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Students' Perspectives on Teaching Intercultural Communicative Competence: Evaluation in Philippine Senior High Schools

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ABSTRACT

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)—the capacity to comprehend one's own culture, acquire knowledge regarding foreign cultures, and utilize this understanding to establish meaningful cross-cultural connections—remains under-researched regarding instructional frequency across its sub-components (Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes) and student-preferred learning strategies in Southeast Asian secondary education. Employing a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, this study empirically evaluated these dimensions among 62 Grade 12 Senior High School students in Benguet, Philippines, utilizing a validated questionnaire (Aiken's $V = 0.97$, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.915$) followed by Focus Group Discussions (FGD, $n = 8$). Quantitative results revealed that ICC instruction is overall "Seldom Discussed" across language classrooms (Overall $M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.42$), with ICC-Skills recording the highest mean ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.45$), followed by ICC-Attitudes ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.48$) and ICC-Knowledge ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 0.41$). Strategy preference analysis indicated that students most favored first-hand accounts challenging cultural norms for ICC-Knowledge (Mode = 5), interactive group activities and role-playing for ICC-Skills (Mode = 5), and deep structured discussions on taboo or controversial issues for ICC-Attitudes (Mode = 5). Qualitative thematic analysis illuminated that low reading comprehension and standardized curricular time constraints severely hinder deep cultural engagement. The study underscores the necessity of integrating contextualized, student-centered pedagogies to operationalize Byram's ICC framework in language curricula.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Fostering intercultural understanding across diverse societies remains an imperative educational goal, particularly as indifference and cultural misinterpretations continue to trigger social disharmony, ethnocentrism, and discrimination (Akkilinc, 2018; Baldwin, 2017; Ogharanduku & Tinuoye, 2020). The international community has codified this

imperative through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—specifically SDG 11 (Safe and Inclusive Communities), SDG 16 (Peaceful Institutions), and SDG 17 (Global Partnerships)—positioning education as a primary vehicle for cultural appreciation (Benito et al., 2025). Culture, defined by Hofstede et al. (2010) as the collective mental programming distinguishing group members, is dynamically transmitted through language. Consequently, language education serves as an ideal pedagogical site for integrating cultural learning, equipping learners with the capacity to navigate complex global interactions without forfeiting their distinct identities (Hariri, 2022; Xing, 2022).

To operationalize cultural integration within language classrooms, Byram introduced the conceptual model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) (Huang, 2021; Munezane, 2021). ICC extends linguistic and communicative competence by embedding three core, interrelated dimensions: (1) *ICC-Knowledge (savoirs)*, encompassing awareness of social groups, societal practices, and cross-cultural interaction dynamics; (2) *ICC-Skills (savoir apprendre/faire and savoir comprendre)*, denoting the ability to interpret, relate, and acquire new cultural knowledge in real-time encounters; and (3) *ICC-Attitudes (savoir être)*, reflecting openness, curiosity, and the readiness to suspend disbelief regarding other cultures while relativizing one's own (Munezane, 2024). Contemporary frameworks by Huber and Reynolds further expand these dimensions to include multiperspectivity, cognitive flexibility, and critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) (Pham & Pham, 2022; Sarwari et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2022).

Despite the robust theoretical development of Byram's framework globally, a critical disconnect persists between policy expectations and classroom execution, particularly within Southeast Asian ESL/EFL contexts. Extant literature primarily evaluates teacher perspectives or textbook cultural representations (Bal & Savas, 2022; Novita et al., 2024; Özişik et al., 2019), frequently neglecting the learner's lived experience. Furthermore, while previous empirical studies have examined cultural awareness in broader terms (Dela Cruz et al., 2024; Rangsarittikun, 2024), there is a distinct shortage of empirical research quantifying the exact “frequency” with which each distinct ICC component (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes) is addressed in daily secondary language instruction, alongside how students explicitly prefer to acquire these competencies.

