Effects of Flipped Classroom on EFL Learners’ Translation Competences in MICE

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in flipped teaching to enhance students’ English proficiency. So far, however, there has been little discussion about the influences of flipped classroom on EFL students’ English translation skill. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the effects of flipped classroom on EFL learners’ Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions (MICE-related) translation competences. A total of 14 EFL learners at a technological university in central-west Taiwan participated in this study. The experimental methods include (1) pre/post-tests, (2) questionnaires, and (3) semi-structured focus-group interviews. Firstly, the participants were asked to take the pretest, which include 10 translation questions from Chinese to English and 10 translation questions from English to Chinese respectively. Secondly, participants were required to fill in a 5-point

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Likert scale questionnaire designed to understand their perceptions of flipped classroom approach. Thirdly, the participants were interviewed so as to understand their perceptions and thoughts about the impacts of flipped classroom on their translation ability. Finally, they were asked to take the posttest. The research findings show that the participants’ overall flipped classroom learning experiences were very positive. With regard to their learning experiences in the flipped classroom in terms of motivation, effectiveness, engagement, and overall satisfaction were estimated positively by the participants. And the flipped classroom has a significantly positive impact on their translation competences. As a consequence, the participants in the flipped classroom showed improvement in their translation competences in MICE.

**Keywords:** Flipped Teaching, Flipped Classroom, MICE, Translation Competences
Introduction and Literature Review

In recent years, flipped classroom has become one of the major interesting research topics. In a flipped approach, the students gain knowledge at home, such as via watching video clips made by the instructor, and practice the skills in class, where the instructor can easily control and correct the learner (Chen Hsieh, Wu & Marek, 2017). Replaying the learning materials and resources may reinforce and deepen the students’ understanding of the materials. Students can then apply knowledge in a comprehensive scope during in-class activities. This flipped approach provides an effective and interactive learning environment where the instructor educates students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter.

A number of researchers have reported that flipped classroom can actually boost students’ learning ability, use class time more effectively, and increase student’s critical thinking, etc. A considerable body of research has shown that digital learning can effectively increase students’ motivation to learn and willingness to engage (Murdock & Williams, 2011; Prensky, 2005; Thorne, Black, & Sykes, 2009).

Previous studies have documented that flipped classroom can greatly enhance student learning performance (Day & Foley, 2006; Deslauriers & Wieman, 2011; Hung, 2015; McLaughlin et al., 2014; Zappe et al., 2009) and student engagement (Dill, 2012). In addition, several studies have reported that flipped classroom can substantially strengthen learning results (Baepler, Walker & Driessen, 2014; Moravec, Williams, Aguilar-Roca, & O’Dowd, 2010), and student motivation (Strayer, 2012; Traxler & Riordan, 2003). Besides, other studies have shown that flipped classrooms can enormously foster active learning and higher-order thinking skills (Baepler, Walker, & Driessen, 2014; Hung, 2015; Zappe et al., 2009).
Many instructors started to apply a variety of teaching strategies of flipped teaching in the classroom. With this approach, instructors give students more opportunities to engage in active and autonomous learning. As a consequence, the researchers are hopeful that flipped classroom may help improve EFL learners’ translation competences. Currently, however, there have been few studies conducted in EFL teaching field. Therefore, the purpose of the paper is to explore the effects of flipped classroom on EFL learners’ MICE-related translation competences.

Based on the purpose of this study, two research questions are formulated as follows:

To what extent would participants improve their MICE-related translation competences?
What were the participants’ overall flipped classroom learning experiences?

**Research Methods**

**Participants**

A total of 14 students at a technological university in central-west Taiwan participated in this study. The participants were 4 male and 10 female aged from 19 to 25. Most of them came from the graduate program (N=11), taking up the highest number among others from the undergraduate program (N= 3). They majored in different academic areas. More than half of them majored in Humanities (N= 8), followed by those majoring in Management (N= 6).

