

The role of input and output in developing speaking skills

Katrin Mikk
University of Tartu

Background

Speaking is considered the most important skill for language proficiency – if you can speak, you know the language.

- For language learners, speaking is the most important part of language learning, but also the most stressful. (Hendra, Jones 2018)
- Language course graduates still have speaking problems.
- A survey of Estonian L2 teachers confirmed this problem, although teachers say they use a communicative method. (Kitsnik, Mikk 2021)
- It is necessary to study what is actually done in the classroom under the name of the communicative method.

Therefore, I use lesson observations to examine the total volume, types and quantities of input and output in language lessons. This study is part of my PhD thesis.

Methods

- B1-level Estonian language course (16 students, 120-hour course, 4 lessons/one session)
- Five class observations (observation diary)
- Basic textbook “Naljaga ...” (Kitsnik, Kingisepp 2021)
- Quantitative/qualitative data analysis

Research Questions

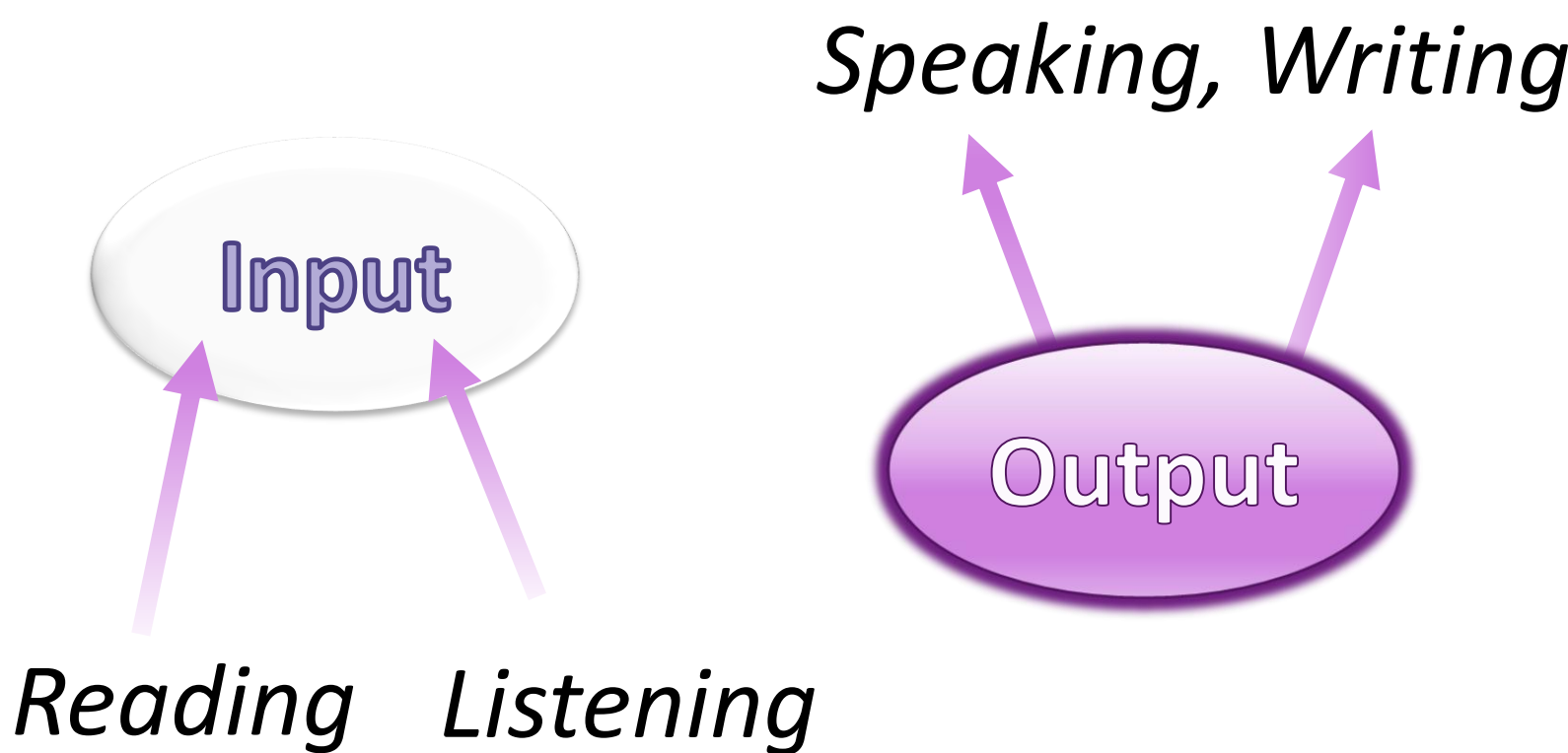
- What is the volume of input and oral output in an adult B1 Estonian course?
- What are the types and volumes of input and output?



