Innovations in Pedagogy and Technology
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Flipping the Flipped Classroom—Student Preferences and Pedagogical Practice Towards Recuperating the Lecture-Based University Teaching Methodology

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ABSTRACT

Under the pedagogical conditions of the 'flipped classroom,' personal mastery of the content material presented in a course is nearly irrelevant. Often, the 'flipped classroom' in its absolute form does not require any instructor to be expert in their subject area, but rather only in pedagogy. While the introduction of the flipped classroom model was valuable and useful, perhaps it was not as revolutionary as it was touted to be. Its almost uncritical embrace as an avant-garde methodology that ostensibly answered much empirical pedagogical research, and that promised to change the landscape of student participation and knowledge retention, was only matched by its frequent impracticability and concomitant quiet (if not shame-filled) dismissal/rejection by instructors in actual practice. The purpose of the present contribution is to survey relevant literature on integrated pedagogical practices in an effort to recover the still-valuable lecture model from its philosophical banishment by offering practice-based strategies based on student preferences across three sample higher education modules and on the insights of practice-researchers nominated by students for their efficacy. The practicality of the contribution lies with its potential usefulness to instructors who are facing real contextual barriers to flipped classroom implementation and who otherwise remain skilled lecturers.

Keywords: Lecture-Based Teaching; Flipped Classroom; Teaching Cycle; Activity Integration; Pedagogy Strategies; Higher Education

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ARTICLE INFO
Received: 30 May 2026 | Revised: 22 August 2026 | Accepted: 27 August 2026 | Published Online: 8 September 2026
DOI: https://doi.org/10.63385/ipt.v2i4.100684

CITATION
Christopher, D., 2026. Flipping the Flipped Classroom—Student Preferences and Pedagogical Practice Towards Recuperating the Lecture-Based University Teaching Methodology. Innovations in Pedagogy and Technology. 2(4): 22–36. DOI: https://doi.org/10.63385/ipt.v2i4.100684

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1. Introduction

Gilis et al.[1] explain that a 'student-centred' pedagogical approach is often defined in contradistinction to 'a teacher-centred orientation' which 'focuses on the transmission of defined bodies of content and knowledge' (p. 532). While the former is good practice, the latter is necessary foundational material in which to implement that practice. However, under the pedagogical conditions of the 'flipped classroom,' personal mastery of the content material presented in a course is nearly irrelevant. Often, the 'flipped classroom' in its absolute form does not require a *lecturer* to be expert in their subject area, but rather only in pedagogy. On some fundamental level, the flipped classroom is, in fact, contradictory to the practice of the *lecturer*'s research-based teaching. The flipped classroom's almost uncritical embrace as an avant-garde methodology that ostensibly answered much empirical pedagogical research, and that promised to change the landscape of student participation and knowledge retention, was only matched by its frequent impracticability and concomitant quiet (if not shame-filled) dismissal/rejection by many instructors in actual practice. Indeed, what almost all of the quantitative analytical 'findings' ignore is the very liquid definition of 'flipped' classrooms. Barbara Zamorski[2] suggests two ways students learn about research: being an audience or 'recipient of research' (p. 417) and being actively involved as student researchers. The word 'and' is important here, pointing out that both are significant and necessary components of the learning process. As celebrated pedagogical master Richard P. Feynman is famously quoted as saying, 'knowledge isn't free; you have to pay attention.' The purpose of this scoping review is to survey and critique significant scholarship concerned with the flipped classroom in an effort to recuperate the art of the good lecture against a wave of flipped classroom and integrated technology hybrid learning pedagogical philosophies and to provide a sample survey of student preferences towards strategies to do so. This study is intended to offer real strategies that can be implemented in practice based on the preferences foregrounded by actual students who are aware of the constraints and limitations of the educational resources and environments in which they are learning.

In order to facilitate this survey, a definition of the "flipped classroom" is necessary. Most scholarship reclines on its simplest understanding as the displacement of traditional 'homework' into the classroom setting while traditionally foundational information reception is conducted as pre-homework[3, 4]. More specifically, Nomasomi Hilda Matiso[5] states that 'A flipped classroom is a mixed learning approach, where students access knowledge outside of the classroom using asynchronous resources (videos and articles from modules, other electronic data sources, photographs, and presentations) ... before going to class, and participate in differentiated instruction where they 'complete learning exercises during class, with the instructor acting as coach, mentor, or guide' (Kay et al., 2019).' Rahmani and Zitouni[6] add the helpful concept of 'blended learning' which they define as 'an educational methodology that combines and connects face-to-face teaching with distance learning. ... In other words, learners are invited to read and prepare the theoretical part of courses and prepare any possible questions or inquiries to be discussed once in class. Besides, teachers schedule supporting activities to reinforce learners' understanding of the courses' (p. 453). On the surface, it would seem intuitive that this methodology is fundamentally superior towards teaching in the new millennium but it is this very assumption that often goes unacknowledged in quantitative research about the positive impacts of the flipped classroom.

For example, Matiso[5] reports that '[f]lipped classrooms have the power to *replace* the lecture-method, which marginalises the learners and renders them passive, making them empty vessels that await to be filled by the teacher' (p. 243). Matiso[5] goes on to argue that '[s]tudents can spend more of their classroom time engaged in active learning activities *rather than listening to lectures that provide direct instruction* by implementing the flipped learning paradigm. It has been demonstrated that the increased student involvement brought about by these active learning activities increases student success (Swemsen, 2022)' (p. 236). In fact, however, it has not been demonstrated so much as quantified, and this by very specifically chosen metrics of 'success' that do not necessarily align with student needs. Consider the following explanation for the data sampling in 'Adaptive learning: Helpful to the flipped classroom in the online environment of COVID?' by Clark et al.[7].

