

FLIPPED CLASSROOMS: MAKING THEM WORK FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS

AULA INVERTIDA (FLIPPED CLASSROOM): FAZÊ-LA FUNCIONAR COM ALUNOS DE LÍNGUAS ESTRANGEIRAS

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Flipped classrooms are in vogue as an active learning methodology since they combine important pillars of modern education, such as student-centered learning and technology. This model has been applied to different areas and educational levels, though it seems most prominent at the tertiary level. However, it is not clear if it is appropriate for all subject areas, such as language teaching. This paper will explore this question by treating two principal objectives: to review concepts and empirical research on flipped language classes to ascertain its effectiveness, and secondly, to propose a series of guidelines for language instructors considering flipping their classrooms based on the results from the first objective. We find that flipped classrooms may be particularly interesting for communicative language classrooms, and as well as for writing skills improvement.

Keywords: Flipped classroom. Foreign language teaching. Communicative teaching.

As aulas invertidas estão em voga como uma metodologia de aprendizado ativa, pois combinam importantes pilares da educação moderna, como a aprendizagem e a tecnologia centradas no aluno. Este modelo foi aplicado a diferentes áreas e níveis educacionais, embora pareça mais proeminente no nível superior. No entanto, não está claro se é apropriado para todas as áreas, como o ensino de idiomas. Este artigo explorará esta questão tratando dois objetivos principais: revisar conceitos e pesquisas empíricas sobre aulas de idiomas invertidas para verificar sua eficácia e, em segundo lugar, propor uma série de diretrizes para instrutores de idiomas que considerem inverter suas salas de aula com base nos resultados dos resultados desde o primeiro objetivo. Os resultados descobrem que as aulas invertidas podem ser particularmente interessantes para as salas

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de aula de linguagem comunicativa e também para o aprimoramento das habilidades de escrita.

Palavras-chave: Aula invertida. Ensino de línguas estrangeiras. Ensino comunicativo.

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1. Introduction

The future of language teaching must not only contemplate technology, but in such a way that learner-centered instruction remains in focus as the “tenet for the communicative approach” (Kessler 2018, p. 206; Mehring 2016). Popular interest in technologically savvy teaching methodologies that may do this has piqued around flipped classrooms (FC), as can be seen, for example in recent newspaper articles on the subject in Spain (E.F. 2019; García & González 2018; Torres 2016). The trend however, began much earlier, in 2008, in the United States when two chemistry teachers in Colorado, Bergmann and Sams (2012), began recording and animating their lessons to help students understand them better. They found one result of doing this was the ability to restructure classroom time. With much of the theoretical content being reviewed at home, they could use class time to address students’ needs one-on-one, allowing them to gear their classes toward a more student-centered approach.

Flipped classrooms (FC) reorder, or relocate, the traditional teaching model consisting in an instructor and a lecture as the center of the classroom exercise. It requires students to get the content of traditional lectures outside of class, in videos or by following an animated Power Point Presentation, and then do exercises, projects and research inside class with other classmates and the instructor acting as a guide. According to Bergmann and Sams (2012), a flipped classroom can be described as a setting where that “which is traditionally done in class is now done at home, and that which is traditionally done as homework is now completed in class” (*ibid.*, p. 13). Abeysekera and Dawson (2015) define flipped classrooms as those which (p. 5):

- a. move most information-transmission teaching out of class;
- b. use class time for learning activities that are active and social;
- c. require students to complete pre-and/or post-class activities to fully benefit from in class work.

The educational community has taken an interest in this methodology, since it combines other novel pillars of modern education, such as *blended learning*, *active learning* and *student-centered learning*, as well as digital technology and ICTs in the classroom. Nowadays, for example, there are flipped classroom certification processes for instructors (Fundación Bias 2018) and reoccurring conferences organized solely around the methodology (The Flipped Learning Academy 2018), some of which are supported by institutional bodies such as the Spanish Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional 2018). Research into the effect of flipped classrooms has mostly

occurred in tertiary studies, which is logical given the need for a certain level of student autonomy. However, FC are often promoted as a methodology appropriate for any classroom. Is it also so for teaching foreign languages? This is an area scholars indicate needs more research (Huang & Hong 2016; Lo & Hew 2017). Foreign language classrooms are relatively new to the flipped classroom trend, according to Filizi and Benzeti (2018), and perhaps for this reason they are under-researched. Where has FC had an effect on students' language learning? Do FCs achieve communicative language teaching goals? Are some skills more conducive to a FC than others? What considerations need to be had in particular for using FC for language learning?

