






# English Major Students' Perceptions of the Flipped Classroom in an EFL Context: A Case Study of Afghan English Major Students

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## ABSTRACT

The flipped classroom (FC) model has gained increasing attention as a student-centered instructional approach that promotes active learning and communicative engagement. However, its application within the Afghan English as a foreign language (EFL) context remains largely underexplored. This study examines perceived attitudes of Afghan EFL major students towards FC and explores learners' perceptions regarding its benefits and challenges in their speaking performance. A mixed-methods research design was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative data. Twenty-five elementary-level English major students participated in the study. Quantitative data were collected through a 10-item Likert-scale questionnaire, while qualitative insights were obtained through semi-structured interviews with four purposively selected participants. Descriptive statistics and one-sample t-tests were used to analyze the questionnaire data, and thematic analysis was applied to the interview responses. The findings revealed that students held significantly positive perceptions of the flipped classroom, with mean scores for all items exceeding the neutral midpoint. Learners reported improvements in speaking fluency, confidence, pronunciation, and opportunities for communicative practice. Interview findings further indicated that flipped learning enhanced motivation, learner responsibility, and classroom interaction while also presenting challenges related to time management, comprehension of pre-class materials, and unequal participation during group activities. Overall, the study provides empirical evidence that the flipped classroom can effectively support speaking development and learner engagement in Afghan EFL higher education. The findings suggest that adopting flipped pedagogy may contribute to more interactive and communicatively rich language classrooms in Afghanistan.

**Keywords:** flipped classroom, speaking performance, Afghan EFL learners, student-centered learning, communicative competence

## INTRODUCTION

Effective English language instruction plays a pivotal role in equipping learners with the communicative competence necessary for academic success, professional opportunities, and global participation. Traditional teacher-centered methods, which emphasize in-class lecturing and passive reception of knowledge, have been widely critiqued for their limited opportunities for meaningful language practice, particularly in developing oral communication skills such as speaking (Aguilar-Moya et al. 2025; Raja, F., & Najmonnisa, 2020). In contrast, student-centered instructional models grounded in constructivist learning theory posit that learners develop proficiency most effectively through active engagement, collaborative interaction, and reflective practice (Adib & Hakimi, 2025). The flipped classroom (FC) emerges from this paradigm, reallocating direct instruction to pre-class activities (e.g., video lectures, readings) and dedicating class time to interactive, learner-centered tasks, such as discussion, problem-solving, and peer-collaboration (Milman, 2012). Flipped learning has gained considerable attention across disciplines as a means to foster self-regulated learning, enhance motivation, and expand opportunities for higher-order thinking and peer interaction (Samadi et al., 2024). Recent systematic reviews emphasize that flipped instruction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts can improve language skills, including speaking, writing, and overall academic performance, while promoting learner engagement and autonomy (Sun et al., 2023). Moreover, empirical studies have demonstrated that EFL learners participating in flipped classrooms outperform peers in traditional settings on measures of oral proficiency (Demir & Mirzaie, 2023). Collectively, this body of research underscores flipped learning's potential to transform EFL instruction by creating richer opportunities for communicative practice and feedback within face-to-face sessions.

Despite the growing international evidence supporting flipped classroom effectiveness in EFL contexts, no empirical study to date has examined its application among Afghan EFL learners. The existing literature is heavily skewed toward Asian (e.g., China, Indonesia, Iran, Turkey) and Middle Eastern contexts, with virtually no representation from conflict-affected, low-resource, or post-conflict educational settings such as Afghanistan. This geographical and contextual gap is significant because flipped learning assumes certain preconditions—reliable technology, student autonomy, home study environments, and teacher training—that cannot be automatically generalized to fragile educational systems. Furthermore, prior meta-analyses (Senjaya & Muhtadi, 2025; Soylu, 2025) have explicitly called for context-specific studies in under-researched regions. The present study directly responds to this call by providing the first empirical evidence on flipped classroom perceptions and speaking outcomes in Afghan higher education.

