Students and Instructors of Languages at Community Colleges (SILCC) Surveys: Results from the Instructor Surveys, Fall 2015

Language at the Community College Nexus, Center for Integrated Language Communities

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About the SILCC Instructor Surveys

Who teaches languages other than English at community colleges? What methods and materials do they use? What challenges do they face? What experiences do they bring with them? Why do they choose to teach language?

To answer these questions, the Language at the Community College Nexus project at the Center for Integrated Language Communities administered surveys to students and instructors of languages other than English at community colleges in Fall 2015. 1,756 students and 140 instructors at 101 different community colleges in 33 states across the U.S. completed the surveys. The following report presents results from the instructor surveys.

Survey Methods

Starting with a list of 831 Community Colleges affiliated with the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), email addresses of instructors of languages other than English were manually gathered from public websites of each two-year school during the Spring and Summer of 2015. The survey development team searched for a department of "modern" or "foreign" language, or "humanities," on each school website. The team also searched for instructors of languages other than English through school directories when possible to identify instructors who taught languages in non-language related departments, such as a Business Department offering Spanish for Business. A total of 3,174 email addresses were collected.

An email requesting participation in the Students and Instructors of Languages at Community Colleges (SILCC) surveys was sent to all 3,174 instructors found with contact information. Participation consisted of completing an instructor survey and administering a student survey to the students of one section of an in-person course taught in Fall 2015. Out of the 3,174 emails sent, 226 were returned as an incorrect or outdated email address. Of the remaining 2,948 instructors contacted, 174 agreed to participate and provided information on the course(s) they taught in Fall 2015, and were mailed a packet of surveys. 151 instructors returned packets of surveys to the researchers. A total of 140
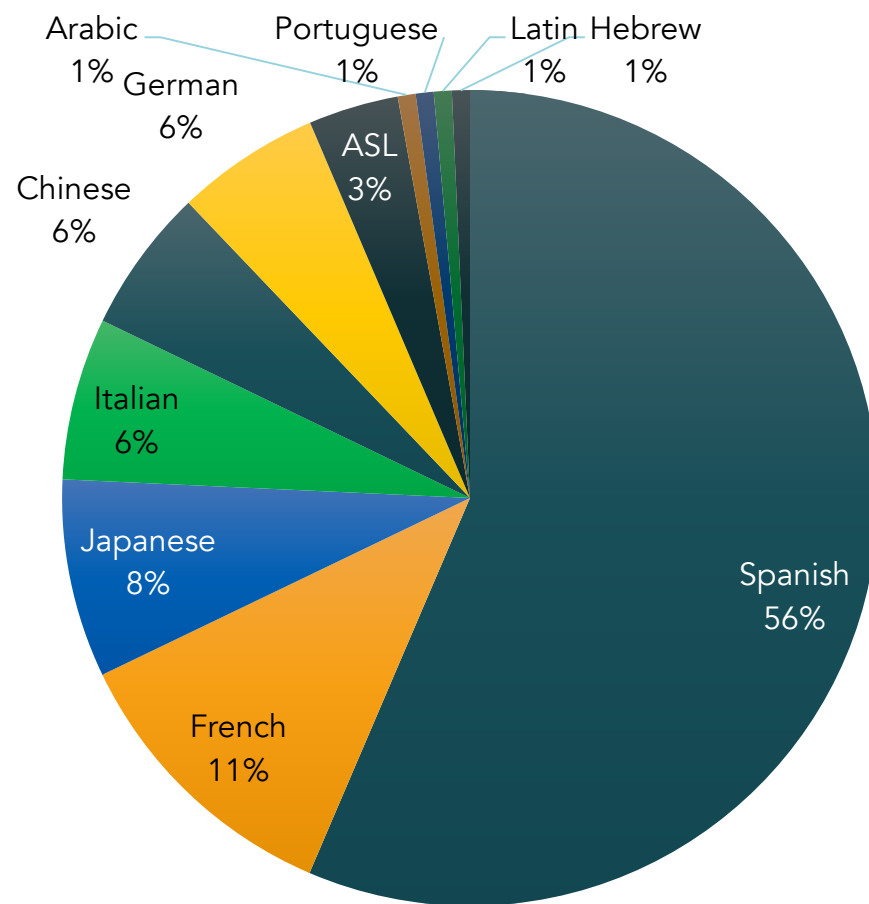
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valid instructor surveys and 1,756 valid student surveys were collected from 150 courses at 101 community colleges in 33 states.

Instructors who agreed to participate were asked for the names of the courses they were teaching during the Fall 2015 semester and the number of students enrolled in each section. For instructors teaching more than one course, a course was randomly selected for them from their list of courses in which to administer the survey to the students and about which to answer questions on the instructor survey. Paper surveys were mailed to instructors who agreed to participate in the study. One copy of the instructor survey and a number of student surveys corresponding to the size of the class enrollment were included in the packet, along with a return envelope for the completed surveys. Although response rates to online surveys may be higher than to paper surveys among community college students[*], the research team was logistically unable to conduct online surveys without collecting the identities and email addresses of students in the selected course sections. The research team also believed that group-administering surveys in class would likely yield higher response rates than requesting students to complete the surveys outside of class. Instructors who completed the surveys received a $50 gift certificate as compensation for organizing the administration of surveys and coordinating the receipt and return of survey packets.

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[*] Sax, L. J., Gilmartin, S. K., Lee, J. J. & Hagedorn L. S. (2008). Using web surveys to reach community college students: An analysis of response rates and response bias. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 32,* 712-729.
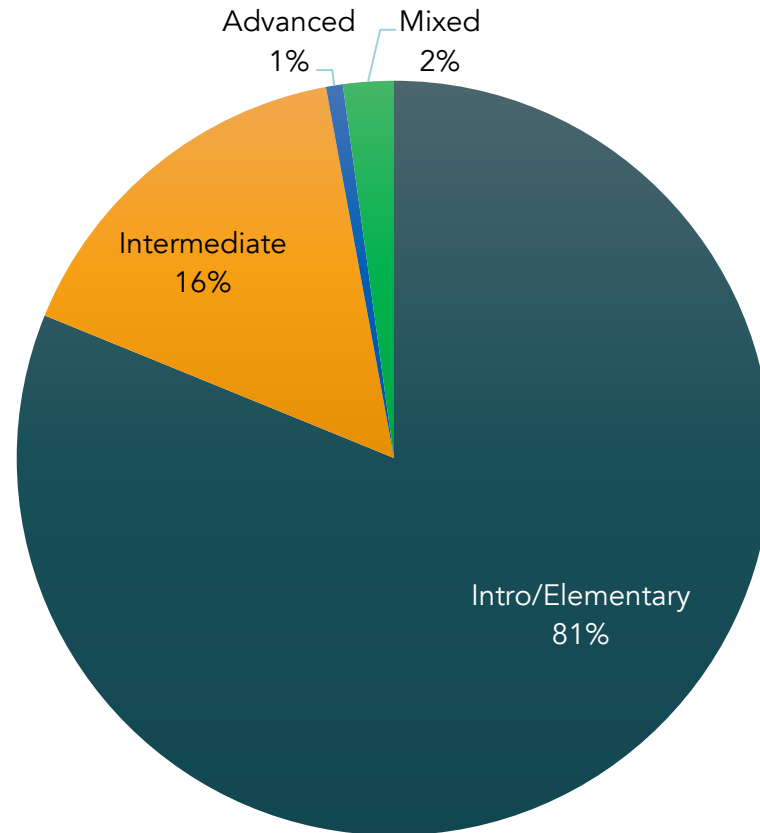
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The Course

What language are you teaching in this course?

Arabic 1%
German 6%
Chinese 6%
Italian 6%
Japanese 8%
French 11%
ASL 3%
Portuguese 1%
Latin 1%
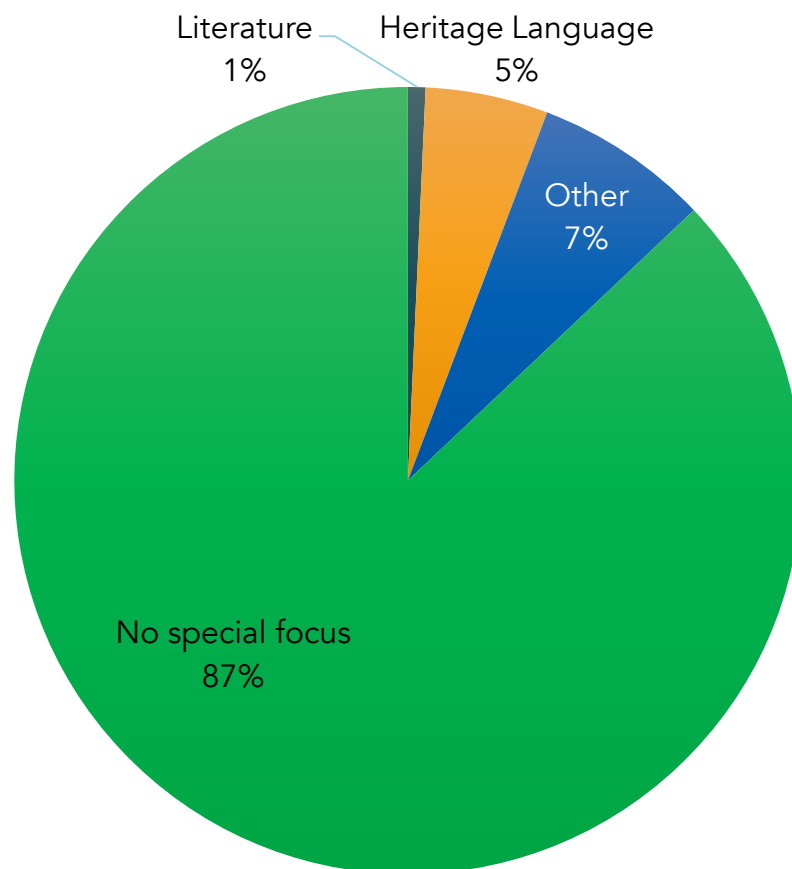Hebrew 1%
Spanish 56%

Spanish comprised just over half of Spanish classes taught in the sample.

What is the level of this course?

The vast majority of courses were at the introductory level.

Does this course have an additional focus or specialization?

