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The impact of Flipgrid on Nigerian undergraduates' speaking skills and speaking anxiety

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Abstract

Despite being the medium of instruction at all levels of education, English fluency remains a challenge for many Nigerian undergraduates, especially considering English functions as a second language in the country. This highlights the need for effective learning strategies for undergraduates. Hence, this study investigated the potential of Flipgrid, a video-based discussion platform, to improve speaking skills and reduce speaking anxiety among Nigerian undergraduates. The study employed a pre- and post-quasi-experimental research design and selected a class of 25 third-year undergraduates at a university in Nigeria as participants. The study results reveal a significant positive impact of the Flipgrid platform on the participants' speaking skills in fluency, pronunciation and accent, vocabulary, accuracy, and comprehension. The study also found a significant reduction in participants' speaking anxiety post-intervention. The results suggest that the platform not only contributes to skill development but also plays a crucial role in overcoming anxiety related to the student's oral communication. Therefore, the study recommends the integration of Flipgrid into English language teaching as a valuable tool for improving Nigerian undergraduates' speaking proficiency and reducing speaking anxiety. Additionally, the study suggests further research to explore the long-term effects of the Flipgrid platform on language learning in different contexts.

Keywords: Flipgrid, Nigerian undergraduates, speaking anxiety, speaking skills

INTRODUCTION

Proficiency in speaking skills is a prerequisite for success in various spheres of life, including academic, professional, and personal endeavors. Many language experts and researchers emphasize the value of speaking and its close relationship to other language skills and language development (Nation, 2015). Poor proficiency in speaking does not only affect one's ability to communicate. However, due to various factors such as speaking anxiety, many Nigerian students struggle to develop these skills (Aliyu et al., 2019; Osisanya & Adeniyi, 2015). Speaking anxiety is a common form of social anxiety which is characterized by fear and apprehension associated with speaking in front of others (Horwitz et al., 2021 as cited in Kalra & Siribud, 2020). In addition to cognitive symptoms like low self-esteem and fear of evaluation, anxiety can also present as bodily symptoms such as perspiration, shaking, and elevated heart rate (Calin et al., 2021). These challenges can hinder students' ability to participate actively in class discussions, express their ideas clearly, and engage in meaningful interactions with their peers and instructors, leading to missed opportunities for practice and meaningful improvement.

Because most traditional teaching methods emphasize rote memorization and passive learning, which frequently fail to engage students and foster the development of effective communication skills among students, educators are increasingly exploring the potential of technology-based tools to address these challenges and enhance communication skills among Nigerian undergraduates. Flipgrid is one of these technological tools; it is a social learning platform that uses films to let students make and share quick videos in response to queries or prompts from their teachers. The interactive and asynchronous aspect of the platform has demonstrated the potential of lowering learners' speaking fear and increasing motivation (Compton, 2004; Freiermuth & Jarrell, 2006; Lepore, 2014; Reinders & Wattana, 2014 as cited in Jaramillo, 2022; Bárkányi, 2021; Trust & Malay, 2017).

Flipgrid allows students more control over their learning process and reduces the nervousness of speaking in front of an audience in real-time. This is because Flipgrid is asynchronous and students can record films in a relaxed and stress-free setting without worrying about being immediately judged by their classmates or teachers. Furthermore, Flipgrid's interactive features, such as the opportunity to watch and react to peers' videos, can promote community building and active engagement. Additionally, Flipgrid's personalized and engaging learning environment helps increase students' motivation to practice and advance their communication skills. Badges and leaderboards, two gamified features of the platform, can incentivize users to participate and promote healthy competition. Besides, adding stickers, filters, and other artistic features to videos can make the learning process more engaging.

Numerous studies have been conducted to assess the effectiveness of Flipgrid in improving students' oral communication skills. For example, Diflippantonio-Pen (2020) investigated how well Flipgrid was used to help English language learners in Japan strengthen their oral English skills. According to the study, using digital video applications improved students' fluency in learning a second language. Tuyet & Khang (2020) also examined how Flipgrid affected the speaking abilities, attitudes toward the usage of English, and anxiety of EFL high school students learning to speak the language. The study found that after using Flipgrid, EFL learners' anxiety levels toward learning to speak in English decreased. Additionally, the study discovered the majority of students' positive perceptions toward using

Flipgrid in learning English speaking and anticipated that Flipgrid should be used often to increase the motivation to study English speaking. Employing a cross-sectional survey approach, Lowenthal & Moore (2020) further looked at how students perceived utilizing Flipgrid for asynchronous video-based discussions in fully online courses. The study's conclusions show that because Flipgrid is simple to use and enhances their social presence, students enjoyed using it.

