



**Joint Efforts for Innovation:  
Working Together  
to Improve  
Foreign Language  
Teaching in the  
21st Century**

**Dolors Masats, Maria Mont  
& Nathaly González-Acevedo (Editors)**

## **A book for the curious and passionate 21<sup>st</sup> century language teachers and teacher trainers.**

Tired of reading about the wonders of technology enhanced project-based learning but not knowing where to seek inspiration to start to adopt this teaching approach? A team of in-service teachers, teacher trainers, pre-service teachers and researchers have worked together to present a simple, engaging and practical book to offer fellow education professionals stimulating ideas for their teaching practice.

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- Pioneering proposals to open up the classroom doors.
- Problem-solving and inquiry-based tasks that promote team work.
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This book includes

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- calls for teachers to do research in their classrooms.
- personal accounts on the importance of school internships for pre-service teachers.

This book is an invitation for practicing teachers and teacher trainers to be creative and to develop learning skills, literacy skills and life skills.

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**JOINT EFFORTS FOR INNOVATION:  
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# Flipped classrooms

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## Introduction

A decade ago, Jonathan Bergmann & Aaron Sams (see Bergman & Sams, 2012) developed a teaching proposal, known as Flipped Classroom, which has transformed many teaching practices around the world. Essentially, a flipped classroom reverses the usual order of traditional teaching methods. Students, rather than learning new content in the classroom, learn it at home through taking part in activities —previously prepared by their teachers— like reading articles, watching videos, listening to songs or stories. Class time is dedicated to discussions, group activities and projects. In a flipped classroom, every student can learn at their own pace. Students are given the opportunity to watch a lesson as many times as they need. They can rewind a video, skip parts or simply pause it. When students come to class, if there is still something that needs clarification, the teacher is there to help. It should be born in mind that there is no such thing as “the flipped classroom model”. Each flipped classroom depends on the type of teaching context it delivers, the learning goals and the students’ needs. Moreover, not everything should or can be flipped. Teachers choose how to do it. For example, they can set students the task to watch a video at home and then do some school task, individually or in groups, or set a discussion in the classroom or online, they can prepare videos to be seen in class to demonstrate part of the course contents, they can set students the challenge to create the videos other students would view, etc.

In primary schools, ESL (English as a Second Language) lessons are very different from lessons in other subjects, since students’ language proficiency is limited and in the same class there can be students with different degrees of competence in the target language. Students’ aptitudes are also heterogeneous, while some students struggle to understand and get their homework done, others need to be challenged. Bergman & Sams (2012) created flipped classrooms as a tool to cater for the needs of all students in heterogeneous groups. When students are given the opportunity to learn the lesson for the first time in their homes, they can go through it at their own pace. Therefore, advanced students can do so without having to wait for the rest of their classmates to understand the material

and the ones having more trouble with the subject matter are able to review it as many times as needed because they are working independently. One of the drawbacks of this proposal, however, is that it might easily increase the digital divide between the students who have a computer or internet access at home and those who do not. To avoid this, teachers should ensure that students without a computer or internet access at home can be offered the opportunity to use computers with internet connection at school (in the computer lab, at the library) or allow them to watch the video in class while other students engage in discussions and wait for them to join right after they finish.

Flipped classrooms are suitable for students of all ages. The aim of this paper is to give primary teachers of English experience-based ideas on how they can flip their lessons.

### **Our experience planning lessons for primary kids**

Research demonstrates that flipped classrooms create a favourable learning environment and that students who take part in flipped classrooms understand lesson contents better than in regular face-to-face classrooms (Bergman & Sams, 2012; Santikarn & Wichadee, 2018), therefore, it is worth making a try. Parallel to this, one of the advantages of this methodology is that it easily blends with other approaches. In our case, we are particularly interested in project-based learning (PBL), a student-centred competence-based approach that, as Patton (2012) suggests, leads learners to produce some sort of project (a video, an oral presentation, an eBook, etc.). PBL is also “an ideal tool teachers have at their disposal to get their students to “connect the dots” between content, language use, the construction of knowledge and the development of 21st century skills” (Mont & Masats, 2018: 93-94).

