Using a Flipped Learning-Based Program for Developing EFL Students' Speaking Skills and their Attitudes Towards it at the Faculty of Specific Education

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Abstract

The research attempted to investigate the effectiveness of a flipped learning-based program in developing EFL students' speaking skills and their attitudes towards it at the Faculty of Specific Education. The sample of the study consisted of (40) students divided into two groups. One of them was a control group (n=20) and the other was an experimental one (n=20). The two groups were chosen from the 3rd year EFL students at the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University. A program based on flipped learning was used in teaching the experimental group, while the regular method was used in teaching the control one in the second semester of the academic year (2017- 2018). The study instruments were (1) a speaking skills questionnaire - which was divided mainly into four dimensions including: fluency and coherence, lexical resource , pronunciation skills and grammatical range and accuracy , (2) a speaking skills test, and (3) an attitude scale. Having applied the instruments and teaching the program, data were collected and analyzed statistically using SPSS. The results of the research revealed that flipped learning is positively effective in speaking skills and attitudes towards flipped learning.

Keywords: flipped learning – speaking skills - attitudes – EFL.

Introduction:

Technology constantly affects our lives positively or negatively. Some basic domains such as communication, interaction and education are shaped by technology in today's world. While, technological development continuously is in progress and its impact on our lives is considerably high, the educational system in Egypt is struggling to keep pace with it. Traditional teaching methods are still used to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) in Egypt. However, new education methods have been used in language classrooms all around the world. Flipped instruction draws attention of scholars, which is technology-based teaching method.

The aim of the flipped classroom or flipped learning (henceforth FL) is to move information transfer out of the classroom and make teacher and students use class times on language production (Lasry, Dugdale & Charles, 2014). In flipped classrooms, the teacher's role changes significantly. Instead of presenting information, teacher helps students to fill information gaps in their understanding. As Charles states that 'flipped' means homework is class work, class work is done as homework.

The idea of flipped classroom, first known as inverted classroom, began to gain popularity when Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams used video lessons to enhance instruction in their chemistry classrooms. They recorded class lectures and provided the videos online to enable students to watch and review the teaching contents more conveniently. With such a strategy, significant results were obtained, and inspired them to further employ it before classes (Bergmann &Sams, 2012). The instructional strategies and pedagogies practiced in FL are based on constructivist learning philosophies of active learning, Kolb's experiential learning and Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (Yemma, 2015).

1.a Definition of Flipped Learning (FL)

Flipped learning is seen differently by researchers. It is an approach that has specific features, requirements and implementations. It is also believed that it is a teaching strategy where students are

engaged in the learning process outside class as well as inside class. It can also be a teaching model where active learning is experienced. Anyhow, whether FL is an approach, a strategy or a model, it stresses the learning pace of individual students. Bergman and Sams (2012) describe that flipped instruction is alternative way to traditional lecture based instruction. The main difference between the two instruction types is that flipped instruction divides traditional lecture into two parts. The first part takes place before the lessons through pre- prepared videos of course content that are handled by students at home. The second part takes place at school with peers and teacher by doing homework, practice and filling information gaps in students' understanding.

However, in traditional lecture based classrooms, teacher presents course content through lecture format in which students are passive receivers of knowledge. Besides, students are expected to do their homework through the help of information that they received in classroom. Besides, teacher rarely has chance to help the students in traditional lecture-based classrooms. The new instruction model is called as flipped learning or inverted classroom (Gannod, 2007).

Huereca (2015) defines FL as an instructional approach to teaching that integrates technology and intends to enhance learning. This type of learning incorporates a pedagogical model that flips the typical lecture given by the teacher and the homework assigned to students to take home. Thus, students use short video lessons at home to learn new concepts that can then be discussed more in depth in the classroom. In-class time, as she argues, aims at promoting rich conversations, collaboration amongst students and with the teacher, as well as projects or other tasks that can expand or clarify students' knowledge of the intended learning goals.

Wiginton (2013) asserts that flipped instruction is an educational instructional model that uses technology to change the location of lecture and homework. When learners receive lectures by video content at home or anywhere they want, class time can be spent for productive activities. Besides, flipped

instruction provides individualized, student-centered learning atmosphere to language learners.

