

Islamic Azad University, North Tehran Branch

Faculty of Foreign Languages,

TEFL Department

**Research Title**

**The Effect of Flipped versus Unflipped Instruction on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners’ Pragmatic Knowledge**

**عنوان تحقیق**

**تأثیر آموزش معکوس در مقابل غیرمعکوس بر دانش پرگمتیک زبان آموزان زبان خارجی در سطح متوسطه**

**Advisor**

Hossein Younesi, Phd

**Reader**

**By**

Akram Khooban

January 2021

**In the Name of God**

1

**Table of Contents**

**CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION………………………………………........ 3**

* 1. Background and Purpose……………………………………………………3
  2. Statement of the Problem…………………………………………………....6
  3. Significance of the Study……………………………………………………8
  4. Research Questions………………………………………………………….8
  5. Research Hypotheses ……………………………………………………….9
  6. Definition of Key Terms…………………………………………………….9
  7. Limitations and Delimitations……………………………………………..10
     1. Limitations……………………………………………….............10
     2. Delimitations……………………………………………………..10

**CHAPTER 2- LITERATURE REVIEW…………………………………...11**

2.1 Introduction………………………………………………………………..11

2.1.1 Theoretical Issues………………………………………………..11

2.2 Advantages of Flipped Classroom…………………………………………12

2.3 Disadvantages of Flipped Classroom……………………………………...14

2.8 Related Studies…………………………………………………………….15

**CHAPTER3- METHODOLOGY…………………………………………...19**

3.1 Introduction………………………………………………………………...19

3.2 Research Design and Variables……………………………………………19

3.3 Participants………………………………………………………………...19

3.4 Instrumentation…………………………………………………………….20

3.5 Procedure…………………………………………………………………..21

3.6 Data Analysis………………………………………………………………21

**References……………………………………………………………………..23**

2

**CHAPTER I: Introduction**

**1.1 Background and Purpose**

As one of the world’s more important educational topics, and as a dominant manifestation of technology use in EFL learning, flipped learning can be mentioned. Flipped learning is “a learning model where learners learn the online course materials first, then have their questions answered by the teacher, and participate in the guided discussion and experiments during the classroom hour” (Lin & Chen, 2016, p. 232). This kind of learning has been formed under the influence of the internet and information technology (Lin & Chen, 2016). In flipped learning, the traditional role of teachers as being a knowledge provider changes to a facilitator and coordinator of the learners’ learning process; moreover, the role of learners changes from the copying and memorization equals high test scores learning model to that of a self-initiating learner model (Kvashnina & Martynko, 2013).

Clearly, it cannot be denied that with the advances in technology and due to technological innovation, implementation of flipped learning has become easier for educators because they can compile and distribute study materials that are also engaging for learners (Berrett 2012). However, the willingness of learners to participate in learning is one of the important elements of successful implementation of flipped learning (Kvashnina & Martynko, 2013). Accordingly,

3

one of the main challenges teachers face in implementing flipped learning is preparing learners. This is while flipped learning is appropriate for learners with special needs and learners of different acquisition paces, using various free video creation tools available like Screencastomatic, Camtasia, OfficeMix, Educations (Moranski & Kim, 2016).

Furthermore, speech acts as functional subcomponent of pragmatic competence are considered as one the important research areas in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) due to the attention to pragmatic competence as the second facet of language competence (Kasper, 2000). Moreover, they play an important role in the appropriate use of language according to context. Speech act knowledge consists of language user's sociocultural knowledge and his/her sociolinguistic knowledge. “Sociocultural knowledge is a kind of competence a speaker needs in order to apply speech act strategies properly. Sociolinguistic knowledge refers to context awareness ability in order to appropriately apply vocabulary, linguistic forms, register and politeness and research done in this area centers on elocutionary acts” (Sadr, Allami & Rezai, 2018, p. 21). Moreover, according to Austin (1962), communication is an event and a series of communication acts to bring about some effect on the environment of hearers and speakers. Pragmatic competence is considered as important factors in success of communication (Sadr, Allami, & Rezai, 2018).

