

A Study of Second Language Speaking-Anxiety among ESL Intermediate Pakistani Learners

Mudassar Nazir¹

National College (Affiliated with University of Sarghodha),
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Shahid Bashir²

Department of English, Dhofar University,
College of Arts and Science Building, Sultanat of Oman

Zahid Bashir Raja³

Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences,
Najran University Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Abstract: *The cardinal intention of this research was to study the level of speaking-anxiety in the ESL classroom among the intermediate students. Anxiety is some sort of troubled state of mind which hampers the foreign or second language learning process. Those ESL learners who experience the communicative anxiety, fail to speak effectively. Communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and general feeling of anxiety would be discussed in this research paper. The tool used for this study was adapted from Horwitz's (1983) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The result showed that the participants experienced a high level of communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. The authors have also given some fruitful suggestions in order to lower the level of anxiety among ESL learners.*

Key words: *FLCAS (Foreign language classroom anxiety), Pakistani ESL learners, Communication apprehension, Fear of negative evaluation*

INTRODUCTION:

The English Language is known as a Lingua Franca, that is, the use of the English language as a common means of communication for speakers of different first languages. English has removed the language barriers between different countries. It is due to the great importance of the English language in the globe which compels the Pakistanis to learn and teach English Language as a second language. The craze of mastering the English language is climbing up day to day. In ESL learning context, Speaking English has always been a critical skill for ESL/EFL learners. The ESL/EFL students may be good at reading, writing, and listening, but they seem to be poor at speaking skills. The Pakistani English learners face difficulties in speaking the English language effectively. The English language Speaking has always been critical for the Pakistani learners since they don't have enough exposure to target language. It has been observed that there are many factors involved which impede the speaking of Pakistani ESL learners. The gravest concern of this research is to figure out the level of anxiety in classroom speaking among Intermediate students of National College, Rawalpindi. The researcher has observed that students of intermediate classes don't speak English effectively in the classroom. They fail to construct

full sentences while answering to the questions orally. The researcher believes that if these Pakistani learners master the speaking of English language, then they may be employed at good posts in multinational company after the completion of their academic career.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) said that the feeling of tension and apprehension is specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, Factors associated with foreign language Anxiety, 1999). MacIntyre et al. reveal that anxiety is some sort of apprehension while listening, speaking and learning the second language. Young (1991) says that Foreign language anxiety is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, Factors associated with foreign language Anxiety, 1999). It means that there are so many factors involved in Foreign language anxiety..Horwitz et al., 1985 said that a growing body of research has demonstrated that language anxiety is closely related to the acquisition of a foreign language (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, Factors associated with foreign language Anxiety, 1999). The researcher like MacIntyre and Gardner in 1989 suggested that the anxiety experienced in the course of learning a foreign language is specific and unique (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, Factors associated with foreign language Anxiety, 1999).

“I know I have some kind of disability: I can’t learn a foreign language no matter how hard I try”, “When I’m in Spanish class I just freeze! I can’t think of a thing when my teacher calls on me. My mind goes blank”, “I feel like my French teacher is some kind of Martian death ray: I never know when he’ll point at me!”, “It, s about time someone studied why some people can’t learn languages” (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

The above statement is quoted from Horwitz et.al (1986) research article, which shows that such statements are frequently listened by the ESL/EFL teachers. Most of the learners utter that they suffer from a mental block which impedes their speaking skills. Horwitz et.al (1986) says that anxiety is a subjective feeling of tension and worry adjoined with autonomic nervous system (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Horwitz et.al says that anxiety not only poses problems in students’ performance in science and mathematics, but also in learning a foreign language.

Horwitz et al. (1986) suggested that foreign language anxiety comprises three components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, Factors associated with foreign language Anxiety, 1999). These three components are very crucial in foreign language anxiety, these components collectively make a powerful force which strengthens the anxiety.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM:

Speaking skill is considered as the most important and neglected skill in Pakistani teaching-learning context, in this era. But, it has been noticed that Intermediate students of

National College, Rawalpindi confront the feeling of anxiety or nervousness while speaking English language in the classroom. Such kinds of feeling obstruct their ability to speak English effectively in the classroom communicative activities.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:

- To highlight the level of anxiety in speaking among intermediate students
- To find out communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation
- To give remedies in order to lower the level of anxiety

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- Do students suffer from communication-anxiety?
- Do students have the fear of negative evaluation?

