Students’ Engagement in English as a Foreign Language Course: Literature Review of Flipped Learning

مشاركة المتعلمين في مساق تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية: مراجعة أدبية في التعلم المقلوب

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Abstract

This study aimed to review forty-four research papers published between 2015 and 2019 to identify the best strategies for learning and teaching the English language in Palestinian universities to non-native speakers, as well as to explore ways to provide learners with self-learning skills. The study answered the following main question: To what extent does the blended learning that includes face-to-face meetings and electronic activities enhance students’ engagement in the process of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in universities?

The analysis results showed that 74% of these studies recommend adopting the flipped learning strategy in teaching EFL in universities, as it provides an appropriate environment for implementing active learning and Project-Based Learning (PBL), which increases students’ interaction and reduces their withdrawal or failure rate. The analysis results showed the difficulties that students and teachers face in implementing flipped learning. This includes the fact that many students and teachers lack computers and good Internet connection in their homes and the nonexistence of Internet connection in some rural areas. In addition to these difficulties, there is the resistance of teachers and students, sometimes, to use the modern learning strategies and their preference for traditional learning. Furthermore, most teachers face difficulties in managing time and designing content and activities for the flipped classroom.

The study recommended that further research be done on how to fully implement flipped learning online and not only through blended learning but also face-to-face lectures.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language - English as a Second Language - Students’ Engagement - Flipped Learning - Blended Learning

ملخص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى مراجعة أربع وأربعين ورقة بحثية عالمية نشرت في الفترة ما بين 2015 و 2019، لتعرف على أفضل استراتيجيات تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعات الفلسطينية لغير الناطقين بها، وكذلك الكفيف عن طرق إكساب المتعلمين مهارات اللغة النحوية. وقد أظهر النتائج النتائج التي تضمن لقاءات وفاجهة وأنشطة الكترونية مشاركة المتعلمين في الجامعات الفلسطينية في عملية تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؟

وقد أظهرت نتائج التحليل أن (74%) من هذه الدراسات توصي بتبني استراتيجيات التعلم المكسور في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كليئة أجنبية في الجامعات، كونه يوفر بيئة مناسبة لتطبيق التعلم النشط، والتعلم الاقتران على المشاريع وما يزيد من تفاعل المتعلمين، وقليل من نسبة احتمالهم أو رفضهم. أظهرت نتائج تحليل الدراسات الصروحات التي تواجه المعلمين والمتعلمين في تطبيق التعليم المكسور منها عدم امتلاك العديد من الطلبة والمعلمين أجهزة حاسوب في منزلهم أو عن طريق الإنترنت والانترنت في بعض المناطق السكنية. يضاف إلى ذلك مقاومة المعلمين والمتعلمين في بعض الأحيان لاستراتيجيات التعلم الحديثة وتفتيضهم للتعليم التقليدي. وأن معظم المعلمين يواجهون صعوبات تتعلق بإدارة الوقت، وتصميم محتوى وأنشطة للصف المكسور.

وقد أوصت الدراسة بعمل المزيد من الأبحاث حول كيفية تطبيق التعليم المكسور عن بعد بشكل كامل، وليس باستخدام التعليم الإلكتروني – تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

1. Introduction

This literature review is carried out to support an initiative at al-Quds Open University in Palestine that seeks to increase students’ English language proficiency in order to decrease failure and drop rates in EFL courses. This initiative is represented by a course called English One, which is a general mandatory course delivered through BL. The course consists of four face-to-face lectures and two virtual classes.

Freshmen students have the option to skip this remediation course if they pass the placement exam. According to statistics from the university in 2019, only 35% of those who apply for the exam, pass from the first time. On the other hand, students who fail this exam and proceed with the course struggled to succeed easily. The statistics also show a high dropout rate among students who proceed with the course. Those students decide to postpone taking the course and many of them repeat it before they can pass.

The university has considered the problems of students’ dropout and failure in EFL teaching and learning. In this context, teaching English in Palestine faces many challenges throughout the education system. This is a major concern for the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education. The challenges are represented in the traditional teaching methods and the inappropriate content in relation to the capacity building of English as an academic language (Bianchi & Hussein, 2014). Other challenges in Palestine are related to the lack of professional teachers in EFL to integrate technology in education and to missed
learning spaces (Rixon, 2013). The problem of EFL teaching and learning is a major problem not only at this university but also in Palestine and other similar countries.

