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## Flipped Learning and Communicative Competence: An Experimental Study of English Learners

**Imam Makruf** 

UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia

**Hedy Ramadhan Putra P.** 

UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia

**Siti Choiriyah** 

UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia

**Arif Nugroho** 

UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia

### To cite this article:

Makruf, I., Putra P., H. R., Choiriyah, S., & Nugroho, A. (2021). Flipped learning and communicative competence: An experimental study of English learners. *International Journal of Education in Mathematics, Science, and Technology (IJEMST)*, 9(4), 571-584. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijemst.1960>

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*International Journal of Education in Mathematics, Science, and Technology (IJEMST)* affiliated with  
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## Flipped Learning and Communicative Competence: An Experimental Study of English Learners

Imam Makruf, Hedy Ramadhan Putra P., Siti Choiriyah, Arif Nugroho

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### Article Info

#### Article History

Received:

05 September 2020

Accepted:

19 June 2021

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#### Keywords

Communicative competence

Flipped learning

Pragmatic competence

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### Abstract

Notwithstanding the fact that extensive studies have highlighted the positive impact of flipped learning on developing learners' skills, the literature has still been silent on its effect on Indonesian English learners' communicative competence. To address this issue, this experimental study sheds some light on the significant impact of flipped learning method on developing English learners' communicative competence. A total of 40 English learners of a university in Indonesia were grouped into flipped and non-flipped classrooms. Through the flipped learning, the course materials were delivered by means of Google classroom platform prior to the class, and the classroom activities were mostly allocated for communicative practices. To obtain the data, this study employed a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) questionnaire. Drawing on paired sample t-test and descriptive statistics, the results depicted that there was a significant difference between the learners' pre-test and post-test scores of DCTs in the flipped group, and it significantly outperformed the non-flipped group. The results of TAM questionnaire further indicated that most of the learners appreciated the learning activities conducted in the flipped learning environment, and positively perceived Google classroom as an online platform for language learning. As the conclusion, it is a worth saying that flipped learning by means of Google classroom is an effective method to develop English learners' pragmatic competence.

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### Introduction

In about two decades ago, we can surely remember the situation of our classroom where we were inactively sitting and occasionally listening to our instructors when they were delivering materials in the class. As the students, we were passively receiving all concepts and information like an empty glass that needed to be filled in the teacher-centered classroom, rather than actively involving in the learning activities. For years, language classrooms have been devoted to language accuracy instead of language fluency (Muthusamy & Farashaiyan, 2016). Thus, the language function in the real context of communication seems to be put aside in that time of language learning (Nugroho, 2019).

Nowadays, in the age of the development and integration of digital technology into language classrooms, a new model of learning that combines traditional teaching with technology-based activities has emerged. Scholars refer to the model as blended learning that enables collaboration between instructors and students in a more student-centered learning environment (Bonk & Graham, 2012). The emergence of blended learning encourages ELT professionals to develop teaching methods that provide ample opportunities to combine conventional teaching with technology-based teaching. With this regard, literature in language teaching and learning has acknowledged Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams as they have developed an interesting teaching method called flipped classroom (Singay, 2020). In the flipped classroom, however, content that was traditionally introduced in class is presented to students before class via videos, simulations, or other electronic means (Hodgson, Cunningham, McGee, Kinne, & Murphy, 2017; Weinhandl, Lavicza, Hohenwarter, & Schallert, 2020). However, some authors criticize flipped education because, in everyday teaching and learning, this educational approach sometimes does not sufficiently exploit the potential of interplays of technologies, pedagogies and learning (Albalawi, 2018; Alharthi & Zhang, 2021; Shukla & Mcinnis, 2021).

The flipped classroom idea came up when it was craving for an effective model of teaching to enable absent students to access the class lessons (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). They made a record of videos and posted them online for those absent students to follow the school lessons by watching the videos at home or at any place. They found that this learning model greatly helped those students who did not attend the class. Interestingly, the students who attended the classroom could also watch the videos to help them review and revisit the day's materials. It initiated a concept of integrating digital technologies into a language learning called the flipped classroom method (Chen, Wang, & Chen, 2014). As a part of blended learning model, flipped classroom design provides a lot of chances to learners prior to, amidst, and after the class because of its flexible process (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). The flipped classroom allows teachers to share learning materials such as videos through a website or an online platform and the students can freely download them prior to the class (Hsieh, Wu, & Marek, 2017). During learning activities in the class, the time is mostly devoted to conduct group tasks, perform conversation and dialogue, do collaborative projects, and carry out discussion based on the videos or course materials that have been learned before the class (Bergmann & Sams, 2012).

