

The Right Way to Flip Your Language Learning Classroom

A Declaratively Accelerated Blended Learning
Implementation Guide



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by Transparent Language

Contents

Introduction	2
Declaratively Accelerated Blended Learning	2
The DABL Learning Cycle.....	3
Step 1: Pre-class Preparation	3
Step 2: Classroom Application	4
Step 3: Sustainment and Enhancement.....	4
Sample Lessons	5
Flipped Class Sample Lesson Plan: Beginner.....	5
Flipped Class Sample Lesson Plan: Intermediate	7
Flipped Class Sample Lesson Plan: Advanced	9
Conclusion.....	12

Introduction

Studies show that for learning foreign languages, *blended learning*—the combination of technology and human instruction—is better than either computer learning or human instruction alone.¹ This concept marries perfectly with the declarative approach to language learning at the core of Transparent Language programs. We call our approach “Declaratively Accelerated Blended Learning” (DABL).

If you’re aware of the “[flipped classroom](#)” concept, think of DABL as a flipped language classroom. Rather than teaching vocabulary and phrases during class time and assigning review and enrichment activities for homework, a flipped language classroom assigns targeted lexical learning as preparatory work *in advance of* a lesson. Students arrive more prepared for in-class activities and tasks.

It’s possible to “flip” a language classroom by having students view grammar videos at home, but we think it’s better to spend that time learning relevant vocabulary and phrases. Computers are great at using game dynamics, personalized learning sequences, and clear native pronunciation efficiently to bring students to mastery of the selected vocabulary. Lexicon is a big part of language learning, and focusing the “flip” on class-relevant lexicon not only results in students building more robust vocabularies more quickly, it makes each class hour more successful.

In this paper, we will show you how to apply the DABL flipped classroom method to language instruction. Sample lesson plans are included. We’ll talk about how we execute DABL in our Transparent Language Online programs, but DABL principles are easily applied to whatever curriculum you choose. For a more detailed overview of the research and methodology behind DABL, see our first [Declaratively Accelerated Blended Learning](#) [whitepaper](#).

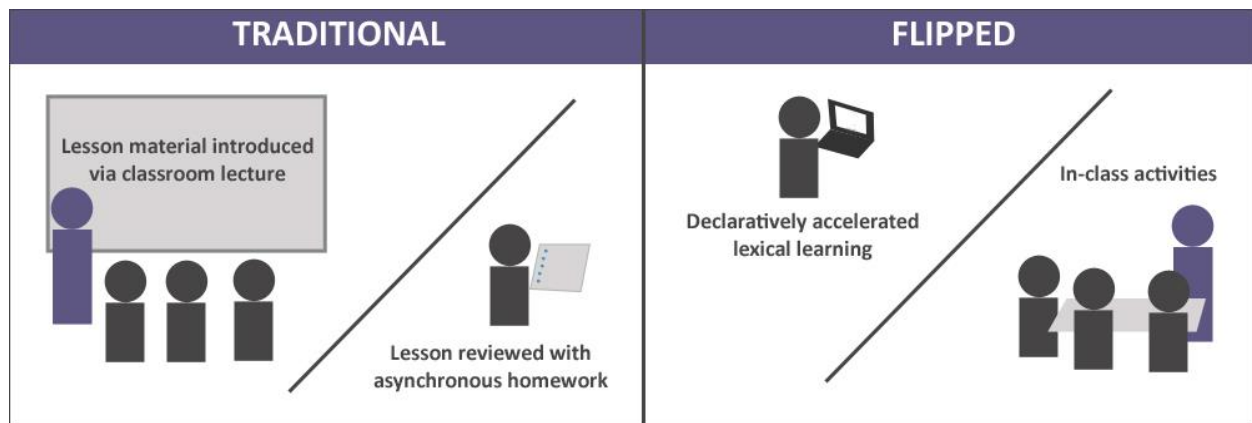
Declaratively Accelerated Blended Learning

Technology is a deeply integrated part of our modern lives, especially for the current generation of digital natives, who were born into a world of digital communication and capability. *Declarative Acceleration* leverages this by using technology to rapidly introduce and teach foreign words and phrases through a suite of engaging activities. Students are constantly exposed to and engaged with the language via desktop, web, and mobile platforms, eliminating most traditional time and place restrictions.

