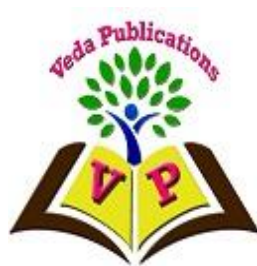**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

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ROLE OF FLIPPED CLASSROOM IN ENHANCING COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH AMONG TECHNICAL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Communicative abilities play a prominent role in the success of technical students in their professional life. Despite the introduction of numerous methods in pedagogy, industry reports still record that many technical graduates are short of the required communication skill set which caters to the need of the industry. Hence, it can possibly be deduced that the current strategies for guidance are not generally the best in improving the communicative skills of our students. With the emergence of technological innovation, here comes the embodiment of Flipped Classroom Approach which appears to be very productive since it requires students' communication and active involvement inside the classroom while the typical part of listening occurs outside the class that permits students work through this input stage in their own time, and at their own pace before coming into the classroom. Further, teachers could allocate more time to help students inside the class, encourage critical thinking, and empower articulation of ideas among the learners by conducting pair or group assignments that add to the improvement of language skills. This paper gives an overview of the Flipped Classroom Approach and explains how communicative abilities can be developed among our technical students of this century.

Keywords: Pedagogy, technological, flipped classroom approach, communication, development.

Instruction in English has become a major priority across the world, but teaching methodologies have not continuously kept pace with the changing needs of our learners. One of the greatest challenges for instructors is effectively educating huge groups of students, all of whom have distinctive identities, distinctive competencies, and diverse learning inclinations. The French essayist, Montaigne, recognized this issue more than 430 years ago: "When, according to our common practice, a teacher undertakes to school several minds of very different structure and capacity with the same lessons and the same measure of guidance, it is no wonder that, among a whole multitude of children, he scarcely finds two or three who derive any proper profit from their teaching." (Montaigne, Essays, On the Education of Children). For example, lower level students can view materials multiple times and higher level students can breeze through everything more quickly. In a traditional classroom, students of various levels all have to follow the same pace set by the teacher and this is less than ideal for many students (TESOL Blog, 2017).

Students who learn language are at their inactive stage during the lecture hours such as at the time of introduction of new vocabulary items. It is quite normal that they listen but for sure they fail to practice them for different reasons despite teachers using several techniques and devices like games, activities etc. All these techniques can be learnt by very few fast learners and others just for the sake of examinations which certainly won't be helpful in acquiring a foreign language. Coming to science subjects, lab classes are allotted where students practically learn whereas language subjects are allotted only theory hours. Simply teaching a language by the teacher is not enough. It needs more and more practice.

For all these reasons, the gist of flipped learning appears valuable which entails students dealing with listening outside the classroom and it appears far more consistent to permit students to work through this input stage in their own time, and at their own pace before entering the classroom. Once students are in the classroom, teachers allocate more time to assist learners, mentor personalized learning and set up combined assignments or recreations. This makes teachers promote reasoning, problem solving, communication skills etc. among students in a language room.

In this way, they will all have a better opportunity to have command over them. Especially for ESL/EFL classes, the Flipped classroom approach works out well as it maximizes the amount of time students speak in English language and at the same time it minimizes the talk time of the teacher.

According to Sams (2011),"The idea of the flipped class started with lecture and direct instruction being done at home via video and/or audio, and what was once considered homework is done in class. So, the order of the "lecture" and "homework" components of the class is, well –flipped". (Bennett, Kern, Gudenrath & McIntosh, 2011).

Although the concept sounds revolutionary, it can't be denied that several difficulties beset the adoption and integration of flipped technology in institutions even in this 21st century. As

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with any new approach, flipped learning brings some challenges for instructors and students (Onlinelibrary.wiley.com, 2017).

Challenge for instructors

The biggest challenge for instructors was the heavy workload prior to and during class (Onlinelibrary.wiley.com, 2017). Converting a course from a traditional teaching approach to a flipped format required a reasonable amount of front-end investment from faculty members (Ghadiri et al., 2014; Kalavally et al., 2014). Some teachers may not welcome this change as they are not techno savvy to effectively deliver lessons using technological devices. During class, on the other hand, one instructor had to serve many students requesting assistance (Clark et al., 2014).