Many scholars have examined the potential advantages of flipped learning method. Lockwood (2014) and Suprpti, Nugroho, and Pembangunan (2021) acknowledged that flipped learning could significantly enhance students' higher-order thinking skills such as the ability to perform analysis, application, evaluation, and synthesis. Bergmann and Sams (2012) stated that flipped learning offered students ample opportunities to be autonomous learners. It allows learners to study school materials beyond physical constraint (i.e. space and time) at any time and any place as long as they are connected to the internet (Haghighi, Jafarigohar, Khoshsima, & Vahdany, 2019). These advantages motivate ELT practitioners to do further researches on the impact of the flipped classroom on the development of language ability. Singay (2020) examined the influence of flipped learning on Bhutanese students' grammatical competence and the results indicated that the flipped approach had successfully improved the students' language accuracy.

In terms of pragmatic competence, study seems to be the initial research conducted to reveal the effect of flipped

learning on English learners' language fluency. Using Telegram in the Iranian context, the study found a positive correlation between flipped classroom instruction and learners' pragmatic competence. More recently, a study conducted by Hazaymeh and Altakhaineh (2019) indicated that flipped learning method had a significant effect on Emirati students' pragmatic competence. The studies (Haghighi, Jafarigohar, Khoshshima, & Vahdany, 2019; Singay, 2020) suggest that an immense project by involving the greater size of participants and different contexts should be conducted to confirm the results of their investigation. Keeping this in mind, this experimental study attempts to fill the gap by shedding some light on the impact of flipped classroom instruction on a group of learners' pragmatic competence in the Indonesian context.

In the recent decade, the idea of the flipped learning method has magnetized English education scholars to investigate its contribution to learners' language development, including in Indonesia. Afrilyasanti, Cahyono, and Astuti (2017) investigated if flipped classroom instructions contributed to Indonesian learners' writing ability and the results pointed out that there was a significant difference in the learners' pre-test and post-test between the flipped group and control group. The finding indicates a promising contribution of the flipped learning model to improve students' writing skills. Furthermore, Hasanudin and Fitrianiingsih (2018) sought for an empirical relationship between flipped learning and the development of Indonesian learners' reading skills. Drawing on the use of Screencast-O-matic apps, the results revealed that flipped learning significantly contributed to the successful enhancement of the students' reading ability. The study also suggests that the combination between face-to-face teaching and digital technology-based learning in a language classroom creates innovation of teaching reading in the Indonesian context. More recently, Zainuddin and Perera (2019) identified the difference between a flipped classroom and a non-flipped classroom instructional model in developing Indonesian learners' competency to handle language tasks and activities, and in fostering better autonomous learning. The results showed that the flipped learning environment created promising peer interaction and independent learning among the learners. The video-recorded lesson, self-regulated learning activities, and peer communication in the flipped environment had motivated the learners to actively participate in the learning activities. In concluding the results of these studies, it implies that flipped learning design is a potential teaching model to enhance the language learning efficacy in Indonesian setting.

While several previous studies have addressed the impact of flipped learning on various settings (Afrilyasanti et al., 2017; Haghighi, Jafarigohar, Khoshshima, & Vahdany, 2019; Hasanudin & Fitrianiingsih, 2018; Hazaymeh, A., & Altakhaineh, 2019; Singay, 2020; Zainuddin & Perera, 2019), it appears that almost no study, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, has examined the effect of flipped learning method on Indonesian learners' pragmatic competence. The growing body of literature in the realm of pragmatics has shown that pragmatic competence, which is the ability to use language in an appropriate context, is teachable in a language learning context (Alzebaree & Yavuz, 2017; Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 2015; Yazdanfar & Bonyadi, 2016). Although some linguists argue that it seems difficult to teach pragmatics (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Krisnawati, 2011), the integration of pragmatic knowledge in an classroom is considered highly essential especially for context in Indonesia where classroom is the only place for the students to get language exposure (Nugroho, 2019).

