In-Class Flip in Teacher Education Through Loop-Input

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#### Introduction

The 51st ASOCOPI conference held in Bogota in October 2016 gathered professionals from all over Colombia and the world around the topic of technology in the ELT classroom. It was a vibrant event where themes such as gaming, research, differentiation, blended learning, flipped learning, platforms, collaborative learning, and innovation were featured by speakers from different educational contexts. As one of the main purposes of the conference was to inspire Colombian language teachers to use technology purposefully in their classrooms, the authors of the present chapter led a session on in-class flip; an innovative approach towards flipped learning for particular contexts, the Colombian setting being one of them. This chapter presents the experience of training teachers to create their own in-class flips by means of experiencing one, what is known as *loop input* (Woodward, 1988). It also outlines the main stages of an in-class flip for teachers who think a regular flipped setting does not apply to their contexts, learners or conditions. Moreover, it suggests loop input as an effective way to train language educators for situated learning to occur.

In that sense, loop input allowed the authors to deliver a practical and experiential session for preservice and in-service teachers not only to learn about a teaching strategy, but for them to see its real value for their own teaching situations. The session promoted situated learning, "within a context that [resembled] as closely as possible the practice environment" (Stein, 1998,

para. 6), where students (in this case, ELT teachers) transfer learning to reallife situations through "immersion in and with the experience." (para. 5).

Since the authors started to flip, the concepts of time, assessment, content, as well as teacher and student roles in learning have been altered, optimizing the teaching and learning resources and processes. Consequently, direct instruction has lost its protagonism in their classrooms, and is being accessed by students through different means, whether in the individual space at home, or in stations or other means within the classroom walls. Just the same, their classrooms have been transformed "into a dynamic, interactive learning environments where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter." (FLN, 2014, para. 1).

### Flipped learning

Flipped learning has become a buzzword in the last couple of years due to its attractiveness and potential for any educational setting. However, it goes beyond being just a trend. Flipped learning, as defined by the Flipped Learning Network (2014) 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. (para. 1).

It is important to mention that the implementation of this methodology precedes the definition. In 2000, Lage, Treglia and Platt inverted the lectures in their economy classrooms in order to provide their students with active learning opportunities while in class. However, Bergmann and Sams (2012) coined the term *flipped classroom* which has spread rapidly around the globe.

The philosophy behind flipped learning is simple. Resources (i.e. time, space, the teacher, etc.) in the classroom are optimized by assigning direct instruction for students to access by themselves while in the individual space in the form of videos, audio files, texts, textbook pages, etc. Yet, even though most early implementers of flipped learning tend to think so, the videos and materials for students to "learn" are not the most important aspect in a flipped classroom. What matters the most in this setting is the optimal use of the newly acquired class time. Bergmann and Sams (2014) ask educators who are interested in flipping their classes the following critical question: what is

the best use of your face-to-face time? In TESOL, the answer to this question is far-reaching, since lecturing is not necessarily a part of language classes, thereby offering a myriad of opportunities for teachers to use class time more productively with students. Still, in teacher education and especially in the context of conference presentations, the answer is more transparent.

For flipped learning to be implemented successfully, and for educators to have a clear navigation chart when flipping, it is important to consider the four pillars of F-L-I-P<sup>TM</sup> provided by the FLN (2014), and the more recent 187 Global Standards (AALAS, 2018). The pillars are: Flexible Environment, Learning Culture, Intentional Content and Professional Educator. These terms will be understood as follows:

The *Flexible Environment* pillar refers to the flexibility in terms of time and spaces that flipped learning promotes. According to the official pillars document issued by the FLN (2014), not only do educators arrange flexible spaces for students to work in different ways, but they are also flexible about students' processes and learning pace. In a flipped learning paradigm, educators care about their students learning processes and different learning rhythms. As a consequence, they create appropriate class environments for every student to achieve the proposed learning goals at their own pace and in accordance with their own level.

The term *learning culture* encompasses the need for an open, respectful, and tolerant classroom culture. Bearing in mind that students are at the center of their learning process in a flipped classroom, the idea of creating "fertile learning spaces" for them becomes essential (Personal Communication, Marshall, 2015). As a result, educators in flipped settings ought to give students opportunities to master content at their own pace and must scaffold activities for students through differentiation.

