

2021

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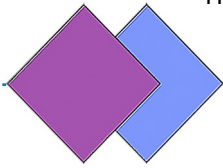
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Hale, Kimberly and Stevens, Tara (2021) "Book Review: Flipped Learning: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty," *International Journal of Interpreter Education*: Vol. 13 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/ijie/vol13/iss1/6>

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Book Review: *Flipped Learning: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*

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Talbert, R. (2017). *Flipped learning: A guide for higher education faculty*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC. 264 pp. ISBN: 978-1-62036-432-1.

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Book Review:

Flipped Learning: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty

The book *Flipped Learning: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty* by Robert Talbert (2017) provides a solid foundation for designing a course by using a flipped learning approach. Talbert, a mathematics professor and assistant department chair at Grand Valley State University, wrote this book to share effective practices in flipped learning design that he uncovered through trial, error, and research, both his and others'. Talbert's aim is to provide an understanding of what is meant by *flipped learning* and a roadmap to effectively implement this pedagogical approach. This review includes a description of the text, a comparison with similarly focused instructional resources, and an explanation of why this book is an excellent addition to the recommended readings of language instructors and interpretation/translation instructors.

Talbert provides a conceptual framework of flipped learning by describing the philosophical foundation for the approach, which is based on a collection of well-researched effective teaching/learning practices, not on a hunch about what will work well in a college course. The foundational principles are *self-determination theory*, *cognitive load theory*, and the framework of *self-regulated learning*. Talbert also discusses *backward design* and *integrated course design* as frameworks that can be used alongside the flipped learning approach. With the explanations and examples in the text, reader can easily grasp how this approach differs from the traditional "assignments and homework" model. Talbert's audience is tertiary teaching staff, not elementary and secondary teachers or workshop providers.

Three distinct sections compose the book. In "Part I: What Is Flipped Learning?" Talbert contrasts flipped learning with the traditional classroom approach and provides a clear explanation of how he created his understanding and definition of flipped learning. Talbert defines *flipped learning* as "a pedagogical approach in which first contact with new concepts moves from group learning space to the individual learning space in the form of structured activity, and the resulting group space is transformed into dynamic interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter" (p.20). This definition builds upon the Flipped Learning Network's definition, which focuses on where direct instruction occurs as opposed to first contact with content (<https://flippedlearning.org/definition-of-flipped-learning/>).

The imperative distinction that Talbert makes between flipped learning and other teaching/learning approaches is what occurs before, during, and after each class session. The distinction is demonstrated through the concepts of *group* and *individual space*. *Group space* is the learning environment where students and instructor are engaged with one another. In a traditional course, this is the classroom learning environment where the instructor and students come together each week. *Individual space* is where students independently complete work, traditionally homework and reading assignments. For flipped learning, Talbert encourages faculty to separate objectives and tasks into either group space or individual space activities, based on the most pedagogically effective use of each space. As opposed to a traditional approach, a flipped learning approach, according to Talbert, has students complete lower-level learning objectives in individual space to prepare for the group space activities. Group space should be designed to take the most advantage of having a faculty member present to guide students to higher levels of thinking and deeper engagement with the material. This is in contrast to traditional learning environments, where the student does some preparation for class and during the class session, the instructor helps students achieve lower-level objectives (i.e., knowledge and understanding) and then sends students off with homework to apply the learning. In flipped learning, students are expected to achieve lower-level objectives (i.e., knowledge and understanding) before attending the group space session, where the focus may be on application and evaluation.

"Part II: Flipped Learning Design," which is the bulk of the text, provides a step-by-step process for designing a flipped learning course (or redesigning an existing course to become a flipped environment). From determining learning objectives and ordering them from least to most complex to designing activities for individual and group spaces, Talbert's 7-step process provides a detailed roadmap of the entire flipped learning design process. Specific examples accompany the explanation of each step. In his discussion of Step 1: Determining the Learning Objectives, Talbert lays the groundwork for the foundation of the course structure. Step 2, ordering the objectives in the order of complexity, is guided by Bloom's taxonomy. In Step 3, Talbert guides the reader through outlining group space activities. This is at the organizational and structural levels of class design, not designing specific activities that will be completed. The linchpin of flipped learning design occurs in Step 4, the splitting of the learning objectives into basic and advanced. In this step, the instructor determines which learning objectives will be acquired during individual space, prior to group space, and which will be developed during and after group space. Step 5 is where the theoretical and organizational steps turn into actual class activities because this is when instructors flesh out and finish

the design of the group space activities. Talbert walks through designing individual space activities in Step 6 and provides a template for the guided practice model that he introduces. Finally, the post-group space activities are designed in Step 7.

In the final section, “Part III: Teaching and Learning in a Flipped Learning Environment,” Talbert describes the approach as adaptable while providing suggestions and advice for implementing a flipped approach in alternative course designs (e.g., hybrid or online) and clarifications and suggestions for responding to common critiques of the approach. This section of the text was especially useful during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated a sudden shift to an almost exclusive use of online and hybrid approaches to teaching for tertiary educators. Having student expectations and work clearly laid out via the guided practice documents created continuity for students and instructors during the transition.

Talbert’s explicit steps for creating a flipped learning course make the process less daunting than other books on similar topics that provide the philosophy but do not offer explicit instructions to implement the approach. Certainly, educators may deviate from his model implementation, but having the process, structure, and sample documents available allows instructors to focus on the best ways of implementing the approach in their own courses rather than on the nuts and bolts of how to effectively implement flipped learning.

