

**TOPIC 25**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this essay is to study foreign language teaching from the Learner-Centred Approach taking into account the identification of motivation and attitudes according to some practical applications. Accordingly, Order 30th May 2023 by which the curriculum of Primary Education in Andalusia is developed, some attention to diversity and individual differences are regulated, the evaluation process of students' learning and the transition among different educational stages are stated, determines among Specific Competences of the Foreign Language Area appreciating and respecting the linguistic, cultural and artistic diversity from a Foreign Language, identifying and valuing the similarities and differences among languages and cultures, in order to learn how to manage intercultural situations (Specific Competence number 6).

Besides, following curricular levels, Primary Education is also regulated by Decree 101/2023, 9th May which establishes the order and basic teaching requirements for Primary Education curriculum in Andalusia, and then Royal Decree 157/2022 of 1st March by which the order and basic teaching requirements of Primary Education are developed. All these curricular levels come from Organic Law 2/2006 of 3rd May (LOE) which is modified by Organic Law 3/2020, 29th December (LOMLOE) that regulates the educational system in Spain.

Therefore, the importance of this essay for the Area of English as a Foreign Language in Primary Education is to study how the Learner-Centred approach (Cook, 2016) suits foreign language teaching-learning process. Then, the active participation of all Educational Community to increase students' positive attitudes and motivation towards the English lesson is essential to develop Key Competences such as Linguistic and Communicative Competence (Hymes. 1972), so attention to diversity is also taken into consideration according to some practical applications.

## II. TOPIC DEVELOPMENT

### 1. The Learner-Centred Approach in Foreign Language Learning: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Applications

As Tsui (2006) highlights, learning is not merely about memorising facts. Instead, it is a dynamic process based on active participation. Learners acquire knowledge through meaningful engagement, which simultaneously develops a variety of competences. This aligns with the emphasis on Key Competences established by Decree 101/2023 of 9 May.

## **1.1. Theoretical Foundations of the Learner-Centred Approach**

### **Cognitive Learning Theory (Piaget, 1954)**

Piaget's theory considers learning as an internal cognitive process where students actively construct knowledge. According to his stages of development, children aged 7 to 11 are in the Concrete Operational Stage. They begin to think logically and perform mental operations, although they still rely on tangible materials and real-life examples.

*Practical*

*example:*

In a vocabulary lesson, instead of simply listing words, students manipulate flashcards and match them with real classroom objects. When learning the parts of a house, students can build a 3D model using recycled materials and label it in English. This hands-on activity supports their cognitive development and language acquisition simultaneously.

### **The Sociocultural and Interactionist Theory (Vygotsky, 1983; Halliday, 1975)**

This theory emphasises the role of social interaction in learning. Vygotsky (1983) proposed that language development occurs through collaborative dialogue within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where guidance from teachers or peers is key. Halliday (1975) complements this view by stating that language serves a functional purpose: it allows individuals to meet needs and interact socially.

*Practical*

*example:*

Learners engage in role-plays, such as going shopping or asking for directions, where they practise dialogues with classmates. The teacher scaffolds the task with sentence starters and visual support, allowing students to gradually take control of the conversation. Formats such as greeting cards, SMS, or posters encourage meaningful and authentic communication.

### **Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983)**

Gardner's theory proposes that each student possesses a unique combination of intelligences, which influence how they best learn. By addressing multiple intelligences, we promote more inclusive and effective language learning.

*Examples of activities by Multiple Intelligences Theory:*

1. **Verbal/Linguistic** – Students write a short story or poem in English.
2. **Logical/Mathematical** – Learners follow a recipe in English, measuring ingredients and sequencing steps.
3. **Visual/Spatial** – Pupils draw a map of their neighbourhood and describe it using prepositions of place.
4. **Musical** – Children learn a song or chant to remember irregular past tense verbs.



5. **Bodily-Kinaesthetic** – A "Simon Says" game using action verbs helps reinforce vocabulary through movement.
6. **Interpersonal** – Pair or group work where pupils solve a riddle or complete a jigsaw task together in English.
7. **Intrapersonal** – Students reflect on their progress in a learning diary written in simple English.
8. **Naturalistic** – Exploring vocabulary through a nature walk and collecting leaves or flowers to describe in English.
9. **Existential** – Although less applicable at this stage, reflective questions like “Why do we learn English?” can encourage personal connection to the learning process.

