

【資料】

Assessing & Addressing the Needs of Non-English-Major Learners

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Introduction

The HBJD BECC program has presented a new challenge to a group of teachers used to teaching KUIS English major students. Though there is doubtless a degree of overlap between HBJD students and their KUIS counterparts, there are significant differences in context; foremost amongst these is that the HBJD students are non-English majors. The challenge then has been how to make learning English as meaningful, relevant, practical and motivating as possible to these students.

Research rationale

The purpose of this research was therefore needs analysis with a view to making the program content and delivery meaningful, relevant, practical and motivating. This was seen as important for various reasons. First, needs analysis is particularly pertinent to a program based on a communicative approach to language learning. This is because purpose underlies the very act of communication (Breen & Candlin, 2001), and so the goals and objectives of such a program should be based on an analysis of the needs of the participants in that program (Nunan & Lamb, 2001: 45), especially since those participants are key stakeholders in the program. In fact the role of learner is fundamental to both an autonomy-based curriculum and the communicative approach. That role involves the learner contributing and negotiating, and taking responsibility for her learning (Breen & Candlin, 2001).

Another way to look at the issue of needs analysis, is from a motivational perspective. Firstly, there is the importance of a sense of *relevance*: does the learner feel that the course addresses their own needs, either current or projected? As Dornyei observes:

‘One of the most demotivating factors for learners is when they have to learn something that they cannot see the point of because it has no seeming relevance whatsoever to their lives.... We need to relate the subjects to the everyday experiences and backgrounds of the students’ (Dornyei, 2005: pp.63-64).

In the case of our learners, the majority of whom are studying a range of majors other than English, the issue of relevance seems especially relevant, as it were. Did they see English

as a useful ‘side-skill’ either in relation to their future careers, or in relation to their life in general?

The other form of motivation which needs analysis can support is *self-determination*, the feeling of being in control of one's life, able to make one's own decisions and effect change in one's situation, as one sees fit. Therefore, if participants in a program are given the opportunity to express their needs, they are more likely to feel they have an influence over the content of the program, and therefore feel more in control despite the compulsory nature of that program.

Issues related to Needs Analysis

First we need to distinguish between the learners' immediate needs and their future needs. In an EFL setting, as Japan is, although the learners may have some contact with English in their current day to day lives, they are likely to have more need of it in the future; in other words, they are more likely to have a potential need for English.

It is also important, when conducting needs analysis, to recognize the difference between *objective* and *subjective* needs analysis. Savage and Storer, reporting on the establishment of an innovative language program in Thailand, comment on the common omission from language programs of the learners' own perceptions of their learning, what they bring to a course in terms of ‘their own experience and expectations’ (Savage & Storer, 2001: p.141). In other words, it is important to find out what the learners themselves perceive to be their needs, as opposed to simply imposing a set of needs based on some external reference point, such as the institution's objectives, or the results of an entrance examination.

In his extremely useful manual on motivation in the language classroom, Dornyei (2005: pp.65-66) includes a section on the tool of needs analysis for motivating students. He also provides a short list of questions which can be used when addressing the question of students' needs in language learning. These questions focus on what contact the students have with the language and of what use it is to them, both now and in the future, therefore including what language-learning goals they have.

Research questions

- What (if any) L2-related activities are HBJD Freshman students currently involved in?
- What L2 contacts do they have (if any)?
- Which L2 skills do they consider most important/useful (either now or in the future)?
- What (if any) career plans do they have?
- What L2-related goals do they have (if any)?
- What can they imagine using the L2 for if they could speak it?

- What L2-related situations can they visualize themselves in one day.

Methodology

Based on the research questions above, I created a nine item questionnaire. The questionnaire was then translated into Japanese for the sake of clearer understanding of each item. The initial two items elicited basic information about the questionnaire respondent, while the following seven items were as follows:

- What career plans do you have?
- Outside of your English classes at HBJD, what L2-related activities are you currently involved in?
- Outside of HBJD, what L2 contacts do you have?
- Which L2 skills do you consider most important/useful (either now or in the future)?
- What L2-related goals do you have?
- What can you imagine using the L2 for if you could speak it?
- What L2-related situations can you visualize yourself in one day.

