

Research Paper

Flipped Classroom: A Case Study on the Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Flipped Learning for ESL Teacher Candidates

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ABSTRACT

Flipped classrooms have recently emerged as a very innovative approach in teaching and learning English as a Second Language, more specifically by the ESL teacher candidates in higher education institutions. The present study investigated the perceived benefits and challenges of flipped learning in the context of ESL teacher candidates. The subjects of the present study were 50 participants who underwent a structured survey, out of which 10 participants were randomly chosen for in-depth interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. The results showed that flipped learning increases student engagement, promotes collaborative learning, and allows for more individualized instruction; some of the challenges noted in this study involved various technological problems and initial resistance from students. This study highlights how the flipped classroom model can transform language education through active learning and enhancement of critical thinking skills among ESL teacher candidates. These findings therefore gave good lessons that can be learnt by educators who wish to apply flipped learning; potential challenges such as access to technology and the preparedness of students have to be considered in implementing it. This study underlines continuous needs for professional development on the part of educators in adopting new teaching methodologies and points toward the future of studies in terms of the long-term effects of flipped learning in ESL contexts.



INTRODUCTION

During the recent years, one of the most discussed topics in education, not only generally but also in language education, is the concept of a flipped classroom. In a word, the flipped classroom model represents a pedagogical turn in educational practices at large but, in particular, regarding language education. Flipped learning, from a pedagogical perspective, emanates from the constructivist learning theories, emphasizing active participation and interaction among learners. Constructivism postulates that knowledge is created from experiences and interaction with others rather than merely being a passive attribute received from instructors. Piaget (1976) and Vygotsky (1978) support the view that in the flipped classroom model, the focus shifts away from teacher-centered instruction towards student-centered learning. In a flipped classroom, the pedagogical method involves the engagement of students with instructional content outside the classroom, usually using videos and online resources, whereas in-class time is reserved for activities that are collaborative and interactive in nature (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). Another unique feature the model allows is differentiated instruction: materials can be worked through at an individual student's pace, and concepts that prove difficult can be reviewed before an in-class application is attempted. This personalized approach is welcome for ESL learners, who usually come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and hence require personalized support to develop their language skills.

Conventionally, it is in the classroom that students are lectured by teachers and then practiced out of the classroom in homework assignments. On the other hand, a paradigm that has increasingly challenged this model is what is called the flipped classroom. In this model, learners are exposed to new content at home, often through video lectures and other online resources, while time in the classroom is dedicated to activities that allow students to engage more deeply with the material and apply it with others present. Flipping pedagogical practice on its head, this model serves to increase student engagement and active learning, and quite frankly, prepares learners for how they will use knowledge in the real world. Because traditional schools frequently follow set timetables and offer little opportunity for individualized learning, students tend to play a more passive role, receiving material in class and working on tasks after class. Conversely, the FCM encourages students to actively participate in both in-class and extracurricular activities, giving them the freedom to customize their education to suit their own objectives and learning style. According to Bergmann and Sams (2012), the FCM model includes a pre-class period during which students watch videos or do preparatory activities to acquire the course material. The collaborative activities that take place throughout the in-class period in the model require students to actively participate in the learning process, communicate with their partners, and expand their own knowledge.

Flipped learning not only changes the way lectures are structured, but it also changes the roles that instructors and students play. Because of continuous technological advancements and the availability of online resources, teachers are no longer the sole source of knowledge and information in flipped learning (Wilson, 2013). Unlike traditional classroom instruction, flipped classrooms involve the teacher guiding and facilitating the learning process. Teachers help students engage in more diverse pedagogical techniques and build their problem-solving abilities because flipped learning shifts the role of the teacher from one of knowledge or information provider to one of coach or advisor (McLaughlin et al., 2014).

While the interest in flipped learning has been growing, very few studies so far have investigated how to implement it and how effective it will be in ESL contexts, with even fewer being framed from the perspective of teacher candidates. Teacher candidates obviously play an important role in teaching; if their experiences and perceptions of any innovation are not greatly influenced, then the future of language teaching does not seem very bright. Knowing how these future educators perceive flipped learning may lead to rich insights about the affordances and challenges of the approach in informing curricula development and instruction techniques within the ESL teacher preparation programs.

