


A Case Study of Technology-Assisted Flipped Learning in Enhancing Learner Translation Capabilities and Its Mitigated Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a flipped classroom approach tailored to provide dynamic instructional learning of one translation module in Vietnam. The model took consideration of relevant factors of activity theory (instruments, rules, community, and division of labour) to (1) investigate how it could re-orientate learners' translation habits and (2) find out the mitigated challenges encountered by Vietnamese learners. Thirty-nine junior students at a public university in Vietnam participated in the study. The research implemented a case study design, using semi-structured interviews to examine in depth the benefits of this flipped setting and its actual challenges. The collected findings revealed that this approach could not only bridge the gaps in the relevant literature of flipped learning, but also could improve learners' habits to use appropriate translation strategies. Finally, challenges faced by learners during the implementation were minimised, thanks to the systematic structure of the flipped classroom procedure and activity theory.

KEYWORDS

Activity Theory, Challenges, Flipped Learning, Learners' Capabilities, Technology-Assisted, Tensions, Translation Habits, Translation Strategies, Translation Training, Vietnam

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation training is a complex discipline in which graduates are expected to have high ability to participate in a wide range of domestic and international activities (Soang, 2016). However, the differences in instructors' experience, limited training hours, a lack of contextualised materials, and teachers' additional responsibilities to the institutions pose huge challenges in this discipline (Nguyen et al., 2016). Therefore, innovative approaches - which account for specific learners' needs and limited time allocation of the curriculum - are needed to exploit the better use of teachers' and learners' time. The flipped classroom, therefore, presents practical solutions to these issues by maximising the physical class time with more real-life practice, reducing the in-class lectures, and promoting interactions, both inside and outside the classroom.

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In addition, a review of relevant literature reveals some gaps in flipped pedagogy. For one thing, most research has focused its impacts on assessment scores (Novais, Silva, & Muniz Jr., 2017; Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2019) or learners' attitudes (Awidi & Paynter, 2019; Låg & Sæle, 2019), which might not be sufficient for a comprehensive understanding of the benefits of this approach. Therefore, it is useful to understand how this approach actually helps learners to develop good learning habits. For another thing, there is a lack of empirical studies based on a rigid methodological framework that investigate the challenges faced by learners. From a theoretical perspective, scholars typically propose challenges faced by learners and instructors such as limited access to technology (Chung & Khe, 2017), unfamiliarity with the changing roles of teachers and students (Mustafa, Rahmah, Hanafi, & Wahidah, 2019), and extra efforts required from both sides (Lin et al., 2017). As for empirical studies, researchers typically mention the challenges as being attributable to unexpected negative results of their findings, such as heavy workload and unsystematic in-class procedures (Mustafa et al., 2019; Song & Kapur, 2017). However, no formal studies have been conducted to address the challenges systematically. Therefore, a study with a well-defined framework is needed to examine what challenges are actually faced by learners, and how these elements mediate students' performance.

To sum up, the glaring scarcity of literature measuring the beneficial impacts of flipped learning on various aspects of academic learning has prompted this study to investigate how this approach re-orientates positive translation habits, and what challenges are faced when the flipped classroom is designed based on a well-informed instructional design (Soltanpour & Valizadeh, 2018; Zou & Xie, 2019).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Translation Training and Translation Habits

Translation is a linguistic activity to render meaning from one source language into a target language (Newmark, 1988), and translation training is a discipline that caters to the preparation of trainees for the market. Adapted from the functional approach of Nord (2012), the key factor of translation requires that the core information in the source text being translated is adequately communicated in the form of the target language.

Translation habits could be defined as a set of all the regular, settled, or behavioral strategies that learners adopt to solve specific translation problems both consciously and unconsciously (Zhu, 2017). Moreover, as Do (2019) maintained, a solid foundation of good translation habits means that the translators are able to adopt professional strategies on a consistent basis in appropriate situations to do their assignments. This means individuals who can demonstrate exemplary good translation habits are highly valued and have a better employability. In short, good translation habits imply a high awareness of the appropriate use of professional strategies in particular situations and the high frequency of using these strategies to do the tasks (Zhu, 2017). Therefore, helping learners to develop good translation habits should be given more consideration within the translation training process. Regarding this issue, Martín de León (2016) suggested a five-step approach in teaching professional translation strategies and developing learners' translation habits. Figure 1 demonstrates this adapted approach as follows.

2.2. Flipped Learning and Translation Training

Flipped learning (a.k.a. flipped classroom approach) is a teaching approach in which students have prior access to the knowledge and prepare the lessons to obtain basic knowledge about the subject matter prior to the face-to-face sessions. Then, physical class time is devoted to clarifications, collaborative practice and problem-solving activities at a higher-order thinking level (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). The underpinning of this approach lies in the justification for more focus on deeper critical activities. In other words, class time is often used for problem-solving activities based on the

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