

Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (Included Submissions)

0121

What's in and What's out? A Study of Student Choice of Learning Activities in a Flipped EFL Classroom

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Research Domain: Student experiences (SE)

Abstract: Learning activities are decisive to the effectiveness of a flipped classroom, however, research dedicated to learning activities in flipped classrooms is limited, and even scarcer from learners' voice. This paper explores student choice of learning activities for a flipped EFL classroom, in an attempt to find out more targeted measures to enhance teaching and learning practices in the flipped classrooms. Student proposals (n=30) for learning activities from sophomores of an Integrated English Course (IEC) were used as media for data collection. The findings show the participants preferred a partial-flip mode. Further analysis indicates the participants attached more importance to lectures in class and revisions after class. The deviations of the participants' proposed flip from a typical flip mode arose from the advanced technology support and student need in the flipped IEC.

Paper: Background

The popularity of the flipping pedagogy is high and projected to increase in the current HE context (McNally et al., 2017). Literature has indicated the critical advantages of the flipping approach (Hao, 2016; Hung, 2017). This study attempts to explore student choice of learning activities in and out of a flipped EFL classroom. By doing so, it aims to translate student voice into well targeted actions to enhance teaching and learning practice in the flipped classrooms. The rationale behind is two-fold: First, research dedicated to learning activities in the flipped pedagogy has been limited in spite of their recognized importance to the flipping pedagogy (Bishop and Verleger, 2013). Meanwhile, learning activities are reported as the most challenging part to handle in the flipped classrooms (Betihavas et al, 2016). Second, student voice in the flipped classrooms has not received enough research attention (Brogdon, 2018). Most research on the flipping pedagogy has, so far, focused on its effects on learning outcomes and is carried out from researchers' perspectives using quantitative methods. Relatively fewer studies are dedicated to student experiences, and even fewer are done from students' perspectives using student voice.

Method

To enable student voice, student proposals for learning activities were used to collect data for this study. Proposals were made use of as a solution to the covid-19 lockdown when face-to-face data collection was impossible. The primary purpose for using student proposals was to mitigate the possible impact on the integrity of data that might arise from interviewing one's own students the

teacher researcher was lecturing. Besides, the author expected a proposal in the written form allowed time for deliberation, hence, ideas expressed in it could be more valid and sensible than oral responses. The collected data were analyzed thematically and were dedicated to answering the research questions below:

1. What is the flip mode that most students propose for the flipped IEC according to the learning activities they allocate in and out of class?
2. To what extent is the student proposed mode different from the typical flip?
3. What might be the causes of the differences?
4. What are the implications for improvement?

Findings

The majority of the participants in this study showed a preference for partial flip of IEC, with lectures both in and out of class. In addition, the participants proposed a variety of learning activities and resources in and out of class. Taking all these learning activities and resources into account, the participants, on the whole, tend to have knowledge-oriented learning activities and resources allocated online where they can make use of these resources multiple times to consolidate and facilitate their learning. They intend to allocate what is deemed as important and difficult in class, such as text-related learning activities, where they can take advantage of face-to-face interaction and monitoring to learn effectively and efficiently. In general, the proposed learning activities demonstrate the following features: First, the participants show a very conventional understanding as to how the class should be delivered, with most text-related activities in class and other activities outside the class. Second, except that text lecturing and text extensions are almost evenly allocated in and out of class, the participants show a clear preference for learning activities in or out of class. This indicates, thirdly, that they are well aware of the strengths of online and face-to-face learning

The proposed flip differs from a typical mode in the following main three aspects: The majority of the participants proposed a partial flip featuring lectures and learning activities and resources distributed both in and out of class; the participants attached very little importance to pre-class preparation; they showed limited inclination to interact or collaborate.

Technological advances and learner need are the two major factors that lead to the deviations between an ideal flip and the actual flip proposed in this study. The gap between the participants' expressed need in their proposals and their actual need for effective learning indicates that students may not really know what they actually need, what they need to do and how they should do it to learn effectively and efficiently. This explains, to some extent, why the participants cannot fully exploit technology support for learning, and why they pay less attention to pre-class preparation and interaction. These underlying causes of differences imply that to enhance teaching and learning practices in the flipped IEC, carefully planned student support is needed.

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