

Full Length Research

A Model for Flipping the Classroom for the Teaching of Pronunciation to Learners of English in Higher Education Institutions

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This paper argues that flipping the classroom which entails giving students time to study lecture materials online, on their own outside of the class, before joining the class for a thorough examination or discussion of the subject matter, is quite useful and fast gaining currency. The model takes advantage of the fact that we are surrounded by technology in virtually all aspects of our lives. It lends itself favourably to the growing nature of learner populations. Specifically, the paper adopts the teaching of pronunciation, with reference to English vowels, to show the steps involved in the present model of flipping the classroom. Typically, it presents a sample lecture on pronunciation which is meant to be posted online for students to study beforehand. It concludes that flipping the classroom is a veritable pedagogical model, and recommends that institutions of higher learning should encourage its use and make concerted efforts in providing digital facilities for use by teachers and students.

Keywords: flipping the classroom, pedagogy, technology.

INTRODUCTION

According to EDUCAUSE (2012), flipping the classroom is a pedagogical model in which the typical lecture and homework elements of a course are reversed. By this model, "short video lectures are viewed by students at home before the class session, while in-class time is devoted to exercises, projects, or discussions" (EDUCAUSE,2012, para.1). Touzani (2016) stated that the flipped classroom is a pedagogical model that involves reversing the order of traditional education, moving the lecture part of the lesson home. According to him, the purpose is to optimise the time in class dedicating it, for example, to attend the special needs of each student to develop cooperative projects or to work by projects.

Kaushik (2016:61) explained more thoroughly that:

Flipped classroom represents an interesting application brought about by merging the learning value in both

online and face-to-face interactions. In this approach, direct teaching is taken outside the classroom and put on the learning platform using lecture videos and presentations, enabling the learners to learn at home or their own personal space anywhere, by interacting with the materials.

The classroom or personal interaction time is then allocated for dynamic interactive learning where the teacher facilitates the application of concepts learned by the students on their own (Kaushik,2016). The teacher guides peer-to-peer interaction and creative engagement with subject matter through individual or group projects, analysis of situations using role-play or other participative activities.

As noted by Thakare (2018 para.1), "...a flipped classroom is where students are given study material like short video lectures, reference notes, for studying the topic beforehand". The classroom time involves

discussions over these topics and application-based learning using activities like quizzes, group assignments and debates based on study material provided earlier. A study conducted by Moffett and Mill (2014) revealed that the flipped classroom model received highly favourable feedback from most of the veterinary students in the study. Of course, this may explain why the flipped classroom has gained wide currency in universities, the world over. Jensen (2015 para.1) corroborated this position as she observed that "...this model has gained such popularity... that there is now a Flipped Learning. Even in higher education flipped learning is gaining significant ground". Thakare (2018 para.1) pointed out that "as an educator, I'm sure you must have come across the idea of a flipped classroom in the recent past. There has been a rapidly increasing trend of flipped learning..." While commenting on the fact that technological advances have impacted almost every facet of modern culture, Jensen (2015) asserted that the flipped classroom is one of the most recently emerged and popular technology-infused learning models.

EDUCAUSE (2012) counselled that there is no single approach for the flipped classroom—the term is widely used to describe almost any class structure that provides prerecorded lectures followed by in-class exercise. It observed that online quizzes or activities can be interspersed to test what students have learned. Teachers can lead in-class discussions such that students can collaborate and practice what they learned from the lectures they watched outside the classroom. It may be appropriate to point out here that students are at liberty to use the pre-recorded materials as they wish. They may replay and watch as required. On the part of the teachers, the flipped classroom calls for thorough preparation.

Flipping the classroom is often accompanied by technology which can be easily accessed by students in higher education. What is more, the model is appreciated most in higher education settings due to students' relative capability for independent study. Indeed, in flipping the classroom, a learning platform could be selected for the out of classwork. "Students can learn at their own pace, equipped with notebooks, tablets and smartphones using classroom extensions that can be accessed at any time and from any place (Dhanarajan, 2016:1).

