

Factors Contributing to Oral Communication Apprehension among Sudanese Undergraduate Students Majoring in English: Students' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the level of oral communication apprehension (OCA) among Sudanese undergraduate students majoring in English. It, also, aimed to investigate the reasons behind their CA. The sample of the study consisted of 150 English major students, chosen randomly from three faculties at Gezira University: Faculty of Arts at ALKamleen, Faculty of Education at ALHasaheesah and Faculty of Education at Hantoub. The methodological approach underlined this study is a quantitative, descriptive and statistical approach. Two questionnaires were used to collect data; questionnaire (1) is the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), which was used to measure the level of students' communication apprehension and questionnaire (2) was used to investigate factors that contribute to OCA. The data were analyzed by using different statistical methods such as percentages, mean, standard -deviation, and the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). The findings revealed that the level of oral communication apprehension of undergraduate students was mostly average and that public speaking was the most anxiety-provoking as compared to the other contexts of oral communication. The findings also revealed a number of sources of CA such as: lack of self-confidence, lack of special speaking skills, lack of adequate preparation, fear of making mistakes, teacher's behavior, linguistic factors and use of L1. The study concluded with some recommendations to EFL learners, EFL teachers, and educational policy makers. Finally, further researches were suggested in relation to the investigation of oral communication apprehension in lower educational levels and in other universities across the country.

Keywords: Oral communication apprehension, PRCA, Undergraduate students

المستخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد مستوى الخوف من التواصل الشفهي بين الطلاب السودانيين الجامعيين المتخصصين في اللغة الإنجليزية. تهدف أيضاً إلى التحقيق في الأسباب الكامنة وراء هذا الخوف. تكونت عينة الدراسة من 150 طالباً من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية، تم اختيارهم عشوائياً من ثلاث كليات في جامعة الجزيرة: كلية الآداب في الكاملين، كلية التربية في الحصاصيصا وكلية التربية في حنتوب. الطريقة المنهجية التي اتبعتها هذه الدراسة هي منهج كمي وصفي ولحصائي. تم استخدام استبيانين لجمع البيانات. الاستبيان (1) هو التقرير الشخصي لفهم الاتصال، والذي تم استخدامه لقياس مستوى تخوف الطلاب من التواصل واستخدم الاستبيان (2) لاستقصاء العوامل التي تسهم في التخوف من التواصل الشفهي. تم تحليل المعطيات باستخدام طرق إحصائية مختلفة مثل النسب المئوية، الوسط، المعيار، والحزمة الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية. وكشفت النتائج عن أن مستوى الخوف من التواصل الشفهي لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية كان متوسطاً في الغالب وأن الخطابة كانت الأكثر إثارة للقلق

مقارنةً بسياقات التواصل الشفهي الأخرى. كشفت النتائج أيضاً عن عدد من مصادر الخوف من التواصل الشفهي ، مثل: عدم الثقة بالنفس ، ونقص مهارات التحدث الخاصة ، وعدم الاستعداد الكافي ، والخوف من ارتكاب الأخطاء ، وسلوك المعلم ، والعوامل اللغوية ، واستخدام اللغة الام. اختتمت الدراسة ببعض التوصيات لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ومعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وصانعي السياسة التعليمية. أخيراً ، تم اقتراح مزيد من الأبحاث فيما يتعلق بالتحقيق في مخاوف الاتصال الشفهي في المستويات التعليمية الدنيا وفي الجامعات الأخرى في جميع أنحاء البلاد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخوف من التواصل الشفهي، التقرير الشخصي لفهم الاتصال، طلاب المرحلة الجامعية

INTRODUCTION

Communication apprehension is a construct built upon an oral focus and is defined as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1982).

Communication apprehension has been regarded as one of the most important factors influencing learners’ oral communication, and individuals who are often fearful of communication are commonly referred to as communication apprehensive. Horwitz (1986) and Young (1991) discovered the relationship between communication apprehension and achievement in the learning of foreign languages and contended that CA can negatively affect students’ academic achievement. Moreover, Gardner (1994) concluded that communication apprehension and achievement are correlated.