This empirical gap is particularly acute in regional Philippine Senior High Schools (SHS), such as those in Benguet province, where classrooms feature rich indigenous ethnolinguistic diversity (e.g., Kankanaey, Ibaloi) alongside national standard curricula. Although the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) embeds cultural competencies across core subjects such as Oral Communication and 21st Century Literature (DepEd, 2016), educators frequently restrict cultural instruction to surface-level facts (festivals and food) due to rigorous standardized testing pressures and limited instructional time (Ramirez-Espinosa, 2023; Villa, 2023). Consequently, high school learners are rarely afforded opportunities to engage with deeper cultural constructs or develop critical ICC skills and attitudes.

To address this state-of-the-art research gap, this study investigates the teaching of ICC in language classrooms from the direct perspective of Philippine Senior High School students. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Quantify the perceived frequency of classroom discussion across the three ICC components (ICC-Knowledge, ICC-Skills, and ICC-Attitudes).
2. Identify student-preferred instructional strategies tailored to each specific ICC component.
3. Qualitatively unpack the contextual mechanisms, opportunities, and underlying barriers (e.g., reading comprehension, instructional constraints) influencing ICC learning in secondary classrooms.

By systematically linking quantitative frequency metrics with qualitative student narratives, this study provides actionable insights to refine language curriculum delivery and operationalize Byram's ICC framework within regional Southeast Asian secondary education.

2. METHOD

This study adopted a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, as established by Creswell and Creswell (2018). In the initial quantitative phase, descriptive survey data were collected to measure the frequency of ICC classroom discussions and identify student strategy preferences. The subsequent qualitative phase utilized Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to explain, contextualize, and elaborate upon the quantitative trends observed during the first phase.

The study was conducted in a private secondary educational institution in Benguet, Philippines. Utilizing a purposive sampling technique, 62 Grade 12 Senior High School students were selected as quantitative survey participants. Grade 12 students were intentionally sampled due to their cumulative exposure to senior high school language subjects (*Oral Communication, Reading and Writing, 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World*) and humanities courses (*Understanding Culture, Society, and Politics*). Prior to data collection, formal institutional ethical clearance, parent/guardian informed consent forms, and student assent documentation were secured in accordance with university ethics regulations.

For the qualitative phase, a sub-sample of 8 students (coded as P1 through P8) was selected through criterion sampling based on survey completion and willingness to articulate classroom experiences. The FGD lasted approximately 75 minutes, was audio-recorded with consent, and was transcribed verbatim for analysis. The primary quantitative instrument comprised a two-part structured survey:

Part I: Frequency of ICC Discussion. Adapted from Zhou (2011) and grounded in Byram's framework (Munezane, 2024), this section contained 11 items measuring the classroom frequency of ICC-Knowledge (5 items), ICC-Skills (4 items), and ICC-Attitudes (2 items) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Never discussed") to 5 ("Often discussed"). **Part II:** Student Preferred Strategies. Self-developed based on Huber and Reynolds' pedagogical indicators, this section presented 9 candidate strategy

items rated on a 5-point Likert agreement scale ranging from 1 ("Least preferred") to 5 ("Most preferred") (Pham & Pham, 2022).

To ensure the psychometric soundness of the instrument, content validity was rigorously evaluated by a panel of three senior professors in language education, yielding an overall Aiken's Validity Coefficient (V) of 0.97. Subsequent pilot testing with an independent sample of senior high school students ($n = 30$) confirmed the scale's internal consistency reliability, with an overall Cronbach's alpha (α) of 0.915—substantially exceeding the conventional empirical benchmark of 0.70 (Taber, 2018).

Quantitative data derived from the survey was processed using IBM SPSS Statistics. In alignment with established psychometric protocols for interval-level interpretation of Likert-type scales, central tendency and dispersion metric specifically means (M), standard deviations (SD), and modes ($Mode$)—were calculated. The 5-point Likert scale was categorized using equal interval boundary intervals, as operationalized in Table 1.

