

The Impact of Affective Factors in English Speaking Skills

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Abstract—Language learning is a part of the psychological process as it is based on the individual differences of various learners. Speaking skills are classified as the abilities that allow us to speak meaningfully with one another. It provides us with the ability to express information verbally. Affective factors such as self-esteem, self-confidence, anxiety, fear of failure, shyness, motivation, attitude, empathy, and so on influence the development of speaking skills. These affective factors are crucial in second language acquisition. Negative affective factors hinder English speaking skills, whereas positive affective factors facilitate English speaking skills. According to Stephen Krashen, learners will only learn a language when they want to learn it. As a result, it is the language teacher's prime objective to deal with both the positive and negative affective factors of the learners. This study gives a detailed look at the negative affective factors and also talks about how important positive affective factors are for learning a second language.

Index Terms—speaking skills, self-confidence, anxiety, motivation

I. INTRODUCTION

English is taught as a second language in India (ESL). One must understand the language's popularity and universality throughout time. More than 1.5 billion people worldwide speak English. Acquiring a high level of competence in the English language opens up a variety of career opportunities. Acquiring and exercising English has become a necessary survival skill. Teachers must take a look at their learners' mental well-being since language acquisition is a psychological process. Research these days is paying special attention to the emotional and psychological aspects of learners. There are a variety of factors that influence the learning process when it comes to English language acquisition. Personal, social, and affective variables are unavoidable among these considerations. When learning a second language, one of the most important things to keep in mind is how the learner feels. Teachers must consider learners' affective sides before teaching the subjects. This research study presents psychological aspects of language learning through Krashen's affective filter hypothesis. An affective filter hinders language acquisition in learners. Affective factors are motivation, confidence, and anxiety. For a low affective filter, learners must have high motivation, confidence, and low anxiety. These emotional aspects make it easier for input to become intake. Positive environments can be created to reduce learners' emotional variables. When their affective filter level goes down, it makes it easier for them to learn English, and using English in their daily lives helps them learn even more. Motivation is an internal energy that encourages students to work hard toward a desired goal, and self-confidence affects students' performance. Low self-esteem makes students hesitant to perform. However, the purpose of this survey is to find out how students feel about positive and negative affective factors in language learning.

II. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

As language acquisition should be seen holistically, the researcher wants to concentrate on the affective factors of the learners. Major affective factors include motivation, self-esteem, and anxiety. In order to acquire the language faster, learners should have high motivation, self-esteem, and low anxiety. Learners isolate themselves from English due to strong prejudices against it. These prejudices become stronger every day, forcing learners to believe that they are unable to communicate in English. As a result, students' self-esteem is shattered and their levels of anxiety remain high. It influences our positive minds too. These mental blocks prevent the brain from receiving any comprehensible input. With these mental blocks, learners do not listen to or hear any input. All of the teacher's efforts would be in vain if the mental barriers of the learners had not been addressed. Therefore, it is crucial to assess and correct these unfavourable situations before teaching. This study examines the effect of affective factors on tertiary-level students, focusing on motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

“‘English Rules’ is an actual example, presenting to the world an uncomplicated scenario suggesting the universality of the language’s spread and the likelihood of its continuation”(Crystal, 1997, p.1). By ignoring the prominence of English, students read English merely as a subject. The educational system and teachers tend to concentrate much on the cognitive aspects of language acquisition, as speaking English requires the quality time of teachers and learners. Also, the fact that learning and speaking a new language is part of a psychological process is not taken into account. Students cannot be forced to make progress in English as in other disciplines. As a result, it’s crucial to understand the role of positive and negative affective factors in improving English speaking skills. Positive affective factors help people learn a language, while negative affective factors make it harder to learn a language. Language plays a major role in almost every discipline. To learn a language, a suitable environment is very important, as Ni (2012) says positive environments can be created to reduce learners’ negative emotional variables. It is a significant difficulty for English instructors to reduce the degree of negative affective filtering for their students. They need constant learning and multiple practice sessions to overcome this challenge. So, motivation is very important for constant learning and multiple practice sessions. According to Henter, motivation is one of the main affective elements that can influence language learning (Henter, 2014).