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY:

This research work would help English language teachers to spot out the students' reason of inadequate speaking in the classroom. This work will also assist intermediate students to overcome communication apprehension. This study will attract the ample attention of ELT researchers. Not only participants, but all ESL/EFL students' would get benefited with the help of fruitful suggestions provided by the researcher.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The present study utilizes a quantitative approach to collect the desired data.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

In this quantitative approach, a questionnaire was adapted and developed from FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) Horwitz et.al 1986 to measure the participants' anxiety in classroom speaking. This questionnaire is widely used by the researchers in various contexts to measure students' anxiety in speaking. The researcher has prepared the mini version of FLCAS and analyzed its reliability by using Cronbach's alpha method in spss xvii which was 0.728. A mini version of Horwitz et.al was prepared, containing, 12 items. A Likert scale was used, varied from strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutrol (N), Strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D).

POPULATION:

The population consisted of all intermediate students of National College, Rawalpindi. There were total 253 intermediate students of different sections in the college.

SAMPLE:

The researcher used the systematic technique to select the respondents. Every “5th” student was selected from the whole list of the population. The researcher selected 50 participants by using the above mentioned technique.

DATA COLLECTION:

The participants were handed with the questionnaire and were instructed to respond the items given in the questionnaire.

FINDINGS:

The researcher used SPSS XVII to analyze the Likert scale questionnaire. The bar graphs were analyzed which are attached to Appendix B. Moreover, the frequency of responses to each item with Mean were presented to analyze the each item of the questionnaire.. The following chart shows the frequency of responses and mean of each item.

Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
1-I usually feel easy expressing myself in English language in the classroom	1	9	3	22	15	3.82
2-I worry about failing to express myself effectively in the English language	18	22	2	8		2.00
3-I get nervous when the teacher asks questions in English.	25	18	2	4	1	1.76
4-The more i try to speak English in the classroom, the more confused I get	20	14	1	12	3	2.28
5-I feel anxious if someone asks me to explain something in English	20	12	1	11	6	2.42
6-I get confused and worried when i am speaking in my class	18	20	5	7		2.02
7-I feel confident when the teacher asks me to participate in the classroom	1	9		16	24	4.06
8-It embarrasses me to volunteer the answers in the classroom	27	14	4	5		1.74
9-I feel afraid that other students will laugh at me when i start speaking English in the classroom	19	11	6	8	6	2.42
10-I do not worry about making mistakes while speaking English	11	4	2	18	15	3.44
11-I still get worried about speaking, even after preparation	12	10	3	10	15	3.12
12-I feel afraid that the teacher will highlight grammatical mistakes while speaking	20	16	6	8		2.04

DISCUSSION:

It has been analyzed that the Pakistani ESL learners at the National college suffer from communicative anxiety and fear of negative evaluation which hampers their classroom speaking skills. The students suffer anxiety from different dimensions which are: 75% learners do not feel comfortable while expressing in English, 80% learners remain conscious about the consequences of failing to express in English, 85% learners get nervous while responding to questions, 65% learners feel anxious when they are asked to explain something in English, 84% learners bother to volunteer answers in the classroom and remain conscious of making mistakes while speaking. But, it is important to notice that 50% learners do not worry about classroom speaking if they prepare themselves in advance. The study of Ganschow and Sparks (1994) revealed that the majority of the learners who suffer from high levels of foreign language anxiety found their language course difficult, whereas the learners with low levels of anxiety found the language course relatively easy (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, Factors associated with foreign language anxiety, 1999). So, we can say that learners at the National college in Pakistani context with high levels of anxiety feel difficulty in the second language classroom speaking. Young (1990), prepared a list of classroom activities which were considered by the learners as provoking anxiety (Ferdous, 2012): spontaneous role-play in the class, speaking in front of the class, oral presentations or skits in front of the class, Presenting an unprepared dialogue in front of the class, and writing on the board (Ferdous, 2012). In this particular study the researchers took the perspective of classroom speaking and result shows that the participants of this study feel the anxiety in communicative activities. Likewise, Young (1990) highlighted the spontaneous role-play in the class, speaking in front of the class and oral presentations produced anxiety in learners. Moreover, Young (1990) also drew attention towards, “presenting an unprepared dialogue in front of the class” caused anxiety in the learners. In the same way, the participants of this study agreed that they feel confident when they are prepared for speaking in the classroom. Barley Mak (2009), found that students’ mistakes corrected by peers or teachers while speaking were proved to be anxiety-provoking (Mak, 2009). The study also shows that 72% learners feel fear of making mistakes while speaking.