In Sudan, many researches have been conducted to investigate oral communication problems with ESL students, mostly secondary school students. However, many students at the tertiary level are still having difficulty communicating in English. This phenomenon needs careful analysis in order to identify viable measures that will address the problem. This study will address the problem of oral communication

apprehension among Sudanese undergraduate students majoring in English, at Gezira University. The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) is used to measure the level of communication apprehension among undergraduate students as well as a questionnaire to investigate the causes of communication apprehension. Based on the results, some recommendations are to be offered to treat/minimize students’ communication apprehension.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Communication is central to learning. When students do not feel comfortable to communicate in the classroom, their opportunities for learning are minimized (McCroskey, 1982). When teachers fail to communicate with or understand why their students hold back from communication, effective learning does not take place. It is, therefore, important to focus on communication apprehension because it is critical to success in the academic milieu (Richmond, 1989:54). In addition, Richmond and McCroskey (1989:60) believe that the high degree of students’ communication apprehension seriously hinders the interaction between teachers and learners, which is necessary for productive teaching and learning. According to Hamilton (2011), students

who have a high level of communication apprehension are at disadvantage. The phenomenon of communication apprehension is, therefore, a distinct area of research. Worldwide, research about communication apprehension has been carried out extensively. Factors, reasons, effects and strategies to deal with CA have been given a special concern. Yet, the problem still exists and researchers are still looking for best ways to deal with this important barrier to learning. Sudan is not an exception; there have been a lot of researches on oral performance from different perspectives. However, there is paucity in research regarding communication apprehension of Sudanese students, at any level. There is, therefore, a need to determine the degree of communication apprehension among Sudanese students and there is, also, a need to identify the causes behind their CA. The researcher has chosen to research the topic among Sudanese undergraduate students when communicating in English as he has noticed that most of the Sudanese undergraduate students "majoring in English" refrain from giving a speech in English. It is, therefore, necessary to find out about the levels of students' communication apprehension as well as the factors contributing to it. From this brief discussion it could be maintained that the problem of this study revolves around the following questions.

1.3 Objectives

The main objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify the level of communication apprehension (CA) among Sudanese undergraduate students majoring in English
2. Find out what undergraduate students in Sudan regard as the main reasons behind communication apprehension.

3. Suggest suitable techniques/strategies to treat/reduce students' communication apprehension

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the level of OCA among Sudanese undergraduate students majoring in English when communicating in English?
2. What are the main reasons behind oral communication apprehension among Sudanese undergraduate students majoring in English, from students' perspectives?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

1. The level of communication apprehension among Sudanese undergraduate students is very high.
2. The main reasons behind oral communication apprehension among Sudanese undergraduate students majoring in English could possibly be: traditional teaching methods, lack of communication models, lack of exposure to communication activities, poor educational environment, psychological factors, and cultural and social factors.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Most language teachers and instructors, in Sudan, agree that many students face problems communicating in English, as it is not their native language, Mohammed (2007). Even at the university level, students feel apprehensive and insecure when asked to speak English in the classroom, let alone in public. This even includes those who scored well in writing exams; because speaking skills are totally different from writing skills Mohammed (2007). In order to feel confident when speaking English, students need on-going motivation and encouragement from many sources, including their parents, teachers, and peers. If they

feel inhibited when practicing speaking, they will never be able to improve. Therefore, this study is important as it seeks to:

1. Identify the level of Sudanese undergraduate students' communication apprehension in English.
 2. Investigate the reasons behind students' communication apprehension.
- Hence, this study will help ESL lecturers to uncover the real level of CA among tertiary students, particularly at Gezira University. Only by knowing the actual level of CA, can the lecturers find viable measures that will help reduce problems pertaining to CA.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Communication Apprehension (CA)

CA is "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977). Within this context, it is important to distinguish other constructs which are similar in meaning to CA.

