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# The Use of the Flipped Classroom for Teaching French as a Foreign Language: Reality and Perspectives

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#### Abstract

This article aims to explore feedback on the use of the flipped classroom approach in French as a Foreign Language (FFL) classes, with the dual objective of analyzing its current reality and envisioning its future prospects. By providing an overview of its pedagogical impact, the study also seeks to offer practical recommendations for teachers interested in implementing this method. The research is based on semi-structured individual interviews conducted with three university instructors who have integrated flipped classroom strategies into their teaching. Specifically, the feedback derives from the implementation of three distinct courses, each structured around the use of the Moodle platform and pre-recorded instructional videos, designed to engage university-level learners in an active and autonomous learning process. The qualitative analysis of the collected data reveals an important number of pedagogical benefits, including increased learner engagement, improved oral interaction in class, and greater flexibility in pacing. However, several limitations and challenges were also identified, such as technological constraints, resistance from both students and teachers, and the additional workload required for lesson preparation and content creation. The article discusses possible solutions to address these challenges, such as better institutional support, teacher training, and the gradual integration of digital tools. In addition to examining present-day practices, the article also opens a reflection on the future of the flipped classroom in FFL, taking into account evolving technologies and innovative teaching methods. By sharing these diverse experiences, the study contributes to a wider pedagogical discourse on how to improve language acquisition through reimagined classroom dynamics.

**Keywords:** Flipped classroom; flipped pedagogy; teaching French as a Foreign Language; traditional classroom.

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## Introduction

The flipped classroom (FC) is an innovative pedagogical approach that has gained increasing popularity over recent years. This approach transforms the traditional classroom dynamic by moving direct teaching elements outside of class time and utilizing class hours for interactive and collaborative activities. This model is particularly beneficial in the context of teaching foreign languages. Thus, teaching French as a Foreign Language (FFL) can benefit from this method, which maximizes the time for oral practice, interaction, and application of linguistic knowledge.

With this in mind, this article explores this approach within the specific context of FFL learning through some feedback on FC experiences. We rely on the testimonies of teachers who have implemented flipped pedagogy (FP) in their FFL classes, discussing the various facets of FC they highlight. Certainly, several studies have focused on FC in the field of FFL teaching/learning in Algeria: (Taibi & Hamoumi, 2019); (Nid & Dakhia, 2021); (Amer-Medjani & Maarfia, 2021); (Moulay Omar & Sakrane, 2023), but we find that analyses of feedback on the use of FC in FFL classes are rare.

Therefore, to explore and benefit from the experiences conducted by teachers within the framework of FP, and being aware of the importance and extent of innovative pedagogical practices and willing to deepen the debate around FP, we have chosen this theme, which increasingly appeals to practitioners. We aim to highlight the different facets of FC, particularly its importance and impact on learners and the quality of teaching. Thus, we question its contributions and limitations, leading to the central question: What is the feedback from FFL teachers on the use of FC, and what are their perceptions of the pedagogical contributions and limitations of the flipped classroom in FFL classrooms? This main question generates following secondary questions: What significant effects does it have on learners and the quality of teaching? Is it suitable for all learners and all learning objectives? Can it be integrated into the new higher education reform in Algeria?

To address the research problem, interviews focusing on experiences with the implementation of FC are proposed to provide keys for teachers considering embarking on this approach. Through the comments of teachers, the observed potentials and encountered obstacles will be analyzed. The goal is for an overview of the impacts of this approach on learning French to be provided, along with practical recommendations developed for teachers wishing to adopt it. By highlighting these varied experiences, a contribution is expected to be made to broader reflection on the evolution of pedagogical practices in FFL and the optimization of learning processes.

To clarify the points previously mentioned, the theoretical framework on which this research is based will first be addressed, relying on well-established educational research and theories. Next, the methodology implemented during this work and the survey' presentation will be introduced. Thirdly, the current realities of implementing FC in FFL will be analyzed, with the observed potentials and challenges faced by teachers highlighted. Finally, future prospects for this approach will be considered by discussing upcoming technological and pedagogical innovations, as well as expected developments in teaching practices.

## I. Theoretical Framework: Principles and benefits of the Flipped Classroom

To better understand the flipped classroom (FC), we will briefly address its meaning, how it differs from traditional teaching, the context of its integration into education, its origins and evolution, its pedagogical foundations, as well as its principles and benefits.