**Instruments**

The researchers used multiple sources of data collection to explore the effects of flipped classroom on EFL learners’ MICE-related translation competences and understand the perceptions of the participants about their
flipped learning experience, including (1) pre/post-tests of translation, (2) a questionnaire, and (3) a semi-structured focus-group interview, which was employed to address the two research questions in this study. The triangulation of these instruments was a fundamental step to establish reliability and validity of the measurement.

1. Pre-/Post-tests

The pre-/post-tests were intended to answer research question 1 concerning the participant’s improvement of translation competences. The participants were asked to take both pre-test and post-test of translation.

2. Questionnaire

The questionnaire (please see Appendix A) of 5-point Likert scale was designed to answer research question 2 with regard to the participant’s perceptions of the flipped classroom learning experience. It was distributed to the 14 EFL graduate and undergraduate students who took the course of English for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions (MICE) and Marketing. The questionnaire was “Perception of Flipped Learning Experience” questionnaire, adapted from the related literature (Chen Hsieh, Wu & Marek, 2017), to explore the participants’ comprehensive perception of the flipped learning instructional design used in the course. This questionnaire consists of 14 items, focusing on four constructs -- motivation, effectiveness, engagement, and overall satisfaction.

3. Semi-structured Focus-group Interview

A semi-structured focus-group interview (please see Appendix B) was designed to answer research question 2 with respect to the participants’ overall flipped classroom learning experiences. Focus-group interviews, using protocols adapted from Chen Hsieh, Wu, & Marek, 2017, are given to help to understand more about the participants’ perceptions of their comprehensive learning experiences in this course.
Data Collection Procedures

Each class lasted three hours a week, totaling fifty-four hours for eighteen weeks. Firstly, a pretest was conducted for a class hour period (i.e., 50 minutes) in the first week before the flipped classroom instruction. The students were asked to translate two sections of translation questions, one section asking the participants to translate sentences from Chinese to English and the other section asking them to translate sentences from English to Chinese. Secondly, the students began to have a large amount of practice during these hours. They were required to preview course materials, such as video clips, textbook on their own at their convenience. During the class hours, students were able to practice translation activities individually or in groups. Thirdly, the participants completed a posttest in a class hour period (i.e., 50 minutes) after the instruction for 4 months in the last week of the semester. They were required to respond to the same translation questions as used in the pretest. Their pre- and post-tests were compared to examine the effects of the flipped teaching. Then, they were asked to fill out the questionnaire to investigate their perception of the flipped instruction. Finally, at the end of the data collection procedures, a semi-structured focus-group interview was conducted to examine their experience in flipped learning.

Data Analysis

The data on the perception of flipped learning experience questionnaire, the translation test, and the interview questions were collected for analysis. Firstly, the differences between the participants’ pre- and post-instruction responses help us realize if participants’ translation ability improved. A paired-sample t-test was conducted to explore if the participants’ responses differ significantly after flipped classroom instruction. The translation test was also used to inspect their knowledge of MICE before and after the given lecture.
This translation test contains 20 questions. A paired-sample t-test was also used to compare the grading difference and examine the improvement participants made after they took this English for MICE and Marketing course. Finally, a content analysis (Chen Hsieh, Wu, & Marek, 2017) was employed to explore participants’ satisfaction with given instruction. The participants’ responses were identified, classified, and further interpreted for analysis.

Results

Results for Research Question 1: To what extent would participants improve their translation competences?

The participants’ performances in the translation pre-/post-test were graded according to a criterion from General English Proficiency Test (GEPT). The inter-rater reliability indices for the writing and speaking tests are between 0.89 and 0.90, while the discrepancy rate falls between 0.014 and 0.017 (Roever & Pan, 2008).

