

EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON FLIPPED LEARNING IN AN ENGLISH GRAMMAR CLASS

Yusmalinda

Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing Prayoga Padang, Indonesia

Email: yusmalinda@stba-prayoga.ac.id

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to investigate EFL students' perceptions on the implementation of flipped learning. Employing a concurrent mixed method of data gathering techniques, this research was conducted in an English Literature Study Program of a private university in Padang, West Sumatera Province. The participants were fourth-semester students in an intermediate English grammar who were encouraged to actively participate in the class. The flipped instruction was implemented in four meetings. At the end of the sessions, a Google form questionnaire was handed out. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis found out that most students expressed positive perceptions on flipped learning, as indicated by its efficacy to facilitate preparation for offline sessions, making them more active, and completing grammar exercises better. Overall, flipped learning was acknowledged to be effective for English grammar in this study, despite few suggestions for the lecturers to assist them understanding material better.

Keywords: Students' Perceptions, Flipped Learning

INTRODUCTION

Technology has changed substantially, particularly in relation with the development of Information Technology. In education sector, for instance, IT has shifted how instructions could be conducted with the use of various digital tools. Moreover, easy access to internet by using smart phones, computers, and laptops has enabled seamless interaction between teachers and students or students with their peers. Physical classroom is no longer a barrier, students and teachers could nowadays meet virtually using their personal gadgets, such as smartphones or laptops. In addition, there are more websites or other online resources available for everyone to access in any topics in forms of e-books, journals, scientific articles, videos, research journals, and other academic resources. According to Richter & McPherson (2012) free online learning resources are more accessible these days due to internet connection providing accessible video lectures and other free contents at their space and convenience.

These developments should be seen as unlimited potentials for teachers to enhance instruction and make it more effective to achieve the designed learning outcomes. Bergmann & Sams (2012) and Fulton (2012) contended that these days teachers are no longer the sole knowledge fountain, online resources offer free and abundant information without time and space boundary. Teachers could start an innovative model of teaching to incorporate this technology to maximize learning

process and to increase students' involvement in learning activities. One of the models that can be used is flipped learning which might replace the traditional learning by ICT support.

Flipped learning is a new breakthrough of instructions which gives students opportunities to study outside classroom with the use of technology. It is a hybrid approach that combines online learning with face-to-face classroom activities (Graham et al., 2013). It inverts the conducts of traditional instruction. Before the class, the teacher provides videos or other resources and the students could opt their own time and space to learn; in the class, the students participate in collaborative and interactive learning activities, making more efficient time management. Moreover, Albert and Beatty (2014) recommended five important characteristics of flipped classrooms. First, the educational process transforms students from passive to active learners. Secondly, technology facilitates the approach. Third, class time and traditional homework time are inverted so that homework is done first. Fourth, content is given in real-world context. Fifth, class activities engage students in higher order of critical thinking and problem solving or help them grasp particularly challenging concepts. These characteristics can be used to guide teachers to design and implement a flipped classroom.

Implementing a flipped classroom is suggested by scholars to bring some advantages. First, it results in better and more effective learning, improvements of learning outcomes, increase of student engagement, and alignment with student needs and school resources (Egbert et al., 2015). Other benefits include saving in-class time for active learning activities (Pape et al., 2012), shifting learning environment from teacher-centered to student-centered (Gilboy, et al., 2015), and preparing students better before learning in classroom (Almodaires et al., 2018; Ayçiçek and Yelken, 2018; Danker, 2015; Musdi et al., 2019). Moreover, Yang (2017) claimed that the use of flipped learning facilitates students to learn at their own speed, personalize and individualize process of learning, improve learning ownership, and foster reflective abilities. Most studies in the literature indicate that both teachers and students admitted positive perceptions of this teaching technique (El-Bassuony, 2016).

As stated before, flipped learning offers benefits since students are directed to have opportunities for independent learning before face-to-face sessions. This requires students' active involvement, instead of being passive recipients of information. Therefore, students could have ample time previewing English grammar materials before they discuss it in face-to-face classes. In other words, students should be more ready to do learning activities in offline English grammar class compared to traditional grammar classes.

Using flipped learning, students are directed to be more independent learners and use better self-management strategies. Grammar materials in video format as well as exercises, tasks or quizzes are uploaded two days before the offline English Grammar class for the student initial exposure or pre-learning. To motivate them, exercises or quizzes must be completed by all students and are submitted before offline classes. In class, the lecturer does not explain all the materials, but he/she uses problem solving activities by giving exercises or some questions. In other words, the lecturer is a facilitator, and the students should be more active.

