

## LEARNER-CENTERED TEACHING MODEL

Кулиева О.Н.

Белорусский государственный университет

Learning is a fundamentally natural process; learners are curious and basically interested in learning about their world and mastering it. However, negative thoughts and feelings sometimes interfere with this natural inclination and must be dealt with. How should we describe an environment where learning process occurs best? Naturally, this is one that contains positive interpersonal relationships and interactions, comfort and order, and in which the learner feels appreciated, acknowledged, respected and validated. Learning is most effective when it is an intentional process of constructing meaning from information and experience. How to create a positive educational environment and when is learning most effective?

First of all, it's necessary to clarify and to set the educational goals properly. Students set long-term general educational goals for themselves. There will always be a mixture of motives for attending higher education and choosing a particular set of courses. As students progress through higher education, their orientations and goals usually change. But the teachers should remember that the final goal of any successful learning process is to teach the students to be able, over time and with support and instructional guidance, to create meaningful, coherent representations of knowledge.

Secondly, teachers should recognize that learning is a dependent process as it is influenced by:

- environmental factors, including culture, technology, and instructional practices;
- social interactions, interpersonal relations, and communication with others;
- learners' linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds;
- the individual's emotional states, beliefs, interests and goals, and habits of thinking;
- different development within and across physical, intellectual, emotional, and social domains;
- different strategies, approaches, and capabilities for learning that are a function of learner's prior experience and heredity.

Thirdly, student's motivation to learn must be taken into account. Motivation has been widely accepted by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second/foreign language learning. The original impetus in second/foreign extrinsic motivation research comes from the social psychology since learning the language of another community simply cannot be separated from the learners' social dispositions towards the speech community. W.E. Lambert has proposed a social psychological model in which he has emphasized cognitive factors such as language aptitudes and intelligence as well as affective factors such as attitudes and motivation. In his model, he proposes that the extent to which an individual successfully acquires a second language will depend upon ethnocentric tendencies, attitudes towards the other community, orientation towards language learning and motivation [1]. Another pioneer in this field, R.C. Gardner, defines motivation as "the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" [2, c.10]. Motivation refers to the intensity of one's impetus to learn. An integrative orientation simply means that a learner is pursuing a second language for social and cultural purposes, and within that purpose, a learner could be driven by a high or low level of motivation. The learner's creativity, higher order thinking, and natural curiosity all contribute to learning. Intrinsic motivation is stimulated by tasks of optimal novelty and difficulty, relevant to personal interests, and providing for personal choice and control. Acquisition of complex knowledge and skills requires extended learner effort and guided practice. Without learners' motivation to learn, the willingness to exert this effort is unlikely realizable.

And finally, a learner-centered teacher should create and maintain the *feeling of success* in his/her students, because a successful learner is a person who can link new information with existing knowledge in meaningful ways, who can create and use a repertoire of thinking and reasoning strategies to achieve complex learning goals.

M. Weimer described five learner-centered practice areas that are necessary to achieve in learner-centered teaching: the Function of Content, the Role of the Instructor,

the Responsibility for Learning, the Processes and Purposes of Assessment, and the Balance of Power [3].

- *The functions of the content* in learner-centered teaching include building a strong knowledge foundation to develop learning skills and learner self-awareness.

- *The roles of the instructor* should focus on student learning. The roles are facilitative rather than didactic.

- *The responsibility for learning* shifts from the instructor to the students. The instructor creates learning environments that motivate students to accept responsibility for learning.

- *The processes and purposes of assessment* shift from only assigning grades to including feedback and assisting with improvement. Learner-centered teaching uses assessment as a part of the learning process.

- *The balance of power* shifts so that the instructor shares some decisions about the course with the students such that the instructor and the students collaborate on course policies and procedures.

Since these five practices are broad abstract categories, they do not identify specific learner-centered behaviors for many instructors. Ph.Blumberg defined each practice into specific components and incremental steps between instructor-centered and learner-centered teaching, which allow instructors to make changes gradually over time [4]. He organized these incremental steps into rubrics which provide concrete, incremental steps between levels and are used to grade student assignments objectively and effectively. Instead of assessing student performance, these rubrics are a tool to evaluate the status of a course on the continuum from instructor-centered to learner-centered for Weimer's five learner-centered practices. Instructors can see incremental steps, given on the rubrics, in the transformation process toward learner-centered teaching [5].

## References

1. Lambert, W. E. Culture and language as factors in learning and education / W. E. Lambert. // F. F. Aboud & R. D. Meade (Eds.). *Cultural factors in learning and education*. - Bellingham: Western Washington State University, 1974. – P.91-122.
2. Gardner, R.C. Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The role of attitudes and motivation / R.C. Gardner. - London: Edward Arnold, 1985.
3. Weimer, M. Learner-centered teaching. Five Key Changes to Practice / Maryellen Weimer. - San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.
4. Blumberg, P. Developing Learner-Centered Teaching: A Practical Guide for Faculty / P. Blumberg. - San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.
5. <http://www.usciences.edu/teaching/Learner-Centered/rubrics.pdf>