

Flipped Classroom: The Effectiveness of Using Pre-Lecture Assignments on Enhancing EFL Undergraduates' Attitude, Ability, Engagement and Participation

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Received: May 5, 2024

Accepted: September 5, 2024

Online Published: December 12, 2024

doi:10.5430/wjel.v15n2p331

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v15n2p331>

Abstract

Having students as the core pillar of the teaching and learning process is significantly crucial in today's classrooms. Flipped classroom along with the integration of pre-lecture assignments have proved to transform traditional teaching methods into a more engaging and effective one which stresses learners' role to be the centre of the teaching and learning process and increases learning gains. So, this article explores the effectiveness of implementing pre-lecture assignments on enhancing EFL undergraduates' attitudes, ability, engagement and participation. The researcher adopts a descriptive analytical mixed approach. A questionnaire and interview are employed as data collection tools. The population of this study is level three EFL undergraduates majoring in English language; Faculty of Alsun, International University of Africa. Using a random sampling technique, the researcher administers the tools to the whole class (58 students) in which 48 students take part as sample of the study. The data is analysed using SPSS version 29. The results reveal that the pre-lecture assignments have significantly enhanced the students' learning ability and helped them to gain a good background about the upcoming content. It also demonstrates that these assignments have increased their engagement and participation during class discussions and that class time is devoted to discussion rather than presentation. In addition, the findings show that the assignments have enhanced their attitudes towards the course. Finally, it's recommended that EFL instructors should implement pre-lecture assignments in their classes to get more learner-centred classes and equip their students with the required terminology before coming to the class.

Keywords: flipped classroom, pre-lecture assignment, EFL undergraduates, learning ability, engagement

1. Introduction

Having a fundamental understanding and background about a topic to be covered in a university level lecture is an invaluable advantage for both students and instructors. With the advent of flipped classroom approach which is used to familiarise students with course content before attending traditional classrooms (Herreid & Schiller, 2013), instructors have recalled the importance of prior knowledge. Despite the fact that awareness of such kind of prior knowledge has shown its significance many years back (Ausubel, 1968), knowing the effectiveness of what learners know before attending a lecture has been an intriguing question for many researchers. Ausubel has made this importance very clear "...the most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly" (1968). Years later, Vygotsky (1978) postulated the theory of The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that stresses the need of learners' prior knowledge to pave the way for acquiring/learning the new one. Following the ZPD, learners can fit new knowledge into their exciting mental schema.

Assessment as a pervasive instructional tool in any educational context, instructors have used it to activate their students' prior knowledge as a pre- and/or post-lecture assessment tool. Pre-lecture assignments can be understood as a type of learning activity that students need to complete before attending a lecture. As such kind of activity prepares students for the course content (Kilickaya, 2017), this ideology permeates numerous other benefits. For example, it enhances students' engagement and motivation (Kinsella, Mahon, & Lillis, 2017), improves their learning outcomes (Mills, Beaulieu, Feldon, & Olsen, 2020 and Moravec, Williams, Aguilar-Roca, & O'Dowd, 2010), increases students' participation (Brink, 2013) and reduces in-class cognitive load (Seery & Donnelly, 2011), to mention a few.

Over the past few years, numerous researchers have examined the effectiveness of pre-lecture assignments on students' engagement, motivation, increased students' participation, effective use of lecture time and improvement in students' performance. For example, Mills et al. (2020) carry out their research on undergraduate students who were taking data management courses to identify the implications of pre-lecture material on instructional effectiveness. Kinsella et al. (2017) conduct a study on science students to investigate the effect of using pre-lecture activities on enhancing learners' engagement. Brink (2013) investigates the impact of pre- and post-lecture quizzes on accounting students. Kolari and Savander-Ranne (2007) conduct their research on engineering students to explore the effect of pre-lecture quizzes on students' preparedness. It's worth mentioning that, in all of these studies, pre-lecture assignments have shown their

effectiveness in improving the addressed areas.

Nevertheless, many studies have explored the effectiveness of pre-lecture assignments (Brink, 2013, Kinsella et al., 2017, Kolari & Savander-Ranne, 2007, Mills et al., 2020, and Moravec et al., 2010), they are conducted on students majoring in STEM fields and business studies, in addition the limitations of question types and ignorance of students' feedback after the use of the new method. To the best knowledge of the researcher, there isn't a single study conducted on students majoring in English linguistics which raises the need to be conducted in this educational context. Moreover, as Kinsella et al. (2017) note in their conclusion, previous studies don't consider students' feedback after the use of the new method as compared to the old ones. Brink (2013) who employs pre- and post-lecture quizzes, has suggested the use of pre-lecture assignments only. Consequently, this research aims to fill in this research gap by gathering data from unaddressed educational contexts and employing a pre-lecture assignment only as the gaps suggest. In addition, this study also attempts to reflect data from different areas as most of the studies are conducted in Europe.

Technical terminology has been a topic of interest in the teaching and learning of higher education. Linguistic terminologies, likewise, can be challenging for EFL undergraduates, which Sudanese EFL undergraduates are part of, who are taking linguistics courses as their major. In fact, the specific reasons for these difficulties faced by EFL undergraduates vary from one learner to another; linguistic background, proficiency level and exposure to the target language. Kim and Lee (2019) stress the significance of academic vocabulary in academic literacy and achievement for EFL undergraduates. This significance suggests that EFL learners need prior linguistic terminology (technical vocabulary) to attain a reasonable level of understanding of linguistic contents. As an EFL student and later EFL instructor, Sudanese EFL undergraduates face tremendous challenges in understanding core linguistics courses. To that end and to address these challenges, this study tries to shed light on this problem and propose a prospective method to overcome those challenges by formulating the following research objectives and questions.