Literature
1%

Heritage Language
5%
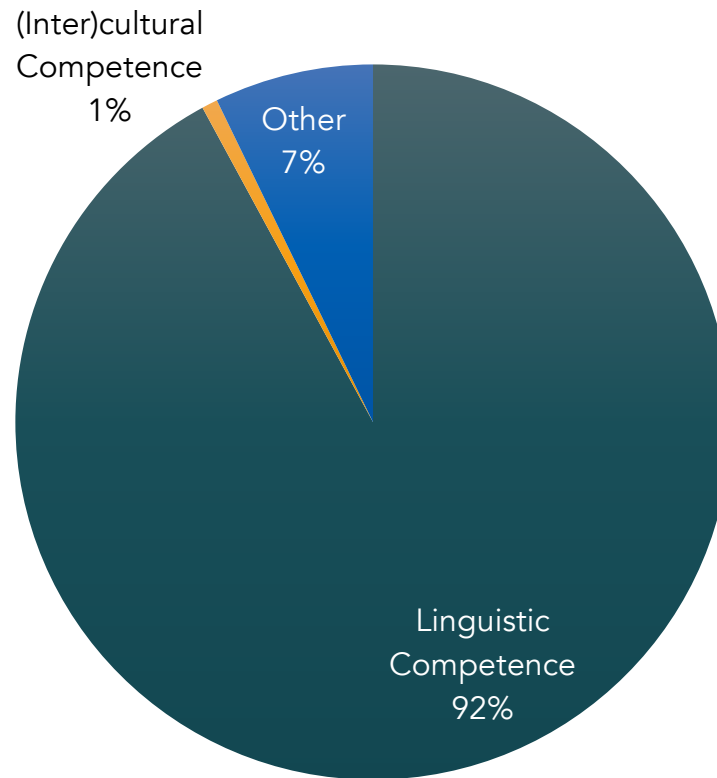
Other
7%

No special focus
87%

While a small proportion of courses had a particular focus, 87% did not.

To the best of your knowledge, how many students are enrolled in this course?

19.2

The mean class size was 19.2 students.

How would you describe the primary focus of this course?
Please choose only one.

(Inter)cultural Competence 1%

Other 7%

Linguistic Competence 92%

More than 9 out of 10 courses focused on linguistic competence over (inter)cultural competence, when instructors were forced to choose one main focus for the course.

SILCC Instructor Survey Question #11

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Which modalities do you emphasize more in pursuing the learning objectives of this course? Please choose only one.

Reading and Writing
29%

Listening and Speaking
71%
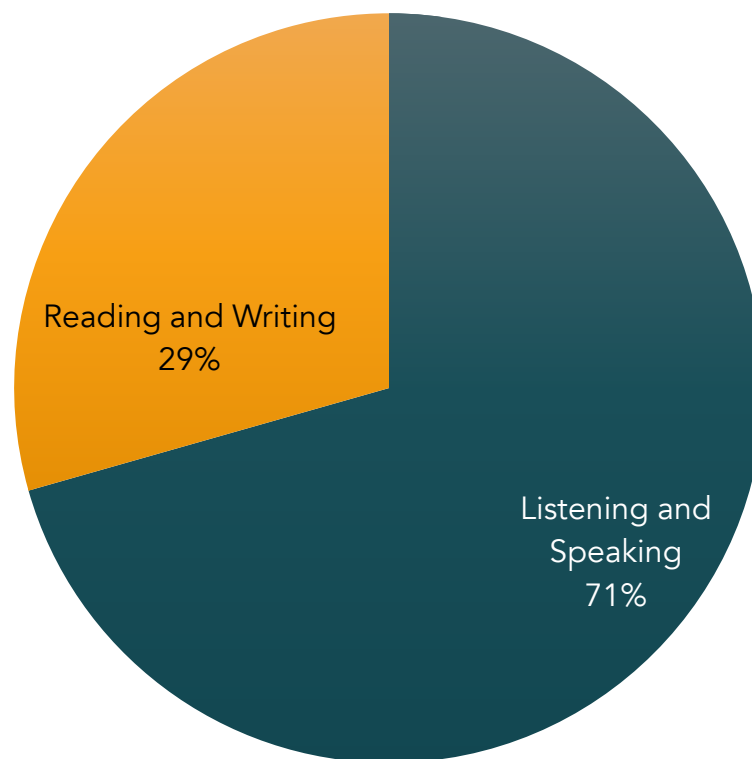
When forced to choose a main modality emphasized in the course, 71% of instructors reported listening and speaking over reading and writing.

Which elements of this course are standardized across courses in your department/institution? Check all that apply.
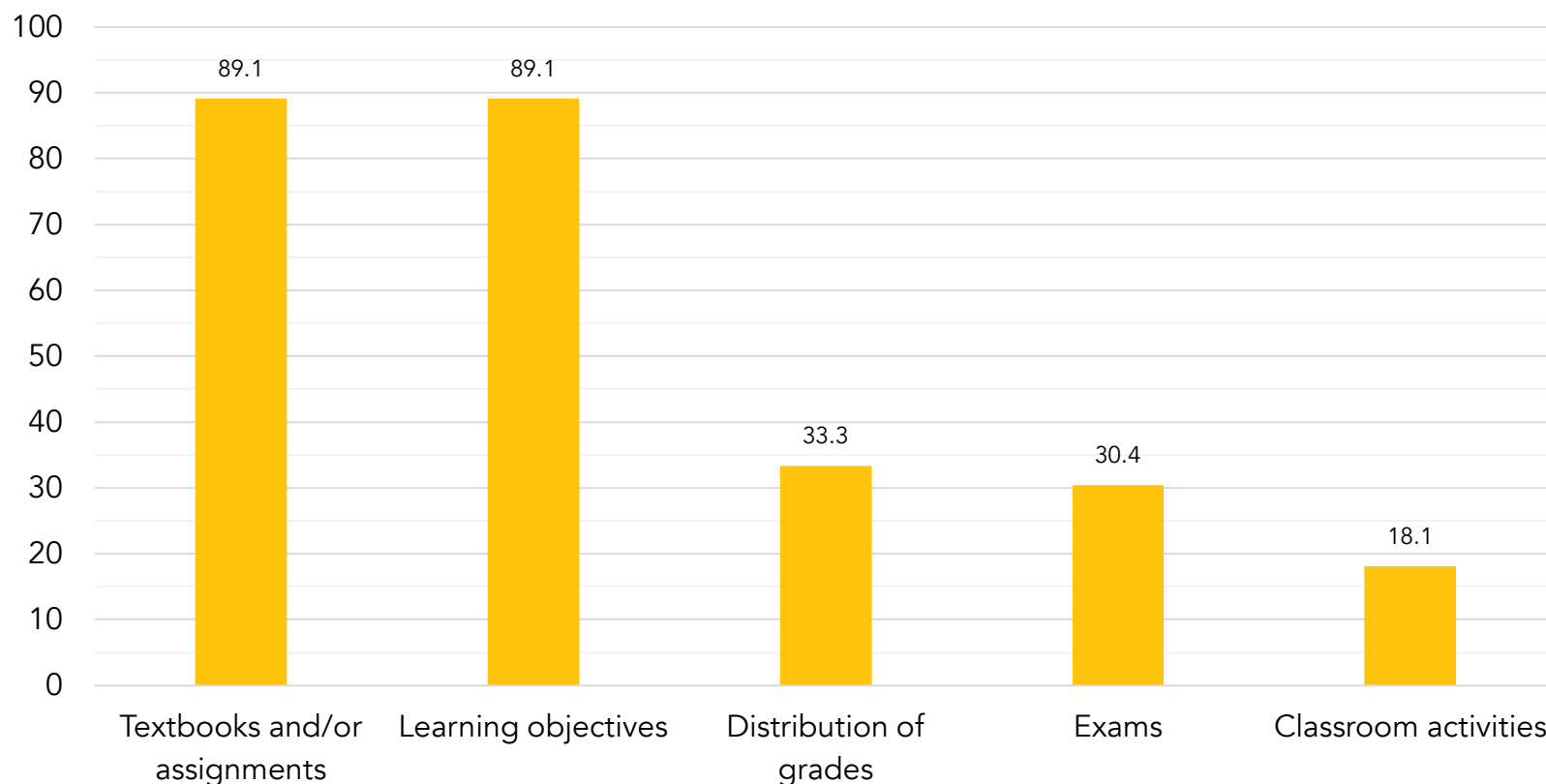
Nearly 90% of instructors reported that textbooks and/or assignments as well as learning objectives were set by the department or institution. Approximately one-third of instructors reported that the distribution of grades or exams were standardized.
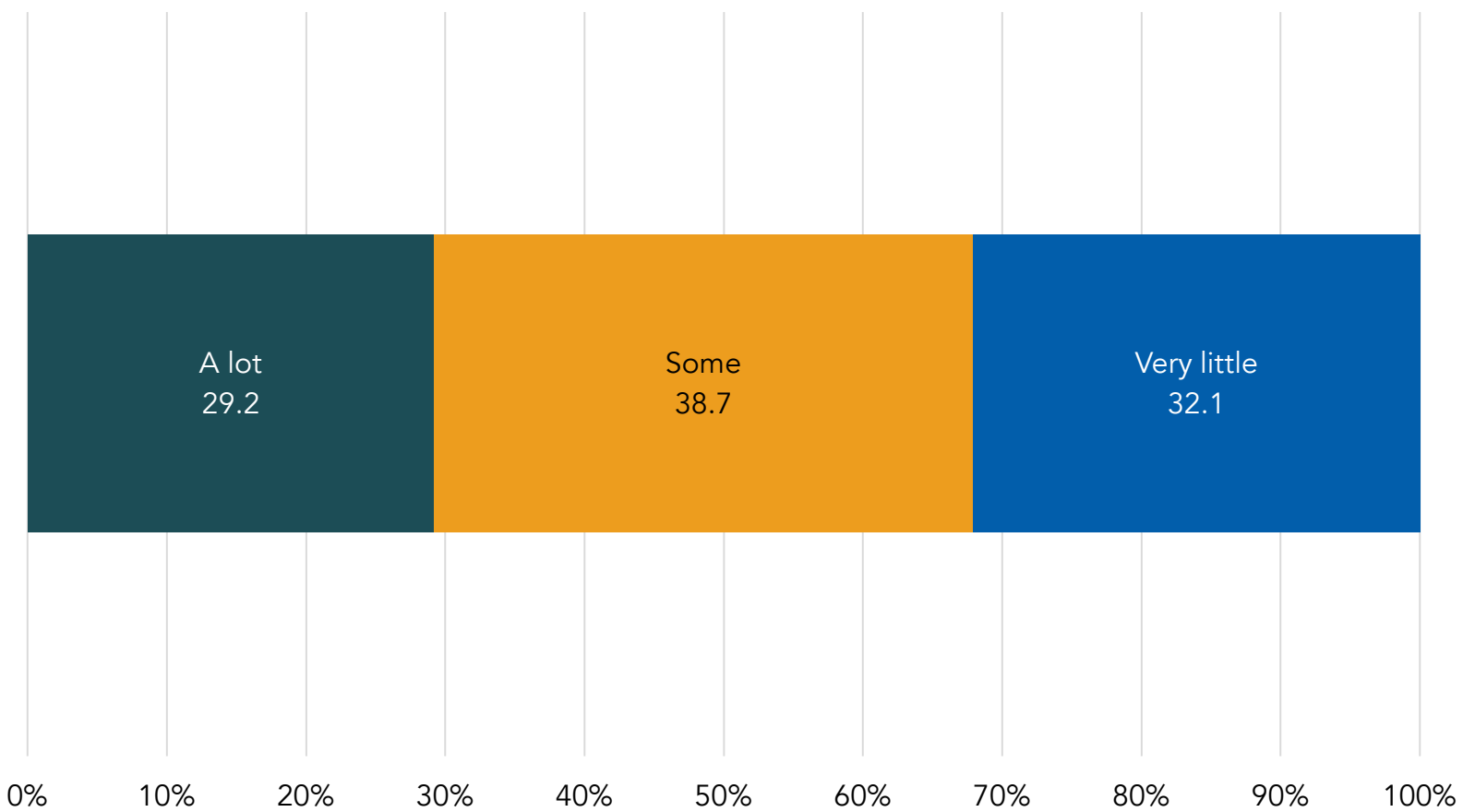
SILCC Instructor Survey Question #13

