

Pedagogical Requirements for ESL Instructors in Online Language Teaching: Practices and Perceptions from a Sri Lankan University

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Abstract

This paper covers pedagogical requirements of the online teaching. Despite its importance, the focus on pedagogical requirements of online language teachers has been a neglected area in online teaching. Even though there has been a sudden pressure from the education administrators on shifting to online teaching, the passage provided for the teachers for shifting is minimal, especially in countries like Sri Lanka where the use of technology for language learning is not a usual practice. The change to online teaching was imposed only after the sudden halt of onsite education which was hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Zoom became the household word overnight, especially among the universities and private fee levying schools in Sri Lanka. Within a year of the introduction of Zoom, it spread to schools to conduct classes for school children as there was no improvement in the pandemic situation. In this case, teachers were struggling to adapt to the new technology too. This paper presents the feedback obtained from the ESL instructors at the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka pertaining to the challenges they faced and the strategies they adopted to keep the online teaching rolling. In the study, it was revealed that most of the instructors had issues in handling the online classes and they declared that they did not have any kind of training for online teaching. Thus, the educational authorities should think of training ESL instructors for the reason that teaching the language online is a challenge.

Keywords: ESL instructors; Online pedagogy; Online teaching; University; Sri Lanka

1. Introduction

In Sri Lanka, online language learning was introduced suddenly in early 2020 after the movements of the public were restrained by the government to contain the spread of the Coronavirus. Online language learning is not a new phenomenon in the world because of the rapid development in communication technology which increased the demand for online language learning (Compton, 2009). However, in Sri Lanka, it was a new concept and when it was introduced, the initial adaptation came from the tertiary level institutes which shifted the mode of teaching to virtual learning or online learning for almost all the courses, followed by the private schools. Slowly this change drifted to secondary level public schools to commence the educational activities. Hence, the schools were kept closed for a longer period of time due to the pandemic situation. Soon after the introduction, the teachers could easily adopt to use the Zoom app, at least with its basic functions.

Even though language teaching is considered different from content teaching and requires specified methods to develop the language knowledge of the students, the Zoom app was commonly used in the same way it was used to teach the content (Guzacheva, 2020; Randhuli, 2020). In this study, online language learning could be defined as any learning activity that takes place using a virtual platform synchronously and mainly using the Zoom platform with or without video. Traditional or face-to-face

learning refers to classroom learning with the presence of an instructor. This study investigates the challenges ESL instructors faced in online language teaching and their suggestions to overcome those challenges based on the practice and perceptions of instructors.

This study was conducted at the Department of English Language Teaching of the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka (SEUSL), where the researcher has been working on the TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) degree programme. Online language teaching had been taking place at the department for nearly 08 months at the time this study was conducted. The university requested all the faculties in the university to shift to online teaching after the COVID-19 outbreak which brought the country to a standstill beginning from March 2020. This direction was made as a result of the advice from the University Grants Commission (UGC), Sri Lanka. This was the first time for almost all the universities in Sri Lanka to conduct classes online and these online classes were facilitated by the LEARN (The Lanka Education and Research Network), a government-subsidized firm, which provides specialized internet service for educational and research purposes and is governed by the national universities and the UGC. After the introduction of online learning, the universities, the UGC and LEARN organized a few training sessions for the academic staff on online teaching and maintaining VLE (Virtual Learning Environment). However, the switching was not an easy task for the university teachers as this was the first time for more than 90% of the university teachers to teach online (The Lanka Education and Research Network-LEARN).

At the SEUSL, the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) was continued and the VLE was used as a platform to share the learning materials, while the direct teaching via Zoom continued synchronously. The class size was around 55 students per group and an instructor was given in-charge for a group for teaching and handling online assessments, especially formative assessments. Some of the issues reported in online classes in general at the SEUSL were the network coverage issues for students who live in remote regions. In addition, the students, especially female students, were reluctant to turn on their videos. Lack of interaction between instructor and students was also reported by some instructors. Hence, despite the fact that online learning has made language learning possible with a lower cost (Godwin-Jones, 2003), less interaction between teacher and students has been an inherent problem in online learning (Hampel & Hauck, 2004). This view was registered earlier by Hron and Friedrich (2003) and Robertson and Klotz (2002) who argued that online learning promotes independent studies so that personal interaction between teacher and students may not be facilitated.

