

# **BILINGUAL LANGUAGE LEARNING AT AN IB WORLD SCHOOL**

**IBO Conference of the Americas 2014**

- **The presentation was delivered by ICG at the IBO Conference of the Americas in Washington, DC on 11 July 2014.**
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## Introductions

**ICG Language Research Background**

**Project Overview**

**Methodology: Survey, LBS, LUBS, and LLPs**

**Language Background Segments**

**Classroom Observations and Collaboration with Teachers**

**Observations on Language Learning**

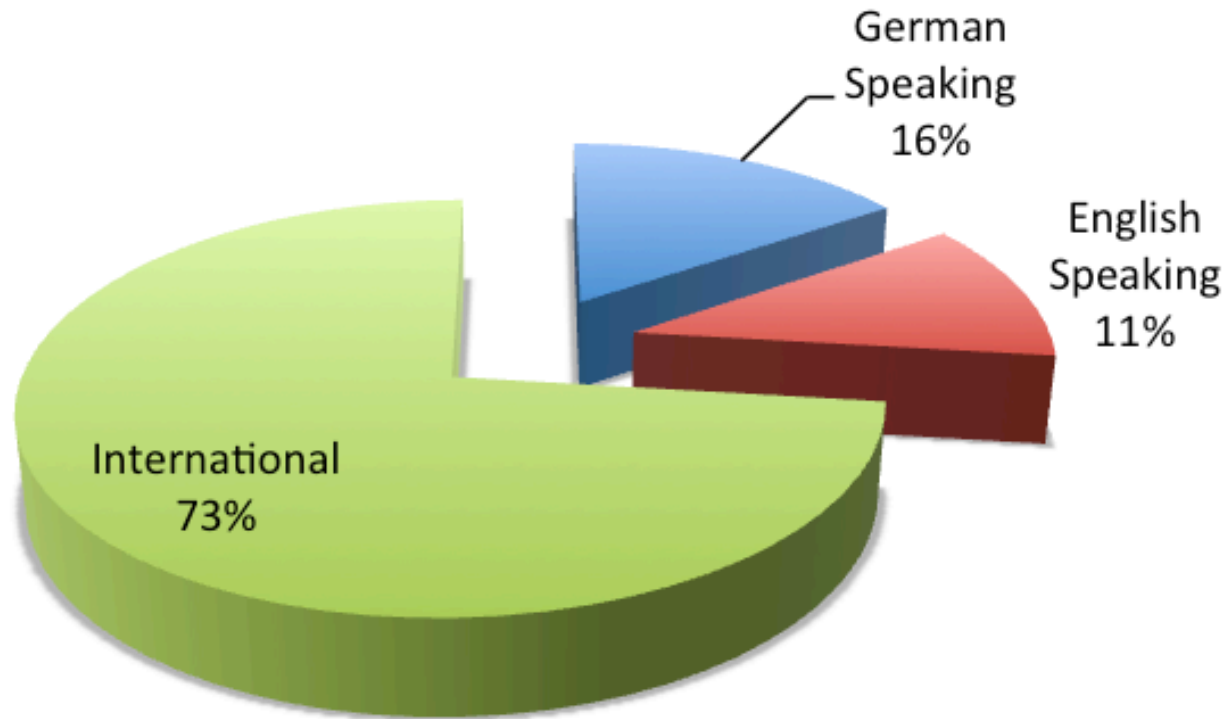
**Discussion**

# **INTRODUCTIONS**

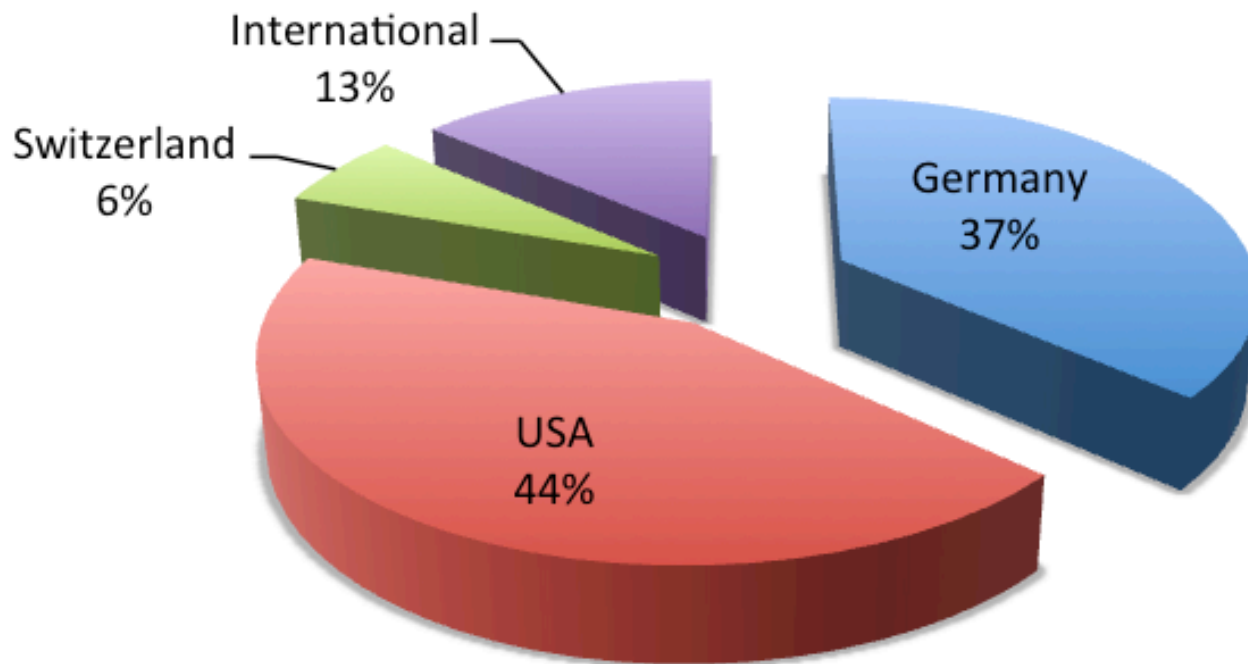
## **German American International School**

- **Founded in 1988 by American and German families / 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary**
- **320 students in Preschool through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**
- **42 different nationalities**
- **Non-profit private school teaching bilingually in German and English following accredited German/Swiss and California curricula**
- **International Middle School with a flexible multiple language track**
- **Fully accredited by WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges)**
- **Authorized by International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme offering the Primary Years Program “PYP” Preschool – 4<sup>th</sup> grade and Candidate for “MYP”, Middle Years Program**
- **Authorized school to conduct German AP and German Government reference tests**

# GAIS Families



# Citizenships All



### Professional Background

- Dominic Liechti has been serving as GAIS Managing Director since 2011. Prior to overseeing GAIS, he worked as the Middle School Director at GAIS, and as a Principal and teacher of a public school in Zurich. He has studied or worked in Switzerland, France, Italy and USA. In 2004 he has founded a nonprofit learning center (Learn4life).

