

# Empowering Iranian English as a foreign language learners in a flipped classroom: A contribution of fanfiction to improving writing fluency in English

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**ABSTRACT:** Fanfiction-based flipped instruction has emerged as a technology-enhanced, learner-centered approach in formal second language writing pedagogy. This study examined the effect of integrating fanfiction writing into a flipped classroom on the English writing fluency of Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Fifty-one female high school students aged 17–19 were randomly assigned to two groups: one received flipped instruction with fanfiction tasks, and the other received flipped instruction without fanfiction. Over twelve 90-minute sessions, both groups accessed instructional videos on paragraph writing and summarizing via the Iranian Student Education Network, followed by in-class writing activities based on the short story *The Happy Prince* (Wilde, 2010). While both groups completed chapter-by-chapter assignments, the fanfiction group reimagined and creatively extended the story, whereas the non-fanfiction group produced conventional summaries. Writing fluency was assessed through word count, T-units, and clause production using a mixed between-within subjects ANOVA. Student perceptions of the flipped model were gathered through a Likert-scale questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with the fanfiction group for qualitative insights. Results revealed significantly greater gains in writing fluency for the fanfiction group, alongside positive attitudes toward the flipped approach, with students reporting increased engagement and confidence in writing. These findings indicate that fanfiction-based flipped instruction can bridge informal and formal writing practices, sustain learner motivation, and promote fluency through creative engagement. The study offers practical implications for EFL educators seeking to integrate technology-mediated instruction with narrative tasks and highlights avenues for future research in innovative, student-centered writing pedagogies.

**Keywords:** English as a Foreign Language Learners; Fanfiction; Flipped Classroom; Technology-Enhanced Language Learning; Writing Fluency

**Empoderamiento de estudiantes iraníes de inglés como lengua extranjera en un aula invertida: la contribución del fanfiction a la mejora de la fluidez en la escritura en inglés**

**RESUMEN:** La instrucción invertida basada en *fanfiction* ha surgido como un enfoque centrado en el estudiante y potenciado por la tecnología dentro de la pedagogía formal de la escritura en una segunda lengua. Este estudio examinó el efecto de integrar la escritura de *fanfiction* en un aula invertida sobre la fluidez en la escritura en inglés de estudiantes iraníes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). Cincuenta y una estudiantes de secundaria, de sexo femenino y con edades comprendidas entre 17 y 19 años, fueron asignadas aleatoriamente a dos grupos: uno recibió instrucción invertida con tareas de *fanfiction* y el otro recibió instrucción invertida sin *fanfiction*. Durante doce sesiones de 90 minutos, ambos grupos accedieron a videos instructivos sobre redacción de párrafos y elaboración de resúmenes a través de la Red de Educación Estudiantil Iraní, seguidos de actividades de escritura en clase basadas en el cuento *El príncipe feliz* (Wilde, 2010). Mientras que ambos grupos completaron tareas capítulo por capítulo, el grupo de *fanfiction* reinterpretó y amplió creativamente la historia, mientras que el grupo sin *fanfiction* elaboró resúmenes convencionales. La fluidez en la escritura se evaluó mediante el recuento de palabras, las T-unidades y la producción de cláusulas, utilizando un ANOVA mixto entre y dentro de los sujetos. Las percepciones estudiantiles sobre el modelo invertido se recopiló mediante un cuestionario con escala Likert, y se realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas al grupo de *fanfiction* para obtener información cualitativa. Los resultados revelaron mejoras significativamente mayores en la fluidez en la escritura para el grupo de *fanfiction*, junto con actitudes positivas hacia el enfoque invertido, con estudiantes que reportaron un mayor compromiso y confianza en la escritura. Estos hallazgos indican que la instrucción invertida basada en *fanfiction* puede tender puentes entre las prácticas de escritura informales y formales, mantener la motivación del alumnado y promover la fluidez a través del compromiso creativo. El estudio ofrece implicaciones prácticas para docentes de EFL interesados en integrar la instrucción mediada por tecnología con tareas narrativas y señala posibles vías de investigación futura en pedagogías innovadoras centradas en el estudiante.

**Palabras clave:** Estudiantes de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera; *Fanfiction*; Aula Invertida; Aprendizaje de Lenguas Asistido por Tecnología; Fluidez en la Escritura

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing integration of digital communication and content development in education has significantly influenced literacy practices, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning (Dehghani & Mashhadi, 2024; Derakhshan & Ghiasvand, 2024; Mashhadi et al., 2025; Traxler et al., 2023). Given the role of English as the dominant medium of international communication, educators are continually exploring innovative methodologies to improve learners' language proficiency (Mashhadi et al., 2023). The rise of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has provided new opportunities for both collaborative and independent learning, enabling educators to transcend traditional classroom boundaries (Chuang et al., 2018; Esather & Amam, 2024; Fitria, 2023; Hayati et al., 2013). This digital expansion laid the groundwork for a broader transition to technology-mediated education, a process that was dramatically accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The global shift to emergency remote teaching not only underscored the importance of ICT integration but also necessitated adaptive, student-centered pedagogical approaches capable of sustaining learning in both online and blended environments (Derakhshan, 2021; Mashhadi et al., 2022; Monjezi et al., 2021).

Traditional EFL classrooms, often characterized by teacher-centered instruction and passive learning, limit students' engagement and hinder the development of essential language skills (Gan, 2021; McCarthy & Anderson, 2000; Sun, 2021; Wang, 2024). Writing, in particular, remains a challenging skill for many EFL learners, as conventional approaches

focus primarily on grammatical accuracy rather than fluency and creativity (Poorsoti & Davatgari Asl, 2016). Recognizing these limitations, educators have explored flipped learning as a promising alternative to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes (Han, 2024; Hung, 2017a; Su Ping et al., 2020; Teng, 2017; Wu et al., 2019; Zou & Xie, 2019). In a flipped classroom, students interact with instructional materials such as instructional videos, readings, and exercises outside of class, enabling in-class time to be devoted to active learning, collaboration, and problem-solving (Adnan, 2017; Chen Hsieh et al., 2017; Karabulut-Ilgu et al., 2018; Wang & Qi, 2018). This approach fosters learner autonomy, critical thinking, and deeper engagement with the target language (Faulkner & Green, 2015; Li & Li, 2022; Liu, 2020; Mok, 2014).

