

# A Decade of Flipped Classrooms in the English Language Education (2015–2024): A Bibliometric Study

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## Abstract

This paper presents a bibliometric analysis of 249 journal articles indexed in the Scopus database, focusing on flipped classroom research in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL)/English as a Second Language (ESL) context between 2015 and 2024. It aims to provide a comprehensive overview of publication trends, geographic and institutional contributions, influential authors, citations, keyword co-occurrence, and co-authorship within the field. Data visualisation was performed using VOSviewer and integrated Scopus analytical tools. The results show an overall upward trend in research, with Iran identified as the leading contributing country. High-output authors are primarily from Taiwan, Iran, and Malaysia, while the “Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia” ranks highest among institutional contributors. The most cited article is “Using the flipped classroom to enhance EFL learning”. Keyword analysis indicates that research has focused on “EFL”, “students”, “teaching”, and “higher education”, with recent trends shifting toward “blended learning”, “online learning”, “self-regulated learning”, and “critical thinking”. Collaboration analysis reveals close cooperation among Iranian scholars, with institutional collaborations mainly concentrated in Iran and China, and China at the centre of the collaboration. Research on the flipped classroom in EFL/ESL contexts has expanded and diversified, with technological innovations driving the integration of multiple teaching models to enhance education quality, thereby aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education). Despite existing imbalances across countries, regions, and research topics, the field offers opportunities for further investigation. Future studies should address ESL learners, teacher perspectives, and comprehensive language skills, while promoting innovative practices through cross-regional collaboration.

**Keywords:** flipped classroom, EFL, ESL, bibliometric analysis, co-occurrence analysis, co-authorship analysis, education quality

## 1. Introduction

As a novel teaching method, the flipped classroom has garnered widespread attention worldwide over the past decade, driving changes in educational practice. It is widely accepted as a successful strategy for improving student learning (Baig & Yadegaridehkordi, 2023). Meanwhile, it alters the traditional instructional model by having students acquire new knowledge outside of classroom time, utilising class time for more interactive activities (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Kushairi & Ahmi, 2021). This change focuses on students rather than teachers and helps students obtain a personalised learning experience by strengthening teacher-student interaction and implementing experiential learning activities (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Furthermore, this shift in educational approaches is consistent with the student-centred paradigm of modern education and responds to the rapid growth of information technology. As Fisher, Tran, and Verezub (2024) emphasised, the digital age has promoted teaching innovation and changes in students’ learning expectations, with flipped classrooms grounded in constructivist principles gradually gaining attention.

In this context, the flipped classroom has been increasingly adopted in language education, particularly in English language teaching. Since 2014, the flipped classroom has become a growing topic of interest in English language teaching research, with most studies highlighting its potential advantages in teaching practice (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). Empirical evidence further indicates that as many as 92.98% of related studies focus on English language learning (Qi, Jumaat, Abuhassna, & Ting, 2024), while research on second language flipped classrooms also predominantly centres on English (Vitta & Al-Hoorie, 2023).

Global English studies are increasingly focusing on teaching practice, advocating learner autonomy as the core, and emphasising the positioning of communication partners and the cultivation of language creativity (Rose, McKinley, & Galloway, 2021). Language acquisition requires time and practice, but classroom time is often limited, which affects the teaching effect (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). However, the flipped classroom can effectively address this challenge. In English teaching, the flipped classroom, as an active learning method, is superior to the traditional teacher-centred approach and has gradually attracted further attention from scholars (Arslan, 2020; Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). Studies show that students positively evaluate this pedagogy as providing diverse learning opportunities and a supportive environment (Fisher et al., 2024). It is expected to foster more innovative, learner-centred teaching (Arslan, 2020) and has

shown potential benefits for language skills, autonomy, and academic progress (Muamar, 2022; Shahnama, Ghonsooly, & Shirvan, 2021). Moreover, it enhances learners' motivation and engagement (Afzali & Izadpanah, 2021; Muamar, 2022).

Although numerous empirical studies have examined the application effects of flipped classrooms in the EFL/ESL context, the analysis of the overall research trend in this field remains relatively limited. Meanwhile, technological changes in education are driving research toward artificial intelligence, learning analytics, and data-driven governance, while aligning with the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education (Prasad et al., 2025). In research on flipped classrooms, this trend suggests that studies should not only focus on the practical effects of teaching but also reveal the overall trend through bibliometric analysis, thereby providing references for educational reform and innovation. At present, this field remains underexplored in bibliometric analysis and its application in English teaching, making it a promising research direction with broad prospects that warrant further attention and in-depth study (Dan & Mohamed, 2024; Limaymanta, Apaza-Tapia, Vidal, & Gregorio-Chaviano, 2021).

Bibliometrics, as an effective tool for analysing the development of academic literature, can reveal research trends. Google Scholar was used to identify gaps in the literature due to its broad and comprehensive coverage of scholarly publications (Pranckutė, 2021). Among the publications retrieved from Google Scholar, five were found to be closely related to the topic of this study. However, these bibliometric studies respectively examined the research trends in the flipped EFL context (Dilo & Wasiyati, 2024; Linling, 2025; Nuraeni & Fachrunnisa, 2024) and the flipped ESL context (Yusoff, Mahmud, & Fauzi, 2024, as well as the research on flipped classrooms and language learning (Dan & Mohamed, 2024). However, there is a lack of comprehensive bibliometric analysis that integrates the study of EFL/ESL in the flipped classroom. Therefore, the present study aims to address this gap by conducting a more comprehensive and focused investigation of research on flipped classrooms in English learning contexts over the past decade (2015–2024).

Building on this, the study addresses three research questions by analysing articles collected from the Scopus database (2015-2024) to explore related topics and comprehensively fill existing research gaps.

- 1) What is the present status of publications on the flipped classroom in the EFL/ESL context?
- 2) What are the author keywords most commonly repeated in research on flipped classrooms in the EFL/ESL context?
- 3) What is the extent of cooperation between different authors, organisations, or countries/regions in the study of the flipped classroom in the EFL/ESL context?

## 2. Methodology

Bibliometrics, a useful method for evaluating the progression of scientific research (Lim, Kumar, & Donthu, 2024), was employed in this research to examine the trends and developments in the flipped classroom in the EFL/ESL context through bibliometric analysis. This method is particularly suitable for this research, as it can identify research trends, key topics, and collaborative networks in this field. Bibliometrics employs statistical analysis to investigate publishing patterns and identify connections among published materials, utilising quantitative methods to comprehend intellectual, social, and conceptual relationships, thereby summarising a field's research contributions (Öztürk, Kocaman, & Kanbach, 2024; Ninkov, 2020). According to Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, Pandey, and Lim (2021), bibliometric analysis systematically analyses large amounts of data to reveal and describe trends in the growth and evolution of scientific knowledge in well-established fields.

For each stage of the bibliometric study, the research steps outlined by Donthu et al. (2021) and Lim et al. (2024) were followed. Combining these steps resulted in the following framework: (1) Define the aims and scope of the bibliometric study; (2) Select appropriate techniques for bibliometric analysis; (3) Collect bibliometric data; (4) Clean and preprocess the bibliometric data; (5) Conduct the bibliometric analysis and present the findings.

### 2.1 Aims and Scope of the Bibliometric Study

This study aimed to perform a bibliometric analysis of research on the flipped classroom in the EFL/ESL contexts. It analysed the current state of publishing, the co-occurrence of author keywords, and co-authorship among authors, institutions, and countries/regions. The difference is only significant when the sample size of bibliometrics reaches at least 200 (Rogers, Szomszor, & Adams, 2020). A research scope is meaningful when it covers hundreds or thousands of studies (Oknaryana et al., 2025). In this study, an initial search in Scopus for [TITLE-ABS-KEY (“flipped classroom” OR “flipped learning”) AND (“EFL” OR “ESL”)] retrieved over one hundred articles, indicating that the chosen scope has academic value.

