**Introduction**

In age where the process of globalisation has created a multitude of social and economic links stretching across the globe, certain common means of communication have become apparent. As modern communication technology has flourished so too has the use of the English language as one of the most prevalent and influential international languages.

As societies acquire ever more diverse demographics and cultural idiosyncrasies, tensions have grown between different linguistic and cultural groups both within nation states and across borders. As language and culture are inextricably linked and cannot be separated one from the other, each exerts a fundamental set of effects upon the other.

This dissertation considers the complex relationship between culture and language and how systems of values and norms are constituted within cultural communities. As characteristics and people are linked with particular linguistic preferences and styles, this dissertation highlights the conflict that arises between these elements and seeks to explore solutions to the same. In order to clarify concepts, one initial goal is to establish a broad working definition of what is understood as ‘culture’ and how it is created and altered. Given that many languages exist across the world, culture can mean different things to different people. To that end, this text recognizes the real potential for racist tendencies to arise as a result of prejudicial and misinformed attitudes.

The first section of the text deals with the nature and definition of culture. Section two is concerned with intercultural citizenship education and explores the role of official language policies, intercultural communication and motivation issues in foreign language learning. Language socialization is the topic examined in section three followed by the exploration of interculturality in multicultural societies in a globalized world. Section five is concerned with the concept of racism, the definition and development of the term and how it is relevant to the EFL classroom and with respect to children. Immediately following this section there follows a brief discussion on peer culture in order to help to account for how young EFL learners can be conditioned into certain behaviours by their peers.

Sections seven and eight are concerned with the results of a survey conducted with both ELF students and teachers in the primary classroom and the implications the
results have for EFL teaching. The exploration of the intercultural approach and a
description of a practical approach form the basis of the next two sections (12 & 13).
Concluding remarks are accommodated in section fourteen.

**Research problem and study aims**

This dissertation work will argue that while English as a foreign language (EFL) is
essential in the globalized economy, it can and should also be utilized as a means of
expanding the philosophical and intellectual horizons of learners in a manner that
embraces intercultural competencies acquired by promoting the key principles of
citizenship education programmes in operation in EU member states such as the
Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. A facet of Bourdieu’s concept of ‘cultural
capital’ known as *linguistic ease* and Byram’s exploration of culture learning and
language learning will form part of the foundation for the discussion of the utility and
social value of acquiring additional language competencies.

Primarily concerned with raising awareness of other cultures, particularly the cultures of
countries whose mother tongue is the English language, the objective of this project is
to identify and reduce intolerance through the inter-cultural approach, with particular
attention being given to racism.

**Culture**

Originally conceived from the Latin word ‘colere’ meaning ‘to cultivate’ this
term gave rise to the word ‘culture’. The ‘classical conception’ of culture was primarily
developed by German philosophers and historians from the late eighteenth and early
nineteenth centuries. Such a conception can be defined as follows:

Culture is the process of developing and enabling human facilities, a process facilitated
by the assimilation of works of scholarship and art linked to the progressive character of
the modern era

(Thompson, 1990: 126)

Therefore, ‘culture’ can be conceived in two ways: the first has to do with
physical things, cultural products and institutions both authored and utilized by a certain
group of people in a broad sense, on the other hand, this concept is concerned with the
kinds of values and conduct displayed by a particular group of people (Zheng, 1996).

Atkinson (2004: 279) draws on Tylor’s 1871 definition of culture which
encompasses ‘knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and
habits acquired by man as a member of society’. In a broader sense, ‘culture’ is a
reflection of the ‘beliefs and values people have about societies, social change and the
ideal society they seek’ and it is in the course of learning that these values are
transmitted through society that includes ‘patterns of behaviour, which human beings acquire as part of their social experience or direct teaching’ (Giddens, 1997: 15-17).

**Postmodernist perspectives of ‘culture’**

Postmodernist constructions of culture (e.g. Appadurai, 1996; Lyotard, 1984) shed light on upheaval, variation, transition, blend and deterritorialization. This stance examines the juggernaut-like nature of the intermingling and assimilation that characterises the globalization process and the global capitalist system and what he terms as the neo-imperialist flow of mainly “western” popular culture with the media acting as a conduit for this whole phenomenon (Atkinson, 2004: 280).

“Contemporary culture” on the other, has been construed from an ideological and hegemonic perspective whereby cultural practices are moulded through exposure to the power and diversity of mass popular culture (During, 1992:1).

Tong et al (2011: 57) cite Wade (1999: 5) who states that cultural identities are sought by individuals by identifying ‘what one has in common with others, perceived to be like one self’. Distinguishing ‘cultural identity’ as meaning ‘ethnicity’, Friedman (1994) elaborates:

If ‘cultural identity’, is the generic concept, referring to the attribution of a set of qualities to a given population...It is not practised but inherent, not achieved but ascribed. In a weaker sense this is expressed as heritage, or as cultural descent, learned by each and every individual and distinctive precisely at the level of individual behaviour.

(Friedman, 1994: 29-30)

For Kramsch (1998), however, informed by a foreign language (FL) pedagogical perspective, language provides the binding link between community and culture, in that language provides the means through which a group of people can communicate the state of their culture and simultaneously draw pride from the use of that language (Tong et al, 2011: 57).

**Legitimate culture**

Bourdieu’s (1991) concepts of cultural and linguistic capital are most useful in seeking to describe and account for the competencies sought and employed by intercultural learners in their journey toward linguistic competence in the English language.
Those in a position to acquire linguistic competencies, in what could be described as the dominant language (i.e. that which is most widely used in a broad range of international economic and social contexts, namely the English language) accrue what Bourdieu (1991) refers to as cultural capital in the form of linguistic capital. Once in possession of this linguistic capital, learners can later convert the same into other forms of capital such as educational qualifications that leads to the attainment of higher income (Chew, 2007). Given that the appropriation of cultural capital of this kind is usually only accessible to a select element of society, these cultural products, whether material or symbolic, accumulate in a situation which Bourdieu (2010) defines as conferring distinction which derives its value from its very exclusivity, wherein people are said to ‘yield a profit of distinction, proportionate to the rarity of the means required to appropriate them, and a profit of legitimacy, the profit par excellence...’ (Bourdieu, 2010: 225).

This distinction is generally arrived at through the acquisition of cultural capital in the form of academic capital which is often evidenced by knowledge or proficiency in a foreign language (such as English), but is particularly noteworthy for those persons who possess linguistic ease, defined as distinguishing ‘those who merely experience the language in the classroom from those who actively engage and learn the language as a cultural tool’ (Bourdieu, 2010: 252). Moreover, this linguistic ease only possesses value as:

...the most visible assertion of freedom from the constraints which dominate ordinary people...this linguistic ease may be manifested either in tours de force of going beyond what is required by strictly grammatical or pragmatic rules, making optional liaisons, of example, or using rare words and tropes in place of common words and phrases. (Ibid)

Thus, having acquired this linguistic ease through possessing the appropriate academic capital, it fulfils the role it has been set, which has in turn been delivered through the educational system as a result of:

The combined effects of cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school (the efficacy of which depends on the amount of cultural capital directly inherited from the family)...through its value-inculcating and value-imposing operations, the school helps to form a general, transposable disposition toward legitimate culture...

(Bourdieu, 2010: 14-15)
An anthropological perspective and the symbolic dimension of ‘culture’

In Geertz’s *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) culture is defined as being ‘a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures’ which consists of actions, symbols and signs as well as utterances, conversations and soliloquies’ (Thompson, 1990: 131). Cultural analysis is concerned with ‘unravelling layers of meaning, describing and re-describing actions and expressions and interpreting these actions and expressions in the course of their everyday lives’. Therefore, the ‘symbolic conception’ of culture can be broadly understood as relating to ‘patterns of meanings embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, utterances and meaningful objects of various kinds, by virtue of which individuals communicate with one another and share their experiences, conceptions and beliefs’ (Ibid).

Since values in a cultural community are shared and shaped by individuals that comprise it, it stands to reason that when certain attitudes and beliefs are formed and discussed they will be transferred and appropriated across and within that community.

In what is known as the ‘conventional’ aspect of symbolic forms the definition applied to culture states:

The production, construction or employment of symbolic forms, as well as the interpretation of symbolic forms by the subjects who received them, are processes that typically involved the application of rules, codes or conventions of various kinds...applied in practical state...as implicit and taken-for-granted schemes for generating and interpreting symbolic forms. They constitute part of the tacit knowledge which individuals employ in the course of their everyday lives, constantly creating meaningful expressions and making sense of the expressions created by others.

(Thompson, 1990: 139-140)

As individuals and groups create the knowledge element of this symbolic system, the debate can sometimes veer towards a more radical rhetoric that often becomes intolerant in nature and, in more extreme cases, even racist as these individuals and groups proceed to create and contest and re-contest the issues which arise from their interactions and declarations. It is, therefore, imperative that these tendencies be kept in check.
Symbolic forms undergo continuous change by the people who operate under such a system through constant debate and discussion (Thompson, 1990: 146). In the context of adult interaction, this process is often quite vigorous; this contrasts with the more simplified, but no less important negotiation of such meanings in the primary EFL classroom. As these learners mature and learn the necessary skills to navigate these situations and develop the intellectual capacity to understand these social dynamics, it is then possible to broach the concept of intercultural awareness within the primary EFL classroom.

**A place for intercultural citizenship education?**

As part of this process individuals are engaged in the receipt and interpretation of symbolic forms which in turn influences values and meanings in a process which occurs principally in one’s native culture. However, it is possible to build on the basic strands of this process so as to permit EFL learners to gain an insight into the cultural values in the target language and the culture associated with it. The primary EFL teacher has a central role to play in this process as a cultural mediator who can bring learners to a point where they can acquire new interpretations of their own culture through the looking glass of another culture.

Symbolic reproduction of social contexts then involves meanings that have arisen through the reconstitution in the act of receipt to reproduce and thereby sustain the very context in which it was produced (Thompson, 1990: 153). It is not uncommon then, for example, for racially intolerant attitudes to be perpetuated from parent to child, and from one child to another. In the latter case, these ideas and values are communicated and negotiated between students in a school environment. The context of the school environment provides an appropriate and valuable opportunity, particularly for EFL teachers in the primary classroom to identity and attempt to address such tendencies through citizenship education initiatives which place intercultural communicative competencies to the fore of strategies to educate, enlighten and imbue greater tolerance.

**Encouraging intercultural dialogue through language policies and intercultural citizenship education**

Making students aware of other languages and acquiring linguistic competencies forms a central part of language policies for the European Union and the Portuguese
State. These learning objectives also seek to build tolerance and respect between different cultural communities. In May 2010 the Committee of Ministers of the contracting parties of the Council of Europe formally adopted what is known as the *Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship*. In this Charter the Council defines ‘Education for democratic citizenship’ as pertaining to:

…education, training, awareness raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law.

(Council of Europe, 2010: 7)

The Charter also obliges contracting states of the Council of Europe to adopt and support educational strategies and teaching approaches with the objective of having learners:

…aim at learning to live together in a democratic and multicultural society and at enabling learners to acquire the knowledge and skills to promote social cohesion, value diversity and equality, appreciate differences –particularly between different faith and ethnic groups– and settle disagreements and conflicts in a non-violent manner with respect for others’ rights, as well as to combat all forms of discrimination and violence…

(Council of Europe, 2010: 12)

The pan-European policy document and primary guide for language education within Council of Europe states known as *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* also concerns itself with instilling the values of intercultural awareness and multicultural tolerance. This is evidenced where it states:

The learner of a second or foreign language and cultural does not cease to be competent in his or her mother tongue and the associated culture. Nor is the new competence kept entirely separate from the old. The learner does not simply acquire two distinct, unrelated ways of acting and communicating. The language learner becomes *plurilingual* and develops *interculturality*. The linguistic and cultural competences in respect of each language are modified by knowledge of the other and contribute to intercultural awareness, skills and know-how. They enable the individual to develop an enriched, more complex personality and an enhanced capacity for further language
learning and greater openness to new cultural experiences. [emphasis added by the author]

(Council of Europe, 2001: 43)

The Portuguese state through the Ministry of Education also refers to these educational principles and goals in its official language policies. Outlining the position of the Portuguese State with respect to the educational and cultural aspects of teaching English at primary level, Bento et al (2005) mention the target key learner competencies in their *Inglês no 1º Ciclo do Ensino Básico, 2005/6*. Of particular interest in the intercultural context are the following competencies mentioned in the above named document:

- sensibilizar para a diversidade linguística e cultural;
- promover o desenvolvimento da consciência da identidade linguística e cultural através do confronto com a língua estrangeira e a(s) cultura(s) por ela veiculada (s);
- fomentar uma relação positiva com a aprendizagem da língua;
- fazer apreciar a língua enquanto veículo de interpretação e comunicação do/com o mundo que nos rodeia;
- promover a educação para a comunicação, motivando para valores como o respeito pelo outro, a ajuda mútua, a solidariedade e a cidadania;

(Bento et al, 2005: 4)

As can be seen here, raising linguistic and cultural awareness, recognising how language can be used as a vehicle to interpret and communicate with the outside world, as well as the promotion of respect, mutual support and citizenship form the foundation of the 1º Ciclo programme. This stage of development provides a strong basis from which students can be prepared for more profound development of intercultural competencies as outlined in the 2º Ciclo programme where the Ministério da Educação (1996: 41) states:

> A aprendizagem da língua inglesa, pela apropriação de competências de tipo comunicativo, determina ainda uma abordagem intercultural, em que o aluno parte da sua própria língua e cultura para a descoberta da língua e das culturas dos povos de expressão inglesa...Para além disso, a análise contrastiva que faz da sua realidade e da dos povos de expressão inglesa permite-lhe um melhor entendimento de uma e outras, do que resulta por um lado uma atitude de tolerância e respeito pelas diferenças e por outro a relativização dos valores e dos significados da sua própria cultura.