Challenges for Students

Challenges for students include uninteresting online material, technical issues and insufficient knowledge about the new approach. For example, students in Amresh, Carberry, and Femiani's(2013) study found the online videos boring. Similarly, the length of the videos contributed to lack of interest in the material (Olson, 2014). The other major problem is the fact that some of the students are from low income socioeconomic homes where they do not have access to computers and other digital devices. Even if they have, time for effectively watching and studying the flip videos at home could be a limiting factor as well for students who are involved in after college programs/activities/part time jobs. Although it is generally accepted that today's net generation students ubiquitously use various technological tools and applications in their daily lives, this synthesis implied that technical issues frustrated students (Clemens et al., 2013; Tague & Baker, 2014). Students complained about the connectivity speed which is assumed to have been resolved at least on higher education campuses (Everett, Morgan, Stanzione, & Mallouk, 2014).

Salman Khan, a widely recognized online educator, popularized the flipped classroom through his website, Khan Academy. This website contains over 4,120 short educational videos, most detailing a specific math concept (Thomas, 2013). Khan works problems step by step on each video. "Khan's idea was that youngsters would watch the videos at home and work on problems in class, essentially 'flipping' the classroom" (Kronholz, 2012, p. 25). Students also frequent the website to get homework help when they are stuck on a problem. Khan seeks to change the way people think about education, noting "the old classroom model simply doesn't fit our changing needs" (Khan, 2012, p. 1).

Many schools have used Khan's videos to flip the classroom. Greg Green, principal at Clinton dale Community Schools in Michigan, commended the flipped classroom for its ability to assist students who do not get homework help at home (Yourspace.minotstateu.edu, 2017).Students now receive guidance at home in the form of video lectures, and can directly interact with teachers and peers during class time to get answers to their questions. Teachers utilizing Khan Academy to flip their classrooms realize they often work harder during the school day as they are always moving around and interacting with students. It must be noted

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Khan Academy is not meant as a fix-all. Math teacher Courtney Cadwell commented Khan "is not great at helping kids conceptualize math" (Kronholz, 2012, p. 26). Video lectures need to be supplemented with activities which encourage discussion and emphasize the application side of mathematics. When flipping the classroom, teachers must constantly interact with students, adjust instruction on the fly, and design activities which complement the videos (Yourspace.minotstateu.edu, 2017).However, advocates of the Flip classroom approach suggest that it facilitates self paced learning, flexible scheduling and online learning among other things (Sams, & Bennett, 2011).Moreover, there is an affordable state of recording technology and web-based dissemination tools make research on the flipped classroom both timely and cost-effective recent days. There prevails a question about how can these claims be measured up in a systematic study. As White (2011) claims, "further research is necessary to determine the flipped classroom model's efficacy more rigorously even though it has proved successful in the eyes of many educators. Not only is more research required on the efficacy of the flipped classroom model, but also on an adequate assessment strategy that complements the flipped classroom".

Therefore, the objective of this paper is not just to identify the impact of flipped classroom approach on technical students but also to make an attempt to prove its effectiveness through appropriate data analysis. In order to make this emerging technology fruitful, all the stake holders should be integrated together to chalk out a plan for its maximum positive impact.

Language learners who come to learn professional English are not aware of the significance of English language as it was not given high priority in schools. Such practices might have led to the negative feelings and worry towards English language. But after joining professional courses, they understand the value of communication skills in English as it is the deciding factor for making them employable. So, the ultimate objective is to make students relieved of negative attitudes and worries by fostering a classroom environment that is propitious to learning, enjoying and retaining ESL knowledge. This will certainly produce a positive impact on their employability skills.

Over the past few years, student-centered teaching process has been seriously considered; often assimilating game based/task based learning activities. These activities have their own pros and cons. For many students, they serve as a positive experience. But, for teachers the biggest challenge is the urge of content delivery. To bridge this gap, Flipped classroom teaching comes into play where the course content can be delivered through a multi media source leaving class time for student-centered based learning activities.

Therefore, the main intent of my paper is to provide more contribution on the important aspects to be perceived while executing the flipped classroom approach in teaching language skills to students of technology. In addition, this research also intends to identify the most frequently employed methodologies, area of studies, technology tools, impact of students' learning, and challenges of flipping the class through a content analysis of Engineering Technical English. Let me also hope that this study will encourage future researchers or

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policy makers to expand further their state-of-the-art and theoretical considerations, needed for undertaking their projects and derived publications in the flipped classroom approach.

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Bio-Note

Dr. Amara Rama Devi did her Ph.D. In English in the year 2016 and has been teaching English for UG and PG Students since 2006. So far she has published 12 papers in various International Journals and presented 12 papers at both National and International Conferences. She has done 4 NPTEL Courses with Elite Gold Medal Certificates. Since 2009 she has been working as a Professor of English at PSCMR College of Engineering & Technology.