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IS FLIPPED LEARNING FOR EVERYONE?

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Abstract

An education crisis happens in Indonesia and therefore many policies and efforts are implemented to uplift the quality of its education. The government is committed to improve the infrastructure in the country's education system so that the students will have better experience in the future. This study analyzes flipped learning as one of the strategies in blended learning that incorporates variety of methods in delivering the content of Lessons in English classroom context. By implementing transcendental phenomenology, this study aims at finding a description on how the students give meaning on the implementation of flipped learning in their Interpreting class. This study tried to capture the narrative description of the students' lived experience and depicted the emerging themes from the analysis of the students' understanding, belief, feeling, intention and action. The themes emerged in this study were collaboration, discipline, self-actualization and self-empowerment.

Keywords

Flipped Learning, English Language Learning, Interpreting, Lived Experience

1. Introduction

The emergence of technology in teaching and learning activity has brought about many changes in language classroom in particular. Blended course, in which a portion of the traditional face-to-face instruction is replaced by web-based online learning, has gained its solid ground since many experts still see that face-to-face interactions between teacher and students are still needed.

Bersin (2004) mentions that developing effective e-learning programs is difficult and complex. There are a dizzying number of tools, technologies, and approaches. “Blended Learning,” the integration of e-learning and instructor-led approaches into a seamless program, has become a critical paradigm for training professionals. However, he also mentions that this model provides some drawbacks in which the students with various learning styles encountered various kinds of problems. In reality, this model is the same with traditional face-to-face interaction with technologies in it.

In 2007, Jonathan Bergman and Aaron Sams at Woodland Park High School in Woodland Park, CO, found a way to record PowerPoint presentation. They then recorded and posted their live lectures online for students who missed it. Their method of material delivery made them realize the effectiveness of recording live lectures and nowadays, teachers began using online videos and podcasts to teach students outside the class, reserving class time for collaborative work and concept mastery exercises.

According to Flipped Learning Network (2014, p. 1) “flipped learning is a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter”. By utilizing technology, teachers can create a flexible learning space where students can determine the way they would like to learn, as well as when they learn. So students can take their learning on the go with them.

Flipped learning shifts the roles in the classroom. “Those who support the flipped classroom say it helps teachers transform from “sage on the stage” to “guide on the side” and forces students to become an active learner” (Steffenhagen 2012, p.1). Since students are

assigned the lecture portion of class to watch for homework, students arrive to class with an understanding of the lesson of the day, then the class period is devoted to applying concepts that were covered, and the teacher is there to answer any questions (Johnston 2013). The flipped classroom model allows students to become the center of learning rather than teachers providing direct instruction as the primary teaching tool (Bergmann & Sams 2014).

Converting direct instruction teaching styles in English language learning to a Flipped Classroom model allows the teacher to make short videos that highlight the skills or contents that will be applied during the next class. Instead of a teacher-centered demonstration for students in class, students can analyze video content of themselves or others and provide feedback to demonstrate understanding of the content.

Learning English in Sanata Dharma University, especially in English Language Education Study Program, means learning all aspects of the language, including the skills and contents. Since the study program prepares the students to become English teachers, the students need to master the language well. Educational technologies, in particular those accompanied by appropriate method, will help the students to improve their language mastery.

The premise of this study is implementing flipped learning in this context will help the students get more exposure to the language and hence will improve their self-confidence and positive attitude towards language learning. Besides confidence, the students can use this strategy in communicating their ideas to collaborate with others so that they can contribute to each other's work. The proposed question of this study is how the students give meaning on the implementation of flipped learning in Interpreting class.

2. Method

This research is qualitative since here I try to describe actions within a specific setting and invite rather than try to control the possibility of a rich array of variable (Holliday 2002). It employed qualitative data gathering instruments to answer the research question; they were documents, observations, and in-depth interviews to gather the data needed. The data gathered from the documents were in the form of the students' work and their reflection. Meanwhile, the observation provided a record of what happened on site. Furthermore, I also conducted

unstructured in-depth interviews with the participants to be able to identify and on the same time clarify the participants' response to the reflection.

