

## **Foreign language anxiety and the digital classroom**

How social media and the digitalised classroom affects student anxiety levels in upper secondary vocational studies.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines foreign language anxiety's impact on upper secondary vocational students in Norwegian schools. This study is a continuation of previous research on foreign language anxiety and attempts to offer new insight into how social media and the digital classroom may affect student anxiety levels. The study examined twenty-eight students in two different classes and consisted of a questionnaire, eleven interviews, and responses to Horwitz et al. (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The thesis attempts to use these three investigatory modes to understand how the modern, digitally saturated classroom impacts student anxiety.

This study aims to answer three research questions focusing on students' comfort levels when speaking English in the classroom. The 12th of March, 2021, marked the beginning of the national lockdown of schools in Norway, leading to online lectures and homeschooling. This development led to a massive and unprecedented digitalisation of education and raised issues of student safety, anxiety levels, responsibilities, and rights. The move to Zoom as a mass education tool took place out of necessity, but without a solid research history investigating its impact on students below the tertiary level. While this study does not offer a comprehensive investigation into the impact of Zoom and does not focus exclusively on digital education platforms, it does attempt to offer some insight into how students experienced Zoom in the language classroom and how they experience the other range of internet-connected devices in their educational settings.

This study found that few students are worried about being recorded or filmed during class, however, those even those who are worried about being filmed are reluctant to require the removal mobile phones and computers from the classroom. Further, while most of the students participating in the study experienced medium to high anxiety levels linked to at least some areas of foreign language learning and usage, many of these students experienced anxiety in other subjects as well. Regarding anxiety outside the classroom, students felt more secure when speaking English to natives in a natural setting, such as on holiday or online with friends, than they did in the classroom.

The study contributes to research on language anxiety in the Norwegian context. Further, it provides teachers, and potentially students, with helpful insight into the importance of awareness surrounding foreign language anxiety and its effects on language acquisition. The study also offers new insight into the discussion regarding "black screens and anxiety" on

Zoom and provides a picture of how students experience the modern, digitally-linked classroom.

**Key words:** foreign language anxiety, zoom, digital classroom, vocational studies, FLCAS, Krashen, social media

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# 1 Introduction

A considerable amount of scholarly writing has been devoted to second language (L2) learning and the affective challenges students face when learning a foreign language (Gjerde, 2020; Horwitz et al., 1986; Landström, 2016; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Some studies examine the importance of the learning environment in helping learners develop their L2 language skills and emphasise how important the environment is in exacerbating or ameliorating student anxiety (Kiatkheeree, 2018; Young, 1991). Since the early 1980s, there has been an emphasis on the learner as an individual and the importance of developing individualised plans to overcome their personal hurdles and acquire the target language (Li & Lan, 2021). Furthermore, in Norway and as part of the Directorate of Education's new subject renewal (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019), there is a greater focus on the student as an individual, their environment, their mental health, and their individual goals and parameters for each subject.

The presence or absence of a conducive learning environment is crucial for language learning to happen efficiently. Stevick (1980) argued that in language learning, "success depends less on materials, techniques and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom" (p. 4), while Stern (1983) has insisted that, "the affective component contributes at least as much and often more to language learning than the cognitive skills" (p. 386). In 1991, Young conducted a study revealing that different factors in the classroom take part in creating language anxiety in students, and that in order to create a stable and safe environment for them, the teacher had to learn to recognise the behaviour of anxious students (Young, 1991, p. 429). Recently, Dewaele (2007) claims that high language anxiety levels in the classroom lead to lower grades. A further study lists a reduction in grade point averages, increased absences, and problems focusing in class as typical signs of anxiety for students in school (Læringsmiljøsenret, 2020).

The environment in the classroom is generally dependent on the teacher, the students, and the relationship between the two (Young, 1991, p. 429). However, recent technological changes, including the rise of social media and the digitalised classroom, have played essential roles in classroom dynamics and arguably impact students' ability to acquire the target language. Furthermore, the pandemic has made a digitalised classroom even more helpful, and students have become familiar with digitally enhanced learning environments. Few studies, however, have discussed how the digitalised classroom might be impacting the affective dimension of language learning mentioned by Stevick (1980), Stern (1983), Li and

Lan (2021). Specifically, little research has focussed on the relationship between the digital classroom and anxiety levels among language students. While some recent articles published in the popular media in Norway have debated how Zoom and the usage of cameras may affect students' anxiety levels (Damsgaard, 2020; Møller, 2020; Svendsen, 2021), little formal research has been conducted in the area.

While most people are familiar with the general sensation of being anxious, anxiety has specific psychological traits. According to Steimer (2002), anxiety is widely recognised as an emotional response, mood, and specific anxiety disorder involving cognitive, physiological, and behavioural aspects (p. 232). Furthermore, Steimer explains that anxiety's function is to signalise danger and trigger appropriate responses in order to avoid such danger (p. 233). Anxiety can operate and affect the boundaries between the physical, emotional, and psychological traits. Anxiety is commonly defined as "something felt" (Freud, 1924), however, as we see in Steimer's definition, anxiety is not entirely a mental disorder, but it can become pathological and interfere with the ability to cope successfully in everyday life (Steimer, 2002, p. 234).

In many cases, the person experiencing anxiety will also experience feelings of apprehension, worried thoughts, tension, nervousness, and physical changes such as increased blood pressure, sweating, trembling, and dizziness (Kazdin, 2000). The diagnosis General Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is outlined in The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (also known as the DSM-5) through a specific set of criteria. In order to be diagnosed with GAD, the symptoms must be unrelated to other medical conditions and cannot be related to drugs, alcohol or other substances that may cause similar symptoms. The three main criteria for GAD are all connected and will often occur together and impact each other. People with GAD will experience excessive anxiety and worry about various topics, events, or activities (Stein & Sareen, 2015). The person will often experience that the worry they felt during the activity or event is challenging to control. Lastly, the anxiety and worry are accompanied by at least three of the following physical or cognitive symptoms: edginess, restlessness, more fatigue, feeling as if the mind goes blank, irritability, muscle aches, and trouble sleeping (Glasofer, 2021; Stein & Sareen, 2015).

Building on work focussing on anxiety and language learning, Horwitz et al. (1986) proposed that specific anxiety construct called Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) differed from the standard anxiety or GAD. FLA is characterised by the feeling of unease, worry, nervousness, and apprehension regarding learning or using a second language and is thus a mental disorder closely bound to language production. According to Horwitz et al., the



leading causes of foreign language anxiety are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (p. 125). One might speculate that because language is often tied to identity, FLA can challenge the student's image and may lead to an identity conflict. Several elements, such as classroom atmosphere, the relationship between student and teacher, the risk of embarrassment, and new students, affect the level of FLA a student might experience. Furthermore, the student's self-image and how the student views his/her self will impact the level of anxiety the student experiences (Djafri & Wimbari, 2018). While GAD is a severe disorder impacting the ability to learn in all school subjects, students who experience anxiety linked explicitly to language use often fall under FLA, not GAD.

When children experience high levels of anxiety (both GAD and FLA) in class, there is a chance that the student will avoid the class, the teacher, the student causing the anxiety, or the school. According to Watson and Friend (1969), many who experience anxiety in social settings will deliberately avoid such situations that make them feel anxious not to receive potential negative evaluations from others. School refusal, or in some cases known as school avoidance, is a term used to describe a school-aged child's signs of anxiety, causing them to refuse to go to school. It is not classified as a disorder by the DSM-5, however, it falls under GAD or social anxiety (Kawsar et al., 2021). School refusal is not necessarily connected to anxiety in the classroom, as it can also include students who struggle to get up in the morning to go to school, students who avoid the playground, those who stay away from school for years, and those who dread going, but shows up.

Berg (2002) established a set of criteria that defines school refusal: excessive absence without explanation, students who are at home when not at school, anger, sadness, and anxiety when talking about going to school over a period of time. In many cases, students experiencing school refusal find it hard to control their feelings and emotions connected to the anxiety they are experiencing. These experiences are closely linked to the same lack of control that people with GAD experience. Furthermore, these students often experience physical symptoms such as stomachaches, headaches and trouble sleeping. These are all common in GAD and FLA, however, many of these students are not picked up by the system and therefore not diagnosed, as they often classify as "absent".

American linguist Stephen Krashen (1982) argued in his affective filter hypothesis that there is often a sense of an internal barrier that interferes with L2 acquisition when learners are anxious or bored. He claimed that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, low anxiety, and extroversion are better equipped for language acquisition of a second language. These factors are often created in the self by the environment to which the

student is exposed. Teachers, other students, parents, and parental expectations can all play a role in producing or alleviating language anxiety in a student. Furthermore, these actors can impact the level of anxiety a student experiences regarding their performance in a second language. Further, Krashen argues in his monitor hypothesis that some students who strive towards perfectionism and experience low self-esteem may experience high anxiety levels regarding speaking a foreign language.

Since the inception of widespread internet use, studies have examined social media's impact on young people's mental health. Grieve et al. (2013) demonstrated that social connectedness arising from Facebook usage was negatively correlated with anxiety. Others have connected anxiety with surfing and scrolling digital practices (Anand et al., 2022). Shepherd and Edelman's (2005) created an Internet Use Questionnaire to examine the relationship between internet use, social anxiety, general anxiety, and depression. Their hypothesis was created in line with the self-regulation model and proposed "that social anxiety, low ego strength, anxiety and depression, would be related to using the internet to cope with social fears" (Shepherd & Edelman, 2005, p. 1). The study explored social anxiety and internet use concerning the regulation of social fears. The authors used a demographic and Internet Use Questionnaire together with four scales: The Social Phobia Scale (SPS), the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS), the revised Barron Ego Strength scale (BESS), and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) (Shepherd & Edelman, 2005, p. 4). The informants were 169 university students (124 females and 45 males) between the ages of eighteen and sixty-two. The results of this study confirmed that there was a significant relationship between low ego strength, anxiety, depression and social anxiety. Furthermore, their results confirmed that those with social anxiety use the internet to regulate social concerns (Shepherd & Edelman, 2005).

Both the studies of Shepherd and Edelman (2005) and Grieve et al. (2013) base themselves on social media and their impact on mental health. Shepherd and Edelman confirmed that students with social anxiety use the internet to regulate their social concerns. This conclusion opens up the possibility that students may feel less anxiety when using English online than in the classroom, while Grieve et al. suggests the opposite might be true. This thesis thus attempts to examine the nexus between social media use and foreign language classroom anxieties by answering several research questions:

- How comfortable are upper-secondary students when speaking English in the classroom, both physical and digital?
- Does the presence of social media access heighten their Foreign Language Anxiety?

- Do students feel safer when speaking English online through gaming on zoom/teams than when in a physical classroom

## 2 Literary review and relevant theory

### 2.1 Introduction

Foreign language anxiety is commonly known as a situation-specific anxiety triggered by formal learning of a foreign language (Djafri & Wimbari, 2018). It is not only found in the English-speaking classroom but appears in any classroom where the student is learning to speak, write and understand a second language. It has been documented that strongly motivated students often experience high levels of language anxiety, and students who have bad relationships with their teachers also often experience high levels of anxiety (Djafri & Wimbari, 2018). Further, linguists and psychologists have demonstrated that students who experience anxiety often perform worse than students who do not suffer from anxiety (Gjerde, 2020; Horwitz et al., 1986; Krashen, 1982). As anxiety is a widespread issue and occurs in all language instruction and all schools to some degree, a great deal of previous work has been done on the matter.

In order to discuss foreign language anxiety in the classroom and the effects social media and digital platforms have on students' anxiety levels, one must begin with relevant theory on how students learn and acquire language and the factors that hinder foreign language learning. Krashen (1982) created a series of five hypotheses about language learning. Two of these – the monitor and affective filter hypotheses – have implications for how language and learning are deeply disturbed by anxiety and how this anxiety can impact motivation for learning. This section will first discuss these elements of Krashen's hypotheses and their implications for the role of classroom anxiety in institutionalized L2 learning environments. Further, relevant international and Scandinavian research focussing explicitly on FLA will be presented. Finally, this section will examine new data emerging tracking the role of social media and digital platforms on student anxiety levels in classroom situations.

### 2.2 Theoretical background for learning and language acquisition

#### 2.2.1. Krashen's Monitor Model

Krashen developed the Monitor Model to explain some features of second language acquisition. The model is one of the most discussed theories in L2 acquisition and was developed and refined by Krashen over several years (Krashen, 1982). Krashen's general language-learning model consists of five hypotheses: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982, p. 9). Of these hypotheses, the monitor and affective filter

hypotheses are of interest here. The monitor hypothesis argues that individuals who have learned a language (often in an institutional setting) possess a mental monitor or checker which scans language output for errors. This monitor function helps most people correct their language and create target-like forms. For some people, however, the monitor function is over-active and can cripple production when learners become over-sensitive to the errors in their learner language. At that point, the monitor becomes a source of anxiety (Krashen, 1982, pp. 18-19).

The affective filter hypothesis claims that several ‘affective variables’ strongly relate to possible success in second language acquisition. These variables include motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, and personality traits (Krashen, 1982, p. 31). For this thesis, the variable anxiety is highly relevant. One can imagine the affective filter as a wall dependent on the three variables. When the learner experiences high anxiety levels, boredom and stress, the wall rises and blocks input. According to Krashen, “even if they (the student) understand the message, the input will not reach the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the language acquisition device” (1982, p. 31). When the wall is lowered, the learner feels safe, calm and has a more accessible time learning. Therefore, the affective filter hypothesis implies that the school’s pedagogical goals should include supplying comprehensible input and creating a situation that encourages and protects a low filter (Krashen, 1982, pp. 30-32). Regarding the effect anxiety has on students’ language acquisition, Arnold and Brown (1999) explain that “anxiety is quite possibly the affective factor that most pervasively obstructs the learning process. It is associated with negative feelings such as uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension and tension” (p. 8). They regard anxiety as one of the non-linguistic factors that affect language acquisition the most.

However, many have criticised Krashen’s work (Gregg, 1984; Lai & Wei, 2019; McLaughlin, 1987). Gregg (1984) argues that the monitor model is not coherent and that it lacks credible evidence to support its operation. McLaughlin (1987) pointed out that even though Krashen has presented a detailed and comprehensive theory on second language acquisition, there are some holes in his core assumptions. According to McLaughlin, various hypotheses have not been defined clearly, and are thus not testable. According to Lai and Wei (2019), the most significant contribution of Krashen’s hypothesis is that “it posits a distinction between acquisition and learning” (p. 1461). This is important because the monitor hypothesis depends upon production – created by acquisition – being controlled and corrected by rules learned in the classroom. However, Lai and Wei are quick to point out in their discussion that there is little evidence to support the distinction between acquisition and

learning. If there is no distinction between acquisition and learner, the monitor model must be abandoned for other mechanisms. Even if the distinction between learning and acquisition holds, Zafar (2009) has asked, “How does the filter determine which parts of language are to be screened in/out?” (pp. 144-145).

The affective filter hypothesis, because it is less reliant on the acquisition/learning distinction, has nevertheless also come under scrutiny. McLaughlin (1987) has questioned whether or not affective factors do play a significant role in second language acquisition at all (p. 52). Gregg (1984) criticised how Krashen limits the affective filter to adults and teenagers only and argues that children do not have an affective filter (p. 92), despite findings that children are perfectly capable of experiencing non-linguistic variables such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Krashen (1982) argues that “strengthening of the affective filter around puberty” (p. 44), however, Fry (2018) argues that if this was the case, teaching children a foreign language when teenagers would be a bad idea (p. 11). This would interfere with the school system as teenagers are highly exposed to the English language during their years of puberty.

Despite these criticisms of Krashen’s theory, the affective filter hypothesis and the monitor hypothesis provides the basis for much of the research on motivation and anxiety in foreign language acquisition. Further, his “Input Hypothesis” was the first attempt to create a coherent theoretical account of second language learning and examine the affective elements of additional language learning. Krashen’s affective filter and monitor hypothesis continues to provide cogent explanations for anxiety in the language classroom and many of his hypotheses tacitly underwrite the competencies found in the LK20, the newest Norwegian school reform (Ministry of Education and Research, ENG01 04, 2019).

### 2.3 International research on language anxiety

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope’s (1986) “Theory of Foreign Language Anxiety” defines foreign language anxiety as “a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process” (p. 128). They based their research and clinical experience on students in university classes during their learning process to develop the measuring tools that had been lacking. They received their feedback from thirty students who had attended a support group for language learning. From this feedback, Horwitz et al. suggested that foreign language anxiety could not be evaluated and treated the same way as one would approach

general classroom anxiety. Foreign language anxiety is based on the unique elements of the formal learning of a foreign language and has a severely higher degree of self-expression that causes students to feel uneasy.

Prior to their research, there was a general consensus among researchers that creating a clear understanding of the relationship between anxiety and foreign language learning was difficult because of the paucity of tools to measure anxiety. However, their work suggested three components of foreign language anxiety, namely communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. This division was developed to create more precise lines between the different stages and types of anxiety in order to make research more accessible. Horwitz et al. also used the components to measure the level of foreign language anxiety that occurred in a foreign language classroom. They did so by using a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986).

The term communication apprehension was used to describe the student's apprehension, physical reactions, fear, and anxiety when communicating with other people in a foreign language. This would also occur when the student would listen to a verbal message, as they would often feel anxious when trying to understand the meaning of the sentence or simple word meaning. Test anxiety is not linked to general speaking aloud in class but more from the performance and the anxiety connected to poor performance. This again differs from where the student is worried and anxious regarding the evaluations they may get from others. This also includes avoiding evaluative situations based on the fear of being evaluated negatively (Djafri & Wimbari, 2018).

The level of foreign language anxiety that students experience varies and may come from several factors such as their motivation to learn, their beliefs about how well they might perform and how their performance may be received (Djafri & Wimbari, 2018). Student personality and their functioning in the classroom play an essential role in the presence and severity of anxiety. Furthermore, the relationship between students and the teacher plays is crucial to the development of severe FLA. There is much research done on the social factors (classroom atmosphere, teacher-student relationship, and student-student relationship) and how these factors impact the anxiety the students may experience.

More recently, other studies have supported Horwitz et al.'s theory, including MacIntyre and Gardner (1989). They used nine anxiety scales in order to confirm Horwitz et al.'s "Theory of Foreign Language Anxiety" and argue that language anxiety impacts learners on different development levels when learning a second language. MacIntyre et al. considered several factors; French Class Anxiety Scale, English Class Anxiety Scale, Mathematics

Anxiety Scale, French Use Anxiety Scale, Trait Anxiety Scale, Computer Anxiety Scale, State Anxiety Scale, Test Anxiety Scale, Audience Anxiety Scale. They were able to examine the relationship between the different dimensions of anxiety and the various measures of learning and production, including verbal and written scores. They found correlations between the anxiety scales and achievement measures when analysing these factors. This indicated a difference in the anxiety one experienced concerning a foreign language and the general anxiety one would experience in other settings. MacIntyre and Gardner found a clear relationship between FLA and foreign language proficiency. However, they discovered that there was only a weak relationship between general anxiety and foreign language proficiency (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989).

MacIntyre and Gardner created a three-stage overview of how language anxiety may develop. Their studies revealed that a student might struggle with language learning (comprehension and grammar) initially, and if the student continues to develop a negative association with learning a language, they might develop language anxiety. From here on, the student will experience anxiety every time they are exposed to a foreign language, regardless of the language, and this association will strengthen. At that point, students spend more time being anxious than learning the language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989).

Anxiety can be provoked in a number of ways, and a later study by MacIntyre and Gardner in 1994 looked specifically at the anxiety that might be caused by filming. In this study, 71 French students were divided into four groups. Three of these groups were filmed at some point during their lessons. The results showed that the filmed participants forgot much of their vocabulary and performed worse on specific tasks, not because their French was bad, but because they were anxious. In a follow-up study, MacIntyre (1995) argued that anxiety could, in some cases, act as a causal agent in creating individual differences in second or foreign language learning and that individual learning styles could result from slight differences in anxiety management. Through one of his examples, he argued that even though students know the material, some of them are still prone to “freezing” on a test while others are not. He further argues that anxiety is more likely to be a cause rather than a consequence of poor performance. Both MacIntyre (1995) and Horwitz (2000) have used their evidence to argue that even advanced and successful students have reported anxious reactions in fields where they are expected to do well. MacIntyre also points out that students’ anxiety levels will, in some cases, increase should the students experience further failure, leading to a downward spiral in achievement.



Abu-Rabia et al. (2014) examined students' personalities, gender and the influence these might have on anxiety and achievement levels. Eighty Israeli grade 11 students whose mother tongue was Hebrew, and their second language was English, were studied (p. 123). Abu-Rabia et al. discovered a significant gender difference, as the Hebrew accuracy was higher amongst girls than boys, and the level of anxiety when speaking English was higher amongst boys than girls (p. 129). Dewaele (2002) surveyed one hundred students from Belgium to investigate whether language anxiety was a personality trait or not. The students were tested on speech production in their second language, French, and their third language, English. The results showed that language anxiety was not a personality trait; however, the anxiety level was based on the social context and the situation where the language was used. However, he concluded that students who had traits such as extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism were affected by language anxiety differently than the students who did not share these traits (Dewaele, 2002, p. 35).

Woodrow (2006) examined language anxiety inside and outside of the classroom and gained her results through questionnaires and interviews using the mixed-method approach. Woodrow's work showed that language anxiety was an issue regarding language learning (p. 323), and teachers had to be aware of the problem in order to minimise second language anxiety (p. 323). Furthermore, her studies showed that one of the most frequent anxiety triggers was speaking English with a native speaker (p. 323) or performing in front of classmates / holding an oral presentation (p. 322). Young (1991) presents and discussed six potential sources of anxiety in the classroom, how anxiety is manifested in learners and suggestions for reducing anxiety (p. 427). According to Young, language anxiety arises from 1) personal and interpersonal anxieties; 2) learner beliefs about language learning; 3) instructor beliefs about language teaching; 4) instructor-learner inter-actions; 5) classroom procedures; and 6) language testing. Further, she points out how Krashen argues that the individual's self-esteem has a high impact on a learner's anxiety levels (p. 427). Regarding dealing with anxiety, Young argues that there are several methods, one of them being the students learning their signs and working on them alongside their teacher (p. 430). Young's subjects also described that their instructors could reduce language anxiety by correcting in a 'nicer' manner and generalising the mistakes that the students make (p. 432).

However, there are inconsistencies within these findings as several types of anxiety play their part within the classroom while learning a foreign language. Early in the history of researching anxiety in the classroom, Scovel (1978), supported by Gardner (1985), suggested that researchers should be particular about the type of anxiety being studied and avoid

lumping all anxious reactions together. When researching the elements that separate foreign language anxiety from general anxiety measures, one needs to employ very detailed criteria to distinguish between the kinds of anxiety. Not all forms of anxiety will influence second or foreign language learning; however, “a construct of anxiety which is not general but instead is specific to the language acquisition context is related to second language achievement” (p.34). Moreover, teachers interested in helping students learn foreign languages in the classroom need to be able to distinguish between general anxiety and that explicitly linked to language learning.

## 2.4 Scandinavian research on language anxiety

In Norwegian schools, children are taught English from year 1 in primary school through their first year at upper secondary. After year 1 and year 2, the pupils are expected to be able to demonstrate and develop competence in English through exploration and active use of the language in listening, play and conversation. They are also expected to be able to demonstrate and develop competence in communication and make themselves understood in English. As their education progresses, the student is supposed to be able to master three core elements of English: communication, language learning, and text production. Furthermore, there are four essential skills that the students are expected to acquire: digital skills, reading skills, writing skills and oral skills (Ministry of Education and Research, ENG01 04, 2019).

Psychological disorders and their impact on classroom learning is a relatively new field in Scandinavia. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) emphasised the importance of social comparison and its role within the classroom. Children compare their own academic abilities against other children in the classroom. The conclusions they draw are what then form their academic self-concept, and if the self-concept is negative, it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy we saw in many of the Gardner and MacIntyre studies in the previous section. Skaalvik and Skaalvik also agree with Krashen, stating that anxiety and lack of self-confidence may close the door regarding language acquisition.

Landström (2016) studied forty-nine participants in Sweden, where the participants came from two classes in lower and upper secondary school. Landström used both questionnaires and interviews. For the questionnaire, Landström used Horwitz et al.’s foreign language classroom anxiety scale, and there were ten interviews in total. The results from the questionnaire determined three primary sources of language anxiety fear of negative evaluation, teacher-induced anxiety, and general anxiety (Landström, 2016, p. 25). All of the

students in the upper secondary who participated in the interviews explained that they enjoyed English and saw it as beneficial for their future. In lower-secondary, the interviewed students said that it was fun, however, they did not enjoy the oral parts of learning English as it was stressful and caused anxiety (p. 22). Furthermore, four out of 10 interviewees claimed that speaking to a native speaker of English would be daunting (p. 23).

