Temática: **The use of ICT in the teaching- learning process of English**

El aula invertida en la formación de profesores de inglés

The Flipped Classroom (FC) in English teacher training

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Resumen

El trabajo presenta la fundamentación y los principios del aula invertida en la formación de profesores de inglés para potenciar el uso de la tecnología en el momento actual donde su papel es cada vez más predominante como complemento de la clase presencial. La ponencia toma en cuenta los resultados de la investigación- acción desarrollada por la autora en su clase de inglés con sus estudiantes, profesores de inglés en formación. Se ejemplifican actividades y sugerencias metodológicas para el aula invertida y el enfoque de habilidades integradas como buenas prácticas. Se destacan las bondades de este enfoque de manera que los estudiantes en formación puedan tenerlas en cuenta en su futura labor como profesores.

Palabras clave: aula invertida, investigación -acción, tecnología, enfoque de habilidades integradas, formación de profesores

Abstract

This paper explains the rationale and principles underlying the Flipped Classroom approach in English Language Teaching in teacher training as a way to enhance the use of technology in times where it plays a predominant role as an allied in language education, as well as a complement to face to face classroom activities. The paper considers the results of Action Research carried out by the author with her own students. Examples of activities and methodological suggestions for the FC and the integrated –skill approach are given. Best practices in teacher training to encourage active learning and academic skills enhancement are also discussed. The author highlights the advantages of the flipped

classroom so that teacher trainees may reflect on the benefits of this pedagogical model and be encouraged to use it in their future classrooms.

Key words

Flipped Classroom, action research, technology, integrated-skill approach, teacher training

Introduction

Technology has always been an inherent part of language teachers´ practices. It has accompanied all the methods in the history of language teaching. So, in ELT students and teachers have developed a positive attitude, habits and willingness to incorporate the available technology in their teaching. This may considerably enable them to accept that the latest technologies must be used as a logical component of the teaching learning process without rejection.

In this respect, the concept of Flipped Classroom in ELT has emerged in times where technology plays a predominant role as an allied in language education. It can be seen how a growing number of educational institutions have started to implement this model in order to provide students with more in- class activities and less in- class lecturing. In the case of ELT, it suits a teacher-centered philosophy and encourages students' active engagement as protagonists of their own learning at the time they develop skills like self- management, autonomous learning and desired attitudes like responsibility and commitment to the English language learning process.

The concept of flipping the classroom in ELT is not new. It has always existed as independent work or homework that teachers give students to complete the classroom work with the great asset that now there is an array of existing technology which facilitates the process to a greater extent and enhances students 'motivation and willingness to work on their own. This concept was made popular by Aaron Sams and Jonathan Bergmann.

A technology-enhanced flipped classroom encourages active learning and academic skills enhancement. At present it is really possible to flip a classroom due to all the technological tools that are available which can make the flip more interesting. There are plenty of sites in the Internet to find content and create flipped classroom activities. Moreover, to attract students must not be a challenging task as they are all technology lovers and are motivated to always use it for learning purposes. Students can also develop skills that will help them manage learning for life.

The objective of this article is to discuss principles and the rationale for the Flipped Classroom based on classroom research in teacher training and provide examples of activities that the author used with her teacher trainees.

Materials and Methods

This paper is the result of classroom-based research and explains the **action research** method from the author´s experiences and practices with her 4th year students in teacher training. It is widely known that the language educator has always done classroom research as language learning is a crucial phenomenon that requires study. Hence, the method refers to teacher-conducted classroom research to resolve teaching and learning issues and problems.

 In teacher training, in particular, the English classroom is a laboratory in which techniques, procedures, strategies, ideas and principles are experimented daily. Most teacher trainers need to reflect on their practices in order to assess their teaching, improve it, develop successful training, expand understanding of language teaching, as well as pass experiences on to other peers. In the case of teacher training, modelling is vital. The teacher needs to convey a teaching model to students who are being trained as teachers.

The objective of the **action research** method in this particular context was to collect information by documenting the author´s teaching in order to explore and understand complex events in the Integrated English Practice lesson. The method was self-directed, inquiry- based and directly relevant to the teacher´s and students´ class performances and observed four stages: planning, observation, reflection and adjusting.