In terms of speaking skills, confidence is the most influential affective factor. Therefore, if students increase their confidence level, their speaking skills can improve. Students’ motivation is the second most powerful factor in determining their speaking skills; so, if learners are highly motivated, their speaking talents will also be excellent. If learners lack motivation, their speaking abilities will be poor (Illyin et al., 2021). According to the research, students who have confidence have better involvement in things like learning; they have less exam anxiety; they have more interest in goal-setting; and they are more comfortable with their lecturers (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020). So, affective factors are much needed in the education field. Learners’ attitudes toward learning speaking skills, the teacher, the learning environment, and the way they live affect learning the second language. Affective factors are crucial in second language acquisition. The learner’s affective domains have a significant role in making second language acquisition a success. Affective factors help teachers improve their teaching skills and help students grow as whole people (Kavitha, 2020). Teachers should equip themselves with more teaching strategies and psychological understanding of their learners, and make ceaseless attempts to boost their learners’ self-esteem, reduce their stress, stimulate their motivation, and improve their learning efficiency (Bao & Liu, 2021).

IV. SPEAKING SKILL

Speaking is an ability neglected in the English classroom. Speaking does not mean only uttering words through the mouth; it involves communicating one’s thoughts through words. Students do not have any opportunities to practice their English either inside or outside of the classroom. Learning how to talk also requires a significant amount of attention and practice. Students acquire the ability to communicate orally by just listening to others and repeating. It’s possible that activities including listening, reading, and comprehension can help students learn and comprehend particular vocabulary and grammatical structures so that they can speak in an efficient and effective way. Speaking is an active and productive skill, as it is an act of producing speech sounds. Speaking has become one of the most essential English language skills since it facilitates people’s comprehension of orally communicated information (Richards, 2009). It is an effective tool for communicating ideas, opinions, and views of an individual to others. Speaking skills are often left unconsidered in curricula, as they are time-consuming. Acquiring speaking skills does not happen in a single day. It demands equal effort from the learner and the teacher on a regular basis. While speaking, it is important for the learner to know about the content. When the content is clear, the learner will be able to produce a language. Acquiring fluency in speaking is emphasized first, as accuracy develops much later.

V. AFFECTIVE FACTORS

In psychology, “affect” refers to how a certain feeling, emotion, or mood makes an individual feel in a particular situation. Affective factors are emotional factors that affect language learning. They may have both positive and negative effects. In turn, factors having a negative impact are termed “affective filters”. Affective filters are negative emotional factors, and they are an important part of theories about learning second language acquisition. These are the affective factors:

A. Motivation

Motivation increases the productivity of learners and stimulates them to strive for excellence in language learning. When students are strongly motivated, they learn a language more effectively. Typically, there are two different kinds of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The inner self determines intrinsic motivation in terms of one’s interests and goals. Intrinsic motivation has something to do with people’s personal needs or the things that make them feel good about themselves, like a sense of accomplishment, competence, or self-determination. Extrinsic motivation is related to external stimuli. Extrinsic motivation is driven by the desire for recognition or to avoid punishment. It originates from the outside world and relates to money, incentives, awards, grades, and evaluations. When appropriate, teachers should be the source of motivation.

B. Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is an evaluation of a person's self-worth based on their life experiences. The emotions used to assess oneself include fear, wrath, hate, love, pride, pleasure, anxiety, loathing, humiliation, shame, and embarrassment. Individuals with strong self-esteem are more driven to achieve their goals. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, has a negative effect on the individual, making them feel worthless. It is better to create positive and healthy comparisons. While correcting the errors in language speaking, teachers must consider the fact that it is not affecting their learners' confidence level and self-esteem. Students with strong self-efficacy have a greater propensity to learn than those with low self-efficacy. The learners believe in their own capabilities to work hard and acquire certain speaking patterns. These learned speaking patterns will boost their confidence whenever they use them in a socially acceptable manner. On the other hand, students with less self-efficacy doubt their skills and give up when criticized.

C. Anxiety

Anxiety is the most significant emotional barrier to language acquisition. It is directly associated with negative emotional experiences such as stress, sadness, apprehension, nervousness, discomfort, embarrassment, etc. Anxiety in language learning usually refers to the fear and nervousness that people feel when they have to speak in a language they don't know. The fear of losing self-identity makes them more anxious, and they even fail to exhibit their level of competence in English. Language acquisition and anxiety are inversely proportional: When there is less nervousness, there is more acquisition; conversely, when there is more anxiousness, there is less acquisition. Also, anxiety hurts academic performance, self-esteem, the ability to speak and write well, and positive self-image. As learners become older, they steadily learn to distinguish themselves from other individuals and to take the necessary precautions when necessary. Inhibition is a kind of defence that avoids any utterances and actions that might jeopardise them. In general, young children don't have many worries, so they can take part in class activities. As they are younger, they will be easy-going with the error correction and they won't have a fear of failure. The level of inhibition rises as a natural consequence of advancing age. They are afraid of being criticised or laughed at by others; therefore, they don't speak English at all for fear of making a fool of themselves. As a consequence, high levels of inhibition contribute to poor language learning.