> The adjustment and statistical comparison of the two cohorts were made via the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) procedure in SPSS, a parametric test that used pre-requisite GPA as

> a covariate to account for historical academic performance. As some of the demographic segments had smaller sample sizes, *p*-values from the parametric ANCOVA procedure were corroborated by p-values from the analogous non-parametric procedure known as Quade's test, which uses ranked data and was run using SPSS. Conversely, to assess practical significance, Cohen's d effect sizes were calculated. The flipped classroom without adaptive learning (i.e., fall 2020) was considered the reference category in calculating the effect size. A confidence interval for each d was also determined ... As seven dependent variables (i.e., dimensions) were tested, each of the seven univariate p-values was adjusted using the Bonferroni correction. Specifically, each univariate p-value was multiplied by seven, and this adjusted p-value was compared to $\alpha = 0.05$ to determine statistical significance. Practical significance was assessed using Cohen's d effect size.... (p. 521–522).

It is hard to imagine anything more arcane to anyone but the most avid statisticians and further from the subjective experience of pedagogy in any discipline.

More importantly, the question needs to be asked regarding whether or not students genuinely prefer this educational format and if it actually suits their needs and expectations (Cf. Gannon[8]; Wong et al.[3], p. 941). The flipped classroom model specifically and systemically diminishes the importance of the lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy in which knowledge acquisition is relegated to a background activity for which only flipped learning is necessary. At the recent 'Understanding the Transition to HE in CSSAH' symposium (17 July 2025) at the University of Leicester, A-Levels educators from various schools gave voice to some important revelations. Especially in Media Studies, Film Studies, and English, these secondary educators reported students are somewhat overwhelmed by the expectation to apply new concepts to which they are introduced in the first year of university, a presupposition that is certainly supported by university student feedback. In their discussion it was clear that students in first-level university studies often wish to passively receive information from a field expert embodied in the university instructor hired for that reason. With reference to the ways that students now interact using digital affordances while listening to a lecture, Helmut Fritsch[9], director of the Center for Research in Distance Education at Fern Universitaet (Germany) describes such students as 'witness learning,' and they are anything but passive (pp. 359–360). M. Beaudoin[10] summarizes their behaviour thusly: 'students who are not actively participating via written contributions at a particular point, but who nevertheless are still engaged in the process as observers (witnesses) of the written exchanges taking place online' (p. 148). Similarly, taking notes while listening remains a useful way to focus attention while actively parsing relevant information out of a lecture. It requires significant active intellectual effort. Some lecture presentations can be boring, but just as often these are necessary and useful. In these cases, educational necessity is the operative motivator, and lectures are as useful in presenting new material as are assigned readings to be discussed in so-called flipped classes.

Moreover, not all disciplines universally lend themselves to the flipped model in the same way. As Wong et al.[3] generally concede, for example, their 'findings are limited to [their] university and may not be generalizable to other institutions or educational settings' (p. 942). Clark et al.[7] offer a telling infographic on teaching writing skills (**Figure 1**). It is not clear how the first model of this process writing is significantly different than the second. How can a flipped pre-knowledge-acquisition model work for cultural studies any differently than it has in the past? Students are already expected to read in advance of a lecture, and frequently they do not (as Clark et al. observe). This calls for new pedagogical models for motivating and interesting students to invest in the labour, not soundbites renaming the process. Or for a math module: the textbook will usually offer an explanation of how to do the solving process before exercises are assigned to practice. In this case, it has been *qualitatively* measured that having a person demonstrate and lecture on the methodology is more effective than having students simply pre-read this material from a textbook. And what is the classroom then? Is it merely dedicated time to doing the 'homework' practice? Attendance would plummet. In lieu of attendance, '[o]nline learning creates a high transactional distance between instructor and students that requires high learner autonomy (Moore, 1993). Increasing instructor-student and student-student dia-

logue helps reduce the transactional distance and autonomy requirement (Moore & Kearsley, 1996)'[4] (p. 13). Remembering that many students have actively chosen a university degree based on the expectation of lecture presentations as the standard modality of knowledge acquisition, and taking a cue from the performative elements of genre cinema, it is noteworthy that 'the disruption of spectatorial expectation is an often-overlooked method of distantiation'[11] (p. 174). Summarily, as Gonçalves et al.[12] report, 'while showcasing promising strides in learning outcomes and student engagement, [flipped classroom strategies] don't eliminate the irreplaceable essence of face-to-face instruction' (p. 18).

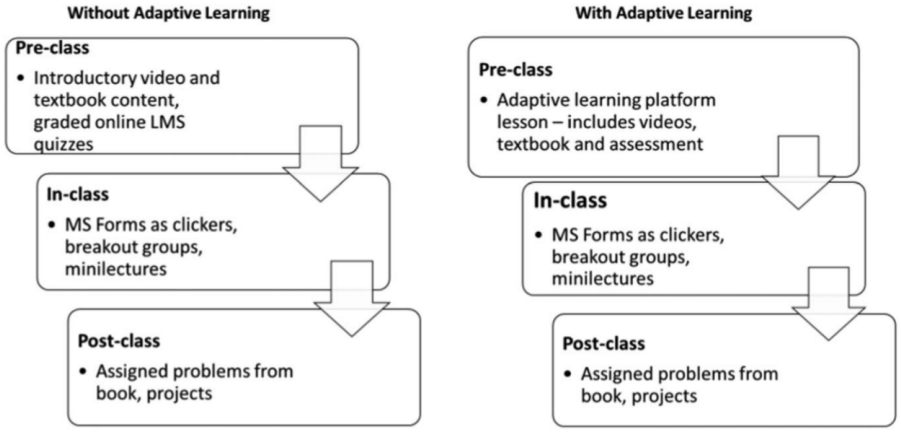


Figure 1. Infographic from Clark et al. (2022), p. 521.