The theoretical bases of flipped learning draw heavily from constructivist learning theories that emphasize the centrality of activity and social interaction to processes of learning. Constructivism assumes learners construct knowledge through experiences and reflection rather than passively receiving information. Instead, in the flipped classroom, students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning through instruction before class and collaborative activities during the class period. This addresses the original Vygotskian formation of the Zone of Proximal Development, where learners may profit from peer social interactions and instructors' scaffolding of complex ideas.

The flipped classroom model also borrows from the principles of adult learning theory, especially within teacher education. Knowles (1980) emphasizes a need toward self-directed learning and experiential activities in adults. Since ESL teacher candidates are oftentimes motivated by the notion of applicability of learning in real-life situations, it could well be argued that the flipped classroom model would give them agency in their learning process. The flipped classroom allows teacher candidates to engage in collaborative problem-solving and critical thinking, thereby creating an environment in which they learn more meaningfully.

Benefits of flipped learning

Research has so far identified several benefits associated with the implementation of flipped learning in educational contexts, among them language education. The first major benefit of the concept lies in increased engagement among students. The flipped classroom model encourages active participation; hence, students can take responsibility for their learning. In this regard, the study by O'Flaherty and Phillips (2015) revealed that in the flipped classroom, learners are much more engaged and motivated than those in the traditional classrooms. Indeed, increased engagement is most crucial in language learning as there needs to be much interaction and communication so that proficiency can develop.

Students in flipped classrooms report higher motivation and interest in their learning compared to others, according to many studies (Baker, 2000; O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015). This turning around from passivity into being an actor allows them to take more responsibility for their own learning process, which is very significant in language learning, since interaction itself plays a great role in such a process.

A study by Lin (2017) explored the effectiveness of the flipped classroom approach on student engagement in ESL learners. It showed that students are much more motivated to participate in class discussions and activities if they come to class prepared with pre-class readings or materials. They can engage more because they can learn at their own pace and access resources when more convenient. Additionally, collaborative classroom activities spur students to interact with their co-students, thus reinforcing participation.

Another major positive effect of flipped learning is collaborative learning. Whereas linguistic acquisition through group work and peer-to-peer interaction is better accommodated in the flipped model classroom than in a traditional setting, this collaboratively rich environment allows students in ESL contexts to contextualize use, receive immediate feedback, and learn from one another. Indeed, Baker (2000) found evidence that collaboration in language learning results in higher levels of language proficiency and fuller retention of information.

In the face-to-face classroom, due to the very limited interaction time, it often inhibits opportunities for students to practice their speaking and listening skills. However, this model enables them to make more meaning of class interactions through discussing, working together on projects, and providing feedback to one another (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

According to Dörnyei (2001), research underlines that collaboration is a critical component of language learning; peer-to-peer interaction offers the ability to negotiate meaning and practice language. Students in the flipped classroom can work in small groups to achieve more authentic tasks than they could work on individually, which can support language use for real-life purposes. For example, Kuo et al. (2014) described how the students of the flipped ESL class showed a higher degree of

collaboration and peer support that eminently improved their language ability and extended the use of their confidence in the target language proficiency.

Besides, the flipped classroom enables personalized instructions. In traditional classrooms, tutors are barely able to attend to the individual needs of students either because of lack of time or due to other competing pressures that require them to deliver content to the entire class. However, the flexibility availed by the flipped model to students outside the class enables them to learn at their pace and review areas they do not understand at their convenience (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). This can be particularly useful to the candidates for ESL teaching positions, as they may have different language proficiency levels and use different learning styles.

Several studies have identified that flipped learning tends to enhance the level of proficiency in the case of ESL learners. When students prepare themselves with instructional content at home, they are better equipped to engage in language practice and application activities during class. In such a manner, deeper insights into the concepts of languages could be provided for better usage in communication.

For instance, Chen et al. (2017) have investigated the effectiveness of flipped learning in developing the language proficiency of ESL students. The findings showed that students taught through a flipped classroom exhibited speaking and writing improvements which were significantly different from those students taught with traditional instruction. Such improvements, as the authors argue, are brought about by improved opportunities in language practice, immediate feedback from peers, and instructor instructors.

