What the FLIP do they think is going on? Learners' and practitioners' understanding of flipped learning in an emergency remote teaching English for academic purposes pre-sessional course

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This small-scale case study sheds light on perceptions of flipped learning in an emergency remote teaching (Hodges et al., 2020) English for academic purposes (EAP) pre-sessional course in the U.K. context. Specifically, it explores students' engagement with flipped learning (FL) from the perspectives of both EAP learners and practitioners. Using semi-structured interviews thematically analysed, key contributors to students' engagement with FL are identified, following Cargile and Gollobin's (2024) emergency remote teaching (ERT) reflective framework. These contributors are monitoring the flipped content, seamlessly integrating the flipped content and the live sessions, and creating a clear link between the flipped content and the assessments followed. Results also evidence students' sophisticated understanding of FL, which is not systematically demonstrated by practitioners. Based on this analysis, this article concludes with a suggested checklist of good practices that aim to facilitate the successful implementation of FL based on the lessons learned during the pandemic.

Keywords: flipped learning, pre-sessional course, English for academic purposes, blended learning, emergency remote teaching, online learning

Introduction

Flipped learning (FL) has attracted considerable attention, even before the Covid-19 outbreak (Wittmann & Wulf, 2023). In its essence, FL requires students to engage with direct instruction before attending a session, which then becomes a collaborative space where students create knowledge with

the support of their peers and the guidance of the tutor (Brinks-Lockwood, 2014). FL is present in EAP practices, as evidenced by Knežević et al.'s (2020) comparative study exploring the efficacy of FL in EAP students' academic vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, Alkhalidi's (2020) research investigates the role of FL in helping EAP students navigate multi-level challenges, and Hudson (2022) discusses how a U.K. university adopted FL to deliver its pre-sessional course during the pandemic. FL has been discussed in EAP forums such as BALEAP conferences (BALEAP 2019; 2021; 2023) and recent IATEFL conferences (IATEFL, 2024). These more recent discussions around FL in EAP present FL in tandem with technology-enhanced learning (TEL). Although FL is conceptualized as an approach underpinned by strong pedagogical principles independent of TEL (Brinks-Lockwood, 2014; Correa, 2015; Villegas, 2022), these recent accounts of practice seem to favour a partnership between FL and TEL. This partnership is not a new development. Bergmann and Sams (2014), considered the founders of contemporary FL, employed pre-recorded lectures, thus engaging with TEL. Nevertheless, implementing FL with TEL seems to be a more salient practice as a result of TEL reclaiming its role within pedagogical spaces. This reality is in line with Ahn and Chi's (2023) reports on changes in the language classroom after emergency remote teaching (ERT) (Hodges et al., 2020), with more teachers reporting more agency to implement technology. Conversations in the field are undergoing a period of reflective analysis of the approaches and techniques implemented during ERT, urging for reflective critical analysis and reflexivity to learn lessons from the pandemic (Fayed & Cummings, 2021; Rogge, 2022; Scully et al., 2021). To facilitate this reflection, Cargile and Gollobin (2024) propose a framework to guide practitioners in harnessing the power of their ERT (Hodges et al., 2020) experiences. Thus, this article aims to contribute to the conversation around FL in EAP by drawing from primary data generated during ERT and suggesting a checklist that practitioners and course developers can use to integrate FL in EAP effectively.

In response to the argument that FL in the online learning (OL) space is of interest to EAP practitioners, this article explores students' and EAP practitioners' perspectives of FL in an online pre-sessional course. Specifically, it aims to gain a better understanding of the different factors that contribute to students' completion of the flipped content from the perspective of students and practitioners. It draws from Cargile and Gollobin's (2024) ERT reflection framework to shed light on the factors that can contribute to the successful implementation of FL in EAP courses. This article contributes to the current conversation by specifically addressing the following overarching research question: to what extent do students engage with FL?

Thus, these results allow for a better understanding of FL, specifically by exploring the role of flipped content in relation to the sessions and the reasons why students engage with it. In this article, engagement is used in

line with Cargile and Gollobin's (2024) multidimensional conceptualization of the term. Based on the data generated, this article concludes by proposing a potentially transferable checklist of best practices that aims to facilitate the successful implementation of FL at the course and classroom levels.

Literature review

Conceptualizing flipped learning in EAP

Flipped learning is difficult to define (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2014). This aligns with the conceptualization of FL as an approach as opposed to a method. In their seminal paper, Abeysekera and Dawson (2014, p. 3) proposed the following criteria to identify FL:

1) moves most information-transmission teaching out of class

2) uses class time for learning activities that are active and social

3) requires students to complete pre- and/ or post-class activities to benefit from in-class work fully.

These criteria reflect the core principles of FL as they are generally understood within the wider education community. They recognize the shift in task distribution, with the high-order thinking skills (HOTS) tasks moved into the classroom and the low-order thinking skills (LOTS) tasks moved out of the classroom. As Brinks-Lockwood (2014) explains, FL is simply turning Bloom's taxonomy (2001) model upside down (Figure 1).

