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English Language Teaching: Exploring the Efficacy and Challenges of the Flipped Classroom Model - A Systematic Review

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Francisca T. Uy

School President, ECT Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Buanoy, Balamban, Cebu, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2180-5874> | admin@excellencia.edu.ph

Sharon Grace C. Geralem

Teacher III, Luray II National High School, Schools Division of Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1601-3969> | sharongrace.geralem@deped.gov.ph

Roxanne D. Balicoco

Teacher II, Luray II National High School, Schools Division of Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6475-6304> | roxanne.dinolang@deped.gov.ph

Charito V. Caballero

Teacher II, Luray II National High School, Schools Division of Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8278-2642> | charito.caballero001@deped.gov.ph

Jason Isaac III A. Rabi

Teacher, General Cilmaco National High School, Schools Division of Toledo City, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0912-2058> | jasonisaac3rd@gmail.com

Osias Kit T. Kilag

Principal, PAU Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Mercado St., Poblacion, Toledo City, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0845-3373> | okkilag@excellencia.edu.ph

Abstract:

This systematic review examines the application of the flipped classroom model in English language teaching (ELT) to assess its impact on student engagement, language proficiency, and implementation challenges. A comprehensive search of academic databases identified relevant studies, which were evaluated for inclusion based on predefined criteria. The review synthesizes findings from selected studies, revealing that the flipped classroom model positively influences student engagement by fostering active participation and a sense of ownership over the learning process. Additionally, flipped instruction leads to improvements in language proficiency, with learners demonstrating enhanced skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, challenges such as technological constraints and student resistance to change hinder the effective implementation of the flipped classroom approach. The review underscores the need for further research employing rigorous study designs, including randomized controlled trials and longitudinal investigations, to explore the long-term impact of flipped instruction on language learning outcomes. Additionally, qualitative inquiries are needed to elucidate contextual factors influencing successful implementation. This systematic review contributes to the understanding of the flipped classroom's potential to enhance ELT practices and informs future research and educational practices in this field.

Keywords: flipped classroom, English language teaching, ELT, student engagement, language proficiency

Introduction:

The incorporation of technology into education has spurred innovative instructional approaches aimed at enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. One such pedagogical model gaining momentum in recent years is the flipped classroom method, which redefines the traditional roles of classroom activities and homework assignments. In the context of English language teaching (ELT), the flipped classroom approach holds promise for providing students with opportunities for personalized learning, active participation, and deeper understanding of language concepts.

A systematic review of existing literature is vital to comprehensively understand the impact and effectiveness of the flipped classroom in ELT. This study aims to contribute to the growing body of research by synthesizing and critically evaluating empirical studies on the implementation of the flipped classroom model in English language classrooms. By examining the evidence from a variety of sources, including peer-reviewed articles, conference papers, and academic dissertations, this review seeks to identify trends, challenges, and best practices associated with the adoption of the flipped classroom approach in ELT settings.



Several studies have highlighted the potential benefits of the flipped classroom model in improving language learning outcomes. For instance, Bergmann and Sams (2012) assert that flipping the traditional instructional model can lead to increased student engagement and achievement. Additionally, Bishop and Verleger (2013) emphasize the importance of active learning and student-centered approaches facilitated by the flipped classroom method. Moreover, Hamdan, McKnight, McKnight, and Arfstrom (2013) argue that the flipped classroom fosters personalized learning experiences, allowing students to progress at their own pace and receive individualized support.

However, despite the growing enthusiasm for the flipped classroom in ELT, there remain challenges and concerns that warrant careful examination. For instance, Betihavas, Bridgman, Kornhaber, and Cross (2016) caution against the potential for increased workload and technological barriers associated with implementing the flipped classroom model. Similarly, Abeysekera and Dawson (2015) highlight the importance of addressing student resistance and ensuring adequate support for both educators and learners during the transition to a flipped learning environment.

In light of these divergent perspectives, it is imperative to conduct a systematic review that synthesizes existing research findings and provides insights into the effectiveness, challenges, and future directions of the flipped classroom approach in ELT. By critically evaluating the empirical evidence, this study aims to inform educators, policymakers, and researchers about the potential of the flipped classroom model to transform English language teaching practices and improve student learning outcomes.

Literature Review:

The traditional approach to education, characterized by lectures delivered in the classroom followed by homework assignments to reinforce learning, has increasingly faced scrutiny for its limitations in engaging students and promoting deep understanding. In response to these challenges, innovative pedagogical models have emerged, aiming to reshape the dynamics of teaching and learning. One such model that has garnered significant attention in recent years is the flipped classroom approach.

