

Higher Education Learners' Perceptions of the Online Flipped Instruction

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored Iranian higher education learners' perceptions of the online flipped instruction. Participants were 25 Iranian undergraduates, aged 20 to 27 years, majoring in English Language Translation, selected through convenience sampling. They received flipped instruction in an online course titled 'Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching', which consisted of 14 sessions conducted in Iran. Data were collected through a structured interview that examined the benefits, drawbacks, and challenges of implementing online flipped instruction. It was found that all the participants were satisfied with their experience. Several benefits were stated, such as 'effective learning', 'interesting and motivating class', 'more interaction', 'more cooperation and collaboration', 'more engagement', 'useful class time', 'learning teamwork', 'control on time to learn', 'acquiring practical knowledge and skills', 'reducing stress', 'self-reflection and self-evaluation', 'learning to take responsibility', 'boosting self-confidence', 'more attention in class', 'receiving effective feedback', 'becoming autonomous', and 'satisfying all learning styles'. However, five students also complained that the approach put a heavy burden on students. Six students argued that poor internet connection and lack of adequate technological tools could cause difficulty for students who study in poor areas of the country. Therefore, positive outcomes can be achieved through the online flipped pedagogy, although careful planning is also required.

Keywords: flipped pedagogy, online classes, higher education learners' perceptions.

Yüksek Öğretim Öğrencilerinin Çevrimiçi Ters Yüz Edilmiş Öğretime İlişkin Algıları Öz

Bu nitel çalışma, İranlı yüksek öğretim öğrencilerinin çevrimiçi ters yüz edilmiş öğretime ilişkin algılarını araştırmayı amaçladı. Kolayda örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen katılımcılar, 20 ile 27 yaşları arasında İngilizce Çeviribilim bölümünde öğrenim gören 25 İranlı lisans öğrencisinden oluşuyordu. Katılımcılar, İran'da 14 oturum süren çevrimiçi bir ders olan 'Dil Öğretiminde Yaklaşımlar ve Yöntemler' başlıklı ters yüz eğitimine katıldılar. Veriler yapılandırılmış bir görüşme yoluyla toplanmıştır. Tüm katılımcıların deneyimlerinden memnun oldukları belirlendi. 'Etkili öğrenme', 'ilginç ve motive edici sınıf', 'daha fazla etkileşim', 'daha fazla ortak çalışma ve işbirliği', 'daha fazla katılım', 'yararlı sınıf zamanı', takım çalışması öğrenme, 'öğrenme zamanı üzerinde kontrol', 'pratik bilgi ve beceriler edinme', 'stresi azaltma', 'öz yansıtma ve öz değerlendirme', 'sorumluluk almayı öğrenme', 'özgüveni artırma', 'sınıfta daha fazla dikkat', 'etkili geri bildirim alma', 'özerk olma' ve 'tüm öğrenme stillerini tatmin etme' gibi çeşitli faydalar belirtilmiştir. Ancak beş öğrenci yaklaşımın öğrencilere ağır bir yük getirdiğinden şikayetçi oldu. Altı öğrenci, zayıf internet bağlantısının ve yeterli teknolojik araçların bulunmamasının, ülkenin yoksul bölgelerinde eğitim gören öğrenciler için zorluk yaratabileceğini savundu. Bu nedenle, çevrimiçi ters çevrilmiş pedagoji yoluyla olumlu sonuçlar elde edilebilir, ancak dikkatli bir planlama da gereklidir.

Anahtar kelimeler: ters çevrilmiş pedagoji, çevrimiçi sınıflar, yükseköğretim öğrencilerinin algıları.

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INTRODUCTION

Online instruction has experienced rapid growth in recent years (Paechter & Maier, 2010). Some studies have proven benefits for online instruction, such as convenience (Fedynich, 2013) and reduced withdrawal or failure (Nguyen, 2015). However, the downsides of the online instruction include ‘having difficulty understanding online course materials’ (Alawamleh et al., 2022; Allo, 2020; Chung et al., 2020; Khalil et al., 2020; Subedi et al., 2020), ‘inadequate active engagement in online class activities’ (Sreehari, 2020; Valizadeh & Soltanpour, 2021; Xhelili et al., 2021), ‘lack of sufficient interaction in online learning’ (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Alawamleh et al., 2022; Bączek et al., 2021; Tan, 2021; Valizadeh & Soltanpour, 2021), ‘learners’ lack of enough concentration’ (Hussein et al., 2020; Subedi et al., 2020; Xhelili et al., 2021) and demotivation (Alawamleh et al., 2022; Xhelili et al., 2021).

