

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FLIPPED  
CLASSROOM IN ENHANCING SELF-  
REGULATED LEARNING AND EFL SPEAKING  
COMPETENCE IN A HIGHER LEARNING  
INSTITUTION IN CHINA**

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**UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA**

**2023**

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by

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**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**December 2023**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

First of all, I wish to express my earnest thanks of gratitude to the following people, without their help and support, I would not have been able to complete this study within the limited time frame. Towards implementation and accomplishment of this study, I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Rohaya Abdullah, for dedicating her precious erudition to guide me. She is thoughtful and helpful and lent me considerable support during the time of research and the write-up of this thesis. Finally, I would like to express thanks to all who, directly or indirectly, rallied around me in completing this study.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

EFL	English as A Foreign Language
FC	Flipped Classroom
SRL	Self-Regulated Learning
SC	Speaking Competence
MOE	Ministry of Education of China
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
CET	National College English Test
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
ISED	International Standard Classification of Education

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**PENGUNAAN FLIPPED CLASSROOM UNTUK MENINGKATKAN  
PEMBELAJARAN REGULASI KENDIRI DAN KECEKAPAN BERTUTUR  
DALAM BAHASA INGGERIS SEBAGAI BAHASA ASING DI SEBUAH  
INSTITUSI PENDIDIKAN TINGGI DI CHINA**

**ABSTRAK**

Pembelajaran yang diatur sendiri dan kemahiran berbahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) dianggap sebagai kemahiran penting yang pelajar perlu kuasai dalam abad ke-21. Terutamanya dalam pembangunan pesat ekonomi China, pelajar China perlu memiliki kemahiran pembelajaran yang diatur sendiri dan kemahiran berbahasa Inggeris, khususnya dalam kefasihan berbicara, untuk memenuhi keperluan semasa yang dikeluarkan oleh Kementerian Pendidikan China. Walau bagaimanapun, pelajar EFL China secara konsisten menunjukkan prestasi yang lemah dalam pembelajaran yang diatur sendiri dan berbicara. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat pelaksanaan *flipped classroom* dalam mempengaruhi pembelajaran yang diatur sendiri dan kemahiran berbahasa Inggeris para pelajar di China dan menyelidiki proses pembelajaran yang dinamik dari perspektif pengalaman, pandangan, kognisi, dan emosi pelajar, untuk memberikan wawasan peribadi dan berkesan ke dalam proses pameran pelajar dalam pembelajaran yang diatur sendiri dan berbicara dalam *flipped classroom*. Kajian kualitatif interpretatif ini menggunakan persampelan berterusan dan persampelan kriteria dalam merekrut lapan pelajar sarjana muda dari sebuah universiti di China. Data yang dikumpulkan termasuk pemerhatian kelas, jurnal refleksi pelajar, dan rekod prestasi akademik, serta temu ramah mendalam. Analisis tematik digunakan untuk menganalisis data dan telah mendedahkan ciri-ciri pembelajaran yang diatur sendiri pelajar: rasa ingin

tahu, kepekaan, kerjasama, dan keaktifan. Pelajar menggunakan strategi motivasi, strategi pembelajaran, dan strategi pengurusan sumber untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran yang diatur sendiri dan kemahiran berbahasa Inggeris mereka. Kajian ini juga menemui faktor-faktor yang berkaitan dengan pelajar dan kelas yang mempengaruhi perkembangan pembelajaran yang diatur sendiri dan kemahiran berbahasa Inggeris pelajar. Oleh itu, adalah penting bagi pengajar, perancang bilik darjah, pengamal pendidikan, dan ahli akademik untuk meneroka lebih lanjut pembelajaran yang diatur sendiri dan berbahasa Inggeris pelajar dalam *flipped classroom*.

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FLIPPED CLASSROOM IN  
ENHANCING SELF-REGULATED LEARNING AND EFL SPEAKING  
COMPETENCE IN A HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTION IN CHINA**

**ABSTRACT**

Self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence are considered to be important skills that students need to master in the 21st century. Especially in the rapid development of China's economy, Chinese students need to have self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence, especially speaking fluency, to meet the current requirements issued by the Ministry of Education of China. However, Chinese EFL students have consistently performed poorly in self-regulated learning and speaking. Therefore, this study intends to investigate the implementation of flipped classroom in enhancing students' self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence in the context of China and probes into the dynamic learning process from the perspective of students' own experiences, viewpoints, cognition, and emotion, to provide personal and lived insights into the process of students' demonstration of self-regulated learning and speaking learning in the flipped classroom. This interpretative qualitative study has applied purposive sampling and criterion sampling in recruiting eight undergraduate students from one university in China. The data collected include classroom observation, students' reflective journals and records of academic performance, and in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data and has revealed students possess these self-regulated learning characteristics: curiosity, attentiveness, collaborativeness, and activeness. The students adopted motivational strategies, learning strategies, and resource management strategies to enhance their self-regulated learning and EFL speaking



competence. The study also found student-related reasons and classroom-related reasons in influencing the students' development of self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence. Therefore, it is crucial for instructors, classroom designers, educational practitioners, and academics to explore further students' self-regulated learning and EFL speaking in the flipped classroom.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

