

## Analysis Apprehension in Language Learning among the Sudanese Students at Schools

Thoyba Khalid Abd – Elbagi - Mahammud Ali Ahmed

### Abstract

This paper investigates the students' oral production apprehension at the Sudanese secondary schools with the aim of finding out the factors behind this type of apprehension to help in learning a second language. The study is carried out on some secondary schools in the eastern parts of Khartoum State. The researcher adopted the qualitative approach in analyzing the statement of the research using the Statistic Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) in analyzing the data collected through a questionnaire consisted of two parts for both teachers and learners. The study found out that the majority of the EFL Sudanese learners at secondary schools have cute difficulties in overcoming their fears in dealing with learning second language. The study also found that fear, shyness are central elements in delaying the process of learning a second language. For this reason, the researcher recommended that the Secondary school teachers in the Sudanese schools should talentedly choose the right methods and techniques used in the class to encourage the students who are victims of apprehension of learning.

### المستخلص

تناولت الدراسة مخاوف التلاميذ في المرحلة الثانوية من التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية وسعت الدراسة إلى توضيح العوامل المؤدية إلى هذه المخاوف، لتساعد التلاميذ على تعلم تلك اللغة الأجنبية. أجرت الباحثة الدراسة في عدة مدارس ثانوية بولاية الخرطوم اتبعت فيها المنهج الوصفي مستخدما التحليل الإحصائي لتحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها باستخدام الاستبيان المقدم لتلاميذ المدارس بمحلية شرق النيل. ابرزت الدراسة أن أغلبية التلاميذ في المرحلة الثانوية لديهم مخاوف من استخدام اللغة في محادثاتهم إذ لا يستطيعون التخلص من هذا الخوف. وظهرت أن الخوف والخجل هما عاملان رئيسيان في عملية تعليم اللغة واستخدامها استخداما صحيحا لهذا توصي الباحثة معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس بالمرحلة الثانوية اختيار واستخدام الأساليب المختلفة الفعالة لحث ومساعدة هؤلاء التلاميذ لاجتياز هذه العقبات.

### Introduction

Learning a foreign language is much more complex process, because it does not only require to know vocabulary and grammar of a language being acquired, but also knowledge about the context and culture and a new way of thinking and acting needs a great consideration. This process also includes certain type of apprehension. Abundant researches have proved language learning apprehension (Ellis 1996 et al). Learning a second

language is a long and complex undertaking (Brown, 2007).

The study investigates the Sudanese students' apprehension in oral production and the factors that lead to such type of apprehension as well as the extents to which such apprehension may affect language learning process namely the oral production in terms of speaking skills. The study contains the overall process of learning process with all its dimensions in the classroom environment as well as outside classroom contexts



### Hypotheses

- 1) Apprehension exerted a strong influence on the students competence and negatively affect their unwilling to communicate
- 2) Teachers can use more activities in oral production to reduce learners' apprehension problems

### Literature Review

Communication apprehension is also known as communication anxiety or performance anxiety. Since foreign language learning emphasizes the importance of interpersonal interactions, the communication apprehension construct plays an important role in language learning. An individual experiencing communication apprehension finds it difficult to speak in a group or in public, or even to listen to a spoken message.

The communication apprehension can also be caused by the necessity to produce language structures in a language which is not yet fully mastered. The inability to express themselves in a desired manner or to understand others can lead to frustration and can make otherwise talkative people silent in foreign language class (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Language anxiety plays a fundamental role in the learning process affecting the learners' cognitive and behavioral appearance. Anxious students are more concerned about their responses to tasks and performance in tasks they receive in language classroom. It is stated that "Language learning is a cognitive activity that relies on encoding, storage, and retrieval processes, and anxiety can interfere with each of these by creating a divided attention scenario for anxious students. Anxious students are focused on both the task at hand and their reactions to it (p.96)".

Fear of negative evaluation is defined as "an apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate the learner negatively" (Watson and Friend 1969: 450). Finally, the third type of anxiety considered to be connected to LA, i.e. test anxiety, though related specifically to the academic context of test taking, stems from the more general fear of failure caused by lack of certainty about one's ability or knowledge evaluated via tests.

Horwitz et al. define communication apprehension as "a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people". They argue that a learner who has difficulty in listening to or learning a spoken message or has difficulty in speaking in public or in a group is experiencing communication apprehension.

