



**Sandra Maria Vieira de Sousa** **Comunicação Intercultural: Representações de Cultura e o Papel do Professor.**



**Sandra Maria Vieira de  
Sousa**

**Intercultural Communication: Representations of  
Culture and Teachers' role.**

Dissertação apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Estudos Ingleses, realizada sob a orientação científica da Dr. Gillian Grace Owen Moreira, Professor Auxiliar do Departamento de Línguas e Culturas da Universidade de Aveiro.

Dedico este trabalho ao Rui pelo incansável apoio.

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**palavras-chave**

Ensino da Cultura  
Ensino das Línguas  
Consciência Cultural e Linguística  
Comunicação Intercultural

**resumo**

O conceito de Comunicação Intercultural é de uso comum nos nossos dias em contextos educativos. A nova realidade da língua Inglesa e os novos contextos em que é utilizada são amplamente reconhecidos por professores e teóricos, que reconhecem também a nova realidade cultural, os novos desafios e objectivos que se impõem para a dimensão cultural no ensino das línguas estrangeiras, especificamente no ensino do Inglês enquanto língua estrangeira num contexto específico e europeu como é Portugal.

No entanto a realidade revela a existência de uma profunda distância entre a teoria e as práticas educativas, o papel do professor continua a dever muito à ideia do professor enquanto transmissor de conhecimentos – isto parece ser especialmente visível no ensino da cultura. A análise dos resultados do meu projecto de investigação, revela que, apesar da maioria dos professores de inglês em Portugal reconhecerem a importância dos novos contextos culturais da língua inglesa, bem como a importância de se contrastar e reflectir sobre aspectos e comportamentos culturais, esta reflexão parece permanecer meramente retórica, não conduzindo a um verdadeiro compromisso com uma atitude crítica e por isso mesmo transformadora da realidade. É necessário que a educação de professores, quer inicial quer contínua, reconheça a importância de os formar em questões de interculturalidade, de debater assuntos e clarificar conceitos, para que os professores sejam capazes de adoptar uma nova perspectiva em relação ao mundo e redefinir-se a si próprios enquanto indivíduos e enquanto profissionais. Só através dum profundo esclarecimento os professores poderão ser capazes de se comprometerem com uma transformação das suas práticas educativas e com a formação de cidadãos capazes de efectivamente analisar, criticar e transformar o mundo em que vivemos, numa lógica de conhecimento e compreensão dos 'Outros' e da sua própria realidade.

**keywords**

Culture teaching  
Language teaching  
Culture and language awareness  
Intercultural Communication  
Intercultural speaker

**abstract**

The notion of Intercultural communication is a common concept nowadays in educational contexts. The new reality of the English language and its new contexts of use are widely recognised by teachers and theoreticians alike, who also recognise the new cultural reality, the new challenges and goals which are raised for the cultural dimension in foreign language teaching, specially the teaching of English as a foreign language in a specific European context such as Portugal.

Nevertheless, there is a profound distance between theory and educational practices, and teachers' roles still owe much to the idea of the teacher as a transmitter of information – this seems to be especially true in culture teaching. The analysis of the results of my research project reveal that even though most teachers of English in Portugal recognise the importance of the new cultural contexts of the English language and also the importance of reflecting upon and contrasting cultural events and behaviour, this reflection seems to be merely rhetorical and a true commitment to a critical and transformative attitude towards social realities is avoided. Teacher training and further education should recognise the importance of training teachers in issues of interculturality and of discussing matters and clarifying concepts so that teachers feel secure and able to adopt a new perspective of the world and redefine themselves as individuals and professionals. Only through a profound enlightening can teachers commit to a transformation of their teaching practices and to the education of citizens able to effectively analyse, criticise and transform the world we live in, in a logic of knowledge and understanding of 'Others' and of their own reality.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This research project has been inspired by my experience as a teacher of foreign languages, by my observation of colleagues and by our visible efforts to bring meaning to the mission that has been set before us, as teachers of a foreign language and culture, particularly of English. I find this research project relevant since I truly believe that most of our disappointments and difficulties concerned to culture teaching are caused by lack of knowledge and true understanding of what it means to teach culture in the present context of globalisation and internationalisation, especially as teachers of a language as immersed in such a complex debate as English is.

It is rather easy to come to the conclusion that teachers are and have always been concerned with culture teaching, and if there is time for a traditional song, traditional food, celebrations or any other rituals to be introduced in class, or if students travel to the country of the target language, this feels like an important achievement for most teachers. This study is dedicated to those who share my belief that in an increasingly globalised world and under the present worldwide social conditions, our task is much more meaningful. Our task is indeed vital for the education of future generations set to make this world a better one to live in.

As a teacher of English I am interested in clarifying the notion of Intercultural Speaker and its implications to EFL teaching practices in Portugal. As the title suggests, throughout my dissertation a link will be established between teachers' representations of culture within the English as a foreign language class in Portugal and the debate on Standard English and the new paradigm for culture teaching which is built upon concepts such as the intercultural speaker and intercultural communicative competence, to be dealt with and explored throughout this thesis. I expect to learn more about the importance teachers consign to the concept 'culture' in foreign language teaching and to their own role in the process of cultural teaching/learning. My research aims to clarify how teachers of English in Portugal approach the teaching of culture, whether teachers of English in

Portugal are aware of the debate surrounding the notions of intercultural communication and the intercultural speaker and recognise the cultural implications of the new reality of the English language. I also hope to discover to what extent this awareness affects teachers' methodologies reflecting an effective change in teaching approaches and an adaptation of teaching methodologies to the new reality of the English language and to the aims of intercultural competence.

It is my deep concern that language teachers gain some awareness of the importance of going beyond monitoring linguistic production in the classroom and become aware of the complex and numerous processes of intercultural mediation that any foreign language learner undergoes. The teachers' role is not as plain and simple as it was thought to be in past years, and the relationship between language and culture has proved to be deeper and more complex than many thought it to be. In the past language and culture seemed to be carefully separated and, in fact, people often chose to learn a foreign language in order to study its literature; but the focus on the disciplines of anthropology and sociology, brought about by the development of the social sciences, resulted in a different understanding of culture, calling attention to the context and situation where the 'foreign' language would be used. The role of culture in the foreign language curriculum developed and the main goal of foreign language teaching became communication within the cultural context of the target language. Currently we have gone farther in describing culture's role in foreign or second language teaching/learning. Brown (1994) questions whether or not language may be value-free or independent of culture and concludes that there are values, presuppositions about the nature of life to be found in any normal use of language. According to Buttjes (1990), language codes cannot be taught in isolation because processes of sociocultural transmission are bound to be at work on many levels. In short all language comes with cultural associations attached. When learning a language we are not only absorbing the linguistics of the language, but everything to do with it, all kinds of cultural information about the language and the country.

Another approach to culture within the field of foreign language teaching is one which considers the importance of the context of situation and all the elements

which are present in it, including the participants 'context of culture', which is related to the participants' values, beliefs and assumptions about life and about others. This approach considers that when we teach language, we '*are not only teaching a rule-governed structural system, whose usage is sanctioned by society, but the actualization of meaning potential associated with particular situation types*' (Kramsh, 1993; 10). The question which arises is: how can a foreign mode of seeing and understanding life, the others and the world be taught through an educational culture, when this educational culture is already the result of native perceptions and ideas? Kramsh suggests that a third culture is created in between the native and target cultures, which has its own value and place in communication.

Globalisation and internationalisation have become central concepts in foreign language teaching discussions. English is often referred to as the language of globalisation and is often seen as a threat. Internationalisation, on the other hand, is often seen as an important strategy when facing global competition which demands the development of intercultural competence. On the other hand the English language has split up into various local variants which are increasingly being recognised and growing in importance.

These issues have come to be of paramount importance for foreign or second language teachers and a new paradigm for teaching practices has developed that focuses on culturally responsive teaching, awareness of the roles of language, communication and critical cultural awareness. There is a need for an ability to reflect ethically and critically about what one experiences and language policy has to do with how people act in relation to the linguistic complexity that characterises the modern world.

The teacher plays an important role in relation to the choice of language and the attitudes to various languages and dialects and the actual use of the target language in the learning environment. Normally teachers have to make decisions as to what is correct and what is wrong in students' use of language, but the English language is incredibly diverse and to choose an upper middle class variant

of British English is only one of the possibilities. There are many variants spread across the world and the decision as to which of these are suitable to meet the students' needs is one which is usually made by the teacher. The teacher's view of language, culture, and society is more important than most teachers suppose or recognise. In fact, as a rule it becomes the 'model' which influences the students' linguistic and cultural or conceptual construction of the language. In short, language teachers have a very important and active role in helping to educate tomorrow's decision makers and opinion formers and it is important that they become fully aware of this power so that they can make better sense of their pedagogical activities. These are important issues which are not often dealt with or adequately debated, but it is vital that teachers are trained to think about sociolinguistic issues such as the ones mentioned above.

One of the most important concepts teachers should consider and pursue is language awareness, which can be in short described as an insight into the structure and the use of language in various communicative situations and awareness of language choice and language attitudes. It also means an awareness of the diversity of languages in the world, the relations between them and of the great linguistic complexity and diversity which characterises our world.

Intercultural awareness, the process of becoming more aware of and better understanding one's own culture and other cultures around the world, is another important factor in today's perception of foreign language teaching and learning. Intercultural awareness is crucial if teachers wish their students to use their language skills in order to genuinely comprehend and communicate in an increasingly internationalised world. Most teachers try to help students have good command of the language, they concentrate on structures and forms and materials have been produced that help students achieve some degree of proficiency in the target language; but real, valid meaningful content is often left out. One of the aims of intercultural learning is to increase international and cross-cultural tolerance and understanding. Intercultural learning is therefore not merely a part of English as a foreign language teaching, but it has been discussed in all fields of education.

In order to better define the concept of intercultural learning, we are confronted with the difficult and almost impossible task of defining the concept of

culture itself, always bearing in mind that it is highly possible to belong to or identify oneself with more than one culture. Culture is often understood as a shared history or set of experiences, a way of life, a set of social practices and a system of beliefs, and it may often be synonymous with a religion. It is often synonymous with a country, a region, a nationality or it may cross several countries or regions. Intercultural awareness in language learning is often referred to as the ability to be aware of cultural relativity and this ability is considered to be of great importance if students wish to be truly proficient in the language.

Culture is closely connected to language, in fact, it has often been argued that they are inseparable and that language itself is defined by culture and vice-versa, that is, culture shapes the language and is at the same time shaped by it. People cannot truthfully learn a second language if there is no awareness of its culture, and how that culture relates to our own first language /culture. It is not only essential therefore to have cultural awareness, but also intercultural awareness.

*Culture in language teaching is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing. (...)If language is seen as social practice, culture becomes the very core of language teaching. (Kramsh, 1993; 1,8)*

Intercultural communicative competence attempts to raise students' awareness of their own culture, while at the same time and as a consequence, it helps them to interpret and understand other cultures. Interculturally competent students should have a good understanding and awareness of their own culture, be aware of how their culture is seen from outside, understand the target culture from its own perspective and be aware of their own perception of the target culture. Intercultural awareness is not just a body of knowledge and it cannot be simply defined as a skill; it is rather a competence which comprises a set of practices requiring knowledge, skills and attitudes. Despite this fact intercultural awareness skills can be developed by designing materials which have cultural and intercultural themes as their content. The attitudes and skills that are considered to build up this competence are very similar to many of the skills normally taught in the language

class. What makes intercultural learning different is the raised awareness of what we do and of the vital importance of these skills.

How does this affect the role of the teacher? Intercultural learning gives the teacher a role which makes many teachers feel uncomfortable, above all with the idea that they may be influencing students in some way. The responsibility for transmitting some kind of ideology to our students and helping them become more aware of the world around them, and to better interact with that world in an active and critical manner is often frightening, but these are crucial roles of the teacher.

Intercultural awareness, as a fundamental feature of language and an integral part of language learning, is important at all levels of language learning. In face of the current global situation, teachers have one of the most important jobs in the world and teaching intercultural awareness is vital to making their job relevant and meaningful. Helping our students understand, interact with and try to intervene and improve the world we all live in, is perhaps one of the most important tasks which could be set before us as teaching professionals.

In the field of foreign language methodology the exact meanings of intercultural learning and its goal: intercultural competence, continue to be the source of much debate and disagreement. Intercultural learning is seen as a learning objective but also as a learning process and as a particular form of communication. There seems to be general agreement among the supporters of intercultural learning as to its key underlying goals and their consequences but Kramsh (1993) highlighted the difficulties in ascertaining if and when the affective aims of intercultural learning have been achieved. Students are not expected to simply develop positive attitudes towards the target culture and many researchers have rejected the idea that contact between cultures automatically leads to intercultural learning and to positive attitudes towards the target culture. Bennet (1993) says that the belief that "*deep down we all are the same*" is not an adequate response to cultural difference.

In contrast to earlier models of culture learning, learners are no longer expected to reject their own culture and take on the target culture, but rather to find what Kramsh (1993) describes as a 'third space'. This refers to a location between the home and target cultures where new identities are formed. Kramsh

sees the term as an alternative to the tendency in foreign language teaching to treat the home and foreign cultures as monolithic entities.

Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence can be seen as a representative model of what elements the process of intercultural learning should aim to develop in learners. The model deals with skills, attitudes, knowledge and critical awareness which have been seen to constitute intercultural competence. Byram's main work on the model offers not only objectives for each of the components, but also suggests modes of assessment for each part. Such elaboration on the model facilitates putting the model into practice in the classroom.

It is important to locate the concept of 'culture' within the context of foreign language teaching and underline notions that lie beneath the construction of this concept: dynamism, diversity, creativity and individuality. Intercultural contacts are not just about national identity but about people with dynamic cultural identities. This perspective fosters the idea of a reflexive teacher, an investigator, knowing methodologies to act as mediator, a teacher who values the students' experience, who takes advantage of the diversity of contexts to build intercultural pedagogical practices and who has to select between different interpretations of culture the one which best fits the educational project in a specific teaching/learning situation.



This dissertation contains four main sections. The first section is entitled English Today and deals with the new sociolinguistic reality of the English language and its contexts of use, it further approaches the implications of globalisation and internationalisation processes in the teaching of English as a foreign language, in language education policies in Europe and the way it affects EFL teaching in Portugal. Teachers' attitudes towards Standard English are presented and discussed here. These opinions were an important starting point for this thesis and in many ways influenced the research which followed.

The second section is entitled Language and Culture and deals with the notion of culture and its relation to language, particularly to the teaching of a

foreign language. It will approach the notion of culture as context and its implication for our understanding of communicative processes and clarify the notions of 'context of culture' and 'context of situation'. This section also approaches the difficulties that the cultural component presents in terms of goal definition and teaching procedures and finally it looks at cultural and social impacts on communicative processes within the current paradigm of global English.

The third section is entitled Intercultural Communication and it tries to clarify the notion of intercultural speaker and intercultural competence and list its implications for EFLT. It deals with issues related to the construction of identity and establishes the implications of the notion of intercultural communication for EFL classes in Portugal. It looks at the impacts of these notions on teachers' and students' roles in the teaching/learning process, on teacher education and development, as well as on future curricula.

The fourth section, entitled Teaching for Intercultural Communication identifies teachers' representations of culture within EFL classes in Portugal and establishes a link between teachers' perceptions and the notion of intercultural speaker, through analysis of data from a questionnaire answered by teachers of English in Portugal. It considers what EFL teachers in Portugal are doing in terms of the cultural component of their classes and identifies their notions of culture's role in language teaching and of their own role in the process of language/culture teaching/learning.

The final section, Conclusion, provides an outline of the findings of this project and discusses possible directions to cater for present and future teachers' and students' needs.

The questionnaire on the subject of Standard English, whose results are discussed in section 1 of my thesis, is presented in Appendix 1. The results of the analysis are presented in Appendix 2. The questionnaire on Intercultural Learning and Cultural Representations of Teachers of English in Portugal, whose results are analysed in part four, is presented in Appendix 3. The results of the analysis of data provided by the latter are presented in Appendix 4.

## **SECTION 1 - ENGLISH TODAY**

### ***1.1 - The English language: a new sociolinguistic reality***

English is currently the most widely taught and studied foreign language in the European Union and America's popular culture, particularly movies and music, has carried the English language worldwide, especially among youngsters. English is a part of many people's social life and work and it is used in different environments, mutating to suit these new environments. Many claim that the residents of English speaking countries can no longer claim ownership of the language and that developing local varieties of the language are growing in importance and will continue to do so. Crystal (1999) points out that English is also widely used by non native speakers in international contexts, in fact non-native speakers use English more often to communicate between themselves than to communicate with native speakers, so one may question whether English still belongs to its native speakers and whether in international communication contexts the norms of 'correctness' should be prescribed by Britain or America. Teaching English as a foreign language is one area where it is generally accepted that a standard of pronunciation is desirable and traditionally in Europe the standard is British English and Received Pronunciation; in the same way, in Portugal the recognised model both for speaking and writing has always been the British one. British English is still the applied model in state-run education, even though American English has remarkably grown in importance.

The question of Standard English has given rise to various discussions. Some of the questions often discussed are if, given the new reality of the English language, some standard must be defined to prevent English from fragmenting into many mutually unintelligible forms, whether a new model for international communication is developing and whether British English and American English are still models of correctness.

Trudgill (1999) points out that current ideas about Standard English, tend to overcome previous notions of a Standard which was, to a great extent, linked to notions of status and power. According to this author, 'Standard British English' is linked to many names and designations, some call it "the Queen's English", others "BBC English" or "Oxford English" and it is often associated with Received Pronunciation (RP). Nevertheless, no matter what names it may take, it seems there is some kind of standard, directly spread from England, to which teachers in Portugal have been teaching for many years and which many teachers in Portugal assume as the ultimate aim any learner of English should pursue. As the former definitions indicate, it has some relation to power, education and social status. In a way, it is related to the upper classes and aristocracy, in fact received meant socially acceptable in the best circles. Received Pronunciation has been the British standard of pronunciation for teachers of English as a foreign language for a long time and it was said to be the accent used by most announcers and newsreaders on national and international BBC broadcasting channels; but these standards are, in fact, forms of language which do not reflect the social identity of a people but of a very small number of people.

According to Rosewarne (1994) RP is also often connected to the south-east of England, but a new form of English is spoken by the vast majority of people living in this area: "Estuary English", a modification of several south-east regional accents. This new form of English, whose name is related to the River Thames estuary, has great influence in the South and it is in fact the most widely used dialect in the country. All south-eastern regional and social accents seem to be converging into this variety. Adding to the list is also the growing "Mid-Atlantic" English, a hybrid form of American and British English. The influences of American vocabulary and pronunciation on British English are still limited but growing fast. As British society becomes less formal, as internationalisation grows, backed up by TV and the Internet, words are disappearing from everyday use and new words are assimilated or invented. As Crystal mentions:

*The spoken British English of Britain is already a mass of hybrid forms, with Celtic and immigrant language backgrounds as a major presence. Accent*

*variation is always the clearest index of diversity (...) RP is probably down to about 2% of the population now; and modified forms of RP are increasingly the norm, and regional accents (...) are increasingly accepted in educated contexts, which would have rejected them a generation ago.(...) In Britain itself, diversity is the reality. (Crystal, 1999;18)*

Trudgill (1999), further points out that, as far as American English is concerned, although English is spoken in various countries in America, such as Canada, Puerto Rico, the Philippines or American Samoa, American English is commonly related to the English spoken in the United States of America. There are various dialects and different accents within American English: take the southern accent, for example, and compare it to the New York accent, and one realises that American English is also marked by diversity. Hispanic American English and Black American English are growing in the USA. Billions of immigrants live in America; all with different linguistic backgrounds, so it is no wonder that influences on American English are incredibly wide-ranging. The fact is that American English innovations rapidly find their way into other varieties of English, through the media, music and cinema industries, and if British English was the greatest influence around the world until the early 20th century, American English (USA English) has definitely taken its place as the most dominant influence in the development of English. Nevertheless American English and British English are, in certain ways, converging.

Crystal, (1999) mentions that added to these, there is the question of world 'Englishes'. According to this author, when the British left their colonies, these inherited the English language, which continued to be used for official matters although it was not native to the various colonies. Each of them had their own native languages, which eventually had an effect on the use of English, leading to the development of new types of 'Englishes', with grammatical and lexical features of their own. New forms of English, which reflect the region's heritage and values, have been adapted to meet the needs of those different environments.

Local (or nativised) varieties of English or 'New Englishes' as Kachru calls them, are evolved forms of English that do not necessarily conform to the norms of the metropolitan varieties, such as British English, American English or Australian English. According to Kachru (1992) degrees of nativisation of a variety of English are related to the range and depth of the functions and period of exposition to bilingualism in English. English is 'nativised' and native languages suffer what Kachru (1994) calls 'Englishization'. Kachru makes a further distinction between institutionalised varieties, where locally used English has a profound effect on second language environments (such as Nigerian English or Kenyan English) and performance varieties, where the speaker's output is influenced hardly at all by English in use locally (such as Chinese English or Japanese English).

According to Crystal (1999) the number of non-native speakers of English is now larger than its native speakers, so English is not only spread around the world but has also been denativised to some extent. Acculturation and nativisation have led to the appearance of various and diverse non-native varieties, leading to the claim that English is no longer owned by its native speakers, since non-native speakers of English have created their own discourse norms.

*English in non-English contexts is decontextualised(...) the strategies to organise language to fulfil the communicative purposes aren't necessarily shared (...) they're specific to each speech community of English(...) English acquires a new identity. (Kachru, 1992)*

The different categories of speakers are often represented in three groups: native speakers, English as a second language speakers and speakers of English as a foreign language. Kachru defined three concentric circles of world 'Englishes' (Fig. 1), representing the types of spread, patterns of acquisition and functional domains in which English is used across cultures and languages.

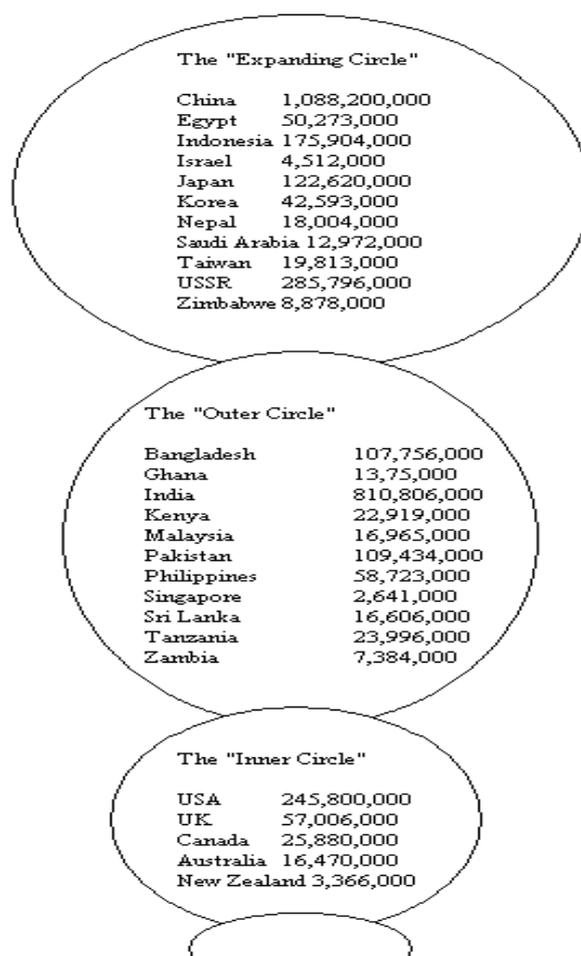


Fig. 1- Braj Kachru's "Concentric Circles". (Kachru, 1992; 356-7).

Note: Population figures do not necessarily correspond to numbers of English speakers and are somewhat outdated.

These are the inner circle (of native speakers), the outer circle (of English as second language speakers, where English has an important status) and the expanding circle (of foreign language speakers). As the number of people using English grows, second language speakers are drawn towards the "inner circle" of first language speakers and foreign language speakers to the "outer circle" of second language speakers. But given the new reality of the English language and its spread around the world, these distinctions are becoming hard to hold.

According to David Crystal (1997) English is the most learned and used language worldwide as well. In spite of not being the most widely spoken language in the world in terms of the number of native speakers, English is considered to be the most widespread language in the world. Crystal points out that the difference between native and second and foreign language speakers is a difficult one and that the number of people who speak English in the world is unknown. English serves many communicative functions in the lives of foreign and second language speakers and the development of English in the world is closely connected to all these functions. The fact that most English speakers speak another language, and the fact that English is being used by a variety of local and national communities, affects the way the language is used and the directions it is bound to take in the future. According to Crystal

*English language teaching policy should make diversity its central principle, (...) Identity and intelligibility are both needed for a healthy linguistic life.(...) The chief task facing English language teaching is how to devise pedagogical policies and practices in which the need to maintain an international standard of intelligibility (...) can be made to comfortably exist alongside the need to recognise the importance of international diversity, as a reflection of identity... (David Crystal, 1999; 13, 15, 20)*

There are many Englishes in use, so it is argued that it would be beneficial to label and define some form of English as standard and many believe that a correct native form is superior and should be imposed on foreign language students. From this point of view, non-native speakers have to view things as a native speaker does, which is in my opinion, impossible, since language reflects the speaker's heritage and culture. Some argue that allowing the use of different forms of English would fragment it, resulting in unintelligibility between users of the language but Smith (1992) argues that difficulties in intelligibility have existed for a long time and that being familiar with speech varieties has an effect on understanding, therefore varieties of English needn't increase problems of

understanding across cultures, if users of English are familiar with them. According to Graddol, tensions arise because:

*English has two main functions in the world: it provides a vehicular language for international communication and it forms the basis for constructing cultural identities. The former function requires mutual intelligibility and common standards. The latter encourages the development of local forms and hybrid varieties. (Graddol, 1997; 56)*

## **1.2 – English as an International Language: the politics of English**

English is a part of many European citizens' lives, they need it to communicate and to work and it is a fact of their social lives and according to Jenkins (1998) a European variety of English or International English is developing to serve as a European *língua franca*.