Recently, Chandra (2022) explored the ways Flipgrid could enhance students' memory ability in learning Mandarin, noting the difficulties that come with learning the language only from textbooks and the students' poor vocabulary retention. The findings show that Flipgrid can be used as an additional tool for speaking and vocabulary development. However, creative instructional design is required to enhance students' memory and critical thinking skills when learning a language. In another study, Kleftodimos & Triantafillidou (2023) investigated and found Flipgrid to be a helpful tool for oral science communication assessment and practice. They conclude that, despite its rarity in scientific domains, Flipgrid holds promise for improving oral communication abilities. Using the Flipgrid platform at Salesian Polytechnic University, Fajardo-Guapisaca & Argudo-Garzón (2022) investigated ways to enhance interactive communication and pronunciation in A1 level English as foreign language students. The study gathered information regarding how the Flipgrid platform affected students' speaking abilities and how they felt about it. It also included suggestions to employ Flipgrid with A1-level university students as well as perspectives on students' speaking shortcomings and the platform's advantages.

Research has generally proven that Flipgrid improves the speaking abilities of students (Kleftodimos & Triantafillidou, 2023; Muslimin et al., 2022). It has been demonstrated to enhance fluency, pronunciation, and interactive discussions when learning a second language. Benefits that students have highlighted include improved grammar, increased confidence, and the ability to concentrate on their areas of weakness for improvement. Furthermore, the platform facilitates peer and instructor feedback, assisting students in recognizing and rectifying speech difficulties. It appears that not enough research has been conducted to examine Flipgrid's effects in the Nigerian setting, despite several studies being carried out across various settings. Flipgrid seems to have the ability to significantly improve communication abilities and lessen the speaking anxiety of Nigerian undergraduates as it does in other contexts (Diflippantonio-Pen, 2020). Therefore, this research aimed to investigate this potential by examining the impact of Flipgrid on students' speaking anxiety and overall speaking proficiency.

Two research questions were formulated to guide the study. They are: (1) What is the impact of the Flipgrid platform on the speaking skills of Nigerian undergraduates? and (2) What is the impact of Flipgrid on the speaking anxiety of Nigerian undergraduates?.

RESEARCH METHOD

A pre-and post-quasi-experimental research design is adopted in the study. This research design allows a researcher to collect data from the respondents, especially in a school setting, to see the effect of a treatment on their behaviors (Creswell, 2014). Thus, quantitative data were collected from the respondents to answer the research questions. The participants of

the study were 25 third-year undergraduates at a university in Northern Nigeria. They were both male and female and the ages ranged from 21-28 years old. The majority of them had no experience with online learning as it was not practiced in the university. The participants mostly communicated in English during class time. However, outside the classrooms, they switched to their mother tongue or broken English while communicating with students who had different mother tongues.

Two instruments were used for the data collection: a speaking task and a questionnaire. For the speaking task, the topics on myself, my family, my favorite dish, my best friend, and my hometown, were given to the participants to make short oral presentations. The presentations were evaluated by two English lecturers based on a rubric on five criteria: Fluency, Pronunciation and Accent, Vocabulary, Accuracy, and Comprehension. The average scores were used for the analysis. As for the questionnaire, Hwa & Peck's (2017) questionnaire developed from Horwitz et al (1986) was used to collect data on the participants' speaking anxiety levels. The instruments have been used by many other researchers and have proven valid (Aliyu et al., 2019). The questionnaire has five factors that are associated with communication apprehension which may have effects on oral communicative competence. They are:

1. psychological anxiety (e.g. self-esteem in speaking in English) – Items 1-2, 11-13, 16-18, 20, and 26;
2. fear of negative evaluation (e.g. worry about negative evaluations from their instructors or peers) – Items 10 and 14-15;
3. English classroom speaking anxiety (e.g. feeling anxious when participating in activities that require them to speak in English) – Items 3-9 and 19-23;
4. social-environmental factor (e.g. an unpleasant emotion experienced as a lack of opportunities to practice English in daily life) – Items 27-32; and
5. perception factor (e.g. perception of the ability to communicate in English which will affect graduate employability in recruitment) – Items 24-25.

The data for the study were collected in three stages: pre-treatment, treatment, and post-treatment. For the pre-treatment, the participants were asked to make an oral presentation in the class on any of the topics: about myself, my family, my favorite dish, my best friend, or my hometown. The anxiety questionnaire was also administered. During the treatment, they were asked to make video presentations using the Flipgrid platform. The presentations were made asynchronously over five weeks, with one topic per week. Making the videos in their comfort zones gave the participants more opportunity to practice over and over and to correct themselves before sharing with the teacher and other students. After each presentation, both the teacher who was also the researcher and the participants created feedback videos for the individual presentations. Debriefing sessions were then held with the teacher-researcher to provide further feedback on video creation and address any additional challenges faced by the participants. These were conducted face-to-face in the class.