Fear of negative evaluation is defined as an "apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate one negatively" (Watson & Friend, 1969 as cited in Foss & Reitzel, 1988), and it is indicated that it may be experienced in any social, evaluative situation such as speaking in a FL. Test Anxiety is defined as the type of performance anxiety resulting from fear of failure (Horwitz et al., 1986).

In order to reduce anxiety while teaching, Gardner and Leak (1994) suggested that training programs that increase awareness of anxiety and equip individuals with strategies to cope with anxiety could be implemented. They asserted that communication between colleagues is vital because teachers would see that they are not alone and that other teachers may also be experiencing teaching anxiety.



Apprehension may lead to negative attitude towards the language and to the teacher. In this sense, when the learner loses the motivation because of some difficulty concerning the language, and this type of problem need the skillful teacher who is able to help the student overcome this apprehension.

The third source of anxiety is fear of negative evaluation which refers to “apprehension about others’ evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate one-self negatively. People who are extremely worried about other people’s impressions like to behave in a way that lessen the possibility of critical evaluation wherein they might leave or avoid social discussions.

It seems to be similar to test anxiety, but not limited to test environment as it occurs in different situations either social or evaluative situations like job interview or speaking in front of the class. It usually occurs when a FL learner assumes that he/she is not capable to achieve the appropriate social impression. The fear of appearing awkward, foolish or incompetent in the eyes of the learners’ can inhibit attempts to communicate confidently. Hence, once that happens student will avoid communicating and stay silent. ( Williams 2008:181-191)

According to Gesell (1985) effective FL learning has to be started before the age of 10. He was speaking of the critical period, a term that has widely influenced theories of learning. Also in discussions about “How Children Learn”, many participants of the workshops favored the idea of the critical period.

However, some psychologists, like the Swiss Hans Aebli, question Gesell’s ideas, arguing that it is mainly the educational environment that influences the learning of a foreign

language. Another important name mentioned in this context is that of David Singleton, who stated that “the younger the better only in the long run” (Mitchell and Myles 1998: 18).

The above highlights a very important element in dealing with learning with is the age. Young learners have the keenness to learn due to their young age than the adults. A set of methods are used in the field of learning and teaching the second language. Each of these methods has its own characteristics and techniques as well as principles that makes it more effective in helping both the teacher and the learner to overcome the difficulties of learning. This chapter sheds light on some of the methods and shows their role and relation to apprehension in dealing with language learning.

A method in language teaching is a way of teaching a language which is based on systematic principles and procedures, i.e. which is an application of views on how a language is best taught and learned and a particular theory of language and of language learning. Language teachers must make decision all the time. Some decisions are relatively minor ones. Others have more profound implications. What should be the goal of language instructions? Which language method will be more effective to reach the goal? there is no single answer to these questions. However , the purpose of this section is to provide information about the methods of foreign language teaching and their relation to the learners' apprehension

To remove reading apprehension, learners are required to have sufficient language capacity, cultural experience as well as motivation, because reading is a cognitive process that demand thinking and using of the subsidiary skills like scanning and skimming.

Although several studies on foreign or second language apprehension claimed that speaking is the most anxiety-provoking situation, Saito et al. (1999) maintained that reading contributes to language learning apprehension and heightens apprehension especially when performing reading tasks.

When it comes to reading, many students experience anxiety even during silent reading. There are two aspects of foreign language reading which have great potential for eliciting anxiety: unfamiliar pronunciation and writing systems and unfamiliar cultural material

The communication apprehension can also be caused by the necessity to produce language structures in a language which is not yet fully mastered. The inability to express themselves in a desired manner or to understand others can lead to frustration and can make otherwise talkative people silent in foreign language class (Horwitz et al., 1986).

In formal education, tests are a common measurement of progress, and performance evaluation is an ongoing feature of most foreign language classes (Horwitz et al., 1986). The importance of testing is stressed since the beginning of one's education. It is not, therefore, unusual that most students experience some level of anxiety when it comes to testing.

### The Results

*Table (4.1) shows results of questionnaire of the first statement*

#### I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	9	22.5	22.5	22.5
Valid yes	31	77.5	77.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table (4.1) shows that 77.5% answered positively and 22.5% negatively responded.

