



ASSOCIATION DU CORPS INTERMEDIAIRE DE
L'EPFL

Case Postale 44, EPFL, CH - 1015 LAUSANNE
TEL 021 - 693 47 77, FAX 021 - 693 47 80, acide@epfl.ch

**ACIDE Survey about the Language Center Services
Launched by ACIDE-ComDoc on March 2009
With the active participation of Joël Teuscher, Chiara Paderno
and Wajd Zimmermann**

Basic information :

This survey was opened to all EPFL researchers and lecturers (intermediate body) and announced by email with one reminder. The questionnaire starts with personal and basic data related to the attended or subscribed lectures. Then it was composed of three parts : before the lecture, during the lecture and after the lecture.

375 persons participated to our survey, with 304 participants who subscribed or attended the classes since the summer 2006. Among them, 295 participants attended a language lecture. Only the records of these 304 participants were used to analyze the basic information and the part before the course. Then only the 295 records were used to analyze the two last parts (during and after the lecture).

Basic data:

PhD candidates form 67% of participants, post-doc 26% and all other categories 7%.
Figure 1 shows the number of participants in each category.

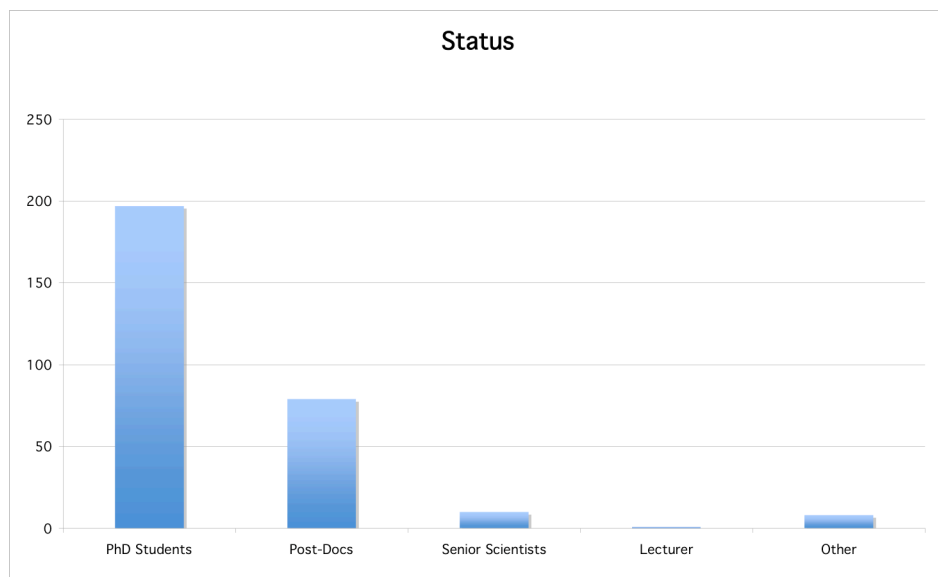


Fig. 1- Number of participants depending on their status

Figure 2 shows that French is the most requested language. More than 70% of participants have attended a French course.

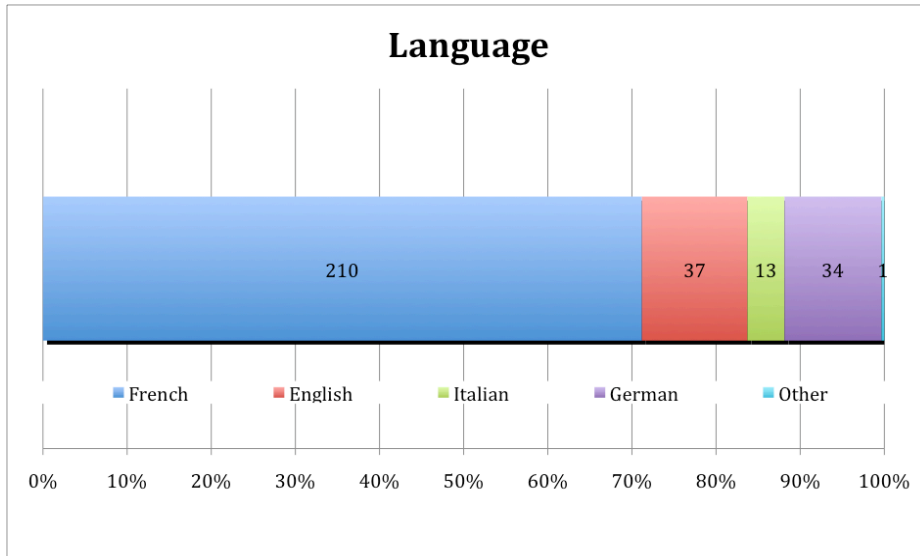


Fig. 2- Language courses attended by the participants

Figure 3 shows the requested languages depending on the participant status.

