

Cornell University
Graduate and Professional
Student Assembly

GPSA ITAP Survey

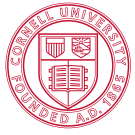
Summary and Raw Data Report

Survey created and distributed by the Cornell Graduate and Professional Student Assembly per concerns outlined in the Graduate and Professional Community Initiative of 2020.

Distributed to all Cornell graduate and professional students from November 10th to November 22nd, 2020 to gauge public opinion on the Cornell International Teaching Assistant Program.

Report prepared: November 23rd, 2020

Nikola Danev, Executive Vice President of the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly



Quick Overview of Findings

90.5% of respondents think that the ITAP must change (of these, 46% believe it should be completely discontinued)

65.5% disagree with the ITAP being necessary for all International Students

62.9% disagree with the ITAP being a fair assessment of English proficiency

64.1% believe that ITAP places an undue burden on international students

53.2% do not believe that the ITAP improves the quality of Cornell lectures

76.1% do not believe students that did their undergrad in English should take the ITAP

72.3% do not believe students that did a grad program in English should take the ITAP

48.9% of respondents do not think the grading was unbiased in the ITAP course

59.1% of respondents neither improved nor benefited from the class

81.4% of respondents did not enjoy the class

37.7% of respondents did not experience bias in the ITAP class

57.2% of respondents had to take the ITAP class more than once

61.8% of respondents felt that the class (at least somewhat) impeded or delayed their ability to TA

63% of respondents felt that that the ITAP ILA was not an accurate test of proficiency

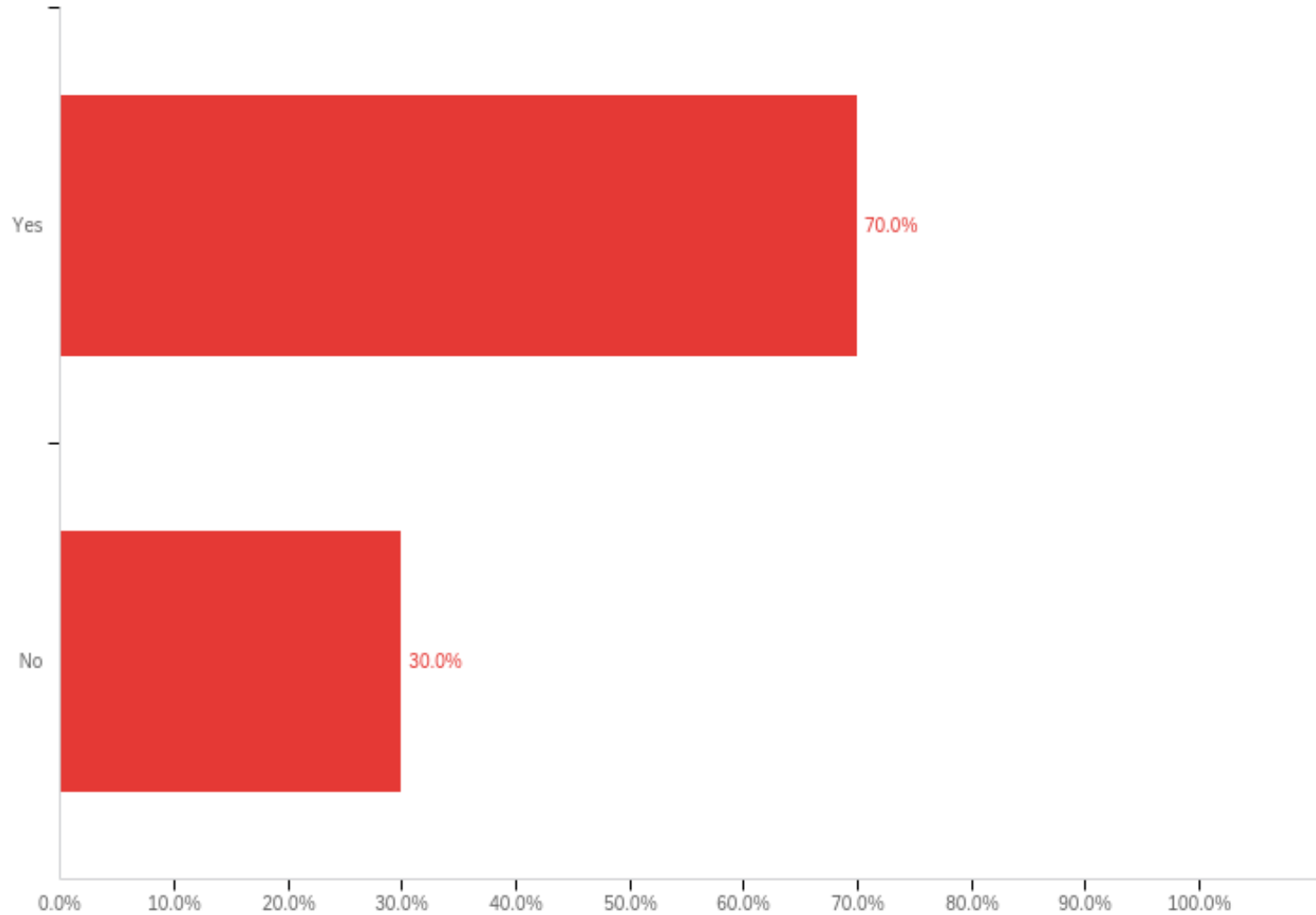
61.6% of respondents did not feel they got adequate feedback

49.5% of respondents felt some bias in the ITAP ILA

57.8% of respondents did not understand why they got the result that they did

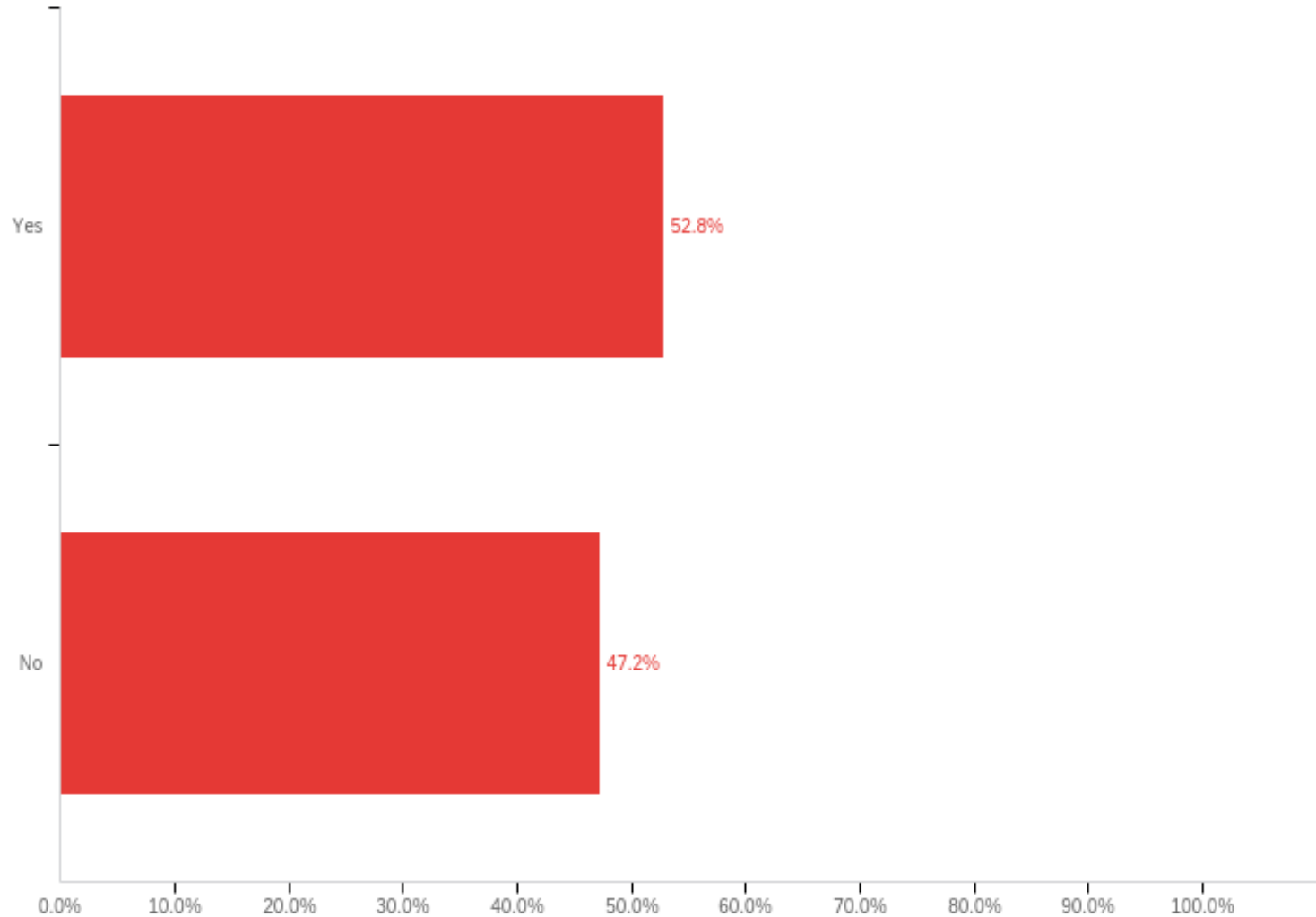
Are you an international student?

