

ASSESSMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXTS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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1. Introduction

Su (2018) asserts that “The world has become more of global village in the 21st century” (p. 217). In this regard, Iswandari and Ardi (2022) draw attention to the emergence of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and World Englishes (WE) in the age of globalization, which requires teaching the varieties of language and also different types of communication. Likewise, Zheng (2014) underlines the fact that communicative competence has become more important in the field of foreign language learning in 21st century with the introduction and use of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and five Cs standards. In a similar vein, Garcia (2022) remarks intercultural communicative competence and cultural awareness in language teaching are really important terms in CEFR. Accordingly, the developments and advances in various fields from technology to education pave the way for the emergence of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which has become an essential part of today’s globalized world by enabling people to gain new perspectives towards differences, to interact with each other and so to develop their understanding about cultural sensitivity (Garcia, 2022).

According to Byram (2009), “Teachers of language need to become teachers of language and culture” (p. 331), which requires language teachers to integrate the components of ICC into their teaching and lesson plans by making use of appropriate methods and materials as it is suggested by Garcia (2022). Munezane (2021) puts forward that “Language classrooms have a great potential for developing learners’ ICC” (p. 1676) by referring to the fact that culture is in constant change and evolves continually. Likewise, Zhai and Razali (2020) specify that language and culture are closely interrelated; therefore, ICC should be an integral part of foreign language learning and teaching. In this sense, they claim that teaching strategies based on intercultural communication should be used in language teaching and higher education programs should include issues such as international student advising, intercultural sensitivity and understanding. Further, Harsch and Poehner (2016) suggest learners to develop their intercultural skills by engaging in intercultural interactions with people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in order to be able to cope with the challenges and changes in this globalized world. Therefore, it can be concluded that the communication channels and tools have changed and evolved with the developments in the globalized age, and special attention has been paid to teaching and assessing ICC. Accordingly, it is expressed that assessing ICC has gained importance in language education as well in the last two decades (Borghetti, 2017).

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Definition and models of ICC

Iswandari and Ardi (2022) remark ICC is composed of two terms, which are communicative and intercultural competence. While the first component is based on appropriate use of language depending on the variety of contexts, the second component is related to the interaction among people from different cultures. Accordingly, intercultural communicative competence is defined as “an individual’s ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries” (Byram, 1997, p. 7). In line with this definition, the main ICC model was developed in 1997 by Byram with the intention of describing the main components of intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 2009). Byram’s 1997 model which is composed of five components is regarded as “most influential in constructing ICC components” (Lei, 2021, p. 38).

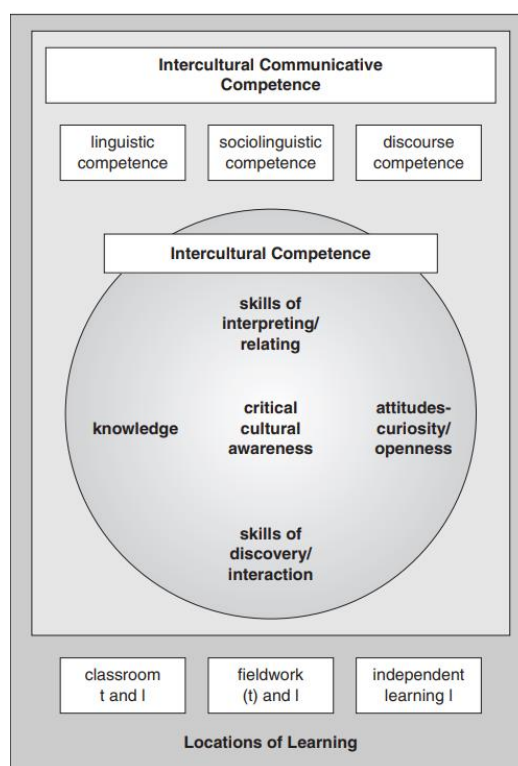


Figure 1. Intercultural communicative competence model (Byram, 2009, p. 323)

Another ICC model is Deardorff's (2006) pyramid model with three levels and it is based on the intercultural communicational knowledge and skills by providing "important methodological implications for the construction of an ICC assessment system" (Lei, 2021, p. 39). According to Deardorff (2006), this pyramid model focuses on both internal and external outcomes of intercultural competence.

