

Abstract. *This article deals with specific features of the English language teacher professional image which enable to solve problems of cross-cultural upbringing while teaching a foreign language. In the process of studying students develop better perception of such notions as cooperation, mutual understanding, tolerance and being “people of the world”.*

Key Words: *image, foreign language, teacher, professional image, image of a teacher, educational online resources, communicative aims, cross-cultural upbringing.*

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BABY STEPS TO LEARNER AUTONOMY: AN EXPERIENCE OF FLIPPING THE CLASSROOM

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Abstract. *The article focuses on developing learner autonomy in lower level students lacking motivation. It offers using the flipped classroom strategy as a viable solution to the problem. The process of flipping the classroom is described step by step, and the advantages*

and disadvantages of the strategy are analyzed. In the end, the author presents some conclusions and applications of the method.

Keywords: *learner autonomy, flipped classroom, EFL, lack of motivation, lower level students.*

Today learner autonomy is a buzzword in the world of ELT; that is why the flipped classroom strategy is becoming increasingly popular. It definitely has many advantages. First, it gives students an opportunity to work at their own pace. This is usually achieved by implementing digital technologies into the curriculum: self-study recorded materials (often uploaded online), e-presentations, online exercises and concept checking questions (often using gamification technologies) etc. Secondly, using digital technologies, which are an integral part of the flipped classroom strategy, tends to have a positive influence on students' motivation because they are so-called "digital natives" and welcome the information delivered to them via digital means. Last but not least, the strategy can be easily combined with gamification techniques, which in its turn enhances learning outcomes [1, p. 1-14].

The flipped classroom strategy is obviously suitable for the classes of the lecture type as it allows the teacher to move most of the material presentation outside the classroom and devote more precious class time to practicing what has been presented and dealing with difficult parts of the course. Nevertheless, the flipped classroom strategy can be used no less efficiently within the framework of the practice-oriented class, including English classes [5, p. 267-273]. However, every method has its drawbacks, and this one is not an exception [2, p. 1-22]. In fact, students may lack motivation so drastically that they will be unable to effortlessly transition into the flipped classroom model of studying. Yet, the problem has a solution: we can start implementing the strategy into our classroom, gradually making our students accustomed to this mode of learning and positively influencing their motivation. Eventually, this strategy has to be extended outside the classroom.

Having studied the advantages and disadvantages of the strategy, its problems and ways to overcome them, we had decided to test-run the flipped classroom model in our English classes to find out if its effective use was possible at the university level.

We (my colleague and I) chose a group of students at Togliatti State University who had been taking the course “Foreign Language-4” at that time. There were about ten students in the group who were in the middle of Level 1, which corresponds with A2 level according to the CEFR [4]. As the course in question uses *Face2Face Elementary* coursebook, we tried adapting it to the flipped classroom principles instead of creating some specific materials in order not to increase a teacher’s workload. We adapted one module of the coursebook (*6C Four weekends*) [3, p. 50-51] as it had to be covered at the time of the experiment and fit into the time frame of one academic class (90 minutes).

We had to create separate worksheets for each pair of students. We decided to use pairwork because it stimulates mutual support and peer teaching. Moreover, as the class is practice-oriented and relies heavily on communicative teaching methods, many tasks could be completed only in pairs.

The textual part of the tasks was easy to adapt, but we soon realised that some of the lexis would be new to our students due to their lower level. The flipped classroom strategy is to be implemented with maximum learner autonomy in mind, but the lack of motivation and the lower level of the students would have made the attempt at making them use dictionaries fail. As a result, we found a way out: we created small wordlists to go with certain exercises (see pic. 1).

Clues!

Exercise 1 - a

- where - где
- a weekend - выходные (сб. + вс.)
- great - великолепный
- quiet - тихий
- busy - занятой
- terrible - ужасный

Fig. 1. Exercise wordlist sample

The wordlists themselves were uploaded to *Google Docs*. To access the wordlist, we integrated a link into the exercise text and added

