, compared to the fields of science, engineering, and medicine, food and nutrition studies have access to few prior studies, practical examples, or teaching materials on teaching English for specific purposes (ESP) as opposed to traditional general purpose English (Japan Association of College English Teachers, 2000). Given this situation, it appears that the teaching staff responsible for developing the curricula in Japan’s nutritionist training programs and providing English as a foreign language (EFL) education rarely have the opportunity to identify the specific English-language needs for nutritionists. As a consequence, they often proceed blindly when preparing the curriculum and teaching materials.

In terms of curriculum development, needs analysis is considered an effective approach for both evaluating existing programs and designing future programs (Richards, 2000) Therefore, in terms of needs analysis, which involves a Target Situation Analysis, Learning Situation Analysis (LSA), and Present Situation Analysis, we set out to implement an LSA of the EFL education curriculum at nutritionist and managerial dietician training schools throughout Japan. For this purpose, we conducted

a questionnaire survey.

METHOD

This survey aimed to identify the attitudes towards EFL education among the teaching staff who develops English curricula for nutritionists and managerial dietitians. The principal aim of the survey was to consider the “curriculum design” and “preparation of learning materials” when incorporating ESP education into nutrition studies, with the aim of training nutritionists who will contribute to food education and internationalization in local communities. A preliminary survey entitled “Preliminary Survey for the Analysis of English Needs in the Workplaces of Nutritionists and Managerial Dietitians” was conducted between September and November 2011, and its results were taken into account when setting the questions for the main survey.

Based on the Japan Dietetic Association website and the official website for school prospectuses,⁴ we targeted teaching staff in 300 nutritionist and managerial dietitian training institutions across Japan (universities, junior colleges, and vocational schools) and asked for their participation in an anonymous, self-reported questionnaire survey. The language used in the questionnaire was Japanese, and requests for participation and data collection were carried out through the postal service. We collected and then analyzed 139 samples (46.3% response rate).

SURVEY RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

The following request for participation was made in the forms sent to potential participants: “Your managerial dietitian/nutritionist training department has been selected to take part in a survey. We request that this survey be filled in by an instructor

who conducts EFL education or a specialist teacher who is in charge of education in the department or developing the curriculum (one person in either case).” Figures 1–4 show the attributes of the 139 respondents from among the targeted institutions. There was an even distribution of universities and junior colleges or vocational schools, as well as of male and female respondents. In terms of age, the highest proportion of respondents were aged in their 50s (37%), with 71% being aged 50 and above. In terms of the ratio of specialist to EFL teachers, specialist teachers represented almost 70% of the entire sample.

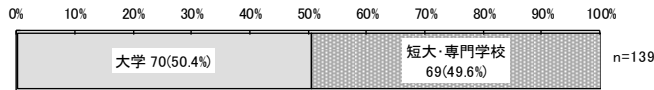


Figure 1: Universities versus junior colleges

大学=Universities 短大・専門学校=Junior colleges/vocational schools

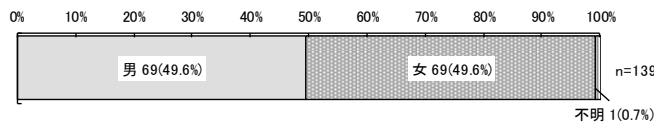


Figure 2: Gender distribution

男=Males 女=Females 不明=Unknown

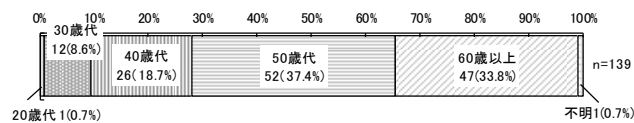
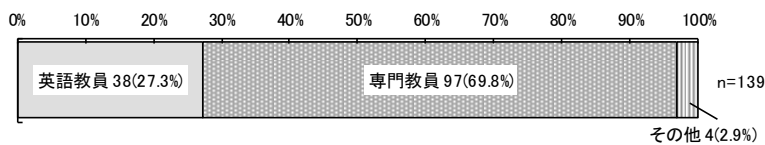


Figure 3: Age distribution

30歳代=30s 20歳代 20s etc.



