Learner vs Teacher Centered Classes: Critical Discourse Analysis of Stakeholders' Stance from Socio-Cognitive Perspective

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Abstract: *The research conducted for this study took place in a Pakistani educational institution. It compared the learner-centred (LC) and teacher-centred (TC) methods and investigated the learners' opinions regarding each method. This study employed qualitative methodology. Two classroom discussions were recorded in LC and TC modes to capture data. Participants in the study were given an open-ended questionnaire. Analyses of data were guided by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The application of the socio-cognitive model (Dijk, 2006) and 3D model (Fairclough, 1995) revealed speech and ideology differences between TC and LC. The learners preferred the LC method. This research will encourage other academics to research different instruction methods. This research will also benefit applied linguists, particularly language teachers, to determine the effectiveness of teaching methods.*

Introduction

Our research aims to investigate various teaching methodologies that prioritize both learners' needs and teachers' roles. We are particularly interested in critical discourse analysis and the socio-cognitive model (Dijk, 2006). In recent years, language teaching methodology has garnered attention from academics, researchers, and professionals. The debate between learner-centred and teacher-centred approaches to language instruction remains a topic of substantial controversy. While teacher-centred approaches emphasize the teacher's role as the primary source of information and control in the classroom, learner-centred approaches prioritize the students' needs, interests, and goals. Our article examines the socio-cognitive discourse of stakeholders' positions on this debate. Classroom discourse encompasses all interactions during a lesson (Walle et al., 2014). According to Gonzalez (2008), classroom discourses are a vital component of the learning and teaching process and consist of exchanges between teachers and students and among students. Classroom interaction leads to constructive exchanges of similar and divergent viewpoints that benefit every student. A healthy exchange of opposing and similar viewpoints in both learner-centred

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and teacher-centred classrooms promote classroom engagement for the benefit of everyone. The foundation of the teacher-centred method was the behaviourist theory, which was founded on the idea that changes in behaviour are brought on by external stimuli (Skinner, 1974). This theory was the basis for the teacher-centred approach. According to this view, students are inactive and merely respond to the cues provided by their surroundings. In a classroom that is centred on the teacher, it is the teacher who is in command of the instruction. Because of this, he or she can teach the kids new information. The learners do not apply themselves since the teacher has the final say in everything that occurs in the classroom. The lessons' content and organization are both decided upon by the instructor. Education primarily takes the form of lectures, and a heavy emphasis is placed on receiving criticism and providing the appropriate responses. The textbook is more of an activity hub than the primary source of information, which is the instructor. Peyton, More, and Young (2010) state that in a normal teacher-centred classroom, the teacher spends most of their time delivering the day's lesson to the students using an overhead projector, whiteboard, or Promethean board. The students should take notes and ask questions while the instructor gives the lesson. Students are expected to be able to carry out this procedure (Peyton, More, and Young, 2010, p. 21).

Classroom control has become a top priority for teachers, but this approach has faced criticism for rewarding inactive students with overactive ones (Freiberg, 1999). It's crucial to note that self-directed education should be the primary focus in classrooms. Teachers are responsible for providing opportunities for students to participate actively so they can take control of their learning. To help students pay attention, participate fully, and achieve academic success, teachers must understand the subject matter and use effective motivational strategies (Espenshade & Radford, 2009). While some educators advocate for teacher-centred strategies, others believe that breaking down the educational process into more manageable segments is more effective. Classroom control has become a top priority for teachers, but this approach has faced criticism for rewarding inactive students with overactive ones (Freiberg, 1999). It's crucial to note that self-directed education should be the primary focus in

classrooms. Teachers are responsible for providing opportunities for students to participate actively so they can take control of their learning. To help students pay attention, participate fully, and achieve academic success, teachers must understand the subject matter and use effective motivational strategies (Espenshade & Radford, 2009). While some educators advocate for teacher-centred strategies, others believe that breaking down the educational process into more manageable segments is more effective.

When lessons are tailored to meet the needs of students, the traditional method of simply providing information is avoided. Instead, students are encouraged to take an active role in their own learning by relating new information to what they already know and discussing it with others. This approach emphasizes student-centred learning activities, materials, and content, allowing students to learn independently and at their own pace. Cooperative learning, where students work together to complete tasks, is a crucial component of this approach, promoting student-to-student communication and comprehension. Students can achieve greater academic success and productivity by fostering an intrinsic drive to learn. Ultimately, the student-centred approach is based on the idea that students construct knowledge through their own experiences and activities, motivating them to study, deepen their understanding, and retain information more easily.

