

Cultural and Linguistic Needs for International Researchers and Scholars

A quantitative data analysis report conducted by

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for

language connectED

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS	5
CONFIDENCE	6
GENERAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING/WORKSHOPS	6
ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS/SUPPORT	8
BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION	10
FUTURE WORKSHOPS	11

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1. Percentage of native and non-native English speakers	5
Figure 2. Sample educational level or professional status	5
Figure 3. Confidence in English communication in professional contexts	6
Figure 4. Institutions offer communication/training workshops	7
Figure 5. Attendance at institution's communication workshops	7
Figure 6. Communication workshops meet participants needs as non-native English speakers	8
Figure 7. English-language skills support available through participants' institution	8
Figure 8. Participants' use of English-language learning/training at their institutions	9
Table 1. Correlations between confidence and use of English-language training	10
Figure 9. Participants' barriers to attending trainings/workshops	10
Figure 10. Participants' interest in future workshops for non-native English-speaking scholars	11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study sought to assess the perceptions of availability, usefulness, and accessibility of institution-based English-language learning programs for non-native English-speaking scholars, as well as their needs for future training.

The sample consisted of 937 respondents from 84 countries, most of whom were non-native English speakers and postdoctoral researchers. In general, they had a relatively high level of confidence in their English-speaking abilities.

While a large majority of participant's institutions offer general professional development communication training, almost one-quarter did not know if their institution offered these or not. Of the participants at an institution that offers these trainings, a small majority of respondents attends them and feels like the trainings address their needs as non-native English speakers. Most participants did not know what types of English-language skill support their institution offers and, unsurprisingly, they do not use these services.

The more confident one feels in their English-language skills, the less likely they are to use English-language support skills. However, for those who do use English-language support skills, they are more likely to use more than one. Similarly, confidence was related to desires for future workshops. Overall, those with higher confidence were more interested in topics such as "Cross-Cultural Communication/Cultural Intelligence" and "Elevator Pitch," while those with lower confidence were more likely to be interested in topics such as "Language and Culture for Small Talk/Networking" and "Presentation Skills."

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Your sample consisted of 937 respondents. 91% consider themselves non-native English speakers (see Figure 1). 93% are Postdoctoral Researchers (see Figure 2). Participants come from 84 different countries, primarily China (N = 159), India (N = 140), France (N = 48), Spain (N = 47).

