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## WHY ARE WE FLIPPING? AN EXPLORATION OF THE REASONS FOR IMPLEMENTING FLIPPED LEARNING AND ITS PERCEIVED IMPLICATIONS IN AN ONLINE ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES PRESESSIONAL COURSE

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**Abstract.** *Pre-sessional courses are designed to help learners develop the necessary language and academic skills to succeed in their higher education journey. Despite this common overarching goal, these courses vary in the degree of disciplinary specificity, duration and pedagogical underpinnings. One pedagogical underpinning used to varying degrees is flipped learning (FL). FL is a relatively novel pedagogical approach which has informed the development of the pre-sessional object of study. This small-scale study aims to gain a better understanding of why course designers, course developers and course coordinators, decide to implement FL, along with its pedagogical implications. Through the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, it is shown how although FL was first adopted as a response to practical constraints, the pedagogical benefits, such as fostering students' autonomy and maximising classroom time, translated into its formal adoption in further iterations of the course. Results also show the practical implications of adopting FL following a top-down approach. This article also shows how FL can be combined with other approaches such as TBL or TEL. Based on the data generated, this article argues for FL to be part of the eclectic pedagogical repertoire that nurtures EAP.*

**Key words:** *Flipped Learning, EAP Pedagogies, Pre-sessional course, Technology Enhanced Learning, Course Design*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Multiple approaches to knowledge have interacted in the development of EAP as a discipline, from the now-consolidated genre-based approach to teaching writing in the disciplines to embracing recent approaches such as Legitimation Code Theory (Bruce, 2012). Interestingly, it is in the classroom space where this eclecticism comes to life (Kirk, 2018). The extra layer of complexity when exploring EAP pedagogies (Kirk, 2023) is the multiple realities of EAP teaching not only in different institutions within the UK but also in terms of the global context (MacDiarmid & MacDonald, 2021). EAP does not exist in a vacuum but rather as a part of broader pedagogical conversations and within

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local contexts. It is primarily a student-centred approach nurtured by advances in pedagogical research and locally enacted to respond to the multiple realities in which is implemented. One of those advances is the case of Flipped Learning, Although FL had been implemented and researched before Covid-19 (Wittmann & Wulf, 2023), it has been gaining popularity due to its seamless integration in the online environment. This is relevant for the current context within HE as following the move online, known as emergency remote teaching (ERT) (Hodges et al. 2020), institutions, practitioners and learners are navigating the return to physical spaces. As a result, new blended and hybrid mediums of delivery are being explored. Crucially, there is a strong desire to harvest the lessons learned from the pandemic (see, for instance, JAAP's (2021) special issue 'Transitions to Remote and Blended Learning'). Similarly, McElveny (2023) explicitly signals FL as one of those positive approaches to teaching and learning while urging the EAP community not to lose the advances made in terms of delivery mode and pedagogical designs (McElveny, 2023). However, despite FL being widely discussed in EAP forums such as BALEAP (2019; 2021; 2023) and IAETFL (2019; 2021; 2023), published research exploring FL in the EAP context is still emerging.

Novel pedagogical approaches and delivery models have also affected EAP preessional courses. As Pearson (2020) explains these courses aim to help learners develop their linguistic and academic skills while regulating admission into HE programmes in the UK. Pearson (2020) also highlights the lack of systematic documentation of preessional programmes in terms of how the intensity, length and frequency of courses relates to minimum English requirements in HE programmes.

This article aims to shed light on how FL, a relatively novel pedagogical approach, informs the development of a preessional course while providing a better understanding of how key figures in pre-sessional design evaluate the pedagogical implications of this approach. Thus it provides a better understanding of the impact of FL in preessional courses while showing how pedagogical principles are embraced following a top-down approach in the course object of study. Specifically, it aims to address the following research questions.

1. What reasons might pre-sessional course designers have for adopting FL?
2. What are the perceived pedagogical implications of embracing FL for course design?

To achieve this goal, a critical review of the literature is presented to contextualise FL in relation to EAP pre-sessionals while exploring the nature of these courses. The methodology section introduces the context of the research and examines the methodological principles and methods adopted in this mixed-methods study. Results are presented and discussed, followed by a critical reflection on the data generated and their implications for the use of FL in EAP preessional courses.

## 2. CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section aims to critically engage with key literature to contextualise this study. Thus, this section explores the nature of FL followed by a brief exploration of the nature of preessionals.

