JOURNAL OF CRITICAL REVIEWS

ISSN- 2394-5125 VOL 7, ISSUE 15, 2020

THE NEED FOR FLIPPED ENGLISH CLASSROOMS IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR - AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY

Ms. N. Merlin Depsy Nithiya[1] & Dr. M. Mary Jayanthi [2]

[1] Research Scholar & Assistant Professor of English, Holy Cross College (Autonomous), Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli – 620002; Tamil Nadu, India

E-mail: merlin.depsy@gmail.com

[2]Research Advisor & Assistant Professor of English, Holy Cross College (Autonomous)

Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli – 620002; Tamil Nadu, India

Received: 14 March 2020 Revised and Accepted: 8 July 2020

Abstract

Education across the Indian higher education sector experienced a paradigm shift since March 2020. It has created a space to rethink and redesign the teaching-learning process in the path of education 4.0. With technology dissemination and support to the education sector at its peak, it creates a need for Indian higher education sector to focus on newer pedagogies for modelling 21st century classrooms, especially English classrooms. Hence, this paper is an attempt to showcase the need to replace the traditional classrooms with flipped classroom approach as an effective alternative for the stagnant 20th century classroom of India. It further discusses the drawbacks of traditional classroom and the need for flipping English classrooms of Indian higher education sector.

Keywords: Education 4.0, Flipped Classroom, Blended Learning, India

The Need for Flipped English Classrooms in Indian Higher Education Sector - An Explorative Study

Introduction

> "The important thing is not so much that every child should be taught, as that every child should be given the wish to learn" (Lubbock, Sir John p. 132).

Education in 2020 has changed momentum. Technology diffusion is at its fastest and hence it requires new skill sets that can be inculcated only through education. The quest for knowledge ever since the early stage has been growing and universal literacy has evolved over generations. The need to channelize the newest trends in education and show progress in preparing the students to join the workforce of the 21st century is apparently a humongous responsibility that lies ahead of the teachers. Besides, it becomes obligatory to examine the evolution of education over centuries and identify the inclination of the present trends and its application in everyday classrooms to keep in pace with the growing advancements of the education sector.

English Language Teaching in India

The importance of English as a second language in India has grown manifold in the past decades. In fact, the role and status of English in India is higher than ever before. It being used as the preferred medium of instruction is an evidence of the prestige associated with the use of this language. With the gradual increase in the number of English learners, a range of methods and approaches to teaching has been implemented across various institutes of the country to test the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. Technology has started playing a prominent role in language teaching and is largely seen to have transformed the traditional teaching methods.

Fortunately, English classrooms in India have added excitement to the entire process of language learning using videos, podcasts and power points. Timely use of available technology in the second language classrooms has made a huge difference in language teaching in many parts of the nation. Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), Computer Assisted Learning (CAI), Computer Assisted Language Assessment (CALA), Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) all of which have been put to use in English classrooms. PowerPoints, prezi presentations, Ted EX talks, Youtube Videos, Google Classroom, Blogs, Edmodo and other mobile apps, online questionnaires, surveys and assessments, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and Virtual Classrooms have added tints of technology to the English classrooms across India. However, these facilities are made available by institutions which can sustain the financial burden associated with it. There are numerous government schools and colleges lacking the necessary infrastructure to experiment such advancements in the teaching-learning process. The key here is the change in the pedagogical approach of the teachers. With every multinational company having its base in India, it becomes a priority for Indian educational institutes to impart English language efficiently and to plan a pedagogy that would best suit the leaner needs of this century. In higher education sector, language labs have been instituted and implemented across institutions irrespective of other infrastructure failures. Such labs act as centres of learning for all levels of learners. Times have changed and language labs can no more be the only point of contact for technology driven language learning. In such a scenario, the role of teachers is reasonably challenging, as one has to sustain the interest of the ever-busy internet savvy students and assure transfer of learning. Here, it has to be noted that the Western countries have moved forward with blended learning and flipped learning as the newer forms of teaching pedagogy to incorporate 21st century skills. In the international scenario, E-learning is maximized and digitally the classrooms are much advanced with even student attendance going online. In such regards, the Indian higher education sector needs to work forward to implement such innovative classroom techniques to be a part of everyday classrooms.