As a worldwide language, English has become a necessity for most individuals seeking numerous possibilities in many sectors, notably the global economy (Abdullah et al., 2021). This reinforces the importance of EFL speaking competence. Speaking competence is drawn from the study of second language acquisition (SLA), and it is a result of second language acquisition (Krashen, 1981), which is seen as a vital talent and a necessity for communicating ideas in academic, social, and professional settings (Abdullah et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2017; Hsu, 2020). However, weak EFL speaking competence has always been one of EFL students' ubiquitous problems (Abdullah et al., 2019), since the scarcity of authentic language practice opportunities in China contributes to the difficulty in applying theoretical knowledge to real-world communication scenarios (Gao, 2023).

In China, mastering EFL speaking competence has grown in importance and has become a priority for most students who view effective speaking competence as a necessary objective (Teng, 2018). Additionally, EFL speaking has been a critical component in assisting students in developing into lifelong students (Kesuma et al., 2020). Schools and university students have also placed a higher premium on mastering EFL speaking competence in China due to the rapidly developed economy.

Meanwhile, self-regulated learning, which is an active process in which students play a main part in mastering their own learning, has been recognized as helpful in language learning (Al-Hawamleh et al., 2022). It entails students actively

regulating and supervising their cognition, metacognition, learning behaviour, and motivation during the learning process, which entails strategies and object processes (Panadero, 2017). In addition, it is used as a contributing method in supporting the students' speaking competence achievement (Menggo et al., 2022). Theoretically, self-regulated learning is the foundation for delivering instruction to a variety of individuals and subjects.

In China, while students are enrolled in universities, it is assumed that they will engage in self-regulated learning (Chen & Su, 2019), and their learning assignments are effective at a variety of academic levels and have been shown to increase students' academic performance (Chen & Su, 2019; Sun et al., 2019). Recent research also shows the importance of self-regulated learning in an online context and EFL-speaking learning contexts (Adam et al., 2017; Al-Hawamleh et al., 2022; Menggo et al., 2022).

That is why the Chinese government and numerous Chinese educationists are attempting to make a breakthrough in improving the self-regulated learning and speaking competence of Chinese university students, as well as reforming and innovating EFL speaking learning (Gao & Zheng, 2018; Teng, 2018), while the application of flipped classrooms seeks to make a breakthrough in enhancing self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence since studies also show that flipped classrooms can result in students' better self-regulated learning performance and EFL speaking competence (Abdullah et al., 2019; Kurt, 2017; Kusuma, 2020).

The term flipped classroom refers to the practice of subverting the traditional classroom, in which students are required to self-learn a large amount of information prior to class (Lestari, 2021). In tertiary education, universities must adapt

instructional tasks, which include transitioning from conventional education to flipped classroom mode that enables students to access learning resources readily (Ahmad, 2020; Pérez-Sanagustín et al., 2020). This type of modification is necessary to keep pace with the advancement of information and communication technologies (Ehlers & Kellermann, 2019), and it becomes more essential in the sustainable development of education (Carrión-Martínez et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, as flipped classroom involves online learning, the literature indicates that self-regulated students are more successful in this learning environment (Sun et al., 2017). Actually, self-regulated learning is the underlying concept of classroom pedagogy because the pre-class individual learning stage in flipped classrooms places a premium on students' self-regulated learning and self-discipline abilities (He et al., 2016). Students who exhibit a high level of self-regulated learning in their learning can complete assignments, projects, and exams with ease, whether they are essays or examinations (Guo et al., 2019). Therefore, self-regulated learning is essential in the classroom, and it is also a support for students in studying (Kesuma et al., 2020).

In China, the flipped classroom plays an essential role in education (Al-Maroofof & Al-Emran, 2021), so this is a new opportunity for students since it has an influence on their learning process and outcomes (Bernacki et al., 2020), which includes offering a variety of platforms for EFL learning, freeing up time for engaging classroom activities as well as students conveying spoken messages effectively by applying self-regulated learning in their speaking class (Menggo et al., 2022). Therefore, the flipped classroom is essential in EFL education and supports students' self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence (Tan et al., 2017).

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

Over the previous 30 years or more, the improved economic situation has created a solid foundation for higher education development, and since then, English has had a significant educational position in China (Han, 2016). The status of English has intensified as China's opening-up policy continues to deepen and international trade expands, and the learning and mastering of English have grown more significant (Liu & Biao, 2021). According to relevant statistics, China has the largest English-learning population in the world, with more than 300 million students (Liu & Biao, 2021).

