

Flipping EFL Classrooms: Impacts on Students' Achievement and Life Skills Learning

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of flipped classroom strategy in developing students' achievement and acquisition of life skills. The study employed a quasi-experimental design where students were divided into two groups: an experimental (N=22) and a control (N=22). The randomly selected and assigned sample consisted of sixth-year elementary school students studying English as a basic course. The findings revealed statistically significant differences between the two groups' means in both achievement and life skills tests in favor of the experimental group. Students of the experimental group who studied using the flipped classroom strategy outperformed the control group who studied in the standard way in achieving the English language and in the life situations test, where the effect size of the use of the strategy was large in both dependent variables. The study is concluded with some recommendations to facilitate the use of flipped classroom strategy for EFL teachers. This can be achieved by training teachers on using the strategy and providing technological resources at schools to implement the strategy efficiently.

Keywords:

Flipped classroom, English, EFL, ESL, life skills.

1. Introduction

Global Educational trends seek to employ technological innovations in an innovative and non-traditional way in various fields, including the educational field, to invest its potential in developing curricula and raising educational practices. The learning and teaching of the English language have attracted the attention of researchers who took into account the close relationship between learning the English language and instructional technologies and the studies that demonstrated a positive impact of employing technology in learning and teaching the English language. Many early efforts emerged in this field. One of them was the standards of ESL programs and the national educational technology standards established by the International Association for Educational Technology. It urged the need to integrate information technology in educational institutions so that ESL learners can communicate using modern communication technologies.

The positive role of technology in improving language learning is evident in interacting learners with the vocabulary provided to them and employing it in real-life

contexts. Moreover, it provides learners, in addition to their linguistic knowledge, with many required life skills. The social constructivist theory emphasizes the effectiveness of language learning through the learner's direct interaction with others and the surrounding social and cultural environment; the activities learners participate in when interacting with others stimulate the desired cognitive change [1].

Therefore, to achieve the objectives of the English language curriculum at the elementary level efficiently, students need to acquire some life skills such as communication skills, dialogue skills, interpersonal skills, and others. This acquisition depends on the use of modern and effective teaching strategies. The learner has a prominent role and can build his knowledge by carrying out exploratory activities in the form of cooperative groups under the supervision and guidance of the teacher. Hence, there is an urgent need to teach the English language in innovative ways based on technology in the educational process which contributes to the development of achievement and provides students with thinking skills and other necessary life skills.

The flipped classroom strategy is one of the modern teaching strategies spread in education. Modern technology can be intelligently employed to provide education commensurate with the requirements and needs of learners in our time. In simple words, the flipped classroom depends on turning the traditional education system upside down. Instead of listening to the lesson in the classroom and answering the questions at home, a student listens/watches the lesson. In contrast, he will do activities in participation with his colleagues and under the teacher's supervision in the class.

Many studies have confirmed the role of flipped classroom strategy in developing achievement and thinking skills and the positive impact on the learning process. One of the most important justifications for using the flipped classroom is due to the characteristics of students in the digital age. Today's students have a short attention span in learning traditionally, while they have a long attention period when they learn through games, watching movies, browsing the

Internet, and sitting in front of the computer or smartphone applications. As indicated in previous studies, the flipped classroom strategy helps consider the individual differences in either the speed or learning methods. The flipped classroom strategy enhances critical thinking, self-learning, building experiences, communication skills, cooperation, and positive dialogue among learners during class activities.

Many previous studies have shown the low achievement of Saudi students in the English language, which urges the need for the educational system to renew English language teaching methods [2]. According to what was indicated by the Educational Testing Service reports about the average results of countries for testing English as a second language in 2018, Saudi Arabia has scored low results compared to other countries. The current study reveals the flipped classroom strategy's impact on developing academic achievement and some life skills related to the language course English for sixth-year elementary students. The study aligns with the vision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2030 towards employing technical innovations in educational institutions and benefiting from their influential role to cope with the characteristics and requirements of this era.

