

# Comparison among GTM, CLT, and Flipped Classrooms for optimal grammar acquisition

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**Abstract:** Grammar acquisition in English as foreign language (EFL) setting has been a challenging task for language learners, including Taiwan. Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) have been extensively practiced by EFL instructors over the years as principal pedagogical methods for teaching grammar, and there has been a debate about which method is more beneficial for EFL learners. More recently, the prevalence of computer assisted language learning (CALL) promoted Flipped Classroom (FC) to become an innovative, effective teaching mode, where learners preview on-line instructional materials before class and then are engaged to interactive learning activities during face-to-face meetings. In view of aforementioned concerns, the present study aims to investigate effect of these three distinctive approaches with regard to grammar acquisition among high school students in central Taiwan. A group of 69 high school EFL learners were invited to participate in this empirical study and they were divided into three groups with each receiving different methods, respectively. The results of the written post-tests indicated that the FC group performed significantly better than the other two groups; yet the significant difference was not found between the GTM group and CLT group. As for the speaking tests, both the GTM and FC groups improved significantly, with much more improvement in the FC class.

**Keywords:** Communicative Language Teaching, Flipped Classroom, Grammar acquisition, Grammar Translation Method

## 1. Introduction

Grammar in English has played an important role in Taiwan, where English is considered as a foreign language. As the fever for English education was brought to Taiwan, grammar was the basic sentence-structure for learners who are passionately eager to learn and are acquired through Grammar Translation Method (GTM). Grammar, a system of “lexico-grammatical patterns,” is implemented to make meaning in proper ways (Larsen-Freeman, as cited in Brinton, Celce-Murcia & Snow, 2014, p. 258). Nonetheless, Grammar Translation Method (GTM) has a negative influence on the Taiwan’s English learners’ modes of thinking based on test-oriented examination and teacher-centered instructions (Chen, 2001; Tseng, 2014). In order to tackle the drawbacks of the method Grammar Translation Method (GTM) (Liang, 2002; Huang, 2016); such as, students’ deficient competence of listening and speaking capability, the method of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was promoted to initiate at the fifth and sixth grade in 2001. In other words, the nature in CLT is more student-teacher interaction (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The teacher may demonstrate certain part of the lesson and then facilitate with students interacting in pairs, small groups or the entire group in arranged situational activities (Chen, 2001; Huang, 2016; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). While there are some constraints with CLT, like neglecting of oral communication in test-oriented examinations and limited class time form CLT practice in class, there is an urgent call for a more efficient and effective teaching mode to teach grammar in Taiwan

EFL context. This Flipped Classroom (FC) approach benefits both the instructor and the learners. It is advantageous for the instructor to prepare lessons recorded as videos with technology as an assisted learning. It also allows for flexible time management in teaching approaches through in-class activities (Brame, 2013; Reyna, 2015). Learners can gain their individual learning experience through on-line instructional videos to acquire grammatical knowledge, and then engage in group activities such as “role-play, problem-based learning, case analysis, and service-learning” during class meeting time to foster listening and speaking skills (Missildine, Fountain, Summers, & Gosselin, 2013, p. 597). This can be processed through individual or group problem-solving discussions, tasks, games, activities to form their critical thinking processes (as cited in Keengwe, Ed., 2014).

In view of the above mentioned problems, the current study, was conducted to assess the impact of Flipped Classrooms (FC) on grammar acquisition among junior high school students in Taiwan. The study was to compare a traditional grammar translation method (GTM) lecture and a communicative language teaching (CLT) instruction. With the motivation aligned with instruction, this study investigates students’ perceptions of and the impacts of the teaching methods correlated to their English achievement.

The present study was designed to address the following two research questions: 1) To what extent were there differences in grammar acquisition among the three classroom instructional approaches including GTM, CLT and Flipped Classrooms? 2) What were the students’ perceptions of the English grammar learning environment with the three different instructional approaches, including GTM, CLT and Flipped Classrooms?

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Participants

The participants were made up of three English EFL classes, being selected in one of public junior high schools of central Taiwan. Class A with 23 students received GTM instruction, Class B with 20 students received CLT instruction, and Class C with 26 received both CLT and FC instructions.

