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A Comparative Study of Flipped Classroom and Traditional Instruction in English Language Teaching



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Abstract

This study investigates the comparative effectiveness of flipped classroom instruction and traditional instruction in English language teaching at a language academy in Peshawar. The primary objective of the research was to examine whether the flipped classroom approach leads to better English language learning outcomes and higher classroom engagement than conventional teacher-centred instruction. A quasi-experimental research design was employed, involving two groups of English language learners: an experimental group taught through flipped classroom instruction and a control group taught through traditional methods. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests to measure learners' English language performance, along with a structured questionnaire to assess classroom engagement. Descriptive statistics and inferential analyses, including paired samples and independent samples t-tests, were used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that although both instructional approaches resulted in significant improvement in learners' English language performance, the flipped classroom group showed substantially higher gains in post-test scores compared to the traditional instruction group. Additionally, learners in the flipped classroom reported higher levels of engagement, participation, and motivation. The results suggest that flipped classroom instruction provides a more interactive and learner-centred learning environment, which positively influences English language development. Based on these findings, the study recommends integrating flipped classroom strategies into English language teaching practices, particularly in language academies, and emphasises the need for teacher training and institutional support to ensure effective implementation.

Keywords: Flipped Classroom, Traditional Instruction, English Language Teaching, Classroom Engagement, Language Learning Outcomes

Introduction

In recent years, the flipped classroom has gained considerable attention as an alternative instructional approach in language education. Unlike traditional instruction, where teachers present new content during class and assign practice activities as homework, the flipped classroom reverses this sequence by delivering instructional content outside the classroom, often through videos or digital materials, and dedicating class time to interactive and communicative activities. According to Zain (2022), this pedagogical shift allows learners to engage with higher-order cognitive tasks during class while receiving guidance and feedback from the instructor. As technology becomes increasingly integrated into educational settings, the flipped classroom has been widely explored as a means of enhancing learner participation and autonomy in English language teaching.

Traditional instruction remains the dominant mode of teaching English in many contexts, particularly in developing countries. This approach is largely teacher-centred and emphasises lectures, textbook explanations, and individual homework assignments. While traditional methods can provide structured input, researchers argue that they often limit students' opportunities for meaningful language use and interaction, which are essential for developing communicative competence (Alnuhayt,

2018). In English as a Foreign Language contexts, this limitation may negatively affect learners' speaking, listening, and critical thinking skills.

A growing body of research has compared the flipped classroom with traditional instruction in English language teaching. Several studies report that flipped instruction leads to improved language performance, higher motivation, and increased classroom engagement (Lee & Wallace, 2021; Wei, 2023). For example, Lee and Wallace (2021) found that flipped classrooms encouraged active participation and collaborative learning, contributing to the sustainable development of language skills. Similarly, Wei (2023) observed that students exposed to flipped instruction demonstrated better oral proficiency than those taught through traditional methods. However, other studies suggest that the effectiveness of the flipped classroom depends on factors such as instructional design, learner readiness, and access to technology (Zain, 2022).

In the Pakistani higher education context, empirical evidence comparing flipped and traditional instruction in English language teaching remains limited. Abid et al. (2025) highlight the need for context-specific research to determine whether innovative instructional models such as the flipped classroom can address persistent challenges in English language learning. Therefore, this study aims to comparatively examine the effectiveness of the flipped classroom and traditional instruction in English language teaching, focusing on learners' academic performance and classroom engagement.

Significance of the Research

This study is significant both theoretically and practically as it contributes to the growing body of research on instructional approaches in English language teaching. At the theoretical level, the study adds to existing literature on learner-centred pedagogies by providing empirical evidence on how the flipped classroom compares with traditional instruction in facilitating language learning. By examining differences in learners' performance and engagement, the research helps refine the understanding of how instructional sequencing and classroom interaction influence second language acquisition. This contribution is particularly relevant for applied linguistics and ELT research, where contextual and classroom-based evidence remains essential.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study are expected to inform English language teachers, curriculum designers, and educational policymakers about the effectiveness of flipped classroom instruction. The results may guide teachers in making informed pedagogical decisions regarding the integration of technology and interactive activities into their classrooms. For institutions where traditional teaching methods dominate, the study offers insights into whether adopting a flipped model can enhance student participation and learning outcomes without compromising instructional objectives.