### 2.1. Conceptualising Flipped Learning

In 2012, two high-school Chemistry teachers, Bergamand and Sams (2012), relocated their traditional lectures outside of the classroom space, to allow the sessions to be a

collaborative space where complex aspects were explored. This transformative initiative resulted in them being credited as the founders of FL as it is currently conceptualised. However, the origins of FL can be traced to the seminal work of Mazur (1997) and, more recently, the Inverted Classroom (IC) (Lage, Platt and Treglia, 2000). IC is defined by the authors as “events that have traditionally taken place inside the classroom now take place outside the classroom and vice versa” (Lage et al., 2000, p. 32). A superficial engagement with IC and FL may suggest that they are cemented in similar concepts. In fact, Bergmann and Sams (Noonoo, 2012) themselves attribute the lack of interest aroused by the IC in institutions and practitioners alike, compared to FL, to the lack of technological readiness. Nevertheless, a deeper analysis of the pedagogical principles of both IC and FL reveals that IC advocates providing a wide range of options for different learning styles, FL advocates an inversion of Bloom’s taxonomy (Brinks-Lockwood, 2014). That is to say, while IC is rooted in the widely discredited theory of learning styles (An & Carr, 2017; Kirschner, 2017), FL is rooted in social constructivism (Correa, 2015). By moving the higher-order thinking skills tasks into the classroom space, learners are able to explore these more challenging tasks with the support of their peers and the guidance of the tutor. This, in turn, results in learning becoming a collective experience (Vygotsky, 1978). This conceptualisation of FL, (Brinks-Lockwood, 2014; Correa, 2015; Villegas, 2022) allows for a deeper understanding of the pedagogical principles informing FL. This is not to say that FL cannot benefit from TEL and multimodal artefacts but rather by demonstrating how FL is underpinned by constructivism, also present in other EAP pedagogies such as Task-Based Learning (TBL), I argue for FL to be a valuable approach within the eclectic EAP pedagogical repertoire.

Having addressed FL in relation to TEL, the importance of space will now be explored. Back in 2016, Fisher’s then-provocative article questioned the need for classrooms altogether argued that FL and active learning spaces are simply a response to the new economic demands. Fisher (2016) predicted the transformation of working spaces due to technological advancements to be mimicked in HE spaces. Fisher’s (2016) rationale is based on a utilitarian conception of education as a preparation for contributing to the world’s economy that he proposes (2016, p. 11). However, with the 2020 Covid-19 outbreak, activity was moved online. In the case of education, Johnston et al. (2022) talk about the importance of the third space as a form of conceptualising schools’ emergency remote teaching (ERT). Crucially, they conclude their article with a call to consider the implications of the lessons learned during the pandemic and the role of digital third spaces in different aspects of education. Similarly, in the context of EAP in HE, McElveny (2023) urges practitioners not to lose sight of the positive aspects of teaching online. He reports successfully implementing FL as part of a TEL project, following Abeysekera and Dawson’s (2014) framework. This is an interesting example of combining FL and TEL where strong pedagogical principles are intertwined with TEL. This is not the only example of a growing body of research (see JPAAP Special issue) reflecting on the teaching and learning that took place during the ERT period. Creative and relatively novel approaches, like McElveny’s (2023), along with the awareness of different spaces and their impact on teaching and learning (Johnston et al., 2022) open the possibility of re-distributing tasks and renegotiating the space. This is then implemented as deliberate action considering pedagogical implications and practices, as opposed to impositions from the labour market as Fisher (2016) proposed. Therefore, FL can contribute to the redistribution of spaces by informing the distribution of the tasks in either the online or physical space. redistribution can thus be informed by strong pedagogical principles and market demands.

Flexibility in space is not the only advantage that FL can bring to the EAP classroom. Studies on FL report a more effective use of classroom time (Davies et al., 2015). Similarly, Wanner and Palmer (2015) attribute FL to an increase in learners' interaction while Yilmaz (2013) reports high students' engagement and satisfaction. Studies exploring FL in the language classroom report better performance (Teng, 2017) along with students' ability to produce higher-quality work (Brinks-Lockwood, 2014). However, studies also report potential pitfalls of FL. Firstly, student lack of preparation of the flipped tasks (Abeysekara & Dawson, 2014) is a common concern. Secondly, in the context of HE, Anderson et al., (2017) report how although initially students who attend a FL course score higher than those on a non-flipped course, these differences disappear after 6 months.

Research specifically exploring FL in EAP is emerging, for instance, McElveny's (2023) project using FL alongside TEL, a trend predicted to continue. Knežević et al., (2020) adopted FL to foster EAP students' vocabulary acquisition; their positive results provide strong grounds to conceptualise FL as a useful practice to enhance vocabulary acquisition in the EAP classroom. Thus, this study aims to contribute to this growing area of research by amplifying the voices of course designers, course developers and course leaders to shed light on their design process and experience of using FL in a preessional course.