SUGGESTIONS:

The following are the suggestions to lower the communicative anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and general feeling of anxiety in the classroom.

- 1- The communicative activities may be isolated in three stages, that is, pre-speaking stage, while-speaking and post-speaking stage in order to lower the communicative anxiety. In pre-speaking stage, the learners may be told earlier about the topic and given enough time to prepare it. In while-speaking stage, the learners must not be interrupted. In post-speaking stage, the learners may be encouraged with positive reinforcement.

- 2- The ESL teachers should not indicate the grammatical mistakes in speaking. The teacher should emphasize fluency not accuracy in communicative activities. Focusing on fluency helps the learners to lower the fear of making mistakes while speaking. The language teacher should encourage the learners to maintain the attitude that making mistakes is a part of language learning.
- 3- The environment of the classroom should be friendly and relaxed.
- 4- The use of L1 in the classroom should strictly be prohibited.
- 5- The ESL teacher should choose a topic for communicative activities as per learners' level and interest.
- 6- The communicative activities must be as realistic as possible.
- 7- Teachers-talking time must be less than the students talking time.

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ANXIETY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name:

Gender:

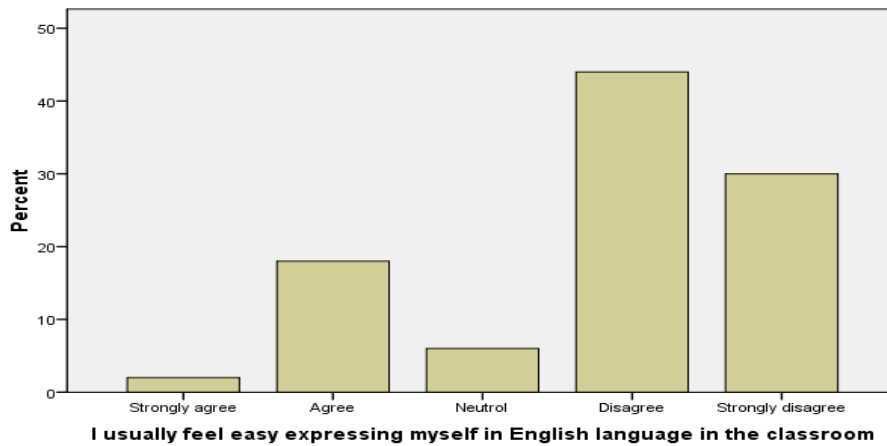
Level of language course:

Please read each statement and circle the number that appeals you.

- 1- I usually feel easy expressing myself in English language in the classroom**
1= strongly agree, 2= agree. 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree
- 2- I worry about failing to express myself effectively in the English language**
1= strongly agree, 2= agree. 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree
- 3- I get nervous when the teacher asks questions in English.**
1= strongly agree, 2= agree. 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree
- 4- The more I try to speak English in the classroom, the more confused i get.**
1= strongly agree, 2= agree. 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree
- 5- I feel anxious if someone asks me to explain something in English.**
1= strongly agree, 2= agree. 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree
- 6- I get confused and worried when I am speaking in the class**
1= strongly agree, 2= agree. 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree
- 7- I feel confident when the teacher asks me to participate in the classroom**
1= strongly agree, 2= agree. 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree
- 8- It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in the classroom**
1= strongly agree, 2= agree. 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree
- 9- I feel afraid that other students will laugh at me when I start speaking English In the classroom**
1= strongly agree, 2= agree. 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree
- 10- I don't worry about making mistakes while speaking.**
1= strongly agree, 2= agree. 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree
- 11- I still get worried about speaking, even after preparation**
1= strongly agree, 2= agree. 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree
- 12- I feel afraid that the teacher will highlight grammatical mistakes while speaking .**
1= strongly agree, 2= agree. 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree

APPENDIX B:

I usually feel easy expressing myself in English language in the classroom



I worry about failing to express myself effectively in English language

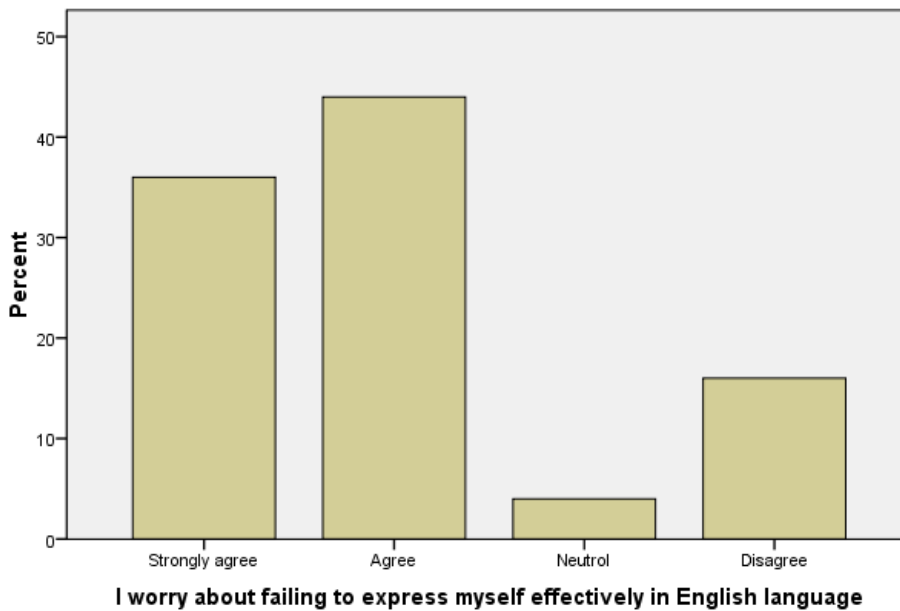


Figure.2

