

BALEAP '23

Revisiting the language needs of students in English- medium universities

Ramsey Cardwell & Ben Naismith
Duolingo
March 31, 2023



Agenda

- Background
- Survey and data collection
- Results & interesting items
- Comparison to BALEAP descriptors
- Discussion

Background

What is the TLU domain?

- EAP encompasses “the communicative needs and practices of individuals working in academic contexts” (Hyland & Shaw, 2016, p. 1)
 - Defined only by the university context?
 - Restricted to academic tasks?

University language skills students need

- Rosenfeld et al. (2001) survey study
 - US-based students (n=345) & teaching staff (n=370)
 - 42 task statements based on TOEFL frameworks
 - No digital technology, no interaction, no extracurricular
- BALEAP Can Do Framework (2013?)
 - Interviews with “lecturers who teach international students”
 - About competencies needed for masters students in the UK


More recent developments

- Technology-mediated learning environments (Kyle et al., 2021)
- Considerations for language use by:
 - What students feel is important
 - What faculty feel is important
 - Undergraduate level? Graduate level?
 - Field of study?
- We're here to learn more about the modern EAP construct

The survey

duolingo english test

Reading (19 questions)

 We'd like to learn more about the reading your students do as part of their classes, and also outside of class (such as e-mails and social media posts). Think about your experience working with students during the past 3 months. Please select the response that best describes your agreement with each statement below.

1) It is **important** that my students can locate and understand information in a text by skimming and scanning. *

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

- **Survey sections (60 questions)**
 - Reading
 - Writing
 - Speaking
 - Listening
 - Language & Technology
 - Demographics (e.g., age, gender, L1, field)
- **Survey timing:** Approximately 15-20 minutes

Survey development process

- 3 researchers
 - Backgrounds in Computational & Applied Linguistics, Ed Measurement
 - Experience teaching/TAing at the university level
 - Experience studying in non-English immersion contexts
- Started with tasks used in Rosenfeld et al. (2001)
- Added tasks based on CEFR activities, BALEAP framework, & experience
- Combined similar tasks
- Iteratively voted on tasks for inclusion

Data collection

- So far administered at 4 universities (1 UK & 4 US; N=418)
- Results presented only for masters students & staff (N=286)
- Most demographic questions were optional

| Institution | Student N | Staff N |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| UK-1 | 24 | 34 |
| US-1 | 22 | 44 |
| US-2 | 5 | 52 |
| US-3 | 9 | 21 |
| US-4 | 29 | 46 |
| TOTAL | 89 | 197 |

Student participant demographics

| Concentration | UK | US |
|---------------------------|----|----|
| Business | 3 | 10 |
| Humanities/Social Science | 10 | 17 |
| STEM | 11 | 37 |

| Age | UK | US |
|-------|----|----|
| 18–22 | 1 | 9 |
| 23–29 | 9 | 37 |
| 30–39 | 8 | 12 |
| 40+ | 6 | 7 |

| Gender | UK | US |
|--------|----|----|
| Woman | 16 | 34 |
| Man | 8 | 31 |

| Spoken L1 grouping | UK | US |
|--------------------|----|----|
| Austroasiatic | 0 | 3 |
| Dravidian | 2 | 7 |
| English | 5 | 18 |
| European | 5 | 19 |
| Indo-Iranian | 4 | 8 |
| Semitic | 0 | 3 |
| Sinitic | 2 | 7 |
| Other | 3 | 3 |

Staff participant demographics

| Gender | UK | US |
|-------------------|----|----|
| Woman | 12 | 84 |
| Man | 18 | 65 |
| Prefer not to say | 4 | 10 |

| Age | UK | US |
|-------|----|----|
| 30–39 | 6 | 26 |
| 40–49 | 12 | 48 |
| 50–59 | 10 | 42 |
| 60+ | 5 | 41 |

