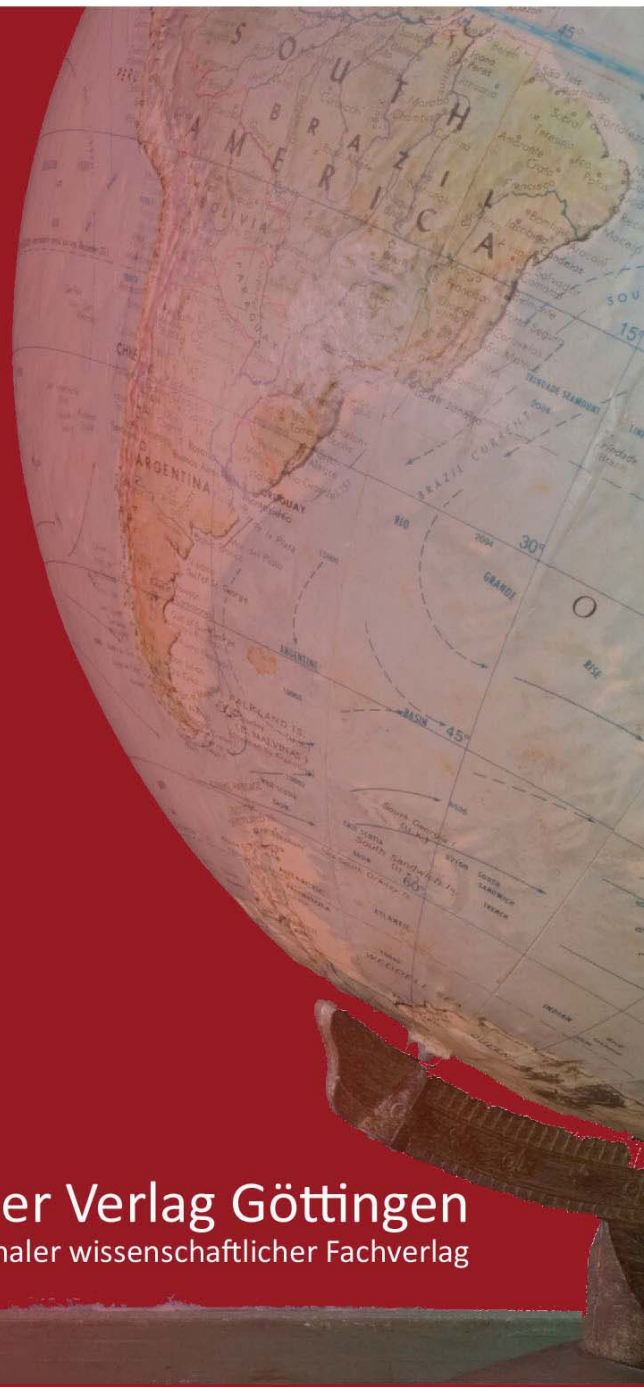


Parnaz Kianiparsa

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Teachers' and Students' Subjective  
Theories on CLT Concerning  
Cross-Cultural Awareness  
in Germany, Iran,  
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Telefon: 0551-54724-0

Telefax: 0551-54724-21

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## Abstract

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a teaching approach which was first introduced in the late 1960s in the US and UK and shifted the focus of language teaching from language awareness to language use and function. CLT aims to make students communicatively competent in terms not only of linguistic, but also socio-linguistic and strategic competence. CLT is seen as one of the approaches which can help learners develop their skills, knowledge, and abilities for effective communication, resulting in its worldwide application in different contexts. However, from the outset, there was no clear agreement about its principles and techniques, and teachers faced problems in describing and applying it. Consequently, CLT has been broadly examined and investigated in different teaching contexts, especially EFL settings. However, there are only a few studies which explore the appropriacy and cultural components of this approach in international contexts. This study was therefore designed to explore upper-secondary school teacher and student attitudes and beliefs towards: (1) the implementation of CLT and their English classes and (2) the inclusion of cultural and intercultural aspects in the principles of CLT and as a result their English classes, with a focus on the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), as determined by current foreign language teaching policy in many countries.

A sample of 83 EFL teachers and 1049 students was chosen in Germany, Iran, Sweden and the Netherlands, and a mixed method approach was used to collect perceptions of CLT and its cultural components through questionnaires for both teachers and students, and semi-structured interviews and two open-ended questions (teachers only) for qualitative data. SPSS for Windows was used to calculate frequencies, percentages and run Chi-Square tests to compare the opinions of the respondents in each country. The information collected from the teachers' interviews and open-ended questions was codified, categorized, and examined using conventional content analysis.

It was found that teachers have a favorable attitude towards using CLT in their classrooms, but face some difficulties in implementing it because of contextual factors such as student learning styles and proficiency, national examinations, curricula and time constraints. European teachers felt that CLT was an appropriate approach, while Iranian participants had the opposite opinion. It was revealed that teachers have some misconceptions of the principles of CLT, and students still have a positive attitude towards teacher authority



and the constant correction of errors by their teachers. With the exception of the Dutch, students in this sample had positive attitudes towards their English classes. As for the second aim in this study, the majority of teachers believe that CLT focuses mostly on the culture of the target countries, i.e. Anglo-American contexts, and that it can help students develop intercultural awareness by considering their native culture, fostering positive attitudes towards, and understanding others, creating a sense of curiosity, and making students think critically. Students, excepting the Dutch, thought along similar lines.

The findings of this study also provide some implications for administrators, policy makers, curriculum and test designers as well as EFL teacher education for developing a better perspective towards the implementation of CLT and the integration of culture into language teaching in the classroom. Likewise, suggestions for further research are provided.

**Key words:** Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Teachers' and Students' Beliefs, EFL Contexts, Intercultural/Cross-Cultural Awareness



## Zusammenfassung

Der kommunikative Ansatz ist eine Lehrmethode, die erstmals in den späten 1960er Jahren in den USA und Großbritannien eingeführt wurde und dadurch verlagerte sich der Schwerpunkt des Sprachunterrichts vom Sprachbewusstsein zur Sprachverwendung und Funktion. Der kommunikative Ansatz zielt darauf ab, dass die Schüler kommunikativ kompetent werden, nicht nur bezüglich ihrer linguistischen, sondern auch ihrer soziolinguistischen und strategischen Kompetenz. Dieser Ansatz wird als einer der Ansätze betrachtet, die den Lernenden helfen können, ihre Fertigkeiten, ihr Wissen und Können für eine effektive Kommunikation zu entwickeln. Aus diesem Grund wird er weltweit in verschiedenen Kontexten angewandt, aber dennoch gab es von Anfang an keine klare Vereinbarung über seine Prinzipien und Techniken, und die Lehrer wurden mit diesem Problem bei der Beschreibung und der Anwendung dieses Ansatzes konfrontiert. Infolgedessen ist dieser Ansatz weitgehend in verschiedenen Unterrichtskontexten, insbesondere im Bereich Englisch als Fremdsprache, untersucht worden, aber es gibt nur wenige Studien, die die Angemessenheit und kulturellen Komponenten dieses Ansatzes im internationalen Kontext erforscht haben. Diese Studie wurde daher entwickelt, um die Einstellungen und subjektive Theorien der Lehrer und Schüler, die in der Oberstufe unterrichteten und lernten, in Bezug auf (1) die Durchführung des kommunikativen Ansatzes und ihres Englischunterrichts und (2) die Einbeziehung von kulturellen und interkulturellen Aspekten in den kommunikativen Ansatz und demzufolge in ihren Englischunterricht, zu erforschen. Der Schwerpunkt lag hierbei auf der Untersuchung der Entwicklung von interkultureller Kommunikationsfähigkeit, die in vielen Ländern ein sehr aktuelles Ziel im Fremdsprachenunterricht darstellt.

Eine Stichprobe von 83 Englischlehrern und 1049 Schülern in Deutschland, dem Iran, den Niederlanden und Schweden wurde ausgewählt und eine gemischte Forschungsmethode wurde verwendet, um Einblick in die Wahrnehmung des kommunikativen Ansatzes und seine kulturellen Komponenten durch Fragebögen für Lehrer und Schüler, und semi-strukturierte Interviews und zwei offene Fragen (nur Lehrer) zu gewinnen. SPSS für Windows wurde verwendet, um Frequenzen und Prozentsätze zu berechnen. Außerdem wurden Chi-Quadrat-Tests durchgeführt, damit die Meinungen der Befragten in jedem Land verglichen werden können. Die durch die Lehrerinterviews und offene Fragen gewonnenen Informationen wurden kodiert, kategorisiert und mit der konventionellen Inhaltsanalyse untersucht.





Die Ergebnisse zeigten, dass die Lehrer, trotz einiger Schwierigkeiten (z.B. Lernstile und Fertigkeiten der Schüler, nationale Prüfungen, Lehrpläne und Zeitdruck), eine positive Einstellung gegenüber dem kommunikativen Ansatz in ihren Klassenzimmern hatten. Europäische Lehrer hatten das Gefühl, dass der kommunikative Ansatz ein geeigneter Ansatz sei, während die iranischen Teilnehmer gegenteiliger Meinung waren. Es zeigte sich, dass es bei den Lehrern einige Missverständnisse bezüglich der Grundsätze des kommunikativen Ansatzes gab, und die Schüler immer noch eine positive Einstellung zur Lehrer Autorität und der ständigen Korrektur der Fehler durch ihre Lehrer hatten. Mit Ausnahme der niederländischen Schüler, hatte in dieser Stichprobe die Mehrheit der Schüler aller anderen Nationen eine positive Einstellung gegenüber ihrem Englischunterricht. In Bezug auf das zweite Ziel dieser Studie glaubt die Mehrheit der Lehrer, dass der kommunikative Ansatz hauptsächlich auf die Kultur der Zielländer, d.h. angloamerikanische Kontexte fokussiert ist, und er den Schülern helfen kann, ein interkulturelles Bewusstsein durch die Berücksichtigung ihrer eigenen Kultur, positive Einstellungen gegenüber den anderen, Fremdverstehen und ein Gefühl der Neugier zu entwickeln. Die Schüler, mit Ausnahme der niederländischen, sind ähnlicher Auffassung.

Die Ergebnisse dieser Studie geben einige Implikationen für Administratoren, politische Entscheidungsträger, Lehrpläne und Test Designer sowie für die Lehrerbildung bezüglich der Umsetzung des kommunikativen Ansatzes und der Integration von Kultur in den Sprachunterricht im Klassenzimmer. Ebenso werden Anregungen für weitere Forschung gegeben.

**Stichwörter:** kommunikativer Ansatz, subjektive Theorien der Lehrer und Schüler, interkulturelles Bewusstsein, Fremdsprachenkontexte



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## **Dedication**

***To my beloved parents, Sedigheh & Ali***

***To my dear brother, Bahman***





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## Abbreviations Used

*ALM (Audiolingual Method)*

*CBI (Content-Based Instruction)*

*CC (Communicative Competence)*

*CLT (Communicative Language Teaching)*

*DM (Direct Method)*

*EFL (English as a Foreign Language)*

*ELF (English as Lingua Franca)*

*ELT (English Language Teaching)*

*ESL (English as a Second Language)*

*FL (Foreign Language)*

*GTM (Grammar-Translation Method)*

*IC (Intercultural Competence)*

*ICC (Intercultural Communicative Competence)*

*L1 (First Language)*

*L2 (Second Language)*

*Non-NS (Non-Native Speaker)*

*NS (Native Speaker)*

*SL (Second Language)*

*TBI (Task-Based Instruction)*

*TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching)*



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### **1.1. Background**

The concept of language teaching methods has a long tradition in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), and it has been affected by the rise and fall of different methods throughout its development (Richards & Renandya, 2002). One of the most conventional approaches or methods of Foreign Language (FL) and Second Language (SL) teaching is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which was developed during the 1960s and 1970s based on Hymes' (1972) and Canale and Swain's theories (1980) of language teaching, referred to as "Communicative Competence (CC)".

Following the drawbacks of the Audiolingual Method (ALM) as the dominant teaching method in the mid-1960s, a new tendency taking into account the functional and communicative aspects of language took hold in the field of language teaching and led to an emphasis on communicative rather than structural proficiency (Richards & Rogers, 2001). Thus, language teaching basically focused on a theory of language as communication with the goal of promoting what Hymes (1972) calls Communicative Competence. Hymes proposes this term as a reaction to Chomsky's theory of "Competence." According to Chomsky (1965, as cited in Brumfit & Johnson, 1979), the purpose of linguistic theory is to describe the abilities of the speaker to enable him/her to use grammatically correct sentences in a language. However, Hymes believes that this view of linguistic theory is totally superficial and suggests that linguistic theory should be seen as part of a general theory embracing communication and culture. Hymes states that in order for a speaker to be communicatively competent, she/he should know how to use the language appropriately in different situations (Wilkins, 1976; Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Saville-Troike, 2003). In other words, the term CC refers to the learner's ability to use the target language linguistically and contextually in an effective and appropriate way (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008).

Hymes' theory of CC was developed by other theorists as well. Two of the best known were Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), who broadened the concept of CC into four different competences, i.e. **grammatical competence, sociological competence, dis-**



**course competence, and strategic competence.** These theories were the origin of the Communicative Approach or CLT in the history of language education. Considering these four competences, CLT can be defined as a kind of method that aims at the development of language acquisition, at the same time fostering expression, understanding and negotiation of meaning (Kumaravadivelu, 1993). Thus, as Brown (1994) states, its main goal is to promote learners' communicative competence before linguistic competence by focusing on pragmatic, genuine, and functional use of the language while emphasizing fluency to make the students meaningfully involved. Within this framework, CLT has the following features:

1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
2. The primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication.
3. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
4. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse (Richards & Rogers, 2001: 161).

The proponents of CLT believe that the main aim of language teaching is to promote learners' abilities to communicate with others, and to reach this goal, it is necessary to avoid overemphasizing grammar and formal structure (Widdowson, 1978; Littlewood, 1981). They claim that the main problem for learners is their inability to use the language appropriately (Widdowson, 1972). According to Littlewood (1981), many features of language learning can be realized through natural processes, which happen when the learner tries to use the language for communication. In other words, CLT was developed at that time to solve the problem of learners who may be grammatically competent, but are not able to communicate appropriately in different situations (Johnson, 1979). Thus, this approach went against the previous methods, which focused on structural/grammatical instruction, since, as Brumfit (1984: 27) says ...

[...] language cannot be thought of solely as a system of formal elements without taking away its major functions. A description of language which is independent of its function is unlikely to have much value to teachers and students who are concerned with developing a capacity to exploit the functional possibility of a language.

In summary, the Communicative Approach or CLT suggests that target language-based communicative competence is necessary for FL learners to participate entirely in the target language culture. In order to make language learners communicatively competent, the tar-



get language culture and the native speakers are among the most important elements. Learners are supposed to acquire structural knowledge of the target language and at the same time be able to use these forms in various social situations appropriately, coherently, and strategically effectively. Hence, learning a FL means acquiring new cultural knowledge and views, reflecting those of target language culture and its speakers (Widdowson, 1994; Alptekin, 2002; Najafi Sarem, 2010).

Considering the principles of CLT, there is no doubt that in learning a second or a foreign language, beside linguistic knowledge, learners should be able to use various ways or strategies to communicate appropriately with others through the target language. However, the implementation of CLT is not easy as there is a need to understand the concept of communicative competence in diverse instructional settings (Kamiya, 2005; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2005). According to Wesche and Skehan (2002: 208), communicative classrooms generally have the following characteristics:

1. Activities that require frequent interaction among learners or with other interlocutors to exchange information and solve problems;
2. Use of authentic (non-pedagogic) texts and communication activities linked to “real-world” contexts, often emphasizing links across written and spoken modes and channels;
3. Approaches that are learner-centered in that they take into account learners’ background, language needs, and goals and generally allow learners some creativity and role in instructional decisions.

To realize these features, CLT may be structured around or comprise ...

1. Instruction that emphasizes cooperative learning such as group and pair work;
2. Opportunities for learners to focus on the learning process with the goal of improving their ability to learn language in context;
3. Communicative tasks linked to curricular goals as the basic organizing unit for language instruction;
4. Substantive content, often school subject matter from non-language disciplines, that is learned as a vehicle for language development, as well as for its inherent value (Wesche & Skehan, 2002: 208).





Matching these features to different teaching contexts may not be a simple task for the FL teachers and practitioners since they always face some practical challenges which should be overcome before applying this approach. These challenges are ...

- difficulties with classroom management, especially with large classes, and teachers' resulting fear that they may lose control;
- new organizational skills required by some activities such as pair or group work;
- students' inadequate language proficiency, which may lead them to use the mother tongue (or only minimal English) rather than trying to 'stretch' their English competence;
- excessive demands on teachers' own language skills, if they themselves have had limited experience of communicating in English;
- common conceptions that formal learning must involve item-by-item progression through a syllabus rather than the less observable holistic learning that occurs in communication;
- common conceptions that the teacher's role is to transmit knowledge rather than act as a facilitator of learning and supporter of autonomy;
- the negative 'washback' effect of public examinations based on pencil-and-paper tests which focus on discrete items and do not prioritize communication;
- Resistance from students and parents, who fear that important examination results may suffer as a result of the new approach (Littlewood, 2013: 5).

For example, in her survey on teachers' attitudes in the Asia-Pacific region, Butler (2011: 36) suggests some challenges in the implementation of some approaches like CLT and Task-Based Language Learning (TBLT) which include ...

- (a) conceptual constraints (e.g., conflicts with local values and misconceptions regarding CLT/TBLT);
- (b) classroom-level constraints (e.g., various student and teacher-related factors, classroom management practices, and resource availability);
- (c) societal-institutional level constraints (e.g., curricula and examination systems).

Likewise, Scollon (1999) says that although the tenets and practices of CLT may seem to be natural in the West, some of them do not conform to the Chinese context and are in contrast with traditional beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning in China. In a similar vein, Ellis (1996) poses questions about the compatibility of CLT with Vietnamese learners,



who believe in social uses of language since in Vietnam knowing and using the suitable linguistic forms in interpersonal interactions is extremely important.

Aside from these contextual factors, in some cases, reports even indicate a lack of success of this approach due to the inefficiency of the teachers themselves. For instance, in her study of 101 local secondary school teachers of English in Greece, Karavas-Doukas (1996) finds out that there are some problems concerning teachers' misunderstanding of the very nature of CLT. Her results reveal that even when using communicative textbooks, teachers are willing to go back to their old ways of teaching based on the traditional teacher-centered practices. CLT principles are rarely followed by teachers in the classroom and only limited traces of these principles have been found in syllabuses, lesson plans, and contents (Sze, 1992; Anderson, 1993; Ye, 2007; Christ & Makarani, 2009). This serves to highlight the importance of teachers' beliefs about language learning and teaching in influencing their decision making processes (Johnson, 1994; Richards, 1998).

Therefore, in spite of the popularity of CLT, several issues regarding this approach have been raised in view of its cultural imposition and appropriateness in different contexts (Tanaka, 2009), its lack of attention to the integration of culture in language teaching as well as the consideration of the native culture of the learners in the process of teaching the language (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999). It has been suggested that although CLT tends to focus on norms of social interaction in a socio-cultural community, i.e. native speakers in the target culture, it does not pay attention to the varieties of interactional norms between socio-cultural groups (Laopongharn & Sercombe, 2009). In other words, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners should not only be communicatively competent in different situations, but they should also have the "ability to relate effectively and appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts" (Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 2003: 244). Therefore, the goal of FL teaching should be to: (a) help the learners to gain language and communicative competence and (b) develop Intercultural Competence (IC) since language and communication are two significant components of culture (Wei & Xiao-mei, 2009). As Wei (2005: 56) states, language is considered both as a means of communication as well as a culture. Language and culture cannot be considered in isolation.

Nowadays, because of the concept of globalization, the relationship between culture and language has become more and more important, and the goal of language learning has been shifted towards cultural learning and competence in serving multilingual communities and



global society (see Fantini, 1995, as cited in Fat, 2004). In a globalized world, people must be provided with the knowledge and skills to behave appropriately in a specific culture (Committee for Economic Development, 2006). However, communicative competence or CLT fails to consider the lingua franca status of English due to its strict faithfulness to Native Speaker (NS) norms within the target language culture. Today, English as an international language is considered as a common medium between many people in international interactions. In such situations, much communication in English includes non-native speaker-non-native speaker interactions. Therefore, teachers should try to make students ready for the encounters with not only the native speakers in English speaking countries, but also with the non-native speakers who speak English as a second or foreign language (Najafi Sarem & Qasemi, 2010). According to Mendes and Moreira (2005: 1) ...

Economic Internationalization as well as cultural globalization, increased mobility and ease of access to information constitute cultural and communicative challenges in today's world. The inevitability of encounter with otherness and the multiplicity of interactions this provokes, in which diverse discursive communities are constituted, place culture and communication at the centre of a fundamental process of redefinition of individual and social identities.

The concept of globalization and its effect on our interactions with others has a great influence on the nature of teaching and learning languages. Consequently, language learning should not only aim to develop communicative competence in a FL, which helps a learner to act linguistically, socio-linguistically, and with pragmatic appropriateness in a FL (Council of Europe, 2001), but also, it should consider Intercultural Competence (IC), which is "the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures" (Meyer, 1991: 138). This definition enlarges the concept of CC to include IC. According to Byram (1997: 42), a successful interaction does not result from an effective exchange of information, which was the goal of CLT, but from "the ability to decentre and take up the other's perspective on their own culture, anticipating and where possible, resolving dysfunctions in communication and behavior." It is a way of increasing learners' capability to discuss meanings across languages and cultures and make them ready for living in this globalized world (Ho, 2009). From this international point of view, the NS is not considered as an ideal norm anymore, and is now replaced by a new model called the intercultural speaker (Kramersch, 1998). This means that a language learner should act as a kind of mediator between two cultures, interpret other in-



sights and viewpoints and examine taken-for-granted opinions and perceptions in his/her own society. Thus, CC is combined with IC to make ICC (Byram & Zarate, 1997).

In summary, nowadays, as Sercu (2005: 1-2) says ...

Bringing a foreign language to the classroom means connecting learners to a world that is culturally different from their own. Therefore, all foreign language educators are now expected to exploit this potential and promote the acquisition of intercultural competence in their learners. The objective of language learning is no longer defined in terms of the acquisition of communicative competence in a foreign language. Teachers are now required to teach intercultural communicative competence.

## ***1.2. Statement of the Problem and Research Questions***

Many factors paved the way for the motivation of this study, such as the importance of promoting ICC in language teaching, the popularity of CLT in language teaching classrooms, language teachers' opinions towards the strengths and weaknesses of CLT in view of cross-cultural awareness and its appropriateness in EFL contexts, and a lack of comparative studies concerning cultural and intercultural elements in CLT.

It is believed that teachers' beliefs and opinions can have a crucial impact on the selection of techniques, activities, and methods and even the application of a method in the classroom (Al-Mekhlafi, 2011). For example, Larsen-Freeman (2000: X) states ...

Any method is going to be shaped by a teacher's own understanding, beliefs, style, and level of experience. Teachers are not mere conveyer belts delivering language through flexible prescribed and proscribed behaviors; they are professionals who can, in the best of all worlds, make their own decisions.

According to Bandura and Sercu (2005), studies about teachers' beliefs have shown that teachers' insights have a direct influence on their teaching practice in the classroom. Teachers' individual and inherent theories of learning can be revealed in their day-to-day teaching. For example, "a language teacher who believes in the value of direct correction of oral mistakes will not wait until after a pupil has finished speaking to remark on any mistakes the pupil has made. A teacher who does not believe in the value of group work will prefer pair work, individual work, or whole class work to group work" (Bandura & Sercu, 2005: 75). Therefore, these theories and perceptions can strongly affect the way a teacher evaluates the new instructional goals and techniques (Henderson, 2002, as cited in Sercu, et al., 2005). Accordingly, teachers' ideas about CLT and its implementation in their classroom can be dif-



ferent as well. It has been suggested that since the concept of CLT is a Western idea and method, it may not fit into other contexts, especially EFL classrooms in non-Western cultural environments. Furthermore, there are a lot of misunderstandings regarding its theory and practice among EFL teachers. An overview on the literature of language teaching indicates that EFL teachers' attitudes, beliefs and practices towards CLT are different from each other based on how they understand its concept in their own contexts. The available evidence reveals that teachers often have deficient and inaccurate perceptions of the concept of CLT, and there are significant differences within teachers' understandings of CLT and between teachers and researchers (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006).

In a similar manner, Karavas-Doukas (1996: 187) states that "the few small-scale classroom studies that have been carried out seem to suggest that communicative classrooms are rare. While most teachers profess to be following a communicative approach, in practice they are following more traditional approaches." Moreover, Savignon (2002) confirms the fact that what teachers say does not often correspond to their classroom practice. These studies suggest that teachers may sometimes have to replace and modify the principles of the methods in order to adapt them to their own contexts and especially the needs of their learners since, as Mitchell (1994) suggests, in modern language teaching, the main concerns are to consider the needs and interests of the learners and to smooth the progress of learning. Within this framework, learners' opinions about teaching methods and approaches can also be effective in language education since as Savignon (1997: 107) maintains, "if all the variables in L2 acquisition could be identified and the many intricate patterns of interaction between learner and learning context described, ultimate success in learning to use a second language most likely would be seen to depend on the attitude of the learner." Thus, learners' perspectives towards learning cannot be overlooked, especially when there is a disparity between teachers' beliefs and learners' beliefs (Schulz, 1996). This discrepancy is also important in the context of instructional practices; for example, in a study by Savignon and Wang (2003: 283) on learners' views towards the instructional practices at their schools in Taiwan, the results show that there is "a mismatch between the needs and preferences of English language learners in Taiwan and their perceptions of instructional practice. Instructional practice in secondary schools is described as generally form-focused in nature;" however, "an analysis of attitudes toward English teaching and learning in general shows learner preference for a meaning-based approach." Thus, learners' perception about the effective-



ness of communicative practices in language learning should be considered as an essential factor in making pedagogical decisions (Savignon & Wang, 2003).

Against this background, although the Communicative Approach or CLT was adopted and disseminated by publishers, applied linguists, and language specialists all over the world, teachers did not always find it easy to apply, due to some contextual factors in different environments (Borg, 2009). In some situations, it was even considered as “cultural imperialism” since the focus of this approach and its accompanying materials is mostly on Britain and the United States of America (USA), where it was developed. Consequently, it is believed that the learners are obliged to accept and follow some practices and habits from these two countries instead of the ‘correct ones’ in their own contexts. This may hinder the establishment of a critical dialogue with the other culture (Richards & Rogers, 2001). In today’s world, the purpose of language teaching is to encourage students to interact with other people and respect them. The aim, as Byram (1997) says, is to help the learners to become critical thinkers. Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002) insist that teachers have a duty to develop this competence in students as much as knowledge about culture. To do so, teachers should pay attention to the students’ own culture as well. In other words, the learners’ native language and culture need to be considered and valued, while a positive attitude and feeling is encouraged towards the target culture (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). Similarly, Clark (1990: 7, as cited in Agudelo, 2007) says that “competent teachers understand that positive self-concept and positive identification with one’s culture is the basis for academic success.”

On the other hand, in spite of the recommendations of European and national curricula for language teaching, language education and teachers are still focusing on the development of linguistic competence. However, knowing about grammar rules, vocabulary, and cultural information are not enough to help non-native speakers negotiate and interact in the FL. Additionally, native or native-like fluency alone will not suffice to make the non-native speakers communicate with people from other cultures successfully either. Unfortunately, studies indicate that cultural dimensions of language teaching are still not considered as important as the linguistic ones (Byram & Risager, 1999; Sercu, 2005). Language teachers continue to consider culture as subjects such as literature, geography, and arts. Although these kinds of cultural information are significant, there are other similarly essential components of culture that should be taken into account in SL and FL classrooms. Subjects such as literature, geography, history and arts are often considered as “civilization” or “big C” cul-



ture as opposed to the group of “little c” culture, which refers to the less visible and tangible elements, and are not usually taught as separate subjects in schools. However, Bennett (1997: 16) correctly states that “to avoid becoming a fluent fool, we need to understand more completely the cultural dimension of language.” In this sense, as Crozet and Liddicoat (1999) suggest, two important issues should be considered in any language teaching method: (1) the important link between language and culture and (2) the attention to the self and others, i.e. the local culture of the students and the target culture. These two concepts lead us to the development of ICC, which is considered as a crucial competence in today’s world.

Aside from this significant role of culture in language teaching, the contextual appropriateness and constraints of a teaching method also has an essential place in every setting. A method which can be successful in one environment may not necessarily be beneficial in another (Bax, 2003). As a result, before applying a method in a specific context, the first points to be considered should be the identification of key aspects of the setting and the implementation of a context analysis (Bax, 2003).

There have been many attempts to introduce the concept of CLT into EFL contexts either based on EFL countries’ own programs or through international projects. On the whole, such attempts have not met with great success (Brindley & Hood, 1990), and applying CLT has often proved challenging (Kirkpatrick, 1984; Sano, Takahashi, & Yoneyama, 1984; Gonzalez, 1985; Valdes & Jhones, 1991; Anderson, 1993; Ellis, 1994, 1996; Chick, 1996; Shamin, 1996). This raises several questions, for example: why is it sometimes difficult to use CLT in the EFL classroom? Is this approach appropriate for EFL contexts? Some experts believe that teachers’ perceptions about CLT and its norms can have a determining effect on its ultimate success or failure in a particular context (Kelly, 1980; Markee, 1997).

Because of the change in the goal of language learning towards cultural learning and competence, and the problem of EFL teachers in implementing CLT in their own contexts, a study into the cultural appropriateness of CLT to EFL learners and its claims of development of cultural awareness among them can shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of this approach in terms of incorporation of IC and its compatibility with different contexts, especially European ones. While many studies have been conducted into the appropriateness and implementation of CLT in Asian contexts, there is a lack of research concerning this issue in Europe, which may result from the idea that CLT is a Western Method and so fits easily into West Europe. However, some principles of this approach may not match such settings



due to some external limitations with regard to institutions and the learners' expectations or learning styles. In this vein, teachers' and learners' opinions—as two of the main factors in language classrooms—about this approach and its cultural elements can help researchers discover the advantages and disadvantages of CLT in this regard. For instance, in a study of students' beliefs in Hong Kong, MacLennan (1988: 66, as cited in Evans, 1997) finds that students support “a fairly authoritarian, structured approach” and expected “very little autonomy in relation to their learning.” MacLennan concludes that “it appears likely that a discrepancy does exist between the students' preconceptions and expectations and the view of the teaching-learning situation held by teachers using a communicative approach” (MacLennan, 1988: 69, as cited in Evans, 1997). Likewise, concerning teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the psycholinguistic procedures in language learning, Mitchell (1988) states that many teachers still follow their traditional opinions and assumptions about language teaching in classroom: “for example, the provision of grammar explanations, and the correction of pupils' formal errors, were justified by many on the ground that they make a direct and significant contribution to the pupils' internalization of the target language system” (Mitchell, 1988: 45).

Hence, the purpose of this research is: **first**, to investigate teachers' ideas about: (1) the strengths and weaknesses of CLT regarding stimulating IC among their EFL learners, (2) the views of CLT towards the target culture and the learners' own culture, and finally (3) the applicability of CLT in their own context—where English is not considered as the first or second language of the society, and **second**, to explore EFL learners' attitudes towards their English language classrooms in view of the principles of CLT and cultural/intercultural issues. To achieve these aims, seven questions are posed to start the study. The questions are as follows:

#### Research Questions:

- What are the opinions of EFL teachers towards applying Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in their own countries?
- According to EFL teachers, how does CLT give insight into the target language culture<sup>1</sup>(s)?

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<sup>1</sup> For pragmatic and methodological reasons, “target language culture” here means British and/or American cultures, where British culture refers to the culture of English people in England. In this way, Scottish and Welsh cultures are excluded and treated as other cultures in order to specify the scope of research in terms of target cultures/countries in CLT.





- From the perspective of EFL teachers, how does CLT pay attention to the concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)?
- What are the EFL teachers' perceived problems in terms of presenting the target culture or other cultures<sup>2</sup>?
- When facing problems, what are the main strategies of EFL teachers in solving students' intercultural problems?
- What are the opinions of EFL learners about their English classes based on their needs and interests?
- What are the opinions of EFL learners about cultural and intercultural aspects of their English classes?

### **1.3. Scope of the Study**

In this section, two important issues about the scope of the present research will be discussed in depth. The first issue deals with the delimitations and refers to those features which are controlled by the researcher to “limit the scope and define the boundaries of [the] study” (Simon, 2011: webpage), and the second is concerned with the limitations considered as external factors beyond the researcher's control which reduce the scope of the study.

#### **1.3.1. Delimitations**

The subjects used in this study are EFL teachers and students at the upper-secondary school level in the countries of Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Iran. The participants were chosen from the upper-secondary school level since according to the educational systems in the countries mentioned above, it was easier and more logical to compare the results at this level (see Chapter 3, Section 3.1). Additionally, the scope of this work was constrained to Bavaria in Germany since each German state has different curricula for teaching English at their schools, and this may cause difficulty in comparing the findings of the other three countries with Germany. To avoid this problem, the focus was on Bavaria in Germany.

Due to the main foci, the linguistic aspects of CLT, which was considered as one of the variables, were discussed only marginally and up to the point which is relevant to the concerns of this research. Moreover, this study was limited to teachers' and learners' opinions in general, and no attention was paid to the concept of gender differences in order to nar-

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<sup>2</sup> “Other cultures” here means the cultures of countries other than England and America (US).



row down the scope of the current research. Thus, one must be cautious when drawing general conclusions.

### **1.3.2. Limitations**

Like all other human endeavors, this research is not without its shortcomings. One of the limitations encountered in the study was the number of schools in each country. This research is limited to 14 schools—Germany (3 schools), the Netherlands (3 schools), Sweden (4 schools), and Iran (4 schools)—and their English teachers and students at upper-secondary school level who agreed to participate in this project. In addition to schools, the number of teachers in the Netherlands, which is lower than other countries, was also among one of the limitations. The sample size did not consist of an equal balance of teachers in the countries mentioned above. This may be due to the lack of some of the Dutch teachers' and schools' interest to participate in such studies. One of their main reasons was their shortage of time and their heavy workload during the school year. Therefore, no generalization can be made regarding the results in these four countries. The ideas and opinions were limited to the scope of this research, and as a result they are not representative of the teachers' and students' opinions in each country.

A further limitation was related to the school system in Iran. In the Iranian educational system, CLT is not applied as a teaching approach at state schools; thus, teachers and students who were teaching and studying at such schools could not be selected as subjects in this study. The subjects were chosen from private English institutes where CLT is used as a teaching method. As a result, the number of Iranian students is smaller than in the other countries since private institutes do not have the same number of students as in state schools. However, the students' (upper-secondary) level was controlled in this setting in order to have a comparative view towards the findings obtained. In other words, those students who were studying at the upper-secondary school level were also selected as the subjects in the English institutes.

### **1.4. Structure of the Thesis**

On the whole, this work consists of five different chapters. The first chapter, entitled Introduction, includes: (a) a general overview on the origin of CLT and its characteristics and problems, (b) a brief background about the necessity of teaching culture and emergence of



ICC, and (c) a glimpse into the aims, research questions, limitations, delimitations, and abbreviations used in this study. Following this section, the second chapter—a Review of Literature—which includes two sub-sections, i.e. CLT and Culture, tries to provide a perspective and overview of the main foci in the work, i.e. CLT, culture teaching, and ICC reviewing the related literature. The method, participants, instruments, and data analysis procedures are presented in detail in the following chapter. Chapter 4 then goes on to deal with results, discussions, and interpretations, and finally the conclusion as well as future research suggestions complete chapter 5.

Based on this structure, in the next chapter the literature will be reviewed in terms of CLT, culture and language, and ICC, which constitute the focus of the present work.



## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

This chapter consists of three different sections. In the first section, a short review will be presented concerning CLT. The next part is related to the concept of culture in language teaching, its relationship with CLT, and the emergence of ICC, and finally the last section refers to the other empirical studies on CLT in the field of ELT.

#### ***2.1. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)***

As mentioned before, CLT is considered as one of the best known methods or approaches which aims to help learners become communicatively proficient and fluent. In other words, its main objective is not to help the learner to pass examinations but rather to increase the learners' communicative competence (CC) (Richards & Rogers, 1986). But how did CLT become popular in the field of ELT? A complete review of the changes in the preceding methods of language teaching can be useful in order to better understand the concept of CLT and the need for its emergence. Such a review can shed more light on the characteristics and principles of CLT in comparison to the previous methods and thus offer a precise insight into one of the focuses of the present research which is related to teachers' beliefs and misconceptions regarding CLT.

##### ***2.1.1. History of Language Teaching Methods<sup>3</sup>***

As Stern (1983) states, the history of language teaching is very long, interesting, and at the same time complicated. For over a century language experts, theorists, and practitioners have tried to find solutions for the problems in language teaching, introducing and establishing different approaches and methods. The rise and fall of language teaching methods over time has been influenced by the recognition of changes in the kind of proficiency that learners need (Richards & Rogers, 2001; Harmer, 2007; Whong, 2011). Based on the principles of Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), speaking the FL was not the ultimate aim, and the goal was to have “a view of language as a formal system of rules or structures to be mastered”

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<sup>3</sup> This section has been written based on a review of Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Howatt, 1984; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Johnson & Johnson, 1998; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Johnson, 2001; Wesche & Skehan, 2002; Kaplan, 2002; Howatt & Widdowson, 2004; Harmer, 2007; Haß, 2010; Whong, 2011; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011.



(Wesche & Skehan, 2002: 208). As Johnson (2001: 164-166) says, GTM was very hard and was concerned with the engagement of the mind. It focused on sentence-level practice. GTM lessons had a fixed structure. They began with a long grammar explanation, followed by examples (deductive approach), and the use of L1 was completely allowed. The written language was of utmost importance, so it emphasized the use of classical language teaching as the model. Translation exercises into and out of the target language were also considered as one of the crucial elements in language teaching, and oral practice was constrained to students reading aloud the translated sentences. Consequently, there was no attention to the language as a means of real communication (Richards & Rogers, 2001), but rather lexical knowledge and grammatical rules were in the center of attention (Haß, 2010; Neuner, 2007). GTM was mostly used until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Howatt, 1984, Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). Thaler (2012: 104-105) classifies the main characteristics of GTM as follows:

- Hauptziele: geistig-formale und kulturell-normative Bildung durch das Erkennen grammatischer Regelmäßigkeiten und intensive Textarbeit
- Hauptmethoden: grammatische Analyse und Übersetzung fremdsprachlicher Texte
- Modus: Konzentration auf den schriftlichen Umgang mit der Fremdsprache
- Grammatik: deduktive Vermittlung, Beschreibung grammatischer Strukturen gemäß lateinischer Tradition
- Wortschatz: zweisprachige Vokabelgleichungen, Übung durch Übersetzen isolierter Sätze
- Fertigkeiten: Leseverstehen und Übersetzen (vor Sprech- und Schreib-Kompetenz)
- Sozialform: Frontalunterricht.<sup>4</sup>

However, teaching a language using translation and structural memorization of rules did not seem to result in fluent speakers and users of language. Thus, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a Reform Movement was initiated by a group of linguists who aimed to address the limitations of GTM and change the present FL teaching practice (Johnson, 2001; Whong,

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<sup>4</sup>

- Main goals: intellectual-formal and cultural-normative education by recognizing grammatical regularities and intensive working with texts
- Main methods: grammar analysis and translation of foreign language texts
- Mode: focus on the written use of the foreign language
- Grammar: deductive teaching, description of grammatical structures according to Latin tradition
- Vocabulary: bilingual vocabulary tables, practice by translating isolated sentences
- Skills: reading comprehension and translation (before speaking and writing skills)
- Interaction pattern: teacher-fronted classroom (My own translation)



2011). According to Howatt (1984) and Richards and Rogers (2001: 9), reformers believed in

...

- a. The study of spoken language
- b. Phonetic training
- c. The use of conversation texts and dialogues
- d. An inductive approach to the teaching of grammar
- e. Teaching new meanings through target language

Based on these principles, these reformers departed from existing methods and shifted to the Direct Method (DM) in which using the target language as the medium of instruction in language classrooms became important. According to DM, students should limit themselves to the target language only and develop the language word by word. With this method, using inductive approaches to grammar learning came back to the foreground (Howatt, 1984, Howatt & Widdowson, 2004; Whong, 2011: 26; Neuner, 2007). As Harmer (2007: 51) states

...

The direct method teacher used only English in the classroom; form and meaning associations were made using real objects, pictures, and demonstration. The point here is that a concentration on form (rather than subconscious acquisition) was considered to be advantageous. It depends on the idea that the input students receive (that is the language they are exposed to) will be the same as their intake (that is the language they actually absorb). However, the direct method, which believed essentially in a one-to-one correspondence between input and output, really got going when it was married to the theory of behaviorism.

Put differently, the main principles of DM were ...

- Vorrang des Sprachkönnen vor dem Sprachwissen
- Vorrang des Mündlichen vor dem Schriftlichen
- Orientierung des Fremdsprachenunterrichts an Aspekten des alltäglichen Sprachgebrauchs
- Einsprachigkeit des Unterrichts
- Anschaulichkeit des Unterrichts
- Erfahrungsorientiertes, anschauliches Lernen



- Entfaltung eines ‚Sprachgefühls‘ und der Gemütsbildung durch Fremdsprachenlernen<sup>5</sup> (Haß, 2010: 152; Neuner, 2007: 228)

Although DM was introduced and developed as a reaction to the problems of GTM, it had its own problems and drawbacks. Its problems were partially practical. For example, orally proficient teachers who could speak the FLs appropriately were rare, and the method needed much more time than those based on reading and writing (Johnson & Johnson, 1998: 99).

In the 1920s and 1930s, following the popularity of behaviorism and an increase of attention to FL teaching in the US, DM was replaced by a new method called the Audiolingual Method (ALM) or Audiolingualism. “ALM is the combination of structural linguistic theory, contrastive analysis, aural-oral procedures, and behaviorist psychology” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 53). Based on behaviorist theory and the stimulus-response-reinforcement model, ALM tried to instill good habits in learners by using positive reinforcements (Thaler, 2012). In order to do so, Audiolingualism relied heavily on drills such as substitutions. Moreover, learners were expected to produce grammatically correct sentences, and mistakes were not allowed. Thus, accuracy was very important. Audiolingualism did not place language learning in a real-life context, and everything was taught at a sentence-based level. It was in contrast with the belief of proponents of the DM, who said that learners learn the language naturally from their environment (Harmer, 2007).

The emergence of ALM in the US was accompanied by other language teaching practices in England and Australia, i.e. Oral approach and Situational approach. The Oral approach was developed by two applied linguists, Harold Palmer and A. S. Hornby in England, who relied on structuralist linguistics and psychological notions of language. They considered language as a system of patterns and structural examples that could be graded sequentially. In this approach, the main focus was on the spoken language, and the language patterns were presented in context. At the same time, in Australia another applied linguist, George Pittman, introduced the Situational approach which used objects, pictures and other realia to explain new language points. Like Audiolingualism, in both of these approaches, language was

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<sup>5</sup>

- Priority of language skills over knowledge about the language
- Priority of spoken before written language
- Orientation of foreign language teaching towards everyday language use
- Monolingual classroom
- Clear instruction
- Experience-based, vivid learning
- Development of a ‘feeling for the language’ and affective learning by foreign language learning (My own translation)



taught using activities such as drills, substitution exercises, whole-class repetition, and dictation under the control of the teacher (Whong, 2011).

Audiolingualism was developed in the mid-1900s due to the need for a multilingual military in a very short and intensive period in the US (Neuner, 2007). At that time the common accepted structure for language teaching lessons was PPP (presentation, practice, and production). As a result, a lesson was mostly started with a presentation of some language points, continued by controlled practice in the form of exercises. When the students succeeded in mastering the form, they could then participate in some less controlled activities in order to generate the language point freely. The main principles of this method can be classified as follows:

- Vorrang des Mündlichen vor dem Schriftlichen, d.h. des Hören/Sprechens vor dem Lesen/Schreiben
- Didaktische Folge der Fertigkeiten: Hören-Sprechen-Lesen-Schreiben
- Situativität des Unterrichts (Einbettung der *speech patterns* in Alltagssituationen)
- Einübung von Sprachmustern durch Imitation und häufiges Wiederholen (*pattern drills*)
- Grundlegende Einsprachigkeit des Unterrichts
- Progression des Lernprogramms durch systematische Steigerung der formalen Komplexität der *patterns* (Grammatikprogression) (Neuner, 2007:229)<sup>6</sup>

Against this background, a new linguistic theory called Generative Linguistics was developed by Chomsky. Unlike behaviorism, this theory suggested that language consists of universal principles which children possess inherently at birth. Following this, the Natural approach of Krashen and Terrell (1983) was shaped. This approach relied on Krashen's Monitor Model, consisting of five Hypotheses: Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, Monitor hypothesis, Natural order hypothesis, Input hypothesis, and Affective filter hypothesis.

The most significant elements in this approach were comprehension and input which should be provided by the teacher. In other words, the emphasis was on providing a sufficient amount of input with ample time for learners to master it before producing the lan-

<sup>6</sup>

- Primacy of spoken over written language use, i.e. listening / speaking before reading / writing
- Didactic sequence of skills: listening-speaking-reading-writing
- Situation-Based language teaching (embedding the speech patterns in everyday life situations)
- Practice of language patterns through imitation and frequent repetition (pattern drills)
- Monolingual teaching
- Progression of the learning program by systematically increasing the formal complexity of the patterns (grammar progression) (My own translation)





guage. Beginners were free to have long silent periods as well. Fluency was much more important than accuracy; the activities were somehow communicatively oriented. Another crucial fact in the Natural approach was the importance of creating a positive atmosphere for language learning in the classroom. However, opponents of this approach argued that the Natural approach has ignored the difference between first and second language learning. For instance, they said that adult language learners do not necessarily experience a silent period as young children do (Howatt, 1984; Howatt & Widdowson, 2004; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Richards & Rogers, 1986, 2001; Harmer, 2007; Whong, 2011; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

Another method which is more or less the same as ALM was Audiovisual method, which was applied during 1950s. Like Audiolingualism, in this method the primary channel of language is speech, but its proponents claimed that a FL can be learned effectively when a firm connection between a situation, a context, or a picture and a group of words and meaning is established (Guberina, 1964). The followers of Audiovisual method assumed that the child's way of language learning is the best way to learn another language. Based on this view, in the Audiovisual method 'meaning' is transmitted through visual images, and then learners are provided with words assigning these 'meanings' or 'realities'. Guberina (1964: 23) acknowledges that "this method works on the principles of physio-acoustics and brain stimulation."

Beside such approaches which were based on specific views of language, there were also some alternatives that developed other educational principles. These approaches were Silent Way by Caleb Gattegno, Total Physical Response by James Asher, Suggestopedia by Georgi Lozanov, and Community language teaching by Charles Curran that were formed based on ideas in human psychology, psychotherapy, or art. The main point in these kinds of approaches was the consideration of the human as a whole person (Ortner, 2007; see also Fäcke, 2010).

The principal idea behind the Silent Way approach was that teachers should be silent in the classroom while learners should try to produce as much language as possible. This approach relied on the fact that learning happens through problem-solving and discovery. Phonology was of utmost importance, and there was an analytical view towards language in the first phases of language teaching (Ortner, 2007). The Silent Way was in contrast to



Krashen's Natural approach, which stresses the comprehension over production, at least initially.

James Asher's Total Physical Response emphasized the significance of kinetics and body language; thus, learners learn language by answering physically to language input with which the teacher provided them. Like the Natural Approach, learners could be silent for a period of time. In other words, they started to talk when they were ready. This might lead to reduction of stress and facilitation of learning. This idea was also one of the main principles in Suggestopedia. Lozanov believed that for learning a language learners need to be relaxed in the classroom. In this method, grammatical explanation and translation had the primary roles, and the texts used for teaching were in the form of long passages (Ortner, 2007). The next approach which was based on ideas from psychology and counseling is Community Language Teaching. In this approach the teacher acts like a counselor, whereas the learners are clients. Language is collaboratively and socially produced in a community. Learning will take place if the whole person is involved, not just their mental power, but their emotions (Howatt, 1984; Howatt & Widdowson, 2004; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Richards & Rogers, 1986, 2001; Harmer, 2007; Fäcke, 2010; Whong, 2011; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

By the end of 1950s, Chomsky introduced the concept of transformational generative grammar in his *Syntactic Structures*, which got linguists more involved in the development of rules system. It means this theory concentrated on the learning and teaching of language structures or grammatical points. Nevertheless, during that period there was a stark reaction against this view which considered language as a system of rules. The proponents of this reaction believed that language is a means of communication, so the way the language is used and meanings are conveyed have a crucial role. In language teaching this movement led to the development of the 'Communicative Approach' or CLT, which is the main focus of this study. One of the powerful reactions against the transformational generative view was discussed by Dell Hymes (1972) in his paper 'on communicative competence'. This objection will be investigated in depth in the next part of this section related to the emergence of CC and CLT. Here, it suffices to say that what is important in CLT is the concept of language use rather than usage (Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-v. Dittfurth, 2009). Put differently, as Fäcke (2010: 43) maintains, „weit wichtiger ist hier die angemessene sprachliche Kommunikation



je nach Situation und Gesprächspartnern.<sup>7</sup>“ In this sense, instead of focusing entirely on grammar and structure, CLT is concerned with spoken functions and notions of when and how to use the language appropriately. Therefore, communicative language teachers tried to teach their learners the functions and notions alongside grammatical points. The aim of this approach is to make the students involved in meaning-focused communicative tasks and provide them with ample exposure to language and plenty of chances to use it. Thus, communicative activities in CLT commonly get students involved in real-time or realistic communication. These kinds of activities or tasks have the following characteristics:

1. A desire to communicate
2. A communicative purpose
3. Content above form
4. Variety of language
5. No teacher intervention
6. No control of materials (Harmer, 2007: 69-70)

In other words, CLT aims to improve the learners' ability to communicate (Harmer, 2007: 70). CLT is considered by many (e.g. Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Brown, 1994a) as an approach rather than a method; that is, it is a theoretical perspective about the nature of language and of language teaching. This approach was developed during the 1970s and is primarily connected with British applied linguistics. The origin of CLT was deeply associated with the emphasis given to socio-linguistics and pragmatics during this period (Johnson, 1998). Considering CLT as an approach, teachers needed to search for particular methods for teaching. Therefore, the agreement on accepting CLT as an appropriate approach and the lack of a specific teaching method based on this approach resulted in the development of "Post-Method Era." Teachers in the Post-Method Era had to stick to CLT principles, and then select, use, and mix up different parts of various methods to apply them in their own contexts based on their students' needs and interests because they could not find a particular method which could be universally acceptable for teaching a language (Whong, 2011: 134-135).

One of the methods which came after CLT was Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching (TBLT) or Task-Based Instruction (TBI). TBLT consists of meaningful activities focusing on communication. The followers of TBLT believe that learning occurs via interaction and use of

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<sup>7</sup> What is more important here is appropriate linguistic communication given the situation and interlocutors (My own translation).



language, and acquisition happens as a result of a rich input. Because of this, TBLT activities are commonly authentic although they may sometimes be altered by teachers to make communication easier (Whong, 2011). Breen (1987: 23) defines TBLT as “any structured language learning endeavor which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task.” Tasks are things which should be carried out by learners; thus, learners are active participants in a TBLT classroom, while teachers act as facilitators. According to Wesche and Skehan (2002: 217), “task is, in this view, assumed to refer to a range of work plans that have the overall purpose of facilitating language learning—from the simple and brief exercise type, to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem solving or simulations and decision making.” These kinds of tasks should “promote attention to meaning ... [and] to relevant data; should be challenging but not threatening; should involve language use in the solving of the task” (Candlin, 1987: 9). Skehan (1998d, as cited in Wesche & Skehan, 2002: 217), suggests that a task is an activity in which ...

1. meaning is primary;
2. there is some communication problem to solve;
3. there is some sort of relationship with real-world activities;
4. task completion has some priority;
5. the assessment of the task is in terms of outcomes.

Put differently, in TBI the task has a central role (Thaler, 2012), and is considered as the unit of syllabus design (Long & Crookes, 1992). They ...

- ermöglichen das Aushandeln von Bedeutung durch Interaktion und Kommunikation;
- fördern eher den Prozess als das Produkt;
- sind dennoch auf ein Ziel hin angelegt;
- sind an die Alltagsrealität angebunden (Thaler, 2012: 108).<sup>8</sup>

According to these features, teachers in a task-based course will expose students to a series of tasks with specific aspects of the target language sequentially. These tasks should be based on the students’ needs and interests. In TBLT, teachers provide the learners with sufficient amounts of input, followed by explicit instruction. TBLT classes are structured into

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<sup>8</sup> • enable the negotiation of meaning through interaction and communication;  
 • promote the process rather than the product;  
 • are aimed at a goal;  
 • are linked to everyday reality. (My own translation)



three different phases: pre-task, task, and post-task. The main purpose of TBLT is to encourage interaction and assist the progress of active engagement with language. For this reason, the presented tasks should be meaningful and engaging. The teacher must also be actively involved while she/he continuously monitors the learners and observes their problems while completing the tasks. It is during this phase that the teacher should determine how to cope with language problems or errors. According to these features, we can see that communication is undoubtedly central to TBLT (Whong, 2011). Thus, TBLT can be considered as a very interesting development of CLT in the field of language teaching (Wesche & Skehan, 2002; Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-v. Ditfurth, 2009; Richards & Rodgers, 2001) and corresponds well to the features of CLT (Whong, 2011).

In other words, according to Willis and Willis (2001), TBLT derives from the broader conception of CLT. Generally, there were two views towards CLT. The first was related to syllabus design. The communicative syllabus was based on a list of notions and functions according to the learners' needs rather than grammar and lexis. Yet, these notions and functions were specified through their linguistic realizations; thus, the syllabus still depended on sets of language patterns. The second view was methodological. In the Communicative Approach, the focus was on using the language in the class, leading to using the language in real-life situations. However, teachers tended to see language teaching as the study of language structure before language use, and thus "tasks were used to assist 'free' production at the end of a controlled form-based teaching cycle. The stimulus to learning was still provided by the identification of a new structure or pattern. Language use was seen as subsidiary to the study of language form" (Willis & Willis, 2001: 175). In contrast, TBLT considers language use as a powerful factor in language learning, and the tasks themselves are fundamental factors in syllabus planning and method. Thus, the study of language structure is subordinate to language use.

One of the best-known models of the task-based approach was firstly applied by Prabhu in his procedural syllabus (Prabhu, 1987). He believes that in fact a focus on language form hinders language learning. We should see language progress as the result of natural procedures. Prabhu (1987) describes three types of tasks which can be used in task-based approaches: information gap, reasoning gap and problem-solving. However, Long and Crookes (1992) question the procedural syllabuses due to three reasons. First, such syllabuses have no guidelines for choosing the tasks based on learners' needs; second, they have no measur-



ing tools to sequence and order the tasks; and third, they do not have a systematic focus on forms. Therefore, TBLT like CLT relies on some general principles instead of particular suggestions or instructions. The first principle of TBLT is that units of syllabus should be arranged based on tasks, and the second principle is that learning will be successful when it is based on language use and the link between form and meaning.

Another approach which sits well with the tenets of CLT is Content-Based Instruction (CBI) or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) referring to the combination of school or academic content with language teaching goals. Put differently, CBI is the teaching of different subjects like geography, history, etc. using a FL (Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-v. Ditfurth, 2009). Within this framework, language is applied as a kind of medium to present and learn the subject. This kind of combination helps learners to have more exposure to the SL. In successful CBI, learners learn both language and content through their SL. The learners' language improves while studying content via recurrent communicative confrontations with the language forms and patterns. For these reasons, CBI can be very helpful for both language and content learning (Wesche & Skehan, 2002).

All forms of successful CBI have the same characteristics since their essential element is identical—learners try to learn new concepts and skills using a language which is new for them. These features are ...

1. Learners receive the content knowledge and language proficiency at the same time.
2. Authentic texts and discourse are the key elements in the language curriculum.
3. They give new perspective into a new culture (Kramsch, 1993).
4. The level of language input and context is adjusted to learners' limited language proficiency.
5. They focus on academic language proficiency as well (Wesche & Skehan, 2002: 221).

CBI is, by definition, a form of CLT, which has “weak” and “strong” versions. Weaker forms aim to develop learners' communicative proficiency in the SL, while in the “strong” version the primary goal is to learn the subject matter (Brinton & Master, 1997; Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989). In both of these two forms learners' limited language proficiency should be taken into account systematically.

Although all forms of CBI have some features in common, they do not focus on the structural aspect of language teaching identically (Stern, 1989). Studies show that formal aspects have a crucial role in the development of accuracy and more native-like language usage (Al-



len et al., 1990; Harley, 1993). While CBI in its stronger versions does not often concentrate on formal instruction, its contexts give rich possibilities to work on accurate and culturally appropriate language using complex oral and written texts. In this way, with the integration of the language and content students become ready to improve skills and strategies in order “to deal with cognitively demanding texts” (Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-v. Ditfurth, 2009: 154).

### ***2.1.2. The Emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)***

A number of factors in the 1960s led to changes in language teaching objectives. Some of them resulted from the migration and displacement of people by World War II and their urgent needs to learn the language of the country to which they had newly moved. It was this movement that led to the formation of The Council of Europe’s Modern Languages Project in 1963. The aim was to promote SL teaching and learning in Europe, both at school and adult levels using learner-centered approaches (Tudor, 1996; Sreehari, 2012).

The language needs of people in Europe and the situations where they should use the SL led to the attempts of The Council of Europe to start different projects for developing curricula in the early seventies. One of these projects was the Threshold Level Project, which aimed at determining a threshold level for the language abilities of the learners in Europe. In other words, it showed what students should do with the language in order to reach a specific level called threshold level (van Ek, 1975). This project led to a functional/notional attitude towards curriculum design, which was discussed by Wilkins in 1976. He argues that utterances convey functional and conceptual meanings which help people to talk about and understand different concepts, such as time, place, quantity, quality, and so on. Thus, based on this idea, the language teaching curriculum and syllabus was designed in terms of these two concepts—functions and notions. Wilkins (1976) discusses that the way that people use the language is much more important than the mastery of it. He also adds that ...

The grammatical syllabus focuses on learning on the core and not learning on the distribution of that core in particular uses. As a result, even the learner who knows the core may not be able to communicate adequately when he finds himself in a situation requiring language (Wilkins, 1976: 12).

In this way, as Whong (2011) suggests, designing a functional-notional syllabus could help to keep away from dependency on the language structures and shift to a new situational or



contextual approach in language teaching. In line with this view, the Council of Europe project acknowledged the primacy of language use, and at the same time many other experts like Widdowson (1978) and Allwright (1979) also proposed that the formal view of language teaching should be replaced with a new communicative one. Within this framework, learners' needs and interests became more and more important. Topics were chosen based on their relevance to learners' needs in different situations, so lessons were becoming more learner-centered rather than subject-centered (Wilkins, 1976).

Alongside this communicative perspective in Europe, a new linguistic theory was also developed by Chomsky in America. Chomsky introduced "competence" and "performance" as two main terms in his theory called Transformational Generative Grammar. For him "competence", which was defined as "the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language" (Chomsky, 1965: 4, as cited in Brumfit & Johnson, 1979: 3), was the primary concern of linguistic theory. Competence is the knowledge of the "ideal speaker-listener" working within "a completely homogeneous community," while "performance" is "the actual use of language in concrete situations." According to Chomsky, "a record of natural speech will show numerous false starts, deviations from rules, changes of plan in mid-course, and so on." For this reason, performance presents a weak and imperfect manifestation of the ideal speaker-listener's competence; therefore, it is not of much interest to the theoretical and descriptive linguist (Chomsky, 1965: 4, as cited in Brumfit & Johnson, 1979: 3).

However, Chomsky's differentiation between competence and performance was criticized in the context of language learning. Dell Hymes (1972)—a sociolinguist as well as an ethnographer of communication—was one of the first critics among language scholars who argued that learning a new language was something beyond learning its grammar. He says ...

We have then to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others (Hymes, 1972: 277).

In other words, Hymes means that a speaker should have other types of knowledge which lets him/her use language effectively. Hymes (1972: 277) emphasizes the need for ...

A theory that can deal with a heterogeneous speech community, differential competence [i.e. variation between individuals], the constitutive role of sociocultural features, ... socio-





economic differences, multilingual mastery, relativity of competence in 'Arabic', 'English' etc., expressive values, socially determined perception, contextual styles and shared norms for the evaluation of variables.

He classifies performance into two different concepts. One is concerned with the 'actual data of speech', which is rule-less in comparison to linguistic competence that is rule-bound; another refers to rules of use which alongside the rules of linguistic competence help the learner or language user to interact appropriately (Wilkins, 1976). Considering the second concept, he believes that effective communication was the result of 'competence for use' (Hymes, 1972: 279). This competence represents the knowledge called 'Communicative Competence' (CC) which is defined by Saville-Troike (2003: 4) as "what a speaker needs to know to communicate appropriately within a particular speech community." Thus, Hymes' theory of CC focuses on the communicative behavior of individuals in concrete situations (Legutke, 2010: 71-72).

Hymes (1972: 281) claims that this new competence or knowledge should be able to answer the following questions:

- Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible;
- Whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available;
- Whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated;
- Whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails.

According to Cook (1998: 63-65), each of these questions refers to different issues respectively:

- The first question deals with linguistic grammaticality and non-verbal and cultural grammaticality.
- The second question refers to psycholinguistic factors, such as 'memory limitation, perceptual device(s), effects of properties like nesting, embedding, branching etc. (Hymes, 1972: 285).
- The third question concerns with the relation of language to context in terms of cultural appropriateness. It should be mention that this element of CC has sometimes been misinterpreted, leading to the need for conformity to the norms of the target



language culture; however, Hymes emphasized that meaning caused from conscious departure from the norm rather than conformity to it.

- The fourth question copes with the knowledge of the occurrence of forms and of the probability of that occurrence.

Thus, a user who has appropriate answers for these four questions can use the language and other communicative tools effectively in a particular culture (Cook, 1998).

Saville-Troike (1989, 1996), another ethnographer who basically agrees with Hymes' notion of CC, pays attention to this concept from the viewpoint of SL or FL contexts. She classifies CC into three types of knowledge: linguistic, interactional, and cultural knowledge. The first knowledge is more or less correspondent to Chomsky's concept of "competence," with a clear difference which is the inclusion of linguistic features that may convey social messages and denotative meanings in linguistic description. Saville-Troike says that realizing linguistic variations that have definite social meanings can sometimes be problematic. Consequently, this kind of knowledge should be viewed as part of one's communicative competence. The second issue is concerned with interactional skills referring to the knowledge and belief about social rules and practices. NSs of English are able to use their language appropriately in a given communicative setting. However, these interactional skills are very hard for EFL students to learn since they are frequently not taught in the classroom by teachers. Thus, like pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, interaction structures are also a basic part of CC that should be dealt with in the classroom.

Beside these two elements, cultural knowledge, especially of the societal structure in the speech community and the attached values and mental attitudes to language, is the third constituent for Saville-Troike's CC. For example, a NS of English can easily recognize the appropriate ways of speaking related to different social groups, while for EFL learners this will not be simple to do, which may lead to unsuccessful communication in the target language. As mentioned above, according to Saville-Troike, these areas of knowledge are fundamental parts of CC which are relevant to Hymes' appropriateness in communicative events.

Beside Saville-Troike's model of CC, in a slight reformulation of Hyme's CC, two other models were presented in the United States and Europe by Canale and Swain (1980) and van EK (1986), respectively. Canale and Swain's model of CC consisted of three-part competence including grammatical competence, socio-linguistic competence and strategic competence in



the area of SL acquisition. Socio-linguistic competence was further separated into socio-cultural competence and discourse competence by Canale in 1983 (see Figure 1).

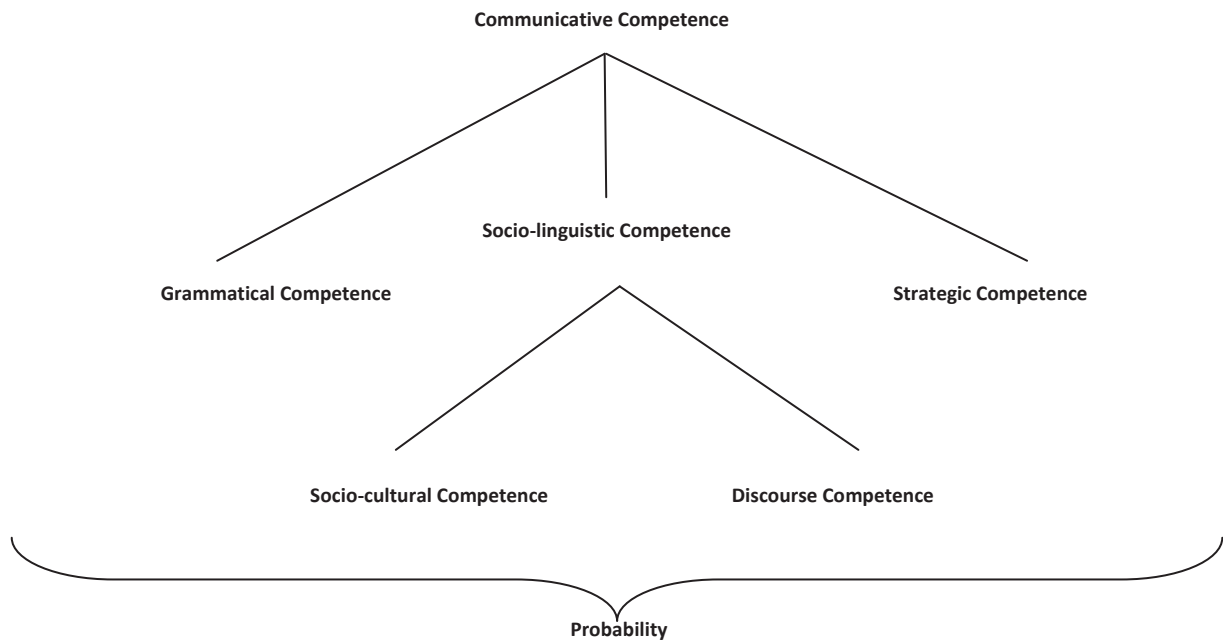


Figure 1. Diagrammatic representation of Canale and Swain's (1980) components of CC (source: Cook, 1998)

According to them, these four components of CC can be defined as follows:

**Grammatical/Linguistic Competence:** This competence refers to the mastery of L2 phonological, morphological, and structural and sentence formation rules that enables the language learner to convey and understand actual meaning of utterances (e.g., knowledge about pronunciation, vocabulary, word and sentence meaning, construction of grammatical sentences, correct spelling, etc.)

**Socio-linguistic Competence:** This concerns the knowledge of socio-cultural rules for using L2 appropriately which shows how utterances are made and interpreted in a variety of socio-linguistic contexts and situations (e.g., understanding of speech act conventions, awareness of standards of rhetorical appropriateness, etc.)

**Discourse competence:** This competence includes the mastery of rules in terms of cohesion and coherence of different kinds of discourse in L2 (e.g., use of appropriate pronouns, synonyms, conjunctions, substitution, repetition, etc.)

**Strategic competence:** This last sub-skill is related to the mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication techniques and strategies in L2 which can be used to compensate for a lack of skill and knowledge in the grammatical and socio-linguistic competence or to raise



the effectiveness of conversation and interaction (e.g., paraphrasing, code-switching, repetitions, asking for information, etc.) (Canale & Swain, 1980: 29-30; Brown, 2000: 247).

As is obvious from their framework, Canale and Swain intend to introduce those kinds of knowledge and skills that a learner should have in order to be communicatively competent and at the same time to create a theoretical foundation for the promotion of a Communicative Approach in the SL teaching. This theory is based on an understanding of the nature of human communication. In other words, beside grammatical points, some other rules and skills must be taught to language learners in order to make them communicatively competent in the target language.

The following model was discussed by van Ek in the mid 1980s in Europe. Van Ek suggests that language teaching should not only focus on the development of communication skills, but also on the learners' personal and social development. Consequently, his model aims at enhancing social competence, promoting autonomy, and developing social responsibility (van Ek, 1986: 63-82). In this model, CC is broken down into six components or competences: "linguistic competence," "sociolinguistic competence," "discourse competence," "strategic competence," "socio-cultural competence" and "social competence." He defines each of these competences as follows:

**Linguistic competence:** by «linguistic competence» we mean the ability to produce and interpret meaningful utterances which are formed in accordance with the rules of the language concerned and bear their conventional meaning.

**Socio-linguistic competence:** it was considered as the awareness «of ways in which the choice of language forms – the manner of expression – is determined by such conditions as setting, relationship between communication partners, communicative intention, etc».

**Discourse competence:** by «discourse competence» we mean the ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and interpretation of texts.

**Strategic competence:** it is the ability to use communication strategies to cope with difficult situations when communicating.

**Socio-cultural competence:** it enables learners to realise the validity of other ways of organising, categorising and expressing experience, and of other ways of managing personal interactions.

**Social competence:** it is the will and the skill to interact with others (van Ek, 1986: 40-67).



Clearly, both models—Canale and Swain’s and van Ek’s—are very similar, but the main distinction exists in the inclusion of socio-cultural and social competence by van Ek, which, on the one hand, consider “values and beliefs” and, on the other hand, “attitudes and behaviors” (Coperías Aguilar, 2010: 88).

Thus, although Hymes did not concern himself with language learning and teaching in his first paper, his model of CC has had a crucial effect on language teaching and learning in all aspects since it provided great insight into the knowledge and abilities of the successful language user or learner (Widdowson, 1978; Brumfit & Johnson, 1979). Within this framework, CC is often combined with proficiency and corresponded to the knowledge of the NS which is presented as the ultimate goal of language learning (Cook, 1998). Consequently, CC has the following features regarding the teaching of language:

- Knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions;
- Knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication);
- Knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations);
- Knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one’s language knowledge (e.g., through using different kinds of communication strategies) (Richards, 2006: 3).

To sum up, the emergence of CC and its emphasis on teaching language for use caused a perspective change in the history of language education. Based on this new view, learners should be taught to be competent both in language use and language usage. Put differently, teachers were expected to help their learners become communicatively proficient in using the learned language in different social contexts. As a result, socio-linguistic and discursive concepts became more and more important in the process of language teaching, and consequently, there was a need for a new language teaching approach and method which considered such conceptions in its principles in order to make students communicatively competent. The attempt to introduce this new method resulted in the advent of a teaching approach called Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Mangubhai et al., 1998) which will be discussed in detail in the following sections.



