Assessment of a Flipped Classroom: An Innovative Method of Teaching English for EFL Undergraduate Students in Thailand

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Abstract

This article assesses flipped classroom, which is a modern-day teaching method for EFL undergraduate students in Thailand, and its effectiveness. The flipped classroom's primary characteristics are outlined, including individualization features, flexibility features, differentiation features, and the opportunities students have to learn anywhere and anytime. The research uses a descriptive-analytical method with a quantitative and qualitative assessment control provided. This article seeks to estimate EFL students' new experiences deriving from flipped classroom applications. It was completed by analyzing responses from the survey-based questionnaire of 80 EFL students at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University. Descriptive statistics and analytical methods were applied in order to verify the research. Flipped classroom applications were revealed to make the process of education both more effective as well as innovative, as EFL students' language learning performance was enhanced, and both their motivation and participation was increased, as was their interest in English learning.

Keywords: flipped classroom, assessment, effective implementation, learning process facilitator

1. Introduction

COVID-19 caused all schools to close down around the world, and education was dramatically changed with the growth of e-learning dominating education, whereby the teaching was taught remotely on digital platforms. In other words, the Internet preferences brought about the initial changes in educational methodology. Flipped classroom is one method preferred when using the Internet for the purposes of instruction. The flipped classroom implementation as a method for teaching increased student satisfaction related to results of learners' anxiety, and especially indicated increased English-speaking performance of EFL students. In addition, the implementation influenced knowledge enhancement, called cooperative learning (Louhab et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2018; Xiu et al., 2019; Thoo et al., 2021; Abdullah et al., 2021).

In accordance with models for flipped classroom, students must investigate and research new information and acquire new materials by using the Internet, video, and audio resources on the particular topic, provided by a teacher, before class. Therefore, classroom activities focus on forming practical speaking, reading, and writing skills in English. Nurkamto et al. (2019) stated that the three roles of a lecturer in the learning process within the flipped classroom are as facilitator, instructor, and as a resource; while roles of a learner in the learning process within the flipped classroom are twofold; as a recipient and as a partner. Consequently, one benefit of a flipped classroom model is the attractiveness for people in the learning process with different learning styles. Thus, students are more highly motivated, more active, and demonstrate independence (Hamdani, 2019).

Flipped classrooms are when a teacher creates a course, text, or lecture that is watched or read by the students at their own pace, and concepts learned from videos and other materials are practiced in class with the assistances of teacher. However, the research results of Santikarn and Wichadee (2018) found contrasting observations and research proved that the flipped classroom model was not beneficial and could not replace the old approach; students and teachers had a preference for lecture-based approaches rather than flipped classroom models. Nonetheless, students could improve their learning and communication skills even though they had negative attitudes towards flipped classroom practices.

From the above contradictory research results, the researcher is interested in setting this research which aims to assess flipped classrooms effectiveness for English teaching to EFL undergraduate students in Thailand. This research's significance is based on the crucial need to determine new and effective methods for teaching online.

Research Questions

1) Can the students' learning performance and motivation be improved using the flipped classroom method?

2) What are the students' attitudes towards flipped classroom methods?

3) Can the online platform MOODLE effectively be implemented using flipped classroom methods?

Research Limitation

The limitation of this research is to only study a learner's stance but not an instructor's stance because as such, the flipped classroom in English learning highlights learning interests, enhancement of learning effectiveness, and the changes from passive learners into active learners. In the future, findings and insights from this research will highlight use of the flipped classroom model in most universities in Thailand.

2. Literature Review

Flipped classroom methods have been widely investigated and interpreted since 2012, mainly on their principles. Flipped classrooms have become somewhat popular within higher education, especially with many universities such as Harvard, the University of Western Australia, and many other universities in the USA. It assigns work through the primary content of their learning courses to students studying in their own time. Moreover, the students can watch recorded lectures or complete guided readings rather than listening to a lecture. This method adds time in class for problem-solving, experimentation, discussion, and others (Saitta et al., 2016). Consequently, Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (2017) and Louhab et al. (2018) expressed that the flipped classroom serves as individualized learning principles, student-oriented instructions, and constructivism. In other words, the students perform many training activities that promote more expressive education, which can be adaptable to the teacher's style, method, and situation.