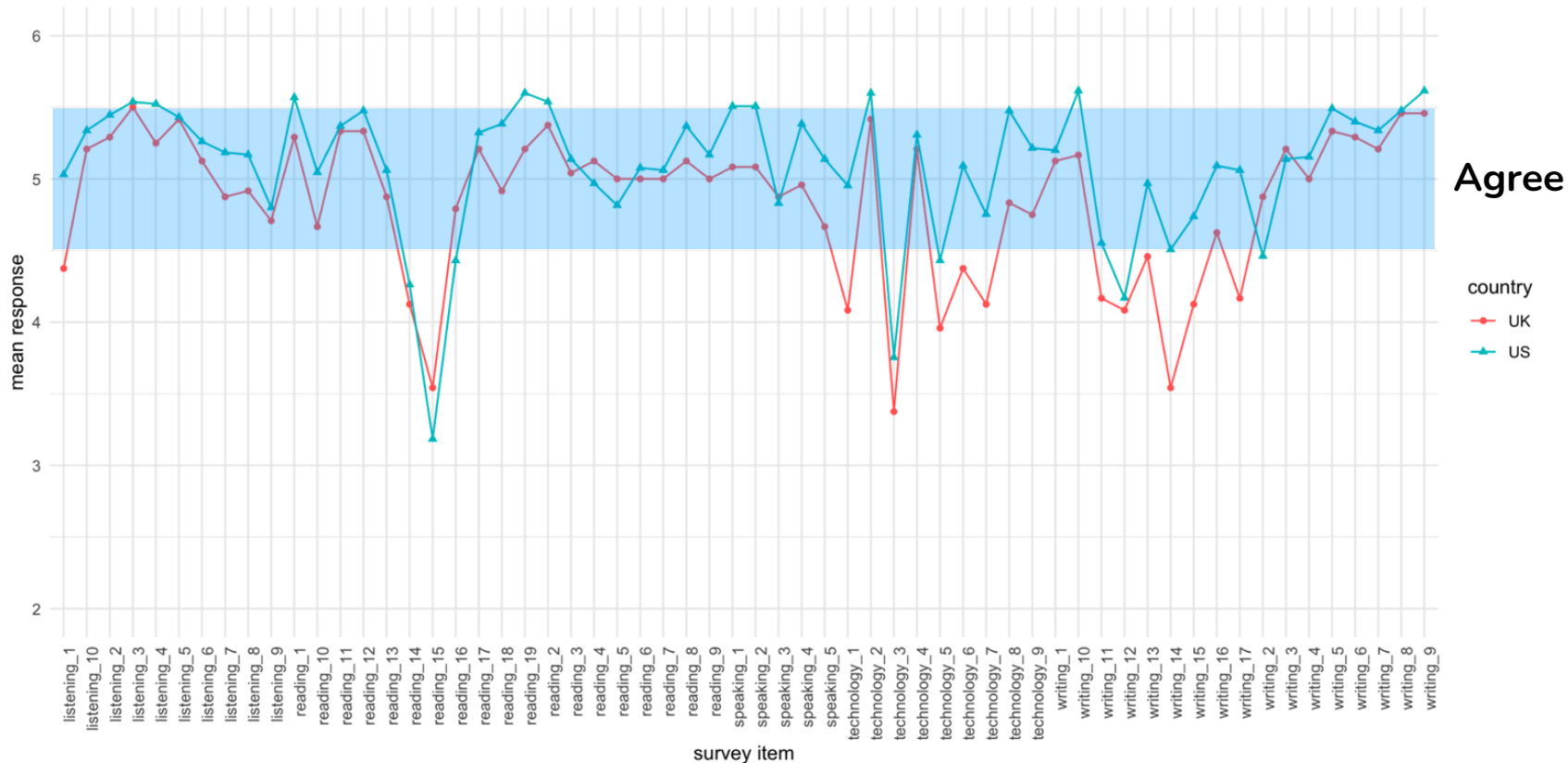
| Teaching Experience (yrs) | UK | US |
|---------------------------|----|----|
| 0–5 | 5 | 26 |
| 6–10 | 6 | 33 |
| 11–15 | 9 | 35 |
| 16–20 | 4 | 21 |
| > 20 | 10 | 47 |

| Spoken L1 | UK | US |
|-----------|----|-----|
| Chinese | 1 | 1 |
| Czech | 0 | 1 |
| English | 30 | 147 |
| German | 1 | 3 |
| Greek | 1 | 1 |
| Igbo | 0 | 1 |
| Spanish | 0 | 5 |
| Thai | 0 | 1 |






