Flipped Classroom in Bangladesh at Jagannath University : A Critical Reflection

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[**Abstract** : In congruence with the mass digitalization campaign and its efficacy across Bangladesh, her education sector is literally experiencing a revolutionary acceleration in terms of multitudinous ways of teaching and learning. One of the most prominent teaching-learning processes in vogue is flipped classroom that has been being effectuated in the technology-mediated educational ambiances. Notwithstanding, both the teachers and learners of the country are yet to act preparedly as well as conspicuously to harvest the optimum benefits of the flipped classroom. Accordingly, the present study attempts to highlight the prevailing scenario relating to the underrated implementation of flipped classroom and its prospects, if duly actuated, for university EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) students in Bangladesh with the special focus on Jagannath University, Dhaka. The population of this study includes 38 undergraduate EFL and ESL learners aging from 21 to 28 years old, 20 of who major in English, 05 in Bio-Chemistry and Molecular Biology, 05 in Fine Arts, 05 in Geography and 03 in Bangla. The comparison between the traditional and the flipped classrooms along with the questionnaire survey among the target participants and its findings reveals that blended learning is highly positive in terms of students' satisfaction, helpfulness, in-class constructive activities and better utilization of class time etc. though its prevalent actualization appears below par expectation and demonstrates some worth-noting shortcomings that require substantial reconsiderations.]

Key Words : English as a Foreign Language (EFL), ESL (English as a Second Language), Flipped Classrooms, Blended Learning, Students' Satisfaction.

Introduction

Every new pedagogical approach being activated in the English language education system in Bangladesh gets effectuated basically on a trial basis. The academicians seek to find which teaching-learning method offers better outcomes disregarding the myriad hurdles standing on the way to the smooth academic advancement. Referring to the age-old as well as existing impediments of learning English in the overall traditional contexts of Bangladesh, Sultana (2018) points out quite a number of issues, like absence of ideal class and classroom arrangements, incongruent course materials incoherence between the learners'

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requirements and the lessons provided to them, lack of duly trained language facilitators etc. Sultana (2018) also recognizes some other Bangladesh-oriented obvious issues that pose obstacles for the learners in learning English in the conventional manner, and pinpoints Bangladesh's being a monolingual country, the colonial mindset of the people of the subcontinent, political compulsion obstructing the effectuation of an appropriate English-friendly education system, imported methods of learning English, examination-based teaching and learning initiatives etc.

Notwithstanding, in Bangladesh, there are several English Language Teaching (ELT) programs. All these Programs try to bring forth positive reformations in different fields such as reformation of teacher, curriculum, and students' participation in regard to teaching and learning English. In fact, the teachers and researchers always attempt to make use of any novel pedagogical approach in order to ensure more fruitful teaching and maximum learning. On this trend appears the question of flipped classroom which is a new and digitalized method of teaching and learning, and which has already gained substantial recognition in the developed educational setups. Bhuiyan and Mahmud (2015) while esteeming flipped classroom in the academic context of Bangladesh find it to be an innovative way of teaching to excel learning. Simultaneously they surmise that it is the latest invention and celebrated outcome of the experimental teaching and learning methods which have incessantly been tried out to reach more practicable results than the age-old black board-white board techniques. With the widespread prevalence of technology in the campus and outside the campus, flipping the classroom has proved to be bringing an appreciable change in the teaching practices, which is why many academicians of the country are now-a-days preferring utilizing novel attempts to ensure maximum practice and learning anywhere and everywhere of the learners' day-to-day life (Bhuiyan and Mahmud, 2015). Accordingly, flipped classroom has attained its entrance and place in the English Language Teaching (ELT) context of Bangladesh and, as a matter of fact, almost all the technologically-embellished countries in the world. Jagannath University is one of the growing public universities of Bangladesh. Jagannath University has 06 Faculties including two new faculties as Faculty of Life Science and Faculty of Law, which accommodate total 36 Departments and 02 Institutes: Institute of Education and Research (IER) and Institute of Modern Languages (IML) offering undergraduate and graduate programs as well as other related courses. English is taught at first year as the compulsory course almost in all Departments. BA (Honours) in English and BA (Honours) in English Language, MA in Applied Linguistics and ELT are offered by Department of English and Institute of Modern Languages. The main objective of this study is to focus on the general applicability of flipped classroom in higher education for undergraduate students of English Language at Jagannath University. As

such from observations this study also focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of flipped classroom.

