




## FLIPPED CLASSROOM IN IMPROVING ESL PRIMARY STUDENTS' TENSES LEARNING



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### ABSTRACT

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Due to recent development of Malaysian education, the transformation of local classroom curriculum for English learning is gradually progressing towards global standard since the introduction of Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) that aligned with the Standard Curriculum Primary School (KSSR). To attract and retain students' attention towards fun and interesting learning, grammar context is embedded indirectly in all types of language learning skills for younger primary students in a normal classroom. Hence, via 'inverted' learning, this study was aimed to look at English as a Second Language (ESL) primary 3 students' perception in tenses learning using flipped classroom approach involving 36 students from a rural school in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The perceptions of the students were measured through questionnaire comprising a survey and open ended questions. The finding of this study revealed that most students were positive to learn grammar through flipped classroom as opposed to traditional learning. Moreover, even for those who perceived negatively also agreed in the end that this approach would improve their understanding. Thus, it is hoped that this study gives educators better insights in using flipped classroom on students' preferences not just in tenses learning but others as well.

**Contribution/ Originality:** This study contributes to the current existing approach of flipped classroom in tenses learning. Much has been said about its potential but limited studies have examined the perspective of younger students at the age of nine in a rural area. Therefore, this adds to the existing literature on this issue.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Education nowadays is no longer restricted to any publication knowledge or constricted to a four walls building. It is now towards gearing and transforming younger students to a more ethical technological sophisticated and fast pace in exploring their hidden potential as well as acquiring critical thinking and communication skills before entering the 4th Industrial Revolution era (Azlan, Zakaria, & Yunus, 2019; Hashim & Yunus, 2019). On the contrary, to cater the demand that is coherent with current situations, revolutions, or modifications in viable curriculum and equivalent to international measures requires necessary changes (Lo, 2018). Even Malaysia has recently adopted a new align CEFR curriculum as its language acquisition benchmark towards reaching the global standards in line with other Asian and European countries (Lo, 2018). Therefore, flipped learning together with blended learning are introduced in all educational institution as mentioned in Malaysian Education blueprint (2013-2025).

Despite the recent changes, learning English using European context in listening, speaking, reading and writing practices for the past three years, there are several objections and complaints by educators that their pupils would precipitously become passive or inactive in the classroom whenever during grammar focus lesson (Jalok, Zainal, Amit, & Yunus, 2019). Malaysian primary students particularly in rural areas are finding it difficult to adopt or use proper grammar rules in their language skill or routines due to family background with either low financial status or lower proficiency of English language education background. Time consuming may also be one of the factors that prevent students from learning adequately in the classroom. Some need ample time to absorb and understand the tenses in grammar learning while others may need information repetition with more examples. Furthermore, some students may need thorough explanation and elaboration not just in the classroom but also outside their school compound at their own pace and convenient. Thus, flipped learning is one of the alternative options that may able to assist students in their language and grammar learning. Hence, the purpose of this study is to identify students' perception in tenses learning using flipped classroom for Malaysian primary students in rural school.

### *1.1. The Implementation of Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) in Malaysia*

Since its first introduction on the KSSR aligned CEFR in 2016, the implementation of Common European Framework of Reference or CEFR is in its third year where the first pioneer batch of students is now in primary three. As students were exposed to a variety of activities in listening and speaking skills during Primary 1 and 2, it is a different matter when it comes to Primary 3. The syllabus in CEFR has inculcated its themes, language skills, grammar, language functions and vocabulary that pupils would learn in Primary Year 3 in all the four main skills. At least, by the end of Year 3, most students should have a good foundation in grasping English language which might help them to achieve at least level A1 Mid on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) as adhered to the content and learning standards guidelines for Year 3 for Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (Rlatif, 2019).

