Systematic Review of Flipped Classroom in EFL Reading Teaching and Learning

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ABSTRACT

In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading instruction, the flipped classroom approach has recently become a prominent and widely examined subject in educational research. Nonetheless, despite the growing interest in this area, previous studies have not thoroughly analyzed the implementation of the flipped classroom method in EFL reading instruction and learning from a systematic review perspective. The aim of this study is to explore the current trends and significant findings related to the use of the flipped classroom method in EFL reading instruction and learning. To accomplish this, 34 articles concerning the flipped classroom approach in EFL reading instruction and learning, published from 2014 to 2024, were retrieved from databases including Scopus, Science Direct, and Wiley Online. A systematic review methodology was utilized, with the articles being analyzed through a content analysis approach. The findings suggest that interest in the flipped classroom method increased among researchers

in EFL reading instruction and learning following 2015, particularly with a significant rise in studies from 2020 to 2022. Furthermore, the majority of studies utilized mixed and quantitative research methods. Further research is necessary to evaluate the effects of the flipped classroom method in vocational college EFL reading classrooms. Further analysis revealed both the challenges and benefits linked to the flipped classroom method in EFL reading instruction and learning. The studies examined particularly emphasized the advantages of this approach in terms of its effectiveness. Based on this review, several recommendations are offered for practitioners and future research initiatives.

Keywords: EFL reading, flipped classroom, systematic review, teaching and learning

INTRODUCTION

Reading plays a crucial role in acquiring information (Adhikari & Poudel, 2020). Improving students' English reading comprehension is crucial. In response, teachers are continually exploring a variety of teaching methods to enhance students' reading skills. Technological advancements have transformed the profiles of both students and teachers, leading researchers to explore innovative educational methodologies that address the changing demographics of learners (Bonfield et al., 2020). Among these approaches, the flipped classroom method has developed in response to the evolving demands of the modern era, gaining broad acceptance among educators and researchers (Kusuma et al., 2021).

The flipped classroom is commonly described as a pedagogical approach that reverses the conventional homework and instruction model, promoting learning beyond the confines of the classroom (Wulandari, 2021). In this framework, students first encounter new content outside the classroom, typically through video resources. During classroom sessions, they participate in practical activities and exercises under the supervision of their instructors. This method fosters active involvement from students and cultivates a dynamic, interactive learning atmosphere.

It is well-established that language acquisition necessitates time, patience, and practice (Gass et al., 2020). For successful EFL reading teaching and learning, students must engage in diverse activities to fully grasp EFL reading skills. However, limited classroom time often restricts opportunities for practice, sometimes forcing teachers to omit crucial aspects of effective EFL reading teaching (Yaqubi & Pourhaji, 2013). The flipped classroom approach has the potential to improve EFL reading outcomes by shifting instructional activities outside of the classroom, thereby allowing for more in-class time to focus on practice and interactive tasks (Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021).

Although there is a growing fascination with the inverted classroom approach, there remains a significant gap in comprehensive research evaluating the effectiveness of the flipped classroom approach in the context of EFL reading instruction and learning (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). While numerous review articles address the flipped classroom approach, none specifically concentrate on its implementation in the context of EFL reading instruction and learning (Fisher et al., 2024). Hence, this study holds importance as a comprehensive examination of existing literature can direct future investigative endeavors and offer valuable perspectives to scholars.

Furthermore, among the extensive research on the inverted classroom, a limited number of studies have been conducted in the area of EFL reading instruction, underscoring the need for further research in this domain (Arslan, 2020). Consequently, this study addresses two key research questions, which are outlined below.

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What are the prevailing trends in the application of the flipped classroom approach in EFL reading teaching and learning research?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What key findings have emerged from the existing literature on this topic?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a systematic review methodology to examine the existing body of research, which involves a rigorous evaluation of the literature based on a precisely articulated research question (Booth et al., 2021). This inquiry guides the systematic selection of studies from the existing literature. A systematic review initiates with a highly structured process, where the identification of articles for analysis adheres to a rigorous protocol and encompasses a range of databases (Booth et al., 2021). Conversely, literature reviews typically lack this rigorous structure and often draw articles from a limited number of databases (Antons et al., 2023).

