Virtual Flipped Classroom: English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners' Decision-Making Styles in Academic Reading

Khairunnisa Othman, Siti Fatimah Abd. Rahman

In-Text Citation: (Othman & Rahman, 2023)
To Cite this Article: Othman, K., & Rahman, S. F. A. (2023). Virtual Flipped Classroom: English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners' Decision-Making Styles in Academic Reading. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *13*(3), 1413 – 1421.

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/publication-ethics

Virtual Flipped Classroom: English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners' Decision-Making Styles in Academic Reading

[1]Khairunnisa Othman, [2]Siti Fatimah Abd. Rahman

[1]Centre of Foundation Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), [2]Kuliyyah of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)

Email: khairunnisaothman83@gmail.com, sfarahman@iium.edu.my

Abstract

One online pedagogical approach that has gained traction in the recent Covid-19 pandemic is the Flipped Learning approach. This approach is seen as a solution to navigate education during and after the pandemic due to its student-centric nature that foster deeper understanding and encourages active learning especially for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. By flipping the traditional classroom structure, ESL learners have the access to view online lectures and materials from home, then spend in-class time participating in activities and discussions to apply and strengthen their English language skills. However, one important aspect that has to be addressed to guarantee that remote ESL learners are prepared for virtual flipped learning is to understand their decision-making styles especially while learning academic reading skills. Resistance to reading compliance may hinder the language teaching and learning process during virtual flipped classes. ESL learners who do not read, will find it difficult to actively participate in VFC for academic reading skills because the nature of it involves intellectual discussions. The knowledge on learners' decision-making styles is important for VFC instructors to provide detailed guidance and support the remote ESL learners to achieve meaningful academic reading skills that may impact their academic success. This paper attempts to explore English as a Second Language (ESL) learners' decision-making styles in virtual flipped classroom for academic reading classes. The implication of this study is to assist language instructors to further understand ESL learners' decision-making styles, and how they perceive decision-making skills for virtual flipped classes to achieve meaningful learning. Also, this study provides opportunities for language instructors to develop Virtual Flipped Classroom modules for teaching language skills.

Keywords: Virtual Flipped Classroom (VFC), Online Distance Learning (ODL), Decision-making Styles, ESL learners, Educational Technology.

Introduction

The reality in education during the current Covid-19 pandemic necessitated changes in the system of higher education in Malaysia to compensate and overcome social restrictions. A solution to current educational realities is offered by many platforms of distance education or Online Distance Learning (ODL). According to Shivacheva-Pineda (2020), the advantages of

distance education lead to effective assistive technology. Thus, higher education institutions have been forced to not only use Online Distance Learning as an assistive platform, but as the only learning technology during this critical situation. Rahman et al (2022) further added that technology offers unlimited sources for education, technology-integrated learning has become a preferred way of teaching.

With higher education undergoing tremendous transitions provoked by the pandemic, Flipped Classroom approach which has been well documented as an approach that significantly improved educational outcomes when compared to traditional classrooms, has now making its debut to virtual education. Despite the great variance of student learning styles and ability that exist in ODL classrooms, traditional one-way live ODL lectures are often one-size fits all. Virtual Flipped Classrooms (VFC) in contrast, allow learners to engage with remote learning at their own pace. O'Flaherty and Phillips (2015) reported That Flipped Classroom approach has increasingly attracted university lecturers' interest and has the potential to serve a diverse student population. Although many educators have recently discussed the positive effects of flipped classrooms, there is still little empirical evidence about whether this approach can actually promote learners' meaningful learning in English courses (Lee & Wallace, 2018). Therefore, there is a need for this study to be conducted in order to bridge the gaps in existing knowledge.

Objective
This study aims
1. to explore English as a Second Language (ESL) learners' perceptions on decision-making skills for knowledge sharing in virtual flipped classroom for academic reading classes.
2. to identify ESL learners' decision-making styles for knowledge sharing in virtual flipped language classroom for academic reading classes.

Online Distance Learning (ODL) in Malaysia
For several decades, online learning has widened the accessibility in education as well as improving teaching and learning activities using technologies. In support of this development, Malaysia's Ministry of Education has introduced eleven operational shifts in achieving the vision of the Malaysian education system. This is a strategic move to also highlight the importance of Information and Communication (ICT) based learning, which is mentioned as the 7th shift in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013).

