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(IJEPC)**www.ijepec.com**CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN IMPLEMENTING
FLIPPED CLASSROOMS IN EFL SETTINGS: A REVIEW OF
CURRENT LITERATURE**

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Abstract:

This review examines the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing flipped classrooms in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, drawing on recent literature to provide a comprehensive overview of current practices and findings. The flipped classroom model, which reverses traditional teaching methods by delivering instructional content outside the classroom and engaging students in active learning during class time, presents unique advantages for EFL learners, including increased engagement, personalized learning, and enhanced language proficiency. However, the implementation of this model is not without its challenges. Issues such as digital literacy, access to technology, and the need for effective instructional design can hinder successful adoption. Additionally, educators may face resistance to change from both students and institutional frameworks. This review highlights the importance of addressing these challenges through targeted professional development, the integration of appropriate technologies, and the establishment of supportive learning environments. Furthermore, it identifies opportunities for future research, including the exploration of best practices for flipped classroom implementation and the impact of various social media platforms on language learning outcomes. By synthesizing current literature, this review aims to provide insights for educators and researchers seeking to enhance EFL instruction through innovative pedagogical approaches.



Introduction

Background of the Study

The flipped classroom model has emerged as a transformative pedagogical approach in educational settings, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. This model redefines traditional teaching methods by shifting the focus from direct instruction during class time to student-centered learning activities that occur outside the classroom. In a flipped classroom, students engage with instructional content—such as video lectures or reading materials—at home, allowing in-class time to be dedicated to interactive and collaborative learning experiences (Bishop & Verleger, 2013; O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015).

The increasing integration of technology in education has facilitated the adoption of the flipped classroom model, enabling educators to leverage various digital platforms for content delivery and communication (Nazara, 2019). This shift is particularly relevant in EFL settings, where traditional teaching methods often emphasize rote memorization and passive learning. By utilizing the flipped classroom approach, educators can foster a more engaging and participatory learning environment that encourages students to take ownership of their learning (Gilboy et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2022).

Recent empirical studies have highlighted the potential benefits of flipped classrooms in enhancing student engagement, improving language proficiency, and promoting collaborative learning (Alharbi & Drew, 2014; Zainuddin, 2018). However, the implementation of this model is not without challenges, including technological barriers, the need for teacher training, and varying levels of student readiness (Tess, 2013; Lo & Hew, 2017). As such, understanding the complexities of implementing flipped classrooms in EFL contexts is crucial for educators and researchers alike.

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of this review is to critically examine the current literature on the implementation of flipped classrooms in EFL settings, focusing on both the benefits and challenges associated with this pedagogical approach. By synthesizing recent research findings, this review aims to provide insights into effective strategies for integrating flipped classrooms into EFL instruction, as well as to identify gaps in the existing literature that warrant further investigation.

Specifically, this review will explore the following objectives:

- i. To define and contextualize the concept of flipped classrooms within EFL education.
- ii. To analyze the benefits of flipped classrooms, including enhanced student engagement and personalized learning experiences.
- iii. To identify the challenges faced by educators in implementing flipped classrooms, such as technological barriers and the need for teacher training.

- iv. To highlight best practices and strategies for successful implementation of flipped classrooms in EFL contexts.
- v. To discuss research methodologies employed in studying flipped classrooms and their implications for future research.

Understanding Flipped Classrooms in EFL Settings

Definition and Concept of Flipped Classrooms

The flipped classroom model is an innovative instructional strategy that reverses the traditional learning environment by delivering instructional content, often online, outside of the classroom. This approach allows students to engage with the material at their own pace, freeing up class time for interactive, hands-on learning activities (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015). In essence, the flipped classroom transforms the conventional lecture-based format into a more dynamic and student-centered learning experience, where educators facilitate discussions, collaborative projects, and problem-solving activities during class time (Nazara, 2019).

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the flipped classroom model is particularly beneficial as it encourages learners to actively engage with language materials before class, thereby enhancing their understanding and retention of grammatical concepts and vocabulary (Wang et al., 2022). This model not only promotes learner autonomy but also allows for differentiated instruction tailored to the diverse needs of EFL students (Zainuddin, 2018).