In the flipped teaching model, students use this technology to “front load” their vocabulary and phrase knowledge before each class. Teachers then help them apply that knowledge in class through communicative activities and task-based strategies. The result is a more rewarding classroom experience, with more time spent actively engaging with the instructor and peers, rather than passively listening.

¹ U.S. Department of Education. *Evaluation of Evidence-Based Principles in Online Learning*. <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf> (2001)

Technology excels at rapid learning exercises - a computer can present dozens of learning encounters per minute, observe and record learning outcomes, and continually adjust until the learner commits the material to memory. A teacher would be hard-pressed to efficiently replicate this fast-paced, flexible, and individualized learning experience. On the other hand, teachers are far better than software when it comes to facilitating interactive tasks such as role play or dialogues, encouraging discussions, and generally helping students apply their language knowledge in context. In an ideal DABL-based flipped classroom, technology and teachers each do what they do best, with transformational results.



The DABL Learning Cycle

Step 1: Pre-class Preparation

The goal of pre-class preparation is for students to learn the basic vocabulary and phrase set to be used in the guided classroom. It doesn't matter what the subject of the lesson is - the DABL method can be applied to any custom collection of words or phrases to align with specific goals, classroom materials, or educational requirements. The important thing is that students learn the vocabulary and other basic concepts before they come to class.

Recommended implementation with Transparent Language Online:

- Use Transparent Language Online's authoring tools to rapidly and economically produce your own custom language lesson, or use an appropriate lesson or vocabulary set from the extensive material included with Transparent Language Online. The vocabulary you choose should support the planned classroom activities.
- Assign the chosen material to students at least 24 hours before class. You can use the built-in assignment and message tools to let students know what you expect them to do.
- Track students' progress through the included usage reports as they work with the material. Some students may take longer than others: Built-in algorithms allow them to take as much time as they need on words or phrases that are challenging to them, while not wasting time on material they master easily.
- Plan task-based and interactive speaking and listening activities in the target language for your live classroom sessions.

Step 2: Classroom Application

The main objective of class time should be for your “warmed up” students to use the language in context. Discussion, role-play activities, and other instructor-led or peer exercises are more effective when students share a collective understanding of the base vocabulary. You may have already heard that students do better and instructors have more fun when the teacher spends less time as “the sage on the stage” and more time as “the guide on the side.”

Recommended implementation with Transparent Language Online:

- Begin the class by asking for the simplest output of language in order to encourage speaking from the very start. For example, you might ask students to identify or describe images of target language words to the class or peer group.
- Continue with a series of activities that gradually increase the level of difficulty and require higher level thinking skills. Prompt students to role play a part, analyze authentic documents, narrate stories, etc.
- Keep in mind that the goal of the classroom experience is to apply the previously learned material that was assigned before class. Use the information from student usage reports along with classroom performance to help guide your understanding of whether students are doing the necessary preparation.

Step 3: Sustainment and Enhancement

Of course, you want your students to sustain their language knowledge and be able to put it into use long after they've left the classroom. In order to do that, learners must commit language knowledge to long-term memory. Technology excels at refreshing learning over time. Transparent Language Online uses a spaced-interval repetition system to provide students with a daily refresh of words and phrases they've learned previously. Because the system notices what students still remember and what they don't, short sessions can keep each student's growing lexicon fresh.

A well-planned flipped classroom will include use of material covered in earlier units, developing language fluency and aiding long-term sustainment.

Recommended implementation with Transparent Language Online:

- As you author or choose new lessons, be sure to include previously learned vocabulary in new combinations and contexts to expand student exposure. You already do this, so it's nothing new.
- Encourage students to take full advantage of the Learned Items features in Transparent Language Online, which will automatically track all the words and phrases they have mastered, and present them again whenever it seems they may be at risk of forgetting. Set goals for the targeted number of items to be learned during the semester and monitor students as they maintain the “freshness” of their Learned Items in Transparent Language Online.
- Track how often students use the program, then send them individual follow-up notes on time spent on assigned independent tasks, class performance, terms to learn as a result of their live sessions, suggested sustainment activities... whatever you feel is necessary to let them know you're watching, and that you care.

Sample Lessons

In this section, we cover some sample classroom lessons and exercises that use the DABL instruction method. The possibilities are endless, and these examples are simply intended to help show you ways in which this learning style can make your classroom time more efficient and enjoyable. The lessons outlined below can, as previously mentioned, be integrated into any lesson plan.