# I.1. What is a Flipped Classroom?

The FC is known by several names, such as flipped classroom, flipped learning, inverted pedagogy, inverted teaching, and inverted learning (Lage, Platt, & Treglia, 2000). This relatively recent concept in pedagogy dates back to the 1990s (Faillet, 2014, p. 652) and owes its development to pioneers like Eric Mazur, Jonathan Bergman, Aaron Sams, and Salman Khan (Lebrun, 2016). Designed to make lessons more interactive and optimize the use of in-person class time, the flipped classroom proposes reversing the traditional teaching model, as shown in the figure below.





Source: Done by the authors

This illustration shows that the FC is a hybrid modality that stands out from other pedagogies, within which classroom actors change roles. It is a pedagogical approach that reverses the nature of learning activities in class and at home (Dufour, 2014), aiming to make the learner more active in their learning process. According to Dufour, "It is given to do at home, autonomously, the low-level cognitive activities, putting the students into action and collaboration. [...] Flipping the classroom means modifying the traditional role of the teacher: the latter is no longer the knower who pours out knowledge but becomes a true learning guide. They move from face-to-face to side-by-side, thus enabling the co-construction of knowledge." (Dufour, 2014, p. 45).

Figure 2: Comparison between the Flipped Classroom and Traditional Teaching



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#### I.2. General Context of its Integration into Education

Since its emergence in the early 2000s, the FC has been adopted by schools and universities worldwide in various disciplines. Increasingly, this approach has become popular in many countries and educational contexts, establishing itself as an effective alternative to traditional teaching methods. Its use is part of a broader trend of transforming pedagogical practices, made possible by the rapid evolution of educational technologies and research in didactics. Digital technologies, particularly learning management systems (LMS), educational video creation tools, and accessible online resources, have facilitated this transition by providing practical means for teachers to create and share educational content.

#### I.3. Origins and Evolution

This concept finds its origins in the early 2000s. It was popularized by two chemistry teachers from Colorado, Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams, who sought innovative ways to help their students catch up on missed lessons. Their basic idea was simple: record videos of their lessons that students could watch at home, freeing up class time for more interactive and practical activities. Their initiative quickly showed positive results, leading to a broader adoption of this method worldwide.

Historically, the concept of the flipped classroom (FC) emerged in 2000 when Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams began recording their chemistry lessons to allow students to review the material at their own pace. This initial step highlighted the potential benefits of this approach for student learning. Between 2007 and 2008, the idea gained traction among educators and institutions, sparking early research and publications on the subject. In 2012, Bergmann and Sams published their influential book, "*Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day*", which played a pivotal role in popularizing the method on international scale. Over the following decade (2010-2020), the flipped classroom approach expanded globally, aided by advancements in educational technology and the proliferation of online learning platforms; becoming a widely recognized and implemented educational strategy.

#### I.4. Pedagogical Foundations of the Flipped Classroom

The FC is based on pedagogical approaches that emphasize active and learner-centered learning. Among the key theoretical foundations of this approach is **constructivism**, enveloped by thinkers like Jean Piaget and Vygotsky (1978), which posits that learners actively build their knowledge through experiences and interactions rather than passively absorbing information. The FC supports this by encouraging students to independently explore and understand concepts outside of class. It also promotes **active learning** engaging students in the educational process through interactive activities, discussions, problem-solving and collaborative projects during class time. Another foundational aspect is **autonomous learning** as the FC enables learners to control the pace and location of their initial engagement with materials such as videos, readings, or online exercices, fostering personal responsibility and self-directed learning. Furthermore, the FC facilitates **differentiated learning**, as teachers can identify the unique of individual learners and tailor class activities to provide targeted support. Finally, the FC is often integrated into a **blended learning** model, which combines online and in-person education offering flexibility and the benefits of both approaches.

It follows from the above that the flipped classroom intersects with several theoretical models and relies on numerous pedagogies. It integrates the principles of these different pedagogies to design learning environments aligned with educational objectives suited to the changes in the 21st-century educational landscape.

