



**Sudan University of Science and Technology**

**College of Graduate Studies**

**College of Languages**



# **An Investigation of Relative Clauses Difficulties among EFL Sudanese Secondary School Students**

**(A Case Study of Some Sudanese Secondary Schools Students)**

**تقصي صعوبات الجمل الموصولة لدى بعض طلاب المدارس الثانوية السودانية في تعلم اللغة  
الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية**

**(دراسة حالة بعض الطلاب بالمدارس الثانوية السودانية)**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Ph.D in English Language (Applied Linguistics)**

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## Qur'anic Verse

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



صدق الله العظيم

My Lord! grant me that I should be grateful for Thy favor which Thou best bestowed on me and on my parents , and that I should do good such as Thou art pleased with, and make me enter , by Thy mercy, into Thy servants , the good ones( Alnaml :19).

# **Dedication**

**I dedicate this research to**

**My family**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to investigate relative clauses difficulties experienced by EFL students at Sudanese secondary schools. The study took place at Almanar Secondary Private School for Boys and Girls in the school academic year (2021-2022). The study has adopted the descriptive analytical method: the researcher has collected data by using two tools, a diagnostic test for (30) EFL Sudanese secondary second year school students and a questionnaire for (30)EFL Sudanese secondary school teachers .To analyze the data of the study the researcher has used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).The findings of the study revealed that EFL Sudanese secondary school students encounter some difficulties in using relative clauses; they do not put relative words in the most appropriate place within the sentence as they are unaware of punctuation of the sentence which lead to misunderstanding , when joining sentences together , students join them in the manner conjunctions are used without paying attention to certain exceptions in the usage of using relative clauses hence they find the sentences unfamiliar due to their weak grammar and unawareness of English syntactic structure ..etc . In the light of the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that students should be aware of the importance of English syntactic structure in the process of EFL learning .Furthermore, teachers should teach grammar systematically and comprehensively and allow sufficient practice time, teachers should also focus on the overall structure of English relative clauses as a way of facilitating holistic development of English skills, in addition, understanding of the errors is helpful in the teaching and learning process since it enables both the teacher and students to identify the causes of the errors and find appropriate solutions towards improving the students' learning process.

### **Key words:**

Foreign language learning, English relative clauses, relative clauses difficulties

## (Arabic Version)

### المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة لتقصي صعوبات الجمل الموصولة لطلاب المدارس الثانوية السودانية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لغة اجنبية. اجريت هذه الدراسة بمدرسة المنار الثانوية الخاصة للبنين والبنات في العام الدراسي (2021-2022). استخدمت الباحثة طريقة الوصف التحليلي و جمعت البيانات بواسطة أداتين هما الإختبار التشخيصي الذي اجري لعدد (30) من طلاب الفرقة الثانية بالمدارس الثانوية السودانية و الاستبانة التي اجريت لعدد (30) معلماً ومعلمة للغة الإنجليزية بالمدارس الثانوية السودانية. استخدمت الباحثة برنامج الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية لتحليل البيانات. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن هنالك بعض الصعوبات التي تواجه طلاب المدارس الثانوية السودانية في استخدام الجمل الموصولة فهم لا يضعون الكلمات الموصولة في الموضع الأنسب في الجملة لانهم لا يدركون علامات الترتيم في الجملة مما يؤدي الى اللبس . علاوة على ذلك عند ربط الجمل معا يقوم الطلاب بربطهم بطريقة استخدام الروابط دون الالتفات الى بعض الاستثناءات في استخدام الجمل الموصولة فهم يجدون الجمل غير مالوفة بالنسبه لهم بسبب ضعف قواعدهم اللغوية وعدم وعيهم بالبنية النحوية للغة الإنجليزية. بناء على تلك النتائج فإن الباحثة توصي بأنه ينبغي على الطلاب ادراك أهمية البنية النحوية للغة الإنجليزية في عملية تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كـلغة أجنبية . علاوة على ذلك، ينبغي على المعلمين تدريس قواعد اللغة بشكل منهجي وشامل وإتاحة الوقت الكافي للممارسة و ينبغي على المعلمين أيضا التركيز على البنية العامة للجمل الموصولة كطريقة لتسهيل التطوير الشامل لمهارات اللغة الإنجليزية. بالإضافة الى ان ادراك الأخطاء مفيد في عملية التدريس والتعلم لأنه يمكن كل من المعلم والطلاب من تحديد أسباب الأخطاء وإيجاد الحلول المناسبة لتحسين عملية تعلم الطلاب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: , تعلم اللغة الأجنبية, الجمل الموصولة الإنجليزية, صعوبات الجمل الموصولة

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background:

For EFL learners to learn and master the language , it is important to understand certain aspects of language , relativisation is one of these important aspects that learners need to understand . According to Aruya (2005) relativisation is a process through which a sentence is embedded in another sentence when the two sentences refer to the same noun or noun phrase, this embedded sentence is called a relative clause and it is introduced by such relative pronouns as who, whose, which, where..etc depending on the semantic properties of the noun phrase being relativised.

Mabah(2006) pointed out that for EFL learners, the effective mastery of relative clauses proves to be the most difficult task as the level of competence and performance of the learners' use of the relative clauses must reflect the learners' knowledge level in the use of English.

Relative clauses are very useful in the process of language learning because they help learners to be more specific and make expressions more interesting, at the same time , they can be very confusing to many EFL learners and users and often used incorrectly, for example some learners of English think that relative pronouns are generally used to join sentences together to form relative clauses in the manner conjunctions are used without paying attention to certain exceptions in the usage . For example, an EFL learner may produce a sentence like “ \*the boy which you sent me to him” as the most common difficulty occurs in grasping the intended meaning, choosing the correct pronoun(person), using the correct

punctuation, using a preposition with an appropriate relative pronoun and maintaining subject-verb agreement.

Morley (2001:90) claimed that teaching relative clauses is neglected in the curriculum at many schools and universities because teachers and students are more interested in other English skills and do not consider it an important part of their courses hence they do not pay attention to teaching English structure.

Relative clauses have always been an important issue to the EFL researchers because of their complex syntactic structure and therefore constitute learning problem to the language learner (Selinker, 2001).

The formation of relative clauses presents problems to EFL learners due to the complexity of the syntactic structure of relative clauses. In this paper the researcher tries to investigate relative clauses difficulties among EFL Sudanese secondary school students, identifies the causes and proposes some suitable solutions to overcome these difficulties that the subjects of the study encounter.

## **1.2 The Statement of the Problem:**

From her observation and experience of teaching EFL, the researcher has noticed that most EFL Sudanese secondary school students face numerous serious deficiencies in using relative clauses ;they do not put them in the most appropriate place within the sentence, they are unaware of punctuation of the sentence which may lead to misunderstanding , moreover, EFL learners are faced with challenges in appropriately using relative clauses thus making them unable to make either or both logically and grammatically correct sentences.

Furthermore, when it comes to joining sentences together they join them in the manner conjunctions are used without paying attention to certain exceptions in the usage of using relative clauses and they are observed to be very poor performers, resulting in comparatively poor achievement, too.

This problem was also noticed by other teachers who teach EFL at different Sudanese secondary schools. The same problem was also observed in other schools in Sudan and other countries (Hasan 2003,Ahmed 2011&Chowdhury 2015 ) . The findings of these studies have emphasized that EFL learners face serious difficulties in using relative clauses. For example, Ja'fr (2013) reported that these problems are attributed to inadequate grammar knowledge, limited knowledge of vocabulary, lack of practice, lack of ideas, punctuation and English sentence structure. Gao(2014) asserted that limited knowledge of English grammar, inadequate vocabulary and poor awareness of the features of connected sentences are the main causes of relative clauses problems.

So, the researcher finds it important to explore these hurdles with the intention of suggesting the appropriate rectifications as the current study tries to investigate relative clauses difficulties among EFL Sudanese secondary school students , identifies the causes and proposes some suitable solutions to overcome these difficulties among EFL Sudanese secondary school students.



### **1.3 Objectives of the Study:**

The study is carried out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To shed light on relative clauses difficulties that face EFL Sudanese secondary school students.
2. To identify the causes of the problem.
3. To suggest some suitable solutions to overcome these relative clauses difficulties.

### **1.4 Questions of the Study:**

The following questions form the basis of this study:

1. To what extent do EFL Sudanese secondary school students have difficulties in using relative clauses?
2. What are the causes of relative clause difficulties that face EFL Sudanese secondary school students?
3. How can these relative clauses problems be solved?

### **1.5 Hypotheses of the Study:**

The following hypotheses are postulated:

1. Most EFL Sudanese secondary school students face some difficulties in using relative clauses.
2. Relative clauses difficulties are attributed to many factors.

3. Teachers can help students to overcome relative clauses difficulties by raising their awareness about the importance of English language structure and using relative clauses for learning in general and providing them with suitable techniques and strategies to improve their English language structure.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study:**

This study investigates relative clauses difficulties encountered by EFL Sudanese secondary school students. Awareness of the factors that can contribute to the problems of EFL relative clauses would benefit the following groups: EFL Learners can identify relative clauses problems and be aware of the factors that can contribute to their relative clauses difficulties; when learners know something about their own difficulties, they will be able to apply the right strategies and techniques of learning and become better learners. In addition, EFL teachers will have better understanding of their students' difficulties and examine their own teaching methods, techniques and materials accordingly; when teachers are aware of their students' difficulties, this will help them to guide students to overcome some of their problems and design materials that suit the level, interest and the needs of the students. The study shall also form a point of departure for syllabus designers and material writers to make further improvement in their teaching materials. Furthermore, the study will also benefit educators in the field of teaching English structure.

Moreover, researchers who are interested in EFL research to use the findings of the study as a basis for further study in the area as the current study paves the way for other researchers to conduct further studies on developing EFL students' English language structure .

The study will also contribute to the existing literature in the field of teaching and learning English language structure.

### **1.7 Limits of the study:**

This study has the following limits:

#### 1. Human Limits:

This study is limited to EFL secondary school students at Sudanese secondary schools; they are at approximately the same level of English abilities.

#### 2. Locative Limits:

Almanar Private Secondary School for Boys and Girls is the place where the study is conducted.

#### 3. Temporal Limits:

This study is conducted during the school academic year 2021-2022.

#### 4. Topical limits:

This study investigates relative clauses difficulties encountered by EFL Sudanese secondary school students.

### **1.8 Structure of the Study:**

This study consists of the following chapters:

Chapter One is an introductory chapter ; it presents an introduction, research problem, objectives, questions of the study , hypotheses, significance , research limits , the methodology of the study and structure of the study.

Chapter Two deals with the review of the related literature to the study which includes the literature related to the questions of the study, in addition to some previous studies which in a way or another contribute to the present study.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology followed by the researcher in order to collect data for this study.

Chapter Four shows the statistical analysis of the data collected by the test and the questionnaire and discusses the hypotheses of the study.

Chapter Five gives the conclusion which the study came up with, the discussion of the results of the study that was analyzed in Chapter Four , summarizes the overall results , gives recommendations on the basis of the findings of the study and concludes the paper.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Theoretical Background**

##### **2.1.1 Background:**

The acquisition of relative clauses has been the subject of many debates in the past three years, mainly because of their complex syntactic behavior in comparison with other structures as the main function of relative clauses is conveying something about the referent of the head noun such function is integrated to language communication; hence mastering the use of these clauses is vitally important to EFL learners.

In EFL contexts relative clauses are very often considered as one rather simple language construction, yet some space for their acquisition is left to the very end of students' language learning process. One of the possible reasons may be the fact that the necessity for their correct usage is much stressed in the written rather than in spoken language as the fact that at earlier stages the possibility of writing is normally at a higher level, and errors that commonly occur mainly concern this written part where their possible incorrect usage is more visible and can affect the meaning of the whole sentence significantly hence it is marked by intonation in speaking (Aruya ,2005) .

According to Smith(1974) processing English sentences , especially these which contain embedded clauses is particularly difficult to EFL learners around the globe as these difficulties arise from understanding the embedded clauses on one hand , and tracking the main clause on the other.

Morley (2001:90) claimed that teaching relative clauses is neglected in the curriculum at many schools and universities because teachers and students are more interested in other English skills and do not consider it an important part of their courses hence they do not pay attention to teaching English structure.

Relative clauses have always been an important issue to the EFL researchers because of their complex syntactic structure and therefore constitute learning problem to the language learner (Selinker, 2001).

Like any other language learning situation EFL Sudanese secondary school students face some difficulties in using relative clauses, these problems may have been caused by some factors such as poor awareness of lexis , background knowledge , syntax, motivation and lack of exposure to the target language , moreover, teachers do not use suitable learning materials that suit the levels and the needs of the students.

In addition, EFL students' difficulties in using relative clauses are related to the misunderstanding of using relative pronoun as some learners use a particular relative pronoun instead of another relative pronoun; moreover, they do not put them in the right place within the sentence .

According to Freeman(2008) relative clauses play pertinent roles in sentence development hence making it mandatory to observe the appropriateness of relative clauses in sentence construction. However, most of the EFL learners are faced with challenges in appropriately using relative clauses thus making them unable to make either or both logically and grammatically correct sentences.

Aruya (2005) stated that EFL learners' limited exposure to English relative clauses is a major reason for interchanging pronouns and putting them in place of relative clauses. However, frequent exposure increase the students' ability and confidence in English language structure thus enabling them to make grammatically correct sentence structure.

Porter& Roberts (1981) pointed out that " We cannot expect learners to handle types of language they have never or hardly ever been exposed to, when we choose authentic materials, we can set different tasks to suit the levels and the needs of the students", this suggests that it is the teacher's task to design activities according to the students' levels and needs.

Carl (2001) asserted that like any language learning situations EFL students face difficulties in using relative clauses, the problem may be caused by some factors that are related to one another to achieve its goals as the

students are expected to improve their English skills(listening-reading-writing and speaking), memorizing vocabulary using the appropriate structure , the material is becoming the main difficulty the students face as most students assumed that English grammar is the most difficult part to learn.

This chapter intends to establish theoretical background for the present study by giving further details concerning relative clauses problems and by providing a review of some of the previous studies and theories related to the study.

### **2.1.2 What is a clause?**

The clause can be defined as a group of words with its own subject and verb. Clauses can be classified into two main groups: independent clause (main clause) and dependent clause (subordinate clauses and relative clauses).

The independent clause forms a complete sentence as it can stand alone while dependent (subordinate) clauses forms a part of a sentence hence they cannot stand alone.

According to Burt (1971) clauses enrich oral and written expressions as they add details and clarify the meaning of the sentence, they also allow the user to join ideas that show different relationships hence they add logic and cohesion which are necessary elements for communication.

Therefore, a clause refers to a group of words that are part of a sentence containing a subject and predicate. A Sentence may have one or more clauses.

### **2.1.3Definitions of Relative Pronouns:**

According to Aruya (2005) in linguistics and grammar, a pronoun is a word that substitutes for a noun or noun phrase.

Pronouns can be divided into several categories: personal, indefinite, reflexive, reciprocal, possessive, demonstrative, interrogative and relative pronoun.

#### **1. Personal pronouns:**

English has two cases, subject and object. Subject pronouns are I, you, she, he, it, we, they. Subject pronouns are used when the person or thing is the subject of the sentence or the clause.

For example:

**I** like to eat chips, but **she** does not.

Object pronouns are me, your, her, him, it, us, them.

Object pronouns are used when the person or thing is the object of the sentence or clause.

For example:

John likes **me** but not **her**.

## **2. Reflexive pronouns**

They are used when a person or thing acts on itself.

For example:

She laughed at **herself**.

Reflexive pronouns are myself, yourself, yourselves, themselves, ourselves, himself, herself, itself .

## **3. Reciprocal Pronouns**

They refer to reciprocal relationship (each other, one another). They must refer to a noun phrase in the same clause.

For example:

They do not like **each other**.

Reflexive pronouns are used similarly to reciprocal pronouns in the sense that they typically refer back to the subject of the sentence.

For example:

John and Mary like **themselves**.

John and Mary like **each other**.



#### **4.Possessive pronouns**

They are used to indicate possession or ownership.

Possessive pronouns has two types, those are dependent and independent.

Dependent such as my, your, his, her, its, our, their.

For example:

Those clothes are **mine**.

Independent possessive pronouns are mine, your, his, hers, its, ours, theirs.

For example:

Those clothes are **hers**.

#### **5.Demonstrative pronouns**

There are four demonstrative pronouns in English; this, that, these, and those. Demonstrative pronouns often distinguish their targets by pointing or some other indication of position.

For example:

I will take **this**.

#### **6.Interrogative pronouns**

They ask which person or thing is meant. In reference to a person, one may use who (subject), whom (object), and whose (possessive).

For example:

**Who** did that?

#### **7.Indefinite pronouns**

They refer to non-specific beings, objects or places.

Indefinite pronouns can represent either count nouns or non- count nouns and include a number of sub-categories: universal (such as everyone, everything), assertive existential (such as somebody, something), elective existential (such as anyone, anything), and negative (such as nobody, nothing).

## 8. Relative pronouns

Relative pronouns mark a relative clause, it has the same referent in the main clause of a sentence that the relative clause modifies.

For example:

This is the house **that** Jack built.

Here the relative pronoun that marks the relative clause “that Jack built” modifies the noun ‘house’ in the main sentence. That refers to a house in the main clause and links to imagined sentences “This is a house” and “Jack built the house”, where house is the same in both sentences.

Fall (2017) stated that a relative pronoun is a pronoun functioning to connects or describing two sentences into one sentence such as when, who, whom, etc, they are used to introduce relative clauses hence they are called relative pronouns as they connect two sentences or clauses.

According to Freeman(2008) a relative clause is an adjective clause which uses conjunction of relative pronouns such as who, which, that, whom, and whose .

For example:

- The bike was sold.
- I borrow it last week.

The bike **which** I borrowed last week was sold.

- The girl is a bright student
- I gave a special reward to her.

The girl **whom** I gave a special reward to is a bright student.

The relative pronoun refer to noun or pronoun that preceded it and it is used to introduce a clause.

Relative pronoun are: who, which, whom, whose, and that.

1. Who is used to replace a person, both as subject and object.

For example:

- He is the man **who** has won the race.
- I spoke the woman **who** lives next door.

2. Whom is used replace the person as an object.

For example:

- I know the boy **whom** you invited yesterday.
- The man **whom** I saw was Mr. Jones.

3. Whose is used to replace the owner, whether a person, animal or thing.

For example:

- That is John **whose** dog we saw yesterday.
- That is John **whose** car was stolen.

4. Which is used to replace things other than the person, either as subject or object. For example:

- I have read the book **which** you just mentioned.
- The movie **which** we saw last night wasn't very good.

5. That is used to replace the person or other things, either as subject or object.

For example:

- He carried a bag **that** was full of books.
- She is the woman **that** I told you about.

#### 2.1.4 Relative Clauses:

A relative clause is a dependent clause that modifies a noun as it describes, identifies or gives further information about a noun. It tells us which person or thing (or what kind of person or thing) the speaker means.

The relative clause is a type of subordinate clause that modifies a head noun in the main clause. Writers use relative clauses when they want to add more information to their sentences without having to start new ones.

Smith(1974)stated that a relative clause can be defined as a subordinate clause containing an element that is interpreted by an antecedent upon which the subordinate clause is dependent grammatically.

Relative clauses are the non-essential part of a sentence that add meaning to it but if removed, the sentence will still remain its grammatical function

Relative clauses modify nouns and noun phrases through the use of grammatical devices to refer to either the noun or noun phrase.

Fall(2017) described a relative clause as a group of words that modify a noun, noun phrase, pronoun or a sentence, and the modified element is called “antecedent” as it is the subordinated clause and can be used to provide more information about the person or thing that appears in the main clause.

In English, there are two types of clauses, they are: dependent clause and independent clause. A dependent clause is not a complete sentence. It cannot stand alone as a sentence. It must be connected to an independent clause. An independent clause is a complete sentence. It contains the main subject and verb of a sentence. It is also called a main clause.

A relative clause is introduced by either relative pronouns (who, whom, which, that, whose) or relative adverbs (when, where, why). Relative clauses are also called the adjective clauses because of the function as the adjectives to describe or modify the noun phrase.

For example:

The girl (that) we saw yesterday was my cousin.

In the above example, the relative clause “that we saw yesterday” modifies the subject of the sentence “the girl” and narrows down its potential set of referents. The modified pronoun is called the ‘head’ and it is co-indexed with the empty position- the ‘gap’, in the relative clause.

A relative clause is named an adjective clause too, as it is the clause that functions as an adjective explaining the condition of noun or pronoun.

Examples:

a. I met a kind man.

b. He is very kind to everybody.

I met a man who is very kind to everybody.

(Main clause- relative pronoun- subordinate clause)

So, who is very kind to everybody explains the man meant by the speaker.

As the classifications of the sentence are:

I met a kind man as independent clause or is called main clause.

I as the subject

Met as a predicate A as an article

Kind as an adjective

Man as an object

He is very kind to everybody as dependent clause or is called subordinate clause.

He as a subject

Is as a predicate

Very kind as an adjective

To everybody as an object

Relative clauses differ with regard to the language in terms of position and structure hence they are post-modifying in English language .

Based on this structure, relative clauses are realized through nominalizations, this enables ESL learners to effectively use relative pronouns since inappropriate use of relative pronouns is the most common problem for them.

Knowledge of pronouns use is also effective in facilitating the acquisition of efficient comprehension and writing skills by EFL learners( Ortega,2005)

The function of a relative clause is noun phrase modification. According to Reinders(2003) the modification process provides additional information on the noun phrase or limits the noun phrase's meaning.

Relative clauses also provide an effective medium for investigating underlying rules, strategies and processes that are used by language learners in processing complex sentences. This investigation also provides relevant insights into position acquisition with regard to the universal linguistic principles of ease and difficulty in acquiring a foreign language (Fall,2017).

### **2.1.5 Types of Relative Clauses:**

Freeman(2008) listed the following three categories of relative clauses :

#### **1. Bound and free relative clauses:**

Bound relative clauses are the most commonly used clauses and refer to explicit or implicit elements in a sentence ;a bound relative clause qualifies an explicit element (usually a noun or noun phrase) appearing in the main clause, and refers back to that element by means of some explicit or implicit device within the relative clause. The relative clause may also function as an embedded clause within a main (or higher-level) clause, thereby forming a matrix sentence. The noun in the main clause that the relative clause modifies is called the head noun, or (particularly when referred back to by a relative pronoun) the antecedent.

For example, in the sentence "The man whom I saw yesterday went home", the relative clause "whom I saw yesterday" modifies the head noun **man**, and the relative pronoun **whom** refers back to the referent of that noun. The sentence is equivalent to the following two sentences:

"I saw a man yesterday. The man went home."

A free relative clause, on the other hand, does not have an explicit antecedent external to itself. Instead, the relative clause itself takes the place of an argument in the matrix clause. For example, in the sentence "I like what I see", the clause **what I see** is a free relative clause, because it has no antecedent, but itself serves as the object of the verb like in the main clause.

A free relative clause lacks an explicit antecedent and instead replaces an argument in a sentence's matrix clause.

## 2.Restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses :

Bound relative clauses may or may not be restrictive. Whereas a non-restrictive or non-defining relative clause merely provides supplementary information, a restrictive or defining relative clause modifies the meaning of its head word (restricts its possible referent). For example:

The man who lives in this house has not been seen for days, (who lives in this house) is a restrictive relative clause, modifying the meaning of man, and essential to the sentence (if the clause were omitted, it would no longer be known which man is being referred to). Hence if it is deleted the remaining part does not provide any sense.

The mayor, who lives in this house, has not been seen for days.

The above example is a non-restrictive relative clause, since it provides supplementary information about the mayor, but is not essential to the sentence – if the clause were omitted, it would still be known which mayor is meant. Hence if it is deleted the remaining part provides the sense.

In speaking it is natural to make slight pauses around non-restrictive clauses, and in English this is shown in writing by commas (as in the examples). However many languages do not distinguish the two types of relative clause in this way. Another difference in English is that only restrictive relative clauses may be introduced with that or use the "zero" relative pronoun .

In colloquial speech, a non-restrictive relative clause may have a whole sentence as its antecedent rather than a specific noun phrase; for example:  
The cat was allowed on the bed, which annoyed the dog.

Here, the context of the sentence (presumably) indicates that which refers not to the bed or the cat but to the entire proposition expressed in the main clause, namely the circumstance that the cat was allowed on the bed. Such constructions are discouraged in formal usage and in texts

written for non-native speakers because of the potential for ambiguity in parsing; a construction more accepted in formal usage would be :

The cat's being [or having been] allowed on the bed annoyed the dog.

Lock(1996) stated that according to the necessity of the information they supply English relative clauses can be classified into two type: restrictive relative clauses and non-restrictive relative clause.

A restrictive relative clause changes the meaning of its key word while a non- restrictive relative clause offers additional information .

Restrictive relative clauses provide crucial information to clarify the noun phrase (NP) they modify.

For example:

John who works in the shop downstairs is a very nice man. whilst non-restrictive relative clauses provide interesting information.