### **2.1.3. Definitions and Characteristics of CLT**

According to Richards (2002), CLT can be considered as one of the theory-based approaches which is based on systematic and principled thinking. It grew up as a reaction to form-based approaches and methods in language teaching in the 1960s. The advocates of CLT developed it as an attempt to criticize the deficiency of the linguistic and pedagogical theory underlying form-based approaches. Based on their definitions, CLT tried to operationalize the concept of CC and employ it at all levels of language teaching including program design, syllabus design, and teaching techniques.

Richards and Rodgers (1986: 72) classify the main characteristics of CLT around three key assumptions:

1. It relies on those activities that create real communication as they can develop learning.
2. These kinds of activities should include meaningful tasks.
3. Using the language in a meaningful context can help the learning process.

Considering these assumptions, learners are asked to interact in the target language from the very first moment (Hu, 2002). Hence, the main distinction between CLT and previously established language teaching methods is its emphasis on the development of CC, rather than linguistic competence alone (Brown, 2001). To reach this aim, CLT highlights the interrelationship between form and meaning, and tries to pay attention to both functional and structural facets of language (Littlewood, 1981; Brown, 2001).

A Communicative Approach was formulated in two ways. First, it was based on a notional-functional approach which tried to include the teaching of grammar alongside interactional notions. In other words, it took both factors of formality and function into account at the same time. Second, it followed a learner-centered approach focusing on the active roles and language needs of learners in the class (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Bygate, 2001). In classes following a learner-centered approach, teachers have low profile roles; there are a lot of pair or small group problem solving activities; students work with authentic samples of English; and the four basic skills, i.e. speaking, listening, reading, and writing are integrated. Thus, CLT is against teacher-controlled drills and exercises, memorization, and extended commentary on structures and grammar (Deckert, 2004). According to CLT theory, each learner has his/her own specific interests, styles, needs, and goals which should be considered in the organization of instructional methods (Savignon, 1991). The best way for teachers is to de-



sign materials according to the needs of a particular class. Students must feel secure and non-defensive in a CLT classroom; thus, teachers who are applying CLT should avoid a teacher-centered, authoritarian or dictatorial position in their classrooms (Taylor, 1983).

In other words, CLT gives a broader orientation towards language learning and teaching. The learners should have the possibility of using the language for purposeful communication in a meaningful way. Thus, in this approach, language is considered as language in function, in situation, and in culture (Edmondson & House, 1998). Knowing about the rules of the language is another element which is essential for successful learning, but it cannot be helpful for the effective use of language in real-life situations when it is considered as the only crucial factor in language teaching. The important thing is the meaningful use of what has been learned in the classroom (CDC, 1983: 14, as cited in Evans, 1997).

As Larsen-Freeman (1986: 132) states, the most distinguishing feature of CLT is that “almost everything that is done is done with a communicative intent.” Students use the language in so many different communicative activities like games, role plays, and problem-solving tasks. Another characteristic of CLT is its focus on using authentic materials because this gives learners the chance to work with the language in realistic L2 situations, which can help them to interpret the language as it is actually used by NSs (Canale & Swain, 1980; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Nunan, 1991; Long & Crookes, 1992; Reid, 1995; Dubin, 1995; Widdowson, 1996). In addition, “activities in the Communicative Approach are often carried out by students in small groups” (Larsen-Freeman, 1986: 132). In this way, students are supposed to communicate with each other in pairs or groups to do a task or an activity (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983). This method can help students learn how to negotiate meaning. To achieve this aim, teachers try to select those activities which involve their learners in meaningful and authentic language use rather than in the merely mechanical practice of language patterns. Brown (2001: 266-7) categorizes CLT characteristics based on its principles as follows:

- Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of CC and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.
- Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.



- Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use<sup>9</sup>.
- In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts.

In another classification by Thaler (2012: 107-108), CLT has the following characteristics:

- Die Kommunikation steht im Zentrum, nicht mehr die perfekte Beherrschung der Sprache (communication before mastery).
- Geläufigkeit des Ausdrucks ist wichtiger als Genauigkeit (fluency before accuracy).
- Nicht mehr Form und Struktur stehen im Mittelpunkt, sondern die kommunikative Bedeutung (meaning before form).
- Sprache wird durch Experimentieren geschaffen (trial and error).
- Eine größere Fehlertoleranz ist nötig.
- Kommunikative Aufgaben verlangen Sozialformen wie Gruppenarbeit, in denen der Sprachumsatz der Lernenden erhöht ist.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, Brown (1994b) shows the characteristics of CLT in six key words: learner-centered, cooperative (collaborative), interactive, integrated, content-centered, and task-based.

#### ***2.1.4. Different Versions and Principles of CLT***

There are 2 different versions of CLT in language teaching: the Strong and the Weak version. The 'weak' version, which has become more or less standard practice in our classrooms, highlights the importance of giving students opportunities to use their English or any other languages for communicative purposes. On the other hand, the 'strong' version of communicative approach emphasizes that language is acquired via communication, "so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of

<sup>9</sup> See also Klippel & Doff (2007)

<sup>10</sup> • Communication, rather than the perfect command of the language, is now at the heart (communication before mastery).  
 • Fluency of expression is more important than accuracy (fluency before accuracy).  
 • Form and structure are not the focus anymore, but rather communicative meaning (meaning before form).  
 • Language is created through experimenting (trial and error).  
 • A higher level of tolerance for errors is needed.  
 • Communicative tasks require interaction patterns such as group work, where learners use the language more actively. (My own translation)





stimulating the development of the language system itself. If the former could be described as ‘learning to use’ English, the latter entails ‘using English to learn it’ (Howatt, 1984: 279). According to Holliday (1994: 171-172), the ‘weak’ version of CLT is characterized by ...

- A focus on communicative functions and meaningful activities;
- The use of relevant tasks and language to a target group of learners;
- The use of genuine, authentic materials;
- The use of group and pair activities;
- The attempt to create a safe, calm atmosphere.

In contrast, in the ‘strong’ version the stress is not on practicing the language but on learning about how language appears in discourse. The lesson input is in the form of a text with which the students should interact. Furthermore, students work together for the purpose of helping each other solve language problems rather than for the purpose of communicating with each other. Since the goal is not to practice language structures, activities do not have to be done in groups or pairs or controlled by teachers. This type of language learning is communicative provided that students are interacting with the text and making useful guesses (Howatt, 1984; Howatt & Widdowson, 2002).

Although these two versions are different from each other, they generally have a number of pedagogical principles and practices in common. In all versions of CLT, meaning is something crucial and instead of the mere development of linguistic knowledge, teaching is based on communicative functions and practices (Widdowson, 1990; Brown, 2001). In other words, social, cultural, and pragmatic dimensions of language should be taught alongside linguistic structures, and linguistic resources should be used to attain communicative goals. The main aim is to achieve effective communication, and language is taught at the discursive rather than the sentence level (Celce-Murcia, 1991). Thus, teaching is student-centered and experience based. In contrast to the previous approaches that considered largely a passive role for students—receivers of knowledge and performers of teacher directions, CLT suggests an active role for students and refers to them as negotiators, communicators, discoverers, and contributors of knowledge and information (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Nunan, 1991). Similarly, CLT objects to teacher dominance in the classroom and supports a more balanced relationship between teacher and student. It considers “the teacher as a co-communicator, a needs analyst, an organizer of resources, a facilitator of procedures and activities, a negotiator, and/or a learner” (Chowdhury, 2012: 11, see also Hu, 2002). In such situations, coopera-



tive learning is reinforced, and pair and group work activities become dominant instead of teacher-controlled instructions. Thus, as Thaler (2008, 2010, 2012) states, it is a kind of open class teaching method which focuses on communicative, interpersonal, political, addressee-oriented, and existential openness.

In this approach, units are designed and sequenced according to themes, functions, meaning, and tasks, so they are not structure-based. These tasks should encourage learners to use language to convey meanings without concentrating on accuracy. This would promote fluency (Brumfit, 1984) and help learners to look into different ways to express themselves creatively using their language knowledge. In this respect, the students are allowed to express themselves freely even if they make mistakes or errors (Finchiaro & Brumfit, 1983); therefore, learners are exposed extensively to the target language through large quantities of input and output which leads to more interactions between teacher and students, and among students themselves. Moreover, most versions of CLT try to set up a connection between classroom activities and real-world tasks since the proponents of this approach believe that the learning and use of language should be contextualized. To achieve this aim, some tasks and activities, such as information gap, problem solving, games, discussion, role play, simulation, improvisation, debating, survey, and project work are used in order to help students function in real-world communicative events (Skehan, 1998; Hu, 2002). As a result, according to Littlewood (1981), there are two types of activities in communicative classes: functional communication activities which help learners to use language effectively and social communication activities which make the students aware of the importance of social context in interactional situations.

Berns (1990: 104, see also Savignon, 2002; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006) generally sums up the principles of CLT as follows:

- Language teaching is based on a view of language as communication. That is, language is seen as a social tool that speakers use to make meaning; speakers communicate about something to someone for some purpose, either orally or in writing.
- Diversity is recognized and accepted as part of language development and use in second language learners and users, as it is with first language users.
- A learner's competence is considered in relative, not in absolute, terms.
- More than one variety of a language is recognized as a viable model for learning and teaching.



- Culture is recognized as instrumental in shaping speakers' communicative competence, in both their first and subsequent languages.
- No single method or fixed set of techniques is prescribed.
- Language use is recognized as serving ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions and is related to the development of learners' competence in each.
- It is essential that learners be engaged in doing things with language—that is, that they use language for a variety of purposes in all phases of learning.

Beside Berns (1990), Finocchario and Brumfit (1983: 91-93, as cited in Beale, 2002: 15) present the principles of CLT as follows:

- Teaching is learner-centered and responsive to learners' need and interests.
- The target language is acquired through interactive communicative use that encourages the negotiation of meaning.
- Genuinely meaningful language use is emphasized, along with unpredictability, risk – taking, and choice-making.
- There is exposure to examples of authentic language from the target language community.
- The formal properties of language are never treated in isolation from use; language forms are always addressed within a communicative context.
- Learners are encouraged to discover the forms and structures of language for themselves.
- There is a whole- language approach in which the four traditional language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) are integrated.

According to these main principles, many specialists (e.g. Williams, 1995; Chastain, 1988; Brown, 2000, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2003) think that communicative lessons are based on tasks and needs of the students. Moreover, such lessons are learner-centered, authentic, and contextualized. Therefore, a class following these principles can be considered communicatively-based.

In summary, the main purpose of CLT is to promote learners' CC. To do so, various activities and roles are designed in different contexts which give learners opportunities to communicate meaningfully in the target language. In the meantime, the students are also not supposed to converse in their native language in class, and teachers try to minimize the corrections of students' errors to encourage risk-taking and confidence in language learning



since errors are considered a completely natural part of the learning process and should not be avoided. Furthermore, by getting students involved in group activities CLT tries to help each student interact with others in practicing meaningful and authentic language. Authentic materials can give the students a chance to develop strategies for interpreting language as NSs do (Jin, Singh, & Li, 2005). In the CLT class both the teachers and the students are directors of learning. Thus, “the teacher is not a ruler, dictator or speaker, but an organizer, helper and enlightener in class so that the students could be relaxed and confident” (Jin, Singh, & Li, 2005: 4). In line with this view, Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983: 98-101) classify some of the responsibilities of teachers in communicative classes as follows:

1. To know the interests of the students; their linguistic and cultural needs; their learning styles, and their social or vocational aspirations;
2. To ascertain their students’ level of communicative skills;
3. To present the communicative functions, the structures, notions, and cultural insights in appropriate realistic situations;
4. To offer both controlled and guided activities leading to fluency, accuracy, and habit formation;
5. To prepare realistic activities which have some relevance to the students’ daily life and communication needs;
6. Not to intervene when students are expressing themselves creatively during fluency activities unless there is a complete breakdown in understanding.

Karakas (2013: 3) provides a summary of the practical and theoretical features of CLT in the following table.



Theory of Language and Theory of Learning	Chief Principles	Student Roles	Teacher Roles
* Language is a system for expressing meaning.	*Focus on fluency and communication not only accuracy and forms	* Negotiators between the self, the learning process and the object of learning	* Needs analyst * Counselor * Group process manager * Facilitator * Participant * Observer * Learner
*Theory of language as communication is paramount.	*Interaction-based activities - negotiation of meaning	* Must interact with each other and be more cooperative than competitive	*Must use text-based materials -dialogues -sentence patterns -visual and taped cues
* The goal of language teaching is to develop communicative competence: - grammatical - sociolinguistic - discourse - strategic - pragmatic - fluency	*Use of authentic materials rather than drills  *Focus on learner autonomy	*Active participant in the production of language rather than passive recipient	*Must use task-based materials and realia. - role plays - simulations - magazines - maps - advertisements - newspapers
*Underlying learning theory -communication principle - task-based principle - meaningfulness principle	*Focus on learner's real-world communication needs	* co-operator with teacher and other students	

Table 1. Summary of the practical and theoretical characteristics of CLT

### 2.1.5. Problems of CLT

Broadly speaking, CLT can be considered as one of the most interesting developments in the field of language teaching. However, its benefits and appropriateness are still questionable for some problems. The first problem is that in comparison with other methods and approaches, CLT cannot provide teachers with an organized and comprehensible syllabus which results in designing easy-to-teach textbooks and assessment tools. It covers different formats for different students and aims, so we do not have a perfect solution or way to teach language.

The second problem is related to its position regarding the role of formal instruction. In spite of the success of CLT in developing highly functional L2 skills in learners, students still face the problem of inaccuracy (Wesche & Skehan, 2002). For instance, studies have indicated that whereas L2 learners in communicative classrooms can acquire high level of comprehension and fluency, they still feel difficulties regarding grammatical accuracy and lexical precision (Harley & Swain, 1984; Lightbown & Spada, 1990). Accordingly, research on the effect of formal instruction has shown that focusing on forms and structures can be benefi-



cial for learners in communicative classrooms (Spada, 1997; Norris & Orteha, 2000). Obviously, involving the students in language use is not sufficient; some degree of emphasis on form and structure is also required (Wesche & Skehan, 2002). As Schmitt and Celce-Murcia (2010: 6) say, “a communicative approach helped learners to become fluent, but was insufficient to ensure comparable levels of accuracy. It seems as if a certain amount of explicit instruction focusing on language form may be necessary as well.”

The next problem is that there is a gap between the theories of CLT and its socio-cultural relevance in different contexts and situations. If the teaching of English is beyond the teaching of language itself (Gee, 1994; Pennycook, 1994), cultural study has an important influence and can directly help teachers adapt teaching method to the conditions in their own countries, since neither language nor teaching methods can be empty of cultural impacts (Liu, 1998). CLT is not a universal cure that can be used in all contexts and situations. It needs particular teacher training programs, and it should be adapted to different local conditions. CLT needs special conditions to be implemented successfully in a given context (Wesche & Skehan, 2002). “Differences among students, student competence levels, school populations, teachers, scheduling and the physical environment invariably impose limitations on theories” (Chowdhury, 2003: 286).

In line with this view, Kumaravadelu (2006: 64) proposes that CLT may be “a classic case of a center-based pedagogy that is out of sync with local linguistic, educational, social, cultural, and political exigencies.” The reactions of teachers and students in various cultures towards CLT may suggest that this approach is difficult to apply. These difficulties originate from various points. In some cases, they are related to the teachers. For example, in a study on Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese EFL teachers’ opinions towards the effectiveness of CLT, Butler (2005) finds that teachers consider it difficult to use CLT in their contexts, in part because of their misinterpretation of the method. In a Bangladeshi case, Hamid and Baldauf (2008: 18) report that all teachers in their study “admitted that they did not have a clear idea about or understanding of CLT; nor did they know the ‘whats’ and ‘hows’ of implementing it in the classroom for developing learners’ communicative competence.” They conclude that this lack of understanding may be owing to a lack of training in CLT. Training, however, does not of itself guarantee successful application of method in the classroom. Additionally, Medgyes (1986: 21) says that the communicative teacher needs extraordinary and various abilities. He/she must be “a multi-dimensional, high-tech, wizard-of-Oz-like super person—



yet of flesh and blood.” He maintains that CLT produces a heavy workload for a teacher since it is a student-centered approach rather than a teacher-centered one, and the teacher has to have more duties both before and during the class, which is especially difficult for non-native teachers.

Another important fact concerning the implementation of CLT is the lack of authentic materials in almost all EFL contexts (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Li, 1998; Eveyik-Aydin, 2003). Some teachers have contended that they spend a great deal of time in order to prepare their materials. For example, Li (1998) reveals that because Korean textbooks are based on grammar-translation or audiolingual methods, some South Korean teachers have to design their own communicative materials, which is an additional burden. In China, Yu (2001) finds that as many Chinese teachers have to work several jobs to make a living, they do not have enough time for syllabus or curriculum change. Likewise, the absence of native speakers has a negative impact on the employment of CLT in South Korea (Li, 1998).

Implementing CLT can be troublesome at the national level as well. Li (1998) states that South Korean teachers believe that their training is not adequate, and that CLT pays much more attention to fluency than accuracy, leading students to score badly on tests which are based on more traditional ways of teaching. In other situations, some of the troubles are related to the students. Some learners say that teachers make them take part in too many fun activities, which are more appropriate for younger students. Moreover, teachers do not correct errors as often as students need, and they give higher marks to students with analytical and imaginative thinking rather than those with fewer errors (Ouyang, 2003). Therefore, in spite of the popularity of CLT, such problems compel many teachers to use traditional, teacher-centered, grammar-translation methods instead of CLT.

Another difficulty concerning this approach is that the term has different meanings to different people. Each person or teacher has his/her own perception of CLT principles based on the special kinds of teaching techniques and activities which he/she uses in the classroom. The next unfortunate consequence of CLT is connected with textbooks which in reality are little more than a series of instructions for activities. A dangerous outcome of the CLT movement is related to the fact that communication results in learning. This leads many teachers to presume that their duty is merely establishing communicative activities and the learning will take care of itself. Although communicative activities are essential, in most language classrooms focused grammar study, substitution, rote-learning, and other non-



communicative techniques and activities should also be a part of teaching. One of the assumptions of CLT is the reduction of teacher talking time; however, in many EFL contexts the teacher is the only source of L2 language input for the students, so listening to the teacher talk is both helpful and advantageous for them (Barker, 2011).

Beside these elements, limited sources and funds can also be troublesome in some situations. For example, most of the schools in China do not have enough resources such as computers, TVs, overhead projectors, and language laboratories which are necessary to apply CLT (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Rao, 1996; Hui, 1997). Another institutional factor that impedes the implementation of CLT is classroom size. Holliday (1994) suggests that oral participation and discussion is very hard to run in large classes. According to Holliday (1994), CLT is more compatible with ESL contexts which have instrumentally-oriented language teaching, whereas in EFL contexts, English teaching is mostly affected by the predetermined syllabuses, textbooks, and testing methods in the institutions. Therefore, the teaching curricula and methods are more predictable in an EFL than in an ESL context, and this is in contrast with the dynamic and changeable nature of CLT.

The advent of CLT has also created a further dilemma for method in view of teaching pronunciation. As we all know, “intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence” (Morley, 1991: 488). CLT emphasizes the need for teaching pronunciation on the segmental and supra-segmental levels. At the same time, in CLT conveying messages and establishing meaningful interactions are much more important than attention to forms. However, in order to learn a language, its items should also be noticed and stressed. This is one of the basic problems that communicative language teachers have to cope with. Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (1996: 8) state that “proponents of this approach have not dealt adequately with the role of pronunciation in language teaching, nor have they developed an agreed-upon set of strategies for teaching pronunciation communicatively.”

### ***2.1.6. Misconceptions about CLT***

According to Thompson (1996), although CLT has been acknowledged by many linguists and language teachers as one of the most effective approaches and has been acclaimed as the leading theoretical model in ELT without paying attention to teaching situation, there are still some teachers who are not clear about its principles and features, and this may lead to





some misconceptions about this approach. As Thompson (1996) says, the following four misconceptions are the most frequent.

### **Grammar Teaching**

According to Savignon (2013), since CLT puts emphasis on meaning rather than morpho-syntactic features, in some cases it has been inferred that grammar is not an important issue in this approach or the supporters of CLT are in favor of learner self-expression regardless of form. However grammar is essential for communication and it cannot occur without paying attention to the grammar. This view is also presented by Canale and Swain (1980) when they consider grammar competence as one of the main components of CC in their theory. In other words, in CLT, learners are supposed to discover grammar through communicative activities. “CLT suggests that grammatical structure might better be subsumed under various functional categories. In CLT we pay considerably less attention to the overt presentation and discussion of grammatical rules than we traditionally did. A great deal of use of authentic language is implied in CLT, as we attempt to build fluency” (Chambers, 1997, as cited in Brown, 2000: 267).

Therefore, in order to develop communicative abilities, there is a need to have a combination of form-based and meaning-based exercises and activities. Grammar is crucial, and students learn grammatical points better when they can relate them to their own communicative needs (Lightbown & Spada, 1993). This view indicates that CLT tries to change the way grammar is taught in the classroom, and it does not mean that this approach refuses to teach grammar for the sake of communication. Thus, as Brumfit (1984: 52) suggests, like fluency work, accuracy work has its own definite role in language teaching; however, “its over-use will impede successful language development.” In this sense, “the structural view of language has not been in any way superseded by the functional view” (Littlewood, 1981: 1). In line with these views, Thompson (1996: 9-10) also proposes that omission or lack of overt attention to grammatical issues is a kind of misconception about what CLT entails, although “it is certainly understandable that there was a reaction against the heavy emphasis on structure at the expense of natural communication.” Furthermore, Canale and Swain (1980) defend the use of CLT against the claim that the communicative syllabuses are disordered and unsystematic concerning acquisition of grammar. They suggest that no empirical evidence can be found to support this issue and that the communicative approach probably



has more positive impact than the grammar-based approach on developing learners' motivation because it gives learners a sense of confidence and security through a clear, unequivocal objective for language learning, i.e. successful communication.

Thus, although CLT has been considered as one of the primary approaches in the language teaching profession for many years (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Bax, 2003), it faces problems finding its rightful place in schools (Thompson, 1996; Bax, 2003) since practitioners comprehend CLT in different ways. For instance, Hasanova (2008: 68-69), points out that CLT in Uzbekistan is "perceived more as a topic of discussion for teaching conferences rather than an approach to be implemented in classroom teaching" and that "the majority of EFL teachers had little theoretical knowledge of what CLT is about, and hence mostly perceived CLT as an oral-based method to language teaching with little or no grammar" (see also Section 2.3.1 for more examples).

Therefore, it should be made clear that CLT not only focuses on oral communication or speaking tasks, but also on the notion of mixing the knowledge and use of language as mentioned earlier. In other words, it is a combination of accuracy and fluency to produce appropriacy. As Savignon (2002:7) states, "communication cannot take place in the absence of structure, or grammar, a set of shared assumptions about how language works, along with willingness of participants to cooperate in the negotiation of meanings." Therefore, CLT has a balanced view towards functional as well as structural aspects of language (Beyene, 2008). In other words, in communicative teaching both grammar and situation are considered; however, "the primary focus is the learner and the functions of language" (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983: 22).

### **Focus on Speaking**

Another misconception about CLT, according to Thompson (1996), is that it focuses only on teaching speaking rather than reading and writing. However, the proponents of CLT believe that its principles pay attention to reading and writing skills as well. For example, Savignon (2013: 138, see also Savignon, 2007) acknowledges that "the principles of CLT apply equally to reading and writing activities and involve readers and writers engaged in the interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning ... [based on] learners' need in a given context."



### **Pair work and Group work**

The next fallacy is that most of the time pair work in CLT was considered by teachers to be role play. Although role play is a kind of activity that can be used in communicative classrooms, pair work and group work are more flexible and helpful techniques than role play. It may be impossible to use role play as often as pair work and group work, especially at beginner level. Using pair work and group work, learners are able to collaborate and help each other in problem-solving tasks, analyze a text, make presentations, and do exercises. This may lead them to greater success as they are themselves responsible for their tasks and activities (Thompson, 1996).

### **Challenge for Teachers**

Medgyes (1986) argues that using CLT is much more demanding and challenging for teachers than other approaches. In communicative classes, lessons are somehow unpredictable, and teachers have to communicate with students as naturally as possible. They must be skillful and proficient in order to manage the class. “But teachers are not supermen and it is far more difficult to use CLT method. Students shouldn’t expect too much from their teachers” (Jin, Singh, & Li, 2005: 6).

At the end of this section, it should be mentioned that since no teaching method is perfect, as Thaler (2010, 2012) claims, it is better to have a balanced view towards language teaching in order to profit from different approaches, classroom types—both teacher-fronted and learner-centered classes, and techniques concerning our specific context and situation of teaching.

## **2.2. Culture**

After this short review on the emergence of CLT and its principles, the following part of the present chapter presents an overview of the second focus or variable of this study, which is culture. This part is concerned with definitions of culture, the relationship between language and culture, the history of culture teaching, CLT and cultural teaching, and the emergence of Intercultural Competence (IC) and related concepts.



### **2.2.1 Definitions of Culture**

Culture has always been considered as one of the most difficult concepts to define, due to its complex nature. As Nemni (1992, as cited in Lessard-Clouston, 1997) and Street (1993) suggest, it is not an easy task to define culture since it can be comprehended differently particularly in our international world. Hinkel (1999: 1) proposes that there are “as many definitions of culture as there are fields of inquiry into human societies, groups, systems, behaviors, and activities.” The American anthropologists, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952, as cited in Gao, 2006), collected about 164 different definitions of this concept, and concluded that culture is a very deep concept including all features of our life. As a result, culture has been defined in various fields of studies from different perspectives. For example, according to Collins English Dictionary (1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003), from the sociological perspective, “culture is the total of the inherited and innate ideas, attitudes, beliefs, values, and knowledge, forming the shared foundations of social action,” while from anthropological and ethnological perspectives “culture includes the total range of activities and ideas of a specific group of people with common and shared traditions, which are conveyed, distributed, and highlighted by members of the group.”

Generally, culture has been concerned with ‘the ways of a people’ (Lado, 1971), and this view integrates both observable and unobservable aspects of culture (Saville-Troike, 1975). Peck (1998) believes that culture refers to all the accepted and shared behaviors of a group of people which is learned by them since they belong to some particular groups. Culture shows not only a group’s way of thinking, feeling, and acting, but also the assigned forms for doing things in specific ways. Culture is our social inheritance; it determines our lives in every moment (Thanasoulas, 2001). Likewise, Moran (2001: 24) refers to the five main dimensions of culture in Figure 2 and describes culture as “the evolving way of life of a group of persons, consisting of a shared set of practices associated with a shared set of products, based upon a shared set of perspectives on the world, and set within specific social contexts.”

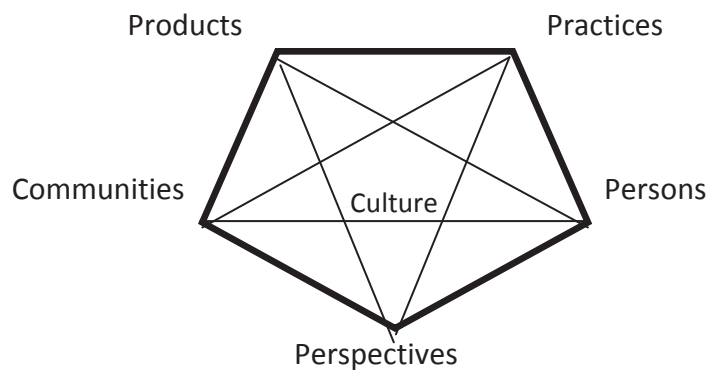


Figure 2. The five dimensions of culture (source: Moran, 2001: 24)

In other words, “Culture is a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioral conventions, and basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member’s behavior and each member’s interpretations of the meanings of other people’s behavior” (Spencer-Oatey, 2000 : 4). In line with Spencer-Oatey’s definition, Liddicoat et al. (2003: 45) explain culture as ...

A complex system of concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviours, practices, rituals, and lifestyle of the people who make up a cultural group, as well as the artefacts they produce and the institutions they create.

Moreover, Kramsch (2003: 24) considers culture as a societal symbolic construct which is the product of self and other conceptions about facts and events that represent a country’s history and past. So, every member of a group has a shared cultural imagination which has been shaped by “centuries of discourses of various genres: maps and censuses, works of literature and other artistic productions, as well as by a certain public discourse in the press and other media.”

From another point of view, many scholars divide culture into two main concepts: “Little/Small c” culture and “Big C” culture, or “low culture” and “high culture.” “Big C” culture refers to the cultural products which are considered as the presentation of a specific culture, such as art, literature, and architecture. In other words, as Lee (2009: 78) maintains, Big “C” culture is “the culture which represents a set of facts and statistics relating to the arts, history, geography, business, education, festivals and customs of a target speech society.” By contrast, little “c” culture includes the everyday aspects of the life of a group of people. Lee (2009: 78) also describes little “c” culture as “the invisible and deeper sense of a target culture” which encompasses mental attitudes or assumptions. Accordingly, Peterson (2004)



characterizes little “c” culture as the culture which puts emphasis on ordinary or trivial subjects. It is concerned with those topics like thoughts, viewpoints, orientations, body languages, food, hobbies, popular issues, and certain knowledge or beliefs (Peterson, 2004; Christensen & Warnick, 2006; Zhu, 2008; Lee, 2009; Liu & Laohawiriyanon, 2013). However, in spite of the popularity of this classification, this kind of cultural interpretation does not include all the major constituents of culture (Zhu, 2008).

Thus, many scholars have tried to use other categorizations to define different aspects of culture. For example, according to Lange (2003: 340), Bennett et al. distinguish between objective culture and subjective culture. Objective culture is “cultural creations including institutions (administrative, political, religious, literary, educational, etc.) and artefacts of formal culture (eating, shopping, artefacts, clothing, marriage, work, behavior, etc.),” while subjective culture refers to “language use, nonverbal behavior, communication style, cognitive style, and cultural values.” This type of dichotomy avoids the conflicts that result from the C and c differentiations, and the terms prepare the learners to deal with an interactive process in learning the culture. This process is between the objective and subjective culture which avoids learning of only the “bits and pieces of culture.”

Aside from the aforementioned classifications of culture, there are two different views of the concept of culture as well: Culture as something static or dynamic. The static view considers culture as something fixed and unchangeable which includes separate and tangible facts that can be taught and learned. In other words, this view deals with cultural knowledge as factual information or products of a society (Liddicoat, 2002). However, the dynamic view of culture sees it as a changing entity or variable practices that are constantly created and re-created by participants in interaction. Thus, in this sense, culture is not concerned with factual information, things or products, but rather it deals with the actions, understandings, and feelings of people (Liddicoat, 2002). Likewise, Kramsch (1998) and Streeck (2002) take a dynamic view of culture; Kramsch (1998: 10) defines culture as “membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings,” and Streeck describes it as “the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another” (Webster’s College Dictionary, as cited in Streeck, 2002: 300). This static/dynamic classification is highly appropriate with the work of Byram (1997) and Kramsch (1993).



In general, according to the Swedish scholar, Lahdenpera (2000: 204), culture can be characterized based on seven dimensions:

1. cultural artefacts, i.e. different cultural products and depictions, such as cuisine, art, architecture, music, costumes and dance;
2. repeated patterns of behavior, such as different types of practices, traditions, rituals, celebrations, how one maps out one's day, etc.;
3. collective religious conceptions and belief systems, i.e. different conceptions, values, virtues, opinion systems, norms and evaluations, what is right and wrong;
4. thinking, i.e. the way to think, abstractions, concepts, categories, metaphors, memory functions, etc;
5. emotions, i.e. frames of mind and emotional expressions and feelings;
6. the way to communicate and relate to one's surroundings, such as family relations and the relationship between the sexes;
7. self concept, how one constructs one's personal picture as a person.

In summary, we can say that culture has the following characteristics:

1. Culture is learned.
2. Culture is transmitted from generation to generation.
3. Culture is based on symbols.
4. Culture is dynamic.
5. Culture is an integrated system (Samovar et al., 2013).

These features of culture are discussed in two famous models by Hall (1976)—iceberg model—and Hofstede (1991)—onion model.

### **Iceberg Model of Culture**

Hall (1976) tries to define culture using the analogy of an iceberg. This iceberg model compares the notion of culture to an iceberg with two visible and invisible parts. As is obvious in Figure 3, the visible part is concerned with those features of culture, such as literature, religion, art, etc. which are tangible and observable, whereas the other hidden part deals with abstract and unobservable notions of culture (beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, etc.) that are not easily interpreted. This model indicates that only small part of the cultural characteristics of a society can be observed by an outsider, while the most important or fundamental features are invisible, and therefore, more difficult to identify, and it is these unconscious or

hidden elements of culture—or “deep culture” (Shaules, 2007: 11)—that should be referred to deeply in language classes (Hoft, 1996) since they form our lives (Hall, 1976; see also Shaules, 2007). Hall (1976: 14) believes that there are different models of culture introduced by anthropologists, but all of them have two clear levels: overt and covert, implicit and explicit. Thus, culture consists of two layers: one is explicit and visible and the other is implicit or invisible. Hall stresses that it is the implicit part which can help us find out more about human nature. Based on his view, culture has three different features: (a) it is something which is learned, (b) its components are interconnected, and finally (c) it is something shared among a group of people.

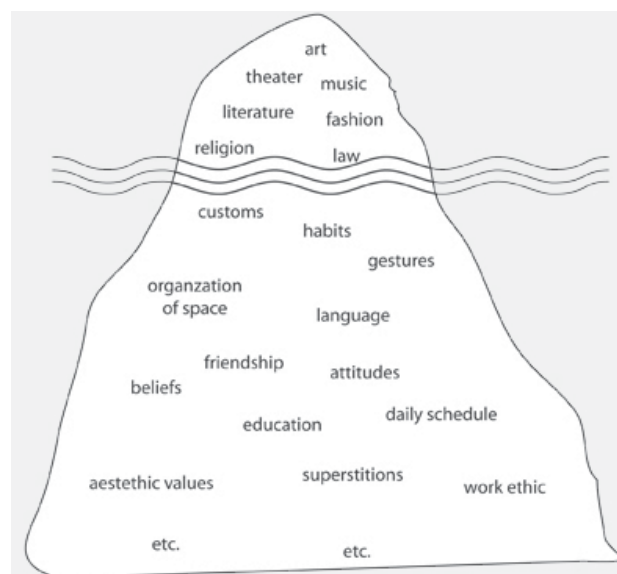


Figure 3. Iceberg model of culture (source: French & Bell, 1995, as cited in Schadewitz, 2009)

### Onion Model of Culture

Another model that shows the characteristics of culture was discussed by Hofstede in 1991. This model is in the form of an onion indicating different layers of culture. Hofstede presents sets of four layers, each of which embraces the lower level. Figure 4 shows this model in detail. As is obvious, values, the most hidden part, are in the center. According to Hofstede (1994: 8), values symbolize those ideas and opinions that people have about how things “ought to be.” These ideas cannot be directly observed by an outsider, and they are only inferred from people’s behaviors in different contexts. Other layers of the onion consist of ...

- symbols, which are words, gestures, pictures, and objects that carry often complex meanings recognized as such only by those who share the culture;





- heroes, i.e. persons alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a culture and thus serve as models for behavior;
- rituals, which are concerned with collective activities that are technically unnecessary to the achievement of desired end, but that within a culture are considered socially essential, keeping the individual bound within the norms of the collectivity (Hofstede, 2002: 10).

These three sections are much more visible than values and are subsumed under 'practices'. However, their cultural meanings cannot be observed, and they directly depend on how these practices are interpreted (Hofstede, 2002; Dahl, 2004).

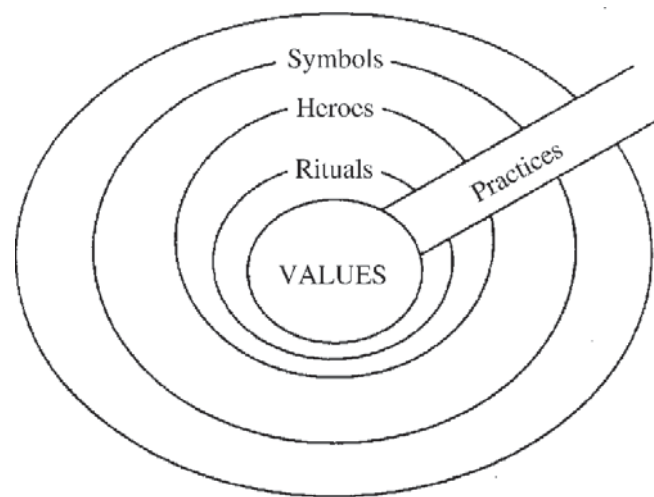


Figure 4. Onion model of culture (source: Hofstede, 2002)

Based on the different definitions of culture, the analysis of cultural notions, and the relationships between them, Spencer-Oatey's (2000) definition of culture is used as the working definition in the present study. According to Spencer-Oatey's (2000: 4), culture is "a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioral conventions and basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influences each member's behavior and each member's interpretation of the 'meaning' of other people's behavior." It is selected as the working definition in the current research since, as Spencer-Oatey (2000: 4) and Gao (2006: 59) maintain, it deals with four important issues.

1. First, culture is manifested at different layers of depth, ranging from inner core basic assumption and values, through outer core attitudes, beliefs and social conventions, to surface-level behavioral manifestations.



2. Second, the sub-surface aspects of culture influence people's behavior and the meanings they attribute to other people's behavior (along with other factors such as personality).
3. Third, culture is a "fuzzy" concept, in that group members are unlikely to share identical sets of attitudes, beliefs and so on, but rather show "family resemblances", with the result that there is no absolute sort of features that can distinguish definitely one cultural group from another, and
4. Fourth, culture is associated with social groups. All people are simultaneously members of a number of different groups and categories; for example, gender groups, ethnic groups, generational groups, national groups, professional groups, and so on. So in many respects, all these different groupings can be seen as different cultural groups.

In this sense, this definition treats culture as a term which refers to certain sets of shared attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs in a group of people who can belong to different cultural groups themselves. Thus, firstly it shows the cultural differences among people in a particular society and secondly it deals with specific assumptions and beliefs related to a group of people which can differentiate them from other groups. These concepts are considered as the main focuses in this study.

Nevertheless, the Big "C" notion of culture is taken into account in the present work as well. According to Lee (2009: 78), Big "C" culture is "the culture which represents a set of facts and statistics relating to the arts, history, geography, business, education, festivals and customs of a target speech society." In addition, it should be mentioned that the terms "intercultural" and "cross-cultural" are used interchangeably, referring to interaction between people from two different "cultural" groups in this research (Spencer-Oatey, 2000: 4).

Now, after this brief overview on the definition of culture, it is time to look at the relationship between language and culture which is one of the main concerns in this research.

### ***2.2.2. Language and Culture***

The relationship between language and culture has always been a hotly debated issue in the field of language teaching. One of the popular theories which tries to describe the relationship between language and culture is the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. Based on this theory, lexicons and their related meanings have a crucial effect on conceptual contents of languages



and cultures. These cultural semantics can be adopted and exchanged among languages and cultures (Whorf, 1956; Sapir, 1973; Perlovsky, 2009). The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis suggests that language affects and shapes the way we think, and that the related differences in a language may not be found in another language (Whorf, 1956; Sapir, 1973; Shaules, 2007; Franklin, et al., 2008). However, this theory has been questioned regarding the causal or reciprocal relationship between language and culture since some studies indicate that culture manifests semantic aspects of language as well (Perlovsky, 2009; Franklin, et al., 2008).

As Brown (2000: 198) states, “culture is really an integral part of the interaction between language and thought. Cultural patterns of cognition and customs are sometimes explicitly coded in language.” Thus, obviously, it can play an important role in the learning of a SL. “A language is a part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture” (Brown, 2000: 177, see also Fantini, 1997; Moran, 2001; Lange & Paige, 2003). It means that language “is both a symbol of the whole and a part of the whole which shapes and is in turn shaped by socio-cultural actions, beliefs, and values” (Byram, 1991: 18).

Crozet and Liddicoat (1999) present this relationship between language and culture visually in Figure 5. This figure demonstrates how culture relates to levels of language use in different domains. At one end of this continuum, we have culture which refers to understandings of the world using knowledge and sources valued within a specific context. This knowledge in turn affects the form of spoken and written genre in the culture, which influences and builds up pragmatic and interactional norms and routines as well. And finally, at the other end, we have language including words, expressions, and grammar. Here, culture is recognized at the pragmalinguistic level in linguistic manifestations with both verbal and non-verbal signs. Thus, as is obvious from this model, we need to have enough cultural information in order to comprehend linguistic and non-verbal behaviors within particular situations. If we are not able to use such cultural conceptions in our interactions with the NSs of the language, communication may break down, leading to unintentional discourtesy and disrespect. Therefore, “language does not function independently from the context in which it is used” (Liddicoat et al., 2003: 8). In other words, as Lantolf (2002: 110) contends, language is perhaps the most dominant and prevalent cultural structure designed by people.

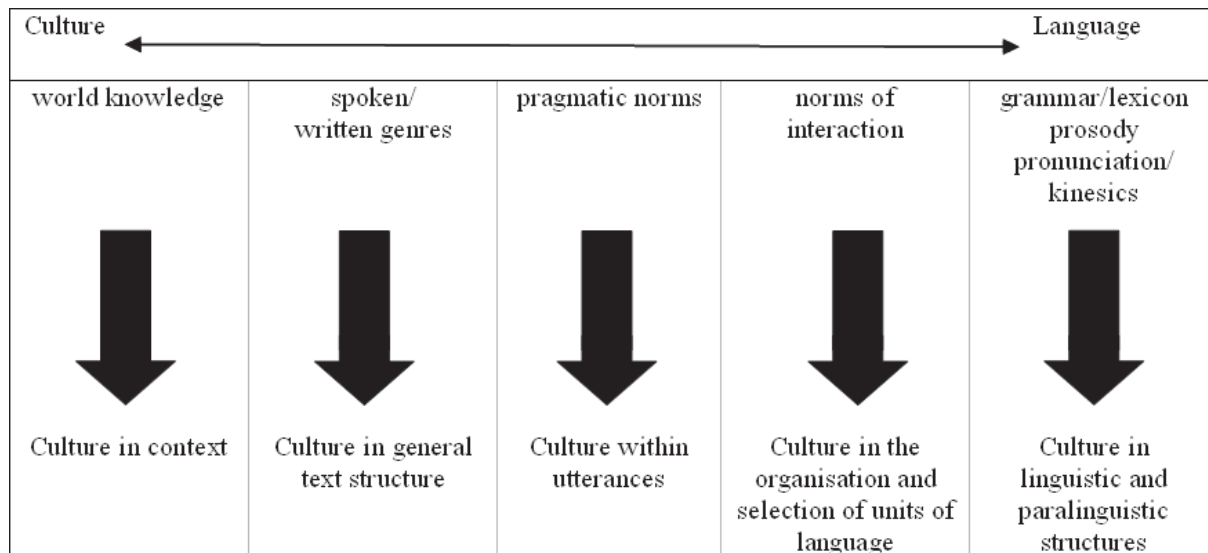


Figure 5. Interactions between culture and language (source: Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999)

In line with this view, many language theorists have also insisted that teaching culture should be a part of teaching language, and it is not possible to present a language without its cultural elements (Byram, 1991; Valdes 1995; Byram, 1997; Byram & Fleming 1998; Alptekin, 2002). Thus, culture is largely conveyed via language, and language represents many cultural perceptions and standards (Brody, 2003). Kramsch (1993: 1) describes the importance of culture as follows:

Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them.

Studies concerning the relationship between SL/FL culture and language teaching reveal that materials and FL teachers are influential in conveying the information about the cultural and socio-cultural features of the target language in the classroom (Damen, 1987; Byram, 1989; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Basically, the process of teaching and learning a FL incorporates the presentation of another culture alongside the establishment of contact with other people (Skopinskaja, 2003). Thus, if we consider language as the skeleton of ELT or foreign language teaching, then literature and culture are the blood and flesh (Klippel & Doff, 2007).

There are lots of studies examining the relation between L2 and target culture teaching (e.g. Kramsch, 1993; Byram, 1997). This kind of research has highlighted that without cultur-



al instruction, teaching L2 is defective and incorrect. When studying a language, it is completely meaningless for the learners if they do not learn anything about the people who live in a country where the target language is spoken. So, learning a language means not only to know about the use of grammar and vocabulary, but also the cultural elements (see also Brooks, 1964; Seelye, 1984). As believed by Bada (2000: 101, as cited in Genc & Bada, 2005), “the need for cultural literacy in ELT arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question, seem to encounter significant hardship in communicating meaning to native speakers.” This problem is much more obvious when using non-verbal clues in conversations. Due to the impact of the Non-NSs’ cultural norms, it is often difficult for the learners to use appropriate forms in a specific situation. Moreover, sometimes non-verbal signs, which are a part of oral communications, cause difficulty leading to miscommunication as a result of unfamiliarity with the non-verbal communication system of the target language (Shumin, 2002).

Thus, FL learning consists of a variety of factors, such as grammatical competence, communicative competence, language proficiency, as well as cultural competence, and many teachers have aimed to incorporate the teaching of culture into the FL syllabus (Thanasoulas, 2001). In other words, according to Risager (2005: vii) ...

Language teaching has two sides: a language side and a culture side, and that one of the greatest pedagogical challenges consists in integrating these two sides so that students get a sense of their interconnectedness.

In summary, with regard to Duranti’s (1997: 24) definition of culture as “something learned, transmitted, passed down from one generation to the next, through human actions, often in the form of face-to-face interaction, and, of course, through linguistic communication,” it is evident that although language is one of the sub-sections of culture, it has a crucial role in understanding other people since it is the “the prototypical tool for interacting with the world” (Duranti, 1997: 49, He, 2005: 26). Language is interwoven with culture. Therefore, “culture should be our message to students and language our medium,” (Peck, 1998: webpage) as in fact, when we communicate with other people, we are processing or investigating others’ values, beliefs and attitudes. As a result, many of the misunderstandings in our daily interactions with members of other cultures are not because of linguistic deficiency but a variety of other cultural differences (Fat, 2004).



Buttjes (1990: 55) gives the following reasons to specify why “language and culture are from the outset inseparably connected:”

1. Language acquisition does not follow a universal sequence, but differs across cultures.
2. The process of becoming a competent member of society is realized through exchanges of language in particular social situations.
3. Every society orchestrates the ways in which children participate in particular situations, and this, in turn, affects the form, the function and the content of children’s utterances.
4. Caregivers’ primary concern is not with grammatical input, but with the transmission of socio-cultural knowledge.
5. The native learner, in addition to language, acquires also the paralinguistic patterns and the kinesics of his or her culture.

Thus, if we ignore the connection between language and culture, it seems that we play “the language game without knowing the rules” (Damen, 2003: 72). “Language and culture are two sides of the same coin which are infused within each other” (Moran, 2001: 47). In this sense, as Doyé (1996: 105) suggests ...

The very nature of language forbids the separation of language from culture. If language is considered as a system of signs, and signs are characterized by the fact that they are units of form and meaning, it is impossible to learn a language by simply acquiring the forms without their content. And as the content of a language is always culture-bound, any reasonable foreign-language teaching cannot but include the study of a culture from which the language stems.

### ***2.2.3. History of Culture Teaching***

As mentioned in the previous section, the controversial relationship between language and culture has always been one of the concerns of FL teachers and scholars. As a result, incorporating the target language culture into language classrooms has been faced with a lot of changes in the history of language teaching. Throughout this history, ELT practitioners have had various ideas for and against teaching culture in classrooms (Genc & Bada, 2005). Before the advent of GTM in 17<sup>th</sup> century, many of the official language teaching programs, especially in Europe were concerned with teaching Latin. During this period, following a long tradition in the Middle Ages, dialogues were mostly used in the teaching of spoken Latin. These



dialogues, which were also used in many late Renaissance instruments for language teaching, were concerned with everyday conversation. Meurier, Holyband, Bellot, and Florio were among the dominant figures using these dialogue models during this period (Howatt, 1984). Thus, the teaching of daily language in dialogues, as “a guide to ‘social reality’” (Sapir, 1929: 209, as cited in Salzmann, 1998: 41), can be considered as the first form of culture teaching in the history of FL education. Aside from the presentation of such dialogues, other tools were also used to teach culture in FL classes during this era. For instance, music, songs, and vocabulary were employed by teachers to teach the cultural aspects—mostly daily life—of the people in the target countries. (Kelly, 1969; Paige et al., 1999; He, 2005). Therefore, it can be concluded that culture teaching has a long tradition going back to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

After the decline of Latin as the leading language and with the emergence of GTM, the teaching of language was confined to an implicit relationship with its cultural dimensions since students were involved in the comparison of two languages through translation. Thus, although culture was indirectly intertwined with language in this method, it was considered in its narrow sense and through literature only. At that time, the aim was to educate people who had enough knowledge of history, literature and fine arts, and culture was used to show the good and aristocratic ways of life. This kind of culture which refers to the products of a country—or surface structure of the target culture (Caspari, 2007)—is called High or Big C culture (Saluveer, 2004; Neuner, 2007). As Brooks (1964: 83-84) states, teaching of culture in GTM can be characterized as follows:

Culture in its refinement has long been attached to language teaching. The language teacher is presumed to be a cultured person and the learner is presumed to enhance his own culture as he learns a second language. The culture of the foreign country whose language is being studied, as reflected in its literature, art, architecture, music, dance, and the like, is the subject of much consideration.

In this sense, according to Seelye (1984: 8), culture was seen as “an elitist collection of facts about art, literature, music, history, and geography.”

However, the rise of DM, resulting in the fall of GTM, had a crucial role in the history of FL teaching especially regarding the cultural dimension of language teaching. From that time on, scholars began to take this element much more into consideration when teaching a language (Genc & Bada, 2005). For instance, Strohmeyer and Huebner, who were two support-



ers of the DM, were strongly in favor of cultural study. Strohmeier believed that one of the aims of FL teaching is to make the students familiar with the foreign culture. Likewise, Huebner called for those materials which give insight into the culture (Kelly, 1969). DM focused on oral language and considered culture as a way of life or small c culture (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). However, since DM did not have a precise socio-linguistic and socio-cultural theoretical foundation, the teaching of culture became incidental and inferior to the teaching of language (He, 2005). As a result, culture was taught separately from language in such courses as **background studies, area studies, British life and institutions, Landeskunde** (in Germany), **civilisation** (in France), and **civiltà** (in Italy) (Byram, 1989: 58-60; Kramersch, 1993: 9; Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993: 6; Byram, Nichols, & Stevens, 2001; Saluveer, 2004: 8). As Finocchiaro & Brumfit (1983: 6) state, “all the statements used were related to the classroom. Teachers did not generally think of students using language beyond the classroom. Any connection with real life was expected to come later and was not the business of the school.”

This kind of view towards culture teaching even continued during the dominance of ALM which became popular from 1947 to 1967 especially in the United States. As Stern (1983: 464) says, “while audio-linguists were not impervious to the cultural aspects of second language instruction, language learning, in the first instance, was viewed as the acquisition of a practical set of communicative skills.” Thus, although cultural teaching was also empathized in this method, it was still considered as something subordinate to language teaching.

In the 1970s, due to the development of the world economy and international contact, there was a need for successful communications. Accordingly, many attempts and projects were conducted in order to establish methods of language teaching which focused on a view of language as a tool for communication between people. As mentioned before, one of these projects run by the Council of Europe was called Threshold Level leading to the formation of functional-notional approach under the influence of Wilkin’s Notional Syllabus. The underlying perspective of this approach was greatly in accordance with the socio-linguistic viewpoint which saw language as a product of the society, economics, culture, and the people. Thus, with the advent of the functional-notional approach and the emphasis on socio-linguistic aspects of language teaching, much more attention was paid to the situational context of the FL teaching, and culture took an important place in the FL curriculum (He, 2005).

Following this view, a communicative movement was formed by some linguists, such as Hymes and Canale and Swain, and CC became the end goal of language teaching, so ALM





was superseded by the communicative approach or CLT which highlighted a functional approach to language learning/teaching. Regarding this shift from ALM to CLT, two of main founders of communicative approach, Canale and Swain (1980: 31), assert that “a more natural integration” of language and culture happens “through a more communicative approach than through a more grammatically based approach.”

Based on the principles of CLT, learners can be competent users of language when they have enough knowledge not only about the linguistic aspects, but also about the cultural background of the language (Xia, 2010). Likewise, Stern (1983: 299) believes that “communicative competence no doubt implies linguistic competence but its main focus is the intuitive grasp of social and cultural rules and meanings that are carried by any utterance.” Therefore, teachers’ guidelines (Rivers, 1981; Hammerly, 1982; Higgs, 1984; Omaggio, 1986) were designed based on detailed units concerning teaching culture in the FL classroom, focusing on the primary objective, i.e. communication within the cultural context of the target language.

Generally speaking, CC, as the main aim of CLT, refers to two different dimensions: linguistic and pragmatic. The pragmatic facet of CC is concerned with cultural competence which can be defined as the ability to realize all features of a culture especially the social formation, the ethics, the attitudes and ways of life of the people. In addition, cultural competence helps students to find out how things are supposed to be done in a specific society (Genc & Bada, 2005). In other words, the cultural component of language teaching is revealed in pragmatic functions and notions which are expressed using language in daily speeches and actions (Kramersch, 1996). As Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983: 22) suggest ...

Communicative competence is viewed as the desired goal in language learning. Since a speech act, communication, takes place in definite but varied sociolinguistic situations, both linguistic and extra-linguistic factors have been taken into consideration. The approach takes cognizance of the fact that the social roles and the psychological attitudes of the participants towards each other in a conversation (employer-employee, teacher-pupil, doctor-patient, parent-child, for example), the place and time of the conversation act and the activity or topic being discussed will determine to a large extent the form, tone, and appropriateness of any oral or written message.

This characteristic of CC was also shown by Savignon (2002) in her model developed in 1983. This model, which was an adaptation of Canale and Swain’s (1980) and Canale’s (1983) model, indicated different components of CC as well, i.e. grammatical competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, and socio-cultural competence. Based on this model, it



is socio-cultural competence which requires learners to understand the social context where language is used. Savignon asserts that participants in cross-cultural communications should be aware of the cultural meanings and social rules in relation to language use. For example, turn-taking, appropriateness of content, body language, and intonation do have impact on the way messages are inferred. In this sense, culture is mostly considered as the “language, customs, mores, taboos, art forms, and social institutions of any society or community of people” (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983: 101).

Regarding the above overview, it can be concluded that CLT was one of the first approaches to identify and establish the notion of social function and situational contexts into language teaching. However, some experts believe that although social context has been considered by CLT, “developing cultural skills and intercultural knowledge has not been an essential aspect of CLT” (Rappel, 2009: 26; see also Krumm, 2007). “Due to the heavy reliance on North American and British values, traditional culture teaching in CLT tends to focus strictly on cultural learning and knowledge of the second language” (Rappel, 2009: 30-31). Thus, it cannot be considered as a helpful approach to develop IC or intercultural understanding (Crozet, Liddicoat, & Lo Bianco, 1999). According to Savignon (2002: 10) ...

In addition to cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity is essential. Just knowing something about the culture of an English-speaking country will not suffice. What must be learned is a general empathy and openness toward other cultures.

In fact, CLT neglects to consider the communication between Non-Ss and NSs as an intercultural one rather than communication in the target language (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999: 113). Besides, as Tarasheva and Darcheva (2001) maintain, considering and investigating the students’ own culture is also useful since understanding the hidden structural elements in the local culture of the learners can lead them to develop a sense of self-awareness.

Following this new presentation of cultural concepts in CLT, many more scholars scrutinized the dynamics of culture and its essential role in ‘successful’ language learning during the 1980s (Byram & Morgan, 1994: 5). In addition, in the 1980s and 1990s, progress in pragmatics and socio-linguistics (Levinson, 1983) shed light on the very nature of language and tried to bridge the gap between cultural and language teaching (Valdes, 1986). In this sense, language is no longer considered as a means for describing or communicating but rather for persuading, betraying, or punishing and controlling (Byram, 1989; Lakoff, 1990; Fairclough, 1995).



Therefore, in spite of the fact that the incorporation of language and culture has been discussed for many years, it is not until the 90s that this integration in language classes becomes more and more significant owing to the efforts of some scholars like Byram (1997) and Kramsch (1993) in this regard. In other words, “language pedagogy and culture pedagogy did not, however, have much to do with each other until the 1990s, when it was possible to see signs of a burgeoning awareness of each other’s work and perspectives—in some respects also a rapprochement, especially under the banner ‘intercultural learning’” (Risager, 2012: 143; Edmondson & House, 1998; Risager, 2007; Kolb, 2013).

According to Risager (2012: 148), the 1990s were very much under the influence of internationalization. At that time, different elements, such as “increase in study travel” thanks to the exchange programs especially in Europe and the advancement in the field of “Information and Communication Technology” had an effective impact on language teaching since these improvements gave students and people in general more opportunities to meet students from other countries both physically and via Internet, resulting in “greater access to transnational personal contacts than before” (see also Byram & Risager, 1999). Therefore, the teaching of culture was much more concerned with “experienced culture and personal cultural encounters, i.e. a much more individualized orientation emerged” (Risager, 2012: 148). Against this background, a new model was developed for FL teaching which sees learners „ nicht mehr der Tourist, sondern der Migrant, nicht mehr der native speaker, sondern der intercultural speaker“<sup>11</sup> (Hu, 2010: 76; see also Kramsch, 1998). This new model was IC, which was the end goal of intercultural learning.

At the same time, according to Caspari (2007: 71) ...

Der Begriff „Kultur“ [wurde] wesentlich erweitert: hin zu einem offenen, mehrdimensionalen Kulturbegriff und zu tieferliegenden, oft unsichtbaren Werten, die das Wahrnehmen, Urteilen und Handeln einer bestimmten Bezugsgruppe bestimmen. Auch neuere Vorstellungen vom Lernen, u.a. die besondere Bedeutung der individuellen Voreinstellungen von Lernern und ihrer affektiven Reaktionen, flossen in die Konzepte interkulturellen Lernens ein, die den

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<sup>11</sup> no longer a tourist, but rather a migrant, no longer a native speaker, but rather an intercultural speaker. (My own translation)



besonderen Beitrag des Fremdsprachenunterrichts zur Persönlichkeitsbildung der Lerner („Offenheit“, „kritische Toleranz“) hervorheben.<sup>12</sup>

To sum up, as Crozet, Liddicoat, and Lo Bianco (1999: 7-9) present, we can describe four various patterns for the status of culture teaching in the history of foreign language teaching:

- The traditional approach to teaching culture referring to literature and High culture;
- The ‘culture studies’ approach concerning the history, geography, and institutions of the target country;
- The ‘culture as practices’ approach regarding the practices and values of people in a society;
- Intercultural language learning.

From the 1990s on, the rapid growth of international contact resulted in the importance of integrating culture into FL classrooms, especially English classes since this language is considered as an international language, and it is mostly used by people to interact with each other all around the world. In the following section, due to the importance of culture in the scope of the present study, further issues concerning the necessity of teaching culture will be discussed in detail.

#### ***2.2.4. The Importance of Culture Teaching***

As mentioned before, since the 1980s culture has taken an important place in SL/FL teaching theories, especially ELT, and it has no longer been recognized as “an add-on but rather as an integral part of second/foreign language learning” (Courchene, 1996: 1). Considering this fact, culture became a central element in the ELT curriculum, and the necessity of including culture in ELT materials was discussed by many scholars. Consequently, different types of learning materials were analyzed by various authors (e.g. Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Bahumaid, 2006; Bao-he, 2010) in order to shed light on the need for including cultural knowledge about the FL culture to encourage positive attitudes towards the FL and the people who speak it as one of the objectives of FL teaching. But, why is teaching culture important and why should culture be integrated in language classes?

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<sup>12</sup> The term “culture” is significantly extended: towards an open, multi-dimensional concept of culture and deeper, often invisible values that determine the perception, judgment, and action of a particular reference group. Also more recent conceptions of learning, among others, the particular importance of individual attitudes of learners and their affective reactions were incorporated into concepts of intercultural learning [which] at the same time highlight the special role of foreign language teaching in developing the learners’ personalities (“openness”, “critical tolerance”). (My own translation)



At the beginning, we should pay attention to culture since firstly, although it is something embedded in language teaching, it is difficult to believe that a person who is learning the FL is simultaneously learning cultural information and skills to a sufficient depth to become a proficient SL/FL speaker because culture, language learning, and communication are so complex in nature. Secondly, it is essential to incorporate culture in the FL curriculum as it helps avoid reinforcing the stereotypical images (Lessard-Clouston, 1997), and thirdly, overt culture teaching enables students to manage their own learning and to be autonomous by reflecting and investigating the broader context in which the learning of the target language is ingrained (Thanasoulas, 2001).

Tomalin & Stempleski (1993: 7-8), following Seelye's (1988) 'seven goals of cultural instruction', present the goals of teaching culture as follows:

- to help students to develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviors;
- to help students to develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave;
- to help students to become more aware of conventional behavior in common situations in the target culture;
- to help students to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language;
- to help students to develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence;
- to help students to develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture;
- to stimulate students' intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people.

In any case, teaching culture aims "to increase students' awareness" and to raise their interest and curiosity towards the target culture as well as their own native culture by getting them to make comparisons among various cultures (Tavares & Cavalcanti, 1996: 19). Such comparisons should not provoke misjudgment of foreign cultures but rather enhance students' knowledge and experience and make them sensitive to cultural varieties. "This diversity should then be understood and respected, and never...over (sic) or underestimated"

(Tavares & Cavalcanti, 1996: 20). In this framework, the FL teachers' task is to try to facilitate learners' interactions with other cultures in order to make their students familiar with their own cultural values, behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes and push them to examine the concept of otherness (Byram, Nichols, & Stevens, 2001).

Therefore, in order to be a competent user of a SL/FL, learners should have enough knowledge both linguistically and culturally (Krasner, 1999). For example, language learners need to be familiar with the culturally suitable ways of addressing people, making requests, and agreeing or disagreeing with a person in the target culture. Moreover, they should be aware of the fact that those behaviors, habits, customs, and intonation patterns which are acceptable in their own countries may be understood in a different way by the people in the target culture. For successful communication, students need to match their language use with acceptable norms and values in the target country (FitzGerald, 1999; Peterson & Coltrane, 2003) since as Agar (2007:1) says, "communication is inseparable from culture."

Aside from the importance of teaching culture, Kitao (1991: 298-300), following several authors (e.g. Cooke, 1970; Bals, 1971; Stainer, 1971; Wallach, 1973, as cited in Kitao, 1991), classifies the advantages of culture teaching into different categories:

- Studying culture gives students a reason to study the target language.
- Understanding cultures makes studying foreign languages more meaningful.
- Studying culture increases learners' curiosity and interest in target countries, their people, and their culture.
- Studying culture gives learners a liking for the NSs of the target language.
- Studying culture also plays a useful role in general education.
- Studying culture is useful not only for understanding people of other cultures but to help students understand themselves and their own culture.

However, in spite of the importance of culture teaching, studies unfortunately indicate that cultural aspects are still among the marginal factors in language classrooms (see Byram & Risager, 1999; Sercu, 2005). One of the main reasons behind this is teachers' opinions about teaching culture. In a study by Castro and Sercu (2005) on teachers' attitudes towards teaching culture, it is found that some teachers do not tend to spend more time on culture teaching because of lack of time and suitable cultural materials, backwash effect of examination and their pupils' need for language proficiency, and even lack of pupils' motivation in terms of learning culture. Furthermore, most of the teachers in this research describe cul-



ture in traditional ways referring to literature, geography, history, and so on. In another study by Lessard-Clouston (1996) on 16 Chinese teachers' perspectives towards culture, the outcomes indicate that teachers pay attention to the role of culture in their EFL teaching; however, they believe that there is still a need for the perception of how to teach culture in their EFL classes. Also, Bennett, Bennett, and Allen (2003: 240) state that teachers cannot consider culture as a crucial element in their language classes because ...

- a. there is language curriculum itself, which is already too full;
- b. for many of them, culture seems far more difficult to teach than language;
- c. teachers feel unprepared—even afraid—to teach either culture or IC, so they try to teach linguistic elements and think that culture learning is a consequence of such instruction (Lange, 2003: 346, future directions...);
- d. teachers may have had little or no experience of the target culture;
- e. the culture keeps changing, so they are continually faced with the challenge of keeping current;
- f. cultural topics can also raise highly charged issues that may difficult to deal with in the class.

Thus, teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards culture can also play an important role in the integration of culture in the language classrooms. In the history of culture teaching, lots of approaches have been presented and developed in order to teach culture in SL/FL classes. In the next section, some of these approaches will be discussed in detail.

### ***2.2.5. Approaches to Culture Teaching***

Different approaches are found during the history of culture teaching which can be classified on the basis of two main viewpoints. The first refers to the transmission of two types of information—Highbrow and Lowbrow—focusing on the target country, and the second deals with establishing a meaningful connection between the target culture and the native culture of the students. The former sees cultural information as knowledge about: (a) the institutional structures and products of the target society and (b) the customs, habits, and folklore of everyday life (see Kramsch, 1993: 24), while the latter view focuses on creating an interpretive framework for culture in order to find connections between the native culture and the target culture. The first perspective resulted in the **mono-cultural approach**, and the



second one led to the emergence of the **comparative or cross-cultural contrastive approach** (Thanasoulas, 2001; Saluveer, 2004; Liaw, 2006).

The first approach was mostly used in courses, such as Landeskunde, area studies, and British life and institutions, reflecting on the target society, while the comparative approach gives information not only about the target culture, but also the students' own culture. However, both of these approaches have their own shortcomings as well. On the one hand, the mono-cultural approach cannot help the students to understand foreign attitudes and values, and may cause learners to ignore some important aspects about their own and the target group's identity. In addition, it cannot give the learners insight into their own native culture. Thus, this information presents "mere book knowledge learned by rote" (Huebener, 1969: 177; Saluveer, 2004); on the other hand, the comparative approach, which asks learners to find potential similarities and differences between the home and the foreign cultures (Liaw, 2006), can only equip learners with cultural knowledge without any explanations about how they can combine that knowledge with their own suppositions, beliefs, and attitudes. Furthermore, it may cause oversimplification about cultures since it reduces them to some significant values; as a result, it may not succeed in showing the true image of a culture, reducing stereotypes and making the students hyper-sensitized to intercultural diversities (Guest, 2002). Another important weakness of the contrastive approach is that it ignores individual differences within each culture since it focuses on comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences between both cultures (Ortuño, 1991).

In spite of these weaknesses, many scholars believe that the comparative approach is more effective since it tries to connect both the foreign culture and the native culture. For example, Buttjes and Byram (1991: 13) say that "one-way flow of cultural information" is not useful for the students and they must be taught to reflect on the target culture and their own culture as well. Successful communication can be achieved when learners resort to their own knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes. Byram and Morgan (1994: 43) state that learners cannot ignore their native culture in the process of learning a language since in this way they deny their own being. However, this approach does not lead the students to evaluate the cultures and rank them in terms of badness or goodness, but rather makes them figure out other ways of doing things. Thus, as Byram and Planet (2000: 189) maintain ...

The comparative approach does involve the evaluation but not in terms of comparison with something which is better, but in terms of improving what is all too familiar. Comparison





makes the strange, the other, familiar, and makes the familiar, the self, strange—and therefore easier to re-consider.

Alongside these two approaches, Risager (1998, 243-252) introduces four other approaches to teach culture, which have been shaped according to the principles of mono-cultural and comparative approaches:

**Intercultural approach:** This approach refers to the comparative approach and claims that the best way of teaching culture is through comparison. Thus, it tries to teach culture by providing an association between the target culture and the native culture of the students. Through comparison, the intercultural approach attempts to improve learners' understanding of both cultures. In other words, it aims at the development of intercultural and communicative competence which helps learners to act as a mediator across cultures. This approach became known since the 1980s after the advent of IC, which will be discussed in depth in the next section. Yet, Risager (1998: 246) believes that this approach is weak since it neglects "the actual multicultural character of almost all existing countries or states."

**The multicultural approach:** This approach stresses that cultures are not monolithic since every culture itself consists of a variety of cultures. The multicultural approach emphasizes the ethnic and linguistic differences which exist both in the target culture and the native culture. Like the intercultural approach, it is based on teaching culture through comparison.

**The transcultural approach:** This approach is concerned with the interconnectedness of cultures due to tourism, globalization, international communication, business, and migration. It is based on the idea of languages as lingua franca, so it considers FLs as international languages. Its main purpose is to help learners use the language for international communications. Thus, it does not focus on the connection between the FL and a particular culture. Put differently, this approach sees the English language learner "as a bi- or multilingual subject for whom English is one of many languages that shapes his/her consciousness, thoughts, and actions" (Kramsch & Aden, 2012: 55). In this sense, "a transcultural approach to ELT includes the recognition of intranational differences, the relativization of self and other, and the inclusion of long ignored historical and ideological differences among speakers of English" (Kramsch & Aden, 2012: 56). Consequently, this approach stresses the replacement of IC with a "translingual and transcultural competence that places value on the multilingual ability to operate between languages" (MLA, 2007: 237, as cited in Kramsch & Aden, 2012: 58). However, according to Byram (1997), these kinds of approaches do not inform the stu-



dents about those topics which are related to a specific culture, and they reject any relationship between language and culture.

**Foreign-Cultural approach:** This approach is another name for the mono-cultural approach in Risager's classification. It is based on the culture of the target country. Thus, the culture of the students and the relationship between the cultures are not considered in this approach. The main goal of the foreign-cultural approach is to promote the NS's communicative and cultural competence. This approach was the leading one until the 1980s, and is rejected nowadays by the experts since it does not pay attention to the link between the cultures.

In addition, according to Galloway (1985, as cited in Saluveer, 2004; Néi, 2007), other kinds of approaches can also be classified under the category of the mono-cultural approach. These approaches are ...

- **The 4-F approach** (folk dances, festivals, fairs and food)
- **Tour guide approach** (monuments, rivers, cities, ...)
- **By-the-way approach** (sporadic lectures or bits of behavior selected indiscriminately)

These approaches deal with the transmission of the factual knowledge about the target country to the students.

However, other approaches, such as the **theme-based approach** (referring to different themes specific to a particular culture and their relationship with the other culture), the **topic-based approach** (focusing on more general and cross-sectional topics about various cultural issues) the **problem-oriented approach** (getting the students interested in another culture and making them do some research on it), the **task-oriented approach** (concerning cooperative tasks and research about different aspects of other cultures), and the **skill-centered approach** (developing learners' skills in order to manage (mis)communications between cultures), come under the group of comparative approaches because they rely on comparison as the essential factor while teaching culture (Saluveer, 2004: 34-37; Néi, 2007: 22-23).

