Proceeding of ICGPSH 2025 Symposium: The Globalization of Connection: Language, Supply Chain, Tariff, and Trade Wars
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.LD25176

A New Exploration in English Teaching That Combines "Learning-centered" and "Student-centered" Approaches

Zhongxiang Sun

Qiqihar University, Qiqihar, China
jdzh3139@hotmail.com

Abstract. Education, as a vital social activity for cultivating individuals, not only fosters personal development but also drives societal progress. With the increasing emphasis on education, discussions surrounding the "student-centered" and "learning-centered" approaches have garnered significant attention among researchers and frontline educators. This study aims to clarify these two pedagogical concepts by analyzing the emergence of the "student-centered" and "learning-centered" paradigms and their contributions to holistic education. By comparing the core principles of constructivism, the input-output hypothesis, and the Production-Oriented Approach (POA), the paper explores the theoretical value of integrating both approaches—the “dual-centered” model—in the context of localized educational research in China. The study further emphasizes the importance of this integration in enriching the theoretical system of education.

Keywords: Learning paradigm, Production-Oriented Approach (POA), Constructivism

1. Introduction

Education, as a crucial social activity for cultivating individuals, not only facilitates personal development but also promotes social progress. In recent years, with the deepening of educational reform research, English education has gained increasing importance, and the debate over “student-centered” and “learning-centered” approaches has attracted growing attention from both researchers and frontline teachers. As these two paradigms come into focus, educators are actively discussing how to embody either “student-centered” or “learning-centered” principles in the teaching process, and which of the two better aligns with the current demands of holistic education. Against this backdrop, the present study aims to systematically review and analyze these two pedagogical concepts, examine their similarities and differences, and explore the feasibility of integrating them in practice. The goal is to provide theoretical and practical guidance for frontline teachers and contribute to the ongoing development of education.

For teachers, this study facilitates a more precise understanding of students’ needs and helps identify their learning characteristics, thereby enabling the design of personalized instructional strategies. Such tailored approaches can stimulate students’ interest in learning, enhance their engagement, promote effective knowledge acquisition, and ultimately improve teaching outcomes. For students, the study contributes to enhancing learning effectiveness by fully respecting individual differences, fostering intrinsic motivation for autonomous learning, and encouraging active

© 2026 The Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.LD25176

participation in learning through methods and environments suited to their personal preferences. This, in turn, supports the development of comprehensive competencies and deepens the understanding and application of knowledge.

In response to the current state of research—where most studies focus on a single theoretical framework and lack comparative analysis—this paper centers on optimizing instructional design for teachers. By integrating the "dual-centered" theory, it aims to implement personalized teaching and propose concrete strategies to enhance students' learning outcomes. The study seeks to address practical issues such as insufficient theoretical application by teachers and inadequacies in instructional design.

2. Literature review

The core of the dual-centered theory lies in the integration of Carl Rogers' "student-centered" approach and Professor Wen Qiufang's "learning-centered principle." Carl Rogers emphasized that education should aim to cultivate individuals who are holistic in nature—integrating the physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and mental dimensions. In his view, an educated person is one who acts with both cognition and emotion in unity, embodying a harmonious fusion of knowing and feeling [1].

Professor Wen Qiufang pointed out the limitations inherent in the traditional "student-centered" approach and proposed the "learning-centered principle" along with the Production-Oriented Approach (POA). She advocates that teaching must not only achieve instructional objectives but also ensure the occurrence of effective learning [2].

This theoretical framework also draws upon and refines Stephen Krashen's "Input Hypothesis" and Merrill Swain's corresponding "Output Hypothesis" proposed in 1993. Krashen argued that for language acquisition to occur, it is essential for learners to comprehend language input that is slightly above their current proficiency level (i+1). Through contextual cues, learners are able to understand this input, which eventually leads to the natural development of language competence [3]. Swain, on the other hand, contended that engaging in activities that require the use of a second language enhances learners' awareness of linguistic problems. This heightened awareness stimulates their cognitive mechanisms, enabling them to consolidate acquired knowledge, identify gaps in understanding, and recognize unresolved issues. In response, learners are prompted to adopt a variety of strategies to improve their language proficiency [4].

The dual-centered theory is a synthesis of the "student-centered" and "learning-centered" approaches. It distills the core pedagogical principles and instructional methods of constructivism, the input-output hypotheses, and the Production-Oriented Approach (POA), and deepens their localization in the Chinese educational context through both horizontal and vertical comparisons. This theory emphasizes the learner's central role in the learning process while simultaneously focusing on the essence of learning itself. It contributes to the refinement and advancement of educational theory and provides a solid theoretical foundation for improving the quality of education.

3. Research challenges

This study aims to support frontline teachers in addressing the following challenges: clarifying the pedagogical concepts of "student-centered" and "learning-centered" approaches; resolving issues related to the inadequacy of instructional design; and overcoming the limited understanding and practical difficulties in applying localized educational theories within the Chinese context.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.LD25176

3.1. Similarities and differences between the "learning-centered" and "student-centered" approaches

The "learning-centered" and "student-centered" approaches share common ground in that both regard students as the central subjects of education, emphasize their personal development, and value their experiences and gains throughout the learning process. However, the "learning-centered" approach places greater emphasis on the learning process itself, focusing more intently on the achievement of learning objectives and the quality of learning outcomes. It frequently employs the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) to implement task-driven instruction, with teaching content designed around specific learning goals and expected outputs. For instance, in language learning, in order to enable students to produce competent oral or written outputs, instructional content is designed to ensure systematic input and practical application of linguistic knowledge and skills. Within this theoretical framework, teaching evaluation tends to focus more on assessing learning outcomes. Nonetheless, this model of evaluation remains constrained by institutionalized educational structures and fails to genuinely empower learners with decision-making authority over their learning objectives, processes, and assessments [5].