An important issue to consider in discussions about the role of English as an International Language is the vision of culture as ideology, which involves issues of power and supremacy, associated with frequent accusations of imposition of the language on the outer circle by inner circle interests. According to Crystal (1997), political and economical reasons, and not just the number of speakers, have turned English into a global language and have led to the assumption that English is essential if one wants to access knowledge, technology and economical power. The dominance of English is a reflection of the structure of global relations and globalisation is related first and foremost with economical domains.

English is seen by some as a threat to local cultural identities and by others as a 'neutral' language necessary for economic growth, science and technology. English also functions as a 'bridge' across races or cultures in multiracial settings and is further seen as a key to social mobility and socio-economic status. Pennycook (1994) mentions an approach to global English, which considers the political and cultural implications of the spread of English. He points out the dangers of this vision of English as a global, neutral and beneficial language, whose spread is due to inevitable forces:

*My point (...) is not (...) to suggest that the world has freely chosen English, but rather that, given the broader inequitable relationship in the world, people have little choice but to demand access to English. (Pennycook, 1994; 74)*

He criticises the optimistic vision of equal communication and cooperation, and connects English to social, economical power and the spread of particular forms of culture and knowledge, to unequal international relationships and a specific cultural vision.

Pennycook describes the tension which subsists between the vision of English as a neutral pragmatic language, essential for national development, and, on the other hand, English seen as a language embedded in forms of culture, values and knowledge representative of the West, which are felt as threatening to local cultural identities. An adequate response to this conflict lies in safeguarding citizens rights by fighting the hegemony of English and highlighting local languages, cultural values, knowledge and practices. Although the European Union has committed itself to linguistic diversity in several treaties, English is increasingly used as the language of communication in Europe and its strength is seen as a problem by many governments. Some countries are trying to develop strategies to encourage the use of other languages. In general, it is argued that English has to be learned in addition to other languages rather than at their expense and that an increased multilingualism is the appropriate strategy to implement this change.

Pennycook points out that '*the struggles around English in its local contexts*' (1994:219) need to be considered and that English can be used and appropriated in different ways, not necessarily in a deterministic one. The reality is that people are agents and not merely objects in the creation of their own meanings; and the spread and use of English as an International Language depends on the functions and meanings developed by its users. Smith writes that:

*The widespread use of English makes it an international language (...) this is not a homogenising factor which causes cultural differences to disappear, it offers a medium to express and explain these differences. There are many valid varieties of English; non-native speakers need not sound like Americans or British to be effective English users. (Smith, 1992)*

This variety of English as an International language is still at the beginning of its evolution and has, therefore, not yet been described. Crystal writes that:

*Although several languages are co-official in the European Union, pragmatic linguistic realities result in English being the most widely used language in these corridors (...) There will be the usual sociolinguistic accommodation, and the result will be a novel variety of 'Euro-English' (...) [which] must now be extended to include the various hybrid accents, grammatical constructions, and discourse patterns encountered there. (Crystal, 1999; 15)*

Jenkins (1998) discusses some norms and models for English as an International Language and concludes that International English may probably be some kind of European-English hybrid, whose norms of correctness and appropriateness are based on the use of English in continental Europe and not in Britain or the USA. This is, nevertheless, just a speculation because up to now no empirical description has been made of how the language is used. Nevertheless, it is crucial for English language teaching in Europe to focus on contexts of use that are relevant to European speakers. English fulfils a different function from the native

language and may be owned by all Europeans as a means of enabling understanding.

In a new reality where ease of mobility is a fact, all over the world people from different nations use English to communicate with one another, most likely they use many 'Englishes' and adapt the various forms so that communication is still made successfully. As language reflects the situation of its speakers, International English can't be identified with the native or non-native varieties of English. Jenkins (1998) highlights the fact that the focus of International English is international intelligibility and communication, so its aim is not native-like competence but the ability to communicate in international settings. International English can be an alternative approach to the long held and outdated idea that near-native proficiency in British or American English is vital for successful communication in English. English as an International Language does not advocate native-like proficiency as the most important or as a vital tool for successful cross-cultural communication; it reflects the international functions of English and tries to answer the new needs of learners affected by globalisation.

It is important that teachers prepare students to use English in various linguistic and cultural situations and contexts. Students must be able to understand how different forms of the English language function in different speech communities and also deal with various different social and cultural assumptions which cross the communicative act and influence it. Students should also be aware of international features of English language, as well as of alternative variations. Intercultural communication is not a one way process of transmission from one culture to another; in fact it implies contacts between individuals, negotiating meanings. This negotiation of a shared language will involve a process of mutual transformation. This transformation relies on an awareness of the cultural politics of English in different contexts and the multiple purposes and roles of English in the world. This awareness can lead to the development of strategies which can support the use of English as an International language in an effective way and promote the challenging of existing discourses.

Languages are always changing and adapting to new realities; so English will continue to change and adapt to new demands. All speakers of English play some part in this change. International interaction and its innovations enrich and refresh the English language, providing a means to express new ideas and concepts. The Internet, TV and other recent trends have led to the informalisation of English, resulting in a greater tolerance of diversity and individuality and, as a consequence, a less authoritative approach to language. Our ideas of 'good' and 'bad' forms of English must be rethought, and effective communication goals should replace native-like proficiency goals. What should be taught and to whom depends on its appropriateness in the context. Native as well as non-native speakers of English will have to adapt their use of English according to the situation.

According to Crystal (1999) non-native speakers outnumber native speakers by far, so one can assume there are far more opportunities to talk to non-native speakers. If we consider this reality, it seems that the acquisition of native-like English is not an adequate goal for language instruction in a context of English as a foreign language like Portugal. Teachers need to cast off outmoded beliefs in the superiority of British English and American English and embrace an understanding of the language more in line with these new realities. Room has to be found for teaching strategies that reflect the language as it is today.

### ***1.3- Teacher's opinions on the subject of Standard English: a study.***

In order to find out how teachers of English in Portugal approach the question of Standard English and the teaching of English in Portugal, I carried out a study in 2003. The conclusions drawn after a thorough analysis of data from a questionnaire answered by 70 teachers of English in Portugal, led to further questions and in many ways influenced my current research. My main interest was to find out whether teachers of English in Portugal were aware of the debate about

Standard English and recognised the new reality of the English language, and whether this awareness was reflected in an effective change in teaching approaches and an adaptation of teaching methodology to the new reality of the English language. The questionnaire and data used in this study are presented in Appendix 1 and 2.

Schools selected for the research included not only state schools but also private language schools and universities. Although the majority was situated in the north of Portugal, schools from the south and centre of Portugal were also represented. The age of the participants ranged from 22 to 54 years old, although half of the participants were between 28 and 33 years old. Most of the participants were non-native speakers of English (80%) and had never lived in an English speaking country (76%), although only a small percentage (12%) had never visited any English speaking country, being the U.K. and more specifically England the most visited countries.

Although most of the participants viewed school English as being closer to British English (76%) and recognised that coursebooks and materials available for English language teaching in Portugal have a British English standard (69%), a strong percentage disagreed completely (39%) or partially (24%) that variations to BBC English and Received Pronunciation are inferior. Nevertheless 69% of the participants chose British English as the standard all teachers should use in class.

The majority of the participants agreed strongly or partially that British English and American English should be introduced into the classroom as examples of native models and not as the model learners are expected to acquire. Although there were discordant voices who disagreed to some extent with this statement (24%), nobody disagreed completely, which may be an indication of an increasing awareness that the role native models play in English language teaching is changing and that native models may no longer be the goal of English language teaching.

An overwhelming majority (90%) expressed their agreement with the view that British English and American English will always be at the centre of a standard for English language teaching and the majority of participants agreed that

if a person has native or native-like grammar, lexis and phonology, appropriate communication will automatically follow. Nevertheless 59% disagreed that sentence structure and grammar are features which should allow for no deviation from standard norms if one wants to communicate effectively.

Many participants disagreed completely (37%) or partially (12%) that International English should be controlled by educational entities in Britain and the USA, but a significant percentage expressed agreement with this statement (33%) and 18% had no opinion on the subject. These results expressed divergent opinions on the subject.

A great majority of participants agreed strongly or partially that the aim of a standard for English was to provide intelligibility between all users of English and that an International English standard can work as a stabilising model learned by future users of English. In fact participants were more or less unanimous in agreeing that the ability to communicate and understand English as an international language is the main aim of English language teaching, although only 20% chose International English as the standard all teachers should use in class. 56% of the participants disagreed that being able to communicate on the Internet and use it effectively was one of the main aims of English language teaching. Most participants (59%) also agreed that the training of students to use English in international settings is not adequately dealt with in Portugal, but a significant percentage (20%) had no opinion. The majority of teachers agreed that in a globalised context where English functions as *língua franca*, standards should adapt to new demands and that a new curriculum for English language teaching is needed to keep pace with social realities. It was a general belief that teachers should recognise the role of English as Europe's *língua franca* and teach according to it, but a significant percentage had no opinion on the subject.

Opinions on varieties of English and their influence on English language teaching in Portugal also revealed some disagreement and indecision on the subject. Opinions were divergent on whether the English language teaching standard in Portugal accounted for the diversity of people who use English. However an overwhelming majority of participants agreed strongly that the English language teaching curriculum should include varieties of English in order to give

students a broader knowledge of language, language use and linguistic diversity. The same percentage disagreed with the statement that exposing students to different varieties of English will confuse them.

Still concerning pedagogy and teaching methods, opinions were divergent. Half of the participants agreed that teachers should teach according to the linguistic model they have so that they feel secure of what they're doing, while 40% showed their disapproval of this. Most participants (70%) disagreed that teachers' main concern in their English teaching should be to follow the syllabus faithfully. The majority of participants (86%) disagreed that students learn English mainly to communicate with native speakers, although a smaller percentage (47%) agreed that English is mainly taught by non-native speakers in order to communicate with other non-native speakers, 38% of the participants disagreed with this statement and 14% had no opinion.

As for the follow-up question, only eight of the seventy participants felt the need to make further comments on the subject. Native speakers highlighted their belief in the superiority of the British English models: *"I believe English originated in Britain"*, *"I believe that British English is more appropriate as a standard because it is purer in form"*, *"The English language institutes in Portugal are upholding the standard of English on all levels (...). At school level (...) English is taught by non-native speakers whose grammar, lexis and phonology are not up to standard"*. Non-native speakers of English were more concerned with teaching and curriculum aspects: *"Curriculum is still too focused on grammar topics rather than on communication"*, *"Students do not have the opportunity to practice what they learn because classes are teacher-centred."* Nevertheless some teachers also revealed a tendency to regard native models as the superior ones and to view the acquisition of native-like proficiency as vital: *"English teachers should have some kind of help in order to do a training or visit to England because it is very important to have real contact with native speakers"*, *"English classes should be taught only in English and never with a mixture of Portuguese and English"*, *"The English we teach in Portugal should be mainly the British English and British culture. When we introduce other 'Englishes' we only confuse students and make*

*them feel less confident in their learning process*". These opinions reveal to some extent the persisting belief in the superiority of native models, they are, nevertheless, not representative of the majority of the participants,

#### **1.4 - Teacher's opinions on the subject of Standard English: analysis.**

The participants in this study were extremely open to the idea that a new curriculum for English language teaching is needed. Teachers seem to be critically aware of the new socio-cultural context of the English language. They agree that there is a need for a pedagogical change which meets the new reality of International English and English as Europe's *lingua franca*. Moreover they chose the ability to communicate and understand English as an International Language as the main aim of English language teaching. So why does a strong percentage choose British English as the standard all teachers should use in class?

Although most teachers do not view variations to British English as being inferior, they are still very much influenced by old models and the belief that near-native proficiency is the goal for English language teaching. These beliefs are backed up and perpetuated by an educational system as well as by textbooks which are often based on a British English standard. In spite of recognising changes and new social and linguistic contexts of the English language, teachers didn't seem to be confident enough to change their teaching approaches or to discard traditional models and adopt new ones. Do teachers crave for rules, for rights and wrongs? Are they somewhat reluctant to adopt new models? The reason why teachers seem to be reluctant to adopt new models may be explained, to some extent, by the fact that International English or European English are still developing ideas and no empirical factual description of either of them has yet been made, or basically by lack of true understanding or deeper insight into the new concepts which are very much now part of the debate about teaching English. Half of the participants agreed that teachers should teach according to the

linguistic model they have so that they feel secure of what they're doing, which may be an indication that many teachers continue to think of themselves and their role in language learning/teaching as one of perpetuator of a model, which leaves little room for innovation.

Teachers' opinions on subjects like International English were divergent and revealed some confusion and lack of understanding. Most teachers agreed that varieties of English should be included in the curriculum and that they are not confusing to students, moreover they agreed that British and American English models should be introduced in class as examples of native models and not as the goal learners should pursue, but teachers then seemed to contradict themselves and revealed some lack of consistency in their opinions when they almost unanimously say that British and American English will always be at the centre of a standard for English language teaching. This opinion revealed that most teachers are influenced to a great extent by state policies on English language teaching and that they rely strongly on these policies, adapting their teaching practices in accordance with them.

Above all, this study indicated that teachers are still very suspicious and probably not sufficiently informed, at least not informed enough to make a firm decision and change their teaching practices. In spite of the growing awareness of the new contexts of the English language, teachers showed some difficulty in engaging with a committed transformation of their teaching realities.

Society changes and needs new linguistic forms to express those changes. Nevertheless, many continue to believe that there is a right way of using English, although they may not use these forms in their own speech. Learners see rules as something that helps them, but the real world of English, and any other language, is full of creativity, and creativity does not allow for prescription; a good deal of language is indeed a matter of choice and not just right or wrong.

By actively noticing changes and encouraging our students to do so, we can witness language change in progress. Changes in language give us cultural as well as linguistic insights and are not only reflected in new words but also in the way language is used and how it reflects the new preoccupations of the time.

Teachers need to be linguistically and culturally aware of aspects of language use and developing a more tolerant approach may seem rather a long-term aim. Teachers will need to rethink the notion of error and both learners and teachers need to be made familiar with the constant evolution of languages, which are often mixed and shifted in multilingual environments. Code-switching and mixing, which are commonplace outside classrooms, are frequently seen as sub-standard language behaviour; grammar forms the core of most course books, when in fact learners wish to communicate in English by speaking the language. Highlighting general strategies of talk and encouraging students to become active observers of language use in different settings seem to be a more proper goal.

The new reality of English should be reflected in the curricula of teacher training programmes. A new paradigm is needed to teach world Englishes, an understanding of the sociolinguistic reality of the uses and users of English and the recognition of the implications of pluralism which has become common to the English language must be at its base.

The English to be taught in schools should be rich and full of useful resources to foster students' potentialities. It is not educationally and linguistically realistic to drive learners to conform to a native variety beyond their needs. Teachers' policy should, in any case, try to meet the learners' needs whatever they are, the students' purposes in learning English, where they are learning the language and how interested they are in learning about the varieties of English and changes taking place in the language. To what extent learners need more up to date information on any variety of English is debatable depending on the context.

An appropriate pedagogy considers how to prepare students for both global and local speakers of English and to feel at home in both international and national cultures. It values the teaching of English which is used and thus needed for local and international communication purposes, leaving aside the insistence on the superiority of established educational models, which is not in keeping with a democratic ideology of linguistic diversity. Students need to develop an awareness

of different varieties of English, positive attitudes towards diversity, and take communicative responsibility as participants in cultural interaction.

A pedagogy that meets the students' needs must be critical and recognise the impossibility of separating English from its multiple contexts of use and raise critical awareness of the dominant vision of English as a global language. This approach allows the awareness that language is not always a question of choice, leading the students to a critical awareness of the language and its place in the modern world. Intercultural communication ( to be dealt with thoroughly in section 3 of this thesis) involves reframing and building up new norms, and engaging in a process of reciprocal change which, as I have mentioned before, cannot be isolated from the cultural politics of English where such encounters take place.

Intercultural ability in English will involve the development of pragmatic and strategic abilities, so that speakers of English as an International Language will be able to take part in the multiplicity of discourses with which English is associated. They will in this way have resources to confront and transform these discourses in empowering ways, turning the language into a means through which its users are capable of developing their intercultural ability and attaining mutual understanding. Teachers must be able to go beyond linguistic monitoring:

*By discarding their role as ambassadors of a foreign culture, the model of a standardised native speaker, and the concept of a static, self-contained, and strange culture, as well as by acknowledging the interactive nature of culture learning and production and the social, political, and ethical implications of intercultural learning/teaching, the foreign language / culture teacher becomes more concerned about issues of communication and solidarity. (Guilherme 2002: 159)*

## **SECTION 2 – LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

### ***2.1- Conceptualizations of Culture and Language Teaching: the Communicative Approach***

Five major fields of study can be identified which have had an influence on language teaching and thus culture teaching, these are historical studies, linguistic studies, sociological studies, psychological studies and educational studies. Stern (1992;3) presents a conceptual framework for second language teaching theories (Figure 2) where these five major fields contribute to language teaching by coming together at a second level: the level of applied or educational linguistics, which deals with the fundamental concepts of language teaching: language, learning, teaching and social context; developing theories and undertaking research, thus providing a basis for second language learning/teaching. According to Stern, educational linguistics acts as an intermediary between the more general language-related disciplines and the specific practice of language teaching. Practice is at a third level and it is divided into methodology and organization. The former leads with practical concepts and the latter with institutions.

It is in fact undeniable that language teaching innovations coincide with the development of human sciences such as linguistics, psychology, sociology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and their related disciplines, and it is important to recognise the ways in which they have influenced the development of language teaching and language teaching methods.

Teaching and learning foreign languages has greatly evolved over recent years, new concepts and methods have developed along with the communicative approach and more recently with the intercultural approach. The most significant changes in perspective were from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning, on

the learners and their background, and from declarative knowledge, which prescribed learning content teachers should transmit, to procedural knowledge which focuses on learning processes and strategies.

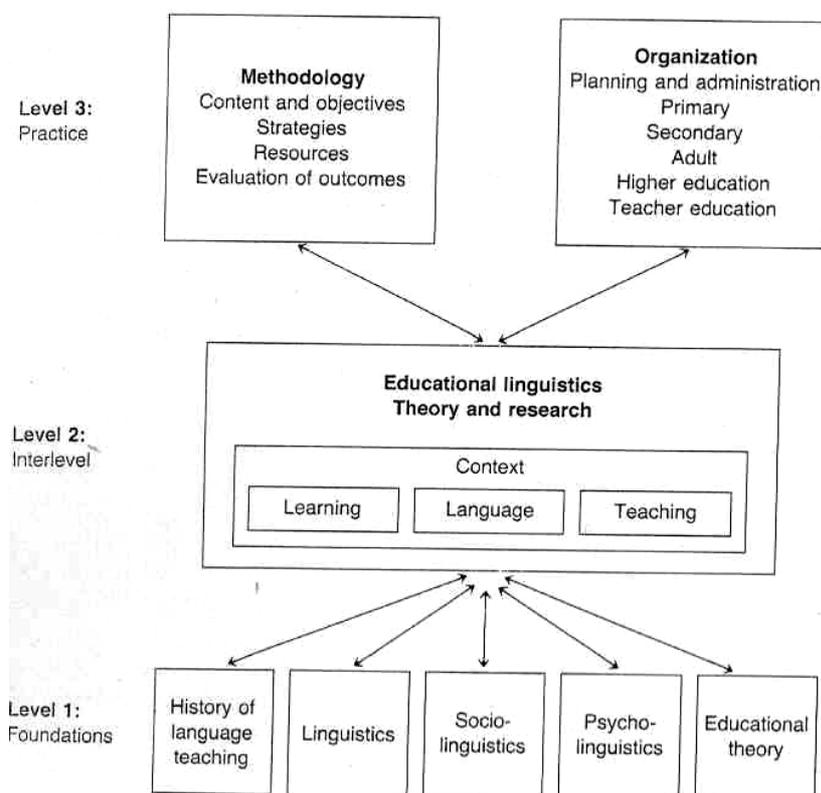


Fig. 2 – Stern's conceptual framework for second language teaching theories (Stern, 1992:3)

Historically when cultural issues were addressed, they frequently concentrated on great literature, history or geography. Between the two World Wars there was an increasing emphasis on the study of history, geography and the country's institutions; their importance was highlighted to the process of language learning and cultural teaching also included the great accomplishments of the target community in arts, music and drama, in scientific areas, sports and other achievements which were a reason for the community to be proud of. After the Second World War and with the growing influence of social sciences, in

particular anthropology and sociology, a different emphasis on 'the way of life' of a community grew, based on a concept of culture which was very much influenced by anthropological studies. This concept of culture generally referred to typical behaviour in daily situations, value systems, philosophy and the whole shared social relations that are part of a society.

Bennett (1993) defines 'Big C culture' as the institutions of culture, such as art and literature, which can be described as Culture with a capital C. 'Culture with a little c' is described as the psychological features that define a group of people, their everyday thinking and behaviour, rather than to the institutions they have created. A good working definition of 'culture with a little c' is the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviours and values of groups of interacting people. Of course social reality is constructed of both large and small 'c' aspects of culture, people learn how to behave through socialization into the institutions of the culture, which leads them to behave in ways that perpetuate those same institutions. Bennett further mentions that understanding objective culture (big C) may create knowledge, but it doesn't necessarily generate competence.

Members of a cultural group identify themselves with that group, which is described by Collier (2000) as cultural identity, that is, the identification with a group that has a shared system of symbols and meanings as well as norms for conduct and the effective acceptance into that group. Culture is, in this way, defined mainly as the sum of a community or population's experiences and patterns of behaviour, its concepts, values and assumptions about life that guide behaviour and how those evolve. Culture thus comprises the philosophy of life, but it also comprises the behaviour and all resulting products, that is, the manifestation of shared meanings in people's social interactions and the results or products of these interactions. These cultural manifestations are an important gateway to understanding other people's deeper values and norms and also our own. A more profound observation of the immediately observable symbols can lead us to the essential genuine values and the basic philosophy of life and will generate a more profound insight into the culture we are observing. Nevertheless, this view of

culture tends to value facts over meanings and students are still seen as somewhat passive receivers of cultural knowledge.

The growing importance of sociolinguistic issues and the introduction of communicative approaches to language teaching led the content area in language teaching to expand and grow out of the previous analysis of literature which aimed to develop, replacing the traditional formal concept of culture referred to as 'capital C Culture' with the concept of culture as 'way of life' referred to as 'small c culture'. The content area embraced happenings of everyday life as well as social institutions and historical developments, norms, values, traditions and art, but the relationship between linguistic acts and social and cultural events was also emphasised. Language had previously been studied in terms of structure and formal characteristics, little or no attention was given to social or semantic aspects and one of the arguments for the increasing focus on culture teaching was that it would provide the necessary contact between language and society, culture and real-life. Language was then increasingly studied in pragmatic and semantic terms, and sociolinguistics established itself as a discipline and discourse analysis grew in importance.

The communicative approach emphasises the use of authentic materials, and socio-cultural content is based on everyday situations concerning people's family, community, work and leisure, norms and values. Teachers began to emphasize pragmatic issues and sociolinguistic facts to help learners avoid communication breakdown when interacting with native speakers. The student learned a foreign language, in most cases to exchange information or to fulfil basic needs while in a foreign context.

Textbooks which accompanied the communicative approach in past years frequently presented language in a de-contextualized way, frequently overlooking the significance of situation, participants and settings as aspects which influence communication and failing to present sociolinguistic information that could allow students to communicate successfully in specific situations. Textbooks offered useful formula for communication but without presenting insights as to contextual influences on these phrases, failing to represent the heterogeneous nature of the

speakers' culture or the students' own social and cultural identity, overlooking the fact that students often rely on their native behaviours or norms when they are faced with real-life communicative situations.

Research into the manifestations of culture in language developed into an analysis of body language, eye contact and other forms of concrete behaviour and communication forms. The analysis of 'speech acts or events' and the encoding of social meanings into language opened the way to the concept of 'communicative competence', which was introduced by Hymes and which became central to foreign language teaching/learning theories. Hymes (1972) argues that speech events are governed by social and linguistic norms for the use of speech, which are not universal but specific of the communication situation and communities. According to this author communicative competence also includes interpretation of speech and behaviour in light of norms of the speech community. Hymes (1972) and Geertz (1975) state that communication involves systems of social and cultural identity and subsystems of sociocultural norms. In interactions among members of different cultures, divergent concepts of appropriate behaviours and meaning interpretations can affect participants' conduct in social contexts.

The concept of communicative competence, developed by Hymes, refers to the ability to use speech properly in varying social contexts and function in authentic communicative situations, through an active exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to linguistic and paralinguistic input. Communicative competence involves therefore a negotiation of meaning and is context-specific.

Hymes (1974) developed a frame of factors to describe the context of situation which are listed under the acronym SPEAKING.

- Setting refers to the time and place, in the case of language teaching and learning, it refers to the class.
- Participants are speakers and listeners.
- Ends are related to what the participants try to achieve.
- Act sequence refers to the structure and the content of statements.
- Key refers to the tone or manner of the message.
- Instrumentalities refer to the selection of channel.