Table 1. Quantitative Interpretation Scale for Discussion Frequency and Strategy Preference

Scale Point	Mean Interval Range	Frequency Descriptive Rating	Preference Descriptive Rating
5	4.21 – 5.00	Often Discussed	Most Preferred
4	3.41 – 4.20	Occasionally Discussed	Often Preferred
3	2.61 – 3.40	Seldom Discussed	Sometimes Preferred
2	1.81 – 2.60	Very Seldom Discussed	Slightly Preferred
1	1.00 – 1.80	Never Discussed	Least Preferred

For qualitative data, audio recordings from the FGD were transcribed and analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2019) thematic analysis framework. Transcripts underwent iterative coding to extract underlying themes explaining quantitative metrics. Methodological rigor and credibility were ensured through member-checking of transcripts and researcher triangulation during codebook development.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Frequency of Classroom Discussion on ICC Components

Descriptive statistical analysis of survey data revealed that all three sub-components of Intercultural Communicative Competence are overall "Seldom Discussed" in language classrooms (Overall $M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.42$). Table 2 summarizes the comparative mean scores across the three components.

Table 2. Summary of Frequency of Discussion Across ICC Components

ICC Component	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Descriptive Equivalent Rating
ICC-Knowledge	3.26	0.41	Seldom Discussed
ICC-Skills	3.38	0.45	Seldom Discussed

ICC Component	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Descriptive Equivalent Rating
ICC-Attitudes	3.29	0.48	Seldom Discussed
Overall ICC Score	3.31	0.42	Seldom Discussed

The descriptive statistical findings indicate that Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) integration remains marginally addressed within the language classroom context. Across all dimensions, the cumulative score yields an overall mean of 3.31 (SD = 0.42), placing the frequency of ICC discussions under the descriptive equivalent of "Seldom Discussed." A closer inspection of the individual sub-components reveals that ICC-Skills recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.38, SD = 0.45$), followed by ICC-Attitudes ($M = 3.29, SD = 0.48$) and ICC-Knowledge ($M = 3.26, SD = 0.41$). Despite these slight numerical variations, the dispersion of responses across all three domains remains tightly clustered around the central tendency, as reflected by the consistently low standard deviations, confirming a consensus among respondents regarding the relative infrequency of ICC practices.

These empirical results underscore a notable pedagogical gap, suggesting that intercultural dimensions are often secondary to traditional linguistic instruction in language classrooms. The uniformly low implementation across knowledge, skills, and attitudes highlights a pervasive instructional trend where intercultural competence is neither systematically prioritized nor explicitly embedded in day-to-day classroom discourse. While instructors appear to engage slightly more with skill-oriented intercultural practices, the overall reliance on sporadic discussion implies a lack of structured curriculum design or institutional emphasis on holistic intercultural training. Consequently, these outcomes call for target interventions, such as explicit curriculum reform and professional development initiatives, to systematically elevate ICC from an incidental classroom topic to an integral component of language education.

ICC-Knowledge Component

As shown in Table 3, only one item under ICC-Knowledge reached an "Occasionally Discussed" rating: exploring different cultures and learner perceptions ($M = 3.52, SD = 0.61$). All remaining items were rated as "Seldom Discussed," with the lowest mean assigned to exploring areas of cross-cultural communication misunderstanding ($M = 3.08, SD = 0.72$).

Table 3. Classroom Discussion Frequency for ICC-Knowledge Elements

No.	Indicator / Item Statement	M	SD	Descriptive Rating
1	Different cultures are discussed including perceptions of learners about these cultures.	3.52	0.61	Occasionally Discussed
2	Different perspectives of learners on a particular event/phenomenon are explored.	3.38	0.68	Seldom Discussed
3	Origins of stereotypes are discussed.	3.17	0.74	Seldom Discussed

No.	Indicator / Item Statement	M	SD	Descriptive Rating
4	Cultures of other countries and other places are discussed.	3.14	0.70	Seldom Discussed
5	Areas of misunderstanding in communication between cultures are explored.	03.08	0.72	Seldom Discussed

