The promise of intercultural understanding and the transformative power of intercultural awareness: a problematization of Intercultural Communication theory

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Thesis submitted to UCL Institute of Education for the Degree of Doctor of

Philosophy

2015

Word count:

80,942

I, Giuliana Ferri, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. John O'Regan, for his support, knowledge and encouragement in these past five years. He has steered my research in the right direction and has kept me motivated and focused. Thank you.

I would also like to thank my family for their support, my mother most of all. Although my father is not here to share this achievement, I know he would be proud.

And last, thank you Nick for your support. I could not have done this without you.

To all my friends, thank you for your patience and for keeping me sane.

Abstract

The thesis is concerned with a problematization of the field of intercultural communication. Philosophical inquiry is employed in this thesis to examine intercultural communication from the perspective of existing critical intercultural frameworks, particularly in relation to conceptualisations of cultural difference and the acquisition of communicative competence. In proposing this philosophical approach, the thesis reconfigures the relationship between self and other in dialogic terms, and it repositions intercultural communication from the current emphasis on business and language learning to a reappraisal of the role of dialogue in dealing with intercultural conflicts in multicultural societies.

Beginning with a critique of the philosophical presuppositions of communicative competence, the thesis proposes an ethical approach to communication based on the philosophy of Levinas. The thesis suggests a contrasting reading of Kantian autonomy of the individual and Levinasian heteronomy. The former is identified as the source of functionalist competence frameworks, while the latter underpins a notion of ethical engagement and dialogic commitment between individuals belonging to different cultural backgrounds. The thesis eschews essentialist attributions of cultural difference in interaction with the other, and reconfigures intercultural communication within a wider philosophical discourse defined by the ethics of alterity, or thinking about the other. This theoretical stance is achieved in the thesis through a productive confrontation between Levinas and other philosophers who have engaged critically with the notion of alterity, such as Žižek, Badiou and Ricoeur.

These theoretical strands are woven together to produce an immanent critique of the field of intercultural communication. This approach offers a conceptualisation of intercultural communication that emphasises ethical engagement with others and the importance of open-ended dialogue, as opposed to a search for a closure of understanding in ideals of universal tolerance. Thus, this thesis acknowledges complexity, contingency and the power relations embedded in communication as constituent of interculturality.

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Chapter One. The theoretical framework

1.1 Introduction

In the present chapter I illustrate the motivation that has informed my decision to begin researching the field of intercultural communication. Moreover, I explain the methodology employed and the reasons for conducting a philosophical investigation in a field largely characterised by empirical research. In particular, I describe the endeavour to reflect complexity, indeterminacy and incompleteness as values that have guided the conceptualisation of this research.

These values originate from the ethical perspective that characterises this thesis, which emerges in the theoretical engagement with the conceptualisation of the relation between self and other in intercultural communication. In this context, I propose a reappraisal of the responsibility of interculturalists in questioning unreflective essentialism and power asymmetries between self and other, particularly in regard to the dangers of appropriation of the voice of the other.

With the adoption of this ethical standpoint I critique the discourse of competence in communication across cultural traditions, which has been a propelling force in initiating the academic field of intercultural communication as a response to the needs of a global post-war elite centred on international finance, diplomacy, business and academia, and more recently tourism and education (see Chapters Two and Three). In this regard, I emphasise the condition of precarity that characterises interaction in times of conflict and uncertainty.

First, I present the research questions and the aims of the thesis. I then discuss the methodological approach and the purpose of philosophical inquiry in the field of

intercultural communication. Finally, I describe the structure of the thesis and the narrative thread that connects each chapter to the overall theme of this research.

1.1.1 The research questions

In order to provide a critique of intercultural communication, in this thesis I have two research questions:

1. *How is the field of intercultural communication theorised and what are its epistemological and ontological assumptions?*
2. *Can a theory of intercultural communication be devised which takes account of difference and otherness as constitutive of communication, while also blurring the distinction between inter- and intra- cultural communication?*

The first research question relates to the theoretical and epistemological underpinnings of intercultural communication. The second research question deals with the application of this critique to the praxis of intercultural research. In answering the two research questions I divide the thesis in two strands. In addressing the first research question, in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five I have the following aims:

- To position my research critically in relation to post-modern and emancipatory interculturalism and to define the ethical stance of the thesis.
- To critique the discourse of intercultural competence and communicative skills.
- To reconfigure intercultural communication within current philosophical debates on the nature of otherness and the ethics of the other.

In the second strand, in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight I address the second research question with the following aims:

- To formulate a dialogic understanding of intercultural interaction in terms of open ended engagement based on Levinasian ethics.
- To apply this dialogical framework in order to examine the asymmetrical power relations between self and other in the context of macro-processes of othering.

The theoretical stance adopted in conducting this critique of intercultural communication is that of problematizing practice (Dean, 1994; Pennycook, 2001), in the form of a philosophical inquiry that has a twofold purpose: on the one side, to investigate the philosophical significance of key concepts that have become common currency in intercultural communication, such as otherness and the role of cultural tolerance in defining interaction. On the other, to reconceptualise the shift postulated between the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence and the ensuing development of ethical responsibility.

As a result of this philosophical investigation, I propose a dialogic conceptualisation of the relationship between self and other, in order to reflect on another dimension of interculturality based on the processual and open-ended engagement in interaction. To this end, I suggest that intercultural interaction can be envisioned in terms of deferred understanding (Chapter Four, section 4.3, on Derrida and the promise of understanding), meaning that ethical concerns are negotiated in the course of dialogic engagement. With the contrast that I establish in Chapter Four between Kantian ethical autonomy and Levinasian heteronomy, I argue that the complexity entailed in intercultural interaction emerges when the individual is destabilised by the embodied presence of the other. What is revealed in this instance is the limitation of cultural tolerance in expressing the ethical tension experienced in engagement between self and other.

This ethical tension represents a major theme of this thesis, which I contextualise in current debates between the proponents of multiculturalism and those who defend the ideal of universalistic liberalism. As I discuss in detail in Chapter Four, multiculturalism is based on the exercise of tolerance and the respect of cultural difference, which leaves open the question of incommensurable cultural practices. Universalistic liberalism rests on the assumed existence of an impartial public sphere, which is neutral in respect to the cultural practices of the various groups present in society. However, in this thesis the assumed impartiality of the public sphere is contested for generalising a Eurocentric and masculine perspective, which is presented as objective and universal, an issue that I explore in Chapters Seven and Eight. In the context of this debate, my intervention focuses on the redefinition of an alternative representation of intercultural engagement based on inter-relationality informed by Levinasian ethics. On the basis of this Levinasian framework, in this thesis I examine the obstacles to the establishment of a dialogic space of interaction between self and other.

1.1.2 The aims of the thesis

In order to provide a theoretical analysis of the field of intercultural studies, the discussion is organised around three central themes that embody the philosophical underpinnings of intercultural communication:

1. The rational and technicist discourse of skills and competences
2. Post-modern notions of fluidity and multiple identities
3. Emancipatory interculturalism and critical intercultural pedagogy

The first theme relates to the notion of communicative competence, which represents a central construct in intercultural communication research. The assumption guiding the formulation of competence relies on the idea that cultural

difference and language create a barrier between self and other. In order to overcome this barrier, intercultural competence offers the skills to communicate with others. In critiquing competence, I refer in particular to the rationalisation of communication in terms of discrete skills that are acquired in the course of intercultural training. This aspect of intercultural communication, I argue, is at the root of a neo-essentialist tendency of intercultural communication according to which the other is defined by culture.

The second theme refers to models of interculturality that emphasise hybridity and fluidity in determining the multiple allegiances of all individuals, thus aiming to counteract neo-essentialism. In this respect, I consider the issue that arises in regard to the problematic relation between structure and agency in post-modern accounts of shifting identities.

The third theme pertains to the emancipatory character of intercultural models of interaction with the other that emphasise the transformative power of intercultural awareness. In this instance, I critique the dimension of totality and the narrative of positive resolution that emerge from this ideal of a final consensus, in which all conflicts are resolved in the unity of intercultural consciousness. This notion of an intercultural consciousness connected to the emancipatory value of intercultural understanding rests on the unproblematized assumption of the ontological transformation of the self following the encounter with the cultural other, leading to the search for a final dimension of intercultural understanding. Beginning with this premise, I argue that ontological claims made in this context are supported at epistemological level with the recourse to the categories of responsibility, tolerance and emancipation from ideological constructs of culture. I critique these categories

by questioning the conceptualisation of the other in critical and emancipatory intercultural communication.

These three themes are discussed according to the problematizing framework adopted in this thesis. In the next section I explain the methodological considerations that have influenced the theoretical and philosophical approach of this thesis.

1.2 Methodological considerations

This thesis reflects the state of flux and theoretical development of intercultural communication research, particularly in the formulation of non-essentialist approaches to the conceptualisation of intercultural understanding and of ethical responsibility in communication. This situation in research is exemplified by Martin and Nakayama (2010) who, reflecting on their previous conceptualisation of culture and communication, argue that this particular field of research has currently not achieved a unified methodological approach. For this reason, intercultural communication remains open to new theoretical interventions, particularly in redefining the role of culture in underpinning the dynamics of intercultural interaction:

> After ten years, revisiting the contemporary terrain of Intercultural communication seems warranted. The field has exploded in many different directions that have opened up the very notion of 'intercultural' communication. In some ways, the term itself, 'intercultural', tends to presume the interaction between discrete and different cultures. (…). Ten years later, the very problem of conceptualising 'intercultural communication' remains as vibrant and relevant as ever (Martin and Kankayama, 2010, p.59).

When I first started to research intercultural communication in 2010 I found myself in the midst of that *'messy business'* described by Phipps (2001, p.viii), aiming to find a standpoint from which I could begin to unravel the abundance of scholarly

interventions from a vast range disciplinary perspectives. Initially, my own experience as an educator guided my interest towards intercultural education, particularly in relation to language teaching and the role of the acquisition of intercultural competence in engendering critical intercultural awareness and responsibility. Although I initially set out to conduct an empirical study in line with current practice, as I delved into the literature I increasingly became convinced that there were a number of issues that I found problematic and that required theoretical investigation.

Orbe (2007) summarises these issues delineating the limitations of traditional empirical methodological frameworks in capturing the complexity entailed in intercultural interaction. These limitations can be thus summarised:

- **Eurocentric bias.** This bias is evident in the discourse of skills and competences in communication that emphasises conflict management as the principal element in interaction between self and other.
- **Essentialising generalizations.** The other is simplified according to parameters such as culture, ethnicity or nationality.
- **Assumptions of difference.** Difference is attributed to contrasting cultural practices.
- **Focus on micro-level practices.** Research is based primarily on everyday communicative practices in small group situations.

For the purposes of this thesis, I address these issues with the intent to contribute to the definition of a methodological approach for intercultural communication which includes the following factors:

- To counteract assumptions of difference by redefining the relationship between self and other within an ethical frame. This ethical framework is based on the Levinasian distinction between the two modes of discourse of the *saying* and the *said.*

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- To confront Eurocentric bias and essentialism with the critique of communicative competence and the analysis of othering.
- To focus on macro-level practices, examining how interaction is shaped by larger social, political and economic systems in both intra- and inter-cultural contexts, creating power asymmetries between self and other.

These aims reflect the methodological difficulty of dealing with the complexity of the world in which interactions take place. In accounting for this tendency to enclose complexity within methodological frameworks, which derive from paradigms set in Western scientific metaphysical tradition, Law suggests to widen the notion of methodology in order to include uncertainty and singularity,

> The argument is that method is not just what is learned in textbooks and in the lecture hall, or practised in ethnography, survey research, geological field trips, or at laboratory benches. Even in these formal settings it also ramifies out and resonates with materially and discursively heterogeneous relations which are, for the most part, invisible to the methodologist. And method, in any case, is also found outside such settings. So method is always more than its formal accounts suggest (Law, 2004, p.144).

Law describes methodology as a process of delimiting the boundaries between what is made manifest in research and those aspects that are made absent, or excluded, in the act of defining a field of investigation. In the context of this thesis, the idea that ''*presence is impossible without absence*'' (ibid.) becomes crucial in defining its aims. In accepting this dialectics between presence and absence in the process of delimiting a field of study for investigation, I focus on two interconnected aspects that I argue are in need of theoretical intervention in intercultural research: the discourse of tolerance and the epistemological status of the categories of self and other. Although tolerance and the categories of self and other are central constructs in the theorisation of intercultural communication, they are not explicitly addressed and problematized.

The idea that presence and absence are mutually constitutive originates in the critique of metaphysics initiated by Adorno (1973, 2008) and Benjamin (1999), which focused on the attempt to retrieve the marginal aspects of existence that have been excluded from philosophical investigation. According to their critique of metaphysical tradition, one of the principal aspects entailed in the act of delineating a concept consists in deciding what is omitted, in virtue of being marginal and non-essential to the definition of its identity. In this process of exclusion, thinking becomes organised in a series of dichotomies: on the one side, the positive aspects that constitute the essence of a concept, and on the other, the negative and the marginal characteristics that are excluded from its definition. In other words, this practice creates a uniform system of truth ordered according to a series of oppositions, which marginalise the particularity of the concrete and singular aspects of individuals and of existence in general.

As I discuss in detail the relevance of Adorno's critique in Chapter Two (negative dialectics, section 2.7), here I limit this epistemological reflection on the nature of knowledge to methodological concerns pertinent to the conceptualisation of this thesis. In this context, the point that I bring forward is that the process of delineating an area of investigation entails the creation of an absence. However, this absence remains as the hidden and repressed aspect of the observed reality. In other words, as Law argues, this absence is made '*other*' in the constitution of an object of knowledge,

> All that is being said is that matters are relational: what is being made and gathered is in a mediated relation with whatever is absent, manifesting a part while Othering most of it (Law, 2004, p.146).

Adopting this perspective, in this thesis I aim to reflect this dialectic between presence and absence in the field of intercultural communication. While I critique

formulations of intercultural competence in which the other is considered from the perspective of the self as the recipient of tolerance, I position this thesis in the context of interventions in critical intercultural communication that are increasingly attentive to the active role of the other in interaction. In particular, in the critique of intercultural competence I refer to the absence of the voice of the other, meaning that communication is contemplated from the perspective of the self and not from the standpoint of interaction. In this sense, employing Levinasian ethics I focus on the reciprocal definition of self and other.

Another aspect that is made absent in research regards the discourse of cultural tolerance. In this thesis I argue that focusing on tolerance of cultural practices as a result of the acquisition intercultural competence skills such as flexibility and adaptation, otherises a number of factors that are constitutive of intercultural interaction. I refer in particular to asymmetrical power relations highlighted in interactional sociolinguistics and in research in second language acquisition focused on gender (see Chapter Seven, section 7.3), which in this thesis I connect to the ethical aspects of interaction as they emerge in the process of othering. Combining both perspectives poses the challenge of developing a framework for the analysis of intercultural interaction, in order to gain a better understanding of the process of definition of self and other. This endeavour brings to the fore the issue of interdisciplinarity in researching intercultural communication.

Being interdisciplinary in nature, the field intercultural communication encompasses three main disciplines, namely, psychology, anthropology and linguistics. Psychology analyses the role of human cognition in identifying the patterns of behaviour of members of different cultures. Anthropology provides the tools to recognise cultural patterns and non-verbal communication. Linguistics examines the

relation between language and cultural systems (Flammia and Sadri, 2011). However, in dealing with notions such as understanding across cultures and perceptions of self and other, intercultural communication also addresses many issues related to ethics, for example the definition of otherness, the idea of tolerance of different cultural practices and the co-existence of diverse ethical frameworks in society. In this regard, in terms of integrating an ethical perspective to the field of intercultural communication, the possibilities offered by an interdisciplinary approach have not been exhausted.

In this context, Youngblood (2007) discusses interdisciplinarity in terms of problem-oriented critical thinking that focuses on process rather than being limited to a specific disciplinary domain. This translates as the process of selecting analytical tools from a relevant discipline in order to advance solutions and promote deeper understanding. With this research, I aim to integrate the perspective of interactional sociolinguistics regarding asymmetrical power relations to a wider discourse relating to ethical concerns, adopting a philosophical line of inquiry. I weave a narrative aimed at attuning intercultural communication to the idea of the absence of the other in theorisations of competence and responsibility, while maintaining an ethical standpoint concerned with intercultural understanding, cooperation and dialogue, which is also highlighted by critical interculturalists.

To summarise, I endeavour to provide an analysis that contributes to the reappraisal of the dialogic aspect of intercultural interaction with an interdisciplinary approach. I combine philosophical argumentation with the contribution of research conducted in sociolinguistics in regard to the role inequality within networks of power in the context of intercultural encounters.

1.2.1 Philosophical inquiry in intercultural communication

In this thesis I favour philosophical inquiry as a means to "*unravel conceptual knots*" (Blake, Smeyers et al. 2003, p.16) through the interpretation of major philosophers. In opting for a philosophical investigation in the context of an academic field related to social science and education, I am intellectually indebted to Inghilleri (1996) and her doctoral thesis, a theoretical research on culture and language largely concerned with clarifying and contextualising concepts that have developed in the area under investigation. Reading Monceri (2003; 2009) also convinced me of the possibility to approach intercultural communication philosophically.

Having adopted this theoretical perspective, I agree with Poster (1989) in doubting the neutrality of a free and autonomous rational subject (or Cartesian cogito) that can represent the real and unmask forms of domination from the privileged subject position of criticality. Thus, I reject the notion of a neutral and objective rational position that is able to demystify ideological falsifications in order to unearth an original truth, and I position my research within the feminist post-structuralist rejection of a unitary and foundational rational subject (Weedon, 1987; Lather, 1991; Ellsworth, 1992; Luke and Gore, 1992; Butler, 2005), in the hope to activate the possibility to rethink categories that have become embedded in intercultural communication, such as culture, identity, tolerance and the emancipated critical intercultural subject.

The philosophical approach adopted in this thesis is characterised by a problematizing perspective, which is influenced by the contribution of Pennycook (2001) in the field of applied linguistics. In his work, problematizing practice, or '*the restive problematization of the given*' (Pennycook, 2001, p.107), redefines the contributions of poststructuralist, postmodernist and postcolonial thought positioning

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itself in a relation to knowledge that questions assumptions, concepts and categories as the product of the relationship between power and knowledge,

> Poststructuralism (and postmodernism) becomes a skepticism about common assumptions, a questioning of givens, (…). One strategy by which this is sometimes achieved is through pluralisation: Knowledge (capitalisation in the original) becomes knowledges, subjectivity becomes subjectivities. Beyond the often obscure discussion of the sign, subjectivity, and discourse, poststructural-ism becomes a way of thinking, a tendency to always question given categories (human nature, universalism, the individual, culture, language, knowledge) and to try to explore how these categories are not so much real qualities of the world but are the products of particular cultural and historical ways of thinking (Pennycook, 2001, p.107).

Here Pennycook refers to one of the tenets of post-structuralist thinking, namely the relation between knowledge and power. Briefly, I summarise this post-structuralist relation from the perspective of Foucault and Lyotard. For Foucault (2010), power is embodied in social practices and in discourses that create regimes of truth, meaning the organisation of accepted forms of knowledge and the division between what is true and false. According to Lyotard (1984) technological advancement transforms knowledge from the old concept of development of the individual mind to a commodity at the service of industrial, military and political strategies. Problematizing practice, in this context, recognises the power relations that are embedded in knowledge and seeks to articulate the ways in which they are reproduced in a particular field of investigation, in this case intercultural communication.

In doing this, I follow Dean (1994) in distinguishing three forms of intellectual practice. The first model is progressivist theory and the high modernist ideal of the Enlightenment, characterised by the ideal of progress and technological advancement. This model adopts the language of natural science to deduce causal explanations that are applied to the social field. The second form of theory is

represented by critical theory, which critiques modernist reason as presenting a technocratic vision of rational advancement. In this model, reason is embedded in social and cultural practices that reposition rational advancement in terms of emancipation. Finally, the third model is represented by problematizing practice, *"the disturbance of narratives of both progress and reconciliation"* (Dean, 1994, p.4). This form of theory is rooted in the practice of formulating questions, rather than seeking a solution based on either an idea of progress or of emancipation.

In the analysis of the constitution of the field of knowledge of intercultural communication, I then accept the distinction operated between critique from the position of a legislating subject *"passing judgement on a deficient reality"* (Dean, 1994, p.119) and the problematization of assumptions that become taken for granted in a discursive practice. From this latter perspective, theory assumes the form of reflection and questioning of notions that have become embedded in this field of research, as outlined in section 1.1.2.

Furthermore, Koetting and Malisa (2004) identify three aims of philosophical inquiry: to theorise, to analyse and to critique with an approach that is interpretive (interest in understanding) or critical (interest in emancipation). The process of philosophical inquiry is thus summarised: an initial conceptual analysis that situates the issue under investigation in the context of a philosophical tradition, and the examination of its epistemological and axiological assumptions that is either interpretive or critical.

In the context of this research, I conceive philosophical inquiry as characterised by an interpretive approach in the clarification of concepts and the problematizing exploration of the theoretical foundations of intercultural communication. In this endeavour, I found that the distinction outlined by Biesta (2001, 2009) between critical dogmatism, transcendental critique and deconstruction, offered a starting

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point from which to articulate my own problematization of intercultural communication.

According to Biesta, critical dogmatism consists in examining a situation critically, adopting a specifc criterion of evaluation. One example is the criterion of emancipation, adopted in critical pedagogy to evaluate existing educational systems. However, Biesta argues that this form of critique is dogmatic because it *"derives its right to be critical from the truth of the criterion"* (2009, p.84), meaning that the criterion itself (i.e. emancipation) is not evaluated critically. In adopting Biesta's argument, in Chapter Two (sections 2.5.1, 2.5.2 and 2.5.3) I examine the notion of a critical intercultural subject, in particular the idea of emancipation.

Transcendental critique begins with the articulation of the conditions of possibility of knowledge initiated by Kant with his Critiques (1987, 2004, and 2007), which relied on the presupposition of the existence of the Cartesian cogito, the 'I think', meaning a universal legislating subject. In the context of the Frankfurt School, Habermas (1984, 1987) grounds transcendental critique in the philosophy of language, through the notion of communicative ethics and its model of rationality based on mutual understanding and consensual action. From this perspective, Derrida's problematization of the tenets of Habermasian communicative action, particularly the concept of an ideal speech situation, introduces a radical approach to the notion of critique, through the practice of deconstruction, to which I am intellectually indebted in the theoretical conceptualisation of this thesis.

The term deconstruction (Derrida, 1997) differs from critical analysis since its aim does not reside in uncovering a stable ground in order to establish a critical distance from a clearly defined object of knowledge. Rather, deconstruction puts into question the possibility of a stable ground and the unity of objects of knowledge,

and focuses instead on the instability of meanings and of metaphysical oppositions (Wortham, 2010). The focus on non-reciprocity, asymmetry and faults in mutual recognition (Bernstein, 2006; Critchley, 2006) directs the practice of deconstruction towards the singularity of the other and the play of differences, or "différance", between signs and signifiers that is constitutive of language (Derrida, 1984, 1997). This practice allows to deconstruct relations and assumptions rooted in the *"philosophy, history, culture and politics of the Western tradition"* (Wortham, 2010, p.37), and as such it constitutes the basis of problematizing practice.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised following a thematic structure. It is divided in two parts, revolving around two major themes, which reflect the two research questions: a critique of the ideal of intercultural competence and a description of dynamics of othering that emphasises the role of difference as constitutive of both self and other. Before illustrating the unfolding of the two themes in the thesis, I will briefly touch upon the rationale that has guided from the onset the critical analysis of the literature relating to intercultural communication.

In this regard, in the initial design of the thesis I have identified the origins of intercultural communication in American foreign policy and trade, which informs the idea of transmission of meaning between two or more interactants who belong to different cultural contexts. In this thesis I argue that the idea of cultural awareness promoted in intercultural communication generates from this instrumental understanding of communication that accompanied the origins of intercultural studies. Indeed, the emphasis on overcoming cultural differences in order to avoid misunderstanding and miscommunication, relies on the assumption that intercultural dialogue develops once behaviour is explained and categorised in cultural terms.

After having delimited an initial field of observation, I have divided research in intercultural communication according to three broad characteristics: on the one side, essentialist descriptions of cultural difference, and on the other the critical appraisal of the categories employed in the analysis of intercultural interaction. This last aspect of intercultural communication research is in its turn characterised by a form of neo-essentialism (Holliday, 2011) that fails to challenge radically the notion of cultural difference, although interculturalists such as Dervin (2011), Monceri (2003, 2009) Phipps (2007) and Piller (2011), question the use of the category of culture, the former three offering a philosophical perspective and the latter from a sociolinguistic standpoint. Their problematization of the notion of culture as an explanatory tool for behaviour interrogates the role of culture in the development of identity that appears both in conceptions of the transcultured self (e.g. Byram, 2006) and in others that favour the idea of hybrid identities (e.g. Rodriguez, 2002; Chuang, 2003; Kim, 2008; Martin and Nakayama, 2010; Rowe, 2010).

The problematization of the role of cultural influence as the determinant factor in the formation of identity undermines one of the tenets behind the notion of intercultural competence, the idea that misunderstanding can be fixed through intercultural training with the acquisition of the awareness of the culture of the other. Whether this awareness is construed in instrumental terms (Hall, 1995; Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2004) or in critical terms (Guilherme, 2002; Byram, 2008), a common element is the notion that the key to intercultural understanding requires crossing over the borders of cultural difference, through the 'intercultural line' (Holliday, 2011).

The critique of this conception of intercultural competence in terms of the ability to navigate cultural traditions is accompanied in this thesis by the preoccupation with

the appraisal of the role of difference in communication. In this sense, difference is conceptualised not only in terms of differential power relations that marginalise the other, but also as a constitutive aspect of dialogic and open-ended intercultural interaction.

1.4 The role of Levinasian ethics in the thesis

The philosophy of Levinas is concerned primarily with ethics, and particularly with the relation between self and other. For Levinas, ethics is thinking about the other, and this preoccupation with otherness, or alterity, represents the principal theme around which his reflection on the nature of thinking, language and knowledge is organized. According to Levinasian ethics, the certainties held by the self are destabilised upon encountering the other,

> For the ethical relationship which subtends discourse is not a species of consciousness whose ray emanates from the I; it puts the I in question. This putting in question emanates from the other (Levinas, 1969, p.195).

The dialogic understanding of intercultural encounters proposed in this thesis is underpinned by this particular aspect of Levinasian ethics. On this basis, I suggest two distinct types of relation between self and other. In the first modality, the relation with the other happens through cultural categories, which fix the encounter within parameters that have been defined in advance, prior to the encounter. In the second modality, the self is exposed to the other in an ethical relation.

To express the complex character of otherness embedded in this ethical relation, Levinas distinguishes between two terms: *autrui* (the other person) and *autre* (otherness, or alterity). The accepted convention in translation is to capitalise the word Other in reference to *autrui*, although I adopt Cohen's argument that the distinction between *autrui* and *autre* is not always consistent in the original text,

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> Still, it must be said, Levinas often uses *autre* where he could very well have used *autrui*; one should avoid making a fetish of this distinction and pay attention to context (Cohen, 1987, p.viii).

In the context of this thesis, I have opted to use the word other without capitalisation in reference to *autrui*, the other person, and the word otherness, or alterity, in reference to *autre.*

The adoption of Levinasian ethics has a twofold implication in this thesis: first, it offers a framework for the dialogic reconceptualisation of interculturalism, and second it allows the recognition of the other not as an abstract entity but in terms of a corporeal, or embodied, self. The unfolding of this conceptualisation of embodied otherness is explained in the summary of the chapters of this thesis.

1.5 A summary of the chapters

In Chapter Two, I review the literature relating to critical intercultural communication, and I position this thesis in the context of contributions that highlight cultural essentialism and rigid attributions of cultural difference in determining interaction. I argue that the categories of class and gender add complexity to the distinction established by Holliday (2001) between Western and non-Western cultural worlds, or Centre and Periphery, and function as lenses through which it is possible to analyse the politics of cultural hegemony, in reference to the notion of the privileged subject and the subaltern other (Spivak, 1988, 1999, 2004).

In line with Spivak, I argue that the division between a hegemonic Centre and a subaltern Periphery is produced primarily through the reproduction of knowledge, of class divisions and of gender inequality. In that context, I discuss the notion of epistemic violence as the burden of the fittest (Spivak, 2004), from which stem two distinct understandings of responsibility- *for* the other and *to* the other, which in

subsequent chapters I connect to a dialogic commitment in regard to intercultural interaction developed according to Levinasian ethics.

Employing the critical analysis of Western rationality developed by Spivak, in Chapter Two I problematize emancipatory praxis in the context of intercultural communication, particularly the idea of giving voice to the other. From that problematization, I contrast two forms of dialectics, a Hegelian positive narrative of reconciliation, and a negative dialectics (Adorno, 1973, 2008), from which I adopt the notion of immanent critique as the plotting of a constellation of ideas relating to an object of knowledge. In the context of this thesis, in Chapter Three I conduct an immanent critique of the epistemological and ontological presuppositions of intercultural competence.

In Chapter Four I argue that Levinasian ethics embraces finitude and intersubjective reason through the dynamic relationship between the *said* (objectifying knowledge) and the *saying (*lived, experiential and intersubjective creation of meaning). Thus, with the distinction between the *saying* and the *said* I return to Spivak's idea of responsibility to contrast responsibility *for* the other as stemming from the autonomous Kantian individual and responsibility *to* the other according to the Levinasian heteronomous ethical subject. I utilise the metaphor of the promise of understanding to argue that the search for a final dimension of intercultural understanding creates an etiolated notion of otherness, according to which the self acquires the instruments to communicate with the other in line with a Kantian model of ethical autonomy.

Having established the Kantian underpinnings of intercultural communication, particularly the conceptualisation of intercultural competence, I argue that a Levinasian approach offers an original insight into the dynamics of intercultural

interaction. To this end, I introduce the notion of subjectivity as it is formulated by Levinas, which provides an account of the relationship between self and other that informs an ethical conception of intercultural dialogue in the form of presence to one another as corporeal, embodied subjects who co-construct meanings. In light of this discussion, I delineate an alternative understanding of intercultural interaction that relies on a dialogic idea of communication closely connected to the experiential sphere and the bodily aspects of lived human subjectivity.

In Chapter Five I have a twofold purpose. First, I clarify the standpoint from which I examine the relation between self and other. This theoretical discussion is justified by the centrality of the intersubjective relation in this thesis, which is envisaged in terms of dialogism and inter-relationality as an alternative to instrumental conceptualisations of interaction that emphasise the idea of tolerance. To this end, I present a critical appraisal of the philosophy of Levinas in relation to two interconnected themes that are crucial in the formulation of dialogism: the idea of tolerance in the context of multiculturalism and the experience of otherness as a defining moment in the constitution of the self.

In doing this, I engage in a productive confrontation with Žižek, Badiou and Ricoeur who, challenging Levinas's conception of otherness, have highlighted the central theme that characterises this thesis, namely, the possibility to engage dialogically with the other. In this sense, with this discussion I position intercultural communication within the wider context of contemporary philosophical debate regarding the concepts of otherness, subjectivity, cultural difference and tolerance.

The second aim of Chapter Five is to introduce the dialogic framework proposed in Chapter Six. I discuss research in intercultural communication that adopts a dialogic approach, and I argue that the ethical relation based on Levinasian ethics informs

an alternative conception of dialogism from the I/Thou relation described by Buber and employed by Xu (2013, see Chapter Five, section 5.5). I conclude the chapter with a reflection on the idea of answerability in Bakhtin as complementing Levinas's notion of responsibility, which I employ in defining the dialogic framework in Chapter Six.

Following the two theoretical chapters, in Chapter Six I illustrate the ways in which Levinasian ethics underpins a model of dialogic intercultural communication that provides a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between self and other and, consequently, a notion of interaction that is multiperspectival and responsive to context. In the light of this dialogic model of intercultural communication, I contrast three models of competence: Deardorff's pyramid model (2011a, 2011b), the ICOPROMO project (Glaser, Guilherme et al., 2007) and Phipps' notion of intercultural competence in terms of dwelling (2007). In doing this, I consider the ethical implications of Levinas's reflection on the nature of language and on the relationship between self and other for the development of a framework that addresses the limitations of current conceptualisations of competence in intercultural communication.

After having discussed the implications of responsibility in intercultural competence from a dialogic, Levinasian perspective, I conclude that although the process of intercultural learning (e.g. Guilherme 2002; Byram 2002, 2006; Holliday, 2011) remains a valuable and desirable pedagogical activity that provides individuals with the ability to question cultural stereotypes and prejudice, in order to account for the complexity entailed in the field of interculturality it is crucial to examine other facets of intercultural communication. I refer in particular to aspects of communication outside of the original fields that have traditionally constituted the target of academic

research, comprised primarily by international business relations, international higher education and language teaching. As an illustration of this point, in Chapter Five of this thesis (section 5.4) I discuss dialogic intercultural communication research focusing on business practices in multinational contexts which addresses openly issues of inequality, and in the conclusion to Chapter Six I argue that the wider implications of dialogic interculturalism, intended as risk-taking and open ended dialogue, are under-theorised.

In Chapters Seven and Eight I return to this last issue and I present an intercultural reading of a process of othering, which illustrates an approach to intercultural analysis that focuses on an aspect not traditionally associated with intercultural research, namely the creation of the abject other. With this notion, I intend othering as a process in which power asymmetries between self and other become visitble, and I apply intercultural analysis to the discourse of gender identity. In doing this, I discuss the relevance of this analysis in the context of multicultural societies, particularly in regard to the notion of tolerance.

I frame the discussion in terms of two distinct interpretations of the other that reflect the two ethical frameworks discussed in Chapter Four: the notion of the abstract other of liberal universalism, underpinned by Kantian individual autonomy, and the notion of the concrete other, according to the Levinasian idea of embodied subjectivity. I suggest that in the first instance intercultural understanding is limited to tolerance of the other, while in the second modality dialogic understanding develops in terms of critical engagement between self and other in which difference emerges as the affirmation of the uniqueness of the individual.

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have illustrated the aims and theoretical underpinnings of this thesis. I have described the philosophical approach adopted and the rationale that has informed the formulation of the research questions. To summarise, in repositioning intercultural communication practice within a new paradigm, I aim to:

- Recognise the impossibility to achieve a formula to fix communication, adopting instead risk taking and open ended dialogue as a guide for intercultural praxis.
- Employ philosophical reflection to delineate a conception of subjectivity based on dialogism and defined by interaction with the other according to Levinasian ethics.
- Situate intercultural encounters within the duality of agency and structure in relation to power asymmetries between self and other.
- Identify processes of othering as they are applied to create the image of an abject other in multicultural and multilingual contexts, applying the tools of intercultural analysis to critique power asymmetries between self and other.
- Seek interdisciplinary connections to promote dialogue and critical engagement with wider issues beyond the micro-analysis of individual intercultural learning journeys.

Chapter Two. Critical intercultural communication

2.1 Introduction

My intent in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five is to answer the first research question:

How is the field of intercultural communication theorised and what are its epistemological and ontological assumptions?

In this chapter I begin by engaging with the theoretical presuppositions in the work of Jensen (2003), Monceri (2003, 2009), Dervin (2011), Holliday (2011, 2013) and Guilherme (2002). My main aim is to discuss the philosophical underpinnings of these critical intercultural frameworks that are paradigmatic of perspectivism (Nietsche, 1968), social constructivism (Bauman, 2000) and emancipatory critique (Horkheimer, 1982; Habermas, 1984). The aim of this discussion is to position this research within a number of critical perspectives in intercultural communication, which relate to the principal themes of this thesis, such as the provisional character of the relation between self and other, dialogism and the ethical status of dialogue in the praxis of intercultural communication. In particular, in the present chapter I give account of two issues as they emerge from the reading of the literature: power asymmetry and emancipation.

Regarding the issue of power asymmetry, I agree with Block (2013) that the role of structure in determining the agency of individuals needs to become more prominent in research, in order to enrich discussions of identity in both applied linguistics and language and intercultural communication research. For this reason, in this chapter I highlight the notion of structure in the discussion of the literature, beginning with the

perspectivism of Jensen and Monceri and the social constructivism of Dervin. I argue that the idea of identity as a shifting construct is in danger of committing the error of voluntarism (Bhaskar, 1998), which omits the influence of societal determinations over the individual. After that, in section 2.5 I discuss the relationship between structure and agency with a particular focus on the notion of emancipation, in relation to Holliday's critical cosmopolitan potential and to emancipatory praxis in Guilherme's critical intercultural citizen.

Connected to the dynamic relation between structure and agency, in section 2.5.3 I draw attention to the relevance of the categories of class and gender (Spivak, 1988, 2004) in adding complexity to the distinction established by Holliday (2011) between dominant and non-dominant cultural ideologies. In that respect, I clarify the standpoint adopted in this thesis in regard to Eurocentric definitions of cultural difference, and I introduce the notion of the subaltern as it is employed by Spivak to designate the other (I return to the notion of the subaltern in Chapter Seven, 7.4.3, in relation to the abject other).

Finally, in section 2.6 I illustrate the philosophical line of inquiry that I adopt in this thesis with a discussion of the Hegelian presuppositions of emancipatory critical interculturalism. Following the close reading of the literature relating to critical intercultural communication, I problematize the notion of emancipation with the aim to critique the idea of critical awareness as a process of enlightenment of the individual, which culminates in the achievement of the ideal of intercultural consciousness. In contrast to Hegelian dialectics, in section 2.7 I adopt negative dialectics (Adorno, 1973, 2008) in order to problematize the pattern of positive resolution that I identify in the notions of critical awareness and emancipation. In particular, I discuss the process of immanent critique of negative dialectics (Adorno, 1973) as a theoretical guide in the

problematization of intercultural communication. In this way, I begin to sketch the approach to the theorization of interculturalism from a Levinasian perspective.

Before I discuss the literature relating to critical approaches to interculturalism, I illustrate the ethos that has guided the conceptualisation of this chapter within the wider scope of this thesis. Here, I am concerned with the problematization of the epistemological and ontological assumptions of critical intercultural communication communication and, in that respect, I engage chiefly with the strand of intercultural communication concerned with the partial, contested and situated nature of language and the often difficult negotiation of meaning in intercultural encounters. This aspect becomes most visible in situations where there is a power imbalance (Blommaert, 1998; Nakayama and Halualani, 2010; Holliday 2011), in the context of language learning (Byram and Risager, 1999), living in a foreign country (Holliday, 2010; Jackson, 2011) and tourism (Phipps, 2007). From this perspective, this thesis is positioned within the growing literature in intercultural studies that challenges cultural essentialism and searches for alternative theoretical positions that foreground the ethical aspect of intercultural dialogue, whilst incorporating issues relating to unequal power relations and the relationship between structure and agency.

2.2 The ethos of the research

In the context of language acquisition for tourism purposes, Phipps describes the experience of the language learner confronted with the challenging task of negotiating meaning in the course of intercultural interaction. Warning against the idea of the acquisition of intercultural competences as a quick fix to resolving conflict and misunderstanding, Phipps emphasises instead the complexity of communication and '*the mess of human relatedness in languages*' (Phipps, 2007, p.26), referring to the Heideggerian notion of language as an expression of our dwelling in the world.

It is this existential dimension that I intend to emphasise in my research: in rejecting a notion of intercultural communication that relies too excessively on a static and essentialist interpretation of culture, I suggest that intercultural interaction brings to the surface the endeavour, and often the failure, to negotiate meaning that characterises human communication, both inter- and intra-cultural. In taking this stance, I agree with Dervin's call for an ethical engagement of researchers towards their research subjects, and their responsibility to challenge common sense and preconceived ideas of the other and of culture. To this end, he criticises the tendency to present the utterances of research participants without analysing further the various layers that constitute their discourses around personal experiences of intercultural interaction. As a consequence, researchers "*do not take into account the complexity of individuals who interact with each other and reduce them to cultural facts or give the impression of 'encounters of cultures' rather than individuals*" (Dervin, 2011, p.38).

Dervin adopts a Bakhtinian perspective in which meaning is constructed in interaction, so that the utterances of subject participants must be carefully deconstructed by the researcher in view of the "*discursive choices, manipulations and contradictions*" behind their discourses (Dervin, 2011, p. 40). The substitution of the word culture with 'space-time', and the consequent definition of interculturality as "*positioning and negotiation of individuals who come from different space-times*", represents an attempt to reconceptualise intercultural communication in terms that are less reliant on the category of culture (Dervin, 2011, p.38). In aligning myself with this attempt to conceptualise intercultural communication without relying on the idea of cultural difference, I thus acknowledge the danger of neo-essentialism that is always present in intercultural communication with the recourse to the category of culture as the basic unit of analysis for human behaviour. In this regard, Holliday argues that even though

"*dominant approaches in intercultural studies oppose essentialism, they remain neo-essentialist because they fall back on prescribed national cultural descriptions*" (Holliday, 2011, p.15). Another characteristic of neo-essentialism resides in the use of scientific categories such as the dichotomy between individualism and collectivism, which appear neutral but are in fact '*chauvinistic*' (Holliday, 2011, p.16), because they essentialise difference along national lines.

Regarding the focus on cultural difference in the analysis of communication in intercultural contexts, Koole and ten Thije (2001) argue that, although justified from an ethnographic perspective, it leads researchers to overlook other characteristics of discourse, such as power relations between dominant and non-dominant groups, resulting in analytical stereotyping and overgeneralizations. Thus, the a priori reliance on cultural difference in the analysis of intercultural interactions highlighted by Blommaert (1991) can be contrasted with other approaches that emphasise power relations and the societal institutions within which the interactions take place, through a situational and discursive approach (e.g. Gumperz, 1982; Scollon and Scollon, 1995; Koole and ten Thije, 2001).

From this perspective, the understanding of language and culture that guides my reading and problematization of the literature rests on a Bakthinian interpretation of discourse in terms of dialogism and on the inevitability of the use of the word culture. First of all, and relating to the aforementioned argument on the '*messiness*' of language steeped in the real world of everyday interaction (Phipps, 2007), my understanding of communication is based on the idea that language is inhabited by what Bakhtin defines centripetal and centrifugal forces: language is the site of a struggle between the system of linguistic norms that form the idea of a unitary language and the reality of heteroglossia. According to Bakhtin, centripetal forces

embody the idea of a unitary language which operates in the midst of heteroglossia, or the stratification of language in dialects. Here Bakhtin refers particularly to dialects as socio-ideological expressions, languages that belong to social groups and that ensure the constant development and vitality of language itself, "*the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification*" (Bakhtin, 2006, p.272). Each individual utterance represents a recognisable speech act in a defined system of rules but at the same time it is placed in the living and unique context in which it is uttered. Therefore, the idea of culture becomes problematic when used as an explanatory tool for behaviour or when talk around cultural belonging is taken at face value, without interrogating the context of the interaction and the role of the researcher in eliciting, recording and interpreting empirical data.

Finally, I recognise my '*metaphysical complicity*' (Derrida, 2010, p.235) with the language adopted in intercultural communication, particularly with the use of the word culture. However, I follow Derrida in the idea that the movement of difference between sign and signifier expresses the impossibility to inscribe meaning in a totality, making it possible to place the term under erasure: in calling a word into question I also recognise the fact that no other word is available (Derrida, 1997; Bradley, 2008). In placing the term culture under erasure, I accept the use of the word in terms of styling (Coupland, 2007), for which I intend the shaping of social meanings through the use of semiotic resources. This understanding is opposed to an essentialist interpretation that turns culture into a natural entity inscribed within national boundaries, which Street (1993) attributes to the use of nominalisation imported from scientific discourse. To this use of the notion of culture, he opposes the idea of culture as a verb, something that is enacted, implying that meanings are contingent and unstable, constantly

negotiated in everyday life and that culture is a discursive construction built in interaction.

Furthermore, cultural discourses are not neutral products but inhabit social spaces embedded in power relationships and can be used to disguise material inequalities, for example attributing underachievement in education to culture rather than addressing its underlying socio-economic dimension (Phillips, 2007). For this reason Street suggests the use of the notion of hegemony[1] instead of culture, described as '*patterns and constraints of social life at the same time as recognising- in a post-modern sense- their multivocal and contradictory character*' (Street, 1993, p.37). In this sense, the word hegemony is best fit to highlight the interrelationship between the top down imposition of dominant discourses and the dynamic complex of forces that reproduce and transform them. This dynamic complex of forces in the social field highlighted by Street represents the thread that connects all chapters of this thesis, as I engage with the network of concepts and contrasting perspectives that constitute the field of intercultural communication, with the intent to conceptualise a dialogic approach to intercultural communication informed by Levinasian ethics.

2.3 Perspectivist intercultural communication

Jensen (2003) identifies two strands of intercultural communication: a functionalist approach focused on cultural difference and a post-structuralist approach. The latter examines communication from the perspective of the individual participants and highlights the process of interaction from their respective interpretations. Jensen employs Yoshikawa's (1987**)** double swing model based on the idea that

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[1] The word hegemony (Gramsci, 2007) designates the control exercised throughout society by a dominant group.

communication is an infinite process in the course of which the participants undergo a transformation. In this model participants are considered to act simultaneously as both addressee and addresser, after Buber's (2004) I-Thou dialogic relationship and the idea of interdependence in the dualism of *yin* and *yang* in Taoist teaching (Chen, 2008). Through intercultural interaction, self and other are able to develop a *dynamic in-betweenness* (Yoshikawa, 1987)*,* meaning the ability to inhabit different identities.

Returning to Jensen's model, it is developed from a post-structuralist approach that emphasises the fact that interactants are engaged in an ongoing process that is based on '*positions of experience'*, or in other words on subjective, individual perspectives. Jensen bases this idea on the horizon of experience (Gadamer, 1976) as an hermeneutical tool to interpret intercultural encounters not only in terms of cultural difference, but taking into account the horizon, meaning the social spaces inhabited by the participants. This positioning, argues Jensen, is constructed discursively during interaction but it is at the same time anchored in social structures, which delimit the sphere of action of the individual.

Monceri (2003, 2009) adopts a similar perspectivism, beginning with a critique of Western rationality. Similarly to Yoshikawa, Monceri (2003) argues that Western rationality is founded on the idea of a unique and indivisible self, able to comprehend reality in its essential elements. Monceri challenges this dichotomy between the knowing subject and the objects of knowledge adopting the notion of will to power (Nietzsche, 1968). Accepting the impossibility to determine a stable and universal standpoint from which the self would be able to formulate claims of truth about the world, with the idea of perspectivism Nietzsche represents knowledge as a will to power that orders the flux of reality from an individual perspective. Thus, the self strives to impose order on reality creating an unchangeable set of identities, in order to

establish an appearance of stability to the flux of phenomena in the empirical world, which is ever changing and shifting.

According to Monceri, this process becomes apparent in the presence of an intercultural encounter, when the definite sense of identity of the self, built upon the idea of the rational apprehension of the real, is challenged by the encounter with an unknown other who eludes the categories imposed by self. This means that, from the standpoint of perspectivism, the categories of self and other become problematic, because intercultural encounters demonstrate that the reality upon which these categories are based changes depending on context and on perspective. In this sense, according to perspectivism the intercultural self is not transcultured, meaning the end point of a process of acculturation, but it is transculturing, meaning that the self is in a constant state of change and becoming. This state of flux is transferred to the theory of intercultural communication by problematizing the search for consensus and highlighting the precarity of communication,

> What perspectivism teaches us is that there is no way out to find only one theory of intercultural communication able to solve all eventual misunderstandings, and that the only possibility left is to elaborate tentative working hypothesis starting from the consideration of concrete interactions between individuals, since individuals and not cultures are the proper partners of any communication process (Monceri, 2003, p.111).

Therefore, Monceri claims that the self is processual, which entails that there are no stable or natural identities (for example sexual or gender based identities), and thus only temporary selves that arise from interaction with others and with society at large,

> Identity, in its turn, points to the infinite punctual selves in which we are compelled to stop the flux of becoming in order to interact with one another, and particularly to meet the requests for identification on the part of our social and cultural institutions (Monceri, 2009, p.52).

To this, Monceri adds the dimension of power relations that attempt to dispel the chaos of becoming and replace it with ''*the (apparent) order of being''* (ibid.). In this conception of the transculturing self, power represents a pervasive force that fixes identity, rendering possible the identification of the self in everyday interactions. However, in doing so, the flux of reality is interrupted and the self is congealed within an identity, instead of continuing the process of transformation, or metamorphosis.

With the notion of the transculturing self, Monceri provides a complex description of intercultural communication based on the provisional and contextual negotiation of meaning in which the self plays an active role as a shifting and hybrid identity. The state of constant becoming of the transculturing self recalls the notion of nomadic subjectivity (Deleuze and Guattari, 1999), stemming from Nietzsche's critique of the ability of the transcendental subject to confer unity to the empirical world. This notion of a nomadic subjectivity that destabilizes fixed identities in order to affirm difference and becoming allows a shift in the conceptualisation of difference framed within the context of cultural belonging to difference as a performative and creative act (Warren, 2008, see also Chapter Seven, 7.3). However, in counteracting essentialist reifications of culture as an insurmountable structure, meaning that culture is regarded as a construct independent of human activity, this radical form of subjectivity falls under the opposing category of voluntarism (Bhaskar, 1998), according to which society is entirely the product of human action.