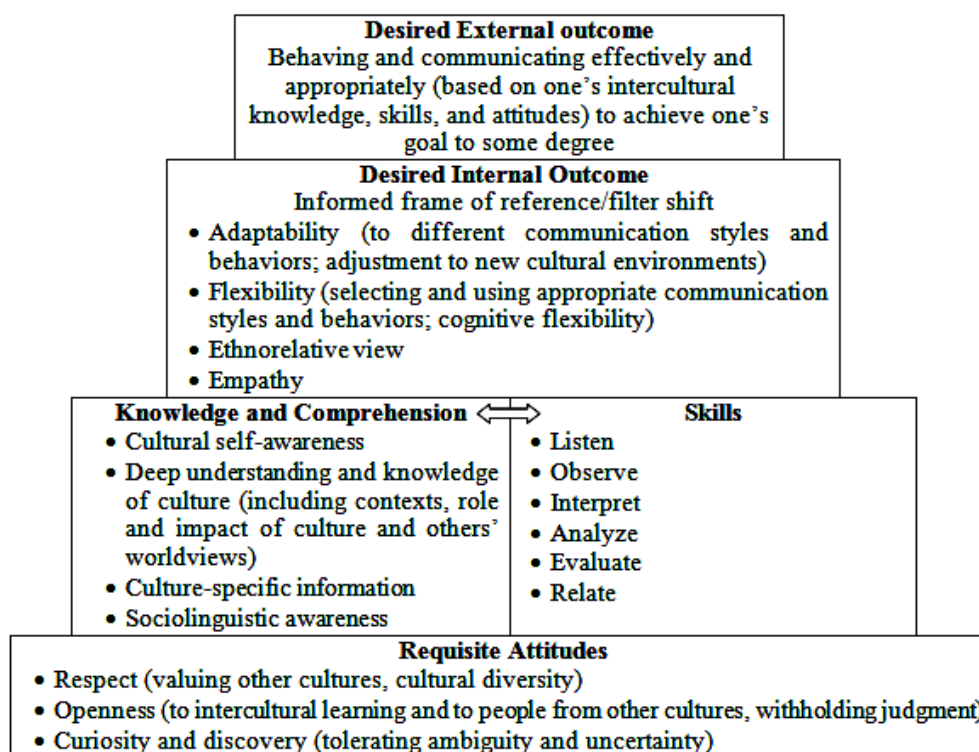


Figure 2. Pyramid model of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006, p. 254)

Further, Fantini (2009) defines ICC as a concept which requires learners to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. On the other hand, he argues that there is no agreement on the definition of ICC; therefore, various alternative terms are used by different scholars. Although the list is not limited to these terms, some of the alternative concepts used for ICC are listed by Fantini (2009, p. 457) as *biculturalism*, *multiculturalism*, *bilingualism*, *multilingualism*, *plurilingualism*, *communicative competence*, *cross-cultural adaptation*, *cross-cultural awareness*, *cross-cultural communication*, *cultural competence*, *cultural or intercultural sensitivity*, *effective intergroup communication*, *ethnorelativity*, *intercultural cooperation*, *global competitive intelligence*, *global competence*, *international competence*, *international communication*, *intercultural interaction*, *metaphoric competence*, *transcultural communication*. Concerning the various definitions of ICC, Deardorff (2006) points out that "The definition of intercultural competence continues to evolve, which is perhaps one reason why this construct has been so difficult to define" (p. 258).

2.2. Assessment of ICC

Considering the differences among the definitions of ICC, various assessment tools or instruments have emerged. In this regard, the book edited by Paran and Sercu (2010) puts an emphasis on the necessity of assessing ICC by referring to the fact that testing and assessment are integral parts of learning and teaching, which is affected by the perceptions and understandings of the individuals. In other words, ICC includes affective, cognitive, and behavioural domains affecting the assessment type, format, and approach as it is discussed by Sercu (2010). Furthermore, he asserts that ICC assessment includes various sub-dimensions from critical thinking skills to reading ability; therefore, it is not possible to assess this term in a holistic way. Likewise, Deardorff (2006) notes that “it is important to measure intercultural competence for a period of time as opposed to one point in time” (p. 257) by claiming that ICC can be assessed and it is significant to assess the levels and components of it rather than holistic assessment. He also refers to the complexity and evolving nature of measuring ICC and suggests implementing both qualitative and quantitative assessment methods while measuring ICC. Another recommendation on assessing ICC is to make use of the combination of expert, peer and self-assessment tools and techniques (Borghetti, 2017). In line with these, many researchers have proposed different assessment models, techniques, and tools about the measurement of ICC. As for the rationale behind the use of various models and techniques to assess ICC, it is mentioned that scholars advocate different perspectives about the focus of intercultural assessment due to the disagreements about what should be assessed in the intercultural communicative context. To begin with Dervin (2010), he refers to the presence of various methods and techniques used for assessing ICC. One of these methods is the use of standard cultural tests which do not reveal sufficient information about intercultural competence. Other methods range from portfolios, self-assessment reports, narrative diaries, surveys to interviews. However, Dervin (2010) emphasizes that all of these methods have been criticized from different perspectives with respect to their drawbacks. So, he proposes two different models to assess ICC in the higher education context. The first model is the summative one which is based on otherization, representation, and identity. As for the second model, it is related to learners’ needs and objectives; so, self-assessment is used as an assessment technique in this model. Likewise, Fantini (2009) indicates that various assessment techniques and strategies are used to assess ICC based on the goals and objectives of courses, programs, and individuals. He also draws attention to the evolving nature of intercultural competence, which means that it is a developmental process and the techniques and tools used for assessing ICC depend on many factors such as learner needs, curriculum objectives, and resources. Thirdly, Sercu (2010) underscores that different assessment techniques are used to measure ICC in foreign language context by highlighting the necessity of assessing ICC in order to reveal the effects of intercultural teaching on learners and on the society as well.

Furthermore, Griffith et al. (2016) claim there are various definitions of ICC in the higher education context. Therefore, they propose that ICC is defined and measured through five

models which focus on different aspects of intercultural communicative competence. After providing the varieties about the definition of ICC, it is underlined that portfolios and surveys are the most widely used assessment formats in terms of assessing intercultural communicative competence. Another important point is related to the challenging features of ICC assessment. In addition, it is underscored that deciding on the design and implementation of the assessment tool according to the validity criteria is a challenging task for the stakeholders. Based on these challenges of ICC assessment, a new three-dimensional conceptual framework which aims to refer to different characteristics of ICC is proposed by Griffith et al. (2016).