### 2.2 Choose the Techniques for Bibliometric Analysis

The study's objectives will guide the selection of suitable bibliometric analysis methods (Donthu et al., 2021). To explore the current state of publishing, popular topics, and collaboration networks associated with the flipped classroom in the EFL/ESL context, data were collected from the Scopus database on September 2, 2025. The study employed a bibliometric approach, including descriptive bibliometric analysis, co-occurrence analysis, and co-authorship analysis. Although descriptive bibliometric analysis has a limited evaluative effect on individual studies, it helps provide an overview of overall publishing trends (van Leeuwen, 2004). Keyword co-occurrence analysis reveals patterns of simultaneous keyword occurrence, providing an overview of the research (Lim et al., 2024). Co-author analysis aims to reveal the interactions among scholars, so understanding how they interact is of vital importance (Donthu et al., 2021). These techniques can systematically present the publishing trends, research hotspots and collaborative networks of EFL/ESL flipped classroom research, thereby

making the research perspective more comprehensive and diverse.

Data was collected from the Scopus database and analysed descriptively. Microsoft Excel was used for statistical analysis, and VOSviewer was applied for data analysis and visualisation.

### 2.3 Bibliometric Data Search

In this study, bibliometric data were collected from the Scopus database, recognised as one of the most comprehensive academic literature platforms (Baas, Schotten, Plume, Côté & Karimi, 2020; Devi, Thinakaran, Hanefar, & Nadzri, 2024; Singh, Singh, Karmakar, Leta, & Mayr, 2021). Scopus supports quick and convenient information retrieval through string searches (Wang, Abdullah, & Leong, 2022), provides comprehensive access with a single subscription, is more user-friendly than WoS, and offers more reliable data than Google Scholar (Pranckutė, 2021). It is conducive to effective data collection and management and provides a wide range of research scope, making it a valuable resource for this study.

The document selection process for this study followed the guidance outlined in the research plan, as shown in Figure 1, which was adapted from Kushairi and Ahmi (2021) and Mohamad Hanefar, Benaouda, Faizuddin, and Ramachandaran (2025). As the first step, an initial search in Scopus was conducted using the query [TITLE-ABS-KEY (“flipped classroom” OR “flipped learning”) AND (“EFL” OR “ESL”)], resulting in 370 documents. Then, the data were selected by restricting the following four criteria: (1) the article title, abstract, and keywords included (“flipped classroom” OR “flipped learning”) AND (“EFL” OR “ESL”); (2) the year was limited to publications from 2015 to 2024; (3) the document type was limited to the article; and (4) the language was limited to English. Upon screening, 249 articles were identified as of 2 September 2025.

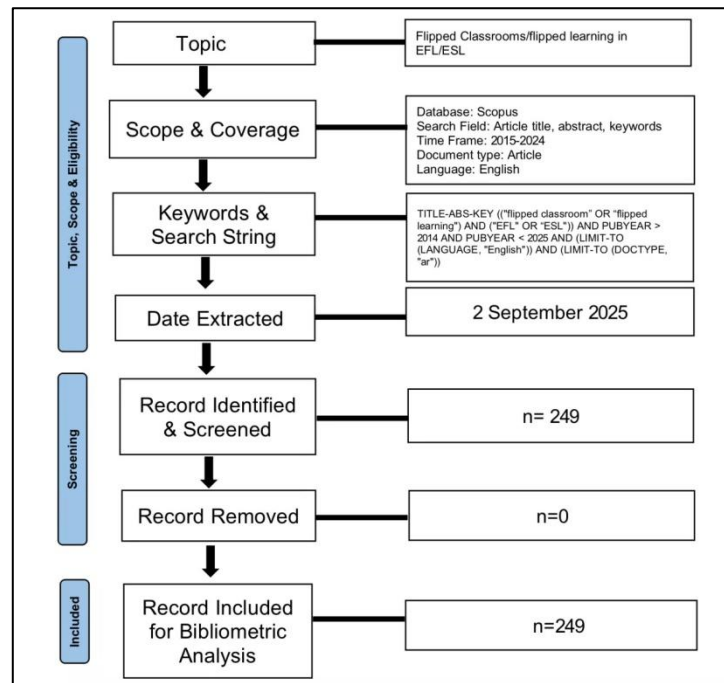


Figure 1. The research plan guided document selection for this study (adapted from Kushairi & Ahmi, 2021; Mohamad Hanefar et al., 2025)

### 2.4 Bibliometric Data Cleaning

After data collection, bibliographic data were retrieved from Scopus and manually checked in Excel. This process involved removing duplicate entries to make sure each publication appeared only once in the dataset. The cleaning process primarily focused on cross-checking for duplicate titles and DOIs. In addition, all the abstracts of the retrieved articles were carefully reviewed to verify their relevance to the scope of this study. As all publications were consistent with the research topic, no articles were excluded at this stage. Consequently, 249 articles were retained for the bibliometric analysis.

### 2.5 Bibliometric Analysis and Report of Findings

A total of 249 articles were analysed using Scopus and VOSviewer. Scopus data has facilitated numerous bibliometric studies on topics such as subject discovery, researcher mobility, and the visual representation of data (Baas, Schotten, Plume, Côté & Karimi, 2020). Its “Analyse” section allows tracking citations and examining how data are distributed across different areas, such as country, institution, and research field (Singh et al., 2021). VOSviewer graphically illustrates the importance and closeness of connections between nodes in a bibliometric network by representing the number of connections per node as node size and using line thickness to indicate the strength of those connections (Kushairi & Ahmi, 2021).

This study employed VOSviewer for analysis, using specific parameter settings to ensure robust results. For the keyword co-occurrence analysis, a minimum occurrence threshold of 5 was applied, including only keywords that appeared at least 5 times. For the analysis of author and institutional collaborations, a minimum of 2 publications was required for each author or institution. For the analysis of collaborations among countries/regions, the minimum publication threshold was set at 5.

To address the research questions, different analytical procedures were employed. For RQ1, a descriptive bibliometric analysis was conducted using Scopus data to examine the research landscape, including trends, countries/regions, authors, institutions, and citation analysis. For RQ2, author keywords were extracted from the dataset and analysed through co-occurrence mapping in VOSviewer to identify major research themes. For RQ3, collaboration networks at the author, country/region, and institution levels were visualised using VOSviewer.

Although bibliometric analysis can provide valuable insights into research trends, it is essential to acknowledge that certain ethical considerations are involved. Quantitative indicators, such as citation counts and publication counts, may not fully reflect research quality and may be influenced by factors like publication language and citation patterns in specific fields. Furthermore, the Scopus database may underestimate the inclusion of non-English or regional journals, thereby introducing potential bias. To ensure maximum transparency and reliability, this study clearly defined the report retrieval strategy, the inclusion criteria and data processing, and carefully interpreted the results.

### 3. Findings and Analysis

Bibliometric analysis was employed to address the three research questions, focusing on key aspects including publication trends, contributions by countries/regions, authors, and institutions, as well as a citation overview, based on data obtained from Scopus. In addition, visual analyses were conducted using VOSviewer to explore co-occurrence analysis of author keywords and examine collaboration among authors, organisations, and countries/regions.

#### 3.1 The Present Status of Publications of the Flipped Classroom in the EFL/ESL Context

To answer research question 1 (What is the present status of publications of the flipped classroom in the EFL/ESL context?), the publication trend, countries/regions, authors, institutional contributions, and citation overview were analysed.

##### 3.1.1 Publication Trend

Based on data collected from Scopus, Figure 2 illustrates the trend from 2015 to 2024. Over the past decade, although the number of flipped classroom studies has fluctuated, it has increased, indicating a growing interest in this teaching method in the academic community.