In China, English is generally considered an EFL (English as a Foreign Language), since its status as a learned language used for specific purposes rather than as a daily means of communication within the country (Wang, 2022). Students in most parts of China learn English systematically in school from grade three onwards, and it is a requirement for students to take the national college entrance exam to be admitted to the university, while English is one of the most essential subjects of the exam (Wang, 2022).

To adapt to the development of China's EFL education in universities, improve the quality of student's learning, and meet the talent needs of the country and society, the Ministry of Education of China (MOE hereafter) has formulated China's College English Curriculum Requirements in 2020 as the primary basis for colleges and universities to organize EFL teaching and learning. According to China's College English Curriculum Requirements (2020), the goal of college EFL courses is to cultivate students' comprehensive EFL application ability, especially

students' speaking competence, so they can communicate effectively and fluently in English in their future studies and work.

In China's College English Curriculum Requirements (2020), speaking competence refers to the students' English-speaking ability, including speaking fluency. There are specific requirements for EFL speaking competence in China's College English Curriculum Requirements (2020): students can discuss general topics or professional topics fluently and express personal opinions and emotions in English in the process of learning; students can state comprehensible facts, reasons and describe events clearly without pausing to look for words, and undue pausing or hesitation, and have correct pronunciation and intonation; students are able to summarize long and difficult passages or speeches in understandable language so that they can deliver a rapid and easy-to-understand speech. The above requirements are the reference standards for colleges and universities to formulate their own university English classroom documents (China's College English Curriculum Requirements, 2020). Colleges and universities can make appropriate adjustments according to their actual situation, but they should pay special attention to the cultivation and training of speaking competence (China's College English Curriculum Requirements, 2020). Admittedly, if students can satisfy the speaking requirements in China's College English Curriculum (2020), achieving speaking fluency, they can meet the needs of learning, communication, and future work in China.

Meanwhile, China's College English Curriculum Requirements (2020) also aims to enhance students' self-regulated learning ability in all university English courses, especially in speaking competence (China's College English Curriculum

Requirements, 2020). In the English language learning context, among the four language skills, speaking competence is given prominence in Chinese higher education because it can assist students in communicating effectively in English in their future studies, work, and social interactions (China's College English Curriculum Requirements, 2020; Shen & Bai, 2022). For example, self-regulated learning strategies such as goal setting, help-seeking, as well as time management have been shown to have a positive influence on students' performance and achievement of their objectives (Kizilcec et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2019; Veletsianos, 2016). Students who exhibit a high level of self-regulated learning in their learning can complete assignments, projects, and exams with ease, whether they are essays or examinations (Guo et al., 2019). Additionally, self-regulated learning and speaking competence are both the required abilities for China's social development and international communication, as China's foreign trade is growing rapidly.

The China's College English Curriculum Requirements (2020) also emphasize that the English-speaking learning process should be assisted with modern information technology. One of the measures taken by the MOE is the promotion of flipped classrooms offering computer-based and classroom-based EFL speaking instruction so as to provide a good language learning environment for students (China's College English Curriculum Requirements, 2020). Meanwhile, students should adapt to this EFL-speaking flipped classroom mode since to a certain extent, English learning can be free from the restrictions of time and place and develop towards personalized and self-regulated learning (China's College English Curriculum Requirements, 2020). Additionally, in the current EFL education field, the new development trend is to integrate modern information technology into EFL learning classrooms (Zheng et al., 2018).

According to China's College English Curriculum Requirements (2020), in flipped classroom, the instructors create pedagogical presentations and online materials on the university's online learning platform ahead of the class, including videos and documents for students to do self-regulated learning, and students need to finish the assigned materials to prepare for the face-to-face class. Then, in the face-to-face class, students need to conduct their own learning management, and the instructor is a facilitator. There should be online learning and classroom learning for flipped classroom to ensure and enhance the effectiveness of language learning (China's College English Curriculum Requirements, 2020). This kind of classroom mode aims to help Chinese college students meet the requirements of the Curriculum, promote students' personalized learning, and develop students' self-regulated learning and speaking competence (China's College English Curriculum Requirements, 2020).

In China, more than half of the students indicated that they are willing to accept and take part in flipped classrooms at university (Li, 2016). The respondents of this study are first-year college students who have studied English for at least 10 years before entering university, continuing to study English as a foreign language. Their age is 18-20 years old with similar scores on college entrance English examination and different majors. Admittedly, in students' formative (primary and secondary school) years, most of them are solely taught English reading and writing, with little, if any, exposure to EFL speaking, until their first year of university (Elliott & Zhang, 2019).