Essentially, the main aim here once more is to create an atmosphere of tolerance and respect through mutual understanding and respect. In turn, these skills are further
refined to focus in even greater depth on the need for mutual respect, responsibility, cooperation and solidarity. As stated in the 3º Ciclo programme for English, it is necessary to:

Relacionar-se com a cultura anglo-americana, questionando padrões de comportamento diversificados no âmbito da área de experiência deste programa;

Manifestar, pela partilha de informação, ideias e opiniões, atitudes positivas perante universos culturais e sociais diferenciados – o(s) colega (s), o professor, a(s) cultura (s) alvo:

Integrar e desenvolver na sua prática atitudes da responsabilidade, cooperação e solidariedade;

Desenvolver estratégias de superação de dificuldades e resolução de problemas, aceitando o risco como forma natural de aprender;

Assumir a sua individualidade/singularidade pelo confronto de ideias e pelo exercício de espírito crítico;

(Ministério da Educação, 1997: 9)

These skills are fundamental if an intercultural communicative approach is to be honed to its full potential for the maximum benefit of EFL learners. Achieving these objectives is heavily dependent on the aims in the 1º ciclo being met to a high standard. Thus this policy underlines the necessity and enormous importance of instilling tolerant values with respect to other languages and cultures in the primary EFL classroom not only to produce dynamic learners, but also to permit the genuine development of respectful young citizens who will make a tangible and positive contribution to society.

The educational system of the state is entrusted with the necessary authority to organize and manage the overall process whereby the domain of language is taught in a robust and sensible manner. The degree of success to which this can be done is dependent upon the inherited cultural capital of the learner, a process which makes use of the social mechanisms of cultural transmission (the media, interpersonal contact etc) to provide knowledge of the legitimate language (Bourdieu, 1992: 62). Essentially, this has to do with learners with strong academic acumen who already possess a certain level of educational capital being able to acquire the necessary linguistic ease more easily than other learners who may not be in possession of similar levels of competence. The larger the disparity in academic capital between these two learners, the greater the
appearance of achievement there will be for the successful learner as against the weaker student.

Therefore, appropriating and reshaping the forces which simultaneously comprise and shape the *habitus* provides a logical and practical way to alter long-term behavioural tendencies. For example, teaching young EFL learners in the primary EFL classroom about other cultures and providing them with strategies by means of which they can understand and respect difference can lead to a positive alteration in the levels of tolerance and positive awareness of other cultures and people outside their own immediate culture and community (Byram, 2008: 68).

In an era of an increasingly globalised system of values, however, where peoples from different countries each with their own language and cultural practices come into contact with one another ever more frequently, as Edwards (1994: 18) so aptly observes:

One would be hard pressed to deny…the utility and justice of an educational thrust which aims to alert children to the varied world around them…(and)…to inculcate cross-cultural respect, and to form a bulwark against racism and intolerance

Moreover, it must be recognised that if such a cross-cultural strategy is to succeed, as Edwards (1994: 189) quite rightly points out ‘…awareness and tolerance must…become an inextricable part of the whole educational enterprise’. This exercise, of course, inevitably takes place in the context of the educational system and since schools have long held the principal role of cultural transmission, the area of major emphasis has been and continues to be language. Just such an approach is in accord with the notion of language being the primary medium of cultural transmission, which in turn justifies the need to utilise language as a means of instilling certain accepted norms and values.

Foreign language teaching thus leads learners to consider issues pertaining to the cultures of the languages which they are studying. Under these circumstances, learners are presented with notions of multiculturalism. A central element of this concept is the cultural diversity that arises when people of different cultures come into contact. Cultural diversity has been defined as:

the representation of a radical rhetoric of the separation of totalized cultures that live unsullied by the intertextuality of their historical locations, safe in the utopianism of
mythic memory of a unique collective identity. (Olson et al, 1999: 15)

While Olson’s (1999) definition of cultural diversity provides a useful point of reference, it also serves to demonstrate how cultures can be seen as homogeneous entities. This view fails to appreciate the dynamic character of cultures and reinforces the need to promote educational programmes which affirm intercultural communication and tolerance as between peoples both within and outside their own immediate cultural context.

**The intercultural dimension in EFL**

Each society has its own culture and may have many subcultures. In the modern era, states around the globe, particularly within the EU and North America, continue to seek ways of creating positive dialogue between different groups within their own countries and as between different cultures. Accordingly, strategies to deal with these situations have been created on account of these needs. One such approach is that which is described as being ‘intercultural’. This type of ‘competence’ has been defined by Byram (2008: 68) as that which ‘is to bring into relationship two cultures’. A broader definition of ‘intercultural competence’ includes ‘mediating’ between the self and others in a way that permits one to take an ‘external’ perspective as one interacts with other people. In this context, it may be necessary to alter one’s own behaviour and the values and beliefs which form the foundation of the behaviour that motivates people. Byram (2008: 69) recognises that a key part of ‘acting interculturally’ necessitates a willingness to suspend one’s personal values so as to be in a position to understand and empathise with individuals from cultures that do not form part of one’s own.

Foreign language teachers, such as teachers of English, are in an appropriate position to seek to build intercultural awareness and cross-cultural tolerance. The site of this activity is of course the EFL classroom; however, the intercultural strategies adopted in that context can be regarded as transferable competencies that can be applied in a wide variety of societal conditions. In the same vein, Byram (2008) makes the pertinent observation with respect to arguably one of the most important ultimate aims of teaching a foreign language and the culture associated with it, which is to instil in language learners the ability to discern and decode different cultures and reflect upon the relationship between them. This objective also includes the capacity to act as a mediator between these cultures, or more precisely, between those individuals who have
been ‘socialized’ into those cultural systems. Mediating in this context relates to the language learner exercising an ability to look at one’s own belief from an outside or ‘external’ perspective so as to examine, and if necessary, modify one’s own stance in terms of both beliefs and behaviours (Byram, 2008: 68).

Byram (1997) has outlined a number of key characteristics in relation to defining what it means to possess intercultural communicate competence:

- **Attitudes**: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own;
- **Knowledge**: of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction
- **Skills of interpreting and relating**: ability to interpret a document from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one’s own;
- **Skills of discovery 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 real-time communication and interaction;
- **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 others cultures and countries.

(Byram, 2008: 69)

Indeed, since one of the most important objectives of interculturality in the EFL classroom is to challenge prejudicial attitudes, every attempt should be made to stimulate the learners’ curiosity about other cultures so as to provide them with a practical empathy to suspend and hopefully permanently jettison any lingering intolerant tendencies they may still retain. This can be achieved by stimulating learners’ interest in and increasing their knowledge of another country and its society by using practical examples in the EFL classroom that could be used to reshape the undesired intolerance in question (Byram, 2008: 77). A practical project which seeks to maximise the potential of such an approach will be detailed in a later section.

However, the EFL teacher must be mindful of the possibility that learning the English language does not necessarily equate with knowing a culture of an English speaking country. Adopting such a stance would result in the failure to grasp the object the exercise – to become proficient in the English language and to understand the culture of one or more countries in which it is spoken. However, this objective must be
executed in such a way so as to allow learners to reflect on their own cultures in comparison to others that in turn permits them to become more tolerant and understanding of different ways of realising social life in different contexts, cultures and languages.

**Intercultural EFL education at Primary level**

In the context of developed countries, young learners of foreign languages find themselves in a world of close-knit internationalisation and of increasing mobility. They meet people from other cultures and origins in their own environment, and they are as mobile as their parents. So their encounters with others are not simply somewhere in their future but also in their present. There is a need to include in the aims of primary foreign language teaching the development of intercultural competence (Byram, 2008: 79).

Byram (2008: 80) identifies a number of crucial areas which are directly applicable to the intercultural context of foreign language learning. In one finding of particular relevance to intercultural competence, he notes that:

> Children have geographical knowledge from early primary age – about their own country from 5-6 (years of age) and about other countries a little later; they exhibit preference for and pride in their own country from about age 7 and this strengthens through middle childhood; but levels of pride are variable across countries and with respect to gender.

(Byram, 2008: 80)

In addition, it was found that ‘stereotypes about a few countries are held by children from about age 5-6 but as they reach age 10-12 they not only demonstrate an ability to describe more countries but also increasingly acknowledge that there are variations around the stereotypes they hold’ (Ibid).

These findings demonstrate the relative intellectual malleability of young learners in their formative years and the importance of early intervention so as to prevent the development of overly zealous nationalist and ethnocentric tendencies which can give rise to intolerant attitudes such as racism. Since young learners are capable of comprehending some basic geographical principles, it is possible to build on this capacity to discern and distinguish between their home country and the cultures and nations outside their own state.
Such a strategy is in accord with research which finds that children of primary school going age are ideal candidates with whom to work with on some aspects of intercultural competence as they are still progressing through the initial stages of primary education and as such would not yet have fully acquired the *habitus* of the culture in which they reside (Byram, 2008: 82). Although young children already possess an awareness of the practices of their own social groups and the basic parameters of appropriate behaviour, they are still relatively immature thus permitting a slightly less challenging introduction to the practices and characteristics of other languages and cultures.

Primary EFL education then, is a most appropriate setting to tackle such issues since one of its principal objectives to communicate and improve the fundamental techniques of learning. Following on from this situation, students in the primary EFL classroom can be shown how to learn to ask relevant questions to further their own enquiries so as to allow them to subject cultural phenomena to their own analysis (Byram, 2008: 82-83).

Critical cultural awareness is central concept in the definition of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Critical cultural awareness is defined as ‘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 (Byram, 2008: 162). Indeed, it is possible to adapt the notion of critical cultural awareness in the context of establishing and maintaining relationships with people from another country so as to include or replace ‘country’ for another social group within the learner’s home nation. This allows learners to move beyond, what for them may seem like an abstract definition, to something that is much more practical and relevant to their own personal educational context.

Research carried out by Kordes (1991) shows that although a ‘foreign culture is less learnable than a foreign language, intercultural learning is feasible to at least some degree’. Hinkel (1999) cites a further study by Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) investigated the classroom situation in which it was shown it was possible for learners to develop positive attitudes toward the cultural perspective of members of different speech communities as a result of an instructional program that brings learners into meaningful interaction with members of the second culture (Hinkel, 1999: 29). For example, Kramsch and McConnell-Ginet (1992) claim the primary focus of teaching
based on the intercultural approach is on the target culture, yet it also includes comparisons between the learners’ own country and target country, thereby helping learners to develop a reflective attitude to the culture of their own countries. Thus, educating students to use a foreign language (e.g. English) means to accustom them to being interculturally, a target recognised in the national curricula of several countries (e.g. England, Wales, Denmark, Portugal and the Republic of Ireland) (Atay, 2005: 223).

**Intercultural Communication: concepts and challenges**

In a world that grows ever smaller as peoples from different societies interact with greater and greater frequency, felicitous cross-cultural interaction is essential. Misconceptions and discord can affect the nature and quality of intercultural relationships where individuals from different cultures are not fully aware of the practices, ideas and beliefs of the other. Cross-cultural pragmatics holds that interactions between individuals from two societies or communities occur on the basis of the conventions or norms of their own communities wherein misperception and incongruence with respect to the conduct and ideology about the other group is frequent (Boxer, 2002: 150-151).

Perceptions and misperceptions arise in social encounters as between peoples from different societies whose linguistic and cultural norms are dissimilar to one’s own (Boxer, 2002: 154). Corson (1995) alludes to the dangers of more dominant or more powerful cultures or linguistic domains diluting other less prestigious (or those perceived as being as such) cultures which may be weaker or less resilient than itself on coming into contact with the same:

If the two languages, along with the two cultural domains of which they speak, are not kept separate in a complex intercultural exchange, then the weaker of the two cultures in that contact setting may have its unique values and concepts watered down when they are rendered into words and expressions of the more dominant language. This is a thorny problem for intercultural relations…

(Corson, 1995: 186)

This serves as an apt reminder that while intercultural communication is a necessary and desirable vehicle for positive intercultural dialogue and racial tolerance, it would be wholly ill-advised to attempt to execute this task at the expense of denigrating one or more cultures in the process. Seeking to build intercultural dialogue through
tolerance and respect would be counter-productive if this process is unidirectional where the effort and understanding comes from one side only. Developing intercultural sensitivity in the above mentioned context requires a conscientious effort on the EFL teacher’s part and ample cooperation from the learners concerned so as to empower them to become more progressive, tolerant and dynamic citizens in order that:

They [the students] ought to be provided with tools to analyse the fundamental aspects of cultures…students should be given pragmatic tools to ‘negotiate meaning’, to develop interactive and meta-linguistic skills, to be able to tolerate and endure ambiguity. Generally, FLT (foreign language teaching) should…concentrate equipping learners with the means of accessing and analysing any cultural practices and meanings they encounter.


**Intercultural Experience and Motivation in Foreign Language Learning**

In a study conducted to examine the relationship between motivation for language learning and inter-cultural contact, Csizér et al (2008: 167) found that interaction with speakers of other languages creates opportunities for FL learners’ language competencies. Indeed, the learners’ experience of these encounters can influence both their disposition to the target language and their attitude to the process of language learning itself. Inter-cultural contact is also assumed to affect FL learners’ motivated behaviour, that is, the energy and effort students are willing to put in to learning the foreign language.

Clément et al (1994) investigated different motivational orientations in a largely monolingual Hungarian context, and they isolated a component called English media subsuming the consumption of cultural products in English (e.g. British/American/Irish, etc.). This study highlights the salient role that L2 cultural products play in familiarizing learners with the L2 community and in influencing their attitudes (Csizér et al, 2008: 169).

Based on their longitudinal study in Hungary, Dörnyei et al (2006) developed a model of L2 learning motivation, in which indirect contact was one of the main variables that predicted motivated learning behaviour. The effect of contact with L2 speakers was also investigated in a qualitative study by Kormos and Csizér (2007), who conducted long interviews with forty Hungarian school children learning either German or English in primary school. Students in this study regarded contact situations as being
beneficial for a number of reasons and reported that inter-cultural contact helped the development of their language competence and contributed to the increase of energy and effort they expend in language learning and the decrease of their language use anxiety. The interviewees also noted that inter-ethnic contact influenced their attitudes toward target language speakers in a positive manner (Csizér et al, 2008: 170).