The Covid -19 pandemic has forced almost all educational institutions in the world to hold online learning with various learning applications, such as Edmodo, Google Classroom, Moodle, Zoom, Google Meet, and Quizziz. This also happened at the university where this study was conducted where classes were converted online using Google Classroom, Edmodo, Zoom, and Moodle. Even though the pandemic has almost ended, the use of learning management system, Moodle, is still used before the offline classes. The materials as well as the exercises or tasks are posted for the students to preview or complete. Reidsema et al. (2017) stated that flipped learning is an important transition stage which moves both students and academic staff away from traditional lectures. In other words, in flipped learning classrooms are becoming places for activity rather than information transfer as it is in traditional class. Students can get information from online learning in video format. In other words, students are guided to do independent learning and exercises related to the materials or activities that are going to be done in face-to-face meeting.

In this study, flipped learning was administered in an English grammar class since, based on observations, some students found difficulty to understand grammar materials, which can be seen from their difficulty in doing exercises and their low grades in grammar tests. Having flipped learning, students who cannot keep up with other students can adjust themselves with learning process. Furthermore, it is expected that they are going to have more opportunities to study and do exercises for the coming sessions. Moreover, this flipped learning expectedly can give time to students to prepare themselves to study in face-to-face learning. In addition, they are hoped to get involved more actively in class activities since they have learned the materials and do tasks before the class.

Therefore, this research focused on the students' perception on the implementation of flipped learning in an English Grammar class. Hopefully, the findings can give contribution to the improvement of the English grammar teaching and learning in EFL context and the flipped learning theories and implementation.

METHODS

To achieve the objectives of this study, a survey was opted as the data gathering due to its "suitability with the needs to assess attitudes and opinions" (Ary et al., 2010, p.414). The questionnaire enabled the researcher to "collect information from groups of participants and to summarize or to measure their attitudes and opinions" (Ary et al., 2010, p.28).

The questionnaire assessed students' perceptions about classroom activities in flipped instruction and how they observed its effectiveness. Four Likert Scales (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly disagree) were used in each statement followed by open ended questions for the participants to add opinion or reasons. Although survey research is "commonly believed to be a wholly quantitative approach" (Julien, 2008, p.846), this research applied both quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis. Close-ended questions provided numerical data analyzed based on quantitatively, while the open-ended questions yielded narrative responses analyzed qualitatively (Julien, 2008).

The setting of the research was at an English Literature Study Program of a private university in Padang, West Sumatra. The subjects were twenty-six students of an intermediate Grammar Class.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research on students' perception on Flipped Learning in an English Grammar class is summarized in the following table.

Table 1. Students' Perception on Flipped Learning

No	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
1	Learning outside the class before offline class, I can have more time to study.	38.5%	53.8%	7.7%	0%
2	By having online learning before the class begins, I can study at my own speed.	26.9%	61.5%	11.5%	0%
3	I can prepare myself better for the offline class by having flipped learning.	26.9%	61.5%	3.8%	7.7%
4	I can learn the materials faster in offline class compared to without flipped learning.	11.5%	46.2%	42.3%	0%
5	I could participate more actively in class with flipped learning.	30.5%	61.5%	7.7%	0%
6	I could do grammar exercises better.	19.2%	50%	30.8%	0%
7	With flipped learning, the classroom activities are centered on students.	16.4%	84.6%	0%	0%
8	Flipped learning is effective for EFL classroom.	38.5%	46.2%	15.4%	0%

The following figures present detail elaboration of the participants' perceptions on flipped learning.