<その他>
 教務課(1)
 教務委員(1)

Figure 4: Staff type

英語教員=EFL teachers 専門教員 Specialist teachers

その他 =Other

教務課=Educational affairs section

教務委員= School committee member

Goal of EFL Education in Nutritionist Training Schools and Level of English Required for Nutritionists and Managerial Dietitians

The survey asked the following question: “What do you think is the appropriate goal of

EFL education for students enrolled in the managerial dietician or nutritionist

department? (You may select multiple answers).” The participants were presented with

ten possible responses as follows: revision of basic English studied in junior high and

high school; broad education as appropriate for university, junior college, or vocational

school students; conversational English; gaining the ability to read a thesis; gaining the

ability to write a thesis; preparation for English qualifications exam (Test of English

for International Communication [TOEIC], EIKEN, etc.); cross-cultural understanding;

understanding English as related to nutrition studies; understanding English as related

to food preparation; and other. More than half of the respondents selected the following

three responses: understanding English as related to nutrition studies, gaining the

ability to read a thesis, and broad education as appropriate for university, junior college,

or vocational school students. The survey results are presented in Figure 5 below:

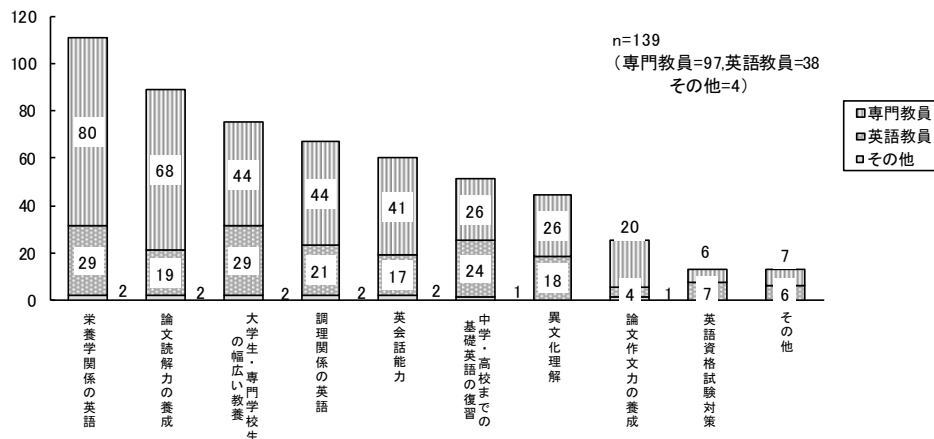


Figure 5: Goal of EFL Education

X axis from the left:

Understanding English as related to nutrition studies

Gaining the ability to read a thesis

Broad education as appropriate for university, junior college, or vocational school students

Understanding English as related to food preparation

Conversational English

Revision of basic English studied in junior high and high school

Cross-cultural understanding

Gaining the ability to write a thesis

Preparation for an English exam

Other

専門教員= Specialist teachers

英語教員= EFL teachers

その他= Other

The survey then asked the following question: “What do you consider to be the English competence required for nutritionists or managerial dieticians in their professional life? (You may select multiple answers).” The participants were presented with the following seven possible responses: ability to read a thesis; ability to write a thesis; daily conversational English; conversational English for giving nutritional advice; ability to give a presentation in English; English terminology relevant to

nutrition, food products, and food preparation; and other (comment freely). While around 40% of respondents selected answers related to the oral communication skills, namely, daily conversational English, conversational English for giving nutritional advice, and the ability to give a presentation in English, more than 70% considered “English terminology relevant to nutrition, food products, and food preparation (83%) and the ability to read a thesis (74%) to be essential. The results from the question are presented in Figure 6.

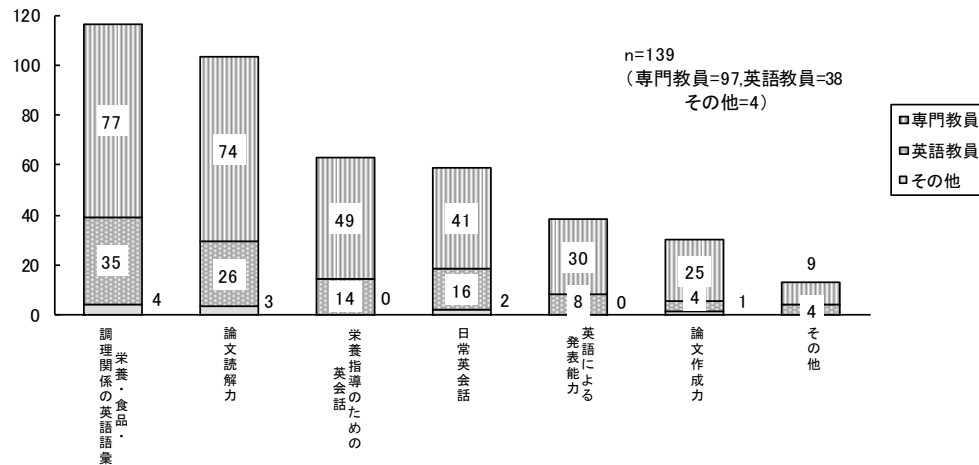


Figure 6: English ability required for nutritionists and managerial dieticians

X axis from the left:

English terminology relevant to nutrition, food products, and food preparation

Ability to read a thesis

Conversational English for giving nutritional advice

Daily conversational English

Ability to give a presentation in English

Ability to write a thesis

Other

専門教員= Specialist teachers

英語教員= EFL teachers

その他=Other

Teaching English for Specific Purposes

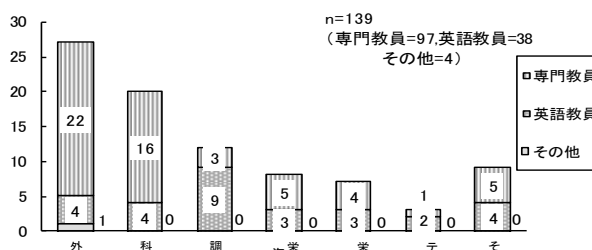
More than 60% of the respondents stated that their institution did not conduct EFL education for specific purposes. For the respondents whose institutions did teach EFL (38%), they were required to specify the ESP course content by selecting one or more of the following seven options: reading foreign texts in the original language; conversational English related to nutrition; technical writing; nutrition-related overseas training; food preparation in English; scientific English; and other (comment freely). The majority of responses related to reading foreign texts in their original language, followed by scientific English and food preparation in English.

Table 1: Teaching of ESP in institutions

専門に特化した英語教育の実施=Does the institution conduct EFL for specific purposes?

している=Yes

していない=No



全体=Total

専門に特化した英語教育の実施	n	%
している	53	38.1
していない	86	61.9
全体	139	100.0

Figure 7: ESP course content

X axis from the left:

Reading foreign texts in their original language

Scientific English

Food preparation in English

Nutrition-related overseas training

Conversational English related to nutrition

Technical writing

Other

専門教員= Specialist teachers

英語教員= EFL teachers

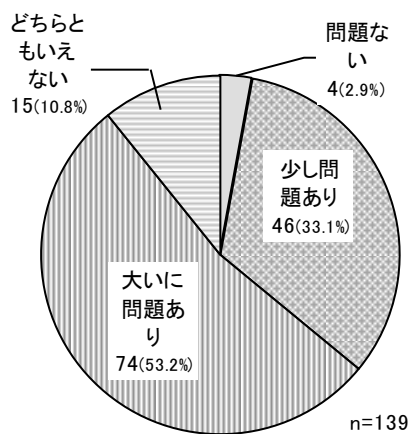
Students' English Ability

The respondents whose institutions conducted English for specific purposes (nutrition) were asked to specify the current English ability of their students. The respondents who answered there to a serious or slight problem accounted for 96.7% of the sample. The survey revealed that university teaching staff holds the view that students' current English ability is insufficient to be able to cope with the introduction of ESP. In particular, around 60% of the specialist teachers considered there to be a serious problem. This finding reveals that there is a strong sense of crisis among

specialist teachers.

The respondents who considered there to be a slight or serious problem were then asked to specify the problem concerning English-language ability of students, with the following six options being proposed: English reading comprehension; English grammar; English vocabulary; decline in English writing abilities; decline in English oral expression; and other (comment freely). The majority of respondents considered the problem to relate to English reading comprehension, vocabulary, or grammar, or the decline in English writing abilities.

It should be noted that among the 24 other comments received, many highlighted the decline in the overall language ability (both English and Japanese) and motivation (11 comments) and the discrepancy in English abilities among students (8 comments).