4

Leech (1983) states that the main role of pragmatic competence is “avoiding disruption and maintaining the social equilibrium and friendly relations” (p. 23). In linguistic theory, it is an important issue relevant to relational communication (Sadr, Allami & Rezai, 2018).

Indeed, pragmatics is concerned with the appropriate use of language. But using language appropriately does not involve just correct phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, but it needs pragmatic knowledge or, in a more specific sense, cultural knowledge so that misunderstandings or communication breakdowns are avoided. Misunderstandings caused by grammatical mistakes are more tolerated than those rooted in different assumptions (Hyde, 1998). This issue goes beyond grammatical or structural accuracy. The matter becomes more complex in EFL settings where English is taught as a foreign language. Therefore, teaching pragmatics (that is, teaching learners how to use language appropriately) has turned into a necessary and significant issue. Accordingly, necessarily, classroom instruction should involve various strategies and techniques for teaching and learning of pragmatics (both knowledge and skills) as well as the processes of teaching pragmatics to learners of EFL contexts (Hyde, 1998).

With a view to the above discussions, this study is going to investigate the effect of flipped versus unflipped instruction on Iranian intermediate EFL learners ‘pragmatic knowledge. 5

**1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The fact is that although number of advocates of flipped learning and educators showing interest in the topic is increasing, there is no consensus on the matter that using this technique will result in success; in other words, flipping lessons have led to contradicting results in different fields including science, technology, engineering, math, etc. (Moranski & Kim, 2016). Moreover, the volume of research on the use of flipped classroom in language lessons is not rich (Kvashnina & Martynko, 2016).

The other problems associated with flipped classrooms are that teachers are not sure whether learners will actually watch the assigned video at home; teachers find planning and building of videos difficult and time-consuming; implementing flipped learning requires additional skills on the part of teachers, etc. (Davis, 2016). In sum, as put by Goodwin (2013, as cited in Davis, 2016), we have no access to a scientific research base showing how and to what extent flipped classrooms work and become successful. In a similar vein, according to Bell (2015), the flipped classroom cannot be accepted and understood as a valid method of instruction because there has been little research on the effectiveness and efficiency of flipped classrooms in learners’ learning (Bell, 2015).

The other problem related to flipped learning is that in spite of increasing popularity of this method worldwide, having a glance at Iranian educational

6

system shows that still traditional teaching methods and techniques are prevalent in many educational settings and just recently computer-assisted language learning has come to be applied in some educational environments. Thus, naturally many language teachers and learners are not familiar with the potentials of this technology for language teaching and learning.

In addition, because pragmatics as a field is not very old in second/foreign language acquisition (S/FLA), the amount of works done in this regard is not huge, at least in EFL contexts. What worsens the situation is the belief among learners that correct use of grammatical rules is more serious and important than appropriate use of language while the important role of pragmatics or appropriate use of language cannot be denied (Lee, 2009).

However, in spite of the mentioned significance of pragmatic competence in the quality of communication and interaction between learners and teachers in language classes, and more importantly, the role of pragmatic competence in the quality and amount of learners’ learning, to the best knowledge of the researcher, few studies have dealt with pragmatic competence in flipped classrooms in the Iranian context. As an attempt to fill this gap, this study will aim at investigating the effect of flipped versus unflipped instruction on Iranian intermediate EFL learners’ pragmatic knowledge.

7

**1.3 Significance of the Study**

Given the increasing use of technology including video in educational environments worldwide, such a study is worth taking. Also, knowing that recently some forms of technology have been introduced and applied in the Iranian educational system, conducting such a study may lead to valuable results and have important contributions to increased popularity and applicability of the flipped learning. Besides, results of this study add to knowledge base in the field. Moreover, they may be helpful for many stakeholders in the field including learners, teachers, etc. by revealing the potential benefits of the flipped classroom in teaching and learning pragmatics as a relatively new research area in the field of ELT. In addition, the results will make curriculum planners aware of the effect of flipped instruction and this in turn can give them useful hints about the need to incorporate this approach into English curricula.

**1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions will be formulated:

1. Does flipped instruction have a significant effect on Iranian female intermediate EFL learners’ pragmatic knowledge?
2. Does flipped instruction significantly improve Iranian female intermediate EFL learners’ pragmatic knowledge?

