



Flipped Classroom in the English Literature Lesson

Margarita-Esther Sánchez-Cuervo
University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain

Abstract

This paper presents a flipped classroom experience for the “English Narrative” subject. The teaching of literature usually involves a traditional approach through which the teacher delivers some theoretical content about authors, their work, and the cultural context in which they developed their literary production. As a result of this method, the class time devoted to the critical analysis of those texts may be considerably reduced due to an excess of theory. In contrast, the flipped classroom methodology allows students to prepare part of the content at home after watching an educational video or presentation provided by their teacher, and the class time is used to assess the selected texts in a more effective way. This proposal describes the procedure employed for a flipped lesson based on *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by Oscar Wilde. A group of 25 Spanish students were involved. They currently take the third year of the Degree of Modern Languages at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The participants have learned about Wilde’s novel and his ideas about art and beauty outside the classroom. Thus the time spent in class has been mainly dedicated to the analysis and critical discussion of said novel. The evaluation was conducted through 9 open questions. The answers have shown the preference for applying the flipped methodology rather than focusing on a more conventional approach to teaching literature.

Keywords: English literature; flipped classroom; educational innovation; methodology; teaching

1. Introduction

This paper seeks to display a flipped classroom experience in an English literature lesson devoted to the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by Oscar Wilde. In general, the flipped methodology is usually defined as the pedagogical approach that moves the teaching process outside the classroom and later uses class time for the work and development of learning activities. The term “flipped learning” or “flipped classroom” is thus used to describe a teaching process in which “the conventional notion of classroom-based learning is inverted” (Sargent & Casey, 2020, p. 71). The implementation of this approach has been widely applied to non-linguistic academic subjects such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics

and, to a certain extent, to other more language-oriented disciplines like English as a foreign language (Chen Hsieh & Marek, 2017); however, the application of flipped learning to the English literature lesson is not so relevant (Beyer & Day, 2016; Ortiz-Aguirre, 2018; Zou & Zhang, 2021); the literature class is apt to the inclusion of this methodology in that students may be asked to read texts before their class and to research on diverse topics to further engage in a possible discussion during the lesson time (Beyer & Day, 2016, p. 2).

For Bergmann and Sams (2012, pp. 15), a common feature of this method is that the class time is restructured: students ask questions about the content that has been previously delivered by means of, for example, a video, and those questions are answered during the first part of the class. The remainder of the lesson can be spent for other activities aimed at problem-solving time, discussions, or debates. In the same line, “teachers become guides to understanding rather than dispensers of facts and students become active learners rather than receptacles of information” (Eyitayo-Olakanmi, 2017, p.128).

In order to follow a flipped learning procedure, teachers should make use of the following four pillars (Flipped Learning Network, 2016):

1. A flexible environment which allows for diverse educational modes which students can adapt to their study habits.
2. A learning culture that fosters the learning-centred approach, by means of which the student can seek and do some research on the proposed tasks.
3. The intentional content is focused on the planning of activities that students must do outside the classroom with the aim of working on more challenging tasks in class.
4. The professional educator becomes a guide during the class time while the more motivating chores are being done and he provides the necessary feedback.

Indeed, the time devoted to feedback and the more individualised attention in class entail an important advantage over more traditional teaching methods. Additionally, students feel more in charge of their own learning process. Flipped learning usually takes place in two phases of instruction that are “flipped” or inverted (Bergmann & Samms, 2012): in the first phase, students are presented with learning materials before class. These materials should be attractive and contain meaningful information which can be examined prior to that class. In the second phase, students participate in student-centred learning activities which are also supplied by their teacher. In relation to the type of activities designed for each stage, they should follow Bloom’s taxonomy model in which the resources and materials offered in the first phase are related to lower order thinking skills, such as remembering, understanding new knowledge, and solving problems by applying techniques which have been previously employed in their educational experience. In contrast, the in-class activities make use of higher-order thinking skills like analysing the content of the specialised questions on the novel, the evaluation and implications of certain concepts and, ultimately, the creation of new content.