Provided with the evidence of the significant impact of flipped learning on various language skills as depicted by the previous studies' results, its contribution in enhancing learners' pragmatic knowledge as a crucial part of communicative competence is worth exploring. Furthermore, the present study makes use of a Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) questionnaire to portray the learners' perspectives toward the implementation of flipped learning which is rarely employed by the previous studies. What else puts the current study differs from the precedent studies is the way it utilizes Google classroom as an online platform to facilitate the delivery of course materials in flipped classroom instruction. A rigorous investigation of new technology integration, specifically a smartphone-based application for language learning, appears scarce until today. Thus, the present study is at the cutting edge of closing the current gaps by designing a flipped classroom model by means of a Google classroom platform in an Indonesian context to enhance the learners' pragmatic competence. To ensure the objectives, this study is guided under the following research questions: (1) Does flipped classroom instruction significantly affect the development of Indonesian learners' pragmatic competence? (2) What is the perception of Indonesian learners toward the use of Google classroom as a platform in the flipped classroom for language learning?

## **Method**

### **Research Context and Participants**

A total of 40 Indonesian learners (27 females and 13 males) studying at seventh semester of a public University in Surakarta Indonesia of the academic year 2019-2020 were involved as participants in the present study. They were in the fourth-year and their ages were between 19 and 22, with the average was 20. Their English proficiency level was appraised to be advanced since they had learned English at the university for about three years. As an effort to ensure their English proficiency level, a TOEFL-like test was administered to around 90 students who entered the course of 'Teaching English with Technology', and those 40 students selected as participants in this present study were the highest-score achievers.

To ensure the efficacy of flipped learning method in enhancing the learners' pragmatic competence, the participants were divided into two groups, i.e. flipped and non-flipped. The flipped group was taught how to convey speech act of request by means of flipped learning technique. On the other hand, the non-flipped group was taught speech act of request using traditional teaching method (e.g. lecturing, drilling, and memorizing). To examine if the English proficiency level of the two groups is statistically different or not, a paired sample-test was administered after conducting a pre-test. The result showed that the p-value was 0.201 that was higher than 0.05 (see Table 7), which meant that there were no significant differences between the flipped and non-flipped groups on the pre-test.

### **Instruments**

First, the present study employed a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to elicit the data from the participants. The DCT was disseminated using an online questionnaire through Google forms. DCT is an assessment tool firstly developed by Blum-kulka & Olshtain (1984) that is utilized in the realm of linguistics and pragmatics to

evaluate certain speech acts. This kind of task is a written questionnaire that comprises some concise contextual descriptions, followed by a blank space for the speech act responses (Alzebaree & Yavuz, 2017). In this present study, the data were gathered using a DCT consisted of 12 contextual situations involving some social variables adapted from Nugroho (2019). The situations were contextualized with day-to-day interactions that were commonly encountered by the learners involved in this study. The DCT was administered in both pre and post-tests to shed light on the impact of flipped classroom instruction on learners' pragmatic competence of request.

Second, since Google classroom is relatively new in Indonesian educational setting, there remains a paucity of literature about its efficacy as an online learning platform. To investigate if this newly-fledged platform offers an ample advantage for learners, a perception questionnaire named Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) consisting of five Likert-scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) was administered. TAM is a valid and reliable instrument to measure language learners' perspectives and attitudes toward technological acceptance (Lee, Hsiao, & Purnomo, 2014; Tarhini, Hone, & Liu, 2014). The model of TAM developed by Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1989) has been confirmed as the most proper and robust model (King & He, 2016). Hence, the present study adapted this model that specifically consists of four main variables to examine the participants' attitudes, namely Perceived Usefulness (PU), Perceived Ease of Use (PEU), Attitude toward Use (ATU), and Behavioral Intention (BI).

### **Data Collection**

The students of the flipped group were taught by using electronic learning platforms, some learning websites for vocabulary and reading, and various video clips containing particular situations about speech act of request and cross-cultural communication. The learners also experienced some self-assessment practices at the end of the productive lesson to enhance their autonomous learning skills. All of these procedures could be accessed via Google Classroom platform which enables uploading videos to assist the participants to practice speech act of request whenever they have leisure time. The participants could also use the platform as a medium to share and download some suggested videos so as to post their assignments. Subsequently, in the class, the participants were trained to practice various tasks such as role-plays, dialogue exercises, games, short conversation, and other individual and group activities that refer to student-centered learning. On the other hand, the non-flipped group was taught how to produce speech acts of request by using the traditional methods of teaching such as drilling, lecturing, and memorizing.

