



## Teacher Centered Method Vs Student Centered Method of Teaching in Teaching English: Critical Study

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### Abstract

*In Albania after 90s when the system changed, country was opened to the world and the need to learn English was seen as a necessity for many people. The English curricula was introduced to the education system starting from elementary schools. By being a population that loves foreign languages and by being closed for more than fifty years we were eager to communicate with western world. English was seen as a priority. People were watching more English programs, movies, songs etc. Many students were starting private courses in English. By 2000 many people could speak, write and understand good English. They are supplied with good knowledge of English. This increased demand in learning English was followed by a need for English teachers too. During the communist regime the main method used to teach was teacher centered method, but with passing of time, other more modern methods were introduced in the world. One of them was student centered method.*

**Keywords:** Teacher centered method, Teacher centered method, various methods of learning, teaching learning English

### 1. The Past English and the Now English in Albania

English language has become a very important language with many users around the globe. In the world English is considered as lingua franca and as a result many methods were being developed by scholars and linguists. After 70 teaching English was considered fruitful by applying various methods that were considered as good possibilities to learn English Direct Method, The Audio Lingual method, Suggestopedia, Total physical response, Community Language learning, Community language teaching. Task based learning etc. Each method was developed to help students learn English because the previous method lacked some thing and the purpose was to cover all the needs of the students. All of them proved to be helpful in teaching and learning English. Each method was developed to fit to the needs of specific group of students.

Albania as many other communist countries was striving to learn foreign languages. By being into communist block, people were left to learn only eastern languages, mainly Russian language. After nineties when the system was changing, country was opened to the world and the need to learn English was seen as a necessity for many people. The English curricula was introduced to the education system starting from elementary schools. By being a people that love foreign languages and by being close for more than fifty years we were eager to communicate with western world, English was seen as a priority. People were watching more English programs, movies, songs etc. Many students were starting private courses in English. By 2000 many people could speak, write and understand good English. They are

supplied with good knowledge of English. This increased demand in learning English was followed by a need for English teachers too.

The Albanian system during communist time was highly centralized. This was also reflected in the education system. In all the education system, the teacher was considered the sole provider of information but there were reasons for that. By living in closed borders, and the internet hadn't taken over, it was very difficult to find information and teachers were seen as the "only people with information". The students could get information to learn English only by their teachers and the books that they used. The majority of books used to learn English were simple, not interactive, where only basic texts and no listening was involved. Texts had a lot of grammar and at that time to "know good English" was associated with having a good knowledge of grammar. The pure English accent (British or American) was hard to find and the books barely included tapes used for listening. Students had only Albanian English teachers that helped them learn the language. On the television there were barely some English movies or documentaries used to learn or help them improve their listening skills. Also some tapes used mainly to listen to their favorite singers were used, but not everybody could afford to buy a tape-recorder at that time. With passing of time things changed. Students could afford to attend better equipped courses with tools that could help them learn better English. With the spread of internet students could learn better and easy English. They had the chance to have access in English you tube channels, listen and watch their favorite movies and songs in English. The information was much easily accessible and they could easily see English spoken by native English people. Nowadays it is very difficult to go around and to find students who don't have knowledge of English language, the only thing that can be disused nowadays among students is the level of English they possess. The level varies from B or B1, to C or C1. There are also cases when students come from the furthest towns or villages of Albania where the learning of English might have been difficult, but these cases are rare. Normally everyone at the age 6 and above is acquainted with English knowledge.

## **2. The English in the Albanian Schools**

Both teacher centered method and student centered method are highly used as methods of teaching in Albanian schools and universities. But what are these and why these are considered so important?

These methods involve different strategies of teaching, different actors, different means and different goals. While the first is still widely used in our educational system, the second is still used vaguely, nevertheless many teachers proclaim that they use student centered method of teaching.

While the first one is more direct, and by the name implies that teacher is the key factor of the method, teacher the sole provider of the information, the first responsible for the management of the information and students are seen solely as receiver of the information, or at least as a passive participant of the class, the teacher is the most important provider, regulator, manager, instructor of the class.

The second as the method implies students play a greater role, they are not passive listeners, but they are active actors during the class. They are actively engaged in the class and take part in various discussions. They complete tasks given by the teacher in the forms of projects, course works, and assignments of different topics, usually chosen by the teacher, but developed solely by them or in cooperation with other students.

