
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Emerging Strategies in Imbibing Learner-Centered Education in the 21st Century Language Classrooms: A Decade Scoping Review in Southeast Asia

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| ABSTRACT

Amidst rapid educational internationalization and significant learner diversity in Southeast Asia, effective language teaching necessitates pedagogical approaches beyond traditional didactic methods. Learner-centered education (LCE) has emerged as a prominent paradigm, yet its practical implementation within the region requires systematic examination. This scoping review aimed to identify and characterize the emerging learner-centered teaching strategies utilized by language educators in 21st-century Southeast Asian classrooms over the past decade (2013-2023). Following the PRISMA-ScR guidelines, a systematic search across four major databases (ERIC, ScienceDirect, Asian Citation Index, JSTOR) yielded 38 peer-reviewed empirical studies meeting the inclusion criteria. Thematic analysis of these studies revealed five core characteristics defining contemporary LCE practices in this context: (1) strategic utilization of technology to enhance resources and foster autonomy; (2) cultivation of an empathetic learning environment emphasizing positive teacher-student relationships and support; (3) implementation of interactive group learning activities, particularly cooperative learning; (4) promotion of student self-regulated learning skills and strategies; and (5) application of differentiated learning principles to cater to individual student needs. Although implementation consistency varies, these findings highlight a clear trend toward more student-active pedagogical orientations. This synthesis provides valuable insights into the evolving landscape of language education in Southeast Asia, offering a foundation for informing pedagogical innovation, targeted teacher professional development, and future research focused on optimizing LCE effectiveness within the region's diverse educational settings.

| KEYWORDS

learner-centered teaching strategies, learner-centered, student-centered, child-centered, autonomous, learning autonomy, emerging learner-centered strategies, 21st Century language classes, systematic review related literature

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1. Introduction

The imperative to equip learners with robust language competencies within increasingly diverse and globalized contexts presents significant pedagogical challenges for 21st-century education systems. Traditional, teacher-centered modes of instruction, while historically prevalent, are often critiqued for potentially fostering passivity and failing to address individual learners' adequate needs or cultivate higher-order thinking skills essential for contemporary demands. In response, learner-centered education (LCE), an approach prioritizing student agency, active engagement, and individualized learning pathways, has gained prominence globally as a pedagogical ideal and policy directive. Rooted in constructivist principles, LCE shifts the focus from passive knowledge

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transmission to active knowledge construction, positioning educators as facilitators rather than primary information sources. However, translating LCE principles into effective classroom practice remains complex and context-dependent (Bhardwaj et al., 2025; Pérez-Jorge et al., 2024).

Southeast Asia, a region characterized by remarkable linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity, provides a compelling context for examining the implementation of LCE in language education. Over the past decade, nations across the region have increasingly incorporated LCE into educational reforms, driven by globalization, the demands of the knowledge economy, and the need to enhance academic quality and equity. Yet, empirical evidence suggests a persistent gap between policy aspirations and classroom realities. Understanding the strategies adopted, their characteristics, and the contextual factors influencing their implementation is crucial for optimizing language teaching and learning outcomes in this dynamic region. Despite the growing body of research, significant research gaps persist. Theoretically, there is a need to critically examine the applicability and potential adaptation of Western-derived LCE models within diverse Southeast Asian sociocultural contexts. Empirically, research often lacks comparative analyses across different national contexts within the region, and investigations into the effectiveness of specific LCE strategies for developing particular language competencies remain limited. Challenges related to large class sizes, resource constraints, assessment pressures, and teacher preparedness often impede the effective implementation of LCE, necessitating context-specific solutions and support mechanisms (Al-Emran et al., 2024).

This scoping review addresses these gaps by systematically mapping the peer-reviewed empirical literature from 2013 to 2023 to identify and characterize the emerging learner-centered teaching strategies utilized by language teachers in 21st-century classrooms across Southeast Asia. By synthesizing research evidence from this specific geopolitical region over the past decade, this review aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the current landscape of LCE implementation, identify commonalities and variations in practice, and highlight areas requiring further investigation. Ultimately, this work seeks to inform pedagogical practices, teacher education programs, and policy development to foster more effective and equitable language learning experiences for diverse Southeast Asian learners in the contemporary era. The central research question guiding this review is: What are the key characteristics of the emerging learner-centered teaching strategies utilized by Southeast Asian teachers in 21st-century language classes?