One underexplored but potentially powerful tool in flipped EFL writing instruction is fanfiction—an amateur form of creative writing based on pre-existing fictional works (Kim et al., 2024; Sauro, 2017). Fanfiction provides learners with an engaging and contextually meaningful platform to experiment with language, allowing them to develop fluency while making authentic connections with written discourse (Cornillie et al., 2021; Lammers & Marsh, 2018; Sauro & Sundmark, 2019). Despite its widespread popularity in online communities, fanfiction remains largely underutilized in formal language education, particularly in EFL writing instruction (Barcellos et al., 2020; De Los Reyes & Pit, 2023). By integrating fanfiction within a flipped learning framework, students may be encouraged to write more frequently, express ideas creatively, and engage in self-directed learning, thereby fostering improvements in writing fluency.

Given the limited research on the role of fanfiction in EFL writing instruction and the challenges Iranian learners face in achieving writing fluency (Saeedi & Farnia, 2017; Tav-anapour & Chalak, 2021), this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of incorporating fanfiction into flipped classrooms. Specifically, it examines the impact of this instructional model on Iranian high school EFL learners' writing fluency and explores students' perceptions of flipped instruction and fanfiction as pedagogical interventions. This study contributes to the growing body of research on flipped learning and technology-enhanced language instruction by exploring an innovative approach to EFL writing development. While flipped classrooms have been widely examined in general language learning contexts, their application to EFL writing—particularly through the use of fanfiction—remains largely unexamined (Fisher et al., 2024; Hung, 2017b; Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021; Putri et al., 2024; Wang & Qi, 2018; Wu et al., 2019; Zou & Zhang, 2021). By addressing this gap, the present study aims to provide both empirical evidence and pedagogical insights for language educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers. The research also offers practical implications for integrating storytelling and creative writing activities into student-centered classrooms, with the goal of enhancing engagement, autonomy, and fluency.

To achieve these objectives, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Does fanfiction contribute to a significant improvement in Iranian high school EFL learners' writing fluency in a flipped classroom?
2. What are learners' perceptions regarding the impact of flipped instruction on their writing fluency?
3. How do participants in the flipped classroom with fanfiction perceive the role of fanfiction in enhancing their writing fluency?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Theoretical Underpinnings of the Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom is underpinned by learner-centered pedagogies that shift the focus from passive reception of information to active, socially mediated knowledge construction (Derakhshan et al., 2024; Hung, 2017a; Teo et al., 2022; Zou, 2020). Rooted in constructivist perspectives, this approach draws heavily on Piaget's (1968) emphasis on cognitive conflict as a driver of learning and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, particularly the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Piaget argued that peer interaction stimulates cognitive growth by exposing learners to diverse perspectives, while Vygotsky highlighted the role of more knowledgeable peers or adults in scaffolding learning experiences. In the flipped classroom, this scaffolding extends beyond the physical classroom through pre-class instructional materials, enabling students to engage with content at their own pace before applying it collaboratively during class time (Erbil, 2020). From a Vygotskian standpoint, the flipped approach optimizes ZPD by using class sessions for interactive, higher-order cognitive activities—such as problem-solving, peer feedback, and joint project work—where learners benefit from the expertise and support of others. The pre-class exposure to instructional videos and readings reduces cognitive load during class, allowing students to devote more mental resources to meaningful interaction and application of knowledge. Moreover, this approach fosters learner autonomy by encouraging responsibility for pre-class preparation while simultaneously promoting social learning through structured in-class collaboration.

Cooperative learning theory further informs flipped instruction. Grounded in social interdependence theory (Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 2009), cooperative learning emphasizes positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive face-to-face interaction, interpersonal skills, and group processing. These principles align closely with the flipped approach, which creates space for small-group tasks, peer-assisted problem-solving, and co-construction of knowledge (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Flynn, 2015). In EFL contexts, such collaboration facilitates language practice in authentic communicative settings, enhancing both linguistic competence and confidence. By merging constructivist and cooperative learning foundations, the flipped classroom transforms instructional time into an active learning environment where students not only consolidate pre-learned material but also engage in socially mediated knowledge building. This combination is particularly relevant for EFL writing instruction, where opportunities for meaningful, extended output are often limited in traditional classrooms. When paired with creative, student-driven activities such as fanfiction writing, the flipped classroom can offer a pedagogical framework that supports linguistic development, fosters learner agency, and integrates academic and personal literacies.

### 2.2. Flipped Instruction and EFL Writing Skill Development

An expanding body of research has explored the impact of flipped classroom instruction on EFL writing, consistently reporting improvements in grammar (Kanwal, 2024), content organization (Fathi et al., 2022; Martínez et al., 2024), higher-order thinking (Salem, 2018), and learner motivation (Nguyen et al., 2019; Shang, 2023). Learners across age groups and

proficiency levels show gains in writing outcomes, autonomy, and engagement (Kumaraysan & Sulaiman, 2023; Sabri et al., 2023). At the tertiary level, flipped instruction has been linked to improvements in grammatical accuracy, writing organization, argumentative writing, and learner motivation, especially when supported by collaborative activities and audiovisual materials (Kheryadi et al., 2024; Shooli et al., 2022). In secondary and pre-university contexts, flipped models have enhanced students' writing quality, preparation, and confidence across diverse settings, including Colombia, Malaysia, and the U.S. (Florence & Kolski, 2021; Kumaraysan & Sulaiman, 2023; Torres Velandia, 2017). Studies also emphasize the model's potential to foster higher-order thinking, functional writing, and peer support when integrated with cooperative learning or inquiry-based strategies (Huang et al., 2024; Pavanelli, 2018; Salem, 2018).

