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Investigating the Effect of The Flipped Classroom Model on Moroccan EFL Students' Expository Essay Writing. A Case Study

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Abstract: This study explores the impact of the flipped classroom (FC) model on expository essay writing skills among 2nd-year baccalaureate arts students at Abdelmajid Benjeloun High School in Kenitra, Morocco. Utilizing a quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test design with non-equivalent groups, the research involved 60 students divided into an experimental group (n=30) and a control group (n=30). Both groups were matched for academic levels and internet access. The experimental group received instruction via the FC model, while the control group followed a typical process writing approach. Pre- and post-tests, scored on criteria adapted from The National Baccalaureate Exam Specifications, assessed performance. Data analysis using SPSS 19 revealed significant improvements in the experimental group's writing skills, as evidenced by higher post-test scores and a Mann-Whitney U test indicating statistical significance (p=0.042) with a small to medium effect size (r=0.262). These findings suggest the FC model's effectiveness in enhancing writing skills and offer valuable insights for educational practices in similar contexts.

Keywords: flipped classroom, writing, expository writing, students' performance

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Introduction

Academic writing is a complex activity. It often includes making decisions about the appropriate vocabulary, sentence variations, punctuation, ways of structuring and developing arguments, and other linguistic tools for cohesion and coherence. In the classroom, writing is described as guiding students to produce whole pieces of communication, and link and develop information, ideas, or arguments for a particular reader or a group of readers (Hedge, 2005). Similarly, writing can be seen as a systematic process that includes, as described by Halum, Y. S. (2021), generating ideas, revising, editing, and publishing the writing to a reader. Therefore, language teachers and policymakers constantly strive for the best teaching practices that aim at developing the kinds of thinking and linguistic processes inducive to competent writing. For instance, The English Language Guidelines for Secondary Schools in Morocco (2007) highlights that learners need ample practice at the level of mechanics and accuracy and should be conscious of how different text structures and genres are organized through a lot of reading, listening, and discussions. However, in-class time may not be sufficient for teachers to provide explicit guidance, nor is it enough for learners to go through the whole writing process. One of the solutions to that issue could be found in adopting the Flipped Classroom Model of instruction (FCM).

The flipped classroom is an innovative technique in education where traditional learning methods are reversed. As Sams, A., and Bergmann, J. (2012) put it “that which is traditionally done in class is now done at home, and that which is traditionally done as homework is now completed in class” (p. 13). Moreover, FC can also be seen as a form of blended learning in which students learn new content online by watching video lectures, usually individually at home, before coming to class. In this respect, Putra, M. K. (2021) argues that by using flipped classrooms, teachers change the model of learning from large group learning to individual learning by using several technologies such as video, online-based reading texts, or other online materials. These arguments suggest that a flipped classroom approach fosters independent learning skills and gives the students ample time to build solid knowledge about the assigned content beforehand.

Within the scope of teaching writing, the literature identifies several studies that showed the positive impact of FL on the writing process of narrative, descriptive, argumentative, and expository texts (Lin, 2019; ÖzdemİR & Açik, 2019; Umutlu & Akpinar, 2020; Yoon & Na-Young, 2022). However, these studies were pertinent to higher education language teaching.

Other studies such as (Ebron & Mabuan, 2021; Fathi & Rahimi, 2020; Montaner-Villalba, 2021) focused on improving academic writing through flipped classrooms for learners studying English for specific purposes (ESP) at the university level. In fact, the implementation of the flipped classroom model in high schools is still in its infancy. Additionally, there is no single mode of implementation for flipped classes and teaching, which means that the effects depend largely on the specific learning activities, resulting in the fact that previous research does not report conclusive results (Gasparič et al., 2024). To this end, this study aims to add to the body of literature through an empirical inquiry that examines the impact of using the flipped classroom model on Moroccan EFL high school students' expository essay writing; thus, contributing with data-driven conclusions to enhance practitioners' pedagogical practices. Narrowed down to more operational words, this study seeks to answer the following question:

- How does the implementation of the flipped classroom model influence the expository essay writing skills of Moroccan EFL high school students?

To address the research question, it is crucial to connect the benefits of the Flipped Classroom (FC) model with the unique challenges of teaching EFL writing in Moroccan classrooms. Abouabdelkader and Bouziane (2016) highlight a lack of awareness of research-based methods, leading teachers to rely on textbooks or personal preferences without clear guidelines for EFL writing instruction. What is more, Moroccan EFL students struggle with language proficiency, poor reading habits, and weak essay structuring skills (Beniche, 2021). Given these challenges, and the studies (mentioned above) showing the positive impact of FC on writing, it is inferred that flipping writing classes can improve Moroccan EFL students' expository essay writing performance. This reasoning leads us to anticipate an affirmative answer to the research question. Hypothesizing that:

- Implementing Flipped Classrooms to teach writing in Moroccan EFL classrooms will have a positive impact on expository essay writing among students.