According to Bhaskar we are 'thrown' into a pre-existing social context, and as a consequence there exists a duality in which individuals both reproduce (*unconscious* production) and occasionally transform (*conscious* production) society (Bhaskar, 1998, p. 35). For Bhaskar there are two errors in the conceptualisation of the relation between human agency and society: one is the error of reification, according to which

society exists independently of human activity and the other is the error of voluntarism, according to which society is the product of human action. It is possible to identify the two errors in both essentialist intercultural communication, with cultural categories that determine individual behaviour, and in perspectivist models that emphasise the idea of a shifting identity over social determinations,

> Society must be regarded as an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which individuals reproduce or transform, but which would not exist unless they did so (Bhaskar, 1998, p.36).

From this perspective, I argue that it is important to articulate more clearly the ways in which these power relations and societal structures are manifested in intercultural encounters. I return to this issue in Chapter Eight, where I discuss the concept of difference in the light of dialogism and in reference to othering. In the present chapter, I illustrate how this relation is conceptualised in the literature in reference to Dervin's liquid interculturality, Holliday's universal cultural processes and Guilherme's critical intercultural citizen.

2.4 Post-modernism and the politics of interculturality

Dervin proposes a conception of interculturalism based on the intersubjective and relational construction of meaning in interaction. Liquid interculturalism (Dervin, 2011) is presented as an alternative to solid interculturality, which is characterised by its reliance on cultural categorization, whereas in the liquid model culture is a co-construction that is acted by interactants during communication. The two categories-solid and liquid, are established by Bauman (2000) with a contrast between twentieth century modernity and twenty-first century contemporary modernity: the first described as solid, heavy, condensed and systemic, with an inherent tendency towards totalitarianism and the latter as liquid, devoid of historical finality, characterized by

fragmentation and the privatization of individual existence. Bauman illustrates this contrast with a reflection on the shift from modernist emancipatory critical thinking to an inward turn towards reflective critique in contemporary, liquid modernity.

> The modernizing impulse, in any of its renditions, means the compulsive critique of reality. Privatization of the impulse means compulsive self-critique born of perpetual self-disaffection: being an individual de jure means having no one to blame for one's own misery, seeking the causes of one's own defeats nowhere except in one's own indolence and sloth, and looking for no remedies other than trying harder and harder still (Bauman, 2000, p.38).

In liquid modernity the individual performs his/her own sense of identity, and is responsible for the outcomes of this performance, a consequence of the critical impulse having been transformed into a self-reflective endeavour. Liquid modernity is represented as the era of inconsequential time, meaning that temporality is reduced to instantaneity, in which spatial distances can be covered with the speed of electronic signals. For Bauman, the ability to traverse different time/spaces with ease signals the ultimate sign of privilege in contemporary liquid modernity.

In the appropriation of liquid modernity as a constructivist model of interculturality in which culture is constantly negotiated and performed by interactants in communication, Dervin substitutes the notion of culture, which he regards a solid concept, with that of space/time, indicating the fluidity of liquid modernity. The liquid intercultural approach is thus summarised,

> In other words, researchers, who wish to take a critical and 'liquid' stance towards intercultural discourses, shouldn't be interested in the question 'what's the student's culture/identity/intercultural competence/sense of acculturation?' But rather 'how do they construct their culture/ identity /intercultural competence/sense of acculturation?' (Dervin, 2011, p.41).

However, in employing the concept of space-time to designate cultural negotiation, Dervin overlooks the structural disparity of access to different time-spaces due to

asymmetrical relations of privilege signaled by Bauman, pointing instead to a culturalist bias in reaserch. According to this culturalist bias, researchers adopt a solid cultural interpretative stance towards research data, instead of a liquid interpretation of communicative utterances in intercultural encounters as instances of different time-spaces traversed and negotiated by the participants. Indeed, according to Dervin, this culturalist bias persists despite the theoretical acceptance of the notion of the multifaceted and hybrid nature of identity- or liquid interculturality. Dervin (2011) highlights an example of this theoretical acceptance of liquid interculturality, which is subsequently abandoned in favour of a solid interpretation of data, in the literature concerning the intercultural experiences of Chinese students. In this instance, the culturalist bias of researchers in interpreting data surfaces in cultural categorization and stereotyping, despite the theoretical acknowledgement of the fluidity of cultural allegiances.

In this context, here I point at one aspect that has not been sufficiently emphasised in Dervin's liquid approach, represented by the modalities in which structural constraints such as economic disadvantage, class and linguistic inequality might influence the agency of the interlocutors in a communicative exchange and their ability to traverse different time/spaces. This aspect is addressed in the context of what Dervin, Gajardo and Lavanchy (2011) define the politics of interculturality, with a critique of constructivist intercultural analysis that views the individual as a free agent able to switch between identities unconstrained from societal and economic structures,

> Certain constructivist views, having replaced openly culturalist theories, are nonetheless as problematic as the latter when they position individuals as free of all influences and capable of choosing their identifications—this is precisely what "soft" postmodern relativism does. (Dervin, Gajardo and Lavanchy, 2011, p.11).

With the term the politics of interculturality, the authors refer to the plethora of terms that surround the area of intercultural studies (i.e. cross-cultural, multicultural, transcultural) and argue that the coinage of new terminology reflects specific socio-political and historical contexts. Although the creation and adoption of new terms demonstrate the attempt to avoid essentialism and culturalism, the result betrays a common ideological agenda regarding the construction of otherness,

> all of these terms invoke perceptions of social reality, together with the ideologies and the a priori perceptions that underlie them, but do not constitute descriptions of the social realities themselves. Moreover, debates about the merits of one of these words to the detriment of the others tend to overshadow the fact that all of them invoke the same basic assumption, that is, that different cultures exist. Encounters between them are then immediately qualified as problematic—or unnatural at the very least—as cultures are seen as corresponding to distinct geographical spaces. The attention paid to the differences between these terms obscures the fact that they convey a similar perspective on the world, on human societies and on the way they are supposed to function (Dervin, Gajardo and Lavanchy, 2011, p.5).

This means that all the different approaches share the same conceptualisation of otherness in terms of a dichotomous relation between self and the cultural other, thus emphasising difference, and hence the problematic character of intercultural interaction, over commonalities. From this perspective, the authors continue, there are two basic assumptions that characterise intercultural research: on the one side, the reliance on the concept of culture creates a polar contraposition between 'us' and 'the other', thus implying a divide between cultures. On the other, this process of contraposition and otherisation fosters discourses of insurmountable differences between coexisting cultures in multicultural societies and the demand for the creation of political instruments to resolve conflicts thereby generated. In this way, the authors point at the political agenda behind the emergence of the term intercultural, particularly the otherisation of migrants and the need to regulate migratory flows within national borders, policies towards minorities and processes of assimilation and acculturation.

Hidden behind this political dimension, the authors identify the social construction of otherness that ascribes the intercultural label in the presence of asymmetrical social relations,

> Described as an encounter with "others" (or a certain kind of other), the 'intercultural' explicitly or implicitly reduces the other to this single element—the "cultural"—while minimising or erasing characteristics of the social identities of the interlocutors, such as gender, age, personal life trajectories and other elements that can make all the difference—or their commonality. Thus, designating certain situations as 'intercultural' supposes positioning oneself as an implicit, normative agent (Dervin, Gajardo and Lavanchy, 2011, p.12).

In other words, the danger in analysing and labelling encounters and experiences as 'intercultural' is rooted in the implicit reproduction of power relations in which the subject positions of the participants are assigned according to the prevalent discourses of a given socio-political context, albeit hidden behind the label of cultural difference. I engage with this discursive and social construction of otherness in Chapter Eight, focusing on the marginalization of the other in the Western liberal universalist tradition.

In this context, the authors propose an epistemological shift from the idea of the intercultural, with its emphasis on cultural difference and the meeting with a cultural other, to interculturality which focuses on the processuality of these encounters. This processuality accounts for the fact that identity is not fixed, but it is the result of the interactions that individuals experience in society.

> We thus address encounters between multifaceted individuals in relation to historicity, intersubjectivity and interactional context (ibid.).

To this end, the authors maintain that acknowledging this processual aspect of communication, together with the wider forces that forge individuals, adds complexity to research. Thus, the focus on

processes, instabilities, contextual dynamics allows us to comprehend social life in all its density and complexity while integrating differentiated uses of discursive, economic, political, social and other types of resources (Dervin, Gajardo and Lavanchy, 2011, p.14).

In this context, individuals are viewed as dialogic entities constantly evolving through interaction, able to draw upon a range of resources available to them: discursive, economic, political and social. This notion of the individual counteracts narrow labelling and cultural categorization, or cultural neo-essentialism, and while it is recognized that individuals are conscious agents and not simply representatives of a specific culture, the authors acknowledge the presence of unequal social relations,

> The multiple ways individuals construct social relations and meanings cannot reduce them to mere "representatives" of a given culture. The interlocutors in the spotlight in our research are full-fledged agents who may make conscious and considered choices, and not culturalised objects supposedly controlled by their cultural identities. This, however, does not prevent us from noting the presence and the force of unequal social relations: we do not assert that they are completely free in making these choices, but rather that margins for manoeuvre exist and that they are utilised both in everyday life and when special events take place (rites of passage, death…) (ibid.).

From this perspective, the interplay between agency and structure becomes predominant in determining the relation between self and other in intercultural encounters. As Block argues, despite clear acknowledgments of social structures in intercultural communication, for example in the work of Holliday and Piller, it is crucial to determine the relationship between structure and agency and make clear the extent to which participants in applied linguistics and language and intercultural communication research are in control of their own agency,

> Are they totally constrained by the social structures which envelope them and shape the activity in which they engage? Or are they free to act as they please in the different domains of activity in which they find themselves on a day-to-day basis? (Block, 2013, p.142).

In this thesis the relationship between structure and agency in not framed as mutually exclusive, thus reproducing the dichotomy between essentialist intercultural communication, in which the individual is constrained within the boundaries determined by cultural identity (as in essentialist intercultural research, e.g. Hall, 1995; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2004), and constructivist notions of identity as emergent in social interaction (e.g Monceri's interculturing self, 2003, 2009; Dervin's liquid interculturality, 2011). Instead, I adopt Holliday's (2011, 2013) recognition of the limits imposed by structural constraints on the agency of individuals in intercultural encounters, while I reject the cultural determinism and the individualism of essentialist intercultural communication. At the same time, I maintain a problematizing stance in regard to discourses of awareness and achievement of an emancipated intercultural consciousness. I clarify this point in the next section in reference to Holliday's critical cosmopolitan potential and Guilherme's critical awareness model.

2.5 Critical intercultural awareness and emancipation

In this section I conduct a close reading of two critical intercultural frameworks. I begin with the critical cosmopolitan potential (Holliday, 2011), and after that I discuss the idea of the critical intercultural citizen (Guilherme, 2002). In the discussion that follows the reading of the two critical frameworks (section 2.5.3), my intention is to highlight the division between Centre and Periphery as a cultural ideology (Holliday, 2011, 2013) adding the politics of class and gender inequality to the reproduction of hegemonic Western dominance (Spivak, 1988, 2004). Moreover, I problematize the idea that intercultural learning, regarded as a positive movement towards a higher level of awareness and self-consciousness, represents the natural fulfilment of the movement of reason towards completeness in emancipatory praxis.

2.5.1 Holliday and the critical cosmopolitan potential

Holliday (2013) engages with the notion of structure by postulating a grammar of culture to interpret intercultural events. In this grammar of culture, the individual is shaped by social and political structures such as cultural resources (e.g. education, language, religion, traditions), economic systems, national politics and global positioning, particularly in relation to Western and non-Western cultural perspectives. According to this framework, the personal trajectories of individuals are in constant dialogue with the structures that surround them, due to underlying universal cultural processes which are shared by everyone regardless of background and that allow the negotiation of the individual with the structural dimension. This ability to transcend national cultures and cross cultural boundaries enables the emerging of patterns that are common in human behaviour notwithstanding cultural identification.

In this sense, a relevant aspect of Holliday's grammar of culture is that the underlying universal cultural processes present two aspects: on the one side, the shared universal ability allows individuals to interact with the particular realities encountered, demonstrating the creative ability to engage with structures; on the other, that same universal ability is at the origin of cultural prejudice, representing '*a common mechanism for making limited sense through easy answers'* (Holliday,2013, p.1), meaning the tendency to simplify the unknown using cultural stereotypes. According to Holliday, critical thinking on identity and culture can be unlocked by engineering *'the right readings'* (Holliday, 2011, p.36). This means that critical cultural awareness can be fostered through the use of three interpretative strategies: thick description, bracketing and making the familiar strange, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Thick description	Bracketing	Making the familiar strange
Seeking the broader picture, looking for the hidden and unexpressed and encouraging 'exploratory juxtaposition of phenomena' (Holliday, 2011, p.29).	Contesting established descriptions entrenched in discourse and ideology.	Transcending the intercultural line between 'our culture' and 'their culture', uncovering the universality of underlying cultural processes through dialogue.

Fig 1. The three interpretative strategies

A crucial pedagogical task consists in uncovering those underlying features and 'unlearn' the impact of ideology in shaping discourses of culture, particularly in the Western pretence of neutrality embedded in the belief of its scientific and technical superiority evident in the neo-essentialism of intercultural training, and in narratives of Orientalism (Said, 2003), based on the idea of the 'foreign Other' (Holliday, 2011).

Ideology, according to Holliday, establishes a dichotomy between a Western self and a marginalised periphery and the task of uncovering its works constitutes an emancipatory practice through which social structures can be modified by social agency. In order to explain behaviour in intercultural contexts, Holliday (2011) contrasts two models of social theory- a structural functional model and social action theory. Structural-functionalism is attributed to Durkheim's (1964) view that society represents an organic system composed of separate institutions that contribute to the whole. Holliday (2011) ascribes this theory to intercultural neo-essentialism, according to which individual behaviour is expression of a national culture and national cultures can be described and compared according to their respective characteristics. Social action theory asserts the independence of social action (e.g. Weber, 1964), and thus the ability of individuals to negotiate the cultural resources available to them. Even in situations of manifest oppression, argues Holliday, the ability to think critically remains

a characteristic of all individuals. In this model of social action, the individual negotiates an established culture, which is described as a dominant discourse embedded in the social structure, and through a personal journey creates a personal cultural identity that is emergent and evolving.

Holliday's intercultural model is based on the notion of universal cultural processes that allow individuals to negotiate cultural realities that can be traced to a post-structuralist notion of subjectivity, able to act creatively and shape cultural identity whilst engaging with powerful and dominant discourses (*see* Weedon, 1987, on the ability of the individual to occupy subject positions within a web of discourses and power relations). At the same time, the idea that ideological falsifications can be unmasked through the adoption of critical cultural awareness, and the development of a critical cosmopolitan consciousness, is rooted in narratives of emancipatory praxis (e.g. the emancipatory practices of teachers who relate theory to praxis in order to fulfil their transformative role, rejecting the notions of knowledge as a banking system and accumulated capital in Freire, 1993 and Giroux, 1993, and the framework for critical intercultural citizenship, Guilherme, 2002).

In this context, the critical cosmopolitan position advocated by Holliday addresses the contradiction at the heart of cultural relativism as the impossibility to establish grounds for right action, and postulates in its place an underlying ability to interact in intercultural communication that is common to all. This critical cosmopolitanism is based on two paradigms of culture- small culture and large culture (Holliday, 1999). The commonly accepted understanding of culture conforms to the large culture paradigm, based on the reduction to ethnic and national characters. The notion of small culture, however, emphasises the cohesive behaviour of small social groupings, without the culturist reduction to ethnic or national stereotypes.

In relation to the notion of large culture, Holliday claims that it is somehow unavoidable, *''an inescapable occupational hazard in cultural analysis''* (1999, p.242) and, for this reason, he invites an increased awareness of *''what its conceptualisation involves''* and its *''ideological implications''* (ibid.). In this sense, researchers need to monitor their own discourses and *'' the ideological orientation of their own small culture''* (p.259), and to understand through the use of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995),

> the details of how small culture and discourse operate if they are to be truly resilient and able to make choices (Holliday, 1999, p.260).

My contention in regard to Holliday's analysis is that it operates within an unresolved dichotomy between a view of subjectivity in line with post-structuralism and a modernist emancipatory praxis aimed at uncovering the false consciousness and *''prejudice of the dominant imagined world''* (Holliday, 2011, p.189), based on ideological falsifications and the perceived superiority of Western cultural perspectives. To this dominant perspective, Holliday opposes the counter-discourse of *the marginal world:*

> The marginal world represents the Periphery, or the vernacular, struggling for recognition (…). The marginal world remains half hidden by the established and dominant imagined worlds (…). (Holliday, 2011, p.189-190).

Thus, the marginal world remains hidden under the ideological falsifications of the Centre. In this context, Holliday proposes three social facts (Durkheim, 1982) that illustrate the reality of cultural chauvinism against non-Western cultures, albeit refusing Durkheim's determinism and allowing for the possibility of action through critical analysis and the consequent uncovering of false consciousness:

1. Ideology is a fact of social life, visible in language and everyday behaviour.

2. Ideology is hidden through projecting technical superiority as a neutral fact.

3. The Western self imagines a culturally deficient foreign other, sustained through cultural and linguistic imperialism and the construction of regional, religious and ethnic cultures (Adapted from Holliday, 2011, p.191).

Therefore, the aim of critical analysis resides in activating the underlying universal cultural processes and *''see through the illusion''* of ideology behind the chauvinism towards '*''the Periphery in the emergent cultural world''* (Holliday, 2011, p.192). Despite the recognition that counter-discourses of the marginal world are also ideologically constructed and thus no more 'real' than dominant discourses, and that they are also in danger of false consciousness, there remains a dichotomy between *''Western domination and chauvinism''* (Holliday, 2011, p.190) and non-Western societies, the privileged locus of emergent counter-discourses to the ideological dominance of the West. This dichotomy indicates a higher reality that is uncovered through the exercise of critical awareness, which uncovers false ideological positions and essentialism. A similar critical approach is developed by Guilherme in the context of language education and intercultural citizenship.

2.5.2 Guilherme: critical intercultural citizenship

Education is the focus of critical intercultural awareness (Guilherme, 2002), which is identified as the critical dimension in foreign language education and outlines the characteristics of the critical intercultural citizen. Guilherme identifies the philosophical foundations of critical awareness in critical theory and post-modernism, the latter discussed through the work of Lyotard (1984, 1988), Baudrillard (1994) and Derrida (1997, 2010). Regarding critical theory, Guilherme focuses on the emancipatory character of the Frankfurt School, particularly the notion of intersubjectivity that

replaces the individualistic and atomistic individual of Enlightenment, according to which the individual could dominate the world through objectifying reason.

The aim of critical theory was identified by Horkheimer (1982) in the role of reason embedded in social relations, which acquires an emancipatory character that brings about changes in society. This happens through the exercise of critical reason, beginning with the explanatory critique of society, and subsequently with the transformation of all the factors that limit human freedom and emancipation, in order to liberate human beings from *''all the circumstances that enslave them''* (Horkheimer, 1982, p.244). Adopting Horkeimer's perspective, Guilherme writes that: *''Emancipation in this sense is achieved through critical thinking which for the early Frankfurtians had the aim of rescuing the oppressed as well as a declining culture''* (Guilherme, 2002, p.68).

Guilherme draws upon the theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984) with the emancipatory intent of identifying the obstacles to understanding through the analysis of intersubjective communication. In the theory of communicative action, truth is constructed discursively on the basis of four validity claims that constitute an ideal speech situation: that what we say is comprehensible, that it is true, that there is a normative basis for the claim, and finally that it is a sincere expression of the speaker's feelings (Habermas, 1984; Outhwaite, 2009). If the four validity claims are observed within an ideal speech situation, it is possible to achieve a rational consensus between speakers. From this perspective, the importance of critical theory for critical culture awareness resides in the view of reason as socially embedded and thus influenced by different cultural perspectives. Furthemore, according to Guilherme critical theory confers a political scope to critical interculturalism in uncovering patterns of domination and ideological representations of culture,

> The enhancement of the liberating power of critical rationality is, therefore, a valuable asset that the notion of critical cultural awareness borrows from Critical Theory (Guilherme, 2002, p.89).

Guilherme combines the emancipatory character of critical rationality with post-modernist notions of hybridity and cultural criticism in the context of global politics and the electronically mediated character of contemporary life. The concepts she draws upon regard the sense of hybridity, uncertainty and undecidability that characterize the post-modern critique of modernist narratives of rationality (Featherstone, 1988; Vattimo, 1988; Best, 1991, 1997). In this context, according to Guilherme the contribution of post-modernism reinforces the role of cultural criticism in creating dissent and promoting diversity and change.

This philosophical framework is translated in Guilherme's emancipatory pedagogical practice, according to which teachers are regarded as intellectuals who relate theory to praxis in order to fulfill their transformative role, rejecting the notions of knowledge as a banking system and accumulated capital (Freire, 1993; Giroux, 1993) and changing the image of schools from sites of transmission of knowledge into sites where knowledge is produced through active critical practice. The ability to act interculturally requires that teachers become cultural mediators, in order to help students clarify their cultural identifications and emphasising the role of dialogue in developing critical and participatory citizenship through the acquisition of skills and competences that allow the suspension of judgement and the ability to empathise with the values of others even when they are not compatible with our own (Byram, 2008). The elements that are considered crucial factors in the development of critical intercultural citizenship (Phipps and Guilherme, 2004) can be grouped under the five categories of reflection, dissent, difference, dialogue and empowerment. Beginning with the development of cultural and political awareness through critical reflection, critical intercultural learning will

cause the self to recognise the existence of contrasting values and thus the need to negotiate with the other. In this way, the adoption of a critical attitude towards perceptions of culture provides the nexus with critical action and the development of critical intercultural responsibility. This sequence of learning is illustrated in Figure 2.

Reflection	Dissent	Difference	Dialogue	Empowerment
Critical Reflection. Cultural and political awareness.	Recognition of the existence of dissenting and contrasting values. Ability to negotiate between 'the Self and the Other'.	Critical appraisal of linguistic and cultural canons and standards. Questioning of the perceived inferiority of cultural other by Western standards.	Nexus between critical reflection and critical action.	Intercultural responsibility.

Fig. 2. Critical intercultural citizenship

A characteristic of critical pedagogy centred on intercultural communication is the relationship between two contrasting tendencies, one focused on emancipatory ideals that seek to counteract the idea of schools as places where inequality is reproduced as habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) and the other based on post-modern concerns with identity and culture. The focus on critical action that characterises this model of critical intercultural awareness presupposes a belief that people are not simply powerless towards structural constraints but that they can forge a space for agency and critical action within institutional spaces. In this context, Apple and Whitty argue that postmodern emphasis on the contingent and the local contributes to the possibility for individual actors to shape educational discourses, although any emancipatory potential seems to be submerged by the language of accountability and efficiency that dominates education and the ideology of consumer choice of neo-

liberalist politics that *'facilitates a denial of the importance of structural disadvantage*'
(Apple and Whitty, 1999, p.18).

According to Giroux (2004), critical rethinking of the role of schools and teachers
requires that classrooms are viewed as sites of micropolitics in which those wider
discourses are played out. This means that for Giroux the development of a radical
form of pedagogy able to counteract the erosion of democratic public life requires the
reconciliation of the modernist ideal of an ethical and political discourse of
emancipation in the exercise of critical reason with the postmodern focus on *'the
contingent and the specific'* (Giroux, 2004, p.66). From this perspective, moving from
the different ethical discourses that shape students' experiences, educators can forge
a relationship between the self and the other: *'Ethics becomes a practice that broadly
connotes one's personal and social sense of responsibility to the Other'* (Giroux, 2004,
p.67, capitalisation in the original).

2.5.3 Discussion

In relation to the two frameworks discussed in sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2, the issue of
emancipatory praxis represents a major concern in the critique of intercultural
communication from a problematizing perpective adopted in this research. In
discussing the emancipatory aspect of critical interculturalism, I adopt a post-structural
feminist position to highlight an aspect that is particularly poignant in the context of
intercultural education, relating to the model of rationality employed in discourses of
intercultural critical awareness. As the union of the two words suggest- inter and
cultural, the term intercultural implies dialogue across cultures. This idea of cultural
dialogue translates in emancipatory educational practice as the critical appreciation of
cultural ideologies, the recognition of otherising practices and the possibility of

reaching critical awareness regarding the reality of oppression and cultural domination (Holliday, 2011). However, the appreciation of cultural difference coupled with the idea of liberation from ideological falsifications presents a theoretical problem.

On the one hand, the rejection of grand narratives of totality in favour of the activation of differences (Lyotard, 1999), presents the danger of turning intercultural communication praxis into a purely intellectual exercise that eschews issues of hegemony in current discourses on culture and identity, and promoting a cultural relativism in which *anything goes.* This form of relativism has been described as ludic post-modernism (McLaren, 2005), a playful and depoliticised discourse that by emphasising difference is oblivious to the realities of power and inequality, in particular in reference to minority identities. On the other hand, the emancipatory agenda behind discourses of cultural hegemony and ideology runs the risk of relying on the vision of a final consensus that would follow once false consciousness has been unmasked, a form of totality that glosses over the complexity and contradictory nature of the real in the illusory achievement of a transcendental truth that would finally win over other validity claims due to its own incontrovertible arguments.

In regard to this conundrum, I agree with the feminist critical perspective on emancipation (Luke and Gore, 1992) that problematizes the emancipatory ideal of critical pedagogy, in particular the identification of the Enlightenment equation of "*knowing, naming and emancipation*" (Lather, 1992, p.131) with the ideal of the historical role of a self-conscious human agency guided by the vanguard role of the critical intellectual. From this feminist position, the foundational and unitary rational subject is rejected as a form of oppression of the other (Weedon, 1987), a perspective which Ellsworth (1992) exemplifies in the paternalistic use of the word empowerment employed in critical pedagogy and the notion of the educator giving voice to her

students. I employ this perspective to discuss the critique of cultural ideology delineated in reference to Holliday in section 2.5.1 and the notion of emancipatory praxis in critical interculturalism, particularly the notion of representation as giving voice to the other, which I have discussed in section 2.5.2 in relation to Guilherme.

Following Spivak (1988, 2004), I begin by adding the issue of class and gender inequality to the cultural politics of Western ideological dominance, which I argue adds complexity to the contraposition between dominant and peripheral cultures, or Centre and Periphery proposed by Holliday. After this initial discussion, I introduce the problematizing perspective that I develop in regard to the notion of emancipation, contrasting Hegelian dialectics, intended as positive resolution, with negative dialectics, intended as open-ended engagement (Adorno, 1973, 2008). The latter position summarises the theoretical framework adopted in this thesis. Before I introduce the critique of emancipatory reason elaborated by Spivak, I clarify the definition of Western and non-Western perspectives as I understand them in this research in relation to intercultural communication.

I concur with Hall (1996) that the idea of a Western society represents a historical construct rather that a definite geographical reality. Briefly, Hall argues that for a society to qualify as Western, it has to display specific characteristics- being developed, industrialized, urbanized, secular and modern. These features indicate an organization of knowledge in which perceived Western and non-Western characteristics are distributed along a dichotomous axis: industrial-rural, developed-underdeveloped, secular-religious, modern-retrograde. Organized along these binary terms, non-Western societies become a counterpoint to the West, with a narrative that defines the West as a rational, chronologically linear, progressive entity and relegates

non-Western societies to the role of the cultural other, dominated by irrationality, historical immobility and religious fervour (Said, 2003; Nair-Venugopal, 2012).

From this perspective, Spivak (1988, 2004) describes Western cultural hegemony through the concept of epistemic violence, meaning the colonizing practice of creating an inferior other in the form of the colonial subject. However, for Spivak the reproduction of this dominant ideology does not proceed exclusively from the Centre to the Periphery, to use Holliday's description of Western and non-Western realities, but it is produced by class and gender stratifications within the Periphery itself. Particularly, Spivak refers to a transnational professional elite class involved in economic and human rights development in the context neo-colonialism, intended as an economic enterprise of imperialism in the developing world,

> There is no state on the globe today that is not part of the capitalist
> economic system or can want to eschew it fully (Spivak, 2004, p.84).

Therefore, according to this argument, the contraposition between Centre and Periphery is not only geographical, because the same distinction is present within the Periphery itself through the division between a privileged transnational class and a subaltern[2] class. This means that, in contrast to the global professional elite referred by Spivak, there exists a marginal class within the peripheral world, composed by subaltern groups. In this context, if subaltern groups are subjected to class inequality, subaltern women experience an additional form of oppression in the form of gender inequality (Spivak, 2004; Andreotti, 2007), which I extend to include oppression towards LGBT- lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identities (Gray, 2013). I return

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[2] Spivak describes the subaltern as *''removed from lines of social mobility''*(1988, p.531). This term was employed by Gramsci (2007) to indicate Italian rural peasantry, and is extended by Spivak to include lower-class subaltern groups in colonial and post-colonial contexts.

to the notion of the subaltern in Chapter Seven, in relation to the conceptualisation of the dynamics of othering in intercultural communication.

In this chapter, I highlight the politics of class in the reproduction of cultural hegemony, in order to relate the divide between the global elite and the subaltern class employed by Spivak to the concept of space-time discussed in section 2.4 of this chapter in reference to liquid interculturality. In this context, I shift the use of the notion of space-time from Dervin's idea of cultural identity as the ability to inhabit and negotiate a variety of space-times, opposed to rigid cultural identifications. Instead, I employ the term to indicate class privilege in gaining access to technology that allows the flow of information in real time without the limitations imposed by spatial distance. In this way, privilege is limited to those with the economic means to access the compression of time and space (Bauman, 2000) that characterizes global late modernity, or post-modernity. Adopting this perspective, I argue that the division between Centre and Periphery proposed by Holliday is defined not only by ideological constructs of culture, but is reproduced primarily through class inequality, in which I include gender inequality. To this end, I contend that by pointing at class and gender stratifications within the Periphery and at the existence of an elite class that is transcultural, and thus intersecting both Periphery and Centre, Spivak's critical reading of colonial and postcolonial experiences of cultural domination and hegemony adds complexity to Holliday's contraposition between two irreconcilable cultural realities, one possessing a higher truth (the Periphery, non-Western) and the other expressing an ideological falsification (the Centre, Western).

Moreover, I concur with Spivak's deconstruction of the type of rationality that informs the idea of giving voice to the other from an emancipatory perspective. In line with Spivak (1988, 1999, 2004) and Chakrabarty (2000), I argue that unproblematized

emancipatory practices are in danger of committing epistemic violence, which designates the naturalization of Western narratives of enlightenment, awareness, freedom and democracy, viewed as universal and ahistorical values. Spivak (2004) describes this process of epistemic violence as the burden of the fittest, whereby Western constructs derived from specific historical processes are universalized and naturalized from a dominant position to become the means of liberation of the subaltern, cultural other. I address this issue in Chapters Seven and Eight, with a critical reading of the presupposed neutrality of liberal universalism from the perspective of processes of othering.

The idea of a burden of the fittest leads Spivak to contrast two forms of responsibility: responsibility *for* the other- meaning that is the duty of the dominant position, the fittest, to provide the means of enlightenment to the unprivileged other; and responsibility *to* the other- intended as answerability and accountability (Andreotti, 2007). This idea of ethics as direct engagement with the other is for Spivak a necessary precondition for initiating wider changes,

> The necessary collective efforts are to change laws, relations of production, systems of education, and health care. But without the mind-changing one-on-one responsible contact, nothing will stick (Spivak, 2004, p.383).

I explore this contrasting notion of responsibility in the context of intercultural ethical communication in Chapters Three and Four, in relation to Kantian moral autonomy and the Levinasian ethics of the other, and I apply the idea of responsibility to the other in Chapter Six in relation to dialogic intercultural competence. In the present chapter, I adopt Spivak's critique of Western rationality as a naturalized dominant practice that intersects with the Periphery, and I place the idea of critical intercultural awareness, intended as a form emancipation from ideological falsifications able to readdress

power imbalances, in the perspective of Hegelian dialectics (Hegel, 1956, 1977). To this conception of dialectics as positive resolution, I contrast the idea of negative dialectics (Adorno, 1973), in order to delineate the contribution of the problematizing stance adopted in this thesis in the theorization of intercultural ethical communication from a dialogic, Levinasian perspective.

2.6 Hegelian dialectics as a narrative of positive resolution

Hegelian dialectics is based on teleological finality, meaning that reality presents an intrinsic rationality that becomes increasingly evident through the unfolding of the Spirit (*Geist*- a higher form of consciousness of which individual consciousness is a limited manifestation) to self-realisation. This process leads to the reconciliation of differences and the resolution of all conflicts into a superior unity (Hegel, 1956; deVries, 1991). In Hegelian dialectics, the force behind the dialectic process is reason, which unfolds to reveal the rational substance of reality. This means that rational understanding resolves all the aporias of thought and achieves absolute knowing, once all contradictions have been resolved in the higher unity of the Spirit. In this way, the whole (or totality) is considered true, whilst the parts constituting the whole, which are deemed to be partial and incomplete in themselves, are subsumed in a totality through the dialectic process.

Although the triadic formula of thesis, antithesis and synthesis is considered to represent the principal element of the dialectical method, Hegel utilizes it only in *Phenomenology of* Spirit (1977) and in reference to Kant. However, Hegel adopts triadic expressions that involve the terminology of affirmation, negation and negation of negation that are conceptually equivalent to the notions of thesis, antithesis and synthesis (Kaufmann, 1988; Beiser, 2005). In this context, for clarity of purpose here I employ the three stages of thesis, antithesis and synthesis to illustrate this process of

subsuming, or overcoming of the parts in a totality, applied to intercultural communication.

The three stages begin with a concept, or thesis, through the negation or opposite, known as antithesis, and finally reaching a resolution in the synthesis, when contradictions and conflicts are solved in a higher totality. Thus, through self-examination, consciousness arrives at the rational comprehension of reality, making the world fully intelligible through the dialectical movement (Stern, 2002; Heidemann, 2008). My main contention is that discourses of critical awareness and emancipation create a dichotomy between a negative state prior to the acquisition of intercultural awareness, and a 'real' or 'true' state, in which conflicting claims are reconciled in the final unity of intercultural consciousness. As in the teleological finality of Hegelian dialectics, the description of the development of critical intercultural awareness follows a similar dialectical pattern in which the critical speaker undergoes a process of transformation from a monocultural entity to an aware and emancipated intercultural speaker.

Prior to the encounter with the other, the self is a monocultural entity, a state upset by being exposed to another cultural perspective, through language learning (e.g. Byram, 2002) or international sojourning and educational exchanges (e.g. Jackson, 2011). In these accounts of intercultural learning, the encounter with an unknown cultural perspective creates anxiety and culture shock, which can lead to miscommunication and negative stereotyping as described by Holliday (2011) and in Bennett's (1993) triadic model of intercultural sensitivity, which progresses from the ethnocentric stages of denial, defence and minimization to the development of ethnorelativistic attitudes of acceptance, adaptation and integration.

Figure 3 illustrates the intercultural process of emancipation according to the triadic pattern:

Thesis	The self prior to the encounter with the other.
Antithesis	The encounter with the other causes culture shock and anxiety. The other as negation of the self.
Synthesis	Achievement of a higher totality: self and other are reconciled. The negative element is subsumed through a critical process of awareness that reveals the intrinsic finality of a higher intercultural consciousness.

Fig. 3. Hegelian dialectics and intercultural consciousness

Guilherme (2002) adopts a similar triadic pattern, summarising the critical process in three main moments: the approach to a foreign culture, the engagement with the other culture and finally the performing of intercultural acts. As outcome of this experience, the self discovers the intrinsic and higher finality in which all the negative elements of the intermediate stage are transformed into tolerance, awareness and reflexivity, revealing the self as a critically aware intercultural speaker. In other words, this critical process of cultural awareness follows a pattern of positive resolution and presupposes the end of conflicting claims subsumed in a higher unity of understanding. However, in this thesis I intend to problematize this positive dialectics and emphasise instead precariousness, open-endedness and even accepting the possibility that things, indeed, could go wrong as characteristics of interculturality.

In assuming this problematizing stance, I contrast Hegelian dialectics with negative dialectics (Adorno, 1973). In the following chapter I adopt the immanent critique of negative dialectics in order to problematize intercultural communication and to propose

an understanding of ethical commitment in communication according to the Levinasian notion of ethical responsibility, intended as responsibility *to* the other in terms of accountability and answerability (Spivak, 2004, see section 2.5.3 in the present chapter). This ethical standpoint represents the focus of the critique of the notion intercultural competence as expression of the Kantian autonomous rational agent in Chapter Three, and is developed in the subsequent chapters relating to Levinasian ethics and dialogic competence.

2.7 Adorno and negative dialectics

Adorno and Horkehimer (2010) argue that the dialectics of Enlightenment turns the idea of reason into its opposite concept, the idea of myth, following the Hegelian pattern of identity and non-identity, or thesis and antithesis. According to this internal dialectics, enlightenment reverts to mythology in the guise of positivist and instrumental reason producing totalitarism and mass alienation. However, if Hegelian dialectics presupposes the positive resolution of the negative moment, in negative dialectics the two items remain separate, and continue to negate each other (Stone, 2008).

Adorno (1973) describes the dialectical process as an imposition of unity on diversity, meaning that identity between thought and its object, or between reason and reality, is achieved negatively through a process of elimination of difference. Thus, negative dialectics renounces the imposition of unity and teleological finality of Hegelian dialectics, admitting the open ended and contingent character of the dialectical process. Indeed, negative dialectics can be considered a dialectics of non-identity, which means that opposites are not resolved into a higher totality. Therefore, negative dialectics articulates *''the divergence of concept and thing, subject and object, and their unreconciled state''* (Adorno, 2008), meaning that objects of knowledge cannot be

entirely possessed by thought. From this perspective, negative dialectics engages with the practice of immanent critique, as opposed to transcendent critique. Whilst the latter establishes the principles of critique apriori before using them to criticize other theories from the outside, immanent critique exposes the internal contradictions of a theory or body of work, *''remaining 'within' it''* (Jarvis, 1998, p.6). Immanent critique does not resolve contradictions, abstracting a phenomenon from the totality to which it belongs, rather it examines relations within the totality of phenomena.

Adorno describes the process of immanent critique as proceeding through the arrangement of concepts into constellations, which means that an object of knowledge is connected to others by examining the historical processes in which it is embedded and the past relations with other objects that have contributed to shape it in its individual uniqueness. Thus, understanding a concept entails weaving a narrative that gathers a plurality of other concepts that illuminate each other. However, being historically produced, objects of knowledge are never fully grasped because they are evolving and unfinished (Stone, 2008),

> The unifying moment survives without a negation of negation, but also without delivering itself to abstraction as a supreme principle. It survives because there is no step-by-step progression from the concepts to a more general cover concept. Instead, the concepts enter into a constellation. The constellation illuminates the specific side of the object, the side which to a classifying procedure is either a matter of indifference or a burden (Adorno, 1973, p.162).

Not proceeding from concept to concept until a final reconciliation is found, the creation of constellations throws light on connections and aspects that have been previously ignored, reflecting the contingency and partiality of the objects being observed. In this way, dialectical thinking becomes fragmentary, renouncing the attempt to reconstruct a totality in the shape of a final concept that subsumes the

others (Bowie, 2013). Instead, it recognizes the historicity of an object of knowledge and examines it from the inside on its own terms. As Adorno explains,

> The history locked in the object can only be delivered by a knowledge mindful of the historic positional value of the object in its relation to other objects-by the actualization and concentration of something which is already known and is transformed by that knowledge. Cognition of the object in its constellation is cognition of the process stored in the object (Adorno, 1973, p.163).

Similarly, I intend to proceed according to this immanent perspective with the problematization of a concept widely used in intercultural communication, the idea of communicative competence. Thus, in the next chapter I conduct a critique of intercultural communication beginning from a specific object of knowledge and I question its ontological and epistemological assumptions: its stemming from a conception of autonomy of the individual and its positioning of communication as a process that can be determined in advance and fixed using the appropriate instruments. Furthermore, in Chapter Four I connect the concept of competence to other related concepts such as the autonomy of the ethical subject in Kantian moral philosophy and instrumental reason, and I contextualize its historical trajectory and development within the field of intercultural communication. With the contrast that I propose between Kantian autonomy and Levinasian heteronomy I highlight the principle of non-identity of negative dialectics, because I contend that dialogue remains open ended and dependent on the reciprocal ethical engagement of the participants in communication. This principle of non-identity guides the conceptualisation of dialogic interculturalism from a Levinasian perspective in Chapter Six.

2.8 Conclusion

To summarise, in this chapter I have discussed the philosophical underpinnings of the frameworks that have informed the theoretical conceptualisation of this thesis. I have engaged with the perspectivist view of interculturality of Jensen and Monceri, and I have concluded that the idea of a hybrid, changing self does not explore sufficiently the issue of structural constraints that influence intercultural encounters, despite the acknowledgement of the existence of power relations between self and other. In addition to perspectivist interculturalism, I have discussed the notion of liquid interculturality proposed by Dervin, in which structure appears in the form of hegemonic cultural practices that essentialise individuals with the attribution of rigid cultural traits. Finally, I have turned to the emancipatory intercultural frameworks of Holliday and Guilherme. Both recognise the existence of structural constraints, although they emphasise the independence of individual action in uncovering hegemonic discourses and ideological falsifications.

Regarding the notion of emancipation and intercultural awareness, first I have discussed the notion of the subaltern other and epistemic violence elaborated by Spivak (1988, 2004). This discussion has highlighted the Eurocentric bias in terms of epistemic violence in discourses of enlightenment and emancipation of the cultural other, to which I will return in Chapter Eight. At the same time, it has introduced the main themes of Levinasian ethics, such as responsibility *to* the other and answerability, which will be detailed in Chapters Four and Five.

Moreover, I have contrasted Hegelian dialectics with Adorno's negative dialectics. In doing this, I have argued for the adoption of a problematizing stance in approaching intercultural communication. As a result of this problematizing stance, in Chapter Three I intend to develop an immanent approach to the critique of intercultural

communication, examining an object of knowledge within this field of research, namely the notion of intercultural communicative competence. In this way, I aim to highlight the internal contradictions that emerge from the interrogation of its presuppositions, and to map out its connections with other concepts, such as the autonomy of the ethical self in Kantian moral philosophy and the functionalism of current models of intercultural competence.

Chapter Three. Intercultural competence

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter of the thesis I describe the concept of competence developed in the field of intercultural communication, aiming to critique the Cartesian presuppositions of interculturalism and to problematize the conceptualisation of responsibility within the Kantian paradigm of the autonomous rational agent. I contend that intercultural training on competences and responsibility is conceptualised in terms of the Kantian notion of the rational autonomy of the moral agent who is held accountable for the effect of his/her moral decisions on others, who become the recipients of his/her actions. The locus of this agency is the Cartesian subject of the 'I think', a bounded individual capable of autonomy and rationality, a concept that developed during the Enlightenment, and particularly through Kantian moral philosophy, with the internalisation of reason and judgment in the thinking subject according to universal norms of freedom and equality. In other words, the subject of this form of rationality that initiated the modern conception of ethical thinking is able to choose the right course of action according to what reason dictates (Popke, 2003; Furrow, 2005).

As I have explained in Chapter Two, this problematization emphasises the existential dimension of communication according to a Bakhtinian model of dialogical communication, in which context shapes the nature of the interaction. Thus, in this exploration of the dynamics that underpin ethical communication and responsibility, I set out to highlight two interconnected problematic aspects of intercultural research relating to the concept of competence: the reliance on the category of cultural difference in determining the relationship between self and other, and the functionalist paradigm (Martin and Nakayama, 2010) derived from post-positivist social

psychological research (e.g. Barnett and Lee, 2002; Gudykunst, 2003), that focuses on consciousness and on the competences of the intercultural speaker in terms of acquisition of skills, effectiveness and appropriateness in language use.

This critique is aimed particularly at models of competence and responsibility that are employed to design intercultural training (e.g. Hofstede and Hofstede, 2004; Deardorff, 2006, 2009; Spencer-Oatey and Standler, 2009; Guilherme, Keating and Hoppe, 2010). Furthermore, the perspective adopted in this overview of the notion of competence in intercultural research originates from Holliday's (2011) description of both essentialist and neo-essentialist understandings of interculturalism, which rely on the category of cultural difference to analyse the dynamics underlying intercultural communication, initiating a process of *othering*, or the creation of the dichotomy between the self and the cultural other. Therefore, the relationship between self and other remains bounded to notions of tolerance of the other as a cultural being, leaving open the question of critical engagement and dialogue with differing ethical frameworks in intercultural encounters. My argument develops as follows: I first contextualise the notion of intercultural competence within the wider field of intercultural communication research. Then I describe the ''critical turn'' in intercultural communication, before delineating critical approaches to competence in language learning, focusing on the notion of symbolic competence developed by Kramsch (2009), Byram's (2008) framework of Savoirs and competence in terms of the development of critical intercultural awareness. Finally, I introduce the concept of responsibility and its relation to the idea of intercultural competence.

3.2 Intercultural competence. An overview

The field of intercultural communication studies encompasses a wide range of academic research that is impossible to pin down to a single definition or to a single discipline. However, a major preoccupation of intercultural studies has been the intensified network of communication created between cultures as a result of internationalisation, caused by a globalised and transnational economy (Stier, 2006; Zajda, 2009).

The genealogical reconstruction of the field of intercultural communication conducted by Moon (2010), traces the narrow understanding of culture in terms of national boundaries and the preference for microanalysis focused on communicative practices between interactants from different national cultures, to the agenda set by the US Foreign Institute in the 1950s in order to create intercultural training to use in trade with foreign countries. Moon concludes that "*intercultural communication developed in the midst of World War II as a tool of imperialism and that much of its foundations were infused with a colonial perspective" (*Moon, 2010, p.35). The notion of intercultural training applied to business, management, marketing and advertising, is aimed at developing intercultural competence under the assumption that the understanding of generalised patterns of behaviour attributed to a defined culture will prevent misunderstandings and facilitate exchange (Dahl, 2000).

A significant consequence of this perspective based on the emphasis of cultural difference in communication is the development of intercultural training with its practical applications in a variety of contexts**.** Research conducted in this field (e.g. Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman, 2003; Bennett and Bennett, 2004; Spitzberg and Changon, 2009; Deardorff, 2006, 2009; Berardo and Deardorff, 2012), formulates the ideal of an intercultural performer who can apply the skills of intercultural training in a

number of contexts such as education, health, management, tourism and intercultural mediation, contributing to the creation of what can be defined an intercultural industry. In Deardoff's model of competence (2006, 2009), the goal of intercultural communication is to communicate effectively and appropriately showing adaptability and flexibility in selecting appropriate and effective styles that are culture specific, reflecting the culture of the other relative to the context of interaction. In this context, I consider Wiseman's (2003) definition of intercultural competence as paradigmatic of the functionalist approach: ''*ICC competence involves the knowledge, motivation and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures''* (p.192). This ability is further described as the process of identifying ''*meanings, rules and codes for interacting appropriately''* (Wiseman, 2003, p.200).

According to Wiseman, this epistemological approach to competence is accompanied by another ontological definition that foregrounds the dialectical process of negotiation of separate cultural identities in the course of interaction. In this sense, epistemological factors including cultural awareness of the other culture, self-awareness and knowledge of the language of interaction, contribute to the successful negotiation of cultural identities that results in competent and effective communication. For example, in Deardoff's model of competence (2006, 2009), the goal of intercultural communication is to communicate effectively and appropriately showing adaptability and flexibility in selecting appropriate and effective styles that are culture specific, reflecting the culture of the other relative to the context of interaction.

From this perspective, Roy and Starosta (2001) argue that a positivist and scientific approach is counter-productive when applied to human sciences, particularly intercultural communication, because it essentialises cultural identity, whilst ignoring the political, social and economic factors that determine the context of interaction.

Similarly, Blommaert (1991, 1998) highlights the fuzziness surrounding the study of intercultural communication and the preoccupation with the practical applications of its principles to education, training and management. This emphasis on practical applications of the principles of intercultural communication is grounded on a static view of culture and promotes the idea of communication as an exchange with a stable essence, leaving unproblematized the notion of culture and the power dimension at work in intercultural communicative exchanges. According to Blommaert, the influence of culture is often inflated in determining behaviour and communication, so that the idea of cultural difference hides the socio-economic inequality underlying the urban, multicultural and multilingual contexts in which much intercultural communication takes place. The idea of cultural differences in communication is thus used in guiding communicative exchanges in elite situations, such as business and management, in which recognition of the other is essentialised:

> Whereas the intercultural object - the Other - is usually pictured as caught in a web of age-old essential and inflexible values and customs, those who have identified the other claim to be free of such determinism (Blommaert, 1998, p.3).

The basic assumption guiding the formulation of competence used in intercultural training is that communication across cultures may cause misunderstandings based on cultural differences and that business organizations tend to reflect the cultures of the countries in which they are located (Leeds, 2001). The research of Hofstede (2001, 2004) on cultural differences offers a model of training in intercultural contexts that reduces culture to a pattern of standardised models of behaviour. The principal claim is that knowledge of behavioural patterns pertinent to a culture, or a cluster of cultures, reduces stress, anxiety and miscommunication in intercultural encounters. A particular essentialist feature is the opposition between individualism and collectivism,

the former considered a value that nurtures initiative and critical thinking characteristic of Western societies, whilst the latter promotes reliance on tradition and group cohesion.