Cooperative learning empowers students to actively participate in the educational process by taking on a dynamic role. It allows them to develop objectives and ideas, engage in critical dialogue, consider multiple perspectives, and deepen their learning to successfully complete assignments. Goodlad (2004) suggests that providing children with a democratic education leads to more effective learning. Dewey (1997) underscores the importance of collaborative teamwork in constructing democratic societies. When students are free to develop their understanding in the classroom, it instils a sense of personal responsibility in them.

Instruction mostly focused on textbooks is something teacher-centred educators dedicated to student-centred learning. It is important to remember that a teaching method heavily emphasises using textbooks as the primary instructional tool that hinders students' ability to

solve problems and make decisions. Students are better equipped to deal with various opinions and develop a society where all points of view are respected when they participate in exercises centred on the discussion. The student-centred approach was built on top of democratic ideas (Dewey, 1994), which served as the foundation. Students profit from being given responsibility, the ability to act successfully, and the encouragement to think critically and reflectively in the classroom. Democratic societies benefit from these types of educational practices. Student-centred learning is a powerful educational technique that can provide students with the skills necessary to contribute to developing a more democratic society. Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), which is another pillar of student-centred pedagogies and was predicated on the notion that children create their own understanding via experiences, was developed by Vygotsky. In addition, developing a warm and inviting educational setting is essential to the students' achievement.

In student-centred educational environments, engaging activities are abundant to make learning enjoyable. Moreover, acknowledging the importance of self-confidence in achieving goals is crucial. Active class participation, sharing responsibilities, and contributing knowledge to peers can significantly boost students' self-confidence. On the other hand, maintaining control in such classrooms can be challenging due to potential behavioural issues.

Teachers can maximize the current situation by encouraging students to take on more responsibility, even though it may require significant time. According to Mart (2013), "passionate teachers" understand that inspiring their students is part of their job. These teachers recognize that it is their responsibility to motivate students towards active learning and promote their intellectual and moral development. By focusing on student-centred classrooms, teachers can provide additional support to increase students' intrinsic motivation, which improves their autonomy and encourages ethical decision-making. Mart (2013) emphasizes the importance of motivation in educational achievement, stating that commitment is key to maintaining it. However, extrinsic incentives can be detrimental to students' motivation, as they may only act to receive the reward (DeVries & Zan, 1994). It is imperative for educators to uphold their pledge to their students and prioritize their dedication to the classroom. This will encourage researchers in literature and linguistics to explore the effectiveness of classroom discussions, especially in underprivileged nations, thereby paving the way for future studies on the topic for possible implementation.

Statement of the Problem

In a classroom setting, mentors use two methods to teach the English language. The LC and TC techniques have their own pros and cons when it comes to teaching. To provide students with valuable insights into TC and LC methods, the researchers aim to understand the learning principles, processes and practices that may make learning and teach more meaningful, well-directed and target oriented. This study involves analyzing classroom teaching techniques, language usage, and speech patterns to comprehend TC and LC methods in the learning environment.

Research Aim

This study aims to compare the learner-centred and teacher-centred approaches to teaching English language-based subjects at the Government College Women University in Sialkot, Pakistan. Additionally, the study aims to gain insight into the students' perspectives on these teaching strategies.

Research Questions

i.   How do learner-centred and teacher-centred approaches differ in the context of English language instruction at the university level?

ii. What are the students' points of view concerning learner-centred and teacher-centred teaching strategies in the context of English language instruction at the university level in Pakistan?

Literature Review

Jones (2007) notes that the teacher-centred approach is widely used in both developed and underdeveloped nations. In this approach, teachers are at the forefront, while students are passive learners. However, Massouleh (2012)

argues that the learner-centred approach, which includes constructivism, progressivism, perennialism, and essentialism, has replaced the TC method. Izumi and Coburn (2001) suggest that the LC method was heavily influenced by the works of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Kirkpatrick. An interesting project by the Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy in California investigated the effectiveness of both TC and LC methodologies. The study aimed to determine whether both techniques were equally effective. The results indicated that the TC approach was useful. Zohrabi (2012) and Rao (2002) conducted studies on students' impressions of TC and LC methods in an EFL context using communicative and non-communicative methods. The research found that students had negative opinions of the LC strategy.

