An Introduction to the Flipped EFL College Classroom: Method & Tools

Selinda England[1]
Showa Women's University.

ABSTRACT

Flipped Learning is a new, profound teaching philosophy, encouraging teachers to approach their classes in a modern way. Instead of the traditional, lecture-style format, educators use technology to become the "guide on the side", tutoring students with hands-on activities. Classrooms which utilize Flipped Learning give students the power to learn independently, at home, while encouraging dynamic group discussions in class. (Sharples et al., 2014). In addition to an overview of the Flipped Classroom Method, this article will showcase several key technology tools to aid in instruction, for example, a) Movenote, b) Screencast-o-matic and c) QR codes.

INTRODUCTION

In 1993, King, an early commentator from the College Teaching journal wrote: "…the professor, instead of being "sage on the stage" functions as the "guide at the side" (1993, p. 30-35) According to Nystrom, King's writing suggested that learning "…is an active process and should contain more than sitting, listening, making notes and seeking for correct answers" (Nyström, 2014, p. 921-931). In 2004, Salman Khan incorporated these ideas and began recording instructional videos for his cousin. These videos allowed students to skip what they already knew, and replay the more challenging lectures of a lesson (Thompson, 2011; Sparks, 2011). This format gave rise to the Khan Academy which has expanded educational service, and is now closely associated with mainstreaming the flipped model of learning.

METHOD

What exactly is the Flipped Classroom and why is there excitement surrounding this teaching technique? The simple definition is "school work at home and home work at school" (Flipped Learning Network, 2014). In greater detail, "The flipped classroom is a pedagogical model in which the typical lecture and homework elements of a course are reversed." (Educause: 7 things you should know, 2012) Short video lectures are viewed by students at home before the class session. "The value of a flipped class is in the repurposing of class time into a workshop where students can inquire about lecture content, test their skills in applying knowledge, and interact with one another in hands-on activities." (Educause: 7 things you should know.., 2012)

The key to applying the Flipped Model in one's classroom is simple – transfer classroom lectures to video. Videos should be kept short, under six minutes, so students feel the material is

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[1] Selinda England is a part-time instructor at Tokai University (Kanagawa) and Showa Women's University (Tokyo), where she utilizes aspects of the Flipped Classroom in her lessons. Please connect with her on Twitter: @selinda_e.

obtainable, even in the second language (L2). At the end of the video, teachers should administer a short quiz, which will check students' comprehension of the content. Quizzes also quickly assess which students are completing the task, understanding the material, and/or who are facing difficulties. Examples of topics which can be taught effectively via video at the high school/university level of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are: pronunciation, grammar, Eiken STEP/ TOEFL /IELTS/ TOEIC test strategies, vocabulary building, and essay writing. For lower level students, teachers can use the students' native language (L1) to teach key points. As the videos are regarded as homework, the use of L1 is restricted to the home; thus enabling teachers to fully utilize the target language (L2) in the classroom setting.

PROCEDURE AND TOOLS

There are two websites which empower teachers to create simple, homemade videos: Movenote® (https://www.**movenote**.com/) and Screencast-o-matic® (http://screencast-o-matic.com/). Both services are free, can be used on a smart phone (via an application, or "app") and, only require a microphone (a camera is optional). The first tool, Movenote®, allows users to upload presentation slides, images, or diagrams, and add voice/video to the accompanying slides. Movenote® is useful for teachers with Google accounts; you can use your Google ID to sign in and videos can be saved and/or attached to Gmail.

FIGURE 1
A screen shot of the Movenote® platform

https://www.movenote.com/v/3fJE-bPM56iQi
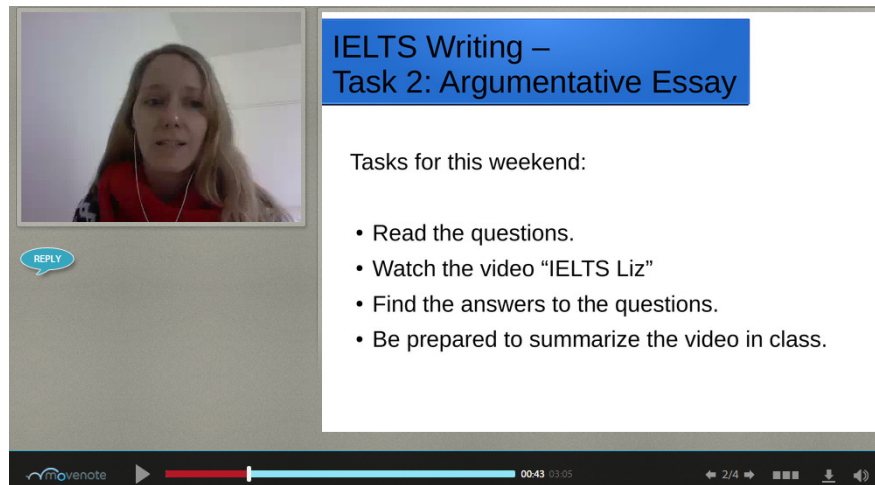
The next tool, Screencast-o-matic®, focuses on taking a snapshot of your computer screen, as well as add voice/video. This tool is useful for teaching how to use a website; a practical application could be explanations on how to log in/sign up for a computer based language test, fill out study abroad applications, or join a Moodle site.