The third pillar of flipped learning is *Intentional Content*. It refers to the decisions educators need to make regarding the relevance of the content given to students. The curriculum takes new importance in a flipped environment; by moving lectures outside of the classroom with the recording of video lectures, the newly gained classroom space allows teachers to plan for authentic, active learning opportunities for students. In TESOL, for example, teachers can decide to remove the grammar portion of the lesson from the class and give it to students for independent access at home, freeing up classroom space for more practice-oriented activities where they can live the language, not

only study it. Though FLN (2014) makes direct reference to video lectures as a means for replacing direct instruction, it is important to clarify that there is a variety of instructional resources that can also be used.

The fourth pillar of F-L-I-P<sup>™</sup> is called *Professional Educator* and it's pivotal for the flip to work, since it refers to the necessary mind-shift teachers need to undergo to design and execute all the aforementioned activities. According to the FLN (2014), "professional educators are reflective in their practice, connect with each other to improve their instruction, accept constructive criticism, and tolerate controlled chaos in their classrooms." (para. 4) Even though they are less controlling of the classroom situation, they are still essential for the learning process to successfully occur.

# Flipping Bloom's Taxonomy

Most advocates of flipped learning have proposed flipping Bloom's taxonomy for ensuring student success (Bergmann, 2016; Brinks-Lockwood, 2014; Rodríguez-Buitrago & Díaz, 2015). In Bloom's taxonomy, low-order thinking skills (remembering and understanding), and high-order thinking skills (applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating) (Krathwohl, 2002) represent the cognitive processes students have to go through to really learn something. In flipped learning, the proposal is to invert Bloom's Taxonomy as illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Inverted Bloom's taxonomy based on Pilgreen's model (2014).

In traditional settings, teachers explain concepts and students have to regurgitate them, while the more complex tasks are assigned as homework. In flipped learning, due to the inversion made, students remember and understand concepts in the individual learning space, and then, in class, they develop high-order thinking skills with the guidance of the teacher. Thus, flipping Bloom's taxonomy is an effective way for teachers to be able to make the pillars a reality in their classrooms.

#### In-class flip

In 2014, the term in-class flip was coined by Jennifer Gonzalez. It offers an alternative to flipping outside the classroom. In other words, instead of assigning direct instruction to be accessed by students from home, the actual flipped content is done through station rotation work within the classroom. Consequently, the in-class flip presents a way to bypass the various obstacles that come with assigning homework such as the lack of "a working device, a reliable, consistent internet connection, and an environment conducive to concentration" (Barnes & Gonzalez, 2015, p. 75). These are some of the reasons that have led to some teachers' abandonment of flipping or denial to even try it. Barnes and Gonzalez (2015) explain that the purpose of in-class flipping is precisely for the flipped process to remain in school, avoiding the 'mess' that comes with the different variables that appear outside the classroom.

This model can work through station work and non-station work (Ramírez & Rodríguez-Buitrago, 2018). Within the station work setting, the planning of the class consists of organizing stations where at least one contains direct instruction (through a video, reading, audio, etc.) which, in simple words, will free the teacher's instructional (content) time so that the focus can be on students' learning and on providing guidance, support and facilitating learning; with this model, the teacher is no longer a "content provider" (Barnes & González, 2015). The other stations can contain practice or application activities related to the topic being learned and others can be independent or "stand-alone" stations that do not have a previous station requirement to be worked on. This means that there are stations in which students can work at any time and there are others that will require a sequence in order to fulfill the learning goal set behind them, which might mean that some stations will be left alone until students are prepared for the task they propose. On the other hand, in non-station work, the teacher can also structure a learning

experience around a learning object (i.e. worksheet, HyperDoc, online lesson, etc.) and have students work with it individually, in pairs or in groups (Ramírez & Rodríguez-Buitrago, 2018).

Ramírez (2017) has divided the in-class flip configuration into two main types: mixed sequence and simple sequence. The first type refers to in class work where students can do activities at their own pace by moving from one station to another, depending on their specific learning needs and previous knowledge. In the latter, students must follow a specific order so as to complete the activities set in each station, thus, following a pre-established work rate. Moreover, Ramírez (2017) clarifies that a need to duplicate stations could arise with a high number of students.

