

**ANXIETY IN SPEAKING ENGLISH AMONG TERTIARY
LEVEL LEARNERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND
LANGUAGE**

AUTHOR'S NAME- OSHANI ALWIS, POSTGRADUATE STUDENT IN M.A.
LINGUISTICS, UNIVERSITY OF KELANIYA, DALUGAMA, SRI LANKA.

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Abstract: In this research study, it is aimed to explore the causes of anxiety, specific situations that causes anxiety and the strategies which might be used by students of University College of Ratmalana, Sri Lanka to overcome anxiety in speaking English as a second language. When analyzing this context, different educational scenarios may consider such as English knowledge of the students who have transferred from secondary education to tertiary education, students who have not gained a sufficient basic English knowledge through primary education and the students who have not improved their English knowledge at the secondary education. The research study followed a group of 30, selected male and female students in the University College of Ratmalana, Sri Lanka to assess the causes of anxiety in speaking English as a second language. To collect the data, a questionnaire was designed by the researcher with six direct questions. As per this results obtained the common causes of anxiety in speaking English among the students were ‘lack of confidence’ about the English language, ‘lack of proper knowledge about the grammar rules’ and ‘lack of opportunity to practice’ the language. In this study, it is suggested several recommendations for educators and students to solve the problem of students’ anxiety. Educators might consider focusing and promoting strategies of continuous practice of English language and self-evaluation methods to access language proficiency.

Index Terms :anxiety, tertiary, second language

I. INTRODUCTION

In order to build the self -confidence of the students in tertiary level, it is compulsory to speak in English. According to an individual student’s skills, capabilities the effort will be vary. When considering the facilities and the technology available, every individual should have to develop their English language proficiency to sufficient level. Lack of proficiency in English language demonstrates the insufficient commitment of the particular student towards the improving the English language as the secondary language as well as the communication method in current context. One of the opportunity for learning English in secondary level student are the oral contribution in the classroom and during English teaching and learning session. In light of this situation, many factors have been identified as the cause of such issue to occur among the student teachers. Thus, these contributing factors will be further investigated in this research in order to come up with means for effective change (Edgington, 2004).

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

In order to fulfill the needs of this research study, following questions were designed.

1. What are the causes of anxiety in speaking English among tertiary level students?
2. What are the specific situations that cause anxiety in speaking English among tertiary level students?
3. What are the strategies which might be used by students to overcome anxiety?

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to investigate the anxiety in speaking English among tertiary level students (Krause, Bochner and Duchesne, 2003). It is aimed to explore the causes of anxiety, specific situations that causes anxiety and the strategies which might be used by students to overcome the anxiety.

By identifying these three aspects, it will be able to overcome the barriers in speaking English as a secondary language. The objectives of the study,

1. To find out the causes of anxiety in speaking English among tertiary level students.
2. To explore the specific situations that causes anxiety speaking English among tertiary level students.
3. To find out the strategies which might be used by students to overcome anxiety.

IV. METHODOLOGY AND EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

The way that research was carried out is reviewed in this chapter. Further, it is aimed to discuss in detail about the subjects of this study, the instruments used to carry out this study, how the data had been collected, and finally the way the data had been analyzed.

Through this chapter, it is described precisely the whole process of the research which consists from distributing the instrument, conducting and collecting the data and the way of analyzing all the data related to this study (Phillips and Soltis, 1998).

It was selected the 15 male students and 15 female students in University College of Ratmalana. The age category of the sample is between 20 years to 25 years. The questionnaire was consisted of six (06) open ended survey questions pertaining to the survey topic. It was prepared to obtain the reason/s from respondents in answering the related question.

V. DATA COLLECTION

This survey was carried out using survey questionnaire. The answered were written in the space provided in the questionnaire paper itself. Hence when this questionnaire was distributed to all the selected students, they were allowed 20 minutes to answer all the questions.

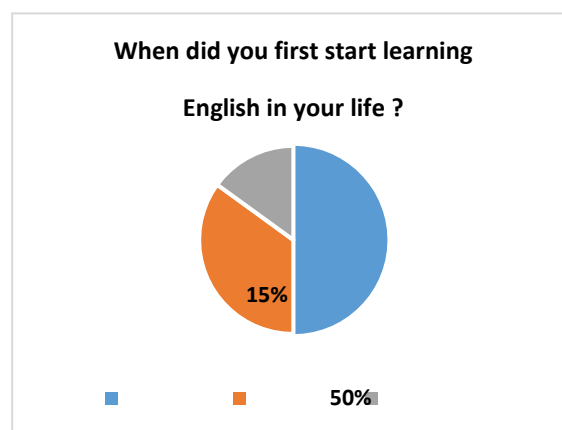
VI. DATA ANALYSIS

After all the data had been collected, an analysis has been carried out to conclude all the findings and collected the data into their percentage. This is done to come out with a list of charts discussing each question in the questionnaire (Singer, Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek, 2006).

