



Implementing the Learner-Centred Approach in English Language Classrooms: Strategies Used by Secondary School Teachers in Central Uganda

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Abstract: *The study explored the strategies teachers of English use in implementing the learner-centred approach in secondary schools. Using a case study design, qualitative data were collected from 16 teachers of English and 48 learners purposively selected in four well-resourced secondary schools from four districts of central Uganda. Data collection was done by using interviews and focus group discussions. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis facilitated by ATLAS.ti Version 25. Although teachers reported using a range of learner-centred strategies, implementation was often superficial characterized by over-reliance on group work. The study revealed that large class sizes limited teachers' ability to effectively facilitate instruction and assess learners during the teaching and learning of the English language. In light of the above findings, the study recommends that MoES strengthen in-service training programs that guide teachers on how to facilitate learning and conduct continuous assessment in large classes. The Ministry of Education and Sports should collaborate with other education stakeholders to reduce teacher- learner ratios in secondary schools by recruiting more teachers of English language and increasing classroom space.*

Keywords: *Implementing, Learner-centred approach, English language, Strategies, Secondary schools*

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1. Introduction

The contemporary education secondary system in Uganda is undergoing significant transformation, marked by a shift in pedagogy from the teacher-centred approach towards the adoption of the learner-centred approach. According to Dole et al. (2015), early instructional practices were predominantly teacher-centred; thus, teachers experienced themselves as the central authority in the classroom. In the teacher-centred approach, instructors used the lecture method that emphasised memorisation and repetition (Sakata et al., 2022). In English language teaching, non

native speakers of English were taught how to read and write using teacher-centred methods such as grammar translation, audio-lingual and direct methods, which emphasised rote learning (Keo & Lan, 2024). Furthermore, in Uganda, Kyeyune , (2021) asserts that teachers of English language focus on accuracy and control, often valuing correct repetition as a sign of learning. During teaching and learning, teachers controlled the pace of the learning, the content to be taught and learners were viewed as passive recipients of knowledge.

However, Prince (2004) asserts that to achieve educational outcomes beyond information acquisition, students need to be more actively engaged in the learning process. The learner-centred approach is a pedagogical method that emphasises the active engagement and participation of learners in the learning process (Jaiswal, 2019). According to Darsih (2018), teachers play important roles in creating an environment that fosters students' learning, accommodates different learning styles, and motivates students to accept responsibility for learning. In this pedagogical framework, the teacher employs a variety of strategies to support and guide learners in constructing their own knowledge (Milistetd et al., 2019). The adoption of a learner-centred approach redefines the roles of both teachers and learners in the classroom. In the new learner-centred approach, the key roles of the teacher are facilitating the learning process and assessing learning outcomes. Furthermore, according to (Weimer, 2013), learner-centred teaching implies adopting five key changes to instructional practice.

1. Change in the balance of power in the classroom; instruction promotes greater learner participation rather than teacher dominance. Teachers of English use strategies such as pair work, group work, debate, project work, and problem-based tasks to enhance learner participation in the English language classroom.
2. The function of content; rather than transmitting content to the learners, teachers of English develop learners' skills such as communication, critical thinking and problem solving. Teachers employ strategies that enhance learners' communicative skills rather than memorizing grammatical rules.
3. The role of the teacher: the teacher's role changes from a knowledge transmitter to a facilitator. Students engage in discovering and constructing new knowledge, while teachers guide and support them as facilitators.
4. The responsibility for learning, students spend more time engaging in learning activities to generate their own knowledge than taking notes provided by the teacher. Teachers employ strategies such as research tasks, independent reading and peer-assessment.
5. The purpose of assessment is not only to assess for grading but also to improve learners' skills.

1.2 Problem statement

In the contemporary Ugandan secondary educational system, teachers have adopted the learner-centred approach

as a means to provide opportunities for students to engage in the learning process (Kidega et al., 2024 and Namubiru et al., 2024). Studies have reported that even when teachers are aware of a learner-centred approach, the pedagogical approach is not yet effectively implemented in the classroom. Furthermore, despite the emphasis on learner-centred pedagogy, existing studies in Uganda have largely focused on teachers' awareness and perceptions regarding learner-centred pedagogy (Muganga & Ssenkusu, 2019;Kisalama, 2020). Consequently, there is limited evidence on the actual strategies teachers of English employ to implement the learner-centred approach in secondary schools. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the strategies used by English language teachers in implementing the learner-centred approach in secondary schools in central Uganda.

