



EFL Students' Perception of Flipped Classroom in Grammar Lessons

الاستاذة / رحاب صلاح سليمان الراددي
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alraddadirehab@gmail.com

Introduction

A flipped classroom is a pedagogical approach in which students perform activities in class and practice them at home that allows them to spend more time in class on problem-solving and individualized instruction (Lage, Platt, & Treglia, 2000). Students access materials or lesson contents online through a learning platform or a learning management system. Most previous studies show a positive attitude towards flipped classrooms in learning a foreign language. This study is about EFL students' perception of flipped classroom in grammar lessons in the Saudi EFL context. The aim of the study is to investigate students' perspective of flipped classroom regarding their believes and practices in terms of understanding the grammatical rule and promoting learner's autonomy.

Research question

What are the secondary EFL students' perceptions of flipped classroom in grammar lessons?

Literature Review

Definition of a flipped classroom

Flipping the language classroom is a kind of technology-enhanced and mobile-assisted language learning (Webb & Doman, 2016). Generally, a flipped classroom is defined as an education strategy which consists of two parts; interactive activity in classroom done by groups and computer based individual instruction outside the classroom. (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). It was Baker (2000) who moved lectures from classrooms to home and activities to classrooms and name this shift as a class flip, since he provided students with lecture notes on a web page. The aim was to focus on understanding and application and give students the opportunity to be responsible of their learning. In the same direction, Lage, Platt, and Treglia (2000) used a similar strategy under the name of "inverted classroom" stating, "Inverting the classroom means that events that have traditionally taken place inside the classroom now take place outside the classroom and vice versa" (p.32).

Theoretically, a flipped classroom allows students to have access to the learning materials according to their own pace which makes the learning flexible in terms of time and place as students can choose according to their individual needs and proficiency (Moffett, 2015).

Flipped classroom and language learning





Literature shows that flipping the classroom enables student to understand the content more (Homma, 2015). By repeating the videos, students' understanding of the lesson is supported (Al-Harbi & Alshumaimeri, 2016). Moreover, a flipped classroom has a positive impact on learner autonomy (Han, 2015). Han (2015) found that high level students from different backgrounds had practiced different ways of autonomous learning with selected materials and tasks through a flipped classroom of English language. These practices successfully developed students' autonomy, which changed their attitudes toward learning and improved their communicative competence.

In a flipped classroom, it is easier to provide students with opportunity to practice what they have learned in-class (Butt 2014). This means that class time is invested in a higher level of Blooms' taxonomy and the teacher stays with students during this stage (Gilboy et al., 2015) In addition, a flipped classroom overcomes the lack of time that EFL teachers often face since learning is done outside the classroom. (Webb & Doman, 2016).

Students have different perceptions of a flipped classroom strategy. Some studies show a positive attitude toward a flipped classroom (Pudin, 2017; Al-Ghamdi & Al-Bargi, 2017). Studies also indicate that some students prefer in-class instructions instead of having the lesson online because they need to ask questions when they first receive the information (Mazur, Brown & Jacobsen, 2015).

Flipped classroom in the Saudi EFL context

In the Saudi context, technology-based teaching methods are preferred by students since the use of technology in learning English has a positive effect on learners' learning outcomes (Alshumaimeri, 2008). A flipped classroom is used in higher education in different fields and studies show positive findings regarding students' performances (AlRowais, 2014). Al-Ghamdi and Al-Bargi (2017) implemented a flipped classroom approach in teaching speaking skills to preparatory year students. The participants' perceptions were evaluated and the results showed their positive attitude toward the flipped classroom experience.

Similarly, Al-Hamlan and Baniabdelrahman (2015) studied the language learning needs of male and female second grade students in the secondary schools. The study investigated students' academic needs, the difficulties that students faced in learning English language, the learning styles they preferred and their suggestions for better EFL learning. The study revealed that students needed to integrate technology in the curriculum, and despite the fact that they learned a lot of grammar they found applying it correctly was a difficult task. This makes a flipped classroom a potentially successful approach in EFL classrooms. Yet, there are limited studies on EFL flipped classrooms in public secondary schools. Therefore, this study will focus on learning grammar through a flipped classroom from students' perspectives.





Methodology

This study has adopted a quantitative method involving a survey questionnaire for data collection and analysis.

Participants

The participants of this study were thirty-six female students in the third grade of a public secondary school in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The participants aged between 16 to 18 years. 60.6% of the participants were 17 years old.

