The Impact of Using Flipped Classrooms on Iranian EFL Learners' Autonomy and Their Attitude Toward Learning English

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ABSTRACT

Flipped instruction is one of the most important discussions in education. This study aimed to find the effectiveness of using flipped classrooms on learners' attitudes toward learning English and their autonomy. To this end, 68 EFL learners were selected based on their scores on the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). The participants were randomly divided into one experimental and one control group. Before the treatment, both groups were pretested by the administration of the learners' attitudes and learner autonomy questionnaires. The participants in the experimental group received the instructional materials through WhatsApp messenger and were asked to study the materials before attending the class. The control group received the materials in the classroom. At the end of the experiment, the two questionnaires were given to both groups once more as the posttests. The findings revealed the effectiveness of the flipped classroom in improving learner autonomy and enabling them to be more autonomous. The results also showed the experimental group's positive attitudes toward English language learning.

INTRODUCTION

Language learners have their own specific feelings about their own process of language learning. That is what teachers generally believe about the learners' attitude that plays a significant role in the process of learning, and specifically learning a second or a foreign language. The process of learning a language is highly improved when learners' have control over the aims and contents of a course of the study (Dam, 1995; Little, 1991). Developing learner autonomy plays a vital role in the theory and practice of language teaching. Language learning is a lifelong activity, not one that starts and ends in a language class room. Helping learners enhance their autonomous learning capacities can be fulfilled in various ways. As Çakici (2015) states, these different ways of learning are often known as learner training courses and may include awareness-raising, strategy training, scaffolding, enhanced social interaction, and reflection encouragement. Najeeb (2013) studied learner autonomy in language learning and stated that the concept of learner independence or learner autonomy moves into an area in which students can direct their own learning. It means that learning activities occur without the immediate intervention of the teacher. Najeeb also states that in this condition, language learners set their goals and follow their devised strategies. This scenario facilitates the process of learning and helps learners become more effective when they study independently.

Among the fundamental psychological needs, i.e., competence, autonomy, and relatedness, autonomy is regarded as the most significant one (Deci & Ryan, 2010). Nowadays, influenced by the social constructivism theory of learning, teachers, and instructors believe that language proficiency is actively made by learners through an autonomous social and experiential process (Nosratinia & Hossaini, 2017; Sprenger & Wadt, 2008). Therefore, a great amount of research has targeted studying the effect of various pedagogical factors on improving learners' autonomy (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Nosratinia & Hossaini, 2017). Based on Guo (2011), learner autonomy refers to learners taking charge of their own learning. Out-of-class learning is one usage of learner autonomy, that is, learner autonomy normally is closely associated with out-of-class learning and out-of-class learning acts as a platform, where learners could fully improve their learner autonomy (Balçıkanlı, 2010; Benson, 2007). Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) stated that learner autonomy improves language learning, increases democracy in the society, forms students for continuous learning, and allows the students to take advantage of learning outside and inside the classroom.

One of the factors affecting autonomy is the student-centered curriculum. According to Crosby (2000), the teacher-centered approach is featured by transmitting the knowledge from the expert (the teacher) to the novice (learner). However, what may contribute to learner autonomy and autonomous learning is student-centered context, whereas, most classrooms are held in the form of teacher-centered classrooms. A student-centered context is described as an environment in which students actively take part in the learning processes (Nunan, 2003). Further, Nunan asserts that autonomous students can play an active role in their own learning. Considering this definition, it looks that autonomous learning may not be carried out in teacher-centered classrooms.

Accordingly, autonomous learners look for learning outside the classroom and create their own learning settings free from the teacher (Ganji Khoosf & Khosravani, 2014). Many researchers (e.g., Holmberg, 1995; Kearsley, 2000; Peters, 1998) viewed learner autonomy as a significant factor in influential language learning. Engaging learners in outside-the-classroom learning activities has several benefits and advantages. The findings of a study carried out by Öztürk (2020) showed that learners' engagement in outside-the-classroom learning activities had a positive effect on learners' achievements, on their pathway to turn into independent, self-regulated, and autonomous learners.

