Article

Students' Perception on Flipped Classroom Approach in Learning Communicative English among Community College Students

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ABSTRACT

Learning English as a second language has never been straightforward, especially when it requires the learners to speak in the target language during the lesson. Students have the tendency to keep quiet and refuse to communicate in English due to many factors. In encouraging students to speak in the target language during the class, many English language instructors have pursued new and interesting approaches. One of the approaches includes flipped classrooms. Flipped classroom allows students to learn the concepts of one particular topic at their own time and pace whilst spending the classroom session on hand-on activities. This study investigates students' perceptions of using flipped classroom approaches in their Communicative English classroom. The aim of this study was to determine whether a learning approach such as flipped classroom had any influence over students' attitudes and motivation. The participants of this study were 106 students at Taiping Community College. This study employed a quantitative research design via survey. Before gathering the students' opinion, the participants had experienced the flipped classroom approach during the Communicative English lesson. After that, a set of questionnaires were distributed to the participants and data were analyzed descriptively. Results revealed that most students had positive perceptions towards the use of flipped classrooms and were highly motivated to learn and had positive attitudes towards the implementation of the flipped classroom approach. This study provides insights for Malaysian community college lecturers to adopt flipped classroom approach in their teaching, especially in the Communicative English lesson.

KEYWORDS: Communicative English; community colleges; flipped classroom; higher education

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Introduction

In this era of Industry Revolution 4.0, we need to have the language skills to show our ability in competing with more advanced countries. Apart from the need to communicate with others socially, we must have the skill of communication as it is a very crucial factor to win an employer's heart in terms of seeking a job (Idrus, Salleh, Abdullah, 2011). Research studies that have been conducted in various Asian countries came out with findings that identify better English mastery helps to improve job performance and boost the prospects of promotion. A study by Ojanperä Miina (2014) pointed out some problems that occurred for having poor English language skills which include misinterpretation for it will create frustration and barriers among the employees. According to Mehta & Mehta (2009), to meet the needs for international communication at a workplace, one needs to be proficient in English.

The teaching and learning process in higher education institutions, especially community colleges have proven to be a great challenge to lecturers in general. The need to boost students' English language proficiency is important as they will one day enter the workforce or further their studies to a higher level. According to Bruniges (2012), new forms of learning and creative expression for students have been introduced through the use of new technology. With the advancement of technology, educators are expected to integrate the innovation into their teaching and learning in order to meet the needs of new generations especially for communicative purposes. One of the promising innovations is called flipped classroom. The flipped classroom has become one of the approaches that have become increasingly popular in the higher education sector. According to Saitta, et al., (2016), in a flipped classroom, students are assigned with work through the basic content of a course on their own time. During the class time, students will usually proceed with hands-on activities focusing more on deep learning experiences.

Background of the study

The purpose of this study is to find out whether the flipped classroom approach for students at one of the community colleges in Malaysia will enable them to experience an English classroom in a different environment and whether this approach has imposed positive impacts to the teaching and learning. A research by Tucker (2012) shows that educators in higher education have started to slowly move parts of their class content outside of the classroom because learning within the confined four walls is deemed as insufficient especially when it comes to the deep learning experience. Due to that, time has been freed up inside of the classroom for meaningful exploration by students.

For the past few years, there has been a rise in the amount of literature on flipped learning studies in the second language learning context. These studies have found that the flipped learning approach is an effective English language teaching and learning approach in the L2 context. Some quantitative studies such as Lee & Wallace (2017) statistically quantified the effects of the flipped learning approach on South Korean learners. The results from the study indicated that the learners taught using the flipped learning approach scored significantly higher than the learners in the non-flipped classroom. From another quantitative perspective, the findings from a perceptions' survey showed that learners enjoyed learning in the flipped classroom. In the same vein, Doman and Webb

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(2016) carried out the study to examine learners' attitudes toward the flipped learning model using a large-scale experiment at the University of Macau. The results showed that students in the flipped learning approach had also shown a positive attitude towards flipped learning than the students in the non-flipped classroom.

