

Flipped Classrooms and Productive Language Skills in EFL: A Critical Review with Reflections on Incidental Intercultural Awareness

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Abstract:

This meta-synthesis examines the impact of the flipped classroom (FC) model on the productive language skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, with focused attention on speaking proficiency, writing development, and the emergent cultivation of intercultural awareness. Guided by three research questions, concerning the theoretical alignment of FC pedagogy with productive skills development, the pedagogical affordances and constraints of flipped instruction, and its potential to foster intercultural competence, the review systematically synthesizes 53 peer-reviewed empirical studies published between 2016 and 2025, drawn from databases including ERIC, Google Scholar, and Semantic Scholar. Studies were selected according to explicit inclusion criteria encompassing methodological rigor, EFL contextual relevance, and thematic alignment with the study's core variables. Findings converge to indicate that flipped instruction consistently enhances oral fluency, written coherence, learner autonomy, and communicative engagement. Pre-class exposure to multimedia content, combined with collaborative in-class tasks, proves especially effective in reducing speaking anxiety and supporting compositional development. Several studies also document incidental gains in intercultural sensitivity, particularly when learners engage with culturally rich, authentic materials that prompt critical reflection. Despite persistent implementation challenges, including unequal digital access and variable teacher preparedness, the FC model emerges as a dynamic and theoretically grounded framework for advancing both communicative competence and intercultural awareness in EFL settings. The study contributes an integrated synthesis of current evidence that bridges pedagogical theory and classroom practice, offering applied implications for curriculum design, teacher development, and future research.

Keywords: flipped classroom; EFL instruction; speaking skills; writing development; intercultural awareness; meta-synthesis

1- INTRODUCTION:

In the contemporary landscape of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, pedagogical innovation is increasingly shaped by imperatives of learner autonomy, interactive engagement, and purposeful language use. Among the models that have gained sustained international attention, the flipped classroom (FC) occupies a distinctive position. By inverting the conventional instructional sequence, relocating content delivery to the pre-class phase through digital media and reclaiming contact time for collaborative, task-based interaction, the FC model reconstitutes the classroom as a generative site for communicative and cognitive development. This structural inversion is not merely logistical; it reflects a deeper pedagogical commitment to centering learner agency and optimizing the conditions under which higher-order language skills can flourish.

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EFL learners frequently encounter difficulties with productive language skills, namely speaking and writing, not because of inherent linguistic limitations but because conventional instructional models prioritize grammar transmission and receptive skill development, leaving insufficient space for authentic language production. Teacher-fronted, textbook-driven classrooms often lack the interactivity, flexibility, and time for learners to engage in meaningful communicative practice. The FC model offers a principled response to this structural deficiency, redistributing cognitive and temporal demands so that classroom time is devoted to those tasks that most benefit from peer interaction, scaffolded feedback, and guided practice.

At the same time, growing scholarly attention has been directed toward the role of language education in developing intercultural communicative competence (ICC). As learners engage with diverse texts, perspectives, and interactional tasks, particularly within digitally mediated, learner-centered environments, they encounter authentic opportunities for cultural reflection and interpretive awareness. While ICC is seldom an explicit objective in FC designs, the model's affordances, including exposure to global, multimodal input; increased self-regulation; and dialogic in-class collaboration, may organically support the dispositions of open-mindedness, critical reflection, and communicative adaptability that are constitutive of intercultural learning.

Despite the growing body of research on the FC model in EFL settings, its capacity to simultaneously develop productive language skills and cultivate intercultural awareness remains under-theorized. Few studies have examined the intersection of these dual objectives within a single pedagogical framework, leaving a gap in both theoretical understanding and classroom application. The present review addresses this gap through a systematic meta-synthesis of empirical evidence published between 2016 and 2025, guided by the following research questions:

- ✚ **RQ1:** How does the flipped classroom model align theoretically with the development of EFL productive skills, particularly speaking and writing?
- ✚ **RQ2:** What pedagogical affordances and challenges emerge when flipped instruction is implemented to support productive language use in EFL contexts?
- ✚ **RQ3:** In what ways does the flipped classroom serve as a platform for fostering intercultural awareness within EFL contexts, including in cases where culture is not explicitly taught?

By addressing these questions, the review seeks to make a theoretically integrated and pedagogically actionable contribution to research on technology-enhanced language learning, productive skills development, and intercultural education.

2- Theoretical Background

2.1. Historical Foundations and Development of the Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom, as a pedagogical paradigm, is the product of a sustained evolution across educational thought, technology, and instructional practice. Its conceptual antecedents predate the digital era; early experiments in educational broadcasting, entailing radio and televised curricula developed in the 1920s and 1930s, anticipated the principle of decoupling content delivery from face-to-face instruction. Tyler (1935) documented how curricular content might reach learners independently of the classroom, effectively foreshadowing the spatial and temporal flexibility that characterizes contemporary flipped models. The institutionalization of this principle gathered momentum in the 1970s with the founding of the Open University in the

United Kingdom, which leveraged pre-recorded lectures, correspondence materials, and printed modules to serve learners at a distance. Although these initiatives lacked the interactive dimension central to current FC designs, they embodied a foundational premise: that learning need not be bound to physical co-presence.

