



STUDENTS AS CO-CREATORS

Enhancing the academic experience of students whose language is not English: A study of the English Language support courses at UOW

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Executive Summary

As one of the most internationally diverse university in the UK, the University of Westminster is a chosen destination for many students whose first language is not English. Thus, providing a supportive English learning provision is becoming increasingly significant. This study is the first attempt to capture the experiences of international students whose first language is not English as to the English language provision offered by the University. To empirically establish how students get the information about the language support service and what they think about the provision, this study collected 36 questionnaires and interviewed 20 students.

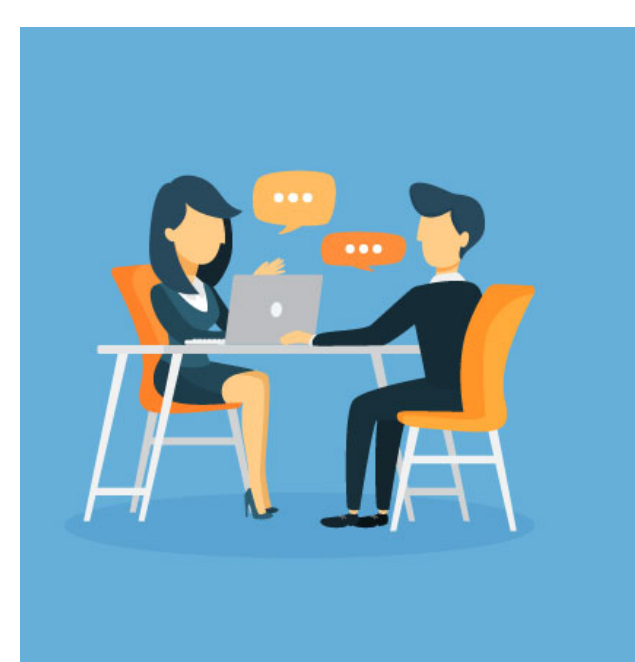
Research Questions

- 1) How do students know which courses are available?
- 2) How does accessing these sources enhance students' academic performance?
- 3) How does attending these courses help their transition and progression into university in terms of communication and cross-cultural experiences?



