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The Effectiveness of Flipped Classroom Model on Listening Comprehension Among Iranian Upper-intermediate EFL Learners

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the effects of flipped classrooms on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension. To fulfill, 50 Iranian upper-intermediate participants were selected through administrating the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). Then, they were divided into two groups; one experimental group and one control group. Then, both groups were pretested by a listening test. After that, the researcher put the participants of the experimental group in a flipped classroom. The flipped classroom was equipped with Internet, computer and projector and participants in this classroom were allowed to bring their Smartphones to the classroom and use them during learning. The control group was exposed to audio file once or twice in the class. They had to answer the questions right after the listening. This procedure continued till the last session. The results of paired samples t-tests revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group on the post-test.

Keywords: flipped classrooms, listening comprehension, Iranian EFL learners

INTRODUCTION

Listening is an important life skill. It is also important for obtaining comprehensible input that is necessary for language development. According to Lin (2002), learners with good listening comprehension abilities are more capable of participating efficiently in class. Therefore, language teachers should make more effort to improve their students' listening comprehension. In spite of the significance of understanding communicated in English, numerous EFL understudies have much trouble to adapt to scholarly listening material (Nasri & Biria, 2017). This may be because of the troublesome idea of tuning in or because of the way that listening was the most dismissed and the least all around instructed of the four language aptitudes. In the Egyptian setting, numerous examinations

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discovered shortcomings in Egyptian EFL understudies' listening appreciation at the essential (e.g., Hassan, 2015), preliminary and auxiliary stages notwithstanding the school level. As an associate teacher of TEFL at the Faculty of Education, Suez University, the scientist saw that the vast majority of her understudies didn't have the listening perception abilities essential for scholarly accomplishment. Along these lines, she tried a gathering of EFL understudies and found that huge numbers of them have issues in listening understanding. The issue of this examination was that there were a few shortcomings in Iranian EFL understudies' listening understanding. So as to discover an answer for this issue, the present investigation endeavored to utilize the flipped classroom model.

The traditional lecture is becoming an outmoded style of teaching requiring students to retain bits of information that may later be forgotten. For Boyer (2013), it seems ironic that so much time is spent in class lecturing, and then students are sent home to struggle through the real work without any support. Taylor and Parsons (2011) add that over the last twenty years, learners' needs, goals, and learning preferences have changed. According to Vaughan (2014), these learners often have easy and quick access to information and prefer to learn in active and collaborative environments. Therefore, as Raths (2014) points out, advances in technology, growth of available online content, and developments in cognitive science challenge traditional notions of teaching and learning. An innovative model which has restructured the traditional lesson utilizing internet technology and online educational resources to support education is the flipped classroom (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Rahimi Esfahani, 2018a). The flipped classroom—sometimes called inverted (Namaziandost, Fatahi, & Shafiee, 2019), and upside down (Zhang, Ma, & Liu, 2014) classroom—is an instructional model that inverts the traditional lecture-plus-homework format (Namaziandost, Rahimi Esfahani, Nasri, & Mirshekaran, 2018). That is, the tasks traditionally assigned as homework are now accomplished inside the classroom and the tasks traditionally accomplished in class are now accomplished at home (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). The flipped classroom can also be viewed as providing internet resources that facilitate student preparation for classroom study, which is then devoted to application and consolidation. In the flipped classroom, students access the curricular content outside of class (Johnson, 2012) in the form of video lessons, so that when they get to class they can get into a real workshop (Boyer, 2013) of hands-on activities and application of knowledge (Namaziandost, Nasri, Rahimi Esfahani, & Keshmirshekan, 2019) that engage them more directly in their learning (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Rahimi Esfahani, 2018a).

Flipped classroom model seems to rest upon a number of theoretical foundations. The first of these foundations is the blended learning approach. As it moves the lecture away from class into online delivery and uses face-to-face class time for actual application (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Shafiee, 2018), flipping accords with the idea that blended learning lets students choose the location where they receive content as well as gives them control over the pace at which they receive the online elements (Tahmasbi, Hashemifardnia, & Namaziandost, 2019). The second foundation of the flipped model is the student-centered approach (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Sepehri, 2018).