Overall results

RESULTS

Student responses by country

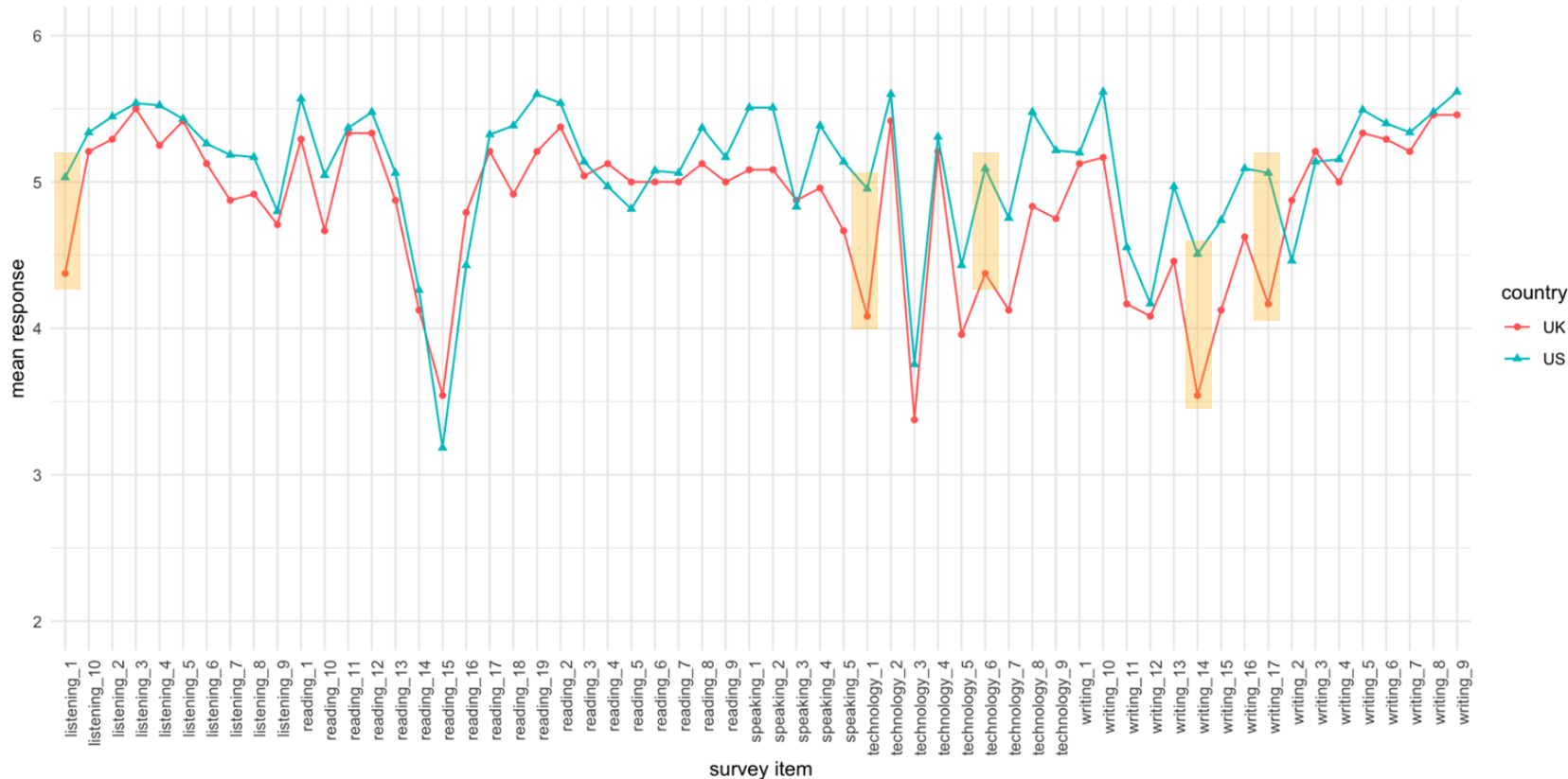


Highest rated – UK students






| Item | Domain | UK mean | US mean |
|---|--|---------|---------|
| It is important that I can understand the instructor's spoken directions regarding assignments. |  | 5.50 | 5.54 |
| It is important that I can use references appropriately to support ideas, analyze, and refine arguments. |  | 5.46 | 5.48 |
| It is important that I can finish writing assignments on time . |  | 5.46 | 5.62 |
| It is important that I can understand the difference between suggestions, advice, directives, and warnings when spoken (e.g., as heard in a lecture or during a conversation). |  | 5.42 | 5.43 |
| I frequently need to read digital reading assignments (e.g., PDFs, e-books). |  | 5.42 | 5.60 |

