Vietnamese lecturers' perceptions of using the flipped classroom model in enhancing EFL students' speaking skills

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the views of Vietnamese university lecturers regarding applying the Flipped Classroom (FC) to improve their students' speaking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). A qualitative, interpretive methodology was used for this study; semi-structured interviews, two focus groups, and two pedagogical workshops were conducted with 25 English-major lecturers from five different universities located in Ho Chi Minh City. Data collected in the course of this study were analyzed using thematic analysis via a six-phase process. Overall, findings indicated strong support among participants for the use of the FC model and general agreement that the model had the potential to increase learners' engagement, confidence, and English-speaking skills, including oral fluency. While there were several challenges noted by participants regarding the implementation of the FC model, such as a lack of adequate technological infrastructure and the low level of digital literacy among learners and teachers, participants reported making a number of context-based adaptations to facilitate learner participation and inclusiveness. These adaptations included modifying materials to be mobile-friendly, developing culturally responsive speaking tasks, and partially flipping their courses. The results include practical suggestions for adapting globally developed pedagogical models to the sociocultural and institutional realities of Vietnam, thereby providing a foundation for sustainable and communicative reform in higher education.

Keywords: EFL teaching, EFL students, Enhancing, Flipped classroom model, Perceptions, Speaking skills, Vietnamese context.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study involved minimal risk and adhered to ethical guidelines for research in education and the social sciences. Formal approval from an Institutional Review Board was not required under the institutional and national research regulations in Vietnam. However, each participant provided a verbal consent to participate before collecting the data. Participants could decide whether or not they wanted to be involved with the study and had the option to drop out at any point during the study without penalty. All data collected through interviews, focus groups, and workshops were de-identified, and pseudonymization techniques were used to maintain participant anonymity.

Transparency: The author confirms that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

Competing Interests: The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

Highlights of this paper:

- The present research is the first comprehensive analysis of how Vietnamese EFL teachers perceive and implement the flipped classroom approach to increase students' spoken English proficiency.
- The results indicate the advantages (Pedagogically) of using a flipped classroom for increasing the amount of time spent on the students' fluency, confidence, and interaction with their peers, and the disadvantages (Contextually) of using a flipped classroom as it relates to technology, institutional policies, and the culture of Vietnam.
- The study has provided adaptive localization suggestions that demonstrate how educators in Vietnam may adapt internationally developed flipped approaches to improve instruction in spoken English, thereby sustainably enhancing the teaching of speaking in Vietnamese higher education.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's interconnected world, English-language proficiency has become vital for global citizenship, academic mobility, and the competitiveness of 21st-century workers. As communication shifts toward collaborative and intercultural dialogue in an increasingly "virtual" world, students' speaking skills are no longer an add-on; they should be central to their language education (Cong-Lem, 2025). This shift requires educational systems, particularly those in non-native English-speaking contexts, to rethink and reimagine curriculum, instruction, and assessment to place greater value on oral communication. In Asia, where high-stakes testing and grammar-driven syllabus designs have traditionally shaped language education (Elahe & Scull, 2022), raising speaking competence warrants both structural and pedagogical change. In this context, pedagogical approaches promoting interactivity, learner autonomy, and communicative competence are emerging. One approach, the FC model, is receiving global attention for its potential to turn passive classrooms into communicative spaces of practice (Baig & Yadegaridehkordi, 2023; Jiang et al., 2022). Therefore, the shift to an FC model in language education is no longer a question of "if," but "when."

In the Vietnamese context, the lack of students' English proficiency remains a pedagogical problem (Nguyen, 2025). Classroom pedagogy remains primarily lecture-based and focused on form, even as the curriculum reform effort aims to develop learners' communicative competence and speaking skills. Speaking tasks or activities, if they occur at all, are lightweight due to time constraints, crowding, and exam-focused contexts (Talandis & Stout, 2015). The disconnection between the curriculum and speaking pedagogy has led to underperformance in speaking among tertiary students; they do not achieve satisfactory levels in speaking skills. The FC provides opportunities for student engagement and responsibilities while managing the design of time and space to meet that engagement (Nouri, 2016). It enables students to access input materials outside class, through videos, readings, or online lectures, freeing up in-class time for interaction, feedback, and communicative practice (Baig & Yadegaridehkordi, 2023). Time and responsibility in the FC format are important in speaking classes, as students become participants in self-paced learning opportunities that enable them to speak in meaningful language. The following sections examine Vietnamese lecturers' understanding and practice of the FC model for speaking development. However, there is limited research on the depth of understanding or on the implications for practice.

Recent studies in applied linguistics and technology-enhanced learning have recognized the transformative potential of the FC model in fostering student-centered education and improving speaking outcomes. A range of studies in Asian contexts (e.g., China, Thailand, and South Korea) provide evidence of increased learner motivation, participation, and oral fluency under FC-based instruction (Afzali & Izadpanah, 2021). However, researchers in the Vietnamese higher education system have not conducted empirical research on the use of FC and its implications for

speaking instruction. While a small number of studies have examined students' perceptions or overall outcomes of flipped learning, little has been published on lecturers' beliefs and enactment as facilitators and gatekeepers of the desired changes (Fisher, LaFerriere, & Rixon, 2020). These omissions are problematic for developing a deeper theoretical understanding of FC and for providing practical guidance on supporting the sustainable, culturally responsive enactment of FC in speaking instruction.

