FLIPPED CLASSROOM: AN INNOVATIVE MODELTO PROMOTE STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING

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Abstract

The present-day students, known as the millennial, possess very different characteristics from the previous generations. While in the past, most students just sat silently, listened to the teacher's explanation then wrote down the materials in their notebook, the new breed of students have very limited attention span and are easily bored by long lectures. Hence, teachers have to be very creative and innovative in finding ways to sustain students' motivation and arouse their interest. Another characteristic that differentiates between the millennial from the generations before them is the use of technology. Unlike their predecessors who used technology sparingly, nowadays, the students use technology in their daily life. As can be easily seen, most students cannot be separated from their smartphones. This can be problematic for teachers since some students prefer to play with their smartphones in the class instead of listening to the lesson. There are some ways to overcome the predicaments. First, teachers need to change their approach from the traditional, teacher-centered approach into student-centered one. By positioning the students at the center stage, it will be easier for the teachers to engage them in teaching-learning process. Second, teachers need to incorporate technology in their teaching. This paper proposes the use of flipped classroom as a new model that can promote student-centered learning as well as foster the use of technology in teaching.

Keywords: Flipped classroom, innovative, student-centered

Introduction

English's classrooms are very different from they used to be. As a teacher who was born around 70's, I have been witnessing dramatic changes in the way students learn. I could recall very clearly, how my classmates and I, the generation x students learned English. The teaching-learning process usually followed the same patterns: Teachers explained – students took notes – followed by doing exercises or homework. In this case, teacher dominated the teaching-learning process and acted as the sole provider of knowledge. The students were mostly become the passive receiver. Nowadays, there is a shift in the role of a teacher, we are not the knowledge-giver anymore, but we perform the role as a facilitator, who encourage the students to be responsible for their own learning by finding information not only in the class, but also outside the class as well.

The present generations are often called the digital natives which is defined by the oxford dictionary as "A person born or brought up during the age of digital technology and so familiar with computers and the Internet from an early age" (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/digital_native). I was quite surprised when my five-year old nephew is able to make video call without experiencing any difficulties. While in the past, we were quite satisfied to use technology once in a while,

the millenial generations seem cannot be separated from their gadget. They can watch videos from youtube anytime, anywhere. Most of them do not take note anymore, they take pictures instead. Information abound in the internet, so we the teacher, cannot boast that we know more than our students.

The above-mentioned phenomenon is like two sides of the coin, on one side, it presents challenges, but on the other side it presents opportunities. Some teachers who feel threatened by the advancement of technology ban the students to take/use their gadgets in the class. Furthermore, they still use the old method of teaching in which teachers have almost full control of the students' learning. Their lessons usually consist mostly of long lectures that make the students bored; they force the students to take notes and gave the students dull and boring exercises that are not relevant with the students daily reality. Repetitions are their mantra as they use the same materials over and over again.The other type of teachers, embrace the changes enthusiastically; they consider the technology development as learning opportunities. Their teaching is dynamic since they incorporate technology in their teaching and keep updating their materials with the recent trends.

Being a teacher in the 21st century is not easy, especially for teachers who belong to the digital immigrants group:

> A digital immigrant is an individual who was born before the widespread adoption of digital technology. The term digital immigrant may also apply to individuals who were born after the spread of digital technology and who were not exposed to it at an early age. Digital immigrants are the opposite of digital natives, who have been interacting with technology from childhood.
> https://www.techopedia.com/definition/28139/digital-immigrant

Take myself as an example of a digital immigrant, I could remember how happy I was when I used computer for the first time (in my senior high school year); when I had my first cellphone (not as smart as the present one) and when I sent my first e-mail. Those experiences thrilled me at that time; but now, technology has advanced so rapidly that what were considered fantastic in the past soon become obsolete.

As a digital immigrant who teaches digital native students, I realize that what worked in the past may not work now. Hence, I need to keep up with the latest technology and be ready to change and adapt to cope with the challenges.

In this paper, I would like to present my library research on flipped classroom as one of the innovative ways of teaching the millenials.