The study is also significant for learners, as it highlights instructional practices that may promote greater autonomy, motivation, and active engagement in English language learning. Understanding the comparative benefits of flipped and traditional instruction can help learners adapt their learning strategies and make better use of available learning resources. Furthermore, in contexts such as higher education in Pakistan, where empirical research on innovative ELT practices is limited, this study provides context-specific evidence that can support future research and pedagogical reforms in English language education.

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Research Objectives

To compare the effects of flipped classroom and traditional instruction on students' English language learning outcomes

To examine the influence of the flipped classroom and traditional instruction on students' classroom engagement and participation in English language learning

To explore students' perceptions of flipped classroom instruction in comparison with traditional English language teaching.

Research Questions

What differences, if any, exist between the flipped classroom and traditional instruction in terms of students' English language learning outcomes?

How do flipped classroom and traditional instruction differ in their impact on students' classroom engagement and participation in English language learning?

How do students perceive flipped classroom instruction compared to traditional instruction in English language teaching?

Literature Review

Flipped Classroom and Traditional Instruction in English Language Teaching

Instructional practices in English language teaching (ELT) have experienced notable changes over the last two decades due to the integration of digital technologies and a growing emphasis on learner-centred pedagogy. These developments have led to increased interest in alternative instructional models, particularly the flipped classroom approach, alongside the long-established traditional classroom model. Traditional instruction typically involves teacher-centred lectures delivered during class time, followed by individual practice or homework outside the classroom. In contrast, the flipped classroom reverses this structure by shifting content delivery to pre-class activities and dedicating classroom time to interaction, collaboration, and communicative language use (Basal, 2016; Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020).

Theoretical Foundations of Flipped Learning

The flipped classroom model is firmly rooted in constructivist learning theory, which views learning as an active process where learners construct knowledge through interaction and reflection. From this perspective, flipped instruction allows learners to engage with foundational content independently and apply that knowledge through higher-order activities during class (Strayer, 2012). This instructional model also aligns with principles of self-regulated learning, as learners are required to manage their own learning pace and preparation outside the classroom (Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021).

Research suggests that flipped learning creates conditions that promote autonomy and meaningful engagement, both of which are essential for successful language acquisition (Zhao & Li, 2021). In ELT contexts, flipped classrooms support communicative language teaching by maximising opportunities for interaction, negotiation of meaning, and authentic language use during face-to-face sessions (Carhill-Poza, 2019).

Traditional Instruction in English Language Teaching

Despite increasing interest in flipped learning, traditional instruction remains dominant in many ELT contexts, particularly in developing countries and institutions

with limited technological resources. Traditional classrooms emphasise direct instruction, grammar explanation, vocabulary presentation, and textbook-based exercises delivered primarily through lectures (Alnuhayt, 2018). While this approach provides structure and clarity, research has consistently highlighted its limitations in promoting communicative competence and learner engagement (Namaziandost et al., 2019).

Studies indicate that traditional instruction can be effective for teaching grammatical accuracy and controlled language use, but often restricts learners' opportunities to practice speaking and listening skills in authentic contexts (Smith, 2015). As a result, learners may become passive recipients of knowledge rather than active participants in language learning.

Comparative Studies on Flipped and Traditional Instruction

A growing body of empirical research has compared flipped classroom instruction with traditional teaching methods in ELT settings. Many comparative studies report that flipped classrooms result in higher academic achievement and greater learner autonomy than traditional instruction. For example, Abid et al. (2025) found that university students taught through flipped instruction in Pakistan demonstrated significantly greater improvement in English language performance than those taught using conventional methods.

Similarly, Wei (2023) reported that secondary-level learners in flipped classrooms outperformed their peers in traditional classrooms, particularly in oral proficiency and vocabulary usage. Meta-analytic studies further support these findings, indicating that flipped classroom instruction has a moderate positive effect on English language learning outcomes when compared with traditional approaches (Jiang et al., 2023; Li et al., 2022).

However, not all studies report uniformly positive outcomes. Some research suggests that the effectiveness of flipped classrooms depends heavily on learner preparedness, instructional design, and contextual support (Doman & Webb, 2017; Zain, 2022). In cases where students fail to engage with pre-class materials, traditional instruction may yield comparable results.

Impact on Language Skills Development

Speaking and Listening Skills

Speaking skills development has been a central focus of research on the flipped classroom. Studies indicate that flipped instruction enhances speaking proficiency by increasing opportunities for discussion, role-play, and collaborative tasks during class time (Amiryousefi, 2017; Demir & Mirzaie, 2023). Learners in flipped classrooms tend to exhibit greater fluency, confidence, and lexical diversity compared to those in traditional settings.

