

*Л.Г. Саноцька, канд. філол. наук, доцент  
(Львівський національний університет імені Івана Франка)*

## SHIFTING THE FOCUS OF THE CLASSROOM: FROM TEACHER TO STUDENT

The article investigates learning styles and preferences of a group of university students and their attitude to innovative interactive lecturing style. The article determines that students with various learning strategies find interactive lecturing effective. It is proved that both independent learners and teacher-oriented students can benefit from interactive lectures providing the teacher caters for the needs of the second sub-group of students helping them to rid themselves of the 'old school' problems.

**Key words:** interactive lecture, independent learner, teacher-oriented learner, dogmatic approach, teacher-centred, learner-centred.

Traditional methods of instruction in higher education in Ukraine originating from the model of standardization used to prepare students for artificial environments. Dogmatic approaches based on dominating position of the teacher limited students' conscious participation in international academic life, which, consequently, led to, social and cultural isolation. Implementing innovative approaches in higher education, which would construct the background for preventing students from frustration, disbelief in personal development and personal participation in local and global society development and intercultural digression is the primary goal of tertiary education nowadays.

In order to minimize the teacher's domination in the classroom or lecturing auditorium it is necessary to learn students' needs, focus on students' learning students' and strategies. Much has been written about preferred approaches to learning in different countries. Researchers state that in some cultures students follow 'basic beliefs, values and consequent behaviour', which factors 'discipline' them towards communicative approaches [5, 284]. Active involvement of students in teaching-learning in-class process presupposes matching learning styles to teaching styles with a greater part of 'learning' constituent [1]. According to Nunan attitudes and expectations of the students are factors that influence effectiveness of a language program [2, 177]. Richards suggests that several characteristics of the students be analysed in order to ensure the learners' increasing interest and involvement in the learning process [4, 101-102]. Although Richards writes mainly about learning languages, we suppose his findings can be applicable in broader learning contexts. Investigating such factors as past learning experiences, learners' expectations for the programme, learners' views on teaching, students' learning approaches as well as expectations for teacher's and learners' roles can provide valuable material for choosing a more effective teaching approach.

In terms of analyzing mental processes which learners employ to use and learn, or procedural knowledge possible correlation have been hypothesized between learning preferences and biographical variables, such as: ethnic group, age group etc. But further research dismantled the hypothesis because 'within any biographical group the same spectrum of opinion on each learning issue was represented' [3, 167-188]. This leads to conclusion that personality factors are more significant for learning strategy preferences than socio-cultural variables or educational background. As far as teacher's role is concerned, according to Tudor, the teacher should be flexible in the choice of methodology in order to respond to the needs of the students and foster learner involvement [7, 197]. Moreover, according to Wenden, students are meant to be self-sufficient problem-solvers, and learner training should be incorporated in the classroom and must be approached systematically [8, 159]. Another important aspect in learner-centred teaching is personalizing the teaching-learning process. Personalization, which, according to Taylor means encouraging students to bring their own information into lesson activity, is important in terms of involving students in

planning and building their own learning. Taylor asserts that the information which students deliver by themselves is more meaningful to them as it relates to the immediate environment [6, 26].

Although, according to Nunan, 'it is premature to reject the notion that there is no correlation' between learning strategy preferences and the 'good learner', we suppose there is a connection between certain 'good learner' characteristics and the ways learners prefer to work, because successful learners' strategies evidently lead to more effective learning [3, 175]. After Rubin and Thompson Nunan states that 'good learners' 'find their own way' in learning the language which implies organizing information about language, finding their own strategies for getting practice in using the language in and out of the classroom, making errors work etc. Nunan claims that following the learner-centred approach the teacher can administer surveys and discussions, in which the learners can be encouraged to reflect on their attitudes and preferences [3, 176]. Undoubtedly, the advantages of this approach include students' awareness of their own preferred ways of learning, knowing that there are choices in 'what to learn' and 'how to learn'. Moreover, learners become more flexible in their approaches to learning.

In order to investigate the students' needs and learning style preferences I have conducted a case study involving quantitative and qualitative research methods in two parts. The main goal of the first part of my research was to know about the 'learning' factors the students find most valuable, in other words, how the students learn. I administered a survey in the group of bachelor university English Philology students. The questionnaire included questions about the most and least helpful things in learning English. The results are given in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Factors which the students find most helpful in learning English*

<b>Activities or factors</b>	<b>Rating</b>		
	<b>1 – 3</b>	<b>4 – 6</b>	<b>7 – 10</b>
Grammar / pronunciation rules	60%	30%	10%
Grammar / pronunciation training	0%	10%	90%
Accessing media – radio, TV, newspapers	20%	60%	20%
Formal classes with a teacher	60%	20%	20%
Conversation with native speakers	0%	10%	90%
Motivation	0%	60%	40%

About 60% of the respondents also added other most helpful aspects: reading books, reading activities, speaking activities, visiting other countries.