The first time teachers think about the possibility of creating a flipped classroom in a PBL environment a lot of ideas come to their minds. It is important to organize these ideas first. Teachers must have clear teaching objectives before they choose the appropriate learning tasks and correct tools to create those tasks. When they start planning the lessons, they need to bear in mind which are the objectives set and what kind of final product kids will have to create at the end of the project. This could also help them choose different types of task to cater for the learning styles of all students, and to keep students’ motivation during their learning process.

The nature of the tasks teachers need to set will depend on their students’ grade, command of English and interest in the topic. Higher grade level students are more autonomous than students in first grades. Consequently, teachers can plan

activities for them to do at home. Fifth and six graders in Catalan schools already use the school email account, which is helpful for teachers who want to exploit a flipped classroom through activities presented in google drive, google classroom or in the format of a web quest. First and second graders are not asked to have and use an email account, so teachers need to plan differently how to use the flipped classroom methodology. In this section we will present two examples of real classroom practices in our schools, one flipped classroom as part of a project carried out with second graders and one with six graders.

### *City characters*

With their class teacher, second grade students were doing research on the city where the school is set and on local celebrations. In the English classroom we took advantage of the fact that children were learning about the giants —cardboard fictional characters— present in the local festivity (see figure 1) to design a project around the topic of clothes. The final product of this project would be an [oral description](#) of the clothes worn by the giants in the city. So the main objective of this project was to ensure students could produce this oral text. Taking this into account, the lesson plan was focussed on learning the names of various items of clothing and the formulae used in English to ask about and to describe somebody's outfit.



Figure 1. A local giant (source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/122076518@N08/21597657256/in/album-72157658540513790/>)

The first activities were planned to be done autonomously, but since not all students had a device with internet connection at home, the last ten minutes of each sessions were devoted to introduce the vocabulary needed for the



following session through a [story](#) and a song. Both the story and the song were also uploaded to the blog the class has in the school website to give students the opportunity to review them at home.

Teachers may find other ways to start using flipped classrooms. For example, they can ask the computer lab teacher to use a few minutes of his/her session to have the students complete their assignments. This can also be done in the English classroom if there is a computer available for each student.

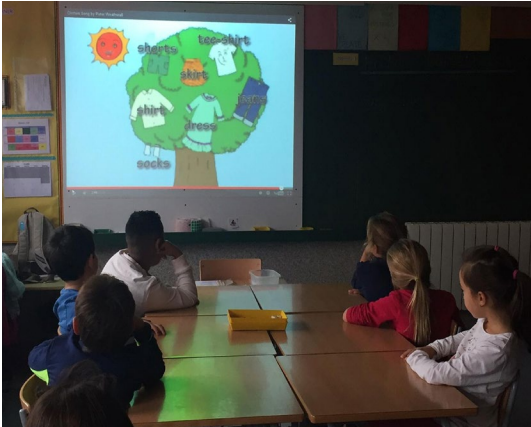


Figure 2. Listening to a song about clothes

The results observed were very positive. All students knew the vocabulary about clothes on the first session devoted to the project. There was no need to spend time to introduce or learn the vocabulary. The first session was, then, used to enhance interaction among the students and to start practising a dialogue. Communication was possible from the very first day.

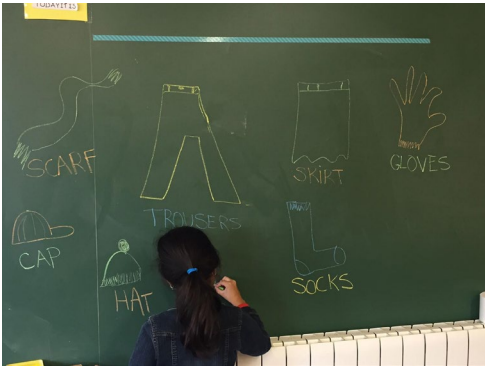


Figure 3. Practising vocabulary



One of the activities planned involved the creation of a washing line with laminated clothes drawings. Students would take turns to ask for the kind of clothes hanging in the various washing lines. Other proposals carried out in class included activities such as dressing up a paper doll, creating a picture dictionary, playing a bingo and a memory game using pictures and words, and describing, orally, what one of the students was wearing and asking others to identify the person being described.