1.1 Research Questions

The current research study answers the following two questions:

1. What life skills can sixth-year elementary students develop through the English language course?
2. What is the effect of using flipped classroom strategy on developing the academic achievement of sixth-year elementary students in the English language?
3. What is the effect of using flipped classroom strategy on developing some life skills for sixth-year elementary students?

1.2 Research objectives

The current research study aims to:

1. Investigate the effect of using flipped classroom strategy on developing the academic achievement of sixth-year students in the English language course.
2. Investigate the effect of using flipped classroom strategy on developing some life skills for sixth-year students.

2. Literature Review

A flipped classroom is a form of blended learning that employs modern technology to provide education that matches the needs of learners and the demands of the times. In flipped classrooms, the student is exposed to the materials outside the class, through an educational video or by using a previous video or ready-made educational material, so that the student will be more prepared in the

classroom to carry out activities and exercises and conduct discussions related to the topic of the lesson (Baker, 2000).

This strategy was called by this name (Flipped) because it changed how teaching takes place. In traditional teaching, the new content is presented to the students in the classroom, and then they use it more deeply through homework, while flipped classroom strategy changed this process [3].

The use of the flipped classroom strategy, regardless of specialization and subject matter, is based on shared principles. These principles can be summarized as follows:

- **A flexible learning environment:** rigid environments hinder the application of flipped classroom strategy. The teacher must constantly rearrange the learning environment to suit the educational situation with the students' levels and needs.
- **Learning Culture:** by moving from the philosophy of a teacher-centered learning process, where the teacher is considered the only source of knowledge, to a more student-centered learning process, where students constantly undertake the process of forming and building knowledge effectively and positively.
- **Careful content segmentation and analysis:** This determines what content will be delivered by direct teaching and what can be presented to students in other ways. This depends on the teacher's decisions based on the nature of the subject and the students.
- **Well-qualified and trained teachers:** The need for an efficient and trained teacher becomes urgent in the flipped classroom. This learning strategy does not replace the teacher; instead, the need for teachers who can deal with this strategy increases [4].

2.1 Advantages of using flipped classroom Strategy

Flipped classroom strategy is distinguished from other active learning strategies by many advantages that consider students' needs and capabilities to achieve better education based on what modern technology provides for distinct learning opportunities [5]. Some of these advantages are manifested in:

- Compliance with the requirements and needs of the digital age.
- Shifting the role of the teacher from being a lecturer to being a guide and mentor.
- Saving the teacher time to record the lesson and use it several times as long as the goals are achieved.
- Using technology to present the material interestingly and attractively through images

serves the educational process and achieves the goals.

- Easy access for the student to the scheduled lessons at any time, any place, by uploading them to a social networking site.
- Strengthening relationships between the teacher and his students and amongst the students through full-time in-class activities and exercises. The students carry out these activities in the form of exploratory activities, where they are divided into cooperative groups that practice their work under the teacher's supervision, direction, and guidance.

2.2 Steps of flipped classroom strategy

Any flipped classroom follows the same steps that assure the active participation of students. The main steps of applying the strategy can be pointed out as the following:

- Determine the appropriate topic to implement the strategy.
- Analyze the lesson's content into knowledge, skills, and values identifying the essential concepts that must be learned.
- Design the educational video that includes the lesson, not exceeding 10 minutes per lesson.
- Ask students to watch the video at home.
- Apply the concepts that the student learned from the video exclusively through activities and exercises that the students carry out in cooperative groups.
- Assess students' learning using appropriate assessment tools [6].

Some studies have investigated flipped classroom strategy to identify its effectiveness in developing achievement, skills, and attitudes. One of these critical studies has identified the effect of using flipped classroom strategy when teaching English grammar on the performance of high school students and their attitudes towards learning English. The study found a clear difference in the mean scores of the experimental group of students in the posttest. Their achievement in English grammar was higher than the mean scores of the control group students; however, it was not a statistically significant difference. The interviews and the questionnaire indicated that the students' responses to flipped learning were very positive [7].