1.3 Purpose of the study

To examine the strategies teachers of English use in implementing the learner-centred approach in secondary schools in Central Uganda

1.4 Research Question

What strategies do teachers of English use to implement the learner-centred approach in secondary schools?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Strategies that teachers of English use in implementing the learner-centred teaching approach

Teaching strategies are broadly understood as structured activities employed by teachers to support learning and enable learners to achieve instructional goals (Anuradha, 2023; Xia, 2020). Within learner-centred pedagogy, these strategies are expected to actively engage learners and promote meaningful participation (Florentina & Syahtia, 2020). According to the English language syllabus, a variety of learner-centred strategies, including pair work, group work, debate, project-based learning, problem-based learning, and inquiry-based learning, have been outlined to promote active participation and meaningful language use (NCDC, 2019). This literature review is guided by Weimer's (2013) learner-centred teaching framework, which conceptualises learner-centred pedagogy through five interrelated instructional shifts

The group work strategy encourages learners to interact as they share knowledge, while the teacher's role, as posited by Weimer's (2013), shifts from knowledge transmitter to facilitator. In the context of English language teaching,

teachers provide learning activities that allow both teachers and learners to use language as a means to generate knowledge (Mercer et al., 2019; Scott et al., 2024). Despite these well-documented benefits, a growing body of evidence indicates that the implementation of group work in classrooms is often superficial. For instance, Hodges (2018) found that teachers often lack the skills to sustain productive group interactions, while Buchs et al. (2017) reported challenges related to group formation, task design, and time management. Similarly, Sartika et al. (2022) reported that although teachers frequently used group work in English language classrooms, large class sizes limited their ability to effectively supervise and support learners. These inconsistencies suggest that teachers' use of group work is often influenced by contextual constraints and limited pedagogical understanding.

More to the above, Think-pair-share (TPS) from Weimer's (2013) perspective, involves engaging learners in how to learn content. Rather than passive knowledge reception, the strategy provides opportunities for all learners to engage in thinking and meaning-making. According to Alsmadi et al. (2023), Think-pair-share enhances engagement by allowing learners to think individually, discuss ideas with peers, and share their responses with the class. However, evidence suggests that the Think Pair Share approach is often hard to implement in overcrowded classrooms since the teacher hardly monitors all the learners. For instance, (Fortes & Tchantchane, 2010) identified large classes, uneven participation, and classroom management difficulties as major barriers. Consequently, these findings may not represent how Think-pair-share (TPS) is effectively used to teach English language in secondary schools in Central Uganda.

Similarly, many recent studies confirm that ICT is central to implementing learner-centred approaches in English language teaching (Bhandari & Bhandari, 2024; Carhill-Poza & Chen, 2020; Saranya & Saranya, 2022). Weimer (2013) explains that as teachers use multimedia resources, students take responsibility for their learning since technology enhances knowledge construction. However, studies indicate that ICT integration remains limited and uneven. Many teachers lack the necessary digital skills and confidence to effectively use technology in their teaching, while infrastructural challenges such as limited access to devices and unreliable internet connectivity further constrain its use. In the Ugandan context, Mbabazi et al. (2022) employed a mixed-methods design to examine ICT integration in selected secondary schools in the Kigezi region. Their findings indicated minimal ICT utilisation in teaching and learning processes, largely due to inadequate infrastructure and limited teacher competencies. Furthermore, although the learner-centred approach emphasises the integration of ICT as a tool for enhancing learners' communicative competence, teachers continue to

rely predominantly on textbooks in classroom practice. For example, (Bhatt, 2025), a qualitative narrative study, explored English language teachers' perceptions and practices of textbook use in Nepali secondary schools. Bhatt's (2025) study findings showed that English language teachers have been entirely dependent on texts and exercises of the prescribed textbooks in their classroom practices. Rathert & Cabaroğlu's (2024) study findings revealed that the teachers' instructional practice was driven by the course book to a large extent, as they followed the guidance given by the course book. This reliance on textbooks suggests a tension between curriculum expectations for learner-centred pedagogy and actual classroom practices, raising questions about teachers' readiness to integrate ICT in English language teaching in secondary schools in Central Uganda.