8

**1.5 Research Hypotheses**

Parallel with the above questions, the following hypotheses will be checked in this study:

1. Flipped instruction does not have a significant effect on Iranian female intermediate EFL learners’ pragmatic knowledge.
2. Flipped instruction does not significantly improve Iranian female intermediate EFL learners’ pragmatic knowledge.

**1.6 Definition of Key Terms**

A number of the key terms in this study are defined to contribute to a deeper

understanding of the trends followed to perform the present investigation.

**Flipped learning**: refers to “a learning model where learners learn the online course materials first, then have their questions answered by the teacher, and participate in the guided discussion and experiments during the classroom hour” (Lin & Chen, 2016, p. 232).

**Pragmatics**:refers to the study of non-native speakers’ acquisition, comprehension and production of pragmatics (Kasper and Dahl, 1991).

**Pragmatic knowledge**: “refers to the ability to communicate properly in a social situation” (Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2017, p. 7313).

9

**Speech act**: refers to “an act uttered and performed by a speaker (Searle et al., 1980), such as making statements, asking questions, giving orders, thanking, etc.” (Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2017, p. 7313).

**1.7 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

**1.7.1 Limitations**

The present study is expected to bear the following limitations:

1. The first limitation of the study is that the researcher cannot select the participants through random sampling.
2. The second limitation is that treatment period of the study will be relatively short.

**1.7.2 Delimitations**

A number of delimitations will be imposed on the research context as follows:

1. As a delimitation of the study, this study will just be constrained to female EFL learners.
2. Another delimitation is that just intermediate learners will participate in the study.
3. Finally, the third delimitation is that the setting of the study will be delimited to a private language institute in Tehran, Iran.

10

**CHAPTER II:** **Literature Review**

**2.1 Introduction**

2.1.1 Theoretical Issues

The flipped classroom is considered a recent idea in the education field. The most commonly cited creators of the flipped model are Sams and Bergmann (2013) when they flipped their high school chemistry classes in 2007. However, some of the basic concepts of the flipped classroom have been there since the 1990’s (Lage, 2000). When Sams and Bergmann (2013) flipped their classes and found that their learners’ test scores improved, they began to publish their findings and established a non-profit organization to assist other teachers in the process of flipping their classrooms.

Brame (2013) defined flipping the classroom as exposing learners to new material outside of class through reading or lecture videos, and then using class time to assimilate the knowledge obtained from new material through problem-solving, discussion, or debates. The flipped learning is concerned with the idea that learners should come to class more prepared than before (Hung, 2015).

The flipped classroom technique is aimed at motivating learners and engaging them interactively, through presenting new information outside of class and assigning class time to higher level cognitive learning (Kvashnina & Martynko, 2013).

11

Ash (2012) suggested holding flipping classrooms based on an evaluationreport on flipping the classroom, but he believed that the amount of flipping should be determined according to the needs of learners. As stated by Sams and Bergmann (2013), videos should be used selectively rather than generally for all situations and all kinds of instruction. As there are learners with different learning styles in any class, it is important for the instructor to use various methods and techniques of teaching in order to reach everyone (Sams & Bergmann, 2013).

Interestingly, Sams and Bergmann (2013) believed that flipped learning is not new because it has been there centuries ago when teachers wanted their learners to come to class prepared through reading a text or a part of a text at home. The only difference is that today in flipped classrooms, learners become prepared more conveniently thanks to technological advances including audiovisual devices.

2.2 Advantages of Flipped Classroom

Some advantages have been enumerated for flipped classroom. The main advantages are as follows:

-Help can be received from peers as well as instructors during the lesson (Berrett, 2012);

12

- Though it is difficult to match the learning styles of all learners, the flipped classroom poses an opportunity to teach in a way that engages learners from a

wide range of learning styles (Lage, 2000);

- Learners choose how and when they watch the video, as well as how they attain the information received (Berrett, 2012);

- EFL learners can benefit from gained learner autonomy, having the choice of suitable learning time and being able to go through the instruction as many times as needed and in a way suitable for them, while taking notes and forming questions they might want to ask from the instructor in class;

