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Oral Communication Apprehension among English Senior Majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine

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Abstract

Communication is an essential part in languages. It is the purpose of learning a second or a foreign language. Oral communication is of the aspects that need to be developed among English learners. The study focused on investigating the factors of apprehension among English language students in Palestine. The Study aimed to investigate the degree of oral communication apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine. In order to achieve the study objectives, the researchers used the descriptive approach. Therefore, as to collect data, the study used the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension Measurement (PRCAM) as the main tool of the study. PRCAM was distributed to a sample of (64) English language seniors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine in Rafah and Khan Younis branches. The major findings of the study revealed that the degree of oral communication apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine was moderate and that there was no any statistically significant difference at ($a \leq 0.05$) in the oral communication apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine due to gender (male or female).

Keywords: Oral communication, apprehension, English majors

1. Introduction

In the present time, scholars have considered the development of students' proficiency in speaking as one of the factors that affect students' performance and competence at the academic life. Some learners are believed to experience high levels of foreign language anxiety. Similarly, some researches indicated that the oral skill is a major obstacle for foreign language learners. The apprehension they experienced may have weakened their ability to use the target language appropriately (Holbrook, 1987).

McCroskey and Beatty (1984), Matsuda and Gobel (2004), and Frantz et al. (2005) reported that the degree of communication apprehension is different among genders. Frantz et al. (2005) stated that this phenomenon resulted from the effects of physical appearance and attitude towards social interaction. It was also found that, in general, the more communication apprehension the subject caused, the less the subject was attracted to people.

Unfortunately, this apprehension will likely be escalated by the ever-growing use of communicative oral testing, for research also provides ample evidence that apprehension increases in evaluative situations (Phillips, 1992). Due to the noticeable communication in an individual's life, studies have examined the relationship between communication apprehension and such things as self-esteem, social personality variables, and gender. Communication apprehension (CA) is defined by McCroskey (1984) as an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons. Four different types of communication apprehension exist, including: trait-like, generalized-context, personal-group, and situational.

2. Review of the Literature

This section is divided into four: The first section gives a comprehensive definition of oral communication apprehension, causes and consequences of communication apprehension, and gender differences in communication

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apprehension. The second section begins by laying out the theoretical frame of the study and looks at the theories that govern communication apprehension and gender differences in communication apprehension. The third section explains the previous studies, which were conducted by researchers on oral communication apprehension and gender differences in oral communication apprehension. The last section summarizes the literature review briefly.

2.1 Oral Communication Apprehension

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the communication apprehension and anxiety among foreign language learners, mainly English learners as a foreign language. Therefore, several studies were conducted to determine whether learners of foreign language experienced any oral communication apprehension and anxiety as a result of students' interaction with their teachers and other peers at schools and universities. Quite a big number of studies focused their attention on the causes and effects of oral communication apprehension. They tried to determine if apprehension was anticipated or real. In either way, they wanted to find out why it affected students' self-esteem and their ability to communicate frequently with others, especially among elementary graders. Therefore, communication apprehension (CA) is believed to intermingle in students' lives (e.g. work, school, and friendship) (Holbrook, 1987; Richmond & Mc Croskey, 1995).

McCroskey (1977) pointed to some types of situations involving communication in which people with trait-like apprehension may feel unease and unsure. For example, the apprehension may happen in group speaking, but not in public speaking because they are in different contexts. However, it is believed that the fear of public speaking is the most common type of this fear (Keaten & Kelly, 2000).

People with eminent tolerance in others' differences are less likely to have high level of communication apprehension (Richmon & McCroskey, 1995). Similarly, low levels of communication apprehension occur in adventurous and emotionally matured people.

2.2 Causes of Communication Apprehension

According to Cooper et al. (1995), there is no enough and accurate information about the causes of communication apprehension, some researchers have tried to seek possible explanation. There are four explanations; (1) Physical inception elements such as social ability, physical appearance, body shape, and coordination and motor abilities which may contribute to the development of communication apprehension, (2) it is essential to develop social interaction skills within the children to prevent them from experiencing communication apprehension, (3) providing model is also required; there is a bigger possibility that a child will formulate communication apprehension on daily basis, which emerges from parents who also suffer from communication apprehension, and (4) the theory of reinforcement is used to expose apprehension. When a child obtains profound reinforcement, the child will receive communicating rewarding and vice versa.