Applicability in EFL Settings

The applicability of flipped classrooms in EFL settings is supported by the increasing availability of digital resources and the growing familiarity of students with technology. EFL educators can utilize various online platforms, such as video lectures, podcasts, and interactive quizzes, to deliver content outside the classroom (Mansor & Abd Rahim, 2017). This flexibility allows students to revisit complex language concepts and practice their skills in a low-pressure environment.

Research indicates that flipped classrooms can significantly enhance student engagement and motivation in EFL contexts. For instance, studies have shown that students who participate in flipped classrooms demonstrate higher levels of interaction and collaboration during in-class activities, leading to improved language proficiency and confidence (Alharbi & Drew, 2014; Zainuddin, 2018). Furthermore, the model supports the development of critical thinking and communication skills, which are essential for language learners (Gilboy et al., 2015).

Theoretical Foundations of Flipped Classrooms

The flipped classroom model is grounded in several educational theories that emphasize active learning and student engagement. Two key theoretical foundations are constructivist learning theory and active learning theory.

Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist learning theory posits that learners construct knowledge through their experiences and interactions with the world around them (Piaget, 1976; Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of flipped classrooms, this theory supports the idea that students learn best when

they are actively involved in the learning process. By engaging with instructional content outside of class and participating in collaborative activities during class, EFL students can construct their understanding of language concepts through social interaction and peer feedback (Nazara, 2019).

The flipped classroom model aligns with constructivist principles by promoting learner autonomy and encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning. This approach allows students to explore language materials at their own pace, facilitating deeper comprehension and retention of knowledge (Bakar Aisyah Hanum et al., 2018).

Active Learning Theory

Active learning theory emphasizes the importance of engaging students in the learning process through activities that require them to think critically and apply their knowledge (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). The flipped classroom model embodies this principle by shifting the focus from passive reception of information to active participation in learning activities. In EFL settings, this can include group discussions, role-playing, and problem-solving tasks that encourage students to use the target language in meaningful contexts (Wang et al., 2022).

Research has shown that active learning strategies, such as those employed in flipped classrooms, lead to improved academic performance and greater student satisfaction (Sun & Wu, 2016). By fostering an interactive and collaborative learning environment, flipped classrooms can enhance the overall language learning experience for EFL students.

Benefits of Flipped Classrooms in EFL Settings

The flipped classroom model has gained significant traction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings due to its innovative approach to teaching and learning. This model not only redefines the traditional roles of students and teachers but also enhances the overall educational experience. Below are some key benefits of implementing flipped classrooms in EFL contexts.

- i. **Enhanced Student Engagement:** One of the most notable benefits of the flipped classroom model is the increase in student engagement. By shifting the delivery of content outside the classroom, students are encouraged to take an active role in their learning. In-class time is then utilized for interactive activities, discussions, and collaborative projects, which fosters a more engaging learning environment. Research indicates that students in flipped classrooms are more involved and motivated compared to those in traditional lecture-based settings (Gilboy et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2022). This heightened engagement can lead to a more dynamic and participatory classroom atmosphere, essential for language acquisition.
- ii. **Personalized Learning Experiences:** Flipped classrooms allow for personalized learning experiences tailored to individual student needs. Students can access instructional materials at their own pace, revisiting complex topics as necessary. This flexibility enables learners to engage with the content in a manner that suits their learning styles and preferences. As a result, students can take greater ownership of their learning journey, which is particularly beneficial in EFL settings where language proficiency levels may vary widely among learners (Nazara, 2019). The ability to learn independently outside of class empowers students to focus on areas where they need the most improvement.
- iii. **Improved Learning Outcomes:** Numerous studies have shown that the flipped classroom model can lead to improved learning outcomes. By engaging in active

learning during class time, students are more likely to retain information and apply their knowledge effectively. A meta-analysis by Lo and Hew (2017) found that students in flipped classrooms generally achieve higher academic performance and demonstrate greater improvement in critical thinking skills. This is particularly relevant in EFL contexts, where the application of language skills is crucial for effective communication.

- iv. **Development of Critical Thinking Skills:** The flipped classroom model promotes the development of critical thinking skills by encouraging students to engage in higher-order thinking activities during class. Instead of passively receiving information, students are tasked with analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating content in collaborative settings. This approach not only enhances their understanding of the material but also equips them with essential skills for real-world problem-solving (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). In EFL settings, fostering critical thinking is vital as it enables learners to navigate complex language tasks and engage in meaningful conversations.