In addition, studies show that the use of formative assessment is a key strategy in implementing the learner-centred approach in English language classrooms (Ghosh et al., 2025; Militosyan, 2025). Similarly, Weimer (2013) observes assessment as a tool for learning rather than merely assigning grades. However, existing evidence suggests that many teachers struggle to implement formative assessment consistently due to large classes, heavy workloads, and examination pressures. For instance, Nakawuki et al.'s (2025) study aimed at exploring teachers' knowledge of Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) formative practices in selected Mpigi District public secondary schools, Uganda. Their study findings indicated that many teachers' knowledge falls short of required standards, constraining their use of true formative strategies like peer or self-assessment, criteria-referenced feedback, and varied assessment techniques. The broader education system in Uganda remains strongly focused on summative assessment (e.g., UCE/PLE), encouraging teachers to "teach to the test" rather than engage with formative assessment practices that develop competencies. Even where formative assessment policy exists, exam pressures divert teacher attention back to summative methods.

Furthermore, there is substantial evidence pointing to a gap between policy and practice. In Zambia, Donkoh & Amoakwah (2024) report that although learners preferred learner-centred techniques, many teachers were reluctant to adopt them due to contextual challenges such as large class sizes and limited resources. Likewise, Diyessa & Woldearegawie (2025) in Ethiopia found that while students acknowledged the benefits of learner-centred approaches in grammar learning, they still preferred teacher-led explanations due to familiarity and perceived clarity. This suggests that learner-centred practices may not automatically lead to improved outcomes unless learners and teachers are adequately supported during the transition. Teacher beliefs and professional preparedness further

complicate implementation. Studies in Uganda and Tanzania (Mkimbili & Kayima, 2022) show that although teachers may be aware of learner-centred pedagogy, they often lack the pedagogical skills to implement the approach effectively. This study, therefore, aimed to explore the actual strategies English language teachers employ in Ugandan secondary schools.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a multiple case study design using the qualitative approach. The study utilised a multiple case study design, which entails investigating more than one bounded case to generate richer and more comprehensive insights (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While a single case study may offer depth, Cohen et al. (2018) note that multiple case studies offer an opportunity for what he calls a “collective case study,” in which the researcher examines several cases together to explore a particular phenomenon, population, or general situation. The design was selected to explore the strategies teachers of English use in the implementation of a learner-centred approach in secondary schools.

3.2 Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling was used in this study. Ahmad & Wilkins, ((2025) argue that purposive sampling facilitates the selection of information-rich cases from which a researcher can gain substantial insight into key aspects of the study. Consequently, the study was conducted in four well-resourced (4) schools and this ensured a rich exploration of knowledge of strategies of English use in the implementation of the learner-centred approach. This study conducted from two private and two government secondary schools in Central Uganda, particularly in Luwero, Nakaseke, Kampala, and Wakiso districts. In this study, Senior Three and four teachers of English were purposively chosen because they were among the earliest users of the learner-centred approach and had been implementing it at the time of the study. Teachers of English were further selected due to their central role in teaching a compulsory subject which is also a medium of instruction. Furthermore, it was allocated more teaching time on the school timetable compared to other subjects. As a result, they were considered likely to provide more detailed and meaningful insights because of their extended interaction with the learners. In addition, I used students as participants because they experience the learner-centred approach directly and can provide valuable insights into how it is practiced. Thus, purposive sampling enabled the selection of information-rich participants across the different cases, as affirmed by Nyimbili & Nyimbili, (2024) thereby

generating an in-depth understanding of LCA implementation in Central Uganda.

3.3 Sample Size

According to Palinkas et al. (2015), locations and participants are purposefully chosen for qualitative research because they might provide important insights into the phenomenon of interest and the research question. The sample size was sixteen (16) teachers chosen from four secondary schools. Four teachers of English were chosen from each school. The study specifically targeted teachers who had undergone training in the new competency-based curriculum and possessed a minimum of 5 years of teaching experience. Students took part in the study and provided secondary data to triangulate the teachers’ information as regards the implementation of the learner-centred approach. Six learners from each class were selected for a focus group discussion. The data saturation principle guided the sample size based on participants’ availability and desire to participate (Gentles et al., 2015; Subedi, 2021).

