Prospective English language teachers' perceptions towards a new paradigm in foreign language education: Flipped classroom model

Duygu Gok & Hilal Bozoglan
Suleyman Demirel University, Turkey

Abstract:

A current pedagogic approach is ''Flipped classroom model' which depends on the use of asynchronous video lectures and practice problems as homework at home, and active, group-based problem solving activities in the classroom. As a new paradigm in educational settings, flipped classroom model promotes student engagement and active learning with an emphasis on the development of problem solving skills and discovery-based learning. However, the role of flipped classroom model in foreign language teaching remains relatively unexplored in literature. In the present study, we aimed to take traditional lecture instruction one step further and integrated flipped classroom model into "Advanced Reading and Writing" course. In this context, a special website was designed to teach advanced reading and writing skills through videos and power point presentations at home, while students made practice in the classroom with the guidance of the teacher. With an aim to shed light on prospective English language teachers' perceptions towards the use of flipped classroom model in language teaching, we carried out semi-structured interviews with 30 participants studying at English Language Teaching department at a university in Turkey. The results suggest that the flipped model has the potential to bring radical changes to language teaching and learning practices in future.

Keywords: Prospective English Language Teachers, Flipped Classroom Model, Foreign Language Education

1. Introduction

Although ''flipped teaching'' is an almost new term in education, it is not completely a new teaching method (Berrett, 2012; Kong, 2014; Roach, 2014). Different terms have been used to entitle the same concept in literature: ''just in time teaching'' (Novak, 2011), ''interactive learning'' (Crouch, Watkins, Fagen, & Mazur, 2007), ''inverted classroom'' (Lage, Platt & Treglia, 2000), ''inverted learning'' (Davis, 2013), ''The Inverted Classroom'' (Baker, 2011), ''Flipped Classroom'' (Bergman &Sams, 2012), ''Flipped learning'' (Flipped Learning Network, 2013).

What is flipped classroom? Bishop and Verleger (2013) define flipped classroom as ''a new pedagogical method, which employs asynchronous video lectures and practice problems as homework, and active, group-based problem solving activities in the classroom.'' (p.1). However, literatüre on flipped classroom model reveals that actually there is not a certain definition of flipped classroom model. (Ash, 2012; Wang, 2014). In simplest terms, flipped

classroom model includes shifting place of lecture with homework via technological tools andputting students to the core of the learning process with interactive and collaborative teaching techniques (Bergman & Sams, 2012; Hamdan, McKnight, McKnight, & Arfstrom, 2013).

A growing body of literature on flipped classroom presents that flipped classroom model has gained acceptance and popularity in the world in nearly every field of science. However, there is limited number of research on the use of flipped classrom model in foreign/second language classrooms. Moreover, there is relatively little research focusing specifically on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. For this reason; to shed light on the place of flipped classroom model within EFL context, in this study we aimed to investigate the reflection of preservice English language teachers on flipped classroom model. In this regard, we investigated the following research questions within the context of 12 weeks flipped classroom application.

- What are the perceptions of prospective English Language Teachers towards Flipped Classroom Model?

- Do preservice English language teachers consider flipped classroom as a beneficial model?

- What are preservice English language teachers' ideas about the flipped classrom model before and after the application?

- What are the pros and cons of flipped classroom model according to preservice teachers?