For example:

Mary, who works in the shop downstairs, is coming tomorrow to the party .

### 3.Finite and non-finite relative clauses.

Finite relative clauses refers to clauses that provide finite objects while infinite relative clauses provide information on finite objects.

An example of a non-finite relative clause in English is the infinitive clause on whom to rely, in the sentence "She is the person on whom to rely".

#### **2.1.6 Relative adverbs**

Based on the antecedent (the noun or pronoun being modified is called the antecedent) which indicated by the introductory words relative clause can be classified into two kinds, they are relative pronouns and relative adverbs.

A relative adverb is a complement of the pattern relative clause, it functions as conjunction in a sentence, such as why, where, when, although, therefore, accordingly, moreover, besides, however, nevertheless.



Examples:

1. The small town (where) I was born has grown to a large metropolis,  
or

The small town in which I was born has grown to a large metropolis.

2. The day (when) they were to leave finally arrived,  
or

The day on which they were to leave finally arrived.

Fall(2017)stated that there are three relative adverbs, they are where, when, and why. We use relative adverbs to refer to place, time, and reason respectively.

For example:

California Pizza Kitchen is **where** Jack used to order a pizza made with pear and gorgonzola.

In this sentence, where refers to the place Jack used to order a pizza made with pear and gorgonzola.

Another example is:

Daniel remembers **when** he could eat pizza not made with gluten-free crust.

In the above sentence, when refers to the time Daniel could eat pizza not made with gluten-free crust.

### **2.1.7 Using Relative Clauses:**

Relative pronouns introduce relative clauses, a relative clause can modify a word, phrase, or idea in the main clause. The word, phrase or idea modified is called the antecedent.

According to Fall(2017)we attach relative clauses to independent clauses using relative pronouns or relative adverbs. There are five relative pronouns: that, which, who, whom, and whose and three relative adverbs where, when, and why.

### **That or which**

Deciding when to use “that” and “which” can be puzzling as “that” refers to things and never refers to people.

For example:

“I feel like eating a vegan pizza **that** is really, really spicy” said Ines.

We would not say Ines feels like eating a vegan pizza “who is really, really spicy” because a vegan pizza is a thing, not a person, although a person can be spicy.

On the other hand “which” also refers to things and never to people, but “which” is used in non-restrictive relative clauses (to provide non-essential information).

For example:

“The Figgy Piggy, which is made of crisp bacon, sweet black figs, fresh sage, and feta cheese, is Jenn’s favorite pizza at Pizza My Heart.”

“The Figgy Piggy” is essential information because it tells us what Jenn’s favorite pizza at Pizza My Heart is. We do not need to know what Jenn’s favorite pizza is made of to know “The Figgy Piggy” is her favorite, so the relative clause starting with the relative pronoun which is enclosed in commas.

### **Who or Whom**

Deciding when to use “who” and “whom” can also be puzzling.

“Who” and “whom” refer to people and never to things.

“Who” refers to the subject of a sentence while “whom” either refers to the object of a sentence or the object of a preposition.

To decide when to use “who” and “whom,” we should conduct the subject/object pronoun test.

For example:

“Actually, sir, Nicky is the one **who** ordered the plain cheese pizza.”  
In this sentence, “who” refers to Nicky, a person, not a thing. Nicky is also

the subject of the sentence. She is the one “who ordered the plain cheese pizza.”

“The waiter at Blue Line Pizza put the Aphrodite, a pizza made of artichoke hearts, kalamata olives, sundried tomatoes, basil, feta, and mozzarella, in front of **whom** he thought was Kerri.”

In this sentence, whom refers to the object of the preposition “of,” Kerri. Kerri is not an object, but she is the object of a preposition as well as the verb “put,” so whom is the correct choice.

### **Whose**

Whose is like ‘who’ and ‘whom’ referring to people and never to things, but “whose” shows possession.

For example:

“I don’t know **whose** Chicago-style pizza this is,” said Evin, “but I’m eating it.”

In this sentence, “whose” refers to the unspecified owner of the Chicago-style pizza, a person and possessor.

### **The Invisible That**

We can attach relative clauses to independent clauses and omit relative pronouns if the relative pronouns or relative clauses are in object positions.

For example:

“Everyone at the Writing Center went to the pizza place (that) I recommended.”

Because the relative clause is in the object position, that can be omitted.

### **2.1.8 Determining if information is essential or non-essential:**

Ortega (2005) stated that in order to determine whether the information is essential or not, we need to distinguish between different types of clauses as relative clauses provide essential information or non-essential information through restrictive relative clauses or non-restrictive relative clauses.

## 1. Restrictive Relative Clauses:

Relative pronouns that introduce a restrictive relative clause are not separated from the main clause by a comma.

Restrictive relative clauses (also known as defining relative clauses) add essential information about the antecedent in the main clause. The information is crucial for understanding the sentence's meaning correctly and therefore, cannot be omitted .

In other words, without the restrictive relative clause, the sentence does not make sense.

Restrictive clause describes the preceding noun by distinguishing it from other nouns of the same class. They are essential for a clear understanding of the noun and the overall sentence.

For example:

The woman **who** wears a blue dress works together with my mother.

In the above sentence “...who wears a blue dress” is a restrictive or defining relative clause. If we omit it from the sentence, the meaning results incomplete and it wouldn't be clear who is the woman we are talking about.

It is crucial to say that these sentences are not separated with commas from the rest of the sentence. The easiest way to explain it is to give the example of two different sentences and the way they combine into one;

A girl was talking to me. Do you know her?

Do you know the girl **who** was talking to me?

It can be noticed that by omitting this restrictive post modification the meaning would not be complete. A girl in this case is a subject of the sentence.

Restrictive relative clauses can refer to the subject of the sentence as well as to its object; to both persons and things.

## **Restrictive relative clauses: persons**

### **Subjects**

They refer to the subject by using the relative pronouns **who** and **that**.

For example:

A woman **who** was sitting with you on yesterday's meeting was my sister.

A boy **who** was running around all the time was Emily's son.

The relative pronoun **that** is also often used after **all**, **everyone**, **everybody**, **no one**, **nobody** and **those**.

For example:

Everyone **who/that** knew him loved him.

Nobody **who/that** watched her singing will ever forget it.

### **Objects**

They refer to the object of the sentence by using the relative pronouns: **whom**, **who** or **that**. Since the object form "whom" is considered very formal, relative pronouns "who" or "that" are frequently used in spoken language.

The relative pronoun "that" is even more frequent in spoken language since it can refer to subject, object, to people and things, but it is also possible to omit the relative pronoun altogether.

For example:

A boy whom we met in front of the school handed me this notebook for my son. It is also possible to say: A boy who we met... A boy that we met... or A boy we met.

## **Restrictive relative clauses: Things**

### **As a Subject**

The relative pronouns “which” and “that” are used to form these sentences.  
This is the book **which/that** caused such a popularity.

The road **which/that** leads to the village is rather dusty and rugged.

### **Object of a verb**

The relative pronouns **which** and **that** are used to form sentences or they can be omitted. For example,

You gave me the book. The book was interesting( object)

The book **which/that** you gave me was very interesting.

The book you gave me was very interesting.

### **Object of a preposition**

The formal combination in this case is: preposition + pronoun which, but the preposition can also be moved to the end of the clause and in this case relative pronouns “which” or “that” are used (or completely omitted):  
For example:

The boat on which we were sailing started to swing: (preposition -the pronoun which) .

The boat which/that we were sailing on started to swing. (pronoun which/that preposition) .

The boat we were sailing on started to swing( preposition)

### **More examples of restrictive relative clauses:**

“I feel like eating a pizza that is really, really spicy” said Ines.

In this sentence, “that is really, really spicy” is essential information because it describes the pizza Ines wants to eat, so it is not enclosed in commas.

“Actually, sir, Nicky is the one who ordered the cheese pizza.”

In this sentence, “who ordered the cheese pizza” is essential information because it describes Nicky, the one who ordered it, and is not enclosed in commas.

Therefore, we use restrictive relative clauses to provide essential information hence essential information is not enclosed in commas and begins with the relative pronouns “that” or “who.”

## **2. Relative Pronouns in Non-Restrictive Clause:**

Although similar in use, relative pronouns that introduce a non-restrictive relative clauses are separated from the main clause by a comma (in most instances). Typically, **which** is the preferred pronoun for indicating that a relative clause is non-restrictive.

Non-restrictive relative clauses (also known as non-defining relative clauses) provide non-essential information about the antecedent in the main clause. The information is not crucial for understanding the sentence’s meaning .

They can be classified as follows:

a. Relative pronouns used as a subject of a non-restrictive relative clause.

For example:

- The science fair, which lasted all day, ended with an awards ceremony.
- The movie turned out to be a blockbuster hit, which came as a surprise to critics.

b. Relative pronouns used as an object in a non-restrictive relative clause.

For example:

- The sculpture, which he admired, was moved into the basement of the museum to make room for a new exhibit.
- The theater, in which the play debuted, housed 300 people.

c. Relative pronouns used as an object of a preposition.

1) For a person

The pronoun can be omitted. The preposition is normally placed before whom. It is however possible to move the preposition to the end of the clause.

This is commonly done in conversation, and “who” then usually takes the place of “whom”. For example:

- Mr. Jones, for whom I was working, was very generous about overtime payments.

- Mr. Jones, who I was working for, was very generous about overtime payments.

## 2) For things

The preposition comes before “which”, or at the end of the clause. For example:

- Ashdown forest, through which we’ll be driving, isn’t a forest any longer.

- Ashdown forest, which we’ll be driving through, isn’t a forest any longer.

d. Relative pronouns used a possessive in a non-restrictive relative clause. Whose is generally used both for animals and things.

“Which” is possible for things, but is unusual except in very formal English. For example:

- This is George, whose class you will be taking.

- His house, whose windows were all broken, was a depressing sight.

The relative pronoun “that” is used in a non-relative (non-defining) clause can be omitted. And using that is not used as a relative pronoun in a non-restrictive clause.

## **More examples of non-restrictive relative clauses**

“The Figgy Piggy,” which is made of crisp bacon, sweet black figs, fresh sage, and feta cheese, is Jenn’s favorite pizza at Pizza My Heart.



As mentioned earlier, we do not need to know what Jenn's favorite pizza is made of to know that her favorite is "Figgy Piggy," so the relative clause starting with the relative pronoun "which" is non-essential information and is enclosed in commas.

We use non-restrictive relative clauses to provide non-essential information. Non-essential information is enclosed in commas and begins with the relative pronoun "which" or "who."

For example:

Daniel, who is not only gluten free but also vegetarian and lactose intolerant, is a writing tutor at the Writing Center.

In the above sentence, we do not need to know Daniel is gluten free, vegetarian, and lactose intolerant to know he is a Writing Tutor at the Writing Center, so the relative clause starting with the relative pronouns who is non-essential information and enclosed in commas.

Non-restrictive relative clauses: persons

In non-restrictive clauses additional information is given which is not essential for identifying the head. Non-restrictive relative clauses are therefore enclosed by commas in writing.

Greenbaum(1998) stated that the "loose non-restrictive relationship is often semantically indistinguishable from coordination (with or without conjunction) or adverbial subordination".

The use of pronouns in this case is limited to wh- items:

He met Jane, **who** invited him to a party.

Here is Jessica, **who(m)** I have already met...

We met in Venice, **which** was enveloped in fog.

When it was enveloped in fog.

We met in Venice, **which** he visited for the first time this year.

## Subjects

The relative pronoun **who** is used to introduce these sentences.

For example,

Mary, **who** has been very motivated lately, received a scholarship.  
George, **who** has been working the whole day, suggested having a break.

## Objects

The relative pronoun **whom** is used to introduce these sentences. In these sentences, the relative pronoun cannot be omitted. Sometimes, in the spoken English, the pronoun **who** can also be found.

For example:

Jonny, **whom** everyone avoided, turned out to be a nice guy.

\*The use of the possessive pronoun **whose** is also possible (both in restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses).

Marry, **whose** children you are going to teach in school, is my best friend.  
This is Tom, **whose** dog we found yesterday.

## Non-restrictive relative clauses: Things

### Subjects

The relative pronoun **which** is used to introduce these sentences. The pronoun **that** is not used in this case.

For example:

The bus for Zadar, **which** is usually very punctual, has been late.

### Objects

We use the relative pronoun **which** to introduce these sentences (in this case it cannot be omitted like in the case of restrictive relative clauses). The pronoun **that** cannot be used here.

For example:

She gave me the scarf, **which** she had knitted herself.

We ate an ice cream, **which** was delicious.

### **Determining Subject-Verb Agreement in Relative Clauses:**

Pronouns are used to substitute nouns. Plural pronouns take plural verbs like singular pronouns take singular verbs. Relative pronouns substitute for the nouns preceding them.

For example:

“I feel like eating a vegan pizza **that** is really, really spicy,” said Ines. In this sentence, **that** refers to the vegan pizza, a singular noun, so that becomes a singular relative pronoun, thus making the verb preceding it, “is,” also singular.

In EFL contexts relative clauses are very often considered as one rather simple language construction, yet some space for their acquisition is left to the very end of student’s language learning process. One of the possible reasons may be the fact that the necessity for their correct usage is much stressed in the written rather than in spoken language as the fact that at earlier stages the possibility of writing is normally at a higher level, and errors that commonly occur mainly concern this written part where their possible incorrect usage is more visible and can affect the meaning of the whole sentence significantly. The relative clause is marked in speaking by intonation. The correct understanding of subordinate relative clauses can help students to make a better use of them in written language (Rod,1999).

### **2.1.9 Subordination and coordination:**

When the same sentence contains two clauses , they can be connected by coordination or subordination. In the case of coordination, the two clauses are “equal partners” in the same structure.

Subordination (subordinate clause), on the other hand, depends on the other clause (the main clause). The sentence containing such clauses is called a complex sentence.

Greenbaum(1998) stated that a subordination is a non-symmetrical relation holding between two clauses in such a way that one is constituent or part of the other.

For example:

I live in Rome (independent) and you live in Zagreb (independent).

I live in Rome which is situated in Italy. (independent + subordinate or dependent clause or main clause).

The subordination enables us to organize multiple clause structures and each subordinate or dependent clause may become superordinate or the main one to one or more other clauses, resulting sometimes in the sentence of great complexity.

The main clause is the one that doesn't depend on another clause as it can stay alone. The noun phrase can also be complex just as the sentence can. According to Merriam Webster dictionary a noun phrase is a phrase formed by a noun and all its modifiers and determiners, or it is any syntactic element (as a clause, clitic, pronoun or zero element) with a noun's function (as the subject of a verb or the object of a verb or preposition).

A complex noun phrase is composed of three components:

- a) The head, around which other components cluster.
- b) The pre-modification, which refers to all the items placed before the head.
- c) The post-modification, refers to all the items placed after the head.

For example:

The pretty girl standing in the corner is a friend of mine.

the pre-modification (The pretty) - the head(the girl)- the post modification(standing in the corner).

### 2.1.10 The Acquisition of Relative Clauses in English:

Ellis (1997) discusses the acquisition of relative clauses in English. First, he holds the point of view that the acquisition of relative clauses presents learners with two tasks.

In case of English, they must first learn that relative clauses can modify noun phrases that occur both before the verb (i.e. as subject of the main clause) and after the verb (i.e. as object or in a prepositional phrase).

For example:

The man **who** won the Nobel Prize works very hard.

We visited the man **who** has contributed so much to the protection of the wildlife.

Second, they must learn the various functions that the relative pronoun can serve. English permits a range of functions, as shown in the following example. These two tasks amount to a substantial learning burden.

For example:

The woman **who** committed the crime (Subject)

The woman **whom** I visited.....(Direct object)

The woman **to whom** I present a medal (Indirect object)

The man about **whom** we talked(Object of preposition)...

The woman **whose** husband is a president (Genitive) ...

The man **that** I am richer than...( Object of comparative)

The role of the first language in L2 learners' second language acquisition process has received a great deal of scrutiny among researchers. Researchers have studied languages contrastively (contrastive analysis) and examined L2 learners' errors (error analysis) in order to have a better understanding of the

influences of L1 on L2 acquisition. While it is now widely accepted that the cross-linguistic influences occur in almost every aspect of language acquisition (i.e., pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and pragmatics, etc.) and the effects can be both positive and negative (Ellis, 1993; Odlin, 1990) as issues surrounding the first/second language relationship continue to attract researchers' interest since many remain unexplored.

Many studies have provided evidence that the differences in principal branching directions between the two languages often cause difficulties in acquiring complex syntax (e.g., Smith 1974, ; Porter and Robert, 1981).

### **2.1.11 Common Mistakes among EFL Learners:**

Smith (1974) stated that when using relative clauses, EFL learners made the following mistakes :

1. Commas are not required in writing in restrictive relative clauses.

For example:

Mary is a manager of the corporation which produces a wide range of products on international level. (correct)

Mary is a manager of the corporation, which produces a wide range of products on international level. (incorrect)

The most important rule here is that commas are not used to separate a restrictive clause from the rest of the sentence since its meaning is essential to its correct understanding.

2. The incorrect use of commas may lead to incorrect meaning. The students **who have regularly attended the lectures** can take the written exam. (restrictive)

The students, **who have regularly attended the lectures**, can take the written exam. (non-restrictive)

The restrictive relative clause tells us that only those students who have regularly attended the lectures can take the written exam. The sentence

implies that there were also other students who haven't regularly attended the lectures and that they cannot take the exam. The non-restrictive relative clause tells us that all the students (mentioned earlier in the context) can take the written exam since they all have regularly attended the lessons. That is the message understood by the non-restrictive clause, which by its definition gives extra information to the sentence because even if it gets omitted, the meaning remains the same.

3. We do not repeat the subject (personal pronoun or noun) after a relative clause.

For example:

The man **who** was sitting next to me he had a blue jacket (incorrect).

The man **who** was sitting next to me had a blue jacket (correct)

5. A relative clause can have only one direct object, when a relative pronoun is the object of the relative clause, we don't need another object in the relative clause.

For example:

He lent me his book, **which** I found it very interesting. (incorrect)

He lent me his book, **which** I found very interesting. (correct)

5. When a relative pronoun is the object of the relative clause, we need a subject (pronoun or noun) in the relative clause.

For example:

You handed me the book **that** was looking for yesterday (incorrect).

You handed me the book **that** I was looking for yesterday. . (correct)

6. That cannot be used in a non-restrictive relative clause, just the relative pronoun who can refer to person in the subject position, while we use which if we refer to thing in the subject position.

For example:

A student, that was awarded a scholarship, will receive 10000 kn. (incorrect).

A student, who was awarded a scholarship, will receive 10000 kn. (correct)

7. Only the relative pronouns **which** and **that** can refer to subject in the restrictive relative clauses (in this case these relative pronouns can also be omitted).

The car what I bought was...

The car that I bought...

The car which I bought...

The car I bought was...

A relative sentence must always follow the noun to which it refers.

For example:

My office is about hundred metres from the centre, which I share with my colleague. (incorrect)

My office, which I share with my colleague, is about hundred metres from the centre.(correct)

### **2.1.12 Errors on the Use of Relative Words:**

Richard (1985) defined an error as the use of a linguistic item in a way in which fluent or native speaker of the language regards as showing faulty or incomplete learning.

According to Rod(1999) an error is a deviation from the norms of the target language. Carl(2001) asserted that an error is an unsuccessful bit of language.

Lennon(1991) declared that an error is a linguistic form or combination of forms which, in the same context and under similar conditions of production would, in all likelihood, not be produced by native speaker counterparts.



Errors may also refer to regular patterns in the learners' speech which consistently differ from the target language model hence it is the result of behavior failure (Corder, 1967).

Mabah(2006) stated that language errors can be influenced by several factors, namely:

1. Intervention (pressure) first language to the foreign language which often occurs due to differences in language structures rules between the first and the foreign language.
2. Intra-language error which is caused by the influence of the language it self.
3. Teaching techniques or materials, in which the teacher can also make mistakes that results in its impact to what students are taught.

Errors are inevitable in the process of language learning and study and analysis of these errors is of great significance in foreign language teaching.

Corder (1967) pointed out that errors of the learners are important because these errors give instruction to teachers and let teachers know what they should teach and how to teach; if teachers analyze the errors systematically, they will know what level students have reached, how much students approach to the target language, what students should continue to learn and what strategies and steps students take in their learning process; error is the way the learners use to test the hypothesis to the laws of target language.

Learners can know their weaknesses through analyzing and correcting their errors. In addition, learners can find characteristics of the foreign language learning through analyzing their errors as rrors reveal the process of language learning and provide the basis for the acquisition of language (Nofia,2007).

Error Analysis is a branch of applied linguistics and is an important part of second language study. Error Analysis looks learners as the center of the research and through analysis of the errors of learners the process of learners' acquisition will be found as the improvement of foreign language teaching requires deep understanding of the learning process while error

analysis theory is just based on the analysis of the learners' language errors to reveal the regularity of learning process.

Corder is the advocator and founder of the EA theory considers that applied linguists' focus on foreign language learners' error is not a bad habit to be eradicated, but is a ways of insight into learners' learning process. He pointed out that errors are essential and important parts in students' learning because they can reveal the differences between learners' transitional language grammar and target language grammar.

Lourdes (1996) stated that error analysis holds belief that when foreign language learners learn a new language it is just like children acquisition of their mother language. Learners make hypothesis to the target language according to the language material they access and verify its correctness and actively approach to the target language.

Error analysis emphasizes the importance of studying and analyzing role of learners' errors in their language acquisition process. Therefore, error analysis plays an important role in English teaching activities and also plays an important role in exploring the law of foreign language learning process and improving foreign language teaching.

Applying Error Analysis to the foreign language learning refers to analyzing errors made by learners in their foreign language learning systematically and comprehensively and exploring the nature and reasons of these errors in order to prevent or reduce the errors.

An understanding of the errors is helpful in the teaching and learning process of EFL learners since it enables both the teacher and the student to identify the causes of the errors and find appropriate solutions towards improving the students' learning process.

Most EFL students think relative clauses are difficult to learn because they are complicated as the process of learning them involves sentence structure, the choice of relative words, the process of embedded clause, etc.

Corder(1974) noted that errors can be significant in three ways: they provide the teacher with information about how much the learner have

learnt; they provide the researchers with evidence of how language is learnt and they serve as devices by which the learner discovers the rules of the target language as error analysis has five steps:

Collecting of the samples of learners' language.

Identification of errors.

Description of errors.

Explanation of errors.

Evaluation of errors.

### **2.1.13 Factors Affecting Relative Clauses Difficulties among EFL Learners:**

Learning English as a foreign language is a complicated process that is majorly impeded by numerous factors such as foreign language structure, mother tongue effect and difference between the first language and the target language . The process of learning English as a foreign language is also influenced by numerous factors .

Communication and information in English language is primarily influenced by a sentence's structure thus making it pertinent to pay attention to aspects of sentence construction. The sentence construction aspect of interest in this case is relative clauses since it is responsible for the logic soundness of a sentence .

According to Rod (1999) the critical nature of relative clauses thus draws the attention of second language acquisition researchers to the role of relative clauses in the learning of foreign language .

Lourdes(1996) argued that a focus on the mistakes and problems of ESL learners alongside the teaching of relative clauses enables better effective learning of EFL

Lightbown ( 1997) attributed EFL learners' difficulties to numerous factors, hence learning a foreign language is one of the most complicated and tedious processes. The complication and the tedious nature is a result of various factors such as language structure , mother tongue and similarities and differences between the first and foreign language.

Due to the complicated nature of learning foreign languages, a learner is vulnerable to making mistakes due factors mentioned above .

However, the process of learning a new language can be accentuated through highlighting likely mistakes to be encountered in the learning process and the causes of these mistakes (Corder,1974).

There are three primary focus factors that affect EFL learning difficulties, the primary feature is the nature of the language learner. Secondly , the errors the learners are likely to make and finally the implications of the errors on the overall learning processes as the complicated nature of learning English as a foreign language is attributed to syntactic structure differences between languages(Rod , 1999).

Ortega(2005) indicated that English second or foreign language learners sentence structure arrangements is primarily affected by mother tongue and first language sentence structure as a majority of English language learners start by acquiring knowledge on relative clauses but requiring a significant amount of effort and practice to correctly use them in modifying other sentence roles.

The need for the effort and practice is due to the fact that most of the EFL learners construct sentences with relative clauses in the direct object position hence making the use of relative clauses unnecessary.

The following are some of the factors that contribute to EFL relative clauses difficulties among EFL learners

### **Inter-language**

Constructive differences in English and other languages internal structure is a main reason for the commonality of errors by EFL learners when learning

a new or foreign language, students tend to develop a personal language system that is a mix of the first and foreign language system (Ortega,2005).

Selinker(2006) maintained that the new system is referred to as an inter-language . An inter-language is an intermediate language between the learners first language and the target language , inter-language enables the new language's tutor to better understand the source of the learners' problems and can provide effective solution.

Wong (1991) stated that inter-language is a language between mother tongue and target language system, also known as “transition” language. It refers to that in the process of or foreign language acquisition, based on the input of target language, language learners through certain learning strategies form dynamic language system that is both different from their mother language and from the target language. This dynamic language system will gradually be transferred into target language.