2. Literature Review

The rising tide of literature in the last decade regarding the flipped classroom was frequently characterized by an uncritical celebratory attitude that did not account for specific teaching contexts. For example, typical of the somewhat idealistic rhetorical stance of the 'flipped classroom' philosophy is Brindley, Blaschke, and Walti's article, 'Creating Effective Collaborative Learning Groups in an Online Environment'[13], which insists that online student collaboration outside of traditional scheduled class time can be just as effective whether a grade is attached to the collaborative outcome or not. However, the article takes its sample from a single, well-established graduate seminar that is actually *about* online teaching. And in another celebratory contribution, Bill Tucker[14] champions the idea of recording video lessons that make the research-led lecture material the 'homework' upon which the flipped classroom activities will be based (p. 82). This solution is actually somewhat ingenious, and, in fact, solves the problem of the relevance of lecturer expertise. He cites high-school chemistry teacher Jonathan 'Bergmann [who] says the most important benefits of the video lessons are profoundly human: 'I now have time to work individually with students. I talk to every student in every classroom every day' ' (p. 82). However, again, these contentions are significantly lacking in context—and they ring a little bit of professional privilege and Western-centrism.

By the mid-2010s, some of this celebratory tone in the discourse had dissipated. In a particular critique of the pre-recorded video lecture strategy, for example, Natalie Milman[15] notes that 'the strategy … has its limitations. …, students may not watch or comprehend the video and therefore be unprepared or insufficiently prepared for the more engaging activities that will occur [face-to-face]' because the necessary 'scaffolding' that comes with the ability to ask questions of the instructor or peers is lacking 'if they watch the live video alone' (p. 86). More recently, the primary finding of Chi-Ming Wong et al.[3] is that students had increased difficulty with the exigencies of time management that the flipped classroom curricular design requires (p. 940). Students specified that out-of-class 'distractions' and 'a lack of sufficient guidance from teachers' in the flipped circumstances were particularly difficult challenges (p. 940). Chi-Ming Wong et al.[3] go on to articulate '*Students' Concerns: Addressing the Flaws*' including 'dissatisfaction with poorly shot videos and lengthy, challenging-to-engage materials' as well as difficulties with lacking digital device affordances and internet connections and speeds (p. 941).

Rotellar and Cain[16] also note how often 'students come to class ill-prepared, without having completed homework or reading assignments' although they make a strong case to explain how good flipped classroom activities can actually motivate and encourage students to do this preparatory work (p. 2). On the teaching side, following a flipped classroom strategy in which the instructor gives students a pre-recorded lecture to watch in advance can actually *double* the labour time and possibly *triple* it with the introduction of video production necessities. When this is added to the conditions of lacking second language facility, an instructor can find themselves with little to do when students do not or *will* not participate in class, often requiring the 'lecturer' to create impromptu presentations in the moment or to simply reiterate the lecture from the assigned video.

More recently, a spate of unremarkable articles appeared post-COVID that offered limited and questionable insight. Gonçalves et al.[12] offer something of a research round-up of pedagogical literature centred on the nexus of the COVID-19 pandemic as a transformational force. However, their paper has a significant identity crisis, broadly examining topics from the use of subtitles in language learning to flipped classrooms in geography studies to a brief interjection in the way that specialized discipline-specific app developments may enhance learning. The paper never really finds its focus. This is most obvious in the promiscuous conclusion that observes the rising centrality of technological affordances in a variety of learning scenarios followed by a somewhat contradictory insistence that 'they don't eliminate the irreplaceable essence of face-to-face instruction' (p. 18), and finishing with a tacked-on concern for inequitable access to technology and the need for inclusivity. Again, the key insight from their paper is that the COVID-19 pandemic acted as a transformative force in pedagogy but they are vague as to how specifically (p. 11). None of the methodologies they cite is fundamentally new *per se* and the only real transformation was the widespread adoption of online affordances by institutions that were otherwise predominantly face-to-face teaching environments (e.g. Clark et al., 2022, p. 520). Was research necessary to reach these conclusions?

Clark et al.[7] also make grand claims about 'adaptive learning' and 'personalized learning' (neither of which is satisfactorily defined in their paper). The closest they come is to insist that '[w]ith flipped instruction, students begin learning foundational content independently before class using resources such as prerecorded videos and textbook readings. Unfortunately, prerecorded videos and readings provide 'one-size-fits-all,' non-personalized instruction before students must apply the content in the classroom' (p. 517). However, even this vague concession is made without considering real classroom vicissitudes. At XJTLU, for example, an MA-Level seminar in 2021–2022 concerned with the sociology of social media had an enrolment of some 110 students, few of whom had satisfactory facility in the language of instruction, and even fewer of whom could receive any significant personalized attention out of such a large population. Clark et al.[7] proceed to provide 'results on student perceptions of learning gains when flipped instruction is combined with adaptive lessons. This is set in comparison to usual teaching approaches as well as other flipped courses without adaptive lessons' (p. 525). At this point in their paper, it is still unclear what 'adaptive' is and it remains further problematic to compare it against a vague definition of 'usual' teaching. They go on to explain, using an unimaginative Likert scale of 'not true, sometimes true, mostly true, and always true, that one-third of respondents chose 'mostly or always true' to the statement, *The adaptive lessons were what I liked most about this class*. This was also a good finding for adaptive learning. ... Unfortunately, females experienced a decline in multiple-choice performance when adaptive learning was used' (p. 526). It is baffling how a decline in performance for female students and a mere 1/3 of responses in the positive could be understood as 'a good finding for adaptive learning.' Herein is evidence that quantitative findings can be presented with any convenient (if not predetermined) subjective interpretation. Finally, at the end of the paper, 'the authors suggest an adaptive learning platform to accommodate students [should] individually and quickly inform the instructor when students are struggling based on its data collection and dashboard capabilities' (p. 529), a banal observation. More importantly, again referring to their own diagram on their p. 521 (above), it remains unclear how the former constitutes a lack of individualized learning while the latter does not. Otherwise, in order to make a 'adaptive' flipped classroom as Clark et al. describe it work would effectively require instructors to become programmers and digital developers rather than teachers: an unsurprising conclusion from an engineering-based quantitative analysis.