### Educational and Research Background

- Dominic holds a M.A.S in School and Education Management from Zurich University Applied Science and a teaching license from College of Education Berne, as well he is finishing his MBA at IMD in Switzerland.

### Awards and Publications

- Dominic Liechti has authored several research papers about school education management, strategy and leadership and stakeholder management. He has been recently accepted into the IBEN network and will serve as workshop leader, authorization visitor and consultants for IBO.

### Service

Dominic Liechti currently serves as the president of Learn4life which supports economically disadvantaged or socially deprived students. This initiative, which, in collaboration with the local community, government and churches, has helped over 1,000 students.

## Professional Background

- Dr. Guhr has been serving as ICG's Managing Director since 2003. Prior to founding ICG, he worked as a strategy consultant with the Boston Consulting Group in Munich and San Francisco, and as a Director of Business Development with SAP in Silicon Valley.

## Educational and Research Background

- Dr. Guhr holds a D.Phil. in Higher Education and a M.Sc. in Educational Research Methodology from Oxford, as well as a M.A. in Political Science from Brandeis. He also studied political science at Bonn and Harvard. In addition, he served as a research specialist at the Center for Studies of Higher Education at UC Berkeley, and conducted research at the Max-Planck-Institute for Human Studies in Berlin.

## Awards and Publications

- During his studies, Dr. Guhr was awarded 17 scholarships, fellowships, and grants. His doctoral dissertation on *Access to Higher Education in Germany and California* was published in the series *Studies in Comparative Education*. Dr. Guhr has authored more than 35 reports, research papers, and studies. He has contributed to more than 85 conference sessions, seminars, and workshops worldwide.

## Service

- Dr. Guhr currently serves on the Provost's Council of College Eight at UC Santa Cruz. He is the past President of the Oxford University Society's San Diego branch. He also served as a Council Member of Bonn University's Universitätsgesellschaft.



### **Dr. John Andersen**

- **Dr. Andersen serves as Chair of the Department of Scandinavian Studies and Linguistics at the University of Copenhagen. He previously served as the University's Director of International Affairs. Dr. Andersen is based in Copenhagen, Denmark.**

### **Tina Bax**

- **Ms. Bax is the Founder and CEO of CultureWorks, an English for Academic Purposes (EAP)/Pathways provider based at Carleton and Western Ontario Universities. Ms. Bax is based in London, Ontario, Canada.**

### **Nicole Brigg**

- **Mrs. Brigg serves as the Director International at Griffith University. She previously served as the Director of the Griffith English Language Institute. Mrs. Brigg is based in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.**

### **Gonzalo Peralta**

- **Mr. Peralta serves as the Executive Director of Languages Canada, Canada's peak body for public and private language schools and programs. His background includes operating an English language school. Mr. Peralta is based in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.**

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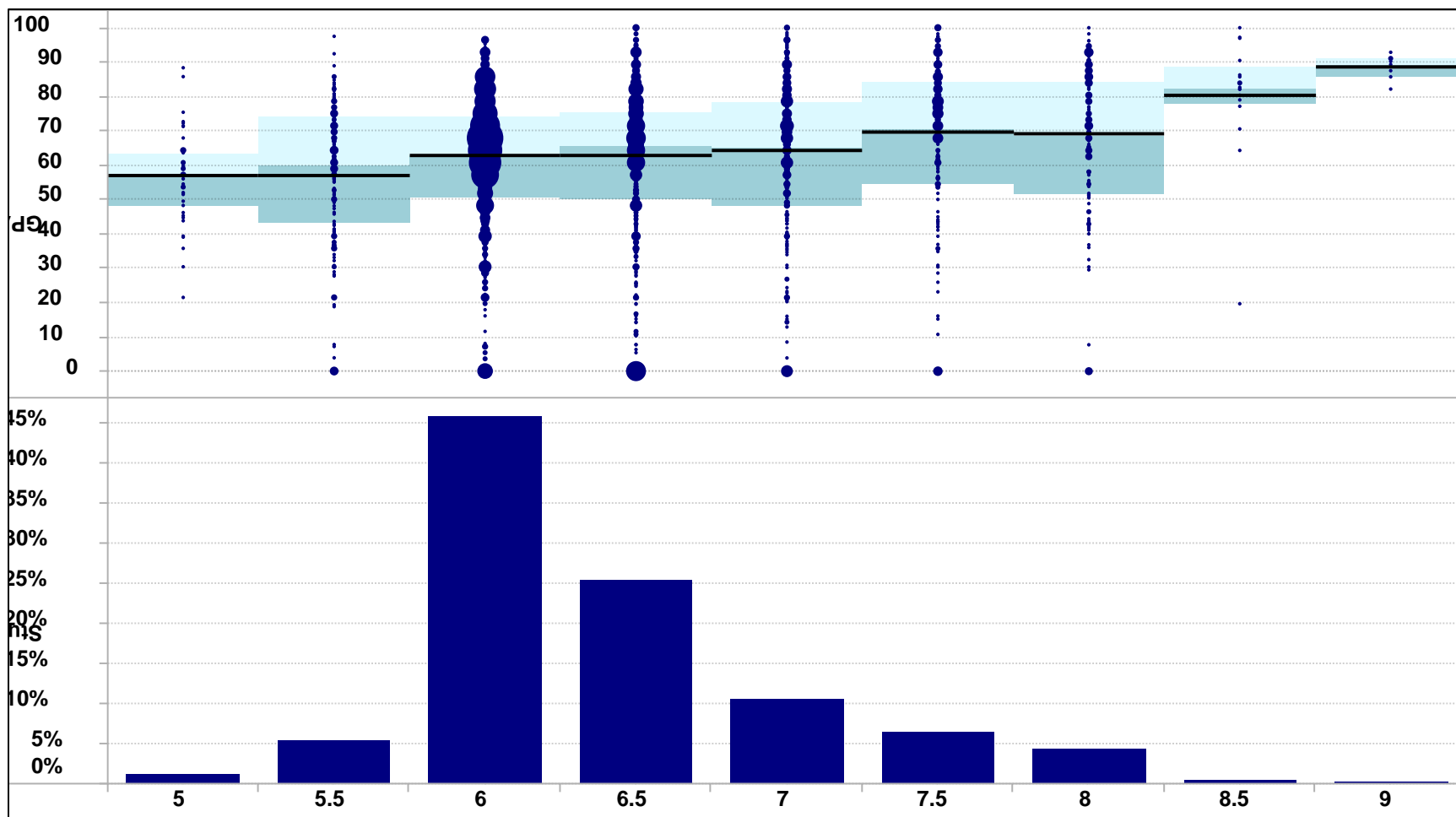
**Observations on Language Learning**