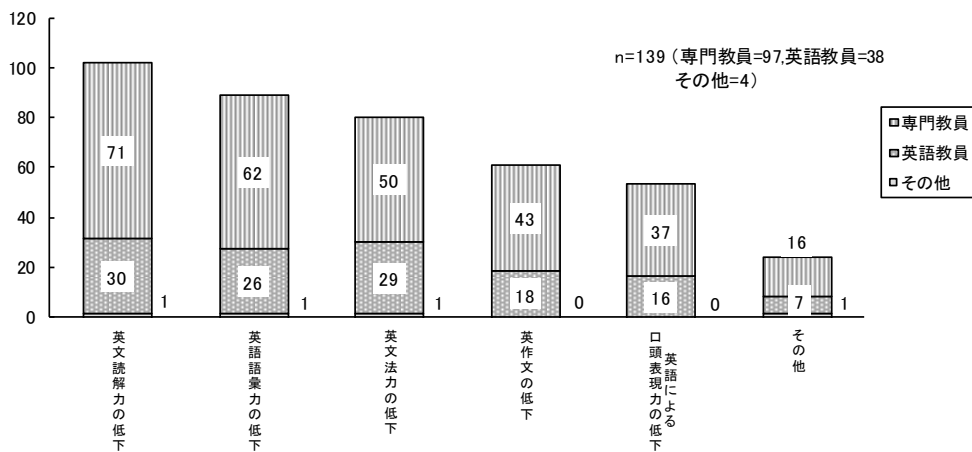
どちらともいえない=Cannot say

問題ない= No problem

少し問題あり= Slight problem

大いに問題あり= Serious problem

Figure 8: English ability of students



X axis from the left:

Decline in English reading comprehension

Decline in English vocabulary

Decline in English grammar

Decline in English writing ability

Decline in English oral expression

Other

専門教員= Specialist teachers

英語教員= EFL teachers

Figure 9: Problem areas relating to students' English-language abilities

Learning Materials for Nutrition English

The survey asked respondents about the type of appropriate learning materials to be used if they were to teach “Nutrition English” in a general EFL education as an

introduction to specialized subjects (e.g., nutrition, studies, and cooking studies). More than 80% of respondents considered it appropriate to use general reading materials relevant to specialized subjects. It should be noted that for the free comments, multiple respondents said that there should be original materials prepared by teaching staff (three comments) and taken from dietetics textbooks used abroad (or in English-speaking countries) (three comments).

Necessity for English-Language Abilities among Nutritionists and Managerial Dieticians in 10 Years

The questionnaire asked respondents whether they thought that the necessity for nutritionists and managerial dieticians to use English at work would increase over the next 10 years. This question was related to the three areas of listening/speaking (conversational ability), reading, and writing. The majority of respondents answered in the affirmative for each of the three skills, namely that English would be much more or slightly more necessary in the future. The respondents considered that there would be a particular need for English reading ability. A comparison between EFL and specialist teachers confirmed that the latter felt more strongly that nutritionists and managerial dieticians would need to master these three English skills in the future.

Table 2: Necessity of English in 10 years: Listening and speaking

		Q7-1.10年後の必要性-聞く、話す						
		n	今より一層必要	今よりやや必要	どちらともいえない	さほど必要でない	必要でない	不明
全体		139 100.0	59 42.4	53 38.1	21 15.1	0 0.0	5 3.6	1 0.7
大学、短大・専門学校別	大学	70 100.0	32 45.7	27 38.6	7 10.0	0 0.0	4 5.7	0 0.0
	短大・専門学校	69 100.0	27 39.1	26 37.7	14 20.3	0 0.0	1 1.4	1 1.4
部門	専門教員	97 100.0	49 50.5	33 34.0	12 12.4	0 0.0	2 2.1	1 1.0
	英語教員	38 100.0	8 21.1	19 50.0	9 23.7	0 0.0	2 5.3	0 0.0

		Q7-1: Necessity of English in 10 years: Listening and speaking						
		n	Much more necessary	Slightly more necessary	Cannot say	Not very necessary	No at all necessary	Unknown
Total								
Institution	Universities							
	Junior colleges and vocational schools							
Department	Specialist teachers							
	EFL teachers							

Table 3: Necessity of English in 10 years: Reading

		Q7-2.10年後の必要性-読む						
		n	今より一層必要	今よりやや必要	どちらともいえない	さほど必要でない	必要でない	不明
全体		139 100.0	76 54.7	42 30.2	16 11.5	3 2.2	1 0.7	1 0.7
大学、短大・専門学校別	大学	70 100.0	47 67.1	16 22.9	5 7.1	1 1.4	1 1.4	0 0.0
	短大・専門学校	69 100.0	29 42.0	26 37.7	11 15.9	2 2.9	0 0.0	1 1.4
部門	専門教員	97 100.0	59 60.8	28 28.9	8 8.2	1 1.0	0 0.0	1 1.0
	英語教員	48 100.0	13 27.1	14 29.2	8 16.7	2 4.2	1 2.1	0 0.0
Total								
Institution	Universities							
	Junior colleges and vocational schools							
Department	Specialist teachers							
	EFL teachers							