### *1.2. Flipped Learning*

With the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in flipped education, students are able to improved and understand better in their learning (Yunus & Suliman, 2014). According to Lie and Yunus (2019) there are many studies conducted on flipped learning approach since 2014, where it was first begun to appear in 2013 by Bergmann and Sams (2014) two chemistry teachers from Colorado who used podcast as a method of recording for their absent and struggling students who had trouble trying to catch up with the lesson. Additionally, Lage, Platt, and Treglia (2015) found during his study using flipped approach in his economics class, preparation time was reduced significantly which resulted in less effort producing lecture demonstrations and increase available time in in-class activities and at the same time increased students' knowledge retention. Furthermore Hirsto, Väisänen, and Arffiman (2019) added under theoretical perspectives in flipped classroom, self-regulated learning and motivation, especially in terms of the fore-thought phase in which the students set goals for their studying and learning processes, and monitoring are also one of the important parts in flipped learning. The learning should focus on not only achieving goals for the students but also teachers' perspectives and preferences as well (Hirsto et al., 2019).

### *1.3. Previous Studies on Students' Perception in Learning Grammar Using Flipped Classroom*

Prior studies suggested that flipped learning strategies on positive perceptions improved learners performance and levels of proficiency in multiple areas of the English language (Al-Harbi & Alshumaimeri, 2016). Different studies indicated that those learners who used flipped approach model performed better in different subjects than in the out-dated technique of teaching as well as their perceptions and attitudes were also improved in contrast to the

traditional way of instruction (Olanmi, 2017). Kvashnina and Martynko (2016) added that flipped learning could increase learners' overall performance on the course, boost learners' motivation and improved their independent learning abilities. Moreover, Pudín (2017) added that using flipped approach together with blended learning, students were eager to learn grammar as the contents are richer and more meaningful. With the rise in popularity of the use of social media, the learning experience could be enriched by integrating teaching into learning and appealing towards younger age group (Yunus, Zakaria, & Suliman, 2019). Yet, some learners also have different perceptions and attitudes toward flipped classroom. As learners confirmed that they understand the content better during flipped learning, there are others who argued about the flipped classroom pre-introduction that requires the use of technology.

Even though the flipped learning approach implemented to ESL learning has had an optimistic impact on the ESL students' perceptions, attitudes, engagement, participation, and performances, the approach had few studies within the framework of teachers' preferences on using the technology, where the elements that mark students' acceptance level are still being unanswered (Lie & Yunus, 2019) as cited in Ifenthaler and Schweinbenz (2013). It may also due to lack or less of practical studies; the Malaysian teachers were not assured to use the flipped approach in lower primary school (Lie & Yunus, 2019). Students also need to change their habit or usual way of doing things in the new learning environment by studying the given contents before class which seems rather challenging for younger students (Hirsto et al., 2019). Nonetheless, there has yet any study conducted especially for lower primary students in rural area in this country after the implementation of CEFR that based on the perception and attitude in flipped approach towards grammar learning.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Research Design

The study was a mixed-method type of research that comprised of a quantitative study and a qualitative approach. The first four sections in the questionnaire aimed to identify respondents' gender profile, flipped classroom preferences, perceived usefulness and ease of use as well as future usage and potential use. Then, in section E which comprised of open ended questions to further explore respondents' perceptions of how flipped classroom can be used in improving their understanding in tenses learning.

### 2.2. Population and Sample of Study

The target homogeneous participants for this research were Year 3 Malay ESL learners from a rural primary school in Negeri Sembilan using purposive sampling. The reason for it was because most of these students own smartphone and for those who did not own one would use their parents'. Additionally, the participants consisted of 21 females and 15 males, all in the same classroom aged nine were selected in the survey and open-ended research.

### 2.3. Research instruments

The quantitative and qualitative questionnaires were used to evaluate the students' perceptions of the flipped classroom strategy. The questionnaire in this study was a modified version of a few other researchers such as Chun and Sathappan (2018) and Xiu, Moore, Thompson, French, and Thompson (2018).