Horn and Staker (2015) present a blended learning rotation model, with similar elements to an in-class flip, which consists of four sub-models that contain a fixed rotation between different learning modalities such as small or whole group instruction, tutoring, paper-based assignments, and online learning. For the purpose of this chapter, only the station rotation sub-model will be explained in order to clarify the difference it presents with an inclass flip.

The station rotation is composed of three elements: a) online instruction, b) collaborative activities and stations, and c) teacher-led instruction. Despite the validity of the first two elements within an in-class flip configuration, the fact that instruction is provided by the teacher in one of the stations indicate that instruction is not being flipped. Therefore, it can be concluded that the station rotation model proposed by Horn and Staker (2015) is not synonymous to in-class flip.

Loop input for teacher education

As most professional development conferences and events are still organized under the expert paradigm, it is still common to see the speaker who holds the knowledge and pours it over teachers, whom are then expected to get back to their classrooms after the event and make magic happen in their students' learning. In other words, teachers are expected to apply the know-how in their real teaching contexts without having done the work in the teacher training learning space; professional development is normally told rather than shown.

Professional development (PD) is a pressing need for most educators. As proposed by Stigler and Hebert, 1999; Guskey, 2009; Mourshed *et al.*, 2010; Opfer and Pedder, 2011, as cited in Carpenter, (2015), "many teachers, scholars and policy-makers consider PD to be pivotal to the enhancement of teaching and learning." (p. 70) Therefore, teachers search for PD opportunities in their area and teachers' conferences, like the one held by ASOCOPI every year, become the preferred scenario to receive training. However, even though teachers' conferences are a great opportunity for teachers to be exposed to new methodologies, to network with others in the profession, and to stay updated with the innovations in their field, they regularly feature a traditional transmission model, making teacher training unauthentic and ephemeral since, due to time constraints, teachers receive "short-term instruction in skills external experts have deemed sound" (Kennedy, 2005 as cited in Carpenter, 2015).

As a result, new alternatives to teacher training seem meaningful and necessary in order to provide teachers with more experiential learning during their valued professional development time. Edcamps and unconferences are PD alternative initiatives developing worldwide to offer participants the opportunity to "build upon the collective intelligence of those in attendance" (Carpenter, 2015: p. 79) instead of only offering expert teaching. In Edcamps and unconferences, teachers propose the topics to work during the day and a schedule is organically organized the morning of the event by the participants themselves (Edcamp foundation, n.d. para 1). Even though this technique might still be farfetched for Colombian conferences, it was the inception for the session being described in this chapter.

In the interest of providing a meaningful and experiential learning experience about the topic being shared in the 51st ASOCOPI conference, the presenters decided to use loop input (Woodward, 1988) as a way to engage participants further with knowledge in a very short period of time.

Loop input is a technique used to provide teachers with a hands-on learning experience where "the process is the content" (Woodward, 1988: p. 28) and teachers learn by doing. Loop input is different to other forms of experiential learning because it also features a "decompression time" (Woodward, 2003. p. 302) where teachers discuss the technique used and consider how to use it in their own teaching. With this technique, teachers live the content being shared and can really feel what their students would in that particular learning situation. Thus, loop input was a suitable mode of teaching for the

session about in-class flip. This, of course, is not only the case for the language classroom, but also for the teacher education setting where lectures are still the main mode of instruction for professional development. For that reason, when thinking about a session for teachers, it was logical to have them be active participants of their own learning instead of passive recipients of "cookbook recipes" to be used in the classroom.

# Description of the procedure used at the 51st ASOCOPI conference

The workshop executed by the presenters was entitled "Make the best of your class with an in-class flip" and it lasted 45 minutes with a total of 32 attendees. In the following sections, the authors will describe the planning stage (before the session), the implementation stage and the reflection stage (both during the session).

### Planning stage

One of the most difficult aspects of conducting an in-class flip is its initial configuration. For that reason, planning is a pivotal stage for the in-class flip to work appropriately, since there are a number of variables that might affect its successful execution. When planning the in-class flip reported in this chapter, the presenters did not know information related to the organization of the venue, the expected number of participants and their profiles or the setting, posing an important challenge and creating the need for the presenters to be creative, resourceful and flexible.