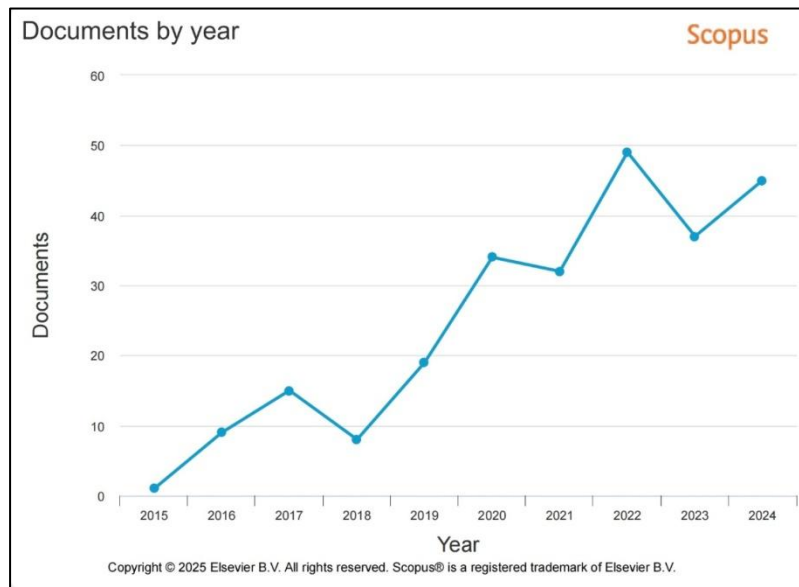


Figure 2. Publication trend 2015–2024 (as of 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2025)

This field was in its initial stage of gradual growth from 2015 (n=1) to 2017 (n=15). Although the number of publications was relatively limited, it still showed a growth trend. However, there was a brief decline in 2018 (n=8). Although unstable, it shows a gradually developing academic interest and potential for growth. Since Bergmann and Sams (2012) proposed the flipped classroom, it has gradually attracted the attention of the education field. Since 2014, the application of this model in the English-language context has only begun to attract the attention of researchers (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). Educational innovation is usually a gradual process, with its adoption following an S-curve, and the speed of dissemination varies depending on the type of innovation (Rogers, 2003).

The number of documents increased significantly from 2019 (n=19) to 2022 (n=49), indicating increasing scholarly interest and

recognition of the flipped classroom in the EFL/ESL context. Reflecting the accelerated transformation of education driven by technological advancements and post-pandemic impacts, flipped classrooms have received more attention due to their integration of digital tools and innovative methods (Cueva & Inga, 2022; Linling & Abdullah, 2023). Especially in EFL courses, with the popularisation of flipped classrooms and the development of information technology in developing countries, its role in improving the quality of education during the pandemic makes this research topic even more important in the future (Linling & Abdullah, 2023).

While the number of studies declined in 2023 (n=37), it rebounded in 2024 (n=45). This indicates that the research field is reaching a stage of stability and maturity, shifting from initial feasibility studies toward more in-depth and practice-oriented investigations.

### 3.1.2 Countries/Regions Distribution

According to Scopus data, 39 countries/territories have engaged in academic studies in this field. As shown in Figure 3, this study analyses the top 9 countries/regions in the number of publications.

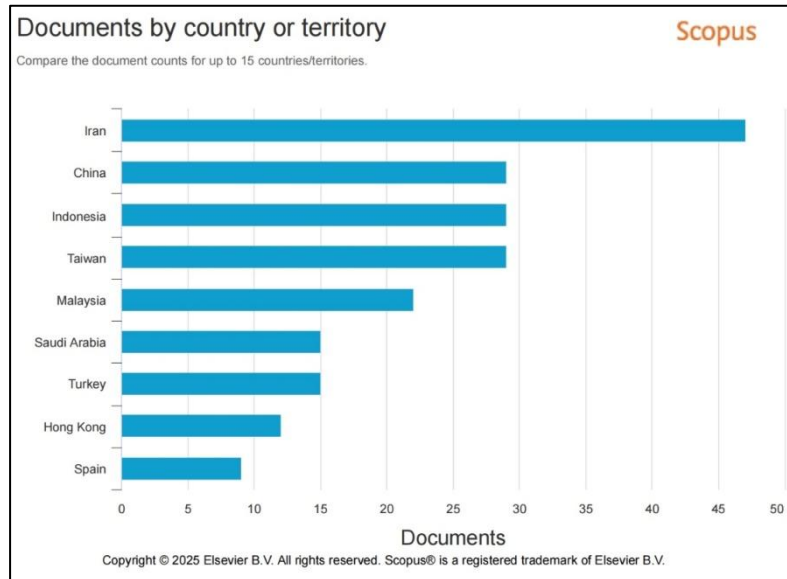


Figure 3. Documents by country or territory

Iran has the highest number of publications (47 articles), indicating a high level of interest and active research in this field. As part of the English-speaking world, although English has no official status in Iran, it is widely used in education, business, and the media, and its influence continues to expand as media and social networks develop (Zarrinabadi & Mahmoudi-Gahrouei, 2017). Although English education in Iran is conservative and emphasises localisation (Iranmehr, Davari, Nourzadeh, & Hassani, 2024), globalisation and student demands have prompted the exploration of technology-enhanced teaching. Iranian scholars attach great importance to the role of technology in foreign language learning and have been actively exploring innovative methods in English education since 2014 (Golshan & Tafazoli, 2014; Kalanzadeh, Soleimani, & Bakhtiarvand, 2014). The flipped classroom, due to its flexibility and the ability to balance localised education and language proficiency improvement, has naturally become a research hotspot in Iran, with more related literature than in other countries.

China, Indonesia, and Taiwan follow closely, each with 29 publications, reflecting their efforts in exploring the use of flipped classrooms in English language education. Since the 2010 education reform, China has continuously promoted innovative, information-based teaching, with flipped classrooms effectively advancing educational reform and becoming a current focus (Yang & Chen, 2020). China is the world's largest English education market, where the status of English is shaped by both socio-political factors and economic development (Cheng & Wei, 2019). With continuous economic growth, demand for English learning is rising. Meanwhile, the development of educational informatisation has further enhanced research and practical attention in this field (Yang & Chen, 2020). Over the past decade, research on flipped classrooms in Indonesia has remained active, experiencing growth, a decline during the pandemic, and a resurgence (Oknaryana et al., 2025). Indonesia's significant contributions in this field may stem from its continuous focus on English teaching strategies, classroom interaction, and the application of technology, as well as its overall efforts to align related research with international trends (Zein, Sukyadi, Hamied, & Lengkanawati, 2020).

Malaysia (n=22) followed closely behind in terms of publication volume. During the pandemic, the flipped classroom has garnered significant attention in Malaysia (Soon Tan, Zakuan, & Ismail Abd Aziz, 2022), particularly as researchers have contributed a substantial body of literature in ESL studies, reflecting the Ministry of Education's high regard for English teaching (Kernagaran & Abdullah, 2022). Although there are relatively few publications from countries such as Saudi Arabia (n=15), Turkey (n=15), Hong Kong (n=12), and Spain (n=9), their participation still highlights the interest in flipped classroom research in the EFL/ESL context.

Researchers from different countries/regions are highly active in this field, indicating that research on flipped classrooms has strong global and cross-cultural applicability. Meanwhile, these data indicate that research on flipped classrooms in the EFL/ESL context is dispersed across countries/regions, reflecting varying stages of development in this field.

### 3.1.3 Authors with the Highest Publication Output

Figure 4 shows the number of publications for 7 authors, with each author's count represented by a blue bar. As shown in the figure, Hwang, Izadpanah, Md Yunus, and Wu have the most extensive research output, having published 5 articles. Khodabandeh, Roohani, and Yang follow closely with 4 articles.

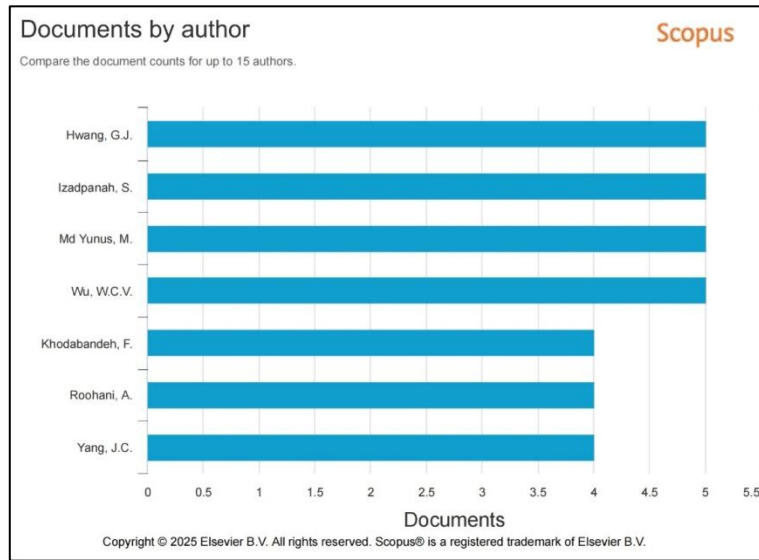


Figure 4. Authors with the highest publication output

As a supplement, Table 1 provides a comprehensive analysis of the author’s affiliations, countries/regions, citations, and H-index, providing more information about their academic influence and geographic background. The H-index measures a researcher’s work by considering both publication count and citation distribution over time, reflecting their influence and importance in the field (Limaymanta et al., 2021).

