

Introduction to Linguistics: Language Attitudes, Inclusion, and Belonging

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NWAV53. November 5 2025



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Overview

1. Research Questions
2. The Present Study
3. Students' Demographic & Linguistic Backgrounds
4. Students' Language Attitudes
5. Conclusion
6. References



University of Washington in Seattle, WA.

Campus buildings at the University of Washington form a square with cherry blossom trees in the center. The Seattle skyline is shown in the background.

Research Questions

1. What are the **demographic** and **linguistic** backgrounds of students enrolled in Introduction to Linguistics at the University of Washington in Seattle, WA?
2. What language attitudes do these students have **prior** to taking Introduction to Linguistics?
3. Do students' language attitudes change **after** taking Introduction to Linguistics?

The Present Study

- Part of a larger dissertation research project
- Survey data collected from undergraduate students enrolled in Introduction to Linguistics at the University of Washington (n=124/92)
 - Demographic & Linguistic Background Data
 - Likert Data: Language Attitudes; Classroom Experiences and Inclusion/Belonging
 - Free Response Data: Dialects/Accents; Classroom Experiences, Inclusion/Belonging and Linguistic Background; Current Curriculum

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 - **Likert Data: Language Attitudes**; Classroom Experiences and Inclusion/Belonging
 - Free Response Data: Dialects/Accents; Classroom Experiences, Inclusion/Belonging and Linguistic Background; Current Curriculum

An Issue: Lack of Diversity in Linguistics

- Linguistics degrees of all types are awarded to White recipients more than any other ethnicity (Schrader, 2021).
- 33% of college graduates, 27% of doctoral students, and 28% of tenure-track faculty are first-generation (Bowie et al., 2024)
- Understanding **who** our students are in our Introductory classes can help us to better support them and increase diversity in our field.
- Positionality Statement: Cis*-Bisexual White American Woman.
First Generation College Graduate. Low Income Background.

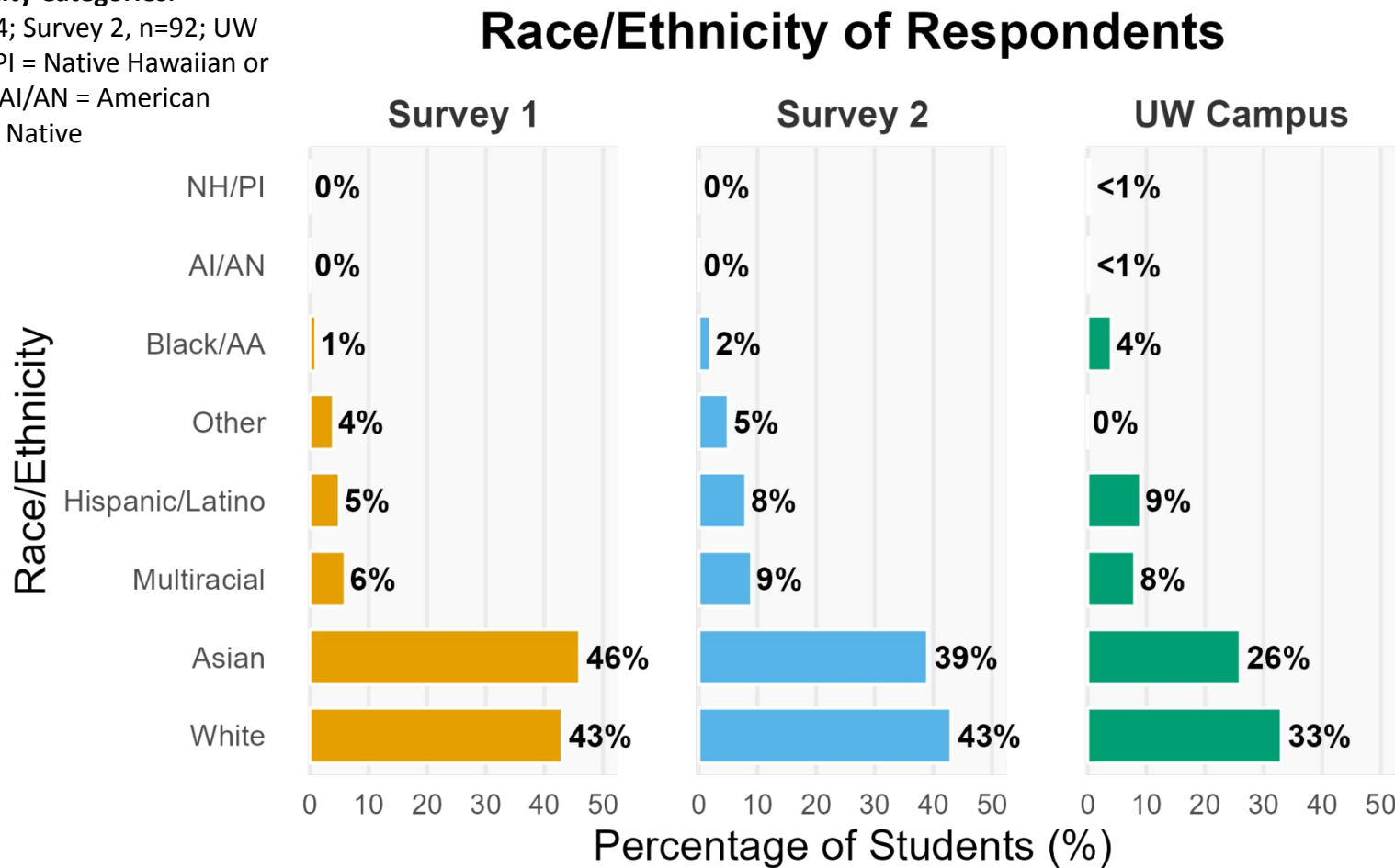
Students' Demographic & Linguistic Backgrounds



Dubs the UW Mascot.

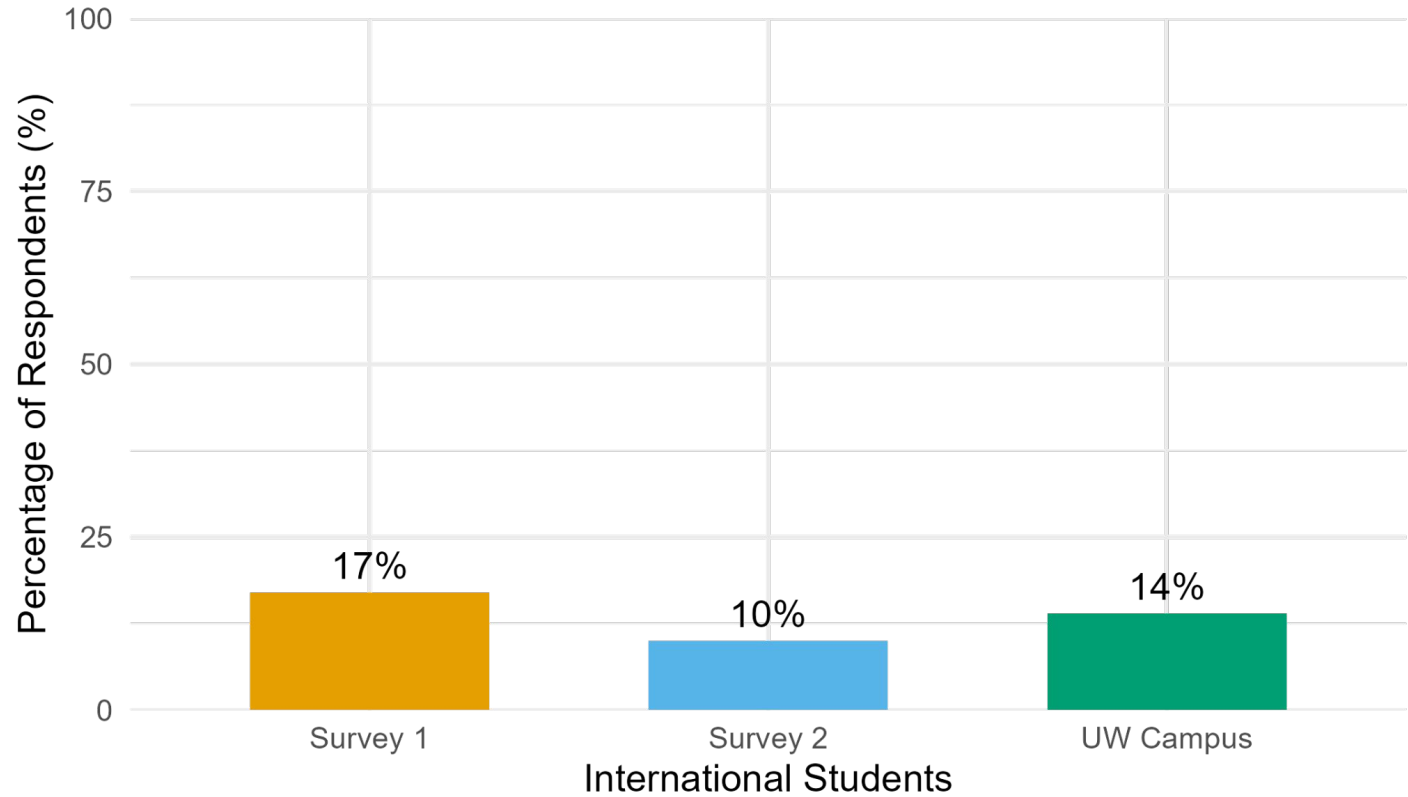
An Alaskan Malamute dog is pictured wearing a purple bandana with a large W and the word “Huskies” on it.

Figure 1. Participants self-identified Race and Ethnicity Categories.
(Survey 1, n=124; Survey 2, n=92; UW n=31,574). NH/PI = Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. AI/AN = American Indian or Alaska Native



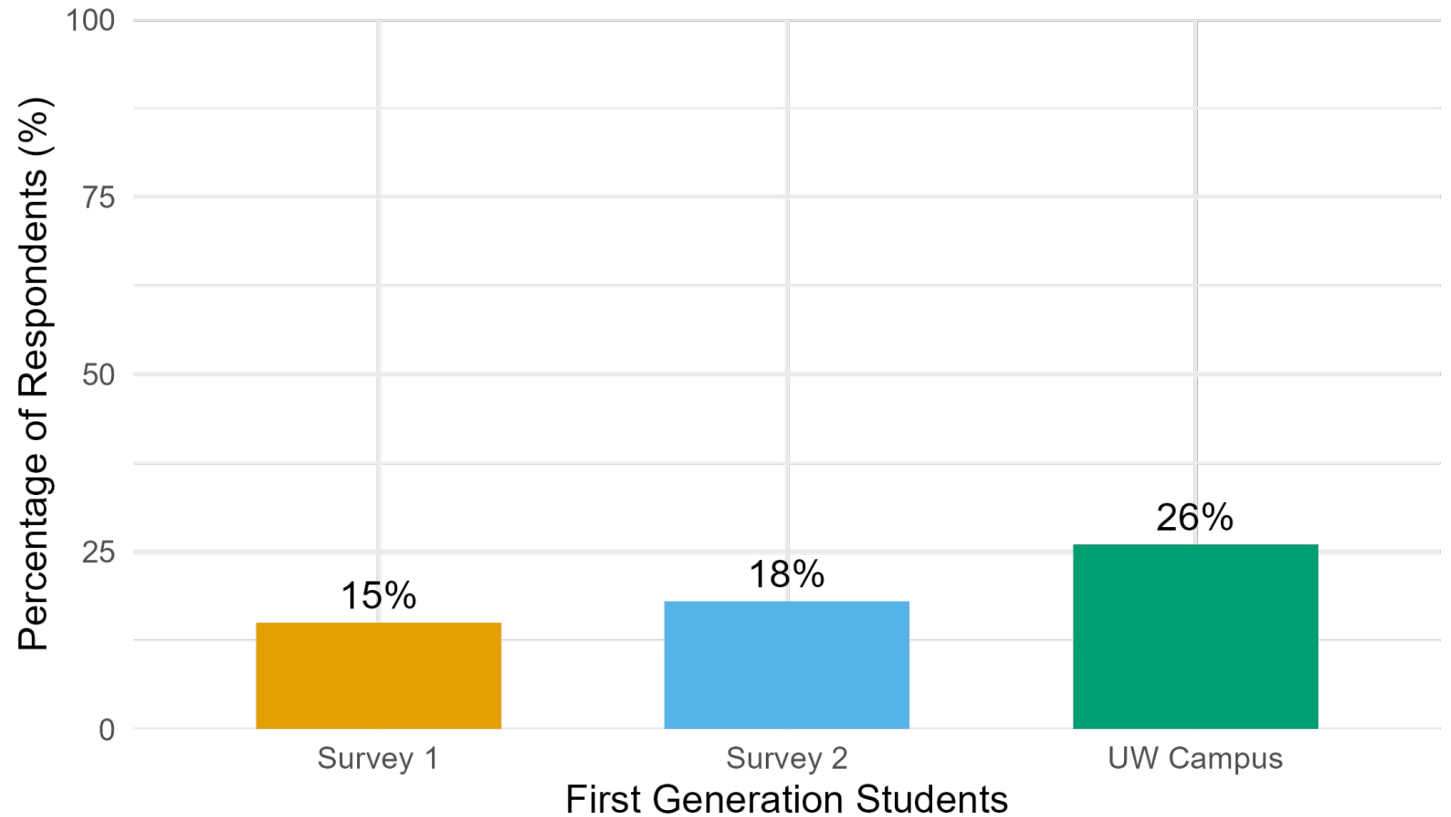
International Student Respondents

Figure 2. Participants who identified as International Students.
(Survey 1, n=124; Survey 2, n=92; UW n=31,574)



First Generation Student Respondents

Figure 3. Participants who identified as First Generation College Students. (Survey 1, n=124; Survey 2, n=92; UW n=31,574)



