FLIPPED CLASSROOM: PROMOTING ACTIVE LSP TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Abstract:

This study aims to draw attention to the flipped learning model, which can be beneficial for various teaching subjects, including the language for specific purposes (LSP). This paper, following the results of existing teaching practices, recent studies, and qualitative research conducted, aims to examine the advantages, limitations, and solutions for the effective implementation of flipped LSP learning in higher educational contexts. The main purpose is to determine the potential benefits of the flipped classroom in promoting more active language teaching and learning and to facilitate solutions for its effective implementation. Additionally, it presents digital tools for both, synchronous and asynchronous learning, that can be utilized with the institutional LMS platforms. The students' perception of the flipped model and LSP provides valuable data for this research. The findings reveal the positive impact on the learning experience and satisfaction at a higher education level, which can reflect on learning outcomes. However, challenges are observed in regard to asynchronous interaction, such as digital distraction, technological issues y non-relevant learning material. The study facilitates ideas on how to perform instructional stages: presentation, practice, assessment, and feedback using determined digital tools.

Keywords:

Flipped classroom, Active teaching, Active learning, LSP, Digital Tools.

INTRODUCTION

A technological revolution impacted all educational sectors during and after the global sanitary crisis (COVID-19). As a result, the Internet and digital aids became a priority in all school systems. Teachers and students have been oriented in a relatively short period of time towards improving their digital skills and technological competencies. One of the main reasons was the adoption of learning management systems (LMS), and other teaching aids as an alternative for synchronous lessons and conventional classrooms. Online environments include a variety of tools that assist the educational processes. Discussion boards, streaming media, asynchronous environments, real-time chat, instant messaging, social networking, and many collaborative and interactive tools collectively named Web 2.0. take part in the teaching together with textbooks, worksheets, and other traditional materials [1].

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The CEFR- Companion Volume fosters action-oriented teaching and learning, and emphasizes interaction and collaboration through online dialogue and discussion, using the Internet for spoken or written tasks [2]. Such concepts promote autonomy and digital competencies of students and learners' active participation in the teaching and learning process. In that context, teachers are encouraged, within proposed frameworks for teachers' knowledge, to develop multiple skills, such as digital or technological, besides the linguistic, pedagogical, and content-related competencies [3].

Technology-enhanced language learning enables learners to develop their language skills using web-based tools and the Internet. One of the recent pedagogical learner-centered models within the blended and hybrid learning environments is a flipped classroom.

2. FLIPPED CLASSROOM AND TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LANGUAGE LEARNING

Different interactive learner-centered methods, such as active learning, collaborative learning, game-based learning, and blended or hybrid learning aim to provide effective teaching processes with improved learning outcomes. Therefore, educators and institutions have incorporated LMS platforms to facilitate an effective application of interactive teaching methodologies in virtual environments.

Additionally, studies reveal the positive impact of technology and the online environment on students' satisfaction, engagement, and progress in learning [4]. In the context of foreign or second language learning, using different kinds of technology can have positive impacts on students' progress in EFL/ESL, within different educational contexts, providing an enjoyable language learning environment [4]. Consequently, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) or Technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) has the potential to provide autonomous and self-paced learning, allowing teachers and learners presentation, practice, feedback, and evaluation [5]. One of the innovative teaching models based on TELL and active learning is the flipped classroom or the flipped learning methodology. The methodology gained popularity in educational contexts in 2006 when Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams started to employ this original way of teaching in their subject of Chemistry, to "rich every student in every class, every day". This model is supported by the use of technology and blended learning environments,

in both, synchronous and asynchronous forms of interaction. It promotes an inverted structure of the traditional classroom: lessons should be done at home and homework or practical activities in class [6]. In other words, learners are encouraged to learn autonomously, outside of class, the content provided by a teacher, in the form of video lesson or video presentation (grammar, vocabulary, introduction to the new topic, etc.), and the class time is dedicated to practice, conversation, and problem solving through active participation and collaboration between peers and teachers. In that context, teachers ought to create suitable learning situations applicable to the specific class and respond to students' learning styles and strategies. Studies reveal that flipped methodology and TELL have a positive impact on the development of language skills and learning outcomes: outside of class, during self-teaching periods, for reading, writing, and audio-visual comprehension skills [7], [8], an oral performance or speaking skills can be improved in the class-time period [9]. Flipped learning can have a positive effect on overall students' language learning outcomes [10].