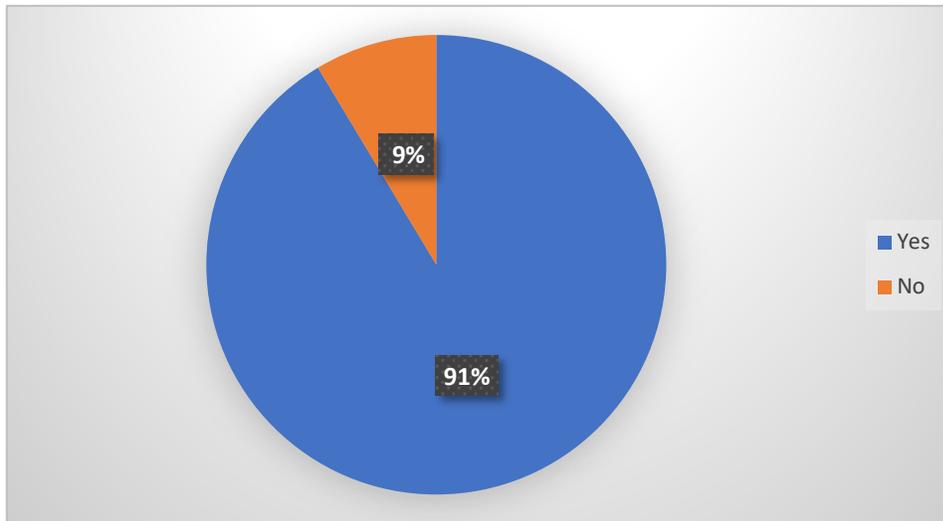


Figure 1. Percentage of native and non-native English speakers

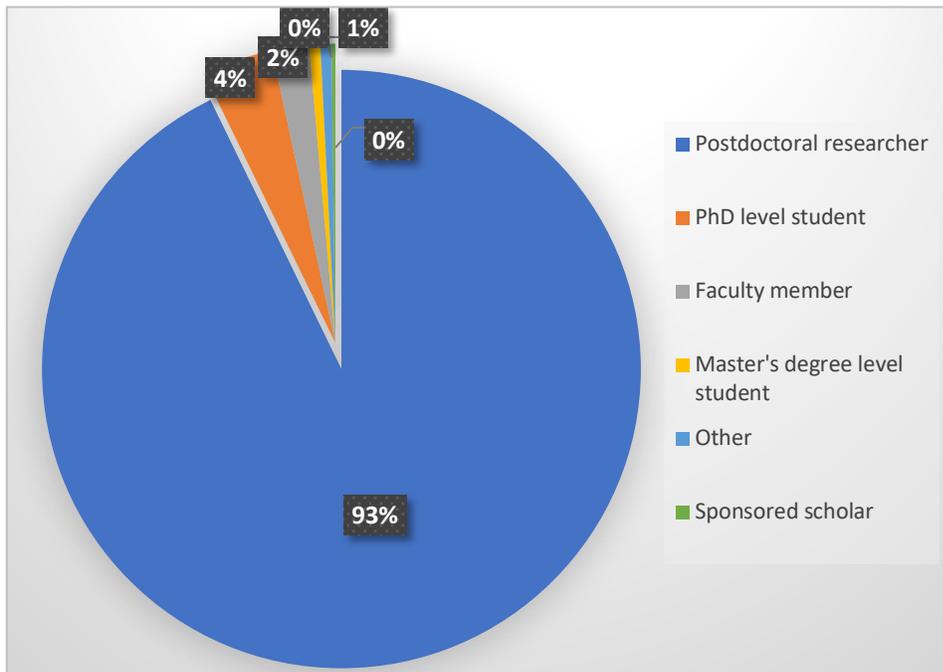


Figure 2. Sample educational level or professional status

CONFIDENCE

The sample had a mean confidence of 3.99 ($SD = .87$) (on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest) with most respondents (40.80%) rating themselves a 4, followed by 5 (31.80%). Very few respondents rated themselves as 1 (.5%) or 2 (3.90%). Figure 3 displays the distribution of scores for confidence in communicating in English in professional contexts. Confidence was used as an independent variable in some of the subsequent analyses.

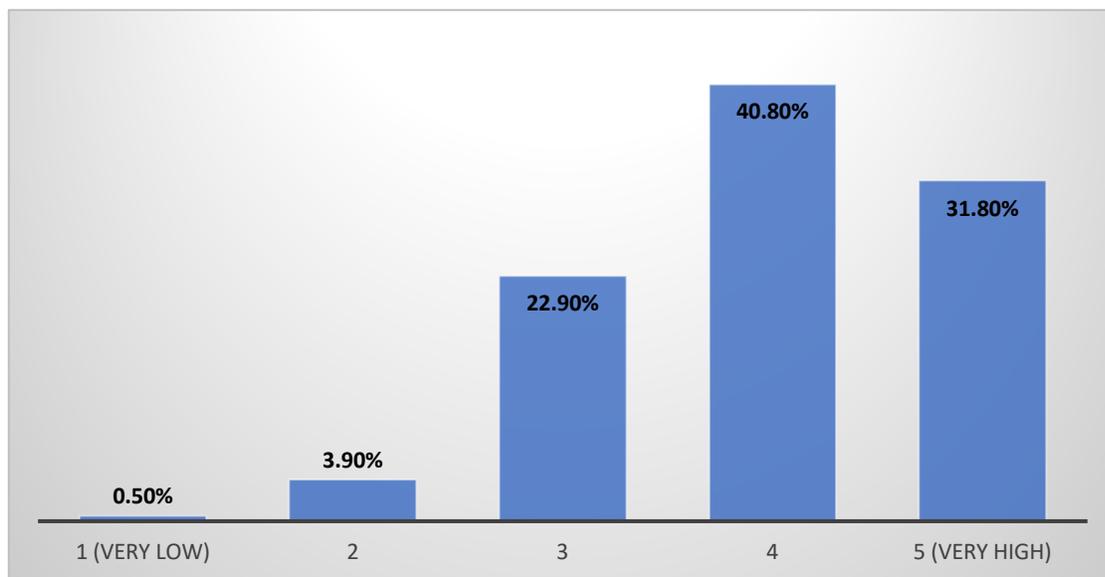


Figure 3. Confidence in English communication in professional contexts

GENERAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING/WORKSHOPS

Seventy percent of respondents stated that their institution *does* offer general professional development communication training, while almost one-quarter of respondents did not know if these programs were available at their institution (see Figure 4).