Moving learners away from an instructor-centered learning environment (Johnson, 2012) to another environment where teachers become real organizers, mentors, and facilitators, the flipped classroom makes each student responsible for coming to class with a basic understanding of the material (Bergmann & Sams, 2012), so that he/she can engage in interactive learning in the classroom (William & Wuensch, 2016). A third theoretical underpinning for the flipped classroom is active learning (Mirshekaran, Namaziandost, & Nazari, 2018) which covers a number of pedagogies focusing on student activity and engagement in the learning process (Nasri, Biria, & Karimi, 2018). The flipped classroom can be used to include active learning elements in class while maintaining the ability to cover critical course material.

The following research question is addressed in this study.

RQ. Does Flipped Classroom Model have any significant effect on Iranian Upper-intermediate EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The idea of the flipped classroom began in the mid-1990s through an exertion driven by Harvard University educator Erik Mazur who let every understudy pick content that met his/her individual needs from content records, intelligent shows, and issue arrangements (Mazur, 1991). In 1998, Walvoord and Anderson proposed a model in which understudies increased first-presentation learning preceding class and concentrated on the preparing some portion of getting the hang of during class.

At the end of 2004, Khan, a MIT graduate, started clarifying math through recorded recordings and set them on YouTube (Namaziandost, Sabzevari, and Hashemifardnia, 2018). In 2008, he made a library of free web-based mentoring recordings containing an assortment of scholastic subjects, known as the Khan Academy, which might be seen as a touchstone of the flipped classroom procedure (Ash, 2012). In 2007, two science instructors from Colorado, Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams, attempted to record video addresses for understudies who had missed class (Fulton, 2012). They required the understudies to take notes on the recordings and come to class with one mindful inquiry to share. The educators saw an improvement in test scores for understudies utilizing the flipping system (Ash, 2012). It was not some time before different understudies and educators all through the world were utilizing these exercises, and making their own. The model was, at that point, slowly acknowledged and promoted (Zhang et al., 2014). It has even pulled in the consideration of funders, for example, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has turned into a noteworthy sponsor of Khan Academy.

The flipped classroom has the best characteristics of both the talk model and the dynamic learning model. This may be the explanation that it is picking up help at all degrees of training (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Shafiee, 2018). One of the upsides of the flipped model is that homeroom time can be utilized all the more effectively and imaginatively (Fulton, 2012). As it uses online assets to move addresses outside the homeroom, class time is opened up for dynamic learning attempts, for example, discourse and critical thinking, instead of latent tuning in (Namaziandost, Rahimi Esfahani, Nasri, & Mirshekaran, 2018). Another bit of leeway of the flipped homeroom is the expanding

open door for association between the educator and understudies (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Since it amplifies vis-à-vis time and spotlights on classroom intelligent exchange (Azadi, Biria, & Nasri, 2018), the flipped classroom causes students to be equipped for clearing up any disarray promptly just as encourages the instructor to have the option to screen students' exhibition.

The flipped homeroom offers numerous different points of interest for students. It builds their scholastic execution, makes a situation that reacts to their inclinations (Mirshekaran, Namaziandost, & Nazari, 2018), and gives a substance that is planned by their needs. Besides, the utilization of video puts addresses under the students' control, enabling them to watch, rewind, and quick forward as they need. This makes content progressively open for understudies who can't go to class just as for understudies with availability concerns. Additionally, the flipped classroom builds understudies' commitment (Azadi, Biria, & Nasri, 2018), opportunity (Fulton, 2012), nonautonomy, joint effort, inspiration, and certainty (Mirshekaran, Namaziandost, & Nazari, 2018). It likewise changes understudies' mentalities toward learning, enables them to learn at their own pace (Fulton, 2012), shifts them from detached to dynamic students (Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019a), offers them adaptability (Johnson, 2012), and gives more prominent responsibility for learning (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Rahimi Esfahani, 2018a).