Ineffectiveness of Lecture Method

Of all the teaching methods, the frequently and globally used method is the lecture method. Being the least expensive and the most widely functional technique that has received the greatest amount of criticism is the lecture method. Continuous research on the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of lecture is being carried out worldwide. Mostly the ineffectiveness of lecture is showcased and new pedagogies at both colleges and schools are proposed. However, it has to be understood that the lecture method cannot be abolished instantly; understanding its glitches and finding ways and means to improve the method can be a plausible solution. Recent research *has shown, however, that the* lecture format *is based on the* erroneous *assumption that* lecturing *equals learning, or in other words,* students learns by being told what they need to know (Shakarian, 1995). Bowles and Gintis have established that lecture pedagogies enforce docility, obedience and passivity in students through notes taking and that it enhances their working-class expectations and nothing more than that. Various researchers have proven that lecture method is beneficial to only students with selective learning styles such as aural learning styles hence only good listeners benefit out of it; whereas visual and kinesthetic learners are left aloof. Lecture pedagogies need to be used in precision because they deny collective productiveness of knowledge creation and fail in imparting higher order thinking skills. John Dewey, trendsetting thinker in the history of modern educational theory criticized the lecture method and even predicted that it will be replaced. "Some studies have shown that lectures only encourage students to take notes quickly rather than think about and process the information they are hearing" (Craik & Lockert 1972). Many faculty members feel and are convinced with the fact in order to cover everything in the syllabus, lecture is the only instructional medium. But, it has to be understood that it is only didactic and hence doesn't suit the present generation learning psyche, needs or their learning style.

With technology skyrocketing, modern ways of lecturing is possible and they can be time bound and learner friendly too. Today mini-lectures have proven effective and are in vogue. Peer lectures and on-line lectures have also taken momentum because they are short and flexible. Even online video that lasts for more than 15 minutes does not serve the purpose of infotainment. Lecture promotes passive learning process because students remain as mere receivers where knowledge is only absorbed. The need of the hour is an active learning process that engages the learners through various interactions and activities. In an active learning environment divergent thinking is possible and allows space for discussion and development of critical thinking skills. Lectures are teacher centered and give less attention to individual needs.

With a global demand for the English language rising every minute, it becomes mandatory for a teacher in English to experiment on the new generation learning needs and interests. In an era, where technology is fast

replacing all spheres of life, it becomes mandatory to explore the latest trends and requirements for educating and sustaining the interest of the ever busy internet savvy generation of learners in India especially. Hence, it is high time that the ineffective learning practices are curbed and more engaging classrooms are created. As pointed out by Coomes and DeBard (2004), millenials are the most diverse cohort encountered today in all the institutions. It must not be forgotten that the senior academicians belong to a generation which has never used or heard about technology and the junior academicians belong to a generation that was not introduced to social media in their formative years. But, both the generations teach the newest of generations who are born with technology and whose lives are intertwined with technology at all stages.

The Need of the Hour

Today's education system operates unfortunately according to the agrarian calendar that was designed with summer holidays to make students work in their fields and with industrial time clock that strikes a bell after every 55 minutes. This was followed by the curriculum that was invented based on the needs of the middle age, during which language, arts, science and maths were much sorted. The education system that is practiced today is entirely based upon the requirements for the industrial age of the 19th century and through standardized tests, it prepares students for a job market of that period only. It is obvious that the needs and requirements of the 21st century are completely different from that of the 20th century.

The four forces that spearhead the learning towards 21stcentury are knowledge work, thinking tools, digital lifestyles and learning research. They are henceforth responsible for connecting the 21st century learning practices. Traditional way of lecturing is today a limitation to engage students actively in the teaching-learning process. The plunge towards a modern technique, acts as a shift towards learner-centered classroom from a typical teacher-centered classroom. This will never be the end of lectures; other form of lectures such as interactive learning and peer learning will happen simultaneously. Research has proved that active and experimental learning is a more effective method for developing conceptual understanding and long term retention. Technology plays a key role towards incorporating active and experimental learning within and outside classrooms. The essential step towards incorporating technology pre and post Covid'19 in Indian scenario is through Flipped Learning. A review of related literature shows that in SCOPUS database, on using the keyword flipped learning /flipped classroom, a rapid increase in the number of publications on studies related to the efficiency of flipped classrooms in both arts and science stream. This showcases the scope of the flipped classroom approach and its implications for the new generation learners of the 21st century.