Teaching Methods, Materials, and Resources

For this course, what materials are students required to use?
## Check all that apply.
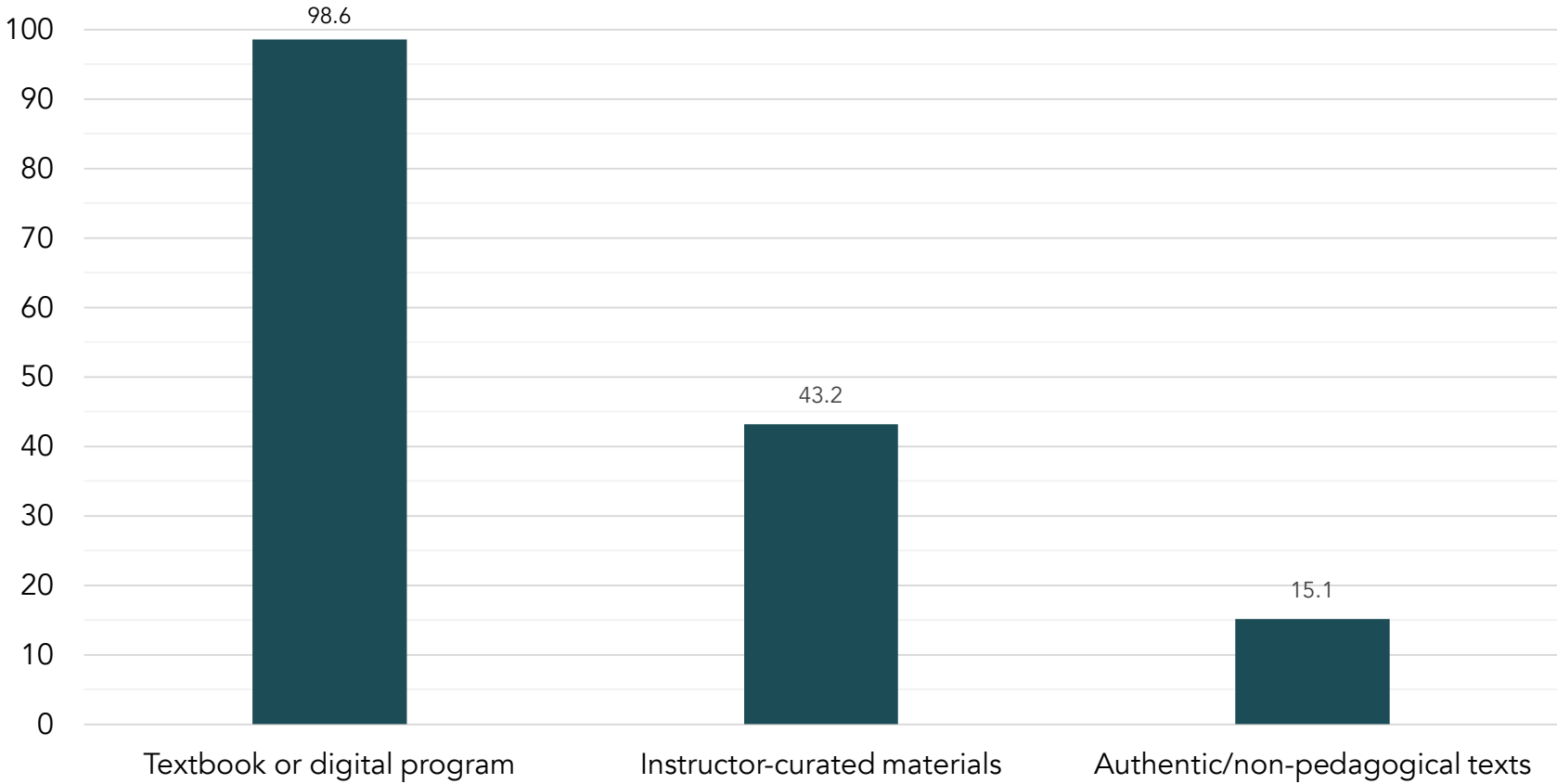
99% of instructors report requiring a textbook or digital program. Nearly 45% of instructors report requiring materials they curate themselves, and about 15% require non-pedagogical texts.

SILCC Instructor Survey Question #5

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How much is the language you teach in this course spoken in the nearby community?