Data Collection

On October 16, 2024, a comprehensive search was executed across several databases: Scopus, Science Direct, and Wiley Online. These databases were chosen due to their extensive coverage of educational research. The methodology encompasses four separate phases: the initial identification phase, the screening phase, the eligibility evaluation phase, and the inclusion phase.

Phase One: The Identification Stage

The selected articles were required to fulfill predetermined standards. For this systematic literature review, the initial databases employed included Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Wiley Online Library. The publications had to be issued between the years 2014 and 2024. Scopus stands out by amalgamating a diverse range of scholarly works spanning numerous fields. ScienceDirect serves as the foremost information resource for researchers, educators, learners, and information specialists. Meanwhile, Wiley Online is one of the largest and most authoritative collections of online journals. The articles were pinpointed using pertinent keywords sourced from these three search engines, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Search keywords utilized for identifying relevant articles

Databases	Keywords
Scopus	Flipped classroom AND EFL reading teaching and learning, Flipped AND EFL reading teaching and learning, Flipping AND EFL reading teaching and learning, Inverted classroom AND EFL reading teaching and learning, Flipped classroom AND EFL reading instruction.
Science Direct	Flipped classroom AND EFL reading teaching and learning, Flipped AND EFL reading teaching and learning, Flipping AND EFL reading teaching and learning, Inverted classroom AND EFL reading teaching and learning, Flipped classroom AND EFL reading instruction.
Wiley Online	Flipped classroom AND EFL reading teaching and learning, Flipped AND EFL reading teaching and learning, Flipping AND EFL reading teaching and learning, Inverted classroom AND EFL reading teaching and learning, Flipped classroom AND EFL reading instruction.

Table 2. The criteria for participation and exclusion

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
a.Journal articles	a.Books, proceedings, and review articles
b.Articles published between 2014 till 2024	b.Articles that were not published between 2014 till 2024
c.Flipped EFL reading teaching and learning must be the focal point of a article	c.Articles that were not published in English language

After applying the criteria for participation and exclusion, Table 2 presents the studies selected for the present investigation. Each article's complete content was downloaded, excluding any restricted ones. The entire content of each article was obtained, excluding those that were inaccessible. In simpler terms, the article selection was tailored to tackle the inquiries posed by the research. Therefore, the establishment of inclusion and exclusion standards played a crucial role in ensuring the strength and reliability of the research structure.

Phase Two: The Screening Stage

Screening Phase involves removing duplicates from the results obtained from three databases: Scopus, Science Direct, and Wiley Online. Following this, the titles and abstracts of the articles undergo screening. Initially, the relevance of the titles is evaluated using the specified keywords, and subsequently, a detailed review of the abstracts is conducted to confirm their alignment with the established inclusion and exclusion standards. This approach is supported by Pottier et al. (2024), who recommend reading abstracts to assess the relevance of the research topic.

Phase Three: The Eligibility Stage

The Eligibility Phase entails evaluating and scrutinizing articles to ascertain their alignment with the criteria for participation and exclusion specified in Table 2. Only articles that match these criteria and can help answer the research questions are selected, while those that are restricted or do not meet the criteria are excluded. Both participation and exclusion criteria are crucial for conducting high-quality research.