While the FC has an attractive conceptual appeal, its actual value lies in its interpretation and use within particular educational and cultural contexts. In Vietnam, with its Confucian traditions around teachers and students as human beings engaging in hierarchical relationships based on knowledge transmission, significant changes are required to shift from a repository-of-knowledge model to student-driven learning, which entails not only pedagogical but also epistemological change (Truong & Hallinger, 2017). Furthermore, the systemic barriers to innovation that are present in the Vietnamese educational ecosystem, such as limited technology, inadequate teacher training, and institutional prioritization of standardized assessments, remain significant challenges (Dinh, 2021), must be accounted for in any FC implementation. Prior studies have tended to treat these systemic barriers to instructional change as incidental rather than central. Thus, there is a need to explore how and why lecturers adopt/reject, and alter the FC model. This study emphasizes the experiences of Vietnamese lecturers to illustrate how cultural norms, institutional contexts, and professional identity shape pedagogical innovation. This emphasis is critical for determining how to go beyond a surface-teaching model toward meaningful, contextualized reform.

The implications of this research reach across the educational landscape. For Vietnamese teachers, it provides opportunities for self-reflection based on their teaching beliefs and practices, thereby stimulating informed experimentation with new models. For educators of teachers and professional development leaders, the research identifies critical areas for training, particularly in technology and communicative methodology. For curriculum designers and academic leaders, this study demonstrates how to align institutional policy with teachers' experiences and social realities, rather than imposing a model developed elsewhere. Furthermore, for those in applied linguistics and educational technologies, this study provides additional literature supporting arguments for a more culturally expansive pedagogy. Finally, although students did not participate directly in this study, they stand to benefit most from the sound implementation of FC, as improved instruction in speaking skills has an immediate impact on their communicative competence, future achievements, and employment prospects. By providing the perspectives of the people responsible for introducing change into the classroom, this research is a productive example of bridging the aspirations of policy and the realities of the classroom.

The overall purpose of this study is to understand how Vietnamese EFL lecturers perceive and enact flipped learning for speaking, with attention to which speaking criteria (fluency, accuracy, complexity, interactional competence, confidence) and which *design features of FC* are foregrounded in practice, which will be investigated through the following research questions.

RQ1: How do Vietnamese EFL lecturers perceive the pedagogical affordances and limitations of the FC model in speaking instruction?

RQ2: What context-specific adaptations do lecturers consider necessary to optimize FC for speaking in Vietnam?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Flipped Classroom Model in Language Education

The FC model is based on constructivist and socio-cultural theories of learning and shifts direct instruction from the in-class component of the lesson to pre-class work, thereby reserving in-class time for student-centered

collaboration and learning activities. In language teaching, this transformation is consistent with communicative language teaching principles by providing students with greater opportunities for authentic language use and peer collaboration (Lundin, Bergviken Rensfeldt, Hillman, Lantz-Andersson, & Peterson, 2018). When students independently engage with instructional content (e.g., grammatical explanations or vocabulary presentations) prior to the in-class lesson, in-class time can be used for meaningful practice, such as debates, discussions, or role-play (Moranski & Kim, 2016). These practices support speaking development by promoting repeated, scaffolded, and low-anxiety experiences with the target language. Additionally, evidence supports the FC model's potential to develop learners' oral proficiency, with documented outcomes including enhanced fluency, confidence, and learner autonomy (Afzali & Izadpanah, 2021; Fisher et al., 2020).

The FC model's primary benefit in language classrooms is its capacity to support personalization and learner agency, two vital components of oral skills development. Allowing students to engage with content at their own pace fosters a more profound understanding and greater readiness for communicative practice in class (Mengesha, Ayele, Misker, & Beyna, 2024). This preparatory contact, when used in an FC context, reduces the cognitive load of speaking tasks and promotes user engagement. The FC model aligns well with task-based language teaching and performance-based assessment, allowing instructors to track students' speaking performance in a formative manner (Baig & Yadegaridehkordi, 2023). For lecturers in EFL contexts such as Vietnam, where spoken interaction time is scarce, the FC model can facilitate a transition from passive learning environments to active speaking-learning conditions (provided that the necessary infrastructure, materials, and training are in place).

While it is pedagogically promising, the effectiveness of FC implementation will depend on numerous contextual factors (e.g., lecturers' beliefs, access to technology, and the availability of institutional support). In contexts with strong, predominant teacher-centered models (e.g., many universities in Vietnam), lecturers may experience conflicting feelings when attempting to reconcile the learner-centered approach of the FC model with teacher-centered educational norms (Tran, Phuong, & Huong, 2020). Research shows that teacher perceptions significantly affect the extent to which teachers adopt instructional innovations (Fix, Rikkerink, Ritzen, Pieters, & Kuiper, 2021). As such, it is critical to better understand how Vietnamese lecturers perceive the opportunities and challenges posed by the FC model to assess its potential to support speaking skills. As discussed by Nouri (2016), lecturers' perceptions influence not only lesson enactment but also the interplay of deeper cultural and institutional tensions that shape the adaptation of global teaching trends to local contextual realities. This all reinforces the need to explore not only whether FC works but also how it is understood, negotiated, and situated by the individuals who will implement it.

