



TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON THE FLIPPED CLASSROOM MODEL FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN SRI LANKA

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INTRODUCTION

A sustainable future is where people can secure a quality education. Addressing the needs of the students in the 21st century ensures better quality education. In this revolutionary modern era, teaching pedagogies are driven by complex networks of global changes. As such, teachers are highly likely to use a blend of technology in their classroom practices. With the advancement of technology, students also tend to embrace modern teaching techniques in place of the traditional methods of learning in which students are completely reliant on their teachers' knowledge and explanations. Given this context, teachers are increasingly adopting the flipped classroom technique, which is one of the most recent developments in student-centered learning methodologies, to meet the needs of students in the present globalized world. The flipped classroom is a pedagogical method of learning where the education is revolved around technology to have an active learner background. This method helps the students foster a personalized education as they are encouraged to explore new knowledge freely (zang, ma, liu, 2014).

It is apparent that flipped classroom is extensively used in english language classrooms in the world to improve students' motivation for learning english as a second language (esl). Although it has been nurtured in the sri lankan context during the past few years, the teacher's implementation of the latest trends of teaching into the curriculum is highly questionable in the modern era, it is evident that in the year 2017, 51.12% have failed the general english paper in the ordinary level examination and that is recorded as the highest failure rate out of all the subjects in the exam (o/l english language pass rate records low, 2018). The continuous use of the traditional teaching techniques in modern foreign language classrooms generally tends to submit poorer results (uzunboylu & karagözülü, 2017). Given the background, to what extent esl teachers in sri lanka are capable of flipping the teacher-centred classroom into a student-centred classroom is a question.

Proposed hypothesis

The flipped classroom model has a positive impact on students' performance in the english as a second language classrooms in sri lanka.

Research questions

The main aim of the study is to examine how the flipped classroom model impacts on english language teaching. To this end, the study is directed by the following research questions.

- How does the flipped classroom model impact english language teaching in sri Lanka?
- Do teachers successfully flip the traditional teacher-centered classroom?
- How does the flipped classroom model impact on the students' performance?
- Do teachers have an adequate knowledge of technology to handle the flipped classroom model?



METHODOLOGY

a. Context and Participants

In order to identify the effectiveness of the flipped classroom model for English language teaching in Sri Lanka, a qualitative investigation was undertaken with ten English teachers. The qualitative method may successfully help to achieve the goals because it can be used “to understand the complexity of social phenomena through a set of systematic and interpretive practices designed to seek answers to questions that stress how social actions and social experiences are created and sustained” (Lichtman, 2013, p. 11). Thus, the qualitative method assists to retain the quality, relevance, and appropriateness of the whole phenomena in flipping the classroom and the participants are allowed to effectively present their perceptions (Savenye & Robinson, 2005).

Colombo is the metropolitan city in the country; thus Colombo dominates in all the inventions and attractions as it is recognized as the center of administration in the country. Thus, the participants in the current study are English as Second Language teachers who are teaching in the schools that belong to the Colombo Educational Zone. The educational system in Sri Lanka is divided into five parts as, primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, collegiate, and tertiary. The ten teachers that were selected for the study are from the senior secondary level which means that they are from the grade 10 and 11 sections. The preparation of students for the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.) Ordinary Level (O/L) is done by these teachers who teach at the senior secondary level.

As indicated in the literature, for a qualitative investigation, the researchers mostly use a purposive sampling method, and the data are gathered from a limited number of participants. The main purpose of deliberately selecting the respondents is to make the study rich in information so that it becomes more comprehensive.

b. Data Collection Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were designed to collect data from the English as a Second Language teachers. The interview questions were prepared and it was distributed among the selected teachers prior to the interview. There were 10 questions to be asked and the interviews were conducted via zoom for 30-40 minutes. All the questions required the participant’s opinion and they were requested to provide examples in order to make the study more authentic.

Secondary data too were collected referring to some previous research and scholarly articles. Amidst numerous research studies carried out on this topic, this study attempted to discover the observations beyond the existing ones by analyzing and executing an empirical study. Thus, this study takes the form of new research on the existing grounds. The theoretical approach of the research is also analyzed through several theories.

c. Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis (TA) is a type of statistical analysis that focuses on grouping and finding themes and trends. According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), thematic analysis is a powerful analytical method for qualitative research. TA provides ample space for the scholars to have their own explanations while maintaining the flexibility associated with the empirical study. It provides a range of information in order to understand the thoughts and motivations of the participants. TA “entails a constant back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data a researcher is analyzing, and the analysis of the data he/she is creating” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Given such a background, Thematic Analysis can be considered as one of the major sources of information to gather, evaluate and investigate the findings gathered. The six steps that followed in analyzing the data are 1) re-read the findings and get familiarized with them 2) generate the initial codes 3) based on the codes generated identify the themes 4) assess the accuracy of the initial codes 5) generate topics to make the themes noticeable 6) complete the reports considering about the key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following these steps, it helped to understand the teacher perceptions of the flipped classroom model.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers around the world are constantly working hard to invest in innovative teaching methods to improve the standards of the teaching and learning process. Flipped classroom method is one of the unorthodox inventions that teachers adopted to deliver knowledge. Thus, the results and the discussion of the study are presented using the given research question. The first section of this chapter discusses the teacher perception regarding the implementation of the flipped classroom model. The next section broadly analyses the traditional classroom system and the modern flipped classroom method. Finally, the impacts of the personal and external factors on the flipped classroom model are extensively discussed. The results and the discussion of this chapter are enriched with the extracts of the participants and the previous research findings.

d. Teacher perceptions of the implementation of the flipped classroom model

The 21st century is experiencing a technological evolution that has impacted the current educational system in most countries including Sri Lanka. There the educational process heavily relies on technology in flipping the classroom. In this model, the students learn the essentials at home and proceed with their newly found knowledge in the classroom which gives them their own space to build up their empirical knowledge through peer learning.

Given such a background, English as a Second Language teachers need to have a flip in their roles and a shift in the role that we normally envision. Although the flipped classroom method is considered as a timely topic in today's world, based on the respondents of the interview, it is something that they have been practising for years "without knowing the terminology of flipped" (Participant 2). Problem-solving tasks with peer learning along with the pre-determined knowledge that they gain at home is something that they have been practising for years even in the traditional classroom. Whether it is flipped or unflipped teachers always provide the students with out-of-classroom teaching materials to read, study and review them at home to expose and broaden their knowledge to meet the trends in the world (Participant 8). The only difference is the combination of the technology in the teaching-learning programme and the pre-preparation of students, it has been already continuing (Iyer, 2019). The significant fact is that in contemporary society, the combination of technology and education share a great alliance guaranteeing the authenticity and the legitimacy of the outcome (Hamdani, 2019). This blended learning has become a trend and Katie Linder (2019), further elaborates that "blended learning is not just a trend", it is "starting to see technology integrated with really intentional ways. Given such a background flipped classroom is something that changed with time, this is being visualized for an elongated stretch of time.

Teachers find the flipped classroom method as a very good opportunity to practice in the classroom since it is inquiry-based learning. The students become inquisitive, and they come out with a lot of questions. "The learner like a sponge is acquiring everything that is possible" (Participant 3). This is a method that comprises the active learning background and minimizes the lecture method of teaching. Ansori and Nafi (2019), further confirm that flipped classroom method is at the receiving corner of the world as it largely focuses on student-centred learning. Flipping enables students to bridge the students' needs and control the learning process regardless of the learning distance. According to Bergmann and Sams' (2012) theory, the flipped classroom framework ensures the productivity of the students "to receive a personalized education tailored to their individual needs". In the flipped classroom model teacher becomes the facilitator and the mentor which means that the teachers in the flipped classroom model seek to relinquish their traditional roles as the main giver and the major source of knowledge and information to allow for more student-centred participation. Overall, the teachers agree that using this pedagogy helps the students in interactive learning as a face-to-face method that motivates the students to meet their learning objectives by focusing more on the out-of-classroom additional reading materials.



e. Traditional classroom vs. the flipped classroom method

Even though the traditional classroom system has been practised for ages and its benefits of it are clearly visible because it is a hands-on learning experience, nevertheless, the flipped classroom model is far more advantageous because it is learner-friendly and it helps the students to control their knowledge.

Traditional learning method depends on the teacher, if the teacher has a specific concept towards one topic the child also only absorbs what the teacher knows, it blocks the content of the child. “In the traditional method the teacher is spoon-feeding, the teacher has to bring all the knowledge, equipment, and everything into the classroom and give the necessary for the students” (Participant 5). Thus, here the straightforward knowledge transmission is considered to be ineffective by the teachers, as a result, the students are given ample opportunity to work at their pace experiencing their own autonomy in the flipped classroom method.

The traditional classroom system only adheres to the development of hard skills in a student. It is the soft skills that shape and enlighten the future of students. The students who master the soft skills complete their studies successfully and make more acquaintances which leads to the strengthening of their future prospects. Soft skills mold students with balanced personalities, and they are comprised of both virtues and qualities that are expected from society in order to climb the ladder profitably. The flipped classroom method involves the form of videos and preparing souvenirs, magazines which make the students more creative (Participant 9). Ngo and Yunus (2021), further highlight that the flipped classroom method enables the students to possess stable ethical considerations to establish the principle of interpersonal relationships. Accordingly, it proves that these innovative methods develop the soft skills of the students besides their collaborative working ability.