The search for the most efficient and effective teaching methods is a primary concern for teachers, regardless of the subject being taught (Leis, 2022). To take precautions to avoid the aforementioned problems in online classes, the teacher-researcher of the present study sought a feasible and practical solution. Based on the review of the literature, it seemed that flipped instruction could be a solution, effective for several fields of study because as O’Shea (2020) truly stated, flipped models of teaching are flexible and have the potential to fulfill the learners’ needs, especially in contexts where the learners are not satisfied with the amount of engagement in class activities and are merely passive recipients of the information.

In flipped pedagogy, learners do not receive the teachers’ lectures first to learn the contents; rather, they usually obtain the content of instruction via online videos prepared or provided by the teacher before the class session. Students are required to watch the assigned instructional videos by themselves before class time (Tang et al., 2023). Then, class time incorporates a variety of communicative activities, such as group work and interactive discussion (Shih & Huang, 2020; Wang & Qi, 2018).

Studies on the effect of flipped instruction have indicated mostly promising results regarding academic performance and student perception in various fields of study (Dressler & Rachfall, 2020; Love et al., 2014; Pamuk & Alagözlü, 2024; Soltanpour & Valizadeh, 2018; Valizadeh & Soltanpour, 2020). For instance, it has already been proven that flipped instruction can enhance learners’ retention (Velegol et al., 2015), content understanding (Love et al., 2014), and learner-instruction interaction (McLean et al., 2016). It can also increase learners’ involvement, task orientation, innovation, meaningful learning, as well as motivation and engagement (Dressler & Rachfall, 2020; Leis, 2022; Smith & Khechara, 2020; Zhu & Xie, 2018); therefore, the learning environment can be more attractive and active for learners.

Collaborative learning approaches, where the instructor is not the sole source of knowledge, can be implemented through flipped classroom model (O’Shea, 2020). Furthermore, teachers’ provision of different learning materials to the learners before class lectures, results in more time for learners’ engagement during the lectures. Learners have knowledge about the lesson content; therefore, they can be active during the class lectures by asking their questions, practicing, and applying their already obtained knowledge during class. Additionally, using this new approach, the professor can identify the low-performing learners who need more help (Dressler & Rachfall, 2020; Klímplová, 2020).

In addition, as for tackling the challenges of online instruction, some researchers adopted flipped instruction and recommended it during the Covid-19 pandemic and found positive outcomes (Beason-Abmayr et al., 2021; Jia et al., 2022; Sanandaji & Ghanbartehrani, 2021). As a result, the teacher-researcher of the present study decided to adopt this approach in one of her university classes to investigate its efficacy. Consequently, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the benefits of the online flipped instruction?
2. What are the drawbacks of the online flipped instruction?
3. Are there any issues that can cause difficulty in employing the online flipped instruction?

METHOD

Research Design

This study has a qualitative design. The purpose of the study was not to test objective theories, so quantitative research was not preferred. Qualitative research is a tool for investigating and thereby understanding the meaning people think and believe about an issue (Creswell, 2014). Convenience sampling was utilized as the sampling strategy. The only criterion for selecting such sampling was the convenience of the researchers (Dörnyei,

2007). In other words, the participants were selected based on their accessibility and availability to the researchers. Also, they were willing to participate in the study. In this study, time was a constraint on the researchers, which can be a reason for the researchers to select such sampling (Sim & Wright, 2000). Also, the research was not funded by any organizations. Therefore, low cost was another main reason why researchers adopted this technique (Johnson & Christensen, 2016). Based on Robinson (2014), convenience sampling in qualitative research is justified if the sample universe is defined as demographically and geographically local.

Research Instruments

The online classes were run on the Adobe Connect platform. Additionally, data were gathered via a structured interview, designed to collect qualitative data. The interview questions were exactly the three research questions of the study. No validity and reliability studies had been conducted for the interview form. The teacher-researcher sent the questions to the participants. They sent their responses via three voice messages.

Sampling or Study Group

The participants were 25 Iranian undergraduates who were majoring in English Language Translation and were selected by convenience sampling as was explained above in the Research Design section. They received the flipped instruction for the online course titled 'Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching'. Their ages ranged from 20 to 27 years old.

Implementation

The students experienced flipped instruction during 14 online sessions. At the end of each session, the participants would receive the materials of the next session in various formats: either teacher-made videos or the ones downloaded from YouTube, teacher-made PowerPoint and audio files, as well as some articles and book chapters in PDF. They were required to study the materials and be ready for group discussions or design lesson plans in class. From session 2, they were also required to select a language component and write a lesson plan based on what they had learned every session, so they would discuss the correctness of their work the next session. In class time, they were required to share whatever they understood with their partners or peers, ask their questions, and clear up their misunderstandings. They also received the professor's feedback whenever needed. Each session's topics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Course Plan