2.2. Speaking Instruction in Vietnamese Universities

For some time, instruction in speaking skills across Vietnamese tertiary English programs has been hampered by structural, cultural, and pedagogical issues. While systematic curriculum frameworks have emphasized communicative competence, the potential of speaking instruction is consistently constrained by the quantity or quality of delivery (Phuong, 2022). Many classes range in size from 40 to 60 students, making it impossible to work on any given speaking performance, provide individual feedback, or develop opportunities for sustained speaking practice. The instructors' emphasis on formalized task-based learning of receptive skills or form-focused productive skills to prepare students for standardized tests (i.e., IELTS, TOEIC) means the focus on students developing their interactional competence during their English speaking study is greatly diminished (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron, & Osher, 2020). This systemic disservice, so tightly structured by operationalized assessments, leaves students ultimately to attend university learning environments that are unable to realize their

theoretical understanding of English, as they grapple to translate their theoretical knowledge into real-time communicative use.

In addition to the significant constraints imposed by institutional factors, cultural expectations regarding classroom interaction create a complex environment for teaching speaking. Phan (2004) points out that Vietnamese educational culture is shaped by Confucian legacies, and it tends to appreciate silence, compliance, and the avoidance of public failure, in other words, the opposite of the risk-taking and spontaneity that are characteristics of communicative speaking tasks. Students may hesitate to speak among their peers and question the information provided by their teacher (Huang, Lederman, & Cai, 2017), especially in formal contexts. Moreover, teachers may hesitate to cede authority over classroom dialogue or to play a facilitative role because their professional identity is closely tied to their expertise and content delivery (Shea, 2018). Even though students may be willing to accept classroom boundaries, teachers still have a personal stake in teaching and in their experiences. This creates a similar reluctance to think beyond the institution in their interactions, reducing the likelihood of entirely using English as a communicative language and hindering genuine dialogue. As a result, even students who may remain within normal developmental levels when producing written tasks struggle to demonstrate fluency and coherence when speaking English (Islam & Stapa, 2021).

Despite these challenges, recent years have seen increased interest among Vietnamese lecturers in exploring alternative approaches to teaching speaking, including blended or technology-enhanced models (Phuong, 2022). However, the extent of their experimentation is inconsistent, particularly because many instructors report uncertainty about how to meet institutional expectations and student needs while still changing their practices (Frenzel, Daniels, & Burić, 2021). The FC model has emerged as a potential way to reconcile this predicament because an FC structure supports content coverage while creating space for interaction and oral language use. Ultimately, the success of innovation efforts will depend on how lecturers understand the relevance, viability, and applicability of innovation within local teaching practices (Andrews & Lemons, 2015). Therefore, to understand the barriers to speaking instruction and to identify opportunities for transformative teaching, it is important to examine instructors' perceptions. Lecturers' ideas may help identify a productive avenue for pedagogical change that is contextually valuable and addresses broader notions of communicative competence.

2.3. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is a framework that seeks to incorporate learners' cultural backgrounds, values, and ways of interacting into the learning design process to promote engagement and equity. In the field of language education, CRP refers to language acquisition practices that extend beyond cognitive processes to encompass identity and culture (Howard & Terry Sr, 2011). In the language classroom, simply applying the FC model without a cultural plan may limit its effectiveness. In a collectivist culture such as Vietnam, hierarchy influences teacher-student interactions, and students engage in face-saving practices (Singh, Jacob-John, Nagpal, & Inglis, 2022). In speaking instruction, students' cultural backgrounds influence how they collaborate, provide feedback, and take risks in their oral performance. CRP can serve as a theoretical framework for designing speaking lessons in an FC context, while respecting culturally appropriate practices and encouraging students to make gradual shifts toward autonomy, collaboration, and active communication.

In Vietnamese higher education, the encouragement of student-centered approaches such as FC can sometimes clash with a history of venerated teacher authority and prescriptive knowledge transmission (Nguyen Thanh, Dekker, & Goedhart, 2008). Such traditions can seem to impose mundane constraints on new and innovative practices, and CRP offers a way of rethinking these traditions as something to work with rather than against. For

example, in FC-based speaking courses, offering a clearly defined, guided pre-class task (e.g., a learning task before lessons) and organizing structured in-class speaking activities can help strike a balance between students' expectations for teacher direction and their experiences of communicative practice (Sointu et al., 2023). In addition, the use of culturally familiar topics, the provision of open-group-based speaking tasks, and non-threatening feedback methods can all reduce anxiety and maintain participation (Mart, 2019). By recognizing the FC implementation in relation to cultural factors such as these, lecturers can create opportunities for students to feel supported by "lessons" in spoken English that do not undermine social relations.

Lecturers play a crucial role as mediators between globalized pedagogical models and local realities in practice. While lecturers interpret and adapt pedagogical models, their agency ultimately determines whether innovations such as the FC model are meaningfully embraced or only superficially adopted (Baig & Yadegaridehkordi, 2023). A culturally responsive lens highlights the importance of recognizing how lecturers navigate their professional identities, structural realities, and pedagogical beliefs in their sociocultural context. In Vietnam, this means examining how lecturers make sense of the FC model in the context of hierarchical teaching traditions, exam-driven curricula, and their individual levels of technological capability (Lee, Lim, & Kim, 2017). By foregrounding the voices and experiences of lecturers, this study contributes to a growing body of literature promoting context-sensitive models of pedagogy that account for cultural complexity while advancing inclusive and communicative language education.

