

A Critical Review of Flipped Learning and Intercultural Growth: Interdisciplinary Pedagogical Insights from EFL and Beyond



LAHMAR Abdelmalek ¹

University of Frères Mentouri Constantine 1 (Algeria), Laboratoire de Langue et
Traduction LLT

abdelmalek.lahmar@doc.umc.edu.dz

LAHMAR Maroua ²

University of Badji Mokhtar Annaba, Laboratoire Interdisciplinaire de
Pédagogie Et Didactique

marwa.lahmer@univ-annaba.dz

Date of transmission: 07/07/ 2025, date of acceptance: 09/11/ 2025

Abstract:

This critical review examines the intersection of flipped classroom (FC) pedagogy and the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in language education and related fields. Drawing on Byram's (1997) ICC model, it synthesizes 21 studies published between 2015 and 2025 to explore how FC supports intercultural learning through multimodal, student-centered approaches. While most studies are rooted in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, research from nursing, teacher training, and business education is also included to broaden pedagogical insights. Findings indicate that culturally embedded pre-class materials and interactive in-class tasks foster empathy, critical cultural awareness, and reflective engagement. Technology-enhanced strategies such as podcasts, virtual reality, and case-based learning significantly contribute to ICC development. However, barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, limited teacher training, and a lack of longitudinal studies persist. The review highlights the need for greater theoretical integration and interdisciplinary collaboration, positioning FC as a transformative model for promoting intercultural sensitivity and global citizenship.

Keywords: Flipped classroom, intercultural communicative competence, EFL, learner-centered pedagogy, Byram's model, critical reflection, technology-enhanced learning

*Corresponding Author : Lahmar Abdelmalek

Introduction

In an era marked by globalization, mobility, and heightened intercultural contact, the ability to communicate across cultural boundaries has emerged as a core educational goal. Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), once considered a peripheral objective in language curricula, has gained central importance in preparing learners to engage meaningfully in multilingual and multicultural settings. At the same time, educational technologies and learner-centered approaches have radically transformed instructional paradigms, with the flipped classroom (FC) model gaining particular traction in recent years. By inverting the traditional instructional sequence—allocating content delivery to pre-class phases and reserving in-class time for active, collaborative learning—flipped pedagogy offers promising avenues for cultivating both language proficiency and intercultural competence in more integrative and learner-driven ways.

Within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and other language learning contexts, the flipped classroom model has been praised for supporting productive skills, learner autonomy, and digital literacy. However, its role in advancing intercultural dimensions of language education has received comparatively less sustained attention. While some scholars have begun to explore how flipped environments encourage cultural reflection, empathy, and dialogue, the empirical and conceptual evidence remains scattered across diverse contexts, pedagogical designs, and learner populations.

Moreover, much of the existing research on flipped classrooms and ICC development occurs not only in EFL or second language classrooms but also within adjacent educational domains, such as nursing, business, and teacher education, where language, communication, and intercultural engagement play a vital role. These studies, though not situated within language instruction per se, provide valuable pedagogical insights into how flipped models can foster reflective, culturally responsive learning. Their inclusion enriches the scope of analysis and broadens our understanding of how intercultural competence can be operationalized through technology-mediated, learner-centered approaches.

➤ Research Problem

Despite growing interest in the pedagogical synergy between flipped classrooms and intercultural communicative competence, the literature remains fragmented and largely under-theorized, particularly in relation to language education. Few critical syntheses have systematically examined the theoretical foundations, methodological diversity, or learning outcomes associated with this intersection. Furthermore, existing reviews tend to either isolate language skills from cultural dimensions or neglect the contributions of empirical investigations outside the narrow confines of foreign language instruction. There is thus a need for a critical, integrative review that foregrounds language education and justifiably includes research from broader educational contexts that illuminate how flipped learning environments support the development of intercultural awareness, empathy, and communicative flexibility. Such a review should offer both conceptual clarity and pedagogical direction, as it evaluates how flipped instruction contributes to ICC across disciplines and cultural settings.

1. Theoretical Background: The Flipped Classroom

1.1. Conceptualizing the Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom (FC) is an innovative pedagogical approach that reconfigures the traditional instructional model by moving direct instruction outside of the classroom and dedicating in-class time to student-centered, collaborative, and interactive activities. This reorganization of instructional time aims to bolster active learning, critical thinking, and substantive engagement with content (Chen et al., 2016; Bishop & Verleger, 2013). To capture the core of the flipped classroom, the Flipped Learning Network (2014) defines it as:

a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter. (p. 1)

The flipped classroom model is inherently flexible in its mode of delivery; it allows for implementation through both high-tech and low-tech approaches (Lahmar, 2022). High-tech implementations typically involve the use of digital tools such as learning management systems (LMS), video platforms (e.g., YouTube), podcasts, interactive tutorials, and cloud-based collaboration tools. These technologies capacitate teachers to pre-record content, track learner progress, and facilitate asynchronous learning. However, the flipped model is not exclusively dependent on advanced technology; it can also be achieved through low-tech means, such as printed reading materials, worksheets, handouts, or pre-class assignments that students complete individually. In either case, the core principle remains the same: moving content delivery outside the classroom to reserve in-class time for higher-order, interactive learning tasks. This model has increasingly drawn scholarly attention for its potential to address persistent challenges in educational contexts, particularly the issue of low engagement among EFL learners (Li & Tseng, 2019).

1.1.1. Core Characteristics of Flipped Learning

According to the Flipped Learning Network (FLN, 2014), effective implementation of flipped learning relies on four pedagogical pillars, collectively known as the **F.L.I.P** framework. These pillars serve as the foundational elements that distinguish the flipped model from mere digital content delivery.