These two approaches to teaching differ in a number of ways, including what the teacher does, the organization of instruction, how much the students are involved actively in learning, how much the students are responsible for their own learning, and how learning is assessed. In either approach, the teacher has the central role as both the planner and the facilitator of student learning. The real difference is how you structure and monitor your students' learning, anyway as the methods imply from the name in the first the students "receive" the information, in the second they are "active" and play an important part as providers of information. In the questionnaires referred to teachers 80% of them stated that they liked mostly the first method or the most they would prefer a mixture of the teacher center method with a "little bit" of student center method. When they asked what do they mean with a "little bit" of student centered methods, they imply that they would like normally to use teacher centered method mostly during the class and only less than 10% the other method. They said that they feel more secure when they use teacher centered method because they don't have discipline problems with their students. They believe that if they use student center method students risk to fall in chaos, when teachers give them assignments in class, students deviate their discussion, or run out of arguments, deviate their topic into things which are not related to the topic or simply prefer to avoid answering questions or participate, that's why teachers feel more secure to be the center of attention and be the sole provider of information. They also said that in order to make the students participate in the class or use the student center method they simply ask some questions at the end of the class. They said that they use it mainly to see if the students have understood the lesson and expect some

feedback from them.

### 3. The Teacher Centered Method

Teacher centered method is a method used exclusively from the Albanian educational system starting from the very beginning of the elementary schools. There are traces of this kind of method used early even in the kindergarten. This kind of study is considered as traditional and teachers prefer to rely solely in this method. From the questionnaires developed in many Albanian schools and universities students declared that 90% of the teachers used this kind of method in Albanian schools. Teachers claimed with this method that they feel more comfortable, because they not only have the whole attention of the class and they "feed" the information to the class, but also they were more comfortable because the class was more "disciplined", they did not face any problem because they can manage the class better especially when the students were under age or elementary schools when the discipline was really a problem and the lesson turns into a chaotic experience.

However during the English classes especially in the not so homogenous classes they encountered a couple of problems such as:

The lesson is aimed at the average student and those with above average or below average abilities are not catered for - low achievers may get frustrated, high achievers may be bored.

The Albanian system of education has a long story with the teacher centered method. As soon as children start their elementary education the education system is focused primarily on "feeding" him the information. He is not encouraged to take lead, to get what information is important for him and to learn how to elaborate the information. Teacher is always on lead. He always plays the major role. Since the children might create discipline problems, teacher are always hesitant to let them teak the lead, so being under these circumstances the Albanian students get used to this kind of system and they continue to educate themselves during their elementary, high school and universities too.

As a method used so massively in our students, our education system has tried to make the best use of it. As it was mentioned above and since it was so vastly used it has a couple of benefits, that if are used correctly the student might take some advantages out of it.

#### 3.1 *Advantages of the teacher centered method:*

In a teacher-centered approach, the classroom stays orderly and quiet because the educator has full responsibility.

- Since students learn on their own; hence they stay independent.
- Since all the responsibility falls on the head of the instructor; hence there is no chance of missing the topic.
- With this approach, it becomes easy to achieve academic goals.
- The approach may seem psychologically sound because it is conducted under the instruction of an expert teacher.
- The subject matter is logically arranged.

#### 3.2 *Disadvantages of teacher centered method*

However, the traditional approach comes with a set of disadvantages too. It hinders the communication and collaborative skills of the students, and it creates monotony in the classroom, making the class boring and pressurizing. The approach is less powerful in making students learn the concepts because their focus gets distracted. Even the students start fearing the teacher and are hesitant to express themselves. This approach discourages the children from asking logical questions.

Our system has produced a mass of students that are not able to think independently. By relying entirely or almost entirely on this system some might have lost the ability not only to distinguish between useful information but also to be scared to think as independent thinkers. They are never or almost never urged to think on their own, because their opinion in the Albanian education system the opinion of a student is never important or almost never important. Some students have reported that they are too shy to state their opinion because teachers will always think that their opinion is not wright, or might say something completely untrue or stupid.

During a routine class and at the end of the class some students reported that they are too afraid to answer to the teachers question because the teachers thought that their answer is far from the possible answer that the teacher's answer. They also reported many cases when the class laughed when the teacher disagreed with their answers, that's

why they don't feel very comfortable with their answer, being hesitant in that way to continue to offer their feedback.

During the class students said that they could support only 20 or 25 minutes without getting bored and they can follow attentively the teacher only if the lecture was very interesting. Teachers were used to this kind of lectures because how some of the reported that it is "worth this kind of lecturing" because we do our job and students don't have problems with the discipline. Students remain silent, but after 30 minutes the majority part of them had lost interest in the lectures. They are not willing to listen to the teacher and waiting impatiently for the class to end. It is not very difficult to see that they have lost interest in the instruction or the information that the teacher is offering. On the other side since the teacher has spoken all the time, he seems to be tired and very soon he will reach the exhaustion point.