In addition, Sinicrope et al. (2007) indicate that the assessment of ICC is mainly based on self-reports in form of surveys among various indirect assessment tools. At this point, it is hypothesized that learners' perceptions about their own intercultural competence would be different from their actual performance. Therefore, some researchers suggest that direct assessment tools such as portfolios, interviews and performance based approaches should be implemented instead of indirect assessment techniques. On the other hand, there are some studies supporting the use of both direct and indirect assessment tools to provide a more detailed analysis of ICC as it is highlighted by Dervin (2010).

All in all, Zheng (2014) points out that "The assessment of ICC is a field that is rife with controversy" (p. 74). For instance, Borghetti (2017) asserts that assessment of ICC is a highly delicate matter which requires assessors to be careful about taking different dimensions, ethical issues, existing models, and recent developments into consideration. Based on the literature, it is presumed that scholars and articles assess various dimensions of ICC differently following affective, cognitive or behavioural focuses by means of different approaches. Regarding all these aforementioned studies and assessment perspectives about ICC, it is aimed to reveal how intercultural communicative competence is assessed in empirical research studies published in the last decade in higher education contexts. Since any consensus has not been built on the definition and assessment of intercultural communicative competence, the present chapter intends to provide a systematic review of updated developments and directions about the assessment of ICC by synthesizing up to date and peer reviewed articles in the last decade. As a consequence, it is hypothesized that the strategies and methods in previous studies will shed light on the current state of the issue and eventually will provide significant implications for future studies. Further, it is intended to provide some implications for the kinds of interventions and models which can be developed to assess intercultural communicative competence in future studies.

3. Findings

25 empirical, up-to-date and peer reviewed research articles published in the last decade were analysed within the scope of this present study (see Appendix A for details). The synthesis of these studies indicated that the studies differed in terms of participants, designs, and ICC assessment techniques and tools depending on their aims (see Appendix B for details). As it can be understood from Figure 3 below, most of the studies were designed as a qualitative study, while some of them were conducted by following the procedures of mixed-method or quantitative study designs.

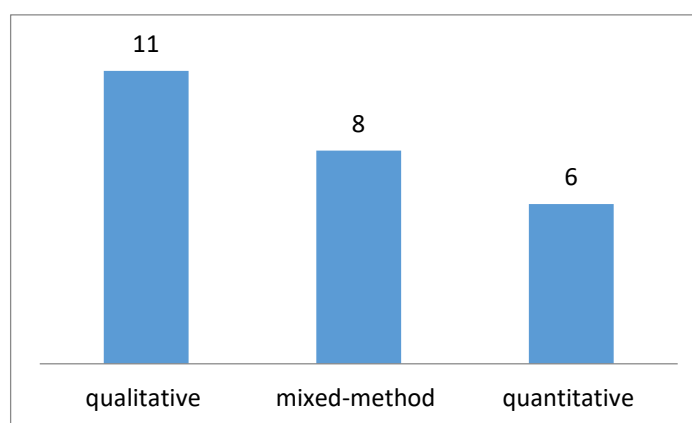


Figure 3. Designs of the studies included in the systematic review

Although the designs and assessment tools used in the studies were different from each other, the analysis of these research studies' findings were gathered around the following five main themes.

3.1. Development of ICC

Development of intercultural communicative competence was one of the main themes associated with the assessment of participants' intercultural competence skills and intercultural sensitivity levels. In this sense, some of the studies focused on the efficacy of study abroad programs, intercultural courses or interactions to assess participants' intercultural competence development, while some studies measured ICC by means of only one assessment tool or at one point in time.

To begin with the study conducted by Bloom and Miranda (2015), the aim was to analyze whether short term study abroad program changed students' intercultural sensitivity or not. The implementation of Intercultural Sensitivity Index before and after the program revealed that participants' intercultural sensitivity scores showed little significant difference in pre and post-tests. Additionally, the study conducted by Hauerwas et al. (2017) aimed to reveal pre-service teachers' development of intercultural competence with the help of a longitudinal teaching abroad program. The study showed that pre-service teachers regarded themselves as others in teaching abroad context at the beginning, but their intercultural competence and communication

were enhanced through the program. Furthermore, Gordon and Mwavita (2018) explored the effect of intercultural courses in undergraduate programs on students' intercultural sensitivity scores through pre- and post- tests. The statistical analysis of pre- and post-test revealed that taking an intercultural course did not make any statistically significant difference in students' intercultural sensitivity scores. On the other hand, the study conducted by Huang (2021) revealed that explicit instruction on intercultural themes such as identity, cross-cultural contacts culture, and stereotypes would help foreign language learners to develop their ICC levels. In a similar vein, it was observed that students' intercultural learning and intercultural competence scores improved with the help of internationalized courses and study abroad programs in Sierra-Huedo and Nevado-Llopis's (2022) study. As per the study conducted by Gómez (2018), it was concluded that news article discussions contributed to students' intercultural competence development by offering a critical stance towards intercultural issues. Likewise, Özdemir's (2017) study gathered data through intercultural effectiveness scale revealed that the students in Facebook group discussion improved their scores on intercultural communication effectiveness scale after the implementation of intercultural instruction compared to in-class discussion group.