## 2.2. Conceptualising Preessional Programmes

EAP is related to EFL but presents its own unique characteristics as a field. Watson-Todd, (2003) explains how the key principle behind EAP is to develop students' academic literacies. Crucially, EAP tends not to be included under any specific method due to their prescriptive nature clashing with EAP's intrinsic eclecticism (Watson-Todd, 2003). Therefore, EAP draws from a wide range of approaches that allow for enacting its four controlling principles, as identified by Philips (1981, cited in Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001, p. 183). These principles are

- Reality control, relating to the difficulty of the task.
- Non-triviality, stating how the task needs to be relevant for the students.
- Authenticity, requiring the language to be 'authentic for its specific purpose' (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001, p. 183).
- Tolerance of error, allowing errors that do not compromise communication.

The eclectic and fluid nature of EAP makes it a truly student-centred discipline, where a wide range of approaches are used to allow students to join their disciplinary discourse and actively engage with the construction of knowledge. As highlighted in the introductory section, to achieve this goal, traditional approaches such as Swales' (1998) conception of textography as a genre inform materials and courses which allow students to acquire the unique disciplinary patterns of their field. Similarly, Hyland explains how to be heard in a discipline, it is necessary to 'display a competence as disciplinary insiders' (Hyland, 2005, p. 175). Thus, by using authentic materials, students will be more aware of their discipline's discourse, thus addressing Hyland's point and fostering not only students' own awareness of disciplinary discourse but also their ability to communicate successfully within their communities of practice. An example of specificity in preessional courses is discussed by Hulme (2021) who argues for the need for discipline-specific professionals while offering a set of guidance principles.

However, the ability to engage in these pedagogical discussions informing the course direction is not necessarily available to practitioners in the course. Fletcher (2023) urges

course designers to allow space to preessional tutors to bring their own expertise, thus addressing differentiation and genuinely place the learners at the centre of the sessions. As highlighted, a learner centred approach is key in teaching EAP. Similarly, Alexander (2020) explains the need for EAP tutors to quickly adapt to teaching a course “it is designed, rather than as they imagine it should be designed”. This quote puts the focus on the understanding of pedagogical principles enacted by course designers while highlighting a top-down implementation of these principles. This, in turn, requires practitioners who have the skills to unpack those pedagogies and bring them to live in the classroom.

However, as Fletcher (2023) highlights a purely to-down implementation may overlook differentiation. Crucially, EAP practitioners need to be highly skilled to decode and implement pedagogical underpinnings yet may be unable to provide key input based on their experience and high skills. Ganchev (2020) proposes a middle-ground approach to designing academic writing preessionals where a top down-approach is complemented by student-generated data based on questionnaires, diagnostic texts and classroom observations. While this approach includes students’ voices, it still fails to acknowledge how preessionals following a top-down design rely on qualified practitioners unpicking said principles and qualified practitioners effectively using them to underpin their courses.

In the case of FL, this requires course designers who have an intimate understanding of FL and the specific contexts in which the course will be implemented. In turn, it requires practitioners who can understand how this pedagogical approach is conceptualised and implemented. Crucially, the Competency Framework for EAP teachers (BALEAP, 2008) does not include FL as one of the key pedagogical approaches in the EAP practitioner toolkit. Thus, creating the space to explore the rationale underpinning course designers’ selections and implementations of pedagogical approaches to inform their courses.

### 3. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

#### 3.1. Research Context

This small-scale study aims to gain a better understanding of why course designers, course developers and course coordinators, referred to under the umbrella term ‘management team’ decide to implement FL while shedding light on their perceptions of the impact of this approach in the course. The course object of study took place at a Russell-group University in the UK offering a 10-week and a 6-week preessional Flipped EAP course was selected. This course relies on TEL to present the flipped content, students access this content through the VLE and complete it before attending the live synchronous session. Crucially, this data was collected in the summer of 2020, therefore this flipped pre-sessional was moved online, making it an example of ERT (Hodges et al., 2020). As FL had been implemented in 2018, this choice of pre-sessional course seems reasonable as they are clear examples of early adopters (Huser et al. 2021). However, it is worth highlighting the unique circumstances in which the data collection took place. This, in turn, needs to be taken into consideration when engaging with the results and analysis in this paper.

### 3.1.1. Participants

This is a small data set with five self-selected participants. Four of the participants identified as male and one as ‘prefer not to say’. Although participants have been labelled under the umbrella term ‘course management team’, Table 1 shows how they hold a wide range of roles related to course design, development and implementation.

Table 1 Roles held by questionnaire participants under the umbrella term ‘course management team’.

| Role in the course object of study  | Respondents |
|---|-------------|
| Course Designers/ Academic Directors<br>They oversee the presessionals design and have line management responsibilities. They meet weekly with the Course Leaders while the course takes place and Course Leaders report directly to them.  | 2           |
| Course Developers<br>They have a strong understanding of OL and Online tools; they report to the Technology Enhance Learning Director   | 1           |
| Course Leader<br>They are the point of contact between the teaching-team and the Course Designers/ Academic Directors and Course Developers. They oversee the teachers implementing the course but have no line management responsibilities | 2           |

Although all respondents agreed to be contacted to participate in a semi-structured interview, only four of them responded to the follow-up email to set up the interview. Interviews included two course leaders, William, and Dennis, one member of the course development James, and one of the academic directors out of the potential two, Lester. Key demographic information about these participants is provided in Table 2. As discussed, interviews revealed complementary information that allowed for a better understanding of the quantitative data collected.

