PECULIARITIES OF TEACHER-CENTERED AND LEARNER-CENTERED EFL TRAINING METHODS AT UNIVERSITIES IN RUSSIA

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Abstract

This paper explores some prospects and limitations of bridging the gap between two educational approaches, i.e. teacher-centered and student-centered models, intended to support the efficacy of teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) at university level in Russia. Today English language is undoubtedly being perceived by the world community as an important instrument of international communication equally serving the needs of everyday life and professional purposes. It is not surprising that most of universities in Russia follow the global trend and try to compile their courses and curriculum activities with account of increasing requirements for effective ways of foreign language acquisition being crowned by a high level of language proficiency among their students.

For many years, the traditional teaching style of English or teacher-centered approach has been dominant in higher education in Russia. At the same time, the opponents of this conventional EFL training method insisted that in a traditional classroom students may only act as passive learners or recipients of teachers' knowledge with zero perspectives for educational growth. Many researchers and practitioners of that sort tried to publicize only the negative sides of the teacher-centered approach thereby detracting its positive effects and evident advantages. Conversely, the majority of scientists and practitioners hastened to exalt another approach, widely known as a learner or student-centered. Recognizing all positive aspects of a learner-centered method, we still aim to compare these two approaches from the perspective of teaching / learning foreign languages at Russian universities.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and document some major beliefs and practices of Russian teachers in both teacher-centered and student-centered educational environment; examine the relationship between these opposite instructional and managerial approaches and students` final learning outcomes; clarify the conceptual apparatus related to teacher-centered and student-centered modes of training; highlight advantages and disadvantages of both approaches, etc.

The methodological framework of the study rests on the social, pedagogical, integrative and comparative approaches allowing accumulating best teaching strategies of using the aforementioned approaches by top universities. The main result of the study is the design of an integrative model of educational environment that enhances the quality of foreign language education and increases the level of language proficiency among the university students.

Keywords: education, university, teacher-centered, student-centered, EFL (English as a foreign language), training, methods.

1 INTRODUCTION

The problem of improving professional skills and competences of future specialists is in the spotlight of Russian society, state authorities, university administrations and the teaching staff in particular. In the era of digital growth enhanced by information and technology there is a great demand to increase the speed and breadth of knowledge turnover in order to meet all the challenges of the emerging global labor markets and multicultural diversity. Highly qualified specialists capable of serving complex tasks of innovative economy are at the center of attention, as reflected in a number of laws and other normative documents, including the Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" No.273-FZ of December 29, 2012, presidential decrees on further improvement of state policy in the field of education and science, decrees of the Government of the Russian Federation on the implementation of state and federal programs targeted at the development of education in a digital era, new Federal state educational standards (FSES), etc. [1]. According to the newly adopted FSES, the modern teaching and learning process at university should become more active, experiential, mastery-based and personalized [2], experimentation, technology and innovation being proliferating. Generally speaking, personalized learning is a type of instruction that offers pedagogy, curriculum, and learning environments to meet the individual student's needs. The experience is tailored to learning modes, preferences and the specific interests of different learners. Personalized or personality-oriented

approach to the learners in order to instruct and optimize the needs of each learner so as to deepen their knowledge and enhance their educational opportunities is also known as learner-centered [3]. Personalized learning is the process of student's growth rate developed by a set of goals and missions based on collective data thus individualized through tools, instructional models, and learning styles [4].