Consequently, the reflections on this paper topic and the activities that are suggested originates from the author´s action research carried out in her own classroom to tackle the following problem situations that were identified in teacher trainees.

1. Insufficient time for students to develop and practice speaking and listening skills in class as the time allotted for the subject Integrated English Practice was reduced.

2.   Difficulties with accuracy and fluency which affected students´ communicative competence.

3.   Poor development of self- directed and autonomous learning skills which was evidenced in class and in the development of students´ research works.

4. Limited use of technology for learning purposes.

The following strategies and techniques were combined to collect information:

Teaching journal: It was used to keep a written account of observations and reflections about teaching in Teacher Training, in 4th year and was vital to analyze the positive and negative aspects of lessons, as well as a record of incidents which allowed the teacher to review her students´ performances and hers, and then return to what needed to be improved or changed later. It was basically a source of review and reflection and an account of approaches and classroom management aspects.   It was done electronically in the Notes App of the cell phone. A notebook was also used.

Interview to students: At the end of some of the lessons, students were asked to highlight aspects in the PNI section (Positive; Negative and Interesting). At this point, a problem- solving class section was carried out to listen to students´ appraisal of the lesson, performances, types of assessments and possible solutions when required.

Dialogue journal: It was also very positive as part of the writing skill activities to have students reflect in writing on their performances, class engagement and interaction, self and peer assessment   and what they thought was necessary to change for improvement. As teacher trainees they were asked to propose solutions and courses of actions.

Class observation and discourse analysis: This was done with the aid of technology using audios or video records with the help of students in order to understand the kinds of interactions that occurred in the classroom; as for example, if it was a student-centered or teacher-centered lesson and how instructions, explanations and feedback were provided.

Results and Discussion

In order to solve the problems identified, the Flipped Classroom (FC) approach was adopted which is defined by this paper´s author as "A pedagogical approach in which the conventional concept of classroom –based learning is inverted so that students are introduced to the learning material in class, then asked to work on their own, aided by technology in most cases, and then back in the classroom, instructional time is devoted to discussion and problem solving activities which require higher order thinking skills, encouraging group work. The teacher will go from someone in front of the classroom to someone who can move and interact with students and act as a facilitator. The movement is from classroom instruction to independent work or homework (self-study) and then again back to the classroom for feedback. (López M, 2019)

Based on the aforementioned definition, the author concludes that there are concepts that need to be carefully observed in order to implement a flipped classroom successfully:

- ✓ Organizing learning time
- ✓ Creating a repository of content
- ✓ Choosing what activities to flip
- ✓ Organizing collaborative learning
- ✓ Providing feedback
- ✓ Teacher is a facilitator

Rationale for the FC as a result of classroom research

The most significant asset of the FC is that students produce work individually on in group work prior to class, developing collaborative learning skills and then are more adequately prepared for productive class time.

Other reasons for the FC philosophy are the traditionally encountered reality of teachers related to little time for interactive and creative activities in the classroom, and those which require more students critical thinking, as well as students pace which is not always the same and make slower students lag behind, causing distress and disappointment. Today, taking advantage of student´s zest for technology is a great motivator to implement a FC model.

When the English classroom is flipped, teachers can save time in presenting content in the classroom that students can read, analyze and study on their own or in groups, giving teachers the possibility to devote more time to classroom activities and tasks which require peer interaction and debate where critical thinking skills come into play. The teacher can also use classroom time to explain more difficult aspects, check concepts and clarify questions that students identify while working by themselves.

Besides, teachers can personalize the teaching process and pay closer attention to individual differences. For example, students who need more attention can have more help on the part of the teacher while the rest of the class can be working in pair or group work, helping each other and practicing peer and group assessment.
The teacher can also have a more predominant role as Facilitator and Mediator, and is not the classroom center. This places learning closer to a student-centered approach which is the heart of a language classroom so that interaction and communication may be fostered.

Methodological suggestions for best practices

1. Video watching, listen to podcasting and reading articles can be done at home, while classroom time is used for more collaborative activities such as discussions, exploration of concepts, critical thinking and problem solving activities.

2. The problem of limited instructional time can be resolved as there are many activities that can be done as independent work.

