

EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Learner-Centered Teaching in Public Schools of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

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Abstract

This quantitative research aims to investigate the awareness and perceptions of EFL teachers regarding learner-centred teaching (LCT). The approach emphasizes the vital role of students in taking greater responsibility for their own learning, with teachers serving as facilitators of this process, drawing upon the theoretical foundations of constructivism and social constructivism. An online questionnaire is used in the study for EFL teachers within the Choman directorate of education – Soran Independent Administration. A total of 83 teachers responded to the questionnaire. Findings reveal that participants demonstrate a solid understanding of LCT principles and assign value to all ten potential aspects of LCT. Notably, the study finds that participants' beliefs do not strongly align with either learner-centered or non-learner-centered beliefs. This study underscores the need for tailored interventions and professional development to guide teachers in purposefully integrating LCT principles into their teaching practices, contributing to the discourse on effective language teaching methodologies and the professional growth of EFL teachers.

Keywords: EFL teachers, Learner-centered teaching, learner-centered beliefs, Teacher familiarity

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the global education landscape has witnessed a paradigm shift toward learner-centred teaching (LCT), characterized by a pedagogical approach in which students actively participate in shaping their learning experiences (Harden & Crosby, 2000; Weimer, 2002; 2013; Harris & Cullen, 2010). In contrast to traditional teacher-centered teaching (TCT), LCT emphasizes the vital role of students in taking greater responsibility for their own learning, with teachers serving as facilitators of this process. This transition places significant demands on teachers, necessitating a re-evaluation of their professional development needs (Schweisfurth, 2011; Onurkan Aliusta & Özer, 2017), which is crucial for the successful implementation of LCT in teaching and learning. However, the successful implementation of LCT is not without challenges (Le Ha, 2014; Cheng & Ding, 2021) as critical questions regarding the effectiveness, suitability, applicability, feasibility, and cultural dynamics surrounding LCT persist. This scepticism underscores the importance of scrutinizing the adoption of LCT to ensure that it meets the diverse needs of educational systems. Additionally, the transformation from traditional teaching to LCT requires a significant shift in power dynamics between teachers and learners, which can be intricate and demanding (Schweisfurth, 2011).

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI henceforth), educational reform initiatives have also called for the integration of LCT principles into the curriculum, particularly in English language teaching (Sofi-Karim, 2015). Despite these top-down policy changes, EFL teachers in the KRI continue to face significant challenges in embracing LCT mainly due to logistical (class sizes, inadequate facilities etc.) and cultural/pedagogical reasons as most educators predominantly adhere to teacher-centred practices (Sofi-Karim, 2015;

Haji, 2018). Culturally, the teacher remains the primary authority, and students tend to assume passive roles whereby learning primarily occurs through memorization (Hamad, 2018).

Although policy reforms in 2008-09 mandated EFL teachers in the KRI to implement LCT methodologies, research conducted in the region tends to suggest a lack of understanding within the basic and high-school education system regarding the effective implementation of these innovative methods (Vernez et al., 2014). This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive exploration of EFL teachers' awareness and perceptions of LCT in the KRI. Hence, this study investigates EFL teachers' familiarity and perceptions of LCT in the KRI. It is hoped that this research can inform educational policies and practices, offering insights into educators' readiness to embrace LCT and practical strategies for overcoming implementation challenges. By doing so, it can contribute to the enhancement of teaching methodologies in KRI's public schools and align teaching practices with evolving student needs.

This study commences with a review of the literature and a well-defined theoretical framework, highlighting the core principles of learner-centred pedagogy and constructivism. Subsequently, the research methodology, including data collection procedures, reliability, and validity considerations, is presented. The results section encompasses findings related to EFL teachers' familiarity and perceptions towards LCT as well as the definition of LCT. In the discussion section, the study delves into the implications of EFL teachers' LCT awareness and their pedagogical beliefs. Finally, the study provides some concluding points and recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section begins with a concise introduction to learner-centeredness and constructivism. It then delves into Weimer's five key changes to practice. Following this explanation, the section explores teachers' familiarity with and their perceptions of LCT. Finally, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic, a dedicated sub-section is designated to review and discuss previous studies in this field.

LEARNER-CENTREDNESS AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

Learner-centred teaching has been defined as an approach in which students are actively involved in their own learning process, taking greater responsibility for their learning compared to the teacher. In this approach, the focus is on what the students are doing to achieve their learning goals, rather than solely on the actions of the teacher (Harden & Crosby, 2000; Weimer, 2002; 2013; Harris & Cullen, 2010). The concept of Learner-centeredness has been significantly influenced by constructivist pedagogies rooted in the assumption that knowledge is not passively received and that learners, instead, actively construct their own understanding, moving beyond the passive reception of information from external sources like teachers and learning materials (Jacobs & Renandya, 2016). Hence, constructivist pedagogies tend to advocate for learner autonomy viewing teachers as facilitators or mediators, aiding learners in discovering meaning and understanding rather than merely dispensing information for rote memorization (Geraldine O'Neill et al., 2005). In this sense, student-centred learning shares similarities with the social constructivist perspective, which highlights the importance of active learning where culture, values and beliefs play a significant role in shaping individuals learning experiences. In addition, interaction with more knowledgeable members of society is crucial for learners,

enabling them to acquire social meaning and develop their thinking abilities through engagement with experienced individuals in their community (Singhal, 2017). As a result, at the practical level, instructional approaches that promote collaborative and social learning experiences tend to be favoured in student-centred classes (Harris & Cullen, 2010).