VII. RESULTS

This chapter comprises information gathered in survey through the questionnaire.

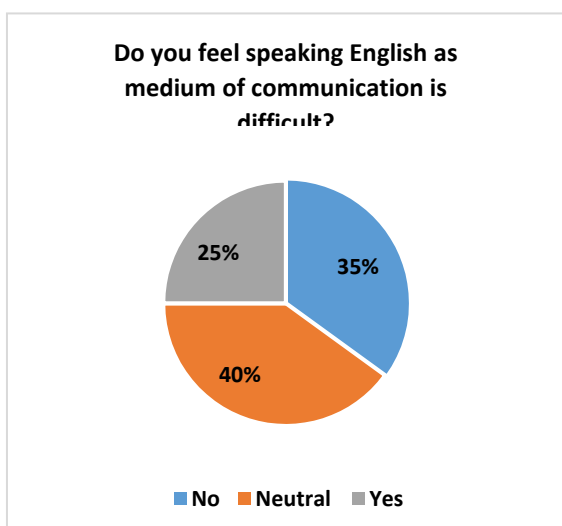
- a. Question: When did you first start learning English in your life and what can you say about the experience?



50% students were answered as 'primary classes' (age 3-11). 35% students were answered as 'nursery' (up to age 3). 15% students were answered as 'secondary' (after age 12). They have provided different answers as pleasant experience,

unforgettable experience, bad experience and some students regret about the past about their time wasting without having good educators and teachers to provide them with an ample knowledge in the language.

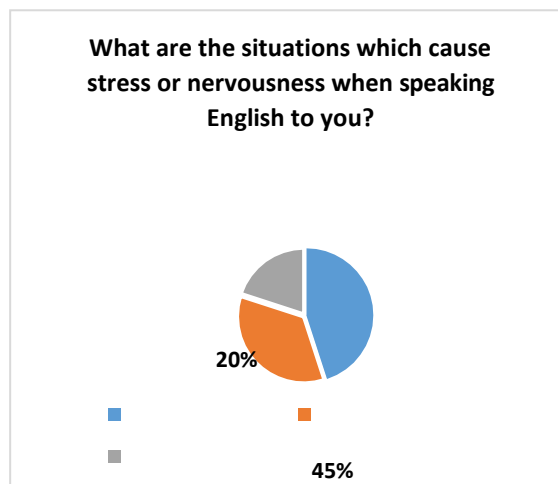
- b. Question: Do you feel speaking English as a medium of communication is difficult? What are the problems or difficulties you have when speaking English?



35% students were answered as 'no.' 40% students were answered as 'average'. And 25% students were answered as 'yes.' They have provided different answers as lack of the knowledge about grammar, lack of the knowledge in vocabulary, nervousness and lack of support from school, teachers, parents and friends.

- c. Question: What are the situations which cause stress or nervousness

when speaking English to you?



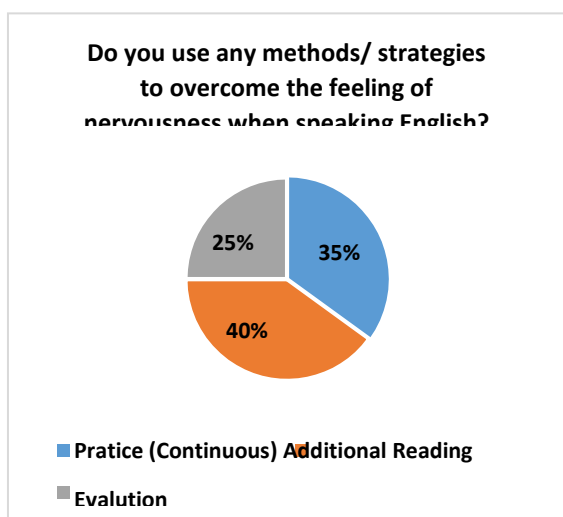
45% students were answered as 'public Speaking'. 35% students were answered as 'daily practice' at home and office and 20% students were answered as 'examinations.' They have provided different answers such as grammar issues, vocabulary issues, lack of practice at home and office and less motivation.

- d. Question: What do you think are the reasons for you to feel nervous or scared when speaking English?



40% students were answered as 'lack of confidence' about the English language. 30% students were answered as 'lack of proper knowledge about the grammar rules.' 30% students were answered as 'lack of opportunity' to practice with the persons who are having good speaking ability.

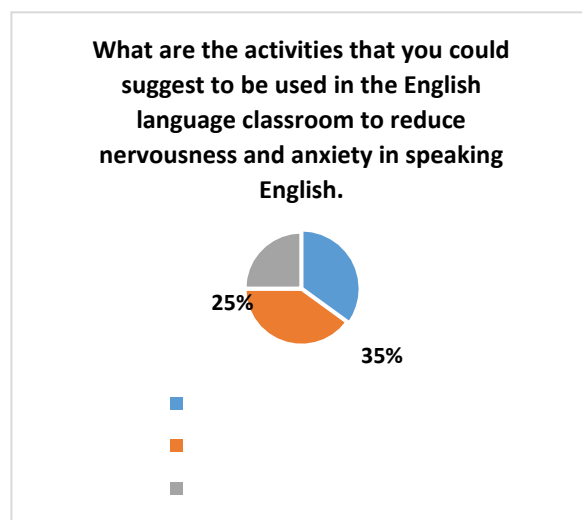
- e. Question: Do you use any methods/ strategies to overcome the feeling of nervousness when speaking English?



