

# FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF A LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACH TO TEACHING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

## ОСНОВНЫЕ ПОНЯТИЯ ЛИЧНОСТНО-ОРИЕНТИРОВАННОГО ПОДХОДА К ОБУЧЕНИЮ КОММУНИКАТИВНЫМ НАВЫКАМ

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this article is to highlight the issues associated with the learner-centered approach to developing speaking skills. As described in the first section of this article, a learner-centered approach is a method of teaching that addresses the needs of all students in a classroom. It is a responsive approach to different learners' learning preferences in a classroom.

**Key words:** Learner centered approach, interactive learning, individual differences, language acquisition.

**АННОТАЦИЯ:** Цель этой статьи — осветить проблемы, связанные с личностно-ориентированным подходом к развитию разговорных навыков. Как описано в первом разделе этой статьи, личностно-ориентированный подход — это метод обучения, учитывающий потребности всех учащихся в классе. Это гибкий подход к предпочтениям разных учащихся в обучении в классе.

**Ключевые слова:** личностно-ориентированный подход, интерактивное обучение, индивидуальные различия, овладение языком.

The learner-centered approach to language teaching and learning is concerned with the investigation of the relationships between individual differences of learners and language acquisition development; thus, this issue is critical in modern language teaching methodology. To be more specific, learners in one classroom may differ

and be unique in terms of language learning success due to the previously described aspects. This, in turn, brings the difficulty of implementing the principles of the learner-centered approach into the center of FLT's instructional purpose. This process is achieved by using some principles or criteria of learner centered approach. Before outlining the lingua didactic potential of the principles of learner centered approach, firstly, it is essential to distinguish main principles of learner centered approach.

As Uzbek pedagogist-scholars such as N.A. Muslimov, M.Usmonboyeva and M.Mirsoliyeva mentions, there are some principles and types of learner-centered approach as presented in the Table 1 [1;55]:

**Table-1: Key principles of learner-centered approach**

Key principles of learner-centered approach	
1. Innovative Education	8. Project-Based Learning
2. Module Education	9. Differentiated Instruction (Differentiation)
3. Cooperative Learning	10. Collobarative Learning
4. Interactive Learning	11. Game Technologies
5. Distance Learning	12. Individualized Instruction (Individualization)
6. Computer-assissted learning	13. Programm-Based Learning
7. Problem-Based Learning	14. Independent Learning

According to the table's content, Innovative Education, Module Education, Cooperative Learning, Interactive Learning, Distance Learning, Computer-Assisted Learning, Problem-Based Learning, Project-Based Learning, Differentiated Instruction, Collaborative Learning, Game Technologies, Individualized Instruction, Programm-Based Learning, Independent Learning, and others formulate the principles of learner-centered approach.

As can be seen from the chart, the Learner-Centered Approach to Language Education has a wide range of concepts and types; consequently, we cannot focus on all of them. Considering the breadth and complexity of the Learner-Centered Approach, we can note that in this study, we concentrated only on the differentiation and individualization principles of the Learner Centered Approach, and we will discuss these principles as the main principles of the Learner Centered Approach below. To begin, the terms "differentiation" and "individualization" must be defined.

Based on these definitions, Barbara Bray and Kathleen McClaskey offer their interpretation of the terms "differentiation and individualization," stating that differentiation targets the learning needs of specific groups of learners while individualization addresses the needs of a single student. [2;26]. Furthermore, several linguists and researchers defined the terms differently. Heacox [3;66], for example, defines differentiation as "changing the pace, level, or type of instruction you provide in response to individual learners' needs, styles, or interests," whereas Willis, S., and Mann, L. state that "differentiation is a teaching philosophy based on the evidence that teachers should adapt instruction to student differences" [4;46]. Carol Ann Tomlinson, a major expert in this sector, proposes a widely accepted definition of the term, defined instruction is a teaching philosophy based on the notion that children learn best when teachers accommodate diversity in their readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles.

Carol Ann Tomlinson suggests the following distinguishing concepts. [5;16-20]:

- ✓ Focus on the essentials;
- ✓ Appreciation of the student differences;
- ✓ Assessment and instruction are inseparable;
- ✓ Modification of content, process and product in response to learner's readiness, interest and learning profile;
- ✓ Respectful tasks;
- ✓ Collaborative learning;

- ✓ Balancing group and individual norms;
- ✓ Flexible cooperation of teacher and student.

