

Raising a Bible Translation Workforce for Nigeria: A Review of the TCNN Programme

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Bible Translation (BT) Needs in Nigeria



512

Number of Nigerian
languages



40

Number of Nigerian
languages with full
Bible

70

Number of Nigerian
languages with New
Testament only



About 90

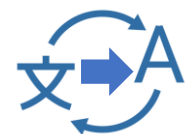
Number of Nigerian
languages with just Scripture
portions

About 184



Number of Nigerian
languages that are likely to
need a translation project
starting

242



Number of current
Nigerian language
active projects

Source: SIL Nigeria, June 2023.

About TCNN LBTD

About the **Linguistics and Bible Translation Department (LBTD)** of the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria

Linguistics and Bible Translation Department (LBTD) has been existing in Nigeria since 2005. In 2005, there were only **3** students. Now the students in LBTD has grown to **78**.

TCNN LBTD is a place for raising and reskilling local translators and upcoming consultants, and preparing people for other areas of Bible translation.

TCNN LBTD in 2015



Photo credit: Ben Kuwitzky

Heads of Department TCNN LBTD



Dr. David Crozier
2005 – 2013



Dr. John Hollman
2013 – 2016



Dr. Matthew Harley
2016 – 2019



Dr. Russell Norton
2019 till date

Programs of TCNN LBTD

LBTD run the following programs:

**Bachelor of Arts degree
in Linguistics and Bible
Translation**

**Postgraduate Diploma
in Linguistics and
Bible Translation**

**Master of Arts degree in
Linguistics and Bible
Translation**

Areas of Specialization at TCNN LBTD

Postgraduate Diploma

- ➡ Language Documentation and Description
- ➡ Koine Greek Translation
- ➡ Classical Hebrew Translation

Master of Arts Degree

- ➡ Language Documentation and Description
- ➡ Koine Greek Translation
- ➡ Classical Hebrew Translation

Stirtz (2015:1) explained 5 approaches to linguistic analysis

Traditional

Institutional

Participant

Grammar book

Participant and grammar book

Stirtz, Timothy M. 2015. Rapid Grammar Collection as an Approach to Language Development. SIL Electronic Working Papers, 2015-004, <https://www.sil.org/resources/publications/entry/62483> (accessed September 11, 2023).

Stirtz (2015:1) explains the institutional approach:

“Another approach by SIL has been to send mother-tongue speakers with academic potential to universities or other institutions for linguistic training. During their coursework or afterwards, they analyze the grammar of their language and are regarded as experts who can inform the communities about the best choices for the writing system.”

Stirtz (2015:2) says institutional approach is good for Nigeria in

“...the institutional approach may work best in places like Nigeria, where there are far more languages needing development than available linguistic personnel can individually assist.”

From the inception of TCNN LBTD till date, students have done the linguistic analysis of **98 languages**.

These include the phonological and grammatical analysis of each of these languages. They also collect over **1500 words**.

Olsen (2008) highlighted three hindrances to the application of knowledge to workplace situation in Africa:

Obstacles from Student Expectations

Obstacles from Application Timeline

Obstacles from Methods of Teaching

You would see more about these in the responses to the questionnaires

Olsen, Elizabeth J. 2008. Training for Translation: How Can We be More Integrative in Our Approach? A View from the Formal Education Perspective in Africa. <http://diu.edu/documents/gialens/Vol2-1/Olsen-Training-for-Translation.pdf> (accessed April 1 2023).

What TCNN LBTD does

- My experience with BA1 students in Jan 2022
- Also potential students are asked why they want to join LBTD during the interviews.
- Fieldwork for two semesters out of a 4 year BA program
- Few of our students did 6 weeks internship with SIL
- Mentoring, evaluation from students, different methods of teaching

Why would someone have many years of experience in Bible translation and still need TCNN LBTD

It is holistic and can help a person specialize in an area or help to discover an area of strength.

There are many courses attached to an area of specialization that cannot be taught in one workshop.

In my experience some individuals in Bible translation (BT) organizations would prefer workshop training to academic training? These are the reasons?

It is practical

It is time saving

It helps to solve specific problems

What a workshop training might not be able to achieve

It might not help people to specialize in a specific area because there are a lot of things that can not be taught in one workshop.

