


Innovations in Flipping the Language Classroom

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Innovations in Flipping the Language Classroom			
Author:	Jeffrey Mehring & Adrian Leis (2018)		
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Flipped language learning offers many advantages in the foreign language classroom. Through the flipped methodology, teachers can provide their students with study materials before class, and in-class work can be devoted to more communicative and productive activities. However, to learn the fundamentals and effective implementation of the flipped methodology, language teachers could benefit from guidance. Mehring and Leis' (2018) edited *Innovations in Flipping the Language Classroom* addresses this need with fifteen chapters written by different authors. The book aims to prepare language teachers for flipped instruction in a step-by-step manner. The first two chapters provide a detailed description of the flipped method, and the remaining chapters present the reader with various examples of flipped language lessons. The remaining chapters also provide background information about the teaching context and elucidate lesson objectives, the targeted language skills, pre-class and in-class activities, technologies, and evaluations of the flipped lessons. Sample group activities and tasks, project guidelines, checklists, and rubrics are also available in many chapters for the teacher's use. The lesson plans provided in some chapters clearly demonstrate the components of the flipped lesson, including the link between pre-class and in-class activities. Research support is also a component of many, if not all, chapters, and data collection tools provide readers ideas about the evaluation of the flipped lessons.

In the first chapter, Jeffrey Mehring directs attention to one of the most common misconceptions about flipped learning, which is that using videos and technology is required in flipped classes. He stresses that although using technology has been common

due to its affordances, the essence of flipping lies not in technology but in promoting a student-centered learning environment. By studying reviewable content at home, language learners can develop autonomy, reflect on their learning, and become active learners in the classroom through increased interaction with peers, content, and the teacher. However, increased workload is a challenge in flipped learning. The teacher needs time to create instructional materials in advance. At the same time, students might be daunted by the amount of preparation required before coming to class. Mehring advises a gradual implementation of the method, beginning with flipping some parts of the course and increasing the number of assignments incrementally.

The next four chapters explain the background and principles of the flipped classroom. Chapter 2, written by Anna Brown, covers the key points of designing flipped courses, starting with how to prepare students to participate in flipped learning and ending with an assessment of their learning. The third chapter, by Marie Yeo, delineates a flipped second language acquisition module for in-service teachers. Yeo reports that pre-class materials that fail to engage learners, coupled with ineffective timetabling of flipped lessons, can pose problems in flipped classes. In Chapter 4, Martha Ramirez describes a flipped teacher-training course for native Spanish speaking teachers who are teaching English as a foreign language to Spanish speaking students. These teachers study online content about different pronunciation features of English, as well as pronunciation teaching, and engage in forum discussions before class. The face-to-face session is for discussions, teacher feedback, and the implementation of pronunciation teaching activities. The flipped reading course presented by John Graney in Chapter 5 details how students can study videos and books about organizational patterns of paragraphs as pre-class tasks. As a means of formative assessment, in-class activities can focus on students' use of graphic text representation to analyze texts, which also help teachers better address learner needs related to reading.

The next five chapters are concerned with flipping productive language skills. Carolina Buitrago and Juliana Díaz report in Chapter 6 on a college-level flipped writing lesson in which learners receive online input on the features of compare and contrast essays during the flipped portion of the class. During class time, they apply this knowledge while outlining and drafting their essays through peer feedback. In Chapter 7, in-class flipping is suggested by Martha Ramirez as an alternative for teachers with students who do not have access to technology outside of the classroom. Ramirez outlines a 7th grade literature course with flipped stations in the classroom through which students can access instructional input and practice stations. The aim of the flipped lesson in Chapter 8, written by Akihiko Andrew Tohei, is to improve the speaking skills of non-native English-speaking pre-service teachers preparing to acquire teaching licenses in different fields of education. Tohei assigns pre-class listening tasks, and during class, the pre-service teachers create their own role-plays related to the situational conversations they studied as pre-class materials. Similarly, Mark Feng Teng, the author of Chapter 9, explicates that using listening materials before class to increase students' knowledge about cross-cultural communication and allocating class time for student-student interaction is an effective way of improving students' speaking skills. Chapter 10, written by Mark deBoer, presents a flipped university-level conversation class. Group discussions and collaboration tasks that are initiated online for group projects are continued in class time and coupled with other tasks, such as giving presentations and speeches.

The following three chapters delve into flipping receptive skills. The focus of Chapter 11, written by C. J. Brown, is a flipped reading lesson in which online videos, course readings, and preparation tasks for the in-class group leader discussion activities are assigned to students. Classroom time is allocated for the discussion of reading material and self/peer evaluations about the group leader discussion. Chapter 12, written by Daniela Wagner-Loera, discusses how adding flipped elements and implementing strategies for reducing the cognitive load (e.g., employing a weekly course organizer, following strict routines) improve student grades. Khalid Fethi and Helaine W. Marshall, in Chapter 13, integrate movies into a flipped speaking and listening course by using pre-movie activities as a lead-in to the movie's content and the target language. This is followed by in-class movie-viewing, then by group discussions, and post-movie activities (e.g., community service and art projects).

The final two chapters display flipped content-based language lessons. Chapter 14, by Yu Jung Han, discusses the importance of curating and contextualizing online content for suitability, validity, and consistency while flipping English for Academic Purposes courses. Adrian Leis, the author of Chapter 15, flips the reading lessons by preparing video explanations of the reading passages. He indicates that using closed captions timed with the teacher's voice, as well as animations and colors in the online videos, are helpful for students' comprehension of the videos.

Overall, this book is a useful resource, especially considering the few book publications on flipping language classrooms. At the same time, it still has some minor shortcomings. First, nearly all the lessons take place in a university context, and K-12 teachers may not gain enough insights about how to overcome the challenges of flipped classes for younger students. Secondly, the research aspect of the book is not very salient, as only a small section is allocated for reporting the research methodology and findings in the chapters. Finally, although grammar content is flipped in some of the chapters for the teaching of writing skills, none of the chapters deal specifically with flipped grammar lessons.

All in all, *Innovations in Flipping the Language Classroom* is an invaluable resource for language teachers, as it provides advice and practical ideas about flipping classes for different language skills. Since the flipping procedure is described in detail, teachers reading this book can choose example lessons based on their needs and implement them in their own classes with ease. Due to its focus on practice, this book should be within the reach of any language teacher as a beneficial guide to flipping language classes.

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