n = 230



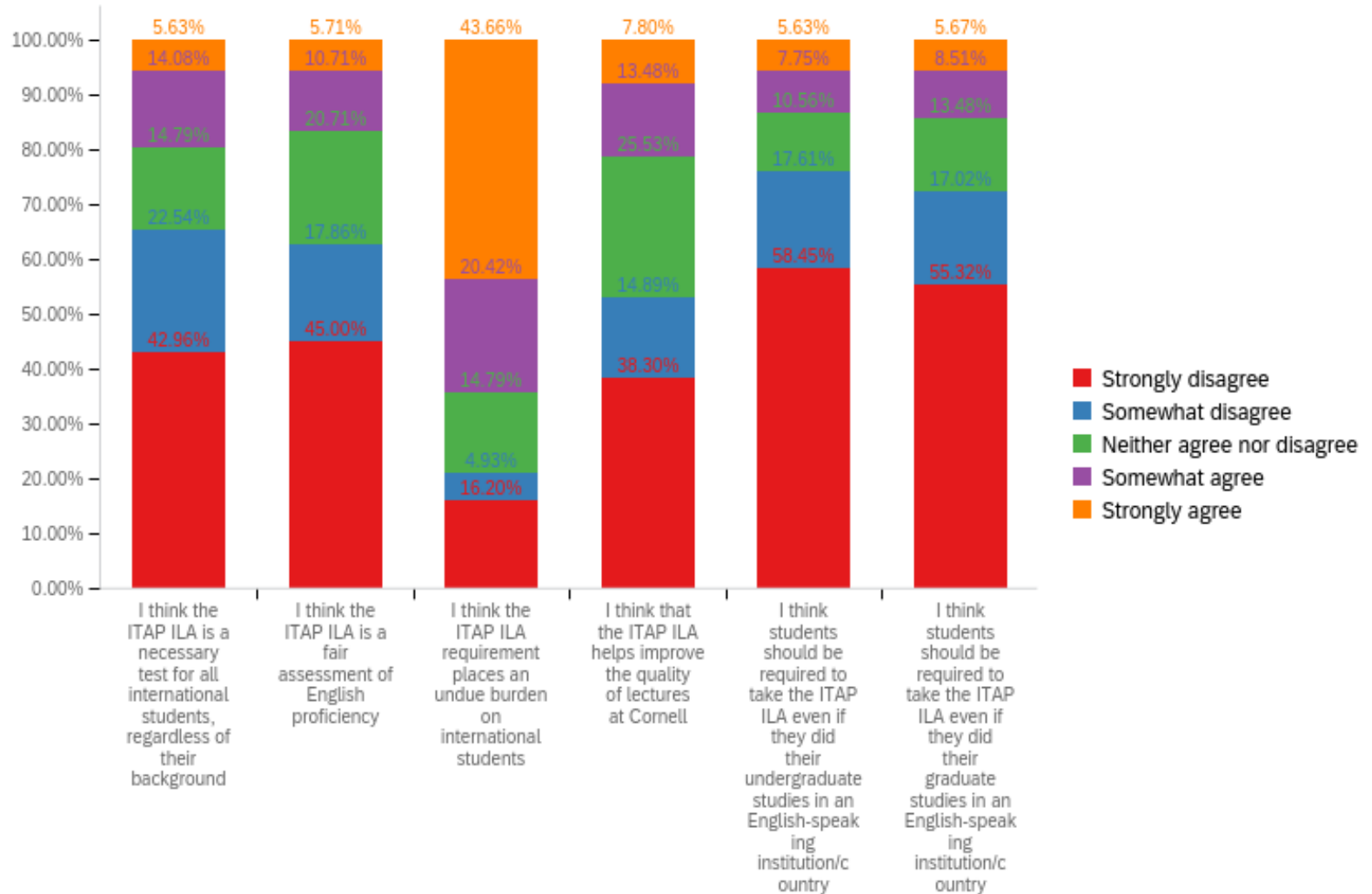
Have you taken the ITAP ILA (language assessment)?

n = 214



Please answer the following with values between 1(Strongly Disagree) and 5(Strongly Agree).

n = 142



Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 4

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

While I agree that there should be some assessment and subsequent class to teach students that may need the extra help, I believe that the class shouldn't be as hard as it is (from my lack of knowledge of the process) that it takes an average of 1.67 times to pass, thereby inhibiting funding or graduation times.

All I concerned is there is no transparency on language assessment. How they grade it? How much point I get from each evaluation?

I feel that ITAP ILA is a test more about communication than English itself, and it might not be fair to assume that native English speakers definitely communicate better than those for whom English is not their first language. If the goal of having ITAP ILA is to make sure we have the English communication skills required for TAs, then perhaps everyone should take it instead of just non-native speakers?

As an international student from a country where English is one of the official languages, I did not have to undergo ITAP ILA. However many of my friends and colleagues have. I have watched this undermine their confidence in their preparedness to teach and write, when they are clearly just as qualified as I, or any of our American colleagues. This system does not benefit students in preparing them to teach, and clearly targets internationally students in uneven and unfair ways. If students would like to take courses or workshops to help improve English-for-teaching that should of course be available to them. But this should be a voluntary part of training.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 4

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

I did the ITAP program. I got to make friends and got \$500 stipend, but other than it was a complete waste of time.

I hope that international students can have the opportunity to serve as the Teaching Assistant and Research assistant (maybe through some flexible ways).

If necessary, student should learn from an actual professor not from people who don't focus on academia.

(1) I have witnessed South Asian and Spanish-speaking students targeted for additional requirements, while white European ESL international students have not been held to the same standard. (2) "Any person ... any study" - International students should be *offered* opportunities to improve English fluency, but more efforts should be made to provide funding opportunities that do not depend on it.

I have taught ESOL for 20 years and have examined this assessment. It's xenophobic, Eurocentric and dehumanizing for international students. Students should themselves decide how to navigate their mode or code of or accent in English. Cornell should SUPPORT them in this on their own terms, not FORCE it upon them unduly.

My understanding is that it does not accurately assess language knowledge or skill and in addition is a huge burden to international students

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 4

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

I graduated from an English-speaking institution, and my English was fine when I came here. If it wasn't, I probably couldn't have graduated.

The test is based on proficiency. Having attended an English-speaking institution is not necessarily a predictor of oral proficiency.

The criteria of assessment are kind of ambiguous. The feedback I received from assessment is trivial and should not lead to an intermediate high result.

Hiring decisions are not made based on the ITAP ILA

I have colleagues who take the assessment for more than once. It seems that the assessment was biased against Chinese students since more than 90% of the students who failed the pass and retake the ITAP training course are Chinese. And the worse thing is that they all need to re-take the course multiple semesters. They failed the assessment, retake the course for one semester and failed the assessment again. Some of them have taken it for more than 3 semesters. It really got me question the effectiveness of the course. If it really helps, why all the students can't pass the assessment? Or they just discriminate against Chinese students during the assessment?

I think the evaluation of the assessment should be more transparent and clear. There are only rough metrics and it seems like whether you can pass it or not is completely depending on the examiner's impression of you, where I believe can exist problems with racial prejudice.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 4

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

The ITAP ILA should be partitioned into two parts, the English language training portion, and the teaching assistant training portion. The English language training portion should be implemented based on the English proficiency of the incoming international student, with no mandatory TA training attached. This structure which is built on the assumption that international students are not proficient in functioning as a TA (even if their English is impeccable) is inherently racist in nature, and has no place in an institution such as Cornell. The TA training program should be potentially targeted towards ALL incoming students regardless of their educational background, and a similar assessment should precede the training course in order to accurately target those who are in need of training in the first place.

no idea what this is

As I have mentioned in the last response, the class material is totally irrelevant with the test. Moreover, the content of the class is all about conceptual term of teaching which are not useful at all in the actual teaching (at least from my experience as a TA). Some of the "teaching techniques" are practically impossible or inefficient but they still insist on spending a lot of time on those. Students in the class do not get practice a lot in terms of oral English (which is this class designed to be) in the class and finally they have to take a test which has nothing to do with the class which is really unfair and unreasonable. I would suggest you randomly go to a class of ALS 5780 and find out by yourself. I think you will find out the problems I mentioned above.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 4

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

I have talked to people in my cohort, and they have all felt ITAP was an unnecessary time drain, especially seeing that their English proficiency is already tested, and each department has their own TA-training that fits them well. AT the very least, it should not be made compulsory, but available as an option should the department feel someone requires one despite showing this (which I cannot imagine is a lot of cases, if at all)

I think we should be asked to take the class only once. If they fail to pass the evaluation, they can still ask to submit some assignments(recordings) but I don't think attending a class more than once isn't valuable

If this course aims to improve the course quality at Cornell, then every one who is a TA need to take this course, why basically only Chinese?

The standard for students to take the assessment should be fair, students with different background should all be tested, rather than some non-english speaking students. Further, current the assessment is not accurate and reasonable for the purpose as mentioned before, a better and transparent assessment should be enforced, and the ITAP class should make its goal clear, to improve students' spoken english, rather than teach students how to TA in their imaginary way, which is always impractical and ridiculous. Do what they are good at, rather than do what they 'expect' us to do, where they are not expert at.

I would have colleagues or professors who worked with the student give feedback on their language.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 4

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

I understand people do not like this exam, but my undergrad tried to get rid of something similar and it was a bloodbath. They had to change TAs in the middle of the semester and it was definitely worse than people finding out they couldn't TA early on.

No matter how academically one is, if she/he can't deliver a clear message due to poor oral skills, then she/he is unfit to be in such position.

The Test should at least be exempted for students who had teaching experience in US. The course quality needs improvement desperately.

Terrible experience about the ITAP. We should open more ELSO course instead.