| A lot 29.2 | Some 38.7 | Very little 32.1 |

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Roughly a third of instructors reported each that the language they taught was spoken a lot, some, or very little in the community nearby their institution.
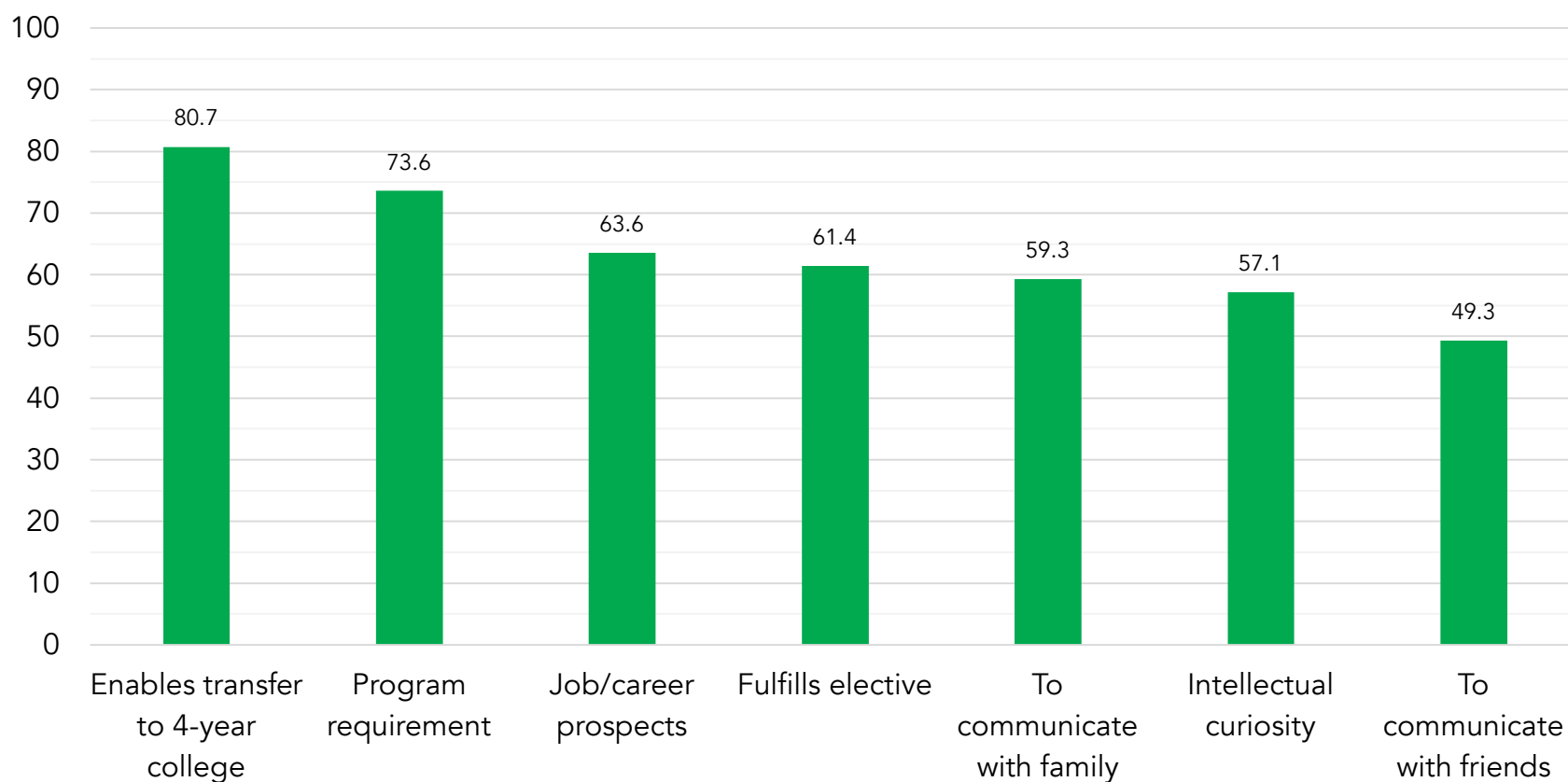
What method(s) do you follow in teaching languages? Check all that apply.
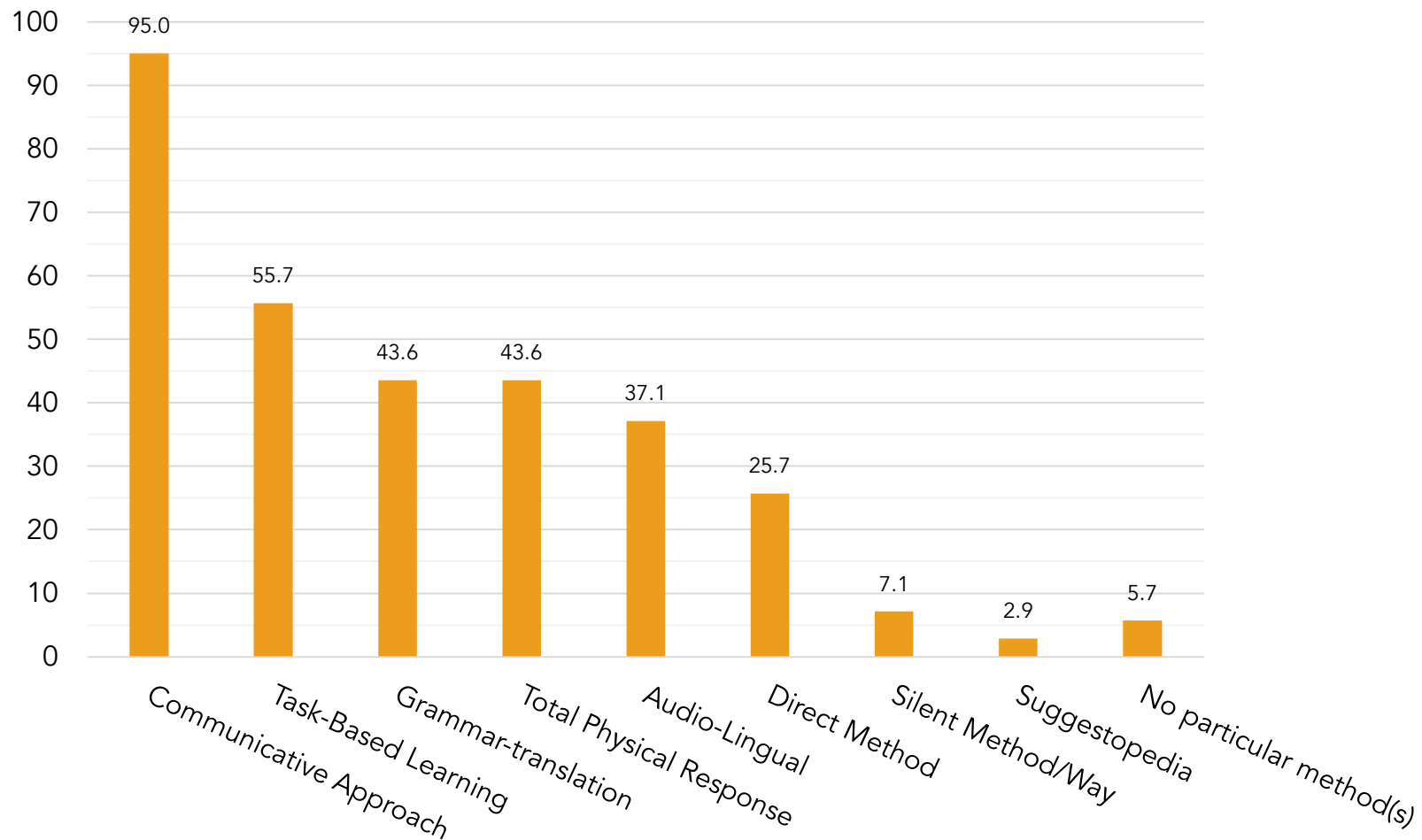
Nearly all instructors reported using the Communicative Approach, while about half of instructors reported using Task-Based Learning, Grammar-translation, and TPR. Approximately a third of instructor reported using the Direct Method.

Instructor Perception of the Students and the Institution

In your view, why do the students in this course study language? Check all that apply.

| Category	Value
Enables transfer to 4-year college	80.7
Program requirement	73.6
Job/career prospects	63.6
Fulfills elective	61.4
To communicate with family	59.3
Intellectual curiosity	57.1
To communicate with friends	49.3

4 out of 5 instructors reported that, in their view, their students studied language to enable transfer to a 4-year college. Approximately three-quarters reported that the course being a program requirement was a motivating factor.

If you had to choose one, which of these is the biggest motivation for your students to study language?


Skills
35%
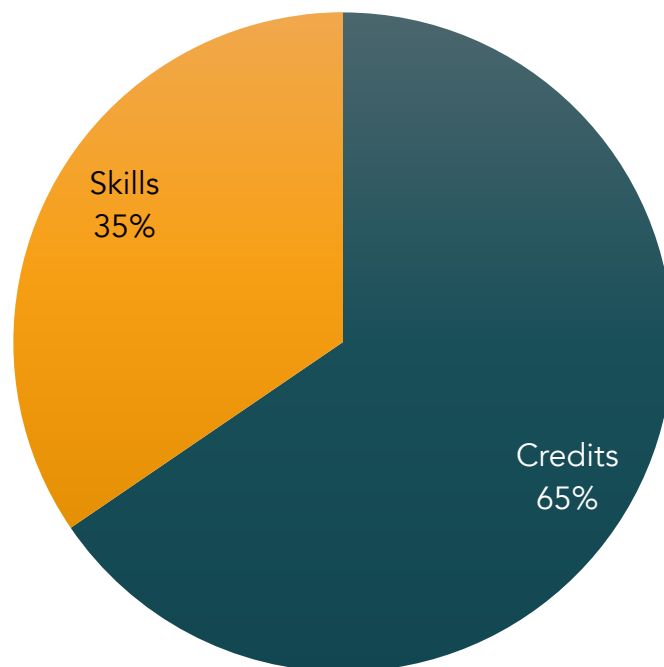
Credits
65%

When forced to choose, approximately two-thirds of instructors reported that credits were the biggest motivator for students to study language, over skills.

What are the biggest challenges community college language students bring to the language classroom? Check all that apply.
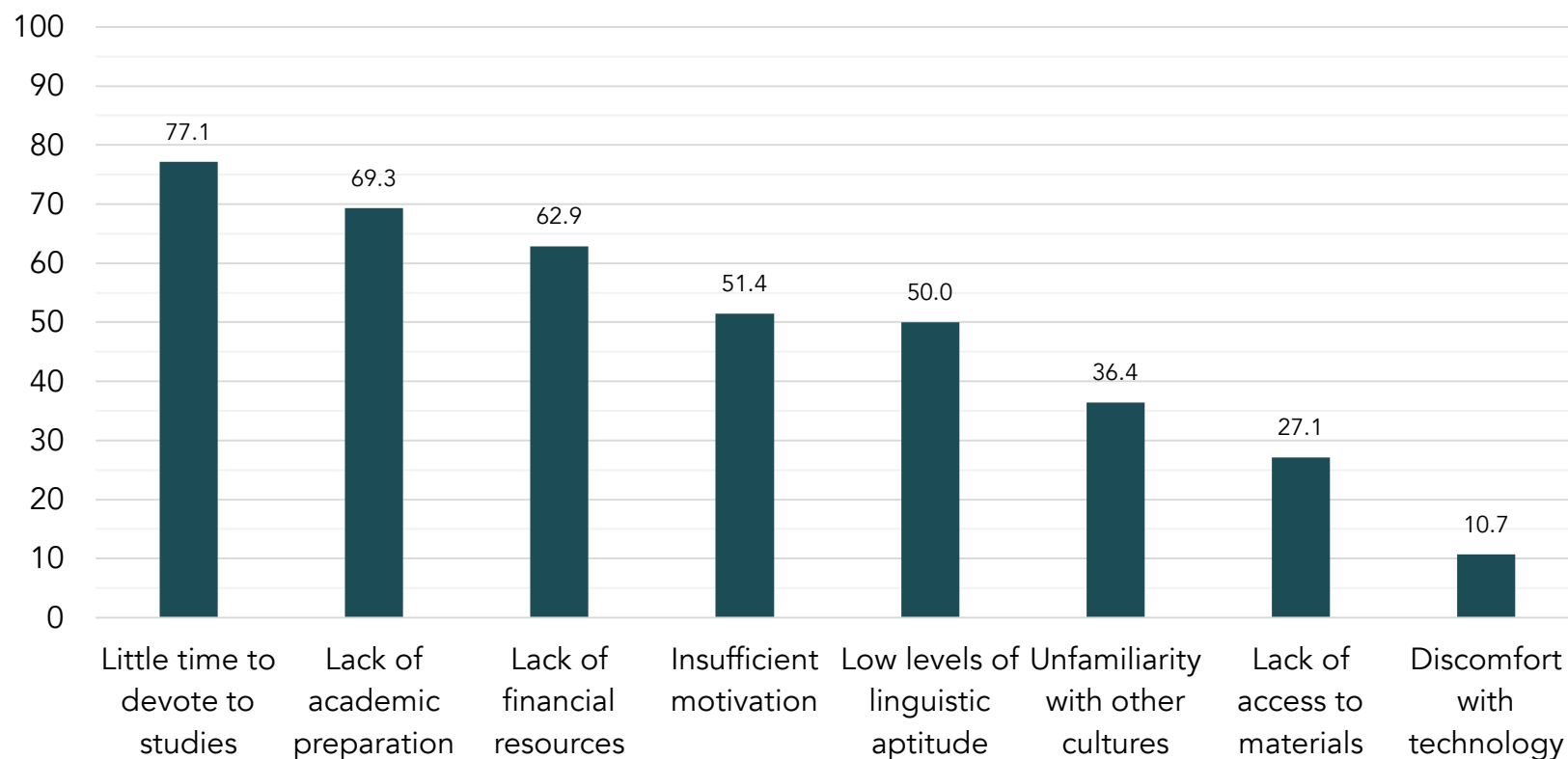
When asked to pick the three biggest challenges, three-quarters of instructors indicated little time to devote to studies as one of the biggest challenges community college language students faced. Approximately 70% of instructors indicated lack of academic preparation as a challenge, while a little over 60% reported lack of financial resources.