Theoretical background

No language can be learned without input (Eskildsen 2008, Gass 2017). The input must be appropriate to the language level of the learner and be slightly more complex, comprehensible and interesting. The classroom is a good place to provide input in a safe environment. (Krashen 1985)

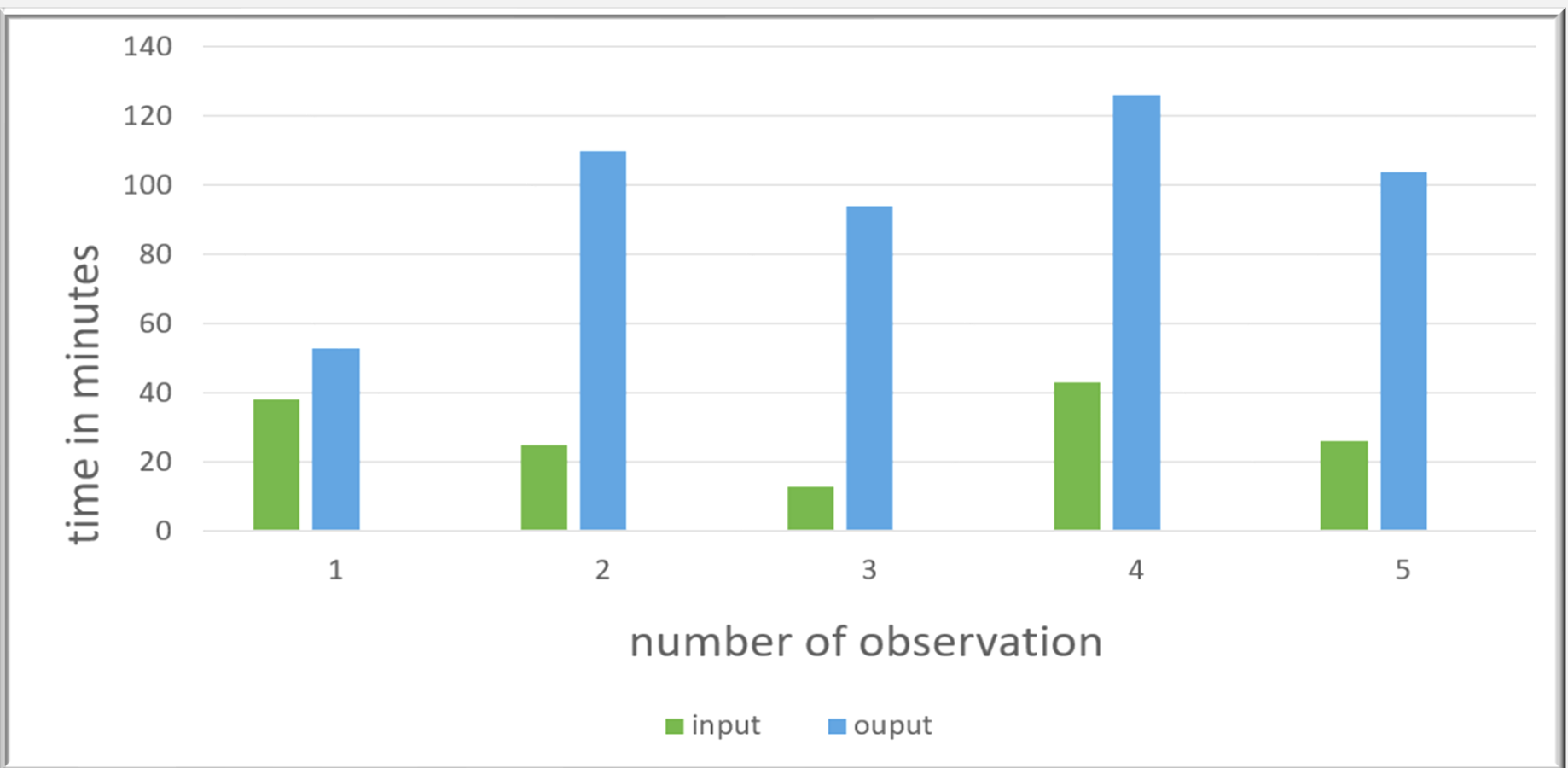
- Input Hypothesis:** Language acquiring needs comprehensible input. (Krashen 1985)
- Output Hypothesis:** Language production allows the learner to test the language and shows what s/he already knows. Learners need to be forced to speak in order to learn new words and grammatical structures. (Swain 1985)
- Effective is the **communicative method**: the information cap exercises, guided role-playing, tasks. The communicative method aims to get learners to communicate with each other in the language they are learning, both in and outside the classroom. (Cook 2016)
- Different types of tasks, both speaking supportive and improvisational (Thornbury 2005)