FGD transcripts shed light on these findings. Participants noted that while surface cultural definitions are presented, deep cross-cultural exploration is rarely sustained. Participant 2 stated, *"During discussions, teachers tell us about different cultures, but mostly about negative effects if we don't follow rules."* Participant 5 corroborated, *"We learned about culture primarily in social science subjects like Aralin Panlipunan and UCSP, but less so in English language classes."* Regarding local culture vs. foreign culture, Participant 1 observed a gap in analyzing cultural practices: *"I watched an interview about traditions where people used custom to cover up inhumane practices... we rarely evaluate those critically in class."*

ICC-Skills Component

Table 4 details the item distributions for ICC-Skills. Utilizing cultural knowledge to explain foreign documents ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.65$) and examining ideological influences on cultural events ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.67$) were categorized as "Occasionally Discussed." Conversely, discussing how learners' own values influence their cross-cultural perceptions ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.71$) and analyzing connotations/implications in foreign texts ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.75$) were rated as "Seldom Discussed."

Table 4. Classroom Discussion Frequency for ICC-Skills Elements

No.	Indicator / Item Statement	M	SD	Descriptive Rating
1	Cultural knowledge and skills are used by learners to explain documents/events from other cultures.	3.51	0.65	Occasionally Discussed
2	Influence of values, beliefs, and ideological perspectives of other cultures in events/documents are explored.	3.41	0.67	Occasionally Discussed
3	Influence of learners' own values, beliefs, and ideological perspectives in their perceptions towards other cultures are discussed.	3.38	0.71	Seldom Discussed
4	Connotations and implications in documents/events from other cultures are explored by learners.	3.22	0.75	Seldom Discussed

In qualitative reflections, students cited poor reading comprehension and limited exposure to foreign literary texts as significant barriers to mastering ICC-Skills. Participant 2 admitted, *"I do not really understand complex foreign texts since my reading comprehension skills are low."* Participant 8 added, *"English subjects require deep reading, but I struggle to understand the hidden meanings of cultural words."* Furthermore, students noted that native cultural reflection is largely neglected; Participant 6 remarked, *"We do not study much about our own culture in English—only the culture of other people."*

ICC-Attitudes Component

Data presented in Table 5 indicate that discussing differing cultural values was "Occasionally Discussed" ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.69$), whereas sharing strange or fascinating cultural practices was "Seldom Discussed" ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.78$).

Table 5. Classroom Discussion Frequency for ICC-Attitudes Elements

No.	Indicator / Item Statement	M	SD	Descriptive Rating
1	Values, beliefs, and perspectives that are perceived differently by other cultures are discussed.	3.41	0.69	Occasionally Discussed
2	Fascinating or strange things about other cultures are shared by learners.	3.17	0.78	Seldom Discussed

Qualitative data revealed that discussion of attitudes occurs primarily when religious practices surface during general topics. Participant 5 shared, *"They teach us about things perceived differently across religious denominations."* However, spontaneous sharing remains limited due to student hesitation and fear of peer judgment.

Student Preferred Instructional Strategies for ICC

To establish effective pedagogical avenues, student preferences for specific learning strategies within Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) were evaluated through frequency distributions and modal analysis (Mode). The empirical findings indicate a distinct pattern in learner orientation toward interactive and experiential instructional modalities, as evidenced by the high concentration of responses around specific preferred learning strategies. By examining both the central tendency via mode scores and the proportional representation across frequency distributions, the data reveals that students overwhelmingly favor active learning frameworks—such as task-based discussions and cross-cultural simulations—over passive, lecture-centered instruction. This pronounced preference underscores a critical misalignment between current classroom practices and student learning needs, suggesting that enhancing ICC engagement requires a strategic shift toward learner-centered, communicative-driven instructional design.

Strategies for ICC-Knowledge

Table 6 demonstrates that all five evaluated strategies for acquiring ICC-Knowledge achieved a modal rating of 5 ("Most Preferred"). The single most favored strategy was **listening to real, first-hand experiences regarding how individuals challenge cultural norms and stereotypes** ($n = 14$ for Rating 5).

