

# Foreword

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It's a routine of mine that I think most teachers can easily relate to. At the end of my work day, as I drive home after teaching in my university position, I do what I always do: I evaluate how I think the day's classes went, and I try to come up with alternative ways of teaching the material that might be better. This line of inquiry—a type of action research—is at the heart of the scholarship of teaching and learning (Kreber, 2007; Vardi, 2011).

Some 35 years ago, I taught my first ESL class in an intensive program at a large university in my home state of Mississippi. Since then, I've taught many kinds of language courses in very different settings. I've taught ESL at a small college as well as at several large universities in the U.S. I've also taught EFL at military programs (in two countries), an English conversation school with adults and young children, a graduate school in a university, and an intensive English program. In this diverse array of settings and programs, I learned early on that to be a really good teacher, I would have to adjust my instruction according to the type of program and the country where instruction was taking place. Intensive programs are not the same as conversation classes. Teaching adults is not the same as teaching children. Teaching in Saudi Arabia or Malaysia is not the same as in Japan or Kuwait.

In addition to teaching English learners, I also have a great deal of experience training pre-service (future) teachers as well as in-service (current) teachers. Working with future teachers has some overlap with working with current teachers, but there are also many differences that a good teacher trainer considers and uses to adjust the instruction. For example, I've had to develop different activities to use with elementary school teachers, high school teachers, intensive program teachers, or adult education teachers.

Because I believe strongly in the adage that learner needs drive everything in a curriculum, I have adjusted my teaching in all of these cases based on actual learner needs. Some students like a more teacher-centered class, some groups need more attention with reading and writing instead of

speaking and listening, and other learners prefer games and activities instead of books and other traditional materials. In most of these cases, however, my adjustments have been related to the **learner**.

More recently, however, I have had to adjust my teaching to the mode of delivery of my instruction. Specifically, I've had to convert my regular face-to-face classes—a retronym that wasn't widely used just ten years ago—to a mixed-mode class where we meet live only every other class. Even with my 35 years of teaching experience in a variety of classrooms and with seasoned curriculum and materials design skills, this transition in instruction delivery—also known as teaching—has been a real challenge. I think the fact that my adjustment is in reaction to something other than the learner is part of my professional confusion here.

While this adjustment in delivery is not exactly the same thing as flipping the classroom, there are many similarities. For starters, moving certain instruction online is a common component in flipping a classroom. In addition, I have to choose which material might be better in a flipped environment. I have to think of how to present the flipped material in that online environment, and I have to think about what will happen after the instruction. Will students have to post a question in a discussion area, which is a common online practice, even if they don't have a real question and wouldn't ask that question in a face-to-face meeting? And how will I provide feedback on whatever I require the students to do in reaction to the flipped material, preferably in a way that does not burden me with extra work—that is, *extra* in the sense that in a live class, I don't give all the students some task immediately after instruction that I then have to collect, mark, and return. Yes, I am familiar with many ways to handle these scenarios, but still, this transition requires more than knowing which buttons to activate for students in an online course. It requires a **major paradigm shift** in not only how the instructor presents the material but also how the student reacts to the material.

In *Flip It!* Robyn Brinks Lockwood explains in clear language with concrete classroom examples what it means to flip an ESL classroom. While many works extol the virtues of flipping a classroom, *Flip It!* is the first book that I've seen that offers strategies with specific examples for different types of ESL or EFL lessons.

For those new to flipping an ESL classroom, Part 1 explains what flipped learning is. Part 2 discusses some of the pros and cons of flipping a classroom, with more emphasis on the benefits for the students as well as the instructor. The remaining two-thirds of this book is filled with strategies in various scenarios, such as flipping with technology, flipping without tech-

nology, and flipping with existing materials from the textbook, instructor's manual, or the real world.

What makes this book so different from the many resource volumes in our TESOL field? When considering this question, two answers come to mind immediately: the clear writing and the concrete examples.

Far too many books, supposedly written to help teachers, are written in rather verbose, often intentionally opaque language, as if the author needed to guard the information. *Flip It!* offers explanations written in clear, concise language that everyone can readily understand, a feature that takes on even more importance when readers are tackling a subject that is as new to most teachers as flipping their traditional classrooms.

In addition, the author always includes specific examples from ESL textbooks to illustrate how a classroom could be flipped. In fact, the book includes at least 50 exercises and activities taken from 15 ESL textbooks covering grammar, writing, reading, listening, speaking, and vocabulary. After reading this book, teachers will easily be able to envision how they could flip their own classrooms.

I know that reading this book and weighing the rationale for why certain exercises were or were not suitable for a flipped classroom has given me much food for thought regarding my own teaching situation as I grapple with selecting which material students will cover before coming to class as well as how that material will be presented. I am very grateful for my interaction with this material as I continue to figure out how to teach my new online lessons and courses.

## ***References***

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- Vardi, I. (2011). The changing relationship between the scholarship of teaching (and learning) and universities. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 30(1), 1–7.