

Teachers' Practices and Perceptions of the Flipped Classroom Approach:

A Case Study of the English Department of Faculty of Arts and Humanities Kairouan in Tunisia

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Abstract: Despite the importance of the flipped classroom approach, few studies have investigated its implementations in Tunisia. This study attempts to fill this gap by exploring the different applications of flipped classroom approach, its spread, and its applicability in Tunisia. This study aims to study the Flipped classroom approach's practices in the English department within the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Kairouan (FLSHK). It also focuses on the English professors' perceptions regarding this approach. Two research methods were used to collect data; observation of five English classes and interviews with nine FLSHK English professors. This research is of great value in understanding Tunisian professors' perceptions of the flipped classroom and its applications within Tunisian English classrooms to seek better learning experiences. The findings have significant implications on teaching, teachers, and learners' experiences.

Keywords: Flipped Classroom Approach, English instructors, practices, perceptions, English as a foreign language

1. Introduction

The flipped classroom approach is a “pedagogical model in which a traditional learning environment and its activities are reformed or at least rearranged” (Awidi & Paynter, 2019, p.1). This pedagogy advocates for the idea of presenting the lecture prior to class time so that in-class, students will have more time for practice and for reinforcing what they have learned as a way to encourage creating a category of autonomous learners willing to take responsibility for their own learning process (Awidi & Paynter, 2019).

This approach may be seen as an extension to previous ideas and suggestions of creating more responsible and autonomous learners. According to Yengina and Karahoka (2012), the Socratic method “is required to guide the learner in his discovery of knowledge” (p.358). They asserted that one of the ideas that the Socratic approach advocates for is assisting the learner in determining the solution by reviewing his prior knowledge, which is one of the main key features of the flipped classroom approach. These approaches necessitate the teacher transferring responsibility and control to the student that to their belief will enhance learners' performance. In Ancient Greece, learners engaged in real-life challenges and activities on their own, sharing their own views and opinions to find answers to difficulties and come up with solutions to problems, which we can see

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it in the Socratic Method. Educators that believe in social, student-centered, collaborative, and cooperative learning that involves students as active and responsible participants in the learning process have long used educational approaches comparable to the Socratic Method such as the flipped classroom approach. Both of the latter share some core principles, which are mainly giving more ground to learners to be responsible in their own learning process (Bates et al, 2016).

1.1.The paradigm controversy between traditional classroom approach and flipped classroom approach:

The traditional classroom atmosphere is about tackling issues and modules in class, presenting some tasks to the student, and giving some homework to enhance his/her comprehension. In other words, students take the lectures, directly from their teachers in class, and then students will be assigned to do some homework. Brooks (2002) presents the Traditional Classroom (henceforth TC) as mostly teacher centered and conflicted with the constructivist approaches to learning and teaching, whereas the flipped classroom approach consists of flipping the actual classroom schema. According to Bergmann and Sams (2012), a FC can be described as a setting that “which is traditionally done in class is now done at home, and that which is traditionally done as homework is now completed in class” (p. 13).

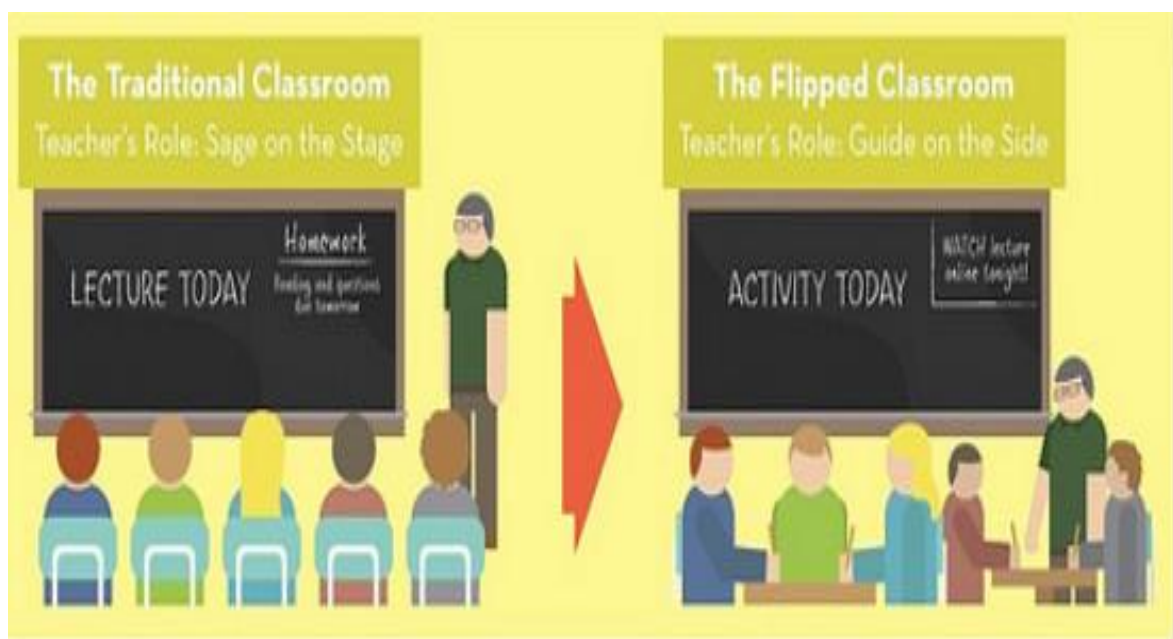


Figure 1

Flipped vs. Traditional classroom

Note. From Flipped vs. Traditional classroom, by M. Hartyányi et al, 2018, Flipped Classroom in Practice (<https://mek.oszk.hu/19700/19778/19778.pdf>). Copyright by Creative Commons (CC).

