

The Effect of Online Flipped Classrooms on High School Students' English Grammar Achievement

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Abstract

In today's innovative world, it is not right to consider learners as passive receivers of information since they are more possibly qualified to advance. They are certainly more actively involved, interested, self-directed, and autonomous. Likewise, a flipped classroom helps students to be more active participants in an interactive learning environment. Thus, the current study aimed to describe the benefits of implementing online flipped classrooms on EFL female students' grammar achievement. The study was conducted as a pretest-posttest quasi-experimental research design at one of the Iranian high schools. Fifty EFL female students who were studying humanistic in grade 12th were requested to take part in this study. After analyzing the data using an independent-samples t-test, the findings indicated that the experimental group had better performance than the control group. Additionally, the results of the open-ended question showed that the majority of students had a positive perception of implementing online flipped classrooms. The implications of the study for EFL students and teachers are discussed.

Keywords: English Language; Grammar Achievement; Online Flipped Classroom

1. Introduction

The grammar of a language is an affecting issue in the mastery of other language skills and failing to comprehend grammar rules often leads to communication failures; therefore, it needs substantial efforts to successfully immerse learners in this component of the English language (Schulz, 2001). Fromkin and Rodman (1993) confirm that grammar achievement facilitates the final goal of any language which is communication. Furthermore, the role of grammar in any language learning is vital since without grammar language cannot be properly and correctly communicated. Therefore, a language considering no grammar is meaningless and aimless. Besides, there is a usual feeling among EFL or ESL that complicated grammar

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rules make English difficult to learn (Rossiter, 2021). In addition to difficulties in grammar learning, in this modern world, students should not be considered passive receivers of knowledge since they are more possibly qualified to advance. They are certainly more actively involved, interested, self-directed, and autonomous. One of the keys and recent methods that lead learners in this way is introduced by the literature as flipped classroom approach (Ekmekci, 2017; Tucker, 2012).

A flipped classroom lets students be more active in participation and helps them to work and practice in an interactive learning context (Chuang et al., 2018). Borg and Shapiro (1996) asserted that students' learning styles vary from each other, and personality has an important role in deciding how an individual best learns. The inharmoniousness of an instructor's teaching approach and a learners' learning types may decrease the learning loads and reduce learners' motivation in the subject matter. Thus, Lage et al. (2000) reported that in flipped classrooms teachers can guide and move inside the classroom lectures to outside the classroom (as cited in Uzunboylu & Kargozlu, 2015). This blended learning like approach aids learners to learn the materials via watching videos online before class and by doing more practice-oriented tasks in classroom (Bergmann & Sams, 2014) A flipped approach is a pedagogical approach that stresses instruction through videos as homework. Therefore, learners are asked to watch the videos before class with no lecture being given on the content during class time. Thus, it prepares learners for learning before class time, and class time is spent on questioning, clarifying, solving problems, and discussing the topics (Ansori & Nafi, 2018). Actually, instead of giving lectures which is common in traditional classes, teachers try to design and implement problem-solving skills and interactive learning activities in flipped classrooms (Khanahmadi & Nasiri, 2022). The success or failure of a flipped approach depends on the learners since it is considered as a learner-centric approach. Hence, all the learners are responsible for preparing themselves for class time, and actively take part in the class tasks and discussions. In flipped approach, the teachers act as supporters and scaffolders by helping learners to do activities and provide evaluation, and feedback (Wood et al., 1976). Thus, the teachers can spend more time with individual and small group instruction (Yarbro, et al., 2014) which lets the teacher help learners complete the task and keeps learners interested by the direction of the task clear (Pea, 2004; Wood, et al., 1976).

Accordingly, with the rapid spread of the Coronavirus, the director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO) March 2020 announced the necessity of social distancing during this pandemic. This condition led to emergency online education. Thus, instead of traditional flipped classroom it is necessary to implement online flipped ones (Sadeghpour, et al., 2021). As a concluding remark, the implementation of the flipped classroom in an online class remains understudied. Therefore, with the respect to the importance of grammar and students' failure in learning grammar, the researchers of this study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of online flipped classrooms on Iranian high school grammar achievement. To this aim the following two research questions were posed:

- Q1. Does implementing an online flipped classroom have any significant effect on the Iranian high school students' grammar achievement?
- Q2. What are Iranian high school attitudes towards the online flipped classroom?