Flipped Learning (FL)

One of the latest trends in the knowledge delivery industry is Blended Learning (BL). This term "blended learning" was first introduced in a 1999 news release from EPIC Learning, an Atlanta- based computer skill certification and software training business:

> The company currently operates 220 on- line courses, but will begin offering its Internet courseware using the company's *Blended Learning Methodology*[emphasis added]. Select courses will continue to offer the traditional course content online, but will also offer live instruction and other collaborative components, all from the student's desktop. (PR Newswire, March 5, 1999)

BL is defined as a combination of web- based technology and pedagogical approach in achieving the learning outcome. BL skilfully involves various forms of media and instructional technology to achieve the purpose of delivering the content. In BL, the synchronous and asynchronous mode of connectivity is possible through technology and hence the catalyst for change in the teaching –learning process is technology and this makes possible a transformation in the higher education sector. With time, all the individual models were taken within rotation models and all models were incorporated to make learning effective. Self- blend together on and off campus courses landed up in an interesting variant called the "flipped learning". This is a wonderful attempt to keep the new generation learners engaged and is gaining wide popularity.

Flipped Learning (FL) in its simple terms is classwork at home and homework at class. The Flipped Learning Network (FLN) defines Flipped Learning as follows:

> A pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter.

As pointed out by Cherie L. Yestrebsky "In a flipped classroom, students listen to and watch the videotaped lecture or other instruction on their own, often via some form of access to the internet, and class time is used for discussion, independent work with teacher guidance, groupwork, peer instruction, teacher led examples,etc".

FL classrooms that are experimented and experienced today owes its origin to two high school teachers in Colorado, Jonathan Bergmannand Aaron Sams. These innovative teacher educators together experimented in the year 2000 an approach to accommodate students who were continuously missing classes for sports and other extra-curricular activities. Hence, theses teachers pre-recorded videos of the classes and made them available to the students using the technology available and named it as'pre-vodcasting model'; where 'pre' means viewing video prior to class and 'vodcasting' was an acronym for video podcasting. This gained instant popularity among the students. Later, KarlFisch, a high school teacher in Denver blogged about the "flipped classroom" model. From then, the term "flipped classroom" gained popularity. A major breakthrough was the publication of the book by the pioneers Bergmann and Sams in 2012 - *Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day.* Since then Bergmann and Sams has been on a journey to spread this innovative approach through consultancy, workshops and conferences. The Flipped Learning Network (FLN) since its inception in 2012 till date plays a vital role in supporting the research and experiments using the flipped classroom approach. FLNs described as given below in the official webpage:

> The "FLN" is the original non-profit online community for educators utilizing or interested in learning more about the flipped classroom and flipped learning practices. Initiated in 2012 by widely recognized pioneers including Jon Bergmann, Aaron Sams, April Gudenrath, Kristin Daniels, TroyCockrum, Brian Bennett and others, the FLN revised its mission in 2016 to focus more directly on being the online hub where educators across the world can share and access resources, tips, tools, and more.

The worldwide popularity of flipped classroom grew with the resources and methodologies popularised and experimented by Khan Academy, Coursera, TED-ED, and other massive open online courses provider. Especially Khan Academy founded by Sal Khan is one of the forerunners of the video supported online teaching uses hands -on exercises, instructional videos, and a personalized learning dashboard that support flexible and anytime learning. Over 5.3 million subscribers globally have accessed and used the Youtube channel of this academy with more that 1.7 billion views as on January 2020.

