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## **Student-centered learning and teacher-centered learning in EFL context**

### **Студентоцентроване навчання та кероване викладачем навчання у контексті вивчення англійської як іноземної**

**Summary.** *The article explores the contrasting pedagogical approaches in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Teacher-Centered Learning (TCL) traditionally positions instructors as central authorities who deliver knowledge through lectures and direct instruction, emphasizing content mastery and adherence to syllabi. In contrast, Student-Centered Learning (SCL) empowers learners to actively participate in their educational activity, fostering collaboration, critical thinking, and personalized learning experiences adapted to individual needs and interests.*

*The authors argue that while TCL ensures comprehensive content delivery and classroom management, it may hinder student engagement and the development of critical thinking skills necessary for real-world application. In contrast, SCL promotes student autonomy and deeper understanding by encouraging interactive learning activities such as group work, discussions, and problem-solving tasks. This approach not only enhances language proficiency but also cultivates skills essential for dealing with complex global challenges.*

*Moreover, the study highlights the challenges and benefits associated with each approach within the context of EFL education. Despite the documented advantages of SCL, including increased learner motivation and improved communication skills, its implementation faces resistance in environments accustomed to TCL methodologies. Factors such as institutional constraints, the need for additional resources, and cultural considerations influence the effectiveness of adopting SCL practices.*

*In addition, the authors advocate for a balanced approach that integrates elements of both TCL and SCL to optimize learning outcomes in diverse educational settings. They propose that combining structured content delivery with student-centered activities can cater to varying learning styles and preferences, fostering a holistic educational experience. This hybrid model acknowledges the strengths of TCL in foundational knowledge acquisition while harnessing the benefits of SCL in promoting critical thinking and independent learning.*

**Key words:** student-centered learning, teacher-centered learning, EFL, education, student, teacher.

**Анотація.** У статті досліджуються протилежні педагогічні підходи у викладанні англійської мови як іноземної. Традиційне навчання, кероване викладачем (Teacher-Centered Learning), визначає викладача як центральну фігуру, яка передає знання за допомогою лекцій та безпосередніх настанов, акцентуючи увагу на засвоєнні змісту та дотриманні навчальних планів. На противагу цьому, студентоцентроване навчання (Student-Centered Learning) дає можливість студентам брати активну участь у своїй навчальній діяльності, що сприяє співпраці, критичному мисленню та персоналізованому навчальному досвіду, адаптованому до індивідуальних потреб та інтересів.

Автори стверджують, що хоча традиційне навчання забезпечує комплексну подачу матеріалу та управління аудиторією, воно може завадити залученню студентів і розвитку навичок критичного мислення, необхідних для застосування знань у реальному світі. На противагу цьому, студентоцентроване навчання сприяє автономії студентів і глибшому розумінню, заохочуючи інтерактивні види навчальної діяльності, такі як робота в групах, дискусії та вирішення проблемних ситуацій. Такий підхід не лише покращує рівень володіння мовою, але й розвиває навички, необхідні для розв'язання глобальних проблем.

Водночас дослідження висвітлює труднощі та переваги, пов'язані з кожним із цих підходів у контексті викладання англійської мови як іноземної. Попри зазначені у літературі переваги студентоцентрованого навчання, зокрема підвищення мотивації учнів та покращення комунікативних навичок, його впровадження стикається з деяким спротивом у середовищі, яке звикло до методик традиційного викладання англійської мови. Такі фактори, як організаційні обмеження, потреба в додаткових ресурсах і

культурні особливості, впливають на ефективність впровадження практики студентоцентрованого навчання.

Окрім того, автори обстоюють збалансований підхід, який інтегрує елементи як традиційного навчання, керованого викладачем, так і студентоцентрованого навчання для досягнення оптимальних результатів навчання в різних освітніх умовах. Вони вважають, що поєднання структурованої подачі контенту з діяльністю, орієнтованою на студента, може задовольнити різні навчальні стилі та уподобання, сприяючи формуванню цілісного освітнього процесу. Ця комбінована модель визнає сильні сторони керованого викладачем навчання у набутті фундаментальних знань і водночас використовує переваги студентоцентрованого підходу в розвитку критичного мислення та самостійного навчання.

