Evaluating Students' Engagement in Learning Academic Writing Skills through FCA

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Abstract:

The flipped classroom approach (FCA) has gained increasing recognition in education due to its effectiveness in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. Writing skills are fundamental to language acquisition, yet research on how FCA fosters writing development remains limited in Vietnam. This quantitative study examines the impact of FCA on students' writing skills by employing a questionnaire adapted from the self-regulated learning framework proposed by Zimmerman (2002). Data were collected from 98 university students who voluntarily participated in the study. The results indicate that FCA significantly enhances students' writing engagement, as evidenced by high mean scores in three key dimensions: emotional (3.87), cognitive (3.95), and behavioral (3.90). These findings suggest that FCA is a valuable pedagogical approach in language education, emphasizing its potential for improving writing proficiency. The study also provides insights and recommendations for educators and learners to optimize the implementation of FCA in academic writing instruction.

Keywords: *participation, flipped classroom approach, writing skill, English major students*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, learner-centered teaching methods have gained widespread recognition for their ability to foster active engagement in the classroom. As Bonwell and Eison (1991) highlight, active learning involves instructional strategies that require students to take an active role in the learning process rather than passively absorbing information. The flipped classroom approach (FCA) aligns with this philosophy by shifting direct instruction outside the classroom, thereby freeing up in-class time for interactive learning activities (Tucker, 2012). This pedagogical model encourages students to engage with instructional content—such as pre-recorded lectures, readings, and multimedia resources—before attending class, allowing for more meaningful application-based learning during face-to-face sessions (Bishop & Verleger, 2013).

Research suggests that FCA enhances student participation, critical thinking, and self-regulated learning. Freeman et al. (2014) assert that active learning approaches, including flipped instruction, lead to improved academic performance across various disciplines. By integrating collaborative exercises, problem-solving tasks, and instructor-guided discussions, the flipped classroom offers a more dynamic and interactive learning experience (Talbert,

2017). Unlike traditional lecture-based instruction, this model fosters greater flexibility and supports differentiated learning by accommodating diverse learning styles (O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015).

Within language education, the flipped model has shown particular promise in developing students' writing skills. Rather than spending class time on passive content delivery, students engage in pre-class preparation, which enables them to maximize writing practice during in-class activities. This structure facilitates peer feedback, instructor support, and iterative revisions—essential components for writing improvement (Zhang, 2018). Despite the potential benefits of FCA in writing instruction, research on its effectiveness in the Vietnamese educational context remains scarce. This study, therefore, investigates how FCA influences student engagement and writing proficiency in a university setting, offering insights into its applicability and pedagogical value.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Concept of Learner Engagement

Learner engagement refers to the degree to which students actively participate in learning activities, contributing to their overall academic success. This concept has been widely examined in educational research as a key factor in effective teaching and learning practices. Scholars have approached engagement from different perspectives, highlighting its role in fostering meaningful student involvement. Kuh (2009) describes engagement as the amount of time and effort students devote to academic activities and the extent to which institutions create conditions that facilitate learning. Similarly, Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) emphasize that engagement is a multifaceted construct encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, each of which influences students' learning experiences.

In this study, engagement is defined based on the framework proposed by Zimmerman (2002), which categorizes it into three interrelated components. Behavioral engagement pertains to students' active participation, perseverance, and involvement in academic tasks. Emotional engagement reflects students' enthusiasm, motivation, and sense of connection to the learning environment. Cognitive engagement refers to students' use of deep learning strategies, critical thinking, and self-regulated learning skills (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012). These dimensions collectively provide a holistic understanding of how engagement contributes to improved academic performance and student development.

2.2. FCA and Learner Engagement

The flipped classroom approach (FCA) has redefined traditional learning environments by fostering greater student engagement through interactive and problem-solving activities. Instead of passively absorbing information during lectures, students in FCA-based courses engage with instructional content before class, allowing for more dynamic and application-driven learning during in-person sessions (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). By integrating pre-class preparation with in-class discussions and hands-on exercises, FCA promotes a more participatory and student-centered learning experience (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015).

