

# Basics and Key Principles of Flipped Learning: Classes Upside Down

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**Abstract**—For many years up till now, language experts have been seeking better ways to teach and learn. All through the history of teaching and learning, traditional methods have come and gone. Despite traditional methods, modern methods tend to be more of a student-centred, constructivist, inquiry based one. An eye-catching model gaining popularity recently is “Flipped Learning”. In pursuit of autonomous and active students, flipped learning gets the traditional classes all upside down! The teacher and the students just swap roles inside and outside the class. Students take the real control of their own learning and have a say in the process.

This paper aims to give insights into flipped classes: the roles, process, and step by step what is really happening inside and outside!

**Index Terms**—Flipped classes, flipped learning, language learning and teaching, learning and teaching.

## I. INTRODUCTION

All through the history of teaching and learning, traditional methods have come and gone in search for better ways to teach and learn. The methods can be basically divided into two as traditional and the modern ones. Despite traditional methods, modern methods tend to be more of a student-centred, constructivist, inquiry based one.

The main difference between traditional methods and the modern methods is their reliance on the learner/student or the teacher. The case for the former is that it takes the teacher as “everything” in the learning process. Traditional teacher-centred method takes the teacher as the “sage on the stage” [1]. The teacher teaches, gives instructions, explains the items whereas the students just stand still and they’re just expected to learn. The teacher is the core, is the controller, is the centre, is totally everything; whereas students are only passive puppets who are expected to ‘learn’ what is ‘taught’. The case is just the opposite in modern methods/models. They rely on the student, take the learner as the core, and expect the teacher to lead the way. The students are the real actors in their learning process. As in the famous saying of Confucius “I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.” the real learning only takes place when the learner is actively involved in the learning process. When the students are actively involved in the learning process, they become more aware of and responsible for their own learning, which provides self-confidence, self-awareness, responsibility and autonomy.

One other thing which has so much importance for modern

learning methods is that they’re mostly in full touch with the miraculous technology. Technology has invaded our lives so much that we cannot even move without it. We’re all surrounded with it and almost all work around us is done with the help of technology. Rather than being a slave, it’s clever to use it in teaching. “Although traces of the principal ingredients of the old methods still effectively find their way into our array of pedagogical options for treatment, our profession has emerged into an era of understanding a vast number of language teaching contexts and purposes, and an even larger number of student needs, learning styles, and affective traits” [2]. It can also be accepted as one of the most important roles of the educators. Therefore, to meet the needs of the students the experts are in search for better models of teaching.

An eye-catching model for teaching, gaining popularity recently is “Flipped Learning”. In pursuit of autonomous and active students, flipped learning gets the traditional classes all upside down with the help of technology. The teacher and the students just swap roles inside and outside the class. The students get the real responsibility for learning rather than the teachers who should be the guide in the process. Students take the real control of their own learning and have a say in the process so that they finally become more autonomous learners.

## II. KEY POINTS

Flipped learning is rather a new concept and model for teaching. Flipped learning is a form of learning that makes use of technology to make learning in the classroom easier and more comfortable and in that way gives the teacher the opportunity to save all class-time into teacher-student interaction instead of lecturing. Flipped learning provides the teacher extra time to get in touch with the students in class, transferring the lecture time to homes through pre-recorded videos.

Using videos has long been in use both in language teaching and micro-teaching sessions of teacher training. However, flipped learning is somewhat one step ahead of using videos in classes. [3] emphasises the difference between previously used methods via computers or educational TVs and inverted classes. It’s clearly stated that inverted classroom concept is novel with its regular and systematic use of interactive technologies in the learning process.

The new generation being so interrelated with technology, it becomes nearly a must to use technology in classes. [4] refers to today’s kids as *digital natives* who grow up using technology and the parents as *digital immigrants* who have come late to the world of technology. The parents and the kids

are very much different, so why should the teaching model be the same? To keep up with *digital natives* and to meet their needs for learning, inverting the classes is a clever idea.