2. Literature Review

The transition toward LCE represents a significant pedagogical shift globally, driven by evolving understandings of learning processes and the changing demands placed upon educational systems in the 21st Century. This review synthesizes extant literature pertinent to LCE, focusing on its conceptualization, application in language teaching, perceived benefits and challenges, and specific manifestations within the Southeast Asian context.

2.1 Conceptualizing Learner-Centered Education in the 21st Century

Learner-centered education fundamentally repositions the student from a passive recipient to an active agent in the learning process. While variously defined, core tenets typically include affording learners opportunities for choice, control, and collaboration, tailoring instruction to individual needs and paces, and fostering intrinsic motivation and self-regulation. This paradigm contrasts sharply with traditional teacher-centered models, where the instructor dictates content delivery and learning pace. The rise of LCE aligns with constructivist learning theories, emphasizing knowledge construction through active engagement and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978), and resonates with the needs of contemporary learners, particularly Generation Z, who often seek more interactive, technology-mediated, and collaborative learning experiences (Kozinsky, 2017). Theoretical frameworks like Self-Determination Theory (SDT) further illuminate the motivational underpinnings of LCE, highlighting the importance of satisfying learners' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness to foster engagement and persistence (Davis, 2024; Ryan & Deci, 2020). However, the conceptualization and operationalization of LCE are not monolithic and remain subject to debate and contextual interpretation (Dung & Cuong, 2021).

2.2 Learner-Centered Approaches in Language Education

Within language education, LCE principles translate into approaches that emphasize meaningful communication, authentic tasks, and learner autonomy. Proponents argue that involving learners actively in communicative tasks enhances language acquisition, vocabulary development, and fluency more effectively than traditional grammar-focused instruction (Dobinson, 2001; Johnson, 2022). Strategies frequently associated with LCE in language classrooms include task-based learning, project-based learning, cooperative and collaborative learning structures (Badjadi, 2020), inquiry-based approaches, and the integration of technology to

provide personalized resources and facilitate interaction (Fang & Abdulla, 2023; Lai & Reinders, 2025?). The teacher's role shifts significantly towards that of a facilitator, guide, and resource provider responsible for designing supportive learning environments, offering constructive feedback, and scaffolding student learning (Darsih, 2018).

2.3 Benefits and Challenges of LCE Implementation

Research suggests numerous potential benefits associated with LCE, including increased student motivation, engagement, critical thinking skills, academic achievement, and overall satisfaction with the learning experience (Benlahcene et al., 2020; Gluhkhova & Sorokina, 2018; Krishnan, 2015; Zain et al., 2012). Furthermore, fostering self-regulated learning skills through LCE is increasingly crucial for lifelong learning, particularly in online or blended environments (Broadbent et al., 2023; Lai & Reinders, 2025). Meta-analytic evidence also supports the effectiveness of specific LCE-aligned approaches, such as Differentiated Instruction, in improving student outcomes across various contexts (Retnawati et al., 2023). Despite these potential benefits, the implementation of LCE faces considerable challenges. Resistance may arise from students accustomed to traditional methods (Wright, 2011) or teachers grappling with changes to their established roles and practices (Pérez-Jorge et al., 2024). Practical constraints such as large class sizes, lack of resources, inflexible curricula, standardized assessment pressures, and insufficient teacher training can impede effective LCE implementation (Al-Emran et al., 2024; Newman & Gentile, 2020).