Descriptive statistics comparing the pre- and the post-tests in the English-Chinese translation questions and Chinese-English translation questions tests revealed that in both types of tests, the mean scores of the post-test were higher than those of the pre-test (please see Table 1). That is, the mean scores of the post-test of both English-Chinese translation questions (M=32.00) and Chinese-English translation questions (M=32.57) were higher than those of the pre-test in English-Chinese translation questions (M=25.71) and Chinese-English translation questions (M=25.14). While the maximum scores of the pre-tests in both categories of tests were about the same, the maximum scores of the post-tests in English-Chinese translation questions (M=40) and Chinese-English translation questions (M=40) were considerably higher than those maximum scores of the pre-tests in English-Chinese translation questions (M=32) and Chinese-English translation questions (M=32).
Additionally, the paired-samples t-test (please see Table 2) showed that in both forms of test, the participants achieved better on the post-test ($p < 0.05$) compared to the pre-test, and that in both forms of the test, post-test was higher than pre-test ($p < 0.05$). These results revealed that flipped classroom teaching method contributed to better learning outcomes ($p < 0.05$). The results for research question one show that students improved their translation competences in MICE more effectively after the flipped learning instruction. This proves that flipped learning achieved the teaching goal of the class.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Pre-test and the Post-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre English-Chinese translation questions</td>
<td>25.71</td>
<td>7.800</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td>6.276</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre Chinese-English translation questions</td>
<td>25.14</td>
<td>7.594</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>32.57</td>
<td>6.630</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=14

Table 2 Paired-sample $t$-test of the evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English-Chinese translation questions (pre-test to post-test)</td>
<td>-6.286</td>
<td>9.507</td>
<td>2.541</td>
<td>-11.775 -797</td>
<td>-2.474</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>.028*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p $< 0.05$

Results for Research Question 2: What were the participants’ overall flipped classroom learning experiences?

The Perception of Flipped Learning Experience questionnaire was employed to evaluate the students’ perception of the flipped instruction used in this study, and to measure the constructs, including motivation, effectiveness, engagement, and overall satisfaction. As shown in Table 3, the results showed...
the participants’ responses to all questions. Based on these results, the answer to research question two is that the flipped instruction (1) motivated the participants to learn English and to improve their oral ability, (2) enhanced the participants’ translation competences and MICE knowledge, and (3) involved the participants in the learning tasks. It is remarkable, however, that although most of the participants were satisfied with the flipped learning experience, Item 13, “I spent more time and effort than usual on my flipped classroom learning activities.”, had the lowest mean score (M = 4.00). This answer aligns with the qualitative data presented in the answer to research question two. Results indicated that participants had to work harder during flipped instruction in comparison with conventional lecture-based instruction. But if participants did good preview and were attentive in class, then flipped instruction required less work than the lecture-based instruction and had higher efficiency, regardless of the outcomes.

Table 3 Mean scores and standard deviations from item 1 to item 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A flipped classroom is a better way of learning.</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>.633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I enjoyed the flipped classroom teaching approach more.</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I think the flipped classroom is a more effective and efficient way to learn.</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>.726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I feel more motivated in a flipped classroom.</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I participated and engaged myself more in learning in the flipped classroom.</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I became a more active learner in the flipped classroom.</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I thought the time and effort I spent in the flipped classroom was worthwhile.</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>.699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I learned more and better in the flipped classroom.</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>.611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I prefer the flipped classroom to a lecture-based classroom.</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>.646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I think the flipped classroom learning guided me toward better understanding of the course topics.</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I experienced pleasure in the flipped classroom.</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>.514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I devoted myself more to the instructional/class activities in the flipped classroom.</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I spent more time and effort than usual on my flipped classroom learning activities.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Generally, I am happy and satisfied with this flipped learning experience.</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>.646</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants’ overall flipped classroom learning experiences were collected via semi-structured focus-group interviews. The interview comments were analyzed for themes, showing that in answering the multiple interview questions, the participants analyzed their experiences in four closely related dimensions: (1) their motivation, satisfaction, and enjoyment, (2) the time and effort commitment of the flipped classroom structure, (3) their nervousness in speaking/ translating in public, and (4) their perceptions of the instruction outcomes.

All of the participants thought that the flipped teaching approach used in this study was a better way than traditional way to learn how to cultivate translation competences and it led to more participation.

Nine participants mentioned that the flipped classroom approach needed more time than a traditional class. Six participants thought that the additional time and workload are acceptable because they felt that it was beneficial, while seven participants did not think so. One student mentioned that flipped learning “promotes learning motivation, but it only works if students are willing to spend the time”.

