

Second Language Speaking Anxiety: An Investigation into the Learner Perspective

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Abstract – Speaking is proved to be the most anxiety provoking aspect in a Second Language learning situation. Through the preliminary investigations done, it was noticed that almost all the participants in the sample of interest have to tackle the difficult experience of speaking anxiety. Switching from their mother tongue to English has been very challenging as stated by many. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the possible causes of speaking anxiety from the learners' perspective. To accomplish the objectives of this study, a total of 60 students from the Faculty of Science, University of Ruhuna were selected. The data gathered were analyzed through a mixed approach that consisted of both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods. The research findings denoted that earlier negative experiences of the learners have made a significant impact on their present perceptions. Anxiety created by the insecurity of being mocked at for making mistakes by their classmates too was highlighted. Besides, difficulty in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, lack of self-confidence, low esteem, stressful classrooms and lack of support and guidance from the teacher have been identified as the major causes of Second Language speaking anxiety. Hence, in the light of their perspectives, this study emphasizes the need of creating an English learning classroom which stimulates and inspires students to practise the target language explicitly and implicitly, through anxiety lessening diverse strategies and a variety of activities that boost their enthusiasm.

Keywords: English as a Second Language (ESL), Learner perspective, Speaking anxiety