RESULTS

Student responses by country

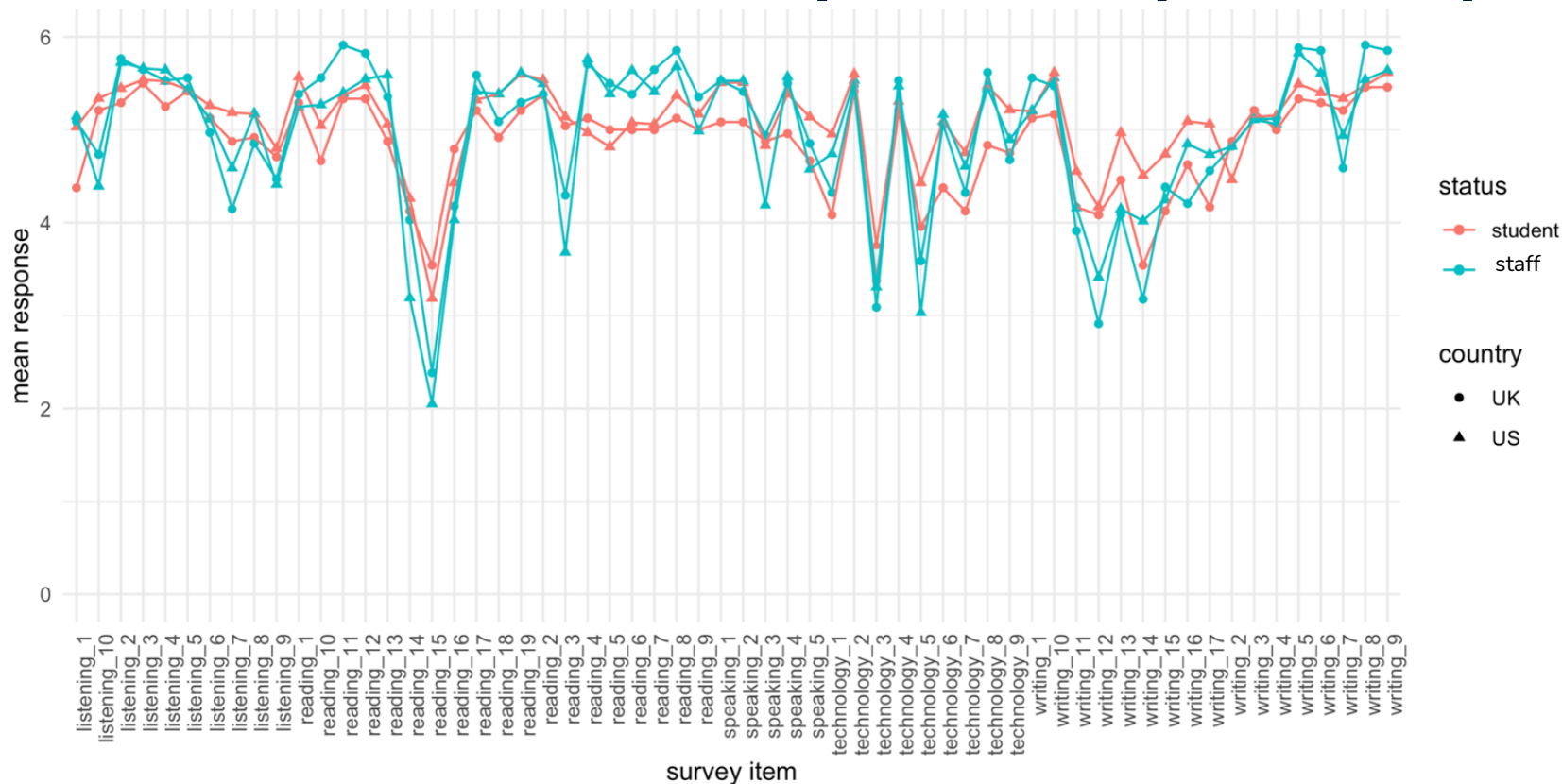


Most discrepant – UK & US students








| Item | Domain | UK mean | US mean |
|--|---|---------|---------|
| I frequently need to write a narrative (i.e., telling a story, or describing something that happened to you or someone else). |  | 3.54 | 4.51 |
| I frequently need to prepare slides with written text (e.g., bullet points) for an oral presentation. |  | 4.17 | 5.06 |
| I frequently need to read paper-based reading assignments (e.g., printouts, physical textbooks). |  | 4.08 | 4.95 |
| I frequently need to speak in in-person settings (e.g., in a classroom). |  | 4.38 | 5.09 |
| I frequently need to take notes during a lecture . |  | 4.38 | 5.03 |

RESULTS

Student and staff responses by country



Most discrepant – students & staff

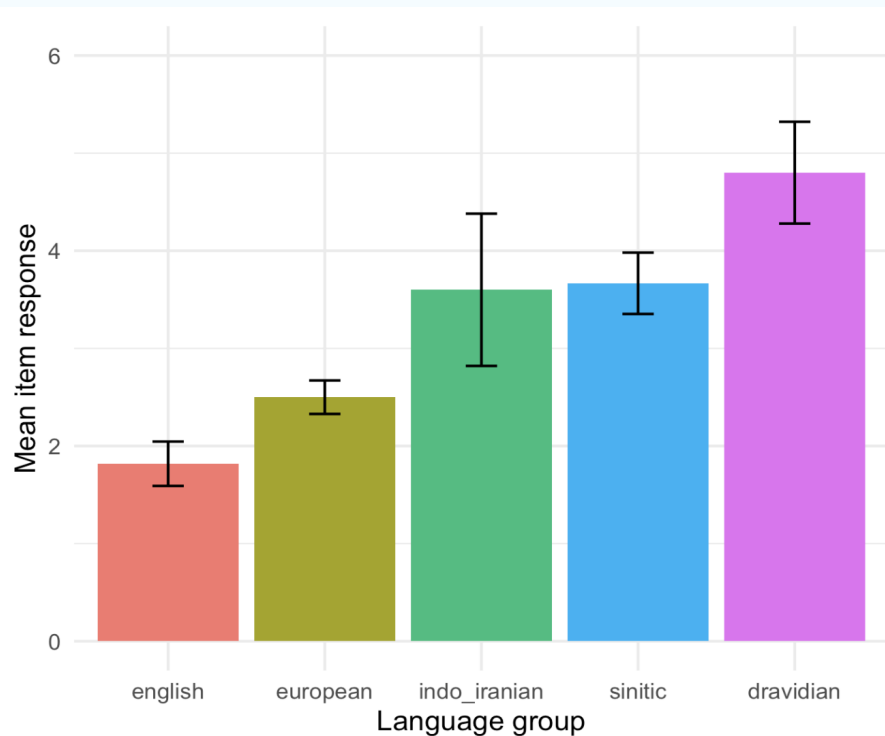
| Item | Domain | Student mean | Staff mean |
|--|--|--------------|------------|
| use keyboard shortcuts (e.g., ctrl/Cmd+F) to locate specific content in digital texts. |  | 5.11 | 3.79 |
| type paragraph-length (or longer) text on a smartphone or tablet . |  | 4.30 | 3.13 |
| read extra material in another language to help me understand course topics. |  | 3.28 | 2.11 |
| read and understand texts written in different varieties of English (e.g., American, British, Indian, Chinese). |  | 4.22 | 3.34 |
| understand recorded speech (e.g., a lecture video) without subtitles. |  | 5.30 | 4.45 |
| communicate with professors via text messages , instant messaging, and social media. |  | 4.15 | 3.32 |
| read and understand written instructions, directions, or announcements about classroom assignments and/or examinations. |  | 5.01 | 5.75 |

RESULTS

Reading 15

I frequently need to read extra material in another language to help me understand course topics.