# 1.5. Principles of Flipped Classroom

The FC model is based on several key principles designed to enrich the learning experience and foster student-centered education. One central principle is **learner autonomy**, which emphasizes self-paced learning, allowing students to engage with educational vidéos and materials at their own rhythm. This approach enables them to focus on challenging concepts while quickly progressing through familiar topics. By managing their learning outside of classroom, students also develop greater responsibility and independence in their educational journey.

Another corer stone is **active learning**, which transforms classroom time into an interactive and collaborative environment. In-class activities such as discussions, group projects, and hands-on exercises provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and benefit from real-time support from their teacher. This approach enhances learner engagement by promoting active participation and motivation (Viau, 2009).

The FC also supports **differentiated instruction** by allowing teachers to personalize their support during class. Educators can address individual learning needs, provide tailored explanations, and adapt activities based on student levels and interests. This flexibility makes the FC a valuable tool for implementing inclusive and differentiated pedagogical strategies.

Finally, the model leverages **educational technologies**, offering students easy access to online resources such as vidéos, readings, ans exercises. These tools create a flexible and accessible learning environment, while Learning Management Systems (LMS) streamline the process of monitoring student progress and improving communication between teachers and learners. Together, these principles foster a dynamic, adaptable, and student-centered approach to education.

In summary, the FC is a learner-centered pedagogical approach where the student plays a central role in their own learning, combining the use of modern technologies with interactive and personalized teaching methods. Although this method requires careful adaptation and preparation, it offers numerous advantages for improving student engagement and success. The use of the FC presents a dual benefit: promoting learning and developing professional skills. Home-based work helps develop autonomous learning abilities, organizational skills, and understanding of instructions. In-class return offers more individualized support by the instructor. Group work facilitates collaboration and argumentation.

## **II. Practical Framework**

## II.1. Methodology

The feedback presented in this contribution is based on the implementation of three courses using the Moodle platform and pre-recorded videos in a flipped classroom format for university students.

To obtain precise and targeted information, we conducted semi-structured individual interviews with three university lecturers. This investigative tool allowed us to reflect on the implementation of the flipped classroom in their teaching practices. We want to specify that the courses covered modules in grammar, writing practices, and university research techniques. Each interview with the lecturers lasted about ten minutes and consisted of five open-ended questions, framed by an opening question and a closing question. The data collected are qualitative, derived from the statements of the interviewed lecturers.

Our approach is based on qualitative analysis. To achieve this, we performed a thematic analysis of the interviews, which allows us to examine variables such as the choice of the FC, the approach adopted during its implementation, its effects on learners and their results, its advantages, and its limitations.

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#### II.2. Presentation of Results and Data Interpretation

To facilitate interpretation and ensure optimal visibility of the data, we have selected and presented the results in relation to:

#### > Justification for Using the Flipped Classroom: Why the Flipped Classroom?

The interviewees mentioned various reasons for choosing to adopt the flipped classroom approach. They justify their choice by:

- Better Use of Time: To focus on higher-level activities in class.

- Motivation and Engagement of Learners: To make learners more responsible, involve them more in their learning, and make teaching more attractive.

- Strengthening Practical and Interactive Activities: To allow learners to apply the concepts learned through practical activities and collaborative projects.

- Individualized Support for Learners: To use class time to provide personalized support to learners who need it, clarify difficult points, answer their questions, and organize tutoring sessions for those with specific needs.

- **Encouraging Self-Reflection:** To facilitate the sharing of learning experiences among learners and reflect on their own learning to identify their strengths and areas for improvement.

From these declarations, we observe that the interviewed teachers demonstrate initiative and innovation.

# > The Approach Adopted for Implementing the Flipped Classroom: How Do You Practice the Flipped Classroom?

The responses confirm that the teachers adhere to the principles of implementing the flipped classroom. The proposed steps outlined during the interview detail a process structured into three distinct phases: a Self-Learning Phase, conducted remotely and consisting of two stages; an Application Phase, carried out in person; and Reinvestment and Evaluation Phase, implemented in a hybrid mode.

The analysed statements confirm that implementing the flipped classroom requires careful preparation and strategic use of available resources and technologies.