SILCC Instructor Survey Question #16   21
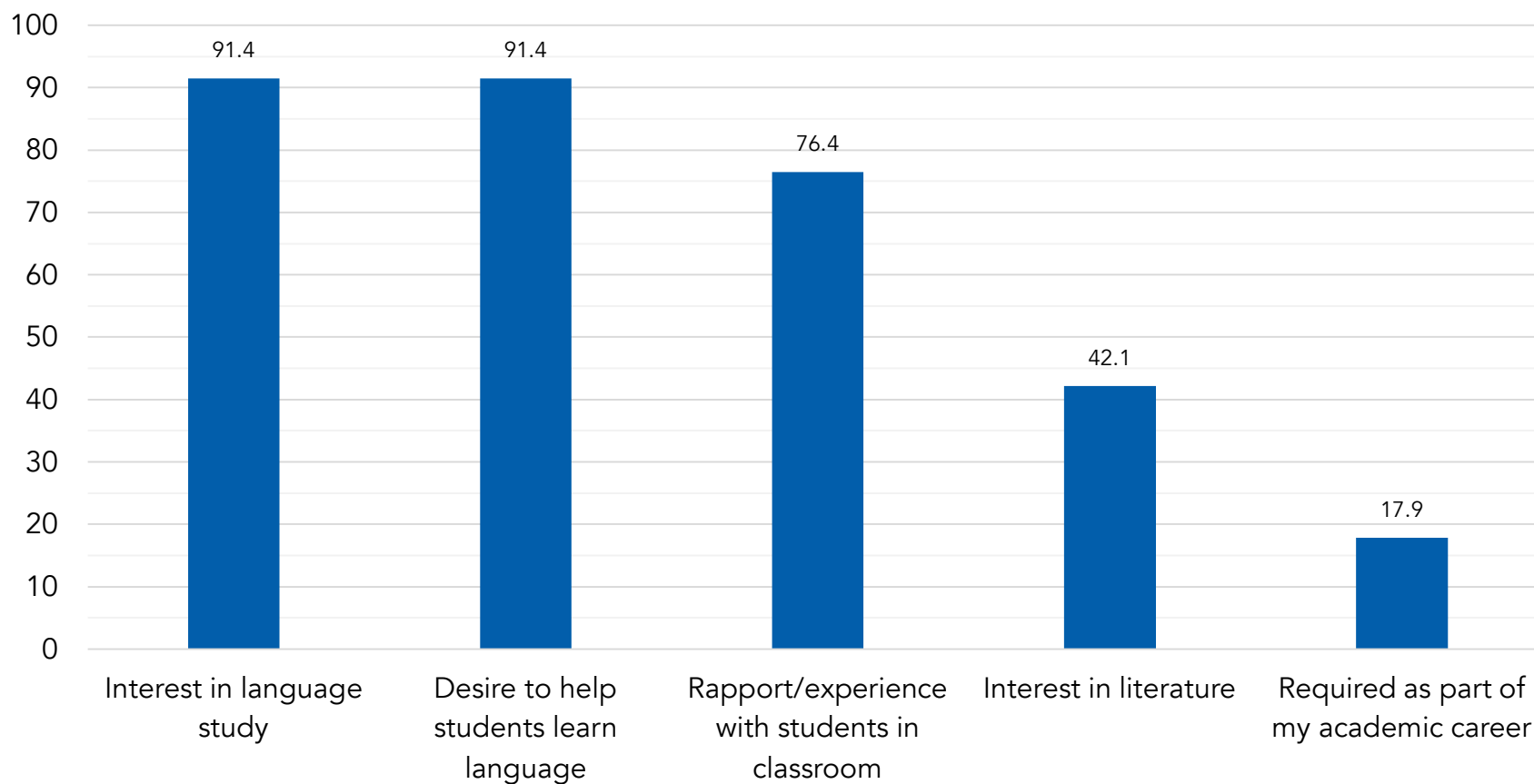
What are the biggest institutional difficulties you face in teaching community college language students? Check three.
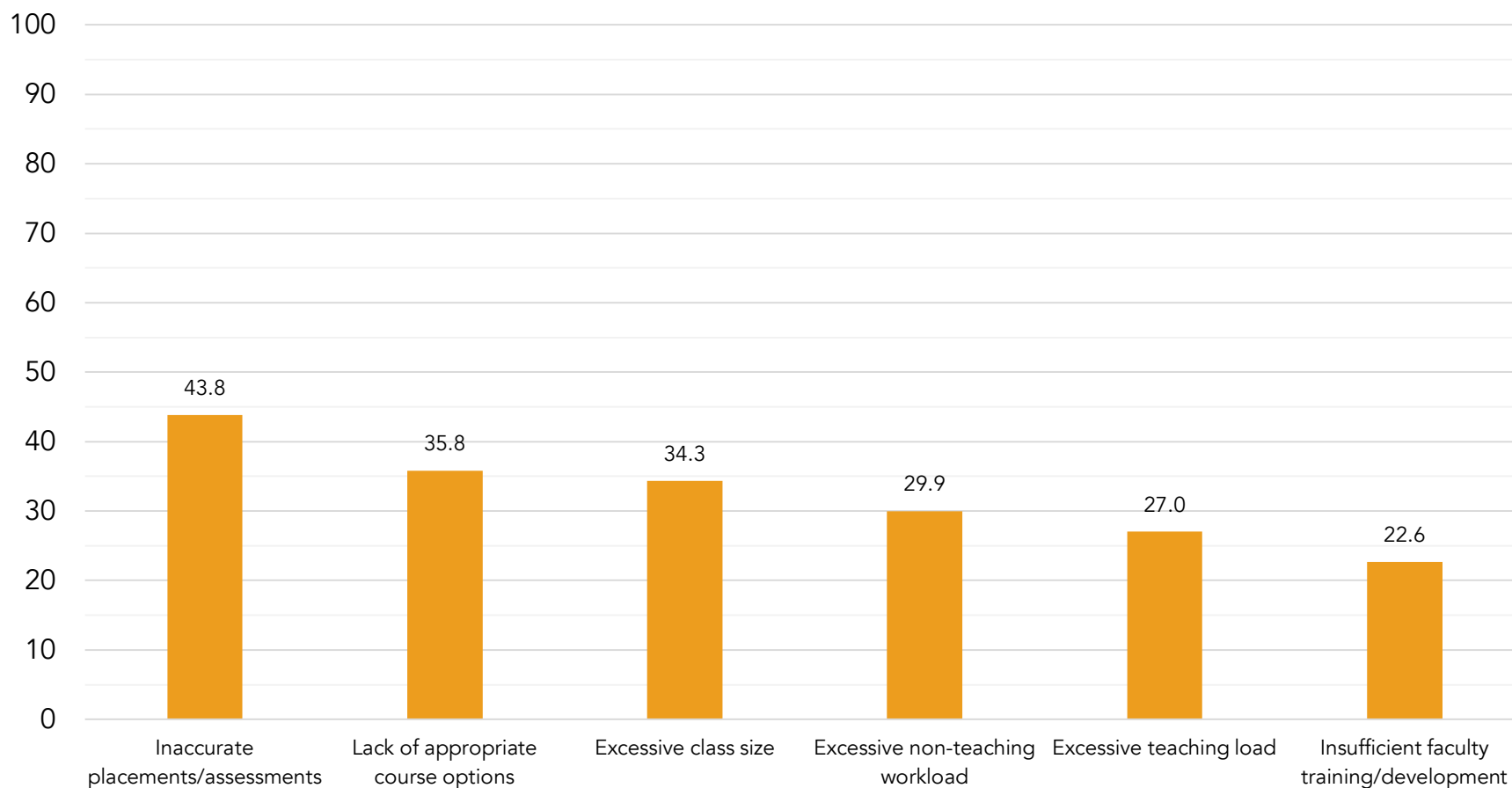
When asked to pick the three biggest institutional difficulties, results were widely dispersed with no one particular difficulty reported by a majority of instructors.
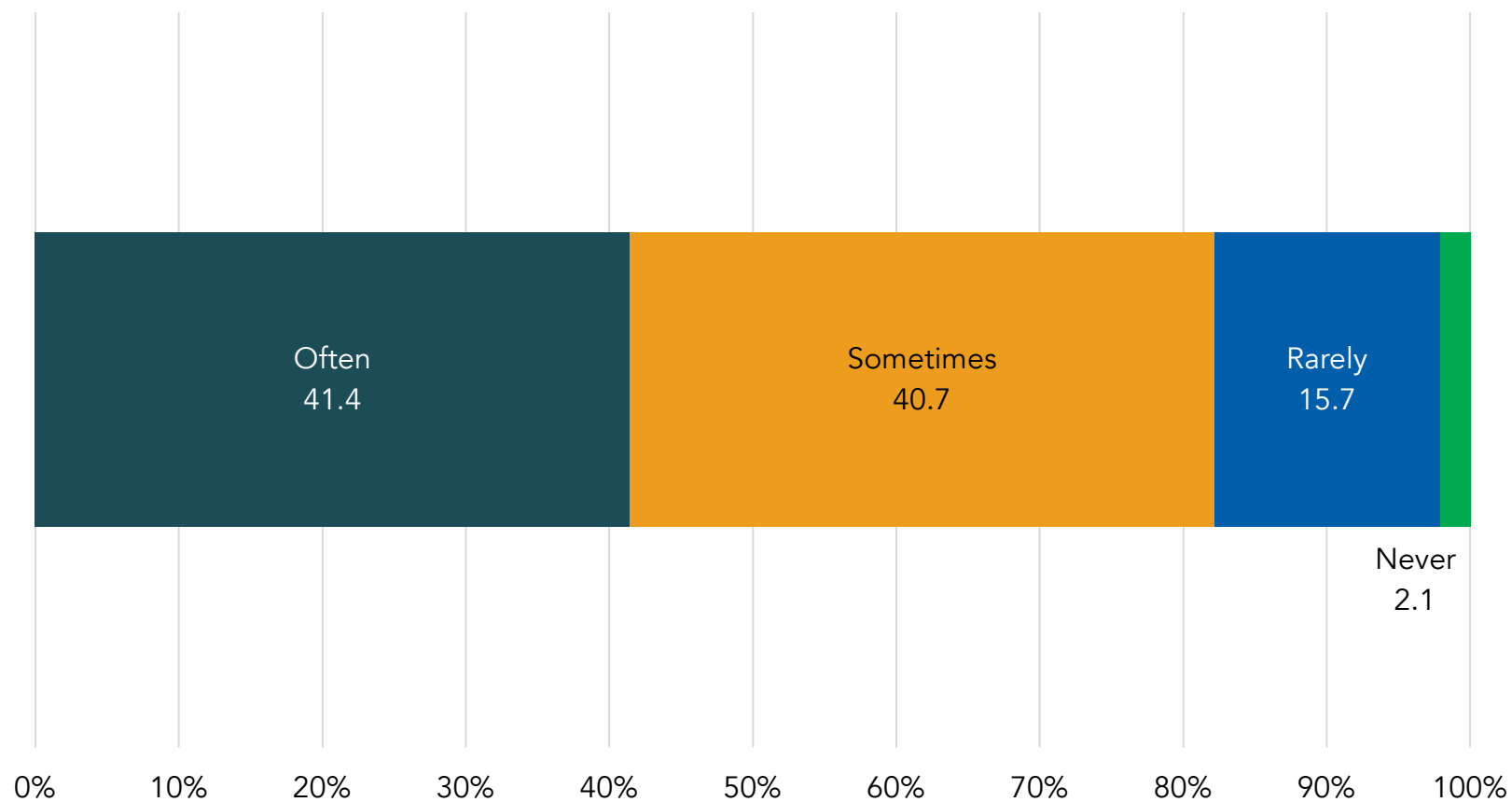
Motivation, Education, Experience, and Professional Development