At the end of the first semester, I administered the survey online, using Survey Monkey, to a total of 223 of the current HBJD first year students, during class-time. This figure represented about 85% of the entire HBJD first year student body. Therefore the students represented all five Departments: Early Childhood Education, Nutrition, Welfare, Psychology, and Languages. Use of Survey Monkey enabled efficient collection and descriptive analysis of the survey results.

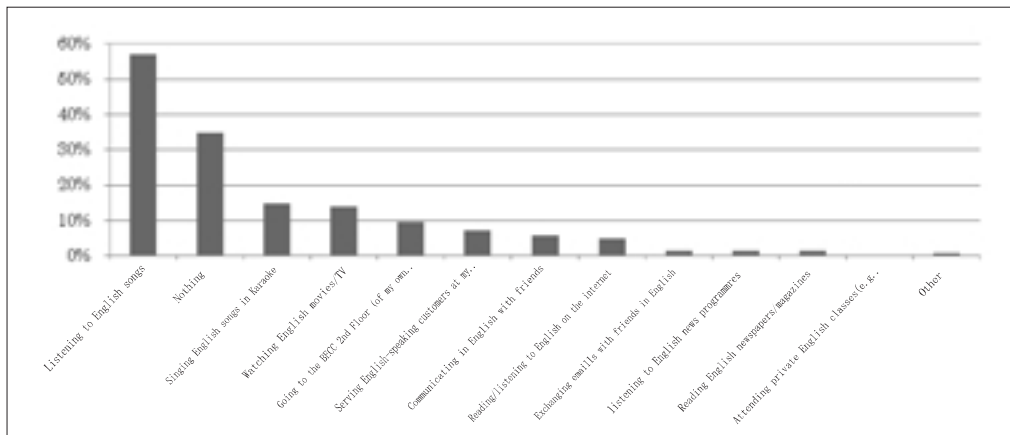
Before looking at the results, it should be noted that the students took the survey after one semester of BECC classes. Therefore their experience of BECC classes may have affected their view of their English language needs, especially since the classes focused heavily on oral communication skills.

Results

Q3. What career plans do you have?

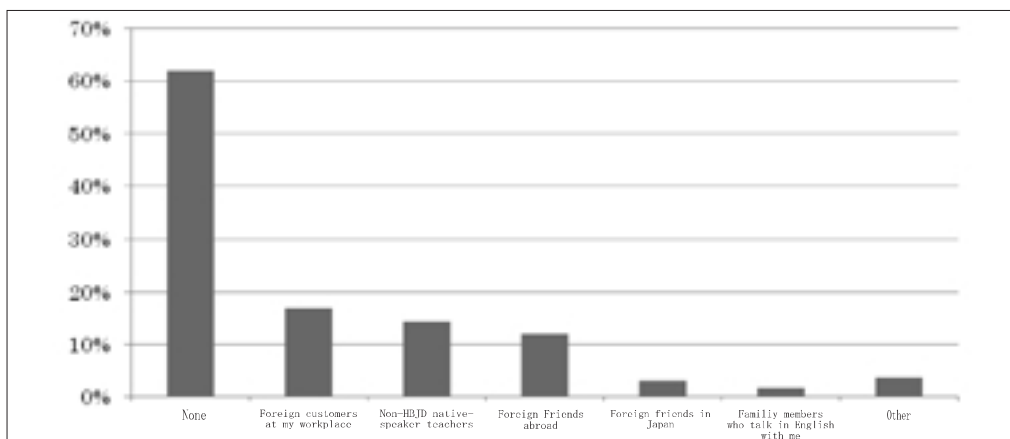
As can be seen from the graphs for each department's first year students (see Appendix 1), in general, the vast majority of students plan to pursue a career related to their subject. However, a contrast between Early Childhood Education/Nutrition/Welfare on the one hand, and Psychology/Languages on the other, is also noted: the latter group seem much less unified in their career plans, and have a significantly higher number of students either interested in careers unrelated to their major, or as yet undecided about their future career.