Lastly, a study by Shao et al.[17] returns 'a clear preference among parent users for human educators over AI educational tools when it comes to educating their children' (p. 8), another relatively intuitive finding. In their first study, '[a] total of 200 participants (131 female, 69 male, 132 participants had children, M = 31.46, SD = 9.89, 18–74 years old) were recruited online with monetary payment as compensation' (p. 4). The mind-numbing 'M=' and 'SD=' statistical data reportage notwithstanding, there is no indication of which media platforms were employed to recruit these participants. Was it a university-driven intranet? And again, for Study 2, '[a] total of 400 participants (256 female, 144 male, Mage = 31.74, SD = 9.54, 18–71 years old) were recruited online with monetary payment as compensation' (p. 4) to reach the conclusion that '[p]arent users showed a greater willingness to have human educators educate their children compared to AI educational tools' (p. 4). More broadly, the paper concludes that 'users are more inclined to prefer human educators for their children and are more likely to share this preference with others (Studies 1 and 2). The underlying reason is that users perceive human educators as more capable than AI tools (Study 2)' (p. 1). Herein lies a valuable insight, certainly, but was such a contrived quantitative study necessary to reach these conclusions?

Overall, what many of these contributions overlook is the fact that a class that uses integrated technologies and depends significantly on seminar discussion and learning activities might also include a significant lecture-based or information-gathering component. Is this, then, still flipped? Indeed, the studies cited above may all be based on very massaged definitions of the flipped classroom in order to reach their conclusions. As Clark et al.[7] note, student uptake on doing the pre-reading or knowledge attainment (ostensibly 'lower' on Bloom's taxonomy learning hierarchy) is a problem for flipped classroom models (p. 517). Arguably, it is for this very reason that many students enrol in a university degree—in order to attain the knowledge foundation in a presentational format from field experts, especially in introductory level modules.

Fortunately, into this sea of somewhat questionable scholarship come several fresh voices of reason. A study by Peng and Wan[18], for example, is more fulsome in that it probes into the reasons why students may prefer an AI TA over a human one or vice-versa, citing perceptions of response reliability and social anxiety as significant factors. However, they do not address the issue of preference *per se*. Rather, they duly note that '[s]tudents using online learning platforms struggle to receive timely help because of high student-teacher ratios (Kasch et al., 2021). Artificial intelligence teaching assistants (AI TAs) offer excellent opportunities to address this critical issue (Bates et al., 2020; Cox, 2021)' (Peng and Wan, 2024, p. 1218). Inherent to this claim is the bias that students would prefer AI help over none at all from overwhelmed educators. Also implicit is a corollary—that students would, in fact, prefer interactive human teaching but that it is simply unavailable. In order to reach their conclusions, Peng and Wan[18] report that their study comprised a productive combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses. These included a survey of some '401 students to empirically validate the hypotheses' (p. 1235). Of course, from a preference perspective, this sample is highly tendentious. The survey was taken from students who are already enrolled in a university programme, already in a category of student who have chosen this pathway of learning, (and who are also just as likely to be self-justifying their choice). The answer is largely predetermined (which is likely why Peng and Wan duly gloss over it), like determining who likes to take surveys by quantifying the answers from a sample of people who took the survey—a quantitative tautology. This is not to say that AI-motivated learning *should*, in fact, replace traditional learning models, but merely to point out that the *preference* data is largely irrelevant. Enough students want interpersonal learning experiences that the university model is not about to become obsolete any time soon, but it will need to adjust and adapt to new technological interfaces and practice models.

Indeed, as Shen et al.[4] report regarding flipped classrooms, '[m]eta-analyses of FC implementation indicate that the effect size of the FC approach on learning outcomes across studies has been small (e.g., Cheng et al., 2019; Lag & Sale, 2019; van Alten et al., 2019)' (p. 3). For this reason, they observe that '[a] majority of studies focus on the effects of this general approach through comparisons of student performance, engagement, and satisfaction with the traditional classroom, with relatively few emphasizing the theoretical framework or elaborating on the pedagogical design of the FC approach being used (Cheng et al., 2019)' which they take as their point of departure for a theoretically-rich sur-

vey of pedagogical strategies to overcome shortcomings in the flipped classroom methodological standard. Their most summary contribution 'integrates blended/hybrid concepts ... into FC design by highlighting the significant roles of online (pre-class), in-class, and after-class learning phases and their connections, which constitute the flipped learning cycles that can help educators and students build upon and revitalize their online and in-person teaching and learning strategies' (p. 3). Notably, their framework does not necessarily presume the displacement of the lecture-model during the 'in-class' sessions, again, especially important for lower-level students who may actively wish to attain their knowledge acquisition in this way.

3. Methodology and Survey Samples

As stated above, the purpose of this contribution is to offer a model of what a hybrid-integrated (rather than definitively flipped) teaching model for the classroom can look like—a practical and viable system of strategic approaches. The research follows the methodology described by Chi-Ming Wong et al.[3] in which '*Questionnaires are utilized to collect exemplary flipped learning experiences from students, while interviews are conducted with teachers nominated by their students for effective flipped teaching approaches*' (p. 937). In order to measure student satisfaction with interactive classroom activities as compared with standard lecture models, a qualitative assessment was undertaken across three modules, two at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University in 2021–2022 (COM 337 Film Studies for the Digital Age, COM 407 Interactive Media Technology) and one at the University of Leicester in 2022–2023 (HA1307 Reading Film at the first-year level). All three of these modules require both traditional in-class lecture presentations and an attendant weekly seminar session which was fundamental to the 'flipped' classroom design. This assessment was comprised of a discourse analysis of student responses to a survey offered for their voluntary participation with the objective, at the time, of developing classroom learning experiences that aligned with student desires and competencies in an effort to improve attendance and engagement. The survey questions were designed using a framework of Likert preferences to minimize 'leading' students in their responses as much as possible (while keeping them focused on the distinction between lecture-based and interactive in the context of the study). (see **Appendix A**.)