Drastic changes have been made by higher education institutions to the education system, not only in Malaysia but all around the world. Many researches have been conducted to explore more on the pedagogical aspects of ODL, and one of the aspects is Virtual Flipped classrooms. However, although among the attempts to explore online distance learning is to look at students' perception on ODL, little attention is given to what is actually experienced by the students in order to prepare themselves in this shift. Students, especially ESL learners had to adapt to a totally new environment in learning a language where there will be no physical support system for language learners to model and learn from. Learning a language requires a socially secure space such as a classroom. ESL learners can learn and model the use of English in all four crucial language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. This small established community these ESL learners have, play a major role in moulding their thinking using the language and are less influenced by their mother tongue. This is among the important goals of a language learner. Nevertheless, for an ESL learner who is affected by the

pandemic, having to remotely learn a second language without physical support from educators and classmates, can lead to a non-meaningful learning in virtual language classes.

BSCS 5E Instructional Model for Virtual Flipped Classroom

Unlike the traditional flipped classroom approach, the virtual flipped teaching and learning process takes place on an online platform. The learning experience is not face-to-face. In a virtual learning setting, learners are independent and they learn remotely. Hence, the preparation stage of virtual learning is crucial to ensure learners achieve the learning outcomes during virtual discussions in VFC. Such learning preparation is also demanded to be an important stage as mentioned in BSCS 5E Instructional Model (Hew, et al., 2020). Bybee et al (2006) explained that the 5E framework consists for five phases: Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate. BSCS 5E Instructional Model is developed based on various educational theories and models. To add, a recent study by Hew et al (2020) in Virtual Flipped Classroom approach also claimed that previous researches have shown positive effects of the 5E framework on learners' achievements, of which makes it a reflection of an ideal virtual flipped classroom for learners to experience meaningful learning. In short, to prepare for a VFC session, an ideal approach is to allow students to critically brainstorm and create connections to their schemata based on the content so learners are able to construct their own understanding. Exploration phase allows students with psychological need for a period of time, to discover ideas and concepts extensively.

Successful virtual flipped learning sessions highly demand ESL learners to be well prepared. Within its nature, this can be achieved through good reading habits. Ribqotul (2020) claimed that ESL students who extensively read academic and non-academic materials tend to develop confidence, master vocabulary and comprehension, as well as develop critical thinking skills, which eventually lead to high academic achievements. Unfortunately, although it is significant that reading is germane to learners' academic performances, there are also several studies reported on poor reading habits among learners. Oriogu et al (2017) reported that majority of the students did not use their time for reading. Their respondents also claimed that they only spend time to read for academic purposes. Among the major factors contributing to poor reading habits according to Oriogu et al (2017), is students' time are spent more on social media. This is a clear reflection on students' poor decision-making skills for an important receptive language skill, reading. Thus, the issue of reading compliance among ESL students triggers the need to prove that this language skill must be addressed especially for virtual flipped learning that is self-directed and requires students to learn independently.

Virtual Flipped Classroom Approach

Virtual Flipped Classroom (VFC) approach is similar to the traditional flipped classroom model where students are encouraged to prepare for class by completing some pre-class activities. However, according to Stohr et al (2020), unlike the traditional face-to-face flipped classroom approach, students in virtual flipped classrooms do not meet face-to-face, but online. A recent research conducted by Hew et al (2020) on Virtual Flipped Classroom in Hong Kong reported a promising result on the effectiveness of VLC to be fully implemented online. The data was collected before the pandemic (Fall, 2019) and during the pandemic (spring, 2020). According to the authors, quantitative analyses of students' final course marks revealed that the respondents who attended fully virtual flipped classes performed as successfully as participants in the conventional flipped learning classes.

In the context of Virtual Flipped Classroom approach, students' engagement has always been related to student's participation in assigned online activities. Such engagement is crucial to achieve intended learning outcomes particularly in asynchronous online discussions. Thus, it is imperative to consider the right techniques to promote learners' engagement in virtual flipped classrooms, as an opportunity for learners to maximize their potential in improving academic performance. To ensure learners' participation in virtual classrooms is important but, monitoring them to attend virtual classes alone does not guarantee the benefits they will get from what is presented during class (Greener, 2020).

