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About the Journal

Founded in 2013, the Journal of Teacher Action Research (ISSN: 2332-2233) is a peer-reviewed online journal indexed with EBSCO that seeks practical research that can be implemented in Pre-Kindergarten through Post-Secondary classrooms. The primary function of this journal is to provide classroom teachers and researchers a means for sharing classroom practices.

The journal accepts articles for peer-review that describe classroom practice which positively impacts student learning. We define teacher action research as teachers (at all levels) studying their practice and/or their students' learning in a methodical way in order to inform classroom practice. Articles submitted to the journal should demonstrate an action research focus with intent to improve the author's practice.

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USING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING TO ADAPT A FLIPPED CLASS FOR UNDERGRADUATE, EMIRATI LEARNERS

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Abstract Engaging students through the use of innovative technology has become increasingly important to equip students with the competencies needed to navigate a complex society. Yet innovative techniques, that are not culturally responsive, may do little to engage students. This study provides an example of the use of culturally responsive teaching to adapt a culturally different teaching approach within a United Arab Emirates (UAE) undergraduate social work course. This action research study investigated the use of a modified flipped class approach among Emirati undergraduate female students, and the influence of this approach on student engagement. The culturally responsive modifications were based on the results of an earlier phase of this study that investigated obstacles to engagement within a UAE undergraduate program. Findings indicated that a culturally responsive, flipped course design positively influenced behavioural, affective and cognitive engagement among participants.

Keywords: Teacher Action Research, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Flipped Class, United Arab Emirates, Social Work

Introduction

Economic sustainability largely depends on a diverse and well-educated citizenry (Ashour & Fatima, 2016). As a country transformed by oil revenues garnered over the last 50 years, the

United Arab Emirates (UAE) has made significant investments in the development of a knowledge-based economy (Ashour & Fatima, 2016; Belhiah and Elhami, 2015). Investments included a robust system of higher education for Emirati nationals, standard practices of mandated English language instruction in UAE federal education institutions as well as recent initiatives of technology-enhanced instruction to support student engagement and achievement (Ashour & Fatima, 2016; Chrystall, 2014; Gallagher, 2011). The promoted educational technologies include mobile learning platforms, technology-enhanced curriculum materials, and other computer-based resources (Engin, 2014; Engin & Donanci, 2014). These tools support the work of teachers to implement pedagogical approaches that enhance student engagement and promote student achievement in both traditional and digital learning spaces (Ashour & Fatima, 2016; Engin, 2014).

For six years, I worked as a faculty member for a Bachelor's of Social Work program at a federally funded college system in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In this role, I worked exclusively with Emirati national women enrolled in the social work program. Through my work, I observed a problem in practice: how an English-based, mostly Western curriculum presented challenges to my students. I observed the challenges associated with adapting culturally different teaching approaches to the needs and culture of my students. These challenges included a lack of cultural contextualization of learning materials, the use of English language textbooks, and an emphasis on student-centered learning when students often had little or no previous experience with this teaching approach. I observed that attempting to implement a progressive pedagogical strategy in a cultural context that is vastly different from the culture in which the strategy was developed could lead to frustration for my students and me. It became apparent to me that instructional strategies developed through traditional research are often devoid of contextual specificity, making transferability difficult.

In response to these challenges, I became interested in investigating a teaching approach that blended cultural relevance with the effective integration of educational technology. I also wanted to align my practice with the national call for increasing student engagement and achievement through the integration of educational technologies in a way that accounted for the cultural background of my students. I decided to investigate a flipped-classroom approach because of its use of technology as well as adaptability to specific cultural contexts (Filatova, 2015). A flipped classroom involves moving the traditional lecture or content outside of the regular class time and often delivering it through electronic means. Class activities, combined with online videos or other out-of-class activities, provide students with multiple ways of learning course material (Bergmann & Sams, 2012).

I decided to enact an ethnographic, qualitative action research study that could help me better understand how modifications to the flipped classroom approach that embodied cultural factors could result in higher levels of student engagement and achievement in my college courses (Mertler, 2014; Yin, 2016).