The survey attempts to broadly distinguish between lecture-dominant sessions (A: a to c) and activities-dominant sessions (A: d to f), as well as (in B) to reach out to students for a rationale that might return some teaching ideas and (in C and D) to determine what strategies and presentation styles the students find useful and effective. There were 110 students enrolled in the Masters Seminar COM 407 Interactive Media Technology at XJTLU in Term 1 of the 2021–2022 academic year. Students were clearly eager to offer input; an unexpected number of 42 students responded to the impersonal online survey, approximately 38%. There were 69 students in COM 337 Film Studies for the Digital Age, a final undergraduate year module at XJTLU in Term 2 of the 2021–2022 academic year. Unsurprisingly, and probably largely due to inadequate second language facility and/or confidence, only 21 students responded, but this still represents an encouraging 30% of the cohort. For the first-level HA1307 Reading Film module at the University of Leicester in the first term of the 2022–2023 academic year, students were afforded time in-class to complete the survey and so the percentage return was higher: 14 of the 17 students in attendance on the day out of a cohort of 20. (A more fulsome statistical summary of the findings is listed in **Appendix B**.) The data presented herein is either strictly statistical and/or anonymized. Where specific student answers are reported, the reportage has followed either XJTLU or University of Leicester internally vetted protocol standards for participant anonymity and the rights and facility for participants to recuse from the study at any time.

The insights achieved from these surveys are parsed through the further insights of recent theoretical scholarship and the pedagogical experiences of the author and various colleagues across several institutions (Cf. Matiso[5], p, 235; Sakulprasertsri[19]). More specifically, these insights are parsed with particular consideration of the ways that Shen et al.[4] describe the ostensibly 'flipped' learning cycle phases: pre-class (often online adaptive learning), in-class, and after-class learning (phases which they outline in more extensive detail on their p. 12). The focus herein, of course, with the intent of recuperating good lecture practices, will be on the in-class section of their cycle. The intention is not to subvert flipped learning strategies that occur in the pre-/online learn-

ing phase of the cycle, but to complement and support these methodologies by providing functional lecture foundation strategies.

4. Findings and Strategies

While the return on the voluntary survey poll across all three modules was more anaemic than hoped for, it was decidedly unanimous. Of the responses received, not one of them fell below the 1c level for the first survey question, indicating a clear preference for lecture-dominated presentations. Typical of these answers was one in which the student selected choice b, but explained that 'I think instructor first gives the lecture is important so that students can preliminarily set a basic knowledge or viewpoint about the certain topic and then form the questions related to the topic. … For the lecture session, maybe letting students share the discussion answers is quite difficult since most of the students would not like to share with public (excluding few students who want to share or prepare in advance).' Similarly, another student selected choice b 'because the knowledge the professor teaches in class is the essence, I think it is an indispensable part of graduate study. In my class this semester, I think in the lecture, the interaction between students and teachers is not very strong. For example, in the last class, the professor asked the same question four times, but no student would answer. Maybe it was shyness, maybe it was not paying attention. My personal feeling is that in group discussions, students are not really discussing the questions asked by the professor.'

In fact, a student who actually selected choice 'a' stated a preference for 'classes where the instructor lectures with a PowerPoint accompaniment. But it would be even better to have two-thirds portion of lectures with a PPT accompanied and one-third portion of case study discussion led by a professor.' Another student explained that 'I prefer the lectures with instructor's presentation, especially when the presenter makes his/her own comments on scholars [sic] debates, through which I can both consolidate the scholars' theory and deepen my understanding of critical thinking through lecturer's discussion on scholars' ideas collision.' Herein lies an interesting reformulation of a finding by Shen et al.[4] for the after-class stage of the cycle that advises to '[g]uide self-evaluation by comparing with appropriate references' (p. 18). In this instance, the reference is coming from the instructor as a recognized authority on the material which the student uses to clarify understanding before critically evaluating the material with their own insight. This same respondent went on to report that 'the materials and the comments generated in the lectures via the perspective of a specific instructor enable the lectures to become specialized.' One of the few students who answered 'c.) classes with shorter lectures followed by group discussions after which students share their discussion answers with the class' added, 'I think lecture time can be more than 50% of class time, but I'm not sure how much time is appropriate.'

Answers regarding a preference for lecture-based acquisition of knowledge also supported the thesis that students in lower levels (who have, in fact, chosen to be enrolled in a university programme as their vehicle of education) appreciate lectures as a mode of knowledge acquisition. As Wong et al.[3] argue, '[i]t's important to note that flipping the entire course may not be suitable in all cases, so both students and teachers should adapt the pace accordingly' (p. 942). A forthcoming student from the first-year cohort (who chose b) emphasized that 'I think that lecture content should mostly be conveyed through the lecturer, and maybe this is the best way for me to acquire knowledge for the course.' Another first-year student stated 'I like going to the lectures. I like when you're first being told something you didn't know. I find that really interesting.' But perhaps the most telling response was simply 'b': no comment or justification and no response to question B, likely due to lacking language facility, or at least because the student wanted to participate, superficially, but mostly just wanted to be a *receiver* of information. Broadly and summarily, the students at both XJTLU and UoL whom I surveyed wanted and expected lecture more than discussion or interactive technology-enhanced learning activities.

More interesting were a number of the methodological strategies that students suggested they preferred or wished to see implemented. Students who answered survey question B and C were exceptionally forthcoming with their suggestions. These responses have been developed and supplemented with insights and strategies taken from colleagues who offered feedback in peer teaching reviews or via email as requested and from the literature review. Broadly, these insights trade on the BOPPPS model of teaching. This acronym stands for

each of six lesson plan stages as follows: Bridge-in (comprised of a greeting, an introduction to the subject matter, and some sort of engaged activity that aligns with the learning objectives for the lesson), Objectives and outcomes of learning (explicitly clarified for students), Pre-assessment (which evaluates what students already know and activates their related schema, usually in an interactive or interrogative format), Participatory learning, Post assessment, and Summary (See Liu et al.[20], p. 2) Additionally, 'Lo et al. (2018) proposed an FC approach based on [Merrill's (2002, 2013)] First Principles of Instruction for designing out-of-class learning and in-class interactive learning, and applied it in high school courses of four subject areas. They used *Activation*, *Demonstration*, and *Application* principles in creating pre-class video lectures and follow-up exercises, and implemented all five principles, including *Integration* and *Problem-Centered* principles, through learning review, mini-lectures, and problem-solving activities during class'[4] (p. 7). Notable is the fact that at least 'mini-lectures' is an integral part of this model. To these theoretical categories, Shen et al.[4] add that '[c]ognition, metacognition, and motivation are three interdependent components for successfully completing any complex learning task (Mayer, 1998), which is particularly true in the FC environment' (p. 4). The strategies below indicate that this latter insight can be practically applied to the in-class lecture model as well.