Methods

- 36 Questionnaire responses
- 20 Semi-structured interviews

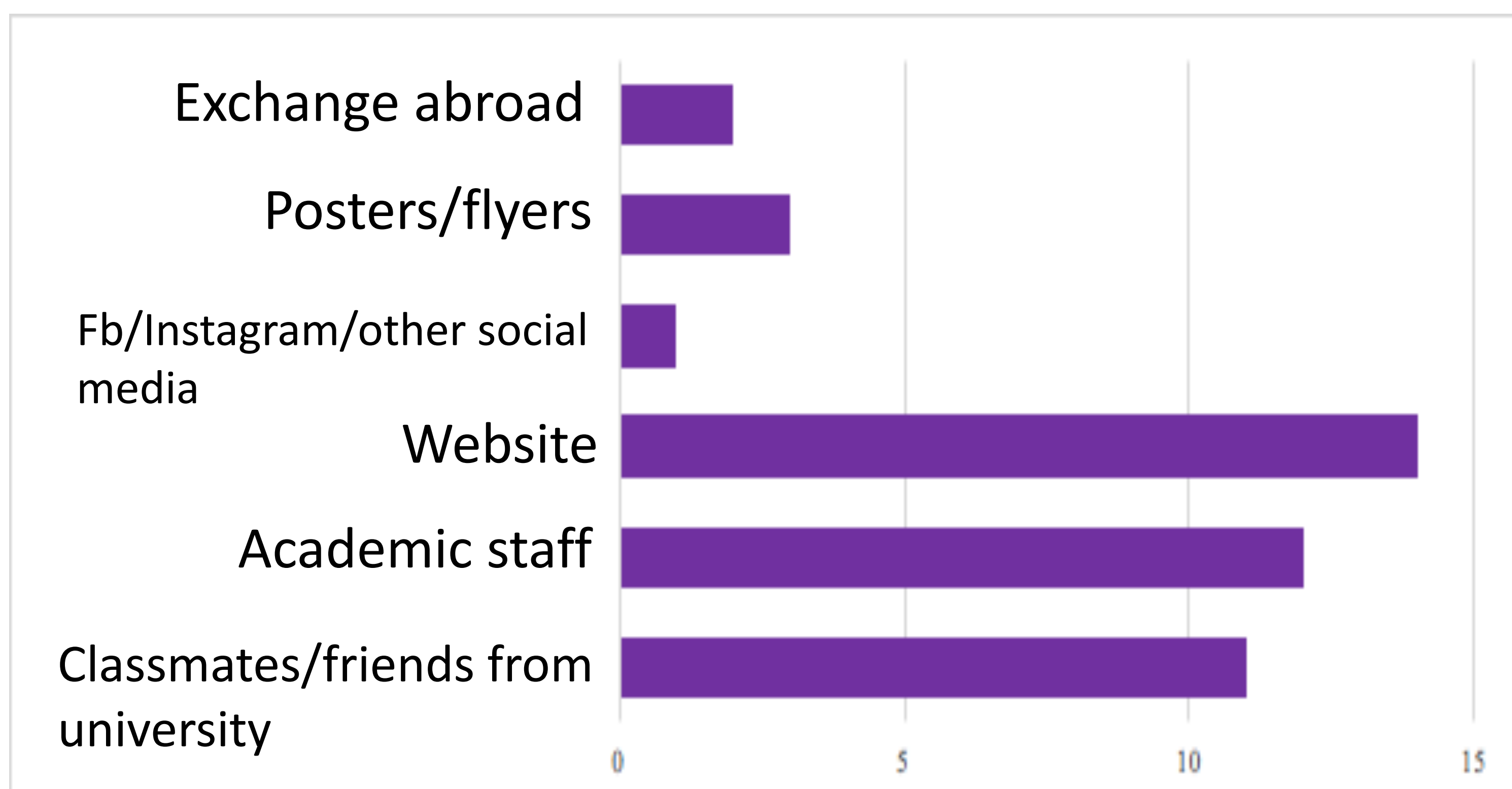


Results

Profile of the responders:

- >50% speak English as a foreign language
- ~30% speak English as their second language
- Foundation to doctoral level
- Master's students represented the biggest users of the English language support services.
- 70% had attended an English language course
- 30% had not attended they explained that most of them were not aware of its existence.

How did you hear about the English language courses?



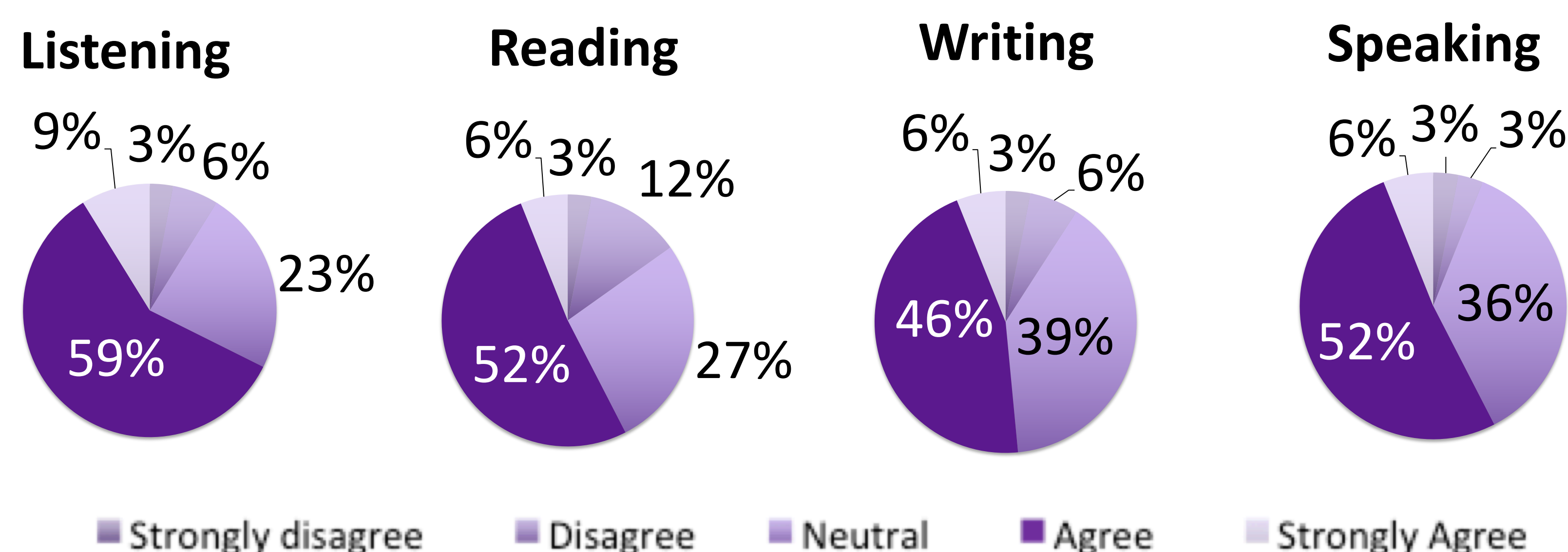
Promotion of the English Language Support Service

- 60% of the participants had heard about the English language services provided by the University. 40% of participants who reported never heard about the services.

Students' Experiences

Generally, most of participants think the English language courses are helpful in improving their English ability from four aspects: listening, reading, speaking and writing.

Do you think the courses improve your English ability?



Interviews indicated that students are generally satisfied with the English language courses. Students also provides some suggestions:

- Separate courses based on disciplines rather than their name a
- Teach more subject related academic English in the pre-sessional course
- Teach students to write different styles and types of essays as some students cannot tell the difference between report and pitch
- More training related to grammar
- Give more feedback and inspection on writing
- Writing practice tends to rely on self-study after class but in the class students don't have enough time to practice
- Listening related training, e.g. TED talk should be considered more carefully as some students found it is very difficult to understand with their current level of English.

Recommendations for Further Research

- Include academic staff experiences and challenges - this would provide richer data and help understand the course structure from different perspectives
- Focus on the cultural differences and gaps of educational system between the UK and the countries where international students come from. In this research, some students mentioned that the language course helps them understand UK's education system, but also some of them pointed out that because of the cultural differences, they could not adjust their learning habit as quick as they expected.
- How well do international students understand the UK education system? To what extend does cultural differences influence their study?