**Discussion**

- **ICG has conducted research on the academic performance of non-native English language speakers in English language post-secondary education classrooms in a number of countries.**
- **The initial focus on English language learning success gave way to a more integrated approach which also considers social integration and academic progression.**
- **This research was undertaken as part of a long-standing research project on international students' academic success. Starting in 2012, ICG began to spin out research on language learning based on its importance to students' overall academic success.**
- **In 2013, ICG began to design Language Learner Profiles (LLPs) which reflect on insights from previous research while moving towards a more comprehensive, integrated research methodology.**

# ICG LANGUAGE RESEARCH BACKGROUND

## English Language Test over Academic Performance Benchmark Results



**This analysis informs institutional policies on language ability thresholds**

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# PROJECT OVERVIEW

## Introduction

- **This project was volunteered by ICG. It is the third project in as many years, following projects on MYP and DP issues.**
- **This project centered on an investigation of how 3-8 year old students at GAIS learn to become proficient and eventually bilingual users of English and German.**
- **ICG also investigated how students progress towards their age specific academic learning goals and how language shapes their social interactions and vice versa.**
- **The goal was to draw up Language Learner Profiles which will enable GAIS teachers to adjust and/or design and track student-specific learning profiles from day one onwards.**

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- **Research centers on four methods/concepts:**
  - 1) **A parent survey – the “starting line”**
  - 2) **Language Background Segments (LBS) – six major segments based on placing survey data on the Language Learner Profile Matrix x-axis**
  - 3) **A Language Usage Behavior Scale (LUBS) – the observational tool to gather quantitative student language usage data**
  - 4) **Language Learner Profiles (LLPs) – the “outcome”**



# PARENTS SURVEY

## Overview

- **An online survey was launched in November 2013 to gather information from parents about the language learning background of their children.**
- **The total pool of potential responses was 140+ (3-8 year olds). The survey received complete, valid responses for 99 students.**
- **The survey contained 16 questions:**
  - **A student bio section with 7 questions.**
  - **A language environment section with 6 questions.**
  - **A social and play environment section with 2 questions.**
  - **A final, open-ended comment box.**
- **Based on the survey results, 56 students were selected for observation and characterized by their Language Background Segment.**

- **Language Background Segments (LBS) were used to segment students covered in the parents survey into six discrete language background segments:**
  - **German only**
  - **German mostly**
  - **English only**
  - **English mostly**
  - **Bi-lingual (assumed to be a somewhat heterogeneous segment)**
  - **Third language (assumed to be a significantly heterogeneous segment)**
- **It was assumed that students in these segments display somewhat aligned overall learning behaviors. Research aimed at discovering intra- and inter-group differences. These differences formed the basis of determining the different progression path to bilingual capability.**
- **Each segment was intended to encompass 6-8 students for observation. Tail-end behavior was clipped off in the final analysis to reduce behavioral outliers.**