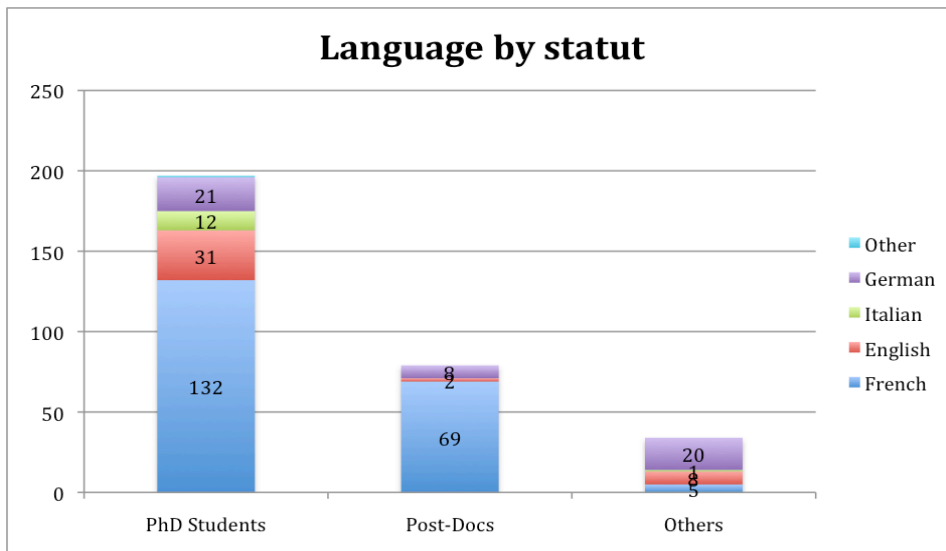


Fig. 3 -Number of participants depending on their status and on the chosen language

Figure 4 shows the course levels attended by the participants.

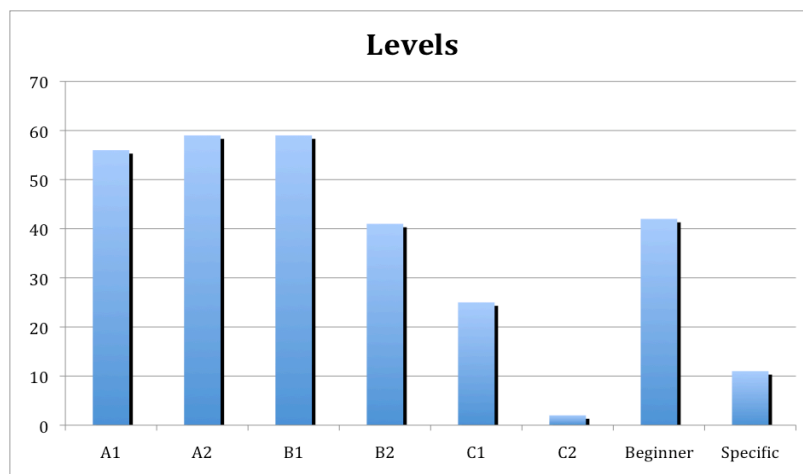


Fig. 4- Course levels attended by participants

Subscription (before the course):

Six grades were proposed (1 is the worst and 6 is the best one) for all questions related to subscription. Note that grade 3 is given by default if no other grade was specified, this is why it hasn't be considered in the analyzed results.

Question « I have been well informed about the language center opportunities »

Figure 5 shows the distribution of the given grades. In general, the information seems to be well appreciated.

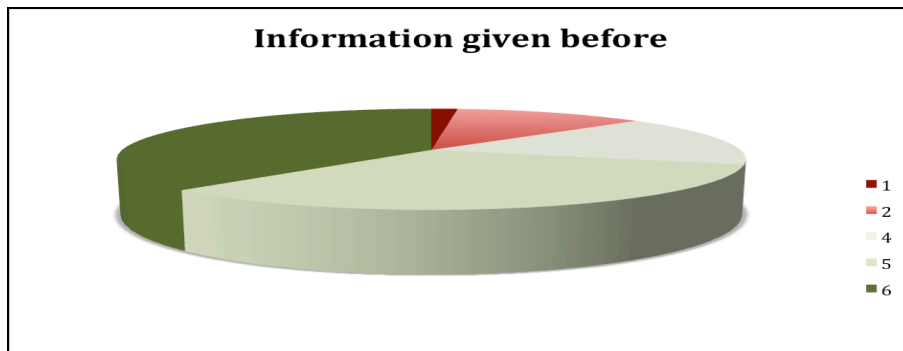


Fig. 5- Question : « I have been well informed about the language center opportunities »

Question "I have been notified of the acceptance/refusal of my subscription on due time"

Figure 6 shows the distribution of the given grades. The notification seems to be well appreciated.

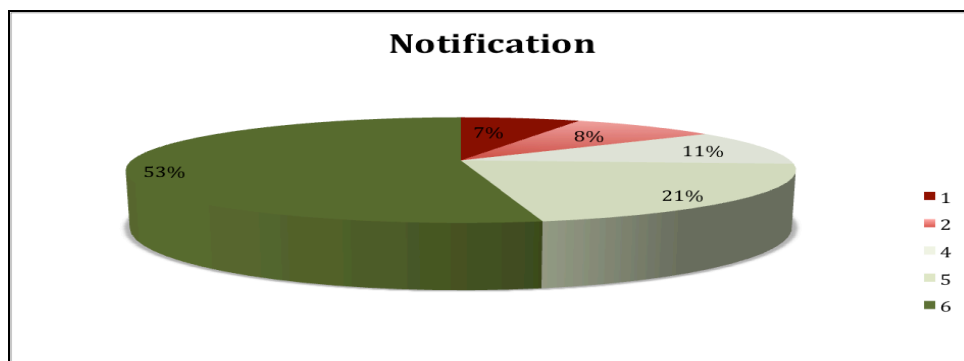


Fig. 6- Question "I have been notified of the acceptance/refusal of my subscription on due time"

Question: "The web-based subscription interface is convenient"

Figure 7 shows the distribution of the given grades. The web-based subscription is less appreciated. 29% of participants don't appreciate the subscription procedure.