Figure 1   Bloom's taxonomy in the flipped classroom (based on Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001)

By moving the HOTS into the classroom space (Brinks-Lockwood, 2014, p. 2), students can then benefit from exploring these skills with their peers' support and tutor's guidance. Crucially, to embrace FL, it is essential to open the classroom space to collaborative activities and project-based language learning (Marshall, 2014). As Bauer-Ramazani et al. (2016) note, it is not

simply a case of switching traditional homework activities for traditional classroom activities. FL is a student-centred approach (Honeycutt & Garrett, 2014) that allows the classroom space to be used to construct knowledge collaboratively, thus aligning with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism. This shift in the distribution of the task and the resulting collaborative approach to teaching and learning strongly suggest that FL is underpinned by constructivism, thus allowing a deeper conceptualization of the method in theoretical terms. Bergmann and Sams (2014), credited with the founding of FL as it is currently understood, proposed the four pillars of FLIP (FLN, 2014). These are flexible environment, learning culture, intentional content, and professional educators (FLN, 2014). These pillars align with constructivism while providing an accessible road map to implement FL according to strong pedagogical principles (see Villegas, 2022 for further discussion).

Crucially, this conceptualization of FL aligns with Kirk and King's (2022) push to promote an EAP classroom where students are seen as in-training researchers and scholars, thus advocating a partnership between students and practitioners. Kirk and King's (2022) example of a speaking classroom moves away from students' use of functional language while superficially engaging with a general topic to a genuine academic discussion based on the understanding of the topic discussed. This can potentially be achieved by allowing students to engage with LOTS activities before the sessions, exploring the topic in depth according to their base level and needs. If done successfully, students would be able to actively engage in their seminars as they would have already worked through LOTS tasks, as suggested by inverting Bloom's taxonomy. Nevertheless, this potentially positive contribution to FL in EAP may be jeopardized by students not completing the flipped content.

Implementing flipped learning in the EAP classroom

As discussed, FL relies on learners independently completing the LOTS tasks before they attend their classes. This results in practitioners' understandable concerns regarding students failing to engage with the flipped content (Correa, 2015) while raising the issue of how effective or assessable students' completion of tasks independently actually is. Brinks-Lockwood (2014) argues that learners are indeed used to completing activities after their classes or homework. Therefore, the expectation is that the activities will be completed, as the flipped content is not a new burden to the student but simply a redistribution of their independent study. Crucially, however, when adopting FL, students must complete the flipped content for the sessions to take place effectively. In a non-flipped approach, students not completing the homework will not systematically result in the materials explored in the sessions being inaccessible to the students, profoundly hindering teaching and learning in the classroom space. As completion of the flipped content

is, therefore, fundamental for enacting FL, relying on implicit expectations may pose a threat to successfully implementing FL in the EAP classroom.

Despite this potential pitfall, studies carried out before the pandemic seem to be generally positive. Among the reported advantages of FL, it is worth noting students' engagement and satisfaction (Yilmaz, 2017), learner interactions (Wanner & Palmer, 2015), more effective use of in-class time (Davies et al., 2013), along with an increase in attendance (McLaughlin et al., 2014). A contributing factor to fostering FL's success includes grading the pre-session tasks (Yilmaz, 2017). Other reported advantages of embracing FL include, firstly, students having the time they need to fully understand the LOTS (Brinks-Lockwood, 2014; González-Gómez et al., 2016). Secondly, the work produced is of higher quality (Brinks-Brinks-Lockwood, 2014). Specifically, in the modern foreign language (MFL) classroom, this translated into better performance for students taking a flipped English as a second language (ESL) course in higher education (HE) (Teng, 2017). Similarly, Aburezeq (2019) reports a positive impact on students' Arabic speaking skills after adopting FL. A final key advantage of FL is the inclusion of materials perceived as useful by the students (Brinks-Brinks-Lockwood, 2014), which aligns with the EAP principles of authenticity and non-triviality (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001).

The danger of students not completing the flipped content has been discussed as detrimental to the successful implementation of FL. However, further negative aspects of FL have been reported in the literature. Firstly, there is evidence that the benefits of FL are not long-lasting when it involves students' grades (Anderson et al., 2017). In their comparative study in a pharmaceutical HE course, students learning through FL initially scored higher than those in the traditional classroom. However, the differences in scores were no longer substantial after six months. Bouwmeester et al. (2019) report the same trend in the medical classroom. Thus, a further key aspect related to embracing FL is assessment; emergent literature on this area shows that FL has a positive impact on students' scores (Aburezeq, 2019; Låg & Sæle, 2019; Pablo-Lerchundi et al., 2023; Teng, 2017) Similarly, learners report increased levels of satisfaction related to these higher scores (Pablo-Lerchundi et al., 2023) and, in the context of medicine, Bouwmeester et al. (2019) identified exam preparation as a less consuming task for learners following the flipped model. However, when analysing the impact of FL on assessment and learners' perceptions, disciplinary differences account for the most variability (Bouwmeester et al., 2019). Thus, caution should be advocated when drawing parallelisms among different disciplines and contexts.

Cultural differences are also identified as potential deterrents to the successful implementation of FL (Compton, 2016). In his study, exploring a foundation FL course in a Turkish context, Compton (2016) urges practitioners

to create a suitable teaching and learning environment by identifying potential areas of cultural clashes, such as body language and dealing with them constructively.

Despite the potential suitability of FL in EAP courses, literature exploring this is scarce. However, practitioners' reflections (Alexander, 2020), along with newly published research (Hamakali & Josua, 2023), are appearing. These new publications present FL alongside TEL, a result of an increase in OL and hybrid provision sparked after the Covid-19 pandemic (Barlow et al., 2021). It is expected that this trend is likely to continue and lead to different combinations of blended approaches to teaching and learning in HE (Barlow et al., 2021).