**Ключові слова:** студентоцентроване навчання, кероване викладачем навчання, англійська мова як іноземна, освіта, студент, викладач.

**Introduction.** Achieving better results in language learning heavily depends on the quality of instructional methods employed by the teacher to manage learning activities. The teacher's role is essential in creating a learning environment where knowledge is co-constructed by both the teacher and students, rather than being directly transmitted by the teacher alone. Consequently, the traditional role of the teacher as the sole transmitter of knowledge shifts to that of an advisor and facilitator of the learning process, with the aim of encouraging students to develop their own solutions to presented problems. This shift allows students to focus more on their understanding and application of knowledge.

This transition is largely driven by observed trends: despite numerous reforms, modern facilities, and the availability of various learning channels, the communicative competence of many EFL learners has been declining in the 21st century. This necessitates a new classroom learning paradigm that emphasizes learning over teaching, a shift supported by scholars such as Sosnytska and Hlikman (2017) [3], Zablotska and Nikolayeva (2021) [1], Wright (2011) [23], McCombs (2012) [17], Miller and Metz (2014) [19], Dole, Bloom, and Kowalske (2016) [9], etc. The student-centered method prioritizes student interests and needs, with the teacher acting more as a facilitator than a traditional lecturer [20, p. 64].

However, adult learners sometimes struggle with transitioning to student-centered learning, as they may initially perceive this approach as the instructor abdicating responsibility for managing instruction. Recognizing this potential resistance can open a dialogue about these changes, helping both learners and instructors negotiate their new roles.

In the context of higher education in Ukraine, many instructors still rely on traditional, teacher-centered methods. These methods often result in students focusing primarily on the teacher as the main source of information, thereby remaining passive recipients of knowledge. This dominance

of teacher-talking time persists despite efforts to implement student-centered approaches. Factors such as the need to complete courses within a specific timeframe and the pressure to prepare students for exams often compel teachers to adhere to teacher-centered strategies.

Nevertheless, the benefits of student-centered learning are well-documented in academic literature. These include increased learner engagement and motivation, enhanced critical thinking and problem-solving skills, improved communication abilities, greater independence, and personalized learning experiences. Despite these advantages, it remains challenging for teachers to embrace change and modify their instructional habits. In Ukraine, the entrenched reliance on traditional, teacher-centered methods often hinders the full implementation of student-centered learning, even as educational reforms and new teaching strategies continue to evolve.

The **aim** of the article is to conduct a comparative analysis of Student-Centered Learning (SCL) and Teacher-Centered Learning (TCL) in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. The authors explore and discuss the implications, challenges, and effectiveness of these two pedagogical approaches.

The **methodology** for this article involves a comparative and qualitative analysis supported by an extensive literature review. The authors systematically compare TCL and SCL, drawing on existing research and contextual factors within EFL education to provide a comprehensive discussion of the advantages, challenges, and practical implications of each approach.

**Results and discussion.** In EFL education, SCL and TCL represent two divergent pedagogical approaches, each with distinct characteristics and implications for teaching and learning. In traditional teacher-centered learning, the instructor assumes a central role by imparting information through lectures, presentations, and direct instructional methods. Students receive and assimilate this knowledge, demonstrating their comprehension through assessments and assignments [13, p. 37]. While effective for introducing foundational concepts and ensuring comprehensive coverage of material, this approach may present drawbacks. Passive learning under this model can result in disengagement, particularly among students who thrive in more interactive learning environments. Moreover, an emphasis on memorization may not adequately cultivate the critical thinking and problem-solving abilities essential for real-world applications.