Q4. Apart from your HBJD English classes, what English-related activities are you currently involved in? (More than one answer is OK)



While just over a third of students are not involved in any English-related activities outside of their English classes, an even greater proportion (almost 60%) claim to listen to English songs. Beyond that, there is evidence of a range of English related activities being carried out on a narrower scale.

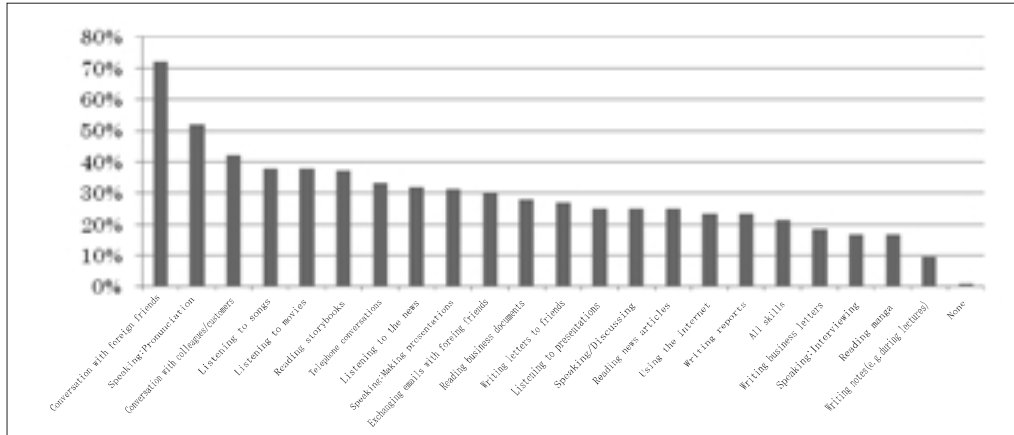
Q5. What English contacts do you have outside Bunkyo? (More than one answer is OK)



Responses to Q5 confirm that the majority of students have no chances to communicate in English in their daily life outside of the university. The chances that do present themselves to students are related either to their part-time jobs (especially as waitresses in restaurants with foreign customers), contacts with their school's ALTs or English teachers, or experiences of foreign exchange programs while at school.

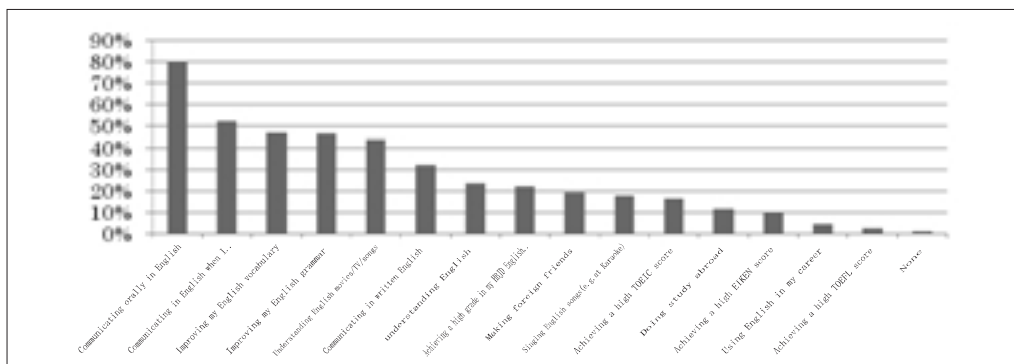
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Q6. Which English skills do you consider most important/useful for yourself (either now or in the future)? (More than one answer is OK)