Literature Review

While elaborating flipped classroom, Bergmann and Sams (2013) state that defining it in one word is difficult for, in fact, different teachers might implement different sorts of teaching mechanisms that may conform to the overall idea of flipped teaching and learning. In simple terms, a flipped classroom is unlike a traditional one as the former ensures recorded (audio, video or soft version) lectures of the teachers to the learners who can then practice and learn from the materials anywhere and anytime they want (Bergmann and Sams, 2013). Regarding the efficacy of flipped instruction, Nwosisi, Ferreira, Rosenberg and Walsh (2016) explore that in flipped classroom or blended learning, students assimilate fresh and novel knowledge online by watching video lectures usually outside the classroom and their assigned tasks are done in the class with the direct help of the teachers providing more cooperative guidance and interactions with the learners. In fact, Nwosisi, Ferreira, Rosenberg and Walsh (2016) design thirty percent of the course content to effectuate flipped teaching and learning, and reach that implementing flipped instruction accelerates learning and comprehension although some students appear slow to grasp the concept at the inception. More elaborately, it eases student-student and student-teacher reciprocity which leads to improved learning outcomes (Nwosisi, Ferreira, Rosenberg and Walsh, 2016).

According to Chow (2015) and Naik (2015), flipped learning is more likely to draw self-regulated or self-directed learning. As per Barr's study (as cited in Anderson and Burns, 1989:3), teachers are expected to fulfill a variety of roles. A teacher can be seen as a director of learning, a friend or counselor of pupils; a member of a group of professional workers; and a citizen participating in various community activities at local, state, national; and international levels. Similarly, Harmer (1991) viewed "the teacher" as an intrinsic motivator. In flipped classroom, teachers' role is to facilitate learning through some technology based materials such as teacher crafted videos that permit students to repeat and watch as much as they want (MC Bride, 2015).

Like almost all other fields of study, English language teaching is currently enjoying substantial coverage of flipped pedagogy, as Quyen and Loi (2018) who study "Flipped model for improving students' English speaking performance", thank the flipped model for it ameliorates students' speaking proficiency by virtue of its provision of available practice materials in class and outside.

Bang and Lee (2014) illustrated a flipped learning and teaching model that was applicable in university courses especially for EL (English Language) courses. Sometimes both the teacher and students can share a common website where

teachers post materials to be taught before their class, students get knowledge prior to the class. During class, a checkup quiz is implemented to check assignments and a mini lecture follows with a view to wrapping up an online session. Small/whole group activities or discussion are carried. Thus we get a great difference of flipped classroom from the regular one. In foreign language teaching-learning sessions, flipped methodology may offer substantial benefits for both the language facilitators and learners given that classroom times can be applied to more interactive attempts (Basal, 2015). Activation of flipped classroom is found to be vividly effective in terms of learning at one's own choice, advancing learners' preparedness, overcoming the constraints of class times and augmenting the participation in the classroom (Basal, 2015).

Pudin (2017) observes a good number of Malaysian tertiary level ESL students preferring flipped classrooms to the traditional grammar classrooms. In fact, flipped teaching has obtained an increasing popularity commencing from higher education and travelling the entire path down the academic tree to the primary level (Li, 2018). Broadly speaking, Li (2018) investigates into the feasibility of flipped classroom in Chinese adult English training and comes to the conclusion that flipped learning and teaching approach equips the learners with the autonomy and possession both within and without the classroom, offers them with multiple scopes of active and interactive learning and engenders a learning atmosphere which helps the learners maximize their learning skills.