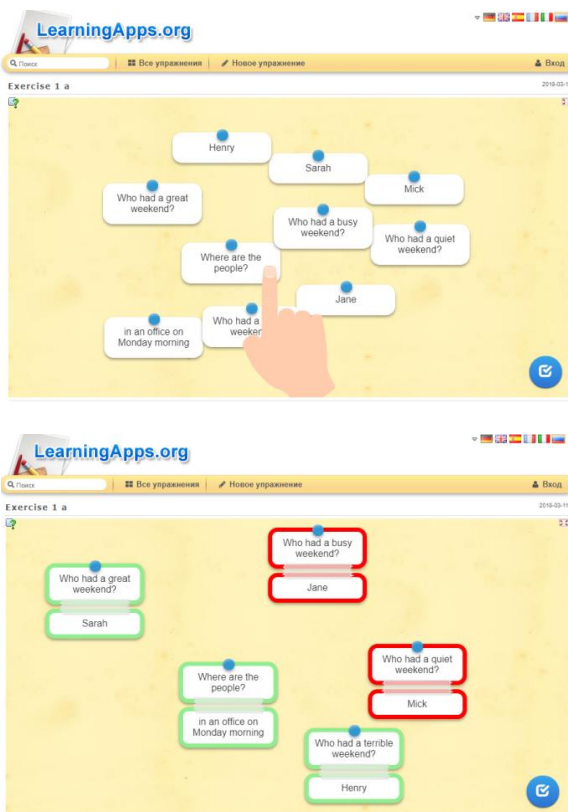
a QR-code to introduce some gamification principles into our class. Students could direct their mobile phones with an installed QR-code scanner at the exercise and immediately reach the wordlist if necessary. In their feedback, our students called such a way of presenting unknown words useful and personalized: only those who needed it followed the link or the QR-code while the others kept on working. The group did not have to stop and wait while one student who did not know a certain word would receive an answer about its meaning, especially considering the fact that rarely one question was enough.

The second stage of exercise adaptation was checking the answers. As a rule, the exercises are either completed in real time and immediately commented on by a teacher or students have some time to complete the tasks (in pairs or individually), and then the whole group checks the answers together. In this case, students had to check their answers themselves. The first option was to use the method similar to the wordlist presentation that is to create an answer sheet and upload it online. However, we would immediately have faced a problem: due to their lack of motivation, the students were likely to follow the link and just copy the answers into their worksheets without completing the exercises themselves. That would have minimized the learning outcomes of the exercises. The solution was to create online exercises on LearningApps (see pic. 2).

On following the link, the students had to complete the exercise again to check their answers, receive feedback and do error correction (see pic. 2). Such an approach not only prevented them from mindlessly copying the answers but also encouraged material recirculation in a discreet and engaging manner similar to online games.




The students' feedback was extremely positive although at first some struggled to understand what they had been required to do. In addition, some unmotivated students immediately followed the link, did the exercise online and copied the answers into their worksheets. There was apparently less recirculation; however, even they had to complete all the tasks on their own and to copy them into the paper worksheets, which activated various types of memory (motor, visual, kinaesthetic). The final version of the worksheet looked as follows (see pic. 3). As you can see, we managed to completely adapt the coursebook module, the exercises look quite attractive to students and are not visually

overloaded; they also contain all the elements essential for autonomous learning.



Pic. 2. Exercise with instant feedback on LearningApps

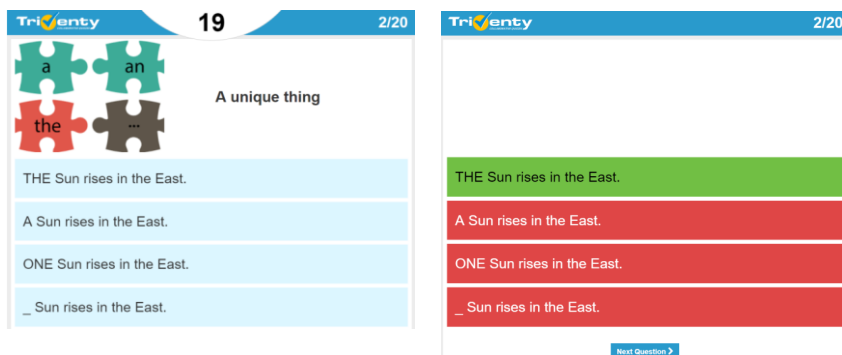
Thus, the whole module 6C was transformed into a worksheet. Using cloud data storage, hyperlinks and QR-codes enabled us to upload audio tracks, and each pair of students could listen to them at exactly that moment when they reached a particular exercise. Furthermore, the number of times different pairs listened to tracks varied depending on their level, which allowed each pair to work at a comfortable yet efficient pace.