I think students should be recommended to take classes of speaking only if their advisors/departments thinks their level represents a burden for the normal knowledge transmiión. It should not ever be dependent of the Office for Teaching Innovation, and much less under any direction or influence of Kimberly Kenyon. She treated us without respect or value of our cultural differences our own intellect, and personally harassing us through other Cornell institutions, departments and Advisors. This person's position is there thanks to how afraid we are all of denouncing her to Title IX fue of how she holds our graduate careers inly in her hands.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 4

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

For me, having this type of language assessment for international students before assigning TA is good. However, the current ITAP ILA is not adequate and need to reform.

ITAP actually asked US residents(green card holder) to take the assessment and take the class only by looking at the students' name(names which can easily tell the ethnicity)

I did my degree in English speaking American university in a country with a different first language. I did not need to take the ITAP. I did not need my English assessed.

Having a BA or MA degree from an English speaking institution is a far better assessment than chatting with the ITAP instructor for a couple of minutes

Why not let the lecturers or professors decide the qualification of the TA? The assessment and the class are not directly related to teaching. Also, it is discriminative to East Asian students. I feel very disappointed that Cornell does not provide an inclusive, diversity and equity environment.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 4

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

Although I am a US citizen who has completed all my education within the US and therefore have not had to experience this assessment and coursework first hand, I have worked with many international students and have witnessed how the course has affected them. From my perspective, the students who receive low English proficiency scores are overwhelmingly from East-Asia, regardless of the quality of their speaking fluency. This in itself shows bias on the part of those scoring students on their speaking. Furthermore, the course strongly emphasizes teaching extremely formal language which does not represent modern spoken English. Phrases like “to my mind” are taught as a good transition, similar to “in my opinion”. This is not a phrase which I have ever heard spoken, and the fact that it has been integrated in the course work shows poor quality control of the material being taught. Students are also expected to answer basic prompts with minutes-long responses which would be difficult for any native English speaker to perform. Although the students do receive individual instruction and feedback from the course advisor on a biweekly schedule, they are speaking with other students with similar proficiency scores as themselves for the vast majority of the class and somehow expected to become more fluent through this conversation? Graduate school is difficult and time consuming. Students have many obligations ranging from research, conference presentations, and coursework required for degree completion. The additional stress of an English language course is undue, particularly when there should be ample opportunity for the student to be conversing in English in their normal environment.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 4

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

I really don't think ITAP in Cornell could help international students or non-native speaker students to improve their language.

Especially they evaluate students but just put those students into one group which is ridiculous.

When students ask for the evaluation form, they said there were too many students so cannot provide the information which makes no sense.

Their curriculum is bad and not helpful.

The class itself is very stupid and I couldn't learn any useful English skills from it. And it's painful!

The course mainly focuses on pronunciation and transition words. Many of the transition words are useless in daily conversation, and the teachers even listed the phrases they never use (eg. to my mind). Also, the audio journals are painful. We have to answer each weird question for 8 minutes (eg. watch a video about word stress and talk about it). I can't even use my first language to talk about those stupid questions for 8 minutes! I would like to see the teachers showing us how to answer those questions for 8 minutes. Each audio journal takes students half an hour every week. Recording myself for 30 minutes does not help my speaking, since the topics are so weird. My lab mate and PI (both are native speakers) think this class is ridiculous. My lab mate and PI have no difficulty communicating with me, and they also don't see the point why I have to take this course.

Moreover, the criteria of passing the assessment is vague. I never got my assessment result, and I don't know why I failed it. The assessment is completely opaque.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 4

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

The logic behind the assessment centers the needs of white, upper-class American students, who are assumed to be intolerant of immigrant instructors. This must be questioned before pursuing any changes with ITAP and its processes.

It is known among grad students that the test is biased against Asian students, and that this bias creates an undue burden beyond what is necessary to maintain a good level of TA instruction.

I have literally seen so many Professors and students speaking in an English accent that is really hard to grasp. This hinders the learning ability of the students. Teaching staff should be proficient in the language used as medium of instruction.

I think a English proficiency test is necessary but the current one is not effective at all and has biases towards certain groups of students

If the student is coming from a primarily English speaking institution, I feel that it is largely unnecessary to assess their language proficiency.

This course has only created an immensely mental burden on me that I need to go to Cornell mental service every week. It does not make sense for an international student not passing this assessment after taking this course for multiple times with untailed course design.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 4 These answers have not been modified and are being reported as they were submitted. No answers have been removed.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

Yo this test dumb as shit

As a native English speaker I do not believe the ITAP should be required for me. It is probably valid for non native speakers.

This test actually is disadvantageous for Cornell's goal of providing a diverse scholarship to its students as because of this requirement, students are less likely to get the advantage of experiencing teaching assistants who come from diverse global backgrounds who may have different perspectives to pedagogy. This is also unfair to international students (who have already shown their competence in communication through the rigorous admission at Cornell), as it hinders graduate students who want to gain experience in teaching for making a career in academia.

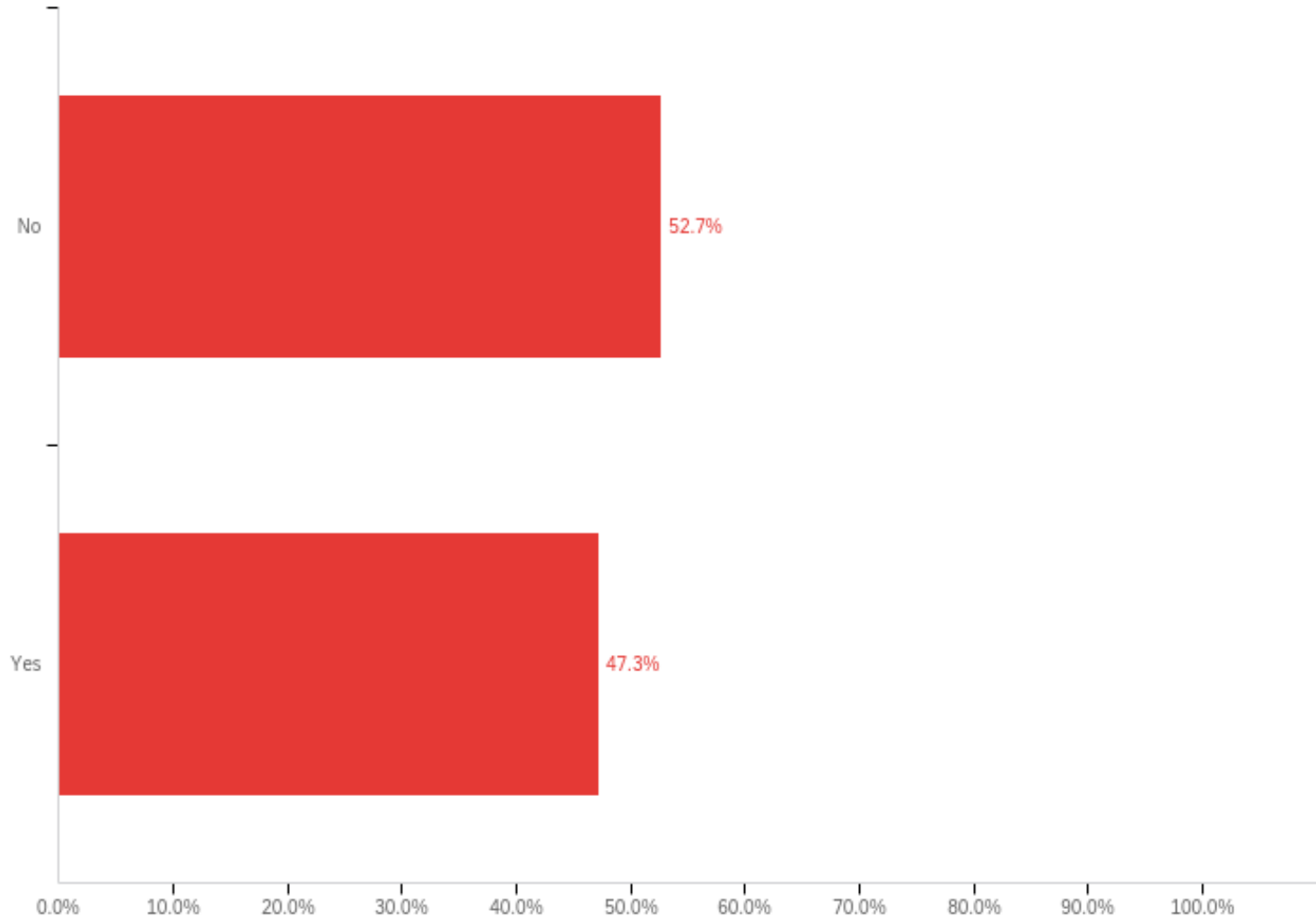
I think this test is overall ridiculous. No other Ivy League University requires this. Especially with proof of having studied in an English-speaking country. Cornell should get rid of requiring this test immediately.

No elaboration needed.

Again, the evaluation itself is too unrelated to academic topics. During my test they didn't even let me give my prepared teaching samples, and just talked with me about some random things like life experiences or hobbies. So I don't think this test was accurate, if it was not because of the misconduct of the examiners. I somehow agree that there could be a fair mandatory language test for international students, but the current test is definitely not a fair one. So I disagree that the CURRENT assessment should be an requirement for international students. Besides, a lot of TAs only need to do the grading work, or answering questions on piazza. They should not be required since they don't have to have conversations with students.