Table 1. Top 7 authors with the highest publication output

No.	Author	Institution	Country /region	Citations	H index
1	Hwang	National Taichung University of Education	Taiwan	375	5
2	Izadpanah	Islamic Azad University	Iran	40	4
3	Md Yunus	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	Malaysia	38	2
4	Wu	China Medical University Hospital	Taiwan	755	5
5	Khodabandeh	Payame Noor University	Iran	59	3
6	Roohani	Shahrekord University	Iran	24	3
7	Yang	National Central University	Taiwan	281	4

These authors are affiliated with institutions in various countries/regions, including Taiwan, Iran, and Malaysia. Among them, scholars from Taiwan have made more prominent contributions in terms of literature output and citation. In Taiwan, English is regarded as essential for educational and career success. Policy pressures, combined with educational competition, have driven a strong research focus on English teaching (Price, 2014). This has further prompted greater attention to innovative English teaching methods, such as the flipped classroom. Scholars from Malaysia and Iran have also consistently produced academic achievements in their respective fields of research. In the current field of flipped classroom research in English classrooms, the influence of authors varies significantly, and researchers with high productivity and high citations are relatively scarce.

Geographical and linguistic factors influence research in this field. The research achievements are primarily concentrated in Asia, reflecting the region’s active exploration of integrating educational technology, particularly the growing practical demand for enhancing the effectiveness of English language education. Moreover, the spread of English in Asia and the development of its diverse variants have long been an important field of sociolinguistic research (Bolton & Bacon-Shone, 2020). Non-native English-speaking countries/regions, due to their increasing emphasis on English education, have placed greater focus on research in this area. Notably, research on English teaching in Southeast Asia primarily focuses on current topics, such as technology-assisted language learning (Ngoc & Barrot, 2023), reflecting the region’s strong emphasis on innovative teaching models.

### 3.1.4 Institutions with Significant Contributions

Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of publications among the top 6 institutions. “Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia” has a literature volume of 9, which is higher than that of other institutions, demonstrating its outstanding ability to produce scientific research achievements in this field.

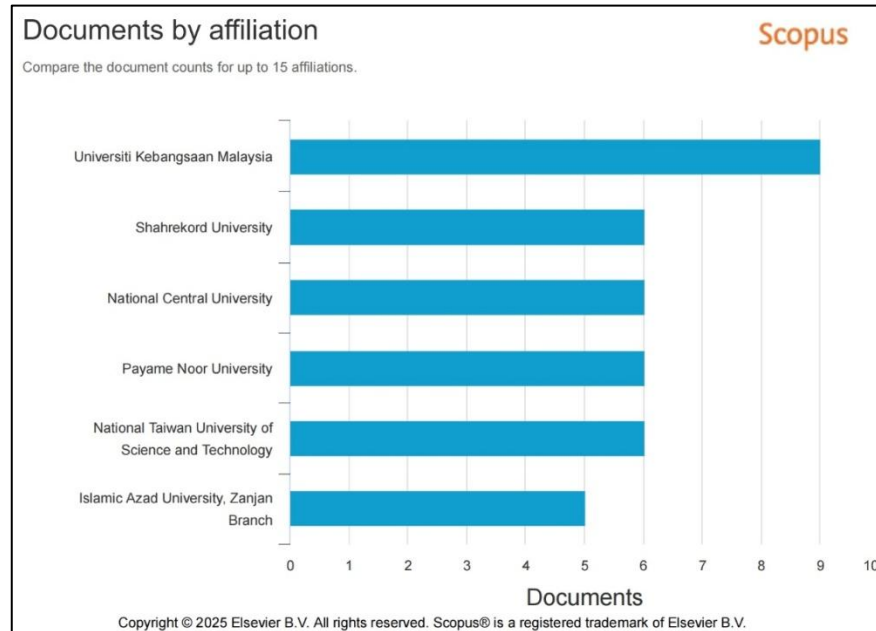


Figure 5. Institutions with significant contributions

Table 2 presents the top 6 institutions with significant contributions in this field, reflecting their academic influence as measured by citation counts and H-index.

National Central University and National Taiwan University of Science and Technology have significantly higher total citations than other institutions, reaching 781 and 498, respectively. In terms of H-index, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and National Taiwan University of Science and Technology demonstrate relatively strong academic influence in this field.

Similar to the distribution of prolific authors, the research output of leading institutions is also concentrated in Malaysia, Taiwan, and Iran. This concern is not only reflected in academic research but also in educational policies. Especially, the contribution of Malaysian institutions surpasses that of other institutions. Specifically, the Malaysian Education Blueprint promotes the flipped classroom to enhance students’ potential, while the government’s national education plan emphasises improving the quality of English as a second language instruction (Kernagaran & Abdullah, 2022; Rahman, Yunus, & Hashim, 2019). Moreover, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia emphasises information and communications technology integration and English language teaching, which has promoted the widespread adoption of flipped classrooms (Anusia & Muniisvaran, 2023), making blended and flipped learning increasingly important for enhancing teaching effectiveness (Soon Tan et al., 2022).

In conclusion, the contributions of these institutions reflect the activity and academic influence of the Asian region in this field of research.

Table 2. Top 6 institutions with significant contributions

No.	Affiliation	Country /region	Citations	H index
1	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	Malaysia	154	6
2	Shahrekord University	Iran	65	5
3	National Central University	Taiwan	781	5
4	Payame Noor University	Iran	147	4
5	National Taiwan University of Science and Technology	Taiwan	498	6
6	Islamic Azad University, Zanzan Branch	Iran	40	4

3.1.5 Citation Overview

The 10 most frequently cited articles are shown in Table 3. This group of articles investigates the concept of flipped classrooms in the EFL/ESL context from various angles, highlighting the ongoing research and its significant impact in this field.

From the perspective of journal distribution, these articles are published in several well-known journals, such as the Journal of Educational

Technology & Society and Computer Assisted Language Learning. It suggests that the technical application of the flipped classroom in EFL/ESL is a topic of significant academic concern.

In terms of research topics, highly cited literature primarily focuses on four areas, with most attention on EFL students. First, the impact of the flipped classroom on the language proficiency of English learners, including oral, listening and writing performance; second, the application of technical tools, such as AI chatbots and mobile social software; third, individual differences among students and classroom participation, including self-efficacy, gender and learning motivation; and fourth, review studies summarise the development trends in this field and provide theoretical and empirical references for future research.

Table 3. The 10 articles with the greatest number of citations

No.	Author (Year)	Title	Journal Title
1	Chen Hsieh, Wu, and Marek (2017)	Using the flipped classroom to enhance EFL learning	Computer Assisted Language Learning
2	Turan and Akdag-Cimen (2020)	Flipped classroom in English language teaching: a systematic review	Computer Assisted Language Learning
3	Wu, Hsieh, and Yang (2017)	Creating an online learning community in a flipped classroom to enhance EFL learners' oral proficiency	Journal of Educational Technology & Society
4	Lin and Hwang (2018)	A learning analytics approach to investigating factors affecting EFL students' oral performance in a flipped classroom	Journal of Educational Technology & Society
5	Lin and Mubarak (2021)	Learning analytics for investigating the mind map-guided AI chatbot approach in an EFL flipped speaking classroom	Educational Technology & Society
6	Namaziandost and Çakmak (2020)	An account of EFL learners' self-efficacy and gender in the Flipped Classroom Model	Education and Information Technologies
7	Hsieh, Huang, and Wu (2017)	Technological acceptance of LINE in flipped EFL oral training	Computers in Human Behavior
8	Lin, Hwang, Fu, and Chen (2018)	A flipped contextual game-based learning approach to enhancing EFL students' English business writing performance and reflective behaviors	Journal of Educational Technology & Society
9	Amiryousefi (2019)	The incorporation of flipped learning into conventional classes to enhance EFL learners' L2 speaking, L2 listening, and engagement	Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching
10	Mehring (2016)	Present research on the flipped classroom and potential tools for the EFL classroom	Computers in the Schools

In conclusion, highly cited literature comprehensively reflects the research hotspots and development trends of the flipped classroom in English education, providing a solid foundation and important references for subsequent research.