From a similar perspective, Hall (1995) delineates two main dimensions of culture: high/low assertiveness and high/low responsiveness, so that each style is seen as conforming to a specific national culture. Behind the neutrality of academic research, these values are ideologically attributed to a fundamental, yet unproven, difference between freedom in Western societies and the sacrifice of the individual to cultural values in all other societies. Jack (2009) defines this form of interculture as hegemonic, in the sense that this partial and simplified understanding of culture has become dominant and has assumed the posture of scientific truth. The most significant consequence of this hegemonic interculturalism for language learning is the priority accorded to the teaching of English over other languages (Hüllen, 2006), to the point that particularly in East Asia learning a foreign language is almost synonymous with learning English: ''*The role of English thus often dominates the development of language education policies and the teaching of English has been a major influence on the methods of teaching all foreign languages*'' (Byram, 2008, p.9). Furthermore, the prevalent version of English used in international exchanges is Business English (Jack, 2009), considered a *lingua franca* in intercultural business communication (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles and Kankaanranta, 2005).

The ability to interact effectively with people from other cultures is also conceptualized through the acquisition of 'intercultural sensitivity' (Chen and Starosta, 1998, 2000) and the development of reflexivity and respect of different cultural perspectives (Tomic and Lengel 1997; Guilherme, Keating and Hoppe 2010). Therefore, failure in establishing dialogue is attributed to a lack of awareness of differences in

communicative styles to due culture. An illustrative example of this paradigm is represented by Global People, an intercultural project originated from the e-China-UK programme, a collaboration between UK and Chinese higher education institutions, which provides guidance in developing intercultural awareness and competence in international educational contexts. The competency framework drawn by the team developing this project states the necessity to cross language barriers in order to achieve effective communication and understanding, delineating the skills needed in this endeavour:

> One of the key resources we bring to building trust and mutual understanding with our international partners is the quality of our communication skills. We may have come to some useful initial conclusions about what they want and how they operate, but unless we can build on this through effective and appropriate communication strategies and skills, the potential for building shared meaning will be lost. Often international partnerships can be beset by misunderstandings based on problems in overcoming the language barrier as well as a failure to draw on the right mix of listening, speaking and perceptiveness skills in order to construct, explore and negotiate meaning (Spencer-Oatey and Stadler, 2009, p.5).

What emerges here is the formulation of competence in terms of acquisition of effective and appropriate communicative skills as an essential pre-requisite in building trust and mutual understanding in international exchanges. The authors continue:

> Often people underestimate the amount of background information that is required to be shared up-front to create a platform for mutual understanding, as well as the different styles needed for communicating effectively with their international partners (ibid.)

The model thus delineated is built on previous knowledge of communicative styles and behavioural patterns in order to direct the ability to frame interlocutors within a national tradition. What transpires from these formulations of communicative competences is the possibility to achieve a form of transparent communication once the cultural other has been identified and categorised, marginalising the crucial task of intercultural

studies to highlight the processual character of communication as an activity that is always situated and negotiated between speakers in both intercultural and intracultural situations (Blommaert 1991, 1998; Dervin, 2011).

Phipps (2007, 2010) critiques the idea of the acquisition of intercultural competence as a quick fix to resolving conflict and misunderstanding, and the practices of the intercultural industry, or ''*consciousness raising industry*'' (Phipps, 2013), in directing intercultural communication research towards the production of training courses and manuals that offer practical applications and ready-made solutions to the complex endeavour of human understanding. Instead, Phipps emphasises the complexity of communication and *'the mess of human relatedness in languages'* (2007, p.26), writing that the notion of intercultural competence as fixing communication ignores the fact that communication is not only a set of skills that are performed:

> People speak-to and with each other. Discourses of performance and competence simply mask and technologies the variedness and complexities of felt languages, from within the human person (Phipps, 2007, pp.3-4).

In the next section I introduce the critical turn in intercultural communication, which foregrounds the ideological character of intercultural studies and emphasises issues of justice and equality as elements that delineate the emancipatory potential of research in this field.

3.3 The critical turn

The critical turn in intercultural communication studies appears in US scholarship with the adoption of a wider perspective that focuses on macro contexts, foregrounding the socio-economic relations and historical/structural forces that shape perceptions of culture in intercultural encounters (Martin and Nakayama, 2000). According to Halualani, Mendoza and Drzewieka (2009) the emancipatory potential of critique can

be fulfilled if interculturalists become organic intellectuals who challenge hegemonic discourses. Gramsci denied that intellectuals exist as a separate and autonomous group, arguing that every social group creates *"one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in social and political fields"* (Gramsci, 2007, p.5). Thus, he highlighted the wider ideological function of the intellectual and the emancipatory role of intellectual critique. This critical approach to intercultural communication utilises insights from other disciplines, such as feminist studies, critical pedagogy, media, race and ethnic studies to form an area of inquiry within the wider field of communication studies:

> Many of us dare to go where others stay clear: across and through the junctures and ruptures of historical authority, formidable structures, and power forces that touch our encounters, relationships and everyday lives; inside the fragmentations and displacements of cultural groups and identities- ours and those of others for whom we care; in and around the contours of our intersecting positionalities in relation to surrounding ideologies and hegemonies of society, and deep within the struggles over power among cultural groups, members, and dominant structures and forms (Nakayama and Halaulani, 2010, p.1).

According to the authors, the emancipatory potential of intercultural communication studies has been obscured by "*the field's chronically singular focus on interpersonal acts between intercultural interactants and two-group comparisons*", whereas a critical perspective uncovers layers of power, recasting assumptions about culture, communication and inter-culturality and relates them to macro social and historical dimensions (Nakayama and Halaulani, 2010). From her analysis of academic scholarship, Moon (2010) locates the critical turn of intercultural communication research in the mid-1990's, characterised by an attempt to historicise the field of intercultural communication, the elaboration of more complex conceptualisations of culture, the critique of dominant ideologies and the harnessing of the theory of

pedagogy as critical praxis in intercultural communication. According to Moon, it is necessary to rethink foundational concepts such as adaptation and competence in order to broaden the field, theorising from the perspective of the 'other' in place of dominant intercultural discourses.

Curtin (2010) positions cultural competences within the broader ideological and structural contexts in which they are ''*enacted, judged and challenged*'' (p.279), thus problematizing competence intended in terms of performance, effectiveness and appropriateness. From a similar critical perspective, Cheng (2010) and DeTurk (2010) problematize the focus on competence training in order to facilitate intergroup dialogue as the process of reinforcing dominant discourses. However, not only has this critical turn been centred principally in the US (Shome, 2010), it is also without a unified critical project (Nakayama and Halualani, 2010). Nevertheless, it is possible to highlight a major preoccupation of this strand of critical intercultural communication in the intent to avoid essentialist interpretations of culture and otherisation in intercultural encounters.

Martin and Nakayama (2010) have developed a dialectical approach to support the notion of fluidity and complexity of culture and the dynamic relationship between culture and communication. This dialectical approach stands in contrast to the other four paradigms that they have defined within intercultural research: the functionalist, which I have noted in reference to intercultural competence, the interpretive, the critical humanist and the structural humanist. They individuate a dialectical process that operates in intercultural relations in the dynamic relationship between individuals and culture (some aspects of behaviour are idiosyncratic and others reflect cultural influences); between the personal and the contextual (some aspects of communication remain constant over different contexts); between static and dynamic dimensions of

culture and finally in the dialectic of privilege and disadvantage that operates in intercultural encounters, which they claim is largely ignored in traditional intercultural communication research.

Such a dynamic conception of culture and communication, according to Chuang (2003), is necessary in order to avoid essentialising others in intercultural encounters and similarly, Rodriguez (2002) proposes the notion of culturing being as a challenge to the static notion of intercultural being. From a similar perspective, Rowe explores the possibility of shifting intercultural communication from *"identity-based claims to being ('I am') to community-based reflections on our becoming ('I belong')"*, against reified notions of group belonging and identity (Rowe, 2010, p.216). In this interpretation, the processual aspect of communication is viewed as a process of exchange that "*unfolds across lines of difference*" and "*between unevenly located subjects*" who move "*across and through power lines*" (Rowe, 2010, p.216).

3.4 Critical approaches to intercultural competence in language learning

In the context of European scholarship, in particular in relation to language teaching and learning, a more critical approach to intercultural communication studies has developed in the shift occurred from the emphasis on the acquisition of grammatical competence separated from real and purposive communication, to a broader understanding of learning a foreign language as the acquisition of intercultural competence or *savoirs* (Byram, 2008). In particular, the French term *la reliance,* or inter-relatedness, underlines the necessity to abandon the clear-cut understandings of culture and identity that underlie more instrumental approaches in intercultural communication studies, in favour of a more nuanced interpretation of communication that embraces complexity and uncertainty. According to this paradigm, the acquisition of a foreign language is a cognitive endeavour that is also affected by other factors

that pertain to the emotional sphere, to corporeality and to agency in a complex interaction between the self, the other and the environment (Matsumoto, Hee Yoo and LeRoux, 2007; Aden, et al., 2010).

Byram (2008) addresses critically the priority accorded to the teaching of English over other languages, which drives formulations of communicative competence in terms of the hegemonic interculturalism outlined above. From this perspective, Hüllen (2006) contrasts the utilitarian motivation for learning English as a foreign language with intercultural language learning, outlining a notion of competence that takes into account the socially constructed nature of culture and the context of interaction. This latter understanding of competence is illustrated by Byram's model of Savoirs (Byram and Zarate, 1997a; Byram and Zarate, 1997b), which was influential in the development of the common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001).

In this model, the intercultural speaker acquires communicative competence not by casting off his or her social identity in the pursuit of a model of native speaker competence, but by developing the ability to assess the relationship between cultures and mediate between them. This is particularly evident in the case of non-native speakers communicating through a third language, or lingua franca, which increases complexity in communication (Byram and Risager, 1999). Similarly, Phipps and Gonzalez (2004) introduce the notion of languaging to highlight the complex nature of culture and the role of language in shaping social environments. According to the authors, the intercultural skill of languaging enables negotiation, understanding and transformation in the figure of the languagers-in-action, intercultural beings that cross borders and engage reflectively with self and other.

Guilherme (2010) also draws on the notion of situatedness, recognising the necessity to develop a form of competence appropriated to context in order to facilitate communication and understanding in multicultural settings. However, despite the redefinition of intercultural competence and language learning in terms of critical intercultural citizenship (Guilherme, 2002; Byram, 2008), the notion of languaging (Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004) and the transnational paradigm of Risager (2006), I agree with Dervin (2010) that critical models of intercultural competence are far from becoming embedded in educational curricula.

Indeed, learning a foreign language still rests on the idealised notion of the nation state, built on the ideal of a common language and of a native speaker reflecting a homogeneous national culture opposed to other national identities (Kramsch, 1998). Despite the attention towards the situatedness of culture and communication, the teaching of modern foreign languages as it is implemented in national educational policies still rests on the unproblematized use of the word 'foreign': ''*emblematic of constructed and imagined difference, which positions speakers of a particular language as different from the imaginary 'us'*'' (Pavlenko, 2003, p.315). This reference to Anderson's (1991) idea of nations as imagined communities posits the notion of a common language as one of the determinant aspects of the construction of national identity.

In this respect, I believe that the issue becomes particularly poignant in the context of multicultural and multilingual educational settings, characterised by the presence of bilingual students and speakers who display varying degrees of sociolinguistic competence in using determinate language varieties of a national language, thus showing the precarious status of a 'common language'. The origins of this national paradigm in German Romanticism in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth

centuries is a well rehearsed argument (e.g. Hardcastle, 1999; Risager, 2006), particularly in reference to Humboldt's (1988) and Herder's (2002) conceptualisation of language as connecting individual consciousness to the wider cultural and spiritual life of a nation, promoting the educational value of the ability to establish comparisons between different peoples and cultures, both past and present, through the study of other languages. This ability formed an important part in Humboldt's educational ideal of *Bildung* as personal and cultural maturation, based on the Kantian presupposition of the value of moral qualities in the development of the individual, and it is powerful to this day in shaping national educational policies. In the next session I illustrate the idea of symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2009), which addresses critically the national cultural paradigm of language education.

3.4.1 Kramsch: symbolic competence

The work of Said (2003) and Todorov (1999) has been instrumental in uncovering the creation of otherness through political and cultural hegemony enacted in Western colonial history, describing how understanding is distorted with the representation of the other as culturally alien. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the idea of progress as a result of linear evolution was employed to justify European cultural superiority and consolidated the 'cultural other' as irreducibly different from the norms of sameness (Popkewitz, 1990). In the context of post-colonial cultural studies, these norms of sameness that underlie discursive practices surrounding cultural difference have been contested in a number of alternative accounts of culture that emphasise hybridity. Bhabba (1994) proposes a model of hybridity contrasted to cultural homogeneity, suggesting that cultural meanings and symbols are not fixed entities, but they can be appropriated, translated and historicised. The meaning of culture is placed in the interstitial spaces present in the peripheries of dominant traditions, favouring a

notion of cultural hybridity that rejects monolithic accounts of national histories and the exoticism of cultural difference, highlighting the shifting nature of identity and the idea of otherness not as an exterior, objective entity, but as always present within the self. In this understanding of culture as hybridity, every act of communication is regarded as an intercultural encounter in which meaning is always produced in the passage from two spaces occupied by the speaking subjects into a third space where meanings are negotiated and reinterpreted.

This idea of thirdness has been re-appropriated in language education (Kramsch, 1993, Lo Bianco et al. 1999) as the opportunity to engage with an unfamiliar culture through language learning, which offers a transformative potential by challenging the binary opposition of self and other (Feng, 2009) and problematizing assumptions about culture and identity. Thus, through communicative exchange, participants find a common space of interaction and experience difference as a repositioning of one's own frames of reference, rather than being passively exposed to cultural difference (Lo Bianco, et al., 1999). Kramsch (1993) further qualifies the notion of a third space as the result of a 'conversion' following a border experience, such as learning a foreign language and becoming socialised in a new culture, that allows learners to interpret their own sense of displacement through a negotiation between the native and the acquired language. The spatial dimension of third place is substituted by the notion of symbolic competence, or the ability to operate and negotiate between different symbolic systems.

However, writing a decade later Kramsch (2009) argues that the idea of a third space does not eliminate the opposition between self and other or native and non native speakers, but simply focuses on the shifting relationships between each set of opposites. In her view, the metaphor of third space is no longer suited to the reality of

a globalised economy, characterised by computer-mediated communication and the simultaneous co-existence of different languages and other signifying practices in everyday life. The consequent displacement of traditional spatial/temporal positioning renders the idea of a monolingual native speaker with a definite national identity obsolete. In this context, she argues that the notion of third space operates on the assumption of the reified existence of a host country and a country of origin, creating a static view of cultural difference with the romanticised idea of a hybrid cultural position placed between two separate dimensions. These systems are referred not only in terms of different linguistic codes, but include all the semiotic resources that contribute to the making of a hybrid identity and allow multilingual speakers to appropriate and manipulate multiple symbolic systems.

This symbolic entity is formed in interaction with the environment through the discursive practices of others, which are then re-appropriated through the conscious activity of interpretation of signs and symbolic forms and the unconscious activity mediated by the conative sphere involving emotions, feelings, memories and desires. Kramsch attributes the construction of the self to this complex process of interaction: '*We only learn who we are through the mirror of others, and, in turn, we only understand others by understanding ourselves as Other*' (Kramsch, 2009, p18). In other words, the process of acquiring subjectivity entails a decentering of the self, learning to interact with other individuals, anticipating their behaviour and developing a sense of trust.

Kramsch argues that subjectivity is produced discursively in terms of intertextuality through shared memories and inferences, described by Goffman (1971) and Bakthin (2006) as the position of each utterance within a sign system of past utterances. This decentered subject is therefore necessarily historical and socially contingent and, in

virtue of the manipulation and interaction with symbolic systems, able to occupy different subject positions, as it is most evident in the case of multilingual speakers who can switch subject position when changing language. At the same time, the shared nature of symbolic systems and the social character of intertextuality also entails that speakers in multilingual contexts might struggle to anticipate behaviour and therefore develop trust in the other, requiring the development of intercultural, or symbolic, competence in communicative situations dominated by uncertainty. Kramsch attributes performative power to the ability to position oneself at the intersection of different signifying practices, although the ideal of a native speaker as the expression of a national culture is still very powerful in multicultural and multilingual educational settings where learners confront daily the symbolic power of the dominant language (Bourdieu, 1991). As a result of the linguistic, cultural and socio-economic inequality that characterises multicultural societies (Gundara and Jacobs, 2000), the ability to navigate multiple practices across more than one language is not acknowledged in European national school curricula (Gundara, 2000), creating a contradiction between the multilingual reality of global societies and the national character of school systems.

In addition the notion of the acquisition of symbolic competence in terms of decentering of the self developed by Kramsch, it is important to highlight that essentialist readings of culture in determining the relationship between self and other (e.g. Deardorff, 2006, 2009; Spencer-Oatey and Stadler, 2009; Wiseman, 2003) have also been challenged from both philosophical and sociolinguistic perspectives. The post-structuralist approach of Monceri (2003; 2009) and Dervin (2010; 2011) rejects culture as the principal model to understand and explain behaviour. As I have illustrated in Chapter Two, Monceri describes the transculturing self in a constant state of flux and becoming, owing to its interaction with the environment and with other

selves, in opposition to the static notion of the transcultured self, which implies the passage from a culture to another after the acquisition of intercultural awareness. Similarly, Dervin (2010) uses the concept of 'space-time' meaning that culture is always situated, and as such it is a joint construction between self and other shaped by the context of interaction. From a similar perspective, Quist (2013) advocates a 'Romantic turn' in language learning, in which the subjectivity of the learners and the complexities of interculturality become the focus of pedagogy, and not problematic aspects that need to be glossed over in order to achieve language proficiency.

Furthermore, according to the sociolinguistic approach of Scollon and Scollon (1995), Blommaert (1998) and Piller (2011), the role of culture in misunderstanding and conflict in intercultural interaction is inflated. Communication happens between people in real contexts, not between representatives of cultures, and conflict often arises as the result of inequality between speakers, not due to cultural differences. These approaches signal the emergence of theoretical interventions in the field of intercultural research that defy the identification between culture and communication in setting the divide self/other along cultural lines, problematizing current models of acquisition, assessment and reliable testing of communicative competences.

3.4.2 Savoirs and critical intercultural awareness

In the framework of Savoirs (Byram, 1995, 1997, 2008), intercultural understanding is presented as the determinant factor in counteracting the difficulties that appear in the increasingly complex context of European schools, characterised by multilingualism and multiculturalism. According to Byram, the language learner is an intercultural speaker, someone who crosses frontiers (Zarate, 1997) and is skilled at translating and mediating between the native culture and the culture being learned. This emphasis on culture mediation places greater importance on socio-cultural

competence rather than on the mechanical acquisition of language, so that the ideal of native speaker competence is replaced by the socio-cultural ability to mediate between a number of cultural perspectives (Risager, 2007). Socio-cultural competence is summarised by Byram in the form of Savoirs: *savoir etre*- existential competence, *savoir apprendre*- the ability to learn, *savoirs*- implicit and explicit knowledge of cultural reference, *savoir faire*- the ability to combine those skills in multicultural contexts and *savoir s'engager*-or critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997, 2008).

The emphasis on both cognitive and affective aspects of learning is crucial in multicultural settings, where learners are socialised in the culture of instruction whilst negotiating other modes of socialisation. In fact, on the one side the culture of instruction represents the expression of a unitary national identity, reflecting the values of dominant social groups, on the other learners encounter different value systems and norms of behaviour in various contexts, all contributing to their identity formation (Byram, 1995; Gundara, 2000). A form of education that strives to promote intercultural competence should then relativise ethnocentric perspectives, focusing on the complexity of socialisation and identity formation through a reflexive approach that highlights the complexity involved in the making of cultural identity to counteract the negative inscription of otherness upon the figure of the migrant in popular discourse (Byram, 1995; Holliday, 2011).

Byram (2008) proposes an important distinction between citizenship education and education for intercultural citizenship which focuses on the comparison of values, beliefs and behaviours of different cultures and social groups, encouraging a questioning of familiar interpretations that have been acquired through primary socialisation. According to Byram, this form of education facilitates the encounter between people of different social groups and cultures, promoting action and political

engagement in the form of participatory democracy, based on agreed criteria to evaluate values and beliefs. The integration of intercultural citizenship education and foreign language teaching is aimed at enabling students to question tourist perspectives and consumerist attitudes, inviting them to engage at a deeper level with the culture of the language being learnt. According to Starkey (2006, 2011), a critical approach to texts in language teaching develops critical cultural awareness as the ability to:

- Identify and interpret explicit or implicit values, placing a document or an event in context, uncovering the ideological dimension through the use of Critical Discourse Analysis, particularly in reference to its emancipatory potential (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1997).

- Evaluate critically with reference to explicit perspectives and criteria, such as human rights, political ideology or religion.

- Interact and mediate in intercultural exchanges, negotiating agreement on possible areas of conflict between contrasting ideological positions.

In relation to the acquisition of the ability to read texts critically, I add that in theorising a model of intercultural citizenship it is important that the idea of the nation state defined by a specific cultural heritage is explicitly contextualised. Particularly, I refer here to the use of the word 'foreign' and the symbolic separation between imagined communities that remains largely unproblematized in the use of the words citizen and citizenship (Pavlenko, 2003; Anderson, 1991; *see section 2.3*). I follow Derrida (2003) in stating that the modes in which citizenship education is conceptualised is still dependent on the legacy of the idea of the nation-state defined by its own national borders, which creates a dichotomy between citizens and those who are not accorded the privilege of being called citizens. From this critical perspective, the integration of intercultural citizenship and language teaching proposed by Byram and Starkey would

increase in conceptual complexity through the problematization of definitions of citizenship, emphasising the dialectics between exclusion and inclusion in the context of current debates on citizenship, multiculturalism and immigration (Chapters Seven and Eight).

To summarise, in Byram's model of intercultural communication, the intercultural speaker acquires communicative competence not by casting off his or her social identity in the pursuit of a model of native speaker competence, but by developing the ability to assess the relationship between cultures and mediate between them. This is particularly evident in the case of non-native speakers communicating through a third language, or lingua franca (Byram and Risager, 1999). Risager (2007), who further explores the social and situated nature of communication, advocates a transnational paradigm that would place language teaching in a global context. Two concepts are particularly relevant in her account of the relationship between language and culture: *language flow* and *languaculture*. Risager separates the link between language and culture established by the Whorfian cognitivist paradigm, to argue that linguistic practice is a form of meaningful practice that is embedded in a larger cultural context.

The term languaculture was first used by Agar (1994) to designate the status of language as belonging to the wider context of meaning and discourse. This concept emphasises the social aspect of language use and is borrowed by Risager to illustrate how the language learner adjusts his/her languaculture when socialising into a new language. At the same time, meanings and discourses flow across societies and are adjusted to each context, indicating a separation between language and culture and favouring the notion of the interaction between languacultures, at the individual level of the language learner and at the wider level of linguistic communities. In this context, Risager underlines the bias in the Whorfian identification of language and culture

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towards the notion of first language and native speaker, whilst the ideas of languaculture and flow place greater emphasis on the multilingual subject and the socio-linguistic character of language use.

Phipps and Gonzalez (2004) introduce the notion of languaging as opposed to the idea of learning in terms of the pragmatic acquisition of skills that enable communication in another language. Instead, the authors highlight the complex nature of culture and the role of language in shaping social environments that can be accessed only through the acquisition of the intercultural skill of languaging, which foregrounds meaning and human connection in communication over performance, assessment and accuracy:

> Learning another language is an exploration of the multiple experiences and cultural resonances that are embedded in and accrue to other languages and their cultures. (...) In order to understand another world, to be intercultural, to language, it is not sufficient to know your world only. That world must be changed and challenged and enriched by others. Nor is the case that all we need is a few grammar tools, a vocabulary list and the ability to apply performative tools in order to resolve practical problems (Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004, p.27).

The process of languaging enables negotiation, understanding and transformation, and introduces a shift from intercultural competence to intercultural being. In other words, the focus shifts from the classroom and issues of curriculum content to an engagement with the social world as languagers-in-action, intercultural beings that cross borders and engage reflectively with self and other (Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004). Guilherme (2010) also draws on the notion of situatedness, recognising the necessity to develop a form of competence appropriated to context in order to facilitate communication and understanding in multicultural settings. In her words, this necessity has become more urgent as the result of the world being more cosmopolitan following intense migratory flows and increased economic mobility. As a consequence, there is

a blurring of the distinction between terms such as 'expatriate', 'immigrant', 'guest' and 'host' and an intensified network of cross-cultural contact that heightens the perception of difference. Guilherme argues that individuals can transform themselves into intercultural mobile beings as a result of an ontological shift, through a process of discovery and awareness that causes a change in being.

As a result of this process of transformation, difference would not only be perceived in the cultural other, but it would be recognised within intra-cultural contexts and within the individual, to the point where we discover the other in ourselves. This epistemological shift beginning with languaging (Phipps and Gonzales, 2004), initiates a critical cycle that causes an ontological change (i.e. a change in being) into an 'intercultural personhood' (Kim, 2008) at ease in the contradictory and often conflicting nature of communication in an increasingly interconnected world. According to Guilherme, the final outcome of this epistemological and subsequent ontological shift is the acquisition of tolerance, which she describes as '*a psychological readiness to be empathetic and to control one's emotions, that is, to be patient and tolerant towards the other (…)*' (Guilherme, 2010, p.8). In the next section, I discuss the epistemological assumption relating to the acquisition of tolerance and the subsequent development of responsibility, delineating and contextualising the ethical framework that is implicitly drawn upon in intercultural research.

3.5 Competences and responsibility

Guilherme, Keating and Hoppe describe intercultural responsibility in the context of multicultural workplaces as ''a dimension that aims to go beyond a straightforward notion of intercultural competence'' (Guilherme, Keating and Hoppe, 2010, p.79). Whereas intercultural competence provides the tools to communicate ''*appropriately and effectively across cultures*'' (ibid.), responsibility adds an ethical layer to

intercultural interaction. According to the authors, if communicative competence prevents conflict and misunderstanding due to a lack of cultural awareness, intercultural responsibility introduces respect of the other culture and of a different ethical framework. In their words, responsibility also contains an emancipatory aspect that develops from the exercise of intercultural ethics framed within the concept of global ethics, an approach that seeks to reconcile and balance universalistic and relativistic perspectives.This form of responsibility demands that:

> every member is responsible not only for identifying and recognising the cultural idiosyncrasies of every other member-in-interaction, but also for developing full and reciprocally demanding professional relationships with them (Guilherme, Keating and Hoppe, 2010, p.79).

 A first step in the development of intercultural responsibility is illustrated by the process of languaging in temporary linguistic groups, where members of different linguistic communities share a common language for work or other purposes and learn to dwell in a new language negotiating different viewpoints (Phipps, 2007). However, the principal elements that allow the negotiation of conflicting and relativistic viewpoints, promoting intercultural responsibility, are represented by coherence, empathy and solidarity, described as the ability to work in a collaborative attitude to others and to adapt ethical principles to interactional contexts whilst maintaining '*underlying moral principles'* (Guilherme, Keating and Hoppe, 2010, p.79).

In this description of responsibility, the intercultural personhood is able to forsake both particularistic ethical perspectives and a superficial, or even opportunistic, acknowledgment of difference for instrumental purposes in name of intercultural dialogue. This is accompanied by the claim that a flexible approach to ethical dilemmas achieved through intercultural responsibility will balance relativistic and universalistic perspectives, leading to emancipatory citizenship and the '*corresponding*

re-framing of institutions and organisations' (Guilherme, 2010, p.81). This notion of tolerance stemming from responsibility is supported by Phipps, who borrows the term *praxis* from Freire to argue for a form of intercultural competence to be added to Byram's savoirs: the ability to change oneself, '*"savoir se transformer"*, a competence that is '*processual, difficult and messy*' (Phipps, 2010, p.68).

From this standpoint, an intercultural speaker is able to interact using effective communicative strategies that display a degree of intercultural competence in handling difference, shifting perspective, adopting the viewpoint of the other and negotiating differing values. In this regard, responsibility in communication is translated as the acquisition of intercultural competences in communicating with other speakers from different cultural backgrounds, negotiating between differing ethical frameworks. As a consequence, intercultural communication understood in this fashion aims to reduce uncertainty in communicative exchanges when difficulties in establishing dialogue are attributed to culture, with the resulting differences in styles of communication.

In line with the critical approach to competence described above, Tomic (2001) argues in favour of critical reflexivity stemming from the idea of an ethical imperative to become intercultural beings: intercultural education should be considered a process of transformation and not a process of acquisition of competences. Tomic writes that: "*For me the task of introducing students to ways of placing themselves on the cultural map before they explore the cultural identities of others is an essentially ethical issue*" (Tomic, 2001, p.3). This framework introduces the analysis of social realities and a critical reflection of one's own position in the social network, in order to overcome a polarised relationship with the Other towards a Bakhtinian I/Thou form of dialogic exchange.

Tomic adapts Starosta and Chen (1998) to indicate the priorities in intercultural communication education: to learn the language and the culture of the Other in significant detail, to assume that the Other is rational "*when understood in cultural context*" and finally to elaborate an equal relationship with the Other, "*setting only those conditions for the Other that will be honoured equally by the Self*" (Tomic, 2001, pp.9-10). Although this emphasis on transformation and dialogue over the acquisition of competences is crucial, in order to obviate an instrumental interpretation of intercultural communication as the possibility to achieve a form of unambiguous communication able to overcome misunderstandings due to cultural differences (Block and Cameron, 2002; Kramsch, 2002), it is notable that the other is identified with a foreign culture, and culture is thus the divide between self and other.

Here, I believe that the concept of 'space-times' (Dervin, 2011) instead of 'culture', would be more helpful in avoiding the danger of neo-essentialism present in any identification between other and culture that invites a distinction between Us and Them (Holliday, 2011). As I have illustrated in Chapter Two, with the notion of liquid interculturality Dervin (2011) presents a constructivist and open-ended approach to the other that is modelled on Bauman's (2000) concept of liquid modernity. In this model of liquid interculturality, individuals are never fully constrained by their own cultural being because discourse is always intersubjectively constructed and negotiated in communication. From this perspective, Dervin argues that one of the fallacies of intercultural communication research is to take utterances at face value, as researchers believe that data reveal cultural meanings that can be extended to entire groups. In what he defines a Janusian approach, Dervin addresses this contradiction: the fact that research seems to oscillate between essentialised interpretations of data

(which he defines as *solid* interculturalism) and the acknowledgment that there are individual variations within a cultural group.

This approach is shared by Piller (2007, 2011) who problematizes the category of culture, particularly when it is employed to conceal socio-economic inequality between and within groups. To this end, she utilises a sociolinguistic interdiscursive model of intercultural communication (Scollon and Scollon, 1995) to argue that the cause of misunderstanding is often of a linguistic nature rather than the result of cultural differences, whether in the course of intercultural encounters, in the case of communicative exchanges with bilingual speakers not fluent in the dominant language or within different sociolects of the same standard language. According to Piller, the contribution of interactional sociolinguistics, bilingualism studies and discourse analysis shifts intercultural communication research from an essentialist interpretation of culture to a focus on discourses where culture is made relevant as a communicative resource.

I recognise the relevance of discourse analysis, sociolinguistic and bilingualism research in challenging the culturalist dominant strand of intercultural communication although my problematization, in line with Piller, questions the category of culture and cultural difference adopting a philosophical perspective focused on the epistemological and ontological claims made in this field. Thus, I share her call for the critical engagement of researchers in problematizing concepts and ideas that are commonly used in intercultural communication:

> Given the frequency with which Intercultural Communication - usually in the form of 'culture A, B or C' and 'cultural difference' are invoked in a wide range of discourses, I consider the reluctance of (critical) academics to get involved in Intercultural Communication research as problematic (Piller, 2007, p.209; parenthesis in original).

3.6 Conclusion

A problematic aspect in the formulation of competence in intercultural communication is represented by the emphasis placed on the consciousness of the intercultural speaker, which focuses on the cultural divide between self and other. Communication is examined in reference to awareness of cultural differences and with the use of neutral, scientific vocabulary, expressed in the language employed in intercultural training such as competence, skills, training and effectiveness (e.g. Hofstede and Hofstede, 2004; Deardorff, 2006, 2009; Spencer-Oatey and Standler, 2009; Guilherme, Keating and Hoppe, 2010). This emphasis on consciousness and on a functional, instrumental understanding of communication influences the ways in which ethical responsibility is understood in intercultural research. To this end, a challenging prospect for future research is represented by the development of forms of theoretical approaches that bring forward and engage with the partial, contested and situated nature of language. Ultimately, the dynamics underpinning communication cannot be readily translated into a formula with practical applications measured by the reliable testing of competences.

Despite current articulations of the critical intercultural speaker (Byram, Guilherme) and the languaging subject (Phipps, Gonzalez) which are increasingly attentive towards the hybrid and shifting nature of the self and the socially constructed nature of language, more theoretical engagement is needed to challenge the reliance on the functionalist paradigm of communication described in Martin and Nakayama (2010), that characterises models of communicative competence and responsibility. However, I agree with Phipps (2013) that there exists a problematic divide between theoretical explorations of ethical issues on one side, and empirical research driven by the collection of data according to established methodologies in social research on the

other, affecting the field of intercultural research, an aspect that I address in Chapter Four. While in the present chapter I have endeavoured to analyse the relation between self and other that emerges in instrumental understandings of intercultural communicative competence based on essentialised representations of identity, in Chapter Four I clarify the theoretical underpinning of the notion of communicative ethics that I propose in this thesis. In doing this, I propose a philosophical analysis of the ideas of self and other that characterises the ethics of Levinas. This discussion delineates the features of a type of subjectivity that I see emerging as a result of the problematization of the discourse of tolerance, which I have critiqued in relation to the concept of competence in intercultural research.

Chapter Four. Levinas and ethical communication

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I have argued that models of competence and responsibility employed to design intercultural training operate according to the Kantian model of the autonomous rational agent belonging to the philosophical tradition of the Cartesian cogito, which postulates the existence of an isolated thinking self. In the present chapter, I intend to argue that the Kantian ethical ideal of autonomy has a bearing on the epistemological assumptions that guide the conceptualisation of intercultural competence and responsibility.

My principal aim in the present chapter is to illustrate the notion of intercultural competence as it is conceptualised in intercultural communication through the metaphor of the promise of understanding. This promise appears with two broad characteristics: on the one side, an instrumental promise of understanding that is enacted through the acquisition of competences in order to communicate clearly and effectively with the cultural other. On the other, an emancipatory promise of a commitment to understanding through engagement in dialogue across two or more distinct cultural traditions, which brings about the transformation of the self into a responsible and intercultural personhood. As I have argued in the previous chapter, this promise of understanding, whether more instrumental in character or emancipatory, emerges in formulations of intercultural communicative competence and responsibility that rely on the Kantian presupposition of an autonomous rational agent. This means that the relationship between self and other in intercultural encounters is established in terms of a dividing line, represented by culture, which is

crossed through the acquisition of competences that allow the self to understand the 'cultural other'.

Notwithstanding the contribution of postcolonial notions of subjectivity that emphasise the hybrid nature of a third space, the category of culture remains at the centre of intercultural communication. In taking this stance, I agree with both Dervin (2011) and Holliday (2011) in pointing not only to essentialist intercultural communication with its rigid attribution of cultural identity along national lines, but also to neo-essentialist uses of culture, particularly in the field of intercultural foreign language education. In fact, Cole and Meadows (2013) write of an 'essentialist trap', highlighting a paradox of intercultural communication: although there is a growing awareness of the dangers of essentialism, culture and language are still considered discrete entities, a fact that Holliday (2011) defines in terms of 'methodological nationalism' and which derives from the association between learning a foreign language and a foreign culture (*in* 1.3 *Critical approaches to intercultural competence in language learning*). Thus, neo-essentialism describes the situation ''*where educators recognise the limits of essentialism but nevertheless reinforce it*'' (Cole and Meadows, 2013, p.30). This uneasiness in the research community is illustrated in the first editorial of the *International Journal of Education for Diversities,* a publication that invites researchers to challenge assumptions that guide educational practice:

> Something is happening in research fields related to notions such as the 'intercultural', 'multicultural', 'transcultural', etc. An increasing number of researchers and practitioners appear to be less and less satisfied with the state of affairs: the way phenomena related to self and other are conceptualised, the research methods that are used to examine these phenomena, the positions of the researcher and practitioner. It appears that these notions are coming under greater scrutiny today (Dervin, Machart and Clark, 2012, p.i).

In this context, Dervin calls for *''both clear(er) epistemological and methodological positioning''* (Dervin, 2011, p.37), as well as an ethical commitment of the researcher in challenging common preconceptions about culture and belonging through criticality of concepts that are used in research, and data analysis that reflects complexity and the wider context of interaction according to a 'liquid' model of interculturality, which I have discussed in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis (Dervin, 2010, 2011). Following from this critique, I intend to focus on the first term of the word intercultural, the 'inter' indicating the dynamic character of the process of interaction and its unpredictability.

In regard to the notion of competence, Byram argues that academic research has been preoccupied primarily with the necessities of international trade, leaving under theorised the aspect relating to the creation of a framework for dialogue that will provide '*a better understanding of human beings and their potential*' (Byram, 2011, p.20). In this sense, Byram delineates a research agenda for intercultural communication competence based on the critique of current theory and the problematization of unsupported assertions, in order to provide the conceptual work needed before the collection of empirical data (Byram, 2011, p.28). This conceptual work, including philosophical inquiry, is not limited to the description of a phenomenon but postulates '*the possible forms it might take*' and evaluates '*the effects these might have*' (Byram, 2011, p.33). In this particular context philosophical inquiry can be employed to analyse the role of the notion of competence in the intercultural field,

> Philosophical inquiry is also necessary for the analysis of the concept of 'competence' which has easily become attached to the notion of the intercultural (ibid.).

In line with this critique, my contribution to intercultural communication resides in adopting a philosophical approach that investigates the underpinnings of

interculturality, particularly the concept of competence. This investigation, in its turn, brings to the surface the ethical implications of the conceptualisation of the relation between self and other that I propose in this thesis. I base this relation on processuality and on the interdependence of self and other in order to delineate a model of ethical dialogue based on the 'inter' of interculturality, or the process of interaction, rather than on the category of culture. For this reason, before I begin this analysis, I point at the importance of philosophical investigation by reflecting briefly on the ethical dilemma of the intercultural researcher who sets out to conduct empirical research focusing on the 'inter' of intercultural interaction, and intending to bring to light the porous line between self and other, as well as the ability of the self to negotiate multiple cultural realities creatively (Dervin, 2011; Holliday, 2011).

In this instance, the researcher has to confront established methodological approaches based on paradigms developed in the social sciences and, according to Phipps (2013), this fact creates a rift between theoretical explorations of ethical issues and the necessities of academic methodological requirements. Crucially, Phipps argues that exploratory, post-colonial and decentring methods have not been sufficiently incorporated in social scientific methodologies, particularly in the fields of applied linguistics and intercultural education. According to Phipps, theorising a 'post-methodology' that encompasses the decentring of the researcher represents a crucial issue in intercultural studies, meaning that both researcher and researched are able to,

> continuously negotiate the meanings and dynamics and the potential for aesthetic resonance of their speech such that the speech and speakerhoods may debate, dialogue, translate, interpret and chorus their understandings and hopes for their particular intercultural world (Phipps, 2013, p.18).

Thus, it has to be established how this open ended dialogue between researcher and researched can be developed within a framework that is acceptable in academic contexts, to assure that,

> research methods in language and intercultural communication can rise to the considerable challenge of 'ceasing their zealous defining and fixing of others in order to allow spaces for the margins to become visible' (Phipps, 2013, p.12).

In the conclusion to the previous chapter, I have argued that this decentring stance translates in the acceptance of uncertainty in the form of responsible engagement with others in dialogue. I intend to justify this claim theoretically following this process: first, I begin by illustrating the epistemological premise of intercultural communication through the metaphor of the promise of understanding. My contention is that the epistemological premise of intercultural communication employs the idea of promise of understanding in terms of final reconciliation of differences, both in terms of essentialist cultural categorisation of the other and through emancipatory discourses of universal tolerance of the other. To this, I contrast another interpretation of promise intended in terms of deferred understanding and open-ended dialogue.

These two different interpretations of the promise of understanding are then reflected in the contrast between Kantian ethical thinking and the ethics of Levinas. In the present chapter I connect Kantian autonomy to the promise of understanding as final reconciliation of differences and universal tolerance, and I introduce Levinasian ethics to conceptualise another interpretation of the promise as expression of open ended and deferred understanding. This contrast represents the backdrop for the distinction proposed by Levinas (1998) between the *saying* and the *said* (*le dire* and *le dit*, meaning the event of speech as lived, experiential and intersubjective and the content of speech as objectifying knowledge), which I employ to suggest two scenarios of

intercultural interaction that show two different approaches to responsibility, one operating in the dimension of the *said* and the other in the dimension of the *saying*.

4.2 The promise as final reconciliation of differences

Vandenabeele (2003) warns against the danger of creating another grand narrative (Lyotard, 1984) of intercultural communication, highlighting the globalising tendencies of intercultural discourse, particularly the danger of universalising an ideal of understanding and communicative transparency based on the value of unambiguous information (Block and Cameron, 2002) and on the ideas of tolerance and understanding from the hegemonic perspective of a dominant cultural position (Holliday, 2010, 2011). This grand narrative of efficiency in communicating across cultures is evident in formulations of intercultural competence and intercultural training programs that focus on the acquisition of communicative skills to deal effectively with the other.

Furthermore, the ideas of cooperation, dialogue and transformation that characterise emancipatory formulations of intercultural communication, outline the promise of a final moment of understanding that leads intercultural communication towards an universalistic notion of final reconciliation of differences. This last aspect in particular leaves unresolved the issue of contrasting claims in multicultural societies, leading to an aporia between theory and praxis (O'Regan and MacDonald, 2007). The promise of a final moment of understanding refers to the appeal to a transcendental signified, ''*an implied higher order of morality by which the differences that exist may be adjudicated and in some manner resolved*'' (MacDonald and O'Regan, 2012, p.4). This appeal to a higher order of morality leaves intercultural communication in a Kantian moral bind between universal claims to tolerance and the inability to provide ''*immanent—i.e. 'here and now' grounds for adjudicating between competing truth claims*'' (ibid. p.6).

Indeed, the use of the terms culture, cultural other, cultural difference that accompanies discourses of tolerance and intercultural understanding is highly problematic, as illustrated in the debate on multiculturalism between liberal theorists and cultural relativists, in particular the dichotomy between the existence of separated group identities and the universalism of traditional citizenship theory (Squire, 2002). The liberal critique highlights the essentialist view of culture embodied in the multicultural ideals of tolerance and respect of cultural difference that leaves unresolved the issue of individual freedom against cultural claims and group belonging, in other words the reconciliation between equality and difference (Barry, 2001). In fact, the multicultural practice of ascribing cultural identities as a mark of difference generates a widespread fear of separateness that multicultural theorists address through the notion of integration intended in terms of a common form of citizenship (Taylor, 1994; Kelly, 2002; Phillips, 2007).

Alternative perspectives attempt to move beyond both multicultural relativism and liberal abstract universalism, arguing instead for a *'pluralistically enlightened ethical universalism'* (Benhabib, 2002, p.36), which establishes a moral community committed to dialogical imperatives in the resolution of conflicts. This moral community is founded on the model of rational communicative ethics (Habermas, 1984), in which equal protection under the law requires that individuals understand themselves as authors of the laws that bind society together through the creation of a public sphere (Critchley, 2006; Outhwaite, 2009). Similarly, Laclau proposes a relative universalization of values, meaning a universalism inscribed in a democratic dialogue between public spheres: *"the particular can only fully realize itself if it constantly keeps open, and constantly redefines, its relation to the universal"* (Laclau, 2007, p.65).

The debate against particularism in the name of universal values is relevant not only in academic contexts, but has been increasingly prominent in the media and in political discourse. An exemplar instance being the speech of British prime minister David Cameron attacking multiculturalism in 2011, which followed similar attacks by the German chancellor Angela Merkel and the former French president, Nicolas Sarkozy (Cameron: my war on multiculturalism, The Independent, 5th February 2011), all pointing at the failure of multicultural policies to promote individual freedom, fostering instead separateness and values that are irreconcilable with life in modern Western liberal societies. From this perspective, the main issue at stake in the debate refers to the type of communities that can be created and sustained in a pluralist society. Pluralism generates anxiety about the validity of universal perspectives and moral norms and, in this context, it is necessary to define a form of ethical understanding between people with different interpretations of the 'common good'.

The claims of the politics of recognition have highlighted the misrecognition of minority identities perpetrated by hegemonic discourses that promote their own partial worldview to the level of universal validity (Taylor, 1994). However, Appiah (1994) warns against an unsophisticated understanding of collective identities that would replace the tyranny of hegemonic culture with the tyranny of a tightly scripted minority identity. Thus the dichotomy between the rights of the individual and the claims of collective identities represents an impasse that seems to characterise multicultural societies, and it generates the need to define a model of ethical choice that could satisfy the demands of universalism while simultaneously showing respect for particularism and individual autonomy. This specific aspect relating to the limits of universalism and of particularism will be analysed in detail in Chapter Seven, where I

return to this conundrum and I contrast the idea of the general other of liberal universalist tradition with that of the concrete other.

In the context of intercultural communication research, a more nuanced account of otherness is necessary in order to problematize the role of cultural difference in shaping the categories of self and other and complement both Laclau's and Benhabib's idea of a moral community, balancing the claims of both universalism and relativism. As I argue in this thesis, the notion of the other developed by Levinas is devoid of both universalism and cultural undertones, but reflects ethical responsibility as a form of practical concern for the other, in contrast with Kantian moral law in the form of liberal abstract universalism inherited from the Enlightenment. For this reason, in the present chapter I focus on the relation to the other as it is theorised by Levinas, according to two modalities: a symmetrical relation, in which the other is known through the categories of knowledge, and an asymmetrical relation, which is ethical because it discloses the other as irreducible to those categories, as a unique other. Therefore, contrary to the notion of a promise of understanding intended in terms of final reconciliation, I posit another interpretation of the idea of promise as deferred understanding. The following description of this idea of promise, formulated according to Derrida's notion of hospitality, introduces the contrast between Kantian ethics and Levinasian ethics in relation to competence and responsibility in intercultural encounters.

4.3 The promise as deferred understanding

The aforementioned idea of promise understood in terms of fulfilment and completeness is ascribed by Derrida (1974, 1984, 1997) to a 'metaphysics of presence' (this notion of presence is also conveyed with the term phallogocentrism, to which I refer in Chapter Seven, section 7.4.3 of this thesis). In other words, Western

metaphysical tradition refers to an original signified that encloses truth within a system of binary oppositions, in which one term is identified with full presence -or truth, and the other term, the negative, with the loss of presence (Norris, 1982; Derrida, 1997; Bradley, 2008). In intercultural communication, this metaphysics of presence is reflected in the opposition between tolerance and intolerance: the positive value of tolerance of the other, achieved through intercultural understanding, is opposed to the negative value of intolerance and refusal of the 'cultural other' (MacDonald and O'Regan, 2012, p.4). However, this dichotomy is unable to provide immanent reasons to resolve the conflicting claims of those who advocate tolerance and those who refuse it recalling visions of cultural purity which reassert nationalistic values and divisive arguments across ethnic, linguistic, cultural and historical lines, an example being the terroristic acts of the Norwegian white supremacist, Anders Behring Breivik. In both cases, the underlying concept refers to a 'metaphysics of presence' and the notion of a final moment in which competing claims will be resolved by defeating the 'false' or 'negative' opponent.

The idea of promise as deferred understanding recurs throughout Derrida's philosophical investigations and it is described in the notion of a 'disjointed' temporality that is irreducible to presence (Derrida, 1994; Wortham, 2010), meaning that there is an element that remains irreducible to the system of binary oppositions of Western metaphysics, which is the experience of an emancipatory promise described in terms of a messianism without religion. This notion of messianism is connected to the idea of justice in terms of a *democracy to come'* (Derrida, 1994, p.74). According to the principle of disjointed temporality of this messianism without religion, the notion of a democracy to come does not represent an ideal future democracy, which is opposed to imperfect existing political systems. Instead, it embodies the irreducible element that

eludes the system of oppositions established in the metaphysics of presence. This irreducible element is described in terms of a gap between *''fact and ideal essence''* (Derrida, 1994, p.80), or between the reality of existing political systems and the utopian ideal of a future democracy. Furthermore, this notion applies not only to existing forms of imperfect democracy, but according to Derrida it constitutes the apriori structure of the essence of justice itself. According to this form of messianism without religion, democracy is

> a concept of a promise that can only arise in such a diastema (failure, inadequation, disjunction, disadjustment, being 'out of joint'). That is why we always propose to speak of a *future* democracy in the future present, not even of a regulating idea, in the Kantian sense, or of a utopia- at least to the extent that their inaccessibility would still retain the temporal form of a *future present,* and of a future modality of the *living present.* (Derrida, 1994, p.81).