In a study about language learning, Csizér et al (2008) adopted one of the most important requisites in the language learning process as their main criterion, i.e. language learning behaviour (Dörnyei, 2005), which they construe as meaning the ‘effort expended to achieve a goal, a desire to learn the language and satisfaction with the task of learning’ (Csizér et al, 2008: 171). Csizér et al’s study involved some two hundred and thirty-seven students of English as a foreign language, of whom fifty-nine per cent were girls, with the balance comprising boys of primary school age. The study data also contained a slight bias in favour of the urban setting with all the learning taking place within a relatively homogenous curricular framework, thereby giving a more accurate picture of their learning setting (Csizér et al, 2008: 173).

Csizér et al (2008) also found that perceived importance of a language plays a mediating role between a variety of contact variables and language related attitudes. The most significant conclusion of this study was that motivated behaviour was found to be affected by only two latent concepts: language-related attitudes and the perceived importance of contact, a feature confirmed by Kormos and Csizér’s (2008) study with different groups of ESL students. Findings from this later study found that how much effort students are prepared to make directly affect the context of learning the English language. Therefore, if the EFL teacher can manage to improve learners’ attitudes toward other (e.g. English speaking) cultures, this approach is very likely to lead to higher motivation on the part of learners to engage in the process of learning the English language. Indeed, work by Stephan (1987) has shown a positive correlation between motivated learning behaviour and the perceived importance of that language.

Kormos and Csizér’s (2008) study also reinforces the claim that students benefit from opportunities of contact with the target culture by means of increased motivation as well as this additional knowledge of FL culture serving to allieviate student anxieties. These findings also show that the perceived importance of contact is built entirely in the social context, i.e. it is affected by milieu and indirect contact. The attitudes and views
are supplied and assimilated by EFL learners in discussion with parents and teachers as to the nature and character of these other cultures (Csizér et al, 2008: 176-177).

For the students concerned in this study, since they do not have the means to travel outside their country of residence, the effect of direct contact is limited to what they are exposed to within their own country. Indeed, English language learners who have taken part in intercultural activities with respect to the L2 and learners who obtain information in relation to L2 speakers and their cultures form their own immediate environment appear to show slightly higher levels of interest in the culture of the L2. This suggests, that along with self-confidence, both direct and indirect contact with the L2 target culture has the very real potential to elevate interest levels of learners through L2 cultural products and the media which forms part of the dissemination and discussion of the values those products represent. Consequently, for those learners who cannot hope to have or do not have direct contact with the target culture, indirect and virtual exposure becomes all the more important. This exposure comes about by means of exposure to English-language media such as television, magazines, the Internet, etc. and eventually comes to exert more influence on L2 learners by taking the place of direct contact with native speakers and permanent residents of the target culture (Csizér et al, 2008: 178-179).

In a study carried out by Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) it was found that interest in the target culture on the part of L2 learners is a powerful motivating factor. This factor of cultural interest was shown to reveal learners’ eagerness for cultural products (e.g. films, television, pop music, magazines and books) directly linked to the particular L2 language being learned and the culture associated with it. Even where direct contact with L2 native speakers is minimal or absent, learners may still have a strong understanding of the L2 community in the form of its cultural products and artifacts (Csizér and Dörnyei, 2005: 21).

In the context of language learning and being mindful of research in activity theory, critical psychology and anthropology, Lave (1993: 5-6) defined learning as “changing participation (and understanding) in the cultural designed setting of everyday life”. Such a conception of learning is particularly relevant and practical in accounting for the language socialization process experience by L2 learners in countries such as Portugal.
**Language Socialization**

The main tenet of language socialization theory is that “linguistic and cultural knowledge are constructed through each other” and that language learners such as children “are active and selective agents in both processes” (Watson-Gege et al, 2003: 165). The process of language learning, constructing cultural meanings and exhibiting certain social behaviour is experience as a continuous process (Watson-Gege et al, 1995). Learners construct “a set of (linguistic and behavioural) practices that enable them to communicate with and live among others”, particularly in situations where these individuals find themselves in a highly complex and hybridized cultural setting. Such a view supports understandings of language and language varieties that need to adapt to human circumstances, that culture shapes development and language, culture and mind interactively shape one another through an interactive set of practices and discourses (Watson-Gege, 2004: 339).

Being constrained by the societal and cultural values in which they learn and use language, learners are, therefore, part of a scheme which reveals, as Bourdieu (1985) described, the non-existence of disinterested social practice. In other words, social practice is always based on a set of values and norms of some kind. Cole & Zuengler (2003: 99) observe that “language forms correspond with the values, beliefs, and practices of a particular group” and language learners at their initial stage of learning a foreign language “can come to adopt them in interaction” simply because it is through the medium of language that “social structures and roles are made visible and available”.

Language socialization theory, supported by research, also holds that children learn mostly through their participation in the linguistic market events and it is through verbal cues that they gain an appreciation of the structure and characteristics of that (target) culture. Particularly fundamental to a learner’s socialization of a target language and culture is the appropriation of the syntax, semantics and discourse practices that are utilized in structuring their development of linguistic and cultural knowledge. Indeed, second language classrooms expose and instruct these sets of cultural and epistemological assumptions, which frequently diverge from those of the language learners own native culture (Watson-Gege, 2004: 340-341).

Cognition is built from experience and is situated in sociohistorical and sociopolitical contexts (Lave, 1993). In the context of language socialization this means
that insights and cultural models are unified by principles acquired from cognitive anthropology in a model developed by Nelson (1996: 12) known as the Mental Event Representations concept (MER). As cognition is created by participating in social interactions, language socialization theory describes learners in this context as being part of communities of practice and learning, which Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as legitimate peripheral participation. The latter makes reference to the integration of learners into the activities of communities of practices. Learners begin as participants on the edges (periphery) of an activity. As they gain experience in this community, learners refine their skills as they take on a series of more complex roles.

A growing body of research, therefore, demonstrates that it is not possible to perceive how learners acquire language in the absence of considering this process in conjunction with the social world in which this happens:

Neither language acquisition nor language use – nor even cognized linguistic knowledge – can be properly understood without taking into account their fundamental integration into a socially-mediated world.

(Atkinson, 2002: 534)

The primary EFL classroom can then be seen as a cultural arena, a perspective supported by Breen (1985: 138-139) who also cautions against attempts to divorce the classroom environment from the social context of the student:

Given that we wish to understand how the external social situation of a classroom relates to the internal psychological states of the learners, the metaphor of the classroom as provider of optimal input or reinforcer of good strategies is inadequate…The priority given to linguistic and mentalistic variables in terms of the efficient processing of knowledge as input leads inevitably to a partial account of the language learning process. The social context of learning and the social forces within it will always shape what is made available to be learned and the interaction of the individual mind with external linguistic or communicative knowledge.

Phenomenological approaches to interaction have led language socialization theory to stress the limitless, negotiated character of everyday social actions in a way that acknowledges that this very nature permits the opportunity for innovation and change (Garrett et al, 2002: 344). Moreover, in order to bring about positive changes in behaviour, for example, in a move away from rigid nationalism toward more tolerant interculturality, citizenship education in the primary EFL classroom can be used to
enlighten attitudes so as to act as a catalyst for such change. The precise mechanics of a project of this nature will be detailed in separate section.

In many instances, young learners possess expertise in some areas, for example, when children assist older adults with new technologies and resources (e.g. computers and the Internet), or when adults who have immigrated from another country possess limited second language abilities are left with no alternative but to depend on their children to mediate their relationship with third parties and institutions outside their households and their immediate community (Garrett et al., 2002: 346). Under such circumstances then, it can be said that children can become conduits within their own families and communities for more progressive, tolerant attitudes which they acquire through participation in citizenship education and intercultural communicative ideas experienced within the primary EFL classroom. The primary EFL classroom thus provides an appropriate environment for the infusement of certain progressive and tolerant values and norms that positively alter the habitus of the young EFL learner.

With respect to the individual level of how learners integrate values and norms in the linguistic and target culture, Nelson (1996: 12) argued that “Human minds are equipped to construct complicated ‘mental models’ that represent…the complexities of the social and cultural world”. Further elaboration of this theory re-directs one’s attitudes to the above mentioned term of Mental Event Representation (MER), wherein MER is concerned with the basic flexible structures of children’s cognitive development. These structures are known as schemas and scripts that later become a mental context that guides future behaviour in individuals under similar conditions (Watson-Gegeo, 2004: 334-335).

Expanding these schemas into cultural models, Quinn & Holland (1987:24) and Holland et al (1998) find that cultural shared information can be seen as “prototypical event sequences in simplified worlds”. Similarly, Quinn & Holland’s (1987) work concurs with that of Watson-Gegeo (2004) in the way that cultural models also act as a framework through which learners interpret their experiences and plan their objectives in terms of surface behaviour and verbalization.

Children, as well as adults, are “active participants” (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000: 24) in relation to their own development process and so play a meaningful role in determining the nature of the social environment in which they reside. As children are active participants in their own development they must be given the appropriate tools
and guidance to mould their own attitudes and competencies toward being more tolerant citizens. It is essential that this process occurs early in the development of cognitive abilities of the child as personality development and socialization are processes that occur during childhood and result in habitual patterns of behaviour that are not readily modifiable in adulthood (Harris, 2000: 711). Other data compiled by Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1989: 600) also demonstrate that once children have been weaned, most of their time is spent in play groups, wherein it was found that “the child’s socialization occurs mainly within the play group”. As children spend long periods of their time at school, it is arguable that “de-facto” play groups are constituted by school friends in the formal school environmental, thus demonstrating the utility of adopting an intercultural approach in the primary EFL classroom to affect more tolerance and less xenophobic attitudes.

**Interculturality in Multicultural Societies in a Globalised World**

The need to create a reciprocal balance between rights and responsibilities and to relate these ideas to citizenship has become for Meer (2010) an integral part of multiculturalism, a concept which in turn helps to accommodate notions of interculturality. This concept affects how society as a whole and its constituent parts perceives its own members and the civic status of different groups in a national community (Nasar et al., 2011: 8).

The essential feature of interculturality involves achieving an appropriate and effective level of mediation between two individuals or groups from different cultures or societies. Parekh’s *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (2000) holds the major defining feature of interculturality as being the recognition of diversity and social pluralism whose key strength is ‘(to) challenge people to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their own cultures and ways of life’ (Parekh (2000) in Nasar et al, 2011: 10). Further refining the suggestion of challenging our self-participation, Parekh (2000: 167) states:

> However rich it may be, no culture embodies all that is valuable in human life and develops the full range of human possibilities. Different cultures thus correct and complement each other’s horizon of thought…inassimilable otherness challenges us intellectually and morally, stretches our imagination, and compels us to recognize the limits of our categories of thought.

It is precisely by changing and complementing one another’s views and ideas of the cultural Other that gives rise to intercultural learning. This process seeks to bring
about a tolerant culture where values are held in joint ownership so as to encourage the sharing of experiences that in turn lead to interdependencies superseding single nations and those cultures they project and represent (Booth, 2003: 432).

As Boon (1982: 22-26) pointed out: ‘Culture materialises (through language) only in counterdistinction to another (language)/culture’ thus confirming the desirability and efficacy of intercultural contact as means of not only increasing tolerance but also as a means of better understanding the self. This kind of intercultural action can be seen as:

neither a question of maintaining one’s own cultural frame nor of assimilating to one’s interactant’s cultural frame. It is rather a question of finding an intermediary place between these two positions – of adopting a third place…the experience of difference through language comes through the analysis of one’s own culture and the ways in which language mediates this culture

(Lo Bianco et al., 1999: 5)

Culture is thus mediated and experienced in a much more dynamic way in the context of contact with other outside cultures, which is said to be a cross-cultural encounter. In this situation people are given the opportunity to create a middle ground known as a ‘third place’. Reaching this middle ground makes it more likely that inter and cross-cultural relationships will successfully develop both within and beyond disparities in cultural identities (Lo Bianco et al., 1999: 5).

Addressing the need for greater intercultural communicative competencies in the modern era requires accounting for the effects of globalisation, which could be understood as referring to how the depth and variety of ways populations and countries have become linked in a single global space. This single space can also be imagined as encompassing pan-national media and international telecommunication systems. Such social communication systems have a key role to play in that they can bring discrete systems of endeavour into contact with other cultural manifestations that then permits the formation of a variety of expression of these cultural forms through a myriad of instantaneous communication conduits such as television, cinema, the print media and music (Lo Bianco et al, 1999: 6-7).

Therefore, conceiving culture as ‘a collective way of acting through language’ requires the adoption of a teaching strategy that involves teaching language through
culture which reflects the key conventions and norms of the target culture. In this way, learners, already in possession of their own cultural values are placed in a position whereby they can begin to observe and interpret the actions and utterances originating from an interlocutor from outside their own culture. Language learners communication on an intercultural basis are thus strongly motivated to mediate knowledge, behaviour and the values of the other culture in question as learning the target language provides a very strong link to the culture in which it operates (Lo Bianco et al., 1999: 9).

Since language pervades all areas of life, it is arguable that the needs of an intercultural competence program are most likely to be more successful through the teaching of a second language. Moreover, if language is to be equated with culture, then culture also forms part of everything human beings do in their lives (Lo Bianco et al., 1999: 11). Intercultural competence then, is practised through language teaching and learning and has been divided into three key facets by Lo Bianco et al (1999: 11) which read as follows:

1. The teaching of linguaculture
2. The comparison between learners’ first language/culture and target language/culture
3. Intercultural exploration

These three areas assume a most important role in the context of the powerful societal forces that create competing demands for national policy makers in terms of societal integration, intergroup relations and community cohesion. Demands of this nature feature prominently in multinational and multicultural societies wherein the necessity to employ effective language policies can make a major contribution to social order by integration through engagement and recognition of these linguistic and cultural identities (Lo Bianco et al., 1999: 23).

Within a given cultural space learners, particularly novices are exposed and affected by the norms and conventions that are inherent to that context. In this way learners are said to be ‘socialized’ into the language, for example, in the EFL classroom where they are exposed to the culture through the English teacher, pedagogical materials and exposure to the cultural media such as television, the Internet, music etc. Research data assembled by Schieffelin and Ochs (1986: 165) led them to conclude that ‘socialization is an interactive process’ and that ‘the child or novice…is not a passive recipient of
sociocultural knowledge’ who ‘automatically internalizes others’ views but is a ‘selective and active participant…in the process of constructing social worlds.’

