

Original Paper

The Influence of Teachers' Classroom Transformational
Leadership on Chinese College Students' English
Learning—Taking the Flipped Classroom as an Example

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Abstract

Many educators have recognized that a teacher-centered approach to teaching and learning frequently results in students becoming passive in the classroom. The flipped education model has resulted in students becoming more motivated and participating in the classroom, particularly in English (Doman & Webb, 2017). In addition, in a flipped university English classroom, the teacher as a leader can first stimulate students' interest in the flipped classroom; set motivational goals to stimulate students' interest in learning the language; set specific and manageable goals, plans, requirements, and assessment criteria; provide personalized guidance to students; set an example for students through the teacher's own behavior; and create a pleasant and relaxed learning environment (Suo & Hou, 2017). All of these changes in teaching styles reflect the transformational leadership of teachers in the classroom, while this change in classroom paradigm has also influenced university students' learning of English.

Keywords

Transformational Leadership, the Flipped Classroom, English Learning, Higher Education

1. Introduction

In 1978, Burns introduced the concept of transformational leadership for the first time, and since then there has been a great deal of research into the original concept (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999). It has been expanded to explore the outcomes and their impact on various variables in an organizational environment (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009). There are four components of transformational leadership: firstly, the transformational leader has a charismatic or idealizing influence; secondly, the

transformational leader inspires followers by articulating a vision; thirdly, the transformational leader inspires followers intellectually; and fourthly, the leader individualizes consideration for followers. By using these elements, transformational leaders achieve educational change (Bass, 1990; Bass & Steidlmeiera, 1999). Unfortunately, however, observations on the impact of transformational leadership by educators, particularly on transformational leadership by teachers in Chinese university English flipped classrooms, remain limited. This paper argues that incorporating the concept of Transformational Leadership into university English classroom teaching can be a powerful way to bring out the idealized influence, encouraging motivation, intellectual stimulation and personalized care of teachers. It is a theoretically guided practical exploration of teachers' use of advanced teaching concepts and a comprehensive and dynamic understanding of university English teaching from a managerial perspective. The following three articles will describe the impact of teachers' transformational leadership on students' English learning in Chinese college English flipped classrooms. Taken together, these three articles hope to provide a critical review of classroom reform in Chinese college English and teacher transformational leadership.

2. Literature Review

2.1 He, J. (2020). *Research and Practice of Flipped Classroom Teaching Mode Based on Guidance Case. Education and Information Technologies*, 25(4), pp. 2337-2352

He (2020) analyses and reflects on the transformational leadership of teachers as embodied in the flipped classroom and the current situation, problems, and responses to English language teaching, based on examples of flipped classroom instruction at home and abroad. First, He (2020) discusses the need for classroom reform at the national level, describing the definition of the flipped classroom as a teaching method that challenges the traditional teaching structure and makes the classroom more personalized. He (2020) concludes that the flipped classroom has been developed overseas for more than a decade. The peer teaching method created by Eric Mazur laid some of the foundations for the implementation of the flipped classroom (Little, 1991). Although he did not develop the theory of the "flipped classroom", we can see traces of it in his previous theories (Fu, 2010). With the publication of an article by Lage et al. (2000) on how to make more effective use of the flipped classroom, further thinking about the flipped classroom has been triggered. Meanwhile, foreign researchers have had some success in related teaching practices. For example, in an attempt to help students who have taken time off work to make up for their classes, Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams (2012) embarked on an experiment in teaching reform. They discovered that flipping the classroom allowed teachers to have more time to personalize their teaching and helped to strengthen the relationship between teacher and student, which in turn promoted student motivation (Fu, 2010). Immediately afterward, He (2020) cites the research practices of flipped classrooms in China and the trajectory of flipped classrooms in China. He found that Chinese researchers began to focus on flipped classroom teaching models in 2012. Subsequently, Chinese scholars also constructed flipped classroom models, each of which differed, but

the overall models did not differ much. Because of the relatively short duration of the research, Chinese research is still in its infancy and exploratory stage. However, from these relevant cases, we can see the advantages that teachers can bring by making changes to the classroom model, as well as reflecting the characteristics of transformational leadership.

