



The Effects of Communicative Activities on EFL Learners' Speaking Performances in CLT Classroom¹

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Abstract

In the current study, the researcher investigated improving EFL learners' speaking performances using communicative activities. The design of the study was classroom action research. The researcher followed a quantitative method in this study. A Ph.D. student in the ELT department as the teacher-researcher and 40 second-year EFL students enrolled in the ELT program participated in this study. To select participants, the researcher used convenience sampling. The teaching and learning process of the study consisted of ten cycles that were carried out in ten weeks. Each cycle included four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Different instruments such as English-speaking tests, lesson plans, observation checklists, the rubric of speaking, and questionnaires were used for collecting data. To calculate mean scores of the pre-test and post-test scores and to find any significant differences between the two tests descriptive statistics and Wilcoxon signed-ranked tests and to find inter-rater reliability among three raters for two tests, the researcher used the Interclass Correlation Coefficient test. The findings revealed the effectiveness of the interventions and communicative activities in the speaking classes. Statistically, significant differences were found in EFL learners' perceptions of their speaking ability, performances, classroom participation, anxiety level, willingness to speak, and self-esteem. Overall, students favored activities that provided a competitive classroom environment and led to a high level of classroom participation. The results indicated the effectiveness of speaking classes, because students were significantly more satisfied with their speaking ability after the interventions. Students' perceptions and attitudes about their interactional skills were changed significantly after the study.

Keywords

Communicative activities
Action research
Speaking performance
Perception
Communicative language teaching

Article Info

Received 11.10.2022
Reviewed 05.02.2022
Published 31.03.2023
Doi Number 10.29228/ijlet.65008

Reference

Rezalou, A. & Yağiz, O. (2023). The effects of communicative activities on EFL learners' speaking performances in CLT classroom. *International Journal of Languages' Education and Teaching*, 11(1), 1-19.

¹ This study was adopted from the first author's Ph.D. dissertation in 2021.

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İletişimsel Etkinliklerin İngilizce Öğrenenlerin CLT Sınıfındaki Konuşma Performansları Üzerindeki Etkileri⁴

Özet

Bu çalışmada araştırmacı, iletişimsel etkinlikleri kullanarak İngilizce öğrenenlerinin konuşma performanslarının iyileştirmesini araştırdı. Araştırmanın tasarımı sınıf eylem araştırmasıdır. Araştırmacı bu çalışmada nicel bir yöntem izlemiştir. ELT bölümündeki bir doktora öğrencisi öğretmen-araştırmacı olarak ve ELT programına kayıtlı ikinci sınıf İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen 40 öğrenci bu çalışmaya katılmıştır. Araştırmacı, katılımcıları seçmek için kolay örnekleme yöntemini kullanmıştır. Araştırmanın öğretme ve öğrenme süreci, on hafta içinde gerçekleştirilen on döngüden oluşmaktadır. Her döngü dört aşamadan oluşuyordu: planlama, eylem, gözlem ve yansıtma. Veri toplamak için İngilizce konuşma testleri, ders planları, gözlem kontrol listeleri, konuşma talimatı ve anketler gibi farklı araçlar kullanılmıştır. Araştırmacı, ön test ve son test puanlarının ortalama puanlarını hesaplamak ve iki testin arasında anlamlı bir fark olup olmadığını bulmak için betimsel istatistikleri ve Wilcoxon işaretli sıralı testler ve iki test için üç puanlayıcı arasında puanlayıcılar arası güvenilirliği bulmak için Sınıflar Arası Korelasyon Katsayısı testi kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, konuşma sınıflarındaki müdahalelerin ve iletişimsel etkinliklerin etkililiğini ortaya koymuştur. İstatistiksel olarak, İngilizce öğrenenlerin konuşma kabiliyetleri, performansları, sınıfa katılımları, kaygı düzeyleri, konuşmaya isteklilikleri ve özgüvenlerine ilişkin algılarında önemli farklılıklar bulundu. Genel olarak, öğrenciler rekabetçi bir sınıf ortamı sağlayan ve yüksek düzeyde sınıf katılımına yol açan etkinlikleri tercih ettiler. Sonuçlar, konuşma derslerinin etkililiğini ortaya koydu, çünkü müdahalelerden sonra öğrenciler konuşma yeteneklerinden önemli ölçüde memnun kaldılar. Öğrencilerin etkileşim becerilerine ilişkin algıları ve tutumları çalışmadan sonra önemli ölçüde değişmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

İletişim etkinlikleri
Eylem araştırması
Konuşma performansı
Algı
İletişimsel dil öğretimi

Article Info

<i>Gönderim Tarihi</i>	11.10.2022
<i>Kabul Tarihi</i>	05.02.2023
<i>Yayın Tarihi</i>	31.03.2023
<i>Doi Numarası</i>	10.29228/ijlet.65008

Kaynakça

Rezalou, A. & Yağız, O. (2023). İletişimsel etkinliklerin İngilizce öğrenenlerin CLT sınıfındaki konuşma performansları üzerindeki etkileri. *International Journal of Languages' Education and Teaching*, 11(1), 1-19.