This means that the ideas of democracy and justice cannot be established as full presence in a present or in a future time, because that would imply a return to the metaphysical binary opposition between a positive term that reflects truth and a term that negates this ideal. The idea of a democracy to come is described as an '*experience of the impossible'* and a '*messianic opening to what is comin*g' (Derrida, 1994, p.82), defining ethics in terms of infinite responsibility and hospitality without reserve. In this interpretation, the promise stops being such when it is fulfilled, and thus in order to retain its messianic character it has to remain open: '*'It is performative in as much as it entails a pledge, an affirmation or giving that is not simply identical or exhausted by its specific content''* (Wortham, 2010, p.146). In other words, the promise does not produce the event of which it speaks (Derrida, 2001), maintaining the character of an unfulfilled promise that is constantly renewed in the tension between the act and its realisation.

This tension is experienced in the aporia between existing political institutions operating within the framework of Western democratic liberalism, based on the notion of the nation-state, and the infinite ethical demand of unconditional hospitality that overflows the boundaries delimited by nation-states, and constitutes the regulating aspect of ethical responsibility. In an interview with Borradori, Derrida explains that:

> We are always led back to the same aporia: how to decide between, on the one hand, the positive and salutary role played by the ''state'' form (the sovereignty of the nation-state) and, thus, by democratic citizenship in providing protection against certain kinds of international violence (the market, the concentration of world capital, as well as ''terrorist'' violence and the proliferation of weapons) and, on the other hand, the negative or limiting effects of a state whose sovereignty remains a theological legacy, a state that closes its borders to noncitizens, monopolises violence, controls its borders, excludes or represses noncitizens, and so forth? (Borradori, 2003, p.126).

Here, the idea of tolerance, intended in terms of *'condescending concession'*, and *'a form of charity'* (p.127), is contrasted to the idea of unconditional hospitality. From this perspective, Derrida's notion of hostipitality (2006), expresses the inherent contradiction in the use of the notion of tolerance. The word hospitality carries within itself its own contradiction, in the word host-hostility,

> The welcomed guest (hôte) is a stranger treated as a friend or ally, as opposed to the stranger treated as an enemy (friend/enemy, hospitality/hostility) (Derrida, 2006, p.210).

This means that the welcome conferred upon a guest is dependent on the goodwill of the host, and that the welcome can be withdrawn, turning into hostility, if the rules imposed to the guest are not observed. These rules are defined by Derrida as the law of the household,

> Where it is precisely the *patron* of the house-he who receives, who is master in his house, in his household, in his state, in his nation, in his city, in his town, who remains master in his house- who defines the conditions of hospitality or welcome; where consequently there can be

no unconditional welcome, no unconditional passage through the door (ibid.).

In fact, the exercise of tolerance is dependent on a conditional welcome, which can be withdrawn to exclude the welcomed. Although unconditional hospitality is in itself impossible, according to Derrida it represents nevertheless the condition of the political and the juridical, because it provides an idea of perfectibility guiding the rules governing conditional hospitality.

I understand this principle of a democracy to come in terms of perfectibility. In other words, I consider the idea of perfectibility as the reluctance to enclose the practice of dialogue and the exercise of political deliberation within a totalising dimension that would lead to closure. An example of closure and of totalising tendencies in dialogue can be illustrated by the aforementioned debates regarding universalism and particularism in multicultural societies (section 4.2), which are framed in dichotomous terms between tolerance of the cultural practices of the other and equality. In this sense, the notion of a democracy to come complements the necessity to reach a form of rational consensus implicit in the model of discursive democracy (Habermas, 1984) but leaving open the possibility for further dialogue. Matuŝtík (2006) describes this idea of perfectibility inherent in democracy itself in terms of an *"exiled otherness"* (p.280) that reminds participants in a community of communication of the perils of the search for a totalising closure to the detriment of engagement in open ended dialogue. I return to this notion of perfectibility and its implications for intercultural dialogue in Chapter Eight, with an illustration of othering in the context of the struggle between the liberal universalist tradition of neutrality and identity politics.

Assuming perfectibility as a characteristic of engagement in dialogue, Derrida's deconstruction of the word hospitality resonates with the distinction that I propose here

in relation to intercultural communication between two forms of a promise of understanding, one intended in terms of final reconciliation and universal tolerance, and the other in terms of deferred understanding. This distinction addresses the problematic nature of the notion of tolerance of cultural practices employed in intercultural communication, which leaves the conceptualisation of the relationship self/other open to this internal contradiction highlighted by Derrida. In other words, tolerance generates an internal aporia between the acceptance of the cultural other as different, and the claim of a universal resolution of those same differences in a final ideal of unity.

I illustrate this conundrum in the remaining sections of the present chapter. I argue that the pledge to an ethical commitment to dialogue is not exhausted in the search for a final dimension of understanding, which in following Derrida I consider a closure of meaning. Instead, this ethical commitment remains open within the horizon of an unfulfilled promise to which I refer in terms of deferred understanding and that informs my reading of the distinction between the *saying* and the *said* in Levinas. In order to do this, I first clarify this position contrasting Kantian autonomy with Levinasian ethics, before introducing the two modalities of the *saying* and the *said*. My aim is to propose an idea of ethical engagement with the other modelled on Levinasian ethics as an alternative to dominant accounts of intercultural competence and responsibility based on the Kantian presupposition of the autonomy of the self.

4.4 Kantian ethics and autonomy

Kantian ethics emerged in the context of the Enlightenment, with the attempt to define the separate domains of reason and religious obedience. In other words, the notion of morality as obedience to religious precepts was contested in the name of the human ability to direct actions conforming to the dictates of reason. Kant is responsible for the

formulation of the conception of morality as autonomy and the subsequent redefinition of the relationship between individuals and society in terms of self-governance of the individual, guiding the change towards the establishment of Western liberal societies (Atwell, 1986; Schneewind, 1998). Kant (1979) divides philosophy into theoretical and practical, the first concerning knowledge and the other concerning the conduct of beings possessed of free will. In the latter application of philosophical reflection, ethics is a ''*theory of virtue*'' that studies the ''*intrinsic quality of actions*'' (p.71) meaning to determine whether an action is not simply the result of compliance with the law, but of the correct moral disposition, in terms of strength in self-control and self-mastery. This correct moral disposition obeys the categorical imperatives guiding practical reason, and determines the free will and autonomy of all rational beings (Kant, 2004).

A crucial aspect of Kantian autonomy is that, as part of the noumenal realm (i.e. the realm of the thing-in-itself, unknowable to human experience), freedom is intended in transcendental terms: moral action is not the result of natural causation, but follows instead the categorical imperative, a categorical obligation not influenced by the pull of desires and interferences from the sensible world. Here resides the core of Kantian orthodoxy (Johnson, 2007), the fact that authority originates in our individual reason, so we act freely only when we reject sensory interferences and place our actions under the scrutiny of a universal law. In fact, moral agents act either in heteronomous terms (Homo Phaenomenon), meaning that the moral law generates from the phenomenal world, or as autonomous agents according to the noumenal world (Homo Noumenon), when the action originates in the self-determining, rational and autonomous individual (Atwell, 1986). Thus, ethics is a theory of virtue and a philosophy of action based on the strength of self-mastery in respect to the moral

disposition, and it *''provides rules for the proper use of our freedom, irrespective of particular applications of it''* (Kant, 1979, p.2).

The moral imperative corresponds to three separate conceptions of the ''good'', of which the third represents the ideal of autonomy,

Bonitas problematica- when the action is determined by the achievement of an end.

Bonitas pragmatica- the action is determined by prudence and as means to happiness.

Bonitas moralis- the action is determined by the goodness of an action in and for itself, representing a free act, determined only by the strength of reason and by its universal validity (Kant, 1979).

The influence of Kantian ethics has been most evident in the development of the concept of autonomy in moral philosophy. The idea of autonomy is characterised by an internal tension between the two words 'auto' and 'nomos', meaning respectively the will of a rational being, and the law objectively binding on that same will (Wood, 2008). According to Kant in Metaphysics of Morals (1983), the 'nomos' is grounded on objective reasons valid for all rational beings who recognise the principles of the law as universally valid and objectively binding. According to the concept of autonomy, rational beings must be viewed under the two attributes of Homo Noumenon, the intelligible self imposing the duty of respect to the law, and Homo Phaenomenon, the empirical self who is subject to the law. This split self is regulated conscience, which Kant describes as an internal court presiding over the self. According to the modalities of this internal court, which operates under the faculty of judgement, the self is at the same time the accuser and the accused:

> Every man has a conscience and finds himself observed by an internal
> judge, who threatens him and keeps him in awe (respect combined

with fear). This authority watching over the laws within him is not something which he himself (arbitrarily) creates, but is incorporated in his being. If he tries to run away, his conscience follows him like a shadow (Kant, 1983, p.101).

From this description of the internal judge presiding over the free, self-determining moral being in the form of the Homo Noumenon, in contrast to the heteronomy of the Homo Phaenomenon, whose conduct is generated by stimuli coming from the sensible world, it is clear that the notion of autonomy represents the pivotal feature of Kant's entire moral philosophy (Atwell, 1986).

Recent interest in autonomy emphasises an individualistic interpretation of the concept. This focus on individualism begins in the 1970s (*see* Neely 1974; Norris, 1982; Dworkin, 1988; Frankfurt, 1988), with the development of hierarchical accounts of personal autonomy in which the content of the moral law is considered neutral, and autonomy depends on the ability to endorse or repudiate desires that move individuals to action (Taylor, 2005). More recently, the concept of autonomy has acquired relevance in the context of the relationship between agency (the capacity for intentional actions), and liberty (independence from controlling influences), in reference to applied ethics and the notion of accountability of morally responsible agency (Arpaly, 2005; Beauchamp, 2005; Haji, 2005). However, the aspect most relevant in the context of this research is that concerning the debate between a liberal conception of individual autonomy (Rawls, 1999; Barry, 2001) and multicultural claims to group identity, particularly Taylor's (1994) politics of recognition and the formulation of a multiculturalism framed within liberal-democratic values (Appiah, 2005; Kymlicka, 2007). The relevance of Kantian ethics in this debate resides in the historical context in which the concept autonomy of the individual was originally elaborated, guiding social change from pre-Enlightenment morality to modern liberal societies, and subsequently entering in conflict with claims of group recognition in multiculturalism.

In conclusion, the most significant aspect of Kantian autonomy is that the self is able to act responsibly, becoming accountable for his/her own actions, only as an autonomous and self-regulating rational being, the Homo Noumenon. The systematic critique of this concept of reason and individuality started with Adorno and Horkheimer in the Frankfurt School, particularly the notion of the abstract transcendental subject and the identification between instrumental reason and the ensuing understanding of human action as determined by utilitarian motives and the imperative of self-preservation:

> The self (which, according to the methodical extirpation of all natural residues because they are mythological, must no longer be either body or blood, or soul, or even the natural I), once sublimated into the transcendental or logical subject, would form the reference point of reason, of the determinative instance of action (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2010, p.29).

The second generation of critical theory, starting with Habermas, rediscovered the Enlightenment project with a critique of instrumental reason and of the self-founding Cartesian subject, through an appreciation of the role of reason understood in the relation to its historical, social and embodied incarnations (Habermas, 1987; Jacobs, 2001). This project of revaluation, based on the notion of communicative ethics that Habermas envisaged in situated reason, is realised in the communicative practices of ordinary interactions oriented to mutual understanding (Habermas, 1987).

Another approach to ethical thinking, the post-modern turn, highlighted the principal argument of Dialectic of Enlightenment (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997), the role of reason in excluding the 'other' of thinking in name of uniformity and sameness (Honneth, 1995). This attention towards the heterogeneous, the non-identical and the excluded from the self-transparency of the Cartesian Self represented the starting point of post-modern ethical thinking (Poster, 1989; Lyotard, 1984, 1988; Derrida,

2001). In this context, Honneth (1995) indicates the notion of asymmetrical obligation between people, developed by Derrida on the basis of Levinas, as the only real challenge to modern theories of morality in the Kantian tradition. Whereas post-modern attention towards the particularity of each individual person and their rights to articulate interests and claims recalls Habermas' model of communicative action, asymmetrical obligation counters the Kantian perspective of equal treatment, initiating a unique model of post-modern ethics. The premise of this reversal of Kantian autonomy is that we become ethical beings only in accepting the obligation towards the other, which breaks the egocentrism of interest-oriented action of instrumental reason and the disembodied, abstract dictates of the categorical imperative. In this context, Levinas distinguishes between morals and ethics, the first referring to an abstract code of conduct and the second to the encounter with the other person. In contrast to morality, ethics is described in reference to the alterity of the other, meaning the 'otherness' of the other:

> Ethics: a comportment in which the other, who is strange and indifferent to you, who belongs neither to the order of your interest nor to your affections, at the same time matters to you. A relation of another order than that of knowledge, in which the object is given value by knowing it, which passes for the only relations with beings. Can one be for an I without being reduced to an object of pure knowledge? Placed in an ethical relation, the other man remains other (Levinas, 2001, p.48).

Here, Levinas introduces one of the principal themes of his ethics, the contrast between the ethical relation and the relationship with the other established through knowledge. This contrast is based on the reversal of the universality of the Kantian moral law, so that ''*ethics arises in relation to the other and not straightaway by a reference to the universality of the law''* (Levinas, 2001, p.114). I agree with Critchley (2007) in considering Levinasian ethical thinking as the continual questioning of attempts to impose order on the contingent, through a radical attention towards the

immanent *here and now*. It is this aspect of Levinasian ethics that I analyse in relation to the distinction between the *saying* and the *said* in the context of intercultural responsibility.

This largely philosophical discussion is necessary in order to define the contribution of Levinasian thinking on alterity (or thinking about the other) for the development of intercultural ethics, which I understand as a relationship between self and other that informs a dialogic, ethical and open-ended understanding of communication in the form of presence to one another as corporeal, embodied subjects who co-construct meanings. Thus, with the philosophical discussion conducted in the present chapter and in Chapter Five, I intend to frame theoretically the understanding of dialogic interaction that I propose in Chaper Six, which relies on an idea of communication aligned to a Levinasian interpretation of the ethical, more closely connected to the experiential sphere of human subjectivity. In order to do this, I begin with a brief discussion on the relevance of Husserlian phenomenology and Heidegger's existential analysis in Levinas's conception of the self and of the disclosure of the ethical in the meeting with the other. I then illustrate the theoretical underpinnings of Levinasian ethical philosophy, before introducing the *saying* and the *said*, and their relevance for an alternative conception of intercultural responsibility to the positivist approach that I have critiqued in Chapter Two.

4.5 Levinasian ethics

Levinas displaces the traditional language of metaphysics and operates a semantic transformation of its terminology. In the history of metaphysical inquiry the principal preoccupation has been the rational apprehension of reality through concepts such as being, universals or first causes and the definition of the unchanging elements that constitute the essence of morals or free will. Levinas dispenses with these

preoccupations regarding ontology and defines ethics in terms of responsibility to the singular other through a radical move from the Kantian ideal of autonomy to the notion of passivity of the self exposed to the other. This displacement of the traditional concerns of metaphysical thought translates into a movement of positive desire towards alterity- the 'otherness' of the other (Critchley, 1999; Derrida, 2010). In this regard, Levinasian ethics represents a reversal of the tradition of the *cogito*- the *I think* of Descartes, taking its point of departure from Husserlian phenomenology and Heidegger's existential analysis. In introducing Levinasian ethics, first I trace the origin of the concept of the ethical mode of existence in the phenomenological investigations of Husserl and Heidegger, mapping the relation of individual consciousness with the world and with the other.

The concept of rational subjectivity is initiated by Descartes with the reduction of experience acquired in the phenomenal world to the rational apperception of the individual cogito- the 'I think'. To this, Kant adds that the objects of experience are knowable only according to the transcendental categories of the mind. However, the objects of experience are inaccessible as things in themselves, meaning that their ultimate essence remains unknowable through the categories of the mind. Following from this premise, Husserl (1999) theorises the phenomenological method, according to which the phenomenal world is explained through the modalities experienced by consciousness. Thus, phenomenological analysis retraces the moment when consciousness is first aware of a sensation, in order to return to a direct and non-conceptual access to the phenomenal world, prior to inherited preconceptions about meaning (Husserl, 1999).

Heidegger (1962) includes the existential dimension of consciousness in phenomenological analysis. The term used to define consciousness is Dasein,

meaning the state of being-in-the-world, or dwelling in the world, which indicates the materiality of consciousness incarnated in the modes of daily existence (in Chapter Six I return to the notion of dwelling and language in relation to intercultural competence). With this understanding of consciousness, the practice of phenomenological analysis is intended to bring forward an understanding of the existence of Dasein within the world,

> Phenomenological interpretation must make it possible for Dasein itself to disclose things primordially; it must, as it were, let Dasein interpret itself (Heidegger, 1962, p.179).

For Heidegger, the interpretation of the modalities of everyday existence of Dasein allows us to gain an insight into the ontological dimension, which is defined with the word Being (capitalized in the original[3]). Being designates the essence of the phenomenal world, which Heidegger argues has been obscured in the history of philosophy, and it is revealed only in fundamental existential experiences such as birth and death.

According to this existential interpretation of consciousness, Dasein relates to the world according to two modalities. First of all, Dasein establishes a cognitive relation with the world, which pertains to the disclosure of everyday objects as tools, '*the factum brutum of something present-at-hand'* (Heidegger, 1962, p.174). In other words, in Heideggerian terminology this means that human existence is first experienced as being thrown, or *being delivered over'* (ibid.) in the world among the ontological factuality of objects. Subsequently, Dasein experiences existential moods

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[3] ''Being lies in the fact that something is, and in its Being as it is; in Reality; in presence-at-hand; in subsistence; in validity; in Dasein; in the 'there is'. In *which* entities is the meaning of Being to be discerned? From which entities is the disclosure of Being to take its departure?'' (Heidegger,1962, p.26).

that hint at an authentic essence- i.e. the meaning of Being, hidden by the everyday concerns of Dasein and the burdensome character of existence,

> even in the most indifferent and inoffensive everydayness the Being of Dasein can burst forth as a naked 'that it is and has to be' [als nacktes ''Dass es es ist und zu sein hat'']. The pure 'that it is' shows itself, but the 'whence' and the 'whither' remain in darkness (Heidegger, 1962, p.173).

Although the prime response to this existential malaise is that of alleviating this sense of burden either by fleeing from these existential states or by acts of volition that master a mood through a counter-mood, Dasein is led into an inauthentic mode of existence because it does not face the source of this existential anguish.

Despite a superficial similarity with French existentialism, which aimed at affirming the freedom of the self (e.g. Sartre, 2003), Heideggerian phenomenological analysis of existential moods is not humanistic in character. Instead, the experience of existential moods is considered a stage in the unveiling of the meaning of Being. Essentially, for Heidegger (2011) thinking is not an act of free will, but an attunement to being, a listening and enabling of being, or letting being be. Thus, contrary to French existentialism, inauthentic modes of existence do not hide the essential nature of the individual as a free being. Rather, inauthenticity obscures being- or essence, and relegate Dasein- or the ways in which human beings exist as embodied in material, social and historical contexts, in an impersonal mode of existence. The use of the term 'they' to indicate other human beings designates this impersonal character of sociality that characterises the inauthentic mode of existence,

> But if man is to find his way once again into the nearness of Being he must first learn to exist in the nameless. In the same way he must recognise the seductions of the public realm as well as the impotence of the private. Before he speaks man must first let himself be claimed again by Being, taking the risk that under this claim he will seldom have much to say. Only thus will the pricelessness of its essence be

once more bestowed upon the world, and upon man a home for dwelling in the truth of Being (Heidegger, 2011, p.151).

This last concept of dwelling as letting being be, represents Levinas's point of departure from Heideggerian philosophy, because Levinas posits the separation between the ontological (the dimension of being) and the ethical. The ontological conception that guides Levinas's analysis derives from Heidegger's description of Dasein, or being-in-the-world, in which the existential experiences of dread, anguish and anxiety reveal temporality and mortality as the horizon of Being (Heidegger, 1962). However, if Heidegger's existential analysis aims to reveal the true meaning of being, the aim of Levinas's analysis is to abandon ontological thinking in favour of ethics, or 'first philosophy', centred on intersubjective relationships (Levinas, 1985).

The passage from the ontological to the ethical is explored through the phenomenological description of existential states such as nausea, insomnia, anxiety, anguish and dread, in which the self first glimpses its own state of solitude and being *thrown* into the world in the midst of the materiality of objects (Levinas, 1987, 2003). The ontological is defined as *il y a, there is,* an anonymous state of being to which the self is riveted by ontological necessity, which means that the self is riveted to being by the simple fact of material, corporeal existing (Levinas, 2003). In other words, the bond of the self to this anonymous *il y a* is manifested in the biological fact of being riveted to the materiality of a body (Levinas, 1990b):

> Whatever be my projects, my movements, my rest, *there is* being. *Il y a* is anonymous, ''*il* y a'' like ''*il* pleut'' (''it'' is raining). *There is* not only something that is but *there is,* above and through these somethings, an anonymous process of being. Without a bearer, without a subject. As an insomnia, it doesn't stop being- *there is*. (Levinas, 2001, p.45).

In Levinas (1987), the self is defined as an 'existent', meaning the individual being as distinct from existence, or the anonymous fact of being. This existent, the self,

emerges from being, the *there is,* and establishes its mastery over the existing in the form of consciousness: '*It exerts on its existence the virile power of the subject'* (Levinas, 1987, p. 54). This mastery, however, exasperates the solitude of the self in its materiality and identity to itself,

> The freedom of the Ego and its materiality thus go together. The first freedom resultant from the fact that in anonymous existing an existent arises, includes as its price the very finality of the I riveted to itself. The finality of the existent, which constitutes the tragedy of solitude, is materiality (Levinas, 1987, p.57).

Thus, the existent is entrapped in being, albeit in the guise of master over the other existents. This happens because, in this instance, the relationship of the self with the other existents is one of dominance through material manipulation and objectifying knowledge. However, the self experiences a series of existential states which bring about the discovery that there is no escape from the brutal and naked fact of pure material existence, and that we are riveted to the anonymous and impersonal il y a, *there is*. Nausea is one of such states:

> The state of nausea that precedes vomiting, and from which vomiting will deliver us, encloses us on all sides. Yet it does not come from outside to confine us. We are revolted from the inside; our depths smother beneath ourselves; our innards ''heave'' [nous avons ''mal au coeur''] (Levinas, 2003, p.66).

This state of nausea represents a limit-situation in which the self experiences pure being, in its '*plenitude and in its utterly binding presence'* (p.67), in its being closed in itself, '*closed to all the rest, without windows onto other things'* (p.68). It is from this state of solitude and insufferable experience of the indifference of being, glimpsed in those existential states, that the self searches for an escape, an exit from being.

To summarise, in this analysis the impersonal *there is* emerges to consciousness in existential moments characterised by insomnia, fatigue, anguish, dread, reminding the

self of the fundamental solitude of existence, the fact that I am chained to my own being. The escape from the solitude of the self, in order to stop '*the senseless rumbling of being*' (Levinas, 1985, p.51) and the persistence of the *conatus essendi* (meaning the perseverance of being), happens at first through the modality of enjoyment, or *jouissance* (Levinas, 1969). However, at the end of the experience of enjoyment there is a return to the solitude of the self. Only the ethical relation awakens the self from its '*its transcendental imperialism*' (Levinas, 1998, p.164), when the self is exposed to the other.

The crucial difference with Kantian ethics arises at this point, in the determination of the motivation to act according to ethical principles. In the Kantian tradition of autonomy, the ethical act stems from an abstract moral imperative to which the self abides in accordance to the dictates of transcendental reason. In heteronomous Levinasian terms, however, the ethical act originates from the other, from the ethical demand that the other imposes upon me. In this sense, the human acquires its significance only in relation to the other, and not prior to that, when the self is singled out by the other who imposes an ethical demand. This theme of ethical responsibility originates from the immanent *here and now,* which is conceptualised in a series of oppositions: accusativity vs subjectivity; asymmetry vs symmetry; heteronomy vs autonomy and proximity vs distance. Therefore, for clarity of purpose I use these distinctions to illustrate the theoretical underpinnings of the Levinasian ethical philosophy of the other, and to establish the distinction between the modalities of the *saying* and the *said.*

4.5.1 Accusativity vs Subjectivity

Subjectivity, meaning the transcendental ego that organises experience through the categories of knowledge, is for Levinas the expression of the autonomous and rational

self. Contrary to the tradition of rational moral autonomy, Levinas envisages subjectivity as the location where the self awakens to the other and to the ethical relation, and he uses phenomenological analysis to retrace this awakening (Levinas, 2006a, 2007b). In *Otherwise than being* (1998) the passage from ontology to the ethical is illustrated through the phenomenological method of reverting to the primordial appearance of the phenomenal world to consciousness (Lewis and Staehler, 2010), in order to retrace the experience of the self from the solitude of being to the encounter with the alterity of the other.

The self experiences and relates to the world according to two modalities, an ontological relation and an ethical relation (Levinas, 2006b). In the first instance, subjectivity organises experience through knowledge, according to the transcendental apperception of the Cogito or of the Kantian I think. Thus, on the one side, subjectivity opens to the world as intentionality of consciousness, through knowledge. On the other, the self experiences the world in a modality that is not related to ontological knowledge (the knowledge of being), but is elicited by the existential and corporeal discovery of vulnerability. This experience of the self opening to the world as an embodied being represents a traumatic experience, which is likened to a *"stripping of the skin exposed to wound and outrage"* (Levinas, 2006b, p.63).

This state is brought about by the experience of sensibility, lived first in terms of enjoyment and then in what Levinas defines in terms of '*exposedness to the other*' (1998, p.75). This means that, if enjoyment represents the culmination of the ego, the '*singularisation of the ego in its coiling back upon itself*' (p.73), the encounter with the other is lived as an experience that exceeds the categories of representation and apperception of the rational mind, and that is likened to the experience of a trauma. In this mode, the self becomes the locus of an encounter with the other. Here,

subjectivity is lived in a modality that is defined as 'accusativity', meaning that it is the other who calls the self to action:

> At least no escape is possible with impunity. The other calls upon that sensibility with a vocation that wounds, calls upon an irrevocable responsibility, and thus the very identity of a subject (Levinas, 1998, p.77).

This notion of subjectivity lived in the modality of accusativity, is not reducible to the categories of the mind, because it pertains to the sphere of the corporeal and of embodiment. In Levinas's words, the experience of meeting the other in this modality is '*independent of the adventure of cognition'* because in this instance the '*corporeality of the subject is not separable from its subjectivity'* (p.78). Thus, accusativity represents the ethical subject as 'flesh and blood', whereas rational subjectivity is identified with the abstract 'I think', the cogito, separated from the body. This opposing relationship is reflected in the encounter with the other, depending on whether the encounter happens in the modality of the cogito or in that of accusativity. As cogito, the self categorises the other into the categories of the known, or the categories of the same and of identity in Levinasian terms, operating autonomously and according to abstract principles. As accusativity, however, the relation with the other is invested with responsibility. This happens because when the self is called by the other, it is singled out in its uniqueness:

> In responsibility as one assigned or elected from the outside, assigned as irreplaceable, the subject is accused in its skin, too tight for its skin (Levinas, 1998, p.106).

This being singled out in the uniqueness of the self is further described as a '*divesting,'* an '*emptying itself of its being'*, a '*turning inside ou*t' and '*the fact of otherwise than being*' (p.117), meaning that the self exits being to enter the ethical relation. In what Levinas defines a first philosophy, positing the ethical before ontological thinking, the

appearance of the face of the other marks the ultimate rupture within the self: in its nakedness and vulnerability, the face is nonetheless resistant to possession and to the totalising tendency of the self to appropriate and grasp otherness. The face of the other appears without cultural ornaments (Bernasconi, 2006), it is not a phenomenon that appears through an act of knowing and it has no systematic character (Wright, Hughes and Ainley, 1988).

In the context of intercultural communication, I propose a reading of the notion of the face of the other that emphasises the materiality of the embodied other facing the self (Sparrow, 2013) and that is expressed in ethical communication through the notions of the *saying* and the *said,* meaning respectively the event of speech and the content of speech (which I discuss in detail in section 4.6). As an illustration of this reading, in the following quote Levinas explains that, as opposed to ontological knowledge of the other, the ethical relation is established in the presence of self and other in their materiality, as embodied beings,

> I do not know if one can speak of a 'phenomenology' of the face, since phenomenology describes what appears. So, too, I wonder if one can speak of a look turned toward the face, for the look is knowledge, perception. I think rather that access to the face is straightaway ethical. You turn yourself toward the Other as toward an object when you see a nose, eyes, forehead, a chin, and you can describe them. The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the colour of his eyes! When one observes the colour of the eyes one is not in social relationship with the Other. The relation with the face can surely be dominated by perception, but what is specifically the face is what cannot be reduced to that (Levinas, 1985, pp.85-86).

Understood in this way, '*the whole human body is in this sense more or less face*' (Levinas, 1985, p.99).

The notion of the face of the other illustrates the difference between Kantian autonomy and Levinasian heteronomy. Furthermore, in the context of intercultural communication an understanding of the role of the other in shaping interaction is a

crucial determinant in the task of redefining an idea of ethical responsibility that is based on the interdependence of self and other, and that emphasises the inter-of the intercultural, meaning its processual and embodied aspects.

In Kantian autonomy, persons are ends in themselves in virtue of their rationality and thus each person is a moral legislator, according to the dictates of the moral imperative guided by reason. This conception of the self as moral legislator can be observed in the literature related to intercultural responsibility illustrated in Chapter Three, in which the self is able to determine in advance the outcome of communication through the acquisition of communicative tools that are used responsibly by the moral agent in interaction with a cultural other, who is the recipient of this act. In contrast to this understanding of ethical autonomy, an appreciation of Levinasian ethics suggests a different approach to intercultural responsibility, because the position of the moral agent as legislator is destabilised by the presence of the other. From this perspective, the notion of the face conveys the ethical effect of an encounter in which embodiment and corporeality reveal mortality and the vulnerability of existence, designating the other in his/her corporeality and indicating the proximity of the other person facing the self.

Thus, obligation towards the other is not the result of a formal or procedural universalization of maxims, because ethics is lived in the corporeal obligation that originates from the immanent, here and now, meeting with the other (Critchley, 1999). Here, I understand that in the presence of another being we are compelled to respond, although in relation to the phrase '*straightaway ethical'* I contend that it does not imply necessarily a conception of '*goodness*' as it is commonly used in reference to a moral judgment, rather it expresses the practical engagement established with an other in

the praxis of everydayness and communication, which also harbours the possibility of hostility, fear, violence and even murderous intention.

Indeed, Levinas articulates an ethical ambivalence inherent in the encounter with the other that includes the possibility of violence, *"a desire to kill, an ethical necessity not to kill"* (Butler, 2010, p.173). For Levinas this desire to kill, this violence, represents a modality of engagement in which the self dominates the other, encountered in the vulnerability of embodiment, as face. It is precisely this murderous impulse that defines the ethical dimension of alterity, since the face of the other poses the ethical challenge of resisting violence: *"the Other is the only being I can wish to kill"* (Levinas,1969, p.198). According to Levinas (1985), an expression of this ethical ambivalence is found in the biblical moral imperative *Thou shalt not kill*: on the one side, because of its vulnerability, the face can generate a murderous impulse, on the other the face reminds the self of the interdiction to kill (see also Chapter Nine, section 9.3).

In this sense, ethical engagement assumes a different connotation due to the acknowledgment of the possibility of miscommunication, misunderstanding and failure to establish dialogue, which is entailed in a conception of intercultural communication that recognises the dimension of risk taking and open ended engagement between self and other and, indeed, to recall Phipps, the fact that there are no 'quick fixes' to the endeavour of human understanding.

From this perspective, in order to illustrate the dialogic relation with the other that I propose in this thesis, I proffer the notion of sensibility, indicating the corporeal aspect of subjectivity from which the self encounters the other (Levinas, 2008), in place of the notions of awareness and sensitivity that are commonly used in intercultural communication. Intercultural awareness, as I have argued in Chapter Two, describes a process of enlightenment that allows the self to uncover a higher truth that resolves all

conflicting claims in the name of universal tolerance of the cultural other. Similarly, intercultural sensitivity indicates the ability to discriminate levels of cultural difference in order to interact effectively with others. Through the six stages of development of intercultural sensitivity- denial, defense reversal, minimization, acceptance, adaptation and integration (Bennett, 1993), the individual becomes progressively accustomed to cultural difference, thus adjusting his/her perceptions and experiencing a reduction of uncertainty (Wiseman, 2003; Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman, 2003). Both notions of awareness and sensitivity follow the pattern of ethical autonomy that I delineate in reference to Kant, and depend on the idea of cultural difference as the principal obstacle to clear and unambiguous communication.

With the notion of sensibility, Levinasian ethics suggests an alternative conceptualisation of the relation with the other, based on the perception of the embodied self in the ethical encounter. Whereas awareness and sensitivity develop in the ontological dimension of the self, sensibility represents the bodily aspect of experience and indicates a pre-reflective engagement with the other, meaning being affected by the presence of another. In this sense, the self as a sentient being is affected by the presence of the embodied other. This fact creates the preconditions for the development of an ethical concern for the other stemming from the '*here and now*', meaning the immediacy of lived experience. The ethical, in other words, is embedded in the materiality with which the self is engaged in everyday existence,

> We live from 'good soup', air, light, spectacles, work, ideas, sleep, etc…These are not objects of representations. We live from them (Levinas, 2008, p.110).

Taking this materiality in consideration, it is important to highlight how this understanding of the ethical does not necessarily entail that engagement with the other is devoid of difficulties. On the contrary, it implies a traumatic element of

discovery of the self as a sentient being who is faced with the ethical choice to respond to the presence of an other. This response, however, can assume the aspect of refusal of engagement, of fear or of misunderstanding. The crucial aspect is that this material presence of the other will pose ethical demands and ethical challenges, which the self is called to acknowledge. Understood in this sense, I suggest the notion of intercultural sensibility to illustrate the type of dialogic engagement with the other that I propose in this thesis in relation to the notion of competence. This aspect is further discussed in Chapter Six.

The embodied relation with the other is illustrated by Levinas in terms of sociality,

> I have access to the alterity of the Other from the society I maintain with him and not by quitting this relation in order to reflect on its terms (Levinas, 2008, p.121).

To this end, I contrast this type of sociality as practical engagement with the other with the attempt to control interaction through the assignment of cultural traits to explain the behaviour of the other, as in the notion of communicative competence examined in Chapter Three.

To summarise, following Heidegger in the reversal of Kant's Copernican revolution (according to which the object of knowledge is determined by transcendental categories), Levinas rejects the basis of modern metaphysics that resides in the Cartesian idea of the subject as a conscious, thinking ego, the subject of representation. However, if Heidegger focused on the transcendence of Being that the Dasein, or being-in-the-world, has to humbly receive in order to achieve an authentic form of existence, Levinas points in the direction of a subject outside of metaphysics (Critchley, 1999). Therefore, if Levinas is in agreement with Heidegger in considering Dasein as openness to the world, and thus the self as an embodied being, he

distinguishes between an ontological subject and an ethical subject. The ontological subject affirms and dominates over the existing, whereas the ethical subject appears beyond essence, following the appearance of the concrete other, who singles out the self in her uniqueness and finitude (Levinas, 1998; Ciaramelli, 1991). In other words, the self discovers her unique individuality in relation to others, through sociality. This point is explained in the next section on the asymmetrical relation between self and other.

4.5.2 Asymmetry vs Symmetry

In the ethical relation described by Levinas (1985, 1998), the relation to the other lived as pure exteriority and obligation is devoid of any form of intentionality, for the self previously enclosed in the solitude of egoism and self-preservation is exposed to the other in an asymmetrical relation. Therefore, the self does not absorb and determine the meaning of the other, because the other escapes the play of the same, or the dialectic process through which the self reaffirms its own identity after representing and enveloping the other into a theme, or categories of knowledge, recreating a totality (*see* Chapter Two, section 2.6 of this thesis on Hegelian dialectics intended as positive resolution). Levinas writes that:

> The freedom of another could never begin in my freedom, that is, abide in the same present, be contemporary, be representable to me. The responsibility for the other can not have begun in my commitment, in my decision. The unlimited responsibility in which I find myself comes from the hither side of my freedom, from a 'prior to every memory', 'an ulterior to every accomplishment', from the non-present par excellence, the non-original, the an-archical, prior to or beyond essence (Levinas, 1998, p.10).

The essence to which Levinas refers is ontological knowledge, or comprehension of beings in terms of generalisation, identity and universality of concepts. Ontological

thinking, or thinking about beings, leaves all irreducibility and singularity outside of the relation established by the thinking subject towards the objects of knowledge,

> The work of ontology consists in apprehending the individual not in its individuality but in its generality (Levinas, 1969, p.44).

This means that, according to Levinas, ontology is a philosophy of power, based on the impersonal universality of concepts that turn difference and singularity into sameness. Ontological thinking is in other words a form of impersonal knowledge that predominates over the relation with the concrete other in its singularity, in order for the thinking subject to *"comprehend or grasp it"* (Levinas, 1969, p.46).

Although ontological thinking predominates in the tradition of Western philosophy, Levinas finds in the ethical relation with the other an originary form of thinking that *'overflows the capacity of thought'* (1969, p.49), adopting the idea of infinity that Descartes described in the Third Meditation. The argument of that meditation, aimed at establishing the existence of god by the fact that the idea of the infinite cannot have been generated by a finite being, is turned by Levinas to designate the encounter with the other in the form of irreducible alterity, *"the relation with a being that maintains its total exteriority to him who thinks it"* (1969, p.50). Thus, the ethical relation assumes the character of responsibility when the self abdicates her/his sovereignty as thinking subject and answers to the other, meaning entering in a relation in which the self is not the master.

In order to illustrate this asymmetrical relation, ethical responsibility is defined as a state of *'insomnia or wakefulness'*, a *'perpetual state of vigilance and effort which can never slumber'* (Levinas, 1969, p.66) rather than an act proceeding from a fully bounded, rational, autonomous self. This state of vigilance described by Levinas is

reminiscent of the messianism without religion of Derrida (1994) and the materialistic messianism of Benjamin (1999), in which the anticipation of an eschatological finality of messianic religions is abandoned in favour of a conception of temporality that contracts time in the *here and now,* in the immediacy of contact with the other (*see* Chapter Four, section 4.3 of this thesis on the promise as deferred understanding).

In the ethical relation described by Levinas, the self is not in control of the interaction, rather the interaction proceeds in an open-ended and unpredictable manner. Although this asymmetry assumes tragic undertones in Levinas's writing, such as in the depiction of being called by the other as *''an election in persecution''* (p.56, 1998), meaning a radical form of passivity towards the other, in this thesis I emphasise the dialogic elements of this relation, which I discuss in detail in Chapters Five and Six. Here, I introduce dialogism in the contrast between heteronomy and autonomy, which is reflected in the distinction between distance and proximity to the other, and which I discuss in the next two sections.

4.5.3 Heteronomy vs. Autonomy

As explained above, autonomy indicates the moral self of Kantian ethical thinking, who pursues universal moral ends as an autonomous and rational being. In contrast, the concept of heteronomy places subjectivity outside of the disembodied realm of the Cartesian ego into the phenomenal world, where it interacts with other selves to become an ethical being. In this context, ethical choices are made in relation to others, and not prior to the intersubjective relation. Thus, in contrast to the concept of autonomy, heteronomy indicates the central idea in Levinasian ethics that the self is not self-legislating, but is determined by the call of the other. In other words, the self acquires meaning through the intersubjective relations established with other selves,

rather than through abstract notions related to transcendental conceptions of subjectivity.

The principal issue in the opposition between the two concepts of heteronomy and autonomy is to establish whether ethical actions are determined by abstract universal rules, or whether they arise from immanent relations with others. This means that the self is either a product of moral norms that belong to it transcendentally and that pre-exist its constitution as a subject, or that the self becomes an ethical being only in relation to others. In this last sense, the attention towards the immanent and the contingent that is behind the notion of the heteronomy of the self, leaves open the question of establishing a ground for moral accountability and moral agency that is universal and not tied to the particular (Butler, 2005). The answer provided by Levinasian ethics is that the self acquires ethical significance only in relation to the other; prior to that the self exists in an ontological sense, as a being concerned primarily with its own perseverance in being, or *conatus essendi.* The ethical, in this context, originates outside of ontology and is *otherwise than being* (Levinas, 1998). All questions relating to the social and the political, in short the aforementioned problem of universalism vs particularism (in the present chapter, section 4.2, on the promise as final reconciliation of difference), stem from the original relation to alterity, meaning the otherness of the other, that interrupts the solitude of the self and the disembodied, abstract *I think*.

This difference can be further illustrated in reference to the use of the term intercultural in intercultural communication. The contrast between heteronomy and autonomy becomes evident whether the emphasis is placed on the 'inter' or on the 'cultural': when the emphasis is placed on the 'inter', meaning processuality, interaction cannot be determined in advance, because it represents the result of the process itself, which

is always in the *immanent here and now.* In the second instance, the focus on culture means that communication can be guided through the acquisition of competences, which determine the outcome of interaction. In this sense, the first relation is ethical, relational, open ended and heteronomous, whereas the second relation is ontological, autonomous and guided by the necessity of the self to determine outcomes through the use of cultural categorisation of the other. Therefore, heteronomy represents the dialogic principle of communication adopted in this thesis, while autonomy refers to instrumental conceptions of intercultural competence described in Chapter Three, section 3.2.

The metaphysics of presence manifested in the opposition between tolerance and intolerance described in Chapter Four, section 4.3, appears in this conception of the self as the autonomous and self-governing individual of the Western liberal tradition. It is this autonomous self who exercises tolerance in welcoming the other conditionally, while retaining the right to withdraw the welcome accorded to the other. This conception of tolerance envisioned from the perspective of the autonomous self excludes the role of the other in interaction, positing subjectivity as independent from the influence of the external world. As I have discussed in section 4.3, this reliance on the idea of tolerance leaves intercultural communication in an ethical conundrum in relation to the ability to engage dialogically with differing cultural and ethical frameworks. Thus, taking heteronomy as the basis of a dialogic relation with the other, I suggest that the challenges that emerge in the course of intercultural encounters can be framed in terms of an ethics of hospitality and deferred understanding.

According to this ethics of hospitality, I contend that the complexity of intercultural communication surfaces when the ideals of autonomy and self-sufficiency of the self are destabilised by the material and embodied presence of the other. In this situation,

understanding is deferred in the praxis of engagement between self and other. In this sense, the practice of deferred understanding addresses this conflict inherent in the notion of hostipitality between tolerance and intolerance, an issue which I explore in Chapter Eight in the context of debates in European multicultural societies regarding the practices of the other. Here, I describe this dilemma concerning the encounter with the other through the dichotomy proximity-distance, which introduces the notion of sociality and provides an introduction for the discussion of the two modalities of the *saying* and the *said.*

4.5.4 Proximity vs. Distance

Levinas subverts the traditional correlation between knowledge and being, dispossessing the ego of its privileged position as *res cogitans,* a thing that thinks. In his interpretation, knowledge appropriates and grasps otherness, reducing it to sameness through the act of transcendental apperception. He writes: *'Knowledge as perception, concept, comprehension, refers back to an act of grasping'* (in Kearney and Rainwater, 1996, p.124). In this activity of appropriation of the known and reduction of alterity to sameness, the ego lives in the solitude of a 'happy conscience', disinterested and self-sufficient in its solipsism, leading to

> full self-consciousness affirming itself as absolute being, and confirming itself as an I that, through all possible 'differences', is identified as master of its own nature as well as of the universe and able to illuminate the darkest recesses of resistance to its powers (Levinas,1996,p.127).

However, next to the transcendental ego of pure consciousness, Levinas distinguishes a non-intentional consciousness, or pre-intentional consciousness, which he describes using the words '*stranger*', '*countryless*' and '*homeless*' (p.129) to indicate a dimension of the self that does not reside under the bright light of intentional consciousness. In

this realm of pre-intentional consciousness, ethics begins with the appearance of the face, in relation to otherness, which opens the possibility of conceiving a *'freedom exterior to one's own'* (Levinas, 2006a, p.14). This ego stripped of its transcendental sovereignty is defined by Levinas (1996) as *mauvaise conscience*, i.e. bad conscience, when the self discovers the guilt of the affirming subject and the need to answer for its right to be. This experience introduces the idea of responsibility and justice:

> The human is the return to the interiority of nonintentional consciousness, to bad conscience, to its possibility of fearing injustice more than death, of preferring injustice undergone to injustice committed, and what justifies being to what guarantees it (Levinas, 2006a, p.128).

This means that the encounter with the other generates the fear of violence and usurpation that the individual risks committing in his/her striving for self-preservation. Thus, the notion of proximity describes the conception of sociality that underpins the idea of the other, where proximity represents the modality that confers an ethical, and therefore 'human', status to the self.

Levinas (2006b) distances himself from both structuralism and post-structuralism in defending the idea of humanism, albeit a '*humanism of the other*', meaning that the sense of being human is tied to the ethical relation established with the other. In structuralist tradition meaning is found in larger structures, such as linguistic and social structures, that envelope and determine individuals (Barry, 2002). Post-structuralism shares the critique of the humanist subject initiated by structuralism, but emphasising anti-foundationalism and perspectivism through a renewed appreciation of the work of Nietzsche and Heidegger and the introduction of the themes of difference and otherness in contemporary philosophy (Peters and Wain, 2003). Although the project of destabilisation of the Kantian transcendental subject initiated by both structuralism

and post-structuralism is shared by Levinas, the insistence on the humanity of the other creates a distance with both traditions. The sense of being human for Levinas is to be found in sensibility, which I have described in section 4.5.1 as being affected by the embodied other.

This means that the sense of one's own humanity is discovered through the experience of the other. In fact, from this standpoint, the relation to the other can assume two modalities: in the first instance, the other is encountered within a cultural tradition and interpreted according to the elements associated with that particular cultural horizon. However, the other '*not only comes from a context but it also signifies by itself, without mediation*' (Levinas, 2006b, p.31) when cultural signification is upset by the apparition of the singular, immanent other, described as a '*stripping with no cultural ornament*' (p.32). In this last modality, the encounter between self and other assumes an ethical character, because the self is not in control of the interaction, and it is somehow thrown off balance by an unexpected encounter that upsets the categories of identity and sameness that are employed to categorise. Together with heteronomy, I suggest proximity as the underpinning feature of dialogic intercultural interaction, which is the theme of Chapter Six.

This immediacy of ethics is at the basis of a new form of humanism that dispenses with the notion of cultural difference, not through an appeal to a universal and abstract ideal of humanity, but rooted in the immanent character of the other person. However, Levinas (2006b) returns to the notion of cultural difference with a controversial series of observations regarding the need to overcome cultural relativism in the name of a univocal sense, or a higher standpoint, which he locates in the Greek and Judeo-Christian heritage of Western tradition. A detailed analysis of the literature relating to this particular issue falls outside the scope of this study, however there is one aspect

relating to normativity that I intend to clarify, and which is relevant to the ethical framework developed in this thesis.

On the one hand, Levinas's cultural bias and his position on Zionism can be envisioned and contextualised in terms of a preoccupation regarding the particular destiny of European thinking after the experience of the Holocaust. Hand (2009) argues that this preoccupation attests to the difficulty of translating the rigour of an ethics of the other in political language and praxis, which could be read as a failure of theory to conform to its own ethical demands. On the other, this issue can be examined in relation to the role of normativity in Levinasian ethics.

The issue of normativity is the focus of Benhabib's (2013) response to the criticism levelled at Levinas's position on Zionism by Butler (2012b). According to Benhabib, the ethical relation does not constitute a normative project, meaning a prescriptive code of behaviour within an established moral framework. Instead, this ethical relation attests to an idea of moral perfectionism, which Putnam (2002) ascribes to Cavell's (1990) distinction between legislators and perfectionists in moral theory. According to this distinction, moral legislators provide detailed moral rules, whereas moral perfectionists seek to describe the ethical source of moral principles, which for Levinas resides in the ethical relation, without providing a code of behaviour. Thus, I understand the ethical relation proposed by Levinas as a guiding principle in the formulation of dialogism intended as intersubjective engagement between others, and I recognise the realities of conflict, power asymmetries and precarity.

From this perspective, in the context of this thesis I share Drabinski's (2011) call for a decolonised reading of Levinas, albeit transposed in the field of intercultural communication. To this end, I propose a conceptualisation of the other according to a notion of subalternity (see Chapter Two, section 2.5.3 and Chapter Seven, section

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7.4.3), in which the other emerges as gendered and placed at the intersection of a number of identity markers. This conceptualisation of the other is developed in Chapters Seven and Eight, with an account of othering as resulting from differential power relations.

For the purposes of this research, I limit the discussion on ethics and culture pertinent to the present chapter to a reflection concerning the ethical dimension of the other in relation to the problem of universalism vs relativism, which is more closely connected to this study (section 4.2 in the present chapter). In this context, I agree with Drabinski (2011) that Levinasian thinking bridges the division between the theories of relativism and universalism in the name of the concrete, immanent other. To this end, I argue that Levinas's critique of cultural relativism refers to a superficial idea of particularism that is unable to question cultural practices in the name of a formal and vacuous idea of tolerance, neglecting the uniqueness of the other, the fact that each self is unique in his/her singularity. The failure to acknowledge this *'anteriority of sense with regard to cultural signs'* (Levinas, 2006b, p.36) creates the phenomenon whereby culture represents the privileged point of entry in the understanding of human phenomena,

> Contemporary philosophy takes satisfaction [se complaît] in the multiplicity of cultural significations; and in the infinite game of art, being is relieved of the weight of its otherness. Philosophy is produced as a form that manifests the refusal of engagement in the Other, a preference for waiting over action, indifference towards others-the universal allergy of the first childhood of philosophers. Philosophy's itinerary still follows the path of Ulysses whose adventure in the world was but a return to his native island-complacency in the Same, misunderstanding of the Other (Levinas, 2006b, pp.25-26; capitals in the original).

