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CLT Activities and their Potential to Improve Oral Communication and Reduce Anxiety: Teacher's and Students' Perceptions and Attitudes

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Overview:

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Introduction

❑ Speaking ability is a priority for EFL students, as they rate their language proficiency based on the spoken production.

❑ It is imperative to have speech-developing activities incorporated in the curriculum (Defrioka, 2016).

Introduction

❑ CLT enhances students' speaking production by providing them a stage to speak.

❑ CLT gives wide range of flexibility in choosing activity based on learners' goals and needs.

❑ The mastery of oral communication skills are affected by foreign language anxiety (Brown & Yule, 1999).

Literature Review

Oral communication skills and their importance in language teaching

❏ In communicative classes, activities such as role-plays, interviews, pair and group discussions, language games (Gao, 2008; Littlewood, 1981; Sukai, 2004; Tompkins, 1998).

❏ Types of communicative activities are functional and social (Craig-Unkefer, 2003; Hwang, 2000; Littlewood,1981).

Communicative Competence in L2

❑ Communicative competence is an essential aspect of the speech development. It's the usage of a language for a wide range of purposes in different speaking styles (Richards, 2006).

❑ Communicative competence has four components:
- grammatical competence,
- discourse competence,
- sociolinguistic competence,
- strategic competence.

(Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, 1995; Hymes, 1972; Light, 1989; Sarimsakova, 2019)

"The basic idea of communicative competence remains the ability to use language appropriately, both "receptively and productively, in real situations" (Kiato,1996).

CLT and its importance in the development of communicative competence

❑ CLT proposes practical or performance-based teaching and learning methods;

❑ CLT aims to support real-life language development;

❑ CLT creates a playground for learners to express themselves with the help of collaborative activities.

The history and significance of CLT activities in EFL/ESL teaching

❑ CLT is an L2 teaching approach emphasizing that the goal of language learning is communicative competence (Richards, 1992).

❑ One of the most characteristic features of CLT is that it pays systematic attention to functional and structural aspects of language (Littlewood, 1981).

❑ CLT is viewed as turning point where explicit direct elements are gaining significance in teaching communicative abilities and skills (Celce-Murcia & Domyei, 1997).

Types of CLT activities

❑ Information-gap activities

❑ Jigsaw activities

❑ Task-completion activities

❑ Information-gathering activities

❑ Opinion-sharing activities

❑ Information-transfer activities

❑ Reasoning-gap activities

CLT Characteristics

CLT:

- [ ] is student-focused,
- [ ] is task-oriented,
- [ ] is speech-driven,
- [ ] uses authentic materials,
- [ ] enables the use of L2 in communicative situations,
- [ ] motivates the students to use improvised language.

The effect of language anxiety on students' speaking skills

Anxiety is an "emotional state consisting of feeling, tension, apprehension, and its effects on the nervous system" (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995).

Foreign language anxiety is:

❏ "The feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language texts, including speaking, listening, and learning" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994, p. 30).

❏ "A type of shyness characterized by fear or apprehension about communicating with people" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 3).

The anxiety related to lack of linguistic knowledge might include:

- ❑ limited vocabulary,

- ❑ inaccurate grammar,

- ❑ lack of speaking fluency,

- ❑ inaccurate pronunciation,

- ❑ lack of group skills,

- ❑ fear of making mistakes,

- ❑ hesitation of expressing ideas.

Anxiety can emerge as a source of motivation. As a result, two types of anxiety were suggested:

Facilitative (helpful) anxiety	Debilitative (harmful) anxiety
is a source of drive and willingness to improve performance.	is about hindering the learners' achievements.

(Alpert & Haber, 1960; Carrier, 1984; Gholami, 2013)

Purpose of Study

The study aims at:

❑ determining the potential of the communicative language teaching activities in improving the EFL learners' oral communication skills,

❑ finding out if CLT method might help reduce EFL students' speaking anxiety,

❑ learning about the Armenian public school students' and their teacher's attitudes towards CLT implementation.