Quietness, shyness, and reticence are general personality traits which frequently precipitate communication apprehension. Friedman (1980) stated that shyness or reticence occurs when the process of verbalizing limits the ability and desire to participate in discussions. The level of shyness, or range of situations that it affects, differs greatly from individual to individual. According to McCroskey (1980) and Bond (1984), there were seven factors that could lead to a quiet student have been examined; (1) Low intellectual skills, (2) Speech skill deficiencies, (3) Voluntary social introversion, (4) Social alienation, (5) Communication anxiety, (6) Low social self-esteem, and (7) Ethnical/cultural divergence in communication norms.

Another generally accepted explanation for the cause of communication apprehension is the Negative Cognitive Appraisal Model (Glaser, 1981). The model assumes that the quiet child was criticized for his or her early language performance. The impact is that the child learned to anticipate negative reactions and avoid them by keeping quiet. Even if teachers, parents, or other children simply stop reacting negatively to such a child's talk, the child will perform poorly and avoid oral communication situations (Bond, 1984).

2.3 Communication Apprehension and Anxiety Consequences

There are numerous opinions on the consequences of communication apprehension and anxiety. There are internal effects, which are "fright, discomfort, being unable to cope, being inadequate and possibly feeling dumb" (Richmon & McCroskey, 1995). There are also external effects. Behavioral responses to communication apprehension are count to be the external effects: avoidance, withdrawal, and disruption. Avoidance has to do with someone who deliberately

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refuses to communicate with others (Richmon & McCroskey, 1995). Withdrawal is when someone detaches himself or herself out from communication situation by not responding to any questions or communicating minimally (Richmon & McCroskey, 1995). Disruption happens when a person experiences instant of quietness when he/she speaking or when unusual nonverbal behavior seizes his/her attention.

Other consequences of communication apprehension among children are emotional, educational, and social. Shyness and reticence affect the social skills necessary for children to make friends. Shy students tend to confine their career aspirations to vocations that require little oral communication. They seem to have a higher need to avoid failure, and they have less achievement or success motivation than other students do. In the classroom, the teacher may regard quiet students as "perfect" in that they are not involved in discipline problems. However, students with communication apprehension, avoiding to responding to the teacher or to participation in classroom discussions are perceived as less capable, which may affect their marks badly. Their lack of enthusiasm tends to limit teachers' attention to them, which further reinforces their own self-evaluation (Friedman, 1980; Richmond, 1984).

2.4 Gender Differences in Communication Apprehension and Anxiety

One of the causes of anxiety in male and female interaction is gender. Communication style was conceptualized as the way individuals perceive themselves interacting with others. The separation between male and female as a simple dichotomy prevails in many cultures as evidenced, for example, by the Bedouins tribes in Palestine, and most of the educational institutions in the Gaza Strip, the Hindu Lingam (Shiva) and Yoni (Shakti), and the Tantric Buddhist Jewel and Lotus (Bakan, 1966).

Furthermore, gender differences have been studied concerning nonverbal behavior while gender differences which direct relations to communication apprehension are seldom examined according to McCroskey, Simpson, and Richmond (1982). "Conclusion and summary statements about communication apprehension usually fail even to mention any possible relationship between sex and communication apprehension" (McCroskey, Simpson, & Richmond, 1982, p. 129).

2.5 Related Studies

The researchers tried to review the most recent and related studies. The presentation of the studies is from the newest to the oldest ones. One of the most relevant studies is the study conducted by Rasakumaran and Devi (2017) to measure the amount of oral communication apprehension among freshmen of the Faculty of Medicine in Sri Lanka. The study used Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA 24), which was distributed to 24 freshmen students – 15 females and 9 males. It also used semi-structured interviews. The study showed that the level of CA is mediocre and it was higher among females.

Ka-kan-dee (2017) did a study in order to determine the level of CA among Thai EFL students in oral presentation and speaking. For collecting data, he utilized three tools: the Personal Report Communication Apprehension (PRCA 24), semi-structured interviews, and stimulated recall interviews. The sampling consisted of two Thai EFL lecturers and 45 tourism students. The outcomes of the study showed that tourism students experienced high degree of apprehension, which prevented them from doing their presentation appropriately. Furthermore, the study showed that the two lecturers used effective methods to reduce the degree of anxiety among the students during their oral performance.