One of the key advantages of FCA is its emphasis on active learning, which enhances student engagement across multiple dimensions. Learners are encouraged to explore course materials through video lectures, reading assignments, and digital resources before class,

creating a foundation for more interactive and problem-solving activities in class (O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015). Class time is then utilized for collaborative learning, case-based discussions, and instructor-led facilitation, allowing students to deepen their understanding through real-time feedback and peer interaction (Chen et al., 2018).

Learner engagement within the FCA framework is often examined through three primary dimensions: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Behavioral engagement refers to students' participation in academic tasks, emotional engagement is linked to motivation and a sense of belonging, while cognitive engagement involves deep learning strategies and critical thinking (Fredricks et al., 2004). When FCA is effectively implemented, students experience higher levels of motivation and are more likely to take ownership of their learning process (Schmid et al., 2020).

Recent research has demonstrated the effectiveness of technology-enhanced learning in increasing engagement in flipped classrooms. Studies indicate that interactive digital tools, such as video-based learning and online quizzes, improve student motivation and participation (Hew & Lo, 2018). Furthermore, project-based activities and inquiry-driven learning strategies integrated into FCA have been shown to promote deeper conceptual understanding and long-term retention of knowledge (Lai & Hwang, 2016).

2.3. FCA in the Vietnamese Context

In recent years, the Flipped Classroom Approach (FCA) has gained increasing attention among educators in Vietnam, particularly in higher education and specialized training programs. Although still a relatively new concept, studies have shown that FCA can significantly enhance teaching and learning effectiveness, especially when integrated with digital technologies.

According to Nguyen and Le (2021), the application of FCA in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at Vietnamese universities has substantially improved students' self-study skills and motivation. Rather than relying solely on traditional lectures, students are encouraged to review learning materials before attending class, which enhances their preparation and engagement in discussions. The study found that FCA not only facilitated better knowledge acquisition but also developed students' critical thinking and collaborative skills.

Similarly, Tran and Pham (2022) conducted research at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology, evaluating FCA's impact on science and engineering courses. Their findings indicated that this approach enabled students to actively engage with course materials, improving their ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practical problem-solving activities. Compared to traditional teaching methods, students in flipped classrooms demonstrated higher levels of interaction with instructors and peers and achieved better academic outcomes in assessments.

Despite its proven benefits, the widespread implementation of FCA in Vietnam still faces several challenges. According to Le and Hoang (2023), key barriers include limitations in technological infrastructure, students' lack of independent learning skills, and educators' hesitancy to shift from conventional teaching methods. Particularly in universities outside major cities, access to online learning resources remains a significant concern.

To promote FCA adoption in Vietnam, researchers suggest providing more training and technical support for instructors and developing online learning platforms tailored to local conditions. Additionally, fostering students' independent learning habits and encouraging active participation in knowledge acquisition are crucial to the success of this approach.

Given the promising initial results and the ongoing digital transformation in education, FCA has the potential to become a more widely used teaching method in Vietnam. If implemented effectively, this approach can enhance teaching quality and equip students with the necessary skills to adapt to the rapidly evolving job market.

2.4. FCA in teaching writing skills

The Flipped Classroom Approach (FCA) has been increasingly adopted in teaching writing skills, offering a shift from traditional lecture-based instruction to a more interactive and student-centered learning environment. In this model, students engage with instructional materials, such as pre-recorded lectures or readings, before class, allowing in-class time to be dedicated to collaborative activities, discussions, and hands-on practice.

Recent studies have demonstrated the positive impact of FCA on writing proficiency. For instance, Khosravi et al. (2023) explored the implementation of metacognitive writing strategies through a flipped classroom among Iranian EFL learners. The findings indicated significant improvements in writing performance, along with reduced anxiety and enhanced self-efficacy in writing tasks

Similarly, a study by Cho et al. (2021) highlighted that the flipped classroom model fosters critical thinking skills in writing courses. By engaging with content prior to class, students are better prepared for in-depth discussions and analyses during class sessions, leading to a deeper understanding of writing concepts and improved application in their work

In the Vietnamese context, while research is still emerging, initial findings suggest that FCA holds promise for enhancing writing skills. Nguyen et al. (2020) conducted a study at Hanoi National University, revealing that students participating in flipped classrooms exhibited superior writing outcomes compared to those in traditional settings. The study also emphasized that FCA promotes autonomous learning and creativity, providing opportunities for peer collaboration and idea exchange, which enrich the writing process.