## > Effects of the Flipped Classroom on Learners and Their Results

In response to the researcher's question (What are the effects of the FC on learners and their results?), we summarize the positive aspects of the FC model for FFL learning that emerge from the analysis of teachers' responses:

- **Improvement in Participation and Positive Engagement:** Learners prepare in advance with online resources. Upon arriving in class, they are better prepared and equipped to engage in high-level cognitive discussions and actively participate in interactive, collaborative, and practical activities as noted (Dufour, 2014, p. 44). Moreover, studies indicate that this method significantly boots students' motivation and fosters deeper involvement in their learning process as highlighed (Poumay, 2014, p. 4).

- Development of Learner Autonomy and Responsibility: The FC allowed them to manage their own learning (Bergmann & Aaron, 2014), encouraging them to become more autonomous and responsible by consulting resources chosen by the teacher, preparing class tasks, and completing projects. They learned to organize their time, search for additional information, ask relevant questions, and take charge of their learning (Rétif, 2017, p. 23).

- Gains in Understanding and Knowledge Retention: Class activities focus on applying concepts, thus reinforcing learning. Learners review content at their own pace, promoting better understanding and retention of knowledge.

- Improvement in Communicative Competence: According to the replies, the FC provides opportunities for learners to communicate. This model significantly contributes to improving learners' communicative skills. As confirmed by Choi (2013, p. 124), it creates ample opportunities for students to engage in meaningful communication. By shifting instructional content outside the classroom, in-class time is effectively utilized for communicative activities and the completion of collaborative projets, fostering active participation and practical language use.

- **Increased Learner Motivation:** According to the collected statements, the FC changed the roles of the teacher (as a facilitator who guides the learner) and the learner (as an active participant in their learning).

- **Recognition of the Effort in Creating a Course:** The FC gave learners the opportunity to understand the effort involved in course creation and the teacher's role in knowledge transmission.

However, it is important to note that learner progress is quite disparate, as each learner follows learning at their own pace and cognitive level. Some are reluctant and not motivated by the flipped classroom. Implementing activities with identical educational resources does not necessarily produce the same effects on all learners (Poteaux & Berthiaume, 2013).

# > The Advantages of the Flipped Classroom: What Are the Benefits of the Flipped Classroom?

Teachers practicing this teaching method indicated that it has several significant advantages (Lebrun & Lecoq, 2015, p. 87). It allows for:

- Learner-Centered Learning: The focus shifts from the teacher to the learner. Learners are encouraged to take control of their own learning (Bishop & Verleger, 2013, p. 10), thus promoting autonomy and responsibility.

- Full Engagement and Active Participation: Learners arrive in class better prepared to actively participate in discussions, group work, and practical activities. This makes classroom time more dynamic and interactive.

- Better Time Management in Class: Class time is optimized for activities requiring the teacher's presence, to deepen the concepts learned beforehand and develop both cognitive and metacognitive skills. This allows for more efficient and productive use of time together.

- Differentiated Teaching and Learning: Teachers can better tailor their teaching to the needs and expectations of the learners, offering a more personalized education that considers each individual's characteristics. This way, each learner can progress at their own pace, while those struggling can benefit from personalized attention (Mason, Shuman, & Cook, 2013).

- Easy Access to Online Educational Resources: Learners can review lessons as many times as necessary.

- **Promoting More Effective Learning:** This implementing teaching strategies that enhance understanding, retention, and application of knowledge, ensuring learners achieve deeper and more meaningful learning outcomes.

- Encouraging Learners to Be More Active, Creative, and Involved: Fostering an educational environment where students actively engage in problem-solving, think creatively, and take ownership of their learning process.

- **Optimizing Teamwork:** Emphasize the development of collaborative skills by engaging learners in group activities where they can share solve problems collectively, and build interpersonal communication abilities.

- Placing Learners in Situations of Knowledge Construction: By creating scenarios where learners actively construct their own understanding trough inquiry, exploration, and critical thinking, rather than passively receiving information.

#### Challenges and Obstacles Encountered

Although the FC offers many advantages (Lebrun & Lecoq, 2015, p. 87), it also presents challenges, indicated by teachers practicing this teaching and summarized as follows:

- Technical Issues Related to Accessing Technologies and Mastering Digital Tools: Not all learners have reliable access to computers or a stable internet connection at home. Additionally, the level of digital literacy varies, requiring extra training for some learners.

- **Resistance to Change:** Adopting the FC may meet resistance from learners used to traditional teaching, those who prefer lectures, and established practices. These resistances can also come from teachers and institutions.

