

## Teaching English and Learning Intercultural Values

**Elena Gómez Parra, Antonia Paín**

E-mail: [elena.gomez@uco.es](mailto:elena.gomez@uco.es), [tonipain@gmail.com](mailto:tonipain@gmail.com)

University of Extremadura (Spain)

### Abstract

It is interesting to analyze how the learning and teaching of English has changed along the last decade, especially with the introduction of ICT (tools and methodologies) in the classroom. The teacher of English (in Primary and Secondary education) in most countries is, generally speaking, well adapted to the new technologies as the methods and approaches in the learning and teaching of English have traditionally incorporated some types of them along the history (that is, second language learning and teaching approaches have always been pioneers in the incorporation of new tools such as audio systems, video ... to the classroom). Nevertheless, the general trend is to use ICT as a new tool (in addition to those that we traditionally have had) and sometimes it is not easy to cope with all of them at the same time to accomplish an effective learning (and teaching) of the second language.

Our proposal is based on a previous study where we analyzed the adaptation of Primary and Secondary teachers to the introduction of the Intercultural Component in language teaching. Our classrooms are nowadays really intercultural as migration of students from different countries has become a rule in most European countries. Children are beginning to get used to different types of coexistence in the classroom, as pupils from different nationalities are being taught altogether. It is not difficult to have two/three different languages in the same classroom and, with this, different cultures have to coexist. In our country, intercultural differences are generally outstanding as these cultural differences can be found in different religion backgrounds (catholic / Muslim), dressing (for example, women/girls wearing veil) or even food (for instance, the prohibition for Muslims to eat pork). Such intercultural differences are generally the starting point of misunderstandings among students which need a special intervention from the teacher, who should be the first one to understand it and be able to mediate. Following P. Batelaan (2003), intercultural education is one of the guarantees to promote democratic education in the 21st Century.

We firmly believe that such intercultural education can benefit from the introduction of ICT in the classroom (Elia 2007), as a tool which facilitates learning. Pupils are familiar with them and, in addition, they allow immediate update to new contents, ideas and interconnection with pupils from different cultures. Such exchange can be highly beneficial for language learning (as the second language can be the 'common starting point') and for culture learning.

We propose some activities which can be used by teachers to promote language learning through the Internet as well as to promote intercultural exchange of pupils. Our final conclusions will summarize the advantages of this approach and the need to implement this type of methodology in the classroom if our final goal is to succeed in a democratic and joined (but different at the same time) Europe.