Student responses by language group

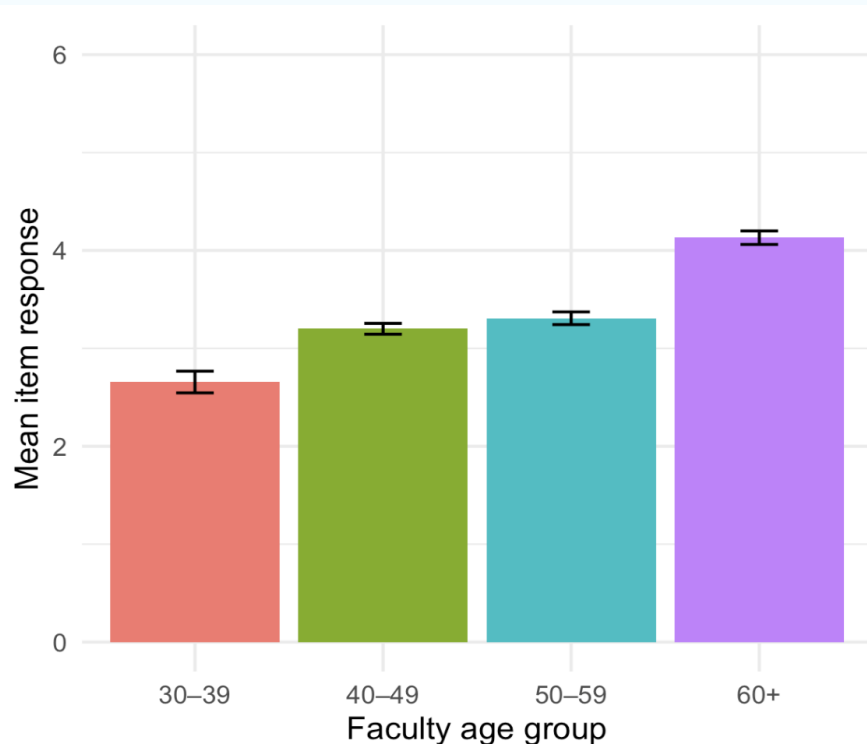


RESULTS

Writing 12

My students frequently need to communicate with professors via text messages, instant messaging, and social media.