In Sri Lanka, in the recent past, even though there were several studies that dealt with general potentials and issues of online learning, studies concerning online language teaching have been limited in number. While the available studies focused on online learning in general and mostly took place as perception studies (e.g. Hayashi, Maddawin, Garcia & Hewagamage, 2020; Kennedy & Sujendran, 2020; Rameez, Fowsar & Lumna, 2020), none of the studies so far has touched on the pedagogical requirements for online language teaching. Therefore, this study could be considered an important one as it deals with online language teaching and mainly focuses on the pedagogical requirements and other challenges in online teaching of the ESL instructors. Hence, the following two research questions are considered within the scope of the study. (a) What challenges do the ESL instructors face in teaching online ESL classes, especially with regard to the pedagogical training needs?, (b) What suggestions could be made to overcome the challenges in online language learning?

2. Literature Review

In the recent past, more and more studies brought in the need for online pedagogy, especially for language learning. Online learning is going to be in the higher education sector all over the world for a

number of reasons, other than the pandemic situation, that include lower cost, technological development and also could be as a result of a paradigm shift in education (Blake, 2009). The educational authorities should pay attention to providing pedagogical training to online language teachers. Otherwise, the effort and cost in creating online materials can be wasted without the adequate training of teachers to present and support the learning (Hampel & Stickler, 2005). They also feel that online language teachers might need a different set of skills and competences compared to the skills needed by the teachers in a face-to-face classroom (ibid).

The common technical problems in online learning are frequent interruptions in internet connections, poor connectivity, etc. However, Manegre and Ali Sabiri (2020) consider that advances in technology continue to minimize these interruptions gradually. Another inherent problem of online courses that is often criticized is the lack of teacher-student interaction (Murday, Ushida & Chenoweth, 2008). However, synchronous classes via Learning Management Systems (LMS) have overcome this issue too. Students can make use of online chat, whiteboards, and videoconferencing technology to help foster vital learning communities in second language instruction (Wang & Chen, 2007). Similarly, Barry (2019) also describes that the features of virtual classroom systems, specifically the video, chat, and text features provide the opportunity for students to maintain interaction, enhance the students' engagement in classes and bring a sense of community.

Hampel and Stickler (2005) proposed the first model for the requirement of pedagogies for online teaching to become successful online teachers. They suggest seven layers arranged in a pyramid called 'Skills Pyramid'. The layers are arranged in a hierarchy that the ones at the bottom are basic ones and the layers on top are advanced. Grounding from the sociocultural view of language learning, they emphasised for more social presence in online language classes. Their framework included a set of seven skills (or seven key competences) arranged into different higher order and lower order skills. The higher order skills include facilitating online socialization, communicative competence, developing creativity and teaching styles that are needed for a successful online teacher. On the other hand, the lower order skills which support the higher order skills, cover basic ICT skills and other technical knowledge.

The Hampel and Stickler's (2005) framework is given below in figure 1. They consider that the basic ICT skills include the ability to use networked computers, including the use of keyboard and mouse, and familiarity with common commands and applications such as word processing and Internet. The next level indicates the specific technical competence such as the ability to use, for example, the Blackboard. The third level of skills requires the online ESL instructors to understand the potentials and drawbacks of the specific applications. One level above is the socialization online. It is important to develop the rapport and a sense of community to develop interpersonal communication. The fifth layer is developing communicative competence among the learners that the instructors should train them with the basic communicative competence skills such as taking turns. At the top are the layers comprising developing creativity and own style. These two are, for example, designing own materials and a unique delivery style respectively.

