

A systematic review on flipped classrooms in English language teaching in Vietnam*

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Received: 29/6/2023; Revised: 24/7/2023; Accepted: 31/7/2023

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to provide a systematic review on the flipped classroom (FL) approach in English language teaching (ELT) in Vietnam in terms of the trends and the key results, based on 12 published articles. A content analysis method was employed to analyze the collected papers. The findings indicated that the implementation of flipped learning appeared to gradually increase in Vietnam since 2017 and remain its prosperity in the higher education context. Also, the results revealed that a variety of research methods were used in selected articles; however, the most common one was the mixed method. Moreover, grammar and speaking skills were the two basic language skills being commonly studied. Additionally, the flipped learning was shown to not only produce an improvement on learners' achievement but also positively affect their perspectives toward its application. The findings also pointed out some challenges and benefits concerning the utilization of the FC in ELT in Vietnam. Finally, some suggestions were provided to educators and future scholars.

Keywords: *ELT, flipped classrooms, systematic review*

1. Introduction

Since the integration of Vietnam into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, English language competence of Vietnamese learners has played a crucial role in their career success (Tran and Nguyen, 2018), which in turn has increased the importance of English language teaching in Vietnam. Therefore, the Vietnam's National Foreign Language 2020 Project was introduced by the Ministry of Education and Training in 2008 to foster and renovate learning and teaching English in the country. Although the project has resulted in a number of beneficial outcomes in terms of English language

instruction, several existing problems need solving in order for the project to meet all its initial goals (Vuong et al., 2019). One of the main reasons leading to students' low proficiency in English is the old-fashioned teaching methods (Le, 2013). Thus, Vietnamese educators and researchers have been constantly in search of new pedagogical methods that suit the educational setting. Additionally, the development in technology has resulted in changes of learners and teachers' profiles (Thin, 2021), which has also triggered seeking out suitable pedagogical approaches. Flipped classroom method has emerged as an innovative one

* Selected from the International Conference "Digital Media & Economic Recovery" held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam on 11th July 2023.

that provides learners with not only opportunities to exploit the potential affordances of advanced technology in their language learning but also better learning environments (Hau, 2022).

The previous studies revealed the popularity of the flipped learning in a variety of fields such as health education (Hew and Lo, 2018), engineering (Karabulut-Ilgu et al., 2018), mathematics (Lo et al., 2017), and teacher education (Turan and Goktas € , 2018). In Vietnam, several research was conducted in the field of ELT (Kien and Hong, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2021; Tinh, 2021; Vuong et al., 2018). However, there is a dearth of review articles towards employing the flipped classroom (FC) approach in English language teaching (ELT) in Vietnam where its employment has been increasing in recent years. The review is important to the field because it can pave the way for future research and provide an insight for scholars and instructors. Thus, the present study aims to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the trends in flipped classrooms in ELT research in Vietnam? (RQ1); (2) What were the main findings from the available literature? (RQ2).

2. Literature review

2.1. Overview of flipped classroom

Generally, the FC emerged as a novel learning and teaching approach in which instruction and homework are switched their place, and learning occurs outside of the traditional classroom setting (Hsieh et al., 2017b). Learners, in the FC, are introduced to new material outside of class, mainly via videos, which allows them to learn in their own space thanks to the capability of pausing, rewinding and replaying the videos. In the classroom, they

take part in hand-on activities and practices under instructors' guidance (Hsieh et al., 2017b). Therefore, learners are offered not only a flexible learning environment but also an interactive one. They are also given opportunities to take part in active cooperation with their peers and instructors, and gain deeper investigation of concepts (Amiryousefi, 2017; Chuang et al., 2018), leading to a learner-centered learning environment (Zou, 2020). This pedagogical approach, however, does not imply that teachers have no part to play; on the contrary, their importance was significantly demonstrated by being aware of students' needs and enabling their involvement in intensive learning activities (Hung, 2017).

2.2. Benefits of flipped classroom

Flipped classroom approach has been found in numerous research to have educational advantages, such as providing learners with interactive learning environment (Hsiel et al., 2017a), which possibly enhances their achievement, foster interaction and engagement (Chuang et al., 2018), and motivation (Zainuddin and Halili, 2016). As a result, teachers serve as a mentor, a facilitator and a provider of feedback on learners' performance (Zou et al., 2020). In addition, learners, in flipped classroom, are not required to spend most of class time absorbing lengthy lectures, giving themselves more time in problem-solving individually as well as actively collaborating under the assistance of their instructors and peers (Zou and Xie, 2019).