Moreover, flipped learning has been found to develop a higher level of critical thinking and problem-solving aptitude, necessary for language learners. A study conducted by Abeysekera and Dawson (2015) identifies that in the flipped classroom, students are forced to engage themselves in higher-order thinking during which they analyze and apply rather than merely memorize information. This could result in developing their language proficiency since students are given the opportunity to use language more appropriately in real-life situations.

Challenges of flipped learning

Despite numerous advantages, the implementation of flipped learning is not free from challenges. Among the major concerns, one relates to the possible technological issues influencing students' opportunities to get access to the instructional content outside the class. Some students, particularly those with resource-scarce backgrounds, may face a huge barrier in gaining access to reliable internet and technology devices. According to Tucker (2012), it is very critical in the flipped classroom model that there is equal access of all students to the technology required for the smooth running of classes.

Access to pre-class materials will be highly dependent on the availability of reliable internet and the right technological devices among students. A disparity in access would, therefore, make some students unequal, especially in resource-poor regions. On the flip side, Lai and Hwang (2016) have also pointed out the issues of technological accessibility in flipped classrooms. For instance, they found that students with limited access to technology struggled with pre-class assignments and subsequent engagement and performance in in-class activities. It is here that educators should take note of such disparities while pursuing the proposition of alternative resources or support for such students.

Initial resistance to change is another challenge faced by the other ESL teacher candidates. Students may be accustomed to conventional modes of learning, while the flipped model probably brings feelings of uncertainty or discomfort. According to Johnson, most students need time to adapt to new approaches to teaching that cause frustration and disengagement. Instructors should, therefore, offer support and guidance during this transition process to enable students to adjust and appreciate the benefits brought about by flipped learning. Most of the students might be used to traditional ways of teaching and might feel uncertain or uncomfortable with the flipped model. Such resistance could show itself in many ways: from the reluctance to engage in pre-class materials to skepticism over effectiveness using the flipped approach.

For any reduction in such resistance to occur, clear communication on the benefits of flipped learning, with support through transition, by the instructors is required. Chen et al. (2018) refer to a study in which students' buy-in and engagement occurred with active involvement on their part in the design and implementation of the flipped classroom. Feelings of unease by the students will lessen as instructors work to develop an environment that is helpful and encouraging, building positive views on flipped learning.

Also, effective time management significantly contributes to the success of a flipped classroom. It is important that students are motivated and disciplined enough to go through the instructional materials assigned outside of class, which is a big challenge for some learners to handle (Baker, 2000). If proper time management skills are not present, students will fail to prepare the pre-class assignments accordingly, which will lead to misconceived gaps in understanding and a decline in engagement during the class activities. In this regard, students must be motivated and disciplined enough to access instructional materials outside the classroom setting, a prospect that has been considered a significant challenge for some learners to effectively manage (Baker,

2000). Unless time management techniques are appropriate, the student may not be able to complete pre-class assignments, resulting in lacunars in understanding and reducing effective participation during class activities.

Research by Rath (2016) emphasized that time management strategies need to be explicitly taught to the students in the case of a flipped classroom. The instructor can also support the students by detailing pre-class preparation and by giving them means and resources for managing their time more productively. An instructor can really help optimize the effectiveness of a flipped classroom through better preparing the students with the skills needed to navigate their learning.

The flipped classroom idea provides special opportunities within English as a Second Language education to take into consideration various needs of language learners. Traditional methods of language instruction involve rote memorization and passive reception, which is especially inappropriate for ESL students who require more involving and communicative forms of learning. The flipped classroom model allows for great student involvement and interaction, wherein learners get to apply the language skills in real contexts with immediate feedback from instructors and peers. Therefore, it is relevant and timely to research how such an innovative approach influences ESL teacher candidates who are preparing to join an educational environment in flux.

This study investigates the perceived benefits and challenges of flipped learning for ESL teacher candidates at a higher education institution. The current study will employ a mixed-methods design, which will combine quantitative and qualitative data to offer a comprehensive understanding of how flipped learning influences teacher candidates' engagement and motivation, as well as their overall learning process. The findings of this study will be significant for educators, administrators, and policy makers who intend to implement teaching practices that are proven effective to better equip future ESL teachers with the challenges they will face in modern language education.