Learner-centered teaching – is an approach to teaching that is increasingly being encouraged in higher education these days. Learner-centered teaching, learning-centered teaching or student-centered learning – these are three phrases commonly used by educators with this approach [5]. Learner-centered teaching – places the emphasis on the person who is doing the learning. Learning-centered teaching – focuses on the process of learning. Both phrases appeal to a faculty or ability to perform or act because these phrases identify the critical role of teaching in the learning process [4]. The phrase "student-centered learning" (SCL) – is also used, but some instructors do not like it because it appears to have a consumer focus, seems to encourage students to be more empowered, and appears to take the teacher out of the critical role [6]. The term "student-centered learning" – is widely used in the literature for educators though. "Student-centered learning" – is an approach to education focusing on the interests of students, rather than of those others involved in the educational process, such as teachers, tutors and administrators. This approach has many implications for the design of the curriculum, course content and interactivity of any courses. Many terms have been linked with student-centered learning, such as "flexible learning", "experiential learning", "self-directed learning", etc. and therefore the slightly overused term "student-centered learning" can mean different things to different people. In practice, it is also described by a range of other terms and this has led to a trivial confusion surrounding its implementation [4].

It is obvious that learner-centered teachers do not employ some particular single teaching method; the approach emphasizes a variety of different types of methods and techniques that *inter alia* shifts the roles of instructors from the givers of information to those facilitating students` learning opportunities. Simply put, student-centered learning – is a model wherein students are placed in the core of the learning process [6]. As such, students' needs, opinions, backgrounds, and goals are acknowledged and incorporated within the learning environment. In this model, teachers are guided by what is best for the students when helping them to learn or make decisions. Herewith, new attitudes neither detract the need for the teachers, nor diminish their roles but unambiguously require a review of their profession. Given the challenges of the time, teachers should increase their knowledge and acquire new skills in such areas of their professional activities as pedagogical, methodical, scientific-theoretical (research), correctional, constructive-technical (normative), educational, management, etc. [7]. This is particularly important since teachers are still expected to pass on their best skills, knowledge, expertise and practices to their learners commonly referred to as Generation Z [8]. One key aspect of this generation is the widespread usage of the Internet and various technologies from a very young age [9].

In a traditional learning environment, instructors used to focus on what they did, and not on what their students were learning. This emphasis on "what instructors should do" often leads to students who are passive learners and who do not take responsibility for their own learning. Educators call this traditional or conventional method an instructor-centered or teacher-centered teaching approach [5]. In contrast, learner-centered teaching mode occurs when teachers or instructors focus on individual students` learning needs and capabilities [10]. This requires that students and teachers collaborate to determine some personalized learning needs, plan personalized learning paths, and design personalized learning scenarios, while emphasizing the role of a student. In this context, the term "personalized learning" or "personality-oriented learning" seems to be the most appropriate [3].

The purpose behind this research was to analyze and document some major global trends as well as some widespread beliefs and practices of teachers and educators in both teacher-centered and student-centered educational environments enhanced by the rapid integration of information and communications technologies (ICT) in all facets of our life. We also explored some leading methods and techniques that might bridge the gap between these two approaches. We provided examination of the relationship between these two opposite instructional and managerial approaches in order to identify the positive and negative effects that each may have on efficacy of both teaching and learning processes and the expected students` final learning outcomes at university, thus highlighting major advantages and disadvantages of two approaches [11]. We tried to clarify the conceptual apparatus related to teacher-centered and student-centered modes of training with a view to avoid any possible ambiguity in interpretation of some core terms and related notions for future studies in this field.

2   METHODOLOGY

The methodological framework of this research rests on the set of social, pedagogical, integrative, competence and comparative approaches, covering all aspects of both teachers' and students' academic activities, including their collaboration and cooperation [6]. Since the majority of students learn best when they are immersed in learning, through interaction and involvement, then both teacher-centered and student-centered models intend to equally support cooperative and collaborative efforts. While the purpose of these pedagogical methods is the same, that is to provide students with opportunities to engage with each other in thoughtful learning, there is a slight difference in the overall comprehension of these notions. Collaboration is a coordinated, synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem. Cooperation on the other hand is accomplished by the division of labor among participants as an activity where each person is responsible for solving a portion of the problem. J. Roschelle and S.D. Teasley once pointed out in "The Construction of Shared Knowledge in Collaborative Problem Solving", that "while many people talk a good game about collaboration, most are just cooperating" [12]. The world is already collaborating though, and by using both cooperative and collaborative methods, teachers can help to create citizens with the skills needed to succeed not only in education, but also at further work [13].

