

The Effects of Flipped Learning Integrated with Role-play on EFL Business English Undergraduates' Oral Communication Performance

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Article information

Abstract

English oral communication becomes essential, especially for business English students since their future careers require a good command of English. The purposes of this study were to determine if the integration of flipped learning and three types of role-plays (i.e., scripted, semi-scripted, and non-scripted) could enhance English oral communication performance of business English students and to investigate the students' perceptions towards the approach. This quasi-experimental mixed-methods research with a two-group pre-test-post-test design was conducted with 68 fourth-year business English undergraduates at a public university in Thailand. The participants were divided into a control group (n = 38) and an experimental group (n = 30). Data were collected using the oral communication performance pre-test and post-test, a perception questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview. The findings showed that the participants' post-test mean score was higher than the pre-test mean score with statistical significance ($p \leq .05$), which indicated that the intervention was effective in enhancing English oral communication performance of the participants. Moreover, a positive perception towards the use of

	the model was revealed. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of knowledge on effective instructional approaches to develop oral communication performance of EFL business English students.
Keywords	flipped learning, role-play, oral communication performance, business English, EFL undergraduates
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1. Introduction

In the globalized world, English oral communication performance is considered to be a critical competency for students in all disciplines who need to master oral communication ability to proficiently communicate in English, as this would lead to not only academic success but also better professions after graduation (Syvak, 2018). However, oral communication skills are considered challenging for EFL learners because English is not the predominant language used in their daily life. Most EFL learners study and use English in language classes where class time is usually limited, and they do not have many opportunities to practice and produce output in the target language, which is essential for the development of oral communication abilities, outside class. Moreover, during the class time, the teaching methods are often form-focused and teacher-centered, where the students are supposed to passively listen to the teacher's lectures. Also, the language that is presented to them is mostly out of the context. Thus, language teachers need to continuously explore innovative pedagogical approaches to provide students with more chances to communicate in English (Rasakumaran & Devi, 2017). In light of this, technology can be utilized to achieve this goal.

Flipped learning, where students acquire course content through online learning prior to class and use class time for active learning, has extensively been studied and proven to be effective in providing more opportunities for students to make sure of the target language communicatively during class time (Tadayonifar & Entezari, 2020). Since the content knowledge is flipped to outside of class, more class time can be dedicated to communicative activities to practice using the language. Thus, students have more chances to interact and communicate with their peers and teachers during class time. In this way, role-play is well suited to be implemented as a communicative activity during the class time as it provides opportunities for students to immerse in realistic scenarios, enabling them to practice using the language in context (Asriyani et al., 2019). By integrating these two pedagogical approaches, the benefits of both can be maximized. To elaborate, flipped learning can be used for providing content and linguistic knowledge via online learning technology, whereas role-plays can be implemented as the communicative tasks during class time so that students can practice producing the language based on the input they have received prior to coming to class (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Cockrum, 2014).

In the context of the present study, business English undergraduates at a public university in northeastern Thailand were required to enroll in the English for Airline Business course that aimed to provide them with as many chances to communicate efficiently and spontaneously in an airline business context. Therefore, the potential synergistic effects of integrating flipped learning and role-play on EFL business English undergraduates' oral communication performance were explored in this study. The findings of this study would contribute to the growing body of knowledge on effective instructional strategies for developing oral communication competencies of EFL business English students, ultimately preparing them for successful engagement in the global business landscape.

To date, previous research on the effects of flipped learning integrated with role-play to enhance oral communication performance in a business English

context is quite scarce. In addition, role-plays have not been studied specifically in the context of airline business. Moreover, only some aspects of oral communication as well as certain types of role-plays have been investigated (e.g., Bezzazi, 2019; Rattanasraeng & Sukavatee, 2021; Zhang et al., 2016). Thus, to shed more light on this aspect, this study attempted to fill the gap by examining the effects of flipped learning integrated with three types of role-plays on business English undergraduates' oral communication performance focusing on aspects of oral communication performance and investigating the study participants' perceptions of the implementation of the intervention with the following questions:

1. To what extent does flipped learning integrated with role-play enhance the oral communication performance of EFL business English undergraduates?
2. What are the EFL business English undergraduates' perceptions of flipped learning integrated with role-play in enhancing their oral communication performance?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Communicative Competence and Oral Communication Performance

Since communicative competence is the end objective that learners strive for in learning a language, the ability to orally communicate plays a critical part in achieving this goal. Communicative competence is defined as the ability to use a language. This term was coined by Hymes (1972) to describe not only implicit language knowledge but also the capacity to utilize a language effectively. For decades, a lot of definitions and models have been proposed by various scholars (e.g., Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980). However, this study applied the framework of Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) who separate communicative competence into four components: grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic, and discourse competence. This model is considered to be accessible, simple to understand, and widely used in the field of English language teaching (ELT) (Abdulrahman & Ayyash, 2019; Furkó, 2016).

