Student-Centered Instruction

2009 China Institute-STARTALK Summer Language Academy
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- 6-week Chinese summer immersion program for 25 high school students from New York and New Jersey with little prior knowledge of Chinese or China
- Overarching theme --- “Global Citizens in the 21st Century: Beijing and Beyond”
- Close integration of Chinese culture and Chinese language teaching/learning
What is Student-Centered Instruction (SCI)?

- An approach to education focusing on the needs of the students, rather than those of others involved in the educational process. Theorists like John Dewy, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky are primarily responsible for the move to SCI.

- In SCI, the teacher still has to lecture, design assignments and tests, and grade papers. However, the teacher also provides students with opportunities to learn independently and from one another and coaches them to acquire the skills they need to do so effectively (From Navigating the Bumpy Road to Student-Centered Instruction, October 13, 1996, by Richard M. Felder and Rebecca Brent).
How did China Institute implement the SCI learning environment? (cont’d)

- Invited students to the process of program planning
  - Listened to the needs of the students prior to and during the program
  - Constantly adjusted the lesson plans to meet the learning needs of the students throughout the program
How did we implement the SCI learning environment? (cont’d)

- Facilitated the students’ learning process
  - Substituted active/interactive learning experience for one-way lectures
  - Assigned open-ended questions and questions requiring critical or creative thinking that could not be solved by following text examples
  - Involved students in simulations and role-play
How did we implement the SCI learning environment? (cont’d)

- Fostered students’ positive interactions
  - Set up the physical learning space in a way that encouraged pair/group work
  - Intermingled lectures with practice involving pair and/or group work
  - Evaluated students’ learning progress and emotional reaction regularly before considering pair work and/or group work.