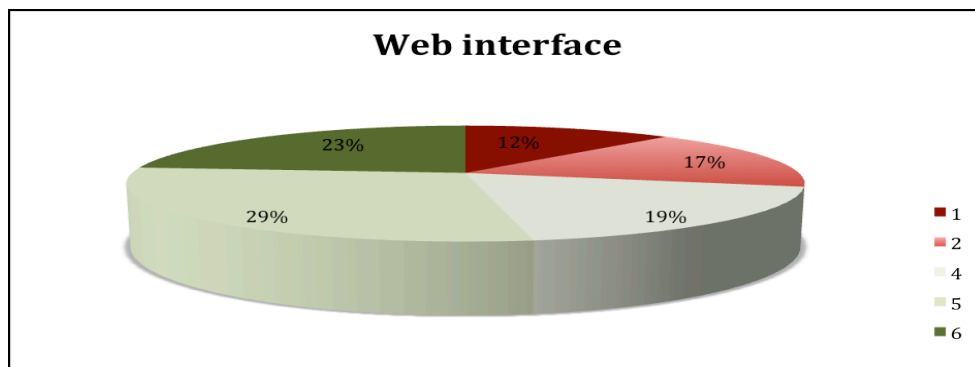


Fig. 7- Question "The web-based subscription interface is convenient"

Question “The schedule system is good (no fixed classes)”

Figure 8 shows the distribution of the given grades. The schedule system is less appreciated as well. 34% of grades have been 1 or 2.

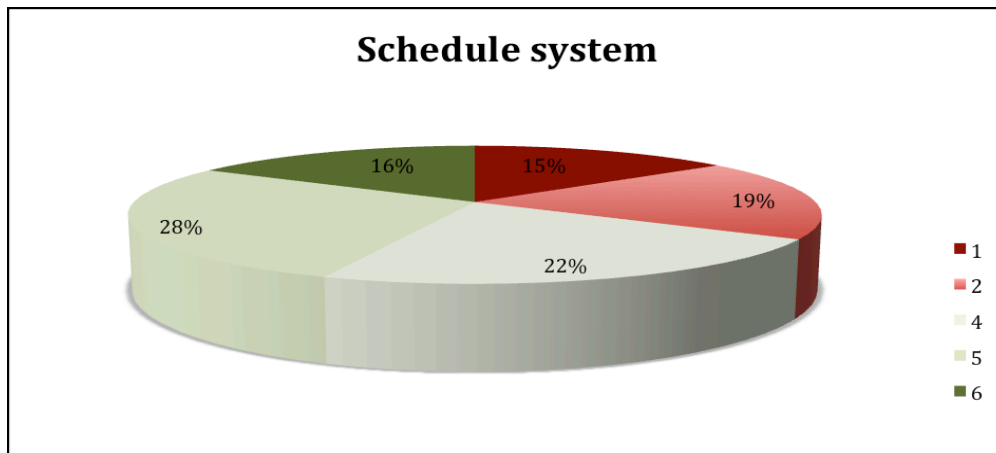


Fig. 8- Question “The schedule system is good (no fixed classes)”

Question “The course offer corresponds to my expectations in terms of possible languages”

Figure 9 shows the distribution of the given grades. The language offer seems to be appreciated.

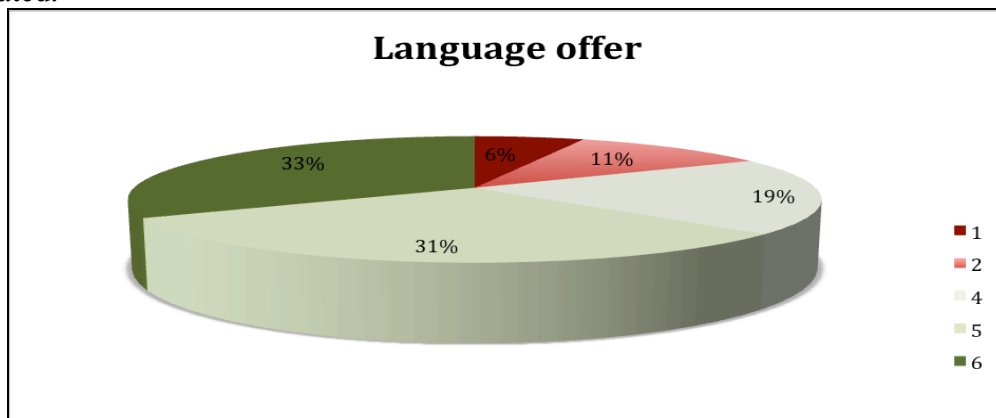


Fig. 9- Question “The course offer corresponds to my expectations in terms of possible languages”

Question “The course offer corresponds to my expectations in terms of available levels”

Figure 10 shows the distribution of the given grades. The level offer seems to be appreciated.