WEIMER'S FIVE KEY CHANGES TO PRACTICE

Weimer's five key changes to practice offer a comprehensive approach to transforming instructional practices, encompassing various dimensions of teaching and learning. This holistic perspective provides a deep understanding of learner-centeredness and its implementation. Weimer's work is highly influential in the field of education, evidenced by its extensive citations and references. According to Weimer (2002;2013), a shift towards LCT requires a transformation in instructional practices, which includes redefining the teacher's role, re-establishing the balance of power, rethinking the function of content, altering the responsibility for learning and reassessing the purpose and process of assessment. These changes emphasize empowering learners by shifting the balance of power redefining the teacher's role and encouraging active engagement, self-directed learning, and critical thinking. Exploring these changes can contribute to understanding how learner empowerment positively impacts educational outcomes.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

In LCT classrooms, teachers assume various roles like facilitators, guides, models, coaches, and co-learners. They motivate students to take responsibility for their learning while still providing knowledge and support (Weimer, 2002; Jones, 2007; De la Sablonnière et al., 2009; Horn, 2009; Emaliana, 2017; Lak, Soleimani and Parvaneh, 2017; Darsih, 2018; Blumberg, 2019). These roles can

change dynamically based on student needs, lesson goals, and context, allowing teachers to adapt between teacher-centred and student-centred roles as required (Jones, 2007; Paris & Combs, 2006). In other words, the teacher's role is not limited to being a knowledge provider but also involves guiding and supporting students in their learning journey. LCT places teachers in multifaceted roles as facilitators, guides, coaches, and co-learners, with the primary aim of empowering students to take charge of their learning.

THE BALANCE OF POWER

In LCT, teachers aim to create opportunities for students to have a say in what and how they learn and how they are assessed (Bremner, 2020). Attard et al. (2010) highlight the shift from traditional lectures to a collaborative teaching style in LCT, where teachers interact more dynamically with students, promoting shared ownership of learning. This shift enhances student engagement, motivation, and academic performance. Weimer (2002) adds that the goal of power-sharing in the classroom is to gradually equip students with the skills to become self-directed learners, with power distributed according to their readiness. Transforming traditional teaching roles into LC facilitation empowers both students and teachers, leading to more engaging and equitable education. This shift supports individual growth and contributes to addressing inequality and promoting social change through education.

THE FUNCTION OF CONTENT

Transitioning to LCT shifts the focus from content delivery to prioritizing the learning process (Harris & Cullen, 2010; Attard *et al.*, 2010a). Overemphasizing syllabus completion is characteristic of a TCT which hinders LCT (Qutoshi & Poudel, 2014). It's crucial to challenge the belief that more content is always better (Weimer, 2002). Content serves beyond providing knowledge; students

actively engage with it to create meaning and facilitate future learning (Blumberg, 2019). This exploration highlights the evolving role of content in education, especially in the transition from a transmission perspective to LCT. Content goes beyond mere knowledge transfer; it becomes a versatile tool that engages students, promotes critical thinking, motivates learning, and equips learners with essential skills.

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING

In LCT classrooms, students have an active role in their education and are responsible for their learning, as noted by Weimer (2002). LCT classrooms differ from traditional ones as students actively engage in their learning, and have a say in what and how they learn, leading to increased responsibility and accountability in their educational experience (O'Neill and McMahon, 2005; Lak et al., 2017; Hanewicz et al., 2017). Demirci (2017) emphasizes the importance of a dynamic partnership between teachers and students, where both parties share responsibility for instruction. Students actively discover, construct, and create new knowledge, while teachers serve as resources and facilitators. Marinko et al. (2016) highlight the significance of enabling students to draw upon their prior knowledge and take ownership of their learning by exploring knowledge and materials. Establishing LCT classrooms requires students to take active responsibility for their learning. Collaboration between teachers and students in knowledge creation is vital, emphasizing co-creation rather than one-way transfer.

THE PURPOSE AND PROCESSES OF EVALUATION

Assessment is a crucial element of learner-centeredness, and there have been numerous proposals for enhancing it in the realm of education (Marinko et al., 2016). Assessment serves two purposes: certifying students' proficiency in the

subject matter and fostering their learning. It is important to strike a balance between these two aims. However, it is regrettable that both teachers and students often prioritize grades over promoting learning (Weimar, 2013). The author states that it is disheartening to note that both teachers and students frequently prioritize grades as a measure of success rather than focusing on promoting learning. According to the author, it is important to involve students in the assessment process. However, this does not imply that students should be solely responsible for grading. The challenges linked to such practices underscore the call for reevaluating traditional grading methods. By embracing transformative assessment practices, education can prioritize holistic learning and individual development in an LC context.

TEACHERS' FAMILIARITY WITH AND PERCEPTIONS OF LCT

Learner-centred teaching represents a pedagogical approach that places learners at the forefront of the educational process, emphasizing their active engagement and autonomy in learning (Brinkmann, 2018). Understanding teachers' awareness of LCT and their perspectives on the approach is crucial for its successful implementation in educational settings.

However, in environments accustomed to teacher-centred approaches, both teachers and students initially find it challenging to question their deeply ingrained assumptions (cf. Diekelmann et al., 2004 & Heise et al., 2010 cited by Attard et al., 2010). This resistance to change is not uncommon, as educational systems worldwide have long been rooted in traditional, teacher-centred models. However, introducing pedagogical reforms such as LCT, can be challenging due to the unfamiliarity of educators with the associated theories and methods (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012). Although teachers often express enthusiasm about

implementing LC approaches, a lack of training and support can hinder effective implementation, as demonstrated in (Hat et al. 2006).

To enable teachers to harness the potential of LCT, they must have a well-defined understanding of what the approach is, a clear picture of how it is implemented in real classroom settings, and a recognition of the benefits it offers (Marinko et al., 2016). Brinkmann (2018) emphasizes the significance of essential competencies for the effective implementation of LCT, stating that belief in LCT methods alone does not guarantee proficiency. Teachers need the knowledge and skills to adapt their instructional practices to align with LCT principles effectively. Furthermore, Brinkmann suggests that understanding and engaging with teachers' existing beliefs and practices is more effective than rigidly imposing a Western model of learner-centred education (LCE). Recognizing and respecting cultural and contextual differences in education is essential when introducing LCT into diverse educational settings. However, it's essential to note that familiarity with an educational philosophy does not guarantee effective implementation in teaching practices, as highlighted by (Shaobing & Adamson, 2014; Tan, 2016).