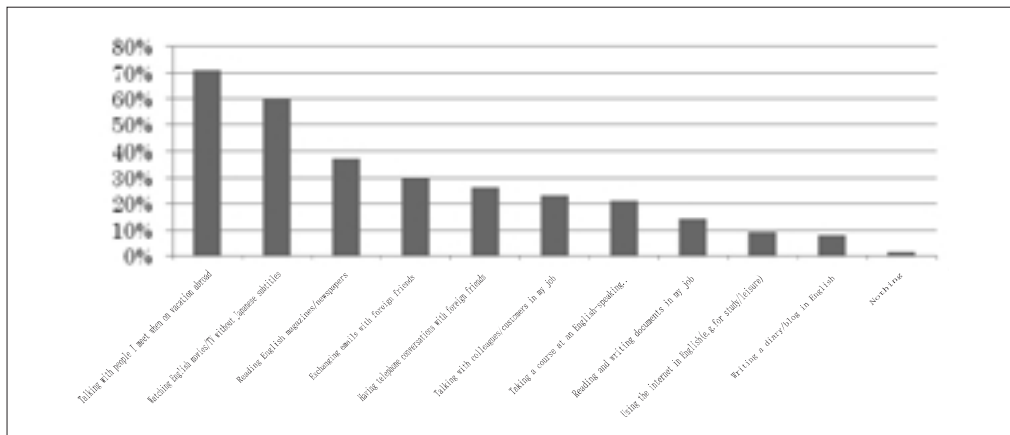
While the majority of the English skills included in this item were selected by 15 to 35% of students as being most important or useful to them, those relating to oral communication are clearly viewed as important to a significant proportion of the student body. Moreover, the emphasis seems to be on English use beyond the classroom; in other words, they value the skills that will enable them to use English in very practical and interpersonal situations beyond the classroom, including making and maintaining friendships, working, and enjoying entertainment and media.

Q7. What English-related goals do you have? (More than one answer is OK)



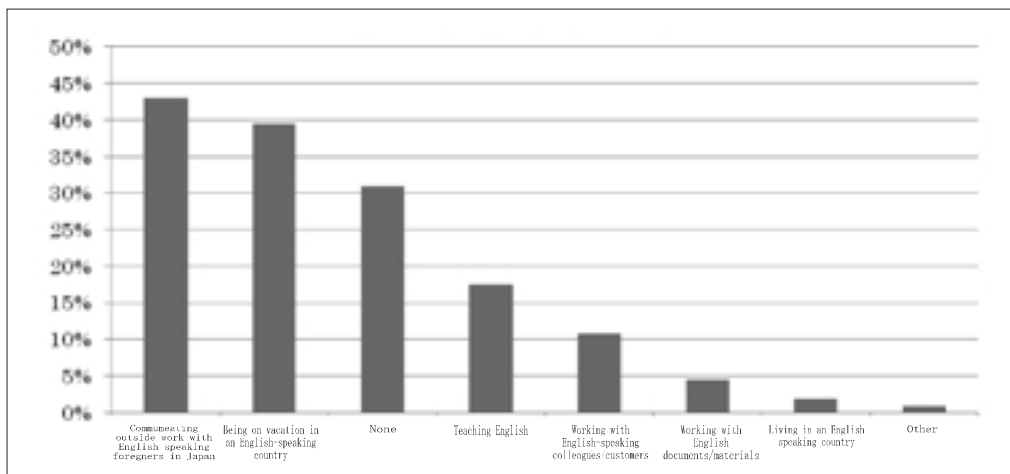
While the responses to this question reflect those from Q6, that is, an emphasis on oral communication, including when travelling abroad, we can also see a significant number of students with goals relating to linguistic knowledge, vocabulary and grammar. Conversely, very few students appear to have goals relating to academic achievement in their English study, whether in terms of their class grades or in terms of English proficiency tests.

Q8. What can you imagine using English for if you were very good at it? (More than one answer is OK)



Q8. and Q9. proved to mirror each other in their responses, and therefore I will discuss them together. Again, oral communication, both with foreigners in Japan and when on vacation outside of Japan, figured very strongly in the students' imagined use of English in the future. So too did the enjoyment of English media. On the other hand, almost no students see themselves living in an English-speaking country in the future.

Q9. What English-related situations can you visualize yourself in one day? (More than one answer is OK)



Discussion

The above results are somewhat surprising, and positively so, in that they reveal that a majority of the students want to learn English for the purposes of communicating outside of the classroom, in a range of 'real life' situations, which matches one of the main

objectives of the BECC Freshman English curriculum. This is surprising bearing in mind that most of the students have very little communicative contact with English-speakers in their daily life; and yet they still value the ability to communicate in English. In other words, many of our students seem to have already invested in imagined communities such as ‘students who want to use English outside of class’, or ‘students who want to use English in their future careers’, or ‘students who want to travel abroad (and thereby use English)’. Being a member of such communities can ‘move [students] more to invest in the activities that define the group’ (Murphey, 2009: p.14).