Traditional classroom approach:

A traditional classroom is generally an educational place where the teacher delivers knowledge to the students in person without any third-party medium. This is the most common way of learning all around the world. Here, the pace of learning remains constant.” In other words, it is

done in a monotonous way. According to Belias et al. (2016), the traditional teaching methods are teacher centered which means that the flow of information and knowledge is moderated and regulated by the teacher. In this situation, the instructor is the main and only source of data for students and in this model, time, place, and pace of students' learning stay consistent. Furthermore, Spahiu and Spahiu (2013) emphasized that this learning process is entirely dependent on the teacher's instructions and in this scenario, while the teacher gives directions, students can only pay attention without having the opportunity to express themselves. In their article, Li et al. (2014) also highlighted the fact that a traditional classroom is a teacher-centered approach through which students act passively and dependent on the teachers' notes. Kaymakamoglu (2017) declared that some educational establishments have a significant role in preserving the same teaching methods and requiring teachers to adopt a traditional role. A role that is consisted of transmitting knowledge to their students, answer them and to be a good role model. However, Findıkoğlu and İlhan (2016) suggested that TC could no longer captivate students' focus that is why we must seek innovative strategies as a substitute.

Flipped classroom approach:

Ozdamli and Asiksoy (2016) define flipped classroom as an active, student-centered approach that was formed to increase the quality of students' performance within and outside the class atmosphere. FC method is one of the most innovative and prominent teaching approaches, which incorporate technology, in which inquiring new notions "takes place at home while practice is conducted in the classroom" (Unal & Unal, 2017). Moreover, Hamdan et al. (2013) suggest that flipped classroom can be implemented using a variety of methods and techniques, which means that it is not limited to particular practices and performances. According to Hamdan et al. (2013), FC requires:

- "Flexible environment": teachers readjust classroom space conforming to his course's needs
- "A shift in learning culture": Students are no longer a tool of teaching but they became the focus of learning. They are invited to participate in lesson building and assess their learning process.
- "Intentional content": Teachers use intentional content so they can identify; first what students are capable of inspect individually outside of classroom atmosphere and second what elements educators shall teach face to face to enhance specific teaching competences and perceptions.
- "Professional educators": In the case of FC approach, teachers are asked to pay attention to students' interactions and to their self-assessment to ensure an organized classroom setting. Moreover, "professional educators" reach out to each other to consolidate their teaching experience and asses their different experiences. (pp. 5,6)

Flipping a classroom also involves careful planning and a role change for instructors that choose to 'forgo teacher-led instruction' in favor for more student-led learning through collaborative contribution to the learning process (Hunley, 2016).

Teachers roles within a flipped classroom

The flipped classroom provides a new methodology for teaching and learning that changes the roles of instructors from only class input to a more cooperative and collaborative contribution to the teaching process (Du et al., 2014). Basal (2015) illustrated that in the flipped classroom model, the role of teacher has changed from a provider of information to a guide, facilitator, and an organizer. This change allows significantly students to be more active within class.

Correspondingly, Alsowat (2016) added that the instructor is considered as a facilitator and supporter of learning; he/she encourages students to participate and controls the activities that have been implemented. The instructor plays multiple roles, including “content expert”, “instructional designer”, and “media developer”. Studies have shown that flipped learning significantly enhances student-learning performance (Hsieh et al., 2016). Therefore, Teachers main role is to ensure the integration of students in this process. In this aspect, teachers assume a crucial role in designing classroom environments that encourage students to become active and self-motivated learners (Abuhmaid, 2020). According to Bergman and Sams (2012), the FC approach is flexible as any teacher can personalize his/her work, while applying this method, taking into consideration courses and his/her students’ needs. Therefore, FC advocates for creating “thoughtful educators” thinking about their implementations of different teaching strategies that are best for them, for their course, and for their students (Bergmann & Sams, 2012).

1.2. The Flipped Classroom Approach And Active Learning

One may ask what the common point between FC and active learning is but first we should know what active learning is and what is it about. According to Bonwell and Eison (1991), active learning is generally defined as any instructional method that engages students in the learning process. FC advocates for these kinds of notions as Kerr (2020) cited that one of FC advantages is active learning. Fabregá et al. (2019) further stated that FC is among one of the different active learning methodologies.

In their article, “Enhancing Student Engagement Using the Flipped Classroom”, Gilboy et al. (2015) explained that in the flipped classroom instead of being lectured in class, students discover material and read about their course before coming to class and then engage in active learning strategies.

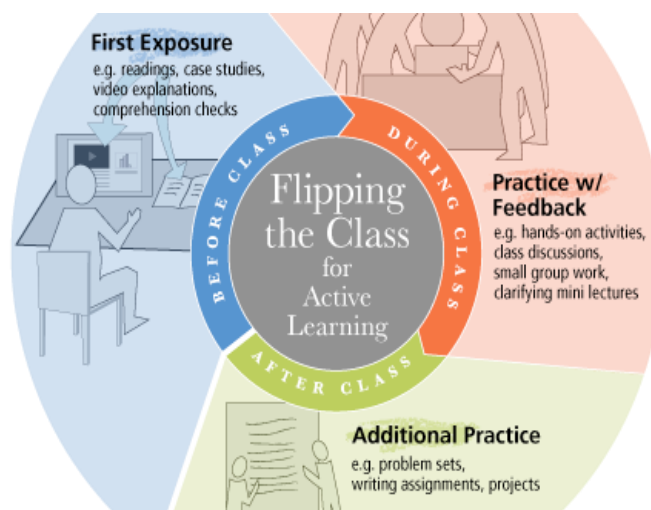


Figure 2

Flipping the class for active learning

Note. From *Flipping the class for active learning*, by Carnegie Mellon University, 2021, Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation (<https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/technology/flippingtheclass/index.html>). Copyright by Eberly Center.