Teacher beliefs and attitudes significantly impact the way they design and conduct their lessons. These beliefs can either support or hinder the implementation of LCT. Teachers who hold traditional teaching philosophies may be less inclined to adopt LCT methods, while those embracing constructivist principles tend to favour LCT approaches (Davis et al., 2020). Teachers serve as role models and guides for their students, and their instructional methods can significantly impact how students view the learning process. When teachers adopt LCT practices, they signal to students that their input, interests, and autonomy are valued.

It is crucial to recognize that the viewpoints and attitudes of teachers have a significant impact on shaping how learners perceive the educational process and the overall dynamics of teaching and learning (McCombs & Whisler, 1997 cited in Ghaicha & Mezouari, 2018). Recognizing the importance of the educational context, as emphasized by Pedersen & Liu (2003), becomes significant in this study, highlighting that educational change's success relies on teachers' ability to translate it into practice. The context in which teachers work can greatly influence their willingness and ability to implement LCT.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Several empirical studies have investigated **teachers' familiarity with LCT**. In the study titled "Student-centredness in Urban Schools in China," conducted by Shaobing & Adamson (2014), the aim was to investigate how teachers in urban secondary schools understand and implement LCT in the new English curriculum, while also examining the factors affecting its implementation. The research was conducted with a sample of three secondary English teachers. The data collection involved official documents, interviews, classroom observations, and teacher reflective reports. The study revealed that while teachers had become more familiar with the concept due to its widespread dissemination, their understanding of the specific teaching principles advocated in the reform remained limited.

Similarly, in the study titled "English Language Teachers' Perspectives on Learner-Centered Education: A Quantitative Study," conducted by Bremner (2021), the aim was to investigate 248 EFL teachers' familiarity with LC education, their confidence in explaining it, and their definitions of LC education. Results showed that 92% of participants had heard of LCE and felt reasonably confident explaining it. Notably, teachers considered all 10 potential

aspects of LC education, mentioned in this study as important, indicating a broader interpretation than conventional literature definitions.

In the study titled "Implementing Learner-Centered Education in Public Secondary Schools in Nyamagana District, Mwanza-Tanzania," conducted by Mgyabuso & Mkulu (2022), the aim was to assess the implementation of LC education. The research employed a mixed approach, involving 165 informants. Although teachers and students expressed positive perceptions of LC education, its actual implementation was limited due to various challenges, particularly inadequate teacher knowledge was a significant obstacle to LCE implementation.

Empirical studies consistently reveal varying **teacher attitudes and practices regarding LCT**. While some exhibit positivity towards the approach, others express neutral beliefs or reservations about the approach.

Teachers usually hold positive views on LCT, highlighting its potential to improve student learning and life skills. In their study titled " Exploring the Implementation of Student-Centered Approach: A Case Study of EFL Teachers' Classroom Management on Junior High School " Latif et al. (2020) aimed to investigate the implementation of the LC approach in junior high school EFL classrooms. Employing a case study methodology with two teachers from SMPN I Polombangkeng Utara, the research delved into teacher perceptions, the actual implementation of the approach, and the associated classroom management process. The study's results indicated a favourable reception of the approach, particularly when compared to the traditional teacher-centred approach.

Additional studies have reported that many teacher participants express positive views about LCT, such as (Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006; Yilmaz, 2008; Seng, 2014; Qutoshi & Poudel, 2014; Salema, 2015; Jony, 2016; Badjadi, 2020). These studies consistently highlight teachers' favourable views towards LCT, supported by their enthusiasm for its positive impacts on student learning and skills development.

Several empirical studies have identified instances of **neutral teacher perceptions and practices regarding the approach**, as seen in Timor's, (2011) study entitled " Attitudes of Beginner Teachers of Special Education to Classroom Management: Who's the Boss Here?". This research aimed to investigate the attitudes of eighteen novice teachers in special education training programs regarding classroom management and instruction specifically in the context of teacher-centered versus learner-centered approaches. The study identified a mixed use of both approaches in classroom management, with a tendency towards the learner-centred approach.

Similarly, in the study titled " Kurdish EFL Teachers' Learner and non-Learner-Centered Beliefs about Learners, Learning, and Teaching" by Aziz (2014), the aim was to explore the LC and NLC beliefs of 165 Kurdish EFL teachers in Ranya, Northern Iraq, regarding learners, learning, and teaching. The study found that the teachers' beliefs were neither learner-centred nor non-learner-centered.

Furthermore, Ecker's (2022) action research entitled "Catalyzing learner-centred education: Using an action research professional learning community to cultivate learner-centred innovation in classrooms" conducted in a small eastern Pennsylvania school district employed a survey to assess teachers' adoption of

LC beliefs and practices. The outcomes revealed that, on average, teachers exhibited a moderate alignment with LCE. Nevertheless, some teachers held a blend of LC and NLC views, particularly concerning their beliefs about teaching and learning, where consensus among respondents was absent.

It is vital to emphasize that in specific empirical studies, **certain teachers have expressed reservations about LCT**. In the study titled " Learner-Centered English Language Teaching: Premises, Practices, and Prospects " by Badjadi (2020), the research aimed to assess the adaptation and implementation of LCE in second language teaching at Algerian universities. A descriptive exploratory study employed a questionnaire with 128-second language teachers and interviews with 9 selected participants. The findings revealed that teachers value traditional knowledge transmission despite recognizing the benefits of active learning. Interviews with participants also revealed concerns about time constraints and challenges with discovery-based learning for both students and teachers.

Additionally, in their systematic review titled " A systematic review of the implementation of learner-centred pedagogy in low- and middle-income countries, " Sakata et al., (2022) aimed to comprehensively examine the application of LC pedagogy in diverse contexts. By analyzing 94 journal articles published between 2001 and 2020, the study addressed concerns expressed by teachers in 14 different research studies regarding the potential negative impacts of LC pedagogy on student learning, particularly in exam preparation. This diversity in approaches, especially in beliefs about teaching and learning, suggests a lack of consensus across different contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This section initiates by presenting the data collection tool and the research questions. Subsequently, it addresses the critical aspects of data validity and reliability.