- Norms of interaction and interpretation refer to how participants interrelate and build interpretations.
- Genre refers to the sort of activity participants are engaged in.

Communicative competence requires that both teachers and students have knowledge of the target language and culture(s) and teachers have tried to develop this familiarity through the use of authentic materials in the classroom. However, as Kramsh (1993) has demonstrated, the use of authentic materials does not automatically produce an understanding of the message that is equivalent to that of the members of the target culture (and there may be variations amongst these understandings). Devoid of an awareness of native perspectives, learners of a second language and culture may not be capable of interpreting the meaning of messages in the target language as members of that culture desire them to.

The study of culture has developed in two separate domains: sociolinguistics and anthropology. Anthropology is concerned with the idea of culture as the way of life and people's ways of thinking, beliefs and behaviours. Cultural anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1975) outlines how behaviour articulates culture and determines how language is used to express meaning. Since language articulates values, frames of reference and identities, by analysing language use, anthropologists seek access to and understanding of cultural frameworks. Anthropologists came to stress that culture is to be found in the 'parole', the spoken language. This approach follows the 'communicative paradigm' which may be characterised by the assumption that culture is being constructed through communicative action.

The ethnography of communication, following Dell Hymes, is a methodology based in anthropology and linguistics that allows people to study human interaction in context and considers interaction to be the crucial feature of communication, it is only by way of interactive communication that meaning and significance is bestowed upon utterances. Ethnographers, thus, attempt to analyse

patterns of communication as part of cultural knowledge and behaviour. They recognize the cultural relativity of communicative practices and the fact that these practices are an important part of what members of a particular culture know and do. They acknowledge speech situations, speech events and speech acts as units of communicative practice and attempt to situate these events in context in order to analyse them. As ethnographers, second language learners should be able to distinguish important elements of communication and learn to observe and analyse discourse practices of the target culture in context. However, like ethnographers, second language learners also need access to the viewpoints of natives of the culture in order to interpret culturally defined behaviours.

When teachers question whether students prefer to learn the language in a functional way as a means of communication and therefore apparently not concerned with cultural aspects; or if they prefer to learn the language in a more cultural way while immersed in its culture, they are assuming that culture is something which we can separate from language, that culture is something that we can introduce into or separate from language according to our will. The idea that culture and language are inseparable is anything but new; Edward Sapir (1921) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956) claimed that language decides the way we see and understand the world and that there is no culture without language. According to these authors language can be seen as a way to describe and represent human experience and understand the world, and members of a language community share systems of beliefs and assumptions which underlie their constructions of the world, these are communicated through language - thus the inevitable link between both. Languages can not be distinguished merely in terms of grammar and vocabulary differences. Sapir affirms that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built on the language habits of the group. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity refers not only to lexical and grammatical notions, but to systems of expressing and referencing our experiences as well.

Risager (1998) questions the easiness of this assumption that language and culture are inseparable; she states that it is necessary to consider globalization processes which characterize the world at present and which have an effect on the linguistic as well as the sociocultural area in the form of '*worldwide homogenizing tendencies*'. According to this author, the linguistic, cultural and social density resulting from these developments turns the allegation of an exclusive connection between language and culture '*more unjustified than ever*'.

According to Risager (1998) any language develops as an element of the social practice of a community of language users and the social organization and frames of reference have an influence on language. This author analyses the conception of culture as macro-context for language use, recognising that it is important to distinguish between contexts where the language is used as first language and contexts where it is used as a foreign or second language. She emphasises the fact that with the increasing process of globalisation languages are more often recontextualized and that the consequential linguistic and cultural complexity generate difficulties for the fields of language teaching and intercultural communication. This author defines a frame of reference for the discussion of culture and society which originates in the anthropological viewpoints about cultural complexity and considers the suggestion that every society is composed of a quantity of discourse communities characterised by certain meanings and understandings, partially articulated in the uses of language.

It is my deep belief that the link between language and culture is inescapable, irrevocable and permanent. All people are part of one or more linguistic communities; people identify with the culture they live in and their identity is built upon the languages of these cultural communities they identify with. Besides sharing a language code, a cultural community also shares a code of behaviour. Although some learners may at first not be aware of the cultural associations attached to the language they are learning, language and culture are irreversibly and inevitably linked, language is culture and therefore you cannot teach or learn a language without teaching and learning culture.

In spite of the continuous debate and constant changes in teaching methods in language teaching, there have been few changes in the treatment of the cultural component in language teaching (since the major shift towards everyday life and little 'c' culture), a component which has always been difficult to accommodate in practice and which has never really played a significant role in language curricula or been systematically approached. The skill versus content debate, often present in language education, has turned the teaching of culture into a controversial matter. In fact, culture is often approached as a fifth skill to be added to the four traditional ones, being seen as plain information expressed and transmitted through language, not as an element of language itself.

The most common approach to teaching about the target culture in the foreign language classroom is a one-way transmission of facts - the providing of information about the people, products, and customs of the target culture. The presentation of culture as a set of learnable 'facts' may promote the notion of culture as a static construct, and it fails to recognize the variability of behaviour within the target culture community, the participative role of the individual in the creation of culture, or the interaction of language and culture in the making of meaning. A fact oriented approach to culture learning, born as it may be from lack of time, lack of training, or lack of materials has been rejected by many language educators.

I believe that we have to go beyond approaches to culture which provide language learners with a key to interpret the target culture, usually related to the notion of national culture, therefore still viewing them as submissive recipients of cultural knowledge, and which situate culture within an interpretative framework using universal categories of human behaviour, consequently still describing it as a more or less coherent system of meanings in which an individual takes part. Culture is, thus, seen as separated from the concrete communicative situation itself. However, I believe that simplistic cross-cultural contrasts between societies will not, by themselves, provide deep cultural insight, it is necessary to include variations to the cultural universes related to the native and foreign languages of the participants and this can start with the features of the intercultural encounter itself.

## **2.2 – Culture as negotiation of meanings.**

Living and growing up in this century presents opportunities and challenges. Being aware of the cultural identities of others helps us understand the way these opportunities and challenges are dealt with by people in a specific culture and allows us to deal with the others as individuals. To understand another culture is to understand the experiences that guide its members through life, things like language and gestures, individual appearance and social relationships, religious convictions, philosophy of life and values, marriage and family customs, food and leisure time, employment and state administration, schooling and communication systems, health, transportation, and government and financial systems. This should always be done bearing in mind that the way we experience other cultures and the knowledge we have of other cultures is limited by our own culture and the degree to which our perceptions are influenced and biased by it.

In any culture there is a set of preferred or dominant values; culture organises such values and each of us carries within us the ways we have learned to organise our experience to mean something. Nevertheless, we have to view individuals or groups of individuals according to a number of potential cultures because all individuals are affected by more than one culture at a time. So even if we want to analyze differences in terms of national culture we also have to recognize that people simultaneously reflect other cultural identities. Social and cultural boundaries are not as rigid as one might believe, nor are national cultures as homogeneous. Against a background of globalisation, differences between and within nations have become crucial and, although people may share many broad national characteristics, they may differ in the more specific patterns of their respective individuality and of their respective ethnicities. Openness to different

cultures entails a keen reorientation of the ideals which are the basis of the community we live in.

*(...) the various components of culture – such things as beliefs, customs, taboos, techniques, rituals, ceremonies, institutions, codes, etc. – are not merely what they seem to be, but are above all, units of meaning; they are signs, which work like the signs of language. Culture thus defined is not merely a complex social system, an integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behaviour, but above all a pattern of meanings, that is to say a language system by which values, ideals and beliefs are communicated, and transmitted to succeeding generations.” (Franz Kuna 1990: 261/262,)*

Culture is discussed in various branches of knowledge and there are some characteristics that most researchers agree on: culture is acquired, not biologically determined; culture is shared by the members of a group, in a certain sense it is culture that defines the group and culture is variable, in terms of time and between groups of people. Culture is seen as a system which one lives in as a member of a group and which partially determines one's behaviour, but it is also possible for an individual to influence this system and thereby alter culture.

Human behaviour is supported by relatively predetermined and fixed patterns and norms which are extremely significant if one seeks to understand a given culture. The shared meanings that are the core of a culture are part of people but at the same time they go beyond people, and although the shared meanings are present within a group leading its members to specific interpretations of life, they are also open to change. Culture comprises a shared system of meanings which dictates what we pay attention to, how we act and what we value and meanings are the result of negotiation in the process of human interaction. Dahl writes that

*cultural codes are often hidden and uncounscious, sometimes taken for granted by members of a particular culture. However they are not fixed and*

*unchangeable entities. When people interact and do things together, such codes are constantly established and re-established and conventions are created as people assign meanings to the texts in their contexts (...). Through interaction with other people signs are transmitted and interpreted. In such a process meanings are constantly adapted and changed. (Dahl, 1999;69)*

Culture may, then, be faced not as an established collection of meanings, but as a confrontation between participants struggling to make and assert their own meanings or the ones that serve their interests. Culture is seen as information and significances but also as a situation of struggle between the meanings of learners and the meanings of the native speakers. According to Kramsh this implies a different view of teachers' and learners' roles:

*Rather than tell their students how they should behave (...) a teacher's responsibility is to give learners a 'space to make their own meanings and help them interpret those meanings(...) Teachers and learners are interested not only in talking and listening to others talk, but in genuinely exploring the intentions, frames of reference, and reactions of the other participants in the classroom dialogue (...) language learners can start using the foreign language not merely as imperfect native speakers, but as speakers in their own right. (Kramsh, 1993; 26/28)*

Kramsh considers the fundamental roles of context and of perspectives in foreign language learning, both on the part of members of the target culture and on part of the language learners. According to this author, the interaction between linguistic forms and social meanings is dependent on the situation or context and the way in which this context is understood and interpreted by the participants, thus, language teachers have to develop linguistic and cultural awareness which closely relates to the context of situation and reflection on the features of that context.

*The structures which speakers choose to use and hearers choose to listen and respond to construct the very context of communication in which learning takes place. Rather than a dichotomy, then, we have multiple options regarding the way language is used in variable contexts of use. (...) Given that language teachers have to teach both a normative linguistic system and its variable instances of use, attention to context calls for a type of pedagogy that fosters both direct and indirect ways of transmitting knowledge, that values not only facts but relations between facts, that encourages diversity of experience and reflection on that diversity. (Kramsh, 1993;5, 11)*

It is important that students become aware of the various frames of reference which can be used and gain consciousness of the importance of context and how manipulating context through language can give people power and control.

*An intercultural encounter does not take place in a vacuum where two autonomous and fixed cultural identities establish a straight and direct line of communication. The open space where the interaction takes place becomes full of direct and indirect messages (...) ideological perspectives from both sides 'collide' and the more conscious they are the less probable that they prevent communication from flowing. (...) Intercultural interactions (...) involve power relations. (Guilherme, 2004;155, 156)*

According to Guilherme, these power relations are not always oppressive and restrictive and the fact that we have to deal with them in intercultural encounters is not necessarily disabling because they allow for negotiation, which means that meanings and values are relativised and challenged and that new possibilities are considered. The speaker has to take a critical view of linguistic codes, perceive their limits, appreciate the fact that they are particular responses to specific circumstances and evaluate them critically. It is the task of foreign language education to question dominant and subordinate ideologies, to give voice to silenced discourses and to the particular discourses of the students, and make

connections between different narratives at the local and global levels. Students can, then, become aware of social and political implications of language choices and understand in a better way how cultural reality is created throughout language.

*the foreign language/culture teacher may transform the hermeneutic exploration of a foreign code into an act of cultural creation by investing her/his students with the power to critically share intercultural events, interrogate their own and others' histories, and commit themselves to the responsibility of building this intercultural world. (Guilherme, 2004; 159).*

Culture, from this perspective, becomes dependent on context and situation. It is not seen as an a-priori influence upon communication, but as part of the communicative event and not something external to it. Cultural meanings are negotiated through interactions and because these negotiations are carried out by communicative actions, the socio-cultural world is also created by way of communication. Culture cannot then merely amount to knowledge, meaning or sign-systems because it is produced and transformed in communicative actions.

Communication becomes something that is negotiated at a local level by participants, involving mutual adaptation and the creation of a third space different from the 'home' spaces of participants. Limitations or individual differences in the strategic competencies may bring difficulties to the process of negotiation, since it is individuals and not cultures which are in contact. It is a fact that a person's culture is never 'bare'; people are part of cultural groups which distinguish them from other groups. Although people draw on frames or schemata which they have 'in their heads' and are particular of a specific cultural group to which individuals belong, the encounter is situated in a specific time and place and meanings are constructed in the course of the interaction itself, a process which involves building new 'frames of reference' and engaging in a process of mutual transformation. This process requires awareness of others and one self as well as of the context, and involves searching for common ground by developing a dialogue. Claire

Kramsh also advocates an approach in which participants, teachers and learners, are involved in challenging frames of reference. This author suggests that

*One of the primary tasks in the development of cross cultural competence should be not so much to fill one's frame with different contents, but, rather to make explicit the boundaries of the frame and try out a different one. (Kramsh, 1993; 223)*

According to this author, intercultural competence is transformative and not merely additive. She makes it clear that what we *'should seek in cross-cultural education are less bridges than a deep understanding of the boundaries. We can teach the boundary, we cannot teach the bridge'* (1993; 228). The purpose of this process is less to reach the right solutions or bridge the gaps effectively than it is to explore oneself in the process of exploring the boundary and experience a *'paradoxical, irreducible confrontation'* that may change one in the process. As she puts it, *'each person tries to see the world through the other's eyes without losing sight of him or herself'* (1993; 231)

Kramsh defines some limitations to recent proposals to operationalise the various components of an intercultural competence in foreign language education:

*These proposals have (...) the limitations of structuralist approaches: they see the boundaries between cultures, between Self and Other, Native and Foreign, as much more rigid than they really are; they see cultures as much more homogeneous than they really are, especially in national terms; they see cultures as much more equal/symmetrical than they really are. (...) I propose to examine the concept of intercultural competence from a post-structuralist perspective, where social boundaries easily get blurred, cultural identities are not only bureaucratically determined but also self-ascribed, and the concept of a third space is becoming a recurring theme (...).* (Kramsch, 1999;43)

Just knowing about a person's national cultural identity clearly doesn't provide complete or reliable information about the person you are communicating with. The cultural identity we express in a given intercultural exchange depends on the participants and the nature of the encounter. In diverse contexts different aspects of culture may be more or less important; the intercultural actor will have to predict which of the actual 'cultures' he or she considers to be the significant one and which cultures he or she should try to understand in accordance with this evaluation. It is extremely important to raise our students' awareness of the fact that people within a culture do not all have identical sets of norms, values and assumptions and that in the intercultural encounter many potential cultural influences are present.

Culture is the individual person's perspective on the world and image of it, but people constantly interact and every action or every interest can produce understanding or resistance. The weakness of descriptions of culture and the theory of culture as a set of norms is precisely the lack of understanding of what forces create similarities and differences between people. New theories of practice view culture as processes seeking to explain how differences and similarities come about, how they function and why they are maintained. Culture is not something that is and characterises a people - it is a way of looking at the world.

The process of internationalisation has spread the issue of cultural differences into all areas of life and education has broadened out; all people are expected to embrace an understanding of foreign cultures and of their own culture, which means an awareness of one's identity in a multicultural world.

*The debate of the next few years will probably make the contrasts between the various perceptions of culture more obvious- also when it comes to foreign language subjects. Hopefully, the debate will cause people to desist from present flourishing tendency to use the word culture as an apparently innocuous plus-word for every conceivable similarity or difference between people, whether they are national, local, ethnic, religious or job-related.*  
(Byram, 1999; 89)

Nevertheless, without any kind of assumption or hypothesis about the cultural differences we may come across in an intercultural encounter, we easily reduce our perceptions to bare individualism, assuming that every person is acting in some entirely distinctive manner. In intercultural communication it is necessary to make cultural generalizations although stereotypes may occur if we act as if all members of a culture or of a group share the same characteristics. One can say that the context of culture, perceived as the institutional and ideological background of participants, which leads to structures of expectations, is as important as the situational one. Kramsh writes that

*Context is shaped by persons in dialogue with one another (...) making statements about themselves and their relationship to one another. Through this dialogue, they exchange and negotiate meanings (...) Context is the matrix created by language as discourse and as form of social practice. Context should be viewed not as natural given, but as social construct, the product of linguistic choices made by two or more individuals interacting through language. (Kramsh, 1993;46)*

According to Keller (1990) what is important for international understanding is the acquisition of a new perspective and the differentiation of general judgements. Therefore

*The best way to understand a foreign culture is to see it from within and to get to know the different perspectives which are shown in the habits, value judgements, characteristics, beliefs and attitudes of the people in the target culture. In this process the students might give up, generalise, modify or differentiate, find others confirmed or gain new ones. (Keller, 1990: 120)*

If students are aware of sociocultural differences, then it is a question of choice whether to take them into account or disregard them, during the intercultural encounter. Students make a choice in full awareness of the consequences in

terms of meanings. We can only try to understand people; we cannot separate them from their ways of seeing the world, their systems of meaning and understanding. In foreign or second language teaching and learning, culture is best defined as being continuous and open to change because this provides the ability to stress various dimensions of culture at different points and accounts for the fact that, even though different cultures may share common elements, culture is constantly being produced and reproduced.

We are, therefore, demanding a more complete understanding of culture, one which recognises the importance of the diversity all cultures possess, and seeks to develop constructive ways to deal with difference. It is recognised that diversity and points of conflict permeate all cultures. Cultures, like any other organic system, attempt to assert life so as to evolve and expand and are constantly negotiating the relationship between chaos and order, homogeneity and diversity, equilibrium and disequilibrium, and other such tensions and the result is that cultures are always in flux. This implies that students are able to create new and different meanings, understandings and practices, an ability which may prepare them for a world that constantly subverts existing meanings, understandings and practices. Thus, through evolution and expansion cultures promote the evolution of new and different ways of understanding and experiencing the world and such an understanding of culture contributes to self-reflection and the appreciation of Otherness. We are constantly constructing new and different ways of living and understanding the world, this process is born out of our distinctive human need to find ways of dealing with the world's ambiguity.

Context is thus emphasised over the importance of mere 'text'. Meaning is something that needs to be constantly negotiated because there are 'gaps' in all language.

*Understanding meanings is thus a process of discovery, a permanent act of 'contextualization' in response to the referential function of language. There can be no doubt that the belief in the polysemic nature of language, and of*

*cultural facts taken as signs, lies at the heart of cultural sciences today.  
(Franz Kuna, 1990; 263)*

Communication is consequently viewed as a process which happens through collaboration of participants and it is argued that communication should promote more constructive ways of negotiating our differences and promote interpretation rather than transmission. Viewing communication as transmission assumes that human beings are passive to the world and implies the conceptualization of the relationship between culture and communication as causal and deterministic. It perpetuates the view that cultures are stable and homogenous and thus open to methodologies that attempt to make complete and absolute claims. It depoliticizes communication by leaving out matters of identity construction and analysis of meaning creation processes.

Communication allows us constant access to new experiences, new meanings, and new understandings and it situates us in the world. It is necessary to develop in our students the skills which will enable them to handle communication problems while helping them to understand and always account for the fact that the other's approach to the communication situation may involve the use of patterns of behaviour which are strange to a person outside that social sphere and that in contact with a representative of another culture there's no assurance of being understood in the way one wishes to be understood. Communication can work more effectively if students are aware of things that happen during communication, and when communicating with others various factors are at work: attitudes, representations, stereotypes, expectations; linguistic, social, cultural and communication norms and behaviour.

### **2.3- Goals and teaching procedures for culture teaching/learning**

Most teachers are confronted with the difficulty of determining teaching procedures and goals as well as of evaluating students' development in cultural terms.

As language teachers it is our task to help students gain deep and true insight and understanding of the powerful forces that link language and culture. Cultural awareness ( a concept which is more thoroughly discussed in section 3 of this thesis) is one of the most important objectives of education, especially of language teaching, and true cultural insight and understanding also require awareness and understanding of students' own systems of beliefs and values and of their own codes of behaviour.

The idea of the student as a 'blank page' has firmly been rejected and there is clear agreement that students have their own interpretative framework and that the individual's perception and different perspectives of the target world are of significant importance. Generally one may affirm that this perception is influenced by individual and social factors, and it is inevitable to develop generalisations and stereotypes and build expectations about the foreign world which are based in our own world. Socio-cultural teaching must account for and deal with these perceptions (often stereotypes) about the target world and language, not only providing new cultural experiences but also widening our understanding of our own world, thus developing means to deal with the outside world and create more effective images of it by understanding our own frames of reference and abstracting from them. As Neuner explains:

*Thus we can expand our own experiences, realise similarities and negotiate possible differences. This may also help learners to come to terms with a possible discrepancy and tension between their own view of the foreign world and the pre-conceived picture that is presented in the 'official interpretation' of the foreign world." (Neuner, 2004; 48)*

The learners' world must therefore be acknowledged and accounted for in foreign language teaching and it can be used as reference point for selecting topics and tasks.

*learners cannot simply shake off their own culture and step into another...their culture is part of themselves and created them as social beings...learners are 'committed' to their culture and to deny any part of it is to deny something within their own being." (Byram and Morgan, 1994; 43)*

Many teachers fill out their teaching time with information about the target country and its population, but a vast quantity of information does not necessarily lead to a better understanding of the world and other people, and it does not necessarily make communication any easier. Even after having studied a language for some years, even when students are considered to have a good command of the foreign language, misunderstandings and conflicts are still likely to happen which students cannot manage to avoid. The process of learning to deal with the differences between your own language behaviour and the language behaviour in the foreign language is a process which takes time. Most of the time, misunderstandings in communication are not merely related to mispronunciation of a word or misuse of a grammatical rule, the best way to deal with them is to become alert as to how other cultures function, and accept their ways of behaviour as equally valid as our own.

*Awareness is not understanding. It is not enough to know that there are other ways of seeing and experiencing the world, that there are other cultural identities. Learners need to know and experience that, from other people's point of view, they are the foreigners, their mode of thinking and acting seems unnatural. This is a far more significant purpose for language teaching than simply learning to 'get by' when on holiday or use the foreign language in a sales pitch. (Byram, 1992; 86)*

It may be difficult to understand other cultures, but it is never impossible, the main condition is that cultural actors are willing to accept that alternatives to their own cultural values are possible and practicable. When learning a foreign language one has to be aware that the other culture may observe different rules; otherwise learning problems and misunderstandings are bound to emerge. Students will need to develop knowledge of and about the foreign or second language culture, but also to master some skills in culturally appropriate communication and behaviour for the target culture. It is important that students gain awareness of and understand that other people often have different beliefs and may live according to other cultural standards of behaviour; but it is imperative that they truly understand that this fact doesn't make them and the lives they lead better or worse than ours.

Favourable attitudes toward the target culture are positively associated with language acquisition, but research does not find the reverse to be true: language study alone does not appear to promote positive attitudes toward the target culture and its people. Studies have found that foreign language study has no positive effect on attitudes about the speakers of the L2, and that on some occasions attitudes are more negative after a period of language study. Without particular training in the searching of similarities and differences between the native and target cultures, students fall short of building up an understanding of the native speakers of the language they are learning. Students do not become aware of themselves as cultural beings, that is, as having a culture. Since there are no magical rules to understand another culture, it is fundamentally important that culture education deals with subjects central to the development of learner's intercultural competence including cultural self-awareness and favourable attitudes towards other cultures, in addition to products, practices, and perspectives.

One of the aims of foreign language teaching is to create a basis for students to be capable of dealing with different people about whom they previously know little or nothing and that is not accomplished by merely showing them images of culture. The purpose is to develop an ability that will allow students to

remain open and tolerant towards foreigners, 'other' people, who are different and who have different thoughts and act in diverse ways that may be difficult for us to understand. Language teaching may be a means to illustrate how cultural products are created and maintained by dynamic social forces, and raise awareness of the fact that this also happens in students' cultural reality; and at the same time teach students to face and find meaning in the concrete circumstances that allow for differences and similarities to arise. If our students are to gain an understanding that will eventually guide them to a superior level of tolerance, it is essential that they start by analysing the processes that lead people to act the way they do and view the world in a specific way.

Several authors offer models of intercultural sensitivity or acculturation, describing stages through which learners commonly pass as they become familiar with another culture. Hanvey (1975) describes 4 levels of cross-cultural awareness beginning with level 1 in which the C2 is seen in a very stereotyped manner common after brief exposure as a tourist. According to Hanvey conflict takes place at Level 2 as the learner becomes more familiar with the target culture and differences in values and behaviours are revealed. The learner may feel disturbed and use words like 'crazy' or 'strange' with regards to the C2 because, at this level, the C2 is still viewed through the framework of the native culture. As the teacher helps students with cultural analysis and provides them with opportunities to understand the cultural coordinates of another legitimate reality, they move to level 3 where they recognise the cultural experience as an alternative behaviour, different from the C1, but not wrong.

Janet Bennett (1993) has explored applications to the classroom of a four-step developmental model of Intercultural Sensitivity. In the denial level, learners believe that there are no real differences in cultures. The level of defence follows in which the learner lives in a dualistic world where differences are felt as being bad. The C1 is dignified and extremely valued and the C2 is put down and diminished. In the stage of minimization, the learner acknowledges that there are differences but focuses on cultural generalisations and believes that deep down we are in fact all the same. At the stage of acceptance, the learner comes to terms

with the logic of another culture and is prepared to avoid hasty judgements. Students are mentally inquisitive and accept as true that the C2 is neither better nor worse. It is important to note that distance between the stages of minimization and acceptance is vast with progress from stage three to stage four requiring a truly important change in points of view from confidence on absolute principles to an awareness that other legitimate 'realities' do exist.