1.b The importance of FL

Researchers have indicated some of the reasons for adopting FL in the teaching /learning process (Bergmann, Overmyer, &Wilie, 2011; Francl, 2014; and Lasry, Dugdale, & Charles, 2014). First, the teaching video allows students to review and preview to have a profound prior knowledge before class, and lets those students who miss classes catch up. Second, multimedia digital teaching materials are easy to save, manage, revise, and impart. Third, in the process of preparing a flipped classroom, educators can inspect and reflect on the whole curriculum and improve the teaching contents and activity design. Fourth, with enough prior knowledge, students have more time to conduct higher level activities and questions. Fifth, in-class activity and discussion can increase teacher and student as well as peer interaction.

Prunuske, Batzli, Howell and Miller (2012) point out that students who view online lectures demonstrate increased performance on lower-order cognitive learning objectives. Meanwhile, class time can be used to achieve higher-order cognitive learning objectives and allow instructors to identify student-learning misconceptions of key concepts.

Sams, Bergmann, Daniels, Bennett, Marshall, and Arfstrom (2014) identify four pillars that should be incorporated into practice to constitute FL. The four pillars of FL are derived from the acronym "FLIP". They illustrate that FL is a pedagogical approach flipping the roles of direction instruction and activities resulting in a flexible learning environment, active and meaningful Learning cultures in the classroom, using intentional content in and out of the classroom, and professional educator roles serving as facilitators to enhance student learning.

Furthermore, Huereca (2015) indicates that FL integrates technology in a way that allows students to use today's technologies outside the classroom and creates a student-centered environment inside the classroom in an attempt to support student learning. This

type of approach, according to Clark (2013), describes how students should construct their knowledge through engaged learning activities. In addition, FL allows for the practice of active learning activities during class time without sacrificing course content (O'Connor, Mortimer & Bond, 2011).

Therefore, the educational value of FL is to let students apply what they have learned with the teacher's guidance. Students would be more active in the class and their higher order thinking ability would be cultivated (Spencer, Wolf, &Sams, 2011; Francl, 2014). Besides, the increasing population of online social networks helps realize the concept of individualized teaching and enables teachers to discuss and answer every student's questions. More time is used for online and in-class discussion, which helps students clarify the ideas and boosts student/teacher as well as peer interaction. Through peers' influence, students with low academic performance can increase their learning speed (Bergmann &Sams, 2012; Tucker, 2012).

1.c The main characteristics of FL

The following characteristics of FL are proposed by different researchers (Abeysekera& Dawson, 2014; Bishop &Verleger 2013; Kim, Kim, Khera, &Getman, 2014):

- Teaching class time is used in different forms: outside class with the help of videos as well as in-class direct instruction for discussion, problem solving and applying analytical skills.

- Out-class time is devoted for self-learning via videos to gain knowledge, remember it and understand it.

- Different ways of interaction (peer interaction, student-teacher interaction) take places in classes to help students to apply, analyze and to evaluate what they have already learned.

In addition, Fulton (2012) highlights some of the advantages of FL. For example, students are able to work at their own pace while allowing teachers the ability to identify learning misconceptions and provide immediate remediation. FL also allows for customizable curriculum and options for achieving mastery

learning of objectives. In addition, it creates an effective use of class time for engaged learning through collaboration and cooperation. Educators have also reported that FL allows greater teacher insight into students' level of learning while increasing student-teacher interaction (Roehl, Reddy, &Shannon, 2013). The flipped classroom provides the ability for the teacher to act as a facilitator or guide of knowledge acquisition while also providing support for the students to become independent and self-regulated learners (De León, 2012). McLaughlin, Griffin, Esserman, Davidson, and Glatt (2013) also suggest that flipping a classroom promotes student empowerment, development, and engagement.

1.d Related studies to flipped learning

Studies that have demonstrated the efficacy of the flipped classroom strategy include Clintondale high school experience (Flumerfelt & Green, 2013). The result of adopting the flipped classroom strategy in this low-rated school was dramatic improvement in learning outcomes. In English subjects, for example, the percentage went from 52% failing students to 19%

According to Flumerfelt & Green (2013), benefits of implementing the flipped classroom strategy include students learning at their own pace, reinforcing the teacher-student relationship (Bergmann & Sam, 2012), and allowing teachers to personalize and individualize learning (Basal, 2015; Kang, 2015).

On the other hand, there are some challenges that accompany the implementation of the flipped classroom strategy such as students having difficulty adjusting to being active learners or neglecting to do the out-of-class work (Borman, 2014; DewiSuryani, 2014; Huelskamp, 2015). Another challenge is the teachers who are not being willing or capable of changing and adopting the use of technology (Educause Learning Initiative, 2012).