According to Brown (2001), four aspects of oral communication consist of fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary. However, as this study emphasized oral communication performance in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) context, appropriateness and social factors should also be considered (Gondová, 2014). As a result, the concept of oral communication performance in the present study was based on those proposed by Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), Brown (2001), and Gondová (2014) which includes (1) grammar, (2) vocabulary, (3) fluency, (4) pronunciation, (5) discourse competence, (6) sociolinguistic skill, and (7) strategic competence.

To achieve the goal of communicative competence, effective oral communication performance should be attained. In this study, the integration of flipped learning and role-play was utilized as the instructional approach to promote effective oral communication performance of business English undergraduates.

2.2 Flipped Learning

Flipped learning refers to the inverted class in which instead of spending a large percentage of classroom time listening to the teacher's lectures, students learn the content on their own outside of class time via technology such as videos and other learning resources, before using the class time for interactive or active learning activities. According to Bergmann and Sams (2014), the most significant feature of flipped learning, unlike the flipped classroom, is not the use of a video, but how to make the most of face-to-face time with students, or, in other words, how to make the class as student-centric as possible. This goal of freeing up class time for student-centered learning provides more opportunities for the students to practice and produce output in the target language. Therefore, flipped learning is promising as an approach to increase students' oral communication performance (Pratiwi et al., 2022; Robillos, 2023; Tadayonifar & Entezari, 2020).

With the rapid growth of flipped learning, a variety of models have evolved, all of which adhere to its principles while tailoring them to the needs of a certain educational situation. Most of the models start the class with the flipped stage in which students have to instantly watch the instructional videos on their own (Bergmann & Sams, 2014; Bretzman, 2013). However, the model of flipped learning adopted in this study has been adopted from Musallam (2011, cited in Cockrum, 2014) which is the Explore-Flip-Apply model in which the lesson starts with the ‘explore’ stage to provide students with activities, challenges, or tasks to engage them in an exploration process. Then, the second phase, the ‘flip’ stage, begins, during which the teacher assigns an instructional video to the students to watch with the purpose of problem-solving or finding additional information from the ‘explore’ stage. Finally, students can proceed to the ‘apply’ stage, in which students put what they have learned into practice through exercises or projects. With this model, the video is implemented after the activity, which is thought to improve learning and is suitable for ESP and business contexts (Marshall & Kostka, 2020).

The Explore-Flip-Apply model was adapted to create the instructional model in the present study. Also, since the context of the present study was teaching English in the airline business context, role-play was integrated into the model as it is considered to be a suitable form of collaborative learning that can be employed during the in-class time.

2.3 Role-play

Since collaborative activities are important in flipped learning, role-play has been recommended by many researchers to be used as a communicative task to facilitate target language production among students (Asriyani et al., 2019; Ellis, 2009). In the present study, as the course aimed to train students who would have to use English as their primary method of professional communication in their future careers and real-life situations, role-play was seen as effective in

encouraging students to develop authentic language required in their future careers (Syvak, 2018). Moreover, in a business English context, various interactions between interlocutors can be related to staff responsibilities, e.g., telephoning, checking in/out, dealing with customers' requirements, making reservations (room, seat, or table), explaining the menu, and describing tourist attractions. This predictable routine is well suited to the use of role-play to practice expression, terminology, and structure (Cho, 2015). Additionally, role-play not only provides a chance for the students to practice linguistic skills but it also enables them to learn pragmatic knowledge relevant to professional situations (Cunningsworth & Horner, 1985). That is, to acquire communicative competence, either linguistic or organizational competence (i.e., grammatical and discourse competence) and pragmatic competence (i.e., strategic and sociolinguistic competence) should be attained.

In the present study, three types of role-plays—scripted role-play, semi-scripted role-play, and non-scripted role-play (Cho, 2015) were used. In general, each type of role-play can be applied in enhancing oral communication performance with its own merits according to the scaffold benefit and suitability of students' proficiency level. Furthermore, to successfully implement role-play, Cho (2015) suggests three main phases in applying the role-play which are pre-role-play, while-role-play, and post-role-play. The first phase provides the necessary information and linguistic input to be used by the students in conducting the role-play. The second phase is when the students cooperatively produce the output to communicate by using their prior knowledge to complete the role-play task. Then, the last phase is used for giving feedback and explaining or clarifying the difficulties or questions that might occur during the role-play.