Action research is an approach to practitioner research wherein the research is focused on a problem of practice that is significant to both the practitioner-researcher and the participants in the study (Dana & Hoppey-Yendol, 2014; Rust, 2009). The cyclical nature of action research can be used to develop a 1) more in-depth understanding of a context-dependent problem of practice to 2) plan an effective intervention. 3) The implementation and 4) concurrent study of the intervention provides a wealth of information on which the practitioner can then reflect (Mertler, 2014).

From the initial investigative phase of my study (abbreviated here due to space), I deepened my understanding of the culturally responsive adaptations that would be needed to modify the flipped classroom approach. After reflecting on the findings from the initial investigation, I recognized that there were differences in how students and faculty viewed the effectiveness of the current forms of instructor-student communication. Additional issues were noted regarding the increased need for English language scaffolding and unproductive classroom approaches such as lecturing. With these findings in mind, I developed and implemented a modified approach to the flipped classroom that was more closely aligned with the needs and background of the students in my courses and more likely to be utilized by the faculty that teach them. In this article, I provide an account of how I used the flipped classroom approach based upon a culturally relevant framework to enhance student engagement.

Literature Review

Student Engagement: Intended Benefits and Contextual Challenges. Active student engagement is a cornerstone of a quality learning experience and an indicator of student achievement (Handelsman et al., 2005). Indeed, it is through active engagement with the learning environment that students make links between their experiences and new knowledge or concepts and apply their knowledge to creatively solve problems (Lam et al., 2012; Saeed & Zyngier, 2012). In this study, we adopt Mandernach's (2015) definition of student engagement, which identifies it as the student's active and positive involvement in the learning process (Mandernach, 2015). Student engagement includes behavioral, affective, and cognitive components and is influenced by both cultural and contextual factors (Handelsman et al., 2005; Lam et al., 2012; Mandernach, 2015).

In the UAE, problems related to student engagement often begin with earlier schooling experiences (Crabtree, 2010). The teaching methods may have emphasized the memorization of material instead of developing conceptual understanding or creative problem-solving skills (Chrystall, 2014; Litz & Scott, 2017). As UAE students transition into higher education, the instructors they encounter are often English speaking educators that emphasize Western pedagogical approaches (Chrystall, 2014). English communication issues, the heavy influence of Western scholarship, and lack of cultural awareness on the part of instructors pose significant challenges to the success of Emirati students in the UAE's higher education system (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015; Chrystall, 2014, Crabtree, 2010). Despite the Ministry of Education's emphasis on the use of active learning techniques to support student engagement, the lecture is often the

preferred route of disseminating information due in part to the language barriers that permeate the context (Chrystall, 2014; Vassall-Fall, 2011).

Gender and societal roles create additional challenges to active student engagement, particularly for Emirati women. These roles are structured, often rigid, and women are expected to be the primary family caretaker placing the wellbeing of their families first (Gallant & Pounder, 2008; Marmenout & Lirio, 2014). Women may marry young and have children soon after marriage (Dickson & Tennant, 2018). These cultural considerations require teaching approaches that engage and provide the necessary English language learning support for students in the classroom while providing students with out-of-class support to work at their own pace and review concepts as needed (Keene, 2013).

Culturally Responsive Teaching: Curriculum Meets Context. Patton (2015) defines culture as a "group of people interacting together for a period of time. . . who develop a collection of behavior patterns and beliefs" (p. 100). Building on this view of culture, Culturally Responsive Teaching seeks to include rather than exclude attributes of the learner's culture by teaching through the "cultural and experiential filters" of the students (Gay, 2002, p. 106). In doing so, connections are strengthened between the learning objectives and the students' experiences, thus fostering higher levels of student engagement because the learning becomes personally meaningful and relevant to the students (Gay, 2002; Habli, 2015; Walter, 2018). Culturally responsive teaching calls for learning from the student: who they are, how they operate in the world, their perspectives and identities, and, ultimately, their cultural knowledge (Walter, 2018; Woodley et al., 2017).