The study of Al Fahid also investigated the effectiveness of the flipped classroom strategy on the achievement of female students of preparatory year at Imam Muhammad bin Saud University and their attitudes towards the university classroom environment. The study found statistically significant differences at $p \leq (0.01)$ between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group. In addition, there were statistically significant differences at $\leq (0.01)$ between the

mean scores of the experimental group students and the control group in favor of the experimental group. Finally, the study revealed a significant correlation at $\leq (0.01)$ between the scores of the experimental group students in the post-application of both the achievement test and the classroom environment attitudes scale [8].

Sawan conducted a study to identify the flipped classroom strategy's effect on English language achievement among first-year secondary school students. The results indicated statistically significant differences at $\leq (0.05)$ between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of the achievement test at the levels of remembering, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation both individually and collectively. Finally, flipped classroom strategy was proved to be effective in developing English language achievement [9].

2.3 Life Skills

The concept of life skills is a flexible concept that has different uses and many implications. Therefore, there have been many definitions of life skills with various viewpoints. Unicef defines "life skills" as "a group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with and manage their lives healthily and productively" [10]. While Baker defines them as tools that enable the individual to communicate effectively with others using several means, such as reading, writing, listening, playing, singing, what the individual learns throughout his life constitutes an enormous stock of life skills [11]. Therefore, life skills can be defined as a set of skills necessary for the individual in daily life to successfully deal with his environment, face his problems, and improve the style and quality of his life as an active member and participant in a particular society.

2.3.1 Classification of life skills

life skills are usually classified into:

- Communication skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening).
- Self-realization skills, including decision-making, emotional response, the exercise of health habits for him and his family.
- Social awareness skills include rights and duties of citizenship, consumer awareness skills, and include practices of sound consumer habits.
- Scientific awareness skills, including classification - problem-solving - reading data [12].

However, Fischer has classified life skills into six main skills: Personal growth skills, health skills, nutritional skills, citizenship skills, communication skills, and consumption skills [12]. Moreover, Price classified life skills into social interaction, avoiding dangers, dealing with social services,

getting a job, proper nutrition, healthy habits, and managing budgets [13]. The researcher will classify life skills into three main categories in the current study: social skills, mental skills, and psychomotor skills.

Reviewing the English language textbooks, especially the elementary stage, allows a large and spontaneous approach to many life skills in its various dimensions and components. The various social, mental, motor, and other skills necessary for the individual help him participate effectively and actively with his community at the local and global levels. Many studies have focused on life skills in the Saudi context. Al-Harithi aimed to identify the effectiveness of a counseling program for developing life skills among secondary school students in Taif governorate, Saudi Arabia. The study tools were the counseling program, the communication skills scale, and the self-esteem scale. The study concluded statistically significant differences between the means and skills of the two experimental and control groups in each of the communication scales and the self-esteem scale, which indicated the counseling program's effectiveness [14].

When we contemplate the teaching of English in public education schools, we notice the evident decline in the outcomes of teaching English. Some studies have confirmed this, such as Al-Sagheer Al-Satani and other studies [15],[16]. The report issued by the Center for Measurement and Evaluation also confirmed the weakness of the outputs and the failure to achieve the desired goals of teaching English.

These findings prompted a review of the unfair practices of teaching English to improve outcomes and achieve highly efficient and effective learning outcomes. Therefore, many studies and literature have called for the need to move away from traditional teaching methods and follow modern methods where the student focuses on the educational process. The flipped classroom strategy opens the doors for thinking about traditional practices and the possibility of replacing them with different practices according to the potential offered by modern technology. The aim is to reconsider the established practices around learning and teaching and then think of effective mechanisms to exploit the potential of technology in the service of the educational process.

