



“Flip” your University ESL/EFL Classroom 101

by Evelyn Doman

Part 1: Getting Ready to Flip

You’ve probably heard a tremendous amount about the flipped classroom, and you may be wondering what the hype is all about. A “flipped classroom” has also been referred to as an inverse classroom or an upside-down classroom (Baker, 2000). Flipping the classroom is a pedagogical approach to teaching and learning which involves reversing the traditional structure of the classroom by moving lectures or instructional moments that would normally be held in class to outside the classroom, thereby freeing up more classroom time for student engagement with each other and the materials, individual and pair work, and differentiated instruction. As applied to teaching ESL/EFL, flipping can be understood as a means to promote or enhance communicative language teaching (CLT) methodologies by making technology more relevant to the learning experience and to allow students to communicate and share more in the learning process.

There are numerous technologies available that can assist with flipping the ESL/EFL classroom. These are technologies that can help with creating lessons on videos, having students engage with the language, providing a platform for online discussions, and facilitating the sharing of materials. While this description is not exhaustive, it is good to know that these are some basic technologies that will help the flipped classroom run more smoothly. Here, I will mention PowerPoints and Prezis for slides, Camtasia Studio and Screencast-o-matic for videos, learning management systems for storage and easy accessibility of files, mind map applications, and online quiz applications as just a few examples.

First, PowerPoints are fundamental to most language classrooms today, but they occupy an even more important position in the flipped classroom. However, alternatives to PowerPoint are recommended, so as to avoid boredom and repetition on the parts of both teachers and learners. One alternative that is highly recommended is Prezi. Prezi is an engaging online presenter website that is free of charge and able to be downloaded as well for when an Internet connection is not available. Unlike traditional Powerpoint, Prezi comes with a wider range of templates and creates more visual stimulation for the learners.

Despite the usefulness of these tools, PowerPoints or Prezis alone are not enough though for flipping the class; the key component is video segments. Videos can be made easily with screencasting tools, as most lectures or instructional materials are now put online. Camtasia Studio is a paid software that will produce high quality video products, but free applications such as Screencast-o-matic are also helpful. Screencasts allow the teacher (or student) to record the computer screen and audio at the same time. They are recommended for instructional guides for the ESL/EFL classroom, such as when the teacher wants to demonstrate to students how to access a site or how to complete an assignment.

Learning management systems (LMS) are helpful in keeping the flipped technology in one place where students can access them more easily. Google, Blackboard and Desire2Learn are a few of the more common LMS applications, but free online versions such as Edmodo and Canvas work well too. Both can function well as they are both cloud-based, so students can access them wherever there is an Internet connection.

Online mind maps such as Simple Mind, Bubbl.us, or Popplet allow students to create mind maps on their computers or mobile devices and share them with anyone. These can be used for collaborative projects, in addition to cutting down on the need for paper materials.

Cloud applications such as VoiceThread provide students with an opportunity to watch video or Powerpoint segments and then to respond to them with audio. In the ESL/EFL classroom, students can practice responding to teacher's questions or prompts and have the option to record and re-record as often as they like.

Clickers are portable student response systems that can be used to answer multiple-choice questions in a fun and easy manner. With questions displayed through a special Powerpoint presentation, students can answer questions with the results being displayed immediately. Clickers are especially helpful in quick quizzes or when a teacher wants to check to see if students understand a concept. Although these devices can sometimes be expensive, mobile applications such as Socrative provide a free online alternative to using clickers, and students can participate by using their own mobile phones.

Finally, Google Documents are ways for students to collaboratively write a paper or work on a project together in either a synchronous or asynchronous environment. The document can be viewed from anywhere an Internet connection exists, and a history of changes to the document is automatically archived.

In addition to the suggested technologies here, there are many websites and mobile applications that can be used for advancing the four language skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening. Grammar games and pronunciation practice websites are also easily accessible. These types of websites and software are excellent additions to the language classroom, and could be integrated in the regular classroom materials or used to encourage self-study.

Now that we have learned more about technologies that can be used when flipping the classroom, we can focus on the steps that we need to get started. Following these steps will result in a flipped experience that will augment CLT and provide students with more opportunities to learn English.

- Identify course modules/activities that you feel are conducive to flipping.
- Familiarize yourself with the technology you will need for flipping (e.g., screencasting, podcasting, video recording).

- Experiment with using the technology, and then record your materials.
- Finalize and distribute your flipped material.
- Review content and seek feedback from colleagues.
- Critically evaluate your materials and revise as necessary.
- Consider how students respond, and adjust lessons/materials accordingly.
- Keep a flipped journal, and share your experiences with others.

Part 2: An Example of a Flipped ESL/EFL Lesson

Next, let’s look at what a flipped ESL/EFL lesson might look like. Figure 1 shows what students would do at home prior to class as well as what they would do in class.

Figure 1

Purpose: What do students need to be able to do at the end of this lesson?

Students will be able to differentiate and use critical reading skills to annotate an academic text.

Out of Class	In Class
<p><i>Learning Outcomes: Before coming to class, students will be able to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. understand what an annotation is and why annotating is important 2. know ways in which annotation can be done online and on paper 	<p><i>Learning Outcomes: By the end of this class, students will be able to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. identify key parts of a longer academic text which will be read through a group jigsaw reading* 2. annotate part of the text individually
<p><i>To achieve these outcomes, students will:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. watch a screencast of a sample annotation created by the teacher 2. review a PPT created by the teacher about annotating and its importance 3. search for reading passages in their majors that they would like to annotate as part of their final annotation assignment 	<p><i>To achieve these outcomes, students will:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. discuss as a class the key components and steps to annotation 2. do a jigsaw reading and answer the questions (see on page 4) in groups 3. watch the teacher do a short sample annotation on the visualizer 4. practice individually on paper the annotation of the part of the text that they read previously 5. receive feedback from the teacher during the annotation process in class 6. receive more feedback from the teacher about their annotation for homework

<p><i>Tools/resources needed:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. screencast made with screencast-o-matic 2. link to the screencast 3. instructional PPT posted online (via an LMS if possible) 	<p><i>Tools/resources needed:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. tables for small groups 2. reading passage 3. questions listed below 4. visualizer 5. colored pencils and/or highlighters
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*A jigsaw reading is a longer text that has been divided into smaller chunks for students to read and then summarize in small groups. This reduces the burden on students to read long passages while at the same time allowing them an opportunity to summarize and synthesize information orally.

Questions for the jigsaw reading:

1. What is your topic?
2. What are 3 important things that your passage discusses?
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
3. Write a brief one or two sentence summary about your passage?

Part 3: Share your Flipped Experience

Although there are many websites dedicated to the Flipped Classroom, few studies can be found online or in print which show the real value of flipping, particularly the effects of flipping on student achievement, outcomes, or measured increases in language proficiency. That's where you are needed. Come up with some research questions that you can tackle, and publish your results. Flipping is a hot topic in the TESOL world, and many teachers would like to hear about your successes (or failures if that may be). To get started, the references below will guide you to some of the research that colleagues and I have done on our flipped experiences. Check them out, and provide us with any feedback you have!

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