3. FLIPPED LSP LEARNING

After COVID-19 pandemic has not only increased the use of technology for language teaching and learning but demand for virtual courses. This fact is easy to observe in international congress and publications where prevail research on the use of digital tools and learning in online environments. Flipped learning is a model that incorporates online interaction combined with virtual or in-classroom. The asynchronous interaction is supported by LMS platforms and offers students a range of study materials: video lessons, presentations, e-books, interactive exercises, assignments, quizzes, games, and others. One of the most prominent benefits of such an environment is time adaptability. The flexible time management allows self-paced learning and developing a variety of language and other skills, including digital, collaborative, and critical thinking skills. Additionally, other benefits are recognized, besides the schedule elasticity, such as accessibility, equity, and inclusion, as well as greater academic outcomes and strengthened student retention of the learning content [11]. In the LSP context, the aim is to improve the language skills in a specific field, but also the macro-skills and micro-skills related to the specific area of the use of language [12]. To implement effectively the flipped LSP model, four aspects should be followed: flexible environments, professional educators, intentional culture, and learning culture [13].

Additionally, it is necessary to determine a need analysis, analyze the specific discourse and formulate the curriculum [14]. The essential aspect of the flipped LSP classroom is related to strategies based on communication aspects in specific fields (business, medicine, tourism, diplomacy, tourism, etc.). On the other hand, the main protagonist of the learning process is a student, who is actively engaged in learning. The multidisciplinary character of language teachers is indispensable because they must develop, the target language, range of socio-linguistic competences in order to prepare students to communicate in the specific professional fields. Therefore, it might be a complex task, to develop effective teaching strategies and design meaningful material that encourages students to focus on learning, minimizing the potential for digital distraction [15]. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance curiosity through critical thinking with attractive content, enabling communication or interaction through learner-centered activities [16].

The solution for effective teaching performance in LSP is related to constant scientific updating and teachers training in technological and pedagogical aspects since the flipped courses have gained popularity in a range of educational systems. Besides active learning it is crucial to encourage active teaching, to determine the typology of effective materials and engaging activities, and to provide valuable and immediate feedback in each activity, observing continuously the progress of learners [17]. The students of LSP courses are in most of the cases adults, professionals, or students of different study programs (Economy, Medicine, Tourism, HR, Sport).

4. DIGITAL TOOLS FOR THE FLIPPED LEARNING

Selection and evaluation of learning and teaching material (LTM) should be based on the previous need analysis and learning style analysis of students. The engaging tools must enhance interest and attention and be rich in learning content. The students should be enhanced to develop both linguistic and other skills, such as critical thinking, collaborative and digital skills. There should be a possibility for self-assessment with interactive tools that provide immediate feedback as well. Regarding the potential challenges, certain students feel motivated in the self-paced learning model, but, on the other hand, other students can feel alone and easily bored with the course. Therefore, tasks, materials, and tools should be various and adaptable to respond to all types of learners, and specific course topics.

The solution is the creation of personal, purposeful, and context-based material, for both, synchronous and asynchronous learning. Such a task is complex and requires additional teachers' time, effort, and multidisciplinary competencies. Fortunately, some of the digital tools that were proven effective in the existing teaching practices do not require advanced technological knowledge, and will be presented as an example:

1. *LMS platforms* (Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Edmodo, Blackboard, and others). This institutional multi-functional tool enables all stages of teaching process: presentation, practice, communication, assignments and feedback. It allaws the incorporation of various materials and information, links, presentations and documents. It facilitates communication via chat and video-conferencing tool.

2. *Edpuzzle.* This platform is flipped classroom friendly tool. It offers video editing and formative assessment features that enable teachers to organize their video lessons and provide to students a reading, writing, speaking and listening practice. Teachers can use ready-made video materials or create their own video lesson with personalized questions and tasks.

3. *Flipgrid* - A website that enables teachers to create personalized collaborative tasks ("grids") in form of the message boards, to foster video discussions among students on selected topics, facilitating an active participation and speaking activities.

4. *Ted-Ed.* This on-line library contains original educative videos, and it is an international platform for teachers to create their own interactive lessons. The lesson includes a title, an introduction, a range of multiple choice or open-ended questions, suggested additional resources, interactive class discussion, and a final task. The use of this tool facilitate the practice of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, with a numerous relevant topics.

5. *Nearpod* - This digital tool enable teachers to create interactive presentations, facilitating multimedia learning and formative assessments. It contains quizzes, polls, videos, collaborate boards, and other tools that permit design of personalized teaching tasks and materials.

6. *Learningapps* -A versatile multi-tool platform that enables teachers and students to create and use a variety of interactive multimedia activities.