In a nutshell, the flipped classroom model offers numerous benefits in EFL settings, including enhanced student engagement, personalized learning experiences, improved learning outcomes, and the development of critical thinking skills. As educators continue to explore innovative teaching strategies, the flipped classroom presents a promising approach to language education that aligns with the needs of modern learners.

Challenges of Implementing Flipped Classrooms in EFL Settings

While the flipped classroom model presents numerous advantages for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, its implementation is not without challenges. Understanding these obstacles is crucial for educators and institutions aiming to adopt this innovative teaching approach effectively. Below are some of the primary challenges associated with implementing flipped classrooms in EFL settings.

- i. **Technological Barriers:** One of the most significant challenges in implementing flipped classrooms is the reliance on technology. Access to reliable internet and digital devices is essential for students to engage with pre-class materials. However, disparities in access can create barriers, particularly in regions with limited technological infrastructure (Lo & Hew, 2017). Additionally, technical issues such as software malfunctions or lack of familiarity with digital tools can hinder the learning process, making it imperative for educators to ensure that all students have the necessary resources and skills to participate fully (Chen et al., 2014).
- ii. **Teacher Training and Support:** Effective implementation of the flipped classroom model requires substantial preparation and training for educators. Teachers must be equipped with the skills to design engaging pre-class content and facilitate interactive in-class activities. Many educators may not have received formal training in these areas, leading to potential challenges in execution (O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015). Continuous professional development and institutional support are essential to help teachers transition to this new instructional model and to address any pedagogical concerns that may arise during implementation (Bakar Aisyah Hanum et al., 2018).
- iii. **Student Resistance and Adaptation:** Students may initially resist the flipped classroom model, particularly if they are accustomed to traditional teaching methods. This resistance can stem from a lack of understanding of the benefits of the flipped

approach or discomfort with the increased responsibility for their own learning (Gilboy et al., 2015). Clear communication of expectations and gradual implementation can help mitigate this resistance. Additionally, providing students with guidance on how to engage with pre-class materials effectively is crucial for fostering a positive adaptation to the flipped classroom environment (Wang et al., 2022).

- iv. **Institutional and Cultural Factors:** Institutional and cultural factors can also pose challenges to the successful implementation of flipped classrooms. Educational institutions may have established norms and practices that prioritize traditional teaching methods, making it difficult to shift to a more student-centered approach (Tess, 2013). Furthermore, cultural attitudes towards education and authority can influence how both teachers and students perceive the flipped classroom model. In cultures where teacher-centered instruction is the norm, transitioning to a flipped classroom may require significant changes in mindset and practice (Fan, 2022). Addressing these cultural and institutional barriers is essential for fostering an environment conducive to the flipped classroom model.

Best Practices and Strategies for Successful Implementation

To effectively implement the flipped classroom model in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, educators must adopt best practices and strategies that enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Below are key strategies for successful implementation.

- i. **Preparation and Planning:** Effective preparation and planning are crucial for the successful implementation of the flipped classroom model. Educators should begin by clearly defining learning objectives and selecting appropriate materials that align with these goals. This includes creating engaging pre-class content, such as videos, readings, or interactive modules, that students can access outside of class (O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015). Additionally, instructors should consider the diverse learning needs of their students and provide varied resources to cater to different learning styles (Bakar Aisyah Hanum et al., 2018). A well-structured plan that outlines the flow of activities and expectations can help facilitate a smooth transition to the flipped classroom model.
- ii. **Integration of In-Class and Online Activities:** A successful flipped classroom model requires a seamless integration of online and in-class activities. Educators should design in-class sessions that build on the pre-class content, encouraging students to apply what they have learned through collaborative activities, discussions, and problem-solving tasks (Wang et al., 2022). This integration fosters active learning and allows instructors to address misconceptions and provide targeted support. Utilizing technology tools, such as learning management systems or social media platforms, can enhance this integration by facilitating communication and collaboration among students (Giannakos et al., 2014).
- iii. **Creating a Supportive Learning Environment:** Creating a supportive learning environment is essential for fostering student engagement and motivation in a flipped classroom. Instructors should establish clear expectations and provide guidance on how to engage with pre-class materials effectively (Gilboy et al., 2015). Additionally, promoting a culture of collaboration and peer support can help students feel more comfortable participating in class discussions and activities. Educators can encourage this by incorporating team-based learning strategies and providing opportunities for students to work together on projects or assignments (Fan, 2022). A positive and

inclusive classroom atmosphere can significantly enhance students' willingness to engage in the flipped learning process.

