

English Teacher Narratives on Flipped Classroom in Online Learning

Ms. Alina Maharjan (Invited Contribution)

Abstract

The study explores the practice of flipped classroom in online teaching in the context of Nepal after the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of English teachers. The information for this study was generated through interview with four research participants: two female English teachers from Primary level and two male teachers from Secondary level. This is a qualitative study that follows interpretive paradigm. The study will surely contribute in knowing the new practice of flipped classroom being practiced in Nepal as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The finding of this small-scale study reveals a different practice of flipped classroom in online learning in the context of Nepal where the teachers have converted their challenge into their opportunity of learning.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Flipped Classroom, Online Learning

Introduction

The widespread of the COVID-19 pandemic has gripped the entire world. The first case of COVID-19 in Nepal was identified on 25th January, 2020 to a 32-year-old Nepali student returning from the city of Wuhan (Chalise, 2020). The pandemic has affected all the aspects of a country like: business sector, economy, health sector and education sector as well. As a result of lockdown, UNESCO (2020) estimated that nearly nine million (8,796,624) students in Nepal are affected by this nationwide closure due to which all the education sectors have moved towards online learning platform with the use of technologies like: Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams. Out of this number, 958, 127 (11%) are in pre-primary, 2,466,570 (28%) are in primary, 3,463,763 (39%) are in secondary and 404,718 (5%) are in tertiary education (Dawadi, Simkhada & Giri, 2020). The education system in Nepal has totally transformed to e-learning or digital platforms from traditional classroom learning.

In the early days, schools and colleges were forced to shift their studies to online mode without proper teacher training (Williams, 2020). With every challenge comes an opportunity (Siddiqui, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a significant change in the education system with the practice of online class with a flipped classroom model. This has changed the traditional way of learning where teacher was the center of knowledge. The practice of online class with flipped classroom has changed this to the student-centered learning and it has also improved the quality of learning in Nepal. The main aim of this study is to narrate teachers' perspective of teaching online class after the COVID-19 Pandemic, how they planned their curriculum, lesson plans, assessment and teaching strategies and their attitudes towards this digital platform.

After the pandemic I still remember my initial days of struggle before running online class through Zoom. I have experienced the flipped classroom during my M Phil education (education run from Kathmandu University School of Education after the pandemic) through Google Meet. But still it took me a couple of weeks to learn the tools, prepare lesson plans and get comfortable to teach from Zoom. The most challenging task was to teach parents and teachers who were less familiar with the technology. However, everything was worth it. After that experience I really wanted to explore more on our practice of flipped classroom in online learning. I wanted to explore whether our practice of flipped classroom is similar with western culture or we had developed our own practice depending on our education.

We have many theories that talk about flipped classroom approach but there are very few schools or institutions that follow this model. After COVID pandemic, most of the education institutions are organizing online class using flipped classroom. I explored many articles related to flipped classroom and flipped learning but when I observed this practice in our context, I experienced it differently. A quick examination of related literature in this area with focus in the context of Nepal revealed that this area is an under researched area. Through this study, I explored those gaps. The study sought to answer the research question: how do English

teachers narrate their experience of using flipped classroom pedagogy in online teaching? I expect the findings of the study will certainly help the researchers know about the practice of flipped classroom in online teaching and teacher's experience of using digital platform which may provide a base for planning future policies in education. The study aims to investigate the Nepalese English teachers' experience of using flipped classroom in their online teaching after the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, the study does not explore any experience from the perspective of students and parents.

Flipped Classroom Approach

Simply, flipped classroom approach is "what is done at school done at home, homework done at home completed in class" (as cited in Ozdamli & Asiksoy, 2016). In this approach, teachers prepare videos of the lesson or academic articles related to it and send it to the students. The students need to see those videos and understand the content. In the classroom, teacher gives assessment related to the video and students need to finish their assignment doing group work or collaborating with their peers. This approach was first developed by chemistry teachers Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams for the students who have missed the lessons. The main aim of this new learning approach is to provide preparation of student for the subject before the course and during course applying activities that increase the quality of face to face education (as cited in Ozdamli & Asiksoy, 2016).

