Flipped Learning for Young English Learners: Teachers' Views on Its Supplementary Role and CLIL Appropriateness

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Abstract

This study examined primary English teachers' perceptions regarding the implementation of flipped learning for young learners (ages 9-12) in Poland. Data collection employed a mixed-methods approach to collect data via surveys from 42 teachers and semi-structured interviews with 5 teachers. The results indicate technology is indeed most prevalent with young learners. However, teachers showed high levels of uncertainty about using flipped learning as the primary teaching method with this age group. Teachers mainly view Flipped learning as a supplementary tool, due to several challenges such as the need for consistent parental involvement, and students' access to technology, The study asserts Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) particularly as a suitable environment for flipped learning to enhance young learners' English proficiency, provided strategic support to enhance student engagement.

Keywords: Flipped learning; Young learners; CLIL; Teachers` perceptions

1. Introduction

Recent changes in education originally were in part driven by the pandemic, have resulted in a growth in the popularity of mixed learning and online learning methods which are technology-based. Flipped learning is a teaching method which has been gaining popularity recently, an approach that inverts traditional classroom tasks by moving direct instruction to the home and using in-class time for interactive activities. Flipped learning had extensive study in higher education and upper K-12 levels. In contrast, with young learners especially in lower primary classes, have seen limited exploration. This research based on the author's Master's thesis completed at the University of Warsaw in July 2023, explores primary English language teachers' views on implementing flipped learning with young learners. This research aims to clarify the perspectives of primary school teachers in both public and private sectors on their insights and contributions to the adoption of flipped learning for this age group. The learning outcomes of students are significantly influenced by the opinions and practical experiences of teachers, as the current generation has had significant exposure to technology. This study demonstrates the potential benefits, challenges context and

necessary required adjustments to effectively implement flipped learning in English language classrooms with young learners.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- What are the primary English teachers' perceptions on implementing flipped learning with young learners?
- What are the main challenges and benefits of implementing flipped learning with young learners, according to the primary English teachers?
- What context of English teaching are teachers more likely willing to adopt flipped learning with young learners?

This research methodology employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, in order to investigate primary in-service English language teachers' perceptions. The quantitative data was gathered through questionnaire surveys, while qualitative data was obtained through interviews designed to collect personalized insights and experiences. The study also considers potential factors, such as parental views and access to technology, that teachers believe could directly or indirectly influence the implementation of flipped learning.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Foundational Principles of Flipped Learning

Flipped learning is a teaching method that transforms standard classroom activities by inverting them, transferring direct instruction outside of the group learning, and turning in-class time into a dynamic, interactive space where teachers help students apply what they've learned. The four main parts of this method are Flexible Environments, Learning Culture, Intentional Content, and Professional Educators. These pillars allow students decide when and where they want to learn and also change the teacher's position to that of a guide, ensuring that the proper material is delivered, and stress the teacher's professional role in creating a supportive environment. Several important educational theories support the flipped learning concept. Constructivism is about the idea of students actively build knowledge by interacting with their surroundings (Vygotsky, 1978). Flipped learning helps this process by having students engage with materials before class and then expand their comprehension through interactions in class (Piaget, 1973). Bloom's Taxonomy is directly supported since lower-order thinking skills like memorizing and understanding, which can be worked on outside of class, while higher-order abilities like applying, analyzing, creating, and evaluating, can be worked on in class through group work and discussion (Bloom et al., 1956). Flipped learning is based on active learning, which means that students are involved and engaged. In-class time is spent on hands-on

activities, problem-solving, and working together, which Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Dewey, 1897) says promotes social interaction and teamwork. Also, flipped learning naturally includes scaffolding. Pre-class materials are the first support, and in-class activities build on this foundation within Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978).