Teachers can create their own activities, based on a variety of templates for interactive learning or practising of any teaching content (grammar, vocabulary, listening, reading, etc.)

7. *Kahoot and Quizizz.* Both are online quiz maker tools that facilitate presentations, practise, assessment and feedback in the form of game-show. Teachers can use and adapt ready-made learning quizzes or create their own activities. Both tools are used among language teachers for formative assessments, assignments or in-class activities.

All presented tools are accessible on any device which is connected to the Internet. They are interactive, multi-modal and can include audio-visual features. The suggested web-based tools are teacher-friendly and permit their creative use, as well as adaptation and design of personalized materials, tasks, assignments and assessment activities. The created activities can be shared with students and performed either synchronously, in-class, either asynchronously, out-of-class, in accordance with concrete teaching and learning objectives.

5. METHODOLOGY: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS-FOCUS GROUP

The aim of this study is to identify the benefits, drawbacks, and solutions for the flipped LSP learning model. For this reason, the study suggests effective tools to encourage active teaching and learning to improve learning outcomes. Consequently, additional research was conducted to illustrate the opinion of potential direct users - university students of different programs and professional orientations who also share a range of common characteristics. The selected students attend lessons in a hybrid learning model, both synchronously and asynchronously, at the same university (Singidunum University, Belgrade, Serbia). They learn two foreign languages: English (as a required subject during the four-year study period), and a second foreign language of their choice (Spanish, German, Italian, Russian, Greek, and French). It is important to emphasize that all students learn both foreign languages in the general language courses. Consequently, the paper provides a qualitative analysis in the form of a focus group as valuable information that reinforces research data. The authors adopted this research method, based on interviews, to collect different students' perspectives on the topic of relevance, in a more open, informal, and relaxed way. The participants in the focus groups are six students (two male, four female), representing various study fields and professional orientations: Business Administration, Human Resources, Sport Management, Tourism and Hospitality, and Information Technology. Five students attend programs conducted in Serbian and one of them is enrolled in the international program. The participants share various common characteristics that relate them to the topic of the research: all of them are students of the same educational institution, they are similar in age (19-23 years old) and all students are learners of both, English and Spanish as their foreign languages. Furthermore, the chosen students are interested in different professional areas and attend lectures on a regular base, in a synchronous form. The learners were highly motivated to participate in the discussion within the focus group because of the topic's relevance and the opportunity to openly express their opinions on issues that were significant to them.

The discussion questions were the following five:

1. Do students understand the meaning of LSP?

2. Would they rather choose the LSP course instead of the general language course? Why?

3. Are the students familiar with the concept of Flipped Classroom?

4. Do the students believe that the Flipped model could be an effective and functional teaching model in their university context? Why?

5. What benefits and challenges are included in flipped LSP learning?

Regarding question 1, about their associations with the LSP, the participants were cohesive in their answers: no one of the students was familiar with the actual concept of language for specific purposes. One student related it with the use of language in particular linguistic variations, and another one connected the LSP with historical development and language influences. After they were informed about the meaning of the concept and its pedagogical purposefulness in the language educational contexts, students agreed that English is a necessary language for them, and affirmed that they would appreciate the possibility to attend ESP courses to acquire relevant language and communication tools for their future employment, with reference to the specific disciplines, focusing on technical, scientific, business, tourism, and other related aspects. When asked the same question about Spanish, students pointed out that for this language, they prefer to acquire basic but effective knowledge and skills, to understand and communicate in general social contexts.

