UNDERSTANDING LEARNER NEEDS IN ENGLISH TEACHING

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Abstract: This article explores the importance of understanding learner needs in English language teaching. It focuses on how identifying students' linguistic, cognitive, and communicative needs can improve the effectiveness of teaching. The study is based on the communicative-cognitive approach, which combines meaningful communication with mental processes in learning. Drawing on ideas from scholars such as Lev Vygotsky, Stephen Krashen, and Jack C. Richards, the article explains how teaching can be adapted to learners' goals and abilities. Practical classroom strategies and challenges are also discussed. The paper concludes that understanding learner needs helps create more effective, motivating, and student-centered English lessons.

Keywords: learner needs, communicative-cognitive method, English teaching, learner-centered approach, language learning

Introduction

In modern education, teaching English is not only about grammar and vocabulary. It is also about helping students communicate, think, and use language in real situations. Today, there is a strong focus on learner-centered teaching, where students' needs, interests, and abilities are taken into account. The idea of focusing on learners is supported by Lev Vygotsky, who believed that learning happens through interaction and social activity. This means that teachers should create opportunities for students to communicate and learn together. At the same time, Stephen Krashen emphasized the importance of meaningful input, suggesting that students learn better when they understand and relate to the material.

Another important perspective comes from Jack C. Richards, who highlights the role of communicative teaching in developing real-life language skills. These ideas together form the communicative-cognitive approach, which focuses on both communication and thinking processes. Within this approach, understanding learner needs becomes very important. Teachers must know what students want to learn, how they learn best, and what difficulties they face. This article examines how understanding learner needs can improve English teaching and learning.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach based on theoretical analysis and practical classroom experience. First, I reviewed key literature on learner-centered teaching, communicative methods, and cognitive learning theories. This helped to build a clear understanding of how learner needs influence teaching. Second, I analyzed classroom practices where teachers adapted lessons based on student needs. These examples include activities such as group discussions, role-plays, and project-based tasks. Observations focused on student participation, motivation, and communication. Third, simple tools such as questionnaires and informal discussions were considered as ways to understand students better. These methods help teachers collect information about learners' goals, interests, and learning styles. Finally, I compared theoretical ideas with practical examples to show how understanding learner needs can be applied in real classrooms. This combination of theory and practice makes the study more useful for teachers.

Results

The findings show that understanding learner needs has several important benefits in English teaching. First, it helps teachers design more relevant lessons. When teachers know students' goals, they can choose topics and activities that are meaningful. For example, students preparing for exams need academic skills, while others may need speaking skills for everyday communication. Second, it improves student motivation. When learners see that lessons match their interests, they become more active and engaged. This supports Krashen's idea that motivation plays a key role in language learning. Third, it supports different learning styles. Some students learn better through speaking, others through writing or visual materials. By understanding these differences, teachers can use a variety of activities to support all learners. Fourth, it increases participation and confidence. When tasks are suitable for students' levels and needs, they feel more comfortable expressing their ideas. This leads to better communication and learning outcomes. Overall, the results show that understanding learner needs makes teaching more effective and student-centered.

Discussion

The results confirm that understanding learner needs is essential in modern English teaching. The communicative-cognitive approach provides a strong framework for this process because it combines communication with thinking. From a communicative perspective, learners need opportunities to use language in real situations. Activities such as discussions, role-plays, and group work help students practice speaking and listening. These activities also reflect real-life communication, which is important for language development. From a cognitive perspective, learning involves mental processes such as memory, attention, and problem-solving. Teachers should design tasks that encourage thinking, such as problem-solving activities or debates. This helps students understand language more deeply. Understanding learner needs also supports autonomy. When students are involved in the learning process, they take more responsibility for their progress. This idea is supported by learner-centered theories, which emphasize independence and self-directed learning. However, there are also challenges. Teachers may have limited time to collect information about learners. Large classes can make it difficult to address individual needs. In some cases, students may not clearly express their goals or preferences. To overcome these challenges, teachers can use simple methods such as short questionnaires, class discussions, and regular feedback. It is also important to be flexible and adjust teaching methods when needed. In addition, technology can help teachers better understand learner needs. Online tools and platforms can provide information about student performance and preferences. This makes it easier to adapt lessons and provide personalized support.

Overall, understanding learner needs requires continuous effort, but it leads to better teaching and learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Understanding learner needs is a key element of effective English teaching. It allows teachers to design lessons that are relevant, engaging, and meaningful. By combining communicative and cognitive approaches, teachers can support both language use and thinking skills. This study shows that when teachers consider learners' goals, abilities, and preferences, students become more motivated and active. They participate more, communicate better, and develop confidence in using English. Although there are some challenges, such as time limitations and large classes, simple strategies can help teachers address these issues. Continuous observation,

feedback, and adaptation are essential for successful teaching. In conclusion, focusing on learner needs helps create a positive and effective learning environment. It supports not only language development but also critical thinking, independence, and real-life communication skills. Future teaching practices should continue to develop this approach and explore new ways to understand and support learners in diverse classrooms.

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