2.2 Characteristics of Young English Learners and Second Language Acquisition

The Critical Period Hypothesis core idea is that younger learners have an inherent natural advantage in learning a second language due to their brain mechanisms, which are similar to those used in first language acquisition. Hence, applying flipped learning to young learners, typically those aged 5 to 12, presents special considerations for second language acquisition (SLA). Flipped learning as method of teaching provides a proper context for the Critical Period Hypothesis to make use it, as the teaching method to entail an environment, in which it increases language exposure through a variety of multimedia resources. Flipped learning supports Krashen's (1985) theory that understandable input is crucial for acquisition. Krashen (2010) asserts that a relaxed environment is necessary for effective language learning. The implementation of flipped learning falls under the umbrella of Krashen's idea, as students having access to materials at home and learning at their own pace create a proper low-anxiety environment where the students have full control. The considerable growth of the English language in Poland, as well as the increasing integration of technology into students' lives, makes Poland an ideal case study for applying innovative methods like flipped learning to second language acquisition. Sugata Mitra's "hole in the wall" experiment highlighted "learner autonomy" by showcasing children's ability to use technology for self-directed learning, which demonstrated how useful technology can be as a teaching tool for young students, as it offers flexible resources, such as Open Educational Resources (OERs), which are publicly accessible internet resources, providing a strong establishment to implement flipped learning even further.

2.3 Flipped Learning and CLIL

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is particularly suitable setting for flipped learning with young English Language Learners. According to Coyle, Hood, and Marsh (2010), CLIL is an innovative and modern teaching approach that integrates language and content learning in a dual-focused manner to help students learn a second language. In contrast to traditional education, CLIL is especially content-driven, more of as a tool that incorporates language and subject matter elements, giving different emphasis at different stages of the learning process. The aim behind CLIL is to provide a more comprehensive educational experience by directly integrating language learning with subjects like science, history, and social studies. (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010).

Flipped resources and materials provide an opportunity for students to familiarize themselves with the content and language at home rather than stumbling upon the new lesson or topic in class, which takes time in class. Therefore, freeing up time for activities related to language and maximizing their understanding in class instead (Recino, 2020). Overall, the combination of CLIL and flipped learning has a lot of potential to help young students improve their English language skills. For instance, watching videos about things like climate change before class can help students learn specifics, new words, and review their level of the topic comprehension. Per this practice, helping the students to improve their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills by in-depth class discussions (Strayer, 2012; Hew & Lo, 2018). Especially, as the lessons are connected and per the content they were exposed to previously, the students can see how the materials at home help them to learn in a larger scale, which means that flipped learning might be able to reach its full potential in CLIL (Recino, 2020). Also, when it comes to improving language-focused teaching beyond CLIL, flipped learning can offer pre-recorded lessons on grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation.

2.4 Flipped Learning Implementation in K-12: Challenges and the Emergence of a Supplementary Role

Flipped learning encompasses a structured approach that includes the preparation of materials (such as videos and online resources) through Learning Management Systems (LMS) to enhance organization and collaboration (Bradley, 2021). This method requires students to complete pre-class assignments (Romero-García, Buzón-García, & Touron, 2018) and engage with the materials prior to class (Abu Safiyeh and Farrah, 2020), followed by active learning during class sessions with teacher facilitation (Abuhmaid, 2020; Strayer). Research indicates that flipped learning has the potential to enhance student achievement, motivation, and engagement. Studies show that this approach increases motivation and active participation (Divjak et al., 2022; Yousefzadeh and Salimi, 2015; Campillo-Ferrer and Miralles-Martinez, 2021), also encourages critical thinking in students (Fish, 2016; Mohanty and Parida, 2016) and facilitates transformative classroom interactions (Strayer, 2012; Hajera Bibi Abdul Kader, 2020).

Flipped learning indeed has the potential to be implemented with students in grades K–12, especially younger students. However, it still comes with challenges, as there hasn't been a lot of comprehensive study on this age group in the field of English language instruction, according to Lo and Hew (2017). Some things that could be problems are how familiar the students are with the method, the length and focus of the video lectures, how clear the in-class tasks are, how much work they have to do, and how easy it is to get help outside of school (Lo & Hew, 2017). There are problems with all of these things that could happen. Also, it can be hard for teachers to make sure that all of their students always have access to technology (Abuhmaid, 2020), give them

comments on time, and get parents involved, all of which are important for doing work outside of school and managing screen time.

