

FLIPPING IN COMMUNICATION: A FLIPPED CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

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Introduction

As a student of 17 years, I have had many opportunities for learning; school has been a pleasure for me. Within my school experience, grades have always been very important to me. I like to do well in school, and I am really good at getting good grades, good enough that I have been able to obtain various academic scholarships. Perhaps due to the pressure of maintaining a high GPA in order to retain a scholarship grades, instead of learning, became the motivator for my academic experience.

My senior year of my undergraduate work I had the opportunity to take a class from Dr. Matthew Sanders, the author of the book "*Becoming a Learner.*" In that class we read Sanders' essay, which preceded the book, and wrote a reaction paper. It was then that I realized I had been attending school to earn a grade, and that a grade would not do me much good beyond getting me another scholarship and keeping me in school. I finally understood we do not go to school to get grades; we go to school to learn how to learn. Pintrich (2003) explains that students may have many motivations for attending school. Some students may be motivated by their belief that they can be successful, others are motivated by their goals and personal interests (Pintrich, 2003). My personal interests were to do well, which to me meant getting good grades. I began to understand that school is to help us become someone. Since that paradigm shift, I have had many more teachers. I have learned that as much as learning depends on the student, some teachers make it easier to learn and focus less on the grade. This focus on learning may be accomplished through creating in-class discussions and activities that help to further learning.

My school experience has been unique in that it has offered opportunities not only to learn, but also to teach. As a teaching assistant for a public speaking course and an instructor for

an introductory communication class, I have sought to be the kind of teacher that helps students want to learn. Pedagogy has always been of interest to me. For this reason, I have chosen to do my capstone project on a new pedagogy, the flipped classroom.

Interest in the flipped classroom has been steadily increasing over the last few years. Although many educators will claim that the idea of the flipped classroom has been around for a long time, two high school science teachers, Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams (2012), have been the two main originators in the recent excitement of the flipped classroom. One indicator of this growth is “The Ning,” a community created to support flipped educators. In 2012 there were 2,500 members in the Ning community. That number has grown to more than 20,000 members in May of 2014 (Yarbro, Arfstrom, McKnight, & McKnight, 2014). There are now 23,637 members of the Flipped Learning Network and 132 groups designed to support “flippers” depending on the teacher’s experience, subject taught, and location (FLN’s Professional Learning Community, 2015).

The organization, The Flipped Learning Network and Sophia, created an online survey, which was given in February of 2014 to assess who is flipping their classrooms, why, and the impact it is having on students. There were 2,358 educators who responded to 36 online questions. The survey results showed that 96% of teachers recognized the term “Flipped Classroom.” This number is up 23% from 2012. According to the survey, most flipped educators teach in secondary schools, only 27% of respondents were in higher education.

Aronson, Arfstrom, and Tam (2013) give several possible barriers for teachers in higher education adopting the flipped classroom. Course redesign is the first barrier for many professors. Faculty at a university are often teaching several different classes, sometimes at

multiple locations, and are involved in other professional activities making it hard to find the time to flip any or all of their courses. Although upfront the workload may seem overwhelming, once the class is redesigned the workload lessens (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Videos can be reused, and activities are already planned. It is also recommended that faculty help one another if they are teaching the same course. Faculty may switch off making videos and creating active learning experiences for their students. Another barrier is student buy-in. By the time students are in college, they have become accustomed to the traditional lecture style. Students have a hard time adjusting to a new way of learning. Presenting clear expectations for the students will help increase their interest in the flipped classroom (Roehl, Reddy, Shannon, 2012). The final barrier that Aronson and his colleague discuss is how students evaluate the course. While some students find the active learning that replaces the lecture in a flipped classroom new and exciting, others find it difficult to follow. These mixed attitudes have caused some professors to score lower in student evaluations (Aronson, Arfstrom, & Tam, 2013). As student evaluations are an important part of faculty assessment, faculty members may hesitate to spend extra time in redesigning a course only to have their student evaluations decrease. Aronson, Arfstrom, and Tam (2013) point out that student satisfaction is of less importance than student engagement and higher performance. Because fewer than 27% of flipped educators teach higher education and none of those reported teaching a communication flipped classroom (FLN and Sophia, 2014), it will be useful to experiment with a flipped classroom in a higher education setting.