3. Research Methodology and Procedures

This part of the research deals with presenting the research methodology and procedures regarding the approach followed, the research population and sample, the procedures for preparing the research tools, how to verify their validity and reliability, and the procedures for applying the research experience.

3.1 Methodology

The current research adopted a quasi-experimental design consisting of experimental and control groups. The two research tools applied in the current research were an achievement test and an aptitude test that measures how students acquire life skills. The experimental group was taught the flipped class strategy, while the control group was taught the traditional way.

3.2 Participants

This study was conducted during the first semester of the academic year 2021 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The study sample consisted of forty-four (44) students divided into two groups: A control group of twenty-two (taught using the traditional way) and an experimental group of twenty-two, taught using the flipped classroom strategy. In order to ensure that the control and experimental groups were homogeneous in all variables except for the independent experimental variable, the researcher has considered the following variables:

- Age: This variable was under control, as all students were from the same class, and there were no repeaters among them. Therefore, the two groups can be considered equivalent in the age variable.
- Achievement level: The equivalence of the two groups (the control and experimental) in achievement was confirmed by administering the achievement test to the two study groups. The results indicated no statistically significant differences between the groups, which confirms the homogeneity of the two groups.
- Gender: This variable was adjusted by limiting the research sample to male students, according to the nature of the Saudi education system.
- Academic content: All elements of the educational content provided to students of the control and experimental groups were standardized; there was no difference except in the way of teaching. The control group students were taught using the traditional educational way, while the experimental group students were taught using the flipped classroom strategy.
- Teaching time: The research experiment was applied during a specific time plan. It took place during the first semester of 2021/2022 academic year, and both groups took eight lessons.

3.3 Research instruments

A list of life skills that can be developed through the sixth grade English language course has been prepared in the light of specific derivation sources:

- The nature, characteristics, and relationships of life skills with English language curricula.
- A review of some previous literature and studies related to life skills development.

- The nature of the English language curriculum at and its objectives.
- Characteristics and needs of elementary school students.

To ensure the validity of the list and to answer the first research question, it was presented to a group of experts to express their opinion on the appropriateness, formulation, and inclusion of the life skills mentioned in the list. The list was modified in light of the opinions of the experts and prepared in its final form, as follows:

Table 1: List of life skills

Main Skills	Sub-skills
Social skills	Communication skills Dialogue skills Cooperation skills Making Connections Critical Thinking Taking on Challenges Self-Directed, Engaged Learning The ability to accept others
Mental skills	Problem-solving skills Critical thinking skills Creative thinking skills Time management skills
Psychomotor skills	Writing skills Basic technical skills Oral presentation skill

3.4 The achievement test

The test aimed to reveal the flipped classroom strategy's effect on sixth-year students' academic achievement (in the third and fourth units of the English language book). The educational material consisted of the chosen units (units 3 & 4 of We Can 5), as shown below:

Table 2: Scope of the assigned units

Behavioral objectives were identified and determined procedurally. There were 18 objectives and the number of test questions was 24. The test included objective questions (completion - pairing - and multiple-choice questions). The questions covered different aspects: speaking, rhythm and reading, grammar, and phonics.

3.5 Life skills test

The test measured the students' ability to act appropriately in different situations. The test statements were formulated in many different life situations. For each situation, three alternatives were given that represent the student's opinion of the situation. The student must choose the appropriate answer from his point of view, which reflects the proper behavior to act in this situation.

The test revolves around three main domains representing the areas of life skills mentioned in the list, which are (social skills - mental skills - psychomotor skills). The life situations test was presented to a group of experts to ensure its validity and the appropriateness of situations mentioned in it for the domain that it seeks to measure and the suitability of the situations for sixth-year elementary students. The modification has been made in light of the experts' opinions.