Table 2 Key demographic information of semi-structured interview participants

| Pseudonym | Demographic information  |
|-----------|--|
| Lester    | Lester is one of the two managers who took part in the questionnaire. He was behind the push for adopting FL in 2018 and maintaining it for the summer school pre-session course due to its positive results |
| James     | James has relevant EL experience and has played a variety of roles in pre-session summer school courses, including teacher, team leader and TEL support.   |
| William   | Summer 2020 was William’s first time as a team leader. However, he has experience of teaching in this pre-session course.  |
| Dennis    | Summer 2020 was Dennis’s first time as a team leader. However, he has experience of teaching in this pre-session course.   |

### 3.2. Methodology and Methods

As highlighted, this study aims to address the following RQs:

1. What reasons might a pre-session course management team have for adopting FL?
2. What are the perceived implications of embracing FL?

To achieve this aim, a mixed methods research approach was adopted. From a philosophical perspective, this research aligns with the practical paradigm, which emphasizes practical application (Denscombe, 2008). This paradigm is appropriate for this study as it aims to investigate how and why FL is implemented in a pre-sessional course from the perspective of course designers, course developers and course leaders. In this study, an abductive approach to data processing is employed, as suggested by Reichertz (2004), because abductive reasoning allows the researcher to actively engage in both theory generation and data creation (Kaushick & Walsh, 2019). This approach is well-suited for the study's mixed-methods nature and the data generation and analysis process. Crucially, MMR allows for triangulation, which involves comparing the outcomes obtained through different methods (Ivankova & Greer, 2015). It also allows for complementarity, thus enabling seeking clarification on findings obtained from different methods (Ivankova & Greer, 2015). In this study, semi-structured interviews allow for further clarification on ideas and themes generated at the questionnaire stage.

Case study was adopted as the research strategy. This is because the project focuses on a specific course in a British HE institution and closely explores their reality of embracing FL in an EAP course. However, it is important to address the limitation of generalizability often associated with case studies, as discussed in the literature (Cohen et al., 2011; Pearson Casanave, 2018; Wellington, 2015). Case studies do not lead to generalizations, but the results can be transferable to similar contexts. Crucially, this cross-sectional study was carried out in the third year of the programme embracing FL, however, the data was collected in 2020. This means that although FL had been implemented in 2018 and refined in 2019, in 2020, FL run alongside ERT. The uniqueness of summer 2020 contributes to the fact that to ethically engage with these results, findings should be considered within their context. Thus, allowing for potential transferability but not for generalisability.

Quantitative data was generated through questionnaires adapting perceptions from the literature and previously used questionnaires in similar studies. Those studies are Noels et al. (2000), Sergis et al. (2018), Sørenbø et al. (2009) and Wanner and Palmer (2015). Adapting questionnaires offered the significant benefit of using items that had undergone testing to ensure validity and reliability for their intended research purposes. This was reassuring to me being a researcher with limited experience, this approach gave me a sense of reassurance and develop my own understanding of the process involved in developing a questionnaire. This questionnaire was also informed by insights from the course object of studies obtained through a pilot exploratory research conducted in 2019. One of the key decisions made in terms of this instrument was using Likert scales with numbers, to avoid potential discrepancies when interpreting words (Cohen et al., 2017). Specifically, in this study, due to the limited sample, the use of percentages was discarded in favour of respondents' numbers. This approach was taken so that results do not misrepresent the data set.

In terms of analytical lenses, descriptive statistics were used due to the self-selected and non-representative nature of the sample. Descriptive statistics allow for categorising and gaining insights into the sample, but they do not support making presumptive conclusions (Allen, 2017). Therefore, descriptive statistics are used to provide context for the qualitative data set and to provide a description, rather than drawing inferences. Two reasons underpin this methodological choice, firstly, it helps assess data quality and identify anomalies (Loeb et al., 2017). Secondly, it enhances the understanding of quantitative description (Trochim, 2020). The software SPSS was used to carry out this analysis due to its user-friendly interface. This study presents the mode to identify the most common answers in the questionnaire.

Qualitative data were generated through semi-structured interviews with the management team and analysed through thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). To generate themes from the semi-structured interviews or conversations with a purpose (Webb & Webb, 1932; as cited in Wellington 2015), I followed the six key decisions proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thus, in this analysis, themes were generated based on trends in the literature, participants own comments and the proposed RQs. In that line, although the analysis was constrained by the RQs, it is closer to a rich description of the data set as opposed to a detailed account of a particular aspect. After all, this exploratory study aims to shed light on the perceptions of practitioners in course management positions in relation to FL.