A more theoretically deliberate articulation of the inverted instructional sequence emerged by the late 1990s. Lage et al. (2000) formally proposed the term “inverted classroom,” describing an arrangement in which students engaged with lecture content before class while in-session time was reserved for higher-order collaborative tasks. Concurrently, Eric Mazur’s advocacy for peer instruction at Harvard University reinforced the value of active, student-driven processing and anticipated many of the principles later consolidated under the FC framework. The model gained widespread visibility in the early 2000s through the work of Jon Bergmann and Aaron Sams, high school chemistry teachers in Colorado who began recording lectures for absent students and quickly observed that the practice benefited the entire class. Their formalization of the approach in *Flip Your Classroom* (Bergmann & Sams, 2012) catalyzed an international pedagogical movement.

Salman Khan’s development of the Khan Academy further normalized the use of asynchronous, video-based instruction, and his 2011 TED Talk introduced the concept of “flipping the classroom” to a global audience (Fink, 2011). By the 2010s, the convergence of accessible digital tools, such as screen capture software, learning management systems, video-sharing platforms, and a growing evidence base on active learning (Freeman et al., 2014) accelerated the FC model’s adoption across disciplines and educational levels. In language education, its relevance is particularly pronounced: by relocating input-based activities to the pre-class phase, teachers can devote contact time to meaningful interaction, negotiation of meaning, and the sustained practice of productive skills.

The flipped classroom is best understood not as a technology-dependent innovation but as a principled reordering of instructional priorities. Hamdan et al. (2013) define it as a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction migrates from the group learning space to the individual learning space, transforming classroom time into an opportunity for collaborative application, guided practice, and deeper conceptual engagement. Bergmann and Sams (2012) similarly emphasize that the FC is defined not by the media it employs but by the pedagogical shift it enacts, from passive reception to active participation, and from teacher-centered transmission to learner-directed inquiry.

To distinguish principled flipped instruction from the superficial assignment of video homework, the Flipped Learning Network (FLN, 2014) formalized the Four Pillars of F-L-I-P. These pillars collectively articulate the conditions necessary for effective implementation. The first, Flexible Environment, emphasizes that both physical learning spaces and assessment practices must be adaptable to diverse learning styles and proficiency levels; in EFL contexts, this flexibility is particularly valuable for accommodating heterogeneous groups and reducing language anxiety. The second pillar, Learning Culture, requires a fundamental reorientation of classroom norms, moving from passive instruction to learner-driven exploration, peer collaboration, and reflective practice; these conditions are intrinsically aligned with communicative language teaching principles. The third pillar, Intentional Content, demands that teachers exercise careful judgment about which material is best suited to independent pre-class engagement and which benefits most from interactive, in-class elaboration; for EFL instructors, this typically involves video-based grammar input, vocabulary scaffolding, or model texts that prepare learners for productive tasks. The fourth pillar, Professional Educator, underscores that far from reducing the teacher’s role, the FC model intensifies it: educators

must design adaptive learning pathways, provide differentiated feedback, and facilitate real-time support for learners navigating complex communicative and compositional challenges.

2.2. Theoretical Underpinnings: An Integrated Framework

The flipped classroom is not theoretically monolithic; its pedagogical logic draws on and synthesizes several foundational learning theories that, taken together, construct a coherent rationale for its distinctive instructional architecture. These frameworks do not operate in isolation but rather interact in mutually reinforcing ways that illuminate different dimensions of the FC's effectiveness in EFL contexts.

Constructivism, as articulated by Piaget, provides the model's epistemological core. From this perspective, knowledge is not transmitted but constructed through active engagement, experimentation, and reflection. The FC enacts this principle by requiring learners to encounter content independently before class, prompting them to build initial understandings, generate questions, and arrive prepared for deeper engagement. This pre-class cognitive work transforms classroom interaction from passive reception into meaningful knowledge elaboration. Vygotsky's social constructivism extends this framework by foregrounding the role of interaction, scaffolding, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in learning. In-class FC activities like peer feedback sessions, collaborative writing tasks, structured speaking exercises are deliberately designed to position learners at the edge of their competence, where teacher guidance and peer mediation can facilitate genuine developmental progress. The classroom, in this account, becomes a dynamic space for the co-construction of meaning, aligning powerfully with the aims of communicative language teaching.

Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) contributes a complementary insight by drawing attention to the constraints of working memory and the importance of managing informational complexity. Conventional classroom instruction, which requires learners to simultaneously process new content, take notes, and engage in communicative tasks, often imposes excessive cognitive demands that impede deep learning. The FC addresses this by distributing cognitive load across time: asynchronous pre-class content allows learners to absorb foundational concepts at their own pace, pausing and revisiting as needed, while classroom time is freed for the application of already-internalized knowledge in more complex communicative contexts. This sequential structuring is especially consequential in EFL instruction, where learners must coordinate multiple linguistic subsystems, specifically phonology, syntax, lexis, pragmatics, while simultaneously engaging in meaning-making.

Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) theory, as developed by Zimmerman (2002) and others, provides the motivational architecture that sustains the FC model. Effective flipped instruction requires learners to plan their pre-class engagement, monitor their comprehension, and evaluate their readiness for in-class tasks, metacognitive processes that, when developed deliberately, become powerful resources for long-term language growth. Studies across diverse EFL contexts consistently demonstrate that FC participation is associated with enhanced SRL capacities, including greater goal-setting, time management, and reflective awareness. These capacities are particularly significant for productive skill development, where the ability to monitor and revise one's own output is foundational to improvement. Taken together, these theoretical lenses, constructivist epistemology, social interactionism, cognitive load management, and self-regulated learning, provide the FC model with a robust and complementary theoretical foundation that is uniquely well-suited to the demands of EFL productive skill development.

