

ANTHROPOCENTRIC TEACHING AS A FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING STUDENT MOTIVATION IN ENGLISH MEDIUM INSTRUCTION CONTEXTS

Ilgor Asrorov

International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan

i.asrorov@iiau.uz

ABSTRACT

The expansion of English Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher education has intensified the need for pedagogical approaches that sustain student motivation in linguistically demanding environments. While existing research highlights the challenges of EMI, less attention has been paid to human-centered teaching frameworks that prioritize learners' psychological and cognitive needs. This paper proposes anthropocentric teaching as a conceptual framework for enhancing student motivation in EMI contexts. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory and contemporary research in applied linguistics, the study develops a model that integrates autonomy, competence, and relatedness with learner-centered instructional practices. The paper argues that anthropocentric teaching can mitigate the motivational challenges associated with EMI by aligning pedagogy with students' individual needs, experiences, and identities. The framework is contextualized within Uzbek higher education and offers practical implications for teaching and curriculum design.

Keywords: *anthropocentric teaching, English Medium Instruction, motivation, higher education, learner-centered pedagogy*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid global expansion of English Medium Instruction (EMI) has reshaped higher education systems, particularly in non-English-speaking contexts. Countries such as Uzbekistan have embraced EMI as part of broader efforts to internationalize their universities and improve graduates' global competitiveness. Despite these ambitions, the implementation of EMI has revealed significant pedagogical challenges, especially in relation to student motivation. Students learning through a foreign language often experience cognitive overload, reduced confidence, and limited participation. These issues are not merely linguistic but deeply psychological, as they affect learners' sense of identity, agency, and belonging within the classroom. Traditional teacher-centered approaches frequently fail to address these complexities, resulting in disengagement and surface-level learning. In response, there is a growing

need for pedagogical frameworks that place the learner at the center of the educational process. Anthropocentric teaching, which emphasizes human needs, experiences, and individuality, offers a promising approach to addressing motivational challenges in EMI contexts. However, this concept remains under-theorized in applied linguistics and EMI research.

This paper aims to conceptualize anthropocentric teaching as a framework for enhancing student motivation in EMI classrooms. It integrates insights from motivational psychology, language education, and learner-centered pedagogy to propose a model that can be applied in higher education contexts, particularly in Uzbekistan.

Anthropocentric teaching can be broadly understood as an educational approach that prioritizes the human dimension of learning. Unlike traditional models that focus primarily on content delivery, anthropocentric teaching emphasizes the learner's psychological, emotional, and cognitive needs. It recognizes that effective learning occurs when students feel valued, understood, and actively involved in the learning process. This approach aligns with broader shifts toward learner-centered education, which advocate for active participation, personalization, and meaningful interaction (Asrorov, 2025). However, anthropocentric teaching extends beyond methodology by explicitly foregrounding the human experience as the core of pedagogy.

In EMI contexts, where students often face linguistic and cultural challenges, such an approach becomes particularly relevant. By acknowledging students' struggles and adapting instruction accordingly, teachers can create more inclusive and motivating learning environments (Macaro, 2018). The concept of motivation is central to understanding learning in EMI contexts. Among the various theoretical perspectives, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, provides a comprehensive framework. SDT posits that motivation is driven by the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When these needs are satisfied, learners are more likely to exhibit intrinsic motivation, persistence, and engagement. In EMI settings, these needs are often compromised. Students may feel a lack of autonomy due to dependence on teacher explanations, reduced competence due to language barriers, and limited relatedness if interaction is constrained. Therefore, pedagogical approaches that restore these dimensions are essential.

Research on EMI has largely focused on linguistic outcomes and policy implementation, often overlooking the human dimension of learning (Macaro, 2018). However, recent studies suggest that emotional and psychological factors play a critical role in student success. Learners in EMI classrooms frequently experience

anxiety, frustration, and self-doubt. These emotions can hinder participation and reduce motivation (Dörnyei, 2001). At the same time, students bring diverse backgrounds, identities, and expectations to the classroom, which influence how they engage with EMI. Anthropocentric teaching addresses these issues by recognizing learners as individuals rather than passive recipients of knowledge. It emphasizes empathy, adaptability, and responsiveness in teaching practices (Asrorov, 2025).