Gjerde (2020) studied language anxiety in the Norwegian EFL classrooms in lower secondary schools (grades 8 to 10) through teacher interviews, student questionnaires and focus group interviews (Gjerde, 2020, p. 31). Her results regarding teacher knowledge of language anxiety and its prevalence in Norwegian schools revealed that teachers had widely varying experiences and perceptions. Some teachers had never heard of foreign language anxiety and/or had never discussed it with fellow teachers. They claimed they were aware that students felt uncomfortable in the English classroom, however, they had never defined it as language anxiety, rather general anxiety. Others were very aware of language anxiety and had taken precise measures to reduce the anxiety experienced by their students (p. 41-50). When answering the questionnaire, thirty-seven of the forty-nine students stated that oral activities in the EFL classroom made them anxious, and twenty-three of these students listed oral presentations as their primary concern (p. 52). Similar to Young's studies (1991) and Skaalvik's discussion (2015), the students in Gjerde's study were worried about others' perceptions of them and therefore performed below capacity and ability levels.

Further, Gjerde (2020) showed that the students felt safer and more in control of the language when speaking it alone or with their friends, confirming Landström's findings that English language anxiety was heightened when speaking to strangers. The students also reported that they felt less secure when speaking English on holiday as they could not speak Norwegian should misunderstandings occur (Gjerde, 2020, pp. 64-65). Gjerde also raised the issue of "generation performance" – those students born after 1995 – arguing that this generation of Norwegian students feels more performance anxiety than previous generations. In Gjerde's studies, some of the students claimed that there could be a connection between language anxiety and perfectionism as they were constantly exposed to 'perfect' English through the media and in online communities. However, one of the students who participated, defining herself as a perfectionist, argued that she had never experienced any language anxiety (Gjerde, 2020, p. 65).

Ellevold (2020) examined the implications of anxiety in students' oral language production of L2 Spanish. His research took place in Norwegian upper-secondary schools, and the participants for the interview were Spanish teachers. In Ellevold's study, 46 students

in upper-secondary Spanish answered a questionnaire (p. 26), with 57% per cent reporting that they felt anxious when holding a presentation in Spanish. Up to 80% said that they felt anxious when speaking Spanish spontaneously. Few worried about being laughed at when speaking Spanish (p. 38).

Tone Stuler Myhre and Tove Anita Fiskum (2020) conducted a study focusing on the importance of instruction outside the formal classroom and its impact on student fluency. They highlighted the importance of being able to use the language in spontaneous as well as planned communication, as fluent conversations often happen spontaneously (p. 202). They also address the issue of language anxiety and how anxiety and stress cause students to perform worse than they are capable of. To lower the threshold for foreign language speaking, they focus on the importance of creating a supportive, friendly, and relaxed learning environment. According to their studies, outdoor education has several positive effects on learning, including increased academic achievement, lower stress levels, and improved social relations (p. 204). The students participating, twenty-three students at the age of 13-14, reported that they felt less stressed, less nervous and anxious, and that they felt as if they were able to speak more freely than when in a classroom (pp. 210-213).

Many students struggle when it comes to speaking English in the classroom. Students often prefer not to answer questions aloud as they do not feel confident speaking without much time to reflect (McCarthy, 2018). Sometimes this is a passing discomfort, and sometimes this is attributable to Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). According to Horwitz et al. (1986), many students who experience FLA may feel comfortable performing prepared speeches but “freeze” in role-playing situations when “speech is expected to come naturally and unprepared (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 126). Young (1991) argues that language anxiety may result in behaviour that leads to reduced participation in social interaction, both in and out of the classroom. This means that language anxiety might have devastating consequences for participation in oral and communicative activities. In the Norwegian context, Ellevold (2020) and Gjerde’s (2020) studies both confirm that oral activities are counted as prone to causing anxiety. Gjerde argues that social media and exposure to native English heightens the pressure that many students experience. Landström’s (2016) findings agree with students worrying about speaking to natives, and Langseth (2007) concluded that the fear of making a mistake is the biggest obstacle to foreign language learning. Furthermore, she explains that for the students to be comfortable in the English language, the teacher must gradually transfer from Norwegian to English in the classroom from an early age.

## 2.5 Zoom and anxiety in Norwegian schools

There is some anecdotal evidence recently written regarding students' anxiety levels and Zoom usage. According to Damsgaard (2020), it is essential for teachers and students to see one another on camera during a Zoom lesson. Nevertheless, as many teachers experienced during the pandemic, classes often involved a group of dark screens. According to Damsgaard, students will interact through the chat, 'clapping' and emojis, but they will not turn on their cameras. The students she spoke to explain that they refused to put on their camera for several reasons: they were worried they were not presentable, that their room was not clean enough, that their fellow students would stare at them, or that the teacher would question them more as they are more visible. Still, students' main concern was that they are not used to looking at each other face forward, and they feel anxious regarding their appearance. Damsgaard discussed the extent to which one can 'force' the students to turn on their cameras in order to preserve the connection between the teacher and students.

In a similar story in the popular media, Svendsen (2021) claimed that seven out of ten students turn off their cameras during lectures at Høgskolen i Innlandet. His study focussed on older students, whilst Damsgaard's was based on lower and upper secondary students. Still, their argumentative points are similar; students turn off their cameras because they feel anxious and insecure. Svendsen also points out that some of the students argue that they do not want to show off their home, they find it tiring to look presentable all the time, and that they are worried their privacy will be abused.

Section Chief of the Data Inspectorate, Nervik, explains that the privacy rules do not regulate orders or prohibitions against wearing a camera and that one cannot force students to have their camera turned on (Svendsen, 2021). Further, Møller (2020) argues that one has to take into consideration that some students simply will never turn their camera on, and one has to leave it at that. Møller also points out that "forced use of cameras in education will raise questions about privacy and the right to privacy" (para. 3). Further, she argues that a student who has signed up for a course that requires physical attendance has not agreed to an online course where the use of a video camera is required. Therefore, one cannot expect them to turn their cameras on (Møller, 2020). None of these 'Zoom articles' directly address FLA or anxiety per se but indicate that digital education can be an arena for traditional anxieties as well as new ones caused by the platform.

### 3 Methodology

The participants in this study came from two classes and were all vocational students. The curriculum for English programme subjects (ENG04-02) is only partially implemented as a part of the new Knowledge Promotion 2020 (abbreviated LK20). The LK20 is the newest Norwegian school reform covering all primary education (primary school, upper secondary school, and adult education). The curriculum officially came into force in August 2020 for all levels except 10th grade and Vg2 starting 2021 and Vg3 starting 2022 (Ministry of Education and Research, ENG01 04, 2019). Vocational students fall under a type of postsecondary education with the primary goal of training students for a specific line of work and equipping them with the skills they need to enter the workforce of their choosing. Their curriculum is similar to ENG01-04, however, it is referred to as ENG04-02. Both curricula share the same core elements and basic skills, but there are differences in their competence aims.

There was a great interest in working with vocational groups for this thesis, as very few studies on language anxiety in these groups. The students who participate in the survey are enrolled in upper-secondary schools in Agder county. In accordance with the Norwegian national regulations concerning the handling of research subject data, the students' identities have been anonymised for those involved in the project and for thesis readers. The two participating classes will be identified as class 1 and class 2. All students are the at age of 16 to 17. In class 1, there are fourteen boys, and in class 2 there are eight boys and six girls. In total, there were twenty-eight questionnaires and eleven interviews; twenty-two boys and six girls answered the questionnaire, whilst seven boys and three girls took part in the interviews.

Further, the students were given an online questionnaire measuring foreign language anxiety, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986). The goal of the FLCAS is to determine the level of foreign language anxiety in the classroom experienced by students and others who learn a foreign language. The FLCAS is constructed by thirty-three questions that result in a score of 33 – 165 points, determining if the student has low, medium, or high anxiety levels. This questionnaire is 100% anonymous and does not distinguish the gender or the class of the participants that took part in the questionnaire.

### 3.1 Choice of method

Due to the small size of the two groups in this project, the study can be characterised as a case study, usually defined as an in-depth study of one person, group, or event (Mackey & Gass, 2005). In this thesis, the two upper secondary classes are the cases studied. An advantage of doing a case study is that developing hypotheses can be explored on a small group and in-depth data gathered. A limitation of case study research is that results are too narrow to make generalisations across large groups of people. Even though this thesis does not create generalisable data, it still offers insight into upper secondary students and their levels of foreign language anxiety and through the triangulation of the mixed methods used to gather information, a robust profile of FLA in this group. The following section outlines the methods used and discusses the basis for their implementation.

Further, this thesis uses a mixed-method approach to study language anxiety in the English classroom. Mixed methods research is often used in the behavioural, health, and social sciences and mixes qualitative and quantitative research strengths. Mixing methods allows one to put findings in context and draw more decisive conclusions about social, emotional, and educational issues (George, 2021). Moreover, using qualitative data to illustrate quantitative findings will, in most cases, function “put meat on the bones” and have a positive effect on your analysis (George, 2021). A mixed-method approach is very labour-intensive and takes much effort to collect, analyse, and synthesise two types of data into one research. In addition, should an analysis yield conflicting results, it can be very challenging to know how to interpret them in a mixed-methods study (George, 2021).

Despite the time investment and the risk of receiving contradictory results, mixed methods were used in this study because the qualitative data would help secure and validate the findings made in the quantitative research. As there were twenty-eight paper questionnaires, twenty-one online questionnaires and eleven interviews, the interviews could validate about half of the questionnaires, which, as mentioned, would add plausibility to the results in both questionnaires. Also, the two questionnaires would build on each other and strengthen the results. Furthermore, the mixed-method researcher can initially explore views and opinions by listening to their participants, exploring what is answered, rather than approaching a topic with a pre-determined set of variables (Creswell, 2012, p. 544).

In addition, studies by Ellevold (2020) and Gjerde (2020) have also examined foreign language anxiety using the mixed-method approach. Ellevold’s thesis focussed on the implications for fluency in students’ oral language production by integrating form-focused teaching with a practical-communicative teaching approach. One of his aims in the study was

to examine “the relationship between expectations of correctness in production and students’ level of language anxiety” (Ellevold, 2020, p. 2). His interviews and questionnaires complement each other and helped validate his theory: the teacher has an important role when minimising the level of foreign language anxiety the students may develop. Ellevold spoke to both teachers and students, giving him the possibility to examine the learning situation from both sides of the dyad. His results show that all of the students that participated felt nervous when speaking a foreign language if not prepared. Furthermore, 33% of the group answered that they avoided answering a question due to the fear of getting the answer wrong or mispronouncing a word (Ellevold, 2020, p. 38). He also points out that several of the students are worried that someone will laugh at them; however, this was not a widespread anxiety in the group that Ellevold studied.

Gjerde (2020) examined language anxiety in oral activities in Norwegian lower secondary EFL classrooms. In her study, three lower secondary school teachers and students were interviewed, and one of the informant classes completed a questionnaire (Gjerde, 2020, p. 31). The results from the questionnaire indicated that students felt safe when speaking English outside the classroom, i.e. on holiday, however nervous in the classroom, strengthening the idea that the classroom itself represents a source of FLA. This thesis will examine if students feel safer speaking English to friends over the internet, expanding Gjerde’s situation-specific study into a new domain. Furthermore, like Ellevold, the project will also examine how significant the fear of getting the answer wrong plays on the student’s involvement and engagement in the classroom. Both Ellevold and Gjerde use the mixed-method approach, and their results are strengthened as a result of this decision.

Gjerde used interviews in order to collect in-depth data, and as she only had three interviews, the workload was compromising (Gjerde, 2020, p. 32). Further, Gjerde used focus groups with students in order to gather information outside the questionnaire. This method of data collection was considered, however, as the groups participating in this study were not very familiar with each other, this method was set aside. Ellevold used quantitative data collection, questionnaires in order to collect data from the students, and qualitative data collection in order to collect data from the teachers. This was due to the number of students, and he wanted to be able to question the teachers regarding the students’ answers (Ellevold, 2020, p. 23).



## 3.2 Quantitative approach – questionnaires

For this study, two types of questionnaires were used; one in paper format (Appendix 1) and one online (Appendix 2). As shown in Ellevold and Gjerde's work, questionnaires are helpful to gather more information over a shorter period of time when also doing interviews. This allows the researcher to cover general information and, from there on, create an interview guide that allows the researcher to get in-depth information. Creswell (2012) claims that quantitative data "is more effective at recording outcomes of the experiment than identifying through qualitative data how individuals are experiencing the process" (p. 545). Although there is no 'experiment' in this project, the project is very interested in finding out how the students experienced the process of reflecting upon their language use and levels of anxiety.

The classes were recruited by a teacher who teaches both groups. The students were informed of the questionnaire before the researcher came to meet the groups. The researcher had no relationship with any of the classes or the students in these classes. In both groups, the researcher was first introduced and spent a lesson explaining the project and how the data would be handled. The project was registered with NSD, and all results were anonymised. During the introduction session, the students received a consent form (appendix 5) that explained the project, their rights, and their level of involvement. They were able to ask questions and refuse participation in the project.

### 3.2.1 Questionnaire: paper-form

The first questionnaire aimed to be as little invasive as possible while still uncovering sources of anxiety on a general level. Because the project deals with anxiety levels, the researcher was particularly concerned about creating research instruments that would not themselves become a source of anxiety. The goal was to make the students feel comfortable and safe so that they would open up and answer the questions in depth. The students had the chance to discuss the questions if they felt unsafe or if anything was unclear.

The questionnaire was semi-manipulated as the questions all had options for answers. This was done to keep the students from not answering or being vague, and some of the questions were repeated but in different wording in order to fault-proof the questions. One possible default is that students can try and pick the answers they feel are the 'correct' answer. Several of the students took the freedom to answer outside the set framework. They would add comments, add answer options, and alternate the questions. This has been

considered when evaluating their answers and can be considered beneficial as the questionnaire was designed with closed questions; questions that structure the answer by only allowing responses that fit into pre-decided categories.

### 3.2.2 Questionnaire: online

The second questionnaire was more concrete and aimed at measuring foreign language anxiety using a tested and discipline-standard tool. When doing so, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986) was chosen. The FLCAS contains thirty-three items using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. The students will be measured from their answers, and as they are all added up, one will be able to determine their level of foreign language anxiety. The FLCAS bases itself on three dimensions: (1) fear of negative evaluation, (2) communication apprehension, and (3) test anxiety. Further, their answers are placed into three categories: high levels of anxiety, medium levels of anxiety and low levels of anxiety. According to Legac (2007, p. 167), the range 33-75 represents low-intensity anxiety, the range 76-119 medium intensity anxiety, and the range 120-165 high-intensity anxiety.

One can also use the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) and the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA-34) by McCroskey (1970) or the Speaker Anxiety Scale (SA) by Clevenger and Halvorson (1992) (Yaikhong and Usaha, 2012, p. 23) For this study, FLCAS was used on twenty-one students in order to measure foreign language anxiety, alongside a general questionnaire and follow-up interviews in order to retrieve as much data as possible. This decision to use the FLCAS was based upon its previous use in studies such as Gjerde (2020) and Ellevold (2020).

### 3.3 Qualitative approach - interviews

In order to gain a greater understanding of the answers to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were offered to both classes. A semi-structured interview is based on an interview guide (Appendix 4); however, the interview topics' questions, themes, and order might vary (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012, p. 79). When interviewing regarding anxiety, one must take the time to explain to students what one counts as anxiety in this specific setting. It is vital to have an open dialogue with the students so that they do not leave the interview feeling as if they have been diagnosed with anxiety. The interviews had to be somewhat structured and follow a structure in order for their answers to be compared,

however, when keeping the interview semi-structured, one allows follow-up questions in order to receive necessary elaboration if needed.

The participants were informed orally about the thesis and the purpose of the interview twice; one time in November and one time in February. They were informed in writing in November through the consent form where they had ticked “yes” to the item asking “would you like to be interviewed?”. In the beginning, one person from class 1 and eight people from class 2 agreed to the interview. The consent form was handed out in November, however, due to the pandemic, the interviews were postponed to February. When re-introducing the project to the two groups in February, six students from class 1 and five students from class 2 signed up for the interviews. They were informed that they would be recorded with a Dictaphone and the audio file will be deleted at the end of this research project. They would say their name at the beginning of the interview so that if they were to withdraw from the project, their file could easily be found and deleted. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in a closed-off room on the school ground. The teacher was not involved in any of the interviews.

### 3.4 The analytical procedure

#### 3.4.1 Quantitative data

The first questionnaire consisted of thirty-eight questions, and the data was gathered on paper before being transferred to an excel-sheet. Diagrams were created to visualise the responses better. While the consent form (appendix 5) was in the students’ L1 Norwegian, the questionnaire was in their L2 English. Some wrote comments in Norwegian, and these had to be translated. This was done so that quotations could be used in the results chapter.

The questionnaire has both free text questions and multiple-choice questions. This project treated the responses to these different kinds of questions differently. The answers to multiple-choice questions are summed up and presented in different graphs. The free-text answers have been sorted according to category and analysed. The comments that the students have added themselves will be treated the same way as the free-text answers. Lastly, several students created their boxes for some of the multiple-choice questions, and they have been added to the excel-sheet as answer options.

The second questionnaire was created using Horwitz et al.’s (1986) FLCAS. There were no changes, except for the word “German”, which was swapped for “English”. The questionnaire data were collected in SurveyXact, and each student’s response was analysed to account for how many experienced foreign language anxiety. The FLCAS is key-reversed,

meaning that the items that are positively worded, *strongly agree* is given a score of 5, and *strongly disagree* is given a score of 1. For the negatively worded items (2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28 and 32), *strongly agree* is given a score of 1, and *strongly disagree* is given a score of 5. One can argue that removing the option *neither agree nor disagree* would force the participant to answer something else, however, for this study, the foreign language classroom anxiety scale was followed exactly how it was created. As mentioned, the FLCAS is composed of three components. The questions that measure fear of negative evaluation are 2, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30. Question 1, 3, 4, 9, 13, 14, 18, 20, 24, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33 measure communication apprehension, and 8, 21, 10 measure test anxiety.

### 3.4.2 Qualitative data

All interviews followed an interview guide (see Appendix 4) to keep the baseline similar for all interviews. The questions were rather broad and allowed the students to add as much information as needed. In order to have a clearer understanding of the results that came from the interviews, the qualitative data were divided into categories and contexts. This method is a descriptive analysis of data and structures the material by categorizing the content and creating keywords (Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018, p. 104). The interviews were conducted in Norwegian to encourage the students to speak as freely and as confidently as possible, however, for the analysis, they were translated to English. The recordings were saved under the participant's name for organizational purposes, but also to have easy access should one wish to withdraw from the project. The researcher had access to the student names, but all information has been anonymised for this project.

### 3.5 Reliability and validity

The mixed-method approach allows for interviews to enrich the data collected by surveys. There were twenty-eight students in total, and eleven students signed up for the interviews. For the FLCAS, seven responses had to be taken out of consideration due to students answering *neither agree nor disagree* to all questions. Neither the survey nor the interviews are generalisable but offer insight into the attitudes of at least some upper-secondary school students in Agder. Patterns found in this investigation could be the subject of further and more-scale investigation later.

Zoltán Dörnyei defines *reliability* in quantitative research as “the extent to which our measurement instruments and procedures produce consistent results in a given population in different circumstances” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 50). He further adds that if “variations cause inconsistencies or measurement errors, then our results are unreliable” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 50). He therefore argues that the tools and instruments one uses to receive results can be the source of unreliability in qualitative research. Poorly constructed questions can be a potential source of this unreliability. Efforts were made in this student to ensure that the questions asked in the initial survey were unambiguous, and the FLCAS survey has been trialled by many researchers since its inception and is a reliable research instrument.

For their part, interviews are often flawed by social desirability bias. Latkin et al. (2017) explain social desirability bias as consisting of two main components. The first one is impression management, meaning one answers the questions in order to fit into a situation or please an audience. The second component is self-deception, where the informant is not trying to please the interviewer but to produce an image of the self that is acceptable to the informant themselves. Ruane (2005) argues that most participants wish to present themselves in the best manner possible, answering questions in a form that makes them look good (p. 125). This counts for both questionnaires and interviews; however, it is often easier to avoid in questionnaires as they are anonymous. When working with a group one does not have a pre-existing relationship with, the risk of students adjusting answering to please the researcher is minimised, as there is no relation to uphold or please. The second element of the social desirability bias – where the informant is trying to please themselves – will, of course, be impossible to avoid in an interview situation.

Lastly, one has to consider researcher bias. Personal attitudes and feelings towards the topic may impact the interviewer’s questions and reactions, which in turn can affect the participants and how they answer. Furthermore, the researcher has personal beliefs that can affect the data and questions. One must, therefore, in qualitative research, follow up on the answers that contradict elements of the research questions or which suggest unexpected or unwelcome attitudes. To avoid and hinder such bias, regular self-reflection was used during the whole process. The triangulation of the data – questionnaires, interviews, and FLCAS – represents an attempt to create a neutral and relatively objective picture of FLA and the digitised learning environment.

### 3.6 Ethical considerations

The questionnaire and the interviews both followed the ethical guidelines used by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data. NSD is the national service provider for the European Research Infrastructure CEESDA. All participants were informed about their rights to withdraw, both orally and in writing. They signed a consent form (appendix 5) allowing the researcher to hand them the two questionnaires and interview them. There were numeric codes on both questionnaires to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. In the interviews, the student said their name at the beginning so that they could easily be found and deleted should they want to withdraw.

The first questionnaire asked them for their gender but did not attempt to gather in-depth personal information about the participants. The participants were also informed that the answers were completely anonymous and that their teacher would not be able to access their answers and possibly recognise their handwriting. The researcher has never seen any work from either of them nor could the researcher recognise them by handwriting. The second questionnaire was also anonymous, and their answers could not be distinguished by gender, class, or previous answers in the first questionnaire or the interviews.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Questionnaire results – paper

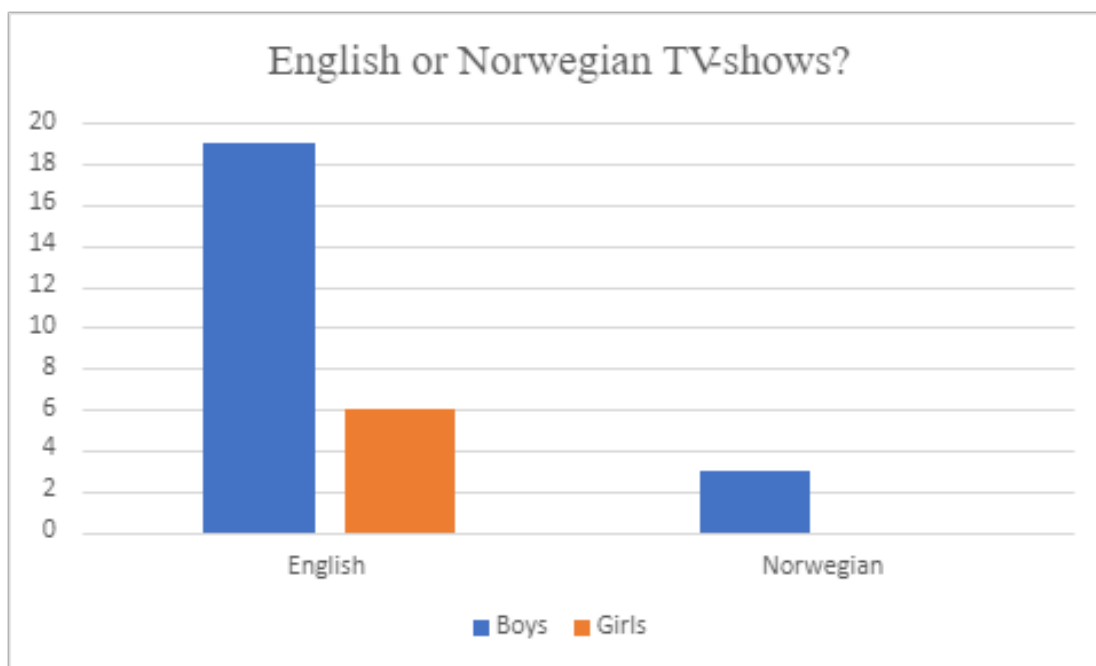
A total of twenty-eight respondents answered the questionnaires. The respondents are from vocational classes in upper-secondary and between 16 and 17 years old. They are from two different classes. The respondents were asked to answer thirty-eight questions in English, focussing on their background, language experiences, and their anxiety levels (Appendix 1).