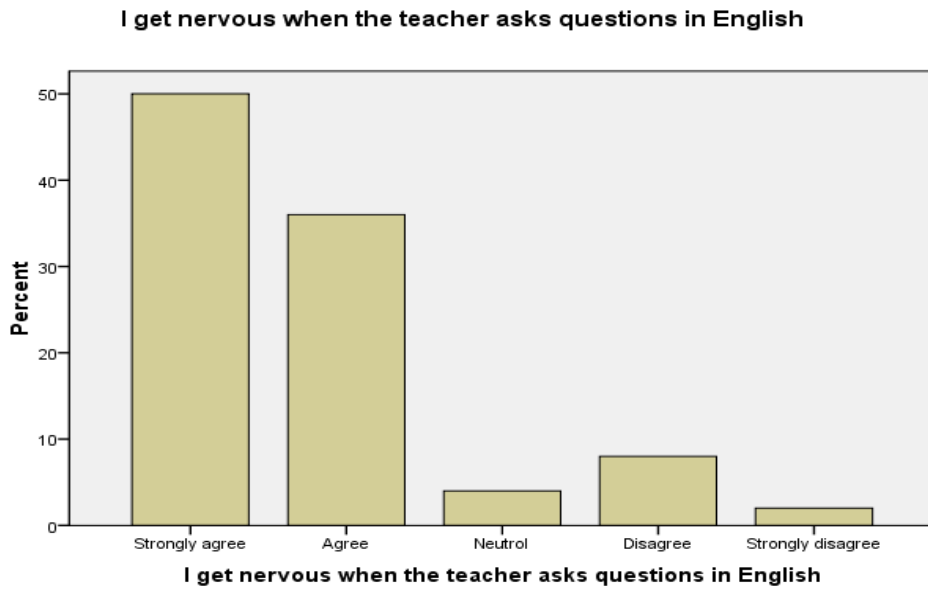


Figure.3

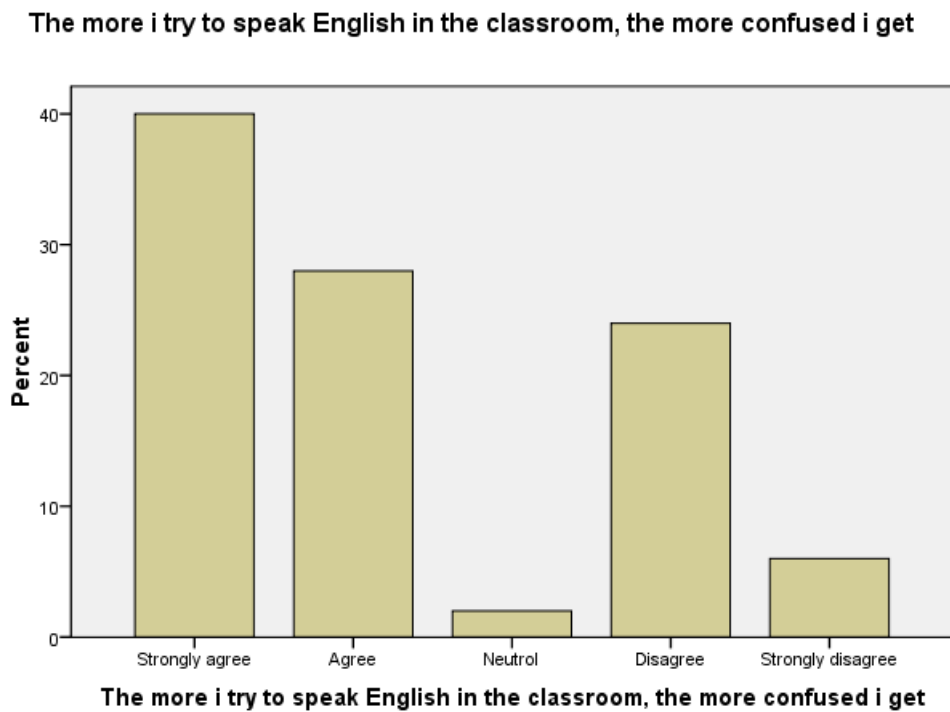


Figure.4

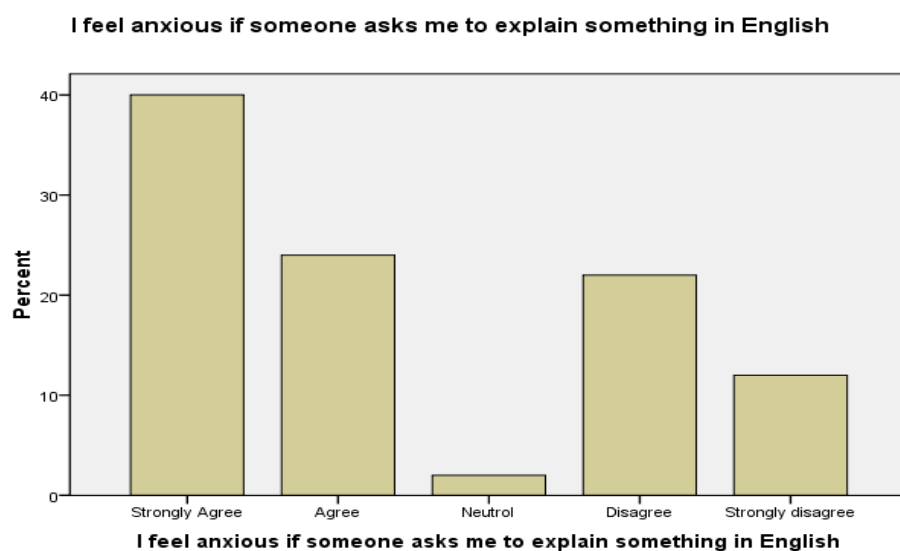


Figure.5

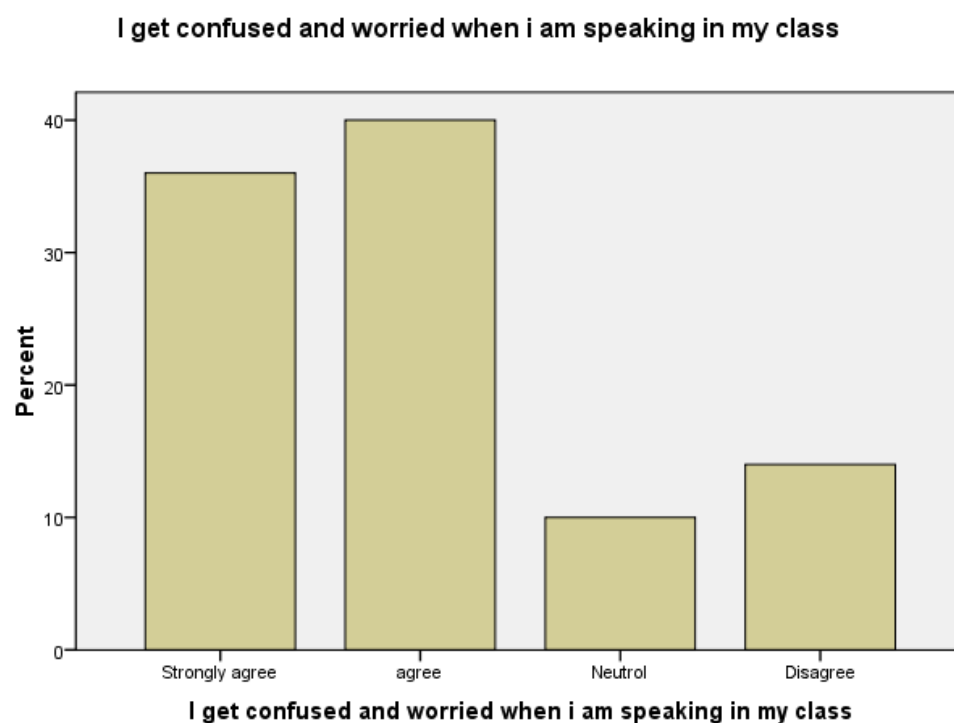


Figure 6