In summary, this review demonstrates that different approaches have been used in the history of foreign language teaching in order to teach culture in the classroom; however, based on the characteristics of these approaches, it can be concluded that most of these methods are originally derived from the principles of two important approaches, the mono-cultural and comparative approaches, with some changes and modifications. For example, in



terms of the intercultural approach, which is the main focus in this study, it can be noted that it is a kind of comparative method but one which differs from its forefather in aiming to turn the students into cultural mediators and critical thinkers.

This short introduction about the most common approaches to teaching culture in the classroom can shed light on the reasons for the development of ICC and the establishment of intercultural language learning in the field of FL/SL teaching. Here, in this section, a review will be presented about the advent of ICC and intercultural learning in ELT and FL teaching.

### ***2.2.6. The Emergence of ICC***

As presented in the previous section, most traditional culture teaching approaches intended to make students familiar with the facts and products of the target country but paid little attention to the learners' own cultural identity and the cultural differences or the relationship between cultures. Simply, the foreign culture approach tried to transmit facts about a certain country, which learners should accept and learn (Castro & Sercu, 2005: 19). However, stimulating intercultural awareness "involves uncovering and understanding one's own culturally conditioned behaviour and thinking, as well as the patterns of others. Thus, the process involves not only perceiving the similarities and differences in other cultures, but also recognizing the givens of the native culture or, as Hall (1969) says, our own hidden culture..." (Damen, 1987: 141).

In the late 1980s, with the increase in international communication and extensive tourism and migration, there was a need for mediating between different languages and cultures due to a variety of factors, such as classrooms full of students speaking different languages, satellite TV broadcasting foreign television programs, and international businesses. "This may lead to new notions of transnational and intercultural literacy which make communication with people from other cultures necessary" (Buttjes, 1991: 5-6, see also Fantini, 2009: 456; Hu, 2010). As a result, a new dimension to language teaching was established under the intercultural language learning/teaching approach since, as Müller-Hartmann and Schocker-v. Ditfurth (2009) suggest, understanding an interlocutor in a conversation is a kind of social process which requires tolerance, empathy, cultural knowledge and strategies in order to create shared meaning using the language competently.

Contrary to other approaches, an intercultural approach to SL/FL learning tries to help learners understand the ways a specific group of people uses language and the ways values



and beliefs are expressed and discussed among the members (Corbett, 2003: 19). One of the important differences between intercultural learning and other approaches is that when language learners seek a cultural understanding of the target language group, they may or may not want to follow the practices or attitudes of the target culture (Corbett, 2003: 20). Röttger (1996, as cited in Edmondson & House, 1998: 173) considers a cognitive, an action-related, and an affective component for intercultural learning, and, as a result, categorizes intercultural learning into three different sections: the awareness of the foreign and the local cultures, the reflection on the foreign and the local cultures, and the critical view of the foreign and the local cultures. According to its principles, intercultural language teaching was not concerned with the transmission of information about culture. Alternatively, it intended to increase cultural awareness using the students' lived experience from the target language culture(s) and other cultures. The main goal of this approach was to develop IC and consequently interculturally competent learners who could appropriately manage intercultural communications and contacts (Crozet, Liddicoat, & Lo Bianco, 1999).

Intercultural theorists define IC as an ability to act appropriately in cross-cultural situations and to form intercultural contacts both emotionally and cognitively. In other words, it is "the ability to stabilize one's self-identity" when mediating across cultures (Jensen, 1995: 39, Ashwill & Du'ong, 2009). Callen (2008: webpage) defines this term as ...

... the body of knowledge and skills to successfully interact with people from other ethnic, religious, cultural, national, and geographic groups. When someone has a high degree of intercultural competence, they are able to have successful interactions with people from different groups. People must be curious about other cultures, sensitive to cultural differences, and also willing to modify their behavior as a sign of respect for other cultures.

Thus, as Mall (2003, as cited in Bredella, 2010: 121) suggests, IC is „eine „normative Selbsttransformation“, die besagt, dass wir auf Absolutheitsansprüche verzichten und den Mut aufbringen, „mit und in Differenzen zu leben und Diskurse zu führen.““<sup>13</sup> In this sense, according to Crozet and Liddicoat (1999), intercultural language teaching has three basic aspects: learning about cultures, comparing cultures, and intercultural exploration, which lead to the development of "a third place between the native linguaculture and the target linguaculture, between self and other" (Liddicoat, Crozet, & Lo Bianco, 1999: 181; see also Kramersch, 1993: 13). Put differently, language teaching should always be accompanied by the

<sup>13</sup> a 'normative self-transformation', which includes that we do not try to claim absoluteness but that we are courageous enough to live and interact with otherness. (My own translation)



focus on socio-linguistic and cultural aspects, as well as the comparison between the target and local linguacultures (Fantini, 1997).

To promote IC, an intercultural language teaching approach integrates language and culture in the classroom and makes culture—especially everyday culture (Thaler, 2012)—a significant element of the teaching of all language macroskills—reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and presenting (Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000). Thus, learners are familiarized with culture in two different ways: first through the communication procedures, and second, through the content. In this sense, interaction is not considered as a means of developing fluency, but rather as a means to encourage students to learn more about their own culture and assumptions. Therefore, this approach stimulates learners to investigate the values, beliefs and thoughts alongside the socio-cultural and historical circumstances which are presented in the cultural content (Finkbeiner & Koplín, 2002). As Ingram and O’Neill (2001: 14) mention, “[k]nowledge alone leaves learners ensconced in their own culture looking out at the other culture and observing its differences (often judgmentally) – rather like walking through a museum.” Thus, active production of meanings and analytical exploration are both essential constituents of this approach (Carr, 2007). Culture learning requires noticing and examining “social processes and their outcomes” (Byram, 1997: 19).

In this sense, the term “intercultural” means that FL learners should gain enough knowledge both about their own local culture and the target culture (Kramersch, 1993; Fäcke, 2010). As Gogolin (2007: 99) maintains ...

Kulturelles Wissen in der Form von Wissen über die kulturellen Manifestationen eines Landes—des Landes, dem die Vertretung der Zielsprache zugerechnet wird—soll im Rahmen der Kontextualisierung des sprachlichen Redemittels im engeren Sinne mit gelehrt werden; die Erschließung dieses Wissens soll über das Vergleichen zwischen eigenkulturellen und fremdkulturellen Inhalten geschehen.<sup>14</sup>

First, they should question their own values, beliefs, traditions, etc. and then reflect on values, customs, and assumptions in other cultures (Straub, 1999). This kind of intercultural understanding is important because it can confront them with their ethnocentric views according to which they interpret otherness only considering their own cultural categories

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<sup>14</sup> Cultural knowledge in the form of the knowledge about cultural manifestations of a country—a country that is representative of the target language—should be taught only to the extent which is needed for teaching linguistic aspects; a favorable way of learning about this knowledge is to compare one’s own and foreign cultural contents. (My own translation)



(Bredella, 2010: 123). This process of questioning and learning is a developmental one for our learners regardless of their nationality (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). Considering this framework, FL teachers should help learners to reshape their cultural worldview, to develop different skills in order to explore cultural diversities, and finally to encourage curiosity (Abrams, 2002). Therefore, FL classes act as a kind of window to the world which help students to acquire intercultural understanding through the development of IC and the extension of the students' language and world knowledge (Legutke, 2010). As Neuner (1997: 74) suggests, intercultural foreign language teaching has three objectives:

1. The development of survival strategies which can help overcome the level of rejection.
2. The development of the learners' awareness of the possible occurrence of critical incidents.
3. The strengthening of the learners' self-confidence and patience.

Within this framework, the focus in the intercultural approach is on the foreign culture(s); however, it also comprises comparisons between the learners' native culture and the target culture, resulting in the development of a reflective outlook towards their own culture. As a consequence, students become ready to act as cultural mediators and to see the world from an outsider's point of view (Sen Gupta, 2003). The FL learner is regarded as an "intercultural speaker", a person who "crosses frontiers, and who is to some extent a specialist in the transit of cultural property and symbolic values" (Byram & Zarate 1997: 11). It means that ...

Interkulturell kompetente Sprecher besitzen nicht nur Wissen über Zielsprache und Zielkulturen sowie um die Angemessenheit des eigenen sprachlichen Verhaltens, sie sind zudem offen für andere Kulturen und deren Werte, sie bringen die Bereitschaft mit, weiterzulernen, sich selbst zu reflektieren und eigene Einstellungen immer wieder zu revidieren. Im Ziel der interkulturellen kommunikativen Kompetenz sind somit alle drei Domänen verknüpft—Wissen, Können und Einstellung (Klippel, 1991, as cited in Klippel & Doff, 2007: 37).<sup>15</sup>

So, learners can question and change cultural stereotypes which "exoticise and essentialize" members of another culture and take more empathetic and conscious attitudes towards others (Kramersch, 2006: 107). In other words, according to Krumm (2007: 141) ...

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<sup>15</sup> Not only do interculturally competent speakers possess knowledge of the target language and culture as well as of the appropriateness of their own linguistic behavior, but they are also open to other cultures and their values, they are ready to keep learning, to reflect on themselves, and to revise their attitudes over and over again. The aim of intercultural communicative competence thus combines all three domains—knowledge, skills and attitudes. (My own translation)



Der interkulturelle Sprecher/Hörer verfügt über die Fähigkeit, mit Menschen aus anderen Kulturen, die als unterschiedlich von der eigenen wahrgenommen werden, zu kommunizieren. Das erfordert die Fähigkeit, unterschiedliche kulturelle Wertesysteme in Beziehung zu setzen (vergleichen, nicht gleichsetzen), andere soziale Erscheinungen innerhalb des fremden kulturellen Systems ohne ethnozentrische Wertung zu interpretieren sowie mit Missverständnissen, Brüchen und Widersprüchen, wie sie für interkulturelle Kommunikation charakteristisch sind, umgehen zu können.<sup>16</sup>

Within this framework, the focus on the concept of the NS as an ideal norm in language learning/teaching, which was implicitly one of the tenets of CLT or communicative approach, was gradually shifted to the intercultural speaker (Byram & Zarate, 1997; Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). According to Coperías Aguilar (2010: 90), “one of the problem of taking the native speaker as a model is that he/she becomes an impossible target for the learner, who will inevitably end up frustrated” since it is like an unachievable target for language learners (Cook, 1999). Even when learners succeed in obtaining a native-like competence, “it may make students abandon one language in order to blend into another linguistic environment, thus becoming linguistically schizophrenic” (Byram, 1997:11). Furthermore, when we consider the NS as a norm in our teaching, we pay much more attention to the cultural dimensions in the target country, and as a result the native culture of the learners has taken a marginal position in the classroom (Alptekin, 2002: 62). Thus, considering the fact that in the present world English is mostly used by people who have different mother tongues, the terms “native” or “native-like” are not particularly appropriate in the assessment of CC (Savignon, 2007: 210). These problems resulted in the revision of CC and its expansion to the concept of ICC, which was firstly introduced by Baxter (1983) and was then extensively developed and discussed by Byram (1997). In fact, as Jensen (1995: 42; see also Edmondson & House, 1998: 178) states ...

The approach suggested by the term “intercultural competence” is solidly based on the theory of communicative competence, and should rightly be considered as offering a further development of that theory.

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<sup>16</sup> The intercultural speaker / listener has the ability to communicate with people from other cultures that are perceived as being different from his/her own. This ability requires seeing different cultural value systems in relation to each other (compare, not equate), interpreting other social phenomena within the foreign cultural system without being ethnocentric, and dealing with misunderstandings, fractures and contradictions which are typical of intercultural communication. (My own translation)



According to Byram, in an international interaction, the interlocutors who are from different countries and cultures bring their knowledge of their own countries and that of the others' to the situation. Thus, the success of these kinds of interactions is partly dependent on the creating and preservation of human relationships relating to attitudinal factors. At the same time, knowledge and attitude are affected by the intercultural communication procedures, i.e. the skills of interpreting and relating and the skills of discovery and interaction. Lastly, all these elements should be incorporated in a philosophy of political education, which develops the learners' critical cultural awareness of all the cultures concerned (Byram, 1997: 32-33). Byram introduces these elements in terms of five various "savoirs" which should be learned or cultivated by the learner:

- "savoir être," which is concerned with attitudes and values and consists of showing curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own;
- "savoirs," which refers to the 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;
- "savoir comprendre," related to the skills of interpreting and relating, that is to say, the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own;
- "savoir apprendre/faire," connected to the skills of discovery and interaction or the 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;
- "savoir s'engager," in relation to critical cultural awareness and/or political education, which means having the 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, 1997: 31-54).

Figure 6 indicates these factors and their interconnections thoroughly.



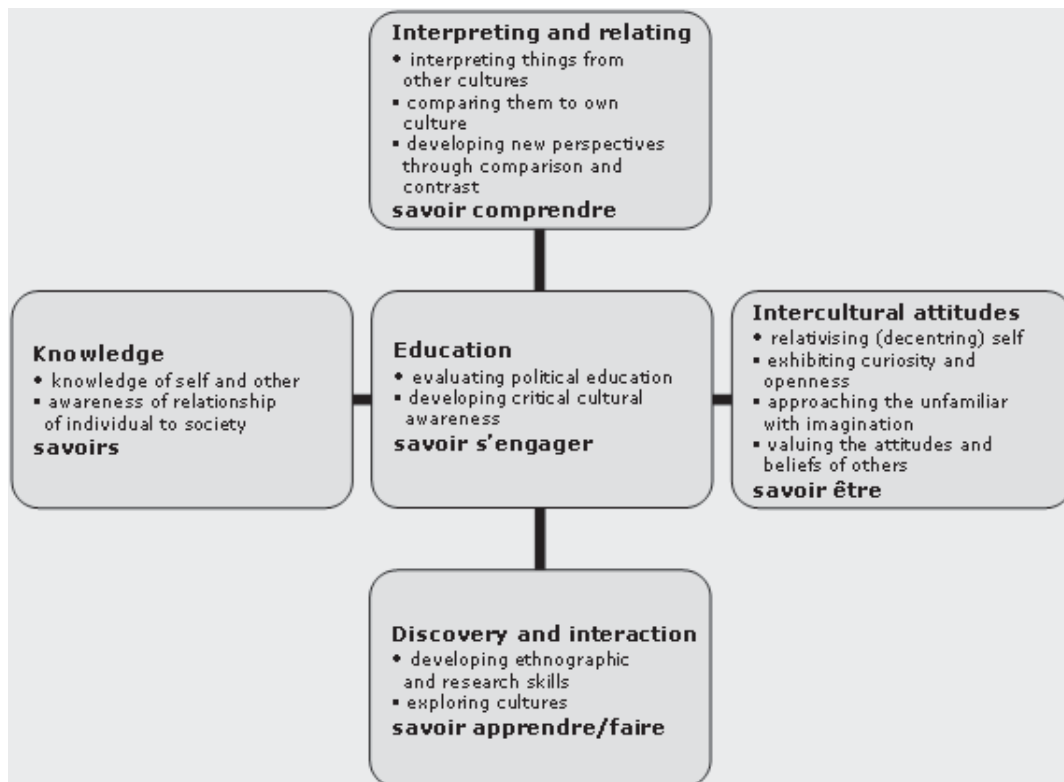


Figure 6. Byram's five "savoirs" (source: Byram 1997)

Among these savoirs, Agudelo (2007: 192) believes that critical cultural awareness is a fundamental concept in an intercultural approach. He states that "becoming conscious of our own cultural representations as well as those we use to identify others helps us see who we are in relation to the other." According to Mendes and Moreira (2005: 1), "contact between languages and cultures provides a communicative framework in which the local, the national and the global, the individual and his/her social identity [...] determine a consciousness of the need for critical cultural awareness."

Another important fact about the intercultural approach is the small distinction between the concept of IC and ICC. For example, according to Kostková (2010: 233, as cited in Vačkářová, 2012) ...

The distinction states that *interculturally competent* individuals are able to interact **in their native language** with people from other countries and cultures; while doing so, they draw upon their knowledge about intercultural communication, their attitudes, skills, previous experience, etc. On the other hand, *ICC* enables individuals to interact with people from other countries and cultures **in a foreign language**; their knowledge of other cultures, their values, habits, etc. is linked to their language competence through the ability to use the language appropriately and their awareness of the specific meaning, values and connotations of the language.



In contrast, Byram (1997: 71) suggests that ICC is much more complex than IC and it deals with a broader variety of contact situations. “Simply said, ICC – the more complex concept – could be perceived as a blend of Intercultural Competence and Communicative Competence in a foreign language” (Kostková, 2010: 233 as cited in Vačkářová, 2012; see also Risager, 2007: 125).

Regardless of this difference, we should pay attention to the fact that in order to teach culture, teachers should include the principles of both traditional and intercultural approaches in a way that encourages students to see culture as something dynamic and subjective (Byram, 1997). Additionally, the learners’ age can affect the extent to which the critical reflectivity and decentering is possible (Lange, 2003). Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004: 8) state that one of the main goals of intercultural learning is to develop cultural awareness by making the students think about an experience in their own culture or translating a new experience in another culture into a corresponding one in their own native culture. As a consequence, one of the cognitive abilities that underlies IC and the intercultural approach is “[k]nowledge 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” (Byram, 2006b: 24, as cited in Newton, et al., 2010). Byram (2006b: 17-18, as cited in Newton et al., 2010) presents the overall aims of the intercultural approach based on the concept of ICC as follows:

- The acquisition of the linguistic and cultural skills of intercultural communication;
- The development of an aptitude for critical thinking, questioning and challenging assumptions;
- A change from exclusive identification with familiar communities and in particular, the nation state and national identity, to inclusive identification with others with related interests in other societies; the acquisition of new international identities, which complement national and local identities;
- Taking action through involvement with people of other societies and liberating oneself and others from assumptions and ways of being and doing which are oppressive or constraining.

In another classification, Seelye (1997: 25) considers six different instructional goals for teaching ICC:



- **Interest:** the students show curiosity about another culture and empathy toward its members.
- **Who:** the students recognizes that role expectations and other social variables such as age, sex, social class, religion, ethnicity, and place of residence affect the way people speak and behave.
- **What:** the students realize that effective communication requires discovering the culturally conditioned images that are evoked in the minds of people when they think, act, and react to the world around them.
- **Where and When:** the students recognize that situational variables and convention shape behavior in important ways.
- **Why:** students understand that people generally act the way they do because they are using options their society allows for satisfying basic physical and psychological needs, and that cultural patterns are interrelated and tend mutually to support need satisfaction.
- **Exploration:** the students can evaluate a generalization about a given culture in terms of the amount of evidence substantiating it, and have the skills needed to locate and organize information about a culture from the library, the mass media, people, and personal observation.

In other words, the aim of FL teaching was not only to develop communicative and functional aspects, but also to instill abilities and attitudes, such as perspective changing, empathy, acceptance, relativizing of ethnocentric perspective, and openness or curiosity towards otherness (Hu, 2010; Neuner, 2007).

However, it should be mentioned that the intercultural approach does not ignore linguistic competence. As Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002) stress, an intercultural approach helps learners to acquire a linguistic competence as well. Besides, this perspective tries to develop a mutual understanding among various individuals and recognize the intricacy of coping with other personalities in addition to our own.

In summary, as Hu (1999: 298-299) states, intercultural learning has the following aspects in FL teaching:

- Das Bewusstmachen der Interdependenz von Sprache und kulturellen Bedeutungen;
- Klärung, Begründung und Erläuterung von Wert-und Normüberzeugungen in Bezug auf die Regionen, deren Sprache gelernt wird;



- In Auseinandersetzung mit diesen Werten und Normen das Bewusstwerden über die jeweils eigenen Normen;
- Neben den konkreten Auseinandersetzungen mit kulturellen Normen und Werten bzw. Anhand dieser Auseinandersetzungen sollten grundsätzliche Aspekte von Interkulturalität geklärt werden, z. B. Bewusstmachen der eigenen Perspektivität, die Problematik um Stereotypisierung und Vorurteile, das Problem der Abgrenzbarkeit und Umstrittenheit von „kulturen“.<sup>17</sup>

There are many scholars who have presented various models of intercultural teaching leading to the development of ICC (e.g. Bennett, 1986; Kim, 1988; Kramsch, 1993; Byram, 1997; Fantini, 1995 (as cited in Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009); Deardorff, 2006; Kupka, 2008 (as cited in Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009), etc.). Most of these models see culture as something dynamic which is continually changing, and as a result, according to Paige et al. (2003: 177), they define culture learning as ...

The process of acquiring the culture-specific and cultural-general knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other cultures. It is dynamic, developmental, and ongoing process which engages the learner cognitively, behaviorally, and affectively.

Thus, as Paige (1997, as cited in Paige et al., 2003: 177) suggests, these intercultural models consist of ...

- learning about the self as a cultural being;
- learning about culture and its impact on human communication, behavior, and identity;
- culture-general learning, i.e. learning about universal, cross-cultural phenomena such as cultural adjustment;
- culture-specific learning, i.e. learning about a particular culture, including its language; and
- learning how to learn, i.e. becoming an effective language and culture learner.

<sup>17</sup> • awareness raising of the interdependence of language and cultural meanings;  
 • clarification, justification and explanation of values and norms of the target language countries or regions;  
 • becoming conscious of one's own norms through dealing with foreign values and norms;  
 • in addition to dealing with cultural norms and values or by using them as concrete examples, general aspects of interculturalism should be discussed, such as raising awareness for their own perspective, the issue of stereotyping and prejudice, the problem of definition of boundaries and having consensus on the concept of "cultures." (My own translation)



Although these intercultural models have common characteristics which aim: (1) to integrate culture into language teaching and (2) to help the learners develop their ICC and act as intercultural speakers in different cross-cultural communications, they differ from each other in terms of their components and proposed stages for the learners on their way to becoming intercultural mediators. Among the presented models, (a) Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity as one of the developmental models of IC, (b) Kramersch's Third Place idea as one of the postmodernist theories which affects intercultural approach greatly, and (c) Byram's model of ICC as one of the co-orientational models with the focus on the conceptualization of the intercultural understanding (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009), which influences the design of Common European Framework of Reference, will be discussed in the next section. These models were selected since they are among the most frequently discussed models of ICC and also significant in language teaching and more compatible with the classroom context.

### ***2.2.7. Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity<sup>18</sup>***

One of the models of ICC was discussed by Bennett in 1986 and 1993. This model which shows the developmental procedures for acquiring IC is called the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), and is concerned with "a recognition that competence evolves over time, either individually or relationally, or both" (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009: 21). Bennett (1993: 24) defines the term intercultural sensitivity as "the way people construe cultural difference and ... the varying kinds of experience that accompany these constructions."

As is seen in Figure 7, this model characterizes a set of phases through which people move based on their intercultural experiences. "The underlying assumption of the model is that as one's *experience of cultural difference* becomes more complex and sophisticated, one's potential competence in intercultural relations increases" (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003: 423).

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<sup>18</sup> This section has been written based on a review of Bennett, 1986; Bennett, 1993; Stulz, 2002; Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 2003; Bennett, 2004; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009; Lange, 2011.

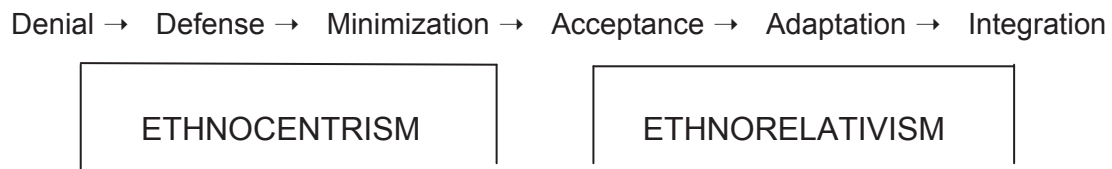


Figure 7. Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity (source: Bennett, 2004)

DMIS consists of two broad categories, i.e. ethnocentric and ethnorelative. The ethnocentric phase deals with a more mono-cultural view and people's unconscious experience of their own cultures. In this stage, people do not wish to face the idea of cultural difference, and they see this issue as a threatening concept. In other words, an ethnocentric person is indifferent and biased towards other cultures and people, and he/she tries to glorify his/her own culture (Pusch, 2009). Bennett (1993: 30) defines ethnocentric stages as "assuming that the worldview of one's own culture is central to all reality." In contrast, the ethnorelative stage is concerned with more complex and multicultural views. As a result, people in this phase try to understand their own culture in relation to others and to recognize that their culture is only one of the possible worldviews with its own limitations.

Each of these two broad stages has its own three different sub-categories or sub-stages. Consequently, this model has been constructed based on six stages. The first three stages of Denial, Defense, and Minimization are classified under the category of ethnocentrism, and the other three stages which refer to ethnorelativism are Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration.

In the Denial stage, "the person's culture is experienced as the only real one—that is, that the patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values that constitute a culture are experienced as unquestionably real or true. Other cultures are either not noticed at all, or they are construed in rather vague ways" (Bennett, 2004: 63). Accordingly, learners at this stage seek isolation from other cultures, and cultural difference is an uninteresting issue for them.

In the second sub-stage, Defense, "the person's culture (or an adopted culture) is experienced as the only viable one—the most "evolved" form of civilization, or at least the only good way to live. People at Defense have become more adept at discriminating difference, so they experience cultural differences as more real than do people at Denial" (Bennett, 2004: 65). In other words, learners are aware of cultural differences but are likely to sepa-



rate the world into “us and them,” resulting in the “denigration of them and the superiority of us” (Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 2003: 249).

“Minimization of cultural difference is the state in which elements of one’s own cultural worldview are experienced as universal” (Bennett, 2004: 66). Difference is recognized and not considered as something negative, but distinction and individuality are acknowledged as trivial issues (Stulz, 2002). Learners at this sub-stage do not have cultural self-awareness, so they cannot realize that concepts of similarity typically originate in their own cultural values and beliefs (Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 2003). It should be mentioned that the Minimization stage is the transition between the ethnocentric and ethnorelative phases.

In the first ethnorelative sub-stage, Acceptance, “one’s own culture is experienced in the context of other cultures” (Bennett, 2004: 68). Thus, cultural difference is accepted explicitly at this stage. People at this phase respect differences in behaviors and values in various cultures (Bennett, 1986). However, it does not mean that they agree with different behaviors or values as positive or suitable characteristics, but that they identify the cultural framework in which these things take place.

“Adaptation to cultural difference is the state in which the experience of another culture yields perception and behavior appropriate to that culture. One’s worldview is expanded to include relevant constructs from other cultural worldviews” (Bennett, 2004: 70). In this phase, learners can change their cultural view, so they can see the world “through different eyes” (Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 2003: 251). At this stage, learners investigate the differences without any judgment. At the same time, they try to use different skills in order to cope with situations or to improve communication (Bennett, 1986). Empathy and pluralism are the underlying abilities to modify perspectives (Stulz, 2002).

And finally in the last stage, Integration, the learner’s own cultural identity can be discussed more explicitly and fluidly. In this phase, “the person’s experience of self is expanded to include the movement in and out of different cultural worldviews. Here, people are dealing with issues related to their own “cultural marginality”; they construe their identities at the margins of two or more cultures and central to none” (Bennett, 2004: 72). In other words, they try to see the world from a third perspective (Stulz, 2002). “Integration is not necessarily better than adaptation in situations demanding intercultural competence, but it is descriptive of a growing number of people, including many members of non-dominant



cultures, long-term expatriates, and ‘global nomads’” (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003: 425).

Bennett (2004) believes that his model displays the way the implicit and inherent worldview can change from a mono-cultural to a more multicultural view, leading to the production of greater intercultural understanding and as a result more intercultural competence. He also assumes that it would help instructors and teachers to detect the individuals’ stages of progress, to design and establish syllabi which are related to specific stages, and to order activities in such a way that assist improvement toward more perceptive stages (Bennett, 1993). Lange (2011: 13) presents some important issues regarding DMIS as follows:

- It primarily influences courses of study abroad and theories of culture shock.
- Although it was not designed for FL courses and does not show the relationship between language and culture, it can be applicable to language classes to some extent.
- It stresses that IC needs time to progress, and its development is a continuous process with several stages.<sup>19</sup>
- It is useful in designing syllabi since it shows a long-term view on the concept of IC.

Moreover, Lange (2003: 274, 282) believes that Bennett’s model of DMIS can be useful because it is dynamic and relates to the maturational levels of learners. In addition, it gives teachers more insight into the students’ developmental level and helps them to structure the curriculum accordingly.

However, since this model originally derives from the intercultural training literature, it does not pay attention to the concept of language and, as a result, FLT (Vogt, 2007). According to Turner (1991, as cited in Kashima, 2006: 25), two other problems related to this model are “the unclear definition of stages and their theoretical differentiation” as well as “identifying the participant’s predominant orientation within the stages Bennett defined.”

### **2.2.8. Kramsch’s Third Place Model<sup>20</sup>**

Another model which has been discussed in relation to IC and the intercultural approach is Kramsch’s Third Place Model. In her two major books—*Context and Culture in Language Teaching* (1993) and *Language and Culture* (1998)—Kramsch proposes a meta-space for the production of intercultural awareness (Du, 2011), which shows how learners acquire their IC.

<sup>19</sup> see also Vogt (2007)

<sup>20</sup> This section has been written based on an overview of Kramsch, 1993; Kramsch, 1998; Kramsch, 1998; Guilherme, 2002; Kramsch, 2003; Du, 2011; Lange, 2011; Houghton, 2012.





Considering culture as a social construction including the views of self and others, Kramersch (1993) suggests that culture teaching requires critical and reflective investigation of the self's and the other's viewpoints. She believes that people are often likely to examine others' beliefs and perceptions based on stereotypical images. However, Kramersch's meta-space tries to make people reflect on their own and others' taken-for-granted perceptions critically, leading to the development of IC. This meta-space is called the Third Place metaphorically (see also Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-v. Ditfurth, 2009; Fäcke, 2010). Thus, the main aim of culture teaching is to help the students reach this Third Place which is a place "that grows in the interstices between the cultures the learners grew up with and the new cultures he or she is being introduced to" (Kramersch, 1993: 236). Figure 8 shows Kramersch's model of culture teaching better.

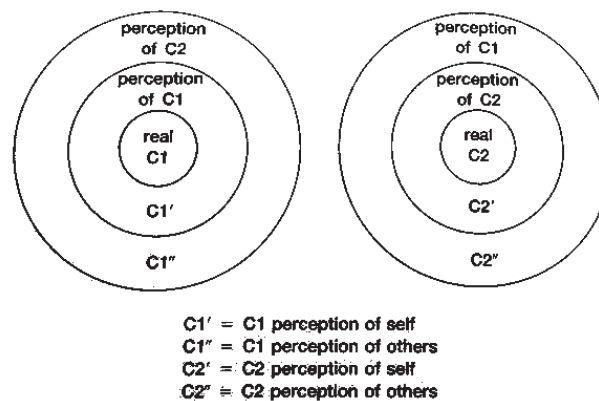


Figure 8. Kramersch's third place model (source: Kramersch 1993)

According to this model, a four-step procedure should be developed in order to reach the Third Place. These steps are ...

- reconstruct the context of production and reception of the text within the foreign culture (C2,C2');
- construct with the foreign learners their own context of reception that is finding an equivalent phenomenon in C1 and construct that C1 phenomenon with its own network of meanings (C1,C1');
- examine the way in which C1' and C2' contexts in part determine C1''' and C2''' that is the way each culture views the other;
- lay the ground for a dialogue that could lead to change (Kramersch, 1993: 210-232).



Thus, as Du (2011: 73) says, “the final goal of culture learning is to create third places for the emergence of meta-cultural experiences, therefore providing critical distance between one’s home and target cultures and room for reflection on one’s perception as an active social being in cross-cultural context.” In this sense, rather than arranging boundaries between the home culture and the target culture, a third culture helps the students to promote an identity through which they can have an access to language, knowledge, and behavior from both native and target cultures. The person who can develop this third culture is called the intercultural speaker, who is able “to select those forms of accuracy and those forms of appropriateness that are called for in a given social context of use” (Kramsch, 1998: 27). However, reaching this Third Place is very demanding since as Kramsch (1993: 238) asserts ...

From the clash between the familiar meanings of the native culture and the unexpected meanings of the target culture, meanings that were taken for granted are suddenly questioned, challenged, problematized. Learners have to construct their personal meanings at the boundaries between the native speaker’s meanings and their own everyday lives.

One of the important issues regarding this model is Kramsch’s emphasis on the role of dialogue in the generation of meaning across cultures which can make up a “third perspective” through which “meaning, i.e., culture, is dialogically created through language in discourse.” From her perspective, culture is shaped through the exchange of thoughts and feelings between specific persons with specific stories and ideas using dialogue (Guilherme, 2002: 140). As a result, performing a cross-cultural dialogue between the native and the target culture is an essential factor in the development of critical cultural awareness in the learners (Agudelo, 2007). Within this framework, accepting NS of the target language as a model keeps learners and teachers from a full exploration of dialogic meaning-making in the classroom since in this process both cultures, i.e. the native culture of the learners and the target culture, should be taken into account. Therefore, considering NSs of the target language as an ideal norm in the language classroom is rejected in Kramsch’s Third Place model.

Furthermore, Kramsch believes that “third culture or perspective” can occur when it is incorporated into a “critical pedagogy” which changes both the “transactional” (the exchange of information) and the “interactional” (the discourses between teacher and students and among students themselves) conversations happening in the class. (Kramsch, 1993: 243-244; see also Guilherme, 2002: 140) In this sense, Kramsch acknowledges the significance of “the socio-cultural context of the learner, of the school and classroom cultures, and the role of



language in changing people's perceptions and visions" (Houghton, 2012: 49). Within this critical pedagogical structure, there is no need for teachers either to have a category of cultural information nor to become cultural specialists. They explore cultures with their students, so they themselves try to learn about the cultures as well (Crawford & McLaren, 2003). In other words, as Li and Girvan (2004: 4) suggest ...

She [Kramersch] drew on the linguistic fields of critical discourse analysis and semiotics to formulate a rhetorical approach to textual interpretation that encourages participants in the ESL classroom to broaden their notions of cultural identity to create collaboratively, a new, ideal third place to develop linguistically, culturally, and intellectually.

To sum up, as Houghton (2012) maintains, Kramersch's model is a kind of curricular outline for cultural learning which is extremely connected to the theory of learner autonomy and critical reflection, so learners are active participants in creating the third perspective. This Third Place is a place where you can know and see yourself through the eyes of others (Kramersch, 1993: 222). Moreover, Lange (2011) adds that the most significant element in this model is the learners' local culture and language. In this sense, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that the students already have in relation with their native culture and language are applied for acquiring new experiences. She also states that Kramersch's model can help language learners live in this multicultural world; however, as Lange (2003: 282) says, her model may be applied at college level rather than elementary or secondary levels when students are not yet ready for this change of perspective.

In general, this short overview of Kramersch's idea of the Third Place can shed light on the importance of critical thinking, which is one of the crucial elements fostering intercultural competence among students. This implies that encouraging students to take a critical look at their own and other cultures, having dialogue about cultural differences, and viewing the world through different eyes are parts of language programs which should be promoted by the teachers in the classrooms. Within this framework, teachers are not the only providers of cultural information, but rather they explore the cultures alongside their students to learn new things about other cultures. In this sense, teachers are both controllers and participants in the process of culture teaching.



### 2.2.9. Byram's Model of ICC<sup>21</sup>

As mentioned earlier (Section 2.2.6), one of the scholars who emphasizes the importance of developing IC in the language classroom is Micheal Byram. Stressing the crucial skills, knowledge, and attitudes which interlocutors in every international situation should possess, Byram discussed one of the models of ICC in 1997. This model was first introduced by Byram and his colleague Zarate as a part of a joint project for the Council of Europe in 1994. Rejecting the NS as an ideal norm for language teaching, they propose the model of intercultural speaker since they believe that FL learners as individuals bring their own cultural and socio-cultural characteristics originating from their local culture to the language learning context as well. Thus, even when they can acquire NS proficiency, they are still considered as mediators between two cultures. In this sense, Byram and Zarate (1994, as cited in Liddicoat, et al., 2003: 15) present their model of IC in terms of four different *savoirs*:

1. *savoirs*, 'knowings': knowledge of self and other, of interaction: individual and societal;
2. *savoir comprendre*, 'knowing how to understand': skills for interpreting and relating information;
3. *savoir apprendre/faire*, 'knowing how to learn/to do': skills for discovering new knowledge and for interacting to gain new knowledge;
4. *savoir être*, 'knowing how to be': attitudes involved in relativizing the self and valuing the other.

As is clear, these *savoirs* are concerned with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that language learners should have in order to become interculturally competent. However, later Byram (1997) adds a fifth *savoir* to this model and considers it as the center of his model.

5. *savoir s'engager*, 'knowing how to commit oneself': education involving the development of critical and political awareness.

Introducing this last component, Byram (1997; see also Liddicoat, et al., 2003: 15) presents his famous model of ICC which comprises four different factors:

1. Linguistic competence: knowledge of the linguistic code: lexicon, syntax, morphology, semantics, and phonology;

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<sup>21</sup> This section has been written based on a review of Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Byram, 1997; Coperías Aguilar, 2002; Liddicoat, et al., 2003; Parmenter, 2003; Noß, 2005; Byram, 2008; Atay, et al., 2009; Skopinskaja, 2009; Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-v. Ditfurth, 2009; Lange, 2011; Houghton, 2009; Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007.



2. Socio-linguistic competence: appropriate selection of language forms for audience and context;
3. Discourse competence: appropriate structuring of the language in the production or reception of texts;
4. Intercultural competence: the five savoirs

Figure 9 indicates this model with its components in detail.

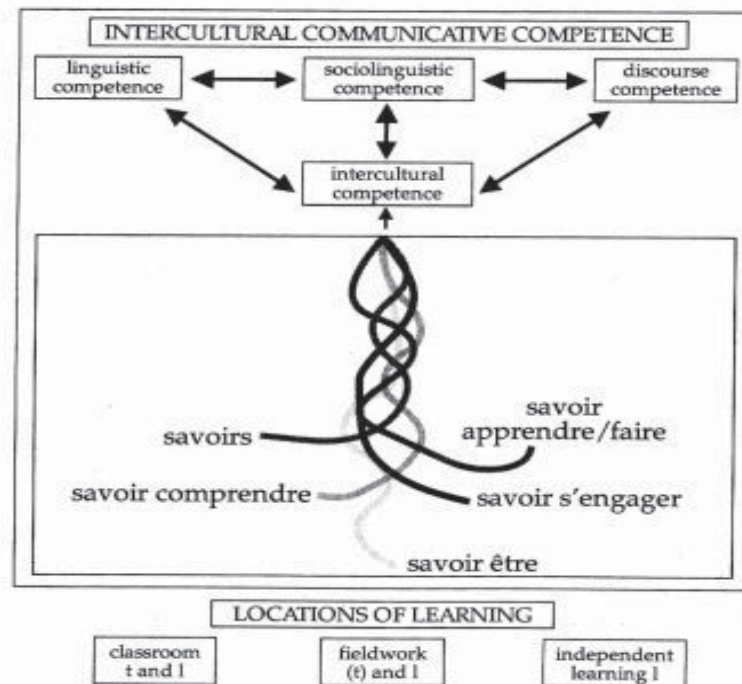


Figure 9. Byram's model of ICC (source: Byram, 1997: 73)

In fact, Byram's model is a kind of redefinition of van Ek's (1986) model of CC in terms of the idea of NS as an ideal model since Byram (1997: 10) believes that in van Ek's linguistic and socio-linguistic competence the NS is intrinsically considered as a norm when referring to "the rules of the language concerned", "conventional meaning", "relationship between communication partners." In addition, regarding socio-cultural competence, the NS is again considered as a norm since the aforementioned "socio-cultural context" is most probably the native one, so the implicit "certain degree of familiarity with that context" is native as well (Coperías Aguilar, 2002; Lange, 2011). Table 2 shows the difference between Byram's and van Ek's definitions in this regard.

van Ek's Proposal	Byram's Redefinition
<b>Linguistic competence:</b> The ability to produce and interpret meaningful utterances which are formed in accordance with the rules of the language concerned and bear their conventional meaning ... that meaning which native speakers would normally attach to an utterance when used in isolation.	<b>Linguistic competence:</b> the ability to apply knowledge of the rules of a standard version of the language to produce and interpret spoken and written language.
<b>Sociolinguistic competence:</b> The awareness of ways in which the choice of language forms ... is determined by such conditions as setting, relationship between communication partners, communicative intention, etc. ... [this] competence covers the relation between linguistic signals and their contextual- or situational-meaning.	<b>Sociolinguistic competence:</b> the ability to give to the language produced by an interlocutor – whether native speaker or not – meanings which are taken for granted by the interlocutor or which are negotiated and made explicit with the interlocutor.
<b>Discourse competence:</b> The ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and interpretation of texts.	<b>Discourse competence:</b> the ability to use, discover and negotiate strategies for the production and interpretation of monologue or dialogue texts which follow the conventions of the culture of an interlocutor or are negotiated as intercultural texts for particular purposes.

Table 2. Byram's redefinition of van Ek's model of CC (source: Coperías Aguilar, 2002: 96)

In other words, we can say that his model is an expansion of van Ek's and Hymes' Model of CC since it has all components presented in these models alongside IC which is the final aim of Byram's model. Byram calls his model ICC since it is a combination of CC and IC. He defines ICC as "a person's ability to relate and communicate with people who speak a different language and live in a different cultural context" (Byram, 1997: 1). Spitzberg and Changnon (2009: 10) categorize Byram's model as a co-orientational model. According to them, these kinds of models "are primarily devoted to conceptualizing the interactional achievement of intercultural understanding or any of its variants (e.g., perceptual accuracy, empathy, perspective taking, clarity, overlap of meaning systems)."

In this model, the NS is not considered as an ideal model for the FL learners, and the goal shifts to making the learners intercultural speakers. To Byram, the intercultural speaker is a person with "the ability to see and manage relationships between themselves and their own cultural beliefs, behaviours and meanings, as expressed in a foreign language, and those of their interlocutors, expressed in the same language" (Byram, 1997: 12). Thus, according to Skopinskaja (2009: 137), in FL teaching, a learner is an intercultural speaker when he/she "has the ability to interact with others, to mediate between different cultural identifications, and to accept other perceptions of the world." To reach this aim, Byram characterizes the necessary knowledge, attitude, and skills of an intercultural speaker as follows:



- Skills of Interpreting and Relating
- Skills of Discovery and Interaction
- Attitudes
- Knowledge
- Critical Cultural Awareness/Political Education

He classifies skills into two groups. The first is the “ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one’s own” (Byram 1997: 52), and the second is the “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” (Byram, 1997: 52). The skill of interpreting and relating refers to the recognition of “ethnocentric perspectives,” “areas of misunderstanding and dysfunction in an interaction” and the ability to “explain them in terms of the cultural systems present” as well as to “mediate between conflicting interpretations of phenomena,” (Byram, 2008: 232) while the skill of discovery and interaction includes “identify[ing] similar and dissimilar processes of interaction, verbal and non-verbal, and negotiat[ing] an appropriate use of them in specific circumstances” and “interact[ing] with interlocutors from a different country and culture taking into consideration the degree of one’s existing familiarity with the country, culture and language and the extent of difference between one’s own and the other” (Byram, 1997: 38).

Both of these skills call for the development of language competence (Parmenter, 2003). Practically, these skills can be learned and can help learners to collect information about other cultures without having any prejudicial views (Houghton, 2009). However, in order to accomplish these skills, an intercultural speaker also needs to improve other abilities like ...

- Kommunikationsprobleme analysieren;
- Kommunikationssituationen reflektieren;
- Kommunikationsstörungen beheben;
- Nervosität überwinden<sup>22</sup> (adapted from Woodman, 2003a, as cited in Klippel & Doff, 2007: 118).

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<sup>22</sup> • analyzing communication problems;  
 • reflecting on communication situations;  
 • resolving communication problems;  
 • overcoming nervousness (My own translation).



“Attitudes are attitudes of curiosity and openness, of readiness to suspend disbelief and judgment with respect to others’ meanings, beliefs and behaviors [...], a willingness to suspend belief in one’s own meanings and behaviors, and to analyze them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging are necessary for successful intercultural communication” (Byram, 1997: 34). Houghton (2009) suggests that attitudes are very crucial since in order to be familiar with other cultures, learners should decenter from their own culture, so people should start from their own to discover other perspectives about other cultures. Both cultures are important for obtaining intercultural understanding.

Like skills, knowledge is also classified into different kinds. (a) “Knowledge about social groups and their cultures in one’s own country, and similar knowledge of the interlocutor’s country” and (b) “Knowledge of the processes of interaction at individual and societal levels” (Byram, 1997: 37). The former knowledge may very often be implicit, unanalyzed and taken-for-granted (Kramsch, 1993); nevertheless, it has a profound influence on the way in which cross-cultural encounters are handled and interpreted. The second is knowledge about *social and cultural processes*, such as processes of socialization, by which our identities are formed (Byram, 1997).

The last component is critical cultural awareness/political education which is the ability “to understand other cultures without losing the perspective of the local reality. Thus, from this perspective the exploration of the local culture was as valid and necessary as that of the target culture” (Agudelo, 2007: 187). In other words, it is “the ability to evaluate critically the perspectives and practices in one’s own and other cultures” (Atay, et al.: 124). In this sense, learners have taken unbiased views towards others. “The important point here is that the intercultural speaker brings ... a rational and explicit standpoint from which to evaluate” (Byram, 2008: 233). The critical cultural awareness has been located in the center of Byram’s model as a significant factor which indicates that language teaching has an educational function in the end (Byram, 2009).

These five *savoirs* have an influence on the definition and categorization of ICC adopted by the “Common European Framework of Reference” (2001) as well. In this classification, ICC has been shaped using four *savoirs*: “*savoir*” or declarative knowledge, “*savoir faire*” or skills and know-how, “*savoir être*” or existential competence, and finally “*savoir apprendre*” or ability to learn (Skopinskaja, 2009).





Thus, according to Byram's model, in order to act as intercultural speakers, teachers should help students acquire different skills which develop their knowledge, information, and understanding of other cultures in addition to their own. Therefore, teachers must also familiarize themselves with the underlying assumptions of the skills and strategies needed for the development of intercultural understanding (Atay et al., 2009). In other words, an intercultural speaker is a person "who has some or all of the five *savoirs* of IC to some degree" (Byram, 2009: 327).

However, in spite of the popularity of this model, it also has its critics. For example, Liddicoat et al. (2003: 15–16) propose that this model illustrates the socio-cultural factor of language skill without establishing a connection between it and other competences, i.e. linguistic, socio-linguistic, and discourse competences, in a fully elaborated way. Furthermore, Coperías Aguilar (2002) considers three different problems for this model. The first refers to the concept of acquisition. It means that we do not know how to acquire ICC in this model since the objective facts and rules which can be taught and learned in the class are just a small part of it, and some of its components, such as skills and attitudes, should be developed rather than transmitted in the class. The next issue is related to its gradation. This model lacks a kind of criterion according to which we can grade and rank our learners' competence. And the last problem deals with the idea of assessment. It is very difficult to assess the level of the learners' IC in this model. In order to do so, some imaginative methods of testing and assessing, such as role play and interview are needed which are really time-consuming and difficult to handle, since they require objectivity on the part of the assessor. Moreover, Burwitz-Melzer (2001: 30) criticizes Byram's model conformity to different contexts and states ...

His model is an all-encompassing one that cannot fit into most European national or school curricula. Singling out some of its parts, however, would deprive the model of its consistency.

Contrary to these criticisms, some other scholars believe that Byram's model is the most systematic and clearly expressed model of IC in the field of language teaching because, as Dervin (n.d.) says, his model has comprehensible goals. Similarly, Lange (2011: 17) enumerates its advantages as follows:

- It gives a detailed outline of what intercultural competence is and what kind of skills need to be considered when teaching language according to the intercultural approach.



- It is useful for teachers as it breaks down a complex concept into its constituent parts.
- It is specifically designed for the language classroom, therefore considering the language learner and the desired outcomes of an intercultural approach to language teaching.
- It comments on the necessary skills of intercultural speakers and does not limit itself to native speaker competence.
- It does not neglect the importance of language and makes sure to point out that linguistic competence is part of achieving intercultural competence.

Moreover, Byram's himself believes his model to be a kind of prescriptive one both for teaching and testing which can be employed to measure the level of success and failure of people in intercultural communication and at the same time to specify the existence or absence of different components (Byram, 2009). Thus, as Vogt (2007: 8) suggests, unlike Bennett's model, Byram's model considers FL learners as its starting point and sets the development of knowledge, attitude, and skills as its main goal.

As discussed above, Byram's model of ICC can be considered as one of the significant models of IC which affects the teaching of culture in different language programs to a great extent, especially in Europe due to its effect on the design of the Common European Framework by the Council of Europe, since it defines specific and clear-cut skills, knowledge and attitudes that language learners should possess in order to understand and accept cultural differences and act as mediators between cultures. In this sense, focusing on the reinforcement of critical cultural awareness among learners, Byram believes that learning a language without holding a reflective view towards the local and target cultures cannot prepare students for living in this multicultural world. Furthermore, the clear and precise descriptions of the components in his model can be more compatible with classroom contexts since they can help teachers to design their syllabuses or lesson plans based on a set of pre-determined features which should be developed within a particular time period.

Having reviewed these three models of ICC which more or less focus on empathy, perspective taking and adaptability in order to develop IC (Deardorff, 2009), it is now time to turn to the necessity of teaching ICC and intercultural learning. In the next section, some key concepts regarding the importance of this issue will be presented.



### **2.2.10. The Importance of Intercultural Learning**

As mentioned before, economic and commercial exchanges across countries have resulted in an increase of contact among people from various cultures who are trying to identify well with others having vastly different beliefs and backgrounds. Successful intercultural communication in such situations can be considered an important issue in order to co-exist peacefully and easily with people from other countries and value systems. Thus, having theoretical and practical knowledge of intercultural communication procedures and skills is of the utmost importance, since different cultures may have various norms and conventions to show the level of behavioral appropriateness in a variety of contexts (Gao, 2006; Thaler, 2012). Lack of knowledge in this regard may lead to intercultural misunderstanding (Hinde, 1997: 99; Neuner, 2007). Therefore, and due to the fact that these days English is often used as a common medium or a lingua franca in intercultural interactions all around the world, we can conclude that FL teaching, especially ELT has a crucial role in the formation of what seems to be a more globalized society (Oka, 2004; Agudelo, 2007).

Nevertheless, successful intercultural communication requires something more than access to a common linguistic system. Cultural and functional abilities are also significant, and NS-oriented CC cannot be helpful in this regard alone. Thus, we need a broader structure which is called ICC. ICC stresses the value of sharing cultural and functional awareness which can lead the intercultural communicator to function in this global world appropriately (Oka, 2004). In other words, as Thomas (1984) mentions, diversities in pragmatic competence can cause problems in intercultural communication, especially when using English as an international language. Additionally, she asserts that a person with a high level of linguistic proficiency may have a more or less low level of socio-pragmatic proficiency. Such speakers may use language inappropriately, incomprehensibly or even offensively. The term appropriateness was earlier discussed in the concept of CC referring to socially appropriate behaviors in various contexts, while in ICC appropriateness means being appropriate with regard to the quality and quantity of information. In other words, the right amount of information should be given effectively based on the common knowledge between the speaker and the hearer. Thus, ICC focuses on the implication of the procedural aspect of interaction. Since interaction is inherently dynamic, information should be relatively in tune with the common ground and the gap between communicators (Oka, 2004). In this sense, the development of ICC can



have a critical role in FL teaching in order to maintain cultural and linguistic variety and at the same time smooth the progress of intercultural communication (Houghton, 2009).

Because of the fact that globalization and the use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) influence the concept of ICC extensively, the next part of the study will discuss these issues briefly.

### **2.2.11. Globalization and ELF**

The universal spread of English is one of the many different improvements which has resulted from the broad concept of globalization. This term was first introduced in the 1970s and was commonly related to economy, worldwide communication systems, mobility, global travel, the transports of commodities, and international mass culture (Robinson, 2002: 9; Gnutzmann & Intemann, 2005). In other words, globalization was related to the many ways in which people were becoming entwined in a particular interrelated way all around the world (Crozet, Liddicoat, & Lo Bianco, 1999). Thus, as Shaules (2007: 14) says, globalization was a new phenomenon tending towards “revolutionizing intercultural relationships.” It seems that “fewer and fewer people live in only a local, regional, or even national societal order [...]. The world is now characterized by an interrelated, interdependent global community” (Samovar et al., 2013: 1).

Against this background, there was a need for international communication because globalization caused “new and more language contact situations” (Janssen, 1999: 48). As a result, people required a common medium or language through which they could interact with each other in a global context. This common medium is called Lingua Franca. According to Gnutzmann (1999: 162), “a lingua franca is an auxiliary language used by people whose mother tongues are different in order to enable communication between them.” In other words, lingua franca can be defined as “a language common to, or shared by many cultures and communities at any or all social and educational levels, and used as an international tool” McArthur (2002: 2). Thus, in international encounters, a common language should be chosen by the interlocutors from different countries in order to have interactions.

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this common language became English (Harmer, 2007), and was increasingly used “as a lingua franca in politics, trade, tourism, media, and science and is therefore influential in many people’s lives” (Gnutzmann & Intemann, 2005: 16). As Harmer



(2007: 14-15) suggests, there are many reasons which have resulted in the extensive use of English all around the world. These reasons are ...

- a colonial history;
- economics (a major factor in the growth of English has been the spread of global commerce, pushed on by the dominance of the United States as a world economic power);
- information exchange (a great deal of academic discourse around the world takes place in English);
- travel (much travel and tourism is realized around the world in English);
- popular culture (in the 'western world' at least, English is the dominant language in popular culture).

In this framework, communications in English are not constrained to encounters with NSs of the language any more, but rather they engage the speakers of different countries with a variety of mother tongues (Meierkord, 2005). This caused the increase in the number of Non-NSs of English in comparison to its NSs (Phillipson, 1997; Crystal, 1997; Crystal, 2003). In other words, English was mostly used by Non-NSs rather than NSs. In line with this view, Kramersch (1999: 138) says ...

English is no longer universally associated with an identifiable native speaking national form what Braj Kachru has called "first circle countries" (Kachru, 1992). Culture has become discontinuous, inventive, and mobile. If there is one thing that globalization has brought us, and that the teaching of English makes possible, it is travel, migration, multiple allegiances, and a different relationship to time and place. English is used for certain purposes and in interaction with certain interlocutors.

In this sense, ELF paves the way for the negotiation of meaning across cultures, leading to cultural heterogeneity (McArthur, 2002). This not only implies linguistic abilities in order to be aware of different accents and to be comprehended by others, but also the knowledge of other cultures to help learners to respond effectively to the problems which result from cultural differences between the contributors in international contacts (Gnutzmann & Intemann, 2005). In other words, successful intercultural communication relies on the speaker's ability to recognize different thinking and living styles; this ability is called "intercultural competence" (Byram & Fleming, 1998: 12).



Thus, since English has been extensively used as the medium of intercultural communication all over the world, teachers should become acquainted with the general standards of intercultural understanding in order to develop IC. It should be considered that IC is not an alternative for communicative and linguistic competence but rather an extension to it. As Gnutzmann (1999: 166) presents, IC implies ...

- awareness of the culture-specific dependency of thought and behavior;
- knowledge of general parameters according to which cultures can be distinguished;
- rejection of ethnocentrism;
- interpersonal sensitivity: the ability to understand people in their own right;
- cognitive flexibility: openness to new ideas and beliefs;
- behavioral flexibility: the ability to change one's behavior patterns.

In these circumstances, conventional approaches like CLT, which “considers target language-based communicative competence to be essential in order for foreign language learners to participate fully in foreign language culture”, are not appropriate any more (Alptekin, 2002: 58), so an alternative model should be used which considers our learners' universal and local communicative needs (Grau, 2005). Thus, according to Klippel and Doff (2007: 34) ...

Englischunterricht ist [nicht] mehr als bloßes Sprachtraining; er dient ebenfalls der Wissensvermittlung über die englische Sprache und ihren Gebrauch. Immer geht es des Weiteren auch um interkulturelles Lernen, das heißt um den Erwerb kulturellen Wissens und interkultureller Sensibilität, also darum, sich der fremden und auch der eigenen kulturellen Prägung bewusst zu werden.<sup>23</sup>

Guntner (1999: 108) states that by 1989, EFL teachers, who were concerned with the development of intercultural understanding, tried to make their classrooms globalized in order to provoke “tolerance, acceptance, and understanding of international difference in culture, ethnicity and ideology,” whereas nowadays, they can use “their globalized classrooms as a point of departure for engendering tolerance, acceptance, and understanding for intra-national differences in culture and ethnicity.” This means that English as FL can be influential in global contact and concurrently encouraging local understanding. “In general, it is the

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<sup>23</sup> English teaching is no longer [considered only as] language training; the students also learn about the English language and its use. It is always about intercultural learning as well, that is, acquiring cultural knowledge and intercultural sensitivity and as a result becoming aware of the cultural impact on the foreign and also on one's own cultural context. (My own translation)



competence to communicate with members of other cultures—i.e. without restriction to the target culture—that intercultural education and FL teaching have to aim at” (Doyé, 1999: 96). Likewise, Byram (1997: 3) acknowledges that ...

FLT has a central aim of enabling learners to use that language to interact with people for who it is their preferred and ‘natural’ medium of experience, those we call ‘native speaker’, as well as in lingua franca situations where it is an estranging and sometimes disturbing means of coping with the world for all concerned.

Having identified the characteristics and objectives of CLT, the importance of culture, and its impact on the emergence of different teaching methods in the history of language education, in the next section of this chapter a short review will be presented of the studies which have been conducted on CLT in terms of its appropriateness and cultural impositions.

### **2.3. Empirical Studies on CLT**

As discussed earlier, since CLT is a western idea which has been transported to non-western countries, scholars have paid particular attention to the cultural appropriateness of this approach, especially in non-western areas (Holliday, 1994; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996), and some of them do not agree with the idea that CLT can be applicable in any contexts, even Western ones. For instance, Kumaravadivelu (2006: 64) believes the CLT principles are not easily adaptable in different cultures and contexts and recommends that CLT may be “a classic case of a center-based pedagogy that is out of sync with local linguistic, educational, social, cultural, and political exigencies.” The term which has been mostly connected with this issue is called ‘cultural appropriacy’ including both institutions such as schools and wider society shaping their context. For instance, “a school culture of teacher-centered classrooms with a focus on transmission of knowledge will have been influenced in part by wider cultural notions of the teacher’s authority as expert and leader” (Hedge, 2000: 69).

According to the literature of innovation studies, a new method or approach can be successful only if it follows a certain set of factors, such as the level of compatibility between the current teaching viewpoint and the new approach; teachers’ opinions about its relevance to their learners’ needs; the accessibility of resources and materials for the new approach; the degree of harmony between the new and the traditional classroom procedures, and the relative strengths of the new approach. All of these elements can have a great effect on the adoption and adjustment of a Communicative Approach by teachers in specific con-



texts (Hedge, 2000). Alongside these factors, teacher confidence is also related to the issue of appropriacy since the implementation of a Communicative Approach requires significant knowledge and skills on the part of teachers. For instance, Medyges (1986: 112) points out that CLT requires teachers to have a significant level of linguistic proficiency which can sometimes be troublesome for the non-native teachers whose energy is “inevitably used up in the constant struggle with their own language deficiencies, leaving only a small fraction for attending to their students’ problems.” However, there are still some teachers who use CLT in their classroom especially when they are free to make decision and see a Communicative Approach as something valuable for their learners (Hedge, 2000).

Such studies of CLT, which are concerned with the issue of cultural appropriacy, have been conducted all around the world; however, most of them are in Asian contexts, so little attention has been paid to the appropriateness of CLT in European contexts. In the following section, the results of some of these studies will be presented in three different subsections. The first refers to the studies of CLT in Asia, the second deals with the studies in European contexts, and the third is concerned with CLT in African countries. In this way, the status of CLT will be shown both in western and non-western countries and the appropriacy of this approach will be examined in three different contexts. Moreover, since the setting of the present research includes one Asian and three European countries, an overview of such empirical studies of CLT in these two contexts can shed light on the presentation and interpretation of the results in this study.

### ***2.3.1. Studies in Asian Contexts***

Some Japanese English teachers believe that it is very difficult for them to implement CLT in their classes since this approach has been designed based on NSs’ norms, which differ from Japanese’s socio-cultural and educational perspectives (Wolfson, 1983; Peak, 1996; Komiya Samimy, & Kobayashi, 2004). In addition, Sano, Takahashi, and Yoneyama (1984) mention that since English is not used widely in Japan, there is no need to use this language in the Japanese secondary school classroom. This might lead teachers to transmit the communicative objectives towards students’ self-expression and individual development rather than towards real-life communicative needs outside the classroom (Hedge, 2000). As a result, they propose an adapted CLT approach through which language activities “need not necessarily be aimed at use that is ‘authentic’, from the native speaker’s point of view” (Sano,





Takahashi, & Yoneyama, 1984: 170). In another study by Reid (1987) on a group of Japanese students, it is found that CLT is not a good choice for them because of their learning styles. Reid's findings indicate that this group of Japanese students has a negative attitude towards group work activities, which are advocated by the CLT approach. Also, Parmenter and Tomita (2001) state that the advent of CLT in Japan faced a problematic disagreement between the proposed curriculum based on CC and the entrance exam focusing on GTM.

In a case study by Hiep (2007) on the beliefs of three teachers about the use of CLT in Vietnam, it is found that the practices and beliefs regarding CLT are multifaceted. He illustrates that CLT is a "broad theory" that "has generated many different ways of understandings, descriptions, and uses of CLT, challenging what it actually means to classroom teachers" (Hiep, 2007: 193). The teachers in his study affirm a positive attitude towards this approach; however, as Hiep says, "when [asked] about the techniques to realize these principles, the teachers were ambivalent" (Hiep, 2007: 198). Thus, although they believe in the usefulness of pair work, group work, role play or simulation in the promotion of CLT, the teachers state that these activities cannot be employed in their classrooms because of the status of English in Vietnam and students' lack of motivation to learn oral English. They also confirm that the difficulty in applying CLT in their contexts may be culture-related. Likewise, Kramsch and Sullivan (1996: 203) highlight how a cultural tradition in Vietnam can affect the use of group work, which is one of the characteristics of CLT classes, in the classroom. They suggest that students in Vietnam often play, work, and live together, so they are like a family. As a result, they form family groups in the classes, and "students are expected to learn together and help each other inside and outside class. In such a supportive setting, dividing into subgroups can be divisive and inhibit learning." In other words, students "build on each other's responses" in "collaborative ways," so the atmosphere is one of "collaboration of the group as a whole". Thus, teachers and students using communicative materials would adjust the method to go well with their need to work collaboratively as a whole class.

Similarly, Rao (2002) claims that the implementation of CLT in China does not result in the development of CC among the Chinese students (Rao, 2002). Some students react negatively to communicative activities, and some teachers were not sure about applying CLT principles. CLT is not in accord with the traditional Chinese teaching and learning strategies with regard to reading, writing, grammar, translation, and memorization of vocabulary (Rao, 2002). Thus, teachers have to modify CLT based on the needs and the conditions of language teaching in



China. For this reason, CLT is confronted with various criticisms in China (Anderson, 1993; Rao, 1996; Wang, 2001; Hu, 2002; Zhu, 2003). Although teachers are eager to use CLT and improve their students' CC, teaching conditions, teacher experience and language proficiency, the students' personal characteristics, lack of appropriate materials, large classes, lack of time, the national examination system, and cultural elements make them doubtful about the success of this approach (Chen, 1988; Coleman, 1996). Consequently, they return to their old existing grammar-translation methods, teacher-centered classes and the widespread use of L1 in the classrooms (Hu, 2002; Hu, 2002; Zhu, 2003; Liu, 2006; Badger & Yan, 2012). This situation is the same for the students as well. In spite of the fact that they are interested in CLT, some of them are still worried about their examinations, and most of them cannot conform to one of the main principles of CLT, independent learning, since it is not possible for them to accept the responsibility for their own language learning (Zhu, 2003). These factors indicate that CLT principles and the traditional Chinese culture of learning and teaching are not in agreement with each other. Hu (2002) shows these controversies in the following table.

CLT Principles of Learning	Chinese Traditional Culture of Learning
the interactive model of CLT	the Chinese epistemic model
learner-centeredness	teacher dominance/control
verbal activeness	mental activeness
independence and individuality	receptiveness and conformity

Table 3. Controversies between CLT and the Chinese culture of learning

Thus, in this framework, Chinese teachers might assist their students' English learning if they can modify a Communicative Approach and make it appropriate for a Chinese context (Jin, Singh, & Li, 2005; see also Bax, 2003); otherwise, as Coleman (1996: 11) states, "innovations which are intended to facilitate learning may be so disturbing for those affected by them – so threatening to their belief systems – that hostility is aroused and learning becomes impossible." This role of culture in the use and success of CLT was also investigated by Tan (2005) in Singapore. She finds that CLT cannot be successful for students at primary schools there.

In a similar vein, in a study on the attitudes of 18 Korean EFL teachers towards CLT, Li (1998; see also Li, 2001) proposes that there are some significant obstacles in applying CLT principles to EFL contexts. Sometimes, teachers themselves recognize that CLT cannot be



successful in their contexts due to different cultural and practical reasons, such as lack of conformity with the conventional teachers' and students' roles in the class, the traditional testing methods, teachers' lack of proficiency, unsuitable teaching conditions, and lack of teacher training courses. Dailey (2010) asserts that these are the common difficulties which can be recognized in Korean classrooms when applying CLT (see also the results of Butler's (2005) study of South Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese EFL teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of CLT in their respective cultures, Hamid & Baldauf's (2008) research in Bangladesh, and Jarvis & Atsilarat's (2004) study about practitioners' and students' opinions towards CLT in Thailand).

In Bangladesh, for example, the situation is somewhat controversial. According to Farhad (2013), the main goal of most Bangladeshi students is to get good marks in order to pass the exams, get a suitable job, and travel to other countries, so they do not aim at developing their CC for real-life situations, and are thus not particularly willing to use English for communicative purposes in the classroom. In contrast to Farhad's claim, Akhter (2010) in her research on the attitudes of 10 teachers and 10 students towards CLT in Bangladesh reveals that these teachers and students have positive attitudes towards CLT although they face the shortage of teaching aids in their classes, and this may confirm the fact that CLT can be used as an effective approach in Bangladeshi context. Teachers like to use different types of communicative activities in the classrooms and act as motivators and facilitators. Similarly, students like to have more chances to practice English in their classes, and they are interested in following different types of activities in the form of group work, pair work, and individual work in their classrooms. However, Chowdhury (2003) emphasizes the need to design an educational program along new post-colonial guidelines which admits the importance of the adaptation of CLT and identifies the significance of its feasibility in Bangladesh. Chowdhury asserts that any such newly adopted method can be effective only if we take the home culture into account.

These problems are also evident in a case study by Vongxay (2013: iv) on the implementation of CLT in Laos. The results show that different factors can be influential in the use of CLT in Laos. These factors are: "teachers' factors including misconceptions of CLT, traditional grammar-based teaching approach, teachers' English proficiency and lack of CLT training, students' factors such as low level of English proficiency, their learning styles and behaviors, and lack of motivation to develop CC, educational factors, for example the power of the ex-



amination, class size, and insufficient funding to support CLT, and the CLT factors including the lack of CLT interaction in society and school.”

Therefore, as Li (1998: 695) maintains, in many EFL contexts there is a disagreement “between what CLT demands and what the EFL situation ... allows.” He also proposes that “implementation should be gradual and grounded in the countries’ own EFL situations” (Li, 1998: 677). Likewise, Holliday (1994) discusses the development of appropriate methods, which adjust themselves to the cultural assumptions and educational customs. Thus, as Penner (1995: 4) identifies, CLT may confront obstacles in eastern countries since the focus in these countries is on teacher, textbook and grammar, and this is in sharp contrast to CLT’s focus on learner, practice, and skill development.

In a similar vein, the results of Al-Mohanna’s study (2010) on a group of teachers in Saudi Arabia illustrates that these teachers tend to use traditional approaches, such as GTM and ALM in order to teach English in Saudi boys’ secondary school. Saudi Arabian EFL teachers believe that the implementation of CLT is very difficult due to different situational limitations such as shortage of time, lack of necessary and sufficient teaching and learning aids, poor examination system, overfull classes, and executive tasks which should be performed by the EFL teachers. Therefore, teacher-centered grammar instructions, chorus reading, vocabulary presentations, and translations are the central focus, and meaning-based activities have a peripheral role in the classrooms.

These findings are also confirmed by Al-Nouh (2008) who examines the use of CLT-based learner-centered methods in Kuwaiti primary schools. He shows that the teachers in his study are applying a teacher-fronted method regardless of their learner-centered training during their education at the university. Therefore, there is again a mismatch between the teachers’ beliefs and their practice in classrooms.

Similarly, in a study conducted by Scott (1993) on 54 teachers in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, the findings reveal that although most teachers believe in using CLT in the classroom, the activities used are frequently traditional such as teacher-student drills, translation, and correcting homework.

In a study on the status of CLT in Indian context, Gutpa (2004: 267) reveals that the introduction of CLT in India is not successful at the beginning since ...

- It was implemented in a hurry, students and teachers had no time or space to get used to it or realize its positive effects.



- Most teachers were not familiar with the whole concept of CLT.
- In an environment where exposure to English is limited to the classroom for the majority of learners, it was self-defeating to expect an understanding of the targets of CLT.
- The evaluation set-up was not prepared for the radical change in examination modules.

All these factors add up to one important issue: context. Considering the effect of context, Christ and Makarani (2009) also suggest that although Indian teachers have positive opinions about CLT, it is still difficult to apply it in Indian contexts due to classroom size, existing resources, and the teachers' and students' oral English proficiency. These results are also the same in Turkish contexts. In a study by Ozsevik (2010: 121-124) on the use of CLT by 61 Turkish teachers, it is found that these teachers experience many problems when applying CLT in their classroom. Their difficulties result from four elements, i.e. the teacher, the students, the educational system, and CLT itself. Thus, although teachers are interested in using CLT, they do not have a positive view about the full implementation of CLT. Teachers believe that they can use CLT beneficially only when they can solve the problems related to those four sources and create more encouraging conditions for the use of CLT in their English classrooms. Therefore, the major problems like "large classes, teachers' heavy workload, mismatch between curriculum and assessment, and students' and teachers' poor communicative abilities" should be overcome in order to achieve this aim (see also Coskun's (2011) findings about the disagreement between teachers' classroom practice and their attitudes towards using CLT due to large class sizes, traditional form-based examinations, and lack of time for the preparation of communicative materials). In another study by Saricoban and Tilfarlioglu (1999) about Turkish EFL teachers' attitudes towards CLT, it is found that although teachers believe in using pair and group work as a CLT principle, they find it difficult to apply such activities in the classes due to the difficulty of monitoring students' performance and their use of the first language in group work activities.