### 3.2 The Author Keywords Most Commonly Repeated in Research on Flipped Classrooms in the EFL/ESL Context

To address the research question (What are the author keywords most commonly repeated in research on flipped classrooms in the EFL/ESL context?), using bibliographic information from the Scopus database, the study used VOSviewer to do a co-occurrence analysis of author keywords to find common themes and trends in studies on flipped classrooms in the EFL/ESL context. Author keywords summarise major research themes and can be used to identify current trends, scientific progress, and prospective future directions (Lee & Su, 2010) by analysing keyword co-occurrence to better understand the connections between concepts or topics (Lozano, Calzada-Infante, Adenso-Díaz, & Garc ía, 2019).

Analysis was conducted using VOSviewer software, which employed co-occurrence analysis to focus on author keywords. The scope of the analysis was limited to author keywords, and the filtering condition was a minimum of 5 occurrences of the keywords. During the data preprocessing stage, terms with identical or similar meanings were standardised and merged through synonym normalisation to ensure the consistency of keywords and enhance the reliability of the analysis results. In total, 18 high-frequency author keywords were analysed (Figure 6).

The different-coloured nodes and lines in the figure demonstrate how keywords are connected, reflecting the features of nodes such as their strength, importance, and neighbourhood relationships (Lozano et al., 2019). There is no doubt that “flipped classrooms”, “efl”, and “flipped learning” are the main keywords in the network, with high frequency and importance. Other common author keywords include “students”, “blended learning”, “teaching”, and “higher education”.

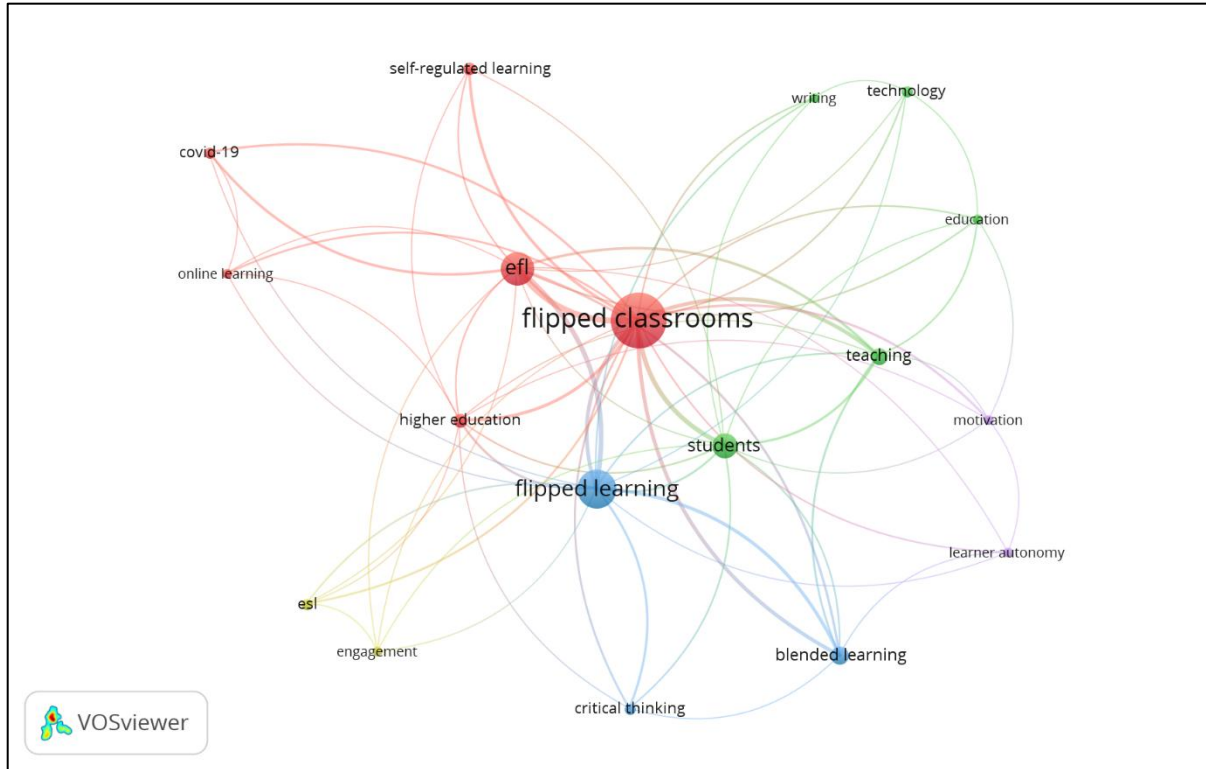


Figure 6. Author keyword co-occurrence analysis mapping

Keywords of the same colour in the graph are usually correlated and will appear together, with each colour representing a group reflecting the popular area or the structure of the research topic (Kushairi & Ahmi, 2021). 5 different clusters were found according to the results of VOSviewer’s cluster analysis (Table 4).

The keywords “students”, “teaching”, “writing”, “motivation”, “engagement”, and “learner autonomy” indicate that the research generally focuses on students. This is consistent with the conclusion of the existing review (Fisher et al., 2024) that studies should focus more on improving students’ perception and language skills. This is also consistent with Linling’s (2025) findings, which emphasise the role of the flipped classroom in fostering autonomous learning and enhancing participation in language acquisition. The prominent position of “higher education” further indicates that colleges and universities are the primary field for researching flipped classrooms. Consistent with Yusoff et al.’s (2024) research results, the flipped classroom of college English is a core theme. “COVID-19” indicates that the epidemic has played a key role in promoting the normalisation of flipped classrooms, which is consistent with the findings of Nuraeni and Fachrunnisa (2024). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the flipped classroom has become an important strategy for maintaining educational continuity (Dilo & Wasiyati, 2024), while also demonstrating its high flexibility (Linling, 2025).

Table 4. Clusters and their associated keywords distribution

Cluster	No.	Keywords	Cluster	No.	Keywords
Cluster 1	1	covid-19	Cluster 3	1	blended learning
	2	efl		2	critical thinking
	3	flipped classrooms		3	flipped learning
	4	higher education	Cluster 4	1	engagement
	5	online learning		2	esl
		6	self-regulated learning	Cluster 5	1
			2		motivation
Cluster 2	1	education			
	2	students			
	3	teaching			
	4	technology			
	5	writing			

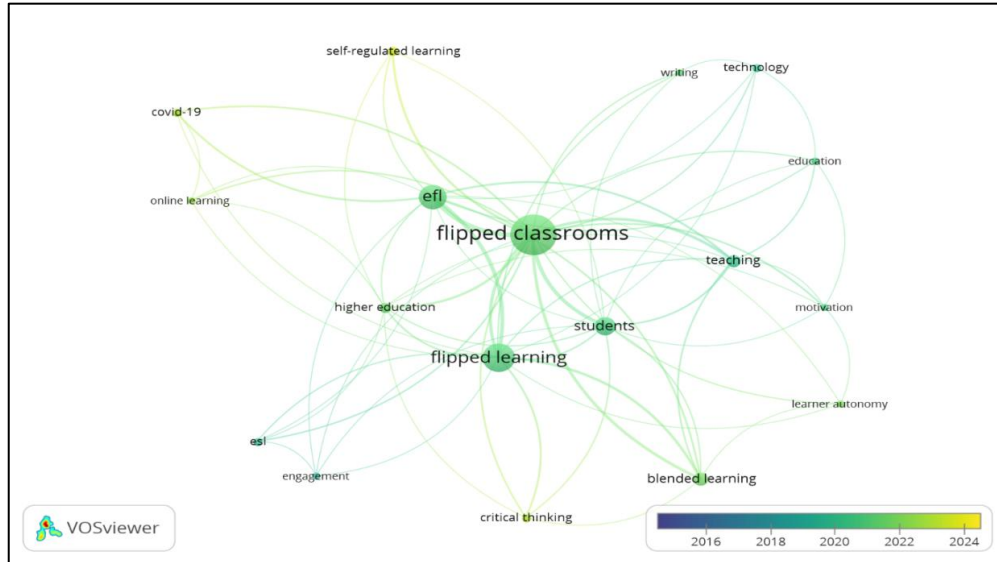


Figure 7. Author keyword co-occurrence analysis mapping according to year

Figure 7 shows the temporal evolution of keywords in this field. The research mainly focuses on the implementation of flipped classrooms and their impact on students, with the majority of the research subjects being EFL/ESL learners in higher education. Early research focused on “teaching”, “engagement”, and “technology”. In recent years, research hotspots have gradually shifted toward “blended learning”, “online learning”, “self-regulated learning”, and “critical thinking”. This reflects that research on flipped learning in the EFL/ESL environment is also constantly enriching the strategies and models for its effective implementation (Dilo & Wasiyati, 2024), demonstrating the diversified development of topics in this field. Consistent with existing research, scholars focus on the role of flipped classrooms in enhancing the higher-order cognitive abilities of EFL learners (Linling, 2025), while also exploring their application in promoting students’ understanding and knowledge construction (Nuraeni & Fachrunnisa, 2024).