In this results section, all of the student answers will be presented as one group for the first section; 4.1.1. This section will cover students gaming habits, and how they prefer to communicate online. The results regarding their comfort level in digital communication will also be presented here. Section 4.1.2 presents the class 1 responses to the questions about anxiety in the classroom, and section 4.1.3 presents class 2 responses to the questions about anxiety in the classroom. In section 4.2, the results from the FLCAS will be presented. When discussing the results from the first questionnaire, the class results must be divided because of the unequal gender distribution in the two classes. For the results from the FLCAS, the participants will not be divided by either gender or class. The results will be presented through descriptive statistics and comments added by the respondents. Lastly in section 4.3, the results transcribed from the interviews will be presented. Appendix 4 contains the interview guide.

#### **An overview of the respondents**

In class 1 there were fourteen boys, and no girls, whilst in class 2 there were eight boys and six girls. Gender was, initially, not supposed to play a part of the survey. However, as there was one group of boys, and one mixed group, gender came to play a part in the examination of their responses. In the questionnaire, there were no questions regarding gender-differences in the classroom, however, it did come up during the interviews. Therefore, it is important to take note of the differences in the two classes.

In order to understand their consumption of English- and Norwegian-language media, I asked the students if they preferred English or Norwegian TV-shows.



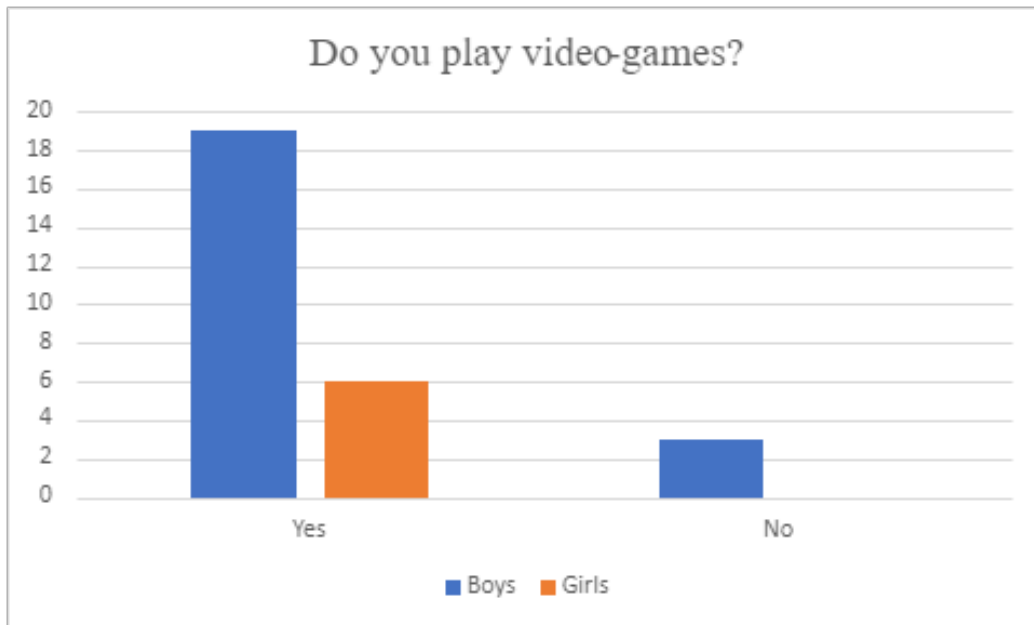
*Figure 1 English or Norwegian TV-shows*

As we can see in Fig. 1, the students preferred English-language television. In fact, none of the girls reported a preference for Norwegian-language programming. Two students wrote comments based on this question. One informant overtly referred to the pedagogical possibilities of English media consumption, saying that they: “feel like I might pick up on some words when watching shows in English, and that has never hurt anyone” and “feel like the setting is more natural than a classroom”.

#### 4.1.1 Gaming habits and online communication

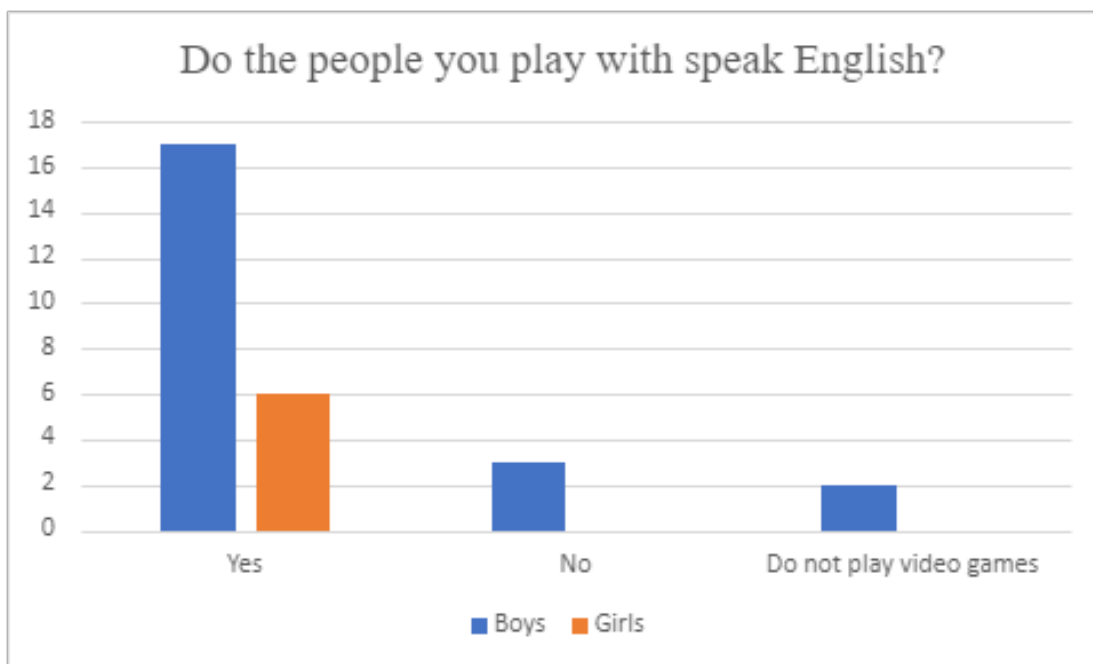
The following questions trace how the students use their languages and in which domain they prefer to speak English. The goal is to uncover if there is a language preference in gaming, and if their anxiety is domain-related or not.





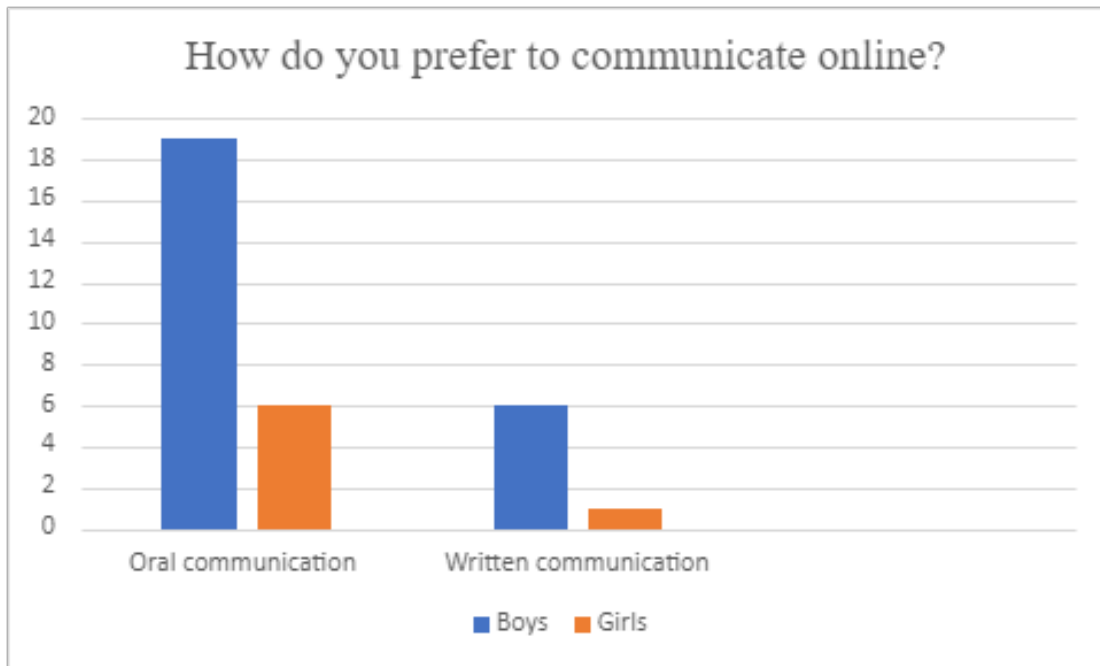
*Figure 2 Video-game activity*

Many of the students that play video games in their spare time, both boys and girls. In fact, all of the girls that participated in the survey play video games. Nineteen boys said that they played video games, three said they did not, and six girls said they played video games. Two students added that they used to play, but do not currently play. The follow-up questions covered how they interact when playing video games and how it makes them feel. All but one of the playing students, answered “yes” when asking if they communicated with others whilst they were playing. Figure 3 below displays their communication languages.



*Figure 3 English player communication*

All of the boys and the girls who answered “yes” in Figure 3, also answered “yes” regarding whether or not they respond orally in English to the people with whom they game. One student added a comment saying “if I have to, but often I just write to them” indicating that at least this student makes a distinction between writing in English and speaking in English while gaming. Figure 6, below, shows a preference for speaking over writing in online contexts.



*Figure 4 writing or speaking online*

Further, the students were asked how they feel when communicating, and the two charts below show how all twenty-eight students feel regarding oral and written communication online.

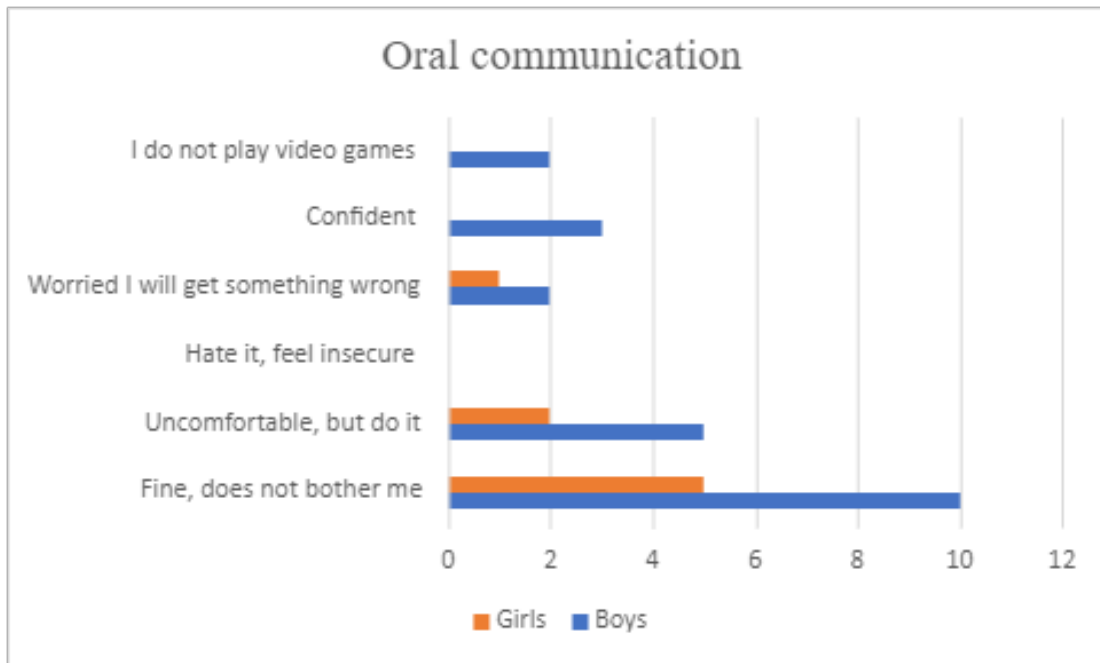


Figure 5 How does oral communication make you feel?

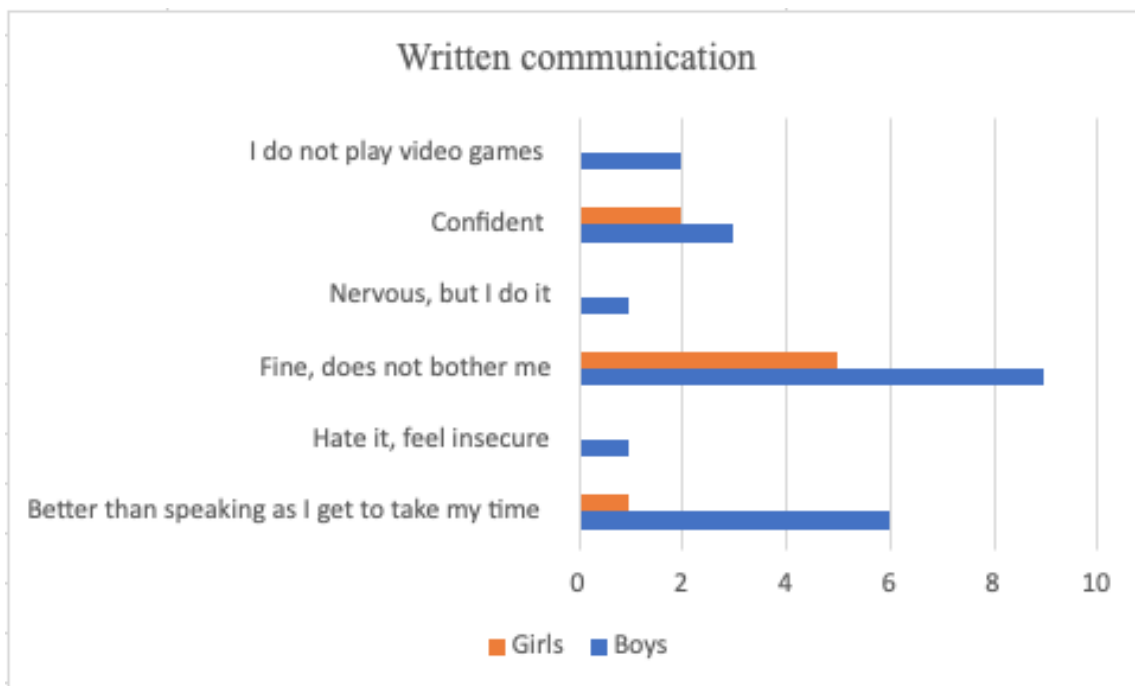


Figure 6 How does written communication make you feel?

Figure 5 and 6 shows how the students feel when speaking and chatting. Two girls reported feeling confident when writing English, but not when speaking. However, none of them have answered “hate it, feel insecure” regarding speaking English when gaming. Two girls also say they are uncomfortable speaking, however, do speak, and five girls say that they feel fine and do not care. One girl worries that she will say something wrong when speaking

English. In total, 60% of the girls who communicate orally become nervous, worried or uncomfortable when speaking English to their friends online. However, when writing English, 100% of the girls feel fine or confident when speaking English. None of the girls feel nervous when chatting.

Five of the boys said they feel confident when speaking English online to their friends whilst gaming. Ten said that they feel fine and are not bothered, and five said that they get uncomfortable, however still speak English. Two of the boys were worried they might say something wrong, and therefore try to avoid speaking English. One of these two students commented that “I get very nervous, and I tend to just chat. But if I have to say something, I will.” Further, 17% of all the boys that do speak English to their friends get nervous or uncomfortable, whilst 83% feel fine, confident or do not mind. Regarding written communication, two students either hated it, or felt nervous. Eighteen boys felt fine, confident or did not mind.

The following two charts show whether or not the students feel safer when communicating through a screen, and how communication online makes them feel. These two questions are regarding gaming or communication with friends online, not communication on zoom.

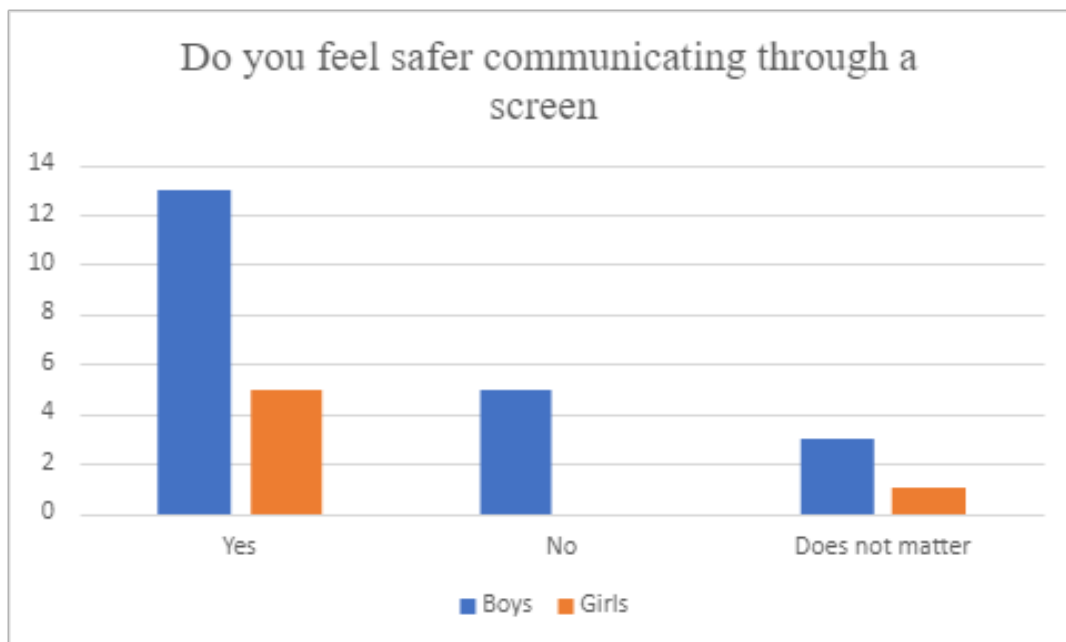


Figure 7 Do you feel safer communication through a screen?

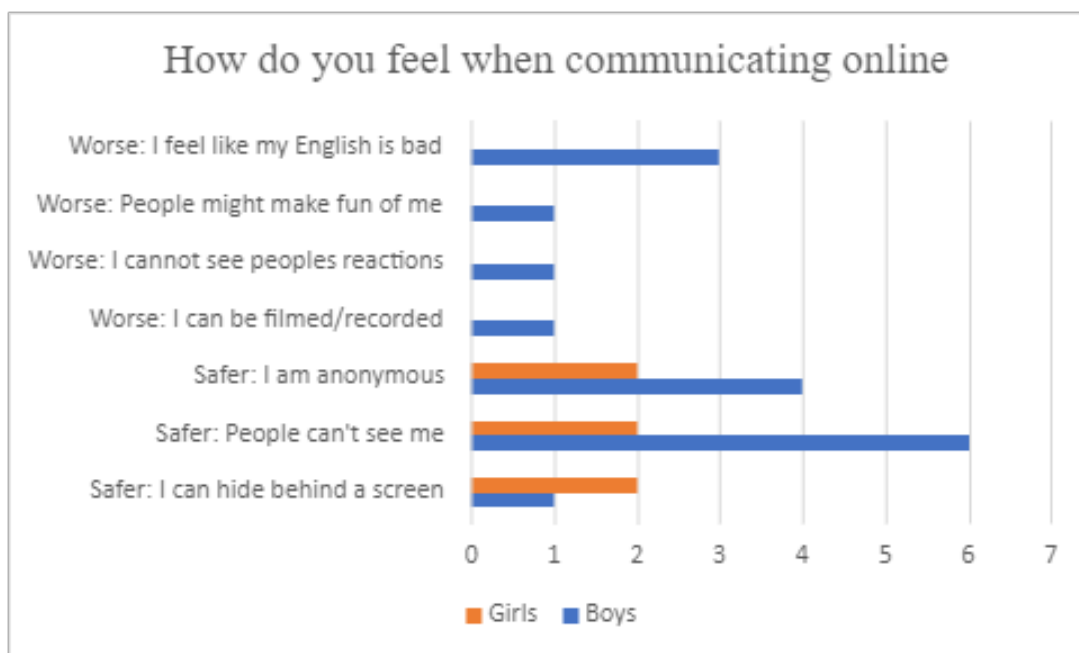


Figure 8 How do you feel when communicating online

Looking at Figure 7, eighteen students responded that they feel safer when communicating through a computer, and four students said that it did not matter. All six girls responded that they feel safer when communicating online as they are anonymous, cannot be seen and can hide behind screens. Still, two girls answered previously in Figure 5, that they feel nervous when speaking English online, however, none of the six girls feel worse when communicating online as opposed to communicating face-to-face. Four boys responded that they do not feel safer when communicating online, and they are the same students that responded that they feel insecure and nervous when communicating (orally and in writing) online. There is a 50/50 split between the boys on whether or not they feel safer or worse when communicating online, however, the options with the highest answer-rate were “safer, people can't see me” and “safer, I am anonymous”.

#### 4.1.2 Anxiety in the classroom and the classroom dynamic for class 1

Class 1 is an all-boys class, consisting of four-teen boys from different lower-secondary schools. They have been in the same class since August 2021, and many of them do not know each other from earlier classes. Figure 9 below shows how many of them get nervous when speaking English in the classroom.

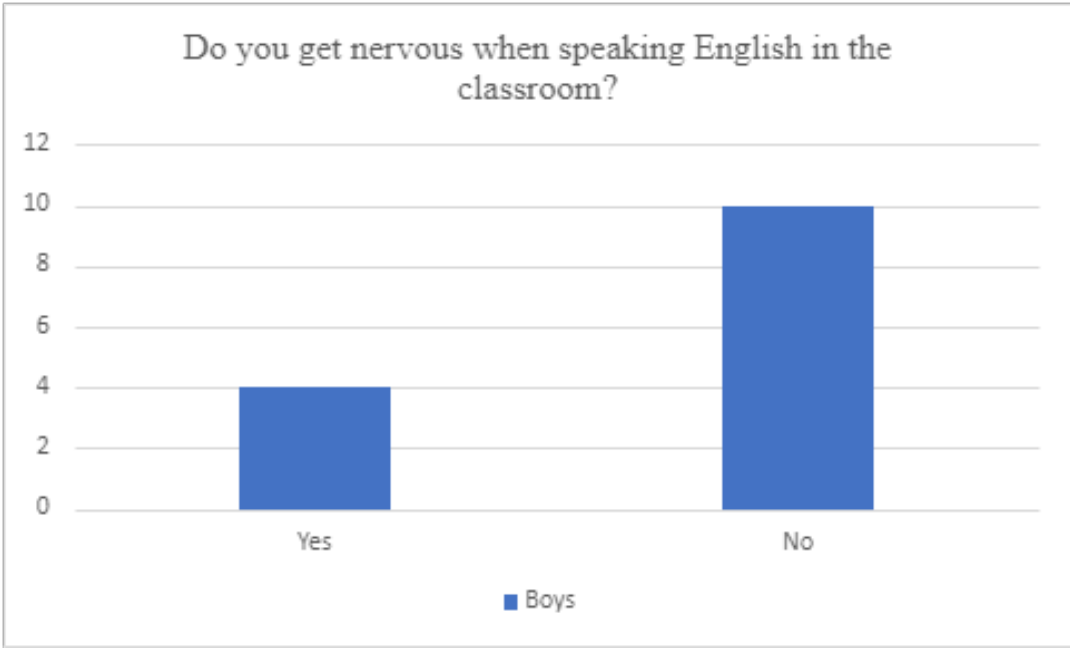


Figure 9 Do you get nervous when speaking English in the classroom?

Four of the boys said that they get nervous when speaking English in the classroom, whilst ten said that they do not. One out of the ten that answered “No”, one boy commented that he used to, but that he no longer gets nervous as he is more comfortable in the class now that he knows more people. Figure 10 shows the factors that make the students in class 1 anxious. These factors are dependent on the classroom dynamic, not on digital tools or social media.