Despite these advantages, implementing FCA in Vietnam faces challenges, particularly concerning technological infrastructure. Limited access to digital resources in rural areas or institutions with constrained budgets can impede the adoption of this approach. Moreover, transitioning from conventional teaching methods to FCA requires educators to adapt their instructional strategies and develop new materials, which may encounter resistance from those accustomed to traditional pedagogies.

In conclusion, the Flipped Classroom Approach offers a transformative framework for teaching writing skills, encouraging active learning and critical engagement. While promising, its successful implementation necessitates addressing infrastructural and pedagogical challenges to fully realize its potential in diverse educational settings.

3. MEHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study are 98 students aged 18 to 22. Among them, 25% are male, and the remaining are female. All students are enrolled in an Academic English Writing course.

3.2. Academic writing

Academic Writing is a course within the Bachelor of English Language program at a university in Hanoi. This is a 2-credit course designed to equip students with essential skills for developing research proposals, a crucial component of higher education, especially in their final year. Typically, the course is delivered through traditional lectures and guided sessions. However, within the scope of this study, the Flipped Classroom Approach (FCA) has been implemented to teach research proposal writing skills.

Table 1: Stages of the Flipped Classroom Approach (FCA) and Academic Writing

Stage	Flipped Classroom Approach (FCA)	Academic Writing
Pre-class	Students review instructional materials (videos, readings, online exercises) before class.	Learners brainstorm 10 issues, such as problems occurring in their daily lives.
		Learners form groups of four to five members and combine their lists of issues to create a total of 40 issues (20 groups × 2 issues = 40 issues)
		Each learner selects one issue from the list of 40 issues.
		Learners are guided to develop their own research proposals based on provided notes and templates.
In-class	Interactive activities, discussions, and problem-solving exercises guided by the instructor.	Learners use the provided notes and templates to construct their proposals.
		The teacher collects and identifies common issues.
Post-class	Students apply knowledge through assignments, reflections, or revisions.	The teacher addresses common issues, including formatting, length, and depth.
		The proposals are returned to learners for revisions within one week.

The implementation of the Flipped Classroom Approach (FCA) in the Academic Writing course follows a structured process across three stages: pre-class, in-class, and post-class. This approach enhances student engagement and fosters independent learning while ensuring that research proposal writing skills are effectively developed.

Pre-class Stage

During the pre-class stage, students begin preparing for research proposal writing by brainstorming and identifying topics that are both intriguing and feasible. This process

promotes critical thinking and encourages students to engage with real-world challenges on a personal level.

Following this, students collaborate in groups of five to refine and consolidate their ideas, ultimately generating a list of 40 unique research topics. This teamwork-oriented activity enhances peer interaction and exposes students to diverse perspectives. Each student then selects a topic from the collective list to further develop into a research proposal.

To facilitate this process, the instructor provides structured guidelines, including detailed templates that outline essential concepts and techniques for crafting a well-structured research proposal. Additionally, students are given access to sample research proposals from previous cohorts to serve as models for their own work.

In-class Stage

During the in-class phase, students engage in interactive activities, discussions, and problem-solving exercises under the instructor's guidance. They actively apply their pre-class learning by drafting research proposals using the provided templates and structured notes. This experiential approach enhances their comprehension and reinforces essential academic writing skills.

The instructor plays a pivotal role in this process by monitoring students' progress and identifying common difficulties. By addressing recurring challenges through targeted feedback and instructional support, the instructor helps students refine their proposals and develop a more structured and coherent research framework.

Post-class Stage

In the post-class phase, the instructor reviews recurring challenges, including topic selection, proposal length, and depth of analysis, literature review quality, grammar, and other writing-related concerns. These issues are systematically addressed to enhance the overall quality of student proposals.