Therefore, the purpose of the review is to support good strategic practice to enhance the learning and teaching process in the blended learning environment. This could be achieved by exploring the pedagogies that increase students’ engagement in EFL courses as well as their reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The review will analyze and present some practices that may lead to low rates of failures and dropouts if piloted.

1.1 The epistemological context
– social constructivism and constructivist active learning

“Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going.” – Rita Mae Brown

According to Singh & Choudhary (2018), learning English for university graduates is a road map for the future. English is the language of science, business, and the Internet. It is the main language in international communication. Therefore, university graduates’ English proficiency is important for their future career and development in social, economic, scientific, and educational fields. Graduates with high English skills are privileged to get more opportunities regarding jobs and education because of their better performance and knowledge. EFL is one of the major concerns of HE ministries in many countries such as Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and the Middle East. Several projects have been running in this regard to increase students’ intercultural communication that is needed in the globalization era and economic development (Tran & Seepho, 2016). The rest of this section presents some of the important theories that seek to enhance students’ engagement and their higher-order thinking skills.

● Sociocultural theory and constructivism learning theory

In his sociocultural theory, Vygotsky (1978), followed by other researchers, emphasized that learning is a process of knowledge construction and meaning negotiations. In the context of foreign language acquisition, several researchers state that this knowledge does not occur in isolation; it is socially constructed by the assistance and interaction between learners and teachers in a process called scaffolding (Storch, 2017). The sociocultural theory could help teachers include problem-solving, mental activities, and logical thinking in their courses. Scaffolding and sociocultural theories enhance a learner’s cognitive development because a learner with social interaction skills can develop cognitive skills and gain high proficiency. Therefore, these theories are part of our literature review that will explore teaching and learning methods related to students’ engagement.

● Active Learning

This knowledge generation approach based on the sociocultural theory as a branch of constructivism learning theory leads to active learning pedagogy. It is defined as “Students’ efforts to actively construct their knowledge” (Carr, Palmer & Hagel, 2015). This definition includes many pedagogical approaches, learning activities, and teaching methods that focus on developing students’ efforts or thinking that will be discussed later in this literature.

● Blended Learning

Figure 1:
Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy levels

BL is a pedagogical model for constructivist active learning theoretical framework. It provides face-to-face and online learning experiences. Teachers in BL are supposed to maximize the benefits of both face-to-face and online methods (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003). This environment may include synchronous and asynchronous technology-mediated tools such as video platforms, instant audio or text messages, conferencing tools, and emails. It allows teachers to use active learning that can help students to take an active part in learning. This could increase students’ engagement and enhance their English language skills, especially for students from the digital natives’ young generation. (Prihastiwi, Rochsantiningsih, & Suparno, 2017; Yough, Merzdorf, Fedesco & Cho, 2017). However, the debate in the literature discussed the BL pedagogical practices and their effectiveness. Although it supports different learning styles, some teachers consider it a challenge in terms of their experiences to use technology, time-consuming in
designing online courses, and a source of distraction for students. (Jeong et al., 2017; Aiello & Mongibello, 2019).

Although the English One course at the University is delivered through BL, most students are not engaged in the course. This problem is represented in the high dropout and failure rates. Using active learning as a pedagogy to increase students’ engagement in the English One course requires students’ higher-order thinking tasks such as analysis, evaluation, reflection, and synthesis. More specifically, to develop students’ thinking using active learning and to measure the learning outcome, teachers need a knowledge-based framework such as Bloom’s taxonomy to determine the type of activities incorporated in classes and to identify the level of expertise of their students and to matches the learning objectives of the course. In 1956, Benjamin Bloom proposed an instructional framework called Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill & Krathwohl, 1956). It categorized educational goals and determined the teaching and learning outcome. Figure 1 shows six levels of the revised Bloom’s taxonomy. Higher-order thinking skills are presented in the top three levels (analyzing, evaluating, and creating).

However, without active learning, students’ knowledge remains under these levels because the learning process is teacher-dominant, and students learn facts rather than deep concepts. (Koch, 2016). Figure 2 shows an example of teacher-dominant learning and non-constructivist teacher.