Rahmani and Croucher (2017) explored communication apprehension among the Kurdish-Iranian minority groups. He used a sample, which consisted of (157) male and female students who participated in language classes at language centers. The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) was used as the study tool to determine the degree of communication oral apprehension, and identify if there were any differences among males and females in the degree of apprehension. The study found that female students had more levels of CA. It also revealed that the Kurdish students experienced less CA than Iranians did.

Adeyemi et al. (2017) studied the implications of CA for employability among 405 mass communication senior students in four institutions in Nigeria. The study used Personal Report Communication Apprehension instrument (PRCA-24) by McCroskey (1984). The study found that the students had moderate levels of CA.

Leong and Ahmadi (2017) traced out the factors affecting learners in English speaking skill through a theoretical and analytical study titled "An Analysis of Factors Influencing Learners' English Speaking Skill." The researchers, after

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their analysis to a set of studies, concluded that the students who had higher levels of anxiety, low self-esteem, and low motivation had serious problems in speaking skill despite their linguistic competence. The study recommended that EFL teachers need to raise their students' self-confidence.

Al–Otaibi (2016) conducted a study to explore the factors of speaking anxiety among EFL Arab freshmen college students in Saudi Arabia. The sample of the study consisted of 22 English-Arabic translation students at the COLT, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. To find out the degree of anxiety, the researcher distributed a 14-item questionnaire to the sampling. The outcomes of the study showed that peer comparison, students' perceptions about their ability to speak, English rules, difficulties in understanding the teacher and impromptu speech were the main factors which resulted in speech anxiety among students.

Ireland (2016) did a study titled "Student Oral Presentations: Developing the Skills and Reducing the Apprehension" to help students improve skills in presentations. The researcher aimed to provide some effective solutions to mitigate CA in public speaking settings. For the collection of data, the researcher used semi-conducted interviews. The study revealed that the major causes of fear of public speaking were novelty, conspicuousness, performance orientation, audience characteristics, and trait-like individual differences.

Petry (2016) conducted a master thesis at John Carroll University to measure the degree of CA among 67 employees in sales and marketing department in the USA. The researcher also wanted to measure whether CA had positive or negative effects on their performance. The study showed that individuals in sales-related professional roles were experiencing low levels of CA than the rest of their counterparts. There were no differences among gender or the organizational level or the region of the country in the level of CA.

Lahtinen (2013) investigated the level of CA among Finnish and Finnish-Swedish upper secondary school teachers and students. The study concluded that there was no difference between Finnish and Finnish-Swedish students in CA. The study also shed light on correcting mistakes and the role of the teacher in dealing with CA.

Chen and Chang (2009) conducted further research. They examined the relationship between cognitive load, foreign language anxiety, and task performance. Cognitive load was concerned with the load carried by working memory in performing specific task. Based on this objective, the authors hypothesized that anxiety should take the resources of working memory and leave small space for cognitive activities and obstructing them affectively. This research used two types of scales: the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to examine the students' anxiety levels, and the Cognitive Load Subject Rating Scale (CLSRS) to measure the cognitive load while taking an English listening task. There were 88 non-English major participants, registered in a 4-year program at the Technical University in Taiwan. The results of the two scales indicated that students with higher foreign language anxiety had higher cognitive load. Therefore, it can be concluded that foreign language anxiety and cognitive load have negative correlation with listening comprehension.

Frantz et al. (2005) attempted to examine the relationship between communication apprehension, anxiety, and gender. The study analyzed the relationship between communication apprehension and gender. The hypothesis of the study was based on the idea that females experienced more communication apprehension than males and, this CA would decrease gradually during study at college. The voluntary participants are full-time undergraduate students at Midwestern, Liberal Arts, of a private Christian College. Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) of 24 Likert-type questions, were distributed and completed by the participants. PRCA-24 was used to evaluate trait-like communication apprehension. The study found that there was a significant statistical difference in the level of communication apprehension between females and males. Females are more potential to equate themselves to other females. This put females to impersonate perfection based on the society's standards. Such characterization was also shaped by television, so when a female feels that she lacks these characters, she might experience communication apprehension.