After confirming the test validity, a pilot experiment was conducted to ensure reliability and reasonable test time. The reliability of the test was calculated using the split-half method. The reliability coefficient reached (0.85), which indicates a high degree of reliability. Finally, the allocated test time was decided using the following equation:

$$\text{Time is taken by the fastest student} + \text{time taken by the last student} / 2$$

$$\text{Test time} = 50 + 70 / 2 = 60 \text{ minutes}$$

3.6 Research procedures

A - Training the teacher on implementing the chosen units using the flipped classroom strategy: Several meetings were held with the subject teacher, where the teacher's guide was handed over to him. The guide explains in detail how to implement the lessons of the selected units using the flipped classroom strategy. It also guides the teacher in managing the classroom, implementing class activities and tasks, dividing students into cooperative groups, and discussing the life skills associated with the lessons and how to work on their development among students.

B - Pre-application of the two research tools: To verify the equivalence of the two groups in the pre-measurement of achievement, the test was re-administered to the students of the two groups. After completing the test application, the answer sheets were corrected, and the results were monitored in sheets specially prepared for that preparation for statistical processing. Tests for the differences between two independent groups were used, and the results were as follows:

Table 3: T value for the differences between the mean scores of

Number of lessons	Units
4	Sports and activities
4	Chores
8 lessons in total	

the control and experimental groups in the pre- achievement test

group	N	Mean	standard deviation	t	Significance
control	22	9.59	6.99	0.86	P = 0.39 Not sig.
Experimental	22	11.27	5.99		

It is clear from the previous table that the *p*-value is not statistically significant, which indicates that there are no differences between the two groups in achievement; that is, the two groups are equivalent.

3.6.1 Pre-application of the life situations test

The life situations test was also administered to the students of the research sample (control and experimental group). T-value was calculated.

Table 4: (T) Value and significance for the differences between the average scores of the control and experimental groups in the pre-life situations test

group	N	Mean	standard deviation	t	Significance
control	22	51.62	15.70	0.20	P = 0.84 Not sig.
Experimental	22	50.62	17.00		

It is evident from the previous table that there are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the research sample in the pre-test, which confirms the equality of the two groups, control and experimental, in the level of life skills.

3.6.2 Teaching the chosen units

The teacher taught units 3 and 4 of *We Can 5* to the experimental group using the flipped classroom strategy. In contrast, the control group studied the same units and for the same period in the traditional way.

3.6.3 Post Measurement

After completing teaching the selected units, the achievement test and the life situations test were re-administered to the control and experimental groups to investigate the flipped classroom strategy's effect on their academic achievement and acquisition of some life skills. The students' answer sheets were corrected and prepared in the score sheets for their statistical processing. They will be discussed in light of the hypotheses of the research questions.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Testing the first hypothesis:

The first hypothesis was formulated based on previous research studies' findings to answer the second question. It stated that there are statistically significant differences at $p \leq 0.05$ between the mean scores of the students of the experimental group and the students of the control group in the post-measurement of the achievement test favoring the experimental group.

To test the validity of the alternative hypothesis, means and standard deviations of the control and experimental groups were calculated in the post-application of the achievement test. Then a t-test was used to find out the direction of the differences and their statistical significance.

Table 5: T-values and their significance for the differences between the control and experimental groups in the post-achievement test

group	N	Mean	standard deviation	t	Significance
control	22	21.86	13.36	3.96	P = 0.00 significant
Experimental	22	35.23	8.46		

It is clear from the previous table that the value of $t = 3.96$, $p = 0.00$ for the differences between the mean scores of the control and experimental groups in the post-measurement of the achievement test is significant. It indicates statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the two groups in favor of the experimental group students. The mean scores of the experimental group students reached 35.23 compared to 21.86 for the control group. Therefore, the first alternative hypothesis is accepted. In order to measure the effect size of the strategy in developing English language achievement, Cohen's *d* was calculated:

$$\text{Cohen's } d = (M2 - M1) / SD \text{ pooled}$$

Cohen suggested that $d = 0.2$ be considered a 'small' effect size, 0.5 represents a 'medium' effect size and 0.8 a 'large' effect size [17].