Attitudes towards languages are the feelings about one's language and the languages of others (Crystal, 1997). Ryan and Giles (1982) define language attitudes as any behavioral, affective, or cognitive index of evaluative reactions toward various language diversities or speakers. The social psychology approach indicates that variables such as learner attitude integrated with language aptitude can predict language learning achievement (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Research studies (e.g., Chang, 2011; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016; Waring & McLean, 2015; Zhang & Graham, 2020) revealed that learners become better and more confident readers when their listening and speaking abilities improve, their vocabularies become richer, and they write better. Moreover, they can have positive attitudes and high motivation toward studying a new language. Due to the role of English as the international language, ever-growing requirements for English fluency have given preference to finding more influential ways to teach English (Richards, 2016).

One of such influential and modern pedagogical approaches is known as the flipped classroom model (FCM). Tully (2014) noticed that flipping a classroom is one of the instructional patterns and strategies that facilitates learner-teacher interaction through using technology instruments. This method has the potential to generate substantial changes in the context of education as well as in institutions. A flipped classroom is an appropriate model for many types of courses because it allows learners to learn English effectively and autonomously. Flipped lessons can be used to facilitate the process of learning in a more systematic way to acquire the target language, specifically when learning takes advantage of authentic materials or online sources in teaching. Considering autonomy in flipped classrooms, studies (Han, 2015; Zainuddin & Perera, 2019) indicated positive results. Khosravani, Khoshsima, and Mohamadian (2020) studied the effect of using flipped classrooms on

Iranian intermediate EFL learners' achievement, autonomy, motivation, and willingness to communicate (WTC). The results showed that flipped classrooms had a significant effect on autonomy and achievement but did not have a significant effect on motivation and WTC.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Given the above-mentioned issues, this study attempted to investigate the impact of flipped classrooms on Iranian EFL learners' attitudes about learning English and their autonomy. Based on the research aims and the problem statement, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: Does flipped classroom model have any statistically significant effect on EFL learners' autonomy?

RQ2: Does flipped classroom model have any statistically significant effect on EFL learners' attitude towards English language learning?

To find logical answers to the above-mentioned research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

H01: Flipped classroom model does not have any statistically significant effect on EFL learners' autonomy.

H02: Flipped classroom model does not have any statistically significant effect on EFL learners' attitudes towards English language learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many research studies have discussed the significance of using flipped classrooms in English language learning. The studies investigated and clarified the advantages of using flipped classrooms in language learning, such as increasing more independent students (AlJaser, 2017), decreasing the number of frustrating sessions (Johnson, 2013), promoting learners' creativity (Al-Zahrani, 2015; Song & Kapur, 2017), enhancing learners' participation (Basal, 2015), improving learners' motivation (Davies, Dean & Ball., 2013; Elian & Hamaidi, 2018; Villanueva, 2016; Sirakaya & Ozdemir 2018), improving learners' academic performance (Evseeva & Solozhenko, 2015), facilitating class discussion (Marlowe, 2012), and increasing learners' communication skills (Rajabi, Mahmoodi, & Hosseini, 2021).

Helping learners to enhance their autonomous learning capacities can be fulfilled in several ways. These different ways of learning are often known as learner training courses and may include awareness raising, strategy training, scaffolding, enhanced social interaction, and reflection encouragement. Whatever the instructors do in their classrooms is inevitably formed by their unique system of personal constructs: "you are yourself, in some sense, what you teach" (Salmon, 1995, p. 28). Three pedagogical principles, namely, learner empowerment, reflectivity, and appropriate target language use, may be proposed to show the features of an autonomous learner in a language classroom (Little, 1991). Based on the first principle, learner empowerment requires teachers to help their students accept the responsibility for their own learning. The second principle, reflectivity, was already implied by the first principle. In an autonomous language classroom, reflection is initiated as a collaborative task in which the teacher and students look to make explicit their common understanding of the process they were involved in (Turloiu & Stefansdottir, 2011). The third principle, appropriate target language use, requires teachers to engage their students in exploratory dialogues to express their own meanings. They should help learners to make and maintain multiple scaffolds in speech and writing. Indeed, in the autonomous approach students try to express their own meanings for their own learning purposes (Dam, 1995).