Weeks (Sessions)	Topics/Activities
1	CLT (Communicative Language Teaching)
2	a) What and How to Teach Grammar to Students aged over 13, that is, Teenagers and Adults b) Lesson plan Template and How to Write a Lesson Plan
3	Students shared their lesson plans with their peers, asked their questions to check their work, and clarified any misunderstanding in terms of the teaching practice of their selected grammatical structure.
4	a) What and How to Teach Reading to Students aged over 13, that is, Teenagers and Adults b) Lesson plan Template and How to Write a Lesson Plan
5	Students shared their lesson plans with their peers, asked their questions to check their work, and clarified any misunderstanding in terms of the teaching practice of their selected reading passage.
6	a) What and How to Teach Listening and Vocabulary to Students aged over 13, that is, Teenagers and Adults b) Lesson plan Template and How to Write a Lesson Plan As students had watched the required videos and articles, and wrote lesson plans for their selected listening skill and vocabulary, students shared their lesson plans with their peers, asked their questions to check their work, and clarified any misunderstanding in terms of the teaching practice of their selected vocabulary.
7	a) What and How to Teach Speaking (Conversation) to Students aged over 13, that is, Teenagers and Adults b) Lesson plan Template and How to Write a Lesson Plan As students had watched the required videos and articles, and wrote lesson plans for their selected listening skill and vocabulary, students shared their lesson plans with their peers, asked their questions to check their work, and clarified any misunderstanding in terms of the teaching practice of their selected conversation part.

8	Principles of Teaching English to Young Learners, aged between 7 to 12.
9	a) What and How to Teach Grammar to Young Learners, aged between 7 to 12. b) Lesson plan Template and How to Write a Lesson Plan
10	Students shared their lesson plans with their peers, asked their questions to check their work, and clarified any misunderstanding in terms of the teaching practice of their selected grammatical structure.
11	a) What and How to Teach Reading to Young Learners, aged between 7 to 12. b) Lesson plan Template and How to Write a Lesson Plan
12	Students shared their lesson plans with their peers, asked their questions to check their work, and clarified any misunderstanding in terms of the teaching practice of their selected reading passage.
13	a) What and How to Teach Vocabulary to Young Learners, aged between 7 to 12. b) Lesson plan Template and How to Write a Lesson Plan As students had watched the required videos and articles, and wrote lesson plans for their selected listening skill and vocabulary, students shared their lesson plans with their peers, asked their questions to check their work, and clarified any misunderstanding in terms of the teaching practice of their selected vocabulary.
14	a) What and How to Teach Conversation to Young Learners, aged between 7 to 12. b) Lesson plan Template and How to Write a Lesson Plan As students had watched the required videos and articles, and wrote lesson plans for their selected listening skill and vocabulary, students shared their lesson plans with their peers, asked their questions to check their work, and clarified any misunderstanding in terms of the teaching practice of their selected conversation part.

Data Collection

After the final exams, all candidates were asked the same questions, which included the three research questions of the present study. The interview questions were sent to the participants in PDF format. The questions were written in Persian, the official language of Iran. The participants were required to answer them orally, record their voice, and send the audio file to the researcher via e-mail, Telegram account, or WhatsApp account at their earliest convenience. They were told they were free to answer the questions in Persian. They had received their final test scores when they sent their answers to the interview questions.

Data Analysis

After receiving the audio files of the interview answers, both authors listened to the files and transcribed the answers separately. Then on a session, they checked the documents together to spot and fix any errors. Then both authors analyzed the data by a method of thematic analysis separately (Guest et al., 2012). First, they read the participants' responses to learn about the data. Then, using MAXQDA 2020 and via both inductive and deductive approaches (Reichert, 2014), they identified several preliminary codes (themes) and assigned them to data. The codes (themes) included "effective learning", "interest", "motivation", "interaction", "cooperation and collaboration", "engagement", "efficiency in using class time", "time management", "practical knowledge and skills", "easing stress", "relieving embarrassment", "self-reflection and self-evaluation", "learning responsibility", "boosting self-confidence", "attention", "feedback", "learning style", "autonomy", as well as "comparison and competition". Next, they reviewed and refined these preliminary themes by collecting relevant themes and referring to similar concepts. Finally, after finishing the categorization, both authors had a meeting to reach a consensus on all codes to achieve inter-rater reliability. They reviewed all the responses and codes, discussed the similarities and differences in their codes, and resolved any differences. Moreover, to incorporate the principle of credibility, concerning the truthfulness of the findings, the researchers used the member-checking strategy by sharing the data and interpretations with 5 participants in the research to check if they agree. As a result, it was assured that the researchers' understanding of the participants' perceptions was as accurate and complete as possible (Nassaji, 2020).

Research Ethics

The research was conducted with the voluntary participation of a group of Iranian undergraduates. Ethical approval for the study, under permission number 1401/6/1, was obtained from Mr. Hashem Mohebbi, the director of the ACECR: The English Language Teaching Department, Karaj, Iran, on August 29, 2022. All ethical guidelines were adhered to, and no ethical considerations were violated during the study.

