Cambodian Journal of Educational Research
2024, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 8–34
https://doi.org/10.62037/cjer.2024.04.01.02

CAMBODIAN
EDUCATION
FORUM
A forum for education

Original Article

Cambodian EFL university students' perceptions of the flipped classroom: An action research study

Panharith Nat *

Royal University of Phnom Penh, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Received: September 15, 2023 *Revised: October 29, 2023* *Accepted: March 29, 2024*

Abstract

A flipped classroom model has been identified as a new classroom instruction in the 21st century. Since its emergence, the flipped classroom has been a subject of empirical studies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in various contexts. This action research study, adopting a qualitative approach, aimed to explore EFL university students' perceptions of implementing the flipped classroom model in writing classes in Cambodia. An online open-ended questionnaire was used to collect data from three Year 1 classes consisting of 104 students studying an academic writing course called Writing Skills 102 in the second semester of the foundation year of the academic year 2021-2022 at the Department of English of the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The findings revealed students' positive perceptions of the flipped classroom model despite some challenges. These findings solidify the benefits of the flipped classroom model on students' learning experiences, making it clear that the flipped classroom holds immense potential to solve writing instructional issues and transform EFL writing classrooms in the post-COVID-19 world.

Keywords: Flipped classroom; writing skills; perceptions; action research; Cambodia

* Panharith Nat ✉ nat.panharith@rupp.edu.kh 🖃 Department of English, Institute of Foreign Languages, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Russian Federation Boulevard, Toul Kork, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

© Cambodian Education Forum

Introduction

Writing involves generating ideas, drafting, editing, and revising, and it is the most challenging productive skill that most English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students find hard to learn (Pavanelli, 2018; Qader & Yalcin Arslan, 2019). This is because writing demands that students convey their thoughts through written language. Hence, they need to have good linguistic competence and be aware of the writing organization to compose a good piece of writing (Su Ping et al., 2020). However, many EFL students struggle to construct a good piece of writing due to their little knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, as well as their lack of understanding of the organization of the various writing genres (Chen, 2002). According to Pavanelli (2018), students' writing proficiency can be improved only when writing instruction provides enough time for writing practice, collaborative work, and revision after getting feedback from the teacher. However, class time is usually not enough for those activities (Burgos, 2017; Khoiriyah & Aji, 2017; Pavanelli, 2018; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017). Therefore, a flipped classroom model is believed to be an effective solution for these writing challenges. This is because flipped learning shifts the in-class lecture to recorded lecture videos to be delivered online outside the classroom (Pavanelli, 2018). Thus, students become more responsible for their own learning, making them more prepared and active in engaging in the in-class activities that help them gain a better understanding of the lesson (Pavanelli, 2018).

According to Bishop and Verleger (2013), a flipped classroom is defined as a new teaching approach in which students study the learning materials through recorded lectures at home and spend in-class time on discussion and communicative activities (see also Putra, 2021; Shih & Huang, 2020). As Pavanelli (2018) noted, by using the flipped classroom model in teaching writing, students can watch lecture videos outside the classroom and spend all the available in-class time for writing practice, immediate feedback from the teacher, and revision of their work. However, the effectiveness of flipped learning in English Language Teaching (ELT) is still a subject of many empirical studies, even if it has been implemented in various academic fields (Ekmekçi, 2017; Fauzan & Ngabut, 2018; Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021; Roth & Suppasetseree, 2016; Sheerah, 2022; Su Ping et al., 2020).

© Cambodian Education Forum

At present, although there have been many research studies conducted in various EFL contexts to investigate the impact of the flipped classroom on students' learning and explore students' perceptions of it (Fauzan & Ngabut, 2018; Güvenç, 2018; Sheerah, 2022; Sukerti et al., 2020), the use of the flipped classroom in teaching in the Cambodian context has only become popular in the post-pandemic context (Chat, 2023). However, research on the flipped classroom carried out in the EFL Cambodian context remains very limited (Nuon & Champakaew, 2017; Roth & Suppasetseree, 2016).

Against this background, this action research study aims to explore Cambodian university students' perceptions of the implementation of the flipped classroom in teaching writing skills by collecting data from students' reflections. Since the study was conducted utilizing an action research design, its findings cannot be generalized; however, the findings still offer additional empirical evidence on the impact of this flipped learning model on students' experiences in learning writing. Thus, this study concludes with some pedagogical implications for EFL teachers to employ this teaching approach in their language classroom.

Literature review

Approaches to teaching writing

Writing is an essential skill that EFL students need to learn for their academic and professional success (Ebron & Mabuan, 2021), but developing this skill is quite demanding. Therefore, teaching students, particularly those with limited linguistic competence and from diverse academic backgrounds, to write cohesive, coherent, and linguistically appropriate texts is an effortful task (Cumming, 1989; Firkins et al., 2007).

Harmer (2015) and other researchers, such as Jurianto et al. (2015) and Sari (2019), identified three common approaches to teaching writing in EFL classrooms, such as a product approach, a process approach, and a genre-based approach. First, a product approach is a traditional teaching approach that focuses on students' final product, meaning that students are asked to produce a piece of writing after getting exposed to a model text. Second, a process approach is another teaching writing approach that is concerned with different phases of writing. These phases include drafting, reviewing, and revising before students can produce a final piece of writing. Last, the genre-based

© Cambodian Education Forum

approach is another common approach to teaching writing. In this approach, students are given many model texts of a specific genre to analyze to identify linguistic features and situational contexts in which genres are developed before they can begin to construct their writing (Sari, 2019). Thus, these are the teaching writing approaches that have been employed by EFL teachers.