Virtual Flipped Classroom Approach for Language Learning
According to Capone et al (2017) to encourage learners to have an active role in applying the new information learned to different contexts is the key to a successful flipped classroom. This is especially true when flipped classrooms are used for language teaching and learning. As learning a language like English requires students to actively participate in a given task, making them apply knowledge learned during virtual classes can guarantee the benefits they will get during the sessions. ESL learners in virtual language classes, like any other students, are responsible for their own learning. The presence of educators is to help them in a process of scaffolding, coaching, to support and facilitate them in developing the ability to use English. Learners should eventually be able to share, differentiate opinions and think using the language based on what learners have learned. To study a language remotely, is difficult if the teaching approach is not tailored within the students' capacity. Dass (2001) in his study found that the distance learners faced problems with their English language courses. He further added that among the problems encountered while remotely learning English was study-related problems, contributing to 74.9% in the findings. In Virtual Flipped classrooms, although with the presence of educators in virtual classes, the only access they have is to facilitate language learning. As claimed by Shivacheva-Pineda (2020), "The pedagogical guidance of the lecturer on the students is limited and their preparation is more based on their skills for self-organization and learning." Hence in order to fully adopt VFC as part of the pedagogical approach in language teaching, educators must first understand how ESL learners work behind the screen before and during virtual classes. This is because, a similar study conducted by Shivacheva-Pineda (2020) observed that students were not prepared and actively involved during virtual classes. The spatial distance in a Virtual flipped classroom environment could somehow demotivate the students and it is difficult for the ESL learners to maintain the attention and provide feedback.

Exploring how ESL learners use their reading skills and decision-making styles can be impactful towards the growth of virtual learning models in education. Kim, et al (2022) in their study found that the interactions between learning outcomes and challenges during Emergency Remote Learning which had happened during Covid-19 pandemic was significant. But their study also found that for learners who did achieve the learning outcomes, they prefer virtual learning in the future. This indicates that virtual learning is a student-centric educational model which offers massive range of opportunities and learning choices for ESL students to take more responsibilities of their own learning. Kember et al (2010) pointed out that such virtual learning experience is crucial for ESL learners to practice language use with the presence of not only the instructor, but also classmates. During virtual learning sessions, instructors are encouraged to conduct collaborative activities, presentations or discussions to clarify concepts and contextualize knowledge of English through application and problem solving. Thus, to achieve the learning outcome, remote ESL learners have to be

metacognitively aware that the decisions they have made during the preparation stage, will not only benefit them individually, but also highly contribute to the flow of intellectual discussions conducted during VFC sessions. Such awareness imparted in remote language learners lead to meaningful knowledge sharing among students during VFC sessions. Interaction during this period has to be active. Students should not passively absorb information during virtual learning (Dias & Diniz, 2013).

Virtual flipped learning environment also provides learners to improve effectiveness and efficiency in learning (Almaiah et al., 2020), leading to a greater self-awareness, to become more knowledgeable (Gonzalez et al., 2020), as well as to enhance higher-order thinking skills such as problem solving, questioning and creativity (UNESCO, 2020). In the context of English language learning, ESL learners too, are expected to independently prepare themselves to achieve meaningful learning in a virtual learning environment, but there is little empirical research concerning the decision-making styles language learners made as to achieve the objectives. In relation to virtual learning, there are many studies conducted on English language acquisition, language skills, but extremely few focused on decision-making styles in the context of language learning. Addressing ESL students' decision-making styles in reading to learn the target language is crucial especially when learning is independent.

ESL learners' decision-making styles in VFC for academic reading is the fundamental of this study, significant to support a growing educational approach of virtual learning, virtual flipped classroom (VFC) approach. Although the syllabus and topics are clearly designed and implemented for academic reading courses through VFC approach, ESL learners have the freedom to explore additional information to be shared during virtual classes. These opportunities are important to nurture maturity in ESL learners decision-making styles. The content selection ESL learners have planned to share during virtual flipped classroom has a significant impact towards maximizing language learning outcomes. Besides, Tang and Liao (2019) explained that decision-making skills need to be nurtured due to the arrival of the Big Data era (BD). They further elaborated that Big Data era has brought 'large, complex and growing data generated from numerous sources'. Also, Mardani et al (2022) suggested that there is an increase trend that shows the use of mass data and decisions are made based on mass data analysis. Furthermore, as decision-making skill is one of the important soft skills needed to deal with contemporary challenges in the working world of the future (Mardani et al., 2022), academicians need to learn whether learners are getting well equipped at their higher educational institutions with knowledge, skills, abilities and other (KSAO) characteristics required to excel and strive in the new world of labour.