Kathleen Fulton (2012), for her part, enumerates several advantages of the flipped learning approach. For example, time class can become more effective and creative. Furthermore, students can work at their own pace during the session while the teacher is better able to diagnose specific learning styles and possible difficulties which may allow for an adjustment to the curriculum. A third benefit is related to students’ greater levels of accomplishment, interest and motivation and, finally, this flipped methodology is in consonance with the most recent use of educational technology in the classroom.

This paper is structured as follows: section 2 presents the participants and the methodology followed for this lesson and depicts a detailed explanation of each stage of the session, which is organised into pre-class, in-class, and post-class activities; section 3 offers the results of the evaluation, mainly conducted through a series of open question surveys. Finally, some conclusions are provided.

2. Methodology

This flipped literature lesson has been implemented during the academic year 2023-2024 at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. 25 students who belong to the third year of the Degree of Modern Languages and take the “English Narrative” compulsory subject have participated. The syllabus of the subject, which covers the first semester, is divided into four major English literary periods:

- 1) The Restoration and the eighteenth century
- 2) The Romantic period, including Gothic literature.
- 3) The Victorian age.
- 4) The Twentieth century.

The educational activities carried out prior to this academic year have mainly included general information about canonical novelists, some tips about their lives and the main characteristics of their works along with some previewing questions before reading the excerpt(s) selected. In general, these lessons have followed a master class methodology, in which the teacher conducts all these tasks in class and then her students discuss some post-reading questions about the extracts which they have read in small groups. During the academic years 2023/2024 and 2024/2025, the “English Narrative” subject is part of an educational innovation project dealing with flipped learning, so the methodological approach has varied considerably. During the first year of the project, an author from each unit will be “flipped” and, during the second year, two authors from each literary period will be selected to carry out the same procedure. Ideally, the aim of the project is to turn gradually the study of all the writers included in the course outline into a “flipped classroom” approach which may foster both autonomous learning and a more positive attitude towards literature lessons.

2.1 Project layout

As said above, the performance of this flipped classroom experience has consisted of three different stages according to the type of activities which have been delivered before, during and after the lesson. As to the pre-class activities, the teacher sent the group a Canva presentation that was available on the Moodle virtual page of “English Narrative”. The presentation covered 6 slides: the first two ones referred to Oscar Wilde’s life and works, the next three slides were devoted to an extended explanation of the plot of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, including a summary and analysis video from YouTube. Figures 1 and 2 show slides 2 and 5:

Figure 1: Slide 2 from the Canva presentation.

OSCAR WILDE: LIFE AND WORKS

- His first published work was the book of children's stories *The Happy Prince*. In 1891, he published *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* and *Lord Arthur Savile's Crimes*, as well as a series of critical essays and dialogues known as *Intentions*.
- Oscar Wilde was instrumental in reviving the comedy of manners with plays like *A Woman of No importance* (1892), *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895).


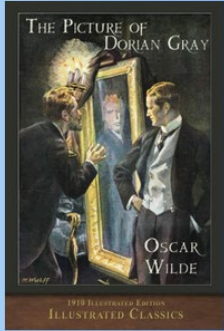



Figure 2: Slide 5 from the Canva presentation.

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

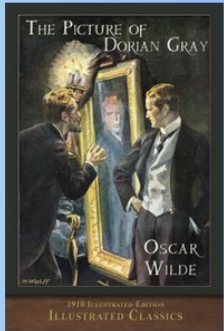


The last slide of this first stage proposes two questions before the reading of the extract from the second chapter of the novel. All students must refresh their knowledge about the great Victorian writer and do some research about Aestheticism, the late nineteenth-century artistic movement which stated that art should exist for its own sake and not for a moral or didactic purpose. Wilde's adherence to this movement is pervasive in the novel, so the questions are meant to require some interpretation of the novelist's words as reflected in the preface to this literary work and the novel itself, as seen in Figure 3:

Figure 3: Slide 6 from the Canva presentation.

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY: PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. In the preface to the novel, Wilde writes that "there is no such thing as a moral or immoral book." In other words, art has no effect, other than aesthetic, on individuals or society. Do you agree with Wilde's premise?
2. Does this novel adhere to his statement? In what way?