On this matter, the apriori of the ethical sphere in regard to cultural significations allows the creation of a standpoint from which to judge cultural practices, not on the basis of an abstract idea of humanity but as ethical responsibility towards the concrete individual. This form of *'humanism of the other'* is not an attempt to restore an

autonomous ego, rather it represents the recognition of the subject rooted in sensibility and embodied in the *here and now*, a post-metaphysical or '*post-deconstructive subjectivity*' (Critchley, 1999).

At this stage, once the basic relationship self-other has been established as the origin of the ethical mode of existence, Levinas introduces the notion of the third person, which enters and mediates the relationship between the individual and the other:

> But we are never, me and the other, alone in the world. There is always a third: the men who surround me. And this third is also my neighbour. Who is the nearest to me? Inevitable question of justice which arises from the depth of responsibility for the unique, in which ethics begins in the face of that which is incomparable. Here is the necessity of comparing what is incomparable- of knowing men. First violence, violence of judgment, transformation of faces into objective and plastic forms, into figures which are visible but de-faced; the appearing of men: of individuals, who are certainly unique, but restituted to their genera (Levinas in Robbins, 2001, pp.115-116).

The entrance of this third person signifies the institution of laws and political systems that guarantee the rights of each individual, effacing the dyadic relation self-other. In this sense, the relationship between self and the other undergoes a transformation with the appearance of this third person, because the ethical relationship becomes political in the need to reconcile conflicting claims (Kearney, 1984; Levinas, 2006). To this end, ethics '*hardens its skin*' (Kearney, 1984, p.65) upon entering the political world of this impersonal third. Nevertheless, the ethical vocation of the self does not disappear in the formalisation of justice into a legal system, because '*justice only has meaning if it retains the spirit of dis-interestedness which animates the idea of responsibility for the other man*' (Levinas, 1985, p.99). Consequently, a political order can be challenged in the name of this ethical responsibility towards the other. For example, in this dimension concerned primarily with the ethical, Levinas (2006) sees in

Marxist theory the manifestation of an ethical conscience that in its demand to transform theory into praxis, displays a concrete concern for the other.

This introduction of symmetry in the relation with others through the notion of the third person becomes poignant in order to fully understand the concrete implications of ethical responsibility. The notion of individual responsibility should not be mistaken with a naïve negation of institutions and the state in favour of a form of voluntarism that relies on the goodwill of individuals. In fact, Levinas affirms the necessity to live in a world of citizens and not only in *'the order of the Face to Face'* (Levinas, 2006a, p.90), but it is essential to highlight the fact that individuals cannot abdicate entirely to the State their own duties of responsibility towards the other. In this context, the notion of responsibility expresses the ethical character of the infinite debt towards each singularity, or individual others, which Derrida (1988) defines undecidability, the fact that each decision represents a leap of faith made in relation to the singularity of a context (Critchley, 1999). If the categorical imperative of Kantian moral law requires to measure a decision against a universal maxim, the idea of infinite responsibility arises from the context of a singular experience and acquires a universal character in the notion of the other's infinite demand made on the individual. The passage from the solitude of the thinking self to the sociality that is established with the other encountered in her/his singularity is constituted through language, from the dimension of the *said* to that of the *saying,* which I discuss in detail in the next section.

In this thesis, I propose a conceptualisation of the intercultural modelled on this distinction between the two modalities of discourse. Beginning with the presupposition that the intercultural is experienced through communicative exchanges between embodied selves, the distinction between the two modes of discourse established through the *saying,* the event of speech as experiential and intersubjective, and the

said, the content of speech as objectifying knowledge, enables intercultural communication to move from the dimension of the cultural to that of the inter-, or the dynamic aspect of communication.

4.6 The *saying* and the *said*

The two aforementioned modalities of the *saying* and *the said* are explored in *Otherwise than Being* (Levinas, 1998) in relation to language and temporality, when phenomena emerge in consciousness from the flow of perceptions. Levinas describes experience unfolding in two temporalities, the diachronic and the synchronic. In this latter form of temporality, consciousness organises experience in a coherent flow of past, present and future, and the impressions given to consciousness from the external world are categorised and identified with the use of language. This activity of categorisation, that Levinas defines as thematisation, proceeds from a proclamatory, or *kerygmatic,* expression*:* which is to say that to identify a being, to acknowledge a being, is to pronounce a proclamation, the fact that a phenomenon is "this as that" (Levinas, 1998, p.35). With this activity, experience is shaped and organised into categories that belong to the *doxa* (i.e. the historical and cultural horizon in which the self is situated). This cultural horizon is the *said:*

> Giving to historical languages spoken by people a locus, enabling them
> to orient or polarise the diversity of the thematised as they choose
> (Levinas, 1998, p.36).

This means that kerygmatic proclamations organise immediate experience into intelligible phenomena that are consequently transmitted in the form of narration in the context of cultural traditions. Levinas defines this process as the *thematised* (Peperzak, 1989), meaning the organisation of experience into a set of themes. The other dimension of language, the saying, operates beyond the language of

identification and categorisation. In this dimension, diachrony is an event that interrupts the synchronicity of time, the orderly flow of past, present and future, through the encounter with the singularity- or uniqueness- of the other person.

This representation of time in the two opposing terms of event and of orderly flow of past, present and future is expressed in the two modalities of discourse of the *saying* and the *said.* The *said,* understood as the content of speech, is ordered according to the linear progression of past, present and future. In this latter modality, because the self is in control of language, s/he is able to isolate an object of experience from the flow of time and fix it into to a theme, a concept or a category. For Levinas, the *said* fixes meaning, while the *saying* expresses another dimension of human expression, which is pre-linguistic and as such it is tied to the experience of sensibility described in the present chapter in section 4.5.1. In other words, the *saying* is connected to the ethical experience inherent in the encounter with the face, in terms of an event that disrupts the certainties of the thinking subject. As Craig writes, because the Levinasian subject is not only determined by cognitive faculties, but is also embodied as 'flesh and blood', language *"mirrors the tension and complexity of the human subject"* (Craig, 2010, p.20).

Thus, the two modes of discourse are not placed in an opposing relation, rather they coexist, complementing each other, because the *saying* (the event), needs a *said* (content) in order to be processed by consciousness. Nevertheless, the *saying* remains as the unsaid, as it is not completely grasped by the *said.* This means that the *saying* dwells in the *said* as an irreducible remainder of difference between the content of the *said* and what excapes categorisation:

> It is only in the said that, in the epos of saying, the diachrony of time is
> synchronised into a time that is recallable, and becomes a theme. (…)

But the signification of saying goes beyond the said. (Levinas, 1998, p.37).

Here, I understand that the presence of the *saying* underlying the *said* challenges the idea of the transparency of language, or the perfect correspondence between word and meaning. Levinas employs this understanding of language to illustrate two modalities of existence, the ontological relation to being expressed in the *said*, in which meaning is fixed, and the ethical relation to the other that emerges in the *saying*. The ethical relation is also referred in terms of non-relation, to emphasise the irreducibility of the other to the categories of the self, which brings about the loss of the Cartesian privilege of consciousness (Levinas, 1996, p.60). In other words, when the other is encountered in this modality, the *saying* is expressed in the form of the uncertainty of open-ended dialogue.

In the next section I contextualise the two categories of the *saying* and the *said* in the field of intercultural research. I contrast the ethical relation described by Levinas to the notion of autonomy that guides the formulation of competence and intercultural responsibility, in other words the formulation of the self in terms of the Cartesian ''I think'' and characterised by autonomy and self-sufficiency. With this contrast, I bring forward on the one side the notion of responsibility in terms of the experiential and intersubjective event of speech, which I envisage in terms of the *saying,* and on the other a conception of responsibility understood as tolerance of the other, which I envisage in terms of objectifying knowledge expressed in the *said*.

4.7 The *Saying* and the *Said*: two scenarios of responsibility

To summarise, the *said* fixes and establishes meanings, it categorises, enveloping an object of knowledge into a theme, it is speaking about something and not to someone. Language as information, the *said*, expresses the symmetry of self and other in the

form of communication of content. In this dimension of the *said*, after being reduced to the known categories of sameness by the active synthesis of the knowing subject, the other becomes the recipient of the moral action in the form of responsibility, tolerance, sensitivity to cultural difference. On the other hand, the *saying* is a 'speaking to' in the form of dialogue, when the self does not occupy a central position bestowing meaning on the other. The saying is proximity, commitment of the one for the other (Levinas, 1985). Levinas describes this proximity in terms of vulnerability of the subject destitute of sovereignty as an autonomous, self-sufficient being, and exposed to the other. This encounter with alterity is the unveiling of a physical vulnerability '*from which we cannot slip away*' (Butler, 2005, p.101), grounding our responsibility as ethical beings in presence to the other (Levinas in Robbins, 2001).

Critchley (1992) divides the relation between *saying* and *said* into three moments: first of all, consciousness organises beings in the modality of the *said* according to the categories of knowledge. Subsequently, the self returns to the *saying* in the ethical experience, which overflows those categories. Finally, the self returns to the *said*, in order to translate the ethical encounter in terms that '*reopen the questions of justice, politics, community and ontology*' (p.229), and that as such destabilise the realm of the *said.* Thus, I understand that the *saying* functions as that idea of perfectibility that I describe in relation to Derrida's notion of infinite hospitality that I have described in the present chapter in section 4.3, and which guides the realisation of conditional hospitality in political praxis.

Levinas (1998) further qualifies the approaching of the other as the uncovering of the one who speaks, a denuding of identity in front of the other, an entering of the diachronic temporalisation that is not actively synthesised by the knowing subject but lived in the experience of exposure as responsibility for the other. Thus, the *said* and

the *saying* stand for two conceptions of speech: the former represents the transmission of content, or communicative competence; the latter is manifested in the presence of speakers to one another, the response to the singularity of the other when the self is addressed in speech (Blanchot, 1993). I suggest that the notion of language as information needing communicative competence to ensure effective transmission of content, which is prevalent in the notion of intercultural training, is a form of totalisation of meaning (Derrida, 1988), the fact that the intention of the speaking subject is in this way exhausted in the speech act, thus leaving no residue that escapes the transmission of intentional meaning. This totalisation is apparent in the idea of intercultural training, by which the competences required to interpret communicative behaviour as expression of a particular culture and to react with an appropriate response in order to communicate effectively are provided.

Such an instrumental understanding of communication is radically challenged by the *saying*, the relation established in speaking to one another, maintaining an asymmetry that defers the process of consensus and closure of meaning into the totality of being. In this way, using this distinction between the *saying* and the *said*, the ethical dimension of intercultural communication emerges as the open-ended character of dialogue, which is foregrounded over the idea of communicative competence as effective transmission of meaning. This main contrast between the two modes of communication of the *saying* and the *said* is further illustrated in the way in which they are defined by Levinas in the context of the relation between the self and the other. Whilst in the notion of intercultural competence the self and the other are beings enclosed within their own cultural horizon awaiting reciprocal recognition, in the *saying* self and other are inter-dependent because dialogue requires interaction between

interlocutors, and the passage from the synchronicity of themes and categories to the diachrony of lived time.

Thus, ethical responsibility resides in this relation between self and other established in the *saying*, which Levinas describes as a 'face to face' encounter: on the one hand, in the said the other is reified into a cultural being, on the other hand in dialogue the other is encountered in their own singularity, uniqueness. As such, the two categories of the saying and the said suggest two scenarios of intercultural interaction that show two different approaches to responsibility, one operating in the dimension of the said and the other in the dimension of the saying.

In the first instance, in the dimension of the *said*, communication develops on a set of assumptions regarding cultural belonging and identity. In this context, the notion of ethical responsibility is limited to the effort to understand the other as a cultural being and to avoid misunderstanding. In this case, the other is an object of knowledge, not an interlocutor, and responsibility is understood as tolerance of the other by the sovereign subject, the autonomous rational agent of Kantian tradition. In the second instance, in the dimension of the *saying,* dialogue unfolds in ways that are unpredictable and that can question our assumptions about culture, identity and belonging through reciprocal interaction between others. Thus, responsibility is revealed not as a conscious act from a fully bounded, all knowing subject, but as finding oneself in a situation that is not of our making. In this regard, Levinas describes the situation of the self being singled out in his/her uniqueness by the call of the other as the 'originary place of identification' (Robbins, 2001, p.110), in contrast to being identified according to a principle of individuation based on the fact of belonging to a particular national or cultural group. According to Levinas, the status of the *saying* and the *said* in relation to alterity, or otherness, surfaces in its simplest forms in everyday

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acts of politeness, for instance in the act of being addressed by an other, when the saying resonates briefly in the presence of two interlocutors:

> In discourse I have always distinguished, in fact, between the *saying* and the *said*. That the *saying* must bear a *said* is a necessity of the same order as that which imposes a society with laws, institutions and social relations. But the *saying* is the fact that before the face I do not simply remain there contemplating it, I respond to it. The *saying* is a way of greeting the Other, but to greet the Other is already to answer for him. It is difficult to be silent in someone's presence; this difficulty has its ultimate foundation in this signification proper to the saying, whatever is the said. It is necessary to speak of something, of the rain and fine weather, no matter what, but to speak, to respond to him and already to answer for him (Levinas, 1985, p.88).

Here, Levinas describes the interaction between the two modes of the *saying* and the *said* in the practice of everyday engagement, during which the experiential and intersubjective character of the *saying* emerges as lived presence of self and other as embodied subjects (see also sections 4.5.1 and 4.6). Adopting a Levinasian perspective, the ethical aspect of language emerges when the discourse of effectiveness, reliability and performance is superseded by concern for the other qua other.

4.8 Conclusion

In Chapters Two, Three and Four I have begun to address the first research question, relating to the ontological and epistemological assumptions that guide intercultural communication. I have argued that the conceptualisation of intercultural competence and responsibility relies on the model of Kantian rational autonomy, to which in the present chapter I have contrasted Levinasian thinking on the other. The reading of Levinas proposed in this thesis is centred on the relationship between two modes of discourse, the *saying* and the *said*, which I have employed in the present chapter in order to shift towards a more problematic understanding of the intercultural in which risk taking, incompleteness and the contingent are not considered in the guise of

problems in need of fixing, but are accepted and incorporated in theory and in intercultural communication praxis. Adopting this Levinasian perspective informed by the distinction between the *saying* and the *said*, in the present chapter I have argued that the relationship self-other is understood as asymmetrical, meaning that they are both irreducible to the categories of knowledge and are recognised as unique others. In this sense, the promise as deferred understanding refers to this conceptual shift that I propose in intercultural communication, meaning that the ideal of a final moment of reconciliation of difference is problematized.

Before I illustrate this theoretical stance in the framework for a dialogic understanding of competence in Chapter Six, I address the issue of the epistemic validity of Levinasian ethics in Chapter Five. Levinasian scholarship has produced a myriad of publications, encompassing a wide spectrum of areas of research: the relevance of the ethics of the other for citizenship and moral education (Bergo, 2008; Chinnery, 2003; Egéa-Kuehne, 2008; Joldersma, 2008), its contribution to the development of a notion of deconstructive subjectivity (Critchley, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2007), its relationship with post-colonial theory (Drabinski, 2011) and finally the parallel established with Habermasian communicative action (Hendley, 2000) and feminism (Irigaray, 1991), ecology, animal rights and the politics of recognition (Chanter, 2001; Perpich, 2008). Another facet of scholarship regards the epistemic validity of concepts such as the face of the other and its status as unknowable and radically 'other'. In the context of this research, in order to clarify the standpoint from which I define my own reading of Levinas and to define the contribution of Levinasian ethics to intercultural communication, I refer to the notions of otherness and ethical responsibility. In Chapter Five I consider the critical readings with which Žižek (1997, 2006), Badiou (2001) and Ricoeur (1992) have confronted Levinasian thinking on ethics and otherness and I

connect Bakhtin's notion of answerability to Levinas's notion of the face of the other in terms of embodied subjectivity. Through my engagement with this aspect of Levinasian scholarship, I provide the theoretical grounding for the dialogic framework that I develop in Chapter Six. The definition of dialogism from a Levinasian perspective will then inform the discussion on the dynamics of othering in the final two chapters of this thesis, Chapters Seven and Eight.

Chapter Five. The epistemic validity of Levinasian ethics

5.1 Introduction

Adopting the metaphor of the promise of understanding, in the previous chapter I have argued that cultural categorisation, meaning the definition of the other in cultural terms, generates two discourses: one the one side discourses of cultural relativism and tolerance of the other, and on the other discourses relating to the incommensurability of different cultural practices. The latter discourse emerges in the largely Western rhetoric of global anti-terrorism (White, 2001; Chomsky, 2002), and is exploited in the media and populist political discourse in terms of a threat of a cultural 'other' which destabilises national identities and other values associated with Western liberalism, such as freedom, tolerance, democracy, respect for human rights and peace (Baker-Beall, 2009). As I have argued in Chapter Four in relation to the promise of understanding in terms of closure and totality, this fear of a foreign cultural other mirrors discourses of tolerance of the other, because they both refer to a totalising and essentialising stance. I explore further this aspect of the relation self/other in Chapters Seven and Eight, through the analysis of the dynamic of othering.

In Chapter Four (section 4.2 of this thesis) I have explained that the issue of relativism vs universalism highlights an under-theorised aspect of intercultural communication, namely the aporia of praxis between cultural relativism and a Kantian politics of presence or moral signified (MacDonald & O'Regan, 2012). In other words, critical interculturalism embraces and celebrates cultural difference whilst also implicitly seeking veridical grounds for its resolution in the midst of perceived ideological falsifications and hegemonic interpretations. Intercultural discourse thus finds itself in an aporetic dilemma: on the one hand, caught amidst competing validity claims, each

asserting their own truth, but incapable of deciding between them (because it is obliged to support them all), and on the other of a requirement to assert the cultural validity of some claims over others by appealing to the presence of a Kantian transcendental moral signified which is outside human experience. Intercultural discourse in these terms is an incommensurable discourse (ibid.). As an alternative perspective to this aporia in intercultural communication, I suggest to challenge the relationship self/other based on cultural categorisation, tolerance and cultural relativism by setting a framework for the development of dialogic methodological approaches in research.

As I have explained in Chapter One, section 1.5, in the present chapter I have a twofold aim. First, I engage in a productive confrontation with three critiques of Levinasian ethics that focus on a crucial theme in the conceptualisation of the dialogic framework proposed in Chapter Six, namely, the ethical relation with the other. For this reason, I have opted to engage with three philosophers who have challenged the ethical relation as it is formulated by Levinas: I begin by discussing critically the idea proposed by Žižek and Badiou that the Levinasian other is connected to a multicultural ideal of tolerance. After that, I discuss the critical reading of the notion of asymmetry between self and other developed by Ricoeur. This critical engagement with the responses that Levinasian ethics has generated in philosophical discourse is important first to articulate the notion of dialogic interaction developed in Chapter Six, and second to define the stance toward tolerance adopted in this thesis, particularly in relation to the analysis of othering in Chapters Seven and Eight.

After this discussion, in section 5.5 I review the literature related to dialogic intercultural communication, and I offer an alternative illustration of the relation between self and other to that established by Xu (2013) on the basis of the I/Thou

relation (Buber, 2004). My aim is to ground the dialogic framework developed in Chapter Six on this confrontation with Žižek, Badiou, Ricoeur and Buber. In the last section of the present chapter (5.5.2), I complement the idea of the ethical relation with the notion of answearability (Bakhtin, 1993), as the underpinning idea of dialogic interaction.

5.2 Žižek *on Levinas*

Žižek (2006) positions Levinas within the philosophical strand which establishes the need to embrace finitude and contingence. This philosophy, argues Žižek, is oblivious to both Freudian and Lacanian theories, particularly the notion of an underlying libidinal force, defined the death drive, which strives to fulfil the desire for a lost object that repeats itself endlessly (Evans, 1996; Butler, 2005). According to Žižek, this cycle of desire represents the inhuman side of existence which eludes the face to face relationship, the pivotal feature of Levinasian thinking and of the followers of the ethical turn. In his critique of the face to face relationship, Žižek claims that Levinas's accounts of the face of the other are the result of having lived the experience of the Holocaust at a safe distance, as a prisoner of war in a camp in Germany, where he was detained in a special barrack reserved for Jewish prisoners. This means that, according to Žižek's argument, Levinas has missed the crucial experience of witnessing the inhuman side of otherness that emerged in concentration camps:

> The Otherness of a human being reduced to inhumanity, the Otherness exemplified by the terrifying figure of Muselmann, the 'living dead' in the concentration camps (Žižek, 2006, p.112).

In this reading of Levinasian ethics, the themes of questioning one's own right to be and unconditional asymmetrical responsibility generate from the guilt of observing the atrocities of concentration camps ''*from a minimal safe distance''* (ibid.). Contrary to

Levinas's '*safe distance*', Žižek uses the image of the Muselmann, a derogatory term used to describe the emaciated and starving prisoners of concentration camps, who are no longer able to answer the call of the other. This image is employed by Žižek to convey the idea of a monstrous dimension of subjectivity which becomes domesticated once it is conceived within a Levinasian ethical frame.

In Levinasian ethics, justice originates from the primordial ethical obligation in which the other faces the self and singles him/her out in infinite responsibility. This privileging of the one in the multitude introduces an imbalance in the whole, which is corrected through the arrival of the third person, meaning a return to the faceless many that were left aside in the dyadic relation. However, for Žižek ''*the true ethical step is the one beyond the face of the other*'' (2006, p.183) towards the universality of justice. According to Žižek the main fallacy in Levinas's phenomenological description of the apparition of the face resides in ignoring the fact that the faceless third is already present in the background prior to the encounter with the other. In this sense, the face is '*an ethical lure*' (2006, p.185) that obscures the fact that justice must be blind and rootless, liberated from its ''*contingent and umbilical link that renders it 'embedded' in a particular situation*'' (2006, p.184). In this sense, Levinas fails to accept ''*the abyss of the rootless Law as the only foundation of ethics*'' (ibid.). From this perspective, justice stems from universal and timeless principles that are separated from the contingency of individuals (Chapter Seven, section 7.4.3 for the difference between these two conceptions of moral autonomy in terms of the general and the abstract other).

Žižek (2005) divides the theme of the other into three levels of analysis referring to Lacanian theory: the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. The imaginary other is the counterpart of the real other, standing for the other human beings with whom we engage in everyday life. This imaginary other is the projected image that is constructed

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with the mediation of the symbolic order, which is necessary in order to establish intersubjective relations and to hide the real nature of the other (Lacan, 2001). This means that the inexpressible side of subjectivity is rendered acceptable according to social norms through the mediation of the symbolic order. However, behind this imaginary other with whom we engage in everyday life through the mediation of conventions established in the symbolic order, lurks an *"abyss of radical Otherness"* (Žižek, 2005, p.143):

> If the functioning of the big Other is suspended, the friendly neighbour coincides with the monstrous Thing (Žižek, 2005, p.144).

Here appears the opposition between Levinasian accounts of the self divested of sovereignty upon entering the ethical mode of relation with the immanent, contingent and concrete other and the image of the other as indifferent and hostile. In this account, the other of Levinasian ethics represents an ethical lure which hides the real other, the real side of subjectivity that emerges when the mediation of the symbolic order becomes absent. This situation is illustrated with the example of concentration camps, which obliterate the symbolic order and display the real face of the faceless, dehumanised other. From this perspective, according to Žižek, placing the origin of justice in the primordial relationship between self and other represents a fallacy of Levinasian ethics, because it fails to account for the inherent inhumanity of the other and it renounces normativity in favour of a relativistic conception of justice.

In this critique, Žižek addresses an important aspect of Levinasian thinking in relation to the notion of the face of the other as the primordial ethical experience. Taking Primo Levi's (1957) account of concentration camps, and the image of the faceless, 'the living dead' who has lost the will to live, to describe the dehumanising character of the Shoah, Žižek points at the danger of creating an image of the 'good other' that he

ascribes to a superficial embrace of differences in a depoliticised version of multiculturalism. However, a closer reading reveals that such a vision of a 'good other' is absent in Levinasian texts, and that the aim of Žižek's critique is not Levinas but the appropriation of Levinasian ethics in contemporary accounts of an ethics of finitude (*e.g.* Butler, 2004, 2005). In fact, Žižek's critique dismisses the immanence of the other as another example of that ''*philosophy of finitude which predominates today*'' (2006, p.110), which invites us to,

> accept the contingency of our existence, the ineluctable character of our being-thrown into a situation, the basic lack of any absolute point of reference, the playfulness of our predicament (ibid.).

This description, however, fails to account for the complexity of the notion of finitude in Levinas, which is connected to the idea of a transcendence of being that remains within the limits of our finitude, through the discovery of infinity in the ethical relation with the other (Hand, 2009). This means that the inhuman and anonymous being described by Levinas as *il y a, there is* (Chapter Four, section 4.5)*,* can be transcended through immanent relations established with others selves. This endeavour, however, requires an ethical commitment of the self to renounce appropriation of the other through the use of ontological categories (the *said*, sections 4.5 and 4.6, Chapter Four).

Furthermore, the description of the ontological underpinning of existence based on the anonymous fact of being, invites another reading of Levinas centered on this account of the 'eternal night' of being (Sparrow, 2013). This reading challenges the idea of ethics as first philosophy in terms of a religious concern with the notions of transcendence, infinite responsibility and the 'obsession' for the other. In this respect, Sparrow writes that alterity does not only approach us from the outside, but *'it wells up inside of us to disrupt and menace the smooth operation of the intellect and the*

cultivation of a solipsistic identity' (2013, p.12), echoing Levinas's illustration of the radical otherness of being.

From this standpoint, the insistence on the primacy of the ethical over ontology can be interpreted as Levinas's attempt to defeat the indifference and the horror of being. Indeed, Levinas is equally concerned with ontology, as it is demonstrated in his depiction of existence in terrifying terms as the realm of the indifferent *il ya*, and in order to counteract this ontological reality, he emphasises the ethical dimension of existence. The interplay between the ontological and the ethical is thus expressed in the fact that, in the latter modality, the other human being remains unknown, and yet present to us (Sparrow, 2013, p.7). In this sense, the philosophical conundrum that Levinas introduces is the possibility to establish an ethical relationship with this other human being accepting the fact that s\he remains 'other', overflowing our capacity of representation. It is this aspect of Levinasian ethics that represents an important contribution to the formulation of a dialogic understanding of intercultural interaction, as it emphasises the 'otherness' of self and other, without renouncing the possibility of dialogue and ethical engagement.

Another problematic aspect of Žižek's critique is the idea of a blind and rootless justice. Here, Žižek again uses Levinas with a polemical aim towards post-modern accounts of cultural difference, through a partial reading of *Totality and Infinity* (Levinas, 2008). Although the ethical relation stems from the face to face relation, it is not a privileging of the other over the many, as claimed by Žižek. Rather, the function of this encounter is to turn the self into a singularity, which means that the other singles out the self in its uniqueness, demanding a response: ''*To be unable to shirk: this is the I*'' (Levinas, 1969, p.244).

This individuation of the self by the other acquires a character of universality that Žižek fails to recognise because he misreads the primordiality of the ethical encounter as an excluding of the '*faceless Thirds in background*' (Žižek, 2005, p.183) in favour of a localised form of justice. On the contrary, Levinas introduces the relationship with the third party, meaning the faceless thirds to which Žižek refers, to balance the asymmetry of proximity between self and other (Levinas, 1998). It is language that creates a relation and a community of universality in the constant tension between the *saying* and the *said,* which signifies the contrast between the moment of individuation of the self in the encounter with the other and the necessity to translate this experience in ''*a terrain common to me and the others where I am counted among them*'' (Levinas, 1998, p.160). I return to this interpretation of Levinasian ethics in terms of dialogic commitment later in the present in chapter, in section 5.4, in relation to Ricoeur.

In the next section I continue to address Levinas's critical reception in terms of a relativistic embrace of multicultural versions of a 'good other'. With this discussion I define the stance adopted in relation to the idea of tolerance, which represents a crucial construct in the development of a dialogic understanding of interaction based on the immanent and processual space of the intercultural. Furthermore, I introduce the distinction between a 'good' other and a 'bad' other, which I employ in the analysis of othering conducted in Chapters Seven and Eight.

5.3 Badiou on Levinas

Similarly to Žižek, Badiou (2001) conflates Levinas with an ethics of difference that recalls the critique of ludic postmodernism as a depoliticised celebration of difference and otherness (McLaren, 1995). Betraying an oversimplified reading of *Totality and Infinity*, the only text quoted in Badiou's critique, the whole of Levinas's body of work is

dismissed as a simple form of pious thought. Nevertheless, Badiou raises a number of important questions, first in relation to Levinas's religious overtones and then regarding the role of an ethics of the other in shaping what he defines an ethical ideology of otherness. This latter aspect refers particularly to Badiou's critical reading of Irigaray (1993) and Spivak (1988), whom he accuses of having conceptualised the primacy of an abstract category of the 'Other' that has been reduced to simple tolerance of cultural difference by advocates of multicultural policies.

According to Badiou, ethical decisions are made as a result of a truth procedure in which the self engages with a concrete situation embedded in a specific context. For this reason, there is no such thing as an ethics in general, but only an ethics of singular truths always relative to particular situations and not to abstract categories (for example the categories of *Man, Universal Rights, the Other)*. In this view of ethics, there is not one single truth to which the ethical conduct has to conform, but there are many truths, which belong to four subjects: political, scientific, artistic and amorous. This means that there is not one ethics, but the "*ethic-of (politics, of love, of science, of art)"* (2001, p.28). Thus, similarly to Kantian ethics, for Badiou ethical decisions are always the result of an engagement with a system of truth, although these are not based in a transcendental realm but in an embedded context.

From this perspective, Badiou claims that the problem with the contemporary ethics of the other resides in positing the absolute difference of the other whilst striving to transcend the contingent in the name of an abstract notion of otherness, with the aim to pacify all conflicting claims. According to Badiou this framework is ideological because it represents the symptom of a "*disturbing conservatism"* (2001, p.16), which devalues the ability to produce affirmative thought in humans by emphasising their status as contingent, finite and mortal beings. This abstract category of otherness

impedes to think '*the singularity of situations'* (ibid) in their uniqueness. Badiou argues that this pattern emerges in Levinas's philosophy of the other and it has been applied to the politics of recognition, to the ethics of difference and to multiculturalism,

> Or, quite simply, to good old-fashioned 'tolerance', which consists of not being offended by the fact that others think and act differently from you (Badiou, 2001, p.20).

Here, Badiou touches upon a crucial aspect of intercultural communication that I have discussed in Chapter Four in reference to the aporia between a discourse of tolerance and the reality of conflicting claims in multicultural societies. However, it is important to emphasise how Badiou himself, even in his dismissal of Levinasian ethics, admits that this contemporary ethics of difference is in fact quite distant from Levinas's philosophy. He writes,

> For the honour of philosophy it is first of all necessary to admit that this ideology of a 'right to difference', the contemporary catechism of goodwill with regard to 'other cultures', are strikingly distant from Levinas's actual conception of things (ibid.).

Thus, the real aim of Badiou's critique is the discourse of tolerance that reduces the other to a mirror image of the self, or a 'good other', who is a victim, an object of tolerance and the recipient of compassion. Crucially, his prime target of criticism is culturalism, or the reduction of difference to cultural factors, to which he opposes a notion of difference that emphasises multiplicity as the fundamental character of being: '*Infinite alterity is quite simply what there is*' (Badiou, 2001, p.25).

Therefore, Badiou's critique of Levinas can be summarised as follows: first of all, for the other to transcend mere finite experience, and thus to negate sameness and the identity of the self, ethics has to acquire a religious significance. Failure to admit this religious character of ethics, argues Badiou, leads to the insistence on the finitude of the self and on tolerance of the other*,* which is attributed to contemporary identity

politics and cultural relativism. In this case, the ideology of otherness is one of domestication, meaning that the other is recognised and tolerated only when within the reach of our understanding.

For Badiou, this conception of an ethics of tolerance requires that the menace of evil is always present alongside the ideological image of a good other. On the one side, the image of a good other represents the object of cultural tolerance and it underpins the rhetorical use of cultural difference in depoliticised versions of multiculturalism (McLaren, 2005). On the other, the presence of an evil other who is inassimilable in civilised society offers a unifying moment in which to reassert the values of freedom and tolerance against barbarism. In this last instance, Badiou brings the example of the war in former Yugoslavia as an illustration of the evil other threatening the values of Western Europe. In Chapters Seven and Eight I return to this topic of an abject other and a sublimated Western self, and I discuss the relevance of processes of othering for intercultural ethics. In the context of this chapter, the importance of this critique resides in that fact that it offers the opportunity to rescue Levinasian ethics from simplistic claims to tolerance of the cultural other, through a closer reading of Levinas's linguistic turn in *Otherwise than being* (1998).

In fact, through the categories of the *saying* and the *said,* Levinas articulates ethics as an event that disrupts all attempts at totalising thought into a closed system. Indeed, the status of the *saying* as event and interruption of totality recalls Badiou's conception of event in relation to ethics. This means that ethical decisions result not from a form of procedural activity and the adherence to an abstract ethical category, but from the engagement with the singularity-the uniqueness, of a situation. Levinas's description of proximity as an *anarchical-* i.e. without origin, primordial relationship with a singularity expressed in the *saying*, through which the self is compelled to respond when

addressed by an other, recalls Badiou's notion of the ethical as the result of the activity of the self in response to a singular, embedded and unique context. Similarly, the aforementioned univocal sense that is disclosed by the encounter with alterity discussed in Chapter Four in relation to Levinas, parallels Badiou's universalistic aspirations as opposed to cultural relativism (Spargo, 2006). I articulate this point in more detail in the next section, with a discussion of Ricoeur's reflection on Levinasian ethics.

5.4 *Ricoeur on Levinas*

Ricoeur (1992) engages with Levinas in a productive confrontation that adds a new distinction to the concept of otherness, that of *idem or sameness* (the permanence in time of identity) and *ipseity* (the selfhood). These two elements constitute the self as a narrative subject who maintains a core identity ordering disparate events in a coherent narrative of the self. Thus, Ricoeur proposes the notion of a split *cogito*, which problematizes the role of the centrality of the subject as the master of meaning (Kearney, 2004). For this reason, as the meaning of selfhood is constructed narratively, and thus intersubjectively, otherness is not an element that confronts the self from the outside but it is an ontological feature of subjectivity. This means that the *cogito* loses its univocal character, confronting the other from the core of subjectivity itself. In this context Ricoeur introduces the notion of polysemy of otherness, meaning that each person is irreducible to the otherness of other persons, '*the Other is not reduced to the otherness of another Person*' (Ricoeur, 1992, p.317; capitals in the original). In this sense, otherness is no longer the counterpart of sameness, but belongs to the constitution of the self.

Ricoeur addresses Levinas directly with a critique of the relationship between the same and the other (or between sameness-identity and otherness). Whilst for Ricoeur

there is a dialectic relation between *idem* and *ipseity,* the relationship sameness/otherness is one of radical opposition in Levinas,

> This pretension expresses a will to closure, more precisely a state of separation, that makes otherness the equivalent of radical exteriority (Ricoeur, 1992, p.336).

This means that the other, as radical exteriority, constitutes the self as responsible and capable of responding, shifting the origin of selfhood in the word of the other, '*placed at the origin of my acts*' (ibid.). However, for Ricoeur this radical separation means that the exteriority of the other cannot be expressed in the language of relation,

> The Other absolves itself from relation, in the same movement by which the Infinite draws free from Totality (ibid.).

This state of absolute otherness is achieved through the use of hyperbole, which for Ricoeur is not simply utilised by Levinas as a stylistic device, but as a '*systematic practice of excess in philosophical argumentation*' (1992, p.337). These hyperbolic claims of a solipsistic ego and the absolute exteriority of the face, means that to the hyperbole of separation on the side of the same is opposed the hyperbole of epiphany on the side of the other,

> Separation has made interiority sterile. Since the initiative belongs wholly to the Other, it is in the accusative- a mode well named- that the I is met by the injunction and made capable of answering, again in the accusative: ''It's me here!'' (Ricoeur, 1992, pp.337-338).

Here, argues Ricoeur, comes to light the aporetic structure of Levinasian accounts of otherness: if interiority is determined by a desire for closure and solipsism, how can the self hear the call of the other? This capacity for reception is, according to Ricoeur, the result of a reflexive structure of the self, meaning that otherness is already present in the structure of the same, in the identity of the self. This means that the movement from the self to the other and from the other to the self is dialectically complementary:

from the same to the other, which unfolds in the constitution of selfhood, and from the other to the same in the ethical dimension of injunction, in which the self opens to the demands of the other, '*If another were not counting on me, would I be capable of keeping my word, of maintaining myself?*' (Ricoeur, 1992, p.341).

To summarise, if in Levinas the other places the self in the condition of accusativity and retains its own character of radical exteriority, in Ricoeur the injunction coming from the other has to be received by a being capable of self attestation and reflexivity. In this regard, I agree with Cohen (2002) that Ricoeur has misinterpreted the role of the other in awakening the self to responsibility. In particular, the readings of both Hendley (2000) and Burns (2008) highlight the pragmatic character of Levinasian ethics, referring to the communicative dimension of ethical responsibility. In this interpretation, the face of the other is tied to expressiveness and represents the event of communication between embodied subjects (Burns, 2008). Indeed, the origin of the ethical relation is described by Levinas (1969) as the other announcing him/herself through speech. Through this event of expression, the other thus guarantees herself/himself through speech that addresses the self,

> bearing witness to oneself, and guaranteeing this witness. This attestation of oneself is possible only as a face, that is, as speech (Levinas, 1969, p.201).

The other and self facing each other as interlocutors are bound by what Levinas terms '*a primordial word of honour*' (1969, p.202), which recalls Habermasian commitment to rational communication (Hendley, 2000). In this sense, Levinas writes that:

> What we call the face is precisely this exceptional presentation of self by self, incommensurable with the presentation of realities simply given, always suspect of some swindle, always possibly dreamt up. To seek truth I have already established a relationship with a face which can guarantee itself, whose epiphany itself is somehow a word of honour. (…) No fear, no trembling could alter the straightforwardness of this relationship, which preserves the discontinuity of relationship,

resists fusion, and where the response does not evade the question (1969, p.202).

Thus, the asymmetry in the relationship with the other does not exclude reciprocity in meaningful exchange, because mutual understanding requires deference and obligation towards the other as well as the need to justify and judge claims (Hendley, 2000). From this perspective, I agree with Shaw (2008) in arguing that the relation self/other is expressed in terms of responsibility, and not of cognition, meaning that Levinasian ethics rests on intersubjective relations and actions that arise from these relations, rather than on the inexpressible nature of the face of the other. In this sense, I understand this preoccupation with the notion of infinite and asymmetrical responsibility not as a claim to the impossibility of approaching the other and establish a relation, but as a shift in focus towards the dynamics of practical engagement between others. Indeed, the description of the self as 'obsessed' by the other, traumatised and exposed to the other without reciprocity, represents a critique of the notion of a sovereign subject to which Levinas contrasts another dimension of the self that is existentially affected by the other, thus revaluing sensibility over reason. In his words, this passivity of the self exposed to the other *'is the way opposed to the imperialism of consciousness open upon the world'* (Levinas, 1998, p.92). Thus, the solipsistic activity of the ego is interrupted in this dimension in which the encounter with an other forces the self to critical reflection and to the need to justify one's own actions and claims (Perpich, 2008).

Having addressed the critiques of two tenets of Levinasian ethics, namely, the status of the other and the asymmetrical relation between self and other, I define the stance that informs this thesis in terms of a dialogic interpretation of Levinasian ethics. This dialogic reading avoids the danger of essentialising an unknowable other, thus creating a separation between the two poles of interaction. In light of this reading, in

which I favour the dimension of practical engagement in dialogue rather than the epistemological issues regarding the status of the face of the other, I discuss next the implications of dialogism for intercultural communication. Therefore, in the next section I address the second aim of the present chapter, by articulating this dialogic reading of Levinasian ethics in the context of research in intercultural communication that favours a dialogic approach. I define the contribution of Levinasian ethics in the context of existing research and I discuss the difference between the dialogism of the I/Thou relation proposed by Xu (2013) and the asymmetrical ethical relation.

5.5 Dialogic intercultural communication

As Cissna and Anderson (2002) argue in relation to the I/Thou relationship established by Buber (2004), setting the conditions of a praxis of dialogue represents one of the major challenges of our times. In this thesis I maintain that, in order to allow the emergence of a dialogic moment of communication, dialogue cannot be controlled through the setting of outcomes, but it has to remain open-ended. This vision of dialogic communication has profound consequences for the concept of competences in interculturalism. In Chapter Six I bring forward a notion of dialogic interaction that is multiperspectival and responsive to context, focusing on the processual character of communication and the interdependence of self and other, based on the Levinasian framework developed in this thesis. Before I delineate this model in more detail, in the remainder of the present chapter I illustrate the relation between self and other that is enacted in dialogic communication, as opposed to reification of the other that occurs in essentialist and neo-essentialist intercultural communication.

Heisey (2011) and Orbe (2007) base dialogic intercultural communication research, teaching and learning on the I-Thou relationship (Buber, 2004), characterised by

'*mutuality, openness, and understanding, whatever the differences that are represented in the Other'* (Heisey, p.11). In this respect, as I illustrated in Chapter One, Orbe (2007) identifies the following fallacies in the history of intercultural communication: an over reliance on traditional empirical approaches that rely on large national groups, a Eurocentric and ethnocentric bias, and essentialism grounded in the modalities in which cultural difference is assumed to guide communication. In Orbe's model of dialogic intercultural communication, researchers should include the contradictions, the tensions and the power dimension at play in communication, thus highlighting multiple perspectives and a deeper appreciation of complexity. In this sense, according to Orbe dialogic communication addresses more effectively the issue of power in intercultural communication, foregrounding an existential dimension of dialogue modelled on the reciprocal I-Thou relation.

Similarly, Xu invites a parallel between Buber and Levinas to design a model of dialogic interaction in intercultural communication, in which the I is conceived as a product of the ' ''*between" of the self, the other, and historical situation (Buber) and a call from the other* (Levinas)' (Xu, 2013, p.6). Furthermore, Xu employs Bakhtin's concept of dialogue to argue that relation and situated interaction should become the focus of intercultural communication, not '*the ontological difference between cultures*' (2013, p.7). An example of dialogic intercultural communication research is that of intercultural organisational communication, which is concerned with '*asymmetry, paradox, domination and suppressed conflicts in everyday organizational experiences'* (2013, p.13), and analyses business practices in multinational contexts, addressing issues of inequality and exploitation (Deetz, 1992, 2001; Barge and Little, 2002; Deetz and Simpson, 2004).

Following Xu, in delineating the features of a dialogic model of intercultural competence, I begin by discussing the concept of dialogue in Buber, although I intend to focus on the conflictual relationship between Buber and Levinas. To this end, I set out to challenge the parallel established by Xu between Buber and Levinas in order to emphasise the asymmetrical character of the ethical relation in contrast to the reciprocal relation I/Thou, and highlight the consequences for the conceptualisation of dialogic intercultural communication. Finally, I draw a parallel between Levinasian ethical communication and the notion of answerability in Bakhtin, as more concerned with the immanent and situated character of the relation between self and other than the I/Thou relationship. This discussion creates the backdrop for the notion of embodiment that is developed in the dialogic framework in Chapter Six.

5.5.1 Buber and Levinas

Buber (2004) distinguishes between the direct relation of the I/Thou and the relation of knowledge between the *I* and the *It*. This means that in the first mode we encounter the other in dialogue, whereas in the second mode the other is treated as an object of knowledge. In this sense, this distinction recalls Levinas's contrast between encountering the other in *saying* as opposed to relating to the other under the modality of the *said.* However, if Buber establishes a condition of reciprocity, so that the relation assumes '*being chosen and choosing'* (2004, p.17), Levinas insists on the passivity of the self affected by the other. In fact, for Levinas the encounter I/Thou does not occur as an act of volition from two autonomous selves, because the ethical relation represents a departure from the sphere of consciousness, which he defines as a paradox of responsibility: '*I am obliged without this obligation having begun in me, as though an order slipped into my consciousness like a thief, smuggled itself in'* (Levinas, 1998, p.13).

Another important distinction established by Buber (1965) is that between being and seeming, in which the former represents an authentic mode of existence and the latter a form of existence based on appearance and dependence on the impressions made on others. An inauthentic mode of existence is expressed in communication in the form of *speechifying*, meaning conversation without dialogue. On the other hand, genuine dialogue requires the presence to one another, '*when mutuality stirs, then the interhuman blossoms into genuine dialogue*' (Buber, 1965, p.81). The fundamental difference between this conception of dialogue and Levinas's ethical encounter is of ontological nature: the *interhuman* dimension for Buber represents an ontological reality, because in dialogue the self is authentic, true to his/her being. However, for Levinas encountering the other means to escape being, and discover another dimension of the self than did not exist prior to this relation.

Furthermore, dialogue can be either genuine, which establishes '*a living mutual relation'* (Buber, 1947, p.19), or technical, prompted by the need of objective understanding. This living mutual relation recalls the *saying* in that it foregrounds open-endedness over outcome. Ethical language, as dialogue, establishes a common world, although Levinas emphasises the material and concrete presence of self and other, rejecting the spiritual overtones of the I/Thou relation (Atterton, Calarco and Friedman, 2004; Strasser, 2004). Instead, Levinas describes this relation in terms of a presence that is '*absolutely straightforward, the most straightforward there is, straightforwardness itself and yet straightforwardness that is not thematised*' (2008, p.12). In other words, transcendence from the ontological is achieved within the finitude of the intersubjective relation between self and other.

5.5.2 Bakhtin and Levinas

Bakhtin's notion of subjectivity is relational, meaning that the self is constituted by the dialogical relation with the other. This dialogism assures not only the dynamism of the relationship between self and other, it also determines the dynamic character of subjectivity itself. Recalling Levinas's notion of asymmetry, in dialogical interaction self and other do not coincide, meaning that the roots of ethics are posited in responsiveness to the other: '*without the alterity of the other, dialogue ends*' (De Boer, Kristoffersen, Lidbom et.al., 2013, p.22). The ethical significance of this responsiveness to the other resides in the immanent character of ethical choices, which are responsive to context and do not adhere to a predetermined set of rules.

This aspect of ethical engagement is reflected in Bakhtin's notion of answerability, meaning the unique character of each individual engaging and participating in the world, which translates in a concrete experience of ethical responsibility, 'my *non-aliby* in it' (1993, p.57). From this perspective, the primacy conferred to the immediacy of experience over pre-determined moral norms signals an overcoming of Kantian transcendental ethical imperatives. This point is illustrated in the *ought*, to which Bakhtin refers to represent the unique participation of the self in the world that produces '*my own actively answerable deed'* (ibid.),

> The ought becomes possible for the first time where there is an acknowledgement of the fact of a unique person's being from within that person; where this fact becomes a centre of answerability-where I assume answerability for my own uniqueness, for my own being (1993, p.42).

This notion of answerability recalls Levinas's idea of the subject absorbed in self-preservation prior to the ethical relation, and the discovery of the other as the need to answer for one's right to be, which discloses the self as a unique and responsible

being. Contra Kantian ethics, the content of this ought is not universalisable as it is the expression of the uniqueness of an individual in response to a concrete and unique situation. Bakhtin opposes this irreplaceable character of the self to the formalism of Kantian practical reason as it provides '*no approach to a living act performed in the real world*' (1993, p.27).

Thus, both Levinas's responsibility and Bakhtin's answerability coincide in denoting a response to the other that occurs within a dialogical situation, through engagement between self and other in communication. For Bakhtin (1981), this uniqueness of the individual is realised in language, in the polysemy of words and their internal dialogism, representing the lived experience of language use in determined socio historical contexts. This ideologically charged nature of words is reflected in their heteroglossia, meaning that language is not a neutral entity that is appropriated by each individual in uniform ways. On the contrary, words acquire manifold meanings in relation to their embeddedness in concrete usage,

> As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own (Bakhtin, 1981, pp.293-294).

This conception of language as ideologically loaded is defined a living utterance, indicating its being located in a specific environment and immersed in the heteroglossia of other living utterances. This dialogic character of language resides in its *addressivity* (Bakthin, 1986), the fact that these living utterances are always

directed to others, who are active participants in communication. When this dialogism is interrupted, language becomes reified and disembodied from its context, turning into a '*mechanical reaction*' (Bakhtin, 1986, p.123) in which participants are able to predict utterances and respond as if they were part of a machinery. As in the *saying* and the *said,* language in the lived experience of interaction loses its immediacy and open-endedness when it is thematised, upon entering the realm of objectifying knowledge.