n spite of the fact that there is nobody approach to flip a course, a flipped classroom encouraging model has two parts: (1) direct guidance utilizing video addresses while outside the class and (2) dynamic up close and personal learning while inside the class (Keshmirshekan, Namaziandost, & Pournorouz, 2019). The video talk is regularly observed as the basic fixing in the flipped methodology. In any case, it isn't the recordings all alone that has the effect, yet how the instructor coordinates them into a general methodology. Such talk can either be recorded by the instructor and transferred to the Internet or chose from sites (e.g., YouTube EDU, the Khan Academy, and PBS). A few educators let understudies watch recordings in class, while others dole out these recordings for schoolwork (Ash, 2012). By and large, when instructors consider the recordings, they use to give content before class, they should guarantee that these recordings are improving their exercises. A few rules can be presented with respect to the utilization of video addresses in flipped classrooms. The main rule is that the recordings ought to be short (Bergman & Sams, 2012) on the grounds that protracted recordings can twofold the understudies' remaining task at hand without fundamentally giving included worth. In this regard, Raths (2014) recommends that the long video ought to be separated into areas with intuitive components. Another rule is that the video talk ought to be intelligent (Bergman & Sams, 2012). Powder (2012) encourages educators to figure out how to connect with understudies in the recordings, for example, expecting understudies to take notes on the recordings, pose inquiries about the recordings, or take part in discourse about them.

The flipped homeroom is more than distributing a video address on the Internet. In this manner, instructors should focus on the other part of the flipped homeroom: class time. The accomplishment of flipping relies upon how the classroom component is organized

(Nasri, Namaziandost, & Akbari, 2019). In this regard, Bergmann and Sams (2012) point out that the flipped homeroom model has built up not so much addressing but rather more action in the classroom. For instance, Rapoport (2013) prescribes utilizing classroom time to respond to interrogates understudies have concerning the essential material while understudies invest energy in the classroom taking a shot at exercises that make a learning situation of coordinated effort with friends. Nasri, Namaziandost, & Akbari, 2019 include that the classroom condition in the flipped model ought to be set up to reflect and support a move towards joint effort and gathering work.

A few examinations researched the view of instructors and understudies about the flipped homeroom. Concerning educators, Maloy, Edwards, and Evans (2014) found that advanced education employees who directed flipped classes announced exceptional instructing and learning impacts. Another experience is that of Tucker (2012) who found that flipping has been the most transformative experience of his vocation. He even questioned that he would have the option to return to instructing in the conventional worldview. Likewise, Linga and Wang (2014) depicted their analysis utilizing flipped class learning as an expectation to learn and adapt for them. Additionally, Corrias (2014) discovered that with the flipped methodology, homeroom sessions ended up being livelier than he anticipated. Concerning understudies' observations about the flipped classroom, numerous investigations found solid signs of understudies being energetic about such instructing model. For instance, in the examination led by Butt (2014), 75% of understudies had a positive perspective on flipped guidance. In addition, consequences of a study led by Hosseini, Nasri, and Afghari (2017) toward the start and part of the arrangement course uncovered that essentially more students favored the flipped configuration after the finish of the course than before it. Another overview controlled by Rapoport (2013) uncovered that 96% of the respondents concurred that survey video addresses before class was significant, 79% concurred that expanded educator understudy connection was alluring, and 62% communicated a craving for more instructors to utilize the flipped model. In the investigation of Maher et al. (2013), understudies commonly saw flipping as an increasingly pleasant learning knowledge while they had a positive discernment toward the model, showing that online assets gave them more authority over their learning. In addition, remarks on an overview controlled by Ruddick (2012) recommended that understudies found the online video and PowerPoint materials helpful. Besides, the input Johnson (2012) got about the flipped classroom from understudies and guardians was overwhelmingly positive.