2. Objectives

We will address these questions through two principal objectives. As a first objective, we will add to current theoretical frameworks for flipped classrooms, by gathering research about two areas. The first of these includes principal concepts associated with flipped classrooms in general, in order to understand its origins and aims. The second area will examine empirical studies to investigate the effectiveness of flipped classrooms in the teaching of foreign languages. In this second area, we will look at studies that show results for teaching FL in a flipped classroom setting. These results are seen in a variety of areas, such as skill development (reading, speaking, etc.) as well as results of a flipped model on motivation and course content assimilation beyond language skills. Against this theoretical backdrop, we will add to current research by offering a comprehensive view of what flipped classrooms have been shown to do in foreign language studies.

As a second objective, and based on these studies, we will propose guidelines for language teachers to consider in flipping classrooms, striving to show a balance of advantages and disadvantages to this approach for foreign language instructors who are considering it, in particular in the face of trying to teach language communicatively. We note that our research focuses on foreign language teaching specifically, not second-language instruction.

2.1. Objective 1: Principal concepts in flipped classrooms: Literature review

Though relatively new to the pedagogical scene in terms of popularity, this methodology has grown out of older models as well as from research advances in psychology pertinent to education. These are outlined below.

2.1.1. Active learning

Flipped classrooms engage is what is commonly known as *active learning*. The concept rests on constructivist theory where learning is a process of one's constructing meaning through experience and social interaction (Vygotsky 1978).

Barnes (1989) defines active learning with the following seven principles:

- a. Purposive: the relevance of the task to the students' concerns;
- b. Reflective: students' reflection on the meaning of what is learned;

- c. Negotiated: negotiation of goals and methods of learning between students and teachers;
- d. Critical: students appreciate different ways and means of learning the content:
- e. Complex: students compare learning tasks with complexities existing in real life and making reflective analysis;
- f. Situation-driven: the need of the situation is considered in order to establish learning tasks;
- g. Engaged: real life tasks are reflected in the activities conducted for learning.

It has been argued that active learning is not a new model for education at all, having behind it the teaching models of the middle ages and apprenticeships, or even, prehistoric practices (Corrigan 2013). However, active learning as we understand it today has been perceived as innovative, one of the push-backs originating in the 1970's and 1980's to the standard lecture "banking" model (Freire 1970). In the banking model, knowledge was transmitted from teacher to student, who would in theory deposit the information for later use. At the end of the 70's and the beginning of the 80's a series of methodologies emerged in education in general that focused on the individual learner as center to the learning process, and her participation in the same. Some of these were: Problem-Based Learning, beginning in the sciences, firstly in medical schools (Barrows 1996), cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson 1989) and experiential learning (Kolb 1984). Language teaching methodologies specifically also experienced changes in the wake of the concerns that led to interest in active methodologies. These include Gattegno's foreign language methodology known as the "Silent Way", where the teacher and student role completely inverted, in terms of speaking time.

2.1.2. Student-centered learning

Student-centered learning goes hand-in-hand with active learning (Rogers 1983), in that very often active learning is student-centered learning and vice-versa. If active learning describes a new model on how information is received and worked, student-centered learning focuses the spotlight on just who is at the center of that model, the learner herself. This is juxtaposed to the role of the instructor, who becomes a facilitator who guides the student in her process of discovery. In this sense, the student perspective is central to the learning experience. Student-centered learning is also associated with constructivist theory of how individuals construct meaning and learn from experiences. For years now education has been moving closer to concepts of the individual in learning, in terms of learning strategies and approaches (see for example, multiple intelligences (Gardner, Lalonde & Moorcroft 1985) or in second language acquisition, individual differences (Skehan 1989) and language learning identities (Dörnyei 2014).