All the above approaches are helpful for students to develop their writing; however, each of them has some drawbacks as well. For example, the genre-based approach is believed to stimulate students to be imitators and to take away students' creativity in writing (Harmer, 2015). On the other hand, a process approach emphasizes different steps in writing, but it is time-consuming (Harmer, 2015). Since writing is a process of drafting, editing, and revising (Harmer, 2015), teaching writing following the process approach is challenging because class time is insufficient for students to complete those writing processes (Burgos, 2017; Khoiriyah & Aji, 2017; Pavanelli, 2018; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017). Therefore, the flipped classroom model has been implemented in EFL classrooms to help students develop and improve their writing ability and create a better learning atmosphere for EFL students to learn writing skills (Ekmekçi, 2017; Fauzan & Ngabut, 2018; Güvenç, 2018; Pavanelli, 2018; Putra, 2021; Sheerah, 2022; Su Ping et al., 2020; Sukerti et al., 2020).

The flipped classroom approach

The flipped classroom was first implemented by two high school chemistry teachers in 2007 in the United States, and it was intended for students who were absent from classes to catch up with their peers by watching the lessons at home (Özkurkudïs & Bümen, 2019). After that, Bergmann and Sams (2012) found out that students who were present in the class also watched the videos at home when they still could not understand the lessons. Since then, the flipped classroom model has emerged and become popular in various fields of education, especially in ELT since 2014 (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020).

The flipped classroom is defined as a new way of teaching where students are required to watch recorded lectures or online videos at home and then come to class to discuss the lesson and complete tasks that help them better understand it (Putra, 2021; Shih & Huang, 2020). Similarly, based on Bishop and Verleger's (2013) description, the flipped classroom involves doing interactive activities in the classroom and watching assigned videos asynchronously at home.

© Cambodian Education Forum

In ELT, the flipped learning model is a suitable classroom instruction for writing classes. As Harmer (2015) stated, writing is better seen as a process of planning, writing, editing, and revising before students can produce a final written draft. Thus, the flipped classroom allows the teacher and students to use classroom time more effectively and efficiently to specifically focus on writing practice in an active and collaborative learning environment that allows them to exchange opinions with each other (Pavanelli, 2018; Roach, 2014). It is because the students have already watched the pre-recorded videos on the organization and model of the writing at their own pace before they come to class. Therefore, this enhances students' writing skills as they can receive immediate guidance and feedback from their teacher and peers on their writing, allowing them to correct their mistakes and create a better piece of writing (Pavanelli, 2018). Given this, flipped learning best fits with the EFL writing class.

Research on the flipped classroom

Many research studies have been conducted in various EFL contexts to investigate the impact of the flipped classroom on students' writing ability and to explore students' perceptions of this teaching approach. Fauzan and Ngabut (2018) and Sheerah (2022), who conducted quantitative and mixed-method studies with university students in Indonesia and Saudi Arabia, respectively, found that the flipped classroom allowed students to be flexible in their learning, making them perceive this approach positively in developing their writing skills and enhancing their communication, commitment, and self-reliance. Other studies found that students in the flipped writing class had better writing proficiency than those in the traditional writing class (Ekmekçi, 2017; Sheerah, 2022). The flipped learning model was also found to motivate students to write, make them engage more in class, foster learning, and promote collaboration and autonomy in learning, thus making them show positive attitudes toward this teaching approach (Ekmekçi, 2017; Güvenç, 2018; Su Ping et al., 2020; Sukerti et al., 2020). From these findings, it can be concluded that the flipped classroom can establish a flexible and enjoyable learning environment, which can, in turn, enhance student motivation, foster collaboration and engagement, encourage independent learning, and improve students' learning outcomes in learning EFL writing.

© Cambodian Education Forum

However, some challenges associated with flipped learning must also be noted. Internet connection was found to be a major problem for students in the flipped classroom (Ekmekçi, 2017; Sheerah, 2022). This created a frustrating learning experience that was difficult for students to adapt to (Güvenç, 2018; Sukerti et al., 2020). Sheerah (2022) also pointed out that technological issues (i.e., a lack of technical support or guidance on the use of learning systems) were an issue students encountered in the flipped classroom in addition to having a heavy workload. A similar finding was reported by Ekmekçi (2017), who addressed students' dissatisfaction with the time-consuming nature of watching video lessons. These studies which focused on using the flipped classroom for teaching writing have indicated that the flipped learning approach had a positive impact on students' attitudes and their overall academic performance, despite some difficulties related to technological use and learning adaptability.

The flipped classroom in the Cambodian context

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many educational institutions worldwide have adopted online teaching and learning (Heng & Sol, 2021; Sun, 2020), and Cambodia is no exception. This sudden shift from physical to virtual classrooms was seen as a golden opportunity to digitalize and reform the country's educational system (Heng, 2020, 2021); however, this new learning experience presented considerable challenges to teachers and students (Heng & Sol, 2021). Key challenges included poor internet connection, a lack of technological devices and digital literacy, difficult adaptation and concentration, heavy workloads, and psychological issues (Chan & Sarik, 2020; Chet et al., 2022; Heng & Sol, 2021; Heng et al., 2023).

Various research studies have been carried out to explore Cambodian students' perceptions of online learning. In a mixed-method study conducted with 440 university students in one public university, Chan and Sarik (2020) found that a majority of students did not want to continue studying online, whereas Chet et al.'s (2022) survey with 1,002 undergraduate students revealed the same result, that is, most students (81.4%) did not wish to study online anymore, and 62.5% of them reported that online education negatively affected their learning. From these findings, it can be inferred that Cambodian students are not fully ready for online learning, given their low perceptions of this teaching approach. The reasons behind this unfavorable perception are a poor internet connection, low digital literacy, a lack of digital devices, a lack of self-motivation, difficulty

© Cambodian Education Forum

in concentration, a lack of self-regulation, concerns about the usefulness of online learning, difficulty in lesson comprehension, and discouraging learning environments (Chan & Sarik, 2020; Chet et al., 2022; Heng & Sol, 2021; Heng et al., 2023). The difficulty in adjusting to online learning, as Sun (2020) explained, was due to heavy reliance on teachers as a resource for learning. Thus, learning remotely without any peer and/or teacher interaction made online learning a stressful and frustrating experience for many Cambodian students (Sun, 2020). Given the fact that students did not want to continue online learning, Chan and Sarik (2020) suggested that blended learning should be considered as an effective learning approach. Heng et al. (2023) made a similar suggestion after finding that most Cambodian university students preferred blended learning to online or face-to-face learning.