Research objectives

- To explore the effectiveness of pre-lecture assignments on EFL undergraduates' ability to grasp basic linguistic concepts and definitions before attending a lecture.
- To investigate the effectiveness of pre-lecture assignments in increasing EFL undergraduates' engagement, participation, confidence and critical thinking skills during class discussion.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of pre-lecture assignments on enhancing EFL undergraduates' attitudes toward linguistic courses.

Research questions

- To what extent does the implementation of pre-lecture assignments affect EFL undergraduates' ability to grasp basic linguistic concepts and definitions before attending a lecture?
- How effective are pre-lecture assignments in increasing EFL undergraduates' engagement, participation, confidence and critical thinking skills during class discussion?
- How effective are pre-lecture assignments on enhancing EFL undergraduates' attitudes toward linguistic courses?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Flipped Classroom Model

The concept of Flipped Classroom (FC) in the teaching and learning of higher education was first introduced by two chemistry teachers; Jonathan Bergman and Aaron Sams, in 2012 (Alzaharani, 2022). Since then, the term FC has raised an intriguing and long-standing discussion in the world of teaching and learning. In recent years, the FC model as a pedagogical approach has increasingly gained significant popularity among researchers and educationalists as a way to enhance learners' attitudes, ability, engagement, participation and autonomy. More than that, the need for more student-centred learning and the advancement of technology have led to the popularity of the FC method in higher education (Alsowat, 2016).

FC model is rooted in behaviourist and constructivist learning theories that emphasise active student engagement and collaborative learning. Generally speaking, FC is defined as an instructional method that inverts the traditional model of education where students review lecture content before coming to class and engage in activities during class time in collaboration with their peers and/or instructors. Altemueller and Lindquist (2017) define FC as a teaching methodology that reverses traditional instruction, with lecture material delivered outside the class and in-class time devoted to problem-solving and application. By flipping the old learning sequence, this model aims to deepen understanding and focuses on promoting critical thinking skills (Limniou, Schermbrucker, & Lyons, 2018).

2.2 Impact of Flipped Learning on Student Engagement and Deeper Learning

With its widespread popularity, the FC approach gained credibility among teachers, researchers and experts. Similar to old teaching methods, the primary teaching philosophy of this method is to emphasize students' engagement. As 21st century skills promote the importance of learner-centred classes rather than teacher-centred classes, and more specifically in the context of EFL teaching, FC teaching method has shown its effectiveness on enhancing learners' engagement and autonomy and deeper learning as compared to traditional teaching methods. Previous studies state that FC promotes active learning, critical thinking and collaboration that eventually leads to improved cognitive, affective and behavioural tendencies among learners (Alsowat, 2016, Hava, 2021, Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021, and Raba', 2020). The effectiveness of FC arises with the promotion of the following skills:

Flexibility and easy access to resources: learners need availability and easy access to resources. The FC is considered as the most flexible approach for learners to review their materials for the upcoming classes on their own pace which accommodates different learning styles (Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021).

Self-regulated learning: taking responsibility and setting goals in the endeavour of the learning process is crucial for each learner. Öztürk and Çakıroğlu (2021) believe that FC promotes and develops learners' language acquisition skills.

Active learning: exposing learner to lecture content outside the classroom leads to students' engagement during lectures rather than having students to passively listen (Alsowat, 2016).

Higher-order thinking skills: critical thinking and problem-solving skills can only be achieved when learners have some background about the topic. Alsowat (2016) claims that with FC, students have the opportunity to implement what they learned outside the classroom with deeper levels of analysis, evaluation and creation inside the classroom.

2.3 Pre-lecture Assignments

As educational activities or tasks, pre-lecture assignments are tasks assigned to students before a lecture aiming to introduce students to upcoming class content. These assignments serve as preparatory work designed to stimulate students' engagement, critical thinking and promote an active learning environment (Kolari & Savander-Ranne, 2007). Research suggests that pre-lecture assignments not only help lecturers tailor their teaching to the needs of the class but also enhance students' engagement, learning ability, motivation and learning outcomes (Ballesteros-Pérez, González-Cruz, Tagg, & Mora-Melià 2017, Jensen, Holt, Sowards, Heath Ogden, & West, 2018 and Moravec et al., 2010). By doing the pre-lecture assignments, students familiarise themselves with key concepts and terminologies pertaining to the lecture, so that they can easily follow their class content and class time is used for discussion and problem solving (Kolari & Savander-Ranne, 2007 and Vyas, Leung, & Wong, 2018).

2.4 The Effectiveness of Pre-Lecture Assignments on Enhancing Learners' Learning Ability

The role of pre-lecture assignments as a pedagogical strategy on enhancing students' learning abilities has gained significant attention in educational research and extensively studied by researchers in various disciplines; biology, physics, mathematics, language, accounting, etc. (Alam, T. Khan & S. Khan, 2014, Brink, 2013, Dindia, 2013, Hadie, Simok, Shamsuddin, & Mohammad, 2019, Kilickaya, 2017).

