

The Perceptions of Undergraduate Students towards Using Flipgrid in Learning English Speaking Skills

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to identify the perceptions of undergraduates towards the use of Flipgrid in learning English speaking skills. 40 undergraduate students who enrolled in ELC590 English for Oral Presentations course are selected as participants in this study. The students completed a 14-item, 5-point-Likert-type online questionnaire designed to assess students' perceptions on the use of Flipgrid in learning English, particularly speaking skills. Results revealed that the majority of the students found Flipgrid as an effective learning tool as they have positive perceptions towards the use of Flipgrid by the end of the semester. Flipgrid provided students with an easy-to-use platform that helped them gain confidence in their speaking skills. The students enjoyed using Flipgrid and it had a positive influence on their participation in the classroom. Flipgrid is an effective learning tool that supports the learning process especially in the speaking class as it can help to improve language speaking skills as well as students' participation.

Keywords: Perception, Flipgrid, Participation, Undergraduate Students, Speaking Skills

Introduction

Since the first case of coronavirus disease or COVID-19 was reported on December 31st, 2019 in Wuhan, China, the world has never been the same. The long-known normality was rewritten in a way that nobody saw coming. Many of our routine activities were obstructed as many countries around the world implemented partial or full lockdown. Despite that the world has muddled through this lamentable chapter and since then been on a path to recovery, some things remain impossible to undo. One of which is the learning process of students.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation or UNESCO (2021) in its education response to COVID-19 indicated that the pandemic had not only caused a massive drop in learning progress but also an increase in the dropout rates across the world. In 2021, over 17,000 Malaysian students were reported to have quit public universities due to their mental health issues, apart from many others (Free Malaysia Today, 2022). As equally

concerning, Moy and Ng (2021) found in their studies that students with negative perception towards COVID-19 and of the younger age scored higher in Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 Items (DASS-21) and vice versa. The study also found postgraduates of Malay ethnicity were associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety, respectively. One of the most commonly cited causes for this academic distress is the use of information technology in online learning. Hence, echoing the aspiration of the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education's (MoHE) on the implementation of online education, it is crucial to integrate reliable technologies that do not risk students' well-being to create an effective as well as a resilient education system that could withstand the everchanging learning climate.

There are many factors that should be taken into consideration when selecting suitable platforms and tools to ensure the effectiveness of online education. One of the common drawbacks of online education platforms and tools is the lack of human connection which raises students' apprehension in learning. Human touch or connection is one crucial aspect to create a collaborative and interactive online learning environment (Dhawan, 2020). According to Sindhu (2003), students mould their perceptions in the classroom learning process based on their observations through senses, which not only give meaning but also interpret the observed object. Keiper et al (2021), claimed that students' perception holds great importance in understanding human behaviour. In the context of learning with the use of technologies, negative perception could lead to students feeling burdened and thus reluctant to utilise related software or application. This is highlighted in the study as a potential cause of a counterproductive learning environment. Similarly, Mango (2019) also found that students' perception plays a direct role in determining their participation in educational activities and classroom learning. Thus, it is important for students to have a positive outlook on the online platforms used for their education: in order for students to learn effectively online, they require a suitable platform which enhances their confidence as well as interest to engage in class.

One of the state-of-the-art online platforms that has been increasingly used for educational purposes is Flipgrid. Flipgrid is a free video discussion platform that offers potential social learning through its features that promote user creativity and connectivity. Many recent research have studied the effectiveness of its usage in learning, particularly from the lens of students' perceptions and attitudes (Hsollah, 2022; Omar & Ismail, 2021; Keiper et al., 2021; Shin & Yunus, 2021; Lowenthal & Moore, 2020; Mango, 2019). Despite being the subject of interest by many scholars, Flipgrid has yet to be fully explored for its huge potential particularly in Malaysia. In a recent study by Shin and Yunus (2021) on Malaysian primary school students' attitudes towards using Flipgrid, it has been found that the majority of the participants perceive Flipgrid as a fun learning tool. Thus, further investigation should be done to explore the usage of Flipgrid for students from various age groups, socioeconomic, and geographical backgrounds to fully capture their respective needs in learning online.

