

Do Lectures Still Matter in EFL Teaching in Higher Education? Exploring Students' Perceptions in Fergana State University

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Abstract. Despite being a foundational method of instruction in universities for centuries, lecture-based teaching is now under increasing scrutiny regarding its pedagogical effectiveness in the age of digital transformation. This study investigates university students' perceptions of lecture classes, focusing on their effectiveness and engagement levels. The research was conducted among 68 undergraduate English language learners at Fergana State University, using a quantitative survey approach. A structured Google Form questionnaire containing 12 closed-ended items was administered to gather data on students' experiences and attitudes toward lecture classrooms. The findings suggest that a significant proportion of students view lecture-based classes as ineffective and disengaging. Key concerns raised include the lack of interaction, persistent classroom noise, and insufficient subject knowledge demonstrated by some instructors. The study also highlights a growing preference for more interactive, student-centered approaches such as group discussions, task-based learning, and technology-enhanced instruction. This research contributes to the ongoing debate on the future of traditional lectures in higher education, particularly within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts.

Keywords: lecture-based teaching, student perceptions, higher education, EFL, interactive learning

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Ali təhsildə EFL tədrisində mühazirələr hələ də əhəmiyyətlidir? Fərqa Dövlət Universitetində tələbələrin baxışlarının araşdırılması

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Xülasə. Əsrlər boyu universitetlərdə əsas tədris metodu olmasına baxmayaraq, mühazirə əsaslı tədris rəqəmsal transformasiya dövründə pedaqoji effektivliyi baxımından getdikcə daha çox diqqət mərkəzindədir. Bu tədqiqat universitet tələbələrinin mühazirə dərsləri haqqında qavrayışlarını araşdırır, onların effektivliyinə və cəlb olunma səviyyələrinə diqqət yetirir.

Tədqiqat Fərqanə Dövlət Universitetində bakalavriat səviyyəsində ingilis dili öyrənən 68 tələbə arasında kəmiyyət sorğusu yanaşmasından istifadə edilərək aparılmışdır. Tələbələrin təcrübələri və mühazirə siniflərinə münasibətləri haqqında məlumat toplamaq üçün 12 qapalı sualdan ibarət strukturlaşdırılmış Google Forms anketindən istifadə edilmişdir. Nəticələr göstərir ki, tələbələrin əhəmiyyətli bir hissəsi mühazirə əsaslı dərsləri səmərəsiz və maraqsız hesab edir. Qaldırılan əsas narahatlıqlar sırasına qarşılıqlı əlaqənin olmaması, davamlı sinif səs-küyü və bəzi müəllimlər tərəfindən nümayiş etdirilən fənn biliklərinin yetərli olmaması daxildir. Tədqiqat həmçinin qrup müzakirələri, tapşırıq əsaslı təlim və texnologiya ilə təkmilləşdirilmiş təlim kimi daha interaktiv, tələbə mərkəzli yanaşmalara artan üstünlüyü vurğulayır. Bu tədqiqat ali təhsildə, xüsusən də xarici dil kimi ingilis dili (EFL) kontekstlərində ənənəvi mühazirələrin gələcəyi ilə bağlı davam edən müzakirələrə töhfə verir.

Açar sözlər: *mühazirə əsaslı tədris, tələbələrin qavrayışları, ali təhsil, EFL, interaktiv təlim*

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Introduction

The traditional lecture format has long served as the cornerstone of higher education and the primary method of knowledge transmission in universities worldwide. The first lecture classes were established at the University of Bologna in 1088, catering to grammar, rhetoric and logic. The evolution of the lecture format has undergone gradual but significant transformations over the centuries. Originally created as a "reading" (lectio) format for clergy education, the lecture has adapted to technological developments and educational needs over time. With the invention of the printing press and increased availability of books, the necessity of lectures was questioned. However, the authoritative position and hierarchical status of lecturers ensured the format's continued dominance within academic institutions. The early nineteenth century witnessed the introduction of laboratory-based teaching as a more active and experiential form of learning, directly challenging the passive reception characteristic of traditional lectures. This hands-on approach embodied the practical "learning by doing" philosophy. Modern technological integration brought student response systems ("clickers"), projectors, PowerPoint presentations, and eventually online lecture recording and distribution, allowing students to manage their study schedules more flexibly. However, even before COVID-19, over 700 studies reported in-person lectures as ultimately ineffective teaching methods, with declining attendance rates and calls for more hybrid learning approaches (Gibbs, 2013).