The flipped homeroom speaks to a job change for the instructor from transmitting data during class time to controlling students through an assortment of dynamic learning works out (Nasri & Biria, 2017). By utilizing a flipped homeroom, the educator doesn't need to address for a considerable length of time while understudies tune in and take notes (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Hence, in the flipped model, educators work all the more seriously with understudies (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Sepehri, 2018), control them to the substance give functional help (Boyer, 2013), help them in applying what they have realized on the web (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Rahimi Esfahani, 2018a), support them in individual or shared endeavors, and challenge them to think

inventively. Concerning understudies, the flipped worldview regards them as dynamic students who recreate learning from data (Tucker, 2012). They get the equivalent instructional substance the educator would give face to face, yet the emphasis is on getting things done with the data as opposed to sitting latently and watching another person illustrate. Understudies accumulate the data to a great extent outside of class and when in class, they apply what they have figured out how to new settings. Flipping gives extra time to them to work out issues, while having the teacher there as a guide. Along these lines, Bergmann and Sams (2012) remind teachers that the genuine substance of the flip is truly to concentrate on the learner.

METHOD

Participants

The population of the study was comprised of 90 English learners. They have been studying English for three years in a private English language institute; ranging in age from 16 to 19. They took Oxford Placement Test (OPT) in order to be selected as a homogeneous group. It is worth noting that only male students were included as the target respondents. Fifty students who scored the upper-intermediate level (i.e., 39-78) based on the Oxford Placement Test were selected as the research sample. Then they were divided into two equal groups including one experimental (n=25) and one control group (n=25).

Instrumentation

The researcher employed the Oxford Placement Test as the first instrument of the study to homogenize the learners in the intermediate level. The test included 60 items in a multiple-choice format. Thus 60 learners of male and female were selected. Since the Oxford Placement Test is a standard test, its reliability was reported at an appropriate level.

The second instrument was a listening pre-test. To realize current participants' listening comprehension level, a researcher-made pre-test was designed based on the students' materials. It was a listening comprehension test of 40 objective items including filling the blanks, true or false items, and multiple-choice items.

After the treatment, a modified version of the pre-test was used for the post-test as the third instrument of the current study and it was given to the participants to assess their listening comprehension after the treatment period and to measure the impacts of flipped classroom model on their listening comprehension skill. Validities of the pre-test and post-test were confirmed by two English experts. They were piloted among 20 upper-intermediate EFL learners and their reliabilities indexes were calculated through Crobach Alpha formula and they were 0.898 (pre-test) and 0.967 (post-test).

Procedure

In order to elicit relevant data from the respondents, the researcher administered the Oxford Placement Test to realize the participants' homogeneity level. Then the listening comprehension pre-test was administered to assess the participants' listening

comprehension at the beginning of the course. After the pre-test, the researcher practiced the treatment on the experimental group. Regarding treatment, the researcher put the participants of experimental group in a flipped classroom. The flipped classroom was equipped with Internet, computer and projector and participants in this classroom were allowed to bring their Smartphones to the classroom and use them during learning. However, the control groups were provided with traditional listening comprehension including question and answer, explanation and class discussion and their errors were directly corrected by the teacher. The learners performed the related listening comprehension tasks and exercises of the text book regularly in the control group. Finally, a post-test of listening comprehension was employed after ten-session treatment to gather data. After collecting the data, they were analyzed through SPSS software, version 25.

Data Analysis

The collected data through the aforesaid procedures were analyzed and interpreted according to the objectives of the study. The descriptive statistics were calculated through using SPSS software, version 25. Finally, paired samples t-test was run to determine the effectiveness of flipped classrooms on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension.