Gender of Respondents in Survey 1 and Survey 2

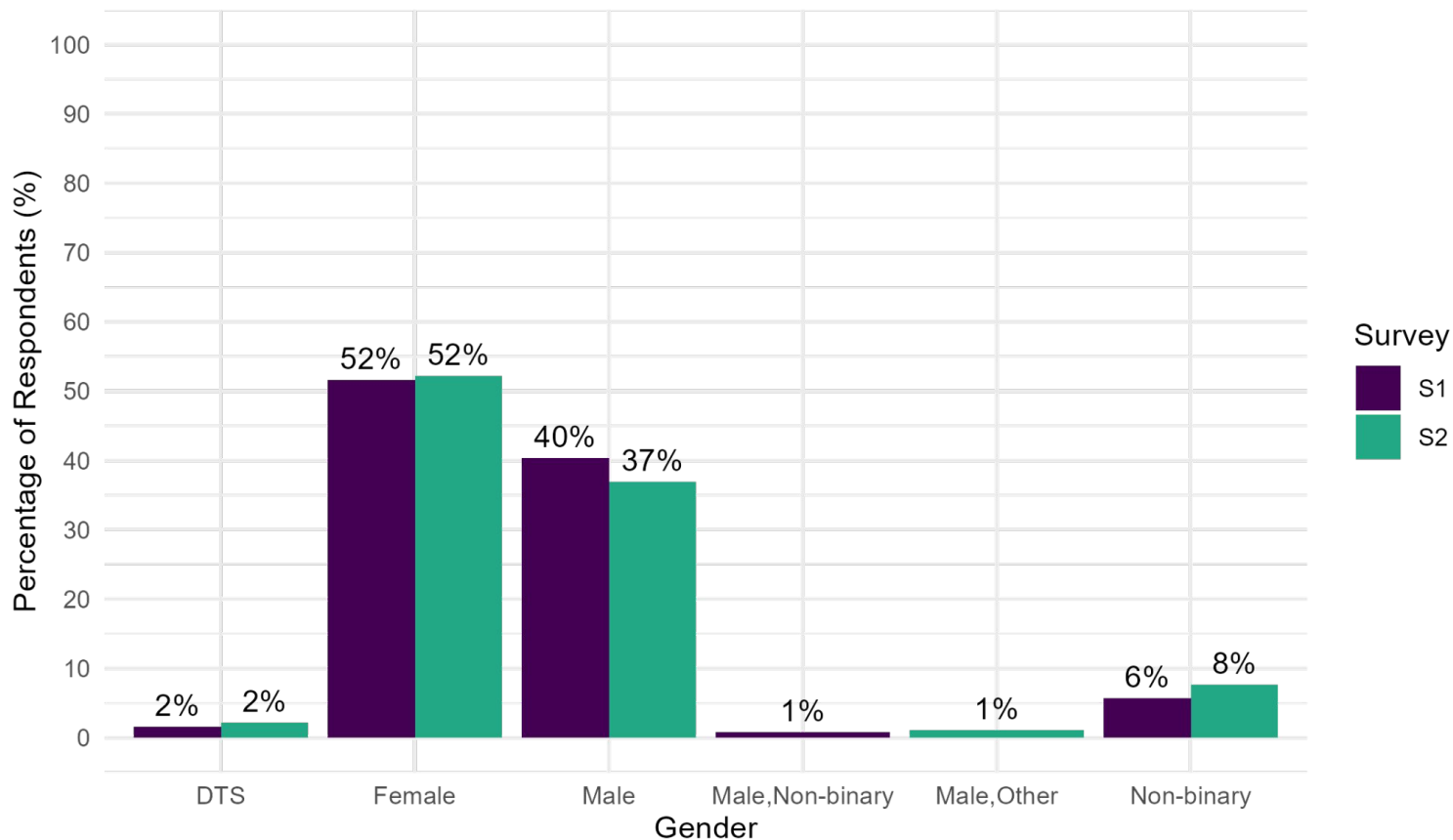


Figure 4. Gender of Respondents (Survey 1, n=124; Survey 2, n=92)

Birth Years of Respondents in Survey 1 and Survey 2

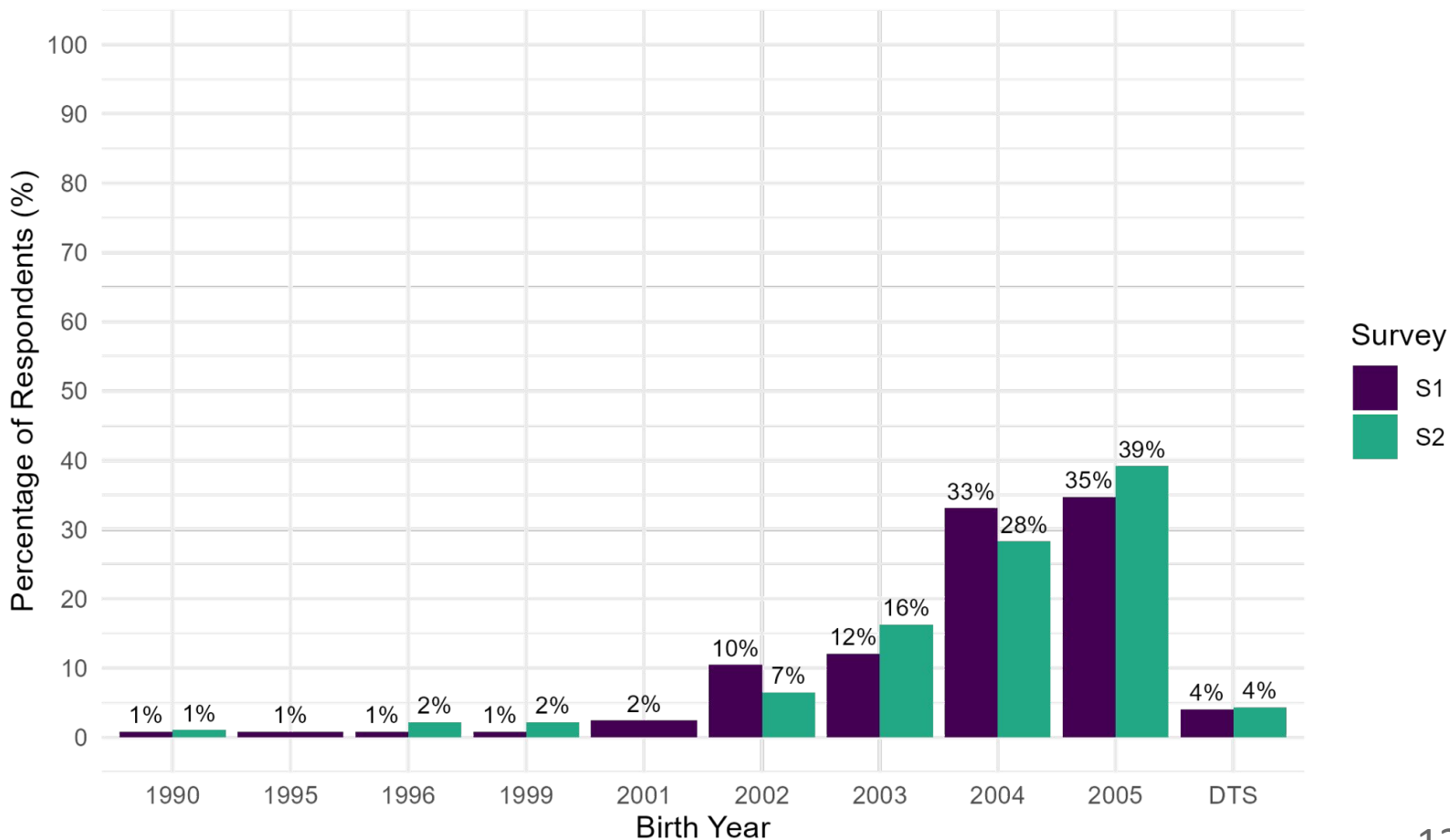
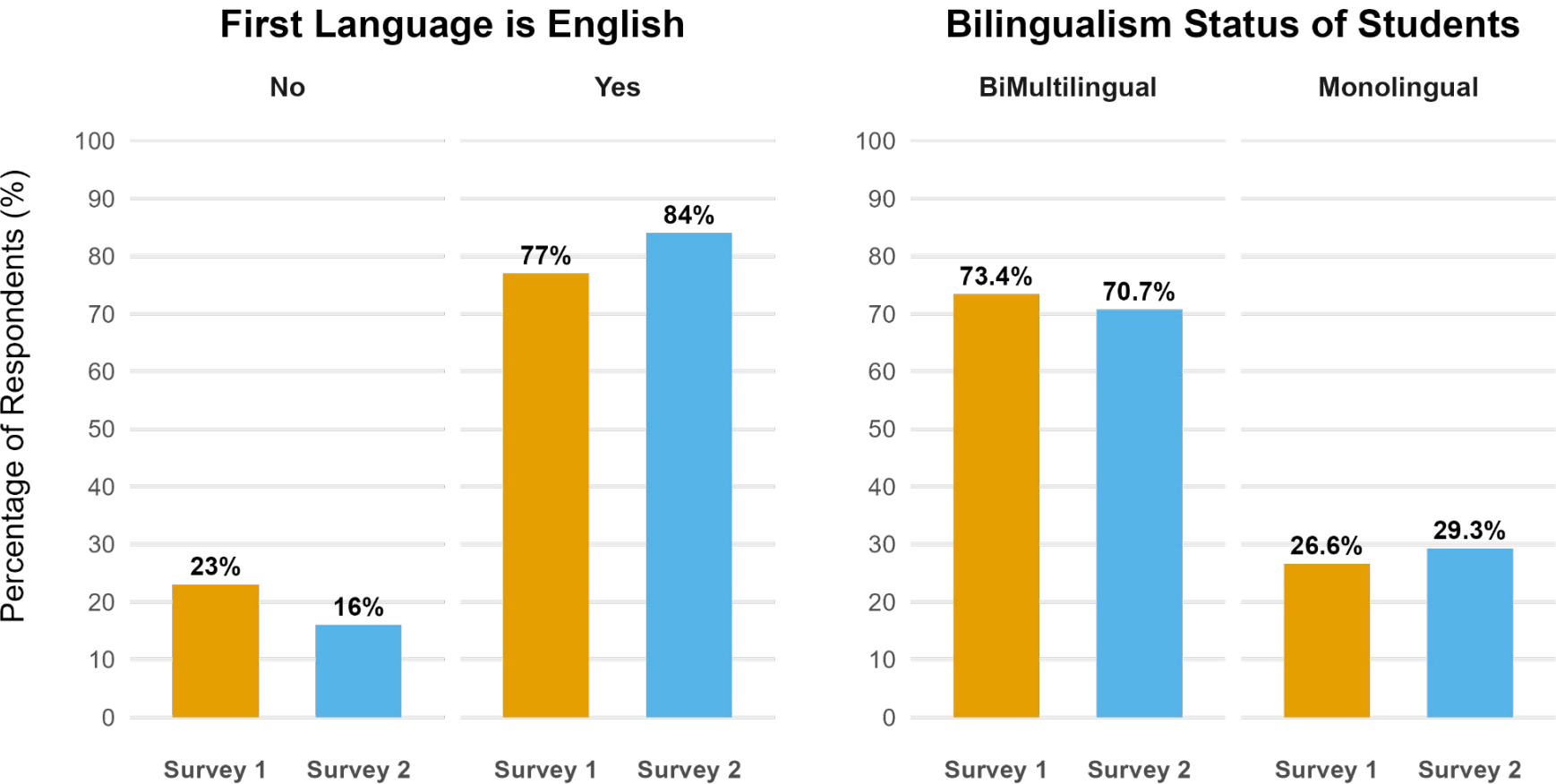


Figure 5.
Birth Year of
Respondents
(Survey 1,
n=124; Survey
2, n=92)

Students' Linguistic Backgrounds

Figure 6. Linguistic Backgrounds of Survey Respondents.
(Survey 1, n=124; Survey 2, n=92; UW n=31,574)



First Languages of Participants



First Languages of Participants

- **Survey 1:** English (96), Mandarin (18), Vietnamese (6), Cantonese (5), Chinese (5), Korean (4), Spanish (3), Malayalam (2), Mexican Spanish (2), Thai (2), Farsi (1), French (1), Hindi (1), Indonesian (1), Khmer (1), Lithuanian (1), Polish (1), Taiwanese (1), Tagalog (1), Telugu (1), Russian (1), Urdu (1), and Wenzhounese (1)
- **Survey 2:** English (77), Mandarin (8), Korean (5), Vietnamese (4), Mexican Spanish (4), Spanish (3), Cantonese (3), Chinese (3), Thai (2), French (1), Fulani (1), Indonesian (1), Japanese (1), Khmer (1), Luganda (1), Malayalam (1), Portuguese (1), Tagalog (1), and Urdu (1)

Additional Languages or Dialects



Additional Languages or Dialects

- **Survey 1:** Spanish (27), English (22), French (11), Mandarin (6), American Sign Language (5), German (3), Mexican Spanish (2), Japanese (2), Korean (2), Taiwanese (2), Cantonese (2), Chinese (1), Georgian (1), Gujarati (1), Italian (1), Khmer (1), Kutchi (1), Lushootseed (1), Nanjingnese (1), Polish (1), Portuguese (1), Tagalog (1), Tamil (1), and Vietnamese (1)
- **Survey 2:** English (16), Spanish (16), French (6), Chinese (3), American Sign Language (2), Japanese (2), Mandarin (2), Chinook Wawa (1), Italian (1), Javanese (1), Lithuanian (1), Lushootseed (1), Portuguese (1), Tagalog (1), Taiwanese (1), and Thai (1).

Language Attitudes **Before** Taking Introduction to Linguistics

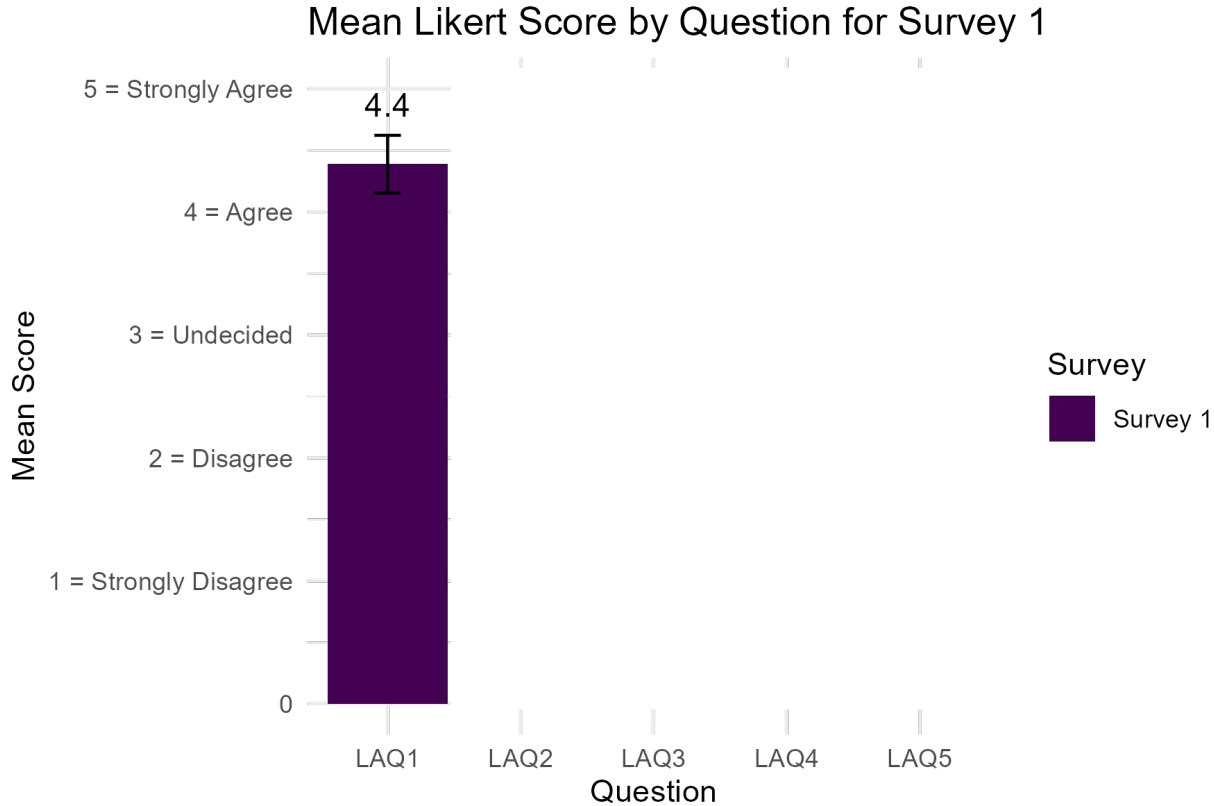
Language Attitude Likert Questions

1. I think all languages, dialects, and varieties of language are equal.
2. I think students of languages other than English or so-called 'standard English' face multiple barriers to academic success and inclusion.
3. I think students of marginalized languages or varieties of languages encounter discrimination.
4. I think professors should be more accommodating to students that speak different languages and dialects.
5. I think that a person's language is related to their identity.