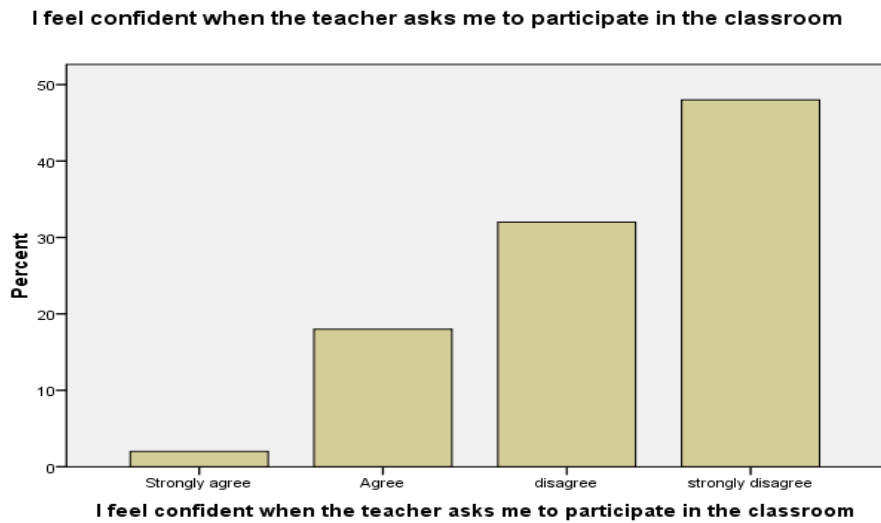


Figure.7

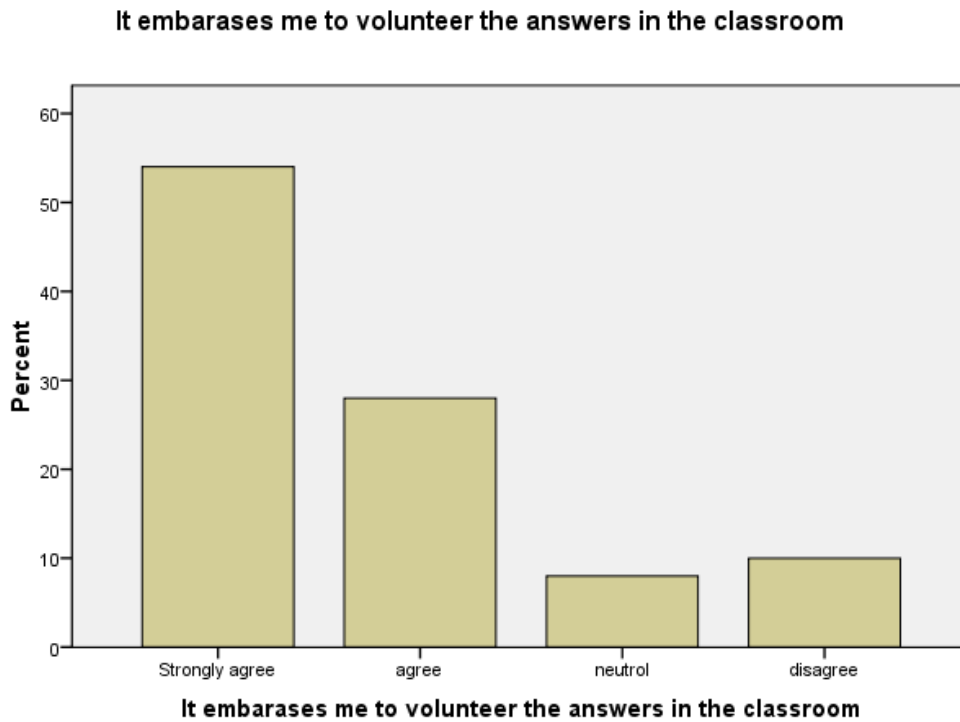


Figure.8

I feel afraid that other students will laugh at me when i start speaking English in the classroom