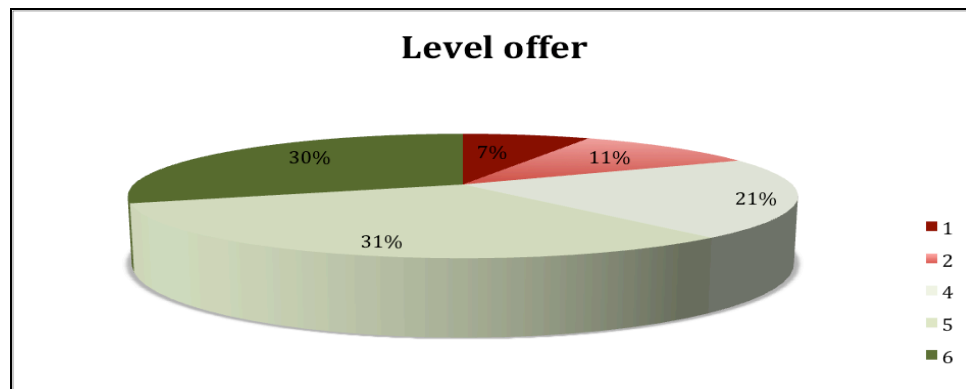


Fig. 10- Language and level offer appreciation

Comments of participants related to the subscription :

There is a high demand for Spanish, a demand for Swiss German and Chinese. The fees for other courses (UNIL) are too high for PhD students.

The level determined with the web-based test is not correct. Conversation is not taken into account for example nor the mother tongue language, neither the Latin background. Different people from different origins don't learn at the same speed. In addition it should be possible to avoid taking the test again and gain, especially when going from level to level between two semesters. There are some administrative problems, especially for PhD students, students versus employee status.

Determination of the schedule is made too late. In consequence, there is no way to change course in case of refusal; there is no flexibility at all. One should have an offer for evening classes (18-20:00 pm). This is also true for the multimedia sessions.

The courses are often not available, especially for high levels. More intensive class is requested, especially for French, when researchers arrive to Lausanne since they cannot wait 3-5 months to enter a class. French courses for spouses would be appreciated.

During the course :

For the five following questions, six grades were proposed (1 is the worst and 6 is the best one). Note that grade 3 is given by default if no other grade was specified.

Question "The teacher was motivated"

Figure 11 shows the evaluation of teacher motivation. The teachers seem to be well appreciated in general.

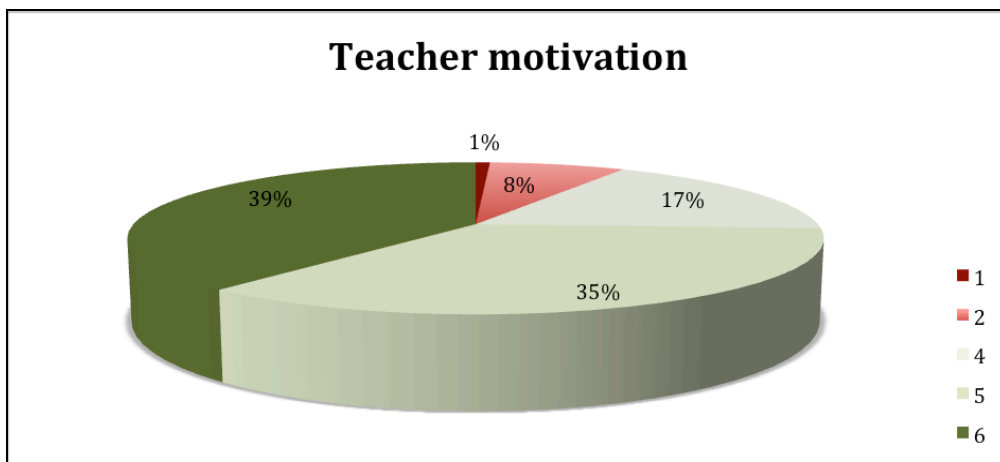


Fig. 11- Question "The teacher was motivated"

Question "The proposed course was adapted to my level"

Figure 12 shows the distribution of the given grades.

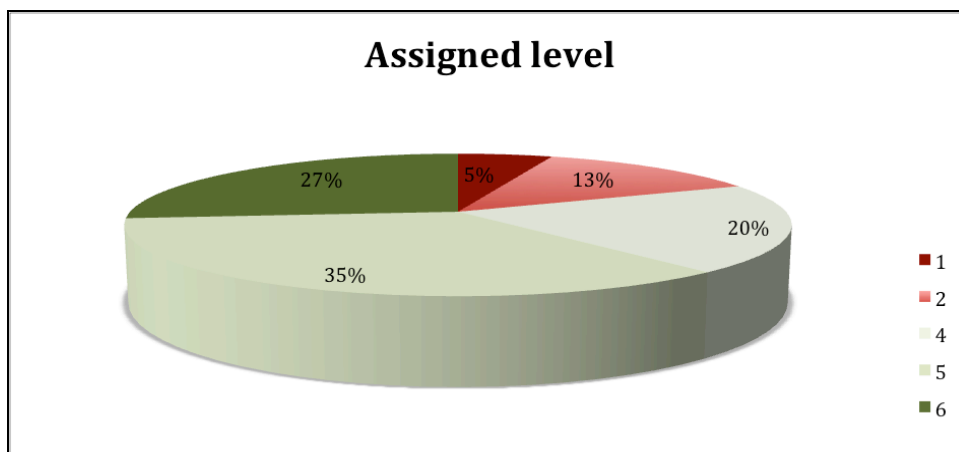


Fig. 12- Question « The proposed courses was adapted to my level »

Question « The level of all the participants was similar »

Figure 13 shows that similarity of the level of all participants in the same class needs to be improved. 30% of given grades are 1 or 2.