3.4 Data Collection

Following approval of the study by the School of Education Higher Degrees Committee of Kyambogo University, an introductory letter was then obtained from the Head of the Graduate School of Kyambogo University to facilitate access to the selected schools. Entry into the research sites was initiated by contacting the District Education officers of the districts where government schools were located as well as head teachers of the selected schools through formal letters and follow-up telephone calls. The purpose of the study was explained, and permission was sought to conduct the research within the schools. Permission was sought from the head teachers, who then introduced the researcher to the deputy head teachers, Heads of English language departments, and ultimately the English teachers, who served as key informants. The interviews were conducted at the school premises, but outside the teaching hours.

3.4 Data Collection Tools

The interview guide and focus group guide were the tools I used to collect data. The interview guide and focus group discussion guide contained questions on the strategies teachers of English used to implement the learner-centred approach. Interviews and focus group discussions were recorded with an audio recorder with participants’ permission to guarantee accuracy in analysis. In addition, field notes were taken during and immediately after each interview to what participants were saying.

3.5 Data Quality Control

In qualitative research, data quality and accuracy are ensured through credibility and trustworthiness. To enhance credibility in this study, triangulation and member checking were employed. Triangulation was applied by using both interviews and focus group discussions as data collection methods to cross-check the findings. According to Ahmed, (2024), such an approach strengthens the credibility of interpretations and minimizes bias that may arise from relying on a single source or method. Member checking was also conducted by sharing interview transcripts with participants to validate the data collected and interpretations made. This process allowed participants to verify the accuracy of the information and provided an opportunity for them to contribute additional insights that may not have emerged during the initial data collection (Yin, 2018). Additionally, prolonged engagement with participants during interviews and focus group discussions enhanced the credibility of both the data and the findings. The interaction between teachers and learners enabled the researcher to gain familiarity with the study context and build trust with participants. This, in turn, facilitated the collection of rich and meaningful data. Trustworthiness was achieved through thick description and auditing to ensure confirmability. Discussions with the auditor regarding data analysis and research procedures offered alternative viewpoints, thereby enhancing objectivity and reinforcing the credibility of the findings (Ahmed, 2024).

3.6 Data Analysis

Field notes and audio recordings were used to collect data for the project. Before the results being entered into ATLAS.ti for analysis, the recordings were meticulously transcribed, anonymised, and checked for accuracy. The data were analysed in accordance with the framework for thematic analysis proposed by Braun & Clarke (2012) in order to find, explore, and interpret recurrent themes and patterns. To guarantee clarity and traceability, transcripts were methodically coded in ATLAS.ti, with each code being explicitly connected to the research questions. The codes were derived from the research questions and social constructivist theory, providing a guided framework for interpretation. Key themes were identified by refining related codes into more general categories. These themes were carefully examined, clarified, and linked to the goals and research questions of the study. Iterative coding, classification, and theme development were all part of the process. To create thematic discoveries that are meaningful and cohesive, codes were updated, combined, and improved. Direct quotes from the interviews were used to illustrate the findings to maintain the participants' genuine voices.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to key ethical principles in research, including anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, participant benefits, and research independence. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by assigning pseudonyms to participants and research sites to protect their identities. All collected data were securely stored in files with passwords, accessible only to the researcher, and were used strictly for research purposes. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before interviews and observations, both verbally and in writing, to ensure voluntary participation. Participants were also informed about the nature and purpose of the study, and their right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Additionally, permission was sought before audio-recording interviews, including during the interview process. Regarding participant benefits, the researcher committed to sharing the study findings or any related publications with participants, so that they could benefit from the outcomes of the research. This also helped participants appreciate their contribution to the study and recognise their role in the implementation of the learner-centred approach. In addition, the study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines provided by the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST).