Table 1 is indicated that three distinctive instructional design is based on the comparison among GTM, CLT and the FC. For GTM instruction, the traditional GTM group had class meetings for the instructor to focus on weekly content of grammar topic during their self-learning morning time and students’ grammar learning engagement.

Table 1

*The Comparison for Instructional Approaches among GTM, CLT and FC*

Instructional Approaches	Grammar Translation Method	Communicative Language Teaching	Flipped Classroom
Instruction Time	Once a week		
Instructional Content	Lesson One: Infinitive Verbs Lesson Two: Gerund Verbs Lesson Three: Indirect Speech Lesson Four: Causative Verbs/Verbs of the Senses Lesson Five: Linking Verbs Lesson Six: Relative Pronouns		

Instructions	1. Deductive teaching. 2. Focus sheets 3. Worksheets 4. Individual activity sheets	grammar	Inductive teaching Focus sheets Worksheets Activity sheets Group discussion/ CLT Group activities	grammar	Before class: On-line Instructional videos Worksheets In-class meeting: Focus sheets Activity sheets Group discussion/ CLT Group activities
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### 3. Results

#### 3.1 RQ1. To what extent were there differences in grammar acquisition among the three classroom instructional approaches including GTM, CLT and Flipped Classrooms?

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of post-grammar English speaking test by groups. One-way ANOVA was conducted to gauge the grammar speaking proficiency of the three classes of Grammar Translation Method, Communicative Language Teaching, and Flipped Classroom. As shown in Table 2, the students in the FC group performed their speaking competence significantly better than those of GTM and CLT instructions ( $M = 45.38 > M = 34.43 > M = 31.40$ ); however, as indicated in Table 4.25, there was no a significant difference of pre-test results ( $p > .05$ ) among the three classes [ $F(2, 66) = .859, p = .428$ ]. Accordingly, results indicated that the mean scores of FC group achieve the highest of post-grammar speaking test among the three groups though no significant effects on a pair of means between GTM group and FC group, GTM group and CLT group as well as CLT group and FC group. It is concluded that all the significant levels were greater than .05, so there was no difference in the means of the three groups.

Table 2

*Group Statistics among the Three Groups of the Post-grammar Speaking Test*

The Post-Speaking Test	N	M	SD	Std Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Min.	Max.
GTM Group	23	34.43	37.769	7.875	18.10	50.77	0	100
CLT Group	20	31.40	37.214	8.321	13.98	48.82	0	92
FC Group	26	45.38	40.571	7.957	29.00	61.77	0	100
Sum	69	37.68	38.620	4.649	28.40	46.96	0	100

Table 3

*One-way ANOVA among Three Groups of the Post-grammar Speaking Test*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2574.379	2	1287.190	.859	.428
Within Groups	98846.606	66	1497.676		
Total	101420.986	68			

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

#### 3.2 RQ2. What were the students' perceptions of the English grammar learning environment with the three different instructional approaches, including GTM, CLT and Flipped Classrooms?

Students' perceptions of positive and negative feedback of the English grammar learning environment with three different instructions, five students' semi-structured interview in each group (Appendix M, N & O) were analyzed. students value highly their first exposure material through

online videos outside the classroom and focus on their understanding (Keengwe, Ed., 2014); hence, students' learning attitude and motivation can be improved through flipped class approach (Bishop & Verleger, 2013).

#### 4. Conclusion

Flipped classroom is a blended approach where students assess their first exposure material through online videos in the outside classroom and focus on their understanding, then talking over their assignment in the classroom with the support of their peers and teacher (as cited in Keengwe, Ed., 2014; Brame, 2013). On the other hand, Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is being used mostly in the EFL classroom, however, there is little specific guidance highlighted on EFL's grammar pedagogy. Using three groups of seven graders for example, this study will argue that the flipped classroom approach, compared to the traditional-based and Communication Language Teaching (CLT) instruction, can provide a groundwork in junior high school students where students acquire knowledge of grammar.

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