Based on the previous case study, He (2020) conducted a quantitative experiment using data collected mainly through a pre-test, a post-test, and two questionnaires. Four classes of non-English majors were selected. Classes one and two were grouped into experimental classes, using a flipped classroom teaching model. The other two classes were grouped as control classes and taught in the traditional teaching model. The aim of this study was to investigate whether the impact of the reformed teaching model based on the teaching cases on students' English learning related to the traditional classroom teaching model was better than the traditional one, thus demonstrating the applicability of teachers' transformational leadership in the flipped college English classroom. At the beginning of the experiment, the teacher determined the teaching objectives, key points, and difficulties of each class according to the teaching content and resources before the class, and then compiled a learning guide list. A list of study guides was distributed to the students beforehand. Students followed the tips and requirements on the list to learn something new. When students encountered a tip that they could not understand, they could discuss it in small groups. Any problems that could not be solved through discussion would be collected by the group leader and brought to the classroom for help from the teacher (Mason et al., 2013). In discussion sessions, students first presented their learning individually or in groups before class. Problems were then collected and presented to the students in group discussions. Then, through the help of teachers, the problems were finally solved and the students learned something new (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). After completing the first three sessions, an evaluation and feedback session was conducted to evaluate and suggest the learning status and performance of the whole class, and to suggest further improvement measures and directions for future efforts. Finally, teachers and students selected the best group by secret ballot. In addition, in the process of learning the text, students were first asked to read the text themselves and found the answers to the questions through their own efforts. This process was done through the students themselves. Then, students were asked to translate the difficult sentences they encountered in their studies through group discussions. Finally, they received some help from the teacher for the sentences they could not understand. Finally, students were encouraged to write an email and after a long discussion between students, each group presented their writing.

The results showed that most of the non-English majors were not interested in English and rarely used other ways to learn English before they were tested. At the same time, the study finds that outdated teaching methods and teaching tools may be another important reason for the low effectiveness of teaching. The study also finds that while some are accustomed to a teacher-centred classroom model, the majority of subjects were eager to try new teaching models, reflecting the need for transformational teacher leadership. More than half said they liked the self-directed learning approach that comes with a

teacher's transformed classroom. Through a variety of teaching methods, students demonstrated that they had a more comprehensive knowledge of relevant English. This further demonstrates the successful implementation of transformational leadership by teachers and sets the stage for subsequent related experiments. However, the sample size for this experiment was too small and the subjects were all non-English majors to reflect the applicability of the English majors to the teacher's reformed college English classroom, and further research is needed.

It can be seen from this flipped classroom experiment that it reflects the idealized influence of teachers' leadership. Through rich classroom content, teachers have changed the traditional boring and boring indoctrination classroom. Students are the center, and students change from passive acceptance of knowledge to active learning of knowledge. At this time, teachers in the classroom are not only transformational leaders but also moderators and participants. Teachers use and transform each factor in the classroom to make it a unified whole with mutual cause and effect. At the same time, in this experiment, teachers with intellectual stimulation ability use a variety of teaching methods in classroom teaching, such as the method of using the study guide checklist. Teachers give students enough time and space to think about problems, return the initiative to the students, and fully believe in the students' abilities. Teachers inspire and motivate students so that students can improve their innovative awareness and creativity through specific activities such as guessing, observation, and discussion. Teachers can adopt flexible methods according to the actual situation of students so that students can experience the taste of success.