Phase Four: The Exclusion Stage

The Exclusion Phase involves eliminating articles that fail to meet the established criteria, including book chapters, books, proceedings, non-English review and meta-analysis papers, and articles published outside the 2014-2024 time frame. This step is crucial for refining the search process and ensuring that only relevant articles on flipped teaching and learning in EFL reading are included. Figure 1 provides a flow chart summarizing the search process in detail.
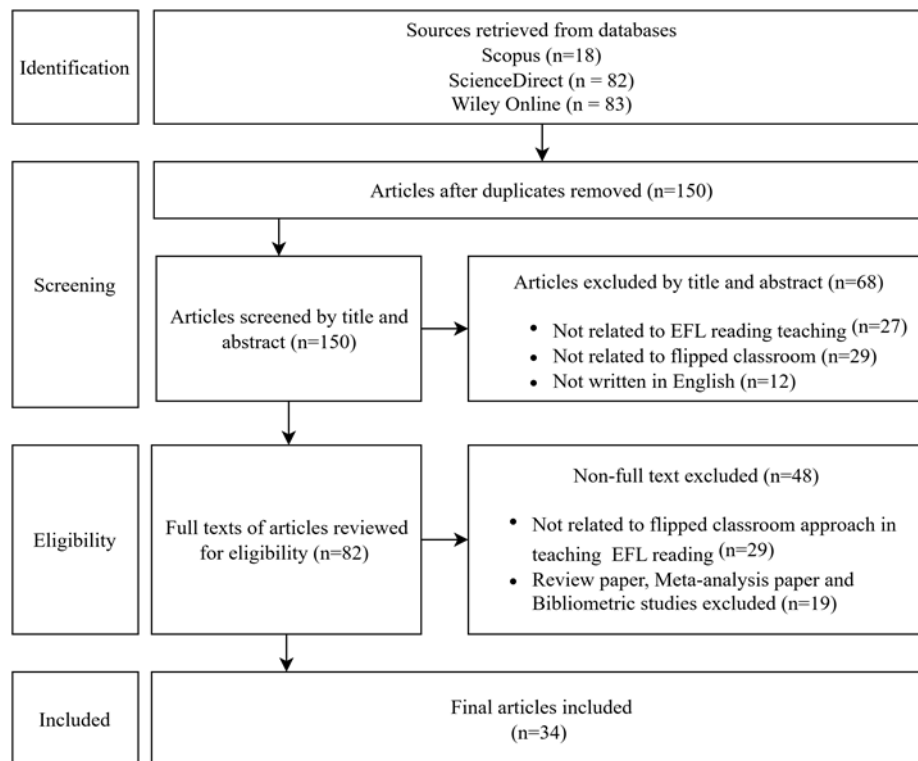

Figure 1. The systematic progression of the review methodology, adapted from Turan and Akdag-Cimen (2020).

Between 2014 and 2024, a comprehensive search across three databases yielded 183 articles pertaining to the implementation of the inverted classroom methodology in EFL reading pedagogy and learning: Scopus (18 articles), Science Direct (82 articles), and Wiley Online (83 articles). After removing 33 duplicate articles, 150 articles remained. After the initial screening phase, 68 articles were excluded following a comprehensive review of their titles and abstracts,

as they did not meet the predefined inclusion criteria. Specifically, 27 articles were unrelated to EFL reading pedagogy, 29 articles did not address flipped classroom methodologies, and 12 articles were not published in English.

Additionally, 82 full-text articles were reviewed for eligibility, among which 48 were excluded for the following reasons. 29 articles were not related to flipped classroom approach in teaching EFL reading. Classification as review papers, meta-analyses, or bibliometric studies were 19 articles. These publication types were excluded to maintain focus on primary empirical research, as they do not provide firsthand evidence of flipped classroom implementation or outcomes in EFL reading contexts. This two-tiered exclusion process ensured that only original, accessible, and contextually relevant studies were advanced to the full-text appraisal phase, thereby strengthening the validity and reproducibility of the review. In conclusion, according to the predetermined inclusion and exclusion standards, a total of 34 articles were selected for inclusion within this review.

Data Analysis

Content analysis is a research method used to systematically describe and quantify specific phenomena, enabling the extraction of reliable and reproducible conclusions from verbal, visual, or textual data (Badzinski et al., 2021). This method involves presenting data in words and themes to interpret the results of reviewed studies. Within the context of qualitative content analysis, latent analysis is conducted at an interpretive level, where researchers aim to uncover the underlying meanings of texts in the studies (Lindgren et al., 2020).

In this study, two researchers coded and analyzed all the studies using the method of content analysis, frequently utilized in textual examinations, permits the comparison, differentiation, and classification of data (Krippendorff, 2018). After carefully reading each article, the researchers filled in the form with relevant information. Then, the researchers used Microsoft Excel to organize the codes and categories for analysis.

Table 3 presents RQ1 alongside its corresponding subcategories, which encompassed descriptive details explicitly mentioned in the reviewed articles. RQ2 and its associated subcategories aimed to obtain comprehensive information about the reviewed articles. Following an exhaustive reading of all studies, the researchers established codes and categories to delineate the benefits and challenges. For RQ1, the researcher took into account the yearly distribution of the studies, the research methodologies employed in the articles, the educational levels of the participants in the studies, and the countries of origin of the articles. In relation to RQ2, the researcher analyzed and identified the effectiveness of the flipped classroom approach in EFL reading teaching and learning in this context.