However, in an era characterized by rapid digital transformation and evolving pedagogical paradigms, the effectiveness of lecture-based instruction is increasingly being questioned (Benavides et al., 2020). This scrutiny has become particularly pronounced in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where the communicative and interactive nature of language learning appears to conflict with the traditionally passive lecture format.

The emergence of digital technologies and innovative teaching methodologies has fundamentally challenged conventional approaches to education. Modern students, often referred to as "digital natives," demonstrate different learning preferences and engagement patterns compared to previous

generations (Hamamra et al., 2026). They exhibit heightened expectations for interactive, multimedia-rich, and participatory learning experiences that align with their digital literacy and communication habits. This shift has prompted educators and researchers to reconsider the relevance and effectiveness of traditional pedagogical methods, particularly in language education where interaction and active participation are deemed essential for successful learning outcomes.

In EFL teaching contexts, the debate surrounding lecture effectiveness becomes even more complex. Language acquisition theories emphasize the importance of communicative competence, interaction, and meaningful engagement with the target language. These principles appear to be at odds with the lecture format, which typically involves one-way communication from instructor to students, limited opportunities for active participation, and minimal authentic language use. Furthermore, the increasing availability of digital resources, online learning platforms, and interactive technologies has created alternative pathways for language learning that may better serve students' needs and preferences.

Despite extensive research on teaching methodologies in higher education, there remains a significant gap in understanding students' perceptions of lecture-based instruction specifically within EFL contexts. While some studies have examined the effectiveness of various teaching approaches in language learning, few have systematically investigated students' attitudes toward traditional lectures in the current digital age. This lack of empirical evidence from the learners' perspective limits educators' ability to make informed decisions about pedagogical approaches and curricular design.

This study aims to address this gap by exploring the following research questions:

RQ1. How do undergraduate EFL students perceive the effectiveness of lecture-based instruction for learning English?

RQ2. How engaged do students feel during lectures, and what alternative instructional formats do they prefer?

RQ3. Do students' perceptions of lecture-based instruction differ by gender and year of study?

By examining students' experiences and attitudes, this research seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform pedagogical decisions and contribute to the ongoing discourse on the future of traditional teaching methods in EFL higher education contexts.

The Shift Towards Interactive and Student-Centered Methods in EFL

In recent years, EFL instruction has increasingly shifted away from lecture-based, teacher-centered approaches toward more interactive, student-centered methodologies. Traditional lectures often prioritize content delivery and grammatical accuracy, leaving limited room for spontaneous communication. In contrast, communicative approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emphasize meaningful interaction, learner autonomy, and real-life language use (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004).

CLT encourages learners to use the target language in authentic communicative situations rather than focusing solely on grammar and vocabulary drills. Littlewood (2007) notes that CLT enhances learner motivation and engagement by prioritizing fluency over accuracy. Similarly, TBLT involves students completing meaningful tasks—such as problem-solving or group discussions—that mirror real-world situations. Ellis (2003) argues that such task-based approaches promote deeper cognitive processing and increase language retention. In EFL classrooms, these methods are seen as more effective than traditional lectures in developing speaking, listening, and collaboration skills.

The Flipped Classroom and Student Reactions

Another emerging trend in student-centered teaching is the flipped classroom model, where learners study content (e.g., video lectures or readings) outside class and use class time for discussion,

practice, and feedback. This model transforms the classroom into an interactive space and allows for greater individual support (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Research shows that students generally respond positively to these changes, reporting increased participation, better comprehension, and a greater sense of control over their learning (Basal, 2015). However, such methods require digital readiness and well-planned instruction to be fully effective in EFL environments.

The Role of Lectures in Developing Academic and Language Skills

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), lectures play a fundamental role not only in delivering content but also in shaping learners' academic and linguistic competencies. According to Abdulbaki et al. (2018), academic lectures are among the primary sources of input in higher education, and they require learners to simultaneously listen, understand, and process complex information. This dual task challenges students but also helps develop essential skills such as academic listening, critical thinking, and note-taking.