2.4 The LCE Landscape in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asian nations have increasingly embraced LCE rhetoric in educational policy documents and reform initiatives (Del Valle, 2021; Lim et al., 2023). Governments have launched projects to improve language proficiency and incorporate student-centered pedagogies, often linked to broader goals of enhancing national competitiveness and promoting student well-being). However, translating these policies into consistent classroom practice appears highly variable across the region. Studies indicate that traditional, teacher-dominated approaches often persist, particularly in specific national contexts or educational levels (Newman & Gentile, 2020). While some educators actively implement innovative strategies, others may lack the necessary training, resources, or institutional support to deviate significantly from established norms. The unique sociocultural contexts within each Southeast Asian nation likely mediate the interpretation and enactment of LCE principles, presenting opportunities and challenges for pedagogical innovation. Synthesizing the specific characteristics of strategies currently emerging in practice across this diverse region is essential for understanding learner-centered language education's current state and future trajectory in Southeast Asia.

3. Method

3.1 Methodology

This study employed a scoping review methodology to map the key characteristics of emerging learner-centered teaching strategies utilized by Southeast Asian teachers in 21st-century language classes over the last decade (2013-2023). The review adhered to the methodological framework outlined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and further refined by Levac et al. (2010), and followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) guidelines (Tricco et al., 2018). The primary research question guiding this review was: What are the key characteristics of the emerging learner-centered teaching strategies utilized by Southeast Asian teachers in 21st-century language classes?

3.2 Information Sources and Search Strategy

A comprehensive search was conducted across four electronic databases deemed relevant to education and regional studies: Educational Resource Information Centre (ERIC), ScienceDirect, Asian Citation Index, and JSTOR. The search strategy was developed iteratively, and keywords related to the core concepts were combined using Boolean operators (AND/OR). Key search terms included variations and combinations of: ("learner-centered teaching" OR "student-centered teaching" OR "learner-centered approach" OR "student-centered approach" OR "learner autonomy" OR "autonomous learning") AND ("language teaching" OR "language classroom" OR "language education" OR "EFL" OR "ESL") AND ("21st century") AND ("Southeast Asia" OR specific country names within the region). Searches were limited to the publication dates between 2013 and 2023. The final search across all databases was conducted in August 2024.

3.3 Selection Criteria and Sources of Evidence

The study selection process involved two main stages, conducted independently by three reviewers. Disagreements among the reviewers were resolved through discussion or consultation with a fourth reviewer. First, titles and abstracts of all retrieved records were screened against the eligibility criteria. Studies clearly not meeting the criteria were excluded. Second, the full texts of potentially relevant articles were retrieved and assessed for eligibility based on a thorough reading against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Reasons for excluding full-text articles were documented. This systematic process aimed to ensure transparency and minimize selection bias. The initial search yielded 157 records, from which 38 studies were ultimately included in the review after the screening process. The researchers were strictly bound by these given criteria (Table 1). The search results generated 38 studies for the review out of 157.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

PARAMETERS	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Types of Research	peer-reviewed journals, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method research	non-peer-reviewed journals, columns, and literary papers
Results of the Study	research articles that dealt with learner-centered strategies in 21st-century language classrooms	research articles with no relation to learner-centered strategies in 21st-century language classrooms
Language	research articles that were written in English	research articles that were not written in English
Setting or Context	English teachers in both private and public schools in Southeast Asian countries	Non-English teachers in both private and public schools, Non-Southeast Asian countries
Database	articles indexed from Educational Resource Information Centre (ERIC), ScienceDirect, Asian Citation Index, JSTOR	Databases that were not within the reach of the researcher.
Timeframe	research articles or scientific papers published between the years 2013 and 2023	research articles or scientific papers not published between the years 2013 and 2023
Keywords	'learner-centered teaching strategies,' 'learner-centered,' 'student-centered,' 'child-centered,' autonomous, learning autonomous, 'emerging strategies,' '21st Century language classes' in the title and/or abstract	

3.4 Synthesis of Results

A thematic analysis approach was employed to synthesize the extracted data and identify the key characteristics of emerging learner-centered teaching strategies. Data on specific strategies, teacher roles, student activities, classroom environments, and underlying principles reported across the included studies were coded and categorized. Through an iterative process of reviewing codes, identifying patterns, and grouping similar concepts, dominant themes representing the core characteristics emerged. These themes were then refined and defined based on the evidence from the included literature. This process allowed for identifying the five key attributes in the results section.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

This scoping review utilized publicly available published literature, so institutional ethics approval was not required. However, ethical considerations pertinent to conducting and reporting reviews were upheld (Newman & Gough, 2020). Care was taken to accurately represent the findings and interpretations of the original authors without introducing reviewer bias. By adhering to the systematic PRISMA-ScR methodology, efforts were made to minimize selection and reporting biases. All included sources are appropriately cited using APA 7th edition style, ensuring academic integrity and proper attribution.