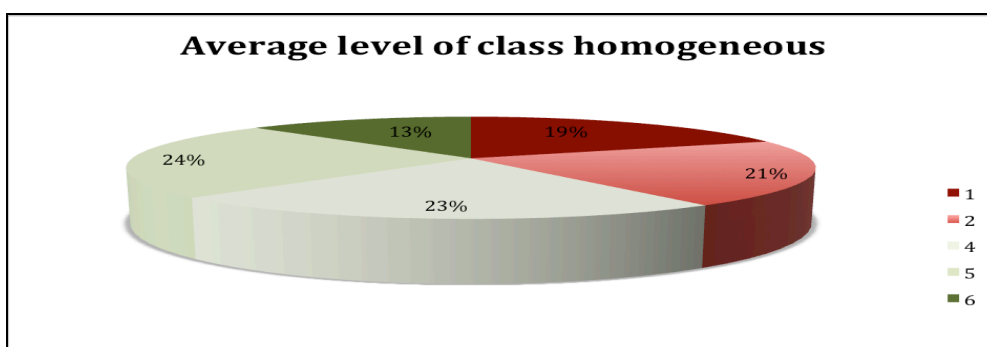


Fig. 13- Question « The level of all the participants was similar »

Question « The course material is useful and used by the teacher »

Figure 14 shows the grades given to the material quality.

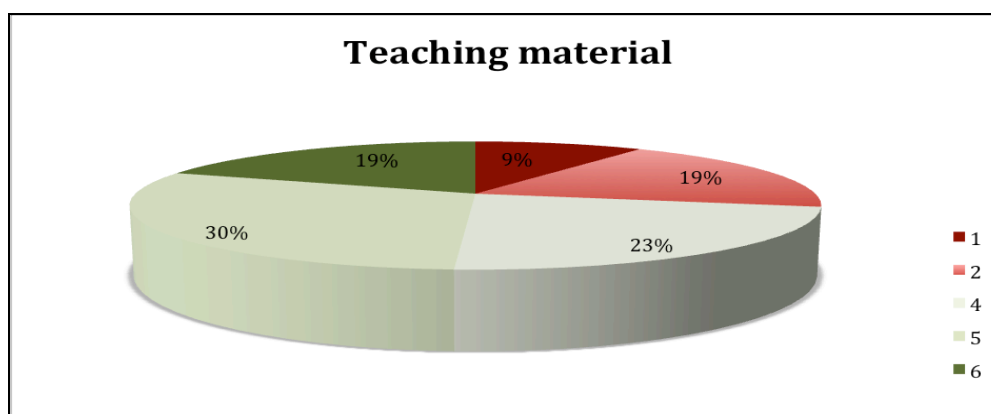


Fig. 14- Question « The course material is useful and used by the teacher »

Question « The European language portfolio is useful »

Figure 15 shows that the European language portfolio is not appreciated at all by the participants. 78% of grades are 1 or 2.

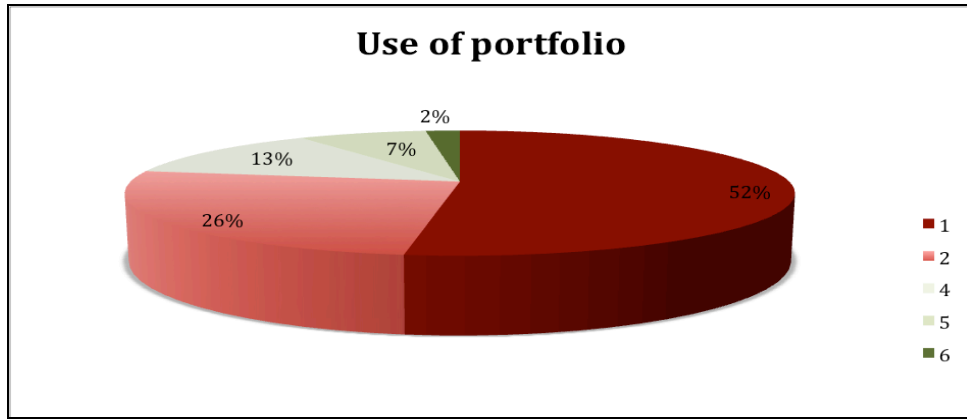


Fig. 15- Question « The European language portfolio is useful »

Question “The number of class per week is ok, too few or too much?”

Fig. 16 shows that in general the offered number of class per week is appreciated; however 34% of participants find it not enough.

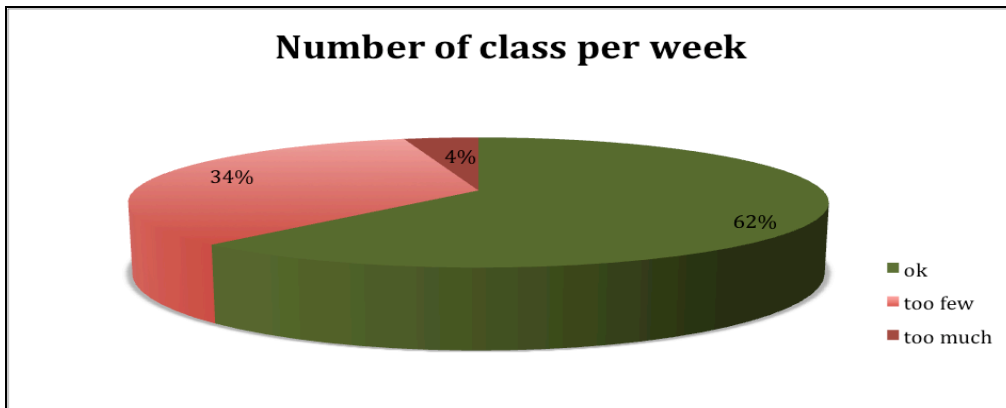


Fig. 16- Question “The number of class per week is ok, too few or too much?”