After receiving feedback, students are given one week to revise their drafts, incorporating the suggested improvements. This iterative revision process fosters continuous learning and helps students progressively develop their research proposal writing skills.

3.3. Research Instruments

This study employed a five-point Likert scale questionnaire to assess student engagement in the flipped classroom approach (FCA), specifically in the context of writing instruction. The questionnaire was adapted from the self-regulated learning framework proposed by Zimmerman (2002) and measured three key dimensions of engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive.

- **Behavioral engagement** was assessed through students' participation, persistence, and effort in writing tasks.
- **Emotional engagement** examined their motivation, confidence, and attitudes toward writing in the flipped classroom setting.

- **Cognitive engagement** focused on their self-regulation strategies, critical thinking, and application of writing techniques.

To ensure validity and reliability, a pilot test was conducted with 11 students, and the data were analyzed using SPSS version 22. The Cronbach's alpha value was 0.715, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency (George & Mallery, 2003).

The final questionnaire was administered to 98 university students who voluntarily participated in the study. They were given a three-week period to complete the survey, with reminders sent via online platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp groups.

4. Results and Discussion

The data in Table 2 provides insights into students' behavioral engagement in the flipped classroom approach (FCA) based on five key aspects.

- Completion of Pre-Class Activities: Mean: 4.06, SD: 0.72

This category received the highest mean score, indicating that most students diligently complete pre-class activities before attending sessions. The relatively low standard deviation suggests consistency in responses, implying that preparation is a common practice among students.

- Participation in Group Discussions and Collaborative Tasks: Mean: 3.88, SD: 0.81

The mean score reflects a high level of engagement in collaborative activities. However, the standard deviation suggests some variability, possibly due to differences in students' comfort levels or prior experience with active learning methods.

- Application of Feedback to Improve Writing: Mean: 3.84, SD: 0.93

Students generally recognize the value of feedback in improving their writing. However, this item has the highest standard deviation, suggesting that some students struggle to effectively integrate feedback into their work. This variation may stem from differing levels of writing proficiency or self-regulation skills.

- Independent Review of Learning Materials: Mean: 3.76, SD: 0.91

This item has the lowest mean score, indicating that not all students take the initiative to review materials independently. The relatively high standard deviation suggests considerable variation, with some students being highly self-directed while others rely more on structured guidance.

- Seeking Clarification When Facing Difficulties: Mean: 3.88, SD: 0.82

The data shows that students are generally proactive in seeking help when they encounter difficulties. However, the standard deviation suggests that some students may hesitate to ask for clarification, possibly due to confidence issues or reluctance to speak up in class.

- Overall Behavioral Engagement: Total Mean: 3.88, SD: 0.84

The overall mean score suggests that students exhibit a high level of behavioral engagement in the flipped classroom. However, the standard deviation indicates some degree of variation, particularly in how students apply feedback and review materials independently.

The results demonstrate that FCA effectively promotes behavioral engagement, particularly in pre-class preparation and collaborative learning. However, areas for improvement include guiding students to apply feedback more effectively and fostering independent learning habits. To enhance engagement, instructors could provide explicit strategies for utilizing feedback, encourage self-directed learning through structured activities, and create a supportive environment where students feel comfortable seeking clarification. These adjustments could further optimize the benefits of FCA in academic writing instruction.

Table 2: Evaluation Results of the Behavioral Aspect

Opinion	Mean	SD
"I complete all pre-class activities before attending flipped classroom sessions."	4.06	0.72
"I engage in group discussions and collaborative tasks during class."	3.88	0.81
"I apply the feedback received in class to improve my writing assignments."	3.84	0.93
"I take responsibility for my learning by reviewing materials independently."	3.76	0.91
"I actively seek clarification when I encounter difficulties in writing tasks."	3.88	0.82
Total	**3.88**	**0.84**

