ОСВІТНІ ІННОВАЦІЇ: ІДЕЇ, РЕАЛІЇ, ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ

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ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES OF STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING IN ARMED CONFLICT

Abstract

The article analyzes the key advantages and challenges of implementing student-centered learning in conditions of armed conflict. It is argued that student-centered learning functions not only as an educational approach, but also as a necessity that ensures flexibility, adaptability, and personalized support for each higher education student. The role of this approach is examined in both peacetime and wartime contexts.

Particular attention is paid to the development of essential qualities that future professionals should possess. One significant educational benefit of the student-centered approach is its potential to create effective conditions for foreign language acquisition. The individualization of the learning process, student autonomy, and the ability to choose educational materials based on personal interests and needs all contribute to increasing the motivation of future foreign language teachers.

Student-centered learning supports the organization of language practice through real communicative situations, significantly enhancing language competence. The approach also actively incorporates interactive methods such as role-playing, debates, interviews, and project-based learning, which not only increase engagement but also effectively develop communicative skills.

The use of digital resources–such as podcasts, online courses, and subtitled videos–is highlighted as a key component of student-centered learning, helping to individualize the educational process and address diverse student needs.

The study establishes that a crucial element of student-centered learning is ongoing feedback between teachers and students. It concludes that the effective implementation of this approach in conditions of armed conflict is possible only through close collaboration among all participants in the educational process, flexible learning organization, and the creation of opportunities for each student to realize their full potential.

Key words: student-centered learning, student-centered approach, autonomy, adaptationn, university student, the higher education students, future foreign language teachers.

Introduction. Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, has led to dramatic changes in all areas of life, particularly education. Unfortunately, no city in Ukraine has been an exception. According to Presidential Decree No. 64/2022 «On the introduction of martial law in Ukraine», educational institutions were forced to switch to distance learning. Distance learning proved challenging due to internet access issues, technical glitches and, certainly, the unstable situation in the region. At the same time, given security challenges, organizing the educational process at city universities and colleges required new approaches to ensuring educational quality and supporting students and lecturers. This period undoubtedly tested the educational systems of all regions of the country, demonstrating their adaptability and resilience in crisis situations.

Distance learning has become the main format of education in all cities of Ukraine. While this format ensures continuous learning, it also creates a number of challenges. Power outages and internet issues make it difficult to participate in classes, complete assignments and communicate with lecturers. Students accustomed to traditional lectures and practical classes often experience difficulties. As is well known, distance learning requires a different approach and self-discipline,

but fortunately, most have adapted. Current unfavorable conditions in Ukraine have undoubtedly exacerbated the problem of university students adapting to academic activities, raising the bar for quality and effectiveness in real-life situations. It's clear that during Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, the social adaptation of university students has become significantly more challenging. Stress and anxiety related to the situation in the country have had a significant impact on students' overall well-being, motivation, and performance. Furthermore, more than half of the students have high or moderate levels of anxiety. They experience anxiety about almost anything, which can be exacerbated by stressful situations, and are unable to independently and adequately respond to difficulties. They also choose ineffective ways to manage anxiety and are unable to fully cope with critical or extreme situations. It is here, in this crisis, that student-centered learning (SCL) comes to the rescue. It is with this approach that each student has an excellent opportunity to become an active, conscious and responsible participant in the educational process. He begins to demonstrate more independence, takes initiative and responsibility for his learning. In student-centered learning (SCL), the autonomy of students expands and this factor contributes to the increase in their self-organization, the development of leadership potential and critical thinking.

Therefore, modern educational approaches are increasingly focused on the active role of the learner. One such approach is student-centered learning (SCL), in which the student becomes not simply a recipient of knowledge but a participant and co-author of the learning process. In peacetime, this approach demonstrates significant potential for increasing motivation, developing critical thinking, and fostering academic autonomy. However, in armed conflict, where basic living and educational conditions are disrupted, the implementation of SCL faces particular challenges.

The goal of the research. Due to the stated above, the goal of this research is important and relevant. The goal of the article is connected with the analysis of the advantages and challenges of implementing student-centered learning in wartime conditions, as well as an identification of pedagogical and organizational aspects that require special attention.

