

STUDENT-BASED FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES: BASES AND APPLICATIONS. IDENTIFICATION OF MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS.

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The theme I have chosen is number 25, which deals with student-based foreign language teaching and learning processes and ...

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The new Organic Law of Education (the 'LOMLOE'), came into force in 2021 and is now being introduced in Primary Education. ...

1. INTRODUCTION

Student-based foreign language teaching and learning, as its name says, considers the learner as the centre of the teaching and learning process. It is true that Humanistic Approaches also accept active of pupils in learning, but learner-centred is more radical.

In this way, pupils' characteristics, knowledge, interests, motivation, needs and experience would be the basis for every activity carried out in the English class if it was the only method used in the classroom; however, not only can we use it exclusively, but we can also resort to it in order to complement other material or to solve certain problems, like poor attendance, for instance.

2. CURRENT LEGISLATION

Current legislation for Primary Education focuses on students and takes into account their needs, in order for them to develop academically and personally in an autonomous way.

It establishes several **PRINCIPLES** which deal with significant issues, such as

- linking the learning aims to our pupils' self-awareness

- the importance of presenting relevant, meaningful and interesting material for learners,
- pupils react to experience as they perceive it not necessarily as it is presented.
- are better learners those students who:
 - value their own experience for further learning or whose experience is valued by others
 - when the learning objectives are congruent with their current self concepts
 - when the content is relevant to their past experiences or present concerns or their life experience.
- Pupils who have learnt “how to learn” strategies are most productive
- or the fact that students do not learn properly if they are stressed, overloaded or over-stimulated, among others.

Thus, we see that the Spanish Educational System undoubtedly reflects and supports the learner-based approach.

Student-centred foreign language teaching and learning is about helping pupils discover their own learning styles and acquire effective study skills which will be valuable and useful throughout their lives.

In order to do so, teachers need to bear in mind important **FACTORS**, like learners' self-assessment or cooperation, and put into practice certain teaching strategies such as problem-based learning, which consists of organising students in groups so that they can work cooperatively and find solutions to real-world problems.

3. LEARNER-BASED FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

In order to analyse this student-based approach more deeply, it is necessary to consider a number of important elements related to it, like the advantages and disadvantages of its use, methodology, material, evaluation and assessment, and the role of the teacher.

3.1. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Regarding the advantages and disadvantages, on the one hand it is important to point out that learner-centred teaching and learning offers us multiple **BENEFITS**, according to Campbell & Kryszewska (1992) such as

- It takes into account The Potential of the Learner, this means that students' knowledge in their MT, feelings, beliefs, attitudes and interests should be reflected in the classroom activities because this will motivate them and increase participation.
- Constant Needs Analysis- activities are chosen to satisfy and meet the current needs of its members and adapt the teaching to the difficulties and successes.



- Topicality- allows teachers to introduce in the classroom those issues which the pupils are interested in.
- Previous Learning Experience- a learner-centred approach offers an open-ended approach to pupils.
- Learners as Authors- Language practice is doubled in student-based learning, since pupils are involved not only in using the material but also in preparing it.
- Pace- preparation work takes longer for learner-centred activities. However, as the activity progresses, the pace increases. In addition, the pupils' involvement is total from the outset.
- The Element of Surprise- the fact that, in a learner-centred teaching situation, the pupils do not have the material in advance adds a strong element of surprise to the lesson
- Peer Teaching and Correction- Learner-centred teaching encourages pupils to work together and learn from each other, thus increasing their levels of socialisation
- Group Solidarity- The fact that pupils work together in activities which are based on their interests and needs will tend to create a spirit of group solidarity.

On the other hand, there are also some **DRAWBACKS**, like

- possible pupil resistance to this kind of method, mainly arise with that kind of learners who have specific preconception and attitudes towards the learning process. To solve this problem, the learner centred activities should be introduced gradually.
- Demands on the teacher- the necessity of keeping all the information, as we do not follow a text book,
- or the possibility of having certain external restrictions imposed by the department or the School Board.

3.2. METHODOLOGY

In relation to methodology, it is important to know that theory and practice are always interrelated within learner-based foreign language teaching and learning, mainly thanks to the influence of the communicative approach.

Many English teachers would like to use and combine both approaches in class, as together they can offer very interesting possibilities, such as connecting communicative activities done in class to real-world tasks and taking into account students' characteristics and needs at the same time; nevertheless, this is not always easy to carry out, as we do have different types of learners in class.

The key, then, consists of first dealing with more traditional tasks, and then introducing more communicative activities gradually, explaining the process to our pupils from the beginning.