1 Review of the Literature

1.1 Motives for Teaching Writing

Writing is a productive skill in which learners express thoughts, ideas, or information and share concerns with the world through written language. In fact, mastering writing is crucial for students to excel in academics, professional endeavors, and daily interactions. In educational settings, writing is frequently utilized to enhance learning outcomes (Bangert-Drowns et al.,

2004; Graham & Hebert, 2011b; Klein, 2000). Similarly, in the workplace, both white-collar and blue-collar roles necessitate proficient writing skills (Graham, S., Capizzi, A., Harris, K.R. et al., 2014; National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2004, 2005) with reports suggesting writing's increasing importance for future job prospects, as cited in Graham, S., et al., (2013).

Moreover, writing plays an integral role in modern social interactions, evident in various digital platforms such as Facebook, blogging, social media posting, tweeting, and email correspondence, reflecting its pervasive influence on contemporary life. "As 21st century students are digital natives, they receive a flood of information, constantly updated, and introduced to plenty of topics" says (Beniche, M., 2021, p. 121). Similarly, Scrivener, J. (2005) argues that "Whereas, in the early 1990s, many people wrote very little day by day, the advent and popularity of email, web forums, Internet messenger services and text messaging has meant that there is now a huge increase in written communication." (p. 234). Therefore, preparing students to be good writers is a priority to help them participate actively in social dynamism and to enable them to share their ideas publicly.

In the Moroccan EFL setting, teaching writing is allotted the importance it deserves because of the various benefits that accrue out of its practice. In this regard, The English Language Guidelines for Secondary Schools (2007) list the following six benefits of emphasizing writing in schools:

1. Writing solidifies language components such as vocabulary and syntax.
2. It reinforces various other skills as writers gather and process information through observation, reading, and analysis.
3. Adequate practice of writing facilitates recycling and generating content.
4. Writing enhances logical thinking and problem-solving abilities during the conceptualization and expression of ideas.
5. Writing is an act of thought and a means of learning. Writers write to think, to explore their environment and the world with language, and to discover and internalize meanings.
6. Ultimately, writing plays a significant role in empowering learners and fostering their growth not only as language users but also as independent intellectuals.

Writing is, therefore, essential for academic, professional, and social success. Hence, prioritizing writing skills has numerous merits, including reinforcing language components, enhancing other sub-skills, reinforcing logical thinking, and empowering learners' overall intellectual growth.

1.2 Instructional Methods in EFL Writing

Effective writing instruction is crucial for equipping students with the ability to convey their thoughts coherently and persuasively. Various approaches to teaching writing have been developed over the years, yet this paper will focus on the process-based approach for it is the one approach endorsed in The English Language Guidelines for Secondary Schools in Morocco (2007).

1.2.1 The Process-Based Approach

The process-based approach to writing focuses on quantity rather than quality, and beginning writers are encouraged to get their ideas on paper in any shape or form without worrying too much about formal correctness (Nunan, D., 1991). Zamel (1983) defines this approach as a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (p. 165). That is to say, writing is a dynamic and creative process in which writers explore and refine their ideas, continuously shaping them to convey the intended meanings. Another, more straightforward definition was elaborated by Scrivener, J. (2005). He defines process writing as an activity in which students write what they want to, with help, encouragement, and feedback from the teacher and others throughout the process of choosing a topic, gathering ideas, organizing thoughts, drafting, etc.

It is worth mentioning that the interest in this approach was first motivated by the results of research on the difference between 'skilled' and 'unskilled' or poor writers. The English Language Guidelines for Secondary Schools in Morocco (2007) claim that inquiries such as Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (1987) aimed to understand the writing processes of proficient writers, believing that by identifying and defining these processes, they could be taught and applied in the classroom. The work of Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (1987) shows that skilled writers use the writing task to analyze problems, reflect on the task, and set goals to actively rework thoughts to change both their text and ideas.

The author in the process-oriented approach goes through various stages to create a piece of writing. These stages have been specified and elaborated by different scholars throughout history. Nonetheless, the model of writing processes most widely accepted by L2 writing teachers is the original planning-writing-reviewing framework established by Flower and Hayes (Flower, 1989; Flower and Hayes, 1981) as cited by Hyland, K. (2003). This basic model of process writing has evolved to further describe what goes on at each stage of the

process, with the lion's share going to describing the teacher's roles and suggesting activities to improve students' writing output. In this regard, Raimes (1992) states that the teacher's main responsibility is to guide students through the writing process, avoiding an emphasis on form to help them develop strategies for generating, drafting, and refining ideas.

