




Fakultät für Wirtschaftswissenschaften
Facoltà di Economia
Faculty of Economics and Management

“It’s the way that you do it”: negotiation in the language classroom

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Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

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Grüße aus Bozen
Hello from Bozen/Bolzano
Saluti da Bolzano

Background context

- 3-year action research project
- Faculty of Economics & Management
- 30-hour English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) course
- C1 level
- 3 ECTS
- approx. 110 students / course / year

Focus of study: development of a new syllabus

Research question 1

What are the English-language skills needed by economics students at this trilingual university as perceived by the main “actors”, i.e. students and lecturers?

- investigation of **concurrent** needs
 - semi-structured interviews with lecturers
 - questionnaires to students

Which approach to syllabus design?

product – process dichotomy

product: focus on what is done

process: focus on how something is done

**THE
FUN BOY THREE
WITH BANANARAMA.**



IT AINT WHAT YOU DO

FB3

“It ain’t what you do, it’s the way that you do it”

Which approach to syllabus design?

product – process dichotomy

product: focus on what is done

process: focus on how something is done

“no one approach can be responsive to learners’
needs”

(Graves 2008: 161)

Research question 2

How can a predominantly product syllabus that is skills-based benefit from the integration of a process approach to syllabus design?

Rationale – process syllabus

Specific teaching context:

- courses are short
- heterogeneous proficiency levels
- multilingual cohort
- situation of flux at the Faculty
- variety of subjects with English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)
Accounting/Maths/Economics/Financial
Analysis/Communication Skills &
Leadership/Information Systems and Data
Management
- diverse career paths of graduates

Rationale – process syllabus

Specific teaching context:

need for a syllabus that is

- flexible
- easily adaptable from one year to the next
- learner-centred and more inclusive
- democratic

Rationale – process syllabus

“Process syllabuses have therefore evolved as a means of planning, implementing and evaluating negotiation in the classroom, and the decisions to which teachers and students may jointly arrive” (Breen & Littlejohn 2000a: 2).

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“Process syllabuses have therefore evolved as a means of planning, implementing and evaluating **negotiation** in the classroom, and the decisions to which teachers and students may jointly arrive” (Breen & Littlejohn 2000a: 2).

Negotiation “comprises overt and shared decision-making” so that individual learning agendas can be accommodated within the group leading to teaching and learning which is as effective as possible (Breen & Littlejohn 2000b: 9)

Rationale – process syllabus

Why negotiation?

- “negotiation can construct and reflect learning as an emancipatory process” (Breen & Littlejohn 2000b: 21)
- learner emancipation → learner autonomy: learners are part of the decision-making process in the classroom – normally excluded voices are included
- autonomy enables a learner to improve their “power of learning” (2000b: 21), which will benefit students in English AND in other subjects now and in the future

Learner autonomy...

“the ability to take charge of one’s learning... to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning”

(Holec 1981: 3)

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Research question 3

What elements of the syllabus can be negotiated with the learners considering the constraints of this particular context and experiences in other contexts?

Negotiation...

- ☹ all decisions negotiated, from content, language and assessment (Slembrouck 2000)

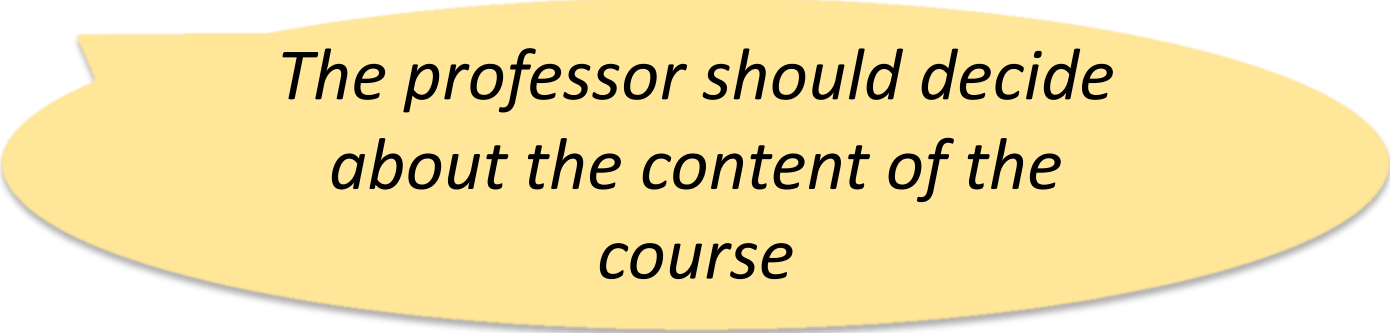
Breen & Littlejohn (2000b: 34): “it would be highly unusual and inefficient for a classroom group to seek negotiated agreement on all of the major questions in every lesson, even if this was feasible”

Negotiation...

“Education cannot function without teacher control”
(Illés 2012: 505)

Teachers are best placed to decide what is feasible
based on the context and their students

Students often expect not to have a say



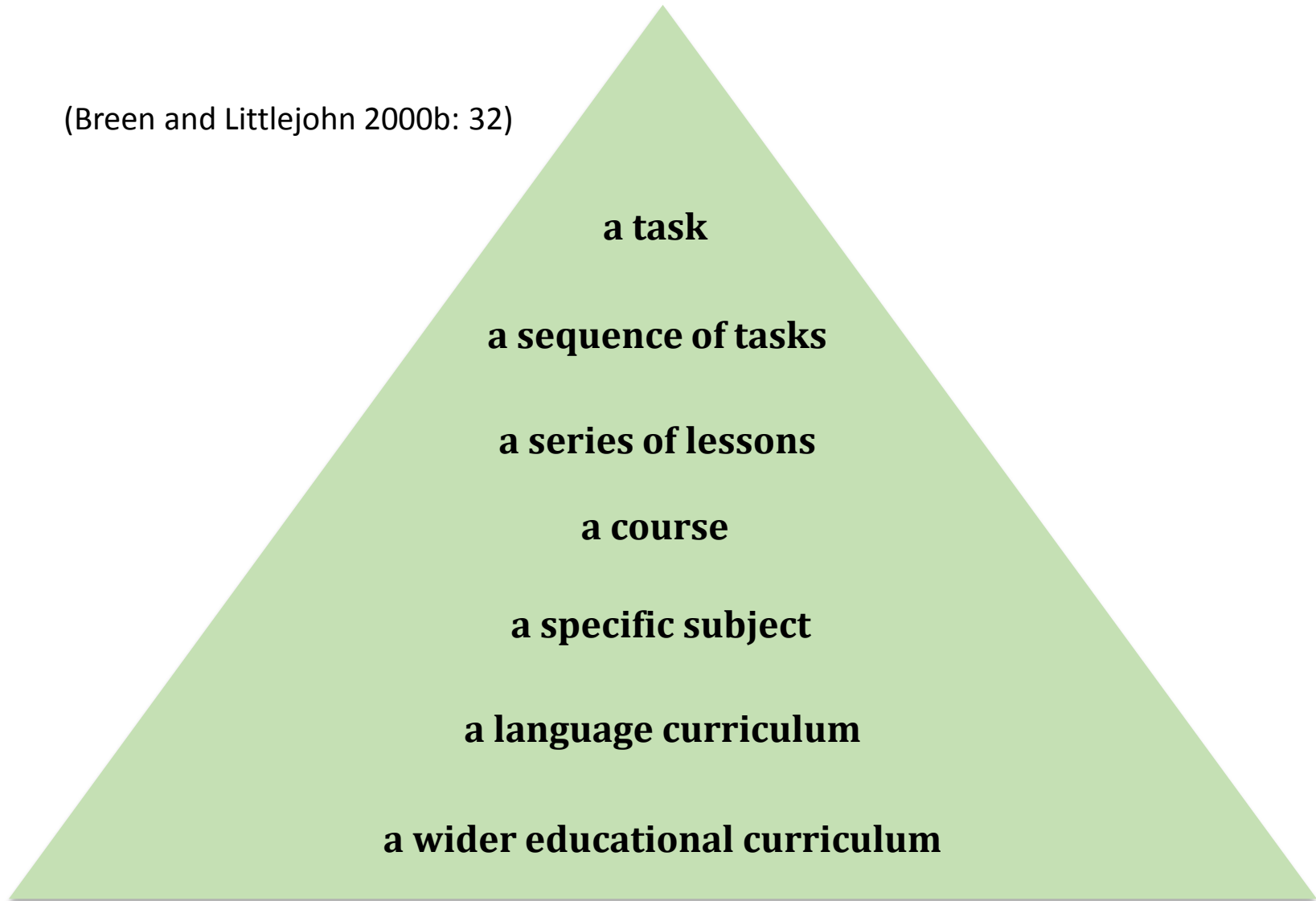
*The professor should decide
about the content of the
course*

Negotiation...