In view of the above scenario, to explore ESL learners decision-making styles in isolation is impossible because language learning involves other language components too, namely speaking, listening and writing. Thus, this research is designed to explore ESL learners' decision-making styles specifically in academic reading classes using VFC approach. A recent study by Shamsudin et al (2021) pointed out that there are only few researches evaluated the different spectrums of virtual learning through the perspective of students' experience, which support the relevance of this current study. It is hoped that this study will illuminate evidences to the effectiveness of Virtual Flipped Classroom approach in support of virtual education in Malaysia.

ESL Learners' Decision-Making Styles in Virtual Flipped Classes
In Malaysia, the Virtual Flipped Classroom approach is rather new. The current shift in the education system allows opportunities for educators to experiment with VFC during the

pandemic. This is seen as an opportunity to understand the Virtual Flipped Classroom approach from a different spectrum.

In virtual classrooms, students who portray indifferent behavioral activities are generally accepted by all psychologists to be rooted in decision-making (Tanglang & Aminu, 2016). For this reason, students must develop good decision-making skills to help in their academic performance and achievements. Such issues can be explored in a decision-making model of language learning. ESL learners' strategies and engagement in virtual classes are seen as part of the decision-making process, a more naturalistic perspective accounting of the learners' cognitive process while learning takes place in a virtual classroom. In making a decision to engage in a language classroom, preparation and participation are influenced by many factors. According to Woods (1997) students' perceptions, expectations, and goals they wish to achieve are some of the factors that influence students' engagement in class. This is also relevant to students who are learning in a virtual setting. All these aspects are significant for educators to prepare a secure platform for these remote students to participate in virtual English language classes.

Contributions

This study contributes greatly to the fields of educational technology and cognitive psychology. As virtual education has taken its place in many countries, educators have to be creative to keep language learners active during online classes. Exploring ESL learners' perceived knowledge on decision-making skills is one of the important contributions towards maintaining learners active learning during virtual flipped classes. Mackall (2004) explained that there are five aspects of a decision-making process namely; identification of problems, composing alternative decisions, thinking about risks and consequences, determining and evaluating decisions. These aspects significantly reflect language skills and strategies, which is crucial in building a holistic English language learner. This is aligned with Bloom's Revised Taxonomy Model developed by (Anderson et al., 2001). In the revised model, The Knowledge Dimension classifies four types of knowledge that learners are expected to acquire or construct; Factual, Conceptual, Procedural, and Metacognitive knowledge. In addition, Cognitive Apprenticeship Model (CAM) suggests that learners should be given the autonomy and opportunities to make decisions about their own learning (Rodriguez-Bonces & Ortiz, 2016) which are based on the individual goals, interests and needs. Having both of these important elements as the basis of ensuring students engagement in a virtual flipped classroom, educators are able to ensure or at least maneuver the direction of virtual class activities.

To accomplish effective language teaching and learning, educators need to maintain an insightful academic lens in reviewing the vast literature on effective online teaching and learning, then select the ones that align with specific institutional missions. However, although the virtual flipped classroom approach has now appeared to be gathering momentum in higher education, very few studies have examined its effectiveness (Hew et al. 2020). Also, research on student's decision-making styles in virtual language learning environments is still an area in the literature that needs to be filled by future researchers.

Conclusion

This study is aimed to explore English as a Second Language (ESL) learners decision-making styles in Virtual Flipped Classroom for academic reading classes. Within this context, a brief review of literature regarding the decision-making skills, Virtual Flipped Classroom approach

as well as the current demand of Online Distance Learning in Malaysia have been discussed. Based on the literature review, it was discovered that there's a need to investigate ESL learners' decision-making styles due to the lack of empirical data on Virtual Flipped Classroom approach from the remote ESL learners' point of view. A study by Shamsudin et al. (2021), pointed out that there are only few researches evaluated the different spectrums of virtual learning through the perspective of learners' experience, which support the relevance of this current study. It is hoped that this study will illuminate evidences of the effectiveness of Virtual Flipped Classroom approach in support of virtual education for Malaysian universities. To add, The Fourth Industrial Revolution is ushering in a new era of digitalization which is transforming the andragogy of higher learning institutions (HEIs). This transformation creates opportunities for ESL learners to access and interact with language learning resources. The outcome of this research can also give insights into how language learners are using the new technology to shape their language learning experience. Hence, this research can also be used to assist the development of more effective digital language learning tools and modules that better meet the needs of virtual education.

Corresponding Author
Siti Fatimah Abd. Rahman (Dr.)
Kuliyyah of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia
Email: sfarahman@iium.edu.my

References
Anderson, L. W., Krathwohl, D. R., Airasian, P. W., Cruikshank, K. A., Mayer, R. E., Pintrich, P. R., Raths, J., & Wittrock, M. C. (2001). *A taxonomy for teaching and assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (Complete edition). Longman.