Many proponents of autonomy paid attention basically to the learners' ability to learn efficiently regarding personal goals (e.g., Dafei, 2007; Jing, 2007). It is stated that the language teachers' last educational goal is to help students become autonomous. In language education, the ideas of student-centered practice and autonomy have been combined into communicative language teaching (Benson, 2001). The relationship between autonomy and language achievement has been a crucial issue for two reasons: researchers found a close relationship

between autonomy and effective learning, and teachers need to state the compatibility of their procedures considering getting proficiency (Dafei, 2007). Autonomous learners indicate the ability to lead the process of their own learning to make decisions considering the course content, organization, and management. The flipped classroom is an appropriate model for many types of courses because it allows learners to learn English effectively and autonomously. Flipped lessons can be used to facilitate the process of learning in a more systematic way to acquire the target language, specifically when learning takes advantage of authentic materials or online sources in teaching. Considering autonomy in flipped classrooms, many studies indicate positive results.

In a study, Zainuddin and Perera (2019) showed that the flipped classroom promoted higher autonomous learning and better interaction among peers. Tsai (2019) attempted to find out whether the FCM had any effect on EFL learner autonomy in a content-based teaching situation. The sample of the study contained learners enrolled in two linguistics classes. The participants were assigned to two groups: the experimental group (flipped instruction) including 64 learners, and the control group (non-flipped classroom) including 60 learners. The results indicated that learner autonomy had increased regarding strategy use, behavior, interaction with the instructional materials, the application of social resources, and learning self-management. Safari and Tabatabaei (2016) investigated the relationship between learners' listening comprehension ability and learner autonomy among Iranian EFL students. The analysis of the collected data showed that learners' proficiency level had a significant influence on the relationship between the research variables. It means that learners with higher proficiency outperformed the ones with lower proficiency levels.

Farrah and Qawasmeh (2018) examined the English learners' attitude towards the flipped classroom at Hebron University. A mixed methods research design was used through the administration of interviews and questionnaires. One pre-service teacher took part in this study and completed the questionnaires. In addition, a number of 10 pre-service teachers participated in the interviews. The questionnaires were used to indicate the learners' attitudes about using flipped classrooms. The interviews sessions were carried out to find out learners' general attitudes towards the problems and the solutions. The results indicated that the flipped classroom improved more learner autonomy and self-direction. Additionally, from the learners" point of view, the flipped classroom was motivating, exciting, and engaging. Eventually, it was concluded that the use of flipped classroom technology created learning opportunities of higher quality for learners to achieve better learning outcomes.

Taking advantage of the flipped classroom can enhance learner involvement, resulting in positive educational outcomes and promoting their performance as a consequence of the learning environment (Reeve, 2013; Wilson, 2013). However, Davies et al. (2013) argued that the process of shifting from traditional instruction to flipped instruction can be challenging due to the insufficiency of facilities, internet accessibility, and influential models. Accordingly, it is important to help students learn and improve their learning skills via innovative teaching methods (Tsai, Lee, & Shen, 2013). Although studies have proven the effectiveness of flipped learning, debates are not suitable. In light of individual differences and learners' different perceptions of flipped learning, stronger evidence is essential to evaluate the impact of flipped instruction on learners' improvement. The review of literature presented in this paper indicated that a plethora of studies have been undertaken so far to address the importance of autonomous learning since it plays a major role in developing learners' achievement.

The findings of this study can present a methodology for teaching and learning which changes the roles of instruction from teacher-centered to a more collaborative and cooperative contribution to the process of teaching (Du, Fu, & Wang., 2014). Indeed, school administrators should motivate teachers to pay more attention to applying new teaching approaches such as student-centered learning, technology-integrated learning, and flipped instruction. They need to create rich environments that motivate learners to control their learning time, and ways of learning and take responsibility for their learning, improve learner autonomy, and decrease classroom anxiety. Teachers should involve learners in such learning situations that improve their experiences. Still, there are other challenges to overcome, such as the integration of technology in foreign language classrooms. Curriculum

developers and syllabus designers can intensely affect and direct the language learning process by providing instructional materials. They may design and compile the curricula and materials in such a way that EFL students become autonomous and professional users of different modified strategies for learning and, as a result, handle their foreign language anxiety effectively.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The study was carried out at a private English-language institute in Tehran, Iran. A total of 68 EFL learners (46 female and 22 male students) out of 97 volunteers who scored ±1 standard deviation above and below the mean on an Oxford placement test (OPT) were selected as the sample of the study. The participants were English learners, with an average age ranging from 18 to 25 years old, and spoke Persian as their mother tongue. The participants were randomly assigned to one experimental (flipped classroom) group and one control group, each including 34 students. Both groups were taught by the teacher researcher (a Ph.D. student in TEFL) with 15 years of experience in teaching English.