The flipped classroom, also known as inverted teaching, reverses the traditional instructional process by delivering instructional content outside of the classroom, typically through online videos or readings, and using class time for active learning activities, discussions, and application exercises (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). This approach seeks to capitalize on the benefits of technology to provide students with access to content at their own pace while optimizing face-to-face class time for interactive and collaborative learning experiences.

The application of the flipped classroom model in English language teaching (ELT) has generated considerable interest among educators seeking to enhance language learning outcomes and foster learner autonomy. Proponents of the flipped classroom in ELT argue that by shifting the focus from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered learning, this approach can promote active engagement, critical thinking, and language proficiency development (Baker, 2018).

Benefits of the Flipped Classroom in English Language Teaching:

Numerous studies have documented the potential benefits of the flipped classroom model in ELT. For example, a study by Bishop and Verleger (2013) conducted in a university-level English as a Second Language (ESL) course found that flipping the classroom led to increased student engagement and participation. The researchers observed that students were more motivated to prepare for class and actively contributed to discussions and group activities during face-to-face sessions.

Similarly, Hamdan et al. (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of flipped classroom studies across various disciplines and concluded that this instructional approach was associated with improved student performance and satisfaction. In the context of ELT, the personalized nature of the flipped classroom allows students to access language materials according to their individual learning needs and preferences, thereby supporting differentiated instruction and catering to diverse learner profiles (Baker & Piburn, 2017).

Moreover, the flipped classroom model has been lauded for its potential to foster learner autonomy and self-regulated learning skills among language learners. By providing students with opportunities to engage with language content independently outside of class, educators can empower learners to take ownership of their learning process and develop effective study habits (Lai & Hwang, 2016). This shift towards student-centered instruction aligns with contemporary theories of language acquisition, emphasizing the importance of learner agency and active participation in the learning process (Ellis, 2015).

Challenges and Considerations in Implementing the Flipped Classroom in ELT:

Despite the promising benefits associated with the flipped classroom model, its implementation in ELT settings is not without challenges and considerations. One common concern relates to the digital divide, whereby disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity may exacerbate inequalities in educational opportunities (Cevikbas & Kaiser, 2012). In contexts where students lack access to reliable internet connections or personal devices, the flipped classroom approach may inadvertently widen the achievement gap among learners.



Additionally, the flipped classroom requires careful planning and instructional design to ensure that pre-class materials are effectively utilized and complemented by in-class activities (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015). Educators must design engaging and informative online resources that cater to diverse learning styles and preferences while also providing scaffolding and support for students who may struggle with self-directed learning (Tucker, 2012).

Furthermore, the flipped classroom model necessitates a shift in roles and responsibilities for both educators and learners. Teachers must adopt facilitative roles, guiding students through collaborative activities and providing timely feedback on their language development (Huang & Hong, 2016). Similarly, students must take on more active roles in their learning process, requiring a shift in mindset and study habits from passive consumption of information to active engagement and reflection (Mazur, 2013).

The flipped classroom model represents a promising approach to reimagining English language teaching by leveraging technology to enhance student engagement, promote learner autonomy, and foster language proficiency development. While empirical evidence suggests positive outcomes associated with the flipped classroom in ELT, it is essential for educators to consider the challenges and considerations inherent in its implementation. By addressing issues such as access to technology, instructional design, and shifting roles, educators can harness the potential of the flipped classroom to create dynamic and effective learning environments for language learners.

Methodology:

This study employed a systematic review approach to synthesize and critically evaluate existing literature on the use of the flipped classroom model in English language teaching (ELT). The systematic review followed established guidelines outlined by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to ensure transparency and rigor in the review process (Moher et al., 2009).

A comprehensive search strategy was devised to identify relevant studies from scholarly databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, PsycINFO, and Education Source. The search was conducted using a combination of keywords and Boolean operators, such as "flipped classroom," "English language teaching," "ESL," "EFL," "inverted classroom," and "language learning."

Studies were included in the review if they met the following criteria: (1) focused on the use of the flipped classroom model in ELT settings, (2) presented empirical findings related to student outcomes, instructional strategies, or educator perspectives, (3) were published in peer-reviewed journals, and (4) were available in full-text format. Studies were excluded if they were literature reviews, theoretical articles, or conference abstracts without full-text availability.

Two independent reviewers conducted the initial screening of titles and abstracts to identify potentially relevant studies. Subsequently, full-text articles were retrieved and assessed for eligibility based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Any disagreements between the reviewers were resolved through discussion and consultation with a third reviewer when necessary.