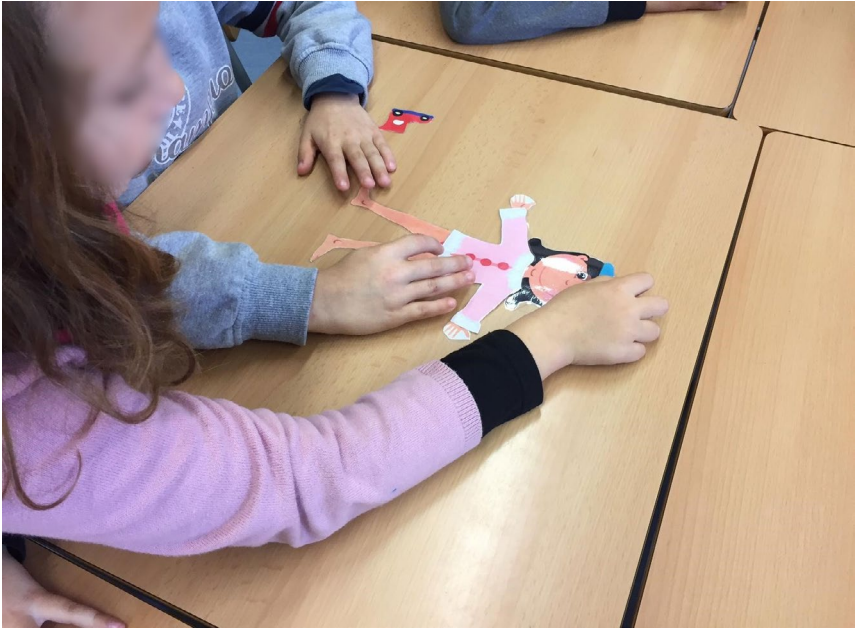


Figure 4. Dressing a paper doll

Students' confidence when participating in the various learning activities proposed was amazing. They were actively engaged in them because they already knew the vocabulary to participate. The level of motivation was substantially higher compared to the times we have used other teaching methods. As mentioned before, teaching through a flipped lesson is not easy to plan, it requires time investment and creativity, but it is worth trying.

***Flipping grammar***

Using the flipped classroom methodology in project-based environments does not mean that teachers cannot design focus-on-form activities. Teaching grammar can be challenging, as students are not thrilled to study grammar, but flipping grammar content can be the solution.

The proposal we present was carried out with a group of six graders who had used Google Classroom for two years to do different assignments as part of their English courses. We had prepared an activity using [EDpuzzle to illustrate how to form comparative adjectives in English](#) and uploaded it in their Google Classroom, where they could access it from home and become familiar with the topic.



Figure 5. Example of a video created in *EDpuzzle* to explain how to form comparisons in English



Figure 6. Example of the type of form Google Classroom creates on the students' task performance

When students come to class after doing the flipped assignment it is time to review and solve problems they might have encountered. Learning management systems (LMS) such as Google Classroom allow teachers to communicate with their students when they are not in class and to share materials with them, as is the case with the activity presented in figure 5. Additionally, one of the main advantages Google Classroom presents is the fact that it allows teachers to check the real interaction of students with the materials, as this LMS creates an assessment form on Google Drive. It also allows teachers to see if students watched the video, when they did it and how many times. If students do some sort of task, the system also informs teachers about the students' results. The analysis of this type of feedback is really useful as teachers have more information that allows them to take better care of the needs of all students and to prepare the activity of solving doubts.