MATERIALS AND INSTRUMENTS

To carry out the current research, the following instruments and materials were used.

A QUICK OXFORD PLACEMENT TEST (QOPT) (2001)

This test is developed to provide English teachers and learners with a quick way of measuring the learners' level of English knowledge. The test which took 55 minutes to complete consisted of two sections with 60 multiple-choice items and cloze tests. The first section contains 40 questions and the second one includes twenty questions. The learners were asked to read the statements and choose the correct answer. It should be mentioned that there was no negative point for incorrect answers.

LEARNER AUTONOMY QUESTIONNAIRE

To measure the degree of learners' autonomy in the process of learning, a 21-item questionnaire developed by Zhang and Li (2004) was used. As to the internal reliability of the questionnaire, Coronbach alpha was 0.89, which showed high and acceptable reliability. This questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first part included 11 five-point Likert scale items and coded as (a) never=1; b) seldom=2; c) sometimes=3; d) often=4; e) always=5); the second part contained 10 multiple-choice items. The total score was 105. The participants were asked to read each item and choose one of the five choices following each item. The allocated time to complete the test was 40 minutes. The autonomy questionnaire was administered twice, before and after the treatment process, to find out the differences between learners' autonomy.

LEARNERS' ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is used to show learners' general attitudes towards English language learning. A 12-item questionnaire adapted from the attitude questionnaire used in a study by Zainol Abedin, Pour-Mohammad and Alzwari (2012). On the whole, 45 items dealt with attitudes towards English language learning in terms of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects of those attitudes. The items used in this study were adapted from the emotional aspect of language learning attitude. This questionnaire, which focuses on learners' attitudes towards learning English, was administered to explore the participants' attitudes. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree of disagreement and agreement, from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The total scores ranged from 12 to 60.

The reliability of the questionnaire was computed and the result showed that the overall Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.78, which was an acceptable degree of internal consistency. It indicates the reliability of the questionnaire for the purpose of the current study. The researcher also investigated the

validity of the questionnaire to find out the extent by which its items considered learners' attitudes about English language learning. The questionnaire was sent to two experts in TEFL. Their comments were taken into consideration and some items were deleted. They confirmed the validity of the 12 items considering the research objectives.

WHATSAPP MESSENGER

WhatsApp Messenger is a freeware, cross-platform messaging, and Voice over IP service owned by Facebook. It allows users to send text messages, voice calls, video calls, images, and other media, documents, as well as user location. This app runs on mobile devices and is also accessible from desktop computers, as long as the user's mobile device is connected to the Internet while they use the desktop app. At the beginning of the study, the teacher-researcher created a group on WhatsApp Messenger and added the experimental group participants.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

To meet the objectives of the study, three phases were carried out: the pretest, the treatment, and the posttest phases. After administration of the OPT and selecting those whose scores fell within ± 1 standard deviation, they were assigned into one experimental (flipped classroom) and one control group (non-flipped classroom). The experiment was carried out during 16 sessions. The first and the last sessions were devoted to the administration of the pretest and the posttest, and the remaining 14 sessions were for the treatment procedure.

The next step was the administration of the learners' autonomy and students' attitude questionnaires to both groups. At first, both research groups received the 21-item learner autonomy questionnaire developed by Zhang and Li (2004). The language learners were asked to read the first part of the questionnaire, which consisted of 11 items in the form of a 5-point Likert scale and coded as a) never=1; b) seldom=2; c) sometimes=3; d) often=4; e) always=5, and choose their answer. They then were required to read the second part of the questionnaire, which included 10 multiple-choice items. They were asked to read and choose the closest answer. Although the standard time was 40 minutes, the participants completed the questionnaire in 15 minutes. It should be mentioned that this questionnaire was administered twice, before and after the treatment procedure as the pre-posttests.