**Race and Racial Intolerance and EFL**

Growing numbers of people across the world are now active participants in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs. As learners come from and reside in a wide variety of geographical locations, EFL learners are frequently seen as ethnically and culturally distinct. Despite this evident situation, relatively little discussion with respect to race and racism in the context of EFL classroom has been witnessed throughout the years. This is perhaps due to a perceived stigma of the term *race*, a term that is often seen as referring to overt forms of bigotry, as opposed to inequalities in a structural or institutional context, and such an attitude has contributed to the undermining of attempts to engage in open discussion of this critical issue (Kubota et al, 2006: 471).

Before proceeding any further with this discussion on the concepts of ‘race’ and racism, it is necessary to first define and explain what is meant by these terms. The 1967 UNESCO statement on ‘racism’ defines the term ‘anti-social beliefs and acts which are based on the fallacy that discriminatory intergroup relations are justifiable on biological grounds’ (Miles et al, 2003: 66). Further elucidation of the term has led to racism also being referred to as ‘all activities and practices that are intended to protect the advantages of a dominant group and/or maintain or widen the unequal position of a subordinate group. These groups are differentiated by skin colour, with ‘whites’ usually being those exercising power over ‘blacks’ (Ibid).

Historical research suggests that the concept of race was invented as a method of labelling people so that those exercising the power in a situation or a society could maintain the status quo by diminishing the possibility of the occurrence of cohesive opposition to their position. Indeed, the materialization of racial categories has featured in a significant way throughout history as a way to create an in-group as a response to particular socio-political and economic forces. Generating an in-group, or dominant group, requires the construction of other subordinate out-groups, the latter of which have always included people of African lineage (e.g. Allen, 1994; Ignatiev, 1995; Roediger, 1990, 1994). Therefore, Whitness is very strongly connected with the practice of excluding or subordinating and subjugating people of colour. Consequently, racism is in essence directly related to power. One dominant group, Whites, build up hegemonic
ideological and discursive norms that permits successful portrayal of themselves as superior to another perceived inferior group, i.e. people of colour (Hyland, 2005: 431).

The term racism has also been employed to refer to personal prejudice, where it is argued that ‘the essential feature of racism is…the defense of a system from which advantage is derived on the basis of race’ (Wellman, 1977: 221-2). Further narrowing the focus on this term has resulted from looking at it from the point of view of its effects rather than its ideological content as meaning:

A position is racist when it defends, protects, or enhances social organization based on racial disadvantage. Racism is determined by the consequences of a sentiment, not its surface qualities…White racism is what white people do to protect the special benefits they gain by virtue of their skin colour.

(Wellman, 1977: 76)

Racism typically invokes imagery with respect to features such as skin colour, eye shape, hair texture, facial features etc. Biological evidence, however, has not been found to support contentions that race has to do with genes. Attempting to classify human beings in racial terms encounters difficulties, as Goldberg (1993:67) observes:

Human beings possess a far larger proportion of genes in common that they do genes that are supposed to differentiate them racially. Not surprisingly, we are much more like each other than we are different….the percentage of our genes that determines our purportedly racial or primarily morphological different – is 0.5 per cent.

This statement is entirely supported by more recent evidence from the Human Genome Project cited by Hutchinson (2005) which found that human beings have 99.9% of their genes in common, so the potential racial difference in the biological sense leans on the on the remaining 0.1%. The only logical conclusion to be made from this evidence then is that races, in fact, do not exist (Kubota et al, 2006: 474). According to Omi and Winant (1994: 55) “race is a concept which signifes and symbolises social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies”. Racial representations, as social constructs are subject to continuing change and are to be found in social and historical processes that discard reflective notions of objective truth in favour of more specific meanings to account for the way the world operates. Indeed, race can be compared to nation as imagined community an idea Miles (1987) defends as making reference to:
...the dual sense that have no real biological foundation and that all those included by the signification can never know each other, and are imagined as communities in the sense of a common feeling of fellowship. Moreover, they are also imagined as limited in the sense that a boundary is perceived, beyond which lie other ‘races’.

(Miles, 1987: 26-27)

Such examples and definitions are most instructive in how to categorise, define and finally reject racist and intolerant attitudes toward members of communities not directly connected or related to one’s own. Another form of racism particularly to the field of English language education is that known as epistemological racism, which is regarded as being ‘based on the epistemologies, knowledges, and practices that privilege the European modernist White civilisation’ (Scheurich, 1997). Scheurich (1997: 140) argues that the world ontological categories that are used to analyse, socialize and educate have almost exclusively been developed within a racial and cultural tradition that provides for “the legitimated ways of knowing (for example, positivism, neo-realism, postpositivism, interpretivism, constructivism, the critical tradition, and postmodernisms/poststructuralisms) that we use”.

This kind of racism is also reflected in North American textbooks (and indeed, their European equivalents) over a range of disciplines including the physical sciences, history and English that serve to build and maintain racial stereotypes that supplies the authors of these actions with the hegemonic tools they need to perpetuate this system of values. In turn, such values are strongly represented in EFL textbooks as the norm with respect to what is regarded and permitted to be the legitimate linguistic and cultural knowledge (Kubota et al, 2006: 479). For example, textbooks printed in the UK reflect the cultural norms and practices in that locality, and learners are often led to believe that these norms must be adopted before they can reach full competence in that language.

In addition to EFL pedagogical materials, an expanding body of research (e.g. Kubota, 2001) demonstrates much of the colonialist and racial hierarchies that form the basis for much of the current cultural racism and monolithic cultural Otherness. Others still (e.g. Pennycook, 1998) accentuate the way in which TEFL plays a role in British imperialism through sustained endeavours designed to endorse the English language as a language of global economic and cultural power as well as Whiteness and epistemological authority (e.g. Amin, 1997; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Canagarajah, 2002; Kubota, 2004).
While recognising the enormous utility in learning the English language for economic and cultural communication purposes, the author of this text has adopted a strategy to alleviate what could be described as culturally imperialist tendencies in the context of teaching the English language to young learners. What is meant by this description is that it has been discovered that a widespread practice is in operation within the reference locality whereby the vast majority of primary EFL teachers focus almost exclusively on the cultural norms and practices of the United Kingdom, thus perpetuating a knowledge deficit of other cultures on the part of learners. Practical supporting data with respect to this claim will be explored in a later section. Such an approach has been adopted so as to provide a broader cultural view of the English speaking world for EFL young learners and to counteract a pervasive practice among primary EFL teachers of almost exclusively focussing on the United Kingdom as a means of teaching the English language. An intercultural approach has been adopted; the precise nature and modus operandi of which will be detailed in a later section.

**Racism and discrimination in children**

Research data examined by Nesdale et al (2005) with respect to children entering puberty and with children aged 5-6 shows that group norms are a powerful factor in how members of that group behave. This research demonstrates that these norms provide a strong incentive to favour those within the in-group and to also act in a discriminatory manner toward individuals who do not form part of the in-group, i.e. those persons who are members of the out-group. (e.g., Crandall, Eshelman, & O’Brien, 2002; Jetten, Postmes, & McAuliffe, 2002; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1996, 1997). In addition, where members of the in-group who display conduct or attitudes that are inconsistent with the prevailing norms of the group, the usual response is denunciation and derogatory in nature (Nesdale et al, 2005: 652).

There is evidence to suggest that young children manifest a preference for membership of groups which are perceived to be high status and that their dislike for an out-group grows more intense particularly when such out-groups of children whose race or ethnicity is dissimilar to their own (Nesdale et al, 2005: 653). Similarly, Killen & Stangor (2001: 177) cite research carried out with children and adults which has found that individuals regularly exhibit an ingroup bias or ingroup favouritism wherein they adopt a more positive attitude and allocate more attractive incentives toward and for members of their own group (Brewer, 1979; Damon, 1977; Van Avermaet &
McClintock, 1988; Yee & Brown, 1992). Research data also shows that intergroup biases materialize quite early in children (Abrams et al, 2003: 1840) and that this bias can continue throughout childhood as studies show that children of all ages show evidence of significant in-group bias (Abrams et al, 2003: 1854).

Despite some disagreement as to how to treat reports of the nature of young children’s abilities to perceive and appraise different racial groups, researchers recognise the existence of early awareness of racial differences at this age (Hirschfield, 1993: 318). The process involves a series of steps. For Katz (1982: 20) children are capable of understanding “easily discernible” cues that have to do with classifying “people into categories on the basis of attributes perceived in common” (Vaughan, 1987: 91) such as external characteristics including costume, cuisine and language (Aboud, 1988: 106; Whiting & Edwards, 1988: 8). Studies on identity constancy also show that ethnicity is a very important characteristic for children in that the race factor made the most significant contribution to preserved identity (Hirschfield, 1993: 322).

Williams and Morland (1976) advocate that regardless of racial group, children have a preference for the colour white over black and favor light instead of darkness. Children’s diurnal nature has been identified as a source of this bias since children’s early experiences demonstrate that most of their needs are provided for during daylight hours or in the presence of light. Such colour biases are often underpinned by cultural practices which associates white with purity and black with more sinister forces. These values are transmitted to children in the form of stories involving heroes (dressed in white) and villains (dressed in black) and about good and evil supernatural forces, e.g. white angels and black witches. Other research by Boswell and Williams (1975) found that children’s attitudes toward the colour white heavily influenced their racial preference for White people. Similarly, they also found that children’s fear of the dark predicted an unfavourable stance with respect to Blacks (Quintana, 1998: 31).

It has been found that younger children make use of a cognitive style that produces generalizations based on specific instances. In a study carried out by Katz (1983) into the development of children’s racial attitudes, provides the example of where a white boy and an African-American peer were engaged in conflict, the White concluded that “Brown people always fight” although he had not had a dispute with any other African American in contrast to some he had already experienced with other white children (Quintana, 1998: 32). Quintana and Vera (1996) established that young
children principally viewed ethnic prejudice on the basis of practical and readily observable personal characteristics such as skin or hair colour. Other findings from Quintana and de Baessa (1996) illustrate that for some children membership of a certain ethnic group is a pre-requisite before they could form friendships with any individual. This tendency was so strong that interviewees for the study indicated that members of a monoethnic peer group would feel more comfortable with one another and would cooperate more easily as opposed to such a group being constituted of individuals drawn from different ethnic groups. Moreover, the children in the study group stated their belief in the principle of ethnic similarity as being a facilitator of new friendships.

Data from group dynamics research, Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Subjective Group Dynamics model defends the notion that members of the in-group strive for positive distinctiveness and to support the norms prevailing within such groups. The latter is achieved by members becoming attentive observers in order to identify any departures from the norms of the group and to also react in a manner that most effectively preserves the norms of that group (Abrams et al, 2003: 1841). Reactions of individuals motivated by group cohesion and for the protection of the group identity often manifest themselves in the form of racial intolerance. For example, a person or a number of people from abroad may take up residence in a community, a development which frequently displeases locals. In what is perceived as a strategy to ‘protect’ the local community and the cultural values it holds, members of out-groups, particularly foreign nationals are treated in a discriminatory way. This discrimination is also to be found in the educational setting where even children re-interpret nationalist tendencies on the part of their peers and reproduce racist practices in their treatment, for example, of classmates who may not be a citizen of the state or continent in which they now inhabitant.

The transmission of intolerant values can occur within groups of children, as well as adults. Children are strongly influenced by the opinions and attitudes of their peers and can take on their values through a process known as ‘peer culture’.

Peer culture

Peer culture has been defined by Corsaro & Eder (1990) as a “stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers” (Carsaro & Eder, 1990: 197). As children’s cognitive skills develop in the early years (3-4 onwards), they begin to discern the world around them
and the meaning it brings and begin to assist in the process of sculpting and distributing in the context of “their own developmental experiences through their participation in everyday cultural routines” (Corsaro & Eder, 1990: 199).

A child’s world experiences significant alterations as children begin to participate in the world outside their own immediate family. It is through their interaction with playmates in organized play groups (e.g. in the school environment) that children produce a series of peer cultures wherein the knowledge and practices they experience during childhood are gradually transformed into the appropriate knowledge and skills necessary for successful participation in the adult world (Corsaro & Eder, 1990: 200). Arguably, it is at this stage of child’s development that it is most appropriate to begin intervention strategies designed to heighten their awareness of other cultures, provide them with the skills to understand and interpret them with a view to building a healthy respect for other cultures as against their own.

**Context and methodology**

The survey chosen to obtain data from EFL teachers and a separate, but similar survey, was constructed from a model questionnaire developed by Atay (2005: 235-236). Given that the situation being examined involves young EFL learners, it was decided to reduce the number of items in the questionnaire so as to narrow the focus of the data obtained and to hold the attention of the students concerned. This approach proved to be both fruitful and justified. Some forty-one respondents in total participated in the teachers survey, the results of which are discussed below (see Appendix 1).

Originally, it was envisaged that the survey would be carried out in English. However, practical mechanics dictated that the collection of data required that the questions be posed in Portuguese. Nine questions were asked of respondents who responded to the same through an online platform. The first question asked in the teachers’ questionnaire was whether the teaching of the English language should be regarded as: a) essential; b) very important; c) important; d) not very important; e) unnecessary. From the available options, some 95% of respondents answered that they believed the teaching of English language is essential with the balance believing it to be important. Teachers were also asked to state whether they had ever visited an English speaking country. Some 81% responded in the affirmative. Thereafter, the next item sought a breakdown of which English speaking countries had been visited. The following countries were given as options: 1) South Africa; 2) Canada; 3) United States
of America; 4) Republic of Ireland; 5) Wales; 6) Scotland; 7) England. Just over 75% of respondents indicated that they had visited England; almost 27% had visited Scotland; approximately 24% had visited the USA; approximately 7% had visited Canada with an equal figure having visited the Republic of Ireland. The remainder of answers indicated that just over 2% of respondents had been to Wales and South Africa.