In the light of this literature review this study aims to answer the following research questions;

1. What are the perceived benefits of flipped learning among ESL teacher candidates?
2. What challenges do ESL teacher candidates face in engaging with a flipped classroom model?

METHODOLOGY

The approach used in this study is thus a mixed-methods design that gives an in-depth examination of the perceived benefits and challenges of flipped learning among the ESL teacher candidates in the higher education institution. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data can create a richer understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions.

In this regard, the current study has been designed in a mixed-methods design, which combines both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies for a complete insight into the research questions. Quantitatively, the approach involves surveys to retrieve numerical data about perceived benefits and challenges of flipped learning among the teacher candidates of ESL. Qualitatively, the method includes semi-structured interviews to get a deeper insight into the participants' experiences and perspectives related to the flipped classroom model.

Participants

Participants for this study were selected from a cohort of ESL teacher candidates enrolled in a teacher education program at a higher education institution. The sample was chosen using a non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling, to ensure that participants had direct experience with the flipped classroom model. The final sample consisted of 60 ESL teacher candidates who voluntarily participated in the study. This number was deemed sufficient to provide a meaningful analysis of the data while allowing for a diverse representation of experiences and perspectives. According to Creswell (2014), a sample size of 30 to 60 participants is typically adequate for mixed-methods studies, especially when the focus is on obtaining in-depth qualitative insights.

Demographic characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the participants were collected to provide context for the findings. Participants included a diverse group of individuals in terms of age, gender, and previous teaching experience. The following table summarizes the demographic information:

Table 1. Demographic Information

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	40	66.67
Male	20	33.33
Age		
20-24	25	41.67
25-29	20	33.33

30 and above	15	25.00
Previous Teaching Experience		
No experience	30	50.00
1-2 years	20	33.33
3 or more years	10	16.67

This demographic information provides insights into the backgrounds of the participants, highlighting the diversity within the sample.

Data collection

Data collection for this study involved two main instruments: a survey and semi-structured interviews. The use of multiple data collection methods enhances the reliability and validity of the findings by capturing a broader range of perspectives (Denzin, 1978).

The survey was designed to assess the participants' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of flipped learning. It consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions to facilitate quantitative analysis while allowing for qualitative insights. The survey was developed based on a review of the existing literature on flipped learning and its applications in ESL education. The instrument included three sections. In the first section demographic information about participants was gathered. In the second section, participants' perceived benefits of flipped learning were gathered through Likert-scale items measuring participants' agreement with various statements regarding the benefits of flipped learning, such as increased engagement, improved collaboration, and enhanced language proficiency. In the last section, perceived challenges of flipped learning were also sought through likert-scale items assessing participants' agreement with statements related to the challenges of flipped learning, such as technological barriers, student resistance, and time management issues.

The survey was pilot tested with a small group of ESL teacher candidates to ensure clarity and relevance of the items. Based on feedback, minor adjustments were made to the wording of certain questions for clarity. The Cronbach alpha value was found to be .80. The survey was administered online using a secure survey platform to ensure confidentiality and ease of access. Participants were invited to complete the survey during a designated period at the beginning of the semester, with a total response rate of 85%. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain anonymous. To complement the quantitative data obtained from the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 20 participants who expressed interest in sharing their experiences in greater detail. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility in the interview process while ensuring that key topics were addressed.

An interview guide was developed based on the research questions and themes identified in the literature review. The guide included open-ended questions designed to elicit participants' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of flipped learning. Sample questions included:

- Can you describe your overall experience with the flipped classroom model?
- What benefits have you observed in your learning as a result of the flipped classroom approach?
- What challenges have you encountered while engaging with flipped learning?
- How do you perceive the role of technology in the flipped classroom?

The interview guide was reviewed by experts in the field of language education to ensure its relevance and appropriateness. Interviews were conducted individually via video conferencing platforms to accommodate participants' schedules and preferences. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was recorded with the participants' consent for later transcription and analysis. Following each interview, the researcher took notes to capture non-verbal cues and contextual factors that might inform the analysis.

