

Textbooks vs. Flipboard

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This article is about using Flipboard in a higher education setting for teaching business English to undergraduate students. In addition, the use of the application, which enables users to curate content from other e-magazines or websites, is compared to the use of textbooks in English language courses in post-graduate context.

In higher education, the use of technology and software continue to expand rapidly, with students and teachers becoming more and more immersed in the digital ecosystem. Flipboard is helpful when encouraging students to read, summarize and speak about what their foreign language teacher considers important for the development of different language skills.

Our previous research showed that, by using the application, students not only spend more time reading and summarizing, but may also considerably improve their speaking skills and, due to the nature of the curated content, also increased their knowledge and skills needed for effective learning..

On the other hand, textbooks, a key component that serves as the basis for much of the language input in most language courses, can represent a ‘problem’ (Swales, 1980): the principle of assembly line in the presentation of topics, texts and exercises, the lack of reality in the materials, quasi-authenticity and the absence of a clear increase in vocabulary difficulty, to mention but a few. In addition, textbooks often maintain the status quo by offering students traditional set of similar topics and an unrealistic picture of the language that is actually used.

Our study is significant, because it provides insight into the use of a social-network aggregation application in a higher education setting for learning business English. Last but not least, by providing useful and relevant texts and promoting student-centered approach to learning we avoided textbook based sadistic teaching methods in foreign language learning.

Keywords: business English, Flipboard, higher education, pseudo-teaching, textbooks