For instance, by conducting qualitative research with the participation of 47 pre-service English teachers, examining their perceptions toward flipped classrooms, Basal (2015) found out that the participants perceived the flipping as a beneficial

method which provided their self-paced learning, boosted their engagement, enhanced their preparation and eliminated time constraints in the classroom.

2.3. Challenges of flipped classroom

In spite of the educational strengths of flipped classroom, this pedagogical approach presents a few challenges. Based on 20 published articles between 2013 and 2015, Zainuddin and Halili (2016) examined flipped classrooms in terms of trends and research topics, noting that inexperienced teachers and low-quality videos noticeably decreased the approach's effectiveness. This review, however, included data from studies in a variety of fields, not particularly paying attention to the implementation of FC on language learning and teaching. Additionally, by reviewing 43 articles during the period of 9 years, from 2010 to 2018, Turan and Akdag-Cimen (2020) reported some common challenges such as heavy workload for learners and technical problems.

2.4. Impact of flipped classroom on learners' academic outcome

Previous research suggested that FC approach enhances learners' achievement and levels of language competence in different language areas. According to Hung (2014), implementation of flipped learning in English classrooms positively affected learners' overall academic performance. Additionally, after the application of flipped classrooms, the improvement of students' scores on TOEIC was found in the study of Ishikawa et al. (2015), which was in line with many studies, yielding the effectiveness of this approach toward learners' performance in term of speaking and listening skills (Han, 2015), writing skills (Ekmekci, 2017).

2.5. Recent studies on flipped classroom in Vietnamese context

Catching up with the world's innovative trends in English teaching and learning, several studies about the application of FC were conducted in Vietnam. Those studies covered different areas of language (Nguyen and Nguyen, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2019; Nguyen, 2021), and even different subjects (Das et al., 2019; Phan et al., 2021; Tieu, 2022). Given the rising popularity of flipped classrooms in Vietnam, a review appears to be necessary which can benefit both Vietnamese educators and scholars.

3. Research methodology

According to Uman (2011), a systematic review method was utilized, on the basis of explicit research questions, to identify which research of the available literature should be included. A systematic review significantly differs from a literature review in terms of its method followed. A systematic review starts in a way which is meticulously organized, with a precise path and inclusion of a variety of available databases to search for the articles to be reviewed. Contrarily, according to Robinson and Lowe (2015), the later method is generally conducted in a less systematic way and only a small number of databases are used to get the articles.

3.1. Data collection

In May 2023, a systematic search was carried out in databases: Eric, Sci-Hub, Google scholar, Taylor and Francis, Web of Science, which includes numerous education-related research. The search terms used were "flipped classroom and Vietnam", "flipping and Vietnam", "Inverted classroom and Vietnam", "flipped learning and Vietnam".

The search generated 23 articles which were published between 2014 and 2023 in Vietnam. We collected articles using criteria as follows: (a) they must be empirical studies, investigating flipped learning in ELT in Vietnam; (b) they had to include details in regard to the participants, research method and main findings; (c) they had to be written in English. The articles were checked independently by the researcher and her co-worker, and 11 out of 23 were excluded.

3.2. Data analysis

The collected studies were coded and

analyzed, utilizing content analysis, a popular technique in humanities and the social sciences (McMillan, 2000), which can be used for analyzing texts, comparing, contrasting as well as categorizing the data (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2000). Microsoft Word forms were created to record the findings of the analysis of RQ1 and RQ2, which included categories relevant to the research questions, such as research distribution by years, research methods, advantages and disadvantages of FC, and effectiveness of flipped classroom on learner's outcomes.

Table 1. Subcategories of research questions

Research question	Subcategories
RQ1. What are the trends in FC in ELT studies in Vietnam?	<p>Research distribution by years: the chosen studies were analyzed regarding their year publication</p> <p>Research methods employed</p> <p>Education levels of participants</p>
RQ2. What were the main findings from the available literature?	<p>Basic language skills studied</p> <p>Benefits and challenges of FC in ELT in Vietnam</p> <p>Effectiveness of flipped classroom on learners' achievement</p> <p>Learners' perspectives toward the implementation of flipped learning into English language classrooms</p>

4. Results

4.1. Trends in flipped classroom and ELT literature

For the purpose of answer RQ1, the research's distribution by publication years, used research methodology, participants' education level were subcategories examined by the researcher.

4.1.1. Research's distribution by publication years

The distribution of reviewed research related to the FC approach in ELT in Vietnam

by publication years is clearly explained as follows. The studies in this field were first published in 2017 (n=1). The following years witnessed an uplift in a number of research. More specifically, there were 2 studies conducted in 2018 and 2019, and a number of research reached its highest point of three studies in 2021 and 2022. However, in 2020, only one study was found.