The basic weakness in this model is, as revealed by Compton (2009), Hampel and Stickler (2005) assume a sequential relationship between the layers. That is, a teacher could move to the top levels of skills once he or she has mastered the lower levels of skills. Nevertheless, Compton considers that a parallel development of skills is also possible, not necessarily one has to come in the order implied in the pyramid. As an alternative, Compton (2009) proposed a framework for online language teaching skills. His framework includes three major areas: Technology in online language teaching, Pedagogy of online language teaching and Evaluation of online language teaching.

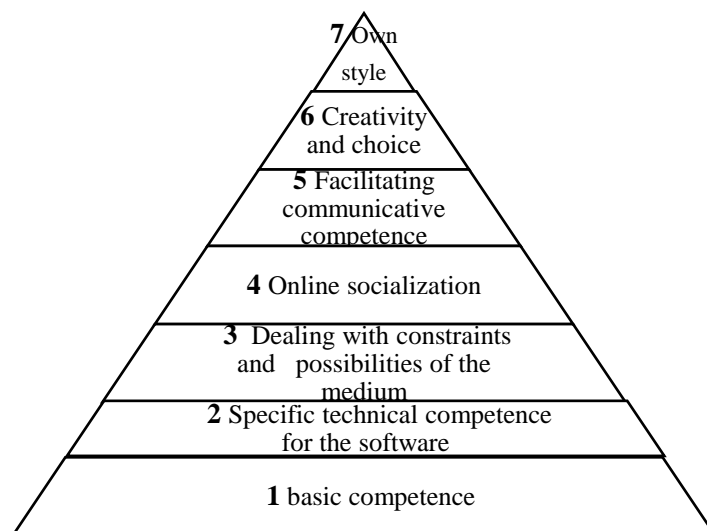


Figure 1. Skills pyramid (Hampel & Stickler, 2005, p.317)

Each of the areas is divided into three levels of expertise. They are novice, proficient and expert - Skills for novice teacher, Skills for proficient teacher and Skills for expert teachers. In addition, Compton has listed what technological, pedagogical and evaluation skills the three kinds of teachers should possess (See Compton, 2009 for details). On the other hand, some other researchers (e.g. Guichon, 2009) considered these skills proposed by Hampel and Stickler (2005) and Compton (2009) are superficial and they may not give any practical assistance to the online teachers. Moreover, when online language teaching now has become synchronous face-to-face teaching, Guichon (2009) identifies three competencies for online teachers.

1. Competency of socio-affective regulation – This refers to the capacity to establish a relationship with a learner or a group of learners in online learning and to build a learning community.
2. Competency of pedagogical regulation – This deals with the strategies and methods adopted in second language teaching and learning.
3. Competency of multimedia regulation – This relates to the skills and ability of the ESL instructor to deal with the communication tools and gadgets that suit the learning situation.

Hockly (2015) explains that the effectiveness of online teaching depends on effective teacher training. According to Hockly, the courses which are delivered online without proper teacher training result in minimal interaction and fail to develop collaborative learning and the learning outcomes. Even though the switch to online teaching happened all of a sudden, it is sad to note that no attention has been paid to the importance of online pedagogy in Sri Lankan universities or schools. Teaching language online requires skills that are different from those used to teach language in face-to-face classrooms.

Online language teaching should invent new teaching approaches and methods for teachers to successfully carry out their teaching. Hence, it is also understandable that the skills needed for teachers are quite different from the ones used in traditional face-to-face language courses. Therefore, the studies related to online language teaching deal with how technology could be incorporated into training language teachers (Hampel & Stickler, 2005; Compton, 2009). Only a very few studies have delved into the pedagogical requirements for online teaching. At the backdrop of the fact that very few studies have been carried out in general and especially in the absence of any studies in Sri Lanka on pedagogical requirements of online language teachers, this study would shed light in the area of the pedagogical requirements of the online instructors.