Once the numbers of teachers who had visited English speaking countries had been determined, their motivation for doing so was then queried. In this respect, four options were offered which consisted of whether they made the journey for 1) family; 2) academic reasons; 3) professional motives. The fourth option related to whether people had visited the country in question for the purposes of taking a holiday. Some 93% of responses indicated that the journey was undertaken in order to go on holiday. 24% indicated that professional reasons motivated their visit. Academic reasons were the reason for 15% of journeys undertaken. The remainder, some 12% went to an English speaking country for the purposes of visiting family.

Another important facet of teacher practice was also investigated, namely identifying the source of their knowledge in relation to the English language and where it is spoken. To that end, seven options were offered to assist respondents, including: 1) pedagogical material; 2) contact with native speakers; 3) courses or workshops; 4) Institutes (such as the British Council); 5) radio; 6) television; 7) the Internet. The internet and pedagogical materials with percentages of 100 and 81 respectively, proved to be the most popular choices, followed by television which commanded a response of 65%. Contact with native speakers and courses and workshops were chosen at 38% and 41% respectively. The least popular choices were for institutes and radio which both recorded a response of barely 5% each.

Following on from the last question, the next logical inquiry to make was to ask teachers how often, if ever, they read materials with respect to teaching the culture and language of English speaking countries. Four options were given: a) frequently; b) from time to time; c) rarely; d) never. 40% of respondents indicated that they undertook this activity frequently with another 50% stating that they did so from time to time. Some 7% of respondents reported only rarely doing so and the remainder (3%) answered as having never read material relevant to teaching English language and culture.

At this point in the survey teachers were asked to state what they believed was the meaning of the term ‘cultural awareness’. Five key options were provided which
consisted of the following: a) knowing the habits of other countries; b) reading books whose storyline is based in other countries; c) visiting other countries; d) speaking with people from other countries; e) speaking a foreign language. At 87%, the most popular choice by far was ‘knowing the habits of other countries.’ 61% of respondents stated their belief that by ‘visiting other countries’ that they could be considered culturally aware. This was followed by the next highest figure of 53% who chose ‘speaking with people from other countries’. Some 22% of respondents chose ‘speaking a foreign language’ as being linked to their perception of being ‘culturally aware’. 15% of respondents chose the option ‘reading books whose storyline is based in another country’.

Given that teachers were asked about their understanding of cultural awareness, the appropriate next step was then to query whether they believed, from their own professional experience, whether their students were willing and motivated to learn about other cultures. Five broad options were presented which consisted of: a) always; b) most of the time; c) sometimes; d) rarely; e) never. The last two options were not chosen by any respondent. The most common choice was ‘most of the time’, which scored 78%, followed by sometimes which recorded an incidence of 17%. Least most popular among respondents was the option ‘always’ which recorded a score of approximately 4%.

As the culture of the English speaking countries is a central theme in this survey, the final question dealt with whether EFL teachers were satisfied that the pedagogical approach currently available and in use by them is sufficient to assist them in their objective of helping their students understand other cultures. A simple Yes/No’ was the only option made available for this final query. A large majority (83%) of respondents answered in the negative, thus confirming that work remains to be done to provide more opportunities for students to learn more about English speaking cultures.

**Survey of students in the primary EFL environment**

The broad objective of this survey, adapted from a model questionnaire developed by Atay (2005: 235-236) was to determine whether students had some awareness of other cultures, if they had ever been abroad and whether they had strong nationalist tendencies, which could in turn lead them to hold inflexible attitudes toward non-Portuguese people, i.e. racist tendencies. In order to obtain more coherent and accurate results, it was decided to concentrate on students from 3rd and 4th classes.
Students were interviewed on a one-to-one basis during classtime over a period of one week. A total number of twenty-one students took part in the survey, which consisted of ten multiple choice questions (see Appendix 2).

Prior to delving into any other matter, it seemed logical to pose a practical question regarding interculturality: whether students had ever travelled outside of Portugal. Just under 26% of students said that they had travelled outside of Portugal and of these 43% did so for the purposes of going on holiday. The balance of 57% made the journey to visit family. Students were then asked if they had ever visited a country in which English was the local language. None of the respondents had done so. Thereafter, students were asked to state where they gleaned information in relation to the English language and the places in which it is spoken. Eight options were offered which consisted of the following: a) the Internet; b) newspapers/magazines; c) books; d) television; e) radio; f) family; g) native speakers; h) teacher. The breakdown of the responses is as follows (figures also account for students choosing more than one option): teacher (66%); native speakers (66%); television (52%); internet (33%); books (14%); newspapers/magazines (14%); family (0%).

Students were then asked whether they thought it was important to learn the English language and about the cultures in which the language is spoken. An overwhelming majority (95%) agreed that it was important to do so. The next question sought to discover the reasons why students felt motivated to learn English. A number of options were offered: a) travel/tourism purposes; b) academic reasons; c) to please your parents d); economic/professional motivation; e) personal motivation; f) advised to do so by family/friends. Students responded in the following fashion: travel/tourism purposes (61%); economic/professional motivation (28%); personal motivation (28%); academic reasons (14%); to please your parents (9%).

Ascertaining the level of nationalist feelings students felt was the next query attended to. This was determined by asking students whether they thought Portugal was: a) As important as any other country; b) More important than some countries; c) the most important country in Europe; d) the most important country in the world. It is suggested that if students chose the option indicating their belief that Portugal was the most important country in the Europe or the world, it was likely that they would hold strong nationalistic tendencies. By choosing the option that holds that Portugal is as
important as any other country, it is likely that students hold no strong preference either way and could thus be regarded as holding a neutral or uncommitted opinion.

A large majority of respondents (76%) stated that they believed Portugal was as important as any other country. Just over 14% of students responded that they believed that Portugal was the most important country in Europe, with a further 9.5% stating that this country was the most important in the world. Taking the total number of responses together for these last two answers produces a combined total of 23.8% of students, or almost one-quarter, who hold a superior opinion of Portugal. It is suggested that this significant minority are likely to also develop strong nationalist tendencies, which in turn may result in them becoming more culturally intolerant and possibly also more racially prejudiced. From this perspective, it is necessary to develop strategies that will raise intercultural awareness, reduce cross-cultural intolerance and racial prejudice.

Student views with respect to foreign nationals and people whose skin differed to their own formed the basis of the next item of the survey. Four options were offered that took the following form: a) they are very welcome in Portugal; b) they are welcome in Portugal; c) I don’t mind whether they’re here or not; d) They should not be in Portugal. Some 38% of respondents felt indifferent in relation to whether or not non-Portuguese people were present in the country or not. Almost 29% of students believed that non-nationals should be welcomed to Portugal, with almost another 24% saying that foreign nationals were very welcome in the country. Thus giving a combined total of over 52% - a figure that displays a majority of students have a positive attitude toward foreign people present in Portugal.

Attitudes with respect to how students believed foreign people, particularly those who do not speak Portuguese, should be treated in an everyday situation was the next item to be queried. Five options were offered in this item that read as follows: 1) we should be respectful and helpful toward them; 2) we should be pleasant to them; 3) I would ignore a foreign national in Portugal; 4) I would be unkind to the person simply because they were not Portuguese; 5) I would be very unpleasant to them because I do not like foreign people in Portugal. In light of the earlier data collected, it is somewhat unsurprising that once more it was found that a significant minority, almost 10% again displayed uncharitable attitudes toward foreign people. Almost 5% (4.8%) stated that they would be unpleasant to a foreign person with an identical number saying they would ignore the same parties. However, just over 38% of respondents stated they
would be pleasant to foreign people. Similarly, almost 58% said they would be willing to act in a respectful and helpful manner toward foreign people in Portugal.

Having previously determined the level of importance at which EFL teachers regarded the learning of the English, the same question was put to students. With this question it was possible to choose from four answers that read as follows: ‘In your opinion, is learning the English language’: a) essential; b) very important; c) important; d) not very important; e) doesn’t matter to me at all. Not a single student replied to the effect that they did not have any regard for learning of the English language. Neither did any student state that the English was unimportant, particularly to them. Most popular among students was the choice stating ‘very important’, which garnered just over 57% of respondents’ preferences. Next most popular was the option ‘essential’ which recorded a preference of just under 24%, followed by ‘important’ with just over 19%. These findings are most encouraging since they demonstrate that students have a strong sense of the importance of learning the English language, arguably one of the most essential tools in the globalized economy.

Before concluding the survey, a final question was asked to determine students’ awareness of English speaking countries. This was done by means of a simple question: whether they could name any English speaking country. A subset of options was offered as part of this item: whether they could name a) one English speaking country; b) two; c) three; or d) four. Fortunately, most students (over 85%) were able to name one English speaking country.

Just over 47% of students were able to name two English speaking countries (the Republic of Ireland and England). Given the limited nature of this body of students’ awareness of the English speaking world, only 14% were able to name three English speaking countries. The original two answers mentioned above were complimented with countries such as the USA and Canada. It is also important to mention that when the question with respect to naming English speaking countries was initially put to students, many of them began naming every country they knew besides Portugal. However, once this task was carefully explained again did students begin to offer more sensible replies.

Kramsch (1993) cautions that even people who share the same nationality and social class may have different understandings of what this means. It is by engaging in intercultural contact in a reflective way that intercultural speakers gain a greater awareness as to how they themselves and their fellow citizens comprehend and
experience their own national identities and how this perception relates to others (Jackson, 2011: 82). In this way they become more aware of the limitations imposed by a national identity and how this can lead to stereotyping and varying interpretations of citizenship, in a process of moving from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelative perspective which Guilherme (2002: 125) holds as causing individuals to attain a much greater receptivity to ‘the multiple, ambivalent, resourceful, and elastic nature of cultural identities in an intercultural encounter’.

Having now discussed the results of both the teacher and student surveys, attention will now turn to applying a suitable strategy with respect to the results obtained in the surveys mentioned herein. The next sections details studies relevant for citizenship education programmes which can inform the teaching of more tolerant attitudes in the EFL classroom.

**Citizenship education in the primary EFL classroom environment**

Prejudice can be understood as the possessing disparaging social attitudes or antagonistic conduct toward individuals owing to their membership of a particular social group (Brown, 1995). One instructive example of prejudicial behaviour persisting in a community is the state of disunity between peoples of Protestant and Catholic faiths in Northern Ireland. In many instances feelings of intolerance in the population manifest themselves in racist attitudes and actions. This situation has greatly improved in recent years since the signing of the Good Friday (or Belfast) Agreement in April 1998 when a power sharing administration comprised of both Catholics and Protestant was constituted as part of efforts to foster a more inclusive society. A curricular review was initiated by state authorities in 1999 in both the primary and secondary sectors with the intention of building on the existing educational policy of a tolerant and peaceful society between Protestants and Catholics and to facilitate young people to become valuable contributors to society. From this point a new area of citizenship education (CE) was included in the curriculum stemming from a statutory programme called ‘Local and Global Citizenship’ designed for use at primary and secondary levels. After a phased basis, this programme was formally adopted from September 2007 (Gallagher, 2007: 256).

Citizenship education (CE) is concerned with the promotions of skills, knowledge and understandings for young people so that they can act as informed and responsible citizens in the local, national and international community. By adopting the
skills acquiring as part of citizenship education, young people are equipped to make informed decisions and develop skills of inquiry and participation as individuals and on a community basis which in turn contributes to the creation of a vibrant culture of democratic participation (Gallagher, 2007: 257).

In launching the Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) in 1997, the Council of Europe sought to employ best practices for education for citizenship so as to combat intolerance. In this way the EDC was intended to be ‘instrumental in the fight against violence, xenophobia, racism, aggressive nationalism and intolerance (Council of Europe, 2000: 5). The EDC programme acknowledges and underlines the significant part the educational system has to play in restraining and reducing racism and xenophobia, since both are regarded as barriers to social cohesion (Osler and Starkey, 2002: 143).

As Tate (2000: 69) points out, the fact that citizenship is directly related to values means it is necessary to analyse the values that form the foundations of democracy and citizenship. Due to the increasingly multinational and multicultural nature of modern society, in contrast to the past, it is now necessary to explicitly articulate the values which contribute to what is now understood as meaning citizenship (Turnbull, 2002: 125).

Within society, it is the educational system in the form of schools which have had to take on the role of locating and defending the values by the wider community, a view supported by Porter (1999:58) who regards schools as ‘widely regarded as the most important source of acculturation’.

In the Republic of Ireland, Citizenship Education has been a formal feature feature of the educational system since 1993 with a programme called Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) becoming part of all secondary schools from September 1997. This programme seeks to develop active citizens with a strong attachment to their communities at local, national and European levels through seven key concepts (democracy, rights and responsibilities, human dignity, interdependence, development, law and stewardship) through four units of study title The Individual and Citizenship; The Community; The State; Ireland and the World (Kerr et al, 2002: 179).
Creating a fairer society means moulding a fairer community for all members of society. The ideal location to begin and sustain such efforts is the educational system. Glass (2000: 279) highlights this situation:

Educational, social, economic, and political power is unfairly distributed among classes, races, genders, and abilities. Yet no other institution besides public education endeavours even to being to address these issues. Schools, with all their faults and despite questions about their own causal role in injustices, remain crucial to a hope for creating more fair and equitable communities.

With respect to citizenship programs introduced into the educational system in jurisdictions other than Portugal, the data shows that England launched the National Curriculum for Citizenship in September 2002, the Canadian province of Ontario introduced a civics curriculum in 1999 and the Australian Federal Government began the circulation of the Discovering Democracy curriculum from 1998 (Davies et al., 2005: 390).

Davies et al (2005: 393) cite the remarks of former British Home Secretary David Blunkett made in 2003 in which he highlighted how essential citizenship education is to a diverse culture and to strengthening the community:

As we live in a society with a diversity of cultures, what we need both to bind us together and to enable us to respect our differences are common beliefs in the democratic practices of citizenship itself and the rights and duties that go with it.

For Davies et al, (2005) there is sufficient evidence from legislation and similar education policies that Australia, England and Canada have a common purpose in mind in that:

The common emphasis on the search for a coherent cohesive society is clear. Citizenship education seems in the eyes of policy-makers to be the instrument by which societies can find a way still to cohere in the face of new challenges.