Breen & Littlejohn (2000b: 34): “a process syllabus identifies different reference points for the negotiation cycle in terms of levels in a curriculum pyramid”

The curriculum pyramid

(Breen and Littlejohn 2000b: 32)



Research question 2

How can a predominantly product syllabus that is skills-based benefit from the integration of a process approach to syllabus design?

Research question 2

How can a predominantly product syllabus that is **skills-based** benefit from the integration of a process approach to syllabus design?

Skills development → learner autonomy

Focus on the specific skills needed for EAP/ESP



practice

declarative knowledge



proceduralisation

practice



automaticity in skills

autonomy

Developments in teaching skills

Including...

- focus on the skill itself (rather than *just* to learn language);
- focus on balancing input and practice;
- focus on autonomy and shifting the responsibility onto the learner
- moving from a focus on teachers and teaching to learners and learning

(Paran 2012: 457)

Aims

to achieve a thorough overview of Economics
students' concurrent needs

Methodology

Action Research cycles

Mixed methods:

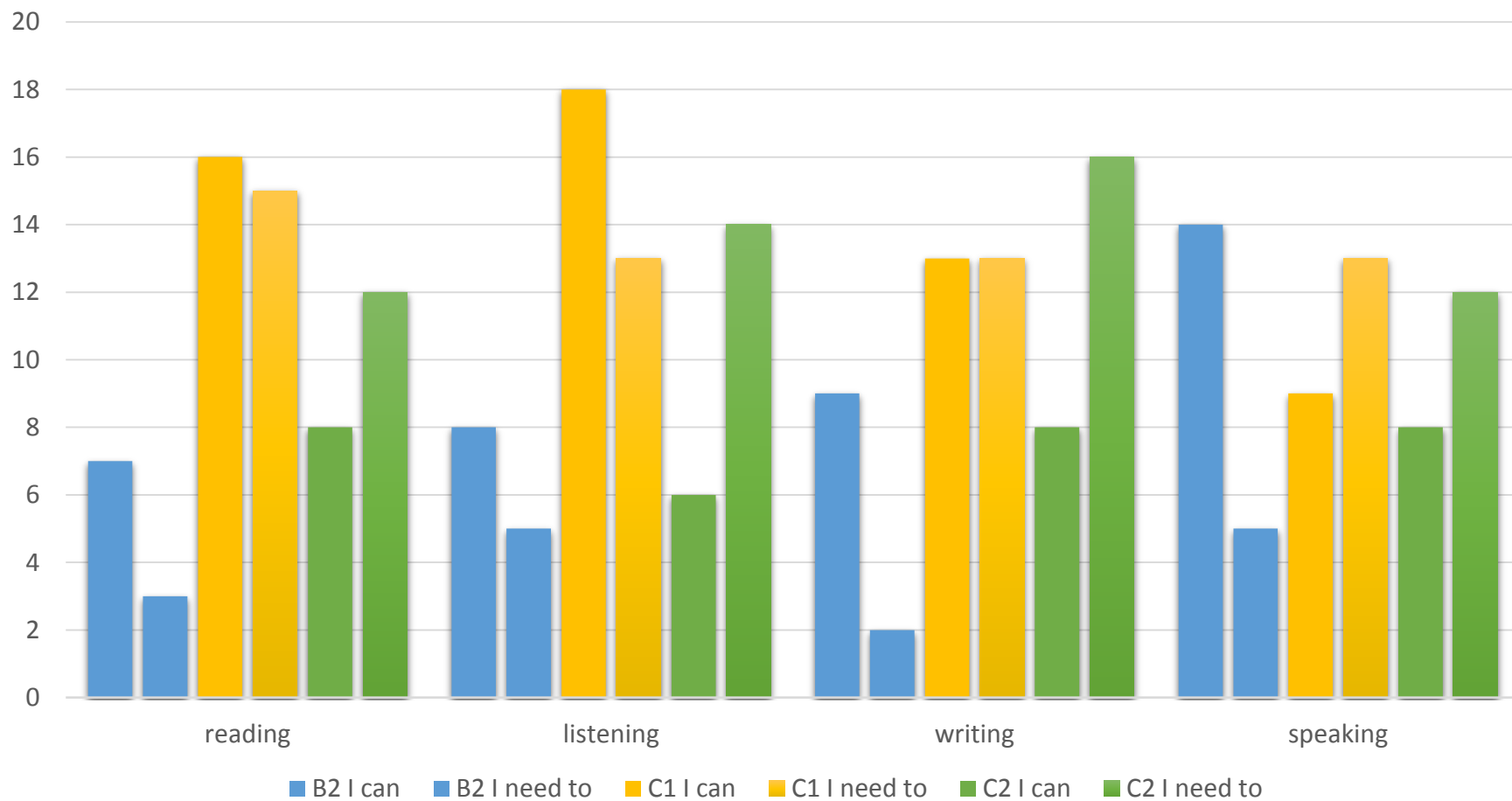
- QUAN: questionnaires
- QUAL: semi-structured interviews
- descriptive analysis of results for subsequent implementation of syllabus in AR cycles 2 & 3

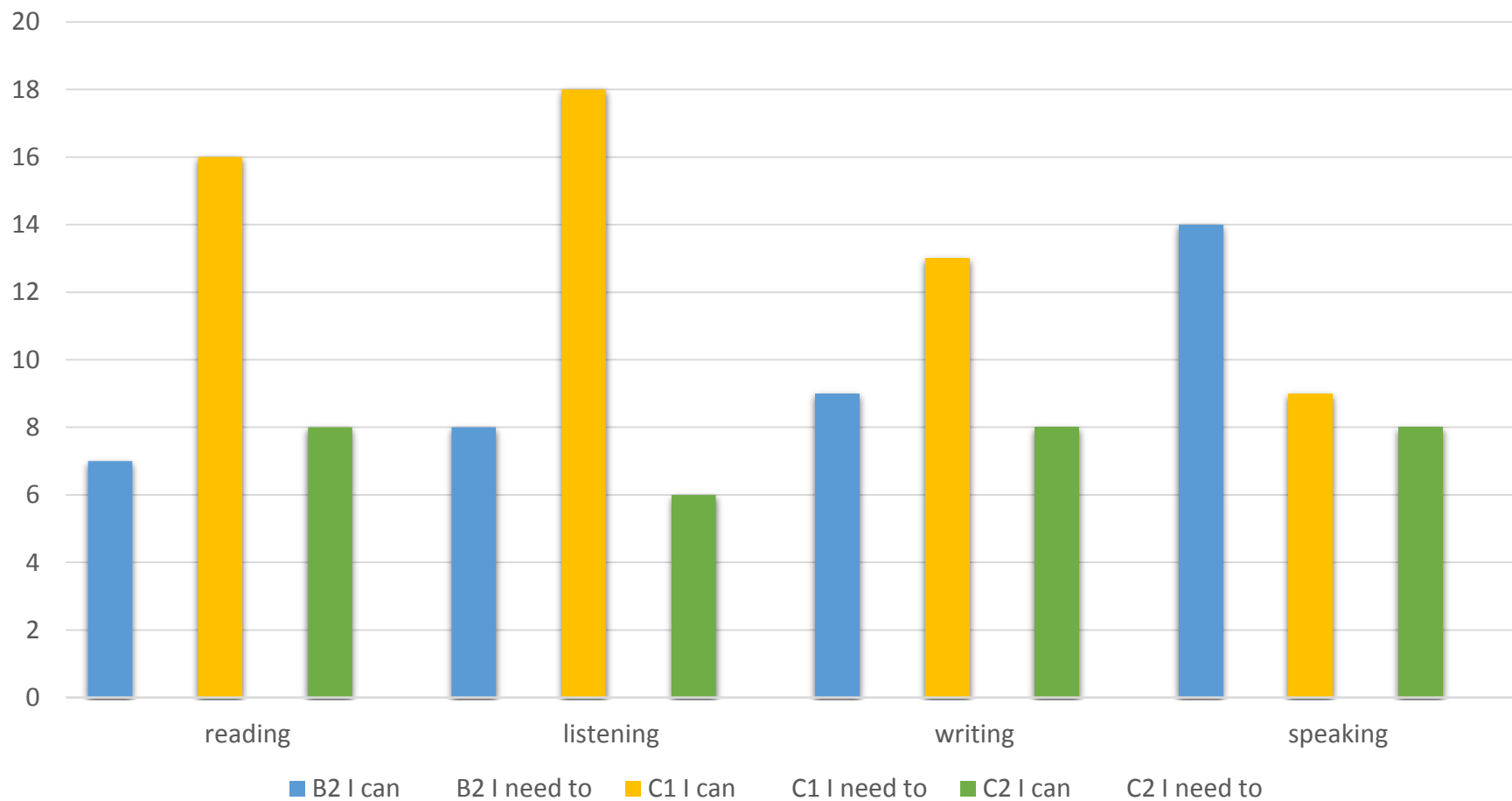
Some data (QUAN)