After the treatment, the participants were asked to make an oral presentation again in the class on any of the topics: about myself, my family, my favorite dish, my best friend, or my hometown. Then the anxiety questionnaire was re-administered. The presentations for both pre- and post-treatment were analyzed based on fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy, and

comprehension, and the scores were compared. On the other hand, the questionnaire data for both pre-and post-treatment were also compared to ascertain the effects of the Flipgrid platform on the participants' speaking anxiety.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The data collected for the study were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis where mean and standard deviation are reported and inferential statistical analysis where paired sample t-tests were run to determine the impact of the Flipgrid platform on speaking skills and reducing speaking anxiety among the participants. The following subsections present the results of the analysis.

1. Impact of the Flipgrid platform on speaking skills

To answer the first research question of the study on the impact of Flipgrid on the speaking skills of Nigerian undergraduates, the scores of the participants' presentations were compared with that of the Flipgrid platform using a paired sample t-test.

First, a descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to describe the scores. The results reveal an increase in mean scores for each speaking component post-treatment. The results reveal that the fluency of participants' speeches in the pre-treatment presentation was relatively smooth, marked by hesitations and unevenness due to rephrasing and word searches, along with volume fluctuations. On the other hand, the post-treatment scores show improvement as fluency became smooth and fluid, with fewer hesitations, a slight search for words, and occasional inaudible words.

The results further show that the pronunciation and accent of the participants were acceptable in the pre-treatment, with no effort towards a native accent. However, in the post-treatment, the pronunciation improved, with some efforts towards an accent, albeit non-native. The results also show that 'the vocabulary in the speeches of the participants was adequate language control, with a lacking vocabulary range. It also improved in the post-treatment, where it showed good language control and a relatively broad range.

The accuracy level also shows improvement as fewer errors in grammatical structures were observed, possibly due to attempts to introduce variety. The comprehension also improved despite repetitions in certain segments, there was an overall improvement in content clarity.

Subsequently, a paired-sample t-test analysis compared pre- and post-treatment mean scores. The results exhibited a significantly higher mean difference in the overall scores of speaking skills of the participants before and after the use of Flipgrid ($t = - 19.036$, $p = .000$), indicating a positive influence of the platform. Substantial improvements were also observed in individual speaking components: Fluency ($t = - 16.389$, $p = .000$), Pronunciation and Accent ($t = - 27.264$, $p = .000$), Vocabulary ($t = -7.787$, $p = .000$), Accuracy ($t = 8.697$, $p = .000$), and Comprehension ($t = - 7.485$, $p = .000$). Table 1 presents the detailed summary of pre-and post-treatment results.

Table 1: Paired-sample t-test for the Pre- and Post-treatment Speaking Scores (n=45)

Components	Pre-tr. Mean	Post-tr. Mean	Mean Diff.	SD	t value	Sig. (2 tailed)
Fluency	3.0000	4.5000	1.5000	.69786	-16.389	.000
Pronunciation and Accent	2.5000	3.6000	1.1000	.30253	-27.264	.000
Vocabulary	3.2000	3.8000	.6000-	.68064	-7.787	.000
Accuracy	2.9667	3.9000	.93333	.86095	-8.697	.000
Comprehension	3.0000	3.7167	.71667	.78312	-7.485	.000
Overall	14.667	19.5167	4.8497	1.9265	-19.036	.000

2. Impact of Flipgrid on reducing speaking anxiety

Results of the statistical analysis showed that there was an increase in the mean scores in all the aspects of anxiety tested in the questionnaire after the use of the Flipgrid platform. The results, as shown in Table 2, indicate that the mean score for psychological anxiety is higher after the treatment (M = 48.21) than before the treatment (M = 37.63). Fear of negative evaluation also has a higher one after the treatment (M = 12.7) in comparison to the before treatment score (M = 7.3). The mean scores of English classroom speaking anxiety also increased after the treatment from (M =31.5) to (M =51.2). Also, the social-environmental factor increased from (M = 22.30) to (M = 29.4). Finally, the Perception factor increased in its mean scores from (M = 6.1) to (M = 9.5).

