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The Flipped Teaching Journey of Turkish EFL Pre-service Teachers
Pre-service Teachers' Reflective Perspectives on the Affordances and Challenges
in an Erasmus+ Project

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Abstract

Flipped learning is an innovative pedagogical approach where the in-class and out-of-class activities are performed in a reverse order (Hsieh, et al., 2017a). Flipped classrooms are characterized by the delivery of the instructional content via mainly online means such as videos or online multimodal teaching materials (i.e., the pre-class activities) before the in-class sessions that facilitate students' knowledge construction, in-depth understanding of the content and mastery learning experiences via problem-solving activities (Hung, 2017b; Shih & Huang, 2020; Wang & Qi, 2018; Zou & Xie, 2019). The flipped learning approach is based on the Bloom's revised taxonomy where the lower-order cognitive activities (corresponding to the remembering and understanding stages on the taxonomy) are addressed outside the classroom and the higher levels of cognitive activities (corresponding to the application, analysis, evaluation and creation stages on the taxonomy) are dealt with in the classroom with teachers' guidance and peer assistance (Yang et al., 2018). Apart from these, flipped learning was shown to facilitate self-paced learning or differentiation (Van Alten et al., 2019; Lo et al., 2017; Sams & Bergmann, 2013).

The flipped classroom settings promote student engagement in higher order thinking skills or problem-solving activities, peer/collaborative learning tasks under the supervision of the instructors (Zou et al., 2020). In fact, with ample opportunities it offers for the student engagement in higher-order thinking skills and the feedback provision and the negotiation of meaning (Egbert et al., 2007) the flipped methodology is likely to provide "an optimal language-learning environment" (Webb & Doman, 2020, p.44). This innovative approach promotes a ubiquitous, student-centered and autonomous learning environment for students where there is a shift of responsibility from teachers to students (Hung, 2017a; Zou, 2020). They are also supposed to be a guide motivating and giving feedback to students (See Webb & Doman, 2020; Zainuddin & Halili, 2016; Zou et al., 2000). The dynamic interactive learning atmosphere in flipped classrooms (Chuang et al., 2018; Hsieh et al., 2017b ; Lin & Hwang, 2018) is considered to be conducive to student engagement (Zou et al., 2000). Flipped classrooms are also indicated to foster inquiry-based learning and digital literacy skills (Bishop & Verleger, 2013, Strayer, 2012), as well as mastery learning practices (Webb & Doman, 2020).

Despite a variety of benefits listed in the extant literature regarding the flipped classroom approach, it is not without its challenges (Zainuddin & Halili, 2016). In an extensive review on the flipped classroom, Zainuddin and Halili (2016) revealed that insufficient or lack of training opportunities for

teachers who are novice flippers and the poor video quality could be considered two of the most frequent challenges reported in literature.

There has recently been a growing interest in the flipped learning research from multiple perspectives including the attitudes of students towards technology-enhanced language learning and the content knowledge as well as digital literacy skill development (Webb & Doman, 2016; Webb, et al., 2014), the impact of external factors on flipped classrooms (Bakla, 2018; Chang & Lin, 2019; Zou & Xie, 2019), the influence of learner factors on flipped learning (Chuang et al., 2018; Hao, 2016; Lin & Hwang, 2018), the flipped learning process (Wang & Qi, 2018), the student interactions in the flipped classroom (Kim et al., 2017). In fact, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the online synchronous flipped learning approach gained popularity to align flipped learning principles with online instruction - See Marshall (2017) and Marshall & Rodriguez Buitrago (2017). In online synchronous flipped learning out-of-class work now moves to the asynchronous space, and in-class work is completed in synchronous class sessions when the teacher and students' peers are present. It replicates the most important part of flipped learning instruction (the interactive and dynamic nature of learning) when teacher-led activities are moved out of class. By meeting synchronously on a regular basis, both the teacher and students can clearly distinguish between the in-class or synchronous learning context and the out-of-class or asynchronous learning context. In real-time class sessions they can meet and interact with their peers (Marshall & Rodriguez Buitrago, 2017). However, there is a paucity of research on the impact of online flipped teaching experiences on the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher-trainees' professional development.

In fact, this qualitative exploratory case study investigated the impact of an online flipped teaching incengagement of Turkish EFL trainee-teachers within the framework of an Erasmus+ project on their professional development from a reflective perspective in the 2020 and 2021 academic year. The participants were four female senior pre-service teachers enrolled in the English Language Teaching (ELT) practicum course at an English-medium state university in Ankara who were chosen to be the project members in the Erasmus+ project called 'Flipped Impact'. They had an age range between 21 and 25 with a C1 level of proficiency in English. The purposeful sampling strategy was adopted in the participant selection. The participant pre-service teachers were engaged in designing and implementing flipped grammar lessons for eight graders at a private middle school every two weeks for the whole academic year. A private middle school in Ankara with technological facilities. The school promotes differentiated instruction and inclusive practices. Regarding the K-12 learner profile, there were ten 8th graders in the school (2 male and 8 female pupils) with a B1 level of proficiency in English. They were not so motivated to learn English and they needed some instructional support to develop their knowledge of English grammar. They were exposed to 6 hours of English at school per week. The pre-service teachers taught eight flipped lessons in total. They started flipped instruction in the third week of each semester, with the first lesson being a warm-up lesson. Each flipped lesson had a different focus (e.g., reported speech, modals, relative clauses and if clauses). The flipped lessons were observed by the university supervisor (the practicum course

instructor at university) and the two English teachers who were responsible for mentoring the students in the Erasmus+ project and in the practicum course. The data was collected via the pre-service teachers' reflection journals and the semi-structured interviews and was analyzed via content analysis. The findings were classified into two categories: affordances and challenges. The affordances included enhanced awareness towards digital material design process, enhanced pedagogical competence regarding the utilization of authentic materials and differentiation, an improvement in the technological pedagogical content (TPACK) knowledge, enhanced awareness towards the student engagement strategies in a student-centered online learning environment, insights into the diverse teacher roles and the importance of formative assessment in online educational settings. The participants emphasized the importance of obtaining feedback from multiple parties (e.g., peer feedback, supervisor's feedback and the mentor teachers' feedback) as well as the importance of peer collaboration and peer learning in their flipped lesson design and implementation processes. On the other hand, the challenges incorporated how to achieve a smooth transition between the pre-class and in-class activities, how to establish and sustain student engagement strategies in different phases of flipped lessons and enhanced teacher agency and teacher autonomy. The study suggested that engaging in the online flipped teaching experience can be considered conducive to the professional development of the Turkish EFL pre-service teachers in different ways and degrees. Although this qualitative case study was conducted with a limited sample size and in a limited duration, it could provide a road map for teachers and teacher educators who are planning to design and implement their own online flipped classes. The study also underlined the importance of the provision of ongoing pedagogical mentoring for the pre-service teachers *designing and implementing flipped classes to sustain their professional engagement and promote the effectiveness of the online flipped lessons.*

Keywords: Flipped Teaching Journey, EFL Pre-service, Teachers' Reflective Perspectives, Erasmus+ Project

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