2.3 Writing in EFL Contexts

Writing is widely recognized as among the most cognitively demanding and pedagogically complex of the four language skills, requiring the integrated deployment of linguistic, rhetorical, and cognitive resources in the service of sustained, purposeful communication (Burns & Siegel, 2018). In EFL contexts, this complexity is compounded by learners' need to navigate an additional linguistic system while simultaneously managing the meta-cognitive demands of composition: organizing ideas, sustaining coherence, and attending to genre conventions. Unlike speaking, which emerges through naturalistic interaction, writing must be explicitly and systematically taught; it does not develop incidentally as a by-product of exposure.

The challenges EFL learners face in writing have been extensively documented and are most productively understood as operating across three interrelated dimensions (Byrne, 1991): the psychological, which encompasses the anxiety of composing without immediate interlocutor feedback and the vulnerability inherent in committing thought to a permanent, evaluable record; the linguistic, which concerns the accurate selection of forms, structures, and vocabulary appropriate to the communicative context; and the cognitive, which involves the higher-order processes of planning, generating, organizing, and revising ideas. These dimensions interact dynamically, such that difficulty in one often exacerbates challenges in the others.

Despite its undeniable centrality for academic and professional advancement, writing has historically occupied a subordinate position in EFL curricula, often treated as a vehicle for grammar reinforcement rather than a communicative skill in its own right. This marginalization is increasingly recognized as pedagogically untenable. As Harmer (2004) notes, writing demands instruction that addresses not only its technical dimensions, such as grammar, mechanics, sentence structure, but also its rhetorical and compositional dimensions, including argumentation, coherence, and contextual appropriateness. In a globalized communicative landscape, the capacity to write with clarity, precision, and cultural sensitivity has become an essential competency, extending well beyond academic settings into professional, civic, and intercultural spheres.

The flipped classroom offers distinctive affordances for writing development that directly address these challenges. By delivering instruction on grammatical structures, essay organization, or genre conventions in the pre-class phase, the FC frees in-class time for the interactive, feedback-rich activities like peer review, guided drafting, collaborative revision, that research consistently identifies as most effective for compositional growth. Learners arrive in class having already processed foundational content, enabling them to engage in more substantive, higher-order writing tasks with reduced cognitive load and greater readiness for productive collaboration. The FC thus transforms writing instruction from a largely solitary, grammar-focused exercise into a socially embedded, iterative process of meaning-making and communicative refinement.

2.4 Speaking in EFL Contexts

Speaking is frequently identified as the most communicatively salient of the language skills, serving as the primary medium through which learners demonstrate and enact their linguistic competence in real time (Thornbury, 2005). Yet its development is also among the most challenging to support pedagogically: oral production demands the simultaneous coordination of phonological accuracy, syntactic fluency, lexical precision, and pragmatic appropriateness, all under conditions of

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real-time pressure and social exposure. For many EFL learners, this combination generates performance anxiety that significantly constrains oral participation, irrespective of underlying linguistic knowledge.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles identify authentic interaction, collaborative task engagement, and learner autonomy as the primary catalysts for speaking development. Learners improve their oral competence not through passive observation of language use but through sustained, purposeful participation in communicative tasks that require negotiation of meaning, uptake of interlocutor feedback, and reflective attention to the relationship between form and function (Nunan, 2003). These conditions are precisely what conventional, teacher-fronted classrooms struggle to provide consistently, given constraints of class size, time, and the structural tendency toward teacher-dominant talk.

The flipped classroom addresses these structural limitations by systematically expanding the proportion of class time available for student-centered communicative engagement. When learners have already encountered and processed target language forms, vocabulary, and discourse conventions through pre-class multimedia input, in-class time can be wholly devoted to the kind of sustained, interactive oral practice that most effectively develops fluency, confidence, and communicative competence. The teacher's role shifts from primary information provider to facilitator and coach, enabling more individualized feedback, more responsive scaffolding, and a richer ecology of peer interaction. This reorientation aligns the speaking classroom with the principles of communicative pedagogy in ways that traditional instruction rarely achieves.

3- Method

This study employs an integrative meta-synthesis methodology, combining elements of systematic review and narrative synthesis to construct a theoretically grounded and pedagogically coherent account of the flipped classroom's impact on EFL productive skills. Unlike quantitative meta-analysis, which aggregates effect sizes across studies, meta-synthesis seeks to interpret, explain, and integrate findings across a body of qualitative and mixed-methods research, generating new conceptual understanding rather than statistical summaries (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2006). This approach is appropriate given the heterogeneity of research designs, instructional contexts, and outcome measures represented in the extant literature on flipped EFL instruction.

3.1 Search Strategy and Databases

A systematic search was conducted across four major academic databases: ERIC, Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, Dimensions.ai, and ProQuest. The search was conducted using the following terms, applied individually and in combination: "flipped classroom," "inverted classroom," "flipped learning," "EFL," "English as a Foreign Language," "speaking skills," "writing skills," "productive skills," "intercultural awareness," "intercultural competence," "language production," and "self-regulated learning." Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to refine and combine search terms. The temporal scope of the search was restricted to publications from January 2016 to December 2025 to ensure contemporary relevance and alignment with the digital learning contexts in which the FC model has matured.

3.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they (a) focused on the use of the FC model in EFL or ESL instructional settings; (b) examined outcomes related to speaking proficiency, writing development, or intercultural awareness; (c) employed peer-reviewed empirical methods, including quantitative, qualitative, or mixed designs; (d) were published in English-language academic journals or edited scholarly volumes; and (e) were published within the 2016–2025

timeframe. Studies were excluded if they focused exclusively on receptive skills without addressing productive skill outcomes, if they involved non-language disciplines without clear relevance to EFL pedagogy, or if they lacked sufficient methodological transparency to permit meaningful synthesis.