This paper proposes a conceptual model that integrates anthropocentric teaching principles with the three components of Self-Determination Theory. The framework positions the learner at the center of the educational process and identifies key pedagogical strategies that support motivation. In an anthropocentric framework, autonomy is fostered by giving students greater control over their learning. This can be achieved through flexible learning pathways, choice of topics, and opportunities for self-directed study (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In EMI contexts, personalization is particularly important because students have varying levels of language proficiency (Macaro, 2018). Allowing students to engage with content at their own pace can reduce frustration and increase motivation. Competence is developed when students feel capable of understanding and mastering academic content. In EMI classrooms, this requires careful scaffolding, including the use of visual aids, simplified language, and structured tasks (Dörnyei, 2001). Anthropocentric teaching emphasizes the importance of aligning instructional difficulty with students' abilities. By providing appropriate support, teachers can help students build confidence and sustain motivation. Relatedness refers to the sense of connection and belonging within the learning environment (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In EMI contexts, this can be challenging due to language barriers. Anthropocentric teaching promotes interaction through collaborative activities, peer support, and open communication. Creating a supportive classroom atmosphere encourages students to participate and engage more actively (Asrorov, 2025). The relevance of anthropocentric teaching is particularly evident in Uzbekistan, where EMI is expanding rapidly (Macaro, 2018). Many students enter EMI programs with limited English proficiency, making it difficult for them to fully engage with academic content. In such contexts, traditional lecture-based approaches are often ineffective. Students may become passive listeners, relying heavily on memorization rather than understanding. This not only limits learning outcomes but also reduces motivation. Anthropocentric teaching offers an alternative by prioritizing student needs and experiences. For example, incorporating interactive activities, using bilingual explanations when necessary, and providing emotional support can significantly improve student engagement (Asrorov, 2025). Moreover, the integration of digital

technologies can complement anthropocentric teaching by enabling personalized and flexible learning (Azimova, 2023; Zoirova, 2024; Asrorov, 2025). However, technology should be used as a tool rather than a substitute for human-centered pedagogy.

The proposed framework has several implications for teaching practice. First, teachers should adopt a more flexible and responsive approach to instruction, adapting their methods to students' needs. This may involve varying teaching strategies, incorporate interactive elements, and provide additional support where necessary (Dörnyei, 2001). Second, teacher training programs should emphasize the importance of motivation and human-centered teaching. Many instructors in EMI contexts are subject specialists rather than trained language teachers, which can limit their ability to address students' needs effectively. Third, curriculum design should reflect the principles of anthropocentric teaching by allowing for flexibility, interaction, and student choice. This requires a shift away from rigid, content-driven models toward more dynamic and inclusive approaches (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The conceptualization of anthropocentric teaching as a framework for EMI contributes to ongoing debates in applied linguistics and higher education. By integrating motivational theory with learner-centered pedagogy, the framework offers a holistic approach to addressing the challenges of EMI (Macaro, 2018; Asrorov, 2025).

One of the key strengths of this approach is its adaptability. Anthropocentric teaching can be applied across different disciplines and educational contexts, making it a versatile tool for educators. At the same time, its emphasis on human needs ensures that learning remains meaningful and engaging (Asrorov, 2025). However, implementing this framework requires institutional support. Teachers need training, resources, and time to develop and apply anthropocentric practices. Without such support, the potential benefits of this approach may not be fully realized.

CONCLUSION

This paper has proposed anthropocentric teaching as a conceptual framework for enhancing student motivation in EMI contexts. By prioritizing autonomy, competence, and relatedness, the framework addresses the psychological and cognitive challenges faced by students in English-medium learning environments. In the context of Uzbek higher education, where EMI is still evolving, anthropocentric teaching offers a valuable pathway toward more effective and inclusive education. Future research should empirically test this framework and explore its impact on learning outcomes.

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