The flipped classroom is favored mostly in subjects such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Berret, 2012). In a survey conducted by FLN and Sophia (2014) more humanities teachers are flipping their classrooms now than a few years ago, perhaps because of the increase in popularity of flipped classrooms. While the excitement of flipped

classroom has happened mostly within the last 8-10 years, some argue that flipped classrooms have been around for decades. Humanities professors require students to read a novel outside of class without taking time to go over the plot, and law professors have long used the Socratic method requiring students to read before or be embarrassed during the lecture because of their lack of preparation (Berret, 2012). While the learning at home aspects of these classes are a characteristic of a flipped classroom, the way time is spent in class is a missing characteristic in these examples.

Although traditionally the flipped classroom has been taught in math and science classes, survey results show that more themes are now being taught using a flipped classroom. Despite the increase in various subjects taught, none of the responders of the 2014 survey reported teaching a communication class with a flipped classroom style (“Who is flipping” 2014). Both because of the lack of higher education flipped classrooms and communication flipped classrooms, my capstone will be helpful in understanding the use of a flipped classroom in both higher education and communication themed classrooms. This project may help other faculty members who are considering flipping a course to understand how to do it in higher education, and what it looks like in a communication environment. This project will also measure student satisfaction of a flipped classroom in a communication course.

Literature Review

The Flipped Classroom

In the academic year 2007-2008 Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams began experimenting with their first flipped classroom. Bergmann and Sams first began recording their lectures when they had multiple students missing class because of athletic events or other school

sponsored activities. Soon other students began using the videos for better understanding or to review before tests. They decided to record all of their lectures and have their students watch them at home. The time that was previously used to lecture during class was then allowed for students to work on homework, thus furthering or proving their understanding of the content. Bergmann and Sams used the in-class time to help students individually (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Thus, the flipped classroom was born.

Since that time, many teachers across the world have adopted some version of the flipped classroom (FLN's Professional Learning Community, 2015). Over the last few years many have heard of flipped classrooms, but some misconceptions have formed (Bergmann, Overmyer, & Willie, 2014). The definition of a flipped class is: "moving the 'delivery' of material outside of formal class time (through extensive notes, video recorded lectures, and other appropriate means) and using formal class time for students to undertake collaborative and interactive activities relevant to that material" (Butt, 2014, p. 33). Bishop and Verleger (2013) have a narrower definition of the flipped classroom. They explain that it contains two parts: "interactive group learning activities inside the classroom, and direct computer-based individual instruction outside the classroom" (par 3.3). They reject broader definitions, arguing that assigning readings outside of class and having a discussion in class does not constitute a flipped classroom. Bergmann, Overmyer, & Willie (2014) explain what a flipped classroom is and is not. A flipped classroom is not just online videos, about replacing teachers with videos, or students being left to learn on their own. A flipped classroom is designed to increase personalized learning time between students and teachers, help students to be responsible for their learning, and engage students in learning. This is accomplished through active learning activities during class time.

Active Learning Theory. Active learning has become a buzz word in the education community. Active learning is highly recommended to faculty but it becomes difficult to apply because of the unfound sure definition. Drew and Mackie (2011) sought to define active learning as either a theory of learning or set of pedagogical strategies.

Watkins (2007) came up with comprehensive framework that enables someone to analyze the definitions of active learning given in a range of literature. Watkins (2007) explains that there are three distinct dimensions in active learning: behavioral, cognitive, and social. Active learning is accomplished behaviorally by aiding students to actively use and create materials. In a communication class students may actively learn behaviorally by having them create a visual aid in a presentation.

Active learning is accomplished cognitively as students actively think and construct new meaning (Watkins, 2007). This may be accomplished in a communication class by presenting the students with a communication situation and having them work through the communication experience. An important part of cognitively learning is reflection, or giving the students time to reflect on what they learned and analyze how effective it was (Drew & Mackie, 2011).

Finally, social active learning is accomplished by “actively engaging with others as collaborators and resources” (Watkins 2007, p 71). If one sought to achieve active learning socially in a communication class then it could be accomplished by assigning students a group project. This allows students to learn to work with others and practice using the available resources.

The underlying epistemological theory of these distinct dimensions is constructivism. Constructivist theory describes that “learning should be an active process in which learners

construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current or past knowledge” (Brandon & All, 2010, p 90). There are two branches of cognitive constructivism that are most relevant when discussing active learning. First is cognitive constructivism, where the learning is focused on the individual’s ability to construct knowledge. The second is social constructivism, in which knowledge is constructed through interaction with others (Drew & Mackie, 2011). While constructivism creates a theoretical foundation for active learning, it remains difficult to ascertain whether active learning is a theory or available strategies that may be used in a pedagogical approach. Kane (2004) argues that it is a theory as “it has evolved generalized principles about the nature of teaching and learning” (p 276) but also a pedagogical approach as it encompasses various strategies that may be used by educators to bring about learning.