3.3 Study Selection and Corpus

Initial database searches yielded over 300 potentially relevant titles. Following removal of duplicates, title and abstract screening reduced the pool to approximately 120 full-text articles, which were then evaluated for compliance with all inclusion criteria. This process resulted in a final corpus of 53 peer-reviewed empirical studies: 34 focused on EFL writing instruction and 19 on speaking development, spanning quasi-experimental, experimental, mixed-methods, action research, and systematic review designs. The selection process was guided throughout by adherence to the PRISMA principles of transparent and reproducible reporting (Moher et al., 2009).

3.4 Analytical Procedures

The analytical process proceeded through iterative close readings of the 53 selected studies. During an initial reading phase, each study was documented according to author, year, research design, educational level, geographical context, instructional approach, and reported outcomes. In a second analytical phase, studies were conceptually grouped according to recurring themes, including learner engagement, affective outcomes, self-regulation, digital mediation, and intercultural gains, and examined for patterns, convergences, and contradictions across contexts. Special attention was paid to the nature and design of flipped interventions, the specific productive skills targeted, and any documented intercultural dimensions of the instructional experience. This integrative approach allowed for the construction of a synthesized interpretation that transcends individual study findings and illuminates broader pedagogical trends.

4- Results and Discussion

4.1 The Flipped Classroom and EFL Writing Development

Table 1 provides a chronological synthesis of 34 empirical studies examining the impact of flipped instruction on EFL writing proficiency, spanning the period from 2016 to 2025.

Table 1: Summary of Empirical Studies on Flipped Classroom Instruction and EFL Writing Proficiency (2016–2025)

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No.	Author(s)	Year	Research Design	Key Findings
1	Atin & Abdul Aziz	2025	Quantitative (questionnaire, writing performance)	Flipped classroom improved writing skills in ESL primary pupils; strong TAM-based learner acceptance.
2	Behforouz & Al Ghaithi	2025	Quasi-experimental (pre/post-tests, autonomy questionnaire)	Blended flipped learning outperformed fully online instruction on writing skills and learner autonomy.
3	Chitambram & Sazalli	2025	Systematic review	Strong evidence for flipped classrooms in primary ESL writing across fluency, grammar, and vocabulary.
4	Ariani et al.	2024	Quasi-experimental (Two-Way ANOVA)	Flipped Digital Classroom raised writing scores by 18 points; highly engaged learners benefited most.
5	Lu & Samah	2024	Mixed-methods (tests, questionnaires)	Improved business English writing performance; intrinsic motivation rose despite decline in extrinsic motivation.
6	Muluk & Dahliana	2024	Mixed-methods (survey, interviews)	Learners held positive attitudes toward flipped instruction but writing gains were not consistently significant.
7	Putri et al.	2024	Quasi-experimental (ANOVA)	Improved sentence structure and mechanics; no significant overall interaction effect ($p = 0.12$).
8	Chai & Hamid	2024	Experimental (SPSS analysis)	Flipped learning significantly enhanced narrative writing compared to traditional instruction ($p < 0.05$).
9	AlAdl	2023	Experimental (pre/post-tests, questionnaire)	Flipped classrooms improved IELTS Task 2 essay quality; learners reported heightened sense of empowerment.
10	Mohammad & Khan	2023	Quasi-experimental (pre/post-tests)	Significant gains in topic sentence construction, supporting details, and grammatical accuracy.
11	Nissa et al.	2023	Quasi-experimental (Google Docs collaboration)	Improved writing coherence ($p < 0.01$); promoted active and collaborative learning.
12	Rahim & Wahi	2023	Action research (pre/post-tests, interviews)	Low-proficiency ESL learners improved sentence construction and reported increased writing confidence.
13	Yazán-Guamá et al.	2023	Pre-experimental (paired t-tests)	Writing scores improved by 20% following flipped intervention.

14	Huang et al.	2023	Quantitative (pre/post-tests, questionnaire)	Flipped model enhanced writing achievement and reduced stress; learners developed greater self-directedness.
15	Sharom & Na	2022	Quasi-experimental (tests, questionnaire)	Flipped instruction boosted writing performance and motivation, though no significant correlation between the two.
16	Andewi & Hastomo	2022	Quasi-experimental (Multifactor ANOVA)	Flipped classrooms outperformed traditional settings ($p < 0.05$); high-motivation learners excelled most.
17	Fathi et al.	2022	Mixed-methods (tests, interviews)	Improved writing organization, language use, and motivation ($p < 0.05$).
18	Indayani et al.	2022	Quasi-experimental (WhatsApp-based)	Statistically significant writing improvement ($p < 0.05$) via mobile-based flipped instruction.
19	Moussaoui & Moubtassime	2022	Quasi-experimental (t-tests)	Significant gains in paragraph writing quality ($p < 0.01$).
20	Shooli et al.	2022	Quasi-experimental (questionnaire, essays)	Higher post-test scores and positive learner attitudes ($p < 0.001$).
21	Lahmar	2022	Quasi-experimental & descriptive (pre/post-tests, questionnaire)	Flipped instruction improved paragraph writing and motivation; learners held positive attitudes toward the approach.
22	Siswanto	2021	Pre-experimental (pre/post-tests)	Mean writing score increased by 26.22 points following flipped intervention.
23	Hidayat & Praseno	2021	Experimental (Edpuzzle integration)	Writing achievement improved by 17% with a 30.5% rise in learner participation.
24	Barakat	2021	Quasi-experimental (pre/post-tests)	Large effect size on essay writing quality and learner attitudes.
25	Kolski & Florence	2021	Action research (mixed methods)	Enhanced writing quality, engagement, and positive learner perceptions of the flipped model.
26	Su Ping et al.	2020	Qualitative (interviews)	Learners reported better preparation, higher engagement, and stronger self-efficacy; some expressed time management concerns.
27	Aydemir Altas & Mede	2020	Quasi-experimental (mixed ANOVA)	Improved advanced writing skills ($p < 0.05$); no significant effect on self-regulated learning.
28	Fathi & Rahimi	2020	Quasi-experimental (ANCOVA, Mann-Whitney U)	Improved global writing fluency ($p < 0.05$); no significant gains in syntactic complexity.

