University language policies and their implementation: English for university staff in Germany

Dr Fabienne Quennet (Marburg)
Dr. Till van Lil (Münster)
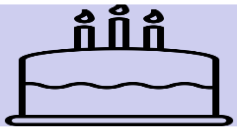
Survey design

Biography

Use and change

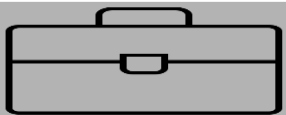Experience and expectations

Study participants

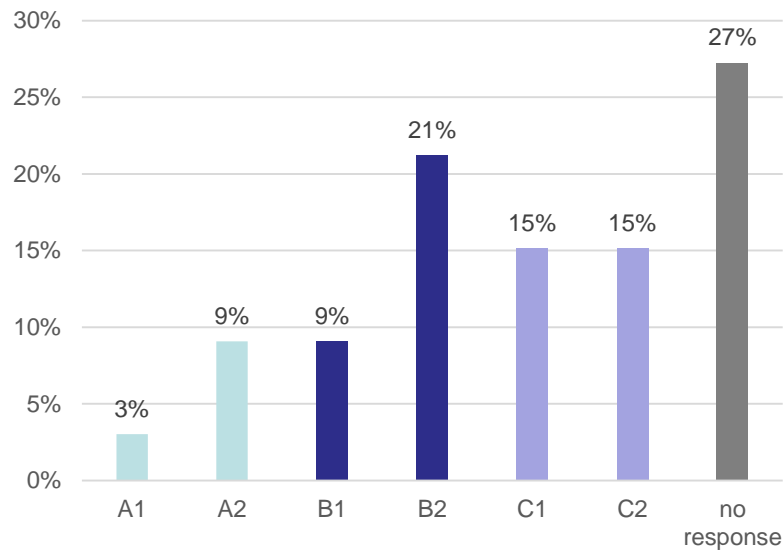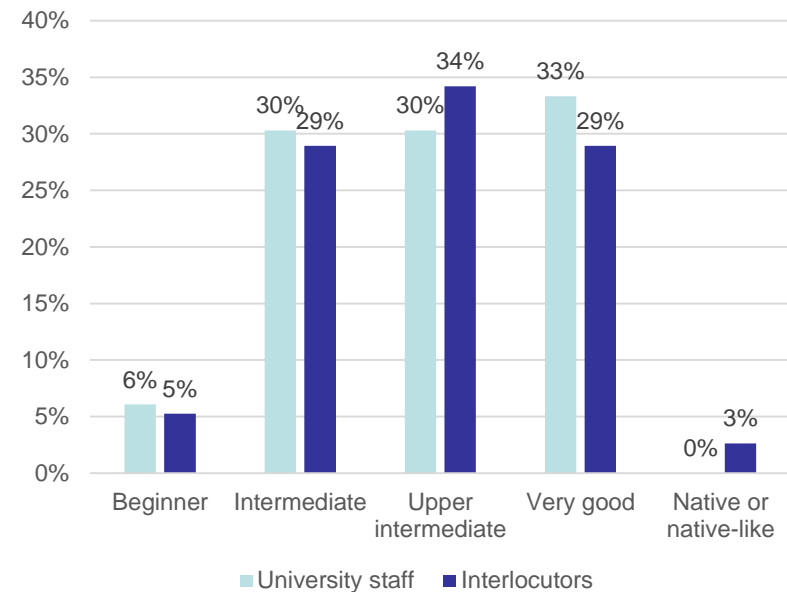|	
👥	33 participants
🎂	36-45 years
👨‍🏫	6-10 years
💼	4-10 years

Proficiency in English

CEFR level of English acc. to certificates, completed courses
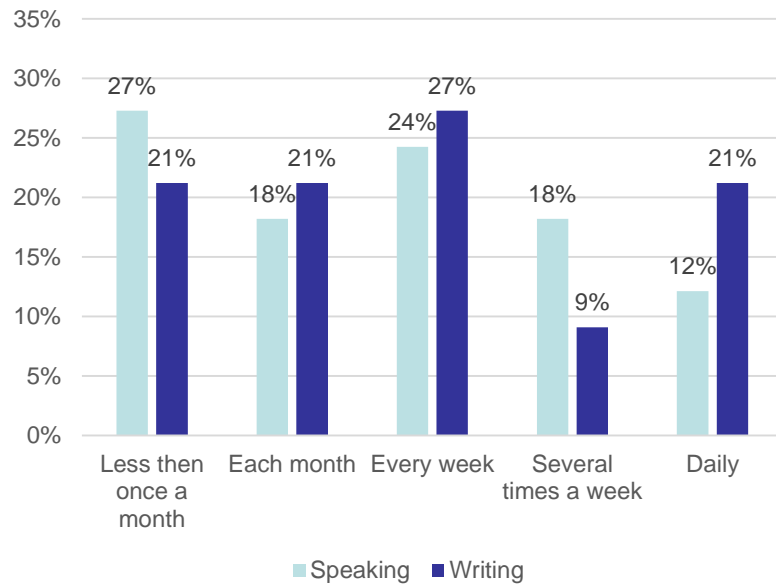
Proficiency in English self-assessment