Given its many benefits, the flipped classroom model, a kind of blended learning, seems suitable for the Cambodian context, particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Chat, 2023; Heng et al., 2023). However, it is worth noting that flipped classroom instruction is still a new teaching approach for many Cambodian students. Roth and Suppasetseree (2016) used the flipped classroom to teach English listening skills to Cambodian students. Their study examined the impact of the flipped classroom on 30 Cambodian pre-university students, and the results indicated that flipped learning improved students' English listening skills, making them feel satisfied with it and wish that other courses should be flipped as well. Another experimental study by Nuon and Champakaew (2017) who investigated the impact of the information and communication technology (ICT)-aided flipped classroom on 81 Cambodian university students showed that the flipped learning model significantly improved students' grammar achievement with a moderate effect size and made students independent learners due to the flexibility of the flipped classroom. In another mixed-method study conducted with 21 undergraduate students at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, Phoeun and Sengsri (2021) found that the flipped classroom used with a Communicative Language Teaching approach could enhance students' speaking skills and help students become active learners.

These studies have provided empirical evidence that indicates the feasibility and practicality of the flipped classroom approach in ELT in the Cambodian context. However, it is worth noting that research on the use of the flipped

© Cambodian Education Forum

classroom in ELT and other academic fields in Cambodia still remains limited, leaving a gap in the literature on the use or implementation of the flipped classroom in the Cambodian context. For this reason, the present study seeks to fill this gap by exploring EFL university students' perceptions of the implementation of the flipped classroom model in teaching writing skills. The findings of this research will offer insights for teachers, particularly Cambodian teachers, on the effectiveness and practicality of the flipped classroom model in teaching writing skills.

This study is guided by two research questions:

1. What are the perceived benefits of learning writing in the flipped classroom reported by Cambodian university students?
2. What are the perceived challenges reported by Cambodian university students in the implementation of the flipped classroom model in teaching writing?

Methodology

Research design

This study was designed as action research (Burns, 2009), aiming to assess teaching practices and rethink pedagogy to improve the teaching and learning environment. Although this study followed Elliott's (1991) action research model, it involved only the first cycle of his model. In this first cycle, some important steps were followed: (1) identifying and analyzing the problem; (2) forming and implementing the plan; (3) monitoring and reflecting on the implementation; and (4) revising the plan (Elliott, 1991).

As informed by a constructivist approach that views knowledge and reality as socially constructed and relative (Crotty, 1998), this action research study employed a qualitative approach. Using qualitative research, researchers can explore an issue about which little is known; thus, the researchers can have an opportunity to conduct an in-depth investigation of the participants' feelings, perceptions, and experiences regarding the issue being addressed (Creswell, 2007; Kumar, 2014).

© Cambodian Education Forum

Research setting and participants

This research was conducted at the Department of English of the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL), Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP). The study sample was three Year 1 classes (n = 104 students) out of 21 Year 1 classes of the academic year 2021-2022. The three classes were taught by the researcher. One class was in the morning shift, while the other two classes were in the afternoon. During the study, the participants were in the second semester of the foundation year, studying a writing course called Writing Skills 102. The course lasted 15 weeks (45 hours), and the students studied this course once a week, with a duration of three hours, equaling two sessions each week, and each session lasted 80 minutes.

The sample was recruited via convenient sampling. Among the 104 students who participated in reflection writing, 68% were female, and 64% were studying in the afternoon shift. These students are identified as S1, S2, S3, and so on (S1 = Student 1) when their quotes are extracted for explanation in the findings section. Table 1 provides demographic information about the participants.

Table 1. *Demographic information of the participants* (n = 104)

Demographic	Value	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	33	32%
	Female	71	68%
Year of study	Year 1	104	100%
Study session	Morning shift	37	36%
	Afternoon shift	67	64%

Implementation of the flipped classroom instruction

In accordance with Putra's (2021) and Shih and Huang's (2020) definition of the flipped classroom, and Bishop and Verleger's (2013) description of this model, the flipped classroom instruction was implemented in this study as follows.
After six weeks of receiving in-class lectures and practice on how to write topic, supporting, and concluding sentences, it was noticed that the two sessions each week were not enough for students to practice writing, receive feedback from peers and the teacher, and revise their work. Hence, students were introduced

© Cambodian Education Forum

to the "flipped classroom." The purpose of this implementation was to provide more classroom time for students to practice writing.

The students were briefed about what the flipped classroom was and how they would study in the flipped classroom in the remaining weeks of the semester. During the nine weeks of the implementation, students were required to watch YouTube videos from Worldwide Speak (http://www.youtube.com/@WorldwideSpeak). The videos were about the following types of paragraphs: (1) a definition paragraph, (2) a process analysis paragraph, (3) a descriptive paragraph, (4) an opinion paragraph, and (5) a narrative paragraph. Each video lasted between 10 and 20 minutes and was uploaded to OneDrive before each week's class. At first, the video was uploaded a week before class, but after three weeks, the video was uploaded three days before class. Since many students studied two degrees simultaneously, it was hard for them to watch the videos and prepare for class. Then, the videos were uploaded a week before class, as initially planned.

After the videos were uploaded to OneDrive, the students were informed through Telegram that they had a new video lecture to watch before they came to the next class. After watching the videos, the students were asked to write a reflection on what they had learned from the videos and submit it through Microsoft Forms. This was repeated during those nine weeks of implementation. When coming to class, the teacher spent between 5 and 10 minutes answering the questions the students asked in Microsoft Forms after they watched the videos and submitted their reflections. If there were no questions, the teacher reviewed the format of the writing to ensure that the students had no doubts about it. After that, the remaining time of the class was for students to do the writing practice.