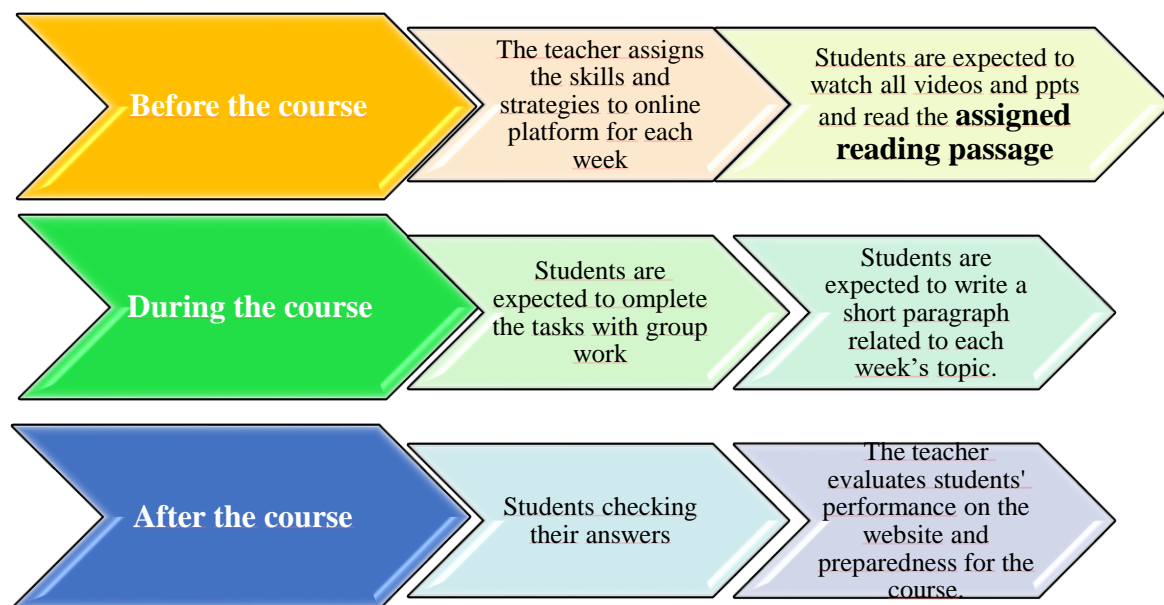## 2. Method

2.1 Participants

The sample of the study was purposefully selected from freshmen of English Language Teaching (ELT) Department within the context of Advanced Reading course. 30 prospective English language teachers (16 female and 14 male) studying at a state university in Turkey took part in this study. The participants had an average age of 18, and they did not take an online course before.

2.2 Procedure

Within the context of Advanced Reading course, a website was specifically designed in parallel with the course book. The framework of the website was developed by an expert on Computer Technologies and an expert on Foreign Language Instruction. The name of website was determined as ''online flipped reading''. The videos and slides of lecture were mainly selected from Youtube, TeacherTube, Study.com and other educational online platforms related to reading strategies of the week. In the first week of intervention, in order to ensure

students' adjustment to flipped classroom model, an orientation training was given to the students to clarify implementation and running of the model.

Figure 1: The overview of procedure

Before the course	The teacher assigns the skills and strategies to online platform for each week	Students are expected to watch all videos and ppts and read the **assigned reading passage**
During the course	Students are expected to omplete the tasks with group work	Students are expected to write a short paragraph related to each week's topic.
After the course	Students checking their answers	The teacher evaluates students' performance on the website and preparedness for the course.

2.3 Data collection process & data analyses

The data involved interviews with the students. All students were asked to participate in focused-group interview. 30 students voluntarily accepted to participate in the semi-structured interviews. Accordingly, the questions of semi-structured interview were prepared to identify students' reflections ''flipped classroom model''. At the beginning of the interviews, the consent letter of participants were taken to record their speech. In this regard, 30 participants voluntarily participated in the interviews. During the interviews, students were asked semi-structured questions in small-size groups, and they were expected to share their ideas related to flipped classroom model.

In order to analyze the semi-structured interview, the records of students were transcribed and organized using thematic analysis. In this context, some recurring themes were defined and examined. The students' responses were analyzed and revisited until the point of saturation. In parallel with Creswell's (2012) suggestion, "Saturation is the point where you have

identified the major themes and no new information can add to your lists of themes or to the detail for existing themes" (p. 257).

In this regard, the researcher firstly coded the transcriptions. While coding, recurring themes were examined and coded based upon literature review. The coded text was reviewed to determine the emerging themes. An expert on this field checked and controlled the themes in terms of reliability and validity.

3. Results and discussion

The following themes appeared in the end of the data analysis:
- The comparison of online reading texts and print texts
- The perceptions of students towards online flipped reading course
- The evaluation of Flipped classroom model

The comparison of online and print texts

Students were taught reading skills and strategies on an online platform with a specially-designed website. In order to define their reflections towards online reading texts, they were asked to reveal their perceptions towards online reading and compare online and print texts in terms of advantages and disadvantages. The following keywords and phrases were extracted from students' repetitive responses.

Table 1. Students' perception towards online reading

Online reading (N=30)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Keeping up with the current technology	6	20.00 %
Practicability	8	26.66 %
Having extra materials	10	33.33 %
Not necessary	6	20.00%
Total	30	100.0%

As stated in the Table 1. students indicated their attitudes towards online reading with some patterns. 20% of students suggested that online reading helped them to keep pace with the recent technology. They reported that they wanted the courses to meet the needs of the 21st century in terms of technology.

