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How Do We Flip Our Language Classroom? Reassessing the Flipped Method

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Abstract

This study has a twofold purpose. First, from an action research approach, the study re-visits how the flipped method is implemented in a Spanish Second Language program at a United States university, and contributes to the literature on the potential benefits and challenges when adopting the flipped method in Second Language programs. Through the analysis of data obtained from a questionnaire, which consists of an agreement-based survey and open-ended questions, we report on how participants and co-researchers—261 Spanish language students and 11 teachers—are affected by the outcomes of this pedagogical implementation. Participants report three benefits and three areas for improvement. Second, based on students and teachers' experiences, we conclude with a re-assessment of the method and a set of recommendations for language educators interested in integrating the flipped method in their teaching. This study contributes to the ongoing debate about the effects of a flipped classroom in language learning, and proposes a reevaluation of the most common applications of the flipped method.

Keywords Flipped method · Participatory action research · Second language learning · Second language teaching · Perception · Recommendations

Introduction

The flipped method (FM) has become a popular instructional model in the last several years due to its capacity to better engage and empower students in being responsible for their learning (Barseghian, 2011; Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Created by Bergmann and Sams in 2007, the FM is an instructional strategy that inverts the typical cycle of content acquisition and application, so that students gain the necessary knowledge before class, and then are guided to actively and interactively apply that new knowledge during class. Compared to traditional lecturing, flipped classrooms are indeed a flip of Bloom's Taxonomy (Marshall & DeCapua, 2013); the understanding and memorization of

(de)contextualized course content and its practice are carried out beforehand and outside the classroom. Class time is devoted to higher-order thinking tasks, such as applied language practice, discussion, critical analysis, argumentation, problem solving, (self-) assessment, and creative work. The Flipped Learning Network (2014) defines the FM as:

> 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.

The FM is student-centered and makes students responsible for their own learning process by holding them accountable for assigned work (Blaschke, 2012). In flipped classrooms, students experience active learning (Bishop & Verleger, 2013; Lai & Hwang, 2016), which is defined as "any instructional method that engages students in the learning process" (Prince, 2004: 223) by engaging in meaningful learning activities (Sohrabi & Iraj, 2016). Thus, students are transformed from passive listeners into active learners (Davies et al., 2013). This represents a paradigm shift in which the focus is no longer on the teacher as the expert

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transmitting knowledge through lectures; rather, the authority is shared with students as co-creators of knowledge and meaning-making in the classroom. The teacher plays the role of a facilitator of learning rather than the traditional presenter of information. Teachers are responsible for maintaining a community of learning based on group work interaction, and individualized attention and support. Since flipped learning is grounded in its optimization of class time use (Mehring, 2018; Voss & Kostka, 2019), this method supports instructors in playing their role of guiding learners in more active classroom interaction and greater awareness of the intricacies of language.

However, there is surprisingly very little literature to date that has examined the role of this method in Second Language (SL) classrooms (Mohan, 2018; Vitta & Al-Hoorie, 2023). With regard to the teaching of English as a SL (ESL), Li et al. (2022) empirically explored the outcomes of the FM on five aspects of written communicative competence of Chinese undergraduate ESL learners: lexis, syntax, cohesion, pragmatics, and discourse. Their findings showed an overall positive effect on learners' communicative development, specifically in their lexical, cohesive, and pragmatic competencies. Likewise, Chang (2023) disclosed the pedagogical effects of the FM on low-proficiency ESL students' learning results and attitudes, which were encouraging in terms of overall learning achievement, motivation, and self-efficacy.

In the field of Spanish as a Second Language (SSL) teaching and learning, Chilingaryan and Zvereva (2017) enumerated all of the advantages of the FM over the traditional method, such as time extension between the teacher and the student, increase of responsibility and self-reliance of the latter, and personified approach to each learner, among many others. From an experiential model, Moranski and Kim (2016) revealed that learners in the FM groups rated their assignments significantly higher in terms of perceived comfort, enjoyment, and subsequent confidence in the material. Those learners also performed considerably better than those in presentational-type of classes when identifying grammatical uses of the target structure on a grammaticality judgment test, but no significant differences were found between the groups' performance on a rule description task or a chapter test. Few other studies on SSL explored the impact of the FM from a different angle: an enumeration of the method's advantages and disadvantages with practical examples of its application (Chilingaryan & Zvereva, 2017); the inclusion of technology in flipped classroom applications (Gretter & Gondra, 2017); or a study on students' perceptions after integrating the Game-based Student Response System (GSRS) Kahoot! supported by the Peer Instruction (PI) technique (González Ruiz, 2021).

"Flipped classroom" has become a catchword in language education, but numerous institutions and educators do not really put this approach into practice, even if they claim to do so (Lea et al., 2003). The FM should move beyond students reviewing vocabulary and grammar (or other lower order cognitive tasks) before coming to class, and then devoting class time to merely use the new acquired language via communicative activities. Instead, the focus of in-class time should be on using the linguistic content reviewed outside the classroom in context and in a meaningful communicative way by means of "analysis, evaluation and manipulation of information, collaborative tasks, and creation of enhanced content or original artifacts" (Mohan, 2018: 3).