### III. FOUR PILLARS OF FLIPPED LEARNING

Flipped Learning flourishes on four main pillars: Flexible Environment, Learning Culture, Intentional Content, and Professional Educator.

**Flexible Environment** is the first key to Flipped Learning. “Flipped classrooms allow a variety of learning modes; educators often physically rearrange their learning space to accommodate the lesson or unit, which might involve group work, independent study, research, performance, and evaluation” [1]. Having a flexible environment, the students don’t feel tense and nervous, don’t need to rush to get every detail in a compact lecture, rather based on the flexibility, the students feel free to get help from the peers or consult the teacher whenever they want. In the same way, getting rid of the heavy burden to ‘teach’ through a compact lecture got pushed for time, the teachers also feel free to have extra time for other activities, and for real practice. Having a positive, stress-free environment fosters learning in a better way.

**Learning Culture:** Shifting from a teacher-based model to a student-based one, the learning culture is rocked to its foundations. Rather than being a passive object of teaching, the students are actively involved in their learning process and have the chance to participate in each step. Being the core to learning, the students have their own way in the process and in this way, they learn and understand deeply.

**Intentional Content:** The teachers decide on what needs to be taught directly and what to be explored by the students. “Educators use intentional content to maximize classroom time in order to adopt various methods of instruction such as active learning strategies, peer instruction, problem-based learning, or mastery, or Socratic methods, depending on grade level and subject matter” [1]. Deciding on the content and planning the learning process, the classroom time is maximized and much time is left for other strategies, and interaction. This provides more of a better and effectively-used classroom-time.

**Professional Educators:** It is commonly criticised that the model might take over the role of teachers and finally dismiss teachers at all. It’s mistaken that the model is a student-based one and so there is no need for the teacher. It must be taken into account that teacher is still one of the key factors in flipped learning. Deciding on the content, adapting the materials, choosing the strategies, maximizing classroom interaction time, and in short-flipping the classroom are still the roles of the teachers.

“By flipping the class the lecturer’s role changes to that of a facilitator of learning through observing and monitoring areas in which students need help with; providing students with different ways to learn content and demonstrate mastery; giving students opportunities to actively participate in meaningful learning activities; scaffolding these activities and making them accessible to all students through differentiation and feedback; and conducting ongoing formative assessments during class time” [5].

### IV. FLIPPED CLASSES

Flipped classes are places designed for maximized classroom interaction time rather than lecture time. This enables both the teachers and the students interact more, have more time for extra strategies to use, learn and teach deeply.

In a flipped classroom, the typical burden of lecture and homework is just reversed. The lectures are given through short videos prepared by the teacher himself/herself or another professional. The students watch these video lectures at home before they come to the class. The students come to the class ready to do exercises, peer-work, project and have interaction with the peers. This way, the classroom time is totally allocated to interaction, collaboration, active-involvement, and deeper learning. “The philosophy behind the flip is that teachers can spend time working with students who need their help in the classroom and students can work together to solve problems rather than sitting home alone with work they might not understand with nobody to ask for help” [6]. As seen in below:

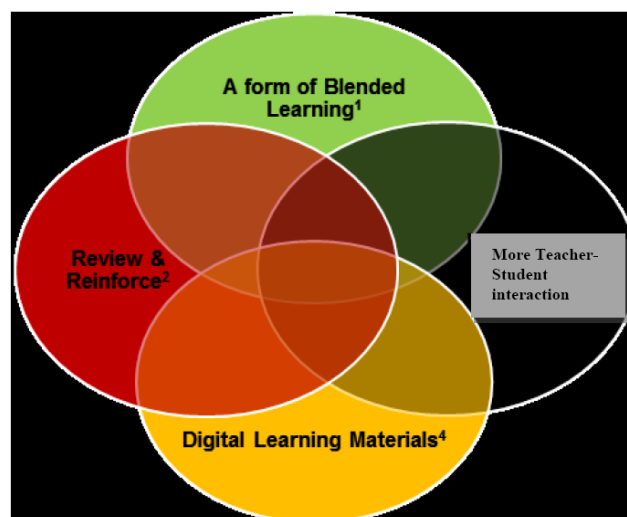


Fig. 1. Flipped instruction [6].

