

Learner-centered Instruction in English Education: Reality and Expectations

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Abstract

This study aims to find out the extent to which classroom instruction in teaching English as a foreign language in the departments of English is learner-centered. The study combines between the elements of a case study, descriptive and self-reflective techniques. The subjects are the teachers and students of English in the college of Sciences and Arts, University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. To collect the relevant data, the researcher used the tools of a questionnaire and unconstructed observations. The questionnaire is used to find out the extent to which teachers are aware of the concept of learner-centeredness, and the observations are used to note down the behavior of the teachers and students in the teaching/learning process. The observations are a kind of self-reflection notes resulted from my teaching experience in the English teaching field. The findings show that teachers surveyed are not aware of the concept, and when appear to be aware they give contradictory responses about the concept of learner-centeredness. The results from the self-reflection observations appear in the form of different constraints in the way of learner-centered instruction. These constrains are those related to students, teachers, system and family. The most important among these constraints are the ones related to students' lack of motivation to learn. Awareness constrains on part of the different participants comes next. The paper concludes that different types of constraints stand in the way of implementing learner-centered instruction (LCI). Some recommendations and suggestions are offered for a better use of this approach.

Keywords: English, instruction, learner-centered, students

Cite as: Ahmad, A. M. (2017). Learner-centered Instruction in English Education: Reality and Expectations. *Arab World English Journal*, 8 (1).

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol7no1.8>

Introduction

Learner-centeredness is the vogue of the day in the field of education in general and in second and foreign language instruction in particular. Teaching can be either teacher-centered or student-centered or a combination of both. Teacher-centered teaching has been in practice for centuries. Learner-centered instruction, on the other hand is quite a recent approach. It has been growing rapidly for the past three decades. Now it seems to have won ground over traditional teacher-centered instruction in many educational institutions and among educationists' circles in many parts of the world. The shift of emphasis from teacher-centeredness to that of the centeredness of the learner is due to what is believed to be the failure of teacher-centered instruction style to prepare the learner to cope with the demands of the ever-changing and challenging life socially, politically and economically. At the same time, educators concerned with the growing problems of school dropout, low levels of academic achievement, and other indicators of school failure have been arguing for more learner-centered models of instruction. Such models attend to the diversity among students and to the use this diversity to enrich learning and to produce results within the context of current school reform (BEA, 1997).

Memorization, or rote learning and repetition, characteristic of teacher-centeredness, have come short to prepare the learner to survive the present challenging society, which requires an individual equipped with the strategies, skills, and other thinking abilities that entail him to take responsibility of his learning and cope with the ever-changing demands. "The meaning of knowing has shifted from being able to remember and repeat information to being able to find and use it" (Doyle, 2008, p3). Furthermore, politically, democratic systems have given a unique place to the individual citizen to exercise his freedom to choose whom to represent and even rule him. So is the case in the field of economy where the emphasis has shifted to the individual customer. This means learners need to learn lifelong learning skills they need to live successfully in an ever-expanding global economy (Doyle, 2008). In response to all this, education has started to pay attention to the learner rather than to the teacher, or the content, to learning rather than to teaching. Here comes the idea of learner-centered approach, which takes the learner as the focus of the whole teaching learning process.

However, in spite of this wide spread use of learner-centered instruction in all fields and particularly in the field of foreign and second language education, most of our language teaching educational institutions are still under the dominance of the traditional teacher-centered styles (Liu, Qiao, & Liu, 2006). This paper is an attempt to investigate where our institutions stand with regard to the implementation of learner-centered instruction (LCI) in the field of English language instruction.

Historical Background to LCI

The philosophy of the concept of learner-centered instruction is not new (Norman & Spohrer, 1996). It has been there centuries long. One can trace its roots back to Plato and Aristotle's ideas in which they claimed that true knowledge is within each individual and the process of learning consists of discovering that which is within each individual (Al-Maktri, 2002). This concept also has been credited as early as 1905 to Hayward and in 1956 to Dewey's work (O'Sullivan, 2003). Arab philosophers share this; Khalil Jubran, for example, sees that knowledge is within each learner, and what is needed is only a skilful teacher to dig that knowledge out (Al-Maktri, 2002).