One of the results of flipped learning is an increased time for teachers and individual students to engage with one another, which some scholars claim is a benefit of truly active learning rather than of the flipped classroom model specifically (Jensen, Kummer & Godoy 2015). In the aforementioned study, they found that students in other non-flipped

classrooms with active methodologies where students spent individual time with instructors were ranked equally high as flipped classrooms (*ibid.*).

2.1.3. Communicative language learning

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is a language methodology that incorporates both active learning and student-centered learning. Based on the theories of Hymes (1972) and Canale and Swain (1980) of language teaching, also known as communicative competence, CLT, like active learning, also developed in the 1970's and 1980's push-back to traditional language teaching methods where the teacher controlled the foreign language input and student roles' were often limited to translation, repetition and memorization in drills. Teacher and student roles change in CLT and teachers should (Richards 2006, p. 13):

- a. Make real communication the focus of language learning;
- b. Provide opportunities for learners to experiment and try out what they know;
- c. Be tolerant of learners' errors as they indicate that the learner is building up his or her communicative competence;
- d. Provide opportunities for learners to develop both accuracy and fluency;
- e. Link the different skills such as speaking, reading, and listening, together, since they usually occur so in the real world;
- f. Let students induce or discover grammar rules;

CLT involves students' participating and specifically interacting with one another, with the teacher acting as a guide to this interaction.

The type of classroom activities proposed in CLT also implied new roles in the classroom for teachers and learners. Learners now had to participate in classroom activities that were based on a cooperative rather than individualistic approach to learning. Students had to become comfortable with listening to their peers in group work or pair work tasks, rather than relying on the teacher for a model. They were expected to take on a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning" (Richards 2006, p. 4).

Communicative language teaching is still the go-to method these days for teaching foreign languages, where it has been shown to be more effective in increasing communicative competence and motivation (Ahmad & Rao 2013).

2.1.4. Blended learning

Blended learning is a product of ICTs and the digital age. Its definitions often include a list of combinations of traditional F2F (face to face) modes of instruction with online modes of learning, using as a base technology-mediated instruction, and where some of the class time is done at a distance. This has also been termed "hybrid learning", or "mixed-mode instruction". This combination of traditional on-site classroom teaching and on-line teaching began in the 1990's with the augment of technology. A recent blended learning study (Center for Digital Education 2015) has shown that in a blended learning environment:

- Student engagement increased by 69%;
- Student retention rates rose by 39%;
- Test scores improved by 28%;
- Grade rates up by 22%;
- Attendance increased by 22%.

What is more, some components of online learning may be well-suited for some areas of foreign language learning, such as those involving rote memorization, for example in learning verb structures or irregular forms, or lexical items as Cubillos indicates in Muldrow (2013). “Research has identified the effectiveness of the online environment for mechanical tasks. In fact, it is both feasible and desirable to complete low-level tasks online” (Muldrow 2013 p. 29).

2.1.5. Other pertinent constructs

In terms of psychological constructs behind the flipped classroom model, Abeysekera and Dawson (2015) cite that one of the two principal underlying theories for FC is *self-determination theory* (Ryan & Deci 2000), which is supported in educational literature as a model for positive motivation in students. This is where basic cognitive needs, for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, should be met for educational success in individual outcomes. Part of this theory includes the concept of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, intrinsic essentially being an interior motivation. This is where students find something in the learning experience which is personally engaging, as versus extrinsic motivation, where the source of motivation is external to the student, such as grades, a teacher’s approval, etc.

The other theoretical pillar Abeysekera and Dawson (2015) discuss as relevant to flipped learning is cognitive load theory (Clark, Nguyen & Sweller 2005), which is based on the concept of working memory and how students undertake differing levels of ‘load’ as they are learning, specifically intrinsic, extraneous and germane. Each of these loads requires something from the student, and extraneous load indicates the sort of extra mental weight that is taken on when a learning task is more difficult than it needs to be, such as presenting information in a format that is not coherent in some way, or that obscures the actual information to be learnt. Abeysekera and Dawson (2015) argue that, based on these theoretical models, the flipped classroom is an interesting solution for learning, since it, in theory, augments intrinsic motivation through autonomy and personal engagement, and it removes feasible extraneous cognitive load in part by allowing students to control the pace of the information they receive in outside lectures (rewinding and stopping videos, for example).

