Factors Influencing the Oral Output of Foreign Language Learners: A Case Study in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

Bok Check Meng[1]*, Nurul Huda Mohd Saad[2]

[1]Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Melaka Branch, Jasin Campus, Merlimau, Malaysia

[2]Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Melaka Branch, Alor Gajah Campus, Malaysia

***Corresponding Author**

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ABSTRACT

Globalisation has created an urgent need for individuals to communicate across cultures, making oral communication a vital component of foreign language learning. This study investigates how Flipgrid, a video-based discussion platform, can enhance oral output and communicative competence among students learning Chinese as a foreign language. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through classroom observations, analysis of students' oral outputs, and semi-structured interviews. The participants were purposively selected from among high-performing students enrolled in a Level 2 Mandarin course (TMC151). The findings revealed that Flipgrid provided learners with an interactive and flexible platform that fostered communication, collaboration, and reflection. Students expressed increased motivation, confidence, and willingness to communicate in Chinese, perceiving Flipgrid as a meaningful tool for practising oral skills beyond the traditional classroom. The study also found that the platform's asynchronous nature enabled students to self-monitor their progress and engage in self-paced learning. However, while Flipgrid enhanced opportunities for peer interaction, limited contact with native speakers restricted the authenticity of the communicative experience. Overall, the integration of Flipgrid successfully bridged the gap between formal and informal learning environments, supporting constructivist and communicative language learning principles. The study concludes that incorporating digital platforms like Flipgrid can effectively promote intrinsic motivation, improve oral fluency, and provide learners with authentic opportunities for language use. Future research should explore how technology-mediated communication can be enriched through cross-cultural collaboration and longitudinal tracking of oral skill development.

Keywords: flipgrid, oral communication, foreign language learning, constructivist learning, motivation

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation has increased the need for us to speak a common language. The overwhelming growth of Chinese use in different countries and the possibility of online use of the language have allowed by the need to communicate in Chinese with Chinese speakers from other countries that speak Chinese, creating a new learning context for oral output. For foreign language learning, communication in the foreign language learned is very essential (Postigo-Fuentes & Fernández Navas, 2020). Instructor must find way to create oral output opportunities for their students. Creating and providing casual online conversations for the students should not be ignored and neglected for foreign language learning (Salomonsson, 2020). In this case study, qualitative analysis was conducted to identify how the process of oral out and communication occur through a qualitative research design.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interaction strategy instruction for communication brings about learner engagement (Dao, 2020). Learners who are provided with oral output opportunities will find that learning a foreign language worth the efforts of learning. The students do not intend to be silent learners of the language they are learning especially the brilliant one.

To gain learners' attention to learning process, reflective learning practices for oral output should be implemented (Dao et al., 2020). Students may reflect on how well they have used the foreign language learned for communication. When they found out that they have using the language they are learning, the motivation in learning will be heightened.

The conversation opportunities can be in face-to-face or online contexts (Loewen & Wolff, 2016). To cater for oral output opportunities in online mode, instructional technologies must be utilized, such as WhatsApp for communication (Hashim et al., 2018), mobile applications (Kim et al., 2019) and use of chatbot (Deshmukh et al., 2019). Each of the applications carries its own strength and weakness. The purpose of use will determine the selection of the utilization of a certain application. For instance, in monitoring the use in more structured manner, WhatsApp can be not so suitable. Language competence is another consideration. Conversational chatbot can be more suitable for learners with higher commands of the language but not be beneficial to zero starting new learners of foreign language.

To open conservation opportunity, another way is by using Flipgrid. Flipgrid allows short conversations to be carried out in an anxiety free environment (Hashim et al., 2019). Students can produce 3-minute speaking video and get responses from learners all over the world. It is believed that by practicing of speaking using Flipgrid can be an innovation will be able to be one of the antidotes in combatting the issue of speaking anxiety among learners. Flipgrid works as a communication platform, showcasing student artifacts, introductions, and critiques. The Flipgrid videos overall show whether communication skills were developed in a connected learning setting and if the videos thoroughly engaged the students. (Johnson et al., 2018). Enmeshing technology and the creativity with artistic pedagogical technologies can be utilized as building blocks for speaking skills development (Janzen et al., 2017).