According to McDonough, student-centered learning is an educational approach where students actively participate in decisions regarding what and how they will learn, as well as how their learning will be assessed. It emphasizes valuing and respecting each student's unique backgrounds, interests, abilities, and experiences. In this approach, each student is treated as a partner in the teaching and learning process, fostering a collaborative and personalized educational environment [18, p. 32]. Beaten et al. further define

student-centered education through three fundamental aspects. Students are engaged in constructing their own knowledge through interactive learning activities that encourage active participation and critical thinking [5, p. 16]. Teachers, in this model, take on the role of coaches, providing guidance and support to students as they handle questions and challenges in their learning process. Moreover, educators incorporate authentic assignments that simulate real-world scenarios and complex educational problems, aiming to deepen students' understanding and their ability to apply knowledge in practical contexts. Thus, SCL is characterized by an approach where students actively engage in their learning process, assuming responsibility for their education [2]. This contrasts sharply with TCL, where the teacher serves as the primary authority, disseminating knowledge in a top-down manner.

Drawing from the existing literature on student-centered learning and teacher-centered learning, this study conducts a comprehensive comparative analysis of these pedagogical approaches across various dimensions, such as the roles of teachers and students, types of learning activities, curriculum design, assessment methods, and classroom environment (see Table 1).

**Role of the teacher.** In TCL, the teacher maintains a central role, controlling the classroom and acting as the sole source of knowledge. This model places the teacher at the forefront of classroom activities, often limiting student participation to passive reception. Addressing the challenges

Table 1

**SCL versus TCL in EFL classroom**

Aspect	Teacher-Centered Learning	Student-Centered Learning
Teacher's role	Central figure, controller, and source of knowledge. Dominates the classroom activities.	Facilitator, guide, and coach. Focuses on supporting students' learning needs and interests.
Students' role	Passive recipients of information. Follow teacher instructions and absorb content.	Active participants, responsible for their own learning. Engaged in collaboration and exploration.
Learning activities	Lecture-based, individual work, and teacher-directed activities.	Interactive, collaborative, and student-driven. Includes group work, discussions, and projects.
Curriculum design	Fixed and standardized. Follows a pre-determined syllabus with little room for adaptation.	Flexible and adaptive to students' needs and interests. Emphasizes relevance and real-world application.
Assessment methods	Summative assessments, standardized tests, and exams. Focuses on final outcomes.	Formative assessments, peer reviews, self-assessments, and portfolio work. Emphasizes ongoing feedback.
Classroom environment	Structured and orderly. Emphasizes discipline and adherence to rules.	Dynamic and interactive. Encourages student autonomy and collaboration.

of the 21st century concerning the role of educators requires acknowledging that teachers primarily function as facilitators. Student-centered learning emerges as the approach that empowers teachers in this role. In this method, teachers act as facilitators who promote students' critical thinking, creativity, and independence. They engage students in designing learning activities and assessments, and offer opportunities for students to select activities that align with their individual learning preferences and styles [4, p. 62]. According to Fabian et al., in organizing students' educational activities in line with regulatory requirements, the teacher defines the objectives and tasks of a particular discipline in relation to other subjects. The teacher selects the most effective forms and methods of instruction that enhance students' cognitive engagement and establish methods of assessment. However, possessing extensive professional knowledge alone is insufficient for effectively engaging a student audience. The overall development of the teacher's personality, their ability to relate material to contemporary contexts and personal experiences, independence in their viewpoints, understanding of youth interests, effective communication skills, and the use of innovative teaching methods significantly impact student engagement. A modern educator must be committed to continuous self-development and self-improvement, prepared to effectively apply their knowledge, skills, and abilities in a dynamic professional environment [10, p. 4].

***Role of the students.*** In SCL, students are active participants in their learning activities. They engage in collaborative activities, critical thinking, and problem-solving. This active involvement contrasts with the passive role of students in TCI, where they primarily absorb information conveyed by the teacher and follow structured instructions, which may lead to potential demotivation and lack of engagement [11].