VI. AFFECTIVE FILTER HYPOTHESIS

According to Stephen Krashen, learners who have a high level of self-confidence, a deep sense of motivation, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in the acquisition of a second language.

The Affective Filter hypothesis captures the relationship between affective variables and the process of second language acquisition by positing that acquirers vary with respect to the strength or level of their Affective Filters. Those whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input, but they will also have a high or strong Affective Filter--even if they understand the message, the input will not reach the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the language acquisition device. Those with attitudes more conducive to second language acquisition will not only seek and obtain more input, but they will also have a lower or weaker filter (Krashen, 1984).

Low motivation, low self-efficacy, and excessive anxiety may all combine to strengthen the filter and form a "mental block" that is now hindering language learning. These three variables are somehow correlated with one another. Learners with high motivation can lessen the effects of the other two. So, Krashen says, our goals as teachers shouldn't just be to provide input that is easy to understand, but also to create an environment that encourages self-confidence and motivation among the learners while having a low filtering effect.

VII. CREATING A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Most learners fail to practice English as they are terrified by the absence of an adequate learning environment for acquiring it. People who speak English as a second language often struggle with their confidence while using the language on a daily basis. The ability to communicate effectively in a second language is directly proportional to the speaker's attitude. As the system concentrates on cognitive skills such as memory, attention, and reasoning ability, learners have formed negative attitudes towards language. These elements create prejudices against the English language. Prejudices and negative attitudes about language stop the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in the brain from getting comprehensible input. The speaker should have a high level of self-esteem and motivation, and they should be free of negative attitudes like fear of failure. A speaker must remain calm in the midst of review and criticism. It is the teacher's responsibility to eliminate the unfavourable learning environments in second language teaching.

To create a free and safe atmosphere, teachers must be friendly with their students. Nowadays, there is a higher demand for change in the conventional classroom setting in order to make learning more dynamic and specific. Because the physical environment isn't always the same, learners can be more involved in lessons. Seating arrangements could be made friendlier by arranging them in circles, squares, or rectangles. If it is going to create a friendly environment for learning, the teacher might even take a class without tables and benches. Teachers might have their courses in the open, which would keep the students motivated and cheerful.

VIII. RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What are the impacts of positive affective factors in enhancing English speaking skills?
2. How does a positive affective factor reduce anxiety among ESL students in the English classroom?
3. What are the perceptions of students about affective factors in language learning?

IX. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To identify the effectiveness of affective factors in motivating learners to develop speaking skill
- To identify the impact of positive affective factor in resolving prejudices against English language learning.
- To assess the efficiency of positive affective factors in creating favourable language learning environment.

X. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study adopted a quantitative research method using a survey questionnaire. Undergraduate students from different colleges in Tamil Nadu were selected for the survey. They were between 18 and 21 years old. All of the learners who took part in the study had studied English for at least 10 years in the past. Their present educational institution uses English as the medium of teaching. However, English is a required course at their present institution for all of these learners. To be more specific, the students who took part were studying a wide variety of subjects, including engineering, the arts, sciences, and medicine.

Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Lalonde & Gardner, 1984) with Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986). Questionnaires are employed to determine whether and how intense students' speaking anxiety was. The data was collected using a questionnaire prepared by Horwitz et al. (1986) and Robert C. Gardner (1985). The questionnaire was created by selecting 15 items from AMTB and FLCAS that were determined to be directly connected to foreign language speaking anxiety and the attitude/motivation test battery. The survey uses a two-graded likert scale. The researchers analysed the data using SPSS software after obtaining the data. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of this study is 0.833 of 156 responses. It is shown in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1
CASE PROCESSING SUMMARY

Cases	Valid	156	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	156	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

TABLE 2
CRONBACH'S ALPHA

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.833	15

XI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Stephen Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, learners will only learn a language when they want to learn it. Fear of failure, fear of losing face in front of peers, nervousness, apprehension, anxiety, and shyness are the negative conditions that will not help them to learn a language. All these negative conditions stem from anxiety; rather, positive conditions will encourage language acquisition. Learners must be free of negative conditions and mental obstacles to learn English in order to obtain comprehensible input provided by teachers in the classroom. Therefore, Krashen asserts that "our pedagogical goals should not include supplying comprehensible input, but also creating a situation that encourages a low filter" (Krashen, 1984, p.32).