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29	Sarani et al.	2020	Quasi-experimental (t-tests, ANCOVA)	Experimental group outperformed control in content, organization, and vocabulary ($p < 0.05$).
30	Sukerti & Rudiastari	2020	Classroom action research (SPSS)	Strong correlation ($r = 0.856\text{--}0.889$) between flipped learning engagement and writing performance.
31	Norazmi	2017	Quantitative (questionnaire)	High learner engagement across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions.
32	Hsieh et al.	2017	Mixed methods (tests, interviews, observations)	Flipped instruction improved idiomatic writing, motivation, and oral production.
33	Gasmi & Thomas	2016	Mixed-methods (questionnaires, interviews)	Emotional and behavioral engagement strongly linked to cognitive writing gains.
34	Elfatah & Ali	2016	Experimental (pre/post-tests)	Experimental group significantly outperformed control in EFL writing ($p < 0.05$).

Across the 34 studies reviewed, a consistent and compelling pattern emerges: flipped classroom instruction yields meaningful gains in EFL writing proficiency, encompassing improvements in grammatical accuracy, organizational coherence, paragraph development, and compositional fluency. This finding holds across diverse educational levels, from primary (Atin & Abdul Aziz, 2025; Chitambram & Sazalli, 2025) to tertiary (AlAdl, 2023; Fathi & Rahimi, 2020), and across geographically and culturally varied EFL contexts in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, North Africa, and Latin America. The breadth and consistency of these outcomes lend considerable weight to the claim that flipped instruction is not merely a logistical innovation but a substantive pedagogical shift with meaningful consequences for writing development.

The theoretical mechanisms underlying these gains are illuminated by the systematic application of the FC's structural logic. By positioning input delivery, grammar instruction, model texts, organizational frameworks, in the pre-class phase, flipped instruction reduces the cognitive load that learners must manage during writing tasks. In line with Sweller's (1988) Cognitive Load Theory, this sequential structuring enables learners to arrive in class with a foundation of processed knowledge, freeing working memory for the higher-order compositional demands of drafting, arguing, and revising. Studies by Fathi et al. (2022), Sarani et al. (2020), and Moussaoui and Moubtassime (2022) demonstrate statistically significant improvements in precisely those dimensions of writing, content quality, textual organization, vocabulary selection, that are most directly associated with higher-order cognitive processing. These findings are consistent with a constructivist account of learning: when learners engage with content before class and then apply it in interactive, feedback-rich environments, they construct knowledge more deeply and durably than through passive classroom reception.

A salient secondary theme across the reviewed literature is the affective dimension of writing in flipped environments. Learners consistently report reduced writing anxiety, increased motivation, and heightened self-confidence when working in FC contexts. Huang et al. (2023)

document that flipped instruction in a college writing course simultaneously improved performance and reduced stress; they attribute these gains to the opportunity for repeated pre-class exposure and the supportive peer-collaboration structures characterizing in-class sessions. Similarly, Barakat (2021) and Kolski and Florence (2021) report that learners experienced a greater sense of ownership and agency over their writing, qualities that social constructivist theory (Vygotsky) identifies as foundational to sustained skill development. These affective gains are not simply incidental; they are integral to writing development, given the well-documented relationship between writing anxiety and compositional performance in second language contexts.

Digital mediation constitutes a third significant dimension of the evidence. Studies by Indayani et al. (2022), Nissa et al. (2023), and Hidayat and Praseno (2021) corroborate that platforms such as WhatsApp, Google Docs, and Edpuzzle enhance the continuity and flexibility of flipped writing instruction by enabling collaborative drafting, asynchronous feedback, and multimodal engagement with input materials. Lahmar (2022) illustrates how Google Classroom-mediated pre-class input enabled secondary school learners to engage in more focused, teacher-supported writing activities during class, with positive effects on both output quality and learner autonomy. These technological affordances support the self-regulated learning processes, involving planning, monitoring, and revising, that Zimmerman (2002) identifies as essential to competent writing development.

Nonetheless, the evidence is not uniformly positive, and important qualifications are necessary. Muluk and Dahliana (2024) and Putri et al. (2024) report that while learner attitudes toward flipped instruction were broadly positive, writing performance gains were either modest or statistically non-significant, which suggests that attitudinal acceptance does not automatically translate into measurable improvement. This divergence points to the importance of instructional design quality, teacher facilitation, and learner readiness as critical moderating variables. The effectiveness of flipped writing instruction is not inherent to the model itself but contingent on the deliberateness with which pre-class content is selected, the richness of in-class collaborative activities, and the adequacy of technological infrastructure. Future research should attend more carefully to these contextual moderators, particularly as FC implementation extends to low-resource and low-proficiency settings.