As highlighted, FL in EAP is at an early stage, but there are relevant studies in the field that can provide advice on embracing FL. Firstly, students need to understand what FL as an approach entails (Al-Zahrani, 2015; Eshreteh & Hisham Siaj, 2017). Secondly, clear mechanisms need to be in place for teachers to be able to check that flipped content is completed by students (Fautch, 2015). Thirdly, students need to be able to ask questions about the flipped content and receive guidance (Chen et al., 2015; Fautch, 2015; Wanner & Palmer, 2015). Fourthly, an increase in workload is a common concern highlighted by students (Khanova et al., 2015; Sage & Sele, 2015; Smith, 2013; Wanner & Palmer, 2015;). Teachers echo these concerns in relation to their own workload when adopting FL (Brinks-Lockwood, 2014). A final key concern highlighted by Khanova et al. (2015, p. 149) is the importance of carefully designing pre-session tasks that prepare students for engaging with the session and avoiding content duplication. Therefore, a clear understanding of the factors involved in engagement with flipped content can lead to a successful implementation of FL.

This article aims to explore those factors and use them to inform the development of a comprehensive checklist that would facilitate the implementation of FL at both classroom and course levels, following Cargile and Gollobin's (2024) ERT reflection framework.

## Methodology and methods

Research context
The course
Data was collected in the summer of 2020 from an EAP pre-sessional course at a Russell Group university. Interviews were carried out in the last two weeks of a ten-week and six-week pre-sessional course. This pre-sessional programme was already following a blended approach in 2019, with fifteen hours of class and roughly ten hours of online interactive contact to be completed before the sessions (Smith & Villegas, 2019). This 2019 pre-sessional course is not only an example of FL early adopters (see

Dale et al., 2021; Hunter et al., 2021) for insightful definitions of this concept) but also of a sector-leading course in terms of embracing and implementing a sector-leading course in terms of embracing and implementing TEL due to the creative approach of the team.

Therefore, FL was not a response to the COVID-19 outbreak. However, the classes being moved to OL synchronous sessions and reduced from fifteen to ten was a direct response to the pandemic. This is a very interesting combination as the flipped content aligns with OL learning, being underpinned by theory and having not only having been trialled but also well regarded within the industry by the accreditation body, BALEAP. However, the actual classes would be closer to ERT (Hodges et al., 2020).

Thus, when exploring FL in the 2020 pre-sessional courses cycle, it is important to remember that, in its essence, FL as an approach and the flipped content activities were maintained from 2019. FL was first implemented in 2018, making 2020 the third time it was used in the ten-week and six-week pre-sessional courses. This duality situates the data generated in a liminal space, allowing for a classification following Cargile and Gollobin's (2024) ERT reflection framework while providing insight into FL as a refined approach. Examples of content from the flipped content (Figures 2–5) help illustrate the nature of the activities used as flipped content in the course. It also shows how the flipped content is accessed through the online medium.

Figure 2   Content for a 'pre-lecture flipped unit' used in the 2019 course (Read, 2019)
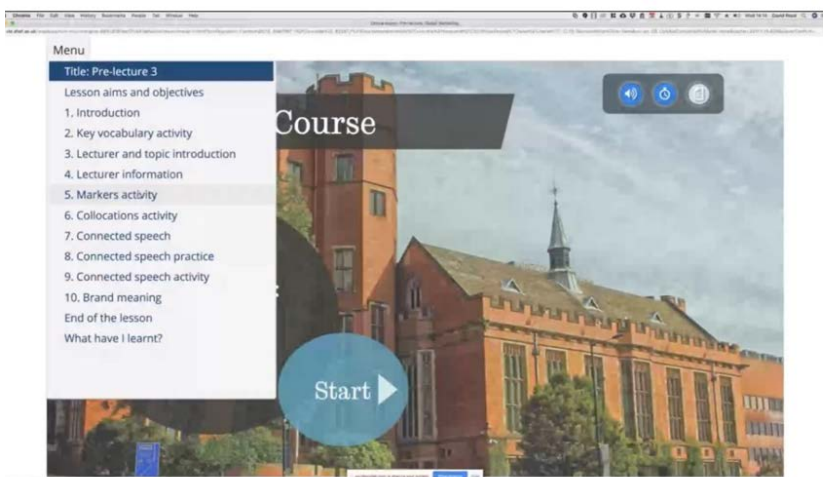
Figure 3   Flipped content for the topic of academic integrity (Read, 2019)
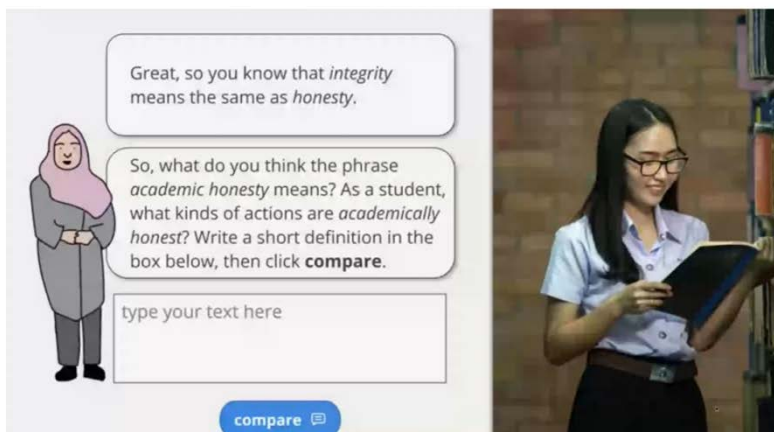
Figure 4   Flipped content for the topic of academic writing (Basarich, 2020)
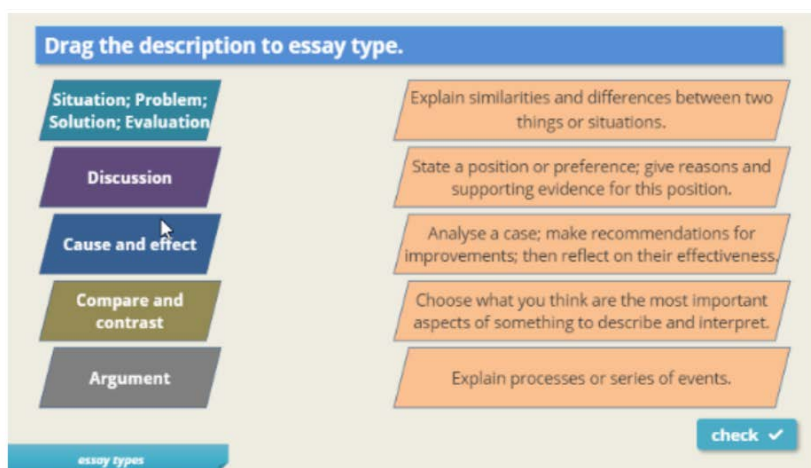
Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that programmes embracing the online environment as a response to these specific set of circumstances intrinsically lack a careful design. For example, MacDiarmid and Rosalinka's (2021) paper explores how, despite the drastic change in circumstances brought by the pandemic, it was possible to design an effective OL pre-sessional. MacDiarmid and Rolinska (2021) credit part of their success to their ability to learn from their experiences in having designed and implemented an OL postgraduate qualification while also drawing from theories exploring best practices in OL. This allows the teaching and learning that occurred during the COVID-19 outbreak to reclaim theoretical and pedagogical spaces while actively contributing to future directions in research and practice, as I have argued in this article.

