How the *Inverted Classroom* works: A manifesto to students
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Many classes in linguistics and web-technology at the Department of English are supported by multimedial learning environments, electronic assessment and pre-recorded E-Lectures on YouTube. The availability of these sources of content acquisition has led to a unique and award winning model of education, the *Inverted Classroom Mastery* Model.[1]

Since the *Inverted Classroom* tends to engender a lot of uncertainty, we are hoping to pre-empt those feelings with this manifesto. It will show you how the *Inverted Classroom* works and why it opens new horizons in learning and teaching.

The Central Idea

In traditional teaching, content delivery and content acquisition are realized in class where several dozens of students have to gather at the same time to be "entertained" by their teacher. In a second phase, students practice on their own: on the basis of additional exercise material, homework tasks, etc.
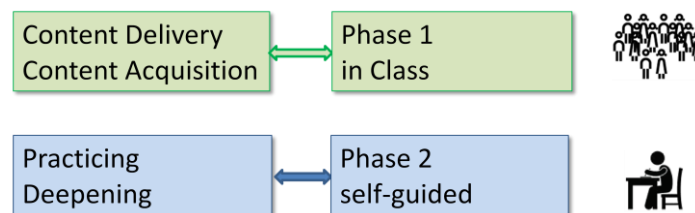

Fig. 1: Traditional Education

We have inverted these two activities. Content acquisition is now self-guided, takes place first and is done online. The additional in-class phase is dedicated to practicing, rehearsing, discussion, analysis, etc. This means: Prior to each in-class meeting, students must have worked through the online-content of the respective unit. This approach is referred to as *Inverted Classroom*.
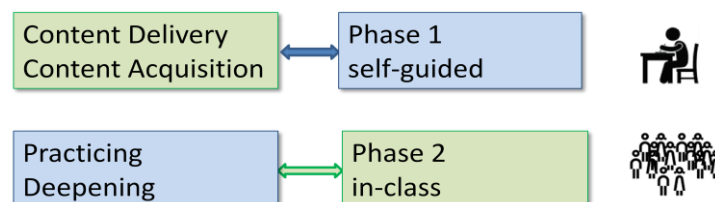

Fig. 2: The *Inverted Classroom* Model

Central to this model is a repository of multimedial content and video material as a special system of student support. The framework, i.e. the platform that controls and administers all these activities and components is – in our case – the *Virtual Linguistics Campus* (www.linguistics-online.com).

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[1] *In 2013, Jürgen Handke and his team were awarded the Hessian Award for Excellence in University Teaching by the Hessian Ministry of Science and Education, the first time ever a member of the Faculty of Arts at Marburg University received such a price (prize money: 85,000 €). In 2015, Jürgen Handke won the Ars legend prize, Germany's highest teaching award (prize money: 50,000 €), awarded by the Hochschulrektorenkonferenz and Stifterverband, Germany.*
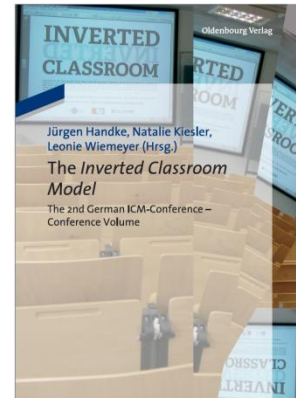
How our *Inverted Classroom* works[2]

One of the main goals of higher education is to teach you to become "*an independent learner who can learn new things continuously throughout the rest of your life*." This is a big deal. As you move through your degree and eventually into your career and your adult post-university life, an essential ability is to learn and grow without needing other people around to make it happen.

There will be many occasions in life where you MUST learn something, and you can't wait for the next term at the local college to come around for you to sign up for a class. You have to take charge. You have to learn on your own.

In the past, most of your classes would have been organized like this: Someone lectures, you take notes, you replicate the notes on tests, and you get a grade. But we know that the problems that matter in the real world don't work like that. The problems that matter most to the world require creative thinking, lots of failures and mistakes, careful analysis, and ultimately people who have the ability to adapt and learn on their own without depending on someone to lecture to them first.

Your *Inverted Classroom* Classes are **not** set up along the traditional classroom model of lectures, presentations and examples in class, followed by homework outside of class. Instead, you will be expected to work through the new concepts **before** coming to class through a variety of means (Multimedia, E-Lectures, quizzes etc.). This will effectively remove frontal teaching from the classroom, freeing up massive amounts of time for us to deal with things that matter: answering questions, working on hard problems with each other, and ensuring an understanding of the material that cannot be conveyed by some person talking to you.

By adopting this approach, you'll become less dependent on other people for your learning, and rediscover your ability to learn things on your own. And you'll be prepared to be a continuous learner. Here's how this will go:

Phase 1: Self-Guided Content Acquisition

- To prepare for a class, you will be given an *E-Learning Unit*. This contains the content you have to go through **prior** to each in-class meeting.

- Each *E-Learning Unit* consists of several parts: The multimedial content linked with our YouTube E-Lectures, a list of questions to be solved, and a wealth of exercise material.

- Your access to the E-Learning Units is not restricted: You can access them from anywhere at any time.

- The "Mastery" worksheet, that is, an online test with which you can demonstrate mastery as soon as you correctly answer more than 60% of all the questions in it.

  It is essential that before arriving at the in-class meeting you must have gone through the respective content and submitted the mastery worksheet.

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[2] The idea of explaining the *Inverted Classroom* is based on Talbot, Robert. 2012. The Chronicle of Higher Education. www.chronicle.com. We adopted some of his central ideas in the text.

Your class instructor is able to look at your work prior to class and make on-the-fly adjustments to the organization of the in-class meeting.

Phase 2: In Class Activities

- Once you come to class, the first thing we will find out is, whether all of you worked through the online-content, that is we will have a very short quiz with our student-response-systems that covers some basic ideas from the E-Learning Unit.

- We'll follow with 10 or so minutes of a question-and-answer session based on your performance, and any questions you may have about the content you went through prior to class.

- The balance of the time we have left over (usually about 45–75 minutes) will be spent working on problems that invite you to go deeper into the material. This is our version of "homework". Instead of having several problems of homework each week to do outside of class, we will have these problems to work on inside of class, where you are free to collaborate, ask questions, etc. until you "get it".

- And since we live in the digital 21st century, it is essential that you "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD), that is your mobile computing device. We will need it in class because many of our tasks involve internet search, predefined online tasks etc.

  Your instructor no longer "teaches" you in class but he can check in with every single one of you in the class in real time as you work, allowing him to tailor his instruction to you and prevents you from getting stuck on a problem for too long. Thus, your teacher is no longer the "*sage on the stage but the guide on the side*".

You'll notice that most of the real work here is concentrated *inside*, not outside, the classroom. In fact, there's really only one thing you should feel responsible for doing outside of class: preparing for in-class meetings (which involves interaction with the multimedial content, watching videos, reading and submitting mastery worksheets). All else, including what we usually call "homework", is done in class.

This is a different setup than you are used to, and it will take a few class meetings to acclimate to the change. But I think you'll find that the effort will be worth it. And remember you can always voice your questions to me and my colleagues about what we are doing — we will listen.

Literature:

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