In the educational context of Bangladesh, activation of flipped classroom seems to a worth-trying for approach though research regarding this in the country has been very few, like that of Bhuiyan and Mahmud (2015). As a matter of fact, many educationists of the country actuate flipped instructions while teaching the pupils on different arenas, despite not scrutinizing whether the learners truly benefit from the blended approach in the desired manner. In reality, there exists a huge lack of technological assistance in English language classroom, and most importantly, there are learners' social media mania which are why they are found to prefer uploading pictures, commenting on, being active in messenger rather than doing assignment or concentrating totally on their assigned home work. In consequence, the flipped instruction is not found to engender expected performance among the learners, which the researcher intends to unearth in a convincing way through a quantitative research among the flipped-classroom beneficiaries from the tertiary level of education.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to gauge general applicability of flipped classroom in higher education for undergraduate students of English Language at Jagannath University. This study also aims to focus on the advantages as well as disadvantages of flipped classroom

Example of Flipped Classroom

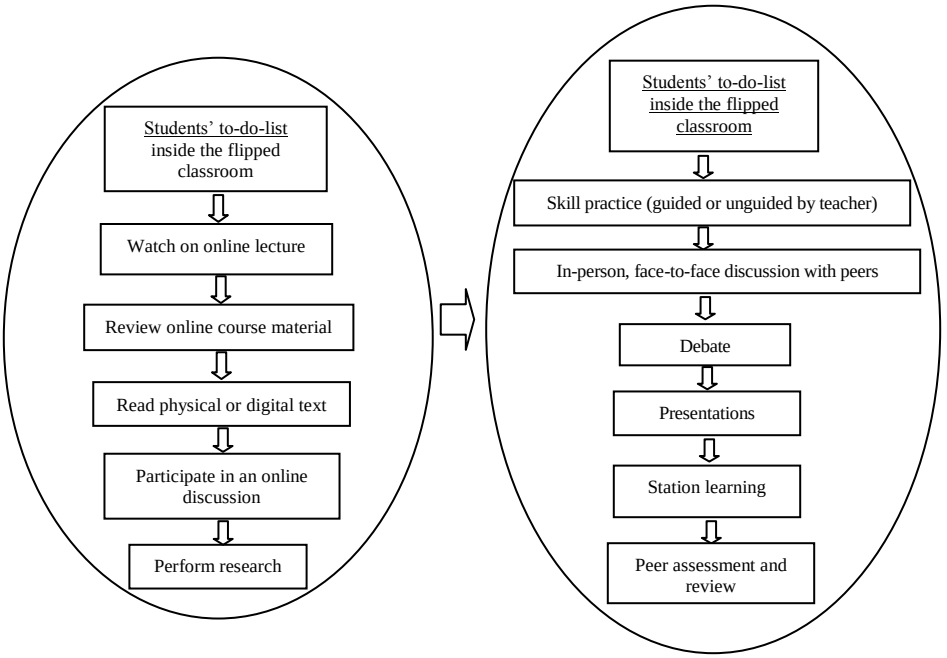


Figure 1 : Model of an Ideal Flipped Classroom (Teach Thought Staff, 2020)

Flipped classroom requires the students to watch an online lecture on the stipulated topic and appraise the course materials available in the vast world of online before they participate in the onsite blended learning session. If the students go through hard copies of texts or digital ones to receive and incorporate the information on the targeted topic with the lesson they obtain from the online lecture, the knowledge and idea they look for will get much more clarified to them. Simultaneously, virtual discussion and discourse on the subject of learning can also provide the learners with substantial foundation prior to their on-campus gathering. On top of these, the learners can also conduct individual or team research on the class topic for better understanding and improvement assimilation.

Subsequently, in a flipped classroom, the learners can practice the target skills either under the active guidance of the teachers or on their own. They can also take part in the other peer learning drills, like in-person performance, face-to-face conversation with their co-learners, debate sessions, presentations and role playing. They students can get their performance reviewed and evaluated by their peers or by the teachers.

These are just some prominent activities that the beneficiaries of the flipped classroom are to put to work before and during the learning sessions (Teach

Thought Staff, 2020), but both the teachers and the learners can effectuate many more digitalized tasks that help comprehensive learning happen anywhere anytime.

