

Implementing Flipped Learning Practices to Develop the Speaking Skills of the Learners in a Tertiary Level ESL Classroom: An Experimental Study

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Abstract

This article focuses on how flipped learning methodology has an optimistic effect on first-year undergraduate learners in Tamil Nadu. Flipped Learning, a learner-centred approach, is a part of blended learning which makes use of technological development in education. The data is collected from first year undergraduate students using flipped learning methodology. The findings of the study focus on the effectiveness of flipped learning procedures prepared by the researcher. The results show how flipped learning is relevant to the students to develop their English-speaking skills at par with Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) levels.

Keywords: Flipped learning, undergraduate, speaking skills, video material, language teaching

Introduction

Language skills are helpful in making a person achieve communicative goals in everyday communicative situations (Klimova, 2014). Speaking is considered to be a crucial one among language skills (Abdullah et al., 2019). Speaking is used in regular communication to share one's identity and to express one's feelings to others (Fan & Yan, 2020). It is globally renowned as a "vital language skill" (Lotherington, 2004; Pendidikan et al., 2021) and is considered an essential part of "international mobility, entrance to higher education and employment" (Fan & Yan, 2020;

Fulcher, 2015). The efficacy in the process of acquiring the speaking skill is difficult as it stands as “one of the most challenging language skills to both the ESL learners and teachers” (Lotherington, 2004; Pendidikan et al., 2021).

In order to develop the English-speaking skills of the learners, flipped learning methodology has been used in this study. As a recently developed concept and model for learning, flipped learning serves as a form of learning which uses technology to save the in-class time duration for the interaction between the student and the teacher and to make learning easier and more comfortable (Demirel, 2016). Flipped learning is an emerging model in the field of research in higher education and among school teachers (Hwang et al., 2019). While learning a language, flipped learning creates interest among the learners and also promotes the effectiveness of learning a language which converts passive learners into active learners (Chou et al., 2021).

Flipped learning is a pedagogical approach (Definition of Flipped Learning, 2014) where the lecture videos are provided well in advance for the learners to watch and understand before the class. The in-class time is used for facilitating knowledge through practice and interaction (Hwang & Chang, 2020). Here, the teachers shift from the traditional classroom model and facilitate the learners to watch the instructional videos before class hours and make use of the class for deeper understanding of the concepts by applying them practically, which creates an individual learning space (Hamdan et al., 2013).

Problems of the ESL Learner

Indian ESL learners study the English language for many years from their primary school level, but they find it difficult to use their language effectively while communicating with others, even after attaining tertiary-level education (Karthika, 2020). The main problem of the teachers in developing the learners’ speaking skill is due to the time-consuming classes. The whole class is used only for lecturing or instructing the students on the importance of speaking, how to effectively communicate, how to introduce oneself in different scenarios and so on. The learners are not given adequate practice and hence, they can’t use English properly or effectively, which results in the inadequacy of speaking the English language. The learners, to become effective

speakers of English, have to overcome several difficulties including “the time factor and associated problems of planning and memory production under pressure” (Karthika, 2020). The need for video and audio materials (Ama, 2022) lack these days. This can also be one of the reasons to present video lecture materials before in-class lectures. In this regard, this study aims at developing the speaking skills of the twenty-five (25) tertiary-level ESL learners at an autonomous institution in India by adopting the flipped learning methodology which uses the in-class timing for the learners to apply what they have learnt and makes use of video lectures to understand the concepts.

Research Questions

1. What are the levels of the learners to introduce themselves before and after the implementation of flipped learning procedures?
2. How is the learners’ speaking ability enhanced by the flipped learning method?

Methodology

Participants

The participants were selected from a first-year undergraduate class at St. Joseph’s College, an autonomous institution in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. A set of 25 students participated in this study. The learners were from different parts of Tamil Nadu residing in Tiruchirappalli and they were from various economic and educational backgrounds. Their mother tongue is Tamil, which is the regional language of Tamil Nadu. The present learners were fond of watching and hearing the world around them. They were able to speak a few fragmented sentences like “My name is Ravi”, “I from Karur”, “Football my hobby” and so on when they were asked to introduce themselves.

Data Collection

The data were collected before and after intercession of the flipped learning methodology. The speaking tests were conducted for all the participants to check their speaking ability before and after the flipped learning classes. The validity of these tests was measured with the help of Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) rubrics. The Head of the Department of English, St. Joseph’s College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli, checked the testing measures and was the external

member for the speaking tests conducted. The performances of all the learners were recorded. Scores at the entry-level and the exit-level speaking tests of each student were analysed.

Data Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26) was used to analyse the data collected from a group of students. Those data were given as values in the SPSS software and the means of the entry-level and exit-level speaking test scores were compared using the 'paired sample T-test operation'. The scores of the learners who attended both the entry-level speaking test and the exit-level speaking test were taken to calculate the exact difference of the scores and to increase the validity of the study.

Procedure

The learners were given a chance to introduce themselves in front of their classmates. This was video recorded and it was evaluated. Their scores at the entry-level were calculated using rubrics such as range, accuracy, fluency, interaction and coherence (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR), 2001). Then, the learners were instructed to watch the self-prepared YouTube video (English Language Learning, 2021) the day before the face-to-face class.

On the following day, the learners were asked about the video content and a formative assessment was conducted to check whether the learners had watched the video material. A few learners revealed that they could not understand the video lesson as it was an English version. The class started with a warm-up activity. Then, the learners were instructed to form groups with 6 or 7 members each. Various scenarios were given to each group and the learners were made to use the chance to speak.