4.1.2. Research methods employed

The most commonly used research methods were mixed method, quantitative

method and qualitative method, respectively. Specifically, seven studies were conducted utilizing mixed method, whereas qualitative method was found in three studies, and purely quantitative one was employed in two studies.

4.1.3. The education levels of participants

The participants in the reviewed

studies were mainly university students (approximately 83%) (Figure 1). There was one study conducted in a high school, and one with the participation of 18-year-old students and office workers at an English center whereas no articles were found in secondary schools.

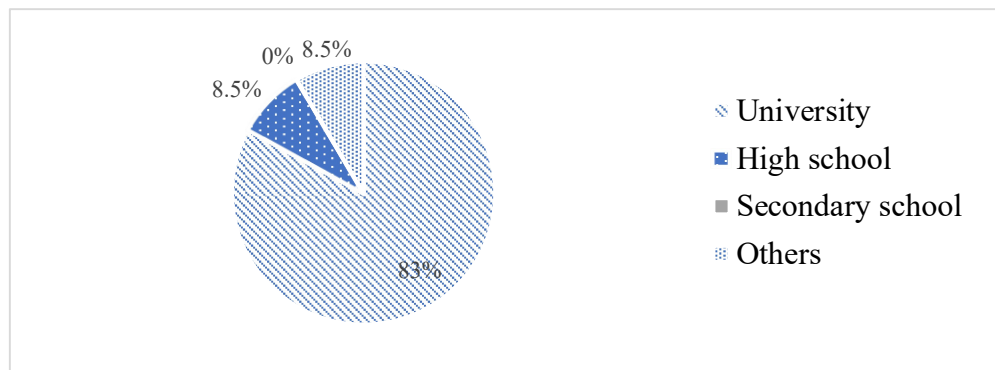


Figure 1. Educational levels of the participants

4.2. The key results of the flipped classroom and ELT in Vietnam

In response to RQ2, the subcategories were examined by the researcher as follows: studied skills, effectiveness of flipped classroom on learners’ performance, benefits as well as challenges of applying this approach into ELT in Vietnam.

4.2.1. Studied skills

Only 7 of 12 reviewed articles directly pointed out which basic language skills

were examined, including speaking (n=2), grammar (n=2), reading (n=1), listening (n=1) and writing (n=1).

4.2.2. Effectiveness of flipped classrooms on learners’ achievement

Totally 8 reviewed studies examined the effectiveness of FC on learners’ academic outcomes, 8 out of 8 articles revealed that the flipped classroom significantly improved their performance (Table 2).

Table 2. Findings of the impact of flipped classroom on learners’ academic outcome

Findings	N	Sample articles
FC effectively improved learners’ achievement	8	Hau (2022); Nhac (2021); Nguyen and Nguyen (2022); Nguyen et al. (2019); Nguyen et al. (2021); Phung and Yen (2020); Thinh (2021); Tran and Nguyen (2018)
FC made no improvement on learners’ performance	0	

4.2.3. Learners' perception toward flipped classrooms

The participants' perspectives toward the implementation of flipped learning into

ELT were examined in 9 articles, which demonstrated their positive attitude toward this approach (Table 3).

Table 3. Learners' perspectives toward the application of flipped classrooms

Learner's perspectives	n	Sample articles
Positive attitude toward the application of flipped classrooms	9	Hau (2022); Kien and Hong (2022); Nguyen and Nguyen (2022); Nguyen et al. (2019); Nguyen et al. (2021); Nhac (2021); Thi (2017); Tran and Nguyen (2018); Phung and Yen (2020);
Negative attitude toward the its implementation	0	

4.2.4 Benefits of flipped classrooms in ELT in Vietnam

The most common benefits when flipping EFL classrooms were enhancing

learners' engagement (n=5), enabling the development of their language skills (n=5), fostering their autonomy (n=4) and enhancing their motivation (n=4) (Table 4).