The inter-language theory was first put forward by Selinker etc. Its inherent assumptions are: the starting point of inter-language is the learner's native language as with increasing accumulation of the knowledge, inter-language gradually closes to the target language in the process of learning. This is just what the learners need. The process of foreign language learning is just the process of constant adjustment in order to approach the target language (Selinker, 1972).

Lado(1999)stated that the process of learning a foreign or second language is very different from learning the first language as the primary problem does not arise from essential difficulties in the new language features but specially created first language habits. This is because the learner develops a tendency of transferring old language habits to the process of learning the new language . Secondly, a learner's mother tongue also plays significant features in the acquisition of the foreign language both positive and negative.

Freeman(1998) further stated that since relative clause word order reflects the sentence's logical option , it is the primary cause of errors for ESL /EFL learners. ESL /EFL learners' transfer of parametric values such as relative

clauses from their first language is another reason for difficulties in correctly acquiring English as a target language .

### **Structural Incompatibility Between English and other Languages:**

When relative clauses are taught to the students , topics covering them reappear in different forms , it has been noticed that relative clauses are flexible hence allowing manipulation through sentence transformation and re-expression ; one is able to utilize various literal devices and techniques such as metaphors, pathos and ethos among others.

Lourdes(1996) argued that among the factors that affects EFL difficulties in learning is due to the structural incompatibility between English and other languages since EFL learners often try to transfer parametric values from their first language to English, the parametric transfer affects significant elements of a sentence such as relative clauses thus affecting the sentences' grammatical correctness. EFL learners often interchange relative pronouns and nouns with relative clauses thus compromising the quality of sentences structures.

Ortega(2005) argued that in the process of sentence construction , EFL students are likely to use wrong resumptive pronouns in the construction of relative clauses , this is usually followed by object relatives , indirect object relatives or oblique object relatives . However, through the study of relative clauses by ESL students in the English language, teachers are able to establish appropriate methods to be used in correcting these issues.

EFL learners' limited exposure to English relative clauses is a major reason for interchanging pronouns and putting them in place of relative clauses. However, frequent exposure increase the student's ability and confidence in English language thus enabling him/her to make grammatically correct sentence structure. This is attributed to the student's realization of the regularity of resumptive pronouns in relative clauses which is difficult to discover when inadequately exposed.

Based on this , English teachers are likely to adapt to the strategy of generated relative and null pronouns in the formation of English relative

clauses as a way of increasing the students' participation and resulting confidence. This significantly improves the learners' subject and object relative clauses use since it is primarily focused on subject and object relative clauses (Saputra, 2000) .

Ortega(2005) further stated that the acquisition of English as a second language by learners is impaired by numerous factors whose interaction causes difficulties for EFL learners in the acquisition of English relative clauses. These factors include parametric differences between English and the learner's first language , difficulties in the resettlement of the wh – movement parameter and the parameter agreement between the head and specifier.

Being aware of the above mentioned factors enables both the teacher to effectively identify learners' weakness and think of appropriate ways of overcoming these weaknesses towards holistic development of the learners' skills.

#### **2.1.14 Strategies Utilized by EFL Learners in the Use of English Relative Clauses:**

##### **The Transfer of Training**

A common strategy utilized by EFL learners in the use of English relative clauses is transfer training. This normally takes place when EFL learners apply rules learned on textbooks or their teachers in the learning process. However, if the instructions or textbooks put emphasis on specific grammar point structures at the expenses of others, learners tend to develop their language acquisition skills on one side. This is because knowledge from the teachers' instructions or textbooks overproduces what they have learned and makes them unaware of other advanced constructions.

Odlin (1990) stated that in the case that either the book or the teacher's instructions are incorrect, learners will also be inclined to make wrong set of the taught structures. Based on this, EFL learners are likely to overproduce the subject relative and under produce other English relative constructions such as the direct object relative. This is attributed to the consequences of

their exposure through textbook contexts which emphasizes on subject relative. Using the textbooks, EFL learners follow the same trend from textbooks by emphasizing on subject relative and advocating for low frequency on the direct object relative.

Selinker (2006) pointed out that teachers should focus on the overall structures of English relative clauses as a way of facilitating holistic development of English skills which creates a balance of all language structures and proper acquisition of the relevant skills.

### **Overgeneralization**

Overgeneralization is a language acquisition strategy used by learners acquiring their native language alongside another official language such as English.

Richard( 1985) defined overgeneralization as a process through which the learner extrapolates the use of a grammatical rule of linguistic item past its acceptable uses in a foreign language. This phenomenon takes place when learners formulate a linguistic rule based on the exposed language data or instructions with no consideration for exceptions.

One example of the above is the frequent use of past tense of go to goed instead of went as a result of seeing the past tense of regular verbs ending with –ed hence assuming that this rule is applicable irrespectively.

With regard to English language relative clauses , EFL learners tend to be unaware of the existing differences between restrictive relative clauses and non-restrictive relative clauses (Richard ,1985).

The following are examples that illustrate the problem associated with overgeneralization:

\*My uncle **who** works in New Zealand is rich.

My uncle, **who** works in New Zealand is rich.

In the acquisition of a new language , EFL learners tend to overgeneralize rules and in most instances wrongly apply a large principle. In the



acquisition of English as a foreign language by EFL learners , EFL learners are likely to fail to notice differences between a restrictive and non-restrictive relative clause. In the above two sentences, the first one has used a restrictive relative clause while the second one has utilized non-restrictive relative clauses.

\*The cat **who** has brown fur is my favourite pet.

The cat **that** has brown fur is my favourite pet.

In the above examples , the learner's overgeneralization has made him/her to use a relativizer on human objects on an animal thus making the sentence grammatically wrong. This is primarily attributed to overgeneralization of the relativizer who to non-human subjects .

My brother **who** lives in New York has two Chevrolets.

My brother, **who** lives in New York, has two Chevrolets.

In the above two sentences, the first learner is referring to a specific brother who resides in New York. The second learner is referring to only his brother who lives in New York.

Ellis(1983) stated that a restrictive relative clause is used in the description, identification and definition of an indefinite head while a non –restrictive relative clause provides extra information with regard to the modified head.

It is most likely that EFL earners with a relatively low English proficiency may fail to realize the prohibition of that in non-restrictive clauses hence overgeneralize its usage to include non-relative clauses.

### **Avoidance**

In the acquisition of English skills by EFL learners , avoidance plays a key role in the acquisition of relative clauses in foreign languages. According to Ellis(1983) learners tend to avoid using difficult linguistic structures as a result of differences between their native language and the target language. EFL learners' native language causes them to produce numerous errors in English language.

Avoidance technique makes EFL learners omit some aspects of the English language construction features they are unsure of. Through the use of fewer relative clauses in sentence construction, EFL learners are unlikely to make a high number of errors.

According to Gass(1996) English language structure avoidance by EFL learners is related to the relative clause level of frequency. In this sense, most frequent relative clauses have a higher likelihood of being avoided.

Zhao(1995) utilized translation to compare relative clause frequency in both English and other native languages. His study revealed that a number of English relative clauses such as non-restrictive relative clauses lack equivalents in the other learners' native language thus making it mandatory to utilize avoidance in the transfer process.

The following are examples that illustrate the problem associated with avoidance

\*The daughter to the man I know is currently studying in London.

The daughter to the man **who** I know is currently studying in London.

In the above example the learner has been to effectively use avoidance without having to compromise the grammar or logic of the sentence. In this instances, the EFL learner is unsure of relative clause to be used in the sentence thus advocating for avoidance.

\*That's the man manages the farm.

That's the man **that** manages the farm.

In the second example avoidance is used to avoid making several grammatical and logic mistakes by EFL learners.

### **Native language transfer:**

Lado(1999) stated that foreign language learners rely on mother tongue knowledge when faced with specific problems in the process of communication process.

In comprehending language , EFL learners use mother tongue language by making direct translation then figuring out the meaning. The process is the same in communication , through native language transfer , EFL learner are able to transfer the form and meanings from the native language to the production and comprehension of English language.

The following are examples that illustrate the problem associated with native language transfer.

\*The man who I loaned my guitar to him is my friend.

The man who I loaned my guitar to is my friend.

In the example above, the incorrectness of the sentence lies in the resumptive pronoun him. Additionally , the relative maker him is co referential with the sentence's head which is the man. In this example, failure to observe a sentence's semantics is primarily attributed to structural incompatibility between the two languages as a result of native language transfer.

\*She has a novel which I am in.

\*She has a novel that interests me.

In the above example , the first sentence is grammatically incorrect as a result of wrong structural arrangement. The sentence stranding of the subject and relativizer at the relative clause' end makes the sentence incorrect. The sentence's grammatical incorrectness in the second sentence emanates from such a lack of possessive relative markers.

\*He provided to me the best care that I never thought.

He provided me with the best care I ever thought of.

The error in the first sentence above is caused by the absence of the relativizer and the object position. EFL learners often omit necessary prepositions while forming relative clauses in English.

\*My favourite pastime that I tell you- first is playing Internet in my free time.

My favourite pastime I would tell you about is browsing the Internet.

According to Zhao(1995) the error in the above sentence is caused by poor sentence structure , lack of the preposition and repetition .

The relativizer ‘that’ has been wrongly used and the use of past and free time is repetitive. The misuse of a relativizer and lack of preposition in a number of native languages .

Poor use of the relativizer is attributed to incompatibility in the subject-verb structure between English and EFL learner’s native language. Additionally , the poor use of the relativizer is also attributed to the EFL learners’ receptive knowledge of English relative clauses.

EFL learners lack knowledge on the need for a preposition in the object of preposition relative as a result from mother tongue and first language influence(Lado,1999).

For example,

\*There are numerous unexpected problems taking now.

There are numerous unexpected problems that are happening now.

The above errors arise as a result of factors which interfere with the development of the writing skills. In this case, the most significant factor is inter-language hence teachers of EFL learners need to understand the interchange language of EFL learners as a way of improving their command of written English. This is because EFL learners rely on the structure of either the first language or the mother tongue in formulating English sentences( Selinker ,1972).

In Modern Standard and Classical Arabic there is a relative pronoun (in Arabic: (الموصول) الاسم al-ism al-mawṣūl) allaḍī (masculine singular), feminine singular allatī, masculine plural allaḍīna, feminine plural allawātī, masculine dual allaḍānī (nominative) / allaḍayni (accusative and genitive), feminine dual allatānī (nom.) / allataynī (acc. and gen.).

It's usage has two specific rules: it agrees with the antecedent in gender, number and case, and it is used only if the antecedent is definite. If the antecedent is indefinite, no relative pronoun is used. The former is called *jumlat sila* (conjunctive sentence) while the latter is called *jumlat sifa* (descriptive sentence). For example:

الولد الذي رأيته في الصف أمس غائب اليوم

al-waladu (a)lladhi ra'aytuhu fī (a)ṣ-ṣaffi 'amsi ġā'ibun al-yawma  
 "The boy I saw in class yesterday is missing today". (relative pronoun present)

هذا ولد رأيته في الصف أمس

hādā waladun ra'aytu-hu fī (a)ṣ-ṣaffi 'amsi  
 "This is a boy I saw in class yesterday". (the relative pronoun is absent)

### **Inter -language**

Inter language is a language between mother tongue and target language system, also known as "transition" language. It refers that in the process of second language acquisition, based on the input of target language, language learners go through certain learning strategies form dynamic language system that is both different from their mother language and from the target language.

This dynamic language system will gradually be transferred into target language. Inter-language Theory was first put forward by Selinker etc. It is based on the assumption that the starting point of inter-language is the learner's native language. With increasing accumulation of the knowledge, inter-language gradually closes to the target language in the process of learning. This is just what the learners need. The process of foreign language learning is just the process of constant adjustment in order to approach the target language (Selinker, 1972).

Selinker (2006) stated that EFL learners build a personal system for both the native language and the foreign language systems, he defined inter-language as the learner's intermediate language system that falls between the mother

tongue and the foreign or second language . Inter-language helps tutors and teachers in better understanding learners' problems as well as providing timely and effectively help the EFL learners so that they may achieve competence in the new language that they are learning (Selinker,115).

### **Fossilization**

Richard( 1985) defined fossilization as a linguistic phenomenon whereby the speakers of a specific native language maintain the linguistic items, subsystems and rules , the specific native language speakers tend to maintain the linguistic items, subsystems and rules in their inter-language. This is in relation to a particular target language irrespective of the learner's age and amount of explanation from the target language.

For example:

\*Vehicles have provided us with a lot of convenience that we require it very much.

Vehicles have provided us with a lot of convenience that we require very much.

In the above example, in the first sentence, the EFL learner adds the pronoun (it) as a result of fossilization.

### **Motivation:**

Motivation is another factor that can contribute to EFL relative clauses difficulties, it plays a crucial role in the learning process and should be put into consideration when teaching English language structure. Lack of motivation from the side of the teacher leads to poor achievements in the language learning process.

According to Morely (2001) motivation factors can be divided into extrinsic and intrinsic motivators, extrinsic motivators have nothing to do with the content of the lesson and are independent of the learning instructions; the teacher can motivate the students by being co-operative, friendly, respectful and smart, he/she should encourage the students to work hard.

Intrinsic motivators on the other hand are related to the learning instructions and help to raise the learners' attention; the teacher can motivate the students by using songs, stories, games, audio-visual materials in teaching relative clauses and by reinforcing students even when errors occur.

### **2.1.15 Developing EFL Learners' Ability:**

Freeman(2008) stated the principles point on national standard of education which mainly support the gaining of basic competence by considering students' potency, relevancy of religion characteristics, physical development level, intellectually, emotional, social and spiritual modes of the students. This basic competence becomes the standard reference to develop the four skills of English as the teaching materials must be related to the development and the knowledge of the four skills : listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Noor (2009) stated that EFL learners can also develop their English ability through focusing on meaning and trying to learn new and important content of the target language, by doing so the learners' lexical repertoire can be enriched , which would better his/her comprehension capacity, and thus pave the way for the development of his/her learning ability.

Another possible way through which the learner can develop his/her EFL ability is attention to accuracy and analysis of form; it is important for the learners to be accurate when using the target language.

A further possible ground for the development of learner's ability is the classroom teacher; Rod(1999) suggested the following recommendations for the classroom teacher:

- Addressing all the students in English , not only the brilliant ones and getting to know them through talking about topics of mutual interest.
- Making English the language of the classroom and pointing out to the students how they are becoming confident and effective users of English.
- Exposing the learners to various English syntactic structure.

- Setting classroom activities that personally engage all the students, and setting challenging, yet realistic goals for each activity. The students should be given clear feedback on how well they do.

Corder (1991) said "Success breeds success" this suggests that if the teacher succeeds in developing learners' abilities, then he/she paved the way for them to engage in successful autonomous learning outside the classroom setting.

EFL learners' limited exposure to English relative clauses is a major reason for interchanging pronouns and putting them in place of relative clauses. However, frequent exposure increase the student's ability and confidence in English language thus enabling him/her to make grammatically correct sentence structure. This is attributed to the student's realization of the regularity of resumptive pronouns in relative clauses which is difficult to discover when inadequately exposed, this means that students should be exposed to the target language structure and have sufficient time for practice.

In addition, English teachers should try to adapt to the strategy of generated relative and null pronouns in the formation of English relative clauses as a way of increasing the students' participation and resulting confidence. This significantly improves the learners' subject and object relative clauses use since it is primarily focused on subject and object relative clauses (Saputra, 2000).

With regard to what have been previously mentioned, the accuracy of different relative clauses tends to improve with time as a result of exposure thus increasing the students' accuracy hence over the course of time, the learner will develop significant relative clause skills resulting in their improvement in the mastery and use of English language. (Ortega, 2005).

According to Freeman (1998) it is psychologically easier to relativize subjects than objects of EFL learning since emphasis is mostly placed on subjects in the learning process. Based on this assumption, emphasis should be placed on both subjects and objects in the learning processes for EFL learners.



Ortega(2005) argued that in the process of sentence construction , EFL students are likely to use wrong resumptive pronouns in the construction of relative clauses , this is usually followed by object relatives , indirect object relatives or oblique object relatives . However, through the study of relative clauses by EFL students in the English language, teachers are able to establish appropriate methods to be used in correcting these issues.

Lado(1999) stated that easiness of relativizing is attributed to the logical property shared with sentence subjects with the exclusion of non- subjects. The logical property shared by heads and subjects is of independent reference, a revitalized subject's structure contains only one necessary independent expressions used to refer. However, when an object is revitalized, there will be two or more independently referring expressions. With reference to this, subject relatives are easier to relativize than non-subject relatives. Knowledge of the above mentioned information would enable a teacher to dedicate a majority of his/her time on non-subject relativization than subjects since non-subject require much efforts in understanding the relativization process.

According to Boa(2014) teachers should strengthen the exercises of students' English basic knowledge, teach grammar systematically and comprehensively, encourage students to use effective learning strategies to learn English, find ways to increase the input and output of English language and train students think in English mode. On the other hand, students should learn to reflect on themselves, strive to improve their English and correct their learning attitude, and learn to use learning strategies effectively with the help of teachers.

## **2.2 Previous studies:**

EFL learners difficulties of using relative clauses are affected by many factors among the factors that have been investigated by researchers lack of background knowledge and English syntactic structure Rod (1999) , lack of exposure to the target language, lack of motivation and insufficient practice time Lennon (1991), motivation, teaching method, and educational background Wulandari(2018). The following are some important studies that have investigated relative clauses difficulties among EFL learners.

Chang(2010) made a study entitled "Second Language Relative Clauses Acquisition: An Examination of Cross-Linguistic Influences"

The purpose of the study was to analyze and describe the difficulties that Chinese learners of English encounter in acquiring the relative clauses. A total of 237 English-major freshmen participated in the study. One written composition from each participant was collected. In addition, a 44-item-multiple-choice test on relative clauses was administered. Data were analyzed in terms of:

- 1) The total number of relative clauses in each pattern.
- 2) The number of errors produced in each pattern of relative clauses.

Evidence of cross-linguistic influence was found in both areas. The findings of the study suggested that the main causes of English difficulties of relative clauses for Chinese university students were limited knowledge of grammar, inadequate vocabulary and poor awareness of the features of English syntactic structure.

Mohammed (2016) studied "Problems Encountered by University Students In Using Relative Clauses . "

The aim of the study was to direct the language students to master the utilization of the relative clauses, to show the learners how to utilize the relative pronouns correctly and how they use commas in relative clauses. In addition, the study intended to guide the students to the best means which can lead them to overcome relative clauses errors.

The researcher followed the quantitative analytical method to conduct the study. Only one tool was used for data collection: the students' test which was administered to fifty students from the fourth level. The results of the study revealed that the students face some serious problems in using relative pronouns and clauses; students do not know how to use commas within relative clauses; students are not aware of reducing relative clauses. The researcher recommended that students should extend their knowledge in grammar field; and they shouldn't just restrict their study on academic curricula; they should read books which contain relative clauses.

Bao(2014) studied "Senior High School Students Errors on the Use of Relative Words" . With the aim to explore the reasons why senior high school students find it difficult to choose relative words and how to improve this situation. Participants in this study were 73 senior high school students from Tong Liao, Inner Mongolia. These students were given a test on using relative clause. Questionnaire on these 73 students and 30 teachers has also been carried on. After collecting and sorting the tests paper and questionnaires, using both quantitative and qualitative method, the researcher found out the main causes of the students' choosing wrong relative words stem from: students pay much attention to language form and apply English rules mechanically, ignoring meaning and context of the language; students' grammar knowledge is not comprehensive and systematic and students tend to neglect or forget some grammar points; students lack necessary basic English grammar and vocabulary knowledge, resulting in the difficulty in understanding the meaning of the sentence; students can't adjust to relative clause because of language transfer.

Therefore the researcher recommended that teachers should strengthen the exercises of students' English basic knowledge, teach grammar systematically and comprehensively, encourage students to use effective learning strategies to learn English, find ways to increase the input and output of English language and train students think in English mode. On the other hand, students should learn to reflect on themselves, strive to improve their English and correct their learning attitude, and learn to use learning strategies effectively with the help of teachers.; motivation, teaching method, and educational background.

Noor (2009) conducted a study "The Difficulties in Using English Relative Clauses Faced by the Second Grade Students of SMAN-1 of Kumai". In the study, the researcher investigated the level of the second grade students' ability on noun clauses, adjective clauses, and adverb clauses. Besides that, the researcher identified the difficulties faced by the students on using noun clauses, adjectives clauses and adverb clauses.

The study used the quantitative method. In collecting the data, the researcher has used a test and documentation.

The results of the study showed that the students face serious problems in the using of adjective clause which has functions for person .

Ahmed (2011) investigated " Difficulties of Using Relative Clauses in Large Classes" , the study took place at Sudan University of Science and Technology during the academic year (2011) , the researcher used the descriptive analytical method , to collect data two tools were used a questionnaire for teachers and a test for students , the main results of the study showed that the curriculum has negative impact on using relative clauses as shown in the results of the teachers' questionnaire and the students' test. The students' test also revealed that large classes have negative effects in the students' achievements and are not helpful in teaching EFL .

Gao (2014) studied "An Exploration of Using Relative Clauses Problems and Their Causes" with the aim to identify relative clauses problems experienced by Chinese university students at intermediate level through multiple perspectives, a mixed method approach was used; integrated questionnaire surveys, participants' self reflections, the Aural-Lex tests and dictation transcriptions conducted both at the beginning and at the end of the semester. The findings of the study suggested that the main causes of relative clauses difficulties for Chinese university students at intermediate level were limited knowledge of English grammar, inadequate vocabulary and poor awareness of the features of connected sentences.

Wulandari(2018) studied "Students Difficulties in Using Relative Pronouns at the ninth Grade of SMA Dharma Wanita 4 Taman" .

The purpose of the study was to identify the students' difficulties in using relative pronouns of adjective clause and to find out the factors causing students' difficulties in learning adjective clause. This research was a case study and it used the descriptive qualitative method to present the students' difficulties and the factors causing their difficulties in learning adjective clause.

The subject of the research was fifty seven of tenth grades students at SMA Dharma Wanita 4 Taman, Sidoarjo who was detected as having difficulties in learning adjective clause , the study took place during the academic year

2017/2018. The documentation, interview, and questionnaire were used as data collection technique. The researcher used document (students' adjective clause' work), open ended interview, and close-ended questionnaire as instruments of the research. The document and interview were used to obtain the data about students' difficulties in using relative pronouns of adjective clauses.

Furthermore, the questionnaire was used to obtain the data about factors causing students' difficulties in learning adjective clauses. The researcher also made an interview with an English teacher to strengthen the data.

Based on the results analysis, the tenth grades students of SMA Dharma Wanita 4 Taman encountered three kinds of difficulties in learning adjective clauses, those were: comprehension, using unnecessary pronoun, and using the wrong relative pronoun. The findings of the study showed that the students had some difficulties in using relative pronouns as it can be seen from the problems they had gotten in using wrong relative pronouns.

They also had some problems in the comprehension of adjective clauses and in using unnecessary pronouns. The finding also showed that there were three major factors causing students difficulties ; motivation, teaching method, and educational background. The researcher suggested that the teacher should give more detail explanation about adjective clauses. The teacher should be more active to increase students' motivation in learning adjective clauses. The teacher should also give clear examples in each relative pronoun because it is really complicated for the students.

Saputra(2000) studied "EFL Learners' Errors in Using Adjective Clauses at Students of SMAN 1 Cempaga Class XI". This study was descriptive qualitative method which focused to describe the types of errors and to describe the factors causing these error.

The result of this study showed that the types of error made by students of SMAN 1 Cempaga in using adjective clauses are classified into four categories: The highest errors made by the students were mis ordering with frequency 85(80.95%). The second errors made by students were omission with frequency 9 (8.57%). The third errors made by students were

misinformation with frequency 9 (8.57%). The fewest errors made by students were addition with frequency 2 (1.90%). So, the factors that caused errors in using adjective clauses are classified into two factors, some of them are related to EFL learners and some related to the teachers. Teachers lacked sufficient grammatical competence, on the other hand, students errors were mainly due to overgeneralization and literal translation.

Nofia(2007) studied "An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Adjective Clauses Made by the Tenth Grade Students of SMA Hang Tuah 2, Sidoarjo".

The study was based on combination of descriptive quantitative and qualitative design. The results of this study revealed that students encountered serious problems with adjective clauses. From the calculation of grammatical errors, errors in relative pronoun whom and whose were the highest of all the errors with quantity 53 out of 275 or 19.272% errors, and the lowest were errors in relative pronoun who with quantity 16 out of 275 or 5.818% errors.

Based on the surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Heidi, the most error occurred in miss formation with number 225 out of 473 errors or 47.568%. This means that the learners had wrong concept in applying the grammatical rules, so that, they had problems in forming the structure of sentence.

Based on data analysis, there are four causes of errors, they are: overgeneralization, ignorance of rules restriction, incomplete application of rules and false concept hypothesized.

