

Assessing the Opportunities and Obstacles of the Implementation of the Flipped Classroom in Algerian Higher Education

A Teachers' Perspective

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Abstract: Learning English has become one of the highly demanded disciplines in the recent couple of years. Yet, ELT in Algerian higher education still in need to be updated and promoted. Educational studies have proven that teaching methods are in an ongoing progress. Recently, a new approach of teaching has been emerged, namely, the flipped classroom. This study endeavors at evaluating the Teachers' perception about the eventual opportunities and obstacles of applying this innovative approach in teaching English in Algerian higher education. In order to achieve this objective, a study has been conducted on a sample of higher education English teachers that aims primarily to assess their views towards this teaching model. Accordingly, a descriptive qualitative approach has been applied in which the questionnaire was the main research instrument. The collected data revealed that although implementing the flipped classroom would be beneficial to both teachers and learners, it may face some hindrances.

Keywords: ELT, EFL, Higher education, Flipped classroom, Blended learning, Teaching approaches.

Introduction

Nowadays, the rapidly developed new technologies, undoubtedly, affect everything in our daily lives, and education is not an exception. Due to these technological opportunities, there has been a transformation from the traditional teaching to new approaches. In this respect, choosing the appropriate among these new teaching techniques is one of the prior responsibilities of the educational systems.

One of these innovative teaching approaches is the Flipped Classroom (FC) Model. This approach aims chiefly at providing preparation of the learner for the subject before the course, then, during the class, a set of tasks that seek for increasing the quality of face-to-face teaching.

This study aims fundamentally to highlight in a little more details teachers' viewpoints about the opportunities and obstacles of the adoption of this model, in Algerian universities. In other words, it investigates the usefulness of the FC as a model to teach English, on the one hand, and the eventual hindrances, on the other.

The main question discussed in this study would be as follows: what are the teachers' perceptions about the main opportunities and obstacles regarding the implementation of the flipped classroom model to teach English as a Foreign Language in Algerian higher education. The objective of this study is mainly to assess the teachers' views on the Flipped Classroom model as an approach to be used in English teaching. The fundamental hypothesis would be formulated as follows: Algerian English teachers' are likely to have different views about adopting this model.

I. Literature Review

A. Flipped Classroom Genesis

To be in its current status, the FC went through a set of stages. According to (Hartyányi et al., 2018, p.6), the Flipped Classroom model originally emerged early in the 19th century when The United States Military Academy (USMA) created a set of teaching techniques in which teachers provide sources to their learners to learn before class, and use the classroom time to group cooperation and solve problems. Based on these reflections, in 2000, Glenn Platt and Maureen Lage, while teaching at the University of Miami, introduced a new teaching method. Simultaneously with the rise of the use of the internet, they used to encourage students to watch educational videos at home, followed by group discussion in the classroom. This teaching technique was fundamentally the cornerstone of the flipped classroom although the term was never been used as such.

Afterwards, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology set up 'open courseware projects' focused on open educational resources. This laid to the establishment of the application of the new Flipped Classroom model. Subsequently, in 2004, Salman Khan created and posted coaching videos to a website that soon became incredibly popular among students. He, then, founded the Khan Research Institution and uploaded more learning materials to the network. This contributed to a fast growth of the Flipped Classroom (Hartyányi et al., 2018, p.6) *ibid*.

Two American science professors, Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams, are said to have started the first true practical use of the flipped classroom. However, over the last 20 years, numerous techniques have inspired the idea of a flipped classroom, including King's 'sage on the stage' creation, and Eric Mazur's 'peer instruction technique' which turned knowledge transfer outside the classroom, enabling the teacher to train students by assimilating information in the classroom. (*ibid*)

In practice, the research work by (Lage et al., 2000) in which they attempted to meet the needs of the learners in various learning styles by 'inverting the classroom' and supplying lecture material to economics students with lectures through digital means, together with the previously mentioned contributions of both Salman Khan, founder of the Khan Academy, and Bergmann and Sams, the flipped classroom technique begun to be widely known and used.

B. Flipped Classroom Defined

Since its emergence, several definitions are provided to the flipped classroom. First and foremost, (Toto and Nguyen, 2009) state that the "flipped classroom" is an approach that promotes active learning and allows students being able to use their knowledge in class with their instructor' guidance. (Mull, 2012) has described it as a model that helps students to prepare the course through videos, podcasts and posts. By the same token, (Milman, 2012) states that it is an approach that seeks to enhance teaching performance via the diffusion of information to the students using videos, podcasts then the application during the course through classroom discussions and group work. According to (Bishop and Verleger, 2013), the flipped classroom is a two-part learner-based teaching model with interactive teaching experiences during and outside the classroom.