4. Results and Discussion

The study sought to determine the teaching experience of the English language teachers who participated in the research. The respondents' years of teaching experience ranged from eight to twenty years. The duration of one's teaching experience can significantly influence their understanding and application of learner-centred teaching techniques. In addition, the participants were asked whether they had received training in implementing the learner-centred approach. All the teachers confirmed that they had undergone such training and were continuing to receive capacity-building sessions in their respective schools. Consequently, it was expected that they would demonstrate proficiency in applying the learner-centred teaching approach.

4.1 Group Discussions

The study found that Group work was a widely utilised strategy of implementing the learner-centred approach in English language teaching. Respondents explained that using strategies such as think-pair-share, pair work, or group discussions provided an opportunity for learners to share ideas among themselves or between the teacher and learners. Most of the teachers affirmed that group discussions provided a platform for learners to generate

knowledge and complete a specific activity through sharing experiences. Teacher 1 reported, “Learners discuss these tasks in pairs or groups; I give them group work for discussion mainly use the discussion method; students come and present, they raise their points, we agree, and then at the end of the day, I give them my notes to copy.”

This finding reveals that teachers tend to equate learner-centred pedagogy primarily with group work. This finding aligns with existing studies (DeVries et al., 2020; Namusoke & Rukundo, 2022) which identify group work as a central feature of a learner-centred approach. In the present study, teachers used the group work strategy to allow learners to generate knowledge and complete a specific activity through sharing experiences in English language teaching. DeVries et al. (2020) explain that the strategy of using group discussions in the implementation of the learner-centred approach allows students to interact and share different perspectives on a given task during the learning of the English language. Despite the fact that literature indicates that group work is widely used, teachers experienced challenges in implementing group work activities effectively. Teachers equated group work with students sitting together to discuss and do the assigned tasks. Similarly, Buchs et al. (2017) reported that teachers themselves found difficulties organising groups, composing balanced teams, and fitting group work into lesson sequences. Furthermore, Gedamu & Shewangezaw, (2020) study reported that from the students’ perspective, the main challenges were inadequate teacher support and follow-up and equal reward for unequal contribution by members to group work. This aligns with the present study findings, which reveal that teachers didn’t support them during group discussions. As a result, teachers still explain and give notes to learners, with group work used superficially. Similarly, Sartika et al. (2022) assert that although group work is commonly used, it is often not effectively supervised due to large class sizes. While the literature emphasises the role of strategies such as group work in promoting collaboration, interaction, and knowledge construction (Mercer et al., 2019; Scott et al., 2024), the present study shows that these outcomes are not automatically achieved. Instead, learners still depend on teachers’ explanations during English language lessons. From Weimer’s perspective, the findings suggest that although teachers attempt to incorporate group discussions in the English language classroom, they do not fully facilitate the collaborative processes necessary for knowledge co-construction. As a result, classroom practices remained partially teacher-directed, limiting opportunities for deep learning. This implies that there is limited teacher facilitation during group tasks, thus a partial understanding of guided learning.

4.2 Think Pair Share

Additionally, teachers reported using think-pair-share and pair work while teaching English to foster collaboration in the classroom. Educators explained that with pair-work, most learners were engaged in the discussion of a given topic, and they got feedback immediately. Teacher 2 reported, “I also use pair work frequently to make quiet learners talk; it allows every learner to interact and share personal experiences” This was corroborated in the focus group discussion. One of the learners explained, “Our teacher used pair work when we studied the market.” “One learner acted as a seller and another as a buyer” (FGD 2)

However, some teachers experienced difficulty in monitoring learners when they assigned them tasks to do research. Teacher 3 reported, “Since the classes are large, it becomes hard for teachers to guide learners and ascertain who has taken the right notes from the library. “Some learners, since they work in groups, completely don’t do anything for research because they know it’s group work. In one of the focus group discussions, a student reported the same challenge: ‘If you have group work, some students may refuse to do the work and depend on one active student to do the work since the group gets equal marks.(FGD 3)

This finding reveals that teachers use think-pair-share (TPS) to promote learner participation and classroom interaction. Learners are often given opportunities to think individually, discuss ideas in pairs, and share responses with the wider class. This aligns with (Bastian & Rahayu, (2023) study, which identifies TPS as an effective strategy for enhancing interaction and dialogic learning. Challenges such as limited time and uneven participation, identified in this study, are consistent with findings by Ramadhani et al., (2025) and Mardlatillah et al., 2025). These findings suggest that while teachers use the think-pair-share (TPS) approach as a learner-centred strategy, their understanding of how to structure and sustain meaningful interaction remains limited, especially in large classes. These findings suggest that though teachers may have the pedagogical skills required to manage and optimise pair-based activities, they find it hard to engage learners in Think-pair-discussions due to large classes.