FINDINGS

Benefits of the Flipped Instruction

The 1st research question inquired about the benefits of flipped instruction. A list of 20 benefits were identified, which are presented below in Table 2.

Table 1. Benefits of the Flipped Instruction

No.	Theme	Found Benefit	Frequency
1	Effective Learning	More effective learning takes place via online flipped instruction compared to the non-flipped online classrooms.	24
2	Interest and Motivation	Online flipped classroom is more interesting and motivating to learn than the other non-flipped online classrooms	19
3	Interaction	There exists more peer as well as student-teacher interaction in the flipped pedagogy.	11
4	Cooperation and Collaboration	There exist more students' cooperation and collaboration.	10
5		Students also learn teamwork, cooperation, and collaboration.	6
6	Engagement	Students are more engaged in learning.	10
7	Time Efficiency	Class time is used more usefully.	6
8	Time Management	Students can have control over their time to learn.	5
9	Practical Knowledge and Skills	Students acquire practical knowledge and skills.	5
10	Easing Stress	Students' stress level for exams is reduced.	5
11	Relieving Embarrassment	Shy students can open up.	5
12	Self-reflection and Self-evaluation	There exists an opportunity for more self-reflection and self-evaluation.	3
13	Learning Responsibility	Students learn to take responsibility for learning.	3
14	Boosting Self-Confidence	Students' self-confidence is boosted.	3
15	Attention	Students devote more attention in class.	3
16	Feedback	There exists an opportunity to offer/receive individualized feedback.	3
17	Learning Styles	Flipped instruction is more suitable for students with various learning styles.	2
18	Autonomy	Flipped instruction helps students be autonomous learners.	2
19	Competition	There exists the possibility of more positive competition.	1
20	Comparison	There exists no comparison or negative competition.	1

Out of 25 participants, 24 students believed that via the flipped instruction, more effective learning takes place. What follows includes some excerpts from the participants' statements.

"Unlike the non-flipped pedagogy, in the flipped pedagogy, the students are not preoccupied with only passing a course, taking an acceptable score, or getting a university degree. The students' concentration is on learning even if they have to do so. As a result, they really learn the matter in question."

"Whatever we had to do prior to class, such as studying, watching videos, listening to podcasts, doing some assignments as well as whatever we had to do in class, such as taking part in group work and group discussions in addition to designing some lesson plans cooperatively helped us keep the lesson better in our memory. I believe this technique helps the students learn better and remember everything that is learned forever."

"I think this flipped instruction is the best type of teaching to help the students learn everything perfectly. Personally, whenever I think of one of the class subjects, let's say CLIL, I remember everything we did in class, especially all the steps we followed to design a plan for it. I'm sure I'll never forget this class subjects. I have them in mind like some images, so I call it the best form of learning. However, in other classes, I don't have such experience. I always have to memorize a load of matters and forget them after the final exam."

"Flipped instruction includes a combination of good techniques: pre-studying, opportunity to watch videos of other teachers' teaching the point, listening to the related explanations, self-study, class discussions, and group cooperation. All these techniques help students to learn more effectively."

Moreover, 19 participants stated that this online flipped classroom was more interesting and motivating to learn than the other non-flipped online classrooms. The following are some quotations from the participants.

“In other non-flipped online classes, professors usually explain everything. While only listening online, we feel so bored. However, in this online flipped classrooms I myself never felt bored. I really liked this class very much, so I always looked forward to it.”

“Because I knew I had time to discuss whatever I learned and I had enough time to ask my questions, I was very interested in this class. I was more motivated to learn. In other classes which are not flipped, I have to listen to professors’ explanations, which are really long and tiring and then the short class time does not usually permit us to ask all our questions. Therefore, all our focus will be on studying on our own and memorizing everything. However, flipped is completely opposite.”

“I felt very excited before each session of this online class. I remember I would check my microphone to see if it worked well because I really liked the group discussions. I liked it when I could speak about whatever I had learned by watching videos, studying the book chapters, etc. to my friends and I could listen to theirs. We learned with each other and with the help of our professor. I like studying in that way.”

“In other online classes, which were/are not flipped, I usually felt/feel sleepy. To be honest, in some of them, I don’t even listen carefully because I feel bored, so I prefer to be online, but do my other work. Then, I use the record of the class on platform to learn and be ready for exams. But in this online class, which was flipped, I was very happy. I was happily alert. I took part in class group discussions and activities, and I really liked the class. I wish all professors followed or would follow the same approach.

Furthermore, 11 participants referred to the existence of “More Peer as well as Student-Teacher Interaction” as another benefit of the flipped pedagogy. The following are some excerpts from the participants’ statements.

“Before the class, we needed to spend time studying the next session lesson, so we watched videos, studied some articles, book chapters, listened to some podcasts prepared by professors, and did some assignments. My friends and I usually faced some problems and couldn’t understand some parts well. But we had this chance to talk to each other about them. We asked each other our questions and tried to learn from each other. Then again in class, we had time to discuss the issue with other classmates and even the professor. These interactions were wonderful. I think these interactions can help even the least intelligent students learn the lessons well.”