- Questionnaires: 365 responses
- “Level of competence in English. Please indicate your level (from + (A1) to ++++++ (C2)*)”

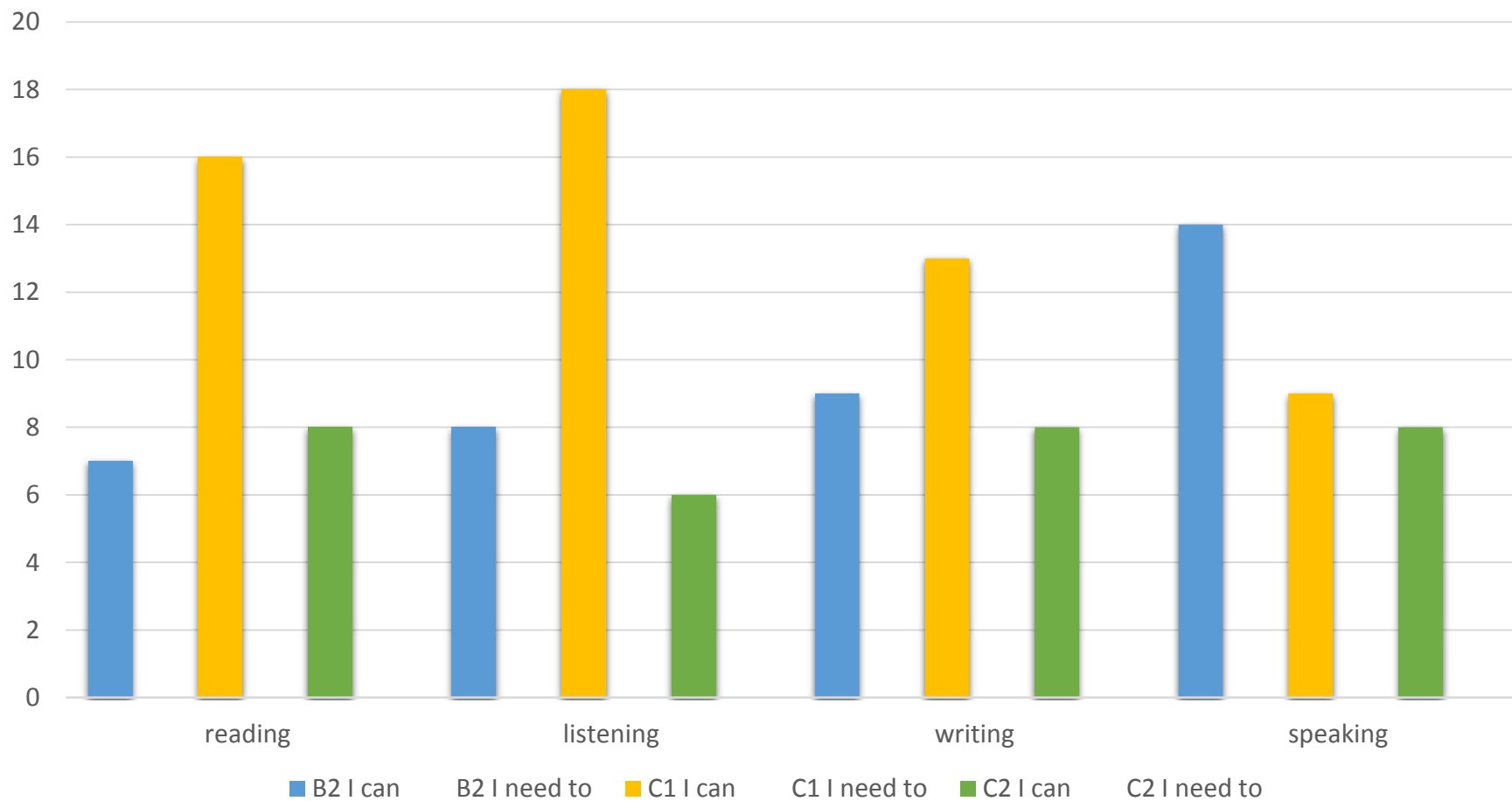
* Common European Framework of Reference

