

DEVELOPING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' DISCOURSE COMPETENCE THROUGH FLIPPED LEARNING TECHNOLOGY IN EFL CLASSES.

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Abstract : This study explores the potential of flipped learning technology in enhancing pre-service teachers' discourse competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. Flipped learning, which reverses traditional classroom dynamics by introducing instructional content outside the classroom and utilizing class time for active learning, has gained recognition as a tool for improving linguistic proficiency and communication skills. This article investigates how flipped learning can foster pre-service teachers' ability to engage in discourse, communicate effectively, and adapt to real-world teaching scenarios. Data was gathered through a mixed-methods approach from teacher training programs where flipped learning has been integrated.

Keywords: Flipped learning, discourse competence, pre-service teachers, EFL, active learning, communicative competence.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, discourse competence is an essential skill for pre-service teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Discourse competence refers to the ability to effectively construct and comprehend texts and conversations in real-life communication settings. Developing this competence is crucial for teachers who will not only use English in their own classrooms but also model effective communication for their students. Traditional teaching methods, however, often fall short in providing the immersive, interactive experiences necessary for developing such competence. Flipped learning technology offers a promising solution. In the flipped classroom model, instructional content is delivered outside of the classroom through videos, readings, or other digital materials, while class time is devoted to practical, student-centered activities that encourage interaction and critical thinking. This paper examines how flipped learning can be used to enhance the discourse competence of pre-service teachers in EFL settings, focusing on both linguistic and pedagogical outcomes.

Methods

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Participants included pre-service teachers enrolled in EFL teacher training programs at universities in Uzbekistan. The flipped learning model was integrated into their coursework, with instructional content (grammar, vocabulary, and discourse strategies) provided through online platforms prior to class. In-class activities focused on applying this knowledge through discussions, role-plays, and group work. Quantitative data was gathered through pre- and post-tests measuring participants' discourse competence, including their ability to use cohesive devices, manage conversations, and adapt language to different social contexts. Qualitative data was collected through interviews and classroom observations to assess participants' attitudes toward flipped learning and its perceived impact on their competence.

Results

1. Improvement in Discourse Competence

The results of the pre- and post-tests indicate a significant improvement in the discourse competence of pre-service teachers who participated in the flipped learning model. Students showed increased proficiency in using cohesive devices (such as connectors and transitions) and demonstrated greater ability to manage conversations, initiate and sustain interactions, and adapt their language use to different communicative contexts. Notably, students were able to apply these skills in both oral and written forms of communication, indicating the broad applicability of the competence developed through flipped learning. Moreover, the qualitative data reveals that students felt more confident engaging in discourse in English, both in classroom settings and in informal discussions with peers. This confidence was attributed to the opportunities for active learning and real-time feedback provided by the flipped classroom model.

2. Enhanced Classroom Interaction

The flipped learning approach significantly transformed classroom dynamics, shifting from teacher-centered lectures to student-centered activities. This change allowed pre-service teachers to engage in authentic communicative practices more frequently and meaningfully. In-class discussions and role-playing scenarios enabled students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life teaching contexts, fostering deeper understanding and better retention of discourse strategies.

Observations revealed that students were more engaged in the learning process, as they came to class prepared with a foundational understanding of the content. This preparedness allowed them to focus on higher-order thinking tasks, such as problem-solving and critical analysis, during class time. Additionally, the collaborative nature

of in-class activities encouraged peer learning, with students frequently assisting one another in refining their discourse skills.

3. Increased Autonomy and Responsibility

Flipped learning also promoted greater autonomy and responsibility among pre-service teachers. By shifting the initial learning phase outside the classroom, students were required to take ownership of their own learning, engaging with the instructional materials at their own pace. This autonomous learning environment encouraged self-regulation and motivated students to explore the material more deeply. Interviews with participants highlighted that they appreciated the flexibility of the flipped learning model, which allowed them to review complex concepts multiple times before engaging in class discussions. They also valued the opportunity to apply their knowledge in practical, interactive activities during class, which helped consolidate their learning and build their confidence in using English for communication.

4. Challenges and Areas for Improvement

While the overall response to flipped learning was positive, several challenges were identified. Some students initially struggled with the shift from passive learning to active engagement, as they were accustomed to traditional lecture-based instruction. Additionally, technical issues, such as inconsistent access to online materials or lack of familiarity with digital tools, posed barriers for some participants. To address these challenges, it is recommended that teacher training programs provide more support in the form of digital literacy training and clear guidance on how to engage with flipped learning materials. Furthermore, instructors should ensure that online content is easily accessible and that sufficient scaffolding is provided during in-class activities to support students in transitioning to this new mode of learning.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that flipped learning is a highly effective tool for developing discourse competence among pre-service teachers in EFL settings. By providing students with the opportunity to engage with instructional content outside of class and apply their knowledge through active learning in class, flipped learning fosters the development of key communicative skills that are essential for both teaching and real-life communication. Flipped learning also aligns well with contemporary theories of language acquisition, which emphasize the importance of interaction and meaningful communication in language learning. By shifting the focus from passive reception of information to active engagement with language in use, the flipped classroom model promotes the development of discourse competence in a way that is both practical and pedagogically sound.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that flipped learning technology can significantly enhance the discourse competence of pre-service teachers in EFL classes. Through increased opportunities for active learning, greater autonomy, and enhanced classroom interaction, flipped learning supports the development of essential communicative skills that are crucial for effective teaching. However, for flipped learning to be fully successful, it is important to provide adequate support and resources to both students and instructors to overcome potential challenges. Future research should explore the long-term impact of flipped learning on pre-service teachers' discourse competence and investigate how this approach can be integrated into other areas of teacher education. Additionally, further studies could examine how flipped learning can be adapted to different cultural and educational contexts to ensure its effectiveness across diverse EFL settings.

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