Table 6. Student Preferred Strategies for ICC-Knowledge

No.	Strategy Statement	Frequency Distribution per Rating Scale (1–5)					Mode	Descriptive Rating
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	Listening to real, first-hand experiences about how people challenged cultural norms and stereotypes.	0	4	4	10	14	5	Most Preferred

No.	Strategy Statement	Frequency Distribution per Rating Scale (1–5)					Mode	Descriptive Rating
		1	2	3	4	5		
2	Discussing similarities and differences of cultures, including ours with others.	0	9	9	8	12	5	Most Preferred
3	Interviewing parents and grandparents about changes in cultural practices over time.	0	4	4	11	12	5	Most Preferred
4	Discussing pros and cons of varied cultural practices (e.g., weddings, burials, child naming).	0	5	5	13	11	5	Most Preferred
5	Learning different meanings of gestures across cultures to avoid offensive actions.	0	7	7	10	11	5	Most Preferred

Participants emphasized the impact of authentic media and direct narratives during the FGD. Participant 8 stated, "Teachers letting us watch real-life documentaries about other cultures is very effective because it comes from reliable, direct sources." Participant 6 added, "To truly learn culture, hearing authentic personal accounts makes it real."

Strategies for ICC-Skills

Table 7 outlines preferences for ICC-Skills strategies. Group activities facilitating cross-cultural sharing emerged as the top preference (Mode = 5, n = 11 for Rating 5), followed closely by roleplaying real-life intercultural encounters and analyzing foreign films or poetry (Mode = 5).

Table 7. Student Preferred Strategies for ICC-Skills

No.	Strategy Statement	Frequency Distribution per Rating Scale (1–5)					Mode	Descriptive Rating
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	Group activities where knowledge is shared about how people with different cultural affiliations live and relate.	0	7	7	10	11	5	Most Preferred
2	Roleplaying real-life scenarios involving interaction with people from other cultures.	0	6	6	9	10	5	Most Preferred
3	Reading foreign poems or watching foreign movies to explore cultural contexts.	0	7	7	10	10	5	Most Preferred

FGD participant 2 highlighted peer collaboration: "In group activities, we learn from classmates coming from different provinces. We listen to how they do things in their hometowns, which opens our eyes."

Strategies for ICC-Attitudes

Table 8 indicates that conducting deep, structured discussions on differing cultural views regarding controversial topics was rated as "Most Preferred" (Mode = 5, n = 11 for Rating 5).

Table 8. Student Preferred Strategies for ICC-Attitudes

No.	Strategy Statement	Frequency Distribution per Rating Scale (1–5)					Mode	Descriptive Rating
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	Deep discussions on different views of various cultural groups on controversial topics.	0	7	7	9	11	5	Most Preferred

As presented in Table 8, student preference for developing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) attitudes strongly favors engaging with complex cultural narratives. Specifically, conducting deep, structured discussions on differing cultural views regarding controversial topics achieved the highest modal value (Mode = 5), corresponding to a descriptive rating of "Most Preferred." The frequency distribution highlights a clear positive skew toward higher preference categories, with most respondents rating this strategy at level 4 ($n = 9$) and level 5 ($n = 11$). Notably, no participants selected the lowest rating category ($n = 0$ for Rating 1), while moderate ratings were equally distributed ($n = 7$ for both Ratings 2 and 3). These empirical metrics demonstrate a widespread learner inclination toward critical, discourse-driven modalities over superficial cultural exchanges.