To that end, the goal of this study is to re-visit how the FM is implemented in a Spanish SL program at a US university from an action research approach, and contribute to the literature on the potential benefits and challenges when adopting the FM in SL programs. This action research project does not necessarily seek to demonstrate the efficacy of the method for the following two reasons: (i) development is not justified by a simple cause-effect relationship; and (ii) the goal of a participatory research project is to document the teaching and learning practices so that future practitioners that seek to implement the FM approach in the L2 classroom may be able to follow or customize basic principles, sample tasks, illustration of protocols, and practical guidance. Participants and co-researchers carried out pedagogical actions as part of the research process, in which the focus was on instructors and students' self-reflections and perceptions more than on strict methodological considerations.

Research Questions

Since this approach was new to this specific group of instructors and students, the aim was to document the potential benefits and challenges when implementing the FM vis-à-vis the previously used traditional model. In the framework of the traditional method students do not prepare anything before class, and therefore, they are exposed to the course content for the first time in the classroom through a lecture given by their instructor. Students are assigned homework in which they need to apply the concepts they learned in class. As co-researchers themselves, we wanted to increase participants' awareness not only of the potential benefits of the method but also the drawbacks an excessive instrumentalization such method may have. The aim was that both students and instructors' perceptions of this novel learning environment would contribute to instructional and programmatic enhancements in the language classroom.

The two research questions that guided the present study were:

1. Do students and instructors perceive that the FM is suitable and operative in order to achieve learning outcomes?

2. After reflection on these new pedagogical practices, can students and instructors think of ways in which the benefits of the FM can be maximized?

Methodology

This study adopted an action research approach to gain a better understanding of participants' perceptions of their learning environment with a view to improve it according to their evolving needs. The participatory aspect of such research approach, in which those involved in the study become researchers and beneficiaries of the findings and solutions or proposal (Colmenares, 2012: 106), was a key aspect when launching this project. This action research project was composed of two parts that consisted of (1) an instructor training, and (2) students and instructors' collaboration.

Participants

All students (n = 261) involved in the study were second language learners enrolled in a first-semester Spanish course. They were between the ages of 18 and 26 years studying at a private university in South Florida. All the instructors (n = 11) were teaching this first-semester Spanish course, and had previously taught Spanish at the same university using the traditional method for at least 4 years. All the instructors underwent the following training session.

Procedure

The week before the semester started, instructors underwent a training session conducted by the director of the program in which participants and co-researchers were allowed to reflect on their current teaching practices to then expand their knowledge and critical thinking on the FM. On the other hand, they got concrete answers to its widely assumed effectiveness or the challenges that arise from a heavily instrumentalized application of such method. The training was divided in three sessions of an hour long each. In the first session, the new syllabus was contrasted with the old one to discuss the differences between a flipped classroom and a traditional communicative one. The discussed main differences are illustrated in Fig. 1 in a simplified way. The director highlighted that with the implementation of the FM, class time was not used for lecture, but for teacher-guided practice, in which students completed student-centered activities engaging in small and large groups:

In the second part, the director gave the instructors a lesson plan template (Appendix) to follow in their classes. Instructors reflected on how the lesson plan had changed when compared with the previous lesson plans in which the FM was not applied. Then, the director taught a Spanish class to the instructors to provide them with a model. The instructors pretended to be students and to have completed the online activities before coming to class, and therefore, they were familiarized with the material. The director had them applied the knowledge they acquired through completing the online activities by using meaningful communicative activities during class time.

In the third and last session, the online lab in which activities are assigned for students to complete outside class was explained. Instructors learned that the activities are organized into five steps that help students move along the track to success. The first three steps are assigned as a preview while the last two steps are used as review.

Fig. 1 Feature of traditional classroom and flipped classroom (Youhasan, 2021, p.3)
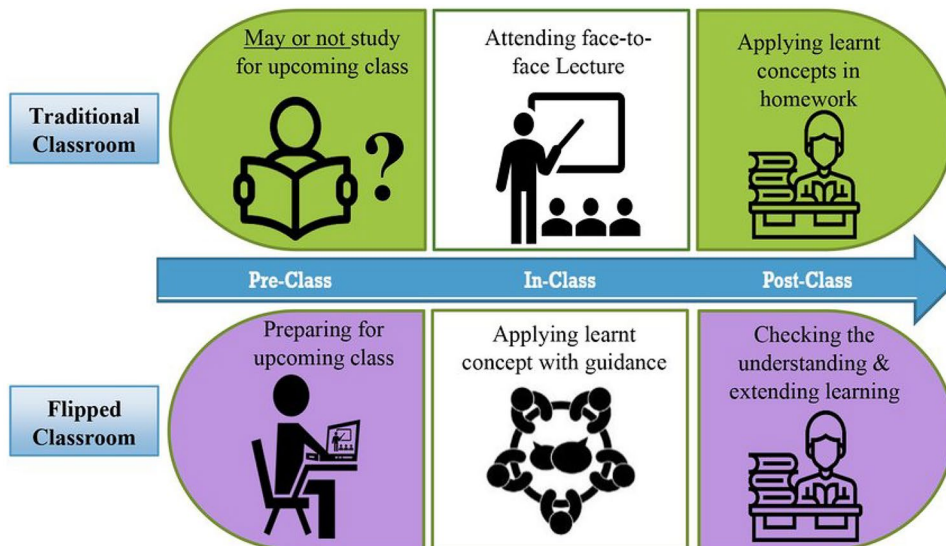
The FM was implemented in the basic Spanish language program the semester in which the data for this study was collected. Students meet face-to-face with their instructor three times a week for 50 min. In order for the academic calendar to reflect the structure of the FM (the sequence *pre-class > in-class > post-class*), the column "Outside class," which includes the assigned online activities, is on the left of the column "In class," which includes the content that is covered in the classroom. The preview activities are marked in red and aligned with the content that will be covered afterwards in class, while the review activities in black and are not aligned with any materials. The following example (Fig. 2) shows the intended working steps:

Instrument

Students completed a questionnaire at the end of the semester in the classroom. They answered an agreement-based survey using a 5-point Likert scale (1, completely disagree; 2, more or less disagree; 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, more or less agree; 5, completely agree), and the next two open-ended questions:

1. What are the advantages of the flipped classroom?
2. What are the disadvantages of the flipped classroom?

The instructors also completed a questionnaire at the same time as their students. They answered yes/no questions using a 5-point Likert scale (1, definitely not; 2, not really; 3, uncertain; 4, somewhat; 5, definitely), as well as the following two questions:

1. Why or why not are you glad you switched to the flipped classroom?
2. What do you think you can do to improve the flipped classroom?

Twenty minutes were given to the participants to complete the survey. During this time, the researcher waited outside the classroom to help mitigate the issue of changing student behavior caused by researcher presence. The purpose of completing the questionnaire in the classroom was 2-fold: to maximize student response rates, and to respond to any possible technical issue that students may encounter.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data collected from the 5-point Likert scale questionnaires. Responses to each item were calculated and presented quantitively in raw numbers and percentages. The mean of all the items for each student was also computed and analyzed. Qualitative data was examined through a line-by-line analysis of students and instructors' answers using the qualitative software Nvivo. A content analysis helped generate 3 overarching categories for advantages and 3 overarching categories for disadvantages, which are discussed in the next section.

Results

Agreement-Based Survey

Students agreed that their experience with the FM was relatively positive ($M = 3.65$). The three statements with which the students indicated the highest agreement were "the flipped classroom helps me get ready for the material that will be covered in class" ($M = 3.92$), "the flipped classroom gives me more class time to practice Spanish" ($M = 3.78$), and "using online videos and assignments helps me understand the grammar" ($M = 3.73$). Interestingly, despite the students' overall positive experience with the FM, their weakest agreement was with the statement "I would recommend the flipped classroom to a friend" ($M = 3.36$). Figure 3 graphs students' mean score of each statement.

Overall, instructors saw an affirmative value on the implementation of the FM. They indicated that they were glad that they switched to this model ($M = 4.45$) since they were able to teach content/concepts more efficiently in the flipped classroom ($M = 4.18$). They added that student grades improved since starting using the FM ($M = 4.18$), and

Fig. 2 The flipped structure represented in the syllabus

Week and Day	Date	Outside class	In class
Week 3 M	September 4	**Capítulo 1.** *Step 1* Gramática B: 30, 31 En Acción: 45, 47	**Capítulo 1** *Step 2* Gramática B: p. 19 En Acción: p. 22-23
W	September 6	**Capítulo 1** *Step 3* Gramática B: 35, 36, 37, 39 Vocabulario: 50, 51, 55, 56, 57, 58 Gramática A: 61, 62	**Capítulo 1** Vocabulario, p. 24-25 Gramática A: p. 28-29

Fig. 3 Students' agreement
scores per statement

Students' (Dis)agreement with the Statements
1 Stronly disagree-5 Stronly agree
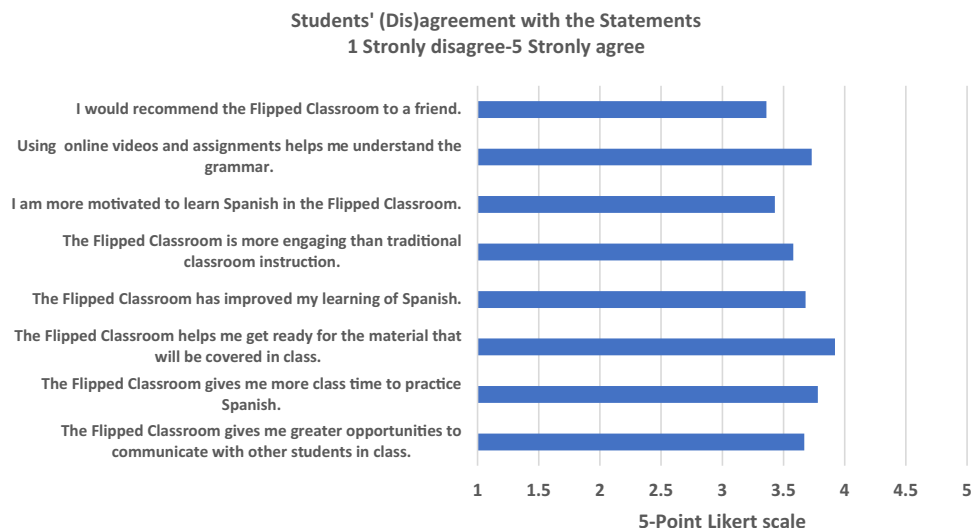
that they believed that their students were learning Spanish better in the flipped classroom ($M = 4.1$). Incorporating the FM into their teaching was somewhat easier than they anticipated ($M = 3.8$). However, they were uncertain if their students seemed to prefer this method over the traditional instruction and homework ($M = 2.9$). Figure 4 graphs instructors' mean score of each statement.