Implementing Active Learning. In order to implement active learning, professors must be willing to make changes from traditional lecture methods in which professors speak and students listen. Research shows that the more students become involved in the learning process the more information they learn (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Some characteristics of active learning include: Students are involved in more than just listening, less emphasis is placed on transmitting information and more on developing students’ skills, students are involved in higher-order thinking (analysis, synthesis, evaluation), students are engaged in activities (e.g., reading, discussion, writing), and greater emphasis is placed on students’ exploration of their own attitudes and values (Bonwell & Eison, 1991).

Bonwell and Eison (1991) define active learning as “instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing” (p iii). Zayapragassarazan and Kumar (2012) explain that, “active learning involves providing opportunities for students to meaningfully talk and listen, write, read, and reflect on the content, ideas, issues, and concerns of

an academic subject” (p 3). Prince (2004) describes active learning to be “introducing activities into the traditional lecture and promoting student engagement” (p 225). In the traditional lecture format students listen, while other formats may include a mixture of both. In the flipped classroom students are given the maximum amount of time to participate in active learning. Students “must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems... [they] must engage in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation” (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p 19).

Some may argue that it is impossible for learning to take place passively. If a student is learning is there not some sort of activity taking place? Rather than think of active learning on one side of a coin and passive learning on the other, it may be more accurate to imagine an active learning continuum. On one end of the continuum is a traditional lecture style where the student sits in class and listens, perhaps taking minimal notes. This is low active learning. As you move up the continuum the notes become more detailed. Instead of writing direct notes students paraphrase what they are learning, and ask questions if they do not understand. A teacher may only give keywords and have the students write down their personal definitions. On the opposite end of the continuum is high active learning. This end of the continuum may include students participating in writing activities, discussion, debates, small group activities, and role-playing (Bonwell & Eison, 1991).

Bonwell and Eison (1991) give several techniques that a professor can use to promote active learning in the classroom. First is using questions to promote discussion. Instead of asking questions that have a right or wrong answer, seek to ask questions that invite students to analyze and form opinions based on the subject. As questions are asked, create a supportive environment that helps students to feel comfortable in participating. One way to involve all of the students is

to think, pair, and share. Ask a question and have students write down or think about their answer. Then have them pair up or form small groups to share their answers. Finally invite a few to share with the class some of the main points of their discussion.

Another recommended technique is problem solving. Present students with a problem that can be solved using the material that has been taught. For example, in an introduction to communication class you could present students with the problem of picking a topic for a speech. First have them brainstorm on their own ideas for a topic. Next have students form groups and discuss the possible topics, finding what most interests their group members. Finally have students solve the problem by choosing the topic.

An additional technique is peer teaching. Peer teaching includes both partnerships where each person takes turns being the teacher and the student, and groups where each member works together to enhance individual performance. In an introduction to communication class, this could be executed by organizing the class into working groups. The task is to help each member in speech delivery. Each member of the group has an opportunity to give his/her speech, and the group works together to help the member improve his/her delivery.

Other techniques that could be utilized in active learning include: role-playing, simulations, games, drama, debates, cooperative learning, computer-based instruction, writing in class, and demonstrations. Some techniques may prove more useful for specific subjects taught than other techniques. The professor must consider both the material and the students involved in deciding which active learning techniques to use. Bonwell and Eison (1991) recommend that teachers use a variety of active learning techniques in order to keep students interested.

Online Videos. Online videos are a central aspect of a flipped classroom. Online videos allow a teacher to reach out to students where students are comfortable. Today's students are comfortable "in image-rich environments, have a need for interactivity, are emotionally open, and show a preference for activities that promote and reinforce social interaction" (Verleur, Heuvelman, & Verhagen, 2011, p 573). Online videos are not a passing fad, and are being watched or downloaded daily (Bondad-Brown, Rice, & Pearce, 2012). Online videos can be viewed on a personal computer, a tablet, or a mobile device, thus making them extremely accessible to college students today.