There is a lot of research on effective flipped classrooms in the teaching of English as a foreign language. Santikarn and Wichadee (2018) practiced the flipped classroom approach in an English class for the provision of the of future English language teachers' perceptions on its application at a state university within Turkey. According to Altemueller and Lindquist (2017), an effective flipped classroom requires teachers to deliver more lectures outside the class using the medium of video. Class time is more critical and should be devoted to making a more active classroom that involves understanding, discussion, and investigation. Therefore, benefits are offered, such as free classroom time, personalized learning opportunities, more student-oriented opportunities for learning, continuous connections between students and their teachers, heightened motivation of the students, and a learning environment filled with familiar tools while having varieties in the content of lectures due to different styles of learning (Jung, 2020).

Zhonggen and Guifang (2016) and Afrilyasanti et al. (2017) came to the conclusion that the method aided in improving undergraduate English students writing skills in a business writing course. Additionally, Chatta and Haque (2020) demonstrated that flipped classroom implementation in EFL classrooms at a university improved the paragraph-writing skills of their students. Besides, speaking skills that used the flipped classroom approach conveyed improved academic achievements in students' verbal activities and increased their engagement level in communication processes (Choe & Seong, 2016; Li & Zhang, 2016; Wu et al., 2017; Qader & Arslan, 2019; Abdullah et al., 2019).

Flipped classroom, e-learning, and blended or hybrid education are growing in popularity as a result of the ineffectiveness of existing older approaches (Konoplianyk & Melnykova, 2019; Abdullah et al., 2021). In spite of the obvious advantages for foreign language teachers using the flipped classroom approach, there are some challenging problems for teachers and their students alike. In respect to teachers, this involves the higher complexity of preparing e-learning materials and tasks as well as in-depth evaluation criteria preparation. In the case of students, problems include low motivation, lack of self-motivation, and a lack of readiness to work independently. Obviously, any transfer from traditional to flipped classroom models cannot be carried out rapidly and require some time for adaptation. In consideration of all mentioned advantages and disadvantages, the flipped classroom method can, however, solve education's innovation problems.

Researchers maintain that the flipped classroom adoption was begun by many lecturers because it brought a new teaching and learning atmosphere (Hamdani, 2019). Arslan (2020) revealed that most research on flipped classrooms is published in the USA, Jamaica, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Somaliland, Singapore China, Canada, Australia, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, and in Turkey. However, there is a lack of significant research from Europe. It was found that in countries such as the Ukraine researchers did very little research on the flipped classroom approach in the EFL teaching context. This lack of research regarding the flipped classroom in foreign language teaching at Ukrainian universities directed subsequent choices regarding topics for needed research.

3. Methods

Research Design

A descriptive-analytical method is used in this research. In order to assess the effectiveness of the flipped classroom when teaching English to EFL students, quantitative and qualitative assessment controls are provided. The method of evaluation involved collection of data and subsequent data analysis for direct as well as indirect course learning results. End of course attendance indicators and student's assessments provided immediate results. Students' perceptions, their attitudes and their feelings on the course conditions suggested, new opportunities revealed, possible problem-solving abilities, creative development and critical thinking skills all provided indirect learning results. Indirect results from a survey of the students, utilizing a Likert-scale, evaluated the effect of studying the course.

Participants

The research was conducted during the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 academic years at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Thailand. A total of 80 EFL Thai and Chinese students aged 18-19, who were in the first year of their studies at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, took part in the research by answering open-ended as well as yes/no questions. All students were divided into four groups, with 20 students per group. Over the two years, the flipped classroom was implemented for the English Studies Program from the first-year and second-year students

at the Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University.

The flipped classroom approach is used efficiently by the EFL students of Chiang Rai Rajabhat University. The EFL students' assignments and classroom activities were connected to the initial interview conducted with EFL students from the experiment groups in order to explain and present the practical training conditions' objectives. *The classroom activities* included communicative tasks for developing speaking and writing skills, debates, brainstorming activities, project work in teams, assessment of projects by peers, problem discussions, consultations and grammar explanations. *The online activities* included lecturing of materials for the study, online vocabulary training exercises, online grammar training exercises, MOODLE system forums, practice with listening, peer-review discussions, and online tests and quizzes. Both sets of activities were adapted from Ivanytska et al. (2021). Furthermore, all these EFL students worked with similar learning materials and had similar assessment controls.