While the model has shown promise in higher education settings globally, including improvements in learners' speaking complexity, accuracy, fluency, and overall communicative competence (Davari & Mall-Amiri, 2022; Demir & Mirzaie, 2023), the Afghan EFL context remains unexplored (Safi et al., 2025, only providing implementation challenges in Afghan higher education). This research concentrates on Afghan EFL major students, seeking to determine (1) how flipped classroom instruction is perceived in influencing learners' speaking performance compared to conventional instruction and (2) what benefits and drawbacks students report when engaged in flipped learning. The findings aim to inform EFL educators and policymakers about effective strategies for fostering communicative competence.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The flipped learning approach has emerged as a prominent student-centered instructional model that reconfigures traditional classroom practices by relocating direct instruction to pre-class learning spaces and dedicating in-class time to active, collaborative, and higher-order learning activities. Rooted in constructivist and sociocultural learning theories, flipped learning emphasizes learner autonomy, experiential engagement, and meaningful interaction—principles that are particularly relevant to second and foreign language

education. This literature review synthesizes theoretical foundations, instructional models, and empirical evidence on flipped learning, with a specific focus on its application in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts and its impact on speaking skill development.

## Theoretical Foundations, Conceptualization, Instructing models & Stages, and Rules within FC

Flipped learning is conceptually grounded in constructivist learning theory, which posits that knowledge is actively constructed through interaction, reflection, and social mediation (Piaget, 1954; Vygotsky, 1978). From a sociocultural perspective, learning occurs most effectively when learners engage in collaborative tasks within their zone of proximal development, supported by peers and instructors. Flipped classrooms operationalize these principles by freeing class time for communicative interaction, scaffolding, and feedback (Ağırman & Ercoşkun, 2022; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Recent scholarship further aligns flipped learning with self-regulated learning theory, emphasizing learners' responsibility for planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning processes (Zimmerman, 2002). Meta-analytic evidence indicates that flipped instruction significantly enhances learners' autonomy, engagement, and higher-order thinking across disciplines, including language education (Lo & Hew, 2017; Samadi et al., 2024). In their study, Ettien and Touré (2023) examine the theoretical foundations of the flipped classroom through a documentary review of existing scholarly literature, aiming to clarify the conceptual bases that justify its pedagogical use. The authors identify three primary theoretical underpinnings: Active Learning Theory, which emphasizes student engagement and knowledge construction through meaningful in-class activities; Pedagogical Differentiation Theory, which supports adapting instruction to diverse learner needs and enabling more personalized learning pathways; and Intrinsic Motivation Theory, which highlights the importance of autonomy, engagement, and internal drive in sustaining effective learning.

Flipped learning is commonly defined as an instructional approach in which foundational content is delivered before class—typically through videos or digital materials—while classroom time is devoted to interactive tasks such as problem-solving, discussion, and collaborative practice (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). Unlike traditional lecture-based models, flipped classrooms emphasize learning as an active, participatory process. The Flipped Learning Network (2014) conceptualizes flipped learning around four pillars: (1) Flexible Environments, (2) Learning Culture, (3) Intentional Content, and (4) Professional Educators. Recent empirical studies confirm that these pillars are strongly associated with increased learner engagement, improved instructional differentiation, and more effective formative feedback (Hava, 2024; Strelan, Osborn, & Palmer, 2020).

Several instructional models have been proposed to structure flipped learning, and although many practitioner-oriented frameworks circulate widely, the peer-reviewed literature consistently emphasizes a sequence that integrates pre-class content acquisition with in-class active learning. Early foundational work by Lage, Platt, and Treglia (2000) conceptualized the “inverted classroom” as a design in which students first encounter instructional content outside class and then engage in interactive, application-focused activities during class time. Subsequent syntheses, such as Bishop and Verleger's (2013) comprehensive review, formalized flipped learning as a combination of computer-based individual instruction and collaborative, active learning environments. From a theoretical perspective, flipped learning has also been interpreted through the lens of experiential learning theory. Drawing on Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle—comprising concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation—researchers argue that flipped designs naturally align with cyclical learning processes. For example, Abeysekera and Dawson (2015) highlight how pre-class activities can provide initial exposure or “experience,” while in-class tasks promote reflection, conceptual understanding, and application through problem-solving and collaboration. This alignment positions flipped learning not merely as a delivery model

but as a pedagogical approach that supports deeper cognitive engagement and iterative knowledge construction. Together, these peer-reviewed frameworks offer a theoretically grounded alternative to practitioner-based models, emphasizing that flipped learning is most effective when pre-class preparation is intentionally connected to structured, higher-order in-class learning experiences.