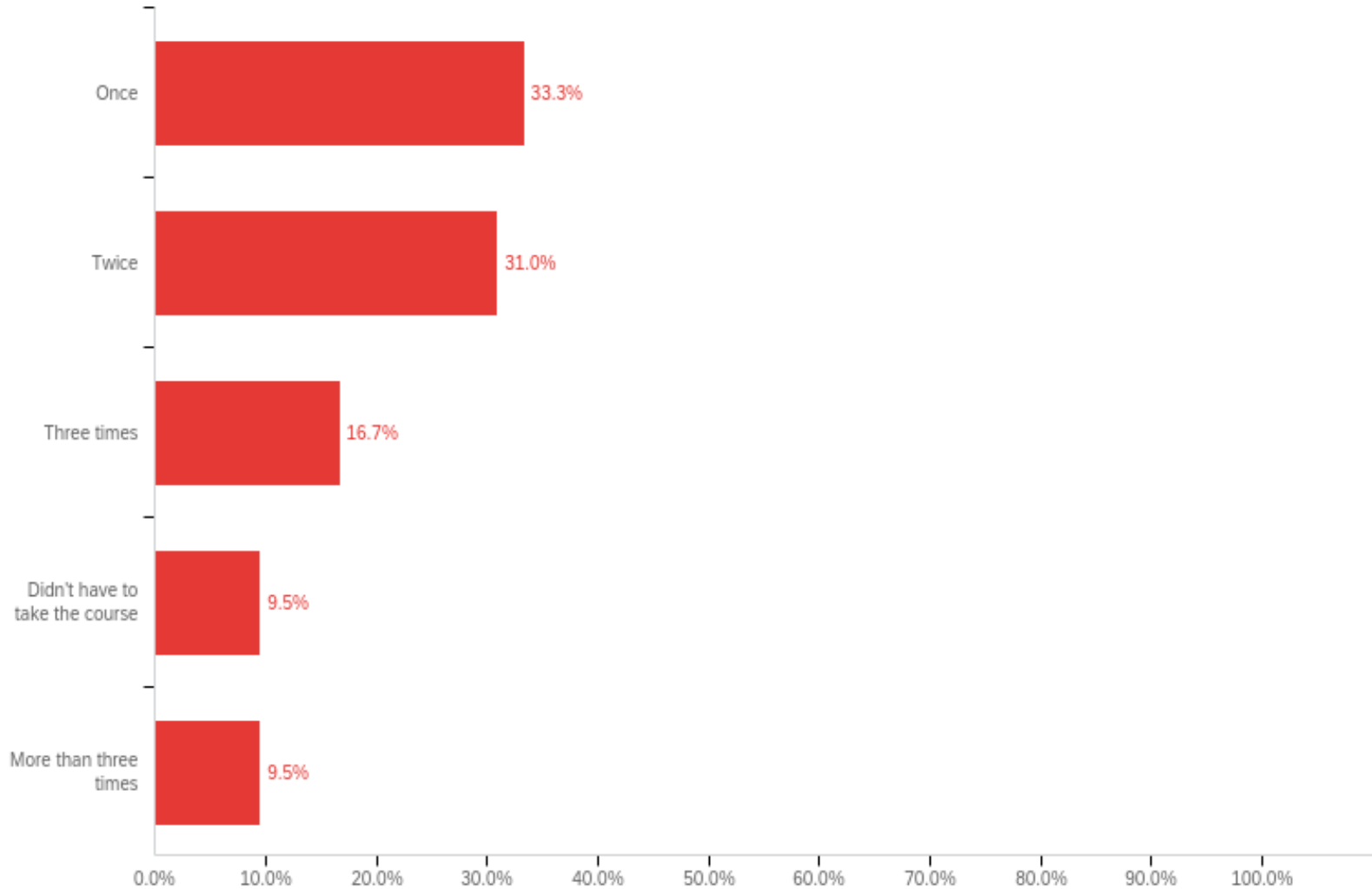
Did you pass the ITAP ILA (language assessment)? Note: Passing means an assessment score of Advanced Low or above

n = 91

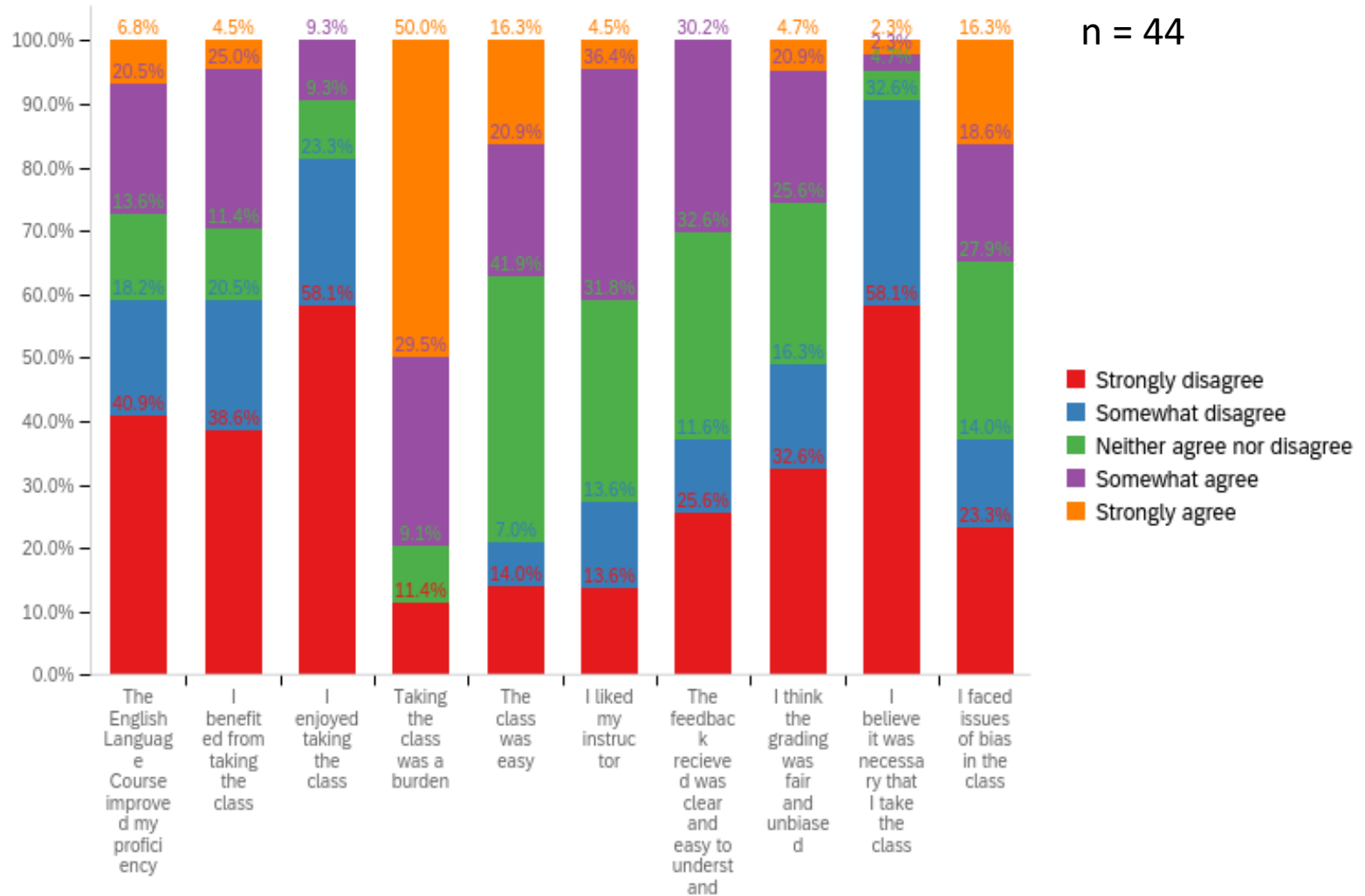


How many times did you have to take the English Language course before passing?

n = 42



Please describe your experience with the International Teaching Assistant Program Course (ALS 5780). Answer the following with values between 1(Strongly Disagree) and 5(Strongly Agree).



Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 18

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

English is not our first language. Being a good TA is not 100% relying on the language neither. It's not fair to evaluate our performance only by final language assessment.

Would help a lot if we know the rubric/description of what advanced low level is before the test, not until afterwards in class

I do not think the class is useful for improving my ability to become a TA. Also, if you do not pass the assessment, you have to take the class again with almost the same contents, if I cannot pass it by taking the class once, I do not know how the class would help even though I take it more as what it teaches is always the same. In my personal experience, I know my major issue is pronunciation, but this is very hard to change in a short time, not to mention that the class has little effort in helping improve or correct pronunciation. ILA is tricky and what it wants you to do is to illustrate one event, compare and contrast two things. I do not know how it can be related to the real work TA would deal with. The criteria are vague, and when I talked with my advisor and DGS, they both thought that they could understand my English and it is okay for them.

Again, it is not about academic English or presentation skills. It is just about small talk.

I think taking the course is a waste of time. I understand that I have to improve my English and understand that the assessment is necessary. But I don't think my English was improved after taking the course. The course was not designed for improving the English. It would be helpful for people need chances to practice English but neither my ascent or grammar was not corrected during the course. I finally passed the exam by taking a private tutor course.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 18

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

It's required that I need to get at least IH level to be able to hold TA duties, but my first result is IM which I think is not accurate.

The courses themselves are somewhat useful for providing general ideas about how to TA, how to improve oral English proficiency etc. However, the tips are very general and lacks actual details, which is understandable since everyone and their subjects are different so it's not possibly to go deep in such a course. There is a one-on-one session with the instructors which supposedly could provide more specific instructions, but they mostly focus on daily languages but not scientific ones, and not about specific cases in TA in a specific subject. It could be beneficial for international students to take the course for one semester, but in reality majority of the students are required to take it for multiple semesters, which is really not that useful and very time demanding. For chemistry, first-year graduate students are required to take three classes in addition to TA. Having to take this additional course definitely further limits my time and causes me having to spend less time to prepare for my actual TA duties.