FL approach is used in various disciplines to replace the existing traditional form of teaching. "The flipped classroom approach does not comprise a single model, but rather a core idea to flip the lecture-based classroom instruction and utilize pre-recorded videos and reading assignments in advance of class" (Tucker, 2012). Class time is then used to engage learners in problem-based, collaborative learning and advancing concepts. The educators who believed in collaborative, student-centred classrooms worked together in introducing a new method to engage the students.

John Dewey is an American philosopher also an educator and the founder of Pragmatism, a philosophical movement in America towards the end of the 19the century. Dewey's philosophies propagated a student-centred education system where the learners should be allowed to solve real-life problems. In this approach, a learner discovered and created knowledge and his/her role was to synthesize, discover, and create knowledge. The teacher in the approach had a crucial role of guiding, organising and helping the pupils towards an effective classroom experience where learning happened at individual's own pace. The same role is expected of a teacher in a FL classroom as it is right the time to shift gears from the role of "Sage on the Stage" to "Guide on the Side".

Characteristic Features of Flipped Learning

1. **Collaboration** – Here, not only the students but the teachers also collaborate with their peers in developing the content for the flipped classrooms. Collaboration between teachers would widen one's network too.
2. **Student- Centred Learning**-Here, teachers become facilitators and hence the students who are usually disengaged in a regular classroom setup takes effort to participate in a non traditional classroom setting and feels motivated to learn at one's own pace.
3. **Optimized Learning Spaces -** These spaces were once blackboard. With technology whiteboard took the space, followed by LCD projector and now ipads, android devices, laptops and palm tops have become the optimized learning spaces. But, in majority of the classrooms these spaces have never been utilised and there is still the same space between a teacher centred classrooms with passive students.

Students engage in preliminary learning prior to classroom learning through usually videos on the topic that would be dealt in class. This is in complete contrast to the traditional form of learning and is referred as reversed teaching. Most higher education institutions today, prefer e-learning courses. However, this is a more refined form of blended learning and is in vogue today.

Why Should the English Classrooms be Flipped in India?

The English classes on flipping foster better comprehension of the prescribed and non-prescribed materials as students are introduced to the print material using various formats. For example, a short story in print format is less comprehended by students who prefer a video format of the same. In a video format, the learning outcome is also better achieved. The key 21st century skills such as computer literacy and critical thinking are at its best when the traditional classrooms are flipped. On flipping the English classes, there is increased motivation for language learning. Flipped classroom also offer better platforms for interactions between teachers and students. In the English classrooms of India which is mostly bilingual, interactivities are created using both mother tongue and target language. Implementing technology in building interactivities will enhance the entire process of teaching –learning. Already, Indian education sector has experienced an unprepared shift towards Education 4.0 as a result of Covid- 19 lockdown of schools and colleges. English classrooms on using the flipped classroom approach will turn to be the model classroom for all other subjects as flipped learning leverages collaboration, student- centred learning and optimized learning spaces which are in turn the characteristic features of flipped learning.

The drive towards a newer and compelled technology-driven pedagogy is the paradigm shift that Indian education system has long been waiting for. Post-Covid, sustaining this migration from traditional to online classrooms and vice-versa will be the key towards success of this compelled shift towards education 4. 0. Here, delivering the digital content with quality and creativity together with adaptability will be the primary motive of the educators. Though this situation is being embraced as an opportunity towards the paradigm shift in Indian higher education sector, newer approaches such as flipped learning which will be a digital innovation can best fit the technology driven pedagogy which is the new wave.

Flipped classrooms are more systematically planned and hence there is focus on higher order thinking skills of the learners. There are more opportunities inside the classroom for students to learn and experiment the 21st century skills – collaboration, critical thinking, communication, problem solving and ICT literacy. Teachers are also given opportunities for professional development. FL highlights the teachers' aptitude for integrating 21st century skills, tools and teaching strategies into their classroom practice and is ideal for clubbing project-oriented teaching methods with direct instruction. It furthers enables learning networks that best support to model a 21st century classroom. In English language classrooms, language should serve as a means of developing higher-order thinking skills (analysing, evaluating and creating) of Bloom's Taxonomy. Students do not learn language for its own sake but in order to develop and apply their thinking skills in situations that go beyond the language (Burns & Richards, 2012). Higher-order thinking that are best employed in a flipped classroom and this hence this approach has already been implemented in many non-Asian countries.

