

The Inverted Classroom Methodology in Germany

The most common form of teaching in Germany is teacher-centered teaching with the teacher standing in front of the class explaining and giving orders. This goes for German elementary and secondary schools but also in many cases for university lectures. The DESI Study (German English Student Assessment International), a study comparing German and English skills of international secondary school students, revealed that in general the teacher speaks more than twice as much as the students. Experts on education are convinced that this methodology still makes sense in a classroom setting. However, they also claim that this methodology leaves very little room for developing communication skills – which is crucial in language classes – and does not allow to pay attention to different learning speeds and interests of the students. ¹

For this reason, teachers and experts have over the last years started looking into new concepts to continue to teach new topics in class while also giving sufficient attention to every single student and his/her needs and interests. In this context, experts on education have started to recommend the flipped classroom methodology. However, the concept remains relatively unknown and is rarely implemented in class. This is without a doubt partly due to the fact that there has not yet been a large-scale project to study advantages and disadvantages of the flipped classroom methodology over a prolonged period of time or in different types of educational institutions.

In this context, it is interesting to look at the *FLIP - Flipped Learning in Praxis*² project which is supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission. The purpose of the project is to develop guidelines for the implementation of blended learning environments in which information and communication technologies (ICTs) are used to enhance students' learning environments.

The German partner Sofatutor is an online platform providing tutorial videos for high-school students to help them learn. In addition, this project was supported by University of Education Heidelberg, Bertelsmann Stiftung and three Berlin-based schools.³

The project showed that the majority of students had been using learning videos prior to the project in order to better understand a subject or to prepare for tests. Thus, they were familiar with the concept of learning videos.

Experts recommend the flipped classroom methodology particularly for language classes as it will give teachers more time in class to focus on communicative exercises and enable them to spend more time to address each student's needs. However, if well developed the methodology can be used in any type of class.

Lehrer-Online, a website for teachers, recommends basing the self-study phase on a video accompanied by at least one exercise (quiz, feedback task, portfolio, learning diary). In the case of the humanities, it may also be useful to use a written text together with a quiz or similar exercises. The authors also recommend adapting the videos to the skills and knowledge of the weakest students in order to avoid giving too much information, which may be overwhelming for slower students. The authors distinguish three ways to implement the flipped classroom methodology, which they recommend to mix or to use alternately in order to maximize the learning progress:

- "flipped": students watch a learning video at home in order to prepare for class.

¹ http://flipyourclass.christian-spannagel.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Download_IB_Praxisbeispiel_Flipped_Classroom_151117.pdf

² <http://www.flippedlearning.eu/>

³ <http://flipyourclass.christian-spannagel.de/>

- "half-flipped": students watch a learning video at home to follow up on what has been discussed in class (This could be a sample solution).
- "in-class-flip": students watch the learning video in class (for example a summary after a topic has been discussed).⁴

According to the authors, there only a few disadvantages.⁵ These include slow internet connection in rural areas and the problem of students who do not do their homework. Teachers wishing to implement the flipped class methodology also need to make a choice whether they use existing learning videos or create their own learning videos. In the second case, preparation will be very time consuming in the beginning, as making the videos requires lots of time. This may be a considerable disadvantage for many teachers as preparation time is usually not included in their working hours.

In a university context, the term Inverted Classroom is more common. The methodology is becoming more and more popular among teachers and students. The two main advantages are that students can watch the videos whenever and wherever they are and take full advantage of the knowledge provided in the videos. In lectures, students tend to lose attention, as the average lecture is usually longer than a student's attention span.

Experts recommend providing additional material for each video such as gap texts, key questions or hypervideos. In order to be accepted by the students, experts also stress that the video lectures need to be mandatory material. The face-to-face classes should focus on discussing central issues to the topic, problems encountered while watching the videos or students acting as teachers and leading the group discussion⁶.

Links to related websites:

- Teacher's feedback after implementation of the flipped classroom methodology:
<http://www.umgedrehterunterricht.de/>
- Conference on ICM in Germany <https://invertedclassroom.wordpress.com/>
- How does the Flipped Classroom function?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruRbdLaloMY>

⁴ <https://www.lehrer-online.de/unterricht/sekundarstufen/geisteswissenschaften/deutsch/artikel/fa/flipped-classroom/>

⁵ <https://www.lehrer-online.de/unterricht/sekundarstufen/geisteswissenschaften/deutsch/artikel/fa/flipped-classroom/>

⁶ https://www.e-teaching.org/lehrszenarien/vorlesung/inverted_classroom