A1-A2: Basic User / B1-B2: Independent User/C1-C2:
Proficient User

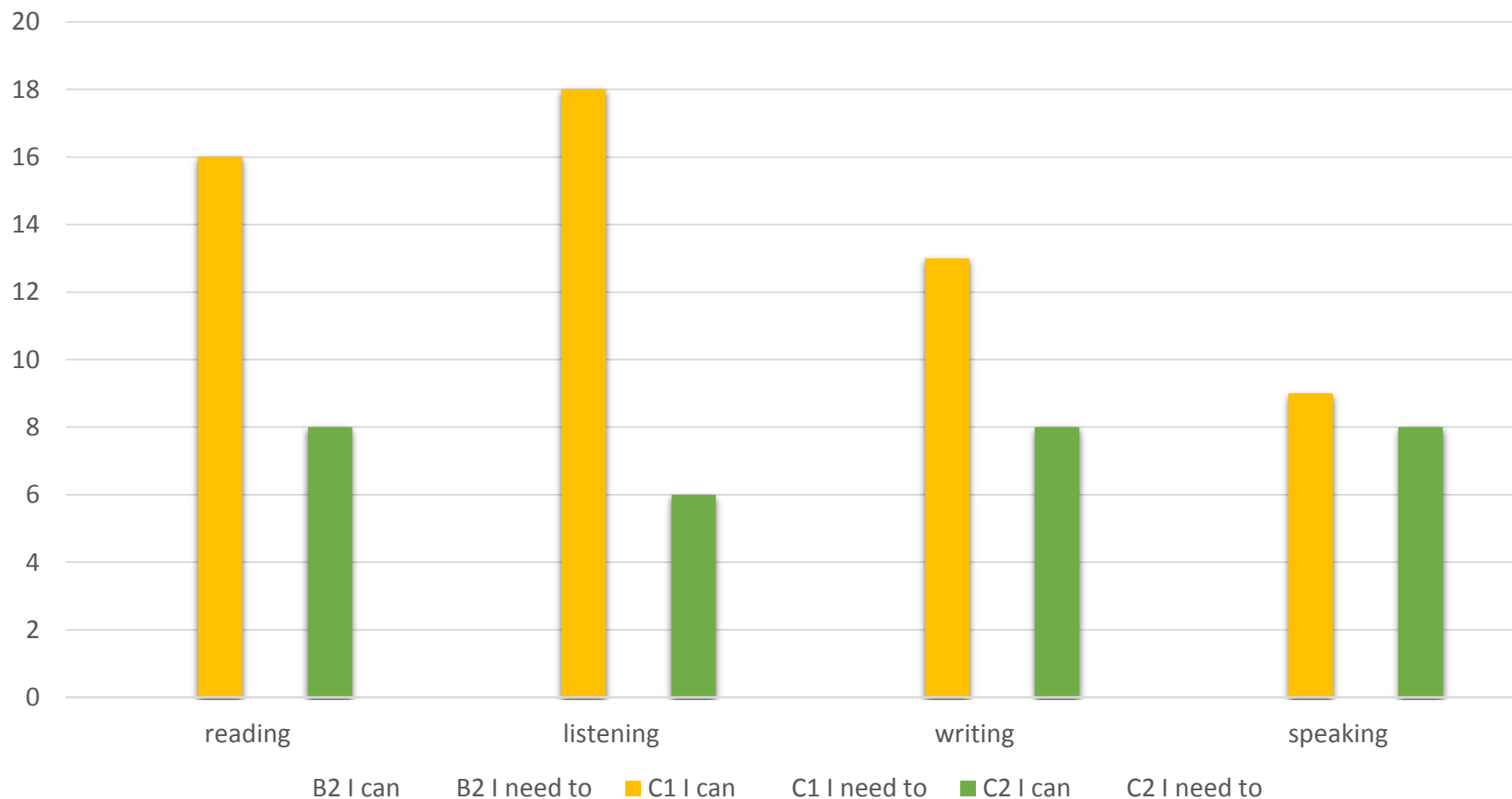




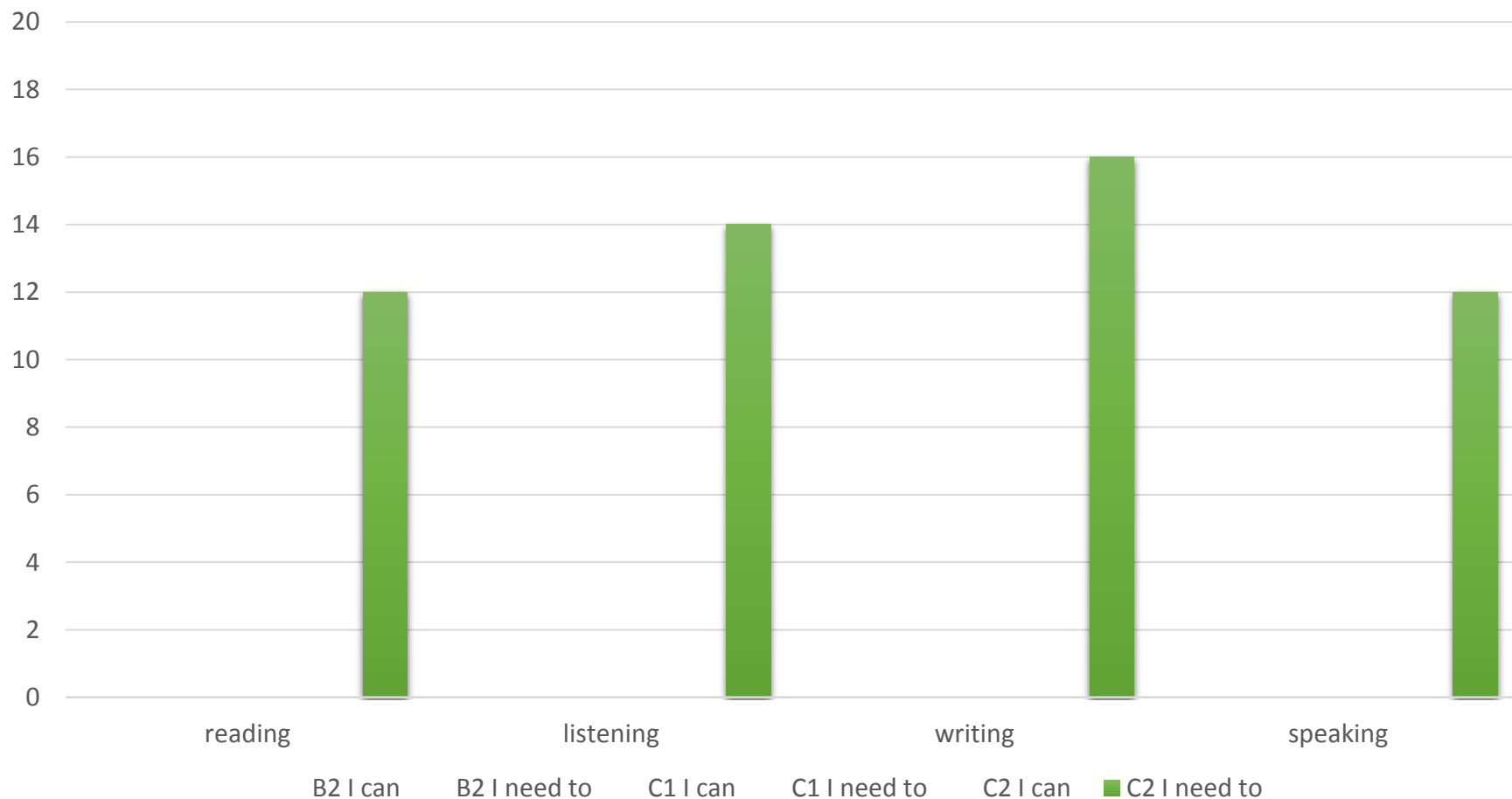
receptive skills strongest



productive skills weaker



speaking weakest skill



writing: highest level needed

Some data (QUAL)

Semi-structured interviews:

- 10 staff members
- Accounting, International Finance, Financial Analysis, Financial Risk Management, Computing Skills, Economics 2, Political Science, Philosophy and Econometrics

Analysis

Thematic analysis



Descriptive and *in vivo* coding



3 conceptual frameworks

Problems encountered in target situation

Language problems

Content problems

Classroom management

Lecturers' problems

No problems

Students' problems

Class size

Type of class

Time problems

Content-related

Non-native speaker related

"Dumb down"