- Flipping enables large institutions reach out to a larger audience and allows to spend valuable class time doing higher level cognitive tasks (Forehand, 2010);

- Flipping can be suitable for different classrooms and subjects as long as the aims are carefully considered;

- This technique enables teachers connect the pre-class task with activities in class that focus on higher cognitive skills which are appreciated by the learners as well (Mehring, 2016);

- Most of the learners perceive the flipped classroom technique as positive especially as they could work at their own pace when learning new content, and then apply the knowledge when doing activities in class;

13

- Advances in technology and easy access to creating high-quality content make

flipping the classroom attractive for language teachers (Moranski & Kim, 2016);

- The flipped classroom moves technology out of the classroom and enables learners to use lesson time for communication and discussions with peers – the time of which would be decreased if new information was presented in class (Moranski & Kim, 2016).

2.3 Disadvantages of Flipped Classroom

The following disadvantages have been reported in the literature on flipped classroom (Kvashnina & Martynko, 2016):

-There is no consensus among teachers on whether using this technique will result in success;

- The results of studies on flipped classroom are controversial;

- There are some reports showing that flipped classroom makes learners less prepared for their courses and less motivated to learn;

- Not all foreign language classes can be flipped and it is up to the instructor to decide what their learners would most benefit from;

- It is not evident whether learners will actually do their pre-class tasks, i.e.

14

watch the assigned video;

- It is possible that learners do not watch videos before class;

- The planning and creation of videos involve much care and are time-consuming;

- The process of creating accessible materials requires additional skills that many teacher do not have;

- Learners who are taught according to the flipped classroom technique are expected to independently process grammar explanations without their instructor’s support;

- Learners may not understand the instructions provided in videos;

- Choosing videos with an appropriate language level is difficult for teachers;

- Some learners may not prefer flipped classroom;

- Learners might not have access to technology.

**2.4 Related Studies**

Joshaghan Nezhad and Bagheri (2018) sought to investigate how a flipped lesson can affect academic motivation and participant learning. To this end, a quasi-experimental design was utilized. While the control group benefited from

the traditional teaching method, the experimental group was exposed to a flipped class method. For data collection, Harter's classroom affect and motivational

15

questionnaire was utilized. As revealed by the results, the mean of learner’s

academic motivation in flipped classes significantly outnumbered that of the traditional group. However, no significant effect of flipped classroom on learner’s learning was reported.

Kaviani, Liaqatdar, and Zamani (2017) attempted to study the process of learning in the flipped class. 17 undergraduate learners studying educational sciences from a university classroom participated in 12 educational sessions. A semi-structured interview was employed to collect the data. According to the findings, active learning was the main concern of the flipped class. It was also recognized that external and internal motivation, learning strategies, classroom management, cultural factors, and learning styles affect the learning process in the flipped classroom.

Haqqani Rezaei, Bigzadeh, and Eghbali (2016) investigated flipped class as a teaching method. More particularly, the concept of flipped class was explored in the study. For this purpose, the researcher reviewed 28 papers, 4 theses and 2 books as the corpus of the study. After description of flipped class, advantages and disadvantages of this method were presented. According to the results, flipped class can be used as a method including direct instructions outside of class and group in-class instruction.

Lin and Chen (2016) investigated whether flipped classroom impacts the learning effectiveness, taking the mediating role of learning satisfaction into

16

account. As revealed by the findings, as perceived by both the instructors and

learners of technical and vocational colleges, flipped learning positively influences learning satisfaction. Moreover, it was indicated that the instructors and learners perceive that learning effectiveness is positively influenced by flipped learning. As the third finding, learning satisfaction mediates the effect of flipped learning on teaching effectiveness.

Said Ahmed (2016) aimed at investigating the effect of a flipping classroom on writing skill in English as a foreign language and learners’ attitude towards flipping. The study sample consisted of 60 learners at Qassim University. The instruments of the study were an EFL writing test and a questionnaire to measure learners’ attitude towards flipping. Results of the study showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the post-test of EFL writing. Second, there was statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre and post application of the questionnaire of the experimental group in favor of the post application. This difference was attributed to using flipping.

