

## **A workshop on flipping grammar component to boost oral production workshop-**

### **Reflection**

#### **Abstract**

Teaching grammar in an EFL classroom requires time not only for students to fully master a grammar topic but also to put what they have learned into practice in communicative activities. Hyler and Hicks (2017) recommend that teachers make use of technological tools to help save in-class time, develop students' communicative competencies, and connect grammatical topics to their real lives. The Flipped Learning approach engages students by creating a student-centered atmosphere, enhancing students' autonomy and involving students in a constructive process of production. This paper summarizes a workshop in which participants became familiar with the main concepts of flipped learning approach and an inverted Bloom's taxonomy, as well as some supporting technological tools, applying these in a realistic, hands-on lesson planning exercise.

**Key words:** grammar instruction; flipped learning; communicative competences; Bloom's taxonomy.

#### **Introduction**

Grammar instruction is one of the main components of many language-teaching approaches. In an English course, learners are expected to master grammatical structures and to use them with confidence when producing the target language in communicative activities. However, planning lessons that contain grammar instruction is sometimes difficult for teachers. Course syllabi can require a large quantity of grammatical content to be covered, which can in turn require a great deal of in-class time to teach, with the risk of

reducing the amount of remaining time for students to practice use of the grammar in speaking or writing products. In other cases, grammar practice may simply be neglected in the classroom, or relegated to homework with the result that it becomes a daunting challenge that students must face alone.

However, implementing a flipped-learning approach can leverage in-class time, helping teachers enhance student-centered lessons, peer-instruction, and autonomy. In the group learning space, students can use their time more effectively to address questions about grammatical topics and practice what they learn through communicative activities. The present paper discusses how flipped grammar instruction can be included in any EFL program to help strengthen real connections between the topic of grammar and its functional use in language.

## **Theoretical underpinnings**

### **Flipped Learning**

Understandings of flipped learning have been evolving rapidly in recent years. The approach was initially referred to as the *inverted classroom* (Lage, Platt, & Treglia, 2000), though Bergmann and Sams (2012) coined the term *flipped classroom*. Both these terms refer to an inversion (i.e. flipping) of what has been traditionally been done in the classroom and through homework, using out-of-class time to deliver content through pre-recorded lectures and moving tasks and activities back into the classroom itself. More recently (2014), the Flipped Learning Network (FLN) proposed a formal definition of flipped learning:

Flipped Learning is a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter. (FLN, para. 1)

This pedagogical approach conceives of two types of learning spaces: group and individual. In the individual learning space, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the contents of pre-prepared or pre-recorded lectures on the given topic (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Out-of-class tasks supported by the use of technological tools help learners use their independent work time to complete activities that reinforce their learning of the topic. In this part of the learning process, students make use of lower-order thinking skills (LOTS), such as understanding and remembering. However, in the group learning space, students then apply what they learned out-of-class through in-class activities that require higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), such as applying, analyzing, creating, and evaluating. Flipping the classroom thus helps establishing a new mindset in which attention is directed away from the teacher, toward the learner and learning (Bergmann & Sams, 2012, p. 12).

### **Grammar**

Approaches to teaching grammar for additional-language acquisition have changed considerably since the dominance of the grammar translation method of a century ago. For example, Hinkel and Fotos (2001) suggest teaching not only grammar forms, but also creating grammar awareness in learners; that is, that learners should recognize that the grammar they must learn has a communicative purpose. In addition, Hyler and Hicks

(2017) suggest that teachers can make use of Kolb's (2011) Triple E Framework to help them make use of technological tools to design and implement meaningful and effective grammar lessons. The Triple E Framework envisions three levels, engagement, enhancement and extension that help teachers both engage the learner and promote commitment towards the content. Teachers also promote enhancement scaffolding to further support learner's acquisition of given grammatical topics, and during the lessons themselves, teachers create opportunities for students make connections between the given grammatical topic and their personal/professional lives.

### **Workshop on flipped grammar lesson planning**

In the 15<sup>th</sup> research symposium held at Universidad de La Sabana, the author presented a workshop on which the present paper is based on. The participants worked in groups and went through different steps. First, each group selected a grammatical topic, and then designed a flipped lesson to teach it using a resources kit that included: a pre-designed lesson-planning form based on Pilgreen's version of Bloom's taxonomy (2015), pre-selected learning outcomes based on this taxonomy, and pre-selected verbs to be used in the lesson activities. To plan the lessons, the participants discussed in their groups the activities that would be included in each lesson. Participants worked towards full grammar lesson plans that realized the opportunities for flipping their own teaching contexts, generating ideas for both in-class and out-of-class activities. They also designed scaffolded activities for the group learning spaces intended promote students' use of HOT skills. The workshop concluded with participants sharing their experiences from their groups' planning process; these included considerations on the design of activities to promote analysis of grammatical

topics using authentic material, the benefits of having time in-class to promote self- and peer-evaluation, and ways of providing extra practice for students on the topics of focus.

## **Conclusions**

One of the greatest challenges for “flippers” is the design of meaningful learning activities that develop students’ higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, creation, or evaluation (Bergmann, 2018). By flipping the grammar component in additional-language lessons, informational content and input can be accessed by learners in their own time, while in-class time can be devoted to scaffolded language use in realistic communicative tasks. Flipped learning is an approach that has been shown to be successful when teachers understand the importance of using class time to create engaging learning spaces. By flipping the traditional classroom paradigm, learners can benefit not only from increased opportunities to interact with each other as they practice a pre-taught grammar topic but also from increased time to reflect on their learning. Such an approach can help teachers differentiate their classrooms and provide students with personalized feedback on their learning and products, thereby guiding learners to greater levels of achievement.

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