In America the term learner-centered was used as early as 1930. (Hidden curriculum, 2014). However, as an approach to teaching and learning, one can trace it to the writings of Dewey and Piaget and more recently to Malcolm (Wikipedia, 2015). The shift of emphasis from the teacher to that on the learner in practice took place in the 1970s onwards (Oller & Richards, 1973).

The idea of learner-centeredness was driven by the need for change in the traditional environment where the students became passive, apathetic and bored. At school level, the idea of 'child-centeredness' connected with the claim that the teacher should not interfere with the child process of maturation. In other words, the point was that the child will learn only when he is ready. The teacher should act as a guide, facilitator, and stimulator. The students are not empty vessels to be filled with knowledge and information by the teacher. Rather, they are human beings who are as able as the teacher himself is and who can take responsibility of their own learning. This way, the paradigm started to shift away from an emphasis on teaching to an emphasis on learning which means a shift of power from the teacher to that on the learner or student (AL-Huneidi & Schreurs, 2013).

The theoretical framework relates to the constructivist view of learning in the importance it places on learner' discovery and independence and on classroom activities. This theory of education and learning rests on the work of a variety of psychologists and philosophers, most notably Piaget, Bruner, Von Glaserfeld, and Vygotsky (Weimer, 2013).

At the core of this constructivists' view is the relationship between learners and content. Constructivist approaches emphasize learners' actively constructing their own knowledge rather than passively receiving information transmitted to them from teachers and textbooks. From a constructivist perspective, knowledge cannot simply be given to learners: learners must construct their own meanings (Stage, et.al. 1998). In a learner-centered paradigm, knowledge is constructed by students through gathering and synthesizing information and integrating such information with skills such as inquiry, communication, and critical and creative thinking (Huba & Freed, 2000).

In the field second language learning, different teaching approaches immersed in harmony with this shift. We have those approaches, like the humanistic approaches, which advocate the concept of the learner as a whole-person in which not only his intellect but also his feelings, wishes, attitudes and other affective elements have to be considered (Larsen-Freeman, 2008). Other approaches in same line also advocated the idea that learning can take place only when the learner is ready for it.

Now the idea of learner-centered has become the rule rather than the exception in most of language educational institutions around the globe particularly in the developed world. This means, teachers need to allow learners to raise their own questions, generate their own hypotheses and models as possibilities and test them for validity. Education is now changing from an instructor-centered to a student-centered paradigm.

Objectives

The study tries to fulfill a number of objectives among which are the following:

1. finding out the extent to which teachers and students are aware of the concept and nature of the learner-centered approach.
2. examining the current position of learner-centered instruction in our English departments.
3. examining the constraints and difficulties that hinder a full application of the learner-centered approach.

Study Questions

1. To what extent are teachers and students aware of learner-centered (LC) approach?
2. To what extent is the current English instruction learner-centered?
3. What are the constraints and difficulties that stand in the way of implementing this approach?

The Significance of the Study

The study is significant as it deals with one of the topics that are of concern to teachers, educationists, and to the teaching and learning process as a whole. Learner-centered instruction now is the rule rather than the exception in many educational institutions around the globe. However, educational institutions, in the Arab World, regarding the use of this approach, seem to lag behind. Though some educational institutions claim that their instruction is learner-centered, this is not the case; learner-centered teaching and learning is still a wish not a reality. The traditional teacher-fronted style of teaching is still dominant. This paper tries to find out and reflect on the status of learner-centeredness in English instruction in the departments of English. This topic is important as learner-centered instruction is in accordance with demands of the current time in that it responds to the individual learner who is considered a central in the teaching learning process. Learners do not have only to receive knowledge from teachers; rather they must construct their own meanings (Stage et al., 1998). Adopting this approach may help prepare students to be independent and responsible individuals equipped with the skills, abilities and knowledge that help them to be active and productive citizens capable of facing the challenges of the fast ever-changing and demanding modern age. Therefore, this study is in response to the needs of the individual students and to the requirements of the society at large.

Study Delimitations

A delimitation of this study involved the selection of a single institution namely the Department of English, College of Sciences and Arts in Annamas town (Saudi Arabia) because the researcher-teacher is a member of the teaching staff there. Other institutions are not included now due to practical constraints. They can be the target of further studies.