I'm totally fine with taking the class once. But more than that will not be helpful at all.. It makes sense to continue to ask them to submit their assignments but I think being in the class isn't necessary.. I also felt the class room environment wasn't inclusive for international students in a certain lecture (although the class teaches about how to make a classroom inclusive...) For example, we were enforced to pronounce our family names in a different(more american) way from the way our mother language pronounces. I thought that wasn't very appropriate. I saw some students were offended.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 18

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

This course is really a burden for students. They focus on how to teach, however, why US student don't need to take this course because they haven't been teachers also. This is really ridiculous. And from my perspective, I think this course is somehow 'targets' Chinese students, because based on the information of more than 50 students, not matter how fluently you speak in the assessment, you will end up with fail and need to take this course if you are Chinese. It's not fair.

It's not clear what's the goal of this class, it should be improving students spoken english, however, little attention was put in this area, most of the teaching contents are teaching students how to TA, how to lead a class, and ask some simple elementary school questions, which are stupid questions and brings no benefits to improving spoken english, while the contents of how to TA is not suitable for TAs in university, as they have little idea of the academic situations. Taking the class was a burden to me, 2 class each week plus one conference with the instructors, and 6 8 mins spoken english recording weekly homework is time consuming on stupid topics, not to say other homeworks, I feel that I spend even more time on this class than my academic class, and it greatly impede my study, reseach and TA, even my sleeping. It's basically a waste of time for me.

The course cannot help us to improve our speaking. I strongly suggest we should open more EISO speaking course instead of ITAP. I would like to improve my speaking, and I planed to take the ELSO course. But due to the conflict and my time constraint, ITAP staff asked me to take their course instead. I felt very disappointed since I got no improvement at that course.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 18

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

It is so full of white supremacist contents that has nothing to do with pedagógica strategies and more to do about “acculturated” international students. The director is not only a white supremacist, but she loves to humiliate students in her private office. I did not learn anything in it but how horrible Cornell treats their international students (and Puerto Rican’s don’t forget they are not foreigner). They have no one content about voice studies, ethics of communication, ways of listening, only focusing in specific phonemes and sound delivering as the only truth of language, They assessments it was as ridiculous as saying that we couldn’t have language level to talk about 1) anything apart of here or now (after two years of attending graduate discussion seminars) or 2) global issues or climate change while our dissertation address much more complicated global issues. The entire process affected so much my mental health that I went to ask for help because I was feeling suicidal if I had to keep attending mandatorily, and I was offered only one alternative: taking a medical leave from my degree and studying English in a private academy (Janna Lamey, you really outdid it yourself with this) as the only alternative to attending this class. It was the most humiliating, offensive, gasslighting and totally mistaken way of improved anyone’s use of their speaking voice. And I am talking as a musicologist, and as a voice scholar.

The assignments of the class were not helpful and time-consuming: recording ourselves speaking in English for 30 mins every week without direct feedback from instructors. Talking to oneself does not seem to be helpful for improving one's communication skills.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 18

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

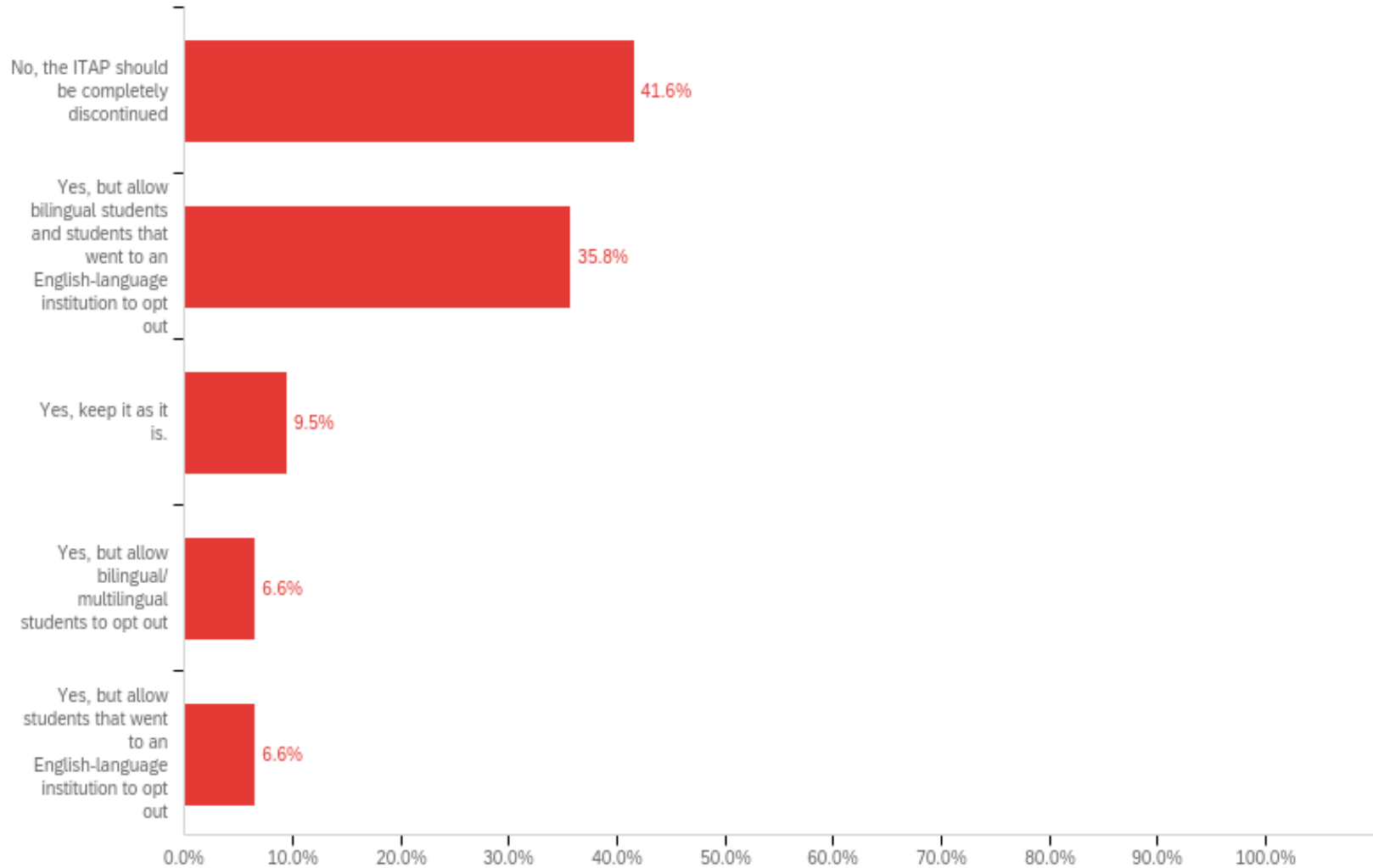
The English class is not designed well and just a waste of time for international students. International TA gets their Teaching/ English proficiency improved by real-life teaching experience and feedback, but ITAP class didn't fulfill this goal at all. Also, biased assessments just hurt the international student's confidence of speaking as well. Assessment and class just became a trap for international TAs.

The purpose of this class or assessment is to improve international students' English and teaching ability. However, the instructor or TA of ALS 5780 has never demonstrated good narrative skills, which is emphasized A LOT in ALS 5780. Therefore, it is groundless to ask the student to keep narrating and answering those questions which are not directly related to teaching assistantship. Also, the instructor and TA are not native speakers either. Why they can teach such kinds of courses? Last but not least, they have never demonstrated a successful language assessment which is encountered the same question set. Thus, I think that it is necessary that they also show their capability of the assessment.

This class is totally boring and a waste of time.

Do you think Cornell should keep the ITAP requirement?

n = 137



Are there any comments you would like to share on the ITAP?

These answers have not been modified and are being reported as they were submitted. No answers have been removed.

Are there any comments you would like to share on the ITAP?

Actually I think ITAP should be transformed into language practicing groups instead of meaningless classes

As international student, I like ELSO class much more than ITAP. If we need to improve our English, we will go to find the resources we need. If a class forces students to enroll and students complain a lot. They should think about what's going on in their class contents and assessment.

For the question above, my answer is actually: I hope that ITAP ILA and the subsequent ALS class for those who didn't pass is:

EITHER:

A hard requirement for everybody who TAs, no matter if English is their first language or not, because the skills tested and taught improves teaching significantly (I have had many lectures where the lecturers are native English speakers but the lectures would not have met the standard of advanced low level speech. A class like ALS 5780 would have prevented that);

OR:

Optional to everyone, with everyone warned that it might hurt their proficiency as a TA if they opt out.

This program is blackbox and there is no fairness in it at all. The test result is decided completely subjectively by the program director and there is no way for international students to appeal. Students of specific background, i.e. asian students, face discriminations in the name of "improve English" and wasted a lot of time on this quite useless class.

Are there any comments you would like to share on the ITAP?

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Waste of time and money. The department TA training programs are sufficient. Especially when TA skills don't generalize across departments. An English dept TA has a different set of expectations from a Math department TA, so why not bolster the individual department TA training programs?

I understand that the school wants to make sure TAs are competent for the job and able to communicate English proficiently. However, I do not think ILA is a good idea, nor the ALS5780 a good resource to improve English. Instead, I think the instructor who the student would TA the course for could decide by themselves if the student is eligible after talking with the student's advisor or directly talking with the student.

"English-language institution" should also include secondary institutions, even when tertiary education wasn't in English

Provide tailored support to ALL students of ALL language backgrounds, as per their own identified goals, needs and interests

This wasn't my experience, but I have many friends who privately told me they had terrible experiences (harassment, humiliation etc.) in the class the ITAP program forced them to take.