In flipped classrooms, the teacher's role shifts from knowledge transmitter to facilitator, coach, and feedback provider. Empirical studies show that this role transformation enables more individualized support, timely corrective feedback, and enhanced monitoring of learner progress (Hava, 2024; Strelan et al., 2020). Learners, in turn, assume greater responsibility for their learning by engaging with content independently before class and actively participating in collaborative tasks during class. Research consistently demonstrates that this role shift fosters learner autonomy, motivation, and communicative confidence, which are said to be the key predictors of speaking proficiency (Lee & Wallace, 2018; Samadi et al., 2024). Instructional materials in flipped classrooms typically include teacher-created or curated videos, supplemented by authentic resources such as podcasts, interviews, and multimedia texts. Recent studies emphasize that authenticity and task relevance are critical factors influencing learners' engagement and speaking performance in flipped EFL classrooms (Hava, 2024; Reinders & White, 2016).

## Related Research on Flipped Classroom in EFL Education

A growing body of empirical research has investigated the implementation and outcomes of flipped classroom models in EFL settings, with a particular focus on speaking performance, learner attitudes, self-regulated learning, and affective outcomes. These studies span diverse geographic contexts, educational levels, and research designs, collectively demonstrating the pedagogical potential of flipped instruction for foreign language development.

Senjaya and Muhtadi's (2025) meta-analysis synthesized 15 primary studies examining flipped classrooms' effectiveness on speaking ability in English and other language learning contexts. The analysis revealed a large overall effect size ( $g = 1.25$ ,  $p < .01$ ) in favor of flipped classrooms compared to traditional instruction, indicating that flipped learning significantly enhances learners' speaking skills regardless of educational level or regional variation. Similarly, Soylu's (2025) systematic review of 18 empirical studies across EFL contexts highlights consistent positive impacts on engagement, autonomy, and communicative outcomes. The review identifies flipped learning as a catalyst for increased learner motivation and self-regulated learning behaviors, which are instrumental in fostering active participation and language practice. Moreover, recent discussions on the impact of the flipped classroom on students' competence reveal positive results (Fitriah et al., 2025; Sun et al., 2023).

Matin and Benshams (2025) conducted a mixed-methods quasi-experimental study at Fakher Institute, Iran. B2-level learners were assigned to an experimental group receiving flipped instruction and a control group taught traditionally, with speaking performance measured through pre and post-tests. Their findings revealed that learners in the flipped classroom significantly outperformed those in the control group in terms of speaking ability. The study also concluded that FC enhances learner engagement, autonomy, and opportunities for communicative practice. Demir and Mirzaie (2023) also conducted a semi-experimental study with intermediate EFL learners in Iran, comparing a flipped classroom group with a traditional control group. Students in the flipped condition demonstrated significantly higher post-test speaking scores, indicating that flipped instruction can produce measurable gains in speaking proficiency when compared with conventional pedagogy. Findings from the Chinese EFL context are also favorable. Qualitatively examining how integrating FC pedagogy with self-regulated learning strategies enhances EFL learners' speaking competence, Zhong (2025) conducted the study at a Chinese university with eight undergraduate learners employing an interpretive qualitative design by using academic records, reflective journals, and in-depth interviews. Analysis revealed that learners applied a range of motivational, cognitive/metacognitive, and resource management strategies

including goal setting, repetition, peer collaboration, and environmental regulation to support speaking. Findings of the study suggest that the synergy between flipped instruction and self-regulated learning contributes to improvements in EFL speaking competence. Rachmawati (2022) similarly reported findings from an Indonesian EFL context, where undergraduate students exposed to flipped classroom instruction outperformed control group peers in speaking assessments. These results reinforce the effectiveness of flipped learning models in higher education EFL settings. At a Turkish university, Dariyemez (2023) examined flipped classroom effects on multiple speaking-related constructs including autonomy, willingness to communicate, and speaking anxiety. The quasi-experimental study found that flipped instruction significantly increased learners' autonomy and willingness to communicate while reducing anxiety—key affective factors that underlie successful oral performance. Aligned with the speaking focus, several studies emphasize cognitive and affective outcomes associated with flipped classrooms. Öztürk and Çakıroğlu (2021) found that self-regulated learning strategies embedded within flipped EFL courses enhanced overall language skill development, with implications for speaking performance as learners took greater responsibility for pre-class preparation and in-class application. In Oman, Abdullah et al. (2021) conducted a mixed-methods study on EFL learners' confidence in English speaking who were enrolled in the course of Advanced Communication Skills (ENGL 154) at BUC between academic years 2017-2018. As a result, it was found that the implementation of the Flipped Classroom Model (FCM) significantly improved students' confidence in speaking.