Through this effort, educators are privy to more evidence and reliable data to personalise their online teaching practices. Taking on the very need of conducting further exploration into the platform and its potential, this study therefore attempted to explore the perceptions of undergraduates towards the use of Flipgrid in learning English speaking skills. This was done by undertaking the following research objective

- To explore the perceptions of undergraduate students towards the use of Flipgrid in learning English speaking skills in ELC590

Literature Review

Video-Based Learning

Over the past decades, the growing trend of video-based learning can be observed. The increase of social networking sites has influenced the mass public, especially the youths to become more inclined to consume and communicate information through videos (Levy, 2007). In the education system, this trend of moving towards audio-visual content has been utilised in creating more engaging educational tools. According to Tan and Towndrowb (2009), video recording allows for detailed analysis of its content as it provides the opportunity for unlimited viewing. Through video practices, viewers are able to rehearse the modelled behaviour through in-depth observation which eventually leads to the mastery of the presented skill (Zhang et al., 2006). The benefits of video usage in teaching and learning environments could be narrowed down to three aspects which are cognitive benefits (information retention), psychological benefits (motivation and satisfaction), and visualisation of knowledge (Pekdag, 2010). Similarly, Berk (2009) argues that the usage of videos in learning increases students' motivation, focus, creativity, and comprehension.

In the context of learning speaking skills, many past research highlighted that improvement in speeches could be observed through the usage of video recordings which could lead to a higher sense of accomplishment in class (Nazlinur, 2016; Pop et al., 2011; Swain & Lapkin, 1995). According to Guo (2009), students are able to reflect on the fillers they use in speaking by reviewing their video recording thus allowing for improvements to be made. Similarly, several past studies have claimed that the use of video portfolios in public speaking classes provides students with tangible evidence of performance which allows them to conduct self-assessment and reflection on their learning progress (Smith & Sodano, 2011; Voth & Moore, 1997). On top of that, studies conducted at a school of engineering by The Cooper Union (1982); Morales and Rosa (2008) found that many participants believe that feedback from video recordings is an effective tool to improve their oral presentation skills.

The countless past studies that have proven the effectiveness of using video recordings as an educational tool have led to the development of many video-based learning platforms. One of the recent video-based learning platforms that could be utilised online is Flipgrid which is the focus of this study.

Flipgrid as an Online Learning Tool

The usage of Flipgrid as an educational tool has generally been studied by many scholars especially in recent years due to the influx of demand for online distance learning. One of the earliest studies that investigate the use of Flipgrid is Stoszkowski (2018) which reviews the strengths and weaknesses of the platform in facilitating learning and collaboration. This study identified seven (7) advantages of Flipgrid namely (i) *access* which does not requires any sign-up; (ii) *convenience* or flexibility to be used whenever and wherever; (iii) *participation* or students' even distribution in discussion; (iv) *appeal* or students' preference for video-based interaction over reading written material; (v) *formative feedback* in the forms of regular written or video-based feedback, emailed directly to students; (vi) *tracking* of participation

levels based on the total engagement time; and (vii) its compatibility to be embedded into other platforms.

In his review, Stoszkowski (2018) also highlighted five (5) potential barriers to the use of Flipgrid including (i) *competitiveness* contributed by the 'like' and 'heart' features and their relationship with students' confidence; (ii) *equipment* or the need for reliable camera, microphone, and internet connection; (iii) *impression management* due to students' concern in getting peer approval; and (iv) *confidence* or students' discomfort when being on screen due to the fear of being judged.

Lowenthal and Moore (2020) through an exploratory study also analysed the use of Flipgrid by investigating the perceptions of graduate students upon using the platform in fully online courses over the course of an academic year. A total of 79 students, who were mostly full-time educators in pre-tertiary and higher education, and instructional designers, participated in a cross-sectional survey comprising both quantitative and qualitative questions. The findings indicated that the majority perceived the platform positively: *its ease of use, ability to engage with one another, and ability to see faces with names* were cited to be three major themes contributing to this. Thus, these findings agree with Stoszkowski (2018) which highlighted Flipgrid's two beneficial features of convenience and participation.

Investigating beyond perceptions, Mango (2019) also analysed students' attitudes toward the use of Flipgrid in second language learning. A total of 30 students from a university in the Southwest of the US participated in an online questionnaire to assess the use of the platform in learning speaking and listening skills in an academic year. In this study, students used Flipgrid to record video responses on a weekly basis to complement their classroom learning. Similarly, the study yielded the same results as the majority of the students had positive perceptions of the use of Flipgrid: they vouched for its *ease of use* apart from noting its *engaging nature* and *perceived assistance* in developing speaking and listening skills. Most students also indicate that their instructors' recordings on Flipgrid ease their language learning process. This is because the videos provide an opportunity for students to model their instructors' speech and rehearse multiple times before recording their response via the platform.