Therefore, in the present study, three types of role-plays which were scripted role-play, semi-scripted role-play, and non-scripted role-play were utilized as the in-class activities, and the three phases of the role-play, namely

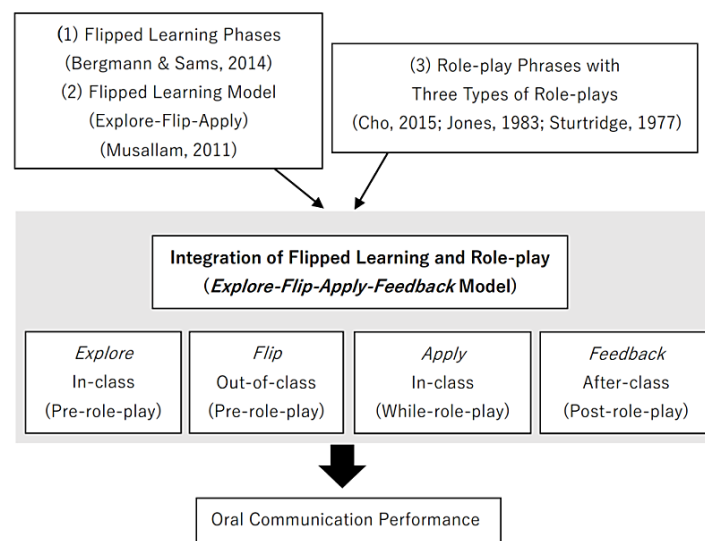
pre-role-play, while-role-play, and post-role-play phases were integrated within the flipped learning model. The detail is illustrated in the following section.

2.4 The Integration of Flipped Learning and Role-play

Integrating flipped learning and role-play leverages the strengths of both methods to create a synergistic approach that maximizes the benefits of each. The integration of flipped learning and role-play instructional model, 'Explore-Flip-Apply-Feedback' in this study was developed based on the integration of (1) flipped learning phases (i.e., before-class, in-class, and after-class) (Li & Suwanthep, 2017), (2) the Explore-Flip-Apply model proposed by Musallam (2011, cited in Cockrum, 2014), and (3) the role-play phases (i.e., pre-while-post role-play phases) (Cho, 2015). It consisted of four major stages: Explore, Flip, Apply, and Feedback. The Feedback stage was added based on the integration of the after-class phase of the flipped learning and the post-role-play phase to provide an opportunity to follow-up on task performance. Since flipped learning emphasizes freeing up the in-class time for communicative activities, three types of role-plays were used as interactive activities during the Apply stage to promote oral communication performance as shown in the following figure.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Study



From figure 1, it can be seen that the instructional framework for the integration of flipped learning and role-play using the ‘Explore-Flip-Apply-Feedback’ model consisted of four major stages: Explore, Flip, Apply, and Feedback. The Flip stage was implemented outside class, while the other three were conducted in class. The explanation of each stage is illustrated in the following table.

Table 1

The Integration of Flipped Learning and Role-play Instructional Framework

Stages	Settings	Steps
<i>Explore</i>	In class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preview questions and activities • Introduce the use of videos and other learning resources
<i>Flip</i>	Outside of class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch the videos and study other learning resources • Do the assigned exercises
<i>Apply</i>	In class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the content learned outside of the class • Do the role-play activities (scripted, semi-scripted, and non-scripted role-play)
<i>Feedback</i>	In class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give feedback • Report problems and discuss solutions • Reflect on difficulties or achievement

To summarize, the integration of flipped learning and role-play using ‘Explore-Flip-Apply-Feedback’ model was an educational approach that combined traditional in-class face-to-face learning with online learning by using technology. Thus, this model incorporated the benefits of both flipped learning and role-play which could help enhance English oral communication performance of EFL students.

2.5 Related Studies

In the EFL context, flipped learning has proven to be effective and yields a positive impact on EFL students’ grammatical competence, overall performance, and attitude (Alexander, 2018; Al-Harbi & Alshumaimeri, 2019; Förster et al., 2022;

Hong et al., 2023; Kawinkoonlasate, 2019). Extensive studies have investigated the implementation of flipped learning in terms of listening and writing skills (Ahmad, 2016), and reading comprehension (Huang & Hong, 2016). However, little research has explored the use of flipped learning integrated with role-play to enhance oral communication performance in a business context.