Second of all, Lantz-Deaton (2017) explored university students' intercultural competence in England through a quantitative inventory. The findings of the study showed that students were at ethnocentric level in terms of developmental levels. In addition, Lei's (2021) study found out pre-service English language teachers' ICC levels were at moderate level, while female students feature higher ICC scores compared to males. Similarly, Pham and Pham's (2022) study showed that university students' ICC scores were not high; however, students in private universities had higher scores compared to public university students. Further, the findings indicated private university students were equipped with more intercultural interaction opportunities and more willing to engage in intercultural communication than public university students.

3.2. Gaining awareness about ICC

The second theme emerged from the data analysis was related to participants' awareness regarding the intercultural communicative competence. The studies in this category displayed the importance of enhancing intercultural competence by helping informants to gain awareness about intercultural issues and topics. To begin with Cheng (2012), EFL teachers' perceptions about intercultural competences showed that teachers became aware of the significance of otherness and cultural topics dealt in textbooks with the help of interviews. Likewise, the study conducted by Gómez (2018) proposed that discussing international news helped English language learners to be intercultural communicators and the findings revealed that news articles helped students to gain critical perspective about cultural and ideological practices by referring to conflicts and comparing other cultures. Furthermore, it was found out that discussing controversial issues such as prejudices, discrimination and racism enhanced English language learners' intercultural understanding and awareness. Another study focusing on improving

intercultural competence awareness revealed two groups of students' intercultural awareness about diversities among home and target cultures (Gutiérrez Almarza et al., 2015). The findings showed that the students in the British university were more aware of cultural differences and similarities in home and host cultures compared to Spanish students. Additionally, the study investigating Korean EFL learners' intercultural competence through participant observations and interviews revealed that EFL learners gain different perspectives and thus enhance their critical cultural awareness while dealing with differences between cultures (Jin, 2015). Furthermore, McKinley et al. (2019) explored the development of intercultural competence in academic staff and postgraduate students with the help of multiple sources of data and the findings reflected that both instructors and students were aware of cultural differences although being aware of these differences did not guarantee intercultural development. According to the study exploring Turkish university students' ICC, students were aware of the importance of ICC since some students favored non-native speakers and cultures along with native cultures. Besides, students agreed that intercultural components and home culture should be included into English language programs. When it comes to the efficiency of preparatory school English program, students remarked that the focus was on the native speakers and culture, and there was not enough stress on intercultural awareness in their classes. Finally, Nguyen's (2021) study also investigated English majors' perceptions about ICC and it was found out that ICC contributed to university students' cultural awareness, critical and communication skills development.

3.3. Factors affecting ICC

The synthesis of the studies revealed that there were some associated factors affecting or concerning intercultural communicative competence. Accordingly, it was observed that internal and personal factors were influential on ICC skills in some of the studies, while some focused on the effects of external and contextual factors on intercultural competence abilities.

Firstly, Bloom and Miranda (2015) suggested that age and proficiency levels were variables which can be associated with students' intercultural sensitivity scores. In addition, the study conducted by Chao (2016) in Taiwanese context intended to analyze non-native English teachers' ICC through self-assessment inventories and interviews. The results of the interviews showed that personal and socio-cultural factors were influential on teachers' ICC. Another study contributing to this theme was Gu's (2016) study and according to findings of this study, some concepts such as personal traits, teaching, experiences, environment and other were detected as external factors affecting intercultural competence of teachers. Additionally, sense of community, interest in culture, and being open to cultural diversities were mentioned as important factors correlated with intercultural competence development of instructors and students in another study by McKinley et al. (2019). Another study also implied that anxiety and perceptions were effective on students' intercultural experiences and intercultural communicative competences (Özdemir, 2017). Similarly, Su (2018) found out that although students had positive attitudes towards intercultural sensitivity, they did not feel confident while

communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds. Besides, the positive correlation between intercultural sensitivity and three variables; namely, students' learning interests towards English, their attitudes towards native English speakers, and ethnocentrism implied that these factors had an effect on participants' intercultural sensitivity levels. Lastly, the study conducted by Yetiş and Kurt (2016) analyzing English, French, and German language teacher candidates' intercultural sensitivity levels in Turkish context indicated that variables such as gender, grade, and language program were influential on participants' intercultural sensitivity.

Secondly, in a case study conducted in Korean context by Kim et al. (2017), the relationship between their intercultural sensitivity and perceptions regarding English as a medium instruction revealed the influence of perceptions on intercultural sensitivity scores. Moreover, the findings of Gordon and Mwavita's (2018) study showed that variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, and parents' cultural background did not significantly affect students' intercultural sensitivity. However, religion, travelling outside the US, studying abroad, and participating in cultural events in campus were the variables which contributed to students' intercultural sensitivity scores. Furthermore, taking many intercultural courses, travelling outside the US, studying abroad, and participating in cultural events in campus were significant predictors of students' intercultural sensitivity scores. In a similar vein, Odağ et al. (2016) investigated undergraduate students' perceptions about intercultural competence in a German international university. The findings of the study put forward that external and internal outcomes, knowledge, attitudes, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills with their sub-dimensions were five factors referred to by university students to define intercultural competence. In addition, the study focusing on intercultural sensitivity showed that having friends from other cultures, passing a specific exam, and work experience were three individual factors influencing intercultural sensitivity levels of postgraduate students (Zhao, 2018). Huang (2021) also found out that English proficiency and overseas experiences were influential on the development of knowledge and skills components of ICC. Lastly, internationalized courses and study abroad programs were effective on university students' ICC development according to Sierra-Huedo and Nevado-Llopis' (2022) study.