Flipped Learning is 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 (Flipped Learning Network, 2014). Flipped Classroom and Flipped Learning are not synonymous to each other. Flipping a class can lead to flipped learning but it is not necessary. Teachers may flip their class by giving reading texts or supplementary videos but to engage in Flipped Learning they must incorporate the four pillars into their practice which they term as F-L-I-P.

F - Flexible Environment

Teachers physically arrange the classroom as suited to the learning environment to support a group work or individual learning. Students are given flexibility to choose the order and importance of their learning activities. This flexibility is applied in assessment and evaluation tools teachers use to assess their student learning. Students are also given freedom to write, create or converse in the classroom setting to show their mastery of a given concept.

L - Learning Culture

In a traditional teaching, the teacher always becomes the center of learning but here, a teacher works as a guide and students in a class explore topics in depth and create learning

opportunities. The teacher creates meaningful exercises and allows student to construct their own understanding and make the learning meaningful.

I - Intentional Content

Educators on flipped learning always try to help students develop their conceptual understanding for which they explore, evaluate and focus on the key learning content and provide it to the students. They send the materials best suited to their context via recording or lectures.

P - Professional Educator

The role of a Professional Educator is more important in a Flipped Classroom. They observe the students and give them proper feedback and make their learning more meaningful, able to analyze it critically and deepen their understanding. This shifts the classroom to a student-centered model that allows valuable face-to face interactions creating new understanding and knowledge.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study that explores the practice of flipped class in online learning after the pandemic. The research is based on interpretive paradigm followed by narrative method. The researcher has purposefully selected the participants. Considering the present pandemic situation, the researcher collected the data through online interview of the participants using Zoom application. The researcher interviewed four research participants here named as Participant A, Participant B, Participant C and Participant D for the study. All the participants are energetic and hold their own responsibility as teachers in the field. Participant A is a woman teacher who has five years of experience in teaching field. She is a Primary English teacher working in a private school. The first participant was provided training from the school before running online class.

The second participant is a man English teacher who teaches for secondary level in a community school. Besides that, he is also an IELTS tutor. He has an experience of more than ten years in teaching field. And, he was not provided any training from the school before running online class. The third participant is also a male English teacher from private school. He works as a secondary English teacher and has an experience of more than 15 years in the teaching field. He was not provided any training in the beginning phase but was provided three month training from school after a year of running online class. The fourth research participant is a female English teacher from a community school and has as experience of more than 10 years in the teaching field. She was not provided any training from the school before running online class. All the participants narrate their stories of conducting flipped classes in online learning. The researcher has applied teaching and learning theory by Wilson, S. & Peterson, P. that talks about three contemporary ideas of learning: learning as a process of active

engagement, learning as individual and social and learner differences as resources to be used, not obstacles to be confronted.

PAST EXPERIENCE AND PRESENT LEARNING

Students need opportunities to learn in multiple ways, and teachers need to have a pedagogical repertoire that draws from myriad learning theorists (Wilson, S. & Peterson, P., 2006). Learners are the active constructor of meaning. Learner's previous knowledge and experience in learning new information plays a powerful role (Wilson, S. & Peterson, P., 2006). Teachers need to learn new theories that best suits their classroom performance and it is also helpful for students if they are provided with opportunities to learn in different ways. Participant A thinks this practice of teaching in a positive way. She continues her narrative and says, 'our class is categorized as per the student's academic qualification'. The qualification is graded in 200 marks, 100 marks only for the extra-curricular activities, projects and presentation. She says further, '...we had a practice of making slides, presentations and conducting case study but this was a new experience for us'. Excited she narrated that they were provided a five days training on running online course where they learnt things like: indulging students in online class, submitting assessment, recording, putting videos and creating slides from VEDAGURU. She further narrates: this pandemic has given her opportunity to learn and implement new ideas in a class which she can also use during her physical class.