Professional use of English

Production: Speaking and writing

- Less then once a month: Speaking 27%, Writing 21%
- Each month: Speaking 18%, Writing 21%
- Every week: Speaking 24%, Writing 27%
- Several times a week: Speaking 18%, Writing 9%
- Daily: Speaking 12%, Writing 21%

■ Speaking ■ Writing

Reading

- Less then once a month: Reading 15%
- Each month: Reading 18%
- Every week: Reading 15%
- Several times a week: Reading 30%
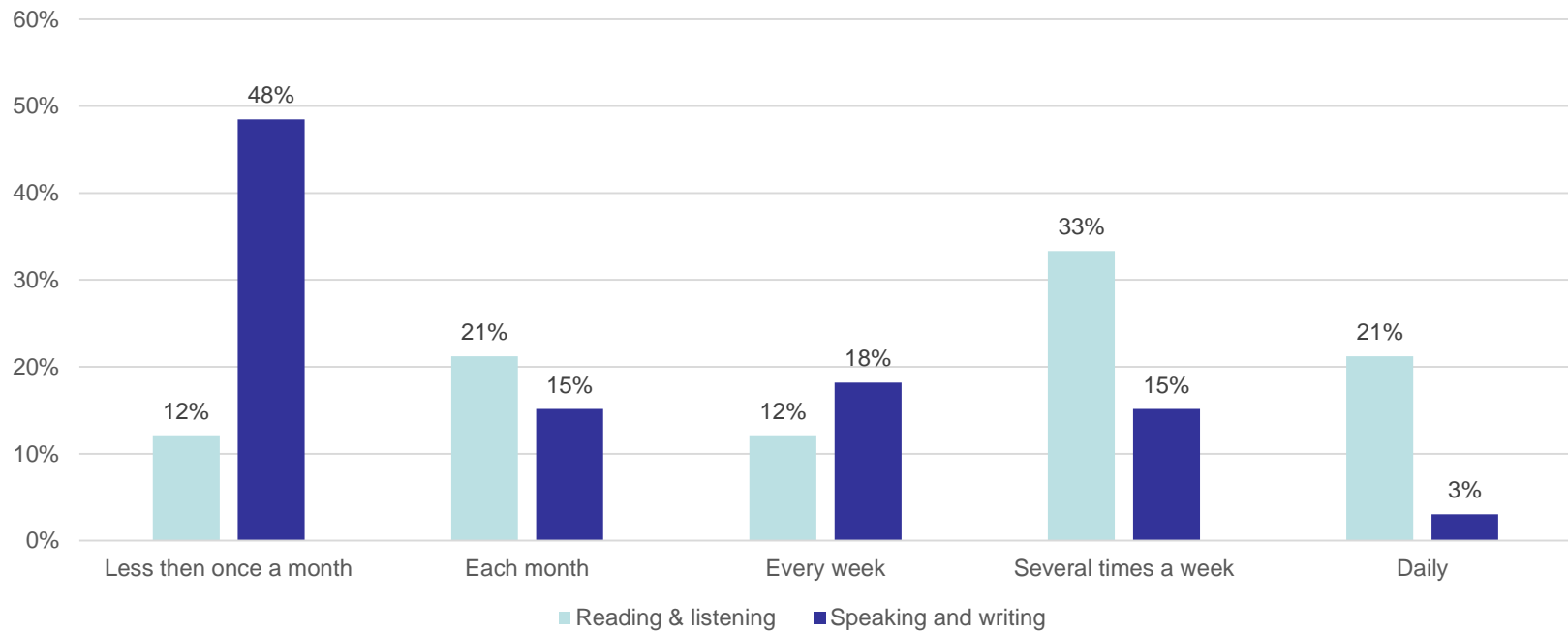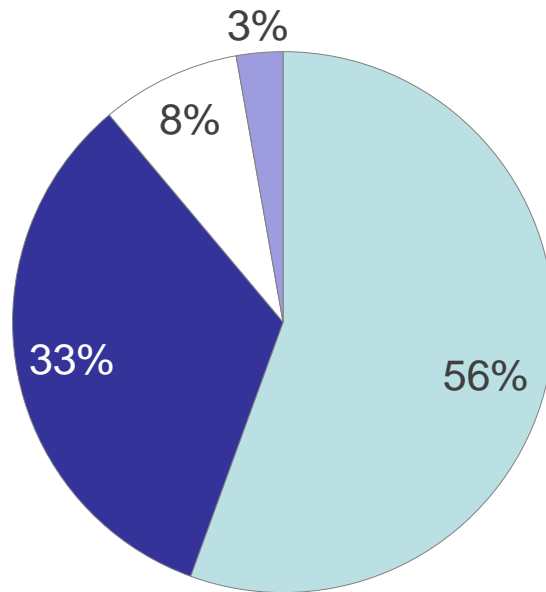- Daily: Reading 21%