Table 1. The Four Pillars of Flipped Learning

Pillar	Description
F – Flexible Environment	Students are offered flexibility in terms of when, where, and how they access content and engage with tasks, supporting diverse learning pathways.
L – Learning Culture	The traditional teacher-centered classroom shifts toward a learner-centered environment, emphasizing active, collaborative, and inquiry-based learning.
I – Intentional Content	Teachers intentionally design or select content to prioritize higher-order skills (analysis, evaluation, creation) and maximize in-class interactive learning.
P – Professional Educator	Teachers actively observe, guide, and provide feedback while continuously reflecting on and adapting instruction to meet learners' needs.

1.2. COVID-19 as a Catalyst for Flipped Classroom Adoption

Although the flipped classroom is commonly viewed as a recent innovation, its underlying principles have existed for decades in different forms. From early uses of radio and television in the 20th century to support learning outside the classroom, to more structured applications like distance education programs and multimedia-enhanced instruction in the 1990s and early 2000s, the idea of shifting content delivery beyond the classroom walls has been evolving quietly. Nonetheless, it was not until the COVID-19 pandemic that the flipped classroom truly moved into the educational spotlight.

The global health crisis forced institutions to reimagine instruction almost overnight. Educators who had previously relied on face-to-face delivery found themselves seeking models that could maintain learner engagement, promote flexibility, and ensure continuity despite physical separation (Divjak et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2020). In this context, the flipped classroom proffered a practical, adaptable solution. Its emphasis on pre-class content exposure, routinely through videos or digital materials, and in-class application through interaction aligned well with the new demands of hybrid and remote learning environments.

COVID-19, therefore, acted as a powerful accelerant. What had been a gradually spreading pedagogical model became, in many cases, a necessity. Teachers experimented with new tools, adapted their roles, and began to reframe class time as a space for collaboration rather than content transmission. The pandemic did not invent flipped learning, but it pushed it to the forefront; it signaled its capacity to solidify learner autonomy, differentiate instruction, and deepen engagement in both online and in-person formats (Collado-Valero et al., 2021). In doing so, it reshaped many educators' perceptions of what effective teaching and learning could look like beyond the constraints of traditional classroom structures.

1.3. Flipped Learning and EFL Language Skills: A Comprehensive Impact

The flipped classroom model has gained substantial recognition in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education for its effectiveness in promoting learners' productive and receptive language skills. Unlike traditional input-heavy instruction, flipped learning reconfigures the learning sequence: learners engage with instructional content (often video-based) before class, while class time is repurposed for interactive, task-based activities. This shift has proven particularly valuable in foreign language contexts, where communicative practice and feedback are essential.

A growing body of empirical research confirms the efficacy of flipped instruction in enhancing writing and speaking proficiency. For example, studies by Elfatah and Ali (2016), Mohammad and Khan (2023), and Fathi et al. (2022) report significant improvements in writing organization, grammar, and learner motivation following flipped interventions. Similarly, in speaking-focused inquiries, Amiryousefi (2019), Chen and Hwang (2019), and Lahmar and Khallout (2021) unveil how flipped instruction fosters greater fluency, critical thinking, and reduced language anxiety.

Even though much of the flipped classroom literature has concentrated on productive skills, reading and listening, the receptive counterparts, have also been shown to benefit from this model. Flipped environments generally require learners to engage with authentic texts, multimedia input, and comprehension tasks outside of class, which not only builds comprehension but also supports vocabulary acquisition and inferencing skills. Research continues to affirm that flipped learning promotes active listening and deep reading when accompanied by structured pre-class input and in-

A Critical Review of Flipped Learning and Intercultural Growth: Interdisciplinary Pedagogical Insights from EFL and Beyond

class scaffolding. Studies using experimental and quasi-experimental designs have found that students taught with flipped classroom methods demonstrate significantly greater gains in listening comprehension compared to those in traditional lecture-based settings, with improvements ranging from 15% to substantial statistical significance across various contexts (Heredia-Arboleda et al., 2024; Wei, 2025; Etemadfar, 2020).

This impact is equally evident in reading instruction, where the flipped classroom model has facilitated measurable gains in learners' inferential and critical reading abilities. By frontloading input through videos, texts, or guided tasks, outside the classroom, learners approach in-class reading activities with greater cognitive readiness. This shift allows teachers to dedicate classroom time to interactive interpretation, textual analysis, and meaning negotiation, all of which deepen comprehension. Studies adopting flipped designs consistently document improvements in learners' ability to draw inferences, evaluate arguments, and engage with texts critically (Samiei et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2024; Öztürk et al., 2021). In addition, the model's emphasis on learner autonomy and sustained engagement supports the development of reading fluency over time.

As an ensemble, the available evidence orchestrates a view of the flipped classroom as a robust pedagogical framework that upgrades language performance across all four skills. By promoting learner autonomy, increasing exposure to language input, and maximizing classroom interaction, flipped instruction synchronizes well with contemporary principles of communicative and learner-empowered language education.

1.4. Intercultural Communicative Competence in EFL Education

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) refers to the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. In the context of language education, ICC extends beyond linguistic proficiency to encompass intercultural awareness, critical reflection, and the skills to mediate between cultural perspectives. Byram's (1997) influential model conceptualizes ICC through five interrelated components, known as the *savoirs*, which together shape learners into intercultural speakers rather than mere language users.