The proposed RQs have played a key role in the analysis of the data generated, therefore, this is closer to a theoretical TA, as opposed to a more inductive approach. This TA aligns with a more Semantic, or explicit level, as it moves from the description to the interpretation of the data. Its goal is to theorize the broader meaning and implication of the data while relating it to the literature previously explored. It has already been explained the rationale behind embracing a pragmatic paradigm, to align with this epistemological choice, this analysis takes a more essentialist. Lastly, Braun and Clarke (2006 p. 85) highlight 'the many questions of Qualitative research' including the project RQs, the interview questions and the questions informing the coding and analysis of data. In this project, the RQs were at the heart of the process but they also evolved and became more refined, as my own understanding of the field grew, and the research evolved. Similarly, the interview questions were mostly informed by the RQs but, due to the dialogic nature of semi-structured interviews, some questions and ideas explored are unique to each participant. Once again, the original RQs were instrumental in coding and analysing the data, in line with a more theoretical approach to TA.

My approach to generating themes also aligns with Braun and Clarke (2006 p.84) approach by embracing their six steps to carry out TA as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3 Braun and Clarke 2006 p.84, the questions of Qualitative Research.

| How to develop a robust approach to TA Braun and Clarke (2006 p.84)? | How did I ensure this?   |
|--|--|
| Familiarise yourself with your data                                  | As highlighted, transcripts were extracted using Otter.ai and check by the researcher for accuracy and omissions. These transcripts were printed out and manually highlighted key ideas that related to the RQs. |
| Generate initial codes   | I re-read this roughly highlighted transcripts and roughly coded them a first time, then I moved the analysis to MAXQDA to refine this initial coding.   |
| Searching for themes   | I looked at the coded extract to generate relevant and meaningful themes to address the RQs.   |
| Reviewing the themes   | I moved from a microanalysis approach to a more holistic one to ensure consistency and congruency in the generated themes in relation to RQs and the literature analysed.  |
| Defining and naming themes   | At this stage, themes were revised and refined ensuring consistency in grouping the extract under the relevant themes.   |
| Producing the report   | This article is the report of this analysis  |

On a more practical note, recordings were transcribed using Otter.ai, and MaxQDA was used to facilitate the coding process. Table 4 summarises the themes generated to address the proposed RQs.

Table 4 Codes generated to address the proposed RQs.

| Themes generated to address the proposed RQs                           |  |
|--|--|
| What reasons might pre-sessional course managers have for adopting FL? | What are the perceived implications of embracing FL? |
| Practical constraints  | FL in combination with other pedagogical approaches. |
| Pedagogical benefits   | FL and TEL   |

### 3.3. Ethical considerations

Before concluding this section, I would like to address the ethical considerations from a data generation and a researcher's positionality perspectives. Firstly, in terms of data generation, it has been reinforced how results may be transferable but not generalisable due to the intrinsic nature of the research. To protect participants' identities, respondents were given the option to choose their own pseudonyms, those who declined were assigned one. Secondly, in terms of positionality, this is an example of an insider researcher, which is intrinsically sensitive, as participants can be influenced by pre-existing relationships. Although, at the time of conducting this research, I was a member of the department object of study, I was involved in in-sessional programmes and not preessionals thus potentially lessening some of the issues. Similarly, the voluntary nature of participating in the research was highlighted in the letter to participants and ethical consent was obtained from the institution and the department. Ethical approval was obtained to carry out this research.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To facilitate the presentation of the results obtained, they have been classified under their respective RQs.

### *RQ1 What reasons might a pre-sessional course management team have for adopting FL?*

The first RQ was solely addressed through the use of qualitative instruments. Rich contributions were made by all participants in this area. Participants reported a response to practical and external factors to explore the use of FL. Specifically, they wanted to maximise the classroom space, responding to a higher number of students in 2017.

Although adopting FL was a response to a desire to embrace students-centred sessions while maximising the physical space, as has been seen from the literature critically evaluated in this article (Bergman and Sands, 2012; Brinks-Lockwood, 2014) in these are areas in which FL can have a positive impact. Crucially, this lengthy quote shows how FL may have been a response to external circumstances but has quickly become a positive approach. The powerful car/ bicycle metaphor explains how allowing FL to become part of the summer school pedagogical repertoire translated into fostering

students' autonomy and aligning classroom dynamics to EAP principles (King and Kirk, 2022).