Flipped Class Sample Lesson Plan: Beginner

Lesson Topic:

Food and Restaurants

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Identify common food and drink items in the target language.
2. Order and complain about food/drink.
3. Comprehend and answer questions about a restaurant video.
4. Comprehend and discuss authentic documents (restaurant ad and menu).
5. Compare and contrast tweets in the target language (via Twitter).

Skills:

L= Listening

S= Speaking

R= Reading

W= Writing

C= Comprehension

Before Class Assignments:

1. Students will learn food/drink vocabulary.
2. Students will learn “restaurant dialogue” phrases.
3. Students will preview authentic documents (restaurant ad and menu).

In-Class Activities:

Because students will come to class already knowing the basic vocabulary, the class activities can focus on creative ways to apply and reinforce their knowledge.

Warm up/Anticipatory Set:

1. (L) Given a series of visuals in the target language and a verbal description of one picture, students will choose the correct image.
2. (L, S) Given visuals of food, drink and restaurant situations, students will brainstorm and state vocabulary word(s) and phrases in the target language.

Learning Activities:

1. Role play restaurant skits
 - a. (S, R) Students will perform skits using text support in target language.
 - b. (S, R) Students will perform skits using only limited text support in target language.
 - c. (S) Students will perform skits given only visuals.
2. Authentic restaurant ad and menu activities
 - a. (S, R, C) Students will brainstorm (state) the words and phrases in the documents.
 - b. (L, R, S) Given a set of true/false questions, students will answer in the target language.
 - c. (L, R, S) Students will answer target language questions about the restaurant and menu.
 - d. (R, S) Students will role play ordering and complaining about the food using visuals as prompts.
3. YouTube Video Activities
 - a. (L, C) Students will watch a YouTube video clip of a restaurant skit in the target language.
 - b. (L, S, C) Given a set of true/false questions, students will answer in the target language.
 - c. (W, C) Students will create a mind map or graphic organizer in the target language providing “who/what/where/when” information.
 - d. (L, S, C) Students will take turns asking and answering questions about the video in the target language.
4. Authentic tweets (via Twitter)
 - a. (R,S, C) Given a series of authentic tweets on the theme of food/restaurants, students will evaluate and report on the posts.

Closure:

- Students will summarize their learning by creating a list of “I can” statements on the topic.

Homework:

- Students will create an ad or menu in the target language for their own restaurant.
- Students will write a restaurant skit between two of the Twitter users.

Flipped Class Sample Lesson Plan: Intermediate

Lesson Topic:

Housing and house buying

Students will be able to:

1. Identify house and house buying vocabulary in the target language.
2. Identify differences or similarities in housing in the target language culture.
3. Understand house buying vocabulary and find differences in listings.
4. Comprehend and discuss authentic documents (rent contract or buying contract).
5. Compare and contrast Twitter tweets in the target language.

Skills:

L= Listening

S= Speaking

R= Reading

W= Writing

C= Comprehension

Pre-class Assignments:

1. Students will learn house/house buying vocabulary.
2. Students will learn “house buying dialogue” phrases.
3. Students will preview authentic documents (house listing and rent contract).

In-Class Activities:

Because students will come to class already knowing the basic vocabulary, the class activities can focus on creative ways to apply and reinforce their knowledge.

Warm up/Anticipatory Set:

1. (R,S, C) Given a series of authentic Twitter tweets about houses and house buying, students will identify and provide the meanings for the tweets.
2. (S) Students will compare and contrast the meaning of “suburbs” in the target language.

Learning Activities:

1. Identifying differences and similarities in housing in the target language culture

- a. (S, R) Students will answer using text support in the target language.
- b. (S, R) Students will answer using only limited text support in the target language.
- c. (S) Students will answer given only visuals.
- d. (S,W) Students will answer related questions based on personal experience.

2. YouTube Video activities

- a. (L, C) Students will watch a YouTube video clip of a house buying skit in the target language.
- b. (L, S, C) Given a set of comprehension questions, students will answer in the target language.
- c. (L, S, C) Students will take turns asking and answering questions about the video in the target language providing “who/what/where/when” information.

3. Authentic house listings (web tour)

- a. (L, C, S) Students will watch a web tour of two house listings and contrast them.
- b. (L, C, S) Given a set of questions on the web tour, students will answer in the target language.
- c. (R, S) Students will compare and contrast two different homes in the target language.
- d. (R, S) Students will role play asking question to the owner of a home for rent, including trying to convince the owner of the house to agree to change some of the terms (such as lowering the price, etc.).
- f. (S) Students will describe their ideal home in the target language using higher-level language structures, such as the conditional mood.