2.4. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework, in which the FC model, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), and contextual factors interact, is used to examine how Vietnamese lecturers modify the FC in speaking instruction. The FC model (Nouri, 2016) provides a structure for pre-class input and in-class practice, offering opportunities to implement guided speaking tasks and receive feedback (Afzali & Izadpanah, 2021). In addition, CRP Howard & Terry Sr. (2011) underpins the design of culturally relevant speaking resources and activities that address face-saving and collectivism, as Vietnamese students might expect from the task (Phan, 2004), thereby making the learner-directed aims of FC culturally legitimate. Contextual factors, such as institutional factors, assessment policies, and beliefs about pedagogy, may determine the potential for implementation (Nguyen Thanh et al., 2008; Tran et al., 2020). Lecturers are regarded as mediating agents (Fix et al., 2021); their perceptions and adaptation strategies demonstrate how FC is implemented in that context as a localized and sustainable practice. These adaptations are expected to yield outcomes such as increased fluency, confidence, and participation in speaking (Mengesha et al., 2024). The framework captures the linkage between the theoretical concepts and the Vietnamese teaching context during the data collection and analysis stages of the study. The conceptual framework of this study is illustrated in Figure 1 as follows:
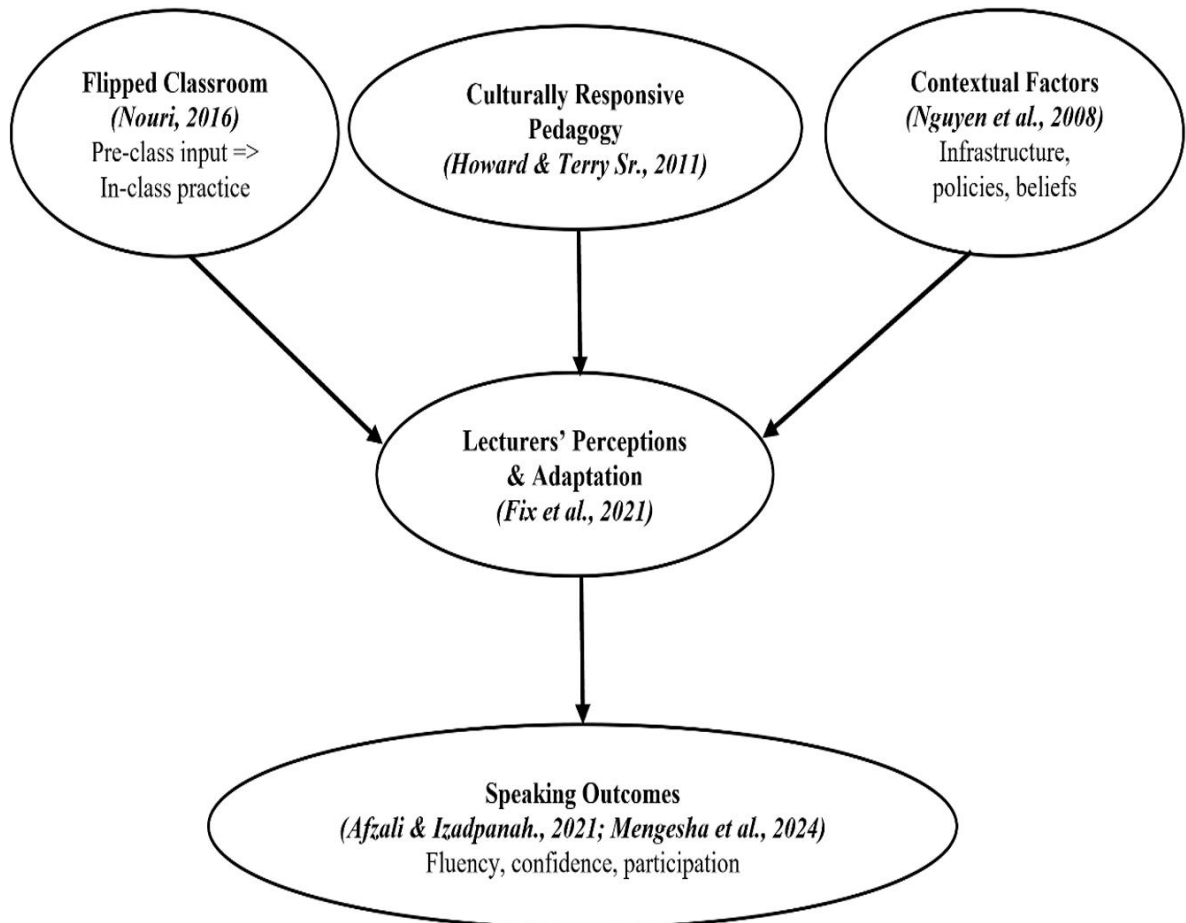
Figure 1. The conceptual framework of using the FC model to enhance students' speaking skills.