4.2 Flipping the Script: A Decade of Research on Flipped Classroom Instruction for EFL Speaking Development

Table 2 presents a chronological synthesis of 19 empirical studies examining the impact of flipped instruction on EFL speaking proficiency across the period from 2017 to 2025.

Table 2: Summary of Empirical Studies on Flipped Classroom Instruction and EFL Speaking Proficiency (2017–2025)

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No.	Author(s)	Year	Research Design	Key Findings
1	Muluk et al.	2025	Mixed-methods (questionnaire, reflections)	Virtual flipped classrooms enhanced speaking skills and reduced anxiety; some dissatisfaction with limited social presence.
2	Irianti et al.	2024	Quasi-experimental (2-factor ANOVA)	Flipped classroom improved public speaking, particularly for learners with stronger critical thinking skills.
3	Zhong	2024	Review study	Strong association between flipped learning, EFL speaking, and learner engagement.
4	Zhong	2024	Interpretive qualitative (journals, interviews)	Flipped classroom improved self-regulation and speaking proficiency through content design and teacher support.
5	Sutrisno et al.	2024	Narrative qualitative (diary, interview)	Teachers identified flipped classrooms as effective for improving speaking and promoting active participation.
6	Halimatun Rosyidah	2022	Case study (interviews, questionnaires)	Learners reported increased confidence and speaking proficiency; valued the flexibility of pre-class preparation.
7	Pratiwi et al.	2022	Quasi-experimental (video-based pre/post-test)	Flipped classroom improved speaking and promoted engagement in online learning environments.
8	Santhanasamy & Melor	2022	Systematic literature review (39 studies)	Self-regulation, interaction, and achievement identified as key flipped learning outcomes for speaking.
9	Marliana	2022	Quasi-experimental (SPSS)	Significant speaking improvement in the flipped group compared to the control ($p < 0.05$).
10	Rosy Halimatun Rosyidah	2022	Case study (qualitative)	Learners perceived flipped learning as effective for developing public speaking and encouraging flexible learning habits.
11	Sohaya et al.	2021	R&D (validation + learning outcomes)	Flipped learning media validated and found effective for improving speaking performance.
12	Putu et al.	2021	Mixed-methods (speaking test, interviews)	E-portfolios in flipped classrooms enhanced speaking skill development and learner engagement.
13	Sudarmaji et al.	2021	Quasi-experimental (online video conferencing)	Fully online flipped classroom improved speaking and fostered learner confidence.
14	Lahmar & Khallout	2021	Descriptive (student and teacher questionnaires)	Flipped classroom enhanced learners' speaking skills, motivation, and communicative engagement.
15	Turan & Akdag-Cimen	2020	Systematic review (43 studies)	Flipped classrooms in ELT improved speaking and writing; majority of studies reported positive outcomes.

16	Ismail et al.	2019	Quasi-experimental (pre/post-tests, interviews)	Flipped classroom significantly improved speaking performance, engagement, and learner commitment.
17	Chen & Hwang	2019	Quasi-experimental (concept mapping strategy)	Improved speaking performance, reduced anxiety, and enhanced critical thinking awareness.
18	Amiryousefi	2019	Controlled comparative study (3 groups, mixed tools)	Flipped learning enhanced L2 speaking, listening, and out-of-class participation.
19	Hsieh et al.	2017	Mixed methods (tests, interviews, observations)	Improved idiomatic fluency, learner motivation, and oral production through flipped instruction.

4.2.1 *Affective Outcomes: Anxiety Reduction and Motivational Enhancement*

One of the most consistently documented outcomes across the speaking-focused literature is the reduction of speaking anxiety and the associated enhancement of learner confidence. For many EFL learners, the prospect of unrehearsed oral performance in a foreign language constitutes a major source of affective stress that constrains participation and inhibits communicative development. The FC model addresses this challenge structurally: by providing pre-class exposure to target linguistic content, discourse models, and task expectations, it enables learners to rehearse, reflect, and prepare before being asked to perform publicly. Muluk et al. (2025), Chen and Hwang (2019), and Ismail et al. (2019) each document significant reductions in speaking anxiety alongside improved oral performance, indicating that the affective and cognitive dimensions of speaking development are reciprocally reinforcing within flipped instructional contexts. From an SRL perspective, this preparation phase develops learners' metacognitive monitoring and self-efficacy, particularly the belief in one's capacity to execute the task, which is an established predictor of oral performance quality (Zimmerman, 2002).

4.2.2 *Cognitive Engagement: Critical Thinking and Self-Regulation*

Beyond affective outcomes, the reviewed studies reveal that flipped instruction fosters deeper cognitive engagement with oral language tasks. Chen and Hwang's (2019) investigation of concept mapping as a pre-class preparation strategy unveiled that structured cognitive planning enhanced both learners' argumentation quality and their capacity to organize and sustain coherent oral discourse, all of which are competencies that lie at the intersection of linguistic and critical thinking development. Zhong's (2024) interpretive qualitative study similarly found that when learners engaged in reflective journaling and teacher-guided self-regulation as part of a flipped speaking course, both their metacognitive awareness and their oral performance improved substantively. These findings illuminate that the FC model's impact on speaking extends beyond vocabulary and pronunciation gains to encompass the higher-order discourse capacities that characterize advanced communicative competence.