The flipped learning challenges shifted teachers' views to express hesitation to completely apply flipped learning as a normal teaching technique due to the fact that such an implementation would be difficult to accomplish, as it is essential that students undertake these difficulties in order to guarantee that they will be able to adequately complete their tasks. Generally, the majority of educators believe that flipped learning serves mostly as a supplementary tool rather than a standard teaching method to adopt with young learners. The challenges are due to how essential it is to consider the diverse learning styles of young learners and their needs, access and use of technology, engaging in thorough planning, selection of appropriate activities, and incorporation of the online platforms (Basal, 2015).

2.5 Key Stakeholders and Support Systems for Flipped Learning with Young Learners

The effectiveness of flipped learning, particularly when adopting this method, with the young learners' group, is strongly dependent on the active engagement and support of key stakeholders in Education. Professional educators, for instance, are an example of these stakeholders whose job in a flipped classroom goes beyond providing direct instruction but into becoming facilitators, content organizers, and meeting students' different needs and styles (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Thus, in order to effectively design and implement a dynamic and interactive learning environment for students, as well as to succeed in using digital tools and platforms effectively overall, teachers must undergo specialized professional development and training as part of the transformation (Basal, 2015; Lo & Hew, 2017). According to Lo and Hew (2017), a major barrier that may impede the effective implementation of flipped learning is the lack of such training or assistance.

Alongside the teachers' role in the implementation of flipped learning. The parental involvement emerges as a significant contribution for the success of flipped learning with young learners (Lo & Hew, 2017). In contrast to adult learners, younger learners overall lack the autonomy and self-regulation that is necessary for them to independently complete pre-class activities, access digital resources, and regulate screen time (Phillips, 1993; Lo & Hew, 2017). As a result, it is essential for parents to provide their active consent and regular support in order to facilitate home-based learning, ensure that tasks are completed, and oversee the use of technology (Lo & Hew, 2017). The lack of this essential cooperation between the family and the school, the components of flipped learning that take place outside of the classroom can become rather to an obstacle, which is in the most part why educators are hesitant to use Flipped learning as a primary instructional strategy. Therefore, teachers and parents must

communicate openly to clarify expectations and obtain the required cooperation from the households.

The educational systems and schools are exceptionally important to provide institutional support, which includes the provision of a sufficient technology infrastructure, the provision of opportunities for continuing professional development, and the cultivation of an atmosphere that places a high priority on new pedagogical approaches such as flipped learning (Lo & Hew, 2017). Also, with the support to the elimination the digital divide among students, by working on guaranteeing equal access to gadgets and dependable internet connectivity for all students (Abuhmaid, 2020), as with these comprehensive systemic supports, it enable educators and parents to navigate the complexities of flipped learning, and allow them to go beyond the supplemental use of flipped learning and towards a more integrated and successful educational model for young English learners.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate primary English language teachers' perceptions on implementing flipped learning with young learners. This design, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, allows for a comprehensive understanding of the research problem by exploring both the prevalence of certain perceptions („what") and the underlying reasons and experiences („why") (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.2. Sampling

The purposive selection was adopted for sampling, in order to recruit participants who met specific criteria: English language teachers who have experience teaching young learners at lower primary levels (grades 3-6) and have experience of using technology in their classrooms. The recruitment was through specifically Facebook groups for English teachers, and the researcher's professional network. The sample size included 42 teachers for the quantitative survey and 5 teachers for the semi-structured interviews. The interview participants were primarily volunteers from the survey who provided contact information, and direct contact with the resaerchers' network of Teachers. The sample sizes were guided by recommendations for mixed-methods research, suggesting at least 30 participants for quantitative components and at least 10 for qualitative components (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.3. Data Collection

The collection of data occurred throughout a set of two phases:

The first phase involved the utilization of online surveys via Google Forms to gather quantitative data. The survey included closed-ended questions covering demographic information, teaching experience, technology use, and perspectives on flipped learning and its implementation.