“I’ve used this metaphor elsewhere, is us adopting FL has been a positive thing. And imagine that you drive to work, and then your car breaks down. So, you start walking to work instead. And you find that actually walking to work is good exercise. It’s cheaper, it’s better for the environment, and you enjoy it more. So then when your car in when your car gets fixed, you decide that walking to work is better in any case, and that’s what we kind of found with FL. Initially, it was a necessity but then we realized this is a better approach, I think, particularly for helping develop autonomy, and not having so much teacher-led lessons with a teacher at the front explaining how to do this and explaining how to do that.” (Lester)

Therefore the pedagogical advantages of embracing FL, such as developing autonomy and fostering a classroom practice with the tutor adopting the role of ‘meddler in the middle’ (Kirk and King, 2022).

Lester’s insightful take on the benefits of FL is an interesting contrast to Dennis pragmatic approach to the advantages of FL

“I, really, you can give a label to whatever theory or methodology you are using but basically, I see it as I go and do some stuff, they do some stuff. And it works, hopefully.” (Dennis)

Dennis further elaborates on this point by stating that:

“Realistically, there’s a lot of homework, and they need to do the homework for the next class I realise no one’s going to be by giving a paper at IATEFL on the students’ need to do a lot of homework. But it’s just the balance between what you’re doing in class and what you are doing outside of class.” (Dennis)

Crucially, Dennis is highlighting the need for a balance between the in-class HOTS tasks and the before-class LOTS tasks. As has been discussed (Bergman and Sands, 2012; Brinks-Lockwood, 2014, Villegas, 2022). However, both Lester and Dennis refer to learners’ autonomy and how it, hopefully, works. The key difference is that Lester seems to conceptualise FL as a conduit for fostering autonomy and students’ engagement whereas Dennis aligns with the conceptualisation of FL as a direct manifestation of active learning. Crucially, Lester’s sophisticated understanding of FL allows him to establish pedagogical links with other key theories in EAP, as the quotes included in this section demonstrate.

It could be argued that Lester’s ability to establish links among the theories used underpinning the course is a result of his heavier involvement in the design. As Basturkmen (2010) argues, beliefs are developed during the process of designing the course. Thus, a direct lack of involvement in this stage may hinder the understanding of pedagogical principles and their impact. This is further supported by William’s perception of FL as a tool to maximise profit.

“I sort of understand the point. Because initially, when it came in, I thought it was just a way for the university to have more money and make more money (...) So you can get two classes in one classroom, so you can make more money, have the early lessons and the late lessons but then I did the course (...) and then it was clearer about how it should be, then it makes sense.” (William)

Considering that FL is difficult to define (Abeysekera and Dawson, 2014), the discussions around spaces in HE (Fisher, 2016) and the neoliberalism influence in HE, it is reasonable to understand how William and Dennis perceived FL to be a strategy to maximize profits. After all, as Lester explains, FL was first considered an option as a response to physical constraints. However, it is clear how all participants are able to identify and articulate the benefits of FL due to their shared understanding of FL, despite the fact that there are different degrees of understanding. The data analysed shows how if FL had not been perceived to foster students' development and contributed to students' centred sessions, it would not have been maintained in further iterations of the course.

This section has highlighted how even though the original drivers underpinning the use of FL were a response to practical constraints, the perceived benefits of FL ensured its continuity in further iterations of the preessional course. Crucially, a thorough understanding of FL is essential to be able to identify these benefits. As evidenced by William's quote, as his understanding of FL develops, he can see 'the point' of FL.

*RQ2 - What are the perceived implications of embracing FL?*

This question aims to explore the perceived implications of embracing FL in an EAP preessional course. To address this RQ, a combination of closed (Table 5, Table 7) and open (Table 6), along with semi-structured interviews were used. The first topic addressed is FL in relation to other pedagogical approaches, followed by FL in relation to TEL.

*FL in relation to other pedagogical approaches*

Table 5 Questionnaire responses on perceived pedagogical implications of implementing FL

| Item   | Completely disagree | Disagree | Agree | Completely agree |
|--|---------------------|----------|-------|------------------|
| I understand the pedagogical principles underpinning FL  |                     |          | 4     | 1                |
| I am comfortable answering teachers' questions about the methods and approaches underpinning this course |                     |          | 4     | 1                |
| The preessional course is more communicative as a result of embracing FL                                 |                     | 2        | 1     | 2                |

It is interesting to see how although the majority of respondents believe FL allows for a more communitive course two respondents feel that is not necessarily the case. When addressing this in interviews, the abundance of materials that needed covering in class combined with the challenges of completing a course delivered through ERT were highlighted as deterrents for fostering communication.

“And if they work in isolation as well. Yeah, I mean, that's something I'm still getting used to. So that's going to make things much harder, isn't it? Yes. Yeah.” (William)

The majority of the interviews reveal FL to be perceived as an excellent vehicle to foster communication, as James' quote below exemplifies. This perception echoes common findings in the literature (Wanner & Palmer, 2015; Ryan & Reid, 2015).