Research Question:

1. What language attitudes do students have **prior** to taking Introduction to Linguistics?

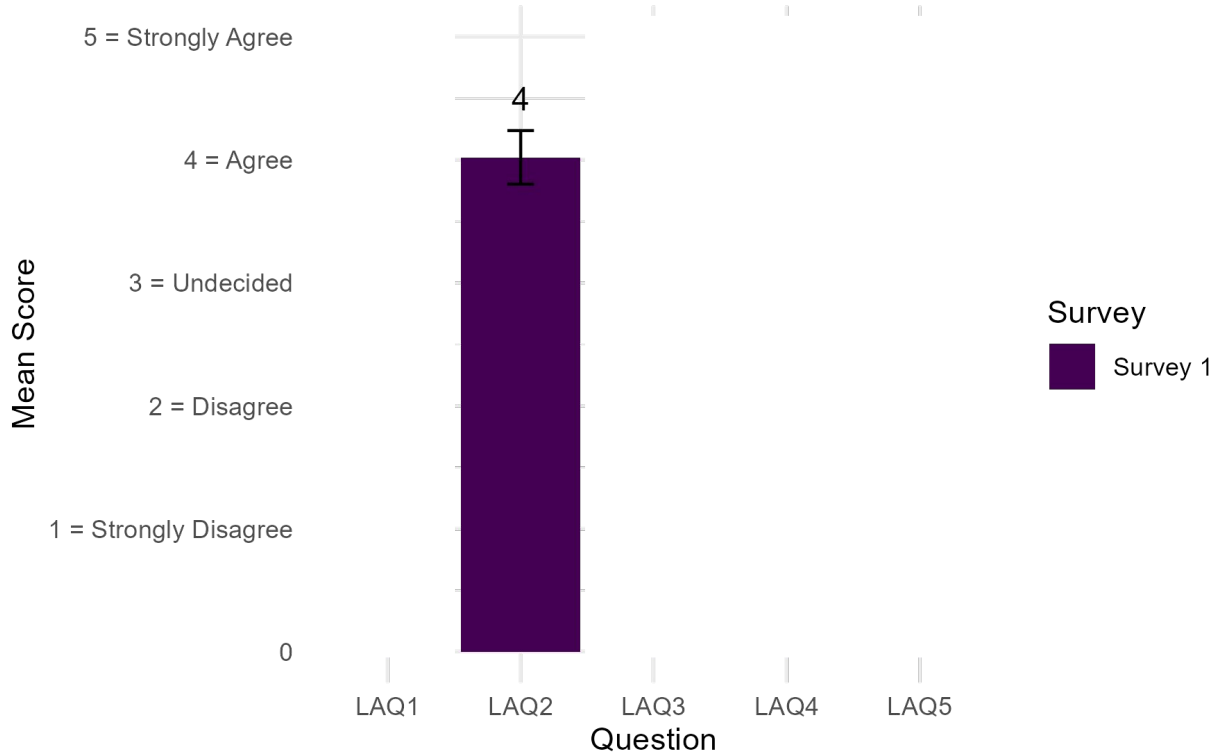
Figure 7. Language Attitude Questions Mean Likert Scores in Survey 1.
Data is from students who took both surveys. n= 49.
Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.



LAQ1. I think all languages, dialects, and varieties of languages are equal.

Mean Likert Score by Question for Survey 1

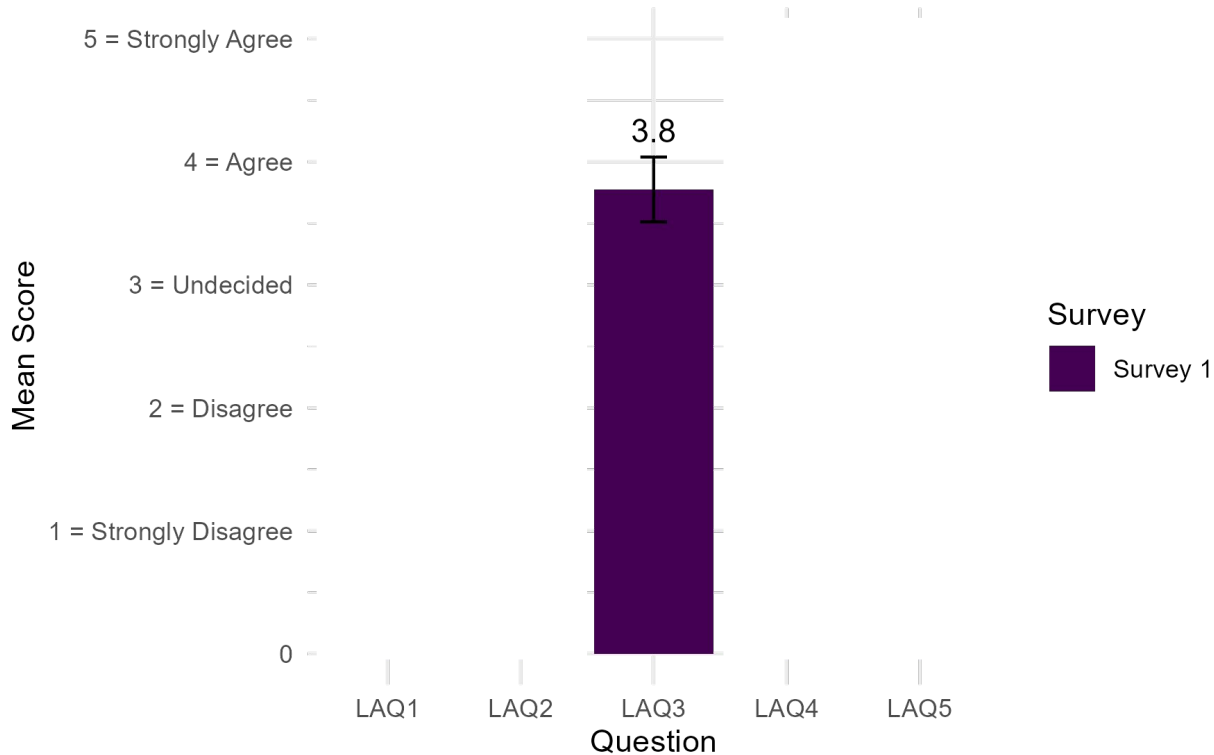
Figure 7. Language Attitude Questions Mean Likert Scores in Survey 1.
Data is from students who took both surveys. n= 49.
Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.



LAQ2. I think students of languages other than English or so-called 'standard English' face multiple barriers to academic success and inclusion.

Mean Likert Score by Question for Survey 1

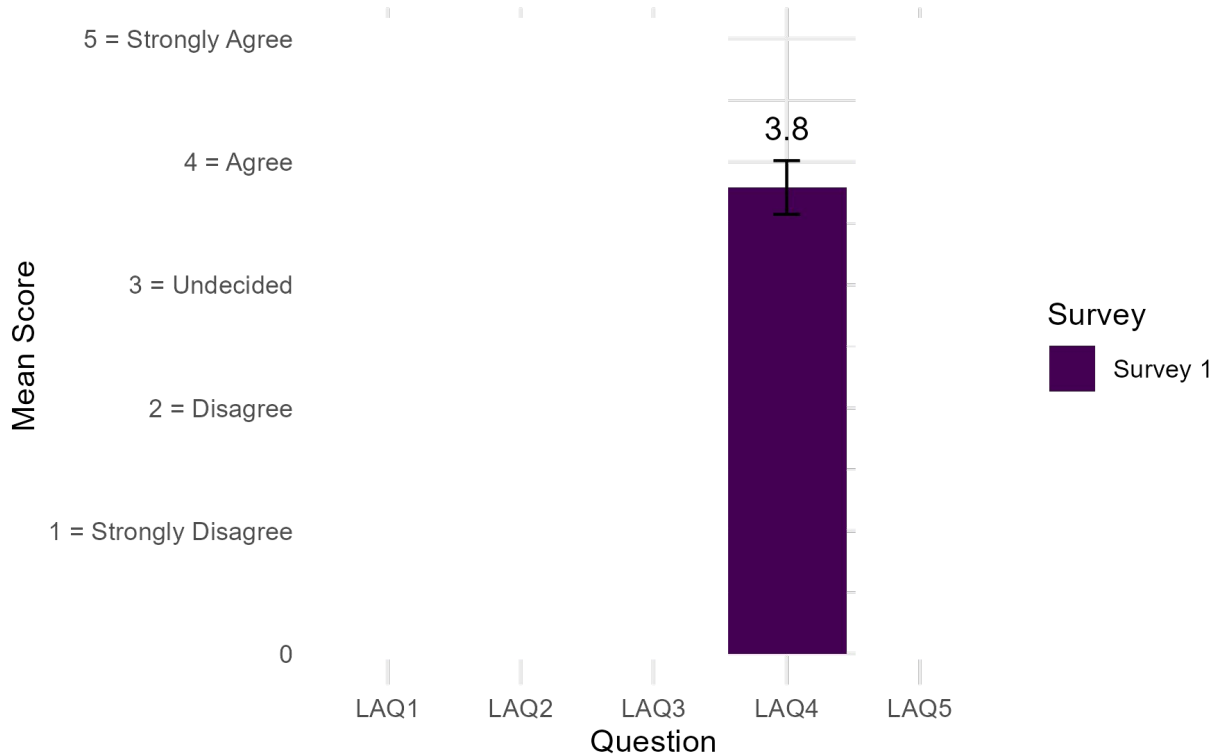
Figure 7. Language Attitude Questions Mean Likert Scores in Survey 1.
Data is from students who took both surveys. n= 49.
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LAQ3. I think students of marginalized languages or varieties of languages encounter discrimination.

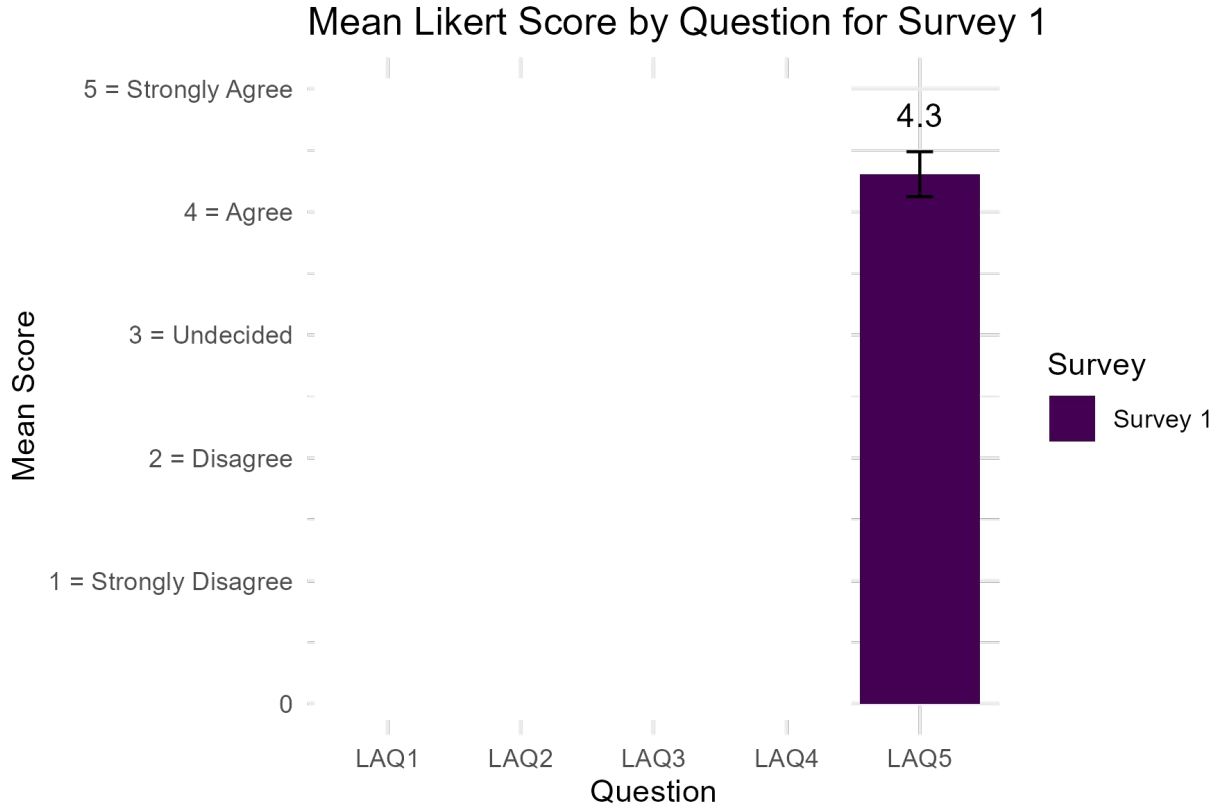
Mean Likert Score by Question for Survey 1

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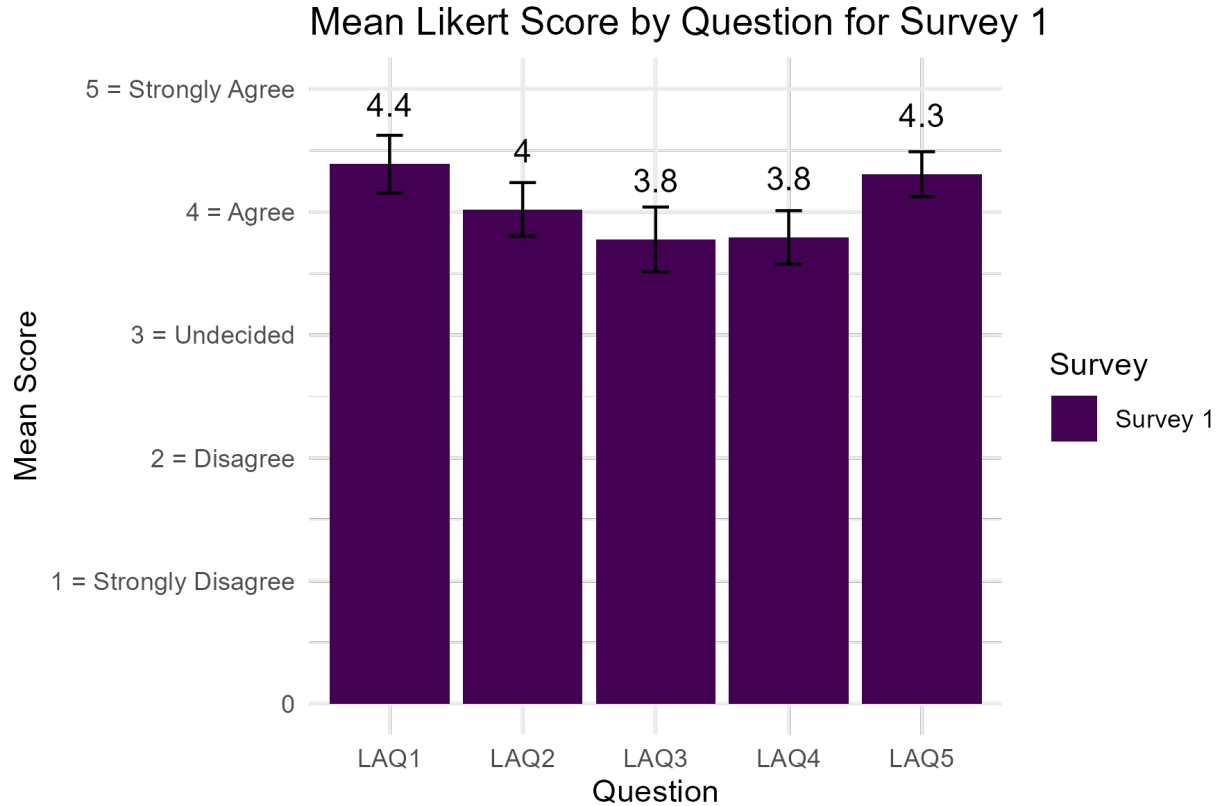
LAQ4. I think that professors should be more accommodating to students that speak different languages and dialects.