The passage of the novel selected for the lesson corresponds to the moment when Dorian sees his portrait for the first time and “the sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation”. The agonising realisation that his picture is going to remain forever young while he is going to grow inevitably old leads him to lament this injustice and to utter the wish that unfolds the subsequent events in the story:

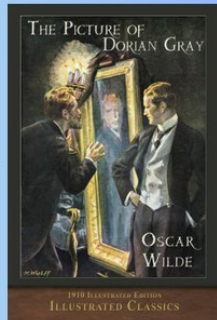
“How sad it is!” murmured Dorian Gray with his eyes still fixed upon his own portrait. “How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June.... If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that—for that—I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!”

After carrying out these tasks outside the classroom, in-class activities will focus on the application of what students have learned in the previous stage (Hung, 2018). For this face-to-face part of the session, the teacher has added two new slides to the Canva presentation which include seven post-reading questions that will be answered in five small groups of four students. The queries are aimed at delving into the analysis of the linguistic content of the excerpt and at discussing the possible relation between the characters’ opinions and Wilde’s controversial ideas about art, morality, and hedonism, among others. The discussion favours the exchange of arguments in relation to Dorian’s wish to never grow old and the debate between the consequences of committing evil acts.

Figure 4: Slide 7 from the Canva presentation.

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY: POST-READING QUESTIONS

1. How does Dorian get the idea of having the portrait age instead of him?
2. How is Dorian's wish of not becoming old related to the Faust theme?
3. Why does Dorian say "I am less to you than your ivory Hermes or your silver Faun. You will like them always. How long will you like me? Till I have my first wrinkle, I suppose".
4. Find an example of simile in the extract.



As seen in Figure 4, in question 1 students point out at the quote they have read in which Dorian wished he could be young and beautiful forever in exchange for his soul, and how this idea is related to the second question about the Faust theme. Similarly, they must decipher the metaphors present in the phrases “your ivory Hermes” or the “your silver Faun” and the similes that can be found in the extract. In contrast, the last three questions from slide 8, as observed in Figure 5, deepen into the comparison between the pages from chapter 2 and the whole novel, and the final discussion regarding the dichotomy between physical and moral decay, and between body and soul.

Figure 5: Slide 8 from the Canva presentation

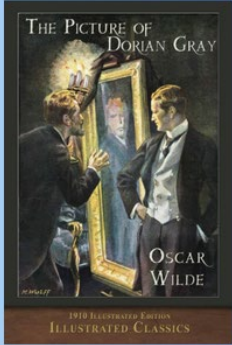
THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY: POST-READING QUESTIONS