After all doubts have been clarified, we carry out activities, usually in groups of four, that enhance cooperative learning. Grouping children with different degrees of expertise in English benefits both high level students and low level students, as they help each other to achieve the tasks. Students with low competence in English are given support by students with better competences, and giving support is also a learning task for more advanced students. When students are working in groups, the role of the teacher is just that of an observer who monitors learning and provides support when necessary.

In class, when students are working cooperatively, they do not learn grammar, but communicate using the grammar they learnt at home. Some of the activities proposed to put into practice the different grammar topics flipped consisted in unscrambling sentences (previously laminated and cut), filling gaps and playing board games or even action games like hot potato. To play hot potato students sit in a circle and pass a ball. The student who catches the ball must say one target word (an item of clothing in this case) or sentence (describing the outfit of a person in the group) and throw the ball to another student before the allotted time runs out.

Students' feedback on the methodology used to teach grammar —presenting grammar in flipped classrooms and practising it in class through games— indicates that they found online learning very helpful and more interesting than the traditional one. Group work, on the other hand, encouraged students to take challenges and strengthened the bonds between them.

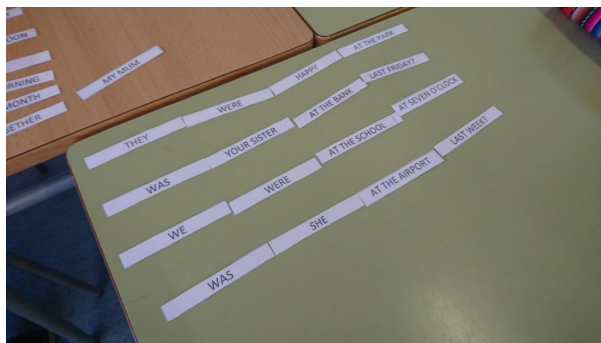
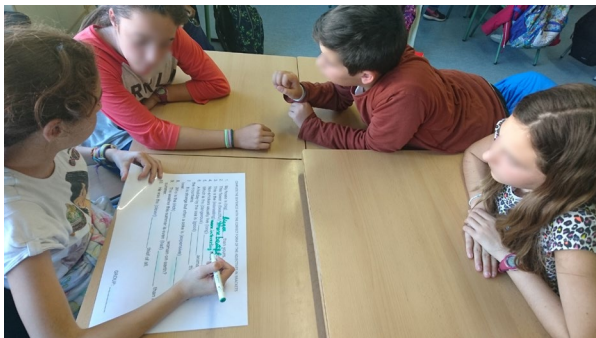
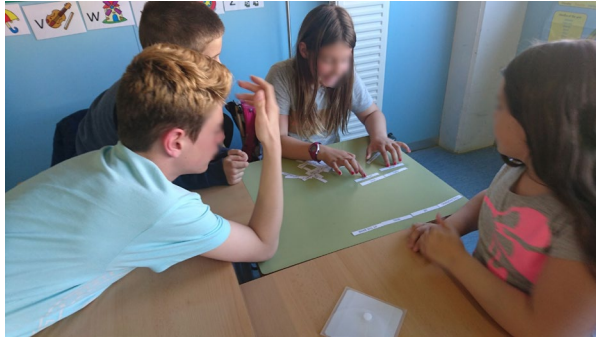


Figure 7. Students playing grammar games in class

## Assessment when using the flipped classrooms method

Flipped classrooms reverse learning, but also assessment. Students' assessment cannot focus only on the knowledge students gain but on how they gain it. A flipped classroom does not teach for the test. As lectures take place at students' homes, teachers have more time to interact with each student individually in the classroom. Consequently, they can integrate a great variety of formative assessment tools in their instruction.

Rubrics are the best tools to assess students in flipped classrooms. A rubric is a grid that illustrates the expected outcomes of a product (e.g. a text, a video, etc.) or a process (students' engagement, cooperation, etc.) in the form of a list of criteria and descriptions of various levels of performance per each criteria. This document is both a teaching and a learning tool. It helps teachers to focus on the observation of particular items and to assess all students objectively. Also, it helps students to know what the teacher expects from them and the assessment criteria can be used as a checklist while they are creating a product/text or conducting a task. It is important to have the rubrics available to students at any time and to prepare rubrics for assessing products and processes.