Table2. Components of Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram, 1997)

Component	Definition
Savoir être (<i>Attitudes</i>)	Openness, curiosity, and the willingness to question one's own cultural assumptions.
Savoirs (<i>Knowledge</i>)	Understanding cultural practices and social norms in both one's own and the target culture.
Savoir comprendre (<i>Skills of interpreting and relating</i>)	The ability to interpret cultural meanings and relate them across contexts.
Savoir apprendre/faire (<i>Skills of discovery and interaction</i>)	The capacity to acquire and adapt to new cultural knowledge in real-time communication.
Savoir s'engager (<i>Critical cultural awareness</i>)	The ability to evaluate cultural practices and values through a lens of social justice, human rights, and democratic principles.

In flipped EFL classrooms, where learners work with authentic, predominantly culturally textured materials outside class and collaborate in intercultural tasks during class, these components

can develop organically. The FC model's emphasis on learner agency, reflection, and peer interaction aligns closely with the goals of ICC, offering a pedagogical space where students not only use language, but also explore, interpret, and critically engage with cultural content.

2. Methodology

2.1. Review Aim and Design

This critical review adopts a theory-driven, interpretive approach to synthesize and analyze research conducted between 2015 and 2025 on the integration of flipped classroom (FC) pedagogy and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) development, with a primary focus on foreign language education and supplementary inclusion of related academic fields where intercultural skills are integral. Unlike a systematic review that emphasizes exhaustiveness or a meta-analysis grounded in statistical aggregation, this review prioritizes analytical depth, conceptual integration, and pedagogical relevance. The goal is to interrogate how FC fosters ICC in language learning, under what circumstances, and through what pedagogical mechanisms such development occurs.

➤ *Research Aim and Questions*

Specifically, the review seeks to address the following questions:

1. How has the flipped classroom model been implemented to promote ICC in language education contexts, particularly EFL/ESL settings?
2. What intercultural outcomes are reported across diverse studies employing flipped instruction?
3. What methodological patterns, pedagogical designs, and technological tools characterize flipped ICC interventions across language and adjacent fields (e.g., nursing, business)?
4. What challenges, limitations, and gaps persist in current research, and what directions are needed for future inquiry and instructional design?

2.2. Phases of the Review Process

The review followed four interconnected phases:

- a) **Planning:** Defining research questions and establishing theoretical grounding in Byram's (1997) ICC model.
- b) **Selection:** Identifying relevant scholarly works through keyword-based searches in Consensus.app and supplementary manual screening.
- c) **Extraction:** Reviewing full-texts to gather data on context, methodology, FC design, targeted ICC components, and outcomes.
- d) **Analysis:** Conducting thematic synthesis guided by Byram's five ICC dimensions and cross-comparing contexts and methodological orientations.

A Critical Review of Flipped Learning and Intercultural Growth: Interdisciplinary Pedagogical Insights from EFL and Beyond

2.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The scope of the review was delimited through clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, summarized in the table below, which ensured that only research outputs of sufficient methodological and thematic relevance were considered.

Table 3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Studies explicitly addressing both FC methodology and ICC (or related constructs such as global competence, cultural awareness).	Studies focusing solely on linguistic proficiency or digital competence without intercultural aims.
Contexts in EFL/ESL or related intercultural education (nursing, business, teacher training).	Corporate/non-educational contexts.
Empirical (qualitative, quantitative, mixed) or conceptual studies.	Studies lacking methodological clarity or insufficient detail.
Published in English between 2015–2025.	Grey literature, non-peer-reviewed reports.

2.3.1. Quality Assurance

Although this review is interpretive rather than systematic, particular care was taken to uphold methodological rigor and safeguard the credibility of the findings. Source identification began with Consensus.app, an AI-powered academic search engine valued for its efficiency in retrieving peer-reviewed research at the intersection of flipped classroom pedagogy and intercultural communicative competence across disciplines. To avoid over-reliance on a single platform, the initial corpus was supplemented through manual searches in Google Scholar and backward citation tracking, which allowed the inclusion of additional scholarly contributions that met the review’s aims. The retrieval process was guided by targeted keyword combinations such as “*flipped classroom*” AND “*intercultural competence*”, “*flipped learning*” AND “*global competence*”, and “*flipped pedagogy*” AND “*EFL*” AND “*culture*.” Each study was then examined in its full-text version to verify relevance, extract methodological information, and evaluate the extent to which it addressed intercultural outcomes within a flipped framework. Only peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers were retained, while grey literature was excluded to minimize bias. Beyond relevance, a light but deliberate critical appraisal was applied. Publications were deemed adequate if they mirrored methodological clarity, explicitly articulated their flipped classroom design, and provided evidence, whether qualitative or quantitative, of intercultural or global competence development. These layered procedures, combining focused retrieval with appraisal of quality and transparency, ensured that the synthesis rested on credible, comparable sources. In this way, the review preserved interpretive breadth while maintaining standards of rigor appropriate to a critical review.

2.4. Data Extraction and Structuring

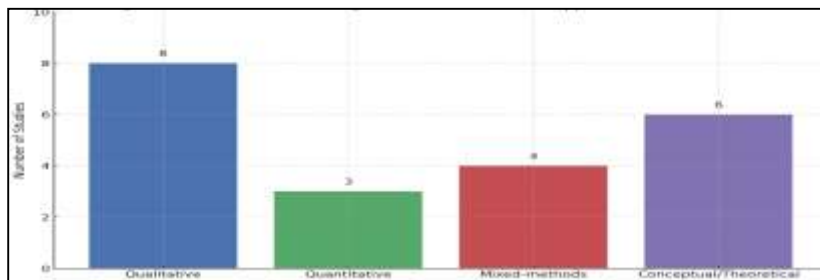
- Each study was reviewed in full to extract:
 - a. Author(s), year, and geographical context
 - b. Educational setting and participant demographics
 - c. Research design and methods

- d. Description of FC implementation (e.g., tools, structure)
- e. ICC elements targeted (as per Byram's model)
- f. Reported outcomes, challenges, and pedagogical insights

- The research outputs were then categorized according to:
 - a. Educational level (e.g., secondary, tertiary, teacher education)
 - b. Methodological orientation (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, conceptual)
 - c. Regional context (Asia, Europe, Latin America, etc.)