To find the impact of affective factors in language learning, researchers surveyed 156 samples belonging to various academic fields. The survey consisted of fifteen questions based on positive and negative effects of affective factors in language speaking skills. Table 3 and Figure 1 show that 85.3 percent (%) of learners need favourable environment that supports language learning.

The first step in easing learners into a supportive learning environment is to create a favourable learning environment. It is the teacher's foremost responsibility to ensure conditions that are favourable to learners. A good ESL teacher takes into account how each student is different and how their culture affects them. The teacher must be aware of the students' interest and strive to make his/her verbal communication more comprehensible in order to meet the learners' linguistic needs. Comprehensible input is the process of making the message meaningful for learners. The relationship between a teacher and the students is a crucial component of a safe and positive language speaking environment.

TABLE 3
I AM SEARCHING FOR A FAVOURABLE ENVIRONMENT TO LEARN ENGLISH

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	133	85.3	85.3	85.3
	Disagree	23	14.7	14.7	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	



Figure 1

Table 4 and Figure 2 show that nearly 66.0 percent (%) of the learners feel anxious even though they are well prepared for the English class. It is normal to feel nervous before doing any activity amidst everyone in the Second Language (SL) class. As the learners are learning English as a second language, they are not sure about their language competence in English. Fear of failure haunts learners even before the activity starts. And the fear of losing face makes people show how bad they are at the activity, which breaks their confidence and motivation.

TABLE 4
EVEN IF I AM WELL PREPARED FOR MY ENGLISH CLASS, I STILL FEEL ANXIOUS ABOUT IT

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	103	66.0	66.0	66.0
	Disagree	53	34.0	34.0	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

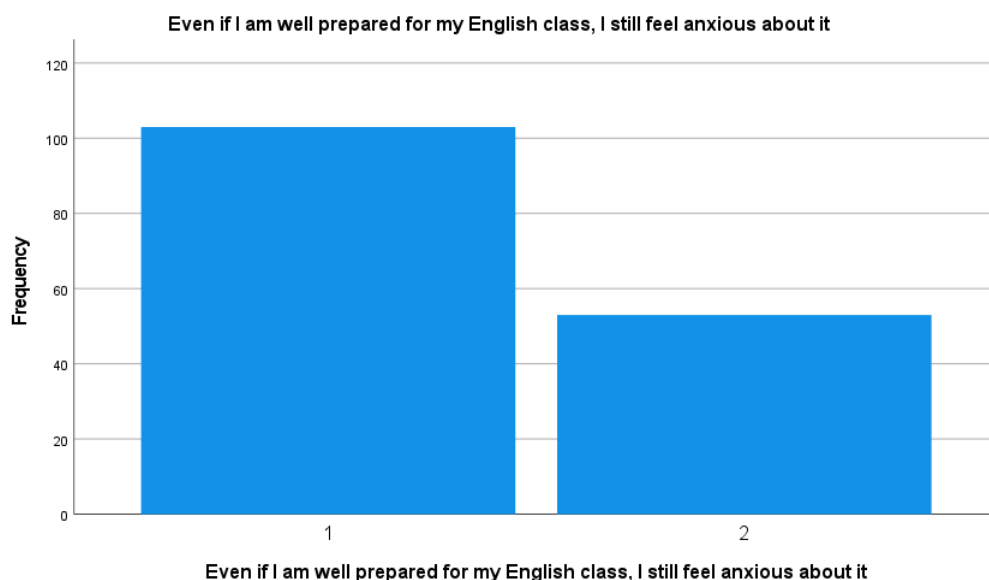


Figure 2

Anxiety may lead to forgetfulness, in general. Anxiety hinders your brain's capacity to perform basic functions properly, such as real-time language processing. This kind of forgetting things would be temporary memory loss and the inability to recall well-known aspects of a particular situation. Anxiety makes life more difficult. As the anxiety levels decrease, the memory will most likely return to its normal degree of proficiency. Results in Table 6 and Figure 4 show that almost 60.9 percent (%) of the learners suffer from this type of anxiety.