Students worked in small groups of three or four to produce a short piece of paragraph writing based on the assigned topic. While the students were doing the writing practice, the teacher monitored and provided assistance along the way. After they produced the first draft of their writing, their work was swapped with students from other groups to get their writing reviewed and commented on. This peer editing focused on grammatical structure, word use, and paragraph organization. Once this was done, the paper was returned, and the students had to revise their writing according to the comments they

© Cambodian Education Forum

received from their friends. During the revision stage, the teacher still walked around the class to scaffold the students if necessary. After they finished the revision, their papers were swapped with other groups for marking. All these activities were repeated every week during flipped classroom instruction.

Data collection

To collect data for this study, open-ended questions were used as a research instrument for students to reflect on their perceptions in the flipped classroom because using them can give researchers a chance to gain rich and detailed insights into the participants' perspectives and experiences on the subject matter (Kothari & Dubey, 2022).

After two weeks of the flipped classroom implementation, the students were asked to answer an open-ended question in Microsoft Forms to reflect on their experiences with learning to write in the flipped classroom. The question was, "Write one thing you like/dislike about studying in the flipped classroom." Three weeks later, another open-ended question was distributed through Microsoft Forms to find out students' challenges in the flipped classroom. The question was, "Write one challenge you have encountered when studying in the flipped classroom."

Data analysis

In this study, the data was collected twice using students' self-reflection (open-ended questions) of their experience in the flipped classroom. The first data collection received 91 responses from the students, whereas there were only 73 responses out of 104 students in the second data collection. After that, the data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet, coded, and categorized based on the themes that emerged from the analysis. Then, the data were presented with extracts of the students' exact comments. The analysis process followed six phases of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. These six phases include reading data for familiarization, coding the data, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing a research report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Because this study collected only students' reflections in the form of open-ended questions, presenting sufficiently authentic data helps establish the credibility and truthfulness of the findings (Güvenç, 2018; Mertova & Webster, 2019).

© Cambodian Education Forum

Ethical considerations

After the researcher received permission from the Head of the Department of English of the IFL, RUPP, he informed the students that they would be asked to share their views about learning writing in the flipped classroom, and their comments would be used as data for the research. They were also assured that they had the freedom to express their opinions regarding their learning experiences in the flipped classroom. This meant that their participation in this research was voluntary, and that would never affect their relationship with the researcher or their overall assessment. Further, their reflection would be used for this research purpose only, and no third party would have access to it. When analyzing, the researcher removed the participants' identities, and each participant was labeled as S1 (student 1), S2, S3, and so on when the data was reported. In addition, every word of the students' comments was kept the same without correcting any grammatical errors when the researcher analyzed and interpreted the data. Doing this can help the researcher keep the participants' identities anonymous and confidential (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015).

Findings

The analysis of the students' reflections from the open-ended questions yielded two main themes in relation to the two main categories: (1) perceived benefits of the flipped classroom and (2) perceived challenges when learning writing in the flipped classroom. These two themes corresponded to the two research questions guiding this study.

Perceived benefits of the flipped classroom

Some major themes from the reflection showed students' positive perceptions of their experiences in the flipped writing classroom. A majority of students reported feeling satisfied with this learning model due to the benefits they received when learning in the flipped writing class.

Increased preparation

A large number of students stated that the flipped classroom helped them prepare for class better because they had already studied what they were supposed to learn in the class, giving them a chance to prepare some questions

© Cambodian Education Forum

to ask the teacher and do some more research related to the lesson. The following are some comments from the students:

> *One thing that I like about your flipped teaching is that I can learn before a class starts and prepare some questions related to lessons.* (S1)
>
> *I like how this flipped teaching works. I can prepare myself for my next class about different paragraph writing and prepare the question to ask beforehand.* (S2)
>
> *One thing I like about the flipped classroom is that we can be well-prepared for the next class which is much easier.* (S3)
>
> *One thing I like about your flipped teaching is that I can learn before the class starts. I also know what I am unclear with and don't feel hesitant to ask.* (S4)
>
> *One thing I like about this flipped teaching is that the students can get to know the lesson first before class so they can prepare and understand more about the lessons … so they can prepare and understand more about the lessons.* (S5)

Improved learning

Students' reflections also focused on how this flipped classroom model helped improve their learning. They stated that the flipped classroom enhanced their understanding of the lesson because they got not only explanations from the videos but also from the teacher when they were in class. During the writing practice, they could ask the teacher questions and receive immediate feedback on their writing. Here are some comments from the students:

> *… when in the class, I can practice more and have the teacher beside me to ask the question or ask for an explanation.* (S6)
>
> *… I, along with my classmates, can be more focused on writing in class because the teacher is here to help whenever I have difficulty.* (S7)
>
> *… I have learned from the video and then at school you explain more about lessons. It helps me remember.* (S8)
>
> *… this type of teaching definitely makes me understand the lesson much better and easier to focus on.* (S9)
>
> *I like this kind of teaching method because it helps me understand the lesson faster than before.* (S10)

© Cambodian Education Forum

Learning flexibility

Most students mentioned how flexible they were when they learned in the flipped writing class. They stated that it was convenient for them to learn the lesson anywhere and watch the lesson videos as many times as they wanted. Below are some of their comments:

> *… when I missed some parts, I can watch your video again …* (S11)
>
> *One thing I like about your flipped class is that it is convenient to rewatch or keep the document, I could say I can watch anytime I want …* (S12)
>
> *… I can rewatch the video again at any time if I don't understand the lesson.* (S13)
>
> *One thing that I like about your flipped classroom is that I can replay the video and stop or pause the video many times to rewatch the part that I'm not sure about. …* (S14)
>
> *One thing I like about your lecture is that it's easy for me to rewatch the lesson whenever I want to …* (S15)

Learner autonomy

Most of the students reported that this flipped classroom encouraged them to learn independently at home to get themselves prepared for class, thus changing their learning habits. Here are some of their comments:

> *One thing I like about your flipped teaching is that we can spend more time learning at home, which allows us to spend our time studying.* (S16)
>
> *One more thing is that this teaching method encourages me to do self-study.* (S17)
>
> *One thing that I like about your dipped teaching is that it helps me study new things at home by myself.* (S18)
>
> *One thing I personally like about your flipped teaching is that it is useful for me to do the self-learning at home …* (S19)
>
> *Personally, it's quite useful since I had never reviewed the lesson before classes or exams. It helps me a lot with procrastination …* (S20)

© Cambodian Education Forum

Time efficacy

Time-saving was also what many students commented about learning in the flipped classroom. They stated that with the flipped classroom, they could have more time to practice their writing and receive feedback from the teacher and peers. Below are some remarks from the students:

> *… it is time-saving as we have enough time to practice in the class …* (S3)
>
> *And in the class, I can have more time to discuss my idea with my classmate and during class, we can exchange our ideas and help each other to correct our mistakes.* (S21)
>
> *The only thing that I like about your flipped teaching is saving a lot of time …* (S22)
>
> *I don't think I dislike this flipped teaching because it also helps a lot and saves time in the class also.* (S5)
>
> *… I get to practice more with you since we have more time in class.* (S23)

Perceived challenges of learning in the flipped classroom

Although the majority of students perceived their experiences in the flipped writing classroom positively, some of them expressed their dissatisfaction with learning writing in the flipped classroom. This dissatisfaction resulted from the challenges they faced when learning to write in the flipped classroom. Below are some of the perceived challenges that emerged from the analysis of the students' reflections.

Time management and heavy workload

Some students disliked this flipped instruction, stating that this new learning method was so frustrating when they did not have enough time to watch the video and prepare themselves before the class due to their heavy work. In addition, they stated that this flipped learning created more work for them to do, making it hard for them to handle. The following are some of their comments on this matter:

> *… I sometimes don't have enough time to listen and watch the videos as well as answer the questions.* (S24)
>
> *… I think it's too much work.* (S25)

© Cambodian Education Forum

> *Have no time to do it before class.* (S26)
>
> *… another thing I dislike about this new method of teaching is that it requires me a lot of time to do and submit.* (S15)
>
> *… what I dislike is that I sometimes forget to check that we have some homework to do, so that's kind of sad that I have missed the deadline for some work.* (S27)

Difficult adaptation and concentration

Some other students reported that they found it hard to adapt to this teaching approach because it was challenging when they tried to concentrate on watching the video lesson. The students' comments on this can be found below:

> *The only challenge I have encountered when studying in a flipped classroom is that sometimes it is hard for me to push myself to be more productive.* (S28)
>
> *I dislike this flipped classroom because I don't get used to it…* (S25)
>
> *To be honest, I do like both ways of teaching but I prefer the physical class where the lesson was explained by you. I could pay more attention and understand the lesson more than learning from the video … the biggest challenge is that I cannot manage myself well. I think it is all my own problem, not the video or your teaching …* (S29)
>
> *… I am too lazy to watch the video. I couldn't focus on what I was doing while watching the video.* (S30)
>
> *… there is one thing that I have struggled to deal with in the flipped classroom, that is, I can't entirely focus on the lessons because other things always get me distracted.* (S31)

In addition, some students were not used to this flipped learning, given the fact that they could not get the answer immediately to the doubts they had when watching the video lessons.

> *One challenge I have encountered is that I can't ask the teacher. I need to watch it again and again to get the details.* (S32)
>
> *I think one of the difficult things is that when I have a question, I cannot ask it immediately…* (S27)
>
> *Not being able to ask anyone when I have doubts, so I have to wait till your session begins and I eventually forget about the question.* (S33)

© Cambodian Education Forum

> *… when I'm unsure about something at the moment and I can't get the answer from the lecturer as fast as I was in the class, so sometimes I forget what I'm unsure about.* (S34)

Unstable internet connection

Poor internet connection posed a challenge to some students when they studied writing in the flipped classroom, thus affecting their learning pace and concentration. Here are some of the students' comments:

> *I sometimes find it difficult to listen to it because of the internet. I only open it on the computer, and it has a weak sound.* (S22)
>
> *The challenge I have encountered when studying in the flipped classroom is the internet connection and I am still stuck at some point in the lesson.* (S35)
>
> *I think the poor internet connection is a challenge for me.* (S36)
>
> *One challenge I have encountered when studying in the flipped classroom is the internet. When it is slow, I spend around 40 minutes watching the video …* (S37)
>
> *The one challenge I sometimes encountered while studying in the slipped classroom was the difficulty in concentrating on the lesson because there was a distraction, like an unstable internet connection.* (S38)

Technical issues

Being unable to sign in to the Microsoft account or forgetting the OneDrive link were the main technical issues reported by several students when they needed to study the learning materials before the class. Here are some of their comments:

> *… but sometimes I'm not able to login to the MS account via the browser app.* (S39)
>
> *One thing I have encountered that is really annoying is that I always forget the link or lose the link.* (S40)

Besides those technical problems above, a few students also reported some difficulties they had with their technological devices. Below are some of their comments:

© Cambodian Education Forum

> *Just a bit of a difficulty with the technology, I can't seem to open the video that smoothly without a computer.* (S33)
>
> *I don't know why my laptop doesn't support it when I go to watch the video that that teacher dropped …* (S41)

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore students' perceptions of the flipped classroom. The study's findings answered the two research questions. The first research question sought to find out the perceived benefits of learning in the flipped classroom. The data obtained from students' reflections (open-ended questions) showed that students held positive perceptions regarding the flipped classroom despite some dissatisfaction resulting from some challenges.