Flipping the classroom hinges on the premise that one does well in a familiar situation. Reflecting on this pedagogical model, in keeping with the principle of familiarity, Lesley University (2015 para 2) observed that:

Because the students are already familiar with the material when class begins, they can spend their time collaborating with their teacher and other students to solidify their understanding, either individually or in small groups. Less 'sit and listen' equals more 'do and

learn' – and the flipped model is making class time more enjoyable, productive and engaging for students and teachers.

As explained by EDUCAUSE (2012), the use of video and other prerecorded media puts lectures under the control of the students: they can watch, rewind and fast-forward as needed. Of course, this contrasts well with the traditional lecture whereby students make determined effort to capture what is being said in the lecture with little achievement. They often miss a lot from a lecture in an effort to reflect on the point at hand. Users of the flipped model do convincingly argue that early exposure of materials to students enables them to get used to the content just in readiness for an in-class activity. What is more, many teachers believe that one can easily talk to thousands of students but will find it extremely difficult to teach them. This is what flipping the classroom presupposes.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to show that flipping the classroom is a fruitful pedagogical model and to exemplify the steps involved in it.

FLIPPING THE CLASSROOM

Presented below is a sample approach to flipping the classroom for learners of English in higher education, with reference to English vowels. The English vowels presented, therefore, form the study material to be posted online for students to access. Indeed, they form the lecture material to be studied by the students outside of the class, before the class session. The very process of giving students lecture material, often through online video, to be studied at home and later discussed, together with exercises during class time, is "flipping the classroom".

The English Vowels

Vowel sounds are produced with a relatively free flow of air. They are all typically voiced" (Yule,2010:33). English vowels are basically classified into two: monophthongs (pure vowels) and diphthongs. Presented below, between two slashes or oblique lines, are vowel phonemes with the corresponding spelling forms they represent in word contexts.

Monophthongs

- /i:/ a long front vowel as in:
- feel, tree, see, feet
- sea, bead, plead, peak
- believe, relief, belief
- theme, me, e

- ceiling, seize, receive, perceive
- /i/ a short front vowel as in:
- milk, bid, pig, hid
- pocket, he, excuse, socket
- colony, happy, rhythm, pity
- village, message, savage, sausage
- build, guilt, biscuit, circuit
- /e/ a short front vowel as in:
- dead, head, wealth, health
- many, maid
- leopard
- bed, dress, tense, merry
- /æ/ a short front vowel as in:
- bad, sack, cat, plan
- plait, plaid
- /ɑ:/ a long back vowel as in:
- bard, bath, father, after
- park, large, barge
- calm, alms, half, calf
- aunt, laugh
- heartily, hearth, heart, heartless
- /ɔ/ a short back vowel as in:
- cot, hot, hostel, pot
- wander, want, what, wan
- cough, trough
- /ɔ:/ a long back vowel as in:
- court, four, pour
- ball, talk, walk, all,
- warm, ward, warn, war
- fault, haul, haughty, taught
- hawk, paw, bawl, law
- /ʊ/ a short back vowel as in:
- pull, full, put,
- cook, wood, book
- would, could, should
- /u:/ a long back vowel as in:
- moon, spoon, food, pool
- glue, true, blue, sue
- crew, chew, grew, shrew
- who, two, do, lose
- rule, June, rude, brute
- /ʌ/ a short central vowel as in:
- love, mother, come, son
- cut, cup, bud, bus
- touch, rough, enough, trouble
- /ɜ:/ a long central vowel as in:
- first, third, bird, thirst
- world, word, worship, work
- nurse, curse, turn, curl
- courtesy, journey, scourge, courteous
- /ə/ a short central vowel as in:
- above, abstract, attempt, abuse

- freedom, confirm, doctor, debtor
- mother, letter, writer, speaker
- labourer, neighbour, colour, harbour

Diphthongs

In addition to single vowel sounds, we regularly create sounds that consist of a combination of two vowel sounds, known as diphthongs (Yule, 2010).