Cooperative and collaborative learning were examined by the authors through the prism of a search for the ways to bridge the teacher-centered and student-centered educational approaches. There was an attempt to find a sort of a compromise that could improve the quality of teaching and learning at university level in Russia as well as develop those skills, opportunities, qualifications and outcomes of both teachers and learners sufficient to enhance the teaching/ learning process and contribute to the new modes and culture of teaching/ learning. Also, the use of new ICT-based tools and strategies as an essential component of developing an inquiry-based and active classroom was taken into account. Along with a learner-centered approach, modern teachers need to focus on the design of situations and employment of various activities conducive to experiential, mastery-based learning modes where traditional knowledge delivery would coexist with practice, innovation and technology. For foreign language (EFL) acquisition, communicative skills are also essential; thus, provision of a structured discussion may raise basic issues and pursue problematic areas of thought then [13]. Encouraging students to participate in collaborative efforts, managing complex learning scenarios, facilitating cooperation, supporting team work, and fostering crowdsourcing are just a few options teachers may have in the arsenal of their professional techniques and methods. Classes where students and teachers complement one another's skills, competencies, expertise and knowledge in collaborative efforts must become the basis of educational paradigm of language teachers in Russia too [14].

Based on the empirical approach, we interviewed teachers of foreign languages working at the Russian universities, namely, Kazan (Volga region) Federal University (KFU) and Kazan National Research Technical University named after A.N. Tupolev (KAI). We aimed to identify teachers` attitudes and needs concerning most preferable and applicable methods and modes of teaching in the wake of globalization and technology. The total number of teachers surveyed was more than 50, aged from 25 to 60 years. The survey was conducted by distributing individual questionnaires issued to each participant. The event was held after the teachers` working hours, all of them having been previously instructed on the rules and goals of the survey. Participation in the study was voluntary and confidential. The results of the survey do not pretend to show any in-deep scientific data; rather, it was an attempt to collect primary information to confirm our hypotheses about the efficacy of some trends. This strategy allowed discovering and accumulating best practices and experiences of university teachers whose roles have already changed a lot and continue to change from that of instructors to that of constructors, facilitators, coaches, and creators of rich ICT-mediated learning environments [2; 7].

The experimental part of the study has also been supplemented by a long-term diligent collection, processing, analyzing and comparing of certain relevant data concerning the learning capabilities, needs and core outcomes of students in their foreign languages acquisition in a traditional (teacher-centered) versus advanced ICT-mediated learning environment (student-centered) of university [15]. The process involved more than 360 students, aged from 19 to 23 years, who were temporarily placed into separate learning environments for one semester, i.e. teacher-centered (conventional or student-centered (interactive, experiential, personalized, mastery- and tech-based) learning environment [2]. Testing, evaluation and control of usability, accessibility, availability and safety of some learning/ teaching methods, tools and resources have been performed. The analysis of the literature on the topic allowed us to assume that most of the common trends of the 21st century involve various ICT-based instruments, including e-Learning, Web-based learning (WBL), mobile learning (mLearning), distance learning, distributed learning, open electronic resources and other forms of online education [16].

3   RESULTS

The data-driven analysis of the results of the survey proved that participants (56 teachers of foreign languages from two high-ranking Russian universities) could almost equally be divided into three groups as follows: (1) those who support and employ both teacher-centered and student-centered methods of teaching/ learning and do not hesitate to integrate blended (or hybrid) technology or flipped class techniques into the classroom activities – 31%; (2) those who fully support and employ the traditional teaching/ learning methods in their practice (aka teacher-centered approach) but partly admit the efficiency of other approaches based on innovation, personalization, collaboration, practice and technology (aka student-centered approach) though do not use the latter or use them quite rarely in a normal course of study or with extracurricular activities – 37%; (3) those who fully support and employ various unconventional teaching/ learning practices mostly student-centered and enhanced by a range of ICT-technologies – 32%. The results of the survey also showed that at least four factors – personal confidence, ICT knowledge/ competence, gender, age – should be taken into account when measuring teachers' attitudes towards a variety of teaching/ learning technologies, methods, tools and techniques mediated by all the ongoing challenges, calls and needs of a digital world [17; 18; 19; 20].