Perceived benefits

As a matter of fact, the findings of this research have yielded similar results to the findings of research studies by a number of researchers (e.g., Ekmekçi, 2017; Fauzan & Ngabut, 2018; Nuon & Champakaew, 2017; Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021; Roth & Suppasetseree, 2016; Sheerah, 2022; Su Ping et al., 2020; Sukerti et al., 2020). For example, the findings of this study showed that the flipped classroom model also created a flexible learning environment for students, as similarly found in studies by Fauzan and Ngabut (2018) and Sheerah (2022), which allowed them to study at their convenience and have more time to prepare themselves for class. This study's findings are also similar to the findings of Ekmekçi (2017), Su Ping et al. (2020), and Sukerti et al. (2020), who found that the flipped classroom model made students responsible for and independent in their learning and enhanced their learning performance. Likewise, the findings of this study also corroborated those found in the Cambodian context that students became more independent and active and that they had better learning outcomes (Nuon & Champakaew, 2017; Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021; Roth & Suppasetseree, 2016). Thus, they felt satisfied with this flipped learning, similar to what was found in Roth and Suppasetseree (2016).

In this present study, students perceived the flipped classroom as something beneficial and useful for their learning because it provided them opportunities to study the lesson in advance and to have more time for paragraph writing in the class. As Pavanelli (2018) stated, this will help improve students' writing proficiency. Furthermore, the flipped classroom also enriched their learning

© Cambodian Education Forum

experience as they got explanations from both the videos and the teacher, which helped them gain a deeper understanding of the lesson. During the in-class time, they got to work with their classmates in groups to produce a paragraph and received immediate feedback from the teacher while they practiced writing. According to social constructivism, learners will advance their L2 development when they collaborate and interact with other peers within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and scaffolding provided by teachers and other more capable peers is important constructive feedback that can help enhance students' L2 learning (Hummel, 2014).

In addition, the flipped classroom created a flexible learning environment in which the students could learn the lesson anytime and anywhere they wanted, consequently making them autonomous and responsible for their own learning. This is aligned with Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) suggestions that students should be encouraged to be responsible for their learning. As Dickinson (1995) argued, students who take responsibility for their learning will be likely to achieve success in learning L2.

Perceived challenges

The second research question focused on the challenges students faced when learning in the flipped classroom. The findings of this study are in line with those of Ekmekçi (2017) and Sheerah (2022) who showed that internet connection was a major problem for students when they studied in the flipped classroom. Since flipped learning requires students to watch videos online at home, limited access to a reliable internet connection makes it a challenging and frustrating experience for students. In Cambodia, having internet connection issues is very common, but since the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been a primary challenge for many Cambodian students when they want to study any materials online (Chan & Sarik, 2020; Heng et al., 2023; Heng & Sol, 2021). However, the technical issues that students experienced in this study were likely due to the inaccessibility of the learning site, which resulted from the fact that they forgot their Microsoft account password or the link to OneDrive and had some technical problems with their technological devices. This was somewhat different from Sheerah's (2022) findings.

Another challenge found in this research is that students had difficulties adapting themselves to learning in the flipped classroom, and there was much

© Cambodian Education Forum

work they needed to complete, so they preferred the traditional way of teaching. This particular finding of this study corroborates those of Güvenç (2018), Sheerah (2022), and Sukerti et al. (2020), who found that some students were not used to this new way of learning and complained about heavy workloads. Therefore, they felt unsatisfied with this flipped classroom. This challenge arose mainly because many Cambodian students get so used to the traditional teaching method that they completely rely on teachers to spoon-feed and guide them in their learning, making them feel challenged when they need to adapt themselves to learn in a new way (Chat, 2023; Sun, 2020). Further, the findings of this research have also demonstrated the lack of proper study skills among them. That is, they do not know how to create a study plan for independent learning. As Nat (2022) suggested, creating a clear study plan is useful for students because it not only helps them to concentrate on self-studying but also motivates them to achieve their learning goals. Without this study plan, they get distracted easily by the surrounding environment (Chan & Sarik, 2020; Heng et al., 2023) and are overwhelmed with tons of work to finish.

Conclusion and recommendations

This research explored students' perceptions of the implementation of the flipped classroom model in teaching writing skills. In particular, it sought to find out students' experiences when learning in the flipped classroom, focusing on the benefits they received and the challenges they faced. The findings from this research have revealed that students perceived the flipped classroom positively, even if some of them experienced some issues such as an unstable internet connection, difficult access to the learning materials, and difficult adaptation to this new learning method and thus preferred the traditional way of learning.

From these findings, it can be concluded that this flipped classroom has had a positive impact on students' learning, making them active, responsible, and autonomous learners. This offers additional evidence for the practicality and effectiveness of the flipped classroom model in ELT, especially in the Cambodian context. These findings suggest that the flipped classroom model can bring changes to the EFL writing classroom, solve instructional issues, and create a more conducive and flexible learning environment for EFL students to learn writing. Therefore, with its consistency with the sociocultural theory that emphasizes independent and collaborative learning (Hummel, 2014), the

© Cambodian Education Forum

flipped classroom model is a potential instruction for EFL teachers to consider implementing in teaching writing post-pandemic.

Drawing on the findings of this study and the literature, some teaching implications for teachers can be suggested, especially for Cambodian teachers, to implement the flipped classroom model effectively in ELT. First, students should be trained on how to set clear goals and manage their time so that they can use these study skills to help them learn the lesson independently (Kerr, 2020). Without these study skills, students will find it difficult to study on their own in the flipped classroom. Second, teachers should use any learning site that is more convenient for students and does not require them to have a strong internet connection to access the video lessons and other learning materials. Google Classroom and Canvas are two examples of convenient Learning Management Systems that are popular among teachers and students. Third, when students engage in self-study, teachers should not assign video lessons that are too long to avoid exhausting them and making them distracted. According to Bergmann and Sams (2012), each video lesson should be between 10 and 15 minutes or shorter than 10 minutes. Last, because some students may not be used to studying alone and cannot ask questions to the teacher immediately, teachers should create a group chat or channel on any social networking site (e.g., Telegram) for students to post their questions for teachers to answer at their convenience. Doing this will add another workload to the teacher, but it helps students get their doubts clarified so that they do not forget what they do not understand. In short, these suggestions will help teachers make their flipped classroom an enjoyable experience for their students.