In a study by Razmjoo and Riazi (2006) on a group of Iranian teachers' attitudes towards CLT in high schools and private institutes, the findings reveal that both high school and institute teachers have positive attitudes toward CLT. It shows that they are satisfied with applying CLT in their classes. But only the teachers of institutes follow a quasi-CLT type of approach in their English classes. The high school teachers are not so strongly in agreement



with CLT principles; for example, they believe that error should be corrected right away, and grammar should be taught in detail. So, like Li's (1998), this study also shows that teachers' perceptions of an approach have a direct effect on its success. Moreover, the results show that classroom practices cannot reflect teachers' opinions about teaching and learning due to various reasons. Sometimes, students, school principals and the educational system can cause obstacles when applying an approach. This issue has also been presented in other studies conducted in Iran (e.g. Bagheri, 1994; Saadat, 1995; Rashidi, 1995; Zanganeh, 1995; Moradi, 1996; Rahimi, 1996; Yarmohammadi, 2000).

Similarly, Nonkukhetkhong, Balddauf, and Moni (2006) investigate 5 Thai EFL teachers' perceptions and ideas of the use of learner-centered and CLT approach in Thai secondary school contexts. They conclude that teachers are interested in implementing the learner-centered approach and CLT for Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), but they face many contextual challenges for the use of CLT (see also Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004). These results are also confirmed in another study by Raissi and Mohd Nor (2013) on the perceptions of 30 Malaysian teachers about CLT at the secondary school level which reveal that teachers have a positive attitude towards the implementation of CLT in the classroom although they face some situational challenges, such as learners with different cultures and backgrounds.

Contrary to these studies, there are also some reports which deal with the positive aspects of this approach in EFL contexts. For instance, Wang (1990) describes CLT success in a FL school in China due to its emphasis on oral competence. Thus, while CLT does not only aim at the development of spoken language, Wang indicates that it could help students promote their language skills both in receptive—listening and reading—and productive—speaking and writing—skills in this setting. Likewise, Anderson (1993) states that in spite of the difficulties, teachers and learners are still interested in using a communicative approach, and many teachers believe in the progress of their students when teaching communicatively.

### ***2.3.2. Studies in European Contexts***

In a study on the perceptions of 59 Scottish teachers about CLT by Mitchell (1988), the findings reveal that these teachers have different perspectives towards CLT and the concept of CC which are often in contrast with the principles and characteristics discussed in the literature. For example, concerning pair work and group work, many teachers believe that using these activities is just a waste of time and that in such activities they cannot monitor their



students' performances in detail. Thus, they prefer to use whole class activities although they admit that pair work and group work activities can help their students to be autonomous. Considering error correction, most of the teachers believe that it is sometimes necessary to correct their students' errors, especially the grammatical ones (see also Williams (1995) and Hawkey's (2006) research on the perspectives of 37 Italian EFL teachers on CLT and the necessity of grammatical correction in the classroom). In this framework, they prefer to teach grammatical points explicitly. This kind of discrepancy is also observable in teachers' perceptions about their roles in the classroom. Although when applying CLT, teachers should be more like facilitators than dispensers of knowledge, most of them would like to communicate knowledge to their students.

In a similar vein, in a study on the opinions of 6 teachers about the use of CLT in France and Sweden, Batak and Andersson (2009) find that teachers' beliefs, ideals and aims of language teaching do not match their actions and practices in the classroom all the time. Furthermore, the results of their interviews and classroom observations indicate that all teachers teach grammar in their native language. In comparison to the Swedish school, the French school seemed to be more traditional since the lessons are frequently teacher-fronted and that the teachers are not tolerant of any errors in the spoken language. In another study by Lijcklama à Nijeholt (2012: 21) on the attitudes of 54 German and Dutch language teachers towards CLT, the findings confirm that there are many significant attitudinal differences between the Dutch and German participants. The German teachers do not agree with the idea that communicative efficiency is more essential than the mastery of grammatical forms; however, the Dutch teachers have different views, and they are much more in agreement with the CLT philosophy. Thus, it can be concluded that "teachers' attitudes towards certain language teaching methods, such as the communicative language approach, may underline cultural norms and expectations." Within this framework, as Newby (2006: 18) says ...

[...] in many European countries the 'communicative' label was one which most teachers identified with. When, however, their classroom practices were analyzed, it was noticeable that many of these did not seem compatible with communicative method. For example, reading texts aloud in class proved to be widespread and group work activities to practice oral language were by no means as common as might be expected.

This situation may even occur in a particular context with the same cultural norms and expectations. For instance, in a study on the status of CLT in 6 Swedish primary schools,



Stridsberg (2007) find that teachers use many teaching alternatives and different CLT approaches in their classes. In addition, the study shows that these teachers also use traditional teaching methods like GTM/ALM and sometimes act as authoritarian figures. CLT as a means of teaching English as a second language seems to be important to the Swedish teachers. In this study, several CLT approaches and activities are used by the teachers, but traditional roles still prevail. The “Swedish approach” of this study suggests a complex system which consists of a language core surrounded by principles and different activities, and that there are a great many teaching alternatives to choose from. Furthermore, teachers interact in the classroom with their pupils and even if some teachers do not have enough time to analyze, they still practice CLT.

Alongside this research on teachers’ and learners’ attitudes towards CLT, there are also other studies concerned with the usefulness of CLT in different contexts. For example, in a study by Xia (2010: 42-43) on the effect of CLT on vocabulary teaching and learning in one school in Sweden, it is verified that CLT is much more effective in vocabulary teaching than other traditional methods like GTM from different perspectives:

1. In the CLT classroom much vocabulary is not taught in the form of wordlist of isolated words any more, but taught in authentic contexts. Vocabulary teaching focuses on developing communicative proficiency rather than commanding the forms of the target language.
2. CLT encourages learners to acquire vocabulary knowledge naturally, rather than to learn it intentionally. Apart from this, the modified target language input which is obtained from conversational interactions between teacher and learners enables them to get better understanding of vocabulary knowledge.
3. CLT promotes learners’ communicative competence and stimulates their inner motivation since the communicative activities are connected and relevant to their daily lives.
4. CLT makes learners adopt responsibility for their own learning and encourages them to discover the forms and structures of the target language for themselves.
5. CLT prompts the development of learners’ spirit of team cooperation by means of communicative activities, yet at the same time cultivates learners’ individuality by allowing them to express their different views and ideas freely in the conversational interactions between them.





However, CLT teachers need to have other skills in addition to proficiency in the target language, i.e. organizational ability and getting to know the learners. Therefore, they should develop such skills in order to ensure improved results in their practical teaching.

In another study by Stelly (1991, as cited in Paige, et al., 1999) on the influence of applying the Communicative Approach and authentic materials on learners' comprehension and attitudes in teaching French, the results indicate that implementing a communicative classroom and authentic materials cannot significantly help the teachers to develop their learners' attitudes toward French culture. However, the findings in the control group of this study using traditional methods like GTM/ALM in the classroom reveal that the students' attitudes significantly improve by using text-based classroom activities and cultural artifacts.

### ***2.3.3. Studies in African Contexts***

Such studies about the appropriateness of CLT have also been conducted in African contexts. For example, in a study of Ethiopian high school teachers' and students' beliefs towards CLT (26 teachers and 100 students), Beyene (2008) points out that most of teachers and learners surveyed have reasonably high levels of awareness of CLT features. Yet there are still a mismatch between the teachers' and learners' perceptions and their practice in the classroom.

Furthermore, in another study on 80 secondary school teachers' attitudes towards CLT and their possible problems in Ethiopia by Mulat (2003), the results show that although many of the participants are in favor of CLT, they still face some difficulties when implementing CLT in their classes. Most of these obstacles are related to "large class size, low level of students' abilities and lack of motivation, lack of resources (facilities), students' expectations and attitudes, students' low level background knowledge, the textbook, teaching loads, examination pressures, cultural influence, influence of colleagues and teachers' English speaking abilities (proficiency)" (Mulat, 2003: 68). Many teachers maintain that the majority of their problems are imposed by external factors, which they cannot control. However, some of them believe that some internal factors, such as their own language abilities and skills can act against the use of CLT in their classes. Even in those cases where teachers think that they are aware of CLT principles and are actually applying them in their classes, classroom observation findings indicate teachers' extreme tendencies to their teacher-centered activities for managing the classes (Yemane, 2007, as cited in Beyene, 2008), which can be related to their "shallow theoretical and practical conceptions of the communicative language teaching"



(Simegn, 2012: iii). Simegn in his research on the opinions and classroom practices of 150 secondary school EFL teachers in Addis Ababa shows that ...

[...] the teachers did not seem to have clear ideas about the focus of the instruction, the roles of teachers and students, the nature of teaching materials, the type of classroom organization and management in employing communicative language teaching in their classrooms. Thus, the teachers' classroom instructions revealed routine pattern of procedures (presentation, monitoring and discussion) that did not seem to reflect their mere pedagogical conception, communicative language teaching. Moreover, the teachers' considered students' limited language capacity and interest in learning the language as the major contextual factor affecting the teaching and learning process.

These findings are confirmed in a study by Shihiba Salma Embark (2011), who researches the conceptions of 100 Libyan EFL teachers about applying a communicative learner-centered approach in Libyan secondary schools and finds that some teachers have misconceptions about CLT principles and practices, such as "free learning, empowering students and disempowering teachers, a new way of teaching, lack of discipline and an approach which cannot be implemented" (Shihiba Salma Embark, 2011: 326). These misconceptions can have a clear effect on their instructional practices, and as a result, the lack of CLT success in their classes. Some definite significant factors could be considered as responsible for this event. These elements are "prescribing textbooks in secondary schools, lack of piloting or evaluating of the curriculum innovation, insufficient training for teachers, a limitation in the resources and facilities provided for schools, composing English language classrooms of a large number of students, an imposition of external traditional forms of examinations on secondary schools, and a lack of harmony between teacher education at university and the needs of these schools" (Shihiba Salma Embark, 2011: 326). Furthermore, some other difficulties are related to the teachers and students themselves, such as (a) "teachers' weak language proficiency, their lack of understanding of the communicative learner-centered approach, their lack of motivation for developing themselves professionally and their high accountability for national examinations, and (b) students' lack of understanding of their new role in the learner-centered classroom, the great responsibility they feel towards passing examinations, their lack of confidence in their communication skills, their traditional background and more critically their perception of themselves as passive recipients of knowledge" (Shihiba Salma Embark, 2011: 326-327). Thus, we can conclude that "the notion of the communicative learner-centered approach is theoretically attractive but the process of its implementation is com-



plex and demanding. A successful implementation of this approach requires a change in the conceptions and practices of teachers, students, head-teachers, inspectors, policy-makers and parents about teaching and learning. It also requires a good preparation for teachers, students, schools and classrooms” (Shihiba Salma Embark, 2011: 329).

In a very similar fashion, Gahin and Mayhill (2001) describe two barriers in the implementation of CLT in Egypt.

- The extrinsic obstacles related to economic elements with respect to low incomes, lack of resources and materials, large classes, lack of equipment, and the pressure from parents, students, principals, and supervisors.
- The intrinsic obstacles related to cultural factors including passive students, negative perceptions of group work activities, and influences of colleagues.

In contrast, in a study by Matsau (2007: 145) on the status of CLT and the learner-centered approach in 5 secondary schools of Lesotho—a developing African country, the findings indicate that these methods are successfully implemented by the teachers and students. For example, the students state that group and pair work activities could affect their “confidence, assertiveness, and decision-making skills.”

#### **2.3.4. Conclusions**

The results of this short review on different studies of CLT indicate that the appropriateness of importing one method or approach from one context to another is a significant issue (Li, 2004). For example, as Holliday (1994: 9) proposes, the introduction of CLT from ESL to EFL is very difficult since it concerns a “one way technology transfer” of prevailing ESL culture to EFL culture. Thus, Holliday calls for “basing appropriate methods on local contexts” since context can determine the success or failure of an approach (Li, 2004). As Markee (2001: 120) states, “systemic context in which an innovation is implemented seems to be an important determiner of whether or not the innovation will be adopted.” Consequently, the local context should be analyzed in order to decide about the appropriateness of a new method. According to Breen and Candlin (2001: 24), “any realization of (communicative) curriculum must reflect a realistic analysis of the actual situation within which the language teaching will take place.”

The second issue which should be considered in these studies is teachers’ thoughts and attitudes in language teaching. In his review of research on teachers’ beliefs, cognitions, and



attitudes, Borg (2003) introduces some important facts in this regard. First, there is frequently a disparity between teachers' perceptions of a method and their actual practice in the classroom. Borg continues that "teacher cognitions and practices are mutually informing, with contextual factors playing an important role in determining the extent to which teachers are able to implement instruction congruent with their cognitions" (Borg, 2003: 81). Here, teachers' cognition means the "unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching—what teachers know, believe, and think" (Borg, 2003: 81). Second, he indicates that the activities and practices teachers used in their classes are based on their previous language learning experiences. Borg also stresses the effect of contextual elements like teaching-controlled syllabuses and guidelines on teachers' practices in the classroom. This implies that "the extent to which teachers have to follow a set curriculum or are free to develop their own courses seems to be crucial in understanding the decisions language teachers make" (Borg, 2003: 98). In line with this view, Hui (1997: webpage) enumerates some contextual factors which can result in a discrepancy between attitudes and classroom practices among teachers. These factors are ...

- economic aspects relating to a lack of appropriate materials and facilities in some contexts;
- administrative elements which include grading teachers, neglecting students' participation, and providing uncommunicative materials;
- cultural elements which are concerned with the beliefs about the teachers' and students' roles in some contexts;
- class size which deals with the number of students in the classroom;
- teachers' academic ability which refers to the required background, training and a positive attitude.

Having reviewed the studies about using CLT in different countries, it is now time to turn to the main objectives of the present research which are: (a) to examine the teachers' beliefs about: (1) CLT and its application in their own contexts and (2) the strengths and weaknesses of CLT with regard to the development of ICC and (b) to investigate students' opinions about their English classes concerning cultural and linguistic matters. In the next section, the method, settings, and participants used for conducting this study are presented in depth.



## Chapter 3

### Method

After reviewing the relevant literature and establishing the framework for the main concerns of the study, which are CLT and the development of ICC, and presenting theoretical and empirical explanations in the previous chapter, we are now ready to discuss the experiment conducted for this research on investigating the appropriateness of CLT and its cultural components. As a result, based on the objectives of the study, the proper instruments and methods for collecting and analyzing the data which were used in this work will be explained thoroughly in this section.

In addition to the above, the rationale underlying the presentation of the data will also be discussed to give an indication of how the information available was interpreted in an attempt to answer the questions posed in this study. In other words, the basis and nature of the research method and the procedures followed to document and analyze the data will be described fully in this part.

The following sections of this chapter will explain where the study was conducted, who the participants of the study were, what types of data were collected, what sources of data they were from, how they were gathered, and what instruments were used for data analysis.

#### **3.1. Setting**

As mentioned before, this work was carried out in four countries, i.e. Germany, Iran, the Netherlands, and Sweden at upper-secondary school level, with an age range of 15/16 to 18/19. This level was chosen in these countries since their educational systems are more or less the same at the upper-secondary school level. In this way, comparing the results of these countries regarding the scope of this work could be more feasible and logical. Moreover, considering the fact that secondary education in these countries has different school types, based on the aims, Gymnasium (Grammar School) in Germany, Dabirestan<sup>24</sup> (High School) in Iran, HAVO<sup>25</sup> (General Secondary Education) and VWO<sup>26</sup> (Pre-University Education) in the Netherlands, and Gymnasieskolan (Upper-Secondary School) in Sweden were selected in

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<sup>24</sup> دبیرستان

<sup>25</sup> hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs

<sup>26</sup> voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs



order to narrow down the scope of this study. In this part, some information about the educational system in each country as well as the reasons for choosing them will be presented.

### 3.1.1. Germany<sup>27</sup>

Germany is one of the European countries located in the west-central area of Europe. This country is among those with a long tradition in cultural teaching in the field of foreign or even first language teaching. This concern has been discussed in the history of language teaching in Germany with different terms such as *Realienkunde*, *Kulturkunde*, *Wesenskunde*, *Landeskunde*, and *Interkulturelles Lernen*. Each of these areas has referred to specific concepts in culture teaching (Risager, 2010, 2012). As a result, conducting a study with regard to the development of ICC, which is one of the main aims of foreign language teaching, especially ELT, would be really interesting in order to discover to what extent this issue is considered in the English language programs and methods used in German schools as well. Furthermore, since the present research was conducted in a university in Bavaria, Germany, collecting data and finding the subjects required in this state was also more feasible.

Germany consists of 16 different federal states. Each of these federal states has its own basic laws in order to determine the structure of the educational system in that specific state. Beside the states, there is still another organization which has an influential effect on the development of the German educational system; this organization is called the *Kultusministerkonferenz*, or Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs. The Kultusministerkonferenz is responsible for the development of the national *Bildungsstandards*, or national educational standards, based on different types of schools in Germany (Thaler, 2012).

In general, the educational system in Germany can be divided into five different categories: (1) early childhood education, (2) primary education, (3) secondary education, (4) tertiary education, and finally (5) continuing education. This classification can be easily seen in the following general structure:

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<sup>27</sup> This part was written based on a review of:  
<http://www.eures.ee/public/documents/0/Hariduss%C3%BCsteem%20Saksamaal%20inglise%20keeles.pdf>  
[http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/doc/Dokumentation/Bildungswesen\\_en\\_pdfs/dossier\\_en\\_ebook.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/doc/Dokumentation/Bildungswesen_en_pdfs/dossier_en_ebook.pdf)  
[ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/germany/docs/national-system-overview-de\\_en.pdf](ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/germany/docs/national-system-overview-de_en.pdf)  
[http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/doc/Dokumentation/Bildungswesen\\_en\\_pdfs/secondary.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/doc/Dokumentation/Bildungswesen_en_pdfs/secondary.pdf)

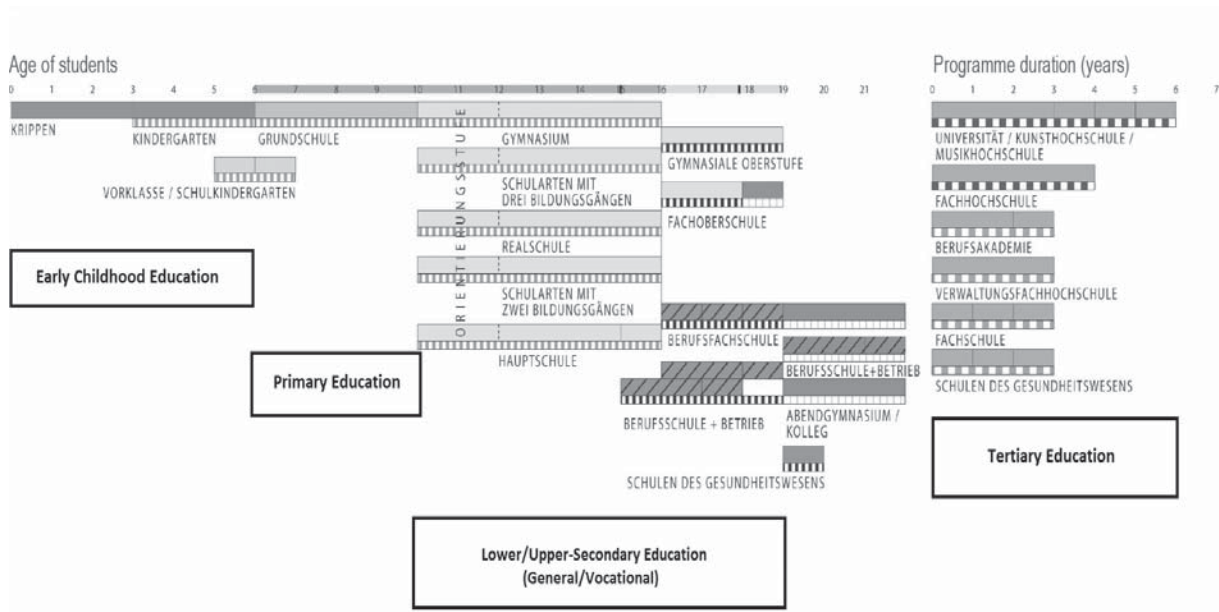


Figure 10. The structure of the educational system in Germany (Source: Eurydice)

As can be seen from this figure, the German educational system has the same national structure at elementary and primary levels; however, the structure of the secondary level (grades 5/7 to 12/13) in different states consists of various educational alternatives which are based on different school types, i.e. *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, *Gymnasium*, *Gesamtschule*, and *Schularten mit mehreren Bildungsgängen*. Each of these school types has its own qualifications and certificates. It should be mentioned that these school types can be different from state to state. For example, in Bavaria (Bayern) the school types are mostly *Gymnasium*, *Realschule*, and *Hauptschule*.

In Germany, primary education begins at the age of 6. All children must attend *Grundschule* (Primary School), so this level is obligatory for the pupils, and it includes grades 1 to 4. However, based on the regulations of different states, the grades can be varied. After finishing the primary school, pupils enter different school types at the secondary school level based on their parents' or the schools' decisions with regard to their abilities and interests. Secondary education in each type of school is divided into two levels: lower-secondary level (Sekundarstufe I) from grades 5/7 to 9/10 of school, and upper-secondary level (Sekundarstufe II) from grades 10/11 to 12/13. The age range at lower-secondary level is between 10 and 15/16, while at upper-secondary level it is between 15/16 and 18/19. At the tertiary level, students who wish to continue their studies and gain a higher education certifi-



icate can enter three different institutions: (a) Universitäten (universities), Technische Hochschulen/Technische Universitäten (technical universities), Pädagogische Hochschulen (colleges of education), Theologische Hochschulen (colleges of theological sciences), (b) Kunsthochschulen and Musikhochschulen (colleges of art and music), and (c) Fachhochschulen (universities of applied science).

As mentioned earlier in this section, the present study was carried out at the Gymnasium or high school level in each country; therefore, in this part, some explanations concerning this school type in Germany is provided.

In Germany, Gymnasium is one of the school types in secondary education which, like other school types, is divided into two categories: lower- and upper-secondary levels. The focus of this work is on the second level, which is upper-secondary. The main goal at the upper level of the *Gymnasium* is to attain the *Allgemeine Hochschulreife* (general qualification for university entrance); thus, the *gymnasiale Oberstufe* (upper-secondary level of Gymnasium) tries to prepare students for academic studies at the universities. It focuses on the development of students' knowledge, skills and competences in the compulsory subjects of German, foreign language and mathematics as well as optional subjects like geography, history, music, etc., depending on the students' selected profile. It therefore has a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary perspective which aims at "an education which facilitates the development and strengthening of personality, the shaping of a socially responsible life, and participation in democratic society."<sup>28</sup>

In some federal states of Germany like Bayern, which is the setting of the present research in Germany, students can enter higher education after 12 years of education; as a result, Gymnasium consists of 8 years in these states, and grades 10 to 12 are considered as the upper-secondary school level. At this level, students are instructed based on three main areas:

1. languages, literature and the arts (e.g. German, foreign languages, fine art, music)
2. social sciences (e.g. history, geography, philosophy, social studies/politics, economics)
3. mathematics, natural sciences and technology (e.g. mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, information technology)<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/doc/Dokumentation/Bildungswesen\\_en\\_pdfs/dossier\\_en\\_ebook.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/doc/Dokumentation/Bildungswesen_en_pdfs/dossier_en_ebook.pdf) (p. 114)

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/doc/Dokumentation/Bildungswesen\\_en\\_pdfs/secondary.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/doc/Dokumentation/Bildungswesen_en_pdfs/secondary.pdf) (p. 128)





Each student has to study all subjects included in these three areas to finish the upper level of the *Gymnasium* and to pass *Abitur* (final secondary school examinations) which has a unified examination standards across Germany. Regarding the area of language, students should take two foreign language courses, one of which is usually English. These courses are taught at least three periods of 45 minutes once a week. The focuses of teaching and learning in this area are to foster “in-depth intercultural understanding, to develop written language in terms of competences involving different text types, and to promote oral discourse abilities and language awareness.”<sup>30</sup> These competences are determined by national educational standards as well as each federal state ministry of education and try to help the pupils reach level B2 in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), which will be discussed in section 3.1.4 in detail.

### **3.1.2. The Netherlands<sup>31</sup>**

Like Germany, the Netherlands is one of the European countries located in Western Europe. According to the Education First (EF) English Proficiency Index in 2011 (see Figure 11), which examines about 1.7 million people across 60 countries, outside Scandinavian countries the Netherlands is one of the countries in Western Europe with the highest level of proficiency in English, coming third in the ranking behind Sweden and Denmark. This issue makes the present study more interesting since there are just a few international studies about ELT and its success in this country, so it was an opportunity to investigate the status of CLT as well as ICC in Dutch school classes in terms of ELT considering the focus of this research.

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<sup>30</sup> [http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/doc/Dokumentation/Bildungswesen\\_en\\_pdfs/secondary.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/doc/Dokumentation/Bildungswesen_en_pdfs/secondary.pdf) (p. 130-131)

<sup>31</sup> This part was written based on a review of:

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurydia\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurydia_en.php)

<http://www.eucim-te.eu/data/eso27/File/Material/Needs%20Analysis%20Report%20Netherlands.pdf>

[http://www.mzes.uni-](http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/publications/misc/isced_97/luij08_the_educational_system_of_the_netherlands.pdf)

[mannheim.de/publications/misc/isced\\_97/luij08\\_the\\_educational\\_system\\_of\\_the\\_netherlands.pdf](http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/publications/misc/isced_97/luij08_the_educational_system_of_the_netherlands.pdf)

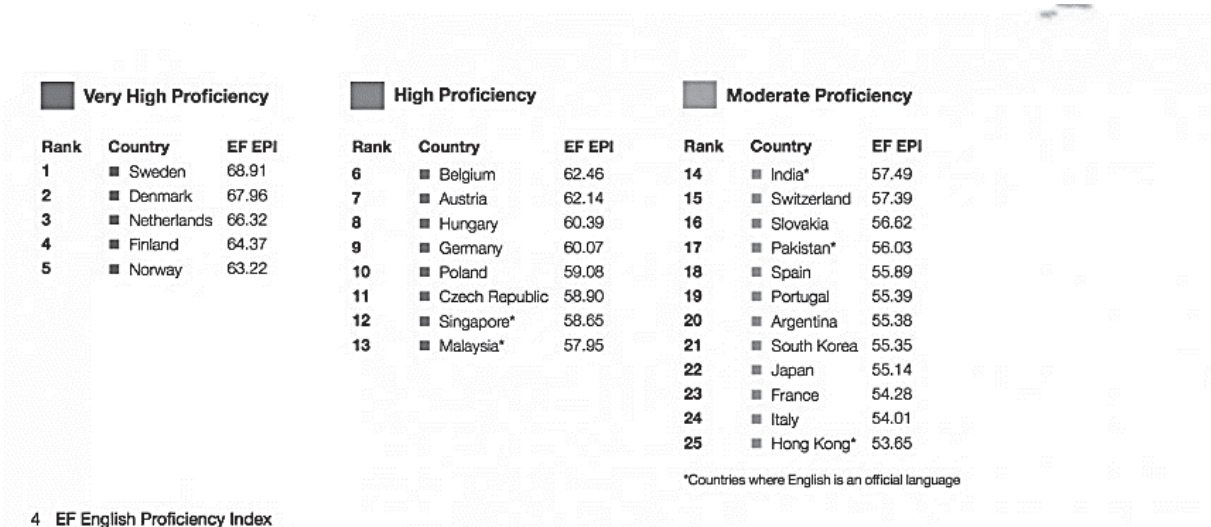


Figure 11. EF proficiency index in 2011 (Source: [www.ef.com/epi](http://www.ef.com/epi))

In general, the executive and legislative structure in the Netherlands has three important sections: National government, Provincial government, and Municipal government. This country consists of 12 different provinces which are ruled by a Provincial Council. The government is made up of parliament (the States General), the monarch and government ministers. In the Netherlands, the State, specifically the Minister of Education, Culture and Science along with the State Secretary (junior minister) for Education, Culture and Science, is generally responsible for the education system. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science sets legislative requirements for early childhood education, primary and secondary education, and secondary vocational education, and supervises adult general secondary education. The government manages the framework of higher education institutions (higher professional education and universities); however, the management of each institution lays down rules based on the government framework in the teaching and examination regulations. The provincial government just administers the legal tasks, so the administration and control of primary and secondary schools and schools for secondary vocational education is locally structured.

Both types of schools, i.e. state and private, can be found in this country, and some of them work based on special teaching methods, such as the Montessori, Dalton, Freinet or Jena Plan (Eurydice, 2008/9: 23). "The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science does however set quality standards which apply to both public and private education and prescribe the subjects to be studied, the attainment targets or examination syllabuses and the content



of national examinations, the number of teaching periods per year, the qualifications which teachers are required to have, giving parents and pupils a say in school matters, planning and reporting obligations, and so on.”<sup>32</sup> In the following figure, the general educational system in the Netherlands is presented in detail.

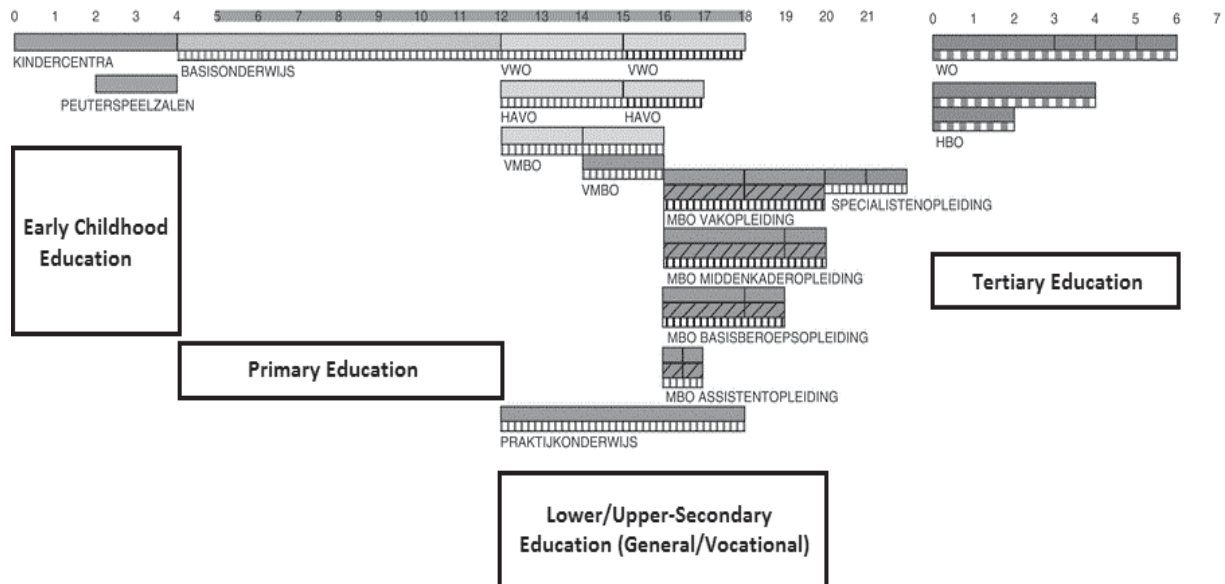


Figure 12. The structure of the educational system in the Netherlands (Source: Eurydice)

According to law, children must attend primary schools at the age of 5. After 8 years of study in primary education, students can select between three types of secondary education, i.e. “VMBO (pre-vocational secondary education, voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs: four years), HAVO (senior general secondary education, hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs: five years), and finally VWO (pre-university education, voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs: six years).”<sup>33</sup> All of these secondary education types are divided into two levels: lower (the first 2 years of VMBO and the first 3 years of HAVO and VWO) and upper (the 3rd and 4th years of VMBO, the 4th and 5th years of HAVO and the 4th, 5th and 6th years of VWO). The upper levels of HAVO and VWO are called pre-higher education as well. The main aim in these types of secondary schools is to turn students into independent learners. As mentioned earlier, HAVO includes five years of study, and the age range of students at this level is from 12 to 17. HAVO equips the students for attending higher profes-

<sup>32</sup> [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurypedia\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurypedia_en.php) (p. 24)

<sup>33</sup> [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurypedia\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurypedia_en.php) (p. 25-26)



sional education. VWO lasts six years for the students from 12 to 18. VWO has three different types of schools: “the ‘atheneum’, the ‘gymnasium’ (where Greek and Latin are compulsory) and the ‘lyceum’ (a combination of ‘atheneum’ and ‘gymnasium’). VWO prepares pupils for university.”<sup>34</sup>

Generally, at the lower levels of secondary education, pupils take some general courses without any specializations. However, at the upper level, especially in the case of HAVO and VWO, which are the focuses in this study, students must select one of the four subjects of: culture and society, economics and society, science and health, and science and technology. Foreign language teaching, especially ELT, was among the common components in each of these four areas.

In the Netherlands, schools are free to choose their own textbooks and methods, and as mentioned before, at the upper-secondary level the aim is to make the students active in the process of learning through independent study. At the end of the upper-secondary level, students have to take part in two types of tests: a school examination (schoolexamen) and a national examination (centraal examen). The components of these two tests are determined by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, and schools should carry out the school exam themselves. After passing these examinations, students get their certificates and become ready to enter the universities.

### **3.1.3. Sweden<sup>35</sup>**

Sweden is one of the Scandinavian countries in Northern Europe, which generally have a high level of proficiency in English (see Figure 11). Some authors even believe that English can nearly be considered as a second official language in Sweden, so in this case English is not used only in international exchanges but rather as a kind of language for everyday communication (McKay, 2002: 10-11). This highlights the important role of English, which influences English language learning and teaching in this country. Therefore, it was rather interesting to know what methods or approaches (especially with regard to CLT) are used to teach this language in the Swedish teaching program and how intercultural issues are considered in teaching English in this country, where English has a prevailing place in the society. Another important fact with regard to the selection of Sweden and the Netherlands is

<sup>34</sup> [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurydice\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurydice_en.php) (p. 82)

<sup>35</sup> This part was written based on a review of:  
<http://estudandoeducacao.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/suc3a9cia.pdf>  
<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Sweden:Overview>



that although both of these countries have high level of proficiency in English, the findings of a study by De Bot, et al. (2005, as cited in Verspoor & Cremer, 2008) investigating factors influencing the English proficiency of 11,000 secondary school pupils in Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Sweden reveal that “as far as teaching approaches is concerned, the Netherlands differs considerably from the other countries [in that] frontal teaching is most prominent and 87% of pupils indicate that they never or rarely work in groups” (Verspoor & Cremer, 2008: 190). Considering this issue, the comparison between these two countries with regard to using CLT can be very interesting.

Sweden consists of three main states, i.e. Götaland, Svealand, and Norrland. These states are divided into 25 different provinces. The Government includes the Prime Minister and the selected ministers. According to the law, the Ministry of Education and Research and the central agencies related to it, i.e. the Swedish National Agency for Education, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education etc., are generally responsible for central management of the Swedish educational system. However, Sweden has about 290 municipalities which also manage and supervise schools at primary and secondary level and adult education.

The educational system in Sweden covers pre-school (förskolan) for children under the age of 6, pre-school class (förskoleklass) for six-year olds, compulsory school (grundskolan), upper-secondary school (gymnasieskolan) education, and tertiary education in Higher Education Institutions, i.e. universities (universitet) and university colleges (högskola). Figure 13 shows the educational system in Sweden clearly.

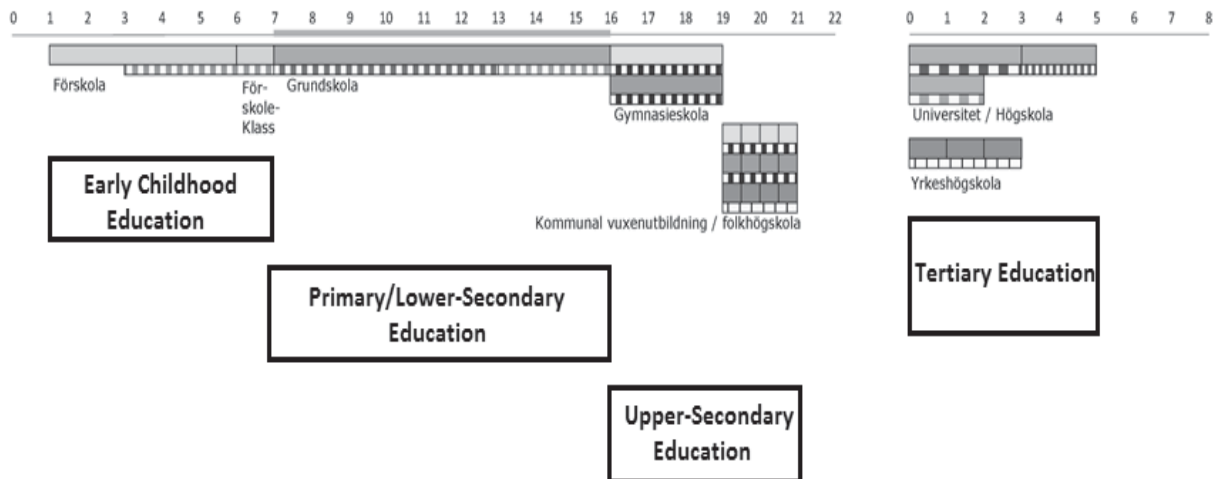


Figure 13. The structure of the educational system in Sweden (Source: Eurydice)

In Sweden, children can enter school at compulsory level at the age of 7, but it is not obligatory to start the school at this age, and pupils can enter school at the age of 6 to 8 based on their parents' decisions. During this period, pupils are instructed according to the same curriculum, timetable, and syllabi nation-wide, which cover subjects like art, craft, English, home and consumer studies, language options, mathematics, music, physical education and health, Swedish/Swedish as a second language, geography, history, religion, social studies, biology, chemistry, technology, and physics. Among these subjects, Swedish, English, and mathematics have an important place in compulsory school. After 9 years of study at the compulsory level, students enter upper-secondary school education. Thus, at this level students are between 16 to 19 years old. "There are 17 national programs in the upper-secondary school. All the upper-secondary school programs are designed around the same eight compulsory subjects (called core subjects): Swedish/Swedish as a second language, English, mathematics, civics, religion, science studies, physical education and health, and artistic activities. In addition to these, pupils study program specific subjects."<sup>36</sup> Thus, among foreign languages English clearly has a special place in education and society, and it is not possible to enter a national or specific program in the upper-secondary school without obtaining a pass grade in English from the compulsory school. This importance is felt in the upper-secondary school as well, where English is one of the compulsory subjects and all pupils

<sup>36</sup> <http://estudandoeducacao.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/suc3a9cia.pdf> (p. 98)



have to study English extensively regardless of their study program. There are also certain types of schools which provide all subjects in English.

It should be mentioned that both vocational and general upper-secondary education is provided in the same institutions. The government passes laws regarding the contents of each national program, examination goals, etc. As a result, everything in upper-secondary education is determined at the national level. “The upper secondary school, based on the compulsory school shall deepen and develop pupil’s knowledge as preparation for working life or studies at Higher Education Institutions. It shall also be a preparation for adult life as a member of society taking responsibility for one’s own life.”<sup>37</sup>

Before addressing the educational system in the last country, which is an Asian one, it is necessary to talk about the Council of Europe and its language policies, which are very influential in the educational systems as well as curricula, syllabi, teaching methods, materials, etc. across Europe.

#### **3.1.4. The Council of Europe and its Language Policies**

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due to the changes in European societies and the increase of migration to Europe, there was a need for the development of social cohesion in Europe and the understanding of other people with, evidently, different cultures and languages. As a result, people needed to be prepared to interact and communicate with one another appropriately, and this was achieved by having a sufficient knowledge of a language in order to contact others. Against this background, the Council of Europe initiated several language projects under the auspices of The Language Policy Division to analyze the European states in terms of their language needs. One of the main results of these projects is the introduction of *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*, referring to the outcomes of the previous project, i.e. Language Learning for European Citizenship, which was carried out in the period 1989-1996. This led to the introduction of the concepts of socio-cultural and intercultural competence and intercultural speaker. The dominant figures in such projects were Byram, Zarate, and Neuner (Risager, 2007) as well as the authors of the CEFR, i.e. Trim, Coste, North, Sheils, and Schneider. The CEFR was firstly published by the Council of Europe in 1996 and then was improved in 2001.

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<sup>37</sup> <http://estudandoeducacao.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/suc3a9cia.pdf> (p. 107)



In fact, the CEFR can be described as “a common reference for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe.” It characterizes the skills, knowledge, and competences that language learners should acquire in order to be able to use a language for communication and to act effectively. Furthermore, the CEFR determines levels of proficiency against which learners’ progress can be assessed at each phase of learning. This common source for the determination of goals, teaching methods, contents, etc. will make the structure of courses, syllabuses, and qualifications, clearer and, as a result, encourage “international cooperation in the field of modern languages.” This clear description of levels will also “facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications gained in different learning contexts, and accordingly will aid European mobility” (Council of Europe, 2001: 1).

The CEFR is in line with the general objective of the Council of Europe “to achieve greater unity among its members” and to follow this aim “by the adoption of common action in the cultural field” (Council of Europe, 2001: 2). Thus, it follows three basic principles of Council of Europe language policy:

- that the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed, and that a major educational effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding.
- that it is only through a better knowledge of European modern languages that it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues in order to promote European mobility, mutual understanding and cooperation, and overcome prejudice and discrimination.
- that member states, when adopting or developing national policies in the field of modern language learning and teaching, may achieve greater convergence at the European level by means of appropriate arrangements for ongoing cooperation and coordination of policies (Council of Europe, 2001: 2).

Along these lines, the main aim is to pay much more attention to the preservation of “linguistic and cultural diversity” and to promote language learning as a kind of tool for maintaining “linguistic and cultural identity”, developing “communication and mutual understanding,” and fighting against prejudice and chauvinism (Little, 2008: 1). Consequently, the final aim of language teaching is no longer to attain a native-like proficiency in one, two, or





three languages considering the NS as an ideal model, but rather “to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place. This implies, of course, that the languages offered in educational institutions should be diversified and students given the opportunity to develop a plurilingual competence” (Council of Europe, 2001: 5).

In agreement with the Council of Europe’s main aims, the CEFR gives a significant importance to the plurilingualism of the individual, which it differentiates from the multilingualism relating to geographical areas. “A plurilingual repertoire comprises the language variety referred to as ‘mother tongue’ or ‘first language’ and any number of other languages or varieties learned to any level of proficiency” (Little, 2008: 2). The Council of Europe (2001: 168) describes this plurilingual competence as ...

The ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures.

In this sense, the Council of Europe stresses the consideration and improvement of the individuals’ ability to learn and speak several languages. The objective is to encourage “linguistic sensitivity and cultural understanding as a basis for democratic citizenship” (Little, 2008: 3).

The CEFR consists of three bands, each of which is divided into two sub-levels; consequently, it has six different levels of language proficiency for language learners. Figure 14 represents these levels clearly.

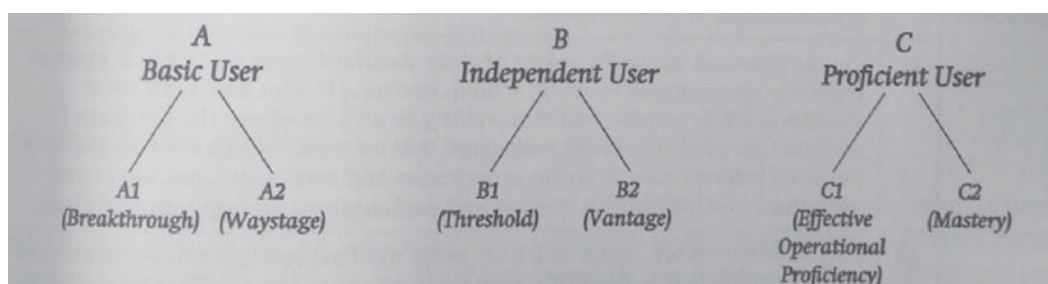


Figure 14. Levels of language proficiency based on the CEFR (Source: Council of Europe, 2001: 23)

Based on this framework, learners use language appropriately and competently when they can obtain the required abilities, skills, and competences. The abilities of the learners at each level are presented in the form of can-do statements. The CEFR focuses on two types of competences: Communicative Language Competences, referring to the consideration of CLT principles in language teaching, and General Competences, relating to the intercultural aspect of language education.



1. Communicative language competences
  - Linguistic competences (lexical, grammatical, semantic, phonological, orthographic, orthopedic)
  - Sociolinguistic competences (linguistic markers of social relations, politeness conventions, expressions of folk wisdom, register differences, dialect and accent)
  - Pragmatic competences (discourse competence, functional competence)
2. General competences
  - Declarative knowledge (savoir) (knowledge of the world, socio-cultural knowledge, intercultural awareness)
  - Skills and know-how (savoir-faire) (practical skills and know-how, intercultural skills and know-how)
  - 'Existential' competence (savoir-être) (attitudes, motivations, values, beliefs, cognitive styles, personality factors)
  - Ability to learn (savoir-apprendre) (language and communication awareness, general phonetic awareness and skills, study skills, heuristic skills) (Council of Europe, 2001: 101-130)

The general competences refer to the development of intercultural competence, which is one of the major objectives of the Council of Europe and therefore the CEFR. The CEFR is certainly concerned with IC and introduces the concept of intercultural awareness, which is described as ...

Knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the 'world of origin' and the 'world of the target community' produce an intercultural awareness. It is, of course, important to note that intercultural awareness includes an awareness of the regional and social diversity of both worlds. It is also enriched by awareness of a wider range of cultures than those carried by the learner's L1 and L2. This wider awareness helps to place both in context. In addition to objective knowledge, intercultural awareness covers awareness of how each community appears from the perspective of the other, often in the form of national stereotypes (Council of Europe, 2001: 103).

Within this framework, learners become interculturally skilled when they have ...

- the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other;
- cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures;



- the capacity to fulfill the role of cultural intermediary between one's own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations;
- the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships (Council of Europe, 2001: 104).

As mentioned above, the CEFR has had a great impact on the educational systems of European countries in terms of contents, syllabuses, examinations, materials, teaching methods, etc.; thus, the educational systems of the aforementioned European target countries, i.e. Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden are also under the influence of this framework. The scholars of these countries try to bring their foreign language educational system into harmony with the criteria of this common reference in order to accomplish the language policy in Europe, which is to make European citizens trilingual individuals who can speak two other languages besides their mother tongue (Council of Europe, 2001; see also Müller-Hartmann & Schoker-v. Ditzfurth, 2009; Thaler, 2012). A comparative study among these countries can therefore be really interesting in order to discover to what extent these countries integrate the requirements into their educational systems in order to achieve the ultimate goal of the CEFR, which is to make the learners interculturally and communicatively competent.

### **3.1.5. Iran<sup>38</sup>**

The last target country discussed in this section is Iran, which is one of the Asian countries in western Asia, in the Middle East. Given that the focus of this comparative study is on culture, it was thought that as an Asian country with a different cultural and educational system, Iran could contribute interesting results for this work. Moreover, being the home country of the researcher, needless to say the running of the present research could be more feasible in this country, due to the familiarity of the researcher with the Iranian educational system and culture.

Iran has 31 provinces which are directed under the control of the central Government. The Government, which comprises the president and the appointed ministers, controls the financing and management of primary and secondary education via the Ministry of Educa-

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<sup>38</sup> This part was written based on a review of:  
<http://wenr.wes.org/2013/04/wenr-april-2013-an-overview-of-education-in-iran/>  
<http://www.iran-embassy-oslo.no/embassy/educat.htm>  
<http://www.medu.ir/Portal/Home/>  
<http://www.roshd.ir/mainpage/others/news/sanad.pdf>



tion. In line with the Ministry of Education, the educational system at the local level is also administered through the provincial agencies and the regional organizations.

“The Ministry of Education supervises national examinations, monitors standards, organizes teacher training, develops curricula and educational materials, and builds and maintains schools; however, the Supreme Council of Education is the legislative body that approves all education-related policies and regulations.”<sup>39</sup>

Figure 15 indicates the structure of Iranian educational system.

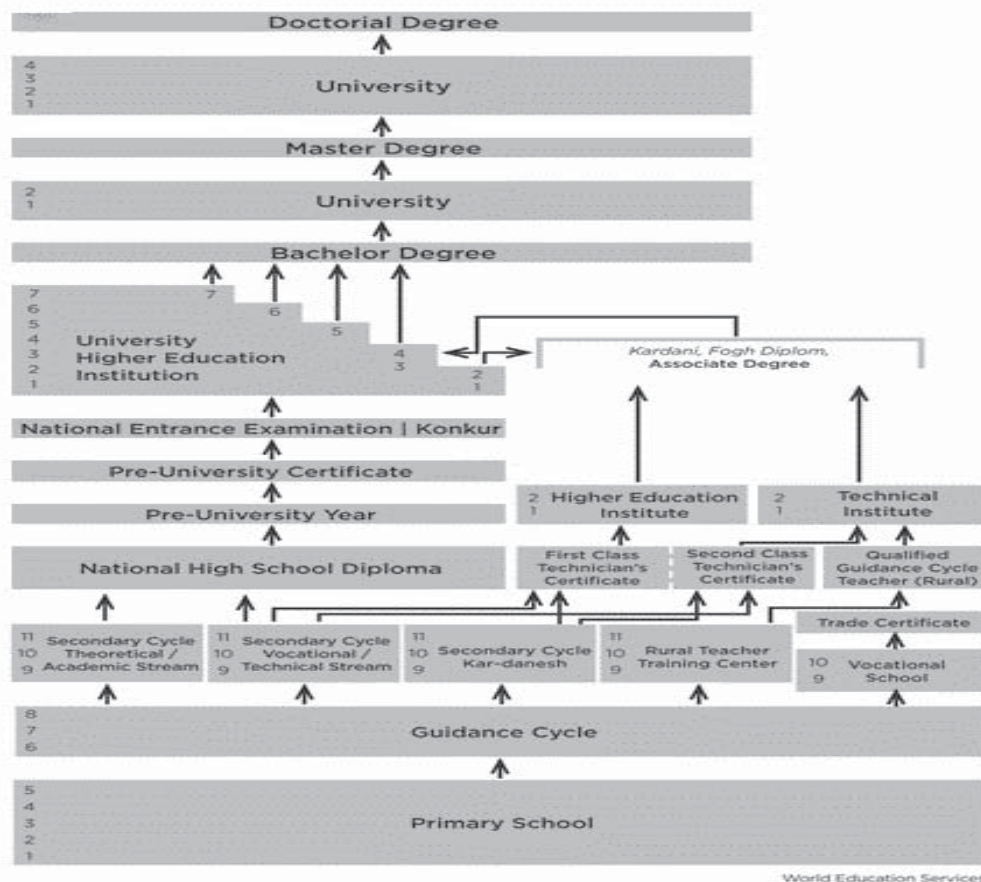


Figure 15. The structure of the educational system in Iran (Source: World Education Service)

Before starting compulsory education, children can attend a one-year program in the pre-school cycle (Pishdabestan<sup>40</sup>) at the age of 5 in order to get ready to enter the primary cycle (Dabestan<sup>41</sup>). Primary school in the Iranian educational system is free of charge and obligato-

<sup>39</sup> <http://wenr.wes.org/2013/04/wenr-april-2013-an-overview-of-education-in-iran/>

<sup>40</sup> پیش دبستان

<sup>41</sup> دبستان



ry, and lasts about 5 years.<sup>42</sup> In this phase, pupils have to pass the school exams in each grade in order to enter the next one, and at the end of the final grade, i.e. grade 5, students take regional examinations in order to get the certificate to start the next cycle, which is the middle or guidance cycle (Rahnama-ii<sup>43</sup>). At this level, which takes about three years, students are equipped with general education, and they become ready to decide about continuing their education in three branches of academic, technical, and vocational/skills in the next cycle. English as the obligatory first foreign language is taught from the first grade of guidance education. At the end of guidance cycle, students participate in a regional examination administered by provincial boards of education. The successful students can proceed to the next, i.e. secondary cycle (Dabirestan<sup>44</sup>). Secondary education consists of three years of study. National and provincial examinations are carried out at the end of each grade throughout the secondary cycle. After finishing the secondary cycle, students are awarded the high school diploma. Those secondary graduates who are interested in higher education have to study one preparatory year, i.e. a pre-university year (Pishdaneshgahi<sup>45</sup>) in order to be allowed to take part in the university entrance examination called Konkur<sup>46</sup>. The students who pass this national examination get permission to enter the universities.

Generally speaking, the aim of teaching foreign languages in the Iranian education system is to develop the students' abilities in four areas of skills and competences (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) and to make them familiar with the required words and structures in order to communicate internationally. The focus of culture teaching is mainly on the local culture of the students.<sup>47</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the focus of this work is on examining the status of CLT regarding the development of ICC at the upper-secondary school level covering the three last grades before entering the universities. However, CLT is not applied as a method of teaching a FL at Iranian schools; therefore, the present research was conducted in English language institutes where CLT is used as the method of teaching. These institutes are also under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, but they are free to choose their teaching methods and materi-

<sup>42</sup> However, since October 2013, the educational system has been changed gradually. Now the primary cycle has six years, and the secondary education has been divided into two levels of lower and upper. Since at the time of running this research, the system was still the old one, in this part the old educational system is presented.

<sup>43</sup> راهنمایی

<sup>44</sup> دبیرستان

<sup>45</sup> پیش دانشگاهی

<sup>46</sup> کنکور

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.roshd.ir/mainpage/others/news/sanad.pdf>



als. It should be mentioned that in order to achieve homogeneous results among the participating schools in these countries, the age range of the students and their grades were taken into consideration in collecting data from Iranian English institutes. In other words, this study was run in those classes whose learners were studying at upper-secondary school level.

### 3.2. Participants

According to Table 4, a total of 14 schools and institutes participated in the present work based on their willingness and interest. As a result, there were no specific criteria or randomizations to choose these institutions. They were mostly located in major cities and their suburbs:

- Iran → Tehran, Damavand, and Ray
- Sweden → Stockholm and Uppsala
- Germany → Munich and Augsburg
- Netherlands → Amsterdam, Zaandam, and Zoetermeer

Schools	Iran	Sweden	Netherlands	Germany
14	4	4	3	3

Table 4. Number of schools in each country

The subjects of this study consisted of German, Dutch, Swedish, and Iranian teachers and students who were teaching and studying at the upper-secondary level in the participating schools of their own countries. The age range of students was between 15/16 and 18/19 years old. Tables 5 and 6 indicate the number of participants in each country.

Teacher	Iran	Sweden	Holland	Germany
83	41	15	7	20
F= 52	F=24	F=10	F=5	F=13
M=31	M=17	M=5	M=2	M=7

Table 5. Number of teachers in each country



Students	Iran	Sweden	Holland	Germany
1049	133	410	228	278
F=580	F=78	F=228	F=101	F=173
M=469	M=55	M=182	M=127	M=105

Table 6. Number of students in each country

The selection of these subjects was without any randomization, so they were chosen naturally from different classes at their schools. In other words, teachers who were interested in taking part in this research were asked to conduct the survey among their students based on their time and school regulations. In this sense, the present research has a convenience or opportunity sampling system “where an important criterion of sample selection is the convenience to and resources of the researcher” (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012: 81). Thus, the participants were chosen naturally from different classes at their schools based on their availability and accessibility. Selection was made simply on the basis of teachers’ interests and agreements in taking part in the work. The teachers were mostly non-native speakers of English that had different years of experience in language teaching. There was only one native speaker, who taught English at one of the Swedish schools.

### **3.3. Research design**

In this part, in order to clarify the structure and design of the research, two important concepts will be presented and described clearly in different sub-sections. One refers to the framework upon which the study relies, i.e. subjective theories, and the other deals with the design of the study which is a mixed method one.

#### **3.3.1. Subjective Theories**

As mentioned earlier (see Chapter 1), the opinions and beliefs of teachers can have a crucial effect on the way they teach and implement methods in the classroom. To interpret the concept of teachers’ beliefs, it is necessary to define this term first. According to Borg (2001), four aspects should be taken into account when defining beliefs: (1) we should understand this concept in comparison to knowledge, (2) we should consider the relationship between beliefs and behavior, (3) we should differentiate between conscious and uncon-



scious beliefs, and finally (4) we should see beliefs as a kind of value commitment. Based on these aspects, Borg describes a belief as “a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior” (Borg, 2001: 186). As a result, teachers’ beliefs can naturally affect the teachers’ didactic opinions, thoughts, and principles since they are “active, thinking decision makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs” (Borg, 2003); one of the main research areas which focuses on this issue is teachers’ beliefs in language teaching and learning (Batak & Andersson, 2009). Figure 16 indicates a graphic conceptualization of teaching in which teachers’ beliefs, thoughts, and knowledge—or cognition according to Borg (2003)—play a crucial role in teachers’ professional lives. This figure clarifies how important the effect of teacher’s beliefs, thoughts, and knowledge on teachers’ professional lives is.

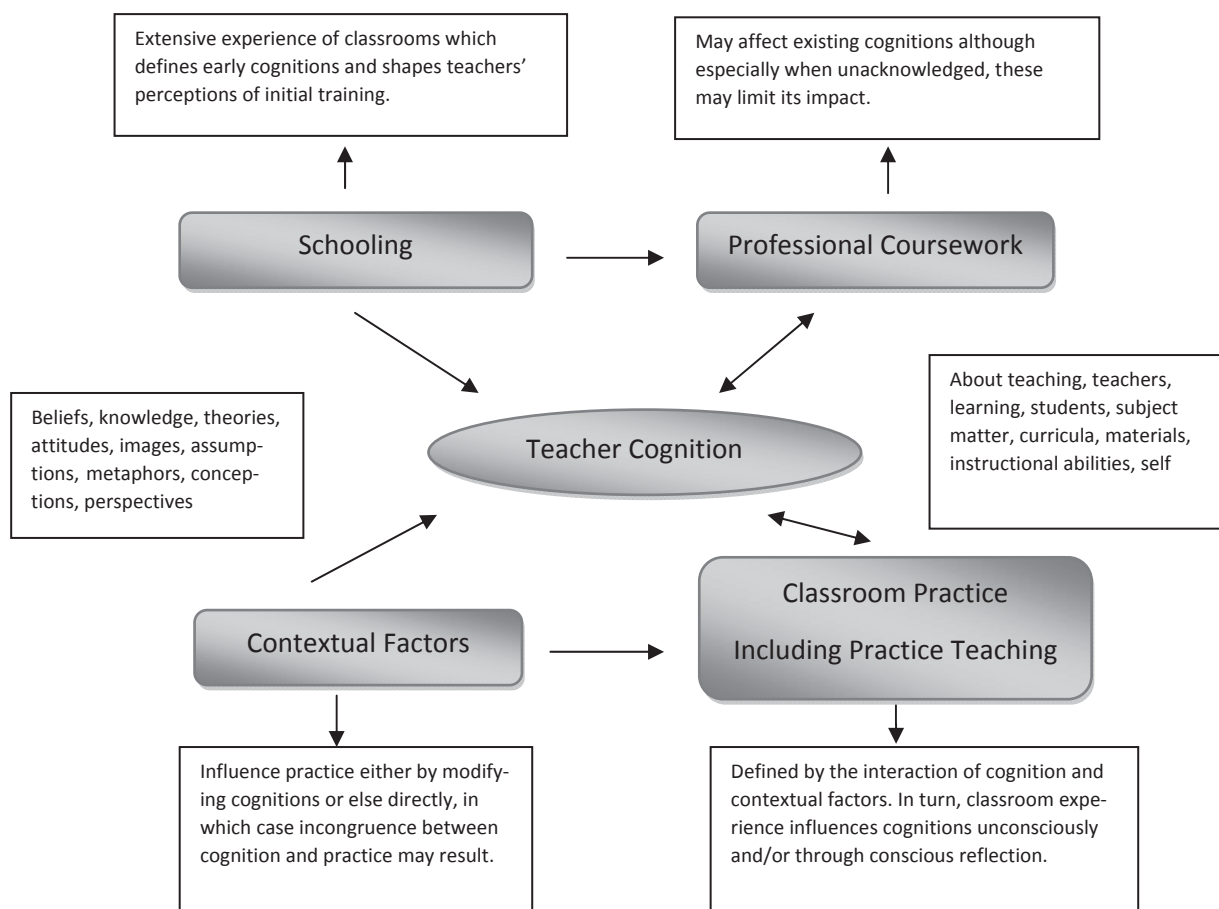


Figure 16. Teacher cognition, schooling, professional education, and classroom practice (source: Borg, 2003)





The role of beliefs in individuals' lives has also been clarified by German writers with a concept called *Subjektive Theorien* (Subjective Theories), which is mostly known as Beliefs by English speaking authors. Subjective theories „beschreiben kognitive Strukturen einer Person und nehmen Einfluss auf ihr Verhalten. Diese kognitiven Strukturen umfassen Wissensbestände, aber auch Annahmen oder Sichtweisen, die einer Person Orientierung im alltäglichen Leben geben“<sup>48</sup> (Fussangel, 2008: 69). Thus, a person's subjective theories consist of assumptions about how oneself as well as others think, feel, and act. They relate to domains of knowledge that provide an orientation for a person by explaining the behavior of oneself and other people (Mandl & Huber, 1983; Dann, 1994; Scheele & Groeben, 1998). This implies that such theories contain (perhaps implicitly) argumentational structures which can be used to evaluate situations or people and can significantly influence the person's behavior. Using such theories, people form and reject hypotheses and develop concepts and cognitive schemata. These internal processes and structures can control their actions (Schlee, 1988; Fussangel, 2008). In this sense, the person is not aware of these implicit assumptions that help to explain behaviors or situations. However, these kinds of subjective theories can be reconstructed and updated using different kinds of methods for collecting data like interviews (Fussangel, 2008; Groeben, 1988; Christmann, Groeben, & Schreier, 1999). Therefore, they can be considered as a central tool “for the explanation and prediction of human action and thinking” (Grotjahn, 1991: 187).

Dann (1990: 166-167) defines subjective theories in five concepts:

- Subjektive Theorien stellen relativ stabile Kognitionen dar, die aber durch Erfahrung veränderbar sind.
- Subjektive Theorien sind teilweise implizit, teilweise aber dem Bewusstsein des Handelnden Person zugänglich, so dass er darüber berichten kann.
- Subjektive Theorien besitzen ähnliche strukturelle Eigenschaften wie wissenschaftliche Theorien. Insbesondere enthalten sie eine zumindest implizite Argumentationsstruktur, wodurch Schlussverfahren ermöglicht werden.
- Analog [zu] wissenschaftlichen Theorien erfüllen Subjektive Theorien die Funktionen (a) der Situationsdefinition i.S. einer Realitätskonstituierung, (b) der nachträglichen Erklärung eingetretener Ereignisse, (c) der Vorhersage zukünftiger Ereignisse, (d) der

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<sup>48</sup> describe cognitive structures of a person and influence their behavior. These cognitive structures include stocks of knowledge, assumptions, or perspectives that provide an orientation for everyday life (My own Translation).



Generierung von Handlungsentwürfen oder Handlungsempfehlungen zur Herbeiführung erwünschter oder zur Vermeidung unerwünschter Ereignisse.

- Über die Funktionen wissenschaftlicher Theorien hinaus kommt Subjektiven Theorien eine handlungsleitende oder handlungssteuernde Funktion zu ... zusammen mit anderen (z.B. emotionalen) Faktoren beeinflussen sie so das beobachtbare Verhalten im Rahmen zielgerichteten Handelns.<sup>49</sup>

Likewise, Groeben et al. (1988) classify these five dimensions as „weite Begriffsvariante“(broad sense) of subjective theories. However, they consider another definition or „engere Variante“(narrow sense) for subjective theories referring to such complex perceptions of self and the world that can be updated and reconstructed through a dialogue-consensus. In addition, they claim that the broad aspect of subjective theories can be reconstructed in different ways, especially in terms of the relationship between the teachers and students and their beliefs:

- self-conception of teachers and students;
- personality traits of teachers and students from their own and each others' perspective;
- teachers' behavior and students' behavior from their own and each others' perspective;
- teachers' and students' subjective theories of instruction, subject matter, and similar topics;
- classroom situations, social climate, institutional and organizational environment, and so forth, as perceived by students and teachers;
- conceptions of the goals and effects of one's own actions; and
- explanation of students' performance given by the student, teacher, or parents (Groeben, 1988: 20, Grotjahn's translation, 1991: 192).

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<sup>49</sup> • Subjective theories are relatively stable cognitive structures which can be changed through experience.  
 • Subjective theories are partly implicit and partly explicit; thus, they can sometimes be accessible and the person can report about them.  
 • Subjective theories have similar structural characteristics to scientific theories. In particular, they contain at least an implicit argumentational structure which allows for inferences.  
 • Like scientific theories, subjective theories have the functions: (a) of defining the situation (i.e. a constitution of reality), (b) explaining events, (c) predicting future events, (d) producing action drafts or recommendations in order to realize desired events or to avoid undesirable ones.  
 • Unlike scientific theories, subjective theories additionally have the function of guiding and controlling action ... together with other (e.g. emotional) factors, they influence observable behavior in the context of purposeful action (My own translation).



The aforementioned concepts have been investigated and clarified by different writers in various fields (e.g. Mandl & Huber, 1983; Koch-Priewe, 1986; Grotjahn, 1991; Calderhead, 1996; Richardson, 1996; Oomen-Welke, 2000; Blömeke, Eichler, & Müller, 2003; Götz & Frenze, 2006), especially with regard to teachers' behaviors since, as Fussangel (2008: 74) states ...

Die Beliefs bzw. Subjektiven Theorien einer Lehrperson stellen somit eine Form des professionellen Expertenwissens dar, auf dessen Grundlage alltägliche Entscheidungen über einzelne Unterrichtselemente, über Aufgaben, über das angemessene Verhalten angesichts eines störenden Schülers oder über die richtige Reaktion auf die Anfrage eines Kollegen getroffen werden.<sup>50</sup>

In other words, as Dann (1994: 173) suggests: „Subjektive Theorien [erfüllen] wichtige Funktionen bei der Handlungsregulation.“<sup>51</sup> These theories have been also examined in the field of language teaching and learning (e.g. Pienemann, 1987; Stone, 1992; Richards & Freeman, 1993; Levin & He, 2008). Since the present work focuses on teachers' and students' beliefs about a specific teaching method and its cultural elements, it can be concluded that the framework of this study is based on the investigation and analysis of teachers' and students' subjective theories about Communicative Language Teaching and its cultural appropriateness.

### **3.3.2. Mixed Method Approach**

The method used in the present study for data collection is a kind of mixed method approach which comprises the features of both qualitative and quantitative methods “within or across the stages of the research process” (Driscoll et al., 2007: 20). This kind of approach or method is defined as ...

Research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007: 4).

In other words, the design of the study is a mixed method one referring to “all procedures which collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data in the context of a single study” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Driscoll et al., 2007: 19; see also Creswell & Plano Clark,

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<sup>50</sup> The teachers' beliefs or subjective theories are a type of professional expertise, on the basis of which [teachers] make everyday decisions about individual teaching elements, tasks, appropriate behavior when confronted with a disruptive student, or the appropriate response to the request of a colleague (My own translation).

<sup>51</sup> Subjective theories fulfill important functions in the regulation of action (My own translation).



2007; Greene, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Creswell, 2009; Hall, 2012). The basis for implementing this design is to develop the extent or span of research to compensate for the weaknesses of either approach alone (Rossman & Wilson 1991). Furthermore, considering the fact that most research questions are concerned with multifaceted entities, using a variety of methods of data collection can help to have a more comprehensive view of the phenomena under study (Irwin, 2006).

According to Bryman (2001), a mixed method design can be a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, quantitative methods, or qualitative methods. As a result, mixed method research can also be known as multi-strategy research which deals with the use of various research strategies in order to answer the research questions of both a qualitative and quantitative nature (Brannen, 2005).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011: 5) enumerate the characteristics of a mixed method approach as follows and state that a researcher in mixed methods ...

- collects and analyzes persuasively and rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data (based on research questions);
- mixes (or integrates or links) the two forms of data concurrently by combining them (or merging them), sequentially by having one build on the other, or embedding one within the other;
- gives priority to one or to both forms of data (in terms of what the research emphasizes);
- uses these procedures in a single study or in multiple phases of a program of study;
- combines the procedures into specific research designs that direct the plan for conducting the study.

Based on these characteristics, mixed method approaches can (a) provide strengths that make up for the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research, (b) give more insight into the examination of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone, (c) help answer questions that cannot be solved by quantitative or qualitative approaches alone, (d) encourage the use of multiple worldviews, or paradigms (i.e., beliefs and values), and finally (e) be “practical” since the researcher is free to apply all possible methods to deal with a research problem and clarify the concept using both numbers and words, inductive and deductive thinking (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011: 12-13; see also Spratt, Walker, & Robinson, 2004; Dörnyei, 2007).



The mixed method approach has a variety of types. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011: 70-72; see also Creswell, 2009: 209-210, 2012: 540- 547), it can consist of six different designs:

- **The convergent parallel design** (collecting both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously, comparing and relating the results, and using them for interpretation) [...]
- **The explanatory sequential design** (collecting quantitative and qualitative data sequentially in two phases to have a deeper view toward the problem) [...]
- **The exploratory sequential design** (first collecting and analyzing qualitative data and then collecting quantitative data to explain the results) [...]
- **The embedded design** (collecting qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously or sequentially to have one form of data play a subordinate role to the other form of data) [...]
- **The transformative design** (collecting data using one of the four mentioned designs to encase the design within a transformative framework or lens. It consists of collecting and analyzing quantitative data followed by collecting and analyzing qualitative data) [...]
- **The multiphase design** (collecting data using convergent, explanatory, exploratory, or embedded designs to examine a problem through a series of phases or separate studies) [...]

According to the aim of this work, the first design, i.e. the convergent parallel design was chosen since (1) the researcher had limited time for collecting data and had to collect both types of data in one visit to the field and (2) the researcher felt that there is equal value for collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data to understand the problem. Applying this design could be helpful in “illustrating quantitative results with qualitative findings, synthesizing complementary quantitative and qualitative results to develop a more complete understanding of a phenomenon, and comparing multiple levels within a system” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011: 77).

Dörnyei (2007: 172) describes this design as a kind of concurrent one, where both qualitative and quantitative methods are used separately but in a parallel manner. At the end of the process, the results of these two methods are brought together in order to be interpreted. According to him, “the main purpose of this design is to broaden the research perspective



and thus provide a general picture or to test how the different findings complement or corroborate each other.”