Santhanasamy and Melor's (2022) systematic review of 39 studies identifies self-regulation, meaningful peer interaction, and academic achievement as the three most consistently reported outcomes of flipped speaking instruction. Those identified merits of FC offer broad empirical validation for the theoretical arguments advanced in Section 2. Learners in flipped speaking courses exhibited greater initiative in preparing for class, more sustained engagement during in-class tasks, and stronger capacity to monitor and revise their oral output, all of which are consistent with the SRL framework's emphasis on goal-directed, metacognitively informed language behavior.

4.2.3 Technological Mediation and Contextual Variability

A third analytical theme concerns the role of technological tools in mediating speaking development within flipped environments. Studies by Amiryousefi (2019), Putu et al. (2021), and Pratiwi et al. (2022) lend credence to the claim that digital platforms, ranging from e-portfolios and instant messaging applications (Telegram, LINE) to video-conferencing tools, can significantly enhance learner access to input materials, support asynchronous speaking practice, and enable formative feedback between in-class sessions. Muluk et al. (2025) extend this analysis to virtual flipped classroom contexts, finding that while synchronous online delivery effectively enhanced speaking skills and reduced anxiety, some learners reported dissatisfaction with the reduced social presence of virtual environments, a finding that underscores the importance of interactional warmth and community-building in oral skills instruction, regardless of medium.

Contextual variability also emerges as a critical analytical concern. Irianti et al.'s (2024) quasi-experimental study reveals that the benefits of flipped speaking instruction were significantly moderated by learners' critical thinking capacities, with higher-order thinkers manifesting greater gains from the model. This finding brings into light the importance of instructional design that scaffolds thinking processes alongside linguistic content, ensuring that the FC model's cognitive demands are accessible to learners across proficiency levels. Similarly, the comparative analysis of Amiryousefi's (2019) three-group design, contrasting flipped, conventional, and hybrid conditions, evidences that full flipped instruction produced remarkably stronger speaking gains than partial or conventional approaches, which signals that fidelity to the FC model's structural principles is consequential for outcome quality.

4.3 Intercultural Awareness in Flipped EFL Environments

While the primary focus of the reviewed literature is on linguistic skill development, a meaningful subset of studies documents the emergence of intercultural awareness as a by-product of flipped EFL instruction. This section synthesizes evidence concerning how intercultural competence is conceptualized, measured, and cultivated within FC environments, arguing that what appears as "incidental" intercultural development may in fact be a systematic outcome of the model's structural and pedagogical affordances.

4.3.1 Conceptualization and Emergence of Intercultural Awareness

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC), as theorized by Byram (1997), entails the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable individuals to communicate effectively and respectfully across cultural boundaries. In EFL contexts, its development requires not only exposure to culturally diverse content but also the kind of reflective, dialogic engagement that capacitates learners to critically examine their own cultural assumptions and develop empathetic interpretive frameworks. The FC model, with its emphasis on self-directed engagement with diverse multimedia inputs and collaborative in-class discussion, creates conditions that are broadly conducive to such development, even when ICC is not explicitly foregrounded in instructional objectives.

Lahmar and Khallout (2021) provide among the most direct evidence of ICC emergence within a flipped EFL context, documenting the progressive development of learners' capacity to navigate intercultural dialogue across a series of flipped discussion tasks. As learners engaged with culturally rich video materials in the pre-class phase and then discussed, debated, and reflected on cultural scenarios in class, they exhibited increasing sophistication in

recognizing cultural relativity and articulating cross-cultural perspectives. Similarly, Hsieh et al. (2017) observe that the integration of authentic, culturally diverse input materials in a flipped speaking and writing course fostered heightened sensitivity to cultural nuance, particularly as learners engaged in comparative analysis of language use across cultural contexts. Soto-Molina and Méndez-Rivera (2021) further document that reflective writing tasks embedded within a flipped curriculum prompted learners to interrogate cultural stereotypes and develop more nuanced understandings of intercultural communication.

4.3.2 Measurement and Methodological Considerations

A significant limitation in the current evidence base is the inconsistency with which intercultural outcomes are conceptualized and measured across studies. Many studies rely on self-report questionnaires or reflective journals that capture learners' subjective perceptions of cultural learning rather than employing validated instruments specifically designed to assess ICC dimensions. Few studies apply structured frameworks, such as Byram's (1997) five-component ICC model or Deardorff's (2006) process model of intercultural competence, to systematically evaluate the nature and depth of intercultural gains. This methodological heterogeneity makes it difficult to draw strong comparative conclusions about the relative effectiveness of different FC designs in cultivating ICC, and it points to a significant lacuna in the research agenda.

4.3.3 Toward Deliberate Integration: From Incidental to Intentional

The weight of available evidence affirms that intercultural awareness emerges most robustly within FC environments when it is treated as a deliberate instructional objective rather than an incidental by-product. When teachers curate pre-class materials that include culturally diverse perspectives, design in-class tasks that explicitly invite comparative reflection, and structure feedback processes that attend to the cultural dimensions of communicative choices, the conditions for ICC development are substantially enriched. The FC model's structural affordances, mainly extended learner access to global content, peer collaboration across cultural backgrounds, and teacher-facilitated critical dialogue, constitute a powerful pedagogical ecology for intercultural learning when intentionally harnessed.

