

# The learner centred classroom

## Introduction

In this teacher development activity, participants explore the way classrooms are managed and the role of the teacher as authority vs authoritarian. They discuss the reason for the persistence of the transmission model of learning in many classrooms and look at some techniques for making the classroom less authoritarian.



This activity draws on materials and ideas presented by Chris Sowton in his presentation 'What Paulo Freire can teach us about the ELT classroom.'

**Webinar time reference:** 13:50 – 17:10

**Time:** 40 – 60 minutes

**Aim:** To encourage teachers to make their classroom a more participatory learning environment.

## Preparation:

- Make copies of the 'Making the classroom less authoritarian' tips from the materials section.

## Procedure

- Point out that Paulo Freire was consistent about the importance of the teacher. Share the quote "Teachers are absolutely necessary, but what is bad, what is not necessary, is authoritarianism rather than authority." (Horton and Freire, 1990: 181)
- Tell the participants that although most teachers believe in facilitative teaching rather than a teacher-centred, transmissive, jug and mug' model of pedagogy, the jug and mug model is still very common.

- Put the participants into groups and ask them to discuss why they think the transmission model of teaching persists.
- Get some feedback from the participants.
- Next, give them the tips for making the classroom less authoritarian.
- Ask them to discuss the suggestions and ask them to decide which ones they like best and what the challenges are with implementing each of these approaches.
- Get some feedback from the participants and ask them to choose one approach that they don't normally use. Ask them to try it for a few weeks and see how it changes their classroom.
- Ask them to report back in the next teacher development session.

### **Materials:**

#### Making the classroom less authoritarian

1. Use more pair and group work.
2. Use a flipped approach to learning and get students to research information about lesson topics before the lesson.
3. Use more projects and Project Based Learning to get students to take more responsibility for their own learning.
4. Try to speak less and get students to speak more.
5. Negotiate with students to decide which topics and parts of the coursebook they most want/need to study.
6. Talk about pedagogy with students and get their opinions about the types of activities and techniques you use. Find out which ones they think work best and share your rationale for using the activities.
7. Ask students to volunteer to research and teach some lessons or parts of lessons
8. Ask students to run revision classes.

## Additional resources

### TBL and PBL: Two learner-centred approaches

- Both TBL and PBL focus primarily on the achievement of realistic objectives, and then on the language that is needed to achieve those objectives. They both treat language as an instrument to complete a given objective, rather than an isolated grammar point or lexical set to learn and practise.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/tbl-and-pbl-two-learner-centred-approaches>

### Project work with teenagers

- Project work is becoming an increasingly popular feature within the ELT classroom. Common projects are class magazines, group wall displays about students' countries and designs for cities of the future. Find out more in this article from Lynn Gallacher.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/project-work-teenagers>

### The learner-centred classroom

- Recorded in 2011, this webinar explores different aspects of learner-centred teaching. What does it mean to be 'learner-centred'? Why is it important? We examine some of the practical issues. What problems might arise? Is learner-centred teaching possible in all contexts?

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/sue-sheerin-learner-centred-classroom>

### Beyond the polarisation of learner-centred and teacher-centred pedagogy

- This webinar explores the reasons behind the failure to implement learner-centred approaches in developing world contexts. Evidence is recounted which questions the effectiveness of learner-centred approaches and favours effective whole-class teaching. Finally, attempts to promote a balanced approach to pedagogy through a teacher education project in Burma are showcased.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/beyond-polarisation-learner-centred-and-teacher-centred-pedagogy>