Benefits Experienced by Participants

The analysis of the qualitative data obtained from the participants' evaluation of the FM through open-ended questions showed three overarching categories regarding the benefits the method had provided in their teaching and learning process.

Independent Learning

Overall, students expressed that the FM facilitated independent learning—which is defined as "a method or learning process where learners have ownership and control of their

learning" (Livingston, 2012: 1526)—while still providing them with a diverse array of assistances. One participant stated that "it allows students to work by themselves and learn things alone and then get specific help on whatever they need." Another student confirmed that "the preview activities help the true beginners learn on their own." The benefits of independent learning are observed across SL courses (Fotos & Browne, 2004). For instance, Huang and Hong (2016) showed that the FM improved beginning English level students' reading comprehension by fostering students' learning autonomy. This relates to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (1978: 89), which he defines as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers." To work well in the ZPD, students need a scaffolded method of learning that allows them to start and develop at different levels. Scaffolding consists of the activities provided by the educator, or more competent peer, to support the students as they are led through the ZPD.

Fig. 4 Instructors' agreement
scores per statement

Instructors' (Dis)agreement with the Statements
1 Definitely not-5 Definitely
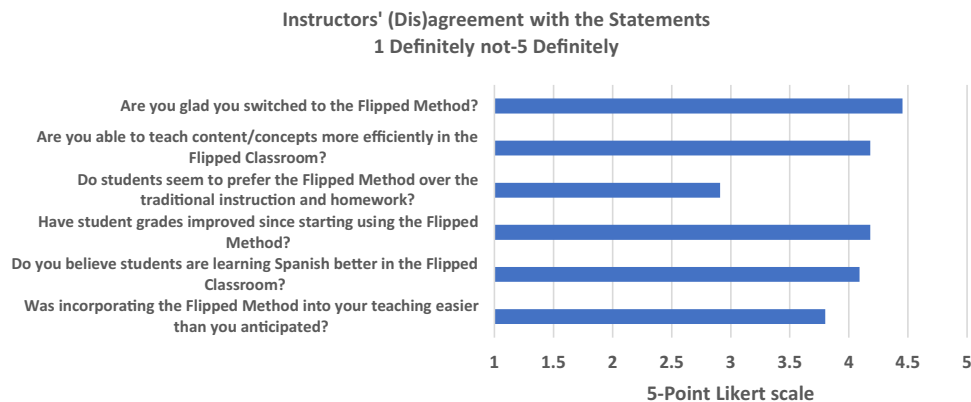
Furthermore, studies have shown that independent learning is also possible because the FM allows learners to adjust their own learning paces (Fotos & Browne, 2004), which is discussed next.

Prepared for Class

The most prominent advantage expressed by the students was that the online preview activities prepared them for class ($M = 3.92$). A student affirmed that "the preview activities allowed us to know what is going to be discussed in class, and to have background knowledge of the topic that would be covered in the upcoming class." Another student revealed that in her opinion the most valuable element of the FM was that "it allows me to review content before being taught it in class. This is great because it lets me have an idea about the content and create a foundation to expand on in the classroom." Thanks to the preview activities, students are "more able to participate in the lesson because we feel more prepared when coming to class." A student compared the FM with the traditional teaching method and said "it helped me learn the language quicker than I have in traditional classrooms." Sahin et al. (2015) compared the effectiveness of an inverted classroom to a traditional one and showed that students participating in the inverted classroom performed as well or better than those in the traditional classroom, and 83% of them stated that flipped-taught lessons prepared them better. Instructors in our study similarly expressed that "the flipped classroom gives the students a big push and they are more prepared for class." One instructor even observed that "since students come to class prepared and ready to participate, we can use the time of the class more efficiently; for instance, now we have more time for communicative activities in which students have the chance to speak Spanish among them and with me." This sense of preparedness reduces students' anxiety and stress while increases their motivation since they become active and independent learners and, consequently, users of the language inside and beyond the classroom, as emphasized next.

Communicative and Collaborative Activities in the Classroom

An important benefit of the FM reported by students ($M = 3.87$) and instructors ($M = 4.18$) is that valuable class time is freed up and may be dedicated to student-centered activities with a focus on meaningful communication and problem-solving. Students appreciated that they had "more time to speak Spanish in the classroom," and "were able to ask more clarifying questions in class." Yousufi (2020: 95) explained that "students are frequently required to participate in the in-class activities and interact with their peers, and this is one of the advantages of the flipped classroom

that engages learners in the learning process and allows them to discuss the target lessons with their peers." This advantage is captured by students' comments such as "It [the FM] gives us more time to work in class on extra assignments that aren't lectures, so classes are much more engaging." Students observed that there was "more social interaction in class in which the instructor is more directly involved with students." Students liked interacting with their classmates, and some claimed that "practicing the material with other students helps reinforce the material." One student highlighted that the clear advantage of the FM was that "it provides more time to practice real Spanish in class as opposed to just learning it." The class then becomes a space in which learners apply the concepts practiced at home through diverse communicative tasks and situations, out of which questions arise and are addressed by the instructor or even the peers in a contextualized way.