As reminded by Ghazali et al. (2020), understanding second language anxiety is very vital for oral production among those foreign language learners. It is when they are in lesser anxiety states, only than they will free safe to express themselves in the new language that they are learning.

In sum, it is the intention of foreign language instructors to see the speaking progress of their students that make foreign language instruction more meaningful (Yeh & Lai, 2019). Producing students that are capable and competent to speak inside and outside of the language classroom should be given ample of attention and efforts.

METHOD

For this study, three primary methods were employed—observations, analysis of oral output during online discussions using Flipgrid, and semi-structured interviews with the students. These methods were triangulated to assess the participants' communicative skills and to obtain a holistic understanding of their oral language development process.

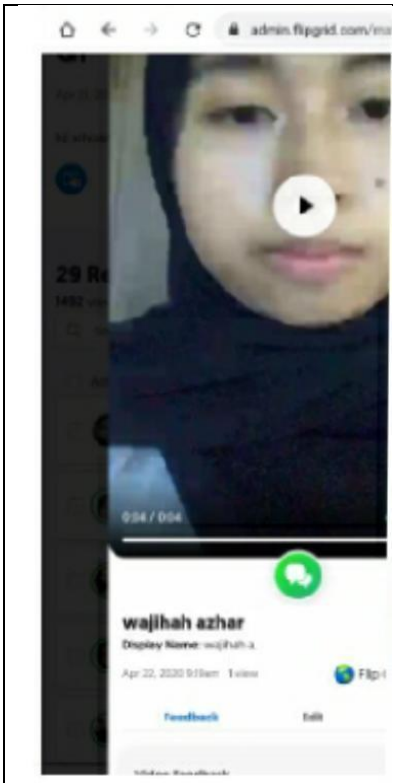
The respondents were purposively selected from among students who had demonstrated good performance in both the listening and writing tests of the Level 2 Mandarin course (TMC151). This selection ensured that the participants possessed sufficient language foundation to engage meaningfully in oral communication tasks.

Flipgrid was selected as the platform for oral output in this study because it allows instructors to trace, monitor, and review students' communication effectively in an asynchronous yet interactive environment. The traceability and accessibility features of Flipgrid—such as video submissions, peer comments, and playback functions—make it an ideal tool for analysing students' oral production and interactional behaviour.

Before data collection, students were trained on how to use the Flipgrid application, including recording, uploading videos, and responding to peers' posts. Throughout the study, they were required to complete oral tasks corresponding to the topics in their textbook chapters. Each topic was supported by guiding questions designed to stimulate meaningful conversation and authentic communication in Chinese.

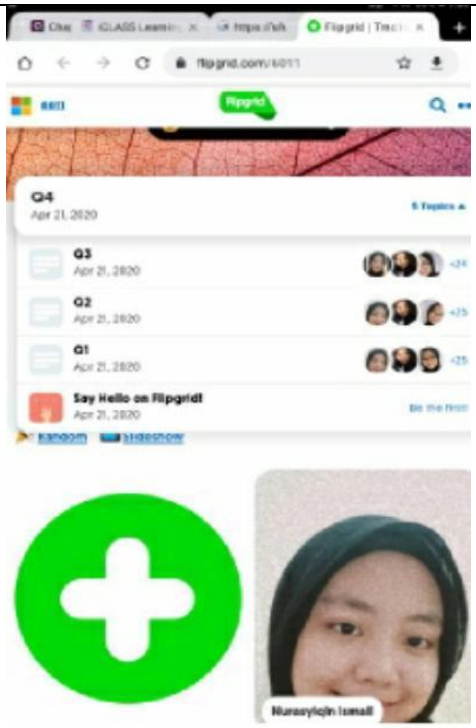
Students were encouraged to express their opinions, describe experiences, and respond to peers' questions, fostering both autonomous learning and peer interaction. The instructor's role was mainly as a facilitator, monitoring discussions and providing feedback where necessary.

The figures below illustrate how students used Flipgrid as a platform for oral interaction, recording their own video responses, engaging in peer discussions, and responding to the oral questions posted by their classmates according to the assigned chapters.