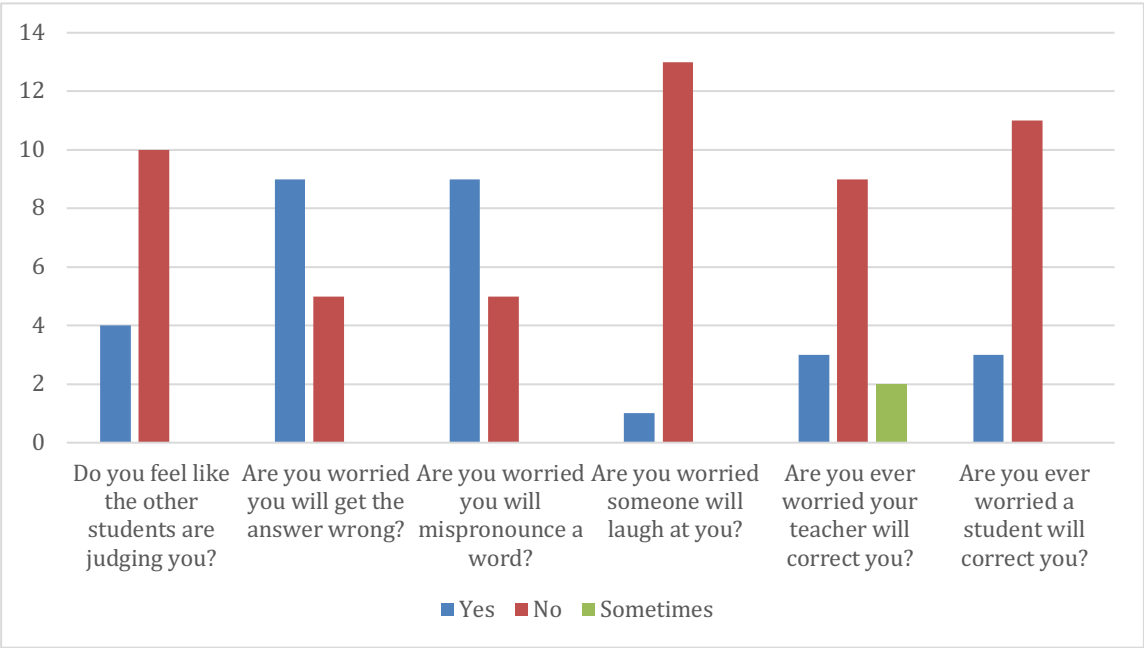


Figure 10 What makes the students in class 1 nervous

The students are equally worried that they will get an answer wrong, and whether they will mis-pronounce a word or not. Only one student is worried they will be laughed at, whilst four feel like the other students are judging them. When asking the students “In all honesty: would you laugh at someone if they got something wrong?” six students answered *yes*, whilst seven answered *no*. One person answered “yes, if it is a mate”. Further, they are more worried that their teacher will correct them, than they worry if a student will correct them.

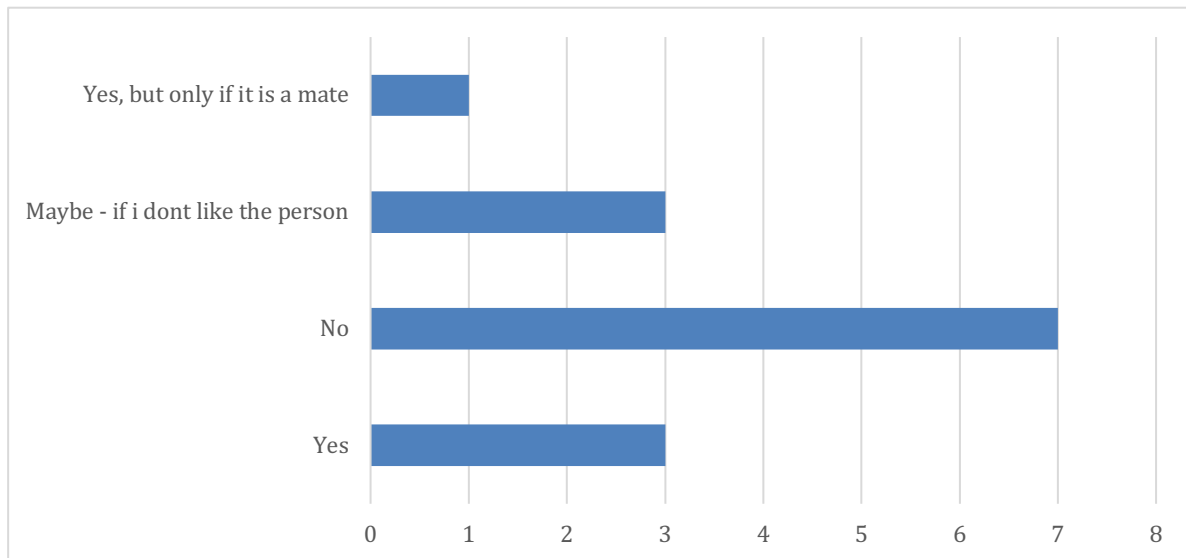


Figure 11 In all honesty: would you laugh at someone if they got something wrong?

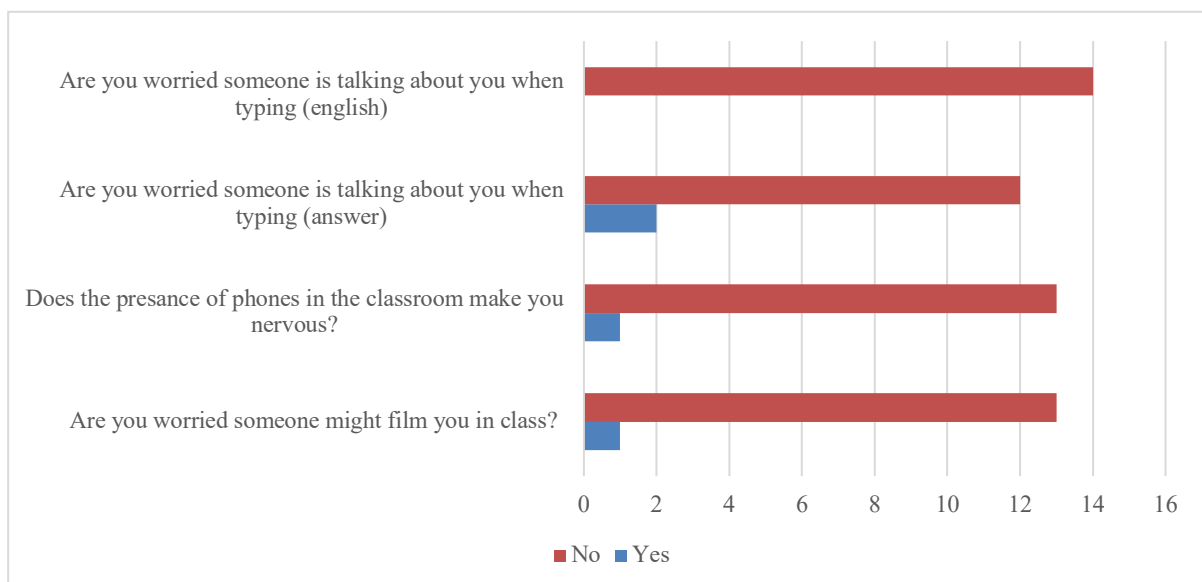


Figure 12 how students feel regarding social platforms and how digital tools in the classroom affects their anxiety.

One student gets nervous from having phones present in the classroom, see Figure 12, and it is the same student that answered that he is worried someone might film him in class. Further, the aim of the two first questions was to see whether or not the students would react to having computers in the classroom, and how sudden typing would create anxiety. Based on the response from the students, 96.43% do not worry or feel anxious when hearing typing after they have answered a question. One student worries that other students are discussing his/her answers, however, this student also commented that, “It may hit me that they are talking about my answer, but I do not give it much thought” Further, I asked them if they had ever made fun of someone on a digital platform such as snapchat, messenger, and discord. Figure 13 shows that six of the students have made fun of someone on a digital platform, and out of those six, three students made fun of their English.

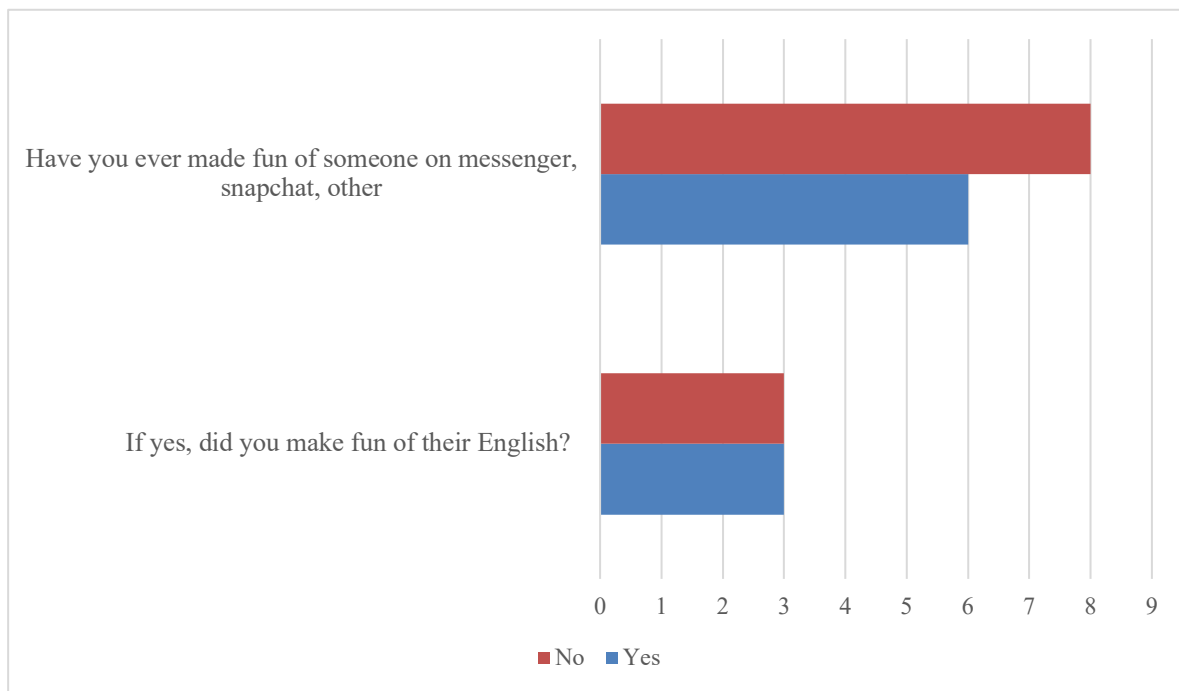


Figure 13 How many in class 1 have made fun of a student in class

#### 4.1.3 Anxiety in the classroom and the classroom dynamic for class 2

Class 2 is mixed group consisting of eight boys and six girls from different lower-secondary schools. They have been in the same class since August 2021, and many of them do not know each other from previous classes. Figure 14 below shows how many of them become nervous when speaking English in the classroom.



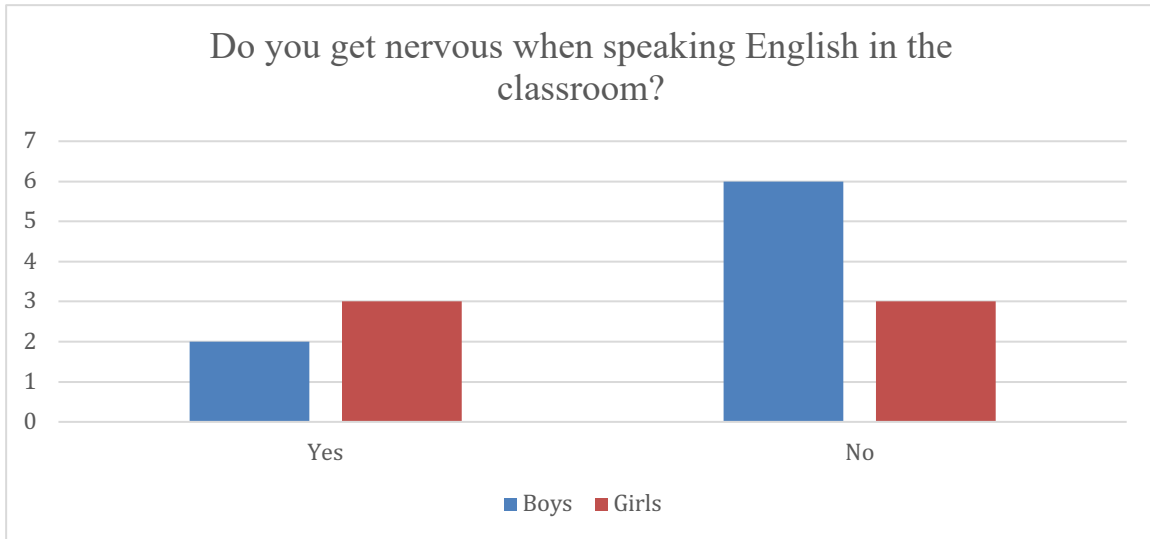


Figure 14 How many in class 2 that get nervous when speaking English in the classroom

Two of the boys, and three of the girls, said that they get nervous when speaking English in the classroom, whilst six boys and three girls said that they do not. Figure 15 shows some of factors that make the boys anxious, whilst Figure 16 shows some of factors that make the girls anxious. These factors are dependent on the classroom dynamic, not on digital tools or social media.

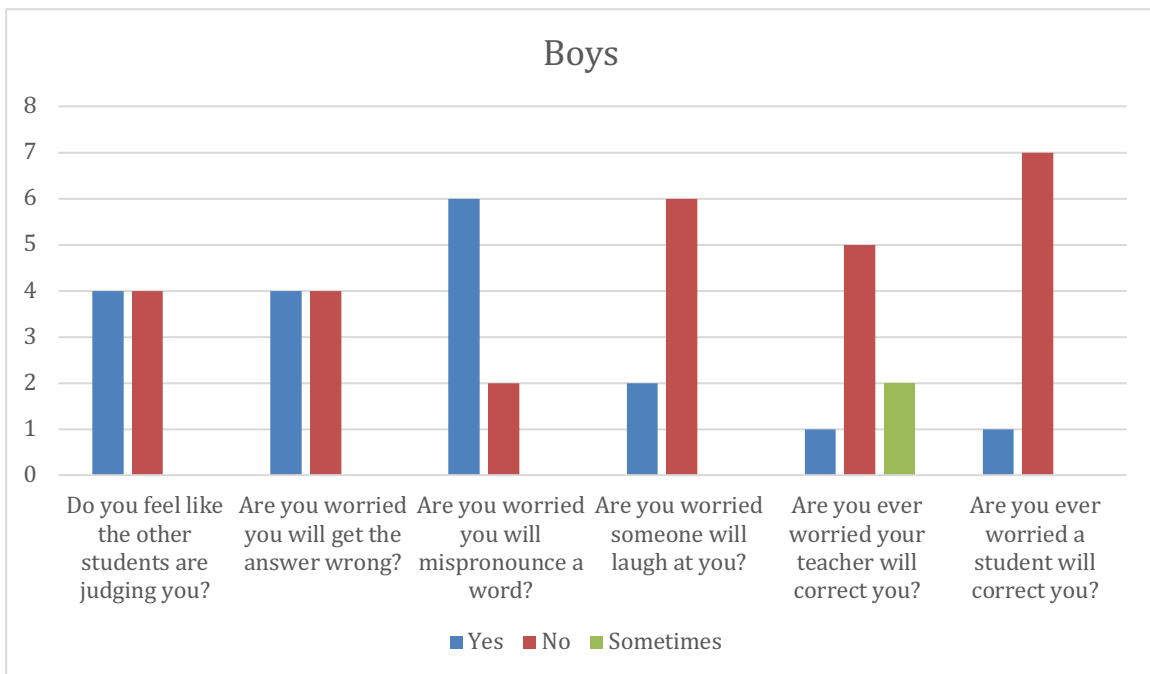
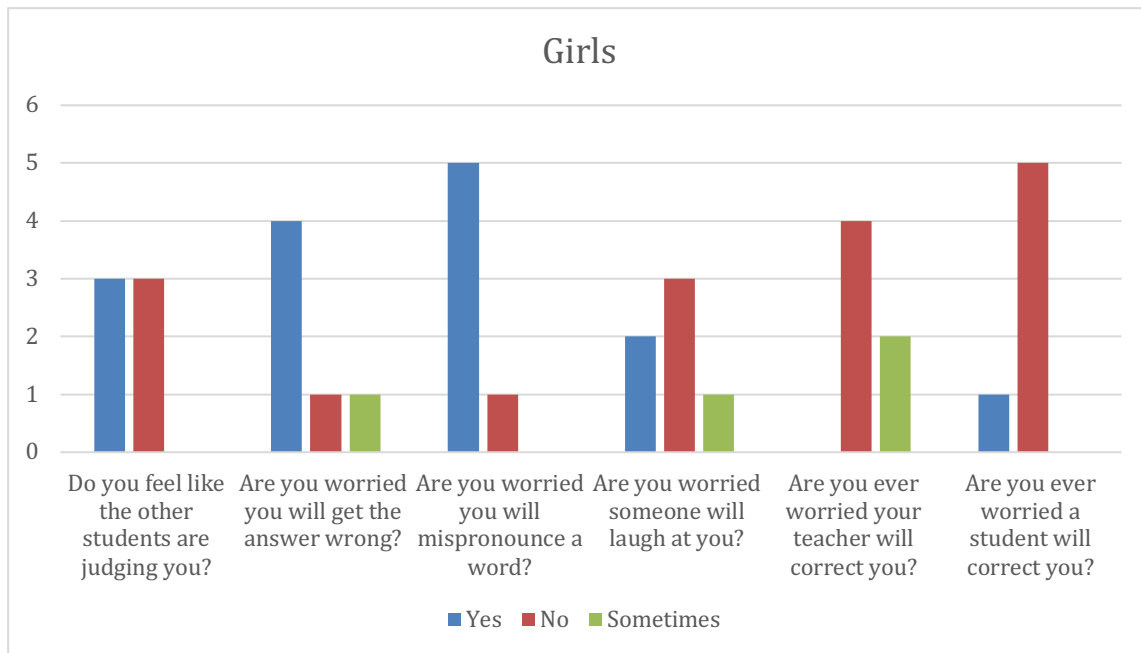


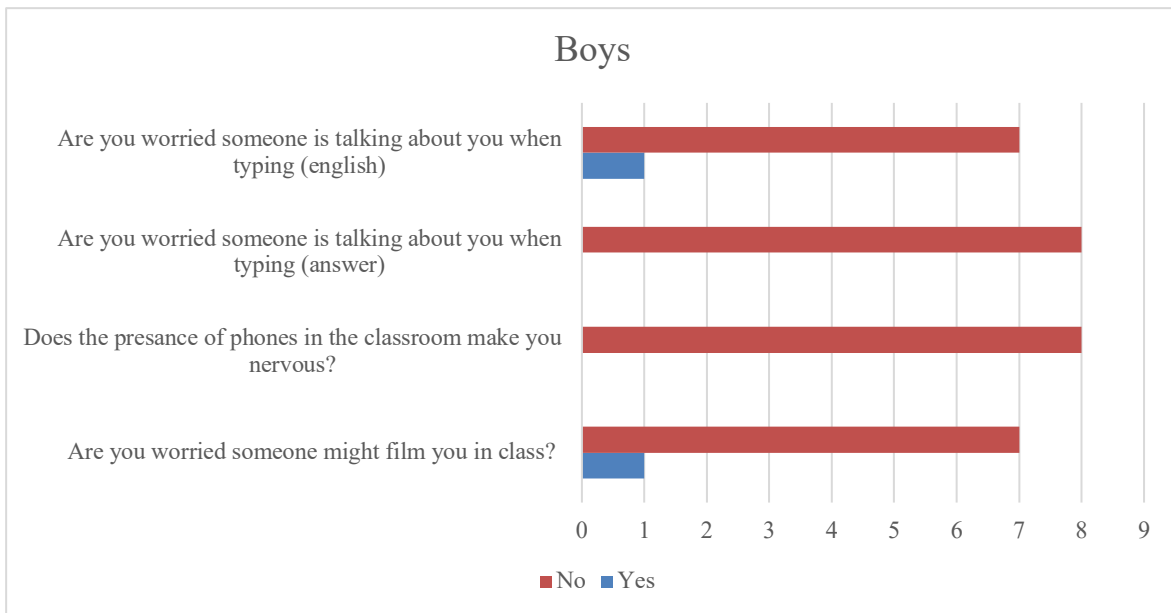
Figure 15 The factors that make the boys in class 2 nervous and anxious



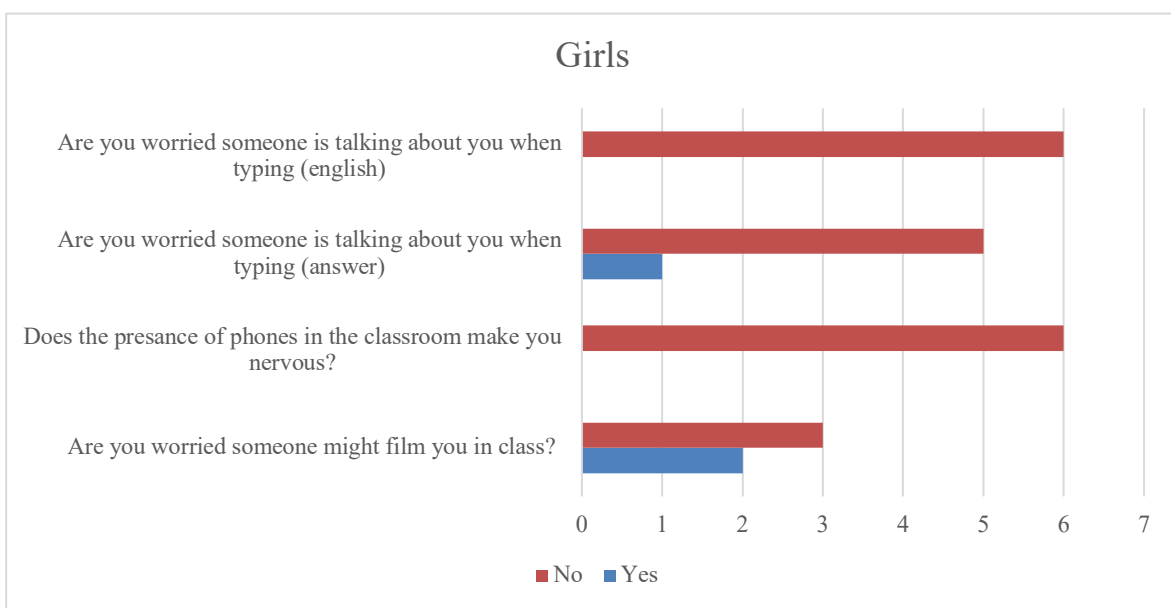
*Figure 16 The factors that make the girls in class 2 nervous and anxious*

Regarding being judged by other students, both boys and girls are equally anxious. When it comes to answering incorrectly, four girls, and four boys worry they will get the answer wrong. When asking if they worry about mis-pronouncing a word, 78.57 % of the class worry and feel anxious. Still, the students main concern is not being laughed at or being corrected by a teacher or by a student. None of the girls answered “yes” regarding feeling anxious of the teacher would correct them, however two girls did answer “sometimes”. Still, they both added comments saying, “it might make me nervous, but I know she/he does it so that I can learn” and “I think of it sometimes, but not always” The boys are more worried about being corrected, however, the one boy who answered “yes” regarding being corrected by a teacher commented “it is her/his job, but it makes me nervous”

The following figures shows how students feel regarding social platforms and how digital tools in the classroom affects their anxiety.



*Figure 17 The digital platforms and tools that make the boys in class 2 nervous and anxious*



*Figure 18 The digital platforms and tools that make the girls in class 2 nervous and anxious*

One boy and two girls worry that they will be filmed in the classroom, however none of the students have answered “yes” regarding if the presence of phones in the classroom makes them nervous. One can imagine that they are not worried about the phone itself, however, should they say something ‘stupid’ or get an answer wrong, they may worry that a fellow students could film them and share it with their friends. It is not the phone itself that makes them anxious, but possible damage that the phone may cause.

Further, the aim of the two first questions was to see whether or not the student would react to having computers in the classroom, and how sudden typing would create anxiety. Based on the response from the students, 85.71 % do not worry or feel anxious when hearing typing after they have answered a question. One boy answered that he might feel anxious regarding his English, and one girl answered that she could feel anxious regarding her answer. None of the two left a comment elaborating on why or how often they experience an anxious feeling, however, they both answered “no” when asking if it would help to ban computers from the classroom. Further, I asked them if they had ever made fun of someone on a digital platform such as snapchat, messenger, and discord. The figure below shows that two of the students have made fun of someone on a digital platform, two have made fun of a mate, and ten have never made fun of anyone.