Then, the learners' attitude questionnaire was administered to evaluate the emotional aspect of their attitude towards English language learning. The participants were required to read the items and select the number which best described their attitude about learning English. The allocated time to complete the questionnaire was 15 minutes. The learners' attitude questionnaire also was carried out twice as the pretest and the posttest. After the administration of the questionnaire, the treatment process was started, and the experimental group received the treatment through the flipped classroom. As explained, the major aspect of flipped classes is that the instruction occurs outside and the preparation takes place inside the class. The researcher prepared the teacher-made video-podcasts, including videos and audio files, to explain the lessons. He also downloaded and used the video and audio clips taken from Crown Academy of English, a website which covers areas such as English grammar, vocabulary, listening, reading, writing, speaking and pronunciation. Supplementary materials such as real-life examples in the form of videos, audio files, and research articles on the topic were also shared through WhatsApp. The participants were asked to watch and study the content related to the target instruction before coming to the class. The students also showed their positive attitude about using Whatsapp. They stated that they could ask questions, answer their peers' questions, or post and receive relevant audio, videos, and texts. They also said that regardless of problems with internet connection, holding flipped classrooms via WhatsApp was very convenient since they could access the materials anytime and anywhere.

At the beginning of each session, the teacher created a discussion about the materials provided by the videos and audios to figure out whether all the learners had watched them or not. During class time, the teacher engaged learners in in-class activities to discuss, reflect on, and practice what they had learned. Because participants were expected to know the content, the teacher could ask learners to explain how to complete the tasks. Then learners were asked to complete the exercises in groups and exchange their tasks for peer correction. Wherever the group members found mistakes, they had to correct them and describe their corrections.

The participants in the control group came to class with no prior background knowledge of the new lesson. They received the instruction using the same textbook, followed by watching the video clips or listening to the audio inside the classroom using traditional teaching strategies and answering the formulated questions. Before teaching each unit, the instructor provided background knowledge, and after teaching each unit, the learners were required to respond to the questions relevant to the lesson. At the end of the experiment and after finishing the treatment procedure, it was time to administer the learner autonomy questionnaire and students' attitude questionnaire to both groups as the posttests to assess the effectiveness of the treatment and learners' achievement.

DATA ANALYSIS

In order to find the effectiveness of the treatment, after collecting the required data from the OPT, the learner autonomy questionnaire and the students' attitude questionnaire towards English language learning, the researchers put the data in Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program version 22 and ran the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) tests to show the difference between the two research groups and the effectiveness of the treatment.

RESULTS

The process of discovering the effectiveness of the treatment and learners' achievement, started after collecting the required data from the OPT and the questionnaires of the two groups. To this end, the researchers put the data in SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program version 22 and ran the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) tests to discover any differences between the two teaching methods, the effectiveness of the treatment as well as learners' achievement. ANCOVA was used to increase statistical power by reducing the within-group error variance.

ANSWERING THE FIRST RESEARCH QUESTION

To answer the first research question which was seeking to find out if using the flipped classroom had significant effects on EFL learners' autonomy, the ANCOVA test was run. The descriptive statistics related to the autonomy scores of both experimental and control groups are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *The Result of the ANCOVA for the Comparison of the Autonomy Scores*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	4359.282[a]	2	2179.641	142.278	.000	.814
Intercept	46.856	1	46.856	3.059	.085	.045
Prescores1	1911.282	1	1911.282	124.760	.000	.657
Group	**2188.990**	**1**	**2188.990**	**142.888**	**.000**	**.687**
Error	995.776	65	15.320			
Total	1224220.000	68				
Corrected Total	5355.059	67				

As Table 1 shows, there was a statistically significant difference between the control and the experimental groups regarding their scores on autonomy, $F (1, 65) = 142.88$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .68$. Therefore, the first null hypothesis was rejected, meaning that flipped classroom model has a statistically significant effect on learner autonomy. It promotes more learner autonomy. It means that learners have the ability to learn English well and make good use of their free time while studying English. They preview the lessons before the class so that they have the chance to participate in activities.