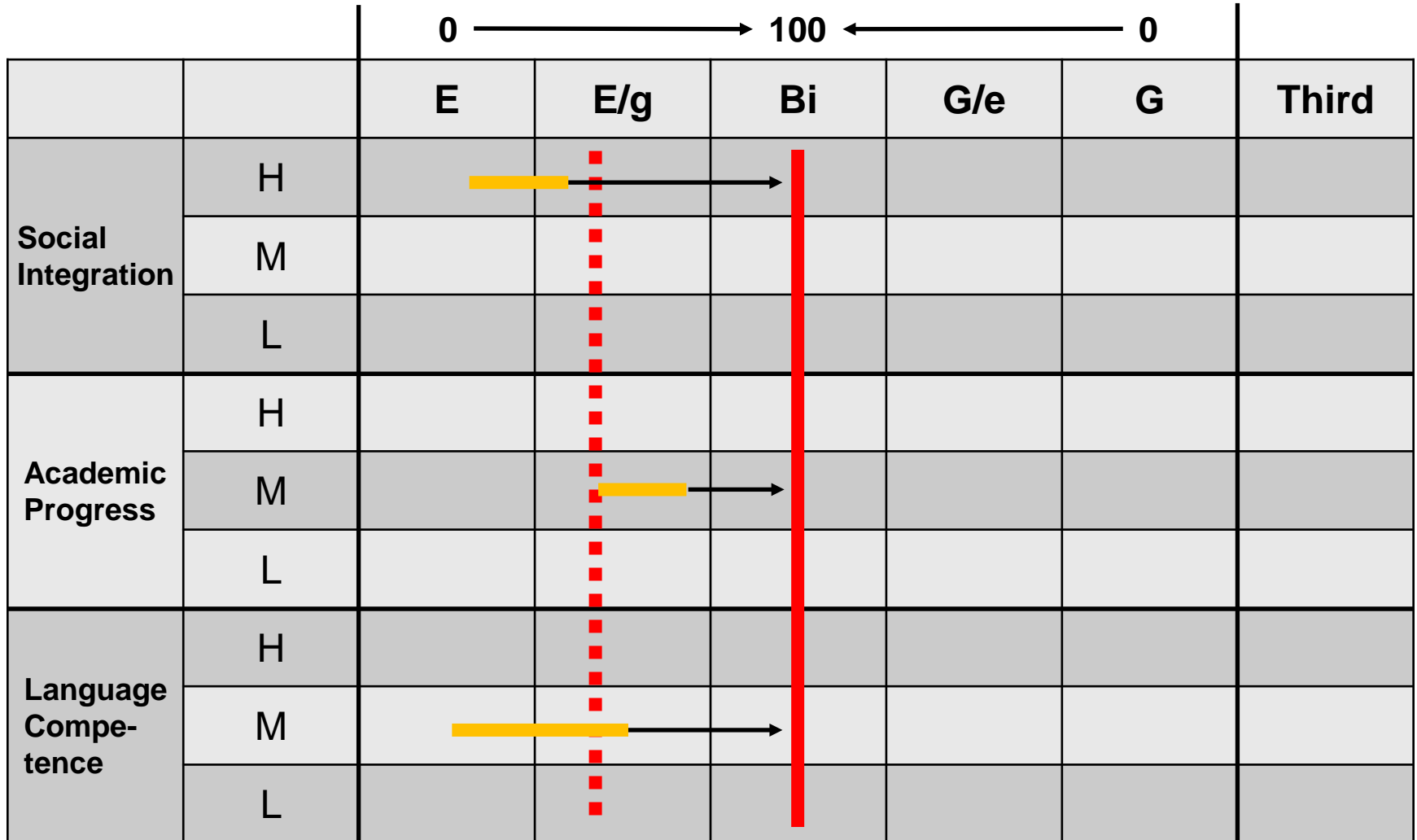
# LANGUAGE LEARNER PROFILES

## Introduction

- **Language Learner Profiles are based on utilizing a comprehensive set of factors in order to describe how a student utilizes language from a learning-centered perspective.**
- **LLPs encompass the following elements:**
  - **A scale reflecting German and English language usage (x-axis), with bi-lingual capability as the center-point**
  - **Three categories of behavior: Social integration; academic progress; language competence**
  - **The above categories are segmented into High/Mid/Low**
- **The LLP Matrix is based on multi-input data streams and stages:**
  - **Parents survey as a baseline**
  - **Teachers' observations relative to the parents survey as an adjustment factor**
  - **ICG observations via LUBS**
  - **Statistical evaluation of LUBS data by LBS with tail-end clipping and sanity checks**
  - **Iteration of findings with a view on future usability for teachers when teaching a new set of students**

# LANGUAGE LEARNER PROFILES

## Matrix (Schematic)



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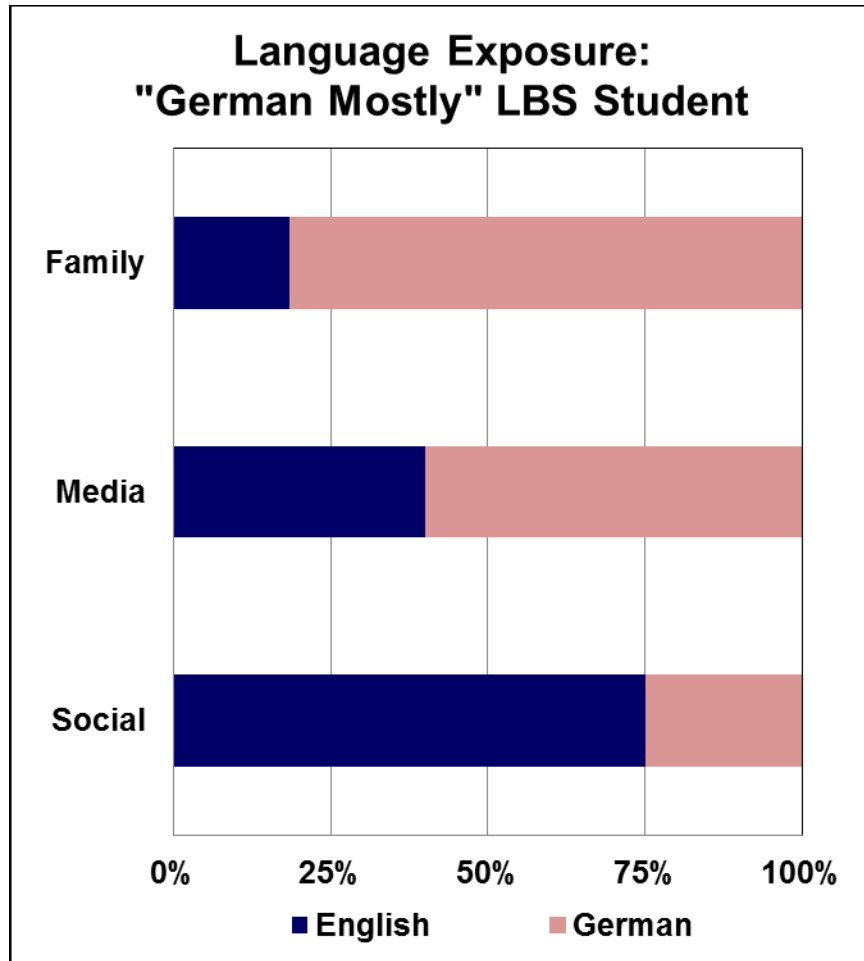
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**Discussion**

- **Language Background Segments are determined based on three key (weighted) areas of English/German language exposure in a student's learning environment as reported by parents in the survey.**
- **Family Language Usage focuses on:**
  - **Parent/guardian language usage (heavily weighted)**
  - **Sibling language usage (if applicable)**
  - **Extended family language usage**
- **Media Language Exposure focuses on:**
  - **Movies, videos, and television shows**
  - **Board, card, and video games**
  - **Books (reading/being read to)**
  - **Music (listening and performing)**
- **Social Activity focuses on:**
  - **Participation in sports and recreational activity (if applicable)**
  - **Participation in social and community activity (if applicable)**
  - **Participation in religious activity (if applicable)**