4. Findings

The studies selected and examined through the researchers' inclusion criteria identified key characteristics of emerging learner-centered teaching strategies utilized by Southeast Asian teachers in 21st-century language classes. Five primary characteristics emerged: Utilization of Technology, Empathic Learning Environment, Interactive Group Learning, Self-Regulated Learning, and Differentiated Learning.

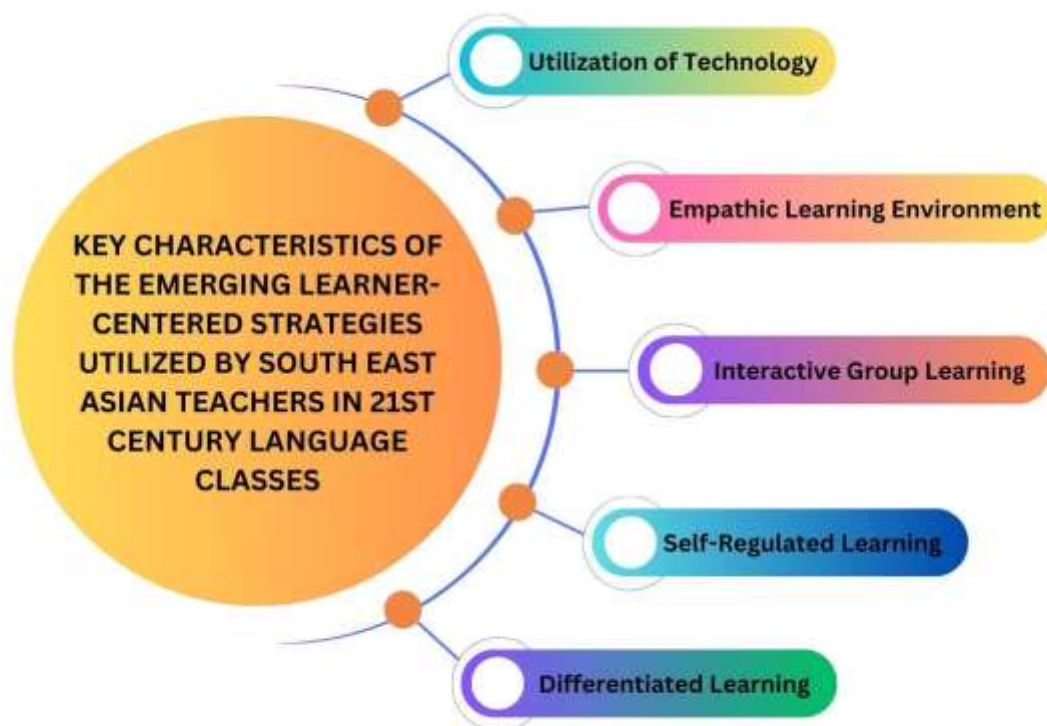


Figure 1. Illustration of the Proposed Key Characteristics of the Emerging Learner-centered Teaching Strategies Utilized by Southeast Asian Teachers in 21st-century Language Classes.

4.1 Utilization of Technology

A notable feature observed in various research is the growing incorporation and application of technology to enhance learner-centered language teaching. Analysis indicated that educators in the region utilize technology to promote student autonomy and facilitate access to varied learning resources according to the requirements of digital native learners (e.g., Kamblar et al., 2017). The synthesis literature identifies specific technical tools and infrastructure, including classroom connectivity, projectors, personal devices such as Chromebooks, and other software applications (Benlahcene et al., 2020; Kamblar et al., 2017; Manakul et al., 2023). The research emphasized the utilization of the internet and multimedia resources to promote autonomous learning, enabling students to investigate subjects and obtain information beyond the limitations of conventional materials (Benlahcene et al., 2020; Khotimah et al., 2019). Moreover, technology was utilized to improve particular language competencies, like listening