Source: Nouri (2016); Howard and Terry Sr (2011); Nguyen Thanh et al. (2008); Fix et al. (2021); Afzali and Izadpanah (2021) and Mengesha et al. (2024)

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

A qualitative, interpretive research design was employed in the study to examine how Vietnamese EFL lecturers perceive and negotiate the implementation of the FC model in teaching speaking skills. Qualitative inquiry was deemed suitable for the study, given the research's emphasis on subjective experience, contextual influences, and meaning-making processes. Rather than producing generalizable results, the study sought to understand pedagogical beliefs and realities in depth and in context. The data were collected through three methods: semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and collaborative workshops. Using a triangulation approach to data collection enhanced the study's data quality and yielded complementary perspectives. The three methods offered different approaches to data collection: interviews provided time for participants to reflect through reflection; focus groups elicited the lecturers' shared challenges through collaborative negotiation; and workshops offered participants an opportunity to connect with FC strategies in practical contexts. Hence, the use of multiple methods facilitated a more nuanced understanding of how the participant lecturers experienced the theoretical possibilities and practical limitations of FC within their institutional contexts.

3.2. Participants

The study included 25 university lecturers (Table 1) from 5 institutions in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The participating institutions included a variety of public and private universities, with an equal number of each. There

were three public universities and two private universities, including Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education (HCMUTE), Nong Lam University, Ho Chi Minh Open University, Van Hien University, and University of Foreign Languages and Information Technology (HUFLIT). This balance between public and private universities resulted in substantial differences in their institutional characteristics, educational environments, and technological infrastructure.

Table 1. Demographic information of the 25 participants from five universities in Ho Chi Minh City.

Institution	No. of participants	Gender distribution	Average years of teaching experience	Common English proficiency level
Ho Chi Minh city university of technology and education (HCMUTE)	5	3 Female / 2 Male	7	C1-C2
Nong Lam University	5	2 Female / 3 Male	8	B2-C1
Ho Chi Minh Open University	5	3 Female / 2 Male	9	C1-C2
Van Hien University (VHU)	5	2 Female / 3 Male	5	B2-C1
University of foreign languages and information technology (HUFLIT)	5	3 Female / 2 Male	6	B2-C1

All participants were currently teaching English-language courses to undergraduate students majoring in English or English for Specific Purposes (ESP). They had varying levels of experience, ranging from 3 to 20 years. All participants held at least a master's degree in applied linguistics, TESOL, or education. The two significant criteria for selection were: (1) direct experience teaching speaking skills to undergraduate students at the tertiary level, and (2) previous experience using educational technology or instructional innovation. This participant profile enabled a rich exploration of informed perspectives and an optimal balance between innovation and existing systemic constraints. Ethical consent was obtained for the study, and each participant's anonymity was preserved through coding.

3.3. Data Collection

The data collection took place over three months, utilizing three qualitative instruments: (1) in-depth semi-structured interviews, (2) moderated focus group discussions, and (3) interactive pedagogical workshops. Interviews, conducted in English or Vietnamese depending on participants' comfort, lasted 45–60 minutes. They focused on the conceptual understanding of the FC model, perceived affordances for speaking instruction, challenges lecturers experience when implementing FC, and how the context of implementation and delivery had been adapted. Focus groups comprised lecturers from similar institutions and facilitated collective reflection on institutional constraints and cultural expectations. In workshops, participants evaluated sample FC lesson plans and proposed localized modifications. All audio recordings of interviews, focus groups, and workshops were made with participant consent, then transcribed in full and translated into English when necessary. Field notes and researcher memos documented non-verbal elements of interaction, group dynamics, and emergent themes. This layered data collection strategy enabled both depth and breadth of insight, thereby enhancing the methodological quality of the study. Protocols (Table 2) were piloted with two lecturers and refined for clarity and cultural appropriateness (e.g., face-saving, turn-taking norms). Prompts were available in Vietnamese/English to match participant preference.

Table 2. Interview questions.

	Objectives	No.	Questions
RQ1	Lecturers' perspectives on using FCM in speaking teaching	1	When using FCM in speaking teaching, **which aspects of speech** (fluency/accuracy/lexical range/interactional competence) **have students improved the most?** Why?
		2	What are the greatest difficulties students face when speaking in a flipped classroom (anxiety, silence, preparation differences, etc.)?
		3	How do you assess **the level of confidence and willingness to speak** after implementing the FCM?
		4	Compared to traditional classes, **how does the quality of interaction** (turn-taking, responsiveness) change?
RQ2	Adaptations in pre-class resource design and in-class task design	5	What format and length **do you typically use** (short videos, slides with voice-over, or others)? Why?
		6	Which distribution platform (LMS/Zalo/Microsoft Teams) is best for your students?
		7	In class, which **speaking task** is most effective (role-play, debate, information-gap)?
	Adaptations in post-class assessment and institutional supports	8	How do you **evaluate your students' progress in** flipped classes (descriptive rubrics, e-portfolios, mini-presentations)?
		9	**How do the infrastructure** (e.g., equipment and network) and **the digital capacity** of students/teachers affect the progress of teaching?
		10	**What support from the school or faculty** (training, time, assessment policy) is key to maintaining the FCM?

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis approach, widely accepted in qualitative research in education for its flexibility and robustness. First, each transcript was read numerous times for familiarization, and some initial notes were made. Second, codes were inductively developed from the data to capture recurring themes, contradictions, ideas, and phrases. Ultimately, codes were aggregated into themes, with data from interviews, focus groups, and workshops continually compared to enhance triangulation and coherence. Themes were then refined through iterative reviews and conversations with the research team to enhance interpretive validity. NVivo software was used to facilitate data organization and auditing. Specific attention was given to themes of lecturers' educational beliefs, technology preparedness, culture negotiation, and institutional adaptability. This method demonstrated the research's capacity to privilege participants' voices while also providing a systematic, theory-informed account of their perceptions of the FC model.