The second phase involved conducting semi-structured interviews with a selected number of survey participants to obtain qualitative data, which were offered in both in person or online via Zoom. The interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent. The interview questions were designed to gather detailed responses.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis also comprised two phases:

In the first phase, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative survey data. This involved summarizing responses to closed-ended questions, calculating frequencies and percentages for each response, and presenting the results in tables and graphs. Demographic information and data related to technology use, online resource availability, and flipped learning adoption were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

The second phase involved analyzing the qualitative interview data. Audio recordings were transcribed and organized. A thematic analysis approach was employed, involving reading through each response to identify recurring patterns and themes related to flipped learning implementation with young English learners. Responses were classified and organized into categories to provide insights into perceived advantages, difficulties, and practical implementation solutions.

4. Findings

This section presents the key findings derived from the quantitative data collected through the questionnaire survey and the qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews.

4.1 Analysis of Questionnaire Data

The data was analyzed from the survey conducted on the implementation of flipped learning with young learners in English language classrooms. The survey collected responses from 42 participants, consisting of English language teachers from various educational backgrounds and teaching experiences.

Section 1: General Information:

Age Distribution: The vast majority of the participants were in the 36-45 age range, having for 45.2% of the responses

Gender Distribution: Female teachers were the most dominant with 73.8%, and for males were 26.2% of the respondents.

Teachers' Degrees Obtained: Teachers with bachelor's and master's degrees were the most among other participants: bachelor's degree and master's Degree, each accounting for 38.1% of the responses and for the High School Diploma, they were represneted with 16.7% and for Doc-torate Degree with 4.8% and The DELTA qualification was only represented by one respond-ent with 2.4%.

Grade Levels Taught: The grade levels taught by the respondents vary widely and include the following categories: from pre-nursery to high school. However, the criteria were the experience with at least one of the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th graders.

Current Employment Sector: The majority of participants were private schools' teachers with 64.3% of the responses and the public sector represented 23.8% and a portion of 11.9%, work in both sectors at the same time.

Section 2: Experience

Teaching Experience: The majority of participants had more than 5 years of teaching expe-rience having 42.9% of the responses which indicates that experienced teachers participated in the research followed by 35.7%, of beginner teachers who have from 0 to 2 years of teach-ing experience, which also show how interesting are the participants are distributed from ex-perienced to beginner teachers, and 21.4% of the teachers that are in between both catego-ries with 2-5 years of experience.

Use of Technology: Participants were asked about the frequency with which they use tech-nology with their learners. The data showed 50% each as for the participants' technology use between daily and weekly

Providing Online Resources: The majority of participants with 92.9% stated that they pro-vide their students with videos, links, and online documents to use at home, and only a 7.1%, said they don't provide such resources.

Use of Videos: 71.4% of the participants stated that they occasionally provide videos for their learners, and 23.8% were providing regularly, and 4.8% never provided videos.

Criteria for Choosing Videos: The data shows that the majority of participants consider content (90.5%) and language level (64.3%) as a leading factors when selecting videos for their learners, followed by participants who consider visual aids and animation (42.9%) and length (40.5%) as important factors, which indicates that teachers give importance to mean-ing and comprehension most

Classroom Time: The data showed that 59.5% of participants believe that they could dedicate more than half of the lessons' time to solving activities, discussions, and

project presentations, which was an interesting finding as teachers are generally asked to work using specific books and follow a specific lesson plan. On other hand 40.5% of the participants stated it is not possible.

