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Investigating the Effec

t of Blended, Flipped, and Traditional Learning

Strategies for Teaching Reading Skills

on Iraqi Kurdistan EFL Learners

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Investigating the Effect of Blended, Flipped, and Traditional Learning Strategies for Teaching Reading Skills on Iraqi Kurdistan EFL Learners

Abstract:

Following current educational technology combined learning developments, interest in implementing blended and flipped classrooms as creative strategies have evolved increasingly prevalent among language instruction management. The present investigation compared

traditional, flipped, and blended learnin

g contexts in Iraqi EFL learners' reading skills. Thus, 45 intermediate EFLs, contingent on Oxford Placement Test (OPT), were chosen and divided into three main groups: two comparative (flipped and blended) and one control group (traditional), with 15 students in each group. First, a pre-test was conducted, and all the students in three groups participated to evaluate their initial reading knowledge. Both comparative groups obtained the same treatment to combine technology into their education. The blended group obtained education in both online and traditional contexts, while the flipped group acquired education just in an online context. The control group obtained education in traditional contexts. Consequently after applying the treatment, a post-test was performed to investigate the effect of treatment. The findings showed that the control group did not significantly differ in pre to post-test. However, the blended and flipped groups revealed a significant difference in the mean score of students reading. Based on the results, the blended

learning strategy had the most influence on the reading skills of Iraqi EFLs.

Keywords: Learning Strategies, Blended Learning, Flipped Learning, Traditional Learning, Reading Skill

التحقيق في تأثير استراتيجيات التعلم المدمج والمقلوبة والتقليدية لتعليم مهارات القراءة على متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في كردستان العراق

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الملخص:

بعد تطورات التعلم المجمعة الحالية لتكنولوجيا التعليم ، أصبح الاهتمام بتنفيذ الفصول الدراسية المختلطة والمقلوبة حيث تطورت الاستراتيجيات الإبداعية بشكل متزايد بين إدارة تعليم اللغة. قارن التحقيق الحالي بين سياقات التعلم التقليدية والمعكوسة والمختلطة في مهارات القراءة لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وهكذا ، تم اختيار 45 من اختبار اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية متوسط ، بناءً على اختبار تحديد المستوى في أكسفورد (OPT) ، وتم تقسيمها إلى ثلاث مجموعات رئيسية: مجموعتان مقارنتان (مقلوبة ومختلطة) ومجموعة ضابطة واحدة (تقليدية) ، مع 15 طالبًا في كل مجموعة. أولاً ، تم إجراء اختبار تمهيدي ، وشارك جميع الطلاب في ثلاث مجموعات لتقييم معرفتهم الأولية بالقراءة. حصلت كلتا المجموعتين المقارنتين على نفس المعاملة لدمج التكنولوجيا في تعليمهما. حصلت المجموعة المختلطة على التعليم في كل من السياقات عبر الإنترنت والسياقات التقليدية ، بينما حصلت المجموعة المقلوبة على التعليم فقط في سياق عبر الإنترنت. حصلت المجموعة الضابطة على التعليم في السياقات التقليدية. وبالتالي ، بعد تطبيق العلاج ، تم إجراء اختبار لاحق للتحقق من تأثير العلاج. أظهرت النتائج أن المجموعة الضابطة لم تختلف بشكل كبير في الاختبار السابق واللاحق. ومع ذلك ، كشفت المجموعات المختلطة والمقلوبة عن اختلاف كبير في متوسط درجات الطلاب الذين يقرؤون. بناءً على النتائج ، كان لإستراتيجية التعلم المدمج التأثير الأكبر على مهارات القراءة للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجيات التعلم ، التعلم المدمج ، التعلم المقلوبة ، التعلم التقليدي ، مهارة القراءة

Introduction

Reading is among the most essential skills for language learning between EFL and ESL learners. Reading skills benefit English language learners by providing an opportunity to learn English in poor input conditions (Wu, 2014). Exposing EFL learners to original native material increases learners' motivation (Marzban & Davaji, 2015). Furthermore, for university scholars who like to challenge themselves with the most delinquent expansions in their expertise, reading original texts can enhance their language mastery and improve their interactive participation in the target exercise more than synthetic reading texts (Alimorad, 2019). In addition, reading authentic materials allows English language learners to familiarize themselves with the target civilization and culture (Akbari & Razavi, 2016). Reading is a basis of scientific knowledge and an exciting exercise that serves as a means to consolidate students' scientific and proficient skills via educational technology instruments. With the technology development, the number of available original English texts has raised, which enables EFL learners to enhance their reading proficiency (Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

Technological developments have directed modifications in learning systems from a traditional learning context to a new learning strategy, equally flipped and blended learning. *Blended learning* is an educational method in which end traditional learning, and electronic learning are merged (Akkoyunlu & Soylu, 2006). Flipped learning is a further form of blended learning which have reversed the traditional learning form

(Cleary, 2020). Learners can combine online classes with traditional ones (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020).