The most frequent cause is false concept hypothesized which suggest that the students usually misinterpret the use of certain structures of the target language. Besides, the interference of the first language into the foreign language. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that to overcome these grammatical errors, teachers should give the clues of who, which, whom, whose, when, where and why, when the students must use them. Besides giving more explanation about adjective clauses, the teacher should also give exercises for practice.

From the above studies, we find that relative clauses difficulties are caused by many factors such as limited knowledge of English grammar, inadequate vocabulary , poor awareness of the features of connected sentences, overgeneralization, lack of practice, literal translation, insufficient learning time..etc students' choosing wrong relative words stem from the fact that students pay much attention to language form and apply English rules mechanically, ignoring meaning and context of the language; students' grammar knowledge is not comprehensive and systematic .

In addition, students tend to neglect or forget some grammar points as they lack necessary basic English grammar and vocabulary knowledge, resulting in the difficulty in understanding the meaning of the sentence hence they can't adjust to relative clause because of language transfer.

It is evident from the above literature review, that efforts have been made by a great number of researchers to identify relative clauses difficulties experienced by second and foreign language learners, more empirical studies, however, are needed to explore the sources of these difficulties and propose some suitable solutions to overcome them, this is what the present study is trying to demonstrate.

### **Chapter Summary:**

This chapter provided theoretical background and reviewed the related literature to relative clauses problems encountered by foreign language learners.

The relationship between the current study and the previous studies is that all the studies tried to investigate relative clauses difficulties among EFL learners and the factors that contribute to such difficulties.

The next chapter is going to discuss the methodology of the study through which data of the study has been collected.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology of the Study**

#### **3.1 Introduction:**

This chapter discusses the population of the study, the sample used in this study, the methodology, the instrumentation, the reliability and validity of the study and the techniques used for data collection and analysis.

The method adopted in this research is the descriptive analytical approach. Data has been collected by using two tools: a diagnostic test was used to investigate relative clauses difficulties amongst EFL Sudanese secondary school students, the test was given to 30 Sudanese secondary school second year students, the researcher also uses a questionnaire in order to collect data



about the views and perceptions of teachers regarding the problem of the study. The questionnaire was administered to (30) EFL Sudanese secondary school teachers, all the data has been then analyzed through SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

### **3.2 Population of the Study:**

As the study uses two tools; a diagnostic test and a questionnaire, the population of the study composes of Sudanese secondary school students in Almanar Secondary School for Boys and Girls to whom the test is administered, and expert EFL Sudanese secondary school teachers who participated in the questionnaire.

### **3.3 Sample of the Study:**

The test has been conducted in Almanar Secondary School for Boys and Girls , the sample of the study was taken from second year students who possess the same level of English abilities and are approximately the same age, (30) students have participated voluntarily, the diagnostic test took place during their during the school academic year (2021/2022).

The sample of the questionnaire is (30) expert EFL Sudanese secondary school teachers who have more than seven years' experience in teaching English at Sudanese secondary schools, the sample was taken to detect some of the causes and to suggest some suitable solutions to relative clauses problems that face the subjects of the study .

### **3.4 Methodology of the Study:**

The purpose of this research is to investigate relative clauses problems among EFL students in Sudanese secondary schools. To achieve this goal and in an attempt to answer the research questions, data has been collected through using two tools, a diagnostic test for (30) students who have participated voluntarily and have been selected randomly from second year students at Almanar Secondary School for Boys and Girls and a questionnaire for (30) expert English teachers at Sudanese secondary schools. The data collected has been analyzed statistically by SPSS.

### **3.5 Instrumentation:**

The instruments used in this study are a diagnostic test and a questionnaire. They are described in details below:

### **3.5.1 The Diagnostic Test:**

The first instrument which is employed in this study is a diagnostic test; the main purpose of this test is to investigate the difficulties that EFL Sudanese secondary school students encounter in using relative clauses.

The diagnostic test was developed by the researcher based on the review of literature stated in the previous chapter. The test consists of two parts; each part was developed to measure one of the intended purposes.

The first part focused on assessing relative clauses constructions where the students were asked to join sentences together by using relative pronouns to form relative clauses and to fill in the blanks with an appropriate relative pronoun .

The second part focused on using relative pronouns to form relative clauses where students were required to choose the correct relative pronoun and to underline the most appropriate relative pronoun.

The test was designed with clear instructions; the language was suitable to the language level of the participants , the test was comprehensive and the time allotted for the test was (80)minutes.

### **3.5.2The validity of the diagnostic test:**

Validity refers to the extent to which a test or a set of tests measure what they are supposed to measure. It also refers to the extent to which the results of the procedure serve the uses for which they were intended.

To estimate the test validity, the EFL diagnostic test was submitted to 5 Sudanese members in TEFL. They were asked to express their opinions regarding the clarity, the difficulty level and length of the test, and how far each item measures the purpose intended to measure. They reported the appropriateness of the test items to the purposes to be measured. Suitability of the diagnostic test to students' academic level was reported.

Clarity of the test instructions and questions and representation of the targeted skills were also reported.

### **3.5.3 The Reliability of the diagnostic test:**

Reliability is defined as the extent to which a test produces consistent results when administered under similar conditions. Reliability also means when a certain test is applied on a number of individuals and the marks of every one are counted; then the same test applied another time on the same group and the same marks are obtained; then we can describe this test as reliable.

For estimating the reliability of the EFL diagnostic test, the researcher used the test-retest method. The test was administered to the piloting group of second year secondary stage students (n=30) .

Pearson correlation coefficient between the two administrations was .95 which is statistically significant at 0.01 so this indicate that the test was reliable.

### **3.5.4 The Questionnaire**

The researcher designed the questionnaire in (Appendix 2) for expert teachers at Sudanese secondary schools to collect information about their views and perceptions regarding causes , solutions of relative clauses difficulties encountered by EFL Sudanese secondary school students .

The questionnaire consists of two parts, part one consists of fifteen statements, it is mainly designed to investigate the causes of the difficulties that face EFL Sudanese secondary school students in using relative clauses from the teachers' point of view.

Part two consists of ten statements with the aim to elicit some suitable solutions to relative clauses difficulties that face EFL Sudanese secondary school students .

The questionnaire was designed by the researcher based on her observations of the relative clauses problems that face the subjects of the study and according to the review of literature which was included in the second chapter of this study.

### 3.5.5 The Validity of the Questionnaire:

The researcher consulted expert university teachers in the field of language teaching who have background in doing research in English language teaching to examine the content, the structure, the logical flow of the statements, the length and the order of the questionnaire, they accepted the items of the questionnaire in general but suggested some modifications, they suggested that the researcher should limit the number of the statements in order to achieve accurate results, the researcher then made some modifications according to their comments.

On the other hand, validity is also a measure used to identify the validity degree among the respondents according to their answers on certain criterion. The validity is counted by a number of methods, among them is the validity using the square root of the (reliability coefficient). The value of the reliability and the validity lies in the range between (0-1). The validity of the questionnaire is that the tool should measure the exact aim, which it has been designed for.

In this study the validity of the questionnaire is calculated by using the following equation:

$$\text{Validity} = \sqrt{\text{Reliability}}$$

For calculating the validity and the reliability of the questionnaire from the above equation, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to respondents to calculate the reliability coefficient using the Alpha-Cronbach coefficient; the results have been showed in the following table :

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
80	25

### 3.5.6 The Reliability of the Questionnaire:

Reliability means obtaining the same results if the same measurement is used more than one time under the same conditions.

Reliability is also defined as the degree of the accuracy of the data that the tool measures. Here are some of the most used methods for calculating the reliability:

- Alpha-Cronbach coefficient.

### **3.6 Techniques of Data Collection and Analysis:**

As has been mentioned, the data of the study has been collected by using a diagnostic test and a questionnaire.

The diagnostic test was conducted on 26 .September.2022, the researcher has administered the diagnostic test to (30) Sudanese secondary school students in Almanar Secondary School for Boys and Girls, the test took place during their school day in the school , the researcher gave them oral instructions by herself then she distributed the diagnostic test.

### **3.7 The Statistical Method:**

The SPSS( Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used to statistically process the data .The method used in the analysis of the data is the frequencies and percentages of the respondents' answers , in addition to the arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the weight of the respondents answers , Chi-square was used to test the hypotheses of the study.

### **Chapter Summary:**

Chapter three shows how the researcher collected the data of the study.

The population, the sample, the methodology, instrumentation, validity and reliability of the tools used to collect data for the study and the techniques

used for data collection and analysis were explained in great details in this chapter.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Data Analysis, Results and Discussion**

#### **4.1 Introduction:**

This chapter presents the analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of the data collected through the diagnostic test and the questionnaire, the first part of it is devoted to the diagnostic test while the second part is devoted to the questionnaire. The statistical part of the analysis of the data of the study is done by (SPSS) program where frequencies and percentages are presented.

#### **4.2 The Test Responses and Analysis:**

The test consists of two parts, the responses to the diagnostic test of the (30) Sudanese secondary school students were tabulated and computed. The following is an analytical interpretation and discussion of the findings regarding different points related to the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

Each section of the diagnostic test is analyzed statistically, discussed and followed by a table to support the discussion.

**Hypothesis One:**

EFL Sudanese secondary school students face some difficulties with using relative clauses.

The diagnostic test:

Part One:

**Join the following sentences by using relative pronouns to form relative clauses:**

Table (4.1) shows the frequency and percentage of distribution of the students' answers to section (1)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Pass	6	17%
Fail	24	83%
Total	30	100%

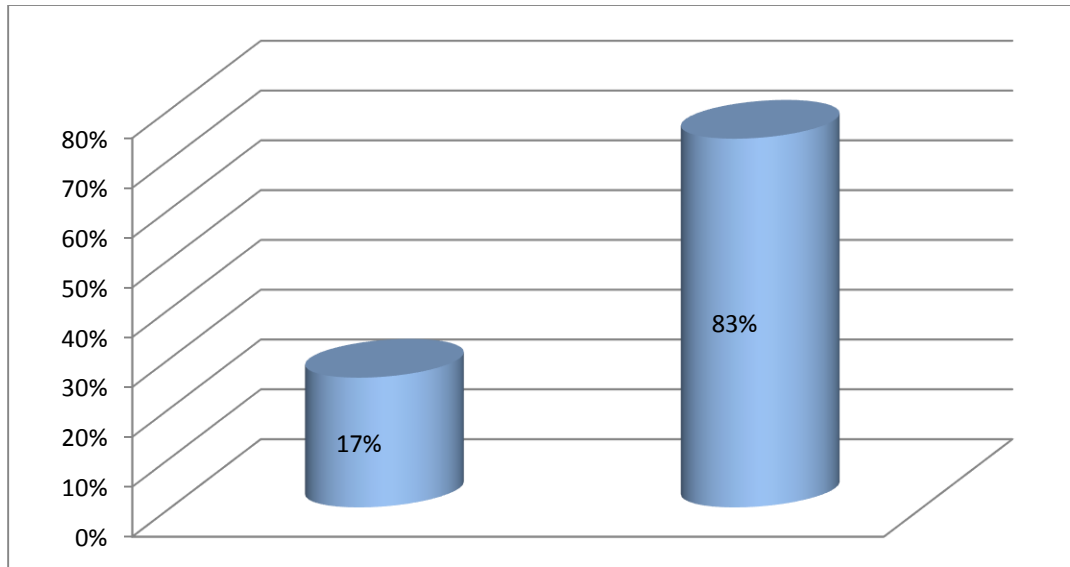


Figure (4.1)

The above table and figure illustrate the percentage and frequency of the answers of the sample of the study with regard to section (1) and show that most of the sample of the study failed to answer the questions of section (1) as it represented by (83%).

**Section Two:**

**a. Fill in the blanks with proper relative word**

**b. There are four choices in each item, underline the best one to fill in the blanks.**

Table (4.2) shows the frequency and percentage of distribution to the answers of the respondents of the study to section (2).

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Pass	7	23%
Fail	23	77%
Total	30	100%



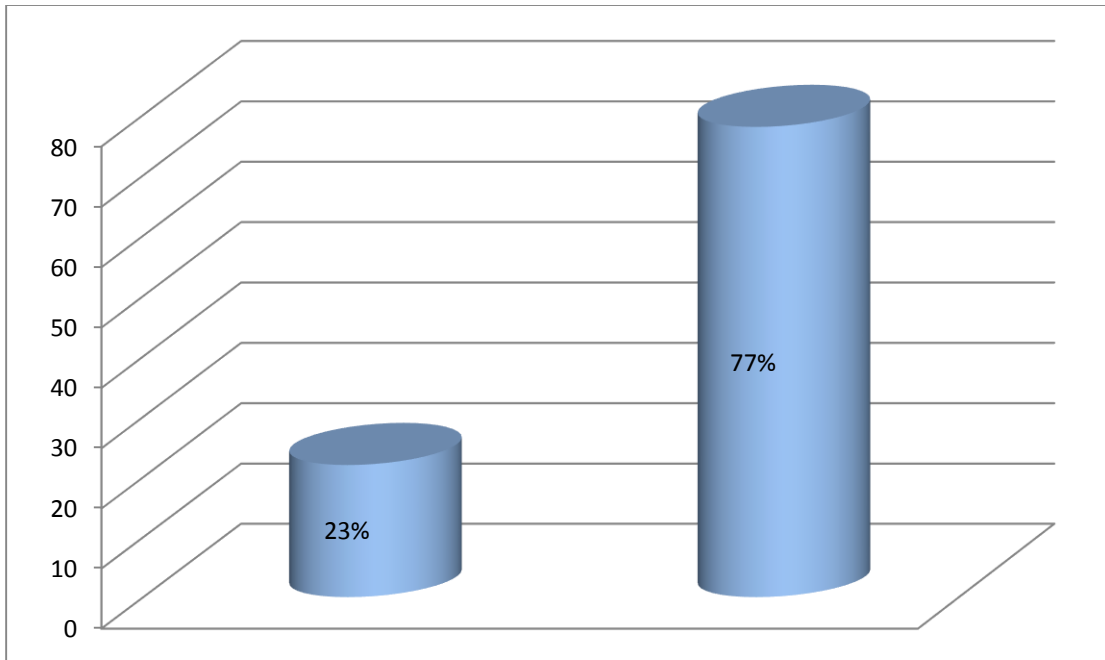


Figure (4.2)

The above table and figure show the percentage and frequency of the answers of the sample of the study related to section (2). It is clear that most of the answers of the students were incorrect as it is represented by (77%).

The overall diagnostic test:

Table No (4.3) shows the frequency distribution of the respondents' answers to the overall diagnostic test:

Answers	Frequencies	Percentage
Pass	9	30%
Fail	21	70%
Total	30	100%

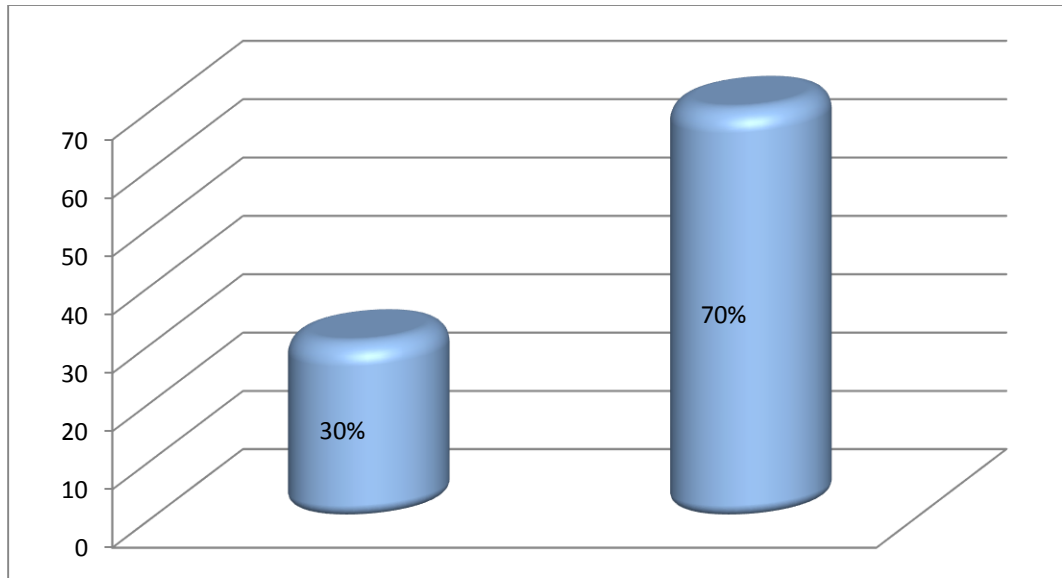


Figure (4.3)

As can be seen from the above table and figure only (9) (30%) of the students in the sample of the study were able to pass the overall diagnostic test; while there are (21) (70%) of students failed the overall diagnostic test.

Table No. (4.4) the frequency distribution and decisions for the respondents' answers of the two sections of the diagnostic test:

Sections	Pass		Fail		Decision
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
<b>section 1</b>	6	17%	24	83%	<b>acceptable</b>
<b>section 2</b>	7	23%	23	77%	<b>acceptable</b>
<b>overall</b>	9	30%	21	70%	<b>acceptable</b>

According to the results above, it can be said that the majority of the students were unable to pass the diagnostic test, so we can say that the first hypothesis of the study is confirmed.

Table (4.5) one sample T-TEST for the diagnostic test

Sections	N	SD	T-value	DF	P-value
1	30	7.2	11	29	0.00
2	30	9.81	17	29	0.00
Overall	30	8.03	15	29	0.00

The calculated value of T -TEST for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in section (1) was (11) which is greater than the tabulated value of T-TEST at the degree of freedom (29) and the significant value level (0.05%) which was (6.54). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (0.05 %) among the answers of the respondents.

The calculated value of T -TEST for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in part (2) was (17) which is greater than the tabulated value of T-TEST at the degree of freedom (29) and the significant value level (0.05%) which was (6.54). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (0.05 %) among the answers of the respondents.

The calculated value of T-TEST for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the overall test was (15 ) which is greater than the tabulated value of T-TEST at the degree of freedom (29 ) and the significant value level (0.05%) which was (6.54). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (0.05 %) among the

answers of the respondents. This asserts that the first hypothesis of this study is verified.

From the findings of the diagnostic test, it is clear that EFL learners encounter some serious problems in using relative clauses for as. According to Smith(1974) processing English sentences, especially those which contain embedded clauses is particularly difficult to EFL learners around the globe as these difficulties arise from understanding the embedded clauses on one hand, and tracking the main clause on the other.

The results also coincide with Aruya (2005) who declared that in EFL contexts relative clauses are very often considered as one rather simple language construction, yet some space for their acquisition is left to the very end of students' language learning process. One of the possible reasons may be the fact that the necessity for their correct usage is much stressed in the written rather than in spoken language as the fact that at earlier stages the possibility of writing is normally at a higher level, and errors that commonly occur mainly concern this written part where their possible incorrect usage is more visible and can affect the meaning of the whole sentence significantly hence it is marked by intonation in speaking.

Odlin (1990) stated that in the case that either the book or the teacher's instructions are incorrect, learners will also be inclined to make wrong set of the taught structures. Based on this, EFL learners are likely to overproduce the subject relative and under produce other English relative constructions such as the direct object relative. This is attributed to the consequences of their exposure through textbook contexts which emphasizes on subject relative. Using the textbooks, EFL learners follow the same trend from textbooks by emphasizing on subject relative and advocating for low frequency on the direct object relative.

Moreover, they agreed with Selinker( 2001) who maintained that relative clauses have always been an important issue to the EFL researchers because of their complex syntactic structure and therefore constitute learning problem to the language learner.

Furthermore, Lightbown (1997) attributed EFL learners' difficulties to numerous factors, he declared that learning a foreign language is one of the most complicated and tedious processes. The complication and the tedious

nature is a result of various factors such as language structure, mother tongue and similarities and differences between the first and second language among others. Due to the complicated nature of learning foreign languages, a learner is vulnerable to making mistakes due to the factors mentioned above . However, the process of learning a new language can be accentuated through highlighting likely mistakes to be encountered in the learning process and the causes of these mistakes.

They also conform to Mohammed's study (2016) who declared that EFL learners face serious problems in using relative pronouns and clauses; students do not know how to use commas within relative clauses as students are not aware of reducing relative clauses.

According to Freeman(2008) relative clauses play pertinent roles in sentence development hence making it mandatory to observe the appropriateness of relative clauses in sentence construction. However, most of the EFL learners are faced with challenges in appropriately using relative clauses thus making them unable to make either or both logically and grammatically correct sentences.

The results also support the findings of Gao (2014) who suggested that the main causes of relative clauses difficulties for EFL students were due to limited knowledge of English grammar, inadequate vocabulary and poor awareness of the features of connected sentences.

### **4.3 The Questionnaire:**

The questionnaire consists of two parts, part one consists of fifteen statements to investigate the causes of the difficulties that Sudanese secondary school EFL learners face in using relative clauses whereas the second part consists of ten statements which elicit some of the solutions to relative clauses difficulties that the subjects of the study face. The questionnaire was given to (30) respondents who represent the teachers' community at Sudanese secondary schools.

#### **4.4 The Responses to the Questionnaire:**

The responses to the questionnaire of the (30) teachers were tabulated and computed. The following is an analytical interpretation and discussion of the findings regarding different points related to the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

Each item in the questionnaire is analyzed statistically and discussed. The following tables will support the discussion.

#### **4.5 The Analysis of the Questionnaire:**

The researcher distributed the questionnaire on the determined study sample (30) EFL Sudanese secondary school teachers, and constructed the required tables for the collected data. This step consists of transformation of the qualitative (nominal) variables (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree) to quantitative variables (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) respectively, also the graphical representations were used for this purpose.

#### **Hypothesis Two:**

Relative clauses difficulties are attributed to many factors.

Statement No. (1)

Limited exposure to English relative clauses is a major reason for interchanging pronouns and putting them in the place of relative clauses.

Table No (4.6)

The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of statement

No. (1)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
-----------	-----------	------------

<b>strongly agree</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13.3%</b>
<b>agree</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>46.7%</b>
<b>neutral</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>disagree</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>strongly disagree</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

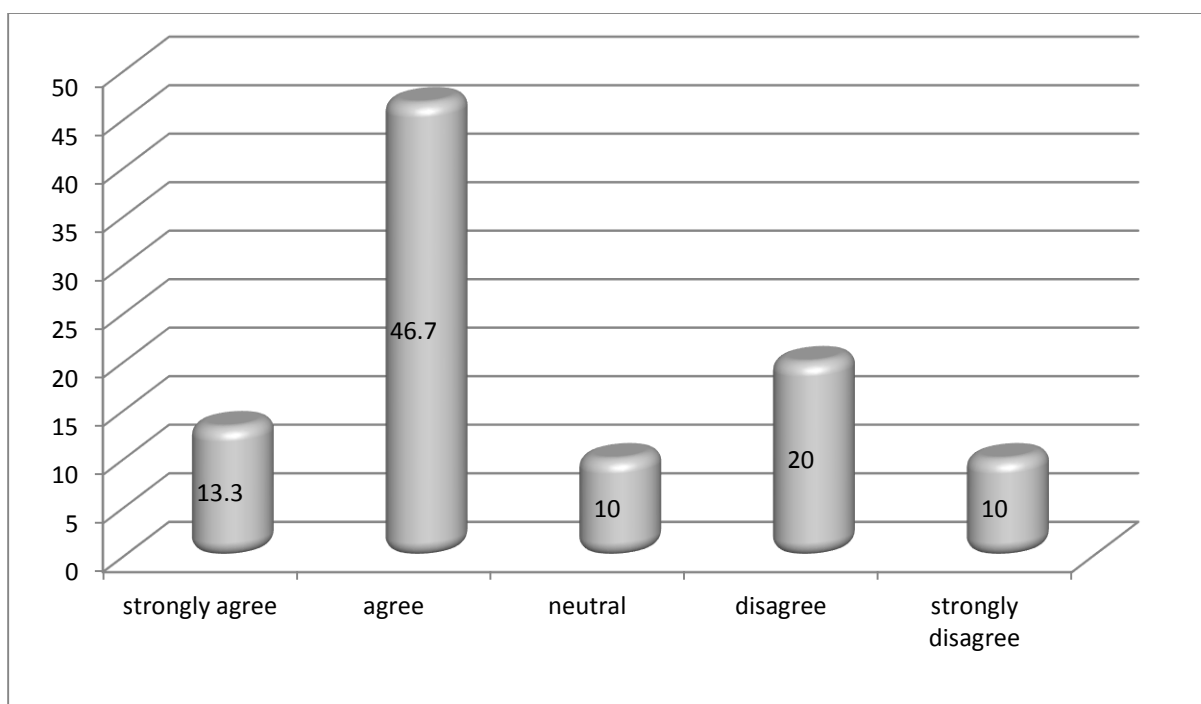


Figure (4.4)

It is clear from the above table and figure that there are only (3) teachers in the sample of the study (13.3%) strongly agreed with " Limited exposure to English relative clauses is a major reason for interchanging pronouns and putting them in the place of relative clauses ".

