



STUDENT-CENTERED PEDAGOGY IN 21ST CENTURY EFL CLASSROOMS

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Annotation. *This paper explores the implementation and impact of student-centered pedagogy in 21st-century English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Emphasizing learner autonomy, collaboration, and active participation, this approach aligns with modern educational demands and fosters communicative competence, motivation, and critical thinking among learners. The study highlights key methods, challenges, and benefits of adopting student-centered teaching in various EFL contexts.*

Key words: *student-centered learning, EFL, pedagogy, 21st-century skills, learner autonomy, communicative competence, technology in education.*

INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of education, traditional teacher-centered methodologies are increasingly giving way to student-centered pedagogy, especially in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The 21st century has witnessed significant pedagogical shifts driven by technological advancements, changing learner profiles, and the growing demand for communicative language competence. Student-centered learning (SCL) emphasizes the active role of students in constructing knowledge through participation, exploration, and reflection, rather than passive reception of information.

This approach fosters autonomy, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration—skills essential for both language proficiency and lifelong learning. Consequently, educators and institutions worldwide are rethinking curriculum designs and instructional strategies to make learning more engaging and responsive to students' needs and interests. This study employed a qualitative approach using classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student surveys conducted across three EFL institutions in Uzbekistan and South Korea. The sample included 12 EFL instructors and 85 intermediate-level learners aged 17–23.

The data focused on:

- Teaching techniques used to promote student-centered learning.
- Student perceptions of engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes.
- Challenges faced by teachers during implementation.

Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring patterns, teacher strategies, and learner responses. The findings reveal that student-centered pedagogy enhances learners' active engagement, improves communication skills, and increases motivation. Notable results include:



• *High participation rates* in collaborative tasks such as role plays, debates, and peer teaching.

• *Improved learner autonomy*, with students taking initiative in selecting materials and reflecting on progress.

• *Enhanced use of technology*, including language learning apps, online discussions, and multimedia presentations.

However, several challenges were also reported:

• *Initial resistance from learners* accustomed to passive learning.

• *Time constraints* in planning individualized instruction.

• *Need for continuous teacher training* in modern pedagogical practices.

The student-centered approach aligns well with 21st-century education principles, such as fostering critical thinking, digital literacy, and interpersonal skills. In EFL contexts, where communication is the ultimate goal, such pedagogical methods allow learners to practice language in meaningful contexts. However, successful implementation depends on institutional support, teacher readiness, and cultural adaptation. In contexts where hierarchical and exam-oriented systems dominate, shifting to a learner-centered paradigm requires gradual transformation and stakeholder involvement. Moreover, the integration of educational technology should not be viewed as a replacement for pedagogy but as a facilitator of interactive and personalized learning experiences. Teachers need to be equipped with both digital tools and pedagogical knowledge to make SCL effective.

CONCLUSION

Student-centered pedagogy offers promising results in enhancing the quality of EFL instruction in the 21st century. By prioritizing learners' interests, encouraging collaboration, and utilizing modern tools, it fosters deeper language learning and prepares students for real-world communication. Nevertheless, for this approach to be fully effective, ongoing professional development, curriculum flexibility, and institutional commitment are vital.

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