LEARNER- CENTRED APPROACH TO TEACH COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS

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Abstract
　　　A focus on learning and the application of learning means that the practice of teaching must be learner-centred, flexible and meaningful. Learning is a voluntary activity, and each learner comes to learning with their own understandings, values, assumptions, learning preferences and motivations. Knowledge, understanding and skills are negotiated and developed in a social setting - through interacting with peers, information, teachers and the broader community. Teaching and learning practices that provide opportunities for social learning; that place learning in relevant and meaningful contexts; that provide supportive learning environments; and that value and recognise diversity provide dynamic engagement and deeper learning for developing communicative skills.

Introduction

　　　The learner-centred approach is based on the idea that learners can learn better when they are aware of their own goals. Thus, this model for language curriculum development shifts from what should be done in a course of study to what is specifically done by language teachers in their classes, through negotiation between teachers and learners in the planning, implementation and evaluation of language courses (Nunan, 1988). Students' needs and learning styles are analysed and used for selecting course content and teaching methodologies. Evaluation is an on- going process in every stage of teaching and learning. Self-assessment by each student is regarded as important as assessment by teachers. Two key components of the learner-centred classroom are first placing more responsibility in the hands of the students to manage their own learning, and second teachers taking roles as facilitators of knowledge to help learners learn how to learn rather than being the source of knowledge as was traditionally the case. Teachers can foster learner autonomy by creating and maintaining a learning environment through communicative tasks through which students can develop their language and learning skills to become autonomous learners. Experts and researchers have demonstrated that the learner-centred approach, which also promotes learner autonomy, can be applied in both ESL (e.g., Banks, 2000; Tudor 1996) and EFL classes (e.g., Lin, 2002; Sumie, 2001).

The General Differences between the Teacher-centred Approach and Learner-centred Approach

　　　Of the two approaches, there are a number of ways in which they differ, each with

its own strengths and weaknesses (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2003). First, there is a difference in the two on how the student works. Considering the teacher-centred approach, the students do their work alone where they do exercises related to the teacher's presentation during or after the lesson while on the other hand, in the student-centred approach, the students work together in groups or pairs as per the demand and purpose of the activity. This way, teaching and learning becomes an enjoyable and friendly active and rewarding activity hence making it easier for the students to understand the lesson since they are actively involved in the learning.

Secondly, the teacher-centred approach portrays students as basically passive while the teachers' are active since teachers are the main focus in this approach which is considered sensible since the teachers are familiar with the language which the students are not. In this case, the students are less engaged during the learning process. However, with the student -centred approach, the teacher and the student are both active participants since they share the learning responsibility of the learner, helping to identify how the students should use the language.

Another considerable difference of the two approaches is that of the classroom situation where in the teacher -centred approach, there is little or no noise in the class. This is due to the fact that since it is the teacher who passes on the information, the students will automatically be quiet in order to grab the necessary knowledge of the language from the teacher. On the contrary, in the learner-centred approach the class situation is busy and noisy since it is mainly in groups and discussions (Jeanne. 2009). In this approach, the teacher is compelled to be comfortable with the fact that the students are more likely to make mistakes that he/she may not hear and correct. The teacher-centred approach focuses on desires and, where the teachers support them. Considering this; there is a difference on the beginning of analysis and emphasis in supporting learning.

In the teacher-centred approach, there is separation of the process of teaching from that of assessing or testing. In this approach, teaching occurs first then assessment comes later as a way of finding out whether the students grabbed the knowledge passed on to them by the teachers. Unlike the teacher-centred approach, the student-centred approach has both the teaching and assessment being done together. As teaching continues, the students do exercises in pairs or groups.

When it comes to assessments, the teacher-centred approach uses assessments to monitor the student's learning (Hayo, 2007). This way, the teachers are able to discover the weaknesses of the students or areas they did not understand in the course of learning and are therefore able to find a way of bringing the point home. This is different from the student-centred approach, where the assessments play the role of diagnosing and promoting learning among the students.

The two approaches differ in the way they test the desired learning with the learners. In the teacher-centred learning approach, the desired learning is tested indirectly by use of objectivity scored exams, while in the student-centred learning approach; the

desired learning is directly, tested through portfolios, performances, papers, and projects (Good & Brophy, 2003).

Teaching Tips to student-centred Learning
1. Maintain good communication skills
        A successful teacher is one that is able to build a rapport with his /her students, one that can easily connect with his learners and feel their needs as individuals. Open and clear communication is the key to develop a healthy friendly learning atmosphere inside your class.
2. Getting student's engagement
        There is nothing as challenging as getting students engagement and holding their attention. Today's students are multi tasked and can hardly maintain a long concentration. They can easily get bored and therefore disconnected. There are many ways you can fight off this problem: Use interesting educational games and activities, use technology and multimedia resources and finally make your teaching student-centred and try your maximum to relate what you teach to student's immediate environment.
3. Use Humour
        Relevant doses of humour to spice up your teaching are highly recommended. Forget about the authoritative and coercive style of teaching, for experience proved that it only disheartens learners and kills their motivation. Use humour at appropriate times; this can lead to students engagement and build up their confidence. You need, however, to maintain the right balance between instruction and joking and don't let your whole class become an hour long comedy routine. Avoid the off-colour jokes and be sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of your students.
4. Act don't react
        Students are very smart and it is part of their juvenile nature to try to get you. You are, for them, like a computer screen, they keep trying out all the keyboard buttons to find your weak point. Learn their game and play it with them carefully. Sometimes ignoring a disruptive behaviour is way better than reacting to it and in case it becomes repetitive or serious then make sure to talk it out with the student involved alone and not In front of the whole class.
5. Be clear and precise in your instructions
        Remember you are teaching digitally focused students with short attention span. Several of the problems some teachers face are due to ambiguous and unclear instructions. Cut off on the clutter and be to the point. Show them the red lines and explain to them classroom ethics and what you can tolerate.
6. Give room to individualized learning
        Not all students are equal in their comprehensive powers. Students learn in different ways, like seeing, hearing, and experiencing things at first hand. Research has

even proved that students can perform better on test if they change study habits to fit their own personal learning styles.Therefore,   some students are slow learners and others are quick, some kinesthetic (learn by experience or doing) others are auditory or visual. Keep these considerations in your mind and   do your best to tend to every kind of learner you might have in your class.

