

## **A Study of Fear and Stage Fright in English Oral Communication among Academics in the Humanities and Social Sciences**

**S. G. S. Samaraweera**  
**University of Ruhuna**  
*sanjaya@eltu.ruh.ac.lk*

Although most academics in the humanities and social sciences use reference materials in English in organizing their lectures conducted in Sinhala, they suffer a great deal of fear and stage fright while speaking English at private or official meetings and at public forums. Some have even completed their postgraduate studies through the medium of English but their oral communication remains very poor as a result of their language anxiety.

The objective of the present paper is to discuss the major causes of such language anxiety which, in effect, are the major findings of a survey conducted by the researcher in relation to a group of such academics from the Humanities and Social Sciences in the University of Ruhuna. The methodology comprised interviews, a formal questionnaire, and discussions with about seventy academics from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in the University of Ruhuna. The findings reveal several conditions which affect negatively in their communication in their working milieu: the standards imposed by the elite in the stratified society of Sri Lanka upon the quality of the English spoken in public, the negative attitudes the fellow academics hold towards English oral communication, lack of support from the environment where they have to practice their English, lack of confidence they suffer as personalities while trying to speak English, lack of integrative and instrumental motivation caused by the professional needs of their duties, and their own complacency and lethargy caused by the professional security they enjoy without any competency in oral communication in English. All these barriers and difficulties create an environment where the academics in Humanities and Social Sciences suffer from fear and stage fright in oral English communication and as a result the competency level of their oral communication in English remains poor.

***Key words:*** *English, Oral communication, Education*