- iv. **Continuous Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms:** Continuous assessment and feedback are vital components of the flipped classroom model. Educators should implement formative assessments to gauge student understanding and progress throughout the learning process (Tess, 2013). This can include quizzes, polls, or reflective journals that allow students to demonstrate their comprehension of the material. Providing timely and constructive feedback helps students identify areas for improvement and reinforces their learning (Chen et al., 2014). Additionally, incorporating peer assessment can foster a sense of accountability and encourage collaborative learning among students (Zainuddin, 2018). By establishing robust assessment and feedback mechanisms, educators can ensure that students remain engaged and motivated in their learning journey.

The successful implementation of the flipped classroom model in EFL settings requires careful preparation and planning, effective integration of online and in-class activities, the creation of a supportive learning environment, and continuous assessment and feedback. By adopting these best practices, educators can enhance student engagement and improve language learning outcomes.

Research Methodologies in Studying Flipped Classrooms in EFL Settings

Research methodologies play a crucial role in understanding the effectiveness and impact of flipped classrooms in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. Various approaches can be employed to gather data and insights, each offering unique perspectives on the implementation and outcomes of flipped classroom strategies.

Quantitative Research

Quantitative research methodologies are commonly used to assess the effectiveness of flipped classrooms in EFL contexts. This approach typically involves the collection of numerical data through surveys, tests, or standardized assessments to evaluate student performance and engagement (Lo & Hew, 2017). For instance, researchers may conduct pre- and post-tests to measure improvements in grammar proficiency or language skills among students participating in a flipped classroom model compared to those in traditional settings (Sun & Wu, 2016). Statistical analyses, such as t-tests or ANOVA, can then be applied to determine the significance of the findings. Quantitative studies provide valuable insights into the overall effectiveness of flipped classrooms and can help identify trends and correlations in student learning outcomes (Bishop & Verleger, 2013).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research methodologies offer a deeper understanding of the experiences and perceptions of students and educators involved in flipped classrooms. This approach often includes interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations to gather rich, descriptive data about participants' attitudes, motivations, and challenges (Creswell, 2014). For example, qualitative studies may explore how students perceive their engagement and learning in a flipped classroom environment, as well as the pedagogical strategies employed by instructors (Nazara, 2019). Thematic analysis can be used to identify common themes and patterns in the data, providing insights into the nuances of the flipped classroom experience. Qualitative

research is particularly valuable for understanding the contextual factors that influence the implementation and effectiveness of flipped classrooms in diverse EFL settings (Fan, 2022).

Mixed-Methods Approaches

Mixed methods approach combines both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to provide a comprehensive understanding of flipped classrooms in EFL contexts. This approach allows researchers to triangulate data, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). For instance, a study might begin with a quantitative survey to assess student performance and engagement, followed by qualitative interviews to explore students' experiences and perceptions in greater depth. This combination enables researchers to capture both the measurable outcomes of flipped classrooms and the subjective experiences of participants, offering a holistic view of the educational impact (Gikas & Grant, 2013). Mixed-methods research is particularly effective in EFL settings, where understanding the interplay between instructional strategies and learner experiences is essential for improving teaching practices and student outcomes.

Case Studies and Examples of Flipped Classrooms in EFL Settings

The implementation of flipped classrooms in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings has gained traction in recent years, leading to various case studies that highlight successful practices, lessons learned, and comparative analyses of different approaches. This section explores notable examples and insights derived from these case studies.

Successful Implementations

Several case studies have documented successful implementations of flipped classrooms in EFL contexts, showcasing innovative practices that enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. For instance, a study by Zainuddin and Halili (2016) examined the use of a flipped classroom model in an EFL course at a Malaysian university. The researchers found that students who engaged with pre-class video materials demonstrated significant improvements in their speaking and writing skills compared to those in traditional classrooms. The study highlighted the importance of using interactive video content and providing opportunities for peer collaboration during in-class activities.

