

# Flipping a Content-Based ESL Course: An Action Research Report\*

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## Abstract

This action research study aims to uncover the pedagogical effects of applying the flipped classroom strategy to Content-Based Instruction for English language learners. Students' perceptions and academic performance were measured by adopting a mixed methods approach. Qualitative results from the post-course questionnaire indicated that student participants were in favor of the flipped classroom over traditional instruction; however, quantitative data derived from pre- and post-course questionnaires and academic performance did not reveal statistically significant differences.

## Introduction

There are a growing number of intensive English programs for English language learners who wish to pursue higher education in America (Long, 2012). To prepare these students for academic success in American universities, it is not uncommon to see content courses embedded in program curricula. The College Preparatory Program (C332) at Hawai i Tokai International College requires students to complete World History, Sociology, Communications, and American Studies during their enrollment, with the aim of building students' academic proficiency.

Foundations of Sociology is a mandatory class for students. On this page, you can find the course description.

development of their critical thinking skills\$ In this paper, I will +rst review the literature on Content!"ased Instruction and the ipped classroom model and present my +ndings on its effects on language learners\$ I will conclude with a discussion of the study% implications for future research and teaching\$

### **Content-based Instruction in ESL and the Flipped Classroom**

Content!&ased instruction ,C" l2 or content!language integrated learning ,C-I-2 is an approach



either lower than those in the traditional classroom ,Strayer, . // @2 or did not signi+cantly improve ,Clark, . /0; 2\$

< any studies a&ove have shown how the ipped classroom framework is conducive to

At the beginning of the term, all nine students in the flipped classroom completed a short



Another e' pressed the aid they received 5cause of include voice7, acknowledging the use of voiceover in addition to visuals\$ 6urthermore, a few students wrote, 5I can watch other presentation easily7 and 5I can review &efore tests7\$ Thus, these students recogniled the convenience of &eing a&le to access videos online, an e' perience they would not have had in a traditional classroom\$ The overall results of the )uestionnaires re ect a positive perception among the students\$ Jetailed responses to the open!ended )uestions are in Appendi' C\$

Table 0  
Students' Perceptions of (i)pped Classroom

Statement	Pre-course mean (SD) mode	Post-course mean (SD) mode	P value
Lectures greatly help me learn the topics\$ A Video!lectures greatly helped me learn the topics\$	1.5 (1.2) 1	1.8 (1.1) 1	0.01
In!class discussions with my classmates greatly help,ed2 me learn the topics\$	1.5 (1.2) 1	1.8 (1.1) 1	0.05
I participate,d2 in in!class discussions\$	1.0 (1.1) 1	1.1 (1.0) 1	0.01
When I haveA had to read the te' t&ook for homework, I read it &efore class\$	1.5 (1.0) 0	1.2 (1.0) 1	0.05
Feading the te' t&ook for homework helps,ed2 me learn the topics\$	1.2 (1.1) 1	1.3 (1.0) 1	0.05
Overall, I prefer learning new topics in class and doing critical thinking )uestions for homework\$	1.5 (1.1) 1	1.5 (1.0) 1	0.05
Overall, I prefer learning new topics for homework and doing critical thinking )uestions in class\$	1.1 (1.1) 1	1.3 (1.1) 1	0.05

\*t-test / two!tailed, paired ,type 02 t!test was used to o&tain p!value &etween the -ikert!scale items\$ SJ indicates standard deviation\$ Items are measured on a scale from 0 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree\$ alpha is set at 0.05\$ The -ikert scale is 0! 1Never\* . 2Rarely\* 3Some of the time\* 4Most of the time\* 5All of the time\$

### Students' Academic Performance

The differences in performance &etween students in the i)pped classroom and those in the non! i)pped classroom were not found to &e statistically signi+cant according to the t!test\$ The close mean and the minimal variation &etween two the classes indicate that the i)pped strategy did not

contribute to increasing academic performance. Hence, incorporating the flipped classroom strategy did not significantly enhance or degrade academic performance when compared to the traditional classroom.

Table 1.  
Students' (Final) Course Grades

	Flipped, n=22 mean R SJ	Traditional, n=9 mean R SJ	P value***
Final course grade P	H: $\mu_1 > \mu_2$	H: $\mu_1 < \mu_2$	0.98

\*Notes: A two-tailed t-test with 12 independent samples with unequal variance was used to obtain the p-value between the course grades. Alpha is set at 0.05.

### Conclusion and Implications

This study found that the students' overall experience with the flipped classroom strategy was positive. As the term progressed, changes in the dynamics of the classroom became evident. The flipped class structure, which included efficient use of narrated videos and class time, contributed to the ready comprehension of course content. Survey results confirmed that visual aids and voiceover in the videos effectively promoted comprehensible input. Class time was efficiently used for reviews, pair discussions, and problem-solving activities requiring critical thinking skills. Students also perceived the instructor more as a facilitator with whom students felt more comfortable asking questions. While the students seemed to favor the flipped classroom according to the qualitative results, the difference in the questionnaire results were nonetheless not statistically significant with one notable exception. That is, students' engagement with the text decreased over time. Furthermore, the study found no statistically significant impact on academic performance. This implies that students will perform similarly in either flipped or traditional contexts.

There were several limitations of the study which need pointed out. First and foremost, three of the participants who had already taken the course may have had an advantage over the other students. Much effort was made to include new content and ask different questions on handouts, tests, and in-class activities. Nevertheless, repeaters may have maintained an advantage if they already knew the answers to questions without having to read or watch the videos. The results, especially those with respect to course grades, may have had been more accurate if there had been no repeaters in the class. Another limitation was the number of participants. The study would have been more valid if it had been conducted with a larger group of students. There is also the possibility that the students' responses to the questionnaires could have been more accurate if the questions were asked both in English and in Japanese, as students' English proficiencies can vary. Further, since the quantitative data was not consistent with the qualitative data, it is possible that the questions in the questionnaires were inadequate for measuring students' perceptions. It is also possible that the course assessments were not generated in a broad



enough manner to re ect the true impact of the ipped classroom strategy. This raises the need for the revision of the content of assessments and questionnaire questions in future studies. Perhaps conducting interviews and focused group discussions with students or conducting student observations would reveal more information regarding their experiences in the ipped classroom. A +nal limitation involved the role or the value of the course te' t&ook, which seemed to diminish with the employment of the narrated 3ower3oint videos. By emphasising the value of both the te' t&ook and video through teacher practices, a precise investigation into the effects of implementing the ipped strategy can be undertaken. In future studies, the content in the videos should be carefully structured to supplement, not to replace, the course te' t&ook or the primary material.

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## **Appendix A**

## **Appendix B**

### **Post-course Questionnaire**

In this class, you were asked you to complete lecture notes for homework\$ Then in class, we reviewed the lecture and you worked on answering critical thinking )uestions with your partner\$

1. Did you like this style? =es A Lo  
Why or why not?
2. What did you think of the videos ,narrated 33T videos online? made & by the teacher?  
Good A " ad  
Why or why not?