Similarly, Morel (2007) explored the views of both professors and students in an interactive lecture session in an English as a Foreign Language classroom. The research findings suggest that all parties involved in the educational system, including students, educators, policymakers, and parents, should be consulted during decision-making before any instructional technique adjustments. Wohlfarth et al. (2008) conducted a significant study investigating the impressions of LC held by the participants. The results revealed that students generally preferred the LC technique. Jones (2007) notes that the teacher-centred approach is widely used in both developed and underdeveloped nations. Teachers are at the forefront of this approach, while students are passive learners. However, Massouleh (2012) argues that the learner-centred approach, which includes constructivism, progressivism, perennialism, and essentialism, has replaced the TC method. Izumi and Coburn (2001) suggest that the LC method was heavily influenced by the works of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Kirkpatrick. An interesting project by the Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy in California investigated the effectiveness of both TC and LC methodologies. The study aimed to determine whether both techniques were equally effective. The results indicated that the TC approach was useful.

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Pakistan's education system lacks thorough investigation and analysis. While some research has been conducted on different instructional methods, it is limited in scope and detail. A study by Khalid and Azeem in 2012 examined students' performance in Lahore using constructivist and other models, discovering that there were differences in their performance. However, the study only reported on the differences and did not delve further into the topic. Rawat and Thomas found that various obstacles, such as class size and other factors, hindered the implementation of the Student-centered approach in Lahore in 2012. Despite the limited research, there is a clear need for further investigation into Pakistan's educational practices.

Methodology

This study aimed to distinguish between learner-centred and teacher-centred instructional approaches and to determine how students perceived them in a university in Pakistan. To investigate the different ways in which teaching methods and student perspectives can vary, a qualitative methodology was chosen. A graduate class of fourteen students from Pakistan's Government College for Women University in Sialkot (GCWUS) was selected for this experiment. The same class was observed using both TC and LC approaches, with the same teacher and students teaching the same topic to control for student, teacher, and subject variables. An audio lesson using the TC technique was recorded in a classroom setting as it is the most used technique by teachers in Pakistan. The instructor was already familiar with the basics of the learner-centred approach, making it easier for

them to manage the class in the same way. Following the recording, the data was transcribed, and a feedback session was held, after which the students completed a questionnaire. Critical discourse analysis and an observational analysis were conducted with the help of conversation analysis. As the study involved people, contributors were given the opportunity to provide informed consent and their choice to maintain privacy was respected. To facilitate this process, we provided each of them with a code, like "T" for teachers and "S1, S2, S3" for students.

Research Tool

Audio recordings were made of two classroom talks that were held following the research project's objectives. One of the discussions focused on the LC approach, while the other focused on the TC method. After that, there was a feedback session that lasted an hour. In addition, a questionnaire consisting of six open-ended and three close-ended questions was administered to the students to elicit their feedback regarding the LC and TC processes.

Sample for the Study

A graduation class of fourteen students was carefully chosen. The nature of the course and the student's immediate availability were the main factors in choosing graduate-level pupils. Only female students between the ages of 20 and 25 were chosen.

Limitations and Delimitation of the Study

There are several limitations to consider in this study. Firstly, the topic covers multiple related subtopics, such as critical discourse analysis, socio-cognitive perspective, and learner-centred classrooms rather than teacher-centred ones. Conducting thorough research on each area within the subject matter may prove challenging. Secondly, the findings of this study may only be applicable to a specific environment, limiting its generalizability to other educational systems. Thirdly, gathering data from various stakeholder groups, including teachers, students, and administrators, may be difficult, potentially affecting the quality of the analysis. Lastly, conducting a comprehensive analysis of stakeholder perspectives on the subject would require significant time and resources, including

access to study participants and relevant literature. These resources would be necessary to conduct a thorough analysis.

