Methodology of Flipped Classroom as a Learning Technology in Foreign Language Teaching

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Abstract

The paper examines the potential of flipped classroom applying in foreign language teaching. The authors look back at the history of emerging of the method, analyse its advantages over other traditional approaches. Among the advantages it should be mentioned time extension between the teacher and the student; increase of responsibility and self-reliance of the latter; personified approach to each learner; teacher’s capability to create authorized mini lectures, taking into account the peculiarities of vocationally-orientated teaching, as well as age peculiarities and other features of each learning group; possibility for each student to work according to his/her personal pace, using time more effectively relative to the students and the teacher; increasing creativity and critical thinking; potential for permanent data archiving; positive transformation of teacher/students’ role relations when a student becomes a protagonist and creator of his/her own knowledge, at the same time the teacher becomes the guide and councilor; advancement of the learner’s motivation; improvement of the atmosphere in the classroom that becomes more friendly and comfortable; chance for better concentration in the classroom.

The paper describes flipped classroom method in graphics and proposes some practical examples of its application.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of EDUHEM 2016.

Keywords: flipped classroom, educational process, challenges, inverted class

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1. Introduction

The modern world is becoming an arena where a huge variety of technologies emerges, have a try and then spread quickly. What used to seem incredible turns into a tangible reality. Today's world exists as a symbiosis of tradition and innovation. Sometimes the traditional way might argue with seemingly unreasonable innovations, and sometimes it absorbs and accepts them with appreciation.

The educational process is a miniature model of our world and society as the whole world and all its functioning is based on this process. From the very first day of existence the little human or animal creature begins to learn to survive, and the adult community does everything to help him.

Therefore, it is an indisputable fact that if our lives and our world are completely imbued with new scientific technologies, then education as an integral part of the world also has a direct bearing.

It is a shame to live in the 21st century and learn in the classes of the 20th century functioning on the 19th century technology. Unfortunately, quite a large number of teachers are simply not ready for this shift to a new system requiring significant literacy in information technology.

However, the transition from the traditional method to the innovative methods is inevitable. Soon people will consider an illiterate person not the one who cannot read, but the one that does not know how to use a computer.

The challenges of modern society make the teacher consider the students' need more and more carefully. In today's Russian secondary schools students are already beginning to demand to substitute the teacher with the hologram so that Napoleon's movement is explained in front of the map by hologram of Napoleon, or Mendeleev's hologram to tell about his famous table of chemical elements. In these conditions, teachers in high schools must be actively involved in this educational process in order to move away from the blowing off the dust from the pages of any grammar, which exerts a soporific impact on students, and move towards bright, capacious, memorable, colorful presentation of the grammar with the help of computer technology.

We need to note that many of the Spanish teachers, who are in love with it, are very inventive in seeking ways to diversify the process of foreign language competence mastering. They are in the search for innovative and variable forms of workshops due to some increased sociability and emotionality, which is the result of a kind of psycholinguistic interference induced by common-inflated sensitively expressive background and temper of an average linguistic identity in the Hispanic linguistic cultures.

2. The essence

Spanish teachers more intensively than other language teachers, implement performances in the classroom activities, episodes from films, karaoke songs, recitation of poems of authentic authors, narrating in news reports, a virtual tours around art museums of Spain and its magnificent royal palaces. In addition, there is a growing practice of working through webinars (Nuzhdin, 2015), there emerges a variety of grammatical and lexical computer tests, which you change creatively, even if we are talking about such a cheerless area as the improvement of foreign language skills, targeted at future natural science profession (Kutjevo 2013, p.101-102).

In this article we would like to touch upon one of the tools from the extensive range of new technologies in education, belonging to multimedia technologies, namely, the so-called inverted lesson (flipped classroom).

A more serious, but extremely intuitive interpretation of this method can be seen in Youtube. So when we talk about the upside lesson "(flipped classroom, Spanish translation of aula invertida), then we are talking about a new strategy in didactics, a new teaching method, which is changing the traditional teaching. This principle of the method is the fact that the theoretical material on a particular topic has been prepared by the teacher in advance and presented to the learner in the form of a recorded video. The student gets acquainted with this theme at home, but practical (home) assignments on the topic are dealt with in the real, not virtual classroom in the presence of a teacher.