4.1. Open With a Lead-In or Warm-Up Activity

It is fundamentally true that all pedagogical strategies can learn much from second language acquisition practices as indicated by Gonçalves et al.[12] Particularly useful is the 5-stage model lesson plan (a derivation of the BOPPPS framework) as it is articulated by Karen Woodman[21] in her workbook accompaniment to Celce-Murcia's *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language (The Red Apple Book)*[22]. Woodman[21] lists these stages as lead-in, elicitation, explanation, controlled practice, and immediate creativity (pp. 18–33). To these she adds a sixth stage important stage of student review and feedback. One survey respondent stated a preference for '[s]ome more interactive examples to start some weekly topic discussions.' It is necessary to make these as fun as is practicable, and to try to connect them to the lecture content in some way. Word Searches, for example, actually have limited pedagogical value, but they can be a fun way to introduce new terms and to activate schema. Another respondent stated that '[t]here are a lot of classes on very interesting topics. Connect daily phenomena with academic ideas. It was very useful and I enjoyed the class so much.' Whenever possible, personalize and localize this introductory material with questions of immediate interest to the students to demonstrate your investment in their individualized cultures and preferences, and as a vehicle through which to foster participation and activate schema[4] (p. 5).

4.2. Make Lectures Objectively Relevant to Both the Scheduled Learning Outcomes and to the Students' Practical Motivations

Shen et al.[4] advise to 'start each SRL cycle with goal setting (p. 16). In their tried and tested view, 'well-defined problems can serve as the context for *Activation* and *Demonstration* to help students see the *Usefulness* of what they learn (Jones, 2018), while observing the problem-solving process they need to master' (p. 13). Connecting these objectives to student motivations is often accomplished with assignments that are immediately connected to evaluations in some significant way. One highly experienced colleague at XJTLU observed that under the severe scheduling exigencies in which many students find themselves, task prioritization is a necessity; to these students, as he put it, 'the evaluation schedule *is* the curriculum.' Students simply have no time for anything else. It is worth observing here the contention against which Brindley et al.[13] argue: 'Swan et al. (2006) propose that 'Assessment can be seen as the engine that drives student course activity, online or off. … (p. 45)' (p. 3). A corollary addendum to the findings of Brindley et al. might be that while *participation* may not improve in any measurable way when grades are attached to an assignment, there is certainly value to students in accruing grades for the work they do in class.

4.3. Have Fun. Be Interested in the Subject Matter Yourself

Doing so inevitably results in the interjection of humour and anecdote. This energy is contagious and students will feed from it. Moreover, as Shen et al.[4] report, 'conversational words (e.g. you, I) and the real instructor's voice

... can contribute to students' feeling of relatedness (*Personalization* and *Voice* principles)' (p. 13). In a module questionnaire response to the instruction to 'Please write two things you enjoyed about the module, and [explain] why' for COM 337, one student stated 'I love the instructor's energy and enthusiasm. I often worry that I will get bored but there is no way to do that in this module.' Another student further explained that '[I] love the book from Rombes! It is interesting and philosophical! It is mind-blowing!' This excitement was further fostered by the regular reference to the assigned readings throughout the lecture presentations.

4.4. Punctuate Lectures with Thought-Provoking Questions that are Clearly Articulated and Presented in a Visual Form

Shen et al.[4] argue that '[m]aterials presenting new knowledge and skills, particularly lecture videos, should be broken into small and sequentially presented segments that allow students to control the pacing and deepen their learning (*Segmenting* principle)' (p. 13). The survey respondent who explained the importance of 'preliminary … knowledge,' cited above,' further stated that '[t]hen the instructor may raise some questions to let students think, poll or discuss. For the lecture session, maybe letting students share the discussion answers is quite difficult since most of the students would not like to share with public (excluding few students who want to share or prepare in advance).' Universal design strategies[23] (p. 9) unanimously indicate that visual accompaniment significantly mitigates this latter concern. In this context, it is also useful to allow for think-pair-share partners and then group feedback and/or debate. Several students also reported that it is often useful to integrate interactive technology such as JazzQuiz or Mentimeter. With these tools an instructor can punctuate a lecture with multiple choice questions immediately based on the lectured material. Purwanto[24] explains how the software of these programs tally answers with the option to immediately present them back to the students in a graphic form that allows an instructor to verify the level of student comprehension. If most students get the correct answer, move on in the lecture. If too many got the answer wrong, perhaps a few more lecture minutes to clarify the last topic are necessary, or *perhaps* such results might prompt an in-class debate or discussion.

4.5. Punctuate Lectures with Other Practical Activities

Activities could include games, word searches for key terms, even drawing activities. Another survey respondent stated, 'I prefer the classes includes [sic] some interactive activities since the interesting and light activities help stimulate my motivation on participating the class, especially in the pandemic era when students cannot have on-location class.' According to Shen et al.[4], 'gamification strategies' as they are described by Huang & Hew, 2018; Lai & Hwang, 2016; Liu et al., 2024; Ng, 2018; and Zainuddin, 2018, proffer metacognitive motivations that align with contemporary learning styles and life experiences' (p. 3). And they're fun, which is also inherently motivating. Another module questionnaire response to the 'two things you enjoyed' question exclaimed 'also I love the kahoot activities! [I] am crushing it!' Another activity suggested by colleagues required students to attempt to draw a picture of one of the many conventional images of Michel Foucault (which, we discovered as a class, looks very much like Uncle Fester). While this activity was in no way connected to the nuances of Foucauldian theory, almost all students 'aced' the questions related to Foucault on the final exam compared to other iterations of the course where the drawing activity was not done.