Table 6: The effect size of the flipped classroom strategy on achievement

IV	DV	d value	Effect size level
Flipped classroom strategy	Academic achievement	1.20	Large

From table 6, it is clear that the use of flipped classroom strategy in teaching English had a large effect size on students' achievement.

4.2 Testing the second research hypothesis:

The second hypothesis was formulated based on previous research studies' findings to answer the third question. It stated that there were statistically significant differences at $p \leq 0.05$ between the mean scores of the students of the experimental group and the students of the control group in the post-measurement of life skills favoring the experimental group.

To test the validity of this hypothesis means and standard deviations were calculated in the post-application of the life situations test. T-test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the means of the two groups.

Table 7: T-value and its statistical significance for the differences between the control and experimental groups in the post-life situations test.

group	N	Mean	standard deviation	t	Significance
control	22	45.33	17.29	3.80	P = 0.00 significant
Experimental	22	62.74	12.70		

It is clear from the previous table that the *t* value (3.80) of the differences between the mean scores of the control and experimental groups in the post-measurement of the life situations test was statistically significant. $P = 0.00$ indicates statistically significant differences between the means of the two groups favoring the experimental group. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

To measure the effect size of the flipped classroom strategy in developing life skills, using Cohen's *d* was calculated:

Table 7: The effect size of the flipped classroom strategy on life skills

IV	DV	d value	Effect size level
Flipped classroom strategy	Life skills	1.14	Large

It is clear from table 7 that the use of the flipped classroom strategy had a large effect size on the development of students' life skills.

This research study showed that the students of the experimental group who studied using the flipped classroom strategy outperformed the students of the control group who studied in the standard way in achieving the English language, where the effect size of the use of the strategy was large. The results also showed that the students of the experimental group who studied using the flipped classroom strategy outperformed the control group students who studied in the standard way in the life situations test; the effect size was large in the development of life skills.

This may be due to:

- Positive interaction between students during the cooperative activities. This helped raise the achievement rate and the acquisition of many skills such as cooperation and acceptance of others and some other social skills.
- Familiarity and desire to practice activities among the experimental group students. In addition to the immediate response in providing feedback from the teacher and providing a safe environment for students. All of this helped the learning to take place largely.
- Employing educational resources in the flipped classroom led to increased learners' satisfaction with the learning process and their participation and cooperation in managing the learning process. In addition to developing some life skills related to the English language, such as oral presentation skills, expressive writing skills, and the skill of dealing with technologies. As well as many social skills such as communication skills, dialogue skills and acceptance of others.
- Implementing the research study noted that there are several advantages of the flipped classroom strategy in teaching English, including developing critical and creative thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and time management.
- Flipped learning helped increase students' enthusiasm and motivation toward learning English.

The results of this study are in line with several studies such as Pedrozoanna, 2013; Johnson, 2012 and other studies that confirmed that the flipped classroom strategy has a positive role in developing achievement and enhancing student thinking. It also agrees with the study of Strayer, 2012,

which showed that students have become more open towards cooperation and acquired many skills such as dialogue and communication, and developing many skills such as creative and critical thinking skills.

5. Conclusion

The learning and teaching of the English language have attracted the attention of researchers who took into account the close relationship between learning the English language, instructional technologies, and the studies that demonstrated a positive impact of employing technology in learning and teaching the English language. This study investigates the impact of flipped classroom strategy in developing students' achievement and acquisition of life skills. It showed that the students of the experimental group who studied using the flipped classroom strategy outperformed the students of the control group who studied in the standard way in achieving the English language, where the effect size of the use of the strategy was large.

The results also showed that the students of the experimental group who studied using the flipped classroom strategy outperformed the control group students who studied in the standard way in the life situations test; the effect size was large in the development of life skills. The study is concluded with some recommendations to facilitate the use of flipped classroom strategy for EFL teachers. Training teachers on using the strategy and providing technological resources at schools to implement the strategy efficiently can achieve this goal.

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