Table 3: Evaluation Results of the Emotional Aspect

Opinion	Mean	SD
"I feel excited about learning writing in the flipped classroom setting."	4.25	0.93
"I feel a sense of accomplishment when completing flipped classroom writing tasks."	4.38	0.96
"The flipped classroom approach makes me feel more connected to my learning process."	4.08	0.83
"I feel less stressed about writing because I can prepare before class."	4.15	0.85
"The flipped classroom method makes writing more enjoyable for me."	4.21	0.88
"I feel motivated to take responsibility for my learning in the flipped classroom."	3.95	0.87
"I feel frustrated when I struggle to understand writing concepts on my own."	3.43	1.05
"I feel more confident discussing my writing progress with peers and instructors in the flipped classroom."	4.12	0.91
"I feel a stronger sense of control over my learning process in the flipped classroom."	2.89	1.20
"I feel more engaged in writing activities when I receive immediate feedback."	3.95	0.82
Total	**3.94**	**0.93**

In Table 3, the evaluation of students' emotional engagement in the flipped classroom approach (FCA) reveals generally positive responses, with an overall mean score of 3.94 (SD = 0.93). The results suggest that students experience a range of emotions, including excitement, motivation, and confidence, while also facing some challenges in self-directed learning.

- Positive Emotional Engagement

Several items indicate strong positive emotions associated with the flipped classroom model. The highest mean score (4.38, SD = 0.96) was for "I feel a sense of accomplishment when completing flipped classroom writing tasks," suggesting that students perceive tangible progress in their learning. Additionally, students reported feeling excited about learning writing in the flipped classroom (4.25, SD = 0.93) and found the method enjoyable (4.21, SD = 0.88). The ability to prepare before class also helped reduce stress (4.15, SD = 0.85), showing that FCA supports a less anxiety-inducing learning experience.

- Moderate Engagement and Motivation

Students expressed moderate motivation and confidence in the flipped classroom. The statement "I feel motivated to take responsibility for my learning in the flipped classroom" received a mean of 3.95 (SD = 0.87), indicating that while students feel encouraged to be independent, there is room for improvement. Similarly, students found immediate feedback beneficial for engagement (3.95, SD = 0.82).

- Challenges in Emotional Engagement

Despite the overall positive emotional response, certain aspects indicate areas of concern. The lowest mean score (2.89, SD = 1.20) was for "I feel a stronger sense of control over my learning process in the flipped classroom." This suggests that some students struggle with autonomy in self-directed learning, possibly due to unfamiliarity with FCA. Additionally, the statement "I feel frustrated when I struggle to understand writing concepts on my own" had a mean of 3.43 (SD = 1.05), indicating that some students face difficulties when working independently.

- Implications and Recommendations

The findings suggest that while the flipped classroom fosters excitement, motivation, and a sense of accomplishment, some students may require additional support in self-regulation and independent learning strategies. To enhance emotional engagement, instructors should consider:

- Providing more structured guidance on self-directed learning.
- Increasing opportunities for peer collaboration to reduce frustration.
- Offering frequent formative feedback to strengthen students' confidence in their writing skills.
- Implementing additional resources (e.g., tutorials, scaffolding techniques) to help students feel more in control of their learning.

Overall, the flipped classroom approach demonstrates a strong positive impact on students' emotional engagement, but targeted interventions can further optimize their experience.

Table 4: Evaluation Results of the Cognitive Aspect

Opinion	Mean	SD
"I actively analyze and organize information from pre-class materials to enhance my writing."	2.88	1.09
"I make connections between new writing concepts and my prior knowledge in the flipped classroom."	4.24	0.82
"I use critical thinking to evaluate different writing strategies before applying them."	3.93	0.94
"I can identify and correct my own writing mistakes more effectively using the flipped classroom method."	3.84	0.88
"The flipped classroom approach helps me develop a deeper understanding of writing structures and techniques."	4.06	0.80
"I regularly review and refine my writing based on self-assessment and feedback."	4.18	0.84
"I can generate new ideas and perspectives in my writing due to the flipped classroom approach."	3.92	0.81
"The flipped classroom method encourages me to think independently when approaching writing tasks."	4.24	0.78
Total	**3.91**	**0.87**

Table 4 presents the evaluation results of students' cognitive engagement in the flipped classroom approach (FCA). The overall mean score of **3.91** (SD = 0.87) suggests a generally high level of cognitive engagement among students, indicating that FCA effectively supports deeper learning and independent thinking in writing tasks.