Meyer (1990) defines a monocultural, an intercultural and a transcultural level of performance. In the monocultural level the learner uses behavioural schemes and demonstrates ways of thinking which are merely adequate for his/her own culture, and he/she does so in situations which demand cross-cultural activity and understanding. *'The learner's concepts relating to foreign cultures are stereotyped, cliché-ridden and ethnocentric. Problems arising in interaction are solved in ways adequate among fellow countrymen and women, not in intercultural situations.'* (Meyer, 1990; 142).

He goes on to describe the intercultural level where the learner is able to explain cultural differences between his/her own and the foreign cultures because he/she can make use of information he/she has acquired concerning his/her and the foreign countries, or because he/she is able to ask for information in relation to cross-cultural differences. *'The information he has may be of historical, sociological, psychological or economic nature, etc. Putting it metaphorically, one could say that the learner stands between cultures.'* (Meyer, 1990; 142) He finally describes the transcultural level where the learner is able to evaluate intercultural differences and to solve intercultural problems by appeal to principles of international co-operation and communication which give each culture its proper right and which allow the learner to develop his/her own identity *in the light of cross-cultural understanding*. He/she is able to negotiate meaning where negotiation is possible. *'Speaking metaphorically, one can say that the learner stands above both his own and the foreign culture, but it should be clear that this does not mean a cosmopolitan neglect of his own culture'* (Meyer, 1990; 143)

Kramsch presents a model which combines three aspects which she defines as the critical (understanding others), the pragmatic (making yourself

understood) and the hermeneutic (understanding yourself) (Kramsch, 1993: 183). In an intercultural encounter Kramsch locates meaning in a 'third perspective' which can only take place if integrated into a critical pedagogy which transforms the exchange of information in class, the discussions between teacher and students and among students. The main aims of this pedagogy are an awareness of the socio-cultural context of the student, of the school and the classroom cultures, and language awareness. Kramsh argues that cultural awareness is not a mere educational purpose in itself, disconnected from language and defends that *'cultural awareness must then be viewed both as enabling language proficiency and as being the outcome of reflection on language proficiency.* (Kramsh, 1993;8)

Kramsh (1993) has argued for an interdisciplinary approach to foreign language teaching in which teachers use information from many fields, including anthropology and sociolinguistics, in order to teach students to communicate successfully with members of other cultures, at the same time as acquiring a better understanding of their own culture. She examined the notion of language teaching as contextual shaping and argued that

*(...) what is at stake is the creation, in and through the classroom, of a social, linguistic reality that is born from the L1 speech environment of the learners and the social environment of the L2 native speakers, but is a third culture in its own right. (Kramsh, 1993;9)*

The way teachers approach didactic concepts of foreign language teaching and the teaching of socio-culture is influenced by different aspects which characterise the society we live in and its relation to the foreign language. One of these aspects is the official view of the target language and the political relationship between our own country and the one of the target language which can deeply influence the presentation of socio-cultural contents and the selection of information. Another important aspect is the institutional educational guidelines which function as a framework for language teaching. The objectives which are defined for the language teaching are always dependent on the weight of different

features of the target society, which can highlight different objectives valuing the cognitive, pragmatic or attitudinal dimension of language teaching according to specific objectives. The socio-cultural aspects of foreign language teaching are always influenced by their presentation in different media and the predominance of different aspects of language and culture teaching affects the way the foreign world is presented in coursebooks.

*the criteria for shaping the image of the foreign world may vary considerably and sometimes even lead to fragmentary or even contrasting and contradictory representations of the same socio-cultural topics.(...) in foreign language instruction the learners meet not the target world 'as it is', but rather a 'pre-filtered construct' of the target world. They are presented with an interim world which has been prepared on premises firmly rooted in our own world. (Neuner, 2004; 35/36)*

Kramsh (1993) refers that even though the educational system is subjected to institutional ideologies based on national and international imperatives, both learners and teachers can use it to promote their own local and personal meanings in between the two worlds of the native and target culture.

The following section of this thesis will thoroughly discuss the notion of Intercultural Competence and in addition highlight its significance in terms of definition of teaching goals and teaching procedures in foreign language teaching.

Concepts such as language and culture awareness, the examining of cross cultural experiences and stereotypes, the negotiation of meaning, etc. are fundamental to the intercultural approach. The intercultural approach sees cultural awareness as a fundamental concept and goal when learning a language. Thus it highlights the fact that foreign or second language teaching must reveal the different and dynamic aspects of culture in order to develop students' understanding of its dynamic nature.

According to Byram, Intercultural Competence includes an insight and awareness of the native culture and the target culture, positive attitudes towards the culture of others, and culturally appropriate behaviour (Byram, 1997).

Knowledge of one's own culture and the development of positive attitudes towards the culture of others can improve existing cultural teaching. He mentions that both of these components promote the teaching and understanding of different perspectives. Explicit attention must be given in the foreign language classroom to the development of self-awareness with regards to the culture and to positive attitudes towards the target culture. Students must be taught a process for cultural exploration that involves observation, description, and hypothesis-refinement. It is important to develop procedural knowledge, strategies of negotiation of meaning, dealing with conflicts in communication, changing roles and adopting different points of view and to develop discursive aspects of communication such as comparing, discussing and interpreting (Byram 1997).

The intercultural speaker (a concept which will be discussed in depth throughout the following section of this thesis) as described by Byram, is able to recognise and explain cultural and linguistic differences and makes use of this ability in communication, relativising and adapting his/her own cultural identity and dealing effectively with conflicts.

*integration of language and culture learning by using the language as a medium for the continuing socialisation of pupils is a process which is not intended to imitate and replicate the socialisation of native speaker peers but rather to develop pupils' cultural competence from its existing stage, by changing it into an intercultural competence. This involves a modification and change of existing schemata to accommodate new experiences. (...) learners are to acquire an intercultural awareness which recognises the function of boundary-markers and the existence of other centres of ethnic identity with different perspectives on both boundary-marking and unmarked phenomena. (Byram, 1999; 137)*

### **SECTION 3 - INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

The world we live in has become gradually 'smaller', the number of holidays abroad have increased and ease of communication has brought people closer, we have become internationalists and we are more aware of our condition as world citizens. Social mobility within and across national borders has become a primary goal of our societies as globalisation forces the pace of internationalisation. Correspondingly, the number of people who live their lives in the same place is much smaller, business has also become international and the internationalisation of life requires more knowledge of cultural patterns.

According to Bennett (1993), common language, behaviour patterns and values form the basis upon which members of a culture exchange meaning and these things we share allow us to predict responses and take for granted some basic shared assumptions. Intercultural communication – communication between people of different cultures - cannot be based on the easy assumption of similarity but on knowledge and understanding of cultural difference.

*Cultures embody variety in patterns of perception and behaviour, approaches to communication in cross-cultural situations guard against inappropriate assumptions of similarity and encourage the consideration of difference. In other words, the intercultural communication approach is difference based. (Bennett, 1993; 59).*

Understanding and respecting difference is thus a topic central to intercultural communication. Understanding people from other nationalities implies the development of an open mind in relation to other cultures and freeing ourselves from stereotypes is part of this process. The realisation that others face and deal with common problems in a different way from ourselves may be distressing and stimulating at the same time. Even though our first reaction to difference may

generally be to avoid it, try to turn it into equality or simply get rid of it, learning to accept and understand difference is vital if our students are to develop tolerance and respect for different approaches to the world and life; in our present society everyone will have to come to terms with what the repercussions are of living in harmony with people who have different cultural backgrounds.

Essential notions such as time, space and identity have complexified and boundaries have become blurred and more complex. There are multiple discourses of identity to be negotiated just as there are multiple aspects to people's identity, and perhaps the most important aspect of identity our students should bear in mind is that identity is not definite but rather transitory and continuously being built. Interaction with Others requires reflection and negotiation and foreign language education has an important role in preparing students to cross these borders whether they be linguistic, cultural, social, political or ethnic. The focus of foreign language education is now on interaction and intercultural encounters. *"The intercultural speaker views cultural identity as socially constructed, one is responsible for the construction of one's own identity (...) identity is fragmented, plural and always relational."* (Guilherme, 2002)

Meeting the other and his/her point of view of ourselves generates a process of self- and other- reflection and self- and other- discovery. We need to understand the 'Other' and relate to the 'Other' in a two-way manner. According to Byram an intercultural encounter encompasses an interaction between the multiple identifications of the social actors, the perceptions they have of each other's identities and the fact that some are more dominant in particular circumstances. When we cross boundaries we are able to maintain contact with members of different communities; this understanding happens in-between or beyond the Self and the Other, in a space where identifications are negotiated (not rejected) in order to reach understanding. Crossing boundaries or frontiers can be defined as *'the ability to make and sustain personal contact with one or more members of the foreign community'* (Byram and Zarate, 1997:12) in a 'third space' which is described by Bhabha as 'unrepresentable in itself', a place where the meanings and symbols of culture 'can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized

and read anew' (Bhabha 1994: 37). This is considered to be the place where we detach from our identifications, not rejecting them but negotiating them in a dynamic way in order to reach universal understanding.

The construction of a European identity is considered to be a political aim for European countries; the construction of this common identity is framed in shared democratic values of the pluralistic societies and in respect for human rights and the commitment to a pan-European dimension. Foreign language teaching / learning has a unique role to play in achieving European citizenship, as languages are at the centre of our cultural identities.

### **3.1 - *The intercultural speaker***

The notion of intercultural speaker is linked to modern theories of cultural identity as socially constructed, and ever changing, plural and relational. The intercultural speaker is aware of the multiple and relational nature of cultural identity, concretely during intercultural encounters. The intercultural speaker is aware of his/her role as mediator between several cultural identities and that these identities have both persistent and changeable aspects.

*The critical intercultural speaker needs to move beyond the universe of self contained cultural homogeneities / diversities, without ignoring them, to 'cultural difference' as a 'time of cultural uncertainty' in 'the articulation of new cultural demands, meanings, strategies in the political present.* (Bhabha, 1994: 35).

The intercultural speaker takes advantage of situations and encounters, analysing different cultural components, their articulation and different cultural perspectives, avoiding stereotypes and prejudices when making cultural judgements. The

intercultural speaker is aware of the complexity of cultural encounters and therefore doesn't aim at complete control or at avoiding misunderstandings completely, because he/she is aware that these are impossible. He/she values new intercultural experiences reflecting critically about these encounters and about the negotiation of meanings inherent to them.

*An approach to intercultural competences that incorporates the highly complex identity-oriented strategies is geared to producing an individual description centred on a positive approach to identity, reversing the traditional relation to things foreign, which is associated with risk and handicap. It seeks instead to develop a success-oriented model capable of producing diversity. (Zarate, 2004: 105)*

According to Byram "the main target for the language/culture learner/teacher is no longer to imitate a circumscribed and standardised model of a native speaker"(1999). He claims that intercultural competence emerges as a much more valid alternative for language learners. Because intercultural competence is of such importance for language learners, Byram considers that it should also be an ideal for the language teacher. Michael Byram asserts that making native-speaker proficiency the goal of teaching corresponds to demanding of the learner that he/she is to strive to emulate the ideal. That also corresponds to asking the learner to ignore or 'erase' his/her own background and social and cultural identity when assuming the role of 'almost native-speaker' of the language. This requirement is assessed as being both unrealistic and an alarming shift of the balance of power of communication in favour of the native-language speaker. Instead the learner ought to be considered as- and should consider him/herself as- a mediator, one who mediates between different cultures by virtue of foreign-language competence in combination with knowledge about, and an understanding of, the other person's cultural, social, and societal universe. The absolute authority which otherwise surrounded the native-language speaker as the natural goal for foreign language teaching and learning is thus brought into question. This has consequences when foreign language pupils from various countries communicate. They are not

necessarily communicating with native speakers of the foreign language but with pupils from other countries and are thus using their foreign language as a lingua franca in a communication situation that can function much more on the basis of equality, since the learners are linguistically at the same level- or at least all of them are learners in relation to the language of communication.

It might seem as if the concept 'the intercultural speaker' means that the strict requirements hitherto imposed on the learner to acquire a grammatical and pragmatic competence corresponding to the native speaker have been relaxed somewhat: it is now permissible to be oneself, to retain one's social, linguistic and cultural baggage, and that the role of communication is to be a tool for the learner's further development of knowledge and understanding, not a means of permanently testing the learner's vocabulary and grammatical competence. But is it really easier to be an intercultural speaker than to try to live up to the ideal of the native-language speaker? In this connection, one must remember that the intercultural speaker is a dynamic concept which, in principle, has no final goal. There will not come a time in the life of foreign-language learners when they can consider themselves fully qualified intercultural speakers. According to Byram and Fleming (1998):

- the intercultural speaker mediates, he/she must help to establish cooperation and the basis for mutual understanding between groups that differ culturally- as well as ethically and socially. The ability to mediate is not restricted to a particular context or culture, but must always be able to be implemented in new contexts, even those for which the learner is not prepared (Byram and Fleming, 1998)
- he/she learns, via communication with native speakers and interaction with the unfamiliar cultural context, the intercultural speaker constantly strives to increase his/her knowledge and understanding. This learning takes place at all levels, for pupils, teachers and researchers alike *"Pupils, teachers and researchers can continue to learn and develop their capacity as intercultural speakers"* (Byram and Fleming, 1998). Like the ethnographer, the pupil

learns via observation and the gathering of data. These activities also include linguistic observations and thus the ongoing language acquisition of the learner. In the learning process, the learner gains ever greater autonomy and independence in relation to the teacher and the classroom situation and is thus able to utilise a larger spectrum of experiences when learning (Byram, 1997)

- is self-reflecting: the intercultural speaker regularly attempts to create cohesion, i.e., understanding in relation to made observations and gathered data. Conceptions of the conversation partner and the unfamiliar cultural context are made on an ongoing basis. The reflection and possible revisions also include the perception of the self and the view of one's own cultural stance. (Byram, 1997)

According to Kramersch most people are participants in various language and cultural groupings and underlying the concept native speaker is a conception of linguistic uniformity and unity concerning a particular ideal for language use. Kramersch is pointing out here that this uniformity and unity are not present in the multicultural society- instead, they can be characterised as grey zones:

*in the grey zones which constitute our multilingual, multicultural societies to an increasing extent, the difference between native speakers- non-native speakers loses its meaning. Both native speakers and non-native speakers can belong to various language groupings, of which there are more or less recognised members. (Kramersch, 1998:30)*

Nevertheless, when learning a foreign language there is special focus on national or ethnic cultural differences. We are more or less aware of cultural and linguistic variation, but the national framework usually asserts itself. The concept of the intercultural speaker is thus partially based on the idea of cultures being more or less defined, cohesive units that clearly differ from each other and that even so are equipped with certain shared structural elements. This makes it possible to compare cultures and mediate between them and often it is a question of national

cultures that are compared in the cultural encounter. The fundamental paradigm of language teaching is the idea that the object of teaching is the national language and national culture of the target country, but internationalisation and the softening of national borders is having a profound impact on this paradigm at present. Even though there will always be a national core in language teaching, a new perception of language is emerging, in which language is not merely seen as a bearer of a particular national culture but also as a tool of international communication in widely differing environments.

The intercultural speaker could then be understood as a person who mediates between defined linguistic and cultural entities and between people whose ways of thinking and acting are strongly influenced by these linguistic and cultural entities, different precisely in the way that their respective national/ethnic cultures define. But by including a more complex concept of culture, it is difficult to view the international encounter merely as one between representatives of well-defined national/ethnic cultures that differ from each other in certain, fairly predictable ways. The encounter must rather be understood as an interaction between individual and collective differences and similarities, where several dimensions of identity are at work, dimensions which may be of a cultural, social, gender-related or professional nature and which the participants may or may not choose to place in the foreground. We can not view the individual as culturally unambiguous and predictable; the individual is part of a complex society which leads to many different attitudes and knowledge.

The cultural dimension to language teaching is agreed to have three dimensions: knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

- Knowledge: insight into cultural and social conditions, primarily in the country whose language one is studying and also the pupil's own country. Deeper insight into causal relationships, not just isolated facts- this includes comparisons, knowledge of one's surroundings. An important point in connection with the knowledge aspect is that it depends on perspective, on the eyes that do that seeing.

- Attitudes: feelings and attitudes towards people and conditions in the target country and in one's own country, including awareness of others' and one's own identity. This includes working with values, ethics morals, prejudices and stereotypes and further development of the ability to have sympathetic insight into the situation of other people. Working with attitudes, ethics, etc can involve interdisciplinary topics that are expressed in different ways in different countries. Attitudes can also involve working with the psychological and social problems that are connected with cultural shock
- Behaviour: knowledge of the cultural rules and conventions that apply in the environment in which one finds oneself as well as the ability to follow such rules oneself. It may involve social conventions in daily communication, clothing, eating, etc. There is often a contrastive element- it is often a question of what one may not do in the culture concerned.

Our societies today place new requirements concerning linguistic and cultural qualifications on every learner, one of them being the requirement to be able to deal with cultural and linguistic complexity at the local level. This means effectively understanding and dealing with the cultural and linguistic complexity of everyday cultural encounters, contributing to finding solutions to culturally conditioned conflicts and misunderstandings and helping to create and participate in multicultural cooperation, in such a way that cultural complexity becomes a source of creativity and productive innovation of current ways of doing things. The intercultural speaker is required to have the ability to master understanding-enhancing strategies, as well as the will to understand more or less incomplete variants of one's native language and to be able to contribute to language acquisition, to master several foreign languages, as well as mastering non-verbal language strategies to achieve understanding, etc. These can be seen as interdisciplinary qualifications that can belong both to foreign-language and to native-language teaching as well as to teaching in subjects to do with society and culture. There is also a requirement to be able to take part in international and global encounters and to learn and make use of information that has been made

globally accessible, as a citizen in a global society. In several ways, the concept of intercultural speaker marks a tendency towards making these new requirements concerning linguistic and cultural competences part of language education.

The intercultural speaker is defined as a permanently learning and reflecting individual and the dynamics of the concept means that the intercultural speaker can adapt to and develop in relation to a changing world. The cultural and linguistic ability to mediate can be characterised as a central qualification in a culturally constituted society, an ability that is already now being discussed within various professions. According to Byram (1997) the intercultural dimension in language teaching can be developed by five competences: life-skills (*savoir-être*), learning skills and know-how (*savoir-apprendre/savoir-faire*), knowledge (*savoirs*), understanding skills (*savoir comprendre*); and critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*). He considers critical cultural awareness to be a crucial educational aim for foreign language teaching, and identifies the main aims for critical cultural awareness: identify and interpret explicit or implicit values in documents and events in one's own and other cultures; make an evaluative analysis of the documents and events which refers to an explicit perspective and criteria; interact and mediate in intercultural exchanges in accordance with explicit criteria, negotiating where necessary a degree of acceptance of them by drawing upon one's knowledge, skills and attitudes' (Byram 1997: 53). The author recognises a political dimension to education. Learning a language goes beyond linguistic competence, it educates citizens who are active and autonomous by fostering the students' development of a questioning, analytical and critical attitude to reality. Placing documents or events in context, uncovering ideologies, being aware of potential conflict while attempting negotiation and accepting difference are guidelines to a new approach. Information of the target culture is not enough; this attitude presupposes a cultural mediator with knowledge and insight into the target culture. Intercultural awareness cannot be simply defined as a skill; it is rather a competence which comprises a set of different knowledges, skills and attitudes. It is not just a body of knowledge, but a set of practices requiring knowledge, skills

and attitudes. This is a competence which can be evaluated with reference to four 'savoirs' defined by Byram in 1994<sup>1</sup> :

- savoir (system of cultural references which structure explicit and implicit knowledge of linguistic and cultural learning)
- savoir-faire (ability to integrate knowledge and know how to be in specific biocultural contacts)
- Savoir-apprendre (ability to produce and operate in an interpretative system to build a perspective of unknown meaning, beliefs and cultural practices)
- Savoir-être (ability to set aside ethnocentric attitudes in relation to the perception of the 'other')

In short a person with some degree of intercultural competence is able to see relationships between different cultures – both internal and external to a society – and is able to mediate, that is interpret each in terms of the other, either for themselves or for other people. It is also someone who has a critical or analytical understanding of (parts of) their own and other cultures – someone who is conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined, rather than believing that their understanding and perspective is natural.

### ***3.2 - Foreign Language Teaching and (Inter-) Cultural Understanding***

A new paradigm for practice in language education has developed which focuses on culturally responsive teaching and which stresses the importance of awareness of the role of languages, communication and critical cultural awareness. Intercultural competence is a popular concept, which is discussed in a

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<sup>1</sup> Expanded, in 1997, by Byram to the five competences mentioned above.

great variety of contexts, but its definition is always determined by context. How to define the kind of intercultural competence that a teacher of a foreign or second language needs to develop? Intercultural competence is broader than the linguistic dimension; it adds content and a greater knowledge of the world, it implies learning to deal with social and cultural differences and relating to them in developing our own identity; developing our intercultural competence is a lifelong process. Intercultural communication is also present among students even before the language or culture lessons begin; the linguistic and cultural diversity of our classes is a resource to develop real intercultural communication in our multicultural classes. Incorporating students' experiences and awareness of and knowledge about various languages and cultures will enhance our foreign or second language culture teaching.

As I have already pointed out present-day societies are culturally complex. Nation states try to maintain an awareness of a common national culture and identity, but in fact the power structures that exist in the world characterise a ruling cultural complexity. Intercultural competence is the ability to handle this cultural complexity at a more personal familiar level as well as in an international, multicultural and globalised context. Language teaching is bound up with the idea of the nation, and it is important to stress that intercultural competence does not simply have to do with dealing with national differences; it also means dealing with the actual complexity that has arisen as a result of global processes. Intercultural competence is an active and productive competence; it allows us to create culture. When communicating we are creating and confirming our identities, intercultural competence is an active process of creating understanding from one's own perspective and horizon. Nevertheless, this liberty of creating identities is somewhat coerced by more or less solid systems that identify us even if we don't really want to be identified.

Intercultural competence also includes an affective dimension; that is, trust in the world and other people, self-esteem and self-respect - this is a pre-requisite for curiosity, openness and willingness to reject false assumptions, as Byram emphasises when characterising intercultural competences.

The history of pedagogy shows that the pedagogical framework, must be conceived inside the experiences and processes of society. The main implication of intercultural pedagogy is the transformation of society since it is founded on a questioning of political, social and economic realities and the legitimacy of power as well as in the raising of an awareness of the structures that build power relations. Culture relates to societal norms and the dominant culture becomes institutionalised power, thus culture and power are undeniably linked and reflecting about the connections between both is pedagogically relevant. As Byram emphasises, the development of intercultural competence ought to lead to a critical awareness and a political awareness of oneself as a citizen.

*The overcoming of constraints affects man as an individual and man as a species. Its legitimacy lies in its attempt to help man to liberate himself from the chains of power that alienate and estrange his thought and action (...)  
From a pedagogical viewpoint the institutionalised shape of power, the cultural hegemony in which reality as a whole as well as the educatee as an individual are involved, has to be made questionable and breakable. We have to help the conscience reach its own critical development. Finally we have to awaken society from its lethargy and turn it towards critical action.  
(Borrelli, 1990: 281)*

There is an interest in recognising the culture of power and helping students understand the social framework of which they are a part. Intercultural Communication dedicates itself to human rights as does or should do all pedagogy, searching for the liberation of the individual and of society as a whole. The experience of foreignness may challenge the individual. In an intercultural perspective social identity and awareness of hidden experiences constitute important material in foreign language education. The learner thus develops his/her own criteria according to which he/she can judge a situation taking both cultures into consideration, sometimes beyond the two cultures and searching for meaning. The process of learning requires constant new impulses and experiences in order to allow for intercultural re-orientation and constant reconstruction. Experience and familiar patterns of behaviour have to be examined

and reorganised according to the new situation, which allows for critical experiences.

Language teachers have special opportunities to contribute to developing the global vision and involvement of their students. Kramsch (1993) is one who argues that when one develops one's intercultural competence, one creates a special personal linguistic and cultural identity that is new and completely one's own. Byram says an intercultural speaker is a person who can take in and mediate between various cultural contexts, also in terms of language: interpret, translate and clear up misunderstandings. Both the teacher and the learner of a foreign language ought to be able to describe and assess his or her own intercultural competence, attitudes to the others, personality and self-development by collecting their own individual portfolios, for example. Teachers communicate with students, and relationships are developed between teacher and students, a teacher also develops a more mediating competence by helping different students relate to each other, communicate and cooperate, beyond cultural differences. This is made easier through an approach oriented towards social and cultural complexity, one which relates to the various identities and ideas about each other and focuses on others' intercultural competence. Thus the teacher should constantly seek for the best way to mediate and exploit differences or similarities in a positive way and question students' attitudes towards the target language and students' perceptions of each other.

Central to language and culture teaching is the question: How can we organise teaching in the best way so that the students can develop their communicative and intercultural competence? It is important to analyse what happens in terms of culture in language teaching. What type of social and cultural practice are we looking at, why does it look this way? What sort of discourses about the world are taking place? How should one view the mediation of culture and society in teaching materials? Should one make use of media images or prefer images that counterweight them? There is a real need for a critical glance at the practise of language teaching.