Cognitive load is also merged with another construct associated with flipped learning, that of higher learning skills. This is rooted in Bloom *et al.*’s (1956) taxonomy of lower level and higher level cognitive skills, where lower level skills like remembering and understanding come before higher level ones like application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (although some scholars postulate that these do not necessarily need to exist in a hierarchy, but may be seen as a sliding scale, according to Harris, Harris and Reed

(2016). When flipped classrooms move the theory component of course content outside the class and use class time for doing exercises, projects, interactive work and one-on-one tutorials with the instructor, they essentially move the lower levels of learning into an area where they are treated under individual study, and create a space in class for higher-level learning. “[F]lipped learning ... [delivers] all low-order content prior to the face-to-face instructional time” (Bergmann & Sams 2014, p. 29). Student centered learning and active learning, stemming from these developments in education and psychology, have merged with technology in an unprecedented way to bring us to the blended learning methodology that flipped classrooms can represent when technology is at the center of how the classroom is flipped. Having revisited the origins of this model, we will turn to part 2 of the first objective, empirical research as to FC’s effectiveness in language classrooms.

2.2. Objective 2: Empirical evidence supporting flipped foreign language classes: literature review

Most of the empirical data available on flipping foreign language classes investigates secondary or tertiary studies, and much of the recent work takes place in the United States, Asia, the Middle East and Turkey, specifically. Many of the positive results seem to be uniform in motivation and student satisfaction with the courses. Some of the principal studies on flipped language classes follow below, organized by sections according to the findings of interest.

2.2.1. FL classrooms studies overall

A very recent meta-analysis of 50 studies in foreign language FCs in 14 countries between 2014-2018 found that Turkey was the country most using FC to teach language (34%) followed by the USA (18%) (Filizi & Benzeti 2018). The languages being taught were mostly English as a Foreign Language (76%), followed by Spanish. Flipped classrooms were used for teaching all skills (46%), but in a majority writing skills were being taught (20%) (*ibid.*, p. 81), with 82% of the studies taking place with university students and using quantitative data. The majority of the studies sought to study attitudes toward foreign language lessons (*ibid.*, p. 82).

2.2.2. Overall proficiency

At the University of Maryland (Muldrow 2013) researchers note that university students taking Spanish in a traditional environment of four days of class a week versus a hybrid one of two days on-line and two days in class, no statistical difference was noted in terms of perceived proficiency at the end of the semester. Teachers did note that students seemed more confident in speaking activities in the hybrid group. In terms of student satisfaction, they indicated they liked the system but that it was more work than a traditional class. Hung (2015) found that implementing the flipped classroom model in EFL classes develops students’ academic performance in general, while Obari and

Lambacher (2015) shows that flipping English classes improves students' scores on the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC).

At a South Korean university investigators compared a regular EFL class taught with a communicative language focus with another EFL course that was flipped. Their findings show that students in the flipped classroom achieved higher average scores in their final three tasks than those in the non-flipped classroom, although only the final examination mean score showed statistical significance. Questionnaires revealed that most students seemed to enjoy learning English in a flipped learning environment, so that motivation was considered to be improved, as well. Finally, the instructor found the students in the flipped classroom to be more engaged in the learning process than those in the non-flipped classroom (Lee & Wallace 2017).

2.2.3. Content instruction and higher-order thinking

A quantitative and qualitative analysis-based study of university students taking Korean as a foreign language focused on the effectiveness of flipped classrooms in language teaching in terms of content instruction (Kim, Park, Jang & Nam 2017). Interesting results were found in the production of cognitive comments “involving deeper information processing and higher-order reasoning skills” where students in FC showed more cohesive interactional patterns than did the students in the traditional classroom. According to the authors, these results show that flipped classrooms can effectively promote higher-order thinking processes and in-depth, cohesive discussion in the content-based second language. Also, this study found that between the traditional classroom students and those in FC, no difference in participation rates were seen. In another study with EFL university students in Taiwan doing flipped instruction in online written and oral interaction, the students showed a more active usage of the course content (idioms) in class as well as in learned idiomatic knowledge as a class outcome overall. They also showed enhanced motivation according to the authors (Hsieh, Wu & Marek 2016). A content-based class (CLIL) in sociology in a pre-college program at Hawaii Tokai International College found no statistical difference in how students in a FC classroom and those in a traditional classroom learned content in their EFL class, although the post-course satisfaction questionnaire indicated the FC students were very positive about the experience (Oki, 2016).

