

## LANGUAGE ATTITUDE ANXIETY AND BUILDING CONFIDENCE TO SPEAK ENGLISH

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Language Attitude Anxiety (LAA) stems from the societal attitudes that are prevalent in a society towards languages and the speakers of those languages. The English language, being the then colonial master's language shifted its proprietorship to the US and never lost its power globally. The attitudes prevalent in the society towards fluent and non-fluent speakers of English affect both alike, resulting in the fluent speakers appointing themselves as the watch-dog of the language while the non-fluent speakers lack confidence to speak English for the fear of being ridiculed in society. Having taught English as a second/foreign language over 70 years after independence, Sri Lanka and her post-colonial neighbours have not produced satisfactory results. Learners in Sri Lanka, with a history of 10 years of English language learning behind them, step out into society unable to communicate in English. A large-scale study conducted in 4 countries, namely Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh revealed that learners suffered from Language Attitude Anxiety resulting in a lack of confidence to speak English. This is as a result of the fear of being judged and laughed at by 'others', the watchdog, whether present or imaginary. The findings clearly manifest in the necessity of shifting the centrality of English language teaching in Sri Lanka and her neighbours, towards building learner confidence to speak English and away from teaching grammar or structures. To this end, we propose a specially designed course "Building Confidence to Speak English" with a specific teaching methodology and assessment regime that caters to the dire context-specific need for eliminating the fear to speak English in the post-colonial English language learner.

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