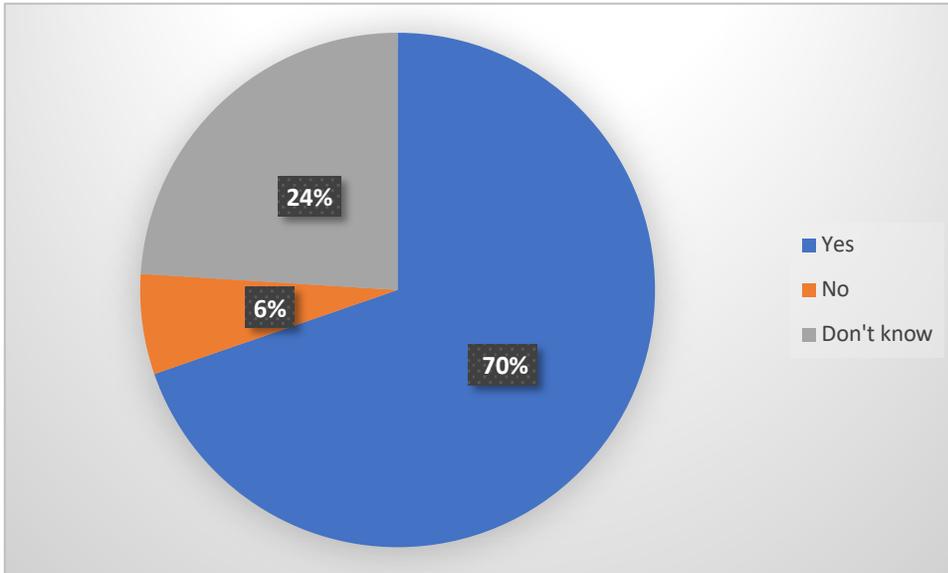


Figure 4. Institutions offer communication training/workshops

Of those who responded that their institution *does* offer these types of programs, 56% stated that they attend and 44% stated that they do not (see Figure 5).

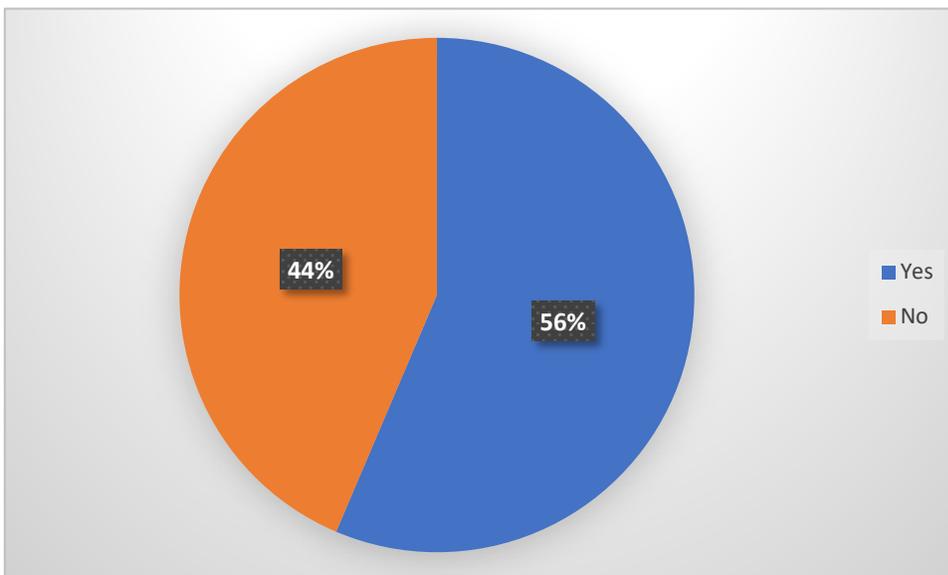


Figure 5. Attendance at institution's communication workshops

Of those who reported that they *do* attend these workshops/trainings, 57% said the workshops address their needs as a non-native English speaker, while 40% said they did not. (3% were confused and said that they do not attend the workshops.) This data is presented in Figure 6.