### Method

The study will use the descriptive analytical method. The researcher will use a questionnaire as a tool to collect the data from the EFL learners at the Sudanese secondary schools by distributing this questionnaire to the third level students to identify the main causes of oral production apprehension. Then it will be analyzed statistically with SPSS Program.

### Population

This research was conducted in Khartoum state, East Nile Locality. The population of this study were the students of Nahda Secondary School for girls/boys. Students in this school as in other schools study general subjects such as: Biology, Physics, History, Geography, etc. All the students in this school share the same circumstances such as: The academic year, the academic system, the number of subjects, the number of classes, etc.

### Instruments

In this research, the researcher adopted a questionnaire for students and another for teachers to show the effects of apprehension in the process of learning a second language. These questionnaires were designed to collect data about the students' and teachers' attitudes towards learning a second language in terms of language production apprehension.

As shown in the chart below:



**I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.**

*Table (4.2) shows results of questionnaire of the second statement*

**I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	17	42.5	42.5	42.5
sometimes	13	32.5	32.5	75.0
yes	10	25.0	25.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table (4.2) shows that 25.0% answered positively and 42.5% negatively responded and those who said sometimes are represented by 32.5%.

As shown in the chart:

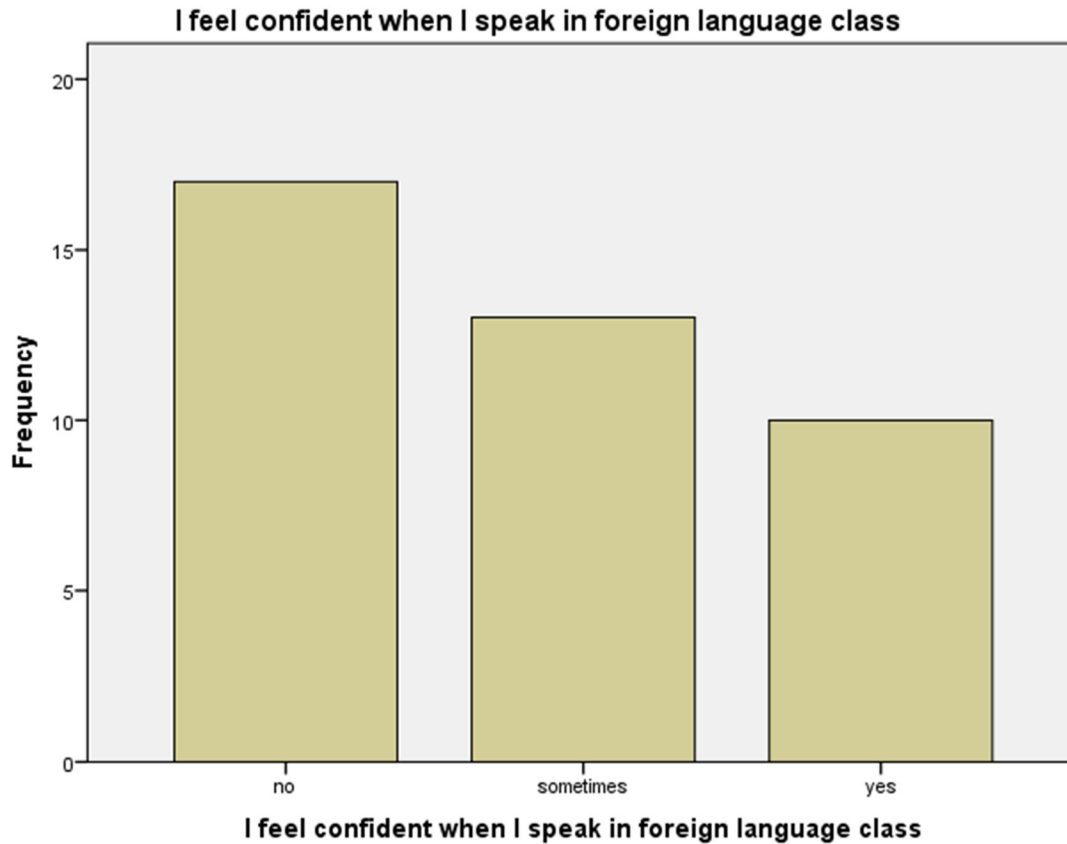


Table (4.3) shows *results of questionnaire of the third statement*

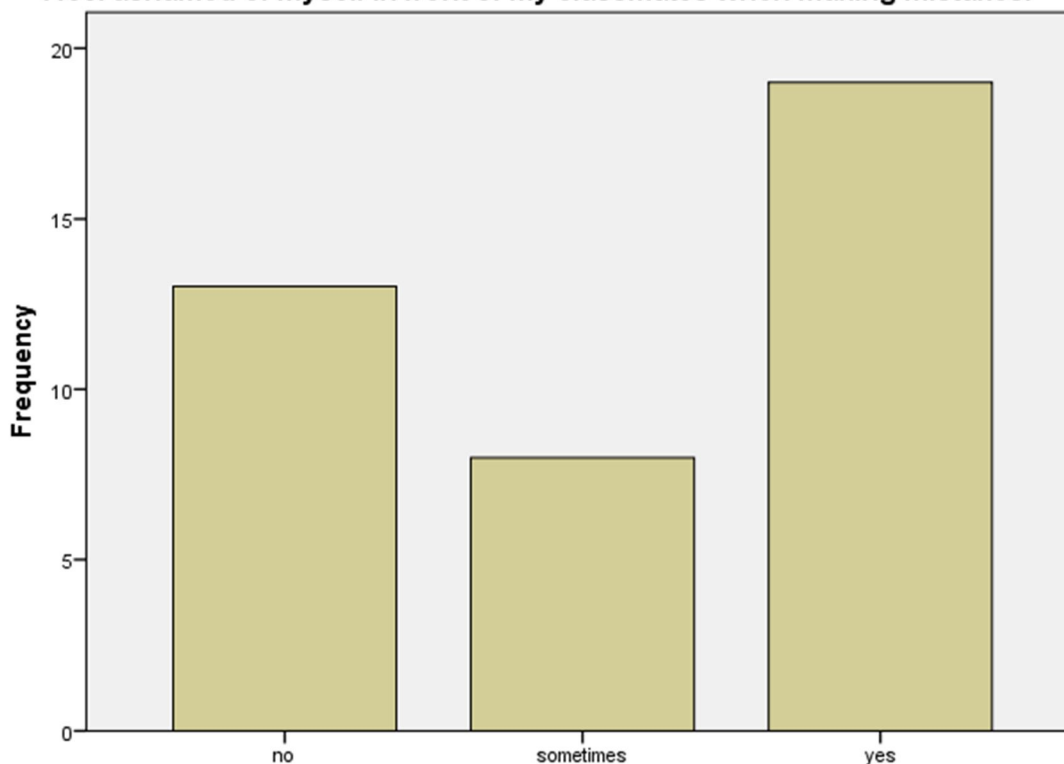
**I feel ashamed of myself in front of my classmates when making mistakes.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	13	32.5	32.5	32.5
sometimes	8	20.0	20.0	52.5
yes	19	47.5	47.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table (4.3) shows that 47.5% answered positively and 32.5% negatively responded and those who said sometimes are represented by 20.0%.

As shown in the chart below:

I feel ashamed of myself in front of my classmates when making mistakes.



I feel ashamed of myself in front of my classmates when making mistakes.