Section 3: Flipped Classroom

Implementation of Flipped Learning: Participants were asked whether they had ever implemented flipped learning with their learners.
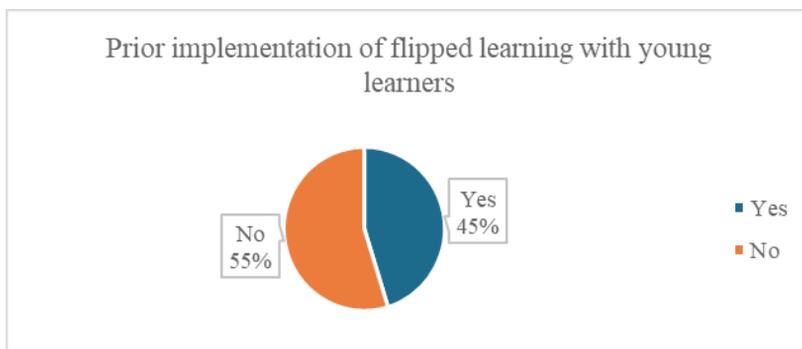

Figure No. 1. Implementation of Flipped Learning

The data indicates that 54.8% of participants have implemented flipped learning with their learners, while 45.2% have not.

Appropriateness and Effectiveness of Flipped Learning for YL: Participants were asked whether they believed it was appropriate and effective to implement flipped learning with young learners (lower primary levels, 3rd grade to 6th) to learn English.
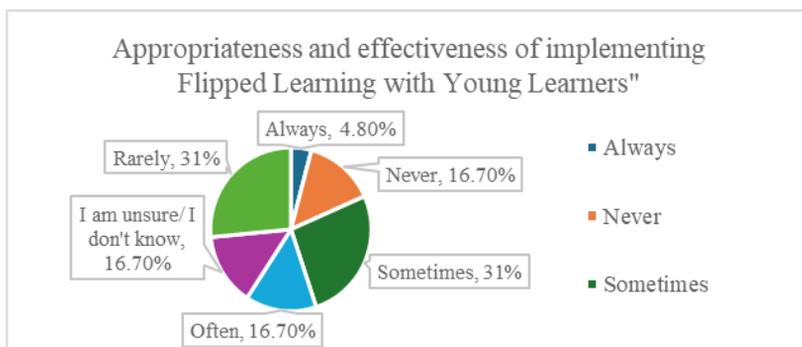

Figure no. 2. Appropriateness and Effectiveness of Flipped Learning for Young Learners

The data shows that (31%) for rarely and sometimes each (31%) and often (16.7%) or always (4.8%). Others showed uncertainty

Challenges of Implementing Flipped Learning with Young Learners: Participants who selected „never" or „rarely" for implementing flipped learning were asked to indicate the main reasons or challenges preventing them from adapting it with lower primary learners. The responses were as follows:
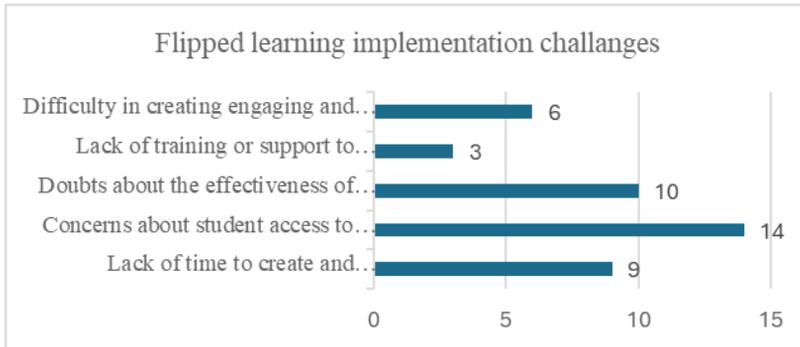