The presenters decided to plan a duplicated simple sequenced in-class flip (Ramírez, 2017), considering that thirty was the maximum number of participants allowed per session. With this number in mind, the attendees would be divided into four stations. Figure 2 illustrates the sequence used in the ASOCOPI conference session.



Figure 2. ASOCOPI workshop stations sequence.

Four stations were created to provide the content needed for thorough understanding of the concepts of flipped learning as well as of in-class flip in a short period of time. Due to the forty-five minute time frame provided for the workshop, stations were timed and twelve minutes were allotted to each one. Stations were planned to make evident the procedures of the inclass flip so that participants could experience the technique first-hand as proposed by Woodward (2003).

Stations one and two were intended to teach participants about the basic concepts and brief history of flipped learning. Thus, a nine-minute video created by one of the presenters along with a worksheet (Appendix A) was handed to participants. According to Bergmann and Sams, (2012) self-generated videos are more positively perceived by learners since they create an affective connection with the presenter (teacher). Moreover, as one of the main goals of the session was to offer attendees the full in-class flip experience via loop input, it was important to orchestrate every aspect of the session as similar to the class setting as possible. Consequently, materials were designed for participants to the session in the same way as they would be expected of teachers in an in-class flip setting. For instance, the video for the session was designed using a simple combination of *screencast-o-matic* and *Microsoft Power Point*, a user-friendly application for video and screencasting in a way to show the participants the kind of material they could work with for their own in-class flip.

Returning to the configuration of the session, it is important to mention that laptops for participants were not available at the venue, so the presenters

offered their own devices and invited attendees to provide theirs for them to watch the video turning the session in a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) space. For video access, a short link was created using *bit.ly* and a QR code was also displayed on one of the PowerPoint slides. For the presenters, it was important to show participants the many variables that are at stake when planning this kind of lesson. For that reason, they tried to mirror the experience in full for the attendees showing normal situations that may arise.

While in stations one and two, participants completed a worksheet that contained a chart about the history of flipped learning, some boxes to write information about the four pillars of F-L-I-P<sup>TM</sup> and following Kirch's (2016) Watch-Summarize-Question (WSQ) model, they were prompted to write a question about the content for presenters to answer it during the debriefing stage of the session (Appendix A).

Stations three and four provided the definition of in-class flip, the different types and examples of its structure by means of colorful posters pasted on the wall. Participants were encouraged to read the information and complete a graphic organizer (Appendix B) regarding their understanding of the information presented.

The reason behind setting technological (stations 1 and 2) and nontechnological instructional resources (stations 3 and 4) was to demonstrate how content can be flipped in different ways.

#### Implementation stage

Organizing the stations in the physical space is as important as the planning stage. With this in mind, different details were taken into consideration for configuration decisions to be made. Therefore, going to the working space before the workshop was essential. A clear understanding of the seating options, projection, wall space and Wi-Fi connection was crucial to determine whether the in-class flip could be delivered as planned. As a result, the presenters arrived at the assigned classroom 15 minutes prior to commencing the workshop and prepared the configuration. A station was located at each corner of the classroom, which implied making sure there was sufficient space for participants and presenters to circulate among stations. Moreover, folders with handouts were placed on each desk for easy organization and use.

In terms of projection and internet access, a laptop was connected to a video projector to display a PowerPoint presentation. Furthermore, the video for stations 1 and 2 was downloaded on another laptop due to a lack of Wi-Fi connection and this laptop was placed in station 2; each presenter also set their smartphone with earphones in case any participant would need to use it.

Turning now to the actual session, a total of 32 teacher participants were welcomed. As attendees walked into the classroom, they were surveyed on their access to a smartphone, earphones and a data plan (internet connection). This information became crucial when deciding which station to place them in, since those who did not have these resources were asked to listen to the video in the laptop in station 2. Fortunately, most attendees counted on these resources, so that at the moment of having to watch the video, all participants were able to do so through one resource (mobile phones, including presenters') or another (laptop). There were 8 participants working on their assigned station for twelve minutes. For the purpose of keeping time, an alarm was set using the website e.ggtimer.com. When time was up, the groups from stations one and two moved to stations three and four and vice-versa for another twelve minutes. The first time around brought some chaos in the organization and logistics. However, when the switch was made, the activities were carried out fluently, since participants were already familiarized with the dynamic and were aware of what they were expected to do.