Figure 7. Language Attitude Questions Mean Likert Scores in Survey 1.
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LAQ5. I think that a person's language is related to their identity.

Figure 7. Language Attitude Questions Mean Likert Scores in Survey 1.
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LAQ1. I think all languages, dialects, and varieties of languages are equal.

LAQ2. I think students of languages other than English or so-called 'standard English' face multiple barriers to academic success and inclusion.

LAQ3. I think students of marginalized languages or varieties of languages encounter discrimination.

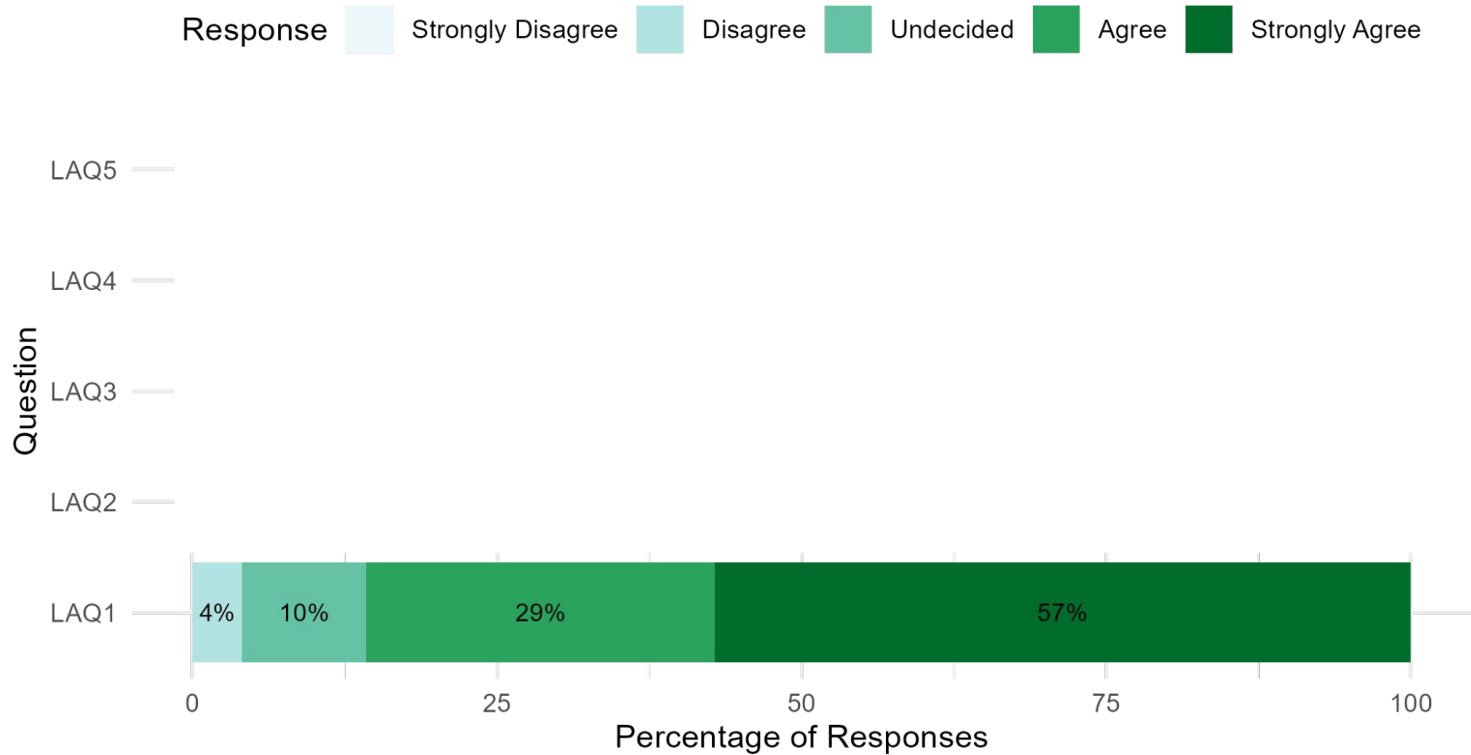
LAQ4. I think that professors should be more accommodating to students that speak different languages and dialects.

LAQ5. I think that a person's language is related to their identity.

Survey 1 Responses by Question

Figure 8. Language Attitude Question Responses in Survey 1.

Data is from students who took both surveys.
n= 49.

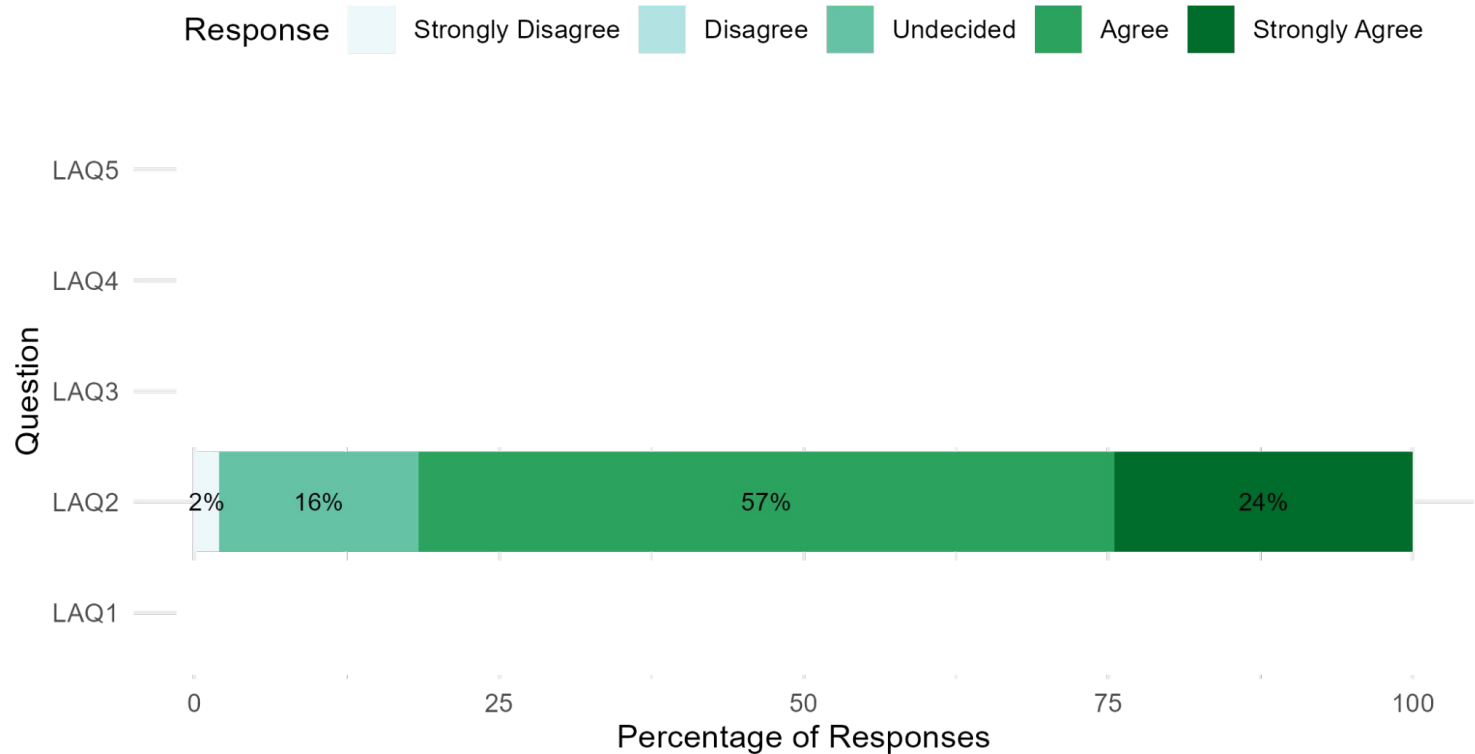


LAQ1. I think all languages, dialects, and varieties of languages are equal.

Survey 1 Responses by Question

Figure 6. Language Attitude Question Responses in Survey 1.

Data is from students who took both surveys.
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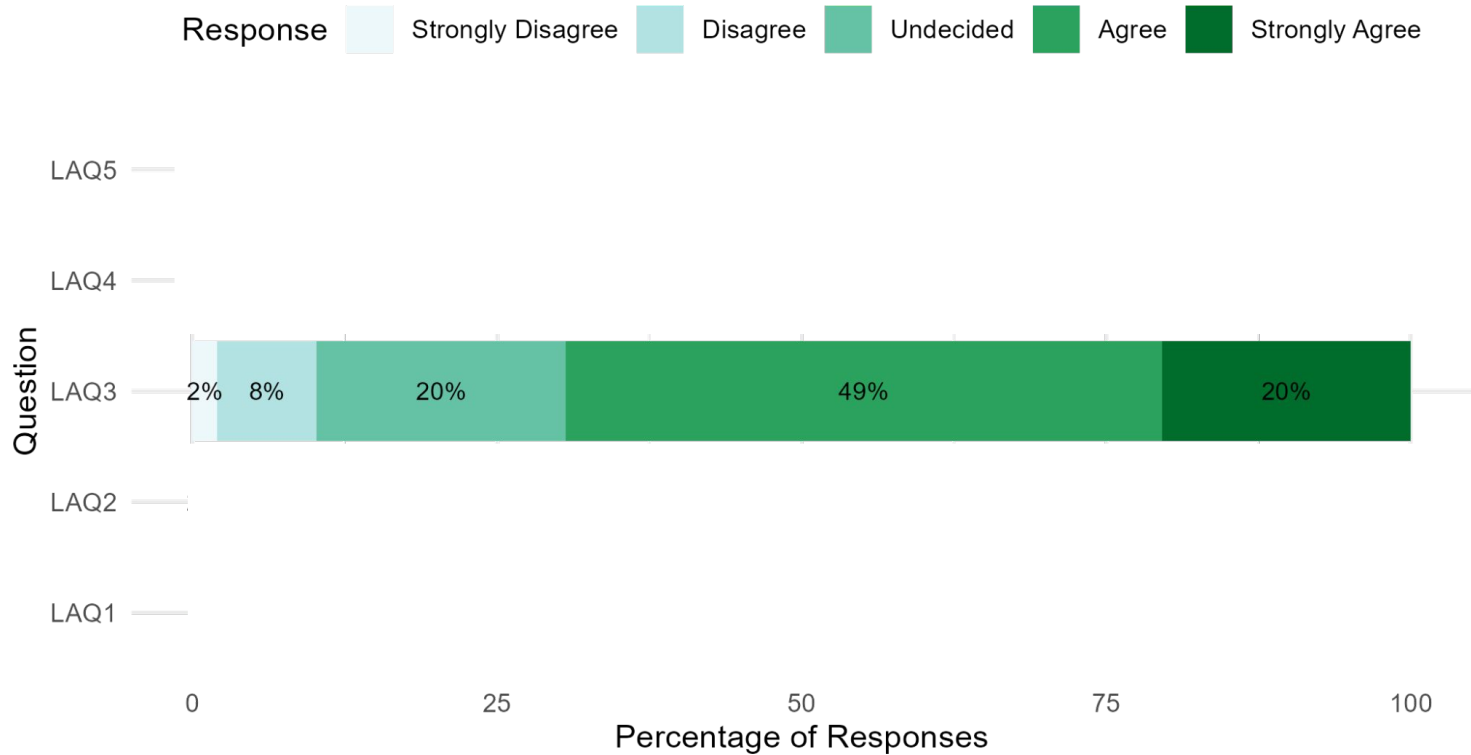


LAQ2. I think students of languages other than English or so-called 'standard English' face multiple barriers to academic success and inclusion.

Survey 1 Responses by Question

Figure 6. Language Attitude Question Responses in Survey 1.

Data is from students who took both surveys.
n= 49.

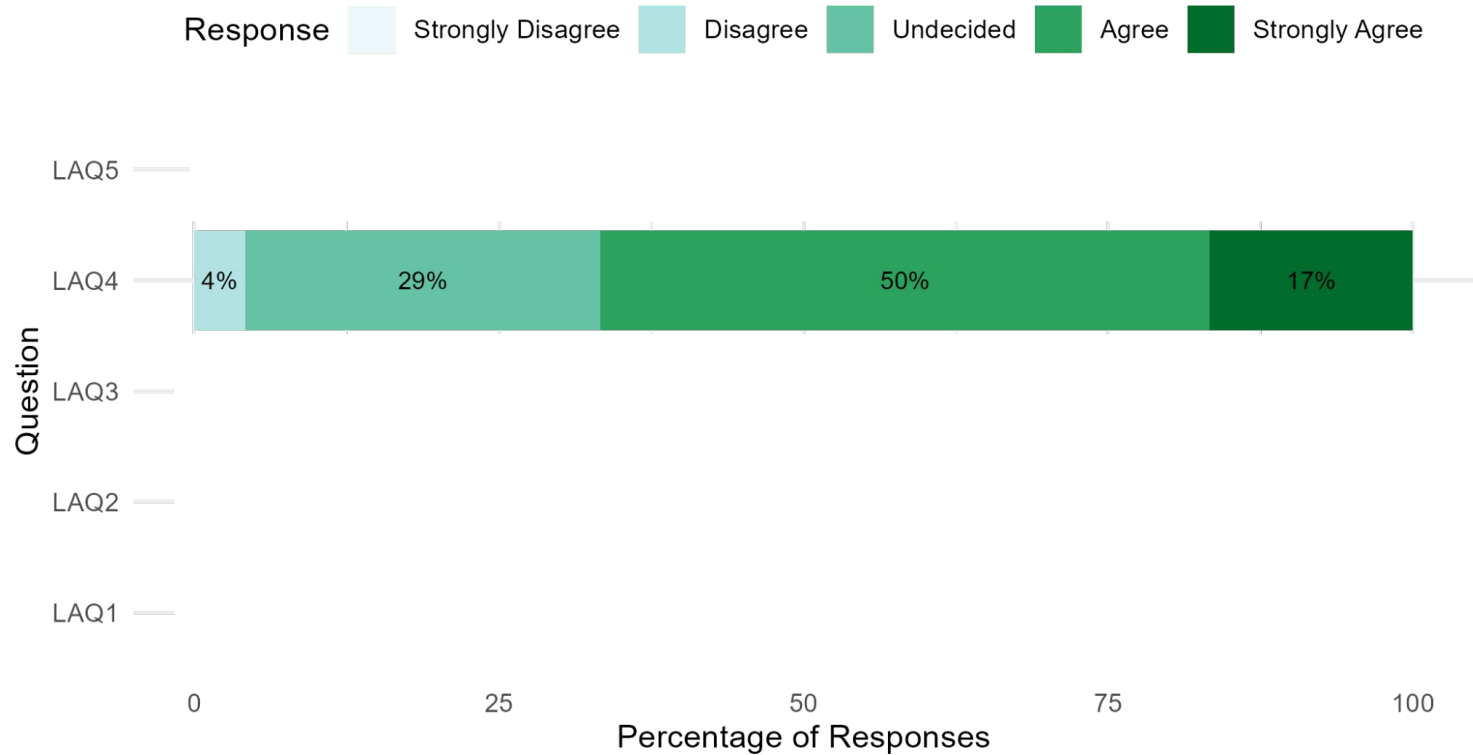


LAQ3. I think students of marginalized languages or varieties of languages encounter discrimination.