4.6. Employ Good Visual Accompaniment that is Relevant and Useful

Shen et al.[4] describe such things as clearly organized outlines and 'concept maps' as 'visual organizational cues' that work 'to direct students' attention and activate their mental framework (*Signaling* principle)' (p. 13). One student respondent stated, 'I really like the way the slides keep the lecture animated. The images were directly related to the subject matter and really helped me to understand ideas that words could not capture well. The colour coordination of topics and examples also helped me.' A professional naturalist photographer and guest lecturer in a film production module at the University of Leicester explains that when he presents a raft of photographic images during a lecture, he makes it a priority to change the image *every fifteen seconds* so that the audience does not become disinterested. He advises that with theory-based power-point presentations it is not necessary to change the *entire* slide *every* fifteen

seconds, but that it helps to have *something* change every fifteen seconds—an animation or GIF, or the new appearance of a summary heading or image. Indeed, the same student respondent listed above in this item articulated that he also appreciated that headings came up only as they were introduced in the spoken lecture which helped him concentrate on the subject being presented rather than being distracted by reading a text-heavy slide all in advance. Shen et al.[4] report that even 'online materials should use narrated visual media with proper amounts of text information (e.g., bullet points, labels), to make the materials easy-to-understand while best utilizing students' cognitive capacity (*Modality*, *Multimedia*, and *Redundancy* principles)' (p. 13). A Theatre History lecturer at the University of Victoria reports that he had earned himself the nickname 'T… the talking head' amongst his students. He observed that during his lectures, his narrative bounced around locations in Europe and Asia with which many lower level students are largely unfamiliar. It made following his narrative very difficult as his students reported that they were preoccupied with spatialization rather than history. Geographically informed historical connections suffered lesser retention because the students were not making the proximity or trajectory connections that T… assumed. A student asked him to present a large map during his lectures and to simply highlight the location on the map as he spoke. He reports that retention and even attention were significantly improved. In this example, visually demonstrating *geography* significantly fostered the retention of *history*.

4.7. Punctuate Lectures with Short Videos, or any other such 'Voice' that You Might Add to Your Own

Again, in a response to the 'two things you enjoyed' question, one student expressed their appreciation of 'screening time and some interactive games (eg. Kahoot!).' Videos (even of 'talking heads') are better than straight audio, but good (especially funny) audio content certainly has its own merits. Although much of the content of such videos can be reproduced by the lecturer, students report that their attention is rejuvenated when a video is introduced. Contemporary production values for many public video essays employ sophisticated visual accompaniment that adds improved visual complements.

4.8. Ask Ss to Participate in the Lecture to Suggest Videos to Watch, or Summarize a Term

One student affirms that 'Seminar design is interactive, which makes everyone participate in the class,' and another indicated that 'Group discussion, makes me understand the concept/thesis more clearly.' In support of item 4.5 above, a respondent to the survey stated 'In my opinion, practice and discussion in class are necessary, and students should be encouraged or forced (in a clever way) to participate in the discussion, which can deepen students' impression of what has been discussed in class. Occasional quizzes and games can improve engagement, memory and understanding. Participation in the classroom can make students have a sense of identity, and at the same time increase interest in the course!' Instructors surveyed variously indicate that it has proven ineffective to dominate classes with student presentations, but small and varied contributions will have the presenting students invest in the material more. Moreover, 'promoting peer interaction and collaboration is essential within the ... classroom environment. Teachers can create opportunities for peer discussion and collaboration through online forums, group activities, or virtual breakout sessions. By fostering a collaborative learning environment, students can actively engage with their peers, exchange insights, and learn from one another'[3] (p. 942). Interestingly, following the insights of H. Fritsch[9] and Beaudoin[10], oftentimes some of the best learning, and certainly some of the most lively discussion, tend to occur in the chat function of the open online platform during hyflex integrated online lessons. During pandemic lockdowns, since all lectures were online, a TA in participation took the initiative to encourage participation on the chat panel with jokes, comments, questions, and related ideas. The response from participating students was lively and entertaining. As Wong et al.[3] further indicate, some of this can now be readily fostered with AI Chatbots (p. 942).

4.9. Give Students Something to Do During the Lecture

It could be a tangible outcome they can work towards to foster note-taking. Matiso[5] assigns such activities as worksheets, for example, to the pre-class activity phase (p. 240), which is sound pedagogy, but this can be applied to in-class

listening activities as well. Some ideas suggested by lecturer respondents to the survey are innovative. One reported that she takes the time to write out a full script of her lecture. She then gives a printed copy of this to students and leaves a blank or blanks where key terms or sentences are included. While the lecture presentation will not be verbatim, students focus on listening to fill in these blanks quite actively. Another respondent has students actively create several multiple choice questions during the lecture to have an impromptu quiz at the end as a review round-up—an interactive way to realize Woodman's sixth stage listed above. These questions are collected and collated to comprise the question set that is utilized on tests and examinations. Marina Hassapopoulou [25] further suggests an innovative interactive activity in which students are actively invited to create and share videos of the lectures in action. 'In this hybrid learning assignment, students are tasked with creatively using social media … and live blogging to document and reflect on their experience of watching a specific film' or attending a specific lecture (n.p.). Hassapopoulou [25] explains that students were asked to augment these real-time activities with summary reflections of both the film and their experience of participating in live digital interactions (n.p.). She reports that the contributions took on an energetic life of their own well beyond the immediate expectations of the module, an example of in-class learning working to motivate otherwise often desultory or moribund participation in online discussion forums enabled by the instructor.

4.10. Finish Early Sometimes

Only one colleague respondent to the survey was bold enough to suggest this strategy but it is certainly worth considering, especially as a vehicle to overcome contingency shortcomings in the rare instances when material runs shorter than scheduled. This Lecturer stated, '[d]on't do this every time because then it becomes an expectation and even something of a disappointment to students who feel they paid for a certain minimum number of contact hours. However, done occasionally it gives students the sense of a bit of a break, and makes the *hard* work of regularly attending long lectures more tenable.'