3.5. Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Multiple strategies were employed to promote methodological trustworthiness, including triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity. Triangulation was achieved by gathering data from multiple sources (i.e., interviews, group discussions, and co-design workshops), thereby facilitating cross-validation of themes that emerged from the data. Member checking was conducted by returning thematic summaries to participants, who could provide feedback and confirm that the data reflected their intended meaning. All feedback and suggested 'fixes' from participants were incorporated into the analysis. The researcher engaged in reflexive journaling, which enhanced credibility and provided a record of personal biases and methodological decisions made during data collection and analysis. Ethical approval was obtained from a university research ethics committee before data collection commenced. The researcher obtained informed consent from all participants at the time of data collection, including assurances of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time. Pseudonyms were used in reporting to protect participants' identities. These strategies facilitated an ethical research process that was trustworthy, transparent, and aware of the researcher and participant positionality.

4. RESULTS

The paper employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach to analyze data from semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and workshops. The thematic results comprised four themes, each with sub-themes generalizable to the two research questions (RQ 1 and RQ 2). Themes 1, 2, and 3 are related explicitly to RQ 1 (lecturers' perceptions of pedagogical affordances and limitations of the FC model in incorporating speaking instruction). In contrast, Theme 4 is relevant to RQ 2 (contextual adaptations to improve FC implementation in Vietnam).

4.1. Positive Attitudes towards FC Potentials

Most participants held positive attitudes toward the FC model overall; significantly, many believed it could improve speaking instruction. Lecturers recognized that the FC model created more time for collaborative speaking practice and interaction. With this additional time, students were able to prepare prior to class, which promoted confidence and greater participation. Several respondents also noted that exposure to the input materials prior to class reduced students' anxiety, enabling them to engage more fully in class discussions. As one lecturer highlighted, "Students feel safer practicing in class when they already understand the topic." This perception demonstrates alignment between the principles of FC and the principles of effective conditions for communicative competence: motivated learners demonstrate a lowered affective filter and report gains most frequently in fluency and confidence, alongside improvements in interactional routines (turn-taking/responsiveness) in the target language in a highly scaffolded environment.

Another commonly mentioned advantage was the increase in learner autonomy and responsibility. Lecturers observed that students who used the flipped materials before class demonstrated greater proactivity and preparedness for communicating during the lesson. This behavior change removed the responsibility of merely transmitting content and allowed instructors to focus on facilitating and promoting student communication. One lecturer commented that the FC model "forces students to become responsible for their own learning," particularly in speaking activities, where preparedness is linked to fluency and coherence. The participants attributed these changes to positive shifts in classroom dynamics; for example, participants noticed that even the more reluctant speakers were contributing more consistently during group discussions and group presentations.

Beyond its educational advantages, participants acknowledged that the FC model aligns with contemporary educational aspirations. Many participants framed flipped instruction as a means of modernizing English language teaching in Vietnam, hence bridging the gap with global educational practices. They viewed the FC model not only as a method of instruction but also as a shift in mindset, thereby opening up further opportunities for student-centered, communicative, and technology-enhanced teaching. In terms of implementation, some lecturers stated that the FC model can become "a direction for the future work of our profession," especially related to the transition to a blended learning model post-pandemic. These positive perceptions contribute to the notion that FC intervention is, above all, a means of facilitating change in speaking instruction within higher education in Vietnam.

4.2. Implementation Challenges

The participants expressed optimism about the FC model, but all acknowledged significant implementation challenges, particularly related to technological infrastructure. The majority of universities, especially in non-urban locations, reported lacking reliable internet connections, functioning multimedia devices, or access to learning management systems. Lecturers reported challenges in assigning out-of-class work due to limited access to devices/computers or digital tools. One participant noted, "We do not even have enough projectors for a basic

presentation, let alone running from a video for each group." This infrastructure deficiency significantly hampered the FC model's core principles of out-of-class content distribution and in-class engagement. These limitations created a disconnect between the potential pedagogical strategies and the reality at the institutional level.

In addition to infrastructure, many lecturers specifically identified constraints related to students' and their own digital literacy. It is important to note that although some instructors used online tools, many reported lacking the skills or training to design, curate, and implement their flipped materials. Furthermore, students, particularly those from rural and disadvantaged backgrounds, were not quite ready to independently manage their online platforms, including downloading materials or completing work before class. If it was not bad enough to have to deal with these challenges, several lecturers reported a lack of institutional support for their professional development needs, technical support, and time. One particular lecturer summarized the feeling by saying, "It is like we are allowed to innovate, but have neither the tools nor the time to do it properly." This idea of unsupported systemic neglect diminished the lecturers' motivation and exacerbated their lack of confidence in sustaining the flipped classroom model.