The researchers planned to focus on two delimitations or stages of this study. Firstly, the researchers planned to include all stakeholders like students, teachers, parents, and administration staff. However, later, the researcher planned to only include teachers and students in his research studies. Secondly, the researcher has chosen only the female gender of students because, in GCWU Sialkot, there is no male gender student present. So, for this research, the sample size is only 14 female gender students, and teachers of the BS English department are included.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Transcribing the audio recordings of class discussions provided the data. Then, Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995) was used to analyze and inform the data. A feedback session and questionnaire were also planned to verify the students' responses further. The order of the study questions served as the foundation for organizing the findings and debate. Observations and criticisms of critical discourse analysis are used to guide the first step of data analysis. The analysis and discussion of the questionnaire and feedback session come next.

Critical Discourse Analysis

The current analysis of discourse is based on a model developed by Fairclough in 1995. The model has three dimensions that elaborate on discourse as a discursive practice and discourse as a social practice for critical discourse analysis of transcriptions. The first two dimensions focus on the study of discourse as text and its relationship to other texts and organizations, while the third dimension deals with text and social ideology. The study was also guided by another model, viz., socio-cognitive at the macro-level analysis. According to Thornton and Reynolds in 2006, the discourse in teacher-centred classrooms (TC) is organized as a monologue with a story structure. In contrast, learner-centred classrooms (LC) mostly stay in the present tense, focusing on information sharing. In LC, dialogue and adjacent pairs act as building blocks of group effort and help create the general theme of the talk,

whereas, in TC, the teacher creates and keeps the group together.

It has been observed that despite the input of seven students, the teacher dominates the conversation. This highlights a clear power imbalance between teachers and students, where the teacher holds significant control. What is worth noting is that the students did not intervene while the teacher monopolized the discussion. This further emphasizes the teacher's power and authority. On the other hand, in LC mode, students take an active role in leading discussions, sharing opinions, and engaging in collaborative activities. This fosters a sense of teamwork and encourages students to work together to learn. Despite these differences, both LC and TC modes involve power dynamics where the teacher has control over the topic, initiates and ends discussions, and decides how to explain concepts. However, in LC mode, the teacher acts as a mediator rather than a sole authority figure. In conclusion, both teaching modes have their merits, but addressing power imbalances and encouraging students to take an active role in the learning process is crucial. It has been observed that despite the input of seven students, the teacher dominates the conversation. This highlights a clear power imbalance between teachers and students, where the teacher holds significant control. The fact that the students did not intervene while the teacher monopolized the discussion further emphasizes the teacher's power and authority. On the other hand, in LC mode, students take an active role in leading discussions, sharing opinions, and engaging in collaborative activities. This fosters a sense of teamwork and encourages students to work together to learn. Despite these differences, both LC and TC modes involve power dynamics where the teacher has control over the topic, initiates and ends discussions, and decides how to explain concepts. However, in LC mode, the teacher acts as a mediator rather than a sole authority figure. In conclusion, both teaching modes have their merits, but addressing power imbalances and encouraging students to take an active role in the learning process is crucial.

According to Izumi (2001), power dynamics are embedded in the structure of classroom settings. In a teacher-centred (TC) classroom, the power is evident as the teacher stands tall while the students sit idly at their feet. This clear hierarchy establishes the teacher's authority. Zohrabi et al. (2012) support this by stating that the teacher is in charge of a TC-based class. In contrast, a learner-centred (LC) classroom promotes a collaborative environment where everyone has an opportunity to express their thoughts (p. 35). Additionally, Zohrabi et al. (2012) note that when the teacher summarizes the main themes after each student's contribution, it displays their dominance and control. The teachers also make a list of the significant topics discussed, indicating their leadership in the conversation (Zohrabi et al., 2012, p. 19).

Feedback and Questionnaire

To assess the learners' understanding of TC and LC, a questionnaire was created specifically for this purpose. The questionnaire consisted mostly of six items, and its results were combined with feedback to form the findings and discussion section. It was found that every student preferred LC for their instruction, and their responses have been quoted and further explored below.

Results and Discussion

Based on the questionnaires and feedback collected from students (referred to as S), learner-centred instruction is highly preferred. The students have provided compelling reasons for their choice. The principles of learner-centred discourse LCD are considered fundamental to both modes of discourse, which explains why the students prefer it. Specifically, they appreciate learner-centred discourse in practical situations where the mentor acts as a facilitator and allows students to complete their work independently. *S5 states: Student-centered teaching allows for elastic teaching. learners' emotions are considered. The facilitator is the teacher.* A traditional and conservative approach is teacher centred. The relationship between students and teachers continues to be a contentious topic in academia. The results of this problem are significant and far-reaching.