Preliminary results

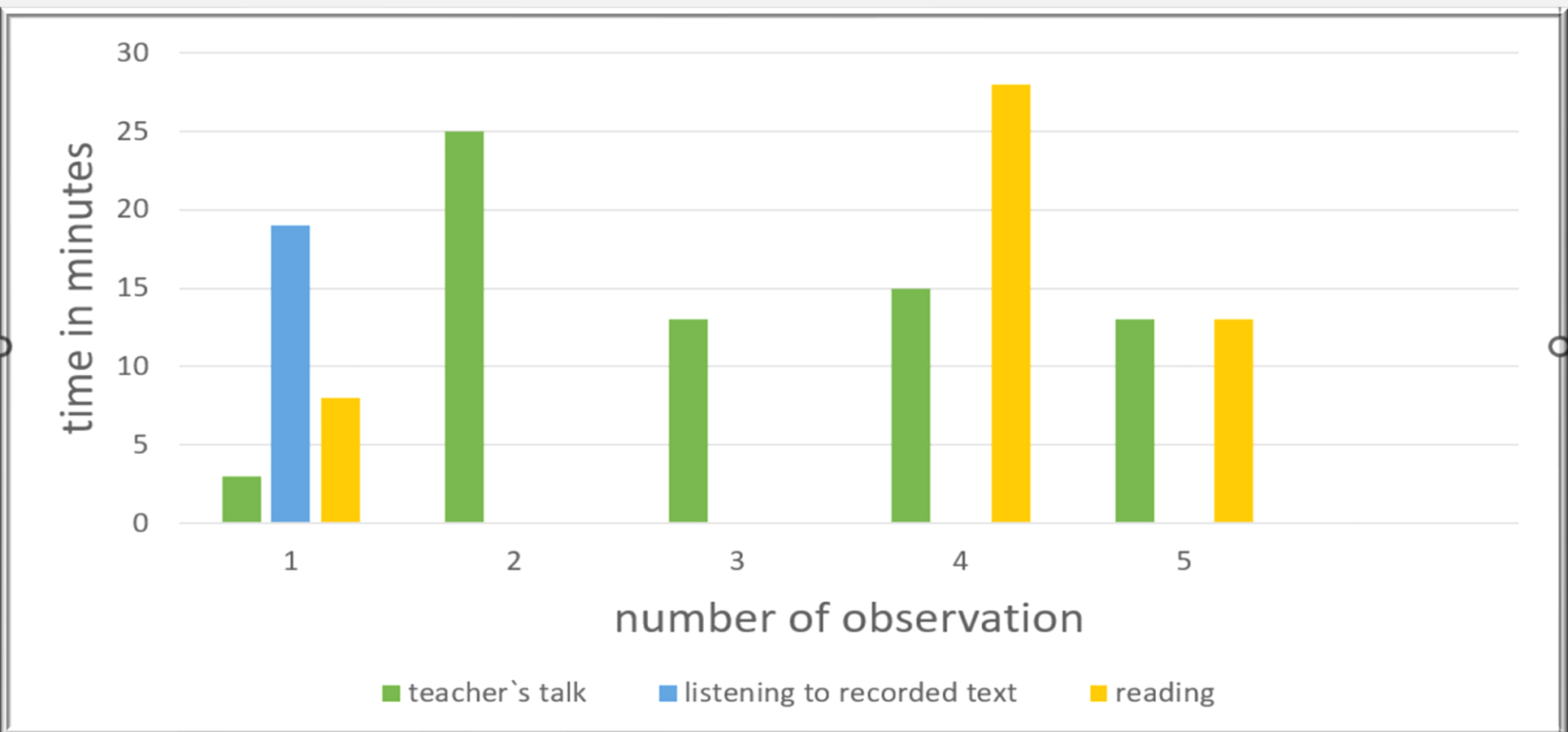
Quantitative results

The table shows the volume of inputs and outputs based on observations from five lessons.