Question “How many were you in class?”

Fig. 17 shows the number of answers giving the different numbers of students per class. It shows that the number of students per class goes from 7 to 20 students. If the number 12 is considered to be the best number for a best class condition, then more than 20% of the answers show that the number of students per class at the language center may be quite high.

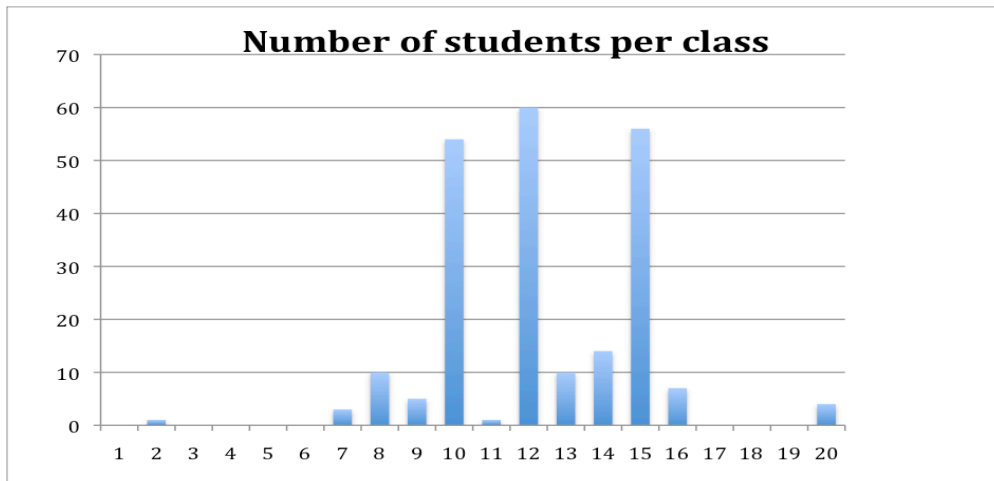


Fig. 17 Question “How many were you in class?”

During the course- Multimedia center:

For the four following questions, six grades were proposed (1 is the worst and 6 is the best one). Note that grade 3 is given by default if no other grade was specified.

Question “The multimedia center hours are useful”

Figure 18 shows that the multimedia center hours are not considered as useful in general. More than 50% of the given grades are 1 or 2.

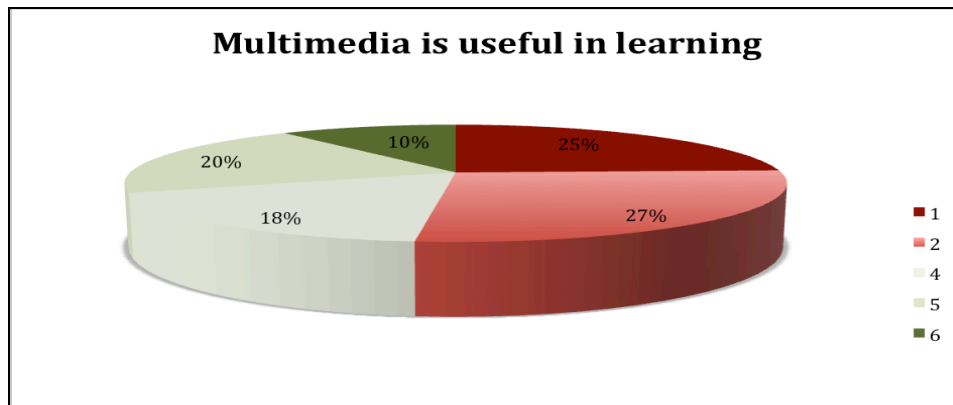


Fig. 18 Question “The multimedia center hours are useful”

Question « The support offered is good”

The support offered during the multimedia hours needs to be improved as shown in figure 19. 31% of the given grades are 1 or 2.

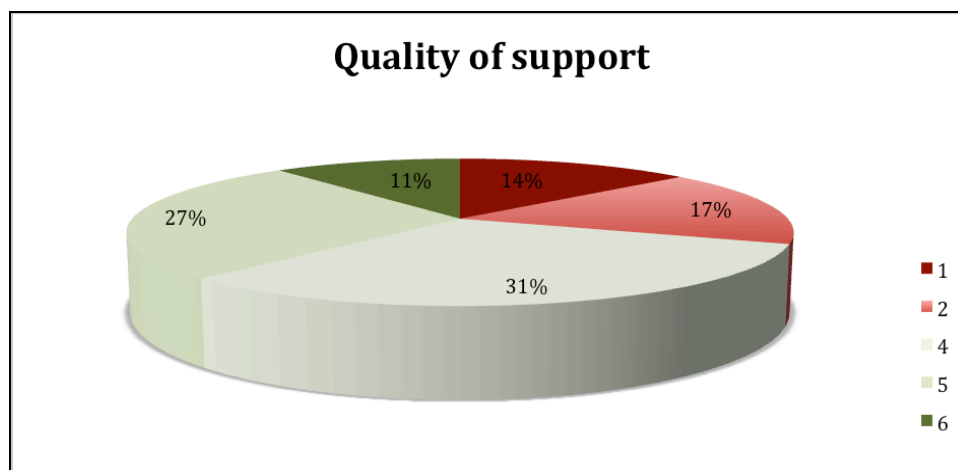


Fig. 19- Question « The support offered is good”

Question “The proposed schedules are good”

The proposed schedules need to be improved as shown in figure 20. 46% of the given grades are 1 or 2.