Sung (2015) looked into a flipped English content-based class where participating college learners were enrolled and completed all the course requirements in an elective course. Before each class, the learners were guided to preview lesson materials such as readings and videos and to engage in diverse online activities on an LMS flat form. Then, they did collaborative class activities

17

such as sharing their Thought Papers, discussing the questions on weekly readings developed online, and doing a final project of designing an evaluation plan. The results of the analysis of both informal and formal course evaluations and learner work showed that they viewed flipped learning positively despite initial difficulties of adjusting themselves to it. They also viewed that flipped teaching can be a good momentum for change in current English language teaching.

Mireille (2014) examined the impact of using a flipped classroom instructional method on the writing performance of the twelfth grade Emirati female learners and identify female learners’ perception of the Flipped Instruction in an ESL writing setting. For this purpose, a 15-week teaching program was designed to cover the main IELTS Tasks 1 and 2 writing objectives. The program consisted of instructional videos and differentiated class tasks that were used with only one group of learners while the other group studied the teaching material in a similarly learner-centered class. Both groups completed a pretest and post-test to answer the inquiry of the study. Findings revealed statistically significant differences between the mean scores in favor of the learners in the experimental group. This improvement in the writing performance was attributed to the Flipped Instruction method of teaching. Learners’ attitudes towards the Flipped Instruction proved to

be equally favorable.

18

**CHAPTER III: Methodology**

**3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented literature review. This chapter, as the name speaks for itself, addresses the methodology of the study. The researcher is going to settle the effect of flipped versus unflipped instruction on Iranian female EFL learners’ pragmatic knowledge. So, for doing this research in this chapter we describe design and variables, participants, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis.

**3.2 Research Design and Variables**

This study will benefit from a pre-test post-test control group design within a quasi-experimental method. This research is considered as a quasi-experimental

one because no random sampling method will be used in it.

The independent variable of the study is flipped instruction. The dependent variable is pragmatic knowledge.

**3.3 Participants**

The participants include 50 female EFL intermediate learners of a language institute in Tehran, Iran. They will be selected to participate in the study based on convenience sampling in the form of two intact classes. One of these classess

19

will be assigned to the flipping (experimental) group and the other one to the control group. The participants’ age range will be about 18-25 years and their mother tongue is Persian.

**3.4 Instrumentation**

The following instruments will be used in the current study:

1. The first instrument is a short version of Oxford Placement Test (OPT) which will be employed to ensure about the homogeneity of the participants regarding their language proficiency at the beginning of the study. This test is composed of 50 multiple choice items (20 items on grammar and 30 items on vocabulary). Reliability of the test was reported as .80 (Wistner, Hideki & Mariko, 2013).
2. The second instrument is discourse completion test (DCT) which will be used as the pre-test and the post-test. It is a multiple choice test and it will be taken from Birjandi and Rezaei (2010). It consists of 20 multiple choice items. This test was validated by its designers and its reliability was reported as high (.80) by them.

20

**3.5 Procedure**

To collect the required data, the homogenized participants will be randomly assigned into two groups namely, flipping group and control group. In the next stage, DCT will be implemented in the two groups as the pre-test. Next, the two groups will be exposed to 8 treatment sessions wherein they will benefit from virtual classes of the institute. The flipping group will benefit from flipped instruction (using video lectures, demonstrations, PowerPoint files, etc.) on the appropriate use of speech acts (i.e., refusal, apology, and request). But the control group will not be exposed to any form of flipped instruction and just benefit from traditional mainstream instruction on pragmatics. That is, in the control group, the teacher will explicitly explain the speech acts and their appropriate context of use. One week after the end of treatment sessions, DCT will be implemented in the two groups as the post-test.

**3.6 Data Analysis**

To analyze the data, descriptive and inferential statistics will be needed. That is, will be used to test normality of questionnaire data. Descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores will be calculated to see the participants’ performance in the pre-test and post-test. And to compare the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the pre-test

21

and post-test, independent samples *t*-tests will be used. Moreover, to compare the pre-test and the post- test scores of the flipping group with each other, a paired-samples t-test will be run.

