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ENHANCING SPEAKING PROFICIENCY THROUGH FLIPPED LEARNING AND CLT APPROACH: A QUASI- EXPERIMENTAL STUDY AT INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY KAZAKHSTAN

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Abstract— This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of integrating a flipped classroom approach with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in improving the speaking skills of pre-intermediate students in the context of general English. The research involved two groups, with 16 students in the experimental group and 14 students in the control group. The primary objective was to assess the impact of incorporating the flipped classroom strategy with CLT on students' performance, perceptions, and attitudes towards independent learning of English grammar. Data was collected through pre-tests and post-tests for speaking and writing, as well as a questionnaire measuring students' perceptions and attitudes. The results obtained from the observations and assessments revealed significant improvements in the participants' speaking ability. Furthermore, there was a positive shift in their attitude towards learning English, indicating a favorable response to the flipped instruction and CLT activities. These findings provide substantial evidence for the effectiveness of integrating the flipped classroom approach with CLT in enhancing students' speaking skills and overall learning outcomes. To further advance the understanding in this area, future research should aim to expand upon these findings by investigating their applicability in different general English learning contexts. Exploring the long-term effects of the flipped classroom approach with CLT, as well as assessing its impact on other language skills, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of its effectiveness.

Keywords— *flipped learning; communicative language teaching (CLT); speaking skills; pre-intermediate students; general english.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

Background In foreign language teaching and learning, the development of communicative competence is crucial for effective language acquisition. Oral proficiency plays a vital role in enabling individuals to communicate ideas and engage in conversations in a foreign language (Alvarez, 2017). However, teaching speaking skills to Kazakhstan's English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students presents challenges such as limited class time, a lack of interaction opportunities, teacher-centered instruction, and a lack of motivation of students (Zikrina, 2022). Traditional classroom approaches have faced criticism for their insufficient emphasis on promoting communicative competence and their tendency to rely on teacher-led instruction, which limits students' autonomy and opportunities for independent learning (Kim, 2018). To address the need for improving students' speaking abilities, educators at International Information Technology University (IITU) Kazakhstan have implemented various approaches and techniques. Among these, communicative language teaching (CLT) has emerged as one of the most effective methods for enhancing speaking skills. CLT emphasizes meaning over structure and encourages students to actively engage in communicative activities such as role-plays, dialogues, games, and problem-solving exercises. However, due to limited class time dedicated to grammar, vocabulary, reading, and listening, there has been a challenge in allocating sufficient time for communicative activities. In response to

these constraints, integrating technology into speaking classrooms offers promising opportunities for students to become more active, independent, and productive in their language learning journey (Silaiyappan & Sivakumar, 2018).

Flipped learning (FL) has emerged as an adopted approach to enhance students' learning and communication skills. FL involves three distinct stages: pre-class, in-class, and post-class. In the pre-class stage, teachers provide students with recorded lecture videos and related tasks to be completed as homework. This approach allows for more efficient use of classroom time, as it frees up valuable in-class moments for deeper and more meaningful learning experiences. Students have increased opportunities to engage in activities that promote understanding and application of knowledge, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes (Baker, 2000). These activities enable students to actively apply the concepts they have learned in a practical context, enhancing their understanding and retention of the material. In the post-class stage, students further reinforce their understanding through assignments and feedback activities, solidifying their learning (Yu, 2022).

Implementing a flipped classroom model with CLT in an English language classroom has proven beneficial in fostering increased engagement in English speaking activities, consequently enhancing students' speaking abilities (Abdullah et al., 2019). By providing more opportunities for active participation and practice during class, the flipped model promotes student involvement and active learning, resulting in improved speaking skills. Students have the chance to communicate and interact in English more frequently, leading to greater fluency and confidence in speaking.

The novelty of this research lies in the combination of two approaches that is CLT and the flipped learning model to address the challenges faced by EFL students in Kazakhstan when learning speaking skills. While CLT is an established method for enhancing speaking skills, this research explores its integration with the flipped learning model, which has not been extensively studied in the context of teaching speaking skills to EFL students in Kazakhstan.

This study aims to investigate whether a flipped classroom approach combined with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) can contribute to increased gains in speaking skills among students. The primary objectives of this study include to assess the effectiveness of the flipped classroom approach with CLT in improving students' speaking skills. Second, to examine students' attitudes towards the flipped classroom approach and its impact on their motivation and engagement in speaking activities.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach was introduced in the 1970s as an effective way to teach second languages by emphasizing communicative skills. It has gained recognition as one of the most valuable methods in English language teaching (ELT) for enhancing learners' ability to communicate in real-life situations (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). CLT focuses on meaningful communication rather than solely on grammar and sentence structure. It encourages activities where students engage in authentic language exchanges and interactive tasks that reflect real-world communication needs (Brown, 1993). CLT is based on the understanding that language learning should be interactive and centered around meaningful communication, allowing learners to use the language effectively in diverse social contexts (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). It aims to foster communicative competence, which involves not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to use the language appropriately and efficiently.