As we can see in the figure above, flipping the class helps in using the in-class time to encourage active learning through different active strategies and activities such as practicing,

applying, discussions, and group activities which contribute in implementing this method (Carnegie Mellon University, 2021). Moreover, according to Kerr (2020), FC helps in gaining time in-class so students can be active and have much more time to work on their pedagogical skills and needs, focusing on their “higher order skills”, encourage students’ interactions, and having more opportunities to be actively engaged in their learning process. Higher order skills are a series of essential competencies people can employ to enhance learning progress and critical thinking. Respectively, Youngblood and Beitz (2001) asserted that critical thinking could be stimulated through active learning strategies. Cambridge Assessment International Education (2020) stated that active learning could be extremely beneficial as it promotes knowledge and understanding that can help students in further contexts, encourage learner autonomy as students are asked to be part of their own learning process and it helps students in developing their higher order thinking skills as we mentioned earlier. Overall, FC approach is of a great deal in fostering active learning which not only helps in developing students’ critical thinking and their higher order thinking skills but also in other skills.

1.3. Flipped classroom approach and learner autonomy

As mentioned above, in prior literature review sections, FC approach serves to cover students’ different needs and skills. Respectively, the FC approach also promoted students’ learning autonomy (Zainuddin & Perera, 2017). According to Holec (1981), learning autonomy is the “ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (p. 3).

Yu Jung Han (2015), Tsai (2019), Zainuddin and Perera (2017) and Ghufon and Nurdianingsih (2019) discussed FC role in developing an autonomous learner. Yu Jung Han (2015) talked about how learner autonomy can be clearly developed through the adaptation of FC approach as this method supports students’ active engagement and motivation. In other words, the increase of students’ motivation will lead to learner autonomy, as they are positively correlated (Ghufon & Nurdianingsih, 2019; Xiu & Thompson, 2020). Similarly, Ghufon and Nurdianingsih (2019) research’s results proved that during and after experiencing the flipped teaching technique, students are reported to have a greater level of learner autonomy. Han (2015) added that FC not only succeeded in developing students’ language attitudes and abilities but it also successfully introduced learner autonomy. Moreover, studying through the FC method made students thrilled about evolving to be autonomous learners as The FC method created a flexible and student- centered atmosphere, which helped them develop this sense of autonomy (Zainuddin & Perera, 2017). Ghufon and Nurdianingsih (2019) also displayed similar findings, showing that opportunities given to students such as finding information, thinking critically, analyzing findings and courses, and seeking the development of their different learning abilities and skills, like in the FC model, created a sense of learning autonomy over time because students are encouraged to work in such environment. On the other hand, as demonstrated by Han (2015), learner autonomy can be inconclusive as autonomy is correlated with motivation and students may show lack of motivation to certain fields or ideas. Therefore, one may say that Flipped classroom has a great impact in promoting learner autonomy but it is not fully guaranteed. Tsai (2019) exhibited, through his findings, that “The experience of the FC has not only transformed students’ ideology and concept of learning, but also their behavior and discipline” (p. 25). Learner autonomy is proven by FC from a “psychological, technical, sociocultural and political–critical perspectives” as FC developed a more in control student through practice, student-teacher and student-student interaction and confidence which resulted in learning independency and by consequence it also resulted in learner autonomy (Tsai, 2019, p. 3).

In conclusion, several studies focused on the flipped classroom vs the traditional classroom in EFL contexts. Different methodologies have been used to show the extent to which the FC

approach can be useful and beneficial for students and teachers. The following section will describe the methodology of conducting the study prior to interpreting the results in the following section.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research context: the flipped classroom approach in Tunisia

Daoud (1996) sought that to evolve the Tunisian educational system towards a more professional institution; working in ELT should be emerged and facilitated. For instance, as an indication of emerging innovative teaching strategies in Tunisia, in 1988, the Flipped classroom approach principles unfolded through the CIAP (Clarification, Illustration, Application, Participation) strategy was adopted (Kaffel & Ben Hamida, 2018). In their article "Evaluation of CIAP (Clarification, Illustration, Application, Participation) as a teaching tool in rheumatology", Kaffel and Ben Hamida (2018) studied the CIAP application. Following the FC principles, they informed the Moahmed Kassab institute students to read the module a week before their lecture and to evaluate learners' self-teaching, they prepared a pre and a post-test and they noticed a good and positive impact on students comparing to the TC approach.

Moreover, after the pandemic, Ben Kahla and Khanchel (2021) noticed that the urge to use different approaches valuing e-learning in Tunisia has noticeably increased. In such health crisis, Ben Kahla and khanchel sought to alter TC teaching management to a more effective and personalized classroom by applying the FC approach. They demonstrated the importance of FC approach in increasing Tunisian students' motivation, interaction, reflectiveness, critical thinking, and active learning.

The past research examples show the effectiveness of the FC approach among Tunisian educational system. Yet, we can always notice, due to the raising numbers of teaching research and trials, the long-lasting attempts to innovate teaching in Tunisia in all way possible, which proves the importance of education and especially FL learning in Tunisia. However, the Tunisian educational system still has many issues to work on as we may see in the next section.

The target population of this paper is Tunisian university English teachers at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Kairouan. The participants in five English classes of different subjects, Eight FLSHK English professors and fifty English students from different levels.

To have an insight about FLSHK English classes' practices, five classes were observed. The table below shows some details concerning those classes.

Table 1

Information about the observed classes

<i>Class</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>N° of Students who attended the session</i>
1. First year bachelor degree	Literature	Two hours	8
2. First year bachelor degree	Civilization	One hour	23
3. Third year bachelor degree	Literature	Two hours	19

4. <i>First year master's degree</i>	Linguistics	Three hours	26
5. <i>First year master's degree</i>	Civilization	Two hours	18

Note. This table demonstrates information about the five observed classes. It illustrates the level of classes, the subject, duration of each session and the number of students attended the sessions.

Classroom observations are used to measure how well schools and school systems perform in key areas such teachers' use of instructional time and resources, student engagement, and the use of best-practice teaching methods.

In parallel with these lesson observations, an encounter with four English professors occurred. A discussion with each one of them happened discussing different teaching practices they already used and currently using.

Eight teachers took part in the interview. Six of these interviews were conducted face to face and two were online. When it is necessary to gather in-depth data on people's opinions, beliefs, experiences, and feelings, interviews are a suitable way. When the subject of the inquiry involves issues that call for in-depth questioning and extensive probing, interviews are helpful.