■ Speaking ■ Writing ■ Reading
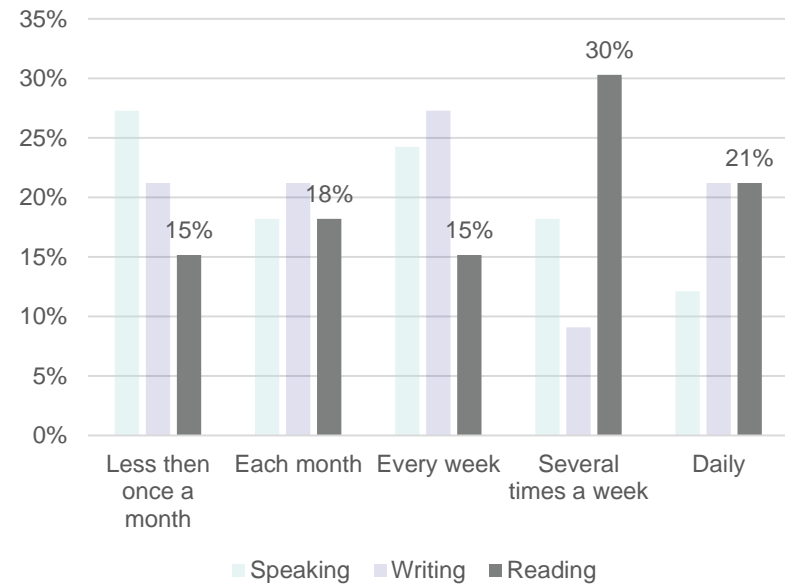
Private use of English

Interlocutors: First language

- Non-native speakers with different L1 than self — 56%
- Mixed groups — 33%
- Native speakers — 8%
- Speakers with same L1 as self — 3%

Interlocutor groups

Differences in between groups
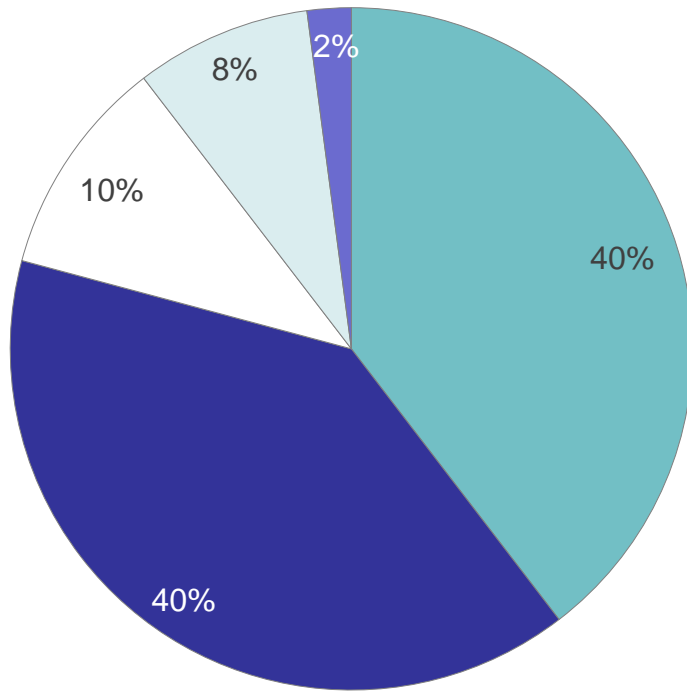
Pie chart legend:
- Students
- Researchers
- Guests
- Partner universities
- Contractors, suppliers