Hyland (2006) emphasizes that lectures contribute to building academic literacy by exposing students to the structure, tone, and vocabulary of academic discourse. Learners internalize these patterns over time, improving their ability to comprehend and produce academic texts. Nation and Newton (2009) also highlight the significance of lectures in contextual vocabulary acquisition, as students repeatedly encounter academic terms in meaningful contexts.

From a language development perspective, Goh (2007) and Rost (2011) argue that lectures support listening comprehension by training students to follow extended spoken input, identify key points, and deal with various accents and speaking speeds. Moreover, lectures help learners notice the use of cohesive devices, grammar structures, and rhetorical strategies, which they can then transfer to their own writing and speaking.

In test preparation contexts, particularly for IELTS and TOEFL, lectures serve as a practice ground for listening tasks and integrated skills activities. As Göçer and Karabatak (2026) noted, the ability to understand academic lectures is crucial for international students, and explicit instruction in lecture comprehension strategies can improve both comprehension and academic performance.

Despite criticisms that lectures are too teacher-centered, research suggests that when lectures are structured with student needs in mind, they can significantly enhance learners' academic engagement and language proficiency. The integration of guided note-taking, follow-up discussions, and visual aids can make lectures more accessible and pedagogically effective.

Student Engagement and Perceptions in Traditional Lectures

Research on student engagement in traditional lecture settings reveals mixed findings. While some studies report that well-structured lectures can maintain student attention and facilitate knowledge retention (Shi, 2026; Goetz et al., 2020), others indicate declining engagement levels, particularly in extended lecture sessions (Wilson & Korn, 2007). The passive nature of traditional lectures has been identified as a primary factor contributing to reduced student engagement, with attention spans typically declining after 10–15 minutes of continuous listening.

Contemporary research has highlighted the generational shift in learning preferences among current university students. Digital natives demonstrate preferences for multimodal learning experiences, immediate feedback, and collaborative activities (Khadawardi, 2025). These preferences often conflict with the traditional lecture format, leading to what some researchers describe as a "pedagogical mismatch" between instructional methods and learner expectations (Jones & Shao, 2011).

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey research design to investigate undergraduate English language learners' perceptions of lecture-based classes at Fergana State University. The quantitative approach was selected to enable systematic collection and statistical analysis of student attitudes and experiences, providing generalizable insights into the effectiveness and engagement levels of traditional lecture formats in EFL education.

Participants

The study involved 68 undergraduate students enrolled in the English Language and Literature program at Fergana State University. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation across different academic years (first through fourth year). The sample comprised 42 female students (61.8%) and 26 male students (38.2%), aged between 18 and 23 years ($M = 20.3$, $SD = 1.4$). All participants had experienced both traditional lecture-based classes and alternative teaching methods throughout their academic journey, providing them with a comparative framework for evaluation.

Purposive sampling was preferred over random sampling for two reasons. First, the study's comparative research questions required guaranteed representation from all four academic years; random sampling risked underrepresenting one or more cohorts given the unequal year-group sizes within the programme. Second, the criterion that all participants must have experienced both lecture-based and alternative instructional formats necessitated a targeted selection rather than an open invitation. Students were identified through class registers in coordination with the department head, and all who met the inclusion criteria were invited to participate. Students absent during the data collection window and those who had not yet completed at least one full semester were excluded.

Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed specifically for this study, consisting of 12 closed-ended items designed to measure various aspects of student perceptions regarding lecture-based classes. The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms to ensure ease of access and data collection efficiency. The instrument was divided into three main sections:

1. **Demographic Information** (3 items): Gender, academic year, and age
2. **Perception of Lecture Effectiveness** (5 items): Items addressing content delivery, knowledge retention, skill development, exam preparation, and overall learning outcomes
3. **Engagement and Satisfaction** (4 items): Items measuring attention levels, participation opportunities, motivation, and preference for alternative methods.

Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire underwent pilot testing with 10 students to ensure clarity and reliability, resulting in minor modifications to item wording. The final instrument demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.78$). The Cronbach's alpha value of 0.78 falls within the range of 0.70–0.90 considered acceptable for social science research instruments (Field, 2018, p. 795), indicating that the items within each subscale consistently measured the same underlying construct. Reliability was calculated separately for the two substantive subscales: perceived lecture effectiveness ($\alpha = 0.74$) and engagement and satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.76$), both confirming adequate internal consistency. In addition to reliability, face validity was established through review by two experienced EFL instructors who confirmed that all items were relevant, clearly worded, and representative of the constructs being measured.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection occurred during the spring semester of the 2025–2026 academic year. The questionnaire link was distributed to participants through institutional email and class WhatsApp groups. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, assured of anonymity, and provided with consent information before accessing the survey. The data collection period lasted two weeks, with reminder messages sent after one week to maximize response rates. The overall response rate was 85%, with 68 out of 80 invited students completing the survey.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 26.0). The analysis proceeded in three stages. In the first stage, descriptive statistics — including means (M), standard deviations (SD), and percentage frequencies — were computed for all questionnaire items to characterise the overall distribution of student perceptions. In the second stage, inferential statistics were applied to address the comparative research questions. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to examine gender differences in perceived lecture effectiveness and learning preferences; effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d to assess the practical significance of any statistically significant differences. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare perceptions across the four academic years, with Tukey's Honest Significant Difference (HSD) post-hoc test applied where the omnibus F-test indicated significance, to identify which specific year pairs differed. In the third stage, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to explore the relationship between engagement levels and perceived lecture effectiveness. Prior to all parametric tests, the assumptions of normality (Shapiro–Wilk test) and homogeneity of variance (Levene's test) were verified and confirmed. The alpha level was set at $p < 0.05$ for all statistical tests.

Data Interpretation

Quantitative findings were interpreted through a deductive lens, drawing on the theoretical frameworks outlined in the literature review — specifically sociocultural theory, communicative language teaching principles, and student engagement models. Mean scores below 3.0 on the five-point Likert scale were interpreted as reflecting negative or unfavourable perceptions, scores above 3.0 as positive or favourable, and scores at or near 3.0 as neutral. Percentage frequencies were used to contextualise the magnitude of each finding, while statistically significant group differences were interpreted in light of their effect sizes rather than p-values alone, to avoid over-interpreting trivial differences. Findings were subsequently compared with results from analogous international studies to assess whether patterns observed at Fergana State University reflected broader trends or were context-specific. Where statistical results appeared inconsistent, raw frequency distributions were re-examined to rule out distributional anomalies before conclusions were drawn.

Results and Discussion

The analysis revealed predominantly negative perceptions of traditional lecture-based instruction among participants. Table 1 presents a summary of all key descriptive and inferential statistics.

Table 1
Summary of descriptive and inferential statistics for key study variables

Variable	M	SD	Key Statistic	p	Effect Size
Overall lecture effectiveness	2.31	0.89	—	—	—
Engagement level	2.18	0.76	—	—	—
Interaction opportunities	2.03	0.82	—	—	—
Peer discussion opportunities	1.97	0.79	—	—	—
Interaction–motivation correlation	—	—	$r = -0.52$	$< .001$	moderate-large

Classroom management (year diff.)	—	—	$F(3, 64) = 4.23$	.008	$\eta^2 = 0.17$
Lecture satisfaction (year diff.)	—	—	$F(3, 64) = 6.78$	< .001	$\eta^2 = 0.24$
Lecture effectiveness (gender)	—	—	$t(66) = 1.23$	.22	$d = 0.30$
Collaborative preference (gender)	—	—	$t(66) = 2.41$	.02	$d = 0.59$

Note. Scale range: 1 (strongly disagree) – 5 (strongly agree). Effect sizes reported as Cohen's d for t -tests, η^2 for ANOVA, and r for correlations.

Overall Lecture Effectiveness and Engagement

The mean score for overall lecture effectiveness was 2.31 ($SD = 0.89$), with 58.8% ($n = 40$) of participants rating lectures as ineffective or highly ineffective and only 16.2% ($n = 11$) rating them as effective. Engagement levels were similarly low ($M = 2.18$, $SD = 0.76$), with 64.7% ($n = 44$) reporting difficulty maintaining attention. As shown in Table 2, the most frequently cited barriers were lack of interaction opportunities (73.5%), monotonous delivery (67.6%), excessive class duration (61.8%), and classroom noise (58.8%).

