

Perceptions of Teachers and Students towards the Use of Zoom Breakout Rooms in an ESL Context- An Exploratory Study

SA Gurusinghe, AS Karunarathne, and IS Ramanayake

Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Ruhuna, Matara, 81000, Sri Lanka.

Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Sri Jayawardenepura, 10250, Sri Lanka.

Department of English and Linguistics, University of Ruhuna, Matara, 81000, Sri Lanka.

<sandaliashara95@gmail.com>

Abstract - The use of technology in education has become an integral part of the teaching and learning process due to the current pandemic situation in Sri Lanka. Technology enables teachers and learners to adapt computer based classroom activities through online platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams for the continuation of the education system. Out of the learning applications, Zoom is a convenient and user-friendly application. This study explores the perception of teachers and learners in using Breakout Room option in Zoom application. The data was collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews from 15 students following the English Intensive Course in the Faculty of Management & Finance, University of Ruhuna and 3 teachers who were assigned to this course. The purposive sampling was conducted until data saturation. All the gathered qualitative data was subjected to thematic analysis. Major findings were identified as positive and negative perceptions of teachers and learners towards Breakout Rooms. The researchers brought to notice that learners' positive interaction, peer learning, less anxiety in expressing themselves, collaborative learning, teacher as a facilitator as positive perceptions whereas, inability in accessing Breakout Rooms at once, connectivity problems, impossibility of continuation in recording the sessions, not being techno-savvy, bringing lame excuses when they are given opportunity to speak as negative remarks. Based upon the evidence, it can be concluded that there was a higher satisfaction in students towards Zoom Breakout Rooms.

Keywords: Zoom Breakout Room Option, Perceptions, ESL