3.4. Practices regarding ICC

There were also some studies dealing with practices used by teachers to assess intercultural communicative competence. To exemplify, Abduh and Rosmaladewi (2018) aimed to reveal strategies used by instructors in bilingual higher education institutions. The findings of the study showed that instructors claimed that they used some strategies to enhance intercultural competence through in-country and overseas immersion programs. While in-country programs included writing and language clubs, overseas immersion programs focused on guiding students to gain intercultural experiences with the help of short, mid or long term study abroad programs. In a similar vein, Gu (2016) implemented a study in higher education context in order to explore the assessment of ICC with the help of a nation-wide project in China. The findings of the study

revealed that EFL teachers were confused about the tools and processes of ICC assessment although they were aware of the importance of assessing ICC. The results also showed that the teachers mostly used traditional ways of assessment and they did not use alternative methods to assess ICC. Another study linked with this theme was implemented by Hauerwas et al. (2017) and the findings of post reflections revealed that pre-service teachers had difficulty in integrating cultural identity into their teaching. However, the study conducted by Liu (2021) revealed that using critical-incident technique as a reflective self-assessment tool in terms of assessing ICC would help learners to improve their ICC skills. Huang (2021) underlined that integration of explicit instruction with presentations, text analyses, and videos helped learners to develop their ICC and also to learn about own and other cultures. Lastly, the study conducted by Nguyen (2021) revealed that implementation of project-based assessment enabled learners to develop their ICC skills and cultural knowledge by means of presentations, discussions, problem-solving, critical thinking, and group-working skills.

3.5. Misperceptions about ICC

When it comes to the last theme, it was based on misperceptions about intercultural competence. The studies in this part revealed some contradictions between results and participants' perceptions about their own intercultural competence. To illustrate, Bloom and Miranda (2015) grouped students according to their intercultural experiences, like less and greater experienced students. Then, it was observed that there were some contradictions between students' intercultural sensitivity scores and self-assessment statements according to quantitative and qualitative data. For example, self-assessment of students who had less intercultural experience did not comply with their actual intercultural sensitivity scores. Also, students having more intercultural experiences got lower scores on ethnorelative statements compared to less experienced group according to intercultural sensitivity index results. The findings of the self-assessment inventory in Chao's (2016) study revealed that although teachers had positive attitudes towards ICC, their ICC-oriented teaching practices and self-reported ICC were not in line with each other. It was also found out that non-native English teachers in Taiwan seemed to prioritize the culture of English-speaking countries. Lastly, the data collected through semi-structured interviews in Cheng's (2012) study showed that Taiwanese teachers believed that intercultural competence and globalization were identical terms. Consequently, it was emphasized that teachers did not have deeper understandings regarding intercultural competence and teacher-centred classrooms hindered the development of intercultural competence on the part of learners.

4. Discussion

The systematic review of twenty-five articles revealed that most of the studies focused on assessing university students' ICC perceptions, understandings, and levels. At this point, it can be recommended that further studies can be conducted with the participation different stakeholders along with students. Besides, perceptions of teacher educators and curriculum

developers can be investigated to enhance intercultural communicative competence at each level of educational processes. To illustrate, ICC as a concept should be clarified with the help of administrative support and then available tools, new guidelines, and trainings should be provided as it is proposed by Gu (2016). Additionally, the systematic review study conducted by Iswandari and Ardi (2022) on pre-service and in-service teachers' ICC in EFL settings indicated that the assessment of ICC was a neglected field despite the abundance of the studies focusing on ICC. That is why, it can be suggested that future studies should be conducted in teacher training programs with the integration of different assessment tools and techniques.

As for the techniques and strategies, it was seen that many qualitative and quantitative data collection tools were used to assess intercultural competence with respect to the aims and designs of the studies. In this sense, many scholars referred to different methods and tools to assess intercultural competence (Dervin, 2010; Fantini, 2009; Sercu, 2010). To exemplify, Fantini (2009) emphasized that the needs and objectives of individuals and institutions are at the centre of ICC assessment tools and strategies and these tools differ because of the emergent features of intercultural competence. In this sense, Gordon and Mwavita (2018) claimed that intercultural sensitivity should be measured through qualitative and quantitative methods which require administrators to set clear and achievable goals. At this point, it is possible to see that some researchers favor the use of direct assessment tools (Sinicrope et al., 2007). As it can be inferred from these studies, the use of only one tool or method would not be adequate to assess intercultural competence. Further, Sercu (2010) indicated there was no holistic tool or instrument which could assess all dimensions and components of intercultural communicative competence; therefore, it can be concluded that using various techniques and tools provide rich data on this issue and it is better to collect data from multiple sources of data.