“Students can spend time on their own and focus on the very basic ideas, understand very simple concepts, concepts. Look at language at the very good sort of like basic level, before they come to the classroom and do something a bit more advanced, or the interactivity happens in a way that, you know, they prepare something in advance, and then they come and they practice it in the lesson, they communicate their ideas and their notes”. (James).

In line with the responses generated in RQ1, the first two items reinforce participants' confidence in their own understanding of FL, along with the pedagogical principles informing the course. Lester's interview offers further evidence of the strong pedagogical principles underpinning the course as a direct result of engaging with the body of knowledge

“Well, to be honest, I kind of pride myself on the work that I have done. So back in 2018, when we first started adopting, flipped learning, I remember saying to my colleague, we don't know what we're doing. And so I went and found out and I went and read books about flip learning, task-based learning, andragogy. And I took what I discovered, and I applied it to the development work we were doing on the course.” (Lester)

This perceived interaction of FL with other pedagogical approaches in the course was explored in the open-ended question (Table 6).

Table 6 Course management team identification of other pedagogical principles informing the course

| Participant   | Principles Identified   |
|---------------|---|
| Management    | Essentially, we applied principles of flipped learning and task-based learning. The former kind of necessitates the latter because things that can be done didactically, passively or independently such as reading a text, understanding a grammar point or preparing a discussion can be flipped out of the classroom, and class time should be spent on quality interactive activities and TBL already has a wealth of literature on good ways to approach this. |
| Management    | The communicative approach  |
| Course Leader | TBL   |
| Course Leader | Promoting student autonomy and independence   |
| TEL Team      | Discourse analysis/text processing, lexical approach, digital literacy, learner autonomy, critical thinking, task-based learning, CLT.  |

As can be seen, FL is perceived to be implemented alongside TBL. Responses show how different members of the team conceptualise the course and its pedagogical underpinnings and approaches. It is also worth noting how some perceived positive impacts of embracing FL, promoting students' autonomy and independence, are reported as pedagogical underpinnings.

Taken together, these responses show how FL is perceived to interact with other pedagogical approaches in EAP. Crucially, an understanding of these pedagogies has been presented as essential to developing a robust course. These findings highlight how different pedagogies are carefully implemented in an eclectic manner to foster teaching and learning in EAP.

It is also possible to see how this top-down approach to course design may clash with the reality of the classroom. The vast quantity of materials prepared may be a detriment to meaningful participation. It has been argued how EAP instructors are required to possess a wide range of skills that in this top-down approach may be underutilised if they are forced to forefront completing the syllabus to responding to the learners' needs and peace by teaching how course 'how it was designed' (Alexander, 2023).

#### *FL and TEL*

The second theme generated to better understand the implications of embracing FL is TEL. As has been explained, despite voices arguing for a conceptualisation of FL based on strong pedagogical principles (Brinks-Lockwood, 2016; Villegas, 2022); FL is largely presented in relation to the use of TEL (Abeysekera and Dawson, 2014; Bergamnd and Sands, 2012). As highlighted, as this data was collected in 2020, the role of TEL is visible in the development of the flipped content and in the delivery of the sessions. With all teaching having been moved online as a result of ERT, the classes were delivered synchronously. Responses to the questionnaire (Table 7) show how students were perceived to be able to access the tasks and ask questions, this is an identified potential pitfalls when implementing flipped learning (Wanner and Palmer, 2015).

Table 7 FL and TEL questionnaire responses

| Item  | Completely disagree | Disagree | Agree | Completely agree |
|---|---------------------|----------|-------|------------------|
| The flipped content is easy to access   |                     |          | 4     | 1                |
| Students know what to do when they struggle to understand the interactive task            |                     |          | 3     | 2                |
| Organising a FL course is logistically more challenging than organising a traditional one |                     |          | 2     | 3                |

The theme of technology appeared frequently in the interviews. The exchange below shows the extent to which TEL is perceived to play a major role in the course. Firstly, TEL is perceived as a positive element that enhances students' motivation and engagement with the course while allowing them to develop their skills while providing agency regarding the channels used.

They really like the interactive lessons. This sounds like a cliché, but the...these are young people they love using like computers or, or phones or devices. And so to actually, in a traditional classroom, we're always having to tell your students put your phone away. (...) And it's an advantage for engaging with texts. Because students can go at their own pace, they can read again, they can watch again. Certainly, it's a bit more accessible in terms of allowing students the freedom to decide how they engage with something (Lester).

Most of the language lessons are interactive in the way students are clicking to identify something or clicking to complete a multiple choice task or drag and drop, you know, drag the words into the text or identify something and the students like that sort of interactivity. Because it's, it has this sort of you gamifying language learning, and it

does help with, you know, motivation and understanding the content a bit more in checking (James).