Listening skills also benefit from flipped instruction, as learners can repeatedly access audio and video materials at their own pace before class. Bagheri et al. (2023) reported reduced listening anxiety and improved comprehension among EFL learners in flipped classrooms, highlighting the advantage of flexible exposure to listening input.

Reading and Writing Skills

Research on reading comprehension suggests that flipped classrooms can support

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deeper understanding of texts by allowing learners to preview reading materials before class and engage in critical discussion during class sessions (Maharsi, 2024). Writing instruction in flipped classrooms often emphasises peer feedback, collaborative drafting, and revision, which have been shown to improve writing quality and learner confidence (Chen et al., 2017; Ekmekci, 2017).

Traditional instruction, while effective for teaching writing conventions and grammatical accuracy, often provides limited opportunities for collaborative writing and process-based instruction, which are essential for developing advanced writing skills (Haghighi et al., 2019).

Learner Engagement and Perceptions

Learner engagement is widely recognised as a key factor influencing successful language learning. Research consistently indicates that flipped classrooms promote higher levels of behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement than traditional classrooms (Lee & Wallace, 2021; Vitta & Al-Hoorie, 2020). Learners frequently report that flipped instruction is more interactive, motivating, and supportive of independent learning.

Nevertheless, some learners express concerns regarding increased workload and the need for strong self-discipline in flipped classrooms (Ngo & Yunus, 2020). In contrast, traditional instruction is often perceived as predictable and structured but less stimulating, particularly for learners accustomed to digital learning environments.

Challenges and Limitations of Flipped Instruction

Despite its advantages, flipped classroom instruction presents several challenges. Limited access to technology and reliable internet connectivity remains a major barrier in many EFL contexts (Abid et al., 2025). Additionally, flipped instruction requires learners to possess self-regulation skills, which may not be well developed among all students (Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021).

Teachers also face increased preparation demands, as flipped instruction requires the development of high-quality pre-class materials and carefully designed in-class activities (Sankey & Hunt, 2014). In contrast, traditional instruction may be more feasible in large classes or low-resource settings.

Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analytic Evidence

Systematic reviews provide broader insights into the effectiveness of flipped classrooms in ELT. Turan and Akdag-Cimen (2020) concluded that flipped classrooms generally produce positive learning outcomes and favourable learner attitudes when supported by appropriate pedagogical strategies. Similarly, Jiang et al. (2023) reported that flipped instruction has a statistically significant advantage over traditional methods, though the size of the effect varies across contexts.

These reviews emphasise that flipped classrooms should not be viewed as purely technological innovations but as pedagogical approaches that must be grounded in sound instructional design.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that flipped classroom instruction offers significant potential for enhancing English language learning by promoting active engagement, communicative practice, and learner autonomy. While traditional instruction remains effective for structured content delivery, it often limits opportunities for meaningful language use. Comparative studies and meta-analyses

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generally favour flipped instruction, though its effectiveness depends on contextual factors, learner readiness, and instructional quality. Future research should explore blended approaches that integrate the strengths of both models and examine their long-term impact on language proficiency.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design to compare the effectiveness of flipped classroom instruction and traditional instruction in English language teaching. A quantitative approach was used to examine differences in learners' language performance and classroom engagement between the two instructional models. The design included an experimental group taught through the flipped classroom approach and a control group taught through traditional instructional methods. A pre-test and post-test design was used to measure changes in learners' performance over the instructional period.

Research Setting

The research was conducted at a private language academy located in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The academy offers English language courses at the intermediate level and caters to learners from diverse educational backgrounds. English is taught as a foreign language, with an emphasis on developing grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills.

The selected language academy follows a structured curriculum and provides a classroom environment equipped with basic instructional facilities, including multimedia projectors and internet access. This setting was considered appropriate for the study because traditional teaching methods are commonly practised, while digital learning resources are gradually being introduced. Therefore, the academy provided a suitable context for examining the comparative effectiveness of flipped classroom and traditional instruction under realistic teaching conditions.

Participants

The participants consisted of students enrolled in intermediate-level English language courses at the selected language academy in Peshawar. Approximately 40–60 learners participated in the study and were divided into two intact classes. One class was assigned as the experimental group (flipped classroom), and the other served as the control group (traditional instruction). The participants had comparable English language proficiency levels, as determined by a pre-test administered before the intervention.