The primary effectiveness of pre-lecture assignments is attributed to the fact that these assignments help students build the foundation of knowledge and then relate this knowledge and the new concepts to meaningful learning during class time (Moravec et al., 2010). For example, a study on pre-lecture quizzes in language classes found that participants who completed pre-lecture quizzes performed significantly better on exams than those who did not engage in the control group (Kilickaya, 2017). Similarly, Dindia's (2013) study on pre-lecture activities in undergraduate science courses found that pre-lecture assignments facilitate student learning in three different ways; students are introduced to key concepts before the lecture, instructors incorporate pre-lecture questions into the lecture itself and students are more likely to participate actively if they are familiar with the content and feel confident in their understanding. Thus by involving students in pre-lecture assignments, students develop a foundation of knowledge and prepare themselves for more in-depth discussions and problem-solving in the classroom.

However, research has also indicated that non-compliance with pre-lecture activities is one of the commonly cited challenges that face the learning process (Mei 2021). This non-compliance causes insufficient preparation for upcoming lecture content that eventually leads to a lack of students' learning ability. Carvalho, Dougkas, Ghaffarzadegan, Punzi, and Tareke (2014) state that to maintain learners' interest during class time, active learning methods such as problem-solving, class discussion and group activities.

2.5 The Effectiveness of Pre-Lecture Assignments in Increasing Learners' Engagement and Classroom Participation

Student engagement during lectures is a cornerstone in today's teaching and learning process. Mansoor (2021) claims that learners' engagement changes their role from being passive to active participants in the learning process. As the teaching and learning process is a social activity where students and instructors interact, and engagement doesn't happen with no prior knowledge, pre-lecture assignments prepare the students for this engagement and classroom participation. Pre-lecture assignments are seen as a catalyst for positive classroom participation. Students become familiar with the key concepts, vocabulary and ideas that enable them to actively engage in class discussion, generate questions and collaborate with their peers when they are equipped with prior knowledge of the upcoming class content.

For example, a study by C. Nkhoma, M. Nkhoma, Ulhaq, & Sang (2017) find out that pre-lecture assignments play a significant role on enhancing learner engagement and classroom participation. Similarly, Kantamas (2023) and Kinsella et al. (2017) conclude that pre-lecture assignments increase learners' engagement and learning outcomes. Additionally, pre-lecture assignments that involve group discussions and open-ended questions increase learners' engagement and preparation in a flipped classroom context (Chai, Kushnazarov, Yau, Qi, & Lei, 2019). These assignments are particularly crucial in creating an environment where students are actively motivated to engage during class rather than being passive learners.

However, it is worth mentioning that adapting the pre-lecture assignments model can be challenging due to its nature (time-consuming) and the need for extra resources (Ekaningrum, 2015).

2.6 The Effectiveness of Pre-Lecture Assignments on Enhancing Learners' Information Retention

Learning at a higher education level is an intricate process that involves acquiring new knowledge, skills, and intellectual abilities to solve problems effectively and grasp new information easily. Pre-lecture assignments as mentioned earlier serve as a pedagogical tool in the teaching and learning process, not only for their effectiveness in preparing learners for upcoming content but also for their contribution on enhancing learners' information retention (Alam et al., 2014).

Previous studies that delve into the effectiveness of using pre-lecture assignments on enhancing learners' information retention conclude that these assignments play a significant role in enhancing learners' information retention across various educational settings and disciplines. For example, research by Jain (2022) in an introductory psychology course demonstrates that students who complete pre-lecture assignments (quizzes) show greater retention than those who don't. Similarly, a study by Ballesteros-Pérez et al. (2017) find that pre-lecture assignments promote a high level of student understanding information retention. Another study by Alam et al. (2014) in mathematics course conclude that these assignments have shown significant improvement in students' information retention.

The integration of the FC model with pre-lecture assignments has shown significant effectiveness in recent research studies. As characterized by engaging learners with upcoming topics before class and using class time for active learning, the FC model and pre-lecture assignments have proved to enhance students' learning ability, engagement and information retention.

Despite the fact that the existing literature provides significant insights into the FC model and pre-lecture assignments, there is a notable gap in the literature concerning its implementation and effectiveness in the Sudanese context particularly Sudanese EFL undergraduates' context. Additionally, and to the best knowledge of the researcher, there is no previous study on FC model and pre-lecture assignments in linguistics courses.

3. Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical mixed approach to provide an inclusive understanding by relating detailed descriptions with statistical and analytical insights. A questionnaire with twenty-four items and an interview with one open-ended question are employed as data collection tools. The questionnaire is designed using a five-point Linkert scale; strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. These twenty-five items address five variables; learning ability (8 items), engagement and participation (8 items), attitudes (5 items) and overall feedback (4 items). The population of this study is level three EFL undergraduates majoring in English language in the Faculty of Alsun at the International University of Africa. Using Google Form and a random sampling technique, the researcher administers the questionnaire to the whole class (58 students) of which 48 students take part as the study sample. Hence, it's administered before taking their final exam to avoid any bias. Phonetics course has been taught during the period of conducting this study. It's worth mentioning that, it's the first time for the students to experience pre-lecture assignments and the researcher who is the course's instructor, doesn't inform the students that by the end of the semester they are going to take part in the study. The data (questionnaire) is analysed using SPSS version 29 and displayed with figures while the interview is analysed by quoting some of the participants' responses and the researcher's interpretation in the results and discussion section.