Though age and gender do not have direct influence on confidence, ICT knowledge/ competence or attitudes toward innovations in the field of teaching/ learning, they sometimes obstruct and limit integration of new and thrilling trends and technologies into academic environment of university [5; 6]. The fact that gender might affect teachers' attitudes towards any novelty or contrariwise commonness in higher education was also rejected earlier in Chen's study, where the author found no correlation between gender and teachers' attitudes [19]. Age and experience were next factors whose effect on teachers' attitudes towards integration of student-centered educational tools and methods we aimed to measure and compare during our experiment. Based on the cluster sampling method, the teachers were virtually divided according to their age into the following groups: of 23-30, 31-40, 41-50, and 51 and above. The results indicate that there is no significant difference in using tools and resources for student-centered learning between different groups of teachers according to their age or experience. Wherein the younger teachers (23-30, 31-40) demonstrate keen curiosity in various Internet tools and resources including such novelties as new social 3D platforms, multifaceted message boards providing instant feedback with collaborative, multimedia assessment tools or "spiraling sandboxes" full of adventure and creation, then their more mature colleagues (41-50, 51 and above) show more interest in technologies, methods and resources aimed specifically for educational purposes only [21].

For control points, we selected several popular tools and educational resources for student-centered creative expression deployed on the Internet. These are *inter alia* such online programs and resources promoting student's growth, creativity and achievement as *Glogster EDU* (http://edu.glogster.com/) – a global education platform that allows students and educators to create interactive online posters that include text, photos, videos, graphics, sounds, etc.; *Storybird* (https://storybird.com/) – an educational site whose mission is to help students improve their reading, writing, and creative skills; it gathers visually stunning artwork and images from artists and illustrators around the world and invites students to turn those images into creative stories; *Prezi* (https://prezi.com/) – a fantastic tool that uses a visually stimulating, moving canvas that spices up any classroom presentation; *Slidely* (http://slide.ly/) – a simple-to-use, free website and app that allows students to create eye-catching video slideshows that are accompanied by music and other effects; *Storyboard That* (https://www.storyboardthat.com/) – a storyboard generator that allows students to create their own storyboards using provided scripts and other free resources; *Tiki-Toki* (https://www.tiki-toki.com/) – a free web-based software that allows anyone to create interactive and visually stimulating timelines; *Pixton* (https://www.pixton.com/) – an innovative click-n-drag technology that gives students opportunity to create amazing comic strips with just a few clicks of the mouse; *Picsart* (https://picsart.com/) – a free mobile app that enables anyone to find, edit, and create images via a mobile art studio; *Big Huge Labs* (https://bighugelabs.com/) – a fantastic resource for students and teachers to create a number of cool items with images; *ThinkLink* (http://www.thinglink.com/) – an easy to use platform that helps anyone create and discover rich and striking images; *Makers Empire* (https://www.makersempire.com/) – a great design and creation tool that teachers and students can use to be innovative and share ideas with a vibrant community of makers, it's a stellar 3D design hub that promotes innovation, collaboration, and creation; *Minecraft: Education Edition* (https://education.minecraft.net/) – a classroom-ready excellent tool to engage students in learning, collaboration, and critical thinking; *NowComment* (https://nowcomment.com/) – a versatile discussion platform for teaching, peer reviewing, and fostering active reading that offers much more than traditional word processors; *FlipQuiz* (https://flipquiz.me/grouper) – a random group maker that improves classroom management, encourages collaborative work, provides educators with a quick way to create quiz boards for test reviews in the classroom that can be saved for later use.