3. Methods

This study uses the ESL instructors' practice and perceptions. The ESL instructors were interviewed individually and also given a questionnaire to fill. Thus, this study employs a mixed methods approach which used quantitative surveys and personal interviews. Twelve ESL instructors participated in the study and their experience and qualifications vary from two years to 20 years. Nearly 60% of the instructors fell into the category of below 5 years of teaching experience. Four of them have followed a Master's degree in TESL/linguistics and the rest are following presently. The instructors were approached and their consent and free time were found by a research assistant for interview, of them eight were available for interview out of twelve. However, all twelve filled the questionnaires.

4. Findings

The findings are based on the perceptions of the ESL instructors which is mostly based on their classroom practice and experience. The data were obtained pertaining to mainly the pedagogical requirements of the ESL instructors. The findings are arranged in question and answer sequences.

4.1 Do you need different pedagogical training (to help you with your teaching in ESL classes) for teaching online compared to the traditional classroom? If yes, what training/s do you need?

Many of the ESL instructors agreed that they need training. They like to learn different pedagogies for handling the online classes. ESL Instructors' views are given below. (T1, T2, refer to the instructors' views but do not refer to any particular instructor)

T1: *For me, online teaching seems to be very different from traditional classroom teaching as the students are not physically present in online classes. Though I could effectively use different methods and approaches in face-to-face classrooms according to the needs of my students and different contexts, I think I need better understanding of methods, approaches and task that could be used online to spark students' interest and active participation.*

T2: *Managing the online class is another challenge I face in my teaching. I feel I need training on how to manage online classes and conduct lessons effectively.*

T3: *Yes, because learners' learning styles sometimes vary from traditional to online. So, getting knowledge in terms of adopting teaching strategies that cater to the learners' learning style is important. This can be achieved by proper pedagogical training. For example, as I am new to this mode of teaching I am unaware of the tools available in technology to facilitate teaching and learning. Hence, getting to know about such tools would help me direct my teaching to the learners' learning style.*

T4: *I think it is relevant to the present scenario as we have been experiencing a sudden shifting to online modes that demand new skills and customized resources. This change of modes can be overwhelming for people unwilling to try out new modes of learning and teaching. I believe that I am not very much familiar with the online teaching when compared to traditional classroom. I could see there are so many features available on VLE, yet there is no idea of how to access all of them. I need training on accessing all the features on VLE. Further, I also need to know the ways of making students involve and interact with the teacher in online teaching as it is very difficult to incorporate students' participation on tasks.*

T5: *Yes, I need some online teaching related pedagogical training which are applicable to carry out the online teaching effectively and efficiently. I hope that it would enhance my IT, E-learning and teaching skills further for the benefit of the students and me.*

Instructors also like to get training in a student-centred method and learn online assessment techniques too.

T8: *As I prefer student-centred teaching and learning, I think I need more training on how to integrate student-centredness into my online teaching as many students seem to be very passive in doing tasks or participating as of my understanding.*

In addition, how to assess and evaluate my students has become a challenge for me. I need more training on assessment and evaluation.

4.2 Do you need other technical (IT related) trainings?

Instructors stressed that they needed IT training.

T1: *Yes, I do. Since I am novice to online teaching, I cannot properly and effectively use the technology to teach my students. Though there are many enhanced features that are available in online platform, I am unaware of many of them (e.g for grouping, etc.). So, a proper training or an awareness workshop on how to use technology well is a necessity.*

T2: *The knowledge about different software and Apps that promote language teaching and learning are required.*

T3: *Yes. To teach effectively we need knowledge on online learning tools and apps as well as to avoid the technical issues in online classes.*

T4: *Yes, I do need training on using online apps and other online platforms to create an effective and interactive language classroom where all the students can share their opinions. Also, I need training on creating online quizzes and activities that would help me understand to what extent students have understood the lesson.*

4.3 Do you think the future of ELT depends on online teaching and learning?

For this question, many of the instructors agreed that online teaching would be an alternative solution to manage the pandemic situations like COVID-19. Their views were that the universities should have courage to face any such situations in future too. Thus, ELT cannot merely depend on physical classroom teaching. They also believed that online teaching should continue as long as the pandemic exists. In addition, an instructor mentioned that online teaching is important for courses like distance learning and external degree programmes. As an alternative, depending on the severity of the COVID-19 issue, institutions can consider hybrid-mode of teaching where the onsite teaching could be combined with online teaching.