As a result, some students may take a leading role in the learning process, while others, due to factors such as personality or prior knowledge, may be unable to fully engage, leading to a polarization in learning outcomes.

The "student-centered" theory emphasizes the promotion of student development as a core principle, positioning students as the central subject and placing their learning activities at the heart of instructional focus. This approach prioritizes respect for students' individuality, interests, and needs. Commonly employed methods include inquiry-based learning and cooperative learning, with teaching content adjusted according to students' interests and requirements. For example, in group inquiry-based learning, students independently select topics, design research methods, and draw conclusions, while the teacher primarily serves as a facilitator. Under this theoretical framework, instruction may overly emphasize student autonomy, potentially neglecting the supportive role of structured learning [6].

3.2. The role of teachers

Divergent definitions of the teacher's role across various theories have led to ambiguity, making it difficult for teachers to strike a balance in their role positioning during actual teaching practice. For example, Western constructivism advocates learner-centered education, viewing students as the cognitive subjects and active constructors of knowledge and meaning, with teachers serving primarily as facilitators who assist and promote students' meaning-making processes [7]. In contrast, the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) emphasizes the teacher as the "primary designer of instruction," insisting that all classroom activities must serve the occurrence of effective learning. Consequently, in teaching practice, teachers often find themselves limited to adopting only one type of role, completing instructional tasks under the guidance of a single theoretical framework.

3.2.1. Difficulties encountered by teachers in teaching

Through one-on-one interviews conducted with English teachers currently teaching at junior and senior high schools using the interview method, this study identified several issues present in contemporary secondary school English education. Most teachers possess extensive frontline teaching experience but lack sufficient theoretical knowledge as well as the ability to synthesize and

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.LD25176

integrate educational theories. Regarding instructional challenges, teachers demonstrate unclear understanding of teaching philosophies, insufficient rigor in instructional design, and inadequate comprehension of localized teaching theories. On the affective front, teachers face considerable instructional pressure and suffer from anxiety, while simultaneously exhibiting ambivalent attitudes toward the implementation of educational reforms.

3.3. Current status of domestic research

Most domestic research on teaching theories and methods currently focuses on either the "learning-centered" or the "student-centered" approach individually, lacking systematic exploration of the synergistic mechanisms between the two. Furthermore, the localization of various teaching theories remains insufficient, and they have yet to be fully implemented in classroom practice. For example, although constructivism emphasizes a student-centered approach, in China's examination-oriented environment, teachers may find it difficult to fully apply its core principles. Task-based teaching methods may struggle to achieve desired outcomes due to large class sizes and time constraints. Similarly, flipped classrooms rely heavily on students' autonomous learning abilities, which poses challenges for implementation in China, where large class formats remain predominant.

3.4. Measures to implement the "dual-centered" theory

How can the practical application of the "dual-centered" theory be realized? First, teachers should develop personalized instructional plans based on actual teaching conditions, student characteristics, and available teaching resources. For example, in response to student groups with varying proficiency levels and interests, teachers can design tiered instruction and diversified learning activities to fully embody the "student-centered" philosophy. While aligning with instructional objectives and students' learning needs, teachers also need to continuously optimize teaching content and methods to ensure the effective implementation of the "learning-centered" approach.

By reviewing current research in the field of education on the "student-centered" and "learning-centered" approaches, this study aims to understand the focal points of various scholars, and to explore potential innovations and the possibilities for their organic integration. This exploration will be targeted to address issues that arise in English language classrooms. For example, big data analysis technologies—including data collection, processing, and analysis—can be employed to structure the compiled information and establish a new model for English teaching. Subsequently, this model can be validated through practical application.

In addition, it is essential to continuously monitor the forefront of educational research, actively incorporate new educational ideas and theoretical achievements, and consistently enrich and refine the "dual-centered" teaching theory system. For example, attention should be given to emerging international theories and practices such as personalized learning and blended learning, integrating these developments with existing research to promote the ongoing innovation of the "dual-centered" theory.

4. Conclusion

The dual-centered theory proposed in this paper is currently in its developmental and refinement stages and remains an exploratory endeavor. The author hopes that more educators and scholars will apply and investigate this theory in classroom practice to further its development and improvement. The dual-centered theory represents a novel exploration that integrates the "learning-centered" and

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.LD25176

"student-centered" approaches, aiming to combine their strengths to enhance teaching efficiency and effectiveness. This requires teachers to have a solid understanding of theories such as the Production-Oriented Approach (POA), the student-centered approach, and constructivism. It is the author's hope that this article will provide practical support for teachers' instructional work and thus contribute to the advancement of English language education.

References

[1] Rogers, C. R. (1969). Freedom to learn: A view of what education might become. Columbus, OH: Merrill.
[2] Wen, Q. F. (2015). Developing a theoretical system of production-oriented approach in language teaching. Foreign Language Teaching and Research, 47(4), 547–558.
[3] Krashen, S. (1985). The input hypothesis: Issues and implications. London, UK: Longman.
[4] Swain, M. (1993). The output hypothesis: Just speaking and writing aren't enough. The Canadian Modern Language Review, 50, 158–164.
[5] Benson, P. (2011). Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning (2nd ed.). .
[6] Kember, D. (2009). Promoting student-centered forms of learning across an entire university. Higher Education, 58, 1–13.
[7] He, K. K. (2021). The new constructivism theory: Chinese scholars' critical inheritance and innovative development on Western constructivism. Education Sciences in China, 4(1), 14–29.