Technology integration plays a central role in the effectiveness of flipped instruction, with numerous studies highlighting its potential to improve writing performance, learner motivation, and classroom engagement. Across contexts such as Oman, Vietnam, Iran, and Thailand, flipped models supported by digital tools and structured pedagogical scaffolding have led to notable gains in academic writing, exam outcomes, and learner attitudes (Gasmi & Thomas, 2017; Ho et al., 2024; Kawinkoonlasate, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2019; Soltanpour & Valizadeh, 2018). AI-powered enhancements, particularly those involving tools like ChatGPT, have also demonstrated strong outcomes in fostering creativity, improving writing quality, and sustaining student engagement in EFL writing courses (Khuibut et al., 2024). Despite these successes, several studies underscore persistent challenges related to learner self-regulation, vocabulary acquisition, and cognitive engagement, which may limit the long-term effectiveness of flipped models without adequate instructional scaffolding (Gasmi & Thomas, 2017). Moreover, much of the existing research has centered on academic genres, leaving the creative and expressive potential of flipped instruction underexplored. One promising yet understudied direction involves the integration of fanfiction—a form of learner-driven storytelling that promotes narrative coherence, character development, and authentic voice. These elements align well with the participatory, student-centered ethos of flipped learning environments. Given its potential to enhance both motivation and language gains, future research should explore how fanfiction-based tasks might complement flipped instruction and expand the scope of EFL writing pedagogy

### **2.3. Fanfiction and EFL Writing Skill Development**

Empirical studies have shown that engaging in fanfiction writing can enhance core writing skills, particularly in narrative structure, creativity, and language use. Writing fanfiction helps students develop plot organization, character development, and literary techniques such as irony and foreshadowing (Stanko & Kolegaeva, 2024), while also supporting vocabulary growth, grammar accuracy, and revision strategies (Pudo, 2024). Fanfiction has been found to improve narrative writing performance in formal education settings. Students writing fanfiction showed significant gains in coherence, structure, and expression in their narrative texts (Hadi & Karyadi, 2023). In higher education, collaborative fanfiction writing has supported creative expression, vocabulary development, and literary analysis (Sauro & Sundmark, 2016), and has been linked to the development of academic identity and advanced literacy skills (Roozen, 2009).

The social and multimodal dimensions of fanfiction also contribute to writing development. Participation in online fan communities encourages authentic interaction, identity formation, and multimodal composition, especially for adolescent English language learners (Black, 2007; Korobkova & Black, 2014). Emotionally resonant narratives in fanfiction promote engagement and empathy, though they may require support to ensure academic vocabulary development (Haas & Tussey, 2023). Learners also report personal and linguistic growth through fanfiction. Writing in informal contexts fosters emotional expression and transformation (De Los Reyes & Pit, 2023) and contributes to fluency and confidence in English, particularly for future teachers (Hernández-López & Urbar-Serrano, 2024). Quantitative findings further confirm self-reported gains in vocabulary, grammar, and fluency among fanfiction users (Surya & Aiswarya, 2021).

Despite these promising findings, several studies highlight important limitations and research gaps. Challenges related to learners' autonomy, lack of storytelling background, and the informal nature of fanfiction platforms may hinder its effectiveness without guided support (Cornillie et al., 2021). Additionally, the gap between fan-based literacies and formal academic writing remains a concern, as learners often compartmentalize these practices (Korobkova & Black, 2014). Moreover, the majority of existing studies have focused on either flipped instruction or fanfiction as separate instructional strategies, with limited research examining their combined impact on writing fluency. As such, further research is needed to explore how fanfiction can be effectively bridged with academic literacy goals, particularly through teacher mediation and curriculum integration. This study thus seeks to investigate how the integration of fanfiction within a flipped classroom framework can enhance engagement and writing performance among Iranian high school EFL learners. By addressing this research gap, the study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on innovative language learning strategies and provide practical implications for EFL educators seeking to incorporate fanfiction and student-centered approaches into writing instruction.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to examine the efficacy of fanfiction writing in improving the writing fluency of Iranian high school EFL learners within a flipped classroom framework. The study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to ensure a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The instructional intervention lasted for twelve ninety-minute in-class sessions, supplemented with pre-class activities as part of the flipped instruction. Participants were divided into two treatment groups: the flipped classroom with fanfiction and the flipped classroom without fanfiction. Each group received targeted instruction to assess the impact of the intervention on their English writing fluency.

#### **3.2. Participants**

The study was conducted in the context of an elite Iranian girls' high school located in Andimeshk, Khuzestan Province. The research sample consisted of fifty-one female Iranian

high school EFL learners aged 17 to 19, enrolled in a voluntary, non-compulsory writing module offered as an extracurricular activity. Participants were selected through convenience sampling based on accessibility and willingness to participate. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants and their legal guardians prior to data collection, ensuring adherence to ethical principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw without penalty. Language proficiency was determined using the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT), and only learners classified at the lower-intermediate (B1) level under the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) were included to maintain group homogeneity. This level of proficiency was selected to accommodate more high school students, since proficiency levels higher than B1 are hardly observed among Iranian high school learners of English. Random assignment to the ‘flipped classroom with fanfiction’ and ‘flipped classroom without fanfiction’ groups was carried out using the RAND function in Microsoft Excel, ensuring allocation concealment and minimizing selection bias.