Data analysis

Data analysis for this study involved both quantitative and qualitative methods, corresponding to the mixed-methods design. The quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data from the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis.

Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS) to calculate descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies. The analysis focused on the perceived benefits and challenges of flipped learning, as indicated by participants' responses on the Likert scale.

Each Likert-scale item was scored on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represented strong disagreement and 5 represented strong agreement. The mean scores for each item were calculated to determine the overall trends in participants' perceptions. Additionally, frequencies were computed for each response category to identify patterns in the data.

Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method that involves identifying and interpreting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process included the following steps:

Transcription: The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to capture participants' responses accurately. Transcription was completed shortly after each interview to ensure the integrity of the data.

Familiarization with Data: The researcher read through the transcripts multiple times to become familiar with the content and to identify initial impressions and potential themes. This stage of familiarization is crucial for ensuring a thorough understanding of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Coding: The researcher then engaged in an inductive coding process, assigning codes to segments of the transcripts that represented distinct ideas or concepts related to the research questions. This process was iterative, allowing for the refinement of codes as the analysis progressed.

Theme Development: After coding the data, the researcher identified overarching themes that captured the essence of participants' experiences and perceptions. Themes were developed based on the frequency of codes and their relevance to the research questions. Each theme was supported by direct quotes from participants to provide rich, contextual evidence.

Validity and reliability

To enhance the validity and reliability of the qualitative analysis, member checking was employed. Participants were invited to review the preliminary findings and themes derived from their interviews to ensure that their perspectives were accurately represented. Feedback from participants was incorporated into the final analysis.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process to protect participants' rights and welfare. The study adhered to the ethical guidelines established by the higher education institution's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Key ethical considerations included:

Informed Consent: All participants were provided with detailed information about the study, including its purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation, ensuring that participants understood their rights and the voluntary nature of their involvement.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study by anonymizing participants' data and ensuring that identifying information was not disclosed in any reports or publications. Participants were assigned unique identifiers to protect their identities, and all data were securely stored.

Right to Withdraw: Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. This right was emphasized during the informed consent process and reiterated during the study.

RESULTS

The results section presents the findings from both the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews conducted in this study. The analysis highlights the perceived benefits and challenges of flipped learning as reported by ESL teacher candidates at a higher education institution. This section is organized into two main parts: quantitative results from the survey and qualitative findings from the interviews.

Quantitative results

The quantitative data collected from the survey were analyzed to assess the overall trends in the perceived benefits and challenges of flipped learning among ESL teacher candidates. The analysis includes descriptive statistics, including means and frequencies, to provide a comprehensive overview of participants' responses.

Demographic Overview: A total of 60 ESL teacher candidates completed the survey, representing a diverse cohort. The demographic characteristics of the participants were summarized earlier. The following sections present the results regarding perceived benefits and challenges based on the survey responses.

Perceived Benefits of Flipped Learning: The survey included 15 Likert-scale items measuring participants' perceptions of the benefits of flipped learning. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding the impact of the flipped classroom model on their learning experiences. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Perceived Benefits of Flipped Learning

Benefit Statement	Mean	SD	% Agree/Strongly Agree
Increased student engagement	4.50	0.68	88.33%
Enhanced collaboration among peers	4.32	0.78	85.00%
Improved understanding of course content	4.30	0.75	83.33%
Greater flexibility in learning	4.25	0.80	81.67%
Enhanced opportunities for personalized learning	4.20	0.76	80.00%
Increased motivation to learn	4.15	0.70	78.33%
Improved language proficiency	4.10	0.85	75.00%
Better preparation for classroom activities	4.00	0.82	73.33%
Greater access to resources and materials	3.90	0.88	70.00%
Enhanced critical thinking skills	3.85	0.79	66.67%

As shown in Table 1, participants strongly agreed with several statements regarding the benefits of flipped learning. The highest-rated perceived benefit was "increased student engagement," with a mean score of 4.50, indicating that a majority of participants (88.33%) felt that flipped learning significantly increased their engagement in the learning process. Similarly, "enhanced collaboration among peers" (M = 4.32) and "improved understanding of course content" (M = 4.30) were also highly rated. The findings suggest that ESL teacher candidates perceive the flipped classroom model as an effective approach to enhancing their learning experiences, fostering collaboration, and improving content comprehension.