However, if the flipped classroom strategy was implemented well, and students and teachers received appropriate support, resistance would not last for long (Hamdan & McKnight, 2013; Ishikawa et al, 2015; Strayer, 2012). Furthermore, Hamdan and McKnight (2013), Ishikawa et al. (2015), and Strayer (2012) showed

that if the flipped classroom strategy was well implemented, and students and teachers received appropriate support, challenges could be overcome.

Studies suggest the flipped classroom strategy positively affects students' performance and proficiency levels in various areas of English language. Hung (2015) found that implementing the flipped classroom model in English classes develops students' academic performance in general.

In addition, Ishikawa et al. (2015) and Obari and Lambacher (2015) found that flipping English classes improves students' scores on the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). In addition, flipping English classes improve students' speaking skills (DewiSuryani, 2014; Obari & Lambacher, 2015) and reinforces students' listening comprehension (Han, 2015; Hung, 2015; Kang, 2015). Even in studies where the flipped classroom was utilized to promote other areas of English language, such as students' grammar, vocabulary, and idiomatic knowledge, the results show that students' confidence, and oral fluency skills also improved (Han, 2015; Hsieh, Wu, & Marek, 2016; Kang, 2015).

Furthermore, the flipped classroom strategy can encourage learners and make them more attentive to the learning process. Hung (2015) confirmed that 80% of the participants in the flipped classes spent more time and effort learning on their own compared to students' in the traditional classes, which indicated that they participated more in the learning process. Similarly, Han (2015) noted that during the study, students independently devoted time and effort to finding the technological learning tools and resources they needed to expose themselves to English for their ungraded project, showing motivation and interest in English learning.

2. Speaking skills

As language learning is a complex process affected by socio-cultural and psychological factors, learning a foreign language is not inevitably guaranteed and English is taught as a foreign language in Egypt. In an ESL context language learners

have access to the target language outside class even with native speakers of language. However, in an EFL context language is taught inside the classroom (Tulung, 2008).

2.a Definition of speaking skills

As one of the basic components of a language, speaking skill development is a complex issue. Speaking is a complex skill to learn and to teach in foreign language education. Teachers and learners should realize that speaking skill teaching needs to change in various aspects. First of all, speaking skill teaching should be recognized as an indispensable skill of a language and it deserves the same emphasis with other language skills. Secondly, a language teacher should create more student-centered classrooms in which learning is more personalized and collaborative. In this respect, the use of technology in speaking classrooms provides language learners more autonomous and constructivist way of thinking in technological society (Bushweller, 2011; Davis, 2011; Keefe & Jenkins, 2002).

2.b Importance of speaking skill

Speaking is an interactive process because it requires the involvement of another person unlike listening, reading or writing (Noll, 2006). Speaking as a skill is not only producing the utterances, but it is the complete process of constructing meanings, producing utterances and receiving and processing information with confidence.

In speaking, learners try out new vocabulary and develop working knowledge of language form and structure once visually prompt and culturally familiar information are provided. In oral learning, facing clues like intonation and gesture enhances understanding (Dawes, 2008: 44).

Speaking has a meaning when it enables children and young people to explore their own selves and clarify their identity. They can manage to understand and respect their own selves (Ranson, 2000). When speaking happens, learners express their views, feel confident to speak up when issues of high interest occur. They also

develop a range of skills, strategies and behaviours which assist them to manage the challengeable situations. Fielding and Ruddock (2002) explained that speaking opportunities facilitate a stronger sense of membership, respect and self-worth, learning management, agency and personalizing learning.

So speaking skills are important to achieve the career success. Speaking enhances one's personal life by giving opportunities for travel, promotion, scholarships, or to attend conferences, international meetings, represent organizations in international events.

2.c Characteristics of proficient speakers

Unrban (2007) holds the belief that the speaker can be proficient if he has the characteristics of being dynamic, effective, and confident. He listed those characteristics as below:

1- The confident speaker listens to himself critically. He can instantly recognize his mistakes and how to correct them immediately and goes on.

2- An effective speaker has the ability to control the strength and clarity of his voice in a proper breathing.