“To me, the best part of the flipped instruction is the class time when all the students interact with each other and with the professor. That’s the best time to ask about, discuss, and learn whatever has been difficult to understand.”

In addition, ten participants referred to “Students’ More Cooperation and Collaboration” as another positive point of the flipped instruction. The following are some quotations from the participants’ responses.

“As our course was about approaches and methods of teaching, we needed to design lesson plans based on specific methods or approaches cooperatively. We did it in groups with our friends and the professor supervised our work. It was very useful. In other non-flipped classes, these activities are required to be done only individually because the short class time does not permit.”

“I really liked the course plans we designed either in a group in class or as pair work out of class. Doing that work together with another classmates or some other ones was very helpful because through that cooperation, it was easier for us to think of better ideas and be more creative.”

Additionally, ten participating students referred to “Students’ More Engagement” as another advantage of the flipped instruction. The following are examples of the participants’ quotations.

“In the flipped classroom we had, no student was passive. During the class, everybody was active, even actively listening because we had lots of sharing information and discussions in our groups. However, in other classes, which are not flipped, we are mostly passive listeners. We listen and at the end of each part, the professors ask us if we have any questions. I liked the active moments of the flipped classroom a lot because it helps us learn very well.”

“It was excellent that we had the opportunity of being involved in various activities. I myself hate it when I have to just sit somewhere and listen to the professor. When students are active, are busy with doing a variety of educational activities before and during the class, they will definitely enjoy learning and they will certainly learn the lesson.”

Further, six participants referred to “More Useful Class Time” as one of the blessings of the flipped instruction. Given the current study, what follows includes some excerpts from the participants’ comments.

“In non-flipped classrooms, the class time is spent mostly on listening to the lectures of the professor or lectures of other students. Very short time will be left for even answering other students’ questions. In my opinion,

this is not the true learning. But in the flipped classroom, the class time is spent on true learning. The class time is not wasted at all. Students already studied everything and in class, they have enough time to ask all their questions and clarify every vague point in their mind. In my opinion, this is what class time must be like."

"Students attend classes to learn something, while in reality in traditional classrooms, we just receive some information, but learning hardly ever takes place during the class time. We have to spend a lot of time at home alone, studying, memorizing, and trying to learn something. I myself have to watch the recorded classes to review the lessons and try to learn them, but in the flipped classroom, learning occurs in class. The planning of the lesson is in a way that the class time is spent in the most efficient way to help students learn everything."

Moreover, six participating students mentioned "Learning Teamwork, Cooperation, and Collaboration" as one of the assets of the flipped instruction. What follows includes some excerpts from the participants' opinions.

"In my opinion, one of the best points about the flipped instruction is that students gradually learn how to cooperate or work as a teammate. This is an essential skill in which we Iranians are really weak. I think the flipped learning not only helps students learn the lessons through group work but also it helps them learn how to work with others."

"I remember when we started this approach, some students didn't know what to do or how to start a project which was intended to be done cooperatively. Students really learned to think, analyze the task, sharing responsibilities, helping other teammates, etc. while doing that project. It was very useful for all of us and I'm sure it will be useful for anybody who experiences this technique."

Furthermore, five students referred to "Control on Time to Learn" as one of the benefits of the flipped instruction. The following are some of the excerpts from the participants' responses.

"I think one of the best features of the flipped instruction is that students receive all instructional materials, especially the video or audio files some days before the class. In this way, students have enough time to watch the videos or listen to the audio files as many times as needed. We are not pressed for time. In non-flipped classrooms, professors sometimes provide us with some videos, for example, in class, but because of a shortage of time, the videos are not played more than one time, or the audio files of the listening sections, for example, are played at most twice. It is not enough for some students who have poor listening skills. But in flipped classroom, we have control over this issue. It makes the materials more useful, too."

"During the semester, we received the materials (videos, audio files, PowerPoint, etc.) some days before the class, so I myself planned to watch them at my convenience, whenever I felt fresh to study. It was very useful for me myself. I could learn them very well."

In addition, five students referred to "Acquiring Practical Knowledge and Skills" as one of the good points of the flipped instruction. What follows are some of the excerpts from the participants of this study.

"Because we were studying the course on approaches and methods of teaching languages, this flipped approach which we experienced taught us not only the contents of our book, which included both past and present approaches, but also we learned how to implement this modern approach in a real classroom."

"In our course, we practically planned some lessons with the help of other classmates and our professor. It was the practical aspect of our course, which prepared us for the position of a teacher for a real classroom. I think if the flipped instruction is used for other courses or other majors, the same benefit will be achieved. Other students will also learn some practical issues relevant to their courses and majors, too."