With the availability of online videos, it is important to consider what makes a good video for a lesson. Videos should be short (Miller, 2012, & Verleur, Heuvelman, & Verhagen, 2011). If videos are too long students will get bored watching them, or won't make time to watch them. The content in the videos should contain a manageable amount of learning (Miller, 2012). For a video to be successful it must be interesting enough for students to want to learn from it. Falk, Sockel, and Chen (2005) discuss the importance of having a user-centered design. Videos should be created with the students in mind. Viewers will be more interested in videos when they relate well with the video (Huang, Chen, & Weng, 2012).

An important tool for a successful video is making them accessible. Students will use videos to aid learning if they view them as being useful and easy to use (Falk, Sockel, & Chen, 2005). Yale and Noyes (2007) suggest that interactivity improves the experience of the user. A good video for a flipped classroom is short, user centered, easy to find and watch, and provides for some interactivity.

The literature on flipped classrooms, active learning, and online videos is broad. Various articles have been written on each of the topics, but the literature is vague. Flipping the classroom is a newer phenomenon and thus has little peer reviewed literature available, and tend to focus more on personal experiences. While the term active learning has been around longer than flipped learning, many authors cease to come to an agreement upon a definition. The determination of whether active learning is a theory or a pedagogical approach remains a mystery. It is seen as both, depending on who you ask. Finally, while some literature was found on online videos, the information was ambiguous. Videos should be “short” but there is no mention of a specific time. The literature states that videos should be user centered, interesting, and contain minimal material for optimal learning, but no specific numbers were given. This lack of specific suggestions makes it difficult for any instructor striving to implement the flipped classroom.

Considering the literature, a course was created with various active learning approaches and interactive 10-15 minute videos. Having more specific results would help in the creation of a flipped classroom.

Reactions

Along with the excitement of a flipped classroom there have been varying reactions to this new pedagogy. Butt (2014) researched students’ reactions to a flipped classroom environment. A survey was given at the beginning of the semester analyzing students’ primary thoughts on the proposed structure of the flipped classroom. He found that there was a 50/50 split of respondents who believed the proposed teaching method would be successful. A survey was taken at the end of the semester to measure students’ experiences, and 75% of total

respondents reported that the flipped classroom was beneficial to their learning. Fulton (2012) reported that students like the change.

Students' opinions of the flipped classroom are positive, with a few students who strongly dislike the change (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). This dislike could be attributed to students who do not adjust swiftly because they would rather work alone, or are accustomed to the traditional classroom, with assignments completed in the student's chosen environment (Roehl, Reddy, Shannon, 2012).

While many students like the change, some disagree. One proposed reason students dislike flipping is because they can no longer passively receive material in class, they are required to be responsible for their own learning (Berret, 2012). As Berret (2012) explains "the cognitive strain that flipping imposes on students accounts for much of its success – and the resistance it engenders" (p 6). A flipped classroom requires students to take much of the responsibility of learning on themselves. Because of this shift in responsibility, it is important that an instructor has clear expectations (Roehl, Reddy, Shannon, 2012). Some of the failed flipped classrooms may be attributed to the unclear expectations of the instructor.

In a survey ("Who is flipping" 2014) 96% of teachers who have flipped classrooms would recommend that method to other teachers. Generally instructors have a positive reaction to flipped classrooms. Dr. Penne Restad, Distinguished Senior Lecturer at the University of Texas at Austin described the flipped classroom experience:

In the end, the benefits of the flipped approach are considerable. Students take more responsibility for their own learning. Working in class along with a master of the discipline (you), they learn to think more critically, communicate more effectively, and

have a greater appreciation for the unique importance and logic of the subject. And they experience at least some of the satisfaction of learning how to think in a new and, in some cases, life changing way. (Aronson, Argstrom, & Tam, 2013)

However, Ramsey Musallam, a chemistry teacher at Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory high school, is less enthused by the flipped classroom. He claims that a flipped classroom is “really a better version of a bad thing” (Ash, 2012, pp. 9). Deb Wolf, a high school instructional coach who has experimented with flipped classrooms explains that a flipped classroom is just one form of teaching in a broader field of pedagogy. The flipped classroom is not the quick fix of teaching, and it will not make a bad teacher a good teacher (Ash, 2012). This conflict of opinions shows that a flipped classroom is not for everyone. It is important to seek to do what is best for the students.