Figure 2: Warren (1989) Retrieved from https://talentedapps.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/be-empathetic1.jpg

As shown in Figure 3, this review will show how active learning pedagogies such as PBL can be employed in BL for EFL courses to increase students’ engagement in a modern educational method called flipped learning. Later in this literature review, we shall come back to this concept and explore in detail the idea of “flipping” the way of approaching the concepts in Bloom’s Taxonomy levels to have learner-centred active learning environment.

Figure 3: Focus of the literature review

1.2 Research Questions

This literature review seeks to answer the following question:

Overarching Question: To what extent does the involvement of online platforms enhance teaching methods and students’ engagement in EFL in HE?

RQ1: To what extent do the teaching methods used in EFL fit with the objectives of such courses in terms of education and market needs?

2. Methodology and approach

2.1 Search criteria, method, and outcome

This literature review covers five areas that informed this research. First, to answer the overarching question about students’ engagement and teaching methods in BL, Scopus online database was used to explore relevant studies using the following search criteria and outcome:

- Title, Abstract, or Keywords include: Engagement AND English AND (Second language OR Foreign Language)
- Result-1: 514 articles
- Refine: Journal articles, Book chapter, and literature review
- **Result-2**: 439 articles
- **Exclusion criteria**: pedagogies of traditional learning that are not related to BL nor technology AND not EFL studies AND not Higher Education
- **Result-3**: 72 journal articles, book chapters, and reviews.
- **Result-4**: 19 articles about flipped learning

Second, by reading abstracts, conclusions and scanning some of the interesting articles within Result-3, the following five themes, which include the main theories of BL and engagement, emerged:

- Social Constructivism
- Blended Learning
- Active Learning
- PBL
- Flipped Learning

Third, searching within results for flipped learning revealed 19 articles, as shown. Figure 4 illustrates the results.

The problem of low students’ engagement in EFL courses taught in BL at the University makes the role of technology questionable. Moreover, classroom activities and the role of the teacher need to be developed in a way to enhance students’ language skills and increase their engagement with the course. Therefore, in the following sections, this review will explore the pedagogies behind using BL and will demonstrate how to implement interesting teaching and learning methods for the classroom. On the other hand, online platforms will be presented as enhancement tools for delivering the course content, such as course material, videos, and online collaboration.

![Figure 4: Flow chart of literature review articles identification and selection](image-url)
3. Literature review

In this section, the themes that emerged from the area of students’ engagement in BL will be analyzed. The answer to the overarching question will start in this section; the first subsection will define students’ engagement and focus on the role of technology in enhancing students’ engagement. The next subsection will discuss the teaching methods that promote active learning, such as PBL and its effect in increasing students’ engagement. Moreover, it will highlight the important skills that students need to acquire for their future and how to measure the learning outcome using Bloom’s taxonomy. The final subsection will present one of the promising learning pedagogies in terms of increasing students’ engagement, called flipped learning. It will also explore the way of measuring the learning outcome of this method using Bloom’s Taxonomy.

3.1 Students’ Engagement in EFL courses

Students’ engagement is defined as “the extent to which students are contributing to activities” (Vinson et al., 2010). It is “the extent to which students are actively involved in a variety of educational activities that are likely to lead to high quality learning” (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004). This states that students’ engagement is a multi-dimensional construct with three components; cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. (Reeve, 2013), adding the agentic engagement as a fourth component. Some studies in EFL literature addressed students’ engagement as a solution for problems such as language failures and dropout rates by specifying the type of engagement (Jamaludin & Osman, 2014; Alhasani & Masood, 2017; Ayçiçek & Yelken, 2018; Aubrey, 2017). However, most studies that addressed students’ engagement in EFL courses did not mention the type of engagement that was addressed. Therefore, it is important to define each type of engagement and give an example of measuring it, as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Engagement</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample for measurement (Jamaludin et al., 2014)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Engagement</td>
<td>“The teacher’s skill in questioning and the students’ elaboration of an idea as an answer” (Smart et al., 2012).</td>
<td>“I make up my own example to help me understand the important concept I am studying for this class”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Engagement</td>
<td>“Intentionally selecting materials that stimulate students’ interaction with and feedback to the material” (Taylor et al., 2014).</td>
<td>“When we work on something in class, I get involved”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural Engagement</td>
<td>“Teachers’ direction of students toward activities that require them to apply initiative” (Fredricks et al., 2004)</td>
<td>“When I’m in class, I participate in class discussion”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agentic Engagement</td>
<td>“Student self-learning, with a contribution from the lecturer to provide instructional support (Reeve et al., 2011).</td>
<td>“I try to make whatever we are learning as interesting as possible”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using interactive online tools in EFL course delivered through BL increase students’ engagement. Davies (2015) concludes that students’ participation in voice microblogging activities using “Bubbly” developed their spoken pronunciation skills in EFL course by practicing and resulted in increasing students’ engagement and confidence. However, the researcher suggested that further research is needed to identify the type and level of engagement. Alharbi (2019) concludes that adding videos as supplementary material resulted in high student engagement in EFL grammar courses.