Sometimes the teacher would ask students questions at the end of the class, but since they would be impatient to end the class the feedback would be very poor. Students too sometimes would feel very tired to catch up with the teacher.

#### **4. Student Centered Method of Teaching**

Student centered method of teaching is more modern method. As it can be spotted from the name this kind of method places the student at the center of attention. The student has "certain" right and the teacher is seemed more as a facilitator of it, rather than as the main provider of information. As a method it:

- Make presentations interactive.
- Assess student understanding in real-time & personalize instruction.
- Empower students with choice and control.
- Encourage classroom collaboration.
- Use educational games.
- Student voice activities.
- Teach social-emotional learning skills.

It is said to make the presentation interactive. As a method of teaching the presentation should be interactive. Teacher student and student to student. There should be an active interaction between all the factors in the class. People in the class need to share their ideas about their research or opinions that they have acquired and conclusions that they may have acquired during their group work, various projects etc. This method assess the students in real time for their work. Students are prone to continuous assessment too. They feel more empowered and motivated to continue their good work and further more to play in team. Games are an active part of this method especially for the children in elementary education and they also learn how to use the method since the very early time of their education building their path in other higher education when the collaboration is a must. Interaction enhances their emotional skills. They feel much better at the end of the class and also much more connected to each other. This method promote cooperation amongst them rather than individuality that is more a feature of teacher centered method.

##### *4.1 Student centered method of teaching in Albania*

This method is vastly mentioned in the Albanian education but rarely used, and whenever teacher thinks it is using the method it may bring chaos or problems with the student's discipline, as claimed teachers that were asked.

It is difficult to be used correctly because as teachers claim, it has some difficulties and problems to be used properly in our system. First, it needs proper tools to be implemented correctly in our schools. Even though has passed more than 30 years in democratic system, the majority of schools and universities still lack all the equipment such as computers, internet and video-projectors. These are necessary equipment to start the implementation of this method. Secondly, since our system is widely used to the teacher centered method it finds it difficult to switch from this system to the student centered method. Thirdly, projects and homework research is required to be done by students. These projects are necessary to make students able to get information about the topics that need to be discussed during classes. This mean to make students independent to choose the information that they deem necessary during classes, but this may mean to create groups of work which are very necessary to put to work their research or projects.

This activity is considered very difficult by our students. By being used to work individually and under the strict guide of teachers, they find it very difficult to be part of a group or to be a team player. They either give everything to a student who is the one that always resolves the most difficult tasks or refuse completely to perform the task, making it almost impossible to sort out the difficulties that they may encounter. This makes the rest of the group not to be engaged seriously and during the presentation either one person will take the credits or if the group takes the credit, the person

who solved everything will remain disappointed and no further engagement will be possible in the future, risking in that way the normal development of the future cooperation in other projects, and by doing so risking the use of teacher centered method or deviation to the same old teacher centered method.

- This method if used properly, it increases student participation

Student-centered learning creates a collaborative environment that students are eager to participate in. Students are encouraged to think critically about what they're learning and consider how they want to learn and demonstrate knowledge. This can involve small groups where students can learn and share knowledge.

By changing the physical arrangement of the classroom, students can feel less intimidated about sharing with their peers. Additionally, by having more choice in the learning space and style, students will be more comfortable actively participating as they drive their learning.

- Stronger relationships between teachers and students

Student-centered learning can create strong relationships between students and teachers as they learn from one another. They create stronger bonds.

Teachers play the role of mentor and guide while still supporting and trusting the individual approaches, strategies, and learning decisions students make to suit their learning preferences. Students and teachers also develop strong communication to ensure students are reaching learning goals.

- Better preparation for real-world challenges

By empowering students to take ownership of their learning journey, they will learn based on their needs, learning style and interests. Allowing students to discover different contexts around classroom topics through their lens will help them understand real-world challenges and apply their knowledge to problem solve.

Students will also bring their own personal backgrounds and knowledge to their learning creating a more inclusive classroom that acknowledges a variety of lived experiences. Deeper understanding of how students learn best. Giving students choices in their learning environment, what and how they learn, and how they demonstrate their knowledge will help them understand how they learn best. When students have a strong connection and understanding of their curiosity and knowledge, they are more likely to appreciate the learning process and become lifelong learners.

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