3. Students need to transfer their learning to new situations which require higher order thinking skills.

4. The FC is related to the concept of blended learning.

5. The FC allows for self-paced and autonomous learning.

6. The role of the teacher in the FC is that of mentor, facilitator and supervisor. No more teacher-centered roles.

7. Teachers should train students flor flipped learning: skills like note taking, managing extra time, making responses on articles and responding to videos and podcasts.

8. Students can work art their own pace, advanced students won't get bored and less advanced will have the time they need. Students can pause, rewind, re -watch videos (self-paced)

9. Teacher´s and student´s roles change and become diversified.

10. Students can contribute to create a repository of digital resources for classroom activities as they are exposed to flipped learning.

11. The FC is a way to develop students´ metacognitive skills and self-ruled learning.

12. The FC Integrates ICT in ELT and learning: students can watch videos at home, or download them from the Internet under the teacher´s guidance.

13. Students´ motivation is increased to prepare for class assignments.

14. Students take more responsibility for their own learning.

15. Enhances understanding of assessment.

16. Promotes active, self-directed and autonomous learning and reinforces their electronic literacy skills.

17. Develops self-study habits and encourages different learning strategies to solve learning problems and face challenges.

18. Promotes group work and collaborative learning.

19. Maximizes speaking and productive activities in class which requires teacher´s monitoring.

20. Uses classroom time to do more productive activities, group work, pair work and problem solving activities based on what they have done on their own.
21. Makes students use technology wisely, for learning purposes.

The FC philosophy gives students the possibility to work at their own pace and so they have more time to think, analyze the learning material, activate critical thinking skills, take notes, go back to what they do not understand and manage their own learning. The great asset of working independently is that unlike in the classroom they are not rushed to keep up with the teacher´s and peers´ pace as some students are slower than others and need more time to analyze the classroom content and learn what others do faster. This, of course, results in better classroom performances as they come more practiced and so enables more dynamic and interactive activities which require more teacher´s attention and control.

The Flipped Classroom   and Bloom's Taxonomy

A significant feature of the FC is that it follows all the stages of the learning cycle of Bloom´s Taxonomy. A major success lies on the way teachers should organize learning time so that students do the low- level understanding activities on their own like watching videos or read texts, and then back to the classroom, they do the higher-level order thinking activities to demonstrate and apply knowledge of what they learned at home like debates, role-playing and problem-solving activities where they apply knowledge, interact, learn from others and are assessed under teacher´s control and supervision.

The taxonomic classification of the cognitive dimension is raised in a triangular shape of six steps, in which the first three are occupied by the most elementary thought processes, identified as the lower order ones, and the last three steps are occupied by more complex mental processes, called higher order. This means that learning begins with knowledge - the most elementary process and must end up with creation, the most complex process.
To connect this Bloom´s theory with the flipped classroom model, the following image can be used to illustrate it.
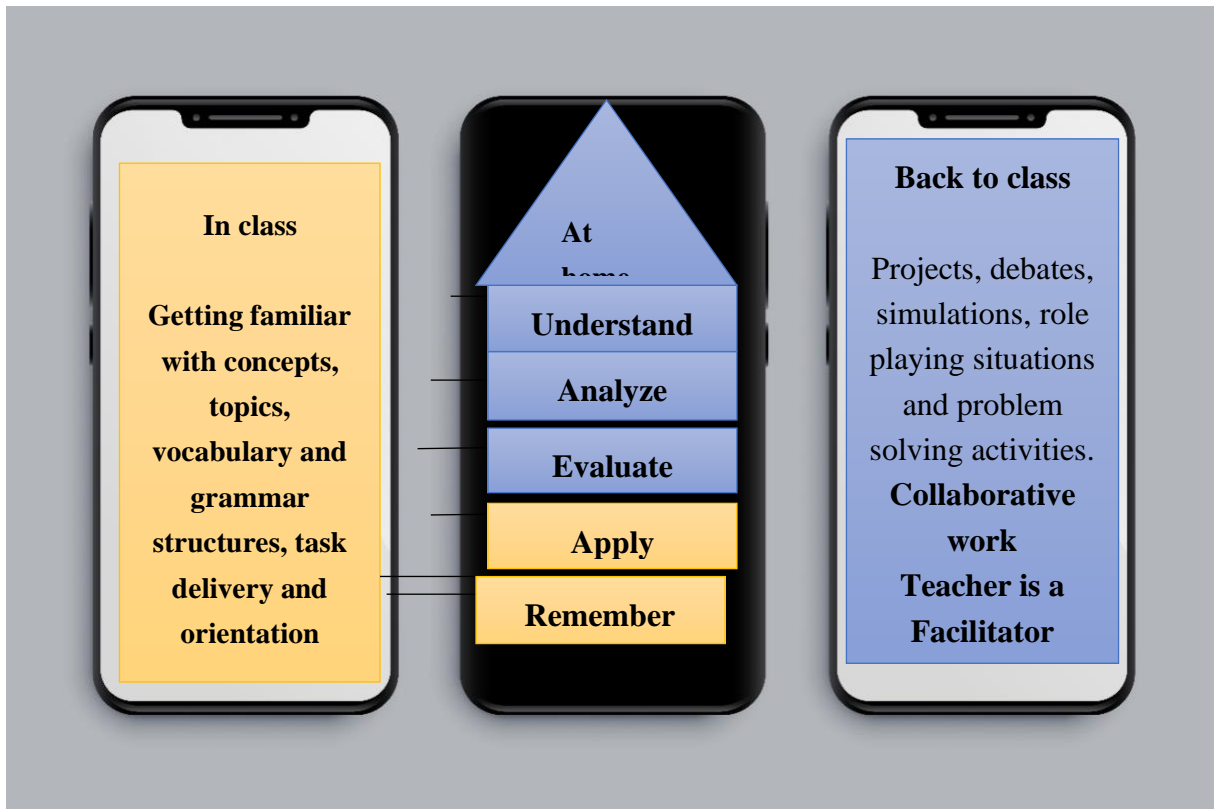
Figure 1 Bloom's theory and the flipped classroom model