Closure

- (L, S) Given vocabulary clues on the subject of housing, students will complete sentences in the target language that apply to their own life.

Homework:

- Students will write an essay about their dream home.
- Students will write a skit about a person going to a real estate office to buy a home or rent an apartment.

Flipped Class Sample Lesson Plan: Advanced

Lesson Topic:

Natural Disasters

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Identify and describe natural disasters in the target language.
2. Discuss how the specific topic of natural disasters applies to their own lives.
3. Develop a “Natural Disaster Preparedness Plan”.
4. Comprehend and answer questions about a recent natural disaster.
5. Understand and discuss an authentic newspaper article about a recent natural disaster.
6. Compare and contrast Twitter tweets about natural disasters.
7. Interpret and compare two infographics about natural disasters.

Skills:

L= Listening

S= Speaking

R= Reading

W= Writing

C= Comprehension

Pre-class Assignments:

1. Students will learn specific natural disaster vocabulary and phrases.
2. Students will think about ideas for a “Natural Disaster Preparedness Plan”.
3. Students will read an authentic newspaper article about a recent natural disaster.
4. Students will watch an assigned YouTube video related to a natural disaster.

In-Class Activities:

Because students will come to class already knowing the basic vocabulary, the class activities can focus on creative ways to apply and reinforce their knowledge.

Warm up/Anticipatory Set:

1. (L, S) Given a series of visuals in the target language, students will take turns giving a verbal description of one of the pictures. The other student will choose the correct image.
(L, S) Given specific visuals of natural disaster preparedness items, students will brainstorm vocabulary.
2. (S, L, C) Students will take turns talking about natural disasters in their country/state. Each student will also ask at least one follow-up question about another student’s statement.

Learning Activities:

1. Natural Disaster Preparedness Plan

- a. (S, C) Students will create a Natural Disaster Preparedness Plan in the target language. With the help of visuals, they will collaborate and develop a specific plan of what supplies one should have on hand if disaster strikes. The plan should contain at least 6-7 tips.
- b. (S, C) Students will negotiate in the target language to agree on which 3 tips are the best and why.

2. YouTube Video Activities

- a. (L, C) Students will watch a YouTube video clip in the target language about a recent natural disaster.
- b. (R, L, S, C) Given a set of foreseen and impromptu questions, students will answer in the target language.
- c. (S, C) Each student will ask one follow-up question about the video in the target language.

3. Analysis of an Authentic Newspaper Article about a Natural Disaster

- a. (S, R, C) Each student will pick key vocabulary terms from the newspaper article and describe them in his/her own words. The other students will quickly skim the text and find the correct vocabulary.
- b. (R,L, S, C) Students will answer foreseen and impromptu target language questions about the newspaper article.
- c. (R, S, C) Each student will come up with one extra question about the article.
- d. (R, S) Given a scrambled sequence of events, students will put them back into the correct order.
- e. (R, S) Students will summarize the article in their own words.

4. Infographic analysis

- a. (R, S, C) Given two different infographics about natural disasters, students will analyze and interpret each.
- b. (S, R, W, C) Students will compare both infographics and categorize commonalities and differences into a provided chart.
- c. (S, C) Students will each pick a favorite infographic and argue why they like it better than the other.

Closure:

- Students will summarize their learning by reflecting on how natural disasters affect their own lives. Each student will be asked to make a brief statement.

Homework:

- Students will research the latest natural disaster that occurred in their own country or state, then write 6-7 sentences about it in the target language.
- Students will create a customized “Natural Disaster Preparedness Plan” for themselves and their families, providing at least 5 tips.

Conclusion

At Transparent Language, our company mission is to transform language learning on a global scale, for both educators and learners. Outcomes matter. We develop our technology and practices based on research and in cooperation with some of the most stringent language programs in the nation. The flipped classroom approach is especially effective for language instruction, and can dramatically improve learning outcomes for your students. We not only offer our own programs of instruction, we put the technology and tools for curriculum customization into the hands of teachers. In the end it's about your curriculum, not ours. Transparent Language Online combines perfectly with a flipped classroom strategy. If you would like to know more, [contact us](#), and we'd be pleased to work with you to set up a demo or trial.