Recent research also explores how technology integrated with flipped learning can amplify communicative outcomes by fostering learner engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking. For instance, studies highlight that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools embedded in flipped classrooms enhance students' academic achievement and attitudes while promoting interactive dialogue and peer-to-peer communication (Al-Samarraie et al., 2020). Similarly, web-based platforms and social media applications used in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts have been shown to increase learner participation and authentic communication, shifting the focus from teacher-centered to learner-driven exchanges (Zainuddin & Perera, 2019). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of technology-supported flipped learning, with educators reporting that digital tools sustained communicative collaboration even in disrupted learning environments (Lo & Hew, 2017). Collectively, these findings suggest that technology-enhanced flipped learning not only supports knowledge acquisition but also transforms communication into a dynamic, interactive process that extends beyond the classroom. As a consequence, empirical investigations illustrate that flipped classroom instruction can substantially improve EFL learners' speaking outcomes, support learner autonomy and affective engagement, and foster environments conducive to meaningful language practice. They also highlight the importance of self-regulated learning strategies and technological supports in maximizing the efficacy of flipped pedagogy.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Design

This study was guided by a pragmatic philosophical underpinning, which emphasizes the use of multiple methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. A simple mixed-methods design was adopted, integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative interview insights to triangulate findings. The study employed a cross-sectional time horizon, as data were collected within a defined period (June 2–12, 2025), rather than longitudinally.

### Participants of the Study

The participants in this study were English major students at a public institute in Kabul, Afghanistan. A total of 25 male students participated in the research, aged between 18 and 24 years. Pashto and Dari are the native

languages of the participants. All participants were at an elementary level of English proficiency, as determined by their placement test results at the beginning of the study. The researcher employed the convenience sampling method to select participants for the survey and the purposive sampling method to select four participants for the interview. Due to the limited number of English major students during the study period, only 25 students met the criteria for participation in the questionnaire. Similarly, only four participants were purposively selected for the interview, as they were among the few willing and able to provide in-depth insights relevant to the study. The small sample size, while a limitation, reflects the actual population of the target group and was sufficient to explore the research objectives within the case study context. According to Cresswell and Guetterman (2019), a convenience sampling procedure can be employed when it is possible for the researcher to access participants who fit the study's requirements. Before participating in the study, the participants were given a consent letter to sign. In the consent letter, it was clearly stated that participants had the right to withdraw from the research at any point, and they were assured that their participation would be kept confidential. Additionally, the study's objectives were clearly explained to all participants.

## Instrumentation

A total of three research instruments were used in this study: an adapted questionnaire, an interview, and a proficiency test. The used questionnaire was adapted from Aljaraideh (2019). The statements of the questionnaire were edited, simplified, and prepared for the Afghan Context. It consisted of 10 Likert-scale items, focusing on the impact of the flipped classroom on students' speaking performance. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.86, which, according to George and Mallery (2019), is an acceptable value, as it exceeded 0.70. To find answers to the second research question and support the findings from the qualitative data, a semi-structured interview was conducted. The interviews aimed to obtain deeper insights into how the flipped classroom approach influences students' speaking performance, motivation, and the drawbacks. Four English major students were purposively selected for the interview. The interview consisted of five questions, in line with the second objective of the study. Data collection took a total of 10 days, starting on June 2 to June 12, 2025.

## Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

To ensure the questionnaire's understandability, the researcher conducted a pilot test in the first step. During this stage, the researcher received input that helped them fix some mistakes, rearrange the questions, add new questions, and remove some others from the questionnaire. Three of the researcher's coworkers were given the questionnaire to complete during the pilot-test phase, so that he could gather their opinions on its content. Following the pilot test, the questionnaires were collected along with the opinions of the lecturers and coworkers, and some modifications were made. After ensuring the questionnaire's understandability, the researcher proceeded to collect data to answer the research questions. The data was gathered in two phases: first, students were given questionnaires to answer, and then they were asked interview questions to provide detailed insights into the advantages and drawbacks of flipped classrooms.

Questionnaire data were analyzed using SPSS (29). The interview transcripts were imported into NVivo for systematic analysis. After familiarization through repeated readings, the researcher coded meaningful segments of text using NVivo's node functions, applying both inductive codes that emerged from the data and deductive codes guided by the research questions. Codes were refined iteratively and organized into broader categories, which were then clustered into themes. NVivo's visualization tools supported the identification of relationships among codes, while memos documented analytic decisions. Themes were reviewed against the dataset to ensure coherence, defined and named clearly, and supported with illustrative quotations. The final thematic structure was reported in alignment with the study objectives, ensuring transparency and rigor in the analytic process.