Staff responses by age group



BALEAP descriptors

Survey items & BALEAP descriptors

33 survey items

- Technology
- Extracurricular reading
- Written communication
- Plurilingualism

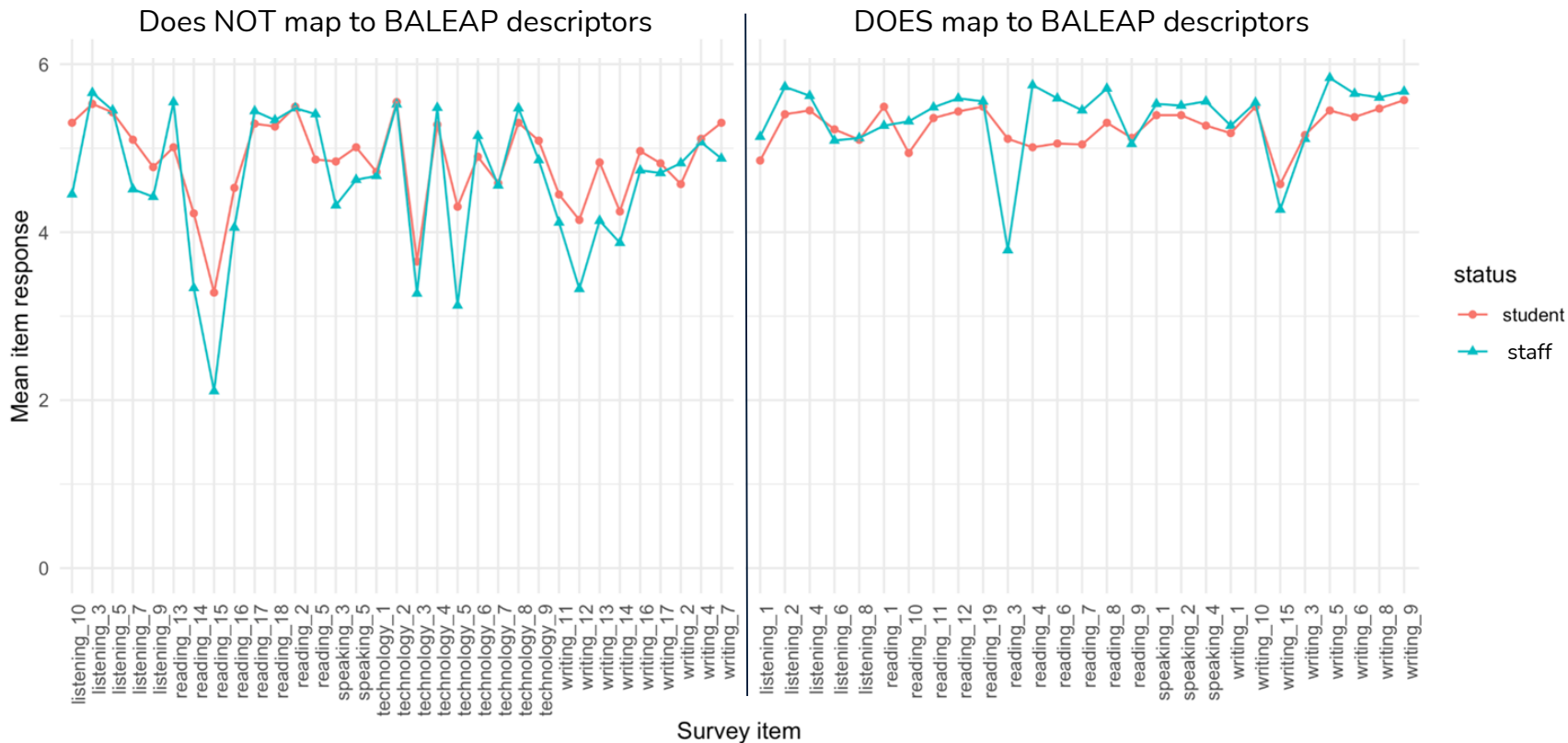
64 descriptors / 27 items

- Reading comprehension
- Select and evaluate source materials
- Write clearly and concisely
- Language knowledge and accuracy
- Spoken interaction
- Note-taking







104 descriptors

- Critical thinking
- Synthesize information
- Format and components of written products
- Engage in discussion/debate
- British context

Survey items by BALEAP mapping



Highest rated unmapped survey items

| Item | Domain | Student mean | Staff mean |
|--|---|--------------|------------|
| understand the instructor's spoken directions regarding assignments. |  | 5.53 | 5.66 |
| type paragraph-length (or longer) text on a computer. |  | 5.28 | 5.48 |
| locate and understand information provided in charts, graphs, and tables . |  | 5.49 | 5.48 |
| understand the difference between suggestions, advice, directives, and warnings when spoken (e.g., as heard in a lecture or during a conversation). |  | 5.43 | 5.45 |
| read and understand text on lecture presentation slides and video subtitles. |  | 5.29 | 5.44 |
| read for everyday purposes (e.g., train schedules, food menus, street signs). |  | 5.26 | 5.34 |

Conclusion

Concluding thoughts

- Generally similar trends across country (UK/US) and status (student/staff)
- A few interesting differences between students and staff
 - Using keyboard shortcuts, typing on a smartphone, reading in another language
- Some items differ by other demographic variables
 - Language group (reading in another language)
 - Age/teaching experience (texting with students)

More concluding thoughts

- ~50% of our survey items correspond to BALEAP descriptors
 - These items were generally highly rated
- Unmapped survey items present possible expansion of BALEAP framework
 - Typing skills
 - Interpreting charts, graphs, and tables
 - Reading time-limited text (slides, subtitles)
 - Reading for everyday purposes

BALEAP '23

Thanks! Questions? Suggestions?

ramsey@duolingo.com

ben.naismith@duolingo.com