Scrivener, J. (2005) further explains that we, teachers, can help our learners meet the writing skills and strategies in many ways. We can help them choose a topic and a genre; get ideas and discuss them with others to get new perspectives; select and sequence ideas; make notes, diagrams, etc. to help organize ideas; find grammar and lexis suitable for the text; do practice exercises on language items that will be useful; study sample and model texts similar to what they want to write; draft a rough text; get feedback on content and on language use; co-write sections of text in groups; make alterations and rewrites; write a final version; and find appropriate readers.

According to the aforementioned, we can synthesize that writing is not a solitary activity, but it is rather an intensively interactive process involving the learner writer, other learners, and the teacher. To use Ron White & Valerie Arndt's (1991) words, it is an *enabling* approach that involves a collaborative effort between teacher and students, breaking down classroom barriers and engaging both parties as writers and critical readers. The process approach emphasizes fostering metacognitive awareness among students in the writing process, which involves reflecting on their writing strategies. This orientation also places significant emphasis on individual, personalized responses to learners' writings. For Hyland, K. (2003), a response (or feedback) is the point at which the teacher's intervention is most obvious and most crucial, for it plays an important part in motivating learners and lays the ground for overt correction and explicit language teaching.

Nevertheless, the process-based approach to writing has also attracted criticism. One such criticism is that it pays less attention to grammar and structure. Although there is much emphasis on feedback, studies (Ferris, 1997; Truscott, 1996) argue that the effectiveness of error correction and grammar teaching in assisting learners to improve their writing remains controversial in this model. In addition to concerns about accuracy, it is argued that we still do not have a comprehensive idea of how learners go about a writing task or how they learn to write. Research into the complex interplay of cognition and the process of writing, though influential, remains small-scale and contradictory (Hyland, K., 2003). This leaves us with unanswered questions about why writers make specific choices or how they transition cognitively in the intervening stages and whether the processes apply universally to all learners.

The Flipped Classroom Modal

In a flipped classroom, students first learn about new topics outside of class, then, class time is used for more engaging tasks such as problem-solving, discussions, group work, or hands-on activities. It is also worth noting that the phrase "flipped learning" came into general use interchangeably with “flipped classrooms” by the pioneers of the said model Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams, who released their book “Flip your Classroom” in 2012 and later co-founded the Flipped Learning Network (FLN) in 2014.

1.3.1 Defining the Flipped Classroom

Ogden, L. et al. (2014) define the flipped classroom approach to teaching as a pedagogical design that replaces what typically takes place during a face-to-face lecture with more engaging activities and assigns the course as homework for students to complete autonomously outside of class. This entails that the teachers have a lot of time to interact with the students to help them to improve their competence about the material.

The flipped Classroom may be confused with other terms, such as blended learning and online teaching. It is, therefore, prerequisite to clear the blur surrounding these terms. Blended learning, also known as hybrid, web-enhanced instruction, or mixed-mode instruction, is a combination of face-to-face instruction and technology that requires at least some physical co-presence of instructors and students (Nuruzzaman, 2016). Likewise, Kitchenham (2011) argues that blended learning “involves the purposeful inclusion of information and communication technologies, as well as multimedia or mobile devices, in order to meet learning goals” (p.3).

On the other hand, FCM is a specific type of blended learning (Florence & Kolski, 2021). In the FCM, there is often an online element, or video lecture involved in the at-home step; however, students might also have a reading assignment (Nanclares & Rodríguez, 2016). Moreover, the FCM emphasizes replacing traditional face-to-face lectures with active, collaborative hands-on activities. The takeaway is that flipped classes can usually be blended classes, since materials are often provided online, and they can also be hybrid, if some of the class interactions take place online. However, blended and hybrid courses are not always flipped.

1.3.2 The Characteristics of the Flipped Classroom Model

Currently, teachers who flip their classes may do so utterly differently, employing various technological tools and devising different lesson plans that may not share the same

characteristics. However, flipped classrooms share a few characteristics, as stated in the Flipped Class Manifest (Bennett, B.E., Bergmann, J., Cockrum, T., Fisch, K., Musallam, R., Overmyer, J., Sams, A., & Spencer, D., 2012). These features include:

- Transferring portions of information delivery outside the classroom, often, but not exclusively, through teacher-created online videos, to optimize face-to-face interaction during school hours.
- Educators are now guides and facilitators of comprehension, fostering active learning among students.
- The created materials should be archived, allowing students to review content as needed.
- Learners have instant and straightforward access to any subject matter when they need it, leaving the teacher with more opportunities to expand on higher order thinking skills and enrichment. (Bennett, B. E., Spencer, D., Bergmann, J., Cockrum, T., Musallam, R., Sams, A., ... & Overmyer, J., 2011)

Similarly, studies such as (DeLozier & Rhodes, 2017; Moffett & Mill, 2014; Moore & Chung, 2015) emphasize two main components of the FCM: The engaging activities inside class and the video lectures outside of class. On the one hand, In-class activities, whether individual or group-based, offer valuable learning experiences. Independent activities allow students to showcase their personal skills. Conversely, small group activities foster deeper learning through collaboration and instructor and/or peer feedback, enriching the learning process (Florence & Kolski, 2021). On the other hand, researchers have identified key guidelines for creating effective video lessons or lectures. Guo, Kim, and Rubin (2014) discovered that shorter videos with a presenter's face are more engaging for students. Also, Engin and Donanci (2014) found that incorporating interesting visuals and voice-overs can engage high school English students effectively.