If so, are your institution and you ready for this change? If yes, how?

The instructors gave different answers to these questions. Their answers varied from 'yes' to 'somewhat' ready.

T1: *The institute (the university) has also made necessary measures to extend online teaching and learning.*

T2: *I don't know completely about the institute but hopefully our institute is getting ready to teach English online in terms of building the VLE with necessary materials that are needed to face the future.*

T3: *Yes, I am very confident enough that I can continue this practice with our institution. The VC and other academic staffs including deans, heads and non-academics of the institution are keen that students' academic activities should not collapse whatsoever. This kind of moral support would induce the staff to continue the process. This can be more effective and efficient once the so-called challenges and suggestions could be considered to improve the online teaching and learning process.*

Further, with regard to the readiness of the instructors, they presented the following:

T1: *Yes, hereafter we cannot predict how the future will be due to this pandemic. Now every one of us is compelled to use online platforms to teach and learn. This can continue in the future too. Since we are now becoming exposed to technology, future teaching and learning would not be challenging. I am also ready to adapt to the new change and it has even now become familiar and easy-to-do job as well. Using technology to teach English would not be a difficult thing as we are becoming to use technology well with its enhanced facilities to teach English.*

T2: *Yes. We are ready to utilise the online teaching and learning method. Since we are familiar with virtual sessions it won't be a greater challenge for us to use these methods. And our institute has also taken the necessary measures to go forward with the present trend.*

The instructors also stated that they had gained considerable experience over the couple of months they had been teaching.

T3: *We are ready to a certain extent because we have already gained considerable amount of experience in teaching online.*

T4: *To a certain extent we are ready. I have been teaching on VLE for the past eight months. This was a very new experience for me at the beginning and it helps me explore different new features available online. Most of the materials (hard copies) were scanned to upload on VLE. So that students are able to download their modules. Moreover, we have senior staff who guide us along with them there are many young staff who are ready to take up these challenges and go ahead with online teaching in future (if needed).*

4.4 What challenges did you face in online teaching?

The challenges faced by the instructors are given under the different subtopics below.

4.4.1 Technical difficulties

The major technical difficulty is the network coverage. Students are scattered all over the island and many of them live in areas far from the cities or metropolitan areas. This results in poor network coverage for them. More than this, most of the lectures are held during usual office hours, from 8.30 to 4.30, and the Zoom gets higher congestion during these peak hours. As a result, sometimes scheduled lectures had to be postponed due to the inability of Zoom to accommodate meetings during these peak hours. Technical issues like not getting proper coverage culminate in the cancellation of classes. An instructor mentioned the following: *For developing countries like Sri Lanka, implementing online learning depends on efficient internet connectivity and stable connection and students' access to gadgets. Some of the students complain that they have connectivity problems. Both the students and most of the teachers including me had struggled when initiating online teaching, but as the time goes we are adapted to it.* Some other issues such as unforeseen bad weather and unexpected power cuts also cause disruptions in the classes.

4.4.2 Lack of students' participation

The main complaint is students' passive behaviour. Instructors allege that even though students join the classes, they do not listen to lectures carefully or answer any questions asked. They can easily escape from answering once a question is posed to them. When those students who are reluctant to answer are traced back, they come out with different excuses like lack of coverage, malfunctioning of microphone, etc. However, the reliability of these claims has always been a question.