The 7 most common author keywords were analysed (Table 5). Undoubtedly, “flipped classrooms” and “flipped learning” appear far more frequently than other keywords, with total link strengths of 110 and 68, respectively. Following closely behind are “efl” and “students”. As the review by Fisher et al. (2024) showed, research on the application of English flipped classrooms in higher education mostly focuses on students’ perceptions, and some explore their role in improving English knowledge and skills. Meanwhile, from 2014 to 2024, the flipped classroom has received increasing attention in the EFL context, with its development accelerating since 2016 (Linling, 2025).

Moreover, the emergence of “blended learning” reflects that current research is also exploring the integration and coordinated development of flipped classrooms with other hybrid or online teaching models. Especially in the post-pandemic era, the education community is promoting the integration of online flipped learning into regular teaching (Jiang, Meng, & Zhou, 2024).

Furthermore, “teaching” is especially in the environment of “higher education”. This trend also suggests that integrating digital technology and teaching methods is becoming an increasingly important topic for colleges and universities. As higher education institutions undergo a digital transformation driven by the technological advances of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, universities are adopting new communication technologies, as students increasingly depend on mobile devices and learning with technology becomes common in higher education (Benavides, Tamayo Arias, Arango Serna, Branch Bedoya, & Burgos, 2020; Dunn & Kennedy, 2019; Santos, Batista, & Marques, 2019 ). It might also be because college students are more receptive to this approach and have a stronger ability for self-regulation (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, the recognition of the flipped classroom has increased, and more colleges and universities have incorporated it into their blended teaching strategies (Fisher et al., 2024).

Table 5. The 7 most common author keywords

No.	Keywords	Occurrences
1	flipped classrooms	135
2	flipped learning	64
3	efl	48
4	students	27
5	blended learning	15
6	teaching	12
7	higher education	9

3.3 The Extent of Cooperation Between Different Authors, Organisations, or Countries/Regions in the Study of the Flipped Classroom in the EFL/ESL Context

To address research question 3 (What is the extent of cooperation between different authors, organisations, or countries/regions in the study of the flipped classroom in the EFL/ESL context?), VOSviewer was employed to analyse and visualise co-authorship networks, revealing collaborative patterns among authors, organisations, and countries/regions. Co-authorship is a tool for analysing the relationships and structure of the scientific community through social network analysis, which enables researchers to gain a deeper insight into collaboration patterns and their effects on scientific progress (Kumar, 2015).

3.3.1 Cooperation Among Authors

Collaboration among authors was analysed using VOSviewer, and the findings are shown in Figure 8. The analysis was based on a minimum of 2 documents per author, for a total of 62 authors. Of these, only 5 authors formed a relatively close collaborative network.

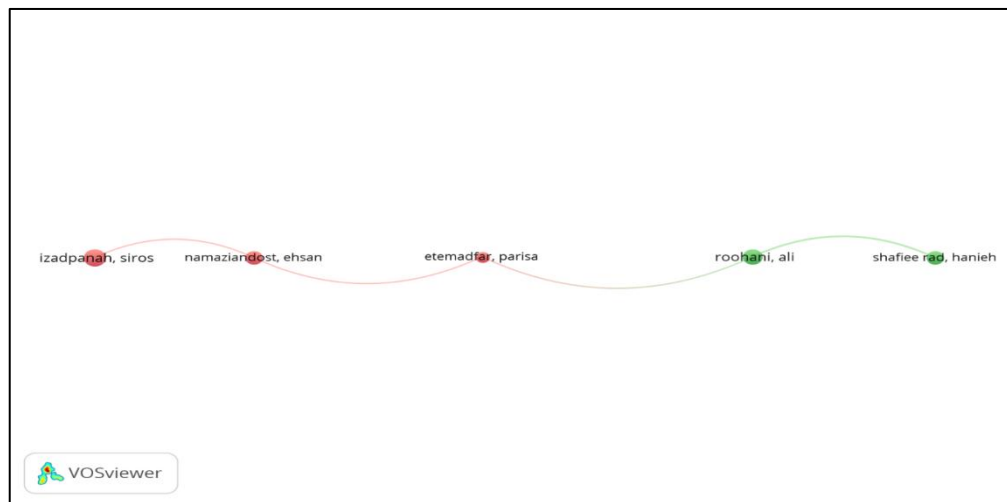


Figure 8. Cooperation among authors

All of these authors are from Iran, primarily affiliated with Shahrekord University, Islamic Azad University, and Islamic Azad University (Zanjan Branch). Etemadfar, Izadpanah, Namaziandost, Roohani, and Shafiee Rad have established a close collaborative network, largely due to their geographic and academic connections within the country. This pattern reflects the significant role of institutional affiliation in shaping authors’ collaborative relationships.

As shown in the specific data statistics graph in VOSviewer, Roohani has the highest total link strength at 3 and has published 4 papers. This indicates that it holds a core position in the cooperative network of this field. Izadpanah has made the greatest contribution to publications (n=5), although the cooperation is not particularly close. However, author collaboration is still limited to a few researchers, indicating that significant deficiencies remain in cross-institutional and even cross-border author collaboration in this field, which may limit the diversity and innovation of research results.

3.3.2 Cooperation Among Organisations

Applying the threshold of a minimum of 2 publications per organisation, 55 organisations met the criteria. Among these, only 4 organisations demonstrated close collaborative relationships. The results are shown in Figure 9.

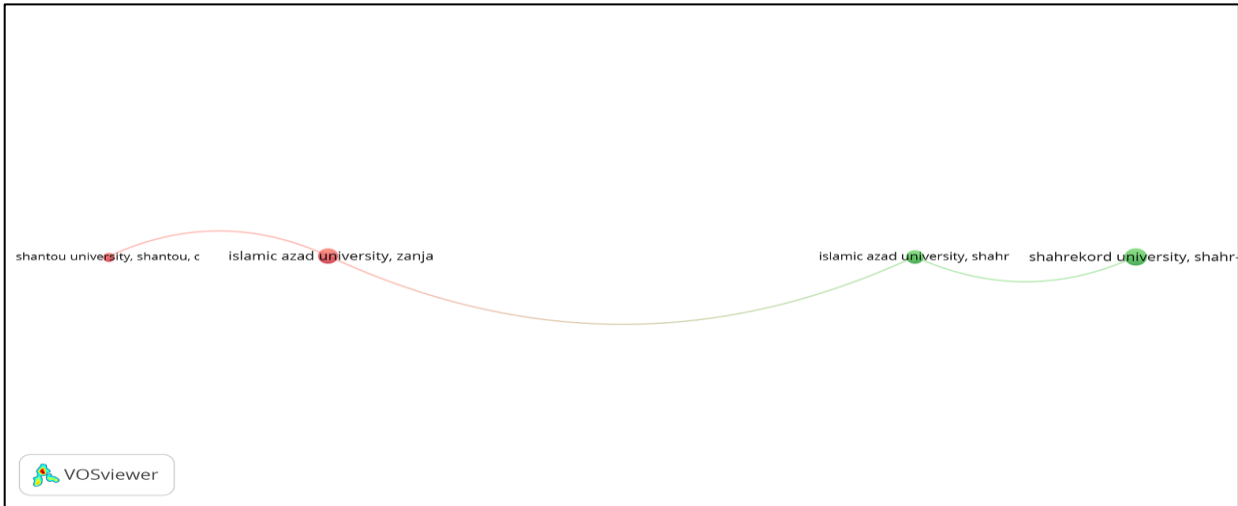


Figure 9. Cooperation among organisations

Islamic Azad University (Zanjan Branch), Islamic Azad University (Shahrekord Branch), and Shahrekord University are all located in Iran, while Shantou University is based in China. These institutions are mainly located in Asia, demonstrating close cooperative relationships within the region and reflecting a powerful and interrelated research network. Nevertheless, their overall cooperative relationships remain relatively limited, with low collaboration intensity. Among them, Islamic Azad University (Zanjan Branch) and Islamic Azad University (Shahrekord Branch) show comparatively stronger collaboration, though the total link strength is only 2. Despite Shahrekord University contributing 6 publications in this field, it maintains collaboration with only one institution. Notably, Islamic Azad University (Zanjan Branch) has also engaged in international collaboration with Shantou University in China. Although some institutions have engaged in international collaboration, the overall intensity of collaboration remains low, indicating that the institutional collaboration network in this field is still fragmented and lacks extensive cross-regional cooperation.