The characteristics of the FCM can also be generalized from the literature describing the merits of that model. Ilie, V. (2019) summarizes the following: FCM fosters collaboration, increases interaction between students and teachers, and promotes personalized learning. Students can break down content into manageable chunks, repeat them as needed, and take responsibility for their learning. Teachers can assess student understanding quickly, and students have flexibility in accessing and engaging with material online. The scholar adds that this approach optimizes classroom time and supports asynchronous learning. Similar merits were also reported during the 2nd Annual International Conference on Social Science and Contemporary Humanity Development.

Like many educational approaches, it is not all roses and sunshine. Abeysekera & Dawson (2014) state that a potential issue with flipped learning and teaching lies in students' motivation while at home, along with the possibility of a detrimental effect on knowledge acquisition if students fail to engage with the assigned video content and corresponding tasks, thereby missing out on crucial information presented in the videos. For this very reason, scholars (Bishop & Vergler, 2013; Boevé et al., 2017; Clark, 2015, Persky & McLaughlin, 2017; Shih & Tsai, 2017), as cited by (Florence & Kolski, 2021), suggested including another key feature to the FCM, which is an initial assessment of learning to ensure students view the lecture video. This can be carried out by having students write discussion posts in response to the material (Moran and Young, 2014), using text polling software to answer comprehension questions (Shon and Smith, 2011), or having students submit a rough draft to be shared with others to be peer-reviewed in the classroom (Elliot, 2014).

1.3.3 The Theoretical Underpinnings of the FCM

Trying to scope a theoretical framework for flipped classroom was not easily accomplished. Different resources offer different theories that support the premises of the FCM. Nevertheless, a large body of literature, such as (Florence & Kolski, 2021; Sakulprasertsri, K., 2017; Villegas P., 2022; Hu, J., 2022; Zhou, X., 2023; Eppard & Rochdi, 2017b; Putra, M. K., 2021), agree that FCM beliefs and practices sit comfortably within two main theories: Bloom's Taxonomy and Social Constructivism.

1.3.3.1 **Bloom's Taxonomy.** Notably, the 2001 Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. It is a logically sequenced structure that consists of six cognitive skill categories covering a range of abilities. These categories start with fundamental skills that require minimal cognitive effort and progress to more advanced skills that involve deeper learning and greater cognitive engagement. According to Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (2001), there are six levels of cognitive learning.

- Remembering: Recognizing or recalling knowledge from memory.
- Understanding: Demonstrating comprehension through one or more means of explanation
- Applying: Using learned material through products like presentations, interviews …etc.
- Analyzing: Breaking down concepts into parts, understanding their relationships, and determining their overall structure or purpose.
- Evaluating: Making judgments based on criteria by checking and critiquing.
- Creating: Putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole.

These levels can help develop learning outcomes. Krathwohl (2002) argues that educators can use the said framework to create instructional objectives appropriate for their students' developmental stages. Riazi, A., & Mosalanejad, N. (2010) add that the stages mentioned above correspond with developing both lower-order thinking skills (remembering, understanding, applying) and higher-order cognitive skills (analyzing, evaluating, creating) in students.

How do the stages of Bloom's Taxonomy apply to a flipped classroom? A flipped classroom essentially assigns content presentation as home activities where students do the lower levels of cognitive work (remembering and understanding), whereas class time focuses on the higher forms of cognitive work (applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating) where students have the support of their peers and the teacher (Brame, 2013). The FCM, therefore, allows students to acquire a solid foundation of a subject matter prior to classroom sessions, enabling subsequent activities, assessments, and reinforcement tasks to focus on honing advanced skills with the guidance of a teacher.

Constructivism. Constructivism is one of the major perspectives on language acquisition (besides behaviorism and cognitivism) that stands out for its ability to blend linguistic, psychological, and sociological perspectives into language studies, thereby emphasizing the importance of social interactions and the discovery, or construction of meaning (Brown, 2014).