2.2 Related Constructs

2.2.1 Stage Fright

Stage fright is the [anxiety](#) which may arouse in an individual when asked to speak in front of an [audience](#), whether actually or potentially. It has many signs such as [stuttering](#), sweaty hands, [facial nerve tics](#), [dry mouth](#), and [dizziness](#).

2.2.2 Reticence

Reticence refers to "the behavior in which people avoid communication because they believe it is better to remain silent than to risk appearing foolish", Keaten and Kelly (2000, p.168).

2.2.3 Unwillingness to communicate

(Burgoon, 1976) defined unwillingness to communicate as "enduring and

chronic tendency to avoid oral communication." She added: the unwillingness to communicate construct focuses on the unwillingness of an individual to communicate with others.

2.2.4 Predisposition toward Verbal Behavior

Predisposition toward verbal behavior is the cognitive orientation that persons hold toward the extent of their verbal participation in social settings. Mortensen, Arnston, and Lustig (1977) discussed that the more global features of speech are to be consistent and enduring from one social setting to another. They believed that this is a characteristic predisposition to talk a given amount and that predisposition operates within the constraints of individual situations.

2.2.5 Shyness

According to Juhana (2012), shyness is an emotional thing that many people suffer from, at some time, when they are required to speak in English. This indicates that shyness could be a source of CA. Baldwin (2011) further explains that speaking in front of people is one of the more common phobias that many people suffer from and feeling of shyness makes their mind go blank or that they will forget what to say.

2.3 Types of Communication Apprehension

2.3.1 Trait-like Communication Apprehension

The term "traitlike" is used to describe an invariant characteristic of an individual, such as eye color or height, which cannot be changed. It is a type of communication apprehension that is described as an "enduring personality-type orientation towards a

given mode of communication across a wide variety of contexts (McCrosky, 1984: 16). Trait-like can be changed when treated, but usually people who suffer from this resist change (Drinkwater, 1994:2).

2.3.2 Generalized-context Communication Apprehension

Some people are anxious about communicating in one type of context while they might have no anxiety in other contexts. For example, a person may have a fear of public speaking, but might have no anxiety to speak in other contexts such as during job interviews, or when meeting new people. McCrosky(1984: 16) contends that other people experience generalized-context CA as a relatively enduring, personality-type orientation towards communication in a given type of communication context.

2.3.3 Person-Group Communication Apprehension

This type of CA represents the reaction of an individual to communicating with a given individual or group of individuals across time. People viewing CA from this point recognize that some individuals and groups may cause a person to be highly apprehensive while other individuals or groups produce the reverse reaction. For some people more apprehension may be stimulated by a peer or group of peers. For others, more apprehension may be stimulated by unfamiliar individuals or groups. A school teacher, for example, may be highly apprehensive about talking to his/her principal, but may have no apprehension about talking to a student in his/her own class. McCrosky(1984:17) contends that the person-group CA is " a relatively enduring orientation towards communication with a given person or group of people."

2.3.4 Situational Communication Apprehension

Situational CA can be viewed as a transitory orientation towards communication with a given person or group of people (McCrosky, 1984). It is not viewed as personality based, but rather as a response to the situational constraints generated by the other person or group. An example of a teacher calling a student who is suspected of cheating in a class-test would give a good indication of this type of CA; as such a student is most likely to experience high CA in this specific situation.

2.3.5 Pathological Communication Apprehension

This type of CA is considered an abnormal cause of CA. It refers to an extremely high level of CA or low level of CA.