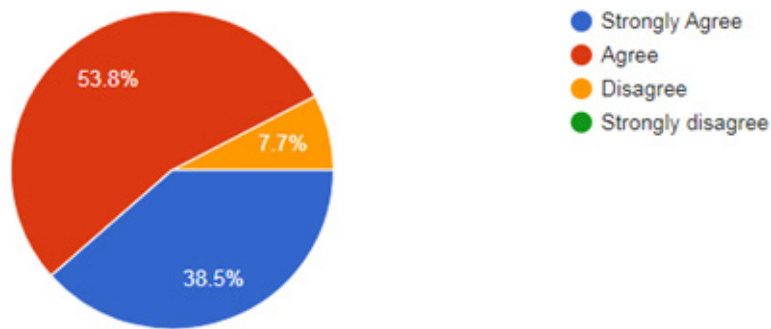


Figure 1. Ample Time to Study

On the first item “the students can have more time to study”, 38.5% of the students stated their strong agreement, 53.8% of them admitted agreement, and 7.7% of the participants expressed disagreement. The students who strongly agreed and agreed with the statement further elucidated that flipped learning enabled them to have ample time to prepare themselves for the next offline class. Meanwhile, those disagreed with the statement said that the time was not sufficient due to their difficulties to manage themselves to study independently since. Various reasons were admitted, such as disturbances from household chores or the needs for teacher assistance to do the grammar exercises. In general, most students perceived that they could have more time to study before the offline classes begins.

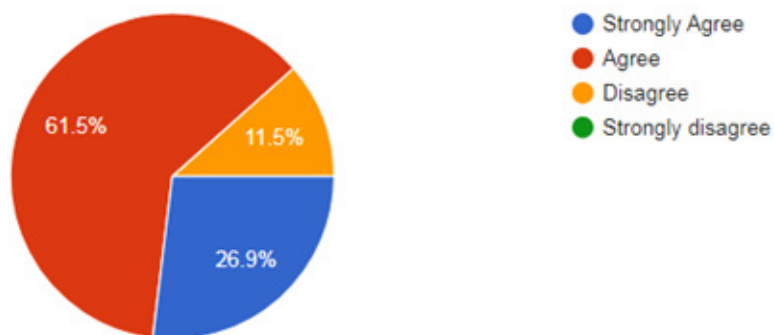


Figure 2. Pace of Study

Dealing with pace of study, figure 2 exhibits students’ admittance to study at their own pace, as indicated by 26.9% and 61.5% stating their agreement. Meanwhile, 11.5% of the students stated their disagreement. It is further stated that every student has different speed of learning, therefore flipped learning offers better self-management opportunities to review the material, understand the lessons, or do the exercises. Moreover, they can study at their convenient time as it is sometimes hard for them to follow teachers’ instruction in the class. The reasons of disagreement could be traced back due to their statements that they cannot study without any help from others or teachers. Therefore, flipped learning require students with better self-management strategies and autonomous.

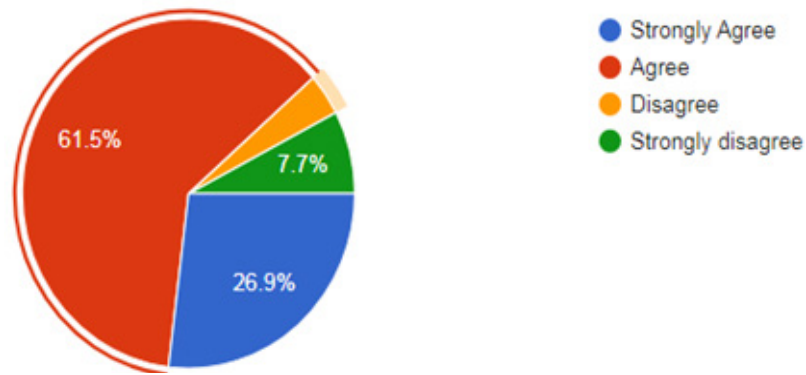


Figure 3. Preparation before Classes

From picture 3 on the students' preparation for the offline class, it was found that there were 26.9% who strongly agreed, 61.5% who agreed, 3.8% who disagreed, and 7.7% who strongly disagreed. Flipped learning offered more opportunities to study the next lesson and do exercises or assignments. Thus, they can prepare themselves better compared to traditional instruction. In addition, they said that flipped learning facilitate their self-designed method of preparation. Meanwhile, few students who disagreed and strongly disagreed stated that they could they cannot study without lecturer help to understand a lesson or do assignments.