At the same time, during the students' time at HBJD, we at the BECC would hope to provide and encourage more contact with English outside the classroom, primarily (but not exclusively) via our Self-Access Learning Centre. We could also further promote the existing study abroad programs offered by the university. By doing so, we would hope to reinforce the imagined communities mentioned earlier, making them a little more concrete.

As for the results from Q3, regarding career plans, the mixed nature of the responses by the Language major students is rather concerning, especially from the BECC's point of view. The fact that a significant number of these students appear to have no idea about their future career has possible implications for their motivation; anecdotal evidence from BECC teachers shows that while the language major students course participation is mediocre, that of the Early Childhood Education major students, over 95% of whom intend to pursue a career in teaching, is conversely very active, even though Language is not their major.

Future Directions

The next step in this research is two-fold: on the one hand, these results will be used to inform the curriculum, both confirming what needs we are meeting already, and also identifying those needs as yet unrecognized or misunderstood. On the other hand, great value can be gained from feeding back the overall results to the students themselves. Since although the students' English use is future-oriented and imagined, that imagining itself is very present, and holds within it a source of language-learning motivation; and that motivation can be shared, bolstered and spread, if the students are aware of each other's imaginings about their future use of English. As Murphey (2009: 14) points out, ‘when students, or even researchers, share their imaginations, these imaginings can become possibilities for listeners’.

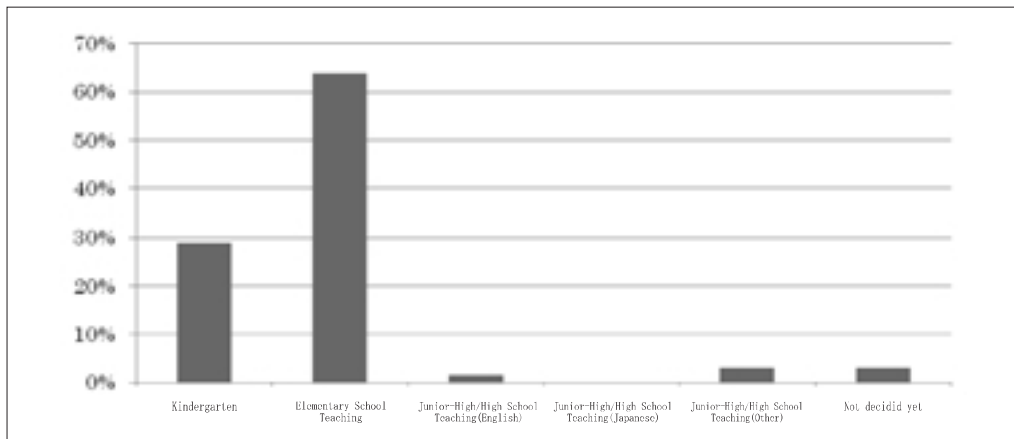
Another useful step would be to investigate to what extent and in what kind of ways students actually use English after graduating. This information could either provide existing students with more concrete imaginings about their future English use, or, if it shows that very few students go onto use English, it could suggest and motivate program changes and additions with a view to increasing the potential of future English use after graduation.