2.4 Causes of Communication Apprehension

Many factors have been considered as leading to OCA. McCrosky (1980) contends that CA can be due to low intellectual skills and speech skills deficiencies. Intellectual skills include knowledge and understanding, critical thinking, problem solving and creative skills. Speaking skills include prior preparation, facial expression, body language, organization, speech fillers, eye contact and articulation. Byrnes (1984) and Meyers, W. (1995) attributed the causes of CA to social introversion. They argued that introverted people are characterized by quiet, unsociable, reserved, passive, careful and thoughtful behavior. These characteristics cause such people to be almost "invisible" in the community where communication is demanded. In addition, Juhana (2012), believed that the cause of CA is shyness. She added: shyness is an emotional thing that many students suffer from at some time when they are required to speak in an English class. Furthermore, Horwitz, (2001) states that anxiety can influence the quality of oral

language production and make individuals appear less fluent than they really are. Moreover, Young (1991), argued that self-esteem is strongly related to language anxiety. In his view, low self-esteem individuals are worried about how others think about them. Heredity has also been identified by Vreken (1995:4) as a cause of CA. He states that "social biologists have determined that infants already differ with regards to their possibility. This could influence their interaction with their environment and eventually lead to lower or higher levels of CA", later on (McCrosky, 1984:23-24). It is, therefore, probable that children may inherit most of their parents' behavior.

In relation to the causes of CA in the classroom, many researchers attribute the causes of CA to the type of reinforcement, medium of instruction and the absence of role models. According to behaviorists, children who are rewarded for communicating, communicate more while those who are punished for communicating will eventually develop high levels of CA and withdraw from communication. As for the medium of instruction, MacIntyre and Gardner (1988:251-273) argued that it is important to note that the instructional language that is a second one for the students will cause communication apprehension resulting in minimal performance. They contended that a language student may have more thoughts and ideas but because of an immature second language vocabulary, he/she will not be able to express them. The inability either to express oneself, or to comprehend another person leads to frustration and apprehension. The absence of role models was emphasized

by Macdonald and Burroughs (1991:15). They say that teachers are the authority and that they direct the flow of students' activity. The students look at the teachers for directions and will willingly carry out their instructions. The role which the teacher adopts is one of the biggest drawbacks or one of the biggest head starts experienced by learners (Macdonald & Burroughs, 1991: 19).

2.5 Measurement of Communication Apprehension

Communication apprehension is measured by the Personal Report of Communication apprehension (PRCA-24), developed by Mckrosky (1984). This instrument is composed of 24 items aiming to assess a person's reactions to communicating in four different settings (group discussion, meetings, interpersonal conversations and public speaking). In filling out the questionnaire, participants are instructed to indicate their agreement or disagreement to each statement on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). The participant's score is computed for the four communication contexts: group discussions, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking– and an overall communication apprehension (CA) score. Scores on the four contexts can range from a low of 6 to a high of 30. Any score above 18 indicates some degree of apprehension. The overall CA score should range between 24 and 120. Scores between 83 and 120 indicate a high level of communication apprehension. Scores between 55 and 83 indicate a moderate level of communication apprehension. Scores between 24 and 55 indicate a low level of communication apprehension.

2.6 Previous Research on OCA

Results of the studies regarding OCA among learners worldwide are many. A few examples of these studies can be discussed as follows:

First, Liu (2006) conducted a study on anxiety in Chinese undergraduate non-English majors at three different proficiency levels. The instruments used in the study were interviews and observations. The study revealed that the more proficient students tended to be less anxious.

Second, Matsuoka (2009), conducted a study, using a questionnaire and interviews, on communication apprehension of Japanese college students and found a negative relation between proficiency level and CA. The study revealed that students with higher proficiency level were more apprehensive because of the fear of negative evaluation from others.

Third, Na (2007), surveyed and analyzed 115 students from a high school in Shandong Province, China, to explore high school students' OCA in Chinese EFL classrooms. The results indicated that students had high CA.

Forth, Flanders (1960), in his study "classroom interaction in EFL classes" focused on what teachers say inside the classroom and the consequences on students' achievement and involvement. Flanders' study reveals that teachers' talking time hinders students' oral communication.