Research Design and Methodology

This entire study used a mixed method. The researcher chose to apply both quantitative and qualitative research methods in conducting the research on the efficacy of flipped classroom at the tertiary level of Bangladesh so as to find a holistic understanding of the matter in all sorts of considerations. Studies reveal that enacting both quantitative and qualitative research methods ensures the normative as well as interpretive consideration to secure the explanations of the issue in relation to specific criteria and contextual factors (Riazi & Candlin, 2014). In other words, the purpose of mixed-method research is to integrate the quantitative and the qualitative research methods to come up with a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon (Riazi & Candlin, 2014). According to Hung (2012) who cites Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), and Croswell (2005) to highlight that mixed-approach method signifies the procedure that collects, analyzes and mixes both quantitative and qualitative research processes for a better apprehension of the research problem. As such, the research was carried out for eight weeks of the first semester students of English Foundation Course at the Jagannath University of Bangladesh. As noted earlier, the participants of this study were 38 university students taking a general English course. All the students were involved in pre- and post tests, the post questionnaire and the interview. In each class, the student log was recorded too. The student log was designed to measure how well pre-preparation assignments and in-class activities were blended and integrated for learning. Two types of pre-preparation assignments were crafted by the instructor/researcher. Grammar sections in each unit were scanned, visualized in the form of power-point slide show and then recorded in the instructor's narration. This approach represents a more updated modern style of teaching where the new grammatical structures and rules are presented to the students in a real language context. So students learn the rules prior to attending classes.

The questioners were designed in the way to know if the students were happy with the overall condition relating to the arrangement and execution of flipped classroom in the university. Since the flipped-classroom beneficiaries are to receive access to both online and offline class sessions, the questionnaire sought to understand the kinds of disadvantages the students encountered during learning from those classes. Likewise, to be abreast of a total view of the performance of flipped teaching-learning mechanism, the participants were to comment on the English skill of their co-learners and on the efficiency and treatment of the teachers. The questioner also shed focus on whether the flipped-classroom learners had any mentionable difficulty on any specific part of the overall service and if all of them possessed computer along with internet access either at home or at the campus.

The researcher randomly made another population sampling of 06 English language facilitators, 03 from Institute of Modern Language and 03 from Department of English of Jagannath University. Designed for teachers' response, the questionnaire inquired about whether the teachers liked the entire flipped-classroom management in their respective department, and the types of advantages and disadvantages the instructors face while enacting flipped classroom. They also were to comment on the overall performance of the students enjoying flipped classrooms. As such, from teachers' points of view, if the practitioners witnessed expected performance from the learners was a vital question there. In addition, the teachers had to reveal how much online access they enjoy on their own or in the university for the purpose of providing maximum coverage to flipped teaching-learning arrangement.

Findings

From the students' responses regarding flipped classroom and regular classroom, it was found that 30 out of 38 students' preferred flipped classroom because it was more effective for them to learn English language. The rest 5 had mixed comments. It was also observed that students who are more skilled do not prefer flipped classroom. They rather prefer regular classroom.

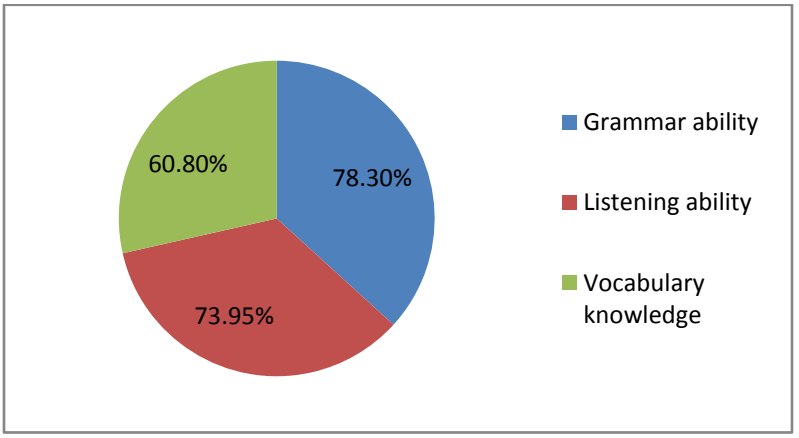


Figure 2 : Percentage of the students' command in various English language skills.