Instructors' perceptions aligned with those of the students. An instructor pointed out that "the main focus of class is on Spanish communication, and we strive for maximum use of the language in the classroom. The FM facilitates teaching in the target language and allows instructors to maximize time spent on communicative activities, which in turn improves student learning." Another instructor added that "instructors have time to use various communicative tasks in the classroom, such as multimedia activities, as well as activities in pairs and small groups. Now there is real interaction between students." Regarding interaction between instructors and students, an instructor found that "the best advantage of this method is that it allows the instructor to have real interaction with the students in the classroom. The class dynamic is definitely better, clearer and more enjoyable."Abeysekera and Dawson (2015) have reported that flipped approaches might improve student motivation and help manage cognitive load, but they call for more specific types of research into the effectiveness of this learning process.

Challenges Faced by Participants

Students and instructors reported shortcomings they experienced in their flipped classroom. This section presents the three overarching categories.

Missing Instructor's Help

As stated before, pre-class activities are reported to facilitate independent learning with regards to individualized pace and interaction with the materials. They are also useful for filtering the depth and level of sophistication of the questions that are then posed in the classroom. Although the questions on form and use that students complete by themselves before class are supposedly easily answered

by rules of thumb, independent learning presents some challenging instances for the students due to the lack of guidelines at home (see also Wanner & Palmer, 2015; Chen et al., 2015).

Fautch (2015) drew attention to a main problem that persists in the flipped course format, which was the inability of students to ask questions immediately as they see and hear content for the first time. This was also expressed by some students, who complained that "you cannot ask the professor questions if you do not understand something from the lesson at home," and since "the teacher is not with you to help explain topics, you must get answers on your own online or from peers," or "If you don't understand something you have to email the professor or wait until the next class period." In addition, as a student indicated, "oftentimes I would spend hours doing homework because I was teaching myself everything." Because students could not obtain an immediate response from their instructors, they were also concerned about not successfully completing the activity after using all three attempts, and therefore, this having a negative impact on their grade. A student commented, "some structures were incredibly confusing and so we as students had no idea what to do, and would be losing tries on our online assignments."

We argue that students' perception of independent learning as a challenge is related to their being used to a teacher-centered approach, in which the instructor is seen as the only source of knowledge and grammar as an outcome more than a tool for communication. As critics of this model highlight, pre-class preparation requires knowledge and skills that students do not yet possess (Wanner & Palmer, 2015: 356). As proposed by the ACTFL Standards, students need to work building strategies to find and create meaning inside and outside the classroom, rather than relying on the instructor to get unquestioned answers. As happened in this action research project, learners and instructors become also researchers of their own developmental and mediated process rather than focusing of an immediate and pre-given result.

Some instructors also recalled challenging instances in the FM. For instance, one instructor claimed that:

> … the disadvantage is that the students will not benefit as much if they are not completing the homework and studying before class. Students that are left behind for not doing their homework have no real chance of catching up (not necessarily a bad thing, but something they may complain about).

The FM relies on a student-centered approach in which learners are responsible of their own learning process. Instructors, as facilitators, should intervene during the process when observing a student falling behind. What is precisely significant about the FM is that the instructor does not remain in the role of a mere spectator waiting for the final product of a task. Noticing a crisis during the students' developmental process, instructors should influence it and metacognitively mediate to redirect their learning process. The flipped classroom underlies the constructivist model, which is based on the theory that learners construct new understandings and knowledge through experience and social discourse, integrating new information with what they already know (prior knowledge). This links up with Vygotsky's abovementioned ZPD, where students are challenged in close proximity to, yet slightly above, their current level of development. However, students are sometimes still not used to that level of independent thinking and performance that the FM facilitates.

Approach on Grammar

The independent learning that the FM relies on may make students perceive internalization of grammar as challenging. As soon as communicative activities that go beyond overt grammar drills happen outside of the classroom, students feel they lack immediate grammatical explanations. The students explained that the reason for this challenge was because they were not used to a flipped (language) classroom.

In their empirical study, Moranski and Kim (2016: 848–9) found that inverted classroom models for explicit grammar instruction promote classroom interaction, as "[it] allow learners (a) to assume more agentive states for longer periods of time and (b) to be more conscious of the grammatical structures used during in-class interactions." Nevertheless, a lot of language classes still rely on the instructor's voice delivering rules of thumb or carrying out the thinking process for students on the blackboard. L2 learners are not used to conceptualizing activity nor to being the ones creating the meaning grammar expresses in an operational and logical way. Oftentimes, L2 learners use simple grammatical rules with tricks and crosscuts, and do not explain the meaning or conceptual reasons behind their communicative choices (Aguiló-Mora & Negueruela-Azarola, 2022: 19). Some learners do not push themselves to conceptualize linguistic issues based on conceptual reasons—such as the notion of aspect to understand the contrast of Preterite/Imperfect in Spanish. This is sometimes also the case of SL instructors. It may happen that they are not used to working with models of language as functional models for thinking. As Aguiló Mora and Negueruela (2022: 18) argued from a conceptual approach on grammar, "L2 grammatical development is not only the learning of endings (morphology) or word order sequences (syntax) but also internalizing new concepts (complex reasons) in order to deploy complex meanings (semantics) in real contexts to enact intentionality (pragmatics)." A flipped classroom is a pedagogical approach that should promote the internalization of language

meanings connected to communication and literacy. The quality of explanations provided to SL learners before class and reaffirmed in class have a definitive impact in language development. Those explanations should become ideas that learners can then use as concrete tools in class and after class to orient and make sense of their performance in practical communicative activities.