Teacher attitudes and expectations are a part of culturally relevant teaching and include caring, beliefs, expectations, and empathy (Gay, 2018). Yet, it is communication that lies at the core of effective teaching and is also "inextricably linked to culture and cognition" (Gay, 2018, p. 139). As such, effective communication during instruction should be multidimensional and accommodate both verbal and non-verbal discourse styles tailoring communication to specific contexts with a goal of building connections (Habli, 2015). But if communication is dependent and even tailored to context, then should the same not be said for the curriculum? Curriculum content should ultimately be delivered "in ways that are meaningful to the students for whom it is intended" (Gay, 2018, p. 142). Goodwin (2013), supported by Habli (2015), points out that critical to second language learners, a student's culture should be used as an instructional resource. Finally, gaining a deeper cultural understanding of how students learn best through cultural congruity, which includes establishing links between the learning of ethnically diverse students and the chosen methods of instruction (Habli, 2015). Examples could include the use of cooperative or collaborative teaching methods to engage students from collective cultures.

Flipped Classroom: Extending the Learning Space. A flipped classroom is an instructional strategy that enables more opportunities for interactive group learning inside the classroom by structuring individual, computer-based instruction outside of the classroom (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Filatova (2015) emphasizes the flexibility of a flipped class approach as one that can be

customized to meet the needs of specific teaching and learning contexts. Class activities, combined with online videos or other out-of-class activities, provide students with multiple ways of learning course material and engaging students (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). If culturally responsive teaching "builds bridges between the cultural experiences of ethnically diverse students and the curriculum content...to facilitate higher levels of learning" (Gay, 2018, p. 52), could a flipped class provide such a bridge that improves engagement through the linking of content to context?

While the benefits of a flipped class include the deep learning gained through opportunities to integrate course concepts with application, a salient benefit to second-language-learners is the ability to self-pace their learning (Danker, 2015; Han, 2015). Certainly, second-language-learners may experience problems keeping up with the pace of a traditional lecture due to language proficiency issues (Gay, 2018). A flipped class optimizes the use of technology to provide learners the time needed to comprehend information at their own pace. In contrast, in-class components provide them with culturally relevant activities and increased opportunities for engagement. These activities help students make links between their experiences and new concepts and knowledge (Gay, 2018; Hung, 2017). Additionally, instructional activities, such as interactive group work, provide for the development of problem-solving and critical thinking activities (Xiao et al., 2018).

Yet there are cultural relevance issues in the use of a flipped class. In Asia and the Middle East, students have traditionally relied on the teacher as the sole source of information, and the lecture continues to be the most common way of transmitting information (Joanne & Lateef, 2014; Vassall-Fall, 2011). As the flipped approach does require student ownership of learning, students unfamiliar with autonomous learning approaches can experience discomfort, a lack of engagement, or a failure to complete tasks (Burt, 2004; Sinouvassane & Nalini, 2016). Other concerns include difficulties students may have in making connections between online lectures and in-class activities (Kim et al., 2014). This can be particularly challenging for students learning in a second language.

To capitalize on the flexibility of a flipped class approach, tailoring it for specific contexts is an important consideration. Lee (2018), for example, used a flipped class approach in South Korea to enhance collaborative learning and shift teacher-centered classrooms to more student-centered democratic classrooms. While Engin and Donanci (2014) described improving their UAE undergraduate English course through the use of a flipped approach to exploit student enthusiasm for mobile technology. This was accomplished through assigning out-of-class writing tutorials, the use of in-class peer teaching, and a question and answer session at the beginning of class.

Methodology

Theoretical Framework and Research Questions. Although research has demonstrated the positive impact the flipped classroom can have on student engagement, the effectiveness of

any pedagogical approach can be limited by not attending to the cultural and contextual factors associated with the learner (Gay, 2018). Therefore, the theoretical framework that guided this study, culturally responsive teaching, emphasizes that student engagement can be adequately supported through technology-enhanced and culturally responsive teaching practices. Within the specific context of a UAE social work undergraduate course, this research considered the following question:

What impact can the use of a culturally responsive, flipped classroom approach by non-Arabic speaking faculty have on engagement in a second language learning environment for Arabic speaking students?