The literature identifies two branches of constructivism: Cognitive and social. Cognitive constructivism's premises are "rooted in Piaget's seminal work in the middle of the twentieth century" (Brown, 2014. p. 12). According to Kaufman (2004), structuralists define learning as a developmental process that involves change, self-generation, and construction, each building on prior learning experiences. Consequently, this approach suggests that students must personally engage with and transform complex information to truly internalize it, advocating for a more active role in their learning. Therefore, in a constructivist learning environment, students learn best when they engage in hands-on, project-based, or problem-solving activities relevant to their lives. This entails that the teacher's role involves facilitating authentic and meaningful learning experiences, guiding students in constructing meaning, as well as monitoring and evaluating learners' progress.

Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cooperative learning. For Richards and Rodgers (2001), the constructivist learning theory holds that knowledge is socially constructed; thus, constructivist learners learn collaboratively in mixed

groups on common projects. One of the most popular concepts advanced by "the champion of social constructivism" (Brown, 2014. p. 12), Vygotsky, was the notion of a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD refers to the distance between learners' existing developmental state and their potential development. Put another way, the ZPD encompasses tasks that a learner has not yet learned but is capable of learning with appropriate stimuli. Morin (2012) argues that "not respecting this zone, either by helping children on tasks they can complete on their own, or by not helping enough on difficult tasks, impedes cognitive development" (437). This leads us to a major component of Vygotsky's theory, which is the concept of learning through a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). The more knowledgeable other could be anyone with a greater understanding of the problem, task, or concept that the child is trying to solve, complete, or learn.

Considering all the propositions above, one can acknowledge that the flipped classroom model and constructivism converge. In a flipped classroom, students engage with new material before class, allowing them to reconstruct their understanding of the subject matter through discussions and activities with peers during class time. Also, the role of the teacher shifts from instructor to guide, facilitating students' discovery of knowledge through hands-on activities and discussions. The teacher's role is to provide necessary information and tools while supporting students in developing their own ideas and drawing conclusions. Last but not least, the social aspect of constructivism aligns with the flipped learning philosophy, which advocates for collaborative work and individualized support during class time.

1.4 Previous Studies on Flipped Classroom in EFL Contexts

The need for innovation is reflected in the eagerness to enquire about the effect of The Flipped Classroom Model on learners' performance. For instance, a study by Putra, M. K. (2021) examined the impact of flipped classroom on students' ability to write a descriptive text. Cluster random sampling was employed to select 59 students as the sample. The experimental class utilized flipped classroom while the control class used conventional techniques. Data analysis via t-test revealed a significant difference in the average writing scores between the experimental class (85.20) and the control class (65.15). The study concluded that flipped classroom demonstrated a significant positive effect on students' ability to write descriptive text compared to conventional techniques.

Additionally, Fathi and Rahimi (2022) conducted quasi-experimental research to explore the effect of FCM on students' writing performance and complexity, accuracy, and

fluency (CAF). They involved two groups of students: control and experimental groups with 24 and 27 EFL students. The results demonstrated that the flipped classroom significantly developed and outperformed the non-flipped classroom on EFL students' global writing performance and writing fluency; however, its effect on the students' writing complexity and accuracy fell short of significance.

Last but not least, Leis, Cook & Tohei (2015) studied the effect of Flipped Classrooms on student's composition proficiency in an EFL environment. A total of 22 Japanese students participated in this study. The participants were divided equally between two groups, a regular group and a flipped group. To measure the participants' improvement, the authors put two indicators: (a) a rubric was founded to measure students' writing; (b), the number of produced words were compared between pretest and posttest. The regular group was taught using a textbook and slide presentation. The latter were made into short videos and uploaded on YouTube for the flipped group to watch. The instruction took ten weeks and ended with a posttest and a questionnaire. The results of the study revealed the flipped classroom group showed greater improvement than the regular group.

2 Method

This research employed a quasi-experimental design using a pre-test-post-test, non-equivalent group approach. In this design, the experimental group (n=30) and the control group (n=30) were selected without random assignment to ensure practical feasibility. Both groups took a pretest and posttest. Only the experimental group received the treatment (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The participants were 2nd-year baccalaureate arts students from Abdelmajid Benjeloun High School in Kenitra, Morocco. To ensure comparability, both groups were matched for equivalent academic levels and access to the internet at home.

In line with learning experiments in classroom settings, where the independent variable typically represents the stimulus or method, and the dependent variable reflects the response (Cohen et al., 2007), this study similarly adopted this framework. Here, the independent variable was the implementation of the flipped classroom approach to teaching writing. In contrast, the dependent variable was the performance of the groups in the post-test. This setup allowed for the examination of how the method of instruction could impact the students' outcomes, assessing the effectiveness of the flipped classroom approach in enhancing writing skills.