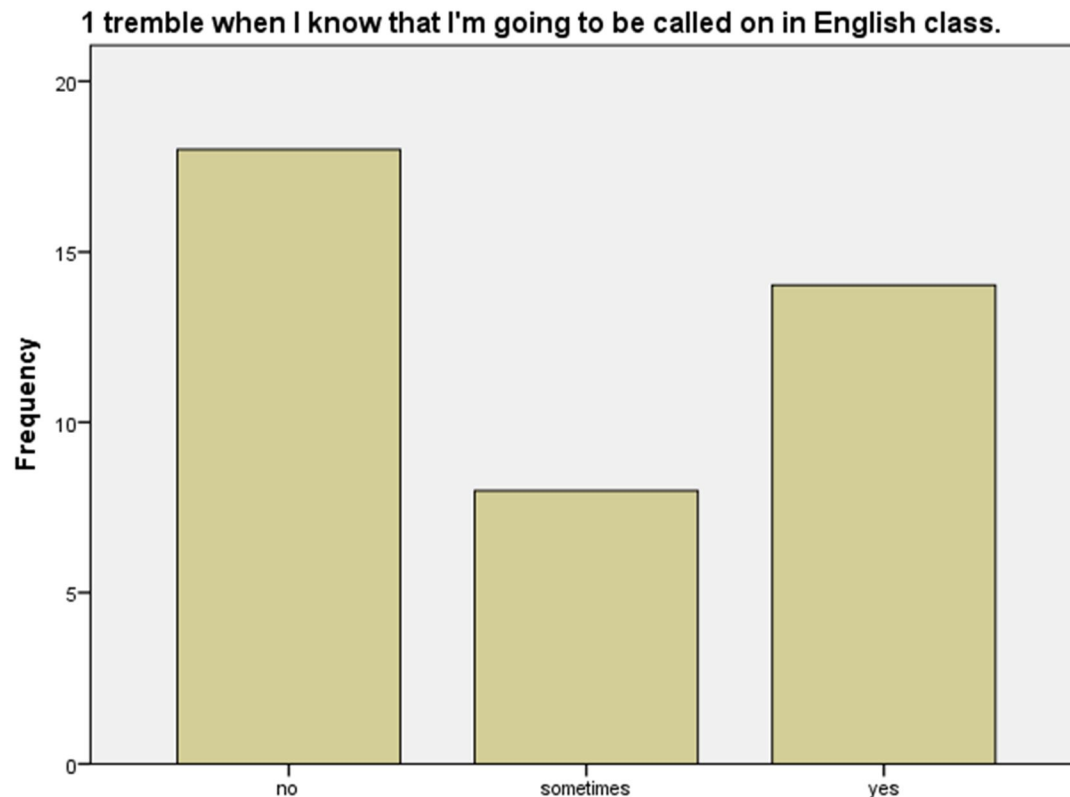
Table (4.4) shows *results of questionnaire of the fourth statement*

**I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in English class.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	18	45.0	45.0	45.0
sometimes	8	20.0	20.0	65.0
yes	14	35.0	35.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table (4.4) shows that 35.0% answered positively and 45.0% negatively responded and those who said sometimes are represented by 20.0%.

As it is clear in the chart:



1 tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in English class.

Table (4.5) shows *results of questionnaire of the fifth statement*

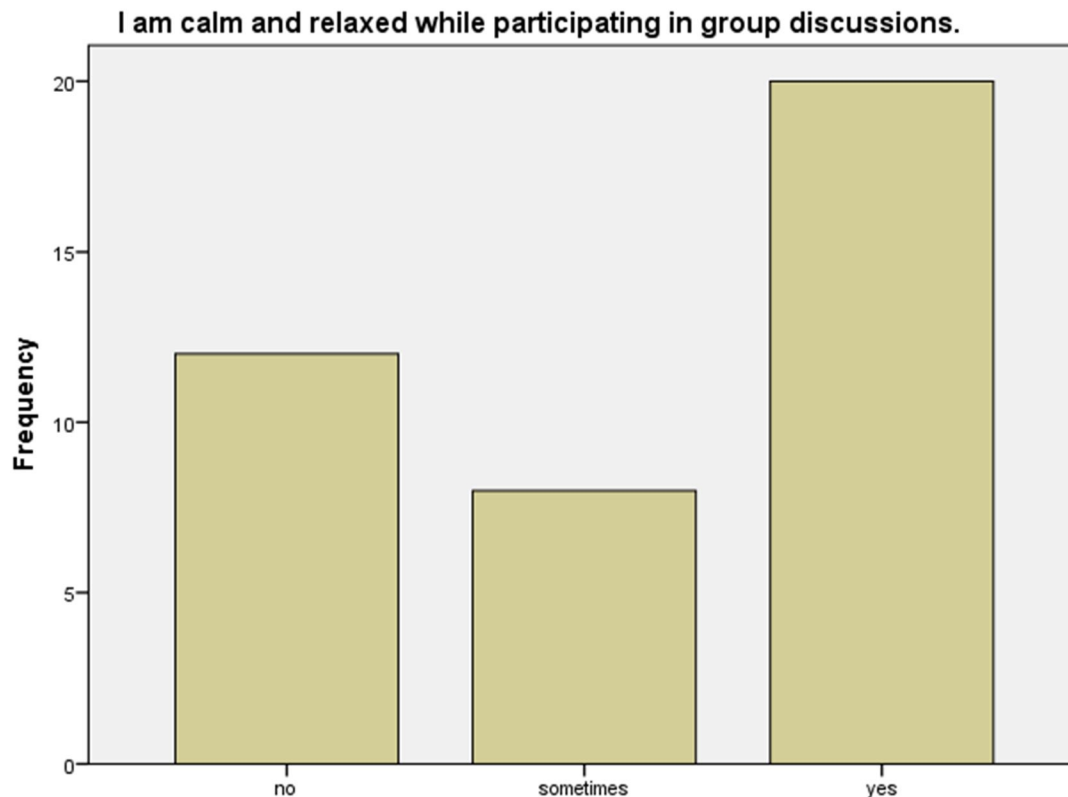
**I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	12	30.0	30.0	30.0
sometimes	8	20.0	20.0	50.0
yes	20	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table (4.5) shows that 50.0% answered positively and 30.0% negatively responded and those who said sometimes are represented by 20.0%.