Additionally, five participants referred to "Reducing Students' Stress" as another advantage of the flipped instruction. What follows includes some excerpts from their answers.

"In other non-flipped classes, students usually don't learn many lessons perfectly during the term, so they have to cram before the tests. As a result, we are often stressed before each exam, but I am sure my classmates and I won't be stressed out before the exam of this course because I think we have learned everything. A short review will be enough to be ready for the exam and even get a high mark."

"In many other courses, I myself feel stressed during the class. Sometimes because some professors require us to pre-study the lesson, and during the class, they ask us some questions instead of teaching the lesson. I feel really stressed then because sometimes I cannot answer the questions and I'm scared of losing marks. But in this class, I never felt stressed. I felt very comfortable. I really like this method."

As another blessing of the flipped instruction, five participants pointed out that via the flipped instruction "Shy Students Can Open up." The following are some excerpts from the participants of this study.

“Some students are smart. They always study, learn, and like to answer the professors’ questions, but they are usually silent because they are shy and they cannot speak in public. We have these kinds of people in our class, too. However, it was very interesting for me to see that even those shy students could easily speak in group work because they feel more relaxed among other friends. I got that the flipped instruction is even good for these types of people. They can show their abilities and whatever they understood.”

“I am an introverted person. I prefer to listen to professors and think about the lessons. But this quality always makes problems for me. I sometimes lose marks because professors believe that I’m not active enough. Despite my personal trait, I liked this flipped instruction. I think everything was perfect. On the one hand, I had time to study on my own and think about the lessons and my understanding. On the other hand, I had time to discuss various points with my friends. Of course, at first, taking part in class discussions was difficult for me, as usual, but little by little, I felt more relaxed and I could participate in group work and group discussions.”

Moreover, three participants referred to “Opportunity for More Self-Reflection and Self-Evaluation” as another good point of the flipped instruction. What follows is an excerpt from one of this study’s participants.

“Via the flipped instruction, students have enough time to think about their learning. It is possible for them to think about what they understood or not when they are studying before the class. During the class, again they have time to think about their learning. So they themselves can assess their learning, too.”

As another asset of the flipped instruction, three students stated that “Students Learn to Take on Responsibility for learning.” What follows is an excerpt from one of this study’s participants.

“One of the beneficial features of the flipped instruction is that students learn to accept responsibility for their learning. They understand that as students, they have to try hard to learn everything. Teachers are there to only facilitate their learning.”

In addition, three participants referred to “Boosting Students’ Self-Confidence” as another advantage of the flipped instruction. What follows is an excerpt from one of the participants of the present study.

“In class when I spoke with other classmates or presented my lesson plan, I felt so good. When the professor and other classmates listened carefully to my talks and confirmed my understanding, I felt more self-confident. I even think I have become more self-confident in other circumstances in society. I can talk with more confidence with others.”

As another blessing of the flipped instruction, three students declared that “Students Devote More Attention in Class”. What follows is an excerpt from the participants of the present study.

“In non-flipped classrooms, students’ attention will be distracted easily because it is the professor who mostly speaks in class. However, in flipped classrooms, students always pay undivided attention to the activities. They cannot think about other things because they are always engaged in a type of activity.”

Additionally, three participants referred to “Opportunity to Offer/Receive Individualized Feedback” as another benefit of the flipped instruction. What follows is an excerpt from one of the participants of the present study.

“In this flipped classroom, it was possible for every student in class to ask his/her questions. Either the professor or the other classmates would answer. Also, each person received comments about his/her mistakes, problems, misunderstandings, etc. It was perfect.”

Furthermore, two participants asserted that the flipped instruction is fortunately “Suitable for Students with various Learning Styles”. What follows is an excerpt from their responses.

“In this course, I mean ‘Approaches and Methods in Teaching’ we learned that learners have various learning styles which are God-given. ... Through the flipped instruction, every individual student will be satisfied with his/her learning because there are various types of materials and activities. For example, those who like to study alone, those who like to study in groups, those who like watching videos, those who like listening to audio files, those who like reading printed materials, etc., everybody will have the opportunity of receiving or experiencing his/her favorite type.”

Further, two participants stated that the flipped instruction helps students “Be Autonomous Learners”. What follows is an excerpt from their responses.

“The whole process we followed taught us how to proceed with our learning independently. I think if students are taught by the flipped instruction, they will become familiar with different strategies, techniques, websites, search engines, educational channels, useful activities, to be ready to continue their learning even without the help of a teacher as a person.”

One participant also referred to the possibility of “More Positive Competition” in the flipped instruction. The following is what the participants of the present study said.

“During the class discussions, I always attempted to perform better than my partners, and I think the others were also the same. We felt good. We didn't intend to downgrade others because we always helped each other to resolve their learning problems. But I myself, felt good when I was that person who helped the others. That good feeling was rewarding. I think that the flipped instruction can create such spirit, I mean the desire for a positive competition.”