4.3 Use of ICT

Similarly, teachers reported using a variety of materials to support learners’ understanding and practice of English. Some teachers incorporated authentic materials such as videos and real-life dialogues to expose learners to natural English usage. Teacher 4 said,

“We are fortunate to have computers and projectors in every classroom, so I can integrate ICT into our lessons; I also use a projector in class to display material I want learners to observe. This corroborated with the learners’ focus group discussion when one of the learners said, “The smart television in our class, we use it to research from different online sources, so that we can understand various topics and even interact with very good materials that we would not be able to access physically in the library.” (FGD 4)

This finding reveals that teachers in this study used digital tools such as multimedia resources to support teaching. This finding is consistent with studies that highlight the potential of ICT to enhance learner engagement, interaction, and access to learning resources (Andrew, 2025 & Bhandari & Bhandari, 2024). Additionally, the use of ICT to support collaborative and interactive learning aligns with Weimer’s (2013) principles, which emphasise creating classroom environments that are conducive to active student involvement. Despite the fact that they used ICT resources in teaching and learning, teachers reported that they used more textbooks than computers. Teacher 5 reported,

“For us in the English language, we use more of the textbooks to follow the learning activities and the stories for reading comprehension; another challenge some teachers reported was the lack of knowledge of the use of smart televisions or projectors for teaching English. Teacher 6 explained, “Another thing, I am not well versed with computer skills, but the good thing my learners guide me. Right now, when I go to class, I don’t do anything or touch the laptop. The students do it, connect the gadgets very fast, and they always help us with connectivity.”

Many teachers reported that they lacked the necessary digital skills and confidence to effectively use technology in their teaching, while infrastructural challenges such as limited access to devices and unreliable internet connectivity further constrain its use. These findings are consistent with Mbabazi et al. (2022) and Ndibalema & Mrosso (2024), who report that inadequate infrastructure and limited teacher competence hinder ICT integration. This suggests that ICT is not yet being fully utilized to support learner-centred instruction. The study also found that teachers continue to rely heavily on textbooks as the primary instructional resource. Lessons are often structured around textbook content, with limited adaptation to learners’ needs or incorporation of interactive strategies. This finding aligns with (Bhatt, 2025b; Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2024), who report that those teachers’ practices are largely driven by prescribed course books. This reliance on textbooks indicates a tension that teachers may lack the confidence or support needed to move beyond traditional

teaching methods. These findings highlight the need to train teachers and equip them with the necessary digital skills and resources to effectively use technology in the teaching of English language.

4.3 Use of Formative Assessment

Teachers reported that they conducted ongoing assessments through classroom observations and learning activities to monitor learner progress. Teacher 7 explained, “During presentations, I award marks based on their understanding and delivery of the topic; “Even when we are assessing competencies, it’s difficult to assess learners on one topic, yet this is not fair judgment, but then where is the time?”. This was confirmed by one of the students in the Focus group discussion, who said,

“They use continuous assessment, but it depends on the levels; for example, level one of reading is receiving- You have to read out loud-, you listen to videos, listen to each other as you are reading articles- they can tell you to write an article about something, and you get assessed. We are given activities of integration at the end of the topic and end-of-cycle assessments at the end of the year.”(FGD 7)

However, findings from the learners revealed notable tensions in the use of continuous assessment, as one stated, “I feel the learner-centred approach is meant to be easier, to build our self-esteem, confidence, and research skills. But when it comes to assessment, we are disappointed and feel that we cannot manage on our own. Things are not clear.” (FGD 7)

Similarly, participants reported difficulties in accessing clear guidance from UNEB on how to assess learners under the new competency-based curriculum, which placed pressure on both teachers and learners. Teacher 8 reported, “UNEB doesn’t want classroom teachers to know what they are assessing and how learners should respond, yet we are the ones teaching the learners. This takes to testing knowledge, not abilities.”