Table 4. Benefits of the employment of FC in ELT in Vietnam

Benefits	n	Articles
Enhancing learners' motivation	4	Nhac (2021); Nguyen and Nguyen (2022); Thi (2017); Tran and Nguyen (2018)
Enhancing learners' engagement	5	Nguyen and Nguyen (2022); Nguyen et al. (2021); Nhac (2021); Thi (2017); Tran and Nguyen (2018)
Increasing learners' satisfaction	3	Nguyen and Nguyen (2022); Tran and Nguyen (2018); Thi (2017)
Promoting learners' participation	3	Nguyen and Nguyen (2022); Nguyen et al., 2019; Phung and Yen (2020)
Reducing the limitation of class time	4	Nguyen and Nguyen (2022); Nguyen et al. (2021); Phung and Yen (2020), Vuong et al. (2019)
Improving learners' vocabulary, pronunciation and intonation	2	Tran and Nguyen (2018); Thi (2017)
Fostering learners' autonomy	4	Nguyen and Nguyen (2022); Nguyen and Nguyen (2022); Nhac (2021); Vuong et al. (2019)

Benefits	n	Articles
Increasing learners' activeness in learning	3	Nguyen and Nguyen (2022); Nguyen et al. (2019); Vuong et al. (2019)
Developing learners' language skills	5	Hau (2022); Nguyen and Nguyen (2022); Phung and Yen (2020); Thi (2017); Tran and Nguyen (2018)
Promoting learner-centered learning environment	2	Nguyen et al. (2021); Vuong et al. (2019)
Increasing learners' enjoyment	1	Hau (2022)
Increasing learners' confidence	1	Nguyen et al. (2019)
Providing flexible learning environment	3	Nguyen et al. (2021); Vuong et al. (2019); Tran and Nguyen (2018)
Voicing their opinion	1	Vuong et al. (2019)
Solving issues related to large-sized classes	1	Vuong et al. (2019)
Exposing to more materials than usual	1	Nguyen et al. (2021)
Facilitating learning grammar communicatively	1	Vuong et al. (2019)
Receiving clear instructions from teachers	1	Nguyen and Nguyen (2022)

4.2.5. Challenges of the implementation of flipped classroom in ELT in Vietnam

In spite of the number of advantages in implementing flipped classroom in ELT in Vietnam, the reviewed articles also presented some challenges such as fast

speed of speakers in video lectures (n=3), causing learners' difficulty in absorbing pre-class materials, heavy workload (n=2), lack of prompt assistance (n=1), difficulty in self-regulated learning (n=2), and shortage of ICT resources (Table 5).

Table 5. Challenges of the implementation of flipped classrooms in ELT in Vietnam

Challenges	n	Articles
Fast speed	3	Thi (2017); Tran and Nguyen (2018); Hau (2022)
Heavy workload	2	Nhac (2021); Vuong et al. (2019)
Lack of prompt assistance	1	Vuong et al. (2019)
Difficulty in self-regulated learning	2	Hau (2022); Vuong et al. (2019)
Shortage of ICT resources	2	Nguyen and Nguyen (2022); Vuong et al. (2019)

5. Discussion

In this review, the trends and the key findings of 12 reviewed articles were analyzed. Firstly, the results showed the gradual growth in the quantity of studies towards the implementation of flipped learning in ELT in Vietnam since 2017. The increase in studies may be linked to the growing popularity of this approach and some of the benefits it has offered. Moreover, Vietnamese researchers were inspired with the concepts of flipping learning thanks to the reports of several scholars on the effectiveness of this method on improving learners' classroom attitude and enhancing their knowledge acquisition at the 2019 National Conference, which was held at University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University (Nguyen, 2021). In 2020, however, this approach received less attention which might be attributed to the negative impact of Covid-19 pandemic on education in Vietnam, causing temporary school closures.

Secondly, it was discovered that a mixed method was most popularly employed in the articles reviewed, followed by a qualitative method, which could be related to the motivation to carefully evaluate how effective FC is. Compared to other research methods, the proportion of the mixed ones is high; however, there are not many of them in literature, suggesting that more empirical research should be taken into consideration.

Thirdly, the sample group was mostly university learners whereas the integration of flipped learning in pre-university was rare, which echoed the results from a review from Zou et al. (2020), Lo and Hew (2017). This is perhaps because of the ease of

access of undergraduate learners and high expectations placed on them when it comes to self-regulated learning (Turan and Akdag-Cimen, 2020). As a result, future research may examine the education levels being under-investigated such as K-12, secondary in EFL settings.

Fourthly, by delivering the pre-class materials online, flipped learning solves problems related to time constraints, resulted in more time for active interaction and application in classrooms (Hall and DuFrene, 2016), requiring learners to utilize productive language skills rather than receptive ones (Turan and Akdag-Cimen, 2020). Thus, speaking skill received more attention in Vietnamese educational settings. In addition, compared to speaking, grammar skill was equally concerned in the reviewed articles. This is likely because of the nature of learning and teaching grammar in Vietnam where learners are able to master grammatical rules well but unable to use them in real-life contexts, coming from lack of communicative activities during class time (Ho and Binh, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2019) whereas flipped classrooms offer learners the opportunity to engage in active learning with communicative activities and applications, peer interaction as well as instructor interaction (Adnan, 2017). However, those studies are still scarce. Therefore, future research could take the investigation of those skills and others into consideration to provide more valuable insight into the impacts of FC approach on the development of the basic language skills.