Another successful implementation was reported by Wang et al. (2022), who explored the use of a flipped classroom in a Chinese university's EFL program. The study revealed that students who participated in the flipped classroom model showed higher levels of motivation and engagement, as well as improved grammar proficiency. The researchers emphasized the role of social media platforms in facilitating communication and collaboration among students, which contributed to a more dynamic learning environment.

Lessons Learned from Case Studies

Case studies of flipped classrooms in EFL settings have yielded valuable lessons that can inform future implementations. One key lesson is the necessity of providing adequate training and support for both students and instructors. For example, a study by Alharbi and Drew (2014) highlighted that student who received training on how to effectively use social media for collaborative learning experienced greater success in the flipped classroom. Similarly, instructors who were well-prepared to facilitate discussions and guide students through the learning process reported more positive outcomes.

Additionally, the importance of aligning instructional materials with learning objectives has been emphasized in various case studies. Research by Tess (2013) indicated that when instructional videos and activities were closely tied to course goals, students were more likely to engage meaningfully with the content. This alignment not only enhances student understanding but also fosters a sense of purpose in their learning.

Comparative Analysis of Different Approaches

Comparative analyses of different approaches to flipped classrooms in EFL settings reveal diverse strategies and their respective impacts on student learning. For instance, a study by Nazara (2019) compared the effectiveness of using Facebook versus WhatsApp as platforms for flipped classroom activities. The findings indicated that while both platforms facilitated student engagement, the use of Facebook led to higher levels of interaction and collaboration among students. This suggests that the choice of technology can significantly influence the success of flipped classroom implementations.

Furthermore, a comparative study by Gikas and Grant (2013) examined the use of various multimedia resources in flipped classrooms. The researchers found that incorporating a mix of video, audio, and interactive content catered to different learning styles and preferences, resulting in improved student outcomes. This highlights the importance of adopting a flexible approach that considers the diverse needs of EFL learners.

In a nutshell, case studies of flipped classrooms in EFL settings provide valuable insights into successful implementations, lessons learned, and comparative analyses of different approaches. These findings can guide educators in designing effective flipped classroom experiences that enhance language learning and student engagement.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The integration of flipped classrooms in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings has shown promising results in enhancing student engagement and language proficiency. This section summarizes the key findings, discusses implications for EFL educators, and provides recommendations for future research.

Summary of Key Findings

The exploration of flipped classrooms in EFL contexts has revealed several key findings. Firstly, the use of social media and digital platforms in flipped classrooms significantly enhances student engagement and motivation. Studies indicate that students who participate in flipped classroom models demonstrate improved language skills, particularly in speaking and writing (Wang et al., 2022; Zainuddin & Halili, 2016). Additionally, the flexibility of accessing learning materials outside the classroom allows for personalized learning experiences, catering to diverse student needs (Nazara, 2019).

Moreover, empirical evidence suggests that collaborative learning facilitated by social media platforms fosters peer interaction and immediate feedback, which are crucial for language acquisition (Alharbi & Drew, 2014). However, challenges such as digital literacy and the need for structured guidance remain significant barriers to effective implementation (Tess, 2013).

Implications for EFL Educators

The findings from the studies underscore the need for EFL educators to adapt their teaching methodologies to incorporate flipped classroom strategies effectively. Educators should focus on developing their digital literacy skills and understanding the pedagogical affordances of social media to enhance their instructional practices (Nazara, 2019). Additionally, creating a supportive learning environment that encourages collaboration and peer feedback can significantly improve student outcomes.

Furthermore, educators should consider the diverse backgrounds and learning preferences of their students when designing flipped classroom activities. Tailoring content to meet the specific needs of learners can lead to more meaningful engagement and improved language proficiency (Wang et al., 2022).

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should aim to address the gaps identified in the current literature on flipped classrooms in EFL settings. Longitudinal studies examining the long-term effects of flipped classroom models on language proficiency and retention would provide valuable insights into their effectiveness. Additionally, research exploring the impact of different social media platforms on student engagement and learning outcomes could inform best practices for implementation (Gikas & Grant, 2013).

Moreover, qualitative studies focusing on students' perceptions and experiences in flipped classrooms can shed light on the socio-cultural factors that influence their learning behaviors (Fan, 2022). Investigating the challenges faced by educators in implementing flipped classrooms, particularly in diverse educational contexts, will also be crucial for developing effective training and support programs.

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