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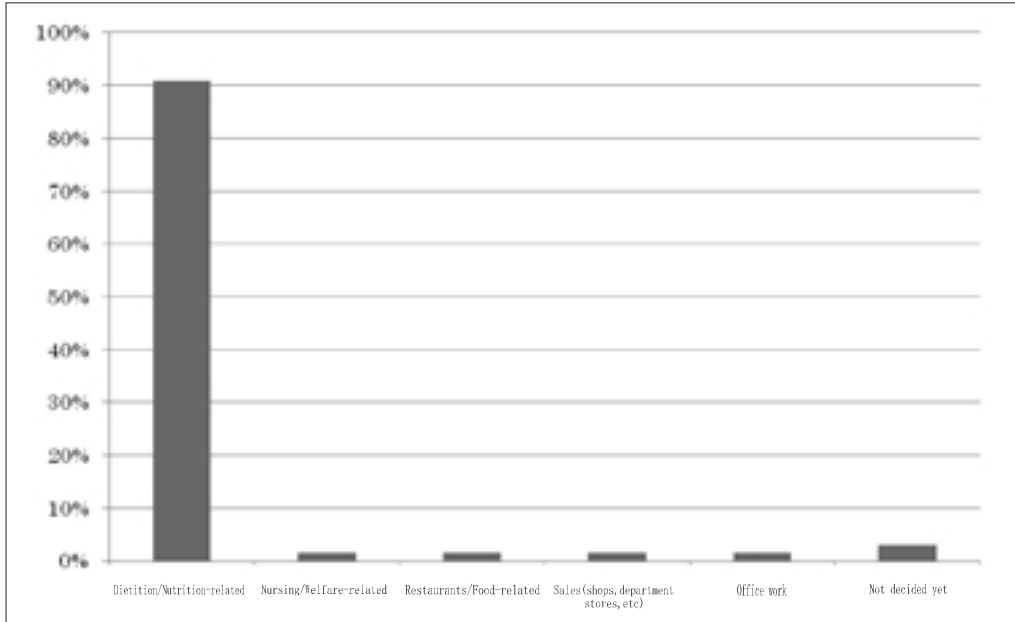
Appendix 1: Graphs showing results to Q3., by the department of :