Methodological Framework. Action research was chosen as a framework for this study because of its emphasis on a four-stage, cyclical study of a specific context and the problems encountered within that context (Mertler, 2014). Action research was a logical methodology to study a problem of practice in which understanding context-specific obstacles was essential to the successful adaption of a teaching method (Dana & Hoppey-Yendol 2014). Situated within the four stages of the action research cycle (Observe, Plan, Act, Reflect), the specific methods and design of this study reflected the ethnographic (Murchison, 2010) and qualitative aspects of more traditional research (Yin, 2016). Qualitative research focuses on developing a rich, descriptive account of natural phenomena (Yin, 2016). Ethnographic research strategies attempt to make sense of how people understand events, describe how *culture* influences the thinking and behavior of the participants, how they understand change and the influence of culture when interpreting change (Murchison, 2010). Through the combination of these methods, I intended to gain an in-depth understanding of student perceptions and experiences during the intervention.

Setting and Participants. The fourteen study participants in this study were students enrolled in one section of *Social Work and the Family*, the course selected for this study. The primary aims of the course were to provide students with an understanding of social work family concepts and the application of the related skills and interventions. All participants were Emirati national women who had passed the English qualifying exam and ranged in age from 19–31. Five students who participated in Phase I interviews also participated in a post-intervention interview. These five participants were purposefully selected (Patton, 2015) based on different ages, motherhood status, and ability statuses to gain possible alternative perspectives of obstacles to learning. During these interviews, a translator who was also a social work faculty member was present. My own reflections were documented through the use of a research journal.

Procedures. In Phase II of this study, I engaged in a second round of the four-stage cycle of action research (Mertler, 2014). During the Observation stage, I used the key findings and the observations I made during the first phase of the study to further clarify the problem of practice. During the Planning Stage, I focused on making the appropriate modifications to my original intervention plans developed before the first phase of this study. Phase I was an example of Gay's (2018) first pillar of culturally responsive teaching in an attempt to know and

understand *first*, so teaching strategies can build on student strengths within a culturally appropriate context. During the Act stage, the third stage in the action research cycle, the modifications suggested by the key findings of Phase I were implemented. These modifications (shown in table 1) emphasized the importance of providing culturally relevant instruction and effective integration of classroom technology in ways that support both culture and learning. To this end, I selected a flipped-classroom approach due to its inherent ability to support culturally relevant teaching strategies (Gay, 2018; Hung, 2017). These strategies included: self-pacing opportunities for second language learners, student collaboration, culturally relevant role-play activities, and the examination of brief case-studies that served as examples of concepts from the course curriculum. During the intervention, each of the face-to-face course meetings followed an instructional sequence that began with a question-and-answer or review segment. This was followed by small-group collaborative work, large-group work and/or role-play activities, discussion and summary. The online portion of the course provided opportunities for students to view the online lectures as many times as needed, while low stakes quizzes aligned with the lectures helped to reinforce and apply the knowledge being acquired by the students during the face-to-face course meetings.

To measure the impact of my intervention, I collected and triangulated various forms of data from different stakeholder perspectives to establish a set of data that would be considered trustworthy, an important aspect of quality in qualitative research (Tracy, 2010). The collected data included 15 field note entries that documented observations related to student engagement during small-and-large-group work. Additionally, 13 audio transcriptions of the question and answer segment or the first 20 minutes of the class and 16 weekly researcher journal entries recorded my thoughts, impressions, and feelings (Lamb, 2013) related to the intervention as it progressed. Post-flipped-class interviews were also conducted with five students to better understand their perceptions of their experiences while engaged in the flipped classroom intervention. Table 1 displays the alignment between the 1) student and faculty feedback from Phase I, 2) the modifications I made based upon these findings, 3) the relevant pillars of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018), and the methods of data collection used in Phase II.