Table 2

Information about interview participants

<i>Educators</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Years of experience</i>	<i>subject</i>	<i>Face to face/online</i>
<i>Educator A</i>	Male	26 years	Literature	Face to face
<i>Educator B</i>	Female	/	Literature	Online
<i>Educator C</i>	Female	25 years	Literature	Online
<i>Educator D</i>	Male	25 years	Literature	Online
<i>Educator E</i>	Male	/	Literature	Face to face
<i>Educator F</i>	Male	20 years	Linguistics	Face to face
<i>Educator G</i>	Male	34 years	Linguistics	Face to face
<i>Educator H</i>	Female	7 years	Civilization	Face to face
<i>Educator I</i>	Male	7 years	Civilization	Face to face

Note. This table shows information about the interview's participants. Nine teachers participated in this study. They are referred to by alphabets for confidentiality purposes. This table presents the gender, years of experience, subject taught and the way of conducting the interview to each teacher.

There are two research tools in this study: observation in different English classes and interview with English teachers. Taking into consideration that these studies took place at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Kairouan. The following sub-sections will provide an analysis of each used tool.

The purpose of this study is to observe, in a natural setting, the actions and behaviors of the teacher and students of each observed class. Through this act, the first research question was investigated. Angrosino (2007) claimed that qualitative observation research aims to depict necessary and meaningful daily processes that assist the objective of extracting important sets, tendencies, and ideas. This research tool can be directed wherever people interact in "natural" settings. Through this research method flipped classroom practices in English classes were investigated.

In appendix A, the questions asked to teachers are presented through providing a model of an interview. First, the obstacles and problems that teachers face while teaching English as a foreign language were pointed out by addressing two questions to address the most common obstacles that teachers encounter first in teaching EFL and second with their students' learning process.

3.Findings

The purpose of this study is to examine Teachers and Students' practices and perceptions regarding the flipped classroom approach within the English Department of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Kairouan. Therefore, a classroom observation, interviews with teachers, and questionnaire distributed to students were conducted to answer the three questions of this research. This chapter presents the data gathered and discusses them later. The results of this study are categorized according to research tools and at the end of each section; findings are analyzed and discussed respectively.

3.1.Discussion of classroom observations:

To investigate the research question, nine FLSHK English professors were asked to answer some questions in a form of interview. The ultimate goal is to find out about teachers' familiarity with the FC approach. Yet, to gain thorough data about some details concerning this approach and how teachers perceived the flipped classroom model, questions were asked about teachers' perceptions regarding obstacles faced in class, opinions to some practices related to the FC approach, teachers' familiarity with the FC and insights to other used approaches. In responding to both general questions and oriented questions, teachers were able to recall sufficient diverse events and perceptions of their classes. Upon completion of the interview, a thematic analysis was conducted.

3.1.1.Flipped classroom implementations in FLSHK English classes:

These sessions' objectives differ from one class to another. However, their common goal is to lead students to discover and analyze different areas under study depending on the highlighted subject. Therefore, it is important to observe a number of classes. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, this observation is a tool to depict the teaching and learning experiences in FLSHK English classes. Each session is intended to deliver certain information and to guide learners through different in-class actions and the duration differs from one class to another. To investigate the FC implementations, there have to be some distinctive acts through which we can study its use. According to Carnegie Mellon University (2021), there are two phases in a flipped classroom, which are;

- a)Before class: first exposure (research, readings, discovering, comprehension checks, videos etc....)
- b)During class: feedback/ practice (discussions, activities, interactions etc....)

These phases are important as they may demonstrate if the FC is used and if yes how. The research question aims to investigate different applications of this specific approach due its numerous advantages that may bring to teaching English as a foreign language.

The flipped classroom as an educational intervention comprised two parts: first, students' initial exposure to content outside of the classroom “via readings, instructional videos, individual or collaborative activities, or a combination of these and then during class”, a significant amount of class time is used for “practice, application exercises, discussion-based activities, team-based learning, or other active learning techniques.” (Carnegie Mellon University 2021).

Observational data illustrate that the most frequent and common act used in all the observed sessions is to ask students to revise what they have learned in the previous session before going to class. Moreover, as shown in the observational tables, teachers tend to ask students to do further readings about what they are going to study, provide handouts related to the course and prepare presentations concerning topics under study. The latter may indicate the importance of prior knowledge. Hence, FC approach is based on similar notions to the latter. It was clear that learners who had some information concerning the course showed a better understanding and interacted more often in class. It is noticeable that the students with prior knowledge are more in control and significantly more successful in interacting and giving further important information. In this context, Peachey (2021) mentioned that the flipped learning provides time to presenting, explaining, and rehearsing new language to effectively foster all of learners' language abilities in the classroom and to do that language should be learned and revised before class learning stage.

For instance, Hailikari et al. (2008) investigated how prior knowledge affects student achievement. The results of this study indicated that learners who had appropriate and more profound level of prior knowledge from past courses were additionally prone to improve their grades. Another study by Diaz (2017) in which the researcher examined prior knowledge's role in learning. The findings showed that although prior knowledge may be associated with several theories like the cognitive theory of learning and constructivism that encourage active learning, it may obstruct learning as a learner's prior knowledge may be deficient and imprecise therefore it “should be assessed before the start of any learning process”.

In one of the sessions, the professor asked students to read a passage giving a limit time 10 minutes. However, students took more than 10 minutes to read and to understand the passage, which it may be considered as waste of time. Whereas, in another session, the professor told a student who came to class late to check Google classroom as the course presentation may be found there. The latter set the student on truck and saved time for both student and teacher. The previous act seems to be in line with FC approach principle. This may prove that some classes do apply some of the FC approach principles at it may be advantageous in terms of gaining time in the classroom. According to Bergmann and Sams (2015), the FC approach advocates for time gain through findings ways to facilitate content transmission so that teachers and students will gain more in class time and opportunities that will be of a great factor in increasing interaction between them.