2. Review of Literature

In this digital era, the flipped approach acts as a novel instructional method in language teaching. This blended-learning-kind of approach – known as the *inverted classroom* – is generally defined as the combination of within-class learning with online learning (Baker, 2000) where students take charge of their learning, and the teacher acts as the guide and mentor (Bergman & Sams, 2012). The idea of the flipped classroom approach was initiated by Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams in 2007 (Noonoo, 2012). Since then, the flipped classroom has been applied by teachers and has evolved into numerous formats as can be seen today.

Chau and Cheng (2010) discussed the use of e-portfolios to advance autonomous learning. The participants were 63 Chinese undergraduate students from 19 to 22 years and 13 English language teachers to serve as cheerleaders with one to over a decade of experience in teaching. A Qualitative research design was used by implementing a semi-structured interview. Students mentioned many advantages of using flipped classrooms and they believed it can make them more engaged and active in class activities.

Considering the vital role of flipped classroom approach in recent pedagogy, Szparagowski (2015) explored the effects of flipped approach on student learning. Gathering data using learners' scores and a class interview showed some probable benefits of the flipped classroom which make it an approach that teachers must not ignore. In addition, Benosa (2015) used flipped approach to study EFL learners' autonomy and practice and their attitudes towards the digital-interactive practice. Findings showed that learners' attitudes altered positively when students became familiar with this approach.

Besides, Valizadeh and Soltanpour (2020) investigated the impact of flipped pedagogy on the grammar and writing skills of basic English users. The results of this study demonstrated that the flipped learning approach expands learners' grammatical knowledge. Consequently, using a flipped approach for teaching grammar can be considered a beneficial teaching approach.

Moreover, Ahmad and Arifin (2020) explored students' grammar progression and their attitudes in an online flipped class. A total number of 531 learners with ages ranging from 18 to 41 years were invited to take part in this study. The result showed that the learners had progression in their post-test than pre-test after running an independent samples t-test.

Shaari et al. (2021) investigated the effect of the flipped model on language learners' perceptions and grammar using a pretest- posttest design. A total number of 133 participants (ages 18 to 25) were invited to take part in the study. The results showed learners' improvement in their post-test. This finding is in line with other studies (Al-Harbi & Alshumaimeri, 2016) that asserted significant enhancement in respondents' post-test scores in flipped classrooms.

Moreover, Mandasari and Wahyudin (2021) examined the effectiveness of using the flipped classroom on EFL learners' satisfaction with grammar classes. The participants of this research were 48 students of the English Education study program enrolled in Intermediate Grammar class. The instruments used in this study are observation, questionnaires, and open-ended interviews. The findings showed that flipped classroom helps students to meet their learning objectives. By flipping the class, the students easily comprehend the intended material. In addition, the students found that their language learning improved. These results confirmed

that flipped classrooms improve students' language grammar learning which are also in line with previous research (Han, 2015; Hsieh et al., 2016; Kang, 2015) in the field.

Accordingly, Alinezhad and Mirshekaran (2021) selected 60 pre-intermediate EFL learners to explore the effectiveness of using flipped classrooms on learning grammar among Iranian EFL educators. The findings revealed that the students who took part in flipped classrooms had higher achievement compared to those who studied in traditional classrooms. In addition, Fardin et al. (2021) explored the benefits of flipped classes on the Iranian EFL learners reading comprehension and grammar. Having 60 Iranian intermediate EFL learners as the participants and 14 treatment sessions, the results showed a significant effect of flipped approach on learners' grammar and reading comprehension.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

A total number of 50 students participated in this study for the purpose of investigating any significant effect of online flipped classrooms on high school students' English grammatical abilities. All the students were Iranian 12-grade high-school students in one of the cities of Iran, who were studying in the field of humanistic sciences. All of the students were in intermediate level of language proficiency, female, 17-18 years old, and their native language was Persian. They were studying in two 25-participant intact classes (experimental and control groups).

3.2. Instrumentations

To measure students' structural ability and their homogeneity, an English grammar test was used as both pre- and post-test. The test was the grammar section of one of the official pasts, 2020/1399, final examinations of the 12th-grade high school students in Iran (available at <http://www.Kanoon.ir>). The test had 22 items and each item has one point. The test's content validity was proven by the three official high school teachers in the field and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to check the reliability. Besides, to examine students' attitudes towards implementing online flipped classrooms, they were asked to answer an open-ended question (in Persian) at the end of the post-test.

3.3. Study Design and Data Analysis

Since the study used two intact classes, a quasi-experimental quantitative-qualitative research design was applied. The study was going to investigate the effect of the independent variable (online flipped classroom) on Iranian EFL high school students' dependent variable (grammar achievement) quantitatively, and to survey the students' attitudes towards online flipped classrooms qualitatively. Besides, SPSS (24 version) software was used to analyze the data. A paired-samples t-test was used between the learners' pre-tests to ensure the homogeneity of the groups. Next, to answer the first research question, an independent-samples t-test was run to investigate significant differences between the means of post-tests. The second research question was analyzed qualitatively.