(Davies et al, 2005: 393)

While the desire for societal coherence there is a recognition that it is necessary to create a flexible workforce (through citizenship education) so as to permit people to react progressively in the face of demands of a changing global economy (Ibid). As Byram (2008) points out that regardless of the part played by the educational system
constructing and attributing national and other allegiances, people need to be in possession of certain intercultural competencies so as to able to behave in a sensible and progressive fashion within and between cultural communities demarcated by political entities (Byram, 2008: 157).

Peiser & Jones (2012: 178) refer to how in England, the Department for Education and Skills identifies a key strength of encouraging young learners to adopt a more tolerant approach toward people who cannot trace their origin to the local community: ‘Children develop a greater understanding of their own lives in the context of exploring the lives of others. They learn to look at things from another’s perspective (DfES, 2005: 8). Indeed, encouraging young EFL learners to explore and engage issues pertaining to intercultural communication provides them with the opportunity to form a broader and more tolerant opinion of other cultures. As Guilherme (2007b) notes, the social construction of language can be summarised through Vygotsky’s (1939/1986) statement: ‘a word is a microcosm of human consciousness’. This assertion recognises the highly socialised nature of language. In the particular context of the English language, while simultaneously being a language of oppressions as well as opportunity, it would be difficult to deny the reality of the utility of this language in the arena of intercultural communication (Guilherme, 2007b:74).

English has become one of the most important vehicles of intercultural communication that has expanded across international frontiers to a much greater extent than any other language and has become an icon of the contemporary era (Ibid). Given this very role of English as a powerful medium for the development of a variety of identifications, the teaching and learning of English as a Global Language (EGL) is obliged to account for the preparation of cosmopolitan citizens who are capable of engaging in critical and conscientious mediation between various competing identity loyalties (Guilherme, 2007b: 78). Therefore, looking at EFL from the point of view of EGL facilitates intercultural dialogue in that it ‘empowers rather than subjugates the learner and the society to which he or she belongs’ (Corbett, 2003: 208).

However, the role of an active cosmopolitan citizen does not evolve solely from crossing national borders nor through just bilingualism, it depends largely on ‘the level of conscious awareness involved’ in acting interculturally (Byram, 2003: 64). In order to create a suitable learning environment for intercultural communication, teachers
should create a ‘tolerant, respectful and productive learning environment so that students feel at ease and motivated’ (Stier, 2003: 86).

Expanding the concept of intercultural competence to include the idea of ‘being intercultural’ Phipps and Gonzalez (2004: 167-168) highlight how this:

…opens us out as people who are always in the process of becoming intercultural beings, whose lives are a patchwork of cultural colours who respect and understand and engage openly with the different ways of living life and understanding that world that we may encounter in others and ourselves…to be intercultural is to be beyond the captivities of culture.

Interculturality and Development of Attitudes in Children

In a study carried out by Piaget cited by Barrett (2009: 70) on the development of children’s attitudes in relation to their own and other groups of people, children up to the age of five were found to have had very low awareness of people from outside their own country. Any knowledge they had at this stage was primarily as result of what they experienced in their own subjective experiences with foreign people and other countries. This caused them to adopt a more egocentric attitude toward foreign nationals. However, as they grew older and approached age eleven, these children’s attitudes then came to greatly resemble those views held by others in their social environments. Unsurprisingly this meant that these children also held the same stereotypes as the other people in the country.

These findings were incorporated by Aboud into her theory of the development of prejudice (e.g. Aboud, 1988) which defends the notion that in early childhood, children exhibit attitudes primarily based on outward appearances of other people and affective biases that in turn lead to them developing active prejudices against outside groups. However, as cognitive decentration continues as improved concrete-operational reasoning skills become apparent from six to seven years of age, a reduction in this prejudice occurs (Barrett, 2009: 70-71).

Children’s intergroup attitudes are also significantly affected by their level of satisfaction with and attachment to their own racial, ethnic or national groups. Studies have shown (e.g. Barett, 2007; Barett, Lyons, del Valle, 2004) that the higher the levels of satisfaction felt by children with their own groups the higher the propensity will be to
create and sustain differences between their own group and what they regard as being the outside group or groups (Barrett, 2009: 79).

Taylor et al (2000) argue that the social norms of prejudice are often acquired early in a child’s life and that experiences during this early stage of development are crucial as it is quite challenging to modify already crystallized attitudes in young adolescents. Criticising myopic conceptions of the world Fullinwider (2001) remarks:

Parochial people need not be insular in the sense that external walls prevent them from coming into contact with customs and ideas different from their own, but they have walls in their minds that block new information from having effect. They are incurious, intolerant, and illiberal.

(Fullinwider, 2001:341)

Counterbalancing this insular perspective, Fullinwider puts forward a view of cosmopolitan citizenship which he characterises as representing a much more open-minded attitude:

Cosmopolitan people, by contrast, do not automatically screen out the unusual or the initially unsettling. They welcome opportunities for new experience; they are curious about ways of living that differ from their own; they are generous in their interpretations of other people’s customs and institutions. In short, the cosmopolitan brings to the new an open mind.

(Fullinwider, 2001: 341)

Essentially, seeking to motivate language learners to become more cosmopolitan and tolerant in their outlook involves:

…habituating them to look for sources of information and experience outside their immediate environment; training them to formulate views and ideas- even those they oppose – in their strongest, not weakest, forms; and fostering their powers of imagination.

(Ibid)

Tolerance involves respecting diversity and this is achieved by treating the beliefs and values of other cultures as being equal to one’s own. However, universal agreement in this respect does not exist and some tensions as to how to interpret and implement this principle remain. The social inclusion agenda is one such contested area and it emphasizes building upon common ground between cultures, achieved through citizenship education, which has become a central part of Western educational systems
and aims to develop an understanding of and respect for diversity as well as the notion of a common citizenship held in common by people with different background (Wylie, 2004: 237).

**Culture, Interculturality and Public Policy**

In order for a modern state (e.g. Portugal), both at national or community level, to develop into a more tolerant environment, it must reflect its multicultural character. This can be particularly well achieved by facilitating the development of an intercultural citizenry (Kymlicka, 2003: 154). From this perspective then, an intercultural citizen is said to be an individual who dispenses fear in favour of curiosity with respect to other peoples and their cultures; who is willing to learn about other ways of life; someone who is at ease when interacting with people from other backgrounds etc. (Kymlicka, 2003: 157).

People are cultural beings and their native culture is invariably acutely ingrained and affects behaviour and attitudes even in people who have been familiarised with a foreign culture (Jiang, 2001: 386). In such contexts, particularly when language learners attempt to relate to an outside culture, it is natural that some disparities arise between what learners believe to be appropriate behaviour and their actual behaviour. Native culture often needs to be moderated by the acquisition of intercultural communicative practices so as to prevent the propagation of overly zealous nationalist tendencies which can cause people to adopt intolerant stances such as xenophobic or racist attitudes with respect to foreign nationals or non-citizens.

Archer (1986) defines the term ‘culture bump’ as where an individual from one culture finds himself or herself in a different, strange, or uncomfortable situation when interacting with person of a different culture. In the event of a culture bump occur, it is appropriate for Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) to teach their own culture explicitly since knowledge gleaned from personal experience is absorbed to a much deeper level than information acquired from pedagogical materials (Jia, 2001: 389). From this perspective, the author of this text, has, as a Native English Speaker, chosen to focus on the culture of the Republic of Ireland.

In a situation where a person is confronted with a ‘culture bump’, the natural tendency is to regard their own cultural norms and behaviours as being ‘right’ or the ‘standard’ way of how one should conduct oneself (Jiang, 2001). It is essential to adopt
a tolerant and respectful approach in these situations. Tolerance can also be viewed in terms of openness to learn and understand new things about other cultures. In a study carried out by Brown (1986) this very factor of openness to different cultural and linguistic patterns was found to facilitate second language learning. Brown (1986: 33) observes “second language learning is often second culture learning”. Brown (1980: 160) also observes that “the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language”. It is, therefore, vitally important to teach not only the language, but also the culture of the language. Intercultural tolerance facilitates this process.

One of the principal ways in which intercultural communicative difficulties arise is where individuals from two different cultures interact with one another. Each individual acts from the perspective of the respective cultural and linguistic norms that are consistent with their own community. As is often the case, the norms and values that persist in one community differ to varying degrees with respect to other cultural communities and it is this divergence that gives rise to communicative misunderstandings. Amelioration of this situation can be achieved be greater ‘cross-cultural competence’ so as to reduce the incongruence between differing values (Cushner & Brislin, 1996; Hofstede, 1980; Trompenaars, 1993) and increase cross-cultural and intercultural communicative harmony (Wilson & Wilson, 2001: 77).

Another form of cross-cultural competence is known as ‘intercomprehension.’ This concept is defined as ‘the process of communication in which participants use their own language and comprehend what is said or written in the other language’ (Alves & Mendes, 2006; Capucho & Oliveira, 2005; Castagne, 2006, 2007; Doyé, 2005, 2007). Intercomprehension has evolved from solid theoretical foundations. For Doyé (2005: 9-10) this idea ‘rests on the interplay of man’s faculty for language and his ability to exploit his previously acquired funds of knowledge’. When people find they need to understand a message expressed by another speaker in a language they do not share, they set in motion a process of intercomprehension by utilizing a ‘plurality of linguistic and non-linguistic resources and strategies’. Successful communication then is reliant upon a working coalition of various dimensions of knowledge, where non-verbal elements play a strong role in the process of interpretation and thus how it influences how linguistic elements are understood (Barbeiro, 2009: 218). On this basis, and also on the basis of stimulating contact with another linguistic and cultural group and promoting
Byram’s ‘savoir faire’, ‘savoir interpreter’ and ‘savoir être’, it was it was decided that a written exchange of materials (in the form of letters and drawings) between the partner school in Ireland and the home school in Portugal would be most beneficial for students.

Intercultural citizenship then, relies upon multiculturalism and equality and is also dependent upon an individual being aware of himself/herself and the acquisition of the appropriate intercultural skills so as to facilitate constructive engagement in modern society (Jackson, 2011: 82). For Guilherme (2007: 87) this means it is necessary to ‘control the fear of the unknown (at the emotional level), the promotion of a critical outlook (at the cognitive level), as well as the enhancement of self-development (at the experiential level)’.

In the context of Portugal, the European INTERACT Project (Intercultural Active Citizenship Education) was established in March 2004 at the Centro de Estudos Sociais, University of Coimbra. This project aims at providing constructive solutions to the social and political changes that have come about as a result of European integration. Project coordinator Manuela Guilherme and her colleagues designed the project to examine of these changes in four EU member states, namely: Portugal, Spain, Denmark and the United Kingdom. In addition to identifying key teacher needs in operating in this situation, the project also seeks to understand how European and national documents provide policy guidance on citizenship education and human rights in the intercultural context (Guilherme, 2007: 4) As part of the final report of the project Guilherme (2007:1) notes that:

…neither Spanish nor Portuguese policies appear to be oriented towards international level of interaction, they rather concern intercultural relations inside the country, community, or school. This is confirmed by the fact that integration and solidarity are clearly in focus of the Portuguese educational policies.

An empirical study of teachers performed as part of the INTERACT project found that 51.1% of respondents had never been involved in any subject related to citizenship education. 76.9% of respondents reported that they had never lived abroad and a further 93.9% of teachers reported that they had no training whatsoever dealing with citizenship or intercultural education (Guilherme, 2007: 72). This reality reinforces the practical necessity to progress intercultural education initiatives that build on the positive elements of the Portuguese Ministry of Education language policies.
Drawing on the principles and lessons discussed above, the discussion in the next section will turn to a practical way of raising intercultural awareness from the perspective of intercultural citizenship and through this medium, a reduction in prejudice and racism.

**Intercultural approach in the EFL classroom**

Broadly speaking, it can be said then that this ‘intercultural approach’ seeks to teach learners how to become ‘diplomats’, i.e. having the ability to observe and interpret the language and behaviour of the target community from a position of informed understanding (Corbett, 2003: 2). Adopting this intercultural approach allows language learners to interpret the other community in a conscientious, informed manner. However, it is arguable that only through a sustained exchange of quality information can learners reach a position in which they possess sufficient knowledge to make such judgments. It is from this perspective that primary EFL learners have been given the opportunity to exchange and reflect on information about their culture with other young EFL learners who speak English as native speakers in the Republic of Ireland.

Corbett (2003: 39) neatly summarises the intercultural approach as the recognition that communities cluster around a set of common goals, values and beliefs which are articulated in and through different types of language and behaviour, thus assisting learners identify more clearly those communities with which they wish to align themselves, to observe the way they work, and to negotiate more effectively their own place in these communities. Thus, facilitating learners to find their location in a ‘third place’ within the target community can be achieved through adopting an intercultural approach. However, this must not be done at the expense of leaving the learning with no alternative but to engage in a whole scale assimilation of the culture and values of the target language, which in essence would allow the effects of cultural imperialism. Such a situation would be directly counter-productive since it would involve the learner jettisoning their own values in favour of those belonging to a more dominant society.

In order for language learners to gain an understanding of their own native culture, they must contrast it with another, preferably the culture associated with the target language they are learning. Encouraging learners to reflect about a foreign culture necessitates having learners reflect on their own which involves creating a ‘sphere of interculturality’ whereby learners can acquire a healthy respect for a different culture to their own (Kramsch (1993: 205). Providing apt justification for the necessity of
including target socio-cultural characteristics of the target language as part of an EFL class, Kramsch (1993) notes

...because learning a language is learning to exercise both a social and a personal voice, it is both a process of socialization into a given speech community and the acquisition of literacy as a means of expressing personal meanings that put in question those of the speech community.

(Kramsch, 1993: 232)

At European Union level, there has been strong recognition of the necessity for intercultural tolerance. In 2008 the European Union Council on Culture formally recognised intercultural competence as facilitating intercultural dialogue. In its Education and Training strategy, ET 2020, published in 2009, the European Council stated its belief that intercultural dialogue forms part of the two principal objectives for the future of education (Hoskins et al, 2011: 115). A complimentary strategy was also developed by the Council of Europe and this bore fruit in 2008 when the organization published a White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue with the subtitled ‘Living Together as Equals in Dignity’ This text underscores the position of member states in that their policy strategies are directed toward the engagement of their diverse societies. Such an approach has been referred to as intercultural dialogue and is now official Council of Europe for the promotion of social cohesion. In that context, intercultural dialogue is characterized as meaning:

an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. It operates at all levels – within societies, between the societies of Europe and between Europe and the wider world.