Fifthly, this review examined the effect of flipping EFL classrooms in Vietnam by analyzing the main findings of the collected articles, generally reporting an

improvement of learners' performance which were in line with findings from others studies in different educational contexts (Han, 2015; Ekmekci, 2017). This can be because flipped learning fostered learners' motivation, provided them with flexible learning settings and more active interaction, leading to effective academic learning (Adnan, 2017; Chen and Hwang, 2020; Zou and Xie, 2019). However, the impacts of FC approach on learners' performance in this review was purely qualitatively investigated whereas a meta-analysis could be considered in the future in order to yield a more informative and conclusive result. Consequently, when there is an increase in a number of articles in this field, a meta-analysis is highly expected.

Sixthly, when it comes to benefits of FC, the review identified some common benefits, including enhancing learners' engagement, enabling the development of their language skills, fostering their autonomy, and enhancing their motivation, which can be due to the nature of flipped learning which fosters active learning in a dynamic learning environment (Hsieh et al., 2017a). Moreover, flipped learning was found to positively affect learners' perspectives toward its application, which is perhaps because of the benefits this approach offers to learners, and their witness on the enhancement of their performance.

Flipping EFL classrooms, however, could cause some challenges, including fast speed of speakers in videos, heavy workload, shortage of ICT resources, lack of prompt assistance and difficulty in self-regulated learning. The results are similar to the findings of reviews by Zainuddin and Halili (2016); Turan and Akdag-Cimen (2020).

Based on the main findings of flipping

EFL classrooms in Vietnam, researchers and teachers may choose to flip their course, especially in classrooms with diversity of learners' need (Siegler, 2014). However, according to Homma (2015), sudden changes in learning and teaching methods can cause early resistance. Therefore, redesigning the curriculum should be thoroughly considered to smoothly transit from traditional teaching methods to the novel one. Moreover, EFL teachers who intentionally implement flipped learning should be familiar with how it works and what should be professionally developed before the implementation.

As for learners, the biggest challenge—and one of the key factors significantly contributing to the success of flipped learning relates to the preparation before classes (Lee, 2017). However, those learners felt that the workload of pre-class activities were too heavy; there is a lack of ICT resources as well as instant assistance from their instructor. For best learning outcomes, instructors should design appropriate videos or use available online sources to suit their learners' proficiency level, having subtitles when needed. Those videos should be short and interesting to prevent learners from getting bored and distracted, and quizzes should not be complicated (Adnan, 2017). However, designing those materials and in-class activities is time-consuming (Lee, 2017). Therefore, collaborations among teachers are strongly advised (Lee, 2017). In addition, online learning platforms are required, which provides learners with instant help from their teachers when having any difficulty in absorbing pre-class materials as well as peer interaction (Al-Naabi, 2020). Moreover, for those who

cannot afford a computer, teachers can seek assistance from the university, offering students those devices in computer rooms or libraries and providing them with strong accessible Wi-Fi. Also, according to Bicen and Beheshti (2019), it is important for learners to be well aware of procedures and fruitful achievement of FC. When having an open mind to this approach, they can actively engage in flipped learning regardless of its challenges.

6. Conclusion

The findings of the review demonstrated that the trend in flipped learning research in Vietnam is the growth of the number of articles since 2017, mixed methods found to be the most common research methodology and university students being a main sample group. In addition, the review indicated the benefits and challenges when flipping EFL classrooms, positive perception of learners toward the employment of FC and its impacts on improving learners' performance.

However, the current study reviewed only 12 articles published in Eric, Sci-Hub, Google scholar, Taylor and Francis, Web of Science between 2017 and 2022, suggesting that this review cannot fully examine every aspect of relevance in the field. A wider range of publication sources may be considered in future research. Additionally, the result of this review was purely qualitatively analyzed. Therefore, in order to yield a more informed and conclusive result, a meta-analysis could be considered in the future, especially when there is a growth in a number of articles in this field.

Generally, based on the findings, it is believed that the FC, an innovative learning and teaching approach, possibly offers positive educational potential for learners

and educators in EFL classrooms. Additionally, some pedagogical implications were given above, hopefully being beneficial to EFL instructors and researchers in the relevant field.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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