Perceived challenges of flipped learning

The survey also included 12 Likert-scale items assessing the perceived challenges associated with flipped learning. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements regarding potential obstacles to implementing the flipped classroom model. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Perceived Challenges of Flipped Learning

Challenge Statement	Mean	SD	% Agree/Strongly Agree
Technological barriers (e.g., access to devices/internet)	4.10	0.85	75.00%
Resistance from peers or instructors	3.85	0.90	66.67%
Difficulty managing time effectively	3.80	0.82	65.00%
Lack of familiarity with technology	3.70	0.76	61.67%
Insufficient training on flipped classroom pedagogy	3.65	0.84	58.33%
Student disengagement with pre-class materials	3.60	0.81	55.00%
Balancing flipped learning with other responsibilities	3.50	0.75	50.00%
Lack of clear communication about expectations	3.40	0.78	48.33%

The results presented in Table 3 indicate that the most frequently reported challenge was "technological barriers," with a mean score of 4.10 and 75% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. This finding highlights concerns related to access to devices and reliable internet, which are critical for the successful implementation of the flipped classroom model. Other notable challenges included "resistance from peers or instructors" (M = 3.85) and "difficulty managing time effectively" (M = 3.80), suggesting that participants recognized both social and practical obstacles to adopting flipped learning.

Qualitative results

The qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews with 20 ESL teacher candidates provided deeper insights into their perceptions of the benefits and challenges of flipped learning. Thematic analysis revealed several key themes related to the participants' experiences with the flipped classroom model.

Perceived benefits

Analysis of the interview data identified four major themes regarding the perceived benefits of flipped learning:

Increased Engagement and Motivation

Participants felt that the flipped classroom model increased their level of participation and motivation to learn significantly. As one participant clearly stated, "I feel more into the class because I can prepare in advance. It's not just sitting and listening; I get to interact more." Several others expressed similar feelings, elaborating that the interactive nature made learning in this class more enjoyable and stimulating.

Enhanced Collaboration and Communication

The collaboration aspects of flipped learning have been mentioned by the participants to be one of the major advantages of the approach. As expressed by one participant, "Being in groups in class, we get to share ideas and learn from each other. It's much better than sitting and just listening to a lecture." This theme represents values about peer interactions and discussions, facilitated by the flipped classroom model.

Improved Understanding of Content

Several participants reported in various ways that the approach employed in the flipped classroom led to a better understanding of the course material. One interviewee said, "Having the videos to watch at my own pace really helped me grasp the concepts before class. I felt more prepared to discuss them with my peers." This result corresponds with the survey results in a sense that participants perceived an improvement in understanding course content as a result of flipped learning.

Flexibility and Personalization

The participants also welcomed the flexibility and personalization inherent in the flipped classroom model. One participant stated the following: "I liked that I could choose when and where to study. That way, it was easier to fit my learning into my schedule." It was this flexibility that allowed the participants to customize their experiences to best suit their needs and preferences.

Perceived Challenges

Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed three broad themes in relation to the challenges pertaining to flipped learning, namely:

Technological Barriers

Indeed, consistent with the survey results, a number of respondents reported difficulties related to technologies: "Not everyone has equal access to technology. Due to problems in the internet, some of my classmates could not watch these videos." This subject shows the importance of finding solutions to the problem of technological disparities in order to provide equal opportunities for accessing materials prepared within the framework of flipped learning.

Time Management Problems

Time management was another major theme that emerged. Respondents stated that accessing pre-class material required some planning and management of their time. One participant responded, "I found it difficult to balance studying for flipped classes with other coursework. It can become overwhelming." This suggests that students will need to be highly organized if they are to successfully navigate a flipped learning environment.

Resistance and Lack of Familiarity

Participants also reported some resistance from peers and instructors to the idea of flipped classrooms: "Some of my classmates were resistant to the idea of flipping the classroom. They preferred traditional lectures." Another challenge involved unfamiliarity with the model on the part of students and instructors. As one interviewee reported, "At first, I didn't know how to engage with the materials effectively. It took some time to get used to it."