The goal of my study was to tell and reveal problems of human lives. Further, I intended to understand stories from the participants about their experiences in Interpreting course. This study talked about how the participants felt about implementing flipped learning in learning interpreting, how they gave meanings to it, how they provided all the efforts in achieving their goals, and how they figured out the difficulties and provided their own solution. The epistemological position regarding the study that I undertook can be formulated as follows: a) data are contained within the perspectives of people who are experiencing the integration of flipped learning in Interpreting class; and b) because of this I engaged with the participants in collecting the data. In conducting the study, I identified a transcendental phenomenology methodology as the best mean for this type of research.

Van Manen (1990) mention that the best way to enter a person's lifeworld is to participate in it. Therefore, I conducted this study in Sanata Dharma University setting since the participants of this research were students of the university. The participants of this research were the seventh semester students of Interpreting course.

This study employed three activities of gathering data. They are unstructured in-depth interview, observation, and document collection. These activities were chosen because they are congruent with the philosophical framework of the research paradigm and methodology, and enable access to participants' experiences (Ajjawi & Higgs 2007, 671).

3. Results

This part discusses the summary of the participants' lived experience extracted from the unstructured in-depth interviews conducted. Since two of the participants were reluctant when I asked whether I could use their real name, here I refer the participants as participant one, participant two and participant three based on the order of the interview.

3.1 The Story of Participant One

She is a 22-year-old student who comes from Solo. She left her hometown after she graduated from her senior high school. She started studying English since she was in elementary

school. Her parents wanted her to be able to speak in English fluently. Therefore, since she was in the fourth grade of elementary school, she enrolled herself in an English course. Her parents repeatedly told her that in order to have good job she should be able to communicate in English.

Her exposure in English before entering ELESP focused on communicative skills. She thinks that she is strong in speaking and reading skills. She had problem in listening skill because she could not have access on good quality audio materials before enrolling in the university. Furthermore, her English course teacher told her that if she is good in speaking, her listening skill would be improved automatically. Therefore, she tends to focus herself on her speaking skill. During her course and activities at school, she rarely wrote in English. Although her teachers asked her to write several texts, she thought that her writing skill in English was not developed.

She likes recording her daily activities in her personal diary with one reason in mind, that is to review again all the things that happened to her. In her daily journal, she uses combination of English and Bahasa Indonesia. Previously before joining ELESP she used only Bahasa Indonesia although here and there she put English words in the journal. She always writes positive things in her diary because she does not want to have negative impression on the things that happened to her. She wants to perceive everything in this world with positive attitude.

In terms of translation and interpreting, she got the experience only after joining ELESP. Previously in her study, her teachers sometimes asked her to translate English texts to Bahasa Indonesia but they never discussed the result in class. She believes that at the moment her ability to translate is way much better than when she joined Translation class in the previous semester. She is taking translation offers from various kinds of clients and this semester she could earn some amount of money from her translation business. However, since she considers herself weak in grammar, she often asks helps from her friends to check and edit the translation before handing it in to the customers.

She has the experience of interpreting just in Interpreting class. Previously, before joining Interpreting class, she felt confident that interpreting was as easy as translation. However, during the semester she realizes that interpreting is way much more challenging for her since she has to force herself to improve her listening skill. The problems she faced during the class are listening

comprehension and spontaneous translation. She likes translation better because she has time to review what she has translated. Meanwhile, she becomes low-spirited whenever she is asked to perform interpreting. However, in this class, she is enthusiastic because the atmosphere of the class is supportive.

3.2 The Story of Participant Two

The second participant is one of the top students in this class. She was born 22 years ago in Yogyakarta. She joined ELESP because she received full scholarship for studying in this university. After graduating from her vocational school, she did not have any dream to study in a university because of financial reasons. Her parents are farmers and she did not have sufficient financial support from her family to continue her study.

She was interested in studying English because she got positive impression from her English teacher when she studied in vocational school. She always excelled in language during her study. With her ability, she gave English courses to her neighbors pro bono. She wanted to help the children in her neighborhood studying English. During her study in ELESP, she excels in almost every subject.

She is an adept language user as well. She has little difficulties in expressing her idea using English. She got many experiences in public speaking from her previous activities in ELESP. She believes that sharing idea and creating community of learners help students' performance in learning languages. Therefore, she supports the implementation of flipped learning in Interpreting class. She considers herself as a perfectionist person and this assumption leads her to always try to be the best. Having full scholarship also encourages her to perform better in every subject she takes. She does not want to let her sponsor down. This motivation helps her to be excellent in ELESP.