Considering the ever-increasing increase in educational technologies, understanding the theoretical bases of flipped and blended classrooms seems necessary. Traditional learning is reversed in both blended and flipped learning (Lai & Hwang, 2016). In this type of training, students practice the teaching materials before the class and discuss them with each other under the teacher's supervision (Bergmann & Sams, 2014; Namaziandost & Çakmak, 2020). In this way, a schema about a specific topic is created in their mind, and then the schema is activated in the class (Slomanson, 2014). In addition, teachers increase students' creativity, ideas, and collaboration through technology-based discussions in the classroom. Therefore, students learn via their backgrounds and the mutual sharing of their interactions with classmates (Boudreaux et al., 2019). As mentioned in the interactionist framework, which promotes language learning by the intersection of input and output through a cooperative interchange (Shekary & Tahririan, 2006).

Although combining traditional education with technology has attracted much attention worldwide, the role of blended and flipped education is still in its infancy (Ekmekci, 2017; Lin & Hwang, 2018). Although there is evidence of the effect of blended and translational education on the development of English language skills, so far, no study has been conducted to compare the effect of this education on the development of language skills of Iraqi learners and compare it with traditional education (Karimi & Hamzavi, 2017; Vaezi et al., 2019). Therefore, the present study was conducted to compare traditional, combined, and reversed education in the development of reading skills of Iraqi language learners.

Methodology

Based on the convenience sampling approach, 45 EFL learners participated in the current study. The independent variable was instructing reading skills in traditional, flipped, and blended learning classrooms, and the dependent variable was EFLs' reading skills..

An Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered to the learners to ensure group homogeneity. This language proficiency test provides a reliable technique to determine learners' proficiency levels. This test consists of 60 questions in three parts that

calculate students' grammar, listening, reading, and vocabulary skills. The learners' mean score was (37.255.12). The learners whose scores dropped one standard deviation above or below the mean from the study were excluded.

A pre-test related to reading skills was conducted before the educational intervention. The purpose of this stage was to measure students' basic reading skills. The total score of this pre-test was 20, and it had 20 questions (one score for each question). The reliability of the reading pre-test was calculated through Cronbach's alpha (=0.93). fter completing the educational intervention sessions, the researchers designed a reading post-test based on the assigned course materials. The post-test also included 20 multiple-choice questions, each question having one score. The reliability of the reading test was 0.91.

The primary learning material employed in this study was an IELTS preparation reading book. The choice of 45 homogenous EFL students was the first stage. The students were unsystematically allocated to one of the scheduled reading courses. Two courses received the educational intervention (blended and flipped), and the third underwent traditional reading instruction on the authority of the syllabus. The treatment was done in 6 sessions. The flipped and blended groups received education as Productive groups (wonderpolis.org) on the Internet. Three classes took the reading course with the same teacher. Nevertheless, the type of treatment in each group was different. Table 1 shows the weekly instructions of the traditional classroom.**Table 1, the weekly instructions of the traditional classroom.**

Classroom	Sessions	Activities
Traditional Classroom	1st	Instruction on reading skill
	2nd	Instruction on reading skill
	3rd	Task-based group activity and feedback
	4th	Task-based group activity and feedback
	5th	Task-based group activity and feedback
	6th	Assigning homework

Students in traditional classrooms received two sessions regarding reading skill instruction, three sessions on task-based group activity and feedback, and one session related to assigning homework. Table 2 shows the weekly instructions of the flipped classroom. **Table 2, the weekly instructions of the flipped classroom.**

Classroom	Sessions	Activities before the online class	Activities during the online class

Flipped Classroom	1st	The teacher sent short instructive videos about reading skill	Asking the students about reading instructions
	2nd		Asking the students about reading instructions
	3rd	The teacher sent short reading articles	Students were asked to summarize the article
	4th		Students were asked to answer questions about the reading
	5th		Task-based group activity and feedback
	6th		Assigning homework

Students in the flipped classroom received two types of activity before the online class, including short instructive videos about reading skills and short reading articles. For the first activity, students were asked about reading instructions in two sessions. Furthermore, for the second activity, students received four sessions. Table 3 shows the weekly instructions for the blending classroom.

Table 3, the weekly instructions for the blending classroom.

Classroom	Sessions	Activities before the online class	Activities during the traditional class
Blending Classroom	1st	The teacher sent short instructive videos about reading skill	Instruction on reading skill
	2nd		Instruction on reading skill
	3rd	The teacher sent short reading articles	Task-based group activity and feedback
	4th		Task-based group activity and feedback
	5th		Task-based group activity and feedback
	6th		Assigning homework

Students in the blending classroom received two types of activity before the online class, including short instructive videos about reading skills and short reading articles. Furthermore in traditional classroom they received two sessions regarding reading skill instruction, three sessions on task-based group activity and feedback, and one session related to assigning homework.