2.2.4. Skills improvement: Writing

Surprisingly, writing seems to be the area that is positively affected by using FCs in foreign language teaching as, for example, Engin (2014) and Farah (2014) indicate. They applied flipped classrooms in teaching English writing and found that flipped instruction had a positive impact on students' writing and their overall academic performance. Similarly, Soltanpour and Valizadeh (2018) investigated the effect of flipped classrooms on Iranian EFL learners' quality in argumentative essays. When compared with a control group, students in the FC outperformed the traditional class, both directly after the flipped instruction occurred, and again after time had passed in a second comparison. Leis, Tohei

and Cooke (2015) compared a traditional EFL composition course with another using the flipped method with 22 Japanese university students and found that those studying in the FC actually produced a significantly higher number of words in their essays than their counterparts, and also showed greater improvement overall in their writing proficiency.

With 62 EFL students at an Indonesian secondary school Afrilyasanti *et al.* (2016) explored the effect of using the flipped classroom model on writing skills. The FC learning group showed more significant improvement in these skills than those students in the control group. In Saudi Arabia, Quda and Ahmed (2016) examined writing skills in the context of a flipped classroom with 60 university students, alongside a control group of a traditional class. The flipped learning group performed significantly better than the control group, and also showed positive reception for the FC model. Finally, Ekmekci (2017) looked to Turkish EFL university students and compared flipped and traditional on-site lecture-based writing classes over 15 weeks. The flipped classroom significantly outperformed the traditional model at the end of the study. What is more, the FC group demonstrated positive reactions to the model.

2.2.5. Skill improvement: Speaking

Fewer studies have examined or found publishable results on how the FC affects speaking skills, despite the fact that this would seem to be an area of particular interest to foreign language learning, in a decidedly communicative tending world. This is also surprising given that the freed class time that FC purportedly affords might be best used for speaking practice. Teng (2018) found that using a FC model improved students' speaking skills in an EFL classroom in Hong Kong, as did Quyen and Loi (2018) in Vietnamese university students learning English. The latter study included pre- and post- speaking tests, a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to examine the effects of a flipped classroom model on EFL (English as a foreign language) students' speaking performance. Li and Suwanthep (2017), with University of Thailand students in EFL classes, also examined speaking skills in pre and post-tests in a control and FC modelled group. The FC group had significantly higher scores than the control group, and like the majority of the FC groups, they expressed positive responses to the teaching model. Finally, in Turkey pre-service teachers' speaking skills were seen to significantly improve for a FC group versus a traditional lecture group after 8 weeks of their program (Köroğlu & Çakır 2017). In contrast to the above studies, Al-Ghamdi and Al-Bargi (2017) did not see significant improvement in students speaking skills when examining the pre and post-speaking achievement tests for EFL university students in Saudi Arabia, though students in the FC group did respond favorably to the teaching model.

2.2.6. Skill improvement: Grammar

A study of Saudi high school students showed that no statistically significant result was had on their grammar improvement after their EFL classes, where a FC model and a traditional lecture class model were compared (Al-Harbi & Alshumaimero 2016). Kang (2015) compared a control group and a FC class of EFL learners at a Korean university

and found that only the flipped classroom produced statistically significant changes in both vocabulary and grammar knowledge. The author also noted that student written comments on the course suggested that “the well-blended flipped classroom maximized facetime, retained more interaction and achieved learning goals”. The author noted one negative point, that an obstacle to the success of FC was students not doing assignments before class. In a study of Chinese university students Webb and Doman (2016) evaluated the effectiveness of a FC class and a control group on pretest and posttest grammar test, along with students' perceptions of their increased comfort and confidence using English grammar through a grammar survey. These data suggest that even though both the control and experimental groups showed higher levels of comfort in the self-report data, gains on actual achievement in grammar were significant only for the experimental groups. Swedish secondary students *perceived* an improvement in their grammar skills in English (these were not tested empirically) with a FC model after two weeks, though some problems were had with a group of less mature students doing the FC model (Löfnertz 2016).