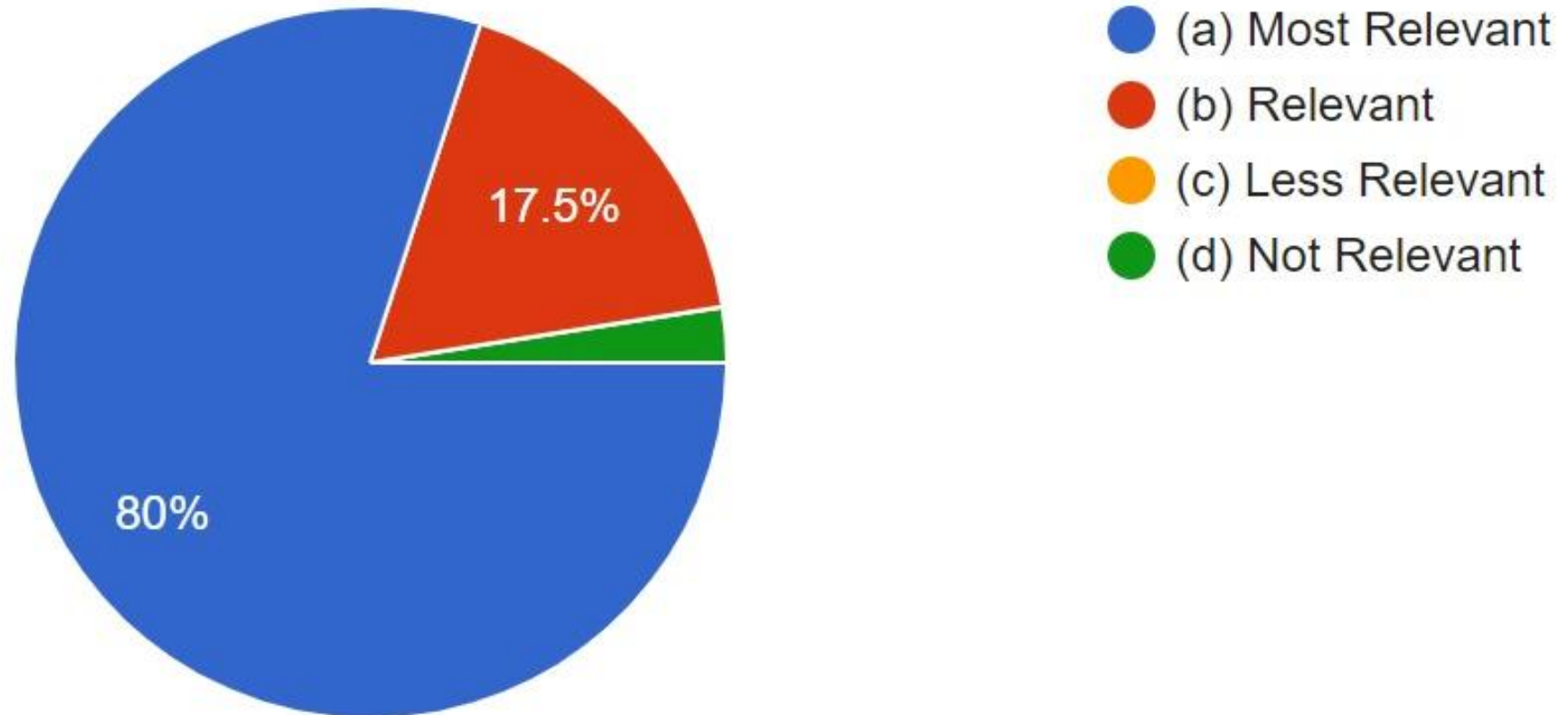
Participants at linguistic workshops do not learn as much as the facilitators. It benefits the facilitators more than the mother tongue speakers because facilitators have previous training.

What is the impact of TCNN on Bible translation in Nigeria?

To determine the impact of LBTD on BT in Nigeria, I sent out questionnaires to past students of TCNN LBTD. There were 40 responses.

The Relevance of LBTD, TCNN to roles in BT organizations

All 40 past students except ONE agreed that the course they studied at TCNN is relevant to their past or current role.



Over 25 courses were listed by 32 past students of TCNN LBTD as being relevant to their current roles in BT.