Survey 1 Responses by Question

Figure 6. Language Attitude Question Responses in Survey 1.

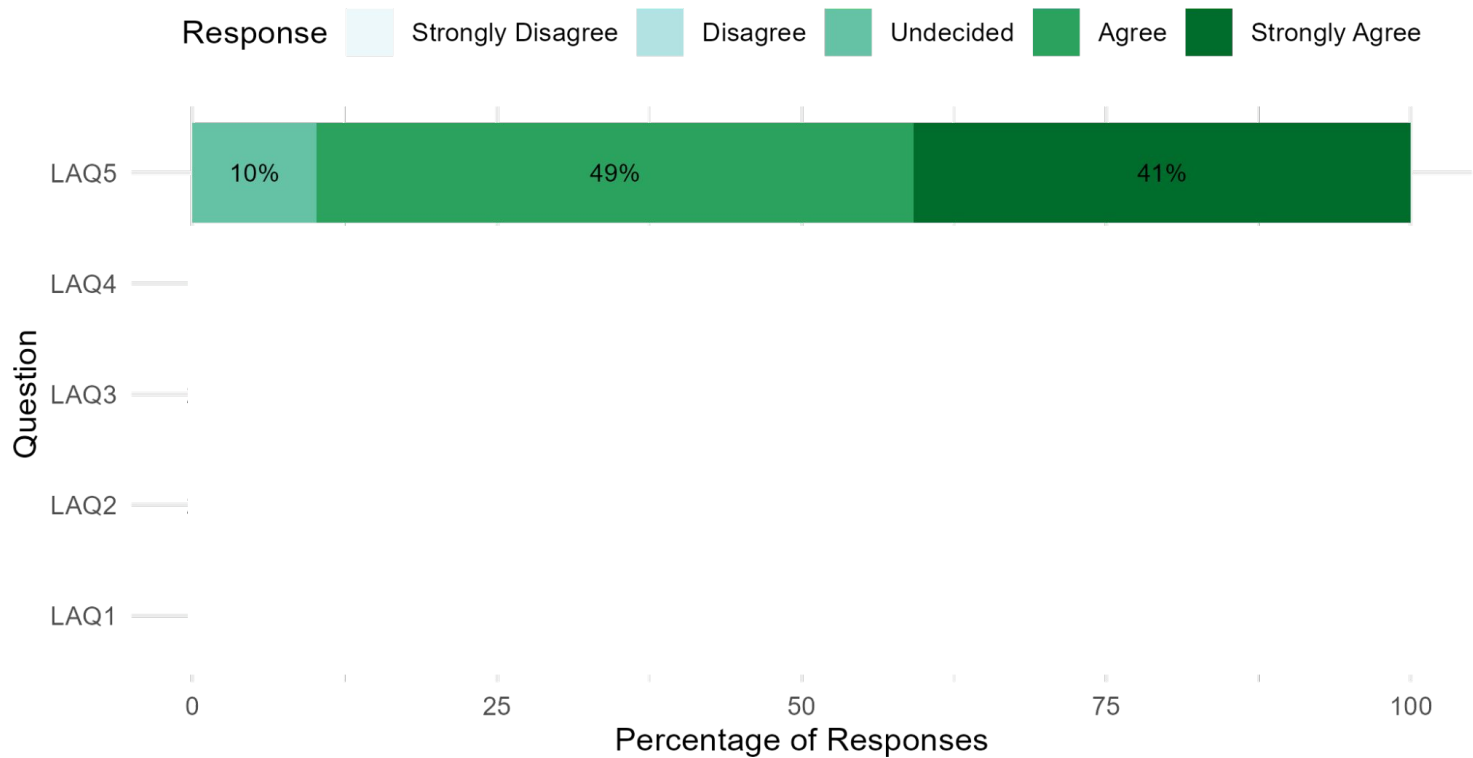
Data is from students who took both surveys.
n= 49. .



LAQ4. I think that professors should be more accommodating to students that speak different languages and dialects.

Survey 1 Responses by Question

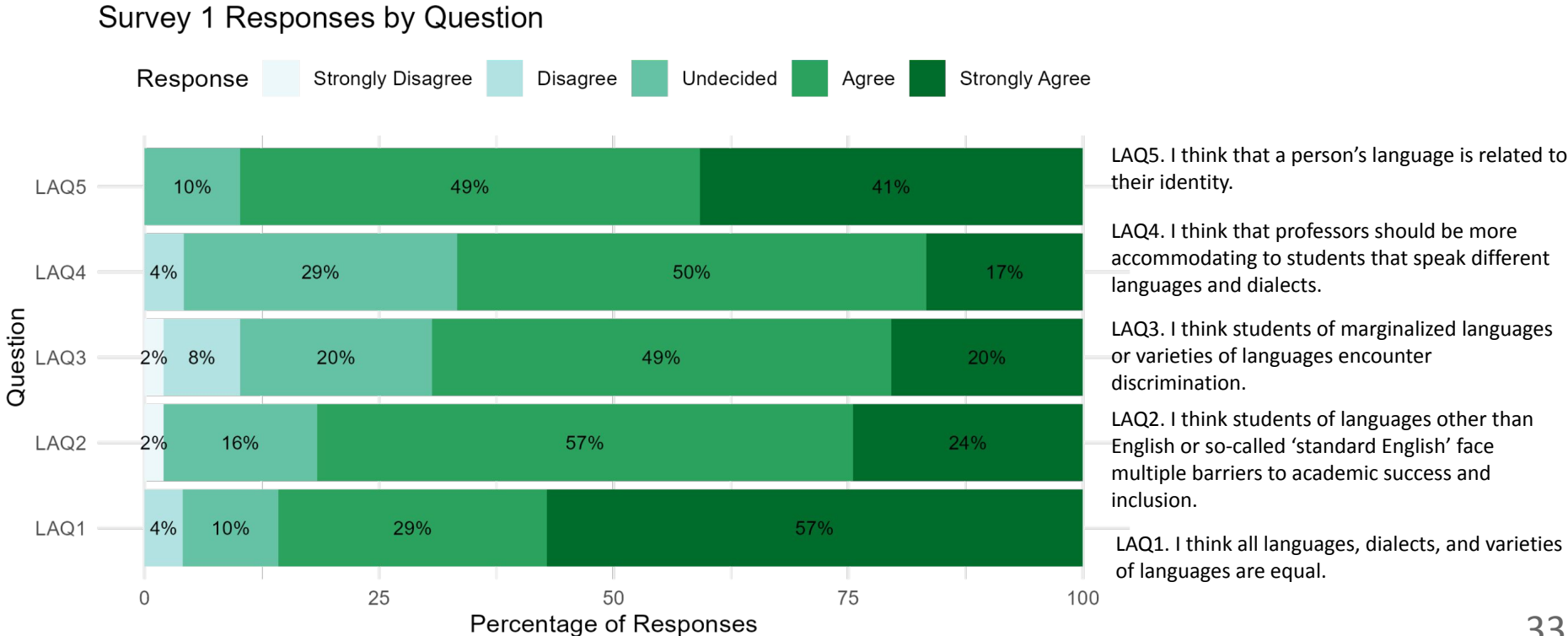
Figure 6. Language Attitude Question Responses in Survey 1.
Data is from students who took both surveys.
n= 49.



LAQ5. I think that a person's language is related to their identity.

Figure 8. Language Attitude Question Responses in Survey 1.

Data is from students who took both surveys. n= 49



Language Attitudes **After** Taking Introduction to Linguistics

Language Attitude Likert Questions

1. I think all languages, dialects, and varieties of language are equal.
2. I think students of languages other than English or so-called 'standard English' face multiple barriers to academic success and inclusion.
3. I think students of marginalized languages or varieties of languages encounter discrimination.
4. I think professors should be more accommodating to students that speak different languages and dialects.
5. I think that a person's language is related to their identity.

Results

Do students' language attitudes change **after** taking Introduction to Linguistics?

- Overall, we see a positive trend in Likert responses from Survey 1 to Survey 2, with higher mean scores for each question.
- And four of the five Likert questions had positive changes that were statistically significant.
- This suggests that students' perceptions or attitudes reflected in the questions shifted positively after their enrollment in Ling 200.

Mean Likert Score by Question and Survey

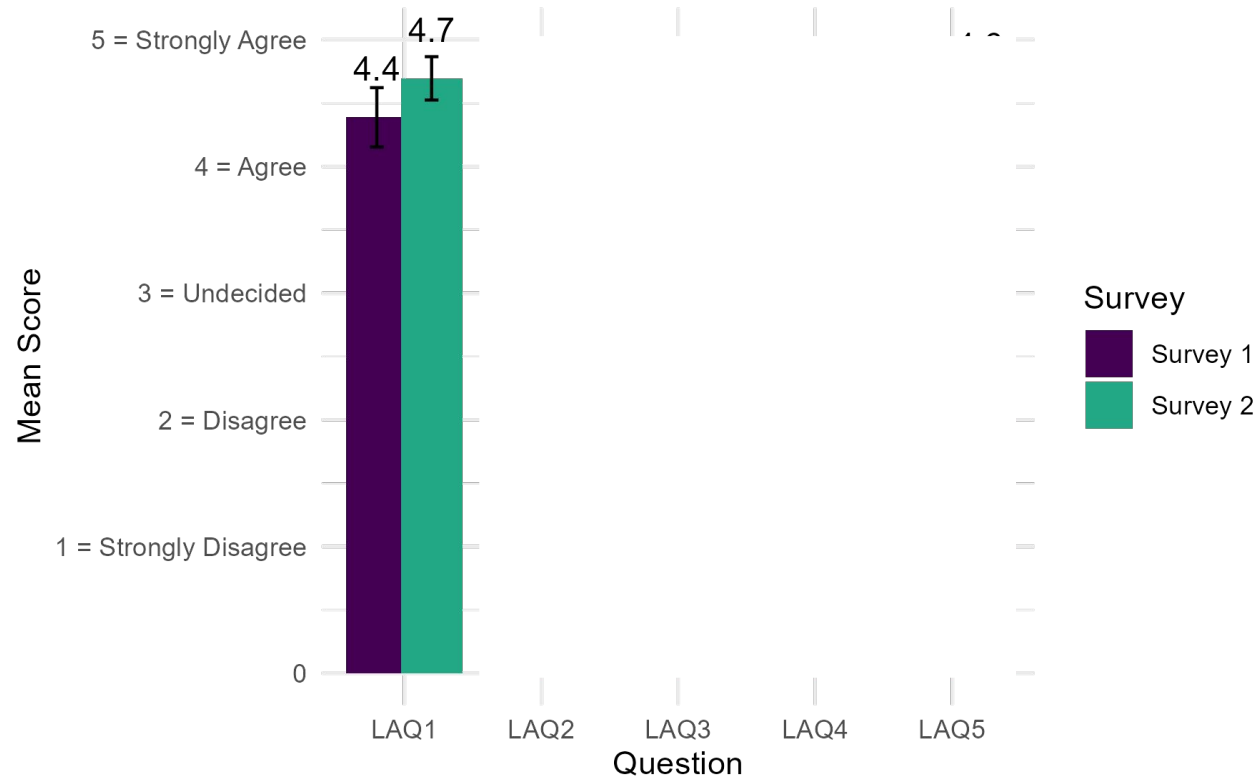


Figure 9. Language Attitude Questions Mean Likert Scores by Question and Survey. Data is from students who took both surveys. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Paired t-test: $t(45) = 2.9, p < 0.01$

LAQ1. I think all languages, dialects, and varieties of languages are equal.