DATA COLLECTION

To investigate EFL teachers' awareness and perceptions of LCT, this study utilized an online questionnaire, which is a widely used tool for collecting data from a large number of participants through uniform sets of written questions or statements (Gass & Mackey 2012). The questionnaire employed in this study was created by drawing insights from various sources (McCombs et al., 1997; Bremner, 2021b; Trenholm, 2016; Shihiba, 2011). but none of them addressed the integration of LCT awareness with teachers' beliefs. To align with the study's needs, elements from these sources were combined.

The target population consisted of EFL teachers who teach English in public schools in the Choman Directorate of Education. Non-probability sampling was used, suitable for obtaining specific, relevant information aligned with research goals, especially when other methods are impractical (Maxwell, 2013). The survey was conducted between September 15th and October 1st, 2022, at the start of the academic year when teachers typically have more availability. A total of 83 teachers, 48 females and 35 males, participated in the survey.

The questionnaire had two sections: (1) section one assessed participants' familiarity with "LCT" with a Yes/No question, and their confidence in explaining it using a scale from "Extremely unconfident", "Unconfident", "Neither confident nor unconfident", "Confident", "Extremely confident." In addition, this section included 10 multiple-choice questions to measure EFL teachers' awareness of LCT definition, rated for importance on a 5-point scale;

(2) section two explores EFL teachers' beliefs about LCT using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Uncertain", "Agree", "Strongly agree".

All respondents were informed of the confidentiality, anonymity, and non-traceability of their responses, along with an explanation of the research goals, following recommendations by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) to ensure respondent comfort and confidence. In addition, strict ethical protocols were followed by obtaining official permission from the Choman Directorate of Education in August 2022, demonstrating transparency and respect for participants' rights (Burns, 2010). Measures were taken to protect anonymity, data were securely stored (Creswell, 2015) and all participants were informed that participation was voluntary (Malone, 2003).

To achieve its aims, the study addressed two key research questions:

- 1- How familiar are EFL teachers in public schools in the Kurdistan region with LCT?
- 2- What are the perceptions of EFL teachers towards learner-centred teaching?

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE DATA

To ensure the content validity of this study, the development of the questionnaire involved a review of relevant literature to generate items for the questionnaire. The study relied on specific resources to facilitate the creation of the questionnaire, which are as follows: (McCombs, Lauer and Peralez, 1997; (Bremner, 2021; EDC evaluation team, 2016; Shihiba, 2011). Furthermore, in accordance with Cohen et al.'s (2007) recommendation, we sought feedback from two academic experts in the field who provided revisions and guidance.

To establish content validity, a pilot study was conducted with 15 EFL teachers, not part of the final sample. This pilot study assesses the questionnaire's effectiveness and gathers feedback on the duration of the study, clarity of instructions, ambiguity of questions, the layout of the questionnaire, and any other comments they may have had. Feedback led to revisions, such as adding explanations and a photograph to address participants' concerns, ensuring the questionnaire's clarity (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018).

In terms of validity, this study placed significant emphasis on internal consistency so Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Items were organized into groups, and subsequently, coefficient alpha scores were computed for each of these scales. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) consider 0.70 – 0.79 as reliable. Table (1) demonstrates the reliability of the study's items. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for items related to participants' familiarity with LCT is .738, and for items related to their perceptions of LCT, it is .853. These coefficients suggest that both sets of items exhibit acceptable levels of reliability, affirming their trustworthiness for use in our research.

TABLE 1
CRONBACH ALPHA RELIABILITY TEST

Items related to	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Familiarity with LCT	12	.738
Perceptions on LCT	26	.853

RESULTS

The questionnaire data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 26) after numbering and coding. Descriptive statistics were employed to simplify the presentation of findings by highlighting data patterns and showing the spread of scores (Dörnyei, 2007). This approach offers a concise summary of findings, enhancing overall dataset comprehension (Mackey & Gass, 2005), thereby improving understanding of research results.

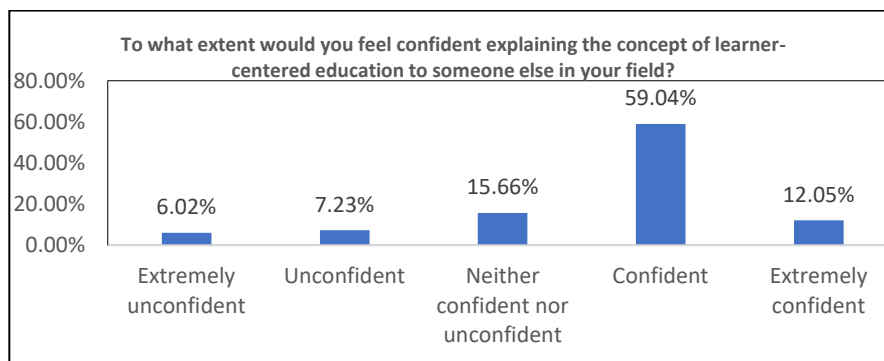
EFL TEACHERS' FAMILIARITY WITH LCT

In the study, participants were first asked about their awareness of the term "LCT." The results revealed that out of the 83 participants, 67 of them (80.72%) responded in the affirmative for this item, indicating their familiarity with LCT, while 16 (19.28%) reported unfamiliarity with the concept. This means that they were familiar with LCT.

Then, they were asked to indicate their level of confidence in explaining the concept of LCT to colleagues in their professional domain in another item. Seventy-one participants, with a mean score of 3.64 (SD= .995), expressed confidence in elucidating the concept of LCE to their professional colleagues. Figure (1) reveals that the response option 'Confident' was the most prevalent at 59.04%, followed by 'Neither confident nor unconfident' at 15.66%. 'Extremely confident' ranked third at 12.05%, while only 7.23% of respondents reported feeling 'Unconfident,' and 6.02% noted being 'Extremely unconfident. The results mean that they were confident in explaining the concept to other teachers in their field.