As in the chart:





I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.

Table (4.6) shows *results of questionnaire of the sixth statement*

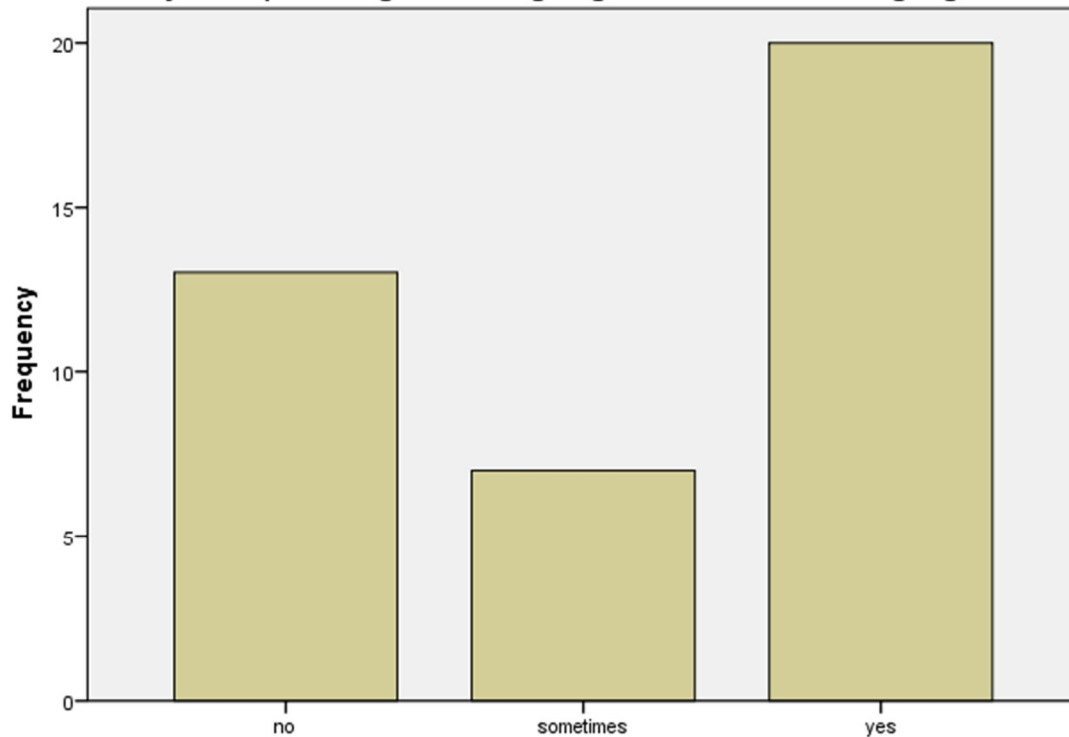
I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	13	32.5	32.5	32.5
sometimes	7	17.5	17.5	50.0
yes	20	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table (4.6) shows that 50.0% answered positively and 32.5% negatively responded and those who said sometimes are represented by 17.5%.

As shown in the chart:

I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.



I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.

Table (4.7) shows *results of questionnaire of the seventh statement*  
I feel relaxed during the English classes

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	9	22.5	22.5	22.5
sometimes	11	27.5	27.5	50.0
yes	20	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table (4.7) shows that 50.0% answered positively and 22.5% negatively responded and those who said sometimes are represented by 27.5%.