In the end, the learners were instructed to watch the bilingual version of the same self-introduction video. Four learners were provided with handouts of the same content used in the video, as they didn't have smartphones to watch the videos. The learners who were unable to understand the English version watched the bilingual version of the same video.

On the next day, the following activities were continued to make the learners understand the lesson and introduce themselves. The learners were asked to introduce themselves and that was video recorded. This was the final or exit-level test and the scores of the learners were tabulated.

The flipped learning procedures were successfully implemented in a first-year undergraduate classroom.

Observation

The learners have to be motivated often when they are instructed to watch the video material content. The learners were able to share their problems with learning and understanding of the video material. This flexible environment provided space for the learners to discuss their problems. Learners were interested in doing group activities in the classroom. The learners, those who failed to watch the video on the first day of the class, were self-motivated to watch it when they saw the activities confidently done by their friends who watched and performed self-introductions.

At the entry level, the learners were able to speak some basic sentences such as “My name is ___” and “I’m coming from ____”. In addition to this, very few learners spoke about their hobbies and ambitions. Some learners struggled to frame a proper sentence. But, after the classes on self-introduction, they were able to frame sentences such as “I am _____”, “I am from _____” and so on properly and also, they added a few sentences mentioning their personal information such as their school, family members, friends, and marital status like “I completed my XII standard at _____ school”, “My aim is to become a/an _____” and so on.

Results

The scores of the entry and exit level speaking tests were fed into the SPSS software and the paired sample t-test tool was selected to analyse the collected data. The mean of the scores of the entry-level and exit-

Table 1: Paired Samples Statistics of the Entry Level and Exit Level Speaking Test Scores Using SPSS

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Entry Level Speaking Test Score	7.72	25	1.646	0.329
	Exit Level Speaking Test Score	13.24	25	2.146	0.429

level speaking tests were 7.72 and 13.24, respectively. The standard deviation was 1.229 and the t-value was -22.461. The significant value or the probability value (p-value) was 0.000, which was less than 1. The report of the result is shown in the tables below.

Table 2: A Report of the Paired Samples Test of the Entry Level and Exit Level Speaking Test Scores Using SPSS

Paired Samples Test									
Paired Differences									
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Devia- tion	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Entry Level Speaking Test Score - Exit Level Speaking Test Score	-5.520	1.229	0.246	-6.027	-5.013	-22.461	24	0.000

Findings

The scientific analysis of the data collected suggested that there was an enhancement in the levels of the learners when flipped learning procedures were implemented in a language classroom. When the p-value is equal to 0.05 or less than that, then there is a statistical significance (Beers, 2022). Accordingly, the observed value was less than 0.05, which proved that there was an important disparity in the data collected. The mean score of the entry-level test was 7.72 and the mean score of the exit-level test was 13.24, which further proved the enhancement of the speaking ability of the ESL learner when flipped learning was used.

Discussion

The findings of the study reveal that there is a significant improvement in the speaking ability of the tertiary-level ESL learners, when flipped learning is used effectively. As Sukerti et al. (2020) mentioned, flipped

learning helps learners to learn with more flexibility, improve their academic achievements and also helps the trainer to teach with creative and innovative ideas. The results of this study prove the academic achievement of the learners. Through the observation, it is proved that the flexible space given to the learners makes them participate in the activities and articulate their problems in speaking English.

The learners before the intervention when they introduced themselves could use only fragmented words and simple phrases like “My name Ravi”, “I from Karur”, “Football my hobby” and so on. With reference to the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR), the level of the learners was found to be in ‘A1’ level at the entry-level. But, after the implementation of flipped learning, the learners’ were able to use sentences regarding their routines and personal details with the proper use of vocabulary such as “I am Ravi doing my I B.Sc”, “I am from Karur”, “My hobbies are playing football and singing cine songs” and so on. So, as given in the CEFR levels, the level of the learner in the exit level was found to be found in ‘B1’ level in general. Therefore, this study provides an answer to the first research question that the levels of the learners before and after the implementation of flipped learning are A1 and B1, respectively.

The significant value of the paired sample t-test is less than 1 (Table 2), which significantly proves that there is an improvement in the scores of the learners before and after the implementation of flipped learning. The difference in the mean scores of the entry-level and exit-level speaking tests was 5.52 (Table 1). This improvement in the speaking ability of the learners is due to the effective implementation of the flipped learning procedures. Thus, this study also answers the second research question, which asks about the enhancement of the learners’ speaking ability through flipped learning.

Conclusion

This study tends to prove the efficiency of the flipped learning procedures in making the learners improve their basic speaking skills in English. The study proves the effectiveness of implementing the flipped learning procedures in a first-year undergraduate classroom at St. Joseph’s College, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. The findings scientifically confirm the effectiveness of flipped learning procedures. Further, the observation of the classroom procedure substantiates the development of the speaking

skill of the learner after the execution of flipped learning procedures. Thus, this study proves the efficacy of flipped learning procedures to enhance the speaking skills of the ESL learner.

The limitations of the study involved that the learners found difficulty in watching the videos from their residences in the remote villages and also monitoring the students' watch time of the videos shared before the in-class discussion was a challenge.

Scope for Further Research

1. The flipped learning can be experimented to find its effectiveness at the school level.
2. In teaching the English Language, flipped learning can be used to improve other language skills (listening, reading and writing), grammatical accuracy and linguistic ability.
3. The flipped learning approach can be used to teach students who are willing to take part in competitive examinations.
4. This study can be extended to the higher levels of the Common European Framework References (CEFR).

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