Research Instruments

In modern education using such online learning is an essential consideration for having a student-oriented approach in the application of the flipped classroom. This determined which research instruments to choose; however, structured along with unstructured interviews, tests, observations, and surveys were also provided. Concerning discussions that were non-directive, the interviewees gave unplanned answers, as was expected. An online survey-based questionnaire was prepared for collecting data and to do research on the MOODLE platform to assess the online learning challenges of flipped classroom. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions including yes/no, multiple-choice and open-ended questions that covered the research's objectives. The MOODLE platform was used to design the survey and at the semester's end it was provided to the EFL students. Later, the questionnaire's validity and reliability were verified.

Research Procedures

In the research, interviewing students with a vital question began with 'Have you ever learned or used the flipped classroom?' Possible answers were: 1) I have already learned and used this method; 2) I know what it is, and I know how to use it; 3) I know what it is, but I don't know how to use it; 4) I have heard about this method, but I don't know anything about it, and 5) I don't know what it is.

The pre-research survey results showed that 44% of EFL students at the university had already learned and utilized a flipped classroom approach for their practice, while another 56% did not share this experience but demonstrated an interest to learn or use the method ('I know what it is and how to learn or use it'). Therefore, 68% of the EFL students at the survey time were ready and had a chance to learn to use the flipped classroom. All 80 EFL students of the university had a certain extent of familiarity with flipped classrooms. During interviews with EFL students, they all displayed concern due to possible problems encountered with the flipped classroom. If there are no technical problems, the flipped classroom approach will work well. Chiang Rai Rajabhat University needs to offer internet access including speedy hyperlinks for instruction materials, for videos, and for audio. These EFL students require a fundamental knowledge of information and communication technology for use with these kinds of online materials. Therefore, any problems of a technical nature can have a negative effect on the motivation and on the learning experiences of the EFL students

Applying the flipped classroom is necessary as a tool to adjust the work to that with a high relationship between the performance of students and the implementation of digital educational resources from the learning platform. Many e-courses taught at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University use the MOODLE online platform because the e-courses include work programs such as a course syllabus, teaching materials for lectures, independent work of applicants, and other necessary information. Using the online platform MOODLE can allow for rapid current performance input and output controls of the knowledge of students. From the long-term past experience, MOODLE can enable students' adaptation to the flipped classroom and break down any barriers regarding how it is perceived and applied. *Removed barriers:* complexity and changes in assessment forms for control and knowledge, the students' lack of willingness to access the method and change their typical student role to become the 'user' role. *Partially removed barriers:* the high complexity of the readiness of EFL students and the requirement of complete readiness of group tasks in order to attain assessment results. *Barriers to be removed:* applicants' low motivation to watch videos and conduct tasks and students' reluctance to independently analyze new materials.

When applying the flipped classroom approach at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, there were no technical barriers revealed. Students could be prepared with good teaching materials, so the students had an outstanding opportunity to work on them beforehand, which partially removed barriers. The teacher aided with and partially helped remove barriers, such as the highly complex learning from materials and methods, during the initial stages.

4. Results

Evaluating the quantitative indictor results for applying the flipped classroom approach in the English Studies Program of the first-year and second-year students at the Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Chiang Rai, Thailand indicated that average passing grades for the 2020/2021 academic year rose by 9.2% when comparing them with the 2019/2020 yearly results. Besides this, the research showed an attendance rate increase by 12.5% for the 2020/2021 academic year in comparison with the same period for the 2019/2020 year. The end of term survey conveyed a positive perception level for far-reaching future chances to the extent of 90-93%.

The students were asked to rate the effectiveness of various flipped classroom elements in a Likert-scale survey. A scale of one to five was utilized by students to rate the different aspects (1 = very ineffective; 2 = somewhat ineffective; 3 = neither effective nor ineffective; 4 = somewhat effective; 5 = very effective). The assessment results of students' satisfaction with the flipped classroom elements for the English Studies Program from the first-year and second-year students at the Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University,

Chiang Rai, Thailand are reveled in table one and figure one.

According to the research results, most students agreed that the lecturer encouraged interest in their course, which accounted for 89% (Mean = 4.63). Moreover, online modules helped in improving the learning process, accounting for 88.5% (Mean = 4.61); this method encouraged interest in the course and was supportive in developing personal autonomy and independence, accounting for 88% (Mean = 4.53); EFL students defined the course content as useful for professional requirements, accounting for 87% (Mean = 4.48), and that flipped classrooms offered more interaction between EFL students, accounting for 86% (Mean = 4.45). Besides, 85.5% (Mean = 4.43) of EFL students considered assignments and in-course test feedback to be of help.