Instructors stated that students sitting behind the screen is one of the main challenges when teaching online even though students feel more comfortable with that. One of them said: *The first reason is we really don't know what the students are doing, if we call a student to give answers some used to leave the meeting or else they give a message that they cannot speak because they are having an inadequate network connection, etc. And some students usually don't join the meeting and then later they used to message that because of power cut or lack of connection they could not join the meeting and they ask us to consider their attendance.*

Interestingly, this situation prevails in the West too. In the American Cornell university, a survey conducted by Castelli and Sarvary (2021) among the undergraduates enrolled in the Investigative Biology Laboratory course revealed several reasons for not switching on the video. Some of them were the students were concerned about other people being seen behind them and their physical location being visible. Some other reasons were students felt that others would look at them, and weaker internet connection. Some other instances given by the instructors concerning the passive behaviour are:

T1: *Sometimes students don't respond when they are called out their names. In such cases, it is difficult to find whether the students are in the lecture listening.*

T2: *Students don't turn on their videos. They say they have coverage issues when they turn on videos. Sometimes, students turn into passive observers than active participants. They lack motivation so the classroom becomes dull.*

T3: *It becomes difficult for instructors to find if the students are comprehending the content and taking part in learning.*

T4: *As there is no direct observation students tend to tell so many reasons for not responding to questions or not involving in classroom activities such as connectivity problem, noise in the background, etc.*

4.4.3 Practical difficulties in online language teaching

In addition to technical difficulties and passive students' behaviours, there are other kinds of constraints too connected to online teaching. Some of them are given below:

1. Unable to notice the body language: Both students and teachers can't see each other's reactions and body language which is the main drawback.
2. Difficulties in assigning group tasks: It is difficult to do group works due to a lack of expertise in handling group activities online.
3. Lack of resources: Most of the students do not own laptops and they join the class using mobile phones in which it is difficult to do all types of tasks. Instructors complained that students can't use the chat box to send written communications.
4. Lack of conducive learning environment: When classes are held, the external noise at students' homes is a main challenge. Many of the students do not have a private noise-free room to follow online classes.
5. Testing and Evaluation: Another important issue mentioned by the instructors is assessment of students. These students are using mobile phones for online classes and it is difficult to conduct online examinations. Hence, most of the time assessments are handled as take-home assessments where there is more chance for plagiarism. Moreover, the semester-end examinations are held as take-home examinations – questions are sent to students and they take a week or so to write answers and post them back.

4.5 What suggestions do you have to improve the online teaching and learning?

Suggestions made by the instructors are given below under different subheadings.

4.5.1 Teacher training

The teacher training should be of two folds. One is training connected with the online pedagogy, mainly to get the students involved in the lesson and build up communicative competence among the learners. Another one is technical training. The latter is connected with handling different online apps and exploiting the online teaching facilities available. It was also revealed by an instructor that she rarely used breakout room while teaching because she was not comfortable with that and also believed her students would not like it. The instructors as well as students should be trained well to use the VLE and other online platforms in order to have an effective online language classroom. Students should be trained to have access to the materials on VLE.

4.5.2 Building a material depository

Interesting and useful materials could be uploaded on VLE and whenever students have coverage issues or breakdown in online learning they can access these materials for self-learning. These materials could also be used for revision activities. In addition, it was suggested that the use of video materials should be enhanced.

4.5.3 Encouraging student participation

In many ESL classes with a larger number of students, around 60, neither the instructor nor the students switch on the videos for various reasons mentioned earlier. If the instructors could teach with the video

on, students would also follow. This synchronous communication is necessary to motivate the students and keep the students with the lesson throughout the class. It is claimed eye to eye contact is necessary between the teacher and learner so that the teacher can understand if the students comprehend or are interested in the lesson. Another suggestion made by the instructors is giving frequent feedback to students in the class. Whenever a task is given to students, the instructors should spend time in correcting it and give feedback. This would encourage students' participation in classes. In addition, it was also suggested by the instructors that they should be friendly with the students. By being friendly, teachers can motivate the learners and instil engagement in learning. Motivation is the best therapy that can help learners be engaged in learning.

4.5.4 Infrastructural development

It was also suggested by the instructors that network access within the campus should be improved and also at the residence of instructors. The university should make arrangements for this improved network access.