The synthesis of research articles revealed that there were some similarities and differences between studies conducted on the assessment of intercultural communicative competence. According to findings, it was found out that the studies can be grouped under five themes, which were development of ICC, gaining awareness about ICC, factors affecting ICC, practices regarding ICC, and misperceptions about ICC. The initial theme based on the development of ICC levels or scores of participants indicated that some studies made use of pre and post-tests to compare intercultural sensitivity levels (Bloom & Miranda, 2015; Gordon & Mwavita, 2018; Özdemir, 2017). Among these three studies, (Özdemir, 2017) found out that there were significant changes in participants' intercultural effectiveness scores when pre-test and post-test scores were compared, while Bloom and Miranda (2015) and Gordon and Mwavita (2018) did not report any significant change in students' intercultural sensitivity scores. At this point, Bloom and Miranda (2015) concluded that a short time study abroad program did not have much influence on students' intercultural sensitivity and individuals' personal experiences affected their scores, which can be connected to the influence of another theme; namely, factors affecting ICC. Further, some studies (Gómez, 2018; Hauerwas et al., 2017; Liu, 2021) emphasized the positive effects of discussions, study abroad programs and critical-incidents

respectively on the development of ICC. However, according to Lantz-Deaton (2017), students' intercultural sensitivity scores at ethnocentric level suggested that longitudinal studies assessing students' intercultural competences with interventions and control groups were needed. Also, it was highlighted that universities should include practical implementations to enhance intercultural competence development. In parallel with this, Altuğ et al. (2019) recommended implementing longitudinal and observational research studies to explore learners' perceptions about ICC.

The second theme emerged from the data was awareness of participants about ICC. To begin with the tools or environments which enhance intercultural competence of learners, Gómez (2018) underlined the contribution of intercultural news articles by claiming that article discussions improved learners' knowledge, skills, and attitudes which are critical components of intercultural communicative competence. Similarly, Jin (2015) revealed the effect of Facebook interactions on students' ICC development. Therefore, the study offered a novel way to enhance intercultural competence through online tools for future studies. Moreover, the study conducted by Cheng (2012) referred to the role of textbooks to enhance intercultural competence. Based on the findings of the study, Zhao (2018) suggested that there was a need for intercultural competence courses which put emphasis on global issues and intercultural awareness. On the one hand, these aforementioned studies focused on gaining awareness about intercultural competence. On the other hand, the studies of McKinley et al. (2019) and Mutlu and Dollar (2017) revealed that raising awareness among students was not enough by itself to support the development of intercultural competence. In this sense, providing opportunities for students to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds could help fostering intercultural competence. Likewise, Zhao (2018) claimed students should be provided with opportunities which enhance intercultural communication. Furthermore, it was suggested that curricula should be designed according to changing nature of students' attitudes and also some tools should be integrated into study abroad programmes in order to enhance students' awareness (Gutiérrez Almarza et al., 2015). At this point another study implied that other cultures should be introduced to students by teachers or instructors who are self-reflective and aware of multicultural differences (Gordon & Mwavita, 2018). In this regard, Pinzón (2020) claimed that integrating real-life situations and making use of authentic and culture-related materials would help learners to improve their ICC skills. She also suggested English language teachers to support students' professional and personal development by making connections between culture and the target language through the use of authentic materials. In a similar vein, Munezane (2021) asserted that increasing students' motivation through confidence-boosting activities and designing tasks to support learners' willingness to communicate would contribute to their ICC development. He also recommended teachers to make use of intercultural pragmatics and nonverbal communication strategies to reinforce students' ICC abilities. According to these suggestions and implications, it would not be wrong to conclude that raising awareness among teachers and students could be the first step of enhancing intercultural

communicative competence, but it should be supported by all stakeholders with further attempts.

The next theme dealt with ICC assessment in terms of influential or interrelated factors affecting ICC. This theme was linked with most of the studies through personal, social or cultural variables. It was also possible to observe the effects of either internal or external factors on participants' intercultural competence. In terms of personal factors, it was observed that confidence was an influential element which enhances or hinders intercultural communication. To exemplify, due to students' lack of confidence, Su (2018) provided some suggestions for teachers to design international curriculums which help learners to develop confidence to be able to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. In this sense, Zhao (2018) recommended that English teaching methods and activities should be designed by taking intercultural communication into consideration. However, in Chao's (2016) study, non-native English teachers' self-confidence to interact with host culture could be regarded as a positive factor affecting ICC development. As per gender variable, the study conducted by Gordon and Mwavita (2018) revealed that it was not an influential factor on students' intercultural sensitivity scores. On the contrary, one study found out that gender affected intercultural sensitivity scores of teacher candidates (Yetiş & Kurt, 2016). Based on these results in relation to gender, it can be claimed that the differences in females and males' intercultural sensitivity scores can be adhered to objectives and needs of individuals. Actually, it can be inferred that various factors associated with the enhancement of ICC were dependent on many different reasons such as context, individuals, time, and so forth. Therefore, it was reasonable to come across with many factors, components and elements affecting intercultural communicative competence directly or indirectly.