Research Method

The research instrument for this study is a survey questionnaire. Questionnaires are used to ask attitudinal questions to find out what participants think of something including opinions, beliefs, interests, and values. (Dornyei, 2003). The questionnaire was constructed from the literature reviewed and the researcher's experience (see appendix 1). It consists of 13 statements. The participants were required to answer each item on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). The two scales were students' beliefs of flipped classrooms (Items 1,5,7 and 10), students' practices in terms of understanding the grammatical rule (Items 2,3,6 and 12), and practices related to the learners' autonomy (Items 4,8,9,11 and 13). The questionnaire was translated into Arabic by the researcher to ensure the participants' comprehension of the items (see appendix 2).

The questionnaire survey was piloted with three participants prior to the main study to avoid ambiguity.

Procedure

The teacher implemented the flipped classroom approach by choosing videos to explain a grammar lesson from the textbook. She uploaded those videos on a learning platform prior to the teaching session, allowing students enough time to watch it and learn the grammatical rules. In class, students used the knowledge they had gained through collaborative and competitive activities related to the grammar rules and asked for clarification, if needed. The teacher used a flipped classroom approach for grammar lessons for three months while teaching one lesson every two weeks. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to the students electronically at the end of the third month.

Analysis of method

The data of the questionnaire were automatically exported to a MS® Excel file and later exported to SPSS®, a statistical analysis software. The descriptive statistics of frequency was selected to ascertain the levels of students' perceptions on the Likert Scale.



Ethics

Participants were informed to make a decision about whether to take part in the study or not. Participation was voluntary and the collected data were treated confidentially to protect the respondents' identities.

Results

Students' beliefs about flipped classrooms.

The four items included in Table 1 are related to the students' beliefs of a flipped classroom. The items are 1, 5, 7, and 10 on the questionnaire. The overall mean score is (3,71), which indicates that the respondents prefer a flipped classroom rather than a traditional classroom for learning grammar.

Table 1

N	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		agree		Strongly agree		Mean	SD
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	I prefer to learn grammar through a flipped classroom	4	11.1	6	16.7	8	22.2	6	16.7	12	33.3	3.44	1.40
2	I prefer in-class instruction when it comes to grammar.	11	30.6	12	33.3	10	27.8	2	5.6	1	2.8	3.83	1.02
3	I enjoy watching a grammar lesson online	3	8.3	6	16.7	8	22.2	4	11.1	15	41.7	3.61	1.40
4	I like a grammar lesson when the teacher explains it	13	36.1	13	36.1	7	19.4	2	5.6	1	2.8	3.97	1.02
Overall mean												3.71	1.21

Statement number 4 has scored the highest mean which is “I like a grammar lesson when the teacher explains it”. There were (13) (36.1%) students who responded “strongly disagree” to this statement, and (36.1%) students who responded “disagree”.

Students' practices that indicates understanding of grammar when using flipped classrooms

With regards to the practices of students that present an understanding of the grammatical rule when using a flipped classroom approach, the data of (4) items are shown in table 3. The items are item 2, 3, 6, and 12 in the questionnaire. The general mean is (3.72), which suggests that students comprehend the grammar rules when a flipped classroom approach is used.

Table 2

N	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		agree		Strongly agree		Mean	SD
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	I apply a grammar rule correctly with flipped classroom.	4	11.1	2	5.6	8	22.2	8	22.2	14	38.9	3.72	1.34
2	I participate confidently in class after watching the lesson online.	3	8.3	2	5.6	3	8.3	11	30.6	17	47.2	4.03	1.25
3	I understand a grammar rule better when I have a lesson online.	3	8.3	6	16.7	11	30.6	2	5.6	14	38.9	3.50	1.38
4	I use class time to do exercises when I have a lesson online.	5	13.9	5	13.9	2	5.6	10	27.8	14	38.9	3.64	1.47
Overall mean												3.72	1.36

- Items

that their means represent (strongly agree)

As shown in Table 2, a high portion of the participants (17) (47.2%) report that they participate confidently in class after watching a lesson online, whereas (3) (8.3%) selected the answer (strongly disagree) to this statement.

Students' practices that indicates learner autonomy practices

Items from 1 to 5 as shown in table 3, which are 4, 8, 9, 11 and 13 in the questionnaire, intend to investigate the extent to which the students are autonomous while using a flipped classroom strategy. The overall mean is (4.01), which suggests that the EFL students are autonomous learners in a flipped classroom.