As can be seen on Table 1, the students evaluated grammar / pronunciation training higher than rules. The learners also found important both factors: accessing media and motivation, however, motivation proved to be more helpful (40% of respondents gave it the highest rating: 7 – 10). Conversation with native speakers is more preferable for the vast majority of the respondents (90%) than formal classes with a teacher, which was rated 1 – 3 by more than a half of the learners.

Among the least helpful things the students identified 'poor teaching' (80%), which means that the authority of the teacher is still important and they expect more from him/her. 60% of the students mentioned 'fear of making mistakes' and 'being criticized/punished', which is symptomatic for authoritarian teaching styles and may lead to overall language anxiety. Eventually, poor teaching, in the process of which the teacher dominates, tactlessly criticizes or even humiliates the student, leads to fear of making mistakes and, consequently, motivated students get disillusioned in this style of classroom teaching and seek for alternative ways of learning the language. Unfortunately, in this teaching environment the unmotivated ones won't achieve much progress. As 'the least helpful factors' the students also regarded 'using L1 in the lesson too often' and 'lack of opportunity to use the TG', which means that the students feel necessity of practicing the TL more often, especially in the class.

The survey also provided data about the preferable students' ways of acquiring skills and learning to use systems of the TL. The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Students' Learning Styles*

<b>Best way of learning</b> <b>Skills and systems</b>	<b>on their own</b>	<b>in the classroom with a teacher</b>	<b>other</b>
vocabulary	70%	10%	30% – on my own –use dictionary to perform a task
pronunciation	80%	70%	20% – on my own by reading aloud
reading	70%	70%	10 – on my own preparing for exams
writing	80%	40%	60 – on my own by reading 10 – on my own by listening
listening	80%	50%	50 – on my own talking to people
speaking	20%	80%	100 – talking to people in formal (classroom) and /or informal situations

Analysis of the data allowed us to identify two sub-groups of learners: 'the teacher-oriented' and 'the independent'. Teacher-oriented students expect the teacher to 'check on' their vocabulary acquisition or correct mispronounced patterns; to provide the model of perfect pronunciation, which they will follow. The teacher-oriented are ashamed of the mistakes they make. On the other hand, independent learners appreciate informal situations, in which, by speaking to other people, they improve their speaking skills. The independent prefer to listen and practice, talk to native speakers and repeat pronunciation patterns after them, look up for transcription. They do not recognize the authority of the teacher as a person who is always right because in many learning situations the teacher is optional. In texts for reading they can see patterns which may be used in speaking. They understand that mistakes are a normal learning phenomenon and they can learn by mistakes. Strongly motivated independent learners watch videos, talk over the Skype, learn to speak by speaking. They improve reading skills by reading for pleasure. Independent learners consider reading and listening to be their 'teachers' in speaking and writing, as language patterns are provided by listening/reading texts. The independent frequently use the dictionary, enthusiastically memorizing '*interesting and important* words'. They prefer to focus on the task at hand. 'Completely' independent learners claim that "it's too noisy in the classroom and less likely to keep words in mind"; 'if I learn words on my own I can focus on the usage, spelling and pronunciation'. Besides, the kinesthetic learners prefer to learn words or learn how to read and write by fulfilling tasks, the visual learners memorize transcription of words, auditory students claim that they learn mostly by listening.

The aim of the second part of my research was to learn if interactive lecturing style is appropriate in teaching Methodology to English Philology bachelor students. I have been observing the students participating in my experimental interactive lectures for about a month. I have also been informally speaking to students in order to learn their attitude to this new way of lecturing as

throughout their previous university studies the lectures were delivered in the traditional teaching style. The students were suggested to identify the best strategy to learn theoretical disciplines.

The vast majority of the respondents (80%) prefer to study 'in the classroom with a teacher, listening and participating in the interactive lecture. They find it important that they can express their own ideas, negotiating with the teacher and group mates. They feel more confident while negotiating with the teacher. Even if they do not participate in discussions they benefit from listening to others. Here are some quotes: "Only when I'm interested in the process and participate in it – I feel satisfaction from the activity"; "When you try to express your idea, it gives you a chance to establish your own attitude towards the problem", "We are all accustomed to passive listening to lectures and taking notes, but I believe that participating in lectures facilitates understanding and memorizing", "Interactive lectures is the best way to ask the teacher about something you don't understand or want to know".

About 60% of the respondents assert that interactive lectures are helpful in their exam preparation because immediate explanation for vague issues is provided on the spot, and 'additional motivation, energy and optimism from communication with the teacher' helps learning.

One of the benefits of interactive lectures, according to the students, is the influence on developing their self-esteem and self-confidence, which was acknowledged by a vast majority of the respondents (over 80%). About 30% of the students feel that interacting with the teacher and cooperating in groups in the lecture helps to overcome shyness and develop analytical skills. Interactive lectures are 'motivating and interesting', 'improve speaking and listening skills', 'the teacher and students get to know each other better'.

