

An Assessment of English Language Speaking Anxiety among Undergraduates of the University of Kelaniya

IS Ramanayake

Department of English and Linguistics, University of Ruhuna, Matara, 81000 Sri Lanka

<sramanayake95@gmail.com >

Abstract – English as a second language is an integral part of the Sri Lankan Education system. When learning a second language, a physical, intellectual and emotional involvement is necessary in order to successfully send and interpret linguistic messages. However, research has significantly demonstrated that language anxiety can be identified as a prominent disturbing factor in learning a second/foreign language. The feelings of anxiety, apprehension, and nervousness remain a prevailing phenomenon which has a debilitating effect on the oral performance in learning a second/foreign language. Consequently, this study has attempted to investigate the level of English speaking anxiety, both inside and outside the classroom as well as to explore the major causes of English language speaking anxiety among undergraduates of the University of Kelaniya. Hundred participants contributed as the sample of this study. Both a questionnaire and focus group interviews were utilized to achieve the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was based on Second Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (SLSAS) of Woodrow (2006) to measure the level of English language speaking anxiety. To investigate the major causes that contribute to anxiety, a focus group interview was conducted. The findings of the study revealed that the undergraduates experience a moderate level of anxiety in speaking English and also found that undergraduates' anxiety in speaking English is derived from four major sources: linguistic difficulties, fear of making mistakes and apprehension about others' evaluation, the role of the teachers and the limited exposure to the target language.

Keywords: English as a Second Language, Speaking, Anxiety.