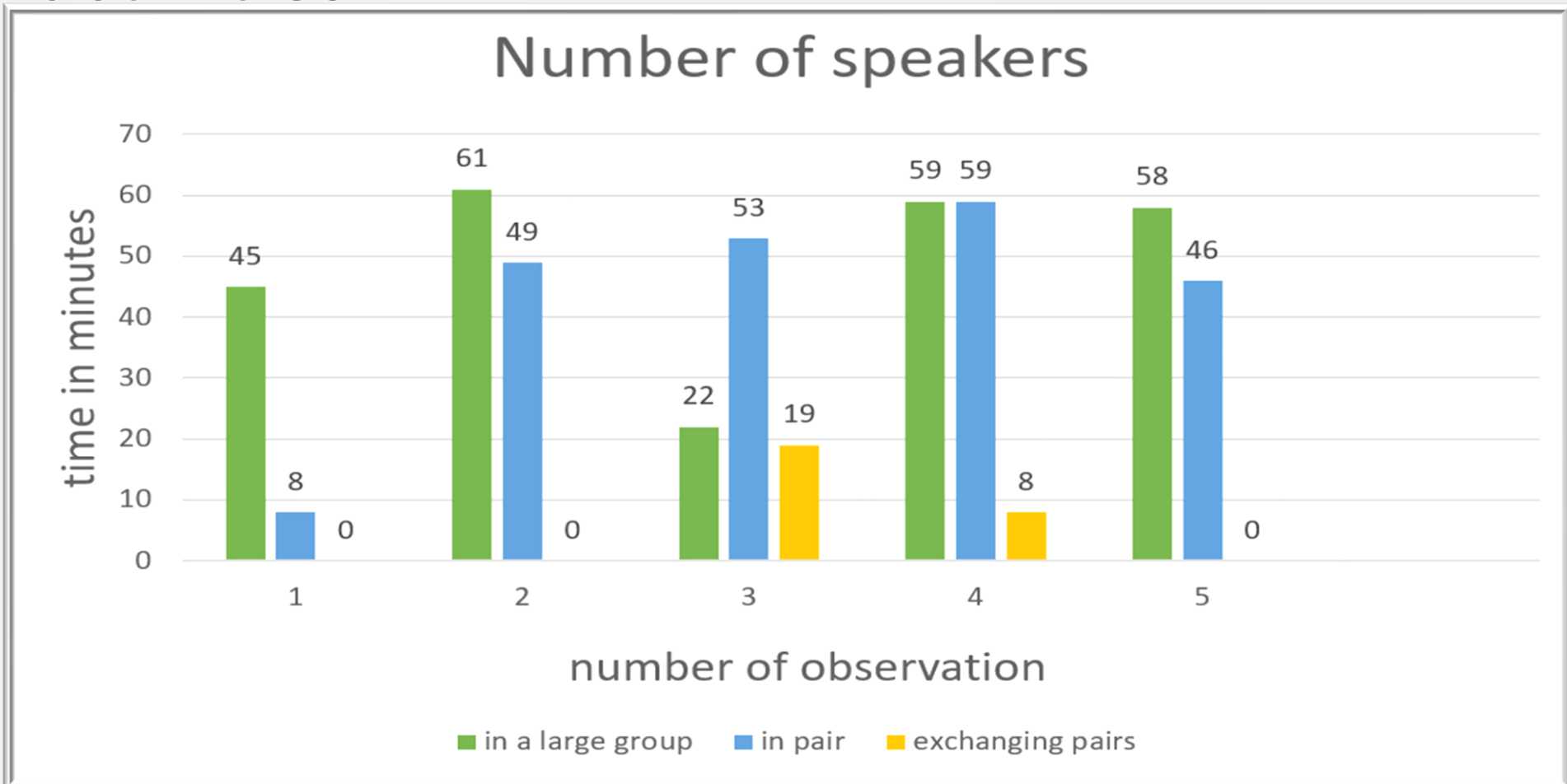
Input activities

The table shows the different volumes of input per lesson. The graph compares teacher's talk, listening to recordings and reading.



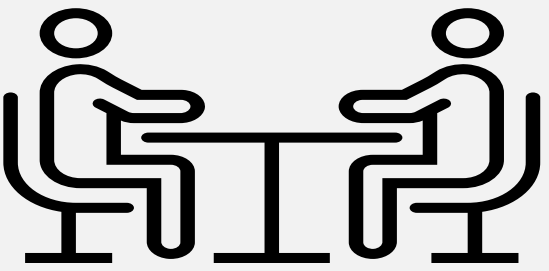
Output activities

Here is the summary of speakers. Speaking activities took place either in a large group, in pairs or in exchanging pairs. In the lessons observed, there were no small group activities.