2.2 Doman, E. and Webb, M. (2017). *The Flipped Experience for Chinese University Students Studying English as a Foreign Language*. *Tesol Journal*, 8(1), pp. 102-141

At the student level, Doman and Webb (2017) gathered information from the University of Macau in order to get a better understanding of students' attitudes toward classroom change. The article first introduces the origin of the flipped classroom, the form of the classroom, and what problems the flipped classroom solves in traditional teaching. Then Doman and Webb (2017) proposed the necessity of implementing flipped classrooms in China. At the same time, he questioned whether recommending flipped pedagogy to Chinese English teachers is feasible for Chinese learners, and how much students like this teaching reform model. It then asks what kind of attitudes students have towards flipped teaching methods and how the attitudes of students in flipped classrooms differ from those of students in non-flipped classrooms. From these questions, we can further analyze and conclude that, from the perspective of students, students' views on the transformational leadership demonstrated by teachers in the classroom further reflect the transformational leadership of teachers. Followed by Doman and Webb (2017), they found that the literature on flipped classrooms is all about Western countries, and there are not many cases of flipped classrooms in China. At the same time, Doman and Webb (2017) also found from the literature review that the most obvious place about the flipped classroom is the lack of laboratory evidence on students' perception of the flipped model, especially for students in foreign language classes in universities outside Western countries, that is, the lack of experimental data on

students' perception of the flipped model. Perspectives on teacher transformational leadership in the flipped classroom from a student perspective. Therefore, to fill a relevant experimental gap, Doman and Webb (2017) conducted related experiments.

The research was carried out at an English-medium university in China's Macau region, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The volunteers who took part in the study were required to complete a certain number of hours of English as a foreign language training. Students watched instructional videos at home before coming to class. These instructional videos were integrated into the online learning modules so that students could complete all of their learning requirements through the online medium. The videos also allowed teachers and students to upload, shared and discussed them. Regarding reading, students often participated in reading activities in the classroom through puzzle-style reading, where students only read part of the text and then shared it with other students. Students were instructed to learn new information at home on their own. Some of this information could be shared with classmates online. Simultaneously, students were frequently asked to meet with their group members in order to collaborate on group assignments. Students spent their time in class participating in activities such as class writing and group discussions. In addition, students repeatedly used these different information technologies in the classroom, making them proficient. For students accustomed to traditional teacher-led classrooms, the change is dramatic (Doman & Webb, 2014). In addition, teachers were also presenting students by showing off their outstanding work done online. In flipped mode, students spent more time interacting with new material. Students gradually grew accustomed to this new approach to classroom instruction and began to look forward to the way they watched videos and completed other types of pre-reading work before class.

Student questionnaires indicated that most students preferred direct teacher instruction. Flipped students were more supportive of technology presence than non-flipped students. Additionally, flipped and non-flipped students expressed neutral perceptions of creativity and critical thinking skills. In the results of the student interviews, flipped students said about online teaching that they shared their ideas online and comment on other students' opinions outside of the classroom. Over time, the students appeared to enjoy the various types of technology used in class as well as the freedom to participate in extracurricular activities in their spare time. While the results suggest that flipped classrooms have many positive effects, learning new technologies presents a challenge for teachers. In addition, there were also shortcomings in the study design, as the researchers did not examine the impact of flipped instruction on student achievement, that is the impact of transformational teacher leadership on student achievement, nor did they compare participants' perceptions. At the same time, the researchers discovered that the reliability of the questionnaires was weak; they would need to be further developed in the future to address learner satisfaction with each area of flipped and traditional approaches.

Doman and Webb (2017) further demonstrate the transformational leadership of teachers in the classroom by flipping the perspectives of students in the classroom. We can see the difference between the flipped classroom and the traditional classroom, that is, the change in the teacher's classroom. In

the flipped classroom, teachers change the traditional teaching method, turn the teacher-centered classroom into a student-centered classroom, give students more independent time to study, and stimulate students' learning potential through different teaching methods. When students encounter learning difficulties, teachers come to assist students. When students succeed, teachers praise them generously, so that students can experience the joy of success. As a transformative teacher, each student is regarded as an individual with a unique personality, so that the student's personality can be fully displayed. Transformative teachers appear in front of students in an equal way, not only as mentors in students' learning but also as companions to grow and develop with students. But research also shows that some students are not well suited to teachers' transformational leadership. This study only focused on the same subject, and the impact of transformational leadership on other subjects is unclear. However, as a new management theory, transformational leadership has not been applied to the classroom teaching of Chinese universities for a short time. However, the results of the research show that it has a profound impact on teachers' teaching methods and students' learning, and further research is needed.