Xiangpin (2003) investigated language anxiety and its effect on the oral performance of students in the classroom. The study involved 97 of non-English major college students from an average university in China. The study used FLCAS (Foreign Language Communication Apprehension Scale) as its instrument (Horwitz et al., 1986). FLCAS is a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", with 33 questions. The estimation of the total score ranged from 33 to 165. The presented statements were the reflection of oral communication apprehension, test anxiety, and the fear of negative evaluation in the foreign language classroom. The results showed that many

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students felt severe language anxiety such as procrastination, fear of evaluation and concern over errors that affected their language performance in class. Generally, as the anxiety increased, the quality of performance decreased. The researchers, after reviewing the previous studies related to oral apprehension, noticed that that oral apprehension is mainly measured by the same tool–Personal Report of Communication Apprehension Measurement (PRSAM). This gives a source of certainty for the researchers to use the same tool to measure the apprehension among the English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine.

3. Methodology

3.1 Approaches of the Study

The study was quantitative in nature. The researchers used the descriptive analytical approach, which mainly depended on analyzing and justifying the data collected from the questionnaire.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all English language Majors (fourth year students) in all the branches of Al-Quds Open university in Palestine-the Gaza Strip during the first semester of the year (2017–2018).

3.3 Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 64 English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Rafah and Khan Younis branches: males (34); females (30). This number represented all male and female English language seniors in the Southern Branches: Khan Younis and Rafah. The researchers distributed 64 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. Sixty-one copies were collected and 3 copies were cancelled because they were not answered correctly. "SPSS" was used for the analysis of the questionnaires

Table 1. The distribution of the sampling according to gender

Gender	Frequency	Valid percent
Male	32	52.4
Female	29	47.6
Total	61	100

3.4 Instrument

For the researchers to determine the level of oral communication apprehension among the sampling, the personal Report of Communication Apprehension Measurement (PRCA) was used as the tool of the study. It consisted of twenty-four items, divided into four domains. It used the 5-likert Scale, which ranges from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.

3.4.1 Piloting the Study

The researchers conducted a pilot study to evaluate the instrument. They distributed the questionnaire to 10 people out of the sample of the study to see if any adaptation was needed. The pilot study aimed to confirm the reliability and the stability of the study instrument as follows:

3.4.1.1 Internal Consistency Validity

The validity was calculated by the use of Person Formula.

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Table 2. Coefficient correlation between each item and the total degree

No.	Domains	Person correlation	Sig
	Group Discussion		
1.	I dislike participating in group discussion.	0.522**	0.000
2.	Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.	0.639**	0.000
3.	I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.	0.503**	0.000
4.	I like to get involved in group discussions.	0.569**	0.000
5.	Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.	0.544**	0.000
6.	I am calm and relaxed when I have to participate	0.282**	0.028
	Meetings	Person correlation	Sig
7.	Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.	0.472**	0.000
8.	I am usually confortable when I have to participate in a meeting.	0.498**	0.000
9.	I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.	0.562**	0.000
10.	I am afraid to express myself at meetings.	0.568**	0.000
11.	Communications at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.	0.511**	0.000
12.	I am very relaxed when answering questions at meeting.	0.586**	0.000
	Interpersonal	Person correlation	Sig
13.	While participating in a conversation with a new colleague, I feel very nervous.	0.448**	0.000
14.	I have no fear of speaking up in a conversation.	0.274**	0.033
15.	Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.	0.429**	0.001
16.	Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.	0.486**	0.000
17.	While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.	0.286**	0.026
18.	I am afraid to speak up in conversations.	0.243**	0.044
	Public Speaking	Person correlation	Sig
19.	I have no fear of giving a speech.	0.450**	0.000
20.	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving speech.	0.152**	0.041
21.	I feel relaxed while giving a speech.	0.332**	0.009
22.	My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.	0.349**	0.006
23.	I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.	0.559**	0.000
24.	While giving a speech, I get so nervous and forget the facts I really know	0.396**	0.002

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

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3.4.1.2 Structure Validity

Structure validity is one of the standards of the validity which measures the level of the achievement of the objectives, which the tool wants to reach. It also shows the level of correlation of each domain with the total degree of the questionnaire's items.