There are 5 sections that comprised of section of A to E. Section A is about respondents gender as the respondents demographic profile were homogenous that came from the same class, area of locality and age. The next section which is Part B is to determined respondents method of learning preferences after participating in both traditional approach and flipped learning. That is to ensure that respondents understood the purpose of this research before pursuing to the main elements of the study which is in section C. In Section C, there are 14 open-ended items that are based on their perceptions of perceived usefulness and ease of use by selecting their agreement

on every statements mentioned in the survey. Respondents would simply select either ‘Strongly Disagree’, ‘Disagree’, ‘Agree’, or ‘Strongly Agree’ to determined their actual perception.

#### 2.4. Data Collection and Data Analysis

As for Section F there are 3 additional open-ended items, where the respondents’ views were probed and categorized into content analysis and interpreted accordingly. The three open ended items gathered were used to support and give meaning to the quantitative data analysis and presentation of each respondent’s selection, each respondent was coded P01, P02, and P03...P36 respectively. The latter part in the open-ended items were purposely conducted to probe students’ thoughts and perceptions about improving tenses learning using flipped method as well as future preferences.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings were presented in five sub-categories. Firstly was the demographic data that consist of gender attribution, then followed by the respondents’ learning method’s preferences, flipped learning perceived usefulness and ease of use as well as the future preferences. These data were then analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Wherein the second part, which is section E, the findings are to be analyzed using content analysis. The statements quoted were based on some of the responds of the respondents extracted from open-ended questions to support and further clarify the previous quantitative data.

**Table-1. Demographic analysis.**

Gender	Male	15	41.70%
	Female	21	58.30%

Note: Table 1 shows the number of participation according to gender distribution in a classroom taken from the school.

In term of gender distributions in Table 1, about 15 or 51.1% were male and 21 or 48.9% were female. All respondents were in Primary 3 (100%) and area of locality is in rural domain (100%). Additionally, all 36 respondents were also introduced to flipped learning at the age of nine years old for the first time during English class as WhatsApp group was formed earlier this year by their class teacher for parents.

#### 3.1. Participants Learning Preferences

There are 4 items in this questionnaire intended to find out participants’ learning preferences be it in the classroom or flipped learning and the reasons why some of them preferred traditional method.

**Table-2. Learning method and preferences.**

No.	Item	1	2	3	4	Mean
1	I prefer to learn in a normal classroom.	13 36.1%	10 27.8%	5 13.9%	8 22.2%	2.22
2	I would not recommend flipped classroom to a friend.	30 83.3%	6 16.7%	0	0	1.17
3	I prefer my teacher to teach tenses using whiteboard rather than watching videos.	11 30.6%	14 38.9%	6 16.7%	5 13.9%	2.14
4	I think I understand better learning tenses in the classroom before using flipped learning	5 13.9%	24 66.7%	4 11.1%	3 8.3%	2.14

Note: Scale 1: Strongly Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Agree 4: Strongly Agree.

Based on Table 2 Likert-type questions, the responses of this finding was about their opinion based on the conventional method of learning. Overall, participants expressed neutral to negative opinions about the

conventional method. The negative opinion was expressed when they were asked not to recommend flipped classroom to a friend with a mean score of 1.17 and has the highest percentage of (83.3%) 'strongly disagree' on the four-point scale. At the same time, participants also expressed disagreement when expressing opinions on the whiteboard over videos (38.9%) and learning tenses better in the classroom before flipped learning (66.7%). More than half of the participants expressed strongly disagree (36.1%) and disagree (27.8%) if they prefer normal classroom over flipped learning which indicated that more and more students are currently attracted and preferred the new way of learning. Further discussion on why most participants were in favor of flipped learning would be discussed later on in the next section in [Table 3](#).