4   DISCUSSIONS

4.1   The nature and origin of the concept of "student-centered learning"

The concept of "student-centered learning" can be derived from several sources and models. The notion could be credited though to Frank Herbert Hayward, the UK inspector of schools and author of many books on education, who was the first to mention the term in his writings as early as in 1905 [22]. Theorists like John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky, whose collective work focused on how students learn [23; 24], were the great pioneers of the move towards student-centered learning. J. Dewey was the American educational reformer who brought progressivism and pragmatism to education, preferring proven evidence to beliefs and asserting that a reliance on an unchanging canon of knowledge hurts a student's ability to thrive in an ever-changing, modern world [23]. According to Dewey, progressivism in education was deeply rooted in American democracy; as a result, there was no room for authoritarian models of education in a democratic society [25]. J. Piaget was a Swiss clinical psychologist best known for his pioneering work in child development. Piaget's theory of cognitive and intellectual development (cognitive constructivism) and epistemological view are together called "genetic epistemology". Cognitive constructivism is a developmental stage theory where learner-centered educational philosophy including "child-centered education" and "open education" are greatly emphasized to support the idea of transformation in learning and development [26]. Genetic epistemology is a study of the origins (genesis) of knowledge (epistemology) where genetics refers to heredity. The goal of genetic epistemology is to link the validity of knowledge to the model of its construction [24]. The Russian psychologist L. Vygotsky's relevance to "student-centered learning" is closely tied to his theory of social constructivism. The constructivist learning theory primarily asserted that knowledge is constructed uniquely and individually in multiple ways. Vygoysky devised the notion of the zone of proximal development and contributed to the idea that learning and development were integrally tied to communicative interactions with the others [24; 26; 27; 28; 29].

Later the idea of student-centered learning has been further developed in the works of a prominent Finnish academician Teuvo Kohonen [27], whose experiential model proved that teaching was a process of transformation of existing knowledge; and Doctor L. Dee Fink [28], the US international consultant on college teaching and faculty development, whose active learning model suggested that all learning activities might have involved some kind of experience or dialogue such as dialogue with self and dialogue with the others. All these student-centered philosophies of education (progressivism and pragmatism to education, cognitive constructivism, social constructivism, etc.) emerged as a response to the limitations characteristic of traditional, authoritarian models of education [26]. Instead of establishing schools as places where a fixed base of knowledge was passed from teachers to students, these philosophies encourage cooperation between students and teachers in order to find the best answers to questions facing modern-day learners [29]. According to the following philosophies – progressivism, social reconstructionism, existentialism – and because the world is constantly changing, students should seek answers through hands-on, experiential learning, such as active learning, cooperative learning, collaborative learning, inductive learning, etc. [30; 31].

Active learning – is a student-centered teaching method, in which students solve problems, answer questions, formulate questions of their own, discuss, explain, debate, or brainstorm during class activities, etc. [21]. Cooperative learning – is another student-centered teaching method in which students work in teams on problems and projects under conditions that assures both positive interdependence and individual accountability [32]. Like the cast and crew of a theatre production, co-operation involves interdependence. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined but are open for negotiation. This method of collaboration brings with it a strong sense of accountability. In contrast to cooperative learning, a collaborative learning let students progress personally, while collectively working towards a common goal. Students are accountable to one another and, with appropriate direction, will self-manage this. Students learn to better understand and anticipate difference, recognize it in themselves and others, and use it to their advantage [32]. In fact, cooperative and collaborative learning have much in common with some differences though but may meet the needs and expectations of both teacher and students. Inductive instructional teaching and learning – are both student-centered teaching and student-centered learning methods, which shift the focus of activity from the teacher to the learners [33; 34]. These are methods in which students are first presented with challenges, questions or problems. Then they learn the course material in the context of addressing the challenges. As a result, they seek the answer to the general principle or question while using a particular set of facts or ideas and then reasoning from facts or particulars to general principles or issues. Inductive methods include: inquiry-based learning, case-based instruction, problem-based

learning, project-based learning, discovery learning, just-in-time teaching, etc. [33; 34; 35]. Student-centered methods have repeatedly shown to be superior to the traditional teacher-centered approach in college and university language courses [36]. This conclusion applies to the assessed outcome in short-term mastery, long-term retention, or depth of understanding of course material, acquisition of critical thinking or creative problem-solving skills, formation of positive attitudes toward the subject being taught, or level of confidence in knowledge or skills [37].