This has pivotal implications for curriculum design and teacher preparation. EFL instructors working within FC frameworks should be supported in developing the intercultural pedagogical literacy, including knowledge of ICC frameworks, skill in selecting culturally rich materials, and capacity to facilitate sensitive intercultural dialogue, necessary to leverage these affordances deliberately. As Byram (1997) argues, intercultural competence is not acquired through exposure alone but requires structured opportunities for critical reflection, comparative analysis, and empathetic engagement; the FC model, when designed with this understanding, can provide all three.

4.4 Implementation Challenges and Pedagogical Recommendations

4.4.1 Learner-Related Challenges

A recurrent finding across the reviewed literature is the difficulty some learners experience in adapting to the self-directed demands of flipped instruction. Learners socialized in teacher-centered educational cultures generally struggle with the metacognitive and time management skills required for consistent pre-class engagement (Al-Harbi & Alshumaimeri, 2016; Lee & Wallace, 2018). This challenge is particularly pronounced in speaking courses, where arriving unprepared for interactive oral tasks can provoke acute anxiety and withdrawal. Effective FC implementation therefore requires explicit learner training in self-regulation

strategies, digital literacy, and task preparation, supported by scaffolding tools such as guided viewing worksheets, reflection prompts, and clear task specifications (Hung, 2015).

4.4.2 Teacher-Related Challenges

Flipping the classroom places substantial new demands on teachers, who must not only design or curate pre-class content but also fundamentally redesign their in-class facilitation practices to maximize the interactive and communicative potential of contact time. Many EFL instructors, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels, report feeling underprepared for this transition, citing inadequate institutional support and insufficient time for content development (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020; Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Institutions seeking to support FC implementation should invest in sustained professional development, including collaborative communities of practice where teachers can co-develop materials, share facilitation strategies, and engage in reflective inquiry about their practice.

4.4.3 Technological and Equity Concerns

Persistent digital inequities represent a non-trivial structural constraint on FC implementation, particularly in under-resourced educational contexts where learners may lack reliable internet access or appropriate devices for pre-class video engagement (Basal, 2015). These constraints are not solely technical; they have direct equity implications, potentially disadvantaging already-marginalized learner populations who are unable to complete pre-class tasks consistently. Responsive FC design should prioritize content that is mobile-friendly, low-bandwidth compatible, and available in downloadable formats, while also providing alternative preparation pathways for learners with limited digital access.

4.4.4 Intercultural Sensitivity in Content Design

Incorporating culturally diverse content into flipped learning environments can enrich learners' intercultural development but also risks provoking discomfort or resistance when materials challenge deeply held cultural assumptions (Yildiz, 2021). Teachers must approach intercultural content with pedagogical sensitivity, framing cultural differences as objects of critical inquiry rather than sources of judgment, and creating classroom norms that support respectful, open-ended dialogue. Byram's (1997) framework for ICC development offers useful guidance here, bringing to the front the importance of developing learners' "critical cultural awareness", namely the capacity to evaluate cultural practices and perspectives through principled, comparative reflection rather than defensive or uncritical acceptance.

5- Conclusion

This meta-synthesis has critically examined the impact of the flipped classroom model on productive language skills development in EFL contexts, synthesizing evidence from 53 empirical studies published between 2016 and 2025. The findings provide robust support for the pedagogical value of flipped instruction in both speaking and writing domains, while also illuminating the conditions under which its effectiveness is maximized and the constraints that must be addressed for equitable and sustainable implementation.

In speaking-focused interventions, flipped instruction consistently expanded opportunities for learner-centered oral practice, reduced performance anxiety through structured preparation, and fostered the self-regulatory capacities that support long-term communicative development. In writing-focused implementations, it provided the scaffolded,

feedback-rich environments that enable learners to engage in iterative, higher-order compositional processes, with documented gains in organizational coherence, grammatical accuracy, and learner autonomy. Across both domains, the model's theoretical foundations in constructivism, social interactionism, cognitive load management, and self-regulated learning provide a coherent account of its mechanisms of effect.

A particularly key contribution of this synthesis is its integration of intercultural awareness as a substantive dimension of flipped EFL pedagogy, rather than a peripheral or incidental concern. The evidence reviewed attests to the fact that FC environments, with their emphasis on authentic multimodal input, dialogic collaboration, and reflective engagement, are inherently conducive to the development of intercultural sensitivity and critical cultural awareness when teachers design with intentionality and pedagogical literacy. This repositioning of intercultural competence from “incidental” to “integrated” within FC pedagogy represents both a theoretical refinement and a practical call to action for curriculum designers and language educators.

Several directions for future research emerge from this synthesis. First, longitudinal studies examining the sustained impact of flipped instruction on productive skill development and ICC would significantly strengthen the evidence base, which currently relies heavily on short-term experimental designs. Second, research that employs validated ICC instruments, such as Byram's (1997) ICC model or Deardorff's (2006) process framework, to measure intercultural outcomes in FC contexts would provide more robust and comparable evidence of cultural learning. Third, investigations of FC implementation in low-resource settings, and among low-proficiency learners, would address an important equity gap in the current literature. Finally, the integration of FC pedagogy with emerging technologies, including AI-assisted writing feedback and adaptive learning platforms, represents a promising frontier for research and practice, particularly as digital tools increasingly mediate the relationship between pre-class input and in-class productive engagement.

As global communication continues to demand both linguistic proficiency and intercultural agility, the flipped classroom model's capacity to simultaneously address both imperatives positions it as among the most pedagogically promising frameworks available to EFL educators. Its full potential, however, will only be realized through deliberate instructional design, sustained teacher development, and a commitment to equitable implementation across the diverse contexts in which EFL learners pursue the challenge of productive, intercultural communication.

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