comprehension, and to render lessons more captivating (Benlahcene et al., 2020; Marzo, 2018). The notion of "smart teaching," which includes pedagogical, technological, and classroom management abilities, has arisen as a crucial talent associated with the digital learning environment (Manakul et al., 2023). The synthesis revealed a potential disparity between technology availability and its transformational pedagogical application, with evidence indicating that teachers may continue to employ a traditional teaching approach despite utilizing technological resources (Jacobs & Lie, 2022). Improving genuine student-centeredness via technology necessitates the active engagement of learners in research, course design, and the collaborative creation of knowledge (Jacobs & Lie, 2022).

4.2 Empathic Learning Environment

The second critical characteristic that emerged from the synthesized evidence was the development of an empathic learning environment, which is defined by positive teacher-student relationships and support for learner autonomy. The studies consistently emphasized the significance of nurturing relationships between instructors and students in accordance with the tenets of the Self-Determination Theory (Upa & Chusanachoti, 2023). Educators utilizing learner-centered methodologies were found to cultivate positive environments through their commitment, provision of clear frameworks, delivery of autonomy-supportive feedback, and expression of affirmative attitudes toward learner diversity (Hatmanto & Rahmawati, 2023; Upa & Chusanachoti, 2023). The importance of fostering a sense of belonging and care through collaborative activities was emphasized (Hidayatulloh & Ashoumi, 2022). The significance of sustaining suitable classroom structure and teacher leadership was recognized while cultivating supportive connections, indicating a context-sensitive, nuanced application (Del Valle, 2021; Hatmanto & Rahmawati, 2023). Teachers' employment of informational, non-manipulative language was recognized as a distinct autonomy-supportive action associated with heightened student motivation. Programs advocating modern pedagogical competencies particularly underscore the importance of establishing trust and nurturing constructive connections (Hummel, 2021).

4.3 Interactive Group Learning

Another characteristic derived from the included research is the intentional implementation of interactive group learning methodologies, specifically Cooperative Learning (CL). Evidence indicates that the use of collaborative learning (CL) enhances student interaction, cultivates critical thinking, promotes positive peer connections, and improves group work skills in Southeast Asian language classrooms (Nguyen et al., 2021). These methods correlated with favorable student attitudes toward learning and heightened responsibility and motivation (Nguyen et al., 2021). The examined literature defines interactive learning as involving diverse student-centered techniques such as group discussions, role-playing, and peer instruction, with the educator serving as a facilitator (Nasri, 2019). Transitioning to student-centered paradigms frequently entails integrating collaborative components, enabling students to actively participate in research, course design, and information dissemination (Jacobs & Lie, 2022). Although interactive strategies were identified as practical pedagogical approaches (Tyrosvoutis, 2016), the synthesis also highlighted potential challenges in implementation due to assessment pressures centered on individual performance and the navigation of existing cultural or classroom hierarchies (Tyrosvoutis, 2016).

4.4 Self-Regulated Learning

The fostering of self-regulated learning and learner autonomy was identified as a fourth crucial characteristic of emerging learner-centered practices in the region. The included studies emphasize the development of learners' capacity to manage their own learning processes (Swatevacharkul & Boonma, 2021). Strategies promoting SRL involve providing learners with opportunities for decision-making regarding learning tasks and materials, encouraging self-direction, and developing skills in time management and self-evaluation (Darsih, 2018; Melvina & Suherdi, 2019; Nurjanah & Pratama, 2020; Paudel, 2019). Specific pedagogical approaches cited in the synthesized literature as conducive to SRL include inquiry-based teaching, which engages students in questioning and analysis (Oktavia et al., 2021), and the flipped classroom model, which allows for learning at individual paces (Paudel, 2019; Roth & Suppasetsee, 2016). Assessing learner needs was highlighted as essential for enabling confident participation in autonomous tasks (Menggo et al., 2022). Evidence suggests that applying learner-centered approaches focused on autonomy increases student engagement and yields favorable student reactions (Dano-Hinosolango & Vedula-Dinagsao, 2014; Krishnan, 2015).