Combined with online self-regulated learning and face-to-face learning, while reasonably inheriting the excellent parts of traditional classroom mode and giving



full play to the advantages of online learning and classroom learning, students can choose the appropriate learning content and learning methods for their own needs according to their characteristics, levels, and time under the instructors' guidance to gradually improve their EFL ability, particularly self-regulated learning ability and speaking competence (China's College English Curriculum Requirements, 2020).

The flipped classroom is conducive to mobilizing students' enthusiasm, primarily reflecting students' dominant position in the learning process and the facilitating role of instructors in the classroom (China's College English Curriculum Requirements, 2020). This kind of classroom does not mean that instructors play no part; instead, they apply their importance by understanding students' needs and facilitating their participation in in-depth learning activities for knowledge construction (Hung, 2017b). The change of classroom mode is not only the change of learning methods but also the change of learning notion: from a teacher-centered classroom to student-centred classroom, which not only imparts language knowledge and skills but also pays more attention to the cultivation of language practical application ability and self-regulated learning ability (China's College English Curriculum Requirements, 2020).

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Despite the importance of English in education China remains a low-EFL-speaking country (Li, 2016), and Chinese EFL students have always performed poorly in speaking in comparison to their writing ability (Liang, 2017), and it is still difficult for students to master EFL speaking competence (Wu et al., 2017). The teacher-centred classroom environment, which is primarily for the aim of passing the high school graduation examination necessary for admission to Chinese universities,

limits students' possibilities for a meaningful speaking engagement and may result in EFL students devoting less time to EFL speaking learning (Shi et al., 2017; Wang, 2022). Therefore, Chinese students' speaking competence is limited (Fan, 2018).

Furthermore, the respondents of this study are first-year college students aged 18-20 years old with different majors who started learning English systematically in school from grade three onwards. Even after years of EFL study, students' command of the EFL speaking competence is quite limited (Elliott & Zhang, 2019). Additionally, students' English foundations are inadequate, and most first-year college students are unprepared for the problems they will experience in their first EFL speaking class at university (Elliott & Zhang, 2019). Not incorporating a dedicated evaluation of students' EFL speaking competence in exams, and the oversight in nurturing students' speaking competence exacerbates the prevalence of muted English, resulting in students' low speaking performance (Wang, 2022).

According to Xie (2020), students still stated that speaking competence, including fluency, is a barrier to learning English and that activities like having free discussions in English in class, talking about varied themes, and gaining fluency in English speaking are difficult for them. That is why China's College English Curriculum Requirements (2020) released by the MOE of China especially emphasizes enhancing undergraduate students' speaking competence, especially speaking fluency, through flipped classrooms so that students can discuss and express comprehensible opinions and emotions rapidly in English without searching for words and undue pausing or hesitation.

Additionally, hitherto, many university students lack the skills to manage their self-regulated learning (Zhang et al., 2016). The majority of college students indicate that they are not prepared to assume total control of the learning material

and process; in other words, they lack the ability to self-regulate their learning (Cao, 2018). That is why China's College English Curriculum Requirements (2020) also points out the importance of cultivating students' self-regulated learning ability through the flipped classroom. However, Chinese university students would have difficulties self-regulating their learning and may not have sufficient self-regulated learning (Lin & Dai, 2022; Sun & Wang 2020). Chinese students lack self-regulated learning and independent thinking, are stereotyped as being fond of rote learning, and rely on instructors' instructions (Wu & Ekstam, 2021). Therefore, the low self-regulated learning and speaking competence hinder the students from meeting the requirements of China's College English Curriculum Requirements (2020) standards and hinder them from achieving better academic performance and future career development.

The flipped classroom mode has been promoted in China's reform of colleges and universities for a long time (Kan, 2015). It is an active exploration of students and universities (Shi et al., 2016), while the purpose of the flipped classroom is to create a self-regulated learning environment for students (Yin & Wu, 2016). It is burgeoning as a rising pedagogical innovation that changes the conventional classroom and cultivates students' self-regulated learning ability (Bergmann & Sams, 2014; Green, 2015; Jamaludin & Osman, 2014; Sweet, 2014). Many studies have reported the effectiveness of flipped classrooms on students' participation and overall learning outcomes (O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015; Sergis et al., 2018; Zainuddin & Halili, 2016).

China's College English Curriculum Requirements (2020) also promoted the flipped classroom since the typical EFL classroom mode is no longer appropriate for Chinese EFL students (Wang & Qian, 2020), and China is one country where flipped

classroom demonstrates a crucial role in education (Al-Marroof & Al-Emran, 2021). Studies show that flipped classrooms can result in students' better self-regulated learning performance and EFL speaking competence compared with traditional classrooms (Abdullah, 2019; Kurt, 2017; Kusuma, 2020; O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015; Tan et al., 2017).