Table 3. Coefficient correlation between each domain

No.	Domain	Person correlation	Sig
1.	Group discussion	0.751**	0.000
2.	Meeting	0.742**	0.000
3.	Interpersonal	0.564**	0.000
4.	Public Speaking	0.460**	0.000

Correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

3.4.1.3 Reliability

Reliability is the consistency of measurement over time (Creswell, 2009). The Cronbach's Alpha was used for the measurement of the reliability of the tool.

Table 4. Cronbach Alpha used for the reliability of the tool

No.	Domain	Item number	Alpha Cronbach
1.	group discussion	6	0.642
2.	Meeting	6	0.723
3.	Interpersonal	6	0.653
4.	public speaking	6	0.611
	Total	24	0.632

According to Table 4, the total results of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.632. This is an acceptable result, which indicates that the tool is reliable.

3.5 Statement of the Problem

One of the most significant current discussions in English Language Teaching is oral communication apprehension. Oral communication apprehension is common disorder characterized by an extreme nervousness when communicating or feeling of reticence. Students with communication apprehension are frequently afraid to communicate and will avoid speaking to others. When this person is forced to communicate, he or she will become uneasy, tense, humiliated, and unsure (Cooper, 1995).

Over the past few decades, there have been numerous attempts to seek elaborate strategy in mitigating the impact of communication apprehension, however, there is no reliable solution to issues why communication apprehension occur, how it delivered, and in what way it is best analyzed. An equivalence of the experimental research analyzing the relationship between apprehension and second language learning is presenting some conflicting evidence and illustrating that anxiety is a complex, multi-faceted construct (Phillips, 1992).

Affective factors in learning a foreign language involve various aspects of emotions, feelings, and attitudes of the learners. The affective side of the learner may have positive or negative influence on the process of learning language. Thus, a better understanding of affect in foreign language learning can lead to more effective language learning and teaching (Cooper, 1995). By considering these aspects, the researchers seek to find the criterion in understanding the

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oral communication apprehension among the students and determine whether these variances are elaborate in the differences that exist between genders.

3.6 Research Questions

The following are the research questions:

1. What is the degree of oral communication apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine?
2. Is there any statistically significant difference at ($a \leq 0.05$) in the oral communication apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine?

3.7 Purpose of the Study

The objective of this paper was to study the degree of oral communication apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine by using Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), as well as, to determine which gender groups, male or female, potentially experienced more oral communication apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine. The study also aimed to provide a suggested program to reduce the level of oral communication apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine.

3.8 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide an in-depth resource for analyzing the degree of oral communication apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine and examines which group of gender potentially experienced more oral communication apprehension. Foremost, the researchers hope this paper can help mapping an elaborate strategy in mitigating the impact of communication apprehension, and help answer such queries, for example, why it occurs, how it develops and affects people, and how best it can be analyzed.

4. Results and Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Silences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. The percentages and means of each item on the questionnaire were used for measuring students' perception of oral communication apprehension. For clarity and simplification, the results were summarized and presented in tables, which make them in order.

The statistical analysis was simplified; the respondents' views and perceptions were classified into three main headings, as the table below shows.

Table 5. The scales of the apprehension degree

Scale	Degree
1.00 -2.33	Low mean value
2.34 – 3.66	Mediocre mean value
3.67 – 5.00	High mean value

4.1 The Results of the First Question

The findings of the first question "*What is the degree of oral communication apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine?"* In order to answer this question, the researchers calculated the means, percentages, test value, and significance of each item in the Apprehension Scale. The researchers reached the following results:

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Table 6. The means, percentages, test value, and Significant of each item in the apprehension scale