# LANGUAGE BACKGROUND SEGMENTS

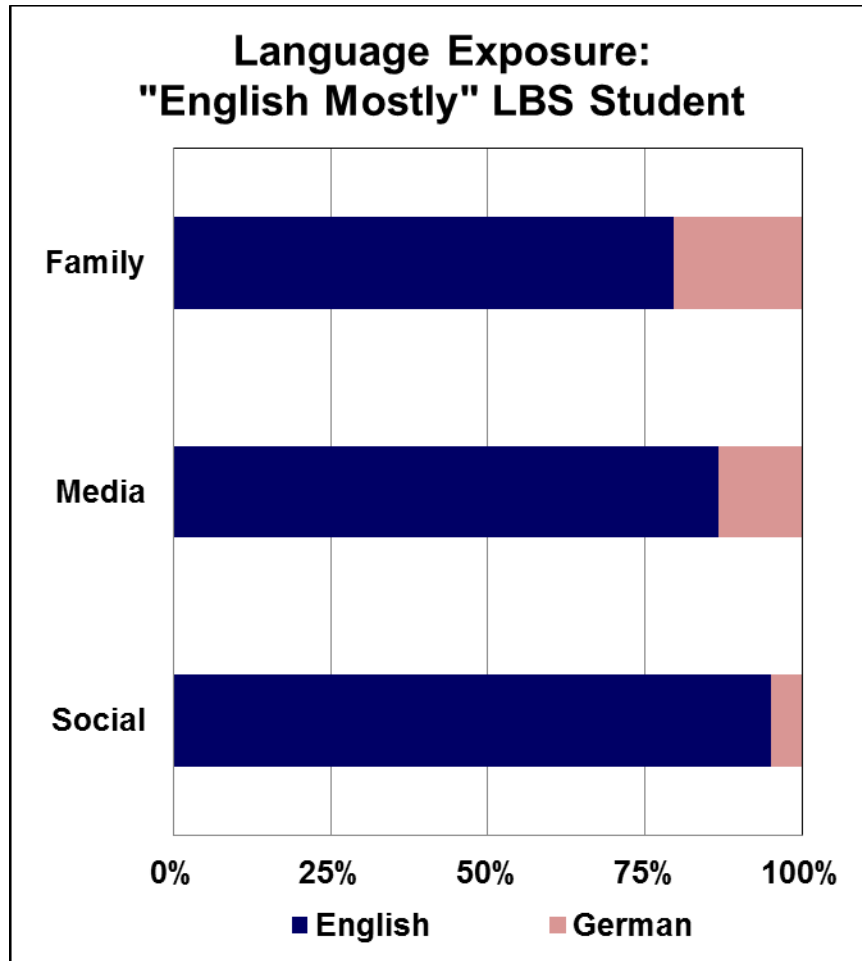
## Example: "German Mostly" LBS Student



- Kindergarten student
- Father only speaks to him in German, Mother and siblings speak mostly German
- Only plays German games, but is exposed equally to books and music in both languages
- Plays in sport groups where only English is used, participates in social activities among both languages equally

# LANGUAGE BACKGROUND SEGMENTS

## Example: "English Mostly" LBS Student

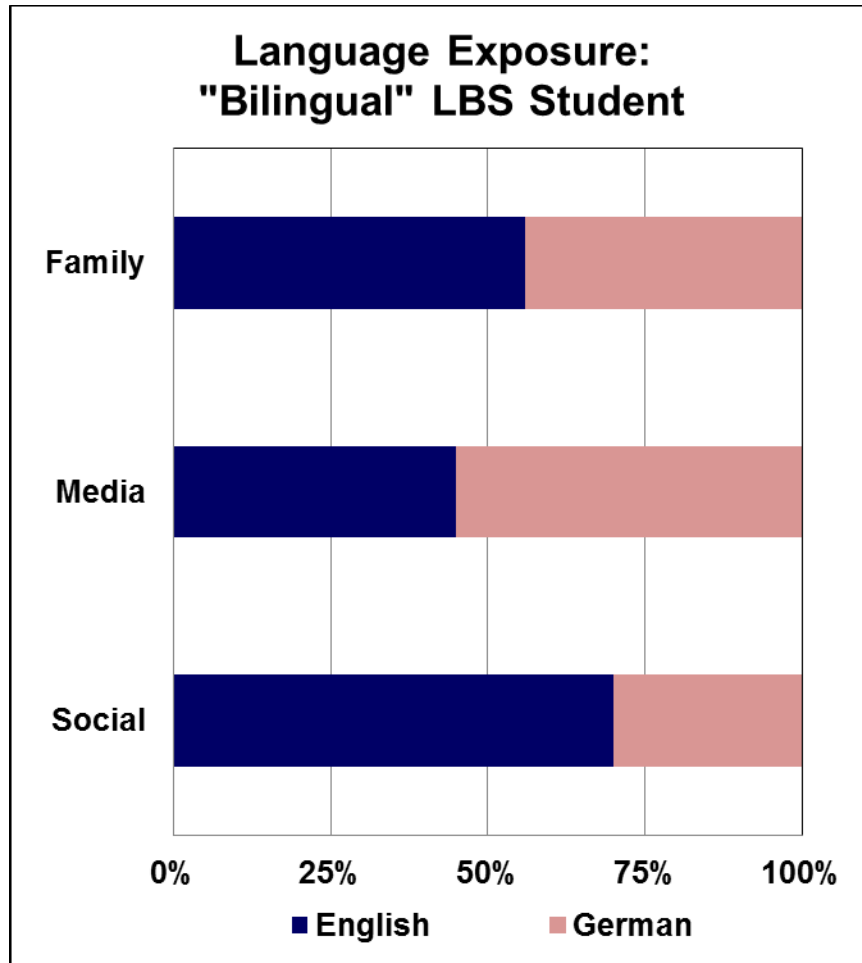


- **Preschool student**
- **Father only speaks to her in German, Mother speaks both English and German equally**
- **Only plays English games, but is read some German books (30%) and listens to some German music (20%)**
- **Participates in a small number of social activities where primary language spoken is German, but attends religious services entirely in English**



# LANGUAGE BACKGROUND SEGMENTS

## Example: "Bilingual" LBS Student



- **Grade 1 student**
- **Father speaks mostly German, Mother and siblings speak mostly English, extended family is evenly split**
- **Reads in both languages equally, listens to and watches slightly more German material**
- **Only uses English in sports, but participates slightly more in social activities where German is spoken**