However most of the students agreed or strongly agreed that the flipped assignments were more helpful for increasing their grammar ability (78.3%), listening ability (73.95%), and vocabulary knowledge (60.8%). In the last section of the post questionnaire, the students answered about the missing homework and spending more time on Face book, the most popular social networking site whereas the teachers responded that they felt the need of proper training and context to execute such classroom effectively. Videos usually had a disadvantage in which learners could not ask the questions. Some students could successfully 'log in' while others could not. Some students had computer or internet access at home

while others did not have at home or university. The worst disadvantage of flipped classroom was 'not doing their assignments' which caused to make the students uncomfortable to participate in class and ended in disturbing group work. To prevent it, a special observation, checking program or an alert function was suggested.

The students, especially, who were studying Fine Arts , were frequently late or absent for class because they usually stay up late to practice together in groups in art work or frequently take part in performances. English class was generally allocated in 8:30 to 9:30 in the morning that was too early for them to wake up and come to class. Therefore, they sometimes did not show up in class, but performed checkup quizzes and filled out their student logs out of class whenever they could access the recorded lessons and videos. From the questionnaires prepared for students, we got several mixed comments. Some of their comments are included here:

A. (Today we have covered) lots of (activities with) small topics (related to the context) and they flew so quickly, they are not possible to remember. It was difficult
B. I could not log on.
C. My parents rebuked me for spending time in offline class instead of attending regular class
D. Watching videos before coming to class helped me to understand the class more intensively.
E. I was absent, but I could get the contents of class lessons from teacher crafted videos. Thanks to the video.
F. I've learned practical English expressions that are used in a real life. But all on a sudden it stopped.

Teachers' Response

Majority (66.66%) of the teachers responding the questionnaire opine that the introduction as well as the execution of the flipped classroom in the university needs to be renovated following the way it is implemented in the developed countries' educational scenario, whereas 43.44% of them expressed their complacence regarding whatever the system has in possession. Nevertheless, 100% of the teachers agreed to the substandard technological and internet support that inhibits the polished implementation of flipped classroom in the university. 83.33% of the language facilitators expressed being upset about the poor performance of the learners in relation to demonstrating expected performance while 01 participant refused to comment on this certain query. As to the most difficult part that the participating teachers encounter in going about managing and using flipped classroom, 50% pointed to the lack of overall logistic support that is essential for flipping the classroom and another 50% exclusively emphasized on the unavailability of incessant technological provision and internet connectivity. Finally,

as the teachers revealed, although cent percent of them own personal computer or Smartphone having internet connectivity at their own expense, they repeatedly face scarcity of these facilities at the campus which is, in fact, the main venue for putting flipped classroom in action.

Drawbacks of Flipped Classroom

There were many drawbacks of flipped classroom but these drawbacks did not exceed the positive sides. These drawbacks are as follows:

There were students who did not submit assignments timely and neglect classes.

- Videos usually had a disadvantage in which learners could not ask the questions.
- The worst disadvantage of flipped classroom was 'not doing their assignments' which caused to make the students uncomfortable to participate in class and ended in disturbing group work. To prevent it, a special observation, checking program or an alert function was suggested.
- Flipped classroom was deemed to be less interesting to the teachers and students of less developed countries where utilizing digital sources successfully took procrastination.
- In line, regular class attendance became poor.
- Teachers' role of motivating students remained poor in comparison with regular classes.
- There were limitations of video instructions too.
- Most of the teachers were not efficient in using flipped classroom. The idea of flipped classroom was unclear to some of them.
- Very few students (30%) could successfully 'log in' while others could not.