Guiding Research Questions

RQ1: *What are the teacher's and students' perceptions of the potential of CLT activities to improve students' listening and speaking skills and reduce foreign language anxiety?*

RQ2: *What are the elementary level EFL students' and the teacher's attitudes toward CLT activities?*

Methodology

Typology

- ❑ **Action research**

- ❑ **Mixed method approach**

- ❑ **QUAL+QUAN (data triangulation)**

- ❑ **Non-probability, convenience sampling**

Context

- Gyumri, Armenia
- Public school
- Offline classes

Materials

- English 6 (Gasparyan et al., 2015)
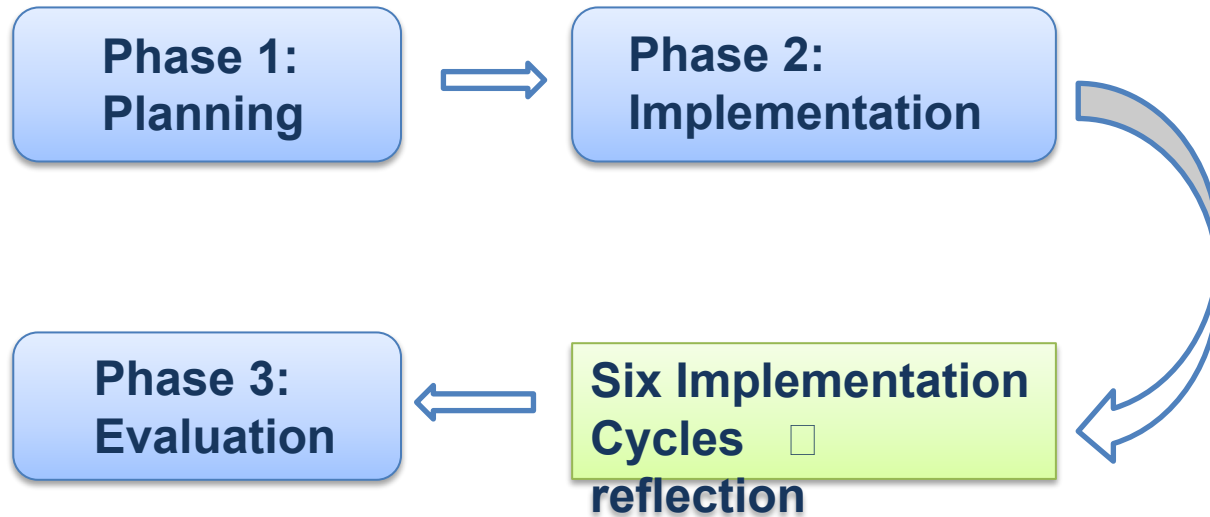- Supplementary materials

Participants

- 20 6th grade students (10 female, 10 male)
- EFL teacher
- Students' Age: 12-13
- Proficiency level: low-elementary / elementary
- L1: Armenian

Sampling Procedure

Based on the action research, the study was carried out in three phases:

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┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
│  Phase 1:        │  ═══▶  │  Phase 2:            │
│  Planning        │        │  Implementation      │
└──────────────────┘        └──────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
│  Phase 3:        │  ◀═══  │  Six Implementation  │
│  Evaluation      │        │  Cycles    ☐         │
└──────────────────┘        │  reflection          │
                            └──────────────────────┘
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Data Collection

Pre-study classroom observations

Pre- and Post-study teacher interviews

Pre-study Foreign Language anxiety scale with 14 Likert scale questions

Pre- and Post-study students surveys with 8 multiple-choice questions each

Data Analysis

Qualitative Data

- ❑ Interview-recording and transcribing (coding, presenting as themes);
- ❑ Content analysis - presentation of most representative parts;
- ❑ Observation notes