4. Results

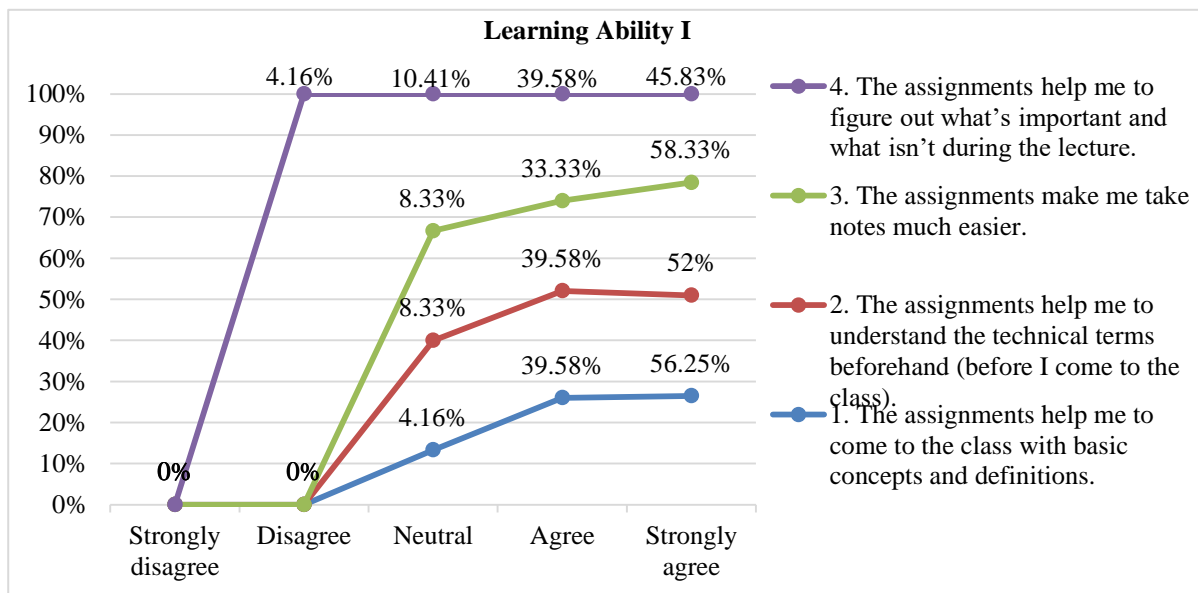


Figure 1a. The Effectiveness of Pre-Lecture Assignments on Enhancing Learners' Learning Ability

Figure 1a illustrates participants' responses regarding the effectiveness of implementing pre-lecture assignments to enhance their learning ability. Hence, this variable has eight items to address it; four are mentioned in figure 1a and the other four are discussed in the following figure (figure 1b). With regard to the first statement 'The assignments help me to come to the class with basic concepts and definitions.', majority (56.25%) of the respondents strongly agree that the assignments have helped them to come to class with key concepts and definitions. Nineteen (39.58%) participants respond with agree while only two (4.16%) are neutral. The second statement which focuses on technical terms 'The assignments help me to understand the technical terms beforehand (before I come to the class).', twenty-five (52%) participants strongly agree that the assignments have helped them to get familiar with technical terms before coming to the class. As in the previous statement, nineteen (39.58%) participants agree while four (8.33%) are neutral. With respect to the third item 'The assignments make me take notes much easier.', majority (58.33%) of the respondents strongly agree that the assignments have made their note-taking skills easier. Sixteen (33.33%) participants show agreement with the statement while four (8.33%) are neutral. The fourth item which focuses on helping learners identify the important points during the lecture 'The assignments help me to figure out what's important and what isn't during the lecture.', twenty-two (45.83%) participants strongly agree that the assignments have helped them to figure out the important points during lecture time. Nineteen (39.58%) participants respond with agree while only five (10.41%) are neutral and two (4.16%) disagree. It's worth noting that none (0%) of the participants strongly disagree with any of the statements.

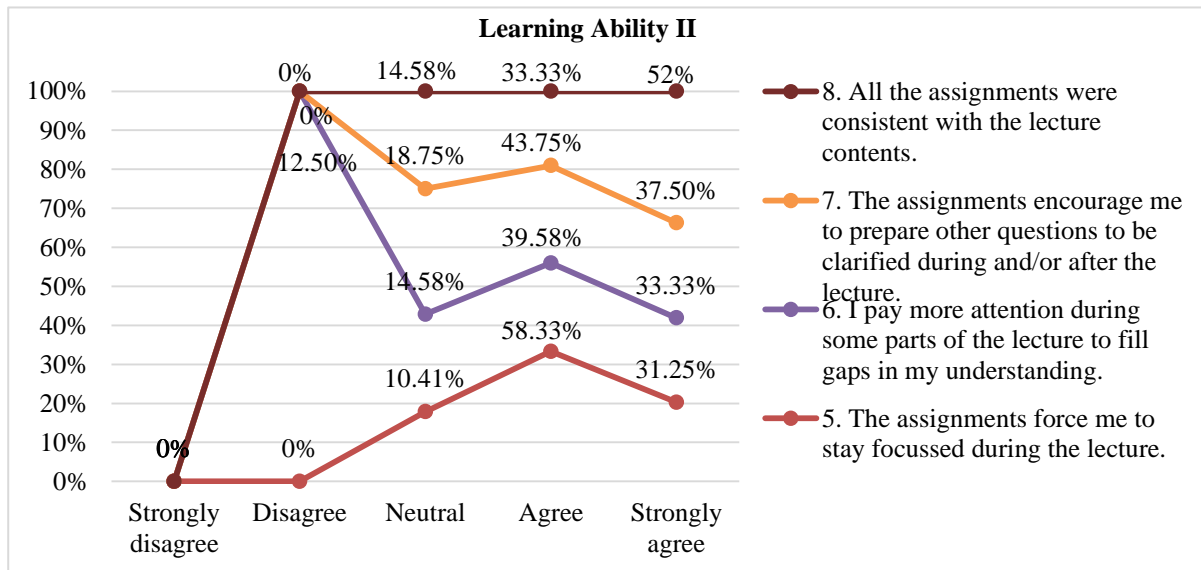


Figure 1b. The Effectiveness of Pre-Lecture Assignments on Enhancing Learners' Learning Ability

