

A few examples will demonstrate how blended learning works. In the first, the teacher provides the coursebook or their own material (and contributions from the students); but the students also (and this is where the blend comes in) direct the students to internet sites which provide practice material designed specifically for the day's or week's work. In the second example, the teacher may ask the students to watch and/or find a video about a topic which they will be going to concentrate on in a subsequent lesson. Perhaps, in the third example, the students will include videos from YouTube during a lesson. The students may be asked to look up on their mobile devices in the middle of the lesson, or search for more texts like this. The class have been working with.

Lessons are still being taught all over the world without the kind of blending we have just talked about (11.2.1) and many of them are extremely successful, as they have always been. But the ability to direct the students to other resources for research, preparation, discussion and input – and to mix or blend these resources with coursebooks and other in-classroom materials – gives the teacher a much broader and more varied 'palette' to work from than ever before. But – to continue the metaphor – a riot of colour does not necessarily make for a happy picture. We, as teachers, should consider carefully where online material contributes to the learning (blends) most appropriately with the other things that are happening in class and use it rather than just using it 'because it is there'.

4.2 The flipped classroom

One suggestion for a reshaping of the relationship between the classroom and the online (or offline) world is the *flipped classroom*. This is based on the observation that, in many situations, teachers present information or (in the case of language learning) language practice in transmission-type input sessions (6.2) – and then the students go home and do practice exercises and tasks by themselves as homework (see 5.5.6). In such a scenario, classroom is where people learn things and home is where they practise them. But this may not always be the best use of time, for the following reasons: some of the students may understand the input and some may not; if the teacher has to explain the concept more than once, it may be wasteful in terms of time; and explaining things to a whole class does not allow the teacher to work with individual students who might be having trouble. One size, in other words, does not fit all: different students need different things (see 7.2).

If, however, we turn the traditional scenario on its head, so that the homework (and the practice that goes with it) takes place in the lesson, but the input is offered at home (or, at least, in the students' own time), then there is far more chance, in class, for the students to get the individual attention of the teacher while the practice is taking place because she will spend less time on teaching input. So, for example, we might have the students watch a video at home about the topic we have chosen (the use of water around the world, for example) and then we would spend subsequent lesson time discussing the issue and working with the language that is used in the video.

Arguments in favour of the flipped classroom have been bolstered by organisations such as Khan Academy (www.khanacademy.org) which offers, it claims, 'free, world-class education for anyone, everywhere' – provided, of course that they have access to the internet. The academy has YouTube videos – input material – about subjects such as maths, science, geography and history, and has been hugely popular. The subject matter is presented through pictures, doodles and graphics.

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