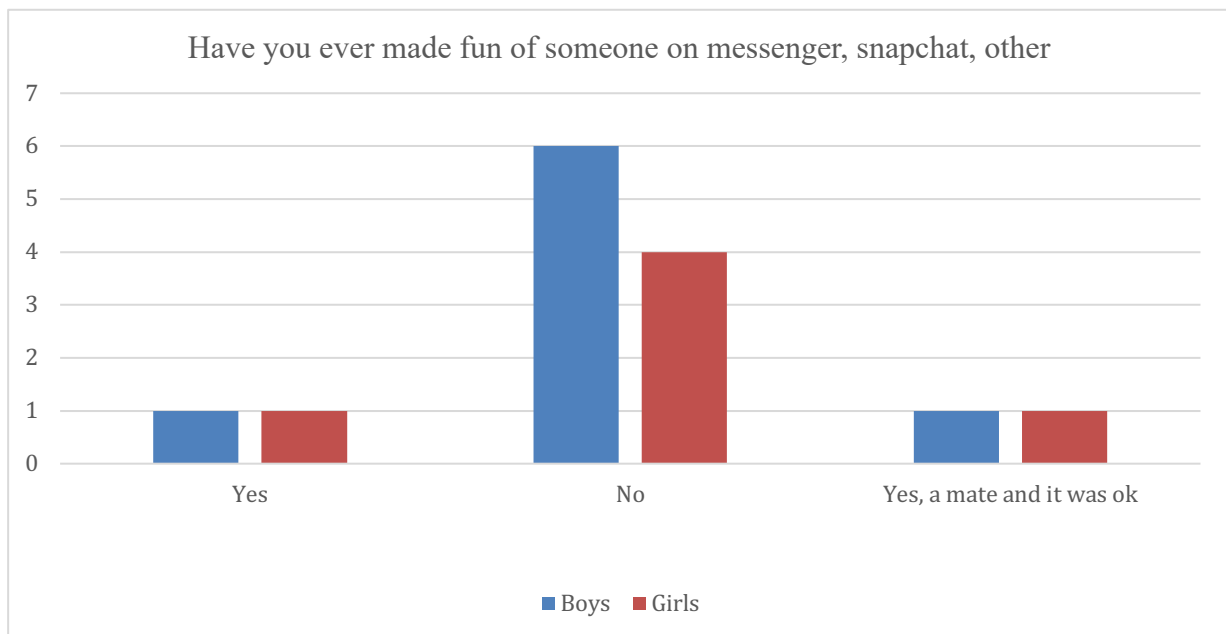


Figure 19 Have you ever made fun of a student on social

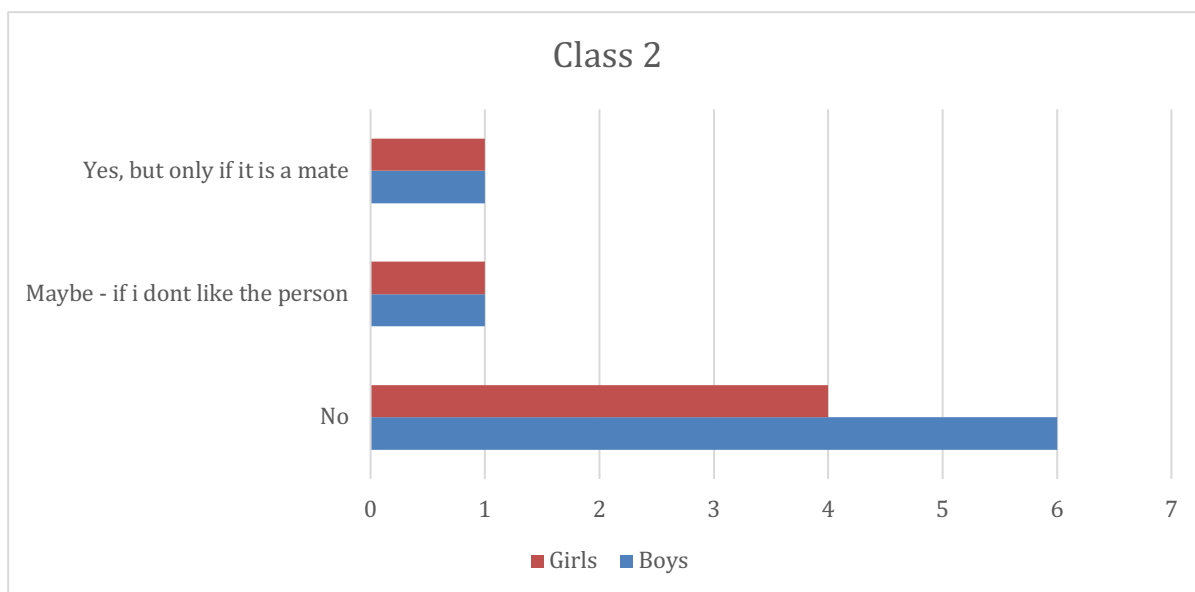


Figure 20 In all honesty: would you laugh at someone if they got something wrong?"

When asking the students “In all honesty: would you laugh at someone if they got something wrong?” none of the students answered “yes”, but two answered “yes if it was a mate”. The most common answer was “no” and two students added comments saying “honestly, that would not fly in our class” and “you just don’t do that”.

#### 4.2 Questionnaire results – FLCAS

The online questionnaire was handed out to the same twenty-eight students, however, only twenty-one answers will be taken into analysis. This is due to seven of the respondents answering in a manner that suggests that their answers were not sincere. As the goal of the survey was to uncover how many students experience foreign language anxiety in the classroom, each students’ answers were analysed individually. However, a full overview of all of the answers will be given in Appendix 3. Further findings of interest will be discussed later in the discussion part of this thesis.

The Figure below shows that in total, twelve students experience foreign language anxiety according to the FLCAS, and six of these students experience a high level of anxiety. One student had a score of 161 points, being the highest score in total, whilst five students had scores beneath 55 points, thereby hardly experiencing anxiety at all.

Anxiety level	Score rate	How many
Low level of anxiety	33 – 75	8
Medium level of anxiety	76 – 119	8
High level of anxiety	120 – 165	5

Figure 21 The level of foreign language anxiety in the classroom according to FLCAS

One of the statements in the FLCAS was “I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.” and the results were:

(26) I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.

	Percent	Respondents
Strongly agree	9.5%	2
Agree	23.8%	5
Neither agree nor disagree	14.3%	3
Disagree	28.6%	6
Strongly disagree	23.8%	5
Total	100.0%	21

Figure 22 Do the students feel more tense in English-class?

The question is worded in a manner resulting in *strongly disagree*, giving the students a score of 1, whilst *strongly agree* gives them a score of 5. Answering *strongly disagree* means that the student either feels just as nervous and anxious in other classes, meaning their anxiety is not related to language, or it means that they do not experience anxiety at all. Based on the questionnaire and the interviews, it is possible to assume that many of the students who answered *strongly disagree* experience anxiety in other subjects as well. Both Anna and Maria show high anxiety levels, however, their anxiety is not necessarily related to English. They both feel secure in their second language, still, they are more worried about taking up too much space or being too loud. On the other hand, eight students have low levels of foreign language anxiety, and they might also have answered *strongly disagree* as they do not feel anxious in the first place. Those who answer, *strongly agree* and *agree* feel more anxious in English than in other subjects, and therefore, their anxiety is most likely connected to the foreign language.

### 4.3 Interview results

In class 1, six boys participated in the interviews. In order to preserve anonymity, they will be named John, Michael, Andy, William, Lucas, and Alfie for this part of the thesis. In class 2, three girls and two boys participated in the interviews. They will be referred to as Anna, Maria, Zoe, Joe and Alex. They are all part of a vocational program at upper secondary and have all answered the questionnaire. As the questionnaire was anonymous, their answers there have not been linked to the interviews. The interviews were held in Norwegian, but all information and data have been translated into English.

#### 4.3.1 Do you get nervous when speaking English in the classroom?

John says that he plays a lot of video games, and when he speaks English online, he feels more comfortable than when speaking in the classroom. However, he is aware that he has good pronunciation and counts English as one of his stronger subjects. Therefore, he does not get as nervous as he used to get and other people's opinions about his language no longer bother him. John stresses that he used to get nervous in all subjects as he did not like the spotlight being on him. However, he feels more comfortable in this group and therefore does not get as nervous and anxious as he used to be. When he gets nervous, it is because he is worried about the correctness of his answer, not his pronunciation.

When chatting online, there are so many who use abbreviations, and spelling-mistakes because they write at a higher speed and nobody cares. If I make a mistake, I am one of many and that is perfectly fine. It is not the same pressure to write correctly as you have in school, so I feel freer and more relaxed when chatting online.

Michael, Lucas, and Andy say they never get nervous and feel as if their English is perfectly fine. None of them play many video games often, although they might chat to someone online or leave a comment in a forum. If Michael gets nervous, it is in regard to his answers, as he feels uncomfortable when the teacher corrects him. However, this does not stop him from answering a question at some other point. Andy and Lucas do not care at all if they get an answer wrong. "If I am corrected, it means I was wrong, and then I try not to get it wrong the next time".

William is one of the students that gets anxious and has physical reactions. He experiences that his cheeks flush, and his palms may get sweaty. Still, he thinks he does well in English and feels perfectly fine when communicating online with mates. William explains

that he feels much safer when speaking to his mates, and he does not have to worry about getting the answer right or being corrected.

For me, it is all about what comes naturally. I feel like myself when chatting online, and I can speak on the topics I know. In class, I am worried I might say the wrong thing, or I may not know as much about the topic, and I can feel myself 'freeze' when trying to find the right words.

Furthermore, William explained that, even if it sounds like a contradiction, he enjoys speaking English in groups in the classroom, as he can see people's instant reactions and facial expressions. However, he does not like all eyes to be on him when answering a question aloud.

Alfie pointed out that he never gets nervous, however, he thinks this is because he is in an all-boys class. He explains that if there were girls present, he might feel the need to impress them and vice versa. He would therefore worry more about what the girls would make of him and his English, rather than what the teacher or the boys would think of him. As of now, he rates his English-skills as above average, and feels comfortable when speaking and writing.

In class 2, two of the girls, Anna and Maria, both said that they feel comfortable in the subject English and would count it as their best subject. Both girls say that they feel as if they master both oral and written English, however, they still get nervous in class. None of the girls are worried about mispronouncing a word, but they are more worried of being "too loud, too good, or a try-hard". Anna explained that she feels as if her English is good, even though she does not have a "perfect" British accent. However, she wishes she had one, but is worried that if she tries to speak in a British accent, the other students will call her a try-hard and make fun of her for being "too good" or "thinking she is better than she is". She also explains that should the teacher correct her; she would get anxious as she is supposed to be "too good to get corrected". Maria expresses the same concern and explains that:

I never got nervous before when going to lower-secondary, as the group-dynamic was very friendly and loud. Everyone would speak up, and there was no awkward silence. However, in this class, people do not say as much, and I feel like I would stick out as a sore thumb if I said too much.

Alex and Zoe both feel as if they are better in English than they are in Norwegian, and therefore feel safer when speaking English. Both explain that they find it easier to explain themselves and give the message across in a correct manner. Alex explained that he feels as if



he has a different personality when speaking English and feels a lot more confident. When asking him to elaborate he explains:

It sounds weird, but I just feel much more confident. Like I am a different person when speaking English. I feel funnier and stronger, and it counts for both inside the classroom, and for when speaking to friends online.

Zoe on the other hand feels more confident when speaking English as Norwegian is not her first language, and she finds English easier to fall back on when forgetting a Norwegian word as others understand English. However, when asking about Zoe's mother tongue, she explained that:

I feel like I can be myself when I speak my mother tongue with my brothers and family. I feel funnier, and like I am able to get my point across a lot easier. I also speak English with my friends sometimes, as it makes it more relatable. I know they have seen the same films and memes as me, and therefore when I speak about them in English, it makes more sense.

The main difference between Zoe and Alex, is that Zoe will not show up to class if she is not prepared for the presentation or other tasks they may have, whilst Alex would show up. She gets anxious when she is not prepared well enough, and this counts for all subjects, not just English. "There is no way I am coming to class and making a fool of myself. I get way to anxious, so I just don't show up".

Joe feels as if his English is good, and gives the credit to social media and gaming, not the school. He believes that most of his English-skills come from gaming, social media and tv. However, he explains that Norwegian students are much better at the technical parts of language than native speakers, and therefore he is grateful for learning this at school. "I am glad I learn the technical bits, however, they may not be as necessary".

All the participants agreed on oral presentations being the worst task, as they all hated speaking for a crowd with all eyes on them. Anna said: "I will do it, but I get really nervous" and Alex explained that "if I do not get to choose the topic myself, I get really anxious as I might get a topic I know little about. If I get to choose the topic myself, I do not get nervous at all. I actually enjoy myself". Maria found long essays hard, however, would pick them over oral presentations any day. William said that his worst nightmare would be speaking in front of the class, and preferred group presentations, or presentations alone with the teacher. "I just hate having everyone looking at me. What if I say something stupid?"

#### 4.3.2 Do you get nervous when speaking English to a native?

John explained that he often speaks to natives online and does not think twice about it. Michael, Lucas, and Andy all said that it would not bother them, however, they would feel some pressure to say things correctly. William gets nervous when speaking English to natives, but if he would end up in a situation where he would have to, he would speak English to a native. Alfie explained that he has family that moved to the UK, and therefore feels fine when speaking to natives.

Anna explained that she often gets in her head when speaking to natives, as they have a better accent than she has, and she is worried she has the typical Norwegian-English pronunciation. She feels as if she learns a lot from speaking to natives, but it does cause some worry. Again, she spends more time worrying about how other perceive her, than worrying about how she performs. Maria, Zoe, and Alex are all used to speaking English to natives, and rarely gives it a second thought. Joe explained that he feels a bit more confident when writing, as he knows his grammar is good and therefore does not worry. However, when speaking to a native orally, he might feel some nerves, but not to an extent that bothers him.

#### 4.3.3 How has social media affected your English?

John, Alfie, Joe, and Alex all agree that much of their English comes from social media, however they argue that it differs from the English they are taught in school. Joe explained that the English he is taught in school rarely applies to the English he uses in his everyday life, however, it does make it easier to communicate when you have been taught the language properly. William is grateful for speaking English with his mates through social media and gaming, as it is the only platform where he feels as if he can practice his pronunciation and sentence-structure. Still, because there is nobody correcting him when he speaks English online, he is grateful for correction in school to improve his English-skills.

Anna and Maria both speak to natives online and follow both Brits and Americans on social media. Anna thinks this is a great platform to pick up on accents and to hear the language in a more casual form. Maria agrees and explained that “my friends are American and English, so I feel like I learn a lot just by listening to them. Furthermore, I am able to hear the language and the process it in a different way than I do in school”.

#### 4.3.4 How was it to speak English on Zoom or Teams?

The participants have been to both lower and upper-secondary school during the pandemic. Because they attended different schools and classes during the first two pandemic years, they had varying degrees of online schooling experience. Some had very few (or no) lessons using Zoom or Teams as a platform, while others spent a considerable amount of time on the platforms. The two with the least online learning experience – Zoe (2 lessons) and Maria (no lessons) had no particular feelings towards speaking English on these platforms.

Others with more online learning experience, had opinions about speaking English on the platforms. On Zoom, John would keep his camera on and was never worried he would be recorded. Furthermore, he did not find it uncomfortable to speak on Zoom, as he was used to it from gaming. Michael, Lucas, and Alfie felt the same way, even though they do not play video games extensively. Andy, who does not normally get nervous when speaking English in the classroom, became nervous on Zoom. He explained that:

It was weird, because I did not have my mates around me to lean on. I could not see their faces or lean on their comments. I was on my own and had to sit in a quiet room and answer questions from a person in a different room. There was a massive pressure as soon as I had to say something, because everyone heard what I said. I did not like it.

William had many of the same comments as Andy and expressed a concern regarding sitting in his room alone and speaking to a screen. He said it felt weird, and if his internet was bad, or there was bad connection, it would lag, and his message would not be as clear. He also felt like he had to speak slower, louder, and that it felt less natural. Joe also commented that he felt uncomfortable as he was alone, but he was more nervous regarding being called to answer and having to turn his microphone and camera on for a split second.

Alex did not use Zoom in English, however, did use it for other subjects. He would keep his camera on and was never worried someone would take his picture or record him. Still, he did worry when answering, as his picture would fill the screen, and everyone would be looking at his face. “It feels as if everyone is staring at you, but you cannot see them”

## 5 Discussion

In this section, four of the main findings will be discussed and these, as well as additional results will be examined in light of the previous research presented earlier. The four focus-areas were selected because they directly address the research questions which motivated this study, but other (unexpected) results were also seen as worth discussing in this section. The four main findings will be discussed individually, and are:

1. Students worry that they will be filmed or recorded, however they do not believe that removing phones from the classroom would positively impact anxiety levels.
2. Students are anxious when speaking English, however, this anxiety level is mostly related to speaking English in the classroom, not speaking English itself. The anxiety is domain specific.
3. The students who experience several levels of anxiety, often experiences the same kinds of anxiety in other subjects as well.
4. Five out of twenty-one students have high levels of foreign language anxiety

### 5.1 Filming and Recording

Digital skills are crucial to learning contemporary English linguistic and cultural content. These digital skills require students to possess the appropriate tools to access the content. This often includes digital tools such as mobile phones, tablets, and computers being present in the classroom. Nevertheless, while Norwegian schools have been quick to adopt digital tools and provide laptops, tablets, and other necessary equipment to students, they have not adopted national guidelines for the appropriate use of those tools in class. In addition, students all come to class with their own digital tools in the form of smartphones. Schools have adopted very different tactics for controlling their use.

There have been reports stating that mobile phones function as a distraction in the classroom. According to a study by Mendoza et al. (2018), students exposed to mobile phones will get distracted and lose focus, leading to weakened performance. A Norway-based study by Krumsvik (2013) concluded that students who spend more time on social media and video games are often generalized as weaker students. A third study by Amundsen (2018) showed that students who are separated from their phones often score 6.4% better than students with their phones. There was a 14.2% improvement among the weakest students when they were separated from their phones (Amundsen, 2018). On the other hand, there have been several studies (Israelsson, 2020; Somdal-Åmodt Vinje, 2020; Statped, 2021) that claim mobile

phones and computers are crucial in the classroom as they serve a leading role for students that struggle to concentrate, struggle to learn or have dyslexia.

This thesis wanted to find out if the presence of mobile phones had any relationship to language anxiety. According to the questionnaire results, one out of twenty-eight students became nervous about the presence of phones, and three students worried they would be filmed or recorded during class. However, all three students who worried about being filmed answered “no” when asking them if it would help to remove mobile phones from the classroom. One might argue that they are so attached to their phones that answering yes could result in them losing their phones in class, and by answering no, they hope to avoid the scenario. One student stated in her interview that “removing phones would take the possibility of being filmed away, but they could still make fun of me through other platforms, so in the end, it does not matter”. Another stated that “You could try to remove them, but it would make more trouble than it would solve”. Removing phones or placing them in “cellphone hotels” could create a sour environment in the classroom, as the students prefer to keep their phones.

Further, ten out of twenty-eight students admitted to making fun of a fellow student in class on a social media platform. Three of these students made fun of their classmates’ English, and the rest have made fun of something else. In her interview, one of the students reported, “I am constantly worried someone will make fun of me or comment on something I say or do in class. A phone is just an easier way of doing it, but not a necessary tool”. Based on their answers, it seems as if many of the students are more worried about being written about or commented on through a group chat than being filmed or recorded. Therefore, removing phones would only solve the problem of filming, however, not the fear of being made fun of on a digital platform as they still have their computers with which they can communicate. The students were also asked if they get nervous or anxious when hearing typing after they have answered a question, and in class 1, 96,43% do not worry or feel anxious when hearing typing after they have answered a question. In class 2, 85.71 % do not worry or feel anxious when hearing typing after answering a question.

Based on the observations and findings in this study, one can conclude that digital tools play an essential role in the classroom, and removing them would not alleviate the fear of digital mocking or bullying. Removing them would be a catalyst for a massive change in how the classroom functions and how the teacher provides the students with information. Despite studies demonstrating that computers and mobile phones have a negative effect on students’ concentration levels, one can argue that these tools are crucial for their learning.

Further, it is hard not to agree with the students; removing computers and mobile phones would not solve the fear of being made fun of on a digital platform after the classroom instruction ends.

## 5.2 Anxiety and Zoom

Zoom and digital classes dominated Norwegian schools during the pandemic, and I was curious to see whether or not students felt more anxious and tired from Zoom lectures and how it affected their foreign language anxiety. During spring 2020, teaching in primary and secondary schools was fully digitalised due to entirely or partially closed schools as a result of the pandemic. Most teachers had used digital learning platforms and digital teaching aids before the closure; however, now they had to plan every lesson on a digital platform such as Zoom or Teams (Federici & Vika, 2020; Gudmundsdottir & Hathaway, 2020). Zoom usage has continued in schools and universities until December 2021 and has been reduced in spring 2022.

According to several articles in the popular and specialist press (Sklar, 2020; Walker, 2020; White, 2021), Zoom fatigue has become more common as a result of the pandemic.

According to Walker (2020), Zoom fatigue occurs when:

we feel tired after overusing video conferencing. However, it is not merely a matter of tired eyes, a stiff neck, or an achy lower back. We can actually feel exhausted after spending too much time on these calls.

The main issue with Zoom is that the communication is not face to face or in real-time, and one is not able to thoroughly pick up on others' body language and reactions (Walker, 2020). According to anecdotal evidence regarding students' levels of anxiety and usage of Zoom, students feel anxious regarding their looks, appearance and living space, and will therefore refuse to turn their cameras on. The arguments presented in these articles suggest that students refuse to turn their cameras on due to anxiety and worry, however, the findings in this thesis do not agree.

The participants for this thesis have been to both lower and upper-secondary schools during the pandemic, and have had varying degrees of online schooling experience. Still, they all agree on one thing; they keep their cameras off because they do not pay attention. They were not worried about being recorded and are not worried about being stared at (as Damsgaard, 2020, argues). One of the students explained that he treats the digital lectures as podcasts and will listen to them as he goes about his day. When asking him how he would

feel about turning on his camera, he said, “why would I turn it on and be forced to sit still for two hours when I learn just as much from listening and making breakfast simultaneously?” Andy was the only student that got nervous when turning his camera on, however, he would never worry about his appearance or his living space; he worried about breaking the silence. For him, it was not the camera itself that was the problem, it was turning his microphone on and off, thereby breaking the silence. When asking him if he would turn his camera on, he responded, “why? It is not like I learn more from it?”

Regarding anxiety related to being stared at or filmed, the students interviewed for this project were not nervous or worried they would be recorded or filmed; however, they were worried that they would be the subject of ridicule. Further, they expressed that it was the complete silence from other students that made Zoom participation terrible, not FLA or the topic of instruction. John, one of the students who play many video games, explained that it “is not the same speaking to mates online as speaking to the class. My mates keep the conversation going, it is never quiet, but on Zoom, it is dead silent”. Several of the students also expressed that they felt uncomfortable speaking through a dark screen, however, they were not comfortable turning on their camera to answer a question.

William was the only student who missed facial expressions when speaking on Zoom. William is one of the few students reporting little video game activity and is thus not used to communicating with people through a screen. He compared speaking on Zoom with answering a question in class. In class everyone looks at you, but you can also see them. On Zoom, William said, you are not able to look at everyone and that is uncomfortable. When speaking in smaller groups, William felt more confident as the conversation is more natural, and he was able to see everyone’s facial expressions.

The students explained that they did experience many of the physical ‘symptoms’ of Zoom fatigue without using the term ‘Zoom fatigue’. They reported feeling tired, unmotivated and bored from sitting in front of their screens listening to the teacher and solving tasks in a break-out room. Still, the more anxious students in the group explained that Zoom did not have any impact on their foreign language anxiety. Some of the students described it as relaxing and enjoyed being able to have more control of their online classes. Those that felt anxiety related to Zoom, were not anxious regarding the camera, but the microphone. These findings do not undermine the fact that many students may struggle with anxiety regarding Zoom, however, it does add another element to Zoom-linked anxiety and suggests that Zoom anxiety may be linked to sound (or lack of) rather than image. It also

suggests that Zoom image anxiety may be worse among non-gamers than gamers, although this is highly speculative because the majority of the students do play video games.