Figure 1b demonstrates the remaining responses to the effectiveness of implementing pre-lecture assignments to enhance students' learning ability. As in the previous four items, none (0%) of the respondents strongly disagree with any of the remaining four statements. With regard to the fifth statement 'The assignments force me to stay focussed during the lecture.', majority (58.33%) of participants agree that the assignments have forced them to pay full attention during classes. Fifteen (31.25%) participants strongly agree while five (10.41%) are neutral. The sixth item which focuses on paying attention in some parts of the lecture to fill the gap of understanding some points that they don't when they complete the assignments 'I pay more attention during some parts of the lecture to fill gaps in my understanding.', nineteen (39.58%) participants agree that the assignments have helped them to focus on areas that they don't understand beforehand. Sixteen (33.33%) show strong agreement with the statement while seven (14.58) are neutral and six (12.50%) disagree. With respect to the seventh statement 'The assignments encourage me to prepare other questions to be clarified during and/or after the lecture.', twenty-one (43.75%) participants agree that the assignments have encouraged them to prepare clarification/follow up question to be posed during and/or after lecture time. Eighteen (37.50%) respondents strongly agree with the statement while nine (18.75%) are neutral. The last statement which addresses the consistency of the assignments' content with the topics covered in the class 'All the assignments were consistent with the lecture contents.', majority (52%) of the participants strongly agree with the statement that those assignments are consistent with their lectures' contents. Sixteen (33.33%) respondents show agreement with the statement while seven (14.58%) are neutral.

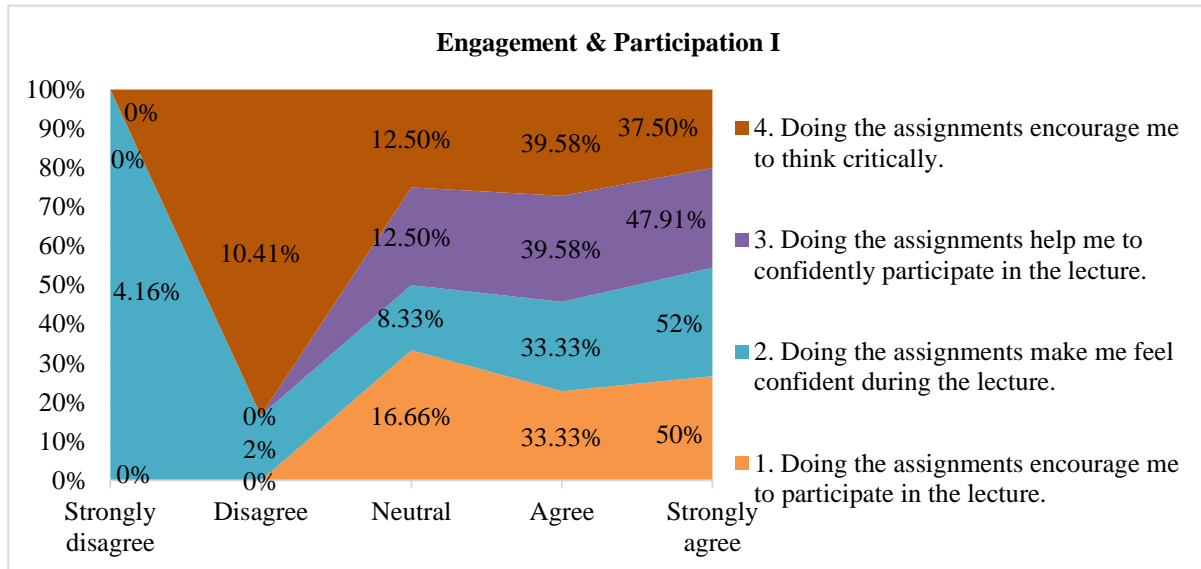


Figure 2a. The Effectiveness of Pre-Lecture Assignments in Increasing Learners' Engagement and Participation

Figure 2a illustrates participants' responses regarding the effectiveness of implementing pre-lecture assignments to increase their class engagement and participation. Hence, as in the previous variable, this one also has eight items to address it; four are mentioned in figure 2a and the other four are discussed in the following figure (figure 2b). With regard to the first statement 'Doing the assignments encourage me to participate in the lecture.', half (50%) of the respondents strongly agree that the assignments have encouraged them to participate during classes. Sixteen (33.33%) participants respond with agree while eight (16.66%) are neutral. The second statement which focuses on confidence 'Doing the assignments make me feel confident during the lecture.', twenty-five (52%) participants strongly agree that the assignments have made them feel confident during lectures. Sixteen (33.33%) respondents agree while eight (16.16%) are neutral. Two (4.16%) participants strongly disagree with the statement while only one (2%) disagrees. With respect to the third item 'Doing the assignments help me to confidently participate in the lecture.', majority (47.91%) of the respondents strongly agree that the assignments have made them feel confident to participate during lectures. Nineteen (39.58%) participants show agreement with the statement while six (10.41%) are neutral. The fourth item which focuses on encouraging learners to think critically 'Doing the assignments encourage me to think critically.', Nineteen (39.58%) respondents agree that the assignments have encouraged them to think critically and nearly the same percentage (37.50%) of respondents strongly agree. Six (12.50%) participants remain neutral while five (10.41%) disagree.