Taiwanese students often feel nervous about speaking in public, such as in front of their classmates, for fear of making mistakes. However, the participants in this study felt more comfortable and less nervous in the flipped classroom instruction.

In the class, the participants engaged in activities such as reviewing the MICE videos, practicing translation activities, and evaluating peers’ feedback. In the learning process, participants shared thoughts about sentence structure, meaning clarification, and opinion sharing.

Discussion

Discussion of the Results

Three significant findings emerged from this study. Firstly, through the
flipped learning experience, participants made remarkable progress in translation competences based on the post-test of both English-Chinese translation questions and Chinese-English translation post-test as compared with the pre-test. Secondly, the participants enjoyed the flipped teaching method. Thirdly, online material was deemed useful for the participants to get access to class materials.

**Discussions on Research Question 1: To what extent would participants improve their translation competences?**

Noteworthy is the fact that participants performed better on their post-tests than on their pre-tests. Indeed, based on the results, the minimum post-tests scores were higher than the maximum pre-tests scores, showing that the participants absolutely learned as a result of the flipped teaching method used in this study.

There was a range of scores on the 40-point English-Chinese translation questions test (M=32), 16 points from highest to lowest score compared to 16 points from highest to lowest on the pre-test. Another was a range of scores on the 40-point Chinese-English translation questions test (M=32), 16 points from highest to lowest score compared to 24 points from highest to lowest on the post-test. Because the participants’ native language, in English-Chinese translation questions test (M=32), there is not a much broad range. However, the participants made a significant progress in Chinese-English translation questions test (M=32).

**Discussions on Research Question 2: What were the participants’ overall flipped classroom learning experiences?**

The main feature that characterizes this study was the beneficial application of flipped instructional for language learning. The research findings show that the participants’ overall flipped classroom learning experiences were very positive. With regard to their learning experiences in the flipped classroom in
terms of motivation, effectiveness, engagement, and overall satisfaction were estimated positively by the participants. Thus, the researchers validated flipped teaching for language learning, in that they enjoyed interaction with their peers. This finding is consistent with the findings of other studies that have also presented participants’ acceptance of the flipped classroom (Lucke, 2014; Mortensen & Nicholson, 2014) and have validated the instructor’s role as a guide in the classroom, rather than a lecturer, allowing participants to learn in an active way and build their confidence (Sarawagi, 2014).

Based on the research findings, the flipped teaching prompted the participants to learn English and improve their oral ability, boosted the participants’ translation competences and MICE knowledge, and engaged the participants in the learning tasks.

Flipped classroom is a new instruction for participants. This instruction requires students to take responsibility for their learning, and the instructor plays the role as a guide. Participants have to spend more time previewing and reviewing the class materials. In the present study, the instructor uses online websites and E-learning as a learning platform, which is highly popular in many Asian schools. Especially, E-learning platform is really common for academic use. Also, based on the participants’ perceptions, it was found that the learning platform offers an enjoyable English learning environment, which led to participants’ improved MICE knowledge, and better speaking proficiency.

It has been revealed in some academic literatures that flipped instruction is beneficial to students. Qualitative data collected from the interview showed that the participants’ overall flipped classroom learning experiences were remarkably positive. During classroom activities, the participants appeared highly motivated and engaged in the class active learning. In addition, learning can take place at many different times and places (Chen & Li, 2010; Huang et al., 2011). In this way, participants are well motivated. This present study suggests that the
flipped instruction can really make students willing to learn more effectively.

**Conclusion**

This study suggests that flipped classroom instruction is positively related to EFL students’ translation competences. Not only do the results show to enhance literature base (Deslauriers & Wieman, 2011; Hung, 2015; McLaughlin et al., 2014; Zappe et al., 2009), but they also provide evidence of student engagement, strengthened learning results, and student motivation.

Based on the scores of the pre/post-test in answer to research question 1, it reveals that most participants really made a remarkable progress. Both scores of English-Chinese post-test translation and Chinese-English translation post-test are higher than those of the pre-tests. Participants upgraded their translation competences more effectively during the flipped learning instruction, which validates that flipped learning really helped the participants achieved the learning goal of the class.