Not Engaging, Repetitive, and Time-Consuming

The online activities used in the FM are claimed to offer opportunities to interact with course material and resources, thus leading to greater engagement and enhanced opportunities for learning Spanish in the classroom (Gretter & Gondra, 2017). However, some students' perceptions did not align with this claim. For instance, one student said that "class is repetitive in a way that is not engaging. Class lessons turn into just reviewing what the homework was." Instructors also expressed this same concern, and one instructor said that "some students tended to see the work of instructors as unnecessary or redundant." Furthermore, similar to students in studies by Khanova et al. (2015), our participants also perceived the method as time-consuming, busy work, and an additional burden. We argue that this may occur because class time is erroneously devoted to replicating the type of grammar and vocabulary activities previously done at home or to a teacher-centered lecture approach rather than a true hands-on, task or project-based, or literacy-based approach.

From the teachers' side, we found one commonly reported challenge. Similar to the students, some instructors reported that the FM required more time and extra workload, complaints also shared by instructors in Wanner and Palmer (2015) and Sage and Sele (2015), respectively. For instance, one instructor complained that "It is really exhausting to find innovative ways to teach and not repeat the same model in the next class." However, we claim that a truly student-centered approach alleviates the burden for the instructors, whose role is that of a mediator through

meaningful tasks. Students are active participants and co-creators of meaning-making tasks that promote not only learning (i.e., the noticing and mastering of skills, forms, content knowledge and procedures) but also development (i.e., conceptual transformation and the internalization of thinking tools to critically organize the knowledge acquire or to be acquired in concrete communicative situations). Yet, instructors need tools to create spaces where development can occur. The "Recommendations for Preparing Second Language Instructors" section will offer some recommendations on that regard.

Remarks

Figure 5 illustrates which aspects of the FM were beneficial and which ones were challenging according to the participants.

The experiences shared by students and instructors help understand the assets as well as the drawbacks that some instructors face in a flipped classroom. Although the instructors expressed that incorporating the FM into their teaching was not more difficult than they anticipated (see Fig. 4), some struggled to think of innovative ways to teach not to make the class repetitive—a complaint found among students. One professor indicated that.

> We need a bank of precise activities that help prepare the lessons, especially grammar. It is very difficult for teachers not qualified in this method to create activities completely different from those they have always taught. It seems to me that Workshops, Model Classes and other activities are needed, which can help in a flipped classroom.

Drawing upon this last comment, the following section offers recommendations to maximize the benefits of the FM implementation and to avoid that it becomes a mechanistic process in which both instructors and students forget the principles behind such a methodological process.

Fig. 5 Benefits and challenges of the FM for the participants
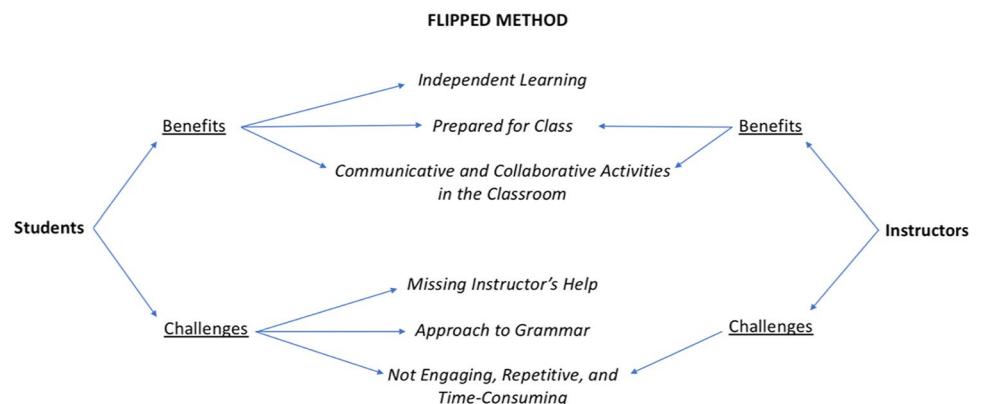
Recommendations for Preparing Second Language Instructors

Here we propose a set of recommendations for language instructors who want to incorporate the FM in the classroom or just to reassess their current implementation. These recommendations emerged from the experiences shared by the participants in the action research project previously described, and current research literature in the field of FM in SL courses.

Teacher Training

Instructors need scaffolded and continued professional training to facilitate more holistic and conceptual understandings and applications of flipped pedagogies because "it [still] falls on the shoulders of the course instructors to optimize these opportunities" (Hattie, 2003: 26). Since the FM is learner-centered, instructors' role becomes the one of proposing research and/or hands-on tasks and guiding students' performances toward the creation of meaningful learning. As stated by the instructors of this study, there is certainly a need for repositories in which designed units and materials to apply the FM would be openly available for teacher training and use.

Building communities of practice with other professionals in SL teaching is important for instructors, as they "provide a model for connecting people in the spirit of learning, knowledge sharing, and collaboration as well as individual, group, and organizational development" (Gretter & Gondra, 2017: 109). According to Cambridge et al. (2005), communities of practice connect individuals with shared interests; provide a context for communication and a platform to share information and build understanding; support interactivity between people; engage individuals to learn through mentoring; provide people with best practices in their field; and foster collaborations that adapt to changing needs and technologies. Instructors do not necessarily have to create a community of practice only within their language program. They can also create one with colleagues across languages, which will reinforce the idea that learning languages helps build intercultural dialogs. Instructors can even locate other educators who use the FM in the language classroom outside their institution.