Teachers are to help their students to study authentic texts critically, this can be done for example by analysing the existence of stereotypes in text books; it

is important to develop skills of critical discourse analysis, this is an analysis of the way social power and inequality are reproduced in texts, students are to engage critically with the contents of the texts. The approach to the materials is always critical and by presenting texts with conflicting views teachers can challenge the learners and prompt discussion. The development of critical cultural awareness implies developing the ability to evaluate things critically and according to explicit criteria. Students are to identify and interpret explicit or implicit values in documents and events in their own and other cultures, using a range of analytical approaches to develop awareness of context. Students are also to interact and mediate in intercultural exchanges, being aware of potential conflict between their own and other ideological positions and to negotiate and accept difference.

Reflecting on one's own practise in teaching has an ethical or political dimension. Diversity, cooperation and mutual appreciation are all prerequisites and values in intercultural competence and Intercultural competence justifies itself by creating certain preconditions for understanding and cooperation. Unfortunately the communicative turn in language teaching tended to emphasise speech act and discourse competence, rather than socio-cultural competence, but it is a fact that teachers are becoming more aware of the limitations of the former and the possibilities of the latter.

Learners can be motivated by curiosity, confronting perspectives and widening horizons. Teachers' motivation also increases when they feel they are contributing significantly to the learners' experience and promoting commitment to democracy and understanding. Teachers can play a much more pro-active role in the education of future critically aware and reflective citizens.

The belief that contact between cultures automatically leads to intercultural learning and to the development of positive attitudes towards the target culture has already been rejected by many. Risager (1998), in her review of approaches to culture learning, explains that, in contrast to previous approaches to language and culture learning, students are no longer expected to simply take on positive attitudes towards the target culture and its members. Byram (1997) outlines why this is the case: *"Attitudes which are the pre-condition for successful intercultural interaction need to be not simply positive, since even positive prejudice can hinder*

*mutual understanding*" (Byram 1997:34). Similarly Bennett (1993), in his developmental model of intercultural sensitivity warns against the limited nature of an understanding of culture where difference is recognised, but nevertheless minimised in order to highlight the universality of human behaviour. Although characteristics of cultures may have much in common at times, he sees this as not being relevant to the real issues of intercultural communication:

*They (attitudes of universalism) fail to address the culturally unique social context of physical behaviour that enmeshes such behaviour in a particular worldview. Failure to consider this context leads people to assume that knowledge of the physical universals of behaviour is sufficient for understanding all other people. (Bennett, 1993: 43)*

Bennett sees true intercultural sensitivity coming about when behaviour is understood as belonging to a particular cultural context and the behaviour is therefore subsequently judged from within that context and not by the learners' own cultural standards. This ability to step back from one's own cultural background and critically identify the original cultural reasoning behind beliefs, actions and behaviour is described by Bennett as 'constructive marginality' and reflects much of what Byram has described as critical cultural awareness. In contrast to earlier models of culture learning, learners are no longer expected to reject their own culture and take on the target culture, but rather to find what Kramsh (1993) describes as a 'third space'. She refers to the phrase 'being on the fence', as being representative of the common belief that language learners are somehow located merely between two cultures. She criticises this term for ignoring the reality of differences in class, race, religion, and so forth, which are inherent in each of the two national cultures. Kramsh suggests that learners need to locate themselves in a place which *'grows in the interstices between the cultures the learner grew up with and new cultures he or she is being introduced to.'* (p. 236). This description highlights two important aspects of intercultural learning- it underlines the learner's newly achieved distance from both the home and target

cultures, and it refers to the multiplicity of cultural identities which belong to all of us, thereby rejecting the fallacy of "one nation = one culture."

Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence can be seen as a representative model of what elements the process of intercultural learning should aim to develop in learners. The model offers a comprehensive approach that deals with the skills, attitudes, knowledge and critical awareness which have been seen to constitute intercultural competence. Byram's main work on the model offers not only objectives for each of the components, but also suggests modes of assessment for each part. Such elaboration on the model facilitates putting the model into practice in the classroom. Byram's model (1997) contains the following elements defining intercultural competence:

- "Attitudes of curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (p.50)
- "Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general process of societal and individual interaction" (p.58).
- "Skills of interpreting and relating: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own"(p.61)
- " Skills of discovery and interaction and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of realtime communication and interaction" (p.61)
- "Critical cultural awareness/political education: an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (p.63)

The analysis of the socio-cultural content of school textbooks stresses the importance of working with many different social environments, placing a greater emphasis on social and political issues and international conditions. Family,

leisure, work and society; everyday activities, personal and social life, the world around us, work, communication and technologies, the international world – an interesting characteristic of the official lists is that they place heavy emphasis on what Byram calls socialisation and life-cycle as well as everyday activities in the family, during leisure time and at work.

Cultural understanding and democracy are bound up with each other and pupils are to be given the opportunity to build up their intercultural competence as part of their democratic education. Pupils must be given the chance to build up an intercultural competence that comprises knowledge, behaviour and attitudes. Central to this understanding is that pupils are allowed to subject the cultural material to a personal interpretation, by means of which they develop the ability to act competently in cultural encounters., or as Kramsh (1993) describes, in the cultural encounter, one attempts to understand the culture of the other person as closely as the other person understands it him/herself; one's own culture from the outside, to the greatest possible extent; the interaction between the two cultures, with all the noise filters and pre-understandings that are part of the encounter.

This is best developed by pupils' adopting a questioning attitude towards the various cultures they meet and then reflecting on and interpreting what they think they have seen. The approach can also work with behaviour and the formation of attitudes and their building-up of knowledge into account; this applies to cultural as well as linguistic knowledge. The pupils' understanding can then be compared and discussed with that of others. Students must also have the opportunity to adopt an interpretative attitude to the material.

If one wants to teach a particular area, one has to be competent in it oneself. This means that student teachers and teachers must themselves have the opportunity to build up an intercultural competence- get the chance to work with knowledge, behaviour and attitudes and to adopt a reflective and interpretative attitude as regards the material. It is important that as a teacher one can function in practice by having certain routines in one's teaching and that one can reflect at a theoretical level on what one is doing. Practice and theory must cohere and support each other- for the benefit of the pupils. The shared teaching in culture

and cultural encounters provides the students with a theoretical framework for interpreting culture.

*integration of language and culture learning by using the language as a medium for the continuing socialisation of pupils is a process which is not intended to imitate and replicate the socialisation of native-speaker peers but rather to develop pupils' cultural competence from its existing stage, by changing it into intercultural competence. (...) this involves a modification and change of existing schemata to accommodate new experience. It is in sharp contrast with the practice of providing pupils with a consumer-tourist competence (...) What is at issue here is a modification of monocultural awareness. From being ethnocentric and orientated simply towards boundary-marking phenomena, as seen from their existing viewpoint, learners are to acquire an intercultural awareness which recognises the function of boundary markers and the existence of other centres of ethnic identity with different perspectives on both boundary-marking and unmarked phenomena.” (Byram, 1989: 137)*

## **SECTION 4 - TEACHING FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

### ***4.1 – Project presentation***

The aim of this research project is to identify teachers' representations of culture within EFL classes in Portugal, the importance teachers confer to the concept 'culture' in foreign language teaching and teachers' understanding of what exactly it means to teach culture in a foreign language class. I expect to learn more about the significance teachers assign to their own role in the process of cultural teaching/learning, how they perceive their classes in terms of cultural space and to what extent they recognize the importance of the students' own world and socio-cultural experience. My project also seeks to find out to what extent teachers of English in Portugal value the cultural component in language teaching in relation to the teaching of the linguistic component. Thus my research aims to clarify how teachers of English in Portugal approach the teaching of culture, how they perceive the notion of intercultural speaker and integrate it into their teaching practices and methods. Links will be established between teachers' perceptions, the notion of intercultural speaker and intercultural competence and the social and methodological implications of the new paradigm for approaching the English language and its teaching as a foreign language. My main interest is to find out whether teachers of English in Portugal are aware of the debate surrounding the notions of intercultural communication and the intercultural speaker, whether teachers recognise the cultural implications of the new reality of the English language and the potential socio-political purposes of foreign language teaching. I also hope to learn more about the importance given by teachers to issues such as language and culture awareness, whether this awareness is present in teachers' methodologies or truly reflects an effective change in teaching

approaches and in an adaptation of teaching methodology to the new reality of the English language and to the aims of intercultural competence.

This will be achieved through analysis of quantitative data which resulted from the answers given by 60 teachers of English in Portugal to a questionnaire presented in Appendix 3. The development of this questionnaire was based on my theoretical research and my personal experience as a teacher. The pre-questionnaire on the subject of Standard English, mentioned in Section 1 of this thesis, was also an important influence for the completion of this present questionnaire. The statistical results of this present questionnaire are presented in appendix 4. In my analysis of the data I have occasionally paired related or similar questions so as to better and clearer fundament some of my opinions. A concern with consistency of results involved checking internal consistency within the questionnaire in order to confirm the findings while matching the statistical results with the ethnographic analysis.

Schools selected for this study include secondary state schools and elementary state schools (EB 2/3) and a small percentage of private secondary and elementary schools (Fig. 4). The majority of these schools (40%) are situated in the north of Portugal, although schools from the south and centre Portugal are also represented as Fig. 3 shows.

**Localization of schools selected for the survey**

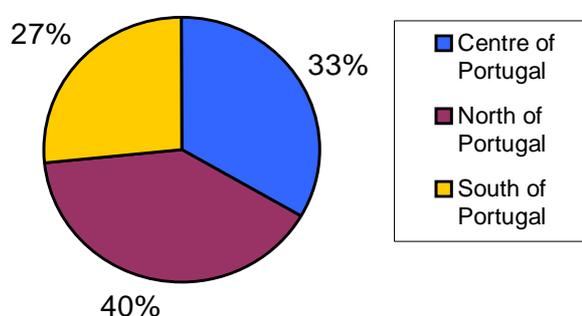


Fig. 3

Schools where the participants currently teach.

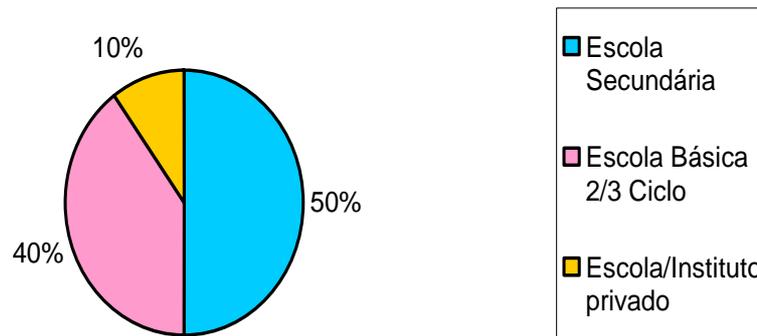


Fig. 4

The age of the participants (Fig. 5) ranges from 25 to 55 years old, although almost half of the participants are between 25 and 30 years old. 75% of the participants are female and 25% are male and as regards academic background 70% have a 'licenciatura' and 30% a master's degree. The participants teaching experience expresses in years ranges from one to forty years.

Age of the participants

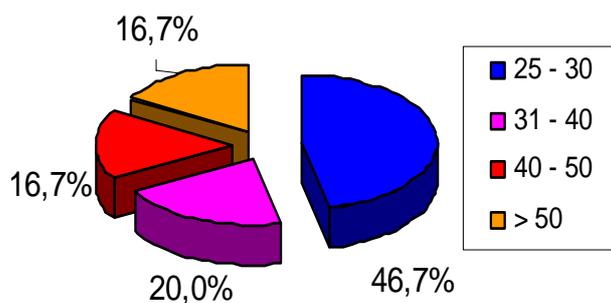


Fig. 5

Teaching experience

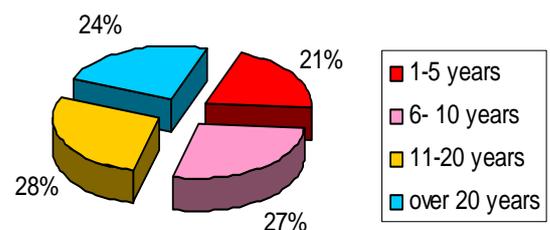


Fig. 6

Most of the participants are Portuguese (93%) and the remaining 7% of participants have dual nationality: Portuguese and English. 76% of the participants

speak Portuguese as their native tongue, but a small percentage speaks English (10%), German (7%) or Spanish (7%) as their native tongue. 50% of the participants have already lived in a foreign country and for some Portugal is a foreign country (Fig. 7).

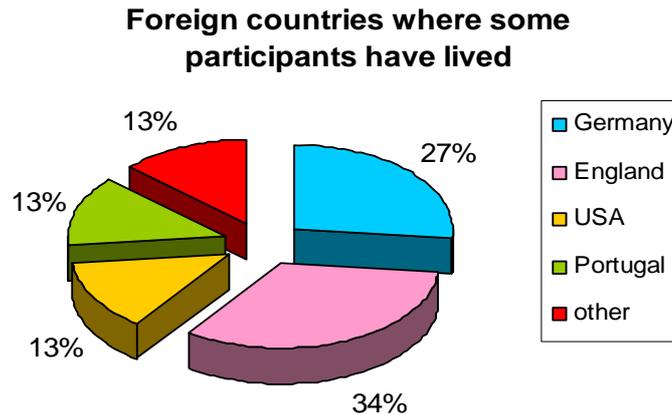


Fig. 7

All participants are teachers of English, 13% also teach German and 10% also teach French. Nevertheless all participants speak more than one language as shown in Fig. 8, and all participants have some kind of contact with foreign people, particularly when on holidays as tourists but also through seminars and online contacts or visits to the U. K. as Fig. 9 shows.



Fig. 8

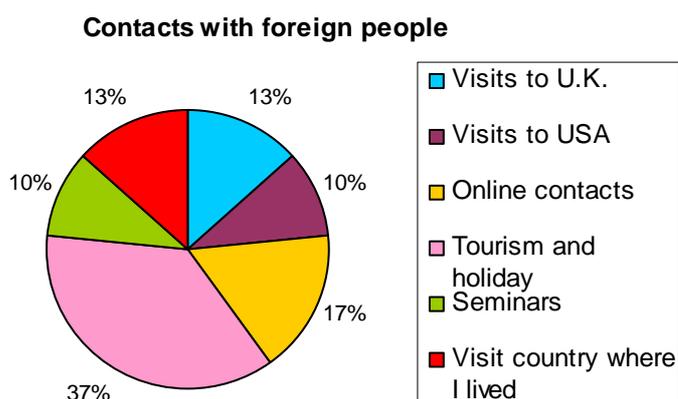


Fig.9

## **4.2- Presentation of research findings**

### *4.2.1- The teaching of the cultural and linguistic components*

The majority of the participants agree strongly (36,7%) or partially (56,7%) that in a foreign language classroom, teaching culture is as important as teaching the language and only 6,7% somewhat disagree to the statement. Although teachers recognise the equal importance of both the cultural and linguistic components of language teaching, when it comes to the harsh reality of classrooms most teachers agree partially (48%) or strongly (27%) that in their class there is a clear dominance of the linguistic component over socio-cultural aspects, in fact no one disagrees completely with this fact. Most teachers also agree strongly (20%) or partially (36,7%) that they have such a limited teaching time that language teaching leaves little time for culture teaching, revealing the fact that the actual teaching practices do not in fact live up to the previously

recognised idea that both the cultural and the linguistic component are equally important in class. However, 30% of participants disagree strongly and 13,3% disagree partially with the former affirmation. My experience as a teacher allows me to assert that most of my fellow colleagues are now more interested in developing and deepening the teaching / learning of the cultural component in foreign language classes, but, as these results seem to confirm, a complete and proper integration of the cultural dimension into teaching realities is made with a lot of hesitation, often under the excuse of insufficient teaching time. The majority of participants in my research project recognise the importance of the cultural dimension in language teaching but the teaching of culture is seen as something detached from teaching the language, something which can only be done if there is enough time (Fig.10).

This incongruence which arises from the fact that most teachers accept and recognise as valid certain concepts, values and teaching ideologies, which are promptly advocated on the one hand, and on the other hand the fact that their everyday teaching practices usually disregard these same values, often leads teachers responses in contradiction, and will be a constant throughout the analysis of the research findings.

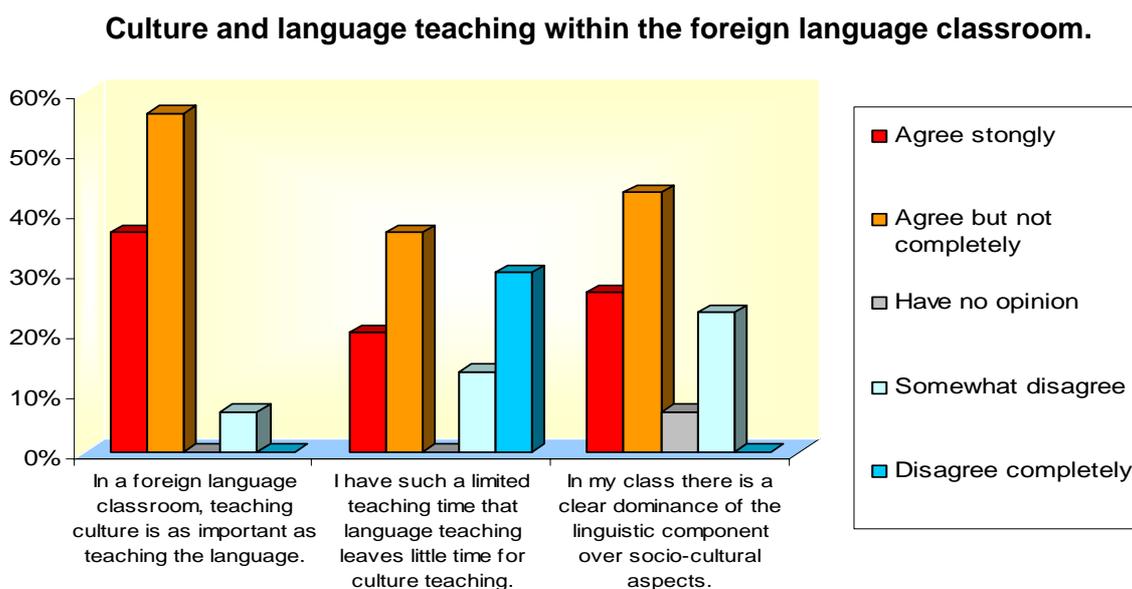


Fig. 10

The majority of the participants expressed their strong (53%) or partial (40%) agreement with the view that the classroom is a cultural space and most teachers consider their classes to be an intercultural experience. Only a slight percentage (7%) somewhat disagree with this fact (Fig. 12).

As regards the teaching of culture, most teachers (53%) also consider themselves sufficiently familiar with the culture associated with the language they teach, although a significant percentage (33%) agree to not being sufficiently familiar with it (Fig.12). Nevertheless a strong percentage recognises that often (42%) or once in a while (55%) they feel the need for training in how to teach culture, even though 3% of participants assert that they never feel the need for training in how to teach culture (Fig. 11); and a significant percentage agrees strongly (23%) or partially (13%) that teaching culture is something they do by intuition and that they have no specific theories that underlie their practices (Fig. 12), thus reinforcing the previously mentioned idea that there is a difficulty in putting new ideas and theories into practice in a systematic way, based not only on intuition but on specific theories which may function as a more secure basis for a committed change in teaching practices and methods. Nevertheless, 33% of participants strongly disagree that they have no specific theories for teaching culture and that it is something they do by intuition.

**I feel the need for training in how to teach culture.**

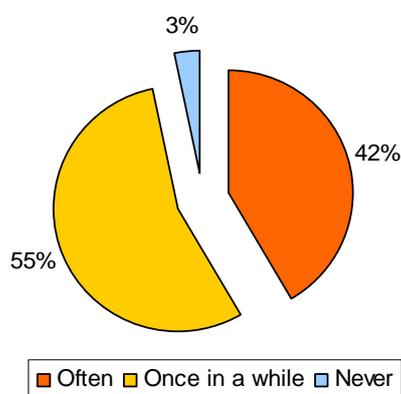


Fig. 11

### Teachers' attitudes towards the foreign culture and its teaching.

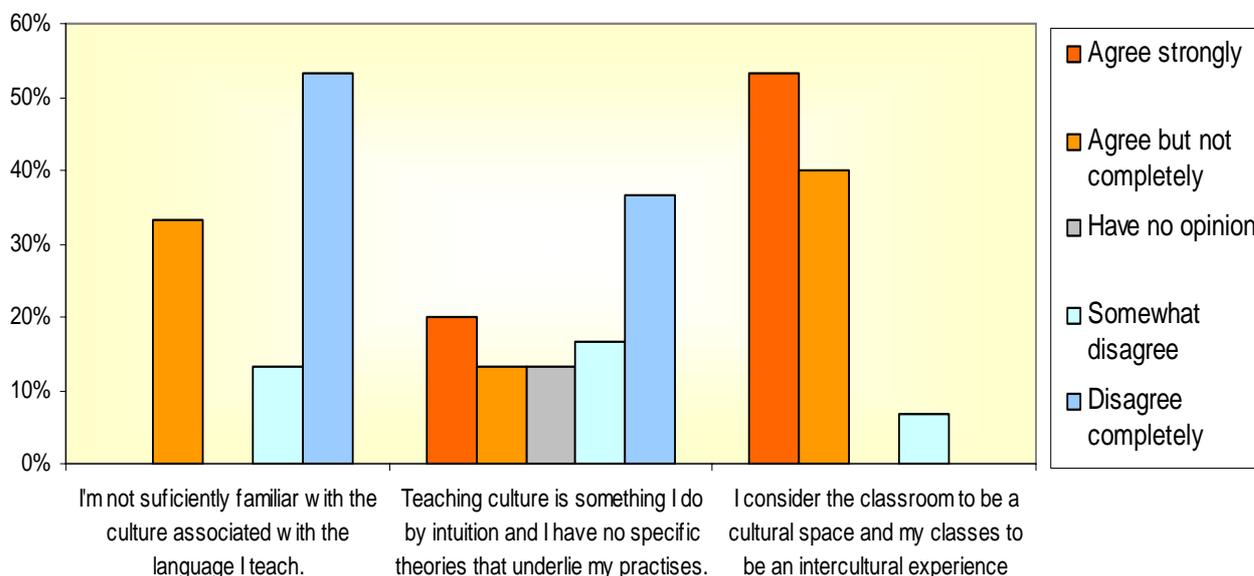


Fig. 11

#### 4.2.2- The students' world and the 'foreign world': conflicts and similarities.

Most teachers also agree strongly (50%) or partially (20%) that students have pre-formed views about the target language and country which should be taken into account in class, in fact, no-one disagrees completely with this statement, even though 17% of participants partially disagree with it and 13% have no opinion on the subject. Although percentages are not so revealing here, most teachers partially (40%) or strongly agree (20%) that the image of the target world which is presented in class is constructed on premises rooted in our own world and only 7% disagree completely of this assertion, while 13% somewhat disagree to it. Nevertheless 20% of the teachers express their lack of opinion about the issue (Fig. 13).

### Students' pre-formed views and the image of the foreign world.

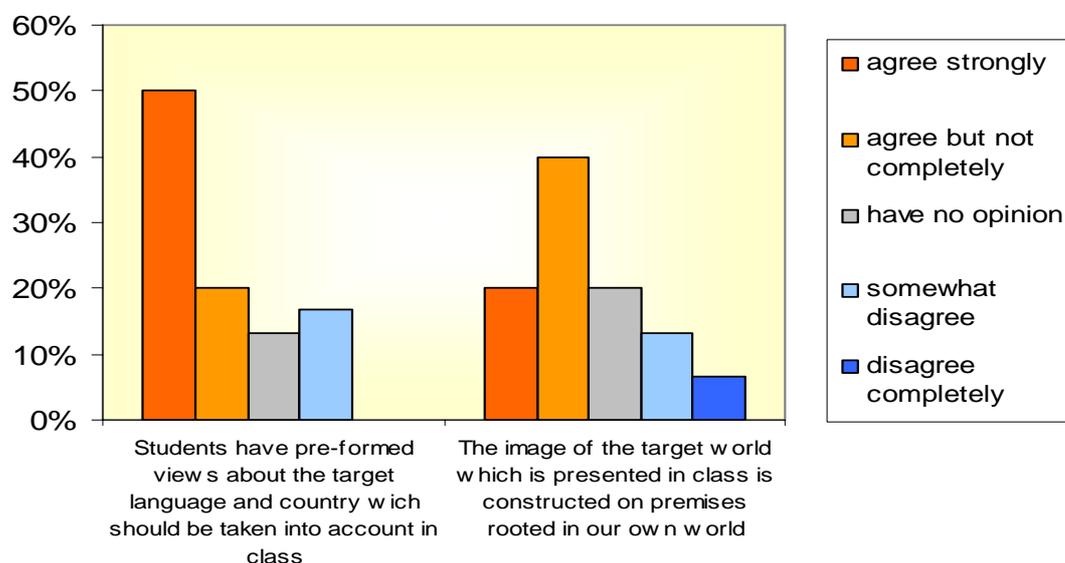


Fig.13

A strong percentage of teachers agree strongly (60%) or partially (27%) that teaching culture in an EFL class also means teaching about Portuguese culture because it is the native culture of the learners, only 7% have no opinion and 7% somewhat disagree. Teachers are more or less unanimous in recognising the importance of the learners' own experience and socio-cultural background in the learning process. As regards the importance of the learners' own world and socio-cultural experience as being essential to the learners' perception and evaluation of the foreign world teachers' position are even clearer and actually no-one disagrees with this fact. In effect, an overwhelming majority expressed their strong (40%) or partial (60%) agreement with this view (Fig 14).