It is also advisable for teachers to conduct some form of assessment every session. As all sessions have a set objective, one feasible possibility is to design a quick activity to check whether students have attained the learning objective of the session. It must be a short activity, between five and ten minutes long, done at the end of the class. For lower grades the activity can consist of drawing pictures or writing words on a whiteboard to demonstrate what they have learnt, in circling relevant vocabulary on a worksheet containing a set of pictures or words, in playing games like bingo or memory games using pictures and words. For upper grade levels the format of the assessment activities can change and turn into more engaging proposals for them such as answering questions in *Kaboot* or performing actions. TPR (Total Physical Response) tasks are very useful as assessment tools. For example, if students have learnt to name and describe items of clothing, the teacher can give commands using the target vocabulary and structures (e.g. students wearing blue jeans, please turn around; students wearing a pair of white sneakers, please stand up, etc.). Similarly if students have learnt the body parts, the teacher's commands may instruct them to touch a part of their body or to perform an action involving a part of the body (clap your hands, stomp your feet, close your eyes, etc.).

Finally, it is also very important to have students assess themselves and their peers. After the completion of their classroom projects, students can fill in a

self-assessment worksheet to evaluate the product they produced and to assess what they learnt and their degree of engagement in the work done by the group. Peer-assessment is also a powerful learning and assessing tool. For example, if students, in groups, need to prepare an oral presentation as the final product of a project, students can assess the performance of the members of the other groups and observe and comment on aspects such as the quality of the information provided and of the resources used as support (e.g. visual documents, body language, etc.), as well as aspects related to students' accurate and fluent use of the target language. Again, rubrics are key assessment tools to guide children on what to observe when assessing others or one's work. If children are not familiar with assessment vocabulary, the teacher should make it comprehensible. This assessment task concludes when both the children and the teacher complete the rubric and the teacher comments the results and presents his/her observations on the work done by all the groups.

### **Concluding remarks**

The interests of our society and the modes of communication among its members have dramatically changed over the past few years. Similarly children's needs and interests today have also evolved. Schools need to adapt to the new situation and teachers need to readjust their practices. Children receive inputs and stimuli from a great variety of sources, so lessons must be also diverse and varied. Children will only participate actively in their learning process if the tasks teachers set are interesting and meaningful for them and if they access knowledge using resources they are familiar with and make them enjoy learning and feel comfortable when faced with new concepts.

Flipped classroom is a methodology that consists of substituting classroom lectures with activities students need to produce at home after having watched a video or read a text previously selected or created by their teachers. Research proves that students learn better and faster, probably because in flipped classrooms they become more conscious and aware of what they are expected to learn, take more responsibilities and develop greater autonomy. As students can review a lesson more than once, they have the possibility of receiving extra exposure to the target language. Students' motivation also increases notably, basically because they take control over their learning pace, decide when or how they want to study, and feel more confident and secure in the classroom because they already possess the previous knowledge gained in the flipped classroom. In addition to this, new technologies make them feel they are learning as they would do in the real world.

Learning management systems give teachers the possibility of observing their students' performance in greater detail, which will help them to cater for the needs of individual students in class. The use of this methodology also offers teachers the opportunity of engaging students in classroom projects oriented to the completion of a sequence of practical tasks, often done in groups. Group work fosters collaborative learning and students' respect for what others do and say. Accepting the ideas or proposals suggested by other learners or reaching a consensus and accepting what the majority of the members in the group decides to do is not an easy task for students, so having more time in class to devote to group work has positive benefits for learners and satisfies teachers when they observe the results. Students' products and learning process can easily be assessed, by teachers and learners alike, through the use of rubrics. This assessment tool is useful because it helps children be aware, already at the beginning of the class project, of what is expected from them and of how they need to conduct the tasks. Rubrics also guide students' productions, help learners stay focused and direct them on how to assess their work and the work of their peers.

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