

## **Testing the confidence level of international students of a university in the USA when speaking in English**

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The research was carried out to see whether the international students studying in a western university lack confidence to speak in English in an environment where English is the most dominant language. This is a follow up/extended research of a study which has been carried out in Sri Lanka over 10 years that repeatedly shows that Sri Lankans lack confidence to speak in English due to the attitudinal problems of the society. The researcher was interested in exploring further on the issue of the need for 'confidence' to speak in English in settings other than Sri Lanka. A group of international students studying at the undergraduate level in a leading university in the USA showed that 'confidence' to speak in English is an issue for them as well. The sample was comprised of a majority of Chinese students along with Saudi Arabian, South Korean students and a minority from countries such as Russia, Nigeria, Taiwan, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Brazil. Their interactions in both formal (academic) and informal (outside academic) settings in the United States of America (USA) were determined by their use of English. In other words, lack of confidence in speaking in English seemed to limit their interactions with native speakers of English both in academic and non-academic settings. The study revealed that the students were not very comfortable with native speakers of English in their informal settings whereas with non-native speakers of English they were comfortable in similar settings. Also, the most useful skill in relation to English for them was listening in both formal and informal settings. The research shows that the confidence to speak in English is an issue for non-native speakers of English in native speaker-dominant environments just as it is for Sri Lankans within the Sri Lankan context.

Keywords: Confidence, English, Speak, Setting, Formal, Informal