

Chapter 1

Flipped Instruction in CALL: Exploring Principles of Effective Pedagogy

Joy Egbert

Washington State University, USA

David Herman

Meilun Junior High School, Taiwan

AiChia Chang

Tzu Chi Foundation, Taiwan

ABSTRACT

Although the literature on flipped instruction to date appears to be relatively atheoretical, the benefits listed in the flipped literature fit well with theories of optimal learning environments and student engagement. This chapter links flipped instruction to these two models to form a theoretical framework for CALL use. The chapter then briefly describes two CALL contexts in which this framework was implemented. The first is a short Mandarin course for teacher education students, and the second is an intensive ESL course that was part of a summer language and culture camp. Observations, student comments and actions, and course documents form the basis for this discussion. The chapter concludes by suggesting how flipped instruction might work in these and other CALL contexts; related issues are also addressed.

INTRODUCTION

Much has been written in recent years about the “new” method of “flipped” instruction and its potential to revolutionize instruction across disciplines (see, for example, Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Obari & Lambacher, 2015). Despite the contribution of a number of research studies exploring the potentials and shortcomings of flipped instruction in various contexts, only a limited number of studies have explored flipped instruction in a second or foreign language learning context (see, for example, Alsowat, 2016; Leis & Cooke, 2015; Yang, 2017). Therefore, this paper explores flipped instruction in language learning. The purposes of this conceptual paper are to: 1) establish a theoretical basis for flipped instruction by relating it to two models, one of conditions for optimal language learning environments (Egbert,

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Chao, & Hanson-Smith, 2007) and the other of task engagement (Lin, 2012), and 2) briefly describe and assess two implementations in CALL classrooms – first, a Mandarin course for teacher education students, and second, an intensive ESL course that involved English language learners taking part in an experience that included principles of flipped instruction. To conclude this paper, we suggest how the principles, rather than the tools, of flipped instruction might work in other computer-assisted language learning (CALL) contexts. With this work we hope to encourage more discussion and research on the principles of effective CALL instruction.

Defining Flipped Instruction

Like many terms that come into the education lexicon and are taken up in a variety of contexts, flipped instruction does not yet have a set definition that is used across media. In settings from K-adult classrooms, and in disciplines as distinct as math and history, strategies for flipping that appear similar have even been given different names. For example, Eric Mazur of Harvard University found that computer-aided instruction allowed him to “coach” instead of “lecture”; he called his model *peer instruction* (Mazur, 1991). In her article *From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side*, a phrase often used in association with flipped instruction, King (1993) stressed the importance of using class time not for information transmission but for knowledge construction. Baker (2000) coined the term “classroom flip” in the late 1990s when describing his strategy of presenting course content on a course management system, allowing opportunities for active learning during class time. Similarly, Lage, Piatt, and Treglia (2000) introduced *inverted instruction*, a strategy which allowed them to differentiate instruction through the use of computer-based lectures and student-centered class time. Bergmann and Sams (2012) are often credited with popularizing flipped instruction in K-12 contexts. The high school chemistry teachers recorded video lectures for their students to view as homework prior to class and spent class time providing hands-on explorations of the concepts, much like prior scholars had.

Regardless of what it is called and how it is implemented, the overall purpose of flipped instruction is to change classroom dynamics by using technology to present direct instruction outside of class. This frees the instructor and class time for more interactive tasks and additional scaffolding, including teamwork, individual conferences with the teacher, group and class discussions, and even reiteration of the content where needed (Alsawot, 2016; Engin, 2014; Farah, 2014; Suo & Hou, 2017). In part, the idea is to give students some control over class content by providing ways for them to direct the pacing of the material, to provide multiple modes for students who learn in different ways, and to allow students to decide what and how they need to learn. Adherents explain that flipped instruction generally

...involves assigning students to work through the basic content of a course on their own time, often by watching a recorded lecture or completing a guided reading instead of listening to a traditional in-person lecture and frees up class time for group problem-solving assignments, demonstrations, experiments, questions and answers, and other engaging experiences. (Saitta, Morrison, Waldrop & Bowdon, 2016, p. 1)

The way this has been traditionally implemented in schools, entire K-12 districts, and higher education classrooms is typically that students watch instructional content videos outside of class and then work on problems in class. However, because the overall goal of flipped instruction is to engage and support students to achieve, it must be implemented in ways that meet the needs, abilities, and desires of students rather than used as a blanket instructional method.

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