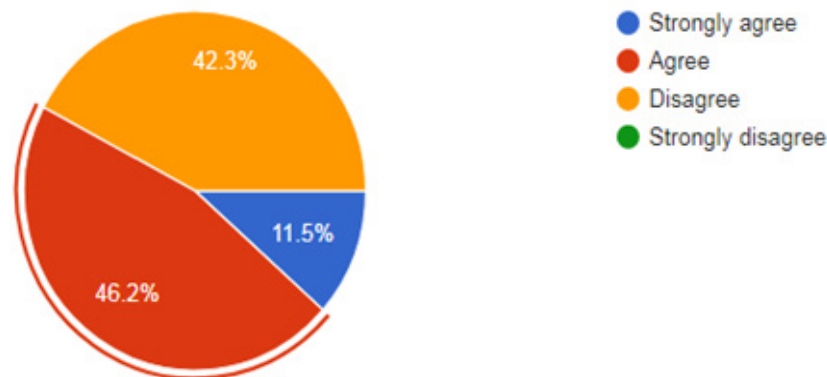


Figure 4. Flipped Instruction Facilitates Faster Learning

Based on the picture about statement 4 that students can learn the materials faster in offline, it was revealed that there were 11.5% students who strongly agreed, 46.2% students who agreed, 42.3% students who disagreed. The reasons why they strongly agreed and agreed with the statement are that they have limited time to study in offline classes. Therefore, having flipped instruction, the offline class could strengthen their understanding from the online sessions. They commenced further that they were ready to study with the knowledge that they have got form online learning. The reasons for disagreements were similar to previous findings, that they needed lecturer's help to explain the lesson. It is more effective for them to study directly in offline class.

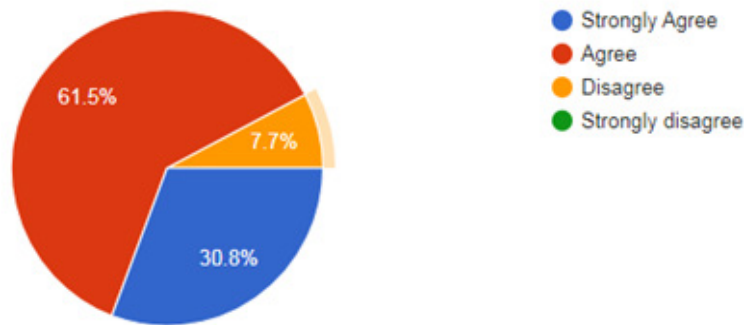


Figure 5. Active Participations in Class Activities

On the statement that the students could participate more actively in class activities with flipped learning, it was found that there were 30.8% who strongly agreed, 61.5% who agreed, and 7.7% who disagreed with the idea. Their reasons for agreement were that they have understood the materials in online learning before the offline class by reading the materials and doing the assignments. Meanwhile, other students could not participate actively in class because they needed explanation from the lecturer. Therefore, they did not know what to say or to do in class.

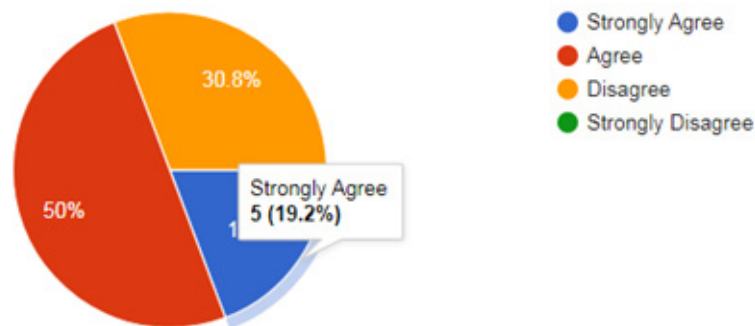


Figure 6. Ability to Do Grammar Exercises

On statement 6 that the students could do grammar exercises better in flipped learning, there were 19.2% students who strongly agreed, 50% students who agreed, and 30.8% students who disagreed. It can be seen that almost 70% students said that they could do the grammar exercises better by having online learning because they had studied the materials and completed the exercises. Having better understanding of the material, they could do the English grammar exercises better in offline class. However, 30.8% who disagreed said that flipped learning did not help them understand the English grammar materials, and of course they could not do the exercises better in offline without teacher's explanation.

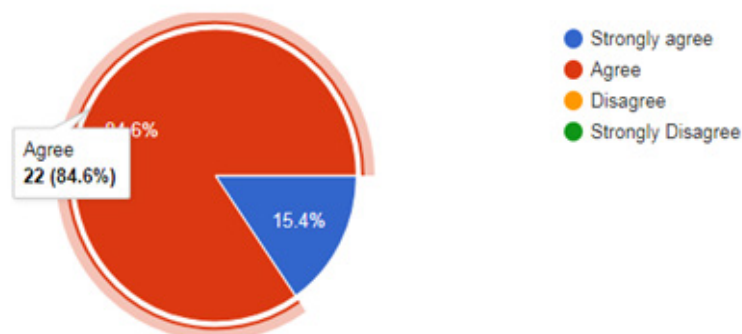


Figure 7. Student Centered Activities

Based on the picture above, on the statements that the classroom activities of flipped learning are centered on student, it was found that there were 16.4% who strongly agreed, and 84.6% who agreed. It could be seen that almost all have good perception about flipped learning, particularly on the perception of student-centered learning. Students stated that they had studied and done some exercises, which initiated their understanding. Therefore, they said that they can be active in learning activities in class especially in doing English grammar exercises.