As shown in the chart:

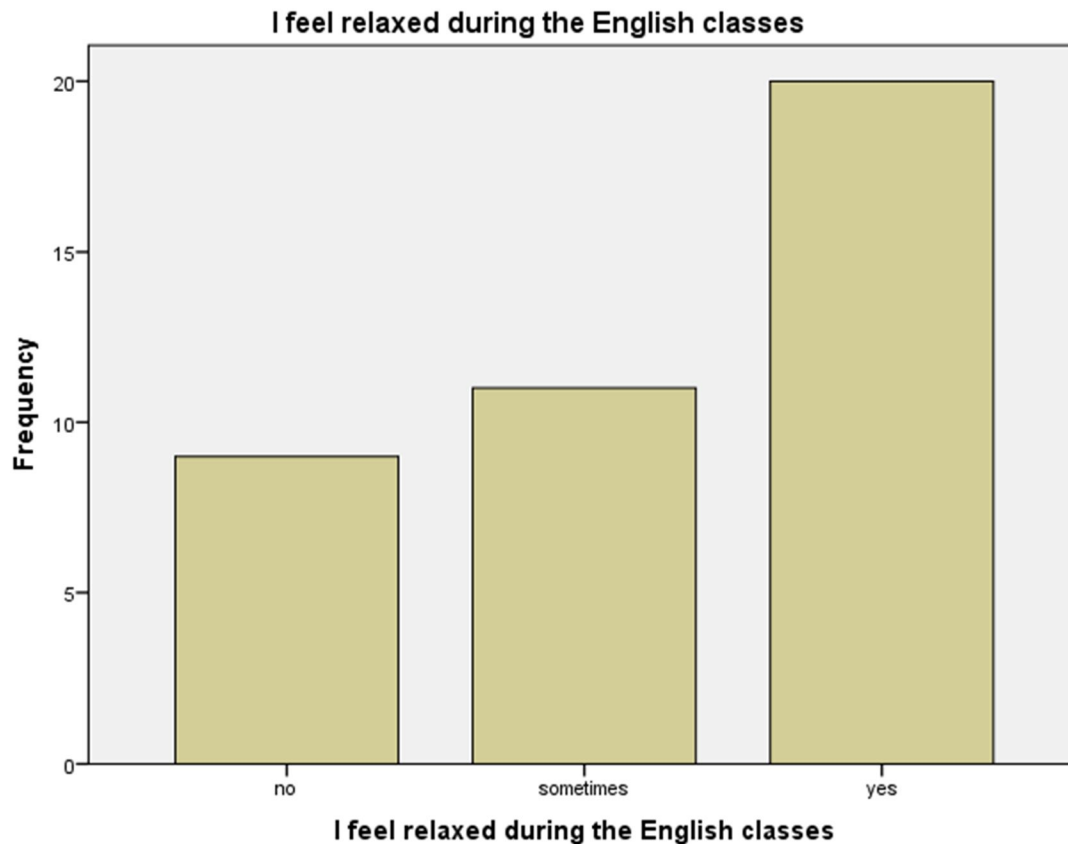


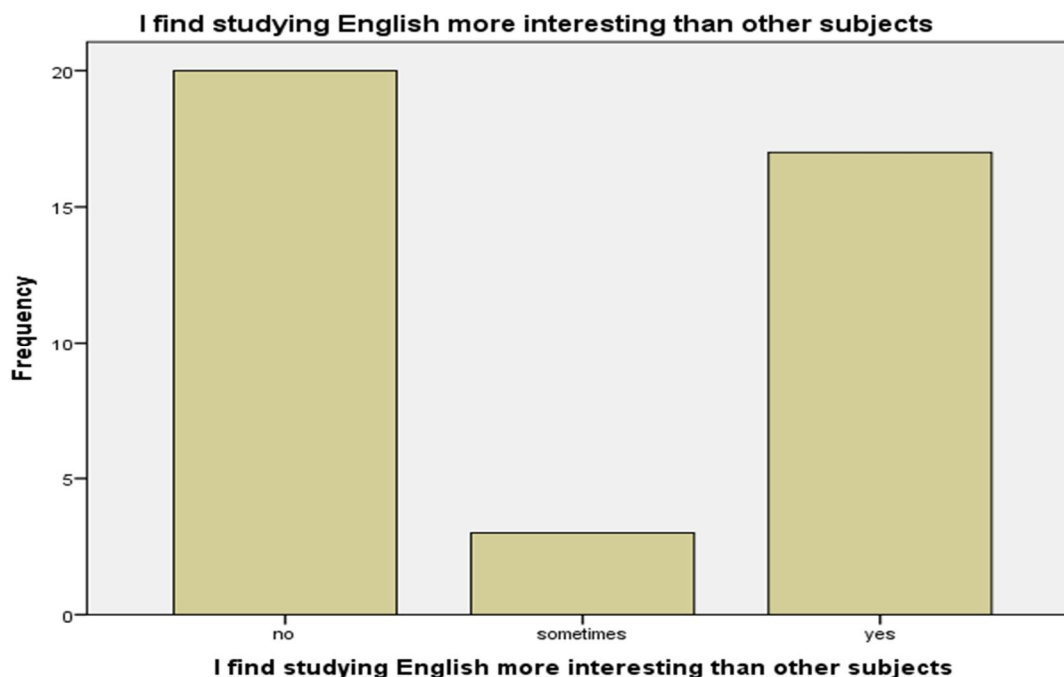
Table (4.8) shows *results of questionnaire of the eighth statement*

**I find studying English more interesting than other subjects**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	20	50.0	50.0	50.0
sometimes	3	7.5	7.5	57.5
yes	17	42.5	42.5	100.0
Valid Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table (4.8) shows that 42.5% answered positively and 50.0% negatively responded and those who said sometimes are represented by 7.5%.

As shown in the chart:



The overall results of the first part are shown in one table that gives all the responses to the questionnaire towards the items from (1-8) alongside with their percentages below:

#### Discussion

It is observed that many students worry about the consequences of failing in their foreign language class. This makes the learning tasks very difficult. In this sense, apprehension is one of the obstacles of dealing with foreign language learning, because the number of the students who feel confident when they speak in foreign language class is very few if compared to those who show any type of apprehension; like reading or speaking apprehension. The feeling of being less confident affects the participation of the students in their classroom activities.

The majority of the respondents to the questionnaire feel ashamed in front of their classmates when making mistakes. However, making mistakes is something unnatural; rather it is an expected thing especially in dealing with learning a second

or a foreign language. Such a feeling is a two – dimension weapon in that sometimes, this feeling leads to the intended success depending on the person. It could also be destructive, because it prohibits the learner development even if he / she is aware of the answer of any question for example.