Table 3

N	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		agree		Strongly agree		Mean	SD
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		

-



1	I play a video more than once to understand it.	1	2.8	1	2.8	4	11.1	1 4	38.9	16	44.4	4.19	0.95
2	I learn at my own pace in a flipped classroom.	2	5.6	2	5.6	8	22.2	1 2	33.3	12	33.3	3.83	1.13
3	In a flipped classroom, I am responsible for my own learning.	3	8.3	1	2.8	3	8.3	1 2	33.3	17	47.2	4.08	1.2
4	I repeat a video as much as I need until I understand it.	1	2.8	0	0	3	8.3	1 2	33.3	20	55.6	4.39	0.87
5	I use self-learning strategies to comprehend the content.	4	11.1	2	5.6	1 0	27.8	1 0	27.8	10	27.8	3.56	1.27
Overall mean												4.01	1.08

Items that

their means represent (strongly agree)

There were (20) (55.6%) students who have responded “strongly agree” to the statement “I repeat a video as much as I need until I understand it”, seventeen (47.2%) students have indicated that they are responsible for their own learning in a flipped classroom.

Discussion.

With respect to the students’ preferences of having a grammar lesson through a flipped classroom or by a traditional way of teaching, the results of this study showed that female EFL students at public secondary schools preferred a flipped classroom over a traditional pedagogical approach. This result supports the findings of Pudín’s (2017) Al-Ghamdi and Al-Bargi’s (2017) studies. This preference might be because the Saudi students like to use technology in learning English as indicated by Alshummairi (2008).

The findings of the current study revealed that students are autonomous when a flipped classroom is adopted. Since a flipped classroom allows them to learn at their own pace, repeat videos until they understand the content and take responsibility for their own learning. Thus, a flipped classroom could be a solution to the problem reported by Asiri and Shukri (2018) that teachers believe that Saudi students lack autonomy and they have poor responsibility which affects the implementation of learner autonomy in EFL classrooms.

Results of the statements related to the students’ practices indicate their understanding of grammar in a flipped classroom. Table 2 shows that a significant number of female EFL students participate confidently in a class after watching a lesson online that might be because





they have the chance to play the video of the content as much as needed. The table also illustrates that 83% of the participants play the video more than once in order to understand it better. Requiring to repeat the information in a traditional class is not an option to all the students due to their shyness or low self-esteem. Relatively, 66% of the students reported that flipping the classroom allowed them to use the class time to complete exercises. The result is in line with a research study conducted by Butt (2014) at Australian National University, Australia. The researcher investigated students' perceptions of changing the use of class time after being involved in a flipped classroom. The study reveals that the structure of flipped classroom gives learners the chance to practice the teaching and learning point in-class. Also, it could be said that flipped classroom solves the obstacles that Saudi EFL students face when they apply the already learned grammar rules (Al-Hamlan & Baniabdelrahman, 2015). The student responses to the statements related to their autonomous practices during the flipped classroom experience show that the majority of them agreed that a flipped classroom gives them the sense of being responsible for their own learning. The results are in agreement with the findings of Han's (2015) study who found that a flipped classroom raised learner autonomy and improved the linguistic proficiency. Almost 66% of the students reported that flipping grammar lessons give them the opportunity to learn at their own pace when it comes to time and duration. However, 36.6% of the participants showed a negative attitude toward the use of self-learning strategies to comprehend the content. One possible explanation of that could be that students lack learning training as revealed in Alrabai's (2017) study.

Finally, it should be noted that the results related to the students' perceptions of a flipped classroom in grammar lesson do not reflect their success in grammar or improvement in their performance or learning outcomes.

Pedagogical Implications of the Study

Based on the findings, the present study demonstrates the preferences of secondary EFL students in relation to a flipped grammar classroom and a traditional class of grammar. In addition, the study shows that how a flipping grammar lesson helps students in their learning practices in terms of applying the knowledge as autonomous learners. As the students' preferences are evidently stated, EFL teachers in Saudi schools should consider adopting a flipped classroom approach in their lessons of grammar points as well as in teaching speaking and writing skills.

Nevertheless, teachers should consider students' tech competence and their age in choosing the learning materials. Moreover, teachers are advised to give enough time to the students to reach the learning materials. Finally, professional devolvement programs on flipped classrooms would increase the potential success of flipped classroom practices.

Limitations of the Study





This study has certain limitations. First, it is limited to Saudi female EFL participants and male students' view are not included. Secondly, it has relied only on a quantitative method and thus the findings may not give a comprehensive overview of the research phenomenon. Thirdly, the number of the participant was limited to 27 students and thus the results might not be easily generalized to other contexts.

Conclusion

This study was an attempt to investigate the EFL students' perceptions of a flipped classroom approach to help teachers integrate technology in EFL classrooms for a better language learning experience. Therefore, this study was conducted in a female EFL secondary school in Riyadh. It has shed light on the EFL students' preferences of a flipped grammar lesson over traditional classes.