RESULTS

The main research question of the study was aimed to find out whether using flipped classroom model had significant effects on listening skills of upper-intermediate Iranian EFL learners. To find an answer to this research question, the pretest and posttest scores of the learners in the EG were compared by means of a paired-samples t test:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Comparing Pretest and Posttest Scores of the EG

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	13.81	25	2.83	.61
Posttest	19.78	25	1.73	.34

It could be observed in Table 1 that the difference between the pretest (M = 13.81) and posttest (M = 19.78) scores of the EG learners was quite substantial (with a mean difference of -4.52). In order to find out whether this difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the EG learners was statistically significant or not, the following t test table had to be checked:

Table 2. Results of the Paired-Samples T-Test Comparing Pretest and Posttest Scores of the EG

	Paired Differences							
	Mean	<i>Std.</i> Deviation	<i>Std.</i> Error Mean –	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pretest - Posttest	-5.97	2.69	.56	-5.68	-3.35	-7.05	24	.00

Table 2 revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the pretest (M = 13.81, SD = 2.83) and posttest (M = 19.78, SD = 1.71) scores of the EG learners since the p value under the Sig, (2-tailed) column was smaller than the significance level (i.e. .00 < .05). This indicates that the treatment (flipped classroom) was effective so far as the listening skills of the Iranian upper intermediate EFL learners were concerned.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the present study, it was hypothesized that there would be a statistically significant difference ($\alpha \le 0.05$) in upper-intermediate level listening comprehension between the pretest and the posttest in favor of the posttest. A paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in favor of the posttest. A probable reason for the result reached in this study may be that the flipped classroom required participants to watch videos before class that explained the content of each lecture. They had to listen attentively to these videos in order to answer the online quiz as well as to gain a basic background about the content that would enable them to participate effectively in classroom discussion. Here, it can be argued that watching these videos could have improved the listening comprehension of the participants for three reasons. First, listening to native speakers could have made participants aware of the difficulties of understanding spoken authentic English. This might have led them to try harder to enhance their listening comprehension skills. Second, the presence of non-verbal communication features (e.g., facial expressions & gestures) could have been useful for participants in comprehending the listening material. Third, the technical features of videos (e.g., pausing, reviewing, etc.) might have provided participants with opportunities for analyzing and comprehending the language presented. In this respect, many studies found that the use of videos improves listening comprehension (e.g., Abedi, Keshmirshekan, & Namaziandost, 2019).

Another characteristic of the flipped classroom that could explain its effectiveness in improving listening comprehension is the active learning component. In the present study, class time was used in engaging participants in active learning activities based on collaboration, interaction, and discussion in English which might have improved participants' listening comprehension. This explanation goes along with Jones's (2006) assertion that collaborative activities have long been shown to enhance learners' comprehensible input which, in turn, leads to greater understanding of aural texts. It also goes along with the findings of some studies that found that active learning improves listening comprehension (e.g., Namaziandost, Saberi Dehkordi, & Shafiee, 2019).

The flipped class can be more interactive than the traditional lecture; it can encourage contacts between students and faculty; it can develop reciprocity and cooperation among students, it can emphasize time on task. As the researcher observed, in the flipped classroom, during class time students engaged in discussions, activities, problem solving, and group work. Since students had prior knowledge, they could learn the lesson more easily.

The major difference between flipped and traditional classrooms is the timing of content learning: Students in a flipped classroom learn the content before class in their own

private time and space and at their own pace, while traditional classroom students learn it in class in a way and at a pace that are determined by the instructor. Therefore, the rich cognitive activity (e.g., in-depth information processing and higher-order thinking processes) observed in this study's flipped classroom may have been due to the students having more time to think about the content and activate relevant prior knowledge related to the content.

Based on the result of the present study, the researcher concluded that the flipped classroom model improved the listening comprehension of EFL students. This instructional model could be used in other courses or implemented by other teachers at Suez University or other tertiary institutions. Based on the result of the present study, the researcher recommends: 1) using flipped classrooms for enhancing EFL learners' listening comprehension, 2) encouraging EFL learners to use available learning resources on the internet, 3) providing them adequate opportunities to listen to authentic material, and 4) devoting class time to active learning, rather than lecturing. Moreover, the researcher suggests conducting studies tackling: 1) the impact of the flipped model on EFL critical listening, 2) EFL learners' attitude towards using flipped classrooms in education, 3) the impact of other online tools (e.g., e-mails, discussion boards, weblogs) on listening comprehension, and 4) the impact of the flipped model on EFL learners' self-directed learning.

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