Definition of the Term

For the purpose of this study, the following definition is adopted:

Student-centered instruction [SCI] is an instructional approach in which students influence the content, activities, materials, and pace of learning. This learning model places the student (learner) in the center of the learning process. The instructor provides students with opportunities to learn independently and from one another and coaches them in the skills they need to do so effectively (Froyd & Simpson, 2003 & Collins & O'Brien as cited in Froyd & Simpson 2003).

Literature Review

Learner-centered instruction is claimed to be widespread. However, the actual practice belies this claim. Lea et al. (2003, P.322) maintain that one of the issues with student-centered learning is the fact that 'many institutions or educators claim to be putting student-centered learning into practice, but in reality they are not'. The following studies give us some idea of about the status of learner-centered instruction in different institutions and contexts.

In a number of research studies, findings show that though the learner-centered approach is acknowledged for being the right approach for the present time, yet actual practice at universities is still teacher-centered. One of these studies by Liu et al.(2006), the findings indicate that instructors whether are they of language or content subjects still use traditional, teacher-centered styles in university settings.

Shipton (2011) conducted a study in the New South Wales (NSW) Police College with the aim to determine Police College staff dominant teaching approach prior to extensive staff development that commenced in 2010. The results highlight contradictions in the survey findings, with responses to closed questions indicating a majority favoring learner-centered approaches, while responses to open-ended questions suggest staff tend to be more teacher-centered. Discussion of these results highlights several possible reasons for this contradiction and suggests that further development of staff teaching conceptions is required to encourage reflective practice and the use of learner-centered approaches crucial to the facilitation of problem based learning.

A quantitative study by Ervin (2012) identified the teaching style of associate degree nursing faculty at Kettering College as teacher-centered or learner-centered. Results from the faculty and student surveys demonstrated teacher-centered tendencies concerning faculty use of learner centered principles. While content analysis of course syllabi showed a propensity for learner-centered instruction.

Another exploratory study for the same purpose using PALS measure (Conti, 1989) indicated that there were two types of teaching style among graduate education instructors at the Midwestern University. Yet, the tendency was geared toward learner-centered rather than teacher-centered teaching style (Ahmed, 2013)

Some of the papers are meta-analyses that synthesize results from numerous individual studies. These results confirm positive influences of student-centered learning approaches to teaching on academic performance, attitudes toward learning, and persistence in programs. In light of the growing evidence on the effectiveness of student-centered, learning approaches (Froyd & Simpson, 2003).

According to Handelsman et al (2004), there is mounting evidence that supplementing or replacing lectures with active learning strategies and engaging students in discovery and scientific process improves learning and knowledge retention.

The Method

The method used in this study is descriptive, analytical, and reflective type of method in which the actual personal experience and observations of researcher-teacher are used as a main source of the data. It also has the features of a case study and action research through the researcher's daily contact with teachers and students. A questionnaire is administered to teachers to find out the extent of their awareness of the learner-centered approach (LCA).

The Setting and Subjects

The setting is the Department of English, boys College of Sciences and Arts, Annamas town, University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. The subjects of the study are the ten teachers (all those available) of English and the whole students in the department.

Data Collection

The following tools are used to gather the relevant data:

1. A questionnaire

The questionnaire is used to consolidate the data generated from the researcher's experience (Self-reflection). It is administered to the teachers of English for purpose of finding out how well they understand the concept of learner-centeredness. The questions of the questionnaire are simple and brief asking the teachers: (1) if they have heard about the concept of learner-centeredness; (2) if they understand the concept; (3) if they agree with the idea that the students should be independent from the teacher; (3) and finally, they ask about their views of who is the most important among the following three elements in the teaching-learning process: the teacher, the students or the teaching-learning materials. Generally speaking, these questions elicit if the teachers concerned are aware of the learner-centered approach (LCA) and its concept.

2. The researcher's personal experience (self-reflection)

The researcher teacher has been teaching English and training teachers of English as a foreign language for over thirty years. His teaching included different types of students from primary to college students. He also trained teachers of English of both genders. In addition, he has conducted a number of studies in the field of English and in the area of learner-centeredness in particular. His PhD thesis was on this very topic: learner-centeredness. Therefore, reflecting on this experience is valuable in providing first hand data on the topic under discussion. In addition, the researcher's daily contact with teachers and students consolidates this reflective experience.