5. How do you characterise Dorian's personality in the text? Give some textual evidence for your answer.

6. Why does Basil want to destroy Dorian's picture?

7. Discuss Dorian's portrait:

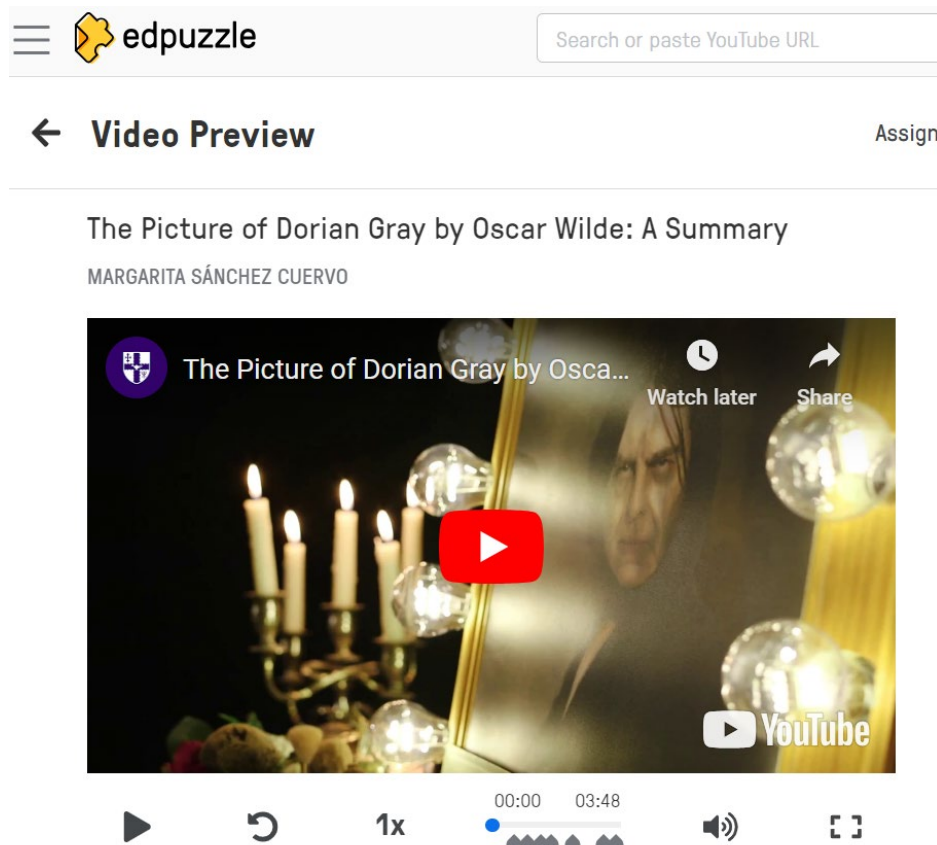
- What does it represent?
- What does it suggest about the effect of experience on the soul?
- Why does Dorian hide it in the attic?



Finally, in the post-class activity which tries to enhance the knowledge that students have acquired, the teacher has uploaded an Edpuzzle task on the Moodle virtual page. The activity consists in watching a three forty-five-minute video called “*The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde: A Summary”, narrated by Dr Nick Freeman, Reader in Late Victorian literature. In the video, the speaker reflects on several issues which have been examined in the lesson about the novelist and his work, so students must pay careful attention to what is said. They must answer 5 open-ended questions and 2 multiple choice ones:

1. In what ways did the preface of the novel dismiss the Victorian belief that art was the hand servant of morality?
2. For Wilde, art was independent from:
 - a) writing
 - b) morality
 - c) beauty
3. What does Lord Wotton encourage Dorian to search for?
4. For Lord Henry Wotton, passions are controlled by...
5. What four concepts does Wilde make jokes about?
6. What genres does the presenter use to describe the novel?
 - a) satire and drama
 - b) gothic horror and dark comedy
 - c) satire and mystery
7. Wilde said that if he was not famous, he would be...

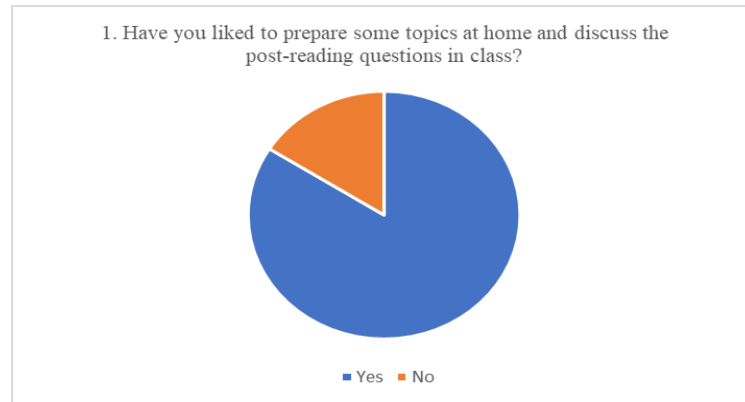
Figure 6: Edpuzzle activity on “The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde: A Summary”