Another significant challenge was managing classroom dynamics, and this was most difficult in classes of 40-60 students, which meant opportunities for students to interact with each other in speaking tasks and to assess students' progress in groups or as individuals were restricted. Some participants expressed concern that flipped learning may exacerbate inequity, as more motivated students may get ahead of those who are less motivated or less prepared. Others suggested some degree of pressure to 'teach to the test,' which is particularly relevant for organizations in which exam-based outcomes determine the pace and priorities of teaching and learning. In these contexts, a flipped environment was more framed as a wish than a need. These challenges to enacting flipped learning are not insurmountable, but they highlight the need for contextualized modifications, institutional buy-in, and systematic support for capacity building.

4.3. Cultural Misalignment and Teacher Role Tensions

A salient theme throughout the interviews and focus groups was the cultural misfit between the FC model and the embedded educational values in Vietnam. Participants described how the FC's demands for student independence, peer-to-peer engagement, and shared authority were at odds with traditional notions rooted in Confucian heritage. The expectation that students prepare individually and lead class engagement disproportionately centers students as the source of class content knowledge, contradicting long-standing norms that position the teacher in this role. Upon first experiencing the FC model, one lecturer stated, "My students are not used to the idea that they must study first before coming to class; they wait for me to explain everything." This quotation identified the dissonance between a learner-centered pedagogical model and the established, deeply embedded teacher-centered expectations shared by learners and instructors alike.

Additionally, lecturers reported experiencing internal tensions regarding their evolving professional identities. Although many acknowledged the pedagogical benefits of the FC model, they simultaneously reported feeling discomfort with the possibility of being "not pedagogically occurring." They gave up on constructing the discourse that traditionally happens in the classroom. Some indicated that fewer lectures meant less authority, or that they were at risk of students perceiving them as "not teaching enough." Others struggled with their dual identity as both content experts and providers of opportunities for students to engage with one another. These tensions may be rooted in the perspectives of senior lecturers who were trained and socialized within earlier paradigms. One participant stated, "I feel insecure when the students are doing activities, and I am just watching, I wonder if I am

doing enough for the job." This statement illustrates the psychological and professional transitions required for the full adoption of flipped pedagogies.

When analyzing these data, the sociocultural importance of harmony and face maintenance in public may also have been a barrier to active engagement in speaking tasks. In FC settings, students must work collaboratively with peers, ask questions, and perform orally. For many, this can be challenging due to fear of making mistakes or losing face in front of their peers. Lecturers described students as frequently reticent during in-class discussions, even though they had read or engaged with the materials prior to class. In this instance, reticence should not have been assumed to indicate a lack of preparation among the students; rather, it could have been understood through cultural lenses that promote modesty and group identity over individual expression. Given this background, participants emphasized that low-stakes, supportive speaking environments and respect for culture are essential for developing communicative confidence. Thus, these findings underscore the need to provide culturally relevant strategies for implementing the FC in the Vietnamese higher education context.

4.4. Adaptation Strategies

Given the cultural and institutional barriers to implementing the FC, participants proposed several pragmatically viable adaptation options. A commonly offered option was a "partial flip" approach, in which select aspects of the lesson (e.g., vocabulary input or grammar) were delivered asynchronously. In contrast, the lecturer delivered the remainder face-to-face. This hybrid model allowed them to introduce students to a new way of learning without overwhelming them. As one of the lecturers noted, "We can start by flipping just 20-30% of the content, at first, so that the students have time to adjust to this new format." This staged approach implies awareness of the cultural and cognitive demands associated with FC and indicates that the lecturers sought to adapt their pedagogy to be inclusive of their learners.

Another technique was to adjust the conceptual design of the pre-class materials to better align with students' access and learning preferences. Rather than longer pre-recorded lecture videos or a long learning management system (LMS), some lecturers simply used applications to design short, mobile-friendly videos or PDF summaries with voice annotations to send to students. Rather than distributing materials via the LMS, lectures used familiar apps (e.g., Zalo or Facebook Messenger), which increased the likelihood of student engagement. Lecturers also reported curating culturally relevant and linguistically accessible materials to bridge the knowledge gap better. Collectively, this represents micro-adaptation and an understanding of both the digital divide and context-based input in language learning. These adaptations highlight how a lecturer served as an active mediator between their pedagogical ideals and local realities, thereby keeping the FC model as inclusive and practical as possible.

Finally, several participants identified the need to create a psychologically safe and socially supportive in-class environment that actively promotes student participation in speaking tasks. Strategies appeared to involve using smaller peer groups, anonymous voting systems, or response-to-prompt tasks, and speaking tasks with comprehensive sequential linguistic scaffolding. Some lecturers engaged their stronger students in peer modeling tasks, allowing them to initiate the task before inviting other students to participate. The strategies should reduce fear of failure and encourage incremental communicative risk-taking. As one lecturer remarked, "Students speak more when they know that there is no penalty for making mistakes." Collectively, these strategies demonstrated both creativity and pedagogical rigor, and they also reflected a strong commitment by lecturers to adhere to the primary intention of FC, in this case, student-centered learning, in the context of socio-cultural and institutional constraints inherent to Vietnamese tertiary education.