**Students' own experience and their influence in class.**

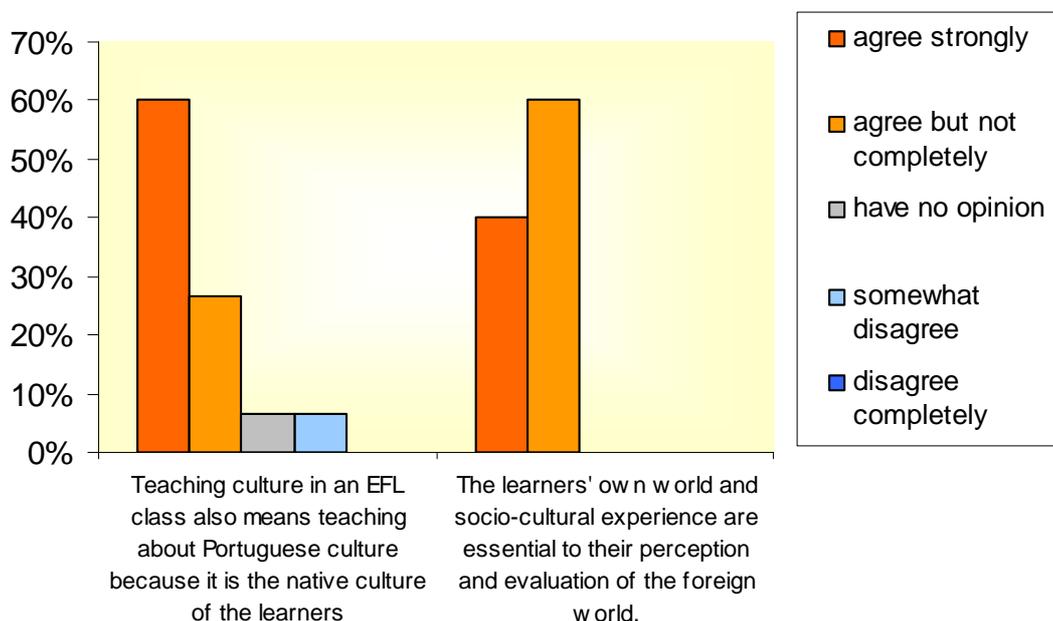


Fig.14

An overwhelming majority of teachers also expressed their strong agreement (70%) or partial agreement (27%) with the fact that learning a foreign language can change our perception of our own culture and identity and nobody disagrees completely with this. Nevertheless when questioned about the aims of teaching English as a foreign language in question 35, teachers fail to recognise this as an important aim for ELT. Teachers are also aware of the importance of the concept of national identity, although opinions on this issue do not seem to be as consensual, revealing some disagreement and indecision on the subject since a significant percentage (27%) partially agrees to the statement that the concept of national identity is not of great importance in an EFL class on the grounds that we are all citizens of the world. Nevertheless most teachers disagree completely (39%) or partially (27%) with this. (Fig.15 and 16).

**Learning a foreign language can change our perception of our own culture and identity.**

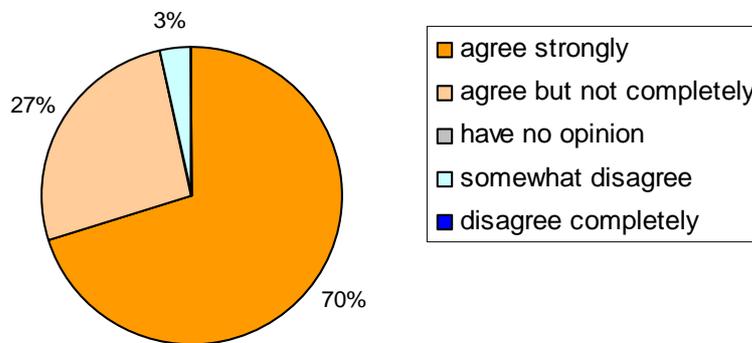


Fig. 15

**The concept of national identity is not of great importance in an EFL class because we are all citizens of the world.**

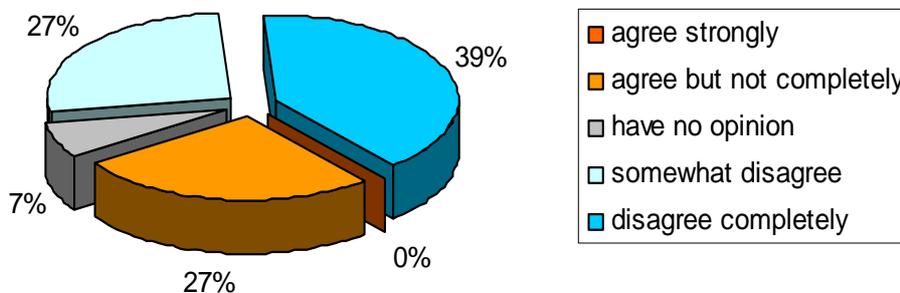


Fig. 16

The majority of the participants expressed their strong (73%) or partial (27%) agreement with the view that students should regard misunderstandings as something normal and likely to happen, because of linguistic as well as cultural differences. In spite of revealing awareness and sensitivity to cultural issues such as the ones previously mentioned, about half of the teachers agree partially (47%)

and 7% agree strongly, that the aim of cultural teaching is to avoid and erase all differences. Nevertheless, there are discordant voices who express their strong (32%) or partial (13%) disapproval of this statement indicating that opinions are divergent and there is some disagreement on the subject (Fig.17).

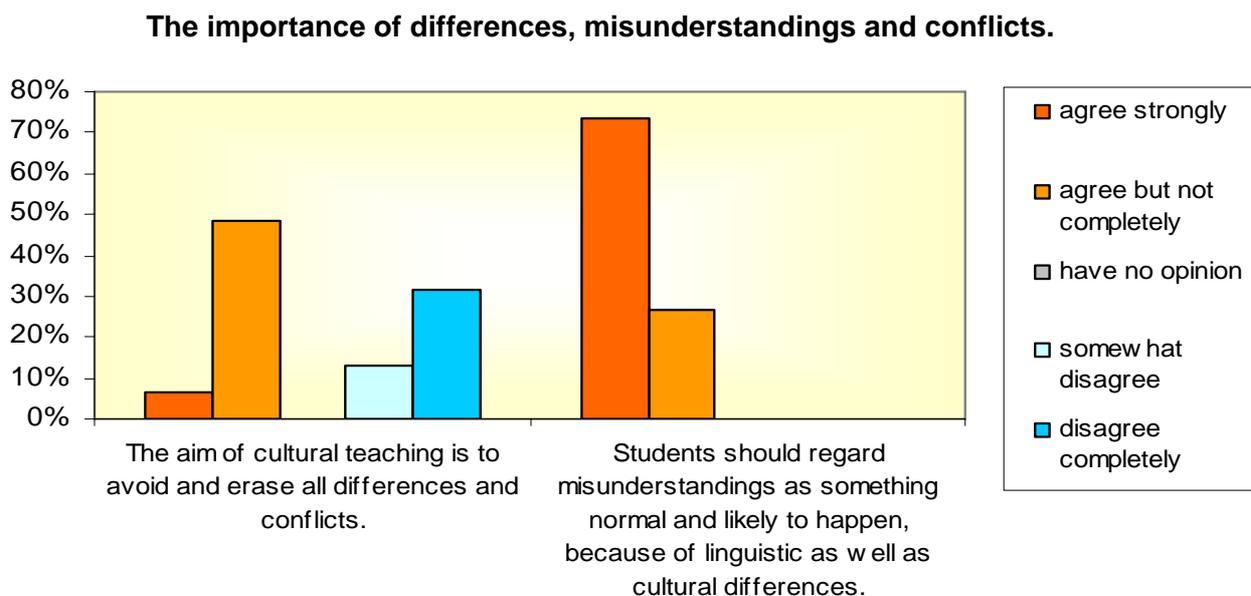


Fig. 17

A large majority (87%) expressed their strong disagreement with the view that pointing out the diversity inherent to cultures is to point out conflicts and that culture should be presented as something homogenous and conflicts should be masked, 7% also disagree partially with this statement and 6% have no opinion on the subject. No one agrees with this statement. The majority of the participants also agree strongly (67%) or partially (27%) that being aware of the complexity inherent to all cultures allows us to have multiple perspectives and negotiate meanings (Fig. 18).

Teachers' answers on the subject of cultural 'conflicts' or differences reveal somewhat divergent and indecisive opinions. Teachers are quick to recognise that cultures are not homogenous but complex and that conflicts are not to be masked,

nevertheless, they at the same time reveal some difficulty in agreeing on what the aim of cultural teaching is, concerning the issue of cultural differences, in fact more than half of the participants consider this aim to be avoiding and erasing all differences.

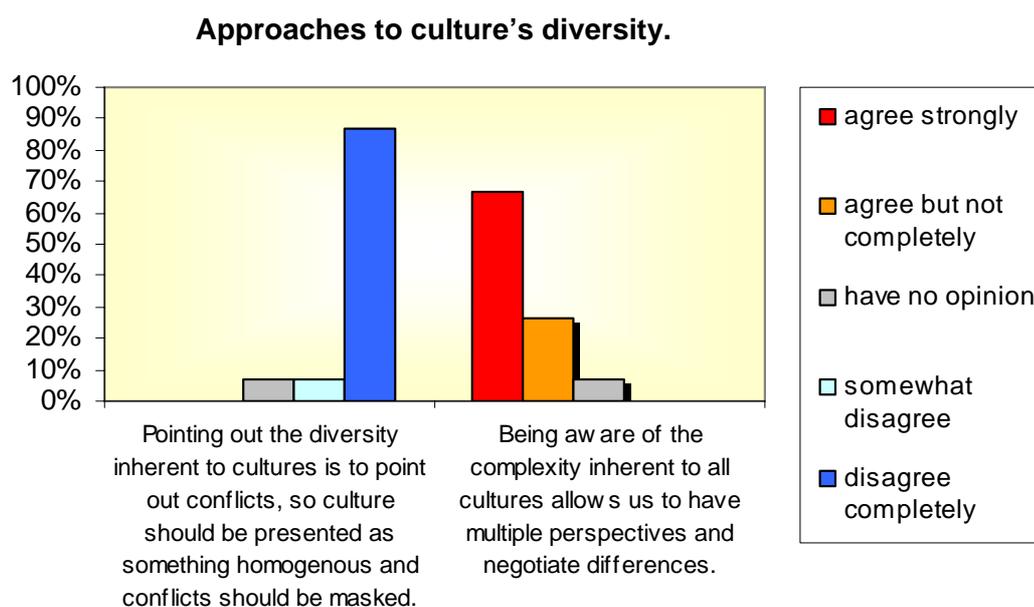


Fig. 18

#### 4.2.3- The socio-political purposes of culture teaching: teacher's role as a possible opinion former.

About half of the participants (52%) expressed their partial disagreement with the view that when teaching culture, teachers should focus on similarities between cultures and not on points of conflict, and 20% of the participants disagree strongly with this statement. Nevertheless, 7% strongly agree with this affirmation and a significant percentage partially agrees (22%) with it. The majority of participants expressed their strong (50%) or partial (37%) disagreement with the

view that teachers should teach about cultural facts but avoid discussing them in class because different points of view may come up and lead to conflict. Only a small percentage (13%) partially agree to this fact. (Fig. 19)

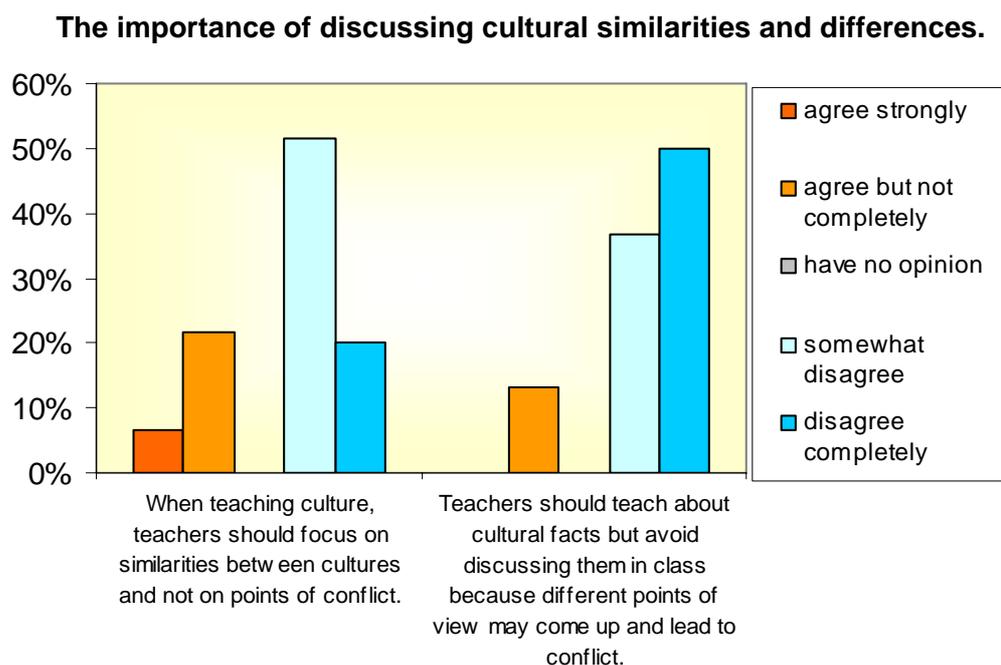


Fig.19

Although participants were more or less unanimous in agreeing that conflicts should not be avoided or 'erased', opinions about the teacher's role in relation to cultural conflicts and differences also reveal some disagreement and indecision on the subject. It was a general belief that teachers should be politically neutral, listen and try to be impartial avoiding the expression of personal opinion. Although there were discordant voices who disagree to some extent with this statement (23%), the majority of the participants (70%) agree with this reduction and simplification of the teachers' role. The majority of participants nevertheless agree strongly (30%) or partially (50%) that teachers should foster discussion of

social issues in class admitting that teachers may express their opinion according to explicit facts (Fig. 20).

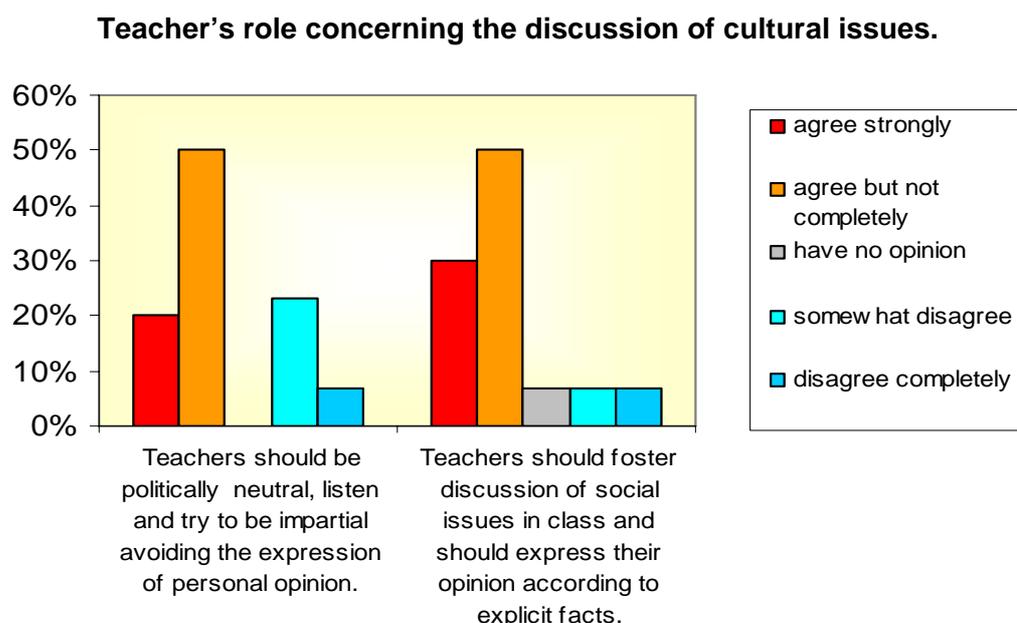


Fig. 20

The majority of teachers show their strong (20%) or partial (33%) disagreement with the view that students should be encouraged to be socially and politically aware, to make decisions and intervene, because teaching is a political act. Nevertheless there were some discordant voices who strongly (20%) or partially (20%) defend this political and social perspective on language education, educational aims and attitudes. Although a strong percentage of teachers agree strongly (35%) or partially (25%) that learning can have political and social purposes, they seem to fail to recognise the central importance of these concepts in language and cultural education. Opinions on this subject also reveal some disagreement and indecision since a significant percentage disagrees partially

(20%) or totally (13%) that language learning can have political and social purposes (Fig 21).

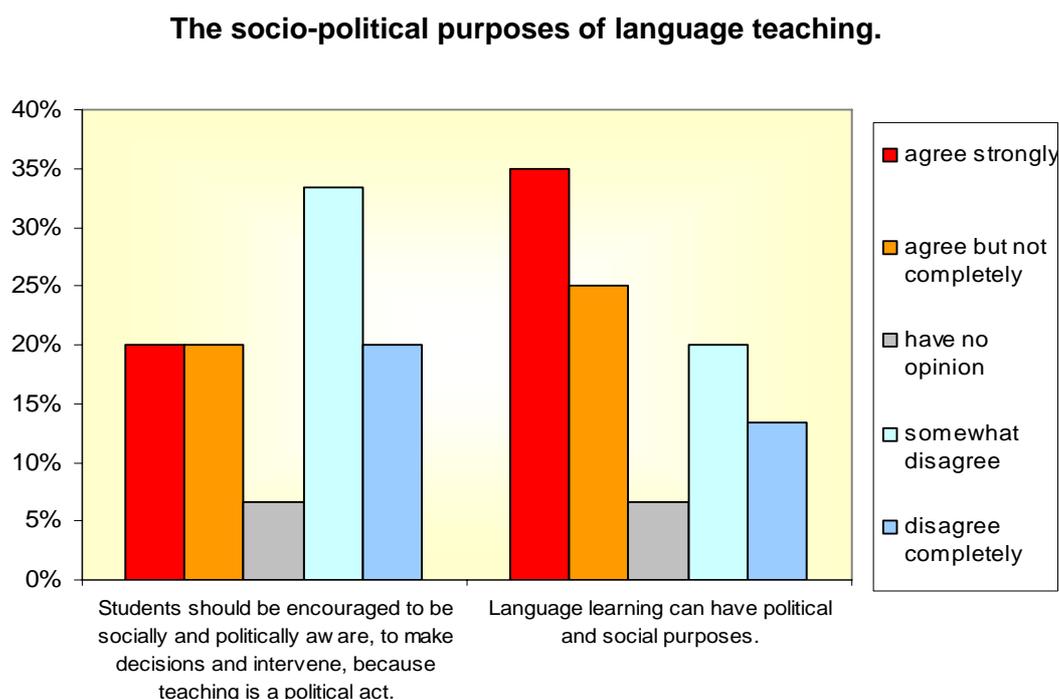


Fig. 21

When it comes to daily cultural activities which take place in language classes, the totality of the teachers states that in their classes stereotypes and pre-conceptions are discussed often (40%) or once in a while (60%). Most teachers also state that often (67%) or once in a while (33%) they value exercises that foster comparison, interpreting and reasoning. The numbers are not as significant when it comes to the analysis of media representations and images of ourselves and others in class. In fact 27% admits to never doing it, 23% admit to doing this analysis once in a while and 50% of participants often analyse these representations. Once again teachers are very careful, not to say somewhat

fearful, when it comes to their role and attitudes in class. 67% of the participants never choose to discuss aspects of the foreign culture which they feel negative about and only 33% agree to doing it once in a while. No one admits to often discussing aspects of the foreign culture which they feel negative about. Nevertheless a strong percentage of the teachers states that they often (52%) or once in a while (48%) talk to their pupils about their own experiences with the foreign language (Fig. 22,23,24).

Teachers recognise as their task to compensate stereotypes and media images and encourage their students to reflect about cultural facts and behaviour, but this reflection seems to be based mostly on the target culture and the term critical is mainly supported by an attitude of reflection over one of analysis, being clear from teachers' answers that they place great importance on the cognitive dimension. Teachers are prompt to recognise the importance of promoting a critical attitude towards the foreign culture and one's own culture but the promotion of this attitude is stripped of active social and political involvement; it is seen as a mere exercise of rhetorical thinking.

**In my class stereotypes and pre-conceptions are discussed**

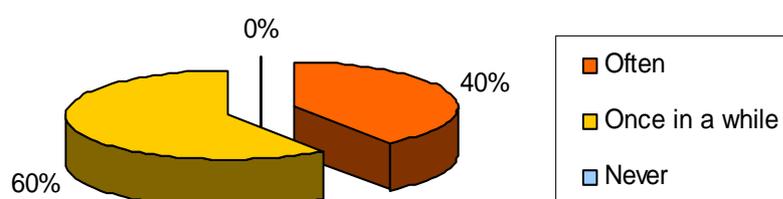


Fig. 22

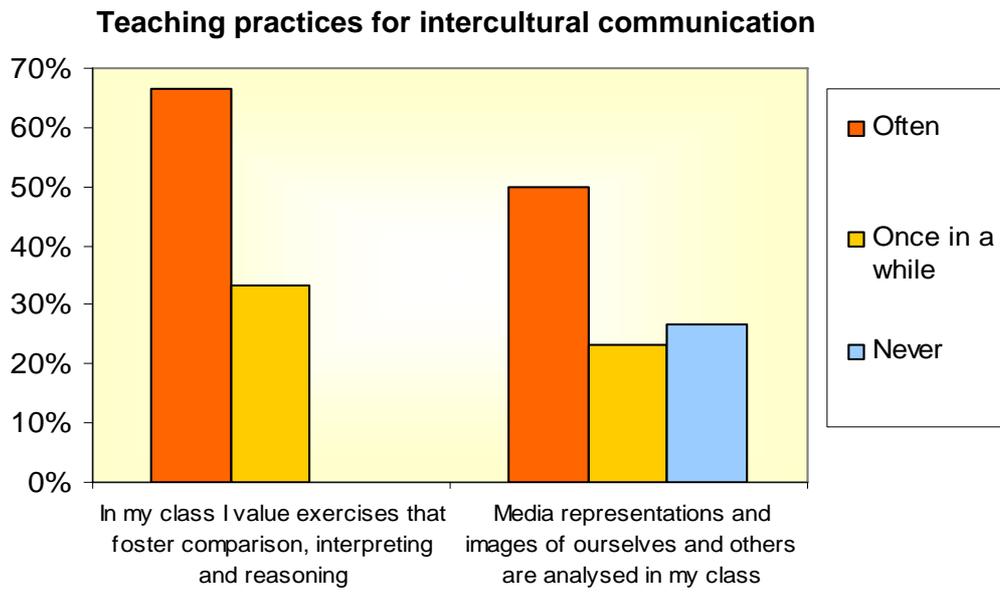


Fig. 23

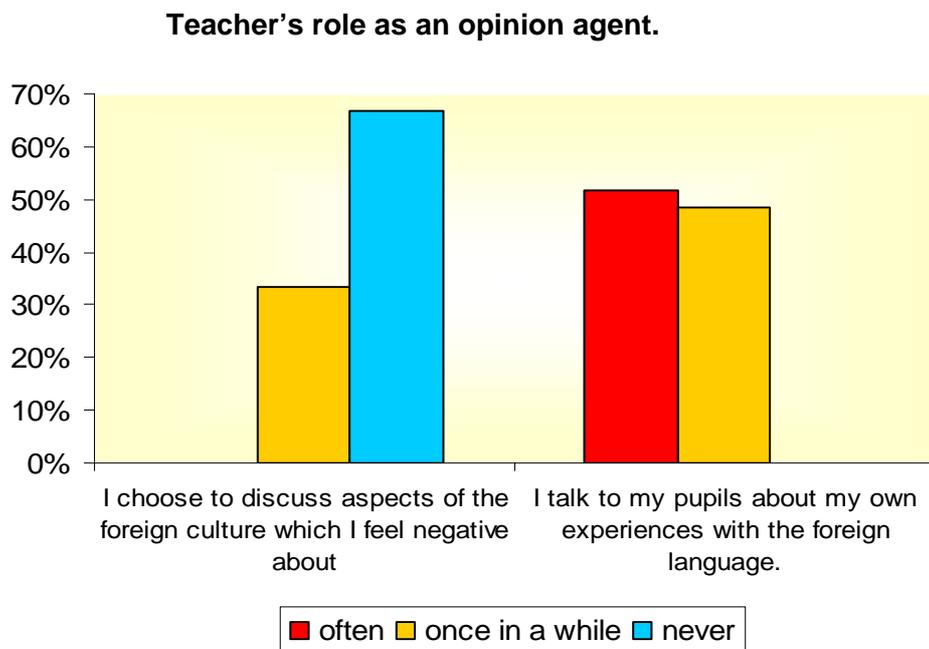


Fig.24

80% of the teachers admit to once in a while not being pleased with the cultural content offered by the textbooks and 13% often feel dissatisfied with it, only 7% of the participants declare that they are never unsatisfied with the cultural content offered by the textbooks. Most teachers admit to using additional materials not taken from any textbook often (67%) or once in a while (27%), although 7% admit to never doing it. (Fig 25)

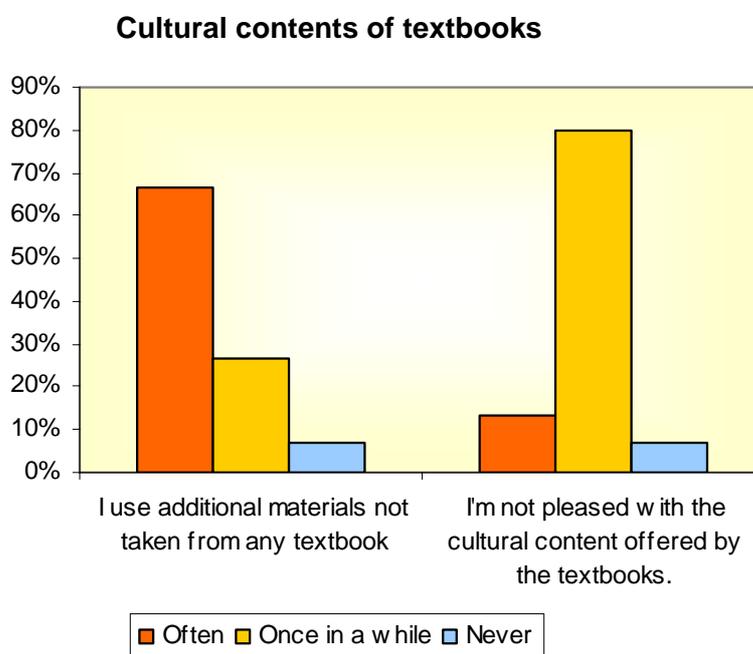


Fig. 25

#### *4.2.4-Teaching culture within a foreign language class: aims and teachers' methodology.*

In the following part of the questionnaire, teachers were asked to put some statements in order of importance. When questioned about what it means to teach

culture within a foreign language class, teachers' first options are somewhat divided between acceptance of new concepts and practices in language teaching brought about by discussions on the subject of intercultural communication and the remains of early concepts and methodologies related to the communicative method of language teaching, especially concerning a more structural and functional approach, which still strongly influence teachers' practices in Portugal. So, and according to what was mentioned before, 40% of the participants state that teaching culture within a foreign language class means teaching about the power that language has to create and overcome distance and differences, although there were discordant voices in a significant percentage who chose this option as their third (37%) or last (16%) option. On the other hand a significant percentage considers that teaching culture within a foreign language class means teaching about aspects of everyday life presented in typical situations and contexts. 39% of participants choose this as a first option and 30% as the second best option to define what teaching culture within a foreign language class means. This approach to the teaching of culture is paramount in the communicative method but is has strongly been debated and criticised for its simplification and lack of insight into extremely important cultural matters. 14% of the participants choose discussing values and beliefs in cross-cultural experiences, stereotypes and differences in meaning as the best definition for what it means to teach culture within a foreign language class and a strong percentage of the participants (46%) choose it as their second option. Only 7% choose teaching about the country's history, government and traditions, about facts and figures, life and institutions as the best option, in fact most participants rejected this vision of culture as being reduced to its visible products and this option was strongly chosen as the last one by more than half of the participants (53%) (Fig.26).