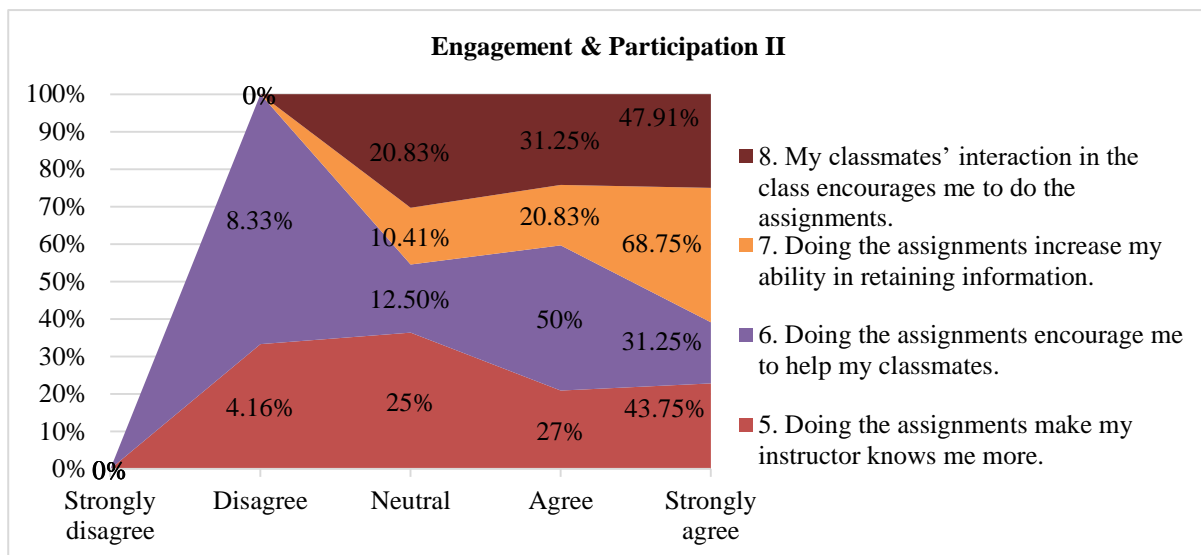


Figure 2b. The Effectiveness of Pre-Lecture Assignments in Increasing Learners' Engagement and Participation

Figure 2b demonstrates the remaining four items of the participants' responses regarding the effectiveness of implementing pre-lecture assignments to increase their class engagement and participation. With regard to the fifth statement 'Doing the assignments make my instructor knows me more.', majority (43.75%) of participants strongly agree that the assignments have made them familiar to their

instructor while thirteen (27%) agree. While twelve (25%) remain neutral, two (4.16%) participants disagree. The sixth item which focuses on whether the assignments encourage them to help their peers or not ‘*Doing the assignments encourage me to help my classmates.*’, half (50%) of the participants agree that the assignments have encouraged them to help their peers while fifteen (31.25%) show strong agreement with the statement. While six (12.50) remain neutral, four (8.33%) disagree. With respect to the seventh statement ‘*Doing the assignments increase my ability in retaining information.*’, thirty-three (68.75%) participants strongly agree that the assignments have increased their ability to retain information during and/or after lectures. Ten (20.83%) respondents agree with the statement while five (10.41%) remain neutral. The last statement which addresses the consistency of the assignments’ content with the topics covered in the class ‘*My classmates’ interaction in the class encourages me to do the assignments.*’, majority (47.91%) of the participants strongly agree with the statement that the interactions with their classmates encourage them to the assignments. Fifteen (31.25%) respondents show agreement with the statement while ten (20.83%) remain neutral. It’s worth noting that none (0%) of the participants strongly disagree with any of the statements.