Pie chart values: 40%, 40%, 10%, 8%, 2%

Bar chart:
- No effect on language use: 33%
- Register: formal v informal: 17%
- Speech speed and proficiency: 17%
- ESP: 17%
- Accent: 8%
- Mixed groups more colloquial: 8%
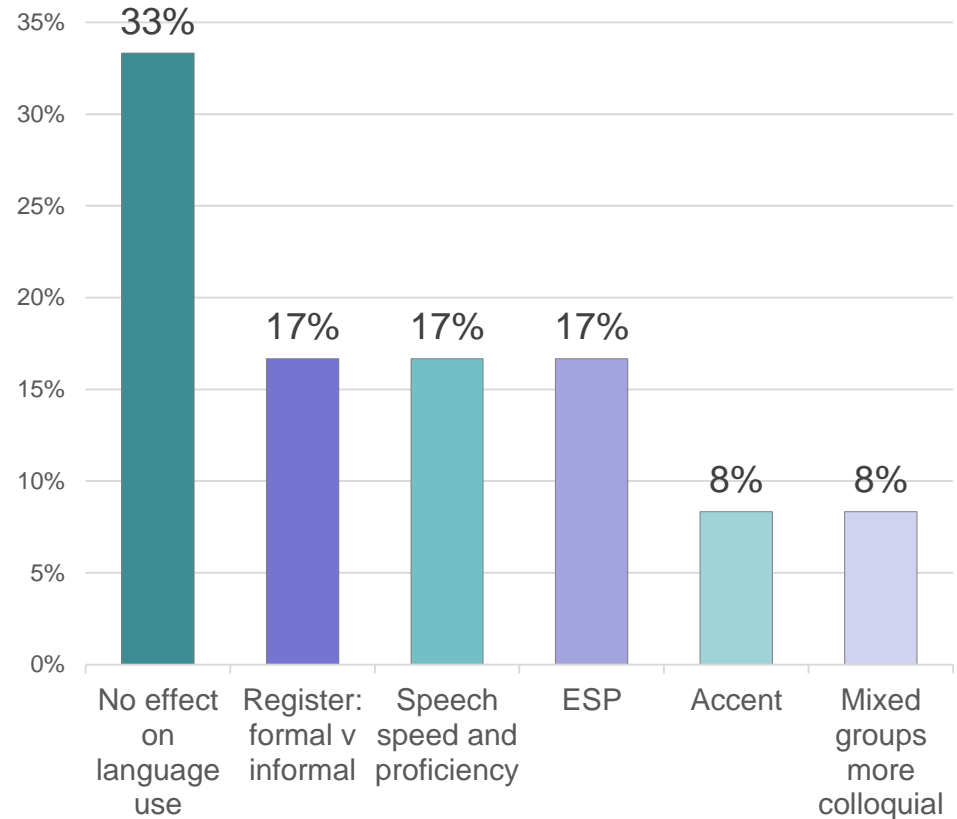
Open questions and answers

Changes

- Could you please describe how the use of English at the university has changed since you started working in university administration?
- How do they think the use of English in higher education administration has changed as a result of the COVID pandemic?

More contact with students seeking advice and information in English

Internationalization has created the need to communicate in English in the first place

I can't see any changes since taking up my post. We are just trying to offer more websites, information texts and flyers in English now

English is routinely used for important information in rather poor automatic translations

The use shifts to written communication

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Open questions and answers

Emotions and challenges

- What feelings do you associate with the use of English at work?
  Apart from those mentioned above, what are the difficulties in communicating in English at work?

It is often difficult to assess whether my counterpart really understands me

On the phone, I am rather insecure because I can't always find all the words, no preparation possible

Different expectations. Suddenly expected to do things in English without really being prepared. Lack of regular practice

Enjoyment because it is challenging and my English skills are maintained through constant use

Open questions and answers

Requests

- Agreement to either or both statements
  - ➢ Do you believe that university staff should be offered more opportunities for general language (*General English*) qualification?
  - ➢ Do you believe that university staff should be offered more opportunities for job-specific language qualification (*English for Specific Purposes*)?

English for Specific Purposes: 16
General English: 6
both: 9
no answer: 2

Attending language courses free of charge and obtaining language certificates through the university would be a nice offer

Language course for administration and student counseling with a focus on speaking

Tandem projects for active language exchange. These could be conducted digitally with members of partner universities worldwide, for example

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Conclusion and outlook

- regular use of English at the workplace

- increase in communicating in English

- esp. during COVID: shift to written communication

- preference for written communication but higher self-set standards in writing

- internationalisation has strong implications for university staff with regards to English language skills

Conclusion and outlook

- How to meet these implications?
  - ➢ strengthening of language programmes for staff within the universities / language centers
  - ➢ offering English support services via language centers
  - ➢ offering specific purpose courses for specific administrative departments and central institutions

Conclusion and outlook

- How to address current/future challenges?
  - ➢ online tools
  - ➢ limited spoken communication skills
  - ➢ English as lingua franca

Conclusion and outlook

DISCUSSION

- How can language centers diversify their learner groups?
- Who needs to be involved with in the higher education institution when offering language courses for academic/administrative staff?
- In which way should these courses differ?
- Is there really a need for language competency for all groups?
- How can hard-to-motivate groups be encouraged to participate?
- Which English should be taught?
- Which formats seem to be the most promising – online, shorter, lunch break workshops ("Pausenexpress"), language cafes, one-to-one coaching?

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