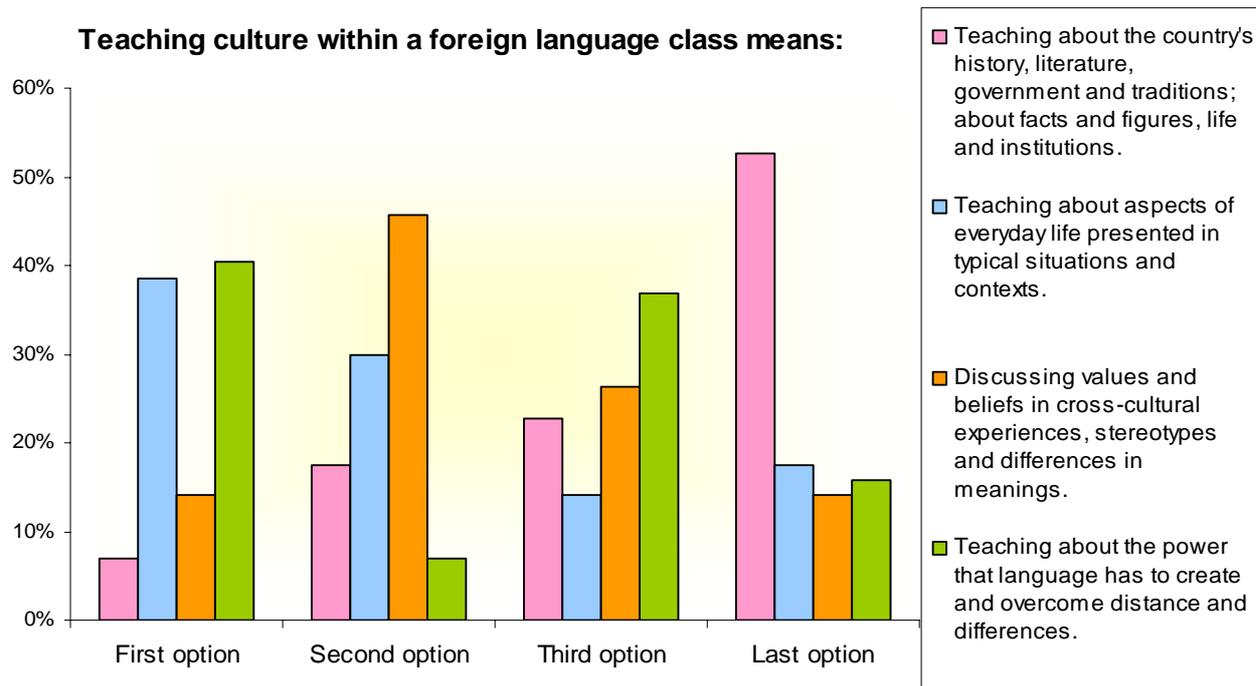


Fig. 26

When asked to choose the best alternative for a methodology of foreign language teaching, an overwhelming majority (90%) chose the development of primary skills as being the best alternative because students must be prepared to use the language in everyday communication. Only a small percentage of teachers (10%) value the emphasis on attitudes towards language and culture because FLT has educational and socio-political objectives and no one chose as the best alternative the fact that the socio-cultural dimension has an independent and explicit objective, which is in many ways different from the linguistic one.

The influence of conceptualizations of a structural and more functional methodology for foreign language teaching based on the communicative method is noticeable, the linguistic aspect of the language is often significantly valued and chosen as the most important component in language teaching and teachers often fail to recognise the importance of the socio-cultural dimension of language teaching. Teachers are particularly reluctant to recognise the fact that education is a political act and that the socio-cultural component of the language has important,

explicit and independent objectives which cannot be reduced to a secondary level.  
(Fig 27)

**Which is more important for a methodology of foreign language teaching?**

- The development of primary skills is very important because students must be prepared to use the language in everyday communication
- An emphasis should be put on attitudes towards language and culture because FLT has educational and socio-political objectives
- The socio-cultural dimension has an independent and explicit objective, which is in many ways different from the linguistic one.

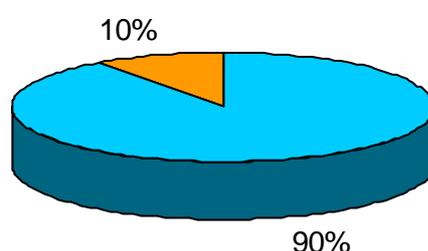


Fig.27

As to the question about what option best defines what teachers try to achieve through their teaching, participants were more or less unanimous (80%) in choosing the fulfilment of the curricular requirements for the subject as the least important one. Half of the participants chose the development of the students' proficiency in the foreign language and their autonomy in learning as the first option, that is, as the most important one. The other half (52%) chose a good relationship with the students as the most important option to define what they are more concerned about as teachers of a foreign language, although there were discordant voices that chose it as third (33%) or last option (15%). The majority of the participants (83%) chose the development of the skills and attitudes pupils will need in life as the second option and 17% chose it as the third option. An interesting fact is that the development of skills and attitudes was never chosen as the most important option but on the other hand it was also never chosen as the least important option, which may be an indication that teachers recognise that the

development of attitudes to life along with skills is something present and important to language learning but fail to give it primary importance or a preponderant position in their methods or in their teaching theories and practices (Fig. 28).

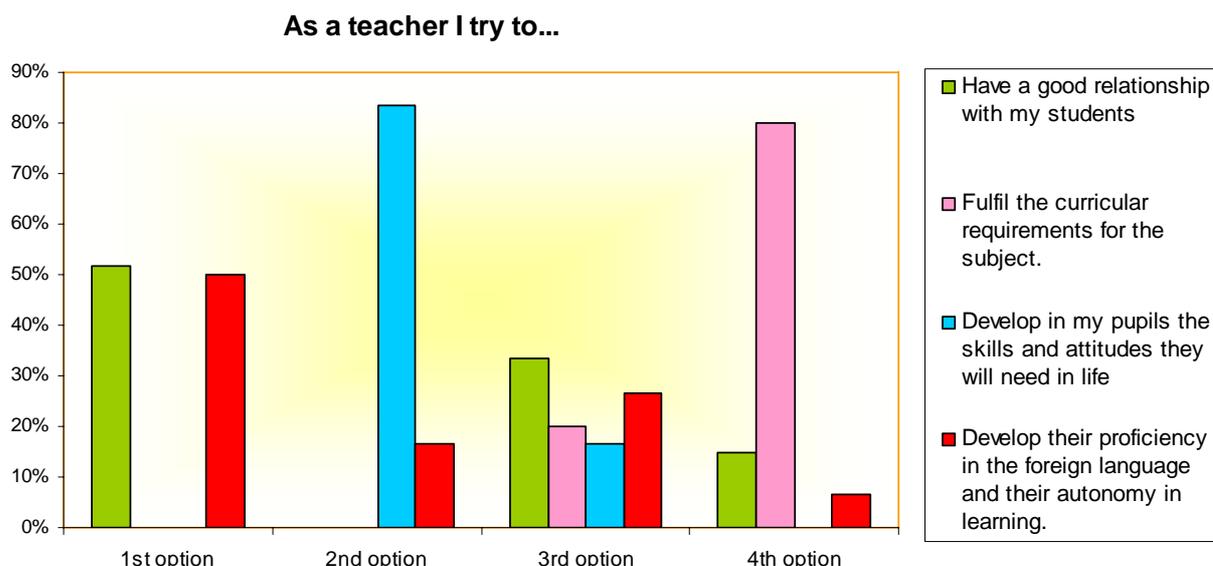


Fig. 28

Finally when it comes to choosing the most important aim for foreign language teaching, it was the general belief (77%) that helping students acquire a level of proficiency to use the language for practical purposes is the most important aim of foreign language teaching. A strong percentage of the participants (53%) don't consider helping students acquire a high level of proficiency in the foreign language as being one of the most important aims of foreign language teaching. About half of them view the development of students' enthusiasm for foreign languages (45%) and of students' cultural and linguistic knowledge of the foreign language (45%) as the most important aims of foreign language teaching, although there were discordant voices who disagree and

consider these two options to be the least important aims of foreign language teaching (28% for the former aim and 20% for the latter).

The majority of the participants (67%) were more or less unanimous in considering that among the aims of foreign language teaching which are mentioned, helping students develop a better understanding of their own identity and culture is one of the least important ones, in fact no-one considered this to be the most important aim for foreign language teaching and only 13% of participants chose it as a second option. Teachers were very cautious as to the aim of promoting openness of mind towards other cultures; in fact, this aim was never chosen as being the most important aim of foreign language teaching but on the other hand participants never chose it as the last option either.

**The most important aim of foreign language teaching is to...**

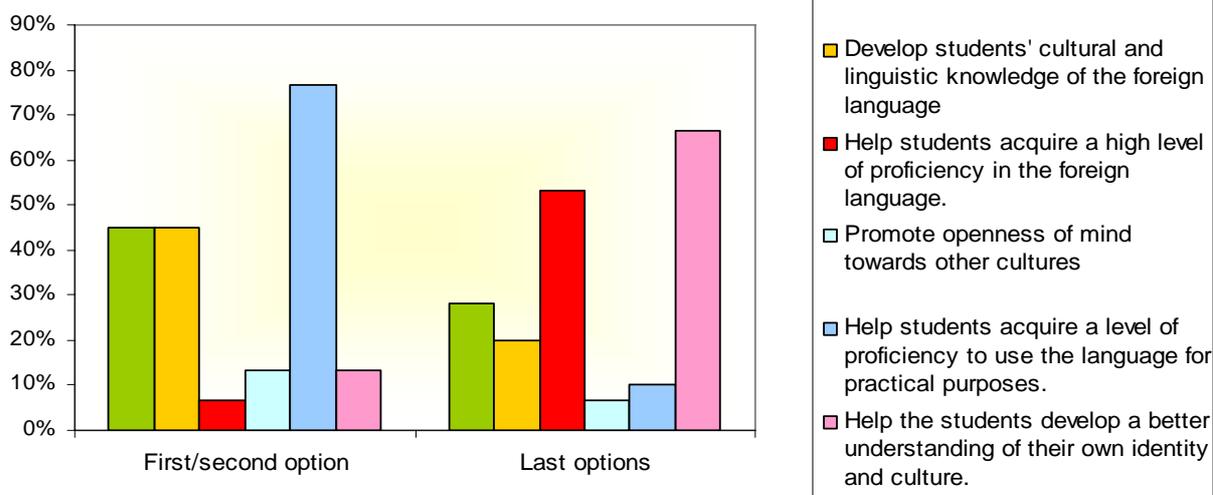


Fig. 29<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Only the first and last options are represented in this graph, since I consider these to be relevant for the analysis of results. Percentages related to options in between were left out due to their lack of relevance.

### **4.3- Analysis and implications of research findings**

It is evident from the answers to the questionnaires that teachers have an idea of the political implications of their task and role but it also becomes clear that teachers are not yet prepared or willing to fully accept the consequences of their role as catalysts of educational change. This idea of the teacher as a political and critical actor and a possible vehicle of transformation of educational realities remains in the theoretical domain because teachers fail to view themselves and their students as being politically active. This lack of active commitment contrasts with the political consciousness which is to some extent present in teachers' answers. Teachers seem to fail to acknowledge their political role as teachers of a foreign language and culture and are not willing to take risks and offer their opinion or ideas for questioning, thus failing to implement the teacher's role as an active element of transformation, whose ideas are as open to questioning as are the ideas of the students and who is not a mere carrier of knowledge but rather accompanies the students in their common search for it.

Although teachers claim that they recognise their classroom as being an intercultural space their practices and their choice of aims and methodologies for foreign language teaching, do not live up to the educational challenge of teaching language as context, that is, adopting a pedagogy that makes context explicit, thus making it possible for structural uses of language and the context of situation and communication to intermingle in the classroom.

Teachers are very cautious when it comes to putting ideas into practice and actually applying them in their teaching methodology. This defensive attitude, which in my opinion comes from a lack of theoretical support and insight into issues of intercultural communication, becomes even deeper when it comes to defining actual attitudes and roles of teachers. Preferably teachers should remain neutral, as mere agents or mere means of conveying information, as if that was humanly possible. Teachers in most occasions still conceptualize culture as mere information conveyed by language and the process of cultural teaching is still to a great extent viewed as a one-way transmitting process in which students are the

recipients of a more or less coherent and closed cultural system of values, norms and beliefs and their manifestation in cultural products. The majority of teachers also choose to adopt a functional approach to language teaching in which their educational success is calculated according to practical purposes.

Teachers believe that students need to learn to use the language in communication and master its structures and get the necessary linguistic skills and at the same time they are confronted with the urgent need of focusing on the message and its context and not on the form of utterances and with the idea that students need opportunities to use their skills and reflect upon real life communicative situations, even before they master the linguistic skills. Without a strong methodological and theoretical background which may help them to integrate these values in their practices, the result is the lack of an enlightened and coherent attitude and approach to language teaching with consequent renunciation of teacher responsibility.

This self-protective and sometimes somewhat contradictory attitude to language teaching is also revealed when it comes to defining the students' role and consequently attitudes to be developed in class, since a majority of teachers showed their disagreement with the fact that students should be made socially and politically aware and be encouraged to make decisions and intervene, thus teachers fail to acknowledge the role of foreign language teaching as being a political act. Learners may be exposed to different uses of language but they are not fostered to think about their communicative experiences in a critical way. Reflection about language and its use in specific cultural situations is not valued, which is not surprising if we consider that most teachers admit to choosing a functional approach to language which considers the cultural component as a 'fifth skill' usually to be developed along with the other traditional skills if there is enough time.

Teachers recognise that comparison and contrast between cultures is important, but most teachers approach this as an attitude of mere recognition of what is different or similar, with no value judgements, avoiding the expression of personal opinion. Merely acknowledging similarities and differences between cultures is the kind of attitude which clearly fails to live up to the needs of the

intercultural speaker, in terms of cultural awareness and critical abilities and it fails to educate critical active citizens, because it emphasises a logic of adaptation and acceptance, cultures are kept separate and although there is an attempt to understand the perspective of the 'Other' contact between cultures is not seen as an interactive one and students as well as teachers adopt a one way perspective: their own. Despite the fact that teachers admitted to teaching about cultural products and practices, most teachers fail to recognise the importance of the presentation of perspectives of individuals from the target group, as well as the critical reflection about these and about one's own perspectives and the possibilities of meaning negotiation.

Although teachers agree that culture learning is important to language learning, the results reveal an apparent lack of a consistent attitude towards culture and of systematic, in-depth teaching of culture. One can conclude that the teachers surveyed generally had no conceptual cultural framework they used in their teaching practices, which calls for more focused and widespread teacher education and professional development programmes on these issues. There is a clear need for clarification of concepts and methodologies and theoretical support that may enable teachers to commit to applying these changes in their teaching reality. This theoretical background would function as a support to teachers' individual approach and help them to better construct their individual practice, based on reflection and discussion rather than merely on intuition.

This study revealed that the cultural aspects of teachers' instruction are based either on personal experiences, what the textbook offers, or what they find in additional materials. Participants revealed that they feel inadequately informed to teach culture in the classroom. Although teachers surveyed acknowledged the cultural context of language, none of them admitted to frequently teach the sociolinguistic aspects of language, but rather stated that they relied on the textbooks as the key point of reference and source of information. The discharge of the social and situational contexts of language can hinder students from developing communicative competence and is a clear indication of a inconsistency involving foreign language educational practices and contemporary foreign language theory which advocates the teaching of language in context and defends

that understandings and interpretations of contacts and communication differers according to the sociocultural information and awareness of the participants creating and developing the communication. Teachers need to be made more aware of the urgent need to concentrate on meaning endorsed to specific communicative behaviour and the best ways to integrate this need in their teaching practices. Teachers' approaches need to focus on sociolinguistic aspects of language and students must be offered the chance to have awareness and understanding of the meaning associated with language practices.

Throughout the research there is a tendency for teachers to recognise social and intercultural aims of foreign language teaching but at the same time a tendency to ignore those same aims when discussing objectives for foreign language teaching as well as in assessment and in teaching practices. Teachers seem to forget about these aims and 'practical communication' becomes the one and imperative aim, the only one which seems to be worth assessing and developing. It became clear during the research that this permeates teachers' attitudes and teaching practice in general. The majority of teachers consider that language learning has various aims and they acknowledge tolerance and cultural awareness and understanding as being important aims of language teaching, but there is no clear and secure application of these aims in daily teaching practice. Consequently, it becomes clear that the emphasis on the evaluation of the objectives related to linguistic aims and practical communication allow for little and fragile efforts to incorporate social, human and cultural aims in daily teaching practices.

My experience as a teacher tells me that most students recognise a difference in quality between teachers' accounts and the information provided by the textbooks, they value teachers' experiences and viewpoints. Nevertheless the results show that the textbook is the determining dominant factor in what teachers choose to offer pupils, the influence of the textbook in cultural information is great and teachers' contributions are different according to individual values and ideas on language teaching or teachers' personal experience with the language and culture, but in general teachers see themselves as mere transmitters of cultural facts, and fail to recognise the important role they play as opinion builders and as

educators of future critically responsible citizens. Most teachers choose to adopt a 'neutral' cultural approach, that is, they see themselves as neutral agents within the process of cultural teaching/learning. Teachers must gain awareness of the importance of the role they play in the whole process of language learning/teaching and understand that students place great importance on teachers' personal contributions.

The teaching of culture seems to have remained attached to earlier teaching methods of information transmission, even though linguistic methodologies and specifically communicative methodologies, which still influence teachers' practices to a great extent, praised learner-centred practices. The teaching of culture continues to be informative, guided by textbooks, usually with no specific theories underlying teaching practices, disorganized and random.

These conclusions will hopefully induce some reflection on the issue of teachers' initial and continuous education and will hopefully raise discussion on whether the present methods are appropriate to pursue the fine aims desired by intercultural communication.

## **CONCLUSION**

In a time when people are more frequently brought together and consequently so are cultures, we are made more aware of distances and differences. There are many new ideas and concepts to develop, whether in teaching/learning theories or in teaching methodologies and practices. Many people still have to be made aware of the importance of a language teaching which can be richer, more stimulating and more responsible in social terms, and through which intercultural understanding and communication can truly be reached. Teachers still have to be made aware of how important it is to think about the theoretical foundations of their pedagogy and how intercultural pedagogy does not seek to be a set of prescriptions or statements.

The teaching of culture often represents an aspect of language teaching that is unfamiliar to language teachers whose professional training largely focuses on structural facets of language; training in pedagogy rarely addresses the many influences of culture on language learning and teaching. There is a need to introduce ethnography and cultural studies into second / foreign language learning / teaching research. Teachers need become familiar with processes of acquisition of a foreign language so that they may understand the very nature of language and language teaching.

Academic knowledge and training must prepare future teachers for the challenges they will have to face in the future, teachers of foreign language need to be educated about human rights and democratic citizenship because they work with issues of identity, difference, equality and are responsible for the preparation of democratic global citizens: intercultural speakers.

There is a need to pay special attention to new demands for teacher education and development; academic training must prepare teachers for the challenges they will have to face in the future. Guilherme (2002) defends that Human Rights Education and Education for Democratic Citizenship contribute to foreign language/culture education and should be included in teacher development

programmes. Finally, the inevitable link between the study of language and the study of culture should be consolidated in teacher education. Linguistic learning and critical cultural analysis should be important issues in the education of language teachers, who have to be provided with in-depth understanding of the framework that supports intercultural communication, while at the same time they should be provided with the tools to expand and question this framework. There is a need for a more profound integration of intercultural training in theory and practice, based on an interpretative and reflective approach, in order to bring about deep critical cultural awareness and a critical reflective attitude in teacher training – only then can we expect teachers to commit to a transformative critical role. If teachers do not receive proper education in intercultural competence themselves, or if they do not feel confident enough because of the lack of in-depth knowledge or clarification of concepts, then it is only normal that they do not have the confidence to develop it in their students as well. Reflection, the development of self-awareness and discussion about these issues and how to attain critical, participatory citizens for the future are vital in teacher education.

These are goals and new strategies which society itself is requiring: a critical transformative attitude, cultural awareness of others and ourselves, the recognition of the political role of teachers, awareness of the complexity of social relations and cultural contexts and the recognition that teacher education is involves the continuous search for intercultural knowledge and competence.

Learning and teaching a foreign language implies taking an ideological view of the world which reflects the way we perceive ourselves and Others. When an intercultural encounter takes place, it is full of direct and indirect messages which may generate conflict and misunderstanding but *“despite conflicting, different cultural views may establish communication with each other if they are both conscious of the process going on and, therefore, conflict is kept under control.”* (Guilherme 2002; 156)

Teaching is dependent upon context and language teachers should gain awareness of these contexts and bring them into practice in planned ways, thus the development of intercultural competence is adopted as an educational goal

and teachers engage in a true change of practices prompted by moral and political issues. Teachers must be able to analyse and interpret the teaching situation and it is important that they are able to plan, develop a teaching policy and reach some conscious decisions in order to bring sense to their teaching methodology and serve the students' interests in learning the language in a better and more effective way. Language teaching and learning requires teachers to think about and be aware of the processes that are going on during the teaching/learning situation. Regardless of the objectives that teachers and students set during the language learning/teaching situation, regardless of the setting in which the situation is taking place or any other conditioning factors, it is important that teachers' conceptualization of the teaching/learning process is coherent and relevant for both teachers and students. There are no magic answers, no definite methods or right prescriptions, but if one seeks to acquire some background knowledge and skills to analyse particular language teaching/learning situations teachers' work can be developed in a more systematic and conscious way.

Foreign language teachers are privileged actors in helping students deal with Otherness, understand different world views and negotiate self- and other-representations, norms and values, and it is extremely important that they become fully aware of this fact and of its implications.

*The foreign language/culture teacher may transform the hermeneutic exploration of a foreign code into an act of cultural creation by investing her/his students with the power to critically share intercultural events, interrogate their own and others' histories, and commit themselves to the responsibility of building this intercultural world. (Guilherme 2002: 159)*

The teacher's role as an agent of educational change has always been somewhat neglected; instead teachers are mostly viewed as executors and educational reforms often fail because of this. Most teachers tend to rely on intuitive and practical approaches, but being practical and intuitive doesn't exclude awareness and systematic thought. It is vital that teacher education programs help teachers relate their practices to concrete educational theories, so that teachers can

develop awareness of what they do and how they do it and of the purposes of learning. There are always pedagogical implications in teachers' choices, as well as social and political implications in the educational process. When they gain awareness that knowledge is never neutral and that the educational curriculum is never without implicit values, teachers and students may develop a different attitude to the educational system and process.