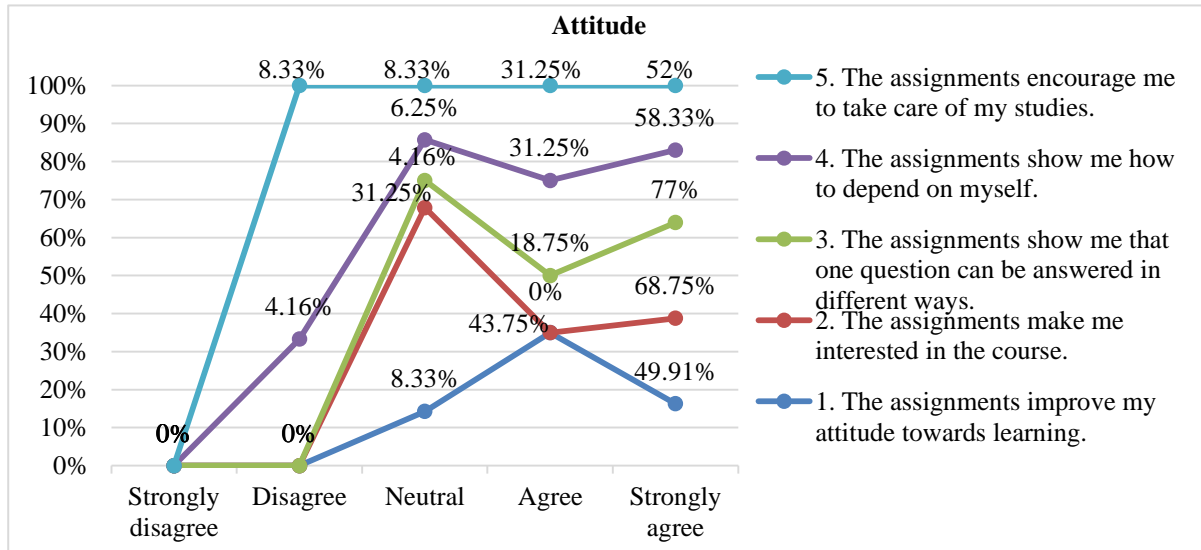


Figure 3. The Effectiveness of Pre-Lecture Assignments on Enhancing Learners’ Attitudes

Figure 3 shows participants’ responses regarding the effectiveness of implementing pre-lecture assignments to enhance their learning attitudes. Hence, this variable has five items to address it. With regard to the first statement ‘*The assignments improve my attitudes towards learning.*’, majority (49.91%) of the respondents strongly agree that the assignments have improved their learning attitudes. Twenty-one (43.75%) participants respond with agree while only four (8.33%) are neutral. The second statement which focuses on interest ‘*The assignments make me interested in the course.*’, thirty-three (68.75%) participants strongly agree that the assignments have made them to be interested in the course while the remaining fifteen (31.25) remain neutral. With respect to the third item ‘*The assignments show me that one question can be answered in different ways.*’, majority (77%) of the respondents strongly agree that the assignments have shown them the possibility that one question can be answered in more than one way. Nine (18.75%) participants show agreement with the statement while two (4.16%) are neutral. The fourth item which focuses on helping learners identify the important points during the lecture ‘*The assignments show me how to depend on myself.*’, twenty-eight (58.33%) participants strongly agree that the assignments have shown them how to be an independent student while fifteen (31.25%) show agreement. Three (6.25%) participants remain neutral, two (4.16) disagree with the statement. The last item in this variable addresses learners’ responsibility ‘*The assignments encourage me to take care of my studies.*’, majority (52%) of respondents strongly agree with the statement that the assignments have encouraged them to take care of their studies while fifteen (31.25%) show agreement. Four (8.33%) participants equally respond with neutral and disagree. It’s worth noting that none (0%) of the participants strongly disagree with any of the statements.

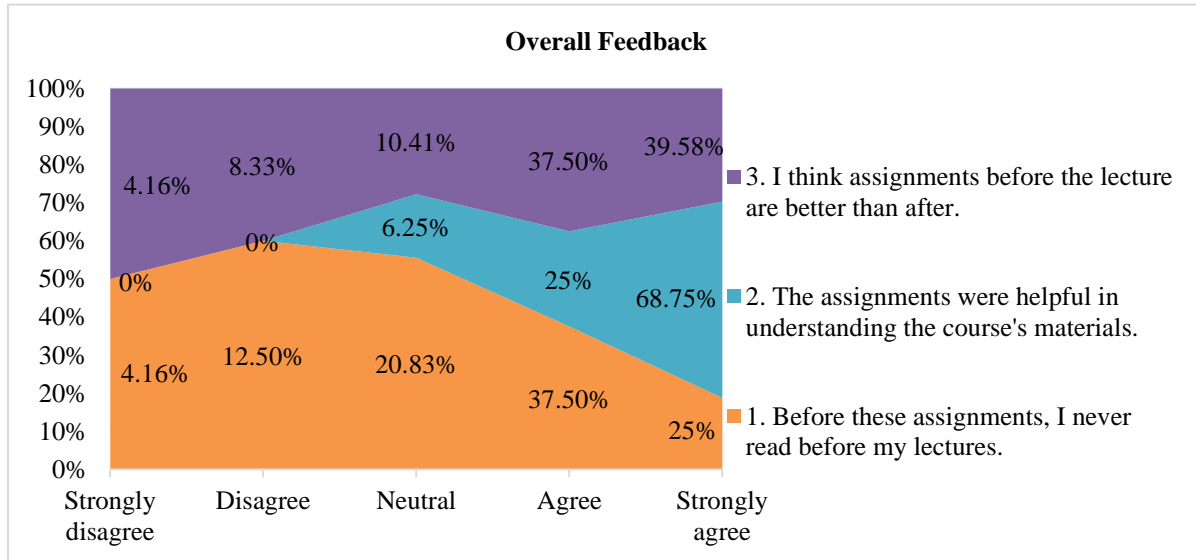


Figure 4. The Effectiveness of Pre-Lecture Assignments on Overall Experience (Overall feedback)

Figure 4 demonstrates the participants’ overall feedback on the effectiveness of implementing pre-lecture assignments as compared to their previous experience. With regard to the first statement ‘Before these assignments, I never read before my lectures.’, majority (37.50%) of participants respond with agreement that before these assignments they have never read before lectures while twelve (25%) show strong agreement. While ten (20.83%) remain neutral, six (12.50%) participants disagree and two (4.16%) strongly disagree. The second item focuses on whether the assignments encourage them to help their peers or not ‘The assignments were helpful in understanding the course’s materials.’, thirty-three (68.75%) of the participants strongly agree that the assignments have helped them to understand the course’s materials. Twelve (25%) respondents agree with the statement while only three (6.25%) remain neutral. With respect to the third and last statement ‘I think assignments before the lecture are better than after.’, nineteen (39.58%) participants strongly agree that assignments before classes are better than those after while ten (20.82%) show agreement. While five (10.41%) remain neutral, four (8.33%) participants disagree and two (4.16%) strongly disagree.

