

## **ESL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING ACTIVITIES: A STUDY AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF UNIVERSITY OF RUHUNA.**

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This study aims to explore the attitudes of English as a Second Language (ESL) students towards student-centered learning activities in teacher-centered classrooms. Teachers incorporate student-centered learning activities to cater to diverse learning styles and preferences despite teacher-guided activities. However, different students may have diverse attitudes towards the utilized student-centered activities as students have different learning styles and preferences. Therefore, the objective of this study is to identify ESL students' attitudes towards student-centered learning activities. The research sample for this study consists of 20 undergraduates from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Ruhuna. Since there is a lack of research specifically incorporating the undergraduates of the University of Ruhuna, there is a clear empirical research gap. Using a qualitative method approach, the study administers a questionnaire. Gathered data is analyzed through MS Excel and presented through charts. Additionally, the thematic analysis is conducted to identify recurring themes in the participants' responses. The data analysis reveals that ESL students actively engage in various student-centered activities like speaking, reading, writing, and listening within their ESL classrooms. Notably, activities such as role plays, reading authentic materials, writing essays, and listening to authentic resources serve as strong motivators for students to learn English. Furthermore, the majority of students find these activities particularly helpful in improving their English language skills, as they provide valuable opportunities to practice and apply what they have learned from their regular lessons. Consequently, student-centered activities offer practical exposure to the content taught in the classroom, which contributes to their language development. Overall, students find that these activities are more engaging and empower learner autonomy and confidence within the students. However, a few students suggest that those utilized activities should improve to capture the attention of students more effectively. Teachers can gain insights from this study to enhance learner autonomy and create a more stimulating environment for ESL students.

**Keywords:** Attitudes, ESL classroom, Learner autonomy, Student-centered learning activities, Teacher-centered classroom

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