4.5 Differentiated Learning

The investigation highlighted the implementation of diversified learning principles as a fifth characteristic, demonstrating efforts to accommodate the varied requirements, preferences, learning styles, and speeds of students in Southeast Asian language classrooms. The collected research suggests that differentiation entails modifying teaching strategies, activities, resources, and curriculum (Said, 2019; Suprayogi et al., 2017). Research indicated that educators in the region employed varied tactics, showcasing their willingness to modify instruction to accommodate diverse learners (Hatmanto & Rahmawati, 2023). This methodology is seen as essential in diversified educational environments to emphasize individual learning variations and potentially cultivate multiple intelligences by facilitating diverse forms of involvement and expression (Said, 2019; Suprayogi et al., 2017). Differentiation is accepted as a crucial element of learner-centered pedagogy, although the literature also recognizes it as complex and challenging for instructors to apply effectively (Suprayogi et al., 2017).

5. Discussion

This systematic literature review identifies five salient characteristics of emerging learner-centered teaching strategies in 21st-century Southeast Asian language classrooms: utilization of technology, development of an empathic learning environment, implementation of interactive group learning, fostering of self-regulated learning, and application of differentiated learning. These characteristics reflect a broader pedagogical shift away from traditional teacher-centric models towards approaches that prioritize student agency, engagement, and individualized learning pathways, a transition gaining urgency in contemporary education (Bhardwaj et al., 2025).

The pervasive utilization of technology aligns with global trends in digital education and caters to the digital native learners prevalent today. Theoretically, this supports constructivist and connectivist learning paradigms where knowledge is actively built through interaction with networked resources (Siemens, 2005). Technology demonstrably facilitates self-direction, autonomy, and engagement. Recent studies confirm technology's positive impact on student motivation, particularly in distance or blended learning environments (Issabekova et al., 2023). However, a critical gap exists between technology access and its effective pedagogical integration. While tools are available and concepts like "smart teaching" are acknowledged (Manakul et al., 2023), transforming teaching practice towards facilitation remains a hurdle (Jacobs & Lie, 2022). Methodologically, future research should employ frameworks like TPACK (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) to assess tech skills and pedagogical integration. Practically, sustained, pedagogically-focused professional development is essential. Policymakers must ensure equitable access and support innovative teaching. Compared to global trends, Southeast Asia actively engages with EdTech, but pedagogical transformation challenges persist (Bulusan, 2024). Future research should focus on the longitudinal impact of specific tech integration models and effective teacher support strategies in this region.

Creating an empathic learning environment underscores the centrality of positive teacher-student relationships and autonomy support. This strongly resonates with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), emphasizing relatedness, competence, and autonomy for intrinsic motivation (Reeve, 2016). The importance of cultivating supportive and empathetic teacher-student connections is increasingly recognized as pivotal for practical instruction and student well-being (Pishghadam et al., 2022). The reviewed studies provide regional empirical support, linking teacher supportiveness, autonomy-promoting language, and collaboration (Hidayatulloh & Ashoumi, 2022) to positive outcomes. Indeed, teacher empathy has been directly linked to increased student engagement in language classes (Pishghadam et al., 2022). Methodologically, implementing these principles across diverse cultural contexts requires mixed-methods research to capture nuanced dynamics and artistic interpretations of support, including teachers' perceptions of their relationship skills competence (Fathi et al., 2024). Exploring the role of "empathetic learners" is also promising (Brown, 2023; Lee & Lee, 2022). Practically, teacher education must prioritize developing interpersonal skills and autonomy-supportive strategies (Hummel, 2021). School cultures should value well-being alongside academics. Compared to Western literature, these findings suggest a blend of autonomy support with culturally relevant structure (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Balancing these elements represents a research gap, necessitating cross-cultural and longitudinal studies within Southeast Asia.

