

# **The Effectiveness of the Flipped Classroom Approach in Improving Speaking Skills of Adult ESL Learners in a Sri Lankan University Context**

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Competency in speaking English is crucial in contemporary Sri Lanka as it is employed in every official domain as well as in other existing fields such as trade, science, technology, and education. Nonetheless, literature claims that Sri Lankan youth lacks English speaking skills in required contexts. Hence, the present study is an attempt to address this issue by investigating (1) the effectiveness of the flipped classroom (FC) approach in improving the speaking skills of ESL learners (2) learners' perceptions towards integrating the FC approach, and (3) challenges faced by teachers using the FC approach. An ESL tertiary education institution was chosen as the research context and the study comprised a sample of stratified-randomly selected 120 first-year undergraduates of the University of Kelaniya, whose proficiency was at the elementary level. The sample comprised three groups; one control and two experimental groups, where traditional teaching and flipped-based teaching were applied respectively. The data were collected utilizing a mixed-method research paradigm including a pre-test / post-test design, an attitudinal questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. Accordingly, a Paired Samples T-test was used to determine the statistical significance of the undergraduates' test scores. Thus, a thematic analysis was conducted to analyze the open-ended questionnaire items and the semi-structured interviews. The findings reported that the mean scores of the post-test marks of the experimental groups have surpassed the ones of the control group. As such, it points towards the effectiveness of the FC approach in improving the speaking skills of learners. The questionnaire analysis on undergraduates' perceptions towards this approach revealed their satisfaction whereas a few challenges were identified based on the lecturers' responses at the semi-structured interviews. Conclusively, the researcher recommends ESL practitioners integrate the FC approach as it improves learners' speaking skills.

**Keywords:** Flipped Classroom (FC) approach, English as a Second Language (ESL) context, Speaking Skills, Learner Perceptions, Challenges