### 3.2. Conventional Approach

Yet, there was a minority of students who are still preferred conventional or traditional learning approach. As appear in item four that stated able 'to understand better learning tenses in the classroom before using flipped learning' which had about 19.4% agreed to this statement. To induce reasons as to why some participants preferred conventional method, an additional set of open-ended questions were used. The first open-ended question, that is referred as a ground base for the previous mentioned connotation was asked, "do you like to use videos as classwork at home?" About (11%) respondents negatively responded 'No' and their reasons were stated below:

*"No, my hand phone is broken"* (P28)

*"I have slow internet connection at home"* (P12)

*"Only my parents have smartphone and they rarely show me the videos as they are always busy"* (P23)

Based on the above replies, it could be implied that the students are aware about the advantages of flipped learning. However, due lack of parental support and technological disability, had hindered their ability to adapt and adopt into any new learning approach that requires additional effort outside classroom with technological integration in their learning method and this resulted in limiting themselves to conventional learning method only. As stated by [Bond \(2019\)](#) the involvement and engagement of parent with child's learning has strongly impacting their children's accomplishment, engagement, motivation and school completion.

### 3.3. Research Objective (RO): To identify Malaysian Year 3 Students' Perception in Tenses Learning using Flipped Classroom.

Students had varied perceptions when giving opinions about flipped learning. As stated earlier, the objective of this study was to identify Malaysian Year 3 students' perception in tenses learning using flipped classroom. A set of questionnaire adapted and modified from [Chun and Sathappan \(2018\)](#) and [Xiu et al. \(2018\)](#) were given to 36 pupils and the results were shown in [Table 3](#).

There are 14 items in the questionnaire aimed to identify students' perceptions on Flipped Classroom learning. Item number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 11 were addressed based on the ease of use on the function and their perception being in a self-paced classroom. Whereas items numbered 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14 were asked to examine their perception whether flipped learning actually improved their learning as an added value to their content-based application in the flipped classroom.

### 3.4. Active Learning and Ease-of-Use Application

Based on the findings from the questionnaire above, the highest percentage on the function and application in the use of flipped classroom was taking tests and quizzes online (100%) with the highest mean of (3.75). It was followed by 'Social media (WhatsApp, You Tube, Quizzes, Kahoot) is important in my learning' in the second highest for both 'agree' and 'strongly agree' placement (94.5%). Being young and playful at the age of 9, participants were attracted to colorful themes and animation as well as gaming-featured learning application. As online applications such as Quizzis and Kahoot do provide such theme, participants were eager to study and learn the

video contents of flipped learning before taking the online quiz and test as they could see their marks and tried to compete for the first top four ranking. Other than being used as a quick assessment, it can also be assigned as 'homework' in a mode of player-paced, where players never have to wait for the whole class to response to a question before they could continue to the next one (Chaiyo & Nokham, 2017).

**Table-3.** Malaysian Year 3 ESL learners' perceptions towards flipped learning approach.

No.	Item	1	2	3	4	Mean	Std Dev.
1	Flipped classroom is more fun and easy to understand than normal classroom learning.	0	8.3%	33.3%	58.3%	3.5	0.655
2	I would recommend flipped classroom to a friend.	0	0	47.2%	52.8%	3.53	0.506
3	I can communicate and ask questions to my teacher and friends during flipped learning.	5.6%	27.8%	38.9%	27.8%	2.89	0.887
4	I like watching the lessons on videos.	0	11.1%	55.6%	33.3%	3.22	0.637
5	Social media (WhatsApp, You Tube, Quizzes, Kahoot) is important in my learning.	0	0	27.8%	72.2%	3.72	0.454
6	I would watch the videos many times so that I can understand the lesson.	0	16.7%	41.7%	41.7%	3.25	0.732
7	I like doing my work at my own pace during flipped classroom.	0	0	33.3%	66.7%	3.67	0.513
8	I like taking my test and quizzes online using Quizizz.	0	5.6%	13.9%	80.6%	3.75	0.554
9	I feel flipped learning improved my understanding towards grammar learning.	1 2.8%	0	72.2%	25%	3.19	0.577
10	The videos were easy to understand and learn from.	0	8.3%	52.8%	38.9%	3.31	0.624
11	I have more time to do my work and learn tenses during flipped learning.	0	11.1%	61.1%	27.8%	3.17	0.609
12	I am more motivated to learn English during flipped learning.	0	2.8%	55.6%	41.7%	3.39	0.549
13	The flipped learning has not improved my understanding in grammar lesson.	75%	11.1%	11.1%	2.8%	1.42	0.806
14	Overall, I prefer learning simple past tense via Flipped Learning compared to traditional approach.	0	5.6%	63.9%	30.6%	3.25	0.554