Figure no. 3. Challenges of Implementing Flipped Learning with Young Learners

Areas of Implementation for Flipped: Participants were asked to indicate the areas where they would consider implementing flipped learning with young learners. The responses were as follows:
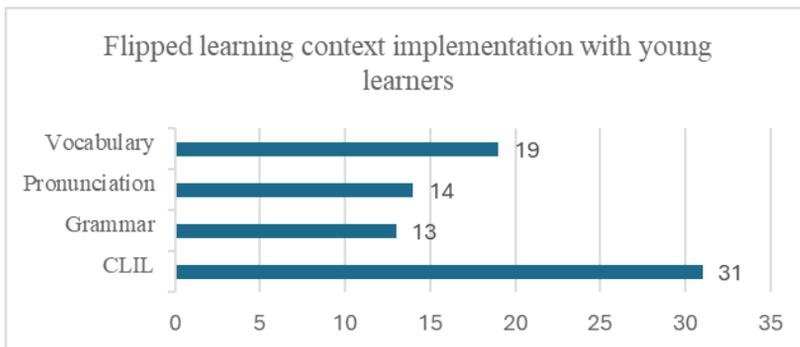

Figure no. 4. Areas of Implementation for Flipped

The data indicates that participants had a strong will and consideration towards implementing flipped learning in the context of English as the language of instruction (CLIL), followed by vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar

Preference for Traditional Learning over Flipped Learning: Participants were asked if they believed traditional learning would be more convenient and applicable than flipped learning for learning English. The responses were as follows:
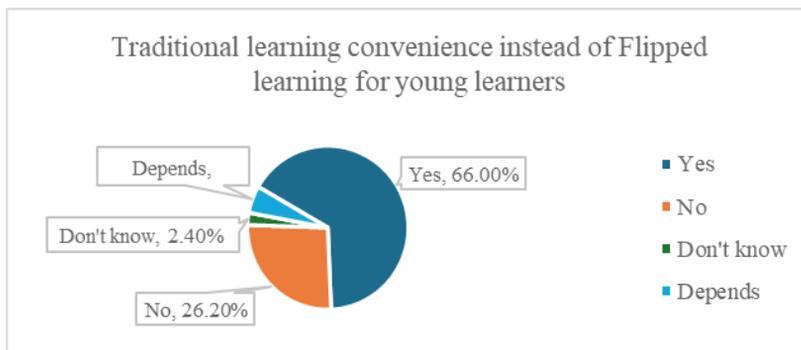
Figure no. 5. Preference for Traditional Learning over Flipped Learning:

The data shows that a majority of participants (66 %) agree with the statement of that tradition-al learning would be more convenient and applicable for learning English. And only 26.2% disa-greed The rest stated it depends or prefer with older students.

4.2 Analysis of Interview Data Interviews

Five primary English teachers with years of experience each contributed more in-depth qualitative insights:

- Teacher 1 (20 years of experience) questioned whether or not flipped learning was acceptable for young students, due to young learners' short attention spans and worries around screen time, as per her experience teaching online during the Covid Pandemic was highly dependent on the assistance of parents, creating several difficulties. Thus, favoured in-person education for younger kids and placed a strong emphasis on managing screen time, despite the fact that she recognised the benefits of CLIL.

- Teacher 2 (15 years of experience) working internationally and a CELTA/ DELTA qualification voiced worries about the readiness of young students for independent study and the concerns of parents around homework. Her suggestion was to use flipped learning for time-consuming components such as films in order to free up class time for other important topics. She believed that this approach would be suitable for schools that encourage independence.

- Teacher 3 (6 years of experience) believes that flipped learning is not suitable for younger kids who do not have regular parental support and incentive for online activity. She suggests that it is more suitable for older students who are more independent learners.

- Teacher 4 (5 years of experience) teaching in private schools found the implementation difficult, despite the fact that she was aware of the potential benefits. She emphasised the importance of parental engagement due to the

fact that internet access was controlled. Her use of flipped storytelling was met with some degree of success, although she struggled with the selection of content. Grammar and CLIL were areas that she believed had potential, although she typically preferred traditional teaching methods and advocated for effective contact with parents.