However, often the problem is that curriculums, students and instructors are still very much exclusively focused on a decontextualized teaching/learning of grammar, which is too often perceived as a synonym of what "language" is and grammar structures as the result *of* learning more than a tool *for* learning (Negueruela, 2008). This is the interpretation of some students and instructors of the syllabus presented in the aforementioned study. The implementation of the FM in the classroom is indeed a pedagogical approach for promoting the internalization of L2 meanings connected to communication and literacy. Training on a multiliteracies-based pedagogical approach may address the issue presented here toward handling the realities of 21st-century learners (Kern, 2000), as explained in the following section.

Implementing the FM

The FM must be evaluated as a pedagogical philosophy and not as the opportunity to avoid lecturing grammar in class. A flipped classroom needs to emphasize the importance of live instruction: not just as 'practice' but as an indispensable part of the cultural and communicative learning process. This way, students will more likely grasp the importance of the classroom activities, and they will also accept the homework load. The FM represents a mindset where learning is centered on students (Bergmann & Sams, 2012) and where instructors are responsible for maintaining a community of learning based on interaction and support. The teacher devotes more meaningful time to the students' personal and specific questions by providing more elaborated conceptual explanations on students' requirements. Below are some suggestions to turn a traditional lecture classroom into a flipped classroom.

Pre-class Time: Preview Tasks

One of the goals of a flipped classroom is to give students input on the vocabulary and grammar they will need for the class interactive activities. Common preview tasks completed by students before class are the auto-corrected drill-type activities, but they should be followed by meaning-bearing activities which serve to prepare students to successfully complete the interaction activities in class. We firmly believe that this said course of action is effective to mechanize some formal aspects of the target language. However, they may erroneously present the process of language learning as fully mechanistic. To avoid this, instructor should also use a multiliteracies approach, which would help with students' "understanding of the relationships among various oral, written, and visual forms and how these forms contribute to textual meaning; the ability to construct meaning through the processes of creating and transforming knowledge; and the recognition of the dynamic nature of language and the socially and culturally embedded resources used in literacy-based practices" (Paesani et al., 2015: 21). From the beginner levels, pre-class time should delve into the critical and/or discursive

analysis of diverse types of texts to be further discussed in class in order to complement the pragmatic approach—based on acquiring communicative skills—and to sharpen learners' analytic skills. This will help improve learners' ability to express their ideas, and to enrich their cultural and literary sensibilities.

Class Time

First, class time can be used to answer any question students may have about the materials as they already studied the material before coming to class, and therefore, they can readily ask questions. Thus, instructors can ask their students if they have any doubts on some aspects of the pre-class content. In fact, the qualitative data from the survey showed that students would like more in-class time for questions. Akçayir and Akçayir (2018) claimed the importance of teachers effectively integrating discussion/interaction tools to make the FM useful in education. Yousufi (2020: 95) also explained that "even as the flipped classroom obliges students to study at their own pace and independently, the teachers are required to instruct and engage students in the face-to-face discussions to provide them the possibility of asking questions, seeking clarification, etc." We advise instructors to create lessons and activities that require students to use the tools learned at home in different communicative situations, which may rise questions and doubts students have.

Second, in-class time should rely on authentic materials and current topics of discussion, and engage learners in active learning in which they have to either think about or perform some application of the knowledge that they have acquired prior to face-to-face time. Examples of activities that can be used in a flipped classroom are information gap activities, surveys, research and reflection tasks, pedagogical translation, project-based units, text-based comprehension and discussion assignments, scenarios, debates, and collaborative writing. Indeed, the main requirement of the flipped classroom is collaborative work. Students are frequently required to participate in in-class activities and interact with their peers, and even with their communities outside the classroom. As such, the instructors can prepare interdisciplinary projects in which the target language is used to compare among, connect to, and interact with multilingual communities at home and around the world, as proposed by ACTFL's 5Cs.

Post/Parallel-Class Time: Assessment

An appropriate implementation of the FM goes hand in hand with a backward course design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), in which the focus is on student learning rather than on instructor teaching. Learning is, therefore, centered on assessments that are designed to give indication that students have accomplished the course objectives. In a backward course design, we first identify the desired goals. Then, and before lesson plans are created, the types of assessments to provide evidence of learning will be determined. Assessment will vary in scope (simple – complex), time frame (short–long term), setting (decontextualized–authentic contexts), and structure (determined–open-ended), such as informal checks for understanding, quizzes or tests, academic prompts, or performance tasks/projects (Beryl, 2013). Assessments should match the idiosyncrasy of the goals previously defined. When the results and objectives have been set, together with the corresponding evidence of understanding through the series of assessments, instructors can determine the content and sequence for the course (see Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

As Aguiló Mora and Negueruela (2022: 15) stated, "communicative curricula since the 1970s gradually replaced a structural organization of courses by a thematic organization of programs (e.g., technology, pastimes, travel) and communicative functions and tasks (e.g., giving opinions, narrating a story, describing your family)," but syllabi focused on grammar as a gradual acquisition process are still very much present. Other options are possible. For instance, unit or final projects are what guides the syllabi in a project-based approach, genres in a genre-based approach, and concepts in a conceptual approach. In line with what was established before, assessment needs to follow an organic continuum with what is done in the classroom and with the learning goals to be accomplished. Assessment of results may be combined with documentation and evaluation of the developmental processes of learning in tasks in which learners create their own meanings and engage intellectuality with the learning units. It would be interesting to help learners focus on mediation, which, from a Vygotskyan perspective, is the place/time where instructors and learners see how the mediated mind works through the creation and use of cultural thinking tools for orientation in practical communicative activities. Assessment would then focus on observing learners' capacity to actively use the concepts or cultural tools learned to mediate (i.e., self-regulate) their thinking in their ZPDs and toward their L2 communicative performance.