## RESULTS

This section presents the integrated quantitative and qualitative findings of the study examining Afghan EFL learners' perceptions of the flipped classroom approach and its perceived impact on English-speaking development. Questionnaire data provide an overview of students' evaluative judgments, while interview data offer explanatory depth and contextual insight. Together, these data sources allow for methodological triangulation and strengthen the evidential basis of the findings.

### Reliability of the Instrument

Prior to analysis, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was examined. The ten-item scale demonstrated high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of  $\alpha = .866$ , indicating that the items coherently measured learners' perceptions related to flipped-classroom-supported speaking development. This level of reliability supports the appropriateness of subsequent inferential analyses.

### Answering RQs

*RQ1: How is flipped classroom perceived in improving the speaking skills of Afghan English Major Students?*

#### *Flipped Classroom & Afghan EFL Learners' Overall Perceptions*

Descriptive statistics revealed that learners held consistently positive perceptions of the flipped classroom approach. As shown in **Table 1**, mean scores for all questionnaire items exceeded the neutral midpoint of the scale (3.00), with values ranging from 3.84 to 4.92. These results suggest that students generally agreed that the flipped classroom supported their speaking development in multiple ways. This overall pattern was corroborated by interview data. Most interviewees described the flipped classroom as "helpful," "different from traditional classes," and "more active," emphasizing that the instructional structure encouraged greater participation and engagement in speaking activities.

#### *Inferential Analysis of Learners' Perceptions*

To determine whether students' perceptions were statistically positive, one-sample *t*-tests were conducted using a test value of 3.00 (neutral midpoint). Given the directional expectation that the flipped classroom would positively influence speaking-related perceptions, one-tailed tests were applied. As presented in **Table 2**, all questionnaire items yielded mean scores significantly higher than the neutral value ( $p < .01$ ). These findings indicate that learners' positive evaluations of the flipped classroom were not attributable merely to chance.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics for Questionnaire Items (N = 25)

Item	Focus of Item	M	SD
Q1	Perceived improvement in speaking fluency	4.84	0.37
Q2	Speaking confidence	4.44	0.82
Q3	Usefulness of pre-class materials	4.92	0.28
Q4	Opportunities for speaking practice	4.20	0.41
Q5	Comfort expressing opinions	4.40	0.63
Q6	Group activities and speaking development	4.12	0.83
Q7	Pronunciation improvement	4.04	0.81
Q8	Amount of speaking feedback	4.00	0.88
Q9	Engagement and interactivity	4.36	0.52
Q10	Understanding speaking tasks	3.84	1.36

**Table 2.** One-Sample t-Test Results for Questionnaire Items (Test Value = 3.00)

Item	M	SD	t(24)	p (one-tailed)
Q1	4.84	0.37	23.01	< .001
Q2	4.44	0.82	8.12	< .001
Q3	4.92	0.28	34.99	< .001
Q4	4.20	0.41	9.23	< .001
Q5	4.40	0.63	10.95	< .001
Q6	4.12	0.83	6.61	< .001
Q7	4.04	0.81	6.45	< .001
Q8	4.00	0.88	5.61	< .001
Q9	4.36	0.52	13.18	< .001
Q10	3.84	1.36	3.02	.002

## Qualitative Findings

### *RQ2: What are the reported benefits and drawbacks of the flipped classroom on the Speaking skills of English Major Students in the Afghan EFL context?*

Interview data were aimed at answering the second research question. The data collected were systematically coded and organized into themes and sub-themes. The five main interview questions, each addressing a different aspect of the flipped classroom experience, were the primary focus of the analysis. The data were categorized using thematic coding to gain insights into students' experiences, skill development, challenges, motivation, self-confidence, and classroom interactions.

Looking at **Table 3**, the interview findings revealed several sub-themes. For each question asked of participants, three sub-themes were identified, which led to a main theme. After analyzing the interview data, fifteen recurring themes were identified, and these themes guided the researcher to five main themes. Each theme is explained below.

#### *Overall Experience*

Active participation, self-paced learning, enjoyment, and satisfaction were the sub-themes identified from the participants' interviews. A student stated, "I find it enjoyable. I like that class time is used for discussions and speaking practices rather than just listening to lectures." This indicates that students prioritize flipped classrooms. They prefer this method over traditional teaching approaches because flipped classrooms provide opportunities for active participation and allow them to learn at their own pace with joy and pleasure.