FIGURE 1

FAMILIARITY OF PARTICIPANTS WITH THE CONCEPT OF LCT



LCT DEFINITION

The study explored EFL teachers' opinions on including ten aspects in the definition of learner-centred education: active participation, interaction, real-life skills, higher-order skills, adaptability to students' needs, power sharing, autonomy, metacognition, formative assessment, and a humanistic role. A 5-point Likert scale was used, with 'Extremely unimportant' and 'Unimportant' combined as unimportant, 'Not sure' left unchanged, and 'Important' and 'Extremely important' merged as important. Table (2) shows percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations for these ten aspects in the LC definition.

Table 2

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE TEN ASPECTS OF THE LCT DEFINITION

Items	Unimportant	Not sure	Important	Mean	SD
3- The teacher organises learning so that there are opportunities for students to participate. (active learning, learning by doing ...)	5%	12%	83%	4.10	.878
4- The teacher organises learning so that there are opportunities for students to interact with others (pair and group work, team-based	4%	7%	89%	4.27	.798

learning...)

5- The teacher not only teaches theoretical knowledge but also real-life skills that students can apply outside of the classroom. (practical skills for life outside the classroom)	6%	4%	90%	4.25	.881
6- The teacher organises learning so that there are opportunities for students to develop higher-order thinking skills such as critical thinking and creativity	6%	10%	84%	4.04	.903
7- The teacher bases learning around the students' prior knowledge, skills, and experiences and adapts learning based on students' needs and interests.	7%	14%	78%	3.99	.890
8- The teacher provides opportunities for the students to be more involved in decision-making regarding what they learn, how they learn, and how they are assessed.	5%	13%	82%	4.12	.861
9- The teacher organises learning so that there are opportunities for students to work independently, both in and out of the classroom. (Students' responsibility for their own learning)	6%	12%	82%	3.99	.819
10- The teacher not only teaches content but also provides opportunities for students to reflect on how they learn. (Metacognition, learning to learn, lifelong learning)	10%	8%	82%	3.94	.954
11- The teacher provides a formative assessment as well as a summative assessment. (Formative is used continuously and	11%	24%	65%	3.66	.914

summative is used at the end)

12- The teacher takes a "whole person" approach towards the students and their learning, focusing not only on their cognitive needs but also their needs as human beings. (students' emotions and well-being, viewing them as individuals)	8%	6%	86%	4.14	.912
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The results suggest that participants valued all ten potential aspects of LCE, with an average score of 4.05 (SD = .478). While there were variations in popularity, 'The teacher not only teaches theoretical knowledge but also real-life skills that students can apply outside of the classroom' was the most favoured (90% importance), followed by 'Interaction' (89%) and 'Humanistic role' (86%). 'Formative assessment' had the lowest rating at 65%. Despite these differences, the gap between the highest-rated aspects (Real-life skills at 90% and Interaction at 89%) and the lowest-rated aspects (Formative assessment at 65% and Adapting to needs at 78%) was not significant. In summary, participants supported the inclusion of all ten aspects in the LCE definition.

EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS LCT

In the questionnaire, participants were asked about their learner-centered beliefs and non-learner-centered beliefs (NLC henceforth) using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree.' To simplify analysis and improve understanding, the 26 questionnaire items were grouped into themes based on Weimar's (2013) five key changes to practice: the role of the teacher, the balance of power, the function of content, the responsibility for

learning, and the purpose and processes of evaluation. This organizational approach revealed recurring patterns and insights into EFL teachers' beliefs. Table (3) shows the mean score and SD of EFL teachers' LC and NLC beliefs.

TABLE 3
MEAN SCORES AND (SD) OF EFL TEACHERS' LC AND NLC BELIEF SCORES

Total	Respondents	Missing	Mean	Std. Deviation
83	75	8	3.26	.284

The results indicated that the overall mean score of all 75 respondents across the 26 items was 3.26 (SD= .284), suggesting that the EFL teachers' beliefs were neither LC nor NLC prior to the intervention. Specifically, based on the mean score of each item, a score above 3.50 was categorized as LC, a score between 2.50 and 3.50 was categorized as neither LC nor NLC, and a score below 2.50 was categorized as NLC.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

The questionnaire in this study had nine items regarding the teacher's role, with a mean score of 3.1274 (SD=.45067), indicating that participants' beliefs about this role do not strongly align with either an LC or NLC framework. For analysis, "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" were combined as "Disagree," "Uncertain" remained unchanged, and "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" were combined as "Agree". Table (4) presents the percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations for the learner-centered belief (LCB) items, while Table (5) displays the corresponding values for the non-learner-centered belief (NLCB) items.

TABLE 4

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF LCB ITEMS REGARDING THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

LCB items	Disagr ee	Uncerta in	Agr ee	Me an	SD
13- The teacher's role is to facilitate and guide students' learning	3.6%	10.8%	75.9 %	4.3 1	0.8 38
14- Taking the time to create caring relationships with my students is the most important element for student achievement	4.8%	12%	73.4 %	4.1 6	0.8 55
15- Addressing students' social, emotional, and physical needs is just as important to learning as meeting their intellectual needs.	8.10%	36.1%	51.8 %	3.6 1	0.9 43

In summary, the study's findings on the role of teachers in EFL education reveal a nuanced perspective. A significant majority recognized the importance of teachers facilitating and guiding student learning (75.9%) and fostering caring relationships (73.4%). Additionally, acknowledging the significance of addressing holistic student needs (51.8%) adds complexity to the teacher's role. In general, their perspectives on these three items are regarded as leaning toward LCT.

Table 5

DESCRIPTIVE OF NLCB ITEMS REGARDING THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

NLCB items	Disagr ee	Uncerta in	Agr ee	Me an	SD
16- Teachers' role is to transmit knowledge through explanations	4.8%	8.4%	77.1 %	1.7 7	0.9 24

and giving examples

17- Good teachers always know more than their students.	8.4%	15.7%	56.3%	1.8	1.0
			7	95	
18- Knowledge of the subject area is the most important part of being an effective teacher.	13.2%	15.7%	61.4%	2.2	1.1
			5	52	
19- It is impossible to work with students who refuse to learn.	42.2%	20.5%	27.7%	3.2	1.3
			4	34	
20- Teachers shouldn't be expected to work with students who consistently cause problems in class.	45.8%	21.7%	22.9%	3.3	1.1
			9	96	
21- It is just too late to help some students.	53%	14.5%	22.8%	3.5	1.3
			5	88	

To sum up, a majority agree that teachers should transmit knowledge through explanations and examples (77.1%) and that subject knowledge is crucial for effective teaching (61.4%). However, opinions diverge on topics like working with challenging students, with a significant portion disagreeing with statements suggesting that it is impossible to work with unwilling learners (42.2%) or that teachers should not be expected to handle consistently problematic students (45.8%). Furthermore, most agree that some students may be beyond help (53%). These results provide insights into the diverse beliefs held by respondents regarding the teacher's role in education, which can be considered as neither LC nor NLC.