3.4. Procedures

This study was conducted during five weeks, with total sessions of ten sessions (two sessions a week), and every session lasted 45 minutes. The students were equipped with SHAD software which is the only permitted application in Iran's educational system. At the beginning of the study, the researchers used a pre-test to prove the students' homogeneity regarding their grammar ability. Then, ten treatment sessions were held. In this stage, students in the experimental group were asked to watch videos at home and practice and discuss the topic in the online class. Thus, the teacher could help learners more in practice, discussion, group work, problem-solving, and collaboration. In online classes, students and teachers did not meet face-to-face in class but met through a virtual class by using an online web application (SHAD). Finally, the post-test was administered to investigate any significant advancement of the experimental group over the control group. The only difference between pre-test and post-test was questions and alternatives order to eliminate the probable recall of pre-test answers. The needed time for answering the test's items was 45 minutes.

The control group received the traditional form of teaching (only teacher explanations in the online classes). Theoretical contents were presented by the teacher at class time and then students were asked to work on practical parts at home. While the experimental group received the treatment. The materials in this study were in the form of YouTube videos, audios, worksheets, and PowerPoint slides. These files were delivered through the SHAD application. The 10- to 20-minute videos for lesson presentations mostly were taken from YouTube, Google, and a few of them were teacher-made. The experimental group students were required to watch the videos prior to the class and do the homework sheet. As mentioned earlier, the online flipped classroom was taken 45 minutes and included ten minutes for warm-up, 15 minutes for checking the worksheets and clarifying questions, and about 20 minutes for doing related tasks and problem-solving. Nevertheless, the students in the control group were asked to do related activities as homework after class.

4. Results and Discussion

Checking Normality of the data distribution was checked by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test which resulted in the normality of both tests. Also, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was shown to be greater than 0.7, signifying that each structure is sufficiently reliable.

To check the homogeneity of students at the beginning of the study, an independent samples t-test was run between the pre-test scores. The results (Table 1) showed that ($t(48) = .047, \alpha = .05, p = .96$) the two groups were homogeneous in terms of their structural ability, and no significant difference was observed between groups in the pretest.

Table 1

Results of Independent Samples t-test for the Structural Ability Pre-test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances					t-test for Equality of Mean			
F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
10.234	.002	.047	48	.963	.040	.849	-1.676	1.765

In order to examine any significant effect of online flipped classrooms on the Iranian high school students' structural ability, their posttest scores were compared using an independent samples t-test (Table 2 & 3).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Control and Experimental Groups on Structural Ability Post-test

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Posttest	Control	25	11.40	3.536
	Experimental	25	16.28	4.523

As shown in Table 2, the post-test mean scores of the participants in the experimental group is 16.28 and 11.40 in the control group. Compare the mean scores in the post-test a mean increase is noticed, and this increase is greater in the experimental group. To see whether this progress was statistically significant or not, the researchers used an independent samples t-test (Table 3).

Table 3

Independent Samples t-test between the Control and Experimental Groups on Post-test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
.975	.328	-4.25	48	.00	-4.88	1.14	-7.18	-2.57

As shown in Table 3, there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups ($t(48) = -4.25, p < 0.05$) in their performance on the post-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that treatment in the experimental group was effective, and implementing an online flipped classroom significantly affected the Iranian high school students' structural ability.

Additionally, the study examined the Iranian high school attitudes towards the online flipped classroom using thematic coding. After analyzing the extracted codes, the percentage of each coding item was analyzed (Table 4). The results showed that the most frequently stated advantages were *class time was more useful for teaching and clarifying the concepts* (10.4%), and *there were more chances of engagement and active learning* (9.2%). However, 11.7% of students believed that flipped classrooms are not a good method of teaching since they *have no access to fast-speed qualified Internet*.

The results of this study showed that implementing an online flipped classroom significantly affected the Iranian high school students' structural ability. This result is in line with Szparagowski (2015), Stöhr et al., (2020) who reported that flipped learning could lead to improve learning outcomes. Besides, Valizadeh and Soltanpour (2020) studied the effect of flipped classrooms on grammatical competence. The results of this study demonstrated that flipped classrooms advance learners' grammar. Moreover, the study's findings are in accordance with other studies that reported flipped classrooms are effective in EFL learners' learning (Al-Faheed, 2015; Han, 2015). On the other hand, few studies revealed no positive effects of the flipped classroom on students' achievement. Lisa and Jeremy (2012) examined

the effect of the flipped approach on learners' progress. However, they showed no significant progress in students learning. Besides, Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri (2016) found no statistically significant difference in grammar accomplishment of EFL Saudi secondary school students concerning using flipped classrooms approach.