In terms of oral communication, numerous studies have investigated the implementation of flipped learning in developing oral communication performance in various contexts, and positive results have been reported. However, most of the studies have been conducted with non-English major students (e.g., Singh et al., 2018) and secondary school students (e.g., Sakulprasertsri & Vibulphol, 2016; Sidky, 2019). Furthermore, only some aspects of oral communication have been investigated such as English pronunciation (Zhang et al., 2016), public speaking anxiety and performance (Bezzazi, 2019), and students' willingness to communicate (Rattanasaeeng & Sukavatee, 2021). Few studies have been conducted to comprehensively examine different aspects of oral communication with business English undergraduate students in the ESP context.

Regarding the use of role-play, most of the previous studies have indicated the effectiveness of role-play in enhancing oral communication performance of the students. Numerous studies have investigated the impact of role-play on speaking ability; however, only a particular type of role-play was focused on. For example, the majority of the study have investigated the impact of scripted role-play on speaking ability (e.g., Ayuningtias et al., 2019; Jakob, 2018; Tipmontree & Tasanameelarp, 2018; Waluyo, 2019). Only a study carried out by Cho (2015) has examined the effects of two types of role-plays, namely semi-scripted and non-scripted, on undergraduate students' oral communication in a tourism English course.

As for the integration of flipped learning and role-play to develop oral communication performance of students, Li and Suwanthep (2017) examined the impacts of flipped learning and scripted role-play on English-speaking ability of first-year non-English major students. The study concluded that the flipped learning integrated with role-play was an effective model for teaching speaking skills. Another study conducted by Phoeun and Sengsri (2021) examined the effects of flipped learning with role-play on the English-speaking ability of undergraduate students using a one-group pre-test-post-test design. The findings indicated that flipped learning integrated with role-play was beneficial in enhancing students' speaking ability. More recently, Pikulthong and Kerdnoonwong (2022) conducted a study that aimed to improve the English-speaking ability of Grade 6 students by implementing the flipped classroom and role-play techniques. The study employed a one-group pre-test and post-test design. The results revealed that the students' speaking abilities significantly improved in terms of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

In conclusion, not many previous studies have investigated effects of flipped learning integrated with role-play to enhance oral communication performance in a business English context. First, only some features of oral communication were investigated (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation). Second, only scripted role-plays were utilized. Third, a one-group pre-test-post-test design was employed. In addition, flipped learning integrated with role-plays has not been studied specifically in the context of the airline business.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental mixed-methods design with the embedded experimental model. The data were collected both quantitatively and qualitatively to ensure a thorough investigation. The mixed-methods approach is

supported by Mackey and Gass (2015), who believe that the quantitative method provides an analysis of what happened, while the qualitative method allows for an interpretation of how and why it happened.

3.2 Study Participants

The participants of this study were 68 fourth-year business English students from two classes at a public university in the northeast of Thailand. They were two intact classes of students who were required to enrol in the English for Airline Business course in the first semester of the academic year 2022. They shared similar characteristics in terms of years of study, age, experience with online learning, and English proficiency levels (low-intermediate to intermediate at about A2-B1 level according to CEFR) based on the in-house English proficiency test. They were divided into a control group (n = 38) and an experimental group (n = 30). The control group received face-to-face instruction with normal in-class lectures and activities, while the experimental group developed their oral communication abilities with the integration of flipped learning with the three types of role-plays (i.e., scripted, semi-scripted, and non-scripted role-play).

For the semi-structured interview, extreme case sampling was used to select the interviewees based on the pre-test and post-test scores. There were 12 interviewees in total which included the participants with the highest and the lowest overall gained score, the participants with the highest, and the lowest gained score from each of the top three oral communication performance components with the highest mean difference (i.e., vocabulary, fluency, and strategic competence), and the participants with the highest, and the lowest gained score in the component with the lowest mean difference (i.e., discourse competence).

3.3 Research Instruments

The instruments used for data collection were the oral communication performance pre-test and post-test, a perception questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview. The oral communication performance pre-test and post-test were a direct test in the form of a guided role-play which was considered to be non-scripted. The tests were used to assess students' oral communication performance before and after learning based on seven components of oral communication performance adapted from Brown (2001), Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), and Gondová (2014), namely grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. The analytical rating scale was used as the assessment rubric adapted from the standardized assessments which included IELTS, TOEFL, CEFR, and the Speaking Rating Scale of Michigan English Test. The oral communication performance of the students was rated on five levels, namely 1 (Weak), 2 (Fair), 3 (Average), 4 (Good), and 5 (Excellent).