To visualize this distribution, the following figures provide a graphical breakdown of the scholarly contributions reviewed:

Figure 1. Research Methodologies Used in Studies on Flipped Classrooms and ICC



The bar chart above illustrates the methodological designs adopted in the 21 selected studies, ranging from qualitative and quantitative approaches to mixed-methods and conceptual/theoretical analyses

Figure 2. Educational Contexts of the Reviewed Studies

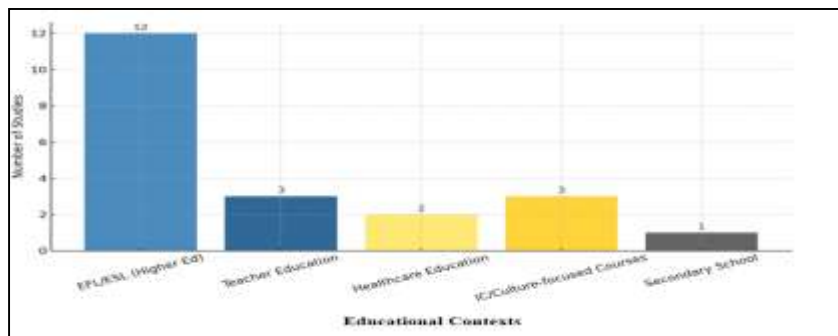
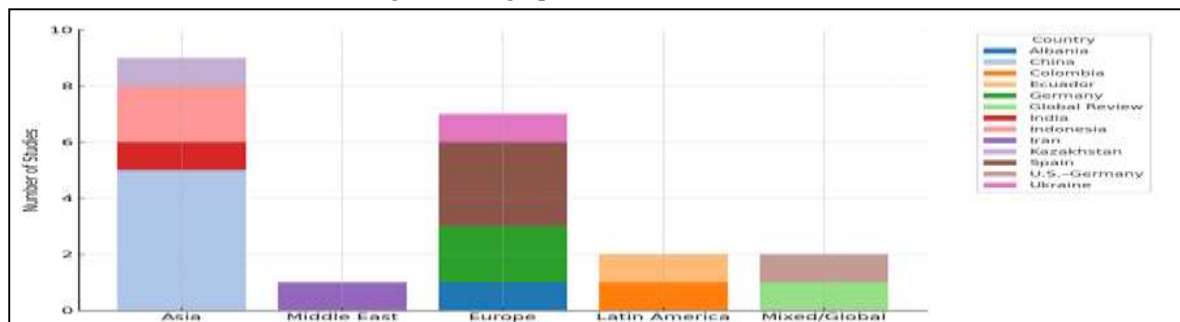


Figure 2 presents the educational levels represented across the corpus, including investigations conducted in secondary, tertiary (university-level), and teacher education settings.

Figure 3. Geographic Distribution of Studies



A Critical Review of Flipped Learning and Intercultural Growth: Interdisciplinary Pedagogical Insights from EFL and Beyond

This stacked bar chart displays the distribution of the 21 reviewed studies across five global regions—Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, and Mixed/Global—with country-level disaggregation. Asia accounts for the highest number of studies (9), including contributions from China (5), Indonesia (2), India (1), and Kazakhstan (1). Europe follows with 7 contributions from Spain (3), Germany (2), Ukraine (1), and Albania (1). Latin America includes 2 studies—one each from Colombia and Ecuador. The Middle East is represented by 1 study conducted in Iran. The Mixed/Global category includes 2 cross-national or theoretical studies: one comparative project involving U.S. and German learners, and one global literature review. The figure showcases the geographic imbalance in current research and suggests a need for expanded inquiry in underrepresented regions.

2.5. Analytical Framework

The analysis was conducted using a qualitative thematic approach guided by Byram's (1997) five dimensions of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). The first dimension, *savoir être*, refers to the attitudinal dispositions of openness, curiosity, and the capacity to decenter from ethnocentric perspectives. The second dimension, *savoirs*, encompasses knowledge of cultural practices and the ability to understand diverse perspectives. The third dimension, *savoir comprendre*, emphasizes the skills of interpreting cultural phenomena and relating them to one another. The fourth dimension, *savoir apprendre/faire*, highlights the skills of discovery and interaction that enable learners to engage effectively with new cultural contexts. Finally, the fifth dimension, *savoir s'engager*, foregrounds critical cultural awareness, which entails the ability to evaluate cultural practices and perspectives in light of explicit values and ethical considerations.

Special emphasis was placed on the alignment between FC design and the development of these ICC components. The analysis examined:

- a. Pre-class materials (e.g., podcasts, case studies, cultural videos)
- b. In-class dynamics (e.g., debates, intercultural simulations, peer collaboration)
- c. Assessment approaches (e.g., reflective essays, video forums, discussion boards)

Conceptual research works were evaluated for pedagogical coherence and innovation, while empirical studies were examined for their methodological robustness and relevance to ICC.

3. Results

Table 4 presents an overview of the 21 studies reviewed in this critical synthesis; it details their authors, year of publication, educational contexts, methodological approaches, and key findings related to intercultural communicative competence (ICC). The studies span diverse fields, including EFL, nursing, teacher education, and business, and reflect a variety of research designs, from qualitative and quasi-experimental to conceptual and analytical reviews.