4.2   The necessity to switch to the new model of teaching and learning

Why was it essential to switch to the new model of teaching and learning? What was the problem with the traditional method? To answer these questions, we need to look back and analyze the nature of the traditional teacher-centered approach, its outcome on learners so as to see why a student-centered approach should be promoted as an alternative [37]. The teacher-centered approach – influenced by the transmission model – affirms that knowledge is something that can be transmitted from teachers to students, like a two-dimensional learning of teacher to student instruction [38]. In a classroom, a teacher – is the person in authority whose job is to impart knowledge and skills, evaluate and correct the learners' performance according to the criteria he or she has set. The students are relatively passive recipients of knowledge, and expect the teacher to be totally in charge of their learning [10]. As such, the typical pattern of classroom interaction in this transmission model – is the so-called IRE pattern, first presented by Hugh Mehan and Peg Griffin at the 1979 American Anthropological Association meetings in Cincinnati [13]. The acronym IRE stands for: teacher Initiation, student Response, and teacher Evaluation. In the IRE pattern, teachers are always at the front of the room, providing knowledge, asking students to demonstrate knowledge previously taught, and evaluating the students' responses and performance [13].

This teacher-centered practice is also deeply rooted in some Asian societies and their culture (Japan, China, Thailand, etc.), wherein "hierarchy" lies as a central value [28]. Since people there place an emphasis on the vertical respect relation and submission to authority, teachers, who have a much higher status than students, are regarded as the second parents whose mission is not only to impart knowledge but also to teach morals and mold the students to be good citizens in society as well [39]. The image that is generally assigned to a teacher – is that of a "righteous guru" who possesses great knowledge. It is understood that in the learning process as such, the teacher and not the learner is placed right in the center. This teaching practice, however, has a major downside: it shapes learners to be passive recipients who merely listen, memorize, and absorb the information transferred by the guru rather than to initiate or negotiate the outcome of the learning process [37]. Students are not trained to exercise their analytical, critical, and reflective thinking. Much worse, this education system does not prompt students to become independent learners who recognize that knowledge is constructed in many ways, assess the value of learning, realize that learning is a life-long process, and understand that there's no one else but themselves being responsible for their own learning [30]. To keep abreast with the rapidly changing world of information and the economy that requires critical thinking, teachers need to empower the abilities and opportunities of their students. Teachers need to enable students to think critically and independently, and be responsible for and involved in their learning [40]. Students need to be self-directed and become active players in the academic learning enterprise. On all these accounts, it is time to advance from two-dimensional teacher-to-student instruction to three dimensional student-centered learning where students and teachers are involved in a project work. According to Y. Watanabe and M. Caprio from Rikkyo University (Japan), "the latter can allow for a depth in the learning process through the students and teachers active participation in the learning process – a participation that allows for an unlimited amount of creativity" [35].

Strong, research evidence exists today in support of the implementation of learner-centered approaches instead of instructor-centered or teacher-centered approaches. Knowledge of this research helps instructors defend their teaching methods before their students and more traditional faculty peers. A task force of the American Psychological Association (APA) integrated this research into fourteen (14) Learner-Centered Psychological Principles, which can be summarized through the following five domains. (1) *The knowledge base*. The conclusive result of decades of research on knowledge base – is that of what a person already knows – largely determines what new information he/ she attends to, how he/she organizes and represents new information, how he/she filters new experiences, and even what he/she determines to be important or relevant [41]. (2) *Strategic processing and executive control*. The ability to influence on and regulate one's thoughts and behaviors is an essential aspect of learning. According to Dr. Barbara L. McCombs from the University of Denver, successful students are actively involved in their own learning, monitor their thinking, consider their personal needs and perspectives in learning, and assume responsibility for their own