Reasons for Flipping the Classroom

With the advancement of technology, many universities are beginning to offer free online courses (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). Video lectures have proven to be as effective as in-person lectures at conveying basic information (Bishop & Verleger, 2013) then using student-instructor time for live lectures may be an unwise use of time. Working smarter has now become a need. Professors should focus on using student and instructor time to further learning through interactive activities, and allow technology to take care of the activities that can be automated (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). Eric Mazur, a Harvard professor explained the importance of flipping:

We put a lot of emphasis on the transfer of information... but that model is making less sense as sources of information grow more plentiful. Simply transmitting information

should not be the focus of teaching; helping students to assimilate that information should. (Berret, 2012)

In an information filled world, with the answer to all of your questions at your fingertips, learning can no longer be simply a transfer of information. For effective learning to take place, it is an instructor's duty to help students think critically about and apply the information received. A flipped classroom has the potential for instructors to help students more efficiently in the learning process, and is a great option.

Benefits of the Flipped Classroom

One of the benefits of flipping the classroom is increasing student/instructor time. This increased interaction aids teachers in determining student grasp of information and learning before the test instead of after (Roehl, Reddy, & Shannon, 2013). Other benefits include: students who are generally more hesitant in asking questions are provided with more opportunities to ask questions in a one-on-one setting, students who are not challenged in the traditional classroom can go at a faster pace in a flipped classroom, and students who are absent for illness or other university-related activities can keep up on missed classes (Roehl, Reddy, & Shannon, 2013, Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Because the instructor is no longer using class time to lecture, class time becomes flexible. Students with similar questions can be grouped together while the teacher aids them, students can help one another, and more advanced students are not held back by students who struggle with a particular topic.

One study completed at the University of British Columbia measured the benefits of a flipped classroom. Physics instructors taught their classes using a traditional lecture style. The last two weeks one class had a new professor teach using the flipped classroom, while the other

class remained the same. They found that in the flipped class attendance increased by 20%, engagement increased by 40%, and students in the flipped class scored more than twice as well as students in the control group on a multiple choice test measuring comprehension of content. When asked, 90% of students agreed that they enjoyed the flipped class experience (Aronson, Arfstrom, & Tam, 2013), other instructors have also had positive feedback from students (Bergmann & Sams, 2012).

Method

With the understanding of what a flipped classroom entails, benefits of a flipped classroom, and some reactions to a flipped classroom, I carried out my project in the following manner. I chose to begin teaching the flipped classroom as we began the public speaking portion of the introduction to communication class. I explained the format of the flipped classroom. I then informed the students that I expected them to watch the videos before coming to class. In class they should come prepared to participate in different activities that would help them put into action what they would be taught in the videos. I warned them that it would be a unique experience in comparison to other classes in which they have participated. I also tried to emphasize that this was an opportunity for them to take control of their own learning experience.

During the flipped classroom experience we covered five chapters from the textbook: Selecting Your Topic and Knowing Your Audience, Researching Your Presentation, Organizing Your Presentation, Informative Presentations, and Delivering Your Presentation. Each of these chapters was taught in preparation for an informative speech to be given in class.

Videos

Primarily the videos that would replace the in-class lecture needed to be created. After researching several different possible applications to use in video creation, I chose to work with Educreations. Educreations allowed me to organize content from various places into one video. I created power points that outlined the main points that needed to be covered. I also looked for online videos that taught specific principles from the chapters. Including online videos was a unique experience as it was similar to inviting an expert to come in and teach part of the lecture. These videos were embedded into the video using Educreations. The videos were never longer than 15 minutes, in hopes that students would be motivated to watch them.

Once the video was completed I uploaded it to a website titled Edpuzzle. Edpuzzle enabled me to insert multiple choice or open-ended questions throughout the video as the students watched. This made the video more interactive for the students. Screen shots of videos and the video quizzes are included in appendix B. A class was created on Edpuzzle where all of the assigned videos and their due dates were uploaded. Once the students downloaded the Edpuzzle application and joined the class, they could easily access the videos on their tablets and mobile devices. Edpuzzle gave me the ability to see if my students were viewing the complete video, and to review the answers to their questions. Points were given for completing the video and answering the questions correctly.

Active Learning Activities

Once the videos were complete I created different in-class active learning experiences for each unit from the course that was covered. Because the chapters covered were on how to write

an informative speech, each of the active learning experiences were centered on the informative speech they would have the opportunity to give.