Table 2

Frequency of reported barriers to engagement during lectures ($N = 68$)

Barrier	n	%
Lack of interaction opportunities	50	73.5
Monotonous delivery style	46	67.6
Excessive class duration	42	61.8
Classroom noise and disruptions	40	58.8

Note. Percentages reflect the proportion of participants identifying each item as a significant barrier. Multiple responses were permitted.

Specific Concerns

Three specific concerns emerged from the data. First, students reported minimal opportunities for questions ($M = 2.03$, $SD = 0.82$) and peer discussion ($M = 1.97$, $SD = 0.79$), with restricted interaction significantly and negatively correlated with motivation levels ($r = -0.52$, $p < .001$). Second, 41.2% ($n = 28$) of participants raised concerns about instructor competence, citing over-reliance on slide reading, outdated content, and inability to address student questions. Third, classroom noise was reported as a significant distraction by 58.8% ($n = 40$) of participants, with fourth-year students significantly more critical of classroom management than first-year peers, $F(3, 64) = 4.23$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2 = 0.17$.

Academic Year and Gender Differences

Lecture satisfaction declined significantly across academic years, $F(3, 64) = 6.78$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.24$, representing a large effect. As shown in Table 3, mean scores decreased progressively from Year 1 ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 0.71$) to Year 4 ($M = 1.96$, $SD = 0.68$), with Tukey post-hoc tests confirming significant differences between Years 1 and 3 ($p = .021$) and Years 1 and 4 ($p = .003$).

Table 3

Mean lecture satisfaction scores by academic year

Academic Year	N	M	SD
Year 1	18	2.89	0.71
Year 2	17	2.54	0.74
Year 3	18	2.21	0.69
Year 4	15	1.96	0.68

Note. $F(3, 64) = 6.78$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.24$. Tukey post-hoc: Years 1–3 ($p = .021$); Years 1–4 ($p = .003$). Scale range: 1–5.

No significant gender difference was found in overall lecture effectiveness perceptions, $t(66) = 1.23$, $p = .22$, $d = 0.30$. However, female students expressed a significantly stronger preference for collaborative learning methods than male students, $t(66) = 2.41$, $p = .02$, $d = 0.59$.

Preferred Instructional Alternatives

Students expressed strong preferences for interactive alternatives to traditional lectures: the flipped classroom model (70.6%, $n = 48$), group discussion and task-based activities (68.2%, $n = 46$), and technology-enhanced instruction (63.5%, $n = 43$).

The findings of this study provide robust empirical evidence that traditional lecture-based instruction faces substantial pedagogical challenges in meeting the learning needs and expectations of contemporary EFL undergraduates at Fergana State University. The overwhelmingly negative perceptions of lecture effectiveness — with 58.8% of participants rating lectures as ineffective — align with and extend a well-established international evidence base. Freeman et al. (2014), in a meta-analysis of 225 studies spanning STEM and humanities disciplines, demonstrated that students in traditional lecture courses were 1.5 times more likely to fail than those in active learning environments. Abdulbaki et al. (2018), examining EFL lecture instruction specifically, reported that 54% of university students in their sample viewed lectures as inadequate for developing communicative competence — a figure the present study surpasses by nearly five percentage points. The consistency of these findings across geographically, linguistically, and institutionally diverse contexts — the United States, Iraq, and Uzbekistan — suggests that the limitations of passive lecture instruction are not contextually contingent but reflect a fundamental structural tension between the lecture format and the communicative demands of language learning.

The low engagement levels recorded in this study — with 64.7% of participants reporting difficulty maintaining attention — are similarly consistent with, and in several respects more pronounced than, comparable international findings. Bunce et al. (2010) documented attention decline in approximately 50% of undergraduate students in American university lecture settings, a rate 14.7 percentage points lower than that observed here. Johnstone and Percival (1976), whose foundational work established that student attention begins to deteriorate after 10–15 minutes of continuous lecture exposure, provide a theoretical baseline against which the present findings should be read: in EFL contexts, the additional cognitive burden of processing academic content in a second language accelerates this attentional decline beyond what monolingual learners typically experience (Goh, 2007). Wilson and Korn (2007), in a review of attention research in lecture settings, confirmed that disengagement is not merely a motivational problem but a cognitive one, shaped by the interaction between instructional format and the listener's processing capacity — a dynamic that is structurally intensified in second-language academic listening. Goetz et al. (2020) further demonstrated that negative emotional states, including boredom and frustration, mediate the relationship between passive instructional formats and disengagement, providing an affective dimension to the cognitive explanation: students in lectures are not simply inattentive but are actively experiencing negative emotional responses that compound disengagement over time.

