

## Alleviating Speech Anxiety through Affirmative Feedback in ESL Classroom Speaking Activities

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**Abstract** – The fields of foreign language anxiety, speech anxiety and affirmative feedback have been at the forefront of teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) for some years. Language learners usually express anxiety, apprehension and nervousness when learning a new language. Foreign language anxiety is a significant element that negatively impacts the language acquisition process. Concurrently, affirmative feedback is noteworthy in language learning and affects the learner's performance with a range of benefits. Developing undergraduates' speaking competence in the English as a Second Language (ESL) milieu is one of the most challenging tasks confronted by ESL teachers. Although group and pair work and mingling activities are constantly deployed to achieve the Intended Learning Outcome (ILO), the phenomenon of speech anxiety still affects the ESL learner in his/her performance in speech. This study investigates the speech anxiety against the affirmative feedback in the ESL classroom speaking activities of fifty-seven weaker students who scored 0-33 at the grading test of the Intensive English Language Course offered to the new entrants to the Faculty of Business Studies and Finance of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka. The mark they got out of twenty for the initial speaking test and the final test was compared to see their progress in speaking with the anxiety factors and given feedback. The research instruments used to collect the data included the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) and shadowed corrective strategies as well. The significant difference between mean values of the marks they obtained for the initial speaking test (1.11) and the final test (11.96) specifies the striking progress in their speaking skill. FLCAS mean value at the beginning was (49.2) and the end (19.5). When the feedback obtained through the questionnaire was analysed, it also revealed that 94% of students liked this approach, and 97% of students believed that they improved their speaking ability. More importantly, there was a positive

correlation between the marks they obtained and their attitude towards the affirmative feedback strategy.

**Keywords:** Foreign language anxiety, speech anxiety, affirmative feedback