ANSWERING THE SECOND RESEARCH QUESTION

To find out whether using FCM significantly affect EFL learners' attitudes towards English language learning, the ANCOVA test was run. Table 2 shows the result of the ANCOVA for the comparison of the attitude scores of both research groups.

Table 2. *The Result of the ANCOVA for the Comparison of the Attitude Scores*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	710.297ᵃ	2	355.148	243.456	.000	.882
Intercept	23.147	1	23.147	15.867	.000	.196
Prescores3	642.297	1	642.297	440.297	.000	.871
Group	**45.627**	**1**	**45.627**	**31.277**	**.000**	**.325**
Error	94.821	65	1.459			
Total	83128.000	68				
Corrected Total	805.118	67				

As can be seen in Table 2, there was a statistically significant difference between the two research groups regarding their attitude scores, $F (1, 65) = 31.27$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .32$. The participants' attitude was significantly positive since the p-value was less than the significance level (sig < .05). Therefore, the second null hypothesis was **rejected**, meaning that flipped classroom model significantly affects EFL learners' attitude towards English language learning. It can be said that the flipped classroom creates better learning opportunities for the learners to achieve better learning outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The main aim of the current study was to find out whether the flipped classroom model had any significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward English language learning and their autonomy. The results associated with the first research question showed that using flipped classrooms was effective since learner autonomy had been improved in terms of strategy use, learners' behavior, self-management of learning, and interaction with the materials. Therefore, the first null hypothesis was rejected. Trebbi (2006) states that taking control of one's own learning is a requirement for learning, and learning cannot occur without the learner having actual control.The findings of this study show that autonomy can be encouraged by giving the learners opportunities for success via flipped classrooms. These opportunities can help the learners to understand their real objectives and to improve

skills to enable them to find the answers and information they require in order for them to be successful in achieving these objectives.

The findings related to the first research question are in line with the findings reported by Khosravani et al. (2020) which showed a meaningful effect of the flip model classroom on learner autonomy. Through a post-test-only control-group design, the flipped classroom resulted in better autonomy scores for the experimental group. The outcomes of this study support those reported by Ghufron and Nurdianingsih (2019) that examined the way flipped teaching worked and affected learner autonomy. Their findings indicated that after utilizing the flipped method along with CALL media in an EFL writing course, the learners showed high learner autonomy and learning motivation. Based on Nguyen (2018), the flipped classroom can affect functioning knowledge, learning autonomy, learning time, scaffolding, and accessibility. Santikarn and Wichadee (2018) state that the flipped classroom approach helps learners improve their autonomy level using online teaching as well as activities at school.

These findings of this study are in accordance with Al Wahaibi and Hashim (2018), who made attempts to find the extent to which flipping an English course affects learners' autonomy in comparison to the traditional approach. The research results showed that the learners in the experimental group were found to be more autonomous than those in the control group. The results are consistent with the findings reported by Farrah and Qawasmeh (2018). They showed that the flipped classroom enhanced self-direction and learner autonomy. These results are also in agreement with Muldrow (2013), who revealed that flipped learning aims at students' needs and therefore improves their autonomy via mixing technology with teaching techniques. However, the results of this study stand in contrast with Nielsen, Bean and Larsen (2018), who investigated the effect of a flipped learning on learners' performance and satisfaction in an introductory statistics class. The findings revealed significant improvement in the learners' performance; however, there was not any significant difference between the learner autonomy scores in the two research groups.

The analysis of the second research question showed a significant difference between the learners' attitudes in the control and experimental groups. Participants in the experimental group showed more positive attitudes towards using English language learning. Considering the findings of the study, flipped instruction in English classrooms can help both English teachers and learners. Interestingly, since it has been indicated in the literature (Dashtestani, 2013), both teachers and learners have a positive attitude toward such methods and prefer to use them in English classes. Learners need to understand and be aware of their own learning styles and use them to their advantage. At the same time, they attempt to adapt to a more autonomous method of learning. As they gain confidence, they can monitor their own learning, which will in turn make them confident and give them a sense of achievement.