3- An effective speaker avoids making vocal mistakes; to speak in a normal speed, not very quickly nor very loudly, not to whine nor to use nasals, not to hesitate nor to fade out at the end of the sentences. Such vocal mistakes are considered as barriers to the listener's understanding the message.

4- An effective speaker speaks clearly; to enunciate the words completely, opening his mouth enough to articulate every syllable of every word. Clearly, he completes his words flow and separate his thoughts.

5- An effective speaker uses dynamics; not to drone on and on a monotone voice, varying the pitch, volume, pace and speed of speech. He also adds different pauses in different places to allow thoughts and concepts be shaped, and understandable to the audience.

6- An effective speaker has a powerful vocabulary; not over people's heads, nor force phony. He has the ability to incorporate words into his speech that denote intelligence and an active mind. He avoids using clichés and overused words.

7- An effective speaker controls his body language. He knows exactly which posture to create, maximize the voice tonal quality, be careful to make eye contact with the audience, smiles, shows warmth and sincerity and doesn't use the hands too much.

8- An effective speaker points, relates to his audience, keeps the presentation clear and interesting and involves his audience.

9- An effective speaker can put it all together; understands the features of an effective and dynamic speech, works to include all elements together regardless of the situation.

10- An effective speaker always looks to improve; gives his performance a proper scoring, doesn't' feel completely satisfied with his performance, realizes that promotion and improvement can happen but never will achieve perfection.((p. 5-6).

2.d Difficulties of speaking skills

At the university level, few students can communicate in English and give responses to their lecturer's questions. Most of others tend to keep quiet. In this regard, the difficulties of speaking are also faced by the students of the English Department of Zagazig University at the faculty of specific education in which I teach. The frequent difficulties in speaking from what I notice during the process of teaching and learning took place were (1) students often have no ideas about what to say, so they tend to keep silent, (2) they are also shy and uncomfortable as well as not confident if they make mistakes., (3) the students are afraid of making errors in class as they will be laughed at by their friends., and (4) the students are not used to talking in class since their pronunciation and vocabulary are poor and confined. These difficulties were supported by a research finding by Taiqin (1995) about non- language factors, which showed that ninety-five percent of students said that they had difficulty speaking because they were afraid of making errors in class, they had no idea what to say, they were not confident and comfortable if they made mistakes, and they were not interested in the topics that are given by the lecturer. Brown (2001) points out that clustering, reduced forms, performance variables, and colloquial language are the factors that make speaking difficult. These difficulties related to linguistic problems. Zhang (2009) argued that speaking remains the most

difficult skill to master for the majority of English learners, and they are still incompetent in communicating orally in English.

According to Ur (1996), there are many factors that cause difficulty in speaking. He argues that: (1) Students are afraid of committing mistakes or being criticized, and sometimes their shyness inhibit them to speak, (2) Students find it difficult to express themselves due to a lack of motivation, (3) In large classes, few students dominate class time and participation, while others are neglected, and (4) If students share the mother tongue, it seems uneasy for the teacher to expose them to the target language all or most of the time.

With the significance of flipped learning in speaking classes, fewer empirical studies have been carried out to investigate the effectiveness of flipped instruction in foreign language learning especially in speaking skills. Reviews of available research show that empirical studies have been missing to investigate flipped instruction's effects on language learners' speaking skills. Besides, the current study aims to combine communicative language teaching and task-based language instruction with flipped instruction. The impact of active learning and collaborative dialogue are also investigated through the research as well. Moreover, the review of researches reveal that there is no existing research that investigates the impact of flipped instruction on students' speaking skills development especially their fluency, accuracy, coherence, grammar, pronunciation and lexical knowledge.

3. Students' attitudes towards flipped learning

It is widely known that an attitude is a psychological tendency to view a particular object or behavior with a degree of favor or disfavor influenced by affective and emotional responses and related beliefs, and tend to be more stable.(Roger, 2005).

3.a Characteristics of Attitude

There are many characteristics of attitude from different points of view. It is a complex combination of things people tend

to call personality, beliefs, values, behaviors, and motivations, situations or aspects of personality irrespective of their status or intelligence. It exists in every person's mind. It helps to define his or her identity, guide their actions, and influence how they judge people, or behave in a particular way negatively or positively. Besides, it is seen as a summary of a person's past experience; thus, an attitude is grounded in direct experience predicts future behavior more accurately.