***Learning activities.*** Student-centered approaches, as evidenced by studies [8, p. 485], emphasize active student engagement, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, thereby deepening language understanding through activities such as group work and presentations. Conversely, teacher-centered approaches, as observed in several studies [7; 15], often focus on grammar instruction, explicit error correction, and teacher-led explanations, potentially limiting student autonomy and active participation. The shift towards learner-centered methodologies in EFL not only enhances writing skills, grammar, and vocabulary but also cultivates positive attitudes towards academic writing, indicating the effectiveness of student-centered activities in creating a more inclusive and stimulating EFL learning environment.

***Curriculum design.*** The curriculum in SCL is flexible and adaptive, designed to meet the diverse needs and interests of students. It emphasizes

real-world application and relevance, allowing for adjustments based on student feedback and performance. TCI, however, follows a fixed and standardized curriculum, adhering to a pre-determined syllabus with little room for adaptation to individual student needs [12].

**Assessment methods.** In teacher-centered learning approaches, assessment methods often rely on traditional formats such as exams and quizzes that primarily assess students' retention of knowledge [13, p. 36]. In contrast, student-centered learning approaches prioritize interactive and participatory assessment methods, such as project-based learning, where students engage in real-world projects, and problem-based learning, where students tackle scenarios or cases to foster self-directed learning [22, p. 75]. Furthermore, student-centered assessment practices within project-based learning entail well-designed assessment procedures, criteria, and tasks that align closely with the student-centered teaching and learning process, ensuring a comprehensive and cohesive approach to assessment in higher education contexts. The shift towards student-centered approaches points to the importance of aligning assessment methods with overall learning objectives and activities to enhance student engagement and foster critical thinking skills. According to Bergner and Chen, collaborative ontology development has been explored as a strategy to empower educators in articulating assessment arguments within student-centered learning environments [6].

**Classroom environment.** In teacher-centered learning approaches, the classroom environment typically centers on the instructor as the primary authority delivering knowledge through direct instruction and information dissemination. On the other hand, student-centered learning approaches redirect attention to the learners, establishing an environment where students assume responsibility for their learning process and engagements, thereby encouraging critical thinking and active participation. Student-centered environments foster student involvement and accountability, by means of using multimedia tools and big data analytics to optimize learning outcomes and student retention rates [24]. These methodologies frequently incorporate project-based learning, problem-based learning, and argument-based curricula, enabling students to engage in practical projects, problem-solving tasks, and debates that foster self-directed learning and diverse perspectives. Student-centered learning environment cultivates a more interactive and participatory classroom atmosphere compared to a traditional teacher-centered approach [11, p. 135].

Additionally, in terms of SCL and TCL, we have examined such aspects as focus of learning, instructional materials, communication patterns, cultural context sensitivity. Considering the *focus of learning*, SCL is process-oriented, prioritizing critical thinking, problem-solving, and personal

growth. It encourages students to develop their skills and understandings through exploration and reflection [14]. TCL, in contrast, is content-oriented, prioritizing the acquisition and retention of knowledge, often at the expense of developing broader cognitive and interpersonal skills.

In SCL, *instructional materials* are diverse and often selected based on student interests. They include authentic materials that reflect real-world contexts and applications [16, p. 50]. TCL predominantly relies on textbook-based materials selected by the teacher or institution, with less consideration for student preferences or real-world applicability.

Teacher-centered approaches typically involve a more traditional, lecture-based *communication model* where the teacher dominates the classroom, leading to passive student roles. On the other hand, student-centered approaches promote a more interactive communication model, encouraging active student participation, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, leading to a deeper understanding of the language [21]. Additionally, in a student-centered approach, the roles of both teachers and learners are transformed, fostering a more motivating and engaging learning environment where students prepare tasks, present independently, and engage in group work, ultimately enhancing EFL learning and teaching experiences [11].

Concerning *cultural context sensitivity*, SCL demonstrates high sensitivity to cultural contexts, adapting to the diverse cultural backgrounds and perspectives of students. It values and incorporates cultural diversity into the learning process. TCL, often follows a standardized approach with limited adaptation to cultural contexts, potentially overlooking the unique needs and experiences of students from different backgrounds.