Finally, some limitations of this research must be noted. This study was designed as action research, utilizing an exploratory qualitative research design to collect data from students' reflections about their perceptions and experiences in the flipped classroom via open-ended questions administered through Microsoft Forms. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized beyond the study's context and scope. Therefore, future research should be carried out using a mixed-methods research design to investigate students' overall attitudes and perceptions toward the flipped classroom. Future studies should also consider employing an experimental design to examine the impact of the flipped classroom on students' writing proficiency between students learning in the flipped writing class and those learning in the traditional writing class.

© Cambodian Education Forum

Although the findings of this research have shown that the flipped classroom was practical in teaching writing, that does not mean it is applicable and effective in teaching other skills in ELT. Thus, future researchers are recommended to use this flipped learning model to teach other skills, such as listening, reading, or grammar, to explore the impact of the flipped classroom model on students' overall academic performance.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the editors of the *Cambodian Journal of Educational Research*, especially Dr. Kimkong Heng, for their editorial support and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this article. The author would also like to thank Professor Dr. Chan Narith Keuk for his research mentorship and Mr. Chanrothana Phay for his advice on how to improve this article.

Conflict of interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

The author

Panharith Nat is currently a lecturer of English at the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL), Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP). Previously, he worked as a full-time primary teacher of English at Paññāsāstra International School and as a part-time teacher of English at ASEAN-Cambodia International School in Ang Snoul District, Kandal province, Cambodia. He received a Bachelor of Education in English from IFL, RUPP. His research interests include literature teaching in EFL contexts, learner motivation, teaching writing to EFL learners, and the flipped classroom.

References

Bergmann, J., & Sams, A. (2012). *Flip your classroom: Reach every student in every class every day*. International Society for Technology in Education.

© Cambodian Education Forum

https://www.rcboe.org/cms/lib/ga01903614/centricity/domain/15451/flip_your_classroom.pdf

Bishop, J. L., & Verleger, M. (2013). The flipped classroom: A survey of the research. *ASEE Annual Conference and Exposition, Conference Proceedings*. https://peer.asee.org/the-flipped-classroom-a-survey-of-the-research

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Burgos, E. G. (2017). Use of the genre-based approach to teach expository essays to English pedagogy students. *HOW Journal*, *24*(2), 141–159. https://doi.org/10.19183/how.24.2.330

Burns, A. (2009). *Doing action research in English Language Teaching: A guide for practitioners*. Routledge.

Chan, R., & Sarik, S. (2020). Assessing the readiness of undergraduate students for online learning during COVID-19. *Cambodian Communication Review*, 31–45. http://dmc-cci.edu.kh/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CCR-2020.pdf

Chat, K. H. (2023). Flipped classrooms in Cambodian higher education: Key challenges and the way forward. In K. Heng, K. Sol, S. Kaing, & S. Em (Eds.), *Innovations and challenges in Cambodian education: Youth's perspectives* (pp. 53–65). Cambodian Education Forum. https://doi.org/10.62037/cef.book.2023.09.05

Chen, Y. (2002). The problems of university EFL writing in Taiwan. *The Korea TESOL Journal*, *5*(1), 59–79. https://koreatesol.org/sites/default/files/pdf_publications/KTJ5-2002web.pdf

Chet, C., Sok, S., & Sou, V. (2022). The antecedents and consequences of study commitment to online learning at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Cambodia. *Sustainability*, *14*(6), 1–43. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14063184

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. SAGE Publications.

Cumming, A. (1989). Writing expertise and second-language proficiency. *A Journal of Research in Language Studies*, *39*(1), 81–135. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1989.tb00592.x

© Cambodian Education Forum

Dickinson, L. (1995). Autonomy and motivation a literature review. *System*, *23*(2), 165–174. https://doi.org/10.1016/0346-251X(95)00005-5

Dörnyei, Z., & Csizér, K. (1998). Ten commandments for motivating language learners: Results of an empirical study. *Language Teaching Research*, *2*(3), 203–229. https://doi.org/10.1177/136216889800200303

Ebron, G. P., & Mabuan, R. A. (2021). Flipped learning approach in teaching writing in a university setting: Students' experiences, preferences, and perspectives. *TESOL Journal*, *16*, 161–183. https://www.tesol-international-journal.com/

Ekmekçi, E. (2017). The flipped writing classroom in Turkish EFL context: A comparative study on a new model. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, *18*, 18–20. https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.306566

Elliott, J. (1991). *Action research for educational change*. Open University Press.

Fauzan, A., & Ngabut, M. N. (2018). EFL students' perception on flipped learning in writing class. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, *8*, 115–129. https://doi.org/10.23971/jefl.v8i2.792

Firkins, A., Forey, G., & Sengupta, S. (2007). Teaching writing to low proficiency EFL students. *ELT Journal*, *61*(4), 341–352. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccm052

Frankfort-Nachmias, C., Nachmias, D., & DeWaard, J. (2015). *Research methods in the social sciences* (8th ed.). Worth Publishers.

Güvenç, G. (2018). The flipped classroom approach in teaching writing: An action research. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*, *4*, 421–432. https://doi.org/10.24289/ijsser.434493

Harmer, J. (2015). *The practice of English language teaching* (5th ed.). Pearson Education.

