

Implementing the R&W in CAR subjects (part II)  
Experience of the pilot CAR subject teachers  
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sheung

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Ecological Perspectives: THE Challenge of our Times  
&  
History of Hong Kong (- GEC)

# Overview of Part II

- Data from two pilot CARs
- Experience of the pilot CAR subject teachers
  - Dr Ng Pak Sheung (GEC)
  - Dr John Babson (GEC)
- Discussion, Questions and Answers



# The first two pilot CARs

Ecological Perspectives: THE Challenge of our Times

Subject teacher: Dr John Freeman Babson – GEC

Number of students: 71

History of Hong Kong

Subject teacher: Dr Ng Pak-sheung – GEC

Number of students: 33

# Theoretical framework and review tools

- Pre course questionnaire
- Videos of lectures
- Observation of lectures
- Focus groups before tutorials
- Videoing tutorial 1 and tutorial 2
- Post course questionnaire
- Course evaluation meeting
- Content teacher's feedback questionnaire



## Findings – feedback comparison from pre and post course questionnaires

Pilot 1: Ecological Perspectives: THE Challenge of our times -  
Total students 71

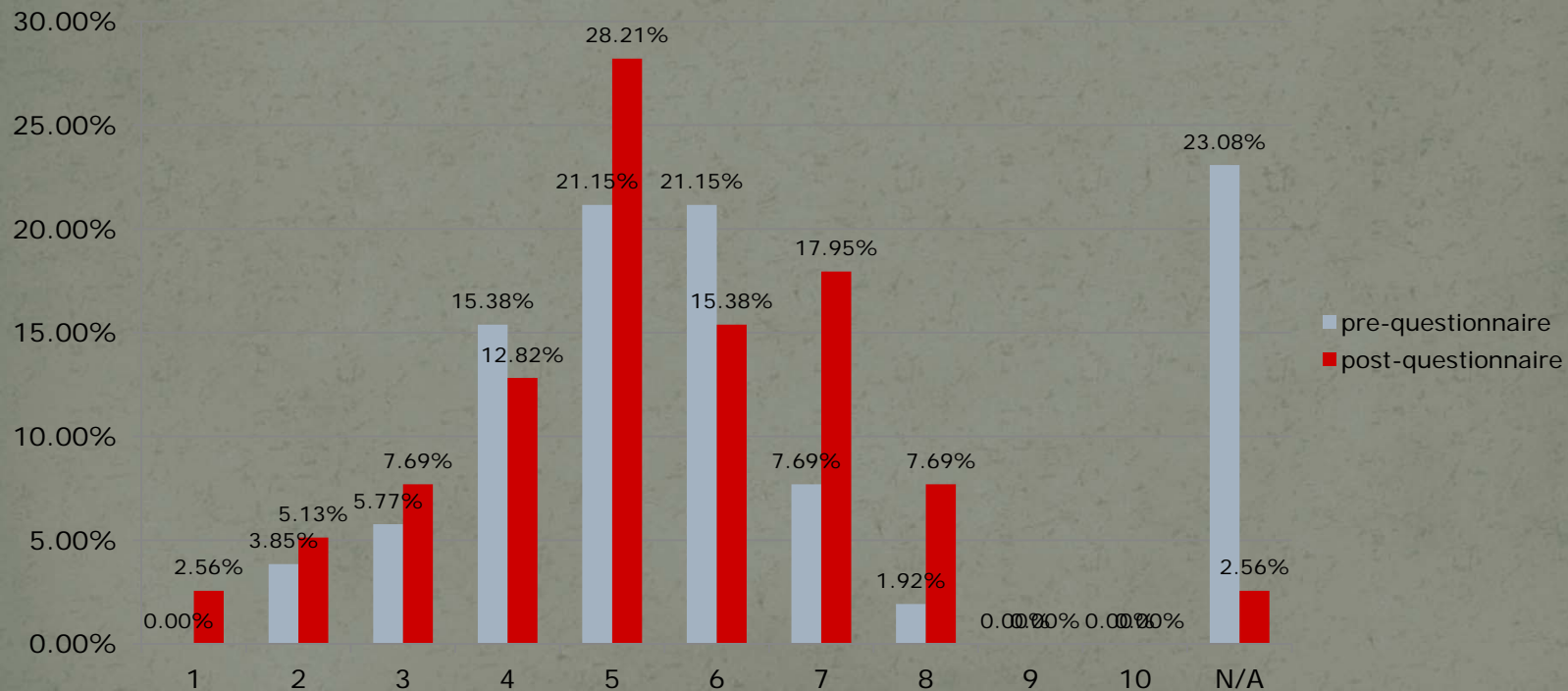
- Pre course questionnaire - Total response: 52
- Post course questionnaire - Total response: 39

(Pilot II: History of Hong Kong - Total students 33)

- Pre course questionnaire - Total response: 32
- Post course questionnaire - Total response: 26

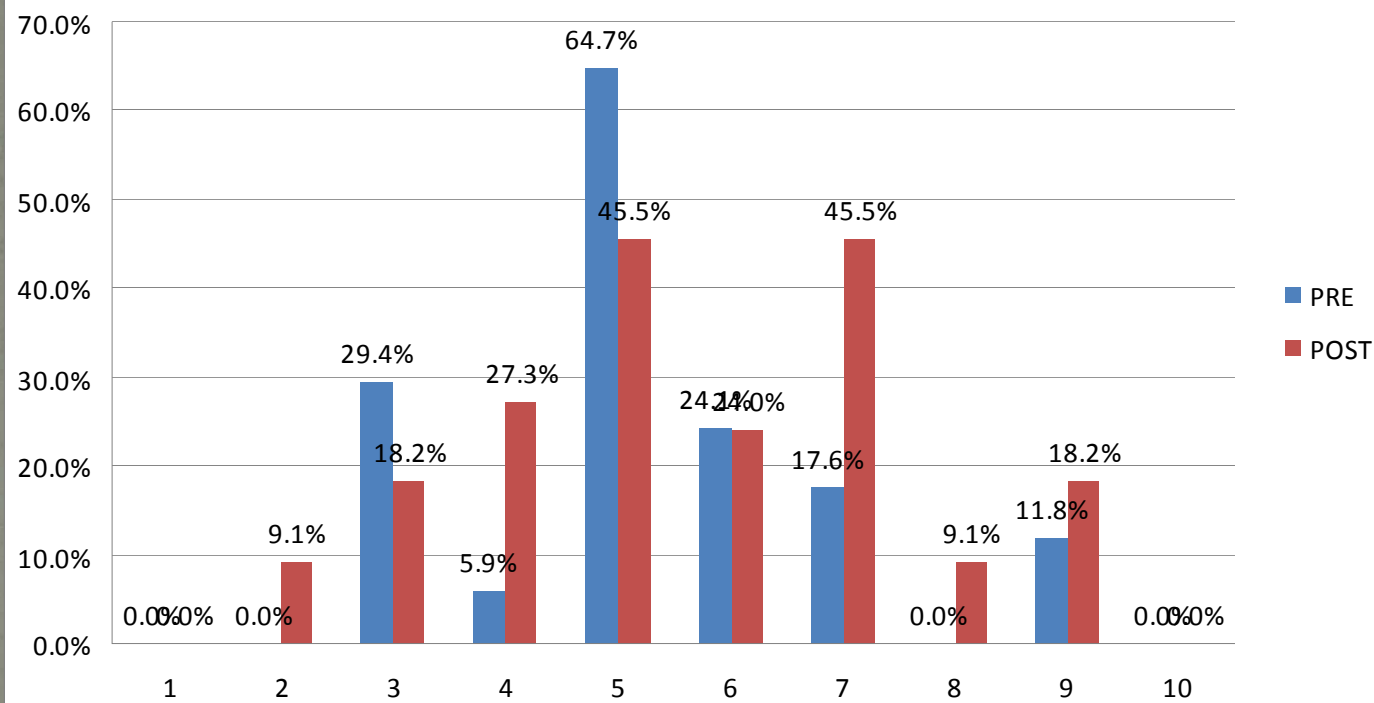
# Findings – feedback from pre and post course questionnaires - Pilot I (Sem II, 2010-11) Ecological Perspectives: THE Challenge of our Times

