

MAIN PRINCIPLES OF LEARNER CENTERED APPROACH

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As it was mentioned in the previous subchapter, the learner centered approach to language teaching and learning deals with the study of relationships between individual differences of learners and language acquisition development, therefore, this issue is of great importance in modern language teaching methodology. To be more precise, learners in one classroom can be different and individual in terms of language acquisition success due to the discussed factors before. In its own turn, this puts the problem of implementing the principles of learner centered approach into the focus of educational purpose of FLT. This makes it clear that learners should be approached to meet the needs of all learners in language classrooms. This process is achieved by using some principles or criteria of learner centered approach. Before outlining the linguodidactic 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 [Muslimov et al, 2017, p 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

It is clear from the content of the table, the principles of learner centered approach are formulated by Innovative Education, Module Education, Cooperative Learning, Interactive Learning, Distance Learning, Computer-assissted learning, Problem-Based Learning, Project-Based Learning, Differentiated Instruction, Collobarative Learning, Game Technologies, Individualized Instruction, Programm-Based Learning, Independent Learning and others.

As can be seen from the table, the Learner-Centered Approach to Language Education is wide in its principles and types, therefore, we cannot focus on all types and principles of this approach. Taking into the width and complexity of the Learner-Centered Approach consideration, we can note that in this study, we concentrate only differentiation and individualization principles of Learner Centered Approach and we will discuss these principles as main principles of learner centered approach below. Firstly, it is important to define the terms “differentiation” and “individualization”.

Based on these definitions Barbara Bray and Kathleen McClaskey suggest their explanation of the term “differentiation and individualization” mentioning that differentiation meets the learning needs of specific groups of learners whereas individualization addresses the needs of an individual learner. Furthermore, many linguists, scholars defined the terms in their own way. For example, Heacox [Heacox, 2002] defines differentiation as “changing the pace, level, or kind of instruction you provide in response to individual learners’ needs, styles or interests” while Willis, S. and Mann, L., state that “differentiation is a teaching philosophy based on the evidence that teachers should adapt instruction to student differences”. A widely spread definition of the term is proposed by Carol Ann Tomlinson, a leading expert in this field, she defines differentiated

instruction as a philosophy of teaching that is based on the premise that students learn best when their teachers accommodate the differences in their readiness levels, interests and learning profiles.

The following principles of differentiation are suggested by Carol Ann Tomlinson [Tomlinson, 1999, pp 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 these principles of differentiation suggested by Carol Ann Tomlinson, we can claim that diverse learners in our classrooms should also be differentiated and individualized according to some principles or criteria as discussed below. Firstly, as Tomlinson [Tomlinson, 1999, p 16] states teachers should focus on the essential content that learners should know. To be more precise, teacher instructs pupils to the essential concepts, principles, and skills of a subject. The subject matter of the course should be clear for all learners.

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*.

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

Key components/elements of differentiation principles of learner centered instruction				
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

It is clear from the content of the table that some elements such as diversity, flexibility, learner needs, multiple, independent learning, context, production and other notions are central to the theory of differentiation and individualization of instruction. In its own turn, these components make up a notion of differentiation and individualization in the field of teaching and learning. As represented in the table, differentiation and individualization focus on learners and their needs, to put it more precisely, it is learner centered by nature.[4] This instruction specifically concentrates on maximizing the learning outcomes of every student in a classroom no matter whether he is struggling or more advanced. Therefore, we believe that teachers should be conscious of these constituents of differentiation and individualization in order to apply effectively differentiated instruction during their professional operations.

We claim that it would be reasonable to recognize main characteristics of differentiation before teachers apply differentiated instruction in their classrooms. At this point, we need to note that Carol Ann Tomlinson lists some basic peculiarities of differentiation and individualization. Particularly, the following characteristics of differentiation and individualization are outlined by Tomlinson [Tomlinson, 2005]: a) differences are studied as a basis of planning; b) student differences shape curriculum; c) pre assessment is typical; d) multiple learning materials are available; e) multiple options for students are offered; f) students make sense of information; g) emphasis on concepts and connections is made; h) there is variable pacing; i) students aid in setting goals and standards; j) varied grading criteria are used; k) excellence as an individual effort is honored. These characteristics of differentiation make it clear and consistent that student differences are systematically studied and treated as the main factor shaping all elements or characteristics of differentiation and individualization theory.

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