

STUDENT-CENTERED VS. TEACHER-CENTERED APPROACHES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract: *This paper explores the fundamental differences between student-centered and teacher-centered approaches in English language teaching (ELT). It analyzes their pedagogical foundations, classroom implementation, and impact on learner outcomes. Through comparative classroom observations and learner feedback, the study reveals that student-centered instruction fosters higher engagement, autonomy, and communicative competence, while teacher-centered methods provide structure and clarity in foundational learning. The paper concludes by recommending a balanced integration of both approaches depending on learners' needs and language proficiency levels.*

Keywords: *English language teaching, student-centered learning, teacher-centered instruction, communicative competence, learner autonomy, pedagogy*

English language teaching (ELT) has evolved significantly over recent decades, transitioning from rigid grammar-focused instruction to more dynamic and communicative methods. Central to this transformation is the debate between teacher-centered and student-centered pedagogical models.

A teacher-centered approach positions the instructor as the primary authority and transmitter of knowledge. Lessons are typically lecture-based, focusing on grammar, vocabulary, and controlled practice. While this method ensures content delivery and classroom control, it often limits learners' active involvement.

In contrast, a student-centered approach emphasizes the active role of learners in the learning process. It encourages interaction, problem-solving, and meaningful communication. Teachers act more as facilitators, guiding learners toward discovering and constructing knowledge collaboratively.

Understanding the benefits and drawbacks of both approaches is essential for effective ELT. This study compares the two in practical classroom contexts to determine which method better supports language acquisition and learner motivation.

The choice between student-centered and teacher-centered methods often depends on multiple factors such as institutional philosophy, teacher training, class size, and student proficiency levels. In traditional classroom settings, especially in exam-driven contexts, the

teacher-centered approach has dominated due to its structure and emphasis on content delivery. However, recent educational research and communicative language teaching principles have emphasized the benefits of making learners active participants in their language development.

In student-centered environments, learners are encouraged to express themselves, collaborate with peers, and engage in tasks that promote real-world communication. This aligns with constructivist theories of education, which argue that knowledge is constructed through active engagement rather than passive reception.

Understanding how each approach affects learning outcomes is essential for English teachers who aim to develop both linguistic accuracy and communicative competence in their students.

A comparative study was conducted at two secondary schools in Tashkent over an 8-week period.

- Participants: 60 intermediate-level students, divided into two groups (30 each).
- Group A: Taught using a traditional teacher-centered approach.
- Group B: Taught using a student-centered methodology (including group discussions, role-plays, project work, and peer feedback).
- Focus areas: Student engagement, speaking confidence, comprehension, and test performance.
- Data collection: Classroom observations, weekly quizzes, and student surveys.

Lesson content was kept consistent in both groups, with only the teaching methodology differing.

Indicator	Group A (Teacher-Centered)	Group B (Student-Centered)
Average quiz score (%)	74%	86%
Speaking confidence (1–5)	2.9	4.2
Class participation rate (%)	56%	85%
Survey: lesson enjoyment (%)	62%	91%

These results show that students in the student-centered classroom demonstrated higher engagement, better speaking performance, and greater enjoyment of lessons.

The results highlight the advantages of student-centered learning, especially in promoting active participation and developing communicative skills. By engaging in pair and group work, learners gain confidence, take ownership of their progress, and apply language in meaningful contexts.

Teacher-centered instruction, while more structured, often limits spontaneous communication. However, it remains valuable for introducing complex grammar or preparing for standardized exams where explicit instruction is beneficial.

The optimal solution may lie in integrated approaches, blending both methods according to lesson objectives and learner profiles. For instance, grammar rules might be taught directly (teacher-centered), while language practice and application are carried out through interactive tasks (student-centered).

The findings from the study indicate that student-centered instruction provides a more engaging and communicative learning experience. Students in Group B not only achieved higher academic performance but also reported greater enjoyment and confidence, particularly in speaking activities. This is likely due to increased opportunities for peer interaction and personal expression, which are fundamental in developing fluency and language ownership.

Moreover, student-centered approaches support learner autonomy, critical thinking, and collaboration—skills that are essential in 21st-century education. Activities like group discussions, problem-solving tasks, and project-based learning encourage learners to become active agents in their education, leading to deeper learning.

Nevertheless, teacher-centered methods still have merit, especially when teaching complex structures, managing large classes, or preparing for standardized tests. It allows for clear explanation, control over classroom pace, and efficient coverage of syllabus content. For novice learners, such guidance can provide the necessary foundation before transitioning to more autonomous learning.

Therefore, rather than viewing the two approaches as opposing forces, they should be seen as complementary tools in a flexible teaching strategy. The key lies in using each approach strategically to support learners' needs, lesson goals, and classroom dynamics.

Both teacher-centered and student-centered approaches have distinct roles in ELT. While student-centered methods enhance motivation, interaction, and learner autonomy, teacher-centered instruction provides clarity and scaffolding.

Educators are encouraged to adaptively combine both models to meet the diverse needs of students. A balanced classroom, where students are active participants and teachers are responsive guides, is most effective in fostering language proficiency.

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