Students doing their own video recording

Students having conversation with each other



Students tried to answer all the oral questions posted by their peers according to the chapters

Fig. 1 Using Flipgrid for oral output

Observations and Data Analysis

For observations, analysis of the oral output during online discussions using Flipgrid, and interviews with the students were conducted as part of the assessment of their communicative skills. The purpose of these activities was to examine the learners' interactional behaviour, oral fluency, and reflective understanding of the learning process. Figure 2 below summarises the major methods and activities carried out during the data collection stage.

The investigation combined three main methods—observations, analysis of oral output, and interviews—implemented systematically to ensure triangulation and validity of findings. Observations were conducted with selected high-performing students across four classes, allowing the researcher to examine how learners interacted and communicated in authentic learning situations. The analysis of oral output focused on the themes of six discussion chapters, each containing six guiding questions, while the interview sessions captured students' reflective insights regarding their motivation, awareness of learning, and perceptions of using Flipgrid as a language learning tool.

Through this process, patterns of interaction, peer feedback, and language performance were examined both quantitatively (in terms of participation and response frequency) and qualitatively (in terms of content, meaning construction, and intercultural awareness).

The comprehensive data collection illustrated in Figure 2 provided a rich corpus of evidence for analysing the relationship between instructional technology (Flipgrid) and oral communicative competence. The triangulation between observation, online oral activities, and interviews strengthened the validity of the findings by offering multiple perspectives on the learners' experiences and perceptions.

Fig. 2 Activities conducted

Method	Activities
Observations	Observed selected 6 best students from 4 classes of level 2 (TMC151); Observation log was prepared; The observations were done for 5 days for 6 weeks;
Analysis oral output	Logged in the system to observe how students interacted with each other; Oral output log was prepared; The oral output logs were arranged in accordance to the 6 topics/chapters of discussion; In each topic, there were 6 questions put up for students' oral discussion; Students were allowed to join in and post their responses within one week for each of the topic/chapter; They may do the video recording in anytime and at anywhere within a week; They may also put up short comments as responses to the videos of their peers. Example: Chapter 4: Food and drinks Question 5: Ni de mama xihuan chi shenme shiwu? What kind of food your mother likes to eat? There were altogether 35 responses to this question. 
Interviews	WhatsApp interviews were conducted with the 24 students; Research questions prepared below were used as guidelines for semi-structured interviews; Interview logs were prepared

Focuses of Interest in the Investigation Process

Based on the objectives and research questions, the investigation process focused on several key themes that emerged from the observations, oral output analyses, and interviews. These themes provided the framework for analysing students' learning experiences, their motivation to engage in oral communication, and their perception of the Flipgrid environment as a supplementary tool for language learning.

The areas of focus were divided into four major dimensions:

1. Learning and Oral Skill Development
2. Motivation
3. Communication
4. Comparison between Flipgrid and Formal Classroom Learning.

Each of these dimensions was operationalised through a set of guiding questions used during semi-structured interviews and reflections. These questions aimed to probe deeper into the learners' awareness, engagement, and perceived improvement in oral communication. Table 1 summarises the main areas of focus and sample questions that guided the investigation process.

TABLE 1 THE FOCUSES OF INTEREST IN THE INVESTIGATION PROCESS

Category	Sample Interview Question	
Learning and Oral Skill Development	1.	How do you perceive your learning and acquisition of speaking skill after using this application?
	2.	Are you aware of the relationship between the use of this Flipgrid and the oral skill development?
Motivation	1.	Is there motivation for learning by using Flipgrid?
	2.	Do students participate actively in discussion in Flipgrid environment?
	3.	Do you think there is a value of involvement in Flipgrid discussions?
	4.	Do you think you are able to develop your speaking skill?
	5.	How do you feel about Chinese learning before and after using Flipgrid?
	6.	Have the oral practices in Flipgrid motivated you to continue to use Chinese in the future?
	7.	Have the oral practices in Flipgrid motivated you to continue to learn Chinese more vigorously in the future?
Communication	1.	How much communication in Flipgrid is there among the students?
	2.	Do you interact well?
	3.	Do you get responses from your peers?
	4.	How is the communication taking place?
	5.	Is it enjoyable?
	6.	Do you enjoy the communication?
	7.	What kind of vocabulary do you use?
	8.	Do you have enough vocabulary to express yourself?
	9.	Do you think you have expressed rightly?
	10.	Do you think you are using the language you learn in this classroom?
	11.	Do you think your peers can understand you well?
Comparison between Flipgrid and Formal Classroom Setting	1.	Do you find any differences?
	2.	Do you find this informal way of learning useful for speaking practices?
	3.	Do you perceive that you speak more than you do in your formal Chinese class?
	4.	Do you feel that this kind of learning is a good way for you to practise what you have learned formally in the classroom?