> "Flipping a class enables students to learn at their own pace as they view lessons on demand via video, thereby increasing their comprehension. Moreover, in the videos, instructors provide scaffolding for the new content and language using think alouds to show students how to construct meaning for unfamiliar vocabulary, how to use graphic organizers, or how to make connections to prior knowledge."
> (Marshall & DeCapua, 2013; Wade, 1990).

As pointed out by Gass & Mackey on flipping, students spend the full time inside class in interactions and discussions which fosters meaningful communication that otherwise does not happen in a traditional set up. The Teacher Talk Time (TTT) unlike in a traditional classroom is less in a flipped classroom and hence the classroom eventually becomes student friendly. English classrooms in India require this space for interactions and meaningful exchanges. The role of the teacher changes as that of a facilitator and hence active learning is at its best when the traditional classrooms are replaced with flipped classrooms.

Conclusion

Nurturing a multidimensional digital culture in higher education will be possible through coordinated efforts from the teacher fraternity. In India, flipped classrooms are the most apt alternatives for low resource classrooms too. The digital divide that exists can be addressed on implementing flipped classroom approach. Teachers should be technically trained to teach the digital natives. Today's teaching needs to shift gears towards flexibility and long term retention. Refresher courses on flipped learning should be made available to the teachers at regular intervals. Awareness on synchronous and asynchronous learning platforms should be maximized. Administrators and policy makers should encourage teachers to spend less time in face-to-face learning and best adapt new teaching approaches such as technology-integrated learning, flipped instruction and student-centered learning. It is important to conduct more Action Researches on studies in experimenting flipped classroom teaching

models. On the whole, higher education system in India should aim to design a global outlook and make possible inter-operability of learning outcomes in its approach to sustain its place towards reaching education 4.0. Post Covid-19 era is the time to capitalize on technology-driven objectives and outcomes for strengthening and upgrading the classrooms especially of the Indian higher education sector.

References

1. Bergmann, J., & Sams, A. (2012). *Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day.Student in Every Class Every Day*. ASCD. USA.
2. Bowles, Samuel, and Herbert Gintis. 1976. *Schooling in Capitalist America: Education Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life.* New York: Basic Books Inc. pp. 131–132, 147.
3. Burns, A. & Richards, J. (2012). The Cambridge Guide to Pedagogy and Practice in Second Language Teaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Cherie L. Yestrebsky. Flipping the Classroom in a Large Chemistry Class-Research University Environment. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Vol. 191, 2015, pp. 1113 – 1118. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.370
5. Craik & Lockhart.Levels of processing: A framework for memory research. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior. Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior.* Vol. 11, Issue 6, December 1972, pp 671-684. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-5371(72)80001-X.
6. Coomes, Michael & Debard, Robert. A Generational Approach to Understanding Students. *New Directions for Student Services.* 2004, pp. 5 - 16. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ss.121.
7. Diana C. Shakarian. Beyond Lecture: Active Learning Strategies that Work, Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance. Vol. 66, Issue 5, (1995) pp. 21-24. https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.1995.10607074
8. FLIP learning. (2014, March 12). *What is Flipped Learning*.
    a. https://flippedlearning.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/07/FLIP_handout_FNL_Web.pdf
9. Gass, S. M., & Mackey, A. (2006). Input, interaction and output: an overview. AILA Review, 19, 3-17. https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.19.03gas
10. Lubbock, John (1899). *The Pleasures of Life: Part I and Part II.* Macmillan.
11. Marshall, H. W., & DeCapua, A. (2013). *Making the transition to classroom success: Culturally responsive teaching for struggling language learners.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
12. PR Newswire. (March 5, 1999). *Interactive Learning Centers Announces Name Change to EPIC Learning.* http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Interactive+Learning+Centers+Announces+Name+Change+to+EPIC +Learning.- a054024665
13. Tucker, Bill. (2012). The flipped classroom: Online instruction at home frees class time for learning. *Education Next.* Vol. 12, No. 1. https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-274874890/the-flipped-classroom-online-instruction-at-home