These courses as noted by these past students help them in literacy work, exegesis, transcription of sounds, Bible translation, BT advisory checks, dictionary making, discourse analysis and so on. More importantly, it is helping them to train others as well.

However, only 12 of these past students have written at least one of the following categories after studying at TCNN:

Grammar write-up

Discourse write-up

Orthography write-up

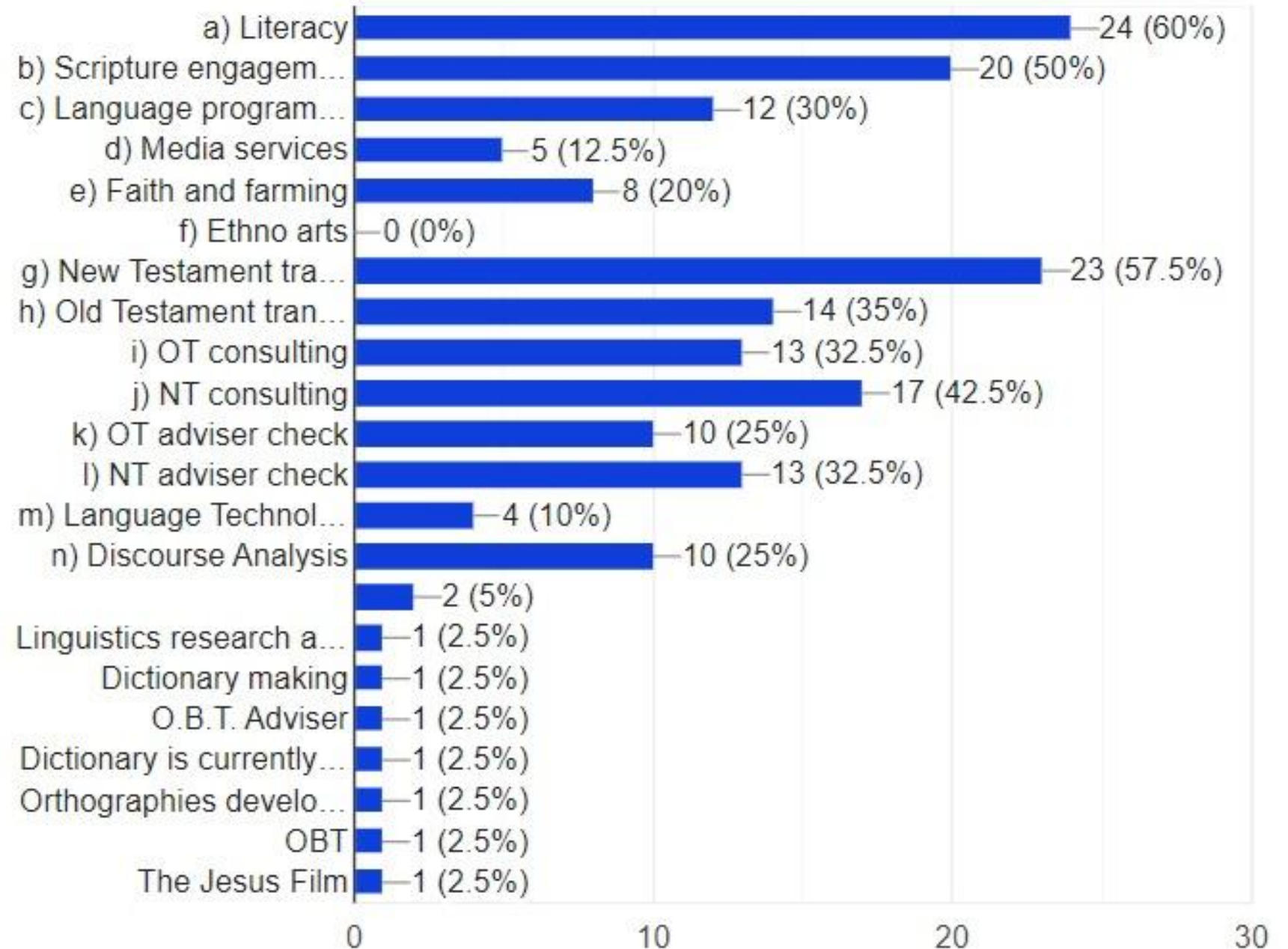
Sociolinguistic write-up

Phonology write-up

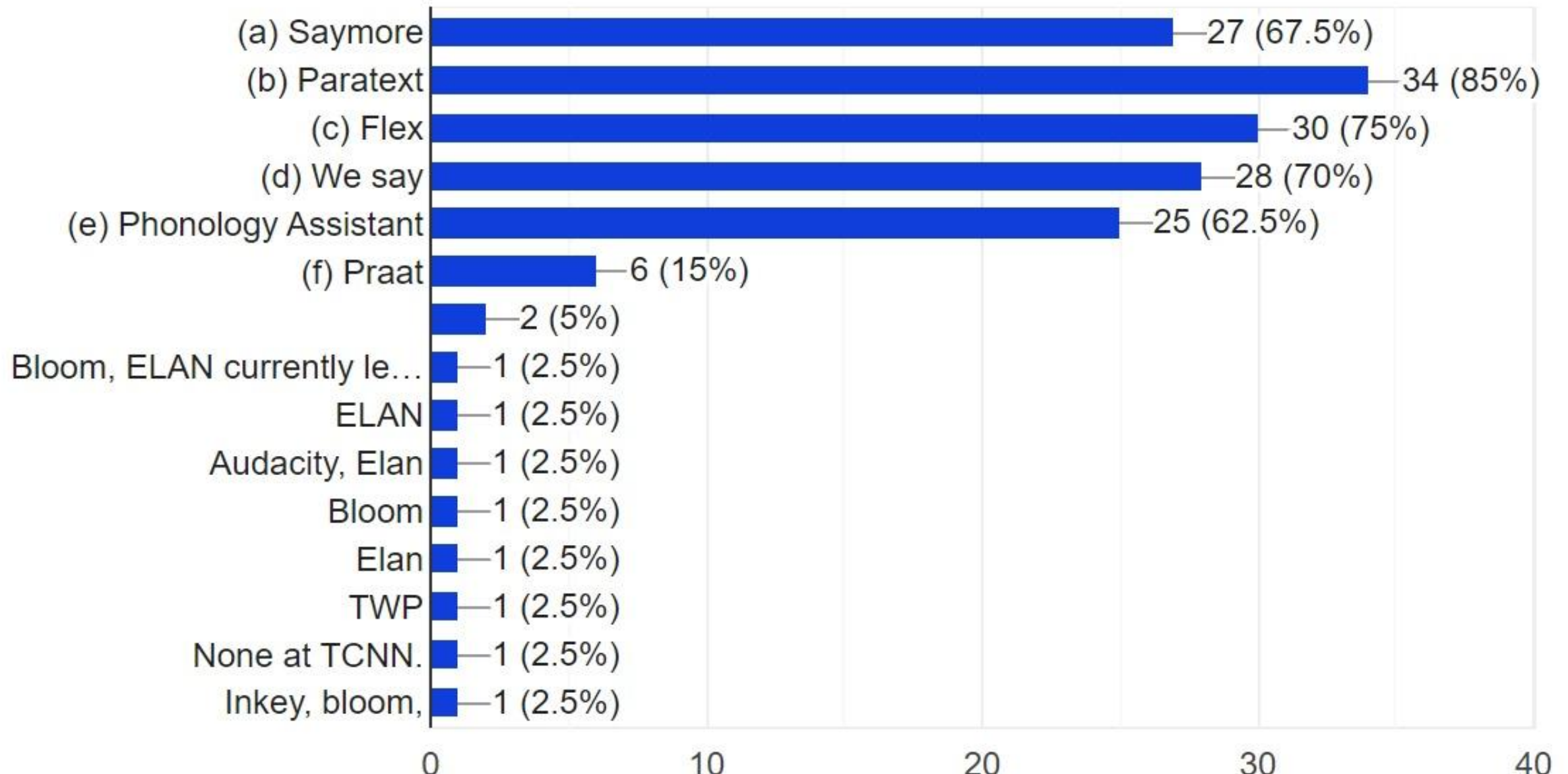
Dictionary making

Please note that these 12 people do not include people who are still working on their write-ups.

All 40 past students have been involved in at least one of the following since their graduation from LBTD TCNN.