So far, even though flipped classrooms have been proliferating in EFL pedagogy, little attention is given to its implementation in speaking competence in an EFL environment (Al-Ghamdi & Al-Bargi, 2017; Amiryousefi, 2019), leading to more research opportunities. Previous studies mainly focused on students' perceptions instead of investigating the process in flipped classrooms (Abdullah et al., 2019), and few studies have been applied to study students' EFL speaking competence in flipped classrooms (Hung, 2017a; Köroglu, & Çakir, 2017; Lin & Hwang, 2018). Additionally, self-regulated learning in the flipped classroom may still be under-researched in the Chinese EFL context (Shen & Bai, 2022), and self-reported perceptions to assess students' self-regulated learning in flipped classroom are limited (Shih et al., 2019). How the process of the flipped classroom can be conducted to enhance students' self-regulated learning and speaking competence has not attracted enough attention (Amiryousefi, 2019).

Compared with the overall studies and publishing productivity of flipped classrooms, few studies try to explore the reasons why the flipped classroom influence students' self-regulated learning and pay attention to the reasons why students participate or do not participate in self-regulated learning pre-class and to what extent (Beatty & Albert, 2016; Chen et al., 2017); and very few studies have been conducted about student's learning process and experience in the flipped classroom in the higher education context (Chen et al., 2017; Rasheed et al., 2020).

Studies of flipped classrooms should focus on ability changes in self-regulated learning and should not only focus on students' grades and evaluation results (Xie, 2020).

Follow-up research using interviews, observations, or other qualitative approaches is advised to elicit information about the complex dynamics of student perspectives and the learning process (Zheng et al., 2016). Thus, it prompts a call for further studies to investigate students' learning process, including their behaviours and their speaking performance in the flipped classroom; and explore their speaking performance and self-regulated learning performance in the flipped classroom, as education does not occur in a vacuum, and the outcomes of education naturally vary among cultures and contexts (Li et al., 2018), and the core of education is students (Zhu & Sun; 2015). Many studies adopt quasi-experimental designs to prove the significance of flipped classrooms (Flumerfelt & Green, 2013; Rajaram, 2019; Sun et al., 2019), but qualitative methods are relatively less applied to study flipped classroom's phenomenological experiences from students' perspectives (Kopcha et al., 2015; Moos & Bonde, 2016; Tawfik & Lilly, 2015), and it can capture the dynamic processes of self-regulated learning and EFL speaking learning in contexts (Li et al., 2018). It is also suitable to examine the learning processes of a specific cultural group (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The qualitative results can further explain the influential factors of students' intentional behaviours in flipped classrooms (Shih et al., 2019). More importantly, in-depth qualitative research is necessary because flipped classrooms are critical in the next era of social learning (Wang et al., 2019).

As stated, since the flipped classroom is a pivotal mode for self-regulated learning and EFL speaking, therefore, this study, framed by Pintrich's self-regulated learning model, Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, and Krashen's second

language acquisition theory, aims at addressing the gap by exploring students' self-regulated learning and speaking competence in flipped classroom in China's higher education system in a qualitative way so as to generate flipped classroom framework for EFL students to promote self-regulated learning effectively in EFL arena.

#### **1.4 Rationale of the Study**

According to the bibliometric analysis conducted by Vosviewer from 2012 to 2021 about flipped classrooms in higher education, the data results show that four themes that represent the under-explored in flipped classrooms in higher education are academic performance, learning experience, learning outcomes, and self-regulation (Zhong & Abdullah, 2021). These themes were trendy and under-explored. Furthermore, bibliometrics, co-regulation, EFL students, performance, and threshold concepts were the top latest four themes that needed more attention (Zhong & Abdullah, 2021). Meanwhile, scientific mapping of research on self-regulated learning in flipped classrooms also revealed that additional research that needed to be investigated in depth included themes of language learning and self-regulated learning strategies (Zhong & Abdullah, 2022). Additionally, based on the systematic literature review conducted by the researcher, which reviewed 22 articles through databases, including Web of Science and Scopus, related to flipped classrooms for EFL courses done by the researcher, qualitative approach was the less used approach for this research area, and only three articles focused on students' speaking in this systematic literature review during the last two years (Zhong & Abdullah, 2023).

Therefore, there is an urgent need for qualitative research to uncover students' self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence, including fluency, from the perspective of students' own experiences, viewpoints, cognition, and

emotions, to provide personal and lived insights into the process of higher education students' demonstration of self-regulated learning and speaking fluency in the flipped classroom. This study would like to use qualitative approaches to study the dynamic process of the flipped classroom in influencing self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence and their overall experiences in the flipped classroom. Because not all students in the flipped classroom environment were flexible students, and not every student was ready for and open to more personalized and self-regulated learning (Al-Samarraie et al., 2019).