Marsh (2012) argues that BL is not a new concept. The new concepts include what and how to blend? There are different learning pedagogies that use technology to support students and teachers. On the other hand, students’ expectation to use technology in-class and out-of-class as part of the learning process must be considered in BL. The author mentioned that the strength of BL in foreign language learning is represented in the following:

- Increasing student engagement in learning.
- Creating an environment for practicing the target language beyond the classroom
- Providing personalized learning support and individualized learning experience
- Supporting a collaborative and interactive learning environment anytime and anywhere
Ahmadi et al. (2018) is a recent review about the effectiveness of using technology in EFL. The findings state that the involvement of technology develops students’ thinking skills and turns the teaching and learning process to student-centred that promotes learner’s autonomy, and increase students’ engagement. Raja and Nagasubramani (2018) state that integrating technology in EFL courses makes learning enjoyable and interactive, which results in high students engagement. In addition to the benefits of using BL in increasing students’ engagement, it is worth mentioning that the primary goal of using BL is to improve pedagogy by increasing the level of active learning (Shaaruddin & Mohamad, 2017).

In the following section, we will discuss the teaching methods that promote active learning and its effect in increasing students’ engagement.

3.2 Active Learning in EFL

To achieve higher-order thinking in active learning represented in the higher three levels of Bloom’s taxonomy (analyzing, evaluating, and creating), teachers may adopt one or more of the active learning strategies that match their course objectives (Shaaruddin & Mohamad, 2017). Accordingly, teachers need to be facilitators or collaborators but not fact tellers only. The technology role in this constructive way of building knowledge is represented in creating an environment for active learners that includes communication, collaboration, information retrieval, and students’ reflections (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004). In this section, I will focus on PBL strategy of active learning in developing EFL courses and their role in increasing students’ language skills and engagement.

- **Project-Based Learning**

Bender (2012) defines PBL as “using authentic, real-world projects, based on a highly motivating and engaging question, task, or problem, to teach students academic content in the context of working cooperatively to solve the problem”. From this definition, we understand that PBL is student-centred learning pedagogy that includes other strategies mentioned in the literature, such as task-based learning and problem-based learning. PBL allows teachers to create an active learning environment in teaching.

Therefore, it has been promoted by some articles as “the most effective instructional practice available to engage students with their learning content” (Bender, 2012; Alsowat, 2016)

What is a project? In learning, it is defined as a process that includes series of activities conducted by the students and teacher to achieve a certain goal (Papandreou, 1994).

In the literature of EFL, several studies proposed teaching practices or methods that adopt PBL pedagogy, especially for collaboration and interaction in foreign language project-based activities that resulted in improving students’ English language proficiency and increasing their engagement.

El-Henawy and Ali (2015) state that PBL provides a real environment for practicing foreign language skills either through oral communication or writing. Stoller (2006) mentioned many benefits of integrating PBL into foreign language teaching that are related to students’ engagement and language learning as the following:

- Improving students’ language skills, autonomy and confidence in using language
- Intensity of engagement, participation and involvement
- Developing students’ abilities to be analytical and think critically in solving problems.

Regarding PBL implementation, Buck Institute for Education has recently developed seven PBL teaching practices shown in Figure 5 that could be applied in teaching EFL courses. In the context of student-centred education, the term 21st-century skills of learners are extensively used in the literature.