⁴ Bu çalışma birinci yazarın 2021'de doktora tez çalışmasından uyarlanmıştır.

Introduction

The main reason for selecting the scope of the study was to offer a sensible answer to the issues of teaching speaking skills in EFL classrooms at the university level in Turkey. According to some action research studies, the main concern is concentrating on enhancing practice which is an impetus for doing the current study. The main important point of action research is classroom practice which connects the gap between practice and theory and removes possible teacher concerns (Crookes, 1993). Because of this reason, the current study tried to provide effective learner-centered speaking classrooms. The scope of the current study was to follow principles of action research regarding the improvement of classroom practice. In this case, listening carefully to voices from the students in CLT classrooms probably was a possible way to meet this aim. Although there has been a renewed movement and interest in teaching speaking in Turkish EFL classrooms, there is still a limited range of studies conducted for investigating the issues regarding communicative-based instruction, activities, and teaching speaking. To overcome the students' challenges in speaking skill and related issues and find answers to improve the students' speaking performances, the researcher conducted this study. This study might be considered a pilot study of a new approach in speaking classes, which can improve learners' interaction in speaking classrooms and beyond. In the present study, by investigation of EFL learners' difficulties, challenges, performances, and needs in CLT classrooms in the ELT department, it is anticipated to see the contribution to language teaching practitioners, language teachers, and learners with some practical, and sensible implications that can be helpful to the efficacy of CLT teaching process. All EFL learners' goal is to gain the ability to speak fluently. Some essential problems influence EFL students' oral proficiency in speaking classes. There have been many investigations related to the CLT method and communicative activities in the ESL context and ESL classrooms. On the other hand, inadequate research has been conducted in the EFL context and EFL classrooms. Thus, this study can provide useful information for language curriculum designers as complementary or additional tools for the improvement and development of students' oral interaction and speaking skills in a university environment. In the local scientific environment, this study can have contributions to the re-design of speaking or oral skills courses in the curriculum renewal process at Atatürk University. Considering above mentioned points, the researcher attempted to examine how and in what direction communicative activities affect students' performance. Therefore, the following research questions were answered:

1. *What are the EFL students' perceived abilities to speak?*
2. *How do communicative activity types affect;*
 - *Student's perception of speaking ability*
 - *Student performance and classroom participation*
 - *Student's level of anxiety*
 - *Student's willingness to speak*
 - *Student's self-esteem*

Literature Review

Generally, communicative activities are fluency-based activities and encourage students to use a foreign language in interaction (Tait, 2001). Four benefits of communicative activities for learners are: a) being in exposure to the target language, b) having authentic opportunities for practicing the language, c) being interesting and funny, and d) providing a real opportunity for using authentic materials. All activities must possess the special communicative quality to fulfill lesson objectives and suggest the learners the opportunity for completing information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction tasks. Moreover, communicative activities are divided into two main categories by functional activities which are information gap and problem-solving. In these types of activities, students use the target language to discuss, evaluate and share information. On the other side, social interaction activities provide opportunities for learners to simulate interaction or communication outside the classroom in the real world. Conversations, discussions, dialogues, role-plays, and debates are good examples of social interaction activities. To design communicative activities, teachers should make the activities communicative. They should plan and then give guidelines for doing communicative activities and during practice time of activities be as a consultant or facilitator. Besides, other teachers' role is to provide a comfortable classroom environment in which learners feel free and be able to express their opinions, make mistakes in learning, and practice the language. Encouraging and promoting the students to use the language authentically and meaningfully in context is the nature of communicative activities. The communicative activities to be applied successfully in classes must be "student-centered" and carried out in interactive, authentic settings (Richard & Rodgers, 2001, p. 163). This can be done by CLT method that emphasizes learner-centered learning.

Recently, in the EFL context, researchers investigating the effects of communicative activities in language learning have used communicative activities effectively. Noom-Ura (2008) studied the effect of well-designed courses to improve low-level students' proficiency in listening and speaking skills. Through random sampling, twenty-eight students were selected from 360 first-year students from the low-level group at Thammasat University in Thailand. A pre-and post-speaking test, pre-and post-questionnaire, a self-reflection checklist, and a course evaluation form were the used instruments for the study by the researcher. At the end of the study, the result indicated that students' listening and speaking ability were significantly different and students' affective and behavioral changes were positive. Boonkit (2010) in a study investigated the factors influencing the learners' development of speaking skills. The findings of the study showed that using the appropriate communicative activities is a good strategy to decrease speakers' anxiety. In addition, the results revealed that the students' freedom in topic selection helped the participants to feel comfortable when speaking English and improve their speaking confidence among EFL learners. AL-Garni and Almuhammadi (2019) investigated the effect of using communicative activities on EFL students' speaking skills at the English Language Institute of the University of Jeddah. The researchers conducted this study in two classes and each class consisted of 21 female EFL students. One class was the experimental group and the other one was the control group. The experimental group was taught using three communicative activities (interviewing, problem-solving, and role-playing) while the control group was taught using traditional methods. To find a significant difference between the experimental and control groups' scores, pre-and post-test was conducted for the students. The findings of the study showed that the experimental group's scores were higher than the control group. These findings revealed the benefits of the implementation of CLT in the practice of teaching English. In Watamni and Gholami's (2012) study, the