There are (14) persons (46.7%) agreed with that, (3) persons (10.0%) were not sure, (7) persons (20.0%) disagreed and (3) persons (10%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No. (2)**

Teachers do not use suitable learning materials and tasks that suit the level of the students.

Table No. (4.7)

The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of statement No. (2)

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>strongly agree</b>	13	34.4
<b>agree</b>	10	33.3
<b>neutral</b>	3	10
<b>disagree</b>	3	10
<b>strongly disagree</b>	1	3.3
<b>Total</b>	30	100.0



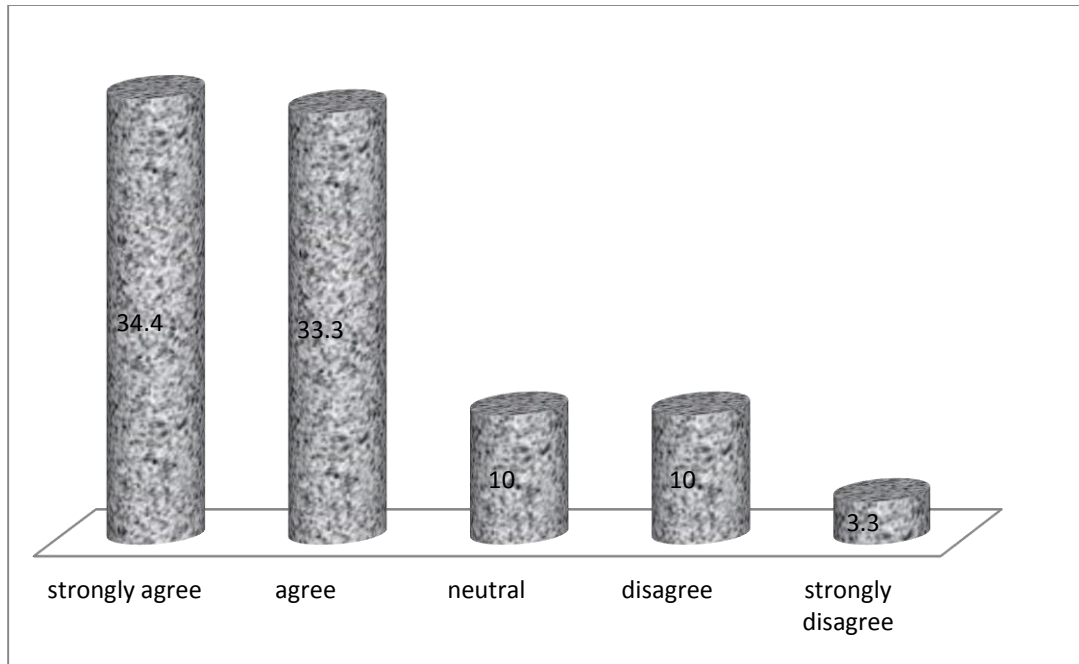


Figure (4.5)

It is clear from the above table and figure that there are (13) persons in the sample of the study (34.4%) strongly agreed with ‘Teachers do not use suitable learning materials and tasks that suit the level of the students’ There are (10) persons (33.3%) agreed, (3) persons (10.0%) were not sure, (3) persons (10.0%) disagreed and (1) person (3.3%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No. (3)**

The complicated nature of learning English is attributed to syntactic structure differences between native language and English .

Table No (4.8) the frequency distribution for the respondents’ answers to statement No.(3 )

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
strongly agree	18	60
agree	10	33.4

<b>neutral</b>	1	3.3
<b>disagree</b>	1	3.3
<b>strongly disagree</b>	0	0
<b>Total</b>	30	100.0

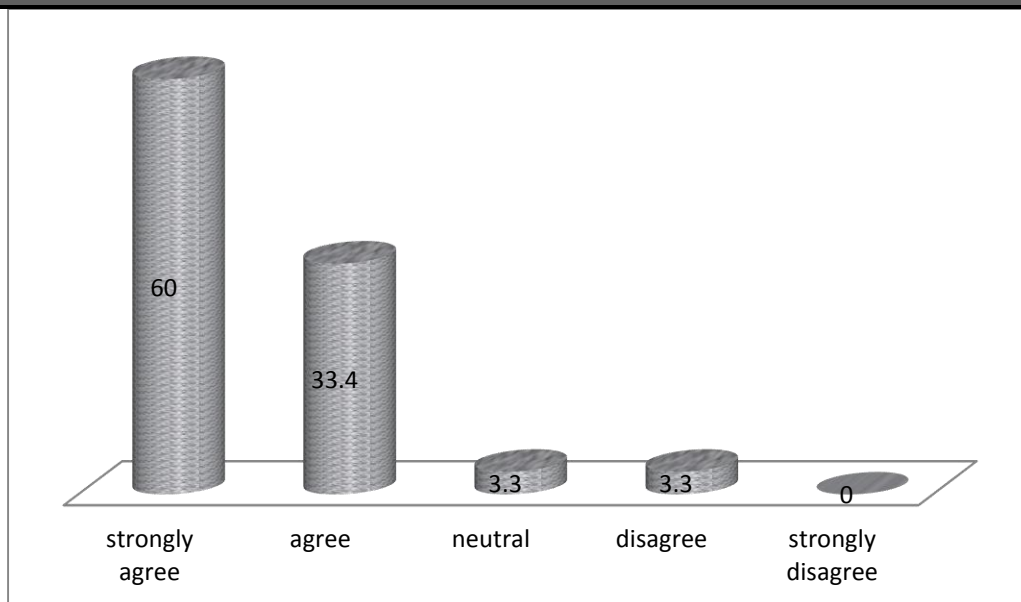


Figure (4.6)

It is clear from the above table and figure that there are (18) persons in the sample of the study (60.0%) strongly agreed with ‘The complicated nature of learning English is attributed to syntactic structure differences between native language and English’. There are (10) persons (33.4%) agreed, (1) person (3.3%) was not sure, (1) person (3.3%) disagreed and (0) person (0%) strongly disagreed.

#### **Statement No.(4 )**

Language structure, mother tongue interference , differences and similarities between the first and second language lead to EFL learners’ learning difficulties.

Table No (4.9) the frequency distribution for the respondents’ answers to statement(4)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
strongly agree	17	53.3
agree	11	36.7
neutral	2	6.7
disagree	1	3.3
strongly disagree	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>

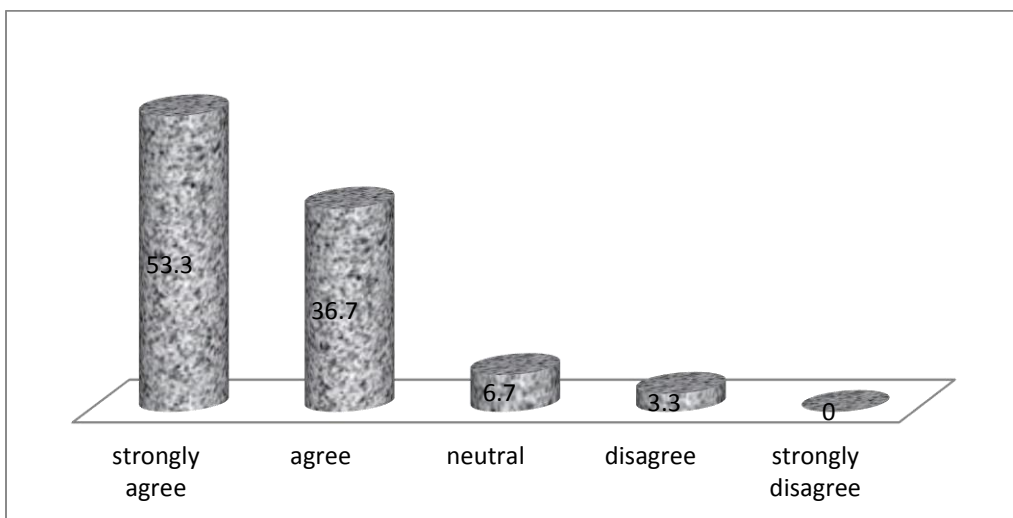


Figure (4.7)

It is clear from the above table and figure that there are (17) persons in the sample of the study (53.3%) strongly agreed with 'Language structure, mother tongue interference , differences and similarities between the first and second language leads to EFL learners' learning difficulties ". There are (11) persons (36.7%) agreed, (2) persons (6.7%) were not sure, (1) person (3.3%) disagreed and (0) person (0%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No. (5)**

A majority of second language learners start by acquiring knowledge on relative clauses but require a significant amount of effort and practice to correctly use them in modifying other sentence's roles.

Table No. (4.10) the frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of statement No. (5)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
-----------	-----------	------------

<b>strongly agree</b>	15	50
<b>agree</b>	13	43.4
<b>neutral</b>	1	3.3
<b>disagree</b>	1	3.3
<b>strongly disagree</b>	0	0
<b>Total</b>	30	100.0

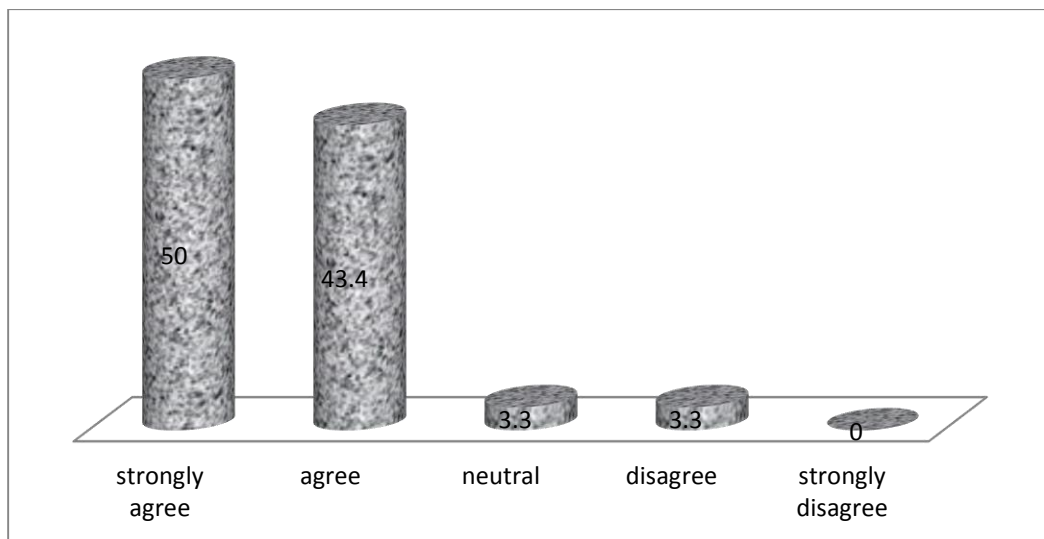


Figure (4.8)

It is clear from the above table and figure that there are (15) persons in the sample of the study (50.0%) strongly agreed with " A majority of second language learners start by acquiring knowledge on relative clauses but require a significant amount of effort and practice to correctly use them in modifying other sentence's roles ". There are (13) persons (43.4%) agreed, (1) person(3.3%) was not sure (1) person (3.3%) disagreed and (0) person (0%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No (6):**

Most EFL learners construct sentences with relative clauses in the direct object or subject position hence making the use of relative clauses unnecessary.

Table No. (4.11) the frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of statement No. (6)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
strongly agree	10	33.3
agree	12	40.0
neutral	4	10
disagree	3	13.3
strongly disagree	1	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>

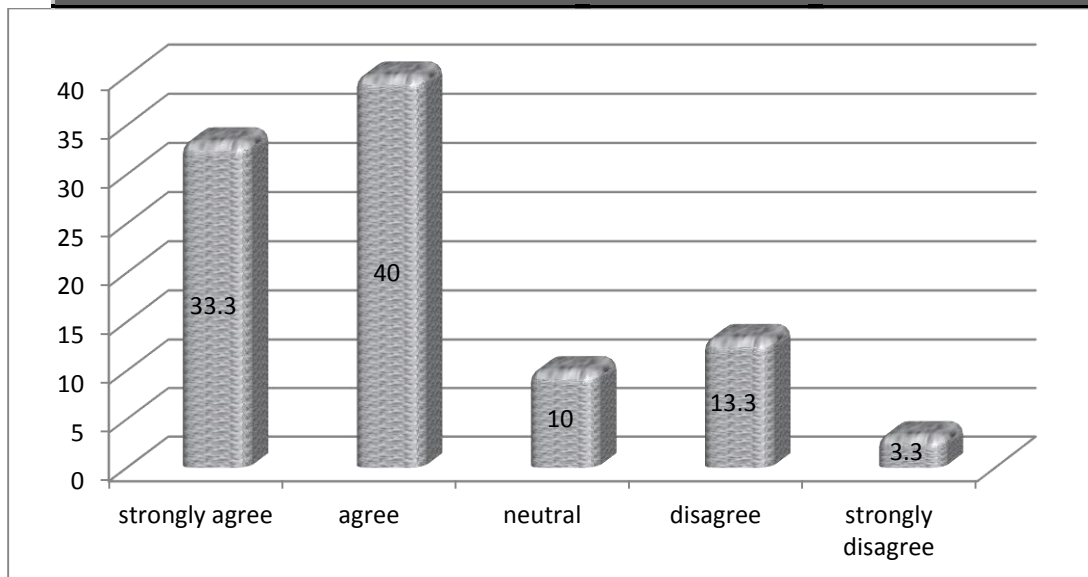


Figure (4.9)

From the above table and figure we can see that there are (10) persons in the sample of the study(33.3%) strongly agreed with " Most EFL learners construct sentences with relative clauses in the direct object or subject position hence making the use of relative clauses unnecessary ". There are (12) persons(40.0%) agreed,(4)persons (10.0%) were not sure,(3) persons(13.3%) disagreed and (1) person(3.3%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No. (7)**

Constructive differences in English and other languages internal structure is also another reason for the commonality of errors by EFL learners.

Table No (4.12)

The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of statement No.(7)

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	10	33.3	33.3	33.3
agree	12	40.0	40.0	73.3
neutral	3	10.0	10.0	83.3
disagree	4	13.3	13.3	96.7
strongly disagree	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

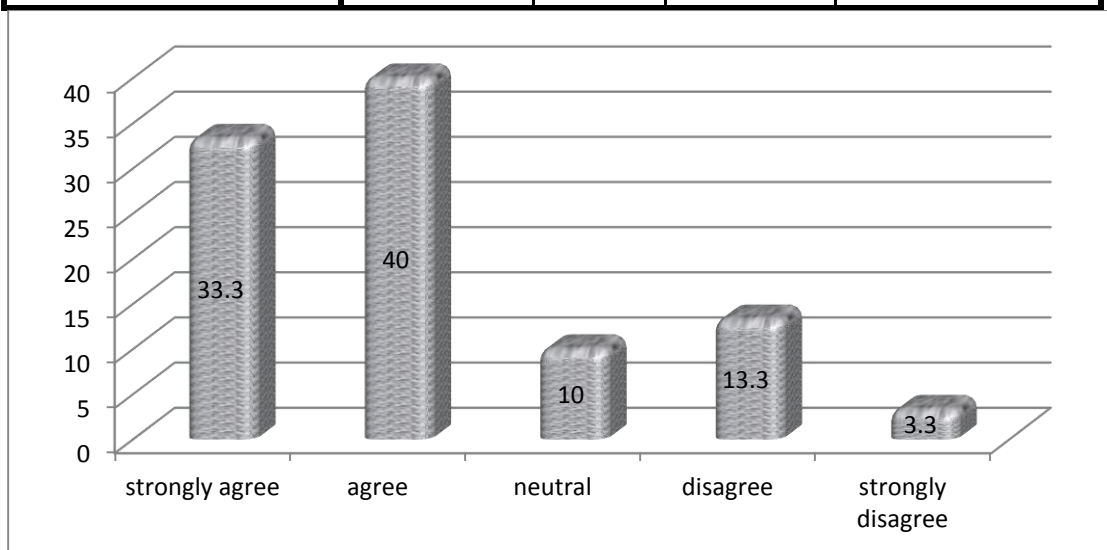


Figure (4.10)

From the above table and figure, we can see that there are (10) persons in the sample of the study(33.3%) strongly agreed with " Constructive differences in English and other languages internal structure is also another reason for the commonality of errors by EFL learners " There are (12) persons(40.0%) agreed, (3) persons(10.0%) were not sure,(4) persons(13.3%) disagreed and (1)person(3.3%)strongly disagreed.

**Statement No. (8)**

When learning EFL learners tend to develop a personal system which is a mix of first and second language system.

Table No. (4.13) The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of statement No.(8)

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
agree	12	40.0	40.0	60.0
neutral	3	10.0	10.0	70.0
disagree	8	26.7	26.7	96.7
strongly disagree	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

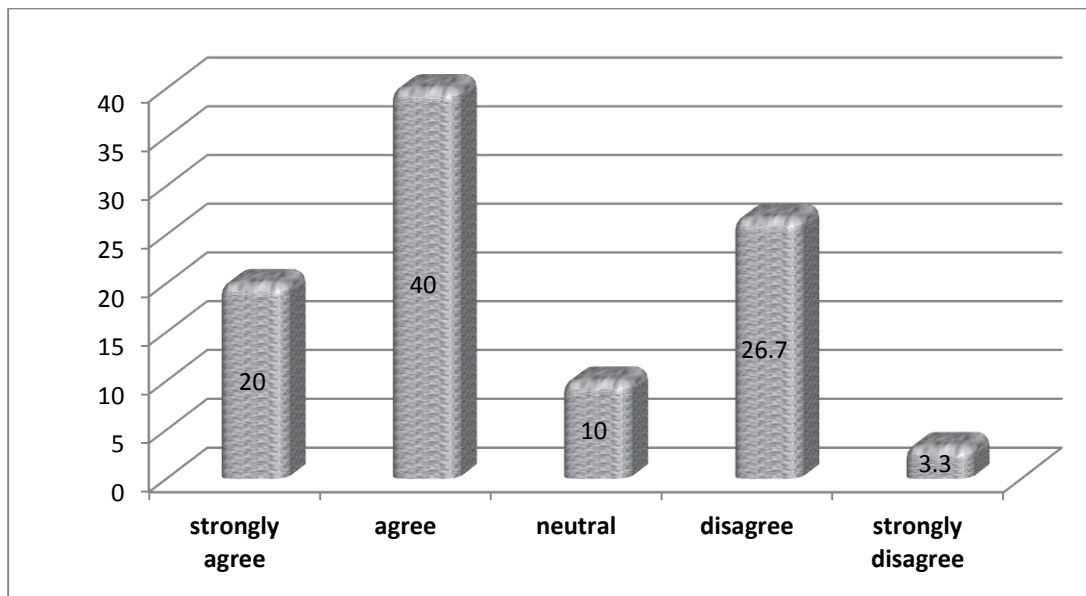


Figure (4.11)

From the above table and figure, we can see that there are (6) persons in the sample of the study(20.0%) strongly agreed with " When learning EFL learners tend to develop a personal system which is a mix of first and second language system." There are (12)persons (40.0%) agreed,(3) persons

(10.0%) were not sure,(8) persons (26.7%) disagreed. and (1)person (3.3%)strongly disagreed.

**Statement No. (9)**

Learners develop a tendency of transferring old language habits to the process of learning English thus making it difficult to learn the new language.

Table No. (4.14) the frequency distribution for the respondents’ answers of statement No.(9)

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	10	33.3	33.3	33.3
agree	8	26.7	26.7	60.0
neutral	3	10.0	10.0	70.0
disagree	8	26.7	26.7	96.7
strongly disagree	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	



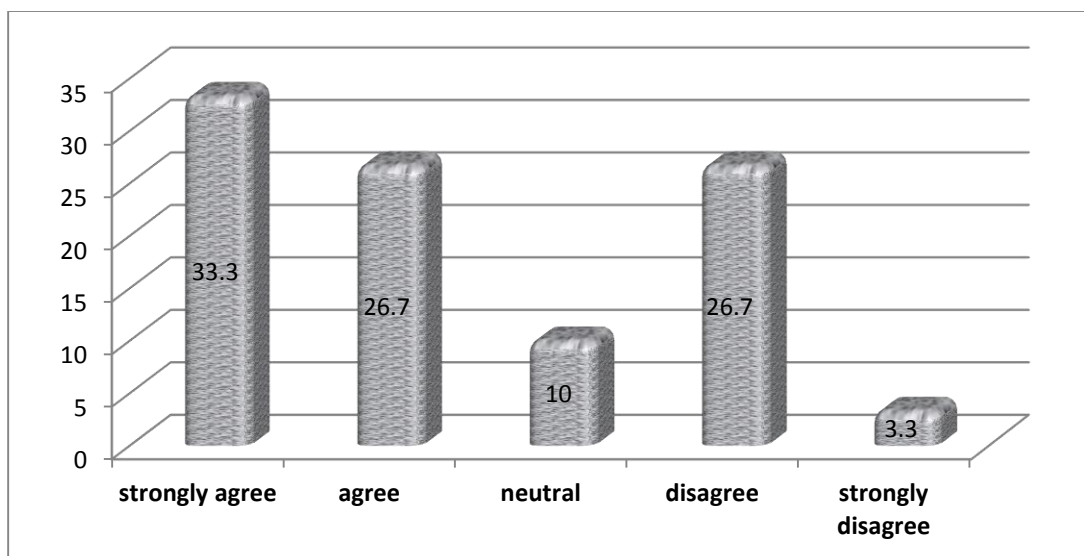


Figure (4.12)

From the above table and figure we can see that there are (10) persons in the sample of the study(33.3%) strongly agreed with " Learners develop a tendency of transferring old language habits to the process of learning English thus making it difficult to learn the new language". There are(8)persons(26.7%) agreed, (3) persons(10.0%)were not sure, (8) persons (26.7%)disagreed and (1) person (3.3%)strongly disagreed.

**Statement No. (10)**

EFL learners try to transfer parametric values from their first language to English which affects significant elements of a sentence such as relative clauses thus affecting the sentence's grammatical correctness.

Table No (4.15) the frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of statement No.(10)

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	10	33.3	33.3	33.3
agree	16	53.3	53.3	86.7

Neutral	3	10.0	10.0	96.7
disagree	0	0	0	0
strongly disagree	1	3.4	3.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

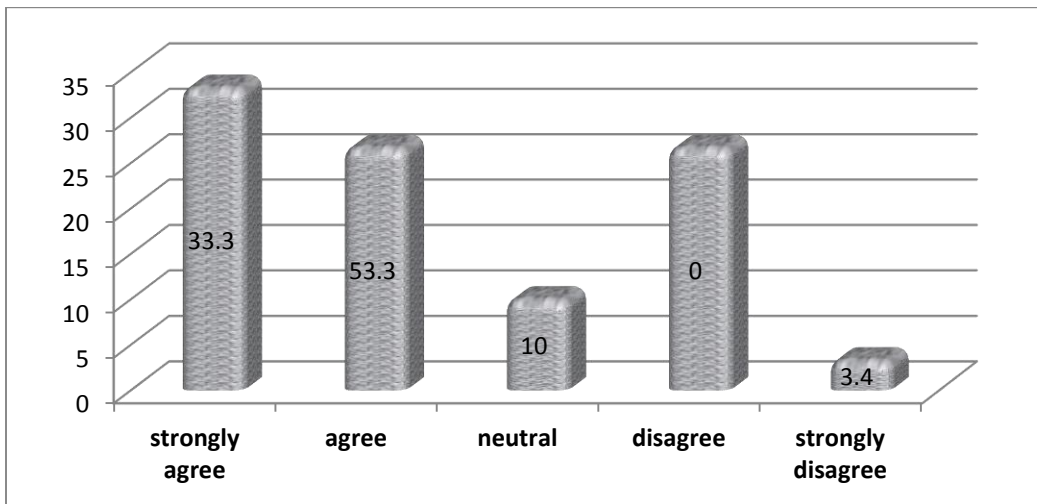


Figure (4.13)

From the above table and figure we can see that there are (10) persons in the sample of the study (33.3%) strongly agreed with "EFL learners try to transfer parametric values from their first language to English which affects significant elements of a sentence such as relative clauses thus affecting the sentence's grammatical correctness". There are (16) persons (53.3%) agreed, (3) persons (10.0%) were not sure, (0) person (0.0%) disagreed and (1) person (3.4%) strongly disagreed

**Statement No. (11)**

When forming relative clauses EFL students tend to use wrong resumptive Pronouns.