3.3. MATERIAL

Student-centred material should also be linked to the outside world and consider learners' needs and interests. Consequently, aspects such as authenticity, independent learning and heterogeneity ought to be taken into account when selecting, designing and elaborating this kind of material. With reference to authenticity, we can find authentic, simulated-authentic and non-authentic material. **Authentic material**, which includes extracts from different TV and radio programmes, films, different kinds of literature, web sites, maps and so on, is not specifically elaborated for language teaching and learning; however, it is good for our pupils, as it is not artificial and introduces learners to the foreign culture, providing them with multiple opportunities to see where different grammar structures, vocabulary and types of discourse are used.

Simulated-authentic material, also known as semi-authentic material, is often produced by teachers in an attempt to adapt authentic material to their pupils' level, as certain learners may find it difficult to comprehend and work with authentic texts. As for **non-authentic material**, it is important to point out that this is normally elaborated taking into account students and their learning process; therefore, this type of material can certainly be useful for English language teaching, despite its lack of authenticity.

Independent learning refers to the fact that each pupil prefers a different kind of learning material, as students learn in distinct ways. Hence, teachers must choose and design material in order for learners to develop their self-awareness as well as their own social, metacognitive, cognitive and communication strategies. As regards heterogeneous material, it covers different levels and offers pupils the possibility of producing various responses to a single task; obviously, this type of material is undoubtedly necessary, as we do have mixed-ability classes.

3.4. EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Evaluation and assessment are extremely relevant within any didactic approach or method. However, it is important to know that they are slightly different processes, as the concept of assessment can be included within the global idea of evaluation, which covers other additional processes.

When examining evaluation and assessment in a pupil-based approach, it is significant to point out that they must be carried out not only by teachers but also by students, who should play an active role here; in this sense, they need to analyse their learning process critically by means of simple and continuous self-assessment as well as the evaluation of different curricular factors.

3.5. TEACHER'S ROLE

Teachers play an essential role in student-focused foreign language teaching and learning, as all elements of the curriculum need to be developed and adapted by

them to learners' features and needs. Apart from this principal role, the teacher should also be able to adopt different roles in class, depending on the context and situation. Some of these roles could be being a resource for pupils, a monitor or an assessor, an active participant, a counsellor or a motivator, for example.

4. STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDES

Before talking about how we can identify our students' motivation and attitudes towards the English language, it is important to mention the different **TYPES OF MOTIVATION**, which can basically be intrinsic, extrinsic, instrumental or integrative.

- Intrinsically motivated learners study because they want to and receive some kind of satisfaction from learning, finding the subject challenging and interesting.
- On the contrary, extrinsically motivated pupils study and learn for other external reasons, which are usually graduating, passing a test or avoiding a failing grade.
- Instrumental motivation is quite similar to extrinsic motivation, as here the goal is to achieve some reward by means of learning and studying the language.
- As regards integrative motivation, it means that language learners study because they want to know more about a foreign language culture and they would like to be part of the foreign community.

Gathering information about students' motivation and attitudes towards English is crucial in a learned-centred approach, as that is the first step in order to take into account and satisfy our pupils' needs and interests. Such information needs to be based on both students' personal data, like their age, family background, or their parents' occupation, and their **OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE NEEDS**:

- in this sense, objective needs are focused on learners' personal as well as academic information,
- whereas subjective needs, which are more difficult to identify than the objective ones, are related to motivation, expectations and attitudes towards the foreign language.

There are two main kinds of **TECHNIQUES** for us **TO IDENTIFY OUR PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION**.

- On the one hand, we can find formal techniques, which include procedures such as proficiency assessments or standardised interviews, for instance.
- On the other hand, there are informal techniques, which are closely linked to classroom management; here, a good option would be to give students different questionnaires, asking them how they like to learn, about the

usefulness of the different activities carried out in class, or why English is important for them, for example.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, throughout this theme we have seen that considering our pupils the most important part of the teaching and learning process is vital. Their interests and needs ought to be the basis for everything, without forgetting that our major objective is for learners to achieve communicative competence. In this way, we must adapt the curriculum to our particular context, bearing in mind that our students do have different learning capacities. Techniques like eliciting, with the aim of giving learners the opportunity to deduce ideas by themselves, are more than suitable for a pupil-based approach, which must also give importance to the development of students' self-study, self-learning strategies and self-evaluation. If we take into account all of these aspects in our everyday practice in school, it is highly likely that our pupils will achieve the minimum level required in the Law governing Primary Education.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

The bibliography I have used for this theme has been

- *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, by Jeremy Harmer.
- *The Communicative Approach and its Application*, by Henry Widdowson.
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