Table 3. Subcategories of research questions

Research questions	Subcategories
RQ1.What are the prevailing trends in the application of the flipped classroom approach in EFL reading teaching and learning research?	Distribution of the studies by years: The articles were analyzed based on their publication year to find out how many studies were published each year.
	Research methods used in articles: The articles were analyzed to identify the research methods used. The methodology sections were examined, the methods were classified as qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method.
	Education levels of samples: The articles were classified into categories based on their focus, which included university students, senior high school students, junior high school students, and vocational college students.
	Countries of articles: The country of each publication was identified through a thorough examination of the abstract and methodology sections, as well as considering the authors' workplace and the location where the study was conducted.
RQ2.What key findings have emerged from the existing literature on this topic?	Advantages and challenges of flipped classrooms in EFL reading teaching and learning research: To identify the benefits and challenges, the results, discussions, and conclusions sections were carefully analyzed.
	Flipped classroom effectiveness in EFL reading teaching research: The first stage consisted of identifying articles that contrasted the flipped classroom approach with alternative teaching methodologies. Subsequently, the abstract, results, and discussion sections were scrutinized meticulously. The assessment of the flipped classroom method's effectiveness was contingent upon the statistical significance of the findings.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1.What are the prevailing trends in the application of the flipped classroom approach in EFL reading teaching and learning research? To address RQ1, the authors examined multiple subcategories, including the distribution of studies by year, the research methodologies employed, the educational levels of the participants, and the geographical regions in which the studies were carried out. The subsequent section offers comprehensive explanations of each of these subcategories.

i) Yearly Distribution of Studies

Figure 2 illustrates the yearly distribution of studies centered on the flipped classroom approach in relation to EFL reading instruction and learning. The pioneering study in this domain was published in 2015, with a count of two studies, followed by a marked increase in the number of subsequent investigations. Notably, 2022 had the greatest number of contributions, followed by 2017 and 2020, respectively.
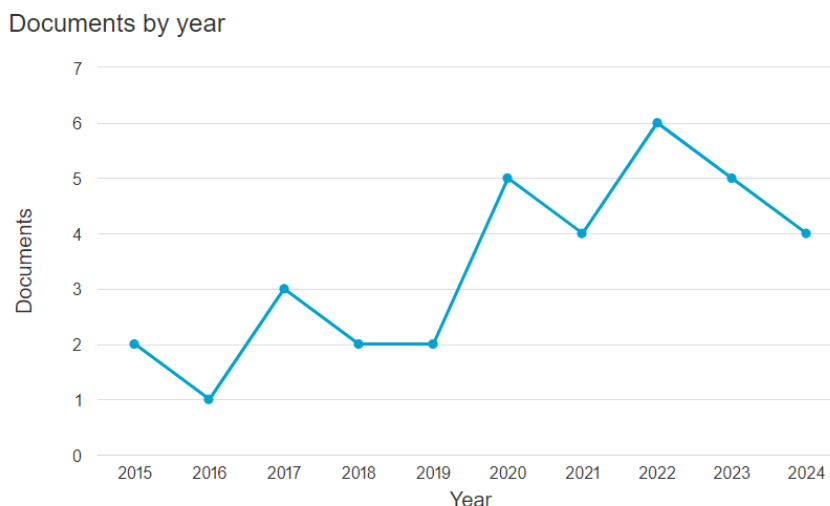

Figure 2. The yearly count of published articles

ii) Research Methods Employed in the Reviewed Articles

A total of thirty-four articles were selected and classified into three distinct research methodologies: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods, based on the criteria pertaining to the flipped classroom approach in EFL reading teaching and learning. Among these, 14 articles employed quantitative research, 6 utilized qualitative research, and 14 adopted mixed-methods research. Table 4 presents an analysis of the research methodologies, indicating that qualitative research was the least frequently utilized method.

Table 4. Number of articles based on research methods

Research methods	Quantity
Quantitative	14
Qualitative	6
Mixed-method	14

To establish the reliability of this evaluation, a thorough examination and interpretation of the results from previous empirical studies on the flipped classroom methodology in EFL reading instruction and acquisition are undertaken. This thorough investigation helps to clarify the research scope and enhances the quality of reporting.

iii) Educational Levels of Sample Participants in the Articles

As shown in Table 5, 22 articles centered on university students as their sample population, followed by 7 articles that focused on senior high school students. The remaining studies included 2 articles on junior high school students and only 1 article on vocational college students.