#### *Speaking Skill Improvement*

To identify the second main theme, 'Speaking Skill Improvement', we first extracted the three sub-themes from the participants' answers. Fluency and confidence, vocabulary and pronunciation, critical thinking, and organization were the three sub-themes extracted from the interviews. "*The approach helps me with pronunciation and vocabulary. I learn new words and phrases at home, which I then actively use in class.*" Examining the quote from the participant's interview, it is clear that flipped classroom activities help learners improve their vocabulary and pronunciation. Moreover, fluency, confidence, critical thinking, and the organization of speech were among the other benefits they experienced after applying the new teaching approach.

**Table 3.** Interview Data Thematic Analysis

Example Quotes	Sub-Theme	Theme	
<i>"Unlike traditional classes, I feel more responsible for my own learning because I prepare at home and then practice in class."</i>	Active Participation	Overall Experience	
<i>"I can learn at my own pace before class, and in class, I get more opportunities to speak and receive feedback."</i>	Self-Paced Learning		
<i>"I find it enjoyable. I like that class time is used for discussions and speaking exercises rather than just listening to lectures."</i>	Enjoyment and Satisfaction		
<i>"It has improved my fluency because I get to practice speaking more often in class. I also feel more confident forming sentences since I already understand the topic beforehand."</i>	Fluency and Confidence		
<i>"The approach helps me with pronunciation and vocabulary. I learn new words and phrases at home, which I then actively use in class."</i>	Vocabulary and Pronunciation		
<i>"I can think more critically and organize my ideas better. Flipped classroom activities like debates help me communicate clearly in English."</i>	Critical Thinking and Organization		
<i>"Sometimes I don't have enough time to prepare before class because of other subjects, so I feel unprepared and less confident to speak."</i>	Time Management		
<i>"It can be difficult to understand some online materials or videos without guidance. This affects my participation in class."</i>	Material Comprehension		Challenges
<i>"Group discussions are sometimes challenging because not all classmates participate equally. If others are quiet, it's harder for me to practice speaking as much as I want."</i>	Unequal Peer Participation		
<i>"I feel more confident because I already know the topic before class. It motivates me to contribute to discussions without hesitation."</i>	Preparation Boosts Confidence		Motivation & Confidence
<i>"The approach makes me more responsible for my learning, so I am motivated to prepare and participate more."</i>	Responsibility & Engagement		
<i>"My confidence has grown because the teacher gives immediate feedback. Mistakes feel like learning opportunities rather than failures."</i>	Feedback-Oriented Improvement		
<i>"It encourages collaboration with classmates. We discuss ideas, share opinions, and correct each other, which makes learning more interactive."</i>	Peer Interaction		
<i>"The teacher has more time to give personalized feedback. I can ask questions freely, which strengthens communication."</i>	Teacher Guidance	Classroom Interaction	
<i>"We interact more during group activities and presentations. Peer interaction helps me practice different speaking styles and vocabulary."</i>	Active Communication		

### Challenges

It is proven and clear that every advantageous thing has its own flaw and drawback. Similarly, the flipped classroom was no exception. The sub-themes, such as time management, material comprehension, and unequal participation, lead us to the third main theme of our review, 'Challenges'. A student stated that *"Group discussions are sometimes challenging because not all classmates participate equally. If others are quiet, it's harder for me to practice speaking as much as I want."* The participant's answer is concerning. It should be taken care of. This is the problem or challenge that can be addressed by the class facilitator. It means that we acknowledge the challenges in implementing the flipped classroom approach, but this should not deter us

from applying it in our classes. Instead, the solution has to be found in order to overcome to mentioned challenge.

### *Motivation and Confidence*

The fourth main theme of the study is motivation and confidence, which was identified through the recognition of the following sub-themes: preparation boosts confidence, responsibility and engagement, and feedback-oriented improvement. A participant stated that *“My confidence has grown because the teacher gives immediate feedback. Mistakes feel like learning opportunities rather than failures.”* The outcome of the responses is satisfying. Students are willing to adopt the flipped classroom as their primary teaching approach for speaking classes, as its application enhances their motivation and confidence.

### *Classroom Interaction*

We reach the periphery of the findings. The fifth and final main theme that we identified from our interviews was classroom interaction. Peer interaction, teacher guidance, and active communication were the sub-themes from which the main theme was extracted. A participant claimed that *“It encourages collaboration with classmates. We discuss ideas, share opinions, and correct each other, which makes learning more interactive.”* Examining the students’ claim paves the way for ending the debate between flipped classrooms and traditional classrooms, as they are no longer in direct comparison. Flipped classrooms are way more advantageous and beneficial than traditional ones. Therefore, the flipped classroom should be the primary teaching method in speaking classes.

## DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

The present study investigated Afghan English major students’ perceived attitudes of the flipped classroom approach on the speaking performance of English major students and explored learners’ perceptions regarding its benefits and challenges. By integrating quantitative questionnaire results with qualitative interview data, the findings provide a comprehensive understanding of how flipped learning is perceived to influence Afghan EFL learners’ speaking development and classroom engagement.

### Perceived Perceptions of the Flipped Classroom on Students’ Speaking Development

The findings of this study clearly indicate that Afghan EFL learners hold strongly positive attitudes towards flipped instruction. As shown in the results section, all questionnaire items yielded mean scores well above the neutral midpoint, with particularly strong ratings for fluency ( $M = 4.84$ ), confidence ( $M = 4.44$ ), and the usefulness of pre-class materials ( $M = 4.92$ ). These quantitative outcomes were reinforced by the one-sample t-tests, which confirmed that learners’ perceptions were statistically positive across all dimensions. The qualitative interviews added depth to these results, with students consistently describing the flipped classroom as “helpful,” “different from traditional classes,” and “more active.” They emphasized that preparing at home allowed them to enter class ready to speak, which in turn boosted their fluency, confidence, and ability to organize ideas. Findings of the study suggest that the flipped classroom creates a learning environment conducive to communicative language use, allowing learners to allocate more classroom time to speaking practice and interaction. These findings resonate strongly with previous empirical research highlighting the effectiveness of flipped instruction in enhancing EFL learners’ oral proficiency. For instance, Demir and Mirzaie (2023) and Rachmawati (2022) similarly reported that students exposed to flipped learning significantly outperformed those taught through traditional lecture-based methods in speaking assessments. Likewise, Senjaya and Muhtadi’s (2025) meta-analysis demonstrated a large positive effect of flipped classrooms on speaking ability across multiple language-learning contexts. The present study therefore, reinforces the

growing body of evidence that flipped pedagogy supports the development of communicative competence by maximizing opportunities for active language production.

From a theoretical perspective, these outcomes can be interpreted through the lens of constructivist and sociocultural learning theories. The flipped classroom shifts the instructional focus from teacher-centered knowledge transmission to learner-centered knowledge construction through interaction and collaboration. By engaging with instructional materials before class, students arrive prepared to participate in communicative activities, which aligns with Vygotsky's notion that learning occurs most effectively through social interaction within the zone of proximal development. The findings, therefore, illustrate how flipped instruction operationalizes these theoretical principles by transforming classroom time into a space for collaborative learning and communicative practice. Furthermore, the results indicate that pre-class materials played a particularly important role in supporting speaking development. The questionnaire item regarding the usefulness of pre-class materials produced the highest mean score, suggesting that students benefited from the opportunity to preview content before class. This preparation allowed them to better understand discussion topics and organize their ideas in advance, thereby reducing anxiety and increasing confidence when speaking in class. These findings correspond with previous research emphasizing that flipped learning enhances self-regulated learning and learner autonomy (Lo & Hew, 2017; Soylu, 2025).

## Students' Perceived Benefits of the Flipped Classroom

The qualitative findings further illuminate how flipped instruction contributed to students' speaking development and learning experience. Five major themes emerged from the interviews: overall experience, speaking skill improvement, challenges, motivation and confidence, and classroom interaction.

First, learners described the flipped classroom as an engaging and enjoyable learning experience that encouraged active participation. Unlike traditional lecture-based classes, students reported that the flipped format allowed them to interact more frequently with their peers and instructor. This increased participation appears to be a key factor contributing to the improvement of their speaking abilities. Similar observations were reported by Abdullah et al. (2021), who found that flipped instruction significantly improved learners' speaking confidence and willingness to communicate in EFL classrooms. Second, students reported noticeable improvements in several dimensions of speaking performance, including fluency, vocabulary use, pronunciation, and the organization of ideas. By studying vocabulary and concepts before class, learners were able to apply newly acquired knowledge during interactive classroom activities such as discussions and debates. This sequence of pre-class input and in-class output corresponds closely with input–interaction–output models of second language acquisition, which emphasize the importance of meaningful communication for language development (Ellis, 2015). Therefore, the flipped classroom appears to provide an effective pedagogical structure for facilitating these processes. Third, the study revealed that flipped learning enhanced students' motivation and confidence. Interview participants reported feeling more responsible for their learning because they were required to prepare before class. This increased responsibility fostered greater engagement and a sense of ownership over their learning process. Moreover, the availability of immediate teacher feedback during in-class speaking activities contributed to learners' confidence and helped them view mistakes as opportunities for improvement rather than failures. These findings align with previous studies suggesting that flipped classrooms strengthen learners' motivation, autonomy, and willingness to communicate (Dariyemez, 2023; Samadi et al., 2024). Fourth, increased classroom interaction emerged as a major advantage of the flipped approach. Students highlighted the value of collaborative activities such as group discussions, presentations, and peer feedback. These activities provided opportunities to practice speaking in authentic communicative contexts while also learning from classmates. From a sociocultural perspective, such interaction facilitates language development by enabling learners to co-construct knowledge and scaffold each other's learning.