THE BALANCE OF POWER

The questionnaire in this study included six items to assess participants' beliefs about the balance of power in the classroom. The overall mean score for these items was 3.1022 (SD= .37458), suggesting that participants' beliefs about the balance of power did not strongly align with either a purely LC or NLC perspective. Table (6) presents the percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations for the LCB items, while Table (7) displays the corresponding values for the NLCB items.

TABLE 6

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF LCB ITEMS REGARDING THE BALANCE OF POWER

LC belief items	Disagr ee	Uncerta in	Agr ee	Mea n	SD
22- Teachers should allow students to express their own unique thoughts and beliefs.	7.2%	10.8%	72.3 %	4.32	0.84 1
23- Students achieve more in classes in which teachers encourage them to express their personal beliefs and feelings.	2.4%	10.8%	77.1 %	4.19	0.94
24- Being willing to share who I am as a person with my students facilitates learning more than being an authority figure.	8.4%	27.7%	54.2 %	3.67	0.94 9

To sum up, a significant majority of participants express strong agreement with the idea that teachers should allow students to share their unique thoughts

and beliefs (72.3%) and that encouraging students to express their personal beliefs and feelings enhances academic achievement (77.1%). In contrast, many disagree with the idea that being an authority figure is more effective for learning than sharing one's personal identity with students (54.2%). These results suggest a prevailing LC belief regarding the items among the participants.

TABLE 7

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF NLCB ITEMS REGARDING THE BALANCE OF POWER

NLCB items	Disagr ee	Uncerta in	Agr ee	Mea n	SD
25- For effective learning to occur, I need to be in control of the direction of learning.	4.8%	19.3%	66.3 %	2.04	0.89 2
26- One of the most important things I can teach students is how to follow rules and do what is expected of them in the classroom.	8.4%	16.9%	65.1 %	2.17	0.95
27- Tasks and activities should be selected by the teacher since it is difficult to consult all the students for their needs	8.4%	20.5%	61.5 %	2.23	0.86 3

In summary, a significant majority agree that effective learning necessitates teacher control over the learning direction (66.3%) and that teaching students to follow rules is essential (65.1%). However, (61.5%) show agreement with

teachers unilaterally selecting tasks and activities due to practical constraints. These results suggest that the participants harbour beliefs that are not aligned with LCT regarding the three items related to the balance of power.

THE FUNCTION OF CONTENT

The questionnaire in this study had two items related to the function of content in LCT, yielding a mean score of 3.14 (SD= .584). This suggests that participants' beliefs about the function of content did not firmly fall into either a purely LC or NLC framework. Table (8) presents the percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations for the LCB items, while Table (9) displays the corresponding values for the NLCB items.

TABLE 8

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF LC ITEMS REGARDING THE FUNCTION OF CONTENT

LCB items	Disagr ee	Uncerta in	Agr ee	Mea n	SD
28- The school is a social institution where students gain knowledge and learn about social norms, moral values and cooperative skills.	4.8%	10.8%	74.7 %	4.09 7	0.94

THE DATA INDICATES ROBUST CONSENSUS, WITH 74.7% OF PARTICIPANTS ENDORSING THE VIEW THAT SCHOOLS FUNCTION AS PLATFORMS FOR KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION AND THE CULTIVATION OF SOCIAL NORMS, MORAL VALUES, AND COOPERATIVE SKILLS. THIS IMPLIES AN LC PERSPECTIVE AMONG THE PARTICIPANTS FOR THIS ITEM.

TABLE 9

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF NLC ITEMS REGARDING THE FUNCTION OF CONTENT

NLCB items	Disagr ee	Uncerta in	Agr ee	Mea n	SD
29- The school is a formal place where students gain the knowledge they need for exams	13.2%	15.7%	61.4%	2.19	1.0887

In summary, a significant portion (61.4%) adhered to a traditional view of schools primarily focused on exam-related knowledge. The results suggest that participants hold an NLC belief regarding this item.

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING

In this study's questionnaire, seven items measured participants' beliefs about the responsibility for learning. The combined mean score was 4.1086 (SD=51338), indicating that participants held LCBs regarding responsibility for learning. Table (10) presents the percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations for the LCB items, while Table (11) displays the corresponding values for the NLCB items.

TABLE 10

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF LC ITEMS REGARDING THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING

LC belief items	Disagr ee	Uncerta in	Agre e	Mea n	SD
30- Pair and group work activities help build up social cooperative relationships among students and between	3.6%	4.8%	82%	4.48	0.828

students and teachers					
31- Teachers ask students to listen and think about their classmates' opinions, even when they don't agree with them.	4.8%	9.6%	75.9 %	4.24	0.89 8
32- Teachers encourage students to work with other students when they have trouble with an assignment.	2.4%	15.7%	72.2 %	4.17	0.86
33- Students will be more motivated to learn if teachers get to know them at a personal level.	2.4%	14.5%	73.5 %	4.05	0.78 7
34- I believe that just listening to students in a caring way helps them solve their own problems.	3.6%	16.9%	69.9 %	4.03	0.85 4
35- Students can take the responsibility for their own learning	7.2%	27.7%	55.4 %	3.79	0.96 3

In summary, the study reveals that EFL teachers overwhelmingly endorse LCBs about responsibility for learning. They strongly support cooperative activities (82%) and value considering classmates' opinions (75.9%). Additionally, a high percentage (73.5%) believe that knowing students personally boosts their motivation, and 72.2% advocate for teacher

encouragement in collaborative problem-solving. A caring approach, with 69.9% agreement, is seen as beneficial in helping students resolve issues. Although slightly lower, 55.4% agree that students can take responsibility for their own learning. Overall, these findings demonstrate a positive orientation toward LCBs related to responsibility for learning.