Why do you teach languages? Check all that apply.

Bar chart showing percentages:
- Interest in language study: 91.4
- Desire to help students learn language: 91.4
- Rapport/experience with students in classroom: 76.4
- Interest in literature: 42.1
- Required as part of my academic career: 17.9

More than 90% of instructors reported teaching language because of interest in language study and desire to help students learn language. Three-quarters of instructors reported the experience with students in the classroom as a factor.

SILCC Instructor Survey Question #14

Do you attend professional development workshops or conferences?

Often 41.4	Sometimes 40.7	Rarely 15.7	

Never 2.1

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Over 80% of instructors reported that they attend conferences or workshops often or sometimes, which approximately 2% report never attending conferences or workshops.

# At these events (conferences/workshops), with whom do you primarily communicate? Check all that apply.
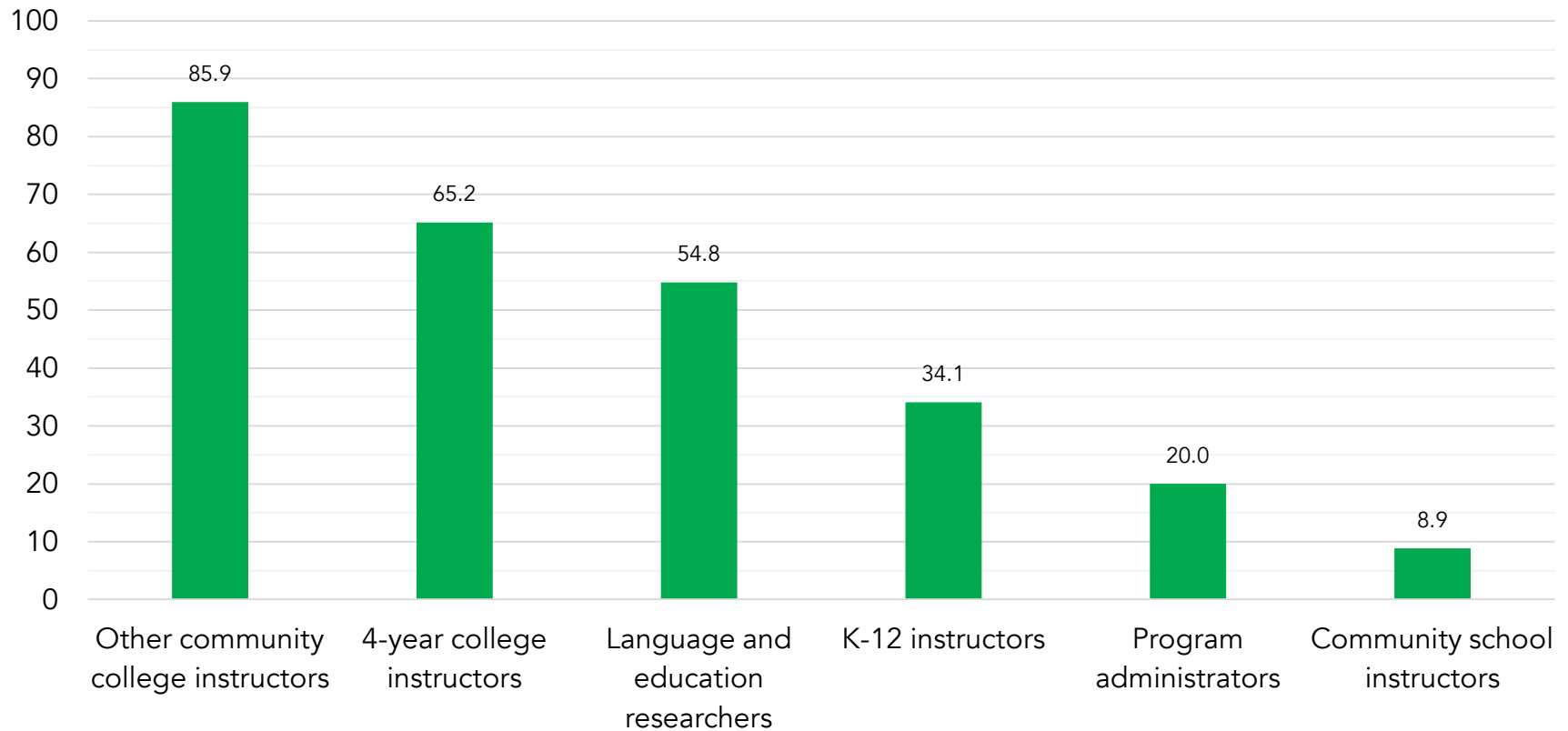
85% of instructors report primarily communicating with other community college instructors, while two-thirds reported communicating with 4-year college instructors. Relatively fewer instructors reported communicating with language educators at the K-12 level or at community schools.

What limits you from attending workshops or conferences? Check all that apply.
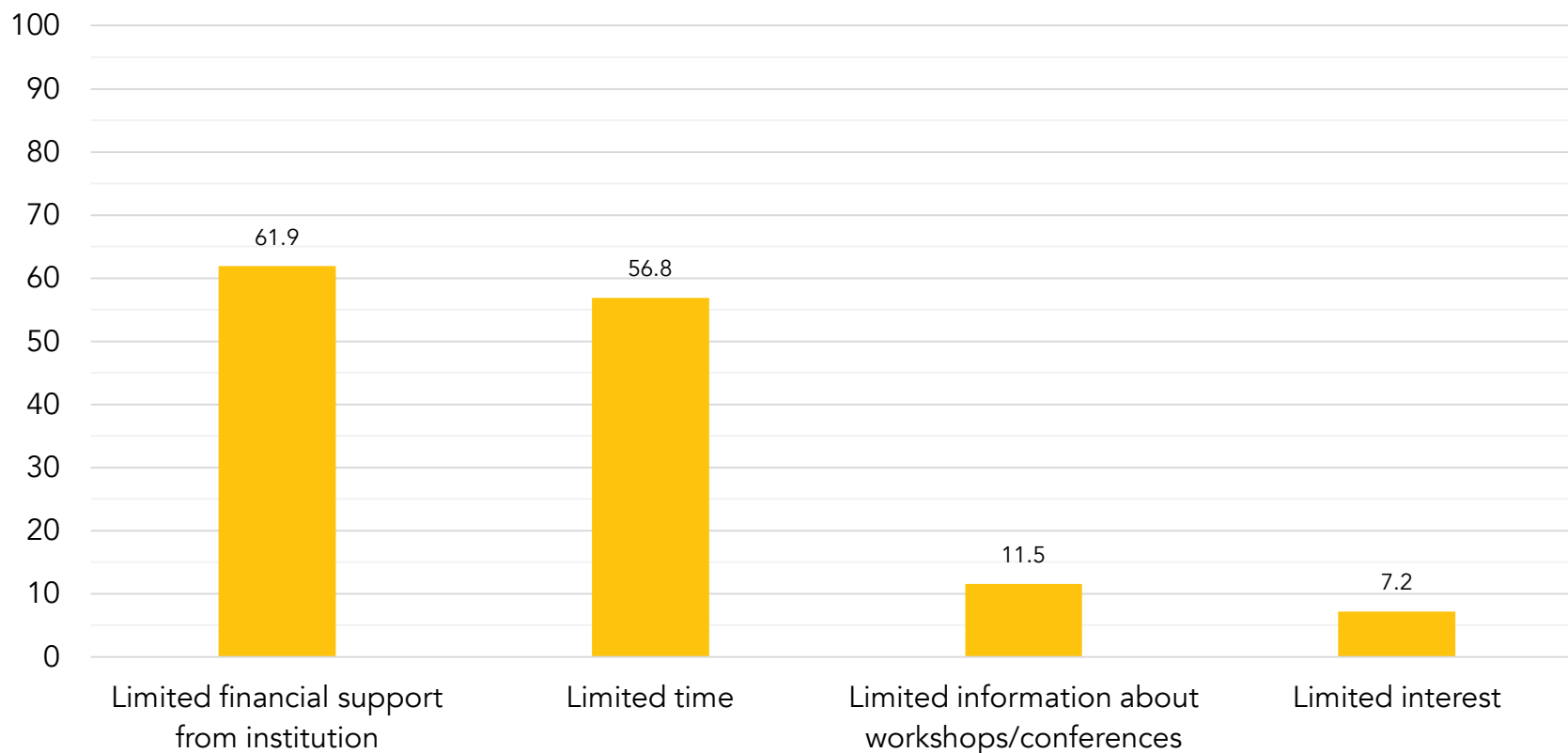

Of those who reported limitations on attending workshops or conferences, more than half of instructors reported financial support from their institution and time as factors.