2.2.7. Skill improvement: Listening

Roth and Suppasetserree (2016) found that in a Cambodian university flipped classrooms enhance Cambodian pre-university students' English listening skills, where the average scores of post-test ($M = 83.31$) was higher than the average scores of pre-test ($M = 72.88$). Improves students' listening comprehension. Ahmad (2016) showed that the FC model was significantly positive for Egyptian university students in terms of listening comprehension gains (no control group was included) when testing their listening skills pre and post-FC instruction.

2.2.8. Skill improvement: Reading

Karimi and Hamzavi (2016) investigated university EFL students in Iran reading comprehension. The results of ANCOVA revealed that the flipped model of instruction had a significant positive effect on the reading comprehension ability of the students. What is more, the results indicated that EFL students in the experimental group also had a positive attitude towards the flipped model of instruction and were positive about the model of teaching.

2.2.9. Student motivation and course satisfaction

In the great majority of the studies cited the FC group indicated a positive reception of the model, which points towards how it might increase motivation. Of the few negative comments in this area, University of Maryland students (Muldrow 2013) complained that the FC model resulted in too much homework and they perceived a lack of teaching in the course overall.

2.2.10. Teacher motivation and course satisfaction

Fewer studies were seen in this area, though it seems pertinent. Teacher motivation for doing a FC should be high, since it involves a good deal of preparatory work at the front-end of the course to prepare a FC. A current project at the University of Palestine on EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Flipped Classroom Model (Raba & Dweikat 2019) reveals that one group of teachers were positive on FC as long as students were mature, whereas the other group "was not in favor of using the flipped learning model because it might add more responsibilities and tasks to the overloaded teachers and it might distract students as well".

3. Main findings and implications

The main findings from the development of the first objective (analysis of concepts associated to flipped classrooms and conclusions drawn from the empirical literature review on this topic) are summarized below with points for consideration. These will lead us to establish our second objective (Objective two. Flipping FL Classes Guidelines) whose aim is to present a proposal for future considerations for flipping foreign language classrooms.

3.1. Benefits of flipped learning in foreign language classrooms: Motivation

Increased motivation was clearly the point of the most positive feedback from studies utilizing the flipped classroom. Although some studies showed negative results, the vast majority were positive, even in those results that showed no other significant effect.

A point of question here might be about the orientation of active learning strategies in general, as other scholars have postulated (Jensen, Kummer & Godoy 2015), in that a strategy for active learning might improve learner motivation overall. It may also be that increased attention from the instructor and the resulting increased one-on-one time between the learner and instructor improves motivation which has also been suggested in previous research in education (Sergis, Sampson, & Pelliccione 2018). Although there is still doubt as to why student's motivation increased with flipped classroom models, increased motivation is a key issue for foreign language learners, since motivation is one of the best predictors for language acquisition success (Masgoret & Gardner 2003; Gardner, Tremblay & Masgoret 1997).

3.2. Benefits of flipped learning in foreign language classrooms: Skills improvement

Skill improvement occurred in studies in reading, writing, speaking, grammar and listening. Many studies show tangible improvement in productive skills, specifically writing and speaking. In terms of writing, this might come as a surprise to foreign language teachers, since writing is a more individualized skill that tends to be developed in isolation when compared to other skills. However, we should note that in many studies the writing was done collaboratively as well as individually, under the supervision of the teacher, in class. It may be that simply having interaction as one writes is helpful to the

writing process, and it may be that a pleasant side effect is that in-class writing activities help prevent some mishaps in the foreign language writing process, such as relying on translators or dictionaries.

Pertinent further questions which went unanswered for these results in writing were what activities were done in and outside of class that helped improve students' writings, and were they distinct from traditional class writings (drafts, redrafts, etc.)? What might cause this improvement, besides the specific activities, for example higher motivation, which does seem to be ubiquitous for the majority of the FC groups, or lower anxiety? Was it the one-on-one tutoring that helped students resolve issues with their writing?