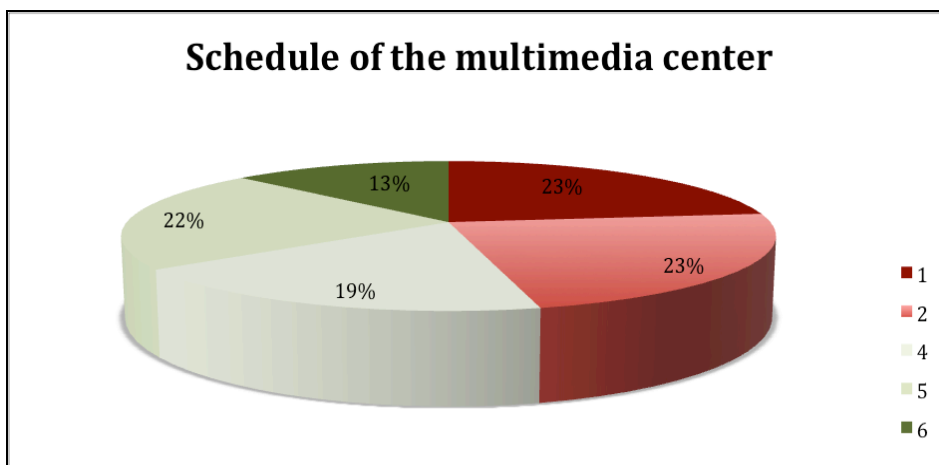


Fig. 20- Question “The proposed schedules are good”

Question “The level of proposed exercises is adapted”

Figure 21 shows the evaluation of the quality of exercises by the participants. 28% of participants have graded it 1 or 2.

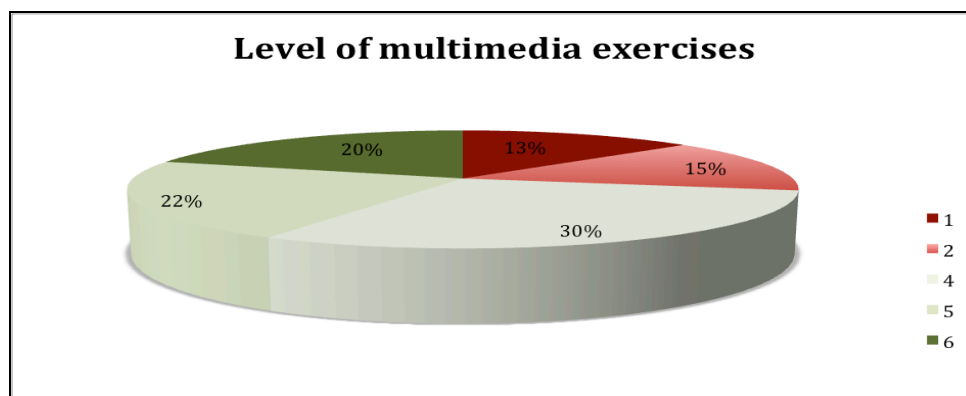


Fig. 21- Question “The level of proposed exercises is adapted”

Comments of participants - « During the course »

Multimedia centre : it should be optional. 45 minutes is too short compared to the preparation and finding an exercise. The schedule is too tight. It should be free access to this centre or even better, a web-based access as most of the time no support is needed. Opening hours are not compatible with a PhD student schedule.

Portfolio : Only useful if credits needed, too much importance put on this. It exists an online version, why not to use it ?

Level of students in the course, i.e. Latin versus Asiatic origins can be a big issue in lower levels. There should be handing-over on level courses. i.e. German for someone who has a good level, but no recent practice.

The courses are not adequate to the working skills needed. The method is childish and courses don't look for specific needs of professionals, but more Erasmus classes.

There should be courses outside working hours, on Saturdays or evenings. It should be possible to choose also a 4h per week course. 50% of comments ask for more hours, 50% ask for only 2h. 15 people are too much in a class.

French courses : the course material is too much « France oriented » and doesn't account for Romandie.

In general the opinion on intensive or semi-intensive courses is good, better than for semester class. Specific comments to teachers are 90% positive, very positive.

After the course :

Question « Did you get your course certificate? »

Figure 22 shows that 39% of participants haven't obtained a certificate after the course.