## Rate your writing skills



# Findings - Pilot II (Sem 1, 2011-12) History of Hong Kong

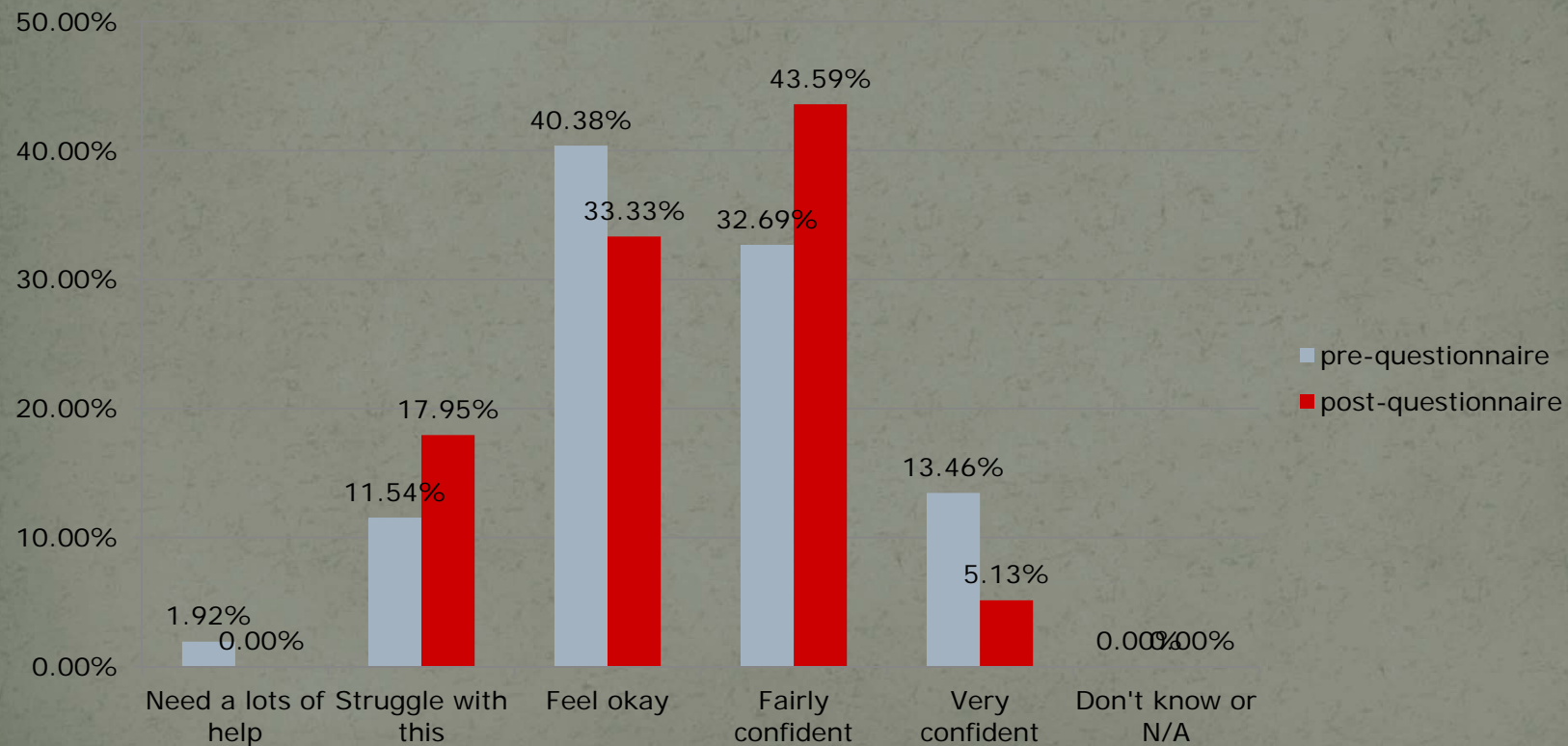
## How do you rate your writing skills overall?





# Findings - Pilot I (Sem II, 2010-11) Ecological Perspectives: THE Challenge of our Times

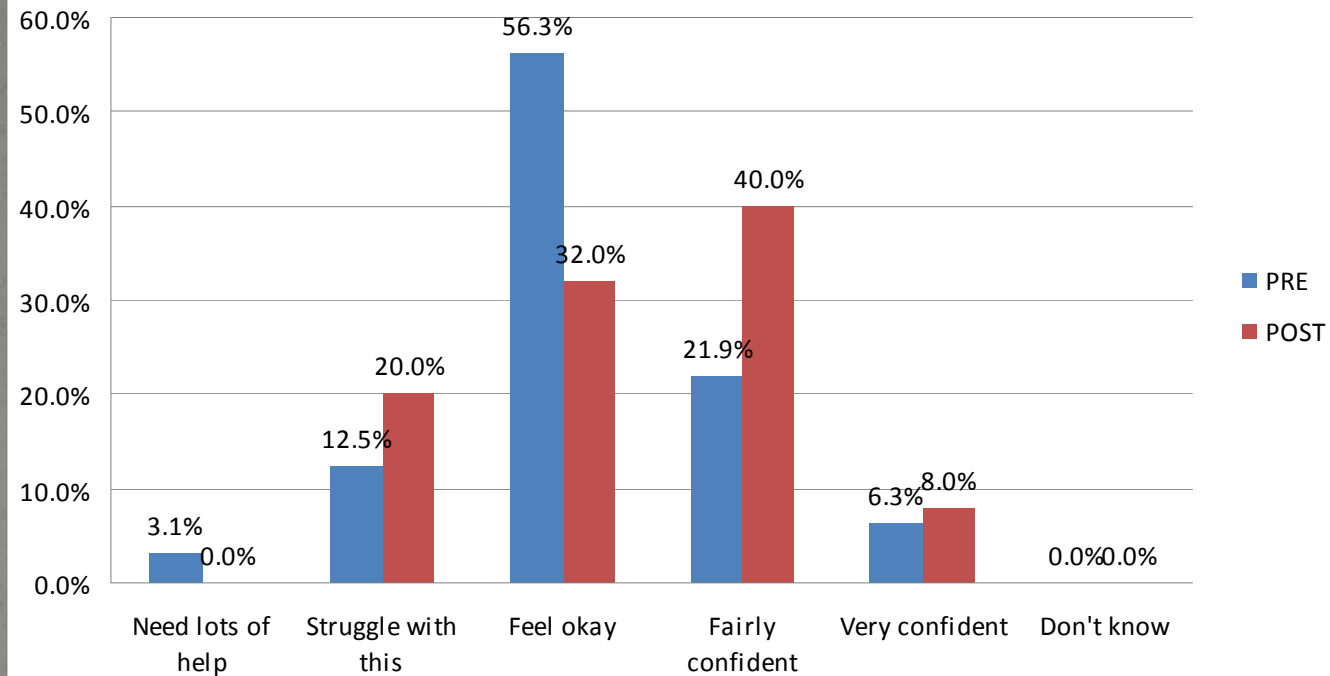
## b. Researching material for the paper





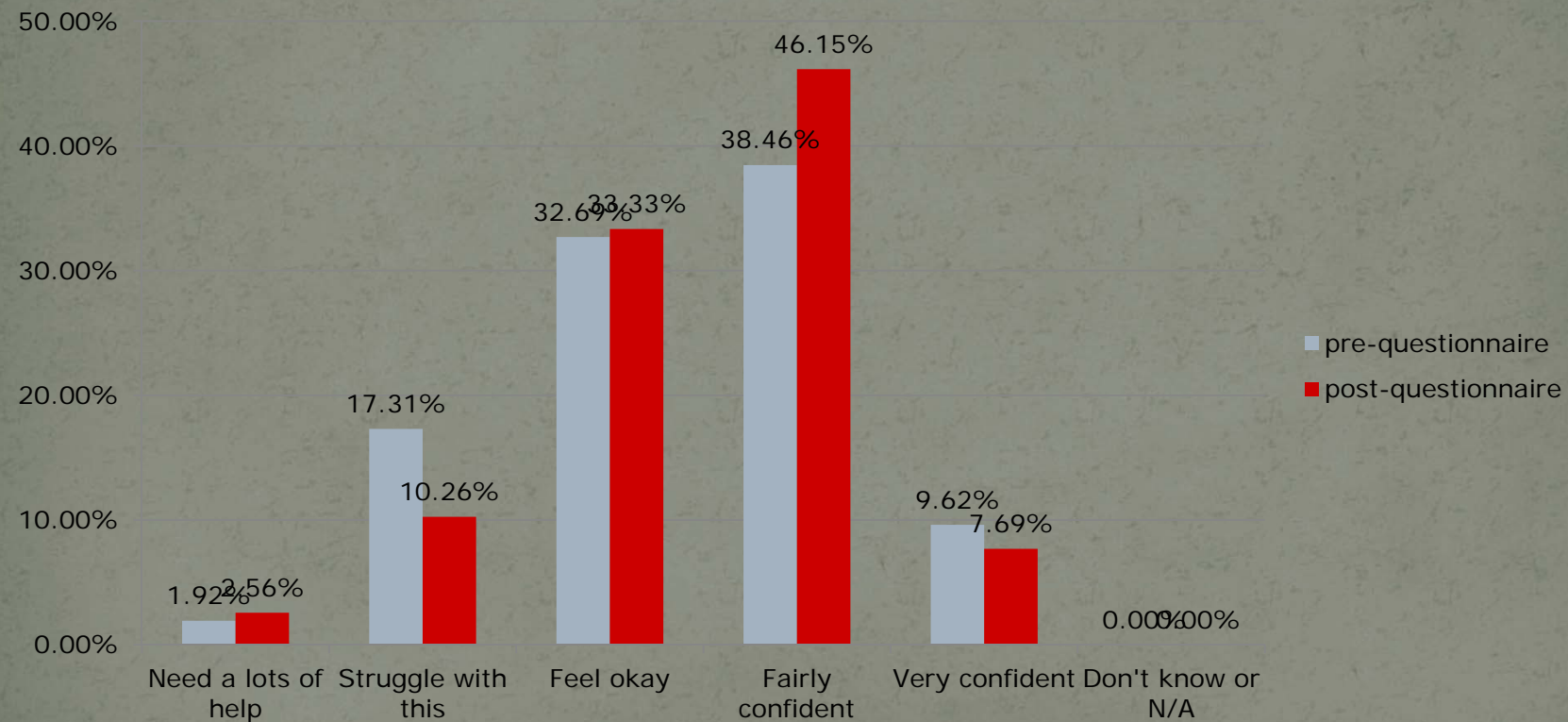
# Findings: Pilot II (Sem 1, 2011-12) History of Hong Kong