Mean Likert Score by Question and Survey

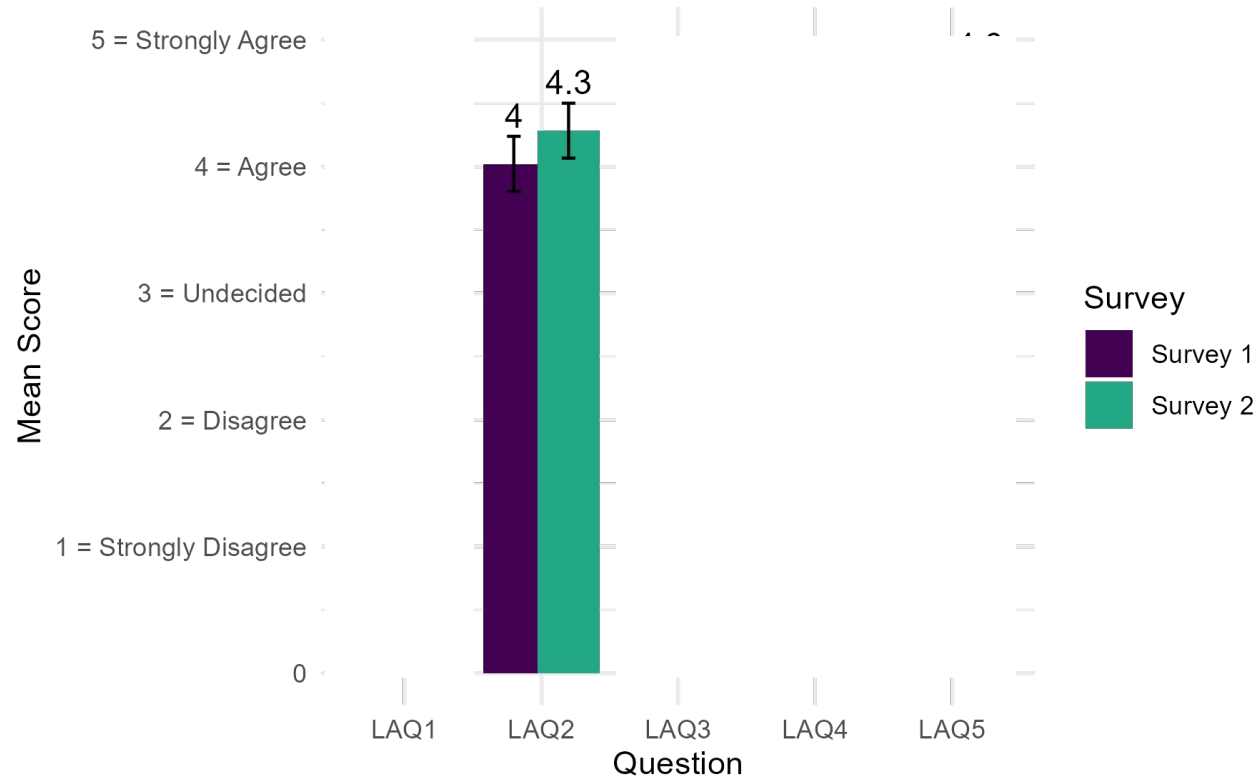
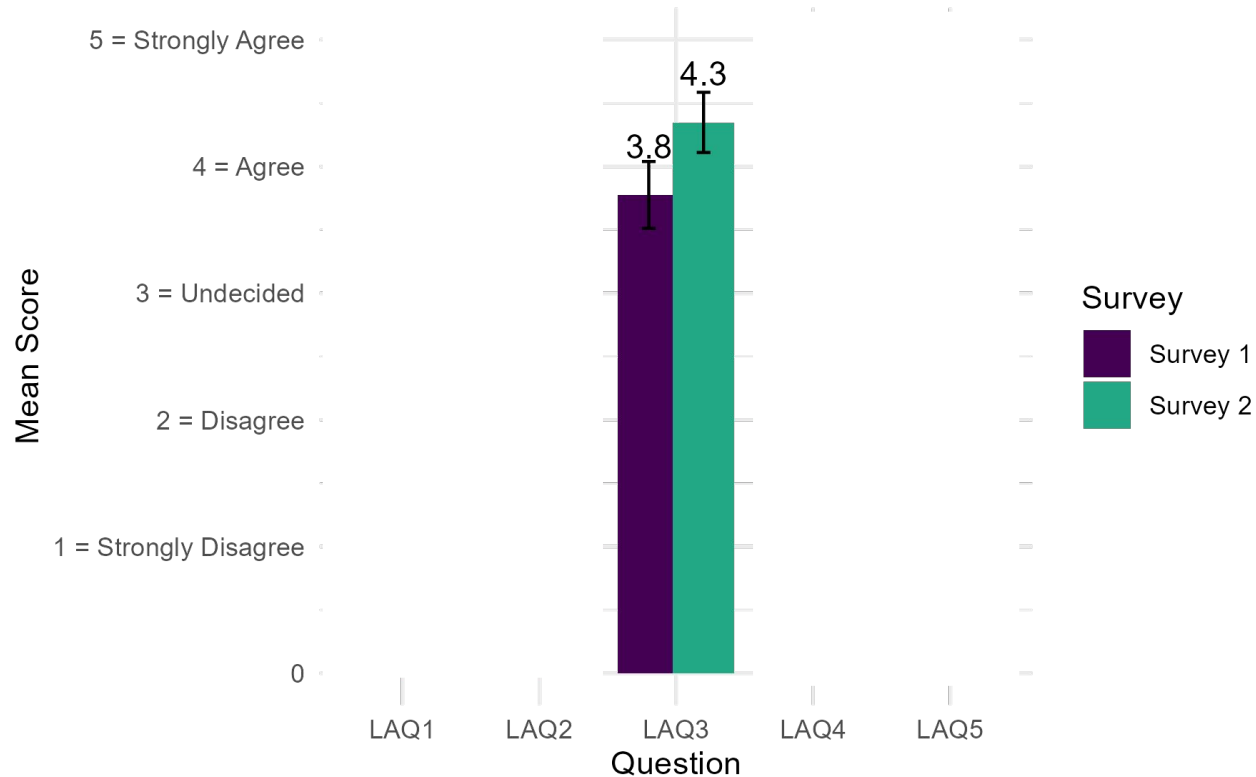


Figure 9. Language Attitude Questions Mean Likert Scores by Question and Survey. Data is from students who took both surveys. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Paired t-test: $t(45) = 2.842, p < 0.01$

LAQ2. I think students of languages other than English or so-called 'standard English' face multiple barriers to academic success and inclusion.

Mean Likert Score by Question and Survey

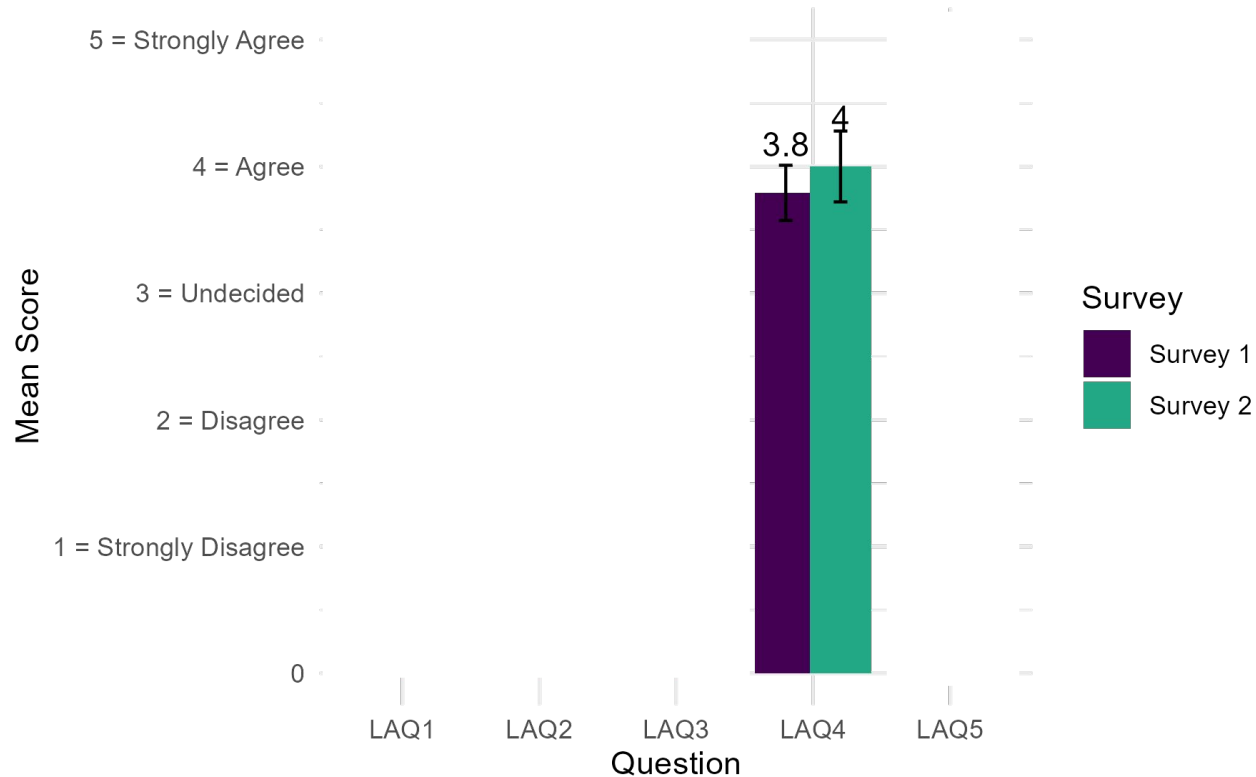
Figure 9. Language Attitude Questions Mean Likert Scores by Question and Survey. Data is from students who took both surveys. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Paired t-test: $t(45) = 3.889$, $p < 0.001$



LAQ3. I think students of marginalized languages or varieties of languages encounter discrimination.

Mean Likert Score by Question and Survey

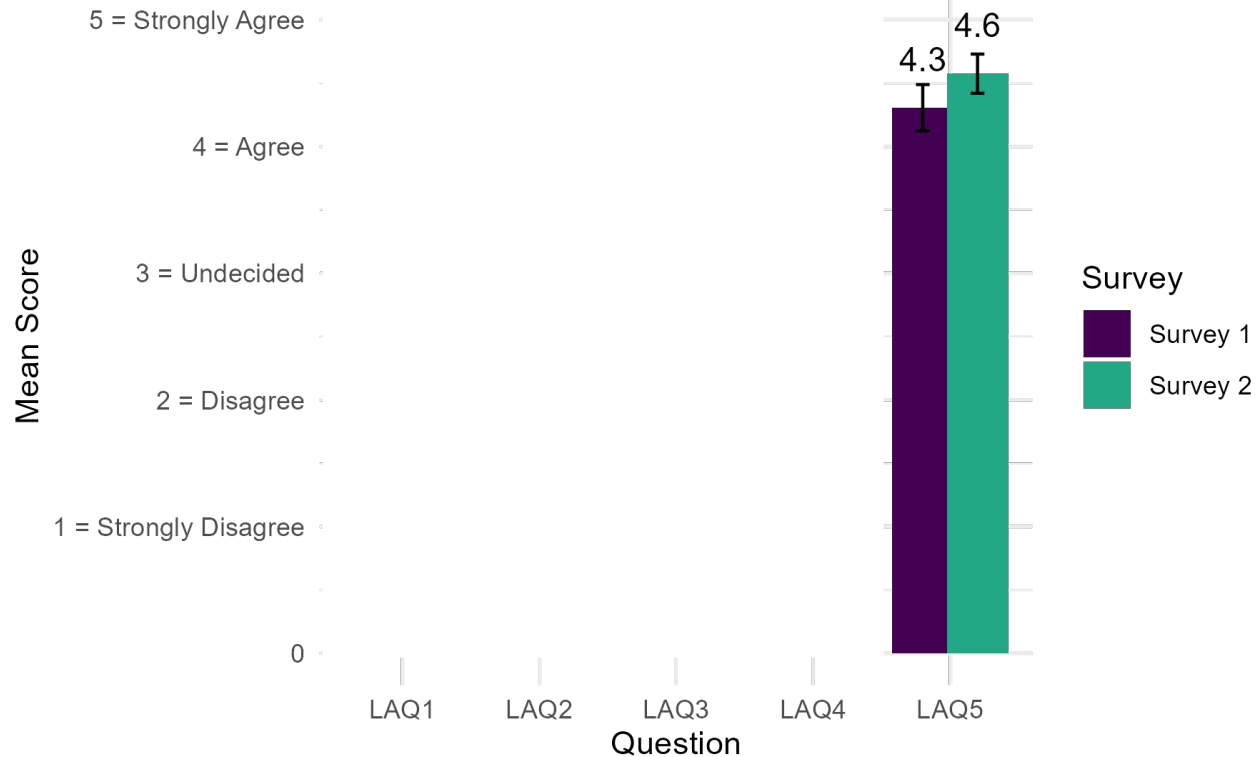
Figure 9. Language Attitude Questions Mean Likert Scores by Question and Survey. Data is from students who took both surveys. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Paired t-test: $t(45) = 1.4211, p > 0.05$



LAQ4. I think that professors should be more accommodating to students that speak different languages and dialects.

Mean Likert Score by Question and Survey

Figure 9. Language Attitude Questions Mean Likert Scores by Question and Survey. Data is from students who took both surveys. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Paired t-test: $t(45) = 2.5516$, $p < 0.01$



LAQ5. I think that a person's language is related to their identity.

Mean Likert Score by Question and Survey

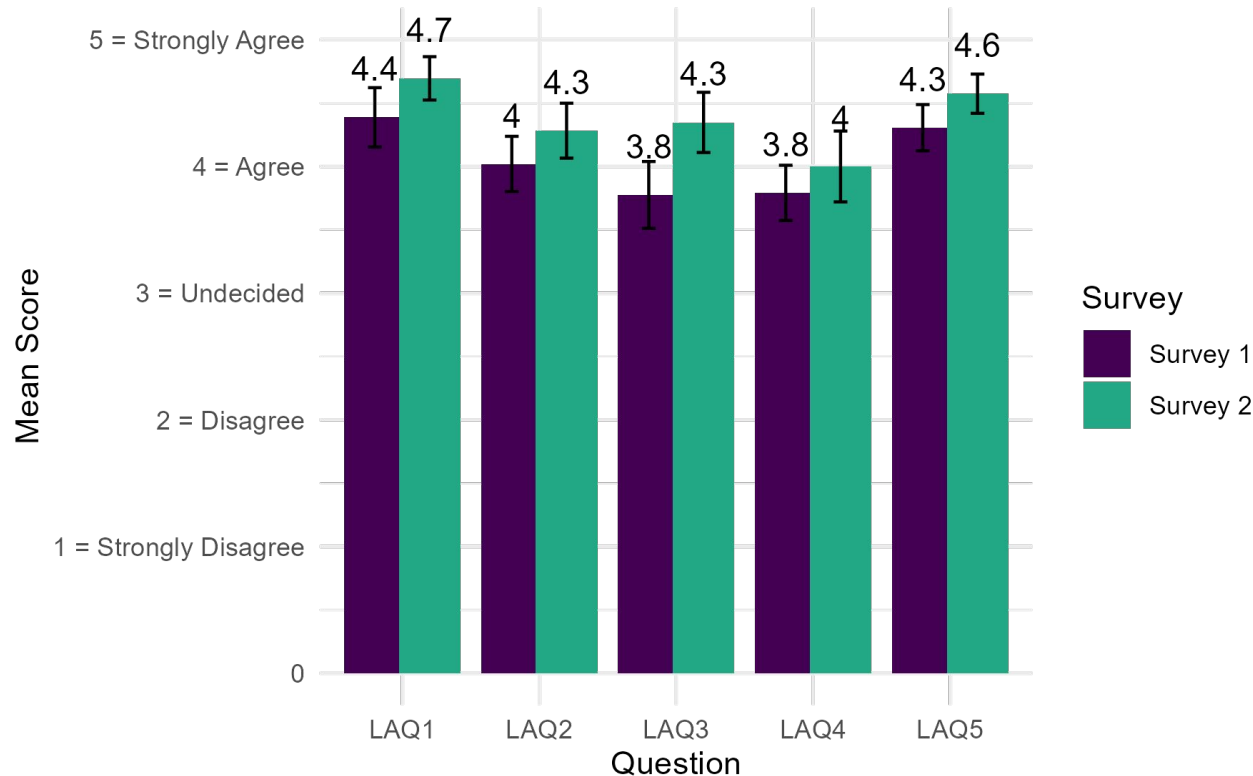


Figure 9. Language Attitude Questions Mean Likert Scores by Question and Survey. Data is from students who took both surveys. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

LAQ1. I think all languages, dialects, and varieties of languages are equal. **p<0.01**

LAQ2. I think students of languages other than English or so-called 'standard English' face multiple barriers to academic success and inclusion. **p<0.01**

LAQ3. I think students of marginalized languages or varieties of languages encounter discrimination. **p<0.001**

LAQ4. I think that professors should be more accommodating to students that speak different languages and dialects. **p > 0.05**

LAQ5. I think that a person's language is related to their identity. **p < 0.01**

Paired t-test Results

1. I think all languages, dialects, and varieties of languages are equal.
 - $t(45) = 2.9$, $p < 0.01$. Average increase of 0.33 units
2. I think students of languages other than English or so-called 'standard English' face multiple barriers to academic success and inclusion.
 - $t(45) = 2.842$, $p < 0.01$. Average increase of 0.30 units
3. I think students of marginalized languages or varieties of languages encounter discrimination.
 - $t(45) = 3.889$, $p < 0.001$. Average increase of 0.59 units
4. I think that professors should be more accommodating to students that speak different languages and dialects.
 - $t(45) = 1.4211$, $p > 0.05$. Average increase of 0.196 units
5. I think that a person's language is related to their identity.
 - $t(45) = 2.5516$, $p < 0.01$. Average increase of 0.28 units

Next Steps

1. Do demographic factors impact the students' responses?
 - a. Race shown to be not significant ($p > 0.05$)
 - b. International Student Status Interacts with Race (Asian)
 - c. First Generation Status (?)
 - d. Bilingualism Status (?)
2. Analyse a second cohort of Survey responses to see if it patterns the same.