4.5.5 Monitoring of online teaching

The universities should monitor the progress of online teaching. (1) Periodical evaluation or getting feedback of the online classes from the students can possibly be done by the head of the department or the dean of the faculty. This practice would stimulate the zealously of learning and teaching; (2) Better to have an ideal digital learning management system to keep on continuing online teaching and learning. An instructor mentioned: *As teachers we have to learn to make the class active. A teacher has to create a comfortable classroom setting. It is not only for the traditional classrooms it is for the online classroom too. The students shouldn't feel isolated.*

5. Discussions

This study revealed the practice and perceptions of the ESL instructors concerning the pedagogical requirements for online teaching and learning. Even though the instructors are carrying out online teaching, it is a new one for them and yet to be familiarized completely. The strangeness of online teaching makes it alien for some of the instructors yet. Many of the ESL instructors agreed that they needed training. They liked to learn different pedagogies for handling the online classes. They preferred to have training for handling IT related matters as well as pedagogical training to have interactive sessions with more student participation. In the study, it was also revealed that the instructors faced many challenges in online teaching. The major problem they faced is to retain student participation in the lesson. Many of the students were participating in lessons off the video and it had been a problem for the instructors to have a lively session. The reasons for this practice were given by the instructors and they also made suggestions to overcome the issues.

Learner participation and interaction are in the central place and of crucial importance in successful language learning – be it face-to-face, blended or fully online teaching. The instructors in the study revealed that maintaining students' active participation has been a challenge for them. For various reasons like technical shortcomings, lack of motivation, etc. students played a passive role in online language learning. Language learning is a skill-based process rather than a content-based one. Skill developments, such as the acquisition of speaking and listening skills, required constant synchronous interaction in the target language (Wang & Chen, 2007). Researchers have long argued that in online learning communities, social interaction and bonding are fundamentally different from real-life situations. Any training programme arranged should focus on these factors. All the ESL instructors who participated in the study unanimously agreed that they needed to have quality training to enhance both their IT skills as well as the teaching pedagogy.

Those who practice virtual learning should consider constructivist learner-centred pedagogy in the online learning setting. They should promote learner participation and engagement, facilitate multi-dimensional interactions, foster the building of learning community, view learning as a process, view group-work and project as important parts of learning and encourage group discussion and initiatives. Moreover, they have to encourage learners to construct their own understanding, foster real-life problem-solving and critical thinking skills, assert learner-control, promote self-directed and self-regulated learning, etc. Instructors in online classes must take extra measures to establish a social presence for themselves and for their students. These efforts could not only increase student satisfaction with online courses, but result in increased learning outcomes.

Hampel and Stickler (2005) consider that despite the wealth of online materials and teachers' willingness to teach online, there is a dearth of quality training to teach online. They claim that communicative competence could be developed only when meaningful interaction and necessary pedagogical support are combined. That means the learning should take place with the synchronous interaction in online classes, either with the peers or instructors. Otherwise, the resources go wasted without proper training of teachers (Salmon (2003).

6. Conclusion

When online language teaching has become an inevitable and necessary teaching method considering the present pandemic status in Sri Lanka, the authorities should think of improving the quality of online language teaching. That is, as stated in this study, the language teachers should be exposed to three kinds of trainings, mainly technical, online pedagogy and communicative competence. Unless teachers are exposed to these kinds of trainings, the successfulness of the language teaching will be a question. Even though researchers and language teachers consider that traditional classroom cannot be easily replaced (Sun, 2011) with online learning, we all need to know what we could do to enhance the effectiveness of online teaching and learning. Even though this study brings to light some kinds of findings pertaining to the challenges faced in online language teaching, the findings of the study should be treated carefully when it comes to generalisation. Only one institute was covered in the study and all the instructors were attached to the same department of that institute too. However, the findings of the study inform clearly that training for online teachers is necessary and educational authorities should pay attention to this. Otherwise, the successfulness of the online language programmes will be a question. Hence, future studies should focus on complex nature of the pedagogical requirements that are beneficial for online teaching.

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