information gap activities were used to improve elementary students' speaking performances. The results of the study showed that these activities improved student-student and student-teacher interaction and provided more opportunities for students to practice speaking. Andrade et al., (2018) conducted classroom action research and aimed to identify the effectiveness of the CLT method in teaching speaking. The data collection was done through observation and speaking tests. The participants of the study were 45 second-year EFL students. The results of the data analysis confirmed that at the pre-cycle, the majority of the students were at the average level. In the post-cycle, the scores of the students were improved. Thirteen students moved up to the high level. After pedagogical practice by integrating the communicative approach the students' scores were better than before and this method helped the students to improve their speaking skills. Uztosun (2013b) in an action research study on Turkish EFL learners tried to report teaching speaking as a neglected area of language education in English classes in Turkey. Collecting data was done through interviews, questionnaires, and observations, to elicit students' views. The researcher conducted this research in the ELT Department. The results of the study indicated that the students wanted more opportunities to practice spoken language. Therefore, students' participation in the classroom, willingness to communicate and self-esteem were improved at a high level, and their anxiety was decreased. These are good examples of action research studies that cleared the importance of action research as a methodology. Despite the research scope in the mentioned studies, it can be concluded that the main objectives of these studies were to find ways for improving classroom practice.

Methodology

Research Method

In this study, the researcher considered Classroom Action Research (CAR) as a research design of the study and followed a quantitative method. The researcher intended to identify potential speech problems related to EFL language learners and use communication language teaching methods and communication activities, for improving their speaking ability. After collecting data related to the student's speaking abilities and identifying the research problems, some actions were planned and implemented, and then systematically evaluated. Participants of the study were a Ph.D. student of English language teaching as a teacher-researcher and 40 second-year EFL students enrolled in the ELT program. To select participants, the researcher used a convenience sampling technique. The researcher conducted the pilot and main study at the English Language Teaching Department, Faculty of Education, Atatürk University, Turkey, in the Oral Communication Skills course. There were two classes and 20 students were in each class. The researcher carried out this study in the first semester of the 2018-2019 academic year.

Data Collection Instruments

The lesson plans were designed in line with the principles of communicative activities. After conducting the pilot study, reviewing, correcting, and making fundamental changes to the weaknesses of the interventions were done.

An observation checklist was used for collecting data through observation. During the pilot study, the reactions of the students toward performing the activities were positive.

English Speaking Tests were designed in the form of interviews to observe any significant improvement in students' speaking performances.

Questionnaires were used to gather data from the classes. The student initial questionnaire, student final questionnaire, and post-session questionnaire were developed by Uztosun (2013b) and the researcher used them in this study. First, these questionnaires were piloted with 40 EFL students. The ELT experts confirmed the validity of the questionnaires. To test the reliability of the questionnaires, Cronbach Alpha (α) Coefficients were calculated. A high degree of reliability was found respectively for student initial questionnaire ($r = 0.75$), student final questionnaire ($r = 0.76$) and post-session questionnaire ($r = 0.79$). In the post-session questionnaire, students were asked to assess the effectiveness of the interventions in the classroom after implementing the interventions.

The Rubric of Speaking Ability is a useful tool that includes students' scores on speaking performance. For this study, the researcher used Hui's (2011) analytic rubric.

Data Collection Process

The process of collecting data consisted of three stages. The researcher's intention of observing classes in the first stage was to conduct a pilot study (two interventions), understand the context, concentrate on the research process in the classroom, and observe the reactions of the students to the events. Cyclical interventions consisting of eight interventions were implemented in stage two. The final data collection for the whole semester was done in stage three.

Research Procedure

The researcher divided the process into ten cycles. Each cycle consisted of two sessions. In each cycle, there were four interrelated stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection as follows:

Planning

- A pre-test to understand students' speaking ability before the study and a post-test for comparing the pre-test to know any improvement in students' current speaking ability;
- Needed communicative lesson plans and training materials;
- The initial and final questionnaires to know students' background and previous knowledge of English language and find out the students' achievement after the interventions, student post-session questionnaire to evaluate each session;
- Preparing a checklist for observing students' behavior during the research process.

Action

- At the action stage, the actions/interventions were implemented.