This practice moves away from paradigms focused on the measurement of isolated and decontextualized data. For example, in Spanish, understanding the notion of aspect is crucial to manage the contrast preterite/imperfect. This conceptual understanding becomes an indispensable tool for narrating a story in the past. Thus, the narration of a story in the past is the communicative activity

that should be assessed together with the process in which students create their understanding of the notion of aspect as a thinking tool. A pre-class quiz on past tenses structures and conjugations makes sense, but class time and assessment need to promote the internalization of concepts (1) to explain diverse communicative intentions, and (2) to perform in diverse socio-communicative situations. This is the way assessment truly integrates into the FM and is articulated in a meaningful flipped curriculum that moves beyond mechanistic approaches to focus not only on the result but the process of learning itself through reflective and critical tasks that smoothly blend in with communicative agendas. The more personalized learning the FM offers, the more personalizing of assessment is required, "through a stronger emphasis on assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning than assessment *of* learning" (Wanner & Palmer, 2015: 355).

Conclusion and Implications

Building upon our previously stated research questions, we may conclude that students and instructors generally agree that the FM is suitable and operative to achieve the expected learning outcomes of the course. However, when implementing the FM in a way that it can be homogenous in all sections of the SSL program, it risks to become excessively mechanistic at times. Some in-class time may be too much devoted to purely structural explanations of grammar or decontextualized communicative tasks that do not required any critical and/or conceptual understanding by the students. Instead, a previously assigned list of lexical and grammatical topics is enough to complete the tasks. Then, as stated by some instructors and students in their roles as co-researchers in this study of the FM, classes may become repetitive and not engaging, similar to the traditional method in which the class session turns into a lecture, and therefore, turning the students into passive learners.

Training on the application of the FM combined with a multiliteracies approach through the use of authentic materials seems to maximize the benefits of the FM as well as students' motivation. Promoting a more reflective type of learning, and helping students move beyond mere comprehension by developing their ability to interpret, infer, read, discuss, think, and write critically about texts facilitates this. Learning skills that help students be independent language learners will result in the internalization of communication abilities in the SL to be applied in the target communities. They will be able to "practice" culture

and language instantly and use the knowledge that was modeled and acquired in class into the "real" world (Evans & Gunn, 2011) from a critical and meaningful approach. In fact, the five "C" goal areas from the Word-Readiness Standard for Learning Languages stress the application of learning a language beyond the instructional setting. The goal is to prepare learners to apply the skills and understandings measured by the standards outside the classroom, as well as bring a global competence to their future careers and experiences.

As an action research project, this study has served as both a pedagogical and investigative task in which instructors and learners became active agents in this process. The main goal of this research was not to provide a general evaluation of the FM, but to use the action research project presented to offer specific insight in order to contribute to a better comprehension and a more enhanced application of the FM. By doing this, language program directors and instructors can reassess its implementation in its specific language learning environment. This study, thus, offers substantiation that supports the potential benefits of carefully implementing a FM in the SL classroom. The FM has been implemented in many different disciplines (math, social sciences, humanities, etc.), and in schools and universities around the world (Hao, 2016). We believe that the set of recommendations proposed in this study were broad and can be applied as a pedagogical approach across disciplines and educational settings by instructors who want to switch from lecture-based teaching to flipped learning. FM allows classroom time in any discipline and at any level (primary, secondary, and higher education) to be used for students to put their knowledge into practice and to do hands-on work with their instructor's guidance. Instructors can benefit from it by identifying their students' knowledge gaps and working to address them in real time rather than waiting until test day to see how much a student understands or has internalized.

We hope we have contributed our grain of sand to educators who want to prepare themselves for a SL flipped classroom. To have a better understanding of the direction where the flipped method should be heading, we believe that future studies should include mirroring questions for the two respondent groups. The views of the respondents could therefore be compared and discussed more deeply. In future studies, standard deviation of the quantitative data should also be considered to see if there is any significant variation between the responds of the same group participants.

Appendix

Lesson Plan Template

Instructor: Course:
Date: Location:

Topic / theme:
Chapter:
Context or situation to make the topic relevant:
Communicative function: *Ss will be able to*   *Ss will be able to*
New vocabulary or idiom to participate/understand:
Grammatical structures connected to communicative function:
Materials needed:

1. Prior to class
   - Write objectives on the board
   - Set up materials

2. Start of class   approx. 10 min
   - Attendance
   - Clarify doubts

3. Warm-up activity (A review of some sort)   _____ min

4. Input   _____ min

5. Comprehension check   _____ min
6. Guided practice   _____ min

7. Open communication   _____ min

8. Closure   approx. 5 min
   - Review what was learned

9. Homework and reminders   approx. 2-3 min

Declarations

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