In the FC, teachers introduce the new content, explains the objectives and orient the task in the classroom. When at home, students remember what they learned in the classroom and have more time to analyze what was given to them at their own pace. In the application stage when they are back to the classroom, teacher checks understanding, students explain to others and the teacher what they did at home and draw conclusions together, practice peer-assessment, analyze problems, find solutions and evaluate what they did by themselves. The whole process enables to develop creativity, peer assessment and critical thinking skills, paving the way for more complex tasks. One strong recommendation is to activate all the interaction patterns: pair and group work and to ensure that students will be provided feedback on the content they accessed at home.

The Flipped Classroom and the integrated-skill approach in English Language Teaching

In designing an integrated syllabus, the first step is to identify the contexts and situations in which learners will need to communicate. After the communicative events are identified in general terms, the next phase should work toward learners' functional goals along with the linguistic elements required to achieve them. The FC model favors an integrated- skill approach as its design allows for the combination of the four language skills. Speaking and listening are activated in the classroom to check and discuss activities and tasks students did on their own. At home, most materials students are given are based on videos, podcasts or reading texts so they have plenty of opportunities to enhance reading and listening skills. They are also required to take notes and respond to what they watch and read by writing essays and response papers to be presented in the classroom. This integration raises learners' proficiency levels and ensures students interaction, negotiation of meaning and collaboration, which is vital to create meaningful and purposeful interaction through language.

The FC embraces a task-based teaching which is probably the most widely adopted model of integrated language teaching today, and it is often considered to be the closest classroom simulation of real-life interaction.

An example that can illustrate a flipped lesson where skills are integrated:

VIDEO WATCHING (independent work): students are given a video to be watched at home. The topic is **Classroom Management** as it is addressed to English teacher trainees who are doing their in-service teaching. The teacher presents the topic, elicits thinking and discussion through related questions to motivate and prepare students for home video watching:

Questions provided to guide students´ independent work. (**While-watching the video**)

1. What is the first classroom management issue presented in the video?

2. What did the teacher do wrong from the start?

3. What other classroom management issues are presented in the video?

4.   How would you change the teacher´s behavior in the video if you were the teacher? What would you do different? Write the conversation and be ready to act it out.

 Back to class

Students will not show understanding of the video by the traditional answering of the questions given by the teacher. Instead, they will do a more creative activity as follows:

Activity 1: In group work, students will prepare a role playing activity about the teacher in the video and her negative behavior.

For this, a **situation** is given: There are several complaints about the teacher´s behavior: she picks on students whenever she has personal problems, yells at them, never sets the example asking them to do what she does not do herself, comes in late, does not greet the students, never shows concern about student´s personal problems, never has time to answer students´ questions when the class finishes and others that students may identify.