In terms of the second area of skill improvement that revealed itself the most in flipped classrooms, speaking improvement, this makes a good deal of sense. If much of the rote components of language teaching, grammar and vocabulary, specifically, are done outside of class, much more class time can be spent on communicative tasks and speaking, resulting in higher levels of interaction and feedback, and more honed speaking skills. This would appear to be one of the more interesting results of a flipped foreign language class in a communicative approach.

An important gap in the studies seen here involved information about the use of L1 in the courses under study, and the levels and comprehension expectations of the out-of-class materials. Teaching language in context, with a communicative focus, as many language teachers tend to try to do, offers the possibility of cushioning our use of the L2 within scaffolding strategies designed to aid foreign language learners. These include gestures, feedback to immediate queries, extra information when something is not clear in the moment, tone and other paralinguistic communication. It seems vitally important to gauge the level of true comprehension of the students reviewing theoretical content in their L2 on their own, as well as to ascertain the sort of strategies in use in media presenting this content outside the classroom. While it is true that students can stop and replay sections of video they do not understand, the differentiated format for transmitting theoretical content requires further study in terms of how L2 content is actually received.

4. Objective 2. Flipping foreign language classes: Guidelines

Taking into consideration the constructs and empirical research reviewed under objective one in the previous section, we propose the following guidelines for foreign language instructors considering flipping their classes, to reach our second objective. We will not delve here into more generic areas that other studies have touched upon and which already have an abundance of resources, such as material creation or syllabi preparation, but rather will examine areas that have specifically come from the research review here which are more novel in their application to foreign language classrooms in particular.

4.1. Use the FC as a mechanism for personal pacing for foreign language students

FC is an active learning model, as noted in the literature review, and one that promotes goals of self-determination for autonomy, competence and relatedness, since students are actively involved in getting the theoretical content for the course on their own time.

Students being able to pace their lessons in this way allows for more autonomy and better balanced cognitive loads, since they can review areas of difficulty as much as they need. Thyagarajan and Nayak observed that the premise for an improved learning experience is personalization (2007). The flipped classroom can contribute even further to the individual needs of students (Strayer 2007).

4.2. Advance higher learning skills in the foreign language through FCs

This is especially pertinent to the moment in which European classrooms find themselves as respects language teaching, in that content teaching in foreign languages is a dominant model. The studies here showed that FC students were more effective in assimilating content (idioms, sociology) than students in traditional classrooms, and showed more profound information processing. It might be that the extra time had in class for focusing on content through student/teacher and student/student interactions allowed for a deepening of content knowledge.

4.3. Further student knowledge through advance preparation

Part of this higher learning includes allowing students to have outside time to prepare contents in advance. Advance student preparation improves understanding of the content of lessons. With flipped classrooms, students come to class with greater knowledge, and their participation increases (Bergmann & Sams 2012). There are more opportunities to discuss topics in depth, and more time to develop their critical thinking about topics before class. For example, after learning at home the difference in usage of present tenses working on a lesson dealing with the environment, students can be asked to research the reduce, reuse and recycle program of the school, university, town hall, etc. As in class-practice students can be asked to write reports and letters commending practices, recommending improvements and/or proposing additional initiatives. Alternatively, students can create posters, devise a campaign to promote the efficient use of energy and resources, or even organize an on-campus event related to the lesson theme. However, this is only possible if students do the preparatory work in advance, which some studies noted was problematic (Löfnertz 2016; Muldrow 2013). This means that the evaluation system should contemplate how to ensure students participate as needed.

4.4. Use FC to treat those “other” passive FL skills we often neglect: listening and reading

Listening takes up a good deal of class time, but students need controlled practice usually done in class: forcing comprehension questions, stopping and listening again to review difficult sections, etc. Listening exercises seem an excellent area to practice outside of class, where students can go back and listen as many times as necessary. This is especially helpful to lower-level students who may need more than the standard two times to finish a listening exercise. In terms of reading, which was an especially underrepresented area of the empirical research, FC might be a way to move this skill out of the classroom, but

at the same time to make it less passive. For example, reading might occur with audio questions embedded into the text to check for understanding, as well as glossaries to aid in comprehension as students move through the text.