The main material presentation. Today, the issues of a student-centered approach are widely discussed among both domestic and foreign specialists (Rashkevych Yu [2]., Soroka Yu [4]., Bremner N. [7] etc.). In the context of student-centered learning, special attention is paid to the formation of key qualities that a future specialist should possess. Among them are the ability to find employment, the presence of the necessary set of knowledge, skills and abilities, the ability to solve production tasks, as well as motivation for constant professional growth and self-improvement. In the process of learning, the development of employability includes the mastery of a number of competencies, in particular: the ability to self-organize, work effectively in a team, perform practical tasks, communicate, express oneself competently, use information technologies and master foreign languages. Such universal skills are relevant for specialists of any professional field [1, p. 28]. We share the opinion of A. Stebletsky that the quality of education is determined by the effectiveness of teacher-student interaction, which depends on five principles: benevolence, openness, impartiality, constructiveness, and the pursuit of excellence [6]. The student-centered approach assumes a shift in emphasis from the lecturer as the main source of knowledge to the student as an active participant in the educational process. The main principles of SCL include individualization, active participation, independence, reflection and cooperation. At the same time, the lecturer acts as a facilitator, creating conditions for effective assimilation of knowledge, and not just as a transmitter. As mentioned above, armed conflicts damage educational infrastructure, disrupt logistics, limit access to technology, and create instability and anxiety for all participants in the educational process. In such circumstances, students often have to balance their studies with the need to take care of themselves, their safety and that of their loved ones. Psycho-emotional stress, unstable communications, and lack of access to educational materials seriously hamper traditional forms of learning.

However, despite the difficulties, it is the student-centered approach that can become the basis for the sustainability of learning in crisis conditions. Flexibility and adaptability play a key role here. SCL allows each student to adapt the pace and format of their learning to their individual circumstances, which is especially valuable when traveling, experiencing internet outages, or experiencing psychological instability. It is also important to mention the support of the student's internal motivation. With the same success, the student-centered approach contributes to the preservation of individual subjectivity and the development of self-organization skills. Autonomy and participation in decision-making increase engagement and interest in learning, even in difficult conditions. When external circumstances disrupt students' normal routines, having control over at least the learning process helps students maintain a sense of control and meaning. Learning through independent planning and reflection develops the competencies necessary for living in an unstable reality. According to M. Weimer, student-centered learning is based on rethinking the role of the teacher and the active involvement of the student in the decision-making process, which is especially important in conditions of instability and the need for flexible adaptation of the educational process [9, p. 20]. In times of crisis and trauma, it's important to consider not only the academic but also the emotional needs of students. Zembylas emphasizes the importance of a «pedagogy of discomfort» and a trauma-informed approach, especially when implementing flexible learning modalities such as SCL [10, p. 765]. Self-Determination Theory, developed by Deci and Ryan, emphasizes that intrinsic motivation is supported by three basic needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These are the principles that underpin student-centered learning [8].

One of the important educational potentials of the student-centered approach is the creation of conditions for effective learning of foreign languages. Individualization of the educational process, autonomy of students and the ability to choose educational materials according to their own interests and needs contribute to increased motivation. As noted by Rohach, it is SCL that allows organizing language practice on the basis of real communicative situations, which significantly increases the level of language competence [3].

Motivation increases when the applicants for higher education see real-world language use because nowadays it's impossible to find a high-paying and promising job without mastering any foreign language. Thanks to the autonomous nature of the student-centered approach, future foreign language teachers can choose topics that interest them (music,

film, business correspondence, computer engineering, ICT etc.). Flexibility of pacing also plays a significant role in student-centered learning. Students never fall behind if they master the material more slowly. Student-centered learning actively integrates interactive methods, including role-playing, debates, interviews and projects, which not only increase interest, but also effectively develop speaking competence. The use of digital resources, such as podcasts, online courses, subtitled videos, etc., is an important component of student-centered learning, as it contributes to the individualization of the educational process and the consideration of the diverse learning needs of students.

Let's consider several examples of role-playing games and debates that contribute to the development of the speech competence of future foreign language teachers.

Example 1.

Role play: «Job Interview»

Situation: Students act out an interview situation: some play the role of recruiters, others play the role of job candidates.

Objectives:

– to develop formal speaking skills;

– to learn to formulate answers to typical questions;

– to adapt vocabulary to the professional context;

SCL elements: Students choose companies, positions, prepare questions/answers, receive individual feedback.

Example 2.

Debate: «Online education is better than traditional classroom learning»

Situation: Students are divided into teams «for» and «against», prepare arguments and conduct debates in English.