This challenge corroborated with information from learners in one of the focus group discussions, one learner explained,

“We are working hard and reading every available content related to the topics we covered, but once we don’t know what is expected of us from the national examination body for every subject, we lose hope. I can’t even blame our teachers, because they also don’t know what is happening in UNEB. They may tell you what they know, yet UNEB expects something else for those questions. The curriculum is both new to us learners and the teachers, too”(FGD 2)

The study found that formative assessment is often limited to surface-level practices and is not systematically integrated into the teaching process. This finding corroborates Jiang’s (2014) study, which reported that some teachers continued to view assessment primarily as a

summative activity rather than as a tool for learning. Ghafar et al. (2025) identified those formative assessments, such as classroom observation, interactive discussions, quizzes, and short tests. In the present study, teachers used formative assessment strategies such as classroom observation of oral presentations and written tasks to monitor learners' progress. These activities enabled teachers to assess learners' competencies continuously rather than relying solely on summative examinations. Although Taye's (2025) study highlights the benefits of formative assessment in enhancing learning outcomes, the present study indicates that teachers rarely use feedback, peer assessment, or self-assessment due to the challenge of large classes. Similarly, a review by Davis & Gbormittah (2023) found that overcrowded classes hinder teachers' ability to implement formative assessment and provide individualized feedback. Without clear assessment guidelines and manageable class sizes, formative assessment becomes difficult to implement effectively. On the whole, despite the fact that formative assessment is conducted, there exists a gap between the intended learner-centered assessment practices and their actual implementation. Without manageable class sizes, formative assessment becomes difficult to implement effectively. This suggests the need for the school administration and Ministry of Education to construct more classrooms for teachers to manage smaller classes and effectively assess learners.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study focused on strategies teachers use in implementing the learner-centred approach. Findings reveal that teachers are attempting to employ a wide range of learner-centred instructional strategies, which promote collaboration and real-life application of language skills. However, the study demonstrates that while teachers employ a range of strategies associated with the learner-centred approach, their implementation is often superficial and constrained by both pedagogical and contextual challenges. The implementation of the learner-centred approach is hampered by inadequate guidance on continuous assessment of learner activities, unequal participation among learners, overreliance on group work and constant reversion to teacher-centred methods to ensure content coverage. Coupled to the aforementioned is the fact that there were still traces of the teacher-centred pedagogical practices in lesson delivery

5.2 Recommendations

This study suggests the following recommendations for policy and practice in the subsequent phases of

implementing the LCA concerning the strategies used for effective English language teaching in secondary schools.

Policy level

1. MoES should organize in-service training programs with a focus on how to manage large classes, facilitate interaction, and assess learners formatively.
2. The Directorate of Education standards should strengthen the inspectorate to ensure teacher compliance with the stipulated learner-centered approach
3. Policy makers in education provide support supervision to teachers to ensure that they use digital tools to promote interactive learning.

School Level

School administration should provide support supervision to teachers to help them contextualize strategies that suit large class sizes and limited resources.

Teacher level

1. Teachers should consistently integrate formative assessment practices into their teaching. This includes the use of feedback, peer assessment, self-assessment, and questioning techniques that promote active learning and continuous learner development.
2. Teachers should develop pedagogical skills in managing learner-centred activities, including guided participation and providing feedback

5.3 Further Research

This research was exploring the strategies used in the implementation of the learner-centred approach in English language teaching. Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several areas require further investigation to deepen the understanding of the implementation of the learner-centred approach (LCA) in English language teaching. There is a need to conduct comparative studies between under-resourced and urban secondary schools to compare findings with those from well-resourced schools. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how contextual factors influence teachers' understanding and implementation of the learner-centred approach across different school settings in Uganda. Additionally, future research should include classroom observation studies to obtain first-hand data on actual teacher practices of implementing the learner-centred approach. Further studies should examine learner-centred outcomes associated with learner-centred approach

strategies. There is a need for quantitative or mixed-methods studies to complement the qualitative insights of this research

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