

The Learning Process of Exchange Students: Integration or Isolation

BACKGROUND

At present, for local students in KU, the Sociology Department at KU has separated the selective courses for MA and BA. However, exchange students can have freedom to choose any selective courses (very often in English), regardless of whether they are MA or BA students. Therefore, teachers for these courses are likely to have problems in the course design and assessment to accommodate different needs for students, given the diversity of students in their knowledge level and skills. Both local and exchange students are likely to feel some mismatch between their expectation and reality in such learning setting.

OBJECTIVE

The project endeavors to investigate the integration of exchange students in the learning process, focusing on three dimensions: 1) interaction with students—other exchange students and local student; 2) participation in the course; 3) utilization of learning tools and materials.

METHOD

1) Quantitative survey

- A survey in the course “Family sociology for a changing society” with 40 students (11 MA local KU students + 29 exchange students), including
 - exchanges’ use of library, Absalon, course material;
 - students interaction;
 - students participation in the course;

2) Qualitative interview

- Interview 3 local KU students
- Interview 3 exchange students
- Interview 1 teachers in the department who have exchange students in their course

RESULTS 1

Utilization of learning tools and materials among exchange students

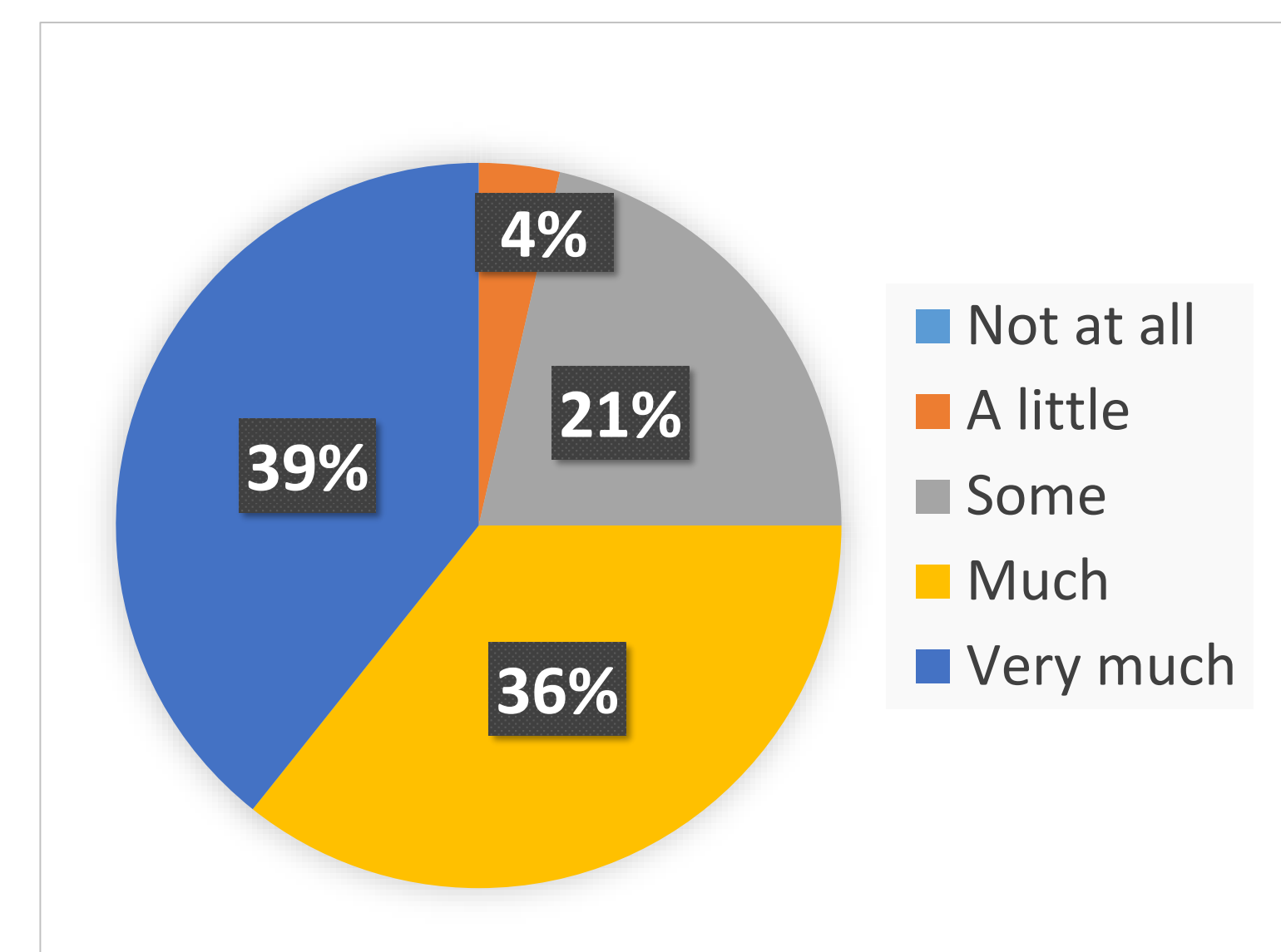


Fig.1 Use of Absalon

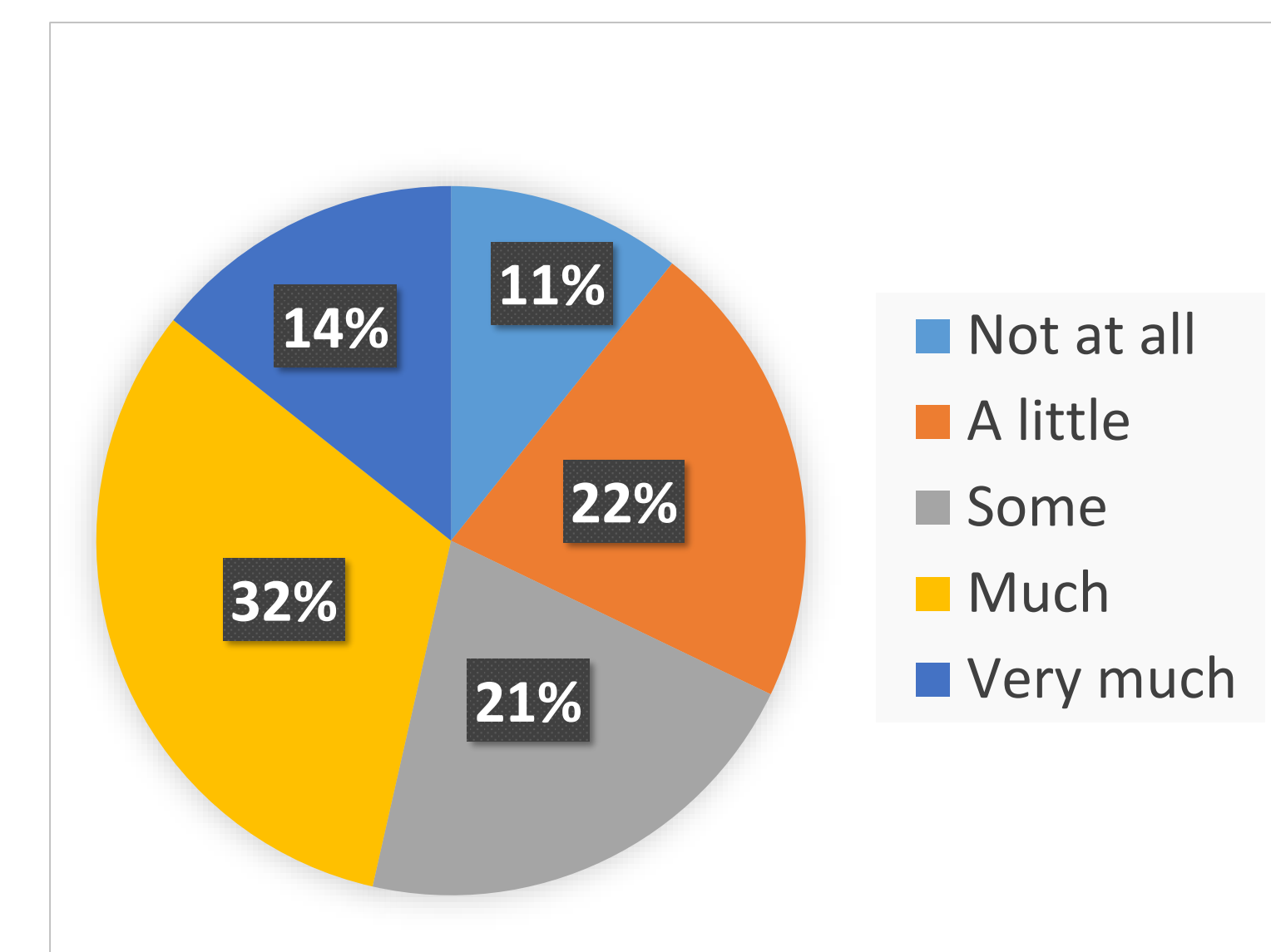


Fig.2 Know how to search KU library

Student interaction

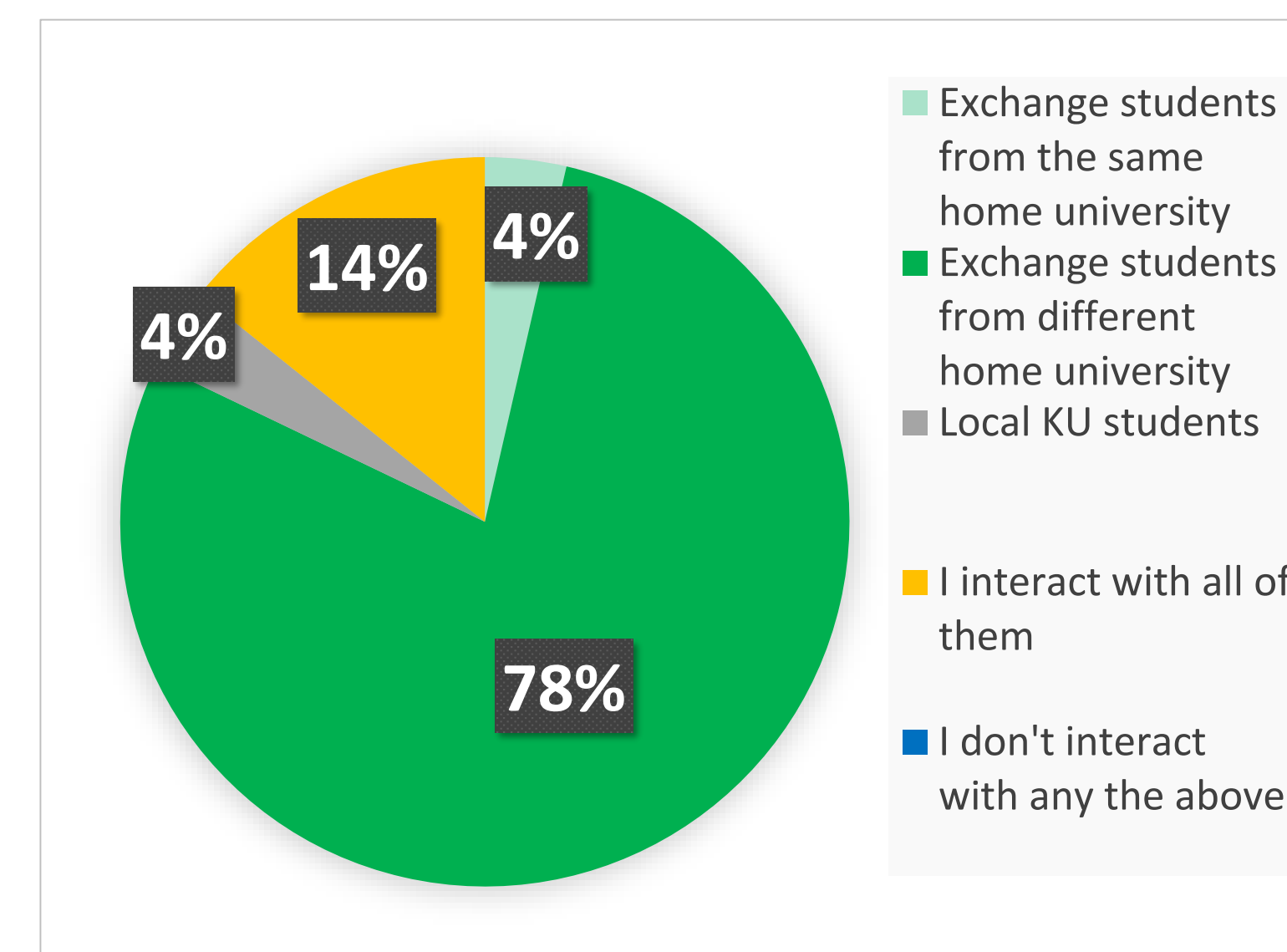


Fig.3 Student interactions perceived by exchange students

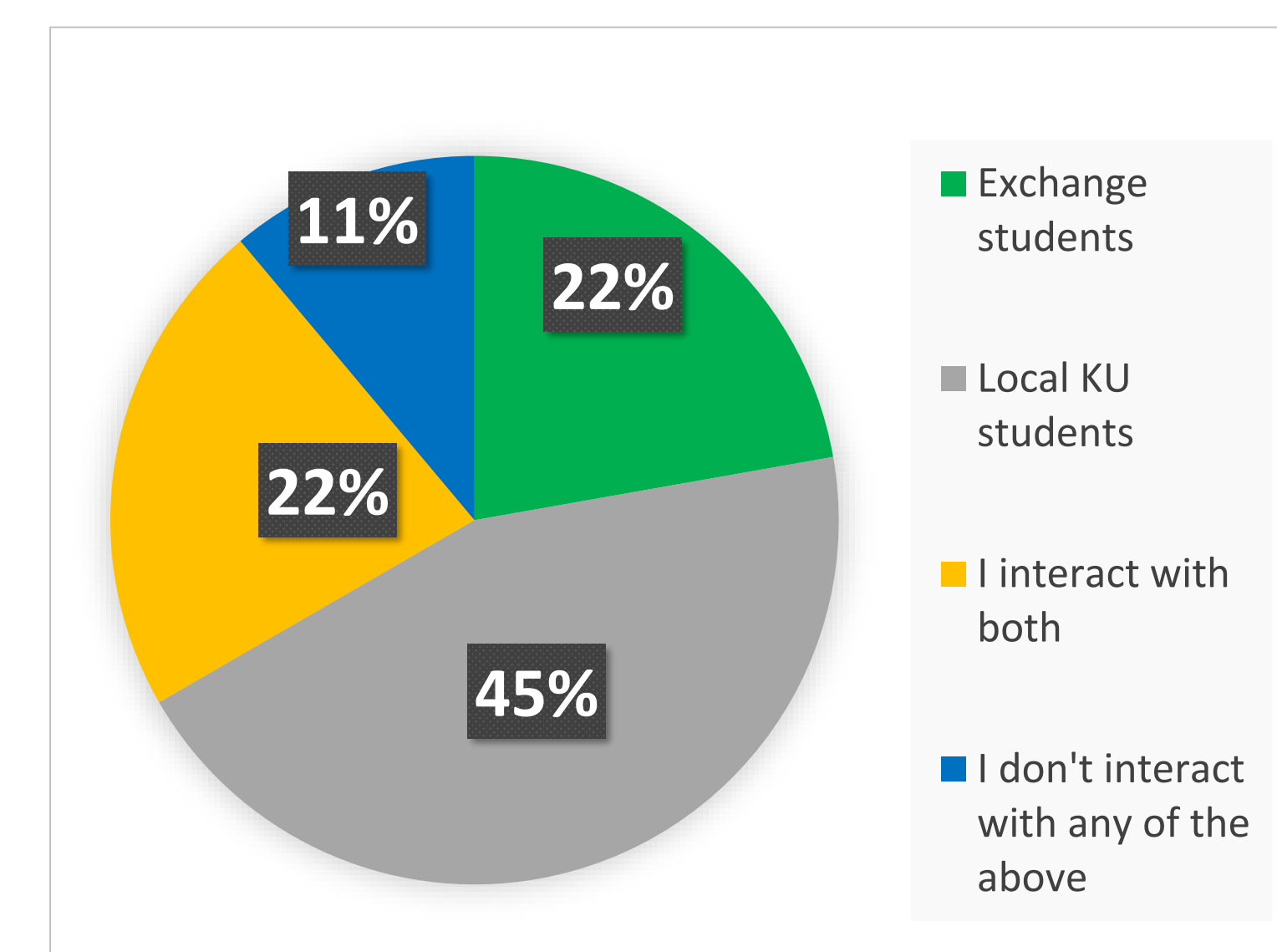


Fig.4 Student interactions perceived by local KU students