Table 1: Feedback, Modification and Data Collection Table

Feedback	Modification	Pillar of Culturally Relevant Teaching	Data Collection Method
Address course expectations and	Introduction Week Orientation	Teacher Attitudes and Expectations	Transcription audio data of the first 20 minutes of class

student responsibilities			Field notes Research journal
Hesitations in asking questions; Addressing questions to the instructor	Open dialogue of differing cultural expectations of teaching and learning	Cultural Communication	Transcription audio data of the first 20 minutes of class Research journal entries
Instructor-student communication	-Online: Personalization of videos to show both the instructor and the media presentation. -In class: Structured review and question and answer segments (Engin & Donanci, 2016)	Cultural Communication	Transcription audio data of the first 20 minutes of class Research journal entries
Long Lectures	-Chunking concepts through the creation of 23 targeted videos -Embedded Arabic words in the online material -Use of culturally relevant examples (Walter, 2018) -Replaced lecture with a question and answer segment along with other online resources.	Cultural Congruity	Field notes Research journal entries Post student interviews
Cultural Relevancy	-Thirty case samples, role plays and collaborative activities based upon UAE community and field experiences	Culturally Diverse Curriculum	Fieldnotes Post student interviews

Discipline-specific vocabulary problems; curriculum only partially covered	-Embedding Arabic keywords in the digital course materials -Online review quizzes -In-class question and answer review segment to strengthen connections between online materials and in-class activities (Engin & Donanci, 2014)	Cultural Congruity	Transcription audio data of the first 20 minutes of class Research journal entries Post student interviews
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Data analysis. As part of my reflection on the intervention, the final stage in the cycle of action research, data was analyzed using a priori codes which were predetermined based on the constructs described in the research question. The a priori codes associated with the engagement of my second-language learners categorized my data points according to behavioral, affective, and cognitive components of engagement (Handelsman et al., 2005; Mandernach, 2015; Saldana, 2016). Nvivo 11.0 software was used during the analysis process beginning with the holistic coding of the data. As explained by Saldana (2016), holistic coding applies a code to a larger unit of data, instead of line by line, to capture the overall point of the text. Descriptive coding was employed for subcategories that emerged during the coding of the data. Descriptive coding is coding that uses a word or phrase to summarize the data (Miles et al., 2014). The second coding cycle used patterned coding to condense codes into categories. Constant comparison, or going back and forth between the data to consider different relationships among the data, was implemented (Saldana, 2016). These methods of data analysis led to the key findings from this study.

Results

A priori *themes* included behavioral engagement, affective engagement, and cognitive engagement (Mandernach, 2015). These themes were defined as follows. Behavioral engagement included observable behaviors in which students were demonstrating or not demonstrating a connection to the material. Cognitive engagement was demonstrations of mental energy to make cognitive connections, while affective engagement was an expression of emotion about learning tasks and/or the learning environment (Mandernach, 2015). A Priori and emergent subthemes are summarized in the tables below. Names were changed to protect participant identity and confidentiality.

Table 2.1: Behavioral Engagement

Behavioral Engagement	Modifications	Behavioral Engagement Demonstrations
Subtheme: Participation	Culturally relevant activities	Student Interview: Fatima- "I like playing the roles. I take all strengths, and I try to write what I have to do next time. I use the strengths and avoid weaknesses. I see myself more like a social worker when I do this."
	-Orientation	Field Note Entry Week 2: "The videos, group work, discussions, and overall understanding of a flipped classroom seem to be working."
Subtheme: Interaction and Questioning	-Chunked online videos	Question and Answer Audio Transcription: Amna: "In the video, you say extra push. What you mean?" (the question and answer concept review reminds her of what she needed to ask).
	-Question and Answer Segment	Student Interview Cala: "So I liked it when you said each person to ask a question. I asked about how to apply the theories. I want to use the theory; I want to know how this information we take is applied in real life. It helps when we ask."