These findings are congruent with the findings of a large body of previous research investigating time use in Flipped classes (Basal, 2015; DeRuisseau, 2016; Mingorance-Estrada et al., 2019).

For instance, Mingorance-Estrada et al. (2019) inspected differences in the academic performance of university students according to the intervention model of the traditional methodology vs. the flipped classroom. In their study, they claimed that in a flipped class, using classroom time is tolerated to clarify contents through activities and interactions rather than traditional classroom set of acquiring elements passively. Moreover, in his study, presenting the implementation of a flipped classroom into an English language class in Turkey University, Basal (2015) appealed that the FC may help overcoming time restrictions in classes as it permits enhancing content of the lecture outside of the class and devoting class time on engaging in activities. In the same context, while

studying the effectiveness of the flipped classroom, DeRuisseau (2016) found that the flipped classroom approach devoted more time to active learning that even helped in including further "higher-order thinking activities".

In contrast, the findings of this study are in conflict with other studies, which showed that the FC overloaded teachers with time consuming work in order to create flipped learning materials (Ansori & Nafi, 2019). Other studies also showed that the FC may be both practical and impractical at the same time in terms of time use (Cheung, 2017; Lee & Wallace, 2017)

3.1.2. Teachers' experiences with Flipped classroom approach:

Verbal discussions, with some teachers in parallel with classes' observations, assisted on shedding light on FLSHK English teachers' experiences with FC approach in their classes. This served on consolidating the observations made to have a deeper insight into the matter.

Professor A said that he/she was using this approach in his/her classroom by asking students to do some research about a specific topic. In the session, two students were asked to talk about the highlighted topic. Then, a discussion including the professor and all the students was made. The professor said that this act created a good and amusing atmosphere where all students interacted and expressed their thoughts and queries and a better comprehension of the discussed topic was noticed. The teacher addressed the importance of students' role in the classroom due to its benefits in creating a better learning atmosphere ensuring the effective transmission of knowledge.

From the teaching experience mentioned above, it seems possible to make some inferences about FC approach practices. The teacher's experience with the FC approach proved its effective role in assuring students' engagement in class. This finding is in line with other research investigating the effects of the flipped classroom approach (Subramaniam & Muniandy, 2017; Ayçiçek & Yanpar, 2018).

For instance, Subramaniam and Muniandy (2017) explored the effects of the flipped classroom approach on students in terms of engagement level. They found that students were highly engaged in flipped classroom. Similarly, Ayçiçek and Yanpar (2018) proved that the FC approach could positively influence students' engagement level in class. They added that this may be due to the fact that this model provides students with opportunities to interact as they came prepared to class and therefore, they are motivated to engage in class. The FC guarantees an active learning environment that advocates for learners to be the center of learning process and therefore an engaged learner (Ayçiçek & Yanpar, 2018).

In addition, professor B said that to implement the flipped classroom approach we need to have motivated students that are willing to participate. The professor added that we lack motivated students that are interested in engaging in such initiatives because these students have a pre-established idea of just getting ready courses and information and not searching for it and that is what they are used to do all their previous studying years. Therefore, he /she added it is necessary to convince students and change these ideas. The latter incites an important notion of the importance of students' motivation to guarantee their involvement in any kind of initiatives, especially the FC approach, to ameliorate learners' acquirement of EFL.

This result is consistent with Abeysekera and Dawson (2014) study in which they examined FC in relation with pedagogy and motivation. They established that the FC might enhance learners' motivation and assist with their mental capacity. Additionally, in some studies, inspecting the impact of a flipped approach on aspects of the student learning experience and students' academic achievement, research deduced that FC advocates for students' access to learning information and resources which make them motivated to engage in learning activities in class (Awidi & Paynter, 2018; Cabı, 2018). However, learners might require support regulating to FC as it necessitates "high

levels of motivation and self-regulation” and this should be taking into consideration (Peachey, 2021).

Moreover, literature professor C said that he/she did not apply the flipped classroom before. However, he /she used to encourage students to interact in class through different methods such as assigning presentations than discussions, engaging students by dividing them into groups so they can interact and work with each other. The educator found that it is very helpful and important to ensure students’ motivation to learn. Contrarily, another literature professor D said that literature is based on explaining specific terms and key concepts and that the professor’s role in the classroom is significant and highly important compared to students’ roles. Moreover, she/he added that the literature session is based on lecturing rather than interacting. She/ he added that the teacher has to guide students over different new concepts that they have to acquire. Therefore, it is essential to go with the traditional classroom approach. Because it is based on lecturing and exploring and analyzing literary work, which have to be done with a total interference of the professor. This may be explained by teachers’ tendencies to use other approaches that they found suitable for their learners’ learning needs. In addition, it is highly important to take into consideration students’ different learning styles in teaching.

In this regard, other previous studies seem to be in line with this idea. Peachey (2021) stated that some students may have some difficulties to comprehend some information without teacher’s assistance. Besides, in his study determining the effect of learning styles on education and the teaching processes, Kazu (2009) stated that learners’ learning styles should be taken into consideration in the educational and instructive practices. In the same context, Raza (2018) explored the importance of distinguishing instructions in mixed-ability classrooms and sought to assist language educators in adapting educational methods according to Arab students’ needs in EFL classrooms.

3.2. Teachers’ interview:

To investigate the research question, nine FLSHK English professors were asked to answer some questions in a form of interview. The ultimate goal is to find out about teachers’ familiarity with the FC approach. Yet, to gain thorough data about some details concerning this approach and how teachers perceived the flipped classroom model, we asked questions about teachers’ perceptions regarding obstacles faced in class, opinions to some practices related to the FC approach, teachers’ familiarity with the FC and insights to other used approaches. In responding to both general questions and oriented questions, teachers were able to recall sufficient diverse events and perceptions of their classes. Upon completion of the interview, a thematic analysis was conducted.

3.2.1. Obstacles English teachers face:

Section one of the interview questions aimed at exploring teachers’ opinions regarding the nature of obstacles they face while teaching and their views concerning issues that hinder students’ learning process.