Vocabulary

Pron

Fluency

Vocabulary

Skills

Reading

Writing

Speaking

Cognitive problems

Understanding

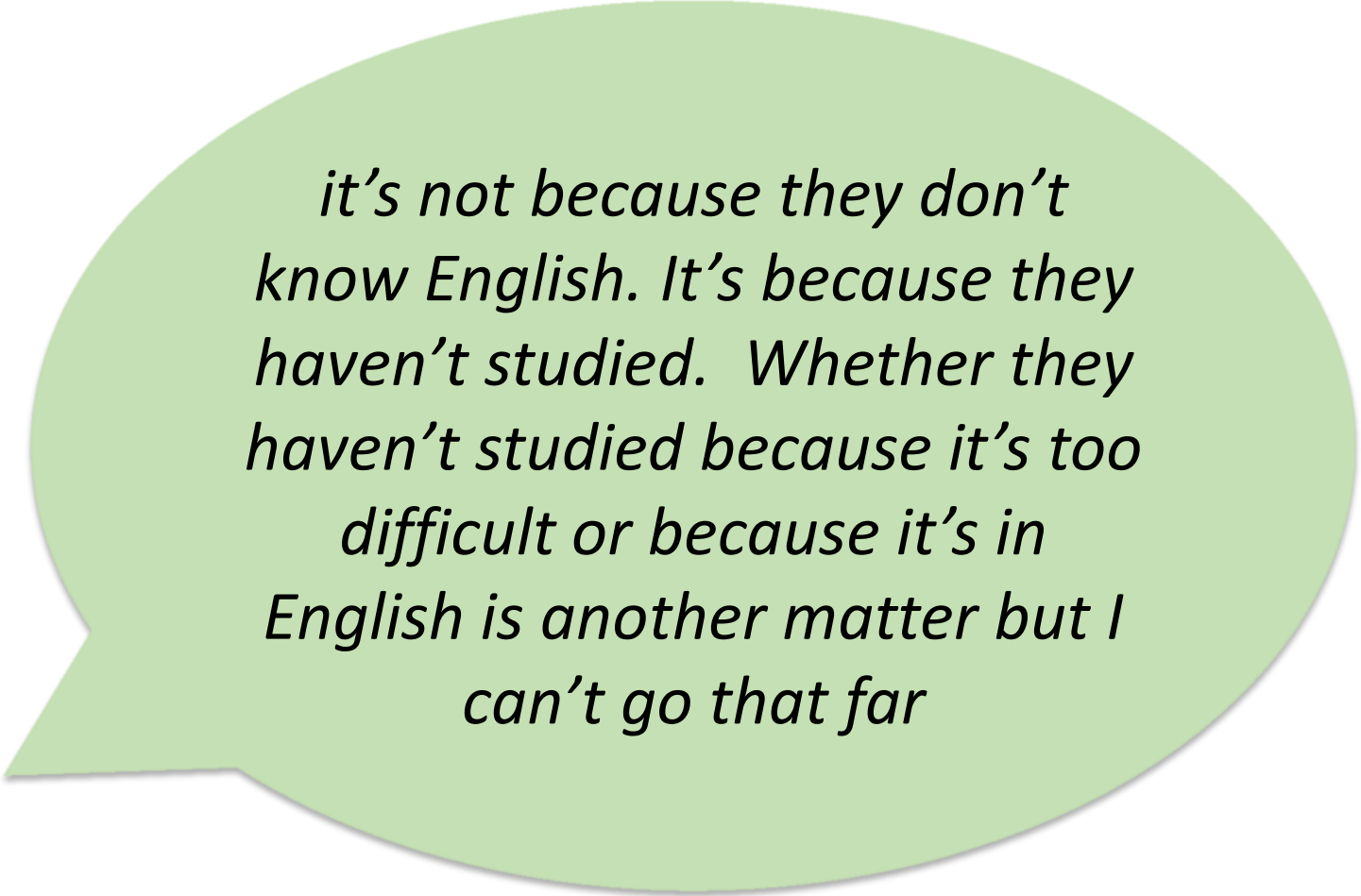
Lack of attention

Affective problems

Anxiety
Shyness
Lack of confidence

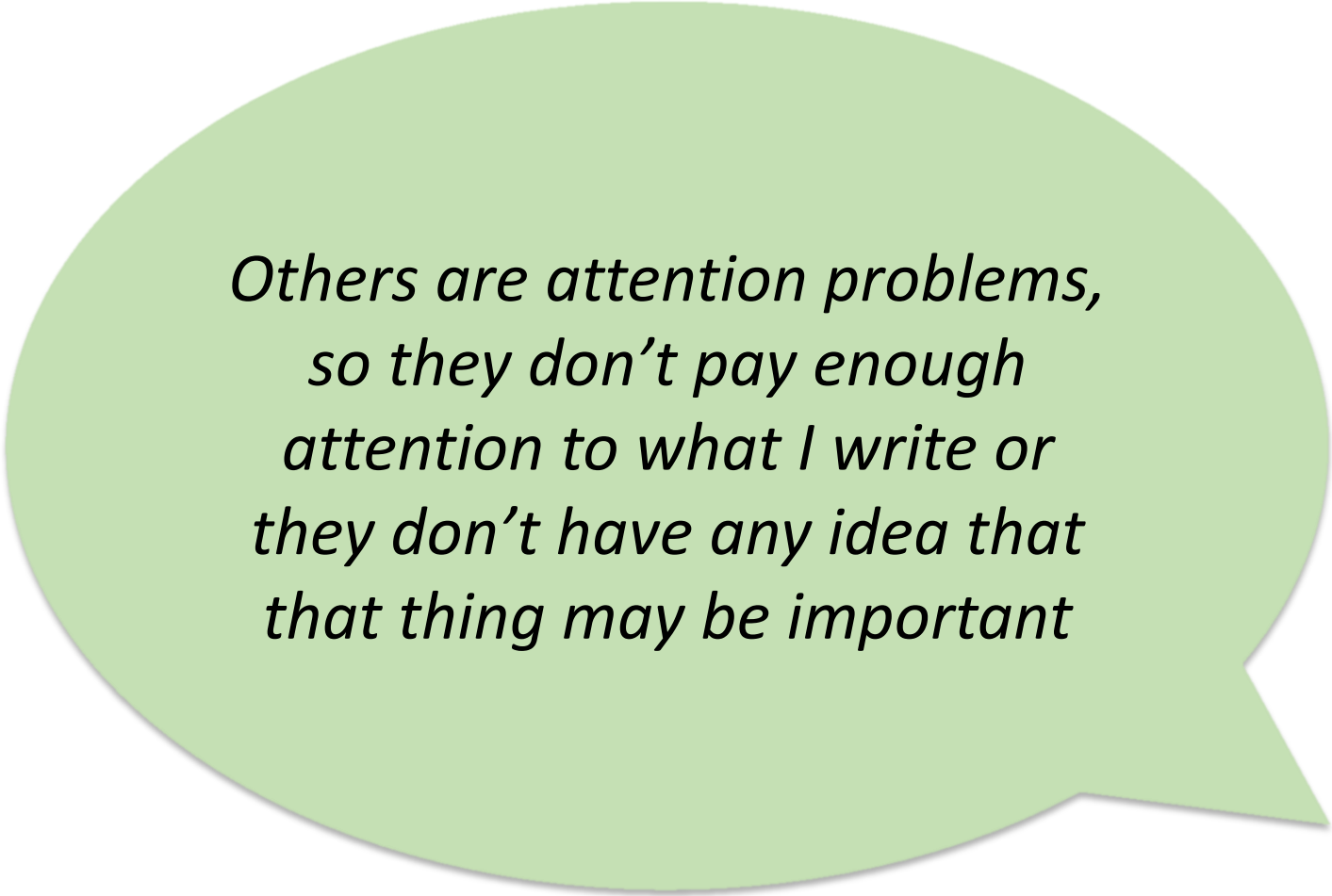
Unwillingness to talk

Content...



*it's not because they don't
know English. It's because they
haven't studied. Whether they
haven't studied because it's too
difficult or because it's in
English is another matter but I
can't go that far*

Cognitive...



*Others are attention problems,
so they don't pay enough
attention to what I write or
they don't have any idea that
that thing may be important*

Problems encountered in target situation

Language problems

Content problems

Classroom management

Lecturers' problems

No problems

Students' problems

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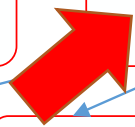
Understanding

Lack of attention

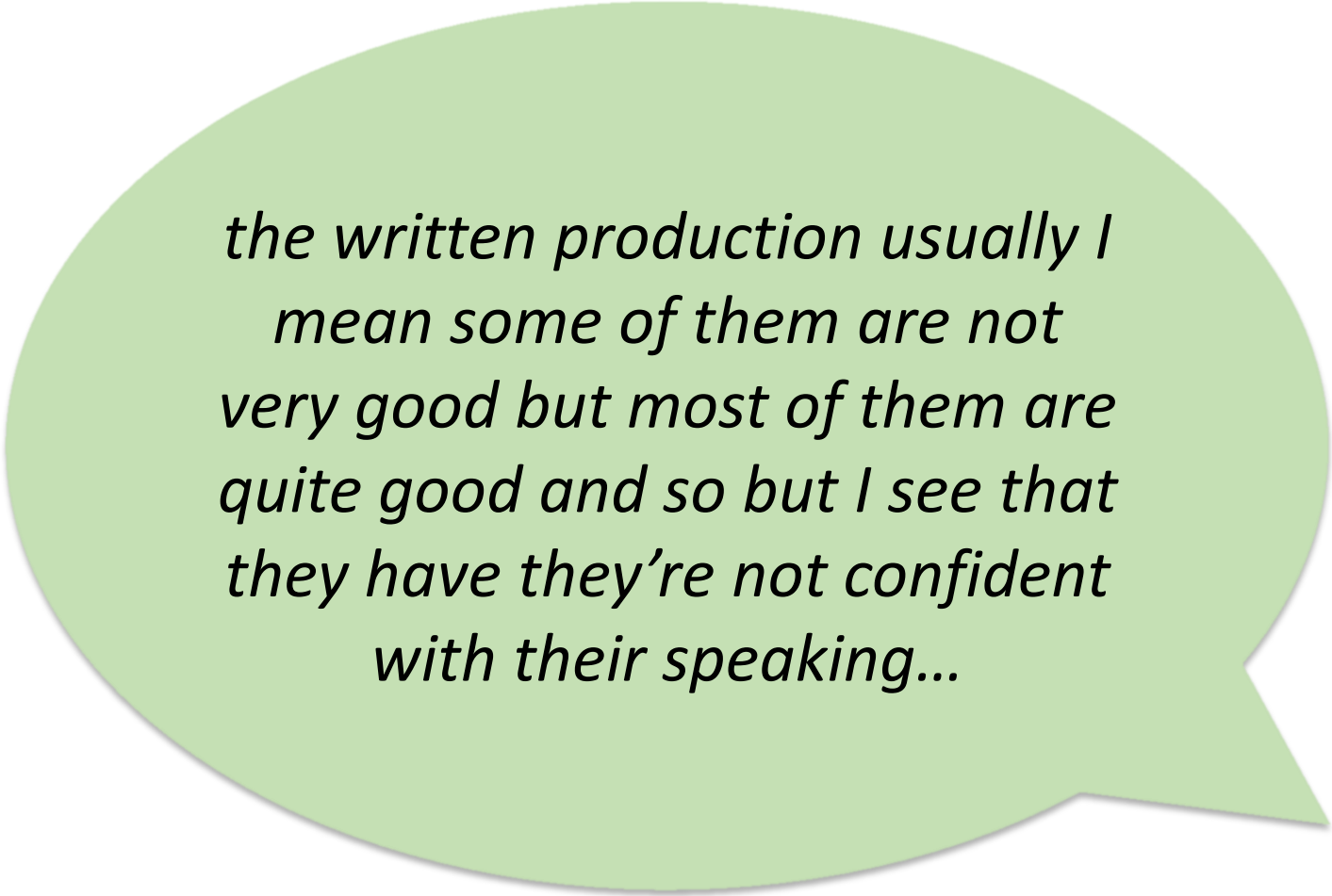
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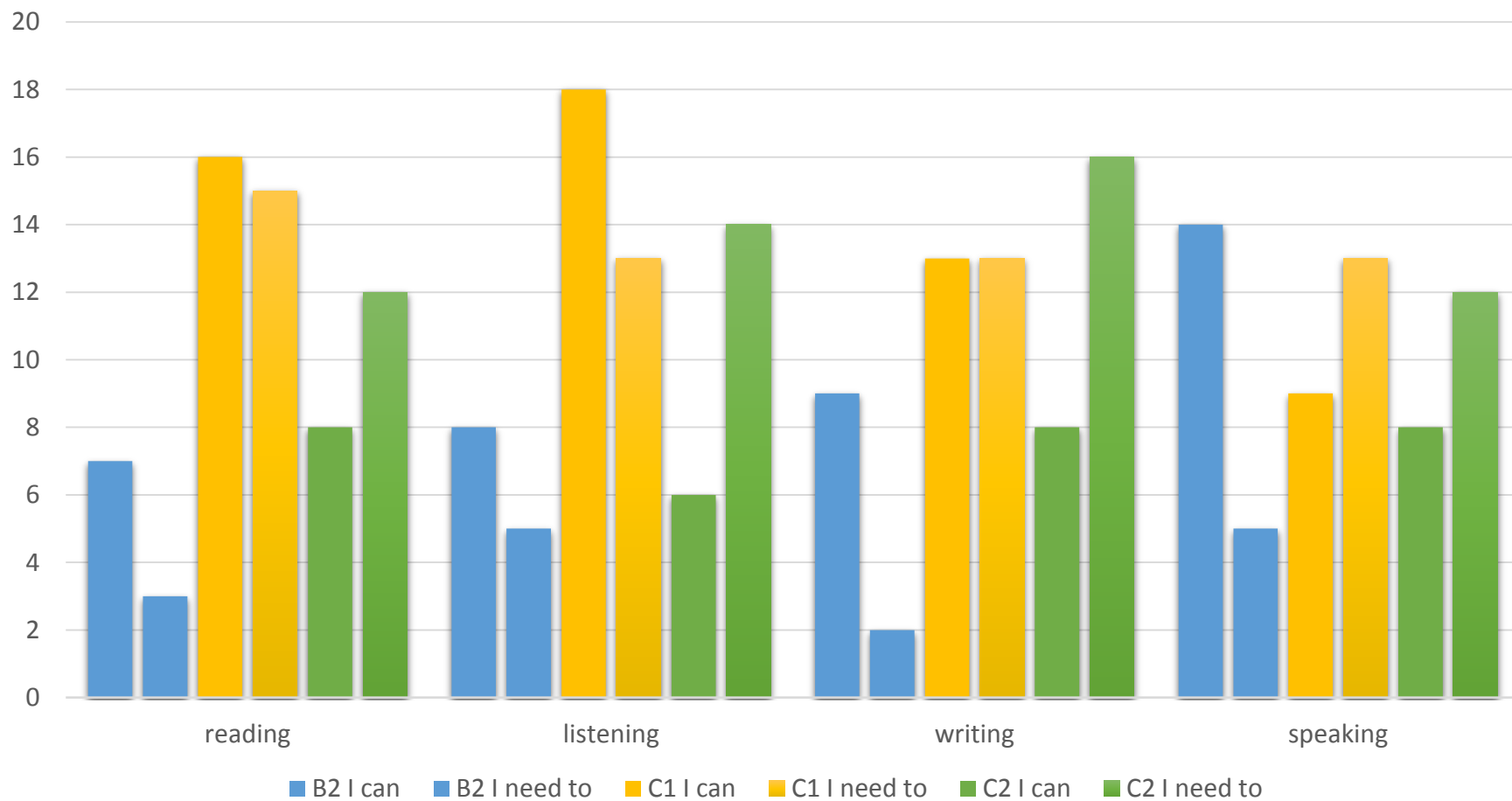
Skills...