Table 4: Necessity of English in 10 years: Writing

		Q7-3.10年後の必要性-書く						
		n	今より一層必要	今よりやや必要	どちらともいえない	さほど必要でない	必要でない	不明
全体		139 100.0	46 33.1	50 36.0	33 23.7	8 5.8	1 0.7	1 0.7
大学、短大・専門学校別	大学	70 100.0	30 42.9	22 31.4	12 17.1	5 7.1	1 1.4	0 0.0
	短大・専門学校	69 100.0	16 23.2	28 40.6	21 30.4	3 4.3	0 0.0	1 1.4
所属	専門教員	97 100.0	39 40.2	33 34.0	21 21.6	3 3.1	0 0.0	1 1.0
	英語教員	38 100.0	5 13.2	16 42.1	12 31.6	4 10.5	1 2.6	0 0.0

		Q7-3: Necessity of English in 10 years: Writing						
		n	Much more necessary	Slightly more necessary	Cannot say	Not very necessary	No at all necessary	Unknow
	Total							
Institution	Universities							
	Junior colleges and vocational schools							
Department	Specialist teachers							
	EFL teachers							

DISCUSSION

Issues concerning EFL Education in Nutritionist and Managerial Dietician Training Programs

The results of this survey revealed that many people who design curricula for nutritionist and managerial dietician training programs in Japan, whether specialist or EFL teachers, consider there to be a problem regarding students' English-language ability, and that this problem must be solved in order to proactively develop ESP for nutritionists.

The issues regarding students' own academic abilities can be considered to apply not only to nutrition students, but also to all of today's university and junior college students in general. There is a need to conduct research on the English-language ability of nutrition students upon their admission to higher education institutes, for example, by examining whether or not English is used as selection criteria for university applicants and the success rate for the general entrance examination and admissions based on the recommendation. Furthermore, regarding the issue as to whether respondents thought that the necessity for nutritionists and managerial dieticians to use English professionally would increase in 10 years, it was specialist teachers who were

more conscious of the need to develop English-language abilities among nutritionists and managerial dieticians.

This study conducted a questionnaire survey targeting teaching staff who develop the curricula. Because of the high dependence on part-time teachers (Conference on the Issues faced by University Part-time Lecturers, 2000), such staff members have few opportunities to become involved in the curriculum. It is therefore assumed that universities do not sufficiently grasp the English needs of students in each faculty and department (or they may not be in a position to grasp their needs). Moreover, in our survey, many EFL teachers did not consider that the need for nutritionists and managerial dieticians to use English in the future would increase.

To effectively develop an English-language nutrition program based on the ESP approach in the excessively concentrated curriculum for nutritionist and managerial dietician training, it is essential to bear in mind the four points raised by Terauchi (2000) with regard to the needs of ESP: responding to learners' academic or professional needs, setting clear objectives for communication, enabling learners to understand the rules of language use rather than focusing solely on the rules of grammar, and encouraging independent learning whereby learners conduct classroom activities in accordance with course goals while taking responsibility for their own learning style and stage. It is also essential for EFL and specialist teachers to share information to enhance student learning.

Limitations of the Survey

The individuals targeted in this study were limited to EFL curriculum decision makers. For this reason, their attitudes may differ to some degree from those of

teachers who conduct English lessons. The English-language curriculum for nutrition students in Japan is also dealt with differently depending on the university. Some universities or junior colleges make English an optional subject or only teach the language in liberal arts. As a result, the teacher staff in charge of EFL education often belongs to foreign language centers or liberal arts faculties, or are part-time teachers. In such cases, the nutrition curriculum and future English needs of students may not have been accurately grasped, and the situation of EFL education for nutrition studies students may not have been properly investigated in the university. Furthermore, this survey did not account for the possibility that the EFL curriculum may have been developed by foreign teachers. As the survey was conducted in Japanese, it did not reflect the English-language abilities of nutrition students as perceived by foreign teachers. It should be noted that the respondents included teachers who are involved in designing the curricula in both junior colleges and universities. As there is a difference between nutritionists and managerial dieticians in terms of their workplace after graduation, it will thus be necessary to conduct separate needs analysis survey (target situation analysis) in the workplaces of both groups.

CONCLUSION

To investigate the situation of EFL teaching, we conducted a survey targeting specialist and EFL teachers who are involved in formulating the curriculum in nutritionist and managerial dietician training schools throughout Japan. The results revealed problems, such as the decline in students' English-language abilities and the difficulty in expanding and improving EFL education. The survey also revealed a gap in terms of the attitudes between specialist and EFL teachers with regard to the goal of

teaching EFL and language level required for nutritionists and managerial dieticians, the appropriate ESP educational content, and the future needs of the profession. In order to develop ESP in nutrition studies, there is thus a need for information sharing between ESP and EFL teachers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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