In brief, according to the previously stated views, one can say that unlike traditional classes, the flipped classroom model is based on the idea of inverting the teaching settings. In practice, the learners use various teaching materials outside the class time, and followed by a classroom appliance, discussion and team works. Simply put, (Sams & Bergmann, 2014) claims that in the flipped classroom approach “what is done at school done at home, homework done at home completed in class”.

B. The Use of the Flipped classroom in EFL teaching

In the first years of its emergence, the FC model was used in many fields viz. Economics, Science, Medicine and Engineering. In the field of ELT, there were many attempts regarding the utilization of the FC in EFL teaching e.g. (Hung, 2015; Jun et al. , 2017; Turan & Cimen, 2019; Al-Naabi, 2020), to name a few. The findings reveal that this model has significant impact on the EFL learners’ performances. For instance, (Jun et al., 2017, p. 16) come up with the conclusion that the “flipped instruction is an appropriate instructional design for teaching English as a Foreign Language”. In their views, this innovative student-centered active learning leads to beneficial outcomes. This latter is due to the fact that this model provides authentic spoken and written interaction using familiar technology that did not involve a large learning curve. Besides, in a study conducted by (Basal, 2015, p.31) in which he indicated some F.C. benefits in EFL teaching such as “learning at ones’ own pace, advanced student preparation, overcoming the limitations of class time, and increasing participation”. Additionally, (Abdullah, 2019) ensures that the FC plays a positive role to enhance the English speaking performance and, as a result, it contributes in raising their communicative skills. In terms of grammar, (Al-Naabi, 2020) conducted a study using the FC approach on Omani EFL learners’ grammatical proficiencies as well as their insights towards the flipped learning approach. The results revealed that this approach had positively contributed on improving students’ knowledge and usage of English grammar. Similarly, (Lin and Hwang, 2018) found that FC helped students to be more responsible and independent in their learning process.

Taken as a whole, the previous educational researches affirm the usefulness of the FC model as an approach in EFL teaching that replace the traditional face-to-face educational techniques.

II. Methodology

The purpose of the present study is fundamentally the assessment of teachers' perceptions on the implementation of the flipped classroom approach to teach English at the Algerian universities. In doing so, a descriptive qualitative approach has been applied.

The research instrument that has been used in conducting this present study was mainly a mixed questionnaire that aims at checking the teachers’ knowledge, experience, and familiarity with the flipped classroom approach as well as their viewpoints. This questionnaire was addressed to a sample of thirty (30) Algerian English teachers from different affiliations in order to collect the needed data from diverse locations. This questionnaire is divided to three main parts. The first part is designed to check the Teachers’ profiles i.e. their age, gender, degree, teaching experience and their affiliations. The second part is dedicated to know the participants’ familiarity and knowledge about the FC. The last one, however, is devoted to investigate the lecturers’ different perspectives.

With regard to the analysis process, data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively in which an analytical deductive approach is adopted. This process went through two steps. Initially, the researchers gathered and classified the responses from the questionnaires. Then, a deep analysis has been done to each part of the questionnaire.

III. Data Analysis

The data that have been obtained from this research study could be presented as follows:

1- The participants' age:

Regarding the age groups of the respondents, it is between 25 years old and 49 years old. Thus, it's a variety between novice and experienced ones.

2- The participants Gender: 37% of the participants are male and the rest 63 % are females as shown in figure1.

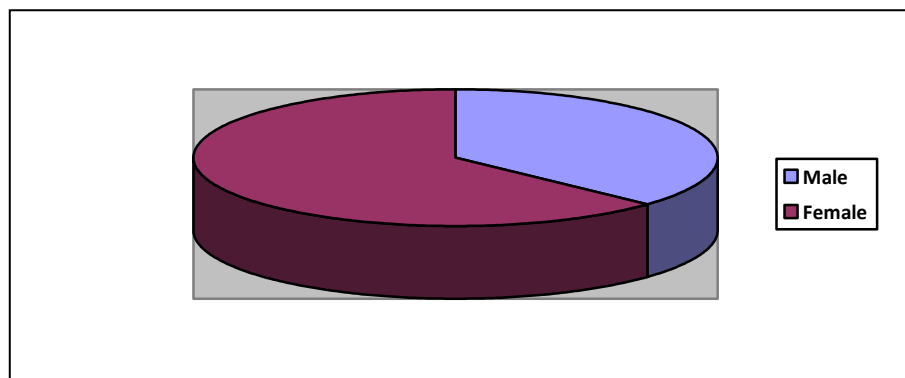


Fig.1 : Participants' Gender

3- The participants Degrees:

Among the 30 participants, 13.33% hold Master degree and they teach as substitute teachers. 3.33% got a Magister degree and the remaining ones are as follows: 23.33% PhD students and 60% hold a Doctorate Degree are figure 2 showcases.