In agreement with Carol Ann Tomlinson's differentiation ideas, we can assert that varied learners in our classrooms should be diversified and individualized according to some principles or criteria, as mentioned below. To begin, as Tomlinson [5;16] suggests, teachers should concentrate on the key content that students should know. To be more specific, a teacher teaches students the fundamental concepts, principles, and skills of a subject. The course content should be understandable to all students.

According to the second principle, teacher should know his/her students. More particularly, differing needs of each learner should be perceived, recognized and appreciated. The EFL teachers should know that students differ in experience, readiness, interest, intelligences, language, gender, and mode of learning. In our view, these differences in learners should be addressed through differentiation and individualization of instruction. In addition, it is known that there can be both struggling and advanced learners in a classroom and therefore we argue that teaching instruction should be adapted to this difference in the classroom. Differentiation and individualization address the needs of struggling and advanced learners. It is a responsive instruction for the needs of both pupils who are at lower level or struggling and more advanced learners.

In our view, it is also reasonable to represent the key elements of differentiation so that we can get a complete picture of main parameters of differentiation and individualization. It should be noted that we synthesized the works of some scholars who developed the problem of differentiation and individualization, particularly the works of Carol Ann Tomlinson, Alberta Education (Alberta Teachers' Association), Barbara Bray and Kathleen McClaskey. Therefore, we reveal the key components of differentiated instruction presented in the *Table 3*. [2;86].

**Table 2. Key elements of differentiation principle of learner centered approach**

<b>Key components/elements of differentiation principles of learner centered instruction</b>				
Learner needs	Learning styles	Abilities	Interests	Readiness level
Diversity	A variety of learners	A variety of methods	A variety of contexts	A variety of materials
Flexibility	Flexible instruction	Flexible grouping	Flexible materials	Flexible product
Instruction	Thoughtful planning	Logical sequence of instruction	Providing choices and opportunities	Instructional strategies and tools
Assessment	Ongoing	Formative	Assessing student needs and progress	Diagnostic and strategic
Multiple	Multiple ways to learning	Multiple opportunities and choices	Multiple ways of assessment	Multi-optional assignments
Curriculum	Standardized program	Quality of curriculum	Following the demands of curriculum	
Context	Individual work	Pair work	Small group	A whole class
Production	A variety of ways for showing input	Input analysis	The application of learning	

Independence	Independent learning	Independent practice of new skills	Choices and opportunities	Students' involvement in their own learning
Ownership of his learning	Self-assessment and monitoring skills	Feeling the responsibility	Critical and creative thinking skills	Motivational skills

According to the table's content, various characteristics such as diversity, flexibility, learner requirements, multiple, independent learning, context, production, and other concepts are fundamental to the philosophy of differentiation and individualization of instruction. These components, in turn, comprise a concept of differentiation and individualization in the field of teaching and learning. As seen in the chart, differentiation and individualization are learner-centered in nature, focusing on learners and their needs. This approach focuses on maximizing the learning outcomes of all students in a classroom, whether they are struggling or advanced. As a result, we believe that teachers should be aware of these differentiation and individualization components in order to effectively implement differentiated instruction during their professional operations.

We contend that it is fair for teachers to recognize key aspects of differentiation before implementing differentiated teaching in their classrooms. At this point, we should mention that Carol Ann Tomlinson specifies some fundamental characteristics of differentiation and individualization. Tomlinson [5;99] emphasizes the following differentiation and individualization characteristics: a) differences are studied as a basis for planning; b) student differences shape curriculum; c) pre-assessment is common; d) multiple learning materials are available; e) multiple options for students are provided; f) students make sense of information; g) an emphasis on concepts and connections is placed; h) variable

spacing is used; i) students assist in setting goals and standards; j) varied grading criteria are used; k) excellence as an individual effort is respected. These differentiation characteristics make it apparent and consistent that student differences are carefully researched and addressed as the primary factor determining all elements or features of differentiation and individualization theory.

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