Heng, K. (2020). 7. COVID-19: A silver lining in the crisis for Cambodia's education sector. In K. Heng, S. Kaing, V. Ros, & K. Sol (Eds.), *English language teaching, education, and online learning in Cambodia during COVID-19: Perspectives from practitioners and researchers* (pp. 41–47). Cambodian Education Forum. https://doi.org/10.62037/cef.book.2020.12.01

Heng, K. (2021). *COVID-19: A catalyst for the digital transformation of Cambodian education*. ISEAS Perspective No. 87. ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute. https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2021-87-covid-19-a-catalyst-for-the-digital-transformation-of-cambodian-education-by-kimkong-heng/

© Cambodian Education Forum

Heng, K., & Sol, K. (2021). Online learning during COVID-19: Key challenges and suggestions to enhance effectiveness. *Cambodian Journal of Educational Research*, *1*(1), 3–16. https://doi.org/10.62037/cjer.2021.01.01.02

Heng, K., Sol, K., & Pang, S. (2023). Challenges and opportunities of online learning: Insights from Cambodian higher education during Covid-19. *Issues in Educational Research*, *33*(2), 608–630. http://www.iier.org.au/iier33/heng.pdf

Hummel, K. M. (2014). *Introducing second language acquisition: Perspectives and practices*. John Wiley & Sons. https://www.perlego.com/book/993101/introducing-second-language-acquisition-perspectives-and-practices-pdf

Jurianto, J., Salimah, S., & Kwary, D. A. (2015). Strategies for teaching writing in EFL class at a senior high school in Indonesia. *Celt: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching & Literature*, *15*(1), 43-53. https://doi.org/10.24167/celt.v15i1.413

Kerr, P. (2020). *Flipped learning*. Cambridge Papers in ELT Series. Cambridge University Press. https://www.cambridge.org/us/files/9115/9438/9974/CambridgePapers_in_ELT-Flipped_Learning_minipaper_ONLINE.pdf

Khoiriyah, & Aji, M. P. P. (2017). Promoting flipped classroom model in teaching writing of EFL learners. *KnE Social Sciences*, 279–291. https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v1i3.748

Kothari, D. P., & Dubey, U. K. B. (2022). *Research methodology: Techniques and trends*. Chapman and Hall/CRC. https://doi.org/10.1201/9781315167138

Kumar, R. (2014). *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications. https://study.sagepub.com/kumar4e

Mertova, P., & Webster, L. (2019). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method: An introduction to critical event narrative analysis in research, teaching and professional practice* (2nd ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429424533

Nat, P. (2022). *Enhancing students' motivation in foreign language learning*, *2*(1), 104–118. https://doi.org/10.62037/cjer.2022.02.01.06

Nuon, P., & Champakaew, W. (2017). Effects of ICT-aided flipped classroom on grammar achievement. *International Conference on Language,*

© Cambodian Education Forum

Education, Humanities and Innovation, 63–74. http://icsai.org/procarch/7iclehi/7iclehi-062.pdf

Özkurkudïs, M. J., & Bümen, N. T. (2019). Flipping the writing classroom: Using grammar videos to enhance writing. *Journal of Education and Future*, *15*, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.30786/jef.425632

Pavanelli, R. (2018). The flipped classroom: A mixed methods study of academic performance and student perception in EAP writing context. *International Journal of Language & Linguistics*, *5*(2), 16–26. https://doi.org/10.30845/ijll.v5n2a3

Phoeun, M., & Sengsri, S. (2021). The effect of a flipped classroom with communicative language teaching approach on undergraduate students' English speaking ability. *International Journal of Instruction*, *14*(3), 1025–1042. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1304417

Putra, M. (2021). The use of flipped classroom in teaching writing: An experimental study. *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on English Language and Teaching (ICOELT-8 2020)*, 289–294. https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210914.055

Qader, R. O., & Yalcin Arslan, F. (2019). The effect of flipped classroom instruction in writing: A case study with Iraqi EFL learners. *Teaching English with Technology*, *19*(1), 36–55. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1204642

Roach, T. (2014). Student perceptions toward flipped learning: New methods to increase interaction and active learning in economics. *International Review of Economics Education*, *17*, 74–84. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.iree.2014.08.003

Roth, C., & Suppasetseree, S. (2016). Flipped classroom: Can it enhance English listening comprehension for pre-university students in Cambodia? *Proceedings of CLaSIC 2016*, 255–264. https://fass.nus.edu.sg/cls/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2020/10/roth_channy.pdf

Sari, D. M. M. (2019). An overview of genre based approach in EFL writing class. *Journal of English Education*, *1*(1), 31-40. https://ejournal.stkippgri-sidoarjo.ac.id/index.php/journe/article/download/59/37

Sheerah, H. (2022). The use of flipped learning as technology enhanced pedagogic tool to support EFL students' writing skills in Saudi context. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, *21*(1), 187–201. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1338132.pdf

© Cambodian Education Forum

Shih, H. J., & Huang, S. C. (2020). College students' metacognitive strategy use in an EFL flipped classroom. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *33*(7), 755–784. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2019.1590420

Su Ping, R. L., Verezub, E., Adi Badiozaman, I. F., & Chen, W. S. (2020). Tracing EFL students' flipped classroom journey in a writing class: Lessons from Malaysia. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *57*(3), 305–316. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2019.1574597

Sukerti, G. N. A., Rudiastari, E., & Susana, K. (2020). The effectiveness of flipped learning in teaching writing. *SOSHUM: Jurnal Sosial Dan Humaniora*, *10*, 78–92. https://doi.org/10.31940/soshum.v10i1.1634

Sun, S. (2020). 9. Online learning during COVID-19: Challenges and opportunities. In K. Heng, S. Kaing, V. Ros, & K. Sol (Eds.), *English language teaching, education, and online learning in Cambodia during COVID-19: Perspectives from practitioners and researchers* (pp. 41–47). Cambodian Education Forum. https://doi.org/10.62037/cef.book.2020.12.01

Turan, Z., & Akdag-Cimen, B. (2020). Flipped classroom in English language teaching: A systematic review. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *33*(5–6), 590–606. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2019.1584117

Wahyuni, S., & Umam, M. K. (2017). An analysis of writing anxiety of Indonesian efl college learners. *Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies*, *4*(1), 103–126. https://www.neliti.com/publications/135539/an-analysis-on-writing-anxiety-of-indonesian-efl-college-learners

© Cambodian Education Forum