Table No (4.16) The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of statement No.(11)

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
agree	15	50.0	50.0	70.0
neutral	3	10.0	10.0	80.0
disagree	4	13.3	13.3	93.3
strongly disagree	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

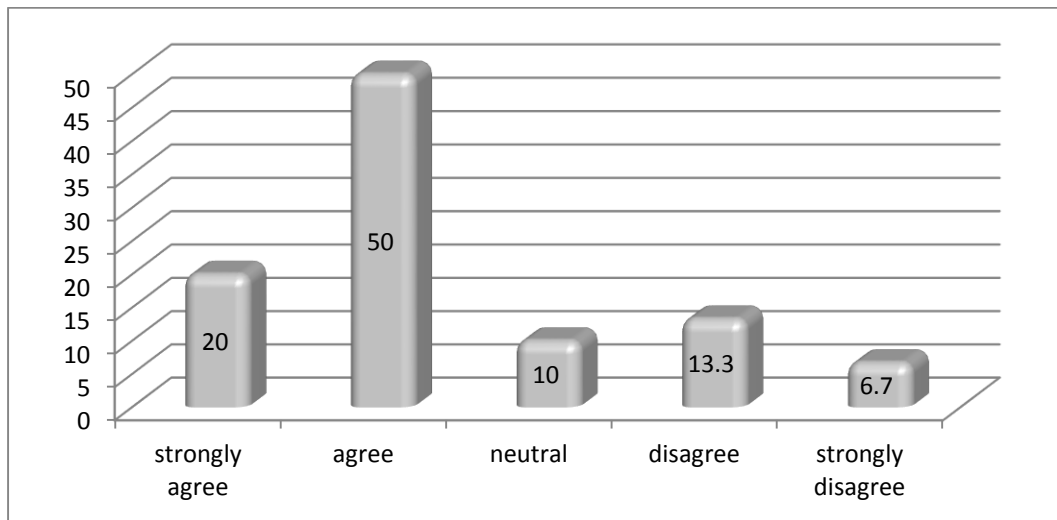


Figure (4.14)

From the above table and figure we can see that there are (6) persons in the sample of the study (20.0%) strongly agreed with " When forming relative clauses EFL students tend to use wrong resumptive pronouns". There are (15) persons (50.0%) agreed, (3) persons (10.0%) were not sure, (4) persons (13.3%) disagreed and (2) persons (6.7%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No. (12)**

Avoidance plays a key role in the acquisition of relative clauses in EFL learning as learners tend to avoid using difficult linguistic features; they tend to omit structure they are unsure of.

Table No. (4.17) The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of statement No.(12)

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
agree	8	26.7	26.7	53.3
neutral	3	10.0	10.0	63.3
disagree	8	26.7	26.7	90.0
strongly disagree	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

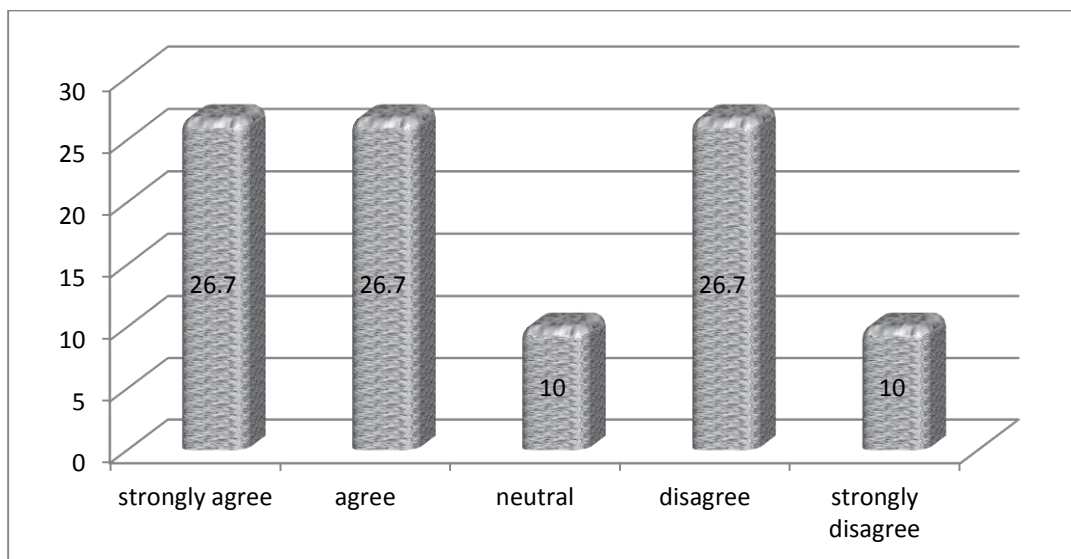


Figure (4.15)

From the above table and figure we can see that there are (8) persons in the sample of the study(26.7%) strongly agreed with " Avoidance plays a key role in the acquisition of relative clauses in EFL learning as learners tend to avoid using difficult linguistic features; they tend to omit structure they are unsure of." There are (8)persons (26.7%) agreed, (3) persons (10.0%) were not sure, (8) persons (26.7%) disagreed and (3) persons (10.0%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No. (13)**

EFL learners tend to formulate a linguistic rule based on the exposed language data or instructions with no consideration for exceptions as a result of overgeneralization .

Table No (4.18) the frequency distribution for the respondents' answers to statement No.(13 )

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>strongly agree</b>	18	60
<b>agree</b>	10	33.4
<b>neutral</b>	1	3.3
<b>disagree</b>	1	3.3
<b>strongly disagree</b>	0	0
<b>Total</b>	30	100.0

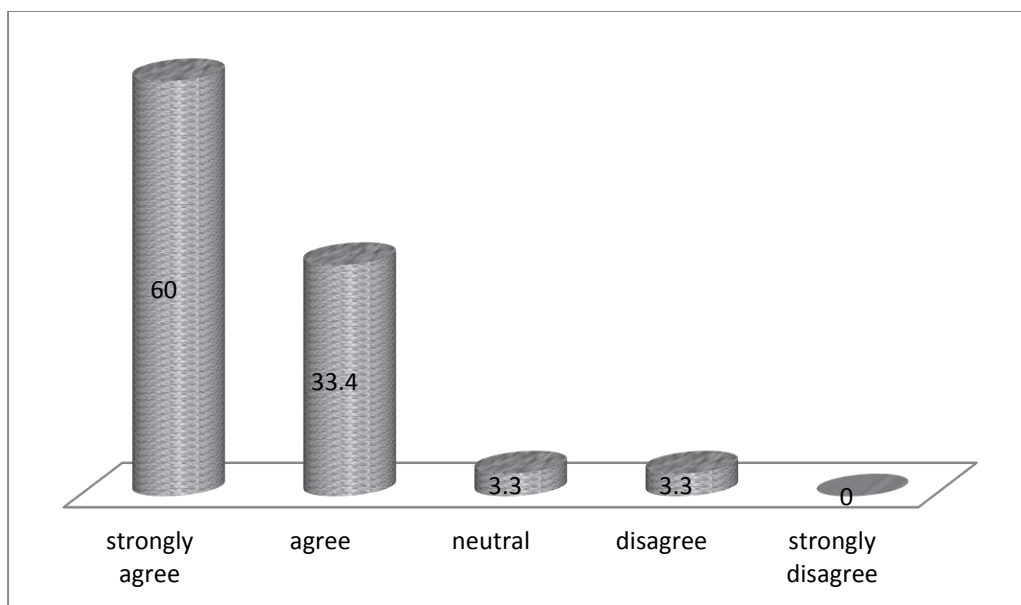


Figure (4.16)

It is clear from the above table and figure that there are (18) persons in the sample of the study (60.0%) strongly agreed with ‘EFL learners tend to formulate a linguistic rule based on the exposed language data or instructions with no consideration for exceptions as a result of overgeneralization’. There are (10) persons (33.4%) agreed, (1) person (3.3%) was not sure, (1) person (3.3%) disagreed and (0) person (0%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No.(14 )**

Teaching relative clauses is neglected in the curriculum at many schools and universities because teachers and students are more interested in other English skills and do not consider it an important part of their courses.

Table No. (4.19) The frequency distribution for the respondents’ answers of statement No.(14 )

Variables	Frequency	Percent
strongly agree	3	13.3
agree	14	46.7
neutral	3	10
disagree	7	20

<b>strongly disagree</b>	3	10
<b>Total</b>	30	100.0

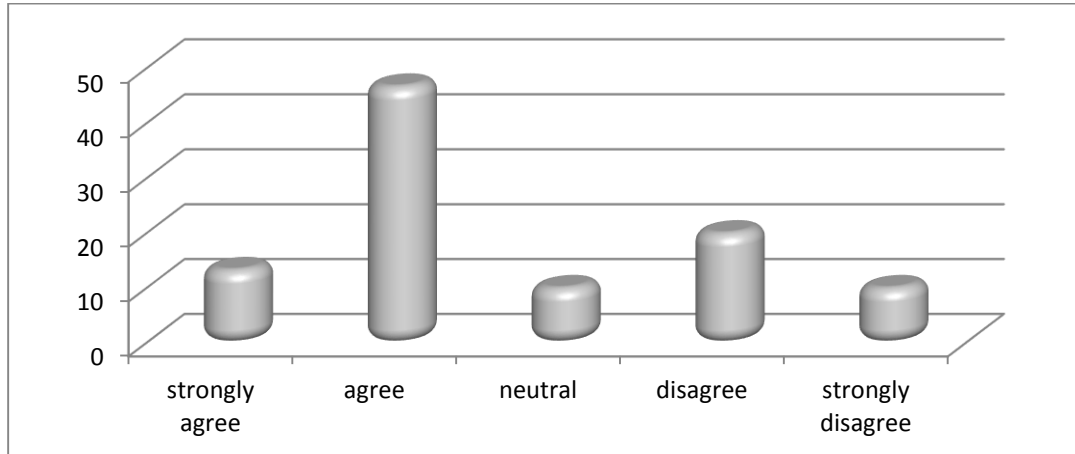


Figure (4.17)

It is clear from the above table and figure that there are (3) persons in the sample of the study with percentage (10.0%) strongly agreed with that ‘teaching relative clauses is neglected in the curriculum at many schools and universities because teachers and students are more interested in other English skills and do not consider it an important part of their courses..’ There are (14) persons with percentage (46.7%) agreed with that, (3) persons with percentage (10.0%) were not sure, (7) persons with percentage (23.3%) disagreed and (3) persons with (10.0%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No.(15 )**

Limited textbooks contents or teachers’ instructions results in overuse or no use of relative clauses not taught leading to wrong grammatical structures

Table No (4.20) The frequency distribution for the respondents’ answers of statement No.(15 )

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent%</b>
<b>strongly agree</b>	13	34.4

agree	10	33.3
neutral	3	10
disagree	3	10
strongly disagree	1	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>

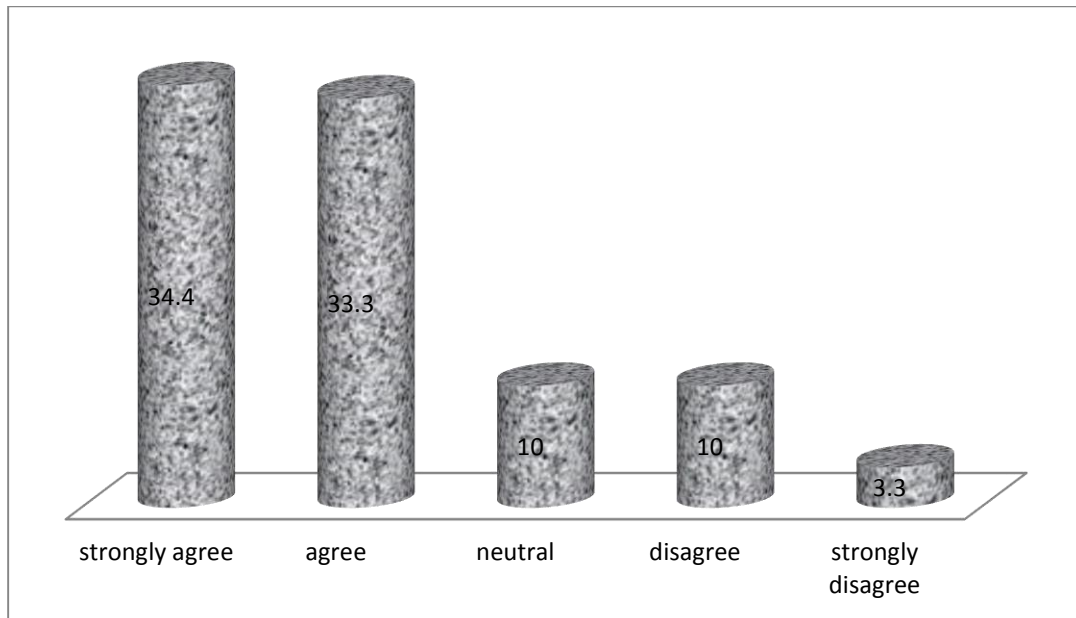


Figure (4.18)

It is clear from the above table and figure that there are (13) persons in the sample of the study with percentage (34.4%) strongly agreed with that " Limited textbooks contents or teachers' instructions results in overuse or no use of relative clauses not taught leading to wrong grammatical structures." There are (10) persons with percentage (33.3%) agreed, (3) persons with percentage (10.0%) were not sure, (3) persons with percentage (10.0%) disagreed and (1) person with (3.3%) strongly disagreed.

**Table (4.21)**

**The mean and standard deviation and chi-square values for Hypothesis (2) : Relative clauses difficulties are attributed to many factors.**



No.	Statements	mean	SD	Chi square	p-value
1	Limited exposure to English relative clauses is a major reason for interchanging pronouns and putting them in the place of relative clauses.	3.6	0.8	29	0.023
2	Teachers do not use suitable learning materials and tasks that suit the level of the students.	2.4	0.5	28	0.010
3	The complicated nature of learning English is attributed to syntactic structure differences between native language and English .	3.3	0.7	23	0.006
4	Language structure, mother tongue interference , differences and similarities between the first and second language lead to EFL learners' learning difficulties.	2.5	3.8	15	0.046
5	A majority of second language learners start by acquiring knowledge on relative clauses but require a significant amount of effort and practice to correctly use them in modifying other sentence's roles	3.4	2.5	22	0.000
6	Most EFL learners construct sentences with relative clauses in the direct object or subject position hence making the use of relative clauses unnecessary.	2.8	1.7	12	0.000
7	Constructive differences in English and other languages internal structure is also another reason for the commonality of errors by EFL learners.	2.9	4.8	34	0.000
8	When learning EFL learners tend to develop a personal system which is a mix of first and second	2.7	0.5	22	0.000

	language system.				
<b>9</b>	Learners develop a tendency of transferring old language habits to the process of learning English thus making it difficult to learn the new language	<b>2.9</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>0.023</b>
<b>10</b>	EFL learners try to transfer parametric values from their first language to English which affects significant elements of a sentence such as relative clauses thus affecting the sentence's grammatical correctness.	<b>2.6</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0.036</b>
<b>11</b>	When forming relative clauses EFL students tend to use wrong resumptive pronouns.	<b>3.6</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0.023</b>
<b>12</b>	Avoidance plays a key role in the acquisition of relative clauses in EFL learning as learners tend to avoid using difficult linguistic features; they tend to omit structure they are unsure of.	<b>3.4</b>	<b>-50</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0.010</b>
<b>13</b>	EFL learners tend to formulate a linguistic rule based on the exposed language data or instructions with no consideration for exceptions as a result of overgeneralization.	<b>3.3</b>	<b>.70</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0.006</b>
<b>14</b>	Teaching relative clauses is neglected in the curriculum at many schools and universities because teachers and students are more interested in other English skills and do not consider it an important part of their courses.	<b>2.4</b>	<b>.50</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0.010</b>
<b>15</b>	Limited textbooks contents or teachers' instructions results in overuse or no use of relative	<b>3.3</b>	<b>.70</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0.006</b>

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No.(1) was (29) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement 'Limited exposure to English relative clauses is a major reason for interchanging pronouns and putting them in the place of relative clauses.'

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (2) was (28) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement'' Teachers do not use suitable learning materials and tasks that suit the level of the students.'''.

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (3) was (23) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement'' The complicated nature of learning English is attributed to syntactic structure differences between native language and English .''

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (4) was (15) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the

statement "Language structure, mother tongue interference , differences and similarities between the first and second language lead to EFL learners' learning difficulties. "

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (5) was (22) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "A majority of second language learners start by acquiring knowledge on relative clauses but require a significant amount of effort and practice to correctly use them in modifying other sentence's roles".

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (6) was (12) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the statement "Most EFL learners construct sentences with relative clauses in the direct object or subject position hence making the use of relative clauses unnecessary."

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (7) was (34) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "Constructive differences in English and other languages internal structure is also another reason for the commonality of errors by EFL learners."

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (8) was (22) which is greater

than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement " When learning EFL learners tend to develop a personal system which is a mix of first and second language system".

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (9) was (32) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement " Learners develop a tendency of transferring old language habits to the process of learning English thus making it difficult to learn the new language".

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (10) was (22) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12). this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "EFL learners try to transfer parametric values from their first language to English which affects significant elements of a sentence such as relative clauses thus affecting the sentence's grammatical correctness. "

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers statement No. (11) was (22) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement 'When forming relative clauses EFL students tend to use wrong resumptive pronouns''.

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (12) was (28) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "Avoidance plays a key role in the acquisition of relative clauses in EFL learning as learners tend to avoid using difficult linguistic features; they tend to omit structure they are unsure of".

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (13) was (23) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "EFL learners tend to formulate a linguistic rule based on the exposed language data or instructions with no consideration for exceptions as a result of overgeneralization".

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (14) was (28) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "teaching relative clauses is neglected in the curriculum at many schools and universities because teachers and students are more interested in other English skills and do not consider it an important part of their courses".

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (15) was (23) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the

statement " Limited textbooks contents or teachers' instructions results in overuse or no use of relative clauses not taught leading to wrong grammatical structures".

According to the findings of the first part of the questionnaire we can conclude that EFL Sudanese secondary school students' difficulties in using relative clauses are attributed to different factors, therefore , the second hypothesis of the study is verified.

The above findings of the first part of the questionnaire revealed some of the causes of relative clauses difficulties among EFL Sudanese secondary school students that coincide with the following findings of different studies:

For as Morley (2001:90) ) pointed out that teaching relative clauses is neglected in the curriculum at many schools and universities because teachers and students are more interested in other English skills and do not consider it an important part of their courses.

Moreover,Selinker( 2001) stated that relative clauses have always been an important issue to EFL researchers because of their complex syntactic structure and therefore constitute learning problem to the language learner.

They also agreed with Roberts (1981) who stated that EFL learners' limited exposure to English relative clauses is a major reason for interchanging pronouns and putting them in place of relative clauses. However, frequent exposure increase the students' ability and confidence in English language thus enabling him/her to make grammatically correct sentence structure.

Ortega(2005) further argued that the acquisition of English as a second language by learners is impaired by numerous factors whose interaction causes difficulties for EFL learners in the acquisition of English relative clauses. These factors include parametric differences between English and the learner's first language , difficulties in the resettlement of the wh – movement parameter and the parameter agreement between the head and specifier.

Moreover, Richard (1985) maintained that EFL learners tend to be unaware of the existing differences between restrictive relative clauses and non-restrictive relative clauses as EFL learners overgeneralize rules.

The results also coincide with Ellis(1983) who claimed that EFL learners tend to avoid using difficult linguistic structures as a result of differences between their native language and the target language hence EFL learners' native language causes them to produce numerous errors in English language.

According to Gass(1996) English language structure avoidance by EFL learners is related to the relative clause level of frequency. In this sense, most frequent relative clauses have a higher likelihood of being avoided.

Lado(1957) maintained that foreign language learners rely on mother tongue knowledge when faced with specific problems in the process of communication process. In comprehending language , EFL learners use mother tongues language by direct translating then figuring out the meaning. The process is the same in communication , through native language transfer EFL learner are able to transfer the form and meanings from the native language to the production and comprehension of English language.

Furthermore, Lightbown (1997) attributed EFL learners' difficulties to numerous factors, he declared that learning a foreign language is one of the most complicated and tedious processes. The complication and the tedious nature is a result of various factors such as language structure, mother tongue and similarities and differences between the first and second language among others. Due to the complicated nature of learning foreign languages, a learner is vulnerable to making mistakes due to the factors mentioned above. However, the process of learning a new language can be accentuated through highlighting likely mistakes to be encountered in the learning process and the causes of these mistakes

According to Freeman(2008) relative clauses play pertinent roles in sentence development hence making it mandatory to observe the appropriateness of relative clauses in sentence construction. However, most of the EFL learners are faced with challenges in appropriately using relative clauses thus making



them unable to make either or both logically and grammatically correct sentences.

Selinker( 2001) reported that EFL students' difficulties in using relative clauses are related to the misunderstanding of using relative clauses as some learners use a particular relative pronoun instead of another relative pronoun; moreover, they do not use them in the right place within the sentence .Selinker (2001) believed that relative clauses have always been an important issue to the EFL researchers because of their complex syntactic structure and therefore constitute learning problem to the language learner.

According to Ja'fr (2013) these relative clauses problems are attributed to inadequate grammar knowledge, limited knowledge of vocabulary, lack of practice, lack of ideas, punctuation and English sentence structure.

Lourdes(1996) argued that among the factors that affects ESL difficulties in learning is due to the structural incompatibility between English and other languages since EFL learners often try to transfer parametric values from their first language to English, the parametric transfer affects significant elements of a sentence such as relative clauses thus affecting the sentences' grammatical correctness. EFL learners often interchange relative pronouns and nouns with relative clauses thus compromising the quality of sentences structures.

Bao(2014) found out the main causes of the students' choosing wrong relative words stem from: students pay much attention to language form and apply English rules mechanically, ignoring meaning and context of the language; students' grammar knowledge is not comprehensive and systematic and students tend to neglect or forget some grammar points; students lack necessary basic English grammar and vocabulary knowledge, resulting in the difficulty in understanding the meaning of the sentence; and students can't adjust to relative clause because of language transfer.

Moreover, Ortega(2005) declared that constructive differences in English and other languages internal structure is also another reason for the commonality of errors by EFL learners as when learning a new second

language, EFL students tend to develop a personal language system that is a mix of the first and second language system.

The findings of the study also confirm with Ahmed (2011) who stated that the curriculum has negative impact on using relative clauses and that large classes have negative effects in the students' achievements and are not helpful in teaching EFL .

Odlin (1990) declared that in the case that either the book or the teacher's instructions are incorrect, learners will also be inclined to make wrong set of the taught structures. Based in this, EFL learners are likely to overproduce the subject relative and under produce other English relative constructions such as the direct object relative. This is attributed to the consequences of their exposure through textbook contexts which emphasizes on subject relative. Using the textbooks, EFL learners follow the same trend from textbooks by emphasizing on subject relative and advocating for low frequency on the direct object relative.

Furthermore, Long (1990) asserted that EFL learners difficulties of using relative clauses are affected by many factors such as lack of background knowledge and English syntactic structure, lack of exposure to the target language and lack of motivation and insufficient practice .

Lourdes(1996) argued that among the factors that affects ESL difficulties in learning is due to the structural incompatibility between English and other languages since EFL learners often try to transfer parametric values from their first language to English, the parametric transfer affects significant elements of a sentence such as relative clauses thus affecting the sentences' grammatical correctness. EFL learners often interchange relative pronouns and nouns with relative clauses thus compromising the quality of sentences structures.

### **Hypothesis three:**

Teachers can help students to overcome relative clauses difficulties by raising their awareness about the importance of English language structure

and using relative clauses for learning in general and providing them with suitable techniques and strategies to improve their English language skills.

**Statement No.(16 )**

The primary problem of learning relative clauses does not arise from essential difficulties in English but specially created first language habits .

Table No (4.22) The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of statement No.(16 )

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>strongly agree</b>	3	13.3
<b>agree</b>	14	46.7
<b>neutral</b>	3	10
<b>disagree</b>	7	20
<b>strongly disagree</b>	3	10
<b>Total</b>	30	100.0

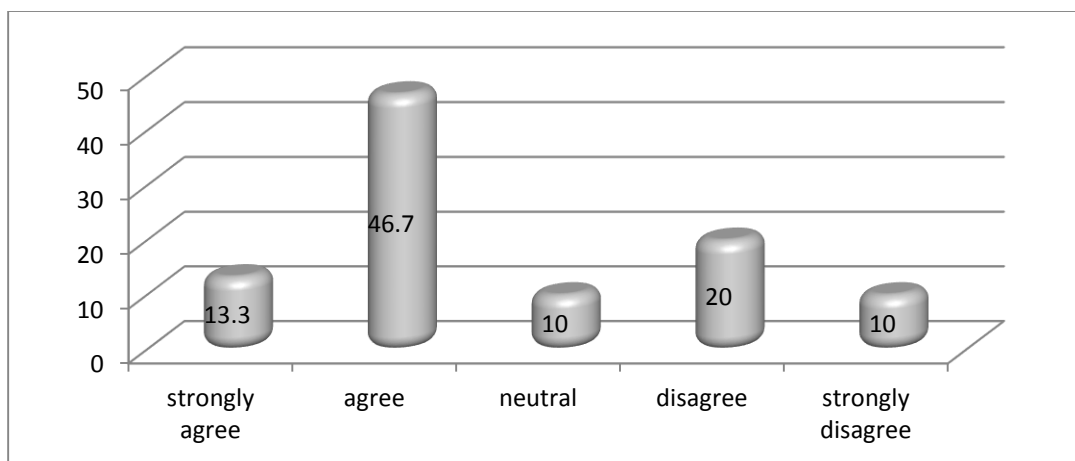


Figure (4.19)

It is clear from the above table and figure that there are (3) persons in the sample of the study (13.3%) strongly agreed with "The primary problem of learning relative clauses does not arise from essential difficulties in English but specially created first language habits". There are (14) persons (46.7%) agreed with that, (3) persons (10.0%) were not sure, (7) persons (20.0%) disagreed and (3) persons (10%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No.(17)**

A focus on the mistakes and problems of EFL learners alongside the teaching of relative clauses enables better effective learning of English as a foreign language.