Fifth, Mohammed (2007), in his PhD thesis on 'Interaction in Large Sudanese University Classes' found that classroom environment, poor English syllabuses and lack of exposure to authentic English events are behind students' reluctance to perform oral

communication. The researcher used a questionnaire and observations to conduct his study

Sixth, Mohammed (2000), in his M.A. research about 'pair/group interaction in oral skills courses for ESL university students observed that students are reluctant when asked to orally participate in co-operative interaction: There is always an anxiety about the amount of oral practice that less able students are getting during lectures. Many of them become embarrassed if they make a mistake when speaking in front of the whole class. He added: students of low -language ability use only short forms of participation such as 'yes', 'no', 'ok' and sometimes just make a sort of murmur.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Participants

The subjects in this study were 150 undergraduate students majoring in English, divided equally among three faculties from Gezira University: the Faculty of Arts at ALKamleen, the Faculty of Education at ALHasaheesah and the Faculty of Education at Hantoub. The participants were selected randomly. They are all Sudanese and they have the same cultural and educational backgrounds. They are all Arabic speakers (mother tongue) and their ages range between 19 and 24.

3.2 Research Design

The first questionnaire was the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), (See section 2.5). The second questionnaire was designed to explore students' perceptions about the factors that contribute to their oral communication apprehension. There are 30 statements in the questionnaire, describing what could

possibly be the reasons behind students' communication apprehension in the classroom. Participants were instructed to indicate their agreement or disagreement to each statement. It is worth mentioning that the questionnaires were translated into Arabic (students' mother tongue). The rationale behind this translation was to help participants who had difficulties understanding and answering these questionnaires.

3.3 Procedures

Students were asked to answer two questionnaires, namely:

- a) Questionnaire 1: PRCA-24 to identify their level of CA
- b) Questionnaire 2: to investigate the causes of communication apprehension

4. Data Analysis and Research Findings

4.1 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS. A descriptive analysis was performed to compute the means and standard deviations for the items. These analyses were intended to measure the level of communication apprehension among students and to identify the causes of communication apprehension.

4.2 Results Findings

The findings have been organized in two parts which correspond to the study's two research questions. Research Question (1) is the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) which consists of 24 items and aims to measure the level of communication in four different contexts of oral communication: group discussion, meetings, interpersonal conversations and public speaking. Table 4.2.1 below presents the descriptive statistics for students' level of CA in four contexts.

Table 4. 2.1: Descriptive Statistics for Students' Level of CA (N= 150)

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Score for Group Discussion	6.00	30.00	15.32	4.290
Score for Meetings	6.00	28.00	15.26	4.245
Score for Conversations	6.00	28.00	15.56	4.597
Score for Public Speaking	6.00	30.00	16.29	5.029
Overall CA Score	26.00	112.00	62.36	15.239

Table 4.2.1 shows communication apprehension measure for each context as well as the overall communication apprehension level of students (that is when the results of all are taken altogether). Accordingly, it is seen in the table that students were found to be most apprehensive in public speaking situations for which they had a mean apprehension level of 16.29 with a standard deviation (SD) of 5.029. It could be concluded that public speaking was the most trouble creating oral

communication task towards which students showed a high sense of fear. This is followed by interpersonal conversations which received a mean apprehension level of 15.56 with a standard deviation (SD) of 4.597 and meetings with a mean value of 15.26 and a standard deviation of 4.245. Students were found least apprehensive in group discussion situations which received a mean apprehension value of 15.32 and a standard deviation (SD) of 4.290.

This indicated that students could manage group discussion events better than other speaking events. However, it doesn't mean that they were not having problems of apprehension. The table also shows that the overall average of communication apprehension was 62.36 where 26 and 112 were the minimum and maximum scores, respectively. Taking the maximum possible level of communication apprehension (120) and the minimum possible (24), one can see that the possible range is 96 and the average is 48 which could be expected