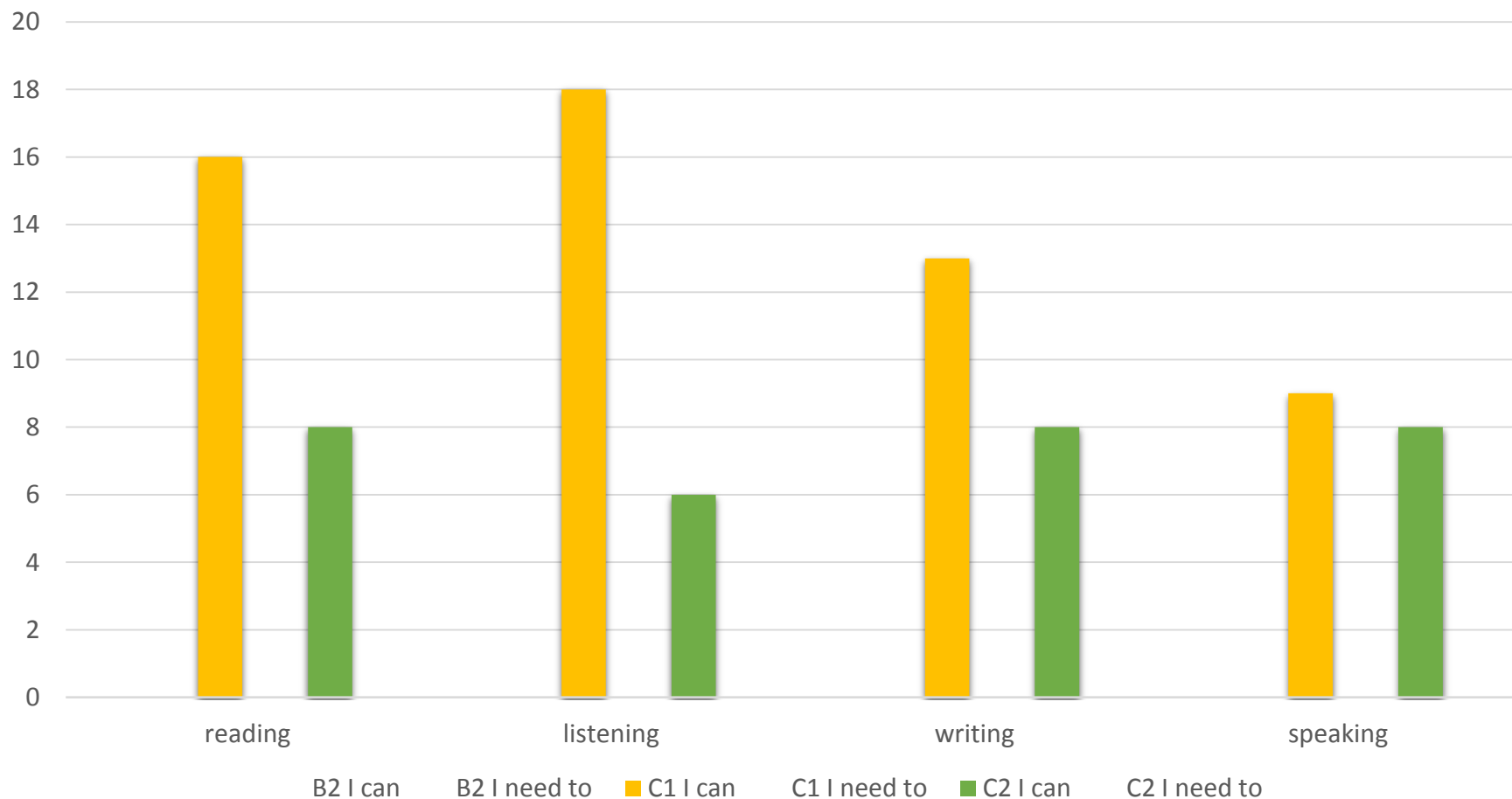


*the written production usually I
mean some of them are not
very good but most of them are
quite good and so but I see that
they have they're not confident
with their speaking...*