What Is Flipped Learning and What Are the Benefits of Using It?
The first thing that we need to know about flipped learning is of course its definition. The governing board and key leaders of the Flipped Learning Network (2014) provides the formal definition of Flipped Learning. According to the them:

> Fliped learning is a pedagogical approach in which direct
> instruction moves from the group learning space to the
> individual learning space, and the resulting group space is
> transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning
> environment where the educator guides students as they
> apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter.
> https://flippedlearning.org/definition-of-flipped-learning/

From the definition above, we can see that flipped learning is very different from traditional learning. First, in traditional learning, teachers spend most of the class time to introduce the concept usually in the form of lecturing. As a result, students tend to be passive in class because they focus on listening to the teachers' instruction. Another disadvantage of the traditional approach is that most of the students will come to the class unprepared. Simply put, in traditional learning culture, the learning of new materials starts in class because the students need to wait for the teacher to pour the knowledge into their head. In flipped learning situation, students learn new materials before the class by watching lecture videos. They can do this in the time most convenient to them, they can do it anywhere using their laptop or smartphones, and more importantly, the video can be reviewed if needed. By gaining first exposure to new material outside of class, students will have more time to digest the concept and prepare themselves to make significant contribution to face to face interaction in class. Second, while in the traditional classroom, teachers give homework to be done outside the class, in the flipped classroom, students do the "homework" in the class, in the form of problem-solving, discussion or debates. Doing the "homework" in the class will give the teacher more opportunities to respond to questions and provide clarifications. I remember how frustrated I was when I did my homework outside the class without my teacher's help, usually I ask my parents which, more often than not, were unable to give satisfactory answers.

Jonathan Bergman and Aaron Sams, two high school science teachers from Colorado, popularized the concept of flipped classroom. In 2007, they had an idea to stop giving lectures in class, and created videos, screencasts and podcasts for their students to be watched before the class (Milman, 2012). They found out that their idea, a reversal of traditional teaching, worked very well. In class, their students had more time to interact with the the teachers and their classmates. This is because, the teacher will not spend too much time deliver the content, but he/she can go around the class helping students understanding the concept, exploring the concept further, and assisting them to do assignments related to the course content. Another advantage that Bergman and Aaron

Sams (2012) observed is the fact that the students who were absent still can keep up with the lesson because they have access to course content provided online by their teachers.

Some Considerations in Applying Flipped Classroom

The Flipped Learning approach need some conditions to be applied successfully. The Flipped Learning Network (2014) suggested the educators who want to flip their classes pay attention to the Four Pillars (F.L.I.P) namely: Flexible Environment, Learning Culture, Intentional Content and Professional Educators

The Four Pillars

Flexible

Students can choose the time and place they want to learn the content.

Learning Culture

In the Flipped Learning, learners are responsible for their own learning, the teachers act as a facilitator or guide to help the students when they have questions, want to have deeper understanding or intend to explore the topic further. In this learning culture, students are actively involved in constructing the knowledge.

Intentional Content

Teachers intentionally decide which materials they will provide for the students. This does not mean that the teachers absolutely control the student learning, but by choosing the materials, the teachers have strategies to maximise students active learning based on the student's level and the nature of the subject.

Professional Educator

Because in the Flipped Learning Environment students may have a lot of questions regarding the content provided by the teacher, the teachers need to prepare themselves by studying and doing research about the content so that they master the content very well. In class time, the teachers also have to observe students carefully to assess their understanding about the content, provide feedback and assist students with the project related to the content.

Beside the four pillars, there are other things that teachers need to consider in applying Flip Classroom, they will be briefly discussed below:

Resources

One of the most important factors in determining the successful application of Flipped Learning is whether the students have the resource (internet connnection) or not. If most students do not have the connection needed to watch the online video, the teachers have to think of a way to enable the students to explore the materials, for example by saving the video file on a usb or a disc.

Students' Motivation

The most common problem that may appear in Flipped Learning is similar to the traditional one, that is – the students do not do their part, in this case watching the video outside the class. To handle this problem, teachers need to create a system to ensure that each student will watch the video, for example: by doing personal approach.

Number of Flipped-Classes/Meetings

As interesting as it may sound, teacher should be careful in applying flipped learning. This is because if all teachers apply flipped learning, students will spend the whole time watching videos, while they may need time to hang out with their friends. Second, using the same approach for the whole semester might make the students tired and bored. The solutions, in my opinion, are the teachers need to discuss with their colleagues how many of them will apply flipped learning, if many teachers would like to apply the approach, they can do it in turn; some teachers do it in the odd semester and others will implement the approach in the even semester. Second, to avoid students' boredom, teachers might use flipped learning for some meetings and other approaches for the rest of the semester.

Conclusion

Different generation of students require different treatments. The way our teachers taught us may not be suitable for this brand new breed of students. Fresh and innovative approaches are needed to sustain the students' interests and keep their motivation high. Flipped learning is one of the models to promote students' autonomy and engagement in learning process.

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