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Orientation -Open discussion of cultural differences 	<p>Research Journal Orientation Week 1: I talked about the issue of addressing problems or clarity issues with the instructor, but several in the class continued to say they would ask their friends if they did not understand and not the instructor. We were able to agree that during group work, I would give as much feedback to groups and meet with each group to see if there were problems or concerns.</p>
Preparation and Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Chunked online video viewing -Online weekly quizzes 	<p>Student Interview: Bakhita: "The problem is she cannot cope with all of the videos because of the demands of other courses." [Translator]</p> <p>Student Interview: Cala: The other difficulty, in her mind she knows the lesson is in the video, so she would say "I will see it today, I will see it tomorrow" when you know you can see it at your own pace." [Translator]</p>

Table 2.2: Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive Engagement	Culturally Responsive Modifications	Demonstrations of Cognitive Engagement
	Chunked video lectures	Audio Transcription Ghalia: “The videos, it is like preparing us for the next session. It makes us search and understand more the words . . . I notice that when I listen to the video, do the exam, listen in class, I feel more power and more knowledge, I think about something, I connect things.”
	Embedded Arabic Words	Student Interview Eiman: “The terminologies. There were a lot of benefits for her to have the definitions and the equivalent term in Arabic in the course material-she understands better” [Translator].

Table 3: Affective Engagement

Affective Engagement	Culturally Responsive Modifications	Demonstration of Affective Engagement
Subtheme: Positive Emotional responses	-Chunked videos -Culturally relevant activities	Student Interview: Amna: "She said she has a positive idea of the class activities, but it takes a long time to do the role plays. She likes the feedback she gets from the teacher and the classmates [Translator]." Student Interview: Fatima: "When I hear it from the first time-I understand, but when I hear the second and third time-it is so good. I think it will help too much if all classes did it."
Subtheme: Negative Emotional Responses	-Culturally relevant activities	Research Journal Week 5: "Problems thinking about how they might stereotype other families because of the pain they have experienced being stereotyped themselves."

Discussion

The use of culturally responsive modifications to a flipped class approach appeared to benefit some components of engagement more than others. In the area of behavioral engagement, 1) participation, 2) questioning, and 3) interactions were all positively influenced by modifications of an extended orientation week. It was during this week that expectations, cultural differences in teaching, and learning were openly addressed. Gay's (2018) first pillar of culturally responsive teaching emphasizes the importance of making expectations clear. Attempting to *understand* the cultural differences in expectations of teaching and learning (relationships and responsibility for learning) as well as the context-specific obstacles identified during the first phase of this study provided a springboard for addressing potential problems and expectations during the orientation. Addressing cultural differences continued throughout the semester in the question and answer segment of the classes.

Modifications of replacing the lecture with a question and answer period and the use of culturally relevant case studies and activities appeared to positively influence both class

discussions and questioning. Student use of questions increased during the semester, a finding supported by Findlay-Thompson and Mombourquette (2014), who noted positive student feedback about opportunities to ask more questions in their flipped class. The flipped classroom approach used in this study appeared to encourage more questions from students. This was possibly due to the informal atmosphere of the course as opposed to the more formal teacher-centered class environment, or as Hung (2017) suggests, the opportunities to provide more responsive feedback become available in a flipped class. Yet students struggled in the areas of preparation and organization. These problems with time management, organization, and managing the online activities are consistent with Sinouvassane and Nalini (2016), and Strayer (2012).

It was in the area of cognitive engagement and connections that students appeared to gain the most benefits. Culturally congruent technological enhancements such as chunking videos into shorter, more manageable components, embedding key Arabic words in the materials, and the use of culturally relevant examples had a positive impact on student learning. In fact, these strategies, together with the use of low-risk quizzes, received the most positive feedback from post student interviews and transcribed audio portions of the class. Consistent with the literature, students talked about the ability to replay the videos and a reduced translation burden due to embedded Arabic keywords in the course materials (Feledichuck & Wong, 2014; Han, 2015).

The affective engagement was mixed, particularly in the area of out of class requirements. Students positively spoke about the online materials, contextualization of case samples, role plays, and collaborative activities based upon field and faculty experiences within the UAE community. They expressed negative emotions towards the amount of out of class requirements.

It did not surprise me that negative emotions were expressed mostly towards the amount of work required outside of class. Indeed, unique to this study's context, female gender role responsibilities were an impediment to increased out of class responsibilities (Marmenout & Lirio, 2014). Suggested modifications will be addressed in implications and conclusions.