From the literature, it can be summarized that flipped classrooms bring a different way of teaching from the traditional teaching methods where the instructions are delivered online, outside the classroom hour and the homework is brought into the classroom. In the Flipped Classroom approach, teachers act as facilitators, in which teachers assist and guide the pupils in achieving their learning objectives. According to Bermann & Sams (2012), when the lecture is delivered to students via video outside of the classroom it means flipped learning is happening. Santikam. et al. (2018) showed that the flipped approach left a positive impact on the students. This supported the essence of the flipped approach whereas flipped instruction also facilitated student learning compared to traditional instruction.

Another perk of using flipped classrooms is it allows learning to be more individualized and personalized (Sota, 2016). This is in line with the notion that there is no one-size-approach that fits all students. Thus, a more individualized approach should be customized to students' differences and preferences. Besides that, motivating students of different proficiency levels can be increased and students' engagement is enabled. In this study, the objectives were to find out the students' perceptions regarding the use of flipped classroom approach in learning Communicative English as well as finding out whether the approach of flipped classroom influence the students' attitudes and motivation in learning Communicative English.

At community colleges, most of the students possess low grades for their English language subject in Malaysia Examination Certificate (SPM). In order to apply for a certificate programme in community colleges, it is not a requirement for the students to pass their English. However, students are required to complete all the subjects in their designated course including two English courses, which are Communicative English and Workplace English in order to receive their certificate. This study aims to introduce the flipped classroom approach to the students of Taiping Community College so that more time can be spent on activities and practical exercises in the classroom.

Findings and discussion

Findings from Questionnaire

The total population of the students during the study was 106. The population is made up of students of Taiping Community College. The study was done on convenience sampling as the students were presently available in English class during the questionnaire distribution. The respondents were gathered and briefed first to ensure they understand about the purpose of the study and how to answer the questions. Respondents were guided through the questionnaires as the researcher explained every detail of the questions. Students were given the choice whether to continue with the survey or not. Information regarding the study will be given to ensure transparency and clarity.

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Table 1: Students' Perception Regarding the Use of the Flipped Classroom Approach in Learning Communicative English

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	SD
I heard about flipped classroom	17 (16%)	48 (45.3%)	40 (37.7%)	1 (0.9%)	0 (0%)	2.235	0.724
I understand the concept of flipped classroom	13 (12.3%)	46 (43.4%)	43 (40.6%)	4 (3.8%)	0 (0%)	2.358	0.745
I find the flipped classroom approach easy to adapt and more engaging	17 (16%)	35 (33%)	44 (41.5%)	10 (9.4%)	0 (0%)	2.443	0.873
I prefer the flipped classroom approach than traditional learning approach	33 (31.1%)	48 (45.3%)	23 (21.7%)	2 (1.9%)	0 (0%)	1.943	0.778
I understand the videos given by my lecturer	10 (9.4%)	34 (32.1%)	30 (28.3%)	28 (26.4%)	4 (3.8%)	2.83	1.046
I find the flipped classroom allows me to control my own learning	13 (12.3%)	32 (30.2%)	43 (40.6%)	16 (15.1%)	2 (1.9%)	2.641	0.948
The flipped classroom approach helped me understand the content easily	28 (26.4%)	46 (43.4%)	30 (28.3%)	2 (1.9%)	0 (0%)	2.056	0.79
I feel happy to learn Communicative English using the flipped classroom approach	9 (8.5%)	36 (34%)	39 (36.8%)	21 (19.8%)	1 (0.9%)	2.707	0.915
I am able to keep up my lessons in Communicative English classes using flipped classroom approach	19 (17.9%)	44 (41.5%)	35 (33%)	6 (5.7%)	2 (1.9%)	2.32	0.9
I want to continue learning using the flipped classroom approach	17 (16%)	40 (37.7%)	35 (33%)	14 (13.2%)	0 (0%)	2.434	0.915
Overall Mean						2.397	0.618

To obtain the reliability coefficient, Cronbach's alpha was performed to affirm the internal consistency of the variables (Hair, et al., 1998). The flipped classroom approach as the first construct had resulted in an alpha level of 0.94 which showed a high degree of reliability. Meanwhile, an alpha level of 0.89 was obtained from the motivation and attitude construct items, which also showed a high degree of reliability. As such with an overall alpha level of 0.91, the scale and its two constructs are highly reliable.