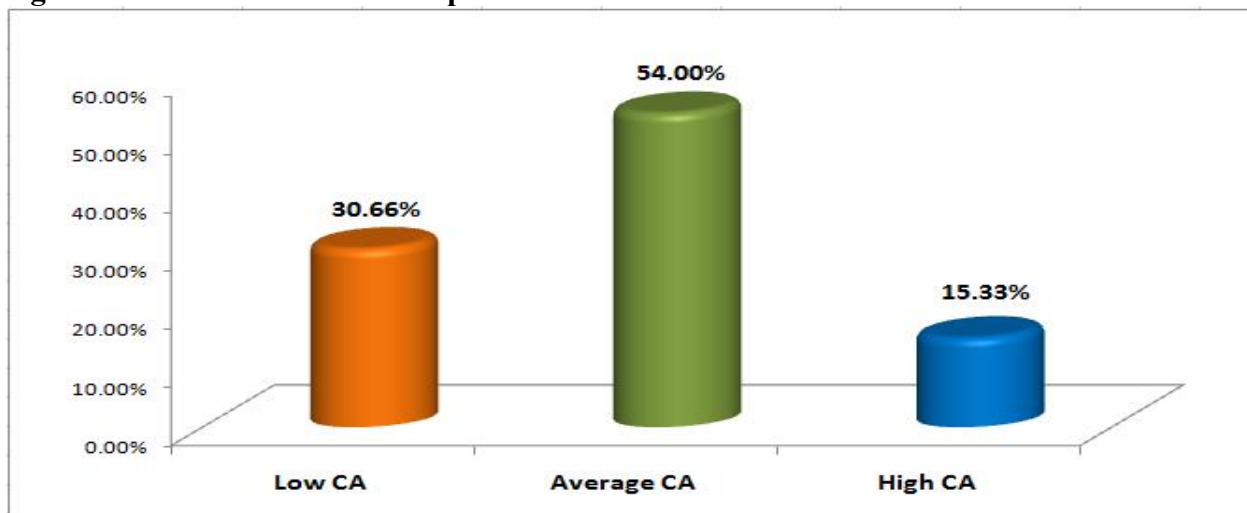
from a student with an average level of communication apprehension. Although, the mean level of overall scores (62.36) exceeds the average range level (48) by 14.36, it can be understood that the students had an average level of communication apprehension. This also implies that students were generally apprehensive in all four contexts of oral communication.

Table 4.2.2 and figure 4.2.1 display the frequency and percentage distribution for the respondents' level of communication apprehension.

Table 4.2.2: Frequency and percentage distribution for respondents' CA level

Level of CA	Frequency	Percentage
Low CA	46	30.66%
Average CA	81	54%
High CA	23	15.33%

Figure 4.2.1: Distribution for respondents' CA level



It is clear from table (4.2.2) and figure (4.2.1) that the majority (54%) of respondents experience average level of communication apprehension whereas (30.66%) of the respondents experience low level of communication apprehension. High level of CA respondents recorded only 15.33%. This could mean that all levels of CA exist among Sudanese

undergraduate students majoring in English, with big variations. However, 54% could generally mean that undergraduate students majoring in English experience average level of CA in all four contexts of oral communication. These findings are, therefore, contradictive to the researcher's hypothesis (students experience high level of CA).

Research question (2) aims to investigate the reasons behind students' CA. Table 4.2.3 below presents the students' responses to the questionnaire items.