Shown in Fig. 1 above, flipped classes simply incorporate the basics of blended learning, digital learning materials, review and reinforce, and more teacher-student interaction. Flipped classes are basically in search of getting rid of the disadvantages of traditional classes. Maybe the biggest problem of traditional classes is that they allocate most of the classroom time to lecture, leading the students to be passive listeners, and letting them all alone with the burden of homework at home without anyone to ask or to get help. Flipped classes just do the exact opposite. The students get the videos beforehand and have the chance to interact, get help, ask for, and practice more in class. (See Fig. 2).

Traditional classes lack many features flipped classes can offer. According to [7], flipped classroom method offers an opportunity to avoid partially some of the common problems of traditional classes such as teachers’ overusing instructional time, talking too fast, and handwriting being misread. Mainly the most important lack of traditional classes is that they rely so much on teacher talk time and lecture, so that the students even have no chance to speak and interact at all. Simply, in a flipped classroom there is no need for lectures. As flipped learning switches “homework at home” and “lecture in class”

to “lecture at home” and “homework in class”, the students don’t feel alone with the work to be done. They can get help whenever they want. “The class will be suitable for the constructivist approach because the class time is freed from the didactic lecturing of the teacher allowing a huge variety of activities, group work and discussions that provides an interactive environment for the students” [8].

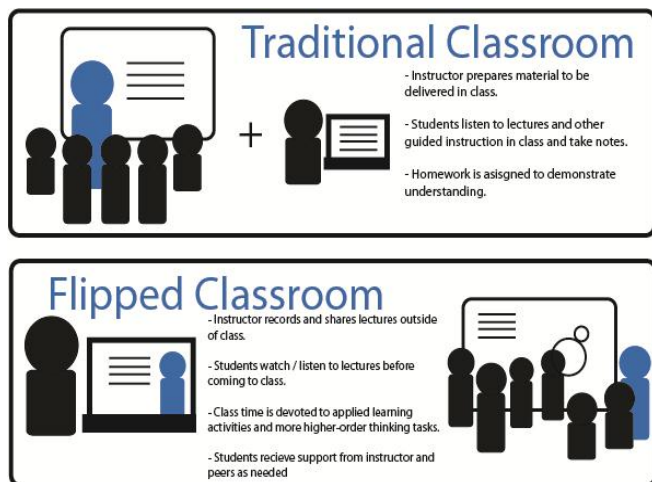


Fig. 2. Traditional classroom vs. flipped classroom.

## V. PROCEDURE

The first and maybe the most important step of flipping the classroom process is recording the lesson and lecture material. Before the classroom time, the teacher decides on the content and the material, and starts planning the learning process. Having the intentional content (see Part III - Intentional Content), the teacher has the advantage of deciding on every detail beforehand. This way, the teacher not only prepares the lesson material, but also gets himself/herself and the students ready for the process. After getting prepared for the lesson, the teacher records the video (of 5-10-15 minutes or so) for the students and uploads it for the students a few days before the classroom time, through which the teacher integrates technology into learning.

The students have free and relax access to the video. They can watch the video whenever and wherever they want. Providing a relaxed pre-class atmosphere, flipped learning also gives the students the chance of learning at their own pace, through their own learning style and technique. Most of the time, in traditional classrooms, the students don’t have the chance of pausing, rewinding, running forward or playing again and again mode. Flipped learning also grants it. The students being the core of, and responsible for their own learning, starts getting the “actor” role in the learning process, have a say in the process and becomes more self-aware.

After watching the video the way they like, the students get ready for the class. With this simply relax mode of being ready for the class and getting on the track they like, the students don’t get nervous.