Figure 6 shows the 21st-century skills defined by the Assessment and Teaching of 21st-Century Skills (ATC21S) research project conducted at Melbourne University that focus on the needs of students. These skills could be included in the objectives of EFL courses in HE because it is inline with the project-based teaching practices in Figure 5. PBL is highly recommended because it is one of the effective ways to develop students’ skills and increase their engagement.
In summary, using PBL pedagogy in EFL course meets the objectives of these courses in terms of 21st century skills. First, students will construct their knowledge in an active environment that goes above the first three levels of Bloom’s taxonomy. Second, this will be reflected on students’ higher order skills of thinking that are represented in the higher three levels of the taxonomy (analyse, evaluate and create).

Although this pedagogy could increase students’ engagement and their English proficiency, it is still challenging for teachers to proficiently employ all levels of Bloom’s taxonomy in a course delivered in the traditional learning model.

In terms of Bloom’s taxonomy, the drawback of the traditional learning model whether it is delivered in classroom or through BL is that, face-to-face lectures in both delivery models carries out only the lower three levels of cognitive work (Remembering, Understanding and Applying). Furthermore, in BL, technology is used for supplementary course materials and assignments. However, as mentioned previously in this review, students’ knowledge in this type of learning remains at the third level of the taxonomy because higher levels that include critical thinking are assigned to students outside the classroom in the form of homeworks and exercises.

Therefore, it is the students’ responsibilities to develop higher order skills outside the classroom.

In 1997, Eric Mazur proposed an approach of flipping the traditional way of learning. In terms of Bloom’s taxonomy, students’ responsibility is to prepare for the course outside the classroom and practice the basic skills in the first two levels of the taxonomy (Remember and Understand). On the other hand, in classrooms, the well-prepared students’ will practice the higher order thinking skills from levels four to seven (Apply, Analyse, Evaluate and Create) with other students and with their teacher. This pedagogy is called flipped learning.
Figure 7 shows how lower and higher-order thinking activities are flipped from in the classroom to out of the classroom and vice versa in flipped learning pedagogy compared to the traditional learning one.

### 3.3 Flipped learning as a teaching method for EFL

In flipped classroom, teachers become guides on the side by leaving the teacher-centred approach and adopt the learner-centred one through flipped learning. Basal (2015) states that the role of teachers in flipped classroom is to guide, organize and facilitate materials to students instead of lecturing them. Alsowat (2016) and Prodoehl (2015) argue that flipped learning - as a constructivist learning approach - is a personalized learning that motivates students to become more active in classroom and to spend more valuable time for collaboration in PBL compared to traditional learning. Keengwe, Onchvari, and Oigara (2014) agree with this point and add that flipped classroom promotes students’ autonomy by allowing them to take decisions in an interesting activity that increases their engagement.

Hsiu (2015) and Millard (2012) argue that flipped learning is one of the most promising approaches to transform learning experiences with the integration of technology and active learning strategies.

Flipped learning is not a new idea, but recently it gained popularity and became a potential pedagogy in various learning topics because of the high spread of using technology in learning. In relation to technology, flipped learning is one of the BL pedagogies characterized by the in-class and out-of-class activities approach.

The role of technology in flipped learning is to indirectly enhance face-to-face classroom activities. Online platforms include multimedia tools that offer students a space to read or watch the course material and get ready before classroom activities occur. Course material could be published on Learning Management System (LMS), or it could be represented through online video platforms such as YouTube. Therefore, the role of technology is important because it will introduce the content of traditional lectures by offering online tools to present the course material to students to achieve the first two levels of Bloom’s taxonomy (Remember and Understand).

In summary, flipped learning includes most of the pedagogies that lead to high students’ engagement and increase their learning outcomes, such as constructivism, BL, active learning, and PBL. However, Alsowat (2016), and Egbert, Herman, and Cluimg (2015) claim that there is a noticeable absence of research work addressing flipped learning in language learning. Moreover, Yough et al. (2017) call for the need for further research to address students’ engagement within the flipped learning environment.
To achieve the goal of this literature review, studies of students’ engagement and their English proficiency are presented in appendix 1. Table 2 includes most of the recent studies in the literature that addressed students’ engagement in EFL courses using flipped learning. It summarizes the research trends and the used technology to enhance students’ engagement using flipped learning. The studies in this table are consistent with the argument used in this literature review about enhancing students’ engagement using a combination of learning theories and methods such as BL, PBL, and flipped learning.