''*In 21st century, with the proliferation of technology we are supposed to use technology; therefore, online reading helps us use technology effectively…*'' *(part. 17)*

''*As we are so close to the technological tools, online reading is suitable for me☺*'' *(part. 2)*

Beside this, one-third of students (33.33 %) noted that they like the visual elements in online reading such as, graphs, pictures. They reported that they have a chance to use extra materials such as online dictionary or supportive links. The majority of the students expressed their ideas with positive adjectives such as; enjoyable, interesting, useful, attractive…

''I can understand the passages with visual opponents and graphs in online reading.'' (part. 19).

The practicability of online reading was another repetitive key word among students' responses. 8 students highlighted the practicability of online reading. They emphasized that the online reading in language learning context was easier. As seen from their quotations, they believed that online reading was practical for foreign language learning. However, 20 % of the students reported that there was no need to use online reading, and they preferred to use hardcopy books. The students explained their ideas in the following way:

'' While reading online, we can see the results of reading questions immediately on the screen, when we complete the tasks. Moreover, we can see the other pages at the same time which is different from hard copy version of the book'' (part. 30).

''... whenever I want to read the passage or articles, I can download and read from even my mobile phone'' (part. 27).
'' It is not necessary to read on an online platform. Print texts are sufficient for the course''(part. 13).

Table.1.2. Online texts vs print texts

	Online text	Print text
Adapting the current technology	√	X
Ubiquitousness	√	X
Accessibility	√	X
Underlying the words, sentences	X	√
Eye and mental fatigue	√	X
Necessity of Extra materials	X	√
Technological problems	√	X
Taking notes on reading texts	X	√
Being unable to concentrate	√	X

After online reading treatment, students were asked to compare online texts with print texts. The recurring codes are shown in Table 1.2. Overall, students stated both advantages and disadvantages of online and print texts. While comparing the online and print texts, students were usually in favor of using online texts. After analyzing and revisiting the responses, the last point of saturation is like the following:

Table 1.3. The descriptive statistics of online and print texts

Codes (N=30)	Frequency (f)
Traditional reading background of students	14
Ubiquitiousness and accessibility	8
The features of hardcopy	10
Eye and mental fatigue	9
Willing to keep up with technological developments	7

As indicated in Table 1.2.1, nearly half of the students (f=14) mentioned about their traditional reading background while comparing print and online texts. Due to the fact that they were used to have hardcopy of books in their reading courses or in daily life, they were in favour of using print texts. They stated their ideas in the following way:

''So far, we have read print texts. So, I had difficulty in adapting to reading from screen of a computer or a mobile phone.''(part. 1)

''I think, it is easier to read print texts. I have never read online texts in a course until now.'' (part. 29).

Moreover, underlying the unknown words or sentences, taking some notes on the page were also emphasized in their responses (f=10). However, they (f=7) supported that adapting the current technology could be ensured by online texts. Here are some quotations from students' responses:

'' Personally, I like reading hardcopies. I want to have a material in my hand to touch and feel.'' (part. 20)
''Reading from online sources is a good alternative in this age of technology, but, I enjoy reading from book with colorful pens. I like underlying and taking some notes on the page of the book. I want to enhance my concentration with these colorful pens.''(part. 10).
''I do not like online things much. I prefer paper and pen, yet, I must get used to online materials to keep up with the innovations of technology'' (part. 4).

The students explained that the most prominent drawback of online texts was eye and mental fatigue while reading on the screen. On the other hand, some students also reported that whenever they wanted to read, they had a chance to access the texts even from their mobile phones. Some of the responses were in the flowing way:

''The only disadvantage of online reading is having pain in my eyes after reading on the screen''(part.22)

'' I prefer reading print texts, but when I could not access the hard copy of the book, I downloaded pdf version and followed from my mobile phone. However, online reading tires my eyes.'' (part.27).

'' I think the advantages of online reading can be listed summarized in the following way: we can easily access the texts, learn unknown words by means of online dictionary and search different concepts on the internet, however, the only bad side of online materials is the eye and mental fatigue.''(part.24).