4.5. Get students into active writing

Surprisingly, the studies on improving FL writing skills showed were the most proliferate in the research found. Writing improvement is a difficult skill to tackle, and it is most often assigned as an individual task, to be done at home, which tends to put foreign language students in the difficult position of resisting online tools to help themselves: translators, in particular. Multiple empirical studies here showed that students' writing skills improved in FC, and it seems that active writing is the key: collaborative or teacher-monitored writing where students write in-class, though this needs further research.

4.6. Move rote memory learning outside of the classroom

Language is sequential and this may make it an ideal subject for classroom flipping, since, according to its founders, a novice flipped classroom instructor should begin with maths for this reason, and for its modularity. Similarly, in language learning, one needs to establish certain concepts, and to memorize certain structures such as irregular verbs etc., before moving onto other ones. The ability to review more difficult concept areas in an online component may be very helpful to some students in this sense. The studies here on increased grammar achievement in FC classrooms seem to indicate that this may be an appropriate way to introduce grammatical concepts. Finally, moving these rote components out of the classroom frees up time for other types of activities, and in particular, interaction.

4.7. Interact more and observe more as students are given time to communicate with FC

One of the largest benefits which proponents of the flipped classroom note is its approximation of the teacher and the student. This can be done in two ways in a communicatively-oriented language class. On the one hand, teachers can interact more directly with students, in the foreign language. This will be helpful on many levels, such as taking into account the learning styles of students and choosing and /or creating appropriate activities based on them. On the other hand, instructors can spend more time checking in on individual students as they work or interact with their peers in their L2. This affords the language teacher an interesting observer's position onto the students' language use in class.

4.8. Be aware of structural needs

There were two negative points mentioned in the empirical research: problems with students doing work outside of class in the online class component, and maturity levels. The former is a trite classroom issue, but some special consideration may be needed since

essential information, once had in classroom lectures, must be gotten on the students' own time outside of class. This will result in the need for evaluative and preparatory structures for ensuring students do the theoretical work before class. It also goes hand in hand with the secondary issue: maturity. Less mature students may not manage independent learning well enough to succeed in a FC.

4.9. Get closer to being truly communicative with less time lecturing

If the more rote components of language learning like grammar and vocabulary memorization are moved outside of the class in flipped learning, then the class space can be taken advantage of for spoken interaction and more complex work, such as projects and group collaboration. One of the biggest benefits of a flipped language classroom is the time it offers students to produce in the target language, when otherwise they would have been passively listening to a lesson, decodifying a reading passage or completing grammar tasks. Simply put, more class time where theoretical contents are already reviewed affords more opportunities to actually put language into context and practice.

5. Conclusions

The popularity of flipped classrooms might cause an experienced educator to pause, but this most recent trend in active learning could indeed be beneficial to foreign language students. Language students need to do a certain amount of rote learning and memorization to progress, and these skills do well in an online environment, aiding in students' cognitive loads while learning. Flipped classrooms promote greater learner autonomy and investment, and are student-centered, which is helpful for language students whose levels are rarely homogeneous and who often have individual learning needs. Finally, it seems clear that flipped classroom courses garner quite positive responses from the students who take them, even if this is due in part to their novelty or their being simply more active than other traditional course structures. This is pertinent to students' motivation, one of the key predictors to foreign language success.

What is more, empirical research has shown that flipped language classrooms are especially interesting for productive skills: writing and speaking, as well as higher level learning such as content analysis. The latter is especially interesting for content-in-language classrooms (CLIL, etc). Finally, FC offers more teacher/student interaction, as well as student/student interaction since classroom lecturing time is reduced, which is positive for communicative language teaching, overall. Importantly, the great majority of studies in flipped foreign language classrooms is recent research, which means that there is surely more to come.

6. Future lines of research

Future investigation into flipped classrooms for foreign language teaching should examine how different types of writing might be affected by FC, as well as what in-class writing strategies, if any, are more effective, since this seems to be an area of achievement gains. This would offer more insight into why writing as a skill seems to do so well in

FC. Another line of research to consider would be reading as a skill to improve in a FC model since this is also a more passive activity, and one that few studies have examined. Finally, further lines of research should be done into the content and form of the lessons created for students' consumption outside of the classroom in terms of how the L2 is used, structured, and transmitted to students.

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