Exploring the implementation of flipped classroom in influencing self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence is helpful in understanding students' dynamic learning process, and students can adjust their learning accordingly. It can provide information for future education and may better cultivate students' self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence. Students may be inspired by the flipped classroom learning process and transfer their self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence to practical applications outside the classroom. This study also helps to enrich the scarce literature and provide qualitative data to understand students' learning processes. This finding may inspire scholars to explore further flipped classrooms, self-regulated learning, and EFL speaking competence.

## **1.5 Research Objectives**

The research objectives are as follows:

1. To find out the characteristics of self-regulated learning that students demonstrate in the flipped classroom in enhancing EFL speaking competence.

2. To assess the extent that students demonstrate the characteristics of self-regulated learning in enhancing EFL speaking competence.

3. To investigate the self-regulated learning strategies that students adopt in the flipped classroom to enhance EFL speaking competence.

4. To explore the way that students apply self-regulate learning strategies in the flipped classroom to enhance their EFL speaking competence.

5. To inquire into the extent of the flipped classroom in influencing students' EFL speaking competence.

6. To probe into the reasons why the flipped classroom influences students' self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

Based on the research objectives, the research questions can be derived as follows:

1. What characteristics of self-regulated learning do students demonstrate in the flipped classroom in enhancing EFL speaking competence?

2. How far do students demonstrate the characteristics of self-regulated learning in enhancing speaking competence?

3. What self-regulated learning strategies do students adopt in the flipped classroom to enhance EFL speaking competence?

4. How do students apply self-regulated learning strategies in the flipped classroom to enhance their EFL speaking competence?

5. How far does the flipped classroom influence students' EFL speaking competence?



6. Why does the flipped classroom influence students' self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence?

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

From the perspective of students' own experiences, this study offers valuable insights into the influence of flipped classrooms on self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence. The findings of this study are of great significance in the following aspects.

Firstly, this study is in line with the China's College English Curriculum Requirements (2020) of modern information technology-supported flipped classrooms, self-regulated learning, and EFL speaking curriculum proposed by the MOE of China. For students, this study provides appropriate self-regulated learning strategies for them to prepare for online study tasks and face-to-face activities and discussions to support their self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence, and it helps students be self-regulated students in their future study and work, which is the requirement in the China's College English Curriculum (2020).

Then, for MOE, this study is the basis for future reform of integrating self-regulated learning in the flipped classroom to influence speaking competence. In this way, flipped classroom design can enable higher education institutions to provide lifelong learning promoted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Hoidn & Kärkkäinen, 2014).

Thirdly, studying the process of the flipped classroom and the changes in students' self-regulated learning and speaking competence helps course developers and specialists in the higher education system to understand the specific factors that might influence students in the process of the flipped classroom. This kind of

information can be essential to highlight the specific design methods and resource types of the flipped classroom since course developers and specialists can also formulate a more effective curriculum outline and curriculum design for the flipped classroom to maximize students' self-regulated learning and speaking competence and ensure that the learning objectives of the flipped classroom can be achieved.

Fourthly, for instructors in the higher education system, this study helps them to have a further understanding of self-regulated learning and EFL speaking teaching in the flipped classroom and can provide practical guidance for them to conduct EFL speaking pedagogy in the flipped classroom. For universities, although the findings are specific to the qualitative study setting, they can also be of practical significance to other universities developing similar flipped classrooms.

Lastly, this study explored an under-researched phenomenon and provided a thick description, and it can add existing literature in the field of self-regulated learning and EFL speaking learning in flipped classrooms.

## **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

There are some limitations to this study. Firstly, in qualitative research, the researcher was considered as a research instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), who was also the interviewer and the facilitator during the interview, could not completely rule out the possibility of bias. The researcher of interpretative qualitative studies needed to be aware of biases that might influence the results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Although the researcher was required to remain objective and neutral in the research process, and the data collection and analysis were strictly in accordance with the research design, the researcher's perceptions of the flipped classroom, self-regulated learning, and EFL speaking

competence might influence the interpretation of the student's descriptions and reactions unconsciously to a certain extent.

Secondly, the limited number of respondents, which in this case is eight, is a potential limitation. The researcher tried to recruit more respondents, but most of the students have a lot of community group activities and they feel that they do not have enough effort for this research, which may affect the results of the study to some extent. While the study aims for in-depth exploration, the small number of respondents may restrict the generalizability of findings to a broader population.

### **1.9 Delimitations of the Study**

According to Baskarada (2014), one of the disadvantages associated with any interpretative qualitative study is that researchers tend to answer a question that is too general, or that a research topic has many objectives. In this study, to avoid this kind of drawback, one of the boundaries set by the researcher was that the sample students in this study were all from the same public university, who took part in the flipped classroom under the same instructor in the same class times, and this study only focused on students' perceptions in the flipped classroom and excluded instructors' perceptions. It provided a suitable sample component to solve the research questions eloquently (Yin, 2014).