**Table 2:**
Summary of studies from the literature of high students’ engagement and English proficiency in flipped learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Focus of the research</th>
<th>Technology used</th>
<th>Research outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Amiryousefi, 2019)</td>
<td>Quality of language learning and teaching Students’ Engagement</td>
<td>* Telegram, instant messaging</td>
<td>Improve students’ foreign language speaking and listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Ho, 2019)</td>
<td>Active learning through gaming Students’ Engagement</td>
<td>* Digital drawing with active learning approaches: story making and storytelling</td>
<td>Gamified flipped learning helps students to identify areas of improvement in English skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Arifin &amp; As’ad, 2019)</td>
<td>Collaborative learning Students Engagement</td>
<td>* Moodle, WhatsApp, Canvas</td>
<td>Behavioural, cognitive and motivational students’ engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Zhang, 2018)</td>
<td>Relation between students’ behavioral engagement and academic achievement based on cooperative learning</td>
<td>* Software to create video lectures Students’ mobile phones</td>
<td>Students need support from teachers to achieve learning autonomy Further research is needed regarding teaching design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hsiu, 2018)</td>
<td>Gamified flipped learning to increase students’ engagement</td>
<td>* Technologically-enhanced board games (TEBGs)</td>
<td>Gamified flipped learning using TEBGs reduces students’ anxiety about speaking English in class and motivate them to participate in classroom activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Ayçiçek &amp; Yelken, 2018)</td>
<td>Effect of flipped learning on students’ engagement in EFL classroom</td>
<td>* Screencast-matic software for recording students’ screens and voices and creating videos</td>
<td>Technology integration in flipped classroom supports autonomous learning that helps in reducing students’ failure rates Active learning model in this study in addition to the flipped learning model enable student to participate actively in classes and therefore increase their engagement in the EFL course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Lee &amp; Wallace, 2018)</td>
<td>Learning outcomes Students’ engagement</td>
<td>* Not specified</td>
<td>Students achieved higher scores in flipped EFL classroom than in traditional one Students enjoyed learning English in flipped classroom and therefore they are more engaged in the learning process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alhasani &amp; Masood, 2017)</td>
<td>Effect of flipped learning with peer instruction on: Students’ reading skills Students’ engagement</td>
<td>* LMS</td>
<td>High students’ engagement in flipped learning with peer instruction model that is based on PBL reading activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdelrahman, DeWitt, Alias, &amp; Abdul Rahman, 2017)</td>
<td>Students’ writing skills Students’ engagement</td>
<td>* Video lectures</td>
<td>Flipped learning improved students’ writing proficiency and increase their engagement and interaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Studies show high students’ engagement and learning outcome in EFL using Flipped Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Focus of the research</th>
<th>Technology used</th>
<th>Research outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Adnan, 2017)</td>
<td>Learning outcomes Students’ engagement</td>
<td>e-portfolio, Digital storytelling</td>
<td>Largely positive students’ perceptions and satisfying learning experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gamification (Kahoot)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Zainuddin, 2017)</td>
<td>Learning experiences Students’ engage-</td>
<td>Online blog for sharing video</td>
<td>High students’ engagement in hand-on activities and peer work. Students’ were able</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ment</td>
<td>lessons and online interaction</td>
<td>successfully achieve the six levels of cognitive domain of Bloom’s Taxonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Wu Hsieh, &amp; Yang, 2017)</td>
<td>The impact of online learning</td>
<td>Smartphone app called LINE</td>
<td>Online learning community in flipped learning; Facilitates collaboration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>community in flipped learning via</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improve students’ oral proficiency</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mobile phones on students’ oral</td>
<td></td>
<td>Resulted in more students’ engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>proficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td>In general, positive attitudes towards flipped learning among teachers and students</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some teachers recommended using flipped learning for promoting activity and achieve</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>higher order learning skills for students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Webb Doman &amp; Pusey, 2014)</td>
<td>Feasibility of applying flipped learning in EFL course</td>
<td>Online videos: TED Talks YouTube</td>
<td>Improvements of videos to become more engaging and shorter and well situated within an authentic content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Su, Verezub, Badiozaman &amp; Chen, 2019)</td>
<td>Low proficiency of students’ reflections and experiences in writings</td>
<td>Video lectures Blackboard as LMS</td>
<td>Improvements of flipped learning difficult to be followed due to lack of time in online participation and preparation out-of-class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, there are some recent studies that explored some implications of implementing flipped learning in EFL courses and are presented in Appendix 2. Table 3 shows few recent studies that focused on the difficulties of implementing flipped learning in EFL courses. These studies highlighted some areas in the literature for improvements, such as students’ lack of access to computers, the difficulty of instructional design in flipped learning, and students’ resistance to leaving their comfort zone of traditional learning.

