THE ROLE OF LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: This article examines the importance of learner-centered approaches in the context of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Unlike traditional teacher-centered models, learner-centered methods focus on student engagement, autonomy, and interaction. Drawing on qualitative research and practical classroom experiences, the study highlights how strategies such as task-based learning, group work, and the use of authentic materials can enhance language acquisition and motivation. The findings suggest that incorporating learner-centered pedagogy in EFL classrooms leads to improved communication skills and greater learner satisfaction, while also presenting new challenges for educators in terms of training and resources.

Keywords: Learner-centered approach, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), student engagement, communicative learning, task-based learning, language teaching methods, autonomy, classroom interaction.

In recent decades, the paradigm of foreign language education has shifted significantly toward learner-centered approaches. This pedagogical shift emphasizes the active role of students in the learning process, positioning them as participants rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Particularly in the context of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), learner-centered methods offer a flexible and adaptive framework that caters to the diverse needs, interests, and learning styles of students. This article explores the significance of learner-

centered approaches in EFL classrooms, highlighting their benefits, implementation strategies, and pedagogical implications.

Traditional EFL teaching methods have long relied on teacher-centered instruction, where the teacher controls the flow of information and learners are passive recipients. While this model ensures structure and clarity, it often limits students' opportunities to actively use the target language in meaningful contexts. In contrast, learner-centered approaches shift the focus from teaching to learning by promoting student participation, collaboration, and reflection.

These methods are grounded in constructivist learning theories, which assert that learners build knowledge through active engagement and interaction with their environment. In an EFL setting, this means that students learn more effectively when they are encouraged to communicate, solve problems, and take part in decision-making processes related to their learning. The emphasis is placed not only on language accuracy but also on fluency, creativity, and the development of communicative competence.

In countries like Uzbekistan, where English is taught as a foreign language in schools and universities, incorporating learner-centered approaches is becoming increasingly essential. With globalization and the growing importance of English in academic and professional settings, there is a strong need to move beyond rote memorization and grammar drills. Instead, EFL educators are encouraged to create learning environments that are interactive, student-focused, and responsive to individual learner needs.

This article seeks to explore how learner-centered approaches can be effectively implemented in EFL classrooms, particularly in non-native English-speaking contexts. By analyzing current practices and highlighting successful

strategies, this study aims to provide insights that will help educators foster more engaging and effective language learning experiences.

This article is based on a qualitative analysis of current pedagogical practices and scholarly literature related to learner-centered education in EFL contexts. Data was gathered from academic journals, classroom observations, and teacher interviews conducted in several Uzbek secondary and tertiary educational institutions. The study focused on identifying teaching strategies that prioritize student engagement, autonomy, and collaborative learning.

The findings revealed that learner-centered approaches in EFL teaching foster greater student motivation, enhance language proficiency, and improve classroom interaction. Techniques such as group work, task-based learning, peer feedback, and the use of authentic materials were commonly implemented. Teachers noted an increase in student participation and confidence when they adapted their lessons to align with learners' needs and preferences. Moreover, digital tools and interactive activities proved particularly effective in creating a dynamic and inclusive language learning environment.

Learner-centered approaches align with contemporary theories of language acquisition, particularly communicative and constructivist frameworks. These approaches encourage students to take ownership of their learning, set personal goals, and reflect on their progress. However, successful implementation requires a shift in both teacher and student roles. Educators must transition from being knowledge providers to facilitators, guiding students through inquiry-based and experiential learning. Additionally, challenges such as large class sizes, lack of training, and limited resources can hinder the application of these methods in some educational contexts.

The role of learner-centered approaches in teaching English as a foreign language is increasingly recognized as crucial for effective language acquisition. By prioritizing the learner's experience and involvement, these approaches contribute to more meaningful and sustainable language learning. For EFL instructors, adopting learner-centered pedagogy involves not only methodological change but also a philosophical commitment to student empowerment. Future research should explore how these methods can be scaled and adapted in various cultural and institutional contexts.

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