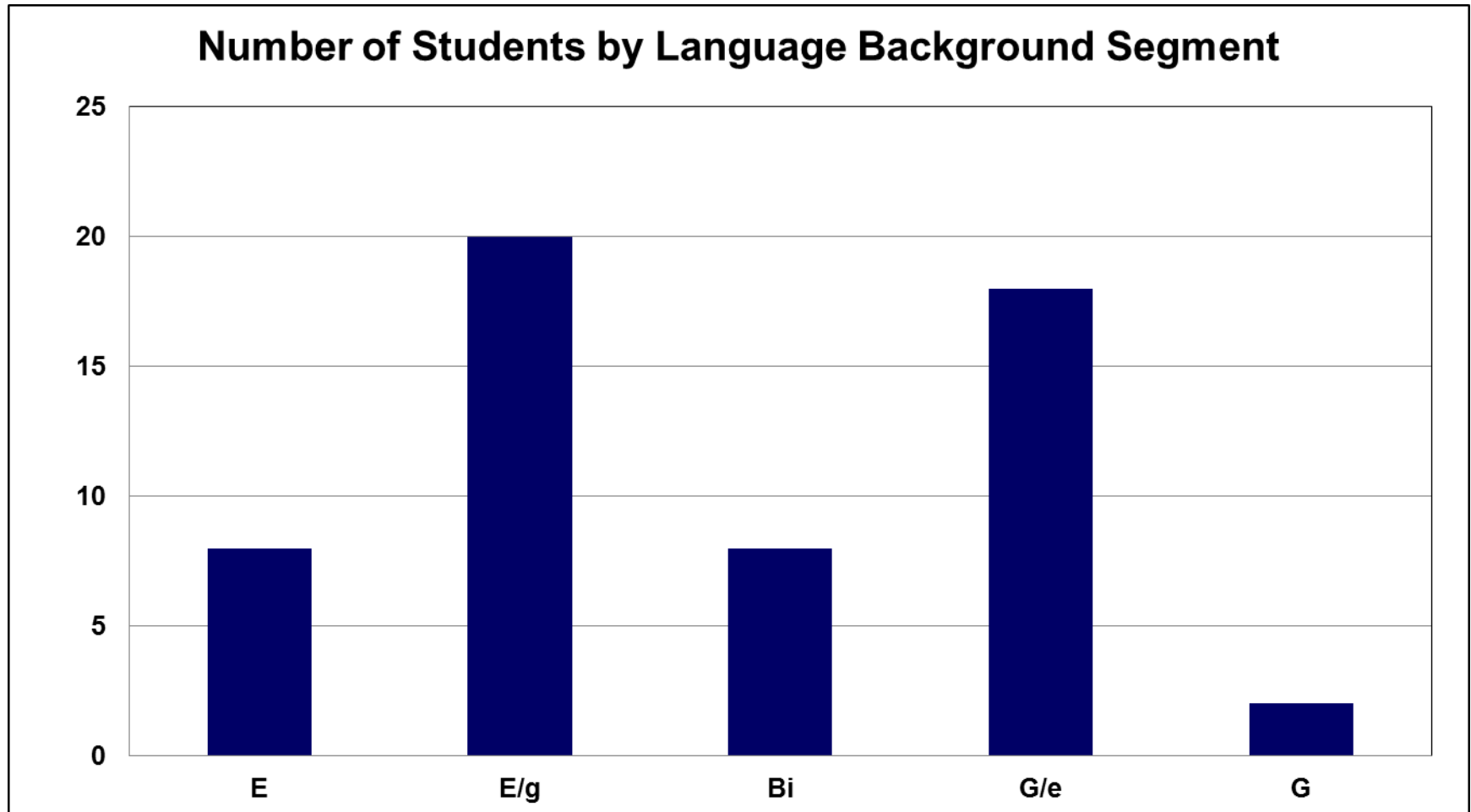
# LANGUAGE BACKGROUND SEGMENTS

## Language Background Segments of Observed Students

- **The following analysis provides an overview of the Language Background Segments of the 56 students selected for observation.**

# LANGUAGE BACKGROUND SEGMENTS

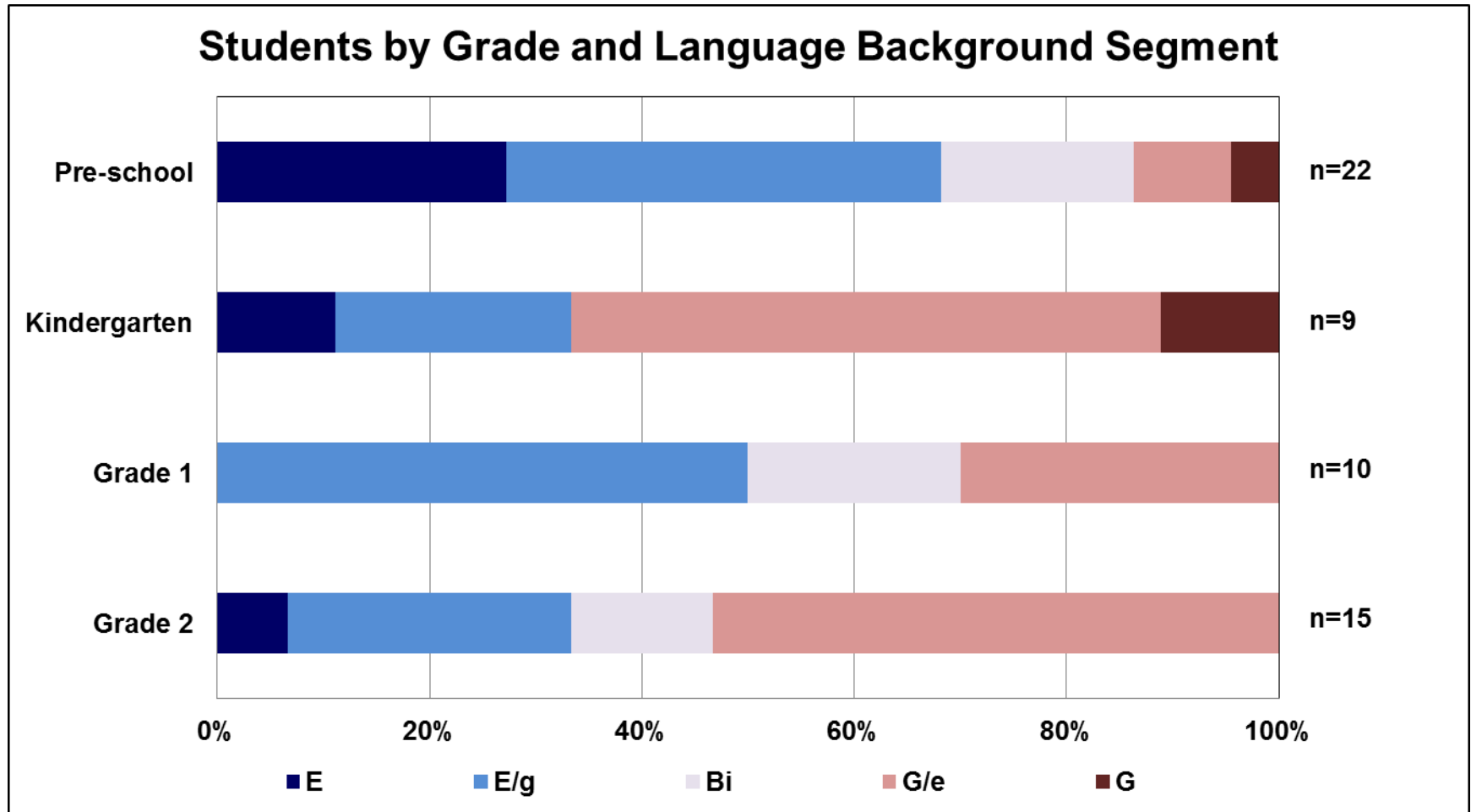
## Students by Language Background Segment