Quantitative Data

- ❑ Descriptive statistics via Excel – percentages

Major Findings

RQ 1

What are the teacher's and students' perceptions of the potential of CLT activities to improve students' listening and speaking skills and reduce foreign language anxiety?
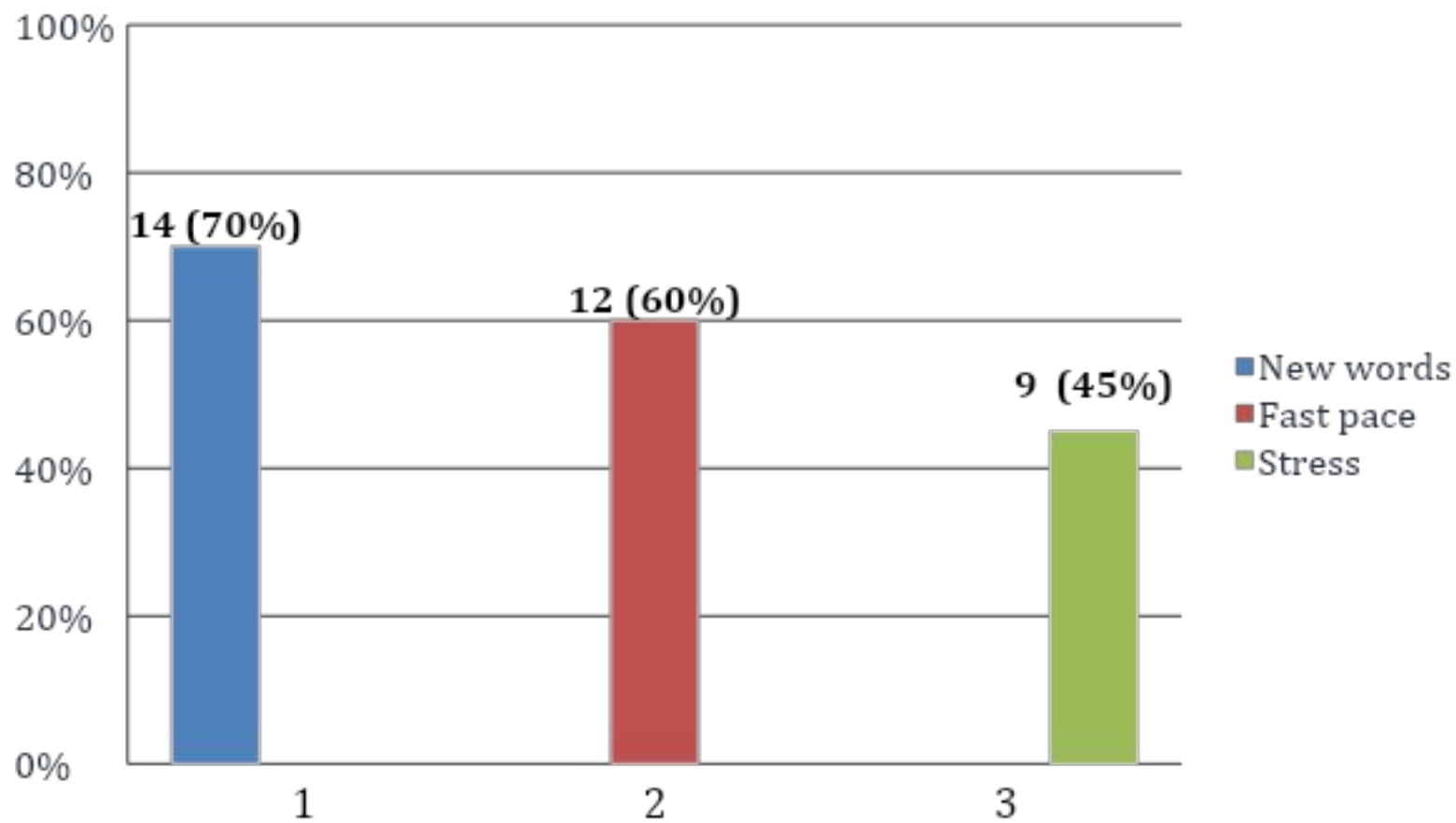