The quantitative findings are further corroborated by qualitative narratives obtained from the Focus Group Discussions (FGD), which highlight the cognitive and affective mechanisms underlying student preferences. Participants emphasized that grappling with controversial topics serves as a key catalyst for critical reflection and perspective-taking. For instance, Participant 4 highlighted how unpackaging culturally sensitive practices fosters deeper affective engagement, stating, *"Learning why a certain practice is considered taboo in another culture helps you empathize, because you finally understand their underlying reasoning."* This convergence of quantitative preference and qualitative insight suggests that exposure to disorienting, or controversial cultural themes encourages learners to move beyond passive tolerance toward active empathy and intercultural cognitive flexibility. Consequently, language educators are encouraged to incorporate structured, inquiry-based discussions centered on socio-cultural controversies to cultivate robust ICC-Attitudes.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide critical empirical insight into the operational realities of Intercultural Communicative Competence instruction within Philippine senior high school language classrooms. Synthesizing quantitative metrics with qualitative student experiences reveals important pedagogical disconnects and opportunities.

The Paradox of Low Discussion Frequency Across ICC Components

The overall finding that all three ICC sub-components are "Seldom Discussed" ($M = 3.31$) aligns with previous regional investigations by [Rangsarittikun \(2024\)](#) and [Ramirez-Espinosa \(2023\)](#), which demonstrated that language teaching in ESL/EFL contexts remains predominantly structural and exam-oriented. Although curriculum documents explicitly mandate cultural integration ([DepEd, 2016](#)), actual classroom implementation rarely moves beyond superficial cultural artifacts such as regional attire, festivals, or local food. As [Hinner \(2017\)](#) emphasized, true cross-cultural competence requires addressing underlying values, cognitive frameworks, and potential communication breakdown dimensions that recorded the lowest empirical means in this study ($M = 3.08$).

Curiously, among the three sub-components, *ICC-Skills* achieved a slightly higher numerical mean ($M = 3.38$) than Knowledge ($M = 3.26$) or Attitudes ($M = 3.29$). This finding contrasts with studies in European contexts ([Fernandez-Aguero & Chancay-Cedeno, 2019](#)), where ICC-Attitudes predominated, or Turkish contexts ([Cansever & Mede, 2016](#)), where ICC-Knowledge was prioritized. In the Philippine educational architecture, this skill-centric trend is explained by DepEd's Senior High School curriculum design, which structures language core subjects (such as *Oral Communication* and *Reading & Writing*) around performance-based outcomes rather than static content transmission ([Güneş & Söylemez, 2018](#)). However, qualitative findings highlight an ongoing imbalance: performance tasks focus almost exclusively on foreign target cultures, leaving learners' native cultural identities under-analyzed. As [Xing \(2022\)](#) argued, disregarding native cultural reflection destabilizes learners' cultural identity, hindering their ability to act as balanced intercultural mediators.

Qualitative themes further revealed that low student reading comprehension severely restricts engagement with ICC-Skills ($M = 3.22$). When secondary learners struggle with decoding foreign literary texts or idioms, they cannot access deeper ideological connotations or engage in multiperspectivity ([Nawi & Nor 2023](#)). This empirical finding demonstrates that linguistic competence and intercultural reading comprehension are deeply interdependent prerequisites for developing advanced ICC skills.

Deciphering Student Preferred Strategies and Pedagogical Mechanics

Students' strong preferences for specific pedagogical strategies provide a clear roadmap for reforming classroom instruction. For *ICC-Knowledge*, the overwhelming preference for listening to first-hand accounts of individuals challenging cultural norms reflects a desire for counter-narratives that dismantle monolithic stereotypes. Stereotypes stem from oversimplified, second-hand information ([Nabung, 2024](#)). Exposing learners to authentic personal narratives and documentaries generates cognitive dissonance, compelling students to re-evaluate preconceived biases and understand the complex origins of cultural prejudice ([Aufa, 2017](#); [Dela Cruz et al., 2024](#)).

Similarly, the preference for comparative family interviews (interviewing parents/grandparents regarding cultural changes over time) underscores the value of

intergenerational learning. As Shwalb and Hossain noted, family oral histories serve as vital conduits for transmitting cultural values and illustrating the impact of globalization on local traditions (Taptiani et al., 2024). Comparing these domestic insights with target cultural norms leverages proximity and personal relevance, amplifying student engagement (Novita et al., 2024; Reid, 2015).