The perception questionnaire was created by the researcher based on Dörnyei and Taguchi's questionnaire design principles (2010). The questionnaire items, which were arranged in a four-point Likert scale, was divided into two sections, i.e., closed-ended and open-ended, written in Thai so that all of the participants could clearly understand the questions. In addition, the closed-ended questions were divided into six main topics which included the perception towards the Explore stage, the Flip stage, videos and materials used in the Flip stage, the Apply stage, the Feedback stage, and overall oral communication performance achievement after learning with the intervention. For the purpose of triangulation, a semi-structured interview was implemented to clarify and explain interesting or outstanding issues found in the questionnaire data in more detail. The instruments were validated by a panel of experts using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) and piloted with ten third-year business English students who had similar

characteristics to the participants of the main study to identify potential problems and weaknesses before they were use in the main study.

3.4 Research Procedures

In the first week, the pre-test was administered, whereas the post-test was administered at week 16 after the implementation of the ‘Explore-Flip-Apply-Feedback’ model. The tests were conducted one-by-one in a classroom at a predetermined time. Each participant was given 15 minutes to complete the test. Both the pre-test and post-test were videotaped and evaluated by two raters (the researcher and a native-English teacher) to ensure inter-rater reliability. Then, after the post-test, the perception questionnaire was distributed. Moreover, the semi-structured interview was conducted one day after the post-test. Each interview lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. The importance of confidentiality was emphasized to ensure that the participants understood that the answers given in the questionnaire and the interview would not have any effect on their course grade.

4. Findings

4.1 The Effects of Flipped Learning Integrated with Role-play on Oral Communication Performance

The pre-test and post-test mean scores of the experimental group and the control group were analyzed and compared using an independent sample t-test as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2*Independent Sample t-test of the Experimental Group and the Control Group*

Oral Communication Performance	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean Difference	t	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
Experimental Group	19.22	0.63	25.82	0.68	6.59	2.68	.009*
Control Group	19.25	0.93	21.47	0.73	2.22		

* $p \leq 0.05$

Table 2 illustrates that the mean difference between the experimental group and the control group was significant at the statistical level of .05, indicating that the oral communication performance of the experimental group was significantly enhanced. This was supported by the qualitative findings from the interviews in which the participants mentioned that the model provided them more chances to communicate in English, so their oral communication performance in the airline business context improved.

Additionally, the mean scores of each component of the tests, namely grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, discourse competence, sociolinguistic skill, and strategic competence were examined as shown below.

Table 3*Scores of Each Component of Oral Communication Performance*

Components of Oral Communication Performance	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean Difference
	M	SD	M	SD	
Grammar	2.87	0.59	3.78	0.75	+0.92
Vocabulary	2.73	0.60	3.92	0.58	+1.18
Pronunciation	2.88	0.65	3.85	0.55	+0.97
Fluency	2.68	0.71	3.85	0.72	+1.17
Discourse Competence	2.75	0.64	3.42	0.76	+0.67
Sociolinguistic Skill	2.77	0.53	3.48	0.78	+0.72
Strategic Competence	2.53	0.73	3.52	0.62	+0.98
Total	19.22	0.63	25.82	0.68	+6.61

It can be concluded that the mean scores of the post-test were higher than the pre-test in all components. The component with the highest mean difference was vocabulary (Mean Difference = +1.18), followed by fluency (Mean Difference = +1.17), and strategic competence (Mean Difference = +0.98), respectively. The component with the lowest mean difference was discourse competence (Mean Difference = +0.67). This was also complemented by the interview data that the model allowed them to practice using the vocabulary learned from the Explore stage and the Flip stage in a variety of meaningful contexts.

Furthermore, to see whether the differences were statistically significant, a paired-sample t-test was calculated. In addition, the effect size of the mean difference on each component was also determined using Cohen's *d*.