### 5.3 A domain-specific anxiety

For this thesis, the goal was to see whether or not students feel safer when speaking English online through gaming, or on Zoom/Teams, compared to when they speak English in a physical classroom. In total, 89.29 % of the students play video games, and 23 of 28 students answered *yes* when asked if they communicate in English with the people with whom they play. The students communicate with people from all over the world, including native speakers. This section investigates anxiety felt by the students when speaking English to natives. Secondly, the section examines the degree to which the students felt as anxious when communicating with friends online as they felt when speaking English in the classroom.

#### 5.3.1 Foreign language anxiety and native speakers

As presented in Appendix 3, 19% of the students answering the FLCAS *strongly disagree* with the statement: 'I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.' A further, 19% answered *disagree*. When presenting the students with the statement 'I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.' 10% disagree, and 14% *strongly disagree*. None of these percentages represent the majority of students in the study, however, the numbers do demonstrate that many students do find it uncomfortable speaking English to native speakers. This agrees with studies conducted by Woodrow (2006), Landström (2016) Ellevold (2020), and Gjerde (2020). Ellevold and Gjerde both concluded that oral activities cause the highest levels of anxiety for students, and Gjerde argued that social media and the exposure to native English heightens students' level of anxiety. Landström's study concluded that speaking English to natives is one of the main causes of foreign language anxiety. Woodrow (2006) also concluded that one of the most frequent anxiety triggers was speaking English with a native speaker (p. 323) or holding an oral presentation (p. 322).

Even though Gjerde's (2020) study demonstrated that students feel more pressure when speaking to natives as a result of social media, the students participating in this thesis did not report this. The students in this study, argue that social media has a positive impact on their language acquisition, and that they feel as if they learn more from listening to natives online than they do in school. William explained in his interview that he is grateful for



speaking English with his mates through social media and gaming, both natives and fellow Norwegians. He feels as if it is the only platform where he can practice his pronunciation and sentence-structure without being judged or laughed at. Maria, Zoe, and Alex explain that they spend more time communicating in English with natives online than Norwegians online and spend little time worrying about their pronunciation.

When gaming, the students communicate with people from all over the world, including native speakers. During the interviews, many of the students explained that they get nervous when speaking to natives but not when playing video games. One of the girls said,

I do not spend much time thinking about what I say or what I write when playing video games. Everything happens so fast, and the comments are often short. There is no need to worry.

Another explained, “There are so many native speakers online and so many Norwegians that it does not matter if you are a native or not”. Further, when the students were asked about how they feel when speaking to natives, many said that anxiety might cross their mind, but they do not dwell on the anxiety as they are comfortable discussing a field they understand.

### 5.3.2 Foreign language anxiety and the classroom

In total, 25 of 28 students answered *yes* when asking them if they play video games, and 23 of these students answered *yes* when asked whether or not they communicate in English with the people they play video games with. In class 1, four out of fourteen answered *yes* when asked if they get nervous when speaking English in class, and in class 2, five out of fourteen students answered *yes*. In total, nine out of twenty-eight students get nervous when speaking English in the classroom. Still, over 50% of the students worry and feel anxious regarding mispronouncing a word in class or getting an answer wrong. Several of the students worry that they will be corrected, laughed at, or ridiculed. One student explained that she “gets so nervous that I refuse to come to class”. Another student explained that he “avoids answering questions because it makes my stomach hurt”.

These results are similar to the results in Young (1991) and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015); the students in this thesis are highly anxious regarding others’ perception of them. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) argued that students worry about social comparison, and that many students compare their own academic abilities against their fellow classmates. Out of the students that were interviewed, Anna and Maria expressed the highest levels of anxiety linked to performance and comparison. Both girls explain that they feel comfortable in the

subject English and would count it as their best subject, however, they still get nervous in class. They worry about being perceived as a *try hard* and can experience physical symptoms of anxiety such as shaking and sweating when speaking English in class. However, their symptoms generally only heighten after answering a question, or after holding a presentation, when they begin to worry about how their answer will be received or the presentation evaluated. Lastly, this agrees with the arguments in Stevick (1980) which claimed that success in language acquisition is more dependent on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom than it is to techniques and linguistic analyses (p. 4).

Krashen proposes that an individual's degree of self-esteem is related to language anxiety. Young (1991) made the link between self-esteem and FLA explicit. Self-esteem, Young writes, "is what causes anxiety in a lot of people. People with low self-esteem worry about what their peers think....And that I think has to do a great degree with anxiety" (p. 427). In the study here, low self-esteem may impact anxiety, but high-performing students who assess themselves as such, like Maria and Anna, also report high levels of anxiety linked to negative perceptions of achievement by their peers, although also the possibility of a negative evaluation by their teacher.

Krashen further suggests an individual variation of 'monitor' use; over-users, under-users and optimal users. In most cases, extroverts are under-users, while introverts and perfectionists tend to be over-users of the 'monitor'. Alongside perfectionism, the lack of self-confidence may also be related to the over-use of the "monitor" (Krashen, 1982, p. 19). Both Anna and Maria, are examples of students that over-use the 'monitor' and whose perfectionism leads to anxiety in the language classroom. Anna is more concerned about her performance and has slightly lower self-esteem than Maria, however, they both get anxious due to stress regarding mispronunciation and their classmates' reactions. According to Krashen (1982), the pedagogical goal of teachers would be to create optimal users, where the 'monitor' is only used when it is appropriate and when it does not interfere with communication (p. 19). This also agrees with the arguments of MacIntyre (1995) and Horwitz (2000) regarding successful students being anxious in fields where they are expected to do well.

Krashen also argues that when the student is bored, nervous, and lack motivation, their 'wall' will be raised, resulting in an incapacity in the language they are learning. Looking at Appendix 3, 43% of the students *strongly agree*, and 33% of the students agree with the statement *During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course*. This implies that the students are bored, or lack motivation in the subject,

which according to Krashen, may raise their ‘wall’ and make it harder for them to acquire language. During the interviews, Michael, Lucas, and Andy all pointed out that they rarely get anxious, and that they easily get bored in class. Further, they do not enjoy their English classes, and tend to get lower grades in English than in other subjects. Arguably, their walls have risen to a point where they struggle to learn during class, thereby leading them to perform worse in class than they might have done if they were not as bored.

### 5.3.3 Foreign language anxiety outside the classroom

Regarding speaking English outside the classroom, none of the students in this study experienced this same level of discomfort. In total, eighteen students responded that they feel safer when communicating through a computer, and four students said that it did not matter. These answers were regarding gaming, not regarding Zoom. Four boys responded that they do not feel safer when communicating online, and they also explained that they feel insecure and nervous when communicating (orally and in writing) online. All of the students explained that they feel safer and better when speaking English to their friends online.

Further, Gjerde’s (2020) studies showed that the students often feel safer and more relaxed when speaking English alone or with their friends, confirming Landström’s findings that English language anxiety was heightened when speaking to strangers. In this current study, William struggles with anxiety in the classroom, however, when speaking with mates online he feels calm as he does not have to worry about getting the answer right or being corrected. Alex, Zoe and Maria spend a lot of time communicating with friends online and most of the time the communication is in English. They will also speak English to their friends outside the classroom, even though they all speak Norwegian as their first language. When asked them if they ever feel anxious when speaking English outside the classroom, none of them reported anxiety. They feel confident, safe and secure as there is no peer-pressure or fear of negative evaluation. In short, the findings here concerning anxiety levels when speaking English with strangers or with friends agrees with both Gjerde and Landström.

Based on the questionnaire results and the conversations held during the interviews, students rarely experience foreign language anxiety outside the classroom, even if they experience it in class. As William explained in his interview, he feels free and more like himself when speaking English online as he feels comfortable with the topics being discussed. Further, he explained that in the classroom, there are expectations placed upon him, and this leads to his nerves getting in his way. Out of all the interviewed students, William was the most anxious student regarding speaking English in the classroom. Others who showed high

anxiety levels felt the same in other subjects as well, and their anxiety was not necessarily FLA per se. One can argue that the students' anxiety is domain-dependent and that the anxiety they experience may not necessarily be connected to the English language itself but is connected to the classroom and the people present in the classroom (the teacher and the fellow students).

According to Myhre and Fiskum (2020) L2 research indicates that classroom teaching does not focus much on fluency-oriented activities, even though becoming a fluent speaker is an important aim of L2 learning (pp. 201-202). They argue that one should use non-classroom contexts in order to teach children a second language in a more natural setting. One of the participants in their study commented that when speaking in a natural setting, "nobody really paid attention, and then it became easier to speak English. We weren't so afraid to say something the wrong way" (Myhre & Fiskum, 2020, p. 210). The students involved in the classes studied for this thesis made similar remarks. They reported feeling as if they learn more English when speaking it with mates, online and on holiday.

#### 5.4 Anxiety in other subjects

When researching foreign language anxiety, I was curious to see if the anxiety and worry that some students experience was mainly related to English and foreign language, or if the students that experience language anxiety also feel anxious in other subjects. This was a small part of the thesis, but the answers presented in the second questionnaire and some of the interviews show that many anxious English students do experience anxiety in other subjects.

The interviews show that Anna, Zoe, Maria, and William experience high anxiety levels. William explains that he feels nervous and anxious when speaking English in the classroom, however, feels fine when speaking English outside of the classroom. He experiences several physical reactions such as freezing, sweaty palms, flushed cheeks, and occasionally shaking. When asked how he handles other subjects, he explains that he gets nervous in subjects he is unsure about and worried that he might get an answer wrong. However, his biggest worry was to speak up when the rest of the class is silent. In these situations, William says; "I feel like I am having a small presentation where I do not know if my presentation has the wrong information or not." Like William, Zoe feels just as nervous in topics where she feels as if she is not good enough or well enough prepared. Zoe, however, avoids showing up to class if she feels as if she will be questioned on something she has not prepared. Again, both students are over-users of the 'monitor' and even though they would

not count themselves as perfectionists, they strive for perfection in pronunciation in order to avoid feelings of anxiety. However, this causes their anxiety to spike, creating an evil cycle where they are prone to feel anxious in class despite not answering a question.

Anna and Maria both worry that they are too loud and take up too much space in the classroom, and attempt to ‘monitor’ all the time. They both feel secure in the English language however, they are more worried about the reactions from their fellow classmates. When worrying about being corrected, it is not the teacher they worry about, it is the perception their classmates will have of them. Alfie was the only student that made a comment regarding gender and pointed out that as long as he is in an all-boys class, he does not feel anxious in any subject. Seeing these results in light of the affective filter hypothesis, one may argue that because they are teenagers, their affective filter is strengthened and their walls harder to break. Both girls comment that they feel as if they struggle to learn in class, however, they both get top grades. In theory, these two variables are contradicting, as student that experience high levels of anxiety and therefore struggle to learn, should have lower grades. However, these girls pick up on their English from platforms outside the classroom, and therefore are able to do well on test even though they feel as if they struggle to learn in the classroom due to their anxiety levels.

### 5.5 FLCAS: five out of twenty-one students have foreign language anxiety

Five out of twenty-one students experienced high levels of anxiety with scores such as 161, 143, 125, 124, and 121. Further, eight students scored at a medium level, meaning they also experience foreign language anxiety in the classroom, however, not at a level that affects their learning. Even though the first questionnaire uncovered that very few students experience language anxiety in given situations, the FLCAS confirms that over 50% of the students have some sense of language anxiety connected to the classroom. The FLCAS places the language anxiety in one specific domain, the classroom, whilst the first questionnaire gives a more general overview of language anxiety across a range of usage settings.

The FLCAS survey was anonymous and collected answers from both classes. Therefore, one can only assume that the students who reported high levels of anxiety on the questionnaire are also the same students who have high FLCAS scores and who expressed high levels of anxiety in the interviews. When speaking to the students, many responded that being called on in class or answering a question without preparation caused high levels of anxiety. When the students responded to the statement, *I start to panic when I have to speak*

*in class without preparation*, six students answered, *strongly agree*, and three students answered, *agree*. Further, when presenting them the statement *Even if I am well prepared for a language class, I feel anxious about it*, the majority, that is 33% of the students, answered, *agree*. In both cases, the five students with high anxiety levels all answered *strongly agree* and *agree* to these statements. As in Ellevold's study (2020), students worry when speaking a foreign language when unprepared and questioned on the spot (p. 38). One of the girls, Zoe, explained in her interview that she is just as anxious when asked a question unprepared in any class.

According to Horwitz et al. (1986) the main causes of foreign language anxiety are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (p. 125). For the students in this study, test apprehension was not the biggest cause of anxiety, however, the students worry more about fear of negative evaluation. Test anxiety is measured in statement 8, 10 and 21, and even though statement 8 and 10 carry high scores (see appendix 3), this does not dominate the questionnaire in paper form nor the interviews. When looking at the scores for fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension, there are several cases where the anxious students score highly. This aligns with results found in the interviews, the studies conducted by Gjerde, and Krashen's monitor hypothesis. The students do worry about failing their class (statement 10) and they are nervous during their tests (statement 8), however, when discussing test apprehension in the interviews, the students are more worried about lower grades having an impact on their choice of university and not necessarily the test itself.

When presenting the students with the statement, *During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course*, nine students answered *strongly agree*, and seven students answered *agree*. All the students who demonstrated high levels of foreign language anxiety answered *strongly agree* to this statement, meaning they either zone out due to stress or have lost interest in the subject as it creates high levels of anxiety. Based on the results from the first questionnaire, one may argue that they zone out to avoid thinking about the reactions they may get if they were to answer a question. Many students who scored low on the FLCAS scale also answered *strongly agree* or *agree*. This can be interpreted as the students' attention wavers because they do not care about the subject or are bored. The students with low-anxiety who answered *strongly agree* to the wandering-attention item also answered *strongly disagree* when presenting them with the statement *I worry about the consequences of failing my language class*. In these cases, the students are just as likely to be registering apathy as anxiety.

## 6 Conclusion

This thesis, first and foremost, aimed to see how much social media and digital platforms impact students' foreign language anxiety and how widespread foreign language anxiety is among upper secondary students in Agder. The research shows that social media does affect students' English, however, not their level of anxiety. Several of the students stated in both interviews and the questionnaires that they believe their English is better due to social media use, and many of them have no concerns about fellow students making fun of them on social media. While stories in the popular and specialist press would lead one to believe that social media and digital platforms significantly impact students' anxiety levels, the classes in this study did not reflect that belief. Most students participating in this project were not worried about being recorded or filmed in class. However, the few who worried about being filmed or recorded were pessimistic about removing digital tools in the classroom, as they would not want to lose the opportunity to use these tools themselves. Further, many students worry about being made fun of but do not blame social media, digital platforms, and digital tools as the primary catalyst for their insecurities. They are more worried about others' perceptions of them.

The questionnaire handed out in paper form, the FLCAS and the interviews give approximately the same results; in the two classes that participated in the research, five to seven students experienced levels of foreign language anxiety, and seven to seventeen students experienced medium levels of anxiety. Monitor over-users often speak hesitantly and tend to self-correct in the middle of utterances. This leads to a lack of fluency, and the students are often so concerned with correctness that they struggle to speak fluently. For William, his fluency in the classroom is weakened by his constant 'monitoring', but when speaking English outside the classroom, his affective filter and his 'monitoring' is lowered as he is not worried about others' perceptions of him. Like William, Anna and Maria also struggle with an over-usage of their 'monitor' and experience high anxiety levels due to perfectionism and lower self-esteem.

This thesis also aimed to uncover how comfortable upper-secondary students are when speaking English in the classroom and on digital platforms. It became clear that they are more comfortable speaking English to their mates online or in-person than speaking English in the classroom or on Zoom. The students explained in their interviews that speaking on Zoom was uncomfortable due to anxiety surrounding breaking the silence when answering a question. When speaking English with friends on social platforms online, they feel as if the

conversations are in real-time, and there is more of a natural conversation where the pressure of speaking does not exist. Contradicting recent studies on black screens and anxiety on Zoom, the students in this study care less about the camera turned on and more about their microphones being on. Further, they enjoy being able to treat their online classes as podcasts where they feel more in control of their learning surroundings. Most of the students who experience high anxiety levels in the classroom worry about being judged, corrected, laughed at, or made fun of when speaking. They also feel there is pressure from the teacher and their fellow students.

Despite the critique of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis and monitor theory, this study shows that one should reconsider both hypotheses when addressing anxiety in the classroom. While Krashen's critics have questioned the effect of affective factors in second language acquisition, this study suggests that anxiety and subject-interest play an essential role in how students experience their classes and their perception of themselves. The students experience little anxiety using English outside the classroom and considerable anxiety within the classroom. Further, it is clear that many of the students are over-users of their internal 'monitor' and that fear of negative evaluation plays an essential role in the student's language acquisition.

When researching foreign language anxiety, it was brought to the researchers' attention that many of the students were not aware that it was even a concept, and they were highly interested in the effect such research may have on the future classroom. Most of the interviewed students who showed high to moderate anxiety levels answered "yes" when asked if their teacher took measures to alleviate their anxiety. Still, some students answered "no" because they had not told their teacher that they occasionally struggle. When asking the students why they had not told their teacher, they explained that they never thought it would be relevant. In brief, the students were unaware that foreign language anxiety is a fairly common problem and that steps can be taken to reduce its impact on their learning.

This thesis demonstrates that language anxiety is experienced by students and has the power to impact how they perform in the English classroom. Students will, in many cases, learn more from using domains where they feel secure and are relieved of the pressure of being evaluated or exposed to peer scrutiny. The challenge is therefore to create an environment where the students are able to flourish and nurture their strengths, whilst still following the curriculum. The LK20 and the increasing digitization of the classroom that accompanied the pandemic may be the beginning of such a change, and it will be exciting to see what the future holds for students and their learning environments.



## 7 Future research

This thesis only investigated foreign language anxiety in two classes at upper secondary schools in Agder. Future research involving more students from more study programs could provide valuable information about the precise relationship between social media, digital tools and foreign language anxiety. In particular, younger students should be studied as we know that very young children are now spending a great deal of time online during classroom instruction without really understanding the impact on their anxiety. Future research might also include a longitudinal study following several groups of students over a more extended period to better gauge the lasting effect of digitised instruction.

Students in this study stressed how gaming, communicating online, and communication in a 'safe space' enhanced their English and helped them develop a vocabulary that allows them to communicate in their foreign language more fluently. Even though gaming has become a more significant part of teaching, and more teachers are open to including gaming and video games in their lessons, students still feel that their skills developed online are not appreciated in class. This thesis shows that when students' walls are lowered, and they regulate their 'monitor', their language acquisition process is not hampered by anxiety levels. Therefore, it is up to the teacher to locate the skills that the students develop and nourish in their safe spaces and incorporate them into the classroom learning environment. This thesis hopes to have contributed to what we know about where students feel safe using their languages and how anxiety can be moderated in the service of language learning.

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## 9 List of appendices

The data collection was conducted mostly in Norwegian, but the analysis of the data was conducted in English. Therefore, the content in some of the appendices is in Norwegian, while the content in others is in English.

**Appendix 1** Paper survey questions

**Appendix 2** Online survey questions

**Appendix 3** Online survey answers

**Appendix 4** Interview guide

**Appendix 5** Consent form for the students

## Appendix 1

### Questionnaire paper form

*Please be as honest as possible when filling out your answers. Remember, they are completely anonymous, and I will have not be able to see who answered what.*

*I truly appreciate your answers ☺*

1. How old are you?
  
2. Do you identify as a
  - Boy
  - Girl
  - Would prefer not to answer
  
3. For how long have you been able to understand English?
  - Since as long as I can remember
  - Since I started school (the age of 5/6)
  - Since the age of 10/11/12
  - Since the age of 13/14/15
  - Since the age of 16/17/18
  
4. Rate your English skills from 1 to 5. Put a circle around one of the numbers.
  - 1 – I do not understand English, and I cannot speak English
  - 2 – I understand some English, but I need hand gestures, the speaker to speak slowly, translation apps and so on.
  - 3 – I understand English, and I am able to make myself understandable
  - 4 – I understand English, and find it easy to speak to native English speakers. I feel like they understand me and I am able to express myself properly.
  - 5 – I am fluent in English, and have no problem speaking, writing or understanding English.

5. Do you prefer Norwegian or English TV-shows?

- Norwegian
- English

6. Why do you prefer/don't you prefer English TV-shows

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7. What is your favourite tv show.

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8. Do you play videogames in English?

- Yes
- No

9. Do you chat/speak to others when you play?

- Yes
- No
- I don't play videogames

10. Do these people speak in English?

- Yes
- No
- I don't play videogames

11. If they speak English, do you respond orally in English?

- Yes
- No
- I don't play videogames

12. If you respond orally in English, how does that make you feel?

- Fine, it doesn't bother me
- I feel a bit uncomfortable, but I do it anyways
- I hate it, it makes me feel insecure
- I am worried I will say the wrong word
- I feel confident, I know what I am talking about
- I do not play videogames

13. Do you chat instead of speak English to the people you play video games with?

- Yes
- No
- I don't play videogames

14. How does chatting make you feel?

- Better than speaking, I get to take my time and make sure what I write is correct.
- Worse than speaking, I hate writing in English
- Ok, don't care if I write or speak
- Nervous, but I do it anyways
- I like it, I feel confident
- I don't play videogames

15. Do you use other platforms to connect with people in English?

Forums, Instagram live, snapchat, messenger...

---

16. Do you feel safer speaking English through a computer? This counts for both oral and written English.

- Yes
- No

17. Why/Why not?

- Safer: I can 'hide' behind a screen
- Safer: People can't see me
- Safer: I can be anonymous
- Worse: I can be filmed or recorded
- Worse: I cannot see the other persons reaction
- Worse: the others might make fun of me in another chat.
- Worse: I feel like I am bad at English.

18. Do you speak English at home?

- Yes
- No
- Occasionally

19. Do you speak any other languages at home?

- Yes
- No

20. If yes, do you feel comfortable speaking this language at home?

- Yes
- No

21. If yes (question 20), would you feel comfortable speaking the language outside your home?

- Yes
- No

22. Do you get nervous when speaking English in the classroom?

- Yes
- No

23. Do you feel like the other students are judging you?

- Yes
- No

24. Do you feel like you might get the answer wrong?

- Yes
- No

25. Do you feel like you might mispronounce a word?

- Yes
- No

26. Are you afraid someone would laugh at you?

- Yes
- No

27. Are you ever worried someone will film you or record you in class whilst speaking English?

- Yes
- No

28. Does it make you nervous when there are phones present in the classroom when you speak English?

- Yes
- No

29. Imagine you are asked a question in class. The question is in English, and you need to answer in English. After you answer, you hear someone typing on their computer. Are you worried they are chatting to someone about your **ANSWER**. (not your English)

- Yes
- No

30. Imagine you are asked a question in class. The question is in English, and you need to answer in English. After you answer, you hear someone typing on their computer. Are you worried they are chatting to someone about your **ENGLISH**.

- Yes
- No

31. If you answered YES on question either 29 or 30, or both, would it make you feel less nervous if you were not allowed to have computers in class?

32. In all honesty, would you laugh at someone if they said something wrong?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe, if I don't like that person

33. Have you ever made fun of someone in the classroom in messenger, snapchat or any other chatting-platform?

- Yes
- No

34. If yes, did you make fun of their English?

- Yes
- No

35. Are you ever worried your teacher might correct you?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes, but I do not think of it every time I answer a question.

36. Are you ever worried a classmate will correct you?

- Yes
- No
- I do not care what they think of me

37. Would you ever correct a classmate?

- Yes, if they were wrong
- No, I don't care
- No, that would be mean
- Yes, just for fun



38. Mark the statements from what makes you the least nervous (1), to what makes you the most nervous (6)

- Oral presentation in groups
- Oral presentation in front of the class
- Answering a question in the classroom
- Reading out loud
- Discussing a question in groups of two
- I don't get nervous in English.

Thank you so much for taking the time to answer. I truly appreciate it 😊

If you want to add anything, please feel free to use this page to add any other comments or remarks.

## Appendix 2

### Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

*Horwitz, E.K., Horwitz, M.B., Cope, J., 1986. Foreign language classroom anxiety. Modern Language Journal, 70 (2), 125–132.*

- (1) I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.
- (2) I do not worry about making mistakes in language class.
- (3) I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.
- (4) It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in foreign language.
- (5) It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes
- (6) During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.
- (7) I keep thinking that the other students are better at language than I am.
- (8) I am usually at ease during my tests in my language class.
- (9) I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.
- (10) I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class
- (11) I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language class.
- (12) In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.
- (13) It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.
- (14) I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.
- (15) I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.
- (16) Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it
- (17) I often feel like not going to my language class.
- (18) I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.
- (19) I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.
- (20) I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.
- (21) The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.
- (22) I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.
- (23) I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.
- (24) I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.
- (25) Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.
- (26) I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.
- (27) I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.