## 1.2. Implementing the Learner-Centred Approach in the English Classroom

The Learner-Centred Approach (LCA), also referred to as Student-Centred Instruction (SCI), focuses on making students active participants in their learning journey. Instead of passively receiving content, students take part in selecting materials, determining learning pace, and shaping activities. **The ultimate aim is to guide them from teacher dependence to personal autonomy in the classroom.**

In the context of English language learning, this approach is key to promoting independence and real communicative competence. Nunan (2004) proposes a progressive model for cultivating learner autonomy in six main steps:

**Step 1: Clarifying and Setting Learning Goals**  
Students should not only understand the objectives of each lesson but also begin to define their own goals.

*Example:* At the beginning of a unit, the teacher introduces “I can...” statements (e.g., *I can describe my house*). Pupils then create their own learning goal, such as *I want to learn how to describe my dream bedroom* and present it to the class in English.

**Step 2: Encouraging Active Language Use**  
Students need frequent opportunities to use the target language in natural and contextualised ways.

*Example:* In a classroom “English Café” simulation, students take turns being the waiter or the customer, using functional phrases like *Can I help you?*, *I'd like a sandwich*, etc. This practical context enhances both confidence and fluency.

**Step 3: Helping Students Discover Their Learning Styles and Strategies**  
The teacher adopts the role of a learning coach, guiding students to recognise what strategies or methods work best for them.  
*Example:* After a listening task, the teacher conducts a reflection session where students choose between drawing a mind map, acting it out, or writing a short summary—catering to visual, kinesthetic, or linguistic learners.

#### **Step 4: Designing Experiential Learning Tasks**

According to Kolb (1984), learning by doing leads to deeper understanding. Using realia (authentic objects) enhances sensory engagement and cognitive processing. *Example:* While learning food vocabulary, the teacher brings actual fruits and snacks. Students handle the items, describe them in English, and then create a shopping list or act out a market scene. The physical interaction makes the lesson more memorable.

#### **Step 5: Promoting Learner Initiative and Self-Regulation**

Autonomous learners manage their time, evaluate their progress, and plan how to achieve learning outcomes. This links directly to the Key Competence “Personal, Social and Learning to Learn.”

*Example:* During a “Final Task” project (e.g., creating a personal English mini-book), students choose the structure, set a timeline with checkpoints, and evaluate themselves using a simple rubric provided by the teacher. They develop not just language skills, but also organisation and self-monitoring abilities.

#### **Step 6: Encouraging Research and Inquiry-Based Learning**

Students should learn how to learn, developing the ability to find information, ask questions, and evaluate sources.

*Example:* In a unit on animals, pupils are given a basic question such as “What do pandas eat?” and must find the answer using printed fact sheets, bilingual dictionaries, or by asking the teacher or classmates. This encourages curiosity, autonomy, and the development of basic research skills.

The Learner-Centred Approach positions the teacher as a guide, organiser, and facilitator (Harmer, 2010), not simply a transmitter of knowledge. The goal is to help students build effective learning strategies that enable them to acquire and use English purposefully. This approach fosters not only language proficiency, but also critical thinking, responsibility, and lifelong learning habits.

## **2. Understanding Motivation and Attitudes Towards English Language Learning**

Both **motivation** and **attitude** are essential psychological variables directly linked to the success of language acquisition. In any classroom, learners come with a wide range of personal traits, backgrounds, learning styles, and interests. When students develop a **positive attitude**, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated to learn English meaningfully.

### **2.1. Motivation**

The learning process often begins with a **challenge or problem**, and the desire to overcome it. Noels, Clément, and Pelletier (2001) identified several types of motivation in second language learning that are highly relevant to English instruction in primary education.

- **Intrinsic motivation** arises from within the learner. It is the personal satisfaction a student feels when engaging in a task they find enjoyable.  
*Example:* Students participate in a storytelling session where they act out a story using puppets or props. The fun, playful environment naturally encourages language use without the pressure of external rewards.
- **Extrinsic motivation** comes from external rewards or the avoidance of punishment.  
*Example:* The teacher uses a point system where students earn stickers for using English during class routines or asking questions in English. Once they collect a set number, they can choose a classroom privilege.
- **Instrumental motivation** is based on the perceived practical value of learning English, such as future job opportunities or academic benefits.  
*Example:* The teacher explains that learning English can help them understand video games, cartoons, or communicate with tourists. Pupils are then tasked with creating a poster titled “Why I Want to Learn English.”
- **Integrative motivation** refers to the desire to connect with people and cultures who speak the language.  
*Example:* Through platforms like **eTwinning**, students collaborate with peers in another country, exchanging voice messages or postcards in English. This fosters a real-world purpose for learning the language and builds intercultural understanding.

