



Group Work in Online-Mode ESL Learning; Benefits and Challenges

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Today online-mode teaching and learning methods are in vogue all over the world, especially in higher education. The COVID-19 pandemic caused it to become indispensable in Sri Lanka as well. As an interactive element in online ESL pedagogy, online group work is increasingly becoming significant. Although numerous research studies have proved the benefits of online group activities, their implementation poses several challenges. In relation to the background, this research study examines how ESL learners perceive the efficacy of online group work in their studies. Accordingly, this study was conducted based on the purposive sampling method within a quantitative framework, with 32 participants attached to the Faculty of Science, University of Kelaniya. In this study, two questionnaires were used to investigate the attitudes of the participants in relation to the benefits and challenges they had during online group work. In relation to the findings, most of the learners found that online group work is beneficial in their learning process. According to the results, the majority of the participants (59.3% and 53.1%) strongly agreed with the statements that online group work assist them in sharing knowledge and ideas among others and stimulating creativity. Further, most significantly 84.3% of the participants have agreed with the fact that online group work facilitates individual student's learning about evaluation. However, the findings manifest that difficulty with communication, lack of feedback, lack of leadership, issues with technology, lack of time and reluctance to participate actively as the major challenges. Conclusively, it is proven that online group work can be implemented as a successful tool in TESL contexts, but it is advisable to amalgamate it with in-person group work as and when it is possible.

Keywords: Online learning, Covid 19-pandemic, Online group work