Teachers must talk about the fact that making mistakes is an inevitable aspect of learning a language. Teachers must not correct the learners' error at the first-hand. Teachers must prepare students for self-correction and peer-correction in their language classes. When self-correction and peer-correction don't work, teachers can point out the mistakes of the students without hurting their self-esteem.

TABLE 5
BECAUSE OF ANXIETY, IN A LANGUAGE CLASS, WHILE COMMUNICATING WITH TEACHERS, I FORGET THINGS I KNOW

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	95	60.9	60.9	60.9
	Disagree	61	39.1	39.1	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

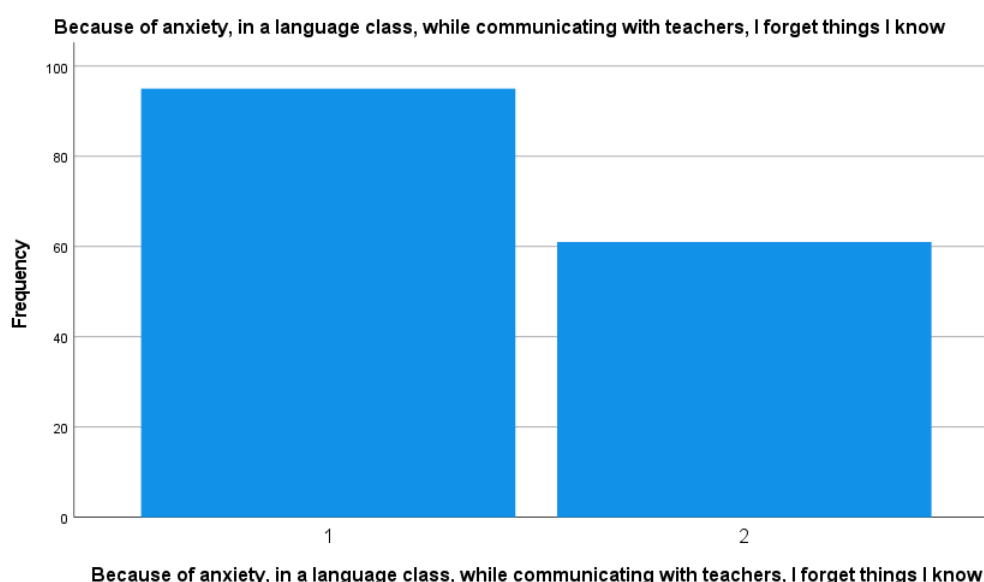


Figure 3

Table 6 and Figure 4 show that 71.2 percent (%) of learners compare themselves with others while practicing the language. As English is a second language, learners tend to be less confident in speaking English and think that their ability will be relatively less than others in the class. Teachers must speak about the unique nature of individuals and how to appreciate the differences in individuals' personality, which does not affect the learners' level of self-confidence. "Students should be confident, which is much easier said than done. Learners should have the idea that making mistakes is normal and necessary. It is inevitable to make mistakes while learning new things. People make mistakes and then learn a lesson from the mistakes" (Bao & Liu, 2021).

TABLE 6
I KEEP COMPARING HOW THE OTHER STUDENTS ARE BETTER AT SPEAKING ENGLISH THAN I AM

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	111	71.2	71.2	71.2
	Disagree	45	28.8	28.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