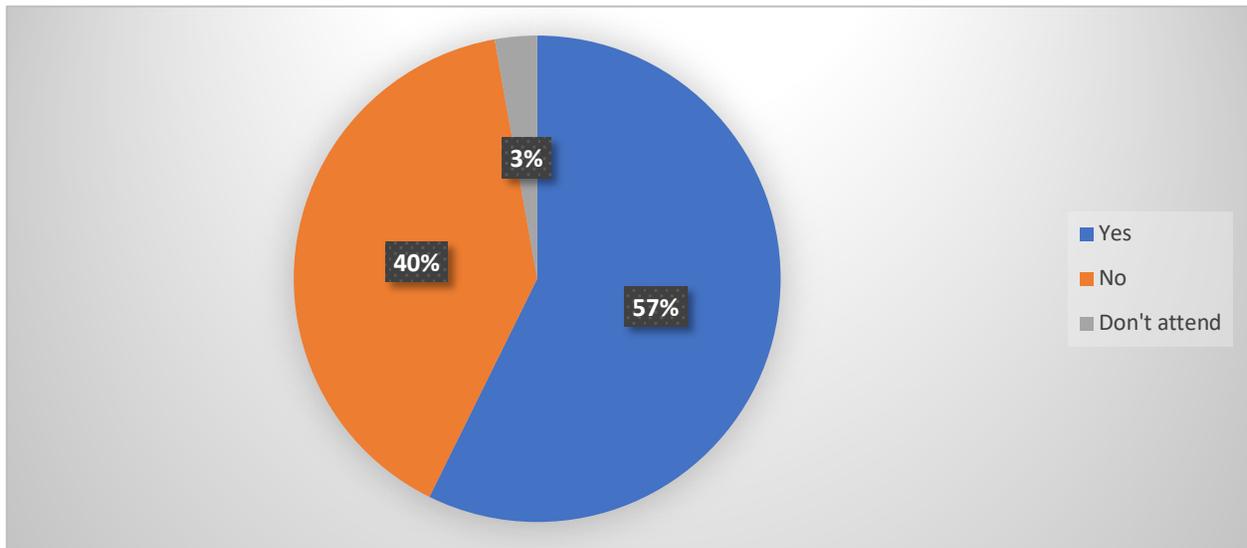


Figure 6. *Communication workshops meet participants' needs as non-native English speakers*

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS SUPPORT

Participants were largely uninformed about their institution's English language skill support. Nearly 58% did not know what types of support were accessible to them to through their institution (see Figure 7). Of those who did know, institution-based English language programs and workshops hosted/supported by the institution were the most popular (28.9% and 25.3% respectively). Online learning tools (12.2%) and private tutoring (8.5%) were also available.