- **Teacher Workload and Time Management:** Preparing content for the FC can be more demanding in terms of time and effort for the teacher, particularly in creating and selecting quality educational resources and planning interactive class activities, which can represent a considerable workload.

- Need for Teacher Training: Effective implementation of the FC requires thorough training on using educational technologies, creating quality educational content, and ongoing support for teachers to fully harness the benefits of the FC in FFL.

- **Paradigm Shift:** Both teachers and learners must adapt to this new role, which may encounter initial resistance. The integration of new technologies and teaching methods in education requires a paradigm shift, with teachers becoming facilitators and learners taking more responsibility for their learning. This transition often encounters resistance due to reliance on traditional methods, lack of training, or doubts about effectiveness.

- Nothing Replaces the Teacher: While technology enhances education, it cannot replace the human connection and judgment of teachers, who provide emotional support, tailored guidance, and a safe learning environment (Heddouche, 2024). Since not all students excel in tech-driven settings, a balanced approach that combines traditional teaching with technology is essential to meet diverse learning needs.

- Struggling Students are Overlooked: In tech-driven or self-directed learning environments, struggling students may lack the additional guidance and support they need, risking disengagement and falling behind. Proactive measures like regular check-ins, differentiated instruction, and targeted interventions are essential to address their learning gaps.

- ICT Use Can Create Disparities: While ICT in education offers potential, it can deepen inequalities due to unequal access to reliable internet, devices, or conducive study environments, particularly for low-income or rural students. Addressing this requires equity initiatives like subsidized devices, offline learning options, and community hubs. Without these efforts, the digital divide may widen educational disparities.

- Need for Technical Skills : Some learners may not be equipped or trained to use new technologies effectively. The use of ICT in education depends on learners' ability to effectively navigate technology, but a lack of digital skills can hinder their experience and limit access to resources. To address this, education systems should integrate digital literacy into curricula, provide targeted support, and simplify tools to ensure greater accessibility.

# Findings

We summarize the conclusions drawn from our sample through the following points:

-Implementing FC is never easy. It requires considerable preparation time for planning and developing educational materials. Implementing an appropriate educational scenario is also never simple (Faillet, 2014). It demands several adjustments based on the learners' progress.

-It requires mastery of technical skills.

-The differential effects of FC on learners' performance can be an advantage for some, while representing a handicap for others in the acquisition of knowledge.

-The change in posture and role for the teacher (Cailliez, 2017) places them in an unfamiliar and unusual situation that can be difficult to experience and manage. They must learn to approach the learners closely to support them throughout this knowledge-building situation.

# > Suggestions proposed for FFL Teachers on Implementing the Flipped Classroom

For a successful implementation of the FC in FFL, teachers' statements indicate that FC requires meticulous planning, appropriate tools, and proactive management of potential challenges. They offer some practical suggestions for FFL teachers:

-For effective CI implementation, it is advised to clearly define educational objectives, select appropriate resources that meet learners' needs and support learning goals, communicate clearly with learners to ensure they understand their roles, and encourage interaction and reflection by allowing learners to apply what they have learned in a meaningful way.

-Regarding resources and tools, they recommend using platforms such as Moodle or Google Classroom to organize and distribute educational content, track learners' progress, and facilitate online communication. They also suggest using video recording tools, digital libraries, applications, and online resources.

-They suggest strategies to overcome challenges by participating in professional training on the use of educational technologies and the implementation of the flipped classroom, collaborating with technicians and technology specialists to resolve technical issues quickly and efficiently.

-Based on these testimonials, we can say that by following these recommendations, FFL teachers can optimize the implementation of FC, thus providing their learners with a rich and effective learning experience. The judicious use of technological resources, clear communication of expectations, and proactive management of challenges will help maximize the benefits of this innovative pedagogical method in the FFL classroom.

# II.3. Discussion

The feedback shows that the flipped classroom is:

-A space that promotes learner/learner and learner/teacher interactions (Gerard & Rubio, 2020);

-A place where the learner, accompanied by an instructor, takes responsibility for their own learning;

-An environment managed by a supportive facilitator, allowing for various forms of differentiation; -A setting that enhances learner engagement in their studies through personalized pedagogical support;

-A method that frees up time, which can be judiciously used to make students more active in class;

-An approach that improves the work of both the teacher and the learner.