My first participant story revealed that the school had not only focused in the academic development of the students but it has also prioritized student's caliber through ECA activities, project and presentation. Before running online classes, the school also provided a five-day training session through which the teachers can easily guide the students and help in their learning. The narration of my first participant discloses the fact that this kind of teaching was new for her. The training which was provided to her from school became a plus point for her and she is so much influenced with this practice that she is planning to use this process in her physical class. From her story we can also say that there was traditional teaching practice. She was the center of knowledge and students conduct the task as suggested by the teachers. However, there were some changes after the pandemic. She used slides for teaching, record classroom discussion and teaching and sent it to the students so that they can replay the recordings and watch the activities as much as they wanted to see it.

Participant B thinks this practice in an optimistic way. He has always practice traditional teaching method. Besides of his training from Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA), he could not link the ideas in the Nepalese context due to reasons like: course plan and available materials. He was not provided with any training and had learnt about the ZOOM and Google classroom only after the pandemic. Since the school did not provide any training, he clarifies he had to search You Tube and Google several times to learn about teaching through online platform. He further says not only him all the old and new teachers collaborated with each other in order to learn these technologies. He says he had learnt

about blended teaching in his Bachelor's level but never applied that but found this way of learning as easy and efficient learning as he can provide videos, articles and correct grammars which is the case he is also planning to run this teaching method even after the pandemic.

The second participant's story revealed that school did not take any initiation to train teachers before running online class. However, all the new and old teachers collaborated with each other and learned to teach through digital platform. Through his story we can assume that the initial stage of learning or the first step toward digital system was difficult for all the teachers but they all learned through collaboration and watching videos from Google and YouTube. Through his story we can also say that we had only theoretical practice of blended classroom in our learning but never applied this theory in teaching due to less resources and curriculum. He was quite positive with the recent practice and the results from his classroom observation and is planning to continue this practice even in his physical class. He used to provide the classroom recordings to all the students which benefitted more to the absent and weak students in a class. They can replay and watch and listen until and unless they get it. Besides of classroom recordings, he also sent many articles related to the subject and moreover, he can easily correct the mistakes, highlight important things using different colours. Through the story of Participant B, it seems he was quiet happy with his learning.

Participant C also thinks teaching in online class is even better and easier for teachers. Instead of drawing on chart papers now they can use videos and materials from the Internet to explain the things. Though it requires some time and effort in making slides but it can be used later. He also shares his memories on teaching using blackboard, then green board, then whiteboard, then smart boards and projectors and finally the experience of teaching online. He also reveals that in the beginning stage school did not take any initiative for teachers training. They had some teachers who were good in IT and they all had collaborative learning. He also got emotional and said that he had to lose his job due to network issue. During the gap he took much training from British Council and International Webinars regarding distance learning. He spent most of his time in learning. Then, after a year, he was again invited to the same school and was provided with three-month training on engaging students in online class. He shares that he was also certified from Quizzes app for using it. Participant C also shares that recording in online class was made compulsion for them. Not only he but all the teachers had to do recordings of their class which was kept as a proof by management as well as given to the students.

Participant C story revealed that online teaching has made teaching very easier for teachers. Now, they don't need to work on papers and present their ideas. They can use materials from the Internet and even play videos from there. They can also use their slides for future use and even provide it to the students who wanted it. Though the training was provided later but during the initial days they had collaborative learning. While narrating the story Participant C also shared his emotions of losing a job in lockdown and how he utilized his time by taking trainings from British Council as well as other International webinars. He also shared his memories of

teaching students in a black board then, green board, white board, smart board, projectors and finally online sitting in our home. From the story we can analyze that how teaching and learning in Nepal is being developed slowly. His story also revealed that after he rejoined the school, he was provided three-month training from school on using different online apps to engage students and ways to make their online teaching much better.

