When I originally designed my Arabic courses at the University of New Hampshire (UNH), I adopted the flipped classroom instructional approach—meaning I assigned students homework to do before they came to class. Early on, this homework often would consist of a YouTube video that presented a new lesson. I would either post the YouTube video link on Canvas or send it to the students via email. When students came to class, we activated what they had (or had not) learned at home. I assumed that students would use the knowledge they gained at home in a context where they could receive immediate feedback from me and from their peers.

Then I would ask the students to do more homework on the same topic after class to make sure that the new knowledge was “organized,” as Brame (2013) and the National Research Council (2000) recommend. This homework often included producing an oral response by making a short video and posting it on Canvas or submitting it to me via email.

Challenges and Solutions

However, it became obvious that some students did not watch the assigned videos before they came to class. This prevented the flipped classroom from working as it was supposed to. To solve this problem, I adopted several easy-to-implement technological innovations.

Listening and Speaking

To teach listening, I upload audio and video materials that contain new vocabulary to Kaltura Quiz. Then I add questions to the video which pop up as it plays. Once students answer these questions, they receive points that are reflected in their homework grades. This happens automatically if you put your gradebook on Canvas and link Kaltura to the gradebook. After viewing the videos at home, students come to class ready to use their newly gained knowledge in interactive activities, receiving immediate feedback from me and from their peers.

To ensure that they organize this knowledge, students make a video outside of the class to reply to a prompt question. This is done using Flipgrid, a video-making tool that is integrated in Canvas. Be sure to link Flipgrid to the gradebook on Canvas to motivate students to produce the videos and comment on each other’s videos.

Grammar

To teach grammar, I record videos of myself presenting new grammatical topics using PowerPoint slides on Kaltura. I then use Kaltura’s Quiz feature to change the video from a one-way to an interactive function that requires student participation, and I embed pop-up questions inside each video.

When students watch the video, it periodically pauses and a question appears on screen. Students must answer the question in order to continue watching. Students automatically earn points for answering each question and these points are added to the gradebook on Canvas.

When students are in class, we review any newly gained knowledge by doing activities that I design in which students can use this knowledge and get immediate feedback from me and from their peers.

Does it work?

Once I integrated Kaltura Quiz and Flipgrid in Canvas and linked them to the online gradebooks, I noticed a remarkable change in my flipped classes. The vast majority of students now do the homework and watch the interactive video with the quiz, coming to class ready to use and organize the knowledge that was introduced to them at home.

However, were my observations an adequate indicator of the success of my instructional approach? To be sure, I used the Mid-Term Assessment Process (MAP) service, provided by UNH’s Center for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching and Learning. The MAP asked students questions about the course structure and the instructional approach.

“This course is being taught differently from other language courses that I...
have taken and I am finding it easier to learn,” commented one student. Since Arabic is considered by many to be one of the most difficult languages for English speakers to learn, describing the course as “easier to learn” compared to other languages this undergraduate had studied says a lot about the effectiveness of using Kaltura Quiz and Flipgrid as part of a flipped classroom.

The MAP also asked what students found to be the most useful thing in the course. One student answered, “The reverse class structure as well as practicing speaking [Arabic] in class.” Another student said, “The flipped classroom has been really helpful in learning the language. The way we go over the things we learned for the homework helps clarify the confusion I may have had in the homework.” Other comments were even more specific: “I think what is most helpful is the videos that have the test during the video” and “Flipgrids and speaking exercises in class are very helpful!”

These MAP comments indicate that integrating appropriate technologies in the flipped classroom increases students’ engagement, helps achieve academic goals, and makes learning easier.

References

WHAT’S THAT APP?

Flippity
flippity.net

Flippity is a versatile Google text manipulation tool that can turn a Google spreadsheet into a board game, a quiz show, a scavenger hunt, a matching game, Bingo, word search, word cloud—even a progress indicator and a self-assessment quiz. It is both language and level neutral, making it useful for a wide range of reading and writing applications. It is free, but there are some age-screened ads. It works on many devices and various platforms. Lots of students can work on it simultaneously, but it is not collaborative, and students cannot save their work. Check it out … you could find some creative, time-saving ways to make this tool work for you in the classroom.

Classkick
classkick.com

Classkick claims to allow educators to see all of their students working and give high quality feedback from anywhere. Not specific to language education, Classkick allows teachers to upload their own content. Students work on assignments on their own devices, and both the teacher and other students can provide feedback. The teacher can also see how each student is progressing through the assignment and determine who needs help.

LISTEN UP!
Language-Related Podcasts

Inspired Proficiency (inspiredproficiency.libsyn.com)

Inspired Proficiency is a podcast for language teachers created by language teachers. Episodes dating back to February 2018 feature interviews, tricks, resources, games and lots of inspiration for K–12 classrooms. You’ll find many familiar voices in these relevant and timely episodes. Well worth a listen. Available through iTunes to listen on Apple Podcasts.

Bilingual Avenue (player.fm/series/bilingual-avenue-with-marianna-du-bosq)
Although this podcast is geared more toward parents raising bilingual children, serving as a guide on what to do, how to do it and what to expect when working with multilingual children, educators who teach young dual language learners will find quite a few episodes of interest. Resources, strategies, and actionable tips are found within insightful interviews with experts and parents as they share best practices, failures, obstacles, and inspiration.