Figure 5   Flipped content for the topic of academic writing (Basarich, 2020)

The participants

Students and EAP tutors in the ten-week and the six-week 2020 pre-sessional courses were approached to participate in this study. The volunteer, self-selected sample of participants included eight students and eight teachers. Essential information regarding the participants is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1   Participants' key information

| Teacher participants								
	Naomi	Cedric	Roland	Jen	Clarence	Russell	Nerese	Marcia
Age range	40–50	50–60	30–40	60+	60+	50–60	50–60	60+
EAP experience	3–6 years	7–10 years	7–10 years	+10 years	7–10 years	7–10 years	7–10 years	7–10 years
Length of pre-sessionals course	10 weeks	10 weeks	10 weeks	10 weeks	6 weeks	6 weeks	6 weeks	6 weeks
Used FL before	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Status	temporary	temporary	temporary	temporary	temporary	permanent	permanent	permanent
Student participants								
	Marla	Omar	Brianna	Rebecca	Preston	Michael	Rhonda	Beatrice
Length of pre-sessionals	6-week	6-week	6-week	6-week	6-week	6-week	6-week	6-week
Target course	MA finance & accounting	MA in applied linguistics with TESOL	MA in architecture	MA finance & accounting	Master's in mechanical engineering	Master's in engineering	MA in education	MA in global journalism
Nationality	Chinese	Colombian	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese

Research methods

To visually represent the key methodological considerations informing the research, an adaptation of the Saunders et al. (2016) research onion framework is used (Figure 6).

Figure 6   The research onion (Saunders et al., 2016) adapted to visually represent methodological choices underpinning this case study
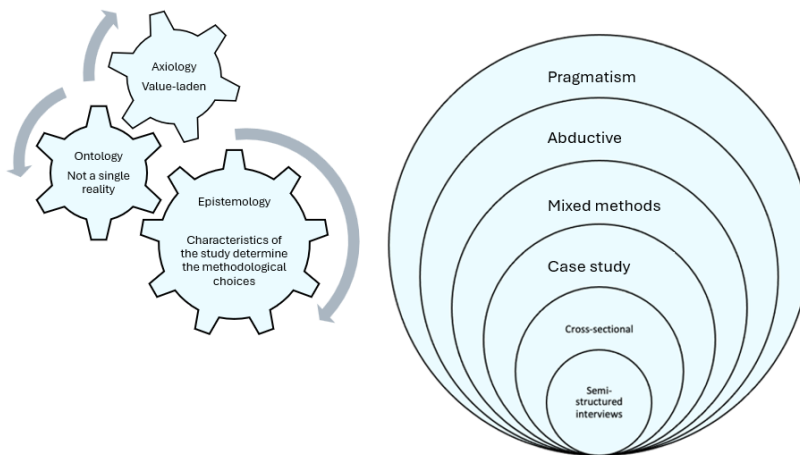
As can be seen, from a philosophical stance, this research sits within the pragmatic paradigm, which is practice-driven (Denscombe, 2008). This is suitable for this study as it aims to explore how students and practitioners perceive flipped content in a FL EAP OL course. This study embraces an abductive approach to processing data as proposed by Reichertz (2004), as the dynamism of abductive reasoning allows the researcher to be actively involved in both theory generation and data creation (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019), which suits the qualitative nature of this study along with the approach to data generation and analysis.