learning outcomes [42]. (3) *Motivation and affect.* The benefits of learner-centered education include increased motivation for learning and greater satisfaction with school. Both of these outcomes lead to greater achievement. Research shows that personal involvement, intrinsic motivation, personal commitment, confidence in one's abilities to succeed, and a perception of control over learning lead to more learning and higher achievement in school [41]. (4) *Development and individual differences.* Individuals progress through various common stages of development, influenced by both inherited and environmental factors. Changes in how people think, believe, or behave will all depend on a combination of factors, such as: one's inherited abilities, stages of development, individual differences, capabilities, experiences, specific context or task provided, and differing environmental conditions [41]. (5) *Situation or context.* Theories of learning that highlight the roles of active engagement and social interaction in the students' own construction of knowledge, according to L.S. Vygotsky [24], strongly support the learner-centered paradigm. Learning is a social process, many environmental factors including how the instructor teaches and how actively the student is engaged into the learning process may influence positively or negatively on how much, and what really students will learn [21]. The studies prove that there are significantly more learning advantages and gains with the active learning within the learner-centered teaching mode of delivery rather than with instructor-centered teaching: colleges and universities attain higher rates of student retention and have better prepared and competitive graduates than those students who were only traditionally trained [21; 30; 36; 37; 39].

5   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to clarify the essence of two approaches and determine which is best for teaching/ learning practices, we compared both teacher-centered and student-centered methods and distinguished what could be proposed as pros and cons of each. In teacher-centered classroom, students put all of their focus on the teacher, i.e. the teacher delivers material in solo, and students exclusively listen. During activities, students mostly work alone, and collaboration is discouraged. When a classroom operates within a student-centered instruction, students and teachers share the focus. Instead of listening to the teacher exclusively, students and teachers interact equally and group work is encouraged, while students learn to collaborate and communicate with one another [43; 44]. In the course of analysis during the study, it has been established that teacher-centered format is regarded by most scholars as a more traditional approach [43; 44] while student-centered format is newer, more progressive and more closely associated with other innovative models such as active learning, cooperative learning, collaborative learning, inductive learning, blended learning, technology-based learning (including e-Learning, Web-based learning (WBL), mLearning (mobile learning), distance learning, distributed learning, open electronic and other forms of online learning), etc. [16; 44]. In the United States, for example, the most significant shift toward student-centered teaching came in 2001 with the passing of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which was later replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015. Originally, the major goal of NCLB was to provide equal educational opportunities for disadvantaged (poor or minors) students. The law held schools accountable for how students learned and achieved. Also, the law aimed to bridge all students, including those in special education, up to the "proficient" level on tests [45]. Since then, student-centered teaching has become the preferred method for K-12 instruction. However, both styles have their own benefits and drawbacks [44].

When education is teacher-centered, the classroom remains orderly: students are quiet, make notes while teacher retains full control of the classroom and its activities. At the same time, since students learn on their own, they acquire independence and try to make their own decisions. As long as the teacher directs all classroom activities, they don't have to worry that students will miss an important topic [43]. One of the strengths of teacher-centered instruction are high academic standards and dedication to time-tested classroom practices [46]. At the same time when students work alone, they don't learn to collaborate and cooperate with other students, and their communication skills may suffer. Also, teacher-centered instruction can be boring and outdated for students. Their minds may wander, and they may miss important facts and data. Generally speaking, teacher-centered instruction may limit or even discourage some students from fully expressing themselves, asking questions, directing their own learning needs and styles and achieving the desired outcomes and results [39; 43].