CLT activities are perceived to help students' participate in classes with **lower level of stress**. However, the influence of **personality types** and students' **learning styles** should also be taken into account.
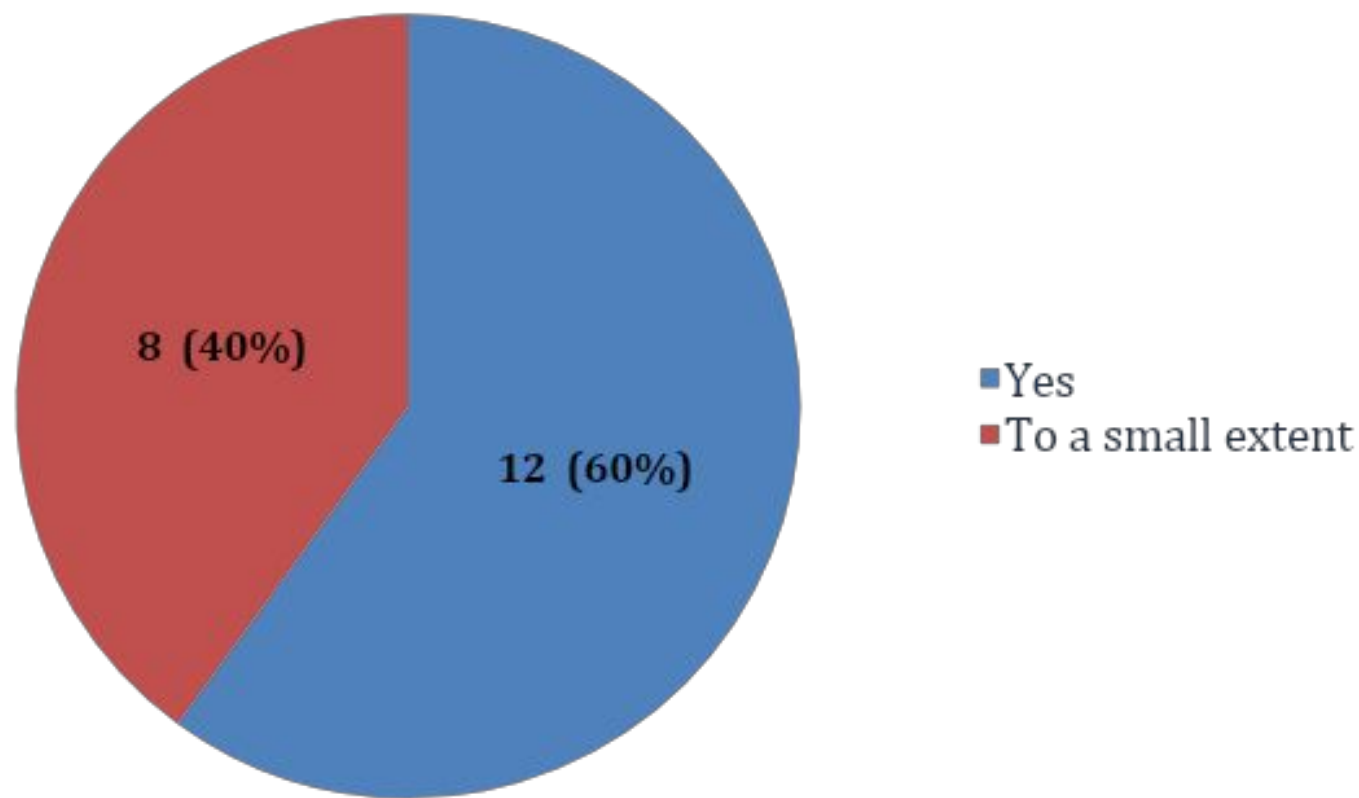
# Factors that make it difficult to speak English.