Table 4. Overview of Studies on Flipped Classrooms and ICC Development in Language Education (2015–2025)

No.	Author(s)	Year	Context & Participants	Methodology	Key ICC-Related Findings
1	Plaza del Pino & Cabezón-Fernández	2025	28 Spanish nursing students	Qualitative (phenomenological)	Podcasts + FC fostered empathy, emotional engagement, and critical reflection on migrant health inequities.
2	Toro, Kisi, & Robja	2025	Albanian university language learners	Survey + training module	FC enhanced digital and intercultural competence; 64% students unaware of FC pre-intervention.
3	Sarvarizadeh et al.	2024	70 Iranian psychiatric nurses	Quasi-experimental (pre/post)	Statistically significant gains in critical cultural competencies ($p < .001$).
4	Cheng et al.	2024	University traditional culture courses, China	IT-based flipped + ARCS model	VR-enhanced FC boosted cultural pride, engagement, and interpretive skills.
5	Verhun & Batryn	2023	Ukrainian business students	Experiential curriculum design	Business English flipped model fostered intercultural dialogue and reflection.
6	MA Yuan & WU Zeyang	2023	Chinese intercultural communication course	Conceptual/theoretical	FC enhanced cultural adaptability, pragmatic language use, and critical awareness.
7	Ks & Batta	2023	Indian online intercultural course	Blended FC + reflective design	The "Performance Culture Approach" improved intercultural problem-solving.
8	Borasheva	2023	Literature review (global HE)	Analytical review	FC is effective in fostering intercultural collaboration and engagement.
9	Tazhenbayeva & Orynbayeva	2023	Kazakh secondary teachers	Quantitative teacher survey	Teachers viewed FC as conducive to ICC development, but lacked training.
10	Campillo Ferrer & Miralles Martínez	2022	179 Spanish student teachers	Quasi-experimental	FC promoted democratic values and ICC through collaborative microteaching.
11	Ianniello et al.	2022	Intercultural classrooms	Theoretical	Proposed "flipped inclusion" model; emphasized respect, dialogue, and diversity.
12	Shi, Yanlan	2022	Chinese EFL learners	Blended case-based learning	Case analysis in FC enhanced critical cultural reflection and peer learning.
13	Lawter & Garnjost	2021	U.S. and German business students	Comparative cross-cultural	ICC gains varied based on national cultural learning preferences.
14	Soto-Molina & Méndez-Rivera	2021	20 Colombian university EFL learners	Mixed methods (survey + interview)	Pre/post flipped ICC modules fostered autonomy, collaboration, and cultural reflection.
15	Husniah et al.	2021	26 Indonesian EFL students	FC + Content-Based Instruction	Flipped CBI modules led to measurable ICC improvement.
16	Fuentes Cabrera et al.	2020	60 Spanish adolescents	Quasi-experimental	FC group outperformed control in ICC indicators (empathy, open-mindedness).

A Critical Review of Flipped Learning and Intercultural Growth: Interdisciplinary Pedagogical Insights from EFL and Beyond

17	Xu, Yiping	2020	Theoretical paper	Conceptual	FL + digital media enables situated, experiential ICC learning.
18	Jensen, Birgit A.	2019	German L2 learners	Flipped ACTFL modules	Critical thinking and intercultural sensitivity improved.
19	Asteria, Prima Vidya	2019	Indonesian teacher candidates	Descriptive qualitative	FC helped TISOL teachers internalize and teach ICC principles.
20	Yang & Qian	2018	Chinese EFL learners	Conceptual	FC bridged culture and language output; emphasized interaction.
21	Huang & Shupin	2015	Chinese college EFL	Conceptual	Flipped model aligns with intercultural humanistic EFL goals.

4. Discussion

4.1. Patterns in ICC Development

The review reveals a growing consensus on the flipped classroom's capacity to support ICC through its learner-centered, multimodal, and interactive framework. The most frequently reported outcomes include enhanced empathy, critical cultural awareness, and collaborative dialogue. Notably, several studies (e.g., Plaza del Pino & Cabezón-Fernández, 2025; Soto-Molina & Méndez-Rivera, 2021) have emphasized emotional engagement and reflective thinking as key drivers of ICC, especially when pre-class materials involved authentic cultural narratives. Studies utilizing mixed methods (e.g., Sarvarizadeh et al., 2024; Fuentes Cabrera et al., 2020) have provided more robust evidence of statistically significant improvements in ICC indicators. Meanwhile, conceptual papers (e.g., MA Yuan & WU Zeyang, 2023; Ianniello et al., 2022) contributed important pedagogical models that foreground inclusivity, real-world application, and the ethics of cultural exchange.

4.2. From Description to Measurement: Evidence of ICC Gains

A closer examination of the empirical record reveals that the flipped classroom does not merely gesture toward intercultural growth; in several cases it produces gains that are both measurable and statistically compelling. The most persuasive evidence comes from quasi-experimental designs, where comparisons with control groups allow the effect of flipped pedagogy to be isolated. Sarvarizadeh et al. (2024), for example, documented striking improvements among psychiatric nurses: after an FC-based cultural care program, the intervention group achieved a mean competence score of 5.33 compared to 4.75 in the control group, a difference supported by a large effect size ($d = 1.22$). Such figures are both statistically significant and pedagogically meaningful, as they point to substantial shifts in cultural awareness, knowledge, skills, and empowerment. Comparable results were reported in adolescent and teacher education contexts (Fuentes Cabrera et al., 2020; Campillo Ferrer & Miralles Martínez, 2022), where FC cohorts consistently outperformed peers on indicators of empathy, open-mindedness, and democratic values.