In CLT classrooms, students are encouraged to participate actively in communicative activities, such as role-plays, discussions, and problem-solving tasks (Celce-Murcia, 2001). This allows learners to practice and improve their speaking skills in real-life situations. Unlike traditional approaches like Grammar-Translation, CLT emphasizes fluency and effective communication over accuracy and precision. Errors are seen as opportunities for learning, and correction is provided in a supportive and constructive manner (Brown, 1993). By creating a learner-centered and non-threatening environment, CLT encourages students to express their opinions, engage in spontaneous conversations, and become comfortable speaking English in various social settings. Implementing CLT in the classroom requires a shift from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered one. The role of the teacher is transformed into that of a facilitator and guide, providing opportunities for students to practice and apply their language skills (Alghonaim, 2014). By incorporating CLT principles and activities, teachers can enhance students' interest, motivation, and active participation in the language learning process.

Difficulties in Implementing CLT in the EFL Classroom

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has emerged as a student-centered approach to language teaching that emphasizes real-life communication and interaction. In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), CLT has gained considerable attention for its potential to enhance students' communicative competence and language proficiency. However, despite its benefits, EFL learners encounter many obstacles that prevent them from improving their speaking skills. First, students may have negative experiences in learning English due to ineffective implementation of learning

strategies and activities in the classroom. Toro et al. (2019) found that in Ecuador, strategies such as group work, pair work, repetition, and modeling were not implemented frequently enough to encourage active participation. The study suggests incorporating more strategies like elicitation and metalinguistic feedback to enhance students' oral skills. Second, students may fear making mistakes and feel pressured to speak flawless English due to their educational backgrounds and previous language learning experiences. Tuspekova (2019) highlights the frustration experienced by Kazakhstan students who have primarily been taught using grammar-based methods, focusing more on theoretical understanding rather than practical communication skills. Similarly, research in Japan (Haghighi, Jafarigohar, Khoshima, & Vahdany, 2019; Smith, 2017) suggests that students may have low confidence in their English abilities, stemming from traditional teaching methods and pressures of grammar-focused examinations. Third, large class sizes and the dominance of traditional teaching methods can hinder opportunities for students to practice speaking and listening skills. Panhwar, Baloch, and Khan (2017) found that in Pakistan, students often lack interactive activities due to the contextual challenges of large classes and overuse of traditional teaching methods. Fourth, cultural orientation also plays a role, especially in countries like China where Confucian values emphasize a passive learning approach. Luo and Garner (2017) assert that despite CLT being an official policy in China, cultural difficulties hinder its successful implementation. In Confucian culture, students are more inclined to passively receive knowledge from the teacher rather than actively engage in constructing it themselves. Fifth, motivating students to speak in the classroom can be a significant challenge for teachers. Koran (2015) suggests that several factors, both social and psychological, contribute to students feeling stressed, nervous, or shy about speaking English. One reason for this hesitancy is the social pressure students face, as they fear judgment or criticism from their peers. Students may worry about being judged for their pronunciation, grammar, or fluency, which leads them to remain silent to avoid potential embarrassment. Finally, the over-reliance on traditional teaching methods can create uninspiring and anxiety-inducing educational environments, leading to a lack of motivation and limited critical thinking skills among students (Alharbi, 2015). This lack of innovative and dynamic teaching approaches can hinder students' engagement and enthusiasm for language learning.

Overview Of The Flipped Learning Approach

The flipped learning (FL) approach has changed the structure of in-class and out-of-class learning, placing greater emphasis on motivating students to independently study the language. In the FL approach, the usual tasks completed in class and as homework are switched around. This approach, as

explained by Herreid and Schiller (2013), involves shifting the traditional classroom activities to take place outside of class, while the activities that typically happen outside of class now occur during class time. By doing so, students can have a more meaningful and interactive learning experience within the classroom (King, 1993). Students are responsible for independently acquiring knowledge and understanding the learning materials before attending class. This allows instructors to focus on organizing interactive activities during class time, which serve to reinforce concepts and address any misunderstandings. Examples of these activities include collaborative learning, role-playing simulations, problem-solving workshops. According to Ahmad (2016), when students can apply what they have learned to real tasks, the learning experience becomes more engaging and active. Active learning stresses the importance of students taking an active role in the process of internalizing knowledge, connecting new information to their prior understanding, rather than passively receiving information through lectures and note-taking (Mehring, 2016). The FL approach fosters active learning by encouraging students to actively engage with the materials they learn outside of the class, typically through videos, and then apply that knowledge during in-class activities (Zhonggen & Wang, 2016).