Table 4

Paired-sample t-test of the Score on Each Component

Components of Oral Communication Performance	Paired Differences				t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	<i>d</i>
	M	SD	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
			Lower	Upper				
Grammar	.93	.67	.68	1.18	7.53	29	.000*	1.05
Vocabulary	1.15	.69	.88	1.41	9.04	29	.000*	1.24
Pronunciation	.96	.57	.75	1.18	9.26	29	.000*	1.02
Fluency	1.16	.72	.89	1.43	8.83	29	.000*	1.15
Discourse Competence	.66	.66	.41	.91	5.52	29	.000*	0.72
Sociolinguistic Skill	.71	.75	.43	.99	5.22	29	.000*	0.73
Strategic Competence	.98	.66	.73	1.23	8.12	29	.000*	1.01

* $p \leq 0.05$

The results indicated that the post-test mean scores on all components of the experimental group were higher than the pre-test mean scores with statistical significance at the .05 level. Moreover, the mean difference on each component demonstrated a large effect size ($d \geq 0.8$), except for discourse

competence ($d = 0.72$) and sociolinguistic skill ($d = 0.73$) whose d value showed a moderate effect size. The component with the largest effect size was vocabulary ($d = 1.24$), followed by fluency ($d = 1.15$). The component with the smallest effect size was discourse competence ($d = 0.72$). Therefore, these high d values reflected the significant differences in the participants' mean scores on all components between the pre-test and the post-test.

4.2 Students' Perception of the Use of Flipped Learning Integrated with Role-play to Enhance Oral Communication Performance

To answer Research Question 2, the quantitative and qualitative findings from the students' perception questionnaire and the semi-structured interview were analyzed and interpreted. The data from the questionnaire are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of the Perception of the Model

Aspects	M	SD	Meaning
1. Pre-class activities (<i>Explore</i> stage)	3.59	0.45	Very positive
2. Self-studying before class (<i>Flip</i> stage)	3.58	0.58	Very positive
3. Videos and materials for self-studying before class	3.57	0.53	Very positive
4. Role-play activities (<i>Apply</i> stage)	3.65	0.48	Very positive
5. Post-learning activities (<i>Feedback</i> stage)	3.80	0.37	Very positive
6. Overall oral communication performance achievement after learning with the intervention	3.48	0.51	Very Positive
Total	3.61	0.48	Very positive

Note: (Interpretation criteria: 3.26-4.00 = Very positive, 2.51-3.25 = Positive, 1.76-2.50 = Negative, 1.00-1.75 = Very negative)

It can be seen from Table 5 that the use of flipped learning integrated with role-play in enhancing oral communication performance received a very positive perception in overall aspects ($M = 3.61$; $SD = 0.48$). The aspect with the highest mean score was the post-learning activities (Feedback stage) ($M = 3.80$; $SD =$

0.37), followed by the role-play activities (Apply stage) ($M = 3.65$; $SD = 0.48$), and the pre-class activities (Explore stage) ($M = 3.59$; $SD = 0.45$), respectively. On the other hand, the overall achievement of competency in using English for communication received the lowest mean score ($M = 3.48$; $SD = 0.51$).

Furthermore, the findings from the open-ended section of the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview revealed that the participants perceived the usefulness of all four stages (Explore-Flip-Apply-Feedback) of flipped learning integrated with role-play to enhance their oral communication performance. On the positive side, the participants believed that the Explore stage had helped them prepare for the self-study and boosted their interest in studying on their own. However, some participants thought that the time given for this stage was too short, so more time should be allotted so that they could have more time to think about the tasks and ask questions.

Regarding the Flip stage, the participants agreed that it provided an overview of the topic, so they could understand the lesson better. They were also able to learn at their own pace and time. Also, they could engage in class activities more actively because they came to class prepared with necessary knowledge. On the other hand, the findings revealed that some participants disliked studying the lesson independently before class since it increased their workload, and it was difficult for them to concentrate when conducting self-study.

As regards the Apply stage, the participants expressed their appreciation for role-play activities since they had several chances to practice speaking English, and this also helped boost their self-confidence, creativity, and collaborative skills. It was also found that participants liked doing role-play activities because it provided them chances to play a role of a cabin crew, a ground staff, a captain, or a passenger. However, while the majority of participants were very positive about

the role-play activities done in the Apply stage, they felt that the time they had was insufficient to do the activities.

Lastly, with regard to the Feedback stage, the participants believed that the teacher's comments and feedback were highly beneficial to enhance their English oral communication which helped them pinpoint and solve their difficulties during the lesson and boost their self-confidence and motivation. There was no negative opinion towards the Feedback stage expressed by the participants.

5. Discussion

Based on the study findings, it can be concluded that oral communication performance of the participants in this study was significantly enhanced after learning with the integration of flipped learning and role-play using the 'Explore-Flip-Apply-Feedback' model. Such effects can be discussed based on the learning opportunities provided by the intervention.