## b. researching materials for the paper



# Findings – Pilot I (Sem II, 2010-11) Ecological Perspectives: THE Challenge of our Times

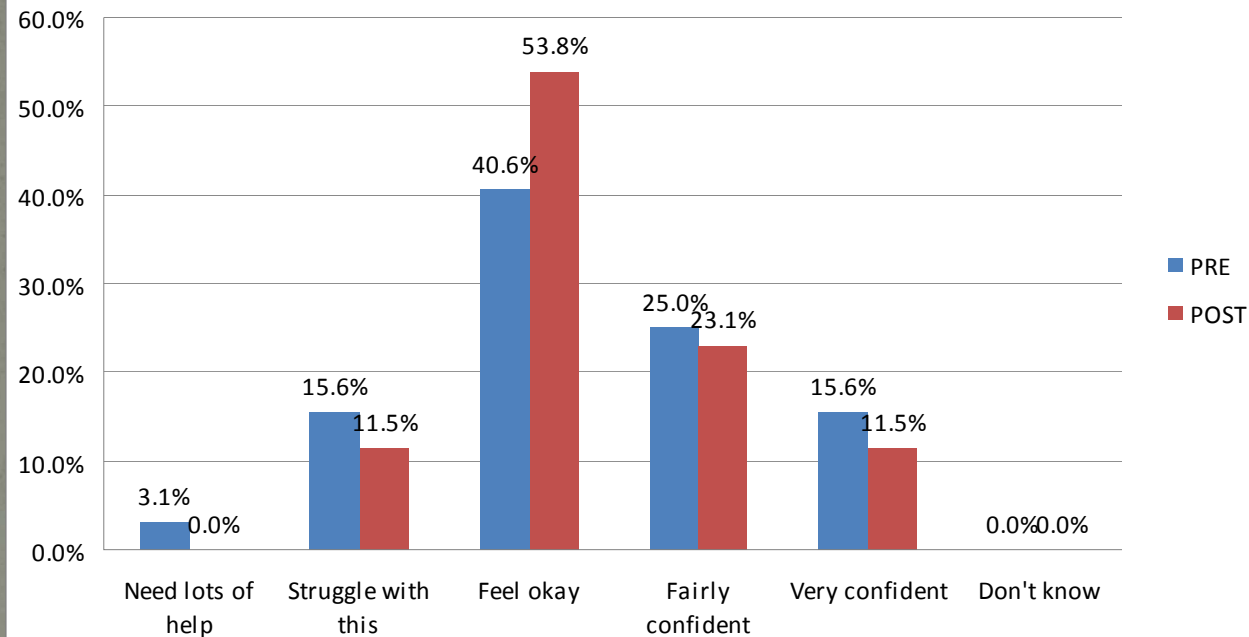
## d. Voicing my own opinions appropriately





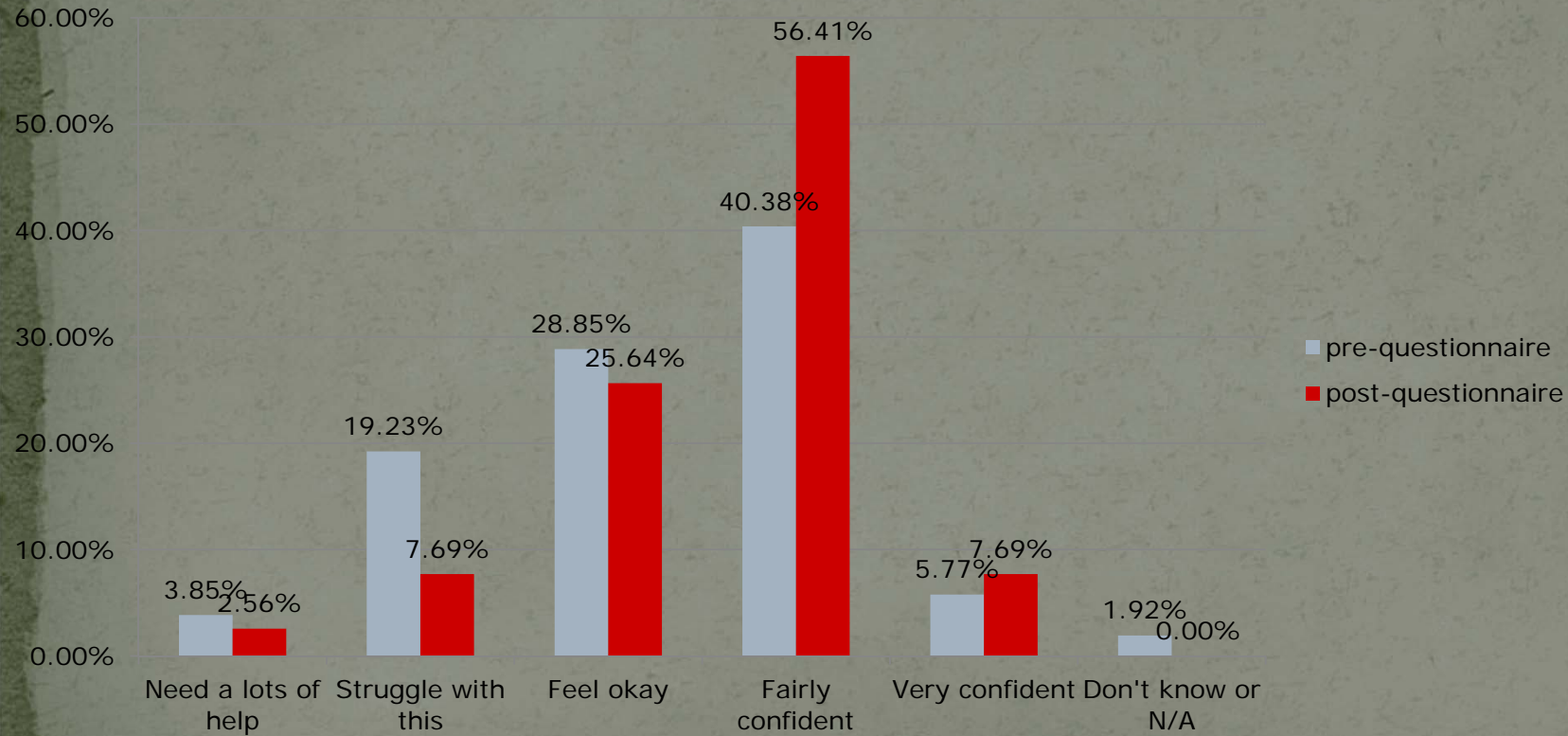
## Findings: Pilot II (Sem 1, 2011-12) History of Hong Kong

### d. voicing my own opinions appropriately



# Findings – Pilot I (Sem II, 2010-11) Ecological Perspectives: THE Challenge of our Times

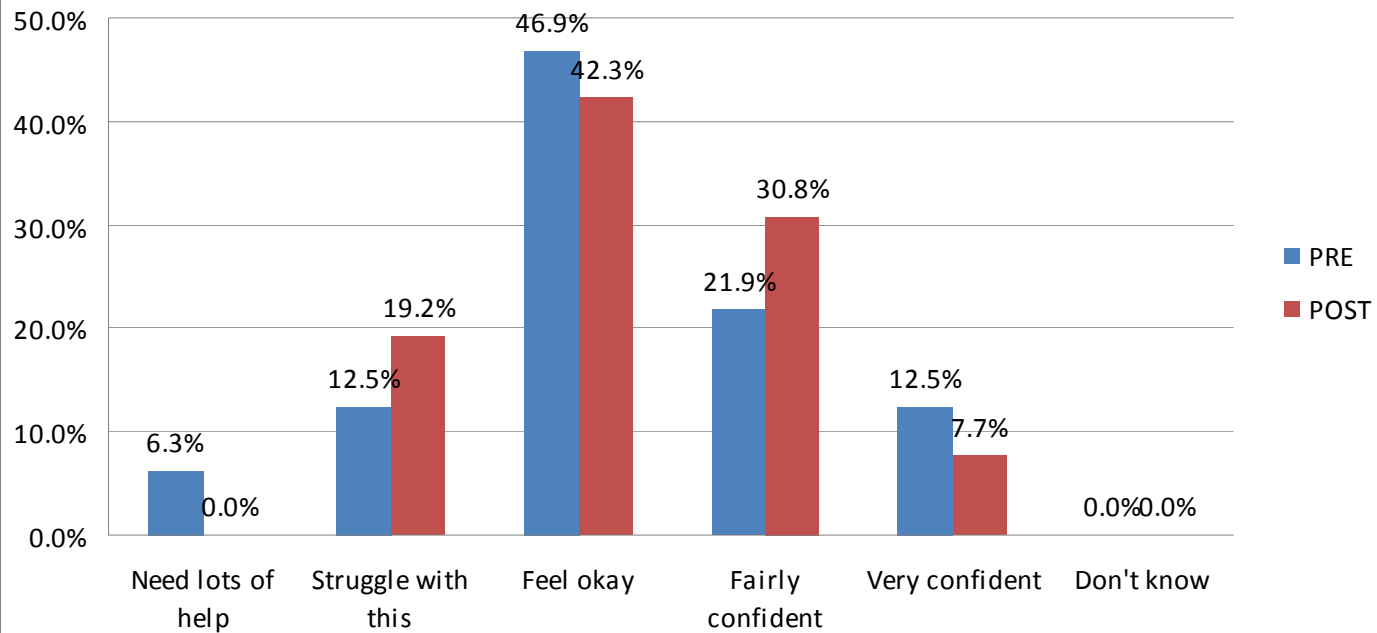
## e. Organising paper with my ideas and selected sources