Observation

- This stage refers to collecting information. The focus of this stage is on data collection concerning the desired improvement. Classroom observation was done systematically by the researcher.

Reflection

- At the reflection stage, the researchers analyzed and discussed the collected data through observation checklists for determining the intended improvement, factors affecting the improvement, and other possible identified problems during implementation.

Data Analysis

To understand the distribution of quantitative data in this study, The Shapiro-Wilk test was used for all questionnaires. According to the results, the distribution of data was not normal. For this reason, the researcher used non-parametric tests for analyzing quantitative data. To analyze quantitative data, calculate the mean scores of pre-test and post-test scores, and find significant differences between the two tests, the researcher used descriptive statistics and Wilcoxon signed-ranked tests. To find inter-rater reliability for the pre-test and post-test among three raters, the researcher used the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC).

Reliability and Validity

The ELT experts confirmed the validity of the instruments. A reliability test was used to obtain the reliability of the instruments. The high average value of alpha Cronbach ($r = 0.76$) was found for all questionnaires. To obtain inter-rater reliability for two speaking tests among three raters, the researcher used the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC). Therefore, a high average measures value of intraclass correlation was found for the pre-test (0.86) and post-test (0.92) that revealed inter-rater reliability among the three raters.

Findings

In the student initial questionnaire, the researcher found interesting results about the students' ideas in seven language areas in EFL classrooms (grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking, pronunciation, and listening) at different educational levels. The results are indicated in Table 1:

Table 1. The Focus of Teaching English

Areas	Primary School		Secondary School		High School	
	N	Sum	N	Sum	N	Sum
Grammar	40	18	40	24	40	21
Vocabulary	40	20	40	19	40	21
Reading	40	3	40	7	40	16
Writing	40	2	40	6	40	13
Speaking	40	5	40	6	40	17
Pronunciation	40	6	40	19	40	22
Listening	40	3	40	10	40	22

In Table 1, we can see the most preferred skill and least preferred skills. Without considering educational level, the seven areas of language learning were the same in rank order. Regarding the university classes, the situation was different. The researcher asked students to reveal the focus of teaching English at the university classes and fill out 5-point Likert-type items; from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5). Table 2 shows the results as follows:

Table 2. The Focus of Teaching at the University

Areas	N	Mean	SD
Speaking	40	4.37	.80
Pronunciation	40	4.12	.99
Listening	40	3.97	1.09
Reading	40	3.97	.94
Writing	40	3.92	.99
Grammar	40	3.05	.98
Vocabulary	40	2.97	.94

By contrasting the results with the focus of other educational levels, it was found that the students confirmed that the focus of English classes at university was on speaking.

Understanding learners' perceived ability in language areas before the study was essential. To do this, the researcher asked participants to rate 5-point Likert-type items, from 'strongly agree' (5) to 'strongly disagree' (1). The results are indicated in Table 3:

Table 3. Perceived Areas of Proficiency

Areas	N	Mean	SD
Reading	40	4.10	.77
Writing	40	3.70	.88
Listening	40	3.67	1.07
Grammar	40	3.62	.83
Vocabulary	40	3.32	.82
Pronunciation	40	3.30	1.18
Speaking	40	3.00	1.17

Compared to other language areas, most of the participants agreed that they were more competent in the reading area. The majority of participants were satisfied with their ability in writing, listening, and grammar areas and few of the students felt competent in pronunciation and speaking areas.

Accuracy, fluency, interaction, and lexical range are sub-areas of speaking that were included in the student's initial questionnaire. Students' proficiency levels were identified with three levels (high=3, medium=2, low=1). The researcher asked participants to tick one number. After reviewing the sum of the scores in each area, it was found that nearly most of the students' level was medium. They

were positive in the lexical range, and interaction and they were nearly negative in accuracy and fluency.

To do a comparison among interventions, the researcher asked students to rate two sections of the post-session questionnaire from 1 to 10 considering two issues: (a) the evaluation of the session, and (b) the evaluation of classroom participation about the effectiveness of the interventions. Figure 1 illustrates the results:

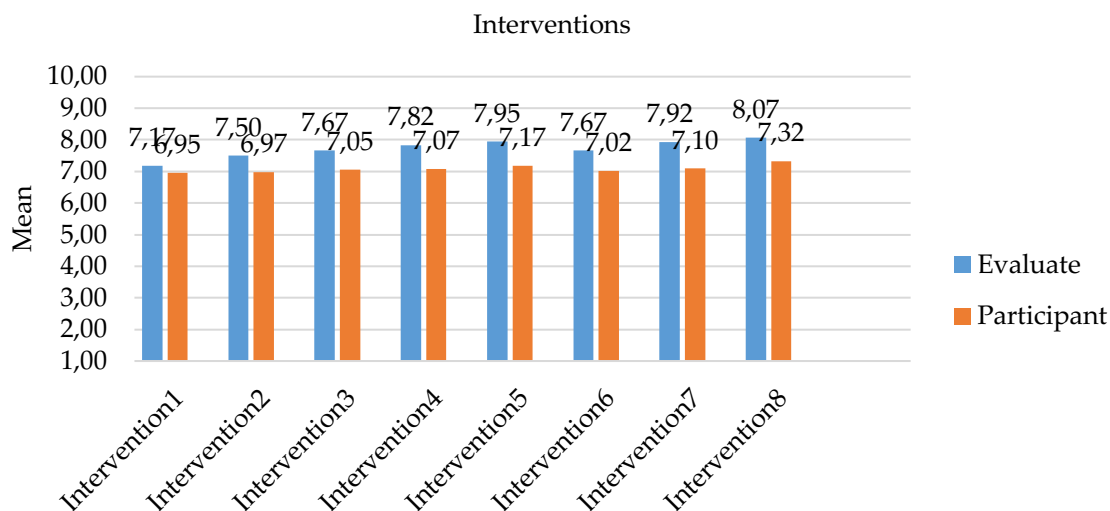


Figure 1. Evaluation and Classroom Participation

As seen in Figure 1, students expressed their opinions positively about the effectiveness of the interventions. The lowest mean score was 7.17. Increasing the mean scores of the evaluation was parallel to the increase of the mean scores of classroom participation. After evaluating and comparing the mean scores of the interventions, interventions 8, 5, and 7 were reported as the most successful speaking classes, and interventions 1 and 2 were the least successful. Questionnaire items concerned two issues. The first one was the characteristics of the session. The second one was the effectiveness of the session. Table 4 indicates the results of these items as follows:

Table 4. Ranking of Interventions for Each Item

Questionnaire Items		Interventions							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
The characterization of the session	Useful	4.68	3.95	4.43	4.50	4.70	4.40	4.65	4.90
	Appropriate to my needs	3.77	4.00	4.35	4.40	4.65	4.27	4.55	4.70
	Enjoyable	3.54	3.90	4.20	4.26	4.30	4.10	4.27	4.37
	Difficult	1.53	1.52	1.96	1.59	1.70	1.65	1.60	1.55
The effectiveness of the session	The instructions were clear	3.90	3.97	4.17	4.32	4.47	4.15	4.36	4.50
	The classroom atmosphere was positive	3.50	3.56	4.23	4.33	4.50	4.12	4.42	4.55

The speaking activities were good	3.13	3.45	3.96	4.23	4.30	3.94	4.27	4.40
The topic was interesting	3.37	3.45	3.94	4.17	4.40	3.90	4.20	4.45
I felt relaxed	3.20	3.37	4.00	4.40	4.55	3.97	4.54	4.60
The activities provided lots of opportunities to speak in English	3.11	3.26	4.00	4.36	4.50	3.97	4.40	4.60
I had enough opportunities to speak	3.26	3.31	3.78	4.10	4.37	3.77	4.30	4.40
I received useful feedback about my speaking performance	3.87	3.72	4.00	4.11	4.43	3.96	4.25	4.45
TOTAL (excluding the 'difficult' item)	3.57	3.63	4.09	4.28	4.47	4.05	4.38	4.55

As shown in Table 4, the mean scores were used for ranking the results and each item was positive except for 'difficult'. It was clear that the most successful classes were interventions 8, 5, and 7 in the ranking. They were three top interventions about usefulness, appropriateness, enjoyment, and effectiveness. In contrast, interventions 2 and 1 were the least successful classes. Concerning difficulty items, the mean scores were low. In this regard, the least difficult item was with a mean score of 1.52. Conversely, the most difficult intervention was 1.96. Considering the results, it can be understood the interventions were easy. According to these results, we can see that the difficulty factor was not related to the success of the interventions.

To explore the differences in students' perceptions about their level of proficiency before and after the study in seven different language areas, descriptive statistics and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test were used by the researcher. The results indicated the significant differences in pronunciation and speaking areas which are displayed in Table 5:

Table 5. Students' Perceptions of Their Proficiency Level

	R	n	M.R.	S.R	z	P
Speaking	Negative ranks	9	12.83	115.50		
	Positive ranks	23	17.93	412.50		
	Ties	8			-2.85	.004
	Total	40				
Pronunciation	Negative ranks	8	12.75	102		
	Positive ranks	19	14.53	276		
	Ties	13			-2.16	.031
	Total	40				

As indicated in Table 5, most of the learners ranked speaking and pronunciation more positively after finishing the study. The speaking and pronunciation scores were compared before and after the interventions. On average, students performed speaking better ($Md = 4$) than before ($Md = 3$) and in pronunciation students' median scores was increased from ($Md = 3$) to ($Md = 3.5$). The result of Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated that the differences are statistically significant, speaking ($z = -2.85$, $sig = .004$, $p < 0.05$) and pronunciation ($z = -2.16$, $sig = .031$, $p < 0.05$).