In respect of question 2 and the potential replacement of general language courses with the LSP, five of six participants agreed that general English is necessary for the beginner courses, but prefer LSP for more advanced levels (third and fourth academic years). One student affirmed that the LSP would be beneficial from the first beginning, in the field of Sports discipline, due to the student's previous knowledge. However, participants were cohesive in their opinion, agreeing that English for Specific Purposes is more significant for their further language education since they have the general pre-knowledge of English. Participants would prefer the university classes to be specifically oriented to the professional language, that can be applied in the job environments. In answer to question 3, if they are familiar with the flipped learning model all participants affirmed that it is a completely new concept for them. Once they understood the flipped classroom premises, with prioritization of active learning and speaking in class, and self-teaching at home, and outside of class, all six participants said that have never experienced such a way of learning and expressed positive reactions regarding this innovative model. With reference to question 4, the students pointed out that the flipped approach, as "something new" might be interesting and motivating for students. It would allow self-paced learning and autonomy for every learner, particularly in the case of more "theoretical subjects". The participants agreed that for better learning would be more effective to read or watch recordings and lesson presentations at their pace before class, and then, during class discuss with peers and professors, solve problems, or demonstrate the practical application of knowledge. Finally, in answer to question 5, the students recognized many advantages of learning a language within an inverted model, such as learner autonomy, accessible material to everyone, flexibility in time and space, and self-paced learning. They also positively valued the benefits of this model for students and teachers' flexible "class-time management", related to preparation out of the class.Nevertheless, according to the focus group participants, their positive attitude about flipped classrooms has been restricted with regard to language learning, especially to language for specific purposes. In regards to disadvantages, the participants agreed about several challenging aspects of flipped LSP learning. Primarily, it might be very challenging to learn a second language oriented to a specific discipline, autonomously and online, owing to specific language aspects - grammar, vocabulary, skills, and other elements, that are incorporated into particular language and communication premises within specialized areas (tourism, hospitality, sport, business, IT and economy sectors). Students prefer to be thought by their language teachers, synchronously (face-to-face or virtually), and provided with clear explanations, instructions, and examples. The students affirmed that individual learning and self-teaching in online asynchronous mode can be challenging, due to the lack of attention. Another challenge that can be a restrictive factor for learning is the digital or technological equipment, or learning environment that is not optimal and functional for everyone. Only in the classroom, do all the students have the same learning conditions.

Regarding the suggested solutions for improvement of the teaching and learning practices, the focus-group members provided cohesive and creative answers. The ESP courses should be introduced in the third year of studies, or earlier, but for Spanish, they agreed that LSP could form part of the general Spanish course. Students support the introduction of the flipped classroom in a gradual way, starting from the beginning of their studies. They agreed that information should be accessible and clearly presented for all in the LMS university platform. The video lessons or presentation materials must not be long. Students would feel more encouraged for autonomous learning if their active participation is awarded (with additional points or other stimulative rewards). The participants also suggested a gradual transition from the traditional classroom to the flipped models, starting from the primary and secondary schools, but also a parallel implementation at universities, to make students more familiar with active and flipped learning.

6. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

Following based on previous findings here are some pedagogical implications of this research:

- The flipped classroom is an effective model within the hybrid learning methods and it can be applied in different courses and teaching subjects, including the LSP.

- The flipped learning ought to be implemented gradually, starting from the beginning of the course. Students need to be instructed in a clear way about all teaching and learning procedures but also provided with effective and meaningful tools and materials to learn actively and autonomously.

- The synchronous interaction: face-to-face or virtual teaching sessions in real time are essential, because they facilitate direct interaction among teachers and students, allowing teachers to keep

under control both aspects- learning progress and learning problems-, and enable them to act accordingly.

- Duration of the tasks and lessons: the video lessons, presentations, and tasks should be no longer than 15 minutes each, and accessible on the LMS university platform.

- Students reveal that they learn better when their progress and participation are awarded (with additional points or with other stimulative rewards). Helpful tools for that purpose are game-based quizzes and tasks with feedback.

- Gradual transition: A step-by-step change from a traditional classroom to flipped learning should be implemented in both, lower and higher educational levels.

- LSP courses: The focus on specific terminology and determined communicative contexts are preferable for university classes. The language classes should be specifically oriented to the professional language context, which can be applied in various work environments.

- Challenges: Individual learning and self-teaching in online asynchronous mode might be challenging because of several reasons: lack of concentration and digital distraction, non-stimulative learning environments, technological issues y non-relevant learning material.

7. CONCLUSION

The study examined and identified benefits, drawbacks, and solutions for the flipped LSP learning model. On the one hand, it was based on existing teaching experiences and recent research papers, and on the other hand, it suggested selected digital tools to encourage active teaching and learning with the aim to improve learning outcomes in the hybrid and flipped learning environments. Finally, a conducted qualitative research illustrates the perception of students, potential learners of the flipped LSP courses. In conclusion, the creative and personalized use of digital tools in the flipped language for specific purposes can facilitate numerous advantages for both teachers and students. The asynchronous interaction can be beneficial for self-paced learning and self-teaching, offering flexibility and adaptable learning time management. However, synchronous teaching or face-to-face interaction in real time remains essential. In direct interaction, teachers and students are allowed to have better control over both aspects-learning progress and learning difficulties, which enables them to examine and find creative solutions. By integrating flipped LSP learning, institutions can facilitate both active teaching and autonomous learning, promoting the development of competencies, regular assessment, and pleasant learning environments.

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