The Flipped classroom method was suggested by teachers of chemistry D.Bergmann and A.Sams. Initially, the purpose of this method was to record the video of some lectures on a subject to enable students who had missed the classes to catch up with the group. It seems that the "founding fathers" did not expect that they would make a revolution in the method of educational strategies. D.Bergmann and A.Sams have been consistent supporters of the individual approach to the student, considering that it is necessary to provide an opportunity for students to learn in this way, at such times and in those forms in which they want it. The authors call their approach "a framework, ensuring every
student to receive a personalized education adapted to the individual needs» [Bergmann y Sams, 2012, p.6]. It is announced in the so-called Flipped Class Manifest, developed by D.Bergmann and A.Sams together with other educators, about the important advantage of this method, which allows the student to work on his own pace but not on the pace imposed from outside [Bennett, 2011]. The authors of the method see it as one of the bases of personalized education that allows the student to become one of the protagonists of the process. And the consequence of this transformation will be the strengthening of the student involvement in the learning process and increasing of the extent of its responsibility for the successful implementation of this process.

3. Method

Firstly, the authors would like to state that this work is not a research study, but an attempt to go insight and see the perspective. As the key issue of his method D.Bergmann considered the question of what will be the most useful lesson for his students. Perhaps this is the most sensible and practical question that every self-respecting teacher should ask himself/herself. Unfortunately, our experience at Russian universities shows that this provision is not always implemented in practice. So, once one of the authors heard the following phrase from one of the teachers: "Well, if we are already going to think about the students ..." Of course, we want to consider this approach to the profession as a particular case. So, in our opinion, an inverted class is an interesting mix of information technology and creative working atmosphere in the classroom.

The teacher creates videos or podcasts (5-10 minutes long) on activities that the student can independently view and listen to at home. In the classroom itself they discuss assignments, do case studies. After watching the video the student can write down the questions that had arisen in the course of view. The teacher looks through the questions individually and is able to resolve the doubts of each student.

There are a large amount of materials and resources (they are easy to find on the educational portal platforms http://www.uchportal.ru/publ/15-1-0-690 or "World of Education» / World of Education - http: // www.world.edu.kg/) For more authentic materials selection you can refer to the resources of Hispanic educational platforms where the teacher will find not only movies, educational language itself, but also video tutorials on special disciplines: mathematics, physics, chemistry. And if the teacher is working with groups of students whose specialty is the ultimate chemist or mathematician, it seems to us, it would be extremely interesting to suggest students watching those professionally oriented films in the foreign language under study. You can consult the educational Namanthis electronic resource portal, which provides more than 8000 training videos in Spanish, Edukatina electronic resource, positioning itself as micro lessons’ storage in various disciplines of the Spanish language, Kahn Academy electronic resource. Also it is worth mentioning a new educational resource in Spanish, created by Google in 2014.

It is a new page within the Youtube EDU, where a selection of videos in Spanish is provided, to allow studying of the relevant sections: social and humanities, administrative services, etc. All videos are subtitled in Spanish. The idea is very interesting because students, learning professionally oriented language will not have to spend a lot of time to look for topics of interest, but will be able to specifically refer to the section of interest to them. However, Google assures that its specialists will monitor closely the quality and content of information.

In domestic universities replenishment of media libraries reminds avalanches. Thus, at the foreign languages department of Law Institute at Peoples' Friendship University it is one of the authors of this work, K. Chilingaryan, who has actively been implementing this practice, and has recorded more than forty mini lessons on legal vocabulary of the English language [electronic resource]. We hope that other language teachers will also took up this initiative.

In the practice of the Spanish language teaching the question of using flipped classroom technology is acquiring more and more supporters and followers. For example the 18th Workshop of Spanish as a foreign language, which was held in Madrid in mid-March 2015 (XVI Encuentro Práctico de Profesorado de ELE), organized by the publishing house Edinumen, was largely devoted to this topic. The workshop heard presentation of professor of the University of Rioja R.Santyago, who has been engaged in the development and practical application of this method for several years. Mr R.Santyago’s speech is available in the Youtube.
4. Advantages

The following points should be recognized as the undoubted advantage of this method:

- First point - increasing the contact time between the teacher and the student; i.e. it is practically doubled. In the framework of the traditional method the student listens to the theory in the classroom and does the homework at home, but teacher does not always possess free time to check it in the classroom. As for the flipped classroom system, all the student’s doubts and his mistakes can be corrected in the classroom together with the teacher.

- Second point - personalized approach to each student

- Third point - an opportunity for the teacher to create authentic mini lectures. Anyone will probably agree that there is no perfect tutorial explaining this or that language subject. With mini lectures the teacher can create a unique authentic short film, where the information will be handled and chosen in the most perfect way, taking into account the professional orientation, age features and other important factors in the learning group.