For *ICC-Skills*, the preference for collaborative group activities and roleplaying confirms that intercultural skills are best developed through experiential, social interaction (Madhu & Bhattachryya, 2023). Small-group settings create a psychologically safe space for peer sharing, reducing the communication anxiety often experienced during whole-class recitations (Sidgi, 2022). Furthermore, as Leon-Henri and Jain (2017) demonstrated, roleplaying real-life cross-cultural encounters enables learners to practice sociolinguistic adaptation, empathy, and non-verbal communication in low-stakes environments (Ishak & Aziz, 2022; Ria & Jamaludin, 2020).

For *ICC-Attitudes*, student preference centered on deep discussions of controversial or taboo subjects (often categorized as PARSNIP: Politics, Religion, Sex, Narcotics, etc.). Ludwig and Summer (2023) observed that controversial topics intrinsically arouse student interest through conflict and intellectual inquiry. When structured carefully, discussing sensitive cultural issues allows students to move past ethnocentric judgment and practice cultural relativism—evaluating practices within their specific socio-historical frameworks rather than through external biases (Lin, 2020; Wansink et al., 2023).

Theoretical and Regional Implications for Byram's ICC Model

In evaluating these findings against Byram's classic ICC model (Huang, 2021; Munezane, 2021), this study provides meaningful theoretical refinement for language education in Southeast Asia. Byram's original framework assumes a linear progression where foundational knowledge (*savoirs*) informs skills (*savoir apprendre/faire*) and cultivates positive attitudes (*savoir être*). However, in multilingual, ethnically diverse contexts like the Philippines, students possess rich, fluid intercultural experiences prior to formal instruction. Consequently, instruction should not follow a passive, linear path. Instead, our empirical data supports a “pedagogical feedback model”: leveraging interactive group encounters (Skills) and provocative, authentic topics (Attitudes) serves as the primary catalyst for driving critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) and acquiring formal cultural knowledge (Knowledge). Re-ordering instruction to match student strategy preferences enhances both linguistic engagement and intercultural development.

4. CONCLUSION

This empirical inquiry provides critical insights into the instructional reality of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) within Philippine senior high school language classrooms. Synthesizing the core findings, the study demonstrates a salient disconnect between pedagogical practice and learner preferences; instructional engagement across all ICC dimensions—Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes—remains

marginal ("Seldom Discussed"), primarily constrained by rigid standardized testing, temporal limitations, and superficial cultural treatments. This operational bottleneck for ICC-Skills is further compounded by linguistic barriers, where limited reading comprehension obstructs students' critical engagement with complex cultural ideologies and foreign literature. Conversely, learners demonstrate a robust propensity for experiential, interactive, and authentic learning modalities. Specifically, ICC-Knowledge is optimized through personal narratives and intergenerational inquiry, ICC-Skills through collaborative roleplaying and cinematic analysis, and ICC-Attitudes through structured dialogic engagement with controversial, real-world cultural topics.

To bridge this policy-practice divide, targeted pedagogical interventions and curriculum redesign are imperative. Educational stakeholders and curriculum developers, particularly within the Department of Education (DepEd), must explicitly integrate dedicated ICC performance standards into language syllabi while embedding vocabulary scaffolding to mitigate reading comprehension constraints during foreign text analysis. Classroom instruction should systematically transition toward student-preferred, experiential frameworks—such as cross-cultural roleplays and intergenerational projects—supported by safe discussion protocols (e.g., Ludwig & Summer, 2023) to navigate sensitive cultural topics constructively. While these actionable insights offer a transformative framework for language pedagogy in Southeast Asia, the study's generalizability is constrained by its localized sample ($n = 62$) within a single private institution in Benguet and its reliance on self-reported data. Consequently, future research should pursue large-scale, nationwide cross-sectional surveys alongside longitudinal experimental designs to empirically evaluate the differential efficacy of specific pedagogical interventions over time.

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