### **3.3. Instruments and Materials**

#### *3.3.1. Language Proficiency Screening*

The OQPT was administered to establish a homogeneous sample and to ensure that participants possessed the requisite linguistic foundation for the intervention. The test comprised 60 multiple-choice items and provided a composite estimate of grammatical, lexical, and reading comprehension abilities. Only learners classified at the lower-intermediate band (B1, CEFR) were retained for the study to accommodate more high school learners and minimize proficiency-related variance across conditions.

#### *3.3.2. Pre-class Instructional Videos*

Pre-class exposure to core concepts was delivered through four instructional videos hosted on SHAD (the Iranian Student Education Network), which served as the centralized learning management hub for resource distribution and teacher–student communication. Two teacher-produced videos (approximately 12–33 minutes) covered paragraph organization, including topic sentences, supporting details, and concluding sentences, while two curated YouTube videos (approximately 6–13 minutes) introduced strategies for summarizing short stories and composing fanfiction. Students were instructed to view the assigned content before class so that face-to-face sessions could focus on application, guided practice, and feedback. The sequencing of videos paralleled the planned in-class tasks to facilitate a smooth transition from individual preparation to collaborative work.

#### *3.3.3. In-class Learning Materials*

Classroom activities were supported by worksheets sourced from Pinterest ([www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)) and related open educational repositories. The materials targeted sentence construction, paragraph sequencing, punctuation correction, and visual-prompted storytelling. These tasks were designed to consolidate the pre-class input and to scaffold movement from controlled practice to freer written production. Although they played an important role in reinforcing

skills, these materials were not themselves included in the calculation of writing fluency outcomes and functioned instead as structured practice leading to the assessed tasks.

#### 3.3.4. *Core Reading Text and Task Design*

All participants engaged with Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince* (2010 edition), selected for its accessible prose and narrative coherence for EFL learners. To ensure parallel workload while isolating the creative-writing variable, the non-fanfiction group produced chapter-by-chapter summaries that preserved the original storyline, whereas the fanfiction group reimaged and extended the narrative by adding plot developments, character perspectives, or alternative endings (Jamison, 2013). Both groups worked to comparable timelines so that differences in output could be attributed to task type rather than time on task.

#### 3.3.5. *Writing Fluency Measures*

Writing fluency was operationalized through three established indices: total word count, T-units, and clauses (Knoch et al., 2015; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). T-units were defined as an independent clause together with any subordinate clause(s) attached to it, and clauses were counted as any finite or non-finite predication. These measures were applied consistently across all collected scripts to capture productivity and syntactic elaboration. Tasks were administered under consistent classroom conditions and prompts were aligned across groups to support valid comparisons. Two trained raters with experience in EFL writing assessment independently coded all scripts for word counts, T-units, and clauses following a shared coding manual developed for the study. Raters completed calibration on a subset of papers prior to full scoring and discussed borderline cases to standardize segmentation decisions. Inter-rater reliability, estimated via intra-class correlation coefficients, exceeded 0.90 for all three indices, indicating excellent agreement. Any residual discrepancies were resolved through adjudication, and final scores represented the mean of the two raters' judgments.

#### 3.3.6. *Flipped Learning Perception Questionnaire*

Participants' attitudes toward flipped learning were measured using the *Perception of Flipped Learning Experience* questionnaire (Chen Hsieh et al., 2017). The instrument comprised 14 five-point Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) designed to capture multiple dimensions of learners' perceptions. These included their preference for flipped classrooms over traditional instruction, enjoyment, motivation, engagement, perceived effectiveness, perceived learning outcomes, effort, and overall satisfaction. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize responses, providing a nuanced understanding of how students evaluated the flipped instructional model.

#### 3.3.7. *Semi-Structured Interviews*

To gain deeper insight into the perceived role of fanfiction in developing writing fluency, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants from the flipped classroom with fanfiction group. Interviews were held in Persian to facilitate richer expression and

included three guiding questions: (1) How do you feel about incorporating fanfiction into your English writing classes? (2) What aspects of fanfiction writing did you find most beneficial? (3) Were there any challenges or drawbacks to writing fanfiction? Responses were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and subjected to thematic analysis to identify salient patterns and perceptions.

### 3.4. Procedure

#### 3.4.1. *Flipped Classroom Without Fanfiction*

In the flipped classroom without fanfiction, participants engaged with a range of instructional materials, including both teacher-made and pre-existing videos, via SHAD (an online learning platform). These instructional videos focused on writing paragraphs and summarizing stories. The key instructional content included guidance on paragraph structure, emphasizing the role of topic sentences, supporting sentences, and concluding sentences. Participants were required to watch these videos prior to class, enabling them to learn at their own pace (Chuang et al., 2018). As the videos were accessible at any time, participants had the opportunity to review the content multiple times.

In addition to video lessons, participants were provided with worksheets to reinforce the concepts covered. These worksheets included tasks such as writing a topic sentence followed by supporting sentences and a conclusion, correcting punctuation errors in paragraphs, sequencing jumbled story paragraphs, and writing a story based on a provided image. These exercises were designed to reinforce the instructional content and ensure participants had watched the videos, but they were not used for formal assessment of writing performance.

Upon completing the video lessons and worksheets, both groups were given the short story *The Happy Prince* to read at home. In class, participants were tasked with writing chapter-by-chapter summary reports of the story. In the flipped classroom without fanfiction, participants were asked to write summaries of each chapter, adhering to the original plot. These reports were later analyzed to assess participants' writing fluency in terms of word count, T-units, and clauses.