No.	Domain	Items	Means	Percentage	Test value	Sig.	Rank	Degree
1.	Group Discussion	I dislike participating in group discussion.	2.39	47.8	3.37	0.001	24	mediocre
2.		Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.	3.20	64	1.204	0.233	4	mediocre
3.		I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.	3.21	64.2	1.49	0.140	3	mediocre
4.		I like to get involved in group discussions.	3.26	65.2	1.89	0.062	1	Mediocre
5.		Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.	3.10	62	0.652	0.517	8	Mediocre
6.		I am calm and relaxed when I have to participate	3.11	62.2	0.708	0.482	7	Mediocre
7.	Meetings	Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.	2.97	59.4	0.189	0.851	12	Mediocre
8.		I am usually comfortable when I have to participate in a meeting.	3.08	61.6	0.499	0.619	9	Mediocre
9.		I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.	3.13	62.6	0.893	0.375	6	Mediocre
10.		I am afraid to express myself at meetings.	2.85	57	0.877	0.384	16	Mediocre
11.		Communications at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.	2.84	56.8	0.971	0.336	19	Mediocre
12.		I am very relaxed when answering questions at meeting.	3.16	63.2	1.217	0.228	5	Mediocre
13.	Inter prsonal	While participating in a conversation with a new colleague, I feel very nervous.	2.85	57	0.837	0.406	17	Mediocre

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14.		I have no fear of speaking up in a conversation.	2.85	57	0.894	0.375	18	mediocre
15.		Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.	2.82	56.4	1.243	0.219	20	mediocre
16.		Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.	2.98	59.6	0.116	0.908	11	mediocre
17.		While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.	2.79	55.8	0.634	0.107	21	mediocre
18.		I am afraid to speak up in conversations.	3.03	60.6	0.200	0.842	10	mediocre
19.	Public Speaking	I have no fear of giving a speech.	2.77	55.4	1.383	0.172	22	mediocre
20.		Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving speech.	3.25	65	1.540	0.129	2	mediocre
21.		I feel relaxed while giving a speech.	2.97	59.4	0.203	0.840	13	mediocre
22.		My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.	2.90	58	0.725	0.471	14	mediocre
23.		I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.	2.75	55	1.737	0.087	23	mediocre
24.		While giving a speech, I get so nervous and forget the facts I really know.	2.87	57.4	0.841	0.404	15	mediocre
		Overall	2.96	59.2	0.431	0.793		Mediocre

As illustrated in Table 6, the overall mean for all of the items was 2.96. Based on Apprehension Scale the researchers adopted, this mean was equal to mediocre. Thus, the answer of the first question was that the degree of oral communication apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine was 'mediocre.'

According to the above table, item number 4 "I like to get involved in group discussions" was the highest factor that constitutes apprehension among students in oral communication in English language, 65.2% of the students agreed that involving in group discussion was the main source for their fear and apprehension in oral communication. In contrary, item number 1 "I dislike participating in group discussion" was the lowest factor constituting apprehension, 47.8% of the participants confirmed that abstaining from getting involved in group discussion was the least factor for their apprehension in oral communication in English. It was clear that all the items of the scale were the same "mediocre." No one single item was higher or lower 'mediocre' degree. It was also noticeable that the highest and lowest degree refers to one domain 'Group Discussion.'

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The researchers mentioned that the highest factors causing apprehension were: item 4 'I like to get involved in group discussions', item 20 'Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving speech', item 3 'I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions', item 2 'Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions' and item 12 'I am very relaxed when answering questions at meeting.'

For the least factors that cause apprehension among English students, they namely were; item 1 'I dislike participating in group discussion', item 23 'I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence', item 19 'I have no fear of giving a speech', item 17 'While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed' and item 15 'Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.'

The researchers draw the following table to give a summary of the highest and lowest degrees of the items in the domains of (PRCA) among English Senior Majors at Al Quds Open University.

Table 7. The highest and lowest items in each domain

Domain	No.	Item	Highest	Lowest
Group Discussions	4	I like to get involved in group discussions.	*	
	1	I dislike participating in group discussion.		*
Meetings	12	I am very relaxed when answering questions at meeting	*	
	19	I have no fear of giving a speech		*
Interpersonal	16	Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.	*	
	17	While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.		*
Public Speaking	20	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving speech.	*	
	23	I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.		*

Table 8. The overall degree of the domain in order

No.	Domain	Mean	Percentage	Test value	Sig.	Rank
1.	Group Discussions	3.04	60.8	0.583	0.562	1
2	Meetings	3.00	60	0.065	0.948	2
3	Interpersonal	2.88	57.6	2.024	0.047	4
4	public Speaking	2.91	58.2	1.443	0.154	3
Total		2.96	59.2	0.793	0.431	