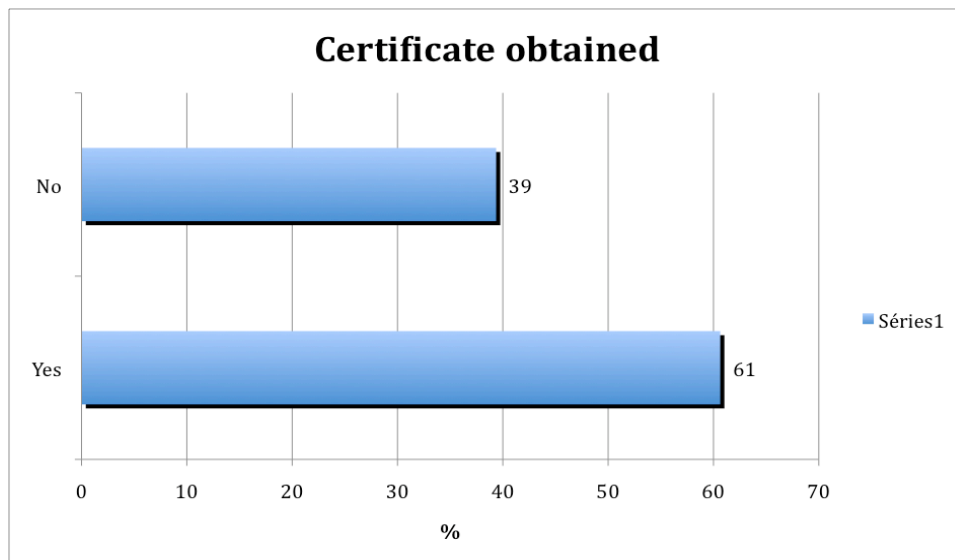


Fig. 22- Question « Did you get your course certificate?»

Question « Were you proposed to evaluate the course?»

Figure 23 shows that 30% of participants have not been asked to evaluate the course.

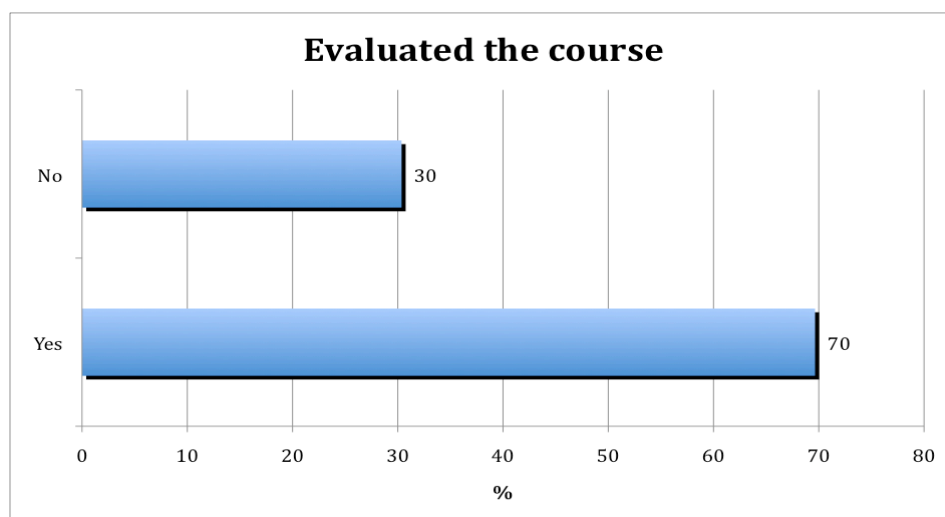


Fig. 23- Question « Were you proposed to evaluate the course?»

Question « Did you find the course useful ? »

Figure 24 shows that 83% of participants find the language courses useful.

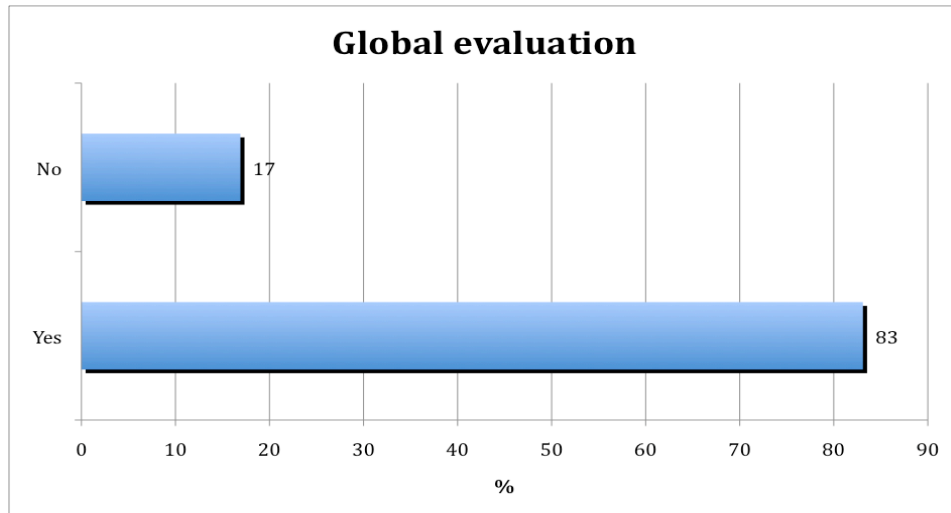


Fig. 24- Question « Did you find the course useful ? »

General comments:

Not enough classes open. Especially in French. No one should be rejected from a French class when arriving in Lausanne. A course dedicated to socialization and communication would be useful to researchers. Not a course in which you learn on how to write a CV.

A better English knowledge of the teacher, and the use of this language must be requested as a tool to teach the other ones as French, German and Italian.

Too much time is spent in (self-) evaluation and analyzing the learning process versus learning.

Conclusions:

- The courses offered by the language center are well appreciated by researchers and lecturers.
- The teachers are well evaluated by the participants and seem to be competent.
- The multimedia center needs to improve the proposed schedule, support and exercises.
- Evening hours would be more suitable for researchers and lecturers.
- The European portfolio is not appreciated at all by the participants.
- More French courses should be organized in order to allow all foreigners to attend one of these courses at the time of their arrival at EPFL.
- More intensive French courses would be appreciated, especially if they can be organized just after the arrival periods of PhD candidates.