Another defining feature is interactive group learning, particularly Cooperative Learning (CL). This aligns with sociocultural theories viewing learning as inherently social (Vygotsky, 1978) and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory emphasizing reciprocal interactions (Jacobs et al., 2022). Recent research continues to affirm the effectiveness of CL in improving language skills, such as oral proficiency (Hong, 2022), and overall student achievement compared to conventional methods (Nguyen et al., 2021). Reported benefits like enhanced critical thinking and social skills support these theories. Student perceptions of CL strategies are generally favorable, highlighting benefits like increased confidence and motivation (Putri et al., 2022). Methodologically, reliance on self-report warrants complementary observational studies comparing different CL structures in authentic classrooms. Addressing challenges

like assessment pressures (Tyrosvoutis, 2016) and cultural hierarchies requires nuanced designs (e.g., ethnographic action research). Practically, structured CL integration is advocated (Nasri, 2017), with teachers needing training in techniques and group management. While benefits mirror global CL literature (Slavin, 2014), the Southeast Asian context adds cultural layers. Research gaps include exploring CL's differential impact on diverse learners, comparing novice vs. experienced teacher implementation, and integrating CL within assessment-driven cultures.

Fostering Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) and autonomy is crucial. This aligns with SRL models emphasizing learners' active metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral roles (Zimmerman, 2002). Findings on student decision-making (Paudel, 2019), self-evaluation (Nurjanah & Pratama, 2020), and the use of strategies like flipped classrooms (Paudel, 2019) exemplify SRL processes. Recent studies are exploring how SRL strategies can be effectively taught and utilized, even in online environments like MOOCs, showing positive correlations with skill development (Cao & Hoang-yen, 2025; Widya et al., 2025). The dynamic interplay between SRL, strategy-based instruction (SBI), and technology is a growing research focus (Li & Zhang, 2025). Methodologically, future studies should directly measure SRL skills and link them to specific interventions, considering factors like teacher beliefs and confidence that impact implementation (Paredes et al., 2025). Investigating effective scaffolding of SRL skills, including the specific phases students engage in (Widya et al., 2025), is key. Practically, teachers must intentionally design for SRL through choice (Melvina & Suherdi, 2019), relevant strategies (inquiry-based, flipped) (Oktaviah et al., 2021; Paudel, 2019), and explicit instruction. Professional development is vital (Darsih, 2018). While core SRL concepts seem universal (Butler & Winne, 1995), application may need cultural adaptation. Developing and validating culturally appropriate SRL interventions and assessments for Southeast Asia is a significant research gap.

Finally, differentiated learning (DI) emerges as a necessary, though complex, response to student diversity (Suprayogi et al., 2017). Grounded in theories recognizing learning differences (Gardner, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978) and aiming to maximize individual growth (Tomlinson, 2001), DI involves tailoring instruction. Teachers' perceptions and understanding of DI significantly influence its implementation, highlighting the need for clear frameworks and support (Shareefa et al., 2025). Methodologically, there's a need for more empirical evaluation of DI implementation fidelity and effectiveness on language outcomes in Southeast Asia, moving beyond descriptions of adoption (Hatmanto & Rahmawati, 2023; Said, 2019). A recent meta-analysis confirms the overall significant positive effect of DI on student learning outcomes across various settings (Retnawati et al., 2023), providing strong backing for its continued exploration. Quasi-experimental or mixed-methods studies examining specific DI strategies are needed in the regional context. Practically, the complexity of DI demands significant teacher support through robust professional development and collaborative planning time (Shareefa et al., 2025; Suprayogi et al., 2017). Compared to Western DI literature (Tomlinson, 2014), the empirical base in Southeast Asia appears less developed. Future research should investigate DI effectiveness across subjects, its long-term impact, incorporating student agency, and developing sustainable models for resource-varied regional settings.

While Southeast Asian language education is actively adopting learner-centered strategies characterized by technology, empathy, interaction, autonomy, and differentiation, significant work remains. Translating theoretical principles and available resources into consistent, effective pedagogical practice across diverse cultural and institutional contexts is challenging. Future research and professional development must focus on bridging this implementation gap, ensuring these emerging strategies genuinely empower learners (Krishnan, 2015) and enhance language acquisition in the 21st Century. Further, SLRs could explore the evolution of these characteristics over time or focus specifically on the intersection of culture and learner-centered pedagogy within the region.

6. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

This systematic literature review synthesized research conducted over the past decade to delineate the salient characteristics of emergent learner-centered teaching strategies within 21st-century language classrooms across Southeast Asia. The analysis converged on five principal factors: the integration and Utilization of Technology to augment learning resources and foster learner autonomy; the cultivation of an Empathic Learning Environment grounded in positive teacher-student rapport and support for self-determination; the strategic implementation of Interactive Group Learning, notably Cooperative Learning, to enhance collaboration and critical linguistic engagement; the deliberate promotion of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL), empowering students toward metacognitive control over their learning trajectory; and the application of Differentiated Learning principles to responsively address the heterogeneity of student needs, interests, and learning paces. Collectively, these findings signify a discernible, albeit variably implemented, paradigm shift in the region towards pedagogical models that valorize student agency, active participation, and personalized learning pathways in language education. The confluence of these characteristics points towards a more holistic pedagogical orientation, aiming to develop communicative competence and crucial transversal skills such as collaboration, critical analysis, self-direction, and digital literacy, which are essential for navigating the demands of the contemporary era. However, this review concurrently underscores persistent challenges, including the often-observed disjuncture

between technological infrastructure and its pedagogically meaningful integration, the inherent complexities in fostering genuine learner autonomy across diverse sociocultural milieus, and the acknowledged practical impediments to implementing effective differentiation consistently.

The synthesis yields several empirical recommendations for advancing learner-centered language education in Southeast Asia. A critical need exists for professional development initiatives that transcend mere technical training, focusing instead on embedding technology within sound pedagogical frameworks like TPACK, enabling teachers to leverage digital tools for transformative learning experiences. Furthermore, enhancing teacher education curricula to develop educators' socio-emotional competencies explicitly is paramount for fostering empathetic, autonomy-supportive classroom climates conducive to deep learning. Institutional commitment is required to support actively and resource interactive methodologies, such as Cooperative Learning, while concurrently equipping teachers with sophisticated classroom management techniques suited for collaborative environments. Facilitating SRL necessitates providing choices and incorporating explicit instruction in metacognitive strategies and self-management skills integrated within authentic language learning tasks. Notwithstanding these recommendations, the inherent limitations of this review must be acknowledged. Its geographical focus on Southeast Asia restricts the direct transferability of findings to other global contexts. The reliance on specific databases and English-language publications within a defined timeframe (2013-2023) may have omitted pertinent studies. Moreover, like all systematic reviews, it is susceptible to potential publication biases despite methodological safeguards, and its conclusions are predicated on the quality and scope of the available primary research.

Critically, this review illuminates significant lacunae in the current research landscape, demanding scholarly attention to propel the field forward. Foremost among these is the need for rigorous empirical investigation into *how* technology can be optimally integrated to cultivate higher-order thinking and authentic student agency within Southeast Asian language learning contexts, moving beyond descriptive accounts of tool usage. Further inquiry, employing culturally sensitive methodologies such as ethnography, is imperative to unravel the complex interplay between universal learner-centered principles (e.g., autonomy, differentiation) and the diverse sociocultural norms prevalent across the region, particularly concerning negotiating authority and independence in the classroom. While this review identified prominent strategies, there remains a paucity of robust, context-specific empirical studies—including quasi-experimental and longitudinal research—evaluating the differential effectiveness of specific interventions like Cooperative Learning models, targeted SRL strategy instruction, and various approaches to Differentiated Instruction on tangible language proficiency gains and affective student outcomes within Southeast Asian settings. Understanding the mediating role of teacher-related factors, including pedagogical beliefs, self-efficacy, and perceived institutional support, in successfully implementing these complex practices represents another vital research avenue. Finally, questions surrounding the sustainability and scalability of these learner-centered innovations, especially within the resource-constrained environments every day in parts of Southeast Asia, require urgent investigation to bridge the gap between pedagogical ideals and practical realities. Addressing these research gaps is fundamental for refining pedagogical theory and informing evidence-based policy and practice to optimize 21st-century language education across this dynamic region. In synthesizing the current state of knowledge and articulating these critical future directions, this review contributes to the ongoing scholarly dialogue on effectively preparing language learners for future success.

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