To fulfill the purpose of this work, which focuses on the opinions of teachers and students, survey research was chosen based on the design of the study. According to McKay (2008) and Zydati (2012), this kind of research can consist of questionnaires and interviews which investigate the unobservable phenomena like informants’ perspectives and attitudes and help the researcher to gather large amount of data.

### **3.4. Instrumentation**

The instruments used in the study were questionnaires and interviews which will be discussed under two categories separately as follows:

#### **3.4.1. Questionnaire**

As mentioned before, a survey study was used to collect the data in this work since as Brown (2001: 2) states, language surveys are designed to “gather data on the characteristics and views of informants about the nature of language or language learning ....” In other words, survey studies in the field of language teaching can give us insight into ...

- language learners’ intended language behavior, that is, how students plan to respond to certain language learning situations;
- people’s opinions and attitudes concerning specific L2s and the language learning process in general;
- participants’ feelings and beliefs about certain L2-related issues;
- learners’ knowledge of certain issues in second language acquisition;
- various background information and biodata from the students (Drnyei & Csizr, 2012: 75).

One of the most common instruments in such studies is the written questionnaire. A questionnaire can be described as an instrument which consists of questions and items written to ask for the required information appropriate to analysis (Babbie, 1990: 377). In other words, “questionnaires are printed forms of data collection, which include questions or statements to which the subject is expected to respond, often anonymously” (Selinger & Shohamy, 1989: 172). According to Acharya (2010: 1-2), there are three types of questionnaires: structured questionnaires including “pre-coded or [closed-item] questions with well-



defined skipping patterns to follow the sequence of questions”, unstructured containing “open-ended and vague opinion-type questions”, and finally semi-structured which is a mixture of structured and unstructured questionnaires. Regardless of the type of questionnaire, these instruments can generally provide the researcher with three sets of information:

- factual information—these kinds of questions are used to get more information about the personal characteristics of the participants, such as age, sex, experience, etc.;
- behavioral information—these kinds of questions are concerned with the way the subjects act or behave in the past;
- attitudinal information—these kinds of questions refer to the ideas, opinions, beliefs, or interests of the participants (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010: 5).

These kinds of information can be collected using different forms of questions (Acharya, 2010: 3-6):

### **Closed- and open-ended questions**

In **closed-ended** or structured questions the respondents have a set of pre-determined options to select. Alternative-answer questions, such as yes/no, true/false, multiple choice, and checklist format questions are classified under this category. However, in the **open-ended** or unstructured questions, subjects are free to give their own answers as they like. These kinds of questions can be generally found in two forms: fill-in used in demographic questions and short answer used for eliciting the detailed information about a specific issue (see also Mackey & Gass, 2005; McKay, 2008).

### **Scaling type of questions**

Scaling is a kind of measurement that includes an instrument associating qualitative factors with quantitative units. There are three types of scaling: Thurstone Scaling (Equal Appearing); Guttman Scaling (Cumulative); and Likert Scaling (Summative).

**Thurstone Scaling (Equal Appearing):** This is simply grouping and arrangement of answers given by the respondents. All activities have equal importance and none of them cancels out the other.

**Guttman Scaling (Cumulative):** In this method, the cumulative nature of current (or expressed) opinion of the respondent also includes the previous ones. Essentially, we would



like a set of items or statements in which a respondent agreeing with any specific question in the list also agrees with all previous questions. Put more formally, we would like to be able to predict item responses perfectly knowing only the total score for the respondent.<sup>52</sup>

**Likert Scaling (Summative):** This is an arrangement of opinions from extreme negative to extreme positive. Its options are, for example:

1. Fully Agree, 2. Somewhat Agree, 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4. Somewhat Disagree and 5. Fully Disagree (Acharya, 2010: 5).

### **Matrix type of Questions**

Matrix questions or battery questions provide multiple answers to more than one person or element. The questions are formed based on a matrix format but not expressed grammatically in question form. These questions can help the researcher to collect multiple variable information about many persons.

### **Ranking type of questions**

The ranking type of question asks the respondents to categorize their answers from lowest to highest variables of research. This type of question can also be categorized under closed-ended questions.

Considering the characteristics of the questionnaires, as Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) say, they can help the researchers to collect a large amount of data within a very short time at low cost, and also “depending on how they are structured, [they] can provide both qualitative insights and quantifiable data, and thus are flexible enough to be used in a range of research” (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 96). In other words, researchers can design different kinds of questionnaires based on their research aims, designs, and questions. In some cases, a mixture of different types can also be used in order to have a proper perspective towards the phenomenon under the study.

As a result and in line with the objectives of the present research and its design, two sets of questionnaires were used to collect the opinions or beliefs of teachers (semi-structured questionnaire in English) and students (structured questionnaire in their own mother tongue) about CLT and their English language classroom (see Appendix A). These questionnaires consisted of three different sections: (1) the personal information section, necessary for sorting and categorizing the questionnaires in a more precise manner, (2) the general or

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<sup>52</sup> <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/scalgutt.php>





linguistic section, and finally (3) the cultural section, containing questions dealing with the subjects' attitudes towards CLT and its cultural appropriateness.

In the first section, some personal questions like country, age range, years of experience, method of teaching, etc. were asked of teachers in order to have a general idea about their characteristics. This part included fill-in and multiple choice questions. Likewise, students were supposed to answer some questions about their age, grade, and sex. In the next part, some questions were posed about the teachers' and students' opinions on the general characteristics of CLT and their English classes. These sections were in the form of Likert scale for the students. However, for teachers it consisted of two types of questions in the form of Likert scale and checklist where "teachers were asked to check all the answers that apply to their situation" (McKay, 2008: 38). In teachers' questionnaire this section had two Likert scale tables: one for the general characteristics and the other one for the appropriateness of CLT in teachers' own contexts. The last section of both questionnaires was concerned with some alternative-answer and checklist format questions that referred to cultural aspects of CLT and the English classes in each country. Moreover, two open-ended questions in the short-answer format were also asked of teachers where they were free to add their own opinions about culture teaching and its problems in their classes. These two questions helped the researcher to elicit more information from the subjects. It should be mentioned that the format of the questions was determined based on the purpose of the research. Likert scale questions are among those forms which provide the researcher with a precise perspective towards the subjects' attitudes concerning a specific phenomenon, in this case the characteristics and appropriateness of CLT. Unlike multiple choice items, checklist format questions give the participants enough freedom to select more than one choice when answering to a question. In this way, they can present more information in relation to one specific item dealing with a certain issue from different perspectives (e.g. those items which are related with cultural aspects in British, American, and other cultures). Finally, alternative-answer questions help the researcher to check the existence of an entity when discussing a particular topic, in this case developing ICC via CLT.

It should be mentioned that the questionnaires were designed based on the dimensions in Byram's model of ICC to examine the extent to which IC is developed by CLT from teachers' and students' perspectives. Byram's model was selected as a reference in this study since ...



1. it is one of the best known models in terms of developing IC among learners in the classroom;
2. the basis of the CEFR (see Chapter 3, Section 3.1.4), which is considered as a kind of criterion for designing curricula in European countries, depends on this model and its dimensions;
3. this model can conform well to the classroom context (Lange, 2011).

Furthermore, different existing questionnaires (e.g. Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Li, 1998; Rao, 2002; Savignon & Wang, 2003; Li, 2004; Nam, 2005; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006; Stridsberg, 2007; Beyene, 2008; Al-Nouh, 2008; Ozsevik, 2010; Akhter, 2010; Shihiba Salma Embark, 2011; Al-Mekhlafi, 2011; Coskun, 2011) which were concerned with the investigation of teachers' and students' attitudes towards the principles and appropriateness of CLT in their contexts were also used to construct the questionnaires.

After designing the questionnaires, in order to check their reliability and validity, both sets were examined in two different pilot studies. The first study was concerned with a kind of initial piloting of the items getting feedbacks from colleagues, and the second one was run on a group of participants similar to the target subjects in Germany and Iran. In this way, the weak or vague points of the questionnaires were easily identified and modified by the researcher (see also Mackey & Gass, 2005; Dörnyei, 2007).

### **3.4.2. Interview**

Interviews are one of the most common ways of data collection in survey studies where the researcher collects responses given by the subjects (Creswell, 2012) "to know other persons—their beliefs, attitudes, and expectations—and to understand the cognitive models that shape their worldviews" (Krippendorff, 2004: 139, see also Trautmann, 2012). Interviews have three basic types: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. According to Friedman (2012: 188; see also Mackey & Gass, 2005; Dörnyei, 2007) ...

In structured interviews, the same set of questions is asked of all participants in order to permit cross-case comparisons. As the opposite end of spectrum, unstructured interviews do not use pre-planned questions, but resemble a conversation in which the researcher proposes a topic that is explored with the interviewee in depth. Most qualitative interviews fall between these two extremes and follow a semi-structured format. In semi-structured interviews the researcher prepares a set of questions (or interview guide) as the basis for the interviews; however, he or she may deviate from the guide in order to pursue topics that arise



during the course of interview. As a result, different questions may be asked of each interviewee.

Similarly, Seliger and Shohamy (1989: 167-168) classify the interviews into three groups of: *open* or “informal talk” with the interviewee’s “freedom of expression”, *semi-open* or semi-structured with some predefined questions and the possibility of elaboration in them, and *structured* with predetermined questions without any elaboration. They believe that depending on the type of interview, the collected data can be different. For example, in the structured interview, the data is in the form of “short answers, checks, and marks”, whereas in the open interview, the researcher has the data mostly in “descriptive and narrative” format.

Like questionnaires, interviews can have different purposes. Interview questions are designed to investigate more the participants’ backgrounds, behaviors, and attitudes towards a specific entity (McKay, 2008). As a result, the major objective of the interview is to elicit information by having a conversation with the interviewee. In this way, it can provide the researcher with a deep perspective towards the elements of subjectivity and personal opinion of the interviewees (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989).

Since one of the aims of the present work was to explore the teachers’ attitudes towards CLT and promoting ICC, the interview was used as a supplementary instrument to the questionnaires in order to obtain deeper information in this regard. As a result, a semi-structured interview was run to allow teachers to freely express their viewpoints with regard to the issues under the study. This semi-structured interview consisted of 12 questions which acted as a guide in the process of conversation (see Appendix B). In other words, sometimes due to necessity, some questions were not asked or were added to the interviews based on the interviewees’ answers. Each interview lasted between 20 and 40 minutes. All of the interviews were conducted in English in order to provide the same situations for the teachers, especially those ones who speak English as a foreign language. A total of 21 teachers participated in the interviews. Table 7 indicates the number of interviewees in each country in detail.

Interviewees	Iran	Sweden	The Netherlands	Germany
21	5	5	5	6

Table 7. Number of interviewees in each country



### **3.5. Procedure**

In line with other studies, once the research questions had been formulated, this research began with the design of the instruments, i.e. questionnaires and interview questions. This process, which took about six months, was carried out using some existing questionnaires based on the presented objectives in Byram's model of ICC and the general characteristics of CLT. After constructing the instruments, they were piloted among a group of colleagues in order to check their quality in terms of the variables under the study. Having gathered colleagues' ideas about the instruments and revised them, the students' questionnaires were translated into their mother tongues by the native speakers, after which they were piloted in the second phase of the research among a group of teachers and students in Germany and Iran to examine their validity and reliability by using a sample of subjects with the same characteristics as the target group. These two processes helped the researcher to add or even eliminate questions or statements which could cause problems in the interpretation of the results from the instruments. Furthermore, the language of the questionnaires was checked by a British native speaker in order to make it as natural as possible.

Along with the preparation of the instruments, some information was collected about the educational system in each country. According to this information, it was decided to work on the upper-secondary school level in each country since as mentioned before, the educational systems of these countries at this level were more or less the same; as a result, it was easier to have a comparative view of the results in each country. In addition, in this way the scope of the study could be narrowed down in order to control the process of research.

After the preparation of the final versions of the questionnaires and interview questions, the relevant teachers in the schools of each country were contacted via email and telephone. The teachers were briefed as to the objectives of the research and asked whether they would be interested in participating in this survey or not. It should be mentioned that for ethical reasons teachers were assured of the confidentiality of the research results. Those schools or teachers who were willing to cooperate were selected as the participants of the study, and some specific appointments were arranged in order to start conducting the survey at their schools.

The process of data collection was begun with four English institutes in Iran in 2011 and ended with three schools or Gymnasiums in Germany in 2013. In order to avoid disruption and interference in the school schedules, the students' questionnaires were copied and giv-



en to the volunteering teachers, so it was the teachers who administered the study among their students. The students' questionnaires took about 10 to 15 minutes to fill in. Thus, the teachers were free to distribute the questionnaires among the students whenever they had enough time in the class. The teachers' questionnaires were given to them personally or via email. It took about 15 to 20 minutes for the teachers to fill in their questionnaires. After collecting the questionnaires, the teachers contacted the researcher to pick up the data. From a total of 1300 student questionnaires and 160 teacher questionnaires, 1049 and 83 completed questionnaires were chosen to start the data analysis. Moreover, those teachers who were interested in having an interview were contacted again to fix a time in order to do the interviews in person or via Skype. Before starting the interviews, teachers were provided with some information about the content of the interviews so that they could have a clear idea about what they were going to be asked.

It should be mentioned that during all of these procedures, the researcher was present in each country in order to have direct access to the subjects whenever it was necessary, for example regarding the interviews. In this way, on the one hand, the survey could be completed faster in a specified time, and on the other hand, it was easier to control data collection procedures and gain more information about the educational system of each country. However, the subjects were chosen naturally without any randomization based on their accessibility and interest at the time of study.

### **3.6. Data Analysis**

After collection, the data were compiled and filed separately under the name of each country, after which the questionnaires were analyzed and their results were calculated using SPSS version 21 for Windows. Based on the nature of the questions in the questionnaires, the findings were presented in the form of frequencies and percentages. Furthermore, Chi-Square was run in order to find the significant differences among the teachers' and students' opinions in the target countries. The alpha level (of significance) was set to .05, as is common in language studies of this type and proportion.

The answers of the two open-ended questions in the teachers' questionnaires as well as the interview transcriptions which were made right after the interviews were kept in Word documents for further analysis. After this process, the data obtained were codified into idea units or categories through a qualitative content analysis procedure which stresses the fea-



tures of language “as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005: 1278). According to Krippendorff (2004: 18), “content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use.” Thus, its main aim is “to identify specific characteristics of communications systematically and objectively in order to convert the raw material into scientific data,” (Mostyn, 1985: 117) and as a result, “to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992: 314). Within this framework, qualitative content analysis can be described as a kind of research method to interpret the content of the text data subjectively by using systematic categorization procedures of coding and recognizing ideas or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), qualitative content analysis consists of different approaches, one of which is conventional qualitative analysis used to describe an incident under study. This type of content analysis which is also known as inductive category development (Mayring, 2000) was used in this research to describe the attitudes and opinions of teachers’ towards CLT and teaching culture. Therefore, based on the steps in such analyses, the following procedures were implemented, as seen in Figure 17.

collecting data in the form of recording voices → transcribing the interviews → reading raw data → deriving or selecting the codes → making notes → sorting the codes into categories → finding the examples for each category → reporting and discussing the results also using other research findings

Figure 17. The procedures in conventional qualitative content analysis

In the final phase, the categories were presented descriptively (in the form of quotations and explanations) to enhance the reliability of the data gained from the interviews. This inductive method of content analysis was also used for the textual analysis of two open-ended questions in the teachers’ questionnaire in the form of reading raw data → deriving or selecting the codes → making notes → sorting the codes into categories → reporting the results.

One of the important issues in research is checking the validity and reliability of the data obtained from the instruments. As in other studies, these issues were also examined in the present work. With regard to qualitative research, as Gibbs (2007) maintains, qualitative validity can be defined as checking the accuracy of findings using different techniques, while



qualitative reliability shows the consistency of the researcher's approach and method among other existing studies or researchers. Gibbs proposes different techniques to examine the reliability of the data, such as checking the transcripts to detect probable mistakes in the process of transcription, determining the consistency of codes in terms of meaning, and using different coders and cross-checking. In order to probe this issue, all of these procedures were considered during the transcriptions of interviews in this study.

Regarding the validity of the qualitative data, some other procedures can be conducted in order to investigate this issue. According to Creswell and Miller (2000, as cited in Creswell, 2009: 191-192), researchers can use eight strategies to check the validity in qualitative research. Four of these strategies used in the present research to enhance the validity of the data are as follows:

- **Use rich, thick description to convey the findings.** Providing detailed information about the setting, objectives, and thematic perspectives of the study can increase the validity of the findings.
- **Triangulate different sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes.**
- **Use peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of account.** Asking a confident peer to check the process of research and review and ask questions about the findings of the qualitative study.
- **Spend prolonged time in the field.** Staying a while in the relevant setting can help the researcher to get a deep understanding of the people and their culture. In this way, he/she can gain a thorough perspective towards the significant factors affecting the study.

In the case of the quantitative data, the reliability and validity of the questionnaires were computed after the pilot study using SPSS for Windows (see Appendix C).

The results of the research are fully presented in the next chapter along with tabulations and graphs.



## Chapter 4

### Results and Discussion

Having introduced the instruments, participants, and method for collecting and analyzing data, in this part the results are presented based on seven research questions. To do so, the results will be accompanied by discussions in order to give a better perspective on the findings in this study. This chapter is separated into four sub-categories, i.e. Questionnaires, Interviews, Overlapping items and Summary. Thus, based on the structure presented, in each part the relevant results are provided using tables and graphs, and then the findings are discussed in the same section. To achieve this aim, it will be helpful to have an overview of the main research questions in this work once again. As discussed in the first chapter (see Section 1.2), the present study is concerned with the following questions:

- What are the opinions of EFL teachers towards applying Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in their own countries?
- According to EFL teachers, how does CLT give insight into the target language culture(s)?
- From the perspective of EFL teachers, how does CLT pay attention to the concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)?
- What are the EFL teachers' perceived problems in terms of presenting the target culture or other cultures?
- When facing problems, what are the main strategies of EFL teachers in solving students' intercultural problems?
- What are the opinions of EFL learners about their English classes based on their needs and interests?
- What are the opinions of EFL learners about cultural and intercultural aspects of their English classes?

It was expected that the findings would go some way towards answering these questions in detail. The subjects' attitudes and answers in the questionnaires and interviews were obtained, and the analysis of the results was initiated by calculating the frequencies, percentages and categories and comparing the subjects' answers in the situations mentioned above. In the case of the questionnaires, the chi-square test was run to compare the results and





examine whether any significant differences exist between the subjects' attitudes in the target countries or not. Here are the codification processes carried out in this research to present the findings of the questionnaires:

### Teacher questionnaire

- Likert scale items:
  - Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Undecided = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5 (items 1-12 & 32-41)
- Checklist format items:
  - Listening = 1, Speaking = 2, Reading = 3, Writing = 4 (item 13)
  - Individual-work = 1, Pair-work = 2, Group-work = 3 (item 14)
  - Peer-corrections = 1, Self-corrections = 2 (item 15)
  - British/England = 1, American/America = 2, Other/Other countries = 3, None = 4 (items 22-26 & 31)
  - Literature = 1, History = 2, Geography = 3, Fine arts = 4, Politics = 5, Education = 6, National symbols = 7, Customs and Festivals = 8, Family life = 9, Food = 10, Youth life = 11, Idioms = 12, Proverbs = 13, Expressions = 14, Slang = 15, Stereotypical images = 16, None = 17 (item 27)
  - Literature = 1, History = 2, Geography = 3, Fine arts = 4, Politics = 5, Education = 6, National symbols = 7, Customs and Festivals = 8, Family life = 9, Food = 10, Youth life = 11, Racial minorities = 12, Stereotypical images = 13, None = 14 (item 28)
- Alternative format items:
  - Yes = 1, No = 2 (items 16-22)
  - Positive = 1, Negative = 2, None = 3 (items 30-31)

### Student questionnaire

- Likert scale items:
  - Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Undecided = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5 (items 1-12)
- Checklist format items:
  - British = 1, American = 2, Other = 3, None = 4 (items 13-20)
- Alternative format items:
  - Yes = 1, No = 2 (items 23-24)
  - Positive = 1, Negative = 2, None = 3 (items 21-22)

In a similar vein, the answers of the teachers to the open-ended questions at the end of their questionnaires were codified into different idea units (Yes for having problems and No for



having no problems, R for reasons, and S for strategies), then the categories were identified using these coding schemes (see the results of the research questions 4 and 5 in Section 4.1). Regarding the interview questions, the same procedure was run to find the related categories and the teachers were coded based on their countries as follows:

- GT1, GT2, GT3, GT4, GT5, GT6 (G for German, T for Teacher)
- ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4, ST5 (S for Swedish, T for Teacher)
- DT1, DT2, DT3, DT4, DT5 (D for Dutch, T for Teacher)
- IT1, IT2, IT3, IT4, IT5 (I for Iranian, T for Teacher)

In the following, the results obtained from questionnaires and interviews are presented in detail. It should be mentioned that all of the findings indicate only the ideas of teachers and students in this sample and cannot be generalized beyond the scope of the present research. Thus, the terms used to describe the results and subjects in each country refer only to the domain of this study.

## **4.1. The Results of the Questionnaires**

### **4.1.1. Research Question 1**

#### **What are the opinions of EFL teachers towards applying Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in their own countries?**

The items (see Appendix A, Teachers' Questionnaire) related to the opinions of EFL teachers in this sample towards applying Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in their own countries can be divided into three sections: (a) items 1 to 12 which probe the general characteristics of CLT, (b) items 13 to 15 which refer to the effect of CLT on the development of skills, types of activities used in the classroom, and error corrections, and finally (c) items 32 to 41 which challenge the appropriateness of CLT in different countries.

#### **(a) Items 1-12 → General Characteristics of CLT**

Table 8<sup>53</sup> displays the frequencies and percentages for the teachers' opinions about the general characteristics of CLT. As is clear from this table, the majority of the teachers in this

<sup>53</sup> In all tables, the most frequent options are shown in the highlighted form.



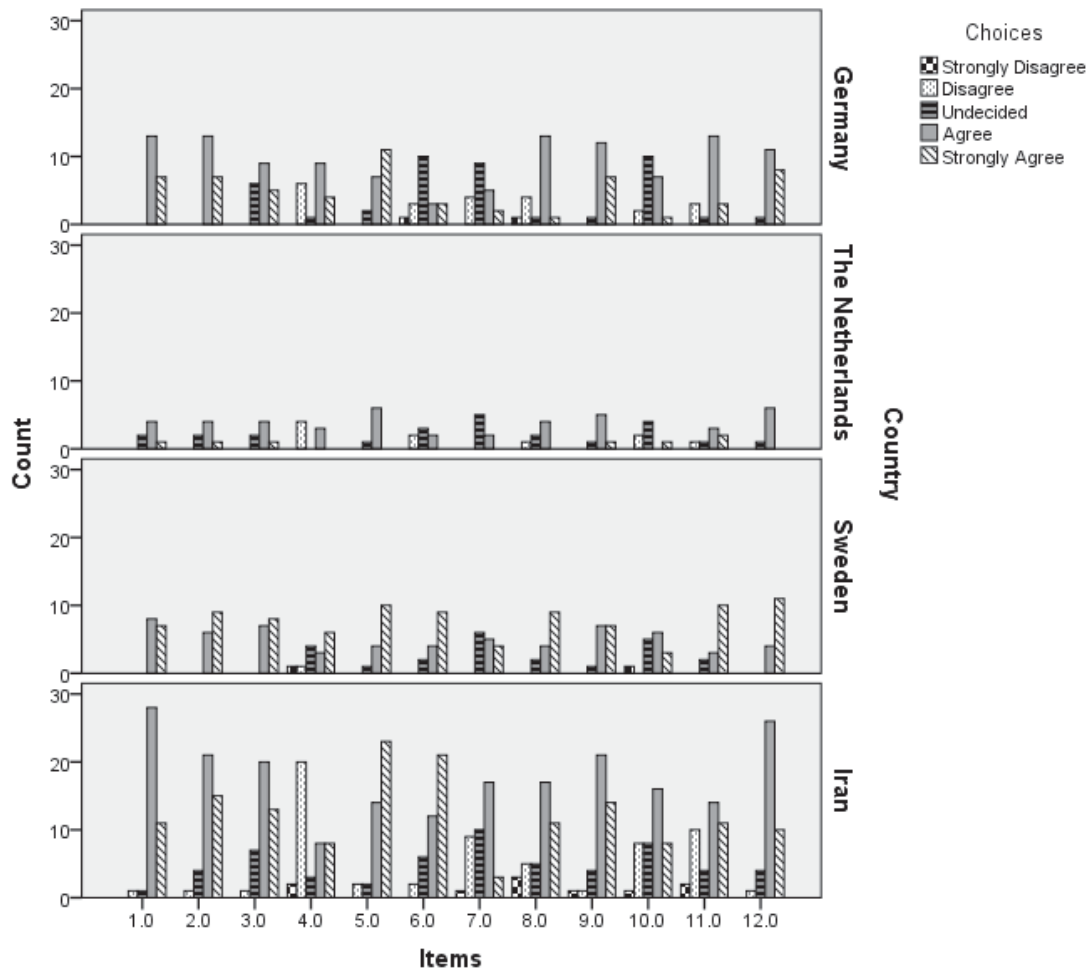
study—62.3 % in Germany, 59.5 % in the Netherlands, 85.6 % in Sweden, and 73.6 % in Iran—“agree” or “strongly agree” with the general characteristics of CLT.

		Choices					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Germany	Count	2	22	42	115	59	240
	% within Country	0.8%	9.2%	17.5%	47.9%	24.6%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	0	10	24	43	7	84
	% within Country	0.0%	11.9%	28.6%	51.2%	8.3%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	2	1	23	61	93	180
	% within Country	1.1%	0.6%	12.8%	33.9%	51.7%	100.0%
Iran	Count	10	61	59	214	148	492
	% within Country	2.0%	12.4%	12.0%	43.5%	30.1%	100.0%
Total	Count	14	94	148	433	307	996
	% within Country	1.4%	9.4%	14.9%	43.5%	30.8%	100.0%

Table 8. Teachers' attitudes towards the general characteristics of CLT

In order to examine the significant differences between the teacher attitudes in terms of general characteristics of CLT in these four countries, a chi-square analysis was run to probe this issue. The result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2(12) = 86.72, P = .000 < .05$ ) indicates that the differences observed in Table 8 are significant.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that the great majority of teachers in the collected sample agree with the general characteristics of CLT and as a result believe that CLT is useful for their pupils in order to learn English. The respondents' attitudes towards this approach can be seen in Graph 1, which illustrates teachers' answers to each item in the target countries separately.



Graph 1. Frequencies of items (1-12) by choices in each country (teachers)

According to the above bar graph, the positive attitudes of the teachers towards CLT are mostly tangible in their responses to items 1,2,3,9, and 12 (see Appendix A, Teachers' Questionnaire), which refer to the usefulness of the communicative way of teaching in helping the students increase their speaking proficiency and use the target language (English) in real-life situations as well as stimulating their interest in language learning. In other words, these teachers believe that CLT has a positive effect on learning English. The results of the present research are in parallel with the findings of other studies in the literature revealing that most of the teachers in different contexts have positive attitudes towards the characteristics of CLT (e.g. Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Li, 1998; Mulat, 2003; Karim, 2004; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006; Beyene, 2008; Mowlaie & Rahimi, 2010; Vaezi & Abbaspour, 2014). However, it should be mentioned that having a positive attitude towards a specific method or approach does not necessarily mean that it is practiced and used by the teachers in the classroom since there are various factors and conditions which can influence the process of



teaching in a particular context (see Section 2.3 for the relevant studies showing the differences between theory and practice). This disparity between belief and practice will be discussed in the following sections, where the teachers' ideas are in contrast with what they actually do in their classes.

The next item examined here is item 4 (*Using mother tongue **should be avoided** when teaching a foreign language*), which is related to one of the disputed issues with regard to the principles of CLT, i.e. the avoidance of using L1 in English classes. Language teaching scholars and practitioners have contrasting opinions about using L1 in the classroom. For example, some of them believe that the mother tongue can play a role in language classes (Nunan 1999: 73, Carter 1987: 153, Dornyei 1995: 58, Holliday 1994: 7), while others argue that L1 has no place in language teaching, especially in those EFL contexts where students have a lack of exposure to the target language (Wharton, 2007). Among these scholars, Krashen (1981) puts emphasis on the importance of using the target language in classes since he claims that any reduction in the use of the target language can result in wasted opportunities for providing the learners with comprehensible input. Alongside Krashen, there are other scholars like Canale (1983), Ellis (1984), Swain (1985), Chaudron (1988), Willis (1990) who have the same opinions and state that using L1 in the second and foreign language classes deprives the learners of valuable input and may hinder the process of language learning. These opponents also think that one of the main aims of language learning is the ability to negotiate meanings. Thus, "if the students use their L1 then nothing is negotiated and therefore little learning has taken place" (Wharton, 2007: 6). However, as Eldridge (1996: 303) says, "there is no empirical evidence to support the notion that restricting mother tongue use would necessarily improve learner efficiency."

In a similar vein, authors have mixed attitudes towards using L1 in CLT or the Communicative Approach. For example, Swan (1985) argues that the use of the mother tongue can hinder the second language acquisition; however, he also suggests that in some situations direct translations can be helpful in the process of learning. Likewise, in her book *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*, Larsen-Freeman (1986: 135) emphasizes the role of the target language in the classroom and mentions that ...

The students' native language has no particular role in the communicative approach. The target language should be used not only during communicative activities, but also, for example, in explaining the activities to the students or in assigning homework. The students learn



from these classroom management exchanges, too, and realize that the target language is a vehicle for communication, not just an object to be studied.

However, in the third edition of the very same book coauthored by Marti Anderson in 2011, she takes a more flexible position towards using L1 and suggests that ...

Judicious use of the students' native language is permitted in CLT. However, whenever possible, the target language should be used not only during communicative activities, but also for explaining the activities to the students or in assigning homework. The students learn from these classroom management exchanges, too, and realize that the target language is a vehicle for communication, not just an object to be studied (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011: 125).

On the whole, there is little evidence to show how the supporters of the Communicative Approach deal with the use of L1 in the classroom (Harmer, 1983; Atkinson, 1993) and sometimes, "there is a curious absence of discussion of the use of L1 in CLT" (Cole, 1998: webpage).

These mixed views towards the use of L1 in CLT are also evident in the teachers' answers in this study. In other words, although they take a favorable position towards the principles of CLT, their ideas about using the students' mother tongue are different. Considering this issue, Dutch and Iranian teachers participating in this study disagree with the argument that using L1 should be avoided in the class. This implies that these teachers believe in using the mother tongue when teaching English to their pupils. In contrast, German and Swedish teachers mostly agree with this statement. Thus, they think it is better not to use L1 when teaching a foreign language. This shows an attitudinal difference between these two groups in the present study. As mentioned earlier, in order to reach a deeper understanding of teachers' ideas about some of the controversial issues in CLT, a number of interviews was carried out to collect teachers' opinions concerning these matters. According to the results of the interviews (see Interview Section), it can be concluded that many European interviewees use L1 when teaching grammar or talking about complicated topics which are difficult for the students to understand. In the case of Dutch teachers, the answers in the interviews as well as the questionnaires indicate consistent results. In other words, both groups believe that using L1 in teaching a foreign language can be beneficial for their students. However, for German and Swedish teachers the case is different. Although in response to their questionnaires German and Swedish teachers mostly believe that using L1



should be avoided when teaching a language, the interviewees in these countries maintain that they use L1 especially in the case of grammar and complex topics, and this is consistent with the results of two studies by Batak and Andersson (2009) and Torstensson (2012) on the status of CLT in Sweden/France and Spain/Sweden, where all informants believe in teaching grammar using L1 because they think that it helps the students to grasp the topics better. Thus, it seems that one can still find some traces of grammar translation techniques used mostly by non-native teachers due to the students' needs, especially when they are beginners.

With regard to Iranian teachers, this contrast can also be observed in the respondents' opinions collected through the questionnaires and interviews. As is clear from the results in the questionnaires, Iranian teachers concede that it is better to use L1 in the class, while the Iranian interviewees believe that it is not necessary to use L1 since their students have very few opportunities to practice their English outside class, so their English classes are considered to be the only places where they can use English in communication. As a result, the Iranian interviewees mostly affirm that they try not to use L1 when teaching English in the classroom. However, the role of the native language of the students cannot be overlooked by the teachers since the use of the students' native language can also have positive effects on foreign and second language learning, especially when the languages have similar structures. Thus, it can be concluded that eliminating the students' native language in order to increase exposure to the target language cannot always be constructive and practical. The German, Swedish, and Iranian teachers' beliefs about using L1 in the classroom is considered as one of the disparities between the teachers' subjective theories and practices.

On the whole, based on the results, it can be concluded that using L1 is still a disputed issue among the most of the teachers in this study since there are some differences between their ideas in the questionnaires and interviews. It seems that this issue is directly related to the students' linguistic competence and needs. In other words, although some of the teachers in this study believe that they should not use L1 very often, they may resort to it due to their students' lack of understanding and proficiency in the case of grammar or complex issues. Another important fact which should be discussed here is the teachers' own level of linguistic competence. Sometimes, teachers use L1 in the classes since they feel they are not competent enough to explain some topics in the foreign language. This issue is not



often discussed or mentioned by the teachers as a reason for using L1 in the classroom; however, it cannot be neglected in the studies. Thus, alongside the students' needs and linguistic problems, lack of teachers' English proficiency can be another factor which may affect the teachers' responses in this research.

Another interesting issue which can be discussed here concerns item 8, dealing with the importance of focusing on communication rather than grammar in language classes (*Communication is more essential than grammar*). The responses provided by the teachers in this study indicate that they mostly believe in the importance of communication rather than grammar, and this is completely in accordance with the principles of CLT, which emphasize the significance of communication and fluency over grammatical structures and accuracy; however, according to the proponents of this approach, the principles of CLT never suggest that teachers overlook grammatical instruction, but rather propose different techniques or activities to teach and practice it. In other words, as do the traditional approaches and methods, CLT also highlights the importance of teaching grammar, but the method of teaching grammar in CLT differs greatly from the previous methods since it focuses more on inductive rather than deductive ways of teaching and learning grammar. Within this framework, as mentioned earlier in chapter 2, "fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use" (Brown, 2001: 266-267; see also Klippel & Doff, 2007). In this sense, in CLT grammar instruction goes beyond the mastery of the rules. Within this framework, it focuses on the practical use of the structures in a way that the learners can use the language appropriately in real-life situations. Put differently, grammar in communicative English classes should be taught in combination with meaning, social factors, and discourse. (see also Celce-Murcia, 1991).

Considering this issue, it should be mentioned that the results of this work are both in agreement (in the case of Dutch teachers) and in contrast (in the case of German teachers) with the findings of a study by Lijcklama à Nijeholt (2012), who compares the attitudinal differences between a group of the Dutch and German teachers towards CLT. The results of Lijcklama à Nijeholt's research reveal that Dutch teachers seem to be more concerned with communication rather than grammar, while German teachers hold the opposite view and do not see communicative efficiency as more essential than grammatical knowledge. However,





in the present research, both of these groups maintain that communication is more important than grammar. One of the factors which can be influential in the perceptions of European teachers in this regard is their syllabuses and curricula. For example, as Torstensson (2012) asserts, the Swedish syllabus mostly focuses on communication rather than grammatical knowledge, which may justify the Swedish teachers' positions towards the importance of communication in comparison to grammar. However, in the case of Iran, an influential factor in this regard is the policies in English institutes which force teachers to focus mostly on communication rather than grammar. Due to the fact that in Iranian schools the main aim of teaching English is to promote grammatical and lexical knowledge, private English institutes mostly concentrate on teaching different ways of communication. In this way, they try to attract the Iranian learners who are deprived of communication and interaction at their schools (see also Aliakbari, 2004; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006; Dahmardeh & Wray, 2011).

The last item discussed here is also related to grammar. In response to item 7 (*Grammar is best taught in a communicative EFL class*), the respondents can be divided into two groups: undecided and in favour. The Iranian and Swedish teachers mostly agree with this idea, while German and Dutch teachers are not sure about it. The positions of Iranian and Swedish teachers in this study can be justified through the policies in Iranian language institutes and the Swedish English syllabuses respectively, as discussed earlier. Since in Iran grammatical knowledge is taught explicitly, based on the principles of GTM and ALM at schools, the students usually have a sense of boredom and reluctance towards learning grammatical concepts; thus, in order to provide the students with new and interesting experiences of learning grammar, the managements in the institutes try to prescribe the more implicit or inductive way of teaching grammar. In Sweden, due to the focus of their syllabus which is on communication, teachers may have more positive views towards teaching grammar communicatively. Concerning German and Dutch teachers in this study, the case is more interesting. This is because although these two groups of teachers believe that communication is more essential than grammar (see item 8 above), they take a neutral position towards the present item which refers to teaching grammar communicatively. These teachers might have chosen this option for two reasons: the tendencies of their students towards preferring the explicit explanation of grammar and their school or national examinations, which make the teachers focus on deductive ways of grammar teaching in



order to meet their students' needs to pass their exams. This is true especially in the case of Dutch teachers in this sample, who strongly maintain that their national examinations have a direct influence on the way they teach in the classroom (see Interview Section and the results related to the appropriateness of CLT to justify this issue). In this sense, when these teachers consider their students' needs and attitudes, it can be concluded that they follow one of the main guidelines in language teaching, which is paying attention to students' needs.

Considering this issue, i.e. the importance of the students' needs, Savignon (1997: 107) asserts that "if all the variables in L2 acquisition could be identified and the many intricate patterns of interaction between learner and learning context described, ultimate success in learning to use a second language most likely would be seen to depend on the attitude of the learner." Thus, one of the important elements which can help teachers to succeed in their teaching practices is that they "should find out what their students think and feel about what they want to learn and how they want to learn" (Nunan, 1993: 4). Therefore, the necessity of including communicative components in teaching practices should be measured based on the learners' preferences in a language classroom, which can sometimes cause a mismatch between teachers' beliefs and practices (Savignon & Wang, 2003).

The other items which have not been mentioned here will be discussed after the presentation of the students' results in the section related to the comparison of the teachers' and students' answers to the overlapping items.

### **(b) Items 13-15 → the skills and types of activities/error corrections**

- **The effect of CLT on the development of skills**

Based on the results displayed in Table 9, it can be concluded that the majority of the teachers in this study—Germany 38.8%, the Netherlands 43.8%, Sweden 33.3%, and Iran 46.5%—believe that CLT develops the speaking ability of their students the most. This is followed by listening comprehension (underlined) which is considered as the second language skill developed by CLT. As for the other two skills, i.e. reading comprehension and writing, the teachers in all countries believe that CLT does not focus on these two skills in comparison to speaking and listening.



LC: Listening Comprehension, SP: Speaking, RC: Reading Comprehension, WR: Writing						
		Skills				Total
		LC	SP	RC	WR	
Germany	Count	19	19	4	7	49
	% within Country	38.8%	38.8%	8.2%	14.3%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	4	7	3	2	16
	% within Country	25.0%	43.8%	18.8%	12.5%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	12	15	10	8	45
	% within Country	26.7%	33.3%	22.2%	17.8%	100.0%
Iran	Count	26	40	9	11	86
	% within Country	30.2%	46.5%	10.5%	12.8%	100.0%
Total	Count	61	81	26	28	196
	% within Country	31.1%	41.3%	13.3%	14.3%	100.0%

Table 9. Teachers' attitudes towards the effect of CLT on language skills

The result of the chi-square test ( $\chi^2 (9) = 7.88, P = .546 > .05$ ) indicates that the differences observed in Table 9 are not significant, meaning that there is no significant difference between the attitudes of the teachers towards the effect of CLT on the development of language skills in these four countries. All of the teachers in this sample believe that CLT can help students develop their speaking and listening skills more than reading and writing. However, this opinion is in contrast with the principles of CLT, which focus on the promotion of all four skills at the same time. This is one of the misconceptions held by teachers regarding the principles of CLT (see also Thompson, 1996; Carless, 1998; Wu, 2008). According to these principles, in a communicative class, the four key skills, i.e. writing, reading, listening and speaking, should be integrated into the language program. Therefore, the present results are in agreement with the other studies where teachers believe that communicative classes are only concerned with the development of oral and listening skills rather than reading and writing (e.g. Li (1998) in Korea, Sato & Kleinsasser (1999) in Japan, Jin, Singh, & Li (2005) in China, and Vongxay (2013) in Laos). This can be related to the definitions and conceptualizations which may exist in the teachers' own cognitions affected by the contexts where they are teaching. Nonetheless, according to Savignon (2002: 22; 2005: 1164) ...

The concern of CLT is not exclusively with face-to-face oral communication. The principles apply equally to reading and writing activities that involve readers and writers in the interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning.



- **Types of activities used in the classroom**

In response to the question about the appropriate types of activities that enable students to interact easily and freely, the majority of the teachers in this study (44.5%) believe that pair work activities help students to best do this in CLT classes. After pair work (highlighted), group work activities (underlined) stand in second place (see Table 10 below).

		Types of Class Work			Total
		Individual	Pair work	Group work	
Germany	Count	11	18	14	43
	% within Country	25.6%	41.9%	32.6%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	0	6	4	10
	% within Country	0.0%	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	7	15	14	36
	% within Country	19.4%	41.7%	38.9%	100.0%
Iran	Count	5	30	31	66
	% within Country	7.6%	45.5%	47.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	23	69	63	155
	% within Country	14.8%	44.5%	40.6%	100.0%

Table 10. Teachers' attitudes towards the types of activities used in classroom

Accordingly, the result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2(6) = 9.74, P = .136 > .05$ ) reveals that the differences observed in Table 10 are not significant, which means that teachers in all of these countries are in agreement with each other in terms of using different types of activities in the classroom. They believe that pair work and group work activities can help their pupils to communicate in the class, and this is basically in parallel with the principles of CLT that focus on using pair and group work activities in the classroom. According to these findings, it seems that most of the teachers in this sample believe in the students' cooperation and active participation in the classroom, leading to the negotiation of meanings, improvement of language practice and communication abilities, as well as increase of the learners' role and talking time (see also Brandes & Ginnis, 1986; Ellis, 2003; Jones, 2007; Ozsevik, 2010; Chang, 2011). The results of this research are also consistent with other studies where teachers show positive attitudes towards using pair and group work in their classes (e.g. Karavas-Doukas (1996) in Greece, Saricoban & Tilfarlioglu (1999) in Turkey, Razmjoo & Riazi (2006) in Iran, Batak & Andersson (2009) in Sweden and France, Shihiba Salama Embark (2011) in Libya, Al-Mekhlafi (2011) in Oman, Coskun (2011) in Turkey).

However, CLT should not be limited to the use of pair and group work only since there are also other factors which may be influential in selecting different social forms in the classroom. Thus, it is the teacher who should create a balance in using different activities and interac-



tion patterns in the class with regard to the contexts, facilities, and learners' types, styles, and needs as well as the teaching objectives (see also Thaler, 2012). According to Savignon (2002: 22) ...

Communicative language teaching does not require work in small groups or pairs; group tasks have been found helpful in many contexts as a way of increasing the opportunity and motivation for communication. Classroom work in groups or pairs should not, however, be considered an essential feature and may well be inappropriate in some contexts.

- **Types of error correction**

Concerning the question about the two types of error correction that are mostly used in CLT classes, the majority of the German and Dutch teachers participating in the present research believe that peer-correction is more useful than self-correction for their students. However, most Iranian teachers have selected self-correction as the most useful method, and in the case of Swedish teachers, they show a positive attitude towards both methods equally. Table 11 depicts these differences clearly.

		Error Correction		Total
		Peer-Correction	Self-Correction	
Germany	Count	18	16	34
	% within Country	52.9%	47.1%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	6	3	9
	% within Country	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	12	12	24
	% within Country	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Iran	Count	22	29	51
	% within Country	43.1%	56.9%	100.0%
Total	Count	58	60	118
	% within Country	49.2%	50.8%	100.0%

Table 11. Teachers' attitudes towards the types of error corrections

The result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2(3) = 2.04, P = .563 > .05$ ) indicates that the differences observed in Table 11 are not significant. This means that there is no significant statistical disparity between the opinions of the teachers in this study regarding the types of error correction.

In general, correction is one of the important factors in the process of language teaching which can be considered as a kind of tool for the learners' progress in the acquisition of a language. Correction is mostly done and determined by the teachers using different techniques, such as explicit and implicit correction, peer-correction, self-correction, clarification request, repetition, recast, metalinguistic feedback, and elicitation. Among these types,



peer- and self-correction can be considered as the main techniques usually applied by teachers in communicative classes since in learner-centered approaches where cooperative learning is implemented and learner autonomy is emphasized, self- and peer-correction have been substantiated as necessary methods in language classes (see also Rief, 1990; Edwards, 2000; Sultana, 2009). In contrast, in teacher-fronted classes where the teacher is the dominant figure in the classroom, correction mainly comes from the teacher. In this way the authoritative figure of the teacher is reinforced. However, the selection and application of any method depend on the specific educational setting and learners' needs and types (see also Sultana, 2009).

In the case of this study, it seems that the Iranian students are more individualistic in comparison to Europeans in this regard, and this may lead them to be more self-reliant. Within this framework, the students prefer to self-correct when they notice a mistake (see also the results of a study by Pishghadam, Hashemi, & Norouz Kermanshahi (2011) which examines the Iranian students' tendencies towards teacher and self-correction, and also a study by Ahangari (2014) which shows the positive effect of self-correction on Iranian students' pronunciation). The Swedish teachers in this study think that their students can benefit from both types of techniques when dealing with their mistakes. In this way, they can encourage a sense of autonomy as well as cooperation among their students. Similarly, German and Dutch teachers' preferences towards peer-correction indicate that they may try to increase their learners' level of participation in the learning process and make them motivated in following the principles of cooperative learning.

### **(C) Items 32-41 → appropriateness of CLT in different countries**

Based on the results displayed in Table 12, it can be claimed that the majority of the European respondents in this study—46% of German, 42.8% of Dutch, and 46.6% of Swedish teachers—agree with the fact that CLT is suitable in their contexts. Put differently, they believe that this approach is compatible with the students' learning styles, needs and interests and, at the same time, teaching conditions in their countries. In contrast, Iranian teachers believe that the principles and characteristics of CLT are not compatible with the teaching situation and their learners' needs, styles and interests. In this sense, it can be concluded that Iranian teachers working in an Asian country which is non-westernized have to face some difficulties when applying CLT in their classes. Thus, it seems that in the case of the present research,



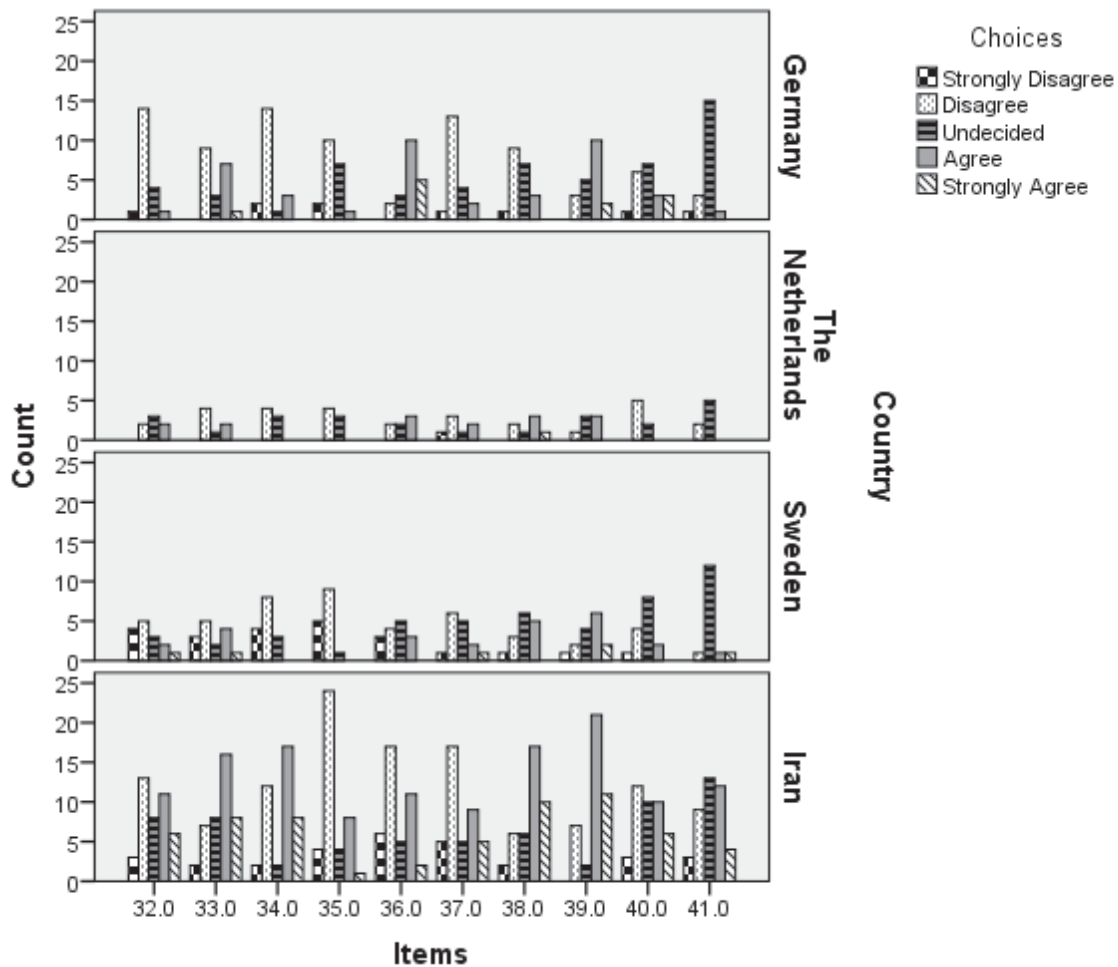
the difference which exists between the Western and Non-Western countries is more important than the differences between ESL and EFL contexts since as in Iran, English is taught as a foreign language in Germany, The Netherlands, and Sweden; however, based on the findings, the European teachers in this sample think that this approach is compatible with their contexts.

		Choices Context					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Germany	Count	9	83	56	41	11	200
	% within Country	4.5%	41.5%	28.0%	20.5%	5.5%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	1	29	24	15	1	70
	% within Country	1.4%	41.4%	34.3%	21.4%	1.4%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	23	47	49	25	6	150
	% within Country	15.3%	31.3%	32.7%	16.7%	4.0%	100.0%
Iran	Count	30	124	63	132	61	410
	% within Country	7.3%	30.2%	15.4%	32.2%	14.9%	100.0%
Total	Count	63	283	192	213	79	830
	% within Country	7.6%	34.1%	23.1%	25.7%	9.5%	100.0%

Table 12. Teachers' attitudes towards the appropriateness of CLT

The result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2(12) = 86.23, P = .000 < .05$ ) also shows that the differences observed in Table 12 between the teachers' attitudes towards the appropriateness of CLT in their contexts are significant.

Graph 2 clearly represents the teachers' responses to each item. Based on this graph, teacher opinions towards most of the items, i.e. 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 40, and 41 are discussed in this part, while items 35 and 39 which are related to the answers of the teachers and students in the first sections of their questionnaires will be examined as overlapping items after the presentation of the students' ideas.



Graph 2. Frequencies of items (32-41) by choices in each country (teachers)

As is clear from the above graph, in response to item 32 (*The classic view on teachers' and learners' roles in my country **is not** compatible with CLT*) and in contrast to German and Swedish respondents who do not agree with this statement, Iranian teachers agree with this item, suggesting that CLT is not appropriate in the Iranian context as an Asian country. In other words, the conventional role of teachers and students in Iran does not match the principles of CLT, which urges students and teachers to be more independent in the classroom. The opinions of Iranian teachers can also be confirmed through other previous studies which have been conducted on the appropriateness of CLT in different contexts (e.g. Chen, 1988; Coleman, 1996; Li, 1998; Zhu, 2003; Chowdhury, 2003; Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004; Li, 2004; Butler, 2005; Beyene, 2008; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Dailey, 2010). This series of research reveals that the typical roles of students and teachers in the classroom, which are to a certain extent related to their cultural background, are sometimes incompatible with the principles of CLT, which encourage independence on the part of teachers and students in the classroom. In other words, the concept of autonomy can be challenging in EFL, especially Non-





Western contexts where this idea would be considered as something unusual or even strange due to the social and cultural norms. With regard to this item, Dutch respondents prefer to take a neutral position. This may imply two perspectives: (1) these teachers do not have a thorough perception of the effect of this factor on the implementation of CLT in their classes or (2) they do not believe in the crucial role of this element in the process of teaching.

This contrasting position between Iranian and European teachers is also obvious in item 33 (*Students have a passive style of learning in my country*). According to the results obtained, unlike the responses of interviewees in this study (see the Interview Section related to the probable difficulties of the teachers when using CLT in their classes), German, Dutch and Swedish teachers believe that their students do not have passive learning styles; Iranian respondents, however, do agree with this issue and think that their learners are not active enough in their classes. This idea can also be discussed when referring to the effect of the cultural background and the roles of the students in different contexts (e.g. see Chen, 1988; Coleman, 1996; Li, 1998; Zhu, 2003; Chowdhury, 2003; Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004; Li, 2004; Butler, 2005; Beyene, 2008; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Incecay & Incecay, 2009; Dailey, 2010; Sreehari, 2012; Vongxay, 2013; Farhad, 2013). Most of these studies conducted in Asian contexts show that EFL teachers are generally considered as the only source and transmitter of knowledge who should be respected by the students, while the students themselves are just passive receivers of information and listeners. Thus, in comparison to European students, who seem to be more outspoken, most of the students in Asian countries prefer to be silent and listen to their teachers in the class. Put differently, most of the students in Europe are extroverted, while Asian students tend to be more introverted and consider silence as a kind of politeness (see also Kaier, 2014). Within this framework, in some societies asking questions of teachers is impolite since they are considered as the individuals who are knowledgeable and should be respected by the students (see also Pratt-Johnson, 2006; Yen's study (2014) on the cultural barriers of native English teachers in EFL contexts and Xiao's study (2006) on some of the Irish English teachers' problems with Chinese students' learning styles). In this sense, the cultural identity of students and teachers can influence their behaviors and expectations in the classroom. Thus, it can be concluded that the results of the items 32 and 33 are somehow related to each other since both of them are concerned with



the impact of culture and pre-determined roles of teachers and students on the process of language teaching.

Concerning item 34 (*Students lack motivation for developing communicative competence in my country*), the same contrasting ideas are presented by the teachers in this sample. Therefore, as with items 32 and 33, the Iranian teachers believe that their students are not so motivated to develop their communicative competence which can be considered as a barrier in applying CLT in their classes, while the German, Dutch and Swedish teachers take the opposite view. They think that their pupils are motivated enough to use their skills and knowledge to act with communicative competence when speaking English. On the one hand, this contrast can occur due to the factors which were discussed earlier in items 32 and 33 while on the other hand, it can be related to the students' needs and demands in their classes. The Iranian students in EFL classrooms may lack motivation to take part in communicative activities and develop their communicative competence due to their final examinations being mostly grammar-based. As a result, in this situation the students aim to pass their exams with good grades and may not be so willing to take part in communicative activities that are not important for them. Furthermore, they (Iranian students in this sample) may not have enough opportunities to use the language outside the classroom, which may demotivate them to communicate in the classroom. With regard to German, Swedish and Dutch teachers' opinions, the case is different since in these countries students have some chances to contact native speakers of English through a variety of programs, such as exchange students, online projects, tandem learning, etc. These kinds of possibilities can provide the grounds for encouraging the students to communicate and participate in communicative activities in the classroom. However, such conditions in a country like Iran cannot be easily established.

In response to item 36 (*Classes are too large for the effective use of CLT in my country*) which deals with one of the problems of EFL teachers when applying CLT in their classes, Iranian and Swedish respondents maintain that they do not have such a problem regarding their classes, while Dutch and German teachers hold the opposite view (the German teachers' position is also confirmed in the interview section of this study where some of the interviewees consider large classes as a kind of barrier to applying CLT). It means that these teachers believe that the size of their classes has a negative effect on using CLT in their con-



texts, and this is something beyond their control since the school authorities are responsible for it.

Considering this issue, McKeachie (1978: 207) argues that “large classes are simply not as effective as small classes for retention of knowledge, critical thinking and attitude change.” He also maintains that “while many teaching methods could be used in large groups, it is probable that more time is devoted to lecturing than in smaller classes[; furthermore,] the large class often reduces the teacher’s sense of freedom in choosing teaching methods, assigning papers, or testing to achieve varying objectives.” In a similar vein, large classes can put limitations on student participation in the class since in such classes the interaction pattern usually happens in one direction either from teacher to students or from student to student. Within this framework, large classes cause a lot of difficulties for the teachers to manage and control those activities which are usually used in communicative classes, especially when it is not possible to move the chairs and desks in the classroom (see also Al-Mutawa & Kailani, 1989, as cited in Al-Mohanna, 2010; Li, 2004). This in turn can influence the motivation of the students to communicate in the classes. It should be noted that the opinions of Iranian teachers in this study can be understood in the light of the fact that the present study was conducted at English institutes in Iran, where the number of students in each class is usually less than 15, so the classes in these institutes are not large.

Item 37 (*Materials and textbooks are inappropriate for using CLT in my country*) is among those items upon which the majority of the teachers in these countries have the same opinion since most of them have chosen the options “disagree” and “strongly disagree” more than other choices. This implies that the materials and textbooks with which the teachers provided are in agreement with the objectives and principles of CLT, and they can be used to teach English based on this approach. In this sense, within the scope of this research, materials and textbooks do not have negative effects on the implementation of CLT. In other words, the lack of resources and materials which is sometimes problematic for the teachers in the use of CLT in their contexts is not considered as a challenging issue in the setting of the present study.

However, in terms of item 38 (*Grammar-based examination in my country has negative effect on implementing CLT*) which refers to the backwash effect of examinations on the implementation of CLT, some contrasting ideas can be detected. With regard to this issue, considered as one of the main problems of teachers in using CLT in different contexts (see for



example Ellis, 1994; Li, 1998; Rao, 2002; Sakui, 2004; Li, 2004; Ozsevik, 2010; Wu, 2010; Coskun, 2011; Farhad, 2013), the Iranian and Dutch teachers in this study believe that the grammar-based examinations at their schools and institutes have a negative effect on the use of this approach since they think that these examinations force them to concentrate on other language elements and skills more than communication and speaking. Within this framework, they feel they should help their students to pass their examinations with good marks, and this is exactly what their school authorities, parents, and students want them to do (see also the results of item 34). In contrast to these two groups, the German teachers maintain that their examinations have no negative effect on the implementation of this approach. This may imply that their examinations are not grammar-based only, and the other language skills are considered in them as well. Finally, considering the neutral position of Swedish teachers towards this issue, it can be concluded that Swedish respondents are uncertain about the effect of their examinations on applying CLT or they do not consider this factor as a kind of determining element affecting the way of teaching in the classroom.

The last items discussed in this part are items 40 (*CLT produces fluent but inaccurate learners*) and 41 (*CLT neglects the differences between EFL (English as a foreign language) and ESL (English as a second language) teaching context*) which deal with two controversial issues in CLT. Based on the findings, in response to these two items, some contrasting and even unfavorable positions can be noticed. The avoidance of teaching grammar as well as focusing exclusively on speaking are among the most common misconceptions of CLT held by the teachers (see also Thompson, 1996; Wu, 2008). Put differently, many teachers may mistakenly think that CLT does not pay attention to grammar, but rather to oral proficiency alone. As a result, they may not focus on teaching grammatical structures and try to work on different techniques to enhance students' fluency in oral skills. However, as Dailey (2010: 10) states, "this is inaccurate in that grammar is considered to be necessary to insure efficient communication and that communication can be learned not only through speaking, but reading and writing as well." In this sense, "CLT principles suggest a gradual development of language from fluency to accuracy. Though its primary goal is fluency but progressively accuracy is also expected" (Ahmed, 2013: 1332).

Keeping these misconceptions in mind, regarding item 40 the Iranian teachers in this study believe that although CLT can help their students become fluent, they still have problems in terms of the concept of accuracy when using the language. This implies that they



may have some misconceptions about this approach, i.e. paying no attention to accuracy or grammatical structures when using CLT in their classes. However, one of the principles of CLT is to develop fluency and accuracy at the same time in order to make students communicatively competent (see also Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In contrast to the Iranian teachers, the Dutch teachers disagree with this issue, while the Swedish and German respondents take a neutral position towards it. However, it should be mentioned that in the case of the German teachers, neutral and disagree opinions are equally strong (when taking their answers to the “disagree” and “strongly disagree” options together). Within this framework, it seems that these teachers consider fluency and accuracy equally important or have a balanced view towards teaching grammar and putting emphasis on speaking.

Likewise, item 41 indicates a sense of dissatisfaction among the Iranian teachers with the CLT approach where they believe that CLT does not consider the differences which exist between EFL and ESL contexts, while the European respondents prefer to take a neutral position there. It is believed that in EFL contexts students have little exposure to the target language, offering limited opportunities to use the language in real-life situations, which is considered as the main aim in CLT. As a result, some EFL teachers think that CLT ignores this important difference between EFL and ESL contexts, where the students have enough chances to use the target language in authentic situations (see also Ellis, 1996; Li, 1998; Rao, 2002; Li, 2004; Hiep, 2007; Ozsevik, 2010). Considering this fact, the European teachers may think that their students have some chances to use the target language outside of the classes in their countries via travelling, exchange programs at schools and media, or they may not believe in any potential differences between these two environments. Due to this reason, their ideas are different to those of their Iranian counterparts.

The Iranian teachers' opinions can be justified through the fact that they think the principles of the Communicative Approach or CLT fail to consider the characteristics of their context in which the students have limited chances to visit the target country or have exposure to the target language and culture in order to receive enough linguistic inputs from the environment. Moreover, their learners have different aims of learning the foreign language in comparison to the ESL learners who are immersed in English. Against this background, some EFL teachers think that the Communicative Approach is more appropriate for those who want to study or live in an English speaking country (ESL context) than those wishing to stay



in their own countries (EFL contexts) (see also Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Stern, 1992; Li, 2004; Ozsevik, 2010; Chang, 2011).

These distinctions between EFL and ESL contexts can be caused by many factors, such as the learners' needs and purposes, educational policies, materials and teaching aids, curricula and examinations, as well as teachers' language proficiency. A further factor which can be influential in this regard is motivation. Generally speaking, motivation can be hypothesized as being either integrative or instrumental in the field of language learning. The main difference between these two types of motivation is related to the purpose of language learning, as decided by the students themselves. The former refers to those learners who learn the target language for aims of communication, integrating with the target language society, and being interested in the target language culture, while the latter is concerned with those students who learn the target language for practical and instrumental reasons like getting a good grade or job (see also Rao, 2002; Jin, Singh, & Li, 2005; Ozsevik, 2010). It is believed that learners can learn a language successfully when they have integrative motivation. Within this framework, since learners in ESL contexts are motivated to merge into the target language community, it can be concluded that they are more likely to have integrative motivation. Against this background, ESL teaching programs are mainly aimed at helping learners improve their communicative competence. However, learners in EFL environments are frequently instrumentally motivated to study and learn English. This implies students commonly learn English either because of their school requirements or their desire to pass the examinations (see also Li, 1998; Gorsuch, 2000; Liao, 2000). As a result, the motivation of the Iranian students in learning English can be considered as another factor which affects the Iranian teachers' responses about the inappropriateness of CLT in an EFL context like Iran in comparison to the ESL context.

#### ***4.1.2. Research Question 2***

**According to EFL teachers, how does CLT give insight into the target language culture(s)?**

This research question is related to the second section of the teacher questionnaire (items 16-31) concerning the cultural characteristics of CLT. The results in this part will be presented in three different sections. These sections consist of:



- a. CLT and the promotion of culture learning,
- b. CLT and the development of cultural aspects, and finally
- c. CLT and the enhancement of positive or negative attitudes towards cultures.

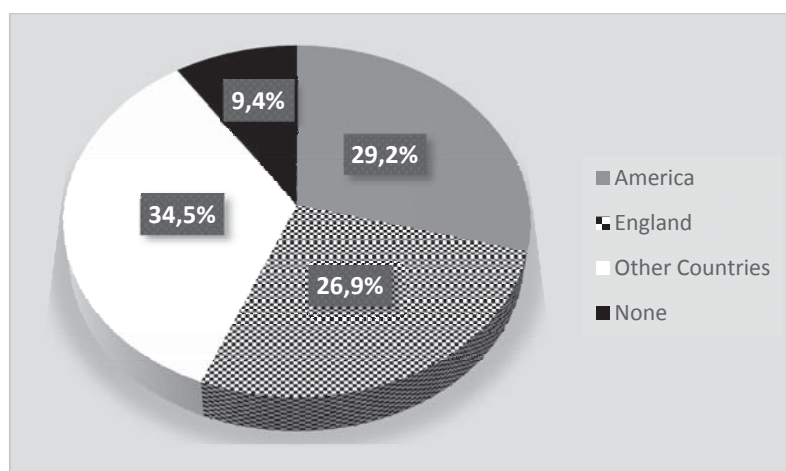
### (a) CLT and the promotion of culture learning

Items 23 to 27 (see Appendix A, Teachers' Questionnaire) target CLT's effects on the promotion of culture learning. Based on the results displayed in Table 13, the majority of the teachers in this sample (34.5%) believe that CLT facilitates learning the culture of other countries. 29.2% (underlined) believe that this approach helps students to become familiar with American culture and another 26.9% (italic) think that it contributes to the learning of British culture; however, 9.4% of the teachers consider that CLT does not play any role in helping the learners understand cultures. These differences also reveal that although at first glance CLT seems to focus on the culture of "Other Countries" (high percentage: 34.5%), the sum of the frequencies and percentages for British and American cultures shows that this approach still puts more emphasis on the culture of these two countries, which are most commonly considered as the target countries or cultures in different contexts. This is not so surprising since CLT originally comes from the UK and US where "British and American scholars [introduced it] to promote the teaching of usable communicative skills in L2 instruction" (Dörnyei, 2013: 162). Furthermore, the influence of these two countries from the historical (the worldwide distribution of the British Empire and its colonies) and economic (the US as the main economic power in the world) perspectives can be considered as another reason in this regard.

		Choices				Total
		British	American	Other	None	
Germany	Count	73	74	43	24	214
	% within Country	34.1%	34.6%	20.1%	11.2%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	15	15	14	11	55
	% within Country	27.3%	27.3%	25.5%	20.0%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	43	41	48	20	152
	% within Country	28.3%	27.0%	31.6%	13.2%	100.0%
Iran	Count	67	85	149	14	322
	% within Country	21.3%	27.0%	47.3%	4.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	198	215	254	69	736
	% within Country	26.9%	<u>29.2%</u>	34.5%	9.4%	100.0%

Table 13. Teachers' attitudes towards the effect of CLT on culture learning

These different views are clearly represented in Graph 3.



Graph 3. Percentages for the effect of CLT on culture learning (teachers)

In order to examine the significant differences between the teachers' attitudes in terms of the effect of CLT on the promotion of culture learning in these four countries, a chi-square analysis was run to probe this issue. The result of the test ( $\chi^2 (9) = 58.33, P = .000 < .05$ ) indicates that the differences observed in Table 13 are significant. Table 14 indicates the opinions of teachers towards each item by countries as a whole.

Item		England	America	Other	None	Total
23	N	58.00	59.00	51.00	5.00	173
	%	<u>33.52</u>	34.10	29.47	2.89	100
24	N	47.00	51.00	54.00	5.00	157
	%	29.94	<u>32.48</u>	34.39	3.18	100
25	N	34.00	40.00	52.00	14.00	140
	%	24.29	28.57	<u>37.14</u>	10.00	100
26	N	27.00	29.00	43.00	28.00	127
	%	21.26	22.83	<u>33.86</u>	22.05	100
27	N	32.00	36.00	54.00	17.00	139
	%	23.02	25.90	<u>38.85</u>	12.23	100

Table 14. Teachers' attitudes towards the effect of CLT on culture learning by items

Considering the answers to item 23, the results indicate that the teachers in the sample believe that CLT makes the students familiar with the American cultural aspects and way of life more than other countries. However, the percentages obtained in this study with regard to England are also high in this item. The results of the remaining items (24-27) show high percentages for other countries and with a slight difference for America, especially in item





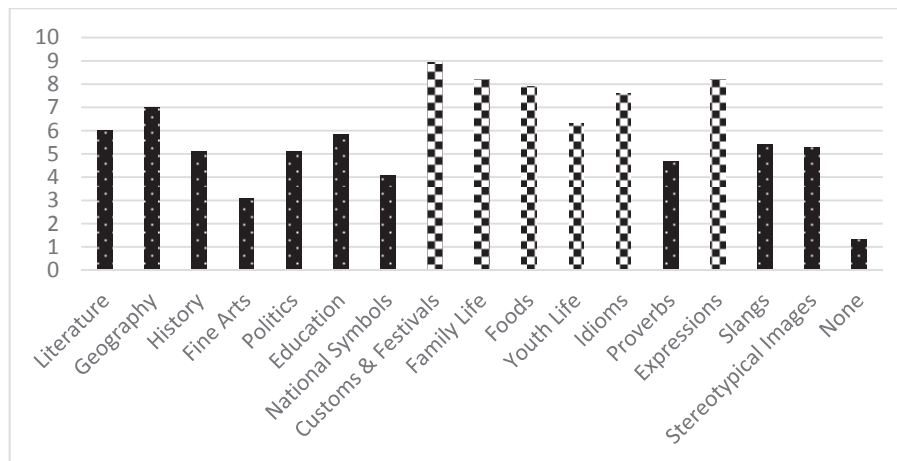
24. However, when summing up the percentages, it is revealed that this approach still focuses mostly on the culture of the Anglo-American contexts in all of these items. This implies that along with some authors who claim that this approach refers mostly to Anglo-American cultures (e.g. Krumm, 2007; Rappel, 2009; Najafi Sarem & Qasemi, 2010), the teachers in this sample also believe that CLT considers these two countries more than others.

### (b) CLT and the development of cultural aspects

Item 28 of the teacher questionnaire deals with different cultural aspects related to the two countries of England and America which can be developed by applying CLT in the classroom. Table 15 displays the frequencies and percentages of the aspects of English and American cultures that are learned through CLT. The percentages range from a high of 8.92% for Customs and Festival to a low of 3.07% for Fine Arts. These differences are clearer in Graph 4.

