

CREATING A FLIPPED CLASSROOM WITH TED-ED

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The number of educators reversing the traditional teaching mode is constantly increasing. Those who have flipped their classrooms report numerous benefits, which are described in the paper. The analysis of data brings us to the conclusion that the flipped classroom model contributes to the personalization of instruction by taking into account the individual abilities of students as well as their motivational, collaborative and educational needs. According to the speakers' experience, one of the most effective platforms to be used in EFL flipped classroom is Ted-ED. The paper focuses on the positive outcome of its usage.

Key words: flipped classroom, blended learning, interactive collaboration, Ted-Ed, online resources, student-centered learning

In recent years teaching methods aiming at creating a more personalized learning environment by means of combining online and class instruction have gained international recognition. Taking the ideas of blended learning mentioned above to the extreme, 'the flipped classroom' became another buzz expression in the field of innovative and interactive instruction. Less popular, but equally important are the terms 'inverted classroom', 'backwards classroom' and 'reverse teaching', all referring to a new teaching method that inverts traditional teaching methods shifting a traditional classroom by 180 degrees. Traditionally students listen to lectures and take tests in class and read textbooks and work on problem sets at home. In flipped teaching students first study the topic by themselves, especially online, using video lessons, and then have discussions and complete assignments on it in class, with team-based or project-based learning often involved.

Though traditionally the technique in question is ascribed to its two 'founding fathers' Jonathan Bergman and Aaron Sams, chemistry teachers from the US, it should be admitted that historically and methodologically, the ideas of a flipped classroom are based on the concept of peer instruction developed by Eric Mazur back in the 1990s. As early back as in 1993 King published his famous article 'From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side' [3], the title of which later became a catch-phrase used to describe the principal benefit of the flipped classroom

technique in terms of changing the teacher's role. It was only in 2007 that A. Sams and J. Bergman are alleged to have applied the method while teaching the Science at a high school in Colorado, followed by "Flip Your Classroom" book in 2012 [1], which, undoubtedly, gave rise to the popularity of the method.

As a result, the number of educators trying their hand at reversing the traditional teaching mode is constantly increasing. Modern schools who have flipped their classrooms report many benefits.

1. Placing didactic content online allows students to learn at their own pace. An additional benefit for all students is that they can choose to be engaged with the material at the most productive time of the day, which satisfies both the early risers and their antipodes.
2. It is more efficient as students enter the classroom prepared to contribute.
3. It enriches the classroom as more time can be spent on group work and projects.
4. Doing homework in class allows students to assist each other, which benefits both the advanced and cognitively challenged learners.

Putting work assignments back in the classroom also has a number of benefits from the learning science perspective. According to statistics, a lot of students describe the frustration of feeling they understand the concept in class, but then being confused when they try to apply it doing an assignment at home. This is also supported by research – we learn best through active work rather than passive listening. Another place where students struggle traditionally is with out-of-class group-work. Moving group-work into the classroom settings makes the logistics easier for the learners, and it also allows an instructor to keep an eye on group-meetings and help to facilitate them if needed.

Flipping also brings changes for teachers. Traditionally, teachers engage most with confident students who ask questions. Flipping allows teachers to target the students who need help. Also, instead of instructing from the front, teachers "guide on the side". This allows them to work more closely with individuals or small groups. Teachers that are not too good at presenting in class, can use videos to explain the concept and focus on methods of teaching that suit their style, such as project work or experiments. Once video lectures are made available online, teachers do not need to deliver the same lecture over and over again. They gain more time to focus on the topical needs of their class.

Many scholars also argue that the flipped classroom model promotes equal learning opportunities as all students get the same attention when doing their homework.

An important aspect about all blended learning environments is that they are not intended to do away with "face time" in the classroom. Unlike online classes where all interaction is online, blended classroom involve a lot of face-to face interaction between students and teachers. Blended learning structures are intended to optimize student-teacher interaction moving the teacher from the passive 'sage-on-the-stage', who delivers lectures to an audience, to a more active role as a 'guide-on-the-side', who interacts one-to-one with students to help guide them. Various techniques are used by instructors in class to engage students in participatory learning via flipped classroom, such as: active learning techniques, collaborative and problem-based learning, group work, discussions or debates (namely, group quizzes, Oxford-style debate, human bingo, inside/outside circle and other interactive discussion exercises) [2]. All of them can help foster an interactive learning environment that will reinforce the topic previously viewed in the online lectures.

According to Javier Horta, a professor at the University of Massachusetts, who uses the flipped classroom technique in his classes, “Students come into the classroom to have an experience, rather than just absorb data” [7].

By doing this, blended learning classes move from a teacher-focused learning model to a student-focused learning model. Blended classrooms are flexible enough to allow the use of a mastery-based model, which acknowledges that all the students can get the material at the same time. By giving students as much time as they need on the topic and letting them decide when they are ready to be tested, flipped classes can help to ensure that students move forward only when they have demonstrated they can apply what they have learned with confidence.