## Challenges in Implementing the Flipped Classroom

Despite its numerous benefits, the findings also revealed several challenges associated with the flipped classroom approach. Students reported difficulties related to time management, comprehension of pre-class materials, and unequal participation during group activities. Time management was identified as a key challenge, as some students found it difficult to consistently prepare before class due to competing academic responsibilities. This finding echoes previous research indicating that flipped learning requires strong self-regulation skills, and students who are unaccustomed to autonomous learning may initially struggle to adapt to this instructional model. Another challenge involved understanding online materials independently. Some participants indicated that certain video lectures or digital resources were difficult to comprehend without immediate teacher guidance. This suggests that instructors must carefully design pre-class materials that are accessible, clear, and aligned with students' proficiency levels. Finally, unequal participation during group discussions was highlighted as a concern. When some students remained passive, others felt that their opportunities for speaking practice were reduced. While collaborative learning is a central feature of flipped classrooms, effective facilitation strategies are necessary to ensure balanced participation among learners. Teachers may address this issue by assigning specific roles within group tasks or incorporating structured speaking activities that require contributions from all students. These concerns echo findings in other contexts, such as Abdullah et al. (2021), who highlighted the need for consistent preparation and scaffolding to maximize the benefits of flipped pedagogy. They also underscore the importance of designing flipped classrooms with accessible materials, clear guidance, and structured collaborative activities to ensure equitable participation.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that the flipped classroom is a promising alternative to traditional lecture-based instruction in Afghanistan. It fosters fluency, confidence, and motivation, while encouraging learners to take responsibility for their own progress. However, its success depends on careful adaptation to local conditions, including technological limitations, small class sizes, and learners' varying levels of preparation. By providing authentic, level-appropriate resources and ensuring structured opportunities for interaction, educators can mitigate the challenges identified and maximize the benefits of flipped learning.

In conclusion, this study examined the perceived attitude of the flipped classroom approach on the speaking performance of Afghan English major students and explored learners' perceptions of its benefits and challenges. The findings revealed that flipped instruction was positively perceived among Afghan EFL learners in improving their speaking development and classroom engagement. It contributes to the growing body of evidence that flipped pedagogy enhances speaking performance in EFL contexts, extending its applicability to Afghan higher education. Learners perceived the model as engaging, effective, and supportive of their communicative development, though challenges in preparation and participation remain. The study carries several implications. Theoretically, the results reinforce constructivist and sociocultural learning theories, demonstrating that flipped classrooms foster learner autonomy, responsibility, and communicative competence. They also align with self-regulated learning theory by highlighting the importance of pre-class preparation and active in-class engagement. Empirically, educators and policymakers can better harness the potential of flipped classrooms to transform English language education in Afghanistan into a more dynamic, learner-centered, and communicatively rich experience.

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several recommendations for future research are proposed. First, future studies should employ larger and more diverse samples, including female learners and participants across multiple proficiency levels (elementary, intermediate, and advanced), to examine whether flipped classroom effects vary by gender or English proficiency, as the present study was limited to 25 male elementary-level learners. Second, longitudinal and quasi-experimental designs with pre-test and post-test measures of actual speaking performance (e.g., fluency, accuracy, complexity) are needed to objectively assess speaking gains attributable to flipped instruction over a full academic term, rather than relying solely

on perceived attitudes. Third, given that material comprehension emerged as a reported challenge, experimental research should investigate what types of pre-class materials (e.g., video length, subtitles, interactive quizzes, native-language scaffolding) best support low-proficiency EFL learners in low-resource settings. Fourth, future research should investigate EFL teachers' perspectives, including their challenges in designing, implementing, and assessing flipped classrooms, as well as how teacher training and institutional support affect fidelity of implementation. Finally, since time management and preparation were identified as challenges, intervention studies that integrate flipped instruction with explicit self-regulated learning strategy training (e.g., goal-setting, time planning, self-monitoring) should be conducted to determine whether such combined approaches reduce the reported drawbacks and enhance learner readiness for flipped classrooms.

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