**Most are exposed to both languages to at least some extent outside of school**

# LANGUAGE BACKGROUND SEGMENTS

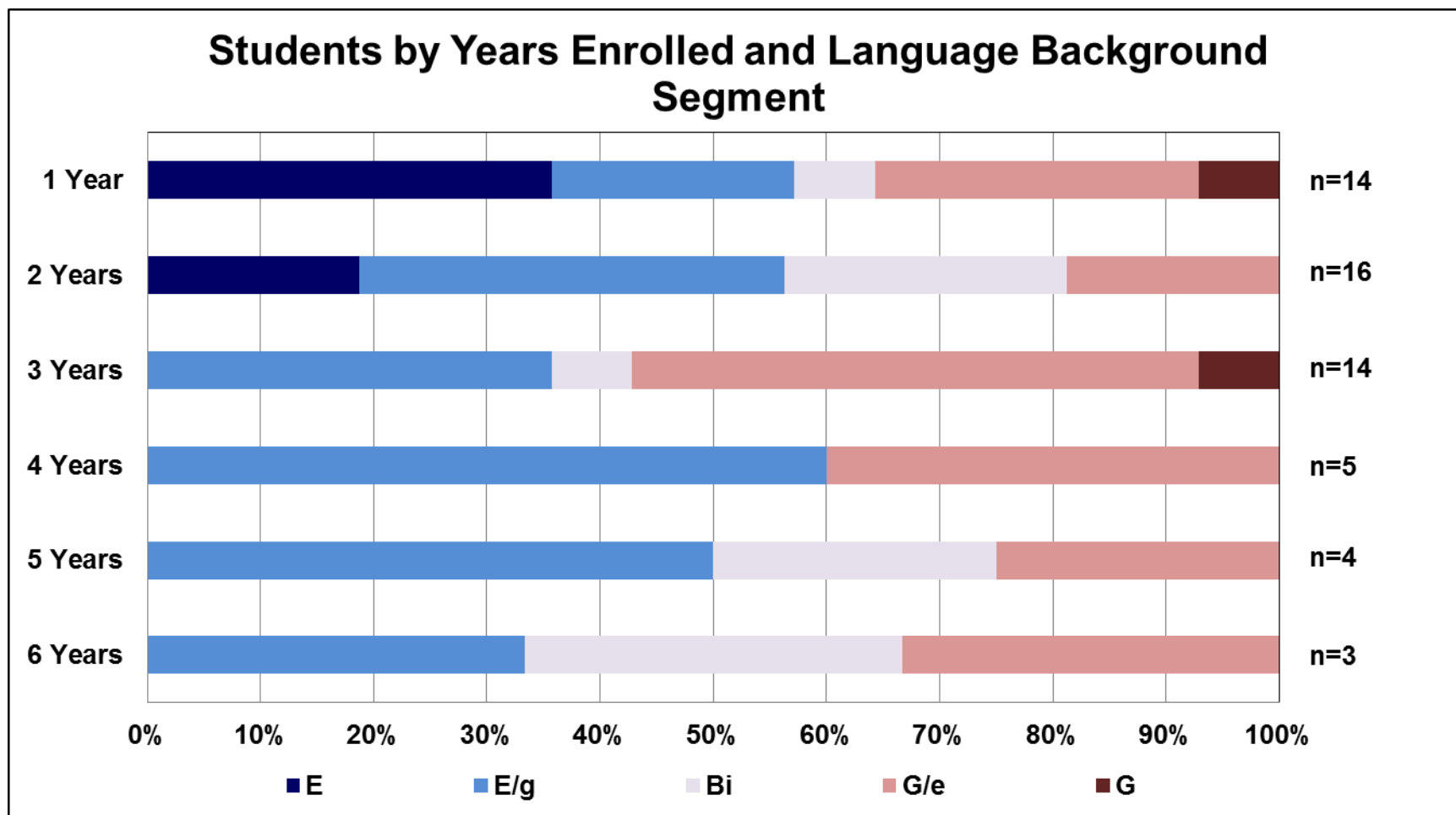
## Students by Grade and Language Background Segment