3. Results and Discussion

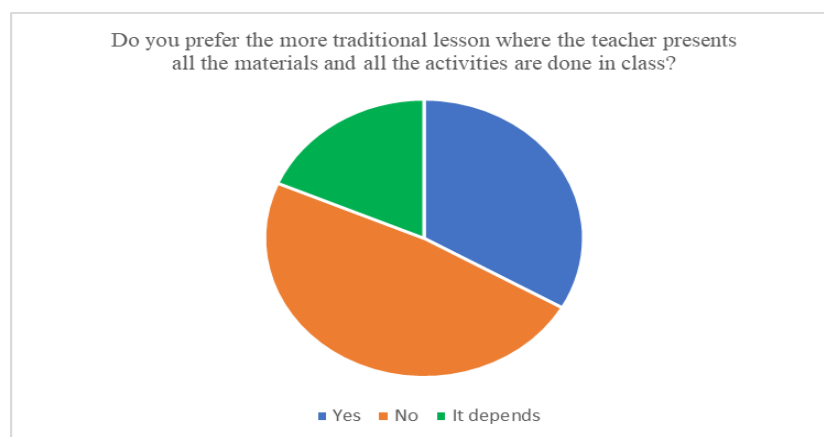
The results derived from this didactic experience have been obtained from a questionnaire carried out at the end of the semester. It included nine open questions distributed into different topics. For example, questions 1-3 regarded students' teaching preferences for “English Narrative”, if they preferred the flipped or the “traditional” approach, and why, and whether they would have liked all the writers in the syllabus to be “flipped”. Questions 4 and 5 referred to the time spent preparing the flipped lesson; questions 6-9 inquired about the degree of satisfaction after applying this methodology and the possibility of making the most of the class time with other more fun activities that evaluate the content of the subject, such as oral presentations or the preparation of a book trailer. I will focus on the findings of questions 1, 2, 6 and 7 since they have to do with the students' interest in applying this methodology and their preference between a more traditional approach to teaching literature and the flipped one.

Figure 7: Question 1: Have you liked to prepare some topics at home and discuss the post-reading questions in class?



As Figure 7 shows, 21 students (84%) answered “yes” to the first question and 4 (16%) said “no”. As to the reasons for liking the flipped style, they mostly considered that it was a different and more dynamic way to learn the authors and their work, it was more productive although it entailed a greater effort, they could just focus on the post-reading questions in class and felt that they had more time to devote to class work and argue their opinions. Likewise, they could work at home at their own pace and could understand the pre-reading activities and the texts in a better way. Some negative reasons had to do with the fact that students were usually busy studying for other subjects and could not dedicate enough time to work on the literature lessons or were more familiar with a teacher-centred style which allowed them to be more “relaxed” in class. This last answer is reinforced and expanded in the second question in that it asks about whether students preferred a more traditional lesson type in which the teacher presents all the materials orally and both the pre- and post-reading activities are done in class.

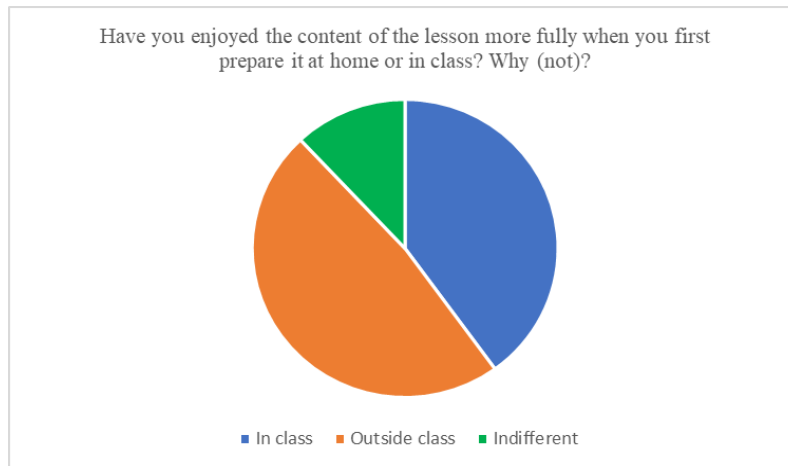
Figure 8: Question 2: Do you prefer the more traditional lesson where the teacher presents all the materials, and all the activities are done in class?