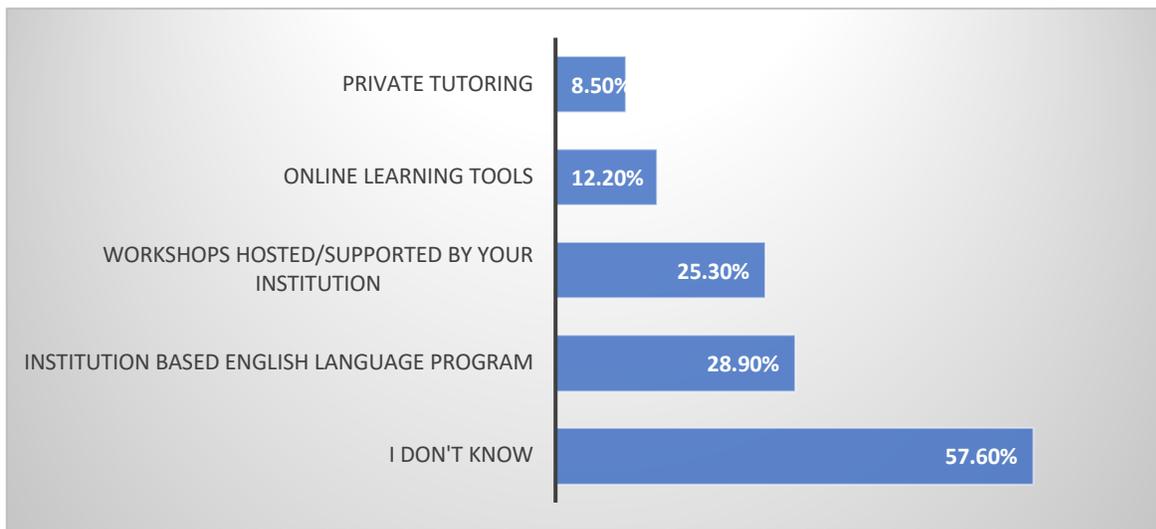


Figure 7. *English language skills support available through their institution*

A large majority of participants (78.5%) did not use any of English language training at their current institution. Of those who did, workshops and English language programs were the most popular (9.7% and 8.8% respectively; See Figure 8).

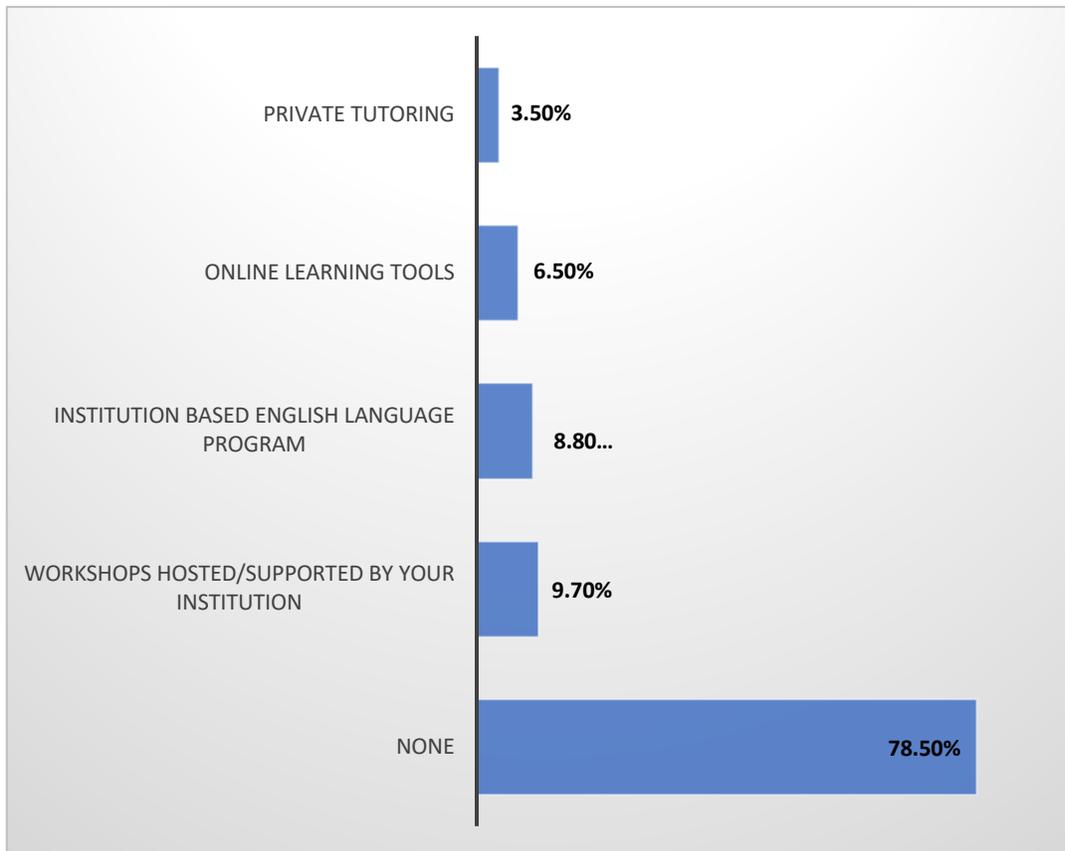


Figure 8. Participants' use of English language learning/training at their institutions