At the conclusion of the treatment, participants completed the '*Perception of Flipped Learning Experience*' questionnaire (Chen Hsieh et al., 2017), which evaluated their overall satisfaction with the flipped instruction through 14 items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

#### 3.4.2. *Flipped Classroom with Fanfiction*

The flipped classroom with fanfiction followed a similar structure to the previous group, with the addition of fanfiction-based activities. After watching the instructional videos and completing the worksheets on paragraph writing and summarizing, participants in this group were introduced to fanfiction through two instructional videos that taught them how to creatively engage with existing stories. Participants were encouraged to analyze, reinterpret, and reshape the narrative and characters of *The Happy Prince* through fanfiction, either by continuing the story, altering the plot, or creating new perspectives on the characters. These fanfiction pieces were kept for comparative analysis of writing fluency through word

count, T-units, and clauses across both groups. At the end of the treatment, the *'Perception of Flipped Learning Experience'* questionnaire was administered to gather feedback on the flipped classroom format. Additionally, semi-structured interviews in Persian were conducted to gain deeper insights into participants' perceptions of how fanfiction contributed to their writing fluency.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

A mixed-methods approach was adopted to provide a nuanced understanding of the effects of flipped learning with fanfiction on Iranian EFL learners' writing fluency. Quantitative analyses were conducted in SPSS, with a mixed between-within subjects ANOVA used to examine differences in word count, T-units, and clauses across time and groups. When necessary, non-parametric tests, such as the Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon Signed Rank tests, were used to ensure the robustness of the results. Normality checks were performed using Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests to validate the assumptions of the parametric tests. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were also calculated for each item of the flipped learning perception questionnaire to summarize learners' evaluations of the instructional model.

Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. Coding was first conducted manually and then verified with NVivo to ensure accuracy. This process identified recurring patterns in learners' perceptions of fanfiction, including its perceived benefits, challenges, and influence on motivation and engagement. To enhance the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, the study adhered to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) evaluative criteria. Credibility was supported through member checking, whereby a synthesized summary of identified themes was shared with participants for validation. Confirmability was strengthened by maintaining an audit trail documenting coding decisions, analytic memos, and theme development. Dependability was established through peer debriefing with a second researcher experienced in EFL writing pedagogy, ensuring interpretative rigor. Transferability was, in turn, facilitated through a thick description of the research context, participant characteristics, and instructional procedures, allowing readers to assess the relevance of the findings to other educational contexts.

## 4. RESULTS

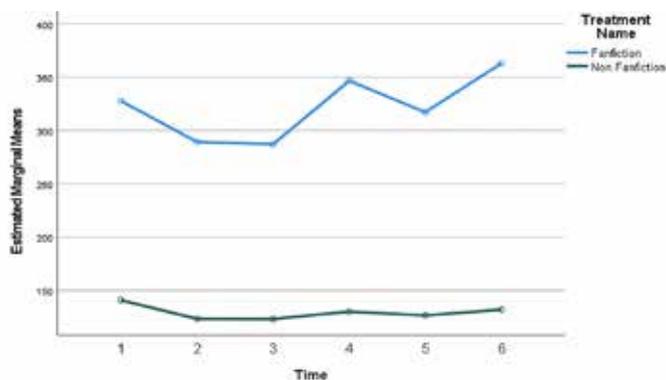
### 4.1. The Effect of Fanfiction on Writing Fluency

The first research question aimed to determine the impact of fanfiction in a flipped classroom on Iranian EFL learners' writing fluency. Writing fluency was measured using word count, T-units, and clauses over six writing sessions. The descriptive statistics (Table 1) reveal that the fanfiction group consistently outperformed the non-fanfiction group across all writing sessions. The mean word count, T-units, and clauses increased progressively for the fanfiction group, while the non-fanfiction group showed little variation across sessions. These trends suggest that the fanfiction-based flipped classroom model contributed to enhanced writing fluency.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics for Writing Fluency Measures

WRITING SESSION	GROUP	WORD COUNT (M ± SD)	T-UNITS (M ± SD)	CLAUSES (M ± SD)
1	Fanfiction	327.6 ± 182.7	30.2 ± 18.7	35.4 ± 20.6
	Non-Fanfiction	140.9 ± 65.8	13.5 ± 7.6	15.8 ± 8.0
2	Fanfiction	289.2 ± 136.5	29.5 ± 15.0	34.3 ± 16.7
	Non-Fanfiction	123.3 ± 60.5	10.8 ± 6.1	12.9 ± 6.6
3	Fanfiction	287.0 ± 143.1	27.6 ± 17.1	33.2 ± 19.4
	Non-Fanfiction	123.2 ± 64.2	10.4 ± 5.7	12.2 ± 7.5
4	Fanfiction	346.6 ± 180.4	34.5 ± 19.1	40.3 ± 22.0
	Non-Fanfiction	130.1 ± 71.5	10.8 ± 7.4	12.9 ± 8.4
5	Fanfiction	317.0 ± 142.6	31.5 ± 14.4	35.7 ± 16.3
	Non-Fanfiction	126.5 ± 59.9	10.2 ± 5.2	11.8 ± 6.3
6	Fanfiction	362.9 ± 203.2	37.8 ± 23.8	44.1 ± 26.9
	Non-Fanfiction	131.9 ± 62.0	11.1 ± 5.6	12.7 ± 6.4

Figure 1 further illustrates the upward trajectory of writing fluency measures for the fanfiction group, while the non-fanfiction group remains relatively stable throughout the study.

**Figure 1.** Visual representation of students' performance throughout the study

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test confirmed that the data were normally distributed ( $p > .05$  for all word count measures). Additionally, independence of observations was ensured as the two groups were distinct. Mauchly's test of sphericity was violated ( $p < .000$ ); however, as multivariate statistics were used, this violation did not affect the analysis. The homogeneity of variance assumption was also satisfied (Box's  $M = .072$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

A mixed between-within subjects ANOVA revealed a statistically significant main effect for time (Wilks' Lambda = .773,  $F(5,44) = 2.584$ ,  $p = .039$ ,  $\eta^2 = .227$ ), indicating that writing fluency improved over time. However, the interaction effect for time and treatment was not significant ( $p = .133$ ), confirming that both groups followed independent developmental trajectories.

