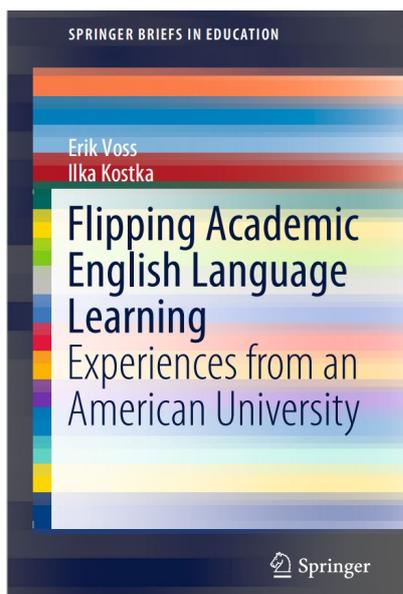




Book Review



Flipping Academic English Language Learning: Experiences from an American University, by E. Voss and I. Kostka, Singapore, Springer, 2019, 91 pp., \$46.30 (US)/ £36.04 (UK), ISBN: 978-981-13-8657-2

The book *Flipping Academic English Language Learning: Experiences from an American University* offers insightful views and practical suggestions specifically for integrating new technology in flipped academic English language classrooms at the tertiary level. Chapter 1 reviews how flipped learning benefits both students and instructors in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses and how some key concepts (including ‘*flipped learning*’, ‘*shifted learning*’, ‘*pre-instruction*’, and ‘*extended application*’) in both flipped learning and academic language learning have been defined and operationalized in the literature. The authors briefly illustrate how concepts (such as ‘*EAP needs*’, ‘*the conventions of academic language*’, ‘*the notion of authenticity*’) from EAP scholarship underpin the use of flipped learning in university EAP classes.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed description of the Flipped Learning Network’s four pillars (namely, *Flexible Environment*, *Learning Culture*, *Intentional Content*, and *Professional Educator*) to distinguish flipped learning from other teaching methods. How flipped learning can be implemented with or without technology is also described briefly. The authors conclude this chapter by offering recommendations for applying the basic tenets of the flipped approach. Chapter 3 focuses on how instructors can get students accountable for completing work before class. To address the concern that students may not complete assigned work before the class, rather than take a punitive approach through use of tests and punishment, the authors offer an alternative approach: get students accountable for completing work before class through developing a sense of motivation among students.

In Chapter 4, the authors share their experiences of implementing flipped learning in academic reading and writing, such as reading for main ideas, summary writing, and writing of email with appropriate etiquette. Take teaching reading as an example, when trying a flipped learning approach, students learn about locating main ideas by watching a YouTube video about the skill or reading a handout that would have been presented or discussed before class. This can foster students’ independent learning and give them a sense of control as they can watch additional videos on YouTube related to the target reading skill.

In Chapter 5, one of the authors shares the experience of flipping three topics of his academic listening and speaking course. He uses the topic of Academic Presentation as an example to demonstrate how the facets of accountability and the four ‘pillars’ of flipped learning can be practiced. For example, when teaching academic presentation, he follows the facets for accountability by providing clear instructions to let students know what they are expected to do. Before the next class, students watch videos as direct instruction.

The last chapter of the book is the most practical chapter for teachers, as the authors introduce a lot of



technological tools and resources and offer valuable flipped learning suggestions. Specifically, the authors introduce some useful technological tools and resources for creating instructional content and designing student-centred practice and knowledge construction, as well as classroom assessment tasks. For instance, students can engage in collaborative writing and the teacher can give written electronic feedback on their work directly by using Google Docs.

While the authors claim that the book is intended to capture the fundamentals of research, theory, and practice in flipping academic English language instruction in a university context, it fails to discuss the potential difficulties instructors are likely to have when adopting flipped learning methodology particularly in some English as a foreign language (EFL) settings. As the authors state, flipped learning most closely resembles many of the tenets of communicative language teaching. Nevertheless, according to Littlewood (2007), one of the five concerns in relation to the introduction of communicative activities in English classroom particularly in the EFL context is avoidance of English as a result of teachers themselves lacking confidence to conduct communication activities in English. Another concern is that the teacher-led activities and a highly competitive examination-driven education system favoured by some Eastern cultures conflict with theoretical underpinnings of a learner-centred methodology such as communicative language teaching, and can make innovative communication-oriented practices difficult. Teachers may even feel threatened by the idea that students have control over their learning in the classroom and engage interactively in making evaluative judgments about their task performance. Arguably, these issues and problems are likely to arise in a flipped EAP classroom, given the similarities flipped learning methodology shares with communicative language teaching.

Despite the limitation discussed above, overall, the book offers an ideal blend of theory and practice, and gives detailed step-by-step explanations for applying flipped learning in academic English classrooms in a university setting. Even for teachers who adopt a traditional language teaching approach can follow the suggestions given in this book to transform their teaching. We also appreciate that there are a few reflective questions in each chapter asking readers to think about their current situations and how to apply those recommended teaching strategies in their teaching contexts. It is reader-friendly that each chapter has a chapter highlight which provides a concise summary of the main themes of each chapter.

Reference

- Littlewood, W. (2007). Communicative and task-based language teaching in East Asian classrooms. *Language Teaching*, 40(3), 243-249.

Chi Cheung Ruby Yang

Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong
rccyang@hku.hk

Wenjiao Wang

Faculty of Education, University of Macau
mb84818@connect.um.edu.mo

Zhengdong Gan

Faculty of Education, University of Macau
ZhengdongGan@um.edu.mo

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