Conclusion

- Statistically significant positive changes in Likert scores for four out of the five questions. The largest change is seen in the question regarding discrimination.
 - I think students of marginalized languages or varieties of languages encounter discrimination.
p<0.001. Average increase of 0.59 units
- Our current Introduction to Linguistics course seems to be having a positive impact on students' attitudes towards language!
- Additionally, understanding the linguistic and demographic backgrounds of our Introduction to Linguistics students can allow us to better support all students and increase diversity within our field of Linguistics and academia as a whole, a goal that we as linguists should all be working towards.

Thank you!

Please share your questions, comments, and thoughts with me.

Get in touch: KL17@uw.edu

References

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Appendix

Short Answer Questions (Survey 1)

1. Do you feel like your linguistic background (the languages and dialects you speak) affects your performance in classes? If yes, what changes to classes do you think would help you have a better learning experience?
2. Do you feel like your linguistic background (the languages and dialects you speak) affects your inclusion and socializing in classes? If so, what changes to classes do you think would help you have a better learning experience?
3. Have you experienced any discriminatory events related to your linguistic background (i.e., use of nonstandard English, slang, foreign languages, your accent)? If so, have you reported these incidents? Why not if you haven't?
4. Is there anything you would like me to know? You are welcome to leave any feedback or comments in this box.

Short Answer Questions (Survey 2)

1. Ling 200 begins with the smallest building blocks of language (phonetics & phonology) and ends with more conceptual topics (dialect variation, bilingualism, language acquisition). Did this structure of the class work for you? Would any changes to this class structure help you have a better learning experience?
2. What topics do you wish were covered more in-depth? Was anything not discussed that you wish had been?
3. Do you feel like your linguistic background (the languages and dialects you speak) affected your performance in class and TA quiz section? If so, how?
4. Do you feel like your linguistic background (the languages and dialects you speak) affected your feelings of inclusion and socializing in class and TA quiz section? If so, how?
5. Is there anything you would like me to know? You are welcome to leave any feedback or comments in this box.

LING 200 Likert Questions

1. I think that the classroom material was engaging.
2. I would have liked more linguistic examples and problem sets of languages other than English.
3. I think that the curriculum was fine and does not need to be changed.
4. I think that different languages and dialects were represented equally in examples.
5. I wish there were more opportunities to discuss topics with my peers.
6. I wish there were more opportunities to complete problem sets.
7. I think that the structure of the class curriculum made sense (beginning with phonetics and ending with sociolinguistics).
8. I felt represented by the linguistic examples and topics.
9. I felt that an appropriate amount of time was spent on each topic (phonetics, sociolinguistics etc.)

Language Attitude Likert Questions

Language Attitudes Questions (adapted from Panicacci & Resnik, in review)

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? 1= Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree

1. I think all languages, dialects, and varieties of languages are equal.
2. I think students of languages other than English or so-called 'standard English' face multiple barriers to academic success and inclusion.
3. I think students of marginalized languages or varieties of languages encounter discrimination.
4. I think that professors should be more accommodating to students that speak different languages and dialects.
5. I think that a person's language is related to their identity.

Classroom Inclusion Likert Questions

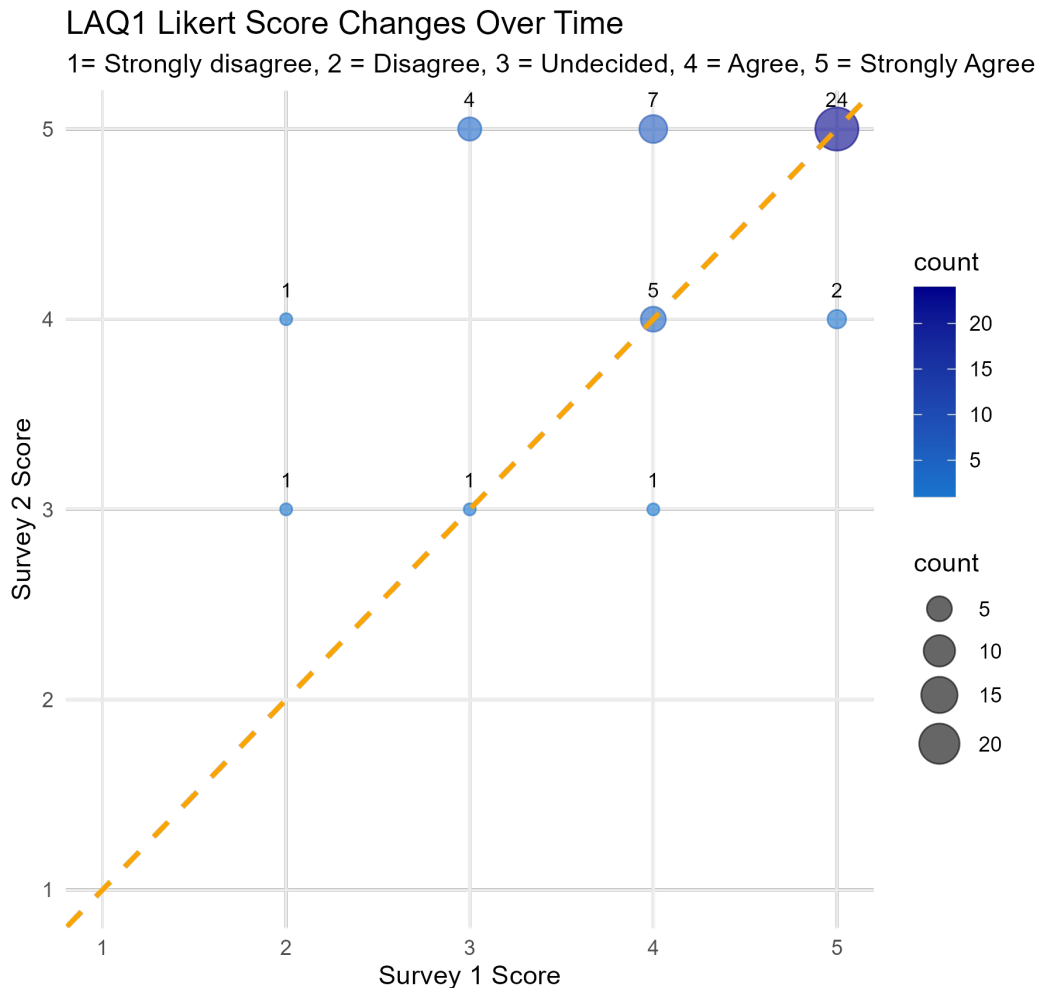
(adapted from UW Climate Survey, 2021)

1. I feel valued as an individual in class.
2. I feel I belong in class.
3. Teachers have a strong commitment to linguistic diversity, equity, and inclusion.
4. I have considered dropping out of some classes because I felt isolated and unwelcome.
5. I have considered dropping out of some classes because of language constraints.
6. I am treated with respect in class.
7. I feel others don't value my opinion in class.
8. I am given the resources to perform up to my full potential in class.
9. I have opportunities for academic success that are similar to those of my peers.
10. In my classes, I have found one or more communities and groups where I feel I belong.
11. In class there is too much emphasis put on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
12. "I am provided with sufficient programs and resources to help me succeed academically.
13. In class, I have to work harder than others to be valued equally.
14. In class, I have to work harder than others to be understood.
15. My experience in class has had a positive influence on my academic growth.
16. In class, I find it easy to interact with students with a different linguistic background (languages, dialects, accents, English varieties) than my own.
17. I know where to find resources for working with peers who have a different linguistic background than my own..
18. I am comfortable intervening when I sense that a student from a different linguistic background is struggling to get along in class.

“I think all languages,
dialects, and varieties
of language are equal.”

Figure 10 A. Language Attitude Questions Likert Score Changes from Survey 1 to Survey 2. Data is from students who took both surveys. In Survey 1, n=49 (LAQ1, LAQ2, LAQ3, LAQ5), n=48 for LAQ4; In Survey 2, n=46 (LAQ1, LAQ2, LAQ3), n=47 (LAQ4, LAQ5) due to NA responses

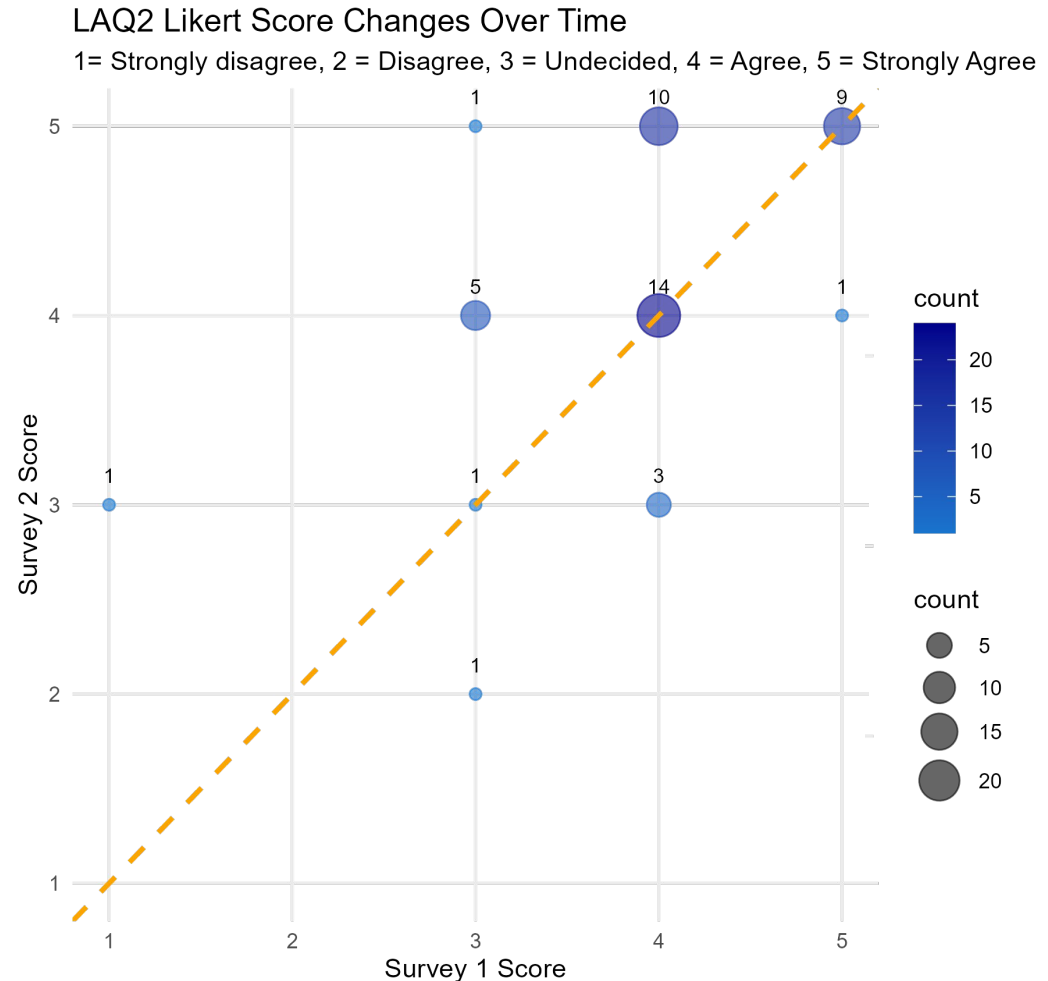
- Thirteen students had a positive change in scores
- Thirty students had no change in scores
 - 24/30 Strongly Agree
 - 5/30 Agree
 - 1/30 Undecided
- Three students have scores in Survey 2 lower than their Survey 1 scores



“I think students of languages other than English or so-called ‘standard English’ face multiple barriers to academic success and inclusion.”

Figure 10 B. Language Attitude Questions Likert Score Changes from Survey 1 to Survey 2. Data is from students who took both surveys. In Survey 1, n=49 (LAQ1, LAQ2, LAQ3, LAQ5), n=48 for LAQ4; In Survey 2, n=46 (LAQ1, LAQ2, LAQ3), n=47 (LAQ4, LAQ5) due to NA responses

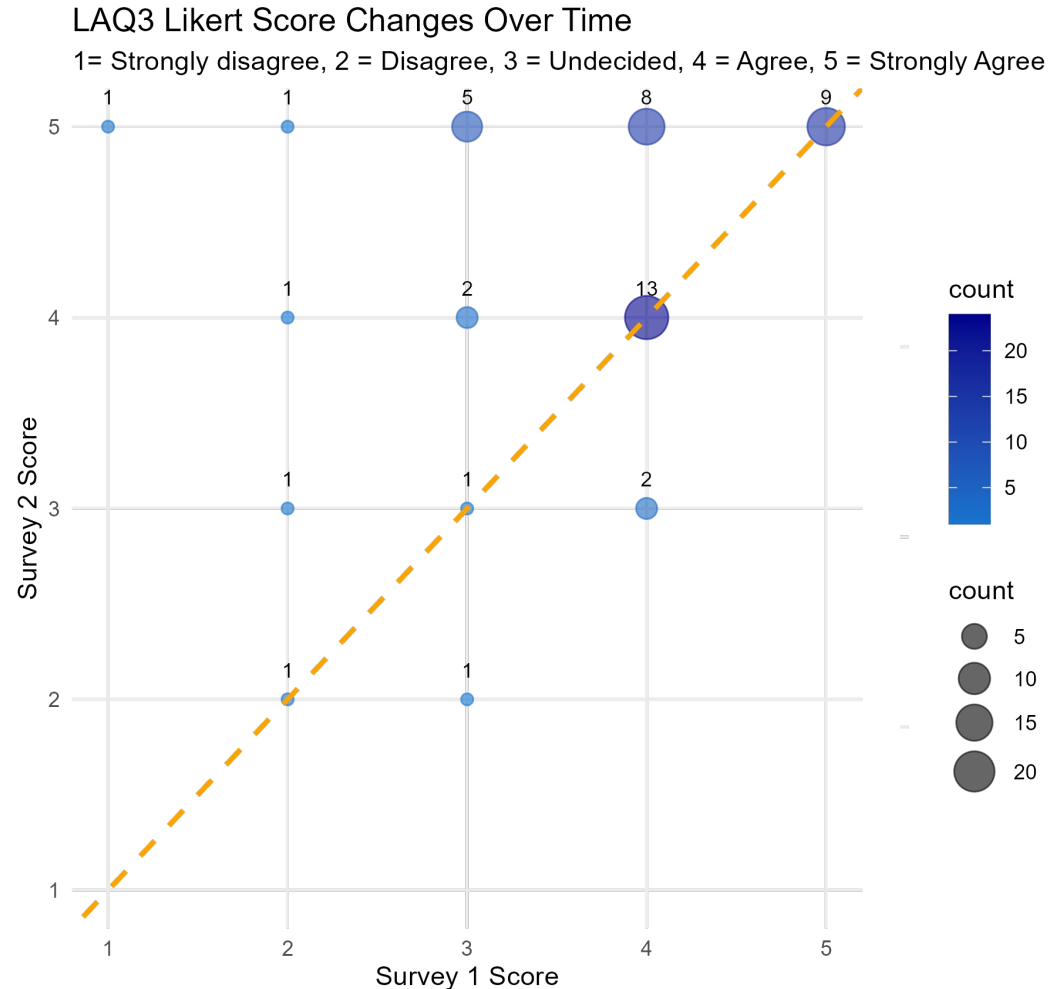
- Seventeen students had a positive change in scores
- Twenty-four students had no change in scores
 - 9/24 Strongly Agree
 - 14/24 Agree
 - 1/24 Undecided
- Five students have scores in Survey 2 lower than their Survey 1 scores



“I think students of marginalized languages or varieties of languages encounter discrimination.”