Advantages of Flipped Classroom

Students who attended both online and offline classes regularly got the best input from flipped classroom. Moreover, class time was effectively utilized as students got prior-knowledge on the subject to be discussed in the classroom from the posted materials of the teachers. Both the teacher and learners remained connected always. Most importantly, flipped classroom and the tasks related to its teaching-learning arrangements ensure a ubiquitous learning ambience for the learners and a facilitated teaching path for the teachers. As for a traditional class, both the teacher and the students are to be on the same spot same time to make teaching and learning occur whereas by virtue of the flipped classroom, learners can learn and revise learning from the same class any number of times they want, and for any number of repetitions of the lecture, the teacher does not have to repeat his labor. In fact, flipped classroom has helped the academic people win over time and place, and it ascertained learning to happen always.

Limitations of the Research

The study demonstrates as well as has encountered some constraints with regard to participants' response, availability of contents and relevant existing research on the field, and the general attitude towards research. Firstly, majority of the participants including both students and teachers wholeheartedly cooperated with the researcher in terms of responding to the questions in relevance with the topic, some showed reluctance to the whole research thing. Besides, many of the responders displayed an almost stark ignorance regarding flipped classroom which the researcher had to elucidate to them in the first place given the fact that this genre of teaching and learning approach is quite fresh and thereby unfamiliar to both the students and teachers. In addition, despite striving heart and soul to come in touch with available flipped-classroom-related contents in the context of Bangladesh, the researcher managed to have little information on the practice of flipped learning in the country, for, as a matter of fact, there has been little, if not no, research so far on the topic in question in this part of the world. Moreover, some research participants manifested involuntary mindset to responding to the questionnaire as though they had expected some sort of monetary return of their valuable time. However, since no appreciable venture succeeds sans obstacles, the researcher attained mentionable experience that was worth trying for. Nevertheless, the overall countenance of the study could have been more scholastic had there been ample resource and advantages favoring the topic.

Recommendations

The study offers quite a number of recommendations to put into consideration for making flipped classroom successful at Jagannath University, Bangladesh in true sense. Firstly, there should be more trained teachers and eager learners. The logistic supports for holding flipped classroom impeccably should be ensured and implanted at suitable locations. In fact, the university needs to define a definite manpower to work for the monitoring and maintenance of flipped classroom materials. As for the students, to enjoy the multifaceted benefits of flipped learning system, they must have computer and internet connectivity at their disposal. Further study for the large number of experimental participants in a variety of educational settings should be carried out. To implement them, technology-based professional training course should be preceded for a richer and more inclusive understanding of the applicability of flipped classroom in EFL for Jagannath University, Bangladesh.

Conclusion

In conclusion it can be said that flipped classroom has both negative and positive effects. However as a pedagogical model it has its own significance. To fully adopt such type of teaching and learning system for English Language Teaching (ELT) at undergraduate level in Bangladesh, we need more research and attention.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire for students'–

Thank you very much for your consent to the interview. During the interview you will give your own opinion on the status of flipped classroom for learning English. Please do not hesitate to speak freely. Your precious opinion will be used for the study purpose only.

You may answer these questions either in English or in Bangla.

Give your opinion about Flipped Classroom of English Language Teaching at your university. Are you satisfied with the overall condition?

What are the main problems you face while using offline class?

Comment on the overall performance of English of your classmates.

Are you satisfied with your teachers' instruction for flipped classroom?

What is the most difficult part of flipped classroom to you?

Do you have access of Internet at home or universities?

Appendix B

Questionnaire for teachers'–

Thank you very much for your consent to the interview. During the interview you will give your own opinion on the status of flipped classroom for teaching English. Please do not hesitate to speak freely. Your precious opinion will be used for the study purpose only.

Give your opinion about Flipped Classroom of English Language Teaching at your university.

Are you satisfied with the overall condition?

What are the main problems you face while instructing on flipped classroom?

Comment on the overall performance of your students who have had flipped classroom.

Are you satisfied with your students' performance for flipped classroom?

What is the most difficult part of flipped classroom to you?

Do you have access of Internet at home or universities?