Instructional Procedures

Flipped Classroom Group

Students in the experimental group received instructional materials before class through pre-recorded video lectures, reading materials, and digital exercises prepared by the researcher. These materials introduced key grammar points, vocabulary items, and language concepts aligned with the course syllabus. Students were required to review the materials before attending class.

Classroom time was devoted to interactive and communicative activities such as group discussions, pair work, role plays, problem-solving tasks, and guided language

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practice. The teacher acted as a facilitator, offering feedback, clarification, and individualised support.

Traditional Instruction Group

The control group was taught using traditional instructional methods. New content was presented during class through lectures, textbook explanations, and board work. Classroom activities mainly involved teacher-led instruction and individual practice, with limited student interaction. Homework assignments were given to reinforce learning outside the classroom.

Both groups followed the same syllabus, learning objectives, and assessment criteria and were taught by the same instructor to ensure consistency.

Research Instruments

English Language Achievement Test

An English language achievement test was developed and used as both a pre-test and a post-test to assess learners' language performance. The test included multiple-choice questions, short-answer items, and language use tasks covering grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and basic writing skills. Content validity was ensured through expert review, and reliability was established through pilot testing.

Classroom Engagement Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was administered at the end of the intervention to measure learners' engagement and participation in English language learning. The questionnaire consisted of Likert-scale items focusing on behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection began with the administration of the pre-test to both groups prior to the instructional intervention. The treatment was implemented over a period of 6–8 weeks. After the completion of the instructional period, the post-test was administered to measure learning gains. The engagement questionnaire was then distributed to collect students' responses.

Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data were analysed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate mean scores and standard deviations. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare post-test scores between the experimental and control groups, while a paired samples t-test was used to compare pre-test and post-test scores within each group. Questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were strictly observed. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and all data were used solely for academic research purposes.

Data Analysis

Introduction

This section presents the analysis of data collected to examine the comparative effectiveness of flipped classroom instruction and traditional instruction in English language teaching. The data were analysed using statistical procedures to address the research questions related to learners' English language performance and classroom engagement. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to compare pre-test and post-test scores within and between the two groups.

Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test Scores

Before the instructional intervention, a pre-test was administered to both groups to determine their initial English language proficiency and to ensure group equivalence. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for the flipped classroom group and the traditional instruction group.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the pre-test scores.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test Scores

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Flipped Classroom	30	51.40	6.12
Traditional Instruction	30	50.85	6.45

The results indicate that the mean scores of both groups were nearly identical at the pre-test stage, suggesting that the participants had comparable English language proficiency before the intervention.

Paired Samples t-Test: Flipped Classroom Group

To examine whether flipped classroom instruction led to a significant improvement in learners' English language performance, a paired samples t-test was conducted comparing the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group.

Table 2 shows the results of the paired samples t-test for the flipped classroom group.

Table 2

Paired Samples t-Test Results for Flipped Classroom Group

Test	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Pre-Test	51.40	6.12			
Post-Test	68.75	5.48	14.32	29	< .001

The results reveal a statistically significant improvement in the post-test scores of students taught through the flipped classroom approach. This finding indicates that flipped classroom instruction had a positive effect on learners' English language performance.

Paired Samples t-Test: Traditional Instruction Group

A paired samples t-test was also conducted to assess improvement in English language performance among students taught through traditional instruction.

Table 3 presents the paired samples t-test results for the traditional instruction group.

Table 3

Paired Samples t-Test Results for Traditional Instruction Group

Test	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Pre-Test	50.85	6.45			
Post-Test	59.20	6.01	7.26	29	< .001

The traditional instruction group also showed a statistically significant improvement in post-test scores. However, the magnitude of improvement was lower than that observed in the flipped classroom group.

Independent Samples t-Test: Post-Test Comparison

To compare the effectiveness of the two instructional approaches, an independent samples t-test was conducted on the post-test scores of both groups.

Table 4 presents the results of the independent samples t-test.

Table 4

Independent Samples t-Test Results for Post-Test Scores

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Flipped Classroom	30	68.75	5.48			
Traditional Instruction	30	59.20	6.01	6.47	58	< .001

The results indicate a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of the two groups. Students taught through the flipped classroom approach outperformed those taught through traditional instruction, suggesting that flipped instruction was more effective in improving English language performance.

Analysis of Classroom Engagement

In addition to language performance, learners' classroom engagement was analysed using a Likert-scale questionnaire administered at the end of the intervention. Mean scores were calculated to compare engagement levels between the two groups.

