

A qualitative study on second language anxiety: Teacher perceptions and alleviation strategies

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The second language classroom has widely been acknowledged by learners as an environment which is highly anxiety generating. Most of the learners express their anxiety of the second language in different forms, to the extent that students simply refuse to speak in English. The results of the earlier research indicate that anxiety was often stated as one of the major causes of decreased motivation to learn, interference to learning and poor performance in the English as a Second Language classroom. This study explores the teachers' perceptions of what causes language anxiety in second language learners, and what strategies teachers use to get students to speak in English in the second language classroom. The study has used semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data from second language teachers of three universities of Sri Lanka and the analysis of this study is based on grounded theory. The findings of the study suggest that language anxiety can stem from learner's own sense of 'self' and their cognitive and language-related difficulties. It also indicates that second language teachers practice a number of different strategies to prompt and help students to speak in English in the classroom. Through these findings, the researcher was able to recommend a variety of strategies to teachers that would help alleviate speaking anxiety felt by second language learners.

Keywords: Language anxiety, Speech anxiety, Second language, Classroom environment, Classroom management