Exchange students participation in the class

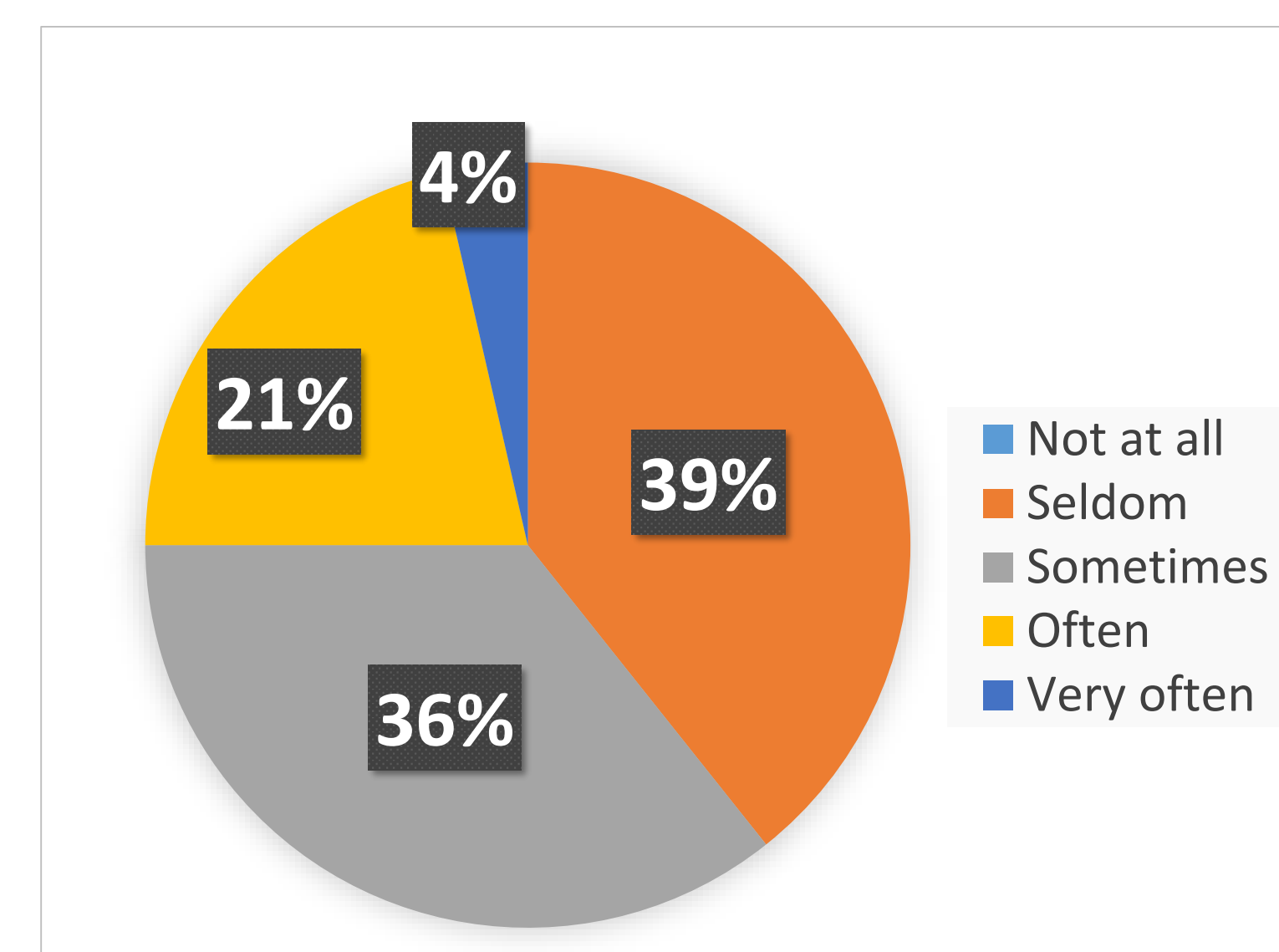


Fig.5 Exchange students' participation in the class discussion

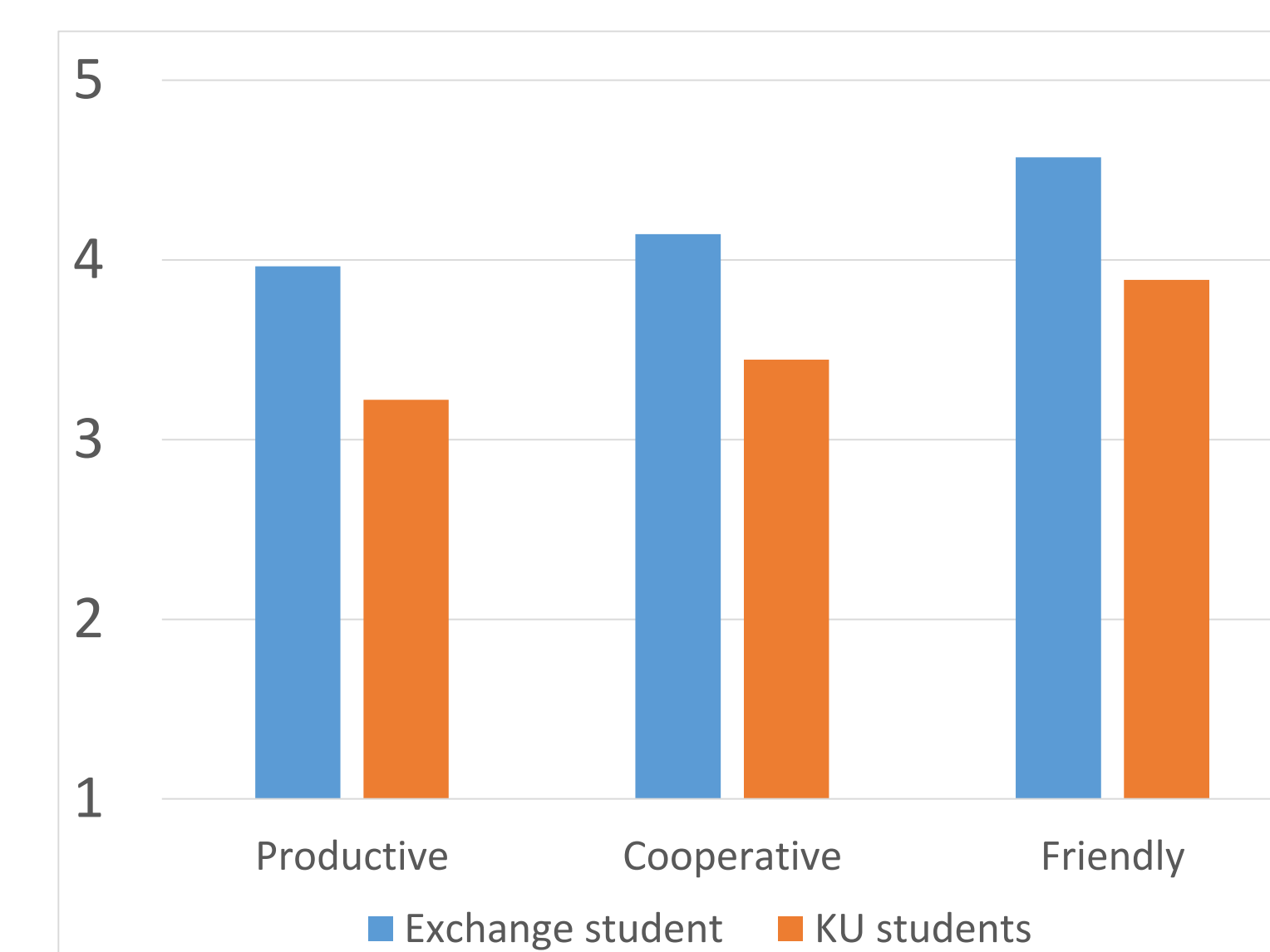


Fig.6 Perception of group presentation

RESULTS 2

A gap in student interaction

- Different motivations: 1) local KU students aim to finish the MA study soon while combine study and work, without strong motivation to interact with exchange students; 2) exchange students aim to get integrated into the study and social life in KU while have other priorities as well (experience different culture).
- Lack of opportunity and information: 1) Not much time for discussion in class; 2) Not much information for student activities after class.

A gap in using learning tools

- No instructions on how to use Absalon and library service from teachers
- Different diverse format of Absalon pages

Dilemma in course design

- The knowledge level for MA vs that for BA
- The exam requirement for MA vs that for BA

Limited choice of exchange students

- Few BA courses in English open to exchange students

CONCLUSIONS

- 33% of exchange students have limited knowledge of how to use KU library.
- The majority of exchange student have no interaction with local KU students. More than half local KU students have either interaction among themselves or no interaction at all.
- 40% of exchange students seldom participated in the class discussion
- There is a gap in the perception of group presentation: exchange students have better impression in terms of productivity, cooperation, friendliness.
- There are gaps in student interaction and utilization of learning tool, calling for more group activities and instructions on Absalon and library by the teacher.
- Course descriptions should be clearer about level of knowledge required before students enroll in the course.
- Provision of more English courses at BA level should be in place.