

A Study on Anxiety in Speaking English among Tertiary Level Learners of English as a Second Language

Oshani Alwis

University College of Ratmalana, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka

udayangi93@gmail.com

Speaking English is one of the major challenges for students in Sri Lanka who learn English as a Second Language (ESL). It is often believed that English language speaking skills of students are not prioritised when compared to other language learning skills such as reading, writing and listening. Several studies based on classroom observation have provided ample evidence to show that students learning ESL are often hesitant and anxious when they speak in English. Thus, this research study aims to explore the causes of anxiety felt by tertiary level learners of ESL at the University College of Ratmalana, Sri Lanka. The study will ascertain specific speech situations that cause anxiety and the strategies used by the learners to overcome anxiety when speaking English. The anxiety coping strategies used by the students are further analysed by the teachers of ESL. In the context of this research, the English knowledge of the students who have transferred from primary, secondary to tertiary educational levels will be a factor of consideration when examining their exposure to the target language. This study was conducted according to a research design of a survey that focused upon a selected group of thirty male and female students pursuing the Higher National Diploma in Technology at the University College of Ratmalana. In order to assess the causes of anxiety in speaking English, a questionnaire was distributed amongst the participants, and five teachers teaching English as a Second Language were interviewed to explore effective pedagogical approaches that could be employed to overcome the anxiety of the learners. Accordingly, this research suggests recommendations for both educators and students to overcome the problems of learner anxiety when speaking English as a Second Language.

Keywords: Language anxiety, Nervousness, Tertiary level, ESL, Anxiety coping strategies