3.1 The perceptions of students towards online flipped reading course

After students learned online reading strategies through flipped classroom model, they were asked to share their ideas pertaining to 10 weeks treatment. They were asked: ''Do you believe that 10 weeks lectures with flipped classroom model is beneficial?''. All participants (n=30) agreed that flipped classroom model was an efficient model for teaching reading. All of the students (N=30) expressed their ideas with positive adjectives such as ''enjoyable, interesting, beneficial, very good, helpful, practicability, entertaining, fruitful, extraordinary…''They argued that flipped classroom helped to improve their reading strategies, they experienced a different model, they gained a good deal of vocabulary knowledge, and they could comprehend the reading texts and answer the questions confidently. Furthermore, the students also added that flipped classroom helped to improve their reading speed, and they enjoyed the reading their lectures at home with videos. Some sample responses are listed below:

''Sure, it was beneficial for me, I improved my reading skills both by learning and by doing.'' (part.22)

''Yes, because we were taught with traditional methods before. But, with 10 weeks flipped classroom experience, we learned a lot of new vocabulary'(part. 23).

''Definitely yes. Foreign language reading paragraphs were troublesome for me. I could not comprehend the paragraphs and answer the questions. But now, I am able to comprehend the whole text while I am reading at home. Now, I can apply reading strategies easily'' (part. 1)

''Yes, if we had been taught with traditional lecture based methods and with hardcopy of book, we would have got bored. As computer is an inevitable part of our life, we enjoyed the lessons. Reading strategies and activities are more permanent for me.''(part. 12).

''Throughout 12 years of my learning experience, the teacher taught the subject and we listened. Sometimes we could not ask when we did not understand. It is still the same even today…. However, during this 10 weeks interesting training process, I was able to comprehend each week's topic and it was really fruitful and beneficial for me.''(part. 17).

Students were also asked to compare themselves before treatment and after treatment. They reported their ideas with some similar phrases as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. The students' perceptions: Before and After treatment

Before treatment	After treatment
Prejudice towards flipped classroom model	Getting used to flipped classroom model
The fear of adapting to online platform	Being able to comprehend easily
Not enough knowledge on reading skills and strategies	Improvement in vocabulary knowledge and reading speed.
Reading anxiety	Decreased level of reading anxiety
Problems with reading comprehension	An effective use of reading strategies

The majority of students indicated that they did not have enough knowledge on reading skills and strategies before the treatment. Thus, they were afraid of adapting a new model. They argued that although they were biased towards the flipped classroom model at the beginning, they got used to it after treatment. Some students were anxious about their reading skills at the beginning. After the treatment, they overcame their fears and anxiety. Within the context of flipped classroom, they could read the reading passages and answered the related questions with their peers on ''forum'' part in the website. While they were reading at home, they had chance to find the meaning of unknown words, and they could enhance their vocabulary knowledge.

Some statements of students were in the flowing way:

''*Before this course, I could not comprehend a text easily, but at home I concentrated on it and day by day, I got used to this style. Also studying with my friends encourages me to participate in the class.*''*(part. 24)*

''*When I asses my knowledge, my vocabulary knowledge has increased and I can answer academic questions easily and immediately.*''*(part. 16)*

''*In fact, I was biased against reading before this course, and when I met flipped classroom model, I was worried about not understanding the passages. However, after this course, I really made a significant progress, and now, I am not afraid of not understanding the passages.*''*(part. 2).*

''*At the beginning of my education, I had trouble with comprehending a foreign language reading text. I was looking up the dictionary when I came across a new word which took too much time and made me feel bored. Now, I do not look up all the words, and I learned to read the passages using strategies. I have plenty of time to comprehend the passage at home.*''*(part.7)*

3.2 The evaluation of Flipped classroom model

Students were asked to evaluate flipped classroom model in terms of pros and cons. Among students' responses (N=30) some repetitive phrases are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The pros and cons of online flipped reading course

Pros	Cons
Teaching in flexible setting (at home)	Lack of classroom teaching
Different experience	Being exposed to too much technology
Not leading to anxiety	Technological problems
Not reading in a limited time	
Gaining responsibility	

As seen in Table 3, students emphasized the general features of flipped classroom model. They reported that teaching at home was an advantage of this model. Moreover, they defined the flipped classroom model as an extraordinary setting. While they presented the pros and cons of online flipped reading together, 10 out of 30 stated that flipped classroom model did not have any cons. Additionally, they described the reading passages as fluent and clear which provided motivation to read with the help of graphical elements. They also explained that they enjoyed the videos and slides. According to the participants, a prominent disadvantage of flipped classroom model was that they were used to listening to the teacher alive and they were used to traditional lecture methods.