On the other hand, some students are characterized by being calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions. This is unfortunately a rare phenomenon, especially with the existence of either internal or external fear that could control and influence the learning process inside the classroom. The teacher can observe such feeling of fear and or relaxation among their students. In this sense, the teachers' role is to remove fear and encourage the students to overcome such hindrances in learning.



#### References

**McCroskey, J. C.** (1987). Willingness to communicate. In J. C. McCroskey & J. A. Daly (Eds.), *Personality and interpersonal communication*.

**Gardner, L. E. & Leak, G. K.** (1994). Characteristics and correlates of teaching anxiety among college psychology teachers. *Teaching of Psychology*, 21(1), 28-32. Retrieved from the EBSCO Host Database.

**Hatch, E. & Farhady H.** (1981). *Research Design and Statistics for Applied Linguistics*. Tehran: Rahnama Publications.

**Horwitz, E. K.** (1996). Even teachers get the blues: recognizing and alleviating language teachers' feeling of foreign language anxiety. *Foreign Language Annals*, 29(3), 365-372.

**MacIntyre, P. D. & Gardner, R. C.** (1994). The subtle effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing in the second language. *Language Learning*, 42(2), 283-305.

**Young, Dolly J.** (1991). Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment: what does language anxiety research suggest?.

**Foss, K. D. & Reitzel A. C.** (1988). A relational model for managing second language anxiety. *TESOL Quarterly*, 22(2), 437-454.

**Omaggio, A. C.** Teaching language in context. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, Inc., 1986.

**Krashen, S.** Principles and practice in second language acquisition. New York: Pergamon Press, 1982.

**Raimes, A.** (1991). Out of the woods: Emerging traditions in the teaching