The concept of language as a dialogic entity has important implications for the notion of intercultural competence, particularly the dangers of reification and totality that occur when the necessity to determine the outcome pacifies the impredictability of dialogue, so that the promise of understanding is totalised in the search for a final dimension of reconciliation of differences.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have contextualized the relevance of Levinasian ethics in contemporary thinking on otherness and cultural relativism. Žižek and Badiou critique Levinas from the standpoint of universalistic aspirations in contrast to the ethics of tolerance of the other and to multicultural relativism. In response to this critique, I have argued that Levinasian ethics addresses this problematic through a form of communicative ethics that is based on the relation between embodied subjects. Ricoeur addresses another problematic aspect of Levinasian ethics, that of the radical asymmetry between self and other. In this respect, I have pointed at the dialogic aspect of the communicative relation between self and other through Levinas's linguistic turn in the distinction between the *saying* and the *said.*

The discussion regarding the epistemic validity of Levinasian ethics conducted in the present chapter represents an important aspect in the formulation of a dialogic

interpretation of intercultural communication because it illustrates the stance adopted in this thesis in relation to alterity, or otherness. Having thus established the underpinnings of this relation, in the next chapter I introduce a dialogic conceptualisation of intercultural interaction informed by Levinasian ethics, which addresses the problematic aspects of intercultural communication as they have been hitherto examined in this thesis.

Chapter Six. Dialogism and intercultural competence

6.1 Introduction

In the present chapter I problematize the epistemological assumptions underpinning the transformation of the self postulated as the outcome of the acquisition of intercultural competences in two frameworks, Deardorff's pyramid model (2006, 2009) and the ICOPROMO project (Glaser, Guilherme et al, 2007), which I consider paradigmatic of a neo-essentialist approach to intercultural communication. The third model of competence is based on the notion of dwelling (Phipps, 2007), and it illustrates a novel approach in intercultural studies in presenting intercultural encounters as learning processes that lead to dwelling in previously unfamiliar cultural spaces.

Through a critique of the discourse of effectiveness that characterises both Deardorff's pyramid model and the ICOPROMO project, and the critical engagement with the Heideggerian underpinnings of Phipps' notion of dwelling, I introduce a conceptualisation of dialogic interaction that is situated in the –*inter,* or the immanent and processual space of the intercultural. Furthermore, I address the concerns relating to the relationship between structure and agency expressed in Chapter Two of this thesis, and I discuss the pertinence of notions of class, socio-economic inequality and linguistic hegemony in the conceptualisation of competence. In doing this, I reframe the relationship between self and other in terms of Levinasian engagement between embodied subjects, according to the theoretical discussion conducted in Chapters Four and Five.

With the notion of dialogic interaction, I begin to address the second research question:

Can a theory of intercultural communication be devised which takes account of difference and otherness as constitutive of communication, while also blurring the distinction between inter- and intra- cultural communication?

With the critical reading of two competence frameworks, in this section I delineate the features of the autonomous Kantian individual who is in control of the interaction. In reference to Derrida's ethics of hospitality (Chapter Four, section 4.3), I highlight the limitations of cultural tolerance that emerge in the two models and I contrast the value of autonomy with that of inter-dependence. Furthermore, I highlight the power dimension present in both frameworks, and I integrate the philosophical discourse conducted in the preceding chapters with a reflection on the issue of inequality in communication. This aspect has important repercussions in the conceptualisation of a dialogic understanding of interaction that emphasises the provisional and open-ended dimension of interaction. Indeed, as it becomes evident in the present chapter, the analysis of context offered by research in the field of sociolinguistics provides a complementary perspective to the largely philosophical line of inquiry adopted in this thesis. With this interdisciinary connection I aim to begin to unravel the complexity entailed in intercultural interaction.

6.2 The Pyramid model and the ICOPROMO project

Following from the theoretical discussion relating to the idea of hospitality and to the ethical status of the self in the encounter with the other in Levinasian ethics, I focus on the critique of two models of competence. These two models illustrate the Kantian ideal of an autonomous and self-sufficient self who is in control of the interaction and is unaffected by the role played by the other in communication. In particular, I draw attention to an epistemological issue, which I identify in the passage from a monocultural self to inter-relationality that is postulated in both the

pyramid model and the ICOPROMO project as a result of the acquisition of skills and intercultural competences.

Whereas the notion of a monocultural identity is unproblematized in both frameworks, I adopt a critical stance in relation to the idea of an idealised self as expression of a national culture and of a national language, which indicates an essentialist orientation according to which cultures are clearly defined entities delimited by national boundaries. Furthermore, to the critique of monocultural identity as expression of an essentialist conception of culture, I add another dimension relating to ethics. As the contrast between Kantian autonomy and Levinasian heteronomy illustrated in Chapter Four suggests, the notion of monoculturality is rooted in the ideal of a self-sufficient and self-governing individual reflected in the conception of ethical autonomy of Western liberal tradition. With the critical reading of the two models of competence I aim to tease out this particular aspect relating to ethical autonomy and I argue for a different conceptualisation of the relation between self and other based on dialogism.

6.2.1 The Pyramid model

The notion of competence delineated by Deardorff (2006, 2009) aims to provide a framework to guide intercultural dialogue according to a pyramid model in which the main four elements are ordered hierarchically: attitudes, skills, knowledge, internal and external outcomes. These elements can be applied to a variety of contexts to guide and assess the development of intercultural competence. In this model, intercultural competence is defined in terms of effectiveness in communication achieved through the following:

- **Attitudes**: a combination of respect, openness and curiosity in showing interest in others and their cultures.

- **Knowledge**: in this model, culture is defined as a set of values, beliefs and norms held by a group of people. Culture shapes behaviour and consequently it influences interaction with others. Thus, from this perspective, competence requires the ability to understand the world from others' perspectives.

- **Skills**: the skills required for the development of intercultural competences refer to the acquisition and processing of knowledge, the ability to observe, listen, evaluate, analyse, interpret and relativise.

- **Internal outcomes:** ideally, the combination of attitudes, knowledge and skills lead to flexibility, adaptability, ethnorelativity and empathy, meaning the ability to respond to others according to the ways in which they desire to be treated.

- **External outcomes:** here, communicative behaviour can be assessed in determining how effectively and appropriately the individual performs in intercultural situations, particularly in showing cultural sensitivity and adherence to cultural norms.

In this framework language is described a vehicle to understand others' worldviews, so that intercultural competence founds an ideal place of development in the foreign language classroom, in order to graduate *global ready students who are not only fluent in another language but who can also successfully navigate other cultures'* (Deardorff, 2006, p.42). The assessment of competence relating to this pyramid model is based on:

- Prioritising goals relating to intercultural communication competence: goals can be set in advance according to purpose, '*to determine which specific elements of intercultural competence should be the focus of programmatic efforts and assessment endevours'* (Deardorff, 2011b, p.72).

- Setting realistic and measurable outcomes through a multimethod and multiperspective plan. This means collecting a range of evidence both direct and indirect.

- Collecting direct evidence in the form of learning contracts, e-portfolios including reflection papers, photos and other documentation of learning, critical reflection which pushes learners to move beyond descriptive reflection, and finally performance in intercultural situations. Indirect evidence is collected through surveys, interviews and focus groups.

The final outcome of this process of acquisition of competences allows the self to move from the personal level, represented by attitudes, to an inter-personal and interactive level. This conclusion, however, poses an epistemological issue residing in the passage from an autonomous, monocultural self to inter-relationality that occurs as the result of the acquisition of skills. In fact, although the acquisition of the required attitudes leads to appropriate cultural behaviours in intercultural situations, the role of the other in shaping competence is neglected in the emphasis placed on skills and measurable, realistic outcomes. As a consequence, what Deardorff interprets as inter-relationality stands for a change in behaviour generating from a static notion of culture occurring after the acquisition of competences, rather than through a process of transformation originating from the 'inter', the processual act of interaction.

Therefore, in this ideal model of competence, the unpredictability of actual encounters is ignored. This unpredictable aspect of interaction is captured by to the notion of messiness (Phipps, 2007), which I employ in this thesis to describe intercultural communication as *saying*, indicating the contingent and embedded character of encounters. It is this character, this messiness, which renders problematic Deardorff's preoccupation with skills and outcomes, because by focusing on these, Deardorff overlooks the *saying* as a moment of emergence of meaning co-constructed by self and other. Moreover, the dimension of power is also absent, particularly in relation to symbolic power and the symbolic capital (Bourdieu,

1991) attached to learning a foreign language, notably English (Pennycook, 2007), as well as in relation to power as a force of domination and control (Fairclough, 1989, 1995; Foucault, 1977).

With post-structuralist theory the notion of discourse becomes prominent in regard to the role of language in society and in establishing a relation between knowledge and power. As Fairclough (1989) argues, language and power are closely connected parts of a wider network, which includes the practices and institutions that produce societal formations. Power exercised through the use of language with the ''*manufacture of consent*'' (Fairclough, 1989, p.4), is opposed to the exercise of power through coercion. According to Foucault (1977) power is a pervasive practice that operates within institutional apparatuses to produce control. In this sense, discourse is not strictly linguistic, but it comprises all the social practices that combine to create an object of knowledge. I return to this point in Chapter Seven, in section 7.3, to discuss the role of gender in intercultural communication, examining the creation of an abject other through representations of the female body. In the present chapter I focus on the notion of symbolic capital attached to the use of English in the two models of intercultural competence examined.

The concept of symbolic capital elaborated by Bourdieu (1991), compares linguistic exchange to an economic exchange, in the sense that words are not only signs that convey meanings, but they also represent a linguistic capital. Words are '*signs of wealth intended to be evaluated and appreciated*' and '*signs of authority intended to be believed and obeyed*' (Bourdieu, 1991, p.66). In this ideological context, the dominant linguistic competence represents the most valuable linguistic capital with the highest symbolic profit. For Bourdieu, the prestige associated with the use of a dominant form of language is the result of social mechanisms, which are

reproduced by institutional powers. In particular, the educational system is invested with the specific role of divulging the standard variety of a national language, thus establishing a *'hierarchy of linguistic practices'* (Bourdieu, 1991, p.49). The value attached to linguistic practices is therefore the result of habitus, a learned process that takes shape first within the sphere of the family, or 'primary market', and subsequently in other 'markets', notably schools, where the primary model can either be valued or devalued, if not conform to the dominant linguistic practices. In this process, language becomes a linguistic capital and schools are placed in a central position in the reproduction of the ideology of a standard, unitary, correct language. This domination is achieved not through overt coercion but it is transmitted in the ordinary aspects of everyday life, to the extent that the idea of a standard and correct language becomes a self evident and transparent idea that requires no further investigation.

In relation to this unquestioned status of language in the Pyramid model, particularly the symbolic capital of English, I employ Cameron's argument that language is treated as a given entity, *'like the mythical turtle that supports the world on his back'* (Cameron, 2006, p.143). Deardorff does not explain the contextual reasons that bring individual language users to subscribe to the dominant ideology that underpins the notions of effectiveness and reliability of communicative competence. As Cameron argues, while language is a vehicle for the fashioning and expression of ideologies, it is at the same time shaped by social and ideological forces. Cameron proposes the idea formulated by Voloshinov (1972), that signs are multi-accented, meaning they reflect the different social positions occupied by individual speakers. From this perspective, the apparent consensus surrounding language hides *'the reality of continual struggle over the sign'* (Voloshinov, 1972, p.144),

generated by the material differences existing between social groups. In Chapter Two, section 2.2, I have discussed this aspect in reference to the centripetal and centrifugal forces employed by Bakhtin (2006) to criticise the idea of a unitary language, abstracted from the living context in which it is situated.

Thus, the connection established between language, knowledge, power and the creation of hegemonic language ideologies is absent from Deardorff's pyramid model. Language is unproblematized and it becomes expression of an abstract monocultural speaker, while the complexity entailed in the relation between speakers and the language employed in communication is reduced to the effects of miscommunication due to cultural difference. To summarise, there are three elements that have been neglected in this framework:

- Lack of dialogism between self and other.
- The emphasis on appropriateness, effectiveness and on the instrumental needs of the self in guiding interaction to achieve his/her goals, underplays the influence of the context of interaction and the power dimension involved.
- Culture is not problematized, but taken at face value as a set of beliefs held by a particular group that influences their behaviour. In this way, in the relation self/other, the role performed by the other is limited to that of representing a cultural being.

Deardorff addresses the issue of the Western bias in the pyramid model, and the importance of developing a non-Western perspective in order to account for the role of cultural identity in the acquisition of intercultural communication competence. This issue, according to Deardorff, is also related to the integration of relational aspects that appear beyond the knowledge skills and attitudes described in the pyramid model. A relational model of competence from this perspective is organised according to a Western self and a non-Western other, meaning that both have to

acquire a separate set of skills in order to interact with each other and demonstrate a degree of reciprocal adaptation. This relational model, including both Western and non-Western perspectives, according to Deardorff would eventually lead to a form of global competence. In contrast to this conceptualisation of the relation between self and other, in this chapter I bring forward the idea discussed in relation to Levinas in Chapter Four that self and other meet in the materiality of practical engagement, as embodied subjects and not as abstract entities. Before I describe the features of this type of dialogic engagement, I discuss the representation of the autonomy of the self in the ICOPROMO project.

6.2.2 The ICOPROMO project

As in Deardorff's pyramid model, responding to the necessities of global trade represents a major preoccupation in the ICOPROMO model (Glaser, Guilherme et al. 2007). However, the ICOPROMO project combines the preoccupation with professional development in competitive markets and the idea of transformation. Indeed, this model of competence is defined '*transformational*' because,

> it articulates the journey the individual undergoes when becoming aware of intercultural challenges as a result of his/her mobility or that of others with whom he/she must communicate effectively (Glaser, Guilherme et al. 2007, p.15).

Similarly to Deardorff's model, this training program is targeted at educators and facilitators working with undergraduate, graduate students and professionals who need to develop language and cultural awareness in order to interact effectively in intercultural situations. The transformational journey of the individual towards the acquisition of competences is represented by a traffic light in which the individual is initially positioned on the red light prior to the development of intercultural skills, moving to the amber and green lights once he/she becomes able to interact

effectively with cultural difference. The theoretical premise of this journey is individuated by the authors in the necessities presented by the '*new world order*', meaning the global flows of trade and communication developed after WW2, which in their account has exposed individuals to a higher intensity of cultural difference and consequently to challenges that are linguistic, cultural and emotional. Crucially, the authors define the individual in terms of a '*mono-cultural identity*' (Glaser, Guilherme et al. 2007, p.16), and as a consequence the main aim of the training programme is to cause an attitudinal change towards the other, with the ability to dispel stereotypes about '*members of a foreign culture*' (ibid.).

As mentioned above, the transformational aims of the ICOPROMO model are based on the notion of a 'new world order' that poses the challenge of being able to cope when confronted with cultural difference. The development of intercultural communication competence, in order to bring about attitudinal and behavioural changes, requires: awareness of the self and the other, communication across cultures, the acquisition of cultural knowledge, sense-making, perspective-taking, relationship building and the ability to assume social responsibility. This complex of skills results in intercultural mobility, '*the ability to interact effectively in intercultural professional contexts*' (Glaser, Guilherme et al. 2007, p.17). The theoretical underpinning of this transformational model resides in a conception of the self based on field theory (Lewin, 1935), which studies behaviour as the interaction between personality and environmental pressures. Thus, training is designed with the scope to influence behaviour through intervention that is tailored to the needs of individuals and the particular challenges that they are facing. In more detail, the development of competence begins with the awareness of self and other, particularly dealing with culture shock or '*cultural fatigue*' (Glaser, Guilherme et al.

2007, p.31). This aspect relating to culture shock as a consequence of cultural difference is employed to justify the notion that communication across cultures leads to miscommunication and misunderstanding and the necessity to acquire both language awareness and the acquisition of specific cultural knowledge. The fact of being exposed to new information from a different culture leads in its turn to the necessity to develop the ability of sense-making, in the form of interpreting and making meaning, as well as the skill of *'identifying/perceiving and understanding prevalent values, beliefs and norms in a situation'* (Glaser, Guilherme et al. 2007, p.35). Perspective-taking allows the individual to look at reality from different viewpoints, and to develop empathy and tolerance, flexibility and the ability to decentre. At this stage, when intercultural communication is effective the result is intercultural mobility (Glaser, Guilherme et al. 2007, p.43) although, according to the authors, this mobility needs to be contextualised within a broader project of democratic citizenship, which promotes intercultural interaction and dialogue in complex societies and emerging communities created by intercultural contact.

6.2.3 Discussion

The problematization of Deardorff's model of competence and the ICOPROMO project highlights a number of issues that relate to their epistemological and ontological assumptions. In Figure 4 I illustrate the sequence of the acquisition of competences that is employed in both models.

A problematic aspect in these formulations of competence in intercultural communication is represented by the emphasis placed on the consciousness of the intercultural speaker, which focuses on the cultural divide between self and other. Communication is examined in reference to awareness of cultural differences and

with the use of neutral, scientific vocabulary, expressed in the language employed in intercultural training such as competence, skills, training and effectiveness (e.g. Hofstede and Hofstede, 2004; Deardorff, 2006, 2009; Spencer-Oatey and Standler, 2009). This emphasis on consciousness and on a functional, instrumental understanding of communication influences the ways in which ethical responsibility is understood in intercultural research (e.g. in Guilherme, Keating and Hoppe, 2010).

Motivation to become interculturally competent	Skills	Outcomes
Global trade Need to become competitive Response to culture shock	To acquire knowledge of another culture and the patterns of behaviour associated with it. To relativise and dispel stereotypes attributed to the cultural other.	Effectiveness Cultural sensitivity Tolerance Responsibility Transformation

Fig. 4. Sequence of acquisition of competences

In other words, the transformation of the self into a responsible, intercultural being is presented as a process beginning in a fully bounded individual who acquires the necessary competences to deal with the initial cultural shock that occurs as a consequence of the encounter with another culture. Following the acquisition of competence, not only the individual is then able to deal effectively and sensitively towards the cultural other, but is also able to display varying degrees of criticality and responsibility in dealing with members of other cultures. Thus, the ideal of autonomy critiqued in this thesis emerges in both frameworks in the shape of a self-sufficient and self-governing individual, while the role of the other in interaction is left unexamined.

From this perspective, although the dimension of critical intercultural citizenship developed by Guilherme (2002) is included in the ICOPROMO project, and a critical approach to a static vision of culture is advocated in Deardorff's model, the practical necessity to become competitive in the global market is taken as the principal element that guides the epistemological assumptions underpinning both frameworks, which relate to the conception of the self as an autonomous being. This stance is illustrated by Deardorff in reference to intercultural learning and intercultural courses in further education as a means to equip students for a '*more global, interdependent world*',

> How can we prepare our students to comprehend the multitude of countries and cultures that may have an impact on their lives and careers? More broadly, what knowledge, skills, and attitudes do our students need if they are to be successful in the twenty-first century? (…) Beyond integration of intercultural competence outcomes within courses, it is important to understand that intercultural learning is transformational learning, which requires experiences (often beyond the classroom) that lead to this transformation. (…). To this end, service learning and education abroad become two mechanisms by which students' intercultural competence can be further developed, leading to students' transformation (Deardorff, 2011b, pp.69-70).

The role of global trade is acknowledged as the initiating force behind the development of intercultural training programmes and creates what Holliday (2011) defines in terms of a reification of intercultural training and the creation of a product, which is marketed as intercultural competence. In this way, the intercultural process is presented as the meeting of separate cultural entities, and the role of the intercultural trainer is to facilitate and provide the tools to help navigate and interpret behaviour as expression of cultural difference. The starting point in this process is represented by the notion of culture shock, or cultural fatigue, which is assumed to initiate the transformational process that changes the individual from monocultural to an interculturally competent entity.

The idea of culture shock derives from anthropology and the four stages of adaptation identified by Oberg (1960), beginning with the honeymoon stage during initial contact with a different culture, followed by negative feelings of anxiety, rejection, anger and frustration, ending with adjustment and finally adaption to the new culture. This concept of culture shock has been widely criticised, although it has become embedded in popular consciousness and it is widely used to designate the shock upon encountering an 'exotic' culture (Kuppens and Mast, 2012). In relation to the role of culture shock in both models of competence discussed in this research, I argue that what is described as the encounter with a reality that is incomprehensible and alien represents a more complex phenomenon that comprises a series of factors that neo-essentialist accounts of culture, of which the two models of competence are paradigmatic, fail to acknowledge.

In this sense, what is described in terms of culture shock hides the complexity of factors that influence communication in intercultural encounters, so that miscommunication due to lack of sociolinguistic competence in the use of a dominant language, low socio-economic status, power imbalance and ideological constructs of culture, are all attributed to cultural difference. Therefore, when culture becomes the principal explanatory category to understand intercultural communication, the notion of competence is presented as a fix, a set of tools that the individual can utilise to become tolerant and understanding of other cultural beings in the context of a globalised neo-liberal market, which I understand in terms of the deterritorialised flows of global trade illustrated in Hardt and Negri (2000) and Harvey (2005), characterised by competitiveness and the necessity to interact effectively. Crucially, the focus on cultural difference prevalent in intercultural training, based on the notion of cultural shock experienced by the individual, leaves

unaccounted for that aspect of globalisation which relates to power and cultural capital, or global flows of '*interested knowledge, hegemonic power, and cultural capital*' (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p.1). In other words, it neglects the socio/cultural distinctions of global capitalism.

For this reason, I reject the cultural constructs adopted by Deardorff of a Western perspective on the one side, and a separate cultural block that includes all non-Western cultures on the other. This neo-essentialist dichotomy is also resonant of the opposition noted by Holliday (2011) between the dominant, hegemonic discourses of the West and the process of othering towards peripheral discourses emanating from non-Western perspectives. In other words, the hegemonic discourses of the West position their own production of knowledge in superior and often 'scientific' terms, whilst alternative discourses are interpolated as cultural products of the 'other' (this aspect is also discussed in Chapter Two, in reference to Spivak's notion of epistemic violence). As such, these peripheral and non-Western perspectives are invoked by Deardorff from a neo-essentialist position in the name of the ideal of universal tolerance of the other, in which that the other is reduced to the represention of a cultural standpoint.

This fact recalls the notion of hostipitality discussed in Chapter Four (Derrida, section 4.3) and the critique formulated by Badiou in Chapter Five in regard to the idea of tolerance. For Derrida, tolerance reflects the metaphysics of presence according to which acceptance of the other is always accompanied by the threat of withdrawal of hospitality. According to Badiou, with the idea of tolerance difference is made acceptable within Western parameters of cultural assimilation of the other. Adopting this perspective, in the next section I focus on the notion of tolerance as it is formulated in the pyramid model and the ICOPROMO project, which I read in

terms of a hegemonic relation to the other from the perspective of an idealised intercultural speaker.

6.2.4 The idealised intercultural speaker

Earlier in the present chapter I discussed the relation between language and power, illustrated in the concept of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) and Voloshinov's (1972) notion that signs are multi-accented, reflecting the different social positions occupied by individual speakers. When the empirical observation of intercultural interlocutors is abstracted from the underlying social relations and hegemonic structures that are at play during communication, it generates the idealistic notion of a competent intercultural speaker. This notion of a competent intercultural speaker is idealistic because it represents a mystification of the social relations at play during communicative interactions. Here I employ the term mystification in relation to the concept of commodity fetishism (Marx, 1974), according to which a commodity is understood in terms of its monetary value as the universal equivalent for exchange and not as the product of a specific set of social relations of production (O'Regan, 2014). Thus commodities acquire an intrinsic value that mystifies their material character, the fact that they are the product of human labour,

> It is precisely this finished form of the world of commodities—the money form—which conceals the social character of private labour and the social relations between the individual workers, by making those relations appear as relations between material objects, instead of revealing them plainly (Marx, 1974, p.78).

Similarly, the ideal of a competent intercultural speaker endowed with the characteristics of tolerance, flexibility, reflexivity, ability to decentre and open mindedness hides the material conditions in which the individual is embedded. This idealistic notion of a competent intercultural speaker is often articulated in the

literature on intercultural competence as an individual learning discovery of the aforementioned intercultural characteristics, e.g. Deardorff, 2006 and Wiseman, 2003 in reference to the development of intercultural competence; Chen and Starosta, 1998, 2000; McAllister, Whiteford *et al.* 2006; Guilherme, Keating and Hoppe, 2010; Jackson, 2011 in relation to the acquisition of intercultural sensitivity and the development of reflexivity.

As a consequence of this process of mystification, these characteristics become transcendental categories, by which I mean that their acquisition becomes necessary in order to gain the status of competent intercultural speaker. In other words, the definition of the competent intercultural speaker is established apriori through categories that render possible its constitution as an object of experience. This process, however, relates to idealised individuals who exhibit the desired characteristics whilst embarking on a journey of intercultural learning, in which the outcome has been delineated in advance as the achievement of intercultural competence in terms of discovery of other cultural perspectives, the development of tolerance and the ability to shift cultural perspectives.

In chapter 4, section 5.4.3, I have discussed this aspect in the contrast between the idea of heteronomy and the idea of autonomy and self-sufficiency. I have argued that, according to Levinasian ethics, the autonomous self of Kantian tradition enters in relation to the other from the perspective of tolerance. Understood in Levinasian terms, the abstract individual of competence relates to the other through distance, exercising the categorising ability of the transcendental Kantian ego, whereas the quality of heteronomy surfaces in proximity to the other, in the practice of engagement (section 4.5.4). Therefore, the heteronomy of the self indicates an experience of communication with the other that reveals the limitations of cultural

tolerance, because the self is not in control of interaction. I defined this experience in terms of deferred understanding in contrast to the promise of understanding. This means that, while deferred understanding results from engagement in the course of interaction, the *saying,* tolerance corresponds to a closure, or a totalisation of meaning, the *said* (Chapter Four, section 4.7). From this latter perspective, tolerance is exercised in terms of conditional hospitality, which leaves intercultural communication within an unresolved dichotomy framed in the context of the metaphysics of presence between tolerance and intolerance (hostipitality, section 4.3).

In order to address this issue of an idealised intercultural speaker caught in the aporia of the discourse of tolerance, in the next section I turn to Phipps' notion of dwelling, which emphasises the idea of messiness in intercultural encounters and problematizes neo-essentialist accounts of effectiveness and scientific reliability in the definition of competence.

6.3 Intercultural competence as dwelling

In contrast to both Deardorff and the ICOPROMO project, Phipps (2007) emphasises messiness, unpredictability and the embodied nature of languages in specific cultural contexts as cultural artefacts and markers of identity. This notion of messiness proposed by Phipps contrasts with the idea of culture shock described in reference to the Pyramid model and the ICOPROMO project. On the one side, the idea of culture shock expresses the experience of intercultural encounters as a problem, a potential source of incomprehension and difficulty. On the other, messiness articulates the uncertainty and the precariousness of interculturality in terms of an existential challenge in which the self discovers uncharted possibilities**.**

In developing the notion of dwelling, Phipps utilises the Heideggerian metaphor of language as a dwelling place and the activity of learning another language as preparation to dwell in a new place. As intended by Phipps, dwelling in a language represents the result of an intercultural experience that provides the language learner with a sense of the fleeting and fragile nature of communication between people who may not share the same cultural perspective. She continues describing languages as fully embodied entities, artefacts that function as markers of identity not reducible to a set of skills to be mastered through the acquisition of grammatical competence.

Reflecting on both traditional (e.g. Hall, Hofstede) and critical (e.g. Byram, Guilherme) accounts of intercultural communication, Phipps argues against the tendency to search for 'a quick fix' to conflicts that arise in intercultural contexts. According to Phipps, only partial and situated answers can be found '*in the quick human relatedness, in the contexts of neighbourliness and of learning together as an everyday process of dwelling in the real world*' (2007, p.26). From this perspective, learning languages and experiencing communication across distinct traditions is not a problem in need of '*technological fixes'* (Phipps, 2007, p.23), but an occasion to acquire a dwelling perspective, '*one which is heavier, messier, requires time to be taken in and with languages, people and praxis*' (ibid.).

Despite the evident merits of such a perspective, due to Heidegger's conservative view of the inextricable bond between culture, language and soil as markers of a shared identity, I intend to propose a different conceptualisation of interaction. While I retain Phipps' ideas of messiness and embodiment, I propose the notions of sojourning and of translation of the self as alternatives to dwelling. In delineating the features of interculturality as a form of translation of the self, I draw from Cavell

(1996, 2009) and Derrida (1998). First, I critique the Heideggerian notion of language as dwelling in Being (see Chapter Four, section 4.5 for an explanation of the notion of Being in Heidegger).

The reflection on language developed by Heidegger is related to his wider concern regarding the relationship between being and Dasein (or being-in-the-world) and the existential analysis centred on the concrete structure of human beings in their predominant state of 'everydayness' (Heidegger, 2011). It is through language that Dasein becomes the guardian, or the "shepherd" of being: language intended as poetic creation discloses the ontological nature of the Dasein in harbouring the meaning of being. However, as a result of the oblivion of being in Western philosophy, this authentic relationship of the Dasein with language has been lost: '*Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man'* (Heidegger, 1971, p.146). According to Heidegger, the primordial and true character of language is to be found in dwelling, in letting the meaning emerge from everyday objects through the bond that exists between a language and its own place of dwelling. The Heideggerian notion of dwelling refers to the Old English and High German word Buan, which means to remain, to stay in a place:

> The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is Buan, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell. The old word bauen, which says that man is insofar as he dwells, this word bauen however also means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine (Heidegger,1971,p.147).

Heidegger contrasts calculative thinking, which predominates in modern scientific thought, to meditative thinking and attributes the former to the condition of

homelessness of modernity and the latter to dwelling in a native soil, claiming that

the rootedness and the autochthony of man are threatened by industrialization,

> Many Germans have lost their homeland, have had to leave their
> villages and towns, have been driven from their native soil. (…) They
> have been caught in the turmoil of the big cities, and have resettled in
> the wastelands of industrial districts. They are strangers now to the
> former homeland (Heidegger, 1966, p.48).

In this reading of modernity, man is alienated from this fertile contact with the native

soil, and language has become a mere tool for instrumental thinking, leading to

alienation and inauthenticity. It seems thus, that in acknowledging the often

contradictory and situated nature of communication, and the impossibility to achieve

a formula that would clear all misunderstanding and miscommunication in

intercultural situations, Phipps has not readily accounted for Heidegger's rhetorical

and nationalistic use of the notion of a bond between soil and language (see also

Levinas, 1990; Adorno, 2003; Gauthier, 2011 on this issue). Although in her

interpretation Phipps emphasises the existential dimension of language as a marker

of identity that is fluid and embodied rather than nationalistic or identitarian, I would

question whether the Heideggerian notion of dwelling best describes the non-

essentialist understanding of intercultural communication that I propose in this

thesis, which privileges the *saying* over the *said*. Both Levinas (1990a, 1990b) and

Adorno (2003) have addressed the problematic nature of the bond between

language and dwelling, the former confronting the dichotomy between native and

strangers that stems from the idea of dwelling and the latter with an analysis of the

language employed by Heidegger.

Adorno refers to the language employed by Heidegger in terms of 'jargon',

describing the aura that emanates from the a-historical and decontextualized

repetition of a limited number of words which acquire the character of essences

tinged with the aura of transcendental revelation, particularly the terminology regarding being (which is capitalised in Heideggerian texts), existence and authenticity (Adorno, 2003; Hearfield, 2004). For Adorno, this use of language creates the sense of a mythical past that inspires reverence and, as a consequence, it cancels the mediation of the thinking subject in the dialectic between word and thing, providing the illusion that words appear from a higher dimsntion to that of the empirical world. Adorno attacks the idea of rootedness and its expression in the archaic, poetic language to which Heidegger recurs in order to illustrate the relatedness between dwelling, authentic thinking and language, describing it as '*washed out clichés in plough-and-furrow novels (…)*'; continuing:

> Whoever is forced by the nature of his work to stay in one place, gladly makes a virtue out of necessity. He tries to convince himself and others that his bound-ness is of a higher order (Adorno, 2003, p.44-45).

The critique of the ontological significance of place and native soil, or autochthony, is further elaborated by Levinas in reference to dwelling as the place where the wanderer finds refuge. In this reading, Heidegger's vision of rootedness creates a dichotomy between natives and strangers,

> One's implementation in a landscape, one's attachment to place, without which the universe would become insignificant and would hardly exist, is the very splitting of humanity into natives and strangers (Levinas, 1990, p.232).

Furthermore, whereas Heidegger laments technological advancement, Levinas welcomes technology which '*wrenches us out of the Heideggerian world and the superstitions regarding Place*' (Levinas, 1990, p.232; capitalisation in original). In line with Adorno's critique, Levinas describes with irony the transcendent use of everyday language and the rediscovery of the holy aspect hiding beneath the mundane that, according to Heidegger, allows the ineffable to become manifest,

> to follow a path that winds its way through fields, to feel the unity created by the bridge, the bridge that links the two river banks and by the architecture of buildings, the presence of a tree, the chiaroscuro, the forests, the mystery of things, of a jug, of worn out shoes of a peasant girl, the gleam from a carafe of wine sitting on a tablecloth (Levinas, 1990, p.232).

This archaic portrait exaggerates Heideggerian language, evoking a return to the true significance of Being gleaming behind everyday objects in their authentic relationship with place. Heidegger's return to an originary understanding of the truth of being is replaced by Levinas with a departure from ontological thinking- or thinking about Being, to ethical thinking, in particular the ethical necessity of welcoming the other unconditionally (see the notion of hospitality in Derrida, Chapter Four, section 4.3 of this thesis). If being builds and cultivates (Heidegger, 1971), in Levinas the thinking subject is destabilised by the arrival of the other, who poses the ethical demand that dwelling becomes a place of unconditional welcome.

This form of ethical thinking opposes Heidegger's philosophy of place and rootedness with a philosophy of the 'émigré', which establishes the dignity of those who leave their native soil,

> He or she who emigrates is fully human: the migration of man does not destroy, does not demolish the meaning of being (Levinas, 2006, p.101).

The philosophy of the migrant, developed in Levinas's Talmudic writings (1994, 2007) into a wider reflection on the significance of cities as places of refuge for the exiles and the oppressed fleeing persecution (Eisenstadt, 2003), can be contrasted to Heidegger's longing for a return to the authenticity of a native soil. Although this ethics of hospitality (Derrida, 2000, 2001) reflects the aporia between the ideal of unconditional welcome and the reality of legal and political limitations, it represents

nevertheless a promise of deferred justice, or an ideal that ought to guide ethical reflection.

In this manifestation of the other as hospitality towards the émigré resides the essence of language as sociality and ethical commitment to dialogue: '*it puts in common a world hitherto mine*' (Levinas, 2008, p.174). In its intersubjective character, which in this thesis I describe in terms of *saying,* language is thus not the expression of a higher truth of being that is disclosed through an authentic bond with a native soil, rather it establishes sociality in the form of dialogic interaction. Dialogue as *saying* challenges Heidegger's notion of language as the source of the meaning of being in virtue of its rootedness in a native soil, and the idea of awakening to an authentic form of language that lay dormant underneath its everyday and mundane use. Thus, with the notion of *saying* it is possible to eschew the conception of the naturalness of a native language as it appears in Heidegger, accompanied by the benign image of a mother tongue that we use naturally from birth in virtue of its belonging to a place of dwelling.

In this context, I signal Cavell's (2005) attempt to reconcile the union of dwelling, thinking and language with the philosophy of the 'émigré', rescuing the idea from the rhetoric of rootedness and authenticity in favour of a more dynamic understanding of dwelling as '*living lightly'* and being prepared '*for departure and the new*' (Cavell and Standish, 2012, p.169). Cavell, reflecting on both Heidegger's and Thoreau's depictions of land in terms of settling, ploughing, growing, tending and care, contrasts two modalities of dwelling: the transcendent emphasis on the fulfilment of destiny of Dasein through the authentic relationship with the native land that is so important to Heidegger, and the worldly tending of the land in Walden, the character in Thoreau's novel (1995), through the modality of 'sojourning',

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> The river poetizes the human being because, in providing 'the unity of locality and journeying', it conceals and reveals Dasein's being and becoming 'homely', 'homelike', I might say homebound. Walden's word for maintaining something like this unity, in its opening paragraph, is 'sojourning', living each day, everywhere and nowhere, as a task and an event (Cavell, 2005, p.229).

Cavell here recognises the fundamental human need to dwell and inhabit, to be at home, but points at the same time to "*the essential immigrancy of the human*" (2005, p.229), or the fact that dwelling is a precarious state that can be interrupted both voluntarily and through forced exile in the events of war and political upheaval.

Returning to Phipps' notion of learning a language as finding a new place of dwelling, in light of this discussion I argue that the experience of learning a new language rather than being comparable to finding a new dwelling is more akin to a displacement of the familiar and to an awakening that reveals the arbitrariness of language itself, its socially constructed nature and its internal stratification (Bakhtin, 1981), or to use Phipps' terminology, its messiness and embodied character. In this regard, in order to emphasise this messiness and embodiment, I propose Cavell's notion of translation of the self (1996, 2009) and the notion of estrangement to the idea of mother tongue in Derrida (1998).

According to Cavell (2009), there are three modes of understanding in relation to culture:

The patriotic, based on the notion of native soil.

The cosmopolitan, which seeks the common principle of humanity.

The multiculturalist, funded on the principle of the politics of recognition and the comparison between cultural traditions.

A common pitfall of all three approaches, argues Cavell, is the contrasting relationship established between the native and the foreign, whether in view of a form of solidarity between different nations (the patriotic), of fusion (the

cosmopolitan) or harmony (the multiculturalist). What is missing is an interrogation of the familiar and what is *''allegedly native to us (…)''* or, more specifically, an understanding of the problematic nature of the concept of a native language with its accompanying cultural identity that, when scrutinised closely, reveals a *''sense of the rivenness of home, the rift within ourselves''* (Cavell, 1996, p.134). In other words, this means that beneath the surface of cultural identity and language resides this internal split of the self, the fact that what we call home *''cannot be a stable shelter''* because we are in a state of immigrancy from the start (ibid). This means that, although we are born into a language community from which we acquire social meanings, we live from the beginning in a process of translation, in negotiating the modalities in which the language and the conventions of the community are appropriated in unique ways. In this sense, we are never at home within a cultural tradition, but we live in a state of translation and migration, in constant tension between freedom and tradition.

This existential fact of incompleteness of self and other, according to Saito (2009, 2015), is reflected in the practice of linguistic translation, particularly when untranslatable words and concepts surface in the course of linguistic exchange. According to Saito, this experiencing of the unfamiliar through linguistic exchange is comparable to a re-engagement with the ordinary from a new perspective. This means that words and concepts that have become common currency in everyday usage are rediscovered in translation. Furthermore, Saito extends the notion of translation to intra-linguistic contexts. Following Cavell, she argues that due to the lack of transparency between words and their meanings the lives of human beings are always in a process of translation (this lack of transparency of language is also conceptualised in Derrida's metaphysics of presence, Chapter Four, section 4.3).

Similarly, Derrida (1998) employs the notion of translation to question the concepts of cultural identity and native language. From this perspective, Derrida interrogates the notion of native language, arguing that the cultural identity granted in virtue of belonging to a linguistic group is of a precarious nature. Due to the paradoxical situation of speaking a language that does not belong to us, because it was inherited from a linguistic community, we have to translate this language and make it our own, meaning that we can never be completely transparent and identical to ourselves and to a community. Thus language, argues Derrida, is not a natural entity, a mother tongue that belongs naturally to a speaking subject, it is rather a phantasm of possession that in its more extreme manifestations becomes the symbol of appropriation that motivates nationalist aggression and '*monoculturalist homo-hegemony*' (Derrida, 1998, p.64), or identitarian hegemony. In this Derridean perspective, language is not a property, it cannot be possessed, stemming from a source that is ever-receding: the phrase '*prosthesis of origin*' (Derrida, 1998) indicates precisely this impossibility to establish an origin of language, a mother tongue viewed as a natural entity possessed by individual speaking subjects (Wortham, 2010).

In conclusion, I argue that the ideas of immigrancy and of translation of the self proposed by Cavell and Derrida, and of dialogic language as *saying* in Levinas, provide a complementary conceptual illustration to the notions of 'messiness' and languaging (Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004) intended in terms of lived, experiential and open ended engagement with others through language. In the light of this approach based on the notions of sojourning and incompleteness, I suggest that the relationship between self and other can be reconfigured in terms of a relationship between two others. Understood in this manner, intercultural encounters become an

opportunity to discover the incompleteness of the self and to accept that the other can never be fully grasped. In the remainder part of this chapter I explore the implications for intercultural communication of this largely philosophical discussion on the relation between self and language. To this end, I return to the concept of competence to argue for a conception of intercultural interaction in terms of an encounter between others that unfolds dialogically.

6.4 Intercultural Responsibility: Saying or Said?

Having discussed critically three models of intercultural competence, it emerges that a challenging prospect for intercultural research is represented by the development of forms of theoretical approaches that bring forward and engage with the partial, contested and situated nature of language. Ultimately, the dynamics underpinning communication cannot be readily translated into a formula with practical applications measured by the reliable testing of competences. Despite current articulations of the critical intercultural speaker (Byram, Guilherme) and the languaging subject (Phipps, Gonzalez) which are increasingly attentive towards the hybrid and shifting nature of the self and the socially constructed nature of language, more theoretical engagement is needed to challenge the reliance on the functionalist paradigm of communication described in Martin and Nakayama (2010), that characterises models of communicative competence and responsibility.

The reading of Levinas presented here suggests that although we are culturally situated, and our cultural horizon is the first instrument that we use in interpreting the world, the ethical encounter opens up a dialogic dimension of communication that is also critical engagement and concern for the concrete other, rather than simple tolerance towards an abstract 'cultural other'. According to this notion of ethical commitment, human individuals cannot be reduced to members or organs of

any given community, in the sense that cultural categorisation and the notion of 'fixing' communication reduce the ethical force of the encounter with the other.

I suggest that there are a number of factors that need to be accounted for in order to develop an ethical model of intercultural communication that challenges preconceived ideas of the other and of culture. This task begins with a notion of competence that is multiperspectival, meaning that intercultural competence should include the following elements, according to a dialogical understanding of intercultural communication:

- An appreciation of the interdependence of self and other and an awareness of the complexity of real life in which interactions take place, including ideological constructions of culture and the discursive practices that surround the perception of the other (Kramsch, 2009; Dervin, 2011; Holliday, 2011).

- A consideration of the power dimensions at play in communication, particularly socio-economic inequality and sociolinguistic competence in the use of a dominant language in intercultural encounters (Scollon & Scollon, 1995; Blommaert, 1998; Piller, 2011).

- An acceptance of uncertainty in the form of responsible engagement with others in dialogue, through the awareness of the position of the self as potential all-knowing subject that silences the other and ignores the "needs, beliefs, feelings, desires, interests, demands, or injustices faced by interlocutors in any event" (Smith, 1997, p.330).

In this last sense, responsible engagement in dialogue demands that the Cartesian presuppositions that underlie intercultural communication are acknowledged and critiqued by interculturalists. Perhaps, an ethical approach to intercultural communication entails taking the risk of meeting the other qua other, without the safety net of cultural categorisation, and at the same time being aware that the

encounter with the other does not occur in a vacuum, because we are always positioned within networks of power (Foucault, 1977).

6.5 A dialogic understanding of interaction

Here, I delineate an understanding of dialogism that addresses the three aforementioned aspects of intercultural communication: the interdependence of self/other, acceptance of uncertainty and finally power. In this sense, this understanding of interaction is processual, sensitive to context and multiperspectival.

The processual aspect relates to the 'inter' of interculturality, the fact that meanings are constructed in interaction during communicative exchanges. The model of interaction that I describe in the present chapter refers to all the factors that influence interaction, particularly those relating to language and power asymmetry. The multiperspectival indicates that all three elements (interdependence self/other, acceptance of uncertainty and awareness of power) are necessary in order to define dialogic interaction, as opposed to the acquisition of separate, discrete skills prior to interaction, which are employed in instrumental models of competence to guide communicative exchanges starting from a pre-defined image of the other.

6.5.1 The processual

The starting point in delineating the broad features a dialogic model of interaction is that the individual is not a monocultural entity. It is an accepted argument in academic research that identity is not monolithic, but it is ever-evolving and influenced by a variety of multiple allegiances and group memberships, and therefore it is not exhausted by narrow definitions of cultural belonging confined within the category of national identity (see Hall and du Gay, 1996; Hall, 1997).

However, although the notion of multifaceted belonging moves away from culturalism in terms of the assignment of fixed cultural identities, the danger is that in the theorisation of intercultural competence behaviour is still explained in cultural terms, albeit within a conception of culture that is more dynamic and flexible (Dervin et al, 2011). Following from this, here I assume that behaviour is determined by the context of interaction and not by culture, and that the development of dialogic intercultural interaction is dependent on the recognition of the following three factors that influence dialogue: the interdependence of self and other, ideological constructions of culture, and power imbalance.

The interdependence of self and other

Adopting a Levinasian perspective, in Chapter Four I employed the modalities of the *saying* and the *said* as interpretative categories in order to delineate two models of engagement with the other. When the other is encountered under the modality of the *said*, it is fixed and understood through cultural categories. In this case, the other is interpreted through classifications that ensure both reliability and validity, two values that underpin the ideal of transparent communication adopted in the models of intercultural competence discussed in the present chapter. However, when met under the dimension of the *saying*, the other remains other. This means that, as in this latter form of communication the encounter is lived in the experiential sphere of practical and embodied engagement, understanding of the other is not limited to cultural categorisation, but it remains open-ended. From this perspective, the *saying* indicates a modality of encounter in which the self is affected by the other in ways that upset and destabilise previous knowledge and perceptions.

Such an experience is the result of an existential disposition that in Phipps' (2007) terms develops when the self is fully immersed in the messiness of intercultural

encounters and is open to challenge pre-conceived ideas of culture and identity. Therefore, employing the Levinasian terminology discussed in Chapter Four, the type of subjectivity that emerges from this existential experience is viewed under the modality of accusativity, meaning that the meeting with the other is accepted as an experience that exceeds the categories of representation, requiring responsibility and engagement in dialogue.

Ideological constructions of culture

The recognition of the interdependence of self and other in constructing an intercultural space requires that the notion of culture is carefully deconstructed. In particular, I refer to the dichotomy between Western and non-Western perspectives, and the attribution of culture as a characteristic of the other. This phenomenon, whereby individuals are deemed to be determined by their own culture, is defined with the term culturalism by Eriksen and Stjernfelt (2012). Culturalism has become a political ideology in both right wing politics and left wing multiculturalism (Eriksen and Stjernfelt, 2009), meaning that culture is mobilised to reinforce nationalist politics through the ideological use of the notion of defence of national values against alien cultures. At the same time, culture is employed to force people into cultural identities in the name of pluralism, tolerance and the multicultural idea of the coexistence of separate cultures.

The liberal response to this phenomenon that affects both right wing and left wing politics is to recall the ideals of the Enlightenment, such as freedom of the individual, autonomy, universalism and the tradition of democratic political liberalism. What I propose here in reference to the development of intercultural competence, is to adopt a Levinasian heteronomous conception of the self, according to which ethical engagement is not determined by abstract universal rules

and the idea of autonomy, but by immanent relations established with others. In doing this, I adopt the notion proposed by Gillespie, Howarth and Cornish (2012) that social categories such as culture, which are employed to categorise individuals, are not fixed and stable entities but they interact and change in time. In other words, categories are perspectival, reflecting '*the pluralism of the social world*' (Gillespie, Howarth and Cornish, 2012, p.393) and the impossibility to establish scientifically '*true*' social categories. From this perspective, I emphasise the inter, or the processual aspect of the intercultural, by which I intend that individuals negotiate their own positioning during communicative exchanges instead of enacting a fixed, static cultural identity. This aspect, however, brings to light another dimension, that of power imbalance between interactants in communication.

Power imbalance between interactants

This dimension is dependent on sociolinguistic competence in the use of the language of interaction, for example in situations where the exchange happens between native and non-native speakers, or between speakers using a lingua franca (Byram and Zarate, 1997). Moreover, the choice that determines the language of interaction reflects positions of hegemony and perceived superiority of one dominant language, for example international English, over other languages (Hymes, 1996; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles and Kankaanranta, 2005; Byram, 2008; Jack, 2009). This power imbalance in communication is described by Hymes (1996) as a dynamic through which language becomes an instrument that recreates structural inequality. In the next section, I relate this aspect of communication to the context of interaction.

6.5.2 Context

The context of interaction is determined by the ways in which interlocutors are positioned: the language being used, their competence in the language of interaction, and the relationships between interlocutors taking part in the communicative exchange. In other words, the setting of a communicative event is not only influenced by language, but also by the ways in which the participants are positioned in relation to other factors such as gender, class, social status and other social categories independently of language use (Regan, Howard et. al, 2009).

Among these categories I highlight culture, particularly the phenomenon of culturalism, meaning the ways in which interlocutors are assigned a cultural identity or choose to act a cultural identity. In this sense, I agree with Holliday (2011) that culture is a discursive production which expresses how individuals socially construct an image of the cultural resources available to them and, consequently, *'they may play up and exaggerate various aspects of cultural resources available to them'* (p.144). Thus, it is important to define context not as static but as emergent, dynamic and negotiated by the participants in the interaction (Regan, Howard et. al, 2009). For all the above reasons, an appreciation of context in intercultural communicative exchanges is a crucial element in the acquisition of dialogic intercultural competence.