Challenges in Implementing the Flipped learning Approach

Implementing FL in the EFL classroom presents several challenges. These challenges include the need for students to have access to necessary technology and reliable internet outside the classroom, as limited access and connectivity issues can hinder successful implementation (Fulton, 2012; Flumerfelt & Green, 2013). Another challenge is ensuring student accountability and active participation in self-paced learning activities, as some students may struggle with self-regulation and require additional guidance (Hamdan & McKnight, 2013; Strayer, 2007). Some students might resist engaging with flipped learning assignments, perceiving them as additional workload or lacking motivation to complete them (Stone, 2012). Instructors also face challenges in planning and reorganizing course materials, as well as designing appropriate assessments to align with instructional objectives (Mason et al., 2013; Lee & Wallace, 2018). The professional development of instructors is essential for successful implementation, as they require support and training to effectively shift from traditional instructional models (Alshumaimeri, 2008).

However, research suggests that with proper implementation and support, these challenges can be overcome (Hamdan & McKnight, 2013; Ishikawa et al., 2015; Strayer, 2012). Adequate implementation accompanied by support for both students and teachers can help alleviate initial resistance

and allow the benefits of the flipped classroom model to be realized. By addressing these challenges and providing necessary training, educators can foster a successful flipped learning environment in the EFL classroom.

II. METHOD

Research Methodology And Procedure

This study used a quasi-experimental design with two non-equivalent but comparable classrooms. Participants were divided into a control group taught English grammar using traditional strategies and an experimental group taught through the flipped classroom approach. Pre- and post-tests were administered to measure proficiency levels, and a questionnaire and interviews were conducted for evaluation.

Participants

In the 2022 academic year, we conducted an 8-week study at International Information Technology University (IITU) in Almaty. The study focused on first-year students with pre-intermediate level, with one experimental group (16 student) and one control groups (14 student), all aged 17-18. The course lasted for 8 weeks, with a total of 75 hours of instruction, including self-study and practical sessions.

Procedure

The development of lesson plans was essential in this research study. To achieve the research objectives, six lesson plans were created, focusing on topics such as "Vacations," "Holidays around the world," "Places," "Education system," "Achievement," and "The world of work." These lesson plans encompassed a combination of in-class and out-of-class exercises, all designed based on the flipped classroom model and CLT approach. This study involved the participation of both an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group was given access to an online platform (MS Teams) where reading texts, videos lessons on grammar and videos on lesson related topics with corresponding assignments were uploaded three days prior to the lesson. These reading texts aimed to enhance students' scanning skills, while the related videos on grammar helped students to learn grammar on their own pace at home and watching short video on different topics could improve students' pronunciation and listening skills. In contrast, the control group received traditional instruction during regular classroom sessions, where they engaged with reading passages and completed assignments within the allotted class time. The research study extended over a period of 8 weeks. At the beginning and end of the experiment, both groups underwent speaking and writing tests. For the speaking test, evaluators provided a range of topics from which students randomly selected. Each student was given 5 minutes to speak and answer questions.

The writing test consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions administered via the Socrative.com platform.

Instruments

Tests

Achievement Tests: At the beginning of the experiment, both the experimental and control groups took two different tests. The first part was an oral test, which aimed to assess the students' speaking skills. The researcher used a rubric score with five criteria: Content, Cohesion, Grammar, Vocabulary, and Fluency. The total score on the speaking rubric was 100.

The second part was a written test of grammar and vocabulary, which consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions (MCQs) with four possible options. This test was developed by the researcher specifically for the study

Written Questionnaires

To assess students' opinions on the flipped classroom method incorporated with CLT, the researcher developed quantitative questionnaires using Google Forms at the conclusion of the experiment. The questionnaires consisted of 10 closed-ended questions, where students used a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree - agree - neutral - disagree - strongly disagree). Similar questionnaires have been used by Johnson and Renner in their research on the impact of the flipped classroom method on student achievement, providing an assessment of students' positions regarding the implementation of the flipped method. The primary aim of the questionnaires was to evaluate the accessibility and effectiveness of video materials and to gauge students' attitudes towards these methods.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In this study, both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the quantitative data collected. The analysis of the data was conducted using SPSS version 25, a statistical software. To compare the results of the speaking and writing pre-test and post-test between the two groups, an independent samples t-test was employed. Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for the pre-test and post-test scores of both groups.

TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Writing	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
pre_test	Experimental	16	50,2000	14,04686	3,62688
post_test	Experimental	16	74,0667	8,47236	2,18755
pre_test	Control	14	53,2308	12,92384	3,58443
post_test	Control	14	61,4615	4,55733	1,26398

The mean pre-test score for the experimental group was 50.20, with a standard deviation of 14.05 and a standard error of 3.63. The mean pre-test score for the control group was 53.23, with a standard deviation of 12.92 and a standard error of 3.58.

After the experiment, the mean post-test score for the experimental group increased to 74.07, with a standard deviation of 8.47 and a standard error of 2.19. The mean post-test score for the control group increased to 61.46, with a standard deviation of 4.56 and a standard error of 1.26.

TABLE 2. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Speaking	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
pre_test	Experimental	16	47.631	8.246	2.062
post_test	Experimental	16	56.782	7.932	1.983
pre_test	Control	14	45.3	6.759	1.811
post_test	Control	14	49.811	5.673	1.517

The results of the independent samples t-test comparing the post-test scores indicate a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. The mean post-test score for the experimental group ($M = 56.782$, $SD = 7.932$) was higher than that of the control group ($M = 49.811$, $SD = 5.673$). These findings suggest that the treatment process implemented in the experimental group was remarkably effective in developing their speaking skills.

Students' Attitudes towards CLT and flipped learning approach

After the completion of the eight-week experimental period, a comprehensive questionnaire was administered to assess students' perceptions of both CLT and flipped learning approaches in experimental group. The results, as shown in Table 3, highlight students' positive attitudes towards both instructional methods.

TABLE 3: STUDENTS SURVEY RESPONSES

CLT approach perceptions	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	Percentage
I feel more engaged and involved in my learning through CLT approach	4.32	0.68	79%
CLT approach has improved my ability to apply knowledge	3.58	0.72	68%
CLT approach has made me more comfortable asking questions and participating in class discussions	4.1	0.5	82%
CLT approach has helped me retain information better	3.75	0.68	63.7%
Flipped Learning Perceptions:			
I can study in a less frustrating environment	3.78	0.96	56%
I can easily access grammar	4.12	0.76	67.4%

instructions at any time			
FL helped me to develop independent learning skills	4.15	0.81	67.7%
FL encouraged my interest to leaning English.	3.94	0.88	62%
I integrated the knowledge received before the class with the tasks given during the class hours.	4.42	0.58	88.4%
I had an improvement in academic performance	4.05	0.82	65%
I would recommend the FL to my friends	4.59	0.37	91.3%

Discussion

Effectiveness of CLT and Flipped Learning in Enhancing students speaking competence

This study aimed to explore the potential benefits of incorporating the flipped classroom model and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches. The results of the study revealed significant improvements in students' English skills as a result of this combination. Two types of assessments were used to evaluate student progress: speaking tests and written tests focusing on grammar and vocabulary.

The findings in Table 1 clearly demonstrate that students in the experimental group, who were exposed to the flipped learning approach, achieved higher scores on their tests compared to students in the non-flipped group. However, a closer examination of the results reveals that the improvement observed in the experimental group was more prominent in grammar and vocabulary, rather than in speaking skills. This discrepancy can be attributed to several negative factors that hindered the development of students' speaking abilities. Firstly, the limited ability of some students in the experimental group to work together in pairs or groups. This could be attributed to their previous experience in traditional classrooms, where they were taught to work individually rather than in teams. Secondly, resistance towards the flipped classroom and CLT approach was observed among certain students. Reluctance to engage with video lessons and complete assignments outside of class limited their preparedness for in-class activities, including speaking tasks. This resistance may come from their personal preferences or learning styles that are not well-suited to independent learning environments. Furthermore, unclear instructions and deadlines for assignments may have contributed to students' unpreparedness. When expectations and timelines are not clearly communicated, students may face challenges in understanding and fulfilling the requirements of assignments. This lack of clarity can hinder their readiness to participate actively in speaking activities. Motivation is indeed an important factor in student performance. When students are aware that their work is being evaluated and that their grades

are being recorded, it creates a sense of accountability. This knowledge can serve as a driving force for students to actively engage in their assignments and class activities. (Marady Phoeun, Supanee Sengsri, 2021; Indah Tri Purwanti, Evi Suryawati, Eliwanti, 2021)