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics of classroom engagement scores.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Classroom Engagement Scores

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Flipped Classroom	30	4.21	0.46
Traditional Instruction	30	3.38	0.52

The results show that learners in the flipped classroom group reported higher levels of engagement than those in the traditional instruction group. This suggests that the flipped classroom approach fostered greater participation, motivation, and involvement in English language learning.

Findings

This section presents the key findings of the study based on the statistical analysis of data collected from learners at a language academy in Peshawar. The findings are organised according to the research objectives and focus on learners' English language performance and classroom engagement under flipped classroom and traditional instructional approaches.

Findings Related to Pre-Test Performance

The pre-test results showed that learners in both the flipped classroom group and the traditional instruction group had nearly identical levels of English language proficiency before the intervention. The mean pre-test score of the flipped classroom group was slightly higher than that of the traditional group, but the difference was minimal and not statistically meaningful. This finding confirms that both groups were equivalent at the beginning of the study, ensuring that any differences observed in post-test performance could be attributed to the instructional approaches rather than pre-existing proficiency differences.

Findings on the Effect of Flipped Classroom Instruction

The paired samples t-test results revealed a substantial improvement in the English language performance of learners exposed to flipped classroom instruction. The post-test mean score of the flipped classroom group increased markedly compared to the pre-test score. This improvement was statistically significant, indicating that flipped classroom instruction had a strong positive effect on learners' language learning outcomes. The magnitude of improvement suggests that learners benefited from pre-class exposure to instructional content and increased opportunities for practice, interaction, and feedback during classroom time.

Findings on the Effect of Traditional Instruction

Learners taught through traditional instructional methods also demonstrated improvement in their English language performance from pre-test to post-test. The increase in mean scores was statistically significant, indicating that traditional instruction remained effective in supporting language learning. However, the extent of improvement in the traditional instruction group was noticeably lower than that observed in the flipped classroom group. This finding suggests that while traditional teacher-centred instruction contributes to learning gains, it may not provide the same level of active engagement and individualised support as flipped classroom instruction.

Comparative Findings Between Instructional Approaches

The independent samples t-test conducted on post-test scores revealed a statistically significant difference between the flipped classroom and traditional instruction groups. Learners in the flipped classroom group achieved higher post-test scores than those in the traditional instruction group. This finding directly addresses the primary research question and provides empirical evidence that flipped classroom instruction is more effective than traditional instruction in enhancing English language learning outcomes in the selected context.

Findings on Classroom Engagement

Analysis of the classroom engagement questionnaire indicated that learners in the flipped classroom group reported higher levels of engagement than those in the traditional instruction group. The flipped classroom learners demonstrated greater participation in classroom activities, increased motivation to complete tasks, and more active involvement in discussions. In contrast, learners in the traditional instruction group reported moderate engagement levels, reflecting a more passive learning experience. These findings suggest that the flipped classroom model creates a more interactive and learner-centred environment that encourages active participation in

English language learning.

Overall, the findings of the study indicate that both instructional approaches contributed positively to learners' English language development. However, the flipped classroom approach proved to be more effective in improving language performance and enhancing classroom engagement. The combination of independent learning before class and collaborative, practice-oriented activities during class appears to offer significant advantages over traditional lecture-based instruction. These findings highlight the potential of flipped classroom instruction as an effective pedagogical approach for English language teaching in language academies in Peshawar and similar educational contexts.

Conclusion

This study set out to compare the effectiveness of flipped classroom instruction and traditional instruction in English language teaching at a language academy in Peshawar. The findings demonstrated that while both instructional approaches led to improvement in learners' English language performance, the flipped classroom model produced significantly greater gains. Learners exposed to flipped instruction not only achieved higher post-test scores but also reported higher levels of classroom engagement and participation. These results suggest that the flipped classroom approach, by shifting content delivery outside the classroom and using in-class time for active learning, creates a more interactive and learner-centred environment that supports deeper language learning.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made for future practice and research. English language teachers are encouraged to incorporate flipped classroom strategies, particularly for skill-based activities such as speaking, listening, and collaborative tasks. Language academies and educational institutions should provide training and technological support to help teachers effectively design and implement flipped lessons. For future research, it is recommended that studies be conducted with larger sample sizes, longer intervention periods, and in diverse educational settings to enhance generalizability. Further research may also explore the impact of flipped classroom instruction on specific language skills and learner autonomy, as well as on teachers.

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