Table 5. Number of articles based on educational levels of sample participants

Educational Levels of Sample Participants	Quantity
University students	22
Vocational college students	1
Junior high school students	2
Senior high school students	7

iv) Countries of the Reviewed Articles

Most studies exploring the application of the flipped classroom model in the realm of EFL reading instruction and acquisition have been conducted in Indonesia (n= 8), China (n=5), and Iran (n= 5). Additionally, several studies took place in Malaysia (n = 3) Turkey (n = 3), and Prussian Federation (n = 3), as shown in Figure 3. This suggests a wide variety of nations in which research on the flipped classroom approach in EFL reading instruction and learning has been conducted.
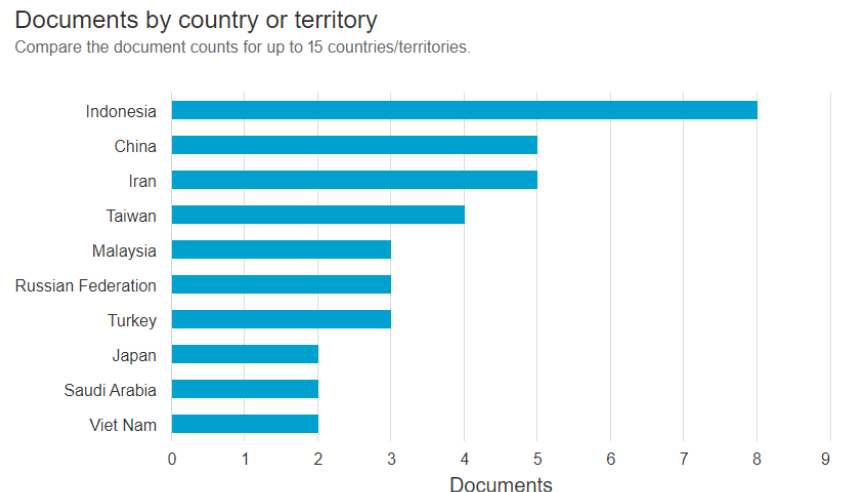
Figure 3. The countries of articles

Research Question 2.What key findings have emerged from the existing literature on this topic? To answer RQ2, the researchers pinpointed and examined various subcategories, such as benefits, obstacles, and assess the overall effectiveness of the flipped classroom approach in EFL reading education and acquisition. A comprehensive explanation of each subcategory is furnished in the following section.

i) Advantages of the flipped classroom in EFL reading teaching and learning

Table 6 highlights the benefits of employing the flipped classroom approach in EFL reading education and acquisition. The most frequently cited advantages are increased learner engagement (n = 10), improvement in reading comprehension (n = 6), and enhanced peer interaction (n = 5).

Table 6. The merits of adopting the flipped classroom model in EFL reading instruction

Advantages	Quantity	Sample article
Enhancing students' engagement	10	Dehham, S. H., Bairmani, H. K., & Shreeb, M. A. (2022)
Improving learners' reading comprehension	6	Ebrahimnezhad Shirvani, F. (2023)
Strengthening peer interactions	5	Adibfar, E. (2022)
Boosting learners' motivation	2	Yılmaz, R., & Saraçoğlu, S. (2022)
Providing a self-paced learning environment	2	Huriyah, S., Contessa, E., & Al Kodri, M. N. (2021)
Enhancing students' preparedness	1	Suryana, P. L., Abas, T. T., & Puspitaloka, N. (2021)
Allowing learners to receive immediate instructor feedback	1	Yılmaz, R., & Saraçoğlu, S. (2022)
Alleviating reading anxieties	1	Gok, D., Bozoglan, H., & Bozoglan, B. (2023)
Fostering positive attitudes towards the language learning experience	1	Dehham, S. H., Bairmani, H. K., & Shreeb, M. A. (2022)
Reducing reading anxiety	1	Mohammaddokht (2022)

ii) Challenges of Implementing the Flipped Classroom in EFL Reading Teaching and Learning

Despite the numerous advantages of the flipped classroom method in EFL reading instruction and learning, its implementation may not always proceed smoothly. According to Table 7, the most commonly cited challenges encompass a heightened workload for students and teachers (n = 3) and problems pertaining to technology or Internet access (n = 1). Teachers need to produce high-quality instructional videos, design interactive tasks, and plan classroom activities that go far beyond traditional lesson preparation (Hasanah & Arifani, 2020). Without technical support or teamwork, it can take a lot of extra time. Students need to spend more time watching teaching videos, reading materials and completing exercises outside of class, and lack of time management skills can easily lead to low learning efficiency or fatigue (Hasanah & Arifani, 2020). Additionally, students need reliable internet access while engaging in their learning activities, and a stable internet connection is essential for ensuring that these activities proceed smoothly (Huriyah et al., 2021).