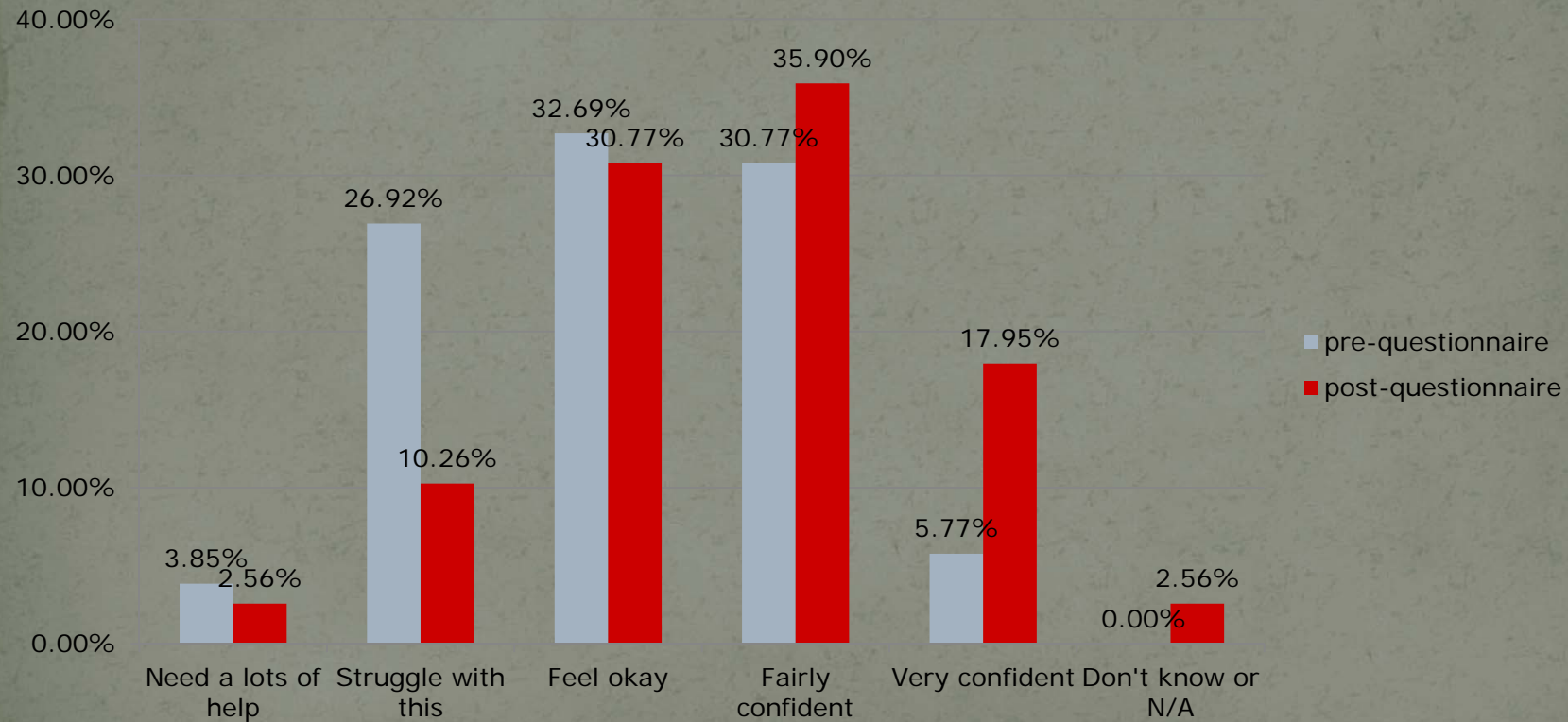
# Findings: Pilot II (Sem 1, 2011-12) History of Hong Kong

## e. organising paper with my ideas and selected sources



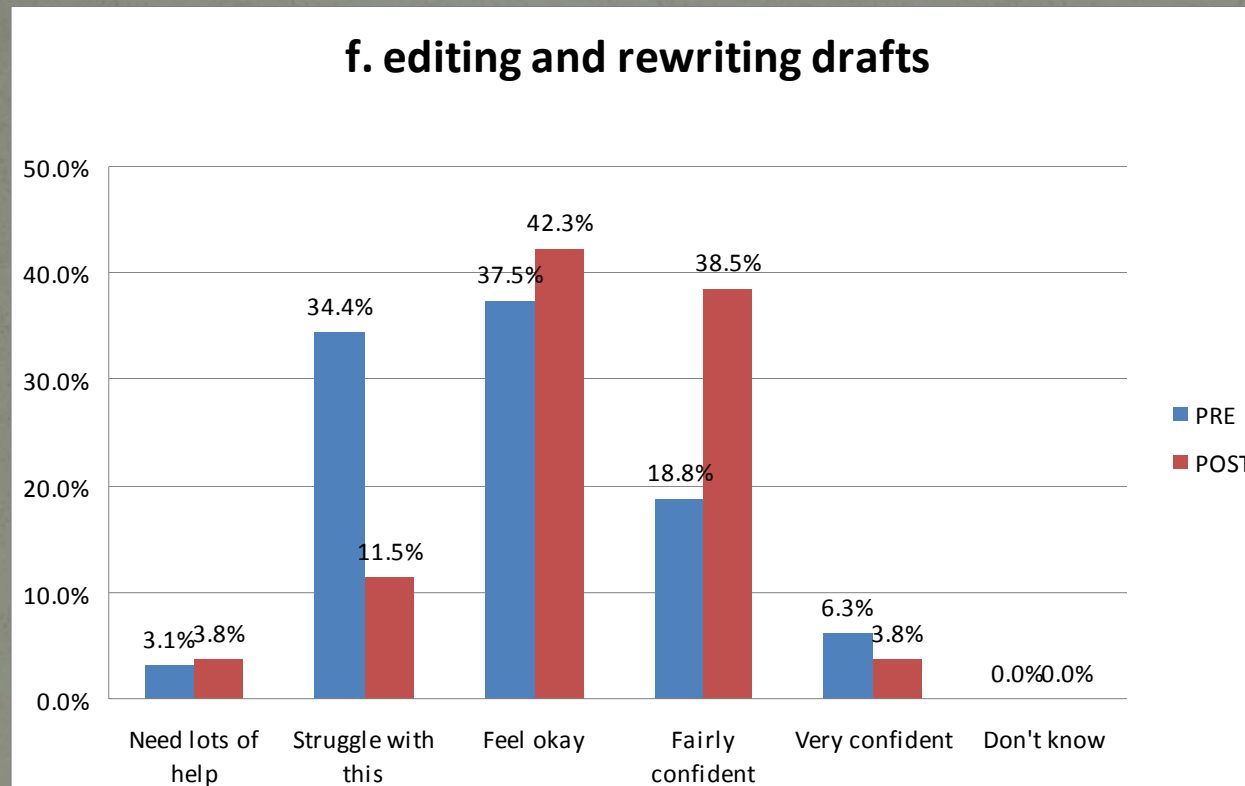
# Findings – Pilot I (Sem II, 2010-11) Ecological Perspectives: THE Challenge of our Times