Figure 10 C. Language Attitude Questions Likert Score Changes from Survey 1 to Survey 2. Data is from students who took both surveys. In Survey 1, n=49 (LAQ1, LAQ2, LAQ3, LAQ5), n=48 for LAQ4; In Survey 2, n=46 (LAQ1, LAQ2, LAQ3), n=47 (LAQ4, LAQ5) due to NA responses

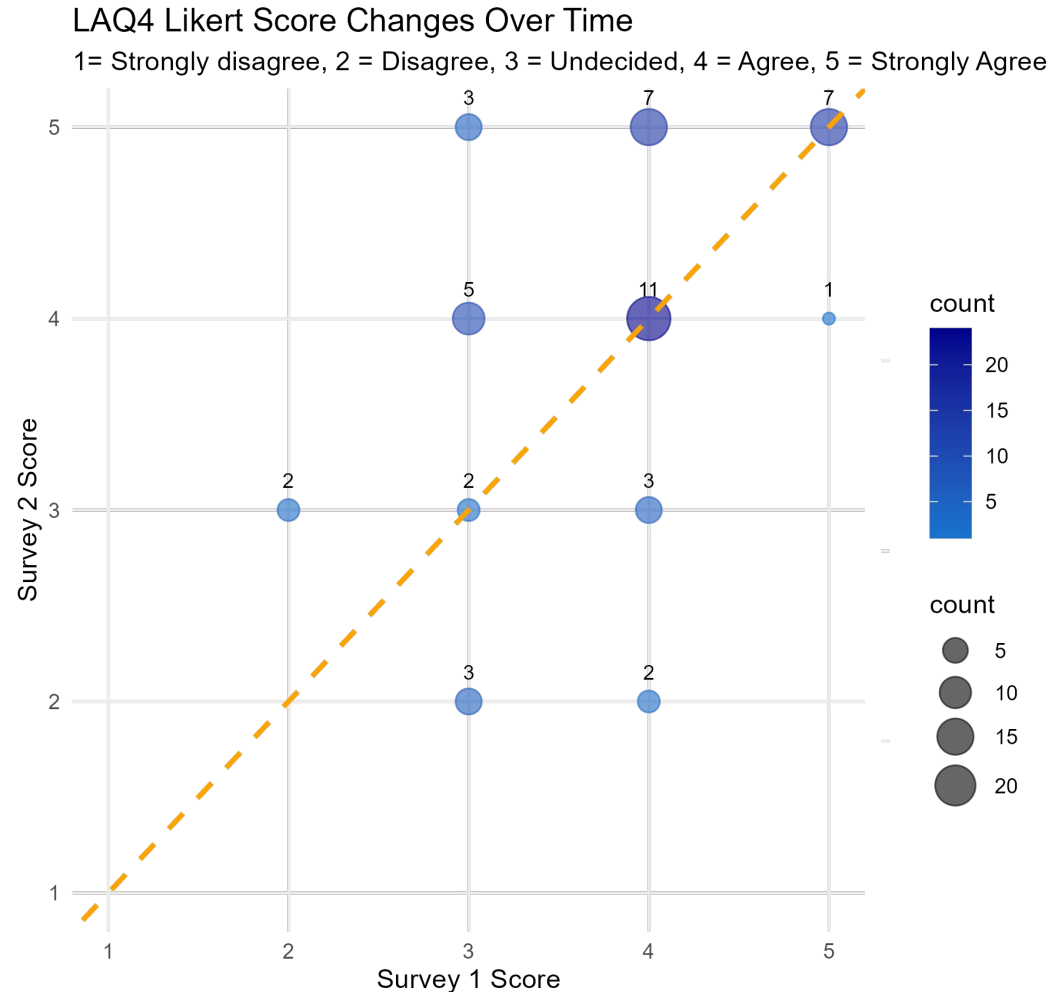
- Nineteen students had a positive change in scores
- Twenty-four students had no change in scores
 - 9/24 Strongly Agree
 - 13/24 Agree
 - 1/24 Undecided
 - 1/24 Disagree
- Three students have scores in Survey 2 lower than their Survey 1 scores



“I think that professors should be more accommodating to students that speak different languages and dialects.”

Figure 10 D. Language Attitude Questions Likert Score Changes from Survey 1 to Survey 2. Data is from students who took both surveys. In Survey 1, n=49 (LAQ1, LAQ2, LAQ3, LAQ5), n=48 for LAQ4; In Survey 2, n=46 (LAQ1, LAQ2, LAQ3), n=47 (LAQ4, LAQ5) due to NA responses

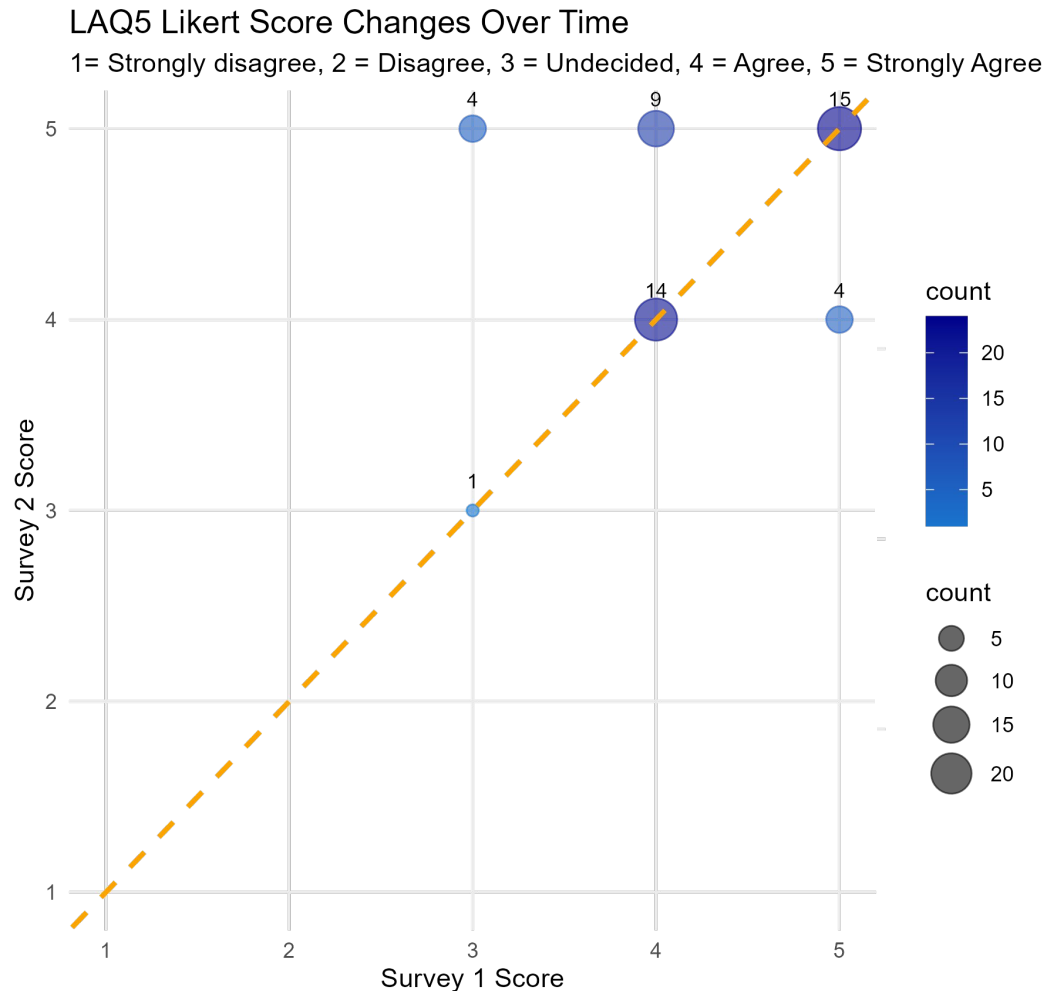
- Seventeen students had a positive change in scores
- Twenty students had no change in scores
 - 7/20 Strongly Agree
 - 11/20 Agree
 - 2/20 Undecided
- Nine students have scores in Survey 2 lower than their Survey 1 scores



“I think that a person’s language is related to their identity.”

Figure 10 E. Language Attitude Questions Likert Score Changes from Survey 1 to Survey 2. Data is from students who took both surveys. In Survey 1, n=49 (LAQ1, LAQ2, LAQ3, LAQ5), n=48 for LAQ4; In Survey 2, n=46 (LAQ1, LAQ2, LAQ3), n=47 (LAQ4, LAQ5) due to NA responses

- Thirteen students had a positive change in scores
- Thirty students had no change in scores
 - 15/30 Strongly Agree
 - 14/30 Agree
 - 1/30 Undecided
- Four students have scores in Survey 2 lower than their Survey 1 scores



Mean Likert Score Distribution by Question and Race

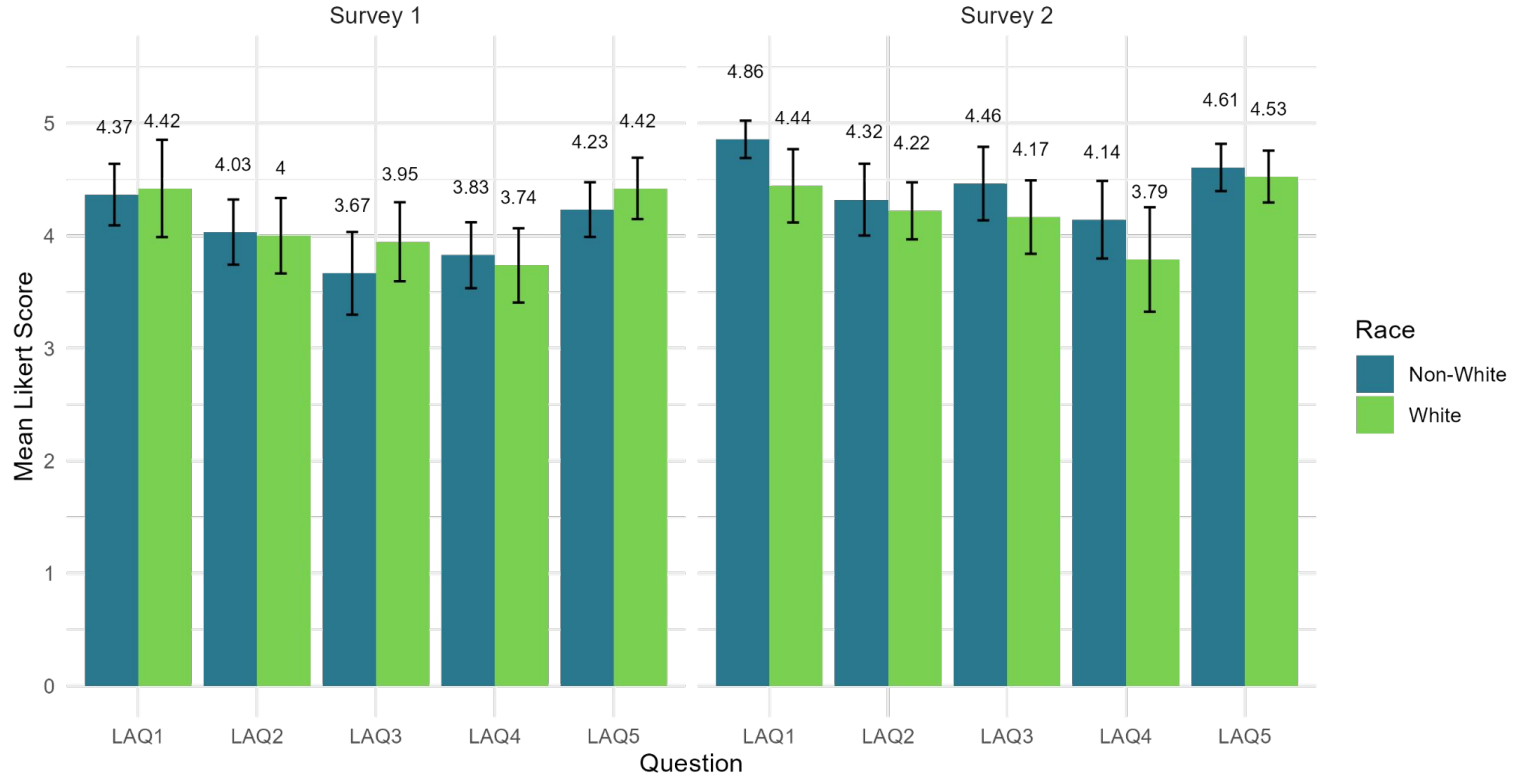


Figure 11. Language Attitude Questions Likert Score Distribution by Question and Race

Data is from students who took both surveys. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

LAQ1. I think all languages, dialects, and varieties of languages are equal.

LAQ2. I think students of languages other than English or so-called 'standard English' face multiple barriers to academic success and inclusion.

LAQ3. I think students of marginalized languages or varieties of languages encounter discrimination.

LAQ4. I think that professors should be more accommodating to students that speak different languages and dialects.

LAQ5. I think that a person's language is related to their identity.

Racial Background and Likert Scores

Linear mixed effects model:

- Examined the effect of Race (White or Non-White) on the outcome variable Likert Score while accounting for the random effects of Survey Timepoint (Survey 1 or Survey 2) and Question (LAQ1, LAQ2, LAQ3, LAQ4, LAQ5)
- Fixed effect for Race was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), suggesting no substantial difference in scores when respondents were categorized into these two groups
 - ($b = -0.081$, $SE = 0.073$, $t(472) = -1.11$, $p = 0.27$)