The strategy adopted for this research is a case study as the insight provided may be relevant for the institution in which the research was carried out, as well as for other practitioners. It is worth addressing how the lack of generalisability of case studies is widely reported in the literature as a drawback (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 293; Pearson Casanave, 2015, p. 129; Wellington, 2015, p. 293). However, even if case studies cannot lead to generalizations, they can lead to exploring them (Mitchell, 1983, as cited in Wellington, 2015). Thus, findings from this case study may provide practitioners in similar contexts with a starting point in their journey to embrace FL. Thus, in line with the intrinsic nature of this research, these results are potentially transferable but not generalizable.

Data was generated through semi-structured interviews, which in this research were closer to what Webb and Webb (1932; as cited in Wellington 2015) refer to as 'conversations with a purpose'. Practitioners and students were asked about their perceptions of FL. The semi-structured interviews ranged from twenty minutes to an hour and were conducted entirely in English. Interviews were recorded and transcribed to facilitate coding. In order to explore this rich data generated fully and keep the project manageable under the confines of the proposed research questions, a theoretical thematic analysis (TA) was conducted. Before embarking on TA, Braun and Clarke (2006) encourage researchers to consider and explicitly discuss its key considerations. Table 2 summarizes these key considerations and the approach taken in this specific study.

Table 2   Considerations that Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) suggest necessary to ponder before embarking on TA

Key decisions according to Braun & Clarke (2006, pp. 82–85)	What does this look like in this research?
What counts as a theme?	Themes were selected in relation to research questions (RQ), trends in the literature, and frequency in the data set and by exploring similarities and disparities between teachers' and students' data sets.
A rich description of the data set or a detailed account of one particular aspect?	Rich description of the data set; however, this analysis was constrained by the proposed RQs.
Inductive or theoretical TA?	As this analysis was driven by the proposed RQs, it is closer to theoretical TA (Braun and Clarke, 2006).
Semantic or latent themes?	Semantic (explicit) level. This analysis moves from the description to the interpretation of the data. Its goal is to theorize on the broader meaning and implication of the data while relating it to the literature previously explored.
Epistemology: essentialist/realist or constructionist TA?	To align with the pragmatic paradigm adopted in this research, this analysis takes a more essentialist approach.
1) The project RQ 2) Questions from interviews 3) Questions guiding the coding and analysis of data	1) The project was informed by the RQ but it was refined as the project took shape. 2) Despite the guiding points informing the interview questions, some of them are unique to some participants in line with the nature of semi-structured interviews. These questions were also informed by data from the pilot and conversations with participants.

In line with Braun and Clarke (2006), TA is analyst-driven and informed by the researcher's own interest in the area. Similarly, Braun and Clarke (2006) reject the narrative of 'emerging themes' and acknowledge how themes are actively identified by the researcher. Thus, the codes identified were refined to present the information in a clear and comprehensive manner. This process was facilitated by the coding software MAXQDA, which allows for the effective coding of transcripts. For transparency, the appendix offers a comprehensive description of the steps taken when completing this analysis following the above-mentioned Braun and Clarke (2006) approach. As discussed, Cargile and Gollobin's (2024) ERT reflection framework is used to present the data generated and guide the discussion. In their framework (Figure 7), they encourage presenting an inventory of ERT practices; this is the purpose of the research context presented in this section.

Figure 7   Post-ERT reflection framework by Cargile and Gollobin (2024, p. 106)
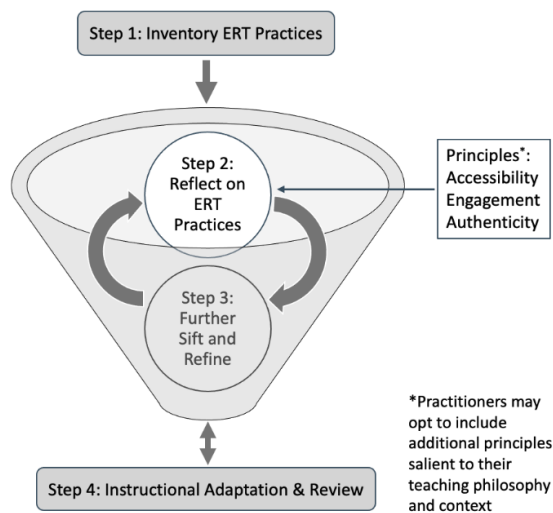
Cargile and Gollobin (2024) also suggest accessibility, engagement, and authenticity as the key principles informing the reflection on ERT practices. Although engagement is the primary focus of this paper, codes were generated to address accessibility and authenticity. Table 3 shows the themes generated in this analysis to address the proposed RQ in relation to the proposed reflective framework.

Table 3   Themes generated to address the proposed research question

To what extent do students engage with FL?				
Themes generated	Monitoring the flipped content	Flipped learning as an approach	Flipped content in relation to the live sessions	Flipped content in relation to the assessments
ERT reflective framework dimension (Cargile & Gollobin, 2024)	Engagement	Authenticity/ accessibility/ Engagement	Engagement/ accessibility	Engagement/ authenticity

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was granted by the university and the department in which this research was conducted. At the time of conducting this research, I was a member of the department providing this pre-sessional course. However, I was involved in in-sessional provision, not pre-sessional. Therefore, although the students only knew me as an external researcher, the practitioners may have been aware of my professional status and link with the department, making this an example of insider research. Although the voluntary nature of participating in this research was highlighted and made clear in the letter to all participants, my dual role as a researcher and practitioner needs to be clearly stated to help readers better understand and contextualize this project. The information to participants clearly stated that they would be asked about their experience of FL.