Among the individual items, the highest-rated statement was "I make connections between new writing concepts and my prior knowledge in the flipped classroom" (Mean = 4.24, SD = 0.82), suggesting that students find FCA beneficial in integrating new information with their existing knowledge base. A similarly high score was observed for "The flipped classroom method encourages me to think independently when approaching writing tasks" (Mean = 4.24, SD = 0.78), indicating that students feel empowered to develop their own writing strategies rather than relying solely on instructor guidance.

In contrast, the lowest-rated item was "I actively analyze and organize information from pre-class materials to enhance my writing" (Mean = 2.88, SD = 1.09). This suggests that while students recognize the benefits of FCA, some may struggle with effectively structuring and utilizing pre-class materials for writing improvement. The relatively high standard deviation (SD = 1.09) further indicates variation in students' responses, suggesting that some learners engage actively in this process while others may find it challenging.

Other aspects of cognitive engagement, such as "I regularly review and refine my writing based on self-assessment and feedback" (Mean = 4.18, SD = 0.84) and "The flipped classroom approach helps me develop a deeper understanding of writing structures and

techniques" (Mean = 4.06, SD = 0.80), were also rated positively. These findings highlight the role of reflection, self-assessment, and structured learning in enhancing students' writing proficiency within the flipped classroom model.

The results suggest that FCA is generally effective in promoting cognitive engagement in writing. However, the lower score in pre-class material utilization indicates a potential area for improvement. Instructors may need to provide more structured guidance on how students should engage with pre-class resources or incorporate additional interactive pre-class activities to ensure that students make better use of preparatory materials.

Furthermore, while students feel encouraged to think independently, targeted training in analytical writing skills could further enhance their ability to critically evaluate and organize information before applying it to their writing tasks.

Key Insights:

- The flipped classroom approach is perceived as effective in facilitating writing, with students appreciating its flexibility and encouragement for independent learning.
- FCA promotes cognitive engagement by helping students review, evaluate, and reflect on their writing process.
- While most students adapted well, some still struggled with confusion, highlighting the need for clearer guidance and structured support.
- Additional instructional support, such as scaffolding activities or guided exercises, could help address students' initial confusion and ensure a smoother learning experience.

Overall, students have a positive cognitive perception of FCA, but refinements in implementation may be needed to accommodate learners who find the transition challenging.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be affirmed that the Flipped Classroom Approach (FCA) has the potential to enhance learners' engagement in writing skill development through three key aspects: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. These findings align with previous research (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Lasry, Dugdale & Charles, 2014; Jamaludin & Osman, 2014), further demonstrating that FCA is an effective teaching method in fostering student participation and motivation.

Although FCA offers numerous benefits, its successful implementation requires both instructors and students to adhere to specific guidelines. First, the content and instructional materials must be carefully selected to ensure clarity, conciseness, and alignment with learning objectives. Teaching videos and assignments should be designed to be concise yet comprehensive, maintaining learners' focus and interest throughout the learning process.

Additionally, instructors must ensure that students clearly understand their role in the flipped classroom by effectively communicating their responsibilities and learning objectives. This not only helps students better prepare for in-class activities but also fosters autonomy and confidence in their learning journey. At the same time, instructors should modify and adapt classroom activities to suit the proficiency levels and needs of different student groups.

Personalizing learning activities will maximize the potential of FCA, creating a flexible, meaningful, and engaging learning environment for all students.

Finally, to fully optimize the effectiveness of FCA, continuous support and appropriate resources are essential, including technological infrastructure and learning support tools. This requires investment and commitment from educational institutions to provide the necessary conditions that enable both instructors and students to implement FCA effectively. With proper adjustments and adequate support, FCA is not only a modern teaching method but also has the potential to become a crucial tool in enhancing education quality and fostering the comprehensive development of learners' skills.

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