As it can be observed in Figure 8, nearly half of the group, 12 students (48%), said they did not prefer a more traditional lesson as compared to 8 (32%) who said “yes”, mainly because they are used to having a teacher who guides them through some difficult questions in a face-to-face session and because they can learn some new concepts in greater depth. Five of them (20%) replied that having a flipped lesson was nice provided that they have enough time to do the pre-reading activities and read the extract at home, especially when they have mid-term tests; in addition, regardless of the fun they can experience when preparing the flipped

lesson outside the classroom, they still have the sensation that they learn in a more detailed way when they are listening to the teacher. In this line, although students appreciate the more innovative teaching procedure of the flipped methodology, they can also feel less connected to their teacher (Strayer, 2007).

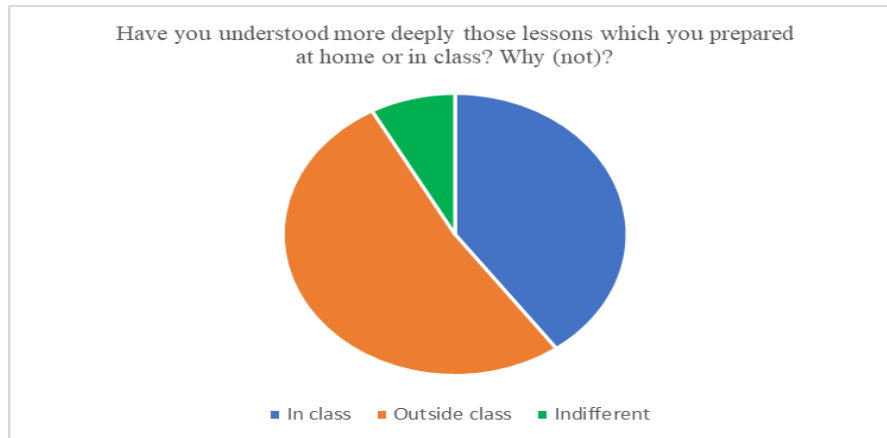
Figure 9: Question 6: Have you enjoyed the content of the lesson more fully when you first prepare it at home or in class? Why (not)?



Question 6, as Figure 9 reflects, queries about whether students have enjoyed the content of the lesson more fully when they prepared it at home. As seen above, there is a slight difference between the 12 students (48%) who prefer to prepare the lesson at home and the smaller group of 10 students (40%) who like a more conventional lecture. Only 3 of them (12%) did not mind the teaching procedure. As to the reasons for being in favour of the flipped classroom, they said that they had more time to understand the texts and answer the pre-reading questions at home, at their own pace. They also knew in advance some of the contents of the face-to-face lesson. Finally, the time for discussing the post-reading questions was longer and more enjoyable. However, those who chose the master class considered that they were less distracted, and the teacher's comments could be more engaging; they also believed that they could solve their doubts more promptly and benefit from their classmates' feedback if different opinions arose.

Question 7 regarded the degree of comprehension of the subject in relation to the teaching approach. As can be observed in Figure 10, 13 students (52%) understood the lesson in a more satisfactory way after flipping the class, 10 students (40%) opted for the in-person session, and only 2 of them (8%) did not appreciate any significant differences in their learning process. Those who liked to flip the literature class argued that they could do more research on the topic, take notes, watch related videos, and even enjoy the film adaptation. As a result, they sensed that they were better prepared and more motivated to go on with the post-reading and extension exercises in the following session. In contrast, the students who disliked the flipped experience claimed that they could interact with their classmates from the first moment, and confirmed that their teacher explained the subject matter in a clearer way while providing anecdotes and interesting data that, otherwise, they would have never known.

Figure 10: Question 7: Have you understood more deeply the lessons which you prepared at home or in class? Why (not)?