To seek and address the differences in students' levels of satisfaction with their speaking abilities, another item was included in students' initial and final questionnaires. The researcher used Wilcoxon signed-rank test for a better understanding of the differences in students' satisfaction with speaking. The results of the test are indicated in Table 6:

Table 6. Students' Satisfaction with Speaking Ability

	R	n	M.R.	S.R	z	p
Speaking	Negative ranks	4	8	32		
	Positive ranks	21	13	293		
	Ties	15			-3.63	.000
	Total	40				

As indicated in Table 6, there is a significant difference in the students' satisfaction with their speaking ability ($z = 3.63$, $sig = .000$, $p < .05$). Students' satisfaction median score after the study ($Md = 4$) was higher than before the study ($Md = 3$).

The researcher compared students' opinions about their proficiency levels in four areas of speaking skill. The researcher asked students to rate their level with three options (high=3, medium=2, low=1). After the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, significant differences were found in sub-areas of speaking skill: accuracy, fluency, interaction, and lexical range. These results can be seen in Table 7 as follows:

Table 7. Perceptions of Proficiency Levels in Sub-areas of Speaking

	R	n	M.R.	S.R	z	p
Accuracy	Negative ranks	6	11.5	69	-2.35	.019
	Positive ranks	17	12.1	207		
	Ties	17				
	Total	40				
Fluency	Negative ranks	5	10	50	-3.63	.000
	Positive ranks	23	15.4	356		
	Ties	12				
	Total	40				
Interaction	Negative ranks	3	14.1	42.5	-3.79	.000
	Positive ranks	25	14.5	363.5		
	Ties	12				
	Total	40				
Lexical range	Negative ranks	8	12.1	97	-2.11	.035
	Positive ranks	18	14.1	254		
	Ties	14				
	Total	40				

It can be seen that in Table 7, significant differences were found in accuracy ($z = -2.35$, $sig = .019$, $p < .05$), fluency ($z = -3.63$, $sig = .00$, $p < .05$), interaction ($z = -3.79$, $sig = .00$, $p < .05$), and lexical range ($z = -2.11$, $sig = .035$, $p < .05$). On average students' median scores in four sub-areas of speaking after study ($Md = 2$) was higher than before the study ($Md = 1$). In other words, students had improvement in four sub-areas of speaking skills at the end of the term. The focus of section E in the student final questionnaire is related to learners' affective states. Most of the items were negative. In addition, there were some positive items. After the study, the mean scores of the negative items addressing students' attitudes decreased. According to the results, participants were more positive about their affective states. Through conducting Wilcoxon signed-rank test, significant differences were found in six items that are shown in Table 8:

Table 8. Students in the Affective States

	R	n	M.R.	S.R	z	p
I don't worry about making mistakes in English class.	Negative ranks	7	13.86	97	-2.27	.023
	Positive ranks	20	14.05	281		
	Ties	13				

	Total	40				
I feel confident when I speak English in English class.	Negative ranks	3	8.00	24		
	Positive ranks	15	9.80	147	-2.87	.004
	Ties	22				
	Total	40				
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English speaking class.	Negative ranks	5	10.40	52		
	Positive ranks	17	11.82	201	-2.50	.012
	Ties	18				
	Total	40				
I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	Negative ranks	8	13.69	109.5		
	Positive ranks	19	14.13	268.5	-2.06	.039
	Ties	13				
	Total	40				
I can take a good turn in conversations about any topic by asking relevant questions.	Negative ranks	5	8.50	42.5		
	Positive ranks	14	10.54	147.5	-2.27	.023
	Ties	21				
	Total	40				
I can take turn in conversations if the topic is familiar to me.	Negative ranks	6	10	60		
	Positive ranks	15	11.40	171	-2.12	.034
	Ties	19				
	Total	40				

As shown in Table 8, we can see the greatest significance in item 5 (section E part 1) ($z = -2.87$, $\text{sig} = .00$, $p < .05$). In addition, significant differences are observable in the other three positive items that are item 1 (section E part 1) ($z = -2.27$, $\text{sig} = .02$, $p < .05$), item 17 and item 18 (section E part 5) respectively ($z = -2.27$, $\text{sig} = .02$, $p < .05$), ($z = -2.12$, $\text{sig} = .03$, $p < .05$) and in two negative students' behavior attitudes. Two negative items are respectively item 11 ($z = -2.50$, $\text{sig} = .01$, $p < .05$) and item 13 ($z = -2.06$, $\text{sig} = .03$, $p < .05$) (section E part 3). On average, students' median score in six items after interventions ($Md = 4$) was higher than before interventions ($Md = 3.5$).

