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THE USE OF A FLIPPED CLASSROOM APPROACH IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Abstract. In the article the essence of the approach «flipped classroom» is revealed. The idea of this approach is that the main stages of the teaching and learning process, such as classroom activities and homework, change places. It means that the theoretical material is studied by students on their own by watching videos and listening to audio lectures recorded by the teacher, or preformed materials downloaded from websites on the Internet, while in the classroom the students are involved in fulfilling practical tasks and discussion of problematic issues. The potential of the flipped classroom approach in teaching foreign languages to university students is determined, its pros and cons in foreign language teaching are identified, the experience of using this approach and some of its results are described. It is underlined that the

flipped classroom approach assumes students' unlimited access to electronic resources. The technology can be considered pedagogically sound because it provides personalized-differentiated learning and student-centered instruction. The pros and cons of the approach are specified. Among the pros the following is pointed out: learning at one's own pace, advance student preparation, overcoming the limitations of class time, increasing the participation in the classroom. Among the cons are students' being lack of equipment and unlimited access to the Internet resources; there is also no way to guarantee students will adapt to the flipped model immediately while the technology completely relies on their diligent work on their own. The approach means an extra workload on teachers who have to develop, record and upload lectures, which take time and skill, as well as carefully integrate them into the classroom work. The data of the university students' interview on the benefits and disadvantages of the approach are given which reveal conflicting points of view though the majority mentioned the availability of the e-learning materials always at hand as the key benefit of the approach.

Keywords: flipped classroom approach, teaching foreign languages, university students.

Problem statement. One of the popular elements of blended learning, which is becoming more and more popular in recent years, is an approach called «flipped classroom». The idea of this approach is that the main stages of the teaching and learning process, such as classroom activities and homework, change places. That is, theoretical material is studied by students on their own by watching videos and listening to audio materials recorded by the teacher, or preformed materials downloaded from websites on the Internet, while in the classroom the students are involved in fulfilling practical tasks and discussion of problematic issues. As a result, when students attend in-person classes, they already have some theoretical knowledge and understanding of the matter that will be discussed in the classroom. It makes the interaction more effective and fruitful as students feel more comfortable and confident asking questions and discussing the issues with the teacher and peers.

The main condition for the implementation of this technology is students' having an unlimited access to electronic resources. They can work in the e-learning environment individually or in groups watching video lectures, checking their knowledge by answering comprehension questions or studying additional learning

resources. In class, students expand the material studied mainly by solving practical tasks, making projects and discussing various important issues on the topic [1].

Since the approach is rather new, additional efforts are required to organize educational activities in its frames, as well as the research of its effectiveness in the university environment.

Review of recent research and publications. A flipped classroom approach attracted attention of educators for the first time in 2007 due to chemistry teachers J. Bergmann and A. Sams from Woodland Park High School who recorded live lessons and broadcast them on-line for the students that missed those lessons. With its simplest definition flipped classroom approach is expressed as «what is done at school done at home, homework done at home completed in class» [2].

The effectiveness of flipped learning in education in the context of teaching languages has been well documented [3; 4; 5].

The main aim of this new learning approach is to provide preparation of student for the subject before the course [6], and during the course to apply activities that increase the quality of face-to face-education [7].

Before the course the students watch theoretical part of the lesson via multiple equipment such as online videos, presentations, learning management systems. During the course they are involved in such activities as finding answers to the questions together, group working, problem solving, and discussion [8].

The flipped classroom approach is described as having four different elements. They are called by the first letters of the word «flip»: F (flexible environment) indicates provision of flexible time and place of learning; L (learning culture): in traditional teacher-centered approach the source of knowledge is teacher. In the flipped classroom approach, there is a transition from the teacher-centered approach to the student-centered approach; I (intentional content): flipped classroom educators think of both providing fluency and developing students' cognition. P (professional educator): flipped classroom educators continuously observe students during the course, evaluate their studies and make feedback [9].

Aim and objectives. The aim of the article is to determine the potential of the flipped classroom approach in teaching foreign languages to university students. Objectives of the article are as follows: to reveal the essence of the flipped classroom approach, to identify its pros and cons in foreign language teaching, to describe the experience of using this approach and its results.

Presentation of the main material. The flipped classroom assumes that students are provided with an unlimited access to electronic resources. Students work in the e-learning environment individually or in groups watching video lectures, checking their knowledge by answering comprehension questions or studying additional learning resources. In class, students expand the material studied mainly by solving practical tasks, making projects and discussing various important issues on the topic.

As Rajesh states, the flipped classroom can be considered pedagogically sound because it serves the principles of personalized-differentiated learning, student-centered instruction, and constructivism. It is personalized because each student learns at his or her own pace. It is student-centered because class time can be used to participate in engaging activities, while the role of the teacher changes to facilitator and observer, allowing students to be more active [10].