Elementary Education students' career plans

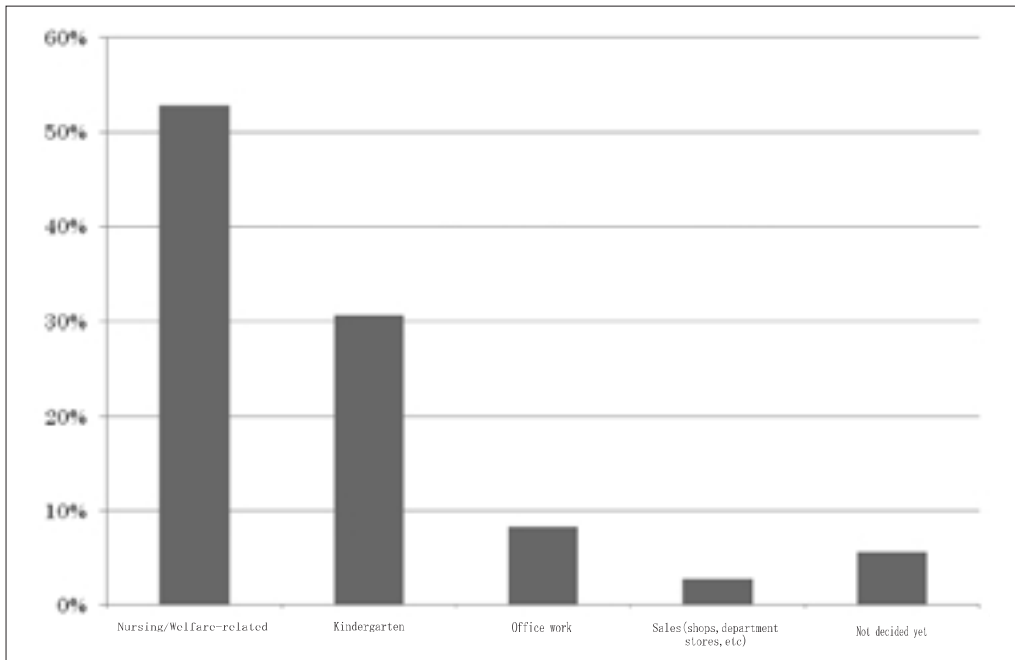


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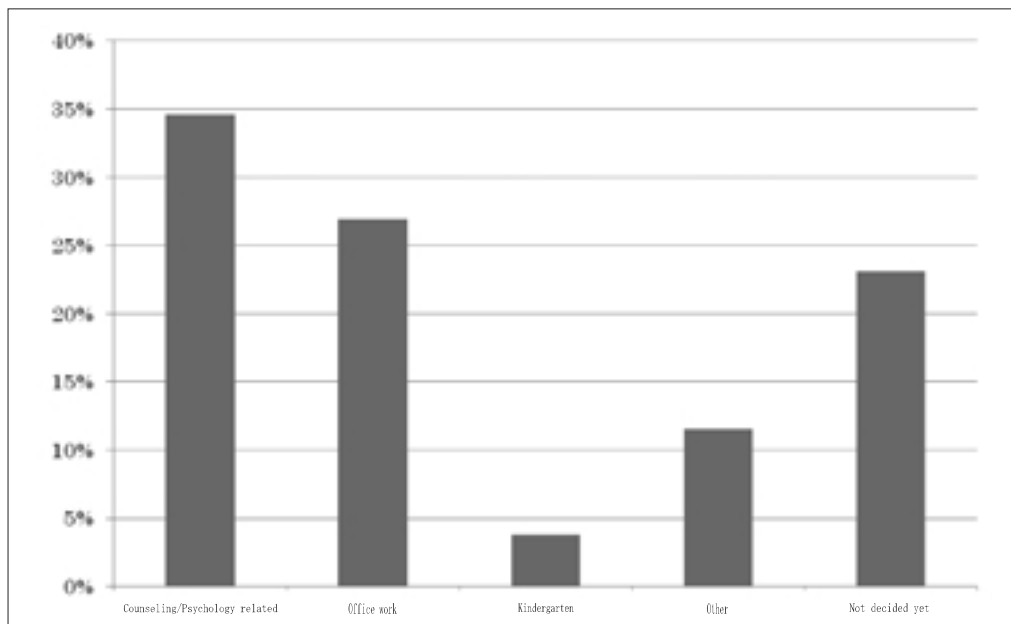
Nutrition students' career plans



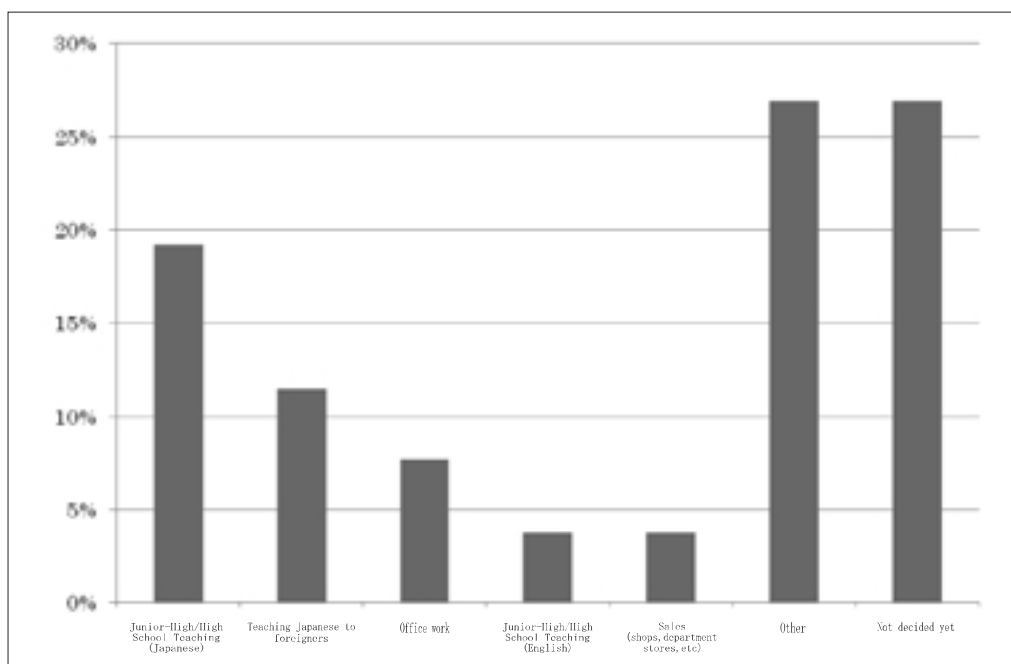
Welfare students' career plans



Psychology students' career plans



Language students' career plans



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