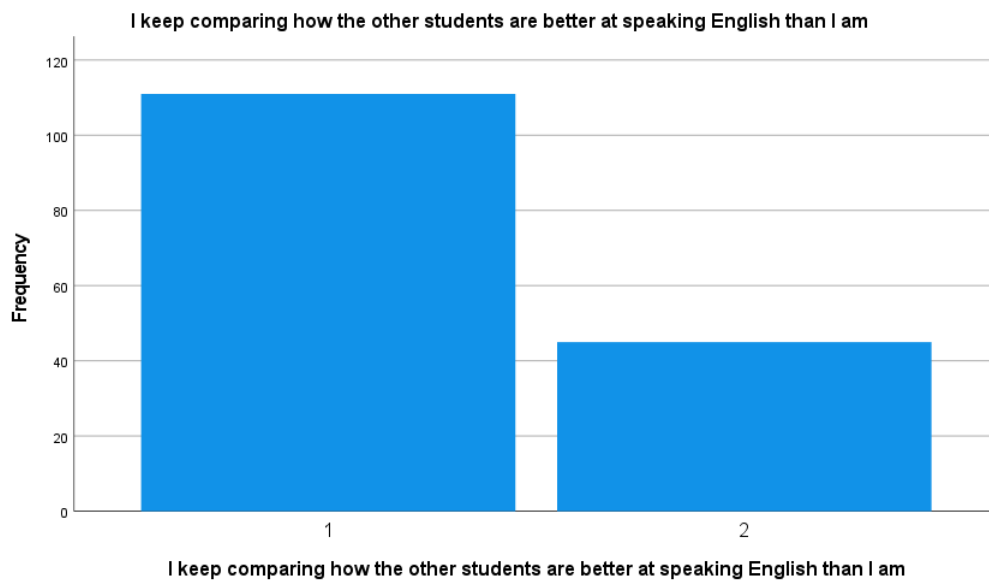


Figure 4

Table 7 and Figure 5 show that 60.3 percent (%) of learners worry about making mistakes while speaking in English with others. Fear of failure and judgement haunts the learners' ability to communicate the language effectively. Learners are afraid of losing face in the event of committing mistakes while exercising the language with their peers. It ultimately stops the learner from speaking English.

TABLE 7
I WORRY ABOUT MAKING MISTAKES WHILE SPEAKING ENGLISH WITH OTHERS IN THE CLASS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	94	60.3	60.3	60.3
	Disagree	62	39.7	39.7	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

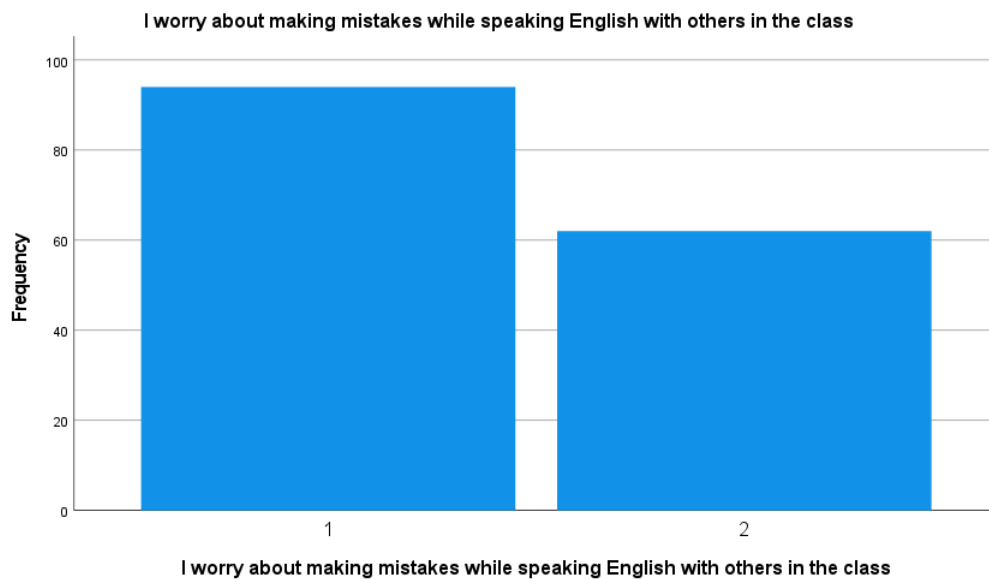


Figure 5

XII. CONCLUSION

Affective factors are important in second language acquisition. If we want to be successful in teaching and learning second language speaking, we must concentrate on socio-psychological components of learners. Teachers must get to know their students personally in order to create a good rapport with them. Language learning should be seen as a whole. The teacher must be aware of each student's strengths and interests, as well as their struggles and

disappointments. Learners feel comfortable and secure when they believe their teacher cares about them and is willing to work with them to achieve linguistic competence. Teachers must serve as good role models for students, recognising their accomplishments and, most importantly, being kind in the face of their failures. It is the responsibility of the teacher to foster a collaborative learning environment, so students must be able to recognise and respect the diversity in their classroom. Classroom jokes, customs, and pets are all good ways to build a strong community. Students who enjoy one another's company are more likely to be friendly and feel completely safe in their environment. Every component of community and class management contributes to the creation of a happy and secure learning environment. As a consequence, learners may feel relaxed using the language and free to make errors, ask questions, and take risks in learning something new. It is critical for ESL teachers and students to be conscious of their affective factors and emotions. They should aim to keep the mental block as little as possible. Teachers try to give comprehensible input, which becomes an intake once understood.

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