Table 1. Satisfaction of students with the flipped classroom elements

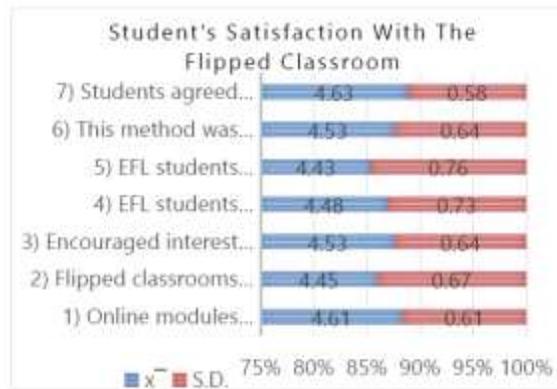| Satisfaction of Students with the Flipped Classroom Elements	EFL Students		
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level
1) Online modules helped in improving the learning process.	4.61	0.61	Very Effective
2) Flipped classrooms offered more interaction with EFL students.	4.45	0.67	Somewhat Effective
3) This method encouraged interest in the course.	4.53	0.64	Very Effective
4) EFL students defined the course content to be useful for professional needs.	4.48	0.73	Somewhat Effective
5) EFL students considered assignment and in-course test feedback to be of help.	4.43	0.76	Somewhat Effective
6) This method was supportive in developing personal autonomy and independence.	4.53	0.64	Very Effective
7) Students agreed that their interest in the course was encouraged by the lecturer.	4.63	0.58	Very Effective
Total	**4.52**	**0.66**	**Very Effective**

Figure 1. Satisfaction of students with the flipped classroom elements

5. Discussion

The objective in this research was to discover if the implementation of the flipped classroom is sufficiently effective for English teaching to EFL students in Thailand. After the intervention, an investigation of was conducted for how the flipped classroom affected learner perceptions and ultimately affect their performance. The findings demonstrated student satisfaction with the flipped classroom and characterized it as being an effective environment for the education of students. Moreover, the findings revealed practical application activating the major characteristics of the flipped classroom, especially opportunities for EFL students to learn anywhere and anytime that was not only convenient for the EFL students to use but also offered flexibility, individualization, and differentiation. Hence, the students' motivation, responsibility and self-confidence increased, and in addition, their performance in English learning improved. The findings were discovered to be similar to previous research by Ivanytska et al. (2021). While they agreed with Abdullah et al. (2021) and Thoo et al. (2021), who demonstrated that the flipped classroom enhanced the English-speaking learners' performance anxiety, the research conclusion also aligned with Hamdani (2019) and Arslan (2020) that it led to an increase in learning outcome gains and enhanced teacher to student task orientation and cooperation. Within the flipped classroom, the three roles of a lecturer in the learning process are as an instructor, as a facilitator and as a resource; the two learner roles in the learning process within the flipped classroom are as a recipient and as a partner (Nurkamto et al., 2019). Consequently, it has been determined that no severe factors proved the flipped classroom ineffectiveness for EFL students. In the present research, some challenging problems for students with low motivation and a poor readiness for independent work were found.

While applying the flipped classroom at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, some barriers acting as limitations that need to be overcome include, self-motivation, motive, and the enthusiasm of the students for independent work. These problems would appear to relate to levels of student responsibility and are common with the majority of student-oriented methods that are applied in foreign language teaching.

6. Conclusion

The results of the analysis discovered that the optimization of a successful flipped classroom approach for learning and teaching can be implemented in the innovative teaching of English language or other foreign languages to university students. This model succeeds due to its flexibility, individualization of educational processes, and focused student-oriented approach. The active development of English skills and individual qualities is promoted by this approach as well as increased academic performance. Data from the research indicated that student independence increased with the flipped classroom, causing them to be better motivated and take greater responsibility for learner outcomes, as well as forming necessary hard and soft skills. However, the findings suggested that the flipped classroom that blended new technology with old approaches is also a viable alternative for English courses in the future since an invaluable learning experience can be provided for EFL students. Positive student feedback implied their openness to the acceptance of new approaches and that they believed the flipped classroom gave them great learner control.

Offering teaching with greater benefits and meaning is recommended. Teachers should choose the model that best serves their context while supporting the objectives of their course. In addition, researchers suggest that there should be an increase in the interactions among learners and enhancement of language performance in classroom activities. It is necessary to test the effectiveness of such technology as the flipped classroom before putting it to use. Regarding further research, it should be conducted on foreign language skills of students, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which may be more effectively formed by using this approach.

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