Interpreting for her is not a new thing since she joined a tour agency. Her reason in joining the agency is so that she can travel for free. Although she only accompanied guests travelled around Yogyakarta only, she got so many experiences in interpreting for her guests. In the beginning, she felt not confident with her English, yet since she pushed herself hard she could manage the queasiness during interpreting sessions.

She agrees with the role of lecturer in this course since she believes that this course prepares her for her job after graduating. She dreams of having her own travel agency and translation agency as well. This interpreting together with translation classes provide her foundation for learning to build the agency. She has asked some of her friends to start making a small agency dealing with translation. So far, her agency translated documents from the surrounding graduate program students.

She believes that interpreting is quite challenging in terms of its spontaneity nature. She understands that she will not have time to look up the meaning of certain words in dictionaries. Her effort to be excellent in this class includes practicing interpreting every English conversation and texts to Bahasa Indonesia. In her opinion, interpreting from English to Bahasa Indonesia is easier than Bahasa Indonesia to English.

She is happy joining this class because she could explore many things without being afraid of being excluded by her friends. Furthermore, the role of lecturer in this course is supportive, in her opinion, because the lecturer creates supportive atmosphere in the class. Outside the class, the lecturer also provides his time to have discussions with the students. Overall, she is satisfied with the course and it helps her in her study in ELESP.

3.3 The Story of Participant Three

She is a 21-year-old student coming from Jakarta. She studied in one of prestigious school in Jakarta for her high school. Before joining ELESP, she did not join any English course. Her father is an entrepreneur in furniture export and import and in many occasions had asked her to accompany him meeting up with his clients. Therefore, although she did not join any English course, she got the exposure to improve her language ability.

She is strong in speaking and listening and weak in writing because she used the language mainly for communication. She tends to avoid writing assignments since she gets difficulties in elaborating her idea in each project. She feels depressed whenever she joins writing courses. During her study in ELESP, she excels in speaking and listening classes but struggles in reading and writing classes.

Although at the beginning she felt reluctant joining this course, at the end she felt that this Interpreting class helped her a lot. She struggled at the beginning of the class, but after she

got the rhythm of the class she could enjoy performing interpreting. In her opinion, interpreting is much easier than translation. She prefers interpreting because she doesn't like to be in deadlines. She thinks that she has difficulties in managing her time.

The role of lecturer in this course also helped her to be confident in interpreting. She says that the lecturer's appreciation on the students' efforts help them to be confident in interpreting. The lecturer also asked the students to make practice groups which support the students to have discussion on how to interpret and practice it.

Although she has small distrust on implementation of flipped learning, in general she is satisfied with this course. In her opinion, this course has helped her performing better in interpreting. She expects that this new understanding on oral translation could help her in writing her thesis.

4. Discussion

There are four emerging themes from this study. They are collaboration, discipline, self-actualization and self-empowerment. This part will discuss the themes.

4.1 Collaboration

Their familiarity with computer and internet made them able to use all the facilities during the implementation of flipped learning in class. All the participants could access all the videos provided in the LMS and could access the forum to discuss with everybody in the class. The facilities helped them to perform better in the course.

The first participant mentioned that the integration of internet in classroom has opened her eyes to the possibilities for communicating with others with ease. The other two participants also highlighted this collaboration as one of the important meaning in the integration. This collaboration includes interaction either with other friends and teacher, sharing with others, providing comments and feedbacks. The collaboration happened because everybody posts discussion topic in the forum before entering the class. After posting their topic, most members in the forum commented and discussed their topic. They did the forum discussion whenever they want without any worry of running out of class time.

The collaboration happened here was not only collaboration to create something, yet it was collaboration to peer assess. Everybody in the class was responsible in providing feedback and revision if one of their friends made mistakes. The comments from others for the participants became challenge for them to revise and write better in the next assignment. All of them found that the comments are positive in nature. Besides receiving comments, they also provided comments to the other friends.

In sum, the interactions and feedbacks happened during the course have developed the collaboration among the students in Interpreting class. However, it was not only the interaction and feedback among the students that was important. The interaction and feedback with the lecturer was also important here.

4.2 Discipline

As the result of the flexibility in accessing the materials, self-discipline became an issue in the beginning of the semester. All students were reluctant to watch the videos provided and discussed the topics posted in the forum. However, after several weeks and the students had understood the rhythm of the class, they initiated themselves to watch the videos and participated in the forum. At the end, their understanding on the topic being discussed improved significantly. The discussions and practices in class became lively and deep.