However, potential conflict with participant recruitment is not the only controversial aspect of insider research. In the spirit of transparency, artefacts of evidence from the course (Figure 3–6) are open access and widely accessible. Similarly, only coded extracts of the interviews are available, and participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities. Participants were emailed their full interview transcripts with the pseudonyms they were given to check that they were satisfied with them.

To conclude this section on ethical considerations, I would like to address trustworthiness and how it is both a practice and an aim (Frey, 2018). Frey (2018) explains how results obtained in the research process are acceptable within the community through transparency in the choice of methods. To meet this requirement, this article has so far included a comprehensive section exploring not only the research decisions made but also the specific and theoretical section context of FL.

Results

Monitoring the flipped content

Both students and teacher participants report that the flipped content is generally completed.

> They engage with the content because when you check on their interactive, you know, the timeline of all the activities, they've done the activities mostly, which was really good. (Jen, teacher)

Jen's quote is representative of teacher participants' answers: they reported that students do complete the flipped content. Teachers also highlighted how being able to closely monitor students' engagement with the flipped content can alert them when students fail to complete the pre-session tasks and address any potential issues with the students during tutorial time. Despite procedural engagement being monitored, teachers warn that task completion may not necessarily equate to a clear understanding of the content explored.

> I can trust them that they will have done the work. It's just the perhaps the level of which they understand the material. (Cedric, teacher)

Similarly, all students reported completing the sessions except for Brianna, who candidly explained how she failed to complete the flipped content due to time constraints. Brianna reported feelings of guilt and sadness when she was unable to complete the flipped content.

> I just don't have enough time so so so maybe the choice whether I choose the external writing is to read more articles, or I do the flipped content, maybe sometimes the flipped content. No, that's important and I will just give you a bit so I feel nervous, I feel guilty about this but just I have no choice. (Brianna, student)

Flipped learning as an approach

Students also report that they learn new things by completing the flipped content and they like its attractive design. Teachers echo students' positive perceptions of the flipped content in terms of the quality of content and design. Students praise FL as a method and appreciate the role of flipped content in relation to fostering their autonomy and preparing them to engage successfully with their future university studies.

> This is very good for us through this flipped lesson, and I think and to take the flip class, flip lesson, we should do much preparation for the class. So, I think this is very good for us to in the future is very good for us. (Michael, student)

All student participants demonstrated an understanding of the flipped content and the benefits of FL; this was due to FL being the key topic of their diagnostic task. As Omar explains, 'well, one of the first task we had, it was reading about flipped learning and andragogy also the method was it is for adults' (Omar, student). This approach to introducing the method through looped input explains students' ability to reflect on the approach taken to develop this course. However, not all teachers demonstrated the same awareness of FL.

> Ah, well flip now flipped learning was what we did last year. So flip learning to me is entirely separate to this online experience. (Clarence, teacher)

Both Marcia and Nerese report that their understanding of FL differs with the way in which FL is implemented in the course. This dissonance between different conceptualizations of FL and its implementation is also present in Cedric's interview comment.

> I tend to think that a good lesson should I think both in terms of 70/30, 70% 30%, so it should be 30% teacher input or teacher focus and 70% the students doing things or practising. Whereas sometimes I think that maybe the flip learning was maybe more 70/30 the other way. (Cedric, teacher)

This is a fairly problematic quote as the intrinsic goal of FL is to allow students to build knowledge. Crucially, the rest of the teacher participants did not share these perspectives and perceived FL to have been implemented in a way that allows them more time for meaningful discussions. However, in this particular interview quote, a certain degree of hesitation can be identified

> I suppose it might lead to doing more discussions because as the students don't need to do the reading in the class, you would have more time to do speaking activities and discussions. (Russell, teacher)

Naomi also explains that the flipped content means that a lot of the students' questions are already answered before attending the sessions and perceives the quality of the work produced to be of a higher calibre, in line with Brinks-Lockwood's (2014) conclusions. Similarly, students report that their teachers are available via email to address any questions or issues that may arise while they are completing the flipped content.

Flipped content in relation to the live sessions
Preston argues that by completing the flipped content 'we can share our ideas with our classmates, our teachers, which is also helpful for us to improve our thinking to improve our English skills' (Preston, student). In a similar vein,

Rebecca (student) explains how 'if I did not do the flipped content, I could not follow my teacher during the session'. Therefore, students can see how the flipped content prepared them to better participate in the sessions and better understand the concepts explored.

The idea of complexity in the session being facilitated by the flipped content is further echoed by teachers. They explain how by students engaging in LOTS tasks before the session, they can 'take the whole class to a higher level' (Roland, teacher). However, both Jen and Marcia (teachers) express concerns regarding the flipped content successfully preparing the students for the HOTS. 'Some of the content in the lessons I thought, at times, I thought the jump was quite the gap between the way it was explained in the flipped content and some of the exercises' (Jen, teacher). If this is the case, and students have not fully mastered the LOTS tasks, they will encounter serious difficulties in participating in the sessions.