Another theme focused on practices implemented by teachers and teacher candidates to enhance ICC. In this regard, the use of critical incidents with the purpose of improving students' ICC was recommended by Liu (2021). In a similar vein, Harsch and Poehner (2016) claimed making use of dynamic assessment approach with the combination of critical incidents would be beneficial for learners' intercultural development. Further, the findings of three studies (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2018; Gu, 2016; Hauerwas, et al., 2017) underscored the importance of guiding students to become intercultural communicators and to gain intercultural experiences. Sercu (2010) also suggested that ICC was necessary to observe the influences of teaching on learners. In this regard, language teachers, curriculum designers, and teacher educators play important roles, to keep record of positive or negative effects of these programs. Therefore, Garcia (2022) stressed the importance of integrating ICC into language teacher training programs with the intention of equipping pre-service language teachers with the necessary pedagogical and content skills regarding teaching. In this sense, it was recommended to evaluate other language policies, course syllabi, and learning materials to understand how to integrate ICC into the processes of syllabus design and materials development in language teaching (Garcia, 2022; Lei, 2021). Hence, it can be claimed that more studies should focus on

intercultural competence assessment to see both short and long term effects of intercultural experiences on students. At this point, it was seen that study abroad programs, reflective practices, intercultural communicative competence trainings, and interventions would enable learners to improve their ICC (Sierra-Huedo & Nevado-Llopis, 2022). Accordingly, study abroad programs come to the fore as crucial supporters of language learning. In this regard, Altuğ et al. (2019) found out students participating in an exchange program had more positive attitudes towards ICC and their ICC scores were higher than the students who did not have any Erasmus experience.

Nguyen (2021) also proposed that teachers should design their teaching plans and lessons in accordance with intercultural communicative competence practices, students' needs, and teaching content. It was also recommended to integrate problem solving skills, real-life situations, and cultural exchanges through virtual classrooms or video calls into language teaching contexts. Additionally, some suggestions such as joining culture clubs and virtual or real field trips were provided for students to improve their ICC. Besides, it was seen that many studies dealt with development of intercultural development concerning language learning perspective as it was the case in two studies (Bloom & Miranda, 2015; Gutiérrez et al., 2015), but fostering intercultural in teaching was as important as intercultural competence development in learning. In this regard, according to Chao (2016), it is important to integrate intercultural perspectives to English curriculum, and assessment of ICC should be an integral part of teacher education programs. In addition, the study conducted by Hauerwas et al. (2017) was a good example showing the difficulties encountered by pre-service teachers in this process. The study also showed that pre-service teachers felt empathy for students during teaching experiences when they became aware of the cultural differences influencing classroom practices; thus, this theme can be associated with the necessity of another theme, which is gaining awareness about ICC. For that reason, there is a need for conducting more studies exploring perspectives and perceptions of pre-service, in-service, and experienced teachers to reflect on the role of study abroad programs on teaching practices. In order to achieve this aim, needs analysis can be regarded as a way of enhancing intercultural competence on the part of teachers to serve for their professional development.

The last worth mentioning theme regarding assessment of ICC according to main study findings was the contradictions between participants' self- assessment and study results. In this sense, the studies conducted by Bloom and Miranda (2015), Chao (2016) and Cheng (2012) displayed the controversial results based on participants' own assessment and their intercultural competence scores and levels. In line with these study results, Sinicrope et al. (2007) drew attention to the contradictions between actual performances and perceptions about intercultural competence as well. As it can be understood from these study results, sometimes collecting data through only one instrument may not be enough or it may cause misinterpretations. That is why the use both direct and indirect methods by combining qualitative and quantitative designs can be one of the implications of this review study. In this regard, Kömür and Akdoğan (2021)

remarked that using only one tool or instrument would not be enough to assess ICC; therefore, the assessment of interculturality should be based on process-oriented tools and context. They also suggested that interviews, observations, logs, portfolios, and performative tasks could ensure comprehensive and multidimensional assessment of ICC. In this vein, Zheng (2014) noted that ICC was not assessed comprehensively because it was defined in many different ways. Therefore, he proposed to assess ICC by referring to both formative and summative methods such as portfolio assessment, performance evaluation, and written tests.

5. Conclusion

The present study aimed to provide a systematic review of up-to-date and empirical research articles on the assessment of ICC. Following the procedures of thematic analysis, the findings of these studies were gathered around five main themes. Accordingly, it was concluded that the aims, designs and tools used in all these studies depended on the approaches and techniques adopted by researchers. It was also inferred curriculum objectives and available sources could change the way of assessing ICC. As a result, it did not seem possible to reach a consensus on the assessment of ICC. Concerning the limitations of this study, it was limited to the revision of twenty-five articles in higher education contexts; therefore, further studies can be conducted by referring to the primary, secondary and high school contexts. In addition, this study reviewed the studies assessing ICC through different methods and designs. However, further studies can also focus on particular assessment tools or methods in relation to specific conceptual frameworks such as synthesizing the studies conducted through intercultural sensitivity scales by referring to developmental models built in this regard.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: The list of journals used in the systematic review