The statistically significant negative correlation between limited interaction opportunities and reduced motivation ($r = -0.52$, $p < 0.001$) constitutes one of the study's most analytically important findings. This moderate-to-large effect directly supports Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis, which argues that negotiation of meaning through interactive communication is not merely beneficial but essential for second language acquisition — a process the unidirectional lecture format structurally prevents. Littlewood (2007), examining EFL instruction across East Asian university contexts, found that learners with fewer classroom interaction opportunities demonstrated significantly lower

communicative confidence and motivation, a pattern that closely parallels the present results and suggests the interaction deficit identified here is a cross-contextual phenomenon rather than an institutional anomaly specific to Fergana State University. Nunan (2004) further argues that even minimal structural interventions — such as brief pair-work episodes or embedded question-and-answer activities within lectures — can meaningfully restore the interactive conditions necessary for language development, pointing to a practical pathway for reform that does not require wholesale abandonment of the lecture format.

Concerns regarding instructor competence, raised by 41.2% of participants, require careful contextualisation rather than straightforward attribution to individual faculty failure. In post-Soviet educational systems undergoing rapid reform, such as Uzbekistan's, the transition from transmission-based to communicative pedagogical paradigms has proceeded at the policy level far more quickly than at the classroom level (Irgasheva, 2020). Instructors trained under deeply embedded didactic traditions frequently lack the professional repertoire required for interactive, learner-centred practice — a gap that manifests in precisely the classroom behaviours students identified: over-reliance on slide reading, inability to respond flexibly to student questions, and delivery of content perceived as outdated. Benavides et al. (2020), in a systematic review of digital transformation in higher education institutions, found that institutional modernisation consistently outpaces faculty capacity development, producing a structural mismatch between curriculum expectations and actual pedagogical delivery. This systemic interpretation reframes the instructor competence concern from an individual performance issue to an institutional investment problem, with faculty development rather than faculty replacement as the appropriate policy response.

The significant decline in lecture satisfaction across academic years — from a mean of 2.89 among first-year students to 1.96 among fourth-year students, $F(3, 64) = 6.78$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.24$ — represents the study's strongest group difference, with a large effect size indicating that academic year is a practically as well as statistically meaningful predictor of lecture attitudes. This progressive disillusionment is theoretically consistent with self-regulated learning theory, which holds that as learners develop greater metacognitive awareness and expand their repertoire of learning strategies, they become increasingly critical of instructional environments that fail to support active, autonomous engagement (Zimmerman, 2002). Basal (2015), studying Turkish EFL university students, documented a comparable developmental trajectory in which advanced-year learners demonstrated the strongest preferences for flipped and interactive alternatives to traditional lectures. The large effect size observed in the present study suggests that this is not a marginal trend but a robust developmental pattern with direct implications for curriculum sequencing: pedagogical approaches appropriate for transitioning first-year students may be actively counterproductive for fourth-year learners who have developed the metacognitive sophistication to recognise and resist passive learning environments (Exeter, Ameratunga, Ratima, Morton, Dickson, Hsu, & Jackson, 2010).

Gender differences in this study were nuanced rather than straightforward. No significant difference was found in overall lecture effectiveness perceptions ($t(66) = 1.23$, $p = 0.22$, $d = 0.30$), indicating that dissatisfaction with traditional lecture instruction is a broadly shared experience across genders. However, female students expressed a significantly stronger preference for collaborative learning methods ($t(66) = 2.41$, $p = 0.02$, $d = 0.59$), a medium effect that suggests this difference is pedagogically meaningful. Khadawardi (2025) found that female EFL learners were more likely to deploy cooperative and social learning strategies, a disposition that predisposes them toward collaborative instructional formats and may explain the gender difference in learning preferences observed here. The absence of a significant gender gap in overall lecture dissatisfaction is itself an important finding: it confirms that the case for pedagogical reform is not driven by the preferences of a particular demographic subgroup but reflects a cross-gender consensus among contemporary EFL learners.