## f. Editing and rewriting drafts



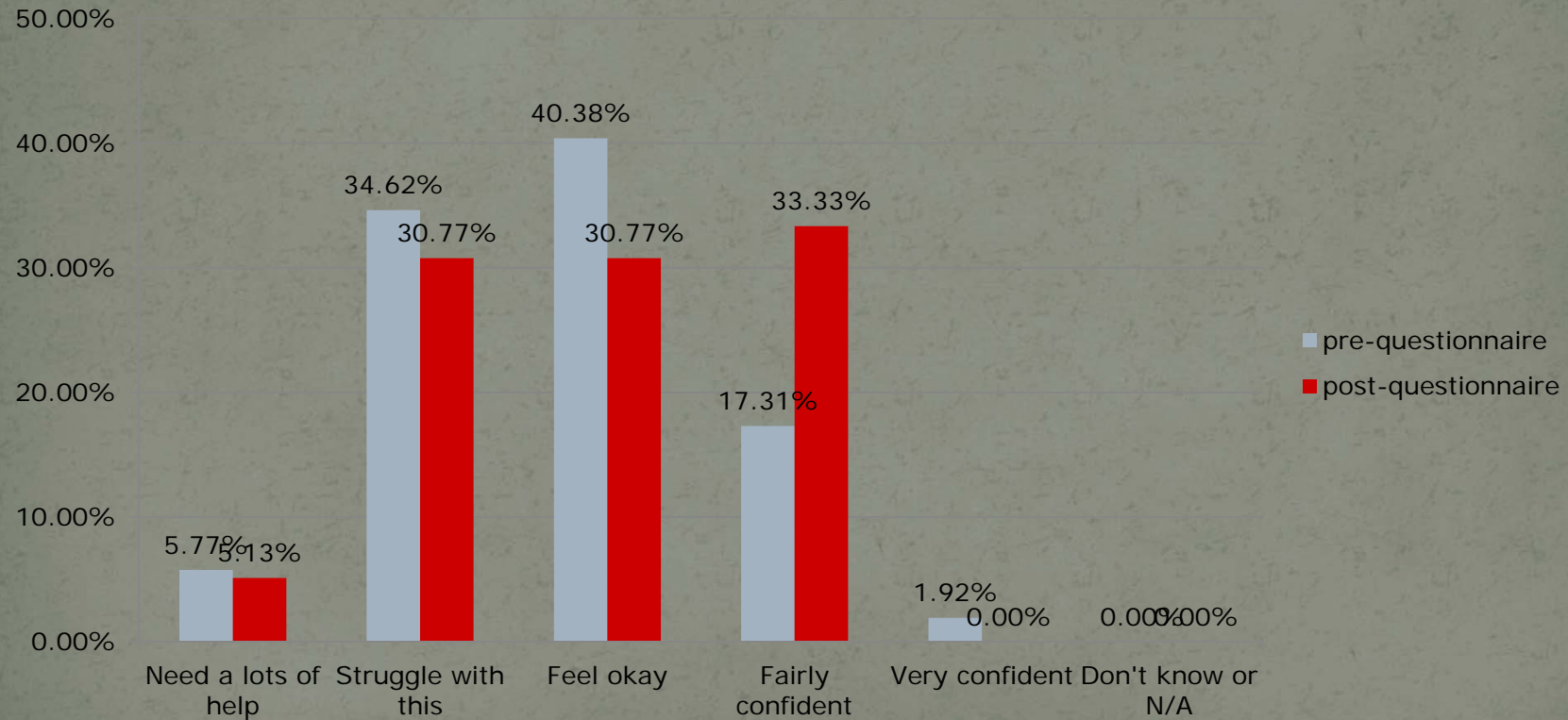


## Findings: Pilot II (Sem 1, 2011-12) History of Hong Kong

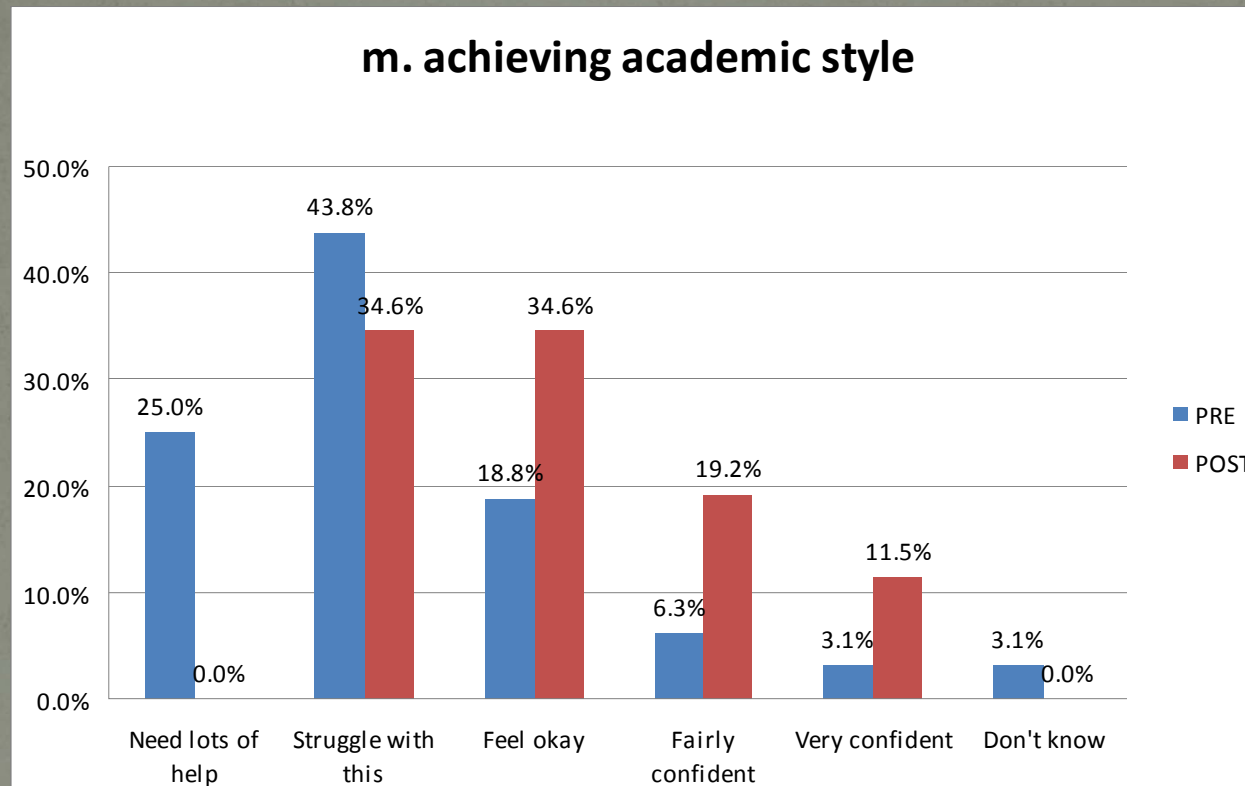


# Findings – Pilot I (Sem II, 2010-11) Ecological Perspectives: THE Challenge of our Times

## m. Achieving academic style



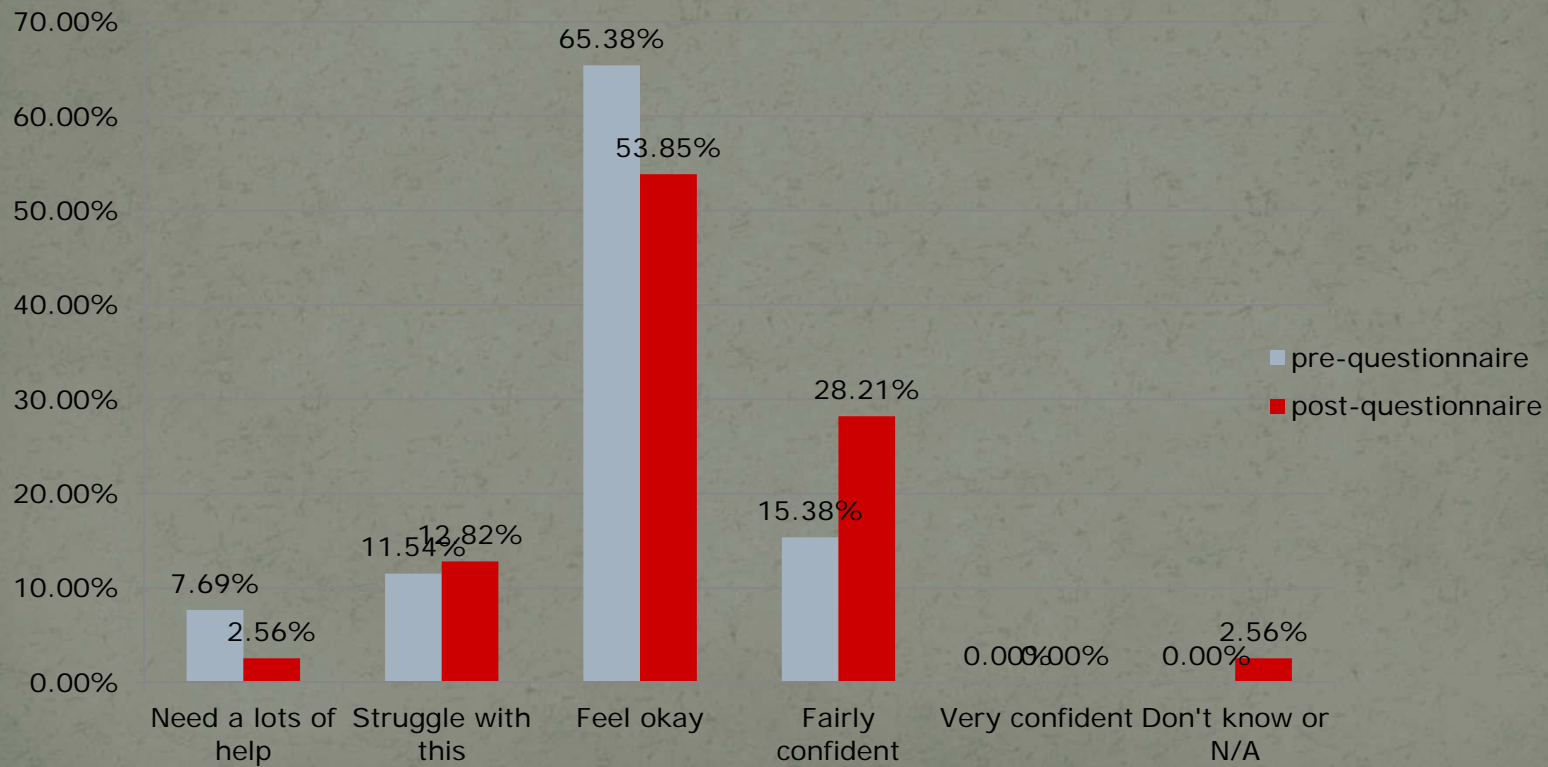
## Findings: Pilot II (Sem 1, 2011-12) History of Hong Kong