- Fourth point - increasing the responsibility and autonomy of the learner. The student is aware of the need to dedicate some time listening to the training video that is a more attractive, more spectacular, more habitual activity; it immerses the student in a more common for the majority of young people computing environment. The flipped classroom technology fulfills the primary task - to promote the growth of student autonomy and improve the quality of this autonomy as much as possible, to teach him to make decisions about what, how and when to study. This means two things: “to be able to learn” and have the necessary didactic material. Flipped classroom allows to use such a situation, in which the student feels comfortable. The modern students are well aware of computer technology; therefore, language training will be in their comfort zone.

- Fifth point - the ability to catch up with the group if they had to miss the classes for this or that reason. At a time when the economic situation and pace of life are forcing many students to combine their studies with work, flipped classroom allows students to not lose missed classes. At the same time teachers engaged in science will be able to participate more fruitfully in conferences, replacing their physical presence in the classroom with not less full-fledged virtual presence.

- Sixth point - more efficient use of time. In our view, this is particularly important in a limited number of hours allocated to language training. This is especially true when learning a second (third) language. It seems absurd, when a qualified teacher gives a lesson writing simple paradigms of verbs and ordinary examples such as "I'm a student." And then there is a parallel group, and he/she does the same thing. Much wiser is to record these explanations on the video so that the students will be able to watch them at home, and then brush the language, taking into account the emerged questions. This way it does not seem to be a tiresome listening to the theoretical material, but a kind of creative workshop, where sharing of collective knowledge starts. This is where the discussion is hold and the student obtains an active role. There is no wasting time when the weaker students asked questions related to the lack of understanding of the material, and the stronger students just inefficiently waste their time.

- Seventh point - an opportunity for each student to work at his pace. Each person has very individual features. One student may need to listen to the explanation once only, while the other must be repeated the material several times. With the help of the method discussed, students can listen to the video an unlimited number of times, stop it, listen again, make records, resort to additional materials that facilitate understanding. For some students these classes are more comfortable from the psychological point of view. There is no need to pull oneself together to interrupt the teacher to ask this or that question, fearing, perhaps, being laughed at.

- Eighth point - the ability to concentrate. In a large group teachers are not always able to fully concentrate the attention of the audience. Young people are distracted by conversations, a variety of gadgets which have become an integral part of their life.

- Ninth point - increasing the motivation of students

- Tenth point - improving the atmosphere in the classroom, makes it more welcoming and comfortable. As the material has been previously worked out at home, it reduces the level of difference between weak and strong students, decreases the level of potential stress. It increases the students’ interest in the lesson – it is always fun to debate than silently to listen to the theory. From this point comes the following advantage of the method:

- Eleventh point - the increase of creativity and critical thinking of students
Twelfth point - the possibility for continual archiving of the material. For example, when preparing for tests or exams, the student can re-listen to the accumulated video material, and to do so in a form convenient for him. The pace of life today does not always allow to find time and opportunity to read a textbook, while the audio and video material can be heard in the car or on the subway.

Thirteenth point - positive transformation of relations role of the teacher and the student. The teacher turns into a kind of counselor, helper, guide, helping to orient and find their way in a sea of information. In the words of M. Warschauer and P. Whitaker, a teacher of the wise man turns into a conductor - not "sage on the stage", and the "guide on the side" [Warshauer, M. & P.F Whittaker, 2002, 31]. At the same time students, in turn, become the central figure of the education process - from passive recipients of information, they become builders, designers, protagonists of their own knowledge.

5. Conclusion and discussion

It should be emphasized that the use of flipped classroom in any case is not intended to replace the teacher’s image into his virtual copy or make the student communicate not with the teacher but with the computer. Flipped classroom is a part of integrated education, which includes a variety of methods, both traditional and innovative. This method begins a new era, when the teacher passes the helm of the ship to his disciples, and he starts to play a role of the navigator, setting the direction of the ship with the help of the compass of his knowledge.

With the introduction of the flipped model of training is easy to make mistakes. Although the idea is very simple, effective “flipping” requires careful preparation. Getting ready to the lessons needs time and effort of both the teachers and students. Moreover, these classes demand new skills from the teachers, although this process can be softened by introducing the model gradually.

Students, in turn, complain for the loss of classroom lectures, especially if they feel that certain video lectures are available to everybody in the Internet. They may not immediately assess the practical value of the model, wondering if the model is different from what they could get from a mere Internet search. Finally, not all the students have stable access to Internet to get a high-end video.

Flipped classroom supposes a new ideology of teacher’s role. This role includes closer cooperation between the trainers and trainees. This model also involves changes of the role of students, many of whom used to be passive participants in the learning process. Flipped classroom model places greater responsibility on the students, giving them an incentive to experiment. The activities can be led by the students, and the communication between the students can become the driving engine that determines the process aimed at learning through practical skills. Flipped classroom leads to a significant shift of priorities from the simple delivery of topics to work on their improvement.

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