Participants have shown a preference for LC in classroom discussions. *I have a greater sense of achievement when the class gets learner-centred* (S3). This indicates that they aim to challenge the status quo. This preference has led them to challenge the traditional hierarchy of authority and power. Several studies, such as those

conducted by Izumi ([2001](#)) and Wohlfarth et al. (2008), have explored the dynamics of power and authority in the classroom, particularly in relation to the teacher-learner relationship. Learners have expressed their preference for LC over TC, as it prioritizes fluency and communication, while TC prioritizes accuracy. S1 states that *if you are focusing on that method, such as a teacher-centred approach (like ancient grammarians), then fluency will never occur. Instead, you will be accurate but not fluent.*

Other studies, like Jones ([2007](#)), have also supported the aforementioned difference. When it comes to the aim and objective of language teaching, there have been debates between LC and TC supporters concerning accuracy and fluency. This has resulted in the emergence of a post-method approach to language teaching that incorporates both LC and TC elements. According to students, while TC is tedious and traditional, LC is an enjoyable, straightforward, and refreshing way of learning that encourages critical thinking and boldness. S2 states that *Learner Centred Method is engaging, simple, and adaptable; learners have freedom; the teacher is a facilitator; time is saved; learners' sentiments are considered; learners become bold; creative; and open-minded; they also improve communication skills and creativity.*

The makeup of a learner's socio-psychological traits may be linked to qualities such as boldness, innovation, and critical thinking. The focus is on fostering both intellectual and personal growth in students, which is the ultimate goal of any educational program. This is a central theme in most educational initiatives. The development of critical thinking skills is particularly important, which is considered a defining characteristic of LC-supported research across various fields (Wohlfarth et al., 2008; Zohrabi et al., [2012](#)). Finally, some students find learning through LC effective as it involves them in different activities and discussions, creating a comfortable learning atmosphere and making the subject matter more accessible. Conversely, in TC, the teacher is at the forefront, which prompts us to assess the approach and methodology of the teaching process. *S3 points out that we can learn easily through practical ways and through discussion.*

Many global studies have examined the differences between LC and TC. This current study, along with other research (including Zohrabi et al., [2012](#); Morrel, 2007; and Wohlfarth et al., 2008), has emphasized the key attributes of LC. These include a passion for learning, self-expression, collaboration, intellectual and personal growth, and a favourable atmosphere. To sum up, these are the main characteristics of LC which have emerged from the responses of research participants of this study.

Findings and Conclusion

This study was conducted to accomplish two goals: the first was to analyze the differences between TC and LC techniques; the second was to assess how students felt about the two approaches. The completion of this inquiry necessitated the recording and subsequent transcription of not one but two distinct lectures: the first focused on TC and the second on LC. Following that, the data were processed utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis, also known as CDA, an abbreviation for Critical Discourse Analysis. According to the findings, several prominent differences between LC and TC should be considered. It demonstrates, for instance, that the TC method is based on a descriptive structure filled with verbal questions. This is one of the insights that can be gained from examining the contents of this text. In addition, the TC technique is entirely under the direction and management of the instructor, and the students do not take part in it as active agents. On the other hand, the LC technique is more engaging since it takes advantage of properties of discourse such as adjacent pairs, turn-taking, and discourse markers. This can be seen when comparing the two.

Current research suggests that using the LC strategy promotes effective collaboration amongst students and ensures that they remain active participants throughout the process. Moreover, there is a direct correlation between class participation and the amount of knowledge gained. The LC method involves arranging the instructor and classroom environment to promote student comfort and confidence, even among those with less self-assurance. Based on the discussion thus far, it appears that the LC approach is more effective, goal-oriented, and beneficial in achieving desired outcomes compared to the TC method. This conclusion holds true when considering various perspectives, such as sociocultural, functional, socio-

psychological, or methodological. It is important to expand the scope of the research to include other educational institutions since the study was only carried out at a single university. Furthermore, there is a need for a comprehensive qualitative assessment to be conducted on utilizing LC in academic settings, such as colleges and schools. This inquiry should involve participation from all key stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and administrative staff at the educational institution. Additionally, it is necessary to examine the views held by teachers and learners at the secondary and tertiary levels, including college students.

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