Objectives:

– to practice persuasive speaking skills;

– to practice spontaneous speaking;

– to form critical thinking in English.

SCL elements: Students choose or formulate topics themselves, discuss the rules of the debate, and evaluate each other.

The use of problem-based learning as an educational tool, where students learn material through solving real problems and tasks, encourages them to think critically and develop analytical skills. Problem-based learning is a method in which students learn by solving open, complex, often real problems. The teacher does not provide ready-made solutions, but acts as a facilitator or mentor. The main features of problem-based learning are: learning based on practical situations, the development of critical thinking, team work and independent search for knowledge.

Let's consider another example.

Situation (problem):

«A new foreign student who does not know Ukrainian is coming to your group. You need to prepare a short English-language guide to the university and the city to help him adapt».

Students' tasks:

– find out what issues are usually of concern to foreign students (accommodation, dining room, transportation, safety, library, etc.);

– create a short glossary of useful words and phrases in English;

– prepare a booklet / presentation or even a 3-5 minutes video guide in English;

– present the work to other students.

What is developed:

– practical use of everyday vocabulary;

– explanation and description skills;

– teamwork skills;

– intercultural communication.

Student-centered learning promotes a more mutually responsible approach to the educational process, as students feel a personal role in their own learning. In particular, it contributes to the development of self-regulation skills, namely: the ability to plan their time, manage tasks and set personal educational goals. At the same time, the lecturer needs to take into account that not all students have a high level of self-discipline because some students may have limited experience of independent learning and need more support and guidance from the lecturer.

As we can see, in student-centered learning, an important aspect is the feedback between the lecturer and students. It includes a discussion of the results precisely so that students can analyze their individual progress and improve the quality of their learning. In the context of wartime realities and digital transformations in education, the flexibility of the educational process is becoming more important than ever. The use of online platforms, e-courses and other digital resources provides students with the opportunity to learn at their own pace and according to their abilities and needs, which are also elements of partnership between the lecturer and the student and the implementation of student-centeredness in higher educational institutions.

The main goal of student-centered learning is to create conditions that allow each student to adapt to modern challenges as effectively as possible. At the same time, in this process, contradictions may arise between students' expectations regarding the improvement of the educational process and the real possibilities of its implementation. In particular, students seek to more actively influence the content, methods, pace and forms of learning, relying on their own needs and individual

characteristics, which turns them into full-fledged participants in the educational process. However, sometimes teachers do not show readiness to introduce flexible learning trajectories, apply innovative methods or play the role of a mentor who accompanies the student in the process of acquiring knowledge. In the opposite case, the lecturer acts as a leader and consultant, which contributes to the formation of students' competencies, structuring and deepening their knowledge. He also provides effective counseling and motivational support in selecting sources of information, creating adequate learning situations and overcoming identified gaps in knowledge [5, p. 380].

However, along with the advantages, the implementation of SCL in wartime conditions is associated with a number of limitations. Not all students have equal access to resources (internet, devices, safe spaces), and therefore, the opportunity to fully participate in student-centered learning. It is this factor that indicates inequality of opportunity. Psycho-emotional overload also leaves its mark. A high degree of autonomy requires concentration, planning, and self-control, which may not be possible under stress or trauma. Students very often suffer from a lack of pedagogical support, disorganization and so-called «disorientation». This happens because lecturers in wartime conditions also face personal difficulties and are not always able to provide individual support. Without clear boundaries and support, students may become anxious, lose motivation and fall behind in their learning.