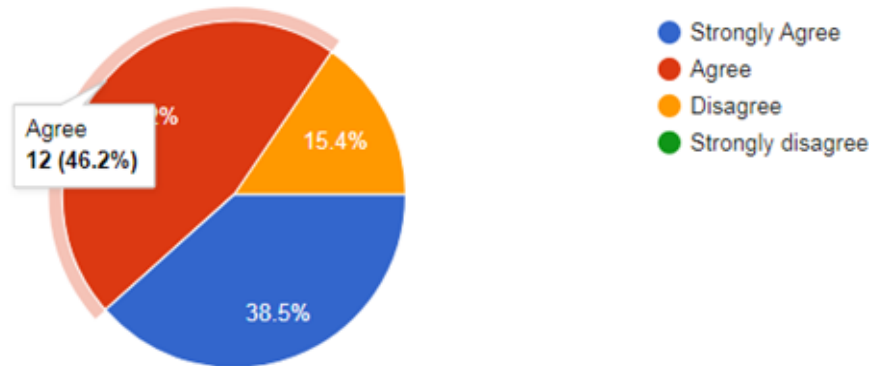


Figure 8. Effectiveness for EFL English Grammar Class

On the statement that flipped learning is effective for English grammar class as foreign Language classroom, there were 38.5% who strongly agreed, 46.2% who agreed, and 15.4% who disagreed. It means that most of the participants had good perception on flipped learning especially as being effective learning for English grammar class since as they said, with flipped learning, they were given opportunities to learn the materials in advance and they can force themselves to study. Moreover, they can improve their English grammar as they have more opportunities to have more practice outside the class by doing exercises or assignments. On the other hand, some students stated that flipped learning is not effective for English grammar classes. Flipped learning is also claimed to be more effective for smart students since the struggling ones need guidance or help from the lecturers. They also added that they can focus on studying in offline class, so studying outside the class is useless for them. In addition, they said that not all English grammar materials can be understood outside the offline class because they need to discuss them with friends or the lecturer. Even they said that they need explanation from the lecturer to understand the English grammar materials.

The above findings could be further elaborated into two points. First, the findings are line with what previous researchers claimed about the advantages of Flipped Learning. Students perceived that flipped learning could help them much for offline class, such as better preparation, more active participation, faster learning pace, student centered learning, and better time efficiency. Based the on previous studies, these are the advantages of flipped learning such as in-class time for active learning activities (Pape et al., 2012), shifting learning environment from teacher-centered to student-centred (Gilboy et al., 2015), and prepare students well before learning in class (Almondaires et al., 2018; Ayçiçek & Yelken, 2018; Danker, 2015; Musdi et al., 2019).

Second, the success of Flipped Learning in English grammar class in EFL context was encouraged by using videos, Power Point, and English grammar exercises. It depends on the students' commitment to have self-independent learning and manage their time well. This research further revealed that a few students who did not positively perceive flipped learning mainly due to lack of self-regulation and needs of lecturer's explanation or help. Therefore, student self-regulation and engagement in learning are the core elements of flipped learning mentioned in the literature (Shyr & Chen, 2018; Sletten, 2017). As students are required to self-study and preview course content outside of class, they need to have self-regulation behaviors to learn and to be ready for in-class activities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings discussed, it is concluded that most students have good perception on flipped learning in their English grammar class. For example, this flipped learning can help them much to prepare themselves for offline class, make them more active in class activities and do English grammar exercises better in class. In short, it can be said that flipped learning is effective for English grammar class as a foreign English class even though a few of students see it in different perspectives. Therefore, it is suggested that English grammar teachers can use flipped learning to help them prepare students to study in offline class so that they can be more active in class activities and understand English materials and do the exercises faster and better. Moreover, it is also suggested to the next researchers to have more various media in online learning before offline class so that the students are more interested in studying and managing their independent learning outside the class without being monitored by the lecturer.

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