

Flip and TILT: ideas for listening and speaking practice

Terence McLean presents some examples of the Flip and TILT method he has employed in his classroom

I have been teaching English as an additional language (EAL) for quite a spell, and in the BC (Before Covid) days, I used to get students to do online assignments in a computer lab once a week. Then, the dastardly pandemic stormed in, thereby forcing me, well, everybody, to move online and develop both synchronous and asynchronous lessons. Mission accomplished.

Now, back in the classroom, I find myself happy to be interacting with students as we get to know one another better in person. Moreover, I am also fortunate because my school has allowed me to use one day a week as an online teaching and learning day (Flex Friday), which has turned what I do into a hybrid situation (with an emphasis on the face-to-face experience, Monday–Thursday). This shift has been fantastic for both me and the students because we are still able to engage in meaningful activities while taking a day at home to work in a comfortable, self-paced environment. A win-win in my books.

So, the challenge that I have embraced is to develop learning activities for the students to tackle on the days on which I do not teach online. I sometimes get the students to do asynchronous work, about which they make online posts and/or bring notes to class on Monday for group discussion. This is where ‘Flip and TILT’ comes into play.

Be it understood – there is nothing novel in the [flipped classroom approach](#) as teachers have been utilising this strategy for many years. In fact, I suppose I was doing this 20 years ago without thinking about nomenclature or sobriquet. Nevertheless, whatever the handle, giving students the task of doing work in preparation for upcoming lessons does, in fact, work. Well, it does as long as the teacher applies [Transparency in Learning and Teaching](#) (TILT).

Essentially, through the TILT strategy, the teacher endeavours to explain with transparency what the task is and how doing it can lead to student success. In my case, I tell the students that they are going to improve their listening and speaking skills (with a boost in academic



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vocabulary, to boot). I also clearly describe the task and the potential homework points that are associated. In this way, students are assured that the work that they do will help them both succeed in the course and develop essential skills.

Regarding actual activities, I utilise videos such as [TED Talks](#) (I know – some are good and some are clunkers – I look for the good ones). At first, I ask the students to watch a presentation (an asynchronous task) and take notes while answering questions that I have prepared. Here are a few examples of TED Talks that consistently gain student approval.

4 reasons to learn a new language – John McWhorter (10:00)

Write down your answers so that we can share them.

- 1 Where is English?
- 2 What language is spoken more than English?
- 3 What are 24 universities in China doing now?
- 4 What is getting better every year?
- 5 How would a French or Spanish speaker say a table would talk?
- 6 What do you think ‘fraught’ means?
- 7 What is an ‘anglophone’ hospital?
- 8 What can learning another language be a ticket to?
- 9 If you speak two languages, what is less likely to set in?
- 10 What do you think ‘a baker’s dozen’ means?
- 11 Learning another language won’t _____ your mind, but it will _____ your mind.
- 12 Post an answer to this question: Do you agree with the speaker? Why or why not? (and/or: Are there any other reasons to learn a new language?)

Don’t insist on English! – Patricia Ryan (10:35)

- 1 For how long has Patricia been living in the Gulf?
- 2 How many world languages are there today? In 90 years?

- 3 What is the main topic?
- 4 What happens every 14 days?
- 5 According to Patricia, who are the gatekeepers?
- 6 What is Patricia against?
- 7 Why did people laugh when they saw the picture of George Bush?
- 8 What problem did Einstein have?
- 9 What did the boy in Africa invent?
- 10 What should we celebrate?
- 11 What should we use language for?

Txtng is killing language. JK!!! – John McWhorter (13:48)

- 1 What is a ‘scourge’?
- 2 For how long has language existed?
- 3 What do linguists say about the way we speak?
- 4 Give three ways how speech is different from writing.
- 5 Why/How can we now write like we speak?
- 6 How does the speaker define texting?
- 7 What is one convention in texting?
- 8 What has ‘lol’ evolved into?
- 9 What does the slash indicate?
- 10 Why did the speaker show quotations from history about complaints about how people write?

How to speak so that people want to listen – Julian Treasure (9:54)

- 1 Julian talks about seven deadly sins of speaking. What are they?
- 2 According to Julian, what is the national art/sport of the UK?
- 3 Julian made up the term: ‘blame-thrower’. What is the word that he used to make this pun?
- 4 ‘...embroidery, exaggeration. It demeans our language, actually, sometimes. For example, if I see something that really is awesome, what do I call it?’ Do you understand this point? Explain it to your group.
- 5 What is ‘dogmatism’?
- 6 What does ‘HAIL’ stand for?
- 7 Have you ever ‘rummaged’? Why?
- 8 What is ‘register’?
- 9 Who do we vote for?
- 10 What is ‘timbre’?
- 11 If you do not use effective ‘prosody’, what do you sound like?
- 12 When thinking about ‘pace’, what can be powerful?
- 13 How can we get someone to really pay attention (2 ways)?
- 14 Can you roll an ‘r’? Try!

How to buy happiness – Michael Norton (10:59)

- 1 What phrase does the speaker think is wrong?
- 2 According to CNN, what do people think when they win the lottery?
- 3 What could happen if friends and family bother you for money?
- 4 According to what some people said they would do if they won the lottery, it seems that money can make people _____.
- 5 What did the researchers make people do?
- 6 What happened to people who spent money on others?
- 7 Did the people who spent \$20 on others get happier than those who spent \$5?
- 8 Where did the researchers go to try the experiment again?
- 9 In the world, people who _____ are _____ than people who _____.
- 10 In which country was this not true?
- 11 What teams sell more?
- 12 The speaker says that 'if you think money can't buy happiness, you're not spending it right'. What can you infer about how he thinks we should spend money?

One woman, eight hilarious characters – Sarah Jones (21:00)

- 1 What type of accent do you think Sarah has at the beginning?
- 2 What is her real accent?

- 3 What is the theme of the session?
- 4 What is Sarah interested in?
- 5 Who did Sarah bring with her?
- 6 What does the first character think about some of the presentations?
- 7 What is Noraida?
- 8 What is she not used to doing?
- 9 What is her organisation called?
- 10 What does the organisation do?
- 11 What does she think will happen in two weeks?
- 12 Who are Sarah's characters based on?
- 13 Who is Alexandre?
- 14 What did Sarah study for three years?
- 15 Where is Praveen from?
- 16 What do politicians do in Georgetown?
- 17 Where is Pauline from?
- 18 Why didn't she like to give speeches?
- 19 What did her daughter tell her?
- 20 What doesn't her daughter like?
- 21 Who is she in love with?
- 22 Where is Habbi from?
- 23 How does she feel?
- 24 Who did she listen to?

The links and questions above are all included in activities that I use in both the classroom and asynchronous lessons. The students eventually get into groups and discuss the answers with the goal of completing the questions together. Time-tested and successful – but – this is teacher driven.

So, to flip the roles, I now sometimes

ask the students to watch the videos (asynchronously), take notes and make questions that they will bring to class. In groups, the students then test one another with their personalised questions and, in the process, consolidate their learning while developing speaking skills (asking and answering questions). This activity can also be turned into a competitive game in which groups develop questions that other groups need to answer. The group with the best/hardest questions win.

Overall, as teachers, we want to give students authentic language learning opportunities, and the usual *Watch this video and answer the questions* works. However, what also works is getting students to take the responsibility for making the questions with which they will challenge their classmates in the classroom. With Flip and TILT in mind, teachers and students can create engaging and interesting activities that promote language learning with purpose.

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