American & English Culture	N	%
Literature	41	5.99
Geography	48	7.02
History	35	5.12
Fine Arts	21	3.07
Politics	35	5.12
Education	40	5.85
National Symbols	28	4.09
Customs & Festivals	61	8.92
Family Life	56	8.19
Foods	54	7.89
Youth Life	43	6.29
Idioms	52	7.60
Proverbs	32	4.68
Expressions	56	8.19
Slang	37	5.41
Stereotypical Images	36	5.26
None	9	1.32
Total Responses	684	100

Table 15. Aspects of English and American cultures learned through CLT (teachers)



Graph 4. Frequencies of item 28 (teachers)

The result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2 (16) = 73.84, P = .000 < .05$ ) indicates that the differences observed in Table 15 are significant. Teacher opinions on this issue in each country can be seen in Appendix D, Table 1.

As is clear from Graph 4, those aspects of culture which are related to the everyday life of people in England and America have been selected more than others. Considering these differences, it can be concluded that the teachers in this study believe that CLT gives more insight into those aspects referring to the daily life of the English and American people, and this is completely compatible with the objectives of CLT that are concerned with the everyday way of life in the target cultures (see Section 2.2.3 for the discussion about place of culture in CLT). Furthermore, it should be mentioned that among the other aspects, Geography has the highest percentage. This may result from the fact that Geography is among those aspects which are simpler and more concrete to grasp. In fact, Geography can provide students with important initial images of the foreign country or community, for example through maps showing size, location, etc. Moreover, as Heatwole (2006) suggests, Geography can have a direct influence on the way people live and behave in a specific country. In other words, it can affect the daily life of people to some extent, especially in terms of food, dressing, politics, economy, etc. Thus, this aspect may be among those which are most frequently taught by EFL teachers and materials. With regard to CLT, since this method also focuses on daily life in the target cultures, the high percentage of Geography can be understood.

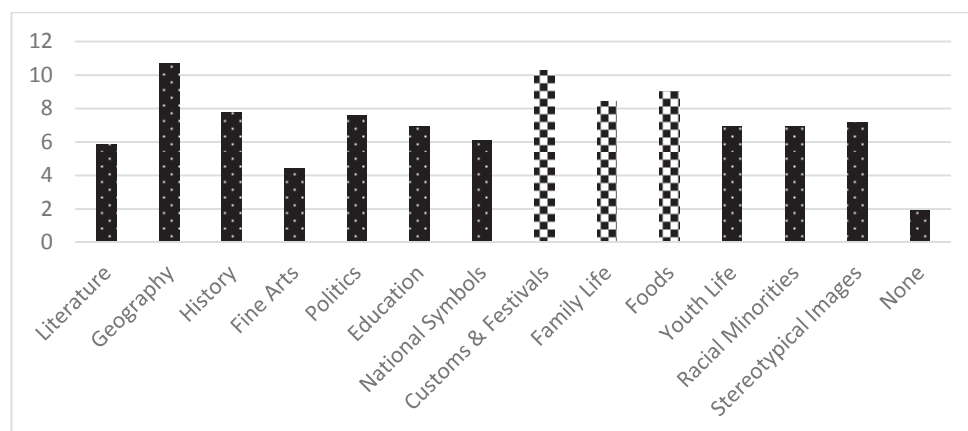
In line with this issue, item 29 of the teacher questionnaire is also concerned with the different cultural aspects of other countries aside from England and America. Table 16 depicts



teachers' ideas about different cultural aspects which can be represented in classes using CLT. The percentages range from a high of 10.71% for Geography to a low of 4.41% for Fine Arts. These differences are clearer in Graph 5. As can be seen from this graph, it seems that from the teachers' points of view, as with England and America, CLT pays much more attention to the daily life of the people in other countries as well. In addition, in comparison to the rest of the options, Geography again has the highest percentage, as with item 28 above.

The Cultures of Other Countries	N	%
Literature	28	5.88
Geography	51	10.71
History	37	7.77
Fine Arts	21	4.41
Politics	36	7.56
Education	33	6.93
National Symbols	29	6.09
Customs & Festivals	49	10.29
Family Life	40	8.40
Foods	43	9.03
Youth Life	33	6.93
Racial Minorities	33	6.93
Stereotypical Images	34	7.14
None	9	1.89
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 16. Aspects of other countries learned through CLT (teachers)



Graph 5. Frequencies of item 29 (teachers)



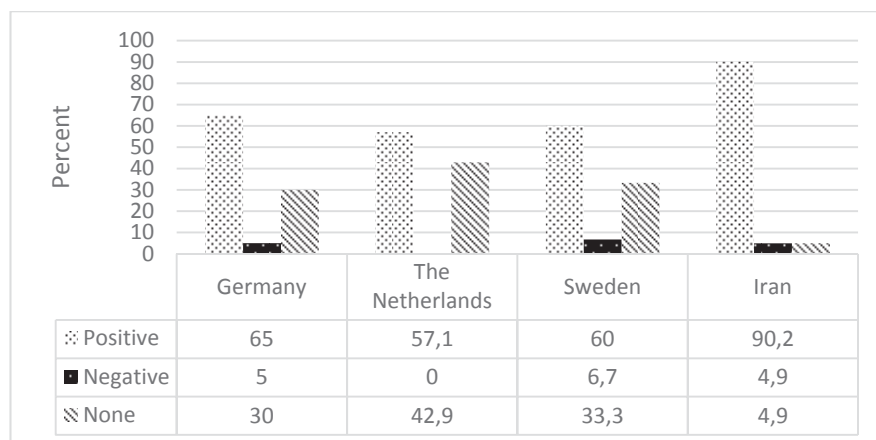
The result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2 (13) = 44.17$   $P = .000 < .05$ ) indicates that the differences observed in Table 16 are significant. As with item 28, teacher opinion on this issue in each country can be seen in Appendix D, Table 2.

### (c) CLT and the enhancement of positive or negative attitudes towards cultures

Item 30 (see Appendix A, Teachers' Questionnaire) probes the opinions of teachers concerning the effect of CLT on students' attitudes towards English and American cultures. Based on the results displayed in Table 17, it can be concluded that the majority of the teachers in these four countries believe that CLT fosters a positive effect on the students' attitude towards English and American cultures. This issue is also clearly presented in Graph 6. The result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2 (6) = 11.85$ ,  $P = .065 > .05$ ) indicates that the difference observed in Table 17 are not significant.

		Item 30			Total
		Positive	Negative	None	
Germany	Count	13	1	6	20
	% within Country	65.0%	5.0%	30.0%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	4	0	3	7
	% within Country	57.1%	0.0%	42.9%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	9	1	5	15
	% within Country	60.0%	6.7%	33.3%	100.0%
Iran	Count	37	2	2	41
	% within Country	90.2%	4.9%	4.9%	100.0%
Total	Count	63	4	16	83
	% within Country	75.9%	4.8%	19.3%	100.0%

Table 17. The effect of CLT on the students' attitudes towards English and American cultures (teachers)



Graph 6. Percentages of item 30 (teachers)



As mentioned in the literature, students' attitude towards a FL is considered as one of the significant predictors of success in language learning. When students have a positive and pleasing experience of a language, they do not suffer from FL anxiety but rather develop greater desire and motivation to learn the language (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2010). This mutual relationship between the positive experience and the reduction of anxiety in language learning can be discussed further when we consider the close link between language and culture, as explained previously. In this sense, FL teaching is not limited to learning the linguistic elements, such as grammar and vocabulary only; it also comprises cultural elements which are part of the language since language and culture are closely interrelated and it is difficult to teach one without any references to the other. Within this framework, a language cannot be learned and understood only from the books and dictionaries, but rather from the way of life of the people who are the actual users of that particular language. As a result, developing a positive attitude towards a foreign culture can stimulate a positive insight into the language, leading to success in learning (see also Mitchell & Myles, 2004; Sarıçoban & Çalışkan, 2011). This is one of the seven goals of cultural instructions, as stated by Tomalin and Stempleski (1993: 7-8), adapting Seelye's (1988) goals ...

To stimulate students' intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people

Put differently, positive learner attitudes towards the foreign culture and the people who live within that culture can be considered as a supplementary element which helps the teachers develop high motivation among the students in learning the FL. This concept is also discussed by Byram (1997) under the name of 'attitude' as the ability to be curious and open towards other cultures to foster interest and positive insights towards others. In this sense, one of the teachers' duties is to encourage the students to become interested in the target language culture and society.

Consequently, according to the findings obtained in this study, it can be concluded that the communicative way of teaching seems to be successful in stimulating a positive attitude towards British and American cultures and, as a result, English language among the students.

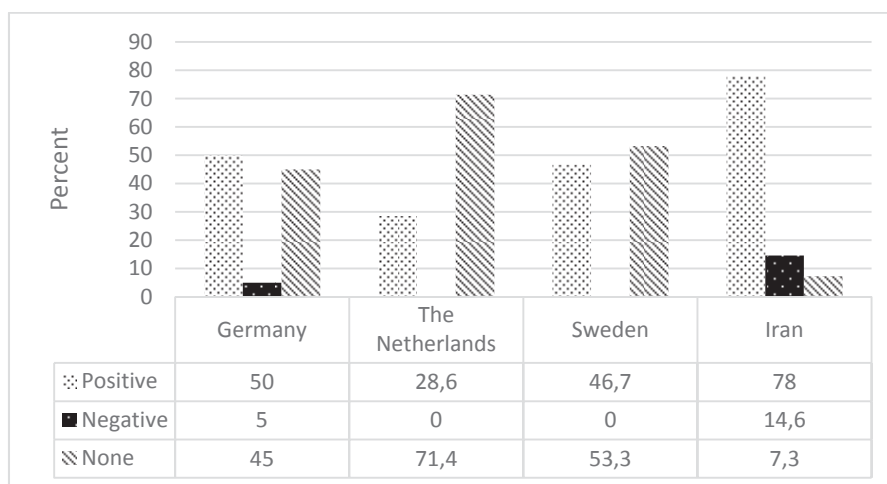
In a similar vein, item 31 examines the opinions of teachers concerning the effect of CLT on student attitudes towards other cultures apart from American and English ones. According to the following table, it can be concluded that German and Iranian teachers believe in the positive influence of CLT on student attitudes towards the culture of other countries,



while Dutch and Swedish teachers in this sample consider that CLT has no effect on the attitudes of their students towards the culture of other countries (these ideas are clearly displayed in Graph 7). Put differently, the German and Iranian teachers think that CLT not only focuses on Anglo-American countries but also fosters positive attitudes towards other cultures. Considering this fact, it seems that to these teachers the principles of CLT support the idea of Thanasoulas (2001: 3), who proposes that “the teaching of culture is not akin to the transmission of information regarding the people of the target community or country—even though knowledge about (let alone experience of) the “target group” is an important ingredient.” In contrast, the Dutch and Swedish teachers believe that CLT does not develop any positive or negative attitudes towards other cultures. Their ideas may imply that talking about other cultures is merely limited to the transmission of some cultural knowledge to the students. It can be concluded that within this framework, no deep view towards other countries is presented in this approach, and the focus is mostly on America and England.

		Item 31			Total
		Positive	Negative	None	
Germany	Count	10	1	9	20
	% within Country	50.0%	5.0%	45.0%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	2	0	5	7
	% within Country	28.6%	0.0%	71.4%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	7	0	8	15
	% within Country	46.7%	0.0%	53.3%	100.0%
Iran	Count	32	6	3	41
	% within Country	78.0%	14.6%	7.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	51	7	25	83
	% within Country	61.4%	8.4%	30.1%	100.0%

Table 18. The effect of CLT on the students' attitudes towards culture of other countries (teachers)



Graph 7. Percentages of item 31 (teachers)



The result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2 (6) = 23.231, P = .001 < .05$ ) shows the differences observed in Table 18 to be significant.

#### 4.1.3. Research Question 3

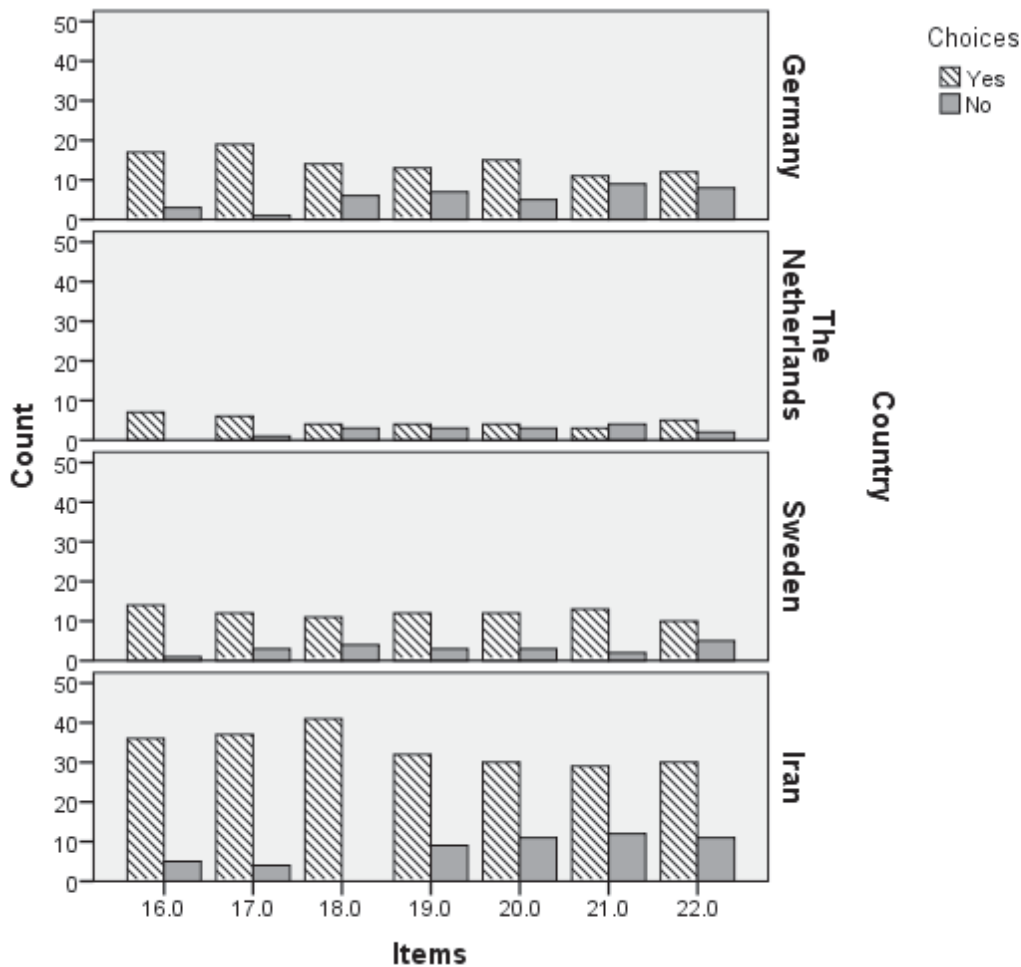
#### From the perspective of EFL teachers, how does CLT pay attention to the concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)?

Items 16-22 of the teacher questionnaire are concerned with the teachers' ideas about the development of ICC through CLT (see Appendix A, Teachers' Questionnaire). Therefore, this section consists of seven questions in yes/no format which refer to the development of knowledge, attitudes, and skills in order to make the students interculturally competent. As mentioned before, these questions were designed based on the model of ICC proposed by Byram in 1997.

According to the results presented in Table 19, it can be concluded that the majority of the teachers in this study—Germany 72.5%, the Netherlands 69%, Sweden 81.1%, and Iran 78.9%—believe that CLT pays attention to the promotion of Intercultural Communicative Competence in the classroom since most of the respondents have chosen the “yes” more than the “no” option in these seven questions. The result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2 (3) = 8.79, P = .032 < .05$ ) points out that the differences observed in Table 19 are significant. Graph 8 displays the answers of the teachers to each item separately.

		Choices		Total
		Yes	No	
Germany	Count	101	39	140
	% within Country	72.1%	27.9%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	33	16	49
	% within Country	67.3%	32.7%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	84	21	105
	% within Country	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Iran	Count	235	52	287
	% within Country	81.9%	18.1%	100.0%
Total	Count	453	128	581
	% within Country	78.0%	22.0%	100.0%

Table 19. Teachers' attitudes towards the promotion of ICC via CLT



Graph 8. Frequencies of items (16-22) by choices in each country (teachers)

Concerning the findings presented in the above graph, these teachers acknowledge that CLT can help students develop their intercultural competence by making them curious and aware of cross-cultural differences, interpreting the events from their own and other cultures, fostering a reflective view towards the cultural norms in their own culture and other cultures and, finally, understanding other people's feelings or empathizing with them. However, this result is in contrast with the opinion of some authors<sup>54</sup>, who believe that CLT does not focus on the concept of ICC, but rather on the transmission of cultural knowledge about the target countries, which are mostly England and America. For example, supporting this view, Crozet and Liddicoat (1999: 113) state ...

Communicative Language Teaching in its endeavor to teach learners to communicate in a foreign language overlooked both the links between language and culture and the necessity to understand communication between non-native speakers (the language learners) and na-

<sup>54</sup> e.g. Kramsch, 1993; Byarm, 1997; Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999; Krumm, 2007; Rappel, 2009; Najafi Sarem, 2010; Najafi Sarem & Qasemi, 2010





tive speakers as intercultural communication rather than communication in the target language.

This means that Communicative Language Teaching fails to consider the inseparability of the authentic use of a language from its cultural context. In other words, when we use a language, we actually get involved in a cultural act which includes two cultures: the culture of the learner and that of the target language. In this sense, the learner should be able to create a third cultural perspective between the home and the foreign cultures in order to see the things through different eyes (see also Kramsch, 1993; Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999). As a result, the supporters of this view believe that CLT does not pay attention to this double role of culture in intercultural communication. On the other hand, the proponents of the Communicative Approach emphasize the important place of culture in this approach and maintain that CLT helps us to understand language use and function as a kind of exchange of meanings under the influence of social and cultural values. Put differently, CLT leads us to develop understandings and perceptions about other people's opinions, beliefs, attitudes and values (see also Berns, 1990; Wei, 2001). The position of the proponents of CLT regarding the development of IC is clearer in the following quotations.

As Peterson and Coltrane (2003: 5) argue, "understanding the cultural context of day-to-day conversational conventions such as greetings, farewells, forms of address, thanking, making requests and giving or receiving compliments means more than just being able to produce grammatical sentences. It means knowing what is appropriate to say to whom, and in what situations, and it means understanding the beliefs and values represented by the various forms and usages of the language." In line with this view, referring to the socio-cultural component of CLT and the role of context in the negotiation of meaning, Savignon (2002: 22-23) also proposes that ...

In keeping with the notion of context of situation, CLT is properly seen as an approach, grounded in a theory of intercultural communicative competence that can be used to develop materials and methods appropriate to a given context of learning.

Put differently ...

Negotiation in CLT highlights the need for interlinguistic—that is, intercultural—awareness on the part of all involved (Byram 1997). Better understanding of the strategies used in the negotiation of meaning offers the potential for improving classroom practice of the needed skills (Savignon, 2002: 18).



Based on the results of the present work, the opinions of teachers in this study are more in agreement with the proponents of CLT who claim that this approach is basically grounded in the theory of ICC. This position is also supported by the interviewees in the interview section of the present research, where they believe that CLT can help students to better interact with people of other countries and cultures since the basis of this approach is communication, leading to the establishment of relationships with and understanding of others (See the Interview Section). The opinions of the teachers can be discussed in two different ways. First, these teachers may actually use CLT in their classes and act according to its principles. Within this framework, they think that this approach can help them to develop intercultural competence. Second, they may use a combination of methods to teach English language and culture in the class, but since their curriculum and syllabus are communicative-based, they consider that it is CLT which can help them to promote intercultural awareness and understanding among their learners. Against this background, the observation of these teachers' classes can shed more light on the success or failure of CLT in terms of the development of IC. Thus, a qualitative method of research in the form of classroom observation is very helpful in order to examine this issue better.

#### ***4.1.4. Research Questions 4 and 5***

- **What are the EFL teachers' perceived problems in terms of presenting the target culture or other cultures?**
- **When facing problems, what are the main strategies of EFL teachers in solving students' intercultural problems?**

Prior to presenting the results related to the fourth and fifth research questions, some background considerations are offered to help clarify the findings obtained in these questions. As mentioned earlier in the present chapter, these research questions refer to the results of the teacher questionnaires (2 open-ended questions) and interviews. Thus, in the first part, the findings related to the open-ended questions will be presented, followed by a discussion of the results of the interviews in the next section.

As described earlier in this study, it is currently believed that language learning cannot be achieved without a reasonable awareness of the cultural contexts within which the language exists (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). For this reason, language teachers should not only help their students to master language forms and elements but also to become familiar with the



cultural concepts in the target language culture. Thus, as Byram and Risager (1999) state, teachers should act as cultural mediators between different cultures to help learners appreciate other people and their cultures. Considering this responsibility of the teachers, two open-ended questions were asked of the teachers participating in this study to investigate their potential difficulties with regard to teaching culture in the classroom.

**The results of the open-ended questions:**

- 1. Do you have any difficulties in presenting cultural topics in your classes? If yes, please elaborate on them.**
- 2. What are your main strategies to solve these difficulties?**

The results in this part will be presented for each country separately.



## Germany

No.	Problems	Strategies
1	No problem "We have open-minded students who are interested in other cultures."	
2	No problem	
3	Pupils with lack of spontaneity	Practicing
4	Students' lack of interest and motivation Students' passive attitudes Lack of my own experiences with daily life in the target cultures	Changing methods Finding new ways for motivating the students
5	Lack of time Large classes Students' lack of concentration	Struggling
6	Lack of up-to-date knowledge	Using the Internet
7	Lack of time	
8	No problem	
9	No problem	
10	Lack of time Having limited first-hand experience	Using authentic materials Gathering information about other cultures
11	Lack of my own familiarity with other cultures	Focusing on those cultures that I am familiar with
12	Group size Authentic materials Restriction of curriculum	Providing special courses (conversation classes, seminars) Using online contents
13	My own lack of authentic experience	Using films about other cultures
14	Lack of time	Using projects and additional materials as homework
15	Obsolete materials in the textbook	Using the Internet, newspapers, and magazines
16	No problem	
4 teachers did not provide any answers		

Table 20. German teachers' difficulties and their strategies in presenting cultural topics

As mentioned before, a total of 20 German EFL teachers participated in this study. Table 20 indicates the ideas of these teachers about two open-ended questions in their questionnaires. It should be mentioned that 4 German teachers who had filled in the questionnaires did not answer these two questions at the end of the questionnaire at all. As a result, the opinions of 16 German teachers are presented in detail in the above table.

As is clear from the responses, 5 teachers believe they do not have any problems when talking about cultural topics in their classes. This can be due to the similarities which exist between the German and British or American cultures. In other words, these German teach-



ers may think their culture is not inconsistent with the English language culture, either in England or America, and as a result there are not so many cultural differences which can be troublesome in the classroom. Furthermore, these teachers may focus on those subjects which are more palpable and easily understood by the students. For example, rather than beliefs and values, they may focus on Big-C culture like history, literature, geography, etc., in their classes. According to Tomalin and Stempleski (1993), these topics contain ideas which are easily used by books and teachers in the classroom. In addition, as the results of the interviews in the eighth question indicate, most of the teachers in this study present those cultural concepts which are related to English speaking countries, mainly England and America, and in this sense they may unconsciously avoid talking about other cultures which are further away from the students' own culture.

In contrast to these 5 respondents, the other German teachers think that lack of time, familiarity with the target cultures, experience, and authentic materials as well as large classes are among those crucial elements which may cause some problems when teaching culture. These problems are also discussed by Sercu et al. (2005), Gonen and Saglam (2012), and Karabinar and Guler (2012) in their studies on teachers' attitudes towards culture teaching in the classroom. For example, Gonen and Saglam (2012: 28-29) classify the teachers' problems in presenting cultural issues as follows:

- One of the problems that teachers may face is the overcrowded curriculum. The study of culture requires time; therefore, many teachers feel they cannot spare time for teaching foreign language culture in an already overcrowded curriculum.
- Another problem is that teachers may fear not having sufficient knowledge of the target culture. That is, teachers are afraid to teach culture because they think that they do not know enough about it, and that their role is limited to expose students to facts only.
- A third problem is negative student attitudes. Students often assume target culture phenomena consisting of new patterns of behavior; thus, they try to understand the target culture only through the framework of their own native culture.
- The fourth problem is the lack of adequate training. Teachers may not have been adequately trained in the teaching of culture and do not have suitable strategies and clear goals that would help them to create a framework for organizing instruction around cultural themes.



- Another problem is that teachers may not know how to measure cross cultural competence and changes in student attitudes as a result of culture teaching.

Based on the results in Table 20, one of the German teachers participating in this research concedes that sometimes students' disinterest and passive attitudes towards these issues are problematic when presenting cultural matters in the class. The students' lack of motivation or interest to learn about cultural concepts may be due to their language needs, which can be determined by the type of examinations at schools focusing more on the linguistic aspects of language learning. Another reason is related to the students' feelings and attitudes towards the new culture. According to Bennett's DMIS (1986), these students may be in a defensive mode where they prefer to stick to their own cultural norms and values. In this sense, cultural differences will not be an interesting topic for them since it triggers a defense mechanism towards such issues.

Regarding the difficulties mentioned above, these German teachers suggest different strategies, such as using the Internet, films, and other authentic materials, working on projects as homework to gather more information about other cultures, and using different methods for motivating the students to overcome their problems in dealing with cultural topics. These techniques and methods can help the teachers expose their students to foreign cultures, especially target language cultures.



## The Netherlands

No.	Problems	Strategies
1	Lack of appropriate materials	Using the Internet
2	Lack of time Pressure of exams The importance of the grammatical points	
3	No problem	
4	No problem “Holland is a small country. Students do not need to get to know other cultures in English classes. Culture just adds something extra.”	
5	Students’ making fun of habits in other cultures	Pointing out some aspects of our own behavior that strikes many foreigners as strange or typical  Acting out how a message would come across if it were delivered in our own country’s style
2 teachers did not provide any answers		

Table 21. Dutch teachers’ difficulties and strategies in presenting cultural topics

7 Dutch teachers took part in this research, 5 of whom answered the open-ended questions thoroughly. Among them, 2 teachers believe that they do not have any difficulties in presenting cultural aspects in their classes. This can also be related to the scope of their focus on cultural aspects and the similarity of the Dutch and English cultures, as discussed above. However, the rest of the Dutch teachers maintain that lack of time, their examinations, and students’ attitudes towards these issues sometimes cause problems for them. The problem of grammar-based examinations was mentioned several times by the Dutch teachers during the interviews as well. Regarding this issue, it can be concluded that the exam-oriented programs in some countries often lead to ignoring the teaching of culture in language classes.

The Dutch teachers in the present research try to solve their difficulties by using the Internet and talking about their own cultures from the perspective of foreigners, which can make their students more critical towards the evaluation of different cultures. In this way, the students become ready to take a new perspective and see the world through the eyes of other people.



## Sweden

No.	Problems	Strategies
1	Vast spread of English language all over the world	Focusing on various countries esp. when something happens in a country Talking about our own experiences
2	Avoiding stereotypes and superstitions	No overt presentation of cultures Getting the students to question the assumptions around events
3	Lack of materials	Finding additional materials
4	Problem in making these subjects interesting to the students	Comparison between other cultures and students' own culture
5	Avoiding stereotypes Challenging ideas The complexity of tasks The idea of culture itself	Using a variety of sources and types of input and exercises Aiming at discussion
6	Students' lack of interest in such issues Students' fear of speaking	Using communicative activities, the Internet, newspapers, and films Using my own materials
7	Presenting accurate and unbiased views	Presenting different views from different sources
8	Lack of time	No solution
9	Difficulty in finding valid information Lack of time	Having dialogue Preparing a flexible class plan
10	No problem	
11	Giving students enough information since the English speaking world is very big	Looking at different aspects of many countries Letting students experience themselves to build their own attitudes to reflect on what they have experienced Avoiding talking about my own or someone else's attitudes Letting the students think on their own
4 teachers did not provide any answers		

Table 22. Swedish teachers' difficulties and strategies in presenting cultural topics

15 Swedish teachers filled in the questionnaires in the present work. Among these teachers, 4 of them did not answer the last open-ended questions; thus, Table 22 presents the results of 11 teachers. Based on this table, most of the teachers consider their major difficulties in teaching culture to be stereotypes and superstitions, lack of time and materials, students'





disinterests, presenting valid and unbiased views or information, and the vast spread of English in the world.

Comparing the answers provided by the German and Dutch teachers, it can be concluded that aside from time, materials and student attitudes, for Swedish teachers, stereotypes, presentation of unbiased views, and vast spread of English language, which results in the development of both inter- and multicultural understanding among learners, are considered as some of the problematic issues. It seems that this group of teachers (Swedish respondents) is sensitive to the development of a valid, unbiased, and realistic perspective towards the other cultures.

According to the opinions presented by the Swedish teachers, the most frequent strategies for solving such problems are talking about their own experiences, getting students to question their assumptions, using the Internet and other materials, talking about different perspectives, establishing dialogue, and letting the students think on their own and reflect on their own experiences. These strategies indicate that Swedish teachers use a combination of techniques also suggested by German and Dutch teachers to make their students reflective and analytical towards different cultures, and this is also confirmed with the findings in other studies mentioned above.

## Iran

No.	Problems	Strategies
1	Students' negative views about foreign cultures	Encouraging students to talk about their own culture
2	Lack of explicit examples to talk about other cultures Lack of qualified teachers because of teacher training systems	Providing enough sources Considering this issue in teacher training syllabuses
3	Limitation in presenting cultural issues due to the control of authorities Inability of teachers to make decisions concerning this issue	
4	Talking about the unfamiliar issues	Being silent about unfamiliar ones Making the subject as funny as possible Using stories Changing the subject when it is necessary
5	No problem	
6	Vast cultural differences The age range of the students	Having a comparative view Making the students to have



		non-judgmental view
7	No problem "since most of the students are eager to learn about other cultures"	
8	Taking a lot of time to explain the new culture The contrast between the new culture and the students' own culture Lack of student interest	Talking about the students' own culture esp. where both cultures have the same events Using explanations Avoiding talking about this subject sometimes
9	Presenting taboo subjects	Changing the situation for example using a man instead of a woman
10	No problem "It is the responsibility of teachers to teach culture relevant to the material and the lesson."	
11	No problem	
12	Presenting cultural differences	Presenting similar example of oddities of our own culture
13	Students' lack of knowledge about the world and different cultures Students' lack of interests in such issues	Presenting exciting and interesting parts of other cultures Motivating the students to look for the differences
14	Lack of opportunity to talk about culture due to the inappropriateness of textbooks and materials in the class	Developing the textbooks and materials
15	Lack of time Students' lack of access to appropriate sources	Providing rich contents Vitalizing the learners and pushing them towards autonomy Surprising them with new contents
16	Lack of students' motivation Lack of educational equipment to present other cultures	
17	Lack of students' knowledge Students' indifference when discussing other cultures	Doing research projects on subjects
18	Students' disinterest in believing other cultures due to their religious background	
19	Students' families and cultural background Closed-mindedness and limited knowledge	"I cannot do anything. It's better to give more information to the students' families via classes and TV programs."
20	Political issues as well as religious considerations Students' social context and family background	Being highly selective in presenting cultural aspects Trying to change them or even putting them in a frame which might seem more appropriate and acceptable to the students
21	Students' inability to digest these issues because of their vast differences Students' lack of interest in these issues	Giving them awareness and insight into the fact that language and culture are inseparable



		Telling them that lack of cultural knowledge can make some competent users of English inadequate and disappointed in certain situations
22	The age range of the students in class	
23	Lack of students' openness to other cultures Students' judgmental view towards others	Making the students aware of the link between language and culture
24	Students' lack of familiarity with other cultures	Giving necessary information to them
25	Political problems in Iran Failure to talk about other cultures esp. western ones in Iran Students' lack of knowledge esp. about the US and UK	Giving explanations Using video clips, pictures, and films
26	Lack of availability of the information about the target cultures	Providing information based on one's own experiences and trips
27	Lack of exposure to real situations in order to use English	Making the class like a real situation
28	Students' difficulty in understanding other cultures due to the historical differences	Giving a close insight into the origin of cultures
29	Lack of students' familiarity with other cultures Students' problems in understanding other cultures Lack of freedom in presenting other cultures Parents' disagreement with talking about these issues	Using real objects and examples Bringing them in real situations Making them work in groups
12 teachers did not provide any answers		

Table 23. Iranian teachers' difficulties and strategies in presenting cultural topics

The above table indicates the Iranian teachers' opinions regarding culture teaching in the classroom. 12 teachers did not answer the questions. The majority of the 29 Iranian teachers who provided answers face some difficulties concerning teaching culture and talking about cultural topics in their classes. These problems mostly refer to students' lack of knowledge and interests, political and religious considerations, and students' and their parents' views towards cultural differences. In general, as Aliakbari (2004) states, the discussion about the link between language and culture has had an influential effect on the English language programs in Iran. There are two main perspectives towards the incorporation of cultural topics in English classes in Iran. The first one refers to this idea that teaching English culture can lead to English linguistic imperialism and cultural invasion; thus, English language should be taught in a culturally neutral way. However, the second perspective puts emphasis on the integration of teaching culture and language in English classes. These controversial perceptions affect the way teachers, parents and even students interpret cultural topics to a great



extent. In other words, some of them may see cultural topics as a kind of threat to their own cultures and religious beliefs, while others treat them as something which must be discussed in language classrooms to make the students familiar with the cultural contexts in which the language exists. Within this framework, teachers should be careful when talking about such issues since some authors, policy makers and even parents consider English as a subject which represents and introduces western culture to the Iranian students, leading to cultural invasion (see also Mahboudi & Javdani, 2012). This can occur because of the vast differences between the western and Persian cultures in terms of their beliefs, especially religious ones. However, these kinds of problems cannot be considered as a kind of justification for ignoring cultural topics in the classroom since according to Mahboudi and Javdani (2012: 90) ...

Persian discourse patterns are often not transferable to standard British or American English, so students need to be instructed about target cultures if they are to be able to use target language discourse patterns. This does not mean that students should experience an assault on their identity when learning English but they do need to be trained in what Smith (1987:3) terms “the sense of the other”. They need to know about the discourse strategies of the prospective others with whom they will communicate, and this means they need to learn about others’ cultures.

Considering these issues, the strategies of the Iranian teachers for coping with their problems are mainly concerned with ignoring these topics, giving insights and more information, using interesting topics and materials, making the students aware of the link between language and culture, being highly selective, and switching to the students’ own culture. Thus, these teachers use three broad strategies to overcome their difficulties:

1. to censor (by filtering the information language students receive) (see also Mahboudi & Javdani, 2012: 92);
2. to expose (by allowing students to come into contact with all the information/language available) (see also Mahboudi & Javdani, 2012: 92);
3. to be selective (by talking about specific topics in the target culture which are not too far away from the local culture of the students or resorting to the native culture of the students).

On the whole, according to the findings presented, the most frequent problems mentioned by European teachers in this study in terms of the presentation of cultural topics in the classroom are lack of time, experience, and familiarity with the target cultures as well as passive student attitudes towards these issues, while in the Iranian context, alongside pas-



sive student attitudes and disinterest, political and religious problems are among the most common obstacles in culture teaching in English language programs at institutes. These difficulties imply the importance of socio-cultural contexts in which the language teaching is taking place. For example, in the present research the difference which exists between European and Asian contexts may cause political and religious factors to influence the process of culture teaching in a language classroom in Iran, while it may not be an important issue in European countries. On the other hand, the common problem seen by all teachers in this study is the students' lack of interest and passive attitudes towards cultural topics in the class. This difficulty can be related to the types of examinations, the learners' needs, and their feelings and emotions towards their own and other cultures. As discussed earlier, when the focus of the examinations is on the linguistic aspects, the students indicate more interest in the linguistic topics rather than the cultural ones in order to achieve higher grades in the examinations. Moreover, sometimes the students' judgmental views towards their own and other cultures can create barriers to the acceptance of cultural differences and make the students disinterested in such topics. Against this background, teachers should try to present cultural information in a nonjudgmental way through free discussions, critical analysis of the stereotypes in both cultures, as well as encouraging the students to do different projects in order to discover more facts about the foreign culture and put no value or judgment on dissimilarities between the students' local culture and the other cultures in the classroom. In this way, the students' judgmental views may be reduced when learning a FL and its culture. This is exactly what Kramsch (1993) defines as a third place in the language classroom—an impartial and unbiased place where the students try to have a critical look at the self and others and reach a sense of tolerance as well as empathy towards those of other cultures.

#### ***4.1.5. Research Questions 6***

**What are the opinions of EFL learners about their English classes based on their needs and interests?**

As explained before, in order to have a precise view on teacher opinion of using CLT in their classes, student attitudes towards their English classes were also examined since their ideas, learning styles, needs, and interests can play a significant role in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language as well. To achieve this aim, students were asked to fill in a questionnaire probing their attitudes towards their English classes in each country. The findings



of the student questionnaires can indicate their opinions about CLT since these questionnaires were distributed in those classes where the principles of this approach were more or less applied by the teachers. However, due to the complexity of the phrase for the students, the term Communicative Language Teaching was not used in their questionnaires.

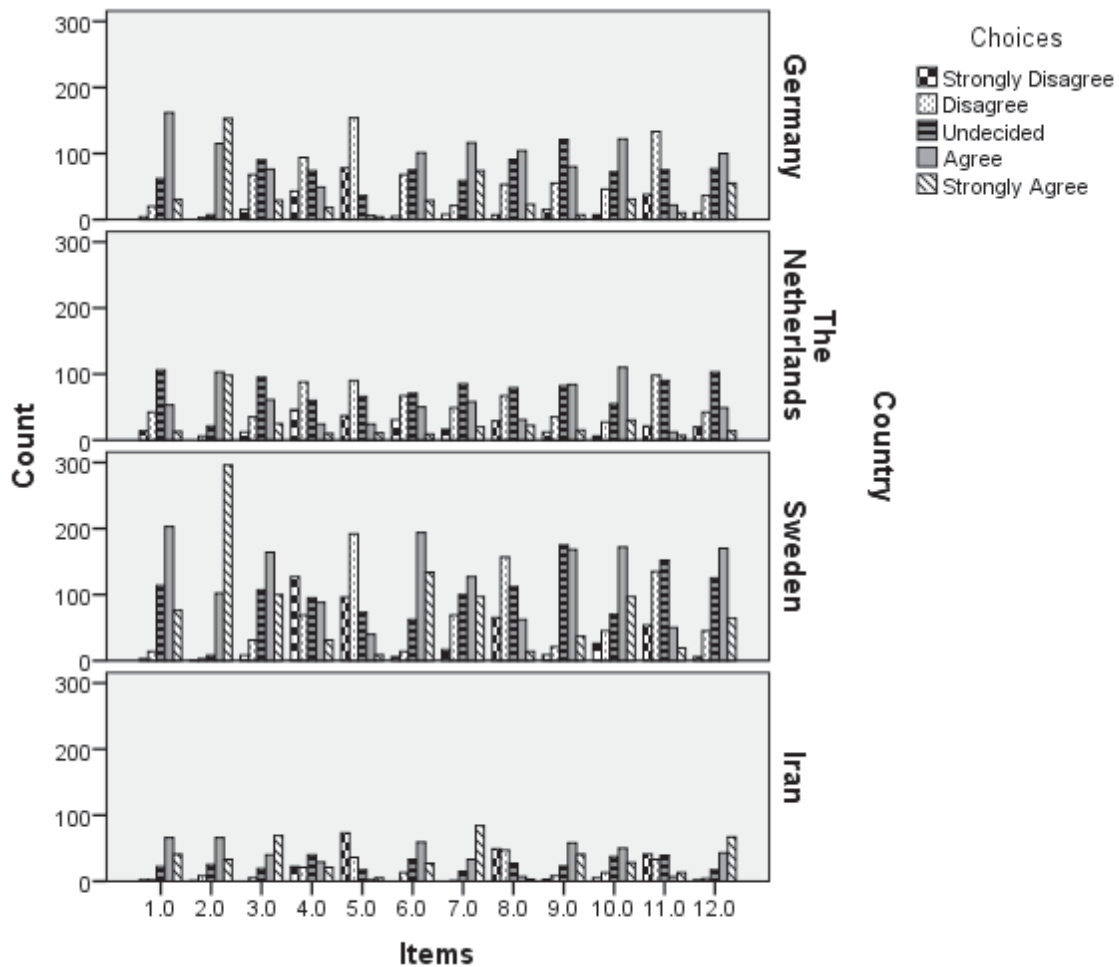
Items 1-12 of the student questionnaire (see Appendix A, Students' Questionnaire) deal with their ideas about the general characteristics of their English classes. Based on the total percentages displayed at the bottom of Table 24, it can be concluded that the majority of the students (46.5%) "agree" and "strongly agree" that their English classes meet their needs and interest. That is to say these respondents believe their classes can satisfy their needs and interests. However, about 27.6% (*italic*) "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with the contribution of their English classes to their language needs and interests. Among the participants, 26% (underlined) are "undecided" in this regard.

Furthermore, regarding the results in each country, German, Swedish, and Iranian students affirm their English classes can satisfy their needs and interests, while Dutch students hold a neutral position towards this issue.

		Choices					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Germany	Count	230	751	839	1053	463	3336
	% within Country	6.9%	22.5%	25.1%	31.6%	13.9%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	244	646	913	659	274	2736
	% within Country	8.9%	23.6%	33.4%	24.1%	10.0%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	418	795	1193	1540	974	4920
	% within Country	8.5%	16.2%	24.2%	31.3%	19.8%	100.0%
Iran	Count	198	191	314	460	432	1595
	% within Country	12.4%	12.0%	19.7%	28.8%	27.1%	100.0%
Total	Count	1090	2383	3259	3712	2143	12587
	% within Country	8.7%	18.9%	25.9%	29.5%	17.0%	100.0%

Table 24. Students' attitudes towards their English classes

As in the case of teachers, an analysis of the chi-square was run to probe for any significant differences between the attitudes of the students from four countries of Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Iran. The result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2(12) = 495.00, P = .000 < .05$ ) indicates that there are significant differences between the attitudes of the German, Dutch, Swedish and Iranian students towards the contribution of the English classes to their needs and interests. Graph 9 shows the students' answers to each item in these four countries in detail.



Graph 9. Frequencies of items (1-12) by choices in each country (students)

As is clear from this graph, the results of some items reveal interesting points regarding students' opinions in each country. For instance, in response to item 1 (*In this class I learn how to talk about my opinions in different situations*) and 12 (*This class makes me interested in language learning*), German, Swedish, and Iranian students believe their classes are interesting and can help them to express themselves in different situations, while Dutch students are mostly undecided and unhappy about this issue. The answers of the students to these two items can indicate whether or not their teachers practice CLT in their classes. As explained earlier, in the first section of the teacher questionnaire, teachers were asked to give their opinions about the usefulness of CLT for making the students interested in language learning and providing them with enough opportunities to express their ideas. The results revealed that they have a positive attitude towards this approach and they think it can equip their students with such chances. Thus, a comparison between teachers' and students' answers can show if the teachers follow their beliefs in this regard or not. As discussed earlier,



teachers' beliefs and perceptions can be considered as one of the influential elements which can affect the way they teach and behave in the classroom (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1).

Based on the students' answers, it seems that, excluding the Dutch teachers, all other teachers participating in this study try to apply this approach in their classes at least for the purpose of communication and to offer chances for interactions in different situations. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no mismatch between the German, Swedish and Iranian teachers' beliefs and practices in this regard. However, alongside beliefs and perceptions, other contextual factors, such as teaching curricula/guidelines and national examinations can also have an impact on the teachers' practices in the classes<sup>55</sup>. In this sense, although there is usually a mutual relationship between the teachers' self-conceptions or beliefs and practices in the classes, the existence of some contextual factors may have an influence on the way they act in the classroom and sometimes cause a mismatch between their theories and practices (see also Borg, 2003). Considering this issue, it can be concluded that the Dutch teachers in this study might be under the pressure of their curriculum or examinations, forcing them to focus on other aspects of language rather than communication, which may cause disinterest among their students. This fact can also be confirmed by the answers of the Dutch interviewees, who believe their examinations and syllabuses have an influence on the application of CLT in their classes (see Interview Section and item 38 in the teacher questionnaires). Therefore, "the extent to which teachers have to follow a set curriculum or are free to develop their own courses seems to be crucial in understanding the decisions language teachers make" (Borg, 2003: 98).

Another interesting item in this section of the student questionnaire is item 4 where students give their opinions about the explanation of grammar in English (*I understand the grammatical points when the teacher explains them in English*). As can be seen from Graph 9, the majority of the European students in this sample concede that it is difficult for them to understand the grammatical points thoroughly when their teachers explain them in English, which may highlight the favorable attitudes of these students towards direct explanation of grammar in their native language on the part of their teachers. This justifies the teachers' opinions in the interviews where they also believe that using the mother tongue is sometimes necessary when teaching English, especially in the case of grammar, because they be-

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<sup>55</sup> see for example Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Lewis & McCook, 2002; Li, 1998; Mangubhai et al., 2005; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006; Savignon & Wang, 2003 for examining the impact of teachers' beliefs and contextual factors on the application of CLT in different contexts





lieve that their students need to have some kind of grammar instruction and explanation in order to learn the new structures. In this sense, these teachers see the students' mother tongue as a kind of catalyst or facilitator which can help the learners to grasp difficult topics in the foreign language better<sup>56</sup>.

However, with regard to the Iranian students in the present research, the case is different since they think they can understand the grammatical issues when their teachers explain them in English. This tendency of the Iranian students towards using English may affect the way Iranian teachers use L1 in the classroom, as presented in their interviews, where they maintain that using L2 is more beneficial for the students who are learning the language in those contexts without any direct access to the target language and culture (see Interview Section). This can imply that the Iranian teachers either use English when teaching grammar or resort to some techniques other than direct translations or L1 explanation which are understandable or interesting for their learners. One such well-known method is using 'Penglish' which is considered as a kind of texting language among Iranians, and it is created through the integration of Persian (L1) and English (L2) together. Here, Persian words are transformed into English ones, and the new words are pronounced in Persian. As a result, the Persian words are used indirectly in order to explain the grammatical structures and even new words. This can be described as a kind of silent use of the mother tongue instead of explicit verbal code-switching. The method is described by one of the Iranian teachers as follows:

I usually do not say anything in my native language. Maybe I have to write Penglish on the board. This is the last thing I do. I believe that in our brain there are some switches. When I switch in Persian in English class, that part of my mind is getting busy with that point, so I cannot run the class perfectly, so I believe that it is not necessary to use the mother tongue in the classroom.

Moreover, some Iranian teachers usually do not use L1 in teaching the language since "Iranian students attribute a high status to those who have a good command of English and regard the ability to speak a foreign language as a mark of an educated person" (Vaezi & Abbaspour, 2014: 1906; see also Abbaspour, Rajaei Nia, & Zare, 2012).

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<sup>56</sup> The same results were obtained by Franklin (1990) in Scotland, Beyene (2008) in Addis Ababa, Al-Nouh (2008) in Kuwait, Batak & Andersson (2009) in Sweden and France, Al-Mohanna (2010) in Saudi Arabia, Torestenstsson (2012) in Sweden and Spain.



The next two items examined here are items 6 and 9. According to the results obtained in this study, in response to item 6 (*I have many opportunities to talk with my classmates in the class*) referring to chances of speaking in pair and group work in the classroom, the German, Iranian, and Swedish respondents take a positive position on this item, which implies that they have enough opportunities to talk with their classmates in their classes. However, Dutch students are mostly dissatisfied with this issue since they have chosen the option “disagree” and “strongly disagree” more than the other choices. These opinions stand in an asymmetric relationship with the answers of teachers in their interviews, where they claim that they use pair and group work to make the students talk in the class; the disparity is that, while Dutch teachers maintain that they use pair and group work in the classroom, their students are not very satisfied with the teachers’ practices since they think that their teachers do not provide them with frequent chances to talk with their classmates (see also the results of item 5 in the teacher questionnaire, where the same mismatch between Dutch teachers’ theory and practice happens, while the rest of the teachers follow their beliefs, i.e. providing their students with opportunities to speak with their classmates). This mismatch can also be caused by some contextual factors such as the national examination, which is considered as one of the most demanding elements in the process of teaching by Dutch interviewees.

Concerning item 9 (*I can learn grammar very well in this class*), the majority of the Iranian, Swedish, and Dutch students believe they can learn grammar well in their classes, while German students are mostly undecided. The answers of Iranian, Swedish, and Dutch students may imply that their teachers use different techniques and methods to teach grammar in the classroom since grammar is often considered as one of the linguistic factors which is not popular among learners. Against this background, applying interesting and new techniques for teaching grammar can help the students become motivated to learn the structures very well. One of these methods is to teach grammar communicatively or inductively, which can make the students more encouraged and curious to discover the rules themselves. In this case, it can be concluded that most of the teachers participating in this study try to follow their beliefs in the first part of their questionnaires where they had claimed that grammar is best taught in communicative classes because in such classes, grammar is taught inductively and in association with meanings and functions. In contrast to this type of grammar teaching, there is also another method which is directly related to the explanation of the grammatical rules explicitly or deductively. It seems that this technique may also be used



by the European teachers in this study since their students claim that they cannot learn grammatical points when their teachers explain them in English. The results obtained in item 4 above and the interview section can also justify the position of the European teachers towards this issue. Thus, as most of the students answer positively on this item, it can be concluded that their teachers try to satisfy their needs and interests in terms of learning grammar. In the case of German students, their answers might be justified by their positions towards item 8 where they maintain that they do not like grammatical exercises in the class. In this sense, these students may prefer to focus more on communicative activities rather than grammatical exercises.

Finally, regarding item 10 (*I speak English with grammatical mistakes*) which refers to making grammatical mistakes when speaking, it can be concluded that most of the students in this study believe they make grammatical mistakes when speaking English, and this can justify their positions towards error correction where they believe that their teachers should correct their grammatical mistakes in speaking (see the results of item 5 in the student questionnaires). In this way, they can identify their mistakes and work on them. The other reason for such findings can be the objectives and policies prescribed in the curricula. In most of the European countries, the English syllabuses at upper-secondary school levels often focus on the development of communicative abilities with a slight reference to grammatical points (see for example the English Syllabus for upper-secondary level in Sweden discussed by Torstensson (2012)). Within this framework, the materials become mostly communicative-based, and grammar is discussed as a minor factor in separate sections at the back of the books (e.g. *Progress Gold* series in Sweden and *New Greenline* series in Germany). Against this background, the upper-secondary school teachers expect their students to master these structures at the lower levels before entering their classes; however, this expectation is not always achieved, as explained by a Dutch teacher in this study:

The problem is when they get here, their English is very weak. It's not something they are taught in grammar school. So, when they get into my class, they just know how to say hello or to say for example my name is John. That's what they know and then they have to start on the first page with "I am going to a party tomorrow". So they feel like learning Chinese. They make sentences without any verbs and they do not recognize that they have difficulty in understanding the texts. When they have to translate and put the words in the right places, they can't any more. Most of them can't. 3 quarters of my class can't. So that what we have to work with and stay that way right up to the exam. It's a huge battle to get them through the exams, so that's our main priority, I am afraid.



These kinds of difficulties with learning grammar in lower grades may result from the interference of the mother tongue, the students' lack of motivation, wrong and demotivating ways of teaching grammar, lack of exposure to the target language, and finally few chances to use it.

With regard to Iranian students, it is somehow different since at Iranian schools the focus is mainly on teaching grammar without usage in communication. In other words, the students usually master a lot of grammar rules and words; however, they are not able to use them in real-life communications. Against this background, English institutes in Iran try to offer communicative-based classes since students are more eager to focus on communicative- rather than form-focused activities when they come to English institutes. Within this framework, neither at school nor at the institute are the students provided with a kind of balanced way of teaching in terms of grammar and communication. This may cause them to make grammatical mistakes in their spoken language.

The rest of the items which have not been mentioned here will be discussed in the section related to the comparison of the teachers' and students' answers to the overlapping items.

#### ***4.1.6. Research Question 7***

##### **What are the opinions of EFL learners about cultural and intercultural aspects of their English classes?**

The second section of the student questionnaire, which is related to the seventh research question, can be divided into five sub-sections. The contribution of their English classes to:

1. learning English language,
2. learning English/American culture,
3. understanding differences between countries/cultures,
4. accepting differences between countries/cultures, and finally
5. learning the cultural and intercultural aspects.

##### **Section 1 → the English class' contribution to learning English language**

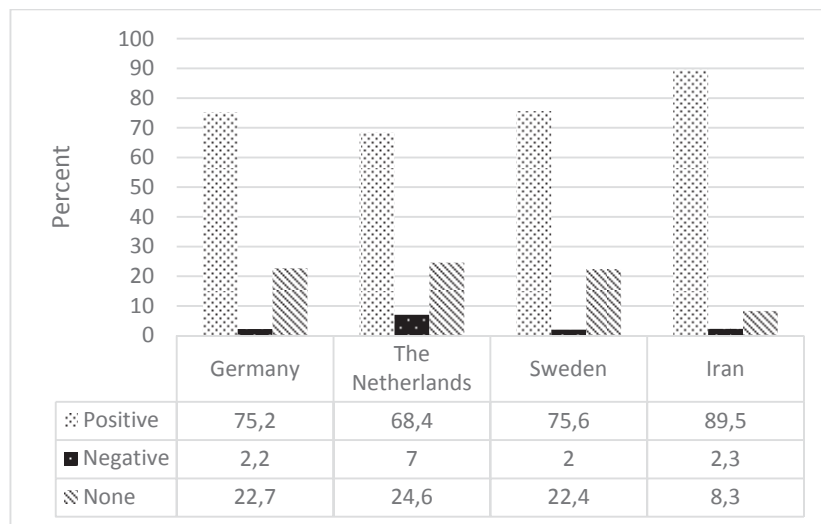
Item 21 in the student questionnaire deals with the effect of their English classes on fostering positive or negative attitudes towards learning English among the students. Based on the results displayed in Table 25, it can be concluded that the majority of the students from the



four countries—Germany (75.2%), the Netherlands (68.4%), Sweden (75.6%), and Iran (89.5%)—believe that their classes foster a positive attitude towards learning English. Graph 10 represents these percentages in each country clearly.

		Item 21			Total
		Positive	Negative	None	
Germany	Count	209	6	63	278
	% within Country	75.2%	2.2%	22.7%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	156	16	56	228
	% within Country	68.4%	7.0%	24.6%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	310	8	92	410
	% within Country	75.6%	2.0%	22.4%	100.0%
Iran	Count	119	3	11	133
	% within Country	89.5%	2.3%	8.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	794	33	222	1049
	% within Country	75.7%	3.1%	21.2%	100.0%

Table 25. Students' attitudes towards the effect of their English classes on English Language



Graph 10. Percentages of item 21 (students)

The result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2 (6) = 31.16, P = .000 < .05$ ) indicates that the differences observed in Table 25 are significant.

These findings support the belief of teachers in the countries participating in this research in the stimulation of positive attitudes towards the English language in order to motivate their students to learn this language better since, as discussed earlier (see Research question 2, part c), positive attitudes towards learning a foreign language can help the language learners be successful in language learning.

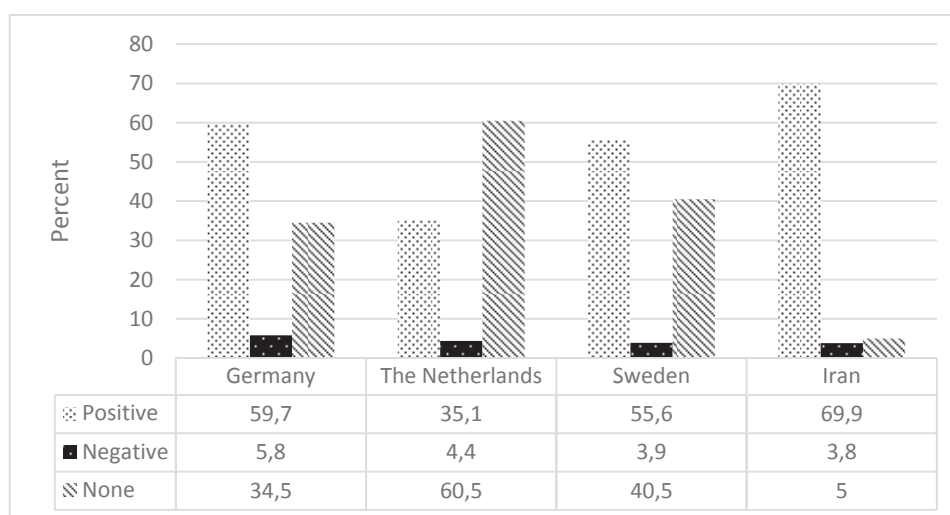


## Section 2 → the English class' contribution to learning American or English culture

Item 22 in the student questionnaire is concerned with their opinions about their English classes with regard to the promotion of attitudes towards learning American or British cultures. Based on the results shown in Table 26, it can be concluded that the majority of the students from Germany (59.7%), Sweden (55.6%) and Iran (69.9%) believe that their classes stimulate a positive attitude towards the learning of American or British cultures. However, the Dutch students (60.5%) think their classes do not create any attitude – either positive or negative – towards learning American or English cultures. These differences are clearly observable in Graph 11 below.

		Item 22			Total
		Positive	Negative	None	
Germany	Count	166	16	96	278
	% within Country	59.7%	5.8%	34.5%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	80	10	138	228
	% within Country	35.1%	4.4%	60.5%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	228	16	166	410
	% within Country	55.6%	3.9%	40.5%	100.0%
Iran	Count	93	5	35	133
	% within Country	69.9%	3.8%	26.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	567	47	435	1049
	% within Country	54.1%	4.5%	41.5%	100.0%

Table 26. Students' attitudes towards the effect of their English classes on English culture



Graph 11. Percentages of item 22 (students)

The result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2(6) = 55.32, P = .000 < .05$ ) indicates that the differences observed in Table 26 are significant. As with item 21 concerning the fostering of positive atti-



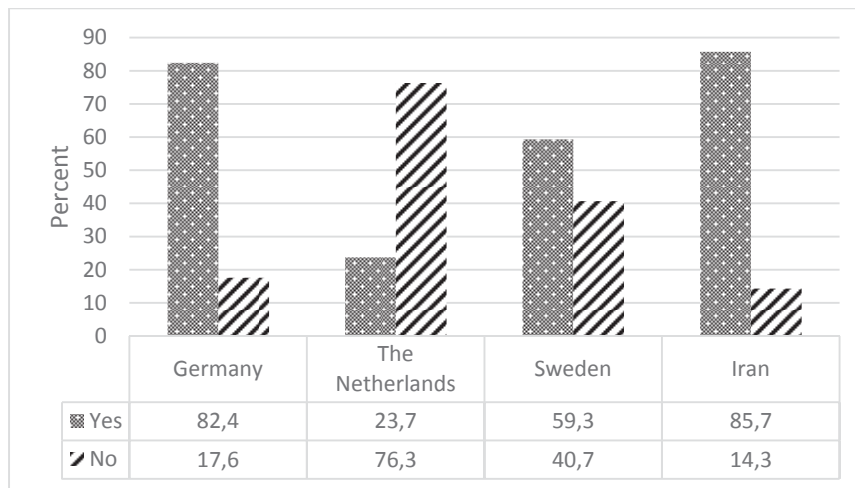
tudes towards learning the English language, the findings of item 22 show that while the German, Swedish and Iranian teachers in this study believe in creating positive attitudes towards the target language cultures in order to make their students interested in learning the English language, which cannot be detached from its culture, Dutch teachers may take a neutral position towards this issue. It seems that for them, creating a positive attitude towards learning the English language is more important than its culture, which may result from the language needs of their students and their national examination focusing on linguistic aspects rather than cultural ones. However, as described previously (see Research question 2, part c), it is believed that stimulating a positive attitude towards the language learned and its culture can pave the way for students' high motivation to learn the language. In this sense, it can be concluded that lack of motivation or passive attitudes towards learning the language and culture can hinder the process of language learning and have a negative impact on the outcome of a specific language program.

### Section 3 → the English class' contribution to the understanding of cultural differences

Item 23 in the student questionnaire refers to the effect of their English classes on understanding the culture of other countries in the form of yes/no question. As is clear from the following table, German (82.4%), Swedish (59.3%) and Iranian (85.7%) students believe their classes help them to understand cultural differences. However, Dutch students hold the opposite view. Graph 12 indicates these differences in detail.

		Item 23		Total
		Yes	No	
Germany	Count	229	49	278
	% within Country	82.4%	17.6%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	54	174	228
	% within Country	23.7%	76.3%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	243	167	410
	% within Country	59.3%	40.7%	100.0%
Iran	Count	114	19	133
	% within Country	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	640	409	1049
	% within Country	61.0%	39.0%	100.0%

Table 27. Students' attitudes towards the effect of their English classes on understanding other cultures



Graph 12. Percentages of item 23 (students)

The result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2 (3) = 221.52, P = .000 < .05$ ) depicts that the differences observed in Table 27 are significant. From these answers, it can be concluded that German, Swedish and Iranian teachers in this study may believe in triggering a sense of empathy towards the people of other cultures in order to make their students understand their feelings and differences. In this way, they help their students to have a reflective view or third perspective towards other cultures as well as their own to explore and reflect upon both cultures. However, with regard to this item, Dutch students' responses may be justified by the position of their teachers towards culture teaching in the interviews where they assert that culture is not their main focus. Thus, the Dutch students in the present research think that their English classes do not contribute to understanding the cultural differences.

#### Section 4 → the English class' contribution to accepting cultural differences

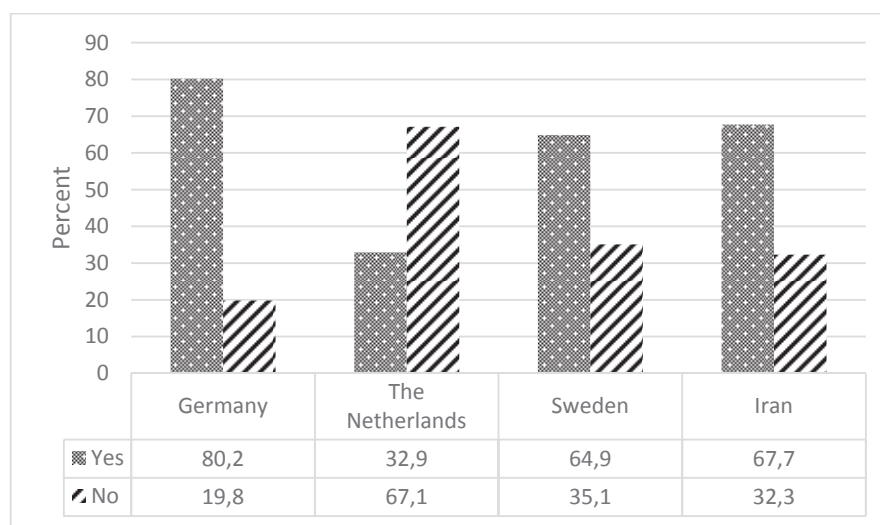
Item 24 in the student questionnaire probes student attitudes towards the contribution of their English classes to accepting cultural differences among countries. As can be seen in Table 28, German (80.2%), Swedish (64.9%) and Iranian (67.7%) students in this sample affirm that their classes help them to accept cultural differences in other countries. However, Dutch students (67.1%) hold the opposite view. These differences are also clearly presented in Graph 13 below.





		Item 24		Total
		Yes	No	
Germany	Count	223	55	278
	% within Country	80.2%	19.8%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	75	153	228
	% within Country	32.9%	67.1%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	266	144	410
	% within Country	64.9%	35.1%	100.0%
Iran	Count	90	43	133
	% within Country	67.7%	32.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	654	395	1049
	% within Country	62.3%	37.7%	100.0%

Table 28. Students' attitudes towards the effect of their English classes on accepting other cultures



Graph 13. Percentages of item 24 (students)

The result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2 (3) = 124.78.52, P = .000 < .05$ ) indicates that the differences observed in Table 28 are significant. Along with item 23, this item is also related to one of the components of ICC which aims at the development of a sense of tolerance towards cultural differences. As is clear from the findings, it seems that German, Swedish and Iranian teachers are successful in making their students more tolerant of cultural diversity, while Dutch teachers appear to be involved in the promotion of linguistic aspects more than intercultural ones. These results can also be confirmed by the Dutch interviewees' opinions about teaching culture, where they believe that culture is not their main concern because they have to prepare their students for the examinations focusing on the linguistic aspects, such as grammar, vocabulary and language skills only. This idea is clearly described by a Dutch teacher in this study as follows:



So our main priority is to get them through the exams and culture, let alone other cultures, is not part of their exam. So if we have to make a choice, it would be the grammar and writing of the essays.

### Section 5 → the English classes and their cultural and intercultural aspects

Items 13 to 20 investigate the focus of the English classes on learning about different cultural aspects. Put differently, these eight items show on which countries the teachers and teaching materials focus more in the English classes. In order to probe this issue, some cultural aspects which were easy to understand and tangible for the students were selected, of which students then chose the most appropriate for each item.

Based on the results displayed in Table 29, in agreement with the interviewees' responses, the majority of the German (43.4%) and Swedish (32.6%) students believe that the focus is mostly on American culture in their English classes, while most of the Dutch (61.4%) students think that their English classes do not concentrate on any specific cultures. In other words, these responses indicate that culture is not the Dutch teachers' main concern in the classroom.

With regard to Iranian responses, the results indicate that they have chosen the "other" (30.1%) option more than "British" (20.5%) or "American" (25.1%); however, when summing up the percentages related to the target cultures (45.5% > 30.1%), it can be concluded that although the cultures of other countries are mostly presented in the Iranian English classes, the cultural topics related to British and American cultures are also considered and discussed in the classes. These findings can be backed up by the results of the interviews, where Iranian interviewees believe that they mostly focus on the target cultures alongside those of other Asian countries like Japan, China, Malaysia, etc.

		Choices				Total
		English	American	Other	None	
Germany	Count	1041	1512	438	486	3477
	% within Country	29.9%	43.4%	12.8%	13.9%	100.0%
The Netherlands	Count	600	129	16	1184	1929
	% within Country	31.1%	6.7%	0.8%	61.4%	100.0%
Sweden	Count	1217	1393	446	1215	4271
	% within Country	28.5%	32.6%	10.5%	28.4%	100.0%
Iran	Count	261	321	385	309	1276
	% within Country	20.5%	25.1%	30.1%	24.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	3119	3355	1285	3194	10953
	% within Country	28.5%	30.6%	11.8%	29.1%	100.0%

Table 29. Students' attitudes towards the presentation of cultural aspects in their English classes



The result of the chi-square ( $\chi^2(9) = 2243.40, P = .000 < .05$ ) also points out that the differences observed in Table 29 are significant. Table 30 shows the students' answers to each item clearly by countries.

Country			Choices				Total			
			English	American	Other	None				
Germany	Items	13	Count	139	200	78	29	446		
		% within Item	31.2%	44.8%	17.5%	6.5%	100.0%			
		14	Count	140	204	74	37	455		
		% within Item	30.8%	44.8%	16.3%	8.1%	100.0%			
		15	Count	175	238	64	17	494		
		% within Item	35.4%	48.2%	13.0%	3.4%	100.0%			
		16	Count	115	191	50	69	425		
		% within Item	27.1%	44.9%	11.8%	16.2%	100.0%			
		17	Count	128	237	26	34	425		
		% within Item	30.1%	55.8%	6.1%	8.0%	100.0%			
		18	Count	124	184	53	75	436		
		% within Item	28.4%	42.2%	12.2%	17.2%	100.0%			
		19	Count	134	172	65	66	437		
		% within Item	30.7%	39.4%	14.9%	15.1%	100.0%			
		20	Count	86	86	28	159	359		
		% within Item	23.9%	23.9%	8%	44.2%	100.0%			
		Total	Count	1041	1512	438	486	3477		
		% within Item	29.9%	43.4%	12.8%	13.9%	100.0%			
		The Netherlands	Items	13	Count	82	36	3	134	255
				% within Item	32.1%	14.1%	1.3%	52.5%	100.0%	
14	Count			100	19	2	121	242		
% within Item	41.3%			7.9%	0.8%	50%	100.0%			
15	Count			81	10	2	145	238		
% within Item	34.0%			4.2%	0.8%	60.9%	100.0%			
16	Count			46	6	0	181	233		
% within Item	19.7%			2.6%	0.0%	77.7%	100.0%			
17	Count			39	29	2	174	244		
% within Item	16.0%			11.9%	0.8%	71.3%	100.0%			
18	Count			72	15	4	149	240		
% within Item	30.0%			6.3%	1.7%	62.1%	100.0%			
19	Count			107	10	3	125	245		
% within Item	43.7%			4.0%	1.3%	51.0%	100.0%			
20	Count			73	4	0	155	232		
% within Item	31.5%			1.7%	0.0%	66.8%	100.0%			
Total	Count			600	129	16	1184	1929		
% within Item	31.1%			6.7%	0.8%	61.4%	100.0%			
Sweden	Items			13	Count	174	227	54	99	554
				% within Item	31.4%	41.0%	9.7%	17.9%	100.0%	
		14	Count	183	194	77	123	577		
		% within Item	31.7%	33.6%	13.3%	21.3%	100.0%			
		15	Count	165	159	54	158	536		
		% within Item	30.8%	29.7%	10.1%	29.4%	100.0%			
		16	Count	133	183	65	147	528		
		% within Item	25.2%	34.7%	12.3%	27.8%	100.0%			
		17	Count	107	204	36	152	499		
		% within Item	21.4%	40.9%	7.2%	30.5%	100.0%			
		18	Count	176	182	58	146	562		
		% within Item	31.3%	32.4%	10.3%	26.0%	100.0%			
		19	Count	181	164	61	134	540		
		% within Item	33.5%	30.4%	11.3%	24.8%	100.0%			
		20	Count	98	80	41	256	475		
		% within Item	20.6%	16.8%	8.6%	53.9%	100.0%			



Total	Count	1217	1393	446	1215	4271	
	% within Item	28.5%	32.6%	10.5%	28.4%	100.0%	
Iran	13	Count	58	66	49	4	177
		% within Item	32.8%	37.3%	27.7%	2.3%	100.0%
	14	Count	40	54	60	6	160
		% within Item	25.0%	33.8%	37.5%	3.8%	100.0%
	15	Count	23	21	32	79	155
		% within Item	14.9%	13.5%	20.6%	51%	100.0%
	16	Count	29	36	50	39	154
		% within Item	18.8%	23.4%	32.5%	25.3%	100.0%
	17	Count	18	30	40	60	148
		% within Item	12.2%	20.3%	27.0%	40.5%	100.0%
	18	Count	40	53	48	19	160
		% within Item	25.0%	33.1%	30.0%	11.9%	100.0%
	19	Count	35	34	76	18	163
		% within Item	21.5%	20.9%	46.6%	11.0%	100.0%
	20	Count	18	27	30	84	159
		% within Item	11.3%	16.9%	19%	52.8%	100.0%
	Total	Count	261	321	385	309	1276
		% within Item	20.5%	25.1%	30.1%	24.3%	100.0%

Table 30. Students' attitudes towards the presentation of cultural aspects in their English classes by items

According to this table, most of the German students have selected the option “American” for items 13 to 19, which refer to the encouragement of curiosity, the comparison between the local culture of the students and other cultures as well as the familiarity with some cultural aspects, such as history, geography, politics, youth life and customs. Regarding the last item (20) dealing with the familiarity with fine arts, they have preferred to choose “None” more than the other options, which indicates that this topic is not among those issues presented and discussed in their classes. These results show that although in the German syllabus of upper-secondary grades the focus is on both British and American cultures, it seems that the teachers in the schools participating in the present work concentrate more on American cultures regarding the topics mentioned above. This may result from the students' interests, the dominant role of America in the world, and the cultural differences of American people in comparison to Germans due to geographical distance.