Table 7. Challenges of the flipped classroom in EFL Reading Teaching and Learning

Challenges	Quantity	Sample article
Increased workload for learners	2	Hasanah, I., & Arifani, Y. (2020)
Technology and Internet-related issues	1	Ramadhanty, S., & Puspitaloka, N. (2020)
Additional workload for teachers	1	Hasanah, I., & Arifani, Y. (2020)
Less supervision from teachers	1	Gok, D., Bozoglan, H., & Bozoglan, B. (2023)

iii) Effectiveness of the Flipped Classroom in EFL Reading Teaching and Learning

According to Table 8, a comprehensive total of 28 studies have assessed the effectiveness of the flipped classroom approach by comparing it to traditional instructional methods or through the utilization of pre- and post-assessment tests. Of these studies, 23 have reached the conclusion that the flipped classroom model serves as an efficacious strategy in the context of EFL reading instruction and acquisition. Three studies have reported inconclusive results, showcasing both positive and negative outcomes, while another two studies have found that the flipped classroom model had no significant effect on EFL reading instruction and acquisition.

Table 8. Synthesis of Results Regarding the Efficacy of the Flipped Classroom Approach in EFL Reading Instruction and Acquisition

Findings	Quantity	Sample article
Flipped is more effective	23	Mohammaddokht & Fathi (2022); Ebrahimnezhad Shirvani (2023);Dehham et al., (2022); Suryana et al. (2021);Yılmaz & Saraçoğlu (2022)
No difference	2	Ahmed et al. (2022)
No difference, students viewed positively	3	Syafitri (2016)

DISCUSSIONS

This research analyzed 34 articles sourced from Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Wiley Online Library to identify trends and pivotal discoveries. The findings suggest a notable surge in publications focusing on the flipped classroom methodology in EFL reading instruction since 2014. This augmentation could be attributed to the increasing popularity and perceived benefits of the methodology. Particularly in the last two years, there has been heightened interest in the

subject, suggesting further popularity in the future. The primary research methodologies utilized were quantitative and mixed approaches, presumably owing to the necessity for thorough examination of the flipped classroom method's effects. Despite the abundance of studies, the depth of research remains constrained. Among the 34 studies reviewed, only six adopted qualitative methods, identifying a gap in the current scholarly works and underlining the necessity for qualitative studies to enable a more thorough examination.

Among the studies that were examined, university students were predominantly selected as the sample population, whereas a smaller number of studies concentrated on senior high school and junior high school learners. Only one article focused on vocational college students. This trend may be due to the greater accessibility of university students and their generally higher capacity for self-regulation. However, additional research is necessary to evaluate the impact of the flipped classroom approach, which is regarded as advantageous in EFL reading instruction, within vocational college EFL reading classroom.

The systematic review revealed a substantial body of research on the implementation of the flipped classroom approach in EFL reading instruction across multiple countries, with Indonesia emerging as the leader in terms of study frequency. Further investigations into the use of this method in EFL reading programs across culturally diverse nations and educational systems could yield valuable insights into its broader applicability and effectiveness.

The review identified several benefits of applying the flipped classroom approach to EFL reading instruction. The most commonly noted advantage is an increase in student engagement, which is linked to the method's promotion of active learning. This finding is supported by research from Li and Li (2022), as well as Setyosari et al. (2021).

The flexible structure of the flipped classroom approach meets different classroom needs by providing students with extra time for learning outside of class. Additionally, it helps teachers pinpoint specific areas where students may need additional assistance (Jiang et al., 2022). Consequently, it is unsurprising that flipped classrooms yield positive results. The studies analyzed in this review further validate that integrating the flipped classroom approach into EFL reading instruction yields numerous advantages. Key findings highlight that this method supports students in enhancing their reading comprehension, fosters greater peer interaction, and helps alleviate reading-related anxiety.