One week after the eight meetings of the treatment period, a post-test in the form of DCT comprising twelve parallel situations was conducted. The post-test aims to examine if flipped classroom instruction had an impact on the development of the Indonesian learners' pragmatic competence. Both flipped and non-flipped groups were provided with the final test, and the results were statistically compared by means of SPSS (e.g. paired sample t-test). Thereafter, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) questionnaire was administered to examine the Indonesian learners perception toward the use of Google classroom as an online platform to conduct a flipped learning. The data obtained from the TAM questionnaire were further analyzed statistically.

## Data Analysis

To provide empirical answers for the research questions, the researchers employed three primary steps in analyzing the data both in form of request utterances obtained from DCT and responses gathered from TAM questionnaire. First, the linguistic expression of the request realizations was coded and classified based on Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) (Blum-kulka & Olshtain, 1984) (see Table 1). Second, a rating scale of appropriateness proposed by Taguchi (2006) was utilized as a basis to code and analyze the data in terms of pragmatics and linguistics aspects based on the appropriateness to the contextual situations (see Table 2). Third, the learners' responses obtained from TAM questionnaire were statistically analyzed to portray their perceptions toward the use of Google classroom as a learning platform to enhance pragmatic competence.

Table 1. Coding Framework of Requesting Acts

Directness Level of Request	Expressions of Request	Examples
Direct request	Mood derivable (imperatives)	Please open book.
	Explicit performatives	I'm asking you to open the book.
	Implicit performatives	I want to ask you to open the book.
	Obligation statements	You should open the book.
	Want statements	I want you to open the book.
Conventional indirect request	Query preparatory questions	Could you open book?
	Suggestions	How about opening the book?
	Permissions	May you open the book?
	Mitigated preparatory	I'm wondering if you could open the book.
	Mitigated wants	I would appreciate it if you could open the book.
Non-conventional indirect request	Strong hint	The lesson begins. Everyone need to write the materials.
	Mild hint	The lesson begins. Can you guess what I want?

Table 2. Rating Scale of Appropriateness

Rating	Points	Criteria
Excellent (5)	10	- The request expressions are fully appropriate based on the provided contextual situations
		- The request expressions are free of grammatical mistakes
Good (4)	8	- The request expressions are almost suitable
		- The request expressions comprise a small number of grammatical mistakes but still understandable
Fair (3)	6	- The request expressions somehow acceptable
		- The request expressions comprise several grammatical mistakes
Poor (2)	4	- The request expressions are not appropriate because of grammatical mistakes
Very poor (1)	2	- The request expressions are not understandable because of wrong responses and heavy grammatical mistakes
(0)	0	- No request expressions are produced

## Results

### Impact of Flipped Classroom on Pragmatic Competence

To statistically answer if flipped classroom instruction has an impact on learners' pragmatic competence, the researchers administered paired sample t-test analysis as presented in Table 3 and Table 4. The analysis was based on the participants' request expressions in the pre- and post-test that was rated by referring to the appropriateness rubric as proposed by Taguchi (2006). The researchers considered the results of the pre-test and post-test of both flipped and non-flipped groups to portray if there was a significant difference.

Table 3 depicted the statistical analysis of pre-test and post-test results of the two groups. The statistical result indicated that in both flipped and non-flipped groups, the mean score of the post-test was higher than that of the pre-test. Table 3 further showed that the mean score of the flipped group ( $M= 66.78$ ) was higher than that of the non-flipped group ( $M= 52.71$ ) (see pair 3 and 4). It suggests that the flipped-group participants perform better in realizing pragmatic competence of requests than those who taught using conventional teaching method.

Table 3. Paired Sample Statistics

		<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Std. Error Mean</b>
Pair 1	Pre flipped	50.631	20	5.077	1.291
	Pre non-flipped	45.366	20	5.170	1.274
Pair 2	Post flipped	66.782	20	4.316	1.074
	Post non-flipped	52.711	20	4.754	1.162
Pair 3	Pre flipped	50.631	20	5.087	1.376
	Post non-flipped	66.782	20	4.115	1.092
Pair 4	Pre flipped	45.366	20	5.257	1.365
	Post non-flipped	52.711	20	4.337	1.167

Moreover, to statistically find out the difference level between the pre-test and post-test scores of the two groups, the researchers employed a paired sample t-test which the result was depicted in Table 4.