Table No. (4.23) The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of statement No.(17)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
strongly agree	13	34.4
agree	10	33.3
neutral	3	10
disagree	3	10
strongly disagree	1	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>

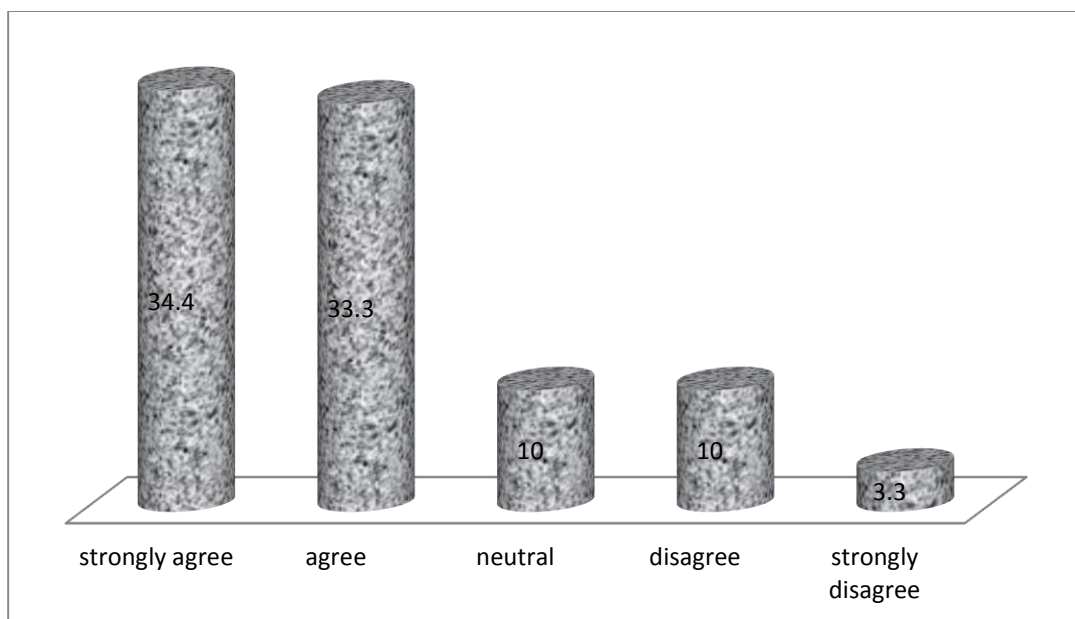


Figure (4.20)

It is clear from the above table and figure that there are (13) persons in the sample of the study (34.4%) strongly agreed with " A focus on the mistakes and problems of EFL learners alongside the teaching of relative clauses enables better effective learning of English as a foreign language".

There are (10) persons (33.3%) agreed, (3) persons (10.0%) were not sure, (3) persons (10.0%) disagreed and (1) person (3.3%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No.(18 )**

Inter- language enables the EFL teacher to better understand the source of the learners' problems and effective solution.

Table No.(4.24 )The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of statement No.(18)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Strongly agree</b>	12	40.0
<b>agree</b>	12	40.0
<b>neutral</b>	2	6.7
<b>disagree</b>	2	6.7

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	2	6.7
<b>Total</b>	30	100.0

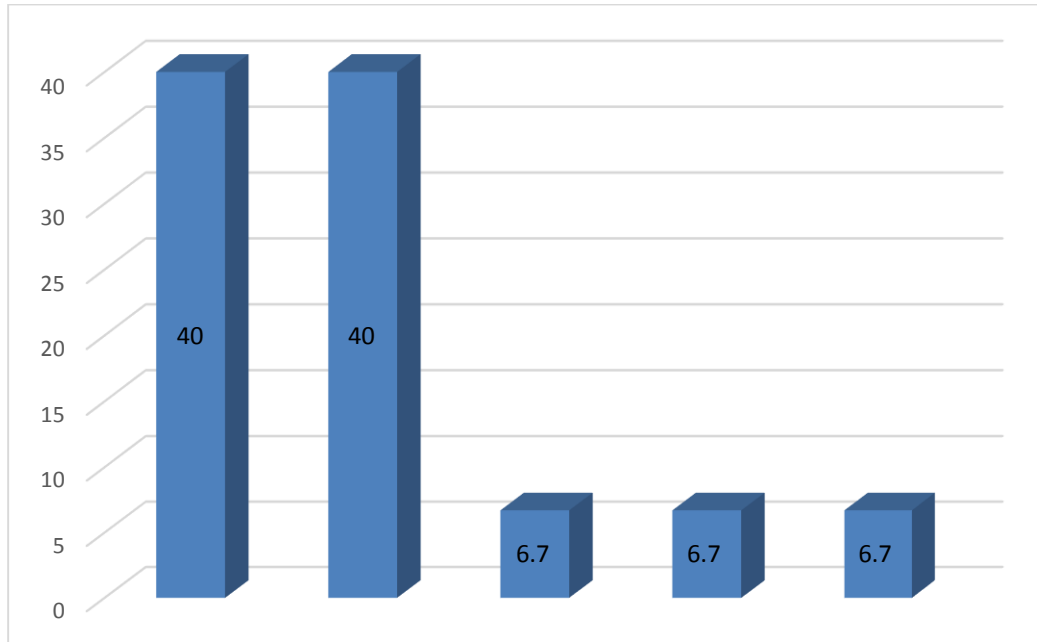


Figure (4.21)

From the above table and figure. It is clear that there are (12) persons in the sample of the study (40.0%) answered strongly agree with " Inter- language enables the EFL teacher to better understand the source of the learners' problems and effective solution." There are (12)persons (40.0%) answered agree, (2) persons (6.7%) answered neutral, (2) persons (6.7%) answered disagree and (2) persons(6.7%) answered strongly disagree.

**Statement No.(19 )**

An understanding of the errors is helpful in the teaching and learning process of EFL learners since it enables both the teacher and students to identify the cases of the errors and appropriate solutions towards improving the students' learning process.

Table No. (4.25 )The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of statement No.(19 )

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	6	20.0
agree	18	60.0
neutral	1	3.3
disagree	3	19
Strongly disagree	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

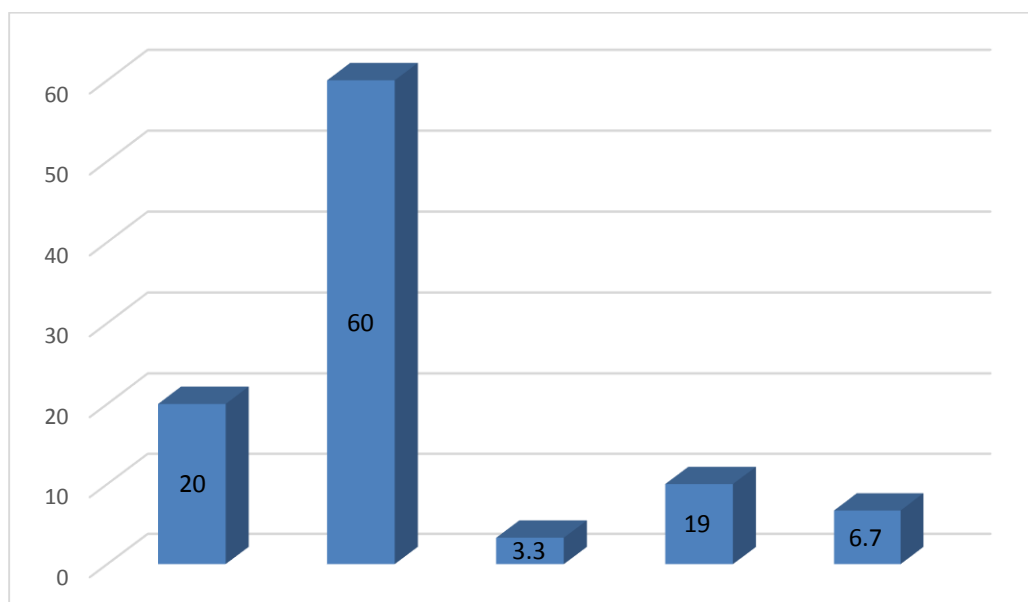


Figure (4.22)

From the above table and figure. It is clear that there are **(6)** persons in the sample of the sample of the study (20.0%) answered strongly agree with " An understanding of the errors is helpful in the teaching and learning process of EFL learners since it enables both the teacher and students to identify the cases of the errors and appropriate solutions towards improving the students' learning process.." There are **(18)**persons(60.0%) answered agree, **(1)** person (3.3%) answered neutral, **(3)** persons (19.0%) answered disagree and **(2)** persons (6.7% )answered strongly disagree.

**Statement No.(20 )**

The teacher should be effectively able to identify proper methods and teaching materials that maximize student benefit from the entire teaching process.

Table No. (4.26) The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of statement No.(20 )

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	7	32.3
agree	18	60.0
neutral	1	3.3
disagree	2	6.7
Strongly disagree	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

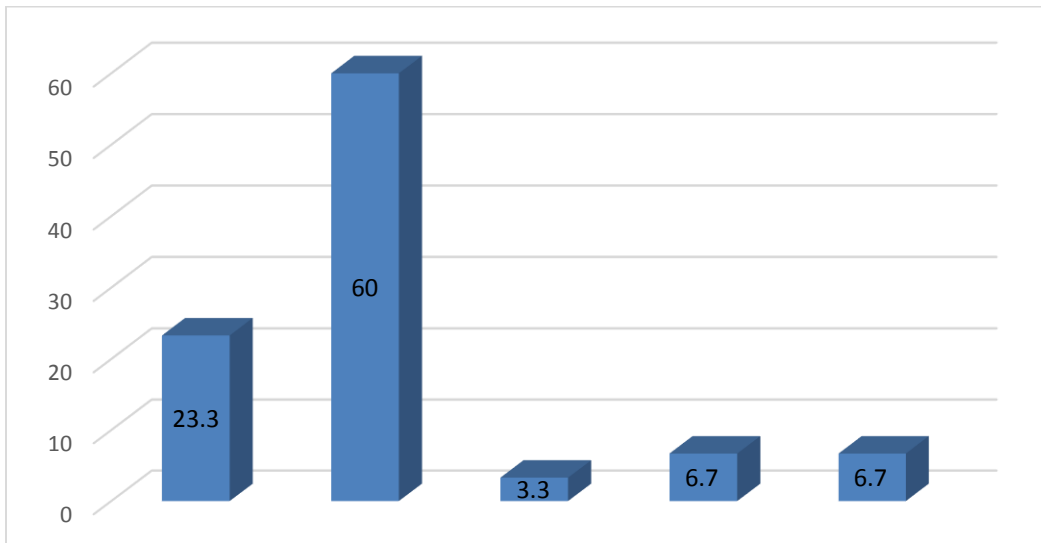


Figure (4.23)

From the above table and figure. It is clear that there are (7) persons in the sample of the study (23.3%) answered strongly disagree with " The teacher should be effectively able to identify proper methods and teaching materials that maximize student benefit from the entire teaching process."'. There are (18) (60.0%) answered agree, (1) person (3.3%) answered neutral, (2) persons



(6.7%) answered disagree and (2) persons ( 6.7%) answered strongly disagree.

**Statement No. (21 )**

Frequent exposure of relative clauses increases the students’ ability and confidence in English thus enabling him/her to make grammatically correct sentence structure as the accuracy of relative clauses tend to improve with time as a result of exposure .

Table No. ( 4.27)The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents’ Answers of statement No.(21 )

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	6	20.0
agree	11	36.7
neutral	3	10
disagree	8	26.7
Strongly disagree	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

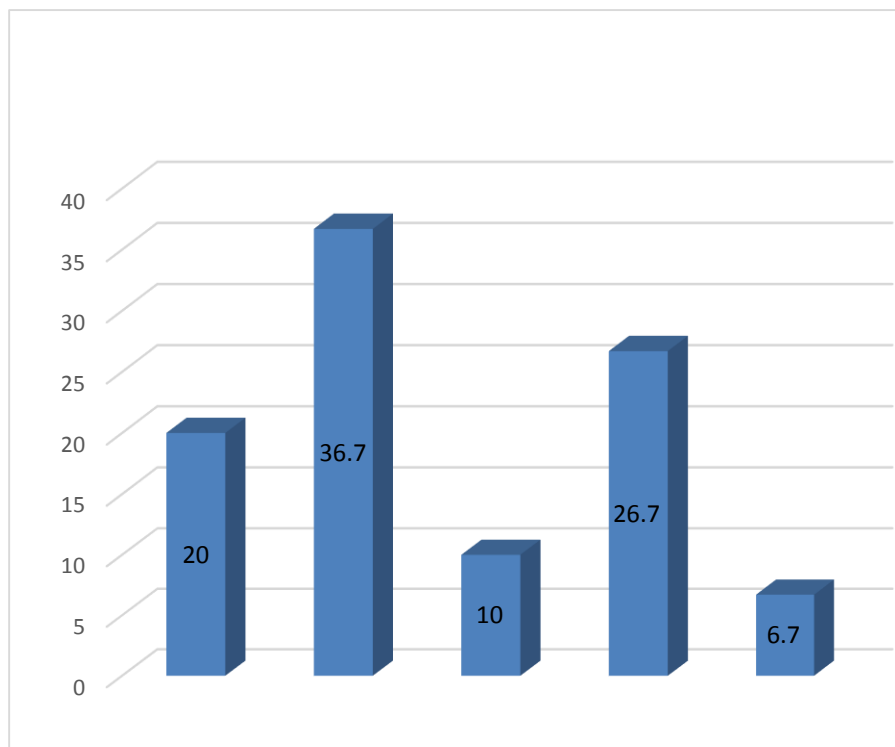


Figure (4.24)

From the above table and figure. It is clear that there are (6) persons in the sample of the study (20.0%) answered strongly agree with " Frequent exposure of relative clauses increases the students' ability and confidence in English thus enabling him/her to make grammatically correct sentence structure as the accuracy of relative clauses tend to improve with time as a result of exposure . ''.

There are (11) persons (36.7%) answered agree, (3)persons (10.0%) answered neutral, (8) persons (26.7%) answered disagree and (2) persons (6.7%) answered strongly disagree.

**Statement No.(22 )**

Teachers should adopt the strategy of generated relative And null pronouns in the teaching of English relative clauses as a way of increasing students participation and resulting confidence.

Table No. ( 4.28)The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of statement No.( 22)

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	4	13.3
<b>agree</b>	6	20.0
<b>neutral</b>	1	3.3
<b>disagree</b>	13	43.3
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	6	20.0
<b>Total</b>	30	100.0

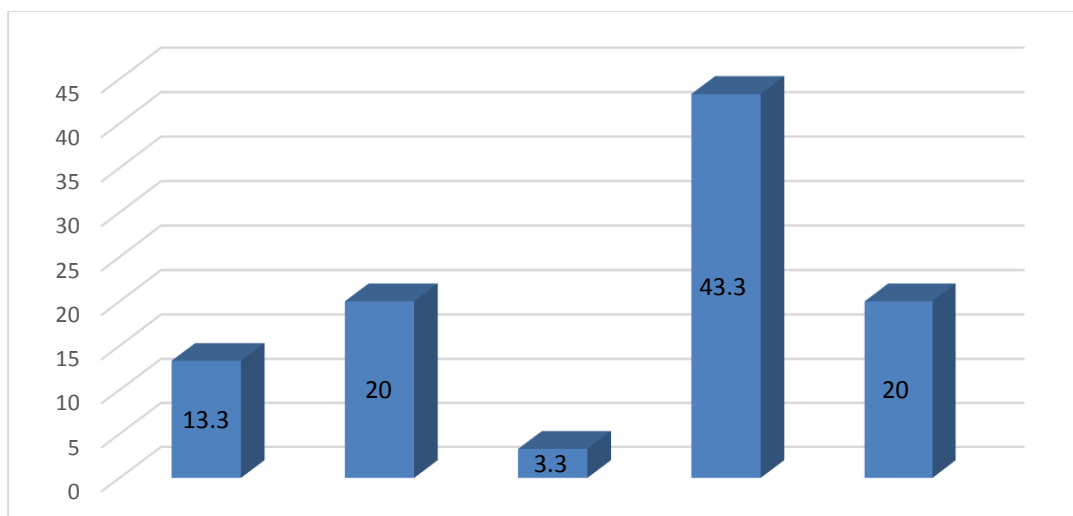


Figure No (4.25)

From the above table and figure . It is clear that there are (4) persons in the sample of the study (13.3%) answered strongly agree with " Teachers should adopt the strategy of generated relative And null pronouns in the teaching of English relative clauses as a way of increasing students participation and resulting confidence.." There are (6) persons (20.0%) answered agree, (1) person (3.3%) answered neutral, (13) persons (43.3%) answered disagree and (6)persons (20.0%) answered strongly disagree.

#### Statement No.(23)

Teachers should focus on the overall structure of English relative clauses as a way of facilitating holistic development of English skills.

#### Table No. (4.29)

The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Statement No. (23)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
strongly agree	3	13.3
agree	14	46.7
neutral	3	10
disagree	7	20

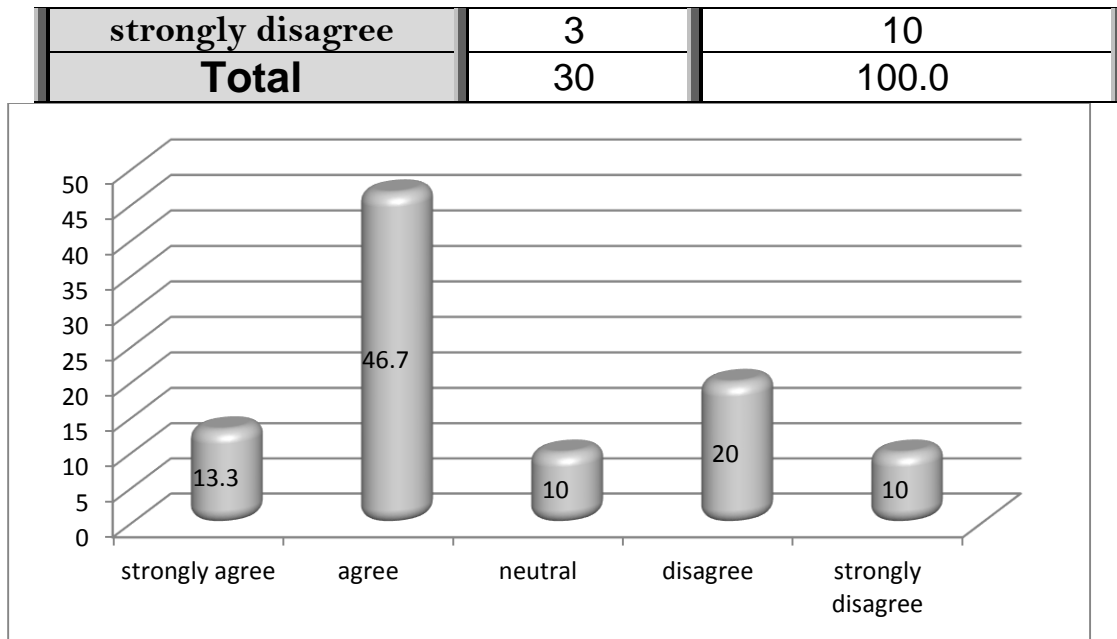


Figure (4.26)

It is clear from the above table and figure that there are (3) persons in the sample of the study (13.3%) strongly agreed with " Teachers should focus on the overall structure of English relative clauses as a way of facilitating holistic development of English skills. ".

There are (14) persons (46.7%) agreed with that, (3) persons (10.0%) were not sure, (7) persons (20.0%) disagreed and (3) persons (10%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No. (24)**

Teachers should try to raise the students' awareness about the importance of relative clauses motivate and encourage them.

Table No. (4.30)

The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Statement No. (24)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>strongly agree</b>	13	34.4

<b>agree</b>	10	33.3
<b>neutral</b>	3	10
<b>disagree</b>	3	10
<b>strongly disagree</b>	1	3.3
<b>Total</b>	30	100.0

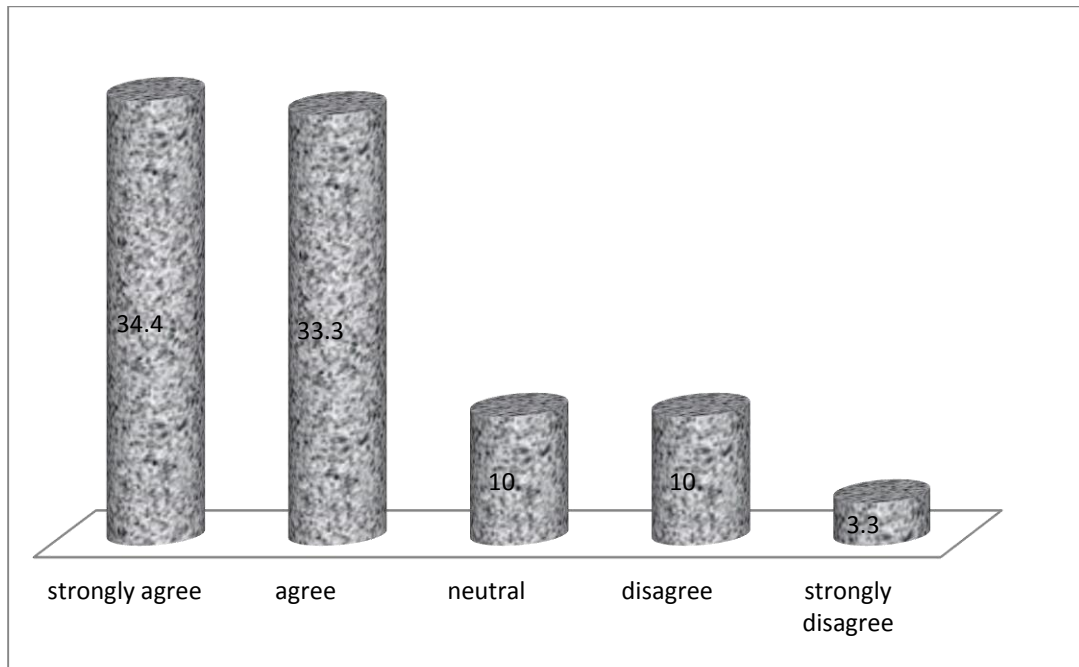


Figure ( 4.27)

It is clear from the above table and figure that there are (13) persons in the sample of the study (34.4%) strongly agreed with ‘Teachers should try to raise the students’ awareness about the importance of relative clauses motivate and encourage them.’ There are (10) persons (33.3%) agreed, (3) (10.0%) were not sure, (3) (10.0%) disagreed and (1) person (3.3%) disagreed.

**Statement No. (25)**

EFL teaching in small classes can be rewarding for both teachers and students.

Table No. (4.31) The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents’ Answers to statement No.(25 )

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>strongly agree</b>	18	60

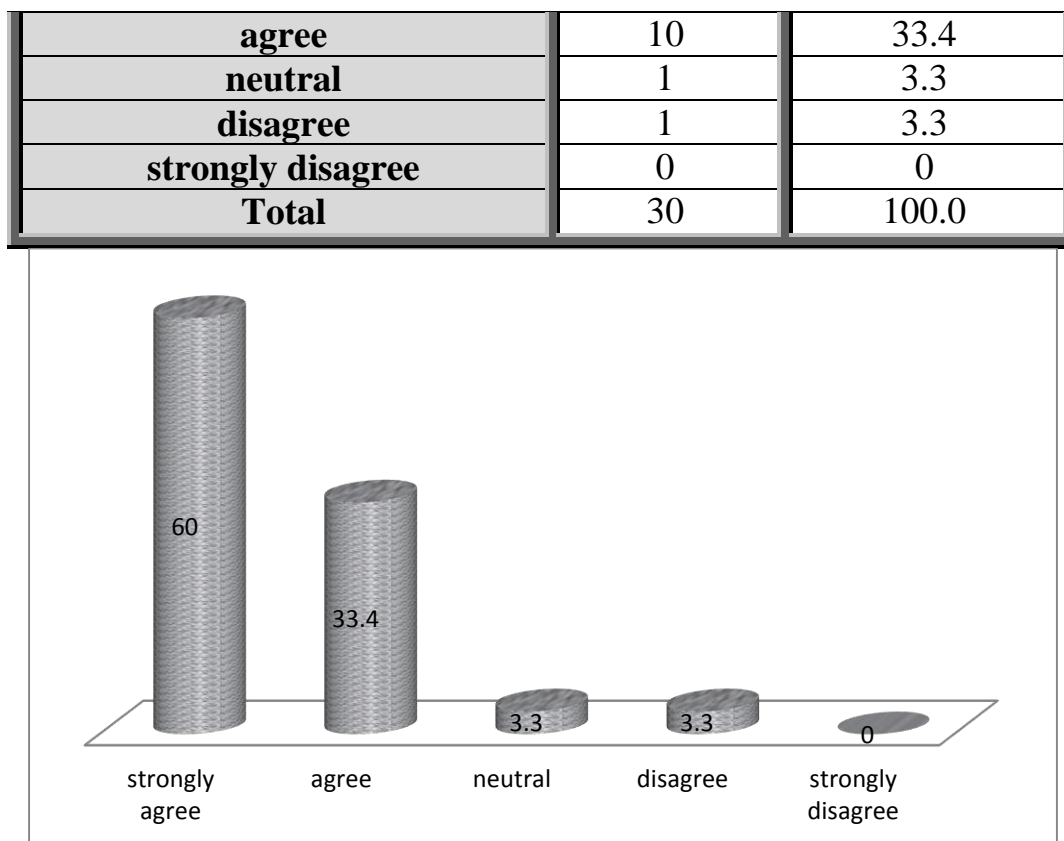


Figure (4.28)

It is clear from the above table and figure that there are (18) persons in the sample of the study (60.0%) strongly agreed with. ‘‘EFL teaching in small classes can be rewarding for both teachers and students’’.