The next step is in class. The students and the teacher are ready for the process. The students and the teacher save much time on lecture, which is really comforting for both. In the classroom time, the teacher is right in the middle, not at the centre of the process. S/he has equal access to each student,

getting in touch with all. Apart from lecture time, classroom time/lesson time is allocated to focusing the content, practice, activities, cooperation, collaboration, teacher- student time and peer interaction.

The students get together, ask each other, discuss, make groups, have roles, and focus on the content. In focusing the content, the students do some research, get to some conclusions and decisions, and have some ideas, output, and sometimes data. The students also present these, discuss all together, ask and answer; and all through this- communicate, socialise, cooperate and collaborate. They have no chance of hiding! At the end of the procedure they have the chance of reviewing and revising. All through the stages of flipped learning, the students are actively involved in the process, they are actively learning, becoming not a part but ‘learning’ itself.

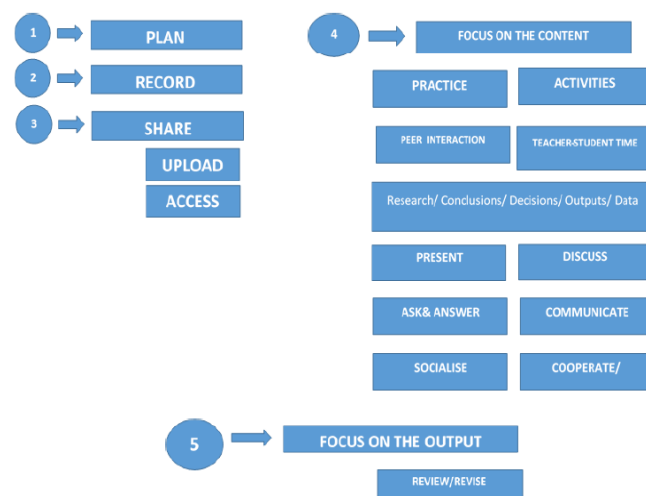


Fig. 3. ‘Flipping the class’ procedure.

Fig. 3 provides an overall look at the basic steps of flipped learning as planning, recording, sharing, focus on the content, and focus on the output.

## VI. ADVANTAGES OF FLIPPING

Traditional methods take the students as passive objects to be taught and the students feel so. They feel worthless and they think they have to obey what the teacher asks. In total contrast to traditional methods, flipped learning takes the learner as the core. The students being the core, they feel that they are really responsible for their own learning- which fosters independent learning and student engagement- so they get on the track to autonomous learning. This way, “learning” becomes the goal in flipped learning, not “teaching”.

Flipped learning gets the traditional classes all upside down with the help of technology. At home, the students watch the videos alone at varying speeds as they like and it doesn’t matter how many times they watch. The case is just to get the gist. They decide for themselves. Independent learning is promoted in this way. “It may be argued that as far as the cognitive ability is concerned, students are not confronted with spontaneous questions during the interaction with the video. But it is interesting to notice that engaging with the video will lead to the maximum retention of information and will inspire high level thinking skills” [7].

Having ready students for the class, classroom time is transferred into more of a peer-interaction, teacher-student interaction, and practice time. Flipped learning fosters peer interaction, cooperation, collaboration, and interpersonal skills. Flipped learning also provides time for teacher to actively get in touch with the students.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Flipped learning is based on the constructivist idea and in total contrast with what we know as traditional methods and classes. Everything is changing day by day with the technological developments of the new era and the main role of teaching and learning profession is to meet the needs of the students. Born into an era of technology, the students feel helpless in traditional classes. They need more time to interact, use technology, to be actively involved in the learning process so that they feel they're really learning.

Flipped learning provides all in one. First, taking the students as the core, the students feel important and responsible. Having the responsibility, the students get engaged and have the opportunity to learn independently. Having technology included in the learning environment, the students don't feel alienated. Having a more relaxed atmosphere, the students don't feel nervous and have time to interact with the peers and the teacher, to practice more and feel safe when get stuck.

All in all, flipped learning gives the students the real responsibility and the chance to be the real and active actors of learning. Towards developing more autonomous learners, flipped classes provide chances.

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