Since attitudes represent readiness for gaining knowledge, a direction for work or a specific experience within a specific context of favor or disfavor, they can fall into three components: cognitive, behavioral and affective. And because students – even those at the university level are still building their attitudes towards people, actions, situations or whatever, they necessarily have their attitudes towards flipped learning if it exists. In language learning classrooms, flipped classroom – according to Johnson (2013), Al Jaser (2017), and Strohmyer (2016) - provides positive ideas and benefits that motivate students to become self-directed learners. Basa (2015), Unakorn andKlongkratoke (2015) suggested that the flipped classroom are helpful for students to learn better and communicate with their colleagues in an enjoyable and convenient learning environment. Al-Zahrani (2015) emphasizes that effective learning takes place when flipped classroom promotes students' creativity. Johnson (2013) stresses that learning is most active when flipped classroom reduces the amount of frustrating sessions.

Problem of the research

Third EFL year students at the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University lack some speaking skills (fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, pronunciation skills). Also, they do not a specific attitude towards FL due to the novelty of the term to them. This problem with its two aspects has been revealed by the pilot study conducted by the researchers during the first semester of the academic year 2017-2018. Therefore, FL was believed help improve those students' English speaking skills and build positive attitudes towards that

type of learning. The study problem could be crystalized in the following main question:

� How effective is a program based on flipped learning in developing EFL students' speaking skills and their attitudes towards it at the Faculty of Specific Education?

This main question could be divided into the following sub-questions:

1- What are the speaking skills required for EFL students at the Faculty of Specific Education?

2- To what extend do they master those skills?

3- What are the main features of a program based on flipped learning for developing the speaking skills required for EFL students at the Faculty of Specific Education?

4- What are the attitudes of EFL students at the Faculty of Specific Education towards flipped learning?

5- Is the program effective in developing EFL students' speaking skills and their attitudes towards it?

Hypotheses of the study

The research hypotheses have been formulated as follows:

1- There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group on speaking skills pre and posttest for the post test.

2- There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the control group and those of the experimental group on speaking skills posttest for the experimental group.

3- There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group on attitudes towards flipped learning pre and posttest for the post test.

4- There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the control group and those of the experimental group on their attitudes towards flipped learning post-test for the experimental group.

5- Flipped learning-based strategy is effective in developing speaking skills among the third year EFL students.

6- Flipped learning strategy is effective in developing the third year EFL students' attitudes towards flipped learning.

Method

This study utilized a quasi-experimental design with 40 EFL students treated as an experimental group (n=20), and a control group (n=20). Quantitative methods were used to collect data. For quantitative model, the speaking skills pre-test was administered to both experimental and control groups at the beginning of the first semester of the academic year 2017 – 2018 to make sure that both groups were homogeneous.

Procedure

The researchers followed the steps below:

� Both groups were pretested on speaking skills and attitudes towards FL.

� Online learning platform for both teacher and students were prepared

� FL was introduced to the experimental group for eight weeks. There was an oral course accompanied by some reading materials and some speaking tasks. Each week, learning materials were uploaded to the website before classroom practices.

� During the program, the participants were exposed to different forms of teaching, practiced different ways of interaction , and they performed different oral tasks.

� Having finished the FL based program, both the control and the experimental one were post tested on speaking skills and attitudes towards FL .

� Data were collected and treated statistically using SPSS.

Results and Discussion

Following is a graphic presentation of the results reached and a detailed discussion of those results related the empirical part of this study. Such a discussion is related to the objectives as well as the hypotheses of the study.

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of using FL on speaking skills of EFL college students and their attitudes towards FL. In order to achieve that purpose, six hypotheses were formulated and tested using SPSS program. As Table 1 shows, there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group on speaking skills pre and posttest for the post test.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and t-values of the experimental group on speaking skills pre post-test

Speaking Skills	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.	Effect size
F & C	Pre	20	2.30	1.17	18.92	19	0.000 Sig.	0.95 high
	Post	20	6.80	1.28				
L R	Pre	20	2.10	0.96	18.85	19	0.000 Sig.	0.95 high
	Post	20	7.20	1.10				
PS	Pre	20	2.60	0.99	17.22	19	0.000 Sig.	0.94 high
	Post	20	7.00	0.91				
GR & A	Pre	20	2.35	1.04	16.43	19	0.000 Sig.	0.93 high
	Post	20	7.25	1.06				

Notes: **F & C = Fluency and Coherence, LR = Lexical Resource, PS = Pronunciation skills, GR & A = Grammatical Range and Accuracy**