As part of the overall feedback the researcher asks one open-ended question as an interview; *What did you like and/or dislike the most about the pre-class assignments?* Majority of the participants believe that the pre-lecture assignments have enhanced their learning ability, classroom engagement and participation and attitudes toward learning. One participant says “*What I liked most was the large number of assignments that prompted me to participate, focus during the lecture, be self-reliant, and acquire a lot of information in different ways. Searching from Google also pushed me to work hard and persevere, to overcome the obstacles and pitfalls that I face, such as lack of concentration and understanding and lack of self-confidence*”. Another student says “*The skill of searching for information has been developed. If I have a good background about the subject, it makes the lecture more fun and easier, and it became difficult to forget the information. It made studying very easy for me, %95 of the lecture is understandable to me and I need only a very little effort. Participation, and focus in the lecture well to understand some of the ambiguities. I benefit and like this method so much that if I become a teacher in the future, I will follow this approach*”. A third one says “*Before this course (Phonetics), I dislike assignment and homework before the lectures, but now I like this and I feel improved in vocabulary and I break obsessed of the fear, shyness and became participated and interesting in the class*”. The fourth participant says “*I like doing the assignment before the lecture and when I do it before I feel the new information in the lecture it looks so easy and understand it quickly, also I taken not quickly and carefully and better at all, so assignment it so effective and better way I think to understand more, to discover more information and knew*”. The fifth one say “*I liked all the assignments that we were doing before the lecture and it helped us very much in understanding the lectures and the material in itself. I hope that you will study us in the upcoming semesters*”. Other four participants believe that the pre-lecture assignments have helped them to have some background about their upcoming lecture content, confidently participate during class discussion, retain information long after the class, and think critically during class time.

On the other hand, one participant claims that they are confused as some of the questions have more than one answer, yet after the class everything becomes clear. Another one claims that they don’t like doing many assignments especially when there are lots of questions in one assignment. A third participant says “*We want to know the correctness of the assignment in order to know if the answers are correct or not*”.

5. Discussion

The current study is carried out to, among other objectives, explore the effectiveness of pre-lecture assignments on EFL undergraduates’ ability to grasp basic linguistic concepts and definitions before attending a lecture. According to the results of the learning ability statements (see Figure 1a and 1b), majority of the participants strongly agree and agree to prove the hypothesis which says pre-lecture assignments are effective for enhancing EFL undergraduates’ learning ability. This result is also aligned with those studies carried out in

other fields as in Li (2022) on EFL students majoring in artificial intelligence and Hadie et al. (2019) on biology students.

The second objective investigates the effectiveness of pre-lecture assignments in increasing EFL undergraduates' engagement, participation, confidence and critical thinking skills during class discussions. As the results in figure 2a and 2b demonstrate, most of the participants agree that the pre-lecture assignment implemented during the course has increased their engagement and participation during class discussions as well as their critical thinking skills. This result is in harmony with previous studies which show the same result; Kantamas (2023) on EFL students (general language skills) and Nkhoma et al. (2017).

With regard to the third and last objective that evaluates the effectiveness of pre-lecture assignments on enhancing EFL undergraduates' attitudes toward linguistic courses, the findings in Figure 3 reveal that the majority of the participants strongly agree and agree with all statements. These results are in line with the researcher's hypothesis that pre-lecture assignments have a positive effect on enhancing their attitudes towards linguistic courses. This result is also aligned with those studies carried out in other fields as in Li (2022) on EFL students majoring in artificial intelligence.

To get their overall feedback and as the results in figure 4 show, the participants prove the general effectiveness of pre-lecture assignments on their learning endeavour. In addition, the data obtained by the interview shows the same feedback and the respondents ask the course's instructor to implement the pre-lecture assignments model in their upcoming courses.

6. Conclusion

Having some background (prior knowledge) before attending any lecture is crucially important, especially attending a class in a foreign language for university/college students. This cruciality arises due to the fact that content courses such as linguistic courses require knowledge of the basic terminologies to be covered during class and class time will be devoted to discussion.

With the obtained findings and the literature review in the second section of this article, it's evident that FC and more specifically pre-lecture assignments have significantly affected EFL undergraduates' attitudes, ability, engagement and participation during classes. This effectiveness is largely due to the fact that the teaching and learning process is triggered towards learner-centred approach more than the traditional teacher-centred one which makes the learner a passive receiver.

It's worth mentioning that 21st century teaching and learning methods focus on making the learner the core pillar of this process. As a result, instructors, particularly EFL instructors, are highly recommended to look at the current study's findings which show undergraduates' feedback after the implementation of the pre-lecture assignments model.

Despite the fact that the small size of the class, the total number of the sample is relatively small for a questionnaire. It's recommended that this study could be replicated on a larger sample of participants.

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the participant of this study whose cooperation has yielded to the fulfillment of this study.

Authors' contributions

Not applicable

Funding

Not applicable

Competing interests

Not applicable

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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