We believe that the results obtained are encouraging. However, despite its numerous advantages, the FC model is not without its challenges and limitations, which require careful considerations for implementation :

-The necessity of self-discipline: The FC model places a significant responsibility on learners to engage with pre-class materials independently. Without adequate self-discipline, students may struggle to prepare effectively, which could diminich the benefits of in-class activities that rely on prior knowledge (Anna, 2020). Strategies such as scaffolding tasks and monitoring progree could help address this issue.

**-Dependence on technology:** The FC model relies heavily on technological infrastructure, such as access to devices and reliable internet. This dependence can exacerbate the dogital divide, leaving students from underprivileged backgrounds at a disadvantage. Teachers and instutions must work to provide equitable access to technological ressources or consider hybrid approaches that integrate offline materials.

-Resistance to change: The shift from traditional teaching methods to the FC approach can be unsettling for individuals accustomed to conventional lecture dormats. Both students and educators may resist adapting to new roles- students as active participants and educators as facilitators. Overcoming this resistance requires targeted training, gradual implementation, and consistent communication about the benefits of the model.

# II.4. Future Perspectives of the Flipped Classroom in FFL

The statements of the interviewees confirm that the evolution of the flipped classroom offers exciting opportunities for FFL teaching/learning. They reveal various perspectives, including:

- Integration of New Technologies: New technologies can make learning more engaging and allow learners to develop language skills in simulated real-life situations. These technologies can help bridge gaps for each learner and provide targeted support, thereby improving learning efficiency. They can create dynamic learning communities where learners share resources, participate in discussions, and support each other.

- In-depth and Ongoing Research: Continuous research can assess the impact of the FC on learners' outcomes, motivation, and engagement. Collected data and obtained results can inform pedagogical practices and guide future improvements of the FC.

- Development of New Pedagogical Models: Exploring combinations of the flipped classroom with other pedagogical approaches, such as project-based learning or differentiated instruction, could create even more effective hybrid models tailored to diverse learner needs.

- Professional Development and Continuous Training for Teachers: Keeping teachers updated with the latest advancements and improving their pedagogical practices can be achieved through professional development and continuous training. Creating collaborative networks among teachers to exchange ideas, resources, and experiences can foster mutual support and encourage collective innovation.

From these accounts, we observe that the future perspectives of the flipped classroom in FFL are promising and diverse, ranging from technology integration to continuous pedagogical innovation and professional collaboration. By exploring these avenues, teachers can create more enriching and effective learning environments, preparing learners for a deeper and practical mastery of the French language.

## Conclusion

From the preceding discussion, it is evident that the FC represents a significant transformation in pedagogical approaches, offering a dynamic and interactive alternative to traditional teaching methods. In the context of teaching French as a Foreign Language, this method presents considerable advantages.

The feedback indicates that the FC has significantly improved the quality of courses. It integrates elements of various pedagogical approaches, such as active learning, differentiated instruction, self-directed learning, and collaborative learning. The observed benefits, such as increased learner engagement and motivation, as well as enhanced autonomy and sense of responsibility, illustrate the effective potential of this method.

However, implementing the FC is not without challenges and presents certain drawbacks. The main difficulty lies in transitioning from the guided phase to the autonomous phase. The results show that, although the FC uses digital technologies, it does not manage to motivate all learners due to the home-based work it imposes. Technical problems, resistance to change, and managing the workload for teachers are obstacles to overcome. To succeed, it is essential to provide teachers with adequate training, foster a supportive institutional environment, and develop strategies to effectively integrate this method with other pedagogical approaches.

In terms of limitations, the FC requires significant self-discipline and relies heavily on technology. It is also less suitable for individuals resistant to change. It is important to remember that the pedagogical support for learners must align with current logic, those of 21st-century skills, which the FC allows us to implement in our classes: collaboration, creativity, communication, citizenship, cultural and social ease, competencies related to new technologies, critical thinking, adaptability, autonomy, and self-confidence.

In summary, the FC offers a promising path to reinvent FFL teaching, making learning more interactive, personalized, and learner-centered. By overcoming current challenges and leveraging future innovations, this approach has the potential to profoundly transform the learning experience of French worldwide.

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