Secondly, this study only focused on the flipped classroom without considering other factors that might influence students' self-regulated learning and speaking competence. The influence of curriculum themes, speaking topics, class size, and class times in the flipped classroom would not be considered.

### 1.10 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

**Flipped Classroom:** Flipped classroom inverts the time and place where lectures and homework should occur, and knowledge delivery through computer-mediated lectures is flipped outside of class so that students can engage in problem-solving or cooperative learning tasks in class with the instructor and peer support (Bergmann & Sams, 2014).

In this study, the basic meaning of the flipped classroom is that the instructors create pedagogical presentations and online materials in the university online learning platform ahead of the class, including videos and documents for students to do self-regulated learning before class, and students need to finish the assigned materials, complete the corresponding quizzes to prepare for the face-to-face class. Then, the face-to-face class allows students to have a more positive and meaningful learning experience, where students need to conduct their own speaking learning management and do group discussions by themselves; and the instructor, as a facilitator, provides scaffolding.

**Self-regulated Learning:** Self-regulated learning is defined as a positive, constructive process, through which students set learning goals and then try to monitor, regulate and control their cognition, intention, and behaviour, and are guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual characteristics of the environment (Pintrich, 2000).

In this study, self-regulated learning means that students' consciousness of learning is a self-guided process. It is an active process in which students play a central part in mastering their learning, and students can self-regulate their EFL speaking learning procedures, finish the learning materials assigned by the instructor before class, complete the quizzes after the online learning, do self-regulated further

material searching to better prepare for the unit; and in the face-to-face class, students perform upcoming speaking assignments independently or collaboratively in the group, to attain success by utilizing various self-regulated learning strategies.

**Speaking Competence:** Speaking competence is derived from the study of second language acquisition (SLA), and it is the result of obtaining comprehensible input, which is predicated on a shared understanding of how to use language in social contexts, as well as the capacity to explain and negotiate meanings (Krashen, 1981). Speaking competence developed through acquisition, which is responsible for generating language and thus accounts for language fluency (Krashen, 1981), and the ability to be spontaneously communicative is called fluency, which is essentially how fast a student can access and use the language in a well-paced smooth manner without awkward pauses (Krashen, 1981).

In this study, speaking competence refers to the students' English-speaking express ability, including speaking fluency, and students can discuss general topics or professional topics fluently and express personal opinions and emotions in English without pausing to look for words so that they can deliver a rapid and easy-to-understand speech without undue pausing or hesitation; students can state comprehensible facts, reasons, and describe events clearly without undue pausing or hesitation, (e.g. students use less filled pauses such as uhs and uhms and use less silent pauses than others).

**Self-regulated Learning Strategy:** Self-regulated learning strategy is a part of the self-regulated learning process, which involves the use of cognition, metacognition, motivation, affect, and behaviour to increase the probability of succeeding in learning, creating meaningful and retrievable memories, and performing higher-order cognitive tasks, such as problem-solving (Pintrich, 2000).

In this study, self-regulated learning strategies are aimed at establishing self-regulated learning levels for students, which are used to assist students in learning efficiently. It involves the use of cognition, metacognition, and resource management in this study, that is, motivational strategies, learning strategies, and resource management strategies.

### **1.11 Summary**

This chapter sets out the research background, research objective, and research questions of this qualitative study, which explores the implementation of the flipped classroom in influencing self-regulated learning and speaking competence in China. Its purpose is to gain an in-depth understanding of undergraduate students' perceptions of their learning experiences in an EFL flipped speaking classroom, and it discusses the significance of the research in terms of generating research-based evidence for the flipped classroom to help improve the future design of flipped classroom in the higher education context so that these initiatives promote self-regulated learning and speaking competence.

The theories addressing the research aim will be illustrated in the next chapter, followed by the conceptual framework. Also, the following chapter two will set out the findings of a review of literature on the flipped classroom, self-regulated learning, and EFL speaking competence that is conducted to inform the design and implementation of the current study and to ensure it is well-grounded in existing research in these areas. Then the following chapters will discuss the overall research methodology of this study, research findings and discussions.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, what follows are the underpinning theories of the study. The researcher introduced Pintrich's (2000) self-regulated learning model, Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory, and Krashen's (1981) second language acquisition theory, followed by the conceptual framework, which gives the reader a better understanding of how each of these variables relates a better understanding of how each of these variables relates to the main concept of this study. Then, the literature review that relates to the present study, that is, flipped classroom, self-regulated learning, and EFL speaking competence, including empirical studies of the flipped classroom, the influence of flipped classroom on self-regulated learning, and EFL speaking competence. The literature review examines previous research on the flipped classroom, which offers a rationale for using flipped classroom to achieve the enhancement of self-regulated learning and speaking competence.