The majority of teachers expressed complications in students’ language competencies as they lack proficiency and express a lack of interest and reluctance in language learning. The interviewed professors reflected on the issues students face. For instance, 7 out of 9 teachers shared the same opinion about students’ lack of motivation, interest, and commitment. Moreover, professors also revealed that they also faced students’ resistance to change and deep reliance on the teacher in terms of course acquirement. They believed that these obstacles may hinder students’ learning process.

The following comments reflect some of the interviewees’ perceptions regarding teaching obstacles and learning issues for some students:

- “The unwillingness of students to read original sources in the subjects of critical theory and literature, their resort to synopses and spark notes to avoid reading lengthy literary works, their reluctance to make research, and their reliance the teacher’s notes.”
- “the students’ lack of motivation”
- “lack of commitment”
- “students’ dependence on me as a teacher”

Additionally, two teachers indicated that sometimes the inefficiency of some teaching strategies and teaching processes might not meet with students’ learning styles, which may cause a problem in keeping students’ motivated, interested, and engaged in class, by saying:

- “I think the teaching practices which do not meet students’ learning styles and intelligences lead to a great inhibition and apprehensions towards learning”.
- “Lack of interest in acquiring a new language, relative difficulty of the language, and the inefficiency of the teaching strategies.”

These findings are similar to Fareh (2010) study, which investigated the challenges encountered in teaching English in the Arab World countries, revealed some major problems hindering the delivery of EFL programs as expected such as teacher-centered methods and lack of motivation on the part of the learners. Besides, Andualem (2019) found that the students’ lack of adequate motivation and courage to speak is among the challenges teachers face in teaching. Contrarily, Dja'far et al. (2016) investigated Indonesian EFL Teachers' perception of students' motivation and English for Specific Purposes learning achievement. They found that these teachers encouraged the use of motivational strategies due to students’ high motivation that benefits their learning achievement.

3.2.2. Teachers’ perceptions towards the flipped classroom practices:

Shedding light on teachers’ practices and opinions about precise practices related to the FC, we sought to investigate different aspects as follows.

When the teachers were asked if the learners learn better in class when they observe or apply, the majority agreed that learners learn better through working with both of these performs. According to them, students do not learn the same way, they actually have different learning skills and they have to adopt a personalized way of learning that works the best for them. One of the interviewees stated that these modes “... may go together because students have different learning skills and people do not learn the same way”. Three other instructors claimed that most of the students learn best when applying. They believed that students tend to consolidate their comprehension through application so practicing seems to be a key factor to their learning. The following comments reflect the interviewees’ insights into this matter:

- “Most students learn through applying, (practice)”
- “I think the best way is practice: the focus should be more on the productive modes over the receptive modes.”

In this regard, in his study, Liton (2012) explored some insights into EFL teaching-learning development in Saudi colleges. He found that some practices improved students learning such as motivating students and increase their interest through exposing them to practical content like trying the language labs. In addition, Liton (2012) stated that the focus should be on; grammar and writing because they offer “a lot of exercises for practice “, on vocabulary acquisition practices, and listening skill practices to enhance EFL students learning.

In the same context, the interviewed teachers were asked if students are motivated to look for information related to course on their own or not. Five instructors expressed that indeed students tend to do that, one of them asserted that “now with technology becoming a major source of information, I think yes many students are motivated to look for information on their own” and another teacher

added that they have the tendency to do that “only if they are told to”. However, four teachers think that students are not motivated to look for information on their own. Two of them made an interesting comment by giving reasons as to why they thought students are not likely to do such actions. They believed that searching for information individually and accurately requires effort and that students are not trained to make such initiatives. The following comments reflect the teachers’ responses:

- “If they are trained and endowed with the methodological tools, students may be motivated to attain information by their own “
- “No, they don’t know how. Students are generally used to spoon-feeding. That is the way that they were used in their previous educational years. Teachers should encourage them to do so and show them how”

When the researcher asked the teachers about students’ prior learning experiences efficiency as if it influence learners’ course comprehension or not, they all agreed that this phase is beneficial for students. One of the interviewees stated that “...it is challenging for students, however I notice that students who have some background knowledge are relatively more successful...” this statement evokes the effectiveness of pre-class content exposure. Thus, another instructor added that in this process teacher’s role is important to direct students in the appropriate track as he answered “To some extent yes. Here the teacher’s role as a moderator is Crucial” referring to teacher’s significant role in students’ learning development. Moreover, some of the instructors thought that this method enhances learners’ ability to figure out the learning strategies that work best for them. To them, this exposure helps students to know their preferences and to know how they can learn best. This idea is reflected in the instructor’s comment saying:

- “well prepared students before the classroom would develop their learning strategies which in turn will help them comprehend their course”

Later, instructors were asked if they rather dedicate their sessions to course presentations and lecturing or to practice and tackle activities related to the course, they all stressed the importance of alternating between these two arrangements. They all gave many reasons regarding their teaching practices. They believed that it depends, on one hand, on students as one teacher said that “sometimes students are not motivated to engage” and on the subject being taught on the other hand as other two teachers stated that “it depends on the subject being taught, but most of the time we should balance between theory and practice” and “it depends on the course”. Additionally, another instructor added that it also depends on the nature of the sessions, as it may be lecture that would mostly be course presentation or tutorials that would be mostly about engaging in activities. This teacher said, “If it is a tutorial, they are engaged in activities. In lectures, it is rather a course presentation”. Moreover, one more instructor thought that both could be equally important stating that engaging in activities may be more important by saying, “course presentation is very important in the process of learning, but engagement in activities would make students positive participants as well.”

This may indicate the importance of creating a balance between both class observation’s exposure and practice.

In his study, Sulistiyo (2016) claimed teachers’ important role in enhancing and easing effective English exposure and learning during classroom practices. In other words, teachers should guide students all along their learning process through increasing their instructional practice in class.

Now, trying to let teachers relate directly to their teaching experiences, they were asked if they ever tried to provide their students with course elements before session. Six out of nine answered yes. These teachers indicated that sometimes they asked their students to either search about certain topics or read something specific before coming to class or even gave them some handouts to check or examine.