2.3 *Pounder, J. S. (2006). Transformational Classroom Leadership: The Fourth Wave of Teacher Leadership?. Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 34(4), pp. 533-545*

In 2006, Pounder (2006) provided insight into the development of teacher leadership. It considered transformational classroom leadership to be an extension of the teacher leadership structure, as well as the concept of teacher leadership to apply to school and university settings. At the same time, Silva et al. (2000) suggested that this development consists of three stages. The first phase confines teacher leadership to formal organizational hierarchies. Therefore, at this stage, the department chair is the typical teacher leader. In the second stage, teacher leaders focus more on the pedagogical function at the teaching level, but they are still assigned to formally established structures. The third stage integrates the concepts of teaching and leadership, recognizing that teachers have the opportunity to demonstrate their leadership abilities in the course of their responsibilities. As a result, relevant researchers have attempted to describe the concept of teacher leadership, but few studies have attempted to integrate the concept of teacher leadership with current leadership theory. Pounder (2006) reviewed the literature and found that Crowther conducted a relevant study on teacher leadership in 1997. Furthermore, Crowther's research shows that the leadership qualities exhibited by his teacher-leadership subjects are broadly transformative (Bass, 1985).

Pounder (2006) then proposed that Bass believes that the concept of transformational leadership has the following characteristics. First, the leader provides a sense of vision and mission to win the respect of subordinates. Second, leaders set an example for their subordinates. Third, leaders care about the development needs of followers. Fourth, leaders encourage followers to rethink the way things are done so that they gain a new understanding from it. Next, Pounder also notes that transformational leadership is related to transactional leadership, forming a broader concept of holistic leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Although Crowther (1997) points out that teachers may not be aware that they have

leadership traits, their behavior has many similarities to the leadership described above. Immediately, Pounder (2006) proposed a new study on American teacher leadership by Beachum and Dentith (2004), linking teacher leadership with leadership theory. Finally, York Barr and Duke (2004) describe the characteristics and competencies of teacher leaders, their descriptions highlight the building of trust and rapport between teacher leaders and their colleagues, and the promotion of their growth, all of which are particularly reflected in idealizing in the influence. There is no doubt that teaching and leadership are inextricably intertwined in the notion of teacher leadership.

Next, Pounder (2006) listed several influences on classroom leadership style. For example, Cheng has adopted the concept of task and maintenance of classroom leadership in many primary school classrooms in Hong Kong. The overall findings are very detailed, but of particular relevance to this paper are the findings that leadership styles have a strong effect on classroom social climate and students' emotional performance (Cheng, 1994). Similarly, Rickards and Fisher (1996) discovered in the same educational context in other countries that student achievement and classroom attitudes were highly associated with teacher classroom leadership, as defined in the Teacher Interaction Questionnaire. Furthermore, Wubbels et al. (1997) collected data on more than 50,000 students and pointed out that students believe that the best teachers are strong classroom leaders. Similarly, Hay McBer (2000) reported on classroom leaders Behavior is one of the important factors affecting students' academic performance. Thus, appropriate instructional leadership has been shown in research to have a positive impact on students' attitudes in the classroom as well as student achievement. Following this, Pounder (2006) conducted a literature review of transformational transactional leadership, summarizing some of the characteristics of this leadership type.

Overall, Pounder (2006) argues that the impact of the implementation of transformational leadership in teachers is broadly consistent with the findings of research on the outcomes of transformational leadership. Examining the concept of teacher leadership in the context of higher education appears to be a productive area of research.