To explore students' opinions about their involvement in the process, a section was included as the last quantitative section in the student final questionnaire. The researcher asked students six questions and asked them to answer these questions with sometimes, yes, or no. The results of this section are indicated in Table 9:

Table 9. Opinions about the Involvement in the Process

Questions	Yes		Sometimes		No	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Did you feel that you have responsibility for making decisions about the topics?	26	37.5	12	30	2	5
Did you feel that you have a responsibility for making decisions about the activities?	23	57.5	14	35	3	7.5
Do you think that the activities were selected according to your wants?	15	55.5	18	45	7	17.5
Do you think that the topics were selected according to your wants?	27	67.5	10	25	3	7.5
Do you think that the activities were selected according to your needs?	15	50.5	19	47.5	6	15
Do you think that the topics were selected according to your needs?	25	62.5	13	32.5	2	5

The results of descriptive statistics in Table 9 showed that the majority of the participants expressed their thoughts positively about their involvement in the process. Students confirmed that the selection of activities and topics was appropriate to their needs and wants. Selecting the topic was the most preferred item and feeling responsible was the least agreed item.

Three raters did assessing pre-test and post-test scores of speaking. For calculating the mean scores of two tests, the researcher used descriptive statistics to measure students' speaking ability, then calculated and compared the three raters' mean scores average for two tests. The results are shown in Table 10 as follows:

Table 10. A Comparison of the Three Raters' Mean Scores on Pre-Test and Post-Test

Raters	Pre-Test	Post-Test
<i>Rater 1</i>	75.87	84.75
<i>Rater 2</i>	73.50	83.25
<i>Rater 3</i>	74.37	84
<i>Average</i>	74.58	84

As seen in Table 10, the post-test mean scores were much higher than the pre-test mean scores. There was a significant difference between the mean scores of the two tests. The average mean score of the post-test ($M = 84$) is higher than the pre-test ($M = 74.58$) average mean score. According to the results, students developed their English-speaking abilities through doing communicative activities.

Discussion and Conclusion

The collected data at stage one, before implementing interventions was very important to understand the situation before interventions. To test students' performances, the researcher considered their perceptions about language areas and pre-test results. Students confirmed that grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing were preferable to listening, speaking, and pronunciation from the seven language areas. This means that in primary, secondary, and high school education contexts more weight had been given to the grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing areas in English classes, and little attention had been drawn to listening, speaking, and pronunciation areas. Therefore, in this case, students are not able to develop their competencies in the neglected areas. Parallel to this study, we can see similar results in Uzatosun's (2013b) and Indrianty's (2016) studies. The current study and the mentioned two other studies have been conducted in the EFL context and similar results have been obtained. The main reason for all the above mentioned issues is related to the necessity of finding opportunities for practicing practical language or spoken language and preparation in language classrooms. To solve this issue, EFL teachers should provide opportunities for all students to participate in speaking activities.

Positive perceptions of the activities can directly influence students' engagement in the activities. Concerning successful classes in this study, students found the classes interesting and motivating. Noom-Ura's (2008) study supports this finding. So, due to the effect of well-designed and effective CLT courses, students can improve their proficiency in speaking skills at any level. Therefore, in light of the effective CLT classes, students' affective and behavioral changes can be positive. In contrast to this, they confirmed less successful classes were not useful. This means that considering students' opinions in designing classroom activities is significant. Lastly, students reported that they perceived class as more comfortable. This refers to the significance of social context in classrooms as Urdan and Schoenfelder (2006, p. 340) stated: providing social context in the classroom could improve students' academic motivation, achievement, and development of their autonomy. Students reported the appropriateness and usefulness of the activities as the success of interventions. AL-Garni and Almuhammadi (2019) and Boonkit's (2010) studies support the results of the current study. Using the appropriate communicative activities is a good strategy to decrease speakers' anxiety because students can be free in topic selection and feel comfortable when speaking English which improves their confidence.

There were significant differences in the students' perceptions of their speaking ability and satisfaction with speaking ability, significant differences were found in the collected data before and after implementing the interventions. After implementing the interventions, learners' views were more positive about the issues in which students had a low level of self-efficacy at the beginning of the study because they had not experienced speaking-centered classes. Hence, after participating in the lessons, their perceptions changed and they believed in their performance. Likewise, in Wan Yu's (2010) study the same results were obtained. This means that considering students' needs in providing appropriate speaking classes for students is helpful in developing their positive sense of fostering their self-efficacy. Therefore, at the end of the term, the majority of students expressed themselves better and spoke more fluently. In this situation, it is believable that there is a relationship between classroom participation and academic achievement. Thanks to the high level of classroom participation, students had higher academic achievement. These results are in line with Zhang and Head's (2010) study. Comparing the