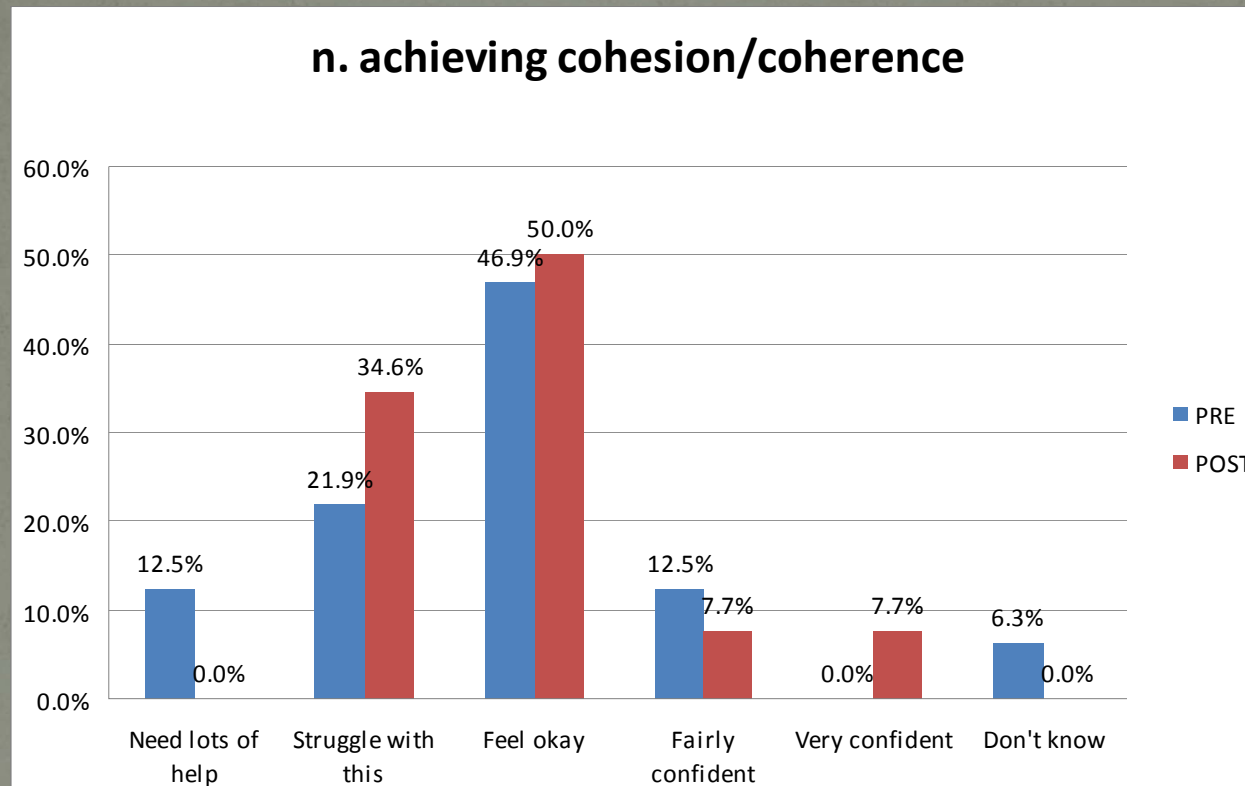


# Findings – Pilot I (Sem II, 2010-11) Ecological Perspectives: THE Challenge of our Times

## n. Achieving cohesion/ coherence

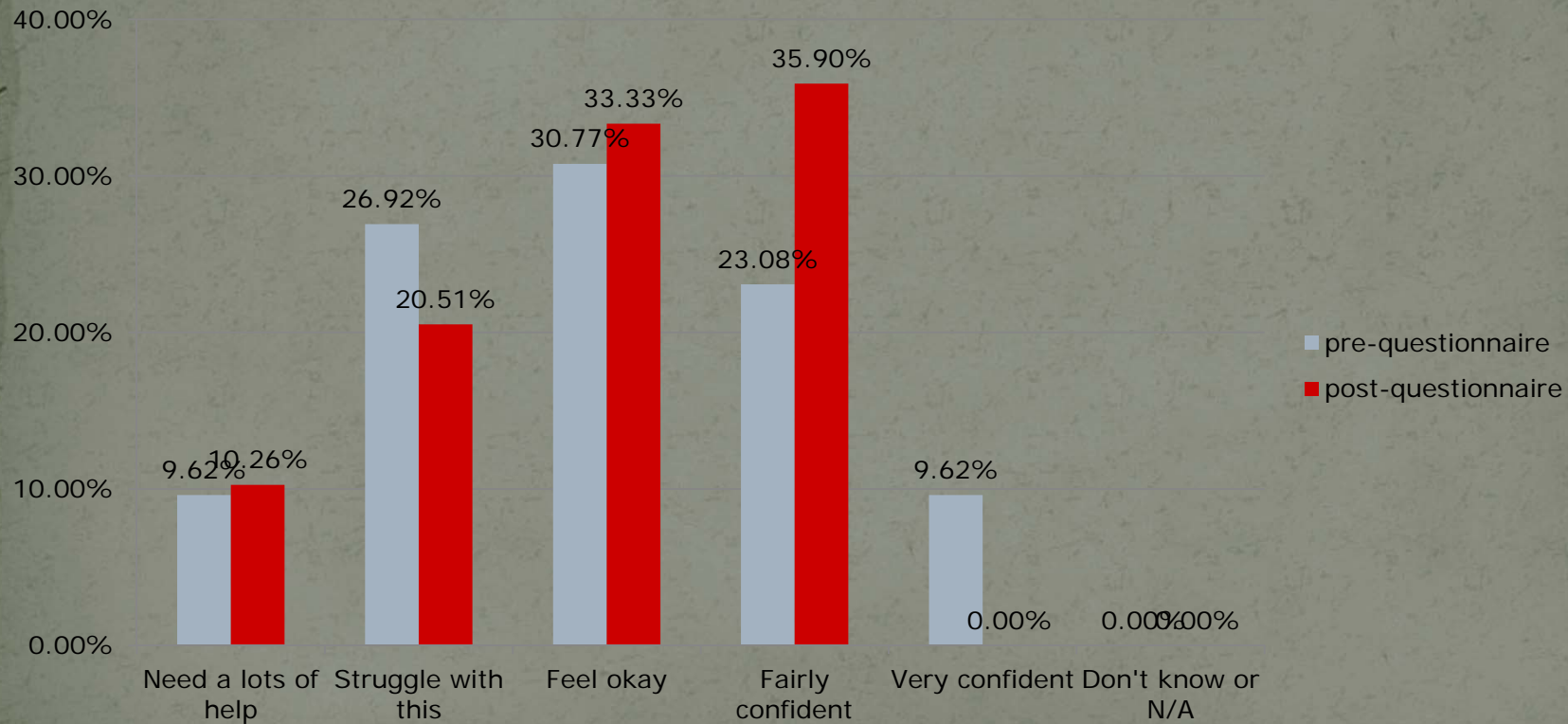


## Findings: Pilot II (Sem 1, 2011-12) History of Hong Kong



# Findings – Pilot I (Sem II, 2010-11) Ecological Perspectives: THE Challenge of our Times

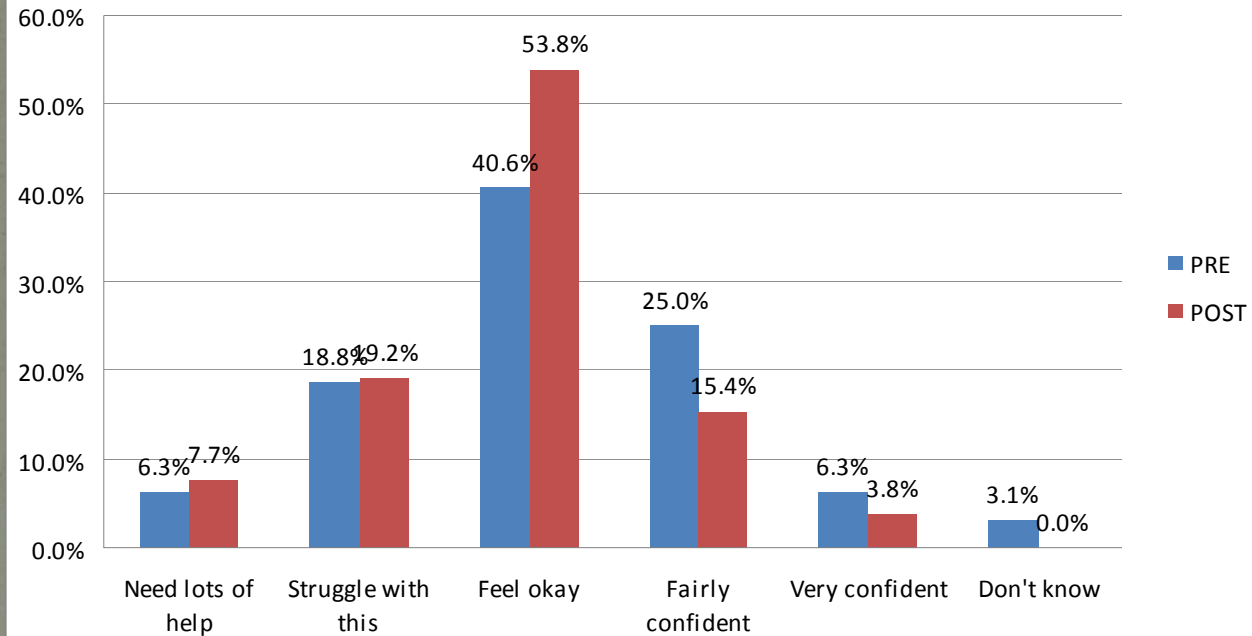
## o. Using correct grammar and punctuation





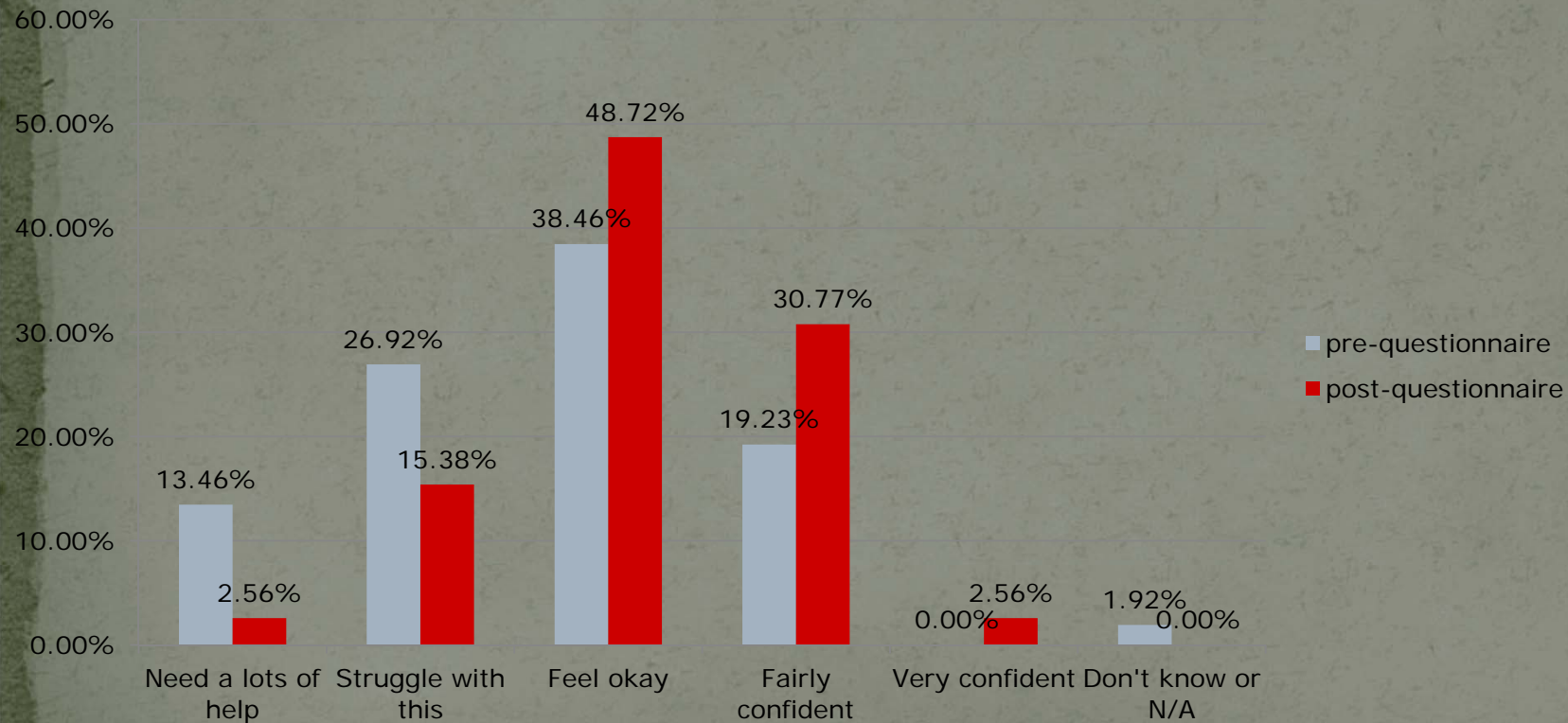
# Findings: Pilot II (Sem 1, 2011-12) History of Hong Kong

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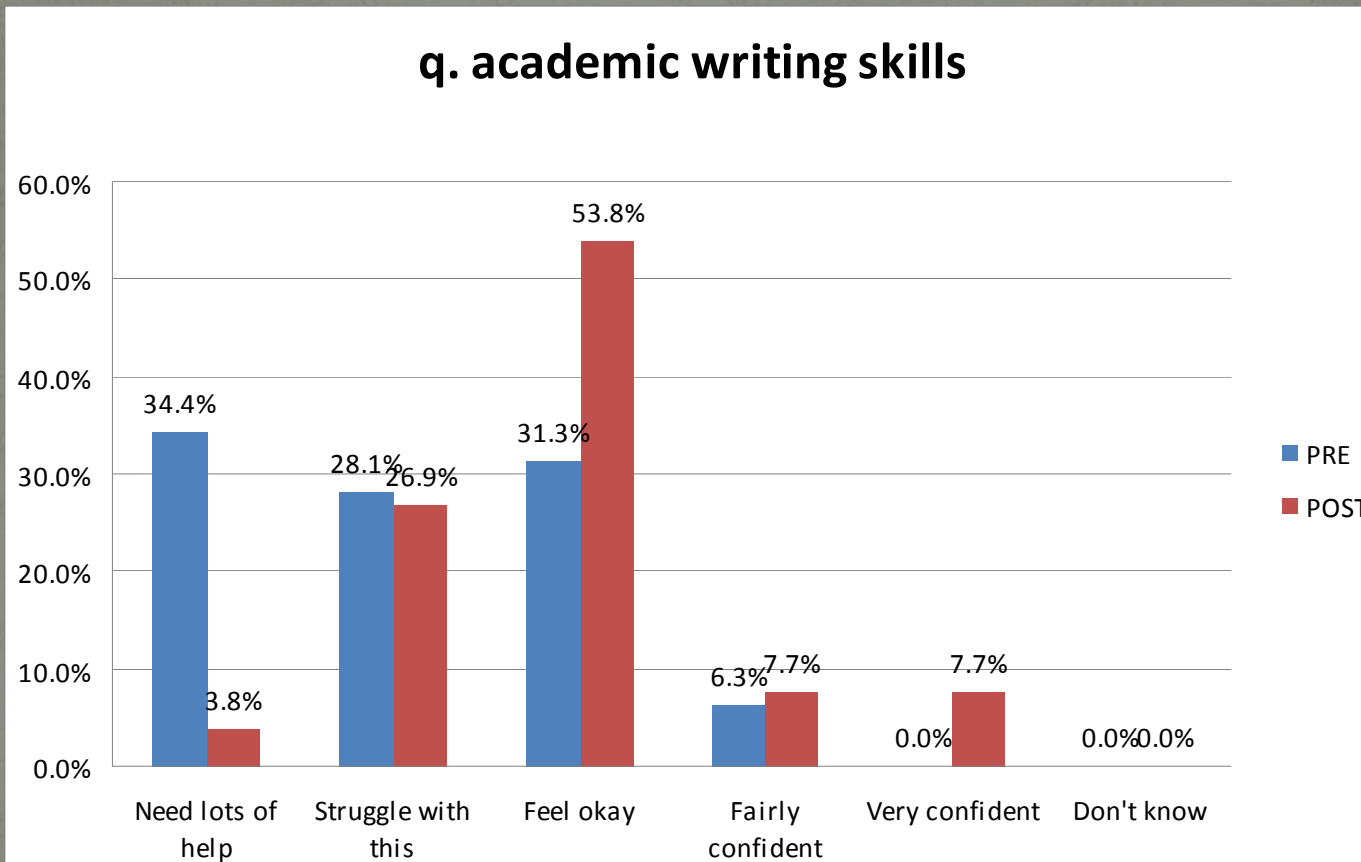
# Findings – Pilot I (Sem II, 2010-11) Ecological Perspectives: THE Challenge of our Times

## p. Journal writing skills



# Findings: Pilot II (Sem 1, 2011-12) History of Hong Kong

## q. academic writing skills





## Post-course Interview with CAR Subject Teacher

Dr. John Babson (JB)

Dr. Ng Pak-Sheung (NPS)

- How has this experience changed your perceptions about your students writing practices?
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- JB: *"I am not sure it has changed my perceptions. Basically my perceptions are that (1) many students need help; (2) if they put effort into it they will learn; and (3) it is very important, especially in a class that is taught primarily to freshman students to build this into the class so that early on they can be exposed and supported helping them adjust from high school to academia. I think it reinforced rather than changed my perceptions. Improvement is really obvious in some cases when it comes to a journal because you have evidence of change."*
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- NPS: *"Previously, I needed to take care of students' writing skills and had to spend quite a bit of time trying to polish language and edit their work. Working with the ELC, however, I did not need to take care of that aspect. It seemed a big burden had been lifted off my shoulders. This time I could focus on content. Collaboration provides students with the best of both content and language experts."*
- *"I observed a marked improvement in students' work in terms of academic style and referencing."*

Post-course Interview with CAR Subject Teacher

Dr. John Babson (JB)

Dr. Ng Pak-Sheung (NPS)

What support you had or needed more of from the ELC?