The ones who answered yes were asked to reflect upon their experience and if they noticed any changes in students' learning experience. These were their responses:

- "Comprehension is better"
- "this motivates students engaging them in the process of comprehension, reflection and class discussion"
- "students were more confident to interact in class, but sometimes teachers are faced with an issue of giving handouts and items related to the course and students end up not showing for class as may they think that those materials are enough "

Teachers' responses showed that the students' background knowledge that represents the pre-class content phase, which is related to the first phase of the FC approach, seem to be efficient to students' comprehension, motivation, interaction, and engagement. It may be explained by teachers' initiatives to encourage students to gain more learning responsibility.

Similarly, in his research, Cakici (2017) showed that Turkish EFL teachers think that their students appear to be ready "to take more responsibility and control for their own learning". In addition, Pei-Shi (2012) also found that teachers tend more to encourage their learners to be more independent in their language learning. In the same regard, Lodge and Kennedy (2015) argued that students' prior knowledge increased their confidence and positively influenced their performance. This also have been confirmed by Johnson et al. (1984) who, in their study, showed a strong link between learners' prior knowledge and their improved comprehension. Additionally, while investigating educational factors that influence learner's motivation to acquire English as Foreign Language (EFL), Keumala et al. (2019) found that prior knowledge contributed in enhancing learners' learning achievement and in increasing their motivation. Respectively, according to Zou (2020), teachers considered pre-class content beneficial "in helping students remember and understand the basic knowledge so that more time was available in class" (p. 1).

3.2.3. Teachers' familiarity with the flipped classroom approach:

In order to investigate FLSHK English teachers' familiarity with the FC approach, teachers were asked if they are familiar with this approach or not. Seven out of nine teachers answered yes. This finding seems to be in line with Azarniya and Dibaei (2020) study. They stated that "The level of familiarity of faculty members of flipped teaching in the teaching process was at a very good level".

Moreover, when teachers were asked about their views concerning this approach and what do they know about it, all of them expressed positive opinions towards this teaching model. They gave different responses. For instance, they shared the same opinion about the effectiveness of this approach in terms of stimulating students' role in the learning process as it may develop learners' performance and improve their engagement in class. They believed that this approach could be efficient. The following comments reflect the interviewees' perceptions concerning the FC approach:

- "It makes the process of learning efficient"
- "It can be successful because of the usefulness of online learning and the personal freedom and space given to the students while learning through a flipped classroom model."
- "Very efficient. It creates an active atmosphere of interaction and discussion"
- "I think that applying the FC would revive students' involvement in learning"

These positive insights are in line with previous research that showed that teachers had positive responses to the flipped classroom approach. For instance, according to some instructors the FC approach helped students enhancing their active learning, collaborative teamwork, autonomous learning, and interaction (Ansori & Nafi, 2019). Moreover, other teachers added that this model sought to be effective (Noroozi et al., 2021) and engaging (Lee & Wallace, 2017) as it reinforced students' learning responsibilities, motivation, and critical thinking skills (Ouabo, 2021).

However, other teachers had some doubts regarding this approach's viability. They thought that this approach may not be feasible as some challenges may be found. For instance, syllabus constraints may be an obstacle as well as it may not work due to lack of students' motivation and we may be facing some teachers and students that resist change. In this context, one of the teachers said that "... it may work but we may face some challenges such as some teachers and students' resistance to change and lack of students' motivation to participate in such initiatives..."

Instructors think that implementing the FC may be challenging. This finding is similar to those found by other researchers. For instance, although Ansori and Nafi (2019) explored the perceived benefits of implementing the FC approach, they also stated that applying such approach may be challenging in terms of creating flipped learning material and facing technical problems. Moreover, (Vaezi et al. 2019) added that teachers may face some difficulties implementing the flipped classroom instructions. Similarly, it is worth noting mentioning the similar finding discussed by Chen and Goh (2011) who stated that EFL teachers may encounter obstacles implementing the flipped classroom such as students' resistance to participate in these practices.

Moreover, in this section, teachers were also asked about their opinions regarding the other FLSHK English teachers' familiarity with this approach by asking if they think that the FC approach is well known among English teachers or not. The majority of instructors expressed their uncertainty. Thus, even though this matter is ambiguous to them, some teachers believed that instructors should get trainings to know about such matters. One of the interviewees answered "I have no idea, but I think they should be informed about it". The other instructor said that he does not think that teachers have an idea about this approach "because of the lack of training". Besides, another teacher added that teachers may be familiar with the notion but not with its technical name specifically.

This finding is in line with Azarniya and Dibaei (2020) findings who investigated the assessment of the level of familiarity and application of flipped teaching. They found that teachers had differences between levels of familiarity with the FC approach and its actual application. These differences and some of educational system's limitations may be overthrow by holding workshops and trainings on the flipped classroom teaching and its application (Azarniya & Dibaei, 2020). Additionally, Chen and Goh (2011) investigated challenges faced by EFL teachers in Teaching English in higher education and possible solutions. Chen and Goh (2011) elicited that majority of teachers who participated in this study expressed their desire to have training on effective instructions to reinforce their knowledge in the EFL context and ensure students' motivation and engagement.

3.2.4. Teachers' implementations to other approaches:

In this section, teachers were asked about the most effective teaching strategies that worked for them in order to have an insight towards the effective practices in English classes.

Their answers revealed that all of the professors emphasized more learner-centered approaches. Moreover, they believed that teachers should take into consideration learners' different learning needs and on that basis, they should figure out how to deal with them so they can guarantee good results as one of the teachers encouraged "Teaching according to students' different intelligence types and potentialities would provide wider possibilities of learning to students."