<p>Exercise 1</p> <p>a. Look at the picture. Answer the questions (Ответь на вопросы)</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are the people? _____ • Who had a <u>great</u> weekend? _____ • Who had a <u>quiet</u> weekend? _____ • Who had a <u>busy</u> weekend? _____ • Who had a <u>terrible</u> weekend? _____ 	<p>Don't know the words? Look here: (Не знаешь слова? Подказка здесь.)</p>  <p>http://bit.ly/2FsS9su</p> <p>Check yourself (Проверь себя)</p>  <p>http://bit.ly/2tACH7R</p>
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Pic. 3. Worksheetsample

The module also included communicative tasks of the so-called “information gap” type. These are the exercises where each participant in a pair or group has his or her own unique set of instructions and tasks, and they have to complete them exchanging information and simultaneously practising a certain language skill, e.g. reacting to news in a proper way. Such exercises were carried out by means of building in two QR-codes into an exercise. Each QR-code directed a student to his or her own part of the exercise which could not be seen by a partner, and that excluded cheating and made such tasks rather authentic. The only minus of the oral pairwork exercises was that some students lacking motivation tried to avoid their completion altogether. They attempted to convince the teacher that they had already done the exercise, and s/he had just missed it because at that moment the teacher had been monitoring another pair. To solve this problem in the next iterations of the experiment, such tasks may be moved to the end of the class so that the teacher could monitor the work of all pairs simultaneously. Yet, this is the last resort, and it is unnecessary if students are motivated enough. In any case, we need to gradually develop the active consciousness of our students: a step-by-step transition from a simultaneous task completion at the end of the class to completing them at each pair’s own pace without trying to avoid the task altogether.

At the end of the class, the students could revise and recirculate the material they had covered in an engaging way of an interactive online quiz. To do this, we used the *Triventy* platform (see pic. 4).



Pic. 4. Question with feedback quiz sample (student's device view)

Following the link or the QR-code on their mobile phones, each pair could join the game session. When everyone was ready, the teacher started the first question from the admin mobile device. The students had a certain amount of time to choose one correct answer out of four options. The students received a specific number of points for the accuracy and the speed of their answers, and the leaderboard refreshed after each question. A major teaching benefit of this platform is that after each question the teacher can see the percentage of those who have chosen this or that answer. If the teacher sees that all or nearly all the students have answered the question correctly, he or she can start the next one without further delay. However, if there many wrong answers, there is a chance to instantly provide feedback, by putting the quiz on hold and discussing which answer was correct and why. Consequently, the quiz was of great use teacher-wise and at the same time, was welcomed by the students with enthusiasm. They strove to answer the questions as quickly and accurately as they could; they searched their reference materials and worksheets for clues and tried to understand why their answer had been incorrect if that was the case. We recommend you not to do such a quiz every single class because its novelty will soon wear off, and the motivation of students will not be as high. Nevertheless, if used sparingly, this task type may be extremely

effective, especially to revise the material which has been studied earlier. Perhaps it should be used at the end of a series of modules, for instance, as a revision activity before a progress test.

At the end of the class, we collected feedback by means of an online voting tool *Tricider* where the students could rate the class with five to zero stars and leave a comment. Frankly, the students were wary of such an offer, but the ratings and the comments that some of them dared to leave were most positive. Such a reluctance to provide any feedback might be connected with the fact that the students were not quite used to the situation when they had to self-reflect and assess the quality of the class and the materials provided. The oral feedback was highly favourable, but the students emphasised that they did not want all their classes to be “flipped”.

In conclusion, we should note that the flipped classroom strategy may be successfully implemented in practice-oriented classes with unmotivated students whose level of English is low. This strategy proves rather efficient in increasing students’ motivation, developing learner autonomy and applying a personalised approach. However, we recommend you to use not only this strategy during the classes but apply an eclectic approach where the flipped classroom will be only one item in the kaleidoscope of various methods and strategies. In our opinion, this strategy will be most of use during the revision classes.

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GENERAL ENGLISH COURSE FOR MASTERS STUDENTS OF “PEDAGOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES” PROGRAMME

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Abstract. *When preparing to plan a General English course for students doing a masters degree in Pedagogy and psychology of teaching foreign languages, we consider a number of topics, such as the language level, purpose of the course and many others. Having done an entry test and needs analysis we have chosen a communication skills course for tutors, lecturers and PhD students “English for Academics”. It helps to develop clear, persuasive English for a range*