Nevertheless, as argued by Strauss (2012) flipping is not always possible with certain lessons. When teaching a foreign language, certain areas need the mixed method system in order to make the students clear about the lessons. Also, flipping cannot be done with all the grades because in certain circumstances the students need the teacher-centered method to grasp the lesson without any doubts. It is also observed that some students tend to play a neutral attitude towards this newly invented methodology, their lack of in-class participation in the presentations is an outcome of the lack of preparations or no preparations for the lesson (Selvaras, 2021). As reported by Participant 5, in certain circumstances like these the teacher needs to do the drilling when explaining the lesson rather than switching to the latest trends in the modern world. Sometimes the teachers believe that explaining the lesson as in the traditional classroom system is the core of the teaching-learning process.

In general, it proves that the flipped classroom is much more advantageous than the traditional classroom where the students can have interactive autonomy along with the learning process. Nevertheless, teachers need to adopt the traditional teaching method for certain lessons.

f. Impacts of the personal and external factors on the flipped classroom model

The main concern of the flipped classroom is the idea of using technology to shift from the traditional to the modern. Thus the teachers need to outperform their technological skills to cope with the latest traditions. But most of the teachers find it difficult to handle the technology due to the lack of exposure that they have given regard to automation. As said by Participant 7, they are not given enough opportunities to participate in the workshops to update their knowledge. In addition to the barriers that most of the teachers face, “flipping doubles the workload” (Participant 4) as it requires extra effort and practice in making the study materials. The primary objective of a teacher is to complete and regulate the course coordination, thus flipping is something extra that makes their work complicated (Gunawardena & Liyanage, 2018). In this context, preplanning, preparing, and implementing is one of the biggest challenges that most teachers face (Ash, 2021). On certain occasions, the teachers need to be prepared to welcome whatever the challenge and should possess the creativity to flip the class accordingly. Weak internet connection and limited resources make students discouraged when switching sides that they are not comfortable with. Teachers are



also swayed by the attitudes of their contemporary society in implementing the flipped classroom method as most of the time parents are very concerned about covering the lessons (Participant 1). Given such a background, even the English curriculum does not support the present day innovations such as the flipped classroom model. The exam-oriented method that is prevailing in Sri Lanka rather supports the traditional classroom system, thus the teachers find that it is not the best to get involved in the risk zone by flipping the traditional classroom system.

Overall, it highlights that students who are incorporated in the flipped classroom method find the environment more student-friendly and motivated when new unconventional methods are implemented in conveying the knowledge. The qualitative study indicates that teaching English as a Second Language is more favourable when flipping the classroom, and the students welcome the flipped classroom tradition while maintaining the conventional classroom tradition of explaining basic concepts and traditions. Further, the perception of the teachers relevant to the flipped classroom tradition in teaching English as a second language indicates that it has both positives and challenges along the way. As emphasized by Selvaras (2019), the shift from the traditional method to the modern flipped classroom method should not be a mere barrier but a bridge that can incorporate all into one. Based on the study, it highlights that the flipped classroom method supports a complete autonomous environment for both the teachers and the students to have their own free choices and free wills, yet another form of independence that supports the teaching-learning process of English as a second language.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, it highlights that the implementation of the flipped classroom method is not a novel experience to the teaching and learning pedagogy used in the English as Second Language classroom. Employing the blend in technology enhances the teaching-learning process of English as a Second Language in the schools of the Colombo Educational zone and it proves to be effective. In addition, the above-discussed results of flipping the English language classrooms at schools are evidence of the eagerness of the students to learn English as their target language in an adopted environment that focuses on flipped as practical-based learning. Nevertheless, the English teachers are trying their best and present their maximum effort to flip the classrooms amidst the difficulties that they have to face. In essence, using innovative methods in teaching-learning lessons favour both the teachers and students to be flexible and accessible in teaching English as a Second Language.

In order to overcome the confrontations faced by the students when flipping the classroom, it is recommended to have a deeper analysis of students' requirements such as the availability of the technological devices, their attitudes towards switching the teaching methods and the preparation time prior to implementing the inverted classroom model for teaching ESL. This may help to overcome the issues that the students may confront when flipping the classroom. In Sri Lanka which is a developing country, the success of shifting the classroom system totally depends on the pre-determined reading materials acknowledged by the teacher. Thus, it would be better if the pre-determined materials can be designed in a way that they can support and view from any technological device irrespective of the place. It is also recommended to have training workshops for English teachers to provide them with adequate knowledge on the latest technological devices.

The current study has implications for professional development providers, ESL practitioners and school management. Also, the findings will be helpful for educational institutions that are funding school-based programmes and the parents can also be re-educated through this.

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