Based on the above, the question arises as to how to turn the disadvantages of student-centered teaching of future foreign language teachers into advantages. First, students require a high degree of self-discipline and independence, which they may not be ready for. This requires developing skills in self-organization, motivation, and responsibility, which are valuable for future professional development. Lecturers can establish a support system, such as mentoring or clear planning to help students adapt to the new reality of war. Secondly, some students may not be well prepared to independently search for information and make decisions. They can sometimes be lazy and don't understand why it's necessary. In this situation, the teacher needs to convey to students a clear position on the fact that it is the independent search for relevant information that stimulates the development of creativity, critical thinking skills and independent search for solutions, which goes beyond the simple acquisition of knowledge. Thirdly, sometimes there are difficulties in formulating the problem and finding the necessary information. In this case, lecturers have a wonderful opportunity to use real-life and social issues to make learning more relevant and motivating. Lecturers can use real-life and social issues to make learning more relevant and motivating, as in service-learning. This allows students to better understand community issues and develop civic position. Fourth, preparing classes in a student-centered format requires more time from the lecturer. Despite this, lecturers have greater freedom in choosing their teaching methods, allowing them to use active learning methods and energize the learning process. This promotes flexibility in teaching and the ability to use a variety of methods to achieve learning goals.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. Student-centered learning in armed conflict settings is not a one-size-fits-all solution, but a potentially powerful resource. Its successful implementation requires attentive pedagogical support, a balance between autonomy and support, and consideration of the students' real-life context. Lecturers and educational institutions should consider SCL as a flexible model that can be adapted depending on the situation, and not as a strict methodology that is the same for everyone. In the conditions of a crisis, it is especially important to remember that support is not always a structure, but it is not always freedom either: the main thing is to be close.

Student-centered learning in armed conflict is emerging not only as an educational approach, but as a necessity that ensures flexibility, adaptability, and individual support for each learner. Its key benefits, namely, the development of independence, critical thinking, and the ability to self-organize and self-learn become particularly important in conditions of instability and limited access to traditional learning environments.

At the same time, in wartime, significant difficulties arise in implementing a student-centered approach: limited resources, psychological instability of students and lecturer, unequal access to technology, lack of a safe learning environment and reduced motivation to learn. This requires higher education institutions to rethink their educational strategy, develop more flexible, adaptive learning pathways, and strengthen the role of the teacher as a mentor and support for students' mental health.

Thus, effective implementation of student-centered learning in conditions of armed conflict is possible only with close interaction of all participants in the educational process, a flexible approach to organizing learning, and the creation of conditions for the development of the internal potential of each student.

Future research should focus on developing flexible models of student-centered learning for challenging environments, exploring how war impacts students' psychological well-being, and supporting teachers in their mentoring roles. It is also important to understand how social and economic factors impact access to education in such challenging times.

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ПЕРЕВАГИ ТА ВИКЛИКИ СТУДЕНТОЦЕНТРОВАНОГО НАВЧАННЯ В УМОВАХ ЗБРОЙНОГО КОНФЛІКТУ

Анотація

У статті проаналізовано ключові переваги та виклики впровадження студентоцентрованого навчання в умовах збройного конфлікту. Визначено, що студентоорієнтоване навчання постає не лише як освітній підхід, а й як необхідність, що забезпечує гнучкість, адаптивність та індивідуальну підтримку кожного здобувача вищої освіти. Розглянуто роль студентоцентрованого підходу як у мирний, так і у військовий час. У контексті студентоцентрованого навчання особлива увага приділяється формуванню ключових якостей, якими повинен володіти майбутній спеціаліст. Одним із важливих освітніх потенціалів студентоцентрованого підходу є створення умов для ефективного вивчення іноземних мов. Індивідуалізація навчального процесу, автономія студентів та можливість обирати навчальні матеріали відповідно до власних інтересів та потреб сприяють підвищенню мотивації майбутніх викладачів іноземних мов. Студентоцентроване навчання дозволяє організовувати мовну практику на основі реальних комунікативних ситуацій, що значно підвищує рівень мовної компетентності. Студентоцентроване навчання активно інтегрує інтерактивні методи, включаючи рольові ігри, дебати, інтерв'ю та проекти, які не лише підвищують інтерес, але й ефективно розвивають розмовну компетенцію. Використання цифрових ресурсів, таких як подкасти, онлайн-курси, відео з субтитрами тощо, є важливим компонентом студентоорієнтованого навчання, оскільки воно сприяє індивідуалізації освітнього процесу та врахуванню різноманітних навчальних потреб студентів. Встановлено, що у студентоцентрованому навчанні важливим аспектом є зворотний зв'язок між викладачем та здобувачем вищої освіти.

Доведено, що ефективне впровадження студентоцентрованого навчання в умовах збройного конфлікту можливе лише за тісної взаємодії всіх учасників освітнього процесу, гнучкого підходу до організації навчання та створення умов для розвитку внутрішнього потенціалу кожного студента.

Ключові слова: студентоцентроване навчання, студентоцентрований підхід, автономія, адаптація, студент, здобувачі вищої освіти, майбутні викладачі іноземної мови.

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