Different **roles** will be assigned and students will role play:

1. Students and Teacher

2. Students and School Principal

3. Teacher and School Principal

After students role play the situation given, class discussion is elicited, guided by questions like:

- ✓ What other classroom management issues do you have to cope with?
- ✓ What roles must teachers play to achieve successful classroom management?
- ✓ What is your biggest challenge in classroom management at present?
- ✓ What is the worst thing a teacher needs to avoid to manage his/ her classroom properly?
- ✓ What are the experiences in your practicum?

Activity 2

3. Discuss the following tips that are related to classroom management in your team. Explain positive or negative consequences. Tick the ones you need to pay more attention to in your classroom. Add other tips that have worked for you.

1. Provide constructive feedback when correcting mistakes and use correct language to do it.

2. Combine different class groupings like whole class, individual work, pair and group work to increase class interaction and engagement.

3. Do not humiliate students who do not perform well. Just help them.

4. Teach students that in learning a language mistakes are an inherent part of the process.

5. Greet your class upon entry.

6. Be the counselor when students need help.

7. Praise when students deserve it to raise their confidence.

8. Remain calm and avoid personal confrontation.

9. Leave your problems at the door. Do not take your bad mood to the classroom.

10. Discuss with your class a code of conduct. Set the rules from start.

11. Play music in English as a source for highly motivating activities.

Activity 3:

Homework: Write an essay in no less than 250 words entitled: **Golden rules of classroom management leads to successful teaching.** Be ready to make a class presentation based on your essay.

Despite all the great benefits of the FC, there are challenges to encounter, which teachers need to know in advance to anticipate solutions.

1. Students´ lack of motivation to work without being closely monitored by teachers.
2. Technology availability to students and teachers may hamper the process in some contexts.
3. FC requires a lot of self- discipline so teachers need to train students carefully.
4. Teachers can offer resistance to break the routine of the conventional classroom model. Resistance to change can also be a constraint for those teachers who adhere to traditional classroom practices and fear to use technology.
5. Students may not do the homework (but they do not do the homework in the traditional classroom either) and can come to class unprepared.
6. Teachers are challenged to find a variety of materials and design creative activities that are technologically-based.
7. Preparation for the FC can be very time-consuming as teachers have to compile learning resources or create their own, so that students may have sufficient material to work with on their own.

Considering the aforementioned challenges, it is strongly recommended that teachers start small by flipping some classes which means that not everything needs to be flipped from the start.

To minimize the risk of lack of students´ engagement in independent tasks, it is also recommended to enhance students´ motivation by selecting materials wisely, which implies good quality videos and podcasts that are attractive and thought provoking, as well as other interesting and relevant materials. Students can also be asked to contribute to create a repository of resources under the teacher´s guidance which gives them a sense of contribution to their own learning process.

Conclusions

The Flipped Classroom (FC) as a pedagogical approach encounters some challenges and biases due to the still existent deep- rooted conception some educators hold of the traditional classroom where everything needs to happen there, controlled and supervised by the omnipotent figure of the teacher.

One major challenge teachers have to face in the FC approach is that students may show up to the classroom unprepared, which certainly creates frustration on the part of the teacher. Likewise, those students who always do their independent tasks and are ready to work will have to cope with others who may not have watched the video assigned or other materials and so, make them waste time. It is important to point out that this is a common situation that is very likely to happen in the traditional classroom as well.

No matter how challenging the FC can be, it is a great strategy to promote self-directed and autonomous learning so it is worthwhile to face the challenges. To avoid the undesired situations, it is then important for teachers to raise awareness of the assets of the FC and the learning profits by explaining its rationale and preparing students to work following the methodological procedures of this model.

It is also very positive to create an appropriate atmosphere by encouraging team work and positive interdependence in collaborative learning. To accomplish this, teacher´s preparation and careful planning are essential to predict possible difficulties.

Besides, other colleagues who understand the benefits and the importance of incorporating new teaching methodologies in the digital age, may help those teachers to overcome barriers and biases by sharing their experiences and positive outcomes. One thing is certain; in the long run it will be thoroughly understood that the effort of implementing a FC absolutely pays off.

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