FIGURE 2
A screen shot of Screencast-O-matic® as seen on a desktop PC
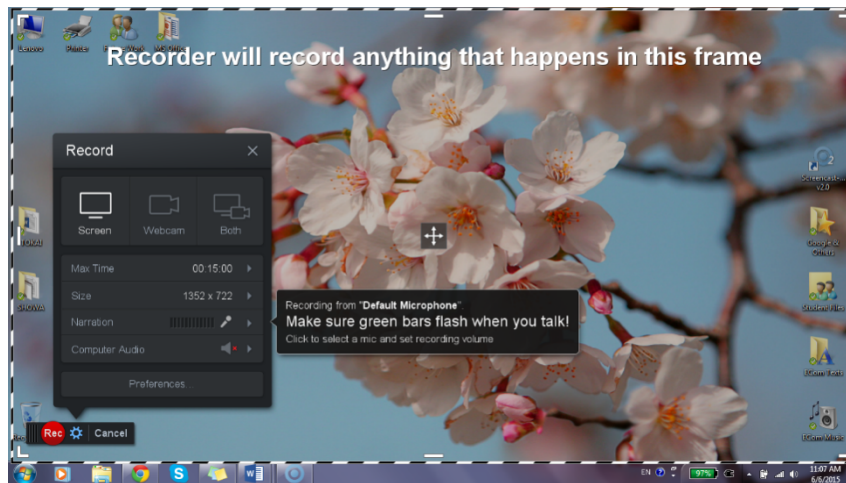
One suggestion is to use Screencast-o-Matic® to film PowerPoint® presentations. Rather than carry a heavy laptop to class, or spend time setting up AV equipment, lecturers can send videos as a link in an email, or post on the university site for students.

FIGURE 3
A screen shot of a vocabulary PowerPoint® presentation made with Screencast-o-Matic®

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVHkNNZWwUM

The final, optional tool for flipped educators, is converting your video to a QR code. QR codes are widely seen in Japan; the checkerboard grid embeds any website and is accessed via a cell phone's camera, enabled with a scanner. With "80% of elementary school users and almost 100% of high school mobile users…have access to the internet via their mobile phones" (Takahashi, 2011) and use it incessantly." (Lockley, 2011), QR codes are a powerful device to quickly share web-based information with your class. To read these codes, students must have a related code-reading app downloaded to his/her phone. In addition, students can read QR codes via the application attached to LINE®, a popular social networking tool.
To create a QR code, use any QR code generator website, input the video's web address, and create the code. Once downloaded to your PC, you can attach it to an e-mail, or copy and paste

the code into a word document for handouts, etc. One example generator site is: http://www.qrstuff.com/

FIGURE 4
A QR code for a vocabulary video, teaching the prefix "re-"

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

When using the Flipped Learning style, teachers often find some students are not watching the videos at home. One scenario would be eliminating this homework completely. Instead, by allotting the first ten minutes of class to watch the video using QR codes on handouts and with student-provided cell phones, classroom management becomes more effective. While students watch the videos, teachers can check attendance, monitor students, distribute handouts, return writing assignments, etc. For lower-level students, educators can allow a short, post-video discussion in the L1 summarizing the video, so key concepts are not missed. Thus, more class time is spent applying <u>what</u> has been learned in the video and not on lecturing.

RESULTS

In a survey, conducted between four classes at Showa Women's University and one class at Tokai University, questions were asked regarding the use of video and QR codes in the classroom. Students, using their smart phones, were familiar with both the Flipped Model and the use of videos in the classroom for two months. The total number of students surveyed was 132. Surprisingly, a large majority of students enjoyed watching videos during the lesson time; they also found the video's content easy to comprehend. In addition, students remarked they were keen on using their cell phones in class.

TABLE 1
Survey results on video & QR code use in lessons

Answers	Do you like watching videos in class?	Do you like using QR codes in class?	Is it easy to use QR codes to watch videos?	Is it easy to understand the videos?	Do you like using your cell phone in class?
Yes	124 (93.9%)	100 (75.7%)	118 (89.3%)	129 (97.7%)	115 (87.1%)
No	7 (5.3%)	30 (22.7%)	13 (9.8%)	2 (1.5%)	15 (11.3%)
Undecided	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.5%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.5%)

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

Following the positive results of the survey, more research into the effectiveness of the Flipped Model is needed. Specifically, do the students feel a sense of accomplishment or improvement in their English studies via use of videos at home or in class? One could propose conducting another survey posing these very questions to students at the end of the course. Also, further valuable research could be undertaken in the area of language testing. Students could take a general aptitude test on English as a Foreign Language at the beginning and end of the course/ semester. Using the Flipped Methods of study in and outside of class time, teachers could then see if test results improved over the course of four months' time. The positive findings from this study illustrate that students of the 21st century enjoy learning via the video format; therefore, flipping the EFL classroom should be promoted.

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