Everyone should be proficient in English because America won the war for global hegemony and in order to hasten our progress towards fully-automated luxury gay space communism, we all need to be able to communicate with each other efficiently.

Are there any comments you would like to share on the ITAP?

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I do believe there exists racial prejudice in current ITAP assessment. Some of my Chinese students show great English proficiency but still get a very low result. Some of them have taken their undergraduate in US and in their universities their English and TA ability has passed and been proved. But the level they get from ITAP is low.

It is undeniable that the English training program is useful for a nontrivial portion of the incoming international student body. Thus, discontinuing the program altogether will not be productive. However, the program should be restructured to (at least) two parts; one for "English" training, and another for "Teaching" training. Furthermore, the assessment process should apply for ALL incoming students, not simply for international students.

seems like a good idea, probably want people dishing out the dollars to go to Cornell to have TAs they can understand

I chose the closest answer to how I felt, but I feel that ITAP may be kept if it's not made compulsory for anyone, and is only used as supplemental resources should someone want their student to use it.

If they have passed their department's English requirements for Admissions, I don't see there's a need to assess those students further. If there are lecture quality issues in a certain department, each department should solve it(e.g., change their english requirement)

Are there any comments you would like to share on the ITAP?

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I don't know what's the point for this course, like what's the goal? Because what they do doesn't improve the whole course quality at Cornell, it's more like a requirement specially designed for Chinese students.

It's acceptable to me to have a requirement for TAs, but the requirements should be fair and transparent, include all international students and test them, make the assessment rules and criteria clear and transparent. What's more, make the class more objective-oriented, it's to improve students' spoken english, not to teach students how to TA, which would be better taught by senior professors rather than non-academic instructors. Also, should put a limit on the terms students should take to pass the exam, if a student have taken 2 semesters, they should automatically pass the requirements, instead of asking them to take the course again and again, one of my friends has taken the class for 7 semesters, which is crazy. What's more, reduce the burden of the class, it should at least less than an academic class, reduce the time required.

Int'l student colleagues from the Global South tell us it places undue stress on them with racialized aggressions that alienate them for the sake of "academic rigor"

Please seriously consider heavily modifying the current program. It's not ethical and it's damaging the reputation of the graduate school among international PhD students! Most students are already very disappointed by this program. Do something right to really serve the international students community!

Are there any comments you would like to share on the ITAP?

Are there any comments you would like to share on the ITAP?

A boot camp class led by voice trainers should be created, with not contain about teaching skills but about embodying a self confident voice.: With this it is our understanding of the ethics of communication that we need to speak clearly enough in order to be understood. The other end, is to teach how to listen to accents and what biases people from Southeast Asia, and Latinamerican countries suffer. Speaking and understanding is never a one's person role, but an entire community enterprise. I never had one problem communicating with my peers in class, no mugged the thousands miles our cultures and languages were separated. This is one positive thing I learn, when two people wants to understand each other, a way of doing is found.

Currently, the courses of ITAP are completely a burden of the students. And it is ridiculous to require someone to take the same course over and over again. Besides, currently the content and homework of the course is too clumsy and inefficient. There are many better ways to improve the spoken language that are less time-consuming.

I agree that a language assessment is necessary for international student to take before being assigned to TAsip. However, the current ITAP ILA is not adequate and need to be reformed.

ITAP class should be optional and only be taken once at most. There is no point of asking students to take the same class with the same content over and over again.

Are there any comments you would like to share on the ITAP?

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From my personal experience and after chatting with many international students I took classes with, ITAP is barely useful in many many ways and wasting a lot of valuable hours

I think it is necessary for international students to pass a language test before being a TA, and it is useful for them to take a class to improve their language. However, ALS 5780 is not helping. Instead of talking about daily life, interest, experiences, etc., students are asked to discuss about teaching strategies, techniques and lots of other irrelevant topics. Let alone the weekly audio journals and irritating required individual meetings with instructor. In addition, the feedback from the instructor is too broad/general to understand. In fall 2019, I took Kim's class. She kept telling me that I mixed between "r" and "l", but didn't instruct how to pronounce correctly.

Therefore, in my opinion, the ITAP needs reform rather than cancellation. The faculty should really think about how to equip students with the proficiency to pass the test and be a competent TA.

Basically, the program is based on the assumption that just because one lived in a non-English speaking country, that they won't be able to teach in an American university without training. The entire program was merely comparison between how things go in the US vs in China. I've never lived in China, I don't know what their system is like. I just think the program needs to narrow down the list of people who should be enrolled in it and now pose burdens onto graduate students who already have to travel thousands of miles to come to Ithaca.

Are there any comments you would like to share on the ITAP?

Are there any comments you would like to share on the ITAP?

ITAP is mostly about learning how to teach. The tools I got there were very useful and the people I met there are still my friends. But the language evaluation part was unnecessary.

1. The TA English assessment and class focus on social English (intonation, telling a story, making comparisons, etc.). However, for TAs, technical English is more important. TAs should be proficient to technical terms and accurate expressions in their specific fields. English teachers are usually not experts in technical English. Therefore, the instructor of the class which the TA is going to teach should take the response to evaluate the English ability of the TA, not English teachers. In addition, the English class focusing on social English provides very limited help for teaching. The English teachers usually hold a TA to take exactly the same English class for multiple times, which consumes TAs a lot time, which can otherwise be used for teaching.

2. When the TA English assessments are conducted by English teachers, there can possibly be another problem of objectivity, because examiners are also those who run the English class. It is not easy to rule out the possibility that the English teachers may purposely fail certain number of TAs to fill their classes.

3. The results of the assessment are extremely race-biased. The probability of East Asians, no matter how good their English is, to pass the assessment is surprisingly low. I see East Asian TAs, who passed TA English assessments in other universities in the same level of Cornell and who did their undergrads in the US, with fluent and authentic English, having to take the TA English class here in Cornell for multiple times.

Are there any comments you would like to share on the ITAP?

Are there any comments you would like to share on the ITAP?

See previous answer.

1. ITAP should have detailed and un-biased assessment for every student who is taking the evaluation. There is almost no european students who is taking ITAP class even their English proficiency is same as East-asian students.
2. ITAP evaluates students such as intermediate-low ,med, high / advanced-low and etc. But put those students into one class.

They should announce the rubric. I want to know how they assess student's speaking skill. Also, the questions in assessment are hard to answer. They asked weird questions which make me speechless (eg. compare snowboarding with baking cakes; talk about the first day you went to your university, as detailed as possible), and then thought my speaking sucks?! Their weird questions cannot reflect student's speaking skill.

Students may choose to be assessed by a third-party, and the result should be recognized by Cornell if the third-party is widely accepted.

ITAP perpetuates inequality and actively makes Cornell a more hostile place for international students and students of color. This institution must be abolished.

Make the ITAP an opt-in program for students who would like assistance with their English language skills. Also please consider how the ITAP differs from the ELSO and consider diverting funding to ELSO instead.

Are there any comments you would like to share on the ITAP?

Are there any comments you would like to share on the ITAP?

I think the problem is that the TOEFL can be memorized by some international students. And a good TOEFL score might not necessarily be representative of a student's abilities to communicate complex ideas to a primarily English speaking audience.

Stop creating such rubbish surveys. What do you think will be the level of teaching of a person who cannot express him/herself fluently in English? Not knowing English is a barrier to teaching.

The test should be changed to one that can truly reflect the students' English level. The director should be replaced and she owes the international students an apology of what she did to us.

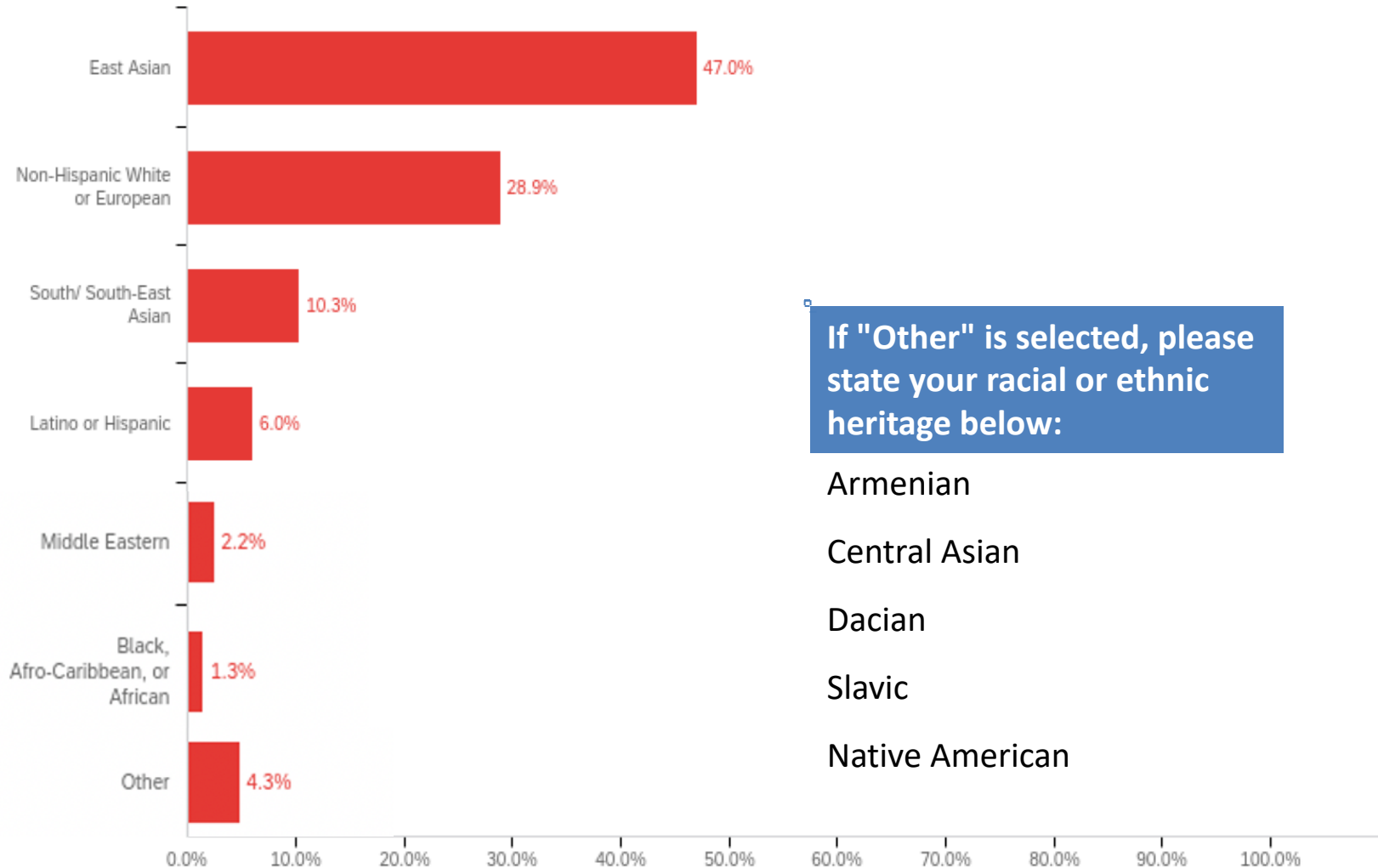
Students must be made aware of this requirement in detail before they commit to Cornell. It also seems that the system needs to be reevaluated, as it currently incentivizes failing students to ensure that the classes remain full.