Moreover, the influence of language in the context of interaction is an aspect that has been often overlooked in intercultural communication (Dervin and Liddicoat, 2013) and consequently in models of intercultural competence. Although the politics of language teaching and the Savoirs as sociocultural competence (Byram and Zarate, 1997; Byram and Risager, 1999), the idea of languaging (Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004), and the notion of the multilingual subject (Kramsch, 2009)

address the issue of intercultural language teaching and learning, culture remains prominent in analysing phenomena related to understanding and interaction between members from different countries. This issue has been addressed first by Scollon and Scollon (1995), and subsequently Blommaert (1998) and Piller (2011), who have focused on the impact of sociolinguistic competence in the language of interaction as the principal cause of misunderstanding and miscommunication in intercultural communication.

As Piller suggests, because context is an emergent and dynamic process which is negotiated by all participants, the 'messiness' of actual interactions (Phipps, 2007) demonstrates the limitations of attempts to understand and regulate communication using the category of culture. This means that establishing dialogical relations lived in the immanent here and now requires an understanding of the complexity of factors that constitute the context of interaction,

> Paying close attention to actual interactions not only reminds us of the importance of natural language and the complexity of human interactions; it also demonstrates that interactants sometimes simply do not want to understand each other and that misunderstandings arise not only because of linguistic or cultural differences, but also because people fight and argue. Put differently, in interactions there are often simply different interests at stake and interactants may not actually want to understand each other. Intercultural communication research often creates the impression that if we just knew how to overcome our linguistic and cultural differences, we would get on just fine with each other and the world would be transformed into a paradise on earth (Piller, 2011, p.155).

In this sense, an intercultural speaker adopting a dialogic approach is able not only to analyse the constraints that influence interaction and the role of language in the communicative exchange, but is also able to recognise and understand the ways in which culture is being enacted and recreated. From this perspective, concerns relating to the use of the category of culture to explain when something 'goes

wrong' in communication are addressed by the straightforward relation with the other described by Levinas, which relates to his notion of responsibility intended as a response to the other that occurs through engagement in dialogue. This notion of responsibility is described by Bakhtin (1986) as the *addressivity* of language, the fact that all interactants are active participants in communication (this aspect is discussed in the parallel between Levinas and Bakhtin that I suggested in Chapter Five, section 5.5.2). In the next section I relate the ethical implications of this dialogic commitment to dialogue to intercultural communication.

6.5.3 The Multiperspectival

Guilherme defines competence as the acquisition of a critical awareness of context. This awareness is achieved through the acquisition of specific skills, attitudes and knowledge,

> It entails becoming aware of the web of intra- and intercultural meanings that are always struggling and evolving. The more conscious we are of the constraints, implications, and possibilities that each situation carries, the more critical we become (Guilherme, 2002, p.155).

With regard to this model of critical cultural awareness, the final aim of the development of critical intercultural competence is the achievement of symmetry between self and other. This means that, the analysis of cultural differences facilitates the understanding of how these differences influence communication and fosters the ability to assess '*the constraints, implications and possibilities'* (ibid.) guiding communicative exchanges. According to this model of critical cultural awareness, this type of intercultural understanding establishes a form of reciprocity between the self and the other.

As I have discussed previously, this ideal of critical awareness responds to a conception of the self modelled on Kantian autonomous rational subjectivity. In contrast to this conception of the relation between self and other, I suggest that the notion of asymmetry underlying the idea of an heteronomous self takes into account the fact that in the inter- of communication, in the messiness of languaging (Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004; Phipps, 2007), self and other can never achieve transparent communication, perfect correspondence and symmetry. However, the acceptance of the impossibility to reach this ideal of '*a paradise on earth*' (Piller, 2011, p.155), meaning the idea of a promise of understanding in which all conflicting claims are pacified in the name of a higher universal truth, brings about another dimension of communication between self and other.

Accounts of critical awareness (*see* Tomic and Lengel, 1997; Tomic, 2001; Guilherme, 2002) describe the process in which the encounter with the strangeness of another cultural perspective allows the self to reflect critically on his/her own cultural standpoint and to discover the other within oneself. From this perspective, through critical reflection the self understands the behaviour of the other as the expression of cultural difference. Consequently, the self is able to negotiate these differences, and can finally assess critically his/her own cultural tradition in the light of this encounter with the other. Although this is a desirable outcome of interaction in intercultural encounters, I nevertheless point at another aspect of communication between self and other that can be interpreted within a dialogical perspective.

Returning to the aforementioned notion of immigrancy of the self (Cavell, 1996), the fact that the self is defined through the act of negotiating and translating meanings, I propose that through open-ended dialogue intended as *saying*, self and other do not simply accept their reciprocal belonging to different cultural traditions. Instead of

directing interaction toward an ideal of tolerance, open ended dialogue enables the discovery that both self and other are incomplete beings. This means that the other is not simply a mirror reflecting the otherness present within the self, instead both self and other find a common existential state of incompleteness expressed in the inadequacy of culture to explain the behaviour of the other interlocutor.

6.6 A comparison of competence models

Having delineated the features of dialogic competence, in this section I compare the theoretical stance adopted in the present chapter with Deardorff's pyramid model, with the ICOPROMO transformational model and finally with Phipps' notion of dwelling. I illustrate the positions of self and other in interaction and the respective underlying assumptions of each framework.
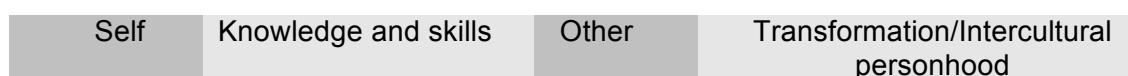
Self	Knowledge and skills	Other	Transformation/Intercultural personhood

Figure 5. Deardorff. The pyramid model

Competence is understood as the ability to deal effectively with the other. Knowledge about the culture of the other, and the skills to communicate effectively are acquired before the interaction.

Underlying assumptions: effectiveness, communicative transparency, tolerance, awareness of culture, rationality, autonomy, cultural sensitivity.

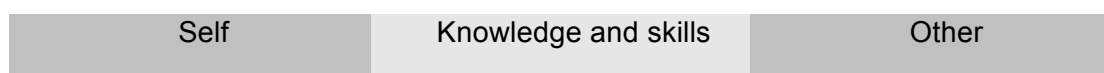| Self	Knowledge and skills	Other

Figure 6. ICOPROMO. A transformational model

Intercultural competence represents the ability to develop critical awareness of culture in order to communicate effectively. As a result of intercultural interaction, the self is transformed into an intercultural being who can communicate effectively

with the other and is able to assess cultures critically, showing high degrees of tolerance of the other.

Underlying assumptions: effectiveness, critical awareness of culture, autonomy, rationality, tolerance, cultural sensitivity, responsibility.

Self	Experience	Self and Other
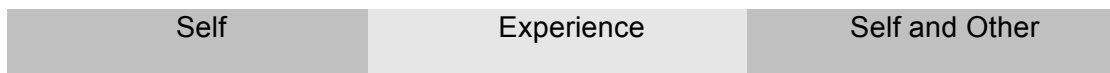
Figure 7. Phipps. Dwelling

Competence is understood as the existential readiness to dwell in another language and culture. This ability is acquired in interaction. The self is transformed after experiencing the other.

Underlying assumptions: existential, experiential, open-ended dialogue, messiness of intercultural encounters.

Self and Other	Interaction	Other and Other
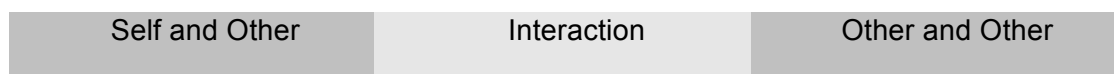
Figure 8. Dialogic interaction

Dialogism unfolds in interaction: it is based on the interdependence self/other, sensitivity to context and it is multiperspective. Interaction results in the recognition of a reciprocal and common existential state of incompleteness. As I have argued in the concluding paragraph of section 6.3 of the present chapter, intercultural encounters represent the opportunity to discover the otherness in the familiar, and to accept the fact that both self and other remain unknowable.

Underlying assumptions: culture as a discursive resource of all interlocutors, reciprocal incompleteness of both self and other, heteronomy, sensibility, ethical responsibility, dialogism.

Dialogic interaction is thus dependent on attitudes that are developed in the praxis of engagement with the other. First of all, a critical attitude towards culture is enacted through the ability to question the attribution of cultural traits to understand the communicative behaviour of interlocutors. Instead, an appreciation of context will lead to a more nuanced form of interaction that is guided by the willingness to engage in dialogue. Finally, developing existential attitudes in interaction brings about the acceptance of uncertainty in dialogue and the knowledge that both self and other are incomplete beings.

These attitudes, and their underlying assumptions, challenge the implicit autonomy that characterises the ways in which intercultural competence is conceptualised in the other models discussed. In this sense, as I have argued in Chapter Four (section 4.4), dialogic interaction requires the development of inercultural sensibility, meaning an embodied relation with the other, which I have contrasted to the ideas of intercultural awareness and sensitivity promoted in the models of intercultural competence critiqued in this chapter. Moreover, it addresses the methodological nationalism implicit in intercultural language education (Holliday, 2011; Cole and Meadows, 2013), through its focus on the use of language in context, rather than on cultural attributes attached to idealised speakers of a language.

As I argue in relation to the *saying* and the *said*, in this understanding of competence self and other are not beings enclosed within their own cultural horizon awaiting reciprocal recognition. On the contrary, the passage from the synchronicity of the *said* to the diachrony of the *saying* allows the emergence of the interdependence of self and other, which is manifested through engagement in dialogue between interlocutors who remain singular, unique and thus, 'other'. The

epistemology that underpins this passage from the *saying* to the *said* is summarised in Figure 9.

Attitude: criticality of constructs of culture.   **Outcome:** ability to question the attribution of cultural traits to the other.
Attitude: ability to assess the context of interaction.   **Outcome:** engagement in dialogue resulting from a critical stance towards the notion of tolerance of the cultural other.
Attitude: readiness to engage in dialogue   **Outcome:** acceptance of uncertainty. Knowledge that both self and other are incomplete beings.

Fig. 9. Epistemological framework

The epistemology underpinning these attitudes is based on the notions explored in the previous chapters in relation to Levinasian ethics:

- **Asymmetry**: I understand the asymmetrical relation between self and other (Levinas, 1985,1998) in terms of a lived experience of communication between embodied subjects.

- **Heteronomy**: adopting the ethical framework of Levinas, heteronomy stands for the phenomenal world where the self interacts with other selves to become an ethical being. The experience of ethics is thus developed in interaction, intersubjectively, and not only from universal maxims.

- **Sensibility**: being affected by others as an embodied ethical self.

- **Saying**: this modality of discourse is the expression of the relationship established in the immanent *here and now*.

- **Promise as deferred understanding***: this aspect relates to the idea of dialogue as open- ended engagement with others, and acceptance of uncertainty.

In reference to the notion of tolerance, particularly to the aforementioned critique of depoliticised versions of multiculturalism expressed in the image of a domesticated good other (*see* Badiou, 2001 and Žižek, 2006 in Chapter Five), I contend that the idea of deferred understanding presented here addresses these concerns relating to a superficial embrace of cultural difference as tolerance of the practices of the cultural other.

6.7 Assessing Intercultural competence, an impossible task?

In light of the problematization of the notion of competence presented in this thesis, centered on Phipps' (2007, 2010) description of the intercultural in terms of messiness and complexity and Levinas's account of ethical communication as *saying*, in this section I critique the use of the categories of reliability, validity and consistency applied to the assessment of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2012), particularly in reference to dialogic competence. These categories that guide the assessment of the acquisition of intercultural competence are in fact used to determine the achievement of an end point, meaning the transformation of the self from being a monocultural entity to an intercultural one. This content-based approach presents an idealised version of intercultural competence that is abstracted from the complex dynamic that occurs in intercultural encounters (Ambadiang and Garcia Pareo, 2011) and that in the present chapter I have interpreted in terms of the Marxist category of fetishism.

Therefore, considering the processual character of intercultural interaction, assessment of intercultural competence has to account for the situated,

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experiential, messy, contradictory, immanent and subjective character of intercultural learning. I agree with Witte that due to the state of flux of *''subjective concepts of self, other and world''* and the *''inherent dynamism of language and culture''*, it is a very difficult task to pinpoint a definition of competence that would serve as a *''definable aim of learning''* (Witte, 2011, p.90) and consequently to set objectives for the assessment of competence. In this sense, Witte writes that,

> Teaching and acquiring intercultural competence cannot be product-orientated, as there exists no definable end-product (2011, p.103).

Byram (1997) divides the components of intercultural competence into knowledge (*savoirs)*, skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire)* and values in the form of critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*). However, the foundation of intercultural competence is in the attitudes (*savoir être)* of openness, readiness to relativise and the ability to decentre. In this context, Byram addresses the issue of reliability that is attached to the notion of assessment in terms of accountability of educators, teaching institutions and providers of intercultural training, highlighting the emergence of a 'transmission' view of teaching and an approach that 'atomises knowledge' (Byram, 1997, p.104) in a series of identifiable abilities that can be transmitted to the learner. This simplification of competences, argues Byram, trivializes learning:

> It is the simplification of competences to what can be 'objectively' tested which has a detrimental effect: the learning of trivial facts, the reduction of subtle understanding to generalisations and stereotypes, the lack of attention to interaction and engagement because these are not tested (1997, p.111).

Byram emphasises complexity and thick description in order to capture the more elusive aspects of competence, particularly through the use of portfolios developed over a period of time. The production of portfolios containing autobiographical

material represents a form of self-assessment that helps educators and intercultural trainers in determining the achievement of aspects of competence. However, personal accounts and experiences are always complex and multidimensional, and thus difficult to assess following criteria of reliability, validity and consistency. To this, it is possible to add the issue of veridicality of autobiographical material, considering the power relation between teachers and students, and between intercultural providers and individuals attending courses as required by their employees. Furthermore, Dervin (2010) adds the desire to please the teacher offering ready-made answers.

Moreover, Sercu highlights the situation when learners fail to achieve assessment outcomes such as the development of desired personality traits, for example interest in other cultures, or building positive images of self and other. To illustrate this point, Sercu brings as an example the Savoirs developed by Byram, asking whether the failure to develop determined competences and skills that are deemed to represent the effective intercultural person signals the inability to become intercultural or simply the impossibility to decide the outcomes of intercultural learning prior to the intercultural experience,

> If learners cannot solve a particular intercultural problem, is it because they are not skillful with respect to the savoir-apprendre or savoir-comprendre dimensions of intercultural competence, or are inadequate savoirs the reason for their failure to complete an assessment task adequately? (Sercu, 2004, p.78).

Sercu here addresses a crucial aspect of intercultural assessment, asking if categories, level descriptors and Savoirs can encompass the complexity of engagement in communication and human understanding.

From this perspective, Le Goff describes the practice of assessment in terms of a 'gentle barbarism' that characterizes modernity, whereby the creation of mechanisms to evaluate skills and performance is presented as guided by criteria of scientificity, in the name of functional imperatives presented as *''neutral, objective tools used by experts''* (2002, p.42). This gentle barbarism reduces people to a

> collection of skills and to machinery seen as a more or less well-adapted to 'natural' developments in which they themselves are simply elements among many (Le Goff, 2002, p.44).

This critique of modernization as a form of soft barbarism echoes the critique of instrumental reason in Adorno and Horkheimer (2010), posing pressing questions on the wider implications for education of the demands for effective and reliable assessment tools to evaluate performance, particularly when the task of assessment risks to simplify the complex dynamics of intercultural learning.

In line with a model of intercultural competence modelled on dialogism, the definition of assessment has to reflect the shift from a notion of the autonomous self to a conception of the heteronomous self that I describe in reference to Levinasian ethics. In other words, practitioners attempting to define the assessment of dialogic competence will have to accept that becoming intercultural is a process of discovery, an existential readiness to take risks and engage with the unknown, although not in terms of a state of completeness that is achieved at the end of intercultural learning.

Taking this stance, however, places the intercultural researcher in the position of renouncing tidy classifications of skills, aims and objectives that can be measured reliably and consistently, in favour of a wider exploration of the epistemology that underpins the notion of assessment in education. This means that the intercultural

researcher pursuing a model of dialogic interculturalism has to delve into the messiness of the intercultural and explore different theoretical approaches that offer new epistemological and methodological frameworks. In beginning to unravel this messiness, I follow Sercu (2004) in delineating the aims of assessment that have become embedded in intercultural practice in the following three domains:

- **Professional contexts:** to demonstrate appropriate behaviour and effective intercultural interaction in transactions with business partners. The main aims of competence in this domain relate to the assessment of knowledge, skills, attitudes and personality traits.
- **Education:** to determine whether learners have benefited from intercultural teaching. In this context, the main aims of assessment relate to cultural awareness and the ability to relativise self and other.
- **Foreign language education:** in this context, an added element relates to the testing of the development of communicative competence.

I argue that the framework presented in this thesis is transversal to the three domains: in terms of professional intercultural training, in Chapter Five, section 5.5 of this thesis, I have discussed dialogic intercultural research addressing the problematic aspect of organizational communication in business contexts. In regard to the other two domains, research is focused on either the methodological nationalism of modern foreign language education or emancipatory models of critical intercultural awareness and intercultural citizenship, and therefore the wider implications of a dialogic model of intercultural competence in the field of intercultural interaction and understanding are under-theorised. I address this issue in Chapters Seven and Eight, with an analysis of processes othering and the implications for intercultural research and intercultural ethics.

6.8 Conclusion

In the present chapter, I have compared three models of intercultural competence. I have argued that the pyramid model and the ICOPROMO project reflect an understanding of communication that mystifies the material conditions in which speakers are embedded and that influence the context of interaction. In contrast to these two models, I have argued that Phipps' focus on the existential dimension of embodied engagement with the other through language represents an alternative to instrumental conceptions of competence as the transmission of unambiguous information.

Taking the notion of competence as paradigmatic of the epistemological underpinnings of intercultural communication, I have contrasted two modalities of engagement between self and other, the first in terms of an ideal of final reconciliation and universal tolerance, the other as deferred understanding and open ended dialogue. In doing this, I have framed the discussion in the context of the wider debates regarding universalism and relativism in contemporary multicultural societies. Furthermore, I have analysed the implications of the ethical ideal of autonomy in the theorisation of intercultural competence, and I have proposed a model of dialogic competence according to a heteronomous notions of ethics that is informed by the distinction between the *saying* and the *said* in Levinas.

To summarise, it is my contention that the following issues have emerged from the problematization of intercultural competence proposed in the present chapter: first of all, an etiolated notion of otherness according to which the other is enclosed within the parameters of cultural categorisation. Second, the promise of intercultural understanding as closure and achievement of a higher totality that surfaces from the perspective of critical intercultural awareness. This latter position requires the

adoption of a critical stance that operates from an Archimedean perspective in positing a modernist model of emancipatory praxis (this aspect is discussed in section 6.53 in the present chapter and sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2, Chapter Two).

Although this thesis is concerned primarily with the problematization of concepts, and therefore it is theoretical and exploratory, in the present chapter I have proposed a framework that delineates the features of a dialogic model of interaction, which reflects the ethical philosophy of Levinas. With this framework I have emphasised the partial and immanent character of communication in intercultural contexts, and I have proposed an ethics of immanence that takes into account the aporetic structure of intercultural communication, which I have illustrated in Chapter Four, section 4.2 of this thesis. In doing this, I have attempted to address the incommensurability of intercultural discourse contrasting the problematic of the Kantian transcendental moral signified with a description of ethical engagement founded on intersubjective relations established with others. In the next two chapters of this thesis I return to the aporia between tolerance and the liberal universalistic ideal of autonomy discussed in Chapter Four (see section 4.3 in relation to the notion of hospitality in Derrida), examining processes of othering in multicultural Western societies, and analysing the implications for the development of an approach to intercultural communication modelled on the Levinasian framework described in the present chapter.

Chapter Seven. Towards an ethics of difference

7.1 Introduction

As has been seen in the preceding chapters, this thesis comprises two dimensions: the first strand relates to the epistemological and ontological assumptions of intercultural communication, and deals particularly with the concept of competence. The second strand is concerned with the implications of the problematization of the ontological and epistemological assumptions of interculturality in the praxis of intercultural communication research. In Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five I have dealt with the first strand, whilst in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight I have as my primary interest the second strand and my second research question:

> *Can a theory of intercultural communication be devised which takes account of difference and otherness as constitutive of communication, while also blurring the distinction between inter- and intra- cultural communication?*

In Chapter Six I have partially answered the second research question through the critique of models of competence: Deardorff's pyramid model and the ICOPROMO project, which posit the separation between self and other as constitutive of communication, thus essentialising the other within the category of cultural difference. In the present chapter and in Chapter Eight I return to the theme of otherness with a twofold aim:

1. In the preceding chapters essentialism has emerged as a form of cultural categorization of the other according to an instrumental understanding of communicative competence, which I have attributed to the Kantian ideal of autonomy of the individual. In the present chapter I suggest that essentialism does not only entail the attribution of static

cultural traits, but that it relates to other overlapping categories- such as gender, sexuality, physical disability, race, class, ethnicity, religion and nationality. To this end, in this chapter I explore the interrelated nature of those categories in order to challenge the presupposition of neutrality of the universalist idea of autonomy of the individual.

2. The second part of my aim in this chapter is to apply this strategic theoretical intervention to intercultural communication research in order to contribute to the development of what Phipps (2013) has referred to as a 'post-methodology'. This requires the decentering of the researcher and the adoption of a dialogic perspective: see the discussion in the introduction to Chapter Four. There I argued that decentering and the dialogic commitment to ethical communication translates as acceptance of uncertainty and recognition that both self and other are not holistic, complete entities, since they define each other in interaction.

Thus, in this chapter I am concerned chiefly with the implications of a central construct of intercultural communication, the process of creation of the other (to which I refer as othering and otherisation), whereby individuals are grouped and categorised under specific essentialised traits. Therefore, my principal aim in the final two chapters of this thesis is to discuss othering in the context of intercultural ethics. In Chapter Three I have illustrated an example of othering, in reference to essentialist intercultural competence, in which the process of othering is enacted according to parameters that focus on nationality, language and cultural characteristics. In that context, the process of creation of the other stems from a functionalist perspective that essentialises cultural difference in order to achieve the ideal of transparent and unambiguous communication. While In Chapter Four I have connected Kantian moral autonomy to this functionalist perspective underpinning intercultural competence, in the present and in the next chapter I return to the ideas of equality and autonomy of the individual from

the perspective of ethical communication in Western liberal universalism. These ideas are discussed and problematized from the standpoint of intercultural conflicts that have originated in the context of multicultural societies- such as the dress code of Muslim women, which has generated debate and anxiety regarding the effects of migration on cohesion and national identity. This issue reflects the aporia of the discourse of tolerance discussed in relation to the idea of hostipitality (Derrida, Chapter Four, section 4.3) and to the contrast between a good other and a bad other (Badiou, Chapter Five, section 5.3). In following Badiou's argument, the concept of tolerance in terms of cultural assimilation is inserted within a dialectical dynamic of definition of the self, which requires the presence of an alien and irreducible other as a counterpoint to an idealised Western self. Thus, on the one side, there is a domesticated, Westernised idea of cultural difference, and on the other, the creation of a menacing otherness that threatens Western values.

In order to examine the process of othering and its implications for an ethics of intercultural communication, I return to the categories of the *saying* and the *said* (see Chapter Four, sections 4.6 and 4.7 of this thesis) aiming to provide an illustration of the modalities in which the other is essentialised and fixed through a conception of communication envisioned under the *said*. As I have argued in Chapter Four, the *said* refers to a relation to the other enacted in communication through categorisation. Thus, in returning to the Levinasian modality of the *said,* I set out to examine the ways in which the other is construed from an essentialist perspective in both intra- and inter-cultural contexts. From this perspective, I regard othering as a transcultural phenomenon, which is particularly visible in the intersection between gender identity, sexuality, religion, nationality, race, ethnicity and perceptions of the body. In this sense, I suggest that these categories are mutually constitutive (Collins, 1998) and

that examining one category implies taking account of its intersection with the other categories in creating patterns of exclusion and othering (Acker, 2006; Bose, 2012).

In examining the process of othering I revisit the principal theme of this thesis, namely the intent to eschew functionalist and essentialist categorisations to explain complex dynamics between self and other. In taking this stance, in this part of the thesis I intend to scrutinize the ideal of autonomy of the individual in liberal universalism in order to describe the modalities in which overlapping categories contribute to the creation of the other. I contend that focusing on this aspect of interaction gives the opportunity to review the other major themes of this thesis: the emphasis on the contingent and the provisional character of the self based on a Levinasian ethical framework, the attempt to conceptualise intercultural communication by counteracting hegemonic constructions that define, categorise and reduce human interaction to the formulation of competences, and finally the endeavour to acknowledge the realities of conflict and power imbalance in determining interactions between self and other.

In that regard, as I maintain throughout this thesis, an alternative to neo-essentialist intercultural research resides in challenging a static conception of cultural difference in order to focus on the contextual, processual and immanent character of engagement between embodied subjects. In this respect, intercultural research which is focused on interpersonal dynamics in the context of small group interaction, based on ethnographic narratives of intercultural learning journeys, provides a wealth of data regarding the provisional and co-constructed character of communicative interactions between members of different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, in the present chapter I shift this focus from individual and small group interaction towards the analysis of dynamics of othering, aiming to challenge the internal contradiction of liberal universalism in regard to the neutrality of the ideal of the autonomous individual.

To this end, in the present chapter I have selected the category of gender (see 7.3 and 7.4 below) as a standpoint from which to unravel the intersecting categories that are presupposed in the process of othering. There are a number of reasons why gender is relevant in the context of intercultural communication. First, gender reveals the complexity entailed in the definition of self and other. Assuming gender in terms of performativity (Butler, 1990, 1993), I critique the attribution of gender roles that identify the other from the position of a powerful self. Second, the focus on gender complements the critical and anti-essentialist position advocated in this thesis in relation to culture, as both notions combine to create dynamics of othering, a process that I discuss in detail in Chapter Eight. Third, gender discloses the historical and situated nature of liberal universalism, in particular in relation to the neutrality of the autonomous moral subject.

All three aspects encapsulate the contribution of this thesis to intercultural communication. In this sense, I align this research with Lengel and Martin (2009) in arguing that, in order to further the critical study of intercultural communication, it is crucial to identify the impact of gender as a discursive construct on interactions between different groups and the ways in which gender identity intersects with productions of knowledge, social practices and perceived differences in creating otherness.

Before I discuss gender, in section 7.2 I describe in more detail the ethical role of intercultural research and I address the call for the exercise of critical vigilance (Phipps, 2014) in the intercultural field. The dialogic reading of the ethical encounter informed by Levinasian ethics has revealed intercultural interaction in terms of unpredictability, open-endedness and practical concern for the other. From this standpoint, in the next section I highlight instances of intercultural communication in

practice that are documented in other fields of research, which illustrate complexity and precariousness in communication. These examples borrowed from other academic fields point in the direction of a productive confrontation with other disciplines that share similar concerns regarding human understanding and co-operation, presenting new challenges for future research. This section provides the background for the discussion in the remainder of the chapter of this problematic and central construct of intercultural communication, namely the relationship between self and other viewed through the lenses of gender inequality and cultural hegemony.

In section 7.3 and 7.4, I introduce the conceptualisation of gender identity in relation to cultural difference in the fields of second language acquisition and in intercultural communication. I then argue that, from the perspective of intercultural interaction, the notion of gender identity can be further analysed as a facet of the relationship between self and other, which I frame in a processual, contextual (connecting to other interlocking categories), and multiperspectival approach, according to the dialogic framework delineated in Chapter Six. Finally, I refine the critique of Kantian universalistic moral theory conducted in Chapter Four adding a gender perspective, with the aim to explore the implications of such a critique in defining an ethics of the other that complements the Levinasian framework of the preceding chapters.

7.2 Critical vigilance

In Chapter Two, I have critiqued the notion of intercultural emancipatory praxis from the perspective of master narratives of an enfolding higher consciousness, and I employed the notion of epistemic violence (Spivak, 1998, 2004) to problematize the notion of giving voice to the other. Despite this critical approach towards ideals of emancipation, I maintain an ethical stance regarding the possibility of intercultural communication, albeit within a problematizing framework in relation to the idea of a

higher intercultural consciousness. From this standpoint, I agree with the call to critical vigilance in intercultural research advocated by Phipps, and I highlight instances of intercultural communication in practice that are documented in other fields of research in which the messiness and precariousness of communication are evident, as in the presence of a dominant other in situations of clear inequality- for example in ethnographic research on asylum seekers in the Belgian legal system (Maryns and Blommaert, 2002; Maryns, 2006) and research on grassroots literacy with African migrants and asylum seekers in Belgium (Blommaert, 2001, 2004). Similarly, Phipps (2014) brings examples from the field of Peace and Security Studies (e.g. Lederach, 2003 and Schirch, 2004), which are able to

> offer frameworks and practices which may enable language and intercultural studies to move away from its insistence on Intercultural Dialogue and offer ways of working with acknowledged and inevitable identity loss and precarity (Phipps, 2014, p.120).

Phipps discusses this sense of precarity in the context of linguistic solidarity, which designates the effort of *'intercultural listeners'* (2012, p.587) to accommodate one's own language in the endeavour of communication, particularly when confronted with the traumatic experiences of asylum seekers using a foreign language under difficult circumstances. In this sense, research in intercultural communication is faced with the challenge to address openly issues of inequality and conflict, shifting from the predominant focus on business relations, intercultural training and language learning in higher education, to the development of viable alternative theoretical perspectives that redefine the ethical significance of intercultural dialogue, a concept which *''is challenged profoundly by the insecurities and precarities which now affect large numbers of people in the world''* (Phipps, 2014, p.115).

Indeed, Phipps' reflection resonates with the ethical scope of this thesis, and invites an investigation into the possibility of including an ethics of communication such as the Levinasian framework delineated in the preceding chapters in the field of intercultural research, particularly in order to address issues of hegemonic discourses and power imbalance that marginalise and otherise not only the cultural other but transversely across gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality and physical disability. An example of research that advocates this transversality of interests is Chávez's (2013) argument in favour of the inclusion of queer and trans theories in intercultural communication, for example mapping the trans-national and trans-cultural circulation of notions of gayness and queerness. Chávez identifies a number of points of convergence between queer and trans studies and the critical turn in intercultural communication (see Chapter Three, section 3.3 of this thesis), particularly the focus on gender, class and race in order to question not only normative modes of identity, but also modes of social and economic organization within the logic of the commodification of difference in political and economic neo-liberalism (see Kaway, 2009 and the commodification of cultural difference in tourism, Shepherd, 2002; Jack and Phipps, 2005). To this end, in following Chávez's and Phipps' call for inclusion of alternative perspectives that are associated with other fields of research, in the present chapter I draw from feminist theory in order to enrich the analysis of this crucial construct in intercultural communication.

7.3 Gender and language

Along with cultural essentialism, gender in intercultural communication has been conceived within binary oppositions that correspond to essentialist attributions of gender roles. As Piller writes,

> An essentialist view of culture sees national culture as a stable attribute of a person in the same way that gender and race are often seen as fairly stable attributes (Piller, 2011, p.81).

The essentialist view of gender as a fixed set of traits in second language acquisition research (e.g. Lakoff, 1975; Coates, 2004) has promoted a deficit approach that, while emphasising asymmetrical power relations among gender roles, has fixed certain traits along the binary opposition of masculine/feminine, and universalised assumptions on gender and language (Shi, 2006). Feminist post-structural critical approaches have contested the binary division established in gendered communication in favour of the contextual nature of gender identities. In Norton (2000), Pavlenko (2001), Pavlenko and Piller (2001), Warren (2001, 2008) and Cameron (2005), the binary polarisation between male and female communicative styles is contested from the perspective of interlocking identity markers such as ethnicity, nation, class and gender in the constitution of identity.

Pavlenko identifies the notion of discourse as the originating force in determining the adoption of this feminist post-structuralist perspective in the field of language acquisition. Pavlenko writes that

> discourses are ideologies which serve to reproduce, maintain or challenge existing power and knowledge structures (2001, p.121).

The role of language in relation to power and ideology has been discussed in reference to intercultural competence in Chapter Six, section 6.2. Here, I focus on the passage from the essentialist attribution of distinct gendered communicative styles to the analysis of gender as a discourse connected to wider social constructs (Cameron, 2005) and I adopt Blommaert's (2005) definition of discourse as language-in-action or meaningful symbolic behaviour. This means that according to Blommaert, language is one manifestation of discourse, together with other semiotic forms such as objects,

attributes or activities connected to wider social, cultural and historical patterns. One example of this semiotic significance of extra-linguistic phenomena in relation to gender and interculturality is the description of the veiled body, the naked body and the barren body that I propose in Chapter Eight.

Research in the field of second language acquisition is particularly relevant in this context, because it highlights the role of culture in connection to gender. For example, Pavlenko and Piller (2001) discuss how gender, in the same way as culture, is performed in different modalities depending on the identity inhabited by multilingual speakers in the use of a particular language. Thus, I adopt the standpoint that gender is perspectival, produced in interaction and open to intercultural analysis in the same fashion as the notion of culture has been the primary object of research and critique in intercultural communication. Indeed, an intercultural analysis of gender, how it is constructed and negotiated in multiple discourses (Pavlenko and Piller, 2001), complements the critical approach to culture in redefining individuals in terms of immanence and embodiment in their relations with others advocated in this thesis.

Here, I find Warren's (2008) conceptualisation of difference of great interest for the purposes of the analysis of othering proposed in the present chapter and in Chapter Eight. According to Warren, communication studies limit the understanding of difference to that of representing an opposition to a normative construct. This means that difference is perceived in terms of a negative, *'something that hurts or constrains us"* (p.295), whether it is construed in terms of racial, ethnic, gendered or linguistic difference. This fact simplifies the rich theoretical ramifications that a more developed conceptualization of difference would bring forward in the field of communication.

I see this dynamic discussed by Warren at work in intercultural communication in two ways. First, it appears in the neo-essentialist attribution of cultural difference in terms of a problem that needs fixing through the discovery of commonalities between cultural traditions, which allow people to communicate interculturally, or through the practice of cultural tolerance. In this instance, the focus on difference is apolitical, abstracted from the contextual factors that attribute cultural difference as a trait of the other.

Second, this etiolated notion of difference is present in the critical appreciation of minor and marginal cultural realities pitted against hegemonic cultural ideologies. Warren (2001) documents this aspect of research with an ethnographic study that illustrates the reproduction of racial inequality as a series of acts that are performed by individuals, consolidating existing discourses and power relations. In this respect, this line of inquiry focuses on the ways in which difference contributes to the reproduction of inequality, affecting the lived experiences of individuals. In this instance, in the contraposition between hegemonic and peripheral cultural realities (see also Centre and Periphery in Chapter Two, 2.5.1) the role of difference in the constitution of the self in terms of embodiment and concrete subjectivity could become more prominent (see Chapter Seven, 7.4.3).

Adopting this perspective, Warren proposes another conceptualisation in which difference is not relegated to representing a negative moment that needs overcoming in order to discover the similarities that bond people,

> My first major discovery, as a thinker about culture, is that difference need not be coded in the negative, as an opposition (i.e., I'm different from you), but could be seen as an affirmation (i.e., I'm unique and so are you). In many ways, this is an elementary idea: difference is the inevitable thread that makes us who we are and that can be a beautiful thing. This is not the same as saying that we are all different and therefore all the same; rather, it is to say that there is variability within presumed categories of people and if we want to understand how

> power works we need to invest careful attention to particularity and avoid the trappings of binary logics (Warren, 2008, p.295).

I agree with Warren that although it is important to investigate the power imbalances caused by difference, at the same time it is important to revaluate difference in terms of particularity and uniqueness. For this reason, Warren suggests that the role of difference in expressing the individuality of the self deserves more theoretical attention in the field of communication studies. In line with Warren's proposal, with the second research question I integrate the focus on difference in terms of hegemonic reproduction of inequality with a reappraisal of the positive affirmation of difference in the constitution of the self in relation to the other in dialogic terms. For example in Chapter Six, section 6.3, I have adopted Cavell's notion of the immigrancy of the self to argue in favour of dialogism in communication as expression of the incompleteness of self and other. Similarly, while in the present chapter I focus on the diversity of gendered identities and gendered practices (Cameron, 2005) to illustrate the effects of otherisation as an exclusionary practice, in section 7.4.3 I reflect on the possibility of integrating the perspective of the concrete other in intercultural communication in terms of positive affirmation of difference.

7.4 Gender in intercultural communication

In Chapter Three, section 3.3 of this thesis, I have discussed the critical turn in intercultural communication, which focuses on the role of power and contextual constraints on communication and highlights the unproblematized status of gender in intercultural communication research. In this context, Lengel and Martin (2009, 2013) propose an interdisciplinary approach for the inclusion of gender in intercultural communication beginning with historical analysis from an intercultural perspective, such as the reconstruction of Western encounters with veiled Muslim women,

> The mere recognition that gender is not natural, but constructed, does not further the critical study of intercultural communication unless scholars can analyse the characteristics and impact of that construction on the exchange of information between divergent individuals and groups (Martin and Lengel, 2009, p.7).

This means that, according to the authors, the historical analysis of intercultural encounters from the perspective of gender presents the possibility to reveal not only the contextual and historical construction of gender and gender roles, but also to disclose the perception of the cultural other in terms of gender identity.

In Chapter Six (section 6.5), I have identified three dimensions of communication: the contextual, the processual and the multiperspectival. My intention was to challenge culture as the principal explanatory category in the relation between self and other in communication, focusing instead on the enactment of cultural resources as a strategy of communication within a wider context comprising of power relations and sociolinguistic competence in a dominant variety of a language. In this chapter, following the same framework, I begin by considering the process of shaping of self and other as gender identities. I then reflect on the contextual intersection of other categories in creating othering, and I conclude with the contribution of gender studies to the definition of an ethics of the other from an intercultural perspective.

Processual dimension: the creation of the other through gender performativity.

Contextual dimension: gender as intersecting with other categories such as race, ethnicity, nation and class in dynamics of otherisation.

Multiperspectival dimension: gender in relation to the ethics of the other.

These three dimensions articulate the ways in which the relationship between self and other is processual, performative and contextual- connecting to other interlocking categories. Finally, as pivotal elements in determining the dynamics of otherisation, I

consider their bearing on an ethics of the other from the perspective of intercultural responsibility.

7.4.1 The processuality of othering

In chapter Six (section 6.5 of this thesis), I have discussed the limitations of hybrid notions of cultural identity in the theorisation of intercultural competence, and I have suggested that the recognition of the interdependence of self and other highlights the ethical dimension of communication that is not confined to the boundaries delimited by cultural categorization. This ethical aspect is expressed in the *saying* as a process of destabilization of fixed categories in understanding and relating to the other. Here, I discuss the mode in which the relationship between self and other is constructed in the context of gender in order to show that, similarly to the notion of culture, gender identity is not a fixed, essential aspect of identity. In doing this, I then consider the ways in which other overlapping categories impinge on gender relationships, reproducing inequality and hegemonic relations.

De Beauvoir (1976) illustrates the relationship between self and other as a primordial feature of consciousness, visible throughout human history. In this sense, this duality of self and other expresses the Hegelian dynamic through which the subject (or the self) acquires self-awareness by posing the other as an extern, hostile object as part of the dialectical process of definition of identity. This process of definition of the self through the production of alterity is transcultural, in other words the process of creation of the other is found in all cultural traditions. However, for De Beauvoir the relation between the male and the female lacks this reciprocal process of otherisation, since the female has been consigned to the role of pure otherness from an essentialist male identity positing itself as absolute. From this perspective, De Beauvoir distinguishes

between sex and gender, claiming that while the former is a biological fact, the latter is a cultural process of definition of gender roles: *''One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman''* (1976, p.276).

According to Butler (1993), this process of becoming woman means that the gender of the female body is fixed in a gendered matrix that relegates the feminine to the natural world as a passive receptacle, signifying the lack of male attributes. Being formed as a consequence of cultural inscription, for Butler (1990, 1993) gender is considered in terms of performativity, meaning that gender identity is constituted through a repetition of acts, and is thus described as a verb rather than a noun- meaning that gender is performed and does not correspond to an essence (similarly to the concept of culture as a verb (Street, 1993) illustrated in Chapter Two, section 2.2 of this thesis).

This means that the gendering of the body happens through cultural practices that establish taboos, injunctions and prohibitions creating gender norms and accepted behaviours that delimit the binary domains of the male and the feminine. From this perspective, heteronormativity- meaning the attribution of gender roles as male or female, is based on an act of repudiation of other identities non conforming to this binary split (this act of repudiation is referred as foreclosure in Butler, 1993 and Spivak, 1999). Therefore, far from implying a constructivist perspective according to which individuals are free to choose which gender they are going to enact, performativity is envisioned as series of acts that are repeated over time within a regulated context, generating the division of the sexes in the male/female binary. Thus gender is a

> set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame that congeals over
> time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being
> (Butler, 1990, p.33).

Nevertheless, it is possible to create space for agency in this highly regulated frame, albeit remaining within the limits imposed by the normative discourses that regulate gender identities. This is possible because gender identity can be destabilised by performative acts that put into question the binary split based on the heteronormative definition of male and female genders.

As a consequence of this process of definition of gender normativity, deviations from the roles attributed to both genders are expelled and excluded as belonging to an aberrant other,

> Discourses do actually live in bodies. They belong in bodies; bodies in fact carry discourses as part of their lifeblood (Butler in Meijer and Prins, 1998, p.282).

In other words, despite the ontological existence of physical bodies in their materiality, the modality in which they are perceived is constructed discursively. An essential part of this discursive construction is the creation of taboos, the exclusion and the abjection of non-normative identities that do not conform to gender binaries or to the norms established regarding gender behaviour (Salih, 2002; Monceri, 2012).

In this context, I refer to the notion of abjection, which is used by Kristeva (1982) and Butler (1993) to indicate the process of othering, first as it is conceptualised in relation to gender and consequently extended to include other categories- e.g. class, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, sexuality and physical disability. Crucially, the idea of the abject body is not restricted to sexuality and gender, but it is extended to all forms of exclusion and processes of otherisation. In this respect, Butler illustrates the process of abjection as a discursive production that creates an irrevocable otherness, which she identifies not only in reference to sexuality and gender but trans-culturally in the representation of non-Western modes of life as being inferior, as class inequality in the

perception and representation of poverty and in the stigmatization of mental illness and physical disability,

> So, we get a kind of differential production of the human or a differentiated materialization of the human. And we also get, I think, a production of the abject. So, it is not as if the unthinkable, the unlivable, the unintelligible has no discursive life; it does have one. It just lives within discourse as the radically uninterrogated and as the shadowy contentless figure for something that is not yet made real (Butler in Meijer and Prins, 1998, p.281).

This means that difference and exclusion are constituted not only through gender identity, but also through intersecting divisions such as class, social status, race, ethnicity, religion, culture and physical ability. This intersection of categories that articulate each other and challenge the idea that identity is an established and uniform position, illustrates the dynamic complex of power relations in which identities are *''constituted and/or erased, deployed and/or paralyzed''* (Butler, 1993, p.117). In this sense, perceptions of womanhood and manhood are never neutral constructs, as they are enmeshed within a wider configuration of power relations and hegemonic practices that establish the 'right' modalities of masculinity and femininity, whilst producing otherness in the modality of the non-conforming abject body (Monceri, 2012). However, this process does not proceed from the singular axis of gender normativity, because it intersects with class, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion and the image of the able-bodied.

The idea of gender performativity is connected to the argument that I have developed in Chapter Six in relation to the enactment of culture in interaction. In that chapter (section 6.5 of this thesis) I have argued that the processual aspect of intercultural communication emerges through the negotiation of identities in interaction with the enactment of cultural features that can be harnessed to please the other, as resources of resistance and defiance or to indicate the refusal to engage. This processual,

performative aspect of culture takes place within a context regulated by a number of structural factors that influence interaction, such as the language being used and the social status of the interlocutors. Similarly, gender represents another facet of engagement between self and other, which intersects not only with culture, but with a number of other categories that interlock to reproduce patterns of privilege and exclusion.

7.4.2 The contextual dimension of othering

In Chapter Six I have highlighted the role of asymmetrical power relations, the enactment of cultural resources and language in influencing the context of interaction. Here, I illustrate the role of other categories that bear upon context, to create interlocking realities that underpin the dynamics of othering.

An example of the overlapping discourses related to gender, women's rights, immigration and integration is offered by Bilge (2010) regarding debates over Muslim dress code in Europe. In this instance, veiled women are considered simultaneously passive victims and an active threat to Western values of freedom and autonomy of the individual, meaning that the promotion of immigrants' rights and women's rights become mutually exclusive in political discourse and in the wider debates concerning the veil as a symbol of oppression. Instead, Bilge proposes a problematization of the intersection of minority gender relations (in this case within Muslim communities) and overarching national politics, in which are embedded a number of social divisions based on class, ethnicity, religion and race. From this perspective, Muslim women are placed *''within in-group patriarchy and the matrix of domination between Western states and their Muslim minorities''* (Bilge, 2010, p.19).

Benhabib (2002) illustrates this dynamic with the example of the 'scarf affair' in France in the mid-1990s, which culminated in the mass expulsion of twenty-three girls from school for wearing a headscarf, or hijab. This controversy finally led to a nationwide ban of religious symbols from all primary and secondary state schools in 2004. This incident, argues Benhabib, is paradigmatic of the difficult relationship between national identities and minority groups. In this particular instance, the girls became the object of state regulation in order to send a wider message regarding the value of laïcité-meaning the neutrality of the state towards religious practices. The act of defiance of the girls in question, who wore the hijab (commonly referred as foulard in French) as a sign of affirmation of their own minority Islamic identity within the larger French society, exposed the fragile balance between the private and the public spheres in multicultural societies: on the one side, the private domain of cultural belonging, where minority identities are free to act according to their own beliefs, and on the other the public domain,

> When distinct cultural groups interact, the rifts of intercultural difference
> are most deeply felt along the boundaries demarcating the public from
> the private sphere (p.83).

For this reason, the image of veiled Muslim women becomes a crucial element in debating the issue of individual autonomy in the context of secular multicultural societies, because their dress code, which belongs to the private sphere of religious and cultural identity, interacts with the public sphere where they engage as individuals endowed with rights and obligations according to a liberal universalist conception of the self.

I address this issue in the next section, with the aim to challenge the presupposition of neutrality of the individual as autonomous agent, a tenet of liberal universalism, in favour of an ethics of the other that requires the formulation of agency from the

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standpoint of embodied subjectivity. My understanding of embodied subjectivity in this thesis is informed by a Levinasian ethics of the other that frames intercultural engagement in terms of dialogic interaction. In this sense, my main contention is that the conception of embodied subjectivity described in the next section offers a more nuanced understanding of agency as context dependent, and represents an alternative to cultural tolerance in relativistic multiculturalism and appeals to the emancipated and autonomous individual in liberal universalism.

7.4.3 Multiperspectival ethical communication and othering

Benhabib (1987, 1999) criticises the tradition of moral autonomy (which I discuss in Chapter Four of this thesis in relation to Kant) for creating the image of the general other, the bearer of a moral outlook that fails to account for difference and particularity. This general other is represented by the Kantian autonomous self whose fundamental moral law is founded on the idea of universalizability- meaning that a principle is valid only if it can be universalized and thus applicable in any context, and to any individual. However, according to Benhabib, universalism is defined through the experiences of a specific group taken as paradigmatic of all humanity. As a consequence of the equation of moral autonomy with reason and rationality, any claims to particularism and difference stemming from embodied individuals are considered irrational and relegated to the status of the other of reason because they are refractory to the universalization of the moral law.

Benhabib describes the Western ideal of moral autonomy as a male narrative that has excluded the experiences of the female into the private realm, confined to the burden of reproduction. Universalist moral theory has retained this dichotomy between autonomy and nurturance, or the sphere of justice and that of the domestic, private sphere. This dichotomy survives in the distinction between the generalised other of

formal equality based on rights, obligations and entitlement, and the non-institutional ethics of care of the concrete other. In this respect, according to Cavarero (1997) the abstract nature of the moral law founded on individual autonomy obscures the practical everyday engagement of self and other. If the moral law considers all individuals as equal, *residing together* [*stare insieme*] as the result of a formal agreement, the fact of *being together* [*essere insieme*] (Cavarero, 1997, p.88) discloses another dimension of being human, the fact that in reciprocal vicinity as embodied, corporeal subjects, each individual is not equivalent but unique,

> The who is simply exposed; or better, finds herself always already exposed to another, and consists in this reciprocal exposition (Cavarero, 1997, p.89).

The relationship established between concrete others, according to Benhabib, requires this acknowledgment of reciprocal exposition based on the recognition of norms of friendship and care, stemming from the sphere of nurturance and not from abstract justice. From this standpoint, universalizability fails to account for this concrete other who acts according to values that are based on the private sphere, such as responsibility, bonding and sharing and not on abstract norms of rights and obligations. However, this definition of two others, the generalised other of universal justice and of the autonomous moral self, and the concrete other of the ethics of care, is not considered a prescriptive division but a critical and productive distinction. In other words, although the recognition of the generalised other represents a necessary aspect of justice, formal procedures are not sufficient in accounting for the whole of the human experience, requiring instead attention to the individual, concrete other: *''we lack the necessary epistemic information to judge my moral situation to be 'like' or 'unlike' yours''* (Benhabib, 1987, p.91).