There are two sets of diphthongs:

- closing diphthongs move towards the closed position;
- centring diphthongs move towards the centre. All diphthongs are vowel glides.
- /ei/ a closing diphthong as in: pain, fail, vein, aid, cake
- /əu/ a closing diphthong as in: over, coke, home, know, goat
- /ai/ a closing diphthong as in: time, style, high, buy, eye
- /ɔi/ a closing diphthong as in: voice, noise, toy, toil, boy
- /au/ a closing diphthong as in: mouth, how, town, house, now
- /iə/ a centring diphthong as in: here, deer, severe, fear, ear
- /eə/ a centring diphthong as in: chair, hair, share, wear, care
- /uə/ a centring diphthong as in: tour, sure, your, cure, lure.

Distribution of Learning Materials

The first step in teaching vowel sounds by flipping the classroom would be to develop a quality lecture video and post it online for students to watch. Typically, a relevant platform that makes simple the creation and distribution of such learning material online, is required. Any reading materials relevant to the lecture could be shared as well to serve as supplementary work on vowel sounds. Students are instructed to make notes on the key points in the video watched and materials read. They may choose to watch recordings individually or with friends and discuss issues of interest. They are encouraged to note points of difficulty on which they would require clarification during class time. Students are at liberty to watch the video at their convenience in readiness for the in-class session.

The In-Class Session

The in-class session of flipping the classroom is carried out for the express purpose of consolidating what **004. Glob. Educ. Res. J.**

learnt during the out of class activities, for example studying the video lecture posted. Basically, the in-class activities include exercises, projects and or discussions. For the lesson on vowel sounds, which lecture had been presented earlier, the teacher would do well to first introduce the subject matter, reminding students of the key areas of the lecture: monophthongs and diphthongs. The teacher then leads a discussion on the question of inconsistency in English spellings which results in mispronunciation by students whose first language orthography of words is phonetic. This is in contrast to the orthography of English words which is not phonetic. Students are encouraged to make inquiries about the lecture content and interact with one another.

Another stage of the in-class activities, which is expected to consolidate what the students had learnt in the online lecture on pronunciation, is giving them dictionary work. Preferably, in groups, students are to find the pronunciation of words written on the whiteboard. Many standard dictionaries make use of phonemic or broad transcription. The students are to use these standard dictionaries to enable them to write the phonemic transcription of words as in the following examples.

feast/fi:st/	home/həʊm/
theme/ei:m/	mouth/maʊθ/
village/vɪlɪdʒ/	style/staɪl/
many/meni/	town/taʊn/
law/lɔ:/	sour/saʊə/

This exercise is crucial in that it provides practice on the theoretical foundation the students had laid through watching their video lecture. Yet another stage of in-class activities which completes our focus on this model of flipping the classroom is giving students work on the use of minimal pairs. Mathews (2007:246) defined a minimal pair as “a pair of words distinguished by a single phoneme” as in /pin/ and /bin/. In groups, students are requested to form minimal pairs for the purpose of distinguishing between them.

It is during an in-class activity that students get both recognition and production practice of words. This is quite in keeping with the aim of pronunciation teaching, to help students produce English speech which is both acceptable and intelligible. Students are expected to use the words transcribed in contexts of continuous speech, for example using them in sentences and short stories. For the purpose of emphasis, flipping the classroom entails: giving the students online lectures to study at home, and giving them the opportunity to put into practice, during the in-class session, what they had learnt online.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper is a pedagogical model on flipping the classroom. It adopts the teaching of pronunciation to

learners of English in higher education institutions to show the steps involved in flipping the classroom. Two key aspects of flipping the classroom have been exemplified. First, the paper presents the study material meant to be posted online, in the form of video lecture, for students to watch at home or elsewhere. It as well shows how the material, which is on pronunciation, covering monophthongs and diphthongs is to be distributed. The second aspect of flipping the classroom as involved in this model is the in-class session, during which the teacher and the students come together in the classroom for a thorough examination or discussion of the subject matter, together with the adequate practice of what had been earlier learnt. Indeed, the paper demonstrates that flipping the classroom, which makes use of technology is quite fruitful and fast gaining currency. The paper, therefore, recommends that institutions of higher learning should encourage flipping the classroom as a pedagogical model, and make sustainable efforts in providing digital facilities for use by teachers and students.

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