A between-group comparison confirmed that the fanfiction group significantly outperformed the non-fanfiction group across all six writing sessions (Table 2). The large effect sizes ( $\eta^2 > .4$ ) underscore the strong impact of the fanfiction-based intervention.

**Table 2.** *Between-Group Comparisons for Writing Fluency Measures*

MEASURE	F	p	PARTIAL ETA SQUARED ( $\eta^2$ )
Word Count	37.21	<.001	.437
T-Units	32.84	<.001	.419
Clauses	30.76	<.001	.403

Additionally, Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted for non-parametric validation (Table 3), confirming that fanfiction participants significantly outperformed non-fanfiction participants across all sessions ( $p < .001$ ).

**Table 3.** *Mann-Whitney U Test for Between-Group Differences*

MEASURE	WRITING SESSION 1	WRITING SESSION 2	WRITING SESSION 3	WRITING SESSION 4	WRITING SESSION 5	WRITING SESSION 6
T-Units	U = 120.5	U = 51.5	U = 72.5	U = 54.0	U = 33.0	U = 49.0
	Z = -3.73	Z = -5.07	Z = -4.67	Z = -5.02	Z = -5.43	Z = -5.12
	p < .001					
Clauses	U = 100.5	U = 49.5	U = 69.5	U = 49.5	U = 31.5	U = 37.5
	Z = -4.12	Z = -5.11	Z = -4.72	Z = -5.11	Z = -5.46	Z = -5.34
	p < .001					

To examine within-group fluency development, Wilcoxon Signed Rank tests were conducted (Table 4). The fanfiction group exhibited statistically significant improvements in T-units ( $p = .014$ ) and clauses ( $p = .012$ ) from Session 1 to Session 6. Conversely, the non-fanfiction group did not show significant progress ( $p = .178$  for T-units,  $p = .089$  for clauses).

**Table 4.** *Within-Group Comparisons from Session 1 to Session 6*

GROUP	MEASURE	Z	p
Fanfiction	T-Units	-2.451	.014
	Clauses	-2.501	.012
Non-Fanfiction	T-Units	-1.347	.178
	Clauses	-1.703	.089

The findings indicate that fanfiction-based flipped instruction significantly enhances writing fluency over time. The fanfiction group consistently demonstrated higher word counts, T-units, and clause production than the non-fanfiction group, with large effect sizes confirming the robustness of these differences. While both groups followed a flipped classroom approach, the narrative-driven, interactive nature of fanfiction contributed to greater engagement and fluency gains in writing.

#### 4.2. Learners' Perceptions of the Flipped Instruction

To address the second research question, which explored Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of the flipped classroom model in enhancing writing fluency, a questionnaire was

administered at the conclusion of the study. The instrument demonstrated strong internal reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = .91), indicating consistency in responses.

The descriptive statistics for the questionnaire responses are summarized in Table 5. Across all 14 items, the mean values ranged between 3 and 5 on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). These results suggest that most participants perceived the flipped classroom positively in terms of its impact on writing fluency.

**Table 5.** *Descriptive Statistics of the Flipped Learning Experience Questionnaire*

ITEM No.	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM	FANFICTION (M ± SD)	NON-FANFICTION (M ± SD)
Item 1	A flipped classroom is a better way of learning.	4.24 ± 0.83	4.20 ± 0.64
Item 2	I enjoyed the flipped classroom teaching approach more.	4.48 ± 0.91	3.68 ± 0.90
Item 3	I think the flipped classroom is a more effective and efficient way to learn.	3.96 ± 0.98	4.04 ± 0.74
Item 4	I feel more motivated in a flipped classroom.	4.00 ± 0.96	4.08 ± 1.08
Item 5	I participated and engaged myself more in learning in the flipped classroom.	4.40 ± 0.65	4.24 ± 1.13
Item 6	I became a more active learner in the flipped classroom.	4.12 ± 0.93	3.96 ± 1.14
Item 7	I thought the time and effort I spent in the flipped classroom was worthwhile.	4.40 ± 0.87	4.16 ± 0.69
Item 8	I learned more and better in the flipped classroom.	3.92 ± 0.81	4.08 ± 0.91
Item 9	I prefer the flipped classroom to a lecture-based classroom.	4.08 ± 0.91	3.84 ± 1.18
Item 10	I think this model guided me toward a better understanding of the content.	3.80 ± 0.71	3.92 ± 0.81
Item 11	I experienced pleasure in the flipped classroom.	4.24 ± 0.72	3.84 ± 1.03
Item 12	I devoted myself more to the instructional/class activities in the flipped classroom.	4.40 ± 0.71	3.76 ± 1.05
Item 13	I spent more time and effort than usual on my flipped classroom learning activities.	3.92 ± 1.15	3.88 ± 1.33
Item 14	Generally, I am happy and satisfied with this flipped learning experience.	4.48 ± 0.96	4.08 ± 0.91

The results of the questionnaire indicate that students generally had a positive perception of the flipped classroom model, with the fanfiction group demonstrating slightly higher levels of engagement and satisfaction. In terms of enjoyment, students in the fanfiction group reported a greater appreciation for the flipped classroom approach compared to the non-fanfiction group. The mean score for enjoyment (Item 2) was notably higher among fanfiction learners, suggesting that integrating creative writing tasks into a flipped classroom may enhance student engagement and interest.

Motivation and participation also emerged as key factors influencing students' experiences in the flipped classroom. Both groups expressed a strong sense of motivation and engagement, with high mean scores reported for items related to participation and becoming more active learners (Item 4–Item 6). However, the fanfiction group showed slightly higher

levels of self-reported engagement, likely due to the interactive and imaginative nature of fanfiction writing, which encouraged greater student involvement. These findings suggest that creative elements in instructional design may contribute to increased participation and motivation in EFL writing tasks.