As it is shown in Table 8, Group Discussion was placed first, while Interpersonal Domain came last. This was true since Al-Quds Open University uses the traditional assessment strategies, mid-term paper exam and final-paper exam and another two written assignments. Classroom participation, including group discussions, seminar presentation was not valued; that is why students and teachers did not consider group discussions. Another reason was that students had to attend only 8 meetings during the whole semester, four meetings in the first half semester, and four in the second half. Most teachers focused on the textbook since the semester was very short. Moreover, some of the students did not have to attend classes since the university is an open university.

4.2 The Results of the Second Question

The second question was stated as "*Is there any statistically significant difference at ($a \leq 0.05$) in the oral Communication Apprehension among English Senior Majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine?* In order to find the answer, the researchers used means, test value, and sig as follows:

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Table 9. The means, test value and sig of the differences between the two genders

Domain	means		Test value	sig
	Male	female		
Group Discussions	2.96	3.13	-1.074	0.287
Meetings	2.96	3.05	-0.521	0.604
Interpersonal	2.90	2.87	0.278	0.782
public Speaking	2.84	2.98	-1.232	0.223
Total	2.91	3.01	-1.025	0.310

According to Table 9, the sig value 0.310 is bigger than 0.05. Therefore, there was no difference in the degree of oral communication apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine.

5. Discussion

5.1 The Discussion of the First Question

The results of the first question revealed that the degree of apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University was 'moderate.' This result went in line with Adeyemi et al. (2017) study that revealed moderate level of apprehension among students and contradicted with Ka-kan-dee (2017) study that revealed high degree of apprehension. Discussing the result of question one, 'moderate' degree was reasonable since there was somehow a good number of students who were used to oral communication, so they experience very little oral communication apprehension. They considered it normal to experience some oral apprehension; they trusted their abilities and seemed to have more confidence in themselves. In addition, many students thought that oral communication made them distinguished among their teachers and classmates; they thought that reading and wiring skills were of little importance in classroom participation. In short, they did not mind having little apprehension since this a natural phenomenon, if not part of being a human.

In contrary, there were a considerable number of students who did not refuse to communicate orally in English in EFL classes, especially due to the lack of confidence. Many students thought that oral interaction in classes was not important since it was not part of assessment at Al-Quds Open University. The university applied the traditional strategies of language assessment, paper and pencil strategy was the only strategy used there. Furthermore, the degree of oral communication apprehension also depended on the nature of the lecturer, type of material, students' level, and facilities and educational aids offered to the students by the university. To fully explain the factors influencing the degree of oral communication apprehension, the researchers presented an elaborate justification for each domain, which are as follows:

5.1.1 Group Discussion

The first domain of the PRCA was Group discussion which began with item (1) and ended with item (6). As shown above (Table 6), item number one 'I dislike participating in group discussion' was the lowest factor of oral communication apprehension. In contrary, item number four 'I like to get involved in group discussions' scored highest. This revealed that students were afraid of communicating in groups since they required them to involve in open discussions. Form one of the researchers' point of view, who has been teaching there for about 5 years now, group discussions at Al-Quds Open University were not highly preferred among students due to co-education. Meanwhile group discussions did not have any formalities; students could not hide and they feel that they were monitored.

Personally, one of the researchers, a part-time teacher at Al-Quds Open University, faced some difficulties when it came to group discussions, especially in the presence of boys and girls. In a session in the second semester of 2016, during the discussion, the researcher noticed some signs of fear on the students' faces. After class, some students explained that they did not like to be involved in group discussion since they were given any marks for this.

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In group discussions, both high and low achievers participated in oral communication. This constituted a factor of risk and intimidation among low achievers, usually wishing not to take part in such discussions.

5.1.2 Meetings

The second domain of the Report was meetings, whose items were specified between 7-12. As illustrated, item number 12, which was 'I am very relaxed when answering questions at meeting' came fifth among all the items of the report and at the same time it was the highest in the "Meeting domain", while item 11 'Communications at meetings usually makes me comfortable' was ranked 19th in the overall Report items and in the same time it was the lowest in this domain.