Beatrice (student) resents using the in-class time for doing LOTS claiming that she does not 'like to do the things which I can do after class because I think it's a waste of time'. This is echoed by Omar who praises the division of content between the flipped content and the live sessions. He claims that 'we didn't waste any time, everything was so precise' (Omar, student). Similarly, Russell reports avoiding repetition of the flipped content to ensure the sessions are successful.

> I don't think you can't really get sidetracked from the main tasks that you'd be doing in the lesson because a few students have not done the learning. (Russell, teacher)

Crucially, both students and teachers can see the connection between flipped content and the sessions, thus suggesting that these pre-session tasks have been carefully designed to allow students to engage fully with the sessions. These data also indicate the importance of avoiding duplicating content.

Flipped content in relation to the assessments

Participants expressed conflicting views when discussing the impact of the flipped content in relation to the assessments. On one extreme of the continuum, there is Brianna, who openly addresses the fact that she stopped completing the flipped content in favour of working on her assessment. Interestingly, she explains how she prioritizes working on her summative essay while only superficially, if at all, engaging with the flipped content. She is able to see how not completing the flipped content means that she is less confident in actively participating in the sessions, but she does not report that lack of confidence in completing her assessments when engaging with her assessments while overlooking the flipped content

> I will more hesitate with all the question teacher ask. Sometimes they ask some question I will hesitate whether to answer should be this or not. Or that I think I have read. I know I know but I just didn't know sure about it. So quiet … quiet. (Brianna, student)

This suggests that she does not perceive to be a clear impact in superficially engaging with the flipped content and her performance in the assessment. On the other extreme of the continuum, there is Omar, who deliberatively waits to have completed the flipped content to engage with the assessments.

> they were very, very important to carry out the final task, for example, for writing the essay, so it was how to structure the essay and the connectors and everything. So, for example, I didn't want to work on the essay, until I had finished my task, because I knew they were so important. (Omar, student)

In terms of teacher participants, both Marcia and Cedric echo Brianna's perception. They both report a gap in students' understanding of the importance of flipped content in completing the assessments and warn of a lack of clarity. However, both Marcia and Naomi explain that students need to complete the flipped content to find the potential topics for summative assessments and guidance on structure.

Discussion

Monitoring the flipped content

Teachers clearly identify procedural engagement, one of the engagement dimensions reported by Cargile and Gollobin (2024). However, this does not necessarily translate in learners cognitively engaging with the content. This echoes the contentious point in HE regarding how effective and assessable students' individual preparation is (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2014). However, it suggests that Correa's (2015) concerns regarding students' task completion may be mitigated by monitoring the flipped content. This approach is in line with Fautch's (2015) findings stressing the importance of monitoring completion of flipped content.

Brianna's quote evidences how she decided to concentrate on her assignments instead of completing the flipped content. Based on this quote, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that Brianna cannot see how competing the flipped content can allow her to perform better in her assessment, thus suggesting that the connection between the flipped content and the assessments is not clear to her. These initial responses to the RQ suggest that monitoring the flipped content is key to a successful implementation of FL, which is in line with Fautch's (2015) results.

Flipped learning as an approach

Cargile and Gollobin (2024) propose a flexible understanding of authenticity that results in meaningful learning experiences. Data shows how learners conceptualize the use of FL as a key step in their university journey, thus receiving the necessary training to succeed in their studies. From an accessibility point of view, as understood by Cargile and Gollobin (2024), this approach offers flexible and self-regulated learning opportunities. In that line, learners report a sophisticated understanding of FL and praise its perceived advantages for learners in their contexts. They are able to refer to pedagogical principles underpinning FL as echoed in the literature. Learners have had to explore FL as part of a task, and this has contributed to their understanding of the approach. This suggests that students' familiarity with the knowledge can foster a conducive environment to engage with the flipped content and FL as a method (Al-Zaharani, 2015; Eshreteh & Hisham Siaj, 2017).

However, taking into consideration that one teacher participant did not recognize FL as being implemented in the course, two teacher participants expressed how their understanding of FL was not reflected in the way the course was designed, and one participant reported that FL did not allow as much space for practice, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that teachers did not have a clear understanding of the approach. This is a sharp contrast with the student participants who demonstrate a clear understanding of FL in pedagogical terms by linking it to andragogy and autonomous learning.

Flipped content in relation to the live sessions

Preston's claim aligns with Aburezeq (2019) who explains how adopting FL had a positive impact on students' Arabic speaking skills, thus showing how engaging with the flipped content helps learners better navigate the sessions. Although data generated shows how teachers cannot evaluate to what extent procedural engagement relates to understanding, they can assess how students perform in the session by evaluating their engagement (Cargile & Gollobin, 2024) and their responses to the in-class HOTS tasks. In that vein, teacher participants report that, in general, students do participate in the sessions and complete the HOST tasks successfully. Therefore, despite the concerns echoed in the literature, it seems that having a mechanism to ask questions and receive guidance (Chen et al., 2015; Fautch, 2015; Wanner & Palmer, 2015) helps students engage with the tasks and allows them to better understand and participate in the sessions, as the students' generated data indicates.

This is in line with Khanova et al. (2015) and Davies et al. (2013) who indicate that unintentional context distribution and repetition deter the successful implementation of FL. Similarly, the role of the flipped content in facilitating participation has been identified. This contributes to the

hypothesis that FL can help foster an EAP classroom where students take the role of trainee researchers and are able to meaningfully engage in complex academic discussions, which is in line with Kirk and King's (2022) conceptualization of the EAP classroom.