Student-centered methods encourage teachers to take the time to help each student develop a rich understanding of the subject, and provide individual attention to students who learn differently, so as to help them reach their goals [47]. The teacher-centered style often involves simply moving on to new material as soon as teachers feel they have sufficiently covered the required amount of time for the previous material. On the contrary, student-centered environments do a better job in helping students apply the lessons they learn to real life situations, along with the teamwork, collaboration, cooperation

and communication skills required to complete difficult tasks and apply them in future at workplace [48]. One of the strengths of student-centered method prides itself on making teachers find new ways to engage students within the subject material through hands-on experience and rich group activities. In a student-centered classroom, students often work in teams, and even if they're not particularly interested in the subject matter, their assigned roles within their teams will keep them busy and their thoughts occupied [49]. At the same time, the needs of individual students are stressed over class performance as a whole since student-centered teaching takes the focus off the teacher's delivery of lesson materials and places it on the needs of each student [50]. No wonder that in recent years, more teachers have moved toward a student-centered approach. However, some students admit that teacher-centered education is more effective strategy. In most cases, it is best for teachers to use a combination of approaches to ensure that all academic requirement and students` needs are met [48].

The major question for teachers is how to create classrooms where students will be motivated and engaged, where they will communicate using English with others, and where they will become more independent and interdependent in their learning [10]. Creating student-centered classrooms (SCC) can significantly increase probability of accomplishing this task. Students are provided with opportunity to expand their knowledge beyond the original context and classroom. The focus here is on creation of real-life situations allowing for more cultural and contextual authenticity. It is essential for teachers to keep to the following: efficacy of true SCC relates to the three connected elements, namely, planning, instruction, and assessment. Thus, teachers should remember that since the primary goal of SCCs is to help students acquire skills, proficiency and independence, the process of SCC development needs planning and efforts. When the teacher plans lesson there is a need to seek background information about students, identify the specific short-term learning goals for each class and students, share these goals with learners, identify the specific long-term learning goals for each unit and share these goals with students as well. There shall be a confidence that both short-term and long-term goals have real meaning and value for students. Teachers shall involve their students into the process of planning and initially define the requirements sufficient to demonstrate that learners have achieved the goals [48].

In addition, since student-centered instruction generally revolves around the needs and abilities of students, teachers might facilitate here a variety of learning modes and opportunities: experiential, authentic, holistic, ICT-based, communicative, collaborative, etc. [10]. Teachers should always correlate their instructional goals with learners' needs, backgrounds, and interests. The goals must also be purposeful, meaningful and valuable from students` point of view. Teachers should realize, for example, that not all tasks related to listening, speaking or writing would be truly communicative [4]. If students read a dialogue in front of a class, perform a role-play, or describe a picture in a textbook, they will not necessarily produce communication. Effective communicative tasks need some problem behind them in order to be resolved or a task to be completed using students' critical thinking skills. The task here should have some relevance to the students working on it and preferably, this relevance should be beyond the aim of "grades" only for completing the task. Examples of learner-centered classroom activities may include: think-pair-share; learner logs; application cards; admit and exit slips; pair and small group work; journal writing; interviewing native speakers; rubrics and self-assessments; peer assessment; a portfolio like LinguaFolioOnline (https://linguafolio.uoregon.edu/) that shows what students can achieve using the target language (EFL), etc. [6]. And finally, all student-centered activities and further assessment must be truly diligent and authentic. Without practice, most learners cannot exactly judge what they know and what they don't know. As with collaborative group work, in order to get the effective impact, teachers must design well-structured tasks with clear requirements and predictable learning outcomes well understandable to students. Besides, teachers will still need to carefully monitor all students` activities and offer constant feedback. Performance assessment will involve students in activity, which requires mastery of certain performance skills or their ability to create products that meet certain standards of quality, etc. This way teacher may establish short-term benchmarks to monitor students' progress. The benchmarks must be relevant to the curriculum so that the students are able to easily identify them. With the portfolio system, teachers may guide students to self-assessment modality, help them document their learning needs and paths, track their progress and reflect achievements, help them to set increasingly more challenging goals, etc. [35]. As we see, despite its obvious benefits, organization of an effective student-centered teaching and learning might be quite difficult and time-consuming and may require a change of mindset of everyone involved [30].

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