Participant one mentioned that she had to force herself to open the materials before the class. She understood that she is weak in listening skill and this pushed her to perform better in this course. She claimed that at the beginning it was hard to make the rhythm since she had to spare more time to understand the video. However, since she could pause and repeat the video, she could understand the topic better. She also claimed that her listening skill is improving and she could understand English native speakers better.

The second and third participants did not have any problem in listening to the explanation given in the videos. Their problem was mainly on time management so that they could access the video before the discussion in class. However, they managed to set certain time in a week to browse and find further information related to the topic.

All of the students struggled at first in terms of time management in accessing the materials. However, since they understood that they would not gain more during the discussion

in class, they became more discipline in attending all virtual discussion for the class. Besides the forum, the lecturer also repeatedly reminded the students through mobile message group to check and participate in the topic discussed in the internet.

4.3 Self-Actualization

Having better understanding in interpreting skills, the students are more enthusiastic in every interpreting session practice they had. They could perform the interpreting practice better and without any reluctance since they understood that nobody in the class would discourage them. Encouragement from peer students and the lecturer provided supportive atmosphere in the class so that they were willing to act out as the interpreter during class sessions.

Besides the interpreting sessions in class, the lecturer also asked his students to record their practice of interpreting using a free software of audio editing. At home, the students practiced interpreting and recorded their voices and uploaded the audio file to the LMS. Afterward, the students commented and provided feedback one another to improve their interpreting skills.

Receiving positive appraisal and comment from other friends brought about self-satisfaction. They were satisfied because they had succeeded in fulfilling the requirement of the assignments and also their friends appraised their good works. Receiving positive reward from the others encouraged the participants to share their happiness again to the other friends by providing appraisals.

Their satisfaction, therefore, resulted in better self-confidence. Self-confidence is needed by a student to get a sense of actualization. They were more confident in every interpreting practice after they got positive feedbacks from the other friends. This confidence resulted in better performance in the next assignments. Hence, there was improvement in their works.

4.4 Self-Empowerment

The first benefit of implementing the approach was the students were motivated to perform better in all classroom activities. They shared their opinion freely and commented one another excitedly. The second benefit of this integration in terms of motivation was all the participants were eager to motivate others. All of them are motivated to give comments and feedback to the other friends with expectation that the others would comment on their recording.

Their motivations given to others were in forms of appraisal, encouragement, and correction to the others' performance.

The internet provided so many opportunities for students to learn better. The technology enabled them to become researchers. They browsed the internet to find more examples and different styles in interpreting. Being able to find and decide good information in the internet makes them capable information technology users, information researchers, problem solvers and decision makers in digital life.

This approach had enabled the students to empower themselves to be better citizen and learner. This self-empowerment becomes the foundation of their own individual progress to be excellent in their own right.

5. Conclusion

This study was aimed at uncovering what the students have toward the implementation of flipped learning in Interpreting class. In order to do this, I managed to conduct observations and in-depth interviews with three students. After managing the interviews, I extracted themes emerging from the interviews and made a composite summary of it.

Flipped learning done in this course provided opportunities for the students to have deeper understanding on the topics being discussed. They could communicate their logic easier without any hesitation of being punished. The communication happened during the activity provided the students opportunity to contribute in their respective groups.

The collaboration happened in the activity were in the form of content discussion and performance feedback. The students were encouraged to express their idea and help one another whenever their friends got difficulties in interpreting practice. This activity promoted collaborations between students and provided practice field for those who are not confident yet with their interpreting.

The integration of the internet and the flexibility for the students to check and discuss the materials provided challenges for the students. However, by understanding what is expected in the class, the students can develop better time management. The personal discipline is reflected on the students' deeper understanding and better performance during interpreting sessions.

Self-actualization was the third theme emerging from the study conducted. The students became more confident in interpreting practices because they did not feel threatened of being punished or mocked. This activity built trust among the students and it resulted in respect building among them. The students supported the community of learners promoted in this class.

The students were empowered by the implementation of this approach. In facing problems or difficulties, they became researchers to solve any problem they had. By becoming better researcher, they become better learners which in turn will make them excellent in their own right.

In conclusion, the students were benefited by having this flipped learning in classroom. However, the lecturer should overcome the objectivity issue appeared in this study. The lecturer should be able to manage the flow of the class and make sure that everybody in the class was benefited from the activity.

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