Journal	Frequency	Author(s)
Language and Intercultural Communication	3	Bloom & Miranda (2015) Gu (2016) McKinley, Dunworth, Grimshaw & Iwaniec (2019)
Journal of Studies in International Education	2	Kim, Choi and Tatar (2017) Odağ, Wallin & Kedzior (2016)
Taiwan Journal of TESOL	2	Chao (2016) Liu (2021)
Computer Assisted Language Learning	1	Özdemir (2017)
Educare Electronic Journal	1	Sierra-Huedo & Nevado-Llopis (2022)
Educational Research and Reviews	1	Yetiş & Kurt (2016)
English Language Teaching	1	Lei (2021)
English Teaching: Practice and Critique	1	Cheng (2012)
European Journal of Educational Research	1	Nguyen (2021)
Gist Education and Learning Research Journal	1	Gómez (2018)
Higher Education Studies	1	Zhao (2018)
Intercultural Education	1	Gutiérrez Almarza, Durán Martínez & Beltrán Llavador (2015)
International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction	1	Mutlu & Dollar (2017)
International Journal of Intercultural Relations	1	Huang (2021)
Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies	1	Pham & Pham (2022)
Language Learning and Technology	1	Jin (2015)
Sage Open	1	Abduh & Rosmaladewi (2018)
Studies in Educational Evaluation	1	Gordon & Mwavita (2018)
Teaching and Teacher Education	1	Hauerwas, Skawinski & Ryan (2017)
Teaching in Higher Education	1	Lantz-Deaton (2017)
The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher	1	Su (2018)

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Appendix B: Articles included in the systematic review on ICC assessment

Author(s)	Aim	Participants	Design	Technique(s) & Tool(s)
Abduh & Rosmaladewi (2018)	to explore IC perceptions and strategies of teachers in Indonesian higher education context	8 teachers in Indonesia	Qualitative (case study)	semi-structured interviews
Bloom & Miranda (2015)	to explore IS development of learners through a four-week study abroad program	12 undergraduate and graduate students in Spain	Mixed-method	Intercultural Sensitivity Index (ISI) and self-assessment questions
Chao (2016)	to explore attitudes and perspectives related to ICC	356 teachers in Taiwan	Qualitative	self-assessment inventories and interviews
Cheng (2012)	to explore EFL teachers' understandings regarding IC and their pedagogical practices in language classroom	5 EFL teachers in Taiwan	Qualitative	interviews and teaching materials
Gómez (2018)	to investigate the contribution of international news to ICC development	4 Colombian EFL learners	Qualitative (case study)	questionnaire, artifacts and field notes
Gordon & Mwavita (2018)	to see the effect of intercultural courses in undergraduate programs in terms of students' intercultural sensitivity	259 US university students	Quantitative	Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS)
Gu (2016)	to assess ICC with the help of a nation-wide project	1170 Chinese EFL teachers	Qualitative	nation-wide survey
Gutiérrez Almarza, et al. (2015)	to explore ICC of university students	55 British and Spanish university students	Mixed-method	pre and post questionnaires, blogs and interviews

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Hauerwas, et al., (2017)	to determine pre-service teachers' IC development	9 pre-service students in Italy	Qualitative (case study)	written reflections, focus groups and prompts
Huang (2021)	to explore the effect of explicit instruction on learners' ICC	54 Taiwanese English-major students	Mixed-method	self-assessment tool-questionnaire and video task
Jin (2015)	to understand the benefits of Facebook intercultural exchanges in terms of IC	32 EFL students at a Korean university	Qualitative (ethnography)	online tasks, participant observations and interviews
Kim, et al. (2017)	to explore IS of international students and to reveal the relationship between EMI and IS	213 college students in Korea	Qualitative (case study)	questionnaires and interviews
Lantz-Deaton (2017)	to explore students' intercultural experiences and to assess their IC	122 first year UK and non-UK university students	Mixed-method	Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and Intercultural Experiences Questionnaire (IEQ)
Lei (2021)	to explore ICC levels of pre-service teachers	186 pre-service English teachers	Quantitative	Intercultural Communication Competence Self Rating Scale (ICCSRS)
Liu (2021)	to examine a pedagogy of using a critical incidents-based method to teach and assess intercultural learning	19 non-English majors	Qualitative (The Critical Incident Technique - CIT)	student-authored critical incidents, reflection, and interviews
McKinley, et al. (2019)	to explore UK students' experiences and perceptions regarding their IC development	24 international postgraduate students and 8 academic staff in the UK	Qualitative (multiple case design)	observations, preliminary and focus group interviews

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Mutlu & Dollar (2017)	to reveal English language learners' perceptions about IC	93 preparatory school students in Turkey	Mixed-method	interviews and surveys
Nguyen (2021)		124 English major students and 36 EFL teachers from Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia	Mixed-method	assessment project, questionnaires and interviews
Odağ, et al. (2016)	to determine how international students define IC	130 German undergraduate students	Qualitative	short responses to a written question
Özdemir (2017)	to explore ICC development of language learners through Facebook to improve IC effectiveness	40 first year ELT students in Turkey	Mixed-method	Facebook discussions, interviews and Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES)
Pham & Pham (2022)	to measure development of IC by means of courses and study abroad programs	14 university students	Mixed-method	Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and interviews
Sierra-Huedo & Nevado-Llopis (2022)	to explore ICC levels of university students	336 university students	Quantitative Descriptive	questionnaire
Su (2018)	to assess IS, to see the relationship between IS and variables, to determine the predictors of IS	1191 college students in Taiwan	Quantitative	ISS, General Ethnocentrism Scale and Motivation Test Battery
Yetiş & Kurt (2016)	to explore IS scores of foreign language prospective teachers	1.049 English, French and German teacher candidates in Turkey	Quantitative	survey, ISS
Zhao (2018)	to discover IS levels and to explore factors affecting IS scores	102 postgraduates majoring in English	Quantitative	ISS

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