One participant referred to “No Comparison or Negative Competition” as one of the good features of a flipped classroom. What follows is what she said.

“In some classes, some teachers compare the students in terms of their abilities, talents, and scores, which causes a kind of negative competition among the students. However, this negative feature has no place in a flipped classroom, which is awesome and can help all students progress in a friendly atmosphere and with the help of each other.”

Inherent Drawbacks of Flipped Instruction

The 2nd research question investigated whether the participants found any drawbacks inherent in the flipped instruction. Two negative points were mentioned. Seventeen students stated that the flipped pedagogy puts a heavy burden on students as they have to watch videos, listen to audio files, and pre-study some materials before the class. They also added that due to the mentioned burden, the flipped pedagogy is time-consuming for the students. The following are some excerpts from the participants of the present study.

“I think the only problem with the flipped instruction is that students need to spend a lot of time before the class time studying and being ready for the class. It definitely takes a long time, which is not available sometimes.”

“Being prepared for the next class needs doing a lot of activities, studying, watching videos, and doing assignments. It is sometimes tiring and it definitely needs a lot of time.”

Problems for Adopting Online Flipped Instruction

The 3rd research question explored whether any issues can cause any difficulty in the implementation of online flipped instruction. Six students pinpointed the probable poor Internet speed which can create problems for downloading video files. What follows is an excerpt from their responses.

“One problem which students may face is poor Internet connection or speed. Sometimes it is very difficult to download some files, especially the videos.”

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

One approach that has attracted researchers' attention for over a decade has been the flipped pedagogy. Given the unique features of this approach, which causes it to suit the online classes, the researchers of the present study employed it in a real online class for a semester.

Almost all participating students in this study believed that via the flipped instruction, more effective learning takes place. This finding of the present study supports that flipped instruction can enhance learners' retention (Noroozi et al., 2020; Velegol et al., 2015), content understanding (Kim, 2018; Love et al., 2014), and more effective learning (Alghasab, 2020; Cagande & Jugar, 2018; Colomo-Magaña et al., 2020; Hsieh et al., 2017; Ismail & Abdulla, 2019; Lai & Hwang, 2016; Ruiz-Jiméne et al., 2023; Yough et al., 2019).

Moreover, the majority of participants stated that this online flipped classroom was more interesting and motivating to learn than the other non-flipped online classrooms. This finding is in line with the previous studies which indicated the flipped instruction can increase learners' interest and motivation (Abdullah et al., 2019; Alghasab, 2020; Cagande & Jugar, 2018; Farrah & Qawasmeh, 2018; Ismail & Abdulla, 2019; Jia et al., 2022; Mitsiou, 2019; Tse et al., 2019; Yilmaz, 2023; Yough et al., 2019; Zainuddin, 2018).

Furthermore, 11 participants referred to the existence of “More Peer as well as Student-Teacher Interaction” as another benefit of the flipped pedagogy. This finding is consistent with the previous researchers' findings which showed the flipped instruction increases the learner-instructor as well as peers' interactions (Ansori & Nafi, 2019; He et al., 2016; Hussain et al., 2020; Kim, 2018; McLean et al., 2016).

In addition, ten participants referred to “Students' More Cooperation and Collaboration” as another positive point of the flipped instruction. In fact, collaborative approaches to learning are an integral part of the flipped

approach (O'Shea, 2020) and the literature includes some research showing this benefit for the flipped instruction. (Fernández-Martín et al., 2020; Ghufron & Nurdianingsih, 2021).

Additionally, ten participating students referred to "Students' More Engagement" as another advantage of the flipped instruction. This finding is in line with the previous studies which indicated the flipped instruction can increase learners' engagement (Abdullah et al., 2019; Ansori & Nafi, 2019; Ayçiçek & Yelken, 2018; Farrah & Qawasmeh, 2018; Ghufron & Nurdianingsih, 2021; Hodgson et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2019; Hussain et al., 2020; Lee & Wallace, 2018; Murillo-Zamorano et al., 2019; Nerantzi, 2020; Steen-Utheim & Foldnes, 2018; Subramaniam & Muniandy, 2019; Toivola et al., 2023).

Further, six participants referred to "More Useful Class Time" as one of the blessings of the flipped instruction. This positive point was also pinpointed by other scholars (Fulton, 2012; Kim, 2018; Li & Suwanthep, 2017).

Moreover, six participating students mentioned "Learning Teamwork, Cooperation, and Collaboration" as one of the assets of the flipped instruction. This point, which is also considered as an essential skill in the 21st century, was also found by other researchers (Ansori & Nafi, 2019; Baytiyeh & Naja, 2017; Latorre-Cosculluela et al., 2021; Mitsiou, 2019; Zainuddin, 2018).