Nonetheless, the findings in Table 2 reaffirm this, showing that even when considering students' higher scores in grammar and vocabulary, the flipped learning approach still had a beneficial effect on their speaking performance. This success can be attributed to the incorporation of flipped classroom strategies, which enable students to access and revisit lecture videos at their own convenience, aligning with their individual differences and diverse learning styles. It is important for students to genuinely study before attending class to fully benefit from the flipped learning approach (Cheh Hsieh et al., 2017; Nazmi DİNÇER, Mustafa POLAT, 2022). Another contributing factor to the success of the flipped learning approach is the incorporation of CLT during class time. By adopting the CLT, students have more in-class time dedicated to engaging in communicative exercises with both their peers and the instructor, as highlighted by Gilboy, Heinerichs, and Pazzaglia (2015). The students underwent a transformation from passivity to active participation, becoming dynamic and collaborative learners. Overall, the results highlight the positive effects of both CLT and flipped learning approaches on students' speaking and grammar, vocabulary skills. The flipped learning approach with CLT proves to be a valuable instructional method in enhancing language acquisition and creating a conducive learning environment.

CLT Approach and Flipped Learning Students' Perceptions

Many students, regardless of their major, often find reading texts, learning grammar and vocabulary to be dull and disconnected from their daily lives (Rigden & Tobias, 1991). Negative experiences and apprehensions can further contribute to students' negative attitudes toward developing their speaking skills. Incorporating CLT and flipped learning strategies in developing speaking skills gave students the opportunity to engage in discussions in a risk-free environment and interact with the course content in a more meaningful way. Table 2 shows students in this study expressed positive attitudes towards both CLT and flipped learning approaches in developing their speaking skills. CLT was found to significantly increase student engagement and involvement, with 79% of students reporting feeling more engaged and involved in their speaking practice. It also improved the ability to apply language knowledge in real-life situations, as indicated by 68% of students. Moreover, CLT created a comfortable and supportive environment that encouraged students to ask questions, express their thoughts,

and participate in class discussions. This was acknowledged by 82% of students.

These findings align with the notion that CLT strategies enhance student motivation, facilitate meaningful interactions, and promote the application of language skills in authentic contexts. Flipped learning was highly regarded for its ability to provide a less frustrating learning environment, as reported by 56% of students. Students appreciated the flexibility of accessing speaking practice materials at any time, with 67.4% of students acknowledging its convenience. By incorporating pre-class materials and tasks, flipped learning facilitated the development of independent learning skills, which was recognized by 67.7% of students. Moreover, flipped learning encouraged interest in improving speaking skills (62%) and integrating prior knowledge with in-class activities (88.4%). Furthermore, 65% of students reported an improvement in their speaking performance as a result of flipped learning. The overwhelmingly high recommendation rate of 91.3% further highlights the positive impact of flipped learning, reflecting the students' enthusiasm to share their positive experiences with others. It is evident from the findings that combining CLT and flipped learning approaches in developing speaking skills can provide complementary benefits. CLT encourages students to actively engage with the language content and each other, while flipped learning empowers students to take control of their learning process and access speaking practice materials at their convenience. By employing a combination of these approaches, educators can create a comprehensive and student-centered learning experience that optimizes student engagement, motivation, and performance in developing communicative competence.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this research study aimed to investigate the effects of a flipped classroom with a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach on students' English-speaking abilities at IITU in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The results indicated that students experienced significant improvements in their English-speaking skills, gradually overcoming their hesitancy to express their thoughts and feelings among peers. The implementation of the flipped classroom allowed students to independently study course content prior to class, enabling productive activities and collaborative speaking exercises during class time. These findings demonstrate that the flipped instructional method is an effective approach for developing the speaking skills of EFL learners. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Firstly, it was conducted with two groups of participants, and further research with different participant groups would provide a more comprehensive analysis. Additionally, the treatment process lasted for a duration of 8 weeks, and conducting

longer treatment periods may yield more comprehensive results. The observation of the teacher highlighted various factors that negatively influenced to successful implementation of the both methods, including limited abilities of certain students, reluctance to engage with video lessons and complete assignments, unclear instructions provided by the teacher, and a lack of student motivation.

In light of these limitations, future research should consider exploring the impact of the flipped classroom and CLT approach on diverse participant groups and extending the treatment process to assess long-term effects. Addressing the identified factors, such as providing clearer instructions and fostering student motivation, will further enhance the effectiveness of the flipped classroom in developing students' English-speaking proficiency.

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