This quantitative strand is complemented by studies offering indicative data through surveys and pre-/post-intervention ratings. Research in Albania (Toro et al., 2025) quantified baseline unfamiliarity with FC, 64% of students had never encountered the method, while subsequent self-reports traced gains in digital and intercultural competence. In Colombia, Soto-Molina and Méndez-

Rivera (2021) captured measurable growth in autonomy, collaboration, and cultural reflection through repeated questionnaires, while teacher surveys in Kazakhstan (Tazhenbayeva & Orynbayeva, 2023) provided numerical evidence of practitioners' recognition of FC's intercultural potential, even in the absence of training. Though less rigorous than controlled experiments, these studies extend the evidence base by showing how perceptions, attitudes, and self-assessed competencies shift when intercultural aims are woven into flipped designs.

Quantification alone, however, cannot account for the affective and reflective dimensions of intercultural learning. Phenomenological studies such as Plaza del Pino and Cabezón-Fernández (2025) elucidate how flipped interventions evoke profound empathy and ethical engagement with issues like migrant health, while conceptual contributions (e.g., Ianniello et al., 2022; MA Yuan & WU Zeyang, 2023) propose models that link flipped inclusion, adaptability, and cultural awareness to broader pedagogical frameworks. Holistically, this body of work illuminates how numerical data and qualitative insights are not oppositional but complementary: the former establishes that intercultural competence can be optimized in measurable ways, whereas the latter explains why these gains matter in real classrooms and professional contexts. When viewed across designs, flipped pedagogy frequently surpasses traditional formats in advancing Byram's *savoirs*. Controlled trials register marked gains in cultural knowledge and interpretive skill, while survey-based and qualitative studies trace significant shifts in openness, empathy, and critical engagement. Yet the distribution of rigorous work is narrow, concentrated in a small number of contexts. What the field now requires are longitudinal inquiries across diverse settings, coupled with systematic reporting of effect sizes, so that current promising patterns can be translated into consolidated and transferable claims.

Table 5. Mapping Byram's ICC Model to Flipped Classroom Pedagogy

ICC Dimension (Byram, 1997)	Flipped Classroom Practices	Pedagogical Purpose & Implementation Notes	Empirical Evidence	Observed Gains
Savoir être	Pre-class: Emotional/cultural narratives (podcasts, films, migrant stories, testimonials). In-class: Guided reflection, small-group dialogue.	Purpose: Spark empathy, foster openness, and challenge assumptions. Note: Instructor ensures psychological safety for sharing reactions.	Plaza del Pino & Cabezón-Fernández (2025); Soto-Molina & Méndez-Rivera (2021)	Enhanced empathy, openness, and willingness to engage with diverse perspectives.
Savoirs	Pre-class: Cultural case studies, readings, videos. In-class: Quizzes, collaborative note-taking, building knowledge wikis.	Purpose: Develop factual/contextual knowledge while treating culture as dynamic and contested.	Sarvarizadeh et al. (2024); Fuentes Cabrera et al. (2020)	Increased factual knowledge; measurable competence gains ($p < .001$).
Savoir comprendre	In-class: Comparative case analysis, debates, intercultural simulations, structured role-plays.	Purpose: Strengthen interpretive and comparative skills. Note: Teacher acts as facilitator, not answer-provider.	Campillo Ferrer & Miralles Martínez (2022); Chen & Hwang (2019)	Improved interpretation; ability to relate personal and target cultural perspectives.
Savoir apprendre/faire	In-class: Peer-led problem-solving, intercultural role plays, simulated negotiations. Outside class: Virtual exchanges, collaborative microteaching.	Purpose: Build discovery and real-time interaction skills. Note: Post-activity debrief is key for consolidating learning.	Husniah et al. (2021); Verhun & Batryn (2023)	Heightened interactional competence; improved discovery of new cultural knowledge.

A Critical Review of Flipped Learning and Intercultural Growth: Interdisciplinary Pedagogical Insights from EFL and Beyond

Savoir s'engager	In-class: Case-based analysis of inequities, ethical dilemmas, democratic dialogue, reflective essays.	Purpose: Foster critical ethical engagement and democratic values. Note: Requires high trust, respect, and psychological safety.	Sarvarizadeh et al. (2024); Ianniello et al. (2022)	Gains in critical awareness, ethical engagement, and democratic values.
-----------------------------	---	---	---	---

4.3. Cross-Context Comparisons

The pedagogical impact of the flipped classroom on intercultural development is not monolithic but is distinctly refracted through the lens of disciplinary priorities. Within EFL and language education, the model's primary strength lies in its seamless integration of linguistic and intercultural objectives. Scholarly inquiries consistently indicate that flipped learning concomitantly elevates language proficiency, particularly in speaking and writing, and nurtures the intercultural sensitivity necessary for its authentic application (Wu et al., 2021; Soto-Molina & Méndez-Rivera, 2021). This synergy cultivates learners who are both more competent communicators and more critical cross-cultural observers. In stark contrast, the focus within nursing and healthcare education shifts decisively from communication to care. Here, flipped pedagogy is leveraged to develop a professional ethic rooted in empathy and ethical responsibility. The investigation conducted by Plaza del Pino et al. (2025) illustrates how culturally embedded pre-class materials, such as podcasts on migrant health, followed by reflective in-class dialogues, propel students toward a deeper, more critical engagement with systemic health inequities. Against this backdrop, ICC is operationalized as a cornerstone of compassionate and just patient care. Meanwhile, business education applications unearth a third orientation: pragmatic adaptability. Flipped learning in this domain prepares students for the fine-grained demands of global business communication (Nguyen, 2019). Yet the outcomes are formed by learners' cultural backgrounds and their prior expectations of classroom interaction; as a result, the effectiveness of collaborative FC tasks proves culturally contingent. From a cross-disciplinary vantage point, this triangulation brings into focus a central insight: the flipped classroom maximizes intercultural growth, but the specific capacities it develops, whether communicative, empathetic, or adaptive, are inseparable from the guiding aims and values of each field.