The findings of this study represent the complex view of perceived benefits and challenges of flipped learning among the ESL teacher candidates. The quantitative results of the survey showed that in the areas of strong agreement of benefits, increased engagement, collaboration, and improved understanding of content were dominant; whereas, dominant difficulties were based on technological barriers and time management.

These qualitative findings of the interviews supported the results with added depth, underlining the flexibility and personalization in the flipped classroom model on one hand but also bringing up concerns over technology access and resistance to change. In their entirety, the findings provide rich insight into the experiences of ESL teacher candidates within flipped learning environments.

DISCUSSION

The discussion section synthesizes the results of the current study on the perceived benefits and challenges related to flipped learning among ESL teacher candidates by integrating quantitative and qualitative results. By doing so, this section offers an in-depth analysis of the implications of flipped learning in teacher education. This discussion is organized into four major themes: perceived benefits, challenges faced, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Perceived benefits of flipped learning

The findings from both the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews indicate that the ESL teacher candidates perceive several benefits associated with flipped learning.

Among the significant benefits to emerge in this study was increased student engagement and motivation. Accordingly, the quantitative results reflected a strong consensus that in flipped classrooms, students are highly engaged, as reflected in the high mean score of 4.50 on the survey. This finding supports the view expressed in the literature that flipped learning encourages active participation and enhances intrinsic motivation among students. Qualitative data supported the same view: Participants thought that flipped classrooms are more interactive; it gave them autonomy over their own learning.

In language education, an engagement factor is especially relevant since motivation may facilitate or hinder the processes of language acquisition and proficiency. For instance, Dörnyei (2001) argues that motivation acts as a chief factor in encouraging learners to engage in the process of language learning. The positive correlation of flipped learning with increased motivation among ESL teacher candidates could be interpreted to mean this pedagogical approach may help them have better experiences and outcomes from language learning.

Other relevant advantages stated by the participants were cooperation and the development of communicational skills. The statement about better cooperation received a very high level of agreement from the respondents, 4.32 on average. The participants felt that the group work during the class allowed them to share their thoughts and discuss the topics with their classmates, therefore understanding the subject matter more deeply.

Within the language teaching pedagogy literature, collaborative learning has been widely regarded as one of the effective pedagogical approaches, since it favors critical thinking, communicative ability, and social intercourse. In flipped classrooms, an environment is created in which students need to jointly solve problems and discuss concepts. Such a model can help ESL teacher candidates develop the interpersonal skills necessary for teaching. Emphasis on collaboration in the flipped classroom aligns with the Communicative Approach to language teaching, which emphasizes above all interaction and practical use of language skills.

There was also a significant difference in the participants' understanding of course content from the flipped learning model. Quantitatively, this benefit received the highest mean score of 4.30. This supports earlier works that, by allowing students to go at their own pace in getting course materials, flipped learning aids depth in their learning (Tucker, 2012).

This allows the students to study the lecture materials in advance, so that during the in-class activities, when something was not clear, there can be more effective and productive discussions. In fact, this is very favorable within language learning, as it will promote advanced comprehension of rather complex topics and vocabulary. The results of the study confirm that flipped learning does allow for more effective learning processes, as it enhances better comprehension of the subject matter.

The flexibility of the flipped learning model was also mentioned as a facilitative factor: the mean score derived from the survey on this aspect stood at 4.25, which indicates that participants valued the time and place opportunities for dealing with course materials. This finding is in line with studies pointing out facilitative aspects of personalized learning experiences (Hattie 2009). Flexibility in language learning allows students to create study habits that are most effective for them, which can ensure good language acquisition. For instance, teacher candidates of ESL may find that going over materials in an environment comfortable for them enhances their focus and retention. Besides, studying the content at an individual pace empowers learners with the autonomy that is essential in the process of language education.

Challenges with Flipped Learning

Even though the perceived advantages in flipped learning are significant, a few challenges were also identified that the ESL teacher candidates faced.

The quantitative data indicated that the technological barriers were the most significant challenge, with a mean of 4.10. It was noticed that most of the participants had concerns about access to various devices and reliable internet connections, which have been seen as major causes of inequity in technology access among students. These findings are supported by Selwyn's work, which argues that inequity in technology access necessarily constrains innovative approaches in teaching and learning.