With respect to the quantitative representation in response to research question 2, the questionnaire constructs – motivation, effectiveness, engagement, and overall satisfaction – were examined. The key finding from the questionnaire was that most of the participants were satisfied with the flipped learning experience. As for the interview data in response to research question 2, it demonstrated that the participants’ overall flipped classroom learning experiences were considerably positive. During the whole semester, participants also enjoyed cooperative learning and their self-confidence improved.

All in all, the participants in this study held more positive views on flipped teaching instruction. It is worthy of incorporating flipped teaching into an EFL environment to strengthen students’ translation knowledge and language proficiency. Future studies may consider integrating this flipped approach into the classroom for more effective translation instruction.
References


Appendices

Appendix A: Pretest and Posttests

Please translate the following questions. (Chinese to English)
誰有意願先開始做討論呢？
會不會是利率上升的負面影響結果。
今天要看的是顧客調查率結果。
讓我們來做個總結。
不幸地，我必須徵得上級同意。
此刻所有事都如期進行。
我們近期應該安排場勘。
由於有約在先，我必須遺憾地婉拒你的邀請。
我們何不設立一個部落格定時更新呢？
我們需要創造話題，好讓大家有興趣參加。

Please translate the following questions. (English to Chinese)
Would you mind taking minutes?
So without further ado, I'd like to open it up for discussion
We don't have the figures to really know how effective our advertising is.
Could you put me through to Mr. Smith?
We're prepared to offer a very attractive price for a minimum sale, in exchange for a two-year contract.
There have been some last-minute changes.
You should regularly check the running order / rundown.
There are many factors to take into account before coming to a decision.
The carrier should be advised that this shipment requires special handling.
Are reservations required to attend the opening reception?
Appendix B. Perception of flipped learning experience

This survey is to understand your overall perception of the flipped learning in the course. There is no right or wrong answer. Please circle the answer which best reflects your overall thoughts about each statement. Your answers are anonymous and will be kept confidential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree 1</th>
<th>Disagree 2</th>
<th>Neutral 3</th>
<th>Agree 4</th>
<th>Strongly agree 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A flipped classroom is a better way of learning.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I enjoyed the flipped classroom teaching approach more.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I think the flipped classroom is a more effective and efficient way to learn.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I feel more motivated in a flipped classroom.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I participated and engaged myself more in learning in the flipped classroom.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I became a more active learner in the flipped classroom.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I thought the time and effort I spent in the flipped classroom was worthwhile.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I learned more and better in the flipped classroom.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I prefer the flipped classroom to a lecture-based classroom.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I think the flipped classroom learning guided me toward better understanding of the course topics.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I experienced pleasure in the flipped classroom.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I devoted myself more to the instructional/class activities in the flipped classroom.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I spent more time and effort than usual on my flipped classroom learning activities.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Generally, I am happy and satisfied with this flipped learning experience.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

翻轉教室對於英語學習者會展英語翻譯能力之影響

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摘 要

近年來，有越來越多人對以下的議題感到興趣：翻轉教學以提升學生學習英語的成效。但是到目前為止，極少研究曾討論翻轉教室對於英語為外語學習者翻譯能力之影響。因此，本研究主要目的為探討翻轉教室對於英語為外語學習者會展英語翻譯能力之影響。中臺灣一所科技大學十四位研究生與大學生參與此研究。研究方法包含 (1) 前後測、(2) 問卷、(3) 訪談。第一，參與者先完成一份包含中文翻英文和英文翻中文各十題的前測。第二，參與者填寫李克特五分量表之問卷調查以了解參與者對於翻轉教室教學的看法。第三，研究者實施訪談，以了解參與者對於此教學法的看法與想法。最後，對於參與者實施後測。結果顯示參與者對於翻轉教室學習經驗看法非常積極正向。參與者對於翻轉教室的動機、效用、參與、與整體學習經驗感到滿意。而課堂上使用翻轉教室的模式對於英語為外語研究生與大學生之翻譯能力有顯著的影響。結果也顯示參與者會展英語翻譯能力皆有進步。

關鍵詞：翻轉教學、翻轉教室、會展英語、翻譯能力

* 通訊作者