- Teacher 5 (5 years of experience) teaching in private language schools, questioned the efficacy of flipped learning in big groups and suggested that it be implemented in smaller groups instead. Despite the fact that she acknowledged its usefulness for pre-lesson investigation, she brought attention to the fact that there are problems associated with learner motivation and technical issues (network connection, parental approval). In the context of English as a Second Language (ESL), she considered that it was more practical to provide preparatory time. She also believed that traditional teaching was generally more convenient. She suggested doing brief trials and evaluating the willingness of learners before implementing the program in its entirety.

4.2.1 Reocurring Themes from The Interviews

Several key themes emerged consistently across the teacher interviews:

- **Concerns about young learners' willingness and motivation:** Teachers frequently expressed doubts about young students' ability to stay motivated and engaged with online content independently, highlighting limited attention spans and the need for external support.

- **Importance of parental approval and involvement:** Nearly all teachers stressed that active parental participation and approval were crucial for successful flipped learning implementation, particularly in ensuring pre-class tasks were completed and managing screen time.

- **Challenges related to technology access:** Concerns were raised regarding students' consistent access to technology and the internet, as well as the potential for increased screen time, which parents might restrict.

- **Suitability for specific subjects and materials**: Teachers suggested that flipped learning might be more appropriate and effective for certain contexts, such as CLIL or for delivering specific content like grammar explanations or vocabulary introductions, rather than as a universal method.

- **Differences between flipped learning and traditional teaching:** Teachers perceived distinct differences, often viewing traditional teaching as more convenient and suitable for the overall development of young learners, while acknowledging flipped learning's benefits in specific situations or as a supplementary tool.

- **Challenges and considerations for implementation:** Practical difficulties mentioned included finding appropriate materials, ensuring student task completion, managing time, addressing diverse learning needs, and the need for careful planning and communication.
- **Temporary trial and assessment**: A suggestion arose for piloting flipped learning on a temporary basis or with smaller groups to assess its suitability and effectiveness before widespread implementation.

4.3 Findings Interpretation in Relation to The Research Questions:

The results and findings shed light on primary English teachers' views on flipped learning with young students (RQ1). Teachers' perception was of high uncertainty on Flipped learning overall implementation with age group (ages 9-12) of young learners. The identified challenges (RQ2) are mainly due to the complexities of flipped learning, which require essential roles of parental support and student motivation in contrast to the potential for enhanced engagement and personalized learning. Teachers are most willing to implement Flipped learning in the context of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) framework (RQ3), due to the provided resources and materials at home and on learners' pace, provide an opportunity for students to familiarize themselves with the content and language at home on their own pace, which frees up time for in-class activities related to language and maximizing their understanding. The study emphasizes that CLIL is an especially conducive environment for flipped learning to significantly improve young learners' English proficiency. Teachers overall were in favour of traditional techniques for convenience and applicability, despite the potential improvements of Flipped learning.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives of primary English teachers regarding the suitability, implementation, and contextual application of flipped learning with younger students in lower grades. Technology and its development have recently been widely popularized in this era, particularly among today's youngsters. The findings highlight proper implementation of flipped learning with this age group of young learners is dependent on a specific set of requirements, involving several parties, teachers, parents, stakeholders, and the learners themselves. The application of Flipped learning poses a significant challenge and hesitation for teachers to fully embrace flipped learning as a standard teaching method for Young Learners. However, the research still finds Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) as a particularly suitable context where flipped learning potentially reaches its full potential and encourages the development of English language skills in young learners. For Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in this age group, flipped learning

offers invaluable extended language exposure beyond the classroom, allowing for pre-class comprehension and freeing up in-class time for practical application and interaction. The connection between CLIL and flipped learning presents an effective opportunity to enhance the English language proficiency. Teachers mostly viewed Flipped Learning as a supplementary learning method rather than a standard teaching method to particularly adopt with young learners, as it requires careful consideration and strategic implementation that takes into account the specific developmental characteristics and contextual factors of this age group.

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