The results of this study are in agreement with the results of a study conducted by Orfan (2020), who probed to find Afghan undergraduate EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English. The results of the one-way ANOVA test revealed the learners' positive attitudes towards English learning. Orfan (2020) also indicated that those participants who used the Internet and experienced English learning had more positive attitudes towards learning English than those who did not have access to the Internet or English learning experience in English language institutes. Accordingly, the results are consistent with those reported by Eshghinejad (2016), who examined Iranian EFL students' behavioral, cognitive, and affective attitudes towards English learning. Her findings showed students' behavioral, cognitive, and affective positive attitudes. These results dealing with the second research question are similar to the findings reported by Ababneh (2016), Ahmed (2015), Elkilic (2016), Iswahyuni (2018), and Malekmahmudi and Malekmahmudi (2018).

However, the results of the present research are not in line with those reported by Zainol Abedin et al. (2012) who attempted to find out Libyan students' attitudes towards English learning. Considering the three aspects of attitude, i.e., cognitive, behavioral, and emotional, the participants revealed negative attitudes towards learning

English. Seemingly, Al-Nofaie (2010) attempted to find out the attitudes of Saudi teachers and students towards using Arabic as a facilitating instrument in English classrooms. It indicated that the teachers and the learners revealed generally positive attitudes toward using Arabic rather than the English language. By the same token, the participants in a study carried out by Al-Zahrani (2018) showed negative attitudes towards English language learning, and it was also supposed that the reason for such a negative attitude might have been a reaction to the traditional techniques and instructions applied by some English language teachers.

CONCLUSION

Considering the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that in a flipped classroom, to completely involve learners in English learning and improve their autonomy, English learners should be allowed to choose suitable learning tasks and activities they favor and decide how long an activity will be. Teachers should allow language learners to discuss learning objectives and materials with them. Consequently, this method may improve students' motivation and stimulate their interests. English teachers need to know how to provide students with some direction and freedom to inspire their autonomy, creativity, and motivation. For example, carrying out carefully structured tasks such as designing exams and portfolios, which require that learners learn English in their own ways, promotes learner autonomy and facilitates learning as well.

The results of this study provided teaching-learning concepts with technology for Iranian EFL teachers and students. Through using flipped classrooms, students get more time to answer the more difficult questions and do the tasks, including both conceptual and procedural knowledge, in class with the teacher and their classmates to discuss their solutions. That is something learners often feel stranded at home doing with the difficult tasks alone. Indeed, watching preparatory material such as video podcasts and listening to audio files help learners understand the subject better. Accordingly, the findings revealed the students' positive attitudes towards flipped instruction since most believed in the effective role of flipped instruction in improving their motivation and encouraging classroom involvement. Their attitudes were mainly directed toward reflection and autonomous learning as a result of flipped teaching.

The findings of the current research have some theoretical, practical, and pedagogical implications. Technology-based instruction through flipped teaching can help teachers and instructors achieve their goals by engaging students in the communicative setting of learning, which makes the learning environment more pleasant and delightful. Gavranović (2017) states that reversing the content of lecture delivery and learners' work outside of the classes requires the active participation of the learners. The flipped classes can improve critical thinking skills, motivation, and communication skills. Later on, learner autonomy is enhanced through the opportunity given to learners to find, assess, and analyze information themselves. Material developers and syllabi designers can also design and provide tasks and activities that teachers are expected to use technology as an instrument to present the instructional materials.

The findings of this study may help policymakers focus on the importance of the use of different approaches in teaching language skills. Education policymakers who focus on educational quality to improve education equity may be required to modify their policies and practices. They may be directed towards using interactive learning and teaching communities to provide flipped teaching for learners in terms of promoting the educational condition and having more student-centered environments. The findings of the current study need to be generalized to more care since the sample and the context are not representative of all Iranian EFL learners in various situations; thus, replication of this study can be done with a larger sample size. Given the significant improvement in the flipped group's performance over the non-flipped group, it can be concluded that the flipped classroom through cooperative learning is more effective than the traditional lecture-homework instruction. Further studies are required on various flipped classroom implementations, such as discussion-oriented flipped classrooms, to show best practices for this encouraging, but still under-investigation instructional method.

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