

## **A study investigating speaking anxiety among sports science undergraduates of the University of Kelaniya**

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The relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance is complex and multifaceted. The ability to communicate fluently in English is crucial for many English as a Second Language (ESL) learners because of anxiety. This study explores the relationship between speaking anxiety and performance among the first-year Sport Science ESL undergraduates at the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. The primary objective of this research is to investigate the reasons for speaking anxiety and its effect on speaking performance of the first-year Sport Science ESL undergraduates at the University of Kelaniya. This study included 50 first-year undergraduates from the Sports Science Department of the Faculty of Science and the English Language Teaching Lecturer of the course English for Sciences, using purposive sampling. The data collection was performed by incorporating questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and observations. The study was conducted using a mixed-method research approach, where the collected qualitative data using semi-structured interviews and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis, while SPSS 23.0 was used for analyzing descriptive statistics gathered from questionnaires, including frequency, means and standard deviations. Further, paired sample T-tests were used to analyze the quantitative data collected through the results of the speaking tests. As a result of the findings, it was determined that there was a lack of speaking performance due to anxiety, and the undergraduates faced challenges in developing their speaking skills, such as a lack of self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, feeling nervous, panicking, and difficulties in applying grammar and vocabulary knowledge in spontaneous speech. Thus, the research findings can be used to identify the reasons for speaking anxiety and this can be used as a guideline to reduce speaking anxiety of the Sport Science undergraduates by upgrading the English language syllabus of the Sports Science Department with more speaking activities.

**Keywords:** English as a second language, First year Sports Science undergraduates, Reasons for speaking anxiety, Speaking anxiety, Speaking performance

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