3	10 (50%)
2	7 (35%)
1	15 (75%)

■ Poor vocabulary level
■ Difficulty forming sentences
■ High level of stress

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%
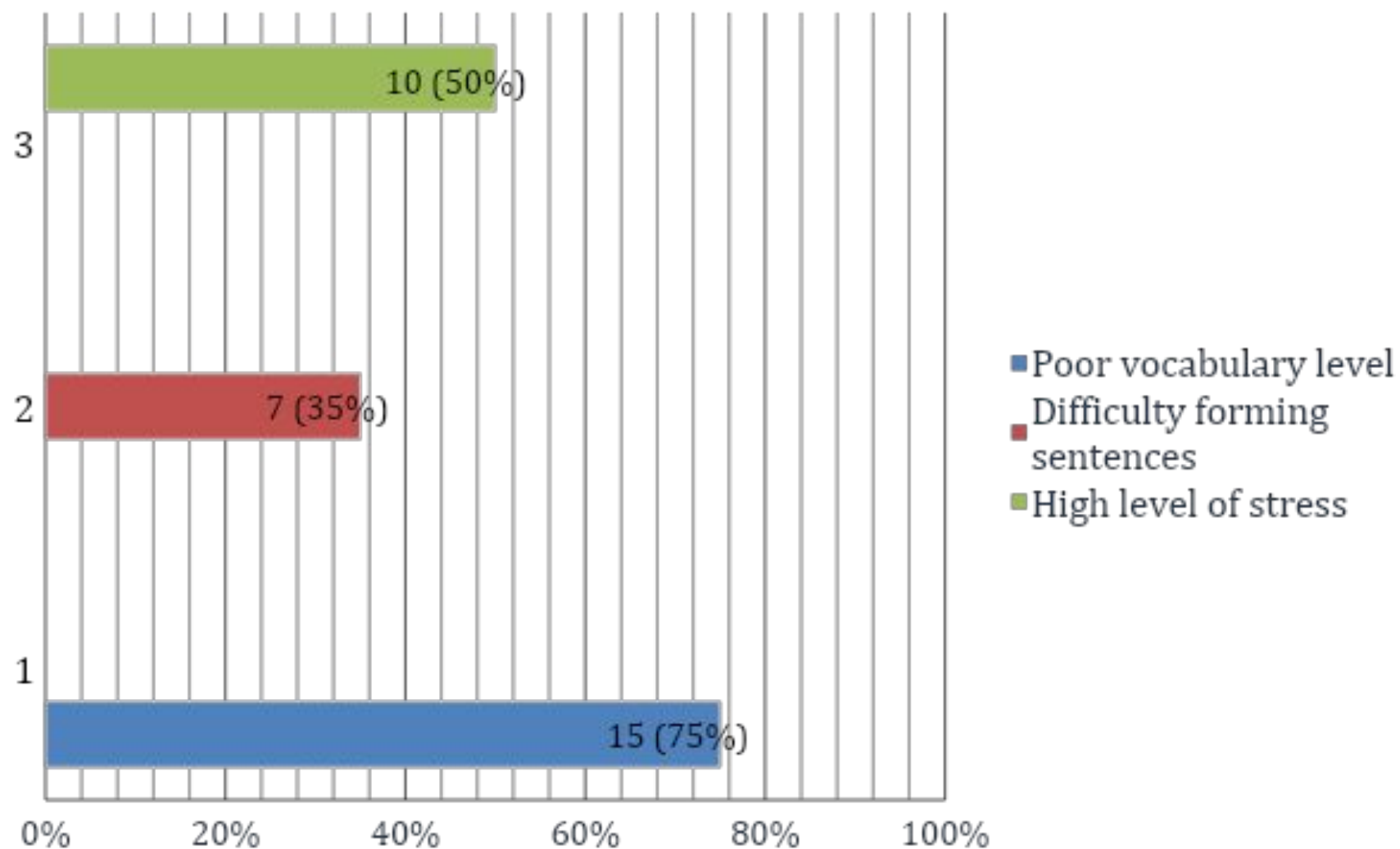
Factors that make it difficult to understand the spoken language.