Table 4. Paired Sample t-test

		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Std. Error Mean</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
Pair 1	Pre flipped	5.26	4.32	1.08	1.91	.201
	Pre non-flipped					
Pair 2	Post flipped	14.07	5.71	1.62	4.17	.000
	Post non-flipped					
Pair 3	Pre flipped	-16.15	4.43	1.71	-14.23	.000
	Post flipped					
Pair 4	Pre non-flipped	-7.34	4.57	1.06	-5.76	.000
	Post non-flipped					

The results of paired sample t-test analysis in Table 4 depicted that there were statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test for both experimental and control groups in which the p-value was less than 0.05 (see pairs 3 and 4). In other words, there was a significant difference in performing pragmatic competence of request between the learners taught in flipped classroom instruction and those taught in the conventional group. Notwithstanding the fact, the learners request expressions in the flipped classroom instruction have a higher level of difference between the result of pre-test and post-test compared to those of conventional one. Therefore, it is a worth saying that the flipped classroom instruction significantly contributed to the development of the learners' pragmatic competence.

### Students' Perceptions on Flipped Learning

As depicted in Table 5, the results of the data obtained from TAM questionnaire showed that perceived usefulness ( $M = 4.15$ ) ranked first, followed by perceived ease of use ( $M = 4.12$ ), attitude about use ( $M = 4.03$ ),

and behavioral intention ( $M = 3.76$ ). The finding of the perceived usefulness revealed that learning and practicing language using Google classroom encourage the participants to perform the appropriate speech act of request. In respect to the perceived ease of use, the results indicated that the teacher's instructions and guidelines made Google classroom a convenient and interactive platform for language learning, particularly teaching pragmatic competence. As for the attitude about use, most of the participant responses showed agreement to integrate Google classroom platform into language classrooms. Finally, with regards to behavioral intention, most of the participants agreed that they will continue using Google classroom to learn a language in the future.

Table 5. Results of TAM

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>N of items</b>
Perceived ease of use	4.12	.51	3	5	4
Perceived usefulness	4.15	.45	2	5	4
Attitude about use	4.03	.43	2	5	4
Behavioral intention	3.76	.56	2	4	4

## **Discussion**

The results of the present study are consistent with the previous researches reporting the impact of flipped method on promoting active language learning and developing learners' pragmatic competence (Hsieh, Wu, & Marek, 2017; Hung, 2015; Jamaludin & Osman, 2014; Murdock & Williams, 2011; O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015; Sahin, Cavlazoglu, & Zeytuncu, 2015; Wafa'A & Altakhaineh, 2019; Wahyuningsih & Baidi, 2020). These studies specifically examined the contribution of flipped learning to the learners' language development, including pragmatic knowledge and awareness. The reason for this crucial development is that flipped learning enables learners to have adequate opportunities for exposing and engaging themselves with authentic contexts of speech materials and cross-cultural communication.

In a more specific explanation, flipped learning technique significantly contributes to the development of the learners' pragmatic competence because it provides accurate examples of real face-to-face interaction and equips them with tangible evidence of how to convey requesting acts in daily communication. This is in line with the result of Abeysekera and Dawson (2015), who take into account the flipped learning as an fruitful method to enhance learners' pragmatic competence because it facilitates the shifting of a transmissive class into a pre-class preparation, in-class activities, and post-class tasks. This method allows the learners to continuously get them exposed to the language practices that improve their pragmatic knowledge.

The result of this study also confirms the previous researches reported by Bishop and Verleger (2013) and Murdock and Williams (2011). The related research reveals that flipped classroom provides an interactive online learning environment that assists learners to gain vigorous correspondences with their teachers and classmates. In addition, it provides learners opportunities to have a regular contact with their colleagues for cooperative work in an attempt to enhance their knowledge and understanding about the topic being learned.

