Exploring Learners' Attitudes Towards Technology-Enhanced Flipped Language Instruction

Lina Lee, University of New Hampshire, USA

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8506-4991

ABSTRACT

The article reports on a study that explored the affordances and challenges of the flipped classroom model for an advanced language course, involving the implementation of a four-skill integration approach and the use of various digital tools. Eighteen advanced language students participated in the study over the course of one semester. Students carried out a variety of online assignments using self-access learning modules in Canvas to prepare them for in-class activities. Data from post-surveys and focus group interviews along with the student coursework reveal that students had a positive attitude towards the flipped model because it gave them agency over their own learning and engaged them in meaningful interactions with their peers. The study suggests that well-designed tasks are essential, and that instructor scaffolding is needed to guide students in learning course content. The study contributes a new model of flipped instruction that facilitated L2 development in an effective manner.

KEYWORDS

Digital Tools, Flipped Language Instruction, Peer Interaction, Task Design, Teacher Scaffolding

INTRODUCTION

According to the *NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements* (ACTFL, 2017), building learners' communicative language competence should be the primary goal of language instruction. To achieve a high level of language proficiency, learners must have constant interaction with and exposure to the target language. Many students, however, encounter challenges of developing their language competence in the traditional classroom due to limited instructional time, large classes, and the lack of opportunities to use L2 beyond the classroom. Among different instructional approaches, flipped learning as a blended approach has been increasingly implemented in L2 instruction to enhance learner performance (e.g., Alhamami & Khan, 2019; Lee & Wallance, 2018; Wang & Qi, 2018). In flipped classrooms, students first learn instructional content using online materials and resources outside of class, and then apply their learning by engaging in interactive classroom activities (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Flipping the classroom follows a constructivist framework rooted in active learning that involves students in taking a central role in the learning process, as opposed to passively receiving information from the instructor (Bishop & Verleger, 2013; Sun, Wu & Lee, 2017). Learners construct

and build L2 knowledge through social engagement and expert guidance. Teachers provide learning environments, opportunities and interactions that foster active learning. Learners, however, should be held accountable for their own learning, and maintain self-directed learning skills and strategies to learn content effectively (Mori, Omori & Sato, 2016; Talbert, 2017).

In the field of language teaching, researchers have examined the effect of using technology to flip the learning process (e.g., Lee, 2017; Lee & Wallace, 2017). Most studies have been conducted by comparing the flipped classroom approach to traditional instruction in STEM education (e.g., Goodwin & Miller, 2013; Lai & Hwang, 2016), and ESL and EFL learning contexts (e.g., Hsieh, Wu & Marek, 2017; Hung, 2017; Wu, Hsieh & Yang, 2017). The results show that flipped learning improved performance, and increased confidence and intrinsic motivation (e.g., Tonkin, Page & Forsey, 2019; Tseng, Lin & Chen, 2018; Yang, Yi & Wang, 2018). Challenges in relation to flipped classrooms have also been reported, such as intensive workload, learners' readiness and technical problems (Hao, 2016; Herreid & Schiller, 2013; Wang, 2016). Research findings to date are mixed and inconclusive. Further studies are needed to investigate the effectiveness of flipped learning on students' engagement in the foreign language learning. Thus, this study attempts to extend the existing literature by conducting an exploratory case study in which an instructional design model for flipped learning was implemented in an advanced Spanish language course to foster and enhance L2 learning. In particular, task types, digital tools, peer interaction and teacher scaffolding were explored to address the affordances and challenges of flipped learning for L2 development.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Technology-Enhanced Flipped Instruction for Language Learning

Flipped learning is viewed as a pedagogical approach that moves content delivery outside of class to free up in-class time for practical application activities. The principle goal of flipped instruction is to involve students in learning course materials before class as a way to better prepare them for in-class activities (Basal, 2015; Webb & Doman, 2020). To this end, the use of digital technology is often incorporated into flipped classrooms to create a virtual learning space where students engage with instructional content individually, and work with others collaboratively (Yilmaz & Baydas, 2017). Students learn at their own pace due to the uninterrupted availability and accessibility of online materials. They decide when, where and how much to learn without time and space limitations. Given that technology extends learning beyond the classroom, flipping a classroom has the potential to increase teacher-student and student-student interactions, and empower students to create and share knowledge through social networking within online communities (Keengwe & Onchwari, 2015).

A wide variety of digital technologies, including learning management systems (e.g., *Canvas, Moodle*), social media (e.g., *Facebook, Twitter*) and mobile instant messaging (e.g., *WhatsApp, LINE*) have been implemented to flipped language learning. For example, Hung (2015) implemented *WebQuest* in ESL flipped lessons to help students develop their language proficiency. As a result, English language learners achieved higher final grades in comparison to those who did not use flipped lessons. In a recent study by Yang, Yi and Wang (2018), various types of technologies (e.g., *Camtasia, WeChat*) were integrated into the flipped classroom to build students' language skills. The findings show that students performed better in speaking than the students in the traditional class. In the same vein, Amiryousefi (2019) reported that EFL students improved their speaking skills after using the mobile instant messaging implemented in the flipped learning instruction. A few studies have found that moving L2 grammar instruction to a flipped mode helped reduce learners' cognitive load to process complex structures by watching short videos at their own pace (Shih & Huang, 2018; Tonkin, Page & Forsey, 2019). Significantly, flipping the L2 instruction enhanced learners' metacognition and promoted social engagement. Apart from language development, research studies

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