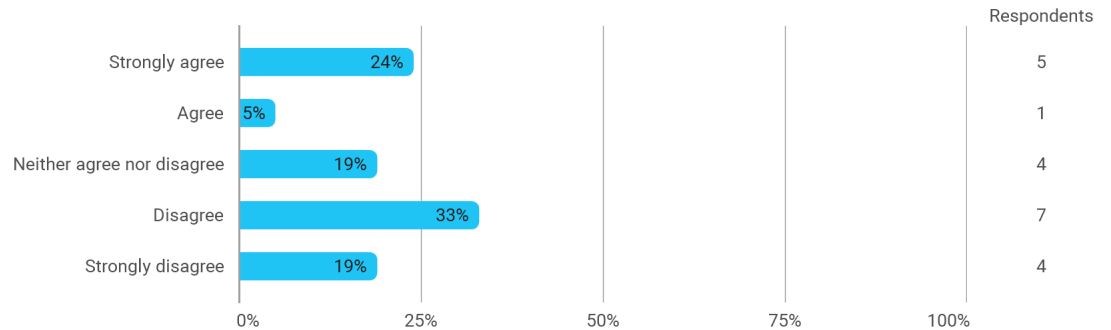
- (28) When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.
- (29) I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.
- (30) I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.
- (31) I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.
- (32) I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.
- (33) I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.

5-point Likert Scale (SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = neither agree nor disagree; D = disagree)

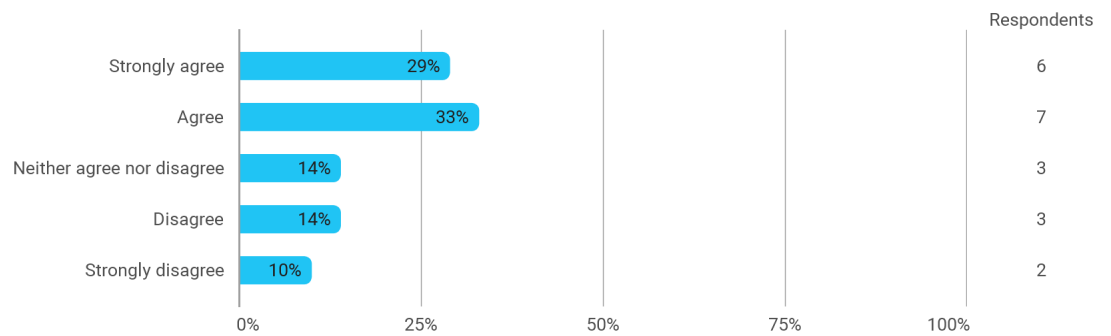
## Appendix 3

### FLCAS results

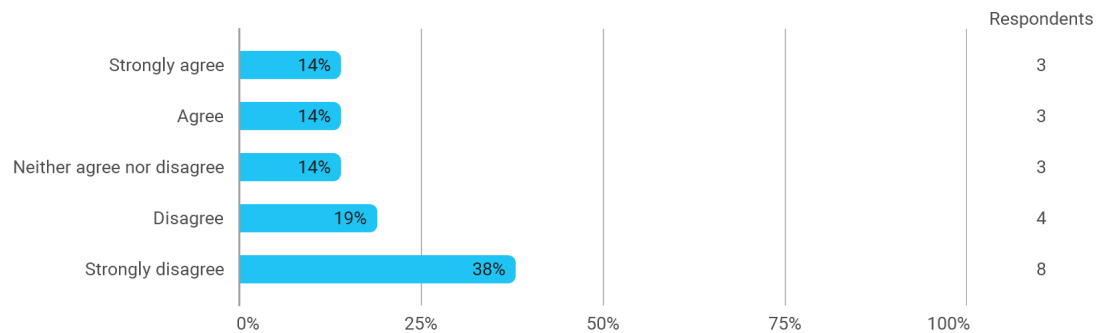
(1) I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.



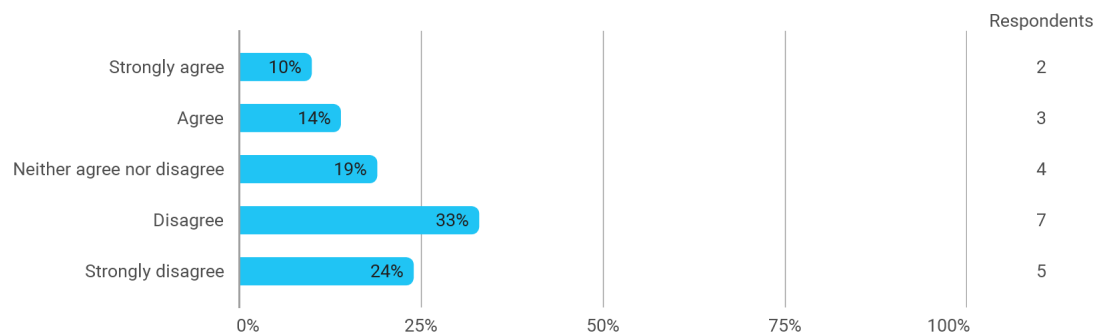
(2) I do not worry about making mistakes in language class.



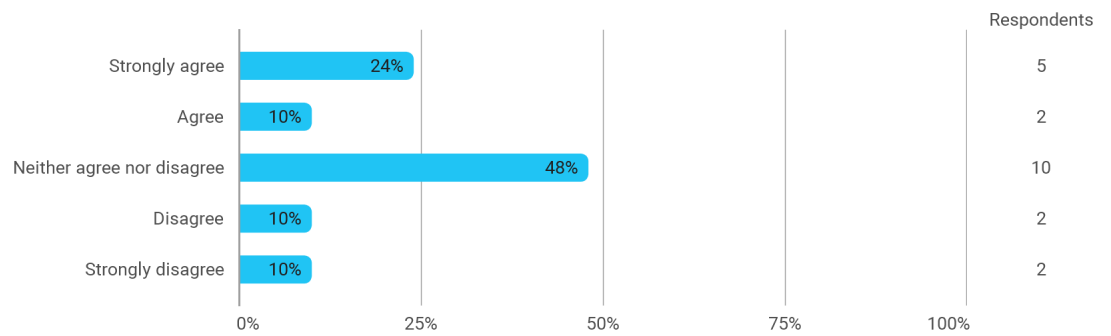
(3) I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.



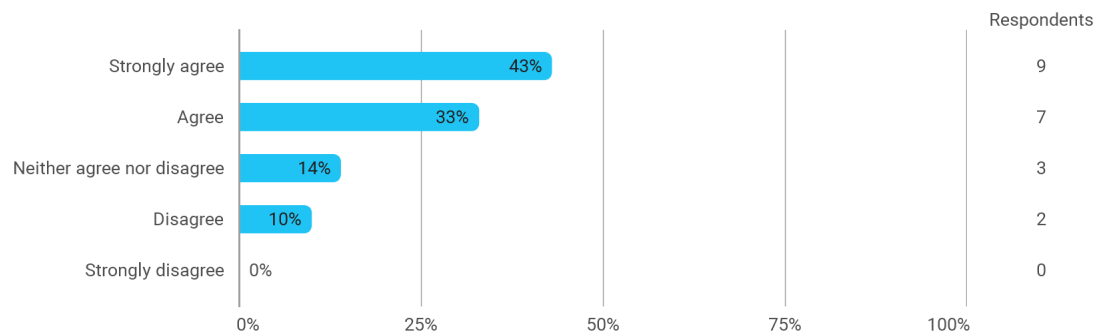
(4) It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in foreign language.



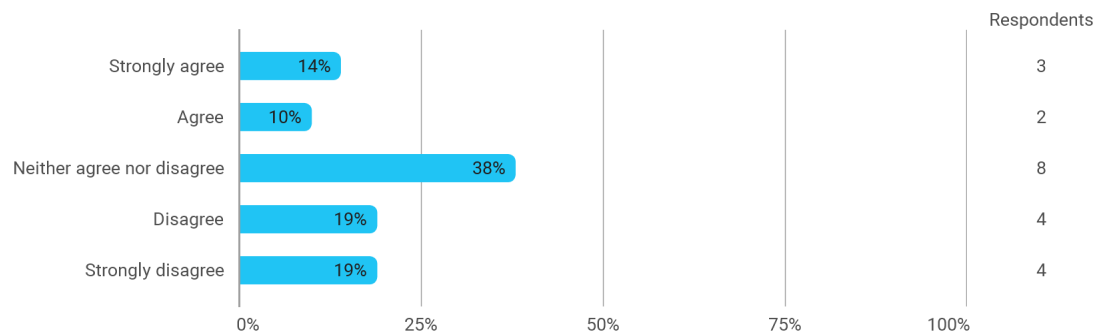
(5) It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes



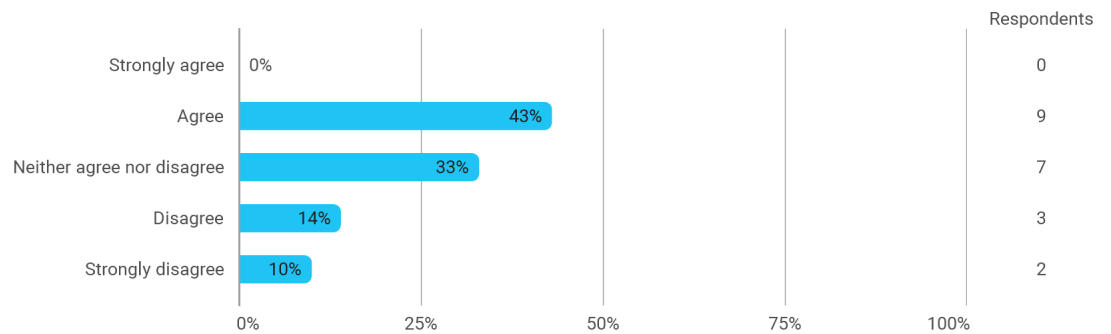
(6) During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.



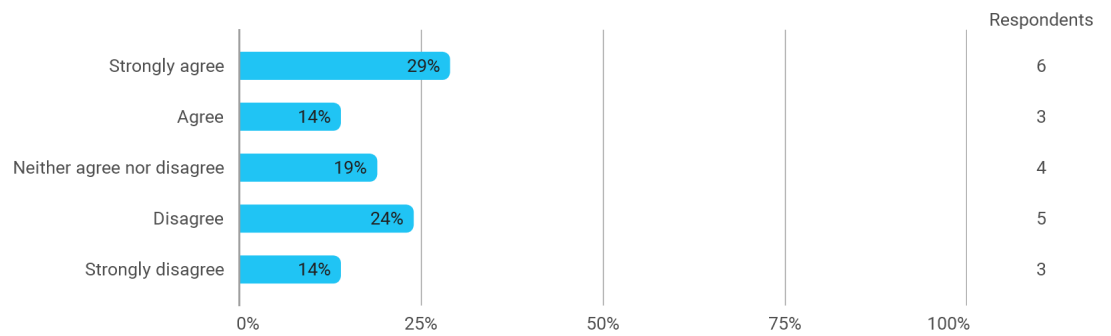
(7) I keep thinking that the other students are better at language than I am.



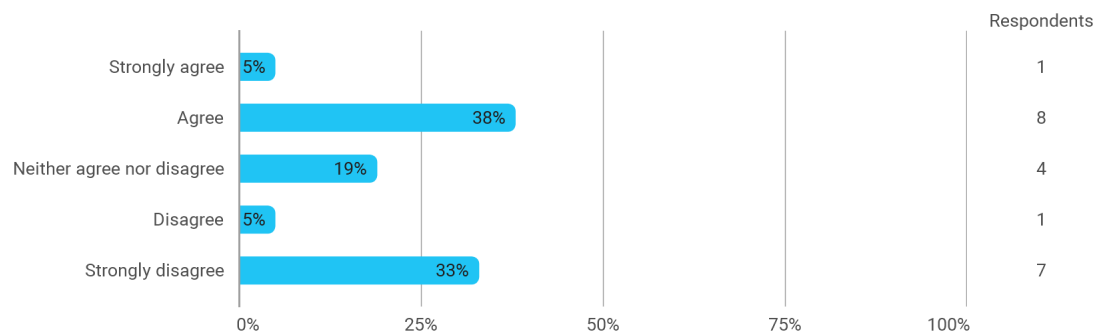
(8) I am usually at ease during my tests in my language class.



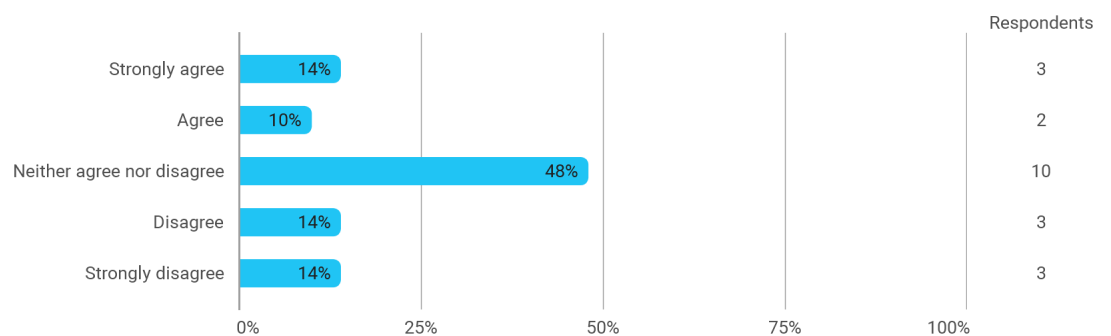
(9) I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.



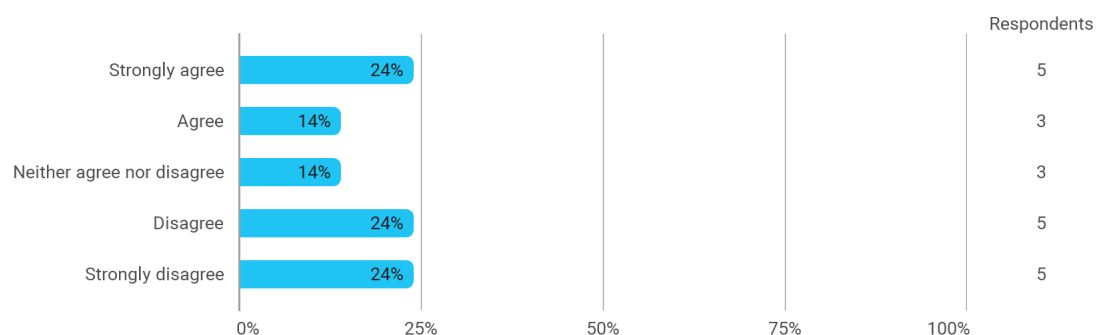
(10) I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class



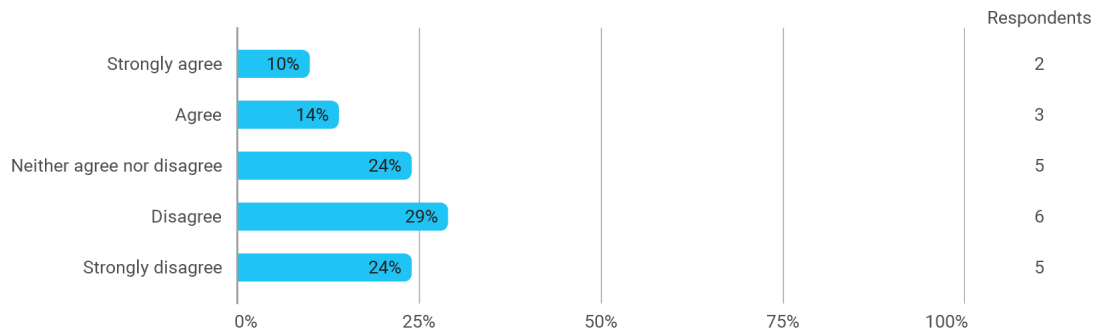
(11) I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language class.



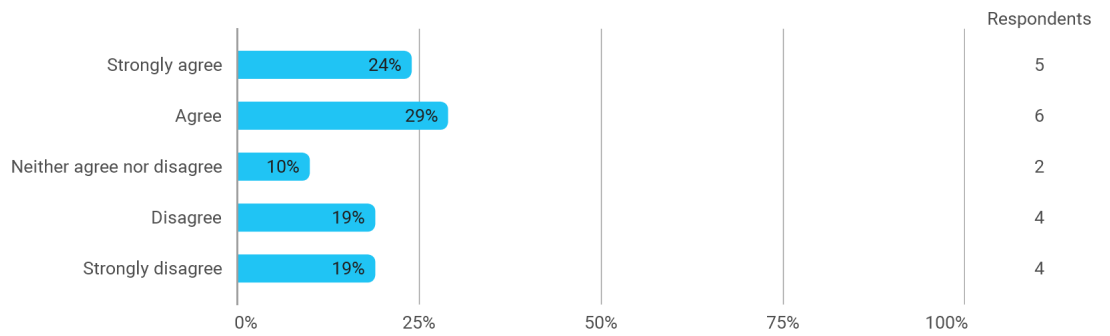
12) In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.



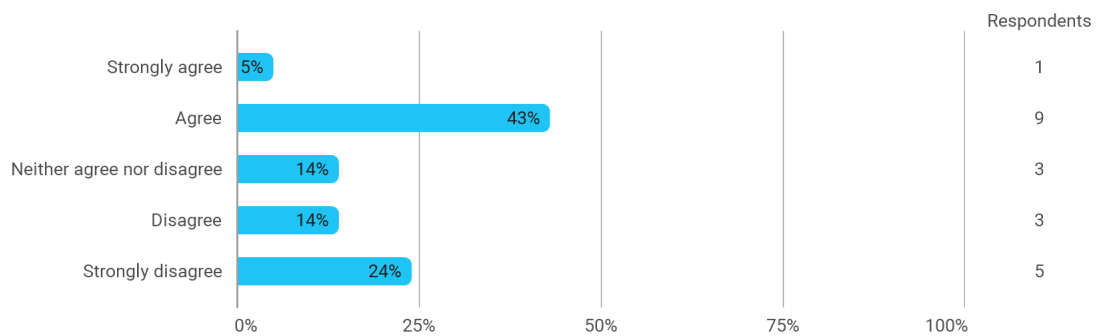
(13) It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.



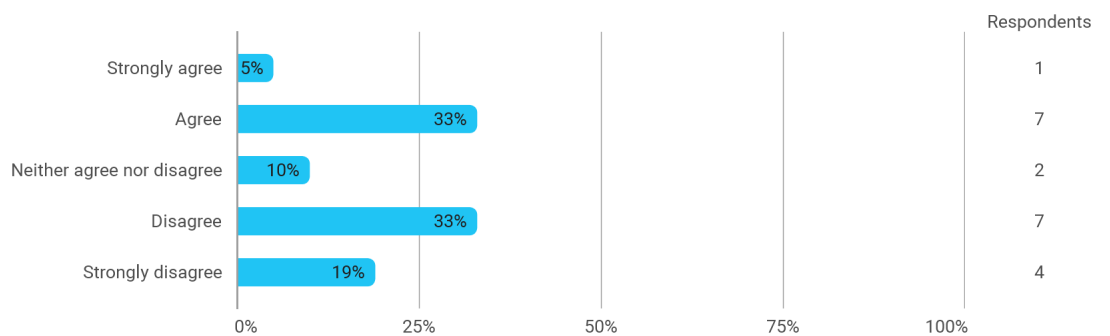
(14) I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.



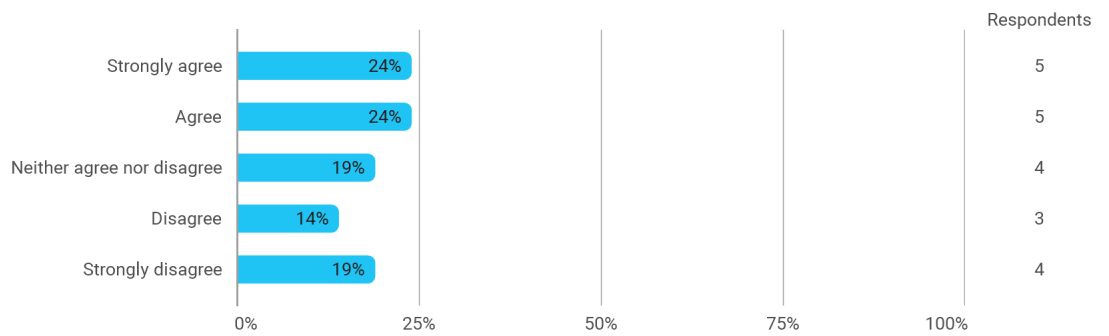
(15) I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.



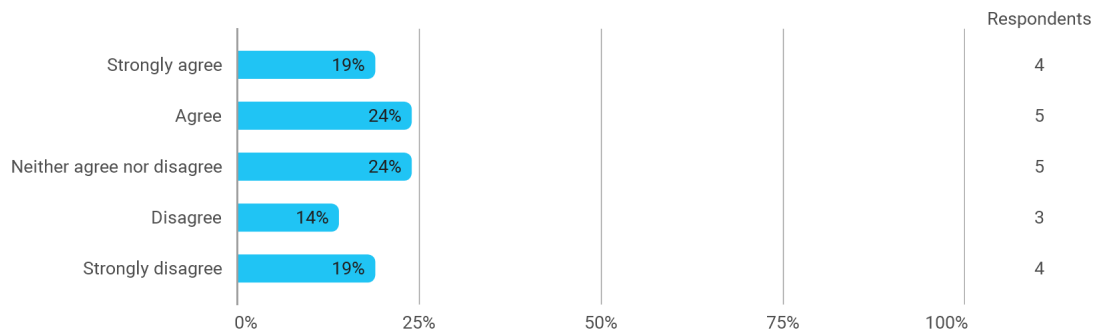
(16) Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it



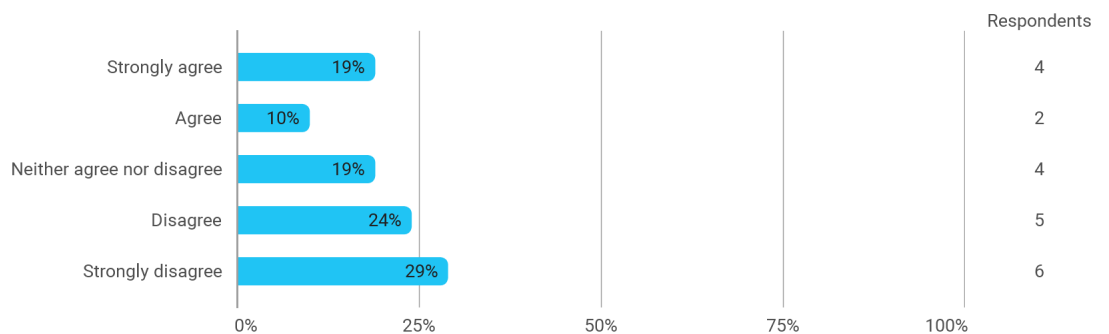
(17) I often feel like not going to my language class.



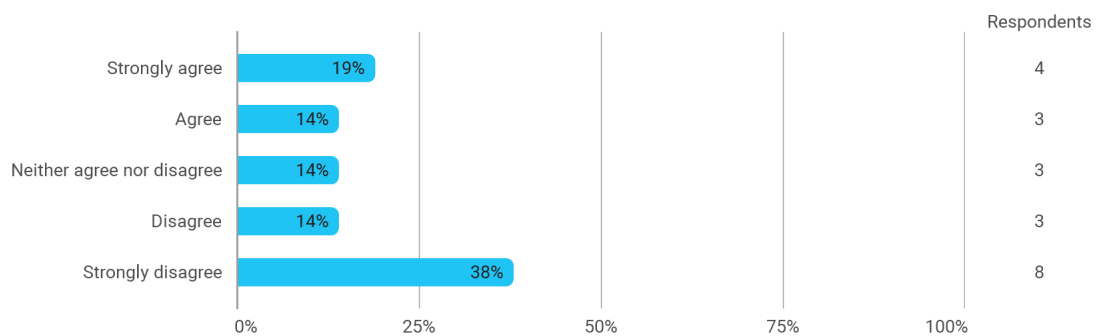
(18) I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.



(19) I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.