Furthermore, some previous researches on flipped learning depicted that it could reduce the learners' stress that results in the improvement of the learner performance, active participation, as well as engagement and interaction with their teacher and classmates. Mostly, the learners' stress reduced, and their active participation increased while performing learning activities because the only assignments they did were practicing conversation, filling short quizzes, playing role-plays, watching and responding to videos, and doing some forms of online learning. This result is consistent with many previous studies reported that flipped learning improved learning efficacy and raised the learners' motivation (Chen, Wang, & Chen, 2014; Hung, 2015; Sahin, Cavlazoglu, & Zeytuncu, 2015), enhanced the learners' engagement (Jamaludin & Osman, 2014), and achieved learning objectives successfully (Baepler, Walker, & Driessen, 2014).

In this regard, flipped learning assists learners with self-guidelines so they are responsible for their own path of learning and become autonomous learners. The efficacy of flipped learning method in this study is in agreement with O'Flaherty and Phillips (2015), who convinced that the flipped method enables learners to perform an independent learning and thus have more pliable time to determine their own learning styles. The result of the current study is also in harmony with a study reported by Katchamat (2018) that the learners usually present high acceptance toward the use of technology in their learning activities to improve self-learning, develop a communicative environment, and enhance learners' accuracy of English.

With regard to the learners' perception toward the online platform, the result of TAM questionnaire found that Google classroom offered the ample opportunities and a realistic environment for language learning (Heggart, & Yoo, 2018). It is consistent with statement that Google classroom, as an online education platform, successfully enhanced learners' participation and improved classroom dynamics. It also agrees with Chen, Wang, and Chen, (2014) who made use offline application to enhance the efficacy of learning. Moreover, the result of the current study is in accordance with the finding of Haghghi, Jafarigohar, Khoshsima, and Vahdany (2019) that revealed the positive perception of Iranian learners toward the use of Telegram as an online platform in a flipped classroom to enhance the learners' pragmatic skills. However, compared to the results of the three previous studies, the present study shows a higher degree of acceptance in most items of the TAM questionnaire. It might be due to the on-going popularity of Google classroom among Indonesian college students as an online learning platform instead of the line app and telegram.

### **Implications**

The results of the current study have some implications. First, the implementation of flipped learning contributes to the better performance of the English learners than teaching via conventional method. It explicitly implies that flipped learning offers opportunities for interactive communication and effective learning that assist the learners to develop pragmatic knowledge and awareness. Second, the present study suggests that the learners are comfortable using digital technologies for language learning inside and outside the classroom. Thus, calling for more use of technology-based platforms is highly recommended to flip the lesson and learning activities. Third, this study indicates that flipped learning method motivates learners to build mutual relationships among the group members and the instructor because almost all of the learning activities are carried out in groups and

peers. Lastly, yet importantly, it is worth saying that flipped learning is an effective method to enhance the efficacy of a language classroom, specifically to develop learners' pragmatic competence.

## **Conclusion**

Briefly, the present study results in a conclusion that flipped learning is an effective method to improve Indonesian learners' pragmatic knowledge. Thus, the integration of flipped design into a language classroom will potentially enhance the efficacy of language learning. Moreover, flipped learning method offers ample opportunities for learners to practice the language more communicatively and collaboratively. As for the second research question, the statistical analysis of TAM depicts a positive perception of the learners toward the use of Google classroom as an online platform to deliver course materials in the flipped learning method.

As most of the foreign language researches, the current study has some limitations. First, this experimental study was carried out by involving the participants from the researchers' own students. It was not feasible to enlist participants from other instructors and other universities at the time of data collection. A further study could be conducted by involving a greater scope of participants to ensure that the results of the current study were not driven by the researchers' subjectivity. Second, this seems to be the initial investigation examining the impact of flipped learning on learners' pragmatic competence in Indonesian context of language learning. Although the current study results in propitious evidence of flipped learning method to enhance learners' pragmatic development, replication studies are highly necessary to generalize and strengthen the results beyond the context of this study.

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### Author Information

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**Imam Makruf**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5040-372X>

UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta

Faculty of Tarbiyah Science

Indonesia

E-mail: *imam.makruf@iain-surakarta.ac.id*

**Hedy Ramadhan Putra P.**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6518-3512>

UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta

Faculty of Tarbiyah Science

Indonesia

**Siti Choiriyah**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0017-0099>

UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta

Faculty of Tarbiyah Science

Indonesia

**Arif Nugroho**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9805-9948>

UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta

Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business

Indonesia

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