Almaiah, M. A., Al-Khasawneh, A., Althunibat, A. (2020). Exploring the critical challenges and factors influencing the e-learning system usage during Covid-19 pandemic. *Education and Information Technology. 25*, 5261–5280.

Bybee R., Taylor J. A., Gardner A., Van Scotter P., Carlson J., Westbrook A., Landes, N., (2006) *The BSCS 5E instructional model: Origins and effectiveness.* Colorado Springs

Capone, R., De Caterina P., Mazza G. (2017) Blended learning, flipped classroom and virtual environment: challenges and opportunities for the 21st century students. *9th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies.* 10478 – 10482 https://doi.org/10.21125/edulearn.2017.0985.

Dias, S. B., & Diniz, J. A. (2013). FuzzyQoI model: A fuzzy logic-based modelling of users' quality of interaction with a learning management system under blended learning. *Computer & Education*, *69*, 38-59

Dass, L. (2001). Exploring problems and coping mechanisms of distance learners: A Universiti Sains Malaysia profile. *Malaysian Journal of Distance Education, 3*(1), 1–21.

Greener, S. (2020). Attendance and attention. *Interactive Learning Environments. Taylor & Francis Online.*, *28*(1), 1–2. https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2020.1712105

Gonzalez, T., De La Rubia, M. A., Hincz, K. P., Comas-Lopez, M., Subirats, L., Fort, S., Sacha,

G. M. (2020). Influence of COVID-19 confinement on students' performance in higher education. *PLoS ONE*, *15*, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0239490

Hew, K. F., Jia, C., Gonda, D. E., Bai, S. (2020). Transitioning to the "New Normal" of Learning In Unpredictable Times: Pedagogical Practices and Learning Performance in Fully Online flipped classrooms. *International Journal of Education Technology High Education 17* (57). https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-020-00234-x

Kim, H. L., Chung-Khain, W., Nabila, E. A. B. (2022) Achieving Learning Outcomes of Emergency Remote Learning to Sustain Higher Education during Crises: An Empirical Study of Malaysian Undergraduates. *Sustainability 2022*, *14*, 1598. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14031598

Kember, D., McNaught, C., Chong, F. C. Y., Lam, P., & Cheng, K. F. (2010). Understanding the ways in which design features of educational websites impact upon student learning outcomes in blended learning environments. *Computers & Education, 55*, 1183-1192.

Lee, G., Wallace, A. (2018). Flipped Learning in the English as a Foreign Language Classroom: outcomes and perceptions. *TESOL Quarterly*. *52*(1), 62 – 84

Mackall, D. D. (2004). *Careers Skill Library: Problem Solving.* New York: Facts on File. 121-128

Mardani, A., Zavadskas, E. K., Fujita, H., Koppen, M. (2022) Big data-driven large-scale group decision-making under uncertainty (BiGDM-U). *Applied Intelligence, 52*, 13341–13344. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10489-022-04113-y

O'Flaherty, J., Phillips, C. (2015). The use of flipped classrooms in higher education: A scoping review. *Internet and Higher Education*, *25*, 85-95

Oriogu, C. D., Subair, R. E., Oriogu-Ogbuiyi, D. C., Ogbuiyi, S. U. (2017). Effect of Reading Habits on the Academic Performance of Students: A Case Study of the Students of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. *Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies. 2* (5), 74-80. https://doi: 10.11648/j.tecs.20170205.13

Rahman, S. F. A., Yunus, M. M., & Hashim, H. (2022). A Review on Adapted Models in Technology Acceptance. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *12*(3), 708–722.

Ribqotul, A. (2020). *A correlational study between reading habit and vocabulary mastery with reading comprehension* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Universitas Widya Dharma Klaten, Java, Indonesia.

Shivacheva-Pineda, I. N. (2020) E-Learning as a Mono Technology in a Pandemic. *The 15th International Conference on Virtual Learning ICVL*. 224 – 230

Tang, M., & Liao, H. (2021) From conventional group decision making to large-scale group decision making: What are the challenges and how to meet them in big data era? A state-of-the-art survey. *Omega*, *100*, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.omega.2019.102141

Tanglang, N., & Aminu, K. I. (2016) Decision-Making Skills and Academic Performance of Distance Education Learners: Implications for Students Counsellors, *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, *6* (1), 44 - 49