Secondly, TEL appears a source of anxiety when issues are reported.

“I mean, obviously, occasionally, you have a technical issue, (...) Sometimes, you know, if they, if their score is not showing, and they did, they completed the activity, but it wasn't recorded. So you'll get you know, we'll get emails from students worrying about 'oh I completed that, but it doesn't show' or these page is blank, and what do I do, and I want my teacher to know that I finished it.” (James)

In the specific context of ERT, FL is perceived to be essential to ensure the smooth delivery of the course, making it both meaningful and feasible as Lester's quote shows. This quote is particularly compelling as it highlights once again the importance of understanding FL to implement it in courses.

“So that kind of moving to an online context, really. Even if it's not flipped learning, there needs to be variety. (...). So you got that flexibility. And I think that's essential. (...) Certainly for, like some kind of full-time or intensive course such as preessional teaching online requires flipped learning really requires some way of having asynchronous content and flipped learning is, is a viable and, and proven and good way of making that work. So I think that if we hadn't adopted flipped learning back in 2018, we would have had to have done this year, if we'd had the time to get our heads around it.” (Lester)

As can be seen, in the course object of research, the role of TEL was essential to implement FL. It is worth reinforcing how the decisions underpinning the design of the interactive flipped materials were informed by strong pedagogical principles. Examples show how the flipped content aimed to allow students to acquire the basic elements of the tasks to then further explore more complex issues in the sessions. This, in turn, facilitated the delivery of the online synchronous sessions thus showing an effective and reciprocal interaction between FL and TEL.

Before concluding this section, it is worth addressing the perceived challenges of organising a FL course in relation to a traditional one. On the one hand, the quotes presented so far evidence a learning curve in terms of embracing a relatively novel approach. Arguably, this is not a challenge intrinsically related to FL, but rather a direct result of embracing new pedagogies. The development of the materials was identified as a challenge in implementing FL using TEL.

“The main challenge is that the time it takes to think about what you want to present, how to present it, what, like, what sort of interactivity a certain task needs. And obviously, that time to make it you know, because for this to be interactive, you need to be inputting a text, you know, it's not just the click of a button, you have to 'oh, make that button green.' If the student clicks on that, make the button red if the student clicks on that. So creating templates and using these templates, and obviously, the interactive content is something we've developed over a few years now. And you know, it wasn't just created in just a week and kind of like given to students. So it does take time and you know, you need to train people to do this. You need to have people writing the materials and understanding what kind of things we can or we cannot do.” (James)

This section has reinforced the need to thoroughly understand pedagogical principles to develop effective materials. Similarly, it is essential to understand digital literacy and an understanding of how to translate practices into the OL environment effectively. Similarly, developing materials in the OL environment requires a considerable investment in terms of resources, however, this would still be the case if the course was not flipped. In fact, by embracing FL course developers have a theoretical framework they can refer to when distributing the tasks as the low-order thinking skills task will be done independently and the higher-order thinking skills task will be done in the session.

## 5. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This article has aimed to show why an EAP presessional management team implemented FL and the implications it had in relation to other key pedagogical principles in EAP and TEL. data, has shown how FL benefits from interacting with other approaches in EAP, thus enhancing the pedagogical repertoire available in the discipline. It has also shed light on how FL can be used alongside TEL and the benefits this can provide in terms of students' motivation, and engagement while acknowledging the challenges in terms of resource investments, this article has aimed to engage with the current discussion around pedagogies in EAP and advocates for the inclusion of FL as one of the approaches in the EAP toolkit.

The data generated aligns with the argument that beliefs are generated during the course design stage (Hulme, 2021). Therefore, it is suggested that discussions around pedagogical underpinning and developments of beliefs are routinely embedded in presessional management team discussions.

This article has shown how EAP practitioners need to display a wide range of competencies, as stated by the Teaching EAP Framework (BALEAP, 2009). Based on the results and discussions presented in this article, a continuous engagement with research and EAP pedagogies is essential to bring to life top-down directives. However, it is suggested that EAP practitioners' expertise is recognised and space is provided to respond to learners' need and differentiation in line with EAP being student-centred.

Although the ERT period forced universities and practitioners alike to move their teaching online, a thorough understanding of OL and instructional design principles is essential to effectively implement FL as a blended approach. Technology can facilitate the design and implementation of LOTS tasks, making them attractive for students, but this is an area that requires specific expertise. Opportunities for CPD with specific emphasis on online instructional design are essential for course developers aiming to effectively include TEL to foster pedagogical approaches such as FL.

To conclude, while this small-scale study has focused on course designers', course developers' and course coordinators' perceptions, it would be beneficial to carry out further studies investigating to what extent these perceptions correspond to students' and teachers. Similarly, comparative case studies of flipped and non-flipped courses may help gain a better understanding of the impact of FL in EAP presessionals courses.

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