Data Analysis

The interpretive (namely percentages) method is used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire. Those obtained from the self-reflection are analyzed descriptively.

Results

Results of the Questionnaire

Data obtained from the questionnaire are give in the following tables: Table 1 shows responses to the first three questions:

1. Have you heard about learner-centered approach?
2. What does the concept of learner-centeredness mean?
3. Do you think students should be independent from the teacher?

Table 1. Knowing About the Learner-centeredness

If teachers have heard about Learner-centeredness	understanding the concept LCA	If students should be independent from the teacher
Yes 87.5 %	37.5%	37.5%
No 12.5%	62.5%	62.5%

Table2 contains responses to the fourth question:

Put the three elements in order of importance: teacher, student, textbook (materials).

Table 2. The most Important Element as Perceived by the Sample

Teacher	Student	Textbook
%62.5	%37.5	% 0

Results of the Experience Observations

Table 3 shows the most important observations from my experience in the field.

Table3. Results of Researcher's Personal Experience (Self-reflection)

No	Students-related Constraints
1	The majority of students are not motivated to learn English
2	Students are not willing to work in groups or teams
3	Students' lack of confidence and courage to be active
4	Low level of language proficiency on the part of students
5	Lack of awareness about the nature of learner-centeredness
6	Lack of awareness about the nature of language and language learning
7	Students are happy to be under the teacher control
8	Students are not accustomed to learner-centered assessment
9	Female students are slightly more motivated than males
	Teacher-related Constraints
1	Teachers' lack of awareness of LCI
2	Teachers are not ready to change roles
3	Problems with disciplines with LCI
4	Teaching under learner-centeredness is demanding
5	Teachers not used to behave in a democratic way
6	Teachers are not trained in LCI
7	Female teachers are less enthusiastic than male teachers to use LCA
	System-related Constraints
1	Educational system is still centralized.
2	Traditional system of assessment is dominating
3	Lack of LC related materials and resources
4	Crowded classes
	Family-related Constraints
1	Parents are not aware of the need to learner-centered instruction
2	Parents too busy to bother about their children education

Results Discussion

The Questionnaire

Table 1 provides us data for the three questions in the preceding section as follows: a majority of about 87.5% says they have heard about the concept of learner-centered approach. Only 12.5 % say they have not. This is a good beginning to say that a majority knows learner-centeredness. However, in answering the other three remaining questions, we can identify clear contradictions of the sample. As for question two, only 37.5 % seem to say they understand the concept of learner-centeredness. A majority of 62.5 % does not have clear idea about it. They give either wrong or at best vague understanding. The same happens with the third question, which inquires whether teachers agree that the student should be independent from the teacher. A majority of 62.5 % does not agree that students should be independent from the teacher. This contradicts the core of the idea of learner-centeredness.

In Table 2, the respondents [teachers] are asked to order the three elements of the teaching/learning process i.e., the student, the teacher and the textbook, from the most important to the least important. The order they gave was as follows: the teacher comes first as the most important with 62.5%. Next comes the 'student' with 37.5%. The textbook comes last with 0%. This shows that the respondents do not have a clear understanding of the approach and the concept of learner-centeredness, which considers the learner the most important element in the teaching/learning process.

All this tells us that implementing learner-centeredness is not feasible in such environment where the teachers do not have clear understanding of the concept and the rationale behind it. This way, the first study question about whether the teachers are aware of the concept of learner-centeredness is answered that teachers generally are not aware of the learner-centeredness. This in turn, tells us that these teachers do not use learner-centered instruction.

Results of the Researcher's Personal Experience (Self-reflection)

The most salient observations given in Table 3 are classified as constraints in the way of implementing learner-centered approach. These constraints are put in the following categories: student-related, teacher-related, educational system-related and family-related:

Student-related Constraints

1. One of the major difficulties facing learner-centered instruction in our context is the one related to students' motivation. Most of the students are not motivated not only to learn under learner-centeredness but also to learn under any circumstances. If motivation is lacking then no real learning is expected. The matter becomes even worse when it comes to implement learner-centered instruction, which demands that students are highly involved in the learning process and motivation is a prerequisite for that. When motivation is lacking, learning is doomed to failure. A learner-centered student is an engaged one, and an engaged student is a motivated student. It is assumed that only when students are active participants, learning will be deep, enduring, and enjoyable, and transfer to contexts beyond the classroom (Walczyk & Ramsey, 2003).