JB: *“More reading support would be nice. The emphasis though in this pilot was on writing support.”*

NPS: *“The ELC support in terms of language and referencing, as mentioned before, was significant.”*

*“The ELC model for collaboration and assistance with other departments is adequate. There is no need to introduce any modification or new aspects. Fine-tuning and perfecting the existing model further will serve the purpose.”*



## Post-course Interview with CAR Subject Teacher

Dr. John Babson (JB)

Dr. Ng Pak-Sheung (NPS)

How have the criteria for this pilot course and the application of them affected your interest and commitment to the Writing Intensive course?

*JB: “Just reinforced what I have already known for years, that students need active support of their writing (along with reading and study skills) EMBEDDED within the subject itself in preference to it being solely presented to them in a separate study skills or English class. I have dealt with Writing Intensive classes before in other academic settings both in Hawai`i and in Japan. What is amazing to me is that this has not been standard stuff here in Hong Kong at the PolyU all of these years.”*

*NPS: “Positive! This is the way to enable students to the English Reading and Writing. The subject teacher spends less time to understand the intent of the students when reading and assessing their scripts. R&W requirements should definitely continue.”*

*“I would like to suggest an increased credit value for ELC’s work/intervention. Students should be given 1 credit for completing the R&W requirements satisfactorily. Students felt that their workload had increased as they had to submit two drafts to the ELC. This resulted in students saying that they valued but did not enjoy the extra load.”*



## Post-course Interview with CAR Subject Teacher

Dr. John Babson (JB)

Dr. Ng Pak-Sheung (NPS)

Are there any constraints that this pilot imposed on the way your time was used and its effects on flexibility for teaching?

*JB: Normally I take a lot of time in this class with the tutorials and supportive consultations where I teach Systems Thinking and introduce students “how to teach”. This can be very reflective. In practice it means that every single week the tutorial hour is spoken for. However, in order to accommodate the English Writing tutorials, I had to surrender two weeks by doubling up student groups when they came to see me for consultation. It is not ideal but that is the trade-off one lives with in order to support the writing program. I will review this to see if there is another way to organize things but I suspect that there is not.*

*NPS: “No constraints. I did not have to do anything additional or anything that increased my workload significantly. Collaboration needed with the ELC did not impact on my autonomy. I feel good about this model. Current model works.”*

## Post-course Interview with CAR Subject Teacher

Dr. John Babson (JB)

Dr. Ng Pak-Sheung (NPS)

How do you think writing might have an impact on students' sense of themselves as thinkers and writers? - (something that points to the idea C Murray mentions of an authorial self).

*JB: "For those who applied themselves, I think it had a strong impact. It is not just the writing per se but the focus got tighter especially through the weekly stimulus questions which challenged their thinking and problem solving. At the same time, the open-endedness of the questioning process I think opened up any number of the students helping them to find their voice. Some students came across in their later journal entries as empowered in contrast to their initial entries at the beginning of the semester."*

*NPS: "Students writing increased in sophistication and critical quality."*



## Post-course Interview with CAR Subject Teacher

Dr. John Babson (JB)

Dr. Ng Pak-Sheung (NPS)

How did this pilot change your relationship with students - if it did?

JB: “I think it strengthened it. I understand fully well the need to establish an open dialog with as many students as possible throughout the semester, especially in a subject such as this one which can be challenging on many levels. That dialog, if pursued carefully through a lot of listening and encouragement can open up students to themselves rather than just be parroting the voices of their expectant elders. It helps them become more real and to learn to believe in themselves.”

NPS: “I spent more time in comforting students and consulting them in terms of R&W requirements, although it is my normal practice to ask students about their other frustrations. Students often come and tell me their stories and emotional upheavals, but I find such communication worth my while.”



Post-course Interview with CAR Subject Teacher

Dr. John Babson (JB)

Dr. Ng Pak-Sheung (NPS)

What do you see to be or hope is the value of the writing for the students in your course?

JB: “First, and foremost, to be able to think clearer and more critically, to not just be reactive and opinionated dealing only with surface issues. With that a bit further down the road, one hopes that they become reflective. Second, to be able to communicate more effectively both in general as well as within the workplace.”

NPS: “*The course includes writing anyway but in terms of reading, students in this course had to do additional work and an additional assessment on ‘Critical Reading Assignment’.*”

Post-course Interview with CAR Subject Teacher

Dr. John Babson (JB)

Dr. Ng Pak-Sheung (NPS)

What do you think the students have the most difficulty with in your course?

*JB: "Reading. If they come from China mainland, they have had an education system which tells them that they need to read so they take it up. If they come from Hong Kong, they had an education system which seems to have abandoned reading. In either case, neither tend to understand that reading is a very active exercise, it is not just the game of recognizing the words. What is the message that the author is trying to convey? You need to THINK and REFLECT. It is for that reason I spend a lot of time in lecture communicating how to read effectively examining the thinking processes exemplified in the text."*

*NPS: "Observing timelines and time management...for all other courses as well. This seems to be a structural problem."*



## Post-course Interview with CAR Subject Teacher

Dr. John Babson (JB)

Dr. Ng Pak-Sheung (NPS)

What do you think students have gained from this additional help with their writing?

*JB: "Primarily I think they gained a sense of synergy with respect to writing in the curriculum. Instead of lessons in writing being a separate class from subject content, they had an opportunity to see it connected in an integrated whole. In addition, they were exposed to two different genres dealing with the same subject matter. As such, the contrast I think has made them much more aware of style than they otherwise would have been had they say been only exposed to formal term paper writing."*

*NPS: "There is no doubt about student gains. They have a better sense of language and the book reviews this term tend to be more standardized in structure. Flow and coherence is better and the improvements are very observable in terms of English writing skills."*



## Post-course Interview with CAR Subject Teacher

Dr. John Babson (JB)

Dr. Ng Pak-Sheung (NPS)

- Do you have any other comments/suggestions/reflections/observations that you want to convey?
- JB: *"I think there are several overall observations, which may be relevant to the PolyU as a whole:*
- *(1) Students need this sort of support. They have not had this in the past in their General Education exposure where the prevailing attitude is that General Education is "just icing on the cake", not necessarily academically rigorous or engaging.*
- *(2) Students can do it if supported and properly pushed.*
- *(3) Relevancy of auxiliary lessons such as study skills, literacy, etc. is much more obvious to students when elements such as this are consciously built into a content subject than if only taught in separate language or study skills classes. This sort of thing ought to be a hallmark of General Education in the PolyU.*
- *(4) If students discover that they encounter this sort of a thing in all of their General Education classes, it will be hard for them to dismiss the message. Students coming through a program such as this will be much better prepared to take on their disciplinary studies in a deeper way and should be much easier to teach. This would be to everyone's benefit.*

## Post-course Interview with CAR Subject Teacher

Dr. John Babson (JB)

Dr. Ng Pak-Sheung (NPS)

- *(5) Grades are student currency. Those students in this class that did the least work and accomplished the least were not surprisingly those students who were grandfathered in as Pass/Fail.*
- *(6) Finally, but not necessarily the least important, I think content teachers need some guidance and understanding as to what the goals of literacy support are all about and how they can be achieved simply because this is a sea change in attitude in the teaching of General Education in the PolyU. I found it an absolute pleasure to work with the ELC in this pilot. However, I have a background that is not the most usual in the challenges of academic literacy and in teaching English as a Second Language so it was not difficult for me to interface with the ELC. I am not sure this would automatically be the case for most content teachers. “Lessons” from the ELC may not go over very well but round table discussions with ELC and content colleagues on an essentially equal footing as fellow concerned teachers might just be the ticket to success. Having gone through this pilot, it might not be a bad idea to invite me to such meetings where I might be able to more effectively communicate some things through my experience.”*
- *NPS: “I would like to suggest an increased credit value for ELC’s work/intervention. Students should be given 1 credit for completing the R&W requirements satisfactorily. Students felt that their workload had increased as they had to submit two drafts to the ELC. This resulted in students saying that they valued but did not enjoy the extra load.”*



Over to you...

Q&A