Note: Scale 1: Strongly Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Agree 4: Strongly Agree.

Moreover, participants felt flipped learning gave them more time to work at their own paced as the third highest opinions (66.7%) with a mean of (3.67). Through flipped learning, the use of technology provided a self-paced instructional advantage that could support mastery learning for learners together with other essentials such as differentiation strategies, assessment for learning, as well as a more flexible environment of instruction (Johnson, 2013).

As students in lower primary are having difficulty in understanding and utilize the correct rules of grammar, students may face difficulties in enjoying and participate in learning while learning tenses (Bailey, Park, & Haji, 2017). This could be overcome when the learning is fun, interesting and engaging as well as meaningful and

convenient to the students. Flipped classroom offers unique interface platform blended with technology that attracted most of the students to precede learning out of the classroom better. In the survey, about 21 respondents (58.3%) 'Strongly agreed' while 12 other respondents (33.3%) 'agreed' that 'flipped classroom is more fun and easy to understand than normal classroom learning'.

Additionally, most participants also liked watching the videos online (55.6% and 33.3%) respectively with a mean score of (3.22). Students find it easier to keep the information longer as they can repeat the same videos or watch other related videos and at the same time attempted the written activities given by the teacher. This is supported by Han (2015) through repetition using the same videos, students are able to imitate the grammar lessons by using the target language and sample sentences from the tutorial videos.

Students also agreed that flipped classroom offers more flexibility in their learning. About 22 or (61.1%) of respondents felt that they have more time to do their work and learn tenses during flipped learning. Han (2015) added, flipped classroom could give students more time to spend a considerable amount of out-of-class time to focus on learning tenses and at the same time, able to compensate the time loss of not being able to comprehend the information properly.

Nevertheless, two thirds of respondents felt that they can communicate and ask questions to a teacher and friends during flipped learning generate the medium mean score of (2.89). As students felt they can ask teachers anytime and at their own convenience whenever they are lost. Students could also send a private message to teacher or even do a voice call to get further clarification regarding the lesson shown on videos. Even some students may get personal online coach for the topic that they had difficulties of understanding. Just at a few 'clicks' students would get all the related videos and information to further strengthen their understanding. It is supported by a study about flipped where some students can also communicate with their peers about their problems and then answer each other's questions (Jiang, 2019).

In flipped classroom, there are many opportunities that arise when implementing flipped learning (Roehl, Reddy, & Shannon, 2013). Students are more confident and eager to commit and engage when they are learning something new. Flipped learning can also be a new method for these students who never had the opportunity to learn in a different realm of language learning. It is an opportunity and a greater advantage of flipped approach and could be expanding to broader usage and larger audience. When asked whether they would recommend flipped learning to a friend, all of the participants (100%) agreed to do so as most of them felt that flipped learning is more fun and easy to understand compared to a normal classroom setting (91.6%). Additionally, most participants also liked watching the videos online (55.6% and 33.3%) respectively. Only a few (11.1%) disagreed on the statement due to reasons mentioned earlier in Table 2.