As teachers, we play a key role in promoting both **intrinsic** and **integrative motivation**. This involves offering rich, varied input, selecting meaningful topics, and creating authentic situations where English is the main tool for real communication and inclusion.

## 2.2. Attitudes

A student’s **attitude** towards learning a language is one of the strongest predictors of long-term success. According to Kovac and Masic (2017), positive attitudes increase willingness to engage with the language and persist through challenges.

Attitudes are formed by a combination of **beliefs, emotions, and prior experiences**. A child might develop a negative view of English due to past frustration, lack of support at home, or learning difficulties. It is the teacher’s responsibility to identify the root causes of these attitudes and create lessons that are as enjoyable and engaging as possible.

*Example:* If a student has struggled with vocabulary memorisation, the teacher might switch to using songs, games, or digital flashcards to make learning more accessible and enjoyable. This shift in method can help rebuild confidence and engagement.



Karahan (2007) highlights the importance of **deliberately reshaping negative attitudes** through planned, supportive interventions. Choy and Troudi (2006) add that students' emotional responses to the language, such as fear, boredom, or excitement, profoundly influence their attitudes. When teachers build a warm classroom climate and design emotionally engaging tasks, students begin to associate English with positive feelings.

*Example:* A “Feelings Chart” at the start of class lets children express their mood and connect it to a phrase in English (*I'm happy / I'm tired today*). Over time, this builds emotional vocabulary and helps students feel seen and supported (Pedagogical Principle f) Decree 101/2023)

Cultivating positive motivation and attitudes is just as important as teaching vocabulary or grammar. By understanding students' emotional and psychological needs, teachers can transform the English classroom into a space of curiosity, connection, and long-term growth.

### III. DIDACTIC APPLICATION

The learning situation *Doctor Parrot*, designed for Year 2 students, illustrates how the Learner-Centred Approach can be applied through a playful, communicative and meaningful task. In this activity, learners take on the roles of doctors and patients in a classroom role-play, using English to describe symptoms and diagnose common illnesses. The task is framed within a Task-Based Language Teaching model, beginning with engaging input (videos, flashcards, drawings), followed by guided practice of key structures (*What's the matter? I have a headache.*), and culminating in a final performance where students act out their dialogues. Motivation is strongly enhanced through role-play and imagination, which promote intrinsic engagement and reduce affective filters. At the same time, students cooperate in mixed-ability groups, developing empathy, responsibility, and communication strategies. The teacher acts as a facilitator, adapting roles and materials so that all students, regardless of their needs, can participate meaningfully. This reflects the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

The activity also integrates key pedagogical principles from Decree 101/2023 and Order of 30th May 2023, especially the development of linguistic competence through 30 minutes of daily communication, inclusion, and competence-based assessment. A simple rubric allows for formative evaluation of both oral performance and collaborative work. Furthermore, it encourages positive attitudes towards English by associating the language with creativity, humour, and real-life problem-solving. Students not only learn vocabulary related to health, but also develop social and civic competence, learning to care for others and express themselves with confidence. Through this type of learning situation, English becomes not just a subject, but a tool for thinking, expressing and connecting with others—laying the foundations for lifelong learning.

## IV CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Learner-Centred Approach stands as a fundamental pillar in the teaching of English, as it responds to the diverse learning styles, rhythms, and interests of students, in line with the pedagogical principles established in the *Order of 30th May 2023*. An effective teaching process begins with the recognition of learners' individual motivations and attitudes, which serve as the foundation for building meaningful and inclusive learning experiences.

From a practical perspective, this approach is best implemented through didactic sequences, where learning culminates in the completion of a final task that mirrors real-life communication. This structure not only enhances student engagement but also promotes the development of Key Competences as outlined in *Decree 101/2023 of 9 May*. To ensure meaningful progression, competency-based assessment must be integrated throughout the process, valuing students' prior knowledge and personal experiences. Ultimately, this leads to a more efficient, autonomous, and functional acquisition of English as a foreign language.

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