To address the second research question on the impact of Flipgrid on reducing undergraduates' speaking anxiety, a paired sample t-test test analysis was conducted. The results revealed a significant difference between the mean scores of the questionnaire before and after the class interactions in all the components of speaking anxiety. This shows that the flipgrid helps to significantly reduce the students' speaking anxiety. The following are the results: Psychological anxiety (t = 12.632, p = .000), Fear of negative evaluation (t = 7.0090, p = .000), English classroom speaking anxiety (t = 15.532, p = .000); Social-environmental factor (t = 8.029, p = .000), and Perception factor (t = 6.732, p = .000). Table 2 presents the summary of the result.

Table 2: Paired-sample t-test for the Pre- and Post-treatment Speaking Anxiety Scores (n=45)

Speaking Anxiety Components	Pre-tr. Mean	Post-tr. Mean	Mean Diff.	t-value	Sig. (2 tailed)
Psychological anxiety	37.63	48.21	10.53	12.632	.000
Fear of negative evaluation	7.3	12.7	5.40	7.0090	.000
English classroom-speaking anxiety	31.5	51.2	23.7	15.532	.000
Social-environmental factor	22.3	29.4	7.10	8.029	.000
Perception factor	6.1	9.5	3.40	6.732	.000

p value= .05

The findings of the study demonstrate that Flipgrid has a beneficial effect on student's speaking abilities. Additionally, it greatly lessened their public speaking fear. As mentioned in the introduction, Flipgrid's positive impact effects on students' speaking abilities and the corresponding decrease in speaking anxiety have addressed the problems that many Nigerian

undergraduate students have already identified as experiencing. Proficiency in speaking is known to be crucial for success in the personal, professional, and academic domains, yet speaking anxiety is common among students, which makes it difficult for them to engage in class and articulate their thoughts clearly (Ahmad, 2021; Gumartifa & Syahri, 2021).

The findings of the study echo the Nigerian educational context, in which conventional teaching strategies frequently fail to engage students and develop their capacity for effective communication (Aliyu et al., 2019). As pointed out in the study, these issues may be resolved by using technology-based solutions such as Flipgrid, which offers a more customized and dynamic learning environment. Thus, the argument that Flipgrid's asynchronous and interactive nature provides a more comfortable and helpful environment for students to practice and possibly enhance their speaking skills is supported by the observed positive impact on speaking skills in this study.

Furthermore, the findings of the study are in line with previous research that has discovered the effectiveness of Flipgrid in various educational contexts (Casañ-Núñez, 2021; Nguyen, 2024; Stoszkowski et al., 2021). The findings from these studies provide credence to the idea that Flipgrid is a helpful and adaptable tool for developing communication skills, reducing anxiety, and encouraging positive attitudes toward language acquisition.

In summary, the analysis of the findings indicates that Flipgrid has the potential as a successful intervention for Nigerian undergraduate students who struggle with anxiety and the development of their speaking skills. The positive findings highlight the necessity for teachers to consider utilizing technology-based tools like Flipgrid in their classroom instruction to create encouraging, stimulating, and productive learning settings for students who aspire to improve their speaking proficiency.

CONCLUSION

The current study investigated the Flipgrid platform's potential to improve speaking skills and reduce speaking anxiety among Nigerian undergraduates. The results of the study show that participants' speaking has significantly improved in terms of vocabulary, accuracy, fluency, pronunciation, and accent. The results also show that the individuals' speaking anxiety has significantly decreased. It is imperative to recognize the study's limitations, such as its limited sample size, lack of a real control group, and short treatment period. The study also did not include the students' experiences in using Flipgrid which could be valuable, especially to examine the process of using Flipgrid which influences the positive effects. However, the study provides significant insights into education in Nigeria. It highlights for educators Flipgrid's potential as an effective tool for enhancing speaking skills and reducing fear in undergraduate Nigerian students. Its captivating and participatory qualities, which promote active engagement and self-expression, also benefit students. In summary, although additional investigation is necessary to examine the enduring effectiveness and wider relevance of Flipgrid, the results of this study offer substantial evidence of the tool's ability to revolutionize Nigerian undergraduates' speaking encounters, creating opportunities for improved communication abilities and increased self-confidence in expressing their thoughts. For further research, longitudinal studies evaluating the long-term effects of Flipgrid on speaking abilities and anxiety levels across a range of student populations should be conducted. Teachers can acquire valuable insights into Flipgrid's distinct contributions by conducting comparative studies that

pit it against other tools or conventional approaches. Furthermore, mixed-methods research that combines quantitative and qualitative data would provide more evidence and insight into Flipgrid's effectiveness. In terms of practice, professional development programs should be organized for teachers to improve their use of Flipgrid and other technological tools, to learn how to integrate course objectives.

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