### 3.5. Content-Based Learning via Flipped Classroom

In order to attract students to learn and improve their understanding, the contents of the videos should be interactive, attractive, engaging and meaningful enough to cater the needs of students' learning (Liu, Sands-Meyer, & Audran, 2018). It was 'agreed' (55.6%) and 'strongly agreed' (41.7%) by most participants that they are 'more motivated to learn English during flipped learning' with the highest mean under this category of 3.39. In one of the open-ended questions, a participant responded;

*"I like to watch video in flipped classroom because it is useful for my learning process compared to traditional method". (P 33)*

As flipped learning is useful in promoting active-learning that overcomes passive learning, hence motivates students to occupy more out-of-class period to study by themselves (Al-Harbi & Alshumaimeri, 2016; Han, 2015). A study by Moranski and Henery (2017) found that videos attuned students' potentials and expectations, mainly in the part of second language predominance in the classroom. This interface then releases face-to-face period for richer, more significant learning experiences for students (Bergmann & Sams, 2014).

Additionally, participants (52.8%) felt the 'content of the videos were easy to understand and learn from' as they could 'repeat the videos many times' in order to absorb the contents of the lesson (41.7%). When asked how many times they would repeat the videos in an open-ended question, most participants would repeat twice (36.1%) followed by thrice (27.8%), and a maximum repetition up to 5 times (19.4%). This is supported by Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri (2016) which had stated, that majority of students appreciated having the authority to control and monitor the video, like repeating the contents of the video and watching them at their own pace anytime and anywhere at their own convenient.

Due to the advantages of having authority of controlling the contents of their lesson, a majority of participants 'agreed' (72.2%) and 'strongly agreed' (25%) that flipped learning had 'improved their understanding towards grammar learning' as they had 'more time and better focused to do their work' (61.1%).

Thus, in overall finding, most participants 'agreed' (63.9%) and 'strongly agreed' (30.6%) 'to prefer learning simple past tense via Flipped Learning compared to traditional approach' which had a mean score of 3.25.

Nonetheless, students who felt flipped learning had not improved their understanding in grammar lesson (11.1%) and preferred traditional approach (5.6%) were at disadvantages of having lack of support from parents with inaccessible to technological requirement. As these students are living in a rural area, there are a few parents who are poor, uneducated, and from a low socio-economic background as well as unsure on how to support their children's learning (Bond, 2019). Another reason could be due to parents who were deeply disturbed about their children's disclosure to the threats and dangers of the Internet exposure (Yusuf, Osman, Hassan, & Teimoury, 2014).

However, there were about 27 students or 75% strongly disagree about these statements. These students felt their understanding in tenses learning improved during flipped. As it sounds too good to be true, these students were no exception to some of the setbacks in flipped classroom. These were the challenges that arise during 4-week flipped process.

Finally, when asked whether they would wish to continue this method next year in year 4, all participants (100%) said 'Yes'. Despite all the barriers, these students perceived that flipped learning could offer them better, useful and innovative method of learning compared to traditional approach.

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

As to conclude, flipped classroom offers many advantages and able to improved students' perceptions towards grammar learning. Despite some limitations to students who had no access to technological infrastructure and lack of their parents' support, would not curb their interest and ability to access knowledge in a better, meaningful and engaging innovative way that traditional approach unable to provide. Flipped learning would not only help students but also effectives for teachers with busy schedules as well. Teachers could be more creative in selecting and modifying the type of video as well as being flexible to help the students understand and participate in the lesson better. Teachers should bear in mind that the used of videos are for presentation only and for level 1 students, the post video lesson should be on question and answer only. As students of rural area have yet to have flipped culture, reinforcement with the help of parents should be used to persuade students to watch the videos and complete their work (Ozkurkudis & Bümen, 2019). Furthermore, it would be more meaningful and beneficial to add school administrators and parents to participate in flipped learning to observe how well these students are willing to learn and to examine how far the parents are keen to assist their children in flipped learning. Thus, as suggested by Bond (2019) it would be better to include parents to be interviewed in the study as well in order to enriched the data. As flipped learning has yet to become embedded in school and home culture, it is better that both educators and school administrator work hand in hand to in creating awareness and deliver mailing information to parents on the benefits of flipped learning as well as to includes graphs of students achievement and the progress of the school based of previous studies.



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