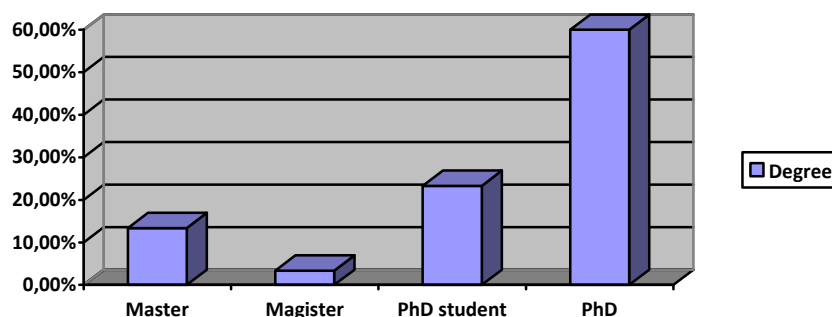


Fig. 2 Teachers Degree

4- The participants Affiliation

While some participants did not specify their affiliations, the respondents belong to different Algerian universities ; namely : Tlemcen University, Guelma University, Algiers2

University, Oran2 University, Khanchela University, Biskra University Teachers' Teaching centre (ENS) of Constantine, Djelfa University and Bejaia University .

5- The participants' teaching experience

When it comes to the teaching experience, 10.33% of the respondents have less than 5 years of teaching experience, 43.33% have taught between 6 to 15 years and the rest 46.33 % have more than 15 years as shown in Figure3.

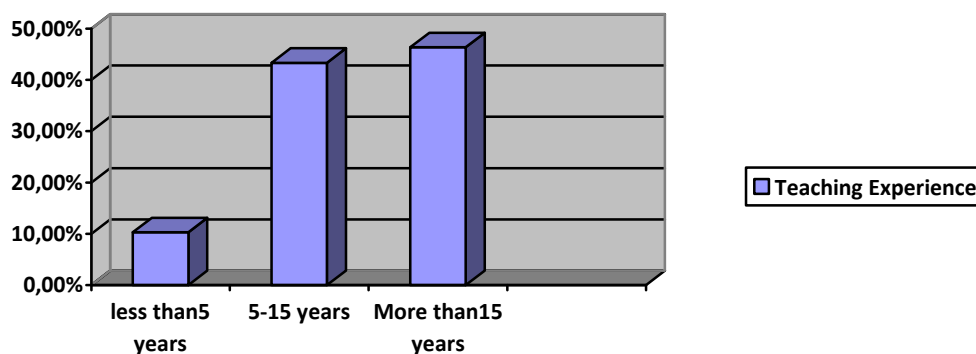


Fig.3:Teaching Experience

6. The respondents' knowledge and familiarity with the Flipped Classroom

The following questions aim at checking the participant's awareness and acquaintance with the F.C modal.

Q1. Do you have knowledge about the Flipped Classroom model? *Yes *No

While 66.66 % of the participants affirm that they know what is meant by the flipped classroom model, the rest 33.33% declare that they have no idea about this model.

Q2. Have you ever tried this teaching model? * Yes *No

Only eleven (11) lecturers respond positively with (yes), and the rest reply that they use other teaching methods.

Q3. If yes, how was the experience?

Among those who tried to teach with this method, multiple views were provided. Firstly, six (06) lecturers find that is enjoyable, fruitful, motivational, helpful, interesting and livelier. However, the remaining ones see it differently. Their responses were as follows: difficult to handle, flipping the classroom is useful for only some lessons, no feedback, and lack of motivation and less effective.

Q4. If yes, how was the learners' feedback?

Regarding the feedback, professors' replies were multiple. Some of them find that their learners enjoy this model, find it excited, interested in the new experience, and motivated to use it. Meanwhile, the rest affirm that there were no feedback due to the lack of tools as well as the internet connectivity.

7. The respondents' views about the Flipped Classroom

In this part, the questions seek to assess the lecturers' different views regarding teaching using the FC model.