Because the first section's answers revealed that teachers face major problems with students' languages problems. Therefore, teachers believed that learners should achieve a certain proficiency level. They sought helping them by adopting different approaches that assures learners' engagement in the learning process. Consequently, one of the teachers claimed that "Integrative teaching strategies seem to be most effective". Additionally, teachers suggested other helpful methods that help learners take an active role in the learning process such as:

- "Teaching as interactive process and encouraging autonomous learning"

- “Presentations”
- “Group work”
- “Communicative approaches”
- “Well preparation and mastery of the course”

The differences in teaching strategies used from one teacher to another is explained by teachers' recognition to the importance of adopting different and particular teaching strategies suitable for their learners' different learning needs.

This finding is congruent with other studies. For instance, Chiya (2003) stated that in order to ensure better learning outcomes, it is highly important for teachers to consider learners' different learning needs and preferences. Therefore, teachers should opt for teaching strategies that correspond to their students' needs (Tulbure, 2011; Liton, 2012). In the same context, to ensure an effective foreign language teaching Arab EFL, Arab teachers believe in the significance of adapting instructional strategies according to their students' needs in EFL mixed-ability classrooms (Raza, 2018).

The results obtained from the classroom observation revealed that the FC approach could be seen in some practices. It is indeed used but unintentionally. This can be explained, as revealed in the interview's last question results, by teachers' tendencies to resort to what is best for their learners' needs and their lessons' objectives. For instance, it is noticed that, in their classes, teachers tend to implement some principles of the FC approach such as ensuring students' exposure to content before class. These actions revealed the importance of pre-class content exposure in increasing class time. The gained time is going to be devoted for practice and activities that is going to ensure students' engagement. Moreover, teachers who had some experience with the FC approach in their classes before, indicated that they noticed an increase in students' engagement and motivation to learn. Other teachers indicated that FC practices may be challenging due to students' lack of motivation and for teachers' significant involvement in course presenting for some subjects. In the light of these results, the FC approach may lead to good teaching and learning outcomes. However, it proved to be challenging for some classes' practices.

The interviews' conducted with teachers confirmed classes' observation results. Through their responses, English professors indicated the importance of students' prior knowledge in enhancing learners' comprehension, motivation, confidence, interaction, and engagement. The findings also revealed positive views to the FC approach. For instance, it was showed that it is efficient in improving learners' learning autonomy, active learning, and interactions. Additionally, teachers confirmed their initiatives to adapt their teaching strategies to their learners' learning needs. Another finding worth noting that confirmed FC challenging implementations is that teachers thought students may not be motivated to implement this approach and they may resist these new methods. Moreover, the interviews helped answering the research question by having an insight into FLSHK English professors' familiarity to the FC approach. The findings showed that they are familiar with this approach. However, they do not think that their colleagues are. They believed that they need more awareness and training for this teaching strategy. The interviews' conducted with teachers are of great value to indicate their teaching practices and perceptions of FC and their experiences as teachers.

4. Implications and recommendations

The present study aimed at investigating the flipped classroom approach from the practitioners' perspective. In the light of the findings, some pedagogical implementations can be stated. Investigating the FC approach in FLSHK may contribute to spreading awareness regarding this approach. Now students and teachers know more about this approach. This research may encourage teachers to have more insights about different teaching student-centered strategies, especially the

flipped classroom approach, which may enhance their teaching experiences. It helped in raising awareness to the importance of taking into consideration learners' learning needs and the different learning strategies that can be used to enhance EFL learning experiences notably the FC approach as an example. Tackling the FC approach at the FLSHK assisted in informing teachers and students about the importance of this approach in enhancing the teaching and learning experiences in terms of acquiring EFL by increasing applicability and perceptions. It also tried to support new understanding regarding FC approach and its anticipated benefits in terms of acquiring EFL more effectively.

The FC approach is not widely used in English classes despite its benefits in gaining in-class time and enhancing EFL learners' engagement and interaction. Thus, due to the positive views held by FLSHK English students and teachers, the FC approach is recommended to be implemented. In fact, both students and teachers perceive the FC approach's first phase, which is the pre-class content exposure, as important for EFL learners. Moreover, FLSHK English students should be aware of different teaching strategies so they can be involved in the learning process, as students are getting more and more independent in their learning experience, which this study tried to achieve.

FLSHK English teachers think that students are not motivated to experience new learning modes. However, results showed that English students are motivated to experience the FC approach. Therefore, teachers are suggested to help their students become more aware of each other's perceptions to implement new strategies that may benefit learners' learning experience.

A further implication of this study is that teachers should support their students and increase their engagement in the learning process. Thus, it is necessary to enhance Students' engagement and motivation in class, as they are important in acquiring English in EFL classes. It is important for Teachers to adapt their teaching strategies according to students' learning needs. In doing so, EFL teachers should increase practice in class as it may help students enhance their English skills, which the FC approach may help in achieving.

Conclusion

This investigation aimed to examine how the English department at Kairouan's Faculty of Arts and Humanities uses the flipped classroom method. It focused on how English teachers view this strategy as well. Five English courses were observed, and nine FLSHK English instructors were interviewed. In order to improve learning opportunities, it is important to understand how Tunisian academics feel about the flipped classroom and how it is used in English classes there. The findings have a big impact on how teachers and students experience learning.

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Appendix A: Teachers' online Interview sample

Questions to depict to what extent are Tunisian English teachers familiar with the flipped classroom approach

Following information is optional

Name:

Gender:

Years of experience:

-What are the most common obstacles that you encountered as a teacher while teaching English as a second language:

.....students...are not interested in particular topic, distracted, or reluctant to acquire knowledge during the English class.

-What are the issues do you believe inhibit or keep your students from engaging, connecting and comprehending course materials:

...stylistic issues, how to fathom symbols and images

-Do you think that students learn more by observing or applying:

.....Most students learn through applying.

(practice).....

-Do you think that students are motivated to look for information on their own:

.....yes, I think 10 per cent of them.....

-Do you think that student's prior learning strategies influence their course comprehension:

To some extent yes. Here the teacher's role as a moderator is crucial.....

- Do you dedicate most of your session to course presentation or to engagement in activities:

...practically to activities.....

- Have you ever provided your students with the course that you are going to teach before the session:

☐ Yes+

☐