# Reflection stage

As part of a loop input teacher training session, "decompression" time is necessary to make connections between the content being learned and the teachers' own teaching contexts (Woodward, 2003). Therefore, during the in-class flip session at the 51st ASOCOPI conference, there was a reflection space for teachers to share their initial impressions about the model and their perceptions regarding its applicability in their own settings.

Teachers seemed highly impressed with the configuration of the in-class flip herein described. They also showed curiosity about the time invested in the planning stage. Furthermore, they mentioned having fears regarding classroom discipline when implementing this model in their own setting due to the number and age of students they serve. They showed enthusiasm and mentioned the need for post-conference guidance from the presenters for their application of the technique.

As a result, some enriching lessons were learned after planning and conducting this session regarding the setting and physical space, students' different levels, the availability of materials, and the importance of time management.

First of all, it is very important to consider the setting and physical space where the in-class flip will take place. As opposed to teachers' conferences, where it is difficult to know in advance the various elements within the teacher training setting, the fact that teachers count on the knowledge regarding their own classrooms, resources and what they can do with their teaching space is a great advantage. Teachers know what electronic devices are available in class as well as the arrangement of furniture, which lead to easier decisionmaking. Teachers could envision station work in their own classroom and make informed decisions beforehand. For instance, students can be asked to bring their own devices or content can be downloaded to computers beforehand if there is no Wi-Fi access (Ramírez, 2018).

Secondly, knowing the students and their level of readiness and cognitive skill makes a difference in planning and implementation. As suggested by Carbaugh and Dubet (2015) and Johansen and Cherry-Paul (2016), flipped learning favors differentiation and allows for teachers to cater to the needs of their students by freeing up classroom space and time. Moreover, Ramírez (2018) asserts that in-class flipping provides "an up-close view of students process while they are carrying out a variety of individual or group space activities or tasks" (p. 94). Thus, an in-class flip allows the teacher to take that differentiation even further, since support and monitoring are always in the class and the role of the teacher as a facilitator is even stronger given the configuration of this particular type of flip.

Thirdly, a lesson on materials was learned by participants and presenters alike. When in-class flipping, materials play an important role in shaping the experience for all and require preparation and clear objectives. Attainable outcomes are crucial in an in-class flip as they strengthen the sense of goal achievement and help students stay focused. It is important to keep in mind that the type of materials to be planned should be student-centered and meaningful. Furthermore, station work will inevitably invite the use of various materials for different practice and application purposes. From this perspective, planning for materials that will evidence students' learning and give account of their understanding of the topics is critical. Therefore, planning this kind of set-up cannot be taken lightly and teachers need to think ahead about what they want their students to achieve in each station and prepare the materials to fit the purpose.

Fourthly, time management and its value in an in-class flip was another lesson learned, since one of the presenters deeply believes in timing stations, while the other one trusts timed and untimed sessions alike. The lesson learned in this regard is that this method lends itself for personalization, which suggests that teachers should apply what they feel more comfortable with and play it by ear with their students. After all, teachers know their setting better and might find better ways of enhancing the method according to their context.

### Results of the experience

After the session, some of the attendees have reported their work with inclass flip via informal communications with the presenters. Attendee teachers have shared different positive experiences that have gone from planning and carrying out in-class flips with learners as young as 4 year-olds up to the application of this type of flipping model within a research project. With this in mind, there is no doubt that in-class flip will soon start reporting results in various teaching contexts not only in ELT, but in other educational fields.

# Limitations

Even though an in-class flip has multiple benefits for teachers and students alike, it is also important to mention some limitations this technique might have in specific contexts. Nevertheless, it is the presenters' belief that these limitations can be easily overcome.