Table 4.2.3: Students' views about causes of communication apprehension

No	Statements	Average responses	Average (%)
1	I dislike participating in group discussion in English. أنا لا أحب المشاركة في النقاش الجماعي باللغة الانجليزية.	2.69	53.87%
2	Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussion in English. بصورة عامة، انا أشعر بالارتياح عند المشاركة في النقاش الجماعي باللغة الانجليزية.	3.41	68.27%
3	I feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on to speak in English class. أشعر بضربات قلبي عندما يطلب مني أن أتحدث في حصة اللغة الانجليزية.	3.31	66.13%
4	I think speaking English fluently requires a special ability (which I don't have yet). (و هذه لم أمتلكها بعد)	3.29	65.73%
5	I am afraid that my classmates will laugh at me when I speak English. علي زملائي عندما أتحدث الانجليزي	2.37	47.33%
6	I have the feeling that my classmates speak English better than I do. زملائي يتحدثون الانجليزية أحسن مني.	3.24	64.80%
7	I feel confident when I speak in English class. أشعر بثقة عندما أتحدث في حصة اللغة الانجليزي	3.57	71.47%
8	I feel upset about speaking in front of my classmates. أشعر بالأضطراب عند الحديث أمام زملائي	2.49	49.73%
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my English class. بالرعب عندما أعلم أنني سأحدث في حصة اللغة الانجليزية دون سابق اعداد.	3.10	62.00%
10	I feel shy when I am asked to speak in front of my classmates. إلي أن أتحدث أمام زملائي	2.45	49.07%
11	I like to sit at the back row to avoid participating in the English class. في الصف الأخير لكي أتفادي المشاركة في حصة اللغة الانجليزية.	1.86	37.20%
12	I feel that my English grammar is not good enough to enable me to, freely, speak English. أشعر أن معرفتي بقواعد اللغة الانجليزية غير كافية لكي تمكنني من الحديث (بحرية) باللغة الانجليزية.	3.29	65.87%
13	I feel that my English vocabulary is not good enough to enable me to, freely, speak English. أشعر أن معرفتي بمفردات اللغة الانجليزية غير كافية لكي تمكنني من الحديث (بحرية) باللغة الانجليزية.	3.20	64.00%
14	I feel that my English pronunciation is not good enough to enable me to, freely, speak English. أشعر أن معرفتي بنطق اللغة الانجليزية غير كافية لكي تمكنني من الحديث (بحرية) باللغة الانجليزية.	3.17	63.33%

15	I feel relaxed and happy when the teacher praises me. أشعر بأنني مسترخ وسعيد عندما يمدحني المعلم	4.03	80.67%
16	I feel upset when the teacher corrects me أشعر بالأضطراب عندما يصحح لي المعلم	3.18	63.60%
17	It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying. 'صاب بالرعب عندما لا افهم ما يقوله المعلم.	3.67	73.47%
18	I feel uncomfortable when speaking in class if my English language teacher is strict. أشعر بعدم الارتياح عند الحديث في الصف إذا كان معلم اللغة الانجليزية حازما.	3.53	70.67%
19	My English teacher encourages me to speak English in class. معلم اللغة الانجليزية يشجعني على الحديث في الحصة.	4.19	83.87%
20	My English teacher has a good knowledge of the subject. معلم اللغة الانجليزية يمتلك معرفة جيدة باللغة الانجليزية	4.38	87.60%
21	My English teacher shows interest in my learning style preference. معلم اللغة الانجليزية يبدي رغبته و اهتمامه بطريقتي المفضلة للتعلم.	3.89	77.73%
22	My English teacher shouts at me when I make mistakes. معلم اللغة الانجليزية يصرخ في وجهي عندما ارتكب أخطاء.	2.28	45.60%
23	My English teacher has a good sense of humor معلم اللغة الانجليزية يمتلك روحا مرحة.	4.06	81.20%
24	My English teacher has good speaking skills معلم اللغة الانجليزية يمتلك مهارات التحدث الجيدة	4.33	86.67%
25	My English teacher uses communicative activities when teaching معلم اللغة الانجليزية يستخدم أنشطة التواصل عند التدريس.	3.60	72.00%
26	My English teacher allows discussion and debate among group and pair work معلم الأنجليزية يسمح بالنقاش والمناظرة في مجموعات وثنائيات.	3.91	78.27%
27	The university English language text books include communicative activities. اللغة الانجليزية الجامعية تشمل على أنشطة التحدث.	3.93	78.67%
28	I learn to speak through interesting games. أتعلم أن أتحدث من خلال ألعاب ممتعة	3.73	74.53%
29	I can make oral presentations in front of the class. أستطيع أن أقدم عرض أمام طلاب الصف	3.74	74.80%
30	I am allowed to use L1 when I cannot express myself in English. يسمح لي باستخدام اللغة الأم عندما أتعثر في الحديث باللغة الانجليزية.	3.31	66.27%