**More younger students coming from unilingual learning environment**

# LANGUAGE BACKGROUND SEGMENTS

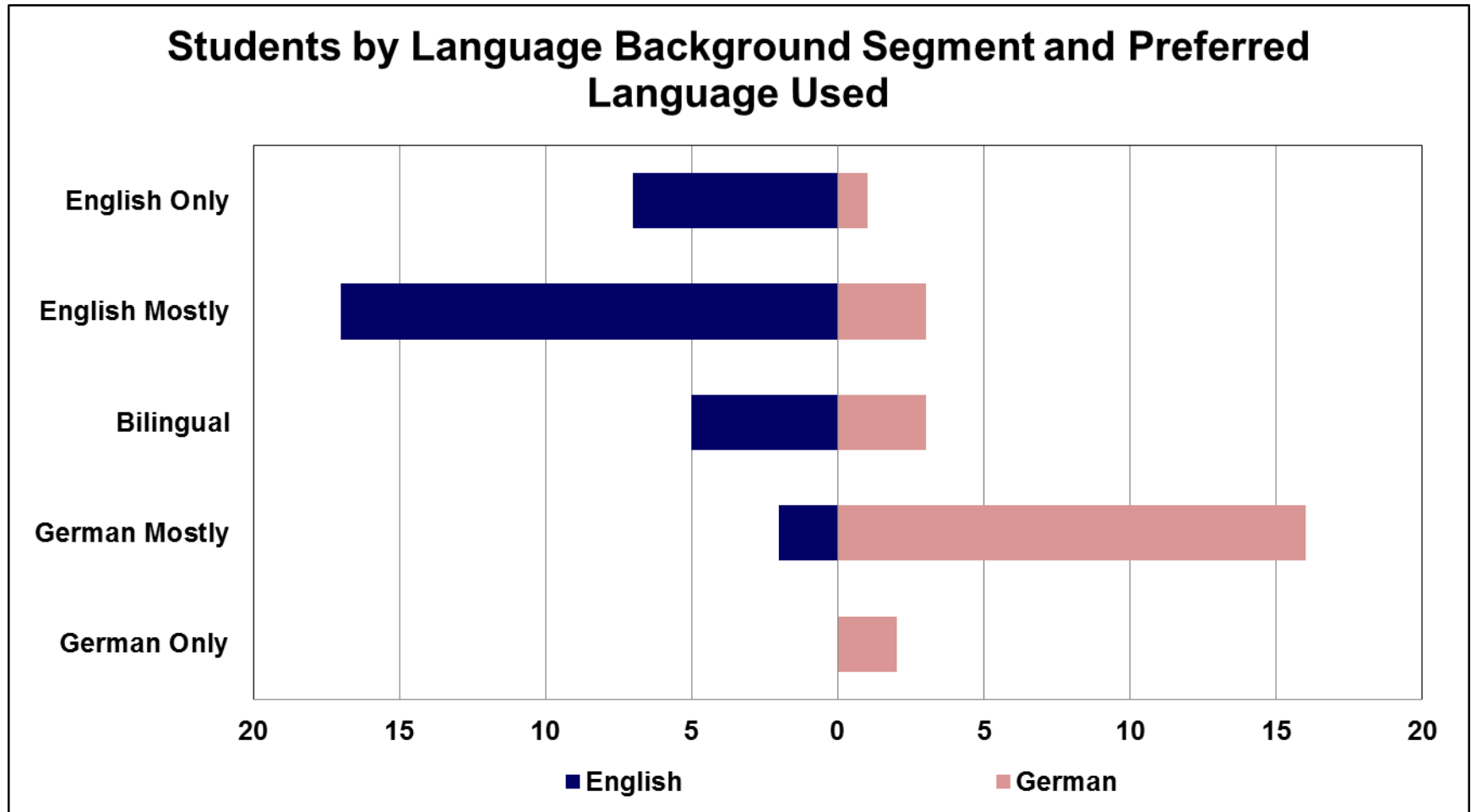
## Students by Years Enrolled at the School and Language Segment



**Outside language environment can be independent of experience at school**

# LANGUAGE BACKGROUND SEGMENTS

## Students by Language Background Segment and Preferred Language



**LBS generally relate to a student's "preferred language" as reported by parents/teachers**

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# CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

## Framework

- **Classroom observations were one of the four core elements of this project:**
  - **Parent survey**
  - **Language Background Segments (LBS)**
  - **Language Learner Profiles (LLPs)**
  - **Observations codified on a Language Usage Behavior Scale (LUBS)**
- **Classroom observations took place 2-4 times/month between December 2013 and June 2014.**
- **Observations were conducted by two ICG analysts.**
- **Observations were codified in a Language Usage Behavior Scale (LUBS).**
- **LUBS focuses on language usage events which reflect on a discrete action/learning/activity by a student within his/her specific context.**



# CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

## In-Classroom Approach

- **Foremost, the need for the integrity of the classroom social and learning environment as set by teachers needed to be acknowledged.**
- **Analysts aimed to minimize their impact by using an age-appropriate, casual, and passive (participant observer) approach.**
- **A key goal is to make students feel comfortable with ICG's classroom presence to be point of "being ignored".**
- **ICG did not actively participate in learning events in order to avoid distorting any observation.**
- **Observation techniques differed depending on classroom settings:**
  - **Pre-School and Vorschule: Immersed, movement, at times close to teacher**
  - **Grades 1+2: Largely static, facing students, away from teacher**

**Details were agreed-on with every teacher**

# COLLABORATION WITH TEACHERS

## Approach

- **ICG conducted itself as a guest in classrooms.**
- **ICG's presence and specific observation approaches followed guidance from teachers. This also concerned determining the most productive observation settings.**
- **No changes from the regular classroom dynamics were required; indeed, it was preferred if classrooms operate as “normal” as possible.**

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- **The language usage observation of students in and out-side of the classroom proved to be complex and challenging.**
- **Observable language interactions varied greatly depending on:**
  - **The setting (circle time, reading, group work, break time, etc.)**
  - **The language interaction pattern (student-teacher, student-student, students-students)**
  - **The purpose of the interaction ( from short and specific to long and complex)**
  - **The role of language in the interaction (from core to peripheral)**
- **The approach to observing students (passive participant observer) did not interfere with students' language usage (after 1-2 sessions, students “ignored” the analysts). Teachers were/are used to classroom guests.**
- **A key challenge was the very low number of codifiable data points per observation hour owing to a lot of slack, resets, abandoned codification, etc. (which is, again, normal).**

- **Language usage followed student-specific circumstances, including:**
  - The strong role of parents and siblings at early ages (3-5 years old)
  - The growing role of peers (6 years old)
  - The strong role of peers in shaping new language acquisition (7-8 years old)
- **Class composition mattered:**
  - The preponderance of clusters of German or English language speakers
  - The role of gender (especially starting with Grade 1)
  - The presence of close friends in the classroom
- **Bilingual language usage:**
  - Fundamentally shaped by family circumstance (early on)
  - Less driven by teachers who have to be effective in communication and thus cannot “force” language adoption
  - Less driven by fellow students since students tend to use their lead language more often
  - Definitely driven through academic and social content immersion over time, moving from passive to active usage

- **To be iterated by Dominic Liechti and Daniel Guhr.**

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