Talbert addresses the applicability of flipped learning to almost any situation despite variation in institutions, discipline, class size, course level, and learning/instructional format. Although language learning and interpreting are not specifically mentioned, the book provides case studies and examples of how the flipped approach to course design has been implemented in a myriad of disciplines (e.g., STEM, literature, and the classics). The authors of this review have successfully redesigned multiple courses, including beginning ASL courses and beginning through advanced interpreting courses, following the step-by-step approach that Talbert offers. The data reviewed thus far indicate that the transition has been effective for students as well; systematic investigation is ongoing and will be reported elsewhere.

Educators may face challenges with Talbert’s approach in some cases. When attempting to effectively design a new course from the ground up, a faculty member must have a firm understanding of the learning outcomes and activities of the course and how to break them down into weekly and daily levels. Although Talbert provides a clear explanation for dividing basic and advanced learning outcomes for each class session, the text provides less structure for breaking course-level learning outcomes into weekly and daily chunks. This lack of structure may prove challenging for new instructors or those with limited experience in course design. Additionally, while extremely detailed and effective, the scripted formula for course design may prove to be overwhelming for instructors to implement each week, especially if they are attempting to implement this entire process during the semester as a course is being taught.

To combat these concerns, Talbert recommends that instructors select a course and begin working on the redesign (or initial design) 1 year in advance of teaching the flipped course. For instructors who have routine teaching loads, this approach would be feasible. However, for those who have unpredictable and fluctuating teaching loads, redesigning a course a year in advance may not be realistic. The effort required to create a flipped learning course a few months prior to teaching or during the term itself is likely more than many academics have to expend given the multitude of competing demands for teaching, service, and scholarship.

Talbert’s work is in company with other guides to course development that are currently available. One such text, *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) describes three stages of backward design: identifying goals and learning objectives, which are the results we want to see from the learning process; determining evidence of mastery and assessment strategies; and designing specific activities to guide day-to-day teaching and learning. This resource is similar to Talbert’s in that it focuses on developing course activities aligned with the learning outcomes and objectives. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) look at overall course design, focusing on overarching goals, assessments, and day-to-day learning activities; however, its instructions are written for elementary and secondary educational settings. Talbert’s book is better suited to tertiary instruction because that is his primary audience, and all the examples and details align with the structure of university courses.

Another resource currently on the market for course design is Fink’s (2013) *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*. Similarly to Wiggins and McTighe (2005), Fink provides a model that emphasizes integration of three major components: learning goals, feedback and assessment tools, and activities. Fink employs a 12-step model for integrating these three areas. Talbert acknowledges that Fink’s model is “richly detailed... [and] takes the whole learning environment into consideration and provides an integrated and focused design” (p.91). Talbert’s 7-step process differs from Fink’s because Talbert is primarily focused on how to design the work for group and individual space activities rather than on how to design course-level outcomes and assessments.

Some academics may be accustomed to employing the *gradual release of responsibility* (GRR), as explained in detail by Fisher and Frey (2013) in *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching: A Framework for the Gradual Release of Responsibility*. Those using this approach to course design may wonder how the flipped learning approach that Talbert describes fits with

that method. Talbert classifies GRR as a partially flipped approach and explains in his book how to integrate the two approaches; however, Talbert cautions that this partial approach may confuse students because flipped learning challenges preconceived ideas of teacher and student roles. Adjusting the roles throughout the course may not proceed smoothly.

Talbert's *Flipped Learning: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty* can be used in conjunction with the approaches described above by faculty who are familiar with them. For faculty unfamiliar with those resources, Talbert's book provides an alternative way to implement effective course and lesson design. While Fink's approach is excellent for addressing the development of the broad objectives and activities for a course, Talbert's method assists instructors in daily implementation of the larger framework. With the 7-step process, faculty identify the learning objectives and then develop learning activities that are directly aligned with these objectives.

The primary benefit of *Flipped Learning: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty* is the ease with which tertiary educators can implement a flipped learning approach based on principles of effective teaching and learning. Because the focus is to engender rich learning experiences and activities during the group sessions when the instructor is available to provide assistance through the process, the prep-work becomes a critical piece to the learning environment that students complete because they see the benefit of being ready for the group class sessions. When using this framework, the prep work for class sessions is clearly designed to provide students with a foundation that will be built upon instead of work to be completed and then reiterated during the group sessions. Instead of saying, "Read p. 57-60," instructors can explicitly state the learning objectives and a means to measure their attainment prior to the group space session, such as "Identify and define the 5 steps of the interpreting process as defined on p. 57-60." When students know the minimum expectations of learning prior to group space, they can make meaningful connections between assigned work, learning, and class preparedness, and, more importantly, they may be better able to manage their own learning.

Talbert's well-designed plan reflects characteristics of effective design for learning. Following this plan allows instructors to self-monitor that they are providing just enough preparation to make the group sessions effective without assigning unnecessary busy work. More importantly, instructors can make conscious choices about which learning outcomes are best completed in individual space versus group space and which teaching methods or activities are best suited to supporting student achievement on each outcome. And, finally, it provides a framework for highlighting the key learning points and a feedback system for students to learn from trial and error.