We cannot talk about BT today and not talk about the technology that is helping us achieve fast results. The following chart shows the number of past BT students and the computer programmes that they learned at TCNN LBTD.



The following shows the number of past students using the computer programmes learned at TCNN in their current role:

Paratext

27

Wesay

3

Flex

15

Saymore

6

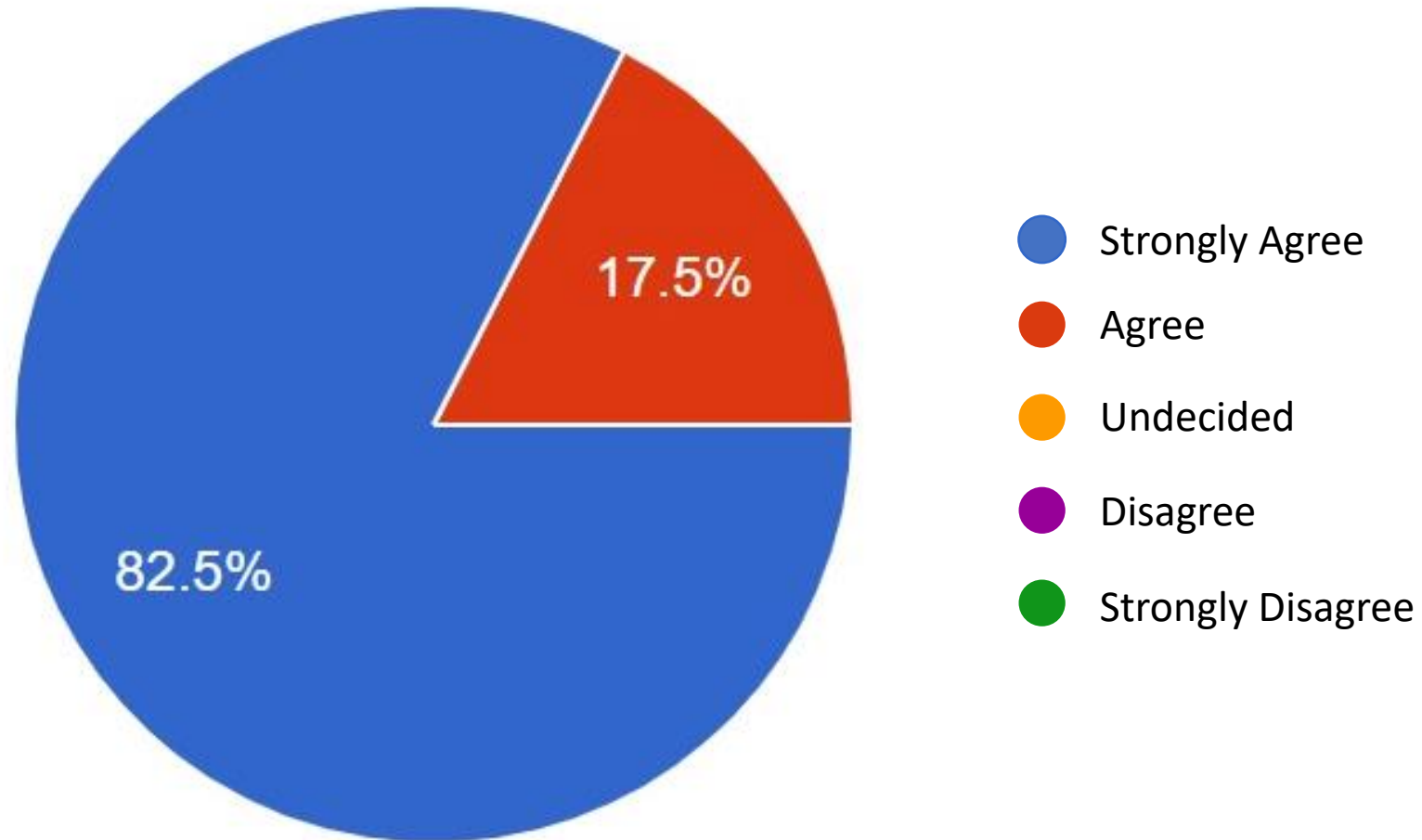
Phonogy Assistant

2

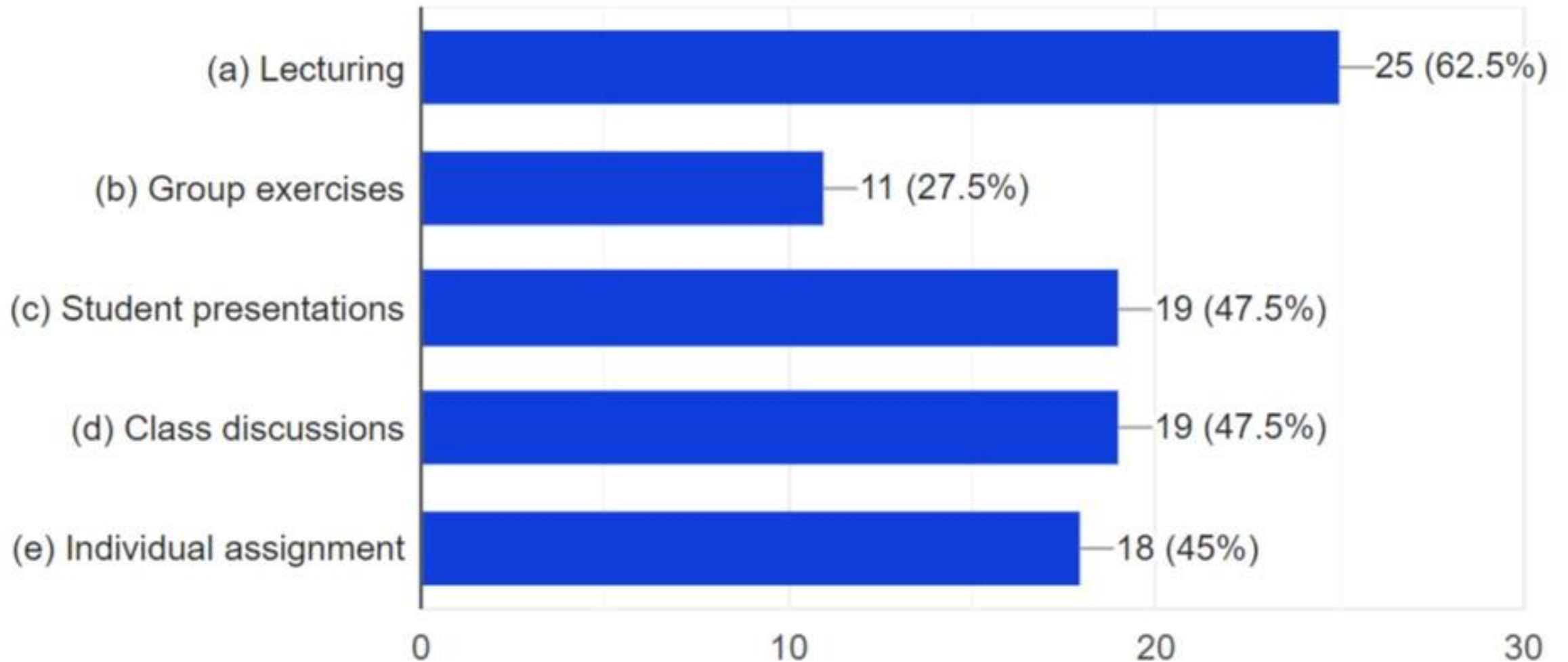
Bloom

2

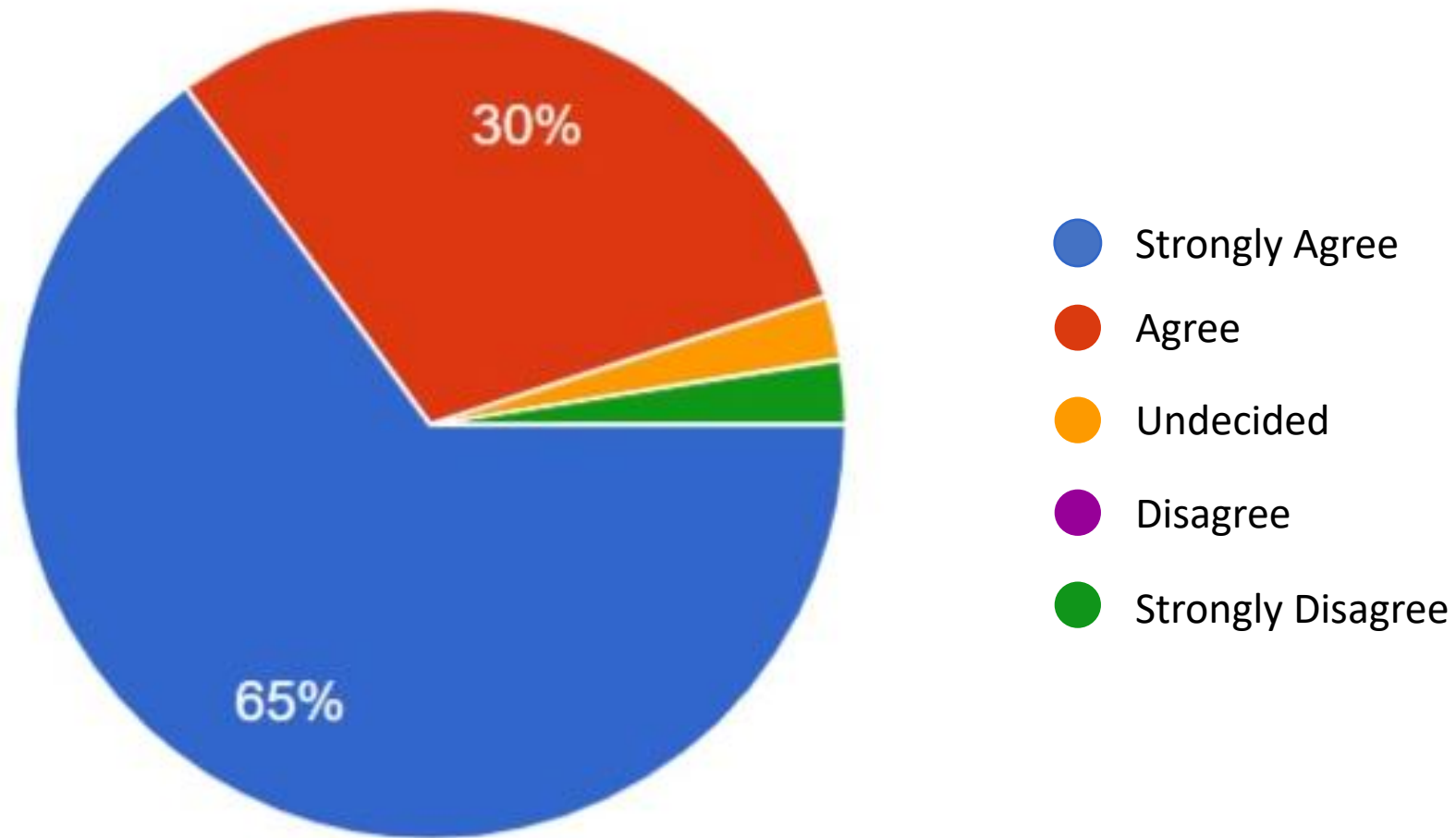
All 40 past students agreed that courses at TCNN LBTD are applicable to workplace situations in Bible Translation (BT) organizations.



Each of these 40 students chose at least one of the following teaching methods as what they enjoyed while at TCNN LBTD:



Most of the past students agree that lecturers at LBTD ensure their assignments meet the best practices requirement of Bible translation.



- ➡ LBTD lecturers have helped at least **10** of the **40** past students to solve a translation or linguistic problem after leaving TCNN.
- ➡ At least **35** past students remember what the lecturer said to them that spurred them on in the work of Bible translation.

Challenges faced by TCNN LBTD

1 Lack of Personnel

2

The use of foreign examples in many linguistic books hinders the understanding of linguistic concepts

3 Lack of funds

4

Sending organizations sometimes do not discern the right person for academic training

5

Some students are not interested in Bible translation work

Proposed Solution

- ➡ We need to shift from English to Nigerian examples when explaining linguistic concepts.
- ➡ More financial support will help LBTD, TCNN
- ➡ Sending organizations should lookout for people that have academic abilities.
- ➡ Envision students and keep asking them during the interview
- ➡ BT organizations should continue to open their doors to our graduates
- ➡ More experienced consultants should come to LBTD or help to mentor our graduates

For more information about TCNN LBTD, please contact

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Thank You