After collecting the data, they were analyzed employing One-way ANOVA and paired sample T-test and hypotheses of normality.

Results

The results of checking the normality of the data are shown in Table 4.

Table 4, Results of normality of data

Group		N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	One sample Kolmogorov Smirnov test	
							Z	Sig.
Control	Pre-test	15	15	19	17.20	1.15	0.231	0.31
	Post-test	15	15	19	17.33	1.11	0.259	0.08
Blended classroom	Pre-test	15	15	18	16.73	0.96	0.276	0.091
	Post-test	15	15	19	18.20	0.77	0.331	0.1
Flipped classroom	Pre-test	15	15	19	16.73	1.09	0.204	0.96
	Post-test	15	15	19	17.67	1.17	0.212	0.06

The normality check results showed that the three groups' pre-test and post-test data were normal. For this reason, parametric tests were used for their analysis. Table 5 compares the pre-test and post-test grades of students in the control groups, the blended class, and the flipped class.

Table 5, the results of the comparison of the pre-test and post-test grades of students in the control groups, the blended class and the flipped class

Group		mean	SD	T	df	p-value
Control	Pre-test	17.20	1.15	-1.468	14	0.164
	Post-test	17.33	1.11			
Blended classroom	Pre-test	16.73	0.96	-8.876	14	<0.001
	Post-test	18.20	0.77			
Flipped classroom	Pre-test	16.73	1.09	-6.089	14	<0.001
	Post-test	17.67	1.17			

Results demonstrated no significant difference (p-value>0.05) between the mean score of the pre-test and post-test in the traditional classroom. The mean score in traditional classrooms improved but was not significant. Moreover, the results indicated that the difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test in blended and flipped classrooms was significant (p-value<0.05). The students' reading skills scores increased significantly in blended and flipped classrooms. Table 6 shows the comparison of different learning strategies.

Table 6, the comparison of different learning strategies.

		T	df	p-value
Pre-test	Control-blended	1.388	14	0.187
	Control-flipped	1.240	14	0.235

	Blended-flipped	0.000	14	1.000
Post-test	Control-blended	-3.166	14	0.007
	Control-flipped	-0.863	14	0.403
	Blended-flipped	2.256	14	0.041

Discussion

The comparative study of flipped and blended learning strategies showed that these two strategies significantly differed in effectiveness. The blended group obtained significantly higher mean scores than the control and flipped groups. By examining the evaluation of flipped and blended learning approaches in improving the reading skills of English language learners, the results demonstrated that both learning approaches significantly improved the participants' learning. Nevertheless, the blended learning strategy had a more significant effect on reading skills than flipped learning. The present study's findings are consistent with previous studies' results (Abaeian & Samadi, 2016; Ekmekci, 2017; Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017; Ginting, 2018; Karabulut-Ilgu et al., 2018; Vaezi et al., 2019). These studies revealed that students who obtain education in flipped and blended classrooms exceed those who do not.

The results of this study showed that combined and flipped learning classes provide the possibility of education beyond the classroom, and also by spending class time for interaction and cooperation between students and the teacher provides the possibility of increasing interaction and progress (Abdullah et al., 2019). The blended learning strategy shift classes from teacher-centered to student-centered that need students' enthusiastic participation (JEONG, 2017). Therefore, they can participate in a more flexible and relaxed learning environment that allows for adjustment to their learning style and preferences.

The survey results proved that these new teaching-learning strategies can be combined with the educational context. On the other hand, educators can combine traditional classroom teaching techniques with new teaching-learning contexts to meet the expectations and demands of today's generation of learners. The results of the control (traditional) group showed that they improved in reading, but their pre-test and post-

test differences were insignificant. In other words, change happens very slowly in traditional classrooms, and learning can be accelerated by combining new strategies.

Conclusion

The current study investigated the impact of blended and flipped learning strategies on improving Iraqi EFLs' reading skills. The results indicated that technology-enhanced learning contexts like blended and flipped classrooms are essential in increasing learners' enthusiastic participation in learning to read. The results explain the claim that various educational technology instruments, like those employed in blended and flipped courses, can support language learning.

The obtained results assist language educators in improving their education strategies and completing the recent generation of students' requirements in utilizing and profiting from unique technical developments and E-learning environments. Language organization creators can develop and supply reading programs through blended and flipped learning strategies as part of their instructional syllabus. Future investigations may explore the impacts of blended, flipped, and traditional learning classes on students' language learning at various proficiency levels.

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