Overcoming the technological barriers is central to the successful implementation of flipped learning in Higher Education Institutions with diverse students. This calls for the provision of adequate resources and support to enable students to interact successfully with digital content. In this regard, it may be appropriate to offer training sessions in technology use, ensure access to reliable internet, and offer loaner devices for those students who cannot afford them.

Other challenges identified were those of time management, where indeed the respondents noted that balancing the demands of flipped learning with other course work became overwhelming at times. Indeed, qualitative data indicated that students struggled to manage their study time effectively, especially in terms of preparation for classes. This agrees with what Barrows addressed in 1996, stating how important time management was in a self-directed learning environment.

To help overcome this, tutors should also provide instructions on effective study skills and time management. Including practical guidance on how to prioritize and plan study schedules might be helpful in managing the course load more effectively in a flipped classroom situation. Another possibility might involve slowing the pace of the class down by providing students with an extended period for accessing pre-class materials.

They also mentioned that some opposition came from classmates and teachers regarding this flipped classroom model. Some students also felt they learned better in a traditional lecture format, perhaps indicating a lack of experience or comfort with the flipped classroom model. This can be related to the findings of previous studies on difficulties and complexities while introducing new teaching methods within higher education (Gilboy et al., 2015).

The resistance to change needs to be addressed by providing comprehensive training to the students and instructors. The instructors need to be equipped with tools and strategies that would help them practice flipped learning in their classrooms effectively. Furthermore, a culture of openness and experimentation needs to be fostered to allow students to accept the novelty of new pedagogies and become more engaged in the process of learning.

IMPLICATIONS

These findings are important in teacher education, particularly in view of ESL teaching.

Curriculum Design and Delivery

It is, therefore, of essence that teacher education programs consider including flipped learning in their curriculum design. Indeed, by infusing the approaches of a flipped classroom, programs will be able to facilitate students to become more active, more collaborative, and even to engage deeper in courses. This also aligns with the communicative approach in teaching languages, where a student should be an active participant in interaction (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Moreover, the instructors should be concerned with the question of accessibility and ease in the pre-class materials themselves. Great video lectures, engaging interactive assignments, and high-quality supplementary resources can enhance and reinforce the effectiveness of a flipped learning experience for students.

For the successful delivery of flipped learning, educators need to be well-trained and supported. Professional development programs should focus on best practices for flipped classroom pedagogy: including how to prepare engaging pre-class materials and lead meaningful in-class activities. Educators should have the necessary skills and resources to make flipped learning work to ensure positive student outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Longer-term impacts on language proficiency and teaching practice certainly need further investigation. Longitudinal studies may provide a very valuable insight into the influence of flipped learning both on the development of students' language over time and on the professional development of future educators.

The research could be further engaged in various demographic variables that may influence their view of flipped learning, including, among others, age, past educational experiences, and diverse cultural backgrounds. Understanding these elements will be important for the tailoring of flipped learning experiences in ways to meet diverse needs among students of teacher education programs.

Finally, other studies should aim at finding new ways of reducing flipped learning technological barriers. Such studies might be related to the investigation of effective strategies on how such barriers can be overcome-possibly things like models of blended learning or hybrid classroom designs-so that flipped learning is available and at an equal standard for all students.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study presented a deep understanding of the perceived benefits and challenges of flipped learning among ESL teacher candidates. These are quite important results, but with the positive impacts on engagement, collaboration, and content understanding, there are also technological barriers, time management issues, and resistance to change to be taken into consideration.

By being aware of both the benefits and challenges within flipped learning, educators and their institutions can work to devise effective and inclusive learning environments that offer scope for professional development for future ESL teachers. Further

research and practices of innovation will be needed long into the future as a means of continuing to inform the field of language education and to further ensure that flipped learning can take root in a variety of educational contexts.

Flipped learning opens many opportunities for developing much more engaged, collaborative, and informed learners about course content in the context of ESL teacher education. However, to maximize its potential, the challenges revealed by this study must be considered. Stressing effective pedagogical ways, receiving institutional support, and encouraging further research by educators and institutions will serve to create an enriching learning environment that prepares ESL teacher candidates for success in their later careers.

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