22

**References**

Ash, K. (2012). *Educators evaluate flipped classrooms*. Retrieved from<http://commons.marymount.edu/instructingonline/wpcontent/uploads/sites/135/2013/07/Bet-Practices-Flipped-Classroom.pdf>.

Bell, M.R. (2015). *An investigation of the impact of a flipped classroom instructional approach on high school students' content knowledge and attitudes toward the learning .* <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/4444>environment Retrieved from

Berrett, D. (2012). How flipping the classroom can improve the traditional lecture. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 45-59.

Birjandi, P. & Rezaei, S. (2010). Developing a multiple-choice discourse completion test of interlanguage pragmatics for Iranian EFL learners. *ILI Language Teaching Journal (Special Issue: Proceedings of the First Conference on ELT in the Islamic World), 6* (1, 2), 43-58.

Brame, C. J. (2013). *Flipping the classroom*. Retrieved from http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/flipping-the-classroom/

Davis, Nicole L. 2016. Anatomy of a flipped classroom, *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, *16*(3), 228-232.

Forehand, M.(2010). Bloom’s taxonomy: From emerging perspectives on learning. Retrieved from <http://projects.coe.uga.edu/epltt/index.php?title=Bloom%27s_Taxonomy>

Haqqani, F., Rezaei, H., & Bigzadeh, A., & Eghbali, B. (2016). Flipped classes: An educational approach. *Iranian Journal of Medical Education, 16*, 312-340.

Hung, H-T. (2015). Flipping the classroom for english language learners to foster active learning. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *28*(1), 81-96.

Hyde, M. (1998). Intercultural competence in English language education. *Modern English Teacher 7*(2), 7–11.

Joshaghan Nezhad, M., & Bagheri F. (2018). The impact of a flipped classroom on student motivation and student learning in computer course. *Research in Curriculum, 2*(31),

23

112-120.

Kasper, G. (2000). Data collection in pragmatics, in Spencer-Oatey, H. (ed.) *culturally speaking* (pp. 316–341). London & New York: Continuum.

Kaviani, H., Liaqatdar, M., & Zamani, B. (2017). Flipped learning process: Representation of the curriculum experienced in higher education. *Quarterly Student Curriculum in Higher Education, 8*(15), 17-29.

Kvashnina, O.S., & Martynko, E.A. (2013). Analyzing the potential of flipped classroom in ESL Teaching. *iJet, 11*(30), 49-63.

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

Lee, W.T. (2009). EFL learners’ pragmatic awareness: an analysis of four-university students in Taiwan. *Journal of China Institute of Technology, 40*, 629-652.

Leech, G. (1983). *The principles of pragmatics.* London: Longman.

Lin, P.L., & Chen, H.M. (2016). The effects of flipped classroom on learning effectiveness: using learning satisfaction as the mediator. *World Transactions on Engineering and Technology Education, 14*(2), 231-244.

Mehring, J. (2016). Present research on the flipped classroom and potential tools for the EFL classroom. *Computers in the Schools*, *33*(1), 1-10.

Mireille, F. (2014). *The impact of using a flipped classroom instruction on the writing performance of twelfth grade female Emirati students in the Applied Technology High School (ATHS)* (M.A. dissertation). Faculty of Education, The British University, Dubai, Emirates.

Moranski, K., & Kim, F. (2016). Flipping lessons in a multi-section Spanish course: Implications for assigning explicit grammar instruction outside of the classroom. *The Modern Language Journal, 100* (4), 830-852.

Sadr, Z., Allami, H., & Rezai, M.J. (2008). Telephone conversation closing strategies used by Persian speakers: Rapport management approach. *International Journal of Foreign*

24

*Language Teaching & Research*, 6 (21), 21-40.

Said Ahmed, M.E.A.(2016). The effect of a flipping classroom on writing skill in English as a foreign language and students’ attitude towards flipping. *US-China Foreign Language, 14*(2), 98-114.

Sams, A., & Bergmann, J. (2013). Flip your students’ learning. *Technology Rich Learning, 70*(6), 51-67.

Sung, K. (2015). A case study on a flipped classroom in an EFL content course. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning, 18*(2), 159-187.

25