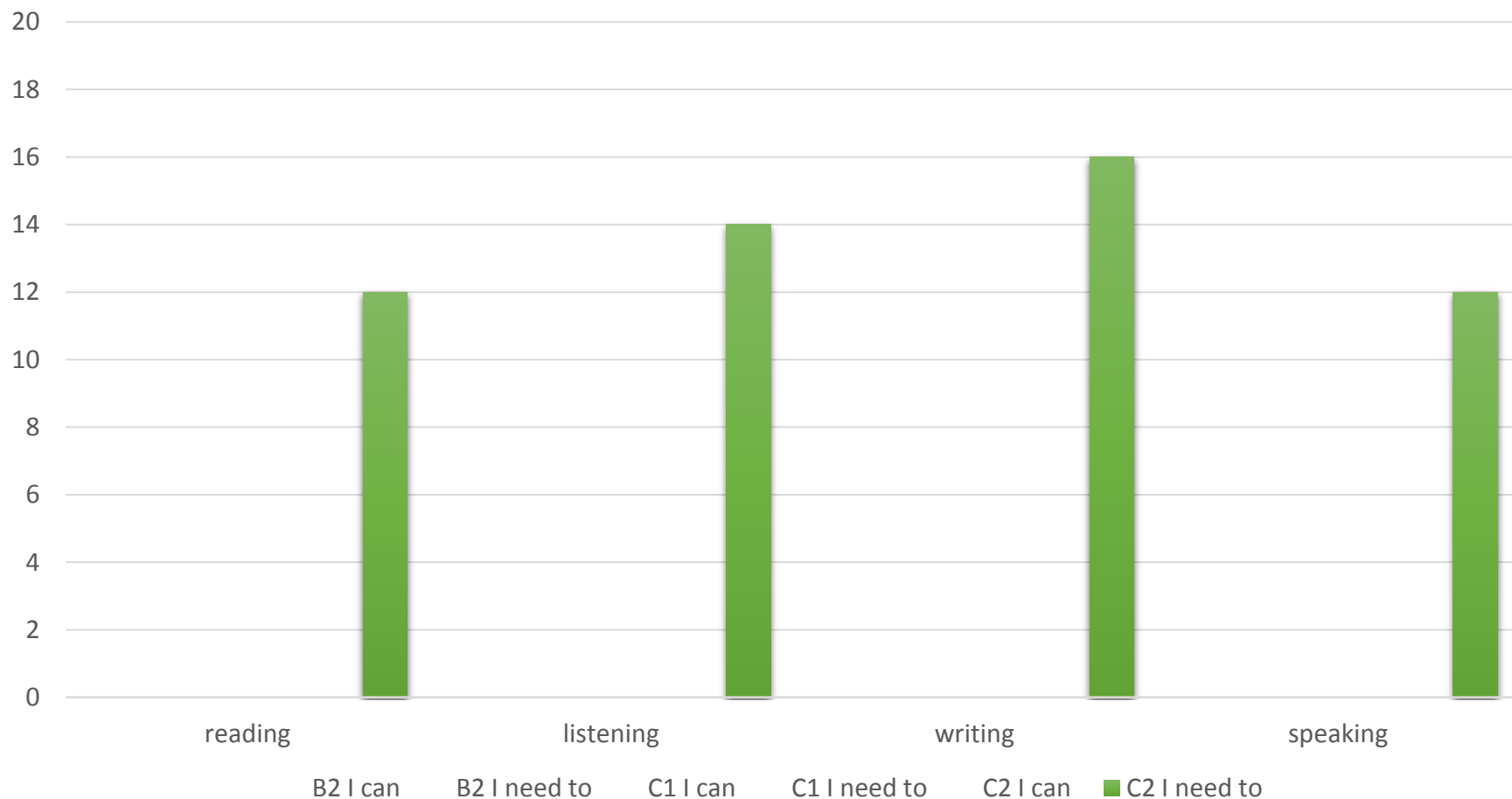
Main findings

Mixed methods: QUAN and QUAL datasets merged





speaking weakest skill



writing: highest level needed

Main findings

- Focus on improving speaking and writing skills

Main findings

Writing	v. difficult	quite difficult	quite easy	v. easy
once a week or less	8.2%	45.7%	39.7%	6.5%
2-3 times a week	7.0%	29.6%	51.3%	12.2%
every day	7.4%	37.3%	44.4%	11.0%

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→chi-square $p= 0.004$ = significant relationship between frequency of practice and difficulty of skill

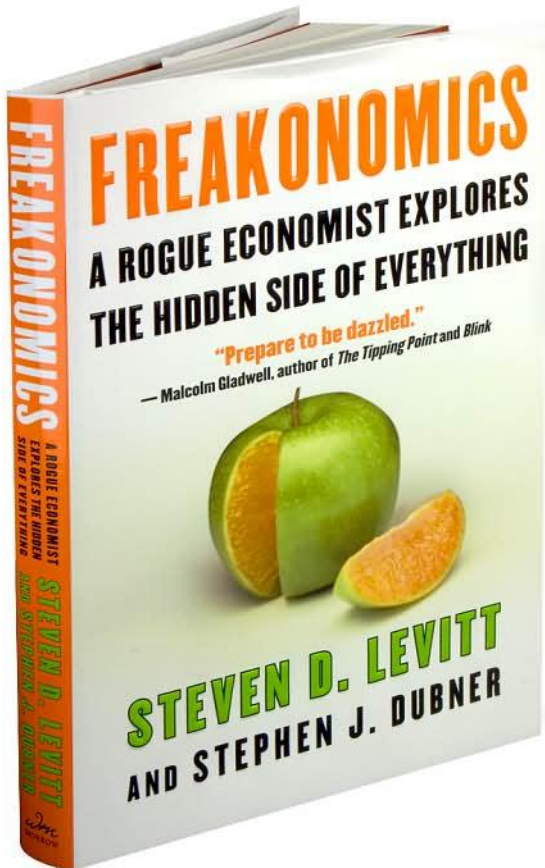
→providing more focussed practice in these skills

Research question 3

What elements of the syllabus can be negotiated with the learners considering the constraints of this particular context and experiences in other contexts?

Written exam 50%; Portfolio 25%; Oral exam 25%

Written exam 50%; **Portfolio 25%**; Oral exam 25%



Elements negotiated:

- contents of Portfolio **including oral topics**
- language skills to be practised for Portfolio contents
- length & number of items/questions
- assessment means

Written exam 50%; **Portfolio 25%**; Oral exam 25%

March 2017

Negotiation classes with 88 students present (group A & B)

Small group work – 20 minutes

Whole group discussion and consensus

Written exam 50%; **Portfolio 25%**; Oral exam 25%

Aims

1. to negotiate contents of Portfolio incl. length and assessment means
2. to provide focussed practice in speaking skills – giving opinions, justifying choices, agreeing & disagreeing

Result...

ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE – SPECIALISED LANGUAGE COURSE FOR ECONOMICS - ADVANCED (27158)

PORTFOLIO 2016/2017

Instructions for portfolio completion

Type your work on separate paper and use full sentences in your answers. If there is a word limit, note how many words you have used in brackets each time.

Remember to put your name and student number on all work submitted for evaluation.

All websites/books consulted for this Portfolio must be referenced and listed at the end in a separate section entitled “References”. Failure to do so may result in failure of the Portfolio.

Portfolio submission

You must send me a copy of this Portfolio via the Turnitin website (Word document, pdf) by the Portfolio deadline, which to remind you is: Thursday 15 June 2017 12.00 midday. Instructions as to how to submit the Portfolio electronically and the deadlines for the other exam sessions for this academic year can be found in the Reserve Collection.

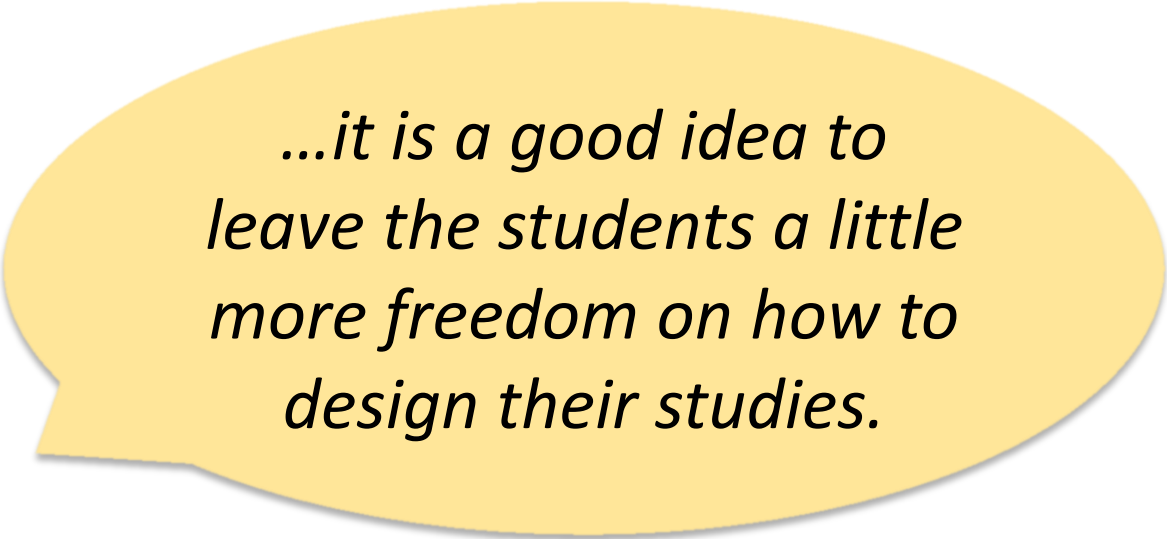
A paper copy of the Portfolio should also be taken to the Faculty of Economics Secretariat (4th floor E building) by the deadline.

Evaluation...

Do you think it's a good idea to be able to negotiate the contents of (some of) your course?

Evaluation...