The new activities helped reduce the learners' language anxiety level

8 (40%)

12 (60%)

■ Yes
■ To a small extent

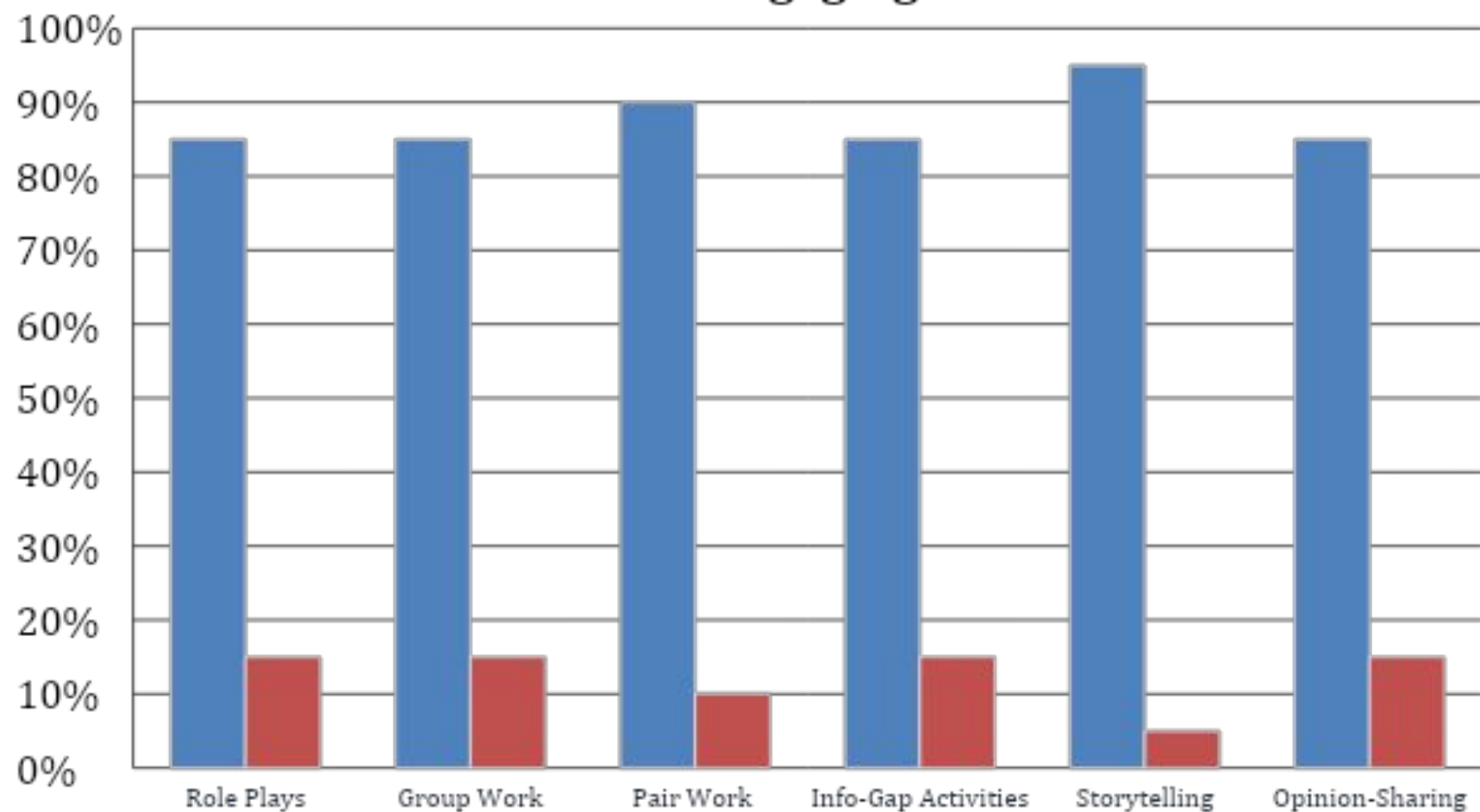The language areas where improvement was noticed after CLT-based teaching.
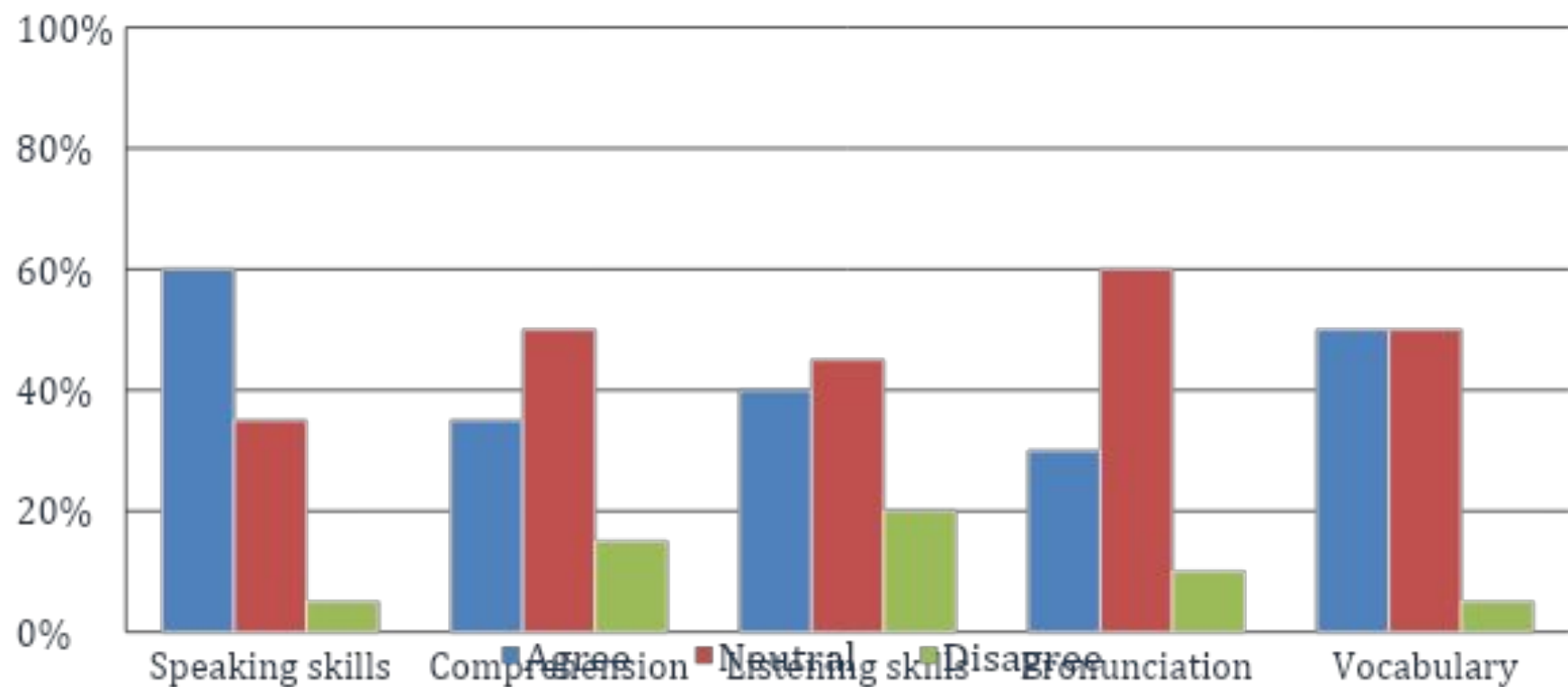
What are the elementary level EFL students' and the teacher's attitudes toward CLT activities?
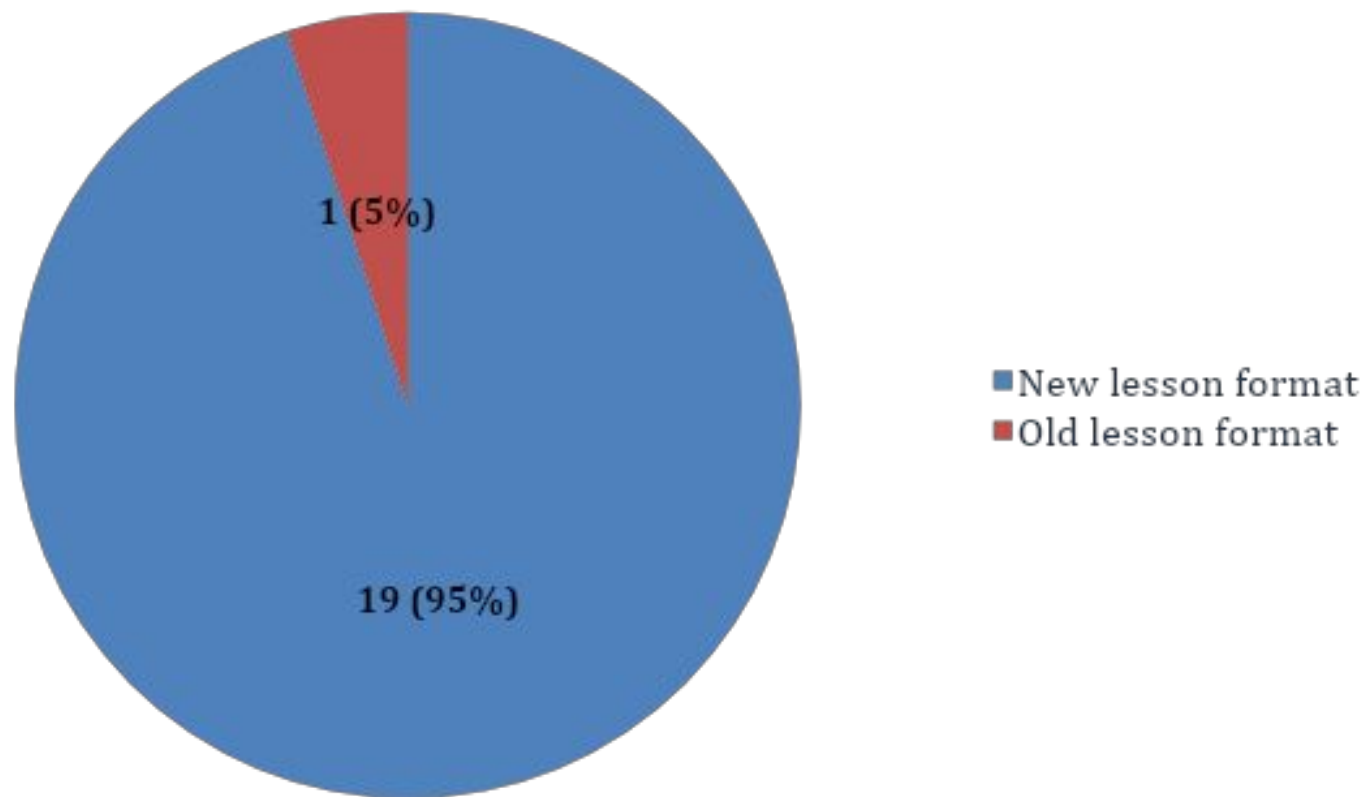
Both the students' and their teacher's attitudes towards CLT activities were solely positive.

Students' responses on which CLT activities were more engaging

The most-preferable lesson format.

1 (5%)

19 (95%)

■New lesson format
■Old lesson format

Teacher's Perceptions

CLT helps the students to:

❏ practice speaking and listening skills,

❏ enlarge their vocabulary,

❏ develop their team-working skills.

The most effective CLT activities implemented during the study:

❏ Information-gap

❏ Group-work

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

❑ Classroom setting

❑ Lack of equipment

❑ Biased answers

Delimitations

❑ Region and city

❑ School, class, and teacher

❑ Age group and grade

❑ CLT activities

Recommendations

Pedagogical Implications

❑ Include more listening activities,

❑ Take into account students' vocabulary prior to CLT

implementation,

❑ Make the instructions in L2 as easy as possible,

❑ Direct students' attention to certain time restraints.

For Future Research

❑ More activities for listening and reading practice.

❑   Focus on the participants' motivation level pre- and post-

CLT implementation.

❑   Other regional public schools in RA.

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Questions & Comments