Perceived learning effectiveness was another important aspect examined in the questionnaire. While both groups agreed that the flipped classroom model improved their understanding of content (Item3, Item10), the non-fanfiction group reported a marginally higher mean score in this category. This could be attributed to the more structured nature of their writing tasks, which may have facilitated clearer learning objectives. However, the fanfiction group still recognized the educational value of flipped instruction, particularly in terms of fostering creativity and personal expression.

Overall, students in both groups were satisfied with their flipped learning experience, with the fanfiction group reporting the highest mean score for overall satisfaction (Item 14). This suggests that while both structured and creative approaches to flipped instruction can be effective, the incorporation of storytelling and imaginative writing may enhance students' enjoyment and engagement. These findings reinforce the potential of flipped classrooms as an effective pedagogical approach for improving writing fluency in EFL learners.

### **4.3. Learners' Perceptions of Fanfiction as a Writing Tool**

To investigate the third research question, which examined learners' attitudes toward fanfiction in improving writing fluency, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 participants from the fanfiction group. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Nvivo for thematic coding. The results revealed three dominant themes:

#### *4.3.1. Engagement and Creative Freedom*

A majority of students found fanfiction writing engaging and enjoyable, emphasizing the freedom to reimagine storylines and develop characters. Unlike conventional writing tasks, fanfiction allowed students to personalize narratives, fostering a deeper connection with the writing process:

*"The fact that we had the freedom to alter events and change the storyline was a major advantage." (Student 3)*

*"I enjoyed being able to shape the story as I wanted, which made writing less stressful and more fun." (Student 5)*

#### *4.3.2. Concerns About Time Commitment*

While students valued the engagement aspect of fanfiction writing, several participants raised concerns regarding the time required to complete writing tasks. Some suggested that fanfiction writing might be more effective as a take-home activity rather than an in-class exercise:

*"This method is effective, but it would be better if it were implemented as a homework assignment." (Student 1)*

*“Fanfiction writing was interesting, but I think shorter tasks would be better for in-class activities.”* (Student 2)

These concerns highlight a need for further refinements in the implementation of fanfiction writing tasks to balance engagement with workload feasibility.

#### 4.3.3. *Self-Expression and Language Development*

Students recognized fanfiction as a valuable tool for self-expression and language improvement. Many participants reported that crafting original narratives helped them develop a stronger grasp of vocabulary and grammatical structures:

*“Fanfiction writing helped me pay closer attention to grammar and vocabulary while writing creatively.”* (Student 2)

*“I found myself using more advanced sentence structures and new vocabulary because I wanted my story to sound better.”* (Student 6)

These findings reinforce the role of fanfiction as an effective medium for integrating linguistic creativity with structured writing practice.

The overall sentiment toward fanfiction was generally positive, with students appreciating the freedom it provided in narrative construction, vocabulary use, and self-expression. However, concerns regarding the time-consuming nature of the activity suggest that further modifications may be required for optimal classroom implementation.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study examined the effect of integrating fanfiction within a flipped classroom on Iranian EFL learners' writing fluency and perceptions. The findings demonstrated that learners in the fanfiction-based flipped condition achieved significantly greater gains in writing fluency than peers in a flipped condition without fanfiction, a notable result in a system where writing instruction remains largely grammar-dominant and product-oriented (Saeedi & Farnia, 2017; Tavanapour & Chalak, 2021). The pattern aligns with research linking fanfiction to increased creativity, narrative competence, and increased written output (Hadi & Karyadi, 2023; Stanko & Kolegaeva, 2024).

Multiple mechanisms likely converged. Writing within a known narrative world decreased idea-generation demands and facilitated risk-taking, which, in turn, lowered anxiety and enabled more fluent production—consistent with the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) and work documenting fanfiction's capacity to reduce emotional barriers to participation (De Los Reyes & Pit, 2023; Hernández-López & Urbar-Serrano, 2024). The license to manipulate plots and character arcs increased personal meaning and ownership, cohering with scholarship on autonomy and learner investment (Surya & Aiswarya, 2021). Familiarity with *The Happy Prince* supplied shared schemata and thematic scaffolds that kept attention on message development rather than on the costly search for content.

The flipped design appears to have amplified these motivational benefits by distributing cognitive load across pre-class and in-class phases. Pre-class materials front-loaded modeling

of target structures and strategies, allowing class time to be reserved for higher-yield drafting, revising, and reflection. Such sequencing resonates with evidence that flipped learning promotes autonomy and writing performance (Chuang et al., 2018; Kheryadi et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2019) and with findings that pre-task planning and extended writing time specifically support fluency (Shooli et al., 2022; Soltanpour & Valizadeh, 2018). From a sociocultural perspective, the in-class phase functioned as a scaffolded ZPD through dialogic support and mediated practice (Erbil, 2020; Vygotsky, 1978), while constructivist dynamics during peer interaction fostered the cognitive conflict that drives revision of language choices and narrative moves (Piaget, 1968).

Collaborative extension or alteration of storylines could also foster positive interdependence, peer scaffolding, and promotive interaction (Johnson et al., 2000, 2007), consistent with studies showing that cooperative structures in flipped classrooms bolster language output and engagement (Hung, 2017b; Wu et al., 2019). Furthermore, the inherently iterative and serialized nature of fanfiction writing may have promoted ‘distributed practice,’ where learners repeatedly return to their text over time, leading to gradual fluency gains through cumulative rehearsal. This cyclical engagement with text mirrors ‘task-repetition effects’ reported in L2 writing research, where revisiting and expanding prior drafts strengthens lexical retrieval and syntactic automatization (Zohrabi & Abasvand, 2014; Khezrlou, 2020).

Identity work mattered as well: dialogic exchanges around character voice and canon compliance echoed patterns in online fan communities where peer-supported learning and identity negotiation sustain participation and iterative improvement (Black, 2007; Korobkova & Black, 2014). This identity investment likely fueled persistence, even when tasks were demanding, because learners were writing not merely to complete an assignment, but to contribute to a personal, valued creative project.