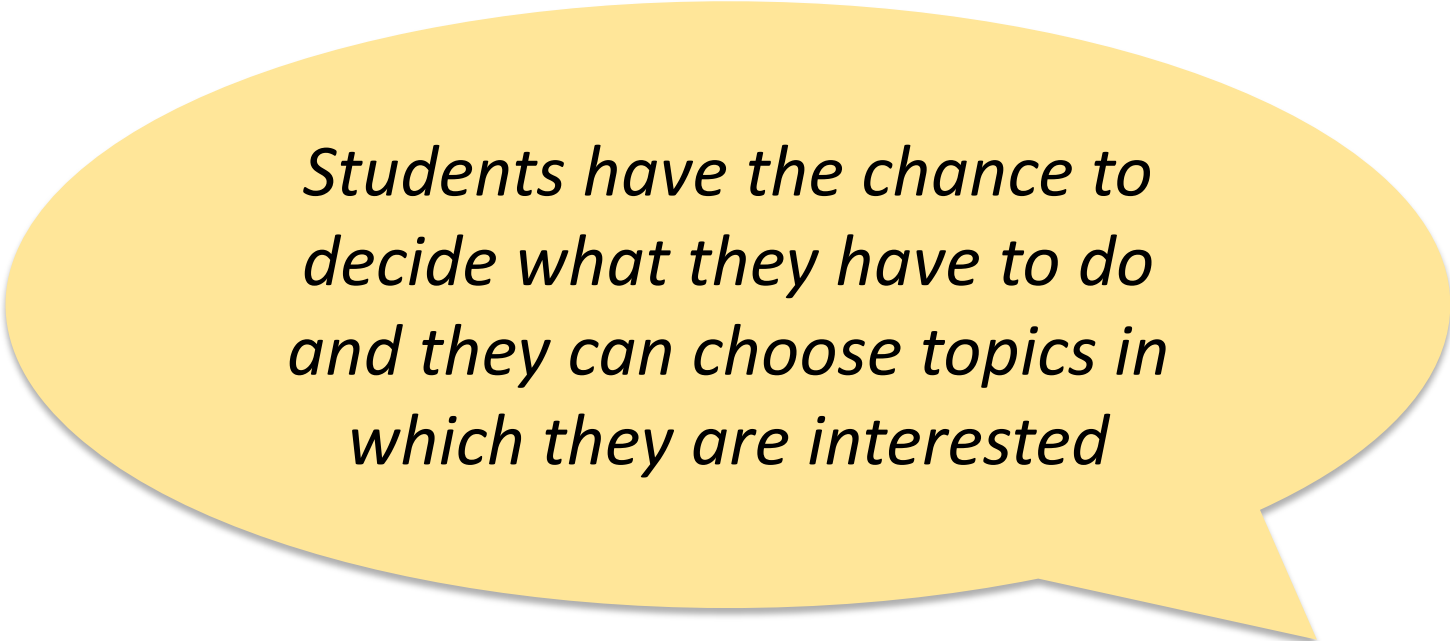
Do you think it's a good idea to be able to negotiate the contents of (some of) your course?



...it is a good idea to leave the students a little more freedom on how to design their studies.

Evaluation...


Do you think it's a good idea to be able to negotiate the contents of (some of) your course?



Students have the chance to decide what they have to do and they can choose topics in which they are interested

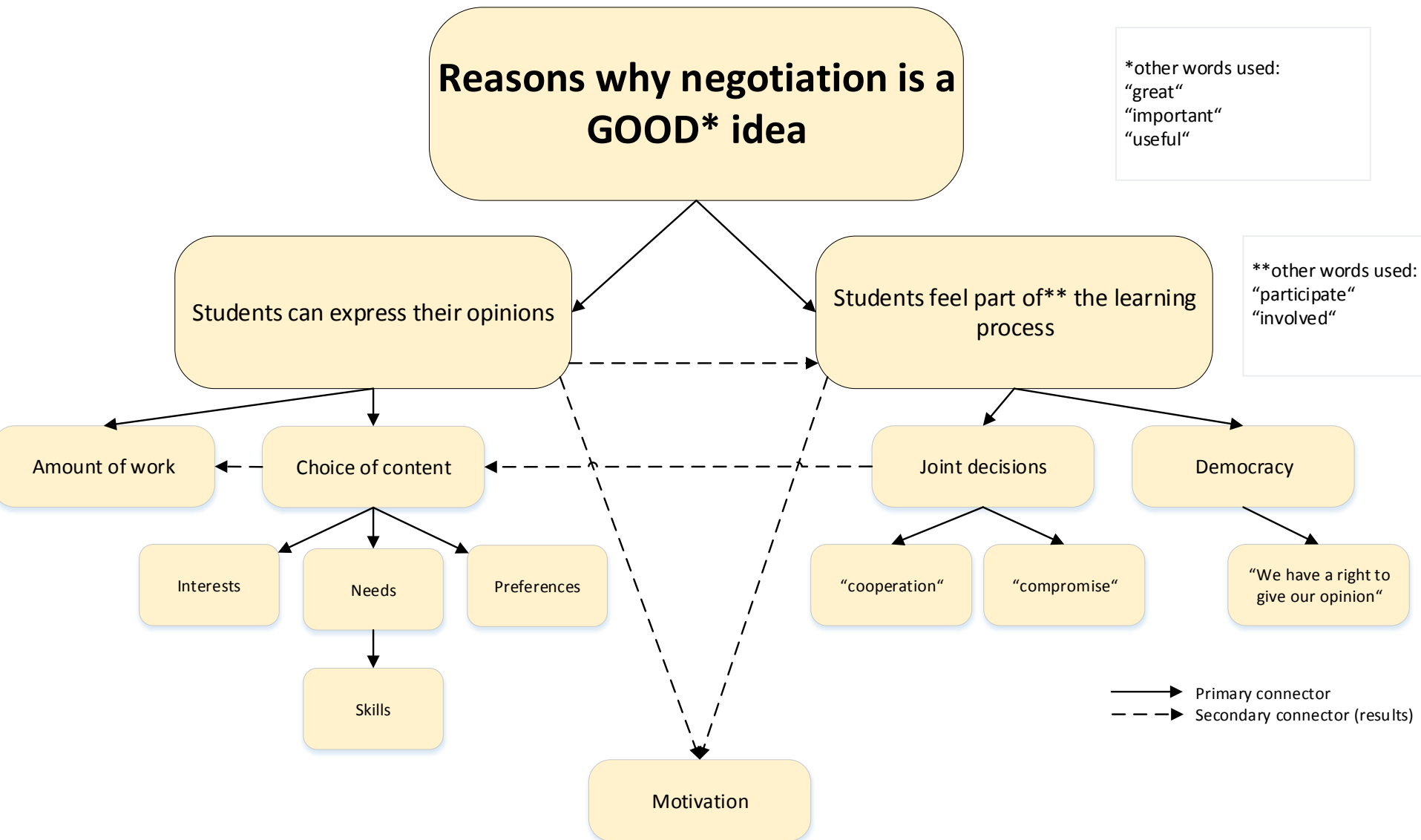
Evaluation...

Do you think it's a good idea to be able to negotiate the contents of (some of) your course?



*I think it demonstrates
that we have also a right
to give our opinion and I
think it is very important*

Coding of students' responses to the question:
'Why do you think being able to negotiate the contents of (some of) your course is a good idea?'



Inclusion...

Blended approach to syllabus design

Product: focus on skills

“**Process** syllabuses have therefore evolved as a means of planning, implementing and evaluating negotiation in the classroom, and the decisions to which teachers and students may jointly arrive” (Breen & Littlejohn 2000a: 2).

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Blended approach to syllabus design

Product: focus on skills

“**Process** syllabuses have therefore evolved as a means of planning, implementing and evaluating negotiation in the classroom, and **the decisions to which teachers and students may jointly arrive**” (Breen & Littlejohn 2000a: 2).

Inclusion – learners included in the decision-making stages of the course

Inclusion...

Blended approach to syllabus design

Product: focus on skills

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“**negotiation** can construct and reflect learning as an emancipatory process” (Breen & Littlejohn 2000b: 21)

Inclusion...

negotiation → learner emancipation → learner autonomy

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“the ability to take charge of one’s learning... to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning”

(Holec 1981: 3)

Inclusion...

If students are supposed to take responsibility for their own learning, it is time to give them more control over the way their learning experiences are structured.

Therefore...

Negotiation “comprises overt and shared decision-making” so that individual learning agendas can be accommodated within the group leading to teaching and learning which is as effective as possible (Breen & Littlejohn 2000b: 9)

Therefore...

Negotiation “comprises overt and shared decision-making” so that individual learning agendas can be accommodated within the group **leading to teaching and learning which is as effective as possible** (Breen & Littlejohn 2000b: 9)

It ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it...

...and that's what gets results!

References

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- Freakonomics: <https://parparvdotcom.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/freakonomics.jpg>
- Other photos: Jemma Prior



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