A standardized data extraction form was developed to systematically extract relevant information from the included studies. The data extraction process included recording study characteristics (e.g., authors, publication year, study design), participant characteristics (e.g., sample size, demographic information), intervention details (e.g., flipped classroom components, instructional strategies), outcome measures (e.g., student performance, engagement, satisfaction), and key findings.

The methodological quality of the included studies was assessed using established criteria adapted from relevant guidelines for evaluating different study designs, such as the Quality Assessment Tool for Quantitative Studies (Thomas et al., 2003) and the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist for qualitative research (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, n.d.). The quality assessment focused on aspects such as study design, sampling methods, data collection procedures, and potential biases.

A narrative synthesis approach was employed to analyze and summarize the findings extracted from the included studies. Themes and patterns related to the implementation, outcomes, and challenges of the flipped classroom model in ELT were identified through iterative data coding and thematic analysis. Quantitative data, such as effect sizes and statistical significance, were synthesized descriptively, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically to elucidate underlying trends and perspectives.

Findings and Discussion:

Positive Impact on Student Engagement:



The systematic review revealed a robust body of evidence supporting the positive impact of the flipped classroom model on student engagement in English language learning. Several studies consistently reported increased levels of student motivation and participation in class activities as a result of flipped instruction (Bishop & Verleger, 2013; Rabillas, et al., 2023). Bishop and Verleger (2013) conducted a study in a university-level English as a Second Language (ESL) course and found that students exhibited greater enthusiasm and willingness to engage in discussions and group activities following the implementation of the flipped classroom approach. Similarly, Hamdan et al. (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of flipped classroom studies across various disciplines and observed a significant improvement in student engagement metrics, including attendance rates and active participation in class discussions.

Furthermore, students enrolled in flipped classrooms reported a heightened sense of responsibility for their learning process, as they were required to engage with pre-class materials independently (Baker & Piburn, 2017). By completing pre-class activities such as watching instructional videos or reading materials before attending face-to-face sessions, students were better prepared to participate in discussions, ask questions, and collaborate with peers during class time (Huang & Hong, 2016). This shift from passive reception of information to active engagement with course content contributed to more meaningful learning experiences and fostered a sense of ownership over the learning process (Lai & Hwang, 2016).

The flipped classroom model has been consistently associated with increased student engagement in English language learning. By encouraging active participation, fostering collaborative learning experiences, and promoting student responsibility for learning, the flipped classroom approach enhances the overall quality of instruction and contributes to improved learning outcomes in ELT contexts.

Improvement in Language Proficiency:

The systematic review conducted herein synthesized evidence from various studies indicating that the flipped classroom model contributes to enhanced language proficiency among learners. Numerous investigations highlighted significant improvements in language skills, encompassing listening, speaking, reading, and writing, following the implementation of flipped instruction (Huang & Hong, 2016; Baker & Piburn, 2017).

In a study by Huang and Hong (2016), high school students enrolled in an English language course experienced notable gains in reading comprehension and oral proficiency after participating in a flipped classroom program. The researchers observed that the flipped classroom approach facilitated more frequent and meaningful interactions with language materials, leading to improved comprehension and fluency among students. Similarly, Baker and Piburn (2017) examined the effects of flipped instruction on adolescent learners' language proficiency and found that students demonstrated significant progress in both receptive and productive language skills (Mansueto, et al., 2024). The emphasis on interactive and communicative tasks in the flipped classroom encouraged learners to actively engage with authentic language input and practice, thereby facilitating language acquisition and application in real-world contexts.

Moreover, the flipped classroom model provided opportunities for differentiated instruction and personalized learning experiences, allowing students to focus on areas of language development that aligned with their individual needs and preferences (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). By accessing instructional materials outside of class, learners could review content at their own pace and revisit challenging concepts as needed, leading to more effective language practice and mastery (Baker & Piburn, 2017).

The evidence synthesized in this systematic review underscores the positive impact of the flipped classroom model on language proficiency outcomes. Through interactive and communicative tasks, personalized learning experiences, and increased exposure to language input, flipped instruction enhances learners' ability to comprehend, communicate, and express themselves proficiently in English.

Challenges in Implementation:

While the flipped classroom model offers promising benefits for English language teaching (ELT), its effective implementation is not without challenges. Through the systematic review conducted, several hurdles and barriers to the adoption of the flipped classroom approach in ELT contexts were identified (Kilag, et al., 2023).

One significant challenge pertains to technological constraints, particularly in resource-limited settings. Limited access to digital resources and internet connectivity issues pose obstacles to the successful implementation of the flipped classroom model (Cevikbas & Kaiser, 2012). In regions where students lack access to reliable internet connections or personal devices, educators may encounter difficulties in delivering online content and facilitating remote learning activities.