''*The pros of online flipped reading course can be listed in the following way: we have a chance to get prepared beforehand, we can read the passage in a silent setting, the perception of 'this is a lesson not homework' makes me study hard before the course, if I do not get prepared beforehand, I can miss some points, on the other hand, the lesson carried out in online setting is the main disadvantage of this model.*'' (part. 29)

''*The cons of this course are the following: it is conducted with technology, so we are which exposed to computers mostly. The pros are the following: I learned to take responsibility for my own learning each week*'' (part. 21).

''*The most interesting advantage of this model is that students could not pretend to know the topic, because if s/he did not get prepared for the lesson at home, s/he could not participate in the class activities. On the other side, the technical problems made me nervous.* (Part.25)

4. Conclusion

Pre-service English teachers' reflections revealed that they all described flipped classroom with positive adjectives and supported the efficacy of flipped classroom. On the other side,

their past experiences with traditional methods still had an effect on their attitudes towards the flipped classroom model. However, shifting place of lecture time with homework using technological tools attracted pre-service English teachers' attention and they were in favour of flipped classroom model. Since assigning homework at home do not meet the needs of 21stcentury learners, doing homework at class time under the guidance of teacher is accepted as the most prominent feature of flipped classroom model. Though pre-service teachers in the present study encountered with the flipped classroom model for the first time, they shared positive ideas about flipped classroom model in general. With respect to the cons of this model, technological problems related to internet connection turned out to be the most encountered problem.

This study, however, was limited to pre-service English language teachers studying at a state university in Turkey, and to the context of reading course. Additionally, there was no control group in the study. In future studies, these limitations can be overcome and the role of flipped classroom model in teaching other skills can be investigated. As a result of this study, it is reasonable to conclude that though flipped classroom model is a new paradigm for pre-service English teachers in Turkey, they accepted the efficacy of flipped classroom. Accordingly, the results suggest that the flipped model has the potential to bring radical changes to language teaching and learning practices in future.

References:

Ash, K. (2012). Educators view "flipped" model with a more critical eye. *Education Week*, *32*(2), 6-7.

Baker, J. W. (2000). The" classroom flip": Using web course management tools to become the guide by the side.

Bergman, J., & Sams, A. (2012). Flip your classroom. *International Society for Technology in Education*, *20*.

Berrett, D. (2012). How 'flipping' the classroom can improve the traditional lecture. *The chronicle of higher education*, *12*, 1-14.

Bishop, J. L., & Verleger, M. A. (2013, June). The flipped classroom: A survey of the research. In *ASEE National Conference Proceedings, Atlanta, GA*.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage.

Crouch, C. H., Watkins, J., Fagen, A. P., & Mazur, E. (2007). Peer instruction: Engaging students one-on-one, all at once. *Research-Based Reform of University Physics*, *1*(1), 40-95.

Davis, C. (2013). Flipped or Inverted Learning. *Enhancing instruction with visual media: Utilizing video and lecture capture*, 241.

Hamdan, N., McKnight, P., McKnight, K., & Arfstrom, K. M. (2013). *The flipped learning model: A white paper based on the literature review titled A Review of Flipped Learning*.

Kong, S. C. (2014). Developing information literacy and critical thinking skills through domain knowledge learning in digital classrooms: An experience of practicing flipped classroom strategy. *Computers & Education*, *78*, 160-173.

Lage, M. J., Platt, G. J., & Treglia, M. (2000). Inverting the classroom: A gateway to creating an inclusive learning environment. *The Journal of Economic Education*, *31*(1), 30-43.

Network, F. L. (2014). The four pillars of FLIP™. *Retrieved from www. Flipped learning. org/ definition*.

Novak, G. M. (2011). Just-in-time teaching. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 2011(128), 63-73.

Roach, T. (2014). Student perceptions toward flipped learning: New methods to increase interaction and active learning in economics. *International Review of Economics Education*, *17*, 74-84.

Strayer, J. (2012). How learning in an inverted classroom influences cooperation, innovation & task orientation. *Learning Environments Research. 15*(2), 171-193.

Talbert, R. (2012). Inverted classroom. *Colleagues*, *9*(1), 7.

Wang, T. (2014). *Exploring Engagement In Foreign Language* (Doctoral Dissertation, Washington State University).

Endnote