3. Discussion

These three articles provide an in-depth analysis of teacher transformational leadership and its deeper higher education context. As described by Pounder (2006), transformational leadership does not initially connect with teachers in the classroom. Rather, it was found that teacher-led subjects showed transformative outcomes as researchers from various parties investigated. In 2014, Pounder argued that transformational classroom leadership has substantial benefits in improving the quality of teachers' teaching experience and educational outcomes in the context of growing criticism of the quality of university teaching (Pounder, 2014).

He (2020) and Doman and Webb (2017) support Pounder's claim, both of them conducted experiments with Chinese college English flipped classrooms as an example, and found the feasibility of flipped classrooms in Chinese college English classrooms. It further arouses people's thinking about the impact

of teachers' transformational leadership on the English learning of Chinese college students in the flipped classroom. He (2020) conducted quantitative experiments based on previous successful case guidance. It was found that before the non-English majors were tested, most of them had no interest in English and seldom-used other means to learn English. After the teacher reformed the classroom, more than half said they liked the flipped classroom. Through a variety of teaching methods, students demonstrate that they have a more comprehensive understanding of relevant English knowledge. This research demonstrates the need for teacher transformational leadership and further demonstrates the successful implementation of teacher transformational leadership in the classroom. However, the defect of this experiment is that the sample size is too small, only one area is tested, and the subjects are all non-English majors with different degrees of liking for English, which cannot reflect the reform of teachers by English majors or other majors. It is necessary to further explore the influence of teachers' leadership styles in the classroom. But from this flipped classroom, we have a preliminary understanding of the transformational leadership of teachers in the classroom.

Furthermore, Doman and Webb (2017) used a mixed experimental approach. Think about the feasibility of flipped classrooms from the perspective of students. This experiment was conducted in an English-taught university in Macau, China, and the students all had a certain foundation in English. From the experiment process, we can see the difference between the flipped classroom and the traditional classroom and the idealized influence of teacher leadership. The teacher changed the traditional boring indoctrination classroom through rich classroom content, with students as the center and students becoming passive. Accepting knowledge is active learning. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods in the classroom to encourage students to think independently. At the same time, teachers also use information technology to assist students in English learning. When students achieve certain success, teachers will give praise to encourage students to further develop in the direction of success. This change in teaching mode reflects the characteristics of teachers' transformational leadership. Compared with He (2020), Doman and Webb (2017) added interviews with students, allowing us to see students' views on flipped classrooms more clearly. There is also a clearer awareness of students' perceptions of the transformational leadership of teachers in the classroom. It lays the foundation for the transformational leadership of teachers in the classroom.

It can be seen that in the process of integrating teachers' transformational leadership in Chinese college English classrooms, we still need to overcome many difficulties. But for now, teachers' transformational leadership highlights several benefits. Teachers with transformative leadership in the classroom are both mentors in student learning and peers who grow and develop with students. They usually have a good sense of humor, express ideas well, and are good at creating an equal classroom atmosphere for teachers and students. At the same time, they make the most of students' initiative by setting goals and motivating them, and at the same time pay attention to individual needs and self-evaluation, so that students can experience a sense of success. In addition, they are not only good at using advanced technology and multimedia for teaching but also pay attention to the cultivation of

students' higher-order thinking. By learning the application of transformational leadership theory in the classroom and specific behaviors, front-line teachers can enhance their classroom leadership, improve their teaching strength, and go further on the road of professional development.

4. Conclusion

These articles highlight the impact of teachers' transformational leadership in Chinese college English classrooms on college students' English learning. This paper studies the development process of teachers' transformational leadership and the reflection of teachers' transformational leadership in the flipped classroom. But what we need to pay attention to is the feasibility of transformational leadership of teachers in the context of China's education system. Experiments have shown that in college English classrooms, teachers' transformational leadership shows many positive aspects. But the applicability of teachers' transformational leadership to other courses requires further exploration. For the further development of China's education reform, we also need to develop a coordinated plan to address these issues.

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