One example of an in-class activity was the survey. The online video watched in preparation for this class included the topic “getting to know your audience.” After participating in an activity to choose their topic, students came up with several questions for their audience that would help them perceive what the audience’s understanding of the topic was. The surveys were given during class, and then each student had an opportunity to discuss what that meant for their topic. One student completely changed her topic after doing the survey and finding that there was very little audience interest in the topic she had chosen.

Doing research for an informative speech and citing sources were additional topics covered. As part of the in class activity students researched their topics, and were required to cite sources correctly. Students then had the opportunity to check each other’s work and make sure their citations were correct.

On the day that speech organization was covered, the class viewed a couple of speeches and identified what organizational pattern was used. Once they chose the organizational pattern, they had to defend their answers with a partner. Afterwards students were put in small groups and were given a random topic. As a group students discussed how each organizational pattern could be used for that particular topic. The day was concluded as students chose which organizational pattern they would use for their informative speech.

Each of these active learning experiences included several different methods. Writing, peer teaching, and group decisions all aided in furthering the learning from the videos. In order

to motivate participation, students were given points for being in class and participating in the activity each day.

Results

Student Surveys

At the conclusion of the flipped learning environment an 8 question survey was given to the class. Seventeen of the 19 students responded. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix A. The first 5 questions were answered using a 5 point Likert Scale. When asked if the student enjoyed the flipped classroom more than a traditional classroom 47% agreed, 29% were neutral, and 24% disagreed. Nearly half the class reported enjoying the flipped classroom environment. When asked if a flipped classroom environment motivated students to attend class 41% agreed, 30% were neutral, and 29% disagreed. Throughout the flipped classroom environment the class averaged 84% attendance compared to the 71% attendance before the flipped classroom experience. When asked to compare their learning in a flipped classroom with their learning in a traditional classroom 35% reported that they learned more in the flipped classroom, 30% reported that there was no difference, and 35% reported that they learned more in the traditional classroom than in the flipped classroom. When answering whether they preferred a traditional classroom or a flipped classroom 35% of students preferred a flipped classroom, 35% preferred a traditional classroom, and 30% had no preference. Finally, when asked if they felt more comfortable in a traditional classroom or in a flipped classroom, a surprisingly 47% reported that they felt more comfortable in a traditional classroom, 29% reported more comfort in a flipped classroom, and 24% felt equally comfortable in a traditional or a flipped classroom environment. From these results we see that about one third of the class had a positive experience in the

flipped classroom, one third felt neutral about the experience, and one third of the class would much rather stick to the traditional lecture style.

The last three questions in the survey allowed for some qualitative feedback. Students reported that they liked having time in class to work on homework. They felt that this was a good use of their time. One student commented “If I had a problem I could get help. When I’m at home I would get stuck.” Other students reported that it was easier for them to learn and they felt the in-class environment was more relaxed. Another student described “I knew the material before I came to class.” This is in contrast to students coming to class not having prepared. Finally, a student stated that his grade had improved because of the flipped classroom.

When students were asked to describe what they liked least about the flipped classroom many had negative feelings towards the videos. Some would forget to watch them before coming to class, others felt that they did not learn as much. One student shared “I felt like I was paying tuition for a YouTube video to teach me.” Other students stated that they did not like having so much homework. Ideally the homework time should have decreased because much of it was completed in class, but students felt that having to watch a video every other day was “a lot.”

The concluding question asked that students share what they would change about the flipped classroom. Several students reported that they would change “nothing” about the class and that “it works as it should, and does help people perform better.” A few students would like to have it changed back, one explaining that “homework time is homework time not lecture time.” Some students stated that the videos should be shorter or suggested that there be a reading assignment instead of videos online. Another student asked for “a little more structure in class.”

Another student suggested that there be “more ability to follow up [and] ask questions.” Many of these suggestions could be easily applied in the future.

Peer Review

Kevin Stein attended one class during the flipped classroom experience. These are his comments:

Emily invited me to attend a class on a day that would be particularly well suited to view the functionality of the flipped classroom since she had given the students outside work to complete and planned to use the class as a “lab” environment, where student would help each other with their speeches. The first thing I noticed was that Emily greeted each student as he/she walked into the class. I believe this set a good tone and demonstrated some real caring on her part toward the students. She even asked a few of the students about their clothes and made positive comments about them.