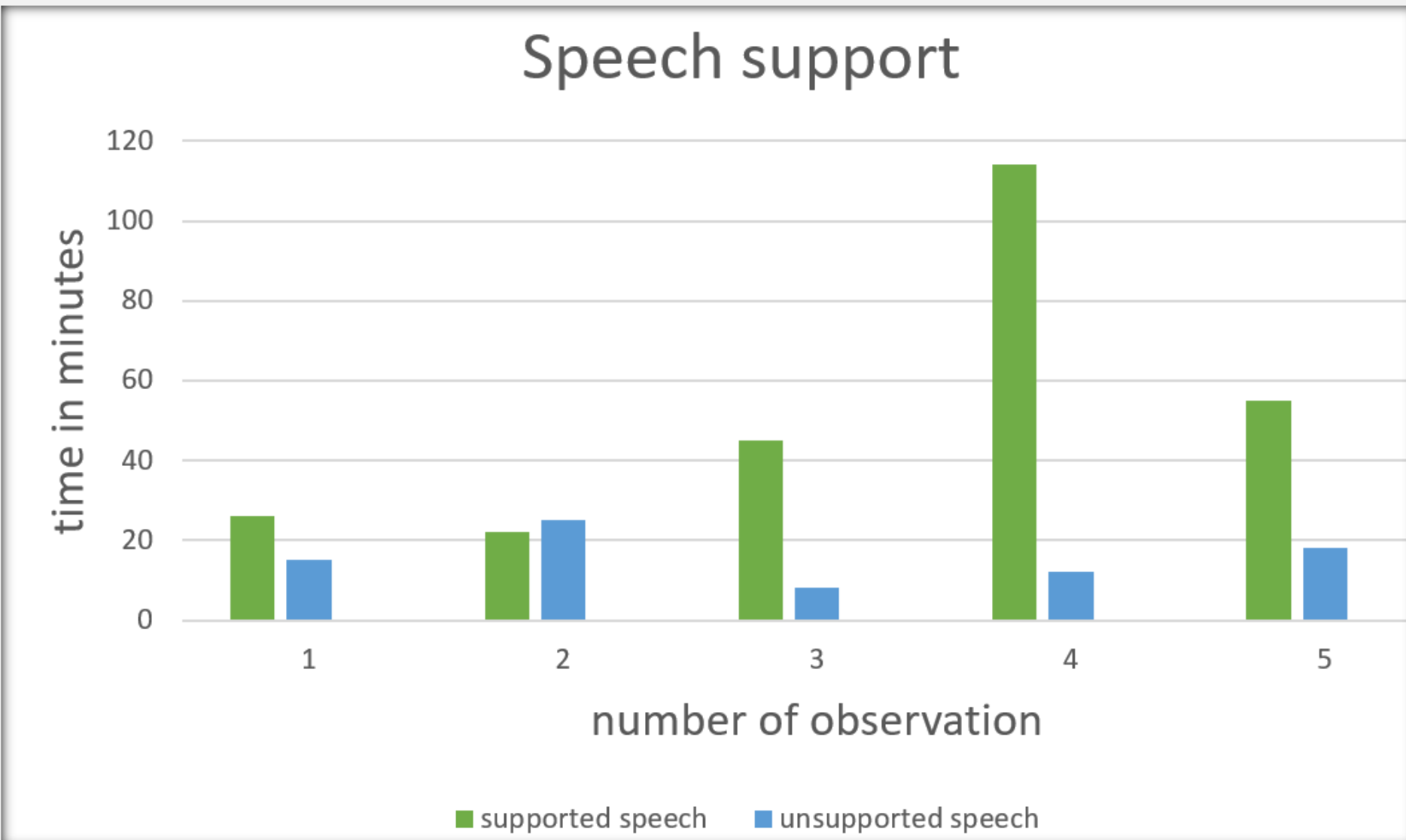


Conclusions

- There is more output than input in lessons
- Supported speech activities dominate
- Continue observing the lessons
- Develop a more precise classification of tasks
- Compare results with another language group to find links between learning activities and the development of speaking skills and motivation



The share of supported speaking (textbook questions, board games, etc.) and learner-generated text (role-play cards, improvised dialogues).



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