Nonetheless, shifting to flipped classrooms for EFL reading instruction may pose certain challenges. The reviewed studies highlight difficulties such as an increased workload for students and issues related to internet and technology. These observations align with the findings of Dehham et al. (2022). Flipped classrooms require students to engage in self-directed learning during pre-class activities (e.g., video lectures, reading materials). However, several studies note that EFL learners, particularly those with lower proficiency levels, struggle with time management and self-regulation when learning autonomously (Hasanah & Arifani, 2020). For instance, in contexts where students lacked prior exposure to flipped pedagogy, pre-class tasks were often perceived as burdensome, leading to incomplete preparation and reduced in-class participation. Additionally, disparities in digital literacy exacerbated inequalities, as learners

from resource-limited backgrounds faced difficulties accessing or interacting with online platforms (Dehham et al., 2022).

The reliance on digital tools in flipped classrooms introduces equity concerns. In regions with unstable internet connectivity, students faced barriers in accessing pre-class materials, undermining the model's effectiveness (Huriyah et al., 2021). Even in well-resourced environments, platform compatibility issues disrupted learning continuity (Dehham et al., 2022).

Additional reported challenges and drawbacks include a heightened workload for teachers. The transition to flipped classrooms significantly amplifies teachers' responsibilities, including curriculum redesign, video creation, and ongoing technical support. For instance, a study on EFL teachers revealed that developing tailored pre-class materials consumed 30-40% more preparation time compared to traditional methods (Hasanah & Arifani, 2020). Furthermore, teachers often lacked training in blended learning strategies, leading to sub-optimal integration of in-class and online components.

An analysis of studies contrasting the flipped classroom approach with conventional teaching methods indicated that the flipped model generally demonstrates greater effectiveness. Moreover, studies assessing the influence of the flipped classroom on student learning, especially through pre-assessment and post-assessment, have shown that this methodology improves the EFL reading learning process.

The results of this research can assist educators and researchers in formulating ideas concerning the implementation of the flipped classroom method in EFL reading instruction. Initially, according to the research outcomes, introducing a flipped classroom model in EFL reading instruction holds the promise of improving student involvement, particularly in environments where attendance is voluntary, thereby indirectly fostering a more engaged learning atmosphere. When students take responsibility for learning the materials prior to having class, they have a greater opportunity to develop autonomy. Consequently, educators may wish to adopt this flipped approach, especially in classrooms characterized by a diverse array of student requirements (Goedhart et al., 2019).

However, making abrupt changes to teaching methods may initially encounter resistance (Mohammaddokht & Fathi, 2022). The educational program should undergo a redesign to facilitate a smooth shift away from conventional instructional strategies. Additionally, educators who initiate flipped EFL classrooms must grasp the methodology's functions and prerequisites prior to initiating such courses. In order to attain superior educational results for students, the recorded flipped course materials should be captivating and dynamic, thereby mitigating learner disengagement (Van Alten et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research stands out as it represents the inaugural review study to concentrate on the application of the flipped classroom approach in EFL reading instruction and acquisition. It is also expected to function as a road map for researchers interested in conducting studies on

flipping EFL reading classrooms. Ultimately, the following suggestions are proposed, drawing upon the insights obtained from the research findings.

Further experimental research is warranted to explore the effects of the flipped classroom approach on EFL reading instruction and acquisition. Moreover, qualitative studies are crucial for gaining a more profound comprehension of the flipped classroom method is integrated in EFL reading classrooms. Additional exploration is needed to evaluate the influence of the flipped classroom method, which is deemed advantageous in EFL reading instruction and acquisition, within vocational college EFL reading settings. Further research is essential to discover remedies to the challenges documented in the existing scholarly works.

The transition to flipped EFL courses may entail an augmented workload for teachers; therefore, collaborating with educators who possess familiarity with the flipped classroom method can reduce the extra time and energy expended. It is recommended that teachers consider learners' needs when planning their flipped EFL reading courses to maximize their benefits. Furthermore, given that the flipped classroom approach hinges on technological instruments, educators must ascertain that both instructors and learners possess access to the requisite technology.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors affirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article.

Authors' Contributions

All the authors contributed equally in conducting the research and writing the article.