Teachers must overcome the duality of most language teaching between native and foreign language and culture, and develop the concepts of mediation and the language learner as a social participant that has to mediate in multilingual encounters and interact with other citizens on equal terms. The ability to 'decentre' is crucial in these situations and is therefore vital to the attainment of intercultural competence. Awareness of multiple identities and of the complex nature of identities is part of this process of 'decentring'. Acquiring intercultural competence is not only useful socially and politically, but it also prompts the individual's personal development and the development of attitudes towards 'others' which are desirable and significant. Education acquires, then, a moral dimension concerned with democratic citizenship, human rights and the acquiring of intercultural competence, language teaching thus acquires political and social purposes, playing a role in changing society for the better. Teachers cannot ignore the fact that language learners now need to learn how to interact and understand each other with mutual respect and intercultural competence.

*Intercultural competence requires a change of perspective on self and other, on the world of one's socialisation and the worlds one meets through language learning. It involves affective as well as cognitive change, and may be a challenge to one's identities as a speaker of one (or more) particular language(s) from childhood. (Byram, 2004; 13)*

Teachers also need to commit to a valid integration of students' previous experiences, as well as their own, in the learning process. Teachers must take into account the fact that the foreign language learner is influenced by the socio-cultural contexts through which he/she has passed and that intercultural learning is

dependent on what the learner already knows, thinks and believes. Significant learning in relation to a new linguistic and cultural context will involve consciousness-raising, new awareness and revision of existing conceptions.

In textbooks the implicit concept of culture values the study of history and knowledge which can be considered to be reductive, stereotyped of the target society and aimed at the structural learning of the foreign language, seen as standard language. Language learning has an important role in providing educational opportunities for citizens and this view challenges practices, reinforced by educational programmes and textbooks, which limit learning to an instrumental process. Language teaching materials cannot be merely considered as an instrument of vocabulary and grammar acquisition, the question of how culture is represented in them must be dealt with. They represent a reality and this representation can be a very complex one, and can lead to different responses and cultural perceptions. The culturally conditioned perception and interpretation of the material produced in a specific context is a central issue of intercultural communication.

Recent ideas in language education, which take into consideration different aspects of intercultural communication, provide a wider view of the English language or Englishes and highlight the importance of going beyond British and American English and the role of English as a language of international communication or lingua franca. They foster a change in the ways the teacher of English as a foreign language works the language and culture and highlight the importance of incorporating into classes the information or knowledge that students bring of the outside world, building bridges between the students' own universe and the foreign one. The promotion of responsibility and the students' own learning, as well as the contextualization of competences and student-centred active methodologies are valued; they foster the negotiation of activities' contents and materials with the students; interdisciplinary work and cooperation; continuous evaluation with multiple processes of observation and information gathering, particularly the portfolio and flexibility in management of programme contents. A

different praxis comes out of this, which demands a teacher who is reflexive, capable of observation, analysis, diversification, innovation and evaluation.

For the Council of Europe, language learning is a key component of education for democratic citizenship. Language learning plays an active role in public life, helping people to shape their own lives in a responsible way. It aims to develop respect for human rights, it prepares people to live in a multicultural society and have tolerance for difference, it develops mutual understanding and solidarity and social cohesion. These aims emphasise values and an active social engagement and Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that *“Education shall be directed to the strengthening of respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding and tolerance amongst all nations, racial or religious groups.”*

Nevertheless, in reality there is a huge gap between the EU's recommendations for education and the practice of EFL teaching in Portugal, which definitely doesn't seem to build upon intercultural communication. In general teachers recognise as goals of culture teaching the cultural awareness and the development of a critical attitude, but then, in practice, culture seems to be something different and the cultural component is presented in a cognitive and discursive way, as an attachment, in a reductionist view of teacher's role as cultural mediator. These considerations ask for a redefinition of academic and professional teacher training at university, knowledge, working methods, pedagogical practices and contents must be reorganised in a different perspective. Critical pedagogy and ethnographical research must be fostered, and so must interdisciplinary work and cooperation.

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## **Appendixes**

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire on Standard English	5 pages
Appendix 2 – Results of Ethnographical analysis and Statistical results of questionnaire on Standard English – Part B and C	2 pages
Appendix 3 - Questionnaire on Intercultural Communication	7 pages
Appendix 4 – Results of Ethnographical analysis and Statistical results of questionnaire on Intercultural Communication	4 pages

## APPENDIX 1- QUESTIONNAIRE ON STANDARD ENGLISH

# Standard English

This questionnaire aims to find out some of the opinions and ideas of teachers of English in Portugal on the topic of Standard English and its reflection in English Language Teaching (ELT).

Please, answer the questions as truthfully as possible. Thank you for the time and attention you have dedicated to this questionnaire.

### A- Biographical and demographic data.

Please answer the questions in the space provided or circle the letter which corresponds to your answer.

- 1- Age\_\_\_\_\_ 2- Gender\_\_\_\_\_
- 3- Academic background  
A- *bacharelato* B- *licenciatura*  
C- *mestrado* D- *doutoramento*  
E- no academic degree F- no teacher training
- 4- Where do you teach?  
A- private school B- primary school  
C- *Escola Básica* D- secondary school  
E- university F- other\_\_\_\_\_
- 5- Where is your school situated?  
A- centre of Portugal B- North of Portugal  
C- south of Portugal D- urban area  
E- suburban area F- rural area
- 6- Are you a native or non-native speaker of English? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7- Have you ever lived in an English speaking country? \_\_\_\_\_  
Which one? \_\_\_\_\_  
For how long? \_\_\_\_\_

8- How frequently do you visit English speaking countries? \_\_\_\_\_

9- Which English speaking countries have you visited?

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For how long? \_\_\_\_\_

**B- Please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements. Circle the letter which corresponds to your choice.**

**A- agree strongly      B- agree but not completely      C- have no opinion**

**D- somewhat disagree    E- disagree completely**

1- Variations to BBC English/Oxford English and Received Pronunciation are inferior.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

2- Sentence structure and grammar are features which should allow for no deviation from standard norms if one wants to communicate effectively.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

3- If a person has native or native-like grammar, lexis and phonology, appropriate communication will automatically follow.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

4- Students learn English to communicate mainly with native speakers

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

5- English is mainly taught by non-native speakers to non-native speakers in order to communicate with other non-native speakers.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

6- In a globalised context where English functions as *lingua franca*, standards should adapt to new demands.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

7- International English should be controlled by educational entities in Britain and the USA.

A B C D E

8- The aim of a standard for English is to provide intelligibility between all users of English.

A B C D E

9- British and American models should be introduced into the classroom as examples of native models, not as the model learners are expected to acquire.

A B C D E

10- The ELT standard in Portugal accounts for the diversity of people who use English

A B C D E

11- The ability to communicate and understand English as an international language is the main aim of ELT.

A B C D E

12- Being able to communicate on the Internet and use it effectively is one of the main aims of ELT.

A B C D E

13- An International English standard can work as a stabilising model learned by future users of English

A B C D E

14- A new curriculum for ELT is needed to keep pace with social realities.

A B C D E

15- The ELT curriculum should include varieties of English in order to give students a broader knowledge of language, language use and linguistic diversity.

A B C D E

16- Exposing students to different varieties of English will confuse them.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

17- Britain and the USA will always be at the centre of a standard for ELT.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

18- The training of students to use English in international settings is not adequately dealt with in Portugal.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

19- Teachers should teach according to the linguistic model they have so that they feel secure of what they're doing.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

20- My main concern in my English teaching is to follow the syllabus faithfully

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

21- Teachers should recognise the role of English as Europe's *lingua franca* and teach according to it.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

22- The more we need to use English to communicate with machines or with people whose fluency is limited, the more simplified the language must be.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

**C- Circle the letter which corresponds to your choice.**

23- School English is closer to:

- A- British English                      B- American English.  
C- International English              D- other\_\_\_\_\_

24- The standard all teachers of English should use in class is:

- A- British English    B- American English.    C- other\_\_\_\_\_

25- Coursebooks and materials available for ELT in Portugal have a:

- A-British English standard.    B-American English standard    C-other\_\_\_\_\_

**D- Please use this space to make further comments on Standard English and/or the English language as it is taught in Portugal.**

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**Thank you for your help!**

**APPENDIX 2 – RESULTS OF ETHNOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS AND STATISTICAL RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE ON STANDARD ENGLISH – PART B AND C**

Age	
22 to 27	29%
28 to 33	43%
34 to 39	16%
40 to 45	2%
More than 45	10%

Gender	
male	12%
female	88%

Are you native or non-native speaker of English?	
Native	20%
Non-native	80%

Academic Background	
Bacharelato	10%
Licenciatura	75%
Mestrado	10%
Doutoramento	0%
No academic degree	6%
No teacher training	0%

Where do you teach?	
Private school	26%
EB 2,3	33%
Secondary school	6%
University	9%
Other	26%

Where is your school situated?	
North of Portugal	68%
South of Portugal	16%
Centre of Portugal	16%

Which English speaking countries have you visited?	
England	47%
Australia	6%
U.S.A	8%
U.K.	28%
None	11%

Have you ever lived in an English speaking country?	
Yes	24%
No	76%

How frequently do you visit English speaking countries?	
Never	12%
Rarely	32%
Sometimes	6%
Often	26%
No answer	24%

PART B

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Agree Strongly	10%	10%	31%	4%	18%	41%	4%	31%	35%	4%	65%	2%
Agree but not completely	16%	31%	45%	10%	29%	24%	29%	45%	31%	33%	25%	35%
Have no opinion	12%	0%	4%	0%	14%	18%	18%	14%	6%	16%	2%	6%
Somewhat disagree	24%	39%	20%	35%	14%	10%	12%	6%	24%	27%	0%	25%
Disagree completely	39%	20%	0%	51%	24%	4%	37%	0%	0%	16%	6%	31%

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Agree Strongly	20%	31%	86%	8%	53%	24%	12%	4%	24%	16%
Agree but not completely	49%	41%	6%	6%	37%	35%	39%	25%	43%	41%
Have no opinion	14%	12%	4%	0%	0%	20%	10%	0%	22%	10%
Somewhat disagree	14%	12%	4%	39%	10%	14%	16%	33%	10%	14%
Disagree completely	4%	4%	0%	47%	0%	8%	24%	37%	2%	20%

PART C

<b>School English is closer to:</b>	
<b>British English</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>American English</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>International English</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>0%</b>

<b>Coursebooks and materials in Portugal have:</b>	
<b>A British English standard</b>	<b>69%</b>
<b>An American English standard</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Both</b>	<b>27%</b>

<b>The standard all teachers should use in class is:</b>	
<b>British English</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>American English</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Other (International English)</b>	<b>20%</b>

Total number of valid respondents: 70

### APPENDIX 3- QUESTIONNAIRE ON INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

# Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to find out some of the opinions and ideas of teachers of English in Portugal on the topic of Intercultural Competence and their role as cultural actors. Please, answer the questions as truthfully as possible. Thank you for the time and attention you have dedicated to this questionnaire.

#### A - Biographical and demographic data.

Please answer the questions in the space provided or circle the letter(s) which corresponds to your answer.

1- Age \_\_\_\_\_

2- Gender: Male

Female

3- Academic background:

a- bacharelato

b- licenciatura

c- mestrado

d- doutoramento

e- no academic degree

f- no teacher training

4- Where do you teach?

a- Escola Secundária

b- Escola Básica 2º/3º Ciclo

c- Escola Básica 1º Ciclo

d- Escola/Instituto privado

e- Ensino Superior

f- other \_\_\_\_\_

5- Where is your school situated?

a- Centre of Portugal

b- North of Portugal c- South of Portugal

d- Urban area

e- Suburban area

f- Rural area

6- What is (are) your native tongue (s)? \_\_\_\_\_

7- What nationality are you? \_\_\_\_\_

8- Have you ever lived in a foreign country? \_\_\_\_\_

Which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

For how long? \_\_\_\_\_

9- Do you frequently visit other countries or have frequent contact with foreign people?  
Specify the situation(s):

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10- What foreign languages do you teach?

---

11- What languages do you speak?

---

12- How long have you been teaching foreign languages?

---

**B- Please, indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements.  
Circle the letter which corresponds to your choice.**

**A- agree strongly**

**B- agree but not completely**

**C- have no opinion**

**D- somewhat disagree**

**E- disagree completely**

1- In a foreign language classroom, teaching culture is as important as teaching the language.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

2- I have such a limited teaching time that language teaching leaves little time for culture teaching.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

3- I'm not sufficiently familiar with the culture associated with the language I teach.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

4- In my class there is a clear dominance of the linguistic component over socio-cultural aspects.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

5- Students have pre-formed views about the target language and country which should be taken into account in class.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

6- The image of the target world which is presented in class is constructed on premises rooted in our own world.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

7- Learning a foreign language can change our perception of our own culture and identity.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

8- Teaching culture in an EFL class in Portugal class also means teaching about Portuguese culture because it is the native culture of the learners.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

9- The aim of cultural teaching is to avoid and erase all differences and conflicts.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

10- Students should regard misunderstandings as something normal and likely to happen, because of linguistic as well as cultural differences.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

11- The learners' own world and socio-cultural experience are essential to their perception and evaluation of the foreign world.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

12- I consider the classroom to be a cultural space and my classes to be an intercultural experience.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

13- I consider it part of my role as a teacher to prepare school trips, exchange projects and other intercultural projects.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

14- The concept of national identity is not of great importance in an EFL class because we are all citizens of the world.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

15- Pointing out the diversity inherent to cultures is to point out conflicts, so culture should be presented as something homogenous and conflicts should be masked.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

16- Being aware of the complexity inherent to all cultures allows us to have multiple perspectives and negotiate differences.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

17- When teaching culture, teachers should focus on similarities between cultures and not on points of conflict.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

18- Teachers should be politically neutral, listen and try to be impartial avoiding the expression of personal opinion.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

19- Teachers should foster discussion of social issues in class and should express their opinion according to explicit facts.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

20- Teachers should teach about cultural facts but avoid discussing them in class because different points of view may come up and lead to conflict.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

21- Teaching culture is something I do by intuition and I have no specific theories that underlie my practices.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

22- Students should be encouraged to be socially and politically aware, to make decisions and intervene, because teaching is a political act.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

23- Language learning can have political and social purposes.

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

**C- Please, indicate how often you do or feel these things.**

**Circle the letter which corresponds to your choice.**

**A- often**

**B-once in a while**

**C- never**

24- In my class stereotypes and pre-conceptions are discussed.

A

B

C

25- In my class I value exercises that foster comparison, interpreting and reasoning.

A

B

C

26- Media representations and images of ourselves and others are analysed in my class.

A

B

C

27- I use additional materials not taken from any textbook.

A

B

C

28- I'm not pleased with the cultural content offered by the textbooks.

A

B

C

29- I choose to discuss aspects of the foreign culture which I feel negative about.

A

B

C

30- I talk to my pupils about my own experiences with the foreign language.

A

B

C

31- I feel the need for training in how to teach culture.

A

B

C

**D- Number the sentences according to your opinion, where number 1 is the best alternative.**

32- Teaching culture within a foreign language class means:

- Teaching about the country's history, literature, government and traditions; about facts and figures, life and institutions.
- Teaching about aspects of everyday life presented in typical situations and contexts.
- Discussing values and beliefs in cross-cultural experiences, stereotypes and differences in meanings.
- Teaching about the power that language has to create and overcome distance and differences.

33- In a methodology of foreign language teaching:

- The socio-cultural dimension has an independent and explicit objective, which is in many ways different from the linguistic one.
- An emphasis should be put on attitudes toward language and culture because FLT has educational and socio-political objectives.
- The development of primary skills is very important because students must be prepared to use the language in everyday communication.

34- As a teacher I try to:

- Have a good relationship with my students
- Fulfil the curricular requirements for the subject.
- Develop in my pupils the skills and attitudes they will need in life
- Develop their proficiency in the foreign language and their autonomy in learning.

35- The most important aim of foreign language teaching is to:

- Develop students' enthusiasm for foreign languages.
- Develop students' cultural and linguistic knowledge of the foreign language
- Help students acquire a high level of proficiency in the foreign language.
- Promote openness of mind towards other cultures.
- Help students acquire a level of proficiency to use the language for practical purposes.
- Help the students develop a better understanding of their own identity and culture.

**Thank you for your help!**

## Appendix 4 – Results of Ethnographical analysis and Statistical results of questionnaire on Intercultural Communication

### PART A

1- Age	
25 to 30	46%
31 to 40	20%
40 to 50	17%
More than 50	17%

2- Gender	
male	25%
female	75%

3- Academic Background	
Licenciatura	70%
Mestrado	30%

4- Where do you teach?	
Secondary school	50%
EB 2,3	40%
Escola/Instituto privado	10%

5- Where is your school situated?	
North of Portugal	40%
South of Portugal	27%
Centre of Portugal	33%

6- What is your native tongue?	
Portuguese	76%
English	10%
German	7%
Spanish	7%

7- What nationality are you?	
Portuguese	93%
Portuguese and English	7%

8- Have you ever lived in a foreign country?	
Yes	50%
No	50%

8- Which one?	
Portugal	13%
England	34%
Germany	27%
USA	13%

9- Contacts with foreign people	
Visits to UK	13%
Visits to USA	10%
Online contacts	17%
Tourism and holidays	34%
Seminars	10%
Visit country where I lived	13%

10- What foreign languages do you teach?	
English	77%
English and French	10%
English and German	13%

11- What languages do you speak?	
English and Portuguese	21%
Portuguese, English and French	30%
English and German	14%
Portuguese, English and Spanish	14%
Portuguese, English, German and French	21%

12- How long have you been teaching foreign languages?	
1 – 5 years	21%
6 – 10 years	27%
11 – 20 years	28%
Over 20 years	24%

**PART B**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
Agree Strongly	36,7%	20%	0%	27%	50%	20%	70%	60%	7%	73%	40%	53%
Agree but not completely	56,7%	36,7%	33%	48%	20%	40%	27%	27%	48%	27%	60%	40%
Have no opinion	0%	0%	0%	5%	13%	20%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Somewhat disagree	6,7%	13,3%	13%	20%	17%	13%	3%	7%	13%	0%	0%	7%
Disagree completely	0%	30%	53%	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	32%	0%	0%	0%

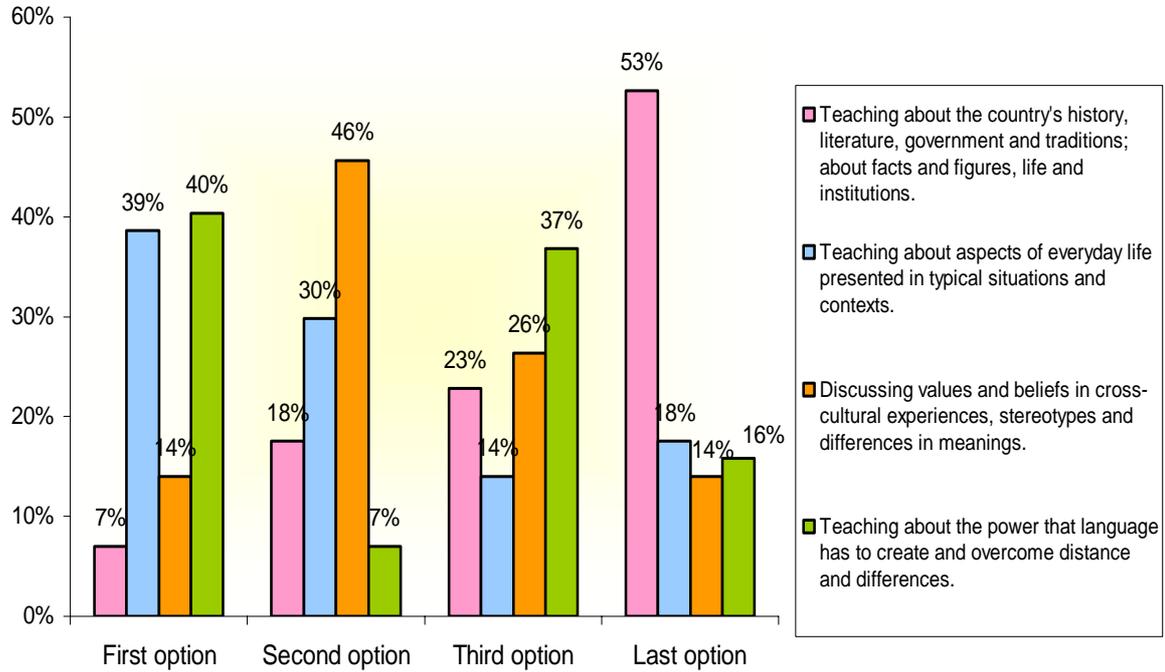
	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
Agree Strongly	20%	0%	0%	67%	7%	20%	30%	0%	26%	20%	35%
Agree but not completely	50%	27%	0%	27%	22%	50%	50%	13%	13%	20%	25%
Have no opinion	0%	7%	6%	6%	0%	0%	7%	0%	10%	7%	7%
Somewhat disagree	7%	27%	7%	0%	52%	23%	7%	37%	17%	33%	20%
Disagree completely	13%	39%	87%	0%	20%	7%	7%	50%	33%	20%	13%

**PART C**

	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>
often	40%	67%	50%	67%	13%	0%	52%	42%
Once in a while	60%	33%	23%	27%	80%	33%	48%	55%
never	0%	0%	27%	7%	7%	67%	0%	3%

**PART D**

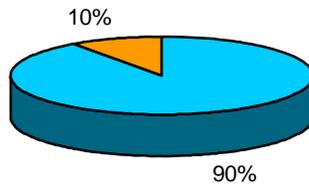
**Teaching culture within a foreign language class means:**



**33- Which is the best alternative?**

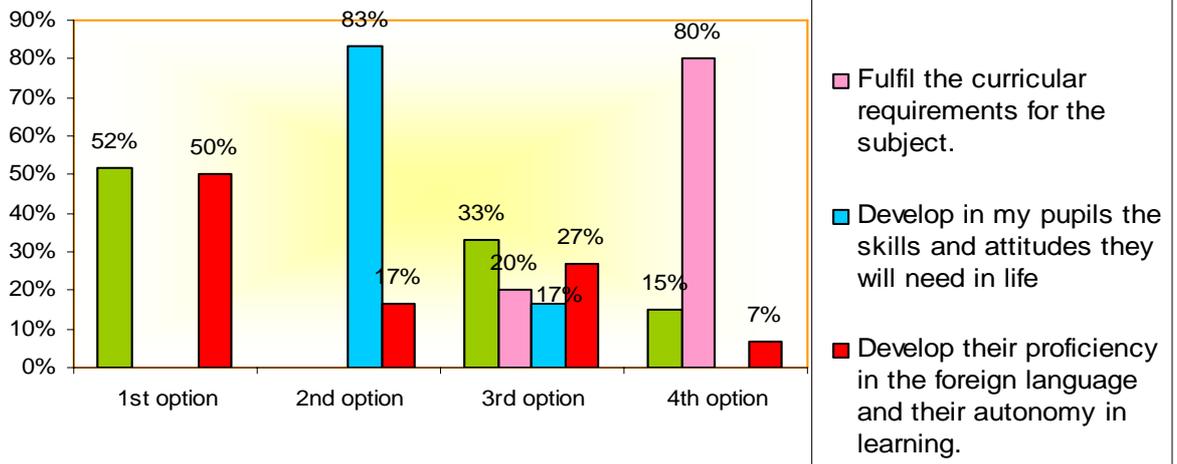
In a methodology of foreign language teaching...

- The development of primary skills is very important because students must be prepared to use the language in everyday communication
- An emphasis should be put on attitudes towards language and culture because FLT has educational and socio-political objectives
- The socio-cultural dimension has an independent and explicit objective, which is in many ways different from the linguistic one.

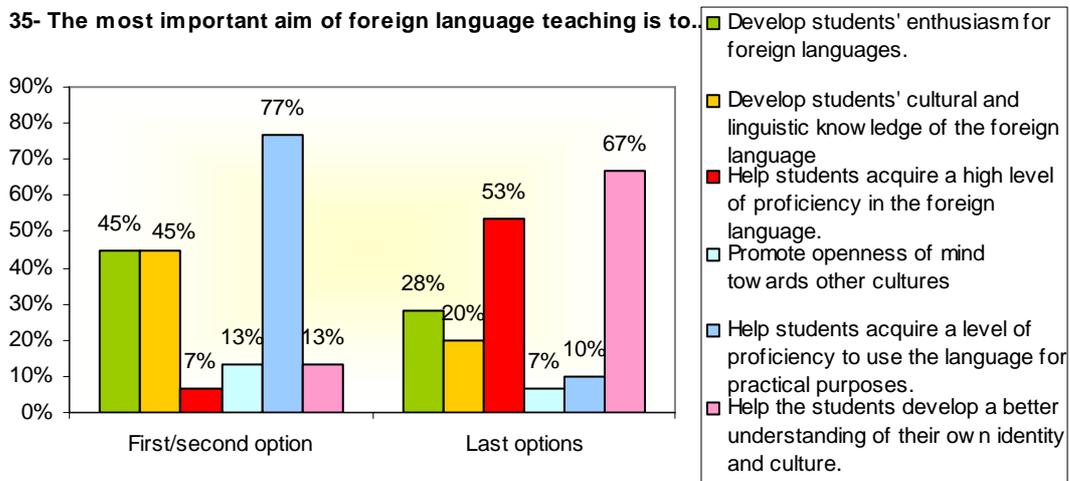


\_Int

### 34- As a teacher I try to...



### 35- The most important aim of foreign language teaching is to..



Total number of valid respondents: 60