Bergmann and Sams give the following reasons why teachers should consider flipping [11]: flipping speaks the language of today's students; flipping helps busy students; flipping helps struggling students; flipping helps students of all abilities to excel; flipping allows students to pause and rewind their teacher; flipping allows for real differentiation; flipping is a great technique for absent teachers.

In foreign language classes, such an approach may offer great benefits for both the teachers and students since classroom time can be applied to more interactive tasks.

The flipped classroom is beneficial in terms of four categories: learning at one's own pace, advance student preparation, overcoming the limitations of class time, increasing the participation in the classroom [12].

Among the pros of flipping researchers also point out the following [13]. The approach allows students who need more time to understand certain concepts to take their time reviewing the material without getting left behind. Due to video lectures available at all times online, students who are forced to miss class because of illness, sports, vacations or emergencies, can catch up quickly. This also gives teachers more flexibility when they themselves are sick and also eliminates make-up assignments.

Thus, this approach increases the interactive period within the class. Students can access lecture videos whenever and wherever they want and it provides students to learn at their own speed [14].

In the flipped classroom, students have opportunities to control their own learning. They can study at their own pace due to availability and accessibility of all necessary resources in the e-learning environment. Moreover, students can choose when and where to study within the time limit allocated for this or that task, they can review the

material any time they need it or get online assistance from the teacher or peers due to chats and forums. A continuous access to online materials allows students to keep pace with the curriculum if they have to miss classes because of illnesses or other reasons.

The flipped classroom increases students' responsibility for their own learning. They become more self-directed and motivated than in a traditional classroom environment. Students have to learn to manage their time working with the electronic course, developing self-study and autonomous learning skills. In other words, students' role in the learning process is changed, making them active participants of the educational process [1].

However, the approach has a number of cons that are recognized by both students and teachers.

One of the biggest problems is the necessity for students to have access to a computer and the Internet in order to view video materials, and not all students have unlimited access to resources. Students may be lack of equipment such as smart phones, tablets or computers and having Internet problems.

There is also the concern that since flipped classrooms are dependent on student participation, students are expected to watch theoretical material at home on their own free will. Unfortunately, there is no way to guarantee students will adapt to the flipped model immediately. Students may not accept the method at the beginning and may come to class without preparation.

Kordyban and Kinash [15] attracted attention to the point as a difficulty that how teachers are certain of that the students do their responsibilities out of class well and expressed the difficulties in case the students come to class without preparation.

There is another concern that implementing a flipped classroom approach adds an extra workload on teachers. Teachers have to tape and upload specially designed lectures, which take time and skill, and carefully think over the activities in the classroom that will motivate students to participate and prepare for class.

There are some who believe that if every teacher starts flipping their classrooms, students will spend hours in front of a computer watching the lectures.

The biggest challenge for teachers is not only developing or broadcasting video lectures but integrate them into the classroom activities. LaFee believes that in contrast to what is known, this method increases the duty of teachers instead of relieving [16].

However, as our experience of using this approach has shown, once the materials were developed, uploaded to the Internet, both tests and interactive tasks to them were

elaborated, this greatly facilitates the teacher's work in future and allows to devote more time to discussion, problem-solving, and creative tasks in the classroom.

We have already tried this approach for distance learning during Covid-19 quarantine (you may find the sample on YouTube platform <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCF9gPDPSDh0djwmvv8ZyU6A/>).

We developed our own videos for teaching English grammar and socio-cultural lexis. Students could work with the videos at a convenient pace, listen to them as many times as they needed to feel confident in class and avoid unnecessary anxiety. In class, students performed grammar and lexical exercises based on the material learnt at home and were ready for discussion on certain issues, during which various problems of an applied and evaluative nature were discussed.

In the course design parallel translation was widely used. Students had the bilingual script as well as a recording of new words and phrases constituting the texts in both languages for out-of-class study. Vocabulary to the texts and the texts themselves were placed parallel to their translation. Then the material was drilled.

Drilling is a technique that has been used in foreign language classrooms for many years and places emphasis on repeating structural patterns through oral practice. At its simplest, drilling means listening to a model, provided by the teacher (or a recorded speaker), and repeating what is heard. Despite some accusations of monotony drilling remains a useful technique in the classroom if it is used appropriately.

Drills can: provide for a focus on accuracy; provide learners with intensive practice in hearing and saying particular words or phrases; provide a safe environment for learners to experiment with producing the language; help students notice the correct form or pronunciation of a word or phrase; provide an opportunity for learners to get immediate feedback on their accuracy in terms of teacher's correction; help memorisation and automatising of common language patterns and language chunks [17].

Students had the opportunity to listen to the podcasts as many times as they wanted and in pauses made by the speaker on the audio clip to repeat the words and phrases as many times as they need, since the greater the frequency of the language item in the input, the more «entrenched» it is likely to become.