Motivation, which correlates well with time on task, can make more of a difference between success and failure than any other factor (Ervin, 2012). What and how much is learned is influenced by the learner's motivation. Motivation to learn, in turn, is influenced

by the individual's emotional states, beliefs, interests, goals, and habits of thinking (McCumbs, 2004, p 6). When a teacher starts to use learner-centered techniques, he is faced with students who are already too passive to take any active part in the learner-centered activities.

Now it is argued that learner-centered instruction helps to increase motivation to learn (Collins & O'Brien, 2003). This means that we have only to start using learner-centered techniques, then motivation will take care of itself. However, this is not always the case. Learner-centered instruction can motivate only those who enjoy some level motivation. For those who motivation is at zero level, learner-centered is useless. Of course, why is it the case that our students are not motivated to learn is a long story and it not the right time and place to go to that issue now.

2. Closely related to the negative motivation of the students, is the idea that they are not willing to work in groups and teams (collaborative learning), which is characteristic of learner-centered approach. The researcher has always observed that whenever we ask the students to work in pairs, groups, or teams, they show discomfort and resistance. In contrast to what Doyle (2008) says that students need to be persuaded that learning is the central purpose of their schooling..., here students are not even ready to be persuaded. When the teacher tries to involve them, they feel that they are under threat and they feel insecure. Cooperative and collaborative learning – modes of learner-centeredness were found not to appeal to the learners who enjoy following the teacher doing the job for them. Moreover, these modes require that a student handle the group activities, which require them to use English to communicate.

3. Another constraint is the lack of courage and confidence on the part of the students to take an active part in the different learner-centered activities. In addition, students do not exert the required effort to practice and use what they have learned in classroom. This makes them underachievers lacking even the basics to communicate in English. Language acquisition is of a sophisticated nature and classroom lessons and lectures are not enough; more practice with active involvement and real interest on the part of the students is required. Acquisition of complex knowledge and skills requires extended student effort and guided practice. Without learners' motivation to learn, the willingness to exert this effort is unlikely without coercion (BEA, 1997).

4. Low English proficiency of the students is another constraint in the way of learner-centered instruction. The students come to class with a very low level of English. Their learning English in earlier stages does not seem to help them have a reasonable command of the basics of English. This is also true to the same students even after two to four years of studying English; they show little improvement. After all, learner-centered activities require some English for simple communication to take place and for a learner-centered activity to be successful.

5. Lack of awareness is another problem. The students are not aware of the learner-centered concept; they do not know other related ideas such as self-learning, learner autonomy, and the shift of the roles of both the teacher and student in the learning process ...etc. "They are not aware that the key idea is that students actively construct their own knowledge..." (Al-Huneidi & Schreurs, 2013). They do not know that learning is active mental work, not passive reception of teaching and that the teacher may teach but the learner may not learn.

6. Students have either old or misconceptions about what the nature of language is and how it is learned. This is also true about their knowledge of the nature of learning and the process of learning. Such misunderstanding makes learner-centered instruction difficult. For example, they think that to learn a language, you have to learn its grammar and vocabulary; or that memorization and rote learning are the only means to learn; or just to be in classroom is enough to learn a foreign language.

7. Due to the low levels of motivation and proficiency, and due to the absence of clear learning goals, and lack of awareness of the concept of learner-centeredness students are comfortable to be under the teacher's control and protection. This is because this state releases them from the responsibility to play an active role. Difficulty of get rid of deeply rooted habits of being passive receivers of knowledge and that it is the teacher whose job is to impart and clarify everything for the students, all contributes to passiveness of the students and the acceptance to the status quo on the part of the teachers. When the teacher wants to make activities learner-centered, the students feel insecure. Therefore, the students feel happy to be under the teacher control and to let him do the job of both teaching and learning for them.