Participant D thinks teaching online is easier only for those who are familiar with technologies. It is very difficult for the teachers who are not much familiar with computer and technology. She further narrates, “I took many teacher trainings and I am much confident in physical class but when school decided to go for online teaching, I was very worried. I had to manage Internet, device for taking class and even sometimes household chores.” She further explains she was not provided any training from school so she had to ask every single thing to her colleagues. Learning in the beginning was very tough for her but she managed to do it and enjoys her class now. She also provided recordings of her class to the absent students so that they can learn from it.

From the story of fourth participant it revealed that learning for her was very tough but she succeeded it. She was not comfortable to teach from home. She had to arrange all the sources needed for online teaching and had to call frequently to her colleagues for the help. Her story also revealed that the teachers who are not familiar with technology had found online teaching very uncomfortable in the beginning phase. But, they finally managed to learn the things through the collaboration with each other. Her story also revealed that the recordings she had provided to the students had helped the students especially the absent students. So, teaching online is not only learning for students but also for the Nepalese teachers who had made their base stronger in traditional classroom.

TEACHER’S PERCEPTION ON FLIPPED CLASSROOM

Teachers in Flipped Classroom give up their traditional teacher role as a center of knowledge to the student-centered learning. This approach allows more participation from students. This idea goes similar with Bakar, A. H., Abidin, N. A., Ali, Z., Isa, N. M. & Sahar, S. (2018) where his findings showed that students have more time to practice grammar in speaking activities through flipped classroom and Raba (2019) whose findings came up with two major aspects: the first one is in Flipped Classroom (FC), teachers become organizers, mentors and facilitators and the second is FC requires students to be independent of the teacher. On this regard, Participant A narrates that she had heard about this term but never practiced this type of teaching. Though the school followed high quality teaching but this type of teaching was never introduced neither practiced by any teachers before. She never thought teaching with this approach in this pandemic will be fruitful.

From the story of first participant, it revealed that she had never practiced a flipped classroom and learning before though they engaged students a lot in their class with different activities. She had heard about flipped classroom but did not know the ways to implement it. But, the

pandemic taught her ways of flipped learning in online classroom like: recording, engaging students through games and group works even in digital platform. She found this learning very fruitful for the students.

Participant B explains that he had never thought of doing blended teaching. He just read the theories in his Bachelor's degree but had no concept of doing it practically. He never thought of recording the session in his physical class but now due to the current situation, he had practiced recording the sessions and provided it to the students. This has helped a lot in the academic growth of weak and absent students.

The second participant's story revealed that students enjoyed this type of learning. Although the learning was difficult but students and teachers tackled the situations and accepted the opportunity and find this teaching more fruitful than the traditional teaching. He had read the theories of blended learning in his academia but never implemented that theory in a practice due to lack available materials and curriculum. Now, in an online learning he practiced the recordings of the session, sending articles related to the course, practicing group work and active involvement of students which he thought to be best practice in teaching. At first, he thought this type of teaching is just to engage students as a temporary solution. Not only he even other teachers also thought like that but when they implemented it the outcome was very commendable.

Participant C narrates that he had heard of the term Blended and Flipped classroom before but never got opportunity to practice it. He learned many things about it during his trainings from British Council and International Webinar. He found this teaching method very easier for teachers especially for the teaching materials. He could also assign the reading materials prior to the students and could ask to read them and also send recordings to the students. Students can easily browse Internet and click the photos of materials provided by the teachers. In a class, they had to write it in their copy which is time consuming. He further narrates the use of Google classroom has made teachers easy to check student's assignment and they can also use online apps to entertain them.

From the story of third participant, we can analyze that the use of Flipped approach in online teaching has made easier for teachers to prepare their teaching materials. The participant had never practiced this teaching before but found this teaching very useful for the students. The recordings will help the students who are confused during the learning and also to the students who are not present in the class. The story also revealed that teachers can assign the students with prior works and discuss about it in the class as well as they can use online game apps to ask questions to the students and make them engage in the online class.