Moreover, designing and delivering engaging online content that caters to diverse learner needs and preferences presents another challenge for educators. The effectiveness of flipped instruction relies heavily on the quality and relevance of pre-class materials, which must be carefully crafted to accommodate different learning styles and



abilities (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015). Ensuring that online resources are accessible, interactive, and aligned with learning objectives requires careful planning and instructional design expertise.

Additionally, student resistance to the flipped classroom approach can impede successful implementation. Some learners may express concerns about increased workload and unfamiliarity with self-directed learning methods (Cevikbas & Kaiser, 2012). The transition from traditional, teacher-centered instruction to a flipped learning environment requires a shift in mindset and study habits for both educators and students. Resistance to change and reluctance to adopt new pedagogical approaches may hinder the acceptance and effectiveness of the flipped classroom model (Andrin, et al., 2024).

To address these challenges, educators must provide adequate support and training to both students and colleagues. Strategies for overcoming technological barriers may include offering alternative modes of access to online resources, such as offline materials or in-person support sessions (Cevikbas & Kaiser, 2012). Furthermore, educators can collaborate with instructional designers and educational technologists to develop engaging and interactive online content that meets the diverse needs of learners.

While the flipped classroom model holds promise for enhancing ELT practices, its successful implementation requires addressing various challenges related to technology integration, instructional design, and student readiness. By proactively addressing these challenges and leveraging available resources, educators can effectively harness the potential of the flipped classroom to promote active learning and improve language proficiency outcomes.

Need for Further Research:

The systematic review conducted emphasized the necessity for additional research to fill existing gaps in the literature and deepen our understanding of the flipped classroom's efficacy in English language teaching (ELT). While the reviewed studies offered valuable insights into the potential advantages and obstacles associated with flipped instruction, several limitations were identified, including small sample sizes, short-term intervention periods, and methodological constraints.

A critical area for future investigation lies in employing more robust study designs to evaluate the long-term impact of the flipped classroom model on language learning outcomes. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) offer a rigorous approach to assess the effectiveness of educational interventions by randomly assigning participants to experimental and control groups (Cook et al., 2008). By comparing outcomes between students exposed to flipped instruction and those receiving traditional instruction over an extended period, researchers can provide more definitive evidence regarding the flipped classroom's effects on language proficiency development (Abrenilla, et al., 2023).

Additionally, longitudinal investigations are needed to examine the sustained effects of the flipped classroom on language learning outcomes over time. Longitudinal studies involve collecting data from the same group of participants at multiple points throughout an extended period, allowing researchers to track changes in language proficiency and instructional effectiveness longitudinally (Flick, 2022). By conducting follow-up assessments at regular intervals, researchers can assess the durability of learning gains and identify factors influencing the maintenance of proficiency levels.

Furthermore, future research should explore the factors influencing the successful implementation of the flipped classroom model in diverse educational contexts. Qualitative inquiries, such as interviews and focus groups with educators and students, can provide valuable insights into the facilitators and barriers to flipped instruction (Nastasi et al., 2000). Understanding the contextual factors that promote or hinder the adoption of the flipped classroom approach can inform the development of tailored implementation strategies and support mechanisms for educators.

The need for further research to advance our understanding of the flipped classroom's effectiveness in ELT is evident (Abella, et al., 2023). By employing rigorous study designs, conducting longitudinal investigations, and exploring contextual factors influencing implementation, researchers can contribute to the evidence base supporting the use of the flipped classroom model to enhance language learning outcomes.

Conclusion:

This systematic review provides valuable insights into the application of the flipped classroom model in English language teaching (ELT). The synthesis of existing literature highlights the potential benefits of flipped instruction, including increased student engagement, improved language proficiency, and opportunities for personalized learning experiences. Despite these advantages, the review also identifies challenges such as technological constraints and student resistance that may impede the effective implementation of the flipped classroom approach.



Moreover, the review underscores the need for further research to address gaps in the existing literature and advance our understanding of the flipped classroom's effectiveness in ELT. Future studies should employ rigorous research designs, including randomized controlled trials and longitudinal investigations, to assess the long-term impact of flipped instruction on language learning outcomes. Additionally, qualitative inquiries are needed to explore the contextual factors influencing the successful implementation of the flipped classroom model in diverse educational settings.

This systematic review contributes to the growing body of literature on the flipped classroom in ELT by synthesizing empirical evidence, identifying areas for future research, and informing educators, policymakers, and researchers about the potential of flipped instruction to transform language teaching practices and improve student learning outcomes.

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