8. Assessing students using learner-centered techniques can be a potential threat to students. It is informal and based mostly on formative or cumulative (Doyle, 2008) rather than summative assessment (Liu et al. 2006). They are accustomed to more summative assessment where they expect formal tests with grades and marks, and to evaluate them informally through self-evaluation, peer evaluation, self reflection, using reflective journals assignments, files, blogs ...etc is too demanding and they will not respond to it easily. Students do not bother even to bring simple stationeries like pens and notebooks to classes let alone using such learner-centered devices.

9. Compared to their male counterparts, girls are slightly more motivated to learn than boys are. They are better achievers under teacher-centered mode, and are more involved in classroom activities, which means if learner-centered instruction is used they can adapt to it more readily than boys do.

Teacher-related Constraints

1. Like students, many teachers are not aware of the learner-centeredness concept, and when they happen to know it, it is hazy and incomplete. This is also in agreement with what results have shown in the questionnaire.

2. When teachers happen to be aware of the learner-centeredness, not all of them are ready to exchange role with and give their traditional power to the students. They cannot even imagine how the situation will be under the mercy of the students.

3. The idea of power shift from teachers to students implies that teachers have to be prepared to confront problems of discipline, which already poses problems even under teacher-centered mode. This will be unbearable to many. In an environment where people are not used to the free atmosphere, this freedom is either misunderstood or misused by the people concerned. This is the

situation with our students. Many teachers see students' lack of motivation as a factor that undermines in them any desire to attempt to implement learner-centered approach.

4. Learner-centered teaching requires more work on the part of instructors than traditional lecture –recitation – evaluation mode in planning for, delivering and assessing instruction. (Walczyk & Ramsey, 2003). It is demanding compared to teacher-centered mode. The teacher has to do a lot to cope with the different needs of the students. In addition, classroom organization is different from the teacher-fronted one. It requires some skills and effort from the teacher. Dealing with the differences between students requires some effort on the part of the teacher. He needs to provide different materials and arrange different activities that suit each individual or at best each group of individuals. This is not the case with the traditional teacher-centered instruction. In addition, the teacher has to be equipped with different skills to deal with the rising problems and situations and this is not always possible with many teachers. Moreover, he must be well versed not only with the language but also with general knowledge to handle the students' needs, questions and enquiries.

5. The idea of democratic behavior is central to learner-centered instruction. The teachers must be prepared to behave democratically which may not be so easy to many teachers as they are not of the habit of behaving so. Most faculty often teach in the same way they were taught (Brookfield, 1995 & Gardiner, 1994). Moreover, democratic behavior means that a teacher has to expose himself as vulnerable and accept criticism from the students, which is not a welcomed gesture.

6. Teachers are not trained to handle learner-centered techniques and activates. Teachers in our case come from countries with different backgrounds and qualifications. These backgrounds have not yet embarked on learner-centered instruction. Therefore, we cannot expect them to be learner-center oriented without some training and more experience to deal with this approach.

7. Compared to their male counterparts, female teachers are less ready to change role and adopt learner-centered instruction. They are usually more teacher-centered oriented. They are not aware of the importance of this mode of instruction, and therefore, their change may take longer time to change. Reasons for are beyond the scope of this paper.

System - related Constraints

1. The present educational system is essentially teacher-centered though teachers frequently are demanded to make use of learner-centered instruction. As Weimer (2002) makes the observation, that for the most part, decisions about the course are made by the instructor; he prepares the content, the schedule, the conditions for learning, the attendance policies, and the evaluation process. She adds that the very language used to communicate this information is in the form of heavy-handed directives which make clear that the teacher is in charge. These decisions, however, are imposed on the teacher from higher authority. For example, teachers are given a prescribed syllable and are required to finish it in a given and pre-specified period of time, usually a semester. When the course is not completed in the given time, teachers have to explain the reasons of not finishing the syllabus. So, on one hand, teachers are asked to use learner-centered techniques and on the other, they are instructed not to do so by restricting their freedom of choice and telling them to cover certain topics of the syllabus and do that in a given time.