In EFL settings, the dichotomy between SCL and TCL highlights fundamental differences in educational philosophy and practice. The emphasis of SCL on student engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking reflects contemporary educational priorities that seek to develop well-rounded, autonomous learners capable of managing complex, real-world challenges. TCL, while effective in ensuring content delivery and maintaining classroom order, may fall short in fostering the critical and creative skills necessary for students to thrive in a rapidly changing global environment.

The trend towards SCL in EFL settings aligns with broader shifts in educational theory and practice, emphasizing the importance of adaptable, personalized learning experiences that cater to diverse student needs and cultural backgrounds. Integrating elements of both approaches could potentially offer a balanced and comprehensive educational experience, employing the strengths of each to support student learning and development.

Determining whether SCL or TCL is better depends on various factors, including educational goals, student demographics, available resources,

and the specific context of the learning environment. Each model has its strengths and weaknesses, and their effectiveness can vary based on these conditions.

From an educational goals perspective, SCL is better suited for fostering critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and real-world problem-solving skills. It aligns with environments that prioritize holistic development and lifelong learning skills. In contrast, TCL is effective for ensuring comprehensive content coverage and preparing students for standardized tests, making it suitable for environments that emphasize content mastery and measurable academic performance.

Student demographics also play a significant role in determining the suitability of each model. SCL works well with diverse student populations, including those with different learning styles, paces, and interests. It encourages engagement and motivation among students who thrive on active participation and autonomy. Conversely, TCL may be more effective for students who benefit from structured and orderly learning environments or who need clear guidance and direct instruction.

The availability of resources is another crucial factor. SCL requires significant resources, including time, technology, and professional development for teachers. Its effective implementation depends on the availability of these resources. On the other hand, TCL can be implemented with fewer resources and is often more practical in resource-constrained environments, where maintaining classroom control and ensuring content delivery are primary concerns.

The learning environment itself also influences the choice of model. SCL is suitable for environments that support flexibility, creativity, and innovation, and is effective in small to medium-sized classrooms where teachers can manage and support individual student needs. In contrast, TCL is effective in larger classrooms or institutions, where maintaining order and delivering content efficiently to many students is a priority.

In many educational settings, a hybrid approach that combines elements of both SCL and TCL may be the most effective. This approach uses the strengths of each model while mitigating their weaknesses. For example, blended learning incorporates technology to facilitate personalized learning while maintaining structured content delivery. The flipped classroom model delivers instructional content online outside of class and uses classroom time for interactive, student-centered activities. Differentiated instruction combines direct instruction with opportunities for students to engage in collaborative and independent learning activities tailored to their needs.

**Conclusion.** The comparison between SCL and TCL in EFL education manifests fundamental differences in educational philosophy and

practice. TCL traditionally places the teacher as the central authority in the classroom, focusing on direct instruction and knowledge transmission. In contrast, SCL shifts the focus to students, encouraging active engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration while emphasizing personalized learning experiences adapted to individual student needs.

The shift towards SCL reflects a contemporary educational approach that aims to cultivate holistic skills such as creativity, problem-solving, and independent learning. This approach not only prepares students to deal with real-world challenges but also fosters a deeper understanding of language and its practical applications. Despite the benefits of SCL, its widespread adoption faces challenges, particularly in environments accustomed to TCL methodologies. Resistance to change, institutional constraints, and the need for additional resources often hinder the full implementation of SCL.

Educational research and literature consistently advocate for integrating elements of both approaches to achieve a balanced educational experience. This hybrid approach acknowledges the strengths of TCL in content delivery and classroom management while also using the benefits of SCL in promoting student engagement and critical thinking. Ultimately, the choice between SCL and TCL depends on educational goals, student demographics, available resources, and the specific context of the learning environment. The authors of the article suggest striking a balance between these approaches, which can enhance overall learning outcomes and better prepare students for the complexities of the cotemporary global context.

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