If this course is about improving TAs' teaching ability, then all TAs, regardless of their nationality, race, and visa type, should take this course. This course's requirement should be written in the offer letter for incoming students and should not affect one's TA funding at all.

Again, this test dumb as shit

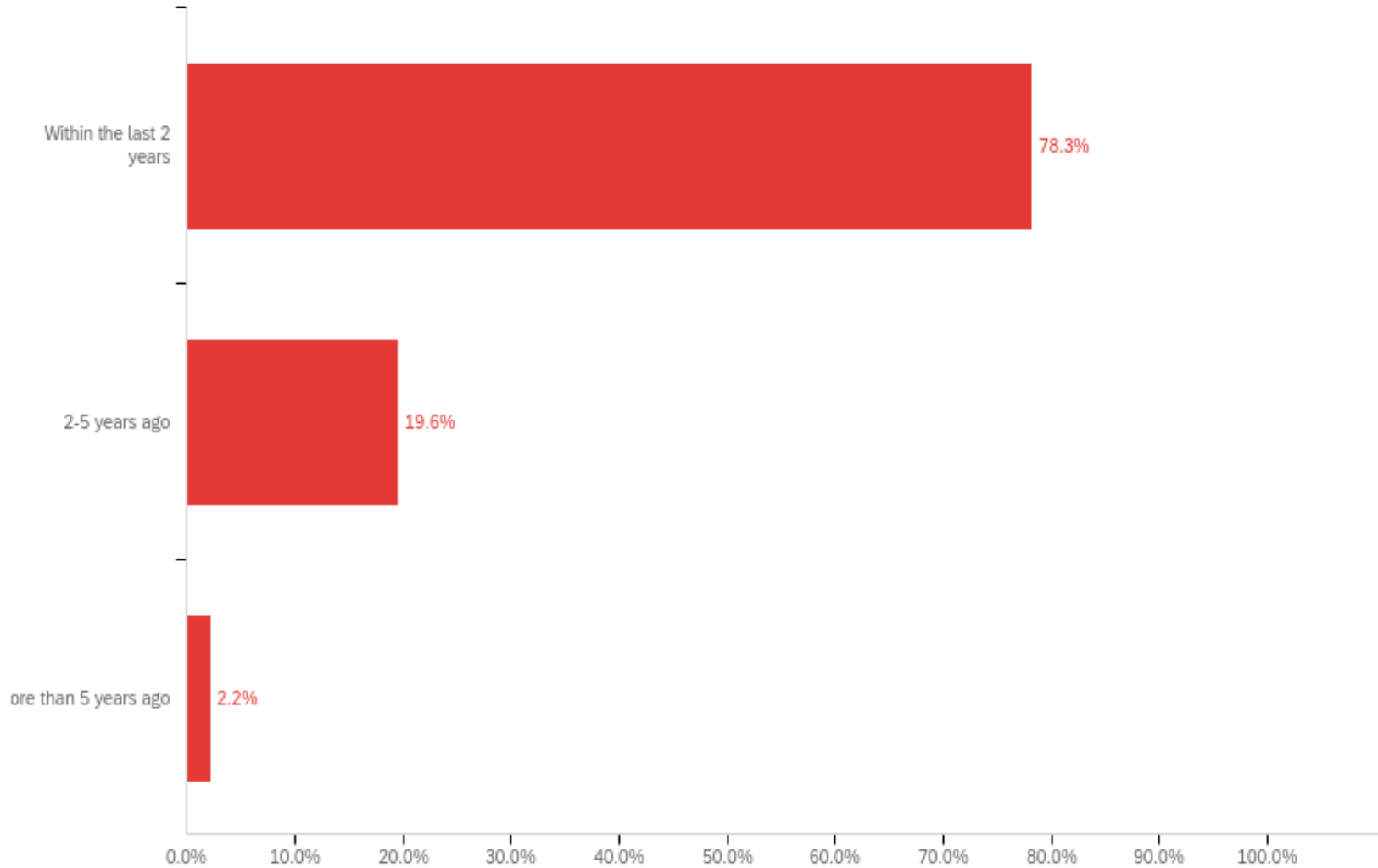
Which of the following best represents your racial or ethnic heritage? Choose all that apply

n = 232

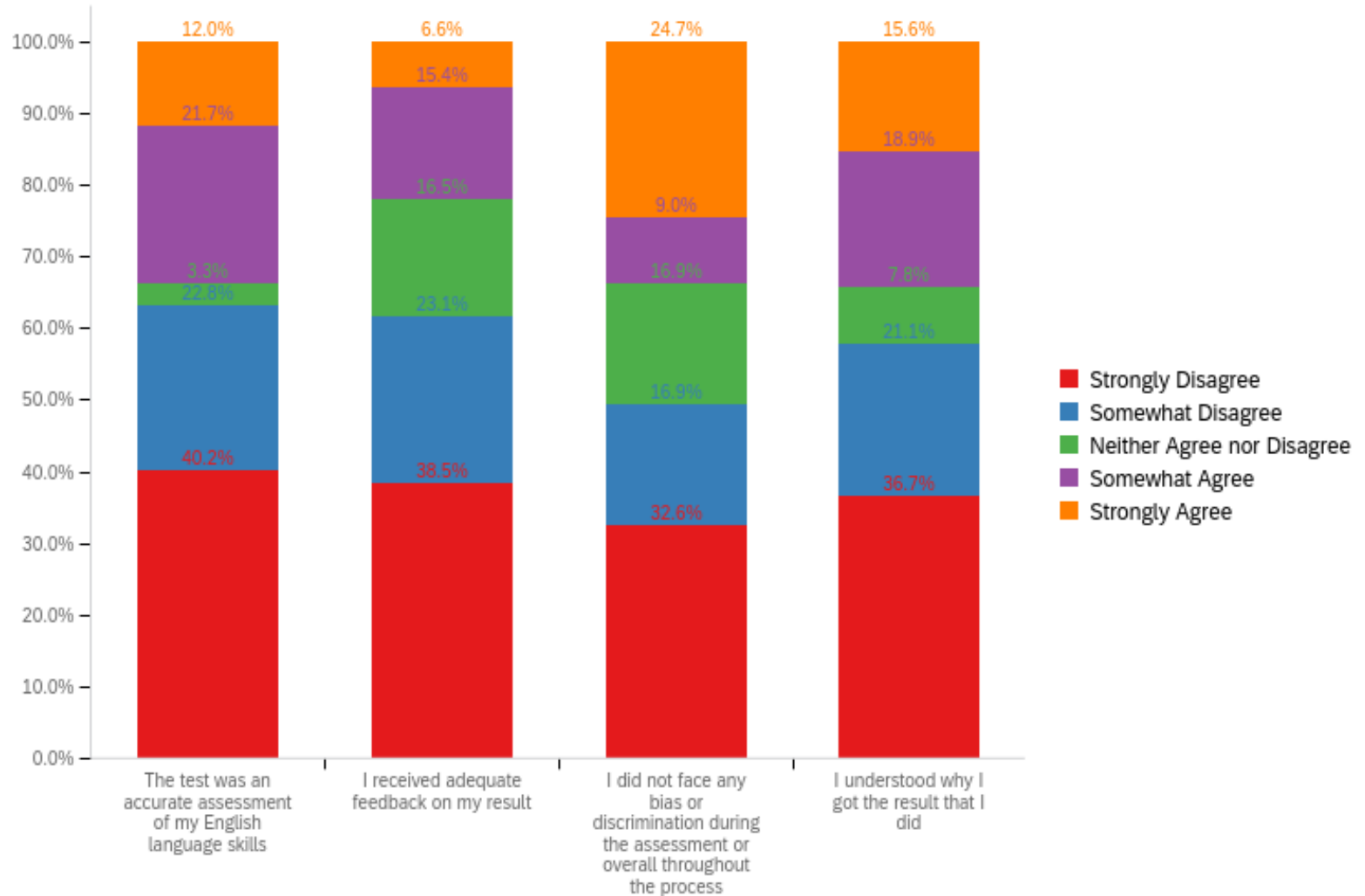


When did you take the ITAP ILA?

n = 92



Please describe your experience with the ITAP ILA. Answer the following with values between 1(Strongly Disagree) and 5(Strongly Agree).
n = 92



Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 36

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

It was an overall nice experience with fluent conversation with various things with the interviewers in english, sort of enhancing self-confidence and make us ready for Ta ship..