5. Conclusions

Lectures are not always already boring, nor are the good ones void of opportunities to participate, to discuss, to ask questions. The methodological design of their study championed by Shen et al. [4] is apropos. They explain that a good flipped classroom 'design framework [is] grounded in theories related to cognition, self-regulation, motivation, and metacognition, *as well as being informed by our experience of designing FC courses across disciplines*. .... Our framework ... goes a step further by contributing pragmatic FC design strategies that can be applied to or adapted for various contexts' (p. 21). Adaptation is fundamental. Each new cohort of students, differing levels of access and attainment, and different disciplines requires ongoing experimentation and versatile adaptation to each new context and attempt. As they astutely acknowledge, 'our framework can be used to initiate educational design research, which involves iterative development of practical solutions and consecutive investigations to build theories (McKenney & Reeves, 2019)' [4] (p. 21). As Clark et al. [7] finally concede, '*In the instructor's experience*, adaptive learning addresses notable challenges and gaps in required, pre-class learning with flipped instruction' (p. 529). No localized quantitative measure of the efficacy of these strategies, in 'instruction in a numerical methods course during the remote instructional period of the COVID pandemic ... at a public research university' [7] (p. 528), for example, will reveal any stable pedagogical magic bullet. Pedagogy in any of even the most objective STEM disciplines is organic and flexible. A strategy that works for one group of students in one academic year may prove entirely inefficacious to a different group with different motivations and different cumulative learning styles. Only ongoing heuristic trial-and-error accompanied with qualitative reflection will satisfy their efficacy.

Moreover, many students learn as well or better from listening and taking notes than from reading. Even large groups of first-year students who are hesitant (or unable) to make verbal contributions in real-time need significant scaffolding to be willing to contribute. This scaffolding may take the form of preparing a presentation or activity in advance, think-pair-share in real-time, collaborative group assignments, or perhaps just listening to a good clear lecture. After all, a presentation or think-pair-share dynamic has to be based on *something*. Indeed, one survey respondent offered a balanced answer that effectively summarizes all of the conclusions this research has returned. 'I prefer the combination of a, b, and c. I would like to hear how lecturers illustrate ideas or theories using PPT slides. The interactive activities

help me to better understand or memorize the class content, and they can be fun ... Then group discussions usually work but it highly depends on whether the group members are willing to talk. It is important to report back to the class, because I also want to hear what other people think and how the lecturers interact with that.' Under certain circumstances, however, unless participation is attached to an objective assessment grade, it may not garner participation. And when it does not, a lecturer is left filling the void with a lecture in any case. Having a good one prepared in advance is the scaffolding that makes for good teaching.

Indeed, the traditional lecture model is no less a complete failure than the 'flipped classroom' is a universal solution. A balance between necessary/good lecture presentations and certain flipped classroom dynamics is best, rather than the wholesale dismissal of one or the other, and that even these are highly contingent on the many divergent particular dynamics and circumstances of any given class, subject matter, and student group. Importantly, in Woodman's five-stage model, the 'explanation' phase is a central part of the learning process, and an accessible explanation may usefully come in the form of a good lecture. From the lecturer's perspective, by preparing good lectures, it not only makes it fun to be an expert in pedagogy, but it also makes it necessary, once again, to be an expert in a scholarly field. As the survey responses to this research initiative have indicated, students (especially those fortunate enough to entertain motivations beyond the now standard 'get-a-degree: get-a-job' mentality) quite appreciate, and even expect it when the education they have paid for is presented to them by a good lecture from an expert in the field.

Funding

This work received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement

The data presented herein is either strictly statistical and/or anonymized. Where specific student answers are reported, the reportage has followed either XJTLU or University of Leicester internally vetted protocol standards for participant anonymity and the rights and facility for participants to recuse from the study at any time. Further ethical review and approval were waived for this study at the point of inquiry by all contributors under the condition of anonymity.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

Data is stored securely by the author as agreed with all contributors but is publicly unavailable due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the students of the modules listed who participated in the study, the global colleagues who kindly offered insights, the Department of Communications at XJTLU and the Department of Film Studies at the University of Leicester.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Appendix A. Student Survey Questionnaire

3A.) Which of the following, or combination of the following, do you prefer?

a.) classes where the instructor lectures with a powerpoint accompaniment.

b.) classes in which the instructor lectures and includes some interactive activities like word-searches or poll questions

c.) classes with shorter lectures followed by group discussions after which students share their discussion answers with the class.

d.) classes with shorter lectures followed by group discussions with no feedback to the class, except in anonymous online forums.

e.) classes with no lecture component but presentations and student discussion groups after which students share their discussion an-

swers with the class

f.) classes with no lecture component but presentations and student discussion groups with no feedback to the class, except in anonymous online forums.

3B.) Please briefly explain your reasons for your choice in A.

3C.) List at least one thing you liked about either the in-class lecture or the seminar sessions that accompanied each week, and/or a strategy or activity that you would like to see implemented in any of these.

3D.) Nominate a Lecturer whose teaching has been particularly effective in your opinion to participate in a survey review of teaching practices they find useful and effective.

Appendix B. Summary of Student Response Percentages

Table A1. Summary.

Student Questionnaire (see Appendix A above)	COM407 Interactive Media Technology at XJTLU (Term 1—2021/22)	COM337 Film Studies for the Digital Age at XJTLU (Term 2— 2021/22)	HA1307 Reading Film at UoL (Term 1— 2022/23)
number of student respondents	42/110	21/69	14/20
respondents as percentage of total student population	38.2%	30.4%	70%
total (percentage) of respondents that chose 3A.a	11 (26.2%)	5 (23.8%)	5 (35.7%)
total (percentage) of respondents that chose 3A.b	22 (52.4%)	12 (57.1%)	4 (28.6%)
total (percentage) of respondents that chose 3A.c	9 (21.4%)	4 (19%)	5 (35.7%)
total (percentage) of respondents that chose 3A.d	0	0	0
total (percentage) of respondents that chose 3A.e	0	0	0
total (percentage) of respondents that chose 3A.f	0	0	0
percentage of respondents in a to c range (preference for lecture-dominated presentations)	100%	100%	100%
percentage of respondents in d to f range (preference for lecture-absent presentations)	0%	0%	0%

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