

## **PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES TO BE USED IN A FLIPPED CLASSROOM (AT EFL LESSONS)**

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### ***Rezumat***

*Prezentul articol propune o serie de activități pentru predarea-învățarea limbii engleze prin intermediul modelului flipped classroom (clasa răsturnată), dar, mai întâi de toate, reflectează asupra relevanței modelului pentru studierea limbii engleze ca limbă străină.*

Since its appearance (in 2006, when Jonathan Bergman and Aaron Sims set their first flipped classroom at Woodland Park High School in Woodland Park, Colorado), the flipped classroom model has arisen plenty of controversies: starting with teachers' lack of experience in using technologies and students' access to internet, going to students' wish to watch videos at home at all and make up a picture of further activities in the classroom and finishing with economic reasons of the flipped classroom for interested sectors (software developers, for instance). With all these, flipped classroom seems to have major impact on both, the supporters and the rejecting ones.

It is logical to think about flipped classroom model (learning the theoretical aspects of the lesson at home through pre-recorded videos or audios and spending class-time with practical activities, i.e. shifting class-work for homework and doing homework in class) when it comes to sciences, where lectures are an integral, necessary aspect. But how to use flipped classroom for those who teach practical classes, practical English, for example? It so happens that Moldovan universities enroll students who want to study a foreign language from the very elementary level, still following the pattern of double specialities (Romanian language and literature and English language, for example). In the situation when all the students in the group belong to the same level (A0, for instance), the problem is

excluded. It appears when the group consists of students with different foreign language levels; for example, in the case when out of 15 students, there are five beginners, three pre-intermediates and the rest are possess intermediate level. Personalized learning might be the answer, and flipped classroom may, hopefully, turn a good model for this. But how relevant is flipped learning for ELT?

The flipped classroom is simply a model of blended learning. It is not a methodology but rather a way of organizing learning and the learning content. In fact it really draws on several approaches to learning; namely a transmission (behaviorist approach to learning) and a social constructivist/task based approach. At home the students are watching videos, listening to podcasts and perhaps doing quizzes to check understanding. Most of this learning is very transmission based and does not involve collaboration of sharing of ideas (though in theory it could). Then the students come into class where they use their knowledge in group work and tasks. This learning is more collaborative in nature and fits more with a constructivist view of learning [2].

In the first instance ELT is student-centered: the teacher's role here is to guide the students to create utterances, to use new vocabulary and sample phrases in real communication, to use grammar structures correctly. This, in its turn, requires thorough study of grammar and vocabulary patterns, and it very often happens that the students do not understand them from the very first attempt (especially when we speak about grammar, text analysis, methods of EFL teaching). In this case the teacher is forced to revise it over and over again until all students understand the material properly. But this also means that the teacher is forced to take time from other important class activities, which is contrary to the course programme specifications. In such situations, flipped learning is a good solution, especially taking into consideration the variety of language levels of students. Pre-recorded videos, available to students will help them to listen to the theoretical material and to analyze the material for as

many times they will need and to ask the teacher just the right questions the next day. Very often, weaker students are reluctant to ask questions when the teacher is explaining the topic in class due to lack of time or fear to be considered not very intelligent by their mates, for instance. It will be valid in those situations when the students are absent from classes and the additional revision the next day didn't allow them to fully understand the theoretical material. Of course, videos should not be the ultimate teacher's choice in case of grammar topics teaching. There are plenty of e-books or web-sites students can analyze (e.g. Murphy's self study grammar books, which can certainly be used in printed version too), but they (videos) might be more relevant and efficient due to a familiar classroom atmosphere, listening to a certain person, having access to a variety of examples suiting each level.

The flipped classroom model might be a very efficient solution for master's students involved in professional activities or living in remote areas and being in impossibility of attending all the classes. Pre-recorded videos (possibly made at the lectures with their colleagues, which will also give an insight of individual work done by the attending group), presentations, additional readers (printed and e-books) are likely to help students be prepared for the further classes, assessments and examinations. For example, in the course of *Interculturality and Intertextuality* I have been teaching for three year already at the Faculty of Philology of Chisinau *Ion Creanga State Pedagogical University* within the Master's Course *Linguistic Education and Intercultural Communication*, students get all the materials used in class (presentations, videos, accompanied by additional readings/e-books) and all the three groups, so far, showed excellent results.

There are, of course, challenges of using flipped classroom model, especially at first cycle of higher education (bachelor), due to the fact that high school graduates do not have a well-grounded notion of individual work. Can the teacher have the certainty that all

the students watched the videos or the presentations, or studied the additional e-books? Is teacher's knowledge and experience sufficient to create flipped classroom contents? Which activities should language teachers use in their classes? How do we assess flipped learning? These are only a few challenges of the flipped classroom to be considered before shifting our course to flipped learning.

### **References**

1. Bergmann, J., Sams, A., *Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day*, ISTE, 2012.
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3. [http://www.academia.edu/15156755/A\\_Comparative\\_Study\\_of\\_Flipped\\_and\\_Traditional\\_Classrooms\\_in\\_an\\_EFL\\_environment](http://www.academia.edu/15156755/A_Comparative_Study_of_Flipped_and_Traditional_Classrooms_in_an_EFL_environment) (accessed on March, 23, 2016).