#### **2.2 Underpinning Theories**

##### **2.2.1 Self-Regulated Learning Models**

There were several different self-regulated learning models, which draw lessons from different theoretical viewpoints and defined self-regulated learning in different ways. Many of these models appeared in the mid-1980s to solve the problem of how students develop into "masters of the learning process" (Zimmerman, 2001). Other authors have also made significant contributions to the research and theoretical development in the research area of self-regulated learning (Azevedo et al., 2008; Boekaerts, 1988; Schunk, 2005; Winne & Hadwin, 1998; Zimmerman, 1986), and

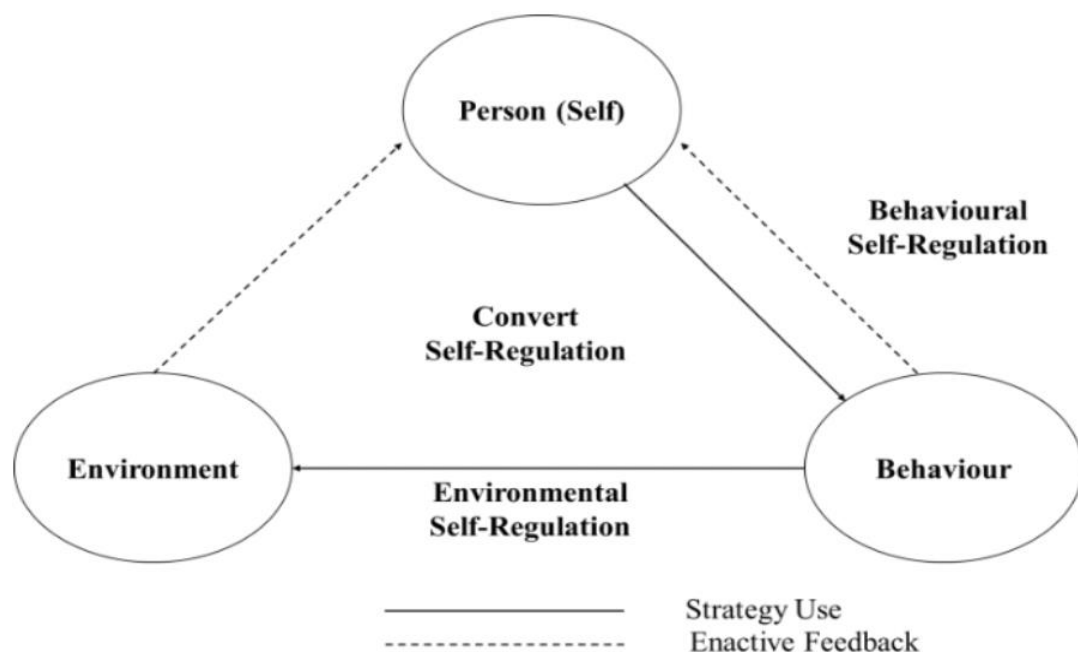
three self-regulated learning models from Zimmerman; Boekaerts; Winne and Hadwin gave a comprehensive knowledge of how previous scholars had conceived self-regulated learning. Thereafter, Pintrich's (2000) general self-regulated learning model will be elaborated. In this study, the researcher paid attention to Pintrich's model.

### 2.2.1(a) Zimmerman's Self-regulated Learning Model

Zimmerman (1986) was credited as being the explorer of self-regulated learning and had developed three different self-regulated learning models (Panadero, 2017), including the Triadic model (Zimmerman, 1989), the Cyclical Phase model (Zimmerman & Campillo, 2003; Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009), and the Multi-Level model (Zimmerman, 2000). The Triadic model (see Figure 2.1) encapsulates the interplay between three distinct modes of self-regulated learning: environment, behaviour, and individual (Zimmerman, 1989).

Figure 2.1

*The Triadic Model (Zimmerman, 1989)*





The Cyclical Phase model (see Figure 2.2) was revised in collaboration with Campillo in 2003 (Zimmerman & Campillo, 2003), and with Moylan in 2009 (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009), discusses the relationship between metacognitive and motivational processes at the individual level (Zimmerman & Campillo, 2003; Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009), and elucidates the motivation–self-regulation connection in depth (Puustinen & Pulkkinen, 2001). It has three phases: forethought, performance, and self-reflection (Zimmerman, 2000). The forethought phase is the initial phase in which the students approach the task and establish goals for completing the given assignment (Gan et al., 2020). In the performance phase, students employ strategies, evaluate their performance, and are motivated to finish projects in accordance with the goals they have established (Kesuma et al., 2020). The self-reflection phase entails self-observation (or self-judgment) and self-reaction, which further impacts forethought processes and activates the cyclical self-regulation mechanisms (Puustinen & Pulkkinen, 2001).

Figure 2.2

*The Cyclical Phase Model (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009)*