Learner perceptions triangulate these mechanisms. Students reported high satisfaction with flipped learning and described fanfiction as engaging and enjoyable due to creative autonomy, personalization, and a sense of ownership—findings consistent with research on student-centered flipped models and positive learner attitudes (Chen Hsieh et al., 2017). Fanfiction was perceived as less ‘pressured’ than conventional academic genres, enabling sustained attention to meaning and ideas rather than local accuracy, echoing observations that digital and media-rich composing environments—especially online fanfiction communities and digital storytelling tasks—support extended production and meaning-focused composing (Sauro & Sundmark, 2019; Sauro, 2021). At the same time, participants noted the time-intensive nature of episodic storytelling, underscoring the need for explicit scaffolds—staged deadlines, model texts, checklists, and workload calibration—to preserve benefits without overextension (Cornillie et al., 2021; Gasmi & Thomas, 2017).

From a pedagogical standpoint, fanfiction tasks bridge informal and formal literacies by converting prior media exposure into structured, productive writing (Roozen, 2009). Their built-in choice and personalization align with differentiated and interest-driven pedagogy, offering a principled route to sustain motivation while meeting syllabus targets (Huang et al., 2024; Salem, 2018). Moreover, fan practices are inherently digital and multimodal—iterative drafting, collaborative editing, and occasional integration of visual or audio elements—aligning with calls for media-rich composition and digital storytelling in EFL writing (Haas & Tussey, 2023). In evolving classrooms, carefully framed use of AI-supported writing tools

(e.g., ChatGPT) can further support ideation and language polishing through fanfiction while keeping human narrative design central and transparent (Khuibut et al., 2024).

Importantly, the outcomes of this study also resonate with the metacognitive dimension of writing development (Teng & Huang, 2023; Teng, 2021). Learners in the fanfiction group could engage in conscious planning by outlining plot trajectories and character arcs before drafting, which reduced cognitive strain and freed attentional resources for linguistic elaboration. They could monitor their progress by checking narrative coherence and language use against both the original source text and their creative objectives, ensuring that form supported meaning. They could evaluate their work by reflecting on whether revisions improved clarity, emotional impact, and stylistic quality, thus cultivating self-regulated learning habits. They could also manage resources strategically by integrating vocabulary and grammatical structures from pre-class materials into their creative writing, thereby reinforcing target forms in an authentic context. Such behaviors, grounded in metacognitive theory (Flavell, 1979), have been linked to sustained fluency development because they enable learners to consciously control and refine their writing process rather than relying solely on reactive editing.

Overall, converging quantitative and qualitative evidence indicates that a fanfiction-based flipped approach proved to be not only effective in enhancing writing fluency but also highly engaging from the learners' perspective. The approach works by lowering affective barriers, leveraging shared narrative schemata, distributing instruction to optimize cognitive resources, and harnessing cooperative, identity-relevant peer interaction. In addition, the sustained and personally meaningful engagement fostered by this model suggests that learners are more likely to internalize productive writing habits, and maintain a positive orientation toward English writing beyond the classroom. By uniting creativity with structured pedagogical scaffolds, the approach demonstrates how informal literacies can be systematically mobilized to meet formal curriculum goals without sacrificing learner autonomy or motivation. This positions the fanfiction-based flipped classroom as a viable model for promoting long-term writing development, especially in contexts where conventional approaches have failed to produce confident, fluent writers. More broadly, the approach provides an evidence-based pathway for moving beyond grammar-centric, product-oriented instruction toward participatory, interest-driven, and process-oriented writing pedagogy that connects learners' informal literacies with formal assessment goals.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study provided empirical support for the effectiveness of fanfiction-based instruction in a flipped classroom setting to enhance EFL learners' writing fluency and perceptions. The integration of creative, personally meaningful writing tasks within a flexible, student-centered learning environment led to significant improvements in learners' written output and fluency. Students perceived both the flipped classroom and fanfiction writing positively, citing enhanced engagement, autonomy, and confidence as key benefits. Fanfiction offered a meaningful way to bridge informal literacy practices with formal academic writing by drawing on students' prior exposure to English-language media and allowing them to transform passive input into active language production. Its narrative and emotionally resonant nature fostered learner investment, reduced anxiety, and promoted sustained writing engagement. When implemented

within a flipped classroom, it shifted the focus from rigid, form-based writing to a more dynamic and learner-driven process that supported both fluency and communicative competence.

The results carry several implications for EFL instruction. Fanfiction and similar creative tasks can be systematically embedded into writing curricula to complement accuracy-focused instruction, particularly in contexts where opportunities for authentic, sustained writing are limited. Similarly, the integration of explicit metacognitive strategy training into this model could potentially magnify gains, as learners would be better equipped to plan, monitor, and evaluate their writing autonomously. Moreover, the flipped classroom's emphasis on pre-class preparation and in-class application can be adapted for various proficiency levels and task types, making it a versatile tool for differentiated instruction. Additionally, fanfiction-based flipped designs could be extended to support integrated skills instruction, with oral retelling, dramatic performance, or multimedia production complementing written output. This could create a multimodal literacy environment, reinforcing vocabulary acquisition, discourse competence, and critical thinking alongside fluency.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The use of convenience sampling and an all-female participant group limits the generalizability of findings, and the relatively short intervention period may not capture the long-term effects of fanfiction-based instruction. Future studies should explore the longitudinal effects of fanfiction-based instruction to assess sustained gains in fluency and examine additional aspects of writing development such as accuracy, coherence, and lexical diversity. Expanding research to include different learner populations, age groups, and cultural contexts can provide broader insight into the adaptability of this approach. Additionally, classroom-based action research could help identify best practices for supporting both teachers and learners in implementing fanfiction effectively within existing curricula.

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