Flipped content in relation to the assessments

Based on the data presented, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that explicitly acknowledging the role of flipped content in relation to effectively completing the assessments would have ensured that all participants shared Omar's views. This is echoed in the four pillars of FLIP (FLN, 2014), specifically calling for the inclusion of formative assessments during class time. In the context of pre-sessional courses where FL is implemented following a top-down approach, clearly establishing the link between the flipped content and the assessment at the design level, for teachers and students would ensure that students have engaged with the necessary LOTS tasks to perform satisfactorily in their final assessments. Similarly, maintaining a clear link between the flipped content and the sessions will help learners see its relevance, thus enhancing the authenticity (Cargile & Gollobin, 2024) aspect of the approach.

Implications for practice

Based on this research, it is possible to generate a checklist to facilitate the successful implementation of FL at both course and classroom levels, using the online environment to host the flipped content. However, as stated in the methodology section, this is a small-scale study using qualitative methods; in practice, this means that this checklist is intrinsically potentially transferable, not generalizable, to similar contexts.

- Careful thought needs to be given to how and why FL is implemented in the course, and this needs to be clearly communicated to teachers and students so that they can effectively engage with the method as it is enacted in the context of the course. As has been discussed, FL is difficult to define and will be implemented differently depending on the institutional context. Therefore, specifically addressing how the approach is conceptualized and implemented would have the following advantages. Firstly, it would allow practitioners to better understand the pedagogical principles underpinning the course. This can, in turn, inform their teaching approach. Secondly, it would potentially foster buy-in when embracing FL, as is the case with the students.
- Students and teachers need to clearly understand how the flipped content feeds into the sessions and the assessments. Explicit links can be made in the actual materials, and formative checkpoints can be included to ensure this relationship is clear and effective.

- By carefully distributing the flipped content in relation to the sessions' and assessments' demands, students may be better able to engage deeply with the tasks and avoid difficulties managing workloads.

- Completion of flipped content should be monitored to identify and swiftly address potential issues with lack of completion. This can be done through specific learning management systems that integrate SCORM (Shareable Content Object Reference Model) reports.

- Clear mechanisms need to be established so that students can ask questions while completing the flipped content. This can be done simply by opening a collaborative OL document where students can write their questions and have them answered by teachers asynchronously.

- Flipped content should allow for differentiation, thus making it possible for students to fill gaps in their knowledge and surpass the target level, allowing them to develop their understanding of the content to navigate the sessions successfully. This can be done automatically, with the software suggesting more complex or simpler tasks based on students' performance. Alternatively, a variety of graded activities can be made available for students to complete based on their self-assessment or their teacher's recommendation.

- In-class time should be devoted to HOTS tasks and collaborative tasks, checking that students understand the target content and are able to manipulate and create new knowledge independently based on the LOTS explored. Therefore, the session should not repeat the flipped content.

Concluding thoughts

In conclusion, this article has shown how students engage with the flipped content. It has also shown how the relationship between the flipped content and the sessions and assessments needs to be clear for teachers and students. Data shows the importance of monitoring the flipped content but also the need to explain the pedagogical reasons underpinning the implementation of FL to teachers and students. Cargile and Gollobin's (2024) ERT reflective framework was used to structure this analysis. Based on the data generated, a simple checklist based on pedagogical and empirical data which may foster the successful implementation of FL in EAP courses is proposed. This checklist is particularly useful for hybrid and OL courses, with the flipped content being hosted online and completed asynchronously while the sessions take place either face-to-face or OL synchronously. The checklist

proposed is informed by both primary and secondary data as well as key theories. However, the primary data was obtained from a relatively small sample size, which may have implications for implementation in different contexts. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this checklist can be used to foster the successful implementation of FL in EAP pre-sessional courses.

This article also argues the value of pedagogical practices that emerged during the ERT period and advocates their role in future pedagogical directions and classroom practices. Further studies reflecting on the experiences of flipped courses would help develop a better understanding of the FL approach and its practical implementation to meet the requirements of the unique needs of EAP students, practitioners, and courses. Therefore, both small and larger-scale studies exploring the multifactorial aspects of FL are necessary to explore its implementation and potential benefits in the field of EAP.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

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Biography

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Appendix
Steps to carry out thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke

The first two columns reproduce verbatim Table 1 as it appears in Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 84). The third column illustrates how those steps were carried out in my research.

Table 4   Phases of TA according to Braun and Clarke (2006) and how they were carried out in my analysis

Phase	Description of the process	What does it look like in my research?
Familiarise yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.	Interviews were automatically transcribed and manually revised and corrected by the researcher. Participants who had requested their transcripts were emailed this copy and asked for feedback. Participants were satisfied with the transcriptions and no problems arose.
Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.	Based on initially brainstormed ideas, I re-read the transcripts on paper and roughly colour-coded them. The analysis was then moved to the coding software MAXQDA following the initial codes to be refined.
Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all relevant data for each potential theme.	Relevant extracts were coded under potential themes; this was done through the coding software MAXQDA.
Reviewing the themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extract (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic map of the analysis.	To check congruency at both levels, I moved away from a microanalysis of extracts and holistically analysed the data set.
Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.	Themes were revised and refined. In this process, some themes were renamed. This allowed me to ensure that both the coding and grouping of themes were consistent.
Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extracts examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature. Producing a scholarly report of the analysis.	The result of this phase is the present article.