The first dimension examined how students perceived their acquisition of speaking skills and their awareness of the relationship between Flipgrid use and oral skill development. The second dimension explored motivation—how the use of Flipgrid encouraged active participation, self-confidence, and continuity in using Chinese beyond classroom boundaries. The third dimension, communication, focused on the quality and depth of interactions among peers, including their enjoyment, vocabulary range, and ability to express and understand messages.

Finally, the fourth dimension compared students' experiences in Flipgrid with traditional classroom learning, identifying perceived benefits and differences in oral practice opportunities.

The identification of these thematic focuses — motivation, communication, and comparison between Flipgrid and formal classroom learning — enabled the researcher to connect the empirical findings with the theoretical framework of communicative and constructivist language learning. Through these dimensions, the study sought to reveal how the integration of instructional technology, particularly Flipgrid, could foster students' motivation, enhance their communicative competence, and create meaningful bridges between formal and informal learning contexts. These insights further highlight the pedagogical value of digital tools in promoting active, reflective, and collaborative language learning experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Considering the case study methodology employed in this research, the results and the related discussion are presented together. The purpose of this study is to understand the learning processes of oral output among foreign language learners within the Flipgrid environment. The results are organized thematically according to the categories that emerged during the analysis process.

Instructional Technology and Language Learning: Flipgrid as a Support for Oral Output

Throughout the learning process, as reflected in the research questions, students consistently acknowledged the strong support provided by instructional technologies such as Flipgrid in enhancing their speaking skills. Observations, video recordings, and interview transcripts revealed that learners perceived Flipgrid as an effective medium to practice and apply the Chinese language beyond the traditional classroom. This demonstrates that technology-mediated environments can increase the relevance and authenticity of language learning. As one participant expressed:

"I strongly support the use of Flipgrid or any other technology that may allow me to use Chinese that I have learned in my formal classroom. I believe if I can use Chinese in this application, I should be able to use Chinese in the future in my daily life."

Such reflections suggest that learners value the use value of language knowledge—the opportunity to employ the language for real communication. This aligns with constructivist learning perspectives, where knowledge is internalized through active, meaningful use rather than passive reception (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1985).

Effect of Flipgrid: Providing Opportunities for Oral Output

Students in formal classroom settings often lack sufficient opportunities to practice the target language orally, especially when class sizes are large. The use of Flipgrid helped address this gap by providing a flexible platform where learners could participate in speaking activities at their own time and pace. This flexibility contributed to more consistent oral practice and self-expression, supporting positive speaking outcomes.

These results emphasize the importance of creating multiple opportunities for oral output—a key factor frequently missing in conventional classroom instruction (Swain, 2000). Without the use of instructional technologies such as Flipgrid, students' chances to interact with peers in the target language would remain limited.

The platform thus "forces" learners to communicate in Chinese, encouraging authentic engagement and peer interaction.

Communication in Chinese: The Need for Authentic Interaction

While Flipgrid enhanced students' opportunities to speak Chinese, most of their communication occurred with non-native peers. This limited exposure to native speakers reduced the authenticity of their communicative experience. Several participants expressed disappointment regarding this limitation:

1. "Flipgrid is good, but the problem is I still talk in Chinese with my peers who are non-native speakers."

2. "I wish to talk in Chinese to native Chinese speakers."
3. "When I tried to talk in Chinese to native Chinese speakers in my daily life, they often replied to me in Malay or English as I am a Malay."
4. "How disappointed I am that I can't talk in Chinese to real Chinese speakers. Even if I met one, they don't seem to understand me."