What teacher training have you currently completed? Check all that apply.
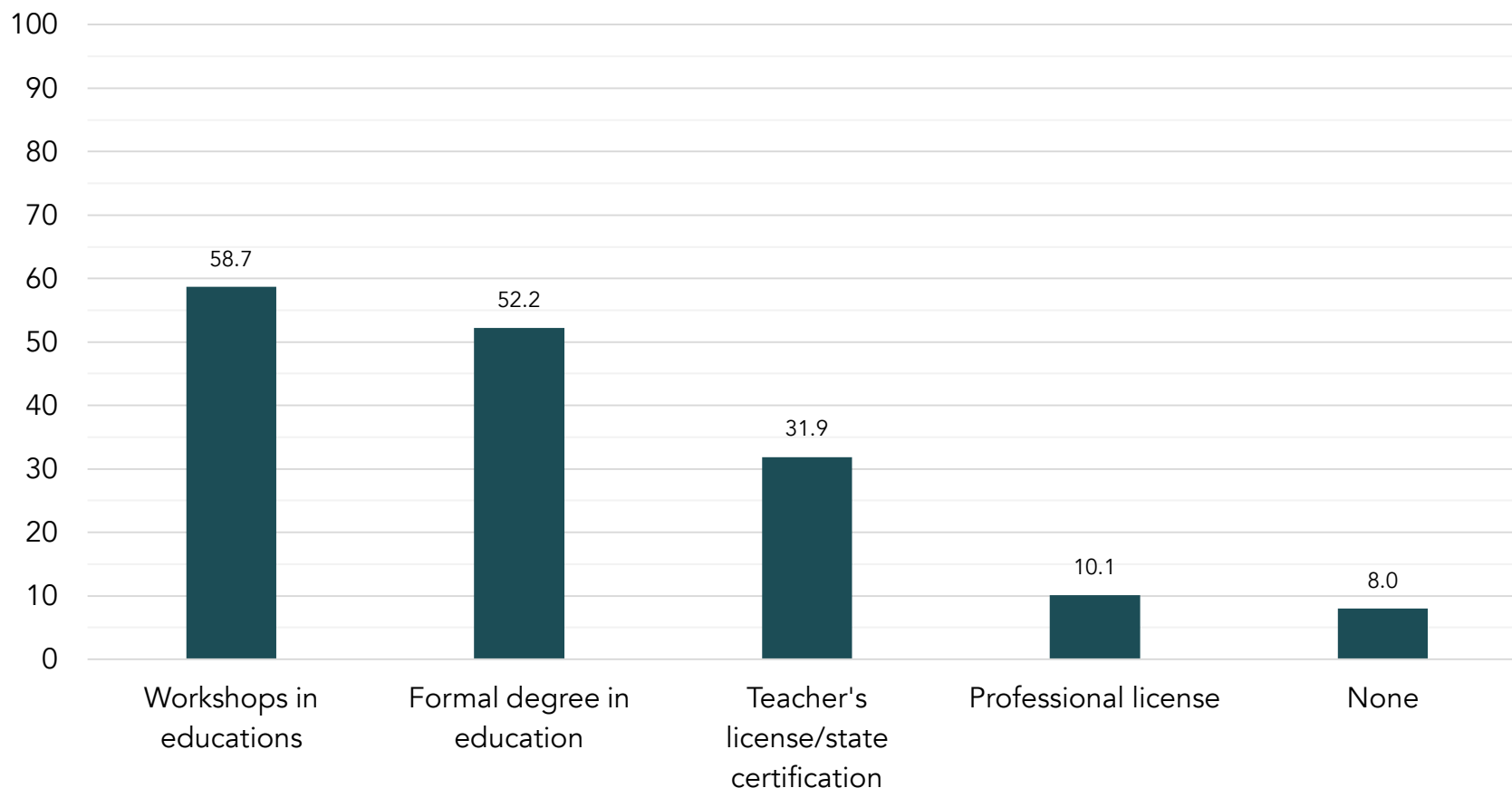
Just under 60% of instructors report having completed workshops in education, while a little over half of instructors hold a formal degree in education. Approximately 8% of instructors report having no teacher training.

SILCC Instructor Survey Question #21   28

What types of professional development are you or would you be interested in, if available? Check all that apply.
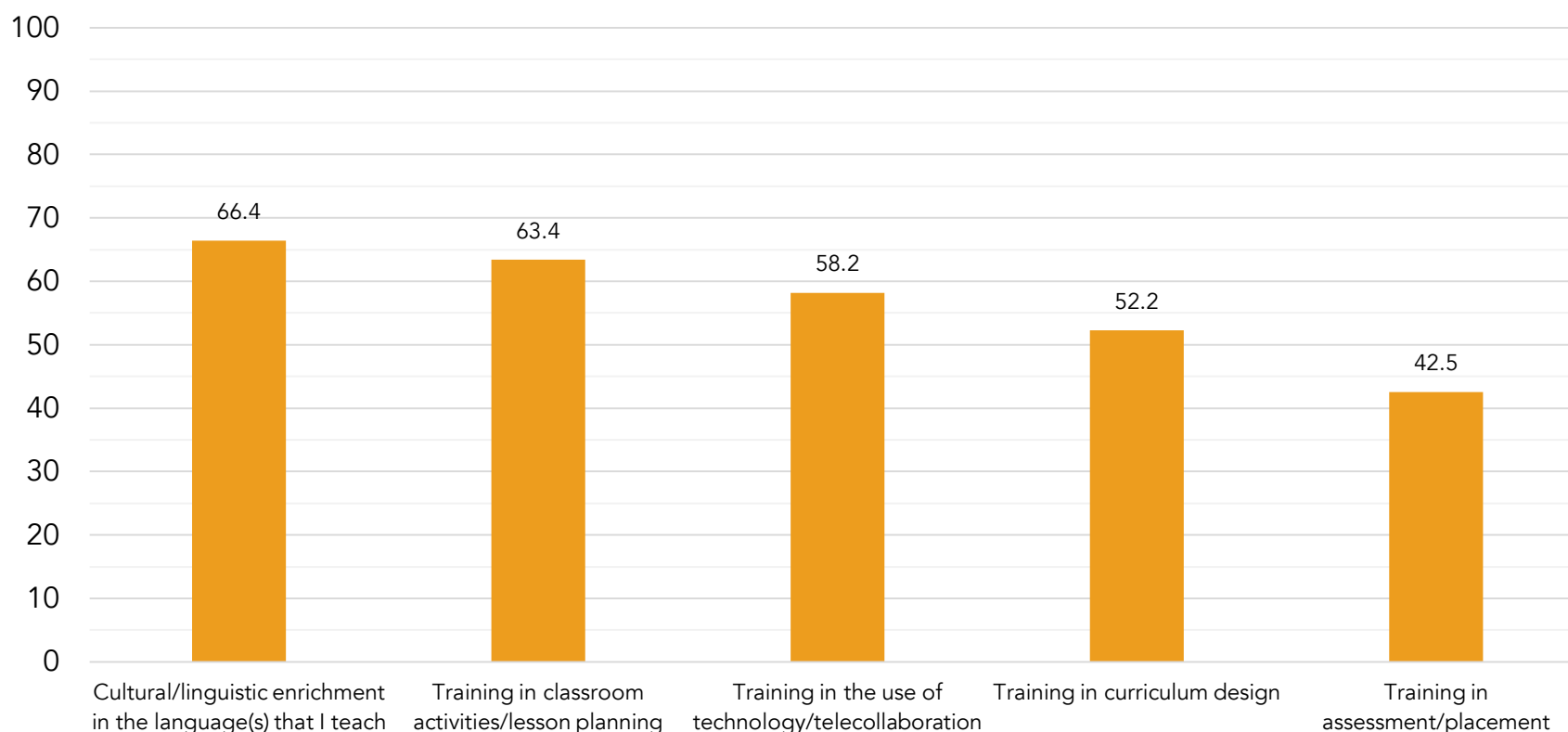

Approximately two-thirds of instructors are interested in professional development in cultural or linguistics enrichment as well as in classroom activities or lesson planning. More than half of instructors also reported interest in training in the use of technology and in curriculum design.

SILCC Instructor Survey Question #22

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How many years have you been teaching at the
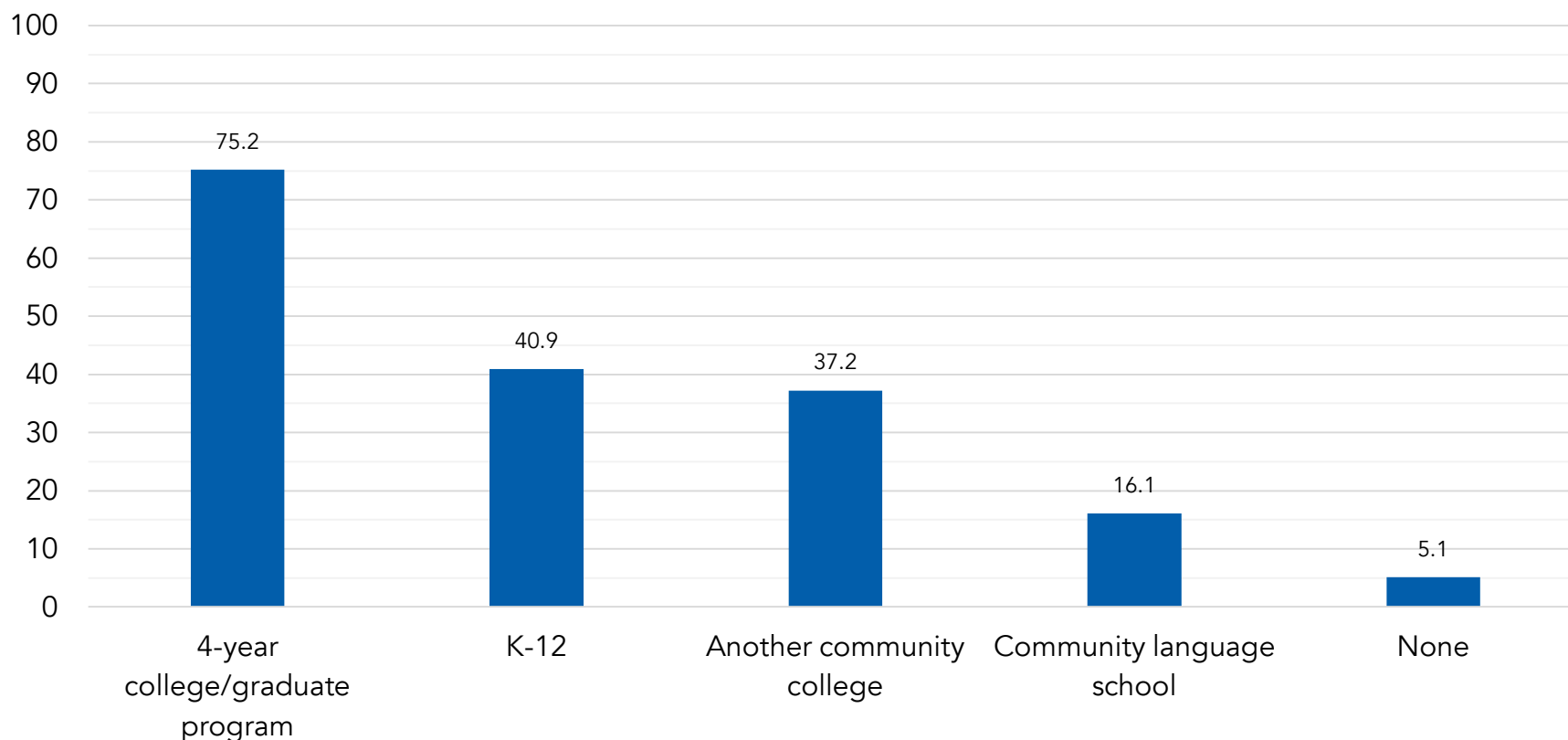community college level (including the current year)?

