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Understanding English as a Second Language (ESL) Undergraduate Students' Beliefs about
Learner-centered Instruction

Description of Work

This study used explanatory sequential mixed-methods to explore ESL students' beliefs about teaching practices in English classes. Results showed teaching practices to be highly transitioning towards learner-centeredness. ESL students also indicated they require supportive mechanism to enhance their learning processes and connect prior learning experience with current learning experience.

Abstract

This explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was undertaken to determine undergraduate English as a Second Language (ESL) students' beliefs about learner-centered teaching (LCT) practices in English classes and to understand to what extent their learner-centered learning experiences influenced their beliefs about the quality of LCT practices. The Learner-centered Battery Student Survey and focus group interviews were used to collect data. One hundred and twelve undergraduate ESL students at a Midwestern university took part in the survey, 17 of whom, subsequently took part in multiple mini focus groups. Quantitative data analysis included descriptive statistics, *t*-Tests, and one-way ANOVAs. Results indicated that except ethnicity, age, gender, and college status had no relationship with student perceptions of teaching practices. The participants perceived teaching practices to be highly transitioning towards learner-centeredness.

For qualitative data analysis, constant-comparative framework was used. Three themes emerged from the focus groups — that LCT practices are characteristically learner-focused and learning-focused, set challenges to learning environment, and lead to academic and non-academic outcomes. The participants measured the quality of LCT practices in two ways: evaluating via past learning experiences and identifying learner-centered and non-learner-centered teaching practices. Results indicated that students require facilitative mechanisms in their learning activities, more support in coping with stress and cognitive challenges, and help adjusting with current learning experience. The findings have pedagogical implications for LCT practices in undergraduate English classes with ESL students. This research can serve as a framework for implementing professional development focused specifically on non-learner-centered practices and thus enhance opportunities for transitioning to learner-centeredness.