7. Positive feedback

"good job, excellent, ..etc" are simple words that might not mean anything to you but they mean the whole world to students. Think back to the days when you were a student and how a positive feedback from your teacher would make both your and your parents whole day. Publicly praise positive behaviour and show students that you are celebrating their achievements as well.

8. Involve students in decision making

Students tend to do great when they feel they are trusted and that they are real parts in the learning / teaching operation. Use voting and polling to investigate about a certain topic or classroom assignment. Try from time to time to give them the wheel and let them lead. This is a great way to inspire students to increase their productivity.

9. Use peer learning

Peer learning is a form of cooperative learning that enhances the value of student-student interaction and results in various advantageous learning outcomes. For peer learning to be effective, the teacher must ensure that the entire group experiences positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, group processing, and individual and group accountability. Here are some of the strategies to help you facilitate successful peer learning as stated in this article:

Buzz groups: This is a large group of students subdivided into smaller groups of 4-5 students to consider issues surrounding a problem.

Affinity groups: Groups of 4-5 students are each assigned particular tasks to work on outside of formal contact time

Solution and critic groups; One sub-group is assigned a discussion topic for a tutorial and the other groups constitute critics who observe, offer comments and evaluate the sub-group presentation

Teach- Write-Discuss: At the end of a unit of instruction, students have to answer Shall question and justify their answers. After working on them individually they can then compare their answers with each others.

10. Love your subject/ job

The best way to get students interested in your subject, from sciences to language to arts, is to love it so much that your passion for the field shows in your attitude. Students positively respond to authenticity. And as Abraham Lincoln once said" Love the job you do and you will never have to work a day".

Assessment of student-centred learning

For many years now, postsecondary educators have utilized a variety of student-centered learning methodologies to enhance student learning. (DeBoer, 2002; Norte, 2005; Scott & Buchanan, 1998). Unfortunately, many instructors who incorporate these approaches often use assessment methods designed for traditional teaching. Research shows, however, that assessment methods should also be student-centered (Ma & Zhou, 2000).

To be considered student-centered, the assessment technique should directly involve students in examining their own cognitive development by having them focus on learning first and the grade second (Pedersen & Liu, 2003). Strategies should be engaging and interactive while incorporating sharing, trusting, team building, reflecting, helping, and coaching (Pitas, 2000). Developing assessment that supports learning and motivation is essential to the success of student-centred approaches.

One of the main reasons teachers' resist student-centred learning is the view of assessment as problematic in practice. Since teacher-assigned grades are so tightly woven into the fabric of schools, expected by students, parents and administrators alike, allowing students to participate in assessment is somewhat contentious.

Thought must also be given as to whether student-centered assessments are individual, team- based, or a combination of the two. Therefore, as a teacher/instructor you need to equip yourself with the skills and knowledge of assessment when using this method of teaching and learning. In assessment one is supposed to sit with the learner implying that it is something we do with and for learners and not to learners. Teaching - learning methods that are child -centred. Below are a number of teaching-learning methods that promote learner centred learning.

- Demonstration
- Asking questions
- Discussions
- Debate
- Group work
- Homework
- Guided learning
- Individual assignment
- Practical work
- Role play/Drama
- Simulation, etc.
- discovery / inquiry learning,
- problem-based learning,
- project-based learning,
- case-based teaching,
- Teaching with archival, botanical, and museum collections.

- pair work

This style of learning involves a number of activities and tasks that appear to provide support for the development of communicative skills. The activities which the students are required to undertake include:

- Problem solving. The tasks require students to seek information from appropriate sources in order to solve a problem that reflects state-of-the-art knowledge about project management. The students are able to use the WWW as an information source but have to select from the many resources available those that are relevant to the task.

- Peer evaluation. Having solved the problem, the students are required develop criteria to apply this to peer projects and to defend the criteria they have developed to explore the options and possibilities available in developing a solution. The students have to examine the information, consider the scope of their inquiry and decide the parameters in which they are going to work.

- Collaboration. Each group consists of 4-5 members. The problem-solving task requires members to organise themselves into productive teams who share the workload, undertake separate tasks and maintain tight deadlines and schedules from one week to the next. Such activities demand that the students consider the requirements of other, be adaptive, responsible and flexible.

- Personal reflection on task and process. Each student maintains a reflective journal 10 which personal views of progress of skills and competencies are recorded. Students consider the skills and cognitive skills they have applied, note the skills that need to be developed and develop learning goals that are carried over to the next task. This provides a strong framework for the development of personal and process knowledge.

Conclusion

Learner-centred approach in teaching focuses primarily on the achievement of realistic objectives, and then on the language that is needed to achieve those objectives. This treats language as an instrument to complete a given objective rather than an isolated grammar point or lexical set to learn and practice. This gives plenty of opportunity for communication in authentic contexts and gives the learner freedom to use the linguistic resources he/she has, and then reflect on what they learned or need to learn. Finally, as EFL teachers are eclectic by nature, teachers often use a combination of learner-centred and teacher-centred approaches. 'As always, the important thing is to use what works best for the learners.

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