5. DISCUSSION

It is not surprising that lecturers view the FC model as helpful in creating opportunities for speaking, reducing anxiety, and accepting greater autonomy for learners, given Nouri (2016) and Afzali and Izadpanah (2021) reported similar findings in EFL contexts, and that aligns with the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach that advocates maximized interaction time in class and preparation of students to talk in class. In light of Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, based on lecturers' observations, suggests that FC may provide a low-anxiety environment that promotes the development of oral fluency. Similarly, the participants' view that FC is part of a "future direction" for language teaching in Vietnam indicates their growing openness toward technology-enhanced pedagogies. However, sustainable adoption will require institutional commitment. While positive attitudes toward flipped learning in a language education context are important, the context is critical, as institutions with weaker infrastructure or less training support may not exhibit similar enthusiasm.

The challenges that lecturers experience with technological and institutional barriers align with the findings of Tran et al. (2020) and Dinh (2021) that infrastructure readiness is a key condition for FC success. The data indicate that internet turbulence, a lack of devices, and limited technical support undermine the prerequisite pre-class learning on which FC depends. Furthermore, as noted by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), the prevalence of large, exam-focused classes means that there will still always be a culture of high-stakes testing that frequently deprioritizes communicative competence. These constraints indicate that, while FC must become a more culturally ingrained form of learning in Vietnam, policy-level changes will also be required, including revisions to assessment systems and increased funding and resources to support digital literacy programs for both lecturers and students. Otherwise, even if these changes occurred, we would be left with superficial implementations of FC that, in practice, may not yield longitudinal gains.

The conflict between FC's learner-centered model and Vietnam's established teacher-centered norms reflects the cultural dynamics identified by Phan (2004) and Truong and Hallinger (2017). The reluctance of students to undertake independent work before class and lecturers' uncertainty about their roles illustrate the challenges involved in shifting along the identity trajectory; indeed, Shea (2018) notes a similar identity issue when discussing aspects of pedagogical change. These tensions are situated within the Confucian heritage culture and are addressed by Singh et al. (2022), which likely constrained students' willingness to engage in risk-taking in oral performance. Our findings demonstrate that implementing FC entails hygienically considering culture when shifting expectations about learning. This will use transitional roles and explicitly teach students to learn both collaboratively with instructors and independently, rather than asking them to adapt immediately to new norms.

The adaptation strategies that participants identified (partial flipping, use of mobile-friendly resources, and incorporation of culturally relevant topics) demonstrate pragmatic agency in bridging global models with local realities. This is consistent with Andrews and Lemons (2015), who advocate phased innovation to strengthen sustainability. Pre-class activities that use shorter, accessible videos that can be sent via the respondent's pre-existing platform (e.g., Zalo, Facebook Messenger) also address the technology-related conditions previously suggested. Using both culturally relevant topics and low-stakes speaking tasks also differed from reluctance rooted in classroom traditions. Overall, this suggests that successful FC use in Vietnam is more a matter of counteracting traditional factors, such as limited engagement and the inability to replicate a source model, than of adopting a foreign model. This potential in Vietnam is likely to lead to sustained adoption among both lecturers and students, owing to the context-specific adaptation and iterative approach employed.

The small sample size limits generalizability, as it consisted of lecturers from only a few Vietnamese universities. Therefore, the extent to which the results can be generalized across other institutions or cultural

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contexts is limited. The overall reliance on self-reported data obtained through semi-structured interviews may also have been subject to social desirability bias, resulting in participants' attitudes toward the FC model being more positive than they actually are. The options for methodological decisions were constrained by time and resources, which prevented inclusive observations of participants' classrooms or the development of longitudinal tracking of their pedagogical change. It was also not possible to fully control for other potential confounding factors (e.g., variations in technological knowledge or prior exposure to innovative teaching approaches). Nevertheless, these factors do not discount the value of illustrating the different culturally contextualized manners in which the FC was enacted in EFL settings.

Future studies should employ a larger, more diverse sample of lecturers from multiple contexts across Vietnam to enhance data transferability. Additionally, future research should employ longitudinal or mixed-methods designs to examine the impact of the FC model on lecturers' perceptions and on students' speaking performance over time. Notably, there are good opportunities for future research to include: incorporating classroom observations to surface the realities of teaching-learning interactions; investigating students' use of technological competence as a mediating factor for the effectiveness of the model; and performing further comparative studies between full and partial FCs to gain further insights about the most effective adaptations applied in contexts that may be resource-limited. In terms of actionable implications, higher education systems are invited to develop model FC training programs for lecturers that account for their context; moreover, any consideration of context should incorporate a pedagogically centered view of the technological innovations in place.

6. CONCLUSION

This study investigates EFL (English as a Foreign Language) lecturers' perceptions, challenges, and adaptation strategies for implementing the Flipped Classroom (FC) model to enhance students' speaking skills in the context of higher education in Vietnam. Overall, the findings indicate a positive view toward implementing the FC model, recognition that FC could improve engagement and reduce students' anxiety about speaking English, and the creative, context-based adaptation strategies implemented. Notably, there were also significant obstacles, including limited technological resources, institutional constraints on time or resources, and culturally misaligned pedagogies, which made learner-centered pedagogy unwelcome. These results highlight the breadth and depth of culturally responsive and resource-conscious FC implementation strategies with ongoing institutional support or professional development. Additionally, by highlighting the potential for implementation rather than the adoption of foreign models, the research contributes to the growing scholarship on technology-enhanced language teaching in Asia. However, as the current investigation focused on a singular institution, its implications may be limited. Nonetheless, the insights gained from this research can provide educators and policymakers with a helpful perspective for advancing the integration of innovative pedagogies into EFL curricula.

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