5.1 The Opportunity for Preparation Before Coming to Class

The approach used in this study was the integration of flipped learning and role-play using the 'Explore-Flip-Apply-Feedback' model in which the role-plays were used as the communicative activities in the Apply stage. The first two stages of the model, i.e., the Explore stage, and the Flip stage, were considered to be very important factors in providing the opportunity to prepare students before coming to class. This helped enhance oral communication performance of the students as elaborated below.

First, in this study, the students had a chance to develop their initial understanding which could lead to content acquisition. The students participated in various guided activities in which immediate feedback was provided before they had to study independently. In this way, the content acquisition which was where students gained first exposure to the content was created. This is in line with the

study of Bishop and Verleger (2013) that engaging students in preliminary research, exploration, and discussions assists them in understanding and using new domain-specific knowledge more effectively in the classroom. This could result in increasing their content knowledge and eventually the oral communication performance was enhanced. However, this study differed from the studies conducted by Li and Suwanthep (2017) and Phoeun and Sengsri (2021) who did not include the Explore stage in their studies. This stage proved to be particularly effective in this study as it familiarized students with the content of the course.

Second, the Explore stage and the Flip stage played a crucial role in activating prior knowledge of the students. This is in line with the study of Campbell and Campbell (2009) which pointed out that through prior knowledge, students could connect new ideas to existing ones which aided in comprehension and expression. Moreover, by drawing from their existing knowledge and experiences, students could effectively convey information and ideas clearly and concisely which allowed them to organize their thoughts and ideas more coherently during oral communication (Echevarría et al., 2016). Thus, students who possessed prior knowledge about the subject were better equipped to articulate their thoughts and responses, as they had a solid foundation of information on which they could rely.

Lastly, the use of instructional videos as a content delivery tool in this study provided comprehensible input of the target language which created contextual understanding, reduced anxiety (Liu, 2022; Tipmontree & Tasanameelarp, 2018), and built vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Moreover, cognitive presence was also enhanced which facilitated language learning through the link between in-class activities and out-of-class content in the flipped environment. In addition, the Explore stage and Flip stage also helped students with their lower-order thinking skills, or remembering and understanding, which were essential for target language production in the higher-order thinking activities in class. Such findings

were congruent with previous studies (e.g., Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015; Bergmann & Sams, 2012; O’Flaherty et al., 2015) which have suggested that the advantages of flipped learning can be seen in how it covers both lower and higher-order thinking skills.

Thus, the integration of flipped learning and role-play using the ‘Explore-Flip-Apply-Feedback’ model provides the learning opportunity to prepare students before coming to class which contributed to the enhancement of their oral communication performance.

5.2 The Opportunity for Self-regulated Learning

Furthermore, the integration of flipped learning and role-play using the ‘Explore-Flip-Apply-Feedback’ model yielded the opportunity for self-regulated learning which could lead to the enhancement of oral communication performance. According to Jdaitawi (2019), this flexible learning environment allows students to determine their own time, speed, and place to learn via technological assistance. In this way, students with different learning styles, aptitudes, and abilities can learn the content the way they prefer which could promote self-paced learning and students’ ownership of their learning. In the present study, when students watched instructional videos, they had to take control of their learning by deciding when to pause or replay the video, when to take notes, and how to seek further resources. Then, during the Apply stage, they could assess their understanding and regulate their strategies through active participation in role-plays and class discussions. This combination made the model an influential tool for fostering self-regulated learning which eventually led to learning engagement and effective language learning and outcomes. Abeysekera and Dawson (2015), Fisher et al. (2017) and Panadero (2017) have confirmed that self-regulated learning allows language learners to become autonomous learners so that they can manage their own learning time, select the learning resources that best work for them, and direct their progress. Additionally, it also enhances metacognitive skills which enable

learners to understand their learning process, monitor their comprehension, evaluate their performance, and adjust their strategies, which are keys to language learning. Therefore, in this study, oral communication performance was eventually enhanced.