There are (10) persons (33.4%) agreed, (1) person (3.3%) was not sure , (1) person (3.3%) disagreed and (0) person (0%) strongly disagreed.

**Table No.(4.32 ) Chi-Square Test Results for Respondents’ Answers of the study Hypothesis No. (3) :**

Teachers can help students to overcome relative clauses difficulties by raising their awareness about the importance of English language structure and using relative clauses for learning in general and providing them with suitable techniques and strategies to improve their English language skills.

No.	Statements	mean	SD	Chi-square	P-value
16	The primary problem of learning relative clauses does not arise from essential difficulties in	2.4	.50	28	0.010

	English but specially created first language habits .				
17	A focus on the mistakes and problems of EFL learners alongside the teaching of relative clauses enables better effective learning of English as a foreign language.	3.3	.70	23	0.006
18	Inter language enables the EFL teacher to better understand the source of the learners' problems and effective solution.	2.4	1.9	12	0.00
19	An understanding of the errors is helpful in the teaching and learning process of EFL learners since it enables both the teacher and students to identify the cases of the errors and appropriate solutions towards improving the students' learning process.	2.5	2.6	17	0.00
20	The teacher should be effectively able to identify proper methods and teaching materials that maximize student benefit from the entire teaching process.	2.4	2.4	13	0.00
21	Frequent exposure of relative clauses increases the students' ability and confidence in English thus enabling him/her to make grammatically correct sentence structure as the accuracy of relative clauses tend to improve with time as a result of exposure .	3	0.8	25	0.03
22	Teachers should adopt the strategy of generated relative And null pronouns in the teaching of English relative clauses as a way	2.9	1.6	20	0.00

	of increasing students participation and resulting confidence.				
23	Teachers should focus on the overall structure of English relative clauses as a way of facilitating holistic development of English skills.	3.6	.80	29	0.023
24	Teachers should try to raise the students' awareness about the importance of relative clauses motivate and encourage them	2.4	.50	28	0.010
25	EFL teaching in small classes can be rewarding for both teachers and students	3.3	.70	23	0.006

**Source: The researcher from applied study, SPSS 24**

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (16) was (28) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "The primary problem of learning relative clauses does not arise from essential difficulties in English but specially created first language habits".

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (17) was (23) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "A focus on the mistakes and problems of EFL learners alongside the teaching of relative clauses enables better effective learning of English as a foreign language. "



The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (18) was (12) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.57) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "Inter language enables the EFL teacher to better understand the source of the learners' problems and effective solution. "

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (19) was (17) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.57) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "An understanding of the errors is helpful in the teaching and learning process of EFL learners since it enables both the teacher and students to identify the cases of the errors and appropriate solutions towards improving the students' learning process. "

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (20) was (13) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.57) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "The teacher should be effectively able to identify proper methods and teaching materials that maximize student benefit from the entire teaching process. "

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (21) was (25) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.57) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the

statement. "Frequent exposure of relative clauses increases the students' ability and confidence in English thus enabling him/her to make grammatically correct sentence structure as the accuracy of relative clauses tend to improve with time as a result of exposure".

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (19) was (20) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.57) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "Teachers should adopt the strategy of generated relative And null pronouns in the teaching of English relative clauses as a way of increasing students participation and resulting confidence. "

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No.(23) was (29) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement " Teachers should focus on the overall structure of English relative clauses as a way of facilitating holistic development of English skills. "

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (24) was (28) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "Teachers should try to raise the students' awareness about the importance of relative clauses motivate and encourage them".

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in statement No. (25) was (23) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the

significant value level (5%) which was (4.12) this indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "EFL teaching in small classes can be rewarding for both teachers and students".

According to the results of the second part of the questionnaire we can say that the third hypothesis of the study has been confirmed.

The above findings obtained from the second part of the questionnaire elicited some of the solutions to relative clauses difficulties among EFL Sudanese secondary school students, that coincide with the following findings of different studies for Lourdes(1996) argued that a focus on the mistakes and problems of ESL learners alongside the teaching of relative clauses enables better effective learning of EFL.

Porter& Roberts (1981) pointed out that " We cannot expect learners to handle types of language they have never or hardly ever been exposed to, when we choose authentic materials, we can set different tasks to suit the levels and the needs of the students", this suggests that it is the teacher's task to design activities according to the students' levels and needs.

They also agree with Aruya (2005) who argued that frequent exposure increase the student's ability and confidence in English language thus enabling him/her to make grammatically correct sentence structure.

Furthermore, Selinker (2009) pointed out that inter-language helps tutors and teachers in better understanding learners' problems as well as providing timely and effective help the EFL learners so that they may achieve competence hence it enables the new language's tutor to better understand the source of the learner's problems and can provide effective solution.

English teachers are likely to adapt to the strategy of generated relative and null pronouns in the formation of English relative clauses as a way of increasing the students' participation and resulting confidence. This significantly improves the learners' subject and object relative clauses use

since it is primarily focused on subject and object relative clauses (Saputra, 2000).

They also coincide with Lado(1999) who claimed that the process of learning a foreign or second language is very different from learning the first language as the primary problem does not arise from essential difficulties in the new language features but specially created first language habits. This is because the learner develops a tendency of transferring old language habits to the process of learning the new language . Secondly, the learner's mother tongue also plays significant features in the acquisition of the foreign language both positive and negative.

Lourdes(1996) argued that a focus on the mistakes and problems of ESL learners alongside the teaching of relative clauses enables better effective learning of EFL

The findings also conform with Corder (1967) who pointed out, errors of the learners is important because these errors give instruction to teachers and let teacher know what they should teach and how to teach. If teachers analyze the errors systematically, they will know what level students have reached, how much the students approach to the target language, what students should continue to learn and what strategies and steps students take in their learning process; error is the way the learners use to test the hypothesis to the laws of target language. Learner can know their weaknesses through analyzing and correcting their error.

In addition, the findings agree with Selinker (2006) who pointed out that teachers should focus on the overall structures of English relative clauses as a way of facilitating holistic development of English skills which creates a balance of all language structures and proper acquisition of the relevant skills.

Furthermore, Nofia(2007) suggested that learners have wrong concept in applying the grammatical rules, so that, they miss form the structure of sentence as there are four causes of errors, they are: over-generalization, ignorance of rules restriction, incomplete application of rules and false concept hypothesized. The most frequently cause is false concept hypothesized which suggest that the students usually misinterpret the use of certain structures of the target language. Besides, the interference of the first language into the foreign language , therefore, teachers should give the clues of relative pronouns such as who, which, whom, whose, when, where and why and when the students must use them. Besides giving more explanation about adjective clauses, the teacher should also give exercises for practice and allowing students to have sufficient practice time .

### **Chapter Summary:**

This chapter examined the difficulties of using relative clauses among EFL Sudanese secondary school learners. It included two main parts .The first one viewed the results the researcher got from the diagnostic test and the second part presented the results obtained from the questionnaire.

All the hypotheses of this study have been verified in this chapter.

Chapter Five is going to be devoted to the summary of the study, findings, recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Summary, Findings, Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Studies**

#### **5.1 Introduction:**

This chapter presents summary of the study, discussion of the findings of the study, conclusion and recommendations for further studies.

#### **5.2 Summary of the Study:**

This study investigates EFL Sudanese secondary school students difficulties in using relative clauses. It consists of five chapters.

Chapter one represents the general framework of the study which includes introduction to the problem of the study, objectives, questions of the study, hypotheses, significance, limits , methodology and structure of the study.

Chapter two provides theoretical background and reviews the related literature to EFL Sudanese secondary school students difficulties in using relative clauses.

Chapter Three describes the methodology of the study. The researcher adopted the descriptive analytical method. The tools of the study were a diagnostic test for (30) Sudanese secondary school students and a questionnaire which was administered to (30) Sudanese secondary school teachers.

Chapter Four deals with the statistical analysis and discussion of the data collected by the diagnostic test and the questionnaire.

Chapter Five reviews a summary to the whole thesis .It gives conclusion which the study came up with, the recommendations and the suggestions for further studies.

### **5.3 Findings of the Study:**

In this part the researcher discusses the findings of the study with regard to the research questions of the present study.

#### **Research Question 1**

To what extent do EFL Sudanese secondary school students have difficulties with using relative clauses?

As far as relative clauses difficulties are concerned, EFL Sudanese secondary school students face serious deficiencies in using relative clauses to a great extent, this is clear from their poor performance in the diagnostic test that the researcher has used to gather the data of the study.

According to the literature reviewed in the present study ,the data analyzed in the previous chapter and the researcher's observation , the highest percentage of the Sudanese secondary school students face the following serious problems in using relative clauses which was obvious from the findings of the diagnostic test .

- They do not put relative words in the most appropriate place within the sentence, they are unaware of punctuation of the sentence which lead to misunderstanding , moreover, they are faced with challenges in appropriately using relative clauses thus making them unable to make either or both logically and grammatically correct sentences.

-Furthermore, when it comes to joining sentences together by using relative pronouns to form relative clauses, they are observed to be very poor performers, resulting in comparatively poor achievement, too hence they find the sentences unfamiliar due to their weak grammar, vocabulary and unawareness of English syntactic structure ..etc

-Understanding and applying the English grammatical rules was not easy for the students because verbs are usually formed differently to have subject-verb agreement according to the tenses. Besides, it was hard for them to learn how to use articles, prepositions, pronouns, and connecting devices appropriately.

- When joining sentences together using relative words to form relative clauses, students join them in the manner conjunctions are used without paying attention to certain exceptions in the usage of using relative clauses .

-They find it difficult to write the necessary information and drop the unnecessary ones.

- They feel distracted and worried as they are using relative clauses because they fail to understand the meaning of every single word or phrase related to the task.

- They are unable to infer meanings of unfamiliar words and make predictions using their personal knowledge and experience.

- They lack knowledge of contextual and cultural aspects of English.

- They have poor awareness of the features of English syntactic structure.

- They face the problem of lack of concentration.

### **Research Question 2:**

What are the causes of relative clause difficulties that face EFL Sudanese secondary school students?

According to the findings of the questionnaire which conveys the teachers' views and perceptions regarding the causes of relative clauses difficulties that face EFL Sudanese secondary school students.EFL Sudanese secondary students face serious problems in the using of relative clauses due to many causes:

- Limited exposure to English relative clauses is a major reason for interchanging pronouns and putting them in the place of relative clauses.



- EFL learners find relative clauses difficult due to effects of L1 transfer , lack of practice , motivation and self- confidence.
- Teachers do not use suitable learning materials and tasks that suit the level and the needs of the students.
- Language structure, mother tongue interference, differences and similarities between the first and second language lead to EFL learners' learning difficulties.
- Most EFL learners construct sentences with relative clauses in the direct object or subject position hence making the use of relative clauses unnecessary.
- Constructive differences in English and other languages internal structure is also another reason for the commonality of errors by EFL learners.
- Weakness of students in lexis, semantics and syntax lead to some relative clauses difficulties.
- Students' lack of awareness of different aspects such as content, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling contributed to the students' difficulties in using relative clauses.
- Learners develop a tendency of transferring old language habits to the process of learning English thus making it difficult to learn the new language.
- EFL learners try to transfer parametric values from their first language to English which affects significant elements of a sentence such as relative clauses thus affecting the sentence's grammatical correctness.

- Avoidance plays a key role in the acquisition of relative clauses in EFL learning as learners tend to avoid using difficult linguistic features; they tend to omit structure they are unsure of.
- EFL learners tend to formulate a linguistic rule based on the exposed language data or instructions with no consideration for exceptions as a result of overgeneralization.
- Teaching relative clauses is neglected in the curriculum at many schools and universities because teachers and students are more interested in other English skills and do not consider it an important part of their courses.
- Limited textbooks contents or teachers' instructions results in overuse or no use of relative clauses not taught leading to wrong grammatical structures.

### **Research Question 3**

How can these relative clauses problems be solved?

To answer this question, the researcher designed the second part of the questionnaire which was administered to expert Sudanese secondary school teachers to suggest some solutions to the problems of using relative clauses among EFL Sudanese secondary school students.

According to the responses of the teachers to the questionnaire, the following are some suggestions to overcome relative clauses difficulties.

- Frequent exposure of relative clauses increases the students' ability and confidence in English thus enabling him/her to make grammatically correct sentence structure as the accuracy of relative clauses tend to improve with time as a result of exposure .
- The teacher should be effectively able to identify proper methods and teaching materials that maximize students' benefit from the entire teaching process.

- In order to improve their English skills, students need to practice as without sufficient practice students can never develop their language skills.
- Syllabus designers should focus on the best selected books which motivate the learner and promote good conditions for learning.
- Teachers should adopt the strategy of generated relative and null pronouns in the teaching of English relative clauses as a way of increasing students' participation and resulting confidence.
- Teachers should focus on the overall structure of English relative clauses as a way of facilitating holistic development of English skills.
- Teachers should try to raise the students' awareness about the importance of relative clauses ,motivate and encourage their students.
- Inter- language enables the EFL teacher to better understand the source of the learners' problems and effective solution.
- An understanding of the errors is helpful in the teaching and learning process of EFL learners since it enables both the teacher and students to identify the cases of the errors and find appropriate solutions towards improving the students' learning process.
- A focus on the mistakes and problems of EFL learners alongside the teaching of relative clauses enables better effective learning of English as a foreign language.
- The primary problem of learning relative clauses does not arise from essential difficulties in English but specially created first language habits.
- EFL teachers should follow the diagnostic approach which suggests that both teachers and students have different roles in the learning process.
- EFL teaching in small classes can be rewarding for both teachers and students.

The above mentioned results agree with Mohammed (2016) who stated that EFL students face serious problems in using relative pronouns and clauses; students do not know how to use commas within relative clauses; students are not aware of reducing relative clauses. He suggested that students should extend their knowledge in grammar field; and they shouldn't just

restrict their study on academic curricula; they should read books which contain relative clauses.

Moreover, the results of the current study supported the findings of Lightbown ( 1997) who attributed EFL learners' difficulties to numerous factors, he declared that learning a foreign language is one of the most complicated and tedious processes. The complication and the tedious nature is a result of various factors such as language structure , mother tongue and similarities and differences between the first and second language . Due to the complicated nature of learning foreign languages, a learner is vulnerable to making mistakes due factors mentioned above . However, the process of learning a new language can be accentuated through highlighting likely mistakes to be encountered in the learning process and the causes of these mistakes.

Furthermore, the study results are consistent with the results of Bao(2014) who found out that main causes of the students' choosing wrong relative words stem from: students pay much attention to language form and apply English rules mechanically, ignoring meaning and context of the language; students' grammar knowledge is not comprehensive and systematic and students tend to neglect or forget some grammar points; students lack necessary basic English grammar and vocabulary knowledge, resulting in the difficulty in understanding the meaning of the sentence; students can't adjust to relative clause because of language transfer. He suggested that teachers should strengthen the exercises of students' English basic knowledge, teach grammar systematically and comprehensively, encourage students to use effective learning strategies to learn English, find ways to increase the input and output of English language and train students think in English mode. On the other hand, students should learn to reflect on themselves, strive to improve their English and correct their learning attitude, and learn to use learning strategies effectively with the help of teachers.

Moreover, the results of the current study supported the findings of Hassan (2003), Ahmed (2011&Chowdhury 2015 ) , Ja'fr (2013) , Saputra(2000),

Nofia(2007) , Gao (2014) and Ahmed(2011) which have been reviewed in the second chapter.

#### **5.4 Recommendations:**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following points :

- Students should be aware of the importance of English syntactic structure in the process of foreign language learning .
- Students should learn and practice new vocabulary and expressions.
- Students should practice the grammatical structures they are taught.
- Students should try to interact with English skills activities in the classroom to be active learners.
- Teachers should use materials that suit the level of the students, needs, interest and background knowledge in order to enhance their students' language skills.
- Teachers should raise the students' awareness about the importance of the use of relative clauses in foreign language learning.
- Teachers should provide students with the necessary vocabulary that is they are likely to encounter during their tasks.
- Teachers should provide students with immediate feedback to correct errors and promote self-confidence.
- The teacher should allow students to brainstorm vocabulary and grammatical structures that they are likely to use, by doing so he encourages them to use them effectively.
- Teachers should use authentic materials that suit the level of the students, needs, interest and background knowledge.
- Teachers should be well-trained and experienced; having good English language skills help students to be good language users and applying teaching techniques helps to improve students' English learning abilities.
- EFL students should practice collaborative learning strategies. as curriculum designers must take into their account the importance of using collaborative learning strategies in the syllables of different stages.

- EFL teaching in small classes can be rewarding for both teachers and students.
- Teachers should strengthen the exercises of students' English basic knowledge, teach grammar systematically and comprehensively, encourage students to use effective learning strategies to learn English, find ways to increase the input and output of English language and train students think in English mode.
- Students should learn to reflect on themselves, strive to improve their English and correct their learning attitude, and learn to use learning strategies effectively with the help of teachers.
- Teachers should allow sufficient practice time to enable students learn better.

### **5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies:**

On the basis of the results obtained in this study, the following recommendations are made for further research:

1. Future research should increase the number of the subjects to enhance the generalizability of the results.
2. The same study can be replicated using pre-test and post-test test instead of the diagnostic test .
3. Future researchers should conduct the same study by using an interview for expert teachers instead of the questionnaire, by doing so more causes of EFL learners' problems will be pointed out.
4. Future researchers should conduct the same study by using error analysis technique of the errors the students make during their learning process.

### **5.6 Conclusion**

The study conducted focused on investigating relative clauses difficulties among EFL Sudanese secondary school students as relative clauses are very useful because they help learners to be more specific and make expressions more interesting , at the same time , they can be very confusing to many learners and users and they are often used incorrectly, for example some

learners of English think that relative pronouns are generally used to join sentences together in the manner conjunctions are used without paying attention to certain exceptions in the usage . for example, an EFL learner may produce a sentence like\* “ the boy which you sent me to him” as the most common difficulty occurs in grasping the intended meaning, choosing the correct pronoun(person), using the correct punctuation, using a preposition with an appropriate relative pronoun and maintaining subject-verb agreement.

The teacher should be able to notice the students' weakness and design suitable tasks to overcome them , this can be done by identifying the students errors as the teacher checks their answers and discusses how they got the incorrect answers to increase their awareness of the importance of English language structure in the process of language learning while providing reinforcement for correct answers as well.

Above all, it must be clearly borne in mind by teachers and students that English syntactic structure cannot be mastered at once; there must be regular practice with increasingly difficult materials as they increase students' familiarity with vocabulary and structures of the target language.

The review of literature stated the factors that caused relative clauses difficulties for EFL learners it also provided some useful suggestions for teachers and students to overcome them.

It is hoped that the findings of this study contribute a solution to the problems of using relative clauses encountered by EFL Sudanese secondary school students.

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**Appendix (1)**  
**The Diagnostic Test**

Instructions to the test:

The main purpose of this diagnostic test is to investigate the difficulties that may encounter you in using relative clauses.

The test consists of two sections

**Section one:**

**Join the following sentences by using relative pronouns to form relative clauses:**

1. The bike was sold. I borrow it last week.(which)

-----

2. The girl is a bright student. I gave a special reward to her.(whom)

-----

3. A girl was talking to me. Do you know her?(who)

-----

4 .This is Tom . We found Tom's dog yesterday.(whose)

-----

5. We ate an ice cream. It was delicious.(which)

-----

6.The man was sitting next to me. He had a blue jacket.(who)

-----

7. He lent me his book , I found it very interesting.(which)

-----

8. You handed me the book . I was looking for yesterday.(which)

-----

9.I will never forget the day. I spent it with you last summer.(that)

-----

10.The reason was he missed his train. For that reason he was late.(why)  
-----

**Section Two:**

a. **Fill in the blanks with a proper relative word(that-who-which-whose-whom)**

- 1.Recently I bought a beautiful vase .....price was quite reasonable.
- 2.John .....you know, is a famous writer.
- 3.The way..... he answered the questions was surprising.
- 4.Who is the woman .....was praised at the meeting?
- 5.The plane ..... has just taken off is for London.

b. **There are four choices in each item, underline the best one to fill in the blanks.**

- 1.Is there anyone in your class----- family is in the country?  
who - whom - which - whose
2. I lost a book, -----I can't remember now.  
which title - its title - the title of whose - the title of which
3. Do you know the man-----is talking with your mother?  
which - when - where - who
- 4.English is the most difficult subject ----- you will learn during these years.  
which- who- what- where
5. It's said that he's looking for a new job, one\_\_\_\_\_ he can get more money to support his family.  
when - where - whose - which

**Appendix (2)**  
**The Questionnaire**

Dear Teachers,

This questionnaire is one of the tools used by the researcher to collect data for a PHD study entitled " An Investigation of Relative Clauses Difficulties among EFL Sudanese Secondary School Students". So your answers to these statements according to your experience in this field are highly appreciated.

Thanks for your co- operation

Name (optional).....

Years of experience.....

Academic degree.....

**Part One:**

Please Tick the option that you feel suitable:

S/N	statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Limited exposure to English relative clauses is a major reason for interchanging					



	pronouns and putting them in the place of relative clauses.					
2	Teachers do not use suitable learning materials and tasks that suit the level of the students.					
3	The complicated nature of learning English is attributed to syntactic structure differences between EFL learners' native language and English .					
4	Language structure, mother tongue interference , differences and similarities between the first and second language lead to EFL learners' learning difficulties.					
5	A majority of second language learners start by acquiring knowledge on relative clauses but require a significant amount					

	of effort and practice to correctly use them in modifying other sentences' roles					
6	Most EFL learners construct sentences with relative clauses in the direct object or subject position hence making the use of relative clauses unnecessary.					
7	Constructive differences in English and other languages internal structure is also another reason for the commonality of errors by EFL learners.					
8	When learning EFL learners tend to develop a personal system which is a mix of first and second language system					
9	Learners develop a tendency of transferring old language habits to the process of learning English thus making it difficult to learn the new language.					

10	EFL learners try to transfer parametric values from their first language to English which affects significant elements of a sentence such as relative clauses thus affecting the sentence's grammatical correctness.					
11	When forming relative clauses EFL students tend to use wrong resumptive pronouns					
12	Avoidance plays a key role in the acquisition of relative clauses in EFL learning as learners tend to avoid using difficult linguistic features; they tend to omit structure they are unsure of.					
13	EFL learners tend to formulate a linguistic rule based on the exposed language data or instructions with no consideration for exceptions as a					

	result of overgeneralization.					
14	Teaching relative clauses is neglected in the curriculum at many schools and universities because teachers and students are more interested in other English skills and do not consider it an important part of their courses.					
15	Limited textbooks contents or teachers' instructions results in overuse or no use of relative clauses not taught leading to wrong grammatical structures					

**Part two:**

**Please Tick the statement that you feel suitable:**

S/N	Statements	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
1	The primary problem of learning relative clauses does not arise from					

	essential difficulties in English but specially created first language habits .					
2	A focus on the mistakes and problems of EFL learners alongside the teaching of relative clauses enables better effective learning of English as a foreign language.					
3	Inter- language enables the EFL teacher to better understand the source of the learners' problems and effective solution.					
4	An understanding of the errors is helpful in the teaching and learning process of EFL learners since it enables both					

	the teacher and students to identify the cases of the errors and appropriate solutions towards improving the students' learning process.					
5	The teacher should be effectively able to identify proper methods and teaching materials that maximize student benefit from the entire teaching process.					
6	Frequent exposure of relative clauses increases the students' ability and confidence in English thus enabling him/her to make grammatically correct sentence					

	structure as the accuracy of relative clauses tend to improve with time as a result of exposure .					
7	Teachers should adopt the strategy of generated relative and null pronouns in the teaching of English relative clauses as a way of increasing students participation and resulting confidence.					
8	Teachers should focus on the overall structure of English relative clauses as a way of facilitating holistic development of English skills.					
9	Teachers should try to raise the students'					

	awareness about the importance of relative clauses ,motivate and encourage them.					
10	EFL teaching in small classes can be rewarding for both teachers and students.					