35% students were answered as 'continuous practice' about the English language. 40% students were answered as 'additional reading and listening'. And 25% students were answered as 'own evaluation.'

- f. Question: What are the activities that you could suggest to be used in the English language classroom to reduce

nervousness and anxiety in speaking English?



35% students were answered as 'communication'. 40% students were answered as 'improving writing, reading, listening and speaking skills. 25% students were answered as 'continuous conversation'.

VIII. DISCUSSION

This chapter comprises information gathered in survey through the questionnaire and the analysis and the discussion is made pertaining to each question asked in the questionnaire.

- a. Question: When did you first start learning English in your life and what can you say about the experience?

50% students were answered as primary classes (Age 3-11). 35% students were answered as nursery (Up to age 3). 15% students were answered as secondary (after age 12). They have provided different answers as pleasant experience, unforgettable experience, bad experience and some students regret about the past about their time wasting without having good educators and teachers.

As per the results obtained, it is appeared that majority of the sample considers that English speaking ability and basic knowledge should be obtained from early childhood. Educational researchers also have been pointed out with the developing human brains, these learning should be done and it will be very effective. The child is having a free mind; he/she has an ability to keep in mind what he/she is learning. Hence educators should be clever and skillful to identify the required level of the student to educate and that type of teaching will be very effective. Very few of the students have answered as post primary stage which signifies learning will not be successful at age after 12 years for this type of language speaking compared to the early childhood language acquisition. It will be hard and the children will have to take much effort to understand the language. In addition, daily practice is important to improve the English language speaking ability.

- b. Question: Do you feel speaking English as medium of communication is difficult? What are the problems or difficulties you have when speaking English?

35% students were answered as 'no.' 40% students were answered as 'average.' 25% students were answered as 'yes.' They have provided different answers as lack of the knowledge about grammar, Lack of the knowledge of Vocabulary, nervousness and lack of support from school, teachers, parents and friends.

In this question it is appeared that students have pointed out the problems of speaking English as lack of grammar knowledge, lack of adequate knowledge in vocabulary and less motivation. Hence it is appeared that there should be positive environment to develop the language learning skills.

- c. Question: What are the situations which cause stress or nervousness when speaking English to you?

45% students were answered as 'public speaking'. 35% students were answered as 'daily practice at home and office.' 20% students were answered as 'examinations.' They have provided different answers such as grammar issues, vocabulary issues, lack of practice at home and office and less motivation.

In this question 45 % of the sample has pointed out as public speaking. And 35% as daily practice. The teachers should attempt to direct the students in continuous communication instead of the rare speaking. It will help to students to memorize certain words which are used in daily conversations.

- d. Question: What do you think are the reasons for you to feel nervous or scared when speaking English?

40% students were answered as 'lack of Confidence' about the English language. 30% students were answered as 'lack of proper knowledge about the grammar rules.' 30% students were answered as 'lack of opportunity to practice with the persons who are having good speaking ability. The results obtained reveals the language scenarios of lack of confidence and lack of proper knowledge about the grammar rules are major reasons for feeling nervousness when speaking English

- e. Question: Do you use any methods/ strategies to overcome the feeling of nervousness when speaking English?

35% students were answered as 'continuous practice' of the English language. 40% students were answered as 'additional reading and listening.' 25% students were answered as 'own evaluation.' Additional reading and listening is suggested as most suitable strategies for improving the English speaking ability according to the results obtained.

- f. Question: What are the activities that you could suggest to be used in the English language classroom to reduce nervousness and anxiety in speaking English?

35% students were answered as 'communication'. 40% students were answered as 'improving writing, reading, listening and speaking skills.' 25% students were answered as 'continuous conversation'. Communication, improving writing, reading, listening and speaking skills and continuous conversations are suggested as effective activities which should use in class rooms.

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CONCLUSION

As per this results obtained for the research study and analysis done it can be concluded,

The causes of anxiety in speaking English among tertiary level students in academic contexts are different from student to student. But common reasons are 'lack of confidence' about the English language, 'lack of proper knowledge about the grammar rules' and 'lack of opportunity to practice' the language with the persons who are having good speaking ability.

The specific situations that cause anxiety in speaking English among tertiary level students in academic contexts are identified as public Speaking, daily practice at home and office, examinations.

The strategies which might be used by students to overcome anxiety are identified as the continuous practice the English language, additional reading and listening and own evaluation about the language proficiency.

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