So, students see the printed text with translation which provides learners with the full semantic and pragmatic meaning of an utterance in the shortest possible time. They repeat new words and phrases in pauses and then listen to a correct pronunciation.

When students have properly consolidated the basic situation, have acted it out and have learned to permute the sentences, the moment has arrived when the class is

ready to venture into creative, message-oriented role-making activities and put what they have learned to meaningful use, however limited at first [18].

However, the survey data also revealed conflicting views on flipped learning.

Many students point out as a benefit of this method is that the flipped model allowed them to prepare for their lessons before class, discuss questions with the instructor and their fellow students, enjoy the hands-on work, and improve their grades. However, other students said that they preferred to receive instruction from their teacher directly, not in a video format, and that the flipped classroom gave them too much work to do outside of class time.

As the benefits of the approach the participants of the interview pointed out that they could watch videos at their own pace; they could watch them as many times as they needed to memorize better or if they didn't understand some points: when they didn't understand something, they could stop the video and play again; they could be prepared for the lesson in advance; watching the videos beforehand could give an idea about what they were going to study during the lesson; they could participate in the lesson more actively than before if they watched the videos regularly.

It should be noted that most students (82%) who participated in the survey liked the idea of integrating the flipped classroom approach into the learning process. As the major problems the respondents mentioned the problems with the Internet access and difficulty with self-discipline to organize their work properly. At the same time almost all students (98%) mentioned the availability of the e-learning materials always at hand as the key benefit of this type of learning.

There are some problems to be solved by teachers if they intend to implement this approach. We share the opinion of some authors [19] that if instructors plan to flip their classrooms, they should reflect on the following. First, to apply the flipped model, instructors need sufficient time to review their curriculum and decide on forms of class materials and assessment criteria. Creating visual materials (e.g., video-recorded lectures and editing them, teaching classes and observing students' engagement in class, keeping notes after each class, and reflecting on one's practice in particular all take extra time). Second, a few students commented that the online tutorials would be more effective if they included interactive components, particularly for the presentation videos. To ensure the quality of the video materials (e.g., resolution, sound) as well as the format compatibility (e.g., viewable on multiple devices), instructors need to communicate with the university tech support team and add such features to their recorded lectures.

Another significant issue that plays a vital role for the flipped classroom technology is the integrity of the classroom and electronic components of the course, which means that all stages of the teaching and learning process should be logically connected. All tasks and assignments that students have to do in the electronic course must be checked and assessed in class or the e-learning environment. This will contribute to raising students' motivation for diligent studying that will result in increasing the efficiency of the learning process [1].

The role of the teacher in this approach is shifting from delivering ready knowledge to students to facilitating their learning. In the flipped classroom there is more reliance on students' self-directed learning and the teacher, therefore, needs to help students be more responsible for their learning.

In our view, the greatest advantage of this method is that students can become autonomous learners. They can spend a great deal of time studying on their own, plan their activities choosing a convenient pace and place. In modern literature it is called adaptive learning whose popularity is growing in connection with the development of information and communication technologies. The purpose of the adaptive technology is to teach students to independently acquire knowledge, to facilitate online instruction that is personalized to the needs of individual learners. Personalized learning is at the heart of educational programmes around the world and one of the great education challenges of the twenty-first century [20].

Conclusion. At present, teachers and students do not have a consensus on the advantages and disadvantages of the flipped classroom approach. For example, proponents of the method believe that this technology allows them to go beyond physical limitations (such as time and space) and study the material at any time and in any place where there is an Internet connection. They also emphasize the fact that the flipped classroom offers opportunities of the individual learning in a student-friendly mode.

However, data of the survey reveal conflicting views of students on the flipped learning. Most of them stated that the flipped model allows them to prepare for classes carefully and at their own pace. Others prefer to listen to the teacher «live» rather than in video format, and that the flipped classroom model means too much work for them to do outside the classroom studies.

Once the teachers have decided to use this approach, they need time to develop materials for videos, record them, design tasks for testing and free conversation on the topic.

There are still some technical and organizational challenges that complicate the integration of the flipped classroom technology in the teaching and learning process.

Overcoming these challenges needs further research in order to create a new learning environment based on the flipped classroom technology.

As any innovative concept, there are some challenges that have to be overcome for the successful integration of the flipped classroom approach into the educational process. One of the challenges is concerned with extra workload that the teacher experiences while designing the content of the electronic course. Recording lectures, developing learning materials and searching for supplementary resources require a lot of time, skills and efforts from the teacher. Nevertheless, when the electronic course is integrated into the teaching and learning process, the teacher has more free time for doing research and developing other activities.

In general, to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed approach, additional experience in the implementation of this technology and additional studies of the effectiveness of its use are needed.

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