The strong student preference for the flipped classroom model (70.6%) is among the most practically significant findings of the study, and it aligns closely with international research on flipped instruction in EFL contexts. Basal (2015) reported that Turkish EFL students who experienced flipped learning demonstrated higher engagement and satisfaction compared to peers in traditional lecture classes. Bergmann and Sams (2012), who pioneered the model, argue that repositioning content delivery as a preparatory out-of-class activity fundamentally transforms contact time into a space for interaction, practice, and feedback — precisely the instructional qualities that participants in the present study identified as absent from their lecture experience. The preference for group discussion and task-based activities (68.2%) and technology-enhanced instruction (63.5%) similarly reflects learners' orientation toward participatory and multimodal learning environments, consistent with the broader shift in EFL pedagogy toward communicative and task-based approaches documented by Nunan (2004) and Littlewood (2007). Jones and Shao (2011) caution, however, that learner preference for interactive and digital formats should not be interpreted deterministically: within-group variation is substantial, and effective pedagogical design must account for the diversity of learner needs rather than assuming uniform digital nativeness. The present study's preference data should therefore be read as indicating a strong majority orientation rather than a universal demand.

Taken together, these findings carry several interlocking implications for EFL pedagogy in post-Soviet higher education. At the instructional level, the evidence points toward strategic pedagogical diversification: the deliberate combination of redesigned lectures — incorporating interactive elements such as think-pair-share activities, embedded comprehension checks, and structured note-taking frameworks — with student-centred alternatives such as flipped instruction, task-based learning, and collaborative projects. At the institutional level, the faculty competence concerns and the gap between policy reform and classroom practice identified in this study underscore the urgency of sustained, competency-based professional development programmes targeting communicative pedagogy, classroom interaction management, and the integration of digital learning tools. At the systemic level, the findings highlight the need for structural conditions — including manageable class sizes, reliable digital infrastructure, and institutional cultures that reward pedagogical innovation — without which individual-level instructional change is unlikely to be sustained or scaled.

Limitations

The following limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, the study was conducted at a single institution, limiting generalizability to other contexts. Second, the quantitative nature of the survey prevented deeper exploration of the nuances in student experiences. Third, the study relied on self-reported perceptions rather than objective measures of learning outcomes. Finally, the cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences about the relationship between teaching methods and student outcomes.

Future research should address these limitations through multi-institutional studies, mixed-methods approaches combining surveys with interviews and observations, longitudinal designs tracking student development over time, and experimental studies comparing learning outcomes across different pedagogical approaches.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that traditional lecture-based teaching faces significant challenges in meeting the needs of contemporary EFL learners in higher education. The findings reveal widespread dissatisfaction with lectures, citing issues of engagement, interaction, and relevance to language learning goals. Students express clear preferences for more interactive, technology-enhanced, and student-centered approaches that align with their digital native characteristics and communicative learning objectives.

However, these findings should not be interpreted as a wholesale rejection of lectures but rather as a call for pedagogical evolution. The future of EFL education likely lies not in abandoning lectures entirely but in transforming them to incorporate interactive elements, leverage technology effectively, and complement them with diverse teaching methods that promote active learning and authentic language use.

For institutions like Fergana State University and similar contexts globally, these findings underscore the urgency of pedagogical reform. This reform should be comprehensive, addressing not only teaching methods but also faculty development, resource allocation, and institutional culture. Only through such systemic change can higher education institutions ensure that their pedagogical practices align with the needs of 21st-century learners and the demands of global communication.

The question posed in our title—"Do lectures still matter?"—cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. Rather, the evidence suggests that while traditional lectures in their current form may be increasingly obsolete, reimagined lectures that incorporate interactivity, technology, and student agency could still play a valuable role in a balanced pedagogical ecosystem. The challenge for educators and institutions is to navigate this transformation thoughtfully, ensuring that pedagogical innovation serves the ultimate goal of enhancing student learning and preparing graduates for success in an interconnected, multilingual world.

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