### 3.3.3 Cooperation Among Countries/Regions

A similar analysis of country/region collaboration was done using VOSviewer, and the results are shown in Figure 10. Using a threshold of at least 5 publications per country, 14 countries/regions were identified, of which 9 demonstrated close collaborative relationships.

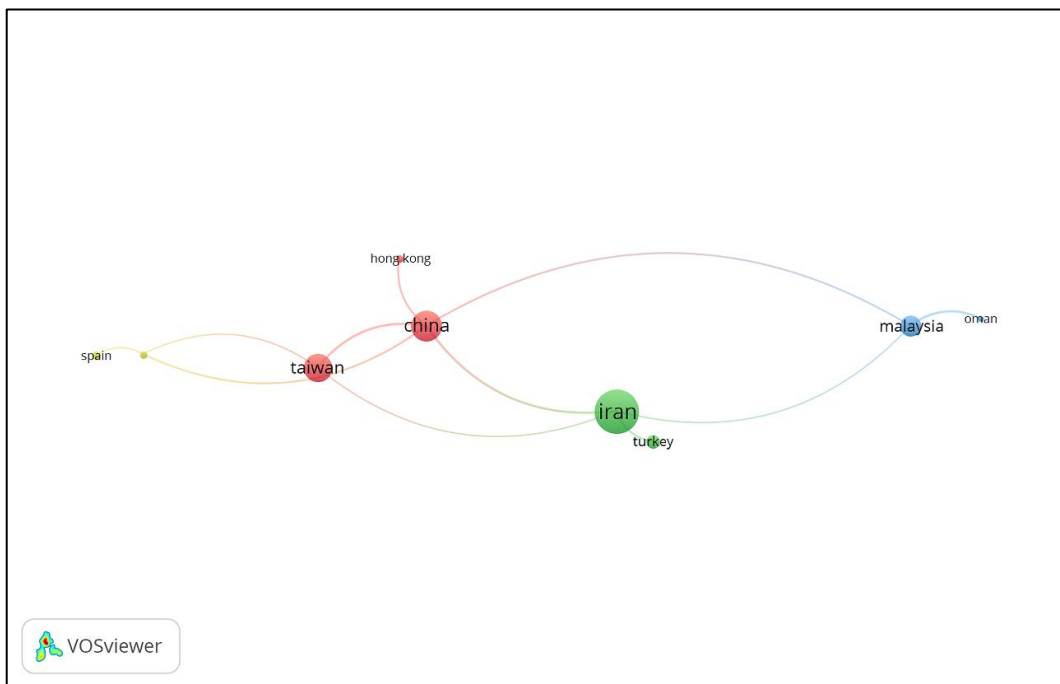


Figure 10. Cooperation among countries/regions

As shown in the figure, 4 clusters of different colours are presented, reflecting the significant international cooperation and cross-regional communication in the research on flipped classrooms in the English-language environment.

The international collaboration network in this field involves 9 countries/regions: China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Iran, Turkey, Malaysia, Oman, Spain, and the United States. Among them, China has the highest total link strength (12) and maintains collaborative ties with 7 countries/regions, including Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Iran, and the United States. Iran contributes the largest number of publications to the network, with a total of 45 papers, and has established close cooperative relationships with China, Taiwan, Turkey, and Malaysia.

The overall cooperation network, centred on Asia, has a significant influence on other continents. This finding is consistent with the results of Linling (2025) and Nuraeni and Fachrunnisa (2024). Geographical proximity and regional cooperation relationships provide visual support for deepening cross-border academic collaboration.

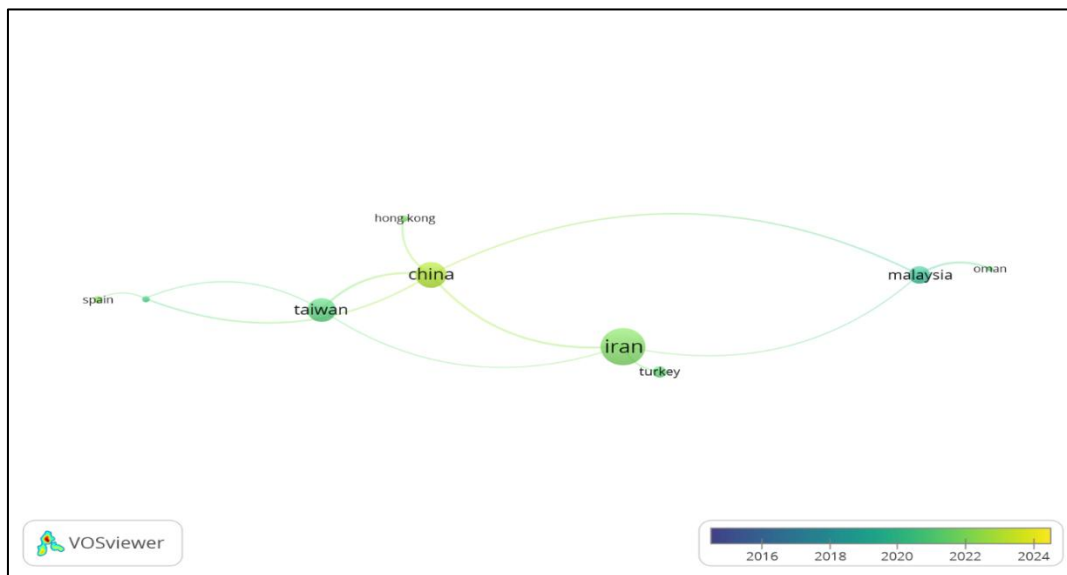


Figure 11. Cooperation among countries/regions according to year

From the perspective of time evolution and current cooperation patterns, China and Iran have become core countries. They are likely to continue playing a central role in research cooperation and publication production, further strengthening their ties with other regions. Hong Kong and Taiwan may maintain their influence through close links with mainland China, while countries such as Malaysia and Turkey are expected to deepen their collaboration over time. As this field develops, countries such as Spain, Oman, and the United States may gradually increase their participation. Overall, it is expected that the international cooperation network in this field will become increasingly interconnected, with more countries and regions actively participating in the future.

**4. Discussion**

The bibliometric analysis provides an overview of research on the flipped classroom in the EFL/ESL context, highlighting the current status of publications, prominent author keywords, and patterns of collaboration. The following discussion interprets these findings in relation to the three research questions, enabling a comprehensive examination of the bibliometric results.

*RQ 1: What is the present status of publications of the flipped classroom in the EFL/ESL context?*

The present status of publications on the flipped classroom in the EFL/ESL context is examined through a bibliometric analysis focusing on publication trends, country/region contributions, authors and institutional outputs, and citation patterns.

From 2015 to 2024, research in this area has fluctuated but exhibited an overall trend of growth. Especially after the epidemic, it began to attract widespread attention. Consistent with previous findings in the EFL or ESL flipped classrooms, although publications slightly declined in 2023 (Dilo & Wasiyati, 2024; Linling, 2025; Nuraeni & Fachrunnisa, 2024; Yusoff et al., 2024), the development of technology is expected to further promote the flipped classroom in EFL/ESL contexts, enhancing teaching interactivity and learning outcomes while offering a new practical pathway for innovation in English education.