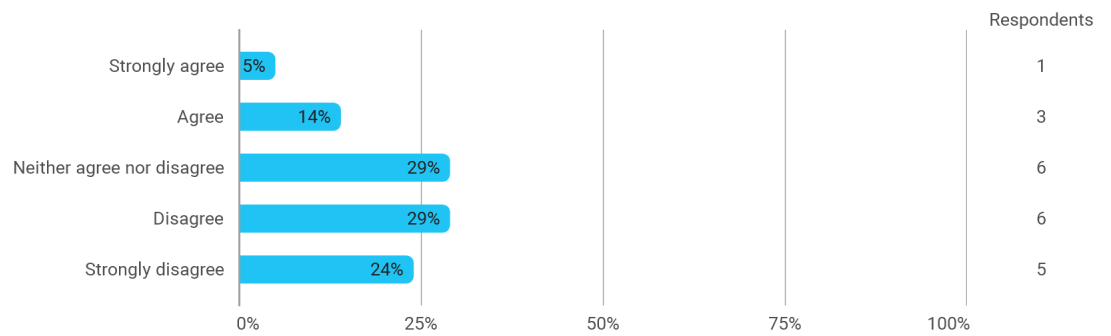


(20) I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.

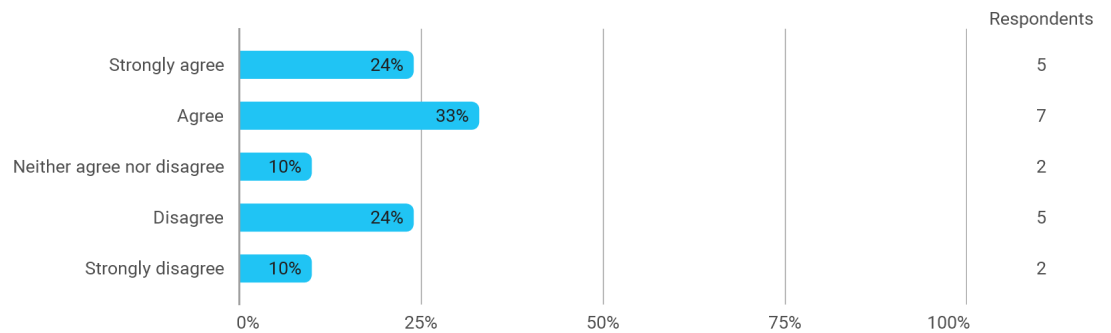




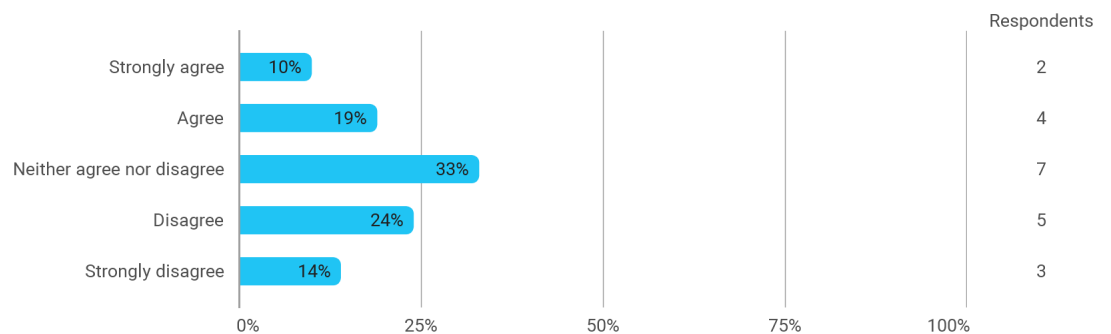
(21) The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.



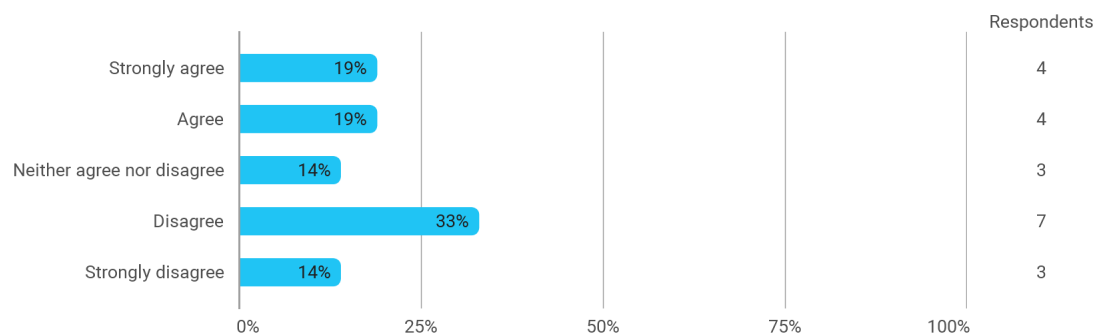
(22) I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.



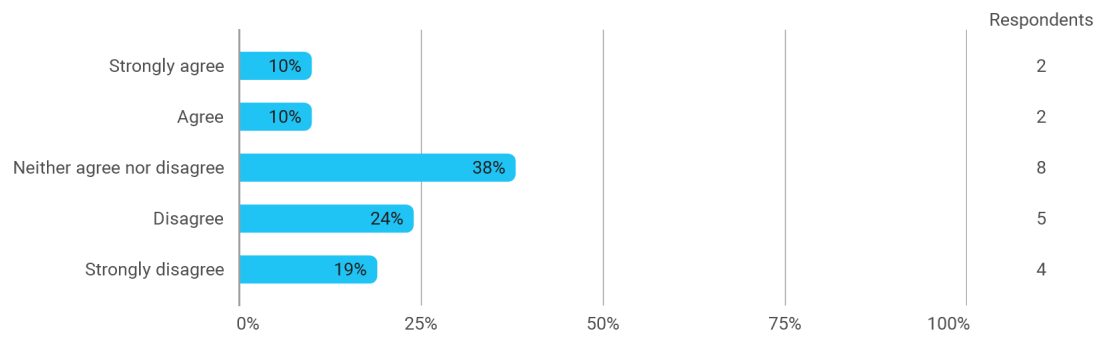
(23) I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.



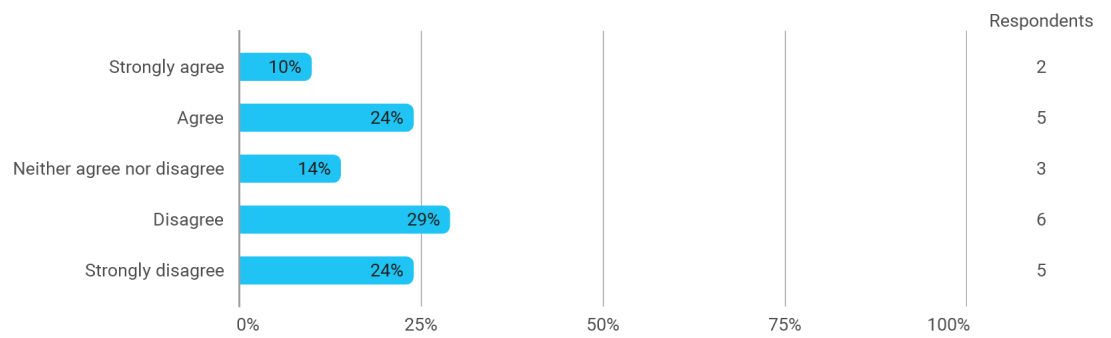
(24) I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.



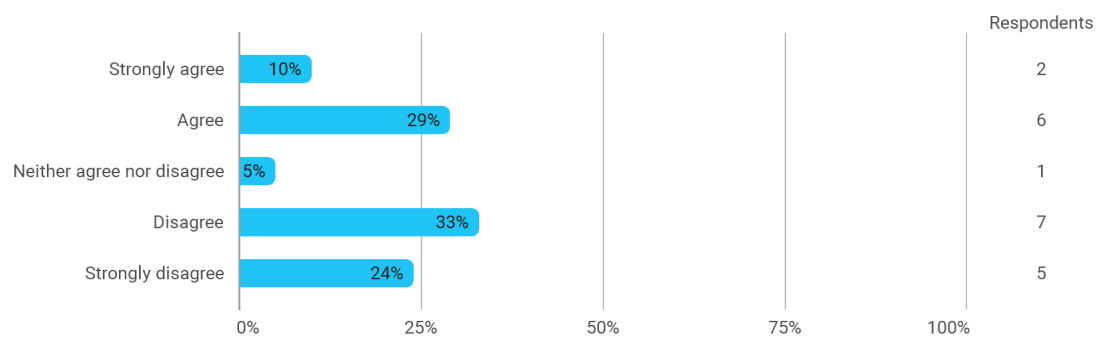
(25) Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.



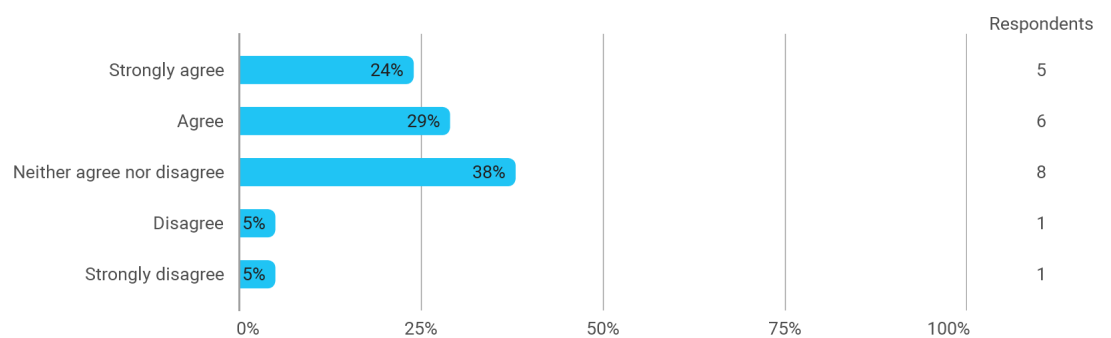
(26) I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.



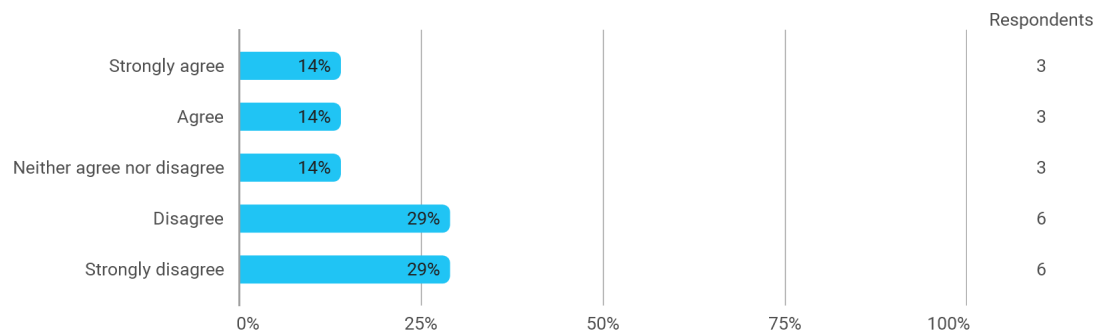
(27) I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.



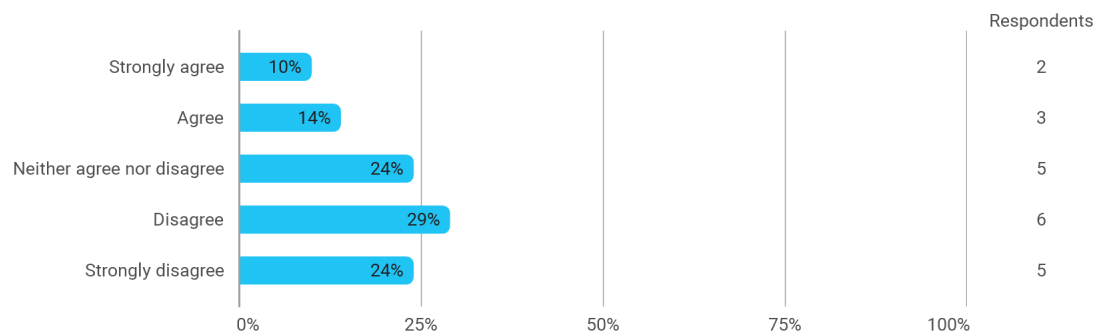
(28) When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.



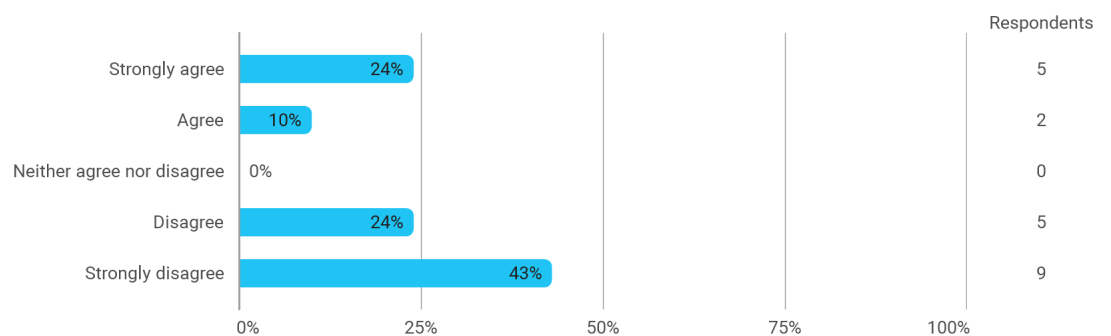
(29) I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.



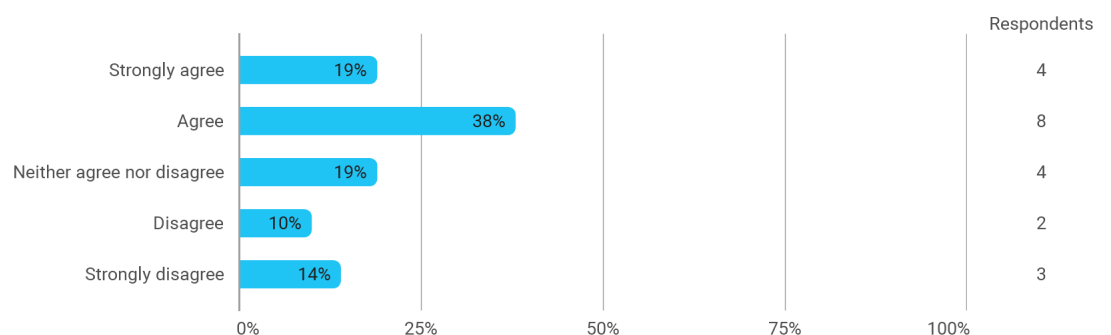
(30) I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.



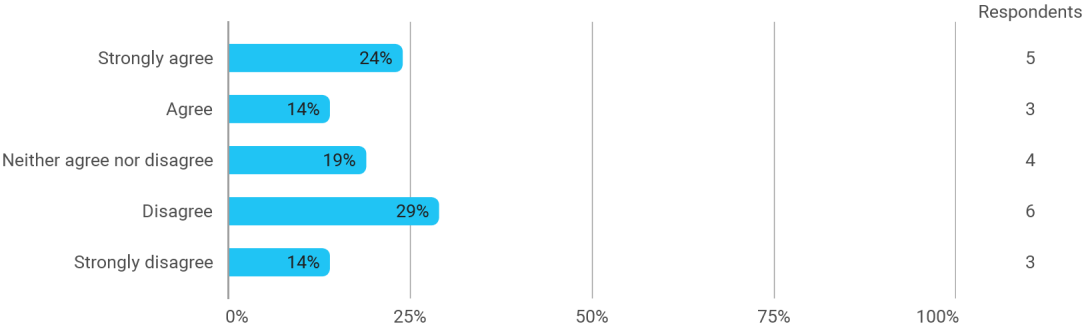
(31) I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.



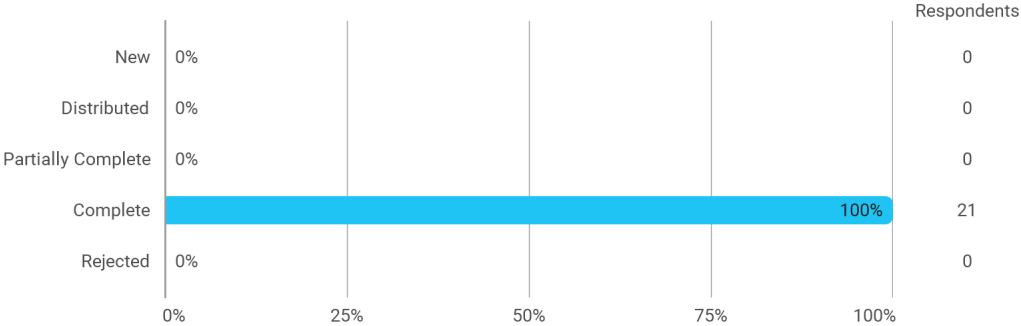
(32) I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.



(33) I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.



Overall Status



## Appendix 4

### Interview questions

1. Identifiserer du deg som gutt eller jente?
2. Hvordan vil du forklare dine engelsk-kunnskaper? Syntes du det er vanskelig, lett, blir du nervøs, føler du deg trygg?
3. Dersom du spiller spill, og snakker med folk på engelsk der: kan du fortelle litt om dette? Hva føler du?
4. Dersom du føler på angst i klasserommet når du skal snakke engelsk:
  - Hvordan håndterer du dette?
  - Hva er den verste oppgaven du kan få?
  - Hva er den beste oppgaven? Hvorfor?
5. Syntes du det er ille å snakke engelsk med engelskmenn? (har det noe å si om de er norske eller engelske?)
6. Syntes du sosiale medier har påvirkning på engelsken din?
  - Er du redd for å bli filma
  - Er du redd for å bli latterliggjort på nett av klassekamerater?
7. Føler du skolen tar hensyn til ditt ubehag rundt engelsk?
8. Hva kan skolen / læreren gjøre?
9. Tror du sosiale medier har påvirkning på elevens skolevegring?
10. Opplever du angst noen andre plasser enn på skolen?
11. Om ja: hvordan takler du dette?
12. Hva er dine følelser rundt å snakke engelsk på zoom?

13. Hvordan vil du forklare dine engelsk-kunnskaper? Syntes du det er vanskelig, lett, blir du nervøs, føler du deg trygg?
14. Dersom du spiller spill, og snakker med folk på engelsk der: kan du fortelle litt om dette? Hva føler du?
15. Dersom du føler på angst i klasserommet når du skal snakke engelsk:
- Hvordan håndterer du dette?
  - Hva er den verste oppgaven du kan få?
  - Hva er den beste oppgaven? Hvorfor?
16. Syntes du det er ille å snakke engelsk med engelskmenn? (har det noe å si om de er norske eller engelske?)
17. Syntes du sosiale medier har påvirkning på engelsken din?
- Er du redd for å bli filma
  - Er du redd for å bli latterliggjort på nett av klassekamerater?
18. Føler du skolen tar hensyn til ditt ubehag rundt engelsk?
19. Hva kan skolen / læreren gjøre?
20. Tror du sosiale medier har påvirkning på elevens skolevegring?
21. Opplever du angst noen andre plasser enn på skolen?
22. Om ja: hvordan takler du dette?
23. Hva er dine følelser rundt å snakke engelsk på zoom?

## Appendix 5

### NSD confirmation form

## Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

“Foreign language anxiety and the digital classroom; How social media and the digitalised classroom affects student anxiety levels in upper secondary vocational studies.”?

Dette er en forespørsel til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt for min masteroppgave derav formålet er å undersøke elevers ubehag og angst knyttet opp mot å lese, samt snakke, engelsk i klasserommet, og hvilke metoder som kan lette på denne vegringen.

I dette skrivet vil du få all informasjon om hva jeg ønsker for dette prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

### **Formål**

Undersøkelsen er en del av en mastergradsoppgave i engelsk ved Universitetet i Agder (UiA). Oppgaven tar for seg det gjensidige forholdet mellom den digitale verden og språklæring, og undersøker hvordan angst og egen identitet er med på å styrke eller svekke engelskundervisningen. Oppgaven har et større fokus rettet mot sosiale medier og hvordan dette er med på å øke en eventuell angstfølelse eleven kan føle i engelsk-timene.

Opplysningene vil kun bli brukt til formålet beskrevet ovenfor. Lyddopptak og personopplysninger vil slettes etter prosjektets slutt.

### **Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?**

Susan Erdmann, min veileder, er ansvarlig for prosjektet. Jeg, Ayla Lee Doughty, vil være ansvarlig for den daglige driften av prosjektet.

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon er Universitetet i Agder.

## **Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet innebærer det utfylling av et kort spørreskjema og gjennomføring av et intervju.

Spørreskjemaet 1 er på 38 spørsmål, og spørreskjema 2 er på 33 spørsmål. De vil stille spørsmål rundt hvordan du opplever skolen, engelsken din, engelsk til andre elever, osv. I all hovedsak vil spørsmålene omhandle din opplevelse og angst rundt det å snakke engelsk i et klasserom.

Intervjuet vil ta ca. 15 minutter.

Under intervjuet vil jeg blant annet spørre deg om:

- Litt generell bakgrunnsinformasjon om dine engelsk-kunnskaper, om du spiller dataspill og hvilke plattformer du bruker.
- Hovedfokus vil ligge på ditt forhold til det engelske språk. Dette innebærer hvordan du har lært det og hva som motiverer deg til å lære det. Videre er jeg interessert i hvor mye du bruker det i løpet av hverdagen.
- Det vil være ett par spørsmål om din identitet og selvoppfattelse. Dette vil ikke gå dypt, men heller dreie seg om ditt forhold til engelsk i klasserommet og din trygghet i klasserommet.
- Hvordan du tror din identitet og personlighet påvirker engelsklæringen din

Intervjuene vil bli tatt opp og lyd materialet vil lagres til prosjektet avsluttes.

## **Det er frivillig å delta**

Det er viktig å understreke at det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Du kan også velge å avstå fra å svare på spesifikke spørsmål under intervjuet.

Dersom du syntes noe er ubehagelig vil det være muligheten til å krysse av for «pass» på alle spørsmålene. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg. Dette er frivillig, og vil være helt anonymt. Du kan trekke deg fra studien ved å henvende deg til Ayla Lee Doughty på telefon (97090737) eller epost ([aylalee98@gmail.com](mailto:aylalee98@gmail.com)).



Din lærer vil ikke kunne spørre om hvorfor du trekker deg, og vil heller aldri se svarene dine. Svarene dine vil heller aldri bli sett av dine medelever.

### **Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har omtalt i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine vil erstattes med en kode som lagres på en egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data. Personopplysninger lagres på PC med adgangsbegrensning.

Det er kun masterstudent, Ayla Lee Doughty, som vil ha tilgang til personopplysninger og råmateriale fra intervjuene. Veilederen min, Susan Lynn Erdmann, vil ha tilgang til anonymisert data. Læreren din vil ikke ha tilgang til noe.

I publikasjonen av prosjektet vil personopplysninger generaliseres og anonymiseres. Det betyr for eksempel at navn vil erstattes med et alias og at spesifikk alder og bosted ikke vil framkomme, men erstattes med for eksempel «20-årene» og «Sørlandet» eller lignende.

Bakgrunnsopplysninger som avdekkes i intervju og spørreskjema vil ikke knyttes til enkeltindivider, men heller være med på å generalisere. Det kan forekomme at et sitat fra et intervju vil stå i oppgaven, men dette vil ikke kunne knyttes til et enkeltindivid.

Forhåndsregler vil bli tatt for å sikre at informasjon ikke kan spores tilbake til én enkelt deltaker.

### **Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?**

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes, noe som etter planen er juli 2022.

Kontaktinformasjon og lydopptak fra intervjuer vil bli slettet.

I publikasjonen av prosjektet vil personopplysninger generaliseres som beskrevet ovenfor.

### **Dine rettigheter**

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg
- få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- få rettet personopplysninger om deg
- få slettet personopplysninger om deg

- sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

### **Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Universitetet i Agder har NSD (Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS) vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

### **Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?**

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

Universitetet i Agder ved prosjektansvarlig Susan Lynn Erdmann and [susan.erdmann@uia.no](mailto:susan.erdmann@uia.no)

Vårt personvernombud ved Universitetet i Agder: Ina Danielsen (epost:

[ina.danielsen@uia.no](mailto:ina.danielsen@uia.no), telefon: 38142140/ 45254401).

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost ([personverntjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personverntjenester@nsd.no)) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Ayla Lee Doughty