To reiterate, the objective of this research is to investigate the impact of the flipped classroom (FC) model on students' expository essay writing skills. To achieve this, a pre-test and post-test were administered to assess whether the implementation of the FC model leads to improved writing performance compared to a traditional teaching method. The pre-test established a baseline of students' abilities, while the post-test was given after four weeks of instruction. During this period, the control group was taught using the typical process writing approach, whereas the experimental group was instructed using the FC model. Both tests required the participants to write a multi-paragraph, expository essay, focusing on several key areas, as adapted from The National Baccalaureate Exam Specifications (2014): Adequate and relevant content; appropriate text structure; correct cohesive devices and transitions; correct use of mechanics such as spelling, punctuation and capitalization; proper structures and vocabulary; and the use of a variety of sentence structures.

The researcher addressed two main concerns with the tests: Content validity and reliability. Content validity refers to the extent to which a test accurately measures what learners were taught. In this case, writing expository texts is a fundamental competency in level 4 (2nd bac) based on The English Language Guidelines for Secondary Schools in Morocco (2007). While content validity cannot be quantified with a formula or statistic, the researcher ensured it by having two other high school English teachers review and approve the tests. This peer review process confirmed that the test content aligned with the instructional objectives, thereby establishing the content validity of the instrument.

Reliability measures the consistency of students' scores. Inter-raters are essential for this research to ensure reliable scoring. According to Gay et al. (2011b), inter-rater reliability refers to the consistency among two or more independent scorers, raters, or observers. In this study, there were two scorers: the researcher himself and another English teacher. This dual scoring approach helped to maintain the reliability of the assessment by ensuring consistent and objective evaluation of the students' writing performance. The researcher adopted and adapted the scoring criteria endorsed in The National Baccalaureate Exam Specifications (2014). The overall score for the writing task was 20 points, equally distributed across five criteria:

1. Relevance to the task (4 points)
2. Appropriate paragraphing and organization (4 points)
3. Appropriateness and variety of vocabulary (4 points)
4. Accurate use of grammar (4 points)
5. Accurate use of mechanics (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization) (4 points)

As for data analysis, the researcher conducted descriptive and inferential (statistical) analyses using SPSS 19. First, the researcher calculated the mean and standard deviation to compare and summarize the data for the pre-test and post-test scores of both groups. Next, the difference between post-test and pre-test scores for each participant (i.e., gain score = Post-test score – Pre-test score) was computed. After that, the researcher tested the assumptions of normality using Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic and tested for homogeneity of variance to decide which test to choose to compare means. An alpha level of $\alpha = 0.05$ was set to support or not to support the null hypothesis.

3 Results

3.1 Descriptives of the pre-test scores

It can be seen from Table 1 that the pre-test scores of the control group vary from 10.00 to 18.00, with a mean score of 12.97 and a standard deviation of 2.62. This indicates that, on average, participants scored just under 13, with most scores falling within a few points of the mean.

Table 1
A descriptive of the control group's pre-test scores

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest		30	10.00	18.00	12.9667	2.61934
Valid (listwise)	N	30				

Table 2 represents the pre-test scores of the experimental group, which vary from 10.00 to 18.00, with a mean score of 13.00 and a standard deviation of 3.18. This indicates that, on average, participants scored 13, with most scores falling within a few points of the mean.

Table 2
A descriptive of the experiment group's pre-test scores

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest		30	10.00	18.00	13.0000	3.18401
Valid (listwise)	N	30				

In summary, both groups have similar average pre-test scores, but the experimental group's scores are more dispersed. This starting point is useful in analyzing the initial

comparability of the groups and in assessing the impact of the treatment applied in the experiment.

3.2 Descriptives of the post-test scores

Table 3 shows that the control group's post-test scores indicate an average score of about 13.97 and a standard deviation of 2.19. This suggests that while most participants scored around 14, there was some variation in the scores, with the lowest being 11 and the highest being 18.

Table 3

A descriptive of the control group's post-test scores

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Posttest		30	11.00	18.00	13.9667	2.18905
Valid (listwise)	N	30				

As shown in table 4, the experimental group's post-test scores indicate a relatively high level of performance, with an average score of about 15.13 and a standard deviation of 2.26. This suggests that while most participants scored around 15, there was some variation in the scores, with the lowest being 11 and the highest being 19.

Table 4

A descriptive of the experimental group's post-test scores

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Posttest		30	11.00	19.00	15.1333	2.25501
Valid (listwise)	N	30				

Overall, the experimental group demonstrated better performance on the post-test compared to the control group. This difference in mean scores suggests a potential positive impact of the intervention (use of the FC model) applied to the experimental group.