Regarding these items, Dutch students have chosen “None” more than the other options, reflecting that they think their English classes do not focus on cultural issues very often. This view is in agreement with the results of the interviews with Dutch teachers, where they believe that culture is not their main focus in the classroom; they use cultural topics as an instrument to work on linguistic elements and make the students prepared for their final examinations. However, these teachers also mention that when they want to present some cultural topics in their classes, they mainly focus on British and American cultures.



For Swedish students, the case is somehow different. They believe that in terms of the encouragement of curiosity, the comparison between cultures as well as the familiarity with geography, politics and youth life, the focus is mostly on America in their English classes. This can be justified by the dominance of American culture via the media in Sweden. According to the Swedish film institute (2008: 6, as cited in Batak & Andersson, 2009: 18), “except for some children’s films which are dubbed into Swedish, all films and TV-programs are shown in their original language with Swedish subtitles.” However, “American films made up 77.4 % of the films shown in Swedish [media].” This can therefore affect the way teachers treat cultural topics in their classes since their students have more connection to this culture via the media. Furthermore, in response to items 19 and 20 (customs and fine arts), they have selected the option “British” and “None” respectively. It means these students think British customs are presented and discussed more than those of other cultures in their English language courses, while to a great extent there is no specific attention to fine arts in their English classes. This can be related to the teaching materials or the beliefs and familiarities of Swedish teachers with these specific subjects, which may make them discuss some topics more than others in their classes.

Finally, in the case of Iranian students, as is clear from the table, in items 13, 14, 16, 18 and 19, the findings indicate that their focus is mostly on the culture of other countries and America rather than England. This can be justified by political reasons and the similarities of other Asian cultures to the Persian culture. The selection of America in items 13 and 18 can be explained by the fact that most of the teaching materials used in the English institutes in Iran have been written by American writers prepared for the international market; thus, it is not surprising if one finds some traces of this culture in the answers of the Iranian students in the present sample. However, in the case of politics, the situation is different. The Iranian students think that this topic is not discussed in their classes at all, which is completely true due to the fact that presenting and discussing this issue is not permitted for political reasons given the policies prescribed by the authorities.

#### ***4.2. The Results of the Teachers’ Interviews***

As discussed earlier, it is expected that EFL teachers as the actual users of CLT in English classes are in a good position to identify and analyze the issues tackled by this study. Thus, in order to have a deeper view of teachers’ ideas, some interviews were conducted with willing



teachers to investigate their opinions about applying CLT and teaching culture in their classroom. Here are the findings obtained based on each related research question.

### Research question 1:

To probe teachers' opinions regarding the first research question, which refers to applying CLT in their classes, three questions were asked in the interviews. These questions were:

1. What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase "Communicative Language Teaching"?
2. Do you use CLT in your classroom? Why?
3. Do you have any difficulties when applying CLT in your classroom? What are your strategies to overcome these difficulties?

Teachers' answers to these questions are presented in the following tables, respectively.

German English Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Free speech</u></li> <li>• <u>Communication</u></li> <li>• Role play/ Group work</li> <li>• Oral exercises</li> <li>• High student talking time</li> <li>• Speaking without attention to grammar</li> </ul>
Swedish English Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Communication</u></li> <li>• <u>Conversation</u></li> <li>• <u>Free speech</u></li> <li>• Using English all the time</li> <li>• <u>Discussion</u></li> <li>• <u>Interaction</u></li> <li>• Student talking</li> <li>• Modern teaching</li> <li>• Strong focus on speaking and writing skills</li> </ul>
Dutch English Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conveying messages</li> <li>• Speaking and teaching in English</li> <li>• <u>Communication</u></li> <li>• Pair work/ Group work</li> <li>• Oral exercises</li> <li>• <u>Interaction</u></li> <li>• Communicative method of teaching</li> <li>• Using varieties of methods</li> </ul>
Iranian English Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Communication</u></li> <li>• <u>Conversation</u></li> </ul>

Table 31. The results of the first interview question



The first question in the interview asked the interviewees to define CLT in their own words. Based on the above table, it can be concluded that most of the respondents in this sample define CLT as having discussion, interaction, communication, conversation, and free speech in the classroom. Aside from these concepts, other definitions are: speaking in English, oral exercises, student talking, pair and group work, role play, etc., all of which are considered as the main focuses of CLT in the classroom.

These perceptions of CLT indicate that the majority of teachers in these interviews believe CLT mostly aims at the development of speaking abilities and providing the framework for encouraging the students to talk more in the classroom using the target language. From one point of view, this conceptualization of CLT is correct since, as mentioned before, this approach focuses mainly on the communication and speaking abilities; however, from another point of view, it can be concluded that these teachers do not have a complete perception of the principles of CLT, which aim at a balance between speaking, listening, reading and writing. For these interviewees, CLT is an approach of communication and interaction; however, this interaction cannot be realized only through speaking activities, but also needs listening, reading and writing tasks and exercises. Therefore, it can be concluded that the definitions presented by the interviewees in this study are mostly based on the meaning of single words in the phrase “Communicative Language Teaching” rather than the theoretical perspectives behind this approach. The following definitions clarify this point better:

IT5: The first that comes to my mind is communication which comes from the origin of the word, learning a language through communication and some sort of situations when they need specific usage of language.

IT2: This method or approach focuses on communication. It means the teachers and the students should be able to communicate in the classroom, so for CLT, communication and conversation are the core and the central point in the teaching.

DT5: It's about using a language as a means of communication, so there will be quite a strong focus on speaking skills. So that's how I interpret this phrase.

DT3: Well, kind of speaking exercises that we do in class and sometimes it's in group or pair work most of the time it is pair work that depends on the situation and the kind of well the thing that we have to do of course.

ST4: Well, communication that you let the students talk a lot that they are sort of very active and that I of course use English basically all the time.



ST2: I think about speech that you communicate through speech more than just giving some instructions and we focus on conversations and speech instead of grammar and writing.

GT4: Talking just few more thoughts and just spontaneous few words so well communicative language teaching is a teaching method that focuses on communicative aspects rather than grammar, vocabulary, the classic skills let's say.

GT6: Well, actually language teaching by talking which is just my first idea which indicates basically and mostly the students' talking in my eyes.

German English Teachers	<b>Yes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Students' stimulus to talk</u></li> <li>• Oral exams</li> <li>• Good for discussion</li> </ul>	
	<b>Not Always:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of time</li> </ul>	
	<b>Combination of methods</b>	
Swedish English Teachers	<b>Yes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Students' stimulus to talk</u></li> <li>• Speaking as a good way of starting the lesson</li> <li>• <u>Communication as the ultimate goal</u></li> </ul>	
Dutch English Teachers	<b>Yes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Students' stimulus to talk in English</u></li> <li>• Its importance</li> </ul>	
	<b>Not Always:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' difficulty in speaking English all the time</li> <li>• Focusing on other skills rather than speaking</li> <li>• Being a challenge for teachers</li> </ul>	
Iranian English Teachers	<b>Yes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Communication as ultimate goal</u></li> <li>• Student needs/interests</li> <li>• Practicality</li> </ul>	
	<b>Not Always:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Its inappropriateness in the context</li> <li>• Its incompatibility with students' levels</li> </ul>	
	<b>Combination of methods</b>	

Table 32. The results of the second interview question

Asking the second question, the researcher tried to obtain teachers' ideas about using CLT in their classes. In response to this question, answers were classified into three main categories of yes, not always and a combination of methods. According to the answers, it can be inferred that these teachers use CLT for making their students talk and express their ideas in





the classroom, which can be justified by their definitions of CLT aiming to make the students motivated to talk more in the class by using the target language, in this case English. Furthermore, they believe this approach can help them to achieve their final goal, communication, and this is compatible with the objective of CLT, which is to enable the students to communicate in the target language. The positive attitudes of teachers to CLT can be noticed in the following statements:

IT1: Sure, because the ultimate purpose of learning a language is communication. The students want to learn how to speak. In communication, teacher should first present something and students should practice and produce the language.

ST1: Yes, we do it on purpose. We are not doing so much about the language. It's sometimes about the language you know grammar or whatever explaining the words a lot of times. We are doing things with the language, communicating things, expressing, getting information from each other, sharing things, ideas, reading for understanding, playing quite all the time.

GT3: Oh yes, you can easily integrate it into your lessons give them sort of tasks or just key words talk about the weather talk about the school it does not matter you can easily make it part of your lesson.

GT1: I use this approach in the class, well, because it makes the pupils talk although it may sometimes make the class noisy, but I appreciate the noise which means they really talk so in a just limited amount of time.

However, apart from Swedish interviewees, some teachers participating in this interview think that CLT cannot always be used in their classes because of lack of time (German teachers), students' difficulty in speaking English (Dutch and Iranian teachers), heavy demands on the teachers (Dutch teachers), and their focus on other skills rather than speaking (Dutch teachers). Some of these problems are expressed by the teachers in the statements below:

IT4: I think so, but not always and not all the factors. I think it's not possible in all contexts in all classes. It depends on the class I think the number of the students and also the level of the students. For example, I think it's possible to have student-centered classes in higher levels, but for the lower ones it's better to be teacher-centered and student-centered together.

DT3: Yes, I use it, but we have noticed that the speaking and listening are the skills that they do the best that means there is no need to practice them, so we often focus on literature and reading and writing because of their exams and because they are already good at speaking and listening, so the need to practice those skills is not that much important, so we did it less often than other skills and topics.



GT6: Well, actually only partly because we've got very tight frame within which we have to move on according to what we must teach and how we must proceed so I can only let conversations go freely within a very tight time frame which actually blocks most of the effects to my impression.

The problems mentioned by the teachers in this study, such as lack of time, students' level of English and heavy demands on the teachers, are also discussed in the other studies as the main obstacles facing the teachers when applying CLT in their classes (e.g. Anderson (1993) in China; Li (1998) in South Korea; Sariçoban & Tılfarlıoğlu (1999) in Turkey; Carless (2003) in Hong Kong; Mulat (2003) in Ethiopia; Li (2004) in China; Jarvis & Atsilarat (2004) in Thailand; Al-Mohanna (2010) in Saudi Arabia; Ozsevik (2010) in Turkey; Shihiba Salama Embark (2011) in Libya; Essossomo (2013) in Cameroon; Vongxay (2013) in Laos, etc.). However, concerning the last problem posed above by the Dutch teachers regarding other skills, it can be concluded that these respondents have a misconception of CLT because they think that this approach does not pay attention to other skills aside from the speaking skill, while according to the principles of CLT ...

Students work on all four skills from the beginning. Just as oral communication is seen to take place through negotiation between speaker and listener, so too is meaning thought to be derived from the written word through an interaction between the reader and the writer. The writer is not present to receive immediate feedback from the reader, of course, but the reader tries to understand the writer's intentions and the writer writes with the reader's perspective in mind. Meaning does not, therefore, reside exclusively in the text, but rather arises through negotiation between reader and writer (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011: 125).

Finally, among these 21 interviewees, 2 of them (one German and one Iranian) suggest it is better to use a combination of methods in the classroom, which implies they believe in taking an eclectic view towards the selection and use of different teaching methods and approaches. Put differently, it seems these 2 teachers follow the beliefs of the Post-Method Era, where scholars concede that there is no fixed and perfect method which can be compatible with every situation. They suggest that teachers should use a variety of methods based on the needs, interests and objectives of their students and classes in their own contexts. In this way, teachers should follow a balanced way of teaching, as discussed by Thaler (2012). The opinions of these 2 teachers are presented in the following quotations:

IT2: As far as I know, I try to use CLT, but definitely it is unavoidable because in some situations in some tasks, I have to shift to other types of methods, but my priority is CLT definitely.



GT4: I guess the approach that I use is a sort of mixture between various things, so I do use it in parts of my lesson actually, but I also use other methods also traditional methods like grammar-translation and things like that.

German English Teachers	<b><u>Shy/ Passive students:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having group discussion</li> <li>• Asking more questions</li> <li>• Giving chance to all students to talk</li> <li>• Asking direct questions from silent students</li> </ul>
	<b>Its incompatibility with students' styles of learning/age:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using different types of tasks</li> </ul>
	<b><i>Lack of students' knowledge or proficiency</i></b>
	<b>Lack of time</b>
	<b>Noisy classes</b>
	<b>Large classes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using more group work</li> </ul>
	<b>Heterogonous classes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focusing on the strength of the students</li> </ul>
	<b>Uneven participation of the students:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderating and motivating the students</li> </ul>
	<b>Curriculum</b>
	<b>Students' use of mother tongue</b>
Swedish English Teachers	<b><i>Lack of students' knowledge or proficiency:</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making them in groups</li> <li>• Joining the groups to help them</li> <li>• Adding more questions</li> </ul>
	<b><u>Shy/ Passive students:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging the students to talk</li> <li>• Forcing them to talk</li> <li>• Making them in groups</li> <li>• Speaking with them outside of the class</li> </ul>
	<b>Uneven participation of the students:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving more time to quiet students</li> <li>• Calling them from the list and asking them to talk</li> </ul>
	<b>Keeping a balance between grammar and communication</b>



Dutch English Teachers	<b><u>Shy/ Passive students</u></b>
	<b>Convincing the students to talk and practice English in the class:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking them to answer the question in English</li> <li>• Speaking about the importance of English in the world</li> <li>• Finding suitable communicative activities</li> <li>• Speaking English a lot</li> <li>• Putting them in small groups</li> <li>• Giving them interesting tasks like interviewing</li> </ul>
	<b>Noisy classes</b>
	<b><i>Lack of students' knowledge or proficiency:</i></b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using Dutch to make them understood</li> </ul>
	<b>Problem in monitoring the class</b>
Iranian English Teachers	<b><i>Lack of students' knowledge or proficiency:</i></b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorming</li> <li>• Encouraging the students to talk</li> <li>• Asking the students to rephrase the ideas</li> <li>• Giving extra projects after class</li> <li>• Watching movies</li> <li>• Working with dictionary</li> </ul>
	<b><u>Shy/ Passive students:</u></b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging the students to talk</li> <li>• Changing the members of groups</li> <li>• Praising the active students</li> </ul>
	<b>Uneven participation of the students:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balancing the time of interaction</li> </ul>
	<b>Lack of time</b>
	<b>Matching the students in groups</b>
	<b>Lack of exposure to the target language in EFL contexts</b>
<b>Students' requests for translation:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoiding using mother tongue</li> <li>• Assigning imaginary nationalities</li> </ul>	

Table 33. The results of the third interview question

The third question, which is more or less related to the second, asked the teachers about their difficulties when applying CLT in their classes. Table 33 shows the teachers' problems with the use of CLT. As is clear from this table, the common difficulties among the interviewees in this sample are shy/passive students (underlined) and lack of students' knowledge and proficiency (italic). These drawbacks are clear in the following statements by the teachers:

GT4: Well, yes of course, because sometimes students' English maybe even my own English sometimes is not good enough to get message across it does sometimes happen if you have students with restricted abilities in English whose vocabulary is not that much good whose mode of grammar is not that good I say something they may misunderstand me and this does happen of course.



ST2: Some students are not used to speaking; they are very shy, and they will fail the class if they refuse to speak but that's how it is if you learn a language then you have to speak; otherwise, you will fail when you go to other countries so that's a problem for some students who are usually girls here.

ST3: We always have the students who do not want to participate in. They do not have anything to say. They do not know how to ask the questions. They do not know what to answer. They do not know how to keep the conversation going. They are embarrassed to speak especially when I put them in groups with specific pairs to work in.

DT5: Yes, I find it very important it's sometimes quite tough to get 28 kids who are in the midst of puberty to get to talking and to get them pass the point of feeling embarrassed and feel secure about themselves.

These results are also consistent with the findings of other studies, which were discussed earlier in the previous interview questions and the teacher questionnaires, where it was found that the learning styles and types of students and their needs and interests, as well as their level of proficiency in the target language, have a direct influence on their motivation to participate in speaking activities and communication in the classes. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that there is a mutual relationship between the first and second problem since when students lack confidence and do not have enough knowledge of the target language, they prefer not to use it for communication in the classroom because of their fear of misevaluation and misjudgment on the part of the teachers and their classmates. In other words, those students who are not sure about their communicative abilities may not involve themselves in communication activities and tasks. They may see these activities as a cause of embarrassment in front of their teacher and classmates.

In dealing with these difficulties, the most frequent strategies proposed by the interviewees for coping with shy and passive students is to make them work in groups and encourage or force them to talk by asking more questions. Regarding the second problem, i.e. lack of student knowledge and proficiency, teachers also believe that the best way is adding extra questions, using groups and the mother tongue as well as working on different projects and watching films. These kinds of activities and tasks provide the students with valuable chances to practice the language, to move the responsibility from teachers to students, and to improve students' communicative abilities (see also Brandes & Ginnis, 1986; Ellis, 2003; Jones, 2007; Shihiba Salama Embark, 2011). These strategies are described by some of the teachers as follows:



DT5: I've realized that when you put them in small groups of four, for example, then they feel less embarrassed and then they are willing to talk more especially with an interesting exercise where they have to work together where they have to interview each other than speaking in front of the entire group or something like that.

IT1: You know brainstorming is very important in this part, and you should I think minimize the teacher's talking time and spend more time on encouraging the students to talk more.

DT2: If I speak English all the time, I lose my pupils, so I have to communicate in Dutch in order to make them understand. I have to explain the things in Dutch, sometimes; otherwise, they get bad marks.

The next three interview questions were also related to the first research question; however, they pointed to principles of CLT sometimes believed to be troublesome.

4. Do you use your mother tongue when you are teaching English? Why? When?
5. Which types of activities do you use in your class more: group work, pair work, or individual work? Why?
6. What is your idea about learner-oriented classes?

The results of these questions will be presented in tabular forms as follows:



German English Teachers	<b>Yes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For <u>grammar</u></li> <li>• For saving time</li> <li>• For organizing trips</li> </ul>
	<b>It depends:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For lower levels in case of grammar</li> <li>• For misunderstandings</li> </ul>
Swedish English Teachers	<b>Yes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For <u>grammar</u></li> <li>• For <u>complicated things</u></li> <li>• For tiredness</li> <li>• In case of beginners</li> </ul>
	<b>No:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For being a native speaker</li> </ul>
Dutch English Teachers	<b>Yes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For <u>grammar</u></li> <li>• For making the students understand</li> <li>• For <u>complicated things</u></li> </ul>
	<b>No:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be after class in case of grammar</li> <li>• Adjusting my language level to students'</li> </ul>
Iranian English Teachers	<b>No:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For helping students reach their aim</li> <li>• For providing more exposure to the target language</li> </ul>
	<b>It depends:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For beginners to reduce the tension and promote learning</li> <li>• For advanced ones in case of clarification</li> <li>• For proverbs/poems</li> </ul>

Table 34. The results of the fourth interview question

The fourth interview question refers to one of the most hotly debated issues in foreign language teaching programs, the use of first language, which was also discussed earlier in the section related to the first Likert scale questions in teacher questionnaires. In the German, Swedish and Dutch interviews, teachers believe in using mother tongues especially in the case of grammar and complicated issues, i.e. when students cannot understand the subjects thoroughly, while Iranian teachers think that it is better not to speak Persian in the class since Iranian students do not have enough exposure to English outside class, and their classes are the only places where they can practice and use English. Among the interviewees in these four countries, some of them mention that they use the students' native language



depending on their levels and also in the case of proverbs and clarifications. The following quotations show the positions of teachers towards this issue clearly.

DT1: I tend to use more Dutch when I explain about grammar, you know, when you deal with novel or a short story the literary lessons are for greater part in English but the grammar lessons are for greater part in Dutch.

DT5: When I was an inexperienced teacher yes I used it, sometimes, but now I know I have to adjust the level of my language with the kids', so I pretty much never speak Dutch in my classroom.

ST3: Only sometimes. I mean the norm is that I use English but sometimes when we go through the grammar, for example, especially with year one students it's too difficult for them to follow in English.

ST5: Well, I sometimes speak Swedish when I talk about grammar because they think it's easier if I speak Swedish, so when they think that the topic is complicated, I turn over to Swedish.

IT4: It depends on my class. If they are elementary and do not understand anything or when I think that using some words in Persian makes them more relaxed and reduces the tension of the students, yes I use Persian, but for higher levels no.

IT1: I do not believe in using the first language because the students are in class to learn the second or foreign language, the communication should be only with the language that they are going to learn.

GT3: Yes, especially with grammar. Explain grammar in German or talk about I don't know everyday stuff how we organize certain trips then I definitely switch to German. When they do not understand then I explain it in German again because I don't have too much time so sometimes it just has to be fast.

GT2: Well, it depends on the grades. When you have the smaller ones, you have to explain grammar in German because they are not able to understand all the things in English and if you want to explain grammar, you have to use their mother tongue.

For a thorough discussion related to the results obtained regarding the use of L1, please refer to the research question 1 (part a) in the teacher questionnaire.





German English Teachers	<b>Group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's good for higher levels.</li> </ul>
	<b>Pair</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They talk more.</li> <li>• In groups, students switch faster to their MT.</li> <li>• In groups, they hide behind each other.</li> <li>• In groups, they talk about irrelevant topics.</li> <li>• In groups, monitoring is time-consuming.</li> </ul>
	<b>Individual</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's good for lower levels due to their lack of linguistic knowledge.</li> <li>• It is the quickest way. Group work is slow.</li> <li>• In groups, weak students profit more than strong ones.</li> </ul>
	<b>Combination</b>
Swedish English Teachers	<b>Group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I use group work for communication/discussion.</li> </ul>
	<b>Pair</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is easier to organize it.</li> <li>• In groups, students are noisy.</li> </ul>
	<b>Individual</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In group work, there are lots of conflicts.</li> <li>• It is good for reading exercises.</li> </ul>
	<b>Combination</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students can profit from all types (e.g. individual work for reflection/ group and pair works for more energy and sharing ideas).</li> <li>• It provides a sense of variation.</li> </ul>
Dutch English Teachers	<b>Group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I use group work only for presentation.</li> </ul>
	<b>Pair</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is the easiest thing to do.</li> <li>• I use group work not that much at the beginning of the year because I need to have children feel that they are in a kind of controlled environment.</li> </ul>
	<b>Individual</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I use individual work due to lack of time and workload.</li> </ul>
	<b>Combination</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• However, for speaking I mostly use group work.</li> </ul>
Iranian English Teachers	<b>Group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are interested in it.</li> <li>• Students learn from each other better.</li> </ul>
	<b>Pair</b>
	<b>Combination</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students can profit from all types (e.g. individual work for evaluation/ group and pair works for shy students).</li> <li>• It provides a sense of variation.</li> <li>• It avoids boredom.</li> </ul>

Table 35. The results of the fifth interview question



As is clear from Table 35, in response to the fifth interview question, which refers to the types of activities used in the classroom, the interviewees maintain that they mostly prefer to use pair rather than group work in the classroom since they believe that in groups, students use their mother tongue a lot, talk about irrelevant topics, are noisy and hide behind each other. For example, a German teacher claims that:

I personally prefer pair work. You just choose two students to work together. Because they talk more and open up more in a group, they switch faster into their native language and they may hide behind each other. When two students start talking then some feel that they don't have to contribute to the discussion, so that's why I prefer pair work more.

With regard to group work activities, one Dutch teacher maintains that he does not use group work, especially at the beginning of the year since he wants the students to have a sense that they are controlled by him. It seems that for this teacher, group work activities may promote a low profile image of the teacher, resulting in a kind of chaos. In other words, this teacher insists on the authoritative figure of the teacher in the class. However, some of the teachers also mention that it is better to use a combination of all of these activities to create a sense of variation and allow the students to profit from all types (see also Thaler, 2012).

ST1: A kind of mixture. I think they are all good because you really need them all. Sometimes, it is necessary to let your students think and reflect in peace, sometimes it's good to have shared activities in pairs and groups to make them more interested and energetic. You need a sense of variety. You can't just do lecture, you can't just do pair work.

Among the interviewees, the Iranian ones prefer to use pair and group work more than individual work in comparison to the other three groups. This implies that they want to engage their students more in communicative activities because their English classes are considered as the only places where the students can practice and use English freely. In other words, lack of exposure to the target language triggers the teachers to use pair and group work activities more than individual tasks in the classroom.



German English Teachers	<b>Appropriate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's useful in small and competent classes.</li> </ul>
	<b>Not appropriate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes, it is too loud.</li> <li>• Students are not disciplined enough.</li> <li>• <u>Teacher must be the director.</u></li> <li>• It does not lead to good results.</li> <li>• We have limited time.</li> <li>• We should stick to the curriculum.</li> </ul>
	<b>Balanced use of T-O and L-O</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It creates a sense of variation.</li> </ul>
	<b>No answer → 1</b>
Swedish English Teachers	<b>Appropriate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is based on the learners' needs.</li> <li>• It is based on the principles of CLT and our materials.</li> <li>• It makes the students involved.</li> <li>• Students feel that they can make decisions.</li> </ul>
	<b>Not appropriate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The students do not know what they should do.</li> <li>• <u>I prefer to be the director and authority in the class.</u></li> </ul>
Dutch English Teachers	<b>Not appropriate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>I want to be the controller.</u></li> <li>• It is a desirable thing but it does not work in reality.</li> <li>• The students themselves are looking for an authoritative figure.</li> <li>• If I let them decide in the class, they do not learn a lot of English.</li> <li>• I appreciate it, but I am the only one that decides.</li> </ul>
	<b>Balanced use of T-O and L-O</b>
Iranian English Teachers	<b>Appropriate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's good for advanced students.</li> <li>• Students can profit from the class more.</li> <li>• Teacher can monitor the class better.</li> <li>• Teacher can give more feedbacks.</li> <li>• Teacher can act as a friend or participant.</li> </ul>
	<b>Not appropriate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is not compatible with all contexts and classes.</li> <li>• It does not match with students' perspective towards teachers' role.</li> </ul>
	<b>Balanced use of T-O and L-O</b>

Table 36. The results of the sixth interview question

As discussed earlier, the sixth interview question deals with teachers' opinions about implementing learner-centered classes. In response to this question, the European interviewees mostly believe learner-centered classes are not appropriate for their students because



they cannot work well, the students do not know what they should do, and the teachers have limited time.

GT3: I prefer learner-centered classes, but sometimes it's difficult with 30 students in the class to organize it in a way that it's organized and then works. Sometimes it just gets too loud and the students are not disciplined enough to do that. Personally, I like that way better with small classes.

DT4: No, several reasons. One of the reasons is that I think the students are looking for an authoritative figure as a teacher. You are in a way as their substitute parents. You are telling them what to do, and I found that they are really comfortable with it. They expect you to give them what they need to learn yeah exactly that and they can't decide on that themselves because if I let them decide they don't learn a lot of English.

Thus, although some scholars (e.g. Nunan, 1993; Alexander & Murphy, 2000; Lambert & McCombs, 2000; Matlin, 2002) emphasize the effectiveness of such classes in language learning, these teachers consider that learner-centered classes are not appropriate in their contexts. This may be due to the lack of language proficiency of the students, time constraints, students' learning styles and needs, examinations, the classic role of teachers and students, etc. These types of classes may be unsuccessful in those contexts where teachers are the sole provider of information and accuracy is more important than fluency. However, Iranian interviewees think that learner-centered classes are appropriate for their students since they can profit from their English classes more, and the teachers are free to act as a participant, give more feedbacks, and monitor the classes. This idea is clearly discussed by an Iranian teacher in the following statement:

Learner-centered classes are the aim because of two points; one point is related to the students' interests and needs to get the advantage of the class, and the other point is related to the teachers since these kinds of classes make them to act like conductor and facilitator in the classroom, so they have better opportunities to monitor the students, give the feedback in oral and written forms.

This difference between European and Iranian teachers may result from their contexts. As mentioned before, the present research was conducted at schools in European contexts, while in Iran data were collected from English private institutes. It is clear that the conditions for teaching English in these two settings are different from each other. At schools, teachers are limited to specific objectives, time, the national or state curriculum, examinations, poli-



cies, etc., whereas at institutes, teachers are somehow freer to choose their materials and prepare their lesson plans because they are not under the same levels of pressure regarding time and curriculum, and this helps to explain the position of Iranian teachers towards learner-centered classes. Furthermore, in Iranian institutes, the main goal of teaching is to make the students communicatively fluent, so little attention is paid to linguistic forms; however, these issues are among the main concerns of teachers at schools, of course, due to the examinations and competition among schools.

Finally, it should be mentioned that among these interviewees, only 3 teachers (one German, one Dutch and one Iranian) prefer a balanced position on this issue, as discussed by Thaler (2012). For example, the Dutch teacher states that ...

I think there should be a balance between these two. I don't think it's one or the other. Yes. I prefer to be in the middle. Yes, sometimes you have to be the dominant person. I mean if you give instructions or something you are the only one who is talking. Yes, but at the same time it's important for them to work on their own to see if they can figure things out themselves before they start asking you questions about it.

### **Research question 2:**

In order to have a deeper view of teachers' opinions with regard to the second research question, which deals with giving insight into the target language culture, interview questions 7, 8, and 9 were also asked in this study. Below are the results obtained from these questions:

7. Do you think that teachers should teach culture to the students as well? Why?
8. On culture of which countries do you focus more in the class? Home, English speaking, or other countries? Why? What about cultural aspects?
9. Does CLT help you in teaching culture?



German English Teachers	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>It is necessary to understand others.</u></li> <li>• It is useful when traveling to other countries.</li> <li>• It is useful for their future business.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Yes, but it is difficult</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students don't have enough cultural knowledge.</li> <li>• Teaching language is easier.</li> <li>• Stereotypes are sometimes problematic.</li> </ul>
Swedish English Teachers	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's part of the syllabus.</li> <li>• <u>Culture is part of the language.</u></li> <li>• <u>Language and culture are tightly connected.</u></li> </ul>
	<p><b>Yes, but it is difficult</b></p>
Dutch English Teachers	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's a good thing to get to know something about others esp. our neighbors although our focus is on communication and linguistics more than culture.</li> <li>• Yes as much as possible, but we have problem because of examinations and time. Culture is not a part of their exams. The focus is on the development of skills, vocabulary, and grammar.</li> <li>• It's quite important because if you want to motivate them to really learn a language it's important that they know whom they communicate with.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Yes, but it is difficult</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's not my main focus.</li> </ul>
Iranian English Teachers	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Culture is an integral part of language.</u></li> <li>• Lack of cultural knowledge leads to misunderstanding/interruption in communication.</li> <li>• Discourses are culture-bound.</li> <li>• Cultural knowledge leads to good conversation.</li> <li>• Linguistic knowledge is not enough.</li> <li>• <u>It is necessary to understand others.</u></li> </ul>

Table 37. The results of the seventh interview question

In regard to teaching culture in the classroom, most of the teachers interviewed believe teaching culture is as important as teaching language in foreign language classes since culture is a part of language. Thus, in order to understand other people, we should know something about their culture, and sometimes lack of knowledge in this regard can lead to misunderstandings and interruptions in conversations. The following statements can better indicate the teachers' positions towards culture teaching.



IT2: We cannot separate culture from the language. The integral part of the language is culture because many discourse situations are based on culture. If the students understand that in this culture we do not use this kind of pragmatics or this kind of discourse competence, definitely they can talk better. Finally, in the real situations or real world they have to talk to the foreigners, so they have to get familiar especially when it comes to the table manner, when it comes to greetings.

IT5: Culture from my point of view is a part of language. You need to teach them; otherwise, they won't be able to use the language. They won't have anything.

ST5: Well, I think it is something you do all the time when you teach a foreign language because that is part of a language. The language and culture is so tightly connected that you have to I mean when you teach English you have to talk about tea breaks and afternoon tea and fish and chips and how they celebrate Easter and everything that is connected to.

ST4: It's very important. It's part of a language. Like for instance, it's just a very simple thing in Sweden. We don't have a word for please and if you don't use please in English, you are rude. So I really have to talk about it and that is the society.

GT2: It's extremely important because it's not only the language. Pupils often tend to go to other countries on holidays or later they will work in the companies. They have to handle to work with colleagues from different nations, and it's really important for me or I think generally for us to get them to know certain background knowledge of other traditions, cultures, etc.

GT1: Yes, of course. I think they should know something about the history or the general life in a country, especially the differences, so that you make them understand the other cultures.

These responses indicate that the teachers in this study have more or less a complete perception of the development of cultural awareness among their learners since they confirm the importance of culture alongside linguistic aspects. However, among the European teachers, some of them believe that culture teaching is difficult for them because it is not their focus, students do not have enough knowledge (see also Karabinar & Guler, 2012), and stereotypes are always problematic. These problems are clearly presented by a German teacher in the following quotation:

Sometimes, I feel like it is a difficult issue to teach because some students don't know or some haven't been to UK or US yet, so it's difficult to present them a sort of a country that they haven't been to or they haven't had any contact with. Furthermore, it's really difficult to distinguish between teaching culture and teaching stereotypes. When you give the students



a topic, they talk about stereotypes, so it's very difficult to differentiate between the actual culture and those stereotypes.

In this sense, it seems that providing a framework for perspective changing is a difficult task for them since they see stereotypes as a kind of obstacle in teaching culture. Among these teachers, most of the Dutch interviewees have problems in terms of teaching culture because of their lack of time and examinations which always focus on linguistic aspects of the language. These findings reveal that although these teachers are generally aware of the importance of including culture into language teaching, the ways they cope with the target culture can be influenced by the curricular concerns and limitations (see also Gonen & Saglam, 2012).

<b>German English Teachers</b>	<b>Target culture (American/British)</b>	
	<b>English speaking countries</b>	
	<b>Reasons:</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Teachers' familiarity with cultures</u></li> <li>• <u>Curriculum</u></li> <li>• <u>Materials</u></li> </ul>	
	<b>Aspects:</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>History</u></li> <li>• <u>Literature</u></li> <li>• Youth life</li> <li>• Geography</li> <li>• <u>Everyday life</u></li> <li>• <u>Music</u></li> <li>• <u>Current events</u></li> <li>• School life</li> </ul>	
<b>Swedish English Teachers</b>	<b>Target culture (American/British)</b>	
	<b>English speaking countries (South Africa, Australia, India, New Zealand)</b>	
	<b>Reasons:</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Materials</u></li> <li>• <u>Teachers' familiarity with cultures</u></li> <li>• <u>Curriculum</u></li> <li>• Teacher education</li> <li>• <u>Students' interest</u></li> </ul>	
	<b>Aspects:</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Literature</u></li> <li>• <u>Way of life</u></li> <li>• Stereotypes</li> <li>• <u>History</u></li> <li>• <u>Current events</u></li> <li>• Movies/ News/ <u>Music</u></li> <li>• Attitudes</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• <i>Customs/traditions</i></li> <li>• <i>Useful phrases and expressions</i></li> </ul>	





Dutch English Teachers	<b>Target culture (American/British)</b>	
	<b>English speaking countries (Australia)</b>	
	<b>Reasons:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of time</li> <li>• <u>Teacher's personal interest/ experience</u></li> </ul>	
	<b>Aspects:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using exchange program</li> <li>• <u>Literature</u></li> <li>• Geography</li> <li>• <u>Current topics/ today's life</u></li> <li>• The way of interaction</li> <li>• Relevant issues</li> <li>• <u>History</u></li> <li>• <u>Music</u></li> </ul>	
Iranian English Teachers	<b>Target culture (American/British)</b>	
	<b>Combination of target (American/British) and local culture/Asian countries</b>	
	<b>Reasons:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Materials</u></li> <li>• Policies of the institutes</li> <li>• <u>Student's interests</u></li> <li>• <u>Teachers' familiarity with cultures</u></li> </ul>	
	<b>Aspects:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Customs /traditions /festivals</i></li> <li>• <i>Expressions, slang, proverbs</i></li> <li>• <u>Everyday life</u></li> <li>• Food</li> </ul>	

Table 38. The results of the eighth interview question

The next question, which is also related to the concept of culture teaching, probes the interviewees' opinions about the cultures and cultural aspects which are presented and discussed in the classroom. In response to this question, most of the teachers interviewed in this sample believe their main focus is on teaching British and American cultures due to their materials, own experiences and familiarity, students' interests, and curriculum. Among them, the Europeans prefer to talk about the cultures of other English speaking countries, such as South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and India, while Iranian teachers prefer to talk about the native culture of the students and the cultures of other Asian countries like Japan, South Korea, China and Malaysia alongside British and American cultures, based on the policies of their institutes, materials, teachers' familiarity and experience, and students' own interests. In this sense, Iranian teachers think that "learners can learn English not only through the target language but also through cultural aspects of the source language" (Erfani, 2014: 330). On the whole, like Naji Meidani and Pishghadam's (2013), Jalali and



Tamimi Sa'd's (2014), and Erfani's (2014) studies, the dominance of English speaking countries, especially the UK and US, is also confirmed by the findings of the present research.

From an overview of the studies in the literature (e.g. Prodromou, 1992; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Alptekin, 2002; McKay, 2003; McKay, 2012; Erfani, 2014, etc.), it can be concluded that many scholars hold different views towards culture teaching in language programs. In general, these perspectives can be classified into four different categories. In the first category, some of the scholars believe that in EFL classes, the focus should be on the cultures of the English speaking countries, the best known of which are the UK and the US. The second group asserts that the local culture of the students should be taught and presented in the EFL classes since the main aim is to make the students speak about their own culture in English. The third group believes in presenting the international cultures, i.e. the cultures of those countries where English is spoken as a foreign language or lingua franca, and finally some scholars look for a method with a combined view towards teaching culture, i.e. looking at the self and others; this view aims at the development of cross-cultural competence among language learners to help them become intercultural mediators. In this sense, one of the main duties of local English teachers is to create a language program which is localized and socially sensitive to the variety of English in today's multicultural and globalized world (see also McKay, 2012). Considering these different positions towards culture teaching in EFL classes, the results of the present research indicate that in comparison to Iranian teachers, who consider the cultures of the UK, the US, Asian countries (because of the similarities between Persian and other Asian cultures as well as the students' interest) and Iran (due to the policies of the institutes and the parents' views, as discussed earlier in the teachers' open-ended questions) in their classes, most of the European teachers focus mainly on English speaking countries, as determined by their curricula and materials used at schools. For example, one of the Dutch teachers states that ...

I think our curriculum is geared to the English and American writers. When we deal with Shakespeare, we also talk or deal with the Elizabethan era, but that is also mainly English which is not sort of much you know Chinese or Russian or Asian you know influences in our program in our curriculum.

Likewise, a Swedish teacher who is a native speaker of English maintains that ...

Yeah, I mean you know that is a part of our syllabus. We are supposed to mention English speaking countries culture, and it does come up through the other materials, the books we



use or have, the materials from some English speaking world you know Australia, South Africa, whenever English is spoken and I think you teach you as well you know I come from England, so I gonna be sharing something from England or whatever that I am familiar with.

However, the opinions of the Iranian teachers can be clearly detected in the following quotations:

IT1: All the books for students are written by American and British writers, so you can see that the cultures of UK and US are dominant in our books, but sometimes some students want to know about their own culture, so first of all we talk about the foreigners, their cultures, and their customs, then we encourage them to talk about their own culture.

IT5: I try to provide different information from different cultures, so it doesn't matter if it is Thai, British or American. But most of the time the students are exposed to English and American cultures based on the books. But the new books contain other cultures as well. They are exposed to Thai, Japanese, Chinese cultures as well.

IT2: Subconsciously, when the book is based on British or American English, the teacher has the tendency to teach those kinds of cultures, and sometimes it depends on the authority of the institute and school that they are going to teach English. Sometimes they force the teachers that whenever you come across these points, you have to customize it in the local culture of the students, but definitely first we get the students familiar with the local culture and then generalize it into the international culture.

According to the results presented in Table 38, the interviewees focus on different cultural aspects in their classes. As is clear from the responses, the majority of the teachers in these four countries prefer to talk about those cultural dimensions which are related to the daily life of people, literature, history, geography, customs, food, etc. However, these findings also reveal that the European teachers in this study talk about the Big-C aspects of the cultures, such as history, literature, music and current events, whereas Iranian ones prefer to focus on the small-c aspects like customs, traditions, food and expressions or slang in other cultures. In this sense, they are more or less like Swedish teachers. This can be explained by the materials that Iranian teachers use in their classes. As mentioned before, most of the materials used in the institutes are international textbooks designed and written by British and American writers focusing on the customs, traditions, daily life, expressions, etc., and this can make the teachers discuss these issues more in their classes (see the results of a study by Erfani (2014) on favorable Iranian teacher attitudes towards teaching small-c cultural aspects more than Big-C ones). Furthermore, concerning the Swedish teachers in this



sample, it should be mentioned that they believe in the importance of the pragmatic aspects of the English language more than the other aspects since these issues are very different in the Swedish language, for example, in terms of politeness.

ST5: We also try to teach our students from the beginning useful phrases that are important to use when you meet a person for the first time, for example, nice to meet you. So all kinds of expressions that are expected from you because we don't say the same thing in Swedish and they must know that when they go to England they have to use please all the time; otherwise, they will be looked upon as impolite.

Thus, as Erfani (2014: 330) states, "this shows the necessity for students to gain awareness about aspects which are of more common ground among learners of different cultures and learners who contact people of the target culture through travel or the internet need more pragmatic aspects of the language in order to have an efficient communication. Therefore, teachers showed more emphasis to this aspect."

On the whole, the responses of these interviewees suggest that materials, curricula, students' needs and institutional policies are among the determining factors in the selection of cultural aspects in the EFL classes of these four countries.

German English Teachers	<b>Yes</b>
	<b>Yes with combination of other methods</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through other methods students obtain proficiency, and then through CLT they can have discussion that promotes culture learning.</li> <li>• Communication and discussion is not enough for culture teaching.</li> <li>• Text analysis is also necessary.</li> </ul>
Swedish English Teachers	<b>Yes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For culture teaching CLT and text analysis help.</li> <li>• Free talk can be helpful for culture teaching.</li> <li>• It helps since the focus of CLT is using authentic materials which are good for teaching culture.</li> <li>• I cannot see any other ways. Reading is not enough.</li> </ul>
	<b>No answer</b>
Dutch English Teachers	<b>Yes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The best I think. Via communication we can teach culture.</li> <li>• Yes, because it's a communicative language approach embedded in cultural analysis.</li> <li>• Learning culture is ingrained in CLT.</li> </ul>
	<b>No</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching culture is not very related to the method of teaching.</li> </ul>



Iranian English Teachers	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLT is based on communication, and the base of communication is respecting and knowing about others.</li> <li>• Communication cannot take place without culture.</li> <li>• CLT is not separable from culture.</li> <li>• CLT materials are culture-based.</li> <li>• Communication helps understanding others.</li> <li>• CLT focuses on using media leading to the development of cultural knowledge.</li> </ul>
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Table 39. The results of the ninth interview question

Finally, regarding the last interview question in this part, which is concerned with the use of CLT in teaching culture, most of the Swedish, Dutch and Iranian interviewees think that CLT is a good approach for teaching culture in the classroom since communication, authentic materials and free talk, which are part of CLT, can help teachers to teach culture, leading to understanding and respecting other people.

IT2: So because communication is the core, so definitely culture can be followed in CLT.

IT4: I think the best method for learning a culture is CLT since it has a lot of conversations; it focuses on vocabulary and expressions.

ST5: Yes, definitely yes. I can't see any other method. Well, of course you can read books but that wouldn't be very useful to do in class. I mean when you are in class I think you should communicate with the teacher the class and the pupils together.

This position can be justified by the fact that some of the common techniques for culture teaching, such as role play, film, authentic materials, discussions, games, etc. are also used in CLT programs as central activities. Because of this reason, they may think that CLT is a good approach to teach culture in their classes and make their students interculturally competent.

However, in response to this question, most of the German teachers believe that in order to teach culture, it is better to use a combination of methods since communication and discussion are not enough, and we need other techniques like text analysis for culture teaching.

GT3: If the students have some basic knowledge about those cultural issues then it's definitely a way of doing it, but when they don't have this knowledge, they don't gonna talk about it. They don't have anything to talk about it. So they first need this basic knowledge and some ideas to talk in order to use them in the discussions. So you first have to do different kinds of teaching before doing such discussions or give them something I don't know examples from media from texts and then they have something specific they can use it for discussion.



GT4: I think so, but I don't use it exclusively because every now and then reading a text shows something as well. So it is good together with other methods.

This implies that they believe in using an eclectic approach for teaching culture in order to create a sense of variety and avoid boredom. Furthermore, this answer shows that some of the German teachers do not have a thorough conception of CLT, as shown in their definitions since they think this approach is only associated with discussion and communication, while as discussed earlier, CLT focuses on all four basic skills. Within this framework, it can be concluded that this approach also works on reading skills because reading a passage is in fact a communication between the reader and writer. Thus, in this sense, text analysis can also be a part of CLT programs.

The next important issue discussed by the interviewees was concerned with the development of intercultural competence in the classroom. To probe teacher attitudes towards this issue, two interview questions (10 and 12) were asked. The following tables will present the results in each country in detail.

10. Do you use comparison between the native culture of the students and the target culture in your classroom? Why?
12. Can CLT and its principles help learners to communicate with the people from different cultures? Why?

German English Teachers	<b>Yes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students like comparisons.</li> <li>• Students talk more in this way.</li> </ul>	
Swedish English Teachers	<b>Yes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It helps to find differences.</li> <li>• It helps the students to understand better.</li> <li>• It is interesting.</li> </ul>	
Dutch English Teachers	<b>Yes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is interesting.</li> <li>• This is the focus of our book.</li> <li>• Students do it themselves.</li> </ul>	
	<b>It depends</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only when it is part of the book.</li> </ul>	
	<b>No answer → 1</b>	



Iranian English Teachers	<b>Yes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It avoids biased views.</li> <li>• It promotes tolerance.</li> <li>• It helps to find differences and similarities.</li> </ul>	
	<b>It depends</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the topic is present in both cultures.</li> </ul>	
	<b>No</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I prefer to criticize the cultures.</li> </ul>	

Table 40. The results of the tenth interview question

In answering the tenth interview question, referring to comparisons between students' native culture and the target cultures, most of the teachers interviewed maintain that they use such comparisons in their classes since students themselves are interested in these issues, and sometimes discovering the similarities and differences between cultures helps them to understand other cultures, respect them and avoid biased views towards other people. Teacher beliefs about this issue are clearly described in the following statements:

GT2: Of course, always. We have always comparison. It's the basic part of our work because they really have the youth life in Germany and the youth life in Britain or other countries in their books. This is what the pupils like because they like to talk about these things and compare them to their everyday life.

GT5: Yes, very often it's a comparison. In grade 12 usually we have a lesson if time permits to let representatives of respective cultures meet each other and enter a dialogue so to give a reference for example meeting on the "Oktoberfest" and try to communicate your drinking habits. It can be a role play. Sometimes we read a text by English speaking writers and try to understand how the text represents roles and patterns of identity from an English speaking country for example. We try to be cultural explorers in this sense.

GT6: This is my first approach to culture teaching. The current comparisons between how they live and how they celebrate and how we live and celebrate.

DT5: Yeah, but they do it themselves, too. They laugh at it because we don't have that in our culture. I often hear them talk about oh but we are doing it differently. I would never have done that it's from their cultural viewpoints.

ST2: Yeah, all the time because then they can understand better. These comparisons make them to understand others and themselves better.



ST4: Yeah because comparison is interesting because then they might see how life is different in different countries, so they can see well this is Sweden.

IT2: Yeah, definitely in many units and many syllabuses, we have this comparison especially for example the New Year. How people celebrate the New Year in America, China, and Iran. There are many cultural points in the textbook that make the students familiar with different cultures through comparison.

IT3: Yes, why not. They can compare cultures with each other to know how similar and different they are. In this way, they can understand and respect others better.

IT1: Yes, I try to use, for example, role play in order to compare cultures. They talk about similarities and differences but without any bias. You know we are not prejudiced. They should be tolerant and accept each other.

This position is also confirmed by those scholars who believe in the integration of culture into language and the comparison of the native culture of the students with the target culture(s) to create a reflective and critical view towards both (e.g. Kramersch, 1993; Byram, 1997; Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999; Savignon, 2002) since learning about the home and target cultures can help the students talk about the similarities and differences, leading to an intercultural awareness. Within this framework, the students learn to judge both cultures based on the realities. In this sense, teachers should provide the students with adequate information on both cultures and then let them be critical thinkers.

This inclusion of the native culture of learners in target language teaching is also supported by many other scholars like Freeman and Freeman (1998), who believe that this integration can help learners foster a positive attitude and raise their self-confidence, and Robotjazi and Mohanlal (2007), who propose that teachers should consider the local context and create an incorporation of target and native language cultures based on the students' needs and demands. Stressing the role of teachers in using these cultures in a balanced way, they maintain that this combination can satisfy the communicative needs of the learners.





German English Teachers	<b>Yes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLT makes them talk.</li> <li>• Communication is important in understanding others.</li> <li>• Communication leads to long-life learning.</li> <li>• Communication helps them to express themselves and communicate with others.</li> <li>• CLT helps to be more reflective towards others.</li> </ul>
	<b>No</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students still have linguistic problems leading to cultural misunderstandings.</li> </ul>
Swedish English Teachers	<b>Yes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other methods like lecturing about grammar are boring.</li> <li>• The aim is to make them use language appropriately. CLT helps in this regard, leading to understanding people.</li> <li>• Communication establishes better understanding.</li> </ul>
Dutch English Teachers	<b>Yes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It helps them to learn the language and culture.</li> <li>• Communication always helps the people to interact with others and express themselves, and this is the focus of CLT.</li> </ul>
	<b>I am not sure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My focus is not on culture.</li> </ul>
Iranian English Teachers	<b>Yes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLT aims at communication.</li> <li>• CLT focuses on culturally based communication strategies leading to successful understanding of others.</li> <li>• Communication establishes better relationships.</li> <li>• CLT helps learners to use language in real-life communications.</li> </ul>
	<b>No</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students still have problems in speaking.</li> <li>• They cannot use what they have learned in real-life situations.</li> <li>• Stereotypical images exist in CLT materials.</li> </ul>

Table 41. The results of the twelfth interview question

The last issue which was discussed in the interviews refers to using CLT for the development of ICC. In response to this question, most of the teachers believe that CLT can help them prepare their students for interacting with people from different cultures. They think that CLT aims at communication, so it can help the learners to express themselves, use language appropriately, understand people and establish better relationships. These ideas are confirmed by some of the Iranian and German teachers as follows:

IT5: Of course, I mean before CLT students used to learn everything in theory. They didn't get to put into practice what they had learned actually. But right now this method enables them to feel and understand the situation.



IT1: I think the purpose of CLT is communication, and communication can cause understanding other people from different countries better, and establishing a better relationship with them.

GT1: Well, I think it makes them talk and as soon as you talk to somebody you can avoid difficulties, express yourself, and understand others.

GT5: Yes, interaction and communication always help the people to communicate with others and express themselves, and this is the focus of CLT. This approach makes pupils to be more reflective towards other people.

Thus, from these teachers' points of view, the learners' intercultural competence can be developed by a communicative approach since identifying the cultural differences and understanding people from other cultures can be achieved via dialogues and discussion. This issue is in parallel with the idea of some scholars like Kramersch (1993), who believe in using cross-cultural dialogues in the classroom in order to develop a third perspective. Furthermore, as discussed before, CC which is the ultimate goal of CLT, includes grammatical competence, discourse competence, and socio-linguistic competence. Put differently, when the aim of a communicative class is to make the learners communicatively competent, these three competences should be taken into account. Among them the socio-linguistic component is directly concerned with the norms of speaking which are dependent on pragmatics as well as social and cultural factors in a society.

Among the interviewees, only two teachers (one German and one Iranian) believe CLT cannot be very helpful in this regard since students still have linguistic problems in speaking which may lead to cross-cultural misunderstandings or breakdowns. The other reason mentioned by the Iranian teacher regarding this issue is that CLT materials are not free from stereotypical images, which can also be the cause of communication breakdowns in intercultural encounters.

IT4: I cannot say exactly, but I think it has a lot of problems. Our students cannot talk and communicate with others. They still have a lot of problems in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. There is still a clear problem about the use of stereotypes in the textbooks which are sometimes misleading.

GT6: I think you can't exclusively do it by CLT. I always use this approach as a trigger to make them start with something then I bring texts. I usually use the texts and then we discuss the issue. It is mostly a kind of combination.



### Research questions 4 and 5:

Finally, in the 11<sup>th</sup> interview question, the researcher investigated the interviewees' opinions in terms of the difficulties they are likely to face when discussing cultural and intercultural topics in their classes. This question helped the researcher to gain a better perspective towards research questions 4 and 5 in this study.

11. Do you have any problems in presenting cultural and intercultural issues in the classroom?  
When? What are your strategies to solve them?

The teachers' answers are as follows:

German English Teachers	<b>Yes</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Unacceptable topics according to the way of life (e.g. role of religion in America, death penalty)</u></li> </ul>
	<b>No</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' curiosity and interest in such things</li> <li>• History as an unproblematic focus/topic</li> </ul>
	<b>No answer → 1</b>
	<b>Strategies:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Avoid talking</u></li> </ul>
Swedish English Teachers	<b>Yes</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>In the situations which are really different like death penalty and using guns in the U.S.</u></li> </ul>
	<b>No</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are always interested in cultures esp. English speaking countries.</li> </ul>
	<b>Strategies:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We talk about it to let them know.</li> <li>• We should accept the differences.</li> </ul>
Dutch English Teachers	<b>Yes</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>It is difficult to talk with Muslim students about their faith laws in some countries.</u></li> <li>• <u>Students sometimes have difficulty in accepting something that is really different from what they are used to do.</u></li> <li>• Sometimes they laugh at these things. They are not very open-minded at this age.</li> </ul>
	<b>No</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since we do not go that much deep into culture.</li> <li>• Culture is not my focus.</li> </ul>
	<b>Strategies:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Basically I ignore the fact</u> or put forward the examples which are acceptable for them.</li> <li>• I try to present the issue from different viewpoints to make them empathize more with others.</li> <li>• I try to make them not judge and make them reflective to respect other values.</li> </ul>



Iranian English Teachers	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Unacceptable topics according to religion (e.g. having dogs as pets or drinking alcohol)</u></li> <li>• Strict students in terms of customs</li> <li>• Lack of students' cultural knowledge about others</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarification</li> <li>• <u>Avoid talking</u></li> <li>• Focusing on similarities</li> <li>• Talking about students' own experience</li> <li>• Talking about teachers' own experience</li> </ul>

Table 42. The results of the eleventh interview question

Based on the responses, it can be concluded that some of the interviewees have difficulties in presenting cultural topics in their classes. These problems mostly refer to some unacceptable topics which are really different from the students' own cultures—because of the students' social and religious norms. In this sense, the cultural differences are not easily accepted by the students, and in some cases they resist accepting such differences and even make fun of them. However, some other teachers interviewed here believe that they do not have any problems in such issues due to the students' curiosity and interests. This is not surprising since for some students these topics can be a source of motivation for discussion and exchanging ideas. The result is in parallel with Rashidi and Soureshjani's (2011) and Jalali and Tamimi Sa'd's (2014) findings, where the teaching of culturally-based topics and texts develops the motivation of some Iranian students. Moreover, some of the respondents do not have any problems since they do not focus on culture very deeply or their focus is only on history. These issues are confirmed especially by the Dutch and German teachers in the present research.

Regarding the strategies used to cope with such difficulties, many interviewees maintain it is better to avoid talking about problematic topics, and rather present a fact from different perspectives, discuss students' or their own experiences, focus on the similar topics, and encourage the students to reflect. This is where teachers may differ when dealing with cultural topics. As seen from the answers, some of them prefer to take a neutral position in this regard and, for example, avoid talking about such issues or keep to the similarities, while others try to discuss them, using experiences to provide different perspectives, and finally get the students to reflect in order to accept the cultural differences. In the latter case, these teachers may think that foreign language learning is "an intercultural subject matter" which



“entails an increase in learners’ familiarity with that language’s cultural background, an expansion of the learner’s cultural awareness and intercultural competence” (Sercu, García, & Prieto, 2004: 86). Here are some examples of the teachers’ problems in their own words:

DT4: Not very often, but sometimes it does evoke a response in them if things are strange. Students sometimes have difficulty in accepting something that is really different from what they are used to do. Basically I ignore the fact or bring the examples which are acceptable for them.

ST4: Yes, sometimes when the difference is very big like using guns in America. We talk about it to make them know that we are different. Nothing is right or wrong. We should accept the differences.

GT1: Yes, sometimes there are differences but nothing that is really hard to be accepted ... if death penalty is a kind of culture, so this is something that is very difficult to accept, and it exists in certain countries, but I think everything that is different is interesting and you can make them talk about it and it’s an important thing.

IT1: Sometimes, yes. There are some culture clashes for the students when, for example, talking about dating, keeping dogs as a pet, or drinking alcohols, those things that are taboos in religion. However, this is part of the learning and part of the culture students should learn. Using explanations and the students’ own experiences can help them to understand the differences and respect others.

### ***4.3. Overlapping Items in the Teachers’ and Students’ Questionnaires***

As mentioned earlier, in the present section those items which probe the same issues in the student and teacher questionnaires will be discussed in detail. These items are:

- a. Item 3 (I learn more when we have some discussions in small groups) in the student and item 5 (Discussing different topics in small groups is helpful for communication) in the teacher questionnaires referring to the usefulness of group discussion;
- b. Item 5 (I **don’t like** to be corrected by the teacher when speaking in English) in the student and item 11 (The teacher **should avoid** correcting all of the errors students make when speaking) in the teacher questionnaires considering the avoidance of error correction when speaking;
- c. Item 11 (I **don’t want** to have my teacher as the authority figure in the class) in the student and item 39 (Students want their teacher to be the director of the class in my



country) in the teacher questionnaires dealing with the authoritative role of the teachers in the classroom;

- d. Item 8 (I **don't like** to have grammar exercises in the class) in the student and item 35 (Grammar-focused activities are more effective than communicative activities for the students in my country) in the teacher questionnaires exploring the participants' attitudes towards the use of grammar-focused activities;
- e. Item 7 (I like to have those activities that make me speak more in the classroom) in the student and item 6 (Communicative activities are more effective than grammar-focused activities in language teaching) in the teacher questionnaires probing the subjects' attitudes towards the use of communicative-focused activities.

The findings of the questionnaires concerning these overlapping items are presented in the following table, where the opinions of the participants are displayed in three different categories of "Agree", "Undecided", and "Disagree" after summing up the answers related to "Agree" and "Strongly agree" as well as "Disagree" and "Strongly disagree" options all together. The positions of the students and teachers towards each topic are determined by a tick.

Countries	Topics	Answers					
		Students			Teachers		
		Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
Germany	The usefulness of group discussion	✓			✓		
	Avoidance of error correction when speaking			✓	✓		
	The authoritative role of teachers	✓			✓		
	Attitudes towards grammar-focused activities			✓			✓
	Attitudes towards communicative-focused activities	✓				✓	
The Netherlands	The usefulness of group discussion		✓		✓		
	Avoidance of error correction when speaking			✓	✓		
	The authoritative role of teachers	✓			✓	✓	
	Attitudes towards grammar-focused activities	✓					✓
	Attitudes towards communicative-focused activities		✓			✓	
Sweden	The usefulness of group discussion	✓			✓		
	Avoidance of error correction when speaking			✓	✓		
	The authoritative role of teachers	✓			✓		



	Attitudes towards grammar-focused activities	✓					✓
	Attitudes towards communicative-focused activities	✓			✓		
Iran	The usefulness of group discussion	✓			✓		
	Avoidance of error correction when speaking			✓	✓		
	The authoritative role of teachers	✓			✓		
	Attitudes towards grammar-focused activities	✓					✓
	Attitudes towards communicative-focused activities	✓			✓		

Table 43. The results of the overlapping items in the questionnaires

As is clear from Table 43 above, in response to the items related to the usefulness of small group discussion in the classroom, with the exception of Dutch students, who are undecided about this issue, the rest of the participants agree with the fact that discussion in small groups can be effective in learning the language and stimulating more communication in the classroom. It can imply that most of the subjects in this study (both teachers and students) are in favor of these kinds of activities which are one of the main features of CLT since, as Larsen-Freeman (2000: 129) suggests, “activities in the communicative approach are often carried out by students in small groups.” Holding this positive position towards group discussion, it seems that these respondents support the concept of cooperative learning and learning the language through communication. The neutral position of Dutch students towards this issue may be due to their learning needs and demands when considering their final examinations, which are mostly grammar-based.

Regarding the second topic, which refers to the concept of error correction in speaking, the teachers and students in all of these countries hold contradictory positions towards this issue. In other words, the students mostly want their teachers to correct their errors when speaking, while the teachers believe that it is not necessary to correct all types of errors when the students speak English in the classroom (see also the results in Razmjoo & Riazi’s study (2006) on 100 Iranian teachers about the application of CLT in their classes). Thus, based on the responses, it can be concluded that there is a partial mismatch between teacher and student attitudes towards error correction. Partial in the sense that the teachers participating in this study believe in correcting some but not all errors; however, from the students’ answers it seems they would like to be corrected whenever they make mistakes or errors. This shows that the students’ points of view in the present study do not match with the principles of CLT with regard to error correction. This position may be due to their final



examinations, which test mostly accuracy rather than fluency. Within this framework, correcting student errors can provide them with a sense of confidence or security regarding their exams. This is where the teachers should consider their students' needs and interests in learning a foreign language.

Unlike error correction, teachers and students in this study are in agreement on the authoritative role of teachers in the classroom, which is discussed in the other two items. In other words, based on the results, it can be concluded that the teachers in this study have a correct conception of their students' attitudes towards their role in the classroom, although sometimes they may act or behave against their own beliefs and opinions (this flexibility can be observed in the results of the teacher questionnaires related to item 10, where the Iranian and Swedish teachers have a different view towards this issue. They believe that teachers should not act as an authority figure in the classroom. With regard to this item, the Dutch and German teachers take a neutral position which shows their doubts about their roles in the class. This position may reveal that these teachers are aware of the external factors forcing them to behave in different ways).

These findings imply that the teachers participating in the present research control their classes based on their students' needs and demands rather than the principles of CLT since this approach asks the teachers to act as a facilitator and participant in the classes and involve the students in the process of decision making and controlling the class<sup>57</sup>.

The next issue which is discussed here refers to teacher and student attitudes towards grammar-focused activities or exercises. According to the findings, it can be concluded that, with the exception of German students, the rest of the learners like to have grammar exercises, whereas all of the teachers think such activities are not very effective for their students in comparison to the communicative ones. This indicates a kind of mismatch between teacher and student beliefs concerning the use of grammar-focused activities in the classroom. In this case, only the German teachers' perception matches with the needs of their students, who do not like doing grammar exercises in the classroom.

Finally, with regard to the last issues which explore the participants' attitudes towards communicative activities, the findings reveal that with the exception of some German teachers and Dutch teachers and students who take a neutral position towards this issue, the

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<sup>57</sup> For further discussion of this issue please refer to other studies such as Carless (1998), Sariçoban & Tılfarlıoğlu (1999), Hu (2002), Jarvis & Atsilarat (2004), Beyene (2008), Ozsevik, (2010), Dailey (2010), Karakas (2013), which show the same mismatch between the principles of CLT and what the teachers do in the classroom.





German students as well as Swedish and Iranian participants (both teachers and students) hold a positive attitude towards communicative activities in their classes. Thus, it seems that neither teachers nor students have a negative attitude towards communicative activities in the classroom. In this sense, students are eager to participate in such activities without being afraid of losing face and confidence in front of the class. This result is in parallel with the findings in Batak and Andersson's (2009) study on the French and Swedish teachers' attitudes towards the usefulness of communicative activities in the classroom (compare the result with a study by Mirdehghan, et al. in Iran (2011) which reveals the negative attitudes of students towards communicative activities because of losing face and lack of confidence). However, in the case of German teachers and Dutch teachers and students, it seems that they are not sure about the usefulness of communicative activities which may be due to their examinations and the number of the students in their classes, as discussed in the interviews and the second Likert scale section in the teacher questionnaire.

#### **4.4. Summary of the Results**

In this section, a short review of the results obtained in the present research will be presented in order to summarize the main findings.

- The majority of teachers in the present sample have a favorable attitude towards the characteristics of CLT and believe that this approach is useful for their students in order to learn English.
- The majority of teachers participating in this study hold a mixed view towards using L1 in CLT and their English classes. Among them, only Dutch teachers show a consistent favorable position about the use of L1 both in their questionnaires and interviews, whereas the rest of the teachers, i.e. German, Swedish and Iranian ones, present contrasting attitudes towards this issue in their questionnaires and interviews. On the whole, it can be concluded that most of these teachers use L1, especially in the case of grammar and complex topics in the classroom.
- The majority of teachers in this sample believe communication is more important than grammar, and this is completely in accordance with the principles of CLT which emphasize fluency over accuracy. However, they do not overlook the importance of grammatical instructions, as is clear from their interviews, where they stress teaching grammar, sometimes using L1. This implies that they have a correct perception of the



features of CLT in this regard since the proponents of this approach also believe in the significance of grammar in communicative classes.

- The majority of teachers in the present research believe that in comparison to reading, listening and writing skills, CLT develops the speaking ability of the students the most. In other words, these teachers think that CLT can help the students to develop their speaking and listening skills more than reading and writing; however, this opinion is in contrast with the principles of this approach which focus on the promotion of all four basic skills at the same time. This is one of the misconceptions held by the teachers regarding CLT.
- According to the results of the questionnaires and interviews, most of the teachers in this sample believe in using pair and group work activities in their classes in order to make their students talk more. Furthermore, in comparison to group work activities, pair work is more highly favored among the teachers.
- Regarding error correction in speaking activities, two important findings can be reported:
  - The students are mostly in favor of having their errors corrected by the teachers, while the teachers believe that they should not correct all types of errors when the students are speaking.
  - Most of the German and Dutch teachers participating in this study think peer-correction is more useful than self-correction for their pupils, whereas Iranian teachers have the opposite opinion. Concerning this issue, Swedish respondents show a positive attitude towards both techniques.
- With regard to the appropriateness of CLT in different contexts, the findings indicate that the majority of German, Swedish, and Dutch teachers in this sample agree with the proposition that CLT is suitable in their contexts, as determined by their students' learning styles, needs and interest, as well as teaching conditions and cultural background. Iranian teachers, in contrast, believe that the principles of this approach are not compatible with their teaching conditions and cultural background. This attitudinal difference is also obvious with regard to the appropriateness of CLT in EFL contexts. Referring to this issue, Iranian teachers believe CLT does not pay attention to the contextual differences between EFL and ESL contexts, while the European respondents prefer to take the neutral position in this regard.



- Considering class size, the teachers in this research take a contradictory position. Iranian and Swedish respondents maintain that the numbers of the students are not too large in their classes, while German and Dutch teachers believe that their classes are too large, thus affecting the implementation of CLT in the classroom.
- The majority of teachers participating in this research agree that their materials and textbooks are suitable for the use of CLT in their classes.
- Most of the Iranian and Dutch teachers in the present sample complain about the negative effect of their grammar-based examinations on the application of CLT, while this issue is not considered as a problem in German and Swedish contexts.
- The majority of Iranian teachers think that CLT is not successful in making the students accurate, while the European teachers do not take an unfavorable position towards this issue.
- Referring to the cultural issues, the majority of the teachers in this study believe that CLT mostly focuses on the cultural aspects of British and American cultures which are widely considered as the target cultures in EFL classes.
- The majority of teachers' responses collected in this sample reveal that CLT focuses mostly on those cultural aspects which are related to the everyday life of people in the target and other cultures, respectively.
- The majority of teachers in this study consider that CLT fosters a positive effect on the students' attitudes towards English and American cultures. However, with regard to other countries, German and Iranian teachers believe CLT stimulates a positive attitude towards the culture of other countries, while Dutch and Swedish teachers think CLT has no impact on the students' attitudes towards the culture of other countries.
- The majority of teachers participating in this study believe CLT considers the promotion of ICC in the classroom by triggering a sense of curiosity and openness, comparing the cultures, and fostering a reflective view towards cultures.
- Based on the findings obtained from the questionnaires and interviews, most of the European teachers in this research maintain that lack of time, experience, and familiarity with the target cultures as well as students' passive attitudes towards cultural topics are among the most common obstacles when talking about cultures, while Ira-



nian teachers mention the political and religious problems and differences as the most common difficulties in discussing such topics.

- The most common problem among the teachers in the present sample when talking about cultural topics is their students' passive attitudes and disinterest towards these issues.
- The majority of students participating in this study believe that their English classes can satisfy their needs and interests. Put differently, German, Swedish and Iranian students think positively about their classes, while Dutch pupils prefer to take a neutral position towards this issue.
- The comparison between teacher and student responses reveal that, excluding Dutch respondents, the rest of the teachers in the present sample seem to apply CLT in their classes at least for the purpose of communication, creating an interesting environment, and offering the chances of interaction in different situations, as displayed by their students' responses.
- There is a kind of consistency between the students' favorable attitudes towards direct explanation of grammar on the part of their teachers using L1 and teacher practice in the European contexts. This consistency is also observable between Iranian students and teachers; however, both groups think that there is no need to explain grammatical points in Persian.
- Regarding the chances of speaking in pairs and groups, while German, Swedish and Iranian students claim that they have enough opportunities to talk with their classmates in the class, Dutch students hold a negative view, which also highlights a disparity with the Dutch teachers' opinions in the interviews about the use of such activities.
- The majority of the students in this sample maintain that their English classes foster a positive attitude towards learning English, which indicates that their teachers believe in the effects of having a positive attitude on the learning process of their students.
- Most of the German, Swedish and Iranian students in this study believe that their English classes help them to develop a positive attitude towards English and American cultures, while Dutch students think that their classes do not create any attitudes towards the cultures of these two countries. These findings indicate that for Dutch



teachers creating a positive attitude towards learning the language is more important than the culture.