According to statistics presented at Knewton Infographics, one of the positive outcomes of the flipped teaching adoption is that the number of discipline cases at Clintondale High School, Detroit, dropped by 66% in one semester after the flip [4]. The involvement of the students in the interactive collaboration in class combined with the increasing amount of freedom to build your own educational strategy develops students’ responsibility, self-reliance, self-control, initiative and communicative skills.

Taking into consideration all the facts mentioned above and judging by our personal professional experience, we consider the flipped classroom model to be essentially important in EFL teaching at university.

Teaching foreign languages at University in the mode of a flipped classroom is extremely efficient with the TED-Ed platform. This technology is becoming increasingly popular nowadays. What is TED-Ed? The extension of TED is technology, entertainment and design. TED is a series of informative, inspiring, educational, and sometimes jaw-dropping talks that present ‘Ideas Worth Spreading’. Once a year Anderson’s nonprofit foundation organizes a conference inviting the most creative and open-minded scientists, musicians, businessmen, philosophers, religious leaders, travelers and adventurers, and the world’s most important thinkers who are the pithiest speakers and long to share their experience and world outlook. This annual venue is one of the most emotional and intellectual highlights of the year for many of the attendees. It is a valuable source of cutting-edge information for many teachers and students who want to be up-to-date in many fields. At present the TED family consists of TED Talks, TEDx, TED Fellow program, TED translator, TED Radio Hour, TED-Ed.

TED-Ed is a free educational website for teachers. It was launched in 2012 and aimed at creating video lessons for various subjects. Content experts and professional animators make videos (5-18 min), which are free and available online, with the ideas, thoughts and talks of both notable and not famous people. Each TED-Ed video comes with supplementary quizzes, questions, activities, discussion points, additional resources for home instructions (“Quick Quiz”, “Think”, “Dig Deeper”, “Discuss”, “...And Finally”). One can use TED-Ed to create a flipped-classroom, to free up classroom time for discussions, to set home review, to launch and carry out different projects. All the tasks can be edited by the teacher, and any educator can customize the activities according to the class objectives. Moreover, any teacher can create their own archives using TED-Ed videos or any other YouTube video.

In the spirits of “flip” teaching, a student may view the video at home (at any time he wants, and as many times as he wants), do all the activities, get involved in the topic under the study and be ready to carry on the discussion in class next day. TED-Ed helps students to learn at individual

pace, to acquire listening skills, to develop linguistic, communicative and cross-cultural competence. TED-Ed provides students with an engaging context from which they can easily practice listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and writing at home.

It is obvious that TED-Ed encourages students to listen actively and autonomously. Watching at home, students feel free to listen whenever and wherever they want, and as often as they find it necessary for better understanding of the information. They can make pauses, rewind and listen again and again to any sentences until they get fully understood. Thereby they can overcome and get used to the barriers which might prevent them from comprehension. In fact, such repetitive work makes a student get accustomed to connected speech in a foreign language. Such a useful exercise is called ‘micro-listening’.

‘Micro-listening’ can also help students to improve pronunciation. Listening to a few sentences which cause troubles a student identifies various speech elements, intonation patterns, weak sounds, and difficult phonemes. A comparison with transcripts gives a clue to a student that there is a crucial difference between spoken and written English. Students can reproduce the sentences imitating the features of connected speech at home.

On reproducing the sentences, one cannot but think about their meanings. Very often students come across unfamiliar words. They may also look at the transcript for extra help, note down the new words, and find definitions, synonyms, antonyms, collocations and example sentences. All these moves are ways of building up one’s vocabulary.

Undoubtedly, students may be encouraged to think about the grammar used in the target video. A teacher may ask to analyze verb tenses or functional language. For example, how the speaker uses sequencing language, how many times the present perfect is used and why, or what modal verbs he or she uses and why. A student can answer all these questions in multiple choice and open-ended questions provided after the video. The use of an open question assumes that a student answers questions which require a written response.

Students can also practise their writing. Below every TED video there is a comments section. A student can discuss the video and the issues that came up in the video in written form, debating, expressing their viewpoint and drawing conclusions.

Finally, if students have their own TED account, they can dialogue their thoughts about the video using the section “... And Finally” where the teacher puts closing thoughts for them to ponder. On doing these activity, students develop communicative competence that is involved further in class.

In-class communicative activities based on what students watched and heard at home may be different. For example, role play as a journalist and a speaker, debate, presentation, writing a review and others.

To sum it up, the flipped classroom model with TED-Ed contributes to the personalization of instruction by taking into account the individual psychological, physical, cognitive and intellectual abilities of students as well as their motivational, collaborative and educational needs and requirements. The well developed skills of critical thinking and self-guided learning make university students a perfect target group for the application of this method.

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