4.4. Technology and Cultural Context

There is lucid evidence that technology-mediated FC environments (e.g., podcasts, VR, digital forums) amplify ICC learning when content is culturally infused and accompanied by structured reflection. However, some challenges persist:

- Studies in developing contexts (e.g., Toro et al., 2025; Tazhenbayeva & Orynbayeva, 2023) reported infrastructural limitations.
- Others (e.g., Lawter & Garnjost, 2021) accentuated how learners' cultural dimensions mediate the perceived effectiveness of FC tools.

This suggests that context-sensitive implementation is crucial; what fosters ICC in one context may not translate linearly to another without cultural, technological, and pedagogical adaptation.

4.5. Pre-Class vs. In-Class Dynamics

The flipped model's strength lies not merely in delivering content outside class, but in reconfiguring classroom dynamics. Studies that integrated in-class debates, simulations, and collaborative problem-solving (e.g., Cheng et al., 2024; Verhun & Batryn, 2023) have yielded richer

ICC outcomes than those relying solely on lectures or passive activities. This reinforces the idea that in-class intersubjectivity, framed by critical pedagogy, is the crucible where intercultural skills are truly forged.

4.6. Gaps and Future Directions

Despite the breadth of studies reviewed, several notable limitations persist in the current literature on flipped classrooms and intercultural communicative competence (ICC). First, few studies disaggregate findings according to the specific components of Byram's full ICC model, which limits a nuanced understanding of which dimensions are most affected by flipped instruction. Second, empirical research involving secondary-level learners remains underrepresented, leaving a lacuna in knowledge about how younger students engage with intercultural content in flipped environments. Third, there is a dearth of longitudinal designs that examine the durability of ICC gains over time. To confront these persistent voids in the literature, future research should incorporate multi-layered assessment tools capable of capturing the full complexity of ICC development. Additionally, scholars are encouraged to explore how flipped classroom design intersects with learners' linguistic identities and cultural positioning, which may mediate intercultural learning progress. Lastly, further investigation is needed into teacher preparation and professional development in intercultural flipped pedagogy, as effective implementation relies heavily on educators' intercultural awareness and instructional competence.

5. Conclusion

This critical review has illuminated the complex, multidimensional relationship between flipped classroom pedagogy and the development of intercultural communicative competence in language education. Building upon 21 studies from diverse contexts, it becomes clear that flipped learning, when implemented with intentional cultural content and dialogic in-class practices, can serve as a potent vector for intercultural proficiency advancement. By harmonizing Byram's ICC framework with FC design principles, educators can instill in learners not solely linguistic competence, but also the critical, empathetic, and reflective capacities needed for global citizenship. Yet, this potential is not automatic. It requires thoughtful integration of technologies, culturally responsive materials, and pedagogical scaffolding. In order to carry these insights forward into pedagogical practice, teachers should be supported in incorporating culturally rich pre-class materials, such as case studies, narratives, or podcasts, and in designing in-class activities, including debates and simulations, that nurture critical reflection. Policymakers, for their part, can advance this pedagogical shift by fostering context-sensitive access to technology, prioritizing teacher training in intercultural pedagogy, and investing in digital competence. Researchers also, as noted earlier, have a vital role: longitudinal studies, multi-dimensional ICC assessment tools, and explorations into underrepresented contexts are all needed to consolidate evidence of sustainable intercultural gains. In culmination, the flipped classroom is not a mere instructional trend; it is a transformative paradigm. When aligned with intercultural goals, it reimagines the language classroom as a space not only for speaking another language, but for becoming intercultural through it.

A Critical Review of Flipped Learning and Intercultural Growth: Interdisciplinary Pedagogical Insights from EFL and Beyond