5.3 The Opportunity to Communicate Through Role-plays

In addition, the integration of flipped learning and role-play using the 'Explore-Flip-Apply-Feedback' model also gave more in-class time for interactive and communicative activities. Since the students had already been exposed to all of the input through the online instructional videos in the Flip stage, the entire three-hour class period could then be used to let the students practice using the target language in the role-play activities in the Apply stage. This stage stressed meaningful interaction using the target language. This study confirmed the findings from previous studies (e.g., Li & Suwanthep, 2017; Lin & Hwang, 2018; Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021) which have suggested that the use of flipped learning combined with role-plays have positive effects on enhancing students' oral communication performance. That is, the incorporation of role-plays in the Apply stage of flipped learning allows students to actively engage in communicative tasks and practice their speaking skills in a realistic and interactive context. Thus, it can be concluded that flipped learning and role-plays complemented each other in the way that flipped learning not only provided more in-class time for language practice but also the foundation of knowledge and understanding that students needed to effectively participate in role-plays which provided a practical and interactive component that enhanced students' ability to use their communication skills in real-life situations (Ardianto & Yuliyanto, 2020). Furthermore, the components of the oral communication performance of the students in the present study were enhanced not only in terms of vocabulary or grammar but also in fluency, sociolinguistic skills, strategic competence, and discourse competence. This may be because this study emphasized the use of role-plays in an ESP context in which the interactions between interlocutors can be practiced with role-plays

during class including expression, terminology, and structure. The effective use of role-plays in ESP classes have been confirmed by Alabsi (2016), Cho (2015), and Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991).

Moreover, during the Apply stage, three types of role-plays (i.e., scripted, semi-scripted, and non-scripted) were performed in each lesson. This integration differed from previous studies in which only a particular type of role-play was implemented. The scaffolding effect of these three types of role-plays could be compared to the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) practice, namely mechanical practice, meaningful practice, and communicative practice proposed by Richards (2006). These three kinds of practice are ordered from controlled, semi-controlled to uncontrolled practices which could scaffold target language communication. In this study, the scripted role-play was performed first as it was a kind of mechanical practice in which controlled activity and repetition drills were executed to acquaint students with the language and format of the role-play. Then, the semi-scripted role-play which was a kind of meaningful practice was performed. In this regard, controlled practice was still performed, but it required students to make meaningful choices. Finally, the non-scripted role-play which was communicative practice in which the students had a chance to practice using the language in a real context where the language used was not predictable was implemented. These practices represented a continuum in language instruction, moving from a focus on form (mechanical) to a focus on meaning and communication (communicative), with meaningful practices acting as a bridge between the two.

6. Limitations and Recommendations

Even though the present study demonstrated the effectiveness of the integration of flipped learning and role-play using the ‘Explore-Flip-Apply-Feedback’ model in enhancing students’ oral communication performance, it was conducted with a limited number of participants in intact groups which may have

affected the generalizability of the findings. Future research should aim to include a larger and more diverse randomly selected samples across various English proficiency and socioeconomic backgrounds to increase the generalizability of the findings. Apart from that, this study was conducted in one semester, so it may limit the depth of understanding regarding the intervention's long-term effects on English oral communication. Conducting future research over an extended period would offer a more thorough understanding of how effective the intervention is in improving communication skills over time. Moreover, in this study, oral communication performance was assessed by using the pre-test and the post-test, and the students' perceptions were explored using the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview. It is recommended that other qualitative instruments, such as self-reported journals, learning logs, and teacher observation be utilized to provide a more comprehensive picture of the impact of the approach on students' oral communication performance. Furthermore, since students had to learn on their own time, effective reinforcements, such as interesting and motivating pre-class activities in the Explore stage, the connection between the video content and the in-class activities, and engagement in-video exercises should be employed to hold students accountable for their self-study assignments.

7. Conclusion

The findings of the present study revealed the positive effects that the integration of flipped learning and role-play using the 'Explore-Flip-Apply-Feedback' model had on enhancing oral communication performance (i.e., grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, discourse competence, sociolinguistic skill, and strategic competence) of EFL business English undergraduates studying in the English for Airline Business course. The model was developed by combining the flipped learning model and the flipped learning phases with the role-play phases in which the three types of role-plays (i.e., scripted, semi-scripted, and non-scripted) were used as the communicative activities in the Apply stage. The reasons that contributed to the enhancement of oral

communication performance of the students might be because the intervention provided effective learning opportunities to the students. First, the students had the opportunity to learn the target language outside of the class which could help them with self-preparation with the content and develop their initial understanding which could lead to content acquisition and lower-order thinking skill development. Second, the students could learn at their own pace and time which could foster self-regulated learning that eventually led to learning engagement and effective language learning and outcomes. Additionally, this study suggested the effective use of instructional videos as a content delivery tool as it could provide comprehensible input of the target language which created contextual understanding, reduced anxiety, built vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, and enhanced cognitive presence which facilitated language learning through the link between in-class activities and out-of-class content in the flipped environment. Lastly, it is highly recommended that the opportunity to communicate using the target language through interactive and collaborative tasks in which the sequence of tasks is progressively challenging should be incorporated as it can effectively scaffold language learning and boost confidence in oral communication.

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