3.3 Checking Assumptions for *t*-test

3.3.1 Testing Normality

Table 5

Normality test of the control group's gain scores

	Group=1 (FILTER)	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Difference	Selected	.214	30	.001	.917	30	.022

As shown in table 5, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the control group's gain scores yielded a statistic of 0.214 with a significance level (Sig.) of 0.001, based on a sample size of 30. This result indicates that the gain scores of the control group are not normally distributed according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

Table 6

Normality test of the experimental group's gain scores

	Group=2 (FILTER)	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Difference	Selected	.229	30	.000	.888	30	.004

Similarly, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the experimental group's gain scores produced a statistic of 0.229 with a significance level (Sig.) of 0.000, based on a sample size of 30 (Table 6). This result indicates a significant departure from normal distribution. Thus, according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the gain scores of the experimental group are not normally distributed.

3.3.2 Testing Homogeneity

Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was conducted to assess whether the variance of the dependent variable differed significantly between the groups. The test revealed a Levene statistic of 0.421, with degrees of freedom of 1 and 58, and a p-value of 0.519. As the p-value is greater than 0.05, we conclude that there is no significant difference in variances across the groups, indicating homogeneity of variance (Table 7).

Table 7

Homogeneity of Variances of gain scores across both groups

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.421	1	58	.519

To summarize, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that the gain scores for both the control group (Statistic = 0.214, Sig. = 0.001) and the experimental group (Statistic = 0.229, Sig. = 0.000) were not normally distributed, while Levene's test for homogeneity of variance showed no significant difference in variances between the groups (Levene statistic = 0.421, Sig. = 0.519).

Since both groups' gain scores are not normally distributed, using a parametric test like the independent samples t-test was not appropriate. Instead, a non-parametric test, which does

not assume normality, was used to compare the significance of scores between the two groups. "Instead of comparing means of the two groups, as in the case of the t-test, the Mann-Whitney U Test actually compares medians. It converts the scores on the continuous variable to ranks across the two groups. It then evaluates whether the ranks for the two groups differ significantly." (Pallant, 2010b, p. 227).

3.4 Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test

The Mann-Whitney *U* test was used to test the null hypothesis: H_0= The FC model has *no* statistically significant difference between the two groups.

Table 8

Ranks of the scores

Ranks

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Difference	Control	30	26.03	781.00
	Exp	30	34.97	1049.00
	Total	60		

Table 8.1

Mann-Whitney U Test statistics

Test Statistics[a]

	Difference
Mann-Whitney U	316.000
Wilcoxon W	781.000
Z	-2.033
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.042

As detailed in table 8.1, the Mann-Whitney U value is 316.000, the Wilcoxon W value is 781.000, the Z value is -2.033, and the asymptotic significance (2-tailed) is 0.042. Given that the p-value is less than the commonly used statistical significance level of 0.05, it is safe to say that "the null hypothesis … has not been supported" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 517). This indicates a statistically significant difference in the gain scores between the control group (mean rank = 26.03, N = 30) and the experimental group (mean rank = 34.97, N = 30), as shown in table 8. Therefore, the treatment had a significant positive impact on the gain scores, demonstrating notable improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group.

3.5 Effect Size

To provide additional context about the magnitude of the difference between the groups, an effect size was calculated. The effect size tells the reader "how big the effect is, something that the p value does not do" (Wright 2003: 125) as taken from Cohen et al., (2007). Importantly, this enquiry used the formula specified in Pallant (2010b) which uses the value of Z reported in the Mann-Whitney U to calculate an approximate value of r.

r = z / square root of N, where N = total number of cases.

In this case:

- Z=−2.033
- N=60

Let's calculate r:

r = (-2.033)/$\sqrt{60}$ Therefore, the r value is .026

An r value of -0.262 indicates a small to medium effect size using Cohen (1988) criteria of (0.1=small effect, 0.3=medium effect, 0.5=large effect). These findings suggest that the experimental intervention had a significant and meaningful positive impact on the gain scores, demonstrating notable improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group.

4 Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to examine the impact of the flipped classroom (FC) model on students' expository essay writing skills. Importantly, the initial pre-test scores revealed that both the control group and the experimental group had similar baseline abilities in writing, as evidenced by their nearly identical mean scores (12.97 for the control group and 13.00 for the experimental group). This baseline comparability was essential for fair matching of the two groups and for minimizing invalidity or bias (Cohen et al., 2007). It also ensured that any post-test differences could be attributed to the type of intervention rather than to pre-existing disparities in writing skills. Following four weeks of instruction, the post-test scores demonstrated that the experimental group outperformed the control group, with mean scores of 15.13 and 13.97, respectively. What is more, the greater dispersion of scores in the experimental group's pre-test (standard deviation of 3.18) was reduced in the post-test (standard deviation of 2.26), indicative of a more uniformly, consistent improvement across the group.