References

- [1]. Amiryousefi, M. (2019). The incorporation of flipped learning into conventional classes to enhance EFL learners' L2 speaking, L2 listening, and engagement. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 13(2), 147–161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2017.1394307>
- [2]. Asteria, P. (2019). Developing intercultural competence for prospective TISOL teachers through flipped learning. In *Proceedings of the Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Conference (SoSHEC 2019)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/soshec-19.2019.27>
- [3]. Bishop, J. L., & Verleger, M. (2013). The flipped classroom: A survey of the research. *120th Annual Conference & Exposition*. Atlanta: American Society for Engineering Education. <https://doi.org/10.18260/1-2--22585>
- [4]. Borasheva, A. (2023). Fostering intercultural communication skills through flipped instruction. *Общество и инновации*. <https://doi.org/10.47689/2181-1415-vol4-iss5-pp72-77>
- [5]. Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- [6]. Cabrera, A., Parra-González, M., Belmonte, J., & Segura-Robles, A. (2020). Educational potentials of flipped learning in intercultural education as a transversal resource in adolescents. *Religion*, 11, 53. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11010053>
- [7]. Chen, L., Wang, X., Li, J., Bao, H., & Ren, G. (2016). Promoting students' engagement? Flipped classroom matters a lot – An empirical research in college. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, 196–206. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-41165-1_18
- [8]. Chen, M., & Hwang, G. (2019). Effects of a concept mapping-based flipped learning approach on EFL students' English speaking performance, critical thinking awareness and speaking anxiety. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 50(5), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjjet.12887>
- [9]. Cheng, J., Liu, Z., Zhou, F., Jiang, N., & Ou, Y. (2024). The application of informatization teaching and flipped classroom in the teaching of traditional culture in college languages. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 20(2). <https://doi.org/10.52783/jes.1635>
- [10]. Divjak, B., Rienties, B., Iniesto, F., Vondra, P., & Žizak, M. (2022). Flipped classrooms in higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic: Findings and future research recommendations. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-021-00316-4>
- [11]. Elfatah, M., Said, A., & Ahmed, M. A. S. A. (2016). The effect of a flipping classroom on writing skill in English as a foreign language and students' attitude towards flipping. *US-China Foreign Language*, 14(2), 98–114. <https://doi.org/10.17265/1539-8080/2016.02.003>
- [12]. Etemadfar, P., Soozandehfar, S., & Namaziandost, E. (2020). An account of EFL learners' listening comprehension and critical thinking in the flipped classroom model. *Cogent Education*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2020.1835150>
- [13]. Fathi, J., Rahimi, M., & Liu, G. (2022). A preliminary study on flipping an English as a foreign language collaborative writing course with video clips: Its impact on writing skills and writing motivation. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 39(3), 659–675. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcal.12772>
- [14]. Ferrer, J., & Martínez, P. (2022). Impact of the flipped classroom model on democratic education of student teachers in Spain. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 18, 280–296. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17461979221084111>
- [15]. Flipped Learning Network (FLN). (2014). *The four pillars of F-L-I-P™*. Retrieved March 19, 2025, from <http://flippedlearning.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=92>
- [16]. Heredia-Arboleda, E., Figueroa, M., Moreno, M., & Cevallos, A. (2024). The flipped classroom to improve the EFL listening skill. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1407.02>
- [17]. Husniah, R., Lischynsky, N., Abu, A., & Natchiar, F. (2021). Content-based instruction in the flipped classroom to enhance EFL learners' intercultural communicative competence. *Journal of English Teaching, Linguistics and Literature*, 4(2), 117. <https://doi.org/10.30587/JETLAL.V4I2.2509>
- [18]. Ianniello, A., Giuseppe, T., Podovsovnik, E., Piermalese, V., & Corona, F. (2022). Value and intercultural skills in the flipped inclusion model. *International Journal of Digital Literacy and Digital Competence*, 13, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.4018/ijdlcd.308301>
- [19]. Jensen, B. (2019). Using flipped learning to facilitate cross-cultural critical thinking in the L2 classroom. *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/TGER.12084>
- [20]. Lahmar, A. (2022). *Investigating the effectiveness of the flipped classroom in enhancing learners' writing skills (paragraph-writing): The case of ABBAS MOUSSA High School second graders* (Unpublished Master's dissertation). Badji Mokhtar University - Annaba.

- [21]. Lahmar, A., & Khallout, F. (2021). *The effectiveness of the flipped learning on students' speaking proficiency: The case of first grade students in Assia Djebbar Teacher Training College, Department of English* (Unpublished undergraduate dissertation). Assia Djebbar Teacher Training College of Constantine, Department of English.
- [22]. Lawter, L., & Garnjost, P. (2021). Cross-cultural comparison of digital natives in flipped classrooms. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 19(3), 100559. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2021.100559>
- [23]. Li, W., & Tseng, J. C. (2019). Engaging students in a flipped English classroom by conducting an interactive response system and its effects on students' learning achievement and learning motivation. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, 87–96. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35343-8_10
- [24]. Mohammad, T., & Khan, S. (2023). Flipped classroom: An effective methodology to improve writing skills of EFL students. *World Journal of English Language*, 13(5), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n5p468>
- [25]. Nguyen, H. (2019). Flipping business English classrooms to enhance learners' intercultural competence.
- [26]. Öztürk, M., & Çakıroğlu, Ü. (2021). Flipped learning design in EFL classrooms: Implementing self-regulated learning strategies to develop language skills. *Smart Learning Environments*, 8, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-021-00146-x>
- [27]. Samiei, F., & Ebadi, S. (2021). Exploring EFL learners' inferential reading comprehension skills through a flipped classroom. *Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41039-021-00157-9>
- [28]. Sarvarizadeh, M., Miri, S., Darban, F., & Farokhzadian, J. (2024). Innovative cultural care training: The impact of flipped classroom methods on critical cultural competencies in psychiatric nursing: A quasi-experimental study. *BMC Nursing*, 23. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-024-02001-z>
- [29]. Shi, Y. (2022). A blended learning practice of "flipped classroom" mode in intercultural communication course. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*. <https://doi.org/10.18178/ijiet.2022.12.11.1748>
- [30]. Soto-Molina, J., & Méndez-Rivera, P. (2021). Flipped classroom to foster intercultural competence in English learners. *Panorama*. <https://doi.org/10.15765/pnrm.v15i29.1706>
- [31]. Tazhenbayeva, A., & Orynbayeva, U. (2023). The perception of teachers on the using flipped classroom approach on formation ICC competence among secondary school students. *National Center for Higher Education Development*. <https://doi.org/10.59787/2413-5488-2023-41-1-39-45>
- [32]. Wei, X. (2025). The effectiveness of flipped classroom in improving English communication skills: A focus on listening and speaking. *Advances in Social Behavior Research*. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7102/2025.20434>
- [33]. Yang, P., & Qian, S. (2018). Application of flipped classroom teaching model in intercultural communication courses in universities and colleges in Yunnan Province. *Proceedings of ICSSHE 2018*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/ICSSHE-18.2018.80>
- [34]. Zhao, J., & Abidin, M. (2024). Innovative strategies for promoting reading skills through flipped classroom in college English instruction. *International Journal of Education and Humanities*. <https://doi.org/10.54097/v8kvc078>