Furthermore, five students referred to "Control on Time to Learn" as one of the benefits of the flipped instruction. This advantage was pinpointed by other scholars as well (Alghasab, 2020; Kim, 2018; Lai & Hwang, 2016; Shih & Huang, 2020).

In addition, five students referred to "Acquiring Practical Knowledge and Skills" as one of the good points of the flipped instruction. This benefit was also stated by other researchers (Bishnoi, 2020; Murillo-Zamorano et al., 2019).

Additionally, five participants referred to "Reducing Students' Stress" as another advantage of the flipped instruction. Marlowe (2012) also found this blessing.

As another blessing of the flipped instruction, five participants pointed out that via the flipped instruction "Shy Students Can Open up." This finding is in line with some previous researchers' (Hung, 2017; Latorre-Cosculluela et al., 2021; Zainuddin, 2018; Zainuddin & Attaran, 2016).

Moreover, three participants referred to "Opportunity for More Self-Reflection and Self-Evaluation" as another good point of the flipped instruction. This benefit was also pinpointed by previous researchers (Khodaei et al., 2022; Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021).

As another asset of the flipped instruction, three students stated that "Students Learn to Take on Responsibility for learning." This asset was also found by previous researchers (Bursa & Kose, 2020; Ghufron & Nurdianingsih, 2021).

In addition, three participants referred to "Boosting Students' Self-Confidence" as another advantage of the flipped instruction. This benefit was pinpointed by other researchers, too (Abdullah et al., 2021; Baytiyeh & Naja, 2017; Lai & Hwang, 2016; Namaziandost & Çakmak, 2020; Tsai, 2021).

As another blessing of the flipped instruction, three students declared that "Students Devote More Attention in Class". This positive feature of the flipped instruction was also found by Tang et al., (2023).

Additionally, three participants referred to "Opportunity to Offer/Receive Individualized Feedback" as another benefit of the flipped instruction. This asset was also pinpointed by Thai et al., (2023).

Furthermore, two participants asserted that the flipped instruction is fortunately "Suitable for Students with various Learning Styles". As for this finding, Kim (2018) also found that students with various learning styles were satisfied with the flipped instruction. Tadayonifar and Entezari (2020) revealed that although all the students in their research benefited from the flipped instruction, significant differences were found "among learning style groups in favor of the visual style" (p. 324).

Further, two participants stated that the flipped instruction helps students "Be Autonomous Learners". This benefit was also revealed by other researchers (Ansori & Nafi, 2019; Colomo-Magaña et al., 2020; Farrah & Qawasmeh, 2018; Fernández-Martín et al., 2020; Ghufron & Nurdianingsih, 2021; Tsai, 2021; Zainuddin, 2018).

One participant also referred to the possibility of "More Positive Competition" in the flipped instruction. Another participant referred to "No Comparison or Negative Competition" as one of the good features of a flipped classroom. These positive points were found in previous research as well (Zainuddin, 2018).

The 2nd research question investigated whether the participants found any drawbacks inherent in the flipped instruction. Two negative points were mentioned. Seventeen students stated that the flipped pedagogy puts a heavy

burden on students as they have to watch videos, listen to audio files, and pre-study some materials before the class. They also added that due to the mentioned burden, the flipped pedagogy is time-consuming for the students. This problem was also found by Kim (2018).

The 3rd research question explored whether any issues can cause any difficulty in the implementation of online flipped instruction. Six students pinpointed the probable poor Internet speed which can create problems for downloading video files. In terms of the mentioned problem, previous studies have also found that the learners' perceptions of the online flipped classrooms are likely to be affected by technological difficulties that may occur; therefore, stakeholders and instructors must consider this issue and try to provide the necessary amenities before employing the online flipped instruction (Ansori & Nafi, 2019; Gündüz & Akkoyunlu, 2019; Lakarnchua et al., 2020).

In conclusion, the participants acknowledged that this approach was really beneficial. The mentioned advantages greatly outnumber the drawbacks. However, the flipped instruction needs careful planning and provision of required amenities to be implemented successfully to achieve positive outcomes.

Implications

Syllabus designers as well as teachers can gain insights from the results of this study. Adopting flipped instruction can be beneficial to learners worldwide.

Limitations

Out of 25 participants, there were 23 females and two males, so this study has limitations in terms of the gender of the participants.

Statements of Publication Ethics

The research was conducted with the voluntary participation of a group of Iranian undergraduates. Ethical approval for the study was first secured from the director of the institute. Subsequently, informed consent was obtained from all participants by the supervisor of the institute, who is also the second author of the study. The study strictly adhered to all ethical guidelines, and no ethical principles were violated.

Researchers' Contribution Rate

Authors	Literature review	Method	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Results	Conclusion
Mohammadreza Valizadeh	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒	☒
Fatemeh Soltanpour	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☐

Conflict of Interest

This study does not have any conflict of interest.

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