The primary results of the descriptive analysis of the two groups' scores were also supported by the output of the Mann-Whitney U test which reported a mean rank of 26.03 for

the control group, while the mean rank of the experimental group was 34.97. The Mann-Whitney U test was also crucial in supporting our hypothesis, which stated that implementing Flipped Classrooms to teach writing in Moroccan EFL classrooms would have a positive impact on expository essay writing among students. More importantly, this study also supported its findings by calculating the effect size to pair the statistical significance with the educational significance (as depicted by Cohen et al., 2007) of the results. The effect size, calculated as r = .262, indicated a small to medium effect according to Cohen's (1988) criteria. By providing both statistical and educational significance, the study robustly demonstrated the positive impact of the flipped classroom model on students' expository writing skills. In addition, these findings added to the robustness of other similar research findings (Leis, Cook & Tohei, 2015; Lin, 2019; Fathi & Rahimi, 2020; Putra, M. K., 2021).

These results could be attributed to several factors. To begin with, the flipped classroom model required students to engage with the material before class. This pre-class preparation allowed students to familiarize themselves with key concepts related to expository essay writing such as noticing the layout of an essay, practicing cohesive devices, and using the internet or other materials to brainstorm ideas relevant to the topic, at their own pace. During class, students participated in discussions and collaborative work, which could reinforce their pre-learned knowledge. Furthermore, the FC model freed up class time for individualized support, enabling the teacher to address individual student needs and learning gaps. This personalized attention was critical, as students could receive tailored feedback on their writing, identify areas for improvement, and work on those areas with guidance from the teacher or another more competent peer. These two factors are paramount in addressing the challenges learners face in writing reported by Beniche (2021), such as language proficiency and essay structuring techniques.

5 Conclusion

This quasi-experiment concludes that the group instructed in expository essay writing using the flipped classroom (FC) model demonstrated superior performance compared to the group taught with a conventional approach. These findings hold significant implications for teaching practices, especially in contexts akin to those of the participants -second-year baccalaureate students in Morocco. The FC model’s capacity to enhance writing skills, offering several advantages over traditional methods. Its ability to improve learners autonomy, provide interactive and student-centered learning experiences, and offer tailored feedback renders it a valuable resource for educators.

While this study focused on Moroccan EFL students, the positive outcomes suggest that the FC model could be beneficial in other educational contexts as well. Teachers in various settings might consider adopting this model to enhance writing instruction and other subjects where active learning and personalized support can make a significant difference.

5.1 Limitations of the Study

Despite the researcher's effort to rigorously adhere to the regulations that govern scientific inquiry, this study is not free of some limitations. The sample size of 60 students (30 in each group), though acceptable for most statistical tests, limits the generalizability of the findings. Another inevitable methodological limitation of this study relates to the study's duration. Four weeks may not be sufficient to observe the long-term effects of the FC model on writing skills. Lastly, while efforts were made to ensure baseline comparability, potential biases related to the teacher and the students or other external factors could have influenced the results. Thus, future studies should strive to control for these variables to strengthen the validity of the findings.

5.2 Recommendations for future research

Given the findings and limitations of this study, several recommendations can be made for future research on the effectiveness of the flipped classroom (FC) model in improving expository essay writing skills. Future studies should include larger and more diverse samples, involving students from various educational levels, geographical regions, and cultural backgrounds to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Conducting longitudinal research to assess the long-term impact of the FC model on writing skills over an extended period can provide insights into the sustained effects of the intervention. Additionally, employing a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative measures with qualitative data, such as student interviews, teacher feedback, and classroom observations, can offer a more comprehensive understanding of how and why the FC model impacts student learning.

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7 Appendix A

Pre-test

Write an essay (two paragraphs in the body) in which you expose the characteristics of modern cell phones. (Time allowed: 1h:30)

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8 Appendix B

Post-test

Write an essay (two paragraphs in the body) in which you discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the internet. (Time allowed: 1h:30)

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9 Appendix C

The text length and scoring criteria

The required length of the written product varies with the number of tasks set. When only one writing task is assigned (and this can only be a free writing task), the required length should approximate the number of words indicated in the table below:

Arts	Humanities	All science, technical and original streams
From 100 to 200 words		

Criteria for scoring must be specified in the marking scale.

Scoring criteria
Relevance to the task(s)
Appropriate paragraphing and organisation
Appropriateness and variety of vocabulary
Accurate use of grammar
Accurate use of mechanics (spelling, punctuation and capitalization)

The rating scale for scoring the writing section will vary with the number of tasks set. When only one free writing task is assigned, it will be graded using a scale ranging from 0 to 10. However, when two writing tasks are set (one free and the other guided or semi-guided) the mark for the free task will range from 0 to 6 points, and the one for the guided or semi-guided task from 0 to 4 points. A score of 0 is given when:

- the candidate does not write anything ,
- the candidate only copies the prompts or the topic,
- the candidate writes in a language other than English,
- the candidate writes about a topic different from the one assigned.