4. Conclusion

This paper has explored the use of flipped learning in the English literature classroom. In the traditional literature lesson, the methodology usually revolves around the teacher’s presentation of an author’s life, work and literary period, and any subsequent discussion is also monitored by the instructor in the face-to-face lecture. Conversely, in the flipped lesson the student receives the teaching material before the session, and the class time is devoted to more challenging activities (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Cevikbas & Kaiser, 2022). I have offered the graded steps for a flipped lesson devoted to the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by Oscar Wilde. The method conducted follows Bloom’s taxonomy since lower cognitive operations such as remembering, understanding, and applying have been performed outside class by means of tasks like knowing about Wilde’s life and circumstances, answering pre-reading questions about the artist’s ideas, and reading the corresponding chapter from the novel. In contrast, the more complex cognitive processes such as analysing, assessing, and creating have been accomplished in class and monitored by the teacher. These more elaborate activities have consisted of several post-reading questions aimed at fostering the discussion about Wilde’s most controversial character as well as a recapitulating video on Wilde’s thoughts.

The results indicate that a meaningful part of the group prefers the flipped methodology because they know in advance the content of the lesson and can dedicate more time to prepare their arguments in class. They have valued the fact that they can do their own research at a more paced rhythm prior to class and thus may feel more confident and participate more willingly. Ideally, flipped learning contributes to improving the student’s motivation and responsibility to learn and respects each learning style. Likewise, collaborative work and autonomous learning are promoted.

Acknowledgment

This study is an output of the Educational Innovation Project (2023-2025), funded by The University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, under award number PIE2023-59, called “Proyecto de clase invertida tradicional, doble y grupal para la enseñanza de la lengua y la literatura en inglés y francés”. We hereby express our thanks.

References

- Bergmann, J., & Sams, A. (2012). *Flip your classroom, reach every student in every class every day*. Washington, DC: Eugene OR: International Society for Technology in Education.
- Beyer, E. J., & Day, J. M. (2016). Flip the page: Reinvigorating literature in the classroom through Flipped Learning. *The Global eLearning Journal*, 5(2), 1-6.
- Bloom's Taxonomy Overview. (2001). Retrieved January 18, 2024, from <https://media.citt.ufl.edu/resources/blooms/index.html>
- Cevikbas, M., & Kaiser, G. (2022). Promoting personalized learning in Flipped Classrooms: A systematic review study. *Sustainability* 2022, 14(18), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/SU141811393>
- Chen Hsieh, J. S., Wu, W. C. V., & Marek, M. W. (2017). Using the Flipped Classroom to enhance EFL learning. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 30(1-2), 1-21.
- Course Hero. (2019, December 16). *The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde | Plot Summary*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOBSfJ5QzHU&t=633s>
- Eyitayo-Olankanmi, E. (2017). The effects of a Flipped Classroom model of instruction on students' performance and attitudes towards chemistry. *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, 26, 127-137.
- Flipped Learning Network. (2014). *What Is Flipped Learning?* Retrieved January 7, 2024, from https://flippedlearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/FLIP_handout_FNL_Web.pdf
- Fulton, K. (2012). Upside down and inside out: Flip your classroom to improve student learning. *Learning & Leading with Technology*, 39(8), 12-17.
- Hung, H. T. (2018). Gamifying the Flipped Classroom Using Game-based Learning Materials. *ELT Journal*, 72(3), 296-308.
- Loughborough University. (2017, February 21). *The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde: A Summary* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEbbAGumo8E>
- Ortiz-Aguirre, E. (2018). Las TIC como TAC en la formación de maestros y profesores de Lengua española y Literatura: la *Flipped Classroom*, el Foro y la Literatura comparada. *Azulejo para el aula de Español*, 9, 115-134.
- Sargent, J., & Casey, A. (2020). Flipped learning, pedagogy and digital technology: Establishing consistent practice to optimise lesson time. *European Physical Education Review*, 26(1), 70-84.
- Strayer, J. F. (2007). *The effect of the classroom flip on the learning environment: A comparison of learning activity in a traditional classroom and a flip classroom that used an intelligent tutoring system*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Ohio State University.
- Project Gutenberg (1891). *The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde*. Retrieved January 20, 2024, from <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/174>
- Zou, D., & Zhang, R. (2021). Flipped primary EFL classrooms: Impact, feasibility, and potential. *ELT Journal*, 75(3), 267-277.