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21ST CENTURY TRENDS: STUDENT-CENTERED INSTRUCTION IN EFL TEACHING AND LEARNING

Abstract: This article is dedicated to Communicative language teaching. In this article there given some characteristics of learner-centered teaching. The aim of the communicative approach is to provide students with real life communication lessons that try to mimic the natural progression of language learning. The emphasis of genuine communication that imitate real life situations is supposedly more fun and more helpful for the students as they are learning a language in situations that it is used every day.

Key words: learner- centered, communicative language teaching, approach, goal, learning, instruction, tasks, realistic goals, responsibility, motivation, knowledge.

Language: English

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Introduction

Student-centered instruction is one of the crucial parts of Communicative language teaching. In this approach main focus is on the learners and their development rather than on the transmission of content, it aims the balance of power of in teaching and learning, moves toward learners actively constructing their own knowledge and enhances the responsibility for learning on the learners. The role of the learners changes into examining and analyzing the subject materials by assessing the situation. They will stop being passive listeners to instructor's lectures and taking notes.

According to Weimer (2012), there five characteristics of learner-centered teaching:

1. Learner-centered teaching engages students in the hard, messy work of learning. "I believe teachers are doing too many learning tasks for students. We ask the questions, we call on students, we add detail to their answers. We offer the examples. We organize the content. We do the preview and the review. On any given day, in most classes teachers are working much

harder than students. I'm not suggesting we never do these tasks, but I don't think students develop sophisticated learning skills without the chance to practice and in most classrooms the teacher gets far more practice than the students"

2. Learner-centered teaching includes explicit skill instruction. "Learner-centered teachers teach students how to think, solve problems, evaluate evidence, analyze arguments, generate hypotheses—all those learning skills essential to mastering material in the discipline. They do not assume that students pick up these skills on their own, automatically. A few students do, but they tend to be the students most like us and most students aren't that way. Research consistently confirms that learning skills develop faster if they are taught explicitly along with the content." Students not only need to develop an understanding of a discipline's knowledge base (content), but they also need to understand how that knowledge is organized and acquired (learning skills). By learning how to solve problems, think critically, apply information, and integrate knowledge, students

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can learn to think like experts in a discipline. In other words, they not only need to learn content, but they also need to know how they can learn more, which is critical in today's environment where information is easily accessible and exponentially growing. Teachers already possess these skills because they are experts within a discipline, so they often overlook the importance of teaching them to students. Research, however, confirms that students do not automatically learn these skills.

3. Learner-centered teaching encourages students to reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning it. "Learner-centered teachers talk about learning. In casual conversations, they ask students what they are learning. In class they may talk about their own learning. They challenge student assumptions about learning and encourage them to accept responsibility for decisions they make about learning; like how they study for exams, when they do assigned reading, whether they revise their writing or check their answers. Learner-centered teachers include assignment components in which students reflect, analyze and critique what they are learning and how they are learning it. The goal is to make students aware of themselves as learners and to make learning skills something students want to develop."

4. Learner-centered teaching motivates students by giving them some control over learning processes. "I believe that teachers make too many of the decisions about learning for students. Teachers decide what students should learn, how they learn it, the pace at which they learn, the conditions under which they learn and then teachers determine whether students have learned. Students aren't in a position to decide what content should be included in the course or which textbook is best, but when teachers make all the decisions, the motivation to learn decreases and learners become dependent. Learner-centered teachers search out ethically responsible ways to share power with students. They might give students some choice about which assignments they complete. They might make classroom policies something students can discuss. They might let students set assignment deadlines within a given time window. They might ask students to help create assessment criteria."

5. Learner-centered teaching encourages collaboration. "It sees classrooms (online or face-to-face) as communities of learners. Learner-centered teachers recognize, and research consistently confirms, that students can learn from, and with, each other. Certainly the teacher has the expertise and an obligation to share it, but teachers can learn from students as well. Learner-centered teachers work to develop structures that promote shared commitments to learning. They see learning individually and collectively as the most important goal of any educational experience."

In today's language classrooms we need to meet students' needs in language teaching. This leads

naturally to using CLT in the classroom. Need for communicating requires us to use more interactive patterns in the classroom. Group and pair works involves students to be more active during the discussions. In our university we implemented a new PreSETT curriculum in which learner-centered instruction is the main concept. According to this curriculum students are involved in more independent learning. In language trends of this curriculum there are plenty of tasks, like project works, case studies, learning logs, reflective writings and etc. In order to fulfill those tasks students need to set their own goals and finds the methods of reaching their goals by working on the process.

According to Halverson it is said that "Beyond facilitating communication in the classroom, a student-centered approach will also make the needs and goals of the learners of central importance." (Halvorsen, 2016). This is true in our context. When students work on different tasks they learn to set realistic goals and work on their time-management too. At the beginning of each course students have difficulties on learning independently, as they come from a teacher-centered learning environment. Later on they do the first task of the course and understand the principles of learning independently.

In order to help students there is a course of Independent Study Skills in the first semester. This course teaches them how to be a successful language learner in student-centered context. After doing different communicative activities in class students feel themselves more confident in language learning and they become life-long learners.

According to Brown and Lee (2015) "Agency, which lies at the heart of language learning, is the ability of learners to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals, as individuals within a socio-cultural context". In my classes I try to encourage my students to be more autonomous and be aware of their own learning styles. This helps them to learn the language structure easier. Another important point is they also should decide what to learn and how to learn. We use many activities on teaching students how to make their study plan. In their own study plan we ask them to think strategies that they found useful and find the ways of achieving results. We give them the list of the possible strategies to include into their study plan. They are managing time effectively, setting realistic goals, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, assessing their own progress. In order to reach success they are expected to keep a diary, watch movies in English at least one a week, chat to a native speaker by internet, listen or read news in English, every day and etc.

Another important issue we want to share is motivation. Motivation plays a great role in language learning. When students are motivated it will be easier for them to acquire language. As we know there are 2 types of motivation, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic

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motivation. For learners which have intrinsic motivation, it is easier to develop their language skills. They enjoy learning and they are usually successful learners. In our class we have some intrinsically motivated students. It is very easy to activate them during the lesson. Only giving clear instructions and asking them to perform a task is enough for these students. We believe extrinsic motivation is very crucial in foreign language teaching. We try to raise interest of our students by giving positive and constructive feedback, by praising their performance and emphasizing every part of their work.

“Various hypotheses considering the relative effectiveness of direct and indirect corrective feedback have been put forward some in favor of direct error correction, others supporting the indirect approach” (Beungen, 2010, p12)

We agree that indirect feedback helps students more as it leads students to self-assess their own works. This encourages them to think about their own learning and be aware of their own language errors. If

we speak about our own students, at the beginning of the course they wanted us to correct every part of their work. We tried to use peer correction technique with our students and after some time they began to understand the helpfulness of self-error correction. However, when they have some complex error, we explain the reason of doing that error in front of the class without mentioning students’ names. Our students don’t like to be corrected in front of the class and they say that they feel embarrassed. In written work they prefer to be corrected their work by teachers. And we always explain them the usefulness of indirect corrective feedback.

When we have accuracy activities we try to give direct corrective feedback to individual students explaining in more details. It takes much time, but it is worth to do it. In fluency activities we prefer not to give corrective feedback to our students immediately. When they finish the fluency activities, we first try to get feedback from them and then we give corrective feedback at the end.

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