In order to determine if confidence in English language (from above) was related to use of English language learning/training, I conducted a bivariate correlation (see Table 1). Results indicated a significant negative relationship between confidence and use of all types of English-language learning/training, and a significant positive relationship with use of none of the learning/training. *This indicates that as confidence increases, participation in English-language learning/training decreases.*

Furthermore, use of all types of learning/training was significantly positively correlated with use of other types of learning/training. *This indicates that if you participate in one type of English-language learning/training provided by your institution, you are more likely to participate in other types.*

Table 1. Correlations between confidence and use of English-language training

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Confidence	-				
2. English-language program	-.15**	-			
3. Private tutoring	-.09**	.08**	-		
4. Workshops	-.07*	.23**	.11**	-	
5. Online learning tools	-.07*	.18**	.11**	.21**	-
6. None	.21**	-.59**	-.37**	-.63**	-.51**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

By far, *the biggest barrier to attending workshops/trainings was release time from work duties (66.3%).*

Being unaware of the calendar events trailed with 43.2%. Figure 9 displays the full results for this item.

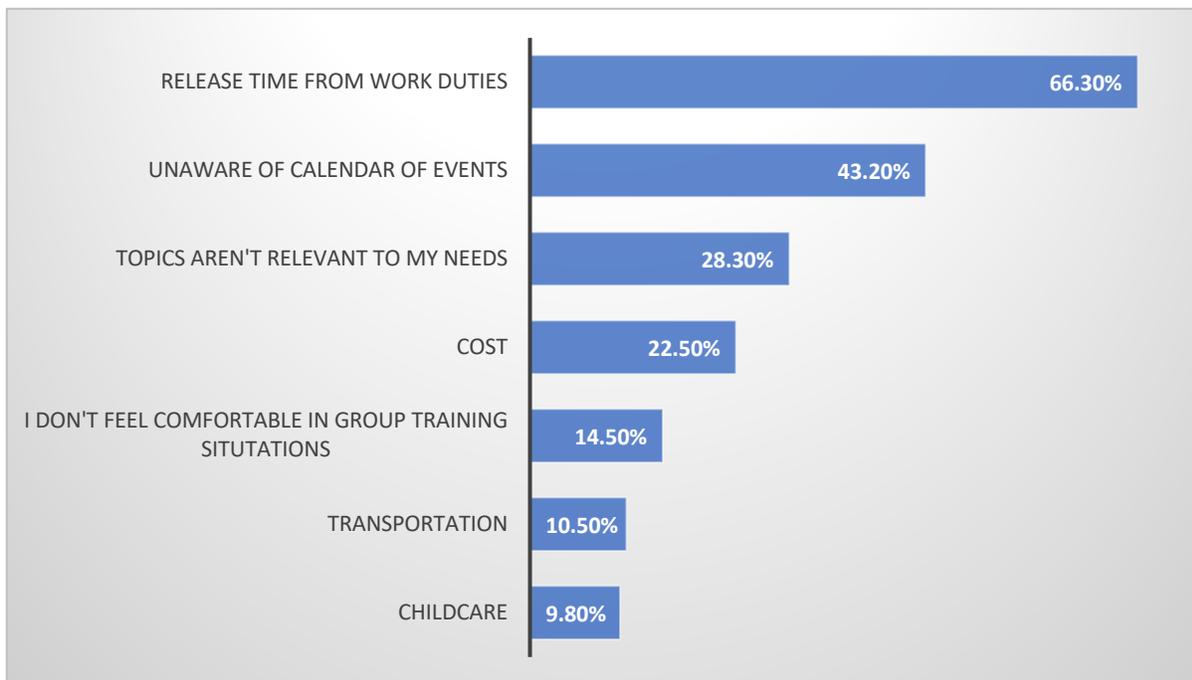


Figure 9. Participants' barriers to attending trainings/workshops

FUTURE WORKSHOPS

The most popular four choices for future communication workshops for non-native English-speaking scholars were Pronunciation/Accent Reduction (54.6%), Presentation Skills (52.4%), Language for Clarification, Interruption, and Negotiation (50.6%), and Language and Culture for Small Talk/Networking (48.9%). The least popular option was Communication Through Technology (17.3%). Figure 10 displays the frequency distribution for this item.