Sometimes my friends and I would feel that Asian students were negatively biased in this assessment.

No transparency about language assessment. Have no idea how they grade it.

During the time I was forced to take the class for several semester, I found that every student in the class was Asian. This program doesn't look fair as I found that all non-asian international students passed the test and didn't need to take the class, while Asian students are forced to take the class again and again. I believe this program has bias and discrimination against students from specific background, i.e. asian.

I feel like most of the time was not used effectively to improve language skills.

I think it waste tons of research time. And the practise way is to speat to person with similar level, which I don't think can improve my speaking a lot.

I feel okay about the assessment but I do not think the assessment can really help know if the student can be an eligible TA because most of the questions have nothing to do with the scientific knowledge and scientific communication, which is the major part of the TA work. Also, the criteria for passing the assessment are very vague.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 36

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

the result is not based on any academic or logics of English. It is only based on the small talk with some topics that are not related to academics.

I personally did not have any negative experience with ITAP but I have heard many negative comments on ITAP from students having taken it in past years. I think my main objection to the assessment is that it fails to consider that students from certain cultures, especially east Asian cultures, are generally less comfortable with talking about certain topics, such as feelings and emotions. This probably does not describe everyone but at least for me I even have trouble describing, say, how I felt at a certain moment, even in my native language. And I believe that the ability to converse about such topics is not essential for being a good TA.

They didn't give me any feedback, not even "you passed."

I don't think I get a fair result/score of my assessment and I get no feedback on my result. I just received the result with no explanation.

The assumption that international students "may" require training on English itself is not inherently discriminatory. However, the implicit assumption that all international students, but NONE of the US based students, require "TEACHING" training cannot be interpreted as non-discriminatory.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

These answers have not been modified and are being reported as they were submitted. No answers have been removed.

*Referring to question on slide 36

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

One major flaw with the assessment is that the performance is heavily dependent on many other factors such as the testee's stress level, familiarity with the topics, personality, and so forth. The results may even differ depending on which day or time of the day it takes place, at least from my experience. In addition, the test is all about daily topics, which are not an accurate representation of actual TA scenario. Therefore, making this the sole criteria for determining whether a student has enough English proficiency to TA is unfair. In addition, from my interaction with my fellows in the ITAP course, students who are considered to have the same proficiency level vary drastically in their actual language performance. There are many students who clearly have very high proficiency that are still forced to attend the courses. Also, there seems to be a very high percentage of Asian populations in the class (in some classes that I attended it was 100%). This may be due to the overall race distribution in all international students and the fact that many Asian countries have low English usage. However, one may argue that there is possibly a systematic bias against Asian students that some are forced to take the course even though they have enough English proficiency, which of course requires careful investigation.

It was just waste of time for everyone involved.

The result of the test was unbelievable and seemed to be "personally designed". I took it for five times which was hard to believe even for most of my native friends. Some students whose oral English were worse than me got passed while I failed for 4 consecutive semesters. Once, the lecturer told me I passed the test however, one week after, she told me I failed! When I asked for explanation, she said nothing but accused me of my "bad" oral mistakes. Apparently, the test results are manipulated by them. The reason that I can think of being treated like this (being failed for 4 semesters) is that once I complained to the director that I felt the class was not very useful and it should be redesigned. Apparently, it is the truth that the class materials have nothing to do with the test.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

These answers have not been modified and are being reported as they were submitted. No answers have been removed

*Referring to question on slide 36

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

I felt that those who have a certain accent have more difficulty to pass the exam.. I have taken the same class twice because of the assessment. I quit the class in my third time because I strongly felt I was wasting time by taking the class with the same content again and again.. I also felt the assessment was very random. My friend was in the first level of the assessment after taking the class. Then he spent a semester without taking the class and was assessed as the highest level of English speaker.. I strongly disagree to ask students to take a same class over and over again. This doesnt create a welcoming environment for international students at all and interrupt international graduate students from making research progress. I sincerely ask for the improvement of the system

During the summer ITAP, I found some people who didn't speak English well and there were people from India and Europe countries, but when I took the ITAP course, I found almost all students are Chinese. Even some of them have lived in US for more than 5 years and they have no problem having fluent conversations, they still need to take this course.

Before the assessments, it's not clear to students what the rules and criteria are of the assessment, however, from my experience of having taken several assessments, the rules are related to some transition words, pronunciations etc, with that to say, if you make one mistake on each aspect, you will not be passed, for example, you speak very fluently, and pronounce accurately, but if you do not include transition words, you will not be passed, so the rules are highly unreasonable. And after each assessment, nothing will be provided to u, either what's your mistake, nor what you should do to pass. Throughout the assessment, I didnt feel bias here, but in the class i'm taking, most people are Asias, even some of them speak very good, so the results are biased to me.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 36

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

This test is highly bias against Asian students. The evaluation process is not transparent at all. No well documented feedback was given. Talked to the ITAP manager once but didn't get satisfying explanations.

I totally didn't understand why someone else who spoke worse than me could pass the evaluation while I couldn't. And during the evaluation the examiners did not talk with me on the academic topics at all, so I don't think it can reflect whether I was qualified for being a TA.

In addition to not understanding the result I got from the assessment with poor constructive feedback provided, a strong sense of discrimination was raised during several talks with the director of the program, Kim. One time during the class, I was asked to pronounce my own name in a "appropriate" tone that Kim wanted instead of using the original pronunciation of my own name: this is not only really insulting but also ironic as the program claimed that accent does not really matter but the ability to communicate.

I have TAed for 4 semesters and given lecture in my TA class. My students and professors have very good comments on me and have no problem understanding me. However, I was assessed by ITAP 4 times and they just said my English was not good enough, my pronunciation was not very "standard"(white), too many pauses... They just asked to take their useless ITAP English class with the same account again and again, which made me feel like they are not trying to help me be a TA but just wanted to insult me.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 36

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

Classes and assessments seem to be designed for keeping students repeat the bizarre course strategies without any clear purpose

I understand the importance of English skills. But it is unfair to base funding decisions on a 10 minutes conversation with the instructor.

The strategy of assessment is debatable. The questions were mainly comparison with two situations that normal people would not ask. For example, to compare cooking and snowboarding. Also, the set of criteria of assessment is questionable. I have a friend who is an international student from Europe. He/she has incorrect pronunciation and poor organization.; however, he/she passed the assessment.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 36

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

I found ITAP to be quite insulting as my first language is English but I was still forced to participate in it

1. The TA English assessment and class focus on social English (intonation, telling a story, making comparisons, etc.). However, for TAs, technical English is more important. TAs should be proficient to technical terms and accurate expressions in their specific fields. English teachers are usually not experts in technical English. Therefore, the instructor of the class which the TA is going to teach should take the response to evaluate the English ability of the TA, not English teachers. In addition, the English class focusing on social English provides very limited help for teaching. The English teachers usually hold a TA to take exactly the same English class for multiple times, which consumes TAs a lot time, which can otherwise be used for teaching. 2. When the TA English assessments are conducted by English teachers, there can possibly be another problem of objectivity, because examiners are also those who run the English class. It is not easy to rule out the possibility that the English teachers may purposely fail certain number of TAs to fill their classes. 3. The results of the assessment are extremely race-biased. The probability of East Asians, no matter how good their English is, to pass the assessment is surprisingly low. I see East Asian TAs, who passed TA English assessments in other universities in the same level of Cornell and who did their undergrads in the US, with fluent and authentic English, having to take the TA English class here in Cornell for multiple times.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 36

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

I think they have every strong bias on East Asian students, and very racial discrimination

The assessment result makes me feel the teachers have bias. When they see East Asians, they think their speaking is not good enough. However, they think western people (or white people) may have better speaking skill. My friend is Polish, who has really strong accent. My other friends find it difficult to understand her speaking, but she passed the assessment. However, my lab mate who is Korean did not pass the assessment, but people in our lab all think it is much easier to understand the Korean's English than the Polish's English.

Cornell ILA results are not consistent with the exam result provided by a certified language assessment organization. All first year international students in C&CB 2019 were assessed by LTI (Language Testing International, <https://www.languagetesting.com/>, exclusive licensee of ACTFL) and all of us were assigned an "advanced low" or higher level; otherwise, we would not get the offer of admission. I was "advanced mid" in that exam (January, 2019, valid for 2 years). However, after several months, at Cornell, I was assessed by ITAP and my level became "intermediate mid". The funny thing is that ITAP(Cornell) also follows ACTFL standard, but people receive significantly lower assessment results in ITAP(Cornell) with the same standard.

The assessment was designed to make me speak about a boring topic for 3 mins. There was no interaction and that's not how people talk in daily life. I also don't use that in my teaching.

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above*

*Referring to question on slide 36

Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above

The assessment determines whether one sounds white enough, nothing else. It's blatantly racist.

I got a cold the first time I took ILA.

Assessment seems arbitrary, and there appears to be bias against students of Asian origins even when they are fluent.

Overall ITAP was a good experience

The director Kimberly didn't treat students as adults and forced students to say their names in "the American" way.

The evaluating criteria is problematic. It is basically about teaching international students about how to conform White culture and have a White accent/intonation.

Did taking the ITAP ILA or ALS 5780 impede or delay your ability to TA?

n = 81

