

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STUDENT-CENTERED METHODOLOGIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Sharipova Xayriniso Umarali qizi¹, Turdimatova Madinakhon Ravshanbek kizi²

¹First year student, Fergana State University

²ELF teacher Fergana State University

Abstract: This paper reports on research findings on learner-centered approach compared to teacher-centered approach in teaching English grammar as a foreign language in Iranian high school context. It shows the need for grammar instruction in English language classes when roughly all education efforts are bottom-up explicit approach.

Key words: *student-centered learning, teacher-centered instruction, grammar teaching methods, communicative competence.*

Student-centered learning or active learning is a method of instruction in which the student is in the center of focus and the teacher has the least impression in (grammar) language instruction. Teacher-centered learning or passive learning, on the other hand, occurs in a setting that the teacher plays the main role. Bowers and Flinders identified teacher-centered model as an industrial production in which student is a product and behaviors of “exit skills” or “out comes”¹⁷⁴. Also, the learner-centered approach means self and life-long education when teachers should change their traditional roles from teller to coordinator and from material users to teaching material providers¹⁷⁵. Richards and Rogers offer a comprehensive model of method and subsets¹⁷⁶. In this theme, method includes: 1) Approach: Body of theory that supports a method; 2) Design: Teaching plans and materials; 3) Procedure: What goes in classrooms during learning-teaching. This study focuses on the process of Iranian educational system. English, in Iran, is taught as a foreign language (EFL) within a context through particular course books which are neutral from cultural point of view¹⁷⁷. The teachers are managers when the learning process heavily depends on pronouncement and enforcement of rules. All major educational policies like school systems, curriculum standards, course books, examination system, and so on are controlled by the Ministry of Education. Teaching English for seven years does not fulfill the learning purposes.

A glimpse at the last century of language teaching practice reveals mixed choices of various methods and processes in language grammar teaching. Indeed it is scaled from “zero grammar” to “total grammar”, according to their approach to grammar teaching. Language is an important device to communicate among people, learned as a second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) beside their native language, sometimes in an artificial condition. To be successful in learning English, people must master English language from the beginning¹⁷⁸. It is believed that most of the methods developed over the centuries have been still in use in various countries. It includes building of different sentence types, word order, compound sentences, word classes etc., and teachers continue to use grammar translation method through course books. Grammar exercises are done as writing activities even students at the university lack the necessary skills to use English communicatively¹⁷⁹.

¹⁷⁴ Bowers, C. A., & Flinders, D. J. Responsive teaching: An ecological approach to classroom patterns of language, culture, and thought. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. (1990)

¹⁷⁵ Baldauf, R. B., & Moni, K. Learner-centeredness in teaching English as a foreign language. Proceedings of the Thai TESOL International Conference, Chiang Mai, Thailand.(2006)

¹⁷⁶ Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. Approaches and methods in language teaching (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2002)

¹⁷⁷ Khajavi, Y., & Abbasiian, R. English textbooks in Iranian schools: Issues and challenges. International Journal of English Linguistics, 1(2), 48–58. (2011)

¹⁷⁸ Moradkhan, D., & Sohrabiyan, R. Grammatical consciousness-raising tasks and the improvement of Iranian students' knowledge of grammar. Journal of Teaching English as a Foreign Language and Literature, 1(4), 57–71.(2009)

¹⁷⁹ Hosseini, S. M. H. ELT in higher education in Iran and India: A critical view. Language in India, 7(4), 1–15. (2007)

Firstly, there is imbalance between teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Sometimes, writing exercises simply mean practicing grammatical structures instead of, for example, writing a diary or a letter to a friend. Even those grammatical instructions lack communicative goals, though all the rules are taught in students' native language. Secondly, course books lack any audio-visual facilities to encourage communicative activities outside the class. Also, course books do not promote grammar consciousness-raising tasks¹⁸⁰. Based on the reviewed literature and the above discussion, it can be argued that grammar instruction in EFL contexts, particularly within the Iranian educational system, still relies heavily on teacher-centered approaches. This reliance significantly limits learners' opportunities to use the language in authentic communicative situations. Possessing extensive grammatical knowledge does not automatically result in communicative competence; rather, teaching grammar in isolation from meaningful context often leads to the development of passive knowledge among learners.

Therefore, in line with contemporary educational demands, it is essential to implement active and student-centered approaches in grammar instruction. Teachers should move beyond their traditional role as transmitters of rules and instead function as facilitators and coordinators of the learning process. When grammatical structures are presented through real-life contexts, communicative tasks, and problem-solving activities, learners' motivation, critical thinking, and autonomy are more effectively fostered. Moreover, the integration of audio-visual materials and grammar consciousness-raising tasks can enhance learners' language awareness and support their development as active and competent users of the English language.

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