Table 2 shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the control group and those of the experimental group on speaking skills posttest for the experimental group for the experimental group. Flipped learning-based strategy is, therefore, effective in developing speaking skills among the third year EFL students.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations and t-values of the control group and the experimental group on speaking skills post-test

Speaking Skills	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.	Effect size
F &C	Cont.	20	4.45	.99	-6.47	38	0.000 Sig.	0.53 moderate
	Exp.	20	6.80	1.28				
LR	Cont.	20	4.55	.94	-8.15	38	0.000 Sig.	0.64 moderate
	Exp.	20	7.20	1.10				
PS	Cont.	20	3.75	.78	-12.02	38	0.000 Sig.	0.80 high
	Exp.	20	7.00	.91				
GR &A	Cont.	20	5.00	.97	-6.95	38	0.000 Sig.	0.56 moderate
	Exp.	20	7.25	1.06				

Table 3 shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group on attitudes towards flipped learning pre and posttest for the post test.

Table 3. Means, standard deviations and t-values of the experimental group on attitudes scale towards FL pre and post-test

Level of Agree.	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.	Effect size
Agree	Pre	20	3.75	0.97	-35.55	19	0.000 Sig.	0.99 high
	Post	20	15.70	1.38				
Not sure	Pre	20	6.80	1.77	9.69	19	0.000 Sig.	0.83 high
	Post	20	2.00	0.92				
Disagree	Pre	20	9.50	2.09	16.59	19	0.000 Sig.	0.94 high
	Post	20	2.15	0.88				

Table 4 shows that there would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the control group and those of the experimental group on their attitudes towards flipped learning post-test for the experimental group. Flipped learning-based strategy is, therefore, effective in developing the third year EFL students' attitudes towards flipped learning.

Table 4. Means, standard deviations and t-values of the control group and the experimental group on attitudes scale towards FL post-test

Level of Agree.	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.	Effect size
Agree	Cont.	20	4.90	1.65	-22.44	38	0.000 Sig.	0.93 high
	Exp.	20	15.70	1.38				
Not sure	Cont.	20	6.85	1.09	15.23	38	0.000 Sig.	0.86 high
	Exp.	20	2.00	0.92				
Disagree	Cont.	20	8.25	1.62	14.83	38	0.000 Sig.	0.85 high
	Exp.	20	2.15	0.87				

A possible explanation for the development of speaking skills might be referred to the fact that FL is student-centered learning where it was constructed through encouraging, social environment and having the teacher as a facilitator, a tutor, and a scaffold. That type of teacher could make class times be spent for practicing speaking, interacting with students and students with each other. At the same time, students cooperatively in pairs and in groups. Besides, the teacher could clarify the difficult or confusing points in video lectures or learning materials. This had had a role in improving the participants' lexicalization grammar, and pronunciation.

A second possible explanation is that the varied language activities provided in class or outclass might have helped the participants participate actively, spontaneously, and freely. They could also practice speaking skills accurately and fluently, but with their chance to adjust their learning pace.

A third possible explanation for the results might be due to the reading assignments the participants had to do before classroom discussions. They had to develop their knowledge and create background information for their speaking activities in class. Their reading skills in skimming and scanning might have helped them show mastery in speaking because they had already had a repertoire for performing such an activity.

As for the participants' improvement of their attitudes towards FL, the researchers think that some rationales are there:

(1) the flexible, non-threatening, cooperative environment that characterized the FL classroom, (2) the variety of speaking activities including discussions that met different individual needs, (3) the independent learning that gave the participants full opportunities to be at ease to learn on their pace. Those points might, according to the researchers, had had a main role in building positive attitudes towards FL.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions could be reached:

✠ Flipped learning is remarkably effective in developing EFL college students' speaking skills with its sub-skills: fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation.

✠ EFL college students' attitudes towards flipped learning improved, which in turn improved their speaking skills.

✠ Adjusting the learning situation/environment according to learners' pace of learning makes a difference with their quality of EFL development.

✠ When learning EFL is active, flexible and student-centered, it develops accordingly.

Suggestions for further research

Referring to the current study results, some research points need to be investigated:

✠ The relationship between FL and different types of motivations in EFL classes.

✠ Investigating the effect of FL on speaking anxiety.

✠ The role of using FL for improving receptive skills.

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