12.2

Instructors reported a mean of 12.2 years of experience teaching at the community college level.

Are you currently full-time or part-time at this institution?

Part-time
41%
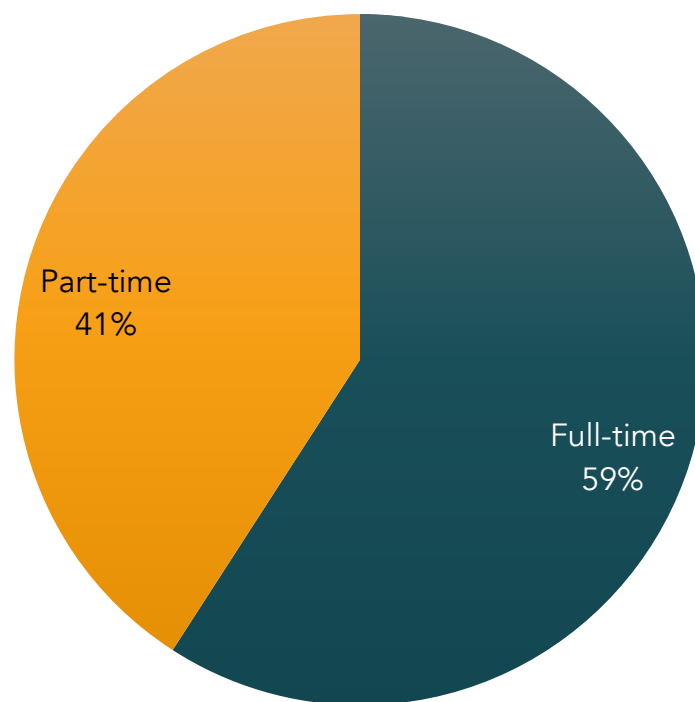
Full-time
59%

Due to a bias in our sampling methods, full-time instructors were more likely to participate in the SILCC Surveys. Of instructors completing the SILCC survey, 60% reported holding full-time positions at their institution.

In addition to teaching at this institution, in what other formal educational settings have you ever taught your language? Check all that apply.

Bar chart:
- 4-year college/graduate program: 75.2
- K-12: 40.9
- Another community college: 37.2
- Community language school: 16.1
- None: 5.1

Three-quarters of instructors reporting having taught at a 4-year college or graduate program, while approximately 40% had experience at the K-12 level, or at another community college.

Including any courses you teach at other institutions,
how many courses do you teach in a typical semester?

Full-time Part-time

4.4 2.9

Full-time instructors reported teaching a mean of 1.5 courses more than part-time instructors.

Do you hold a non-teaching position for 10 hours a week or more?

Full-time Part-time
21% 17%

Full-time and part-time instructors reported holding a non-teaching positions for 10 hours or more in similar proportions.

Have you attended a community college?

32% Yes

Fields of study in which instructors reported holding a degree (Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctorate)

(Derived from question: Please indicate the field(s) and level(s) of post-secondary study you have completed:)
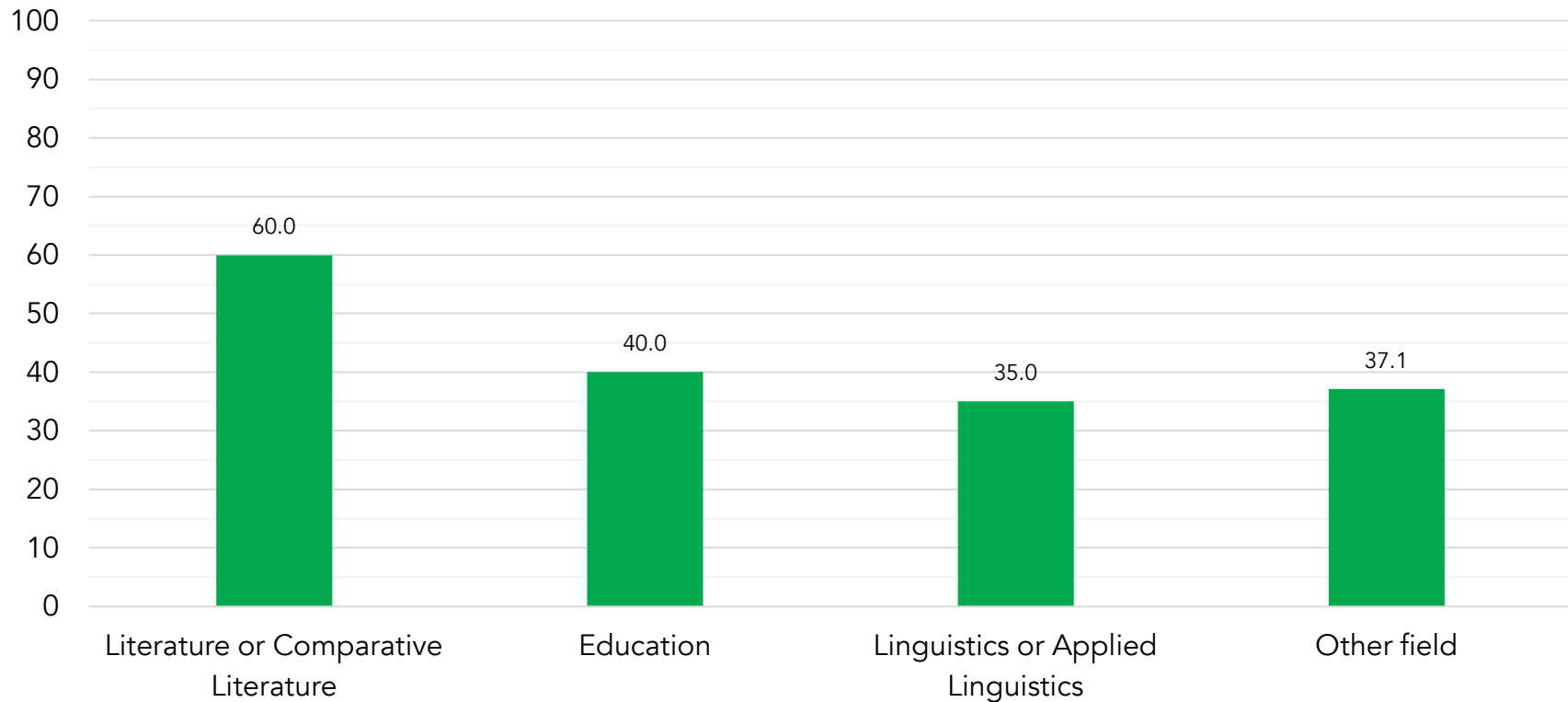
The most commonly reported field of study for instructors of languages other than English at community colleges was Literature or Comparative Literature. Note that percentages don't add up to 100% due to many instructors holding multiple degrees that may be in different fields.

Highest degree instructors reported holding

(Derived from question: Please indicate the field(s) and level(s) of post-secondary study you have completed:)
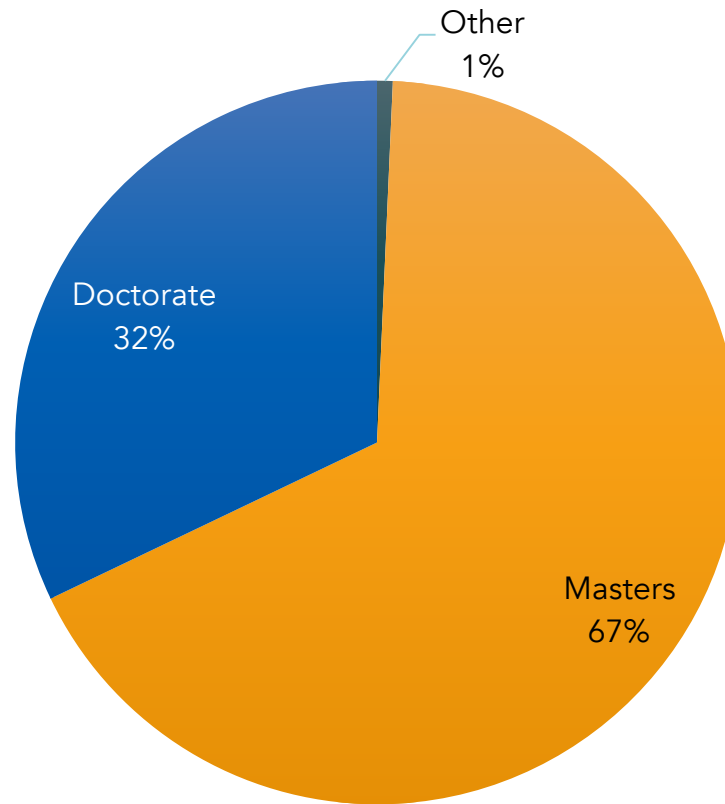
Two-thirds of instructors reported a Masters as their highest degree, while one-third reported a Doctorate.