These reflections highlight the learners' desire for genuine intercultural communication. The study suggests that future implementations of Flipgrid or similar tools should include participation from native speakers—perhaps as co-instructors or guest interlocutors—to create a more authentic linguistic environment. Language instruction should not be limited to reception and controlled production within the classroom; rather, it should extend to social contexts that encourage spontaneous and meaningful communication (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1998).

Awareness of Learning: Immediate Metacognition

To understand the foreign language learning process, it is also necessary to explore learners' metacognitive awareness. Participants demonstrated an emerging self-awareness of their own language use and identity as Chinese language learners. This awareness often occurred during moments of genuine communication, as expressed in the following excerpt:

"I strongly realize that it is only when I am truly communicating in Chinese that I am aware I am a Chinese learner. Hence, I feel the need to think in Chinese, try to express myself in Chinese, then I can say that I am learning Chinese in a meaningful manner."

This statement reflects an important shift from mechanical learning to conscious language engagement—an indication of active metacognitive regulation in the process of speaking a foreign language. Learners' awareness of their cognitive and linguistic processes supports deeper learning and self-directed improvement (Anderson, 2002).

Motivation to Learn a Foreign Language: Use Value as Real Value

Closely related to metacognitive awareness is the intrinsic motivation that arises when learners perceive real communicative value in the language they are learning. When knowledge has use value—that is, when it can be applied in authentic contexts—it naturally promotes internal motivation. As Lancaster (2018) noted, language learners are often driven by either instrumental motivation (to achieve a tangible goal such as passing an exam) or intrinsic motivation (to communicate meaningfully with others). Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) further emphasized that intrinsic motivation fosters deeper, more sustained engagement with language learning.

The participants in this study expressed strong intrinsic motivation, valuing opportunities to speak and use Chinese in real-life situations:

1. "Let me speak, that I may learn."
2. "No talk, no learning."

Such sentiments reinforce the understanding that language mastery develops through active use and interaction. In this sense, the communicative and pluricultural affordances of platforms such as Flipgrid are not merely technological enhancements but essential tools that give learners both purpose and motivation in their language learning journey.

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the results indicate that instructional technologies such as Flipgrid can significantly enhance learners' oral output by creating an interactive, flexible, and supportive environment. The themes that emerged—technological support, communicative opportunity, metacognitive awareness, and intrinsic motivation—collectively demonstrate how digital platforms can transform the foreign language learning experience. However, the findings also reveal that without authentic communicative contexts involving native speakers, oral proficiency may remain limited to peer-based interactions.

These findings suggest that future instructional designs should integrate native speaker participation and crosscultural interaction within digital learning spaces. Additionally, educators should emphasize meaningful communication and learner autonomy to sustain motivation and develop real-world speaking competence. Ultimately, the incorporation of technology like Flipgrid should not replace, but rather expand, the communicative space of the language classroom—bridging the gap between learning and authentic language use.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how Flipgrid, as an instructional technology, could support the development of oral communication skills among students learning Chinese as a foreign language. Through classroom observations, oral output analyses, and interviews, the study revealed that the integration of Flipgrid into language learning promotes learner autonomy, motivation, and reflective engagement. Students valued the opportunity to practise speaking Chinese in a flexible, anxiety-reduced environment that allowed self-expression and peer interaction.

The findings highlight that while Flipgrid effectively provides space for oral practice and interaction, it also exposes a limitation—the lack of authentic engagement with native speakers. Learners expressed a strong desire to communicate beyond the classroom, underscoring the need for exposure to genuine intercultural exchanges to enhance authenticity and fluency. Nevertheless, the use of Flipgrid helped bridge the gap between formal and informal learning, creating a sense of community and promoting communicative competence through meaningful interaction.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study affirms that instructional technologies such as Flipgrid are not mere digital tools but valuable learning ecosystems that enable constructivist and communicative learning to occur in authentic and student-centred ways. When thoughtfully integrated, they can nurture both linguistic confidence and intrinsic motivation—key components in developing real communicative competence.

Future research should further explore how technology-mediated communication can be enriched by crosscultural interaction, longitudinal tracking of oral proficiency growth, and comparative studies across different levels of language learners. In doing so, educators can continue to refine technology-assisted pedagogies that not only improve linguistic performance but also cultivate learners who are confident, reflective, and communicatively competent in multilingual contexts.

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