Table 4
Advantages and Disadvantages Extracted from Open-ended Question

Secondary codes	Advantage	Disadvantages	Percentage
Useful class time/More time to clarify concepts	√		10.4
More engagement and active learning	√		9.2
Lack of direct interaction		√	5.6
Flexible reviewing	√		3.9
High cost of internet and online flipped classrooms' requirements		√	2.8
No limitation in time	√		2.8
No limitation in place	√		2.8
Lack of access to qualified internet		√	11.7
Enjoyable learning	√		2.8
No anxiety & being calm	√		5.2
Deeper learning	√		5.2
Low quality of some videos		√	3.9
Identifying strengths and weaknesses	√		1.4
Improves self-confidence	√		1.4
Variety of teachers	√		1.4
Variety of teaching methods	√		2.8
Boring		√	1.4
No face-to-face relationship with teachers		√	2.8
Decreased my weaknesses	√		1.4
Study the lesson before the class	√		1.4
Enjoyed studying with technological devices	√		1.4
Cannot comprehend the knowledge from videos		√	1.4
Lack of access to device		√	2.8
Not watching videos		√	2.8
Manage my learning	√		1.4
New experience	√		1.4
Distracting things		√	2.8
Better understanding of grammar	√		1.4
Feeling independent	√		2.8
Solving problems in class	√		1.4

Moreover, based on students' feedback, students mostly have positive attitudes towards the online flipped classrooms. Many of them considered the flipped classroom as flexible concerning place and time to watch the videos and do the required homework. In addition, through flipped classroom, class time was more useful, allowing students to synthesize the information they learned, and to work out problems collaboratively. These findings are in line with Han (2015) who indicated that flipped teaching made students more independent. Also, Ahmad and Arifin's study (2020) indicated students had positive attitudes towards using flipped classrooms. They believed that flipped instruction improved their achievement. Besides, Hsieh et al., (2016) and Kang (2015) confirmed students' positive attitudes towards using the flipped model. Also, learners in Benosa's study (2015) mentioned the lack of technology devices as a disadvantage like the current study.

5. Conclusion

The findings of the present study showed that students' grammar achievement improved significantly. According to the results, it can be determined that the implementation of online flipped classrooms can yield constructive results since they could engage students more in learning. Thus, it can be claimed that teaching using flipped approach can simplify English grammar learning. Besides, getting grammar descriptions using videos as homework seems to be positively influential on the way EFL learners learned English grammar structures. Also, according to Chau and Cheng (2010), through the online flipped learning approach, students can review and revise the grammar structures several times based on their needs and pace, and thus, they were more engaged and active in class activities. Flipped classrooms could also help the students be independent and learn how to study at home. Therefore, according to the findings, students are shown to be more motivated to learn, more reflective of their learning, more self-directed with a high amount of autonomy and independence, and more cooperative in language learning since their critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making might be stimulated by flipped instruction (Chau & Cheng, 2010).

It should be noted that, like other research studies, the present study suffered from some limitations. The first limitation was that the research only was done on two classes that are available with no random selection. Besides, since the study was done just on female students (because the researcher has no access to male students). Therefore, generalizability issues should be considered by the other researchers.

As a concluding remark, despite the aforementioned limitations, this study can have important implications for EFL students and teachers by acknowledging the profits and benefits of the flipped approach as an appropriate teaching and learning model for teaching English grammar. It is confirmed by the research findings that the flipped approach has different benefits for EFL students. For instance, this approach lets the learners to study based on their learning abilities at their own time and pace. It also aids them to be autonomous in monitoring their learning progress; therefore, teachers can relinquish controlling the class and learning load while empowering their learners. Teachers can make more student-centered language tasks and activities, and more time can be prearranged for the topic discussed at the learners' levels. These are in contrast with the traditional classroom models that do not authorize learners to learn individually and independently. Teacher talk time and presentations of content materials by the teachers are limited, and students are not forced to work through a single, unified syllabus that may not fit their different learning interests and abilities. Thus, the flipped approach opens different opportunities for teachers to empower their learners to have control on their learning while they act as facilitators and transformers of knowledge directly to the hands of learners.

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