Finally, Keiper et al (2021) investigated the perceived effectiveness of Flipgrid in a Hybrid Flexible (HyFlex) learning environment. This exploratory study has administered a questionnaire containing Likert-type and open-ended questions to 163 undergraduate and graduate business courses students over a 2-year period. The findings of the study indicated that the majority of the students agree that the usage of Flipgrid is beneficial in a hybrid and flexible learning environment. However, the open-ended answers from this study have also shown a small number of students who dislike the platform due to anxiety-related reasons. This concern affirms one of the potential barriers outlined in Stoszkowski (2018) whereby students might feel uncomfortable of having their videos being seen by others online due to fear of being judged.

Overall, many past studies in recent years have found Flipgrid to be a user-friendly platform to teach students online in a more engaging nature. This has resulted in positive perception and increased participation in online classes. Nonetheless, since perception is a unique

experience for each individual, there are still many layers of Flipgrid user experience that remain unexplored, especially through the lens of the Malaysian online learning environment. Thus, this study attempts to identify Malaysian undergraduate students' perception on the use of Flipgrid in learning English speaking skills.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach with a survey research strategy in order to determine students' perceptions of Flipgrid in learning English speaking skills. This was done through the use of an adapted questionnaire consisting of close-ended questions, as suggested by (Creswell, 2009). To measure students' perceptions, statistical procedures were used.

Research Participants

The participants of this study are 40 undergraduate students from the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam who are taking ELC590 English for Oral Presentations. The course, which focuses on students' communication skills, is designed to develop the strategies and skills necessary for effective oral presentations. Emphasis is not only on oral communication theory but also practice, placing equal stress on both verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Over the course of 14 weeks, students' learning is done through a variety of activities to build their confidence and competence.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire used in this research was adapted from Shin and Yunus' (2021) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) questionnaire to explore the perceptions of undergraduate students towards the use of Flipgrid in learning English speaking skills.

Through four major constructs of (i) perceived ease of use, (ii) perceived usefulness, (iii) attitudes, and (iv) behavioural intentions, there were 14 items altogether. Participants' responses were in the form of five-point Likert-scale ranging from 1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4- Agree to 5- Strongly Agree. The reliability of the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each construct, revealing acceptable reliability $\alpha = 0.99$.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.990	14

Sampling Technique

The study employed a convenience sampling technique by recruiting a group of students taking the ELC590 English for Oral Presentations. This was due to the convenient accessibility and proximity that the researchers had with the participants who were readily available at the time when the study was undertaken. This enabled the researchers to partake in recent

studies' early attempt to establish the effectiveness of Flipgrid as the latest online tool for students' learning.

To examine their perception of Flipgrid, these students had been instructed to be using the platform to do activities related to oral presentations. Over the semester, their familiarity in using the online video discussion platform enabled them to render insightful feedback into their perceptions as students learning English speaking skills. The sampling of these participants was deemed to be sufficient as the study intended to solely examine students' perceptions without drawing any link with other aspects such as students' English proficiency. As there are no specific criteria required, the inclusion of the participants was hence believed to be adequate.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The study was conducted within a course of 14 weeks from end of March to mid-July 2022. A total of 40 out of 55 participated in the survey of five likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). The questionnaires were given to students after 14 meetings. The results were computed using statistical data analysis (SPSS). Percentage and mean were used for analysing the students' perceptions of Flipgrid in learning English speaking skills.

Findings

Based on the results, it can be said that the students in this study had positive attitudes towards the use of Flipgrid. When asked if they like using Flipgrid to learn how to speak English, the average response was 4.3 on a 1 to 5 scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree), with the majority of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they liked it.

Table 1

Perceived ease of use

Item	Mean
I think using Flipgrid does not take too much time.	4.3
Learning to use Flipgrid for my class activities is easy.	4.2
Interacting with my teacher and other members through Flipgrid is easy and not stressful.	4.2
Overall	4.2

Table 1 showed the mean of the results on three statements investigating students' perceived ease of using Flipgrid. Based on the results, students had positive perceptions towards the use of Flipgrid. Data indicated that students enjoyed using Flipgrid, and found it was easy to use as well as helpful in their overall learning. 90% of students indicated that Flipgrid does not take too much time with a mean of 4.3. Not to mention, the majority of the students (87.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that Flipgrid was easy to use with a mean of 4.2 and 87.5% of students indicated that interacting using Flipgrid is not stressful with a mean of 4.2. The overall mean of students' perceived ease of using Flipgrid was 4.2.