2. The whole administrative system has to follow an already defined program where little freedom of choice is given to the syllabus designer or teacher. When an enthusiastic teacher tries to implement learner-centered techniques or use learner-based activities, he is faced with such difficulties like the need to follow a prescribed syllabus and finish it in a given time or to teach certain topics not of his or of the student's choice.
3. The current assessment system poses problems. Since teaching is still traditional, so assessment is. The major concern of traditional teaching methods is effectiveness: how much students learn. This effectiveness is measured through the only method of testing. Traditional tests measure declarative knowledge: learned recitations and applications to small problems. They do not necessarily address depth of understanding nor the skills that the students have acquired (Norman & Spohrer, 1996). Assessing students using learner-centered techniques is different and measures different skills and abilities like thinking, both critically and creatively, deep understanding, evaluating and so on. The traditional tests may not be used under learner-centered style. New techniques are used, like self-evaluation or peer-evaluation through using journals, files, blogs diaries profiles and projects (Gibbs, 1995). This kind of assessment can not only be demanding but also threatening to students and teachers.
4. Learner-centered instruction means that enough resources must be available and ready for both learners and teachers from which the students can choose to study and from which the teachers can select and give tasks and arrange activities and so on. This is not always possible. Moreover, well-equipped and up-to-date libraries are not yet available.
5. Learner-centered instruction requires small numbers of students in classes so that a teacher can use different group work activities. This is not the case in most situations where the average number of students in a class can reach fifty students.

Family-related Constraints

1. Families are not aware of the nature and importance of learner-centered education. They hold traditional beliefs about teaching and learning; For example, most, if not all parents still think that it is the teacher who is the most important element, who can determine the success or failure of their children. When their children get high scores, they attribute that to the teacher who is then viewed as good and skilful, When their children fail, it the teacher who is to blame.
2. The family, due to their having little education or due to their having many children, offer little help and spend little time on their children to help them depend on themselves and train them to be learner-centered and learn by themselves. Moreover, even when parents are educated, they are not aware of the concept of learner-centeredness, and what it means for their children to be learner-centered.

Conclusions

1. Learner-centered instruction is not currently in use in English education in the department of English in the Saudi Arabian universities. Attempts by those who try to use it are faced with many constraints related to students, teachers, the current educational system, and family-related ones.
2. Lack of motivation to learn English on the part of the learners is a major factor for not implementing the approach by teachers not only at present but also in the near future.

3. Lack of awareness about the rationale and advantages of LCI on the part of teachers, learners and parents presents another difficulty.
4. Long rooted habits of learning like rote learning and having misconceptions about the nature of language and how it is learned plays a negative role in adopting learner-centered instruction.
5. Other difficulties related to the whole system like that of assessment and the rigid syllabus prescription, the large numbers of students in a classroom and so on; all this poses serious obstacles to make real progress with learner-centered instruction.
6. Family's traditional beliefs about education in general and about the changed roles of the learner and teacher contribute to the fact that learning and teaching remain teacher-centered.
7. Though female students are more motivated to learn, female teachers are less ready to adapt to the LCI mode.

Recommendations

It is recommended that

1. educationists and policymakers should reexamine the nature of the present system and curriculum at all levels, whether of schools or higher education, and should make the necessary changes to accommodate learner-centered instruction.
2. teachers need to be acquainted and trained to use the learner-centered approach.
3. teachers should try to do their best to encourage and motivate students to work hard and take active part in classroom.
4. teachers should start making use of the techniques that are based on learner-centered learning.
5. teachers are required to familiarize their students with the concept and the requirement of approach of learner-centeredness.
6. teachers, students and parents have to accept change of role as a requirement and style of modern life.
7. teachers should try to adapt the prescribed textbooks to be more-learner-centered. They should start to adopt, adapt and use learner-centered assessment techniques that are possible and easy to use.
8. parents should be familiarized with the necessity to help their children to depend on themselves. This can be done through intensive programs by using different means including the mass media and the social net works.
9. parents also should be alerted to the causes of the lack of motivation of their children to learn.

Suggestions

1. Lack of motivation to learn is common among a large number of students. This needs to be taken seriously by all concerned: administrators, educationists, education policy makers, teachers, parents, and the whole society. All need to take action to find out the reasons behind this problem.
2. Research studies should be conducted to find out the pitfalls of the whole educational system in relation to learner-centeredness.
3. A more comprehensive study is needed that encompass a larger population of learners of both genders to find out about the status of implementing learner-centered instruction.

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