results of these two studies, it can be concluded that due to considering students' needs and their views in designing classroom activities, significant progress has been seen in the students' speaking skills and their classroom participation. After ending the study, students had positive perceptions about their speaking abilities because the interventions were successful in creating a communicative environment for engaging students in activities to foster their fluency. After doing the comparison in sub-areas of speaking skill, the researcher found significant differences in 'accuracy', 'fluency', 'interaction', and 'lexical range'. The main contribution of this study was the increasing learners' interactional competencies. This finding takes support from Watamni and Gholami (2012) and Jondeya's (2011) studies in the interaction area in which due to the structure of activities, student-student interaction was maximized, and more opportunities were provided for students to practice speaking. Therefore, the structure of activities was important to meet this goal. In designing activities, the researcher tried to address students' major needs to find opportunities for speaking and this was possible through each student's participation in the classroom activities and interaction with the teacher and other students. The majority of students confirmed the improvement in their classroom participation during the study. In addition, they expressed their willingness to communicate in classroom activities. In the current study, students' high-level participation was the factor for fostering the students' willingness to communicate, raising their self-esteem, and decreasing their anxiety. Uztosun's (2013b) action research study supports the results of this study because the structure and type of the communicative activities were the main reasons for affecting students' involvement in the learning process, their willingness to speak, and their self-confidence positively and decreasing their anxiety in the speaking class.

One of the main principles of CLT is enhancing students' involvement in classroom activities. In other words, willingness to communicate and classroom participation is interrelated. The other issue was anxiety. After finishing the study, most of the students felt less anxious. There is a connection between students' perceived ability and their anxiety. As Williams and Burden (1997) state, learners can feel less anxious while communicating if they have positive self-efficacy. There is a connection between students' perceived ability and their anxiety. In relation to students' speaking performance, teachers should have special attention to self-esteem because it is related to language production and personal development. There is a relationship between context and self-esteem and self-efficacy. As Oxford (1999, p. 62) states, it is "a self-judgment of worth or value, based on feelings of efficacy, a sense of interacting effectively with one's environment." Always, there is a relationship between success and self-worth. Therefore, the focus of the current study was in line with Oxford's opinion because the researcher listened to students' voices and considered them significant members of the classroom. It can be concluded that considering students' needs is useful in fostering their willingness to communicate. Likewise this study, students' willingness to communicate was affected by their perceptions of classroom activities, speaking ability, attitudes, and low level of anxiety in similar studies (Léger & Storch, 2009; MacIntyre, 1994). Therefore, teachers should provide effective communicative activities, consider the complex nature of anxiety in speaking classes and try to provide a more comfortable classroom environment for students.

Considering students' opinions, the lessons were designed according to their needs, and their feeling was respected. In the current study, students' self-regulation was enhanced by considering their views in the process of teaching and learning and this helped students to gain self-awareness about their abilities. Students confirmed the appropriateness of communicative activities. In doing so, their perceptions were changed and they felt like prospective teachers. At the end of each intervention,

students' satisfaction comments were achieved by collecting feedback and were considered by the researcher. These results are parallel to the results of Uztosun's (2013b) study. Therefore, students' satisfaction with using communicative activities and lessons is closely related to designing any intervention or lesson plan in CLT classrooms that should be considered. Students understood that the aim of the study was enhancing speaking. In light of involving in the research, most of them felt valued. Thanks to this research, their motivation was improved to participate in classroom activities. The other positive aspect of involving in the research was more feelings of responsibility among the students. This is the main impact of action research on the participants' involvement in the research. This study built a common objective among students which was a sense of belonging. Also, in the light of the current study students' awareness of their competencies was increased and their positive perceptions of their speaking abilities were developed. These results are supported by Kemmis's (2009) study in which participants' perceptions and attitudes toward the research process are affected due to the student's active involvement in the research process. To sum up, the main purpose of this research was to improve the practice of speaking in the CLT classroom. All students participated in the classroom activities eagerly and actively because these activities were appropriate to their needs. According to the result of this study, communicative activities had a positive effect on second-year EFL students' English speaking ability. Also, the results of Nanthaboot (2012) and Phuphanpet's (2004) studies support the results of this study in helping students for improving their pronunciation and speaking skills, have fun in class and have greater confidence to speak and have more chances to practice speaking. For these reasons, the students expressed their satisfaction concerning the communicative activities. Moreover, the researcher considered students' needs and interests in selecting content of the language that should be relevant, interesting, and meaningful to them. The teacher-researcher as a facilitator had an important role in establishing rapport with students and a good atmosphere in the classroom. Therefore, the students felt relaxed. In the light of giving feedback to the students, they found plenty of opportunities to speak and received support from the teacher. These results are supported by Kethongkum's (2005) and Phuphanpet's (2004) studies. Having plenty of opportunities, getting feedback from the teacher, and establishing a relaxed atmosphere are the main reasons for the improvement of students' self-confidence, self-esteem, interaction, classroom participation, and decreasing their anxiety. Therefore, in this way, students can feel free to practice speaking with their classmates and participate in a class at a high level.

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