

The Effectiveness of Small Group Discussions in Teaching Speaking as a Skill for Grade 6 English as a Second Language Learners in Sri Lanka

M Faiz^{1#} and HMN Bandara¹

¹Department of English Language Teaching, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

#mahrifaiz636@gmail.com

Teaching speaking skills to English as a Second Language (ESL) learners poses a significant challenge, especially in contexts where English is not the primary mode of communication. Among various pedagogical approaches, small group discussions have gained attention for their potential to enhance speaking proficiency. The present study aims to examine the effectiveness of small group discussions in improving the speaking proficiency of Grade 6 ESL learners in Sri Lanka while identifying the impact of small group discussions on student engagement and confidence in using ESL. The study employed a mixed method approach and an experimental research design. Accordingly, sixteen Grade 6 ESL learners with first language Tamil from Al-Mubarak National School were selected as the research sample using a simple random sampling method. During data collection, the study used both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Quantitative data was collected through pre and post-tests while qualitative data was collected through observations. The quantitative data was analyzed by the researchers using MS Excel and the qualitative data was analyzed through a thematic analysis. The findings reveal that small group discussions significantly improve language skills, student engagement, vocabulary building, conceptualization of meaning, and constructs self-confidence in utilizing ESL. Thus, integrating small group discussions into the ESL curriculum can be instrumental in nurturing a supportive learning environment conducive to linguistic growth and learner empowerment.

Keywords: *English as a second language, small group discussions, teaching speaking as a skill*