In terms of the structural environment of the classroom, it was already set up as a horseshoe, which seemed to be ideal for this type of teaching. Emily was obviously a little nervous with her advisor there to evaluate her, but it was probably nothing the students would notice. The first item of business in the class was to review the rubric for the informative speech. When assessing parts of the rubric, students were a little unresponsive when Emily would ask things like “You guys have read this, right?” I’m sure most teachers are used to getting that blank stare when they ask students if they’ve done the requisite work outside of class. I don’t believe this reflects negatively on Emily, but I wonder if there might be better ways of determining if they really are working outside of class since it’s so integral to the effectiveness of a flipped classroom. Emily began to assign students to work groups by counting off each

student. One student complained that he could not select his own group and Emily handled him well and the issue was dissolved. The energy in the room was a little low at the very start, but the environment became more engaging throughout. I think students are probably used to coming in to a class and just listening, so this may have been a big adjustment for them. Some of the student groups were inside of the classroom and others were assigned to go into various “study” rooms that were off to the side of the main classroom. I wondered how she got so lucky to have a room with the horseshoe and then have her own separate study rooms to have breakout sessions. I think it would be much harder to do this kind of group work in a single classroom because the noise level might make it difficult to stay on task. However, this wasn’t a problem in this particular context. I moved around the room a little to listen in on how students were interacting with each other as they provided feedback and they were clearly on task even while Emily was sometimes in the other study rooms. Although traditional public speaking class teachers likely instruct students to practice their speeches outside of the classroom, I appreciated how the flipped classroom ensured that they would get some real practice before delivering their speeches to the entire class. I could tell Emily was trying to be equitable in the attention that she gave to each group. I did wonder if some students would feel they weren’t getting enough individualized attention from the teacher. However, it wasn’t a large class so I believe most students got the help they needed from either their peers or from Emily. She served a “facilitator” role by offering some of her own feedback, but balancing it with the student comments.

The general body language of the students was much like any other class. Some students seemed very engaged and interested in what was going on and others seemed to be just going through the motions. Even in spite of these ambivalent students, I left the class convinced that

some sort of lab type environment for practicing speeches is essential in COMM 1010. It gives students an opportunity to understand the rubric and to recognize strengths and weakness in their own speeches and the speeches of others. As an evaluator, it's impossible to gauge "teaching" in the traditional sense since Emily is really just facilitating group learning. I'm certainly not implying that this isn't teaching, but moderating learning is a completely different style than traditional classroom teaching, whether that teaching involves a great deal of class discussion or simply lecture. So perhaps I went into the experience with as many "blocks" about flipped learning as Emily's students had. Overall, though, I believe Emily effectively ran the flipped classroom well and I can clearly see some of the advantages of doing it.

Personal Experience

A day in the life of a flipped classroom instructor. As I prepared for class it was exciting to know that I would not have to stand in front and lecture the entire class. The video the students were to watch in preparation for class was on outlining a speech. In classes earlier in the week students had picked a topic, done an audience analysis, and researched their topic. I was excited for students to be outlining their speech during class, a full week before any students would begin presenting their speeches. This had to be a record for students planning their speeches ahead of time.

I walk into class hoping students would remember to bring their computers or tablets after my constant reminders. I watch as students come in and sit down, immediately retrieving their devices and preparing to go to work. It feels good as a teacher to know your students are coming to class ready to learn.

I begin class by asking what questions they have about the content covered in the assigned video. My question is met with blank stares and I wonder to myself it is because of my excellent video creations or because they can't remember what was discussed in the video. As I display an example of what an outline should look like on the projector, I attempt to jog their memories. Their eyes begin to recognize the content and a few questions are asked. I then explain to the students that for the remainder of the 50 minute class they will have the opportunity to write an outline for their speech. I left the example outline on the projector and began to roam the classroom seeing who I could help.

A student raises his hand and I go over to help him. He has a topic chosen but is unsure of how to organize the main points of his speech. I remind of the different organizational patterns and allow him to choose what would be helpful. As I finish with this first question a few other students have their hands in the air. I love the opportunity I have to work one on one with my students. Students have questions on the formatting, how to cite their sources in the text, ideas for a good attention grabber, what makes a good conclusion. Finally I am able to see the work they are doing and correct it before it is too late.

I look up from a question and see that the majority of students are diligently working on their outlines, but then I spot a handful of students who are choosing to use the class as a social hour. Suddenly, I feel like I am back in high school and I have to keep my students on task. They are adults and should be able to govern themselves. I'm not going to babysit these college students, but perhaps I can help motivate them. Half way through the class I make an announcement: "Please email me your outline before you leave today so I can check your progress." It works! Suddenly it grows quiet again as all of the students are meticulously

working towards their first draft of the outline. The rest of the class is spent in completing their outlines as I wander the classroom helping students along the way.