Adopting a flipped classroom in the Saudi EFL classroom could be a solution of some of the obstacles that language learners face, such as applying correct grammatical structures and being hesitant while participating in classroom activities. It also meets students' needs of incorporating technology in the learning process and helps them to be autonomous learners. In addition, a flipped classroom could be a solution to EFL teachers' problem who complain about the shortage of class duration.

Further research could investigate the EFL students' perceptions of different samples, such as male participants and different students' levels. Moreover, it is important to investigate teachers' perceptions of the use of a flipped classroom and the challenges they face. Finally, further studies on the impact of a flipped classroom on the learning outcomes





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Appendix 1

EFL Students' perception of flipped classroom in grammar lessons.

Dear student,

This questionnaire is part of a study about your perception of flipped classroom in grammar lessons. Participation is voluntary and highly appreciated. There are no right or wrong answers here.

Thank you.

Note:

Flipped classroom means flip the learning process between class and home by using technology to view the content and invest class time to do activities.

Section 1: Flipped classroom

#	Statement	Strongly disagree	disagree	Unsure	agree	Strongly agree
1.	I prefer to learn grammar through a flipped classroom					
2.	I apply a grammar rule correctly with flipped classroom.					
3.	I participate confidently in class after watching the lesson online.					
4.	I play the video more than once to understand it					
5.	I prefer in-class instruction when it comes to grammar.					
6.	I understand a grammar rule better when I have a lesson online.					
7.	I enjoy watching a grammar lesson online					
8.	I learn at my own pace in flipped classroom					
9.	In a flipped classroom, I am responsible for my own learning.					
10.	I like grammar lesson when the teacher explain it					
11.	I repeat a video as much as I need until I understand it.					
12.	I use class time to do exercises when I have a lesson online.					
13.	I use self-learning strategies to comprehend the content					

Please give your opinion about the statements below by ticking ONE answer for each.





Section 2: Personal information

Your grade is

1 st grade secondary	2nd grade secondary	3rd grade secondary
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Your age is

16	17	18
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Thank you for participating

Appendix 2

استخدام الصف المقلوب في تعلم القواعد

عزيزتي الطالبة،

الاستبيان المرفق جزء من دراسة لمعرفة انطباعك عن تطبيق الصف المقلوب في دروس القواعد في اللغة الانجليزية. مشاركتك في الاستبيان تطوعية ولا توجد اجابات صحيحة أو خاطئة كل الاجابات صحيحة. شكري وتقديري ملاحظة/

يقصد بالصف المقلوب قلب العملية التعليمية بين الصف الدراسي والمنزل وذلك من خلال توظيف وسائل التقنية الحديثة لعرض المحتوى واستغلال وقت الحصة الدراسية في حل الأنشطة. القسم الأول: الصف المقلوب الرجاء تحديد درجة موافقتك للعبارات التالية:

م	العبارة	لا أوافق بشدة	لا أوافق	غير متأكد	أوافق	أوافق بشدة
١.	أفضل تعلم القواعد عن طريق الصف المقلوب					
٢.	أطبق القاعدة النحوية بشكل أفضل عندما يتوفر شرحها عن طريق الانترنت					
٣.	أشعر بثقة أكبر للمشاركة بعد مشاهدة الدرس عن طريق الانترنت					
٤.	أعيد تشغيل الفيديو أكثر من مرة لأتمكن من الفهم					
٥.	أفضل الشرح في الفصل فيما يتعلق بدروس القواعد					
٦.	أفهم القاعدة بشكل أفضل عندما أحصل على المحتوى عن طريق الانترنت					
٧.	أستمتع بمشاهدة دروس القواعد عن طريق الانترنت					
٨.	أتعلم حسب وتيرتي الخاصة (في الوقت والمدة) عندما يكون الصف مقلوب					
٩.	في الصف المقلوب أشعر بأني مسؤولة عن تعلمي					
١٠.	أحب دروس القواعد عندما تشرحها المعلمة في الفصل					





					أعيد تشغيل الفيديو حسب احتياجي حتى أتمكن من فهم القاعدة	١١.
					أستخدم وقت الحصّة الدراسية لحل الأنشطة المتعلقة بالدرس المشروح عن طريق الانترنت	١٢.
					أستخدم استراتيجيات التعلم الذاتي لأتمكن من فهم القاعدة	١٣.

القسم الثاني: المعلومات الشخصية

الصف

	الأول ثانوي	الثاني ثانوي	الثالث ثانوي
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العمر

	١٦	١٧	١٨
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شكراً للمشاركة