(Council of Europe, 2008:10)

Indeed with the rise of migration levels and mobility within the European Union, individual EU member states can no longer be described as monocultural or monolingual communities (Lentin et al, 2008). A challenging situation such as this can be best managed through the adoption of tolerant attitudes and intercultural communication, the latter of which sometimes manifests itself in the form of ‘intercultural dialogue’.

In its publication Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters: Context, concepts and theories, the Council of Europe (2009) envisions the function of intercultural
The role of intercultural dialogue is considered fundamental in creating and maintaining social cohesion, and intercultural competence is the practical foundation’ (Council of Europe, 2009: 4). In the context of language teaching in the primary classroom, ‘cultural awareness’ normally alludes to ‘awareness of the specific culture of the target country’, a process itself which entails acquiring some degree of knowledge, a certain level of engagement with it and possibly taking some initial steps to achieve some ‘understanding’ of the culture of the target country (Rantz & Horan, 2005: 210).

**Intercultural Interaction: Practical Project**

The author of this text, as an EFL teacher, has sought practical data with respect to the cultural views and motivations of his students at primary level and the professional attitudes of other colleagues in the same area within a fixed geographical area. This exercise was undertaken with the intention of informing better practice in teaching and to improve the nature of the pedagogical experience of the students being taught in this environment.

Certain details will be omitted from this description so as to protect the identity of the students involved. However, it is possible to report that this project was carried out within the geographical confines of the Vila Nova de Gaia City Council area. One particular primary school was chosen for a specific intercultural initiative. Four different year groups were involved, one each from 1st to 4th grade inclusive. As the foreign linguistic abilities of the 1st grade are very limited, and as their competencies in their own mother tongue (Portuguese) are still at a relatively formative stage, it was decided to limit this groups’ participation in the project.

In an attempt to avoid what has been found to be a highly stereotypical approach to teaching the English language to learners at all levels in Portugal, the author of this dissertation made a formal suggestion to Câmara Municipal de Vila Nova de Gaia that a change of approach would be appropriate in the context of how the English teachers it employs deliver their pedagogical material. It was suggested that in order to avoid an almost constant and universal tendency to exclusively focus on the United Kingdom and what are considered its key cultural symbols (e.g. the Queen, Big Ben, the Houses of Parliament, the Union Jack etc.) in primary EFL classes, that it would be a progressive and innovative step to look at as many other English speaking countries (and their respective cultures) as possible. Vila Nova de Gaia City Council graciously accepted
this suggestion and the practical implementation of this idea resulted in each Agrupamento Vertical within Vila Nova de Gaia being assigned a particular English speaking country.

It was further decided that each primary EFL teacher would focus on a particular theme within the annual plan they were following. As the country assigned to the author of this text was the Republic of Ireland, and the theme adopted was clothing, the nature of the project that followed, unsurprisingly, initially had to do with Irish culture and dress.

In order to gain an insight as to towards and possible motivations for particular teaching topics among primary EFL teachers within Vila Nova de Gaia, the author designed a relatively compact survey to determine their views on these matters. The results obtained proved to be quite useful into discovering why the United Kingdom would often feature as part of a particular EFL teachers’ lessons.

The author of this text resolved to create a project whereby primary EFL students would be given an opportunity to experience intercultural communication. It was intended that this exercise would increase student motivation with respect to learning EFL and that students could experience a practical example of their English language abilities yielding a specific and tangible positive result. To that end, contact was made with a partner primary school in Cork city, the Republic of Ireland’s second largest urban centre. Before proceeding any further, it must be noted that it was not possible to operate this initiative through an e-twinning scheme as the home school does not possess interactive whiteboard facilities, nor does the school possess an Internet velocity of sufficient quality to allow the project to proceed as in that way.

The idea of culture and interculturality, can also be appropriate to assist in motivating learners to become more interested and the language community they learning about. Work by Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) cited by Corbett (2003: 25) takes an expansive view of culture as to also cover products such as literature, art, artefacts, ideas such as beliefs, values and institutions, and behaviours such as customs, habits, dress, foods and leisure. Building on this approach, the author of this text chose to focus on dress and leisure of the Irish culture in order to narrow the focus and eliminate unnecessary complexities for primary EFL learners. The specific theme chosen in this case was that of clothing. Students were asked to think about clothing in the Portuguese context and what might be different about clothing in Ireland.
would involve thinking about the weather, Ireland’s geographical location and how this might affect the kind of clothing people would wear. It was decided that students would provide personally illustrated examples of traditional Portuguese clothing for their counterparts in Ireland, which it was intended would elicit a similar response on the other side. This in turn would create momentum between each set of classes to become more imaginative in what they wished to demonstrate to one another.

A very positive and enthusiastic response was received from the classes involved on the Portuguese side. Students were highly motivated in what they wished to do. Each student was asked to produce, to the best of their ability, a drawing of traditional Portuguese clothing. Since it was the students producing the material, the intention was to have students take ‘ownership’ of the material being produced and thus increase their personal interest in their involvement in the project. This strategy proved to be quite successful with students wishing to produce larger quantities of material than was necessary. It was, of course, necessary to provide some ‘scaffolding’ in that students did require some assistance to construct an appropriately structured and grammatically correct letter. However, this formed an essential part of their overall learning experience. Naturally, students needed to be motivated and it was necessary to provide something to focus their attention in disciplined manner. To this end, a story book *The Smartest Giant in Town* was used to stimulate their imagination. The story involves George the giant who is initially portrayed as being untidy and poorly dressed, a metaphor for being an outcast.

George needs to replace his old clothes and so purchases new ones in a recently opened shop in town. As he begins his journey home he encounters a series of animals in distress. He feels obliged to help and with each passing stage of the story he donates an item of his clothing in order to help those he meets. Eventually, he is reduced to his underwear and is forced to use his old clothing once more. However, his generosity has not been lost on those animals he has assisted. On returning to his home he finds a large envelope on his doorstep containing a ‘Thank You’ letter signed by all the animals he had helped as well as crown to symbolise his status as the ‘Kindest Giant in Town’.

The story develops in a humorous way, but the lesson is still clear. The story helps students understand how charity and generosity can yield dividends in the future. Prior to reading this story, students made note of the names and form of different items of clothing illustrated on the board by the teacher. So, when it came for the story to be
read, students possessed a baseline of knowledge with which to understand the basic items in the story.

Once the story had been read, the teacher asked students to think about clothing. Students were asked to think about different items of clothing in different circumstances, for example, why people in different countries wear different clothes to children/people in Portugal. Eventually, it was elicited from students that people would need to wear different clothing because of varying weather conditions. As the country in focus was the Republic of Ireland, the teacher asked students to think about what kind of weather that country might experience given its geographical location. Many responded that since it is further north than Portugal then they might expect it to be colder. Therefore, following some discussion, students concluded that one would need to wear warmer clothing for that reason.

A classroom study carried out by Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) shows that, with meaningful interaction with members of the second culture, learners can develop a more positive and tolerant mind-set with respect to members of different speech communities (Hinkel, 2011: 29). On this basis it was decided to pursue an intercultural exchange project. Preceding the formal commencement of the project, the author of this text wished to stimulate and provoke the interest of students in Ireland in general. To achieve this, students were read a short text about St. Patrick, the history of St. Patrick’s Day and a further short text about Leprechauns in Ireland and the legend of their pot of gold at the end of a rainbow.

Students learnt more about St. Patrick and how he had used a shamrock to explain the holy Trinity to the native population. Thereafter, an activity was engaged in whereby students coloured, cut-out and mounted their own shamrocks on a stick. Since 17th March (St. Patrick’s Day) fell on a Saturday, Friday 16th March 2012 was chosen to gather students into individual class groups for a group photograph with each student holding their own shamrock (which covered their face so as to protect their identity – see appendix 3). This exercise was intended to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day and as a gesture to their counterparts in the partner school in Ireland. It also served as general starting point for Irish culture.

Returning to the specific theme of clothing, students were motivated to think about clothing in different contexts. Unsurprisingly, sport was a popular starting point. By using this context, students were more motivated to think and talk about clothing in
English and to use their knowledge to name both the items of clothing and their colours in English. In this way, it was possible to revise and practice several lexical items at the same time: clothing, sporting activities and colours.

Class groups in second, third and fourth grades were asked about their favourite sport. The most common response was football. It was then necessary to determine what major teams students supported. A range of responses were received, but mostly entailed F.C. Porto, Benfica and Sporting. As students’ interest had already been stimulated at this point, it was somewhat easier to motivate them to colour the football team kits consistent with the colours of their chosen team. The next step was for students to use their existing notes (from material they recorded that had previously been taught in class) to write one or two simple sentences describing the drawing they had done. For example, a student illustrates the team kit of F.C Porto and colours it blue. Then writes a simple text beside or beneath the illustration which reads ‘This is the F.C Porto team kit. It’s blue and white. It’s my favourite team. Please tell us/me about your favourite team’.

This approach seeks to create a meaningful point of engagement to motivate students to use and appreciate the value of learning and using the English language. An approach of this nature is consistent with research which has found that before language learners can be expected to engage in any enterprise designed to enhance intercultural tolerance and respect, they must first be sufficiently motivated for this to happen. To that end, it is essential to create a relevant (and therefore meaningful) social context in which to begin this process and thus launch realistic goals of mutual understanding.

Seeking to attain some level of understanding of another (English speaking) culture, the author of this text organized the intercultural exchange between students between 2nd and 4th grades in a primary school in Vila Nova de Gaia and a partner primary school in Cork City in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). To this end and with the objective of raising self cultural awareness, a significant step in promoting intercultural competence, students were encouraged to identify local cultural practices and/or monuments in their local area that serve to illustrate the nature of social life in the community to which they belong. A variety of responses were forthcoming. For example, with 4th grade students some very fine sketches of local landmarks (such as Ponte D Luís I, Barcos de Rebelo etc.) were presented (see appendix 4). Students also produced coloured sketches of the Irish and Portuguese National Flags, drawings of
traditional Portuguese clothing, appropriately coloured National team and Premier League football kits (see appendix 5).

A virtually identical exercise was followed by the 3rd class group. Both 3rd and 4th class groups wrote some text to accompany their sketches. This text described their drawings and on the reverse side asked their counterparts in the partner school to talk about themselves in a return letter. For example, for the 3rd class, one student with a particular acumen for the English language, and whose writing was also highly legible, was asked (with some assistance) to write a cover letter (see appendix 6) to accompany the set of drawings and messages sent to their counterparts in Ireland. This first text read as follows:

Hello from Portugal!
We are learning English and our teacher is Irish.
We love English and we are learning about Ireland.
We live in Vila Nova de Gaia. It’s beautiful and it’s very big. We have a nice park with tables.
Our local football team is called the (redacted)
It’s becoming warm here now and it gets very warm here in the summer.
Our local area is called (redacted)
Please tell us about yourselves.
Class (redacted) E. B. 1 (redacted)

As previously stated, the 4th class group also produced a cover letter (see appendix 7) to accompany their work, which read:

Hello from Portugal!
We are class (redacted) and we are learning
English. Our teacher is Irish and we are learning about Ireland.
We want to know about you.
Please tell us about your school and city.
We live in Vila Nova de Gaia.
We have a bust of an old teacher, her name was (redacted). Our local church is beautiful.
The famous F.C. Porto football team trains in V. N. de Gaia.

Our local area is called (redacted) and our local football team is called (redacted)

Please tell us about yourselves.

The process of identifying suitable vocabulary to use in these texts was not too challenging for students since they had already built up a bank of material from previous classes. Students also find it relatively easy to describe the weather since it forms part of the initial exercise of every EFL class they have. Each time they come to class, students record the lesson number (enumerated in text as well as numerically so as to aid internalisation and recollection), the day of the week, date, month, year and the general state of the weather at the time of writing (for example, ‘Sunny, cloudy and warm’, or ‘Cloudy and rainy’, ‘Sunny and hot’ etc.).

A highly simplified version of the 3rd and 4th grade projects was adopted by the 2nd grade group. The intercultural project as a whole was designed to stimulate real contact between two different cultural groups, to encourage interest in the other, to further motivate students to learn the English language through the demonstration of a practical and tangible example of its utility. Students were and remain highly motivated by the exercise.

Rockboro School students were very enthusiastic about the intercultural exchange. One student produced a coloured printout of Blarney Castle (home to the Blarney Stone), one of Ireland’s most famous landmarks, located approximately eight kilometers north of Cork City. The printout also contained a text explaining that: ‘The famous Blarney Castle in Ireland was built in 1446. It is located in Blarney Village, about 8 km northwest from Cork City.’ The student further explained that their class group had visited the castle on a field trip and that they had very much enjoyed it. (see appendix 8).

Another rather thoughtful student included a printout of a map of Ireland with Cork City highlight within a shaded area of County Cork within an overall map of Ireland so as to show their counterparts in Portugal exactly where they live and where their letters came from. This page also contained information which informed students that County Cork is the largest county in the Ireland and is located on the southwest coast. (see appendix).
Neither did these students fail to mention St. Patrick’s Day and kindly sent several beautifully illustrated St. Patrick’s Day greetings cards, one of which read ‘Happy St. Patrick’s Day. It’s our national day on 17th March. There are huge parades on St. Patrick’s day’ (see appendix 9). Following from Ireland’s National Day falling on St. Patrick’s Day, students from the partner school also included a coloured printout of Ireland National Flag. The flag was described below the picture with the following text: ‘The Republic of Ireland’s flag is made of three equal-sized colours rectangles of orange, white, and green (this type of flag is called a tricolour) (see appendix 10).