Figure.9

I do not worry about making mistakes while speaking English

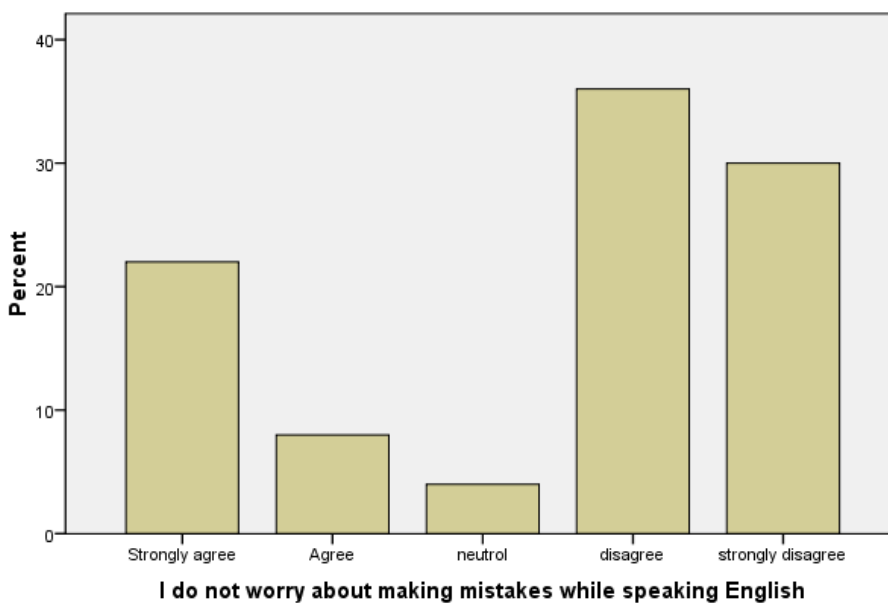


Figure.10



Figure. 11

I feel afraid that the teacher will highlight grammatical mistakes while speaking

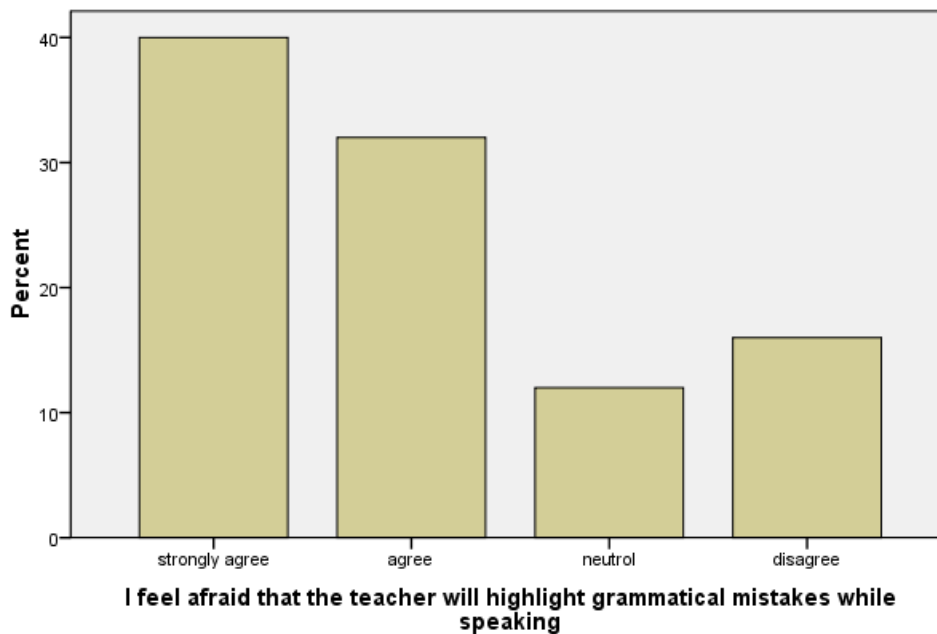


Figure.12