Q1. According to you, is this approach useful to teach English at university?

Twenty one (21) respondents affirmed that this approach is useful. The rest replied differently.

Q2. Which language skill(s) is recommended to be taught using the F.C?

The majority of the answerers see that the F.C is useful for all the skills. However, there were a focus on the speaking and the writing skills.

Q3. What is your perception about the following statements?

This question aims at checking the participants view about the opportunities of implementing the FC in Algeria and its efficacy with teaching EFL. The gathered data are presented in table1.

Table 1. Teachers' perceptions about the opportunities and usefulness of the FC

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
FC can replace traditional teaching	6	8	8	6	2	30
The course is better delivered through the FC that traditional teaching	3	14	7	4	2	30
The FC allows me to effectively interact with my learners.	6	19	2	1	2	30
The FC allows me to test my learners effectively	5	12	10	3	0	30
The FC enhances my learners' linguistic capabilities.	5	17	6	2	0	30

As the table above shows, the majority of the teachers have positive insights about inverting the classroom. This means that they are ready to adopt new methods.

Q4. According to you, what are the advantages of adopting the FC model in Algerian Universities?

Among the replies that the answerers provide is that this model would be advantageous because it raises the learners' autonomy, it enhances their skills, it enables them to be more active, it helps to gain time and offers efficient use of class time, and it provides more practice.

Q5. According to you, what are the disadvantages of adopting the FC model in Algerian Universities?

On the other side, the pitfalls that the teachers perceive are numerous. They see that this model is complex and needs time to be familiar with. Also, it is tiring to transfer the courses to handouts or any other teaching support. Additionally, it is hard to assess the learners' advances and the teaching outcomes. Furthermore, not all the learners are active, and thus, some will rely on their class mates to deal with the activities. Finally, the lack of technological advancement

such as personal computers and internet connectivity in some areas, and the lack of ICT skills in some teachers.

IV. Results and Discussion

To explore the teachers' standpoints towards adopting the flipped classroom model; the results are shown below along with the discussion.

To start with, according to the teachers' perceptions, moving from traditional teaching methods to the flipped classroom would be of significant importance. In fact, using the technological means enables both the learners and teachers to expand the learning time and, as a result of that, they explore the course time to emphasize peer-to-peer interaction which enhances the learners' linguistic skills. Also, adopting this model allows the learners to intensify the use of materials from different sources. This attitude is likely to have positive impacts on their learning outcomes, on the one hand, and advancing their levels, on the other.

Additionally, the idea of inverting the classroom has an initial acceptance among the Algerian teachers. From the collected data, both experienced and novice teachers show their enthusiasm for this approach. This reflects that the implementation process would be welcomed, easy and smooth without any eventual personal complications.

Furthermore, flipping the classroom, as shown in the gathered information, has some challenges. Firstly, the implementation requires some tools and materials both at universities and at home such as PCs, laptops, printers, smart phones and internet connectivity. The lack of these tools would have negative impacts on some learners' outcomes. Secondly, this teaching model results a lack of motivation among the learners since it is hard to control the learners' who have a low self-motivation to work and prepare their lessons at home. Lastly, it might be stated that the evaluation process seems to be difficult to achieve, and this is due to the fact that learners' may cheat or lie and rely on their mates in doing the different task and home-works.

Finally, the adoption of this blended learning model in Algerian higher education may take time because of many considerations. To start with, the majority of the current teachers are accustomed to use other traditional teaching approaches, and, consequently, they need special training to be aware of the different principles of this model. Besides, the lack of experience in such teaching techniques may lead to its misapplication, and, as a result, it may affect the learners' performance and outcomes in the first years of its implementation. Moreover, accepting to deal with this approach, needs a revision and updating the existed syllabi as well as developing up-to-date curricula that keeps pace with it.

Conclusion and Future Research Directions

The purpose of the present study is to explore the ultimate opportunities and obstacles of one of the innovative teaching methods, namely, the flipped classroom. This exploration emphasizes on the teachers' perceptions vis-a-vis this model. To this end, a study was conducted on a sample of English Language teachers at multiple Algerian universities. The collected data reveal that the adoption of such didactic practice is, on the one side, welcomed, efficient and useful for both the learners and the educators, and, on the other side, it might have some

hindrances such as, the deficiency in the required facilities and tools, the lack of experience among lecturers and the required implementation time. In the future occasions, the researchers intend to conduct a study about the implementation process of this blended learning model.

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