It is clear from table 4.2.3 that statement 20 received the highest degree of agreement (87.60%), which means that the tertiary staff at Gezira University have good knowledge of the subject matter and, therefore, it couldn't be taken as a factor behind students' communication apprehension. On

the other hand, statement (11) received the lowest degree of agreement (37.20%), which means that undergraduate students at Gezira University don't fear participating in the English class and, therefore, it couldn't be taken as a factor behind their communication apprehension.

The remaining statements of the questionnaire received between average degree of agreement and high degree of agreement, with three statements for low degree of agreement. Detailed discussion of the questionnaire items can be as follows:

Statements 5,8,10 and 11 received low degree of agreement. This could mean that undergraduate students at Gezira University don't consider fear of classmates, shyness and worry as obstacles to their communication performance.

Statements 1, 2, 3, 4, 6,9, 12,13,14,16 and 30 received average degree of agreement, whereas Statements 7, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29 received high and very high degree of agreement. This could mean that students attribute their communication apprehension to a number of factors: fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, lack of special speaking skills, lack of adequate preparation, linguistic factors, teachers' behavior, use of L1, lack of motivation, and unclear or difficult instructions. It could be concluded that the findings confirm hypothesis 2 as most of the CA causes provided by participants were suggested earlier by the researcher.

5. Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following are offered as recommendations for students and teachers.

5.1.1 Recommendations for Students

First, students should be encouraged to learn more independently and consider ways and strategies to manage their own apprehension. Secondly, students should not hide their apprehension, but rather

discuss it with their teachers and peers. Thirdly, students should have a better attitude to the importance of oral communication. Fourth, students should make use of social media to improve their communication skills. Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Snap chat and Linked in are found to be effective ways to develop users' social and communication skills.

5.1.2 Recommendations for Teachers and Educational Policy-makers

Teachers play an important role in reducing students' communication apprehension. Firstly, they should develop an understanding of the CA construct. Secondly, teachers should develop class programs that foster communication needs. For example, they can converse with students on topics that are of interest to them and they can listen to their students attentively, affirming and acknowledging what students are saying. Thirdly, teachers are urged to focus on building confidence in their students and create an atmosphere of mutual trust; students- students and students-teachers. Fourth, teachers should provide students with an easy-going, comfortable, and secure classroom environment. For example, they should give positive feedback and highlight the good points of their students. They should teach students relevant social skills and create a sociable and friendly environment in the classroom.

In addition, educational and language policy- makers should implement a mechanism for teacher training to equip EFL teachers with necessary skills to address factors influencing oral communication apprehension.

It is also recommended that more national centres of English language teaching and research, such as (SELT), should be established to assist Sudanese universities in designing curricula, developing materials and training teachers.

5.2 Conclusion

This paper has presented some findings regarding oral communication apprehension among Sudanese undergraduate students majoring in English, specifically at Gezira University. The results showed that the majority of students had an average level of CA. However, there were few students with low and high level of communication apprehension. The findings also revealed that students attribute their communication apprehension to a number of causes (see section 4.2.3). Based on the findings, recommendations were offered (section 5.1).

6. The Present Study versus Previous Studies

The findings of the present study confirm the findings of previous studies, in relation to the causes of CA and the possible ways to treat/reduce CA. However, the present study differs from previous studies in the degree of participants' level of apprehension; participants in previous studies showed high level of communication apprehension whereas participants in this study showed average level of CA. Moreover, the researchers in the previous studies used more than a tool to conduct their studies whereas only one tool (questionnaires) was used in this study.

7. Directions for Further Studies

This study is considered a pioneer study in the situation of identifying the level of students' communication apprehension at tertiary level, in Sudan. It would,

therefore, be useful to carry out similar studies at different universities in the country as well as at basic and secondary levels. This would further deepen the understanding of the topic.

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