However, about 15% of the students do not feel completely comfortable in the interactive lectures. This is a group of teacher-oriented students who feel embarrassed negotiating with the teacher, often for fear of not speaking accurately. They write that they "don't want to sound stupid (when they) make mistakes, or feel embarrassed (when they are) corrected and criticized". That is why this group seem to prefer 'old ways' – only listening and taking notes after the teacher. Among the drawbacks to interactive lectures, according to the students, the following were mentioned most often: not all students can participate; weaker students can't keep up with the pace; discussion takes too much time and not everything planned is covered.

The outcome of the survey allows us to state that the majority of the group is independent learners, open to active participation in teaching-learning process, conscious of their role in this process. Those students tend to acquire new learning skills and experiment with new learning strategies. They approve of implementing interactive lectures and seem to benefit from them. The minority are authority/teacher-oriented. So far they prefer teacher-dominating classroom and their own passive role in it seems convenient to them because they are used to it. However, their arguments prove that the problems can be remedied by eliminating several issues of 'old school': establishing non-humiliating attitude towards errors alongside with more tactful approach towards a student making them, applying group-work activities instead of open class discussions as an alternative in the interactive lecture.

To conclude, the learning styles preferred by the learners demonstrate the need for more active participation of the students in teaching-learning process, which implies shifting of the focus of the classroom from teacher to learner. Interactive lecture is solution to learners' inertia and passive role in learning because it encourages students to think critically, solve mini-tasks, develops imagination and memory. Administering open-ended activities help students to demonstrate their individuality by expressing their opinions. Such method involves learners' conscious and creative participation in the learning process and serves to raise its effectiveness. Moreover, students will consequently experience fewer difficulties in exploring their own spheres of professional interest, produce high-value projects and dissertations, avoid plagiarizing their research. Overall, focus on the learner contributes to formation of higher standards of professional competence as a result of making students more responsible for their own learning, preparing them for survival in the 'real life' academic and social environments of the globalized world. It democratizes the 'auditorium space', equals the teacher and the learner in a constructive dialogue.

### **Bibliography:**

1. **Clenton J.** Learning Styles and the Japanese / Clenton J. – Sussex: University of Sussex. – 1998. – [Електронний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: [www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/documents/learningstylesjapanese.pdf](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/documents/learningstylesjapanese.pdf)
2. **Nunan D.** Hidden Agendas: the role of the learner in programme implementation / D. Nunan // Johnson R.K. The Second Language Curriculum. – New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989. – P. 176-187.
3. **Nunan D.** Language Teaching Methodology / Nunan D. – New York: Prentice Hall, 1991. – 263 p.
4. **Richards J.** Curriculum development in language teaching / Richards J. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. – 275 p.
5. **Sampson R. J.** Student-negotiated Lesson Style / Sampson R. J. // RELC Journal, 41 (3). – 2010. – P. 283-299.
6. **Taylor J.** The Minimax Teacher: Minimise Teacher Input and Maximise Student Output Professional Perspectives / Taylor J. – London: Delta ELT Publishing LTD, 2009. – 124 p.
7. **Tudor I.** Learner-centredness as Language Education / Tudor I. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. – 279 p.
8. **Wenden A., Rubin J.** Learner Strategies in Language Learning / Wenden A., Rubin J. – New York: Prentice Hall, 1987. – 181 p.

*Саноцька Л.Г.*

### **ЗМІНА ФОКУСУ АУДИТОРНОЇ РОБОТИ: ВІД ВИКЛАДАЧА ДО СТУДЕНТА**

Статтю присвячено дослідженню стилів навчання групи студентів університету та їхнього відношення до інтерактивного методу проведення лекційних занять. Визначено, що студенти з різними навчальними стратегіями вважають інтерактивні лекції ефективними. Доведено, що студенти з навичками самостійної роботи, так само як і студенти, які орієнтуються на викладача, можуть оцінити переваги інтерактивної лекції, якщо викладач позбудеться «проблем старої школи», які впливають на ефективність роботи другої підгрупи студентів.

**Ключові слова:** інтерактивна лекція, студенти з навичками самостійної роботи, студенти, які орієнтуються на викладача, догматичний підхід.

---

*Саноцькая Л.Г.*

### **ИЗМЕНЕНИЕ ФОКУСА АУДИТОРНОЙ РАБОТЫ: ОТ ПРЕПОДАВАТЕЛЯ К СТУДЕНТУ**

Статья посвящена исследованию стилей обучения группы студентов университета, а также их отношения к интерактивному методу проведения лекционных занятий. Определено, что студенты с разными учебными стратегиями считают интерактивные лекции эффективными. Доказано, что, как студенты с навыками самостоятельной работы, так и студенты, ориентирующиеся на преподавателя, могут оценить преимущества интерактивной лекции, если преподаватель избавится от «проблем старой школы», которые влияют на эффективность работы второй подгруппы студентов.

**Ключевые слова:** интерактивная лекция, студенты с навыками самостоятельной работы, студенты, ориентирующиеся на преподавателя, догматический подход.