The question of sporting interest was also addressed in the return letters. Rockboro School students explained that rugby is a popular sport in Ireland and in Cork. Pictures of the game with some commentary were supplied. A coat of arms of the Irish Rugby Football Union was also included, as was the coat of arms of the Munster Rugby team - the province in which Cork city is located. Such examples helped EFL learners in Portugal gain an understanding of one important and popular aspect of Irish culture: sport.

A Spanish student called Marcela also frequents the Cork partner school – a fact that helped EFL learners in the Portuguese school understand the possibility of a microcosm that schools can represent in a multicultural society. This student attempted to write a text in Portuguese, thus demonstrating their empathy and respect for Portuguese culture and thus esteem for their student counterparts in Portugal (see Appendix 11). Another student sent a printed page in which he had attempted to write in Portuguese so as to communicate with his counterparts in Portugal in their own language. A short text was included which explained how long the student was learning the Irish language (Gaeilge) to Portuguese (see Appendix 12). This helped students to appreciate individual linguistic and cultural identity of another community.

Some students from the partner school also included information in relation local monuments in Cork and mention was also made of the current President of Ireland, a gesture which was reciprocated by the home school. This reciprocation included sending coloured sketches of well-known local monuments such as castles and key infrastructural installations (e.g. Crestuma Dam on the Douro River, Vila Nova de Gaia, Santa Maria da Feira Castle, and Guimarães Castle etc. (see Appendix 13). An exercise of this nature assisted students in both countries to begin to construct a basic mental picture of the physical environment of the others local area of residence in addition to
acquiring the appropriate intercultural communicative skills necessary to successfully navigate this intercultural experience.
**Conclusion**

Humankind is unique in its ability to use highly developed modes of verbal and written means to communicate in an almost infinite variety of situations in everyday life. The passage of millennia has only served to increase the demand for better means of interpersonal and intergroup communication. With the advanced evolution of the methodologies and uses of human and financial capital due to globalization processes, greater volumes of people of varying cultural and linguistic heritage have made their homes in territories beyond their countries of birth. Where communities of dissimilar beliefs and mother tongue have come into contact, there is a strong tendency for dissonance to become a feature of that experience.

Since culture and language are inextricably bound up with each other, one cannot be interpreted without considering the other. It is for this reason that a strategy that involved both language and culture has been employed in the context of a primary EFL classroom setting. Under these circumstances it was decided to embark on an intercultural project with primary EFL students in Vila Nova de Gaia and a partner school in Cork City in the Republic of Ireland. Consistent with research conducted in tandem with this intercultural project, a strategy was employed whereby students from both communities could be given an opportunity to communicate with one another to help educate one another about the broad cultural characteristics of the other’s community. These primary aims of this project were to increase tolerance toward individuals and those who do not originate in the students own local and national communities, raise intercultural awareness and to build motivation by demonstrating the practical utility of learning English as a foreign language.

A very positive environment was created as a result of the project (already described in full earlier) and it led to directly observable changes in behaviour. After the project began students level of awareness was found to have improved significantly to such an extent that their knowledge and motivation manifested itself in their lessons in Portuguese whereby, for example, during one lesson of Estudo do Meio concerning geography, students proudly distinguished the Republic of Ireland on the map from other countries (something which they could not do before the project commenced) and correctly identified it as the country in which their English teacher was born and raised.

As the intercultural project progressed students began to receive information about the partner school’s students’ cultural environment. They also learned about their
pedagogical environment, their subject schedule and local habits and hobbies. In one particular instance, students from the home school asked (via their letters) what kind of sports were popular in the partner school. A list was provided with one item surprising the students: Gaelic Football. Students in the home school had not heard about this sport before. They duly asked the author of this text as their English teacher could provide more information about it. Further information was given. The author of this text made contact with the officer responsible for youth affairs within the national organisation in Ireland charged with the organization and regulation of Gaelic Sports (Hurling, Gaelic Football and Athletics): the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) based at their national headquarters in their stadium in Croke Park, Dublin. The officer in question was most helpful and promptly sent some materials by post which included posters, two DVDs and a guide book on the sport especially adapted for children. These resources were used to assist students learning about Gaelic football in particular, to contrast it with other sports and to teach them about Irish culture in general.

In April 2012, Vila Nova de Gaia City Council officially requested all primary EFL teachers within its functional area to provide a sample of their work within the ambit of their projects as per the English speaking country and theme they had been allocated. Following receipt of these samples of work, the city council made arrangements for the same to be put on public display in Gaia Shopping, Vila Nova de Gaia from 1st to 10th June 2012 (see Appendix 14). In this way, students, parents and the public alike gained access to the fruits of a city wide initiative affecting some 12,000 students at primary level, the vast majority of whom study English at primary level. A very large range of themes were explored by EFL teachers in Vila Nova de Gaia as a result of the suggestion put forward by the author of this text, ranging from traditional Irish dancer’s clothing, religious festivals in India, Scottish clans and castles, England, the Queen, London and British monuments, Native American Indians, Jamaican dolls, the built environment in South Africa, Maori Masks from New Zealand, seafarers in Malta, kits in Singapore, Australian sport and cuisine etc.

From the perspective of many primary EFL students in the home school of the intercultural project directed by the author of this text, this intercultural initiative represented one of the first significant forays into learning about the international community, in discovering and learning about another country and its culture. For many, it was an education simply to become aware of a different way of life, a different
diet, clothing, music, dance and sport etc. In many ways, communicating with other students of their own age with similar interests provided an ideal opportunity to apply the vocabulary they had learnt in class throughout the year to be put to a meaningful use that yielded a tangible and useful result for them personally. These students were also proud to become de facto ambassadors for their own country and culture in that they assumed the role of guiding children of their own age in another country through a broad overview of life in Portugal for children of that age.

It is hoped that this intercultural exercise will sow the seeds of tolerance in the students of today, who will of course become the citizens of tomorrow. Arguably, it is only through providing a theoretical framework from which to build a solid pedagogical approach to tackling intolerance in the form of racial prejudice can genuine cohesion be built in the future. Each culture presents its own challenges for members of its community. However, the reality is that ordinary people can affect real change if they are aware of the power they have and are taught the skills they need at a young age:

Culture is something that is continuously recreated and maintained by members of a community, rather than defined and imposed by a social hierarchy. Intercultural educators recognize this to the extent that our work often focuses on improving relationships in settings where power imbalances, stereotyping, and discrimination have traditionally undermined opportunities for all voices to be heard and valued.

(Chamberlin-Quinlisk and Senyshn, 2012: 15)

Therefore, young learners can become responsible, respectful citizens by embracing a tolerant intercultural approach with respect to members of other cultural and linguistic communities – a key component of a modern, cohesive society.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey of EFL teachers

Acha que o ensino da língua inglesa é...

Essencial

---

Na sua opinião, os seus alunos estão conscientes da existência de culturas diferentes da sua?

Muito

---

Essencial

---

Importante
Os seus alunos estão receptivos à aprendizagem de novas línguas e culturas?

- Nunca
- Raramente
- Às vezes
- Quase sempre
- Sempre

Com que frequência lê materiais relativos ao ensino da língua e cultura inglesa?

- Nunca
- Raramente
- Às vezes
- Frequentemente
Para si o que significa "conhecer outras culturas"?

- Conhecer os hábitos de outros países
- Ler livros cuja ação se passe noutros países
- Visitar outros países
- Falar com pessoas de outros países
- Falar uma língua estrangeira

Na sua opinião, os materiais pedagógicos disponíveis são suficientes para que os alunos aprendam uma língua e a sua respectiva cultura?

- Não
- Sim
Já visitou algum país em que o inglês é a língua oficial?

Se sim, quais?
Se sim, porque é que visitou esse(s) país(es)?

Motivos profissionais
Motivos académicos
Família
Férias

Na sua opinião, o ensino da língua e cultura inglesa deve concentrar-se em que países?

EUA
Inglaterra
Canadá
Austrália
Outros
República da Irlanda
Onde é que adquire informação sobre a cultura e língua inglesa?

- Materiais pedagógicos
- Contato com falantes nativos
- Cursos e ações de formação
- Institutos (ex. British Council)
- Rádio
- Televisão
- Internet
Appendix 2: Survey of EFL students

Achas que é importante aprender a língua inglesa e sobre os países onde esta língua é falada?

Não 4.5
Sim 95.5

Se sim, porquê?

- Pedido dos pais
- Interesse pessoal
- Motivação profissional e financeira
- Razões académicas
- Viagens/ turismo
Onde é que costumas ouvir falar sobre a língua inglesa e os países onde esta é a língua oficial?

- Professor
- Falantes Nativos
- Família
- Rádio
- Televisão
- Livros
- Jornais e revistas
- A internet

Já visitaste algum país estrangeiro?

- Não: 66.7%
- Sim: 33.3%
Já visitaste algum país em que a língua oficial é o inglês?

Não | 100
Sim | 0

Portugal é

O país mais importante do Mundo | 9.5
O país mais importante da Europa | 14.3
Mais importante do que alguns países | 0
Tão importante como qualquer outro país | 76.2
### O que achas dos estrangeiros?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinião</th>
<th>Porcentagem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Não deviam deixar que eles vissem para Portugal</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Não deviam estar em Portugal</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>É me indiferente</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>São benvindos a Portugal</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>São muito benvindos a Portugal</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Como é que achas que devemos tratar os estrangeiros quando estão em Portugal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinião</th>
<th>Porcentagem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ser muito antipático</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ser antipáticos</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignorar</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ser simpáticos</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajudar e respeitar</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Na tua opinião, aprender a língua inglesa é...

- Não é importante: 0
- Importante: 19.1
- Muito importante: 57.1
- Essencial: 23.8

Consegues dizer o nome de quantos países onde a língua oficial é o inglês?

- 4: 0
- 3: 3
- 2: 10
- 1: 18
Appendix 3: St. Patrick’s Day/Student Shamrocks
Appendix 4: Ponte D. Luís/Barcos de Rebelo

This is the famous D. Luís Bridge and the River Douro in Vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal.
This is the famous D. Luis Bridge and the River Douro in Vila Nova de Gaia and Porto.

"Hello from Portugal"  Isabel

4A
Appendix 5: Football Kits/Flags

This is the Portuguese National Kit. It's green, white, and red.
This is the Portuguese national kit. It's red, green, and yellow.

Portugues
Rui Pedro
ROY Petro
John
Ireland
Portugal and Ireland
Friends

Portugal
Hello from Portugal!

I Love Ireland
Appendix 6: Cover letter

May 2012

Dear Friends,
Thank you very much for your letters and beautiful drawings.
We love your messages and postcards.
Your photos were very nice.
Can school be different?
We don’t have a uniform.
We play football, handball, basketball, gaelic football, and rugby.
We study Portuguese, Mathematics, English, P.E., Music.
Best wishes from Portugal.
Miguel Armbrós

Emma
Catarina

CLASS 3A
Hello from Portugal!

"We are class 4A and we are learning: English. Our teacher is Irish and we are learning about Ireland.

"We want to know about you.
Please tell us about your school and city.
"We live in "Casa Nova de Gaia.
"We have a bust of an old teacher her name was Maria Jeronima de Carvalho. Our local church is beautiful. The famous F.C. Porto football team trains in "Casa Nova de Gaia.

Our local area is called Sandim and our football team is called the Sandim Dragons (Dragões Sandinenses).

Please tell us about yourselves.

Erica 4A"
Hello from Ireland!
I think you would like to know about Munster rugby team. Cork is a county in the Province of Munster. They came up to their group in the Heineken Cup (Europe’s rugby tournament). They have such good players. They have a brilliant winger called Doug Howard. He’s from New Zealand and is fast, strong and tall. They a fantastic fullback called Ronan O’Gara! He can score a kick from anywhere.

By for now, Harry Petch
Hello from Ireland.

Robert Bumby School,
Broomy Road,
Co. Cork.
15th March 2012.

Dear you 3 pupils,

Hello from Ireland!

Thank you for your lovely letters. I thought they were lovely! I thought you might want to know about our school gardens. We have trained bees. We have all kinds of plants. We had lots of fun planting them. We will grow lots of other vegetables like peas, beans, and lettuce. Our Easter holidays will be in 2 weeks.

'Bye for now.
Daniel Keely.
Appendix 8: Rockboro School & Blarney Castle
The famous Blarney Castle in Ireland was built in 1446. It is located in Blarney Village, about 8 km northwest from Cork city.

We went on a field trip to Blarney Castle. It was great fun.
Appendix 9: St. Patrick’s Day Cards
Happy St. Patrick's Day from Ireland
Happy Saint Patrick's Day! It's our national day on the 17th of March.
Appendix 10: Irish Tricolour

The Republic of Ireland's flag is made of three equal-sized rectangles of orange, white, and green (this type of flag is called a tricolor).
A língua irlandesa é complicado, mas quando você pegar o jeito da coisa não é que difícil, este é apenas o meu segundo ano lerning irlandês e eu tenho um A + em irish. Here são um casal de irlandeses transleshons de frases irlandês.

qual é o seu nome=cad is ainm duit
quantos anos você tem=cén aois atá tú
meu nome é=Is é mo ainm
eu sou dez anos=tá mé deich mbliana d'aois
tenho onze anos de idade=tá mé aon bhlíain déag d'aois
eu amo o futebol tanto= is breá liom peil an oiread sin
I sorte do irlandês= Ádh mór ar an nGaeilge
Eu amo o dia de Saint Patrick= Is breá liom an lá Naomh Pádraig

Por Jack Riordan
Appendix 12: Portuguese letter from Ireland

Vi meu nome é marcel e eu sou 9 anos e eu ir para a escola rockboro e vici em Espanha para 7 years. And i vived in Irlanda por dois anos.

This is a harp violin banjo; a accordion and banon.

Irish Musical Instrument They are carved from wood.

By marcel age 10
Appendix 13: Local monuments: Crestuma Dam, Guimarães Castle, Santa Maria da Feira Castle.
Appendix 14: Exposition in Gaia Shopping Centre, Vila Nova de Gaia
Trabalhos elaborados pelos alunos do 1º ciclo do Ensino Básico das escolas do Concelho de Vila Nova de Gaia, no âmbito das atividades de enriquecimento curricular da Área de Ensino de Inglês, tendo por base países de língua oficial inglesa.