When class is over I remind them that the next video is on visual aids, and to come next time prepared to create their visual aid for their speech. I watch as my students pack up and leave and I realize I am excited to hear their speeches. I have already seen the majority of their outlines and helped to fix any problems. Because of the flipped classroom environment my students are not just writing their speeches, they are writing their speeches correctly, with the help of a “coach” while they do it. I can see that for some students the flipped classroom is truly helping them progress in their learning, while for other students it may not be the best learning environment. I walk out the door feeling excited to see how the visual aids turn out and give them the opportunity to practice delivering their speech and giving feedback to each other in small groups. The flipped classroom is a unique experience for both the students and the teacher.

Lessons Learned. If I were to flip a classroom again, I would first focus on the introduction to the flipped classroom. I would highlight the benefits of the flipped classroom explaining to the students that this teaching format allows them to maximize their learning. I would help them understand what a successful class looks like, teaching them that they will need to come prepared to class to work on the prepared active learning activities. I would emphasize that it turns most of the learning over to the students, and strive to encourage them to take advantage of class time. I would want to be very clear in explaining what will be expected of them. I believe if it is introduced correctly, students will be excited about the opportunity to experience a flipped classroom.

In order to help students stay focused during class I would plan ways to track the students’ progress. This could be done through having them submit their work at the end of class

or being clear on deadlines of assignments. Another way to increase student focus during class would be to have them work with different groups. Responsibility to peers I found to be a powerful tool. While the literature discusses that active learning activities are encouraged, perhaps students are not accustomed to working in class. Because of this certain action would be required in order to help students stay focused.

A surprising outcome was the students' reactions to the online videos. Videos are thought to be an image-rich environment where students are comfortable. Condensing a 45 minute lecture to 10-15 minutes made the videos information packed. This may have contributed to the negative responses to the videos. It would be helpful to do a study which analyzes how long an instructional video should be and how much material should be covered. Another aspect to consider would be how many questions are acceptable in order to make the video interactive but not overwhelming. With 7 second Vines and 15 second Instagram videos, any video much longer than a few minutes may not hold the attention of students. Researching which videos are most appealing to students will aid an instructor in making the flipped classroom a success. If the literature had been more specific this would have aided me in the creation of the online videos.

Conclusion

The successful completion of this project has been a learning experience for all involved. The students in my class have had an opportunity to experience learning in a new way. The time spent in class creating and practicing their speeches seemed to improve the quality of the informative speeches given. Some students learned that they do better interacting during class and doing something to further learning. Others learned that they are much more comfortable listening to a lecture. As the teacher, I learned much about video creation, and even more about

active learning. I now better understand the importance of adjusting teaching styles to match the learning styles of your students.

After doing this project I have recognized the importance of creating a classroom where active learning can take place. I believe that the idea of a flipped classroom is good, but it must be applied differently to teaching situations. It is possible to do a flipped classroom in a communication setting. In result of the negative reactions to the online videos, a mixed flipped classroom/lecture style may be most effective. Because 1/3 of my class preferred the flipped learning format, 1/3 of my class preferred the traditional lecture format, and 1/3 of my class felt neutral towards either, I will finish teaching my class in a mixed flipped/traditional format. Where some lecture is done in class to clarify readings, but also including more active learning activities during class time. I hope that this will create an environment where my students not only enjoy coming to class, but feel that they are progressing in their learning.

As this project is completed I hope that it is helpful to other higher education or communication teachers who are looking for a way to improve their teaching. The examples and experiences shared in this project may help teachers envision how adopting a flipped learning pedagogy could influence their class for the better.

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Appendix A

Student Assessment

1. I enjoyed a flipped classroom* more than a traditional classroom+.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

2. I am more motivated to attend class in a flipped classroom.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

3. I feel that I learned more in a flipped classroom.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

4. I prefer a traditional classroom more than a flipped classroom.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

5. I am more comfortable in a traditional classroom than in a flipped classroom

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

6. What did you like most about the flipped classroom?

7. What did you like least about the flipped classroom?

8. What would you change in the flipped classroom?

* *Flipped classroom is defined as having the lecture at home and doing active learning activities in class.*

+ *Traditional classroom is defined as a teacher lecturing for the class and students listening. All homework is complete at home.*