First of all, there is an initial sense of chaos when conducting an inclass flip. Considering the physical arrangement, having materials for each station, guaranteeing clarity in the instructions given in each station, planning a meaningful lesson, and managing time (Ramírez,2018) can be an overwhelming amount of aspects to contemplate for every class. It is comprehensible that for some teachers the idea of relinquishing control and allowing a 'mess' into their classroom might discourage them from even trying in-class flipping for the first time. However, once teachers try it and realize that this initial chaos is precisely what sparks students' interest, teachers can learn to ignore it and continue experimenting with this technique (Buitrago, 2017). Secondly, time-management is crucial in any type of in-class flip whether it is sequenced, mixed, looped or half n' half; whether it is timed or not. In Bergmann and Sam's (2012) words, in any form of flipping "time is completely restructured" (p. 15). As previously stated, students and teachers need to be focused on the tasks given so that time can be maximized and the goals of the session can be attained. Likewise, when implementing an in-class flip, focus becomes the backbone of the class. Students feel the need to stay on task before the clock or teacher indicates that time has ended and they need to move to the following station.

Another aspect that might discourage teachers from trying to in-class flip is planning. It is true that planning an in-class flip takes some time and effort, since materials have to be ready and posted on the walls, videos have to be tested, worksheets need to be designed, outcomes for class need to be clear and assessment procedures need to be thought of before starting the lesson. Nonetheless, planning is an inherent part of teaching. The real challenge in an in-class flip is the preparation of materials, but there are multiple ways to tackle that aspect. Teachers can use student monitors to prepare the materials for stations (i.e. putting worksheets and activities inside envelopes, labeling sheets of paper, cutting out jigsaw exercises); they can also reuse materials from past courses (i.e. videos, posters, explanations). The focus and deep learning that students will evidence after implementing this technique is

worth all the effort in planning and preparing.

# Suggestions for further research

While research about in-class flip is in its infancy, this alternative can be counted as part of the research findings on flipped learning and station rotation models. Studies regarding the implementation of this technique in language education and teacher training are needed to strengthen its application and solidify its principles. Moreover, a deeper look into how inclass flip contributes to differentiation and individual learner needs as well as to more significant learner assessment will, without a doubt, provide further advancement to the education field.

# Conclusions

Even though flipped learning is a very successful pedagogical approach worldwide, sometimes a variation for its successful implementation is necessary due to contextual factors. By way of example, in Colombia, where Internet connectivity is still an issue in many institutions, where there are cases of students with no homework support from family, and where many schools hold strict homework policies about the number of assignments students can have in a day (Ramírez, 2018), in-class flip becomes an ideal alternative to have the benefits of flipped learning without worrying about student buy-in and homework doing. On that account, this chapter is also an invitation for teachers to relinquish control in their classroom and to become professional educators who are not only willing to learn new techniques, but also to try new alternatives for generating student-centered classrooms and provide active learning opportunities to their students.

In-class flip is a way to differentiate the classroom and to transform learning for those involved. It becomes an asset to the teacher in providing new ways to generate student centered spaces and optimizing the group learning space; it helps students to stay focused and find learning more meaningful. Furthermore, it assists conference attendees in offering them an experiential approach to learning where the process in the session is the content being learned.

Finally, in terms of the application of loop input for teacher training, this is a technique that contributes greatly to better understanding of pedagogical practices by allowing the teacher participants to authentically experience new ways of teaching by putting themselves in the student's shoes. The presenters strongly believe that loop input should be welcome in any professional development context where the content allows itself to be looped.

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Appendix A. Worksheet used to take notes about the video on Flipped Learning



### Make the best of your class with an in-class flip! 51<sup>ST</sup> ASOCOPI CONFERENCE

Bogota, Colombia What's flipped learning worksheet

 As you watch the video about flipped learning, please take notes in the graphic organizer below.



2. As you watch, answer the following questions in the corresponding spaces:



3. Write a question for us about flipped learning to be solved in the session.

Rodriguez-<u>Buitrago</u>, C. (2017) Make the best of your class with an in-class flip! This material can be used for educational purposes as long as attribution is granted. Creative Commons License 4.0

# Appendix B. Graphic Organizer for In-Class Flip station



Ramirez, M. (2017) Make the best of your class with an in-class flip! This material can be used for educational purposes as long as attribution is granted. Creative Commons License 4.0