Implications

This ethnographic, qualitative, action research study is an example of how action research can improve practice within a specific cultural context, through the adaptation of an innovative yet culturally different pedagogical approach. While Gay (2018) notes ambiguities surrounding how to implement culturally responsive education, this study provides potential strategies of how to use the method. And while the adaptations used in this study were meant to fit a UAE undergraduate setting, situating teaching modifications within the framework of Gay's (2018) culturally responsive pedagogy, could potentially be transferable to other contexts. Examples include the following: inquiry of obstacles to teaching and learning before the implementation of a culturally different teaching approach, followed by an orientation that consists of a component to address these differences. Findings from this study indicated that the extended

first-week orientation, followed by weekly question and answer sessions, helped students to understand the learning expectations and what they needed to do in the flipped class. It was also an opportunity to address concerns related specifically to the cultural context, such as hesitations in asking questions. This appeared to encourage student engagement, such as students both asking for individual feedback and actively participating in the role plays and discussions throughout the semester.

Other examples included modifying the online portion of the course for second language learning. The use of technology through a flipped class approach provided individualized learning experiences for students with varying levels of English proficiency (Han, 2015). Specific modifications that benefited students included chunked video lectures, embedding Arabic vocabulary in the online materials, and providing low-risk quizzes in each learning module. These strategies helped to ease the comprehension challenges of English-based materials (Proctor et al., 2007; Wagner, 2018).

This study also adds to flipped class research within an international setting. Similar to other flipped class studies, students in this study experienced problems with self-pacing, and a perceived increased workload when learning in a flipped class (Findlay-Thompson & Mombourquette, 2015; Sinouvassane & Nalini, 2016). This issue is particularly challenging for students who may have responsibilities that limit time outside of designated face-to-face class meetings. Some possible recommendations include building in time during class for students to catch up on their online coursework or to incorporate a review segment at the beginning of class to assist learners in making connections and reviewing key concepts (Engin & Donanci, 2014). Additional scaffolding, such as highlighting key concepts to stimulate questions or discussion, may also be needed.

Finally, this study is an example of building on cultural strengths and using these strengths in the modification of a flipped class. Examples include the use of various group work formats, such as problem-based and collaborative learning. Group work provided students with a connection to their collective cultural context (Filatova, 2015). Feedback from pre-class interviews included the importance of contextualizing activities to ensure cultural relevance and meaningful connections.

Conclusion

This paper described the design and implementation of a modified, culturally responsive flipped class approach to increase course engagement within a UAE undergraduate class and second language learning environment. Lack of engagement can negatively influence student attainment of knowledge and competencies, yet how students engage and the tools instructors use to engage students, are influenced by culture (Gay, 2018; Lam et al., 2012).

This study used the four-stage cyclical process of action research to identify obstacles to learning and teaching within a specific cultural context, modified a teaching approach based on this inquiry, and provided a culturally responsive alternative. My reflection suggests additional revisions to continue a culturally responsive approach in future iterations. First, I need to

continue my inquiry into cultural understanding through intentional incorporation at various times throughout the semester, where students are asked about their expectations of teaching and learning. Instructors answer the same questions and responses are shared to increase cultural understanding, and teacher attitudes of caring (Al Issa, 2005; Gay, 2018).

Second, I need to modify the review segment at the beginning of each class by adding structure such as highlighting specific concepts that could be covered, and nominating three to five students each class session to ask questions based on these concepts. Nomination as a culturally congruent teaching strategy builds on Choudhury's (2005) argument that second-language learners need teacher questions to initiate communication, as the learners may hesitate due to perceived language deficits.

I also need to continue to revise materials that link the classroom with the community. This can be accomplished through consistent community engagement in which community knowledge is acquired and brought to the classroom through relevant activities and case samples (Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009).

A flipped class approach did provide an innovative and flexible method to deliver an undergraduate course. Yet, the key to the success of this flipped class implementation was the use of culturally responsive pedagogy and action research framework to observe, plan, act, and reflect.

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