- The majority of the students in German, Swedish and Iranian institutions participating in this research believe that their English classes can help them understand and accept cultural differences among people of different countries, while Dutch students hold the opposite view. It seems that culture is not considered as an important issue in the Dutch context, as displayed in the results of the questionnaires and interviews.
- The majority of German, Swedish and Iranian students in the present sample believe that they mostly focus on the cultural aspects in American and British cultures rather than others. This issue can also be confirmed with the result of the interviews with the teachers.
- The majority of subjects (both teachers and students) believe that discussions in small groups can be helpful in the process of language learning. However, Dutch students take a neutral position on this issue.
- Comparing the results in the teacher and student questionnaires, it can be concluded that the teachers and students in the present sample have the same opinion with regard to the teachers' role in the classroom. It seems that there is a favorable attitude towards the authoritative role of teachers among them. This shows that the teachers have a correct perception of their students' ideas.
- Excluding the German students, the rest of the students are in favor of grammar exercises, while their teachers vote for the usefulness of communicative activities. This indicates a mismatch between Iranian, Swedish and Dutch teachers' opinions of their students. However, in the case of German subjects, it seems that there is no inconsistency between teacher and student opinions.
- Referring to the communicative activities in the classroom, Swedish, German and Iranian students participating in this study take a positive position, while Dutch students are undecided about it. Swedish, Dutch and Iranian teachers have the same opinion similar to their students; however, German teachers prefer to be neutral in this regard.
- The majority of the interviewees define CLT as a kind of teaching method which aims at communication and interaction.



- The results of the interviews reveal that teachers face some difficulties when applying CLT in their classes. The most frequent problems are:
  - Shy and passive students (common)
  - Students' level of English proficiency (common)
  - Lack of time (esp. German and Iranian teachers)
  - Uneven participation of the students (esp. German, Dutch and Iranian teachers)
  - Noisy classes (esp. German and Swedish teachers)
  - Using L1 in groups and asking for translation (esp. German and Iranian teachers)
  - Heavy demands on the teachers (Dutch teachers)
  - Making the students talk (Dutch teachers)
  - Heterogeneous classes (German teachers)
  - Curriculum (German teachers)
  - Keeping a balance between grammar and communication (Swedish teachers)
  - Problems in monitoring (Swedish teachers)
  - Artificial nature of the classes (Swedish teachers)
  - Matching the students in groups (Iranian teachers)
  - Lack of exposure to English (Iranian teachers)
- The most frequent strategies to overcome these problems are:
  - Using group activities
  - Encouraging the students to talk by asking additional questions
  - Working on different projects and watching films
  - Brainstorming
  - Balancing the time of interaction
  - Using English a lot
  - Finding suitable tasks and activities
  - Emphasizing the strengths of the students
  - Praising the active students
- The majority of the European teachers in this study believe learner-centered classes are not suitable for their students, while the Iranian ones hold the opposite view. These results show that the European interviewees are in favor of teacher-centered classes more than the Iranian ones since they think that learner-centered classes do



not work well due to their students' language abilities and learning styles, as well as some external factors such as time constraints and examinations.

- With regard to teaching culture, most teachers interviewed believe in the importance of culture teaching since they maintain that culture is a part of the language, and sometimes a lack of cultural knowledge may result in misunderstandings in communication. These teachers have a more or less correct perception of the development of cultural awareness among their students.
- The Dutch interviewees confirm that culture is not their main focus in the classroom due to their time constraints and examinations.
- The majority of the interviewees seem to prefer to talk about those cultural dimensions which are related to people's daily life, literature, history, geography, customs, food, etc.
- The emphasis on the pragmatic dimension of language teaching is mostly observable in the answers of the Iranian and Swedish teachers, who believe in teaching expressions, slang and proverbs.
- The results of the interviews indicate that, alongside America and England, the European interviewees mostly focus on other English speaking countries, while the Iranians consider Asian countries, as determined by their curricula, materials, policies, experiences, and familiarities.
- In contrast to German interviewees, who believe in the combination of methodological approaches when teaching culture, the rest of the participants focus on smaller scale aspects like tasks and techniques provided by CLT can help them teach culture in the class.
- Having a comparative view towards the self and others is also confirmed as a way to teach culture by the majority of the interviewees. This reveals that these teachers really believe in the development of a critical attitude towards the self and others.
- From the interviewees' points of view, students' ICC can be improved by a Communicative Approach since identifying the cultural differences and understanding people from other cultures can be achieved via dialogues and discussion.



## Chapter 5

### Conclusions

In chapter 4, the findings of this study were presented in detail. Here a discussion of the suggestions and implications arising from the research will be offered from the perspectives of the broad discipline of English language teaching. The main intention is to render the results as tangible and tenable as possible so as to shed light on the future course of research in this particular area and to ensure that undue replications of this research can be avoided. Replication could serve a useful purpose as long as it can illuminate the darker corners of previous endeavors. Yet it has to be prevented when it merely (and of course inadvertently) reiterates prior investigation under a different guise. To prevent such problems, a brief discussion of future lines of research in this area which could add to our knowledge will be presented.

To this end, a short recapitulation of the aims and objectives of this work is appropriate at this point. The main goals in the present work were as follows:

- to investigate teachers' ideas about: (1) the strengths and weaknesses of CLT regarding stimulating IC among their EFL learners, (2) the views of CLT towards the target culture and the learners' own culture, and finally (3) the applicability of CLT in their own context—where English is not considered as the first or second language of the society
- to explore EFL learners' attitudes towards their English language classrooms in view of the principles of CLT and cultural/intercultural issues.

With regard to the first query of this research, the following results are discovered:

1. In spite of the difficulties in the implementation of CLT (e.g. passive/shy students, examinations, classroom size, lack of time, the prescribed curricula, etc.), most of the teachers in the present sample show a positive attitude towards the principles and types of activities of CLT and maintain that this approach can help their learners to acquire the language and express themselves in different situations because to them, communication is the main aim. Furthermore, with regard to some of the principles, especially the emphasis on the oral skills, the use of the target language and fluency, the teachers participating in the present survey still hold some misconceptions.





2. Discussing the cultural issues, the majority of teachers in this study claim that CLT mostly focuses on the cultural aspects of Anglo-American contexts, which are widely considered as the target countries in EFL classes. Moreover, these teachers assert that CLT mainly considers the everyday life of people living in the target and other countries. To them, the promotion of ICC is possible via CLT since this approach aims at communication, thus helping the students have intercultural dialogues, understand others and establish relationships, and at the same time pays sufficient attention to the local culture of the students as well as the target culture, thereby fostering reflective and sensitive views towards other cultures.
3. Concerning the appropriateness of CLT in different contexts, it is found that the majority of European teachers in this sample believe in the compatibility of CLT with their own contexts, considering their students' learning styles, needs, and interest as well as teaching conditions and cultural backgrounds. However, Iranian teachers claim that the principles of this approach are not compatible with their teaching conditions and cultural background. In this sense, the difference between western and non-western contexts is more and more evident.

The views presented by the teachers towards CLT in this sample can be better clarified and discussed when considering Byram's responses to four open-ended questions which were collected in a questionnaire designed for this purpose in November 2012. As mentioned earlier, since the focus of this study was to discover the strengths and weaknesses of CLT in regard to the promotion of ICC based on Byram's model of ICC, it was also decided to examine Byram's attitudes and opinions towards this approach in terms of his own model. Consequently, the following questions were asked of Byram to probe this issue.

1. As you know, CLT is one of the popular approaches which tries to help the EFL learners become communicatively competent, with the emphasis on 4 important competences. I would be glad if you could give me your ideas about this approach and tell me whether it can achieve its aim or not?
2. Is there any specific problem regarding its cultural appropriateness when implementing CLT in different, especially EFL, contexts?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of CLT in terms of developing ICC among the learners?



4. Does CLT help learners to become interculturally competent in order to interact with other people from different cultures?

Byram's responses to these questions follow<sup>58</sup>.

1. This is a complex question but an attempt at a short answer follows:
  - CLT is widely misunderstood as dealing only with oral skills and ignoring other skills and a conscious knowledge of grammar; when it is used in a sensible way, CLT is effective in teaching learners communication skills and developing their awareness of language (sociolinguistic and linguistic); it has changed language teaching in Europe but it may not be appropriate for other countries and continents.
  - The disadvantages are that it requires high competence on the part of the teacher especially because it is usually associated with the exclusive use of target language (but this is another misunderstanding) AND that it tends to focus exclusively on communication in the sense of exchange of information (especially at the beginner levels).
  - It needs to be complemented by other (intercultural) competence teaching; it also needs to be complemented by a focus on the educational development of the individual (which partly comes through focus on language awareness and partly through focus on intercultural competence).
2. Yes I think this is the case and has been much discussed in the theoretical literature – problems are partly to do with teacher language competence but also to do with the purposes of language teaching (e.g. focus on reading skills) and examinations with a backwash effect which excludes some skills (Japan is an example of exams which are only focused on reading and writing and therefore affect the teaching of oral skills), and thirdly (as Holliday and others have argued) the kinds of exercise and task based learning which CLT demands is not always comfortable for learners – although one must beware of stereotyping and linking this with 'the Chinese' or 'the ...'
3. CLT has had positive effects in giving language teaching face validity i.e. it is focused on communication and 'speaking' as learners and others expect; the phrase 'learn X language' for most people implies 'learn to speak X language' and analysis of language is assumed not to help with learning to speak; CLT like language teaching be-

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<sup>58</sup> These responses are Byram's own wording without any alterations.



fore it focuses on the other – the other language and the other culture; ICC (and language awareness teaching) has a double focus on ‘self’ and ‘other’ and therefore existing approaches to CLT need to be modified to include this double focus.

4. Not necessarily especially in the early stages since it focuses often on exchange of information rather than interaction – and as said in the previous question there is a need for a double focus.

As is clear from Byram’s answers, it can be concluded that CLT can help learners develop their communication abilities and language awareness, especially in the context of Europe. In other words, by emphasizing the appropriateness of CLT in a European context, he maintains that this approach may not necessarily be successful in other countries and contexts, and this idea is also supported by some of the teachers (especially Iranians) participating in this study, as discussed above. At the same time, he stresses the misconceptions of CLT which are mostly concerned with speaking ability, “exclusive use of the target language”, and fluency. The results of the present research also indicate these kinds of misconceptions among some of the teachers.

Another important issue which can be inferred from the answers is that according to Byram, teachers may face some problems, such as the backwash effect of the examinations and the students’ learning styles when applying CLT in their settings. These are among the very same difficulties which were posed by some of the teachers in this study, especially in the Netherlands and Iran.

Finally, referring to the main focus of the present research, i.e. the promotion of ICC via CLT, Byram mostly believes that CLT should be accompanied by “intercultural competence teaching” since it mainly emphasizes language awareness and fails to consider the importance of maintaining “a double focus on ‘self’ and ‘other’.” That is to say there is still a lack of attention to intercultural matters in this approach. However, the majority of the teachers in this sample did not hold the same position towards this issue since they maintained that this approach can make the learners interculturally aware, referring to both cultures—self and other. Furthermore, they stressed that considering communication as the core of CLT, this approach can help the students interact with other people from other cultures. These findings may stem from the fact that most of these teachers use different kinds of methods and techniques to teach culture without any attention to the principles of CLT in teaching culture. Put differently, in some cases they may ignore these principles since they



are not compatible with their aims at a given point; however, they still think that CLT promotes ICC because they mostly use this approach in their classes.

As for the second objective of this work, it was found that most of the participating students are satisfied with their English classes and they think that these classes can fulfil their needs and interests and provide them with enough opportunities to have communication in the class (except for the Dutch students in this study who held an opposite view towards this issue). In this sense, they are in favor of those principles of CLT which offer opportunities to have more communication in the classroom. However, they still have unfavorable attitudes towards two main features of CLT, i.e. error correction and the teachers' role in the classroom. Furthermore, excluding Dutch students, the other subjects maintained that their English classes focus more on British and American cultures and foster a positive attitude towards the English language and culture; these classes help the students to understand and accept the cultural differences among different countries and people. The participants (except Dutch students) also added that their classes help them to have a comparative view towards their own and other cultures, especially England and America.

Judging from the results presented above, it can be concluded that although the aim of English language classes in these four countries is communicatively-oriented, as determined by the syllabuses and the CEFR, it seems that the implementation of CLT is still challenging for EFL teachers. In other words, some internal (e.g. teachers' shallow and incorrect perception of the principles of CLT) and external factors (e.g. time limit, over-crowded classes, types of examinations, curricula, and students' learning styles, needs, interests and roles) create barriers for the application of CLT in these four countries, three of which are considered as western societies. As mentioned before, since CLT originates from a western idea, it seems that this approach can be better applied in those contexts, but the results of this study do not confirm this idea in all aspects. With regard to the external factors, student influence on teacher practice may be considered as the most important element because sometimes the mismatch between student beliefs and needs and teacher opinions and practices can cause considerable problems in EFL classrooms (see for example Schulz, 1996). What is equally obvious in this study is that teachers considered culture as a significant factor in language teaching and most of them suggested that language teaching should be accompanied by culture teaching since culture is an integral part of the language. In spite of this positive attitude towards the integration of culture into language teaching, some of the



teachers participating in the present research maintained that their curricula, time constraints, grammar-based examinations, and their students' disinterest in cultural topics often force them to concentrate more on the linguistic aspects of language teaching. To them, culture has a minor and instrumental function in their classes. They used culturally loaded texts for the presentation of language elements, focusing on vocabulary and grammar. The majority of these teachers believed that CLT can be a useful method to teach culture in the classroom because communication represents the core of this approach, helping the students to convey messages, understand and respect people, and establish relationships. This positive position towards CLT held by the teachers was also evident when they stated that CLT can be influential in the promotion of ICC when focusing on the local culture of the students, fostering a sense of curiosity and openness, and making the students reflect or think critically. In this sense, CLT can be considered as one of the approaches encouraging intercultural awareness among learners.

After this précis of the results of the study, it is now time to turn to the implications this study bears in light of present pedagogy in language teaching, and then deal with the suggestions this work can offer for the future lines of inquiry into this particular issue.

### ***5.1. Didactic Implications for TEFL (Fachdidaktik)***

Referring to the corollaries of this study, the following recommendations and suggestions will be made.

#### **Teacher Education**

The present study has some implications for teacher education, especially in EFL contexts, since the pre- and in-service programs as well as teachers' own experiences can have an influence on the development of the teachers' principles and beliefs, although these experiences and ideas might not always be observed in the actual practices of the teachers in the classrooms. Thus, according to the findings obtained, this research implies that ...

- It would be desirable to have more pre- and in-service training courses in order to make the teachers familiar with the principles of CLT and the probable difficulties which they may face in their career when applying this approach in their classes since the findings of this study indicate that some of the teachers have still a semantic perception of this approach rather than conceptual. Moreover, teachers should be pro-



vided with enough opportunities to experience this approach in their training courses because they are generally liable to use the same teaching method which they have experienced during their own studies (see also Carless, 1998: 354; Baron, 1998: 222). One way to train the teachers is to have some Teacher Training Courses (TTCs) in which the teachers are informed about different techniques used in CLT and then asked to apply this approach in a real classroom while being filmed or observed by two experienced teachers. The discussion after the class observations can be very helpful to make inexperienced teachers aware of their probable problems in conducting CLT. Additionally, the teachers themselves can observe different communicative classes regularly in order to obtain more experiences, be able to analyze the problems of this approach in their own contexts, and apply the appropriate strategies being used by the experienced teachers in different settings to make a better decision regarding the use of CLT. These pre-service training courses and practices can also help the teachers to increase their understanding of the different roles of teachers and students in a language classroom.

- Teachers should be trained to use more communicative activities for increasing the students' listening, reading, and writing skills. In other words, teachers should be informed that CLT or the Communicative Approach does focus on the inclusion of all four basic skills in teaching a language. However, the integration of all four skills in the language programs depends not only on the teachers' awareness of this issue, but also on other contextual factors, such as curricula, materials, students' needs and interests, the educational policies of the institutions, time constraints, examinations, etc. Thus, in order to apply CLT effectively in the classroom, there is a need to consider these factors, as well. For example, when the curriculum, material, or examinations focus mainly on one or two skills, it is difficult to expect the teachers to integrate these four skills in an appropriate way. In this case, the teachers usually try to match the teaching objectives, techniques, and methods with these elements, leading to fulfilling the learners' needs and following the school policies.
- The requirement for conducting a needs analysis before starting the lesson should be clarified for the teachers in order to prepare them for analyzing the students' needs and interests, upon which the decisions regarding the process of language teaching should be made. In other words, teachers should be trained to be critical and contex-



tual evaluators. In this way, the problem of potential discrepancies between theory and practice can be reduced. This should necessarily be accompanied by the language policy implemented by a specific classroom community or the school.

- Teachers should be informed about the importance of integrating culture into language teaching, and some pre- and in-service programs should be offered to make them familiar with different English speaking countries and their cultural differences since one of the teachers' problems with regard to culture teaching in this study is related to their lack of knowledge about different cultures. In this sense, it would be desirable for the teachers to be able to participate in some courses in English speaking countries via university or school programs. In this way, they have a chance to get more knowledge in the real contexts. However, introducing such programs is not always easy due to the financial problems or finding a host country. In this case, inviting the native speakers from different English speaking countries can be an alternative to make the teachers have more contacts with the target language and culture. Accordingly, the curricula and materials should be designed based on the integration of culture and language teaching to help the teachers follow this aim in their classes. Furthermore, teachers should be sufficiently skilled to cope with cultural subjects and add these elements to their teaching practices. Appropriate strategies should be taught to teachers in order to help them overcome their probable difficulties when introducing cultural topics in the classrooms. Within this framework, culture studies courses should be included in the teacher education programs at the universities in order to make the pre- and in-service teachers familiar with the cultural differences existing between home and target countries.
- Comparing and contrasting the cultural differences between the local culture of the students and the target culture(s) should also be considered by the teachers in order to help the students understand the self and others, change perspective, and shape their own identities without ignoring their own cultural values and norms. Put differently, the importance of ICC should be emphasized in teacher education to make the teachers aware of the fact that one of the main aims of language teaching today is to help the students become interculturally mature. In this sense, the concept of ICC and its aims should be clearly defined for the teachers in order to avoid semantic and unrealistic perception of this issue, only. However, aside from the role of the teach-



ers in this regard, the students, parents, and school authorities should also be informed about the significance of teaching culture since teaching a language is not limited to the linguistic factors only. Learners can learn a language more effectively when they know how to use it appropriately in real-life contexts with regard to socio-cultural matters. Within this framework, in order to help teachers focus on the integration of culture and language teaching: (1) the material designers should consider the inclusion of motivating cultural topics and activities in order to make the students interested in such issues, (2) the curriculum designers should pay more attention to the incorporation of the cultural topics and allocation of enough time to work on them, and finally (3) the school authorities should hold some briefing meetings for the parents to explain the importance of their exchange and cultural programs.

- Aside from this issue, i.e. the importance of ICC, teachers should be enabled to grasp the key influence of the cultural background of the students on the use of CLT since these factors can sometimes create barriers for the implementation of this approach. Such cultural barriers can be the conventional roles of teachers and students in the society and their orientation towards classroom activities, cooperative learning and the importance of fluency. Additionally, the mismatch between the content discussed and the local culture of the students can also be considered as causes of demotivation and disinterest in the target language and culture. With regard to this issue, Abbas, Aslam, and Yasmeen (2011: 337) suggest ...

When conflict exists between the selected content and the culture of the learners, it may impede the whole process of language learning, and may even lead to its failure. It can also develop a sense of cultural and linguistic insecurity, creating obstacles and hindrances. It may create barrier in the dissemination and assimilation of knowledge. An experienced teacher can handle the situation with skill. But in case the situation is mishandled, it may create confusions in the mind of learners, shattering their confidence and resulting in the loss of interest. The problem is that if they aren't able to relate to life, what they study, they won't be able to understand it.

- Teachers should also be equipped with enough knowledge to orient their students towards the principles of CLT and their importance in language learning. The students should recognize that the Communicative Approach or CLT focuses on the development of the grammatical competence alongside of the communicative competence. When the students become aware of the fact that their needs and aims in learning a





foreign language, especially the mastery of grammar and vocabulary, can also be achieved via a communicative method, they may participate in the communicative activities more and conform themselves to its principles easier. However, as explained before, teacher training programs and courses at the universities usually focus on the theory more than practice. Within this framework, the teachers are not often ready to help their students understand the principles and adapt themselves to them. The teachers are informed about some general views regarding different methods of teaching which sometimes may cause misconceptions for them. Thus, the teacher's self-misconception of a specific method can lead to his/her failure to orient the students towards the roles and standards of that method well.

- Teachers should be trained to hold a balanced view towards different types of language teaching styles, i.e. teacher- and learner-centered classes, and to take advantage of the strengths of these approaches since lack of knowledge in this regard may make teachers stick to a specific style and method of teaching. However, due to some contextual factors, such as time constraints, students' cultural background and styles, materials, teacher's own personality, classroom size, etc. teachers are not usually able to make a balance between these two types of classes. Against this background, a teacher may believe in creating such a balance, but cannot follow his/her beliefs in a real situation, and this is where a mismatch between theory and practice, i.e. ideality and reality, may happen.

Aside from teacher education, the results can also redirect the attention of the test and curriculum designers to the inclusion of cultural and communicative elements in their tests and curricula since in a well-prepared language program, the teaching objectives, goals, syllabuses, methods, and materials should be consistent (see also McGrath, 2002).

### **Curriculum and Examination Design**

- The integration of culture into language teaching should be taken more and more into account in the design of curricula, especially with regard to assigning sufficient time to the different aspects in language teaching programs.
- Teachers' ideas and experiences should be investigated when designing the curriculum in different contexts. The importance of teachers' ideas is also emphasized by Sharkey (2004: 279), who claims that teachers' understanding of the context could



affect the development of a curriculum in three main ways: “establishing trust in gaining access, articulating and defining needs and concerns, and identifying and critiquing political factors that affect teacher’s work.” Considering this fact, teachers can also be involved in the design of the curricula, materials, and tests.

- Ongoing evaluations could be made to discover the problems of the curricula and teachers’ understanding, especially in terms of cultural and intercultural topics in order to improve them.
- The authorities should make the necessary modifications to examination frameworks in order to include communicative, cultural, and intercultural aspects. According to the concept of backwash effect, a test can affect the way the students are taught and as a result learn the things in the classroom. Therefore, when the aim is to make the students communicatively and intercultural competent, it would be desirable to consider these aspects in the examinations, as well. In other words, focusing only on one type of questions or tests which refers to some limited linguistic aspects of the language may deprive the students of learning the other important features of the language, such as socio-cultural and intercultural matters.

The findings obtained in this research can shed light on some important modifications which should be carried out by school authorities and administrators to provide appropriate environments for language learning and teaching.

### **School authorities and administrators**

- Teachers and school administrators should provide enough opportunities for the students to practice the target language in an English environment at school.
- The number of students and the size of classes should be adjusted to the aims followed by the teachers and the curriculum.
- Administrators should provide the teachers with more opportunities, such as occasional reorientation programs, workshops and seminars to help them not only stay up-to-date with new methods and techniques of teaching, but also share their ideas about the implementation of different methods, in this case CLT, and consider their opinions through discussions and consultations.
- The adaptation of the Communicative Approach to local contexts can also be implemented to integrate some of its principles to traditional approaches (e.g. grammar-



translation method, direct method, audiolingual method) acceptable to teachers and students, especially in Asian contexts like Iran. Therefore, in order to overcome the resistance of the teachers and students towards the principles of CLT because of their cultural background, using a modified version of CLT can contribute to the acceptance of this approach in these contexts.

- Teachers and school administrators should make a survey to collect student attitudes towards the inclusion of different types of cultures in their classrooms.
- Administrators should consider teacher beliefs regarding teaching and learning because these opinions can influence their teaching inclinations and practices. The importance of this issue is also supported by different scholars, such as Bailey (1992), Hampton (1994), Jackson (1992), Richards, Gallo, and Renandya (2001), and Borg (2009) in the area of language teaching.

The next section provides suggestions for further research to help those who wish to conduct studies in this line of inquiry.

## ***5.2. Suggestions for Further Studies***

Considering the limitations of the present survey, as discussed in section 1.3.2, the following suggestions may be made for other research in this area; it goes without saying that other researchers in the field of English language teaching should avoid the limitations faced in this study to ensure that their claims regarding their outcomes are as firm as possible.

The most important limitation faced in this research was the number of schools and teachers, especially in the Netherlands, who participated in the present survey. In other words, the small sample of teachers (83 participants at 14 schools) for the quantitative module and the small sample of interviewees (21 teachers) for the qualitative section put limits on the generalization of the outcomes of this study to the population of teachers teaching English in Germany, Sweden, The Netherlands and Iran. Nevertheless, applying a mixed method approach provides findings that highlight the beliefs and perceptions of the teachers participating in this study about: (1) CLT and their probable difficulties when using this approach in their classes as well as (2) the concept of culture, the importance of developing ICC in the classroom, and the intercultural problems which may occur when introducing a cultural topic. Thus, future studies may be conducted with larger samples of teachers working at different instructional levels, i.e. primary, secondary, and tertiary, since this pro-



ject was carried out only at upper-secondary school level in the target countries. Put differently, the teachers' opinions on CLT and the presentation of cultural topics can be investigated in different contexts and levels of education to gain a more thorough perspective on these two issues. Other researchers might achieve results pointing out different topics and problems when carrying out new studies in different contexts with other participants. Concerning this issue, student perceptions of their roles in the classroom, their attitudes towards communicative and non-communicative activities, and the place of culture in language teaching can also be investigated in the scope of different studies to shed more light on the effect of student beliefs on the process of language teaching.

As discussed earlier in section 1.3.1, the role of age and gender, as the important factors which can influence the results of the studies, were controlled in the process of the present work. As a result, the findings were inferred without any reference to the impact of age and gender differences on the answers provided by the teachers and students. Subsequent studies considering the effect of students' and teachers' gender and age on their attitudes and beliefs towards CLT and culture will contribute further to this research base. Furthermore, teachers' years of experience, educational background, and working hours can also be explored as determining factors in dealing with the foci examined in this study. Sometimes the differences between years of experience and academic backgrounds of the teachers can have an influence on the ways they cope with their problems when applying a specific teaching method and discussing topics in their classes.

Above all, observations or other research on actual practices of teachers in the classroom when implementing CLT and introducing cultural topics are greatly needed to investigate more precisely the application of CLT and development of ICC as well as their effects on students. Within this framework, the appropriacy of a teaching method and its effectiveness in a specific teaching environment can be measured more adequately and as a result, the potential mismatch between teacher beliefs and practices can be determined in terms of student needs and local conditions.

Referring to the Iranian context, even though the findings of the study indicate that the development of cultural awareness is among the important elements considered by the Iranian teachers, further studies are needed to determine to what extent Iranian EFL teachers have limitations in discussing the cultural topics in their classes and why. Furthermore, some



more research can be done to examine teacher opinions in different public schools in terms of teaching culture in the classroom.

Future researchers may duplicate this study in other national and international contexts to find out more about the possible problems and their solutions in the application of CLT and the introduction of cultural topics since the elusive nature of CLT and culture with different definitions makes it difficult for researchers to come to an absolute conclusion about the problems related to the use of this approach and culture teaching in EFL contexts. Thus, there is still a need to conduct more studies, especially in EFL settings, to probe these issues.

Furthermore, on a yet more basic level, the statement of teacher and learner attitudes and beliefs about teaching practices on Likert-type scales, checklist and Yes/No questions may or may not be a precise reflection of their viewpoints towards the foci discussed in the present research. In this sense, the students' perceptions of their English classes cannot be claimed to exactly mirror actual classroom practices by the teachers. Sometimes, the types of questions in the questionnaires may cause the participants to answer in such a way that they give the appearance of agreement with the aims of the study and present a prestigious perspective of their own knowledge and conditions. This limitation cannot be overlooked with regard to the questionnaires and also the interview questions in this study. Considering this issue, other studies can be carried out to investigate teacher and learner insights using different kinds of instruments, such as group discussions, unstructured interviews, and open-ended questionnaires to reduce the method effect on the subject responses.

At the end of this chapter, a brief evaluation will be provided about the research method, instruments and design used in the present study in order to shed more light on the outcomes obtained applying these techniques and methods.

### ***5.3. Evaluation of the Research Method and Design***

As explained before, this research was run using a mixed method design, i.e. the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, to collect and analyze the related data which helped to provide complementary results. To achieve this aim, two structured and semi-structured questionnaires (one for the students and one for the teachers) and some semi-structured interviews (just for the teachers) were carried out to collect the data. Since the focus of this study was on the subjective theories or beliefs of the participants about CLT and cultural matters, the mixture of these two forms of instruments helped to investigate the



attitudes of the subjects towards these issues in a better way collecting a large group of participants, especially with regard to the number of the students. However, the closed structure of the questionnaires, which was inevitable because of the time constraints on the part of the participants, shed light on some specific aspects in terms of the foci of the research. Thus, for the detailed analysis of the subjects' opinions, especially with regard to ICC which refers mostly to the underlying perceptions and ideas, it would be desirable to conduct qualitative investigations using unstructured interviews and open-ended questionnaires, so that the subjects are free to elaborate more on the topic under the study.

Moreover, considering the teachers' use of CLT in their classes, it would be better to make classroom observations in order to collect more information about what they actually do in their classes and find the mismatches between their beliefs and practices. Questionnaires and interviews used in this study provided some useful information about the teachers' and students' beliefs in this regard; however, in order to go deeper into the problems existing in different contexts, a qualitative research method can be more helpful although it has its own difficulties, such as time, the number of the participants, authority permission, especially regarding classroom observations, as well as the scope of the study.

Finally, it is hoped that this study has provided some valuable insights into the effectiveness of CLT and its cultural components in four different contexts, and also has paved the way for the other studies in the field of teaching methods and development of ICC in different countries.





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### Part one: General characteristics of CLT

In this section, please give your opinions about the general characteristics of CLT.

A: Please check in the appropriate choice<sup>60</sup>.

No.	General characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	CLT helps learners to express their ideas easily in different situations.					
2	CLT helps learners to apply their language skills in real-life situations.					
3	CLT makes learners interested in language learning.					
4	Using mother tongue <b>should be avoided</b> when teaching a foreign language.					
5	Discussing different topics in small groups is helpful for communication.					
6	Communicative activities are more effective than grammar-focused activities in language teaching.					
7	Grammar is best taught in a communicative EFL class.					
8	Communication is more essential than grammar.					
9	English speaking proficiency is more easily achieved in a communicative class.					
10	The teacher <b>should not</b> act as an authoritative figure in the classroom.					
11	The teacher <b>should avoid</b> correcting all of the errors students make when speaking.					
12	CLT helps my students to learn English better.					

**B: Please put a check mark in the circles (more than one option is possible as well).**

13. CLT helps learners to develop their ..... skill(s).  
Listening  Speaking  Reading  Writing
14. Using ..... activities motivates learners to interact easily and freely.  
Individual-work  Pair-work  Group-work
15. .... are useful ways to make the students aware of their mistakes.  
Peer-corrections  Self-corrections

<sup>60</sup> Some of the statements used in this questionnaire may seem a little biased or tendentious, but they are based on the main principles of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach which have been used in other studies on teacher and student beliefs as well as the appropriateness of this method in different contexts (e.g. Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Li, 1998; Rao, 2002; Savignon & Wang, 2003; Li, 2004; Nam, 2005; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006; Stridsberg, 2007; Beyene, 2008; Al-Nouh, 2008; Ozsevik, 2010; Akhter, 2010; Shihiba Salma Embark, 2011; Al-Mekhlafi, 2011; Coskun, 2011).



### Part two: Cultural characteristics of CLT

In this section, please give your opinion about the cultural or intercultural characteristics of CLT.

**A: Please choose yes or no based on your opinion<sup>61</sup>.**

16. CLT can help learners to understand foreign cultures better.  
Yes  No
17. CLT teaches learners how to behave in situations when abroad.  
Yes  No
18. CLT makes the students curious about other culture(s).  
Yes  No
19. CLT helps the learners to interpret events from other cultures and relate them to their own.  
Yes  No
20. CLT makes learners aware of cross-cultural differences among different countries.  
Yes  No
21. CLT helps learners to have a(n) reflective/analytical view on their own culture and other cultures.  
Yes  No
22. CLT helps learners to understand the feelings of the people in other countries.  
Yes  No

**B: Please put a check mark in the circles (in some questions more than one option is possible as well).**

23. CLT helps learners to learn about the cultural aspects of ..... and their ways of life.  
England  America  Other countries<sup>62</sup>  None
24. CLT creates a comparative view between the students' native culture and .... culture(s).  
British<sup>63</sup>  American  Other  None
25. CLT makes learners familiar with social values and beliefs in ..... culture(s).  
British  American  Other  None
26. CLT creates a(n) reflective/analytical attitude towards ..... culture(s).  
British  American  Other  None
27. CLT helps learners to become tolerant of ..... culture(s).  
British  American  Other  None
28. CLT gives insight into the ..... of the target society (England/America).  
Literature  History  Geography  Fine arts  Politics   
Education  National symbols  Customs and Festivals   
Family life  Food  Youth life   
Idioms  Proverbs  Expressions  Slangs   
Stereotypical images  None
29. CLT gives insight into the ..... of other countries.  
Literature  History  Geography  Fine arts  Politics   
Education  National symbols  Customs and Festivals   
Family life  Food  Youth life  Racial minorities

<sup>61</sup> Although Rating or Likert scale items can present a better perspective towards the attitudes of the participants, the Yes/No type of questions were used in this part to explore the existence of the dimensions of ICC in CLT as well as to use different types of questions or items in the questionnaire in order to avoid boredom.

<sup>62</sup> "Other countries" or "Other" means any other countries except England and America. To avoid misunderstandings, the teachers were briefed on the meaning of America which refers to the United States in this questionnaire.

<sup>63</sup> "British culture" in this questionnaire refers to the culture of English people who live in England. To avoid misunderstandings, the teachers were also informed that British culture refers to the culture of English people in England in this questionnaire.



- Stereotypical images  None
30. CLT has a ..... influence on students' attitudes towards **British/American** culture.  
Positive  Negative  None
31. CLT has a ..... influence on students' attitudes towards **other** cultures.  
Positive  Negative  None

**Part three: The appropriateness of CLT in different contexts**  
Please put a tick against your choice.

No.	CLT in different contexts	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
32	The classic view on teachers' and learners' roles in my country <b>is not</b> compatible with CLT.					
33	Students have a passive style of learning in my country.					
34	Students lack motivation for developing communicative competence in my country.					
35	Grammar-focused activities are more effective than communicative activities for the students in my country.					
36	Classes are too large for the effective use of CLT in my country.					
37	Materials and textbooks <b>are inappropriate</b> for using CLT in my country.					
38	Grammar-based examination in my country has negative effects on implementing CLT.					
39	Students want their teacher to be the director of the class in my country.					
40	CLT produces fluent but inaccurate learners.					
41	CLT neglects the differences between EFL ( <b>English as a foreign language</b> ) and ESL ( <b>English as a second language</b> ) teaching context.					

**Part four: Please complete the following questions as appropriate.**

- Do you have any difficulties in presenting cultural topics in your classes? If yes, please elaborate on them.
- What are your main strategies to solve these difficulties?

**Thank you very much for your cooperation!**



## Students' Questionnaire in English

Dear students,

You are invited to participate in a research study that tries to evaluate the teaching methods in English classrooms. Your response is the most important part of this study. All of your information will be kept confidential and be used only for the research purpose. Thanks a lot for your cooperation.

### Personal Information

Age:

Grade:

Sex:

### Part one: General information

**Instruction: To respond to this part, please put a check mark in the appropriate choice.**

No.	General questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	In this class I learn how to talk about my opinions in different situations.					
2	I can speak with other people in English when traveling to other countries.					
3	I learn more when we have some discussions in small groups.					
4	I understand the grammatical points when the teacher explains them in English.					
5	I <b>don't like</b> to be corrected by the teacher when speaking in English.					
6	I have many opportunities to talk with my classmates in the class.					
7	I like to have those activities that make me speak more in the classroom.					
8	I <b>don't like</b> to have grammar exercises in the classroom.					
9	I can learn grammar very well in this class.					
10	I speak English with grammatical mistakes.					
11	I <b>don't want</b> to have my teacher as the authority figure in the class.					
12	This class makes me interested in language learning.					



### Part Two: Cultural point of view

**Instruction: In this part, please put a check mark in the circles (IN SOME QUESTIONS MORE THAN ONE ANSWER IS POSSIBLE).**

13. This class makes me curious to know more about..... culture(s).  
British<sup>64</sup>  American  Other<sup>65</sup>  None
14. This class helps me to compare my own culture with ..... culture(s).  
British  American  Other  None
15. This class makes me familiar with the **history** of ..... culture(s).  
British  American  Other  None
16. This class makes me familiar with the **geography** of ..... culture(s).  
British  American  Other  None
17. This class makes me familiar with the **politics** of ..... culture(s).  
British  American  Other  None
18. This class makes me familiar with the **youth life** in .... culture(s).  
British  American  Other  None
19. This class makes me familiar with the **customs** in ..... culture(s).  
British  American  Other  None
20. This class makes me familiar with the **fine arts (literature, paintings...)** in .... culture(s).  
British  American  Other  None
21. This class creates a ..... attitude towards learning British/American **English**.  
Positive  Negative  None
22. This class creates a ..... attitude towards learning British/American **culture**.  
Positive  Negative  None
23. This class helps me to **understand** the differences among the cultures of other countries.  
Yes  No
24. This class helps me to **accept** the differences among the cultures of other countries.  
Yes  No

Thank you very much 😊

<sup>64</sup> "British culture" in this questionnaire refers to the culture of English people who live in England. To avoid misunderstandings, the students were also informed by their teachers that British culture refers to the culture of English people in England in this questionnaire.

<sup>65</sup> "Other" (13-20) means any other cultures except British and American ones. To avoid misunderstandings, the students were briefed by their teachers on the meaning of America which refers to the United States in this questionnaire.



## Students' Questionnaire in German

Liebe Schülerin/Lieber Schüler,

wir bitten Dich, an einer Forschungsstudie teilzunehmen, in der die Lehrmethoden im Englischunterricht evaluiert werden sollen. Deine Antworten sind der wichtigste Bestandteil der Studie. Deine Antworten werden vertraulich behandelt. Vielen Dank für deine Mitarbeit.

### Persönliche Informationen

Alter:

Klasse:

Geschlecht:

### Teil 1: Allgemeine Informationen

Bitte kreuze jeweils eines an:

Trifft stark zu

Trifft zu

Unentschlossen

Trifft eher nicht zu

Trifft gar nicht zu

Nr.	Allgemeines	Trifft stark zu	Trifft zu	Unentschlossen	Trifft eher nicht zu	Trifft gar nicht zu
1	Ich lerne im Unterricht, meine Meinung in unterschiedlichen Situationen zu äußern.					
2	Ich kann beim Reisen in andere Länder mit anderen Menschen auf Englisch sprechen.					
3	Ich lerne mehr, wenn wir in Kleingruppen Diskussionen führen.					
4	Ich verstehe grammtikalische Sachverhalte, wenn der Lehrer sie mir in Englisch erklärt.					
5	Ich möchte <b>nicht</b> , dass der Lehrer mich korrigiert, wenn ich Englisch spreche.					
6	Ich habe viel Gelegenheit, mich im Unterricht mit Klassenkameraden zu unterhalten.					
7	Ich mag Unterrichtsaktivitäten, bei denen ich mehr sprechen kann.					
8	Ich mag <b>keine</b> Grammatikübungen und Aktivitäten im Unterricht.					
9	Ich lerne die Grammatik in diesem Unterricht sehr gut.					
10	Ich spreche Englisch mit grammatikalischen Fehlern.					
11	Ich möchte <b>nicht</b> , dass der Lehrer die Autoritätsperson im Unterricht ist.					
12	Der Unterricht weckt mein Interesse, Sprachen zu lernen.					





## Teil 2: Kulturelles

Bitte kreuze das Zutreffende an (Bei einigen Fragen ist mehr als eine Antwort möglich).

13. Dieser Unterricht macht mich neugierig, mehr über die ..... Kultur zu erfahren.  
britische<sup>66</sup>  amerikanische  andere<sup>67</sup>  keine
14. Dieser Unterricht hilft mir, meine eigene Kultur mit der ..... Kultur zu vergleichen.  
britischen  amerikanische  andere  keiner
15. Dieser Unterricht macht mich mit der **Geschichte** der ..... Kultur vertraut.  
britischen  amerikanische  andere  keiner
16. Dieser Unterricht macht mich mit der **Geographie** des ..... Landes vertraut.  
britischen  amerikanischen  andere  keines
17. Dieser Unterricht macht mich mit der **Politik** der ..... Kultur vertraut.  
britischen  amerikanischen  andere  keiner
18. Dieser Unterricht macht mich mit dem **Leben der Jugendlichen** in der .... Kultur vertraut.  
britischen  amerikanischen  andere  keiner
19. Dieser Unterricht macht mich mit den **Bräuchen** in der ..... Kultur vertraut.  
britischen  amerikanischen  andere  keiner
20. Dieser Unterricht macht mich mit der **Kunst (Literatur, Malerei...)** in der .... Kultur vertraut.  
Britischen  amerikanischen  andere  keiner
21. Dieser Unterricht erzeugt eine ..... Einstellung, britisches/amerikanisches **Englisch** zu lernen.  
positive  negative  keine
22. Dieser Unterricht erzeugt eine ..... Einstellung, die britische/amerikanische **Kultur** zu lernen.  
positive  negative  keine
23. Dieser Unterricht hilft mir, die Unterschiede zwischen Kulturen anderer Länder zu **verstehen**.  
Ja  Nein
24. Dieser Unterricht hilft mir, die Unterschiede zwischen Kulturen anderer Länder zu **akzeptieren**.  
Ja  Nein

Vielen Dank ☺

<sup>66</sup> „britische Kultur“ in diesem Fragebogen bezieht sich auf die Kultur der englischen Menschen, die in England leben.

<sup>67</sup> „andere“ (13-20) sind alle anderen Kulturen außer britischen und amerikanischen.



## Students' Questionnaire in Swedish

Kära studenter,

Ni är inbjudna till att delta i en studie för att utvärdera undervisningsmetoder i Engelska klassrum. Era svar är den viktigaste delen i denna studie. All information som ni anger kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt och endast användas för denna studie. Tack för er medverkan.

### Personlig information

Ålder:

Årskurs:

Kön:

### Del ett: Allmän information

Anvisning: Vänligen markera lämpligast svar enligt följande skala:

Instämmer helt

Instämmer

Vet ej

Instämmer inte

Instämmer inte alls

No.	Allmänna frågor	Instämmer helt	Instämmer	Vet ej	Instämmer inte	Instämmer inte alls
1	I den här klassen lär jag mig hur jag talar om mina åsikter i olika situationer.					
2	Jag kan tala med folk på engelska när jag reser till andra länder.					
3	Jag lär mig mer när vi har diskussioner i mindre grupper.					
4	Jag förstår de grammatiska poängerna när läraren förklarar dem på engelska.					
5	Jag tycker <u>inte</u> om att bli rättad av läraren när jag talar engelska.					
6	Jag har många möjligheter att tala med mina studiekamrater i klassen.					
7	Jag vill ha aktiviteter som får mig att tala mer i klassrummet.					
8	Jag tycker <u>inte</u> om att ha grammatikövningar i klassrummet.					
9	Jag lär mig grammatik mycket bra i den här klassen.					
10	Jag talar engelska med grammatiska misstag.					
11	Jag vill <u>inte</u> ha min lärare som auktoritetsfigur i klassen.					
12	Den här klassen gör mig intresserad av att lära mig språk.					



### Del två: Kulturell synvinkel

Instruktion: Vänligen kryssa i ditt svar i cirklarna (i vissa frågor mer än ett svar är möjligt).

13. Den här klassen gör mig nyfiken på ..... kultur.  
Brittisk<sup>68</sup>  Amerikansk  Annan<sup>69</sup>  Ingen
14. Den här klassen hjälper mig jämföra min egen kultur med ..... kultur.  
Brittisk  Amerikansk  Annan  Ingen
15. Den här klassen gör mig bekant med **historian** för ..... kultur.  
Brittisk  Amerikansk  Annan  Ingen
16. Den här klassen gör mig bekant med **geografin** för ..... kultur.  
Brittisk  Amerikansk  Annan  Ingen
17. Den här klassen gör mig bekant med **politiken** för ..... kultur.  
Brittisk  Amerikansk  Annan  Ingen
18. Den här klassen gör mig bekant med **ungdomslivet** i .... kultur.  
Brittisk  Amerikansk  Annan  Ingen
19. Den här klassen gör mig bekant med **sederna** i ..... kultur.  
Brittisk  Amerikansk  Annan  Ingen
20. Den här klassen gör mig bekant med **konsten (litteratur, målningar...)** i .... kultur.  
Brittisk  Amerikansk  Annan  Ingen
21. Den här klassen skapar en ..... attityd till att lära sig Brittisk/Amerikansk **Engelska**.  
Positiv  Negativ  Ingen
22. Den här klassen skapar en ..... attityd till att lära sig Brittisk/Amerikansk **kultur**.  
Positiv  Negativ  Ingen
23. Den här klassen hjälper mig **förstår skillnaderna** mellan kulturer i andra länder.  
Ja  Nej
24. Den här klassen hjälper mig att **acceptera skillnaderna** mellan kulturer i andra länder.  
Ja  Nej

Tack så mycket 😊

---

<sup>68</sup> " Brittisk kultur" i den här enkäten avser den kultur av engelska folket som bor i England.

<sup>69</sup> "Annan" (13-20): alla andra kulturer utom brittiska och de amerikanska.



## Students' Questionnaire in Dutch

Beste leerling,

Je bent uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan een onderzoek met als doel de onderwijsmethoden die tijdens de Engelse les worden gebruikt, te evalueren. Je antwoord vormt het belangrijkste deel van deze studie. Alle informatie wordt vertrouwelijk behandeld en zal alleen voor dit onderzoek gebruikt worden. Hartelijk dank voor je medewerking.

### Persoonlijke informatie

Leeftijd:

Klas:

Geslacht (m/v):

### Deel 1: Algemene opvattingen Instructies:

Hieronder staan een aantal zinnen die betrekking hebben op de Engelse les. Maak bij deze zinnen duidelijk hoe jij hierover denkt door de juiste kolom aan te kruisen.

Nr.	Algemene stellingen	Sterk mee eens	Mee eens	Neutraal	Mee oneens	Sterk mee oneens
1	Tijdens deze les leer ik om in verschillende situaties mijn mening te uiten.					
2	Ik kan met anderen in het Engels praten wanneer ik op reis ben in het buitenland.					
3	Ik leer meer wanneer we discussies in kleine groepjes hebben.					
4	Ik begrijp grammaticale onderwerpen als mijn leraar deze in het Engels uitlegt.					
5	Ik vind het prettig <b>niet</b> om door de leraar gecorrigeerd te worden wanneer ik in het Engels praat.					
6	Tijdens de les krijg ik veel mogelijkheden om met mijn klasgenoten in het Engels te praten.					
7	Ik doe graag opdrachten die me tijdens de les meer laten praten.					
8	Ik heb graag <b>niet</b> oefeningen in grammatica tijdens de les.					
9	Tijdens de les kan ik grammatica goed leren.					
10	Ik spreek Engels met grammaticale fouten.					
11	Ik stel het op prijs <b>niet</b> als mijn leraar duidelijk het gezag heeft tijdens de les.					
12	Deze les wekt bij mij de interesse op om een taal te leren.					



## Deel 2: Culturele opvattingen

**Instructies: Dit onderdeel bestaat uit een aantal zinnen. Kruis aan welke van de antwoorden achter de zin voor jou gelden (in sommige vragen meer dan een antwoord mogelijk).**

13. Deze les maakt me nieuwsgierig om meer te weten over de ..... cultuur.  
 Britse<sup>70</sup>                       Amerikaanse                       Anders<sup>71</sup>                       Geen
14. Deze les helpt mij om mijn eigen cultuur te vergelijken met de ..... cultuur.  
 Britse                       Amerikaanse                       Anders                       Geen
15. Deze les maakt mij bekend met de **geschiedenis** van de ..... cultuur.  
 Britse                       Amerikaanse                       Anders                       Geen
16. Deze les maakt mij bekend met de **geografie** van ..... .  
 Het Verenigd Koninkrijk                       De Verenigde Staten                       Anders                       Geen
17. Deze les maakt mij bekend met de **politiek** in ..... .  
 Het Verenigd Koninkrijk                       De Verenigde Staten                       Anders                       Geen
18. Deze les maakt mij bekend met het **leven van jeugd** in de ..... cultuur.  
 Britse                       Amerikaanse                       Anders                       Geen
19. Deze les maakt mij bekend met de **gebruiken** in de ..... cultuur.  
 Britse                       Amerikaanse                       Anders                       Geen
20. Deze les maakt mij bekend met **kunst** (literatuur, schilderijen, etc.) in de ..... cultuur.  
 Britse                       Amerikaanse                       Anders                       Geen
21. Deze les schept een ..... houding met betrekking tot het leren van Brits/ Amerikaans **Engels**.  
 Positieve                       Negatieve                       Geen
22. Deze les schept een ..... houding met betrekking tot het leren over de Britse/ Amerikaanse **cultuur**.  
 Positieve                       Negatieve                       Geen
23. Deze les helpt mij de verschillen tussen culturen in andere landen beter te **begrijpen**.  
 Ja                       Nee
24. Deze les helpt mij de verschillen tussen culturen in andere landen te **aanvaarden**.  
 Ja                       Nee

Hartelijk dank 😊

<sup>70</sup> " Britse cultuur " in deze vragenlijst verwijst naar de cultuur van het Engels mensen die in Engeland wonen.

<sup>71</sup> "Anders"(13-20): elke andere culturen behalve de Britse en Amerikaanse.

## Students' Questionnaire in Persian

دانش آموز عزیز:

این پرسشنامه به منظور ارزیابی روش تدریس زبان انگلیسی طراحی شده است. همکاری شما در موفقیت این تحقیق بسیار موثر است. لطفاً به تمام سوالات به بهترین نحو پاسخ دهید. لازم به ذکر است که پاسخ های شما محفوظ خواهد ماند. از همکاری شما در این رابطه صمیمانه سپاسگزارم.

## اطلاعات شخصی

سن:

مقطع تحصیلی:

جنسیت:

بخش الف: نظرات عمومی

لطفاً پاسخ مورد نظر خود را در محل مناسب علامت گذاری نمایید

کاملاً مخالفم	مخالفم	نظری ندارم	موافقم	کاملاً موافقم	نقطه نظرات عمومی	تعداد
					در این کلاس من یاد میگیرم که چگونه نظراتم را در موقعیت های مختلف به زبان انگلیسی بیان کنم.	۱
					اگر به خارج از کشور مسافرت کنم میتوانم با افراد به زبان انگلیسی صحبت کنم.	۲
					گفتگو با سایر همکلاسیانم راجع به یک موضوع به صورت گروهی در کلاس مرا در یادگیری بهتر یاری میدهد.	۳
					من نکات دستوری را وقتی که معلم آنها را به زبان انگلیسی توضیح میدهد میفهمم.	۴
					من دوست ندارم وقتی در کلاس صحبت میکنم معلم اشتباهات مرا در آن لحظه اصلاح کند.	۵
					من در این کلاس فرصتهای زیادی برای گفتگو به زبان انگلیسی با سایر همکلاسیهایم دارم.	۶
					من دوست دارم در کلاس فعالیت هایی را که برمکالمه و حرف زدن تاکید دارند داشته باشیم.	۷
					من دوست ندارم در کلاس فعالیت هایی را که بر دستور زبان تاکید دارند داشته باشیم.	۸
					من در این کلاس دستور زبان انگلیسی را به خوبی یاد میگیرم.	۹
					من هنگام صحبت کردن به زبان انگلیسی اشتباهات دستوری دارم.	۱۰
					من اعتقاد دارم که معلم نباید گرداننده و نیروی حاکم بر کلاس باشد.	۱۱
					این کلاس مرا به یادگیری زبان انگلیسی علاقه مند میکند.	۱۲

## بخش ب: نظرات فرهنگی

لطفاً پاسخ خود را در محل مربوطه علامت بزنید (در برخی از سوالات پاسخ شما میتواند بیشتر از یک گزینه هم باشد).

۱۳. این کلاس مرا کنجکاو میکند تا با فرهنگ کشور(های)..... بیشتر آشنا شوم.  
 انگلیس  آمریکا  دیگر<sup>72</sup>  هیچکدام
۱۴. این کلاس به من کمک میکند تا بتوانم فرهنگ خود را با فرهنگ کشور(های)..... مقایسه کنم.  
 انگلیس  آمریکا  دیگر  هیچکدام
۱۵. این کلاس مرا با تاریخ کشور(های)..... آشنا میکند.  
 انگلیس  آمریکا  دیگر  هیچکدام

<sup>72</sup>دیگر" در سوالات ۱۳ تا ۲۰ به هر کشور دیگری به جز آمریکا و انگلیس اشاره میکند.

۱۶. این کلاس مرا با جغرافیای کشور(های) ..... آشنا میکند.  
 انگلیس  آمریکا  دیگر  هیچکدام
۱۷. این کلاس مرا با موضوعات سیاسی در کشور(های) ..... آشنا میکند.  
 انگلیس  آمریکا  دیگر  هیچکدام
۱۸. این کلاس مرا با زندگی نوجوانان و جوانان در کشور(های) ..... آشنا میکند.  
 انگلیس  آمریکا  دیگر  هیچکدام
۱۹. این کلاس مرا با سنت ها و جشن ها در کشور(های) ..... آشنا میکند.  
 انگلیس  آمریکا  دیگر  هیچکدام
۲۰. این کلاس مرا با هنرهای زیبا مانند ادبیات، نقاشی و غیره در کشور(های) ..... آشنا میکند.  
 انگلیس  آمریکا  دیگر  هیچکدام
۲۱. این کلاس نظری..... نسبت به یادگیری زبان انگلیسی در من ایجاد میکند.  
 مثبت  منفی  هیچکدام
۲۲. این کلاس نظری..... نسبت به یادگیری فرهنگ کشور انگلیس/آمریکا در من ایجاد میکند.  
 مثبت  منفی  هیچکدام
۲۳. این کلاس به من کمک میکند تا بتوانم تفاوت‌های فرهنگی کشور های دیگر را بفهمم.  
 بله  خیر
۲۴. این کلاس به من کمک میکند تا بتوانم تفاوت‌های فرهنگی کشور های دیگر را بپذیرم.  
 بله  خیر

😊 با سپاس فراوان



## ***Appendix B: Interview Questions***

1. What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase “Communicative Language Teaching”?
2. Do you use CLT in your classroom? Why?
3. Do you have any difficulties when applying CLT in your classroom? What are your strategies to overcome these difficulties?
4. Do you use your mother tongue when you are teaching English? Why? When?
5. Which types of activities do you use in your class more: group work, pair work, or individual work? Why?
6. What is your idea about learner-oriented classes?
7. Do you think that teachers should teach culture to the students as well? Why?
8. On the culture of which countries do you focus more in the class? Home, English speaking, or other countries? Why? What about cultural aspects?
9. Does CLT help you in teaching culture?
10. Do you use comparisons between the native culture of the students and the target culture in your classroom? Why?
11. Do you have any problems in presenting cultural and intercultural issues in the classroom? When? What are your strategies to solve them?
12. Can CLT and its principles help learners to communicate with the people from different cultures? Why?





## Appendix C: Validity and Reliability

### Construct Validity: Teachers' attitudes towards general characteristics of CLT

A factor analysis through *varimax rotation* was carried out to probe the underlying construct of the first Likert scale table in teachers' questionnaire which is concerned with teachers' attitudes towards general characteristics or principles of CLT.

Generally speaking, in order to run factor analysis, two assumptions should be met: the assumption of *sampling adequacy* and the assumption of lack of *multicollinearity* (too high correlations among all variables). As a result, these two assumptions were examined to start factor analysis using SPSS. By default, SPSS calculates two types of tests to investigate these two issues: *Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy* and *Bartlett's Test of Sphericity* (as cited in Field, 2009). Considering the first assumption, it should be mentioned that when the *KMO* index is higher than the standard criterion, which is .60, it can be concluded that the sample size is adequate for running the factor analysis (Field, 2009).

As displayed in Table 1, in this study, the *KMO* index of .69 is higher than the standard criterion of .60. Thus, it can be concluded that the present sample size is adequate for running the factor analysis.

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.</b>		<b>.695</b>
	<b>Approx. Chi-Square</b>	<b>218.825</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>66</b>
	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>.000</b>

Table 1. Tests of assumptions for running the factor analysis (teachers' attitudes towards general characteristics of CLT)

Alongside this issue, the correlation matrix used to probe the underlying structure of the tests should not suffer from multicollinearity either. This assumption can be calculated using *Bartlett's test*. As is clear from Table 1, in this study, the *Bartlett's chi-square* of 218.82 is significant ( $p = .000 < .05$ ). Thus, it can be concluded that the assumption of lack of multicollinearity is also met.

To run the factor analysis, SPSS extracted four factors as the underlying constructs of the 12 items referred to the general characteristics of CLT. This four-factor solution accounted for 59.92 percent of the total variance (see Table 2).



Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.447	28.727	28.727	3.447	28.727	28.727	2.198	18.316	18.316
2	1.416	11.803	40.530	1.416	11.803	40.530	2.047	17.058	35.374
3	1.244	10.371	50.901	1.244	10.371	50.901	1.501	12.509	47.883
4	1.083	9.028	59.929	1.083	9.028	59.929	1.445	12.046	59.929
5	.974	8.118	68.047						
6	.851	7.088	75.135						
7	.767	6.393	81.528						
8	.656	5.469	86.997						
9	.507	4.221	91.218						
10	.414	3.453	94.671						
11	.341	2.839	97.509						
12	.299	2.491	100.000						

Table 2. Total variance (teachers' attitudes towards general characteristic of CLT)

Table 3 displays the factor loadings of the 12 items under the four extracted factors. The items loading together under a single factor are believed to tap into the same underlying constructs. That is to say they are measuring a common construct. Those researchers who wish to administer the same questionnaire in the subsequent studies should pay attention to the characteristics of these factors.

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Q1	.811			
Q12	.732		.479	
Q2	.643	.400		
Q5	.549			.405
Q6		.777		
Q8		.678		
Q10		.530	.410	
Q3	.431	.500		
Q11			.832	
Q4		.310	.441	
Q7				.822
Q9		.308		.646

Table 3. Factor loadings (teachers' attitudes towards general characteristics of CLT)



The same procedures were carried out in order to examine the construct validity of the rest of the Likert scale items in the teachers' and students' questionnaires. The results of this analysis are presented in the following two parts respectively.

### **Construct Validity: Teachers' attitudes towards appropriateness of CLT in their own contexts**

A factor analysis through *varimax rotation* was carried out to examine the underlying construct of the teachers' attitudes towards appropriateness of CLT in their own contexts. Based on the results presented by SPSS, the assumptions of *sampling adequacy* and lack of *multicollinearity* were both met. As displayed in Table 4, the *KMO* index of .65 is higher than the standard criterion of .60. Thus, it can be concluded that the present sample size is adequate for running the factor analysis.

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.</b>	<b>.656</b>
	<b>Approx. Chi-Square</b>
	<b>140.130</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>Df</b>
	<b>45</b>
	<b>Sig.</b>
	<b>.000</b>

Table 4. Tests of assumptions for running the factor analysis (teachers' attitudes towards appropriateness of CLT in their own contexts)

Furthermore, the *Bartlett's chi-square* of 140.13 is significant ( $p = .000 < .05$ ). Thus, it can be concluded that the assumption of lack of multicollinearity is also met.

To run the factor analysis, SPSS extracted four factors as the underlying constructs of the 10 items of the teachers' attitudes towards appropriateness of CLT in their own contexts. This four-factor solution accounts for 65.41 percent of the total variance (see Table 5).



Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.681	26.810	26.810	2.681	26.810	26.810	2.184	21.841	21.841
2	1.511	15.112	41.922	1.511	15.112	41.922	1.830	18.305	40.146
3	1.265	12.654	54.576	1.265	12.654	54.576	1.322	13.223	53.368
4	1.053	10.526	65.101	1.053	10.526	65.101	1.173	11.733	65.101
5	.785	7.849	72.950						
6	.703	7.026	79.976						
7	.678	6.778	86.754						
8	.541	5.406	92.160						
9	.438	4.381	96.541						
10	.346	3.459	100.000						

Table 5. Total Variance (teachers' attitudes towards appropriateness of CLT in their own contexts)

Table 6 shows the factor loadings of the 10 items under the four extracted factors. As mentioned before, the items loading together under a single factor are believed to tap into the same underlying constructs. That is to say they are measuring a common construct. Those researchers who wish to administer the same questionnaire in the subsequent studies should pay attention to the characteristics of these factors.

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Q37	-.738			
Q40	.675			
Q32	-.673	-.436		
Q41	.639	-.330	.363	
Q38		.745		
Q33		.710		.340
Q34	.495	.594		
Q35			.808	
Q39		.336	.615	-.367
Q36				.881

Table 6. Factor loadings (teachers' attitudes towards appropriateness of CLT in their own contexts)



### **Construct Validity: Students' attitudes towards their classes based on their needs and interests**

A factor analysis through *varimax rotation* was carried out to probe the underlying construct of the students' attitudes towards their classes based on their needs and interests. According to the results presented by SPSS, the assumptions of *sampling adequacy* and lack of *multicollinearity* were both met. As is clear from Table 7, the *KMO* index of .75 is higher than the standard criterion of .60. Thus, it can be concluded that the present sample size is adequate for running the factor analysis.

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.</b>		<b>.752</b>
	<b>Approx. Chi-Square</b>	<b>1424.535</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>66</b>
	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>.000</b>

Table 7. Tests of assumptions for running the factor analysis (students' attitudes towards their classes based on their needs and interests)

Furthermore, the *Bartlett's chi-square* of 1424.535 is significant ( $p = .000 < .05$ ). Thus, it can be concluded that the assumption of lack of multicollinearity is also met.

To run the factor analysis, SPSS extracted four factors as the underlying constructs of the 12 items of the students' attitudes towards their classes based on their needs and interests. This four-factor solution accounts for 52.19 percent of the total variance (see Table 8).



Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.774	23.118	23.118	2.774	23.118	23.118	2.073	17.274	17.274
2	1.268	10.569	33.687	1.268	10.569	33.687	1.613	13.439	30.713
3	1.146	9.552	43.240	1.146	9.552	43.240	1.389	11.576	42.289
4	1.074	8.953	52.193	1.074	8.953	52.193	1.188	9.904	52.193
5	.965	8.042	60.234						
6	.868	7.233	67.468						
7	.773	6.445	73.913						
8	.746	6.213	80.125						
9	.697	5.810	85.936						
10	.651	5.423	91.358						
11	.538	4.486	95.844						
12	.499	4.156	100.000						

Table 8. Total variance (students' attitudes towards their classes based on their needs and interests)

Table 9 indicates the factor loadings of the 12 items under the four extracted factors. As mentioned before, the items loading together under a single factor are believed to tap into the same underlying constructs. That is to say they are measuring a common construct. Those researchers who wish to administer the same questionnaire in the subsequent studies should pay attention to the characteristics of these factors.

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Q9	.654			
Q3	.637			
Q8	-.595			
Q6	.587		.387	
Q1	.499		.425	
Q12	.464	.438	.314	
Q11		-.681		
Q5		-.681		
Q7		.561		
Q2			.825	
Q4				.774
Q10				-.705

Table 9. Factor loadings (students' attitudes towards their classes based on their needs and interests)



At the end of this part, it should be mentioned that those sections of the questionnaires with nominal data, such as yes/no and multiple choice questions, cannot be probed for the analysis of the reliability and validity since all these indices – Cronbach alpha and factor analysis – are based on the idea that the data show some kind of distances (see Mackey & Gass, 2005; Field, 2009).

Moreover, in order to check the reliability of these sections of the questionnaires (Likert scale sections), 3 tests (Cronbach alpha reliability test) were also computed. The results of these tests are presented in the following tables respectively.

#### **Reliability Index: Teachers' attitudes towards general characteristics of CLT**

The Cronbach alpha reliability for the teachers' attitudes towards general characteristics of CLT is .73. In general, Cronbach alpha values higher than .6 are acceptable, in view of which the reliability of the questionnaires used in all of these sections is satisfactory. In other words, these sections of the questionnaires are all reliable (see Field, 2009).

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.737	12

Table 10. Cronbach alpha (teachers' attitudes towards general characteristics of CLT)

#### **Reliability Index: Teachers' attitudes towards appropriateness of CLT in their own contexts**

The Cronbach alpha reliability for the teachers' attitudes towards appropriateness of CLT in their own contexts is .669.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.669	10

Table 11. Cronbach Alpha (teachers' attitudes towards appropriateness of CLT in their own contexts)



### **Reliability Index: Students' attitudes towards their classes based on their needs and interests**

The Cronbach alpha reliability for the students' attitudes towards their classes based on their needs and interests is .63.

<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
<b>.635</b>	<b>12</b>

Table 12. Cronbach Alpha (students' attitudes towards their classes based on their needs and interests)





**Appendix D: Frequencies and Percentages for Items 28 and 29  
(Teachers' Questionnaires)**

		Germany	The Netherlands	Sweden	Iran
Literature	N	12	2	7	20
	%	29.3	4.9	17.1	48.8
Geography	N	14	2	9	23
	%	29.2	4.2	18.8	47.9
History	N	10	2	8	15
	%	28.6	5.7	22.9	42.9
Fine Arts	N	3	1	4	13
	%	14.3	4.8	19.1	61.9
Politics	N	12	3	10	10
	%	34.3	8.6	28.6	28.6
Education	N	7	4	8	21
	%	17.5	10	20	52.5
National Symbols	N	7	1	2	18
	%	25	3.6	7.1	64.3
Customs & Festivals	N	17	4	9	31
	%	27.9	6.6	14.8	50.8
Family Life	N	12	4	8	32
	%	21.4	7.1	14.3	57.1
Food	N	11	3	8	32
	%	20.4	5.6	14.8	59.3
Youth Life	N	11	2	9	21
	%	25.6	4.7	20.9	48.8
Idioms	N	13	4	8	27
	%	25	7.7	15.4	51.9
Proverbs	N	6	3	5	18
	%	18.8	9.4	15.6	56.3
Expressions	N	12	4	11	29
	%	21.4	7.1	19.6	51.8
Slangs	N	7	2	7	21
	%	18.9	5.4	18.9	56.8
Stereotypical Images	N	12	2	8	14
	%	33.3	5.6	22.2	38.9
None	N	1	2	3	3
	%	11.1	22.2	33.3	33.3

Table 1. Aspects of English and American culture learned through CLT by countries



		Germany	The Netherlands	Sweden	Iran
Literature	N	5	2	6	15
	%	17.86	7.14	21.43	53.57
Geography	N	13	2	9	27
	%	25.49	3.92	17.65	52.94
History	N	6	1	6	24
	%	16.22	2.70	16.22	64.86
Fine Arts	N	2	1	4	14
	%	9.52	4.76	19.05	66.67
Politics	N	11	1	10	14
	%	30.56	2.78	27.78	38.89
Education	N	3	2	6	22
	%	9.09	6.06	18.18	66.67
National Symbols	N	4	1	3	21
	%	13.79	3.45	10.34	72.41
Customs & Festivals	N	8	2	10	29
	%	16.33	4.08	20.41	59.18
Family Life	N	7	2	7	24
	%	17.50	5.00	17.50	60.00
Food	N	4	2	8	29
	%	9.30	4.65	18.60	67.44
Youth Life	N	6	1	8	18
	%	18.18	3.03	24.24	54.55
Racial Minorities	N	8	3	8	14
	%	24.24	9.09	24.24	42.42
Stereotypical Images	N	8	3	8	15
	%	23.53	8.82	23.53	44.12
None	N	3	3	3	0
	%	33.33	33.33	33.33	0

Table 2. Aspects of other countries' culture learned through CLT by countries



## Glossary of Terms

**Communicative Competence:** Communicative Competence (CC) is the knowledge or ability which helps a learner to use a language effectively for communication. The term is first used by Dell Hymes in his paper *On Communicative Competence* in 1972. Hymes considers four different areas for CC: knowledge of what is possible, feasible, appropriate, and actually done. This concept was reinterpreted and redefined later by Canale and Swain in 1980. They proposed three sub-competences for CC, i.e. grammatical, socio-linguistic (including socio-cultural and discourse competence), and strategic competence (Cook, 1998).

**Communicative Language Teaching Approach:** Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach in FL or SL teaching whose main goal is to promote Communicative Competence (CC) and to increase learners' abilities in terms of the four language skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The principles of CLT are based on the interdependence of language and communication (Richards & Rogers, 2001).

**Competence:** “Competences are the sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions” (Council of Europe, 2001: 9).

**Cultural Competence:** Cultural competence comprises knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding a specific cultural area related to (one of the) target language countries (Risager, 2005).

**English as a Foreign Language:** English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is used in contexts, situations, and countries where English is not generally used for communication or instruction. Usually, in such settings there is not enough exposure to the target language outside of the classroom, so the students have limited opportunity to use the language (Carter & Nunan, 2001: 2).

**English as a Second Language:** The term English as a Second Language (ESL) refers to those situations and contexts in which English is taught and learned as the first language of communication. It is also used in countries where English is commonly spoken as a lingua franca (Carter & Nunan, 2001: 2).



***Intercultural Communicative Competence:*** Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) can be defined as “a person’s ability to relate and communicate with people who speak a different language and live in a different cultural context” (Byram, 1997: 1).

***Intercultural Competence/Awareness:*** Intercultural competence (IC) refers to knowledge, skills, and attitudes about several cultural areas involving the students’ own country and a target language country (Risager, 2005)<sup>73</sup>.

***Native Speaker (NS):*** “A native speaker is traditionally considered to be a person who, having acquired a language in infancy, has expertise and intuitions about its grammaticality, uses it automatically, accurately, and creatively, and identifies with a community in which it is spoken” (Cook, 1998: 227).

***Subjective Theories:*** Subjective theories “are very complex cognitive structures,” including knowledge, assumptions, or perspectives that provide an orientation for a person in everyday life. These structures “are highly individual, relatively stable, and relatively enduring.” Examples are learners’ and teachers’ general beliefs about language, and about learning and teaching (Grotjahn, 1991: 188; Fussangel, 2008).

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<sup>73</sup> See also the definition of the intercultural awareness under the category of socio-cultural knowledge in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages presented by the Council of Europe in section 3.1.4