TABLE 11
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF NLC THE ITEM REGARDING THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING

NLC belief items	Disagr ee	Uncerta in	Agr ee	Mea n	SD
36- I am responsible for what students learn and how they learn	6%	16.9%	67.5 %	2.005	0.88

In summary, a substantial proportion agreed (67.5%) with the item which states teachers are responsible for what and how students learn. This finding suggests that participants hold an NLC belief toward this item.

THE PURPOSE AND PROCESSES OF EVALUATION

In the questionnaire of this study, two items were related to the purpose and processes of evaluation in LCT. The total mean score of the two items was 2.51 (SD= .932). So, the result indicates that participants’ beliefs about the purpose and processes of evaluation are considered to be neither LC nor NLC. Table (12) presents the percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations for the NLCB items.

TABLE 12
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF NLCB ITEMS REGARDING THE PURPOSE AND PROCESSES OF EVALUATION

NLCB items	Disagr	Uncerta	Agr	Me	SD

	ee	in	ee	an	
37- Quizzes, tests or examinations are the most important methods of assessing students' proficiency.	12.9%	14.5%	53 %	2.5 1	1.2 23
38- Even with feedback, some students just can't figure out their mistakes.	18.1%	25.3%	47 %	2.5 2	1.0 83

In summary, the study's findings regarding the purpose and processes of evaluation in LCT indicate a mixed perspective among EFL teachers. The mean score of 2.51 suggests that participants' beliefs about evaluation are neither strongly LC nor NLC. Both items related to evaluation were NLCB items. One item highlights the importance of quizzes, tests, or examinations in assessing students' proficiency, with 53% agreement. The other item suggests that despite feedback, some students struggle to understand their mistakes, with 47% agreement.

DISCUSSION

In this section, we embark upon a rigorous analysis of our research findings concerning two critical aspects: firstly, an exploration of EFL teachers' familiarity with LCT, and secondly, an examination of the prevailing beliefs held by EFL teachers with regard to LCT.

EFL TEACHERS' FAMILIARITY WITH LCT

The study revealed that a majority of EFL teachers in this study were familiar with LCT and were confident in articulating its principles. The finding indicates that the majority of participants possess a strong understanding of LCT principles and can articulate them effectively. This carries significance as it holds the potential for enhanced teaching practices and improved student

learning outcomes. However, it is crucial to note that this knowledge and confidence, although promising, do not guarantee consistent LCT implementation in their teaching. The translation of theory into classroom practice is influenced by various factors, including institutional policies, classroom dynamics, and individual teaching philosophies. The finding seems to challenge the assumption that the prevalence of traditional teaching methods solely stems from teacher unfamiliarity with contemporary approaches, it suggests that the issue may be more complex and that understanding the quality and depth of teachers' awareness and its translation into classroom practices is crucial.

This finding aligns with Bremner's (2021) quantitative study on LC education from the perspectives of teachers, which similarly identified that a significant portion of respondents expressed their familiarity with LCT, accompanied by a high level of confidence in explaining the concept to their peers. In Shaobing & Adamson's (2014) study on LC education in China, participants became more familiar with the concept over time due to its widespread promotion. However, they admitted to having a limited understanding of the specific teaching principles advocated, highlighting that awareness of an educational philosophy doesn't ensure effective implementation in teaching practices.

Interestingly, this finding contrasts with a study conducted by Vernez et al. (2014), within the same region, suggesting that current teachers in the KRI may not fully comprehend the concept and implementation of student-centred learning. This disparity can be attributed to shifts in educational methods and the recent introduction of LCT principles in teacher education colleges. Approximately 55% of the participants in this study were recent graduates with 1 to 5 years of teaching experience, indicating that they likely encountered these

concepts during their college training. Similarly, O'Sullivan (2004) found that many teachers in her study in Namibia were not familiar with LCT. Recent studies, including this one, indicate an increased level of familiarity with LCT among teachers. This study contributes to the understanding of LCT in KRI by providing insights into the awareness and confidence levels of EFL teachers in KRI, particularly recent graduates. It suggests that changes in teacher education may be influencing the exposure of teachers to LC principles.

The study also found that participants assigned value to all ten potential aspects of LCT, such as active participation, interaction, real-life skills, higher-order skills, adaptability to students' needs, power sharing, autonomy, metacognition, formative assessment, and a humanistic role, although there were differences in their popularity. This finding suggests that participants acknowledged the importance of all ten potential aspects of LCT, but there were differences in how much emphasis they placed on each aspect. The finding underscores that there is no universal LCT definition, as people have diverse views on its key aspects. This emphasizes the importance of a flexible, context-aware approach. However, it's worth noting that participants generally value and aim to include all ten aspects in their understanding of LCT.

This finding aligns with Bremner's (2021) research, emphasizing the significance of diverse elements in LCT. The shared recognition of these aspects underscores the complexity of establishing an effective LCT environment. However, some differences between this study and Bremner's exist. For example, 'Real-life skills' held the highest importance here, while 'Formative assessment' was less vital. In Bremner's study, 'Active participation' was most valued, and 'Power sharing' was least valued. These disparities may stem from cultural perspectives, educational priorities, or participant

characteristics. Considering these contextual factors can enable tailored and effective implementation of LC in diverse educational settings.

EXAMINING EFL TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT LCT

The findings of this study show that participants held neutral beliefs, not strongly favoring either learner-centered or non-learner-centered approaches. This is significant because it establishes a baseline understanding of teachers' beliefs, indicating the absence of a clearly defined teaching philosophy among them. This initial neutral stance suggests the potential for change, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions to shape and enhance participants' teaching practices in the subsequent phases of the study. This aligns with Aziz's (2014) study on Kurdish EFL teachers in KRI, which also found neutral beliefs, indicating no strong preference for LC or NLC approaches.