Table 3: Summary of studies from the literature that explored some implications of flipped learning in EFL courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Focus of the research</th>
<th>Technology used</th>
<th>Research outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Zainuddin &amp; Attaran, 2016)</td>
<td>Students’ perceptions and feedback towards flipped learning</td>
<td>Video lectures on SPeCTRUM website</td>
<td>Improvements of flipped learning difficult to be followed due to lack of time in online participation and preparation out-of-class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yamada, Goda, Hata, Matsukawa &amp; Yasunami, 2016)</td>
<td>Evaluation of jigsaw language learning system as collaboration approach for flipped learning (flipped jigsaw)</td>
<td>Flip-J Moodle’s plugin for</td>
<td>Several improvements are needed that affect collaboration and are mainly related to: Discussion forums, Role management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3.4 Gap in the Literature

The discussed pedagogies and approaches, including flipped classrooms, could be enough to solve the problem of students’ engagement and increase their English language skills in BL environment. However, the idea of applying flipped learning to an online EFL course is not mentioned in the literature. In a course that is delivered completely online, the in-class activities in the flipped model could be done synchronously in a virtual class, whereas the out-of-class activities will remain in the online asynchronous mode. This idea needs further investigation in future studies.

4. Conclusion

This literature review is an attempt to gain insight into recent studies about students’ engagement and teaching methods in EFL courses. The purpose of this review is to help in solving the problem of low students’ engagement in EFL courses at a university in Palestine. Although the course is delivered through BL, students do not engage with the course, which leads to high rates of failure and dropout. First, the review starts by identifying the research problem of students’ engagement and teaching methods in EFL. Second, it explores the most important theories and pedagogies in BL that are related to students’ engagement. The search method is a systematic literature review from online databases covering the period from 2012 to 2019.

Results show that there is a shift in focus in recent studies in using flipped learning pedagogy in EFL courses in HE because it includes most of the learning theories that lead to high students’ engagement, such as BL, active learning, and PBL. A total of 44 journal articles were included, 19 of which were recent empirical studies from 2015-2019 addressed students’ engagement and the improvement of their English language skills using flipped learning, enhanced by technology in BL environment. Among the 19 articles, 14 articles claim that flipped learning enhances students’ engagement and learning outcomes, which represent 74% of the reviewed articles, as shown in Table 2. On the other hand, some articles argued that there are some implications and challenges in implementing flipped classrooms, which are represented in students’ lack of access to computers or Internet out-side classrooms and resistance to leave their comfort zone of traditional learning. Moreover, they state that it is a challenging model for teachers in terms of managing in-class activities as a facilitator and creativity in creating out-of-class video materials. The second category of flipped learning implications is shown in Table 3. In summary, the review defines a gap in the literature related to applying flipped learning to a course that is delivered completely online.
Moreover, it highlights the importance of using Bloom’s taxonomy as a reference to measure learning outcomes in flipped learning, especially the higher three levels that represent students’ critical thinking. Despite the extensive research in EFL in many countries, the literature broadly supports flipped learning as a promising pedagogy in increasing students’ higher-order skills and engagement. In BL environment, the role of technology is important in presenting the course material that was delivered in the classroom. Therefore, the University is well-prepared in terms of students’ self-autonomy and technology to employ flipped learning to increase their students’ engagement and their English language proficiency. However, further research in capacity building at the University is needed in terms of curriculum design and teachers’ development to ensure the success of flipped learning in EFL courses.

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