

Effectiveness of Blended Classroom Among Varied Streams of Undergraduate Language Learners – An Experimental Study

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ABSTRACT--- *Technology has become an integral part of learners today and keeping with the time, researchers have developed learning methods that address this issue. There have been several methods developed to address this issue. One of the most successful techniques that has in the recent past contributed largely to active learning is flipped classroom. Communication skills is the need of the hour, to ensure an employable community this study endeavours to develop a learning technique that will nurture active learners and improve their communication skill in a technology oriented community. Hence the paper aims at finding and deliberating the efficacy of implementing flipped classroom to improve communication skills among undergraduate learners from science and humanities majors.*

Keywords—*Communication skills, practical knowledge, blended classroom, pre-class assignments, active learning, flipped classroom, writing skill, qualitative study.*

INTRODUCTION

The internet today is available at your finger tip. It has managed to navigate into the heart of every town and home. Learning methods too need to keep abreast with the changing scenario to ensure a holistic learning experience by the students. Language learning methods have evolved over time based on learner requirements and the evident deficit. Today we stand at a junction where education and technology run parallel. There needs to be a fair share between the two titans for a robust outcome. Keeping this in view an endeavor was made to frame a learning method for English language learners at the undergraduate level.

THE NECESSITY OF FLIPPED CLASSROOM

We handle a classroom of digital natives; students born in the era of technology. To them technology is a part and parcel of their existence. Hence our education system needs to recognize and invest in this to ensure we exploit learners' complete potential. A method of learning that prioritises the role of technology is blended learning and gleaning that further it was purposively chosen to experiment with flipped classroom keeping in mind learner requirements. The flipped classroom method is fast gaining significance in the learning realm. Here active learning techniques are implemented to engage the learner. This proves to be helpful to the teacher especially when dealing with learners ranging from the age group of 17 to 20. Flipped classroom has three steps that invert the tradition cycle of knowledge acquisition. Firstly material related directly or indirectly to

the topic is posted online. The students acquaint themselves with the subject at a superficial level. This proves to be useful especially for learners of varied paces. Pre-class assignments help to detect potential challenges in the subject by the students. It also puts them in a responsible role with respect to their knowledge acquisition. Following that, they come to a traditional classroom. Here the students are reemphasized what was briefed to them through the online material. Any doubts concerning the topic is addressed by the teacher. The time in classroom is of a more concentrated version as students focus on the main issues to be sorted out. The last step in the learning is carried on outside the four walls of the classroom at a personal level. Hence it ensures that learning is not stagnant or limited. This method endeavours to place the learner at the centre of the entire process.

OBJECTIVES

- To observe the effectiveness of flipped classroom in improving students' practical knowledge in communication skills
- To test the students' performance in communication skills through the intervention of flipped classroom with respect to arts and science majors.

LIMITATIONS

- The study is restricted to a qualitative empirical study.
- Language learning with respect to communication skills only is tested.

SAMPLE SELECTION

Since the focus of the study was communication skills a deliberate selection of second year undergraduate students was made because their syllabus for General English has a section dedicated to communication skills in each chapter. Purposive sampling was carried out. To understand how the subject is received by every stratum, students from two different majors were selected. One group belonged to the triple major; Physics, Chemistry and Math. The other group belonged to the triple major; Theatre, English and Psychology. Both the classes had fifty to fifty five students each.

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METHODOLOGY

The three topics that I undertook for the study were; official letter, analytical essay and brochure writing. Both the classes were taught the topics employing the same methodology. Prior to starting every topic, a sample of the subject was posted on Google classroom. For example, a sample of the official letter was posted a day prior to taking the subject in class. Along with the sample a few pointers were posted to help the students gain an overview of the subject. In the case of the official letter, pointers were posted encouraging learners to note the format, alignment and tone of the language employed. Students were expected to merely go through the example and attend the following class. During the class, a detailed theoretical explanation of the subject was carried out for a time period of 40 minutes approximately. Here the example posted in Google classroom was once again projected in class and used as a teaching aid. Following the lecture session, students were given time to go through the chapter and clear any doubts concerning the subject. For those whom queries arose outside the classroom, they were encouraged to post them on Google classroom and were eventually addressed by the teacher. Peers were also encouraged to post their replies concerning the questions, which often lead to interesting discussions. This encouraged cooperative learning among students. Once the chapter has been completed, an activity on the same topic is assigned and submission of the same is set within a stipulated period of time. If students found it tedious to work individually, they were also encouraged to work in pairs and submit the task. The work was evaluated and feedback posted on Google classroom.

Students were evaluated based on a written test that was conducted on the completion of the three topics. Each of the topics were assigned ten marks each. A five point scale student questionnaire was also administered to gain in-depth knowledge on the efficiency of the method.

FINDINGS

- The overall classroom participation of both the major students had increased with the flipped classroom method
- The overall performance of the arts major students was higher than that of the science major students. This was their performance rate prior to using flipped classroom. Hence it can be said that flipped classroom had not altered the overall performance rate of learners from science and arts majors.
- The outcome of cooperative learning through flipped classroom was unexpected and successful in the case of both the major students.
- The science major students had more queries than arts major students in the post class sessions in Google classroom
- The pre-class posts on Google classroom was keenly followed by the science major students than the arts major students
- Arts major students failed to adhere to the format but their language implemented was above average. Hence it can be inferred that the flipped classroom

method was not successful with them with respect to format.

- Science major students adhered to the format but language was found lacking. Hence it can be inferred that flipped classroom was successful with them with respect to format.
- The concept of an analytical essay was challenging for science major students to comprehend even after pre-class posts and classroom lectures. Hence the flipped classroom method was only partially successful with respect to analytical essay.
- The analytical essay in the case of arts major students resulted in an argumentative essay despite the pre-class posts and classroom lectures. Hence flipped classroom was only partially successful
- With regard to brochures, both the major students were creative in their assignments both in format and language. Hence the flipped classroom proved to be successful with respect to brochures.

CONCLUSION

Implementation of flipped classroom as a learning strategy proved to be successful in student participation and the process of learning. However flipped classroom did not improve the performance scale of the learners from the point of view of examinations. Flipped classroom did lead to cooperative learning in the case of slow learners and partially autonomous learning in the case of advanced learners. Flipped classroom helped the teacher impart concepts and formats in a more efficient manner. Flipped classroom being successful or not is subject to the topic being taken and the learners being instructed. It was tedious from the point of view of the teacher and time consuming from the point of view of the learners. Flipped classroom had initiated the interest in continuous learning.

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