According to the result of item number 12, the respondents showed that they experience more apprehension when it came to answering questions in meetings. This was true because students were expected to answer long questions or open ones, meaning questions without specific answers. This was justifiable in that students were not well prepared for such questions: they usually did not have enough background about the nature of the questions. But the researchers thought that students encounter such a problem because they had never been used to think critically nor creatively. They were much more used to keeping information by heart. Some teachers did not allow students to give their points of view and it was necessary for them to follow the textbook answers. Some questions might be sudden or strange for them; which made it source of apprehension among students, especially when they were competent enough in English. The results of item 11 revealed that the students exhibited little fear in this domain as they might really not want to get involved in challenging situations. They might prefer to take part in limited oral communications.

5.1.3 Interpersonal

According to the Table 6, item number 16 'Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations' came 11th among all the items. In the same time, it was the highest factor in the interpersonal domain. By contrast, item number 17 'While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed' was ranked 21st in the overall Report and the least apprehensive factor in the interpersonal domain. The result of item 16 was justified since students preferred to avoid involving in conversation; their communicative competence did not enable them to take part in conversations. The researchers thought that students preferred to carry out conversation that was prepared at home in advance. In short, they feel that they were not obliged to participate in conversations as they were monitored and their mistakes might be a strong inhibitor for them in the future.

5.1.4 Public Speaking

As illustrated in the above table, item number 20 'Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech' was the second degree of the overall items of the Report and highest source of apprehension among students in public speaking domain. While item 23 'I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence' was ranked 23rd in the overall degree in the Report and the weakest cause of apprehension in this domain. The result of item 20 showed that many students had panic when they deliver speech before the public. This was true even when using the mother tongue. From a psychological point of view, people often avoided talking before the public because they were not mentally prepared, which caused them to panic, and this affects their speech production. Moreover, the students were not used to doing so in schools (Al–Otaibi, 2016). For examples, their schools did not have English language clubs to push them to communicate in the target language, neither were they forced to orally present before the students. In addition, the English department did not encourage students to take part in seminar presentations, which was a key factor in preparing students to involve in public talk.

5.2 The Discussion of the Second Question

The results of the second question revealed that there was no difference in the degree of oral communication apprehension among English senior majors at Al-Quds Open University in Palestine. This result did not conform to any of the following previous studies: Rasakumaran and Devi (2017) and Rahmani and Croucher (2017) as the latter two studies revealed that female students had higher level of oral communication apprehension.

In this context, Bakan et al. (1982) stated that one of the causes of oral communication apprehension was gender. However, this study was considered one of the studies that went in line with Bakan et al. (1982) as both genders in this study (male and female) showed moderate level of apprehension. Bakan et al. pointed out that co-education was not permitted in some parts of the world such as some Arab and Muslim countries, with some exceptions. In this study,

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the questionnaire was distributed to co-ed students. The presence of male and female students in one class might raise the level of oral communication apprehension, especially if they were brought up in close-knit families in a conservative society that did not prefer co-education (Ka-kan-dee, 2017). Another reason why females prefer silence in their classes was the fear of making mistakes while talking, which made them an object of sarcasm for the males' students.

6. Conclusion

The study revealed that the degree of the oral communication apprehension among the English seniors' majors at Al Quds Open University was 'mediocre.' This result was justified as there were some factors that encourage them to speak and there were some that did not encourage them to speak. Some of the students felt that they are really competent to speak and communicate easily, while there were some students did not have the ability to speak due to their weak level in English. The study also showed that there was no difference among the two genders in the degree of apprehension. This was interpreted as both, male and female students experienced the same conditions and that made them equal, even in their communication apprehension. This study is hoped to be a fruitful addition to the educational literature, especially the title of the study is applied on a new sample in Palestine. It is also hoped that this study helps teachers and university lecturers to avoid the factors that increase the communication apprehension among their students. Teachers in Palestine are highly welcomed to use this study to be a real reflection of the communication in English due to the fact that this study is an authentic research applied on English majors. Another significant conclusion was that co-education may lower students' active participation in English language classes, which were supposed to the very real opportunity for students to practice the target language freely. Therefore, it was necessary that the university must seek to change the current assessment strategies, and rethink more practical ones.

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