IMPLEMENTATION OF BLENDED TEACHING APPROACH THROUGH FLIPPED CLASSROOMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: It is irrefutable that in contemporary language teaching classrooms, technology is regarded as an integral part of language teaching not only as a tool for developing learning materials but also as a means of delivering content. In addition, it enables learning outside the classroom (online/flipped classrooms).This work mainly deals with the advantages as well as challenges of implementing blended teaching approach, in particular, flipped learning among university students. It is noticeable that more research must be carried out concerning the above-mentioned approach in higher education of Uzbekistan considering that flipped classrooms have received little attention there.

Index terms: blended learning (BL), flipped classrooms, technologies and challenges.

Introduction

In the Information Age, technology saw considerably radical changes. The education system in tandem with technologies has been revolutionized to keep up with demand. Considering various factors such as time constraints, cost efficiency and students' inability to participate in face-to-face classes, language teachers must be prepared to conduct classes and assess students online applying technologies. What's more, in traditional classrooms, technologies may be incorporated for the purposes of entertainment, increased motivation and confidence. Blended learning (BL) is the very method which facilitates education enterprises to make a marked shift from traditional way of teaching to innovative approach to language teaching.

According to Yajie & Farhana (2023), BL is aimed at combining face-to-face and online educational settings, resulting in better learning engagement and flexible learning experiences, with rich settings way further the use of a simple online content repository to support the face-to-face classes. Similarly, the popularity of Flipped classrooms alternatively known as Inverted classrooms has also soared in language teaching contexts.

What is flipped classroom?

As the term suggests, flipped classroom, in its simplest definition, is the method where students watch pre-recorded video lessons outside the classroom to understand the topic and allocate more class time to have discussions and put the knowledge they acquired into practice (Prabaharan, 2014). Contrary to popular belief, the concept of flipped classrooms is not limited to online videos but it serves as a way to enable the meaningful interaction and learning activities that occur whilst having teacher-student communication which is considered a combination of direct instruction and constructivist learning method by Prabaharan (2014). Additionally, students can take the responsibility for their learning in comparison with other conventional learning approaches (Fulton, 2012). Johnson, Becker, Estrada & Freeman (2014) concluded that the principal aim of the approach is to offer more authentic and active learning through project based and real world practices. They also added that flipped classroom model can be a major component of learning process including BL, inquiry-based learning and other approaches. Zownorenga (2013) believes that time is committed to classroom activities in an efficient way.

Advantages of the model

The method can be advantageous, to greater extent, due to several reasons which will be discussed below. Firstly, 'digital natives' of this century compared to older generations of the previous century are more aware of applying latest technologies and have an access to a variety of technological devices nowadays. This, in turn, makes the process more interesting. The study made by Ramirez, Hinojosa & Rodriguez (2014) on the advantages of the model found that students' motivation for learning increased since watching pre-recorded videos was way more meaningful and understandable rather than reading the textbooks. Other advantages may include flexibility, better comprehension and previously learned knowledge prior to classes. Another research conducted by Herreid & Schiller (2013) also found it beneficial since it provides an opportunity for those students who miss the classes to easily follow. Besides, students participate more actively in the learning process and teachers' role is more of an observer and guide. Taking these factors into account, it can be really crucial for both educators and learners.

Challenges of using the approach

The above-mentioned advantages notwithstanding, there are some challenges to be considered. Among these problems which may hinder the process, most students may struggle with technical problems related to the Internet or software (Ramirez, Hinojosa & Rodriguez, 2014), particularly, in most underdeveloped countries.

Jenkins (2012), Duerden (2013) & Miller (2012) stated that teachers must ensure that all the students are following the materials which they shared and come prepared to the class. Additionally, students are not able to receive instant feedback and interact whilst watching the videos or podcasts and struggle to digest the new information. Finally, it is obvious that there will be more demand for technologies and it calls for more funding which may be problematic in some cases.

Conclusion

In this day and age, technologies have become irreplaceable in teaching contexts and it is teachers who can effectively incorporate them into foreign language learning process. In that regard, they can aid in having flipped classrooms and making the classes, first and foremost more student-centered, interactive, interesting and efficient.

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