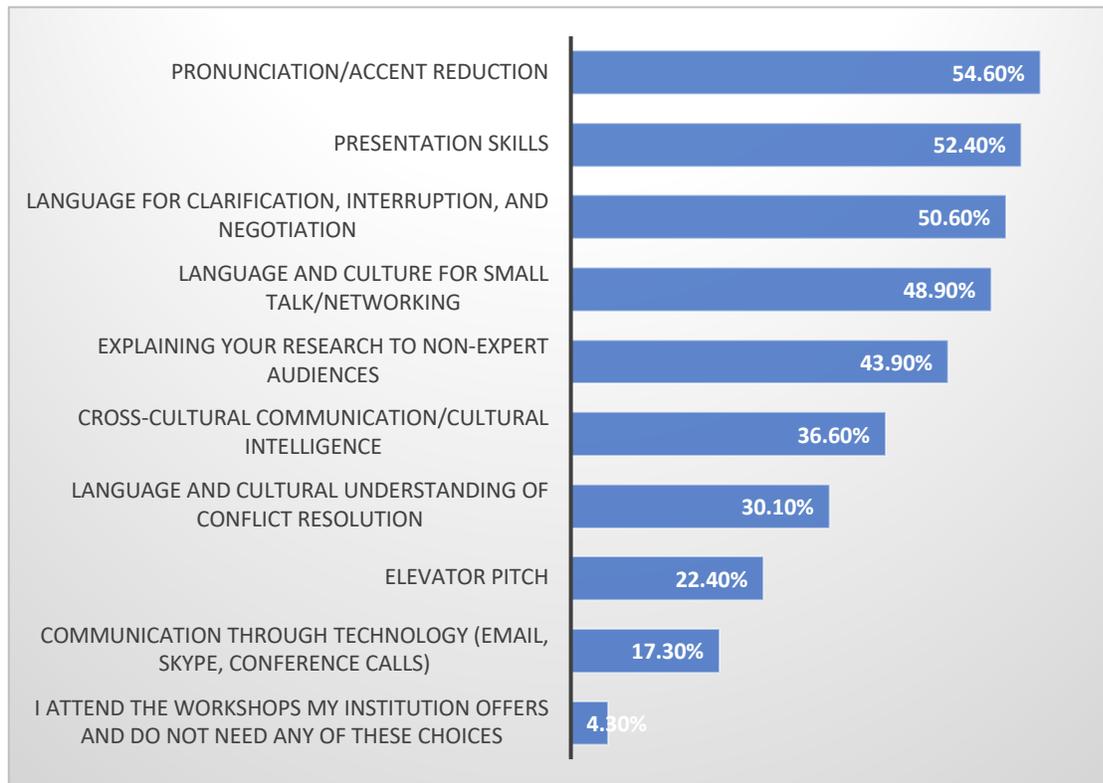


Figure 10. Participants' interest in future workshops for non-native English-speaking scholars

I conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if there were significant differences in future workshop preferences by confidence level. ANOVA results indicate that *the more confident one is in their English-speaking skills, the less likely they are interested in "Language and culture for small talk/networking."* ($F(4,932) = 14.85, p < .001$). Participants with low confidence (1 or 2) requested this topic significantly more than those with higher confidence (4 or 5). I found a similar trend for "Presentation skills" ($F(4,932) = 8.18, p < .001$).

I found the opposite trend for “Cross-cultural communication/cultural intelligence” and “Elevator pitch.” *Those with higher confidence had greater interest in “Cross-cultural communication/cultural intelligence”* ($F(4,932) = 2.54, p < .05$) , *and “Elevator pitch”* ($F(4,932) = 9.27, p < .001$) *than those with lower confidence.*

For “Pronunciation/Accent reduction,” and “Communication through technology (email, Skype, conference calls),” those with moderate to high confidence (3-4) expressed a significantly higher interest than those with very high (5) confidence ($F(4,932) = 13.02, p < .001$) and ($F(4,932) = 6.11, p < .001$). Participants with high confidence (4) endorsed “Language for clarification, interruption, and negotiation” higher than those with moderate (3) or very high (5) confidence ($F(4,932) = 5.34, p < .001$). No differences by confidence level were found for “Explaining your research to non-expert audiences,” and “Language and cultural understanding of conflict resolution.”