Participant D narrates that the learning was difficult for her during the initial days but when she learned it, she found the teaching very interesting and also noticed students enjoying the online class. She further says if we can use this approach in physical class students would be more benefitted by this.

From her story it revealed that though learning is difficult in initial days, if we try to learn we can learn it. It also revealed that if this approach can be implemented in the physical class students would get more benefits from it especially the absent students.

MY PERSONAL OBSERVATION IN THE FIELD

Being a teacher and a student of M Phil, I myself have experienced a lot in this field. During my M Phil class we had the recordings of our lectures and those lectures were sent to us through e-mails. We could listen to those recordings again and again and it was more useful when we missed our classes. If there was a physical class and if we missed our class, we never get a chance to know the things taught in that class. But after the pandemic, we had a flipped learning through online class which was conducted through Google Meet. We also used Moodle to know about our upcoming assignment and submit those assignments. We get the recordings of our class, articles and journals related to that, we also practiced peer learning and group discussions in our class.

As a teacher of Primary level, I also practiced same. I provide recordings to the students indulge them in group learning, share the context through videos and articles related to that. And, I personally found this type of learning more fruitful even the parents are more satisfied with their children's learning and engagement. I also did not get any training from the school so I can relate my experience with second and third participant. I learned everything through the collaboration and YouTube.

Conclusion

After analyzing the story of my research participants, my study came up with certain findings. Firstly, all the participants share positive attitude towards the practice of flipped classroom in online learning. Secondly, the practice of flipped classroom in Nepal is very different if we compare it with western countries. The major difference is teachers in western countries practice flipped classroom by providing the recordings of the course before students come in the class. Students see those videos, find the context; search materials related to that and the next day whole classroom is carried out through discussion. This means a student has to see and analyze those videos before they come to class otherwise the learning will not be fruitful. But, in the context of Nepal, we provide the recordings of the sessions/class that students come and attend. They can see those recordings repeatedly to understand the content. Thirdly, trained teachers find easy to operate the class since the initial stage and they were very comfortable with their teaching whereas teachers who are not trained, they also learn to use technology but they had very difficult situation during their early stage of teaching. Overall, there should be a proper plan and training before running online class. And last but not the least, teachers with more focus on those who were not familiar with technology; they accepted the challenge and converted their challenge into their opportunity.

References

Bakar, A. H., Abidin, N. A., Ali, Z., Isa, N. M. &Sahar, S. (2018). Teachers' Perceptions of the Use of Flipped Learning Approach in Learning Grammar. *Journal of Global and Social Entrepreneurship (GBSE)*, 4(13), 66-73.

Chalise, H.N. (June 16, 2020). COVID-19 Situation and Challenges for Nepal. *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Health*, 32(5), 281-282. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1010539520932709>

Dawadi, S., Simkhada,P. &Giri, R. (May, 2020). Impact of COVID-19 on the Education Sector in Nepal- Challenges and Coping Strategies. *ResearchGate*.

DOI: [10.31124/advance.12344336.v1](https://doi.org/10.31124/advance.12344336.v1)

EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Flipped Classroom Model in Palestine. Retrieved from

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324227123_EFL_Teachers'_Perceptions_of_Flippe_d_Classroom_Model_in_Palestine *Flipped Learning Network (FLN)*. (2014) *The Four Pillars of F-L-I-P*.

Ozdamli, F. &Asiksoy, G. (July, 2016). Flipped Classroom Approach. *World Journal on Educational Technology: Current Issues*, 8(2), 98-105.

Raba, A. A. (2019). EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Flipped Classroom Model in Palestine

Siddiqui, M. (2020). Blended Learning: Flipped Classroom 101.

Williams, S. (2020). The Benefits of Flipped Classroom for Distance Learning. *Pearson*

International School.

Wilson, S.M. & Peterson, P. L. (2006). *Theories of Learning and Teaching What Do They Mean for Educators?* National Education Association.