Table 2
Perceived usefulness

Items	Mean
Learning using Flipgrid helped me develop my English speaking skills.	4.3
I think that using Flipgrid can help me to improve my English speaking skills.	4.3
Flipgrid served as an effective learning aid in this class.	3.8
Overall	4.1

In terms of perceived usefulness as stated in Table 2, the majority of the students found that Flipgrid helped them develop their English speaking skills (M=4.3). In addition, 87.5% of students believed that Flipgrid can help them improve their English speaking skills with a mean of 4.3. In comparison, 59% of the respondents indicated that Flipgrid served as an effective learning aid in the class (M=3.8). The overall mean of student perceptions on the use of Flipgrid towards their speaking skills was 4.1 which indicates a positive perception.

Table 3
Attitudes

Items	Mean
I like using Flipgrid to learn how to speak English.	4.3
I have a positive attitude towards using Flipgrid in learning how to speak English.	4.2
I feel that using Flipgrid is a good way to learn how to speak English.	4.2
I enjoyed watching my classmates' Flipgrid.	4.3
My recordings on Flipgrid are more well thought out than if I were speaking face to face.	4.3
Overall	4.3

The highest mean in this category was students' attitude towards the use of Flipgrid with an overall mean of 4.3 as stated in Table 3. Most of the students (90%) argued that they like using Flipgrid to learn how to speak English with a mean of 4.3. On the other hand, 87.5% claimed that they have positive attitudes towards using Flipgrid in learning how to speak English with a mean of 4.2 and 87.5% agreed or strongly agreed that Flipgrid is a good way to learn to speak English (M=4.2). Most importantly, 90% students agreed that they enjoyed watching their classmates' Flipgrid with a mean of 4.3 and 90% claimed that their recordings on Flipgrid are more well thought out than if they were speaking face to face (M=4.3). It can be said that Flipgrid allowed the students to learn from each other and from listening to their own recordings.

Table 4

Behavioural intention towards Flipgrid

Items	Mean
I will continue to use Flipgrid to learn how to speak English.	4.2
Using Flipgrid helped me to become more willing to speak English.	4.2
When I use Flipgrid, I have more self-confidence to speak English.	4.1
Overall	4.2

In terms of students' behavioural intention towards Flipgrid as mentioned in Table 4, 87.5% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that they will continue to use Flipgrid to learn how to speak English language ($M=4.2$). Most of the participants (87.5%) also agreed or strongly agreed that using Flipgrid helped them to become more willing to speak English ($M=4.2$). Lastly, 82.5% argued that when using Flipgrid, they have more self-confidence to speak English with a mean of 4.1. This result is in line with the findings in McLain's (2018) research which revealed that 42.9% of English language learners in a business writing class felt more confident speaking English when using Flipgrid.

Discussions and Conclusion

This study revealed that participants had a positive perception towards the use of Flipgrid whereby they enjoyed using it in their language learning and found that it played a positive role in developing their speaking skills. Because Flipgrid allowed students to track their progress, they reported feeling more confident in their language skills (Mango, 2021). Students from this current study believed that Flipgrid helped them improve their English speaking skills as they felt more well thought when recording on Flipgrid than speaking face-to-face. This result is in accordance with a study by Tuyet and Khang (2020) which indicated that practising speaking using Flipgrid supports them to develop their confidence and they feel comfortable and less anxious when learning speaking skills using Flipgrid. Like Lowenthal and Moore (2020), this study also found that students have a high level of perceived improvement in social engagement when using Flipgrid.

By the same token, Mango (2019) found that the majority of students had positive perceptions of the use of Flipgrid: they vouched its ease of use apart from noting its engaging nature and perceived assistance in developing speaking and listening skills. Students considered Flipgrid as a beneficial tool in enhancing their language skills. The platform is easy to utilise, with several features to record, edit and design videos according to their creativity.

In addition, the students had access to gain a lot of knowledge through videos posted by other students on Flipgrid. It can be said that Flipgrid offers collaborative learning as the students get the chance to learn from each other. By doing so, Mango (2019) stated that the students will become more active in their learning and indirectly they are taking up the roles of teachers and learners in which everyone contributes to the learning process. This is helpful because some language lecturers notice that students are hesitant to participate in spontaneous speaking activities due to the fear of making mistakes in front of others. Hence, it is important to provide a positive environment for interaction and Flipgrid is one way to do that. McLain (2018) mentioned that when the students have a positive perception towards

their learning, they are more likely to participate in learning activities in the classroom. In a similar manner, Lowenthal and Moore (2020) indicated that the majority of the educators indicated that they would likely or very likely use Flipgrid in the course they were teaching. All in all, lecturers can use this tool to support the learning process especially in the speaking class as it can help to enhance language speaking skills as well as improve student participation. However, given this study's limitation, which covered a small number of participants, more research needs to be done to explore the effectiveness of using Flipgrid in language learning, especially speaking skills.

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