

Attitudes of Tertiary-Level English Learners in Sri Lanka Towards Online Learning: A Study Conducted During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The global COVID-19 pandemic has become a hindrance to the education system. To secure both student lives and the continuation of studies, the traditional education system has been compelled to shift to virtual classroom mode which links both teachers and students online. In order to investigate the student attitudes towards the new virtual classroom concept, an online questionnaire was shared among a sample of hundred tertiary level ESL students from state universities across Sri Lanka. The research followed a mixed method. The questionnaire was structured employing varied types of questions and a Likert Scale to collect data. The key findings reveal that the majority of students face varied issues as a consequence of the abrupt change to online learning. In addition to that are issues such as acceptability struggle, ESL classrooms with different teaching/learning approaches, the struggle of merging them with the online learning concept, inability to develop language skills, students being unaccustomed to online tests and being distracted by external barriers. Moreover, learners from developing countries like Sri Lanka face various challenges such as signal strength and technological affordability.

Keywords: *online learning, ESL learner attitudes, COVID-19 pandemic*