Iran emerges as the leading contributor in the field of flipped classroom research in the EFL/ESL context, followed by China, Taiwan, and Indonesia. This result is highly consistent with previous studies (Linling, 2025; Yusoff et al., 2024). The combination of policy support, national emphasis on English education, and the accessibility of digital technologies may have contributed to the increased research output in the field of flipped classroom applications. Hwang, Izadpanah, Md Yunus, and Wu exhibit the highest research output. The authors are

primarily affiliated with institutions in Taiwan, Iran, and Malaysia. Research in this field is primarily concentrated in Asia, which is closely related to the high demand for English in the region (Bolton & Bacon-Shone, 2020) and reflects a strong emphasis on integrating educational technology and innovating English language teaching. Similar to the distribution of prolific authors, the research achievements of leading institutions are also concentrated in Malaysia, Taiwan, and Iran. The policy environment is a crucial factor in promoting educational technology innovation and teaching model reform, providing impetus and conditions for scholars to research teaching method reform (Dan & Mohamed, 2024).

Overall, highly cited literature indicates that the flipped classroom has an effect on the language skills of EFL students, but its effectiveness is influenced by factors such as student characteristics, motivation, and engagement. Meanwhile, technical tools play a significant role in the flipped English classroom. It is worth noting that the top ten highly cited papers mainly focus on EFL students, while studies from the perspectives of ESL students and teachers are relatively scarce. This indicates an imbalance in the research focus. The frequent citations in review studies also provide theoretical and methodological references for future research. Therefore, future research should expand the scope of subjects and pay more attention to the operability of teaching scenarios, as well as the influence of multiple factors.

*RQ 2: What are the author keywords most commonly repeated in research on flipped classrooms in the EFL/ESL context?*

Keywords are important elements of research, which help enhance the clarity, level, and influence of the results (Nuraeni & Fachrunnisa, 2024). The co-occurrence analysis of author keywords shows that “flipped classrooms”, “flipped learning”, and “EFL” have the highest frequency and link strength, indicating their central role in this research domain. Meanwhile, compared with countries/regions where English is a second language, those where English is a foreign language pay more attention to research in this field. This may reflect the continuous growth in policy support and the demand for innovative English teaching. Moreover, in recent years, the hotspots have gradually shifted to “blended learning”, “online learning”, “self-regulated learning”, and “critical thinking”. It reflects the continuous development potential of the flipped classroom in responding to educational technology innovations and complex learning situations in the EFL/ESL environment.

Overall, research on flipped classrooms in the EFL/ESL context is gradually expanding to new topics such as technology integration, learner autonomy, and cognitive abilities. However, existing research has primarily focused on EFL learners and higher education contexts, highlighting opportunities for further exploration of ESL learners, teachers, and other educational levels. Future research should expand its subjects and perspectives, which echoes the shortcomings revealed in highly cited literature. Meanwhile, there is still room for improvement in the exploration of language skills in existing research. Currently, only “writing” is involved in the hot keywords, which provides a clear direction for further attention to the development of comprehensive language abilities, such as listening, speaking, and reading, in the future. As emphasised by Fisher et al. (2024), future research should focus on the effects of flipped classrooms on English learners’ knowledge, skills, and abilities.

*RQ 3: What is the extent of cooperation between different authors, organisations, or countries/regions in the study of the flipped classroom in the EFL/ESL context?*

The analysis of the co-authorship network shows that, among the 62 authors who published at least 2 papers, only 5 authors formed a relatively close collaborative network. All of these authors are from Iran, and their collaboration is largely influenced by geographic proximity and academic connections. The analysis of the institutional collaboration network shows that, among the 55 institutions with at least 2 publications, only 4 formed close collaborative relationships, primarily concentrated in Iran and China. At the country/region level, this study focused on 9 countries/regions forming a relatively close collaborative network, with China and Iran occupying central positions. This finding shows the same trend as the cooperation between institutions. However, cooperation is still mainly concentrated in Asia and the Middle East, with relatively limited participation from other countries/regions. This trend of centralisation indicates that although cross-border cooperation has developed, collaboration on a global scale remains unbalanced. In the future, more countries/regions should be encouraged to participate to promote the diversity and sustainable development of research in this field.

Overall, the international cooperation network of the flipped classroom in the EFL/ESL field has demonstrated a strong degree of concentration. Although cross-national and cross-institutional collaboration is still limited, this shows that the field has great potential, and expanding collaboration in the future can further support the exchange and integration of global English language teaching.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendation**

A bibliometric analysis of 249 journal articles from Scopus on flipped classrooms in the English language is conducted in this study. This study aims to analyse the publication trends, contributions of countries/regions, authors, and organisations, and to provide an overview of citations. Additionally, it explores co-occurrence analysis of author keywords and examines co-authorship relationships among authors, organisations, and countries/regions. This study examines the research trends on flipped classrooms in the English language from 2015 to 2024, filling a gap in the existing literature and providing new insights in the field.

This study found that the number of publications on EFL/ESL flipped classrooms has generally shown an upward trend, with some fluctuations. Analysis of countries’/regions’ contributions indicates that Iran is the main contributor. Hwang, Izadpanah, Md Yunus, and Wu are the most prolific authors. The institution with the highest contribution is the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. The most cited article is *Using the flipped classroom to enhance EFL learning* by Chen Hsieh et al. (2017). Keyword co-occurrence analysis shows that research in this field has mainly revolved around “flipped classrooms”, “flipped learning”, “EFL”, “students”, “teaching”, and “higher

education". In recent years, the focus has gradually shifted toward themes such as "blended learning", "online learning", "self-regulated learning", and "critical thinking". These hot keywords provide a foundation for future research directions in this field. Co-authorship analysis shows that academic collaboration in these studies of flipped classrooms in English language teaching exhibited significant centralisation and variety. At the author level, Iranian scholars have collaborated relatively closely. The 4 institutions with the closest cooperation are mainly concentrated in Iran and China. In terms of country/region collaboration, China is at the centre of the cooperation network.

Bibliometric analysis indicates that research on flipped classrooms is continuously expanding and diversifying in the context of EFL/ESL. Research has demonstrated that the flipped classroom can enhance students' engagement and motivation while fostering higher-order thinking and autonomous learning. Meanwhile, with the continuous innovation of technology, the flipped classroom has integrated diverse teaching models, further enriching and expanding its core. Although there are still certain imbalances among different countries/regions and research topics, this precisely provides a broad space for the development of future research. Current research still pays insufficient attention to ESL learners, teachers' perspectives, other educational aspects, and the development of comprehensive language skills, which provides a clear direction for future research. Future research can promote the innovative practice and development of flipped classrooms in English education by strengthening cross-regional cooperation and expanding research subjects. Overall, the flipped classroom offers new teaching methods and learning opportunities for English education, and its development potential deserves further attention and exploration.

Undoubtedly, this study has several limitations. It employed only the Scopus database for literature retrieval. While Scopus is widely used, it may not cover all significant literature in relevant fields, potentially leading to bias in the bibliometric analysis and visualisation. Second, the search was limited to literature with the keywords ("flipped classroom" OR "flipped learning") AND ("EFL" OR "ESL") in the title, abstract, and keywords. This can lead to the neglect of other relevant studies, especially those that use different terms or descriptions. Third, this research document type included only articles and excluded other types of literature. This may have resulted in the omission of important findings, impacting the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the results. Lastly, the literature retrieval was limited to English publications, omitting research in other languages and possibly overlooking relevant studies from non-English-speaking countries.

Considering the limitations of this research, future studies should employ diversified bibliometric methods and expand the literature search to include multiple databases, languages, and document types, thereby enhancing the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the evidence. At the same time, the potential impact of data sources and retrieval strategies on the conclusions should be critically evaluated to enhance the effectiveness and generalisability of the research, thereby providing more robust evidence to inform teaching practices and educational policies in the flipped classroom.

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#### **Authors' contributions**

Author 1: Conceptualisation, research design, methodology development, data extraction, formal analysis, interpretation of results, visualisation, writing – original draft preparation, and manuscript coordination.

Author 2: Project administration, supervision, final manuscript validation, and overall approval of the submitted version.

Author 3: Methodology refinement, bibliometric data cleaning, validation of analysis procedures, visualisation support, and writing – review and editing.

Author 4: Software handling, data analysis support, generation of bibliometric maps, and interpretation of network structures.

Author 5: Critical review of methodology and findings, academic guidance, and manuscript review.

Author 6: Final Review

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

#### Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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