Similarly, Ecker's (2022) action research in an eastern Pennsylvania school district used a survey to assess teachers' alignment with LCBs and practices. The results showed that, on average, teachers had a moderate alignment with LCT. However, it is evident that some teachers held a mixture of LCBs and NLCBs, particularly in their beliefs about teaching and learning, where consensus was lacking. Additionally, in Timor's (2011) study, participants displayed a combination of learner-centred and teacher-centred classroom management practices, leaning slightly toward LC. The presence of teachers with a range of beliefs and views about teaching and learning suggests a diversity of approaches and a lack of consensus in different educational contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

From the results received of the analyzed data, the following points are arrived at:

- 1- This study revealed that participants demonstrated familiarity with LCT principles and expressed confidence in articulating them, which challenges the common assumption that the prevalence of traditional teaching methods in KRI's public schools solely results from teachers' unfamiliarity with contemporary approaches like LCT.
- 2- The study also revealed a consensus among teachers with regard to the ten abovementioned aspects as part of their understanding of LCT, emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive educational approach. The participants expressed a strong appreciation for various dimensions of LCT, emphasizing the value of active learning, student-to-student teaching, and prioritizing students' needs over traditional teacher-centred approaches.
- 3- Furthermore, the study revealed that teachers' neutral beliefs toward LCT indicate an opportunity for targeted interventions to shape and enhance their teaching practices. The neutrality of these teachers' beliefs toward LCT, indicates their potential for change and underscores the absence of a clearly defined teaching philosophy among the participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following points are recommended:

- 1- This study underscores the need for a deeper examination of the quality and depth of teachers' awareness of LCT and its implementation in the classroom. Ongoing research efforts should be encouraged to assess the impact of LCT on student learning outcomes and teacher professional growth. Collaborative research endeavours, both locally and

internationally, can provide insights and best practices that further enhance the adoption of LCT.

- 2- Teacher educators should collaborate closely with teachers to prepare them for the adoption of LCT.
- 3- This study recommends offering continued professional development opportunities that go beyond the theoretical and delve into practical applications of LCT principles. These programs should equip teachers with the skills and confidence needed for effective implementation. Consider cultural factors when implementing LCT in different educational contexts.

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پوخته:

ئهم توێژینهوهیه چه ندابەتییه ئامانجی لیکۆلینهوهیه له هۆشیاری و تیروانینهکانی مامۆستایانی EFL سهبارەت به وانهوتنهوه سهنتهری فیرخواز (LCT) رێبازمه که جهخت له سههر رۆلی گرنگی خۆیندکاران دهکاتهوه له وهگرتنی بهرپرسیاریتی زیاتر له فیروبونی خۆیان، لهگهڵ ئهوهی مامۆستایان وهک ئاسانکاری ئهم پرۆسهیه خزمەت دهکهن، که سوود له بنهما تیوریهکانی بونیادگهراپی و بونیادگهراپی کۆمه لایهتی وهردهگرن. پرسیارنامهیهکی ئۆنلاین له توێژینهوهکهدا بۆ مامۆستایانی EFL له چوارچۆیهی بهرپۆههراپهتی پهرومردهی چۆمان – ئیدارهی سهربهخۆی سۆران بهکارهاتوه. کۆی گشتی ۸۳ مامۆستا وهلامی پرسیارنامهکهیان داوتهوه. دۆزینهوهکان دهریدمخهن که بهشداربووان تیگهیشتنیکی تۆکه له بنهماکانی LCT نیشان دهن و بهها بۆ ههر ده لایهنه پۆنانسیلهکهی LCT دانهن. جیی ئاماژهیه، توێژینهوهکه دهریخستوه که بیروباههری بهشداربووان به توندی لهگهڵ بیروباههری فیرخواز-سهنتهری یان نا-فیرخوازا ناگونجیت. ئهم توێژینهوهیه جهخت له سههر پیویستی دهستیوهردانی تایبهتمهند و پهروپیدانی پیشهیی دهکاتهوه بۆ رینماییکردنی مامۆستایان له یهکخستنی

نأمانجدار بنه ماكانی LCT له پراكتيكه كانی وانهوتنه وهیان، به شداریكردن له گوتاری لهسه مینودولژیای فیرکردنی زمانه کاریگهرهكان و گهشه كردنی پیشهیی ماموستایانی. EFL وشهیی سه رهکی: ماموستایانی EFL، وانهوتنه وه به سهنته ری فیرخواز، بیروبوهری فیرخواز، ئاشنابوونی ماموستا

الملخص:

یهدف هذا البحث الكمي إلى التحقيق في وعي وإدراك معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية فيما يتعلق بالتدريس الذي يركز على المتعلم (LCT). ويؤكد النهج على الدور الحيوي للطلاب في تحمل مسؤولية أكبر عن تعليمهم، حيث يعمل المعلمون كميسرين لهذه العملية، مستفيدين من الأسس النظرية للبنائية والبنائية الاجتماعية. تم استخدام استبيان عبر الإنترنت في الدراسة لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية داخل مديرية تشومان للتعليم - إدارة سوران المستقلة. استجاب ما مجموعه ٨٣ معلمًا للاستبيان. تكشف النتائج أن المشاركين يظهرون فهمًا قويًا لمبادئ LCT ويعطون قيمة لجميع الجوانب العشرة المحتملة لـ LCT. والجدير بالذكر أن الدراسة وجدت أن معتقدات المشاركين لا تتوافق بقوة مع المعتقدات التي تركز على المتعلم أو غير المتعلمة. تؤكد هذه الدراسة على الحاجة إلى تدخلات مخصصة وتطوير مهني لتوجيه المعلمين في دمج مبادئ LCT بشكل هادف في ممارساتهم التعليمية، والمساهمة في الخطاب حول منهجيات تدريس اللغة الفعالة والنمو المهني لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. الكلمات المفتاحية: معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، التدريس المرتكز على المتعلم، المعتقدات المرتكزة على المتعلم، معرفة المعلم