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Table 2: Students' attitudes and motivation in learning Communicative English

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	SD
I learn language better when I have positive attitude	22 (20.8%)	37 (34.9%)	30 (28.3%)	17 (16%)	0 (0%)	2.396	0.992
My attitude in learning has improved when flipped classroom approach is introduced	8 (7.5%)	22 (20.8%)	51 (48.1%)	21 (19.8%)	4 (3.8%)	2.915	0.927
I feel that I am more motivated to learn when flipped classroom approach is introduced	26 (24.5%)	41 (38.7%)	23 (21.7%)	16 (15.1%)	0 (0%)	2.273	1.00
I am more actively engaged in the activities given by my lecturer using the flipped classroom approach	39 (36.8%)	43 (40.6%)	22 (20.8%)	2 (1.9%)	0 (0%)	1.877	0.801
Flipped classroom gives me greater chance to communicate confidently with my lecturer and friends	24 (22.6%)	49 (46.2%)	22 (20.8%)	11 (10.4%)	0 (0%)	2.188	0.906
Overall Mean						2.33	0.718

Santikam., et al (2018), showed that flipped approach had a positive impact on the students. The study revealed that the students' English scores were satisfactory after students were taught in flipped classrooms. From the same study, most students gave good perceptions on flipped classroom approach. They believe that this approach allowed them to be autonomous learners. The positive feedback from this study as well implies that students of Taiping Community College are open to accept new things.

Discussion

In line with globalization and modernization, educators in higher education institutions are always seeking the best tools and techniques to employ in order to increase students' achievement. As new technologies emerge, best practices in relation to these technologies should be thought critically by the educators. A progressive classroom change in culture is how one should describe flipped teaching. It suggests a synergy of 21st century learning styles with technology and social academia changes. In this present study, one instructional strategy was implemented which showed a promising outcome for student learning which is flipped classroom approach. This strategy, besides being evolved into a platform for promoting critical thinking, is also promoting collaboration work as well as social interaction with peers on an academic level. Students are encouraged and were provided with educational activities to be active in flipped classroom

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approach. Based on the findings obtained, the respondents show good perception towards the approach introduced.

This study has a number of implications for the college management as well as the lecturers regarding the implementation of flipped classroom approach in learning Communicative English. As the top management, this study will enhance their understanding on the aspect which should be focused on enhancing the effectiveness of flipped classroom approach in learning Communicative English. Furthermore, it will create awareness to the management to ensure that students can adapt with the approaches introduced. This study will serve as a base for more analytical and comprehensive future studies. Better understanding of students' perceptions and impact of flipped classroom approach in students' learning process can influence lecturers' way of teaching in the community college.

Conclusion

Overall, it can be seen that the flipped classroom approach is an innovative strategy which is adopted in higher education because it suits the demands of students at higher academic institutions with the aid of development of technology. The present study showed that the students' perception of flipped classrooms in community college was high. The findings from this study confirm the results of these studies and highlight advantages associated with the flipped classroom approach. Referring to the finding in this study, it indicates that students' perception towards flipped classroom approach in learning Communicative English is good as they could well-understand with the concept introduced. This approach acts as the platform for the students to develop their ability to understand the learning easily. Besides that, it was found that flipped classroom approach was more engaging compared to the traditional classroom learning method. This situation gives positive influence towards students' achievement in the respective subject.

Investigation of the students' perception on the flipped classroom approach for other subjects can be extended further to evaluate its effectiveness. Also, this research can be extended to other community colleges in Malaysia to evaluate students' perception of flipped classroom approach in learning. Several potential areas for future study when considering the differences that exist in flipped vs. traditional classrooms can be suggested. The first is to determine whether the construct of the content or the instructional model came from a different level of learning. Different type of interaction as well as reducing cognitive load through flipped teaching are another point to ponder when researching the increased collaboration in classroom activities. Educators might want to consider researching the structure of the flipped classroom to be introduced in their institutions. The structure can cover some points such as targeted instructions in navigating classroom strategies and expectations and investigating the responsibility of students in accessing, navigating and collaborating their personalized learning.

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