As I have illustrated in the previous section on the contextual dimension of othering, individuals are uniquely positioned within a network of relations. This conception of the individual as uniquely positioned refers to a vision of the self that is *''incompatible with the very criteria of reversibility and universalizability advocated by defenders of universalism''* (Benhabib, 1987, p.81), demanding a wider conception of the individual as embedded in a specific life trajectory and thus shaped by a number of intersecting factors. Benhabib establishes the reconciliation of general and concrete other according to multicultural pluralist arrangements that are based on three principles of democratic deliberation that rest on the principle of communicative ethics (Habermas, 1984):

1. *Egalitarian reciprocity between members of minority and majority groups:* the legal identity of individuals cannot be defined through membership in a community of origin.

2. *Voluntary self-*ascription: individuals must no be not assigned a cultural, religious or linguistic identity by virtue of birth.

3. *Freedom of exit and association:* freedom to leave a group should be unrestricted and facilitated in accordance with principles of citizens' equality.

   (Benhabib, 2002, pp.131-132).

Although the argument of incommensurability between world-views held by different groups limits the validity of this model of deliberative democracy, I agree with Benhabib that only the practice of dialogue can establish the level of incommensurability between world views, and that intercultural dialogue is a process of familiarization with other ways of thinking and other ways of life. Crucially, Benhabib frames this intercultural engagement between groups within the framework of interactive universalism, which acknowledges plurality without endorsing indiscriminately all positions as morally valid. Instead, taking difference as a starting point of action, interactive universality offers a regulative ideal that takes into account

the embodied identity of the concrete other in the search for a point of view that is acceptable to all individuals committed to engagement, fairness and reciprocity. In this context, I concur with Benhabib that a major obstacle in debating the issue of gender inequality in multicultural societies resides in a view of culture that is unable to account for internal fragmentations and contestations within minority groups. Instead, both universalists and relativists regard minority groups as holistic entities, risking the silencing of contrasting voices within minority communities.

Returning to the focus of this chapter, namely the issue of processes of otherization and perception of the other in terms of gender identity from an intercultural perspective, I highlight the notion of the concrete other to designate the ideological limits of universalistic moral theory, in representing the *"unthought, unseen, unheard of such theories"* (Benhabib, 1987, p.92). This notion illustrates the role of otherness as embodied in the historical experience of women, a fact that Derrida (2010) conveys with the term phallogocentrism, meaning the patriarchal privileging of reason as founded on the search for a final transcendental signified that erases all differences (see Chapter Four, section 4.3 of this thesis on the notion of presence in Derrida). According to Derrida (2005), this exclusion of the female experience from public life survives in the modern ideas of democracy and political sovereignty, stemming from the ancient Greek model of friendship based on fraternity and brotherhood. From this perspective, I relate this subordinate role of the female in Western philosophical and political traditions to the process of otherisation of the subaltern in the context of colonial and post-colonial theory (see Chapter Two, section 2.5.3 of this thesis for the notion of epistemic violence towards the subaltern).

The process of otherisation created by European colonialism is embodied by the figure of the native informant, a term employed by Spivak (1988, 1999) to represent the

practice adopted by colonial authorities consisting in selecting colonial subjects in order to ensure the effective governing of colonial territories. Moreover, the tradition of ethnographic research has inscribed the trope of the native informant within Western cultural representations of colonised populations. In this sense, the native informant as cultural other is unable to occupy the position of subject and narrator and is thus *''denied o*f *autobiography''* (Spivak, 1988, p.6). This loss of autobiography is epitomized in the experience of subaltern women, which exemplifies this process of otherisation and exclusion from European consciousness.

This process of concealment and exclusion of the other from European universalizing normativity and history is conveyed with the psychoanalytical notion of foreclosure, meaning the expulsion of the other from consciousness (Lacan, 2001; Grigg, 2008). In this process of foreclosure of the other from European consciousness, the subaltern woman embodies a radical form of otherness, since her experiences have been mediated by both indigenous and colonial male patriarchy, as in the case of widow immolation narrated by Spivak (1998). In this sense, the subaltern woman represents *''the typecase of the foreclosed native informant''* (Spivak, 1999, p.6), who is oppressed not only by the cultural domination of the colonizer, but also by patriarchial structures. If the subaltern woman testifies to an alterity beyond hegemonic formations, it also generates the question of representation of this experience.

At this point emerges the ethical aspect of the endeavour to narrate the subaltern experience, as Spivak contrasts the practice of speaking *for* the other, representing the other as victim, with the practice of speaking *to* the other in terms of responsibility and ability to be responsive and *''recover the subjectivity of the subaltern by attributing to it historical agency''* (Birla, 2010, p.93). This form of responsibility recalls the notion of the concrete other, in the sense that the endeavour to respond ethically to the other

demonstrates the gap between two distinct historical and political representations of the subaltern, particularly subaltern women. One form of narration gives voice to the oppressed by representing the subaltern experience through a homogeneous emancipatory narrative, speaking for the other *''through our pre-given cognitive schemes''* (Cornell, 2010, p.112). An alternative representation is based on the assumption that the subaltern is an agentive subject whose voice is concealed in historical accounts, so that rescuing her experiences requires an ethical commitment to let her absence emerge from the layers of history.

This latter approach is exemplified by the deconstructive reading of colonial and post-colonial accounts of historical incidents in which Spivak (1988) voices the complexity entailed in narrating the subaltern experience without recreating processes of otherisation. In this attempt, she traces the invisibility of the subaltern woman in the colonial archives that chronicle anti-colonial insurgency and in post-colonial texts that attempt to articulate the struggles of the colonized from the perspective of the disenfranchised. In doing this, Spivak identifies acts of agentive subjectivity that contrast with the hegemonic narratives of dominated and passive subaltern women[4]. Here, I suggest that Spivak's endeavour resonates with the Levinasian distinction between the *saying* and the *said* that I propose in this thesis as a guide for intercultural ethics, by virtue of the ethical commitment to let the trace of the other emerge from historical accounts that have obscured her experiences. From this perspective, in Chapter Eight I employ the underpinnings of the idea of the subaltern to delineate the features of an abject other created in processes of othering. I attempt to let the

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[4] As illustration of this deconstructive reading, Spivak (1988) tells the story of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, whose politically motivated suicide was misunderstood as the result of illicit love.

agentivity of the otherised emerge from dominant hegemonic narratives, according to the ethical commitment toward the other expressed in this thesis.

To this end, I discuss the ways in which Muslim women are otherised in dominant narratives that reduce them to agentless victims of traditional communities. In these hegemonic narratives, a perceived superior Western perspective universalises an ideal of neutrality and autonomy of the individual that excludes the experiences of Muslim women, who are relegated to the voiceless role of the subaltern. In order to counteract these hegemonic narratives, I argue that only through dialogic engagement with this voiceless other it is possible to create an intercultural space for dialogue and confrontation between equals.

Therefore, in Chapter Eight I examine the othering of Muslim women in political discourses that appropriate the issue of women's emancipation in order to pursue an anti-immigration agenda which positions Islam as the other of the Western liberal tradition. I share Delphy's call to question processes of othering perpetrated in the name of universalism by drawing attention to *"the hidden specificity of the subject of universal rights"* (2015, p.51) and revealing the *"sexed, ethnicized and class nature"* (ibid.) of the presupposed neutrality of liberal universalism.

7.5 Conclusion.

In this chapter I have highlighted the contextual and processual construction of identity overlapping with other categories, providing the theoretical framework for the analysis of processes of otherisation of women discussed in the next chapter. To this end, having examined the process of otherisation that result from the exclusion, or foreclosure of difference from normative accounts of the self, in the next chapter I illustrate the pertinence of this analysis in intercultural communication.

In positing gender identity as a performative act in the discursive production of the self (Butler, 1990, 1993), I problematize the relegation of non-normative gender identities to the position of otherness in respect to the attribution of autonomy and free will, in this specific case the veiled woman as a signifier of an undesired other in Western societies (Bilge, 2010; Riitaoja and Dervin, 2014). Furthermore, I highlight the ways in which the intersection of gender with other categories brings to light the process of otherisation as dependent on a number of factors that relate to constructions of knowledge, social practices, language and material-physical distinctions (Riitaoja and Dervin, 2014). From this perspective, I refer to otherisation as a process that occurs when universalistic models of moral autonomy are employed to define normative constructions of the self that exclude the other as a subaltern, abject body. In this context, I argue that women's bodies are a battlefield in which cultural and political conflicts are staged, and where the private and public spheres interact, particularly in instances when the boundaries between the two domains can become a matter of contention (Benhabib, 2002).

In this context, in Chapter Eight I position the role of Muslim women as cultural others, acting as powerful signifiers of what has been described a clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1996) between Islam and Western liberal universalism. Furthermore, I argue that the same process of creation of an essential alterity can be observed in relation to women who defy patriarchal norms. In both cases I understand the responsibility of interculturalists as challenging biased conceptions of tolerance and cultural difference, in order to engage with difference not as a stable characteristic of the other but as feature present in individuals both intra-and inter-culturally.

Chapter Eight. Self and Other: an example of othering

8.1 Introduction

Following from Chapter Seven, in this final chapter I provide an example of intercultural conflict in which the attribution of otherness is based on the intersection between the gendered body, by which I mean the social construction of gender (Kessler and McKenna, 1978), cultural difference, ethnicity and national identity.

Starting with this premise, in the present chapter I emphasise three aspects of the relation between self and other: their interdependence, the network of power relations embedded in interactions with others and finally the ethical dimension of the encounter with the other. This ethical dimension proceeds from two distinct ethical frameworks, one based on the idea of embodied subjectivity (or the concrete other) that I ascribe in this thesis to Levinasian ethics, and the other based on abstract Kantian universalism (or the general other). With this focus on the ethical aspect of the relation between self and other I return to the philosophical discussion on Levinasian ethics in Chapters Four and Five, and I pursue a line of inquiry centred on two arguments. First of all, I consider the ways in which the self is defined epistemologically in relation to the other. In order to exemplify this dynamic, I continue the discussion initiated in Chapter Seven, regarding the role of gender in creating othering. Connected to the first point, I then reflect on the modalities in which the other is silenced by a powerful self. Finally, I conclude with a reflection on the implications of this analysis for intercultural communication.

8.1.1 The epistemological framework of Chapter Eight

Regarding the epistemic stance adopted in the present chapter, I intend to return to the practice of immanent critique (Chapter Two, section 2.7) by mapping out concepts and problematizing assumptions that circulate in public discourse regarding the role of gender in intercultural conflicts. According to the anti-essentialist stance adopted in this thesis, which means that I reject explanations based exclusively on cultural difference, I opt for the method of immanent critique because it allows for the unfolding of the complexity that determines the relationship between self and other. Thus, I weave a narrative that reveals the effects of the attribution of essentialised traits to congeal the identity of the other, while creating the image of an idealised self. I gather a number of realities that illuminate each other and in which gender identity, cultural representations of the body, ethnicity and national identity intersect to create otherness.

In doing this, in sections 8.2.1 and 8.2.2 I connect the public discourse concerning the dress code of Muslim women in multicultural European societies to the media attention attracted by the protests of the feminist group Femen, which champions the liberation of Muslim women. From this perspective, I offer an illustration of the absence of dialogism between self and other, and of the perils of the *said* (Chapter Four, section 4.6 on the distinction between the *saying* and the *said*) not only in public discourse, but also in the context of intercultural attempts to engage with others without a reflective stance on essentialist positioning, such in the case of Femen. In this respect, this last issue recalls the notion of the burden of the fittest (Chapter Two, section 2.5.3), whereby the dominant self provides the means of emancipation to the unprivileged other.

In this context, the decision to focus on the public debate surrounding the dress code of Muslim women in Europe is particularly poignant, as the media attention it receives is inextricable from wider debates regarding the integration of migrants in multicultural societies and the threat of terrorism, as shown in regard to the recent attack on the journalists of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris. In the present chapter I argue that the stereotyping of Muslim women as oppressed is employed as evidence that immigrants and minority groups are resistant to the assimilation of Western values of tolerance, equality and freedom. From this perspective, I contend that Muslim women are otherised as passive victims of male patriarchy and religious oppression from the liberal position of autonomy of the individual that posits its own values as neutral and ahistorical.

As a counterpoint to the stereotyping of Muslim women, in weaving this narrative on othering in section 8.2.3 I offer an intra-cultural example of the misogynistic abuse suffered by the former Australian Prime Minister, Julia Gillard. In both instances I contend that the practice of othering, both in inter-and intra-cultural contexts, attributes essentialist traits to groups and individuals, creating difference as an insurmountable obstacle that precludes engagement in dialogue. In this process, the other is objectified either as a passive victim deprived of agency, or as a threat and an enemy.

This dichotomy recalls Badiou's critique of an ethics of tolerance based on the dialectics of the good other and the bad other (Chapter Five, section 5.3), the former representing the object of tolerance and the other the embodiment of a threatening form of otherness. In this dialectics of otherness, the self acquires a sense of identity through this contrast with the other, according to a modality that is twofold. Accepting the other under the conditions of hospitality reflects the value of tolerance embedded in the idea of cultural difference. However, hospitality is based on a precarious balance

that is subverted with the appearance of a bad other, who tests the limits of cultural tolerance and reveals the metaphysics of presence inherent in the concept (see hostipitality, Chapter Four, section 4.3). In the present chapter I aim to illustrate this dynamic by focusing on the depiction of otherness in European multicultural societies.

8.2 The abject body

In this thesis I adopt a Levinasian ethical framework that emphasises the corporeity of interaction, the bodily presence of self and other. Nevertheless, I agree with Butler (2012a) about the importance of extending this preoccupation with the closeness of the individual other to account for the mediated character of contemporaneity, which means that the ethical call may arise from an 'elsewhere' rather than the 'here and now'. In other words, the pervasiveness of media in contemporary life poses the challenge of responding to the other *''at a distance''* (p.134). Here, I extend the preoccupation with embodied subjectivity that characterises Levinasian ethics to ethical engagement with the other from a distance, by critiquing the essentialism that pervades representations of the other in the media and in political discourse.

In Chapter Seven (section 7.4.1) I have argued that an important aspect of othering is represented by the process of creation of the abject body. In the creation of the abject body, the other is construed as aberrant in respect to the normative attribution of accepted behaviours, including heteronormative gender and sexual identities, the perception of physical disability, representations of class, and discrimination based on cultural and religious background, race, ethnicity or nationality. In the remaining part of the present chapter I provide an example of this creation of the abject body and, in doing this, I offer an illustration of the ways in which power imbalance and hegemonic discourses marginalise and otherise groups and individuals with the assignment of essentialised attributes. I illustrate the body of the other as a battlefield where cultural

meanings intersect with material conditions: the veiled body versus the covered body, and the fertile body of the nation against the barren body. I then conclude with a reflection on the implications of this analysis for ethical interculturalists, in the background of the philosophical framework of this thesis.

8.2.1 The veiled body

The variety of dress styles adopted by Muslim women is generally simplified with the term 'veiling', although it refers to a complex semiotic of dress code. For example, the term veiling is employed to indicate the practice of covering the head with a hijab, a headscarf more commonly used by Muslim women. The hijab can also be worn over the jilbab, a long garment that covers the body. Marginally, the practice of veiling can refer to the niqab, a veil imported from Pakistan and the Gulf States that covers the eyes and mouth, worn over a jilbab to signal affiliation to the conservative Salafi movement. The niqab is worn by a minority of women in Europe, and it is banned in a number of European countries, such as France, Belgium and Switzerland (Figure 10).

Fig. 10. Legislation regulating the Islamic dress in Europe

France

- Hijab banned in state schools since 2004-

- Full veil banned in 2011

Belgium

- Full veil banned in 2010

Germany

- Teachers and civil servants are banned from wearing the Hijab in many individual states

Russia

- Full ban of the Hijab since 2013

Switzerland

- Full veil banned in 2013 in the Ticino region

In the present chapter I do not discuss the politics of the niqab and of the two other styles of dress that have also caused much controversy: the chador, a full body cloak worn in Iran, and the burka, which covers the whole face and the whole body, introduced in Afghanistan in the 1990s under the Taliban. This last item in particular has become the default term to indicate the dress style of Muslim women, as it is implied in the term 'burka ban', which is employed in reference to legislation that regulates the wearing of the full face veil and of the headscarf in Europe (Lazreg, 2009; Laborde, 2012). The reason for not entering into the detail of the full face veil is that it affects only a small minority of women in Europe and a discussion of the type of agency enacted in the total covering of face and body is outside the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, it is important to specify that the dress code of Muslim women varies in different communities and that items of clothing differ in their adherence to tradition, being subject to a number of variations in terms of colour and fashionable appearance according to Western standards. In other words, this tradition represents a complex semiotic of dress code which is reduced ''*to one or two items of clothing that assume the function of crucial symbols of complex negotiations between Muslim religious and cultural identities and Western cultures*'' (Benhabib, 2002, p.95). Therefore, in employing the term veil in the present chapter I refer mainly to the label adopted in media discourse in regard to the practice of wearing the hijab. In doing this, I am conscious of the reductive nature of the term in reference to the complex semiotic of dress code in Islamic tradition, which reflects the variety of Islamic sects, such as

Sunni, Shia or Ismaili (Bullock, 2002). I am also conscious of the reality of women forced to cover their bodies in observance to tradition, and I address this aspect later in this section.

Understood in this manner, I regard the veil as a semiotic symbol of what is considered to embody the presence of unassimilable otherness within Western European societies. From this perspective, the Islamic veil represents the catalyst of cultural conflicts in multicultural societies, reflecting the sense of a growing fear of the other that increases in times of economic uncertainty and that is exploited in populist discourses that blame the perceived lack of integration of immigrant communities for the disintegration of national cohesion and commonly held values. As illustration of this perception, in 2014 the British Newspaper Daily Mail started a campaign to mark Remembrance Day asking Muslim women to wear poppy themed hijabs as a symbol of patriotism and anti-extremism (The poppy hijab that defies the extremists: British Muslims urged to wear headscarf as symbol of remembrance, Daily Mail, 31st October, 2014).

The initiative was originally launched by the Islamic Society of Britain in response to the actions of a minority of Muslim protesters, branded '*extremists*' by the Daily Mail, who burned poppies in public to protest against the involvement of British troops in Afghanistan. Although originally the motivation of this campaign was to highlight the positive role of Muslim soldiers in the First World War, in fact it proved divisive, as it singled out Muslim women, and through them British Muslim communities, to demonstrate publicly their allegiance to the values of the nation. This fact has two implications: it essentialises all Muslims as belonging to one homogeneous community, while suggesting that extremism is a problem that disproportionally affects Muslims. In addition to that, it requires a specific group to demonstrate allegiance,

which is not requested of other groups, implying that the presence of Muslims in British society is problematic due to their ambiguous allegiance to British values. This creates the image of a perceived real Britishness, embodied by an idealised British self, which is defined against Muslims.

In a similar vein, in the same year another populist newspaper, The Sun, published the image of a Muslim woman wearing a Union Jack hijab urging ''Brits of all faiths'' to stand up against extremism (The poppy hijab is just Islamophobia with a floral motif, The New Stateman, 3rd November, 2014). In both instances, Muslim women are selected to represent the fight against extremism, demanding that their choice to wear a hijab is transformed into a test of loyalty. From this perspective, The Sun repeats a similar discoursive strategy as the one adopted in the Daily Mail: by singling out Muslim women, it reaffirms the exceptional nature of Islamic presence in British society, while implying the Islamic nature of extremism. Interestingly, it is the danger posited by this extremist other that unites the nation in the fight for freedom and democracy, reaffirming the superior values of the Western liberal tradition.

This situation in which Islamic women are taken as a symbol of oppression under the perceived laissez faire of multicultural policies is exploited by a number of political parties in European politics, which fuel anti-immigrant sentiments by targeting Islamic communities as examples of a lack of integration and of oppression of women (Amnesty International, 2012). Prominent examples of the resurgence of this anti-immigration agenda targeting Muslims communities in Europe are the UKIP (UK Independence Party) in British politics with its stereotyping of immigrants as alien and parasitic, the anti-Islamic Freedom Party in the Netherlands, the Northern League in Italy, the Danish People's Party in Denmark, the National Front in France and the Pegida (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West) movement in

Germany (Charlie Hebdo attacks: Anti-Islam parties are now on the march across Europe, The Telegraph, 7th January 2015).

In 2010, Nigel Farage, the leader of the UKIP party made the following comment in regard to the proposed ban of the niqab,

> It is a symbol of something that is used to oppress women, it is a symbol of an increasingly divided Britain, and the real worry – and it isn't just about what people wear – is we are heading towards a situation where many of our cities are ghettoised and there is even talk of Sharia law becoming part of British culture (UKIP calls for ban on Muslim veil, The Telegraph, 17th January, 2010).

A similar position was upheld in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris, this time with particular reference to the existence of no-go areas for non-Muslims in both Britain and France,

> So wherever you look, wherever you look you see this blind eye being turned and you see the growth of ghettos where the police and all the normal agents of the law have withdrawn and that is where sharia law has come in and you know it got so bad in Britain that our last archbishop of Canterbury, the leader of our church, actually said we should accept sharia law (Nigel Farage tells Fox News there are no-go zones for non-Muslims in France, The Guardian, 13th January, 2015).

In both statements it is evident the connection made between the outward appearance of Muslim women with the imaginary construction of ghettoes where non-Muslims are not able to enter. A personal reflection by the former archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, on the merits of sharia law was used by Farage to reinforce his depiction of the presence of an alien other in 'our' society, representing a threat of fundamentalism which will endanger the secular tradition of Western European democracy. In this respect, the veil is employed to symbolise an unbridgeable otherness illustrated in the essentialist depiction of all Muslim communities as backward and potentially dangerous to the secular values of Western European nations. The following is an example of the rhetorical appeal to women's rights employed to stereotype the Italian

Muslim community as inimical to women, and subsequently averse to modernity. The article was written in reference to the conservative and misogynistic views held by one Imam in Segrate, a municipality in Milan,

> In conclusion, within immigrant communities and those converted to Islam there is a lack of internal resources, a lack of an intellectual class able to produce innovative and modern ideas. For this reason they are forced to turn to the Mecca, and not only in order to pray (Islam, the manual of the Imam: how to beat women, Libero, 22 Dicembre 2014, my translation).[5]

Here, there is a twofold implication: on the one side, the identification between all immigrants and Muslims, which reinforces the othering of immigrants as hostile and alien to Italian society, on the other the assumption of backwardness extended to all those who embrace the Islamic faith, as in the example of converts.

This polarising framing has set the tone for the debates regarding the dress style of Muslim women, which have been prominent in Western media since the early 1990s, and has accentuated and exacerbated the dichotomy between Western secularism and minority groups (Scott, 2007). In this polarization, employing women's bodies as a contentious matter, minority groups are presented as reticent to assimilate to dominant values of freedom and autonomy, even though the practice of wearing the niqab in Europe is limited to a small minority of Muslim women, and worn as a symbol of religious affiliation to a conservative interpretation of Islam (Tarlo, 2010). Indeed, although legislation affected only a small minority of women, Belgium was the first country in Europe to ban the full face veil in 2010, a law first proposed by the Flemish far right as a reaction to the perceived Islamisation of Belgium. Despite the difficult political climate at the time, the proposed legislation achieved unanimous, cross-party

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[5] ''Insomma, nelle comunità di immigrati e di convertiti scarseggiano le risorse interne, manca una classe intellettuale in grado di produrre qualsiasi tesi innovativa e pertanto si è ancora costretti a rivolgersi verso la Mecca e non soltanto per la preghiera'' (Islam, il manuale dell'Imam: ecco come si picchiano le donne, Libero, 22 Dicembre 2014).

support. In the words of Denis Ducarme, a Belgian Liberal party MP, Belgium was *"the first country to break through the chain that has kept countless women enslaved"* (Belgium passes Europe's first ban on wearing burka in public, The Independent, 1st May 2010).

The equation established between the uncovering and the liberation of the oppressed Islamic woman is thus deeply problematic, as it is based on the assumption that oppression is limited to a particular culture and to a particular religion (Bracke, 2012). In this context, a report published by Amnesty International (2012) highlights a reinforcing of stereotyping following debates which have taken place in European countries including Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. As a result of stereotypical perceptions of the hijab, the report continues, women have suffered the negative impact in terms of discrimination and limited opportunities for employment and education. An example of this negative impact is reported in the research conducted in Germany by Human Rights Watch in 2009. According to the report, teachers and civil servants are banned from wearing the hijab in eight states of the Federal Republic, resulting in discriminatory practices that effectively deny women who refuse to comply with the ruling access to certain types of employment on the grounds of their religion. Although the ruling was overturned by the Federal Constitutional Court in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia after nearly twelve years of legal battles, the issue remains highly contested in the rest of Germany. Interestingly, the ban has been introduced in the states with the highest concentration of ethnic Turkish minority populations. Although the ban refers to all religious symbols in the workplace in order to reflect the supposed impartiality of the Western liberal

democratic tradition, it has in fact targeted Muslim women, who have been the most affected by the legislation (Human Rights Watch, 2009).

The idea of a clash of civilizations that generates from the polarization between Islamic religion and the neutrality of Western culture presents Western values as a cure to Islamic backwardness. According to this polarization, freedom and equality are posited as natural to Western culture and backwardness as inherent to Islam (Roy, 2004; Scott, 2007; Bouteldja, 2014; Brems, 2014). From this perspective, Mancini (2012) argues that there are no corresponding laws in Europe limiting women from wearing any type of clothing, meaning that the targeting of one particular dress code implies that the unequal treatment of women is a phenomenon that is limited exclusively in the domain of the cultural other. Indeed, I agree with Laborde (2012) and Taramundi (2014) that in the debates concerning the dress code of Muslim women across Europe, invoking the support of women's rights does not correspond to a serious commitment to gender equality, such as combating domestic violence, establishing pay equality and addressing the balance of work and care. Rather, invoking women's rights in this context betrays an unconscious internalization of Western gender roles and Western gender hierarchies, which are posited as natural and conducive to equality and freedom (Mancini, 2012). From this perspective, it becomes impossible for Muslim women to articulate a position that eludes the narrow and one-dimensional framing of the debate, which recalls Spivak's plea for the voice of the subaltern to emerge amidst hegemonic narratives (Amir-Moazami, 2014; and see Chapters Two and Seven for the notion of the subaltern in Spivak).

In the next section I show how a Western hegemonic framing of the debate generates the image of the veiled Islamic woman as oppressed by the patriarchal traditions of her community. At the same time, she is represented as the symbol of the danger of

dissolution of national identity, of intolerance and of religious fundamentalism (Amiraux, 2012; Brems, 2014; Edwards, 2014). In this dynamic of othering, Islamic women undergo a process of abjection, meaning that their physical presence within Western countries is employed in public discourse to symbolize the undesired other. This process of abjection is epitomised by the protests organised by the group Femen.

8.2.2 The naked body

The feminist movement Femen started in Ukraine in 2008, championing a brand of 'sextremism' embodied in the following slogan,

> FEMEN is an international women's movement of brave topless female activists painted with the (sic) slogans and crowned with flowers (Femen, n.d., http://femen.org/about)

The actions promoted by Femen to protest against religious oppression and the exploitation of sex workers are based on the idea of baring their breasts as an act of defiance towards patriarchal norms. Interestingly, Femen activists appear to be young and conventionally attractive, a fact that has contributed to attract media attention but that has also generated perplexity, particularly on the part of other feminists who condemn the display of nudity as an exploitative tactic that appeals to the male gaze (Zychowicz, 2011).

Here I focus on the stance of Femen regarding the status of Muslim women. One of their most successful actions in terms of media exposure was organised in aid of Tunisian Femen activist Amina Tyler, which led to a Topless Jihad Day on 4th April 2013, an international day of protests staged in a number of European cities characterised by the condemnation of Islam tout court. This condemnation is based on the orientalist equation between oppression and the 'Arab mentality' that guides

Femen's ideology. Anna Hutsol, director of Femen, describes Ukranian attitudes towards women with the following statement,

> As a society, we haven't been able to eradicate our Arab mentality towards women (Femen, Ukraine's Topless Warriors, The Atlantic, 28th November, 2012).

In this context, in defence of International Topless Jihad Day, Femen's leader Inna Shevchenko writes,

> Muslim men shroud their women in black sacks of submissiveness and fear, and dread as they do the devil the moment women break free to light, peace, and freedom (Topless Jihad! Huffington Post, 26th March 2013).

The basic assumption underpinning the stance adopted in relation to the rights of Muslim women resides in the equation established between nakedness and freedom. Hence, the presupposition of a lack of agency on the part of Muslim women who choose not to uncover reinforces the stereotypical image of Islamic backwardness. Framed in this context, Femen's attempt to engage with an intercultural issue, in this case the imprisonment of activitst Amina Tyler in Tunisia, rests on the unproblematized attribution of essentialist traits to define the other and perpetrates the old colonial practice of the racialization of religious belonging (Amiraux, 2012). From this perspective, International Topless Jihad Day created an intercultural conflict, with Muslim women over the world expressing their dissent on social media through a Muslimah Pride Day, against the perceived imperialist message of Western women claiming to liberate the cultural, oppressed other (Muslim women decry topless gender protest, Al Jazeera, 5th April 2013; Femen's obsession with nudity feeds a racist postcolonial feminism, The Guardian, 11th April 2013).

As I have pointed out in the present chapter (8.2.3), Western gender roles equate uncovering of the female body with liberation (Mancini, 2012). Interestingly, as

Wiedlack and Neufeld (2014) argue, a similar equation was employed by Western media to report on the arrest of Russian activists Pussy Riot in 2012. In this case, the wider implications of Pussy Riot's activism regarding their anti-capitalist, anti-neoliberal message and their opposition to the curtailing of LGBT and immigrants' rights in Russia were simplified and decontextualized in terms of sexual liberation from the oppression of the Orthodox Church. I agree with the authors that this focus on sexuality and religious repression is based on an assumption of Eastern backwardness, the same assumption that is harnessed in relation to Muslim women. Here, the framing of the other reveals the idealised image of the Western self as a liberal, free and secular individual who represents a model of liberation for the oppressed other.

For example, returning to Femen's Topless Jihad Day, the following excerpt from an opinion piece published in the newspaper The Guardian exemplifies this dichotomy established in public discourse between Eastern religious backwardness and Western secularism, while dismissing any opposition to such a framing as examples of political correctness and relativism,

> She [Amina Tyler] is claiming freedoms and rights taken for granted in most democratic countries – but which are frowned on and suppressed and violently denied by religious conservatives. If Christian conservatives ran things here, our society would be hobbled and distorted and modern freedoms denied. Femen has indeed attacked Christianity as well as Islam. But in Western Europe the church has very little real power over public morals. Islam does exert such power in North Africa. Tyler objects to this moral control. Is she wrong to do so? Why does this activist for freedom not deserve the same support the Arab spring got? Or is freedom only worth supporting when there is no possible conflict with Islam implied by all the romantic Arabist rhetoric? (A gloriously crude topless 'jihad' from a Femen activist, The Guardian, 5th April 2013).

In this piece, the main point is that democratic countries are in danger of religious obscurantism. The assumption is that democracy is exclusively Western and that

religious fanaticism is non-Western, a dichotomy reinforced by the use of 'our society', which implies the existence of a homogeneous community of shared values. In this example the framing of the other reveals the epistemological construction of the self, in the contrast between the individual of liberal moral autonomy and the victims of religious oppression and fanaticism. In this context, Bracke and Fadil (2012) argue that this dominant framing of the other, *''does not enable us to address nor render intelligible the various voices that do not comply with such liberal registers''* (p.52). This means that the dominant framing renders difficult the emergence of contrasting voices that would create the preconditions needed to initiate intercultural dialogue. In this respect, the other is caught between the dichotomous representation of the good and the bad other (Badiou, section 8.1 in the present chapter) that characterises the discourse of tolerance in multicultural societies.

From this perspective, the main issue for intercultural communication is how to account for these minority voices without falling into the dichotomous opposition between agency and absence of agency. To this end, I suggest that current debates over the wearing of the hijab are based on the opposition between agency (which equates to emancipation and uncovering) and the absence of agency (which equates to oppression and covering). However, as I have discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.3.), this dichotomy reproduces the two errors of voluntarism and of reification (Bhaskar, 1998): according to the former, the individual is free to act unconstrained from society, whereas in the latter instance the individual is completely determined by social structures. Translated in terms of the debate regarding the hijab, Muslim women are placed in the dilemma of either exercising their agency by shunning the hijab and adopting Western gender roles, or remaining covered and signalling their submission to religious authority. Nevertheless, according to Bhaskar, individuals are thrown into a

pre-existing social context and their agency is exercised within the limits imposed by that particular societal formation. Thus, in order to approach the issue from an intercultural perspective, it is important to understand the ways in which concrete others enact their embodied agency within a specific context.

In Chapter Seven I have argued that the adoption of embodied subjectivity offers a more nuanced understanding of agency as context dependent, offering an alternative to cultural tolerance in relativistic multiculturalism and the supposed objectivity of liberal universalism. The adoption of the perspective of the concrete other, in this sense, enables a view of culture that allows for fragmentation, contrasting voices and dissent to become visible, creating a different framing for the other that is conducive to dialogue. This aspect of intercultural interaction recalls the type of responsible ethical engagement with the other that I have delineated in Chapter IV with the distinction between the *saying* and the *said* (sections 4.6 and 4.7), in which the other is encountered in their singularity and as embedded in a context that comprises unequal power relations.

In the next section I delineate an intra-cultural analysis of othering, namely the process of abjection suffered by Julia Gillard. In this example, the process of othering under examination intersects with national values and heteronormative rules and it defies the principles of autonomy, equality and neutrality, which are invoked in defending the rights of Muslim women. This example further illustrates the role of the *said* in producing essentialism and creating othering through the social construction of masculinity and femininity.

8.2.3 The 'barren' body

Anderson (1991) describes nations as imagined communities around which people define their own identity. One such narrative of national identity is represented in the two archetypal figures that were determinant in the formation of an Australian national sentiment: the white, male bushmen who tamed the wild Australian natural environment (Hogan, 2009) and the figure of the *''hypermasculine sportsman''* (Robinson, 2008, p.141). The archetype of the sportsman, in particular the surf lifesaver, identifies the Australian male *''with all that is healthy, natural and robust''* (ibid). This narrative prizes enterprise, freedom of the individual and the struggle against hostile nature as values of the nation.

During a friendly debate in 2005, Julia Gillard, in her role as opposition health spokeswoman, illustrated this Australian archetypal narrative with the following statement,

> "Women lead with emotional intelligence." Pause. "What nonsense. Let's get a grip here. This is Australia: women don't lead." (Chief has more on her mind than gender, The Sydney Morning Herald, 26th June, 2010).

Although said in jest, this remark proved somehow prophetic years later when in her capacity as the first female Australian Prime Minister, she suffered a spate of misogynistic abuse that otherised her as an inhuman, motherless, unmarried, one-dimensional being unable to demonstrate empathy towards others. Her body was subjected to a process of abjection, being described 'barren' in reference to her decision not to have children, thus confusing her public role as Prime Minister with her private sphere. As her body became a matter of public contention, it was employed to undermine her political ability to govern the country. In her famous 'misogyny speech'

in 2012, Gillard describes the type of behaviour she was subjected to from the leader

of the opposition, Tony Abbott,

> I was also very offended on behalf of the women of Australia when in the course of this carbon pricing campaign, the Leader of the Opposition said "What the housewives of Australia need to understand as they do the ironing…" Thank you for that painting of women's roles in modern Australia. And then of course, I was offended too by the sexism, by the misogyny of the Leader of the Opposition catcalling across this table at me as I sit here as Prime Minister, "If the Prime Minister wants to, politically speaking, make an honest woman of herself…", something that would never have been said to any man sitting in this chair.

> I was offended when the Leader of the Opposition went outside in the front of Parliament and stood next to a sign that said "Ditch the witch." I was offended when the Leader of the Opposition stood next to a sign that described me as a man's bitch. (Transcript of Julia Gillard's speech, The Sydney Morning Herald, 10th October, 2012).

The othering of Julia Gillard was enacted across the political spectrum, with

suggestions that her choice not have children or marry her partner was not the result

of the rational deliberation of a morally autonomous individual, but a sign of her

inhumanity, as suggested by this collection of quotes from her political opponents,

> Mark Latham, former Labour leader: "Anyone who chooses a life without children, as Gillard has, cannot have much love in them."

> Liberal Senator Bill Heffernan: "Anyone who chooses to deliberately remain barren ... they've got no idea what life's about".

> Senator George Brandis described Julia Gillard a "one-dimensional" person who had "chosen not to be a parent".

> (Mark Latham says Julia Gillard has no empathy because she's childless, The Australian, 4th April, 2011).

The intersectional process of othering here develops against the dichotomous

gendered matrix of mother versus motherless identity. Although Julia Gillard's choice

to remain childless and unmarried pertains to the private sphere in which, according to

liberal universalism, she is free to make autonomous choices that result from the

individual's innate ability to rational deliberation, she has been otherised as a 'barren' body. In this sense, her barren body represents the negative image of the healthy, robust, fertile body of the Australian nation. These attacks rest on the dichotomy between a normative construction of an idealised self and the other as a subaltern, abject body. Having undergone a process of abjection, her ability to make rational choices is thus questioned, and as a consequence her refusal to conform to gender roles becomes evidence of her unbridgeable otherness. In other words, she is divested of the rational privilege accorded the general other and, through the attribution of essentialised traits, she is relegated to the realm of irrational otherness.

8.3 Conclusion: the general and the concrete other

In the present chapter I have posited the problem of othering in an attempt to articulate an intercultural response in which I have engaged with the issue from the perspective of embodied subjectivity. As such, embodiment indicates the complexity of factors that inscribe and position individuals, an understanding of which is crucial in intercultural communication in order to counteract neo-essentialist tendencies. In Chapter Six, section 5.4.1, I have illustrated the distinction established by Levinas between an ontological relation to the other and the experience of sensibility, meaning the existential discovery of the other expressed in the praxis of interaction, as proximity (Chapter Four, section 4.5.4). In other words, I have provided an illustration of othering as the result of the ontological relation (Levinas, 1969) established by a powerful self in relation to the other.

In contesting the representation of veiled Islamic women as both passive victims of oppression and a menace to Western values I have revisited the ethical concern of this thesis, particularly the possibility of creating a framework of intercultural understanding that acknowledges the reality of conflict, the precarity of communication

and the limits of discourses of tolerance of the other. According to this ethical framework, interaction appears in the complexity envisioned through the Levinasian encounter of self and other as interlocutors in the modality of the *saying* (Chapter Five, section 5.4). With this approach, I have employed this ethical conception of alterity in terms of embodied subjectivity to contrast the self-image of an idealised free and autonomous Western self, with the image of essentialised, and irremediably 'other', women. To this end, I have addressed this issue with an illustration of the process of abjection, employing the notions of the general other and of the concrete other as a guide to the critique of othering.

As I have explained in Chapter Seven, the general other is the bearer of universal rights, endowed with reason and able to exercise moral autonomy. The concrete other is uniquely positioned within a network of relations in which reciprocal interactions with others are conducted under the ethics of care, friendship and nurturance (Benhabib, 1987, 1999; Cavarero, 1997). Although this dichotomy can be presented simplistically in terms of public vs private sphere, individuals are always acting at the intersection between the two, albeit within differential power relations. In this regard, with the example of the veil, in the present chapter I have illustrated the way in which Muslim women are portrayed in public discourse as passive recipients of the universal rights of the general other. This perpetrates the assumption that, being relegated in the private sphere of tradition and religious observance, they lack moral autonomy and are unable to engage in public life as equals. As a parallel example, I have argued that the othering of Julia Gillard was based on the same intersection between the two spheres of the general and the concrete other. In her public role as Prime Minister, the issue of gender became a decisive factor in othering Giulia Jillard on account of the relations established in her private life as a concrete other.

In particular, I have referred here to instances when othering stems from exclusionary practices based on binary thinking that produce abjection. These exclusionary practices are rooted in the presupposition of biological distinctions (e.g. the male/female dichotomy, or the able/disabled body), in the existence of economic inequality (the othering of the poor) and in ethnocentrism (the cultural other), which, in turn, create the abject other as the irrational and negative image of the self. At the root of these binary formations I identify the Derridian system of the metaphysics of presence according to which one term of the opposition represents full presence and the other term the loss of presence, or the negative. Thus, we see this metaphysics of presence in the definition of self and other in opposing terms as male/female, able/disabled, rich/poor, Western/cultural other. These opposing terms refer to the transcendental signified of universal reason, which is expressed in Western patriarchal political traditions (see metaphysics of presence, Chapter Four, section 4.3 and phallogocentrism, Chapter Seven, section 7.4.3). In pursuing this argument, I have highlighted the contradictions of liberal universalism that emerge from the processes of otherisation examined in the present chapter, one in which the notion of equality is employed to fuel anti-immigrant sentiments, and the other in which the decision to enact a non-normative gender identity, being unmarried and childless, puts into question the notion of universality of equality.

While I eschew relativist claims to cultural tolerance, I regard liberal universalist appeals to autonomy as inadequate in order to understand the complex intersection of identity politics and of the individual right to freedom. This argument has been explored theoretically in Chapters Four, Five and Six: on the one side, engagement with the other through the lenses of Kantian universalist autonomy is in danger of neutralising difference and the embodied character of subjectivity. On the other, an

excessive reliance on tolerance of cultural difference assumes that individuals are defined exclusively by their own cultural communities, and thus runs the risk of silencing dissenting voices, while negating their difference in terms of uniqueness.

To conclude, the principal issue that I see emerging from the critique conducted in the present chapter is that the supposed gender neutral discourse of liberal universalism (Redhead, 2015) reproduces inequality when not accompanied by an appreciation of the embodied concrete other. This relation to the embodied other is framed in Chapter Six in terms of asymmetry, meaning that mutual understanding is the result of a disposition based on reciprocal commitment to dialogue. Indeed, as I have argued in Chapter Seven, I agree with Warren (2008) that it is important to explore theoretical alternatives that reflect on the positive affirmation of difference in the constitution of the self and in relation to the other. In this sense, I propose the notion of the concrete other (section 7.4.3) to argue in favour of dialogism as expression of intercultural engagement intended in terms of the *saying* and according to the Levinasian framework delineated in this thesis.

Chapter Nine. Final thoughts

The other is the future. The very relationship with the other is the relationship with the future (Levinas, 1987, p.77).

The relationship with the other is not an idyllic and harmonious relationship of communion, or a sympathy through which we put ourselves in the other's place, we recognise the other as resembling us, but exterior to us (Levinas, 1987, p.75).

The Other is the sole being I can wish to kill (Levinas, 1969, p.198).

9.1 Introduction. The research questions

According to the problematizing perspective of this research, I accept that living under the metaphysics of presence (Derrida, 1997; see also Chapter Two, section 2.2 and Chapter Four, section 4.3) we all commit the 'sin' of essentialism and employ cultural categories when engaging with others. However, in this thesis I have suggested the exercise of ethical vigilance intended as the practice of recognising this metaphysical complicity and challenge the cultural categorisation of the other. Particularly, I have engaged with the metaphysics of presence through the idea of tolerance. I have argued that tolerance operates in terms of conditional hospitality, which indicates a modality of welcoming of the other that is dependent on the goodwill of the host (see hostipitality, section 4.3). In this respect, tolerance is a discourse stemming from the autonomous individual delineated in this thesis according to the Kantian conception of ethics. To this, I have contrasted reciprocity and inter-dependence as values that underpin dialogic intercultural interaction.

This contrast between two conceptions of ethical engagement between self and other has represented the primary focus in answering the first research question:

How is the field of intercultural communication theorised and what are

its epistemological and ontological assumptions?

Beginning with the epistemological presuppositions of intercultural competence in the ideal of transparent communication across cultural barriers, I have investigated the ontological assumptions made in regard to the transformative power of intercultural consciousness in engendering responsibility toward the other. I have proposed the modality of the *saying* (see the *saying* and the *said,* Chapter Four, section 4.7) to argue that the role of alterity (i.e. the distinction between self and not-self) in intercultural communication could be envisaged in terms of the unknowable otherness of the other. This conception of alterity constitutes the principal contribution of this thesis to intercultural communication, because with this conceptualisation of otherness I describe dialogic interaction in terms of deferred understanding. To this dialogism, which I define according to the modality of the *saying,* I have contrasted attempts to totalise meaning from the perspective of competence, which I have defined in terms of the modality of discourse of the *said.*

The answer to the second research question was articulated according to that distinction between the *saying* and the *said* established in the previous chapters:

Can a theory of intercultural communication be devised which takes account of difference and otherness as constitutive of communication, while also blurring the distinction between inter-and intra-cultural communication?

In Chapter Six I have described the features of dialogic interaction in contrast to current models of intercultural competence. I have highlighted the power dimension at work in communication in the critique of two competence models that are paradigmatic of the idea of competence critiqued in this thesis, the Pyramid model

and the ICOPROMO project. In Chapters Seven and Eight I have exemplified this power dimension describing the process of othering in terms of the creation of the abject body. I have argued that this process is both an inter-cultural and an intra-cultural phenomenon, and in order to illustrate this dynamic in both contexts, I have employed gender in its intersection with other categories, such as culture and ethnicity, in the context of multicultural debates regarding the co-existence of conflicting cultural perspectives. In this sense, I have highlighted difference in negative terms, as something that otherises and constrains the individual (see Warren, 2008, in Chapter Seven, section 7.3). Nonetheless, the dialogic perspective adopted in this thesis reconceptualises difference as a constitutive trait of the self in terms of incompleteness. This incompleteness, which I see emerging in the contrast between the state of immigrancy of the self (Cavell, 1996) and the idea of dwelling (Heidegger,1971, 2011; see also Chapter Six, section 6.3), becomes more visible in the existential experience of intercultural interaction.

Having thus engaged critically with the field of intercultural communication, I envision a methodological shift toward a more prominent role of the voice of the other in research that emphasises a conceptualisation of the self in terms of embodied subjectivity rather than in terms of autonomy and individuality. In order to provide an illustration of this conceptualisation of otherness, I have proposed an analysis that has highlighted the ways in which the uniqueness and the individual trajectories of the concrete other (see Chapter Seven, section 7.4.3) are ignored in essentialist representations of difference.

9.2 Aims and outcomes

In this section I outline how I have addressed the aims stated in Chapter One, section 1.1.2.

1) **To define critically the ethical stance assumed in this thesis in relation to the existing literature on critical intercultural communication.**

In Chapter Two I have defined the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis in relation to the existing literature on critical intercultural communication. I have discussed critical approaches to intercultural communication: post-structuralist notions of hybrid identity (see Jensen and Monceri, in section 2.3) and post-modern liquid interculturalism (see Dervin in section 2.4). In that context, I have highlighted the dilemma between structure and agency in defining the intercultural self according to the two errors of voluntarism and reification (Bhaskar, 1998; see section 2.3): on the one side, I have critiqued the idea that the self is able to inhabit a variety of identities free from determination of structural constraints (the error of voluntarism). On the other, I have argued that the self is not entirely determined by society (error of reification). Instead, I have endeavoured to articulate the influence of power relations and societal structures in influencing intercultural interaction.

From this standpoint, I have engaged critically with emancipatory critical intercultural communication (Holliday and Guilherme, section 2.5). In particular, I have discussed the ideas of Centre and Periphery employed by Holliday to describe essentialist and totalising narratives of cultural essentialism. However, I have adopted Spivak's deconstruction of cultural hegemony to argue that the division between Centre and Periphery is not exclusively geographical, but it is produced through class and gender stratifications, which become visible in the figure of the subaltern. Following from this, I

have defined the ethical stance that has guided the conceptualisation of the thesis through the idea of negative dialectics and immanent critique (Adorno in section 2.7).

2) To critique the epistemological underpinnings of the concept of competence.

With the definition of immanent critique as the questioning of the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin an object of knowledge, in Chapter Three I have engaged critically with the concept of competence. I have critiqued the notion of communicative competence by problematizing the idea of cultural difference in defining interaction. Moreover, I have discussed the implications of that critique for formulations of intercultural responsibility that rely on the acquisition of communicative competence in order to engender intercultural consciousness (section 3.5).

3) To position intercultural communication in the context of current philosophical debates on the ethics of the other.

In Chapter Four I have engaged with the philosophical underpinnings of the concept of ethical responsibility in the field of intercultural communication and I have contextualised the issue of cultural difference in the debates between liberal universalists and proponents of multiculturalism. From this perspective, I have framed the debate employing Derrida's deconstruction of the word tolerance (section 4.3), and I have argued that intercultural communication finds itself in the dilemma between searching for a form of final consensus, which I define as a promise of understanding, and tolerance of the practices of the other. Taking the contrast between the idea of the autonomous individual of Kantian ethics and the heteronomous self of Levinasian ethics, I have suggested the notion of deferred understanding to delineate the features of dialogic interaction as open-ended engagement. In this sense, I have

reconfigured the notion of intercultural responsibility with the idea of the modality of the *saying* (section 4.7). In Chapter Five I have positioned intercultural communication in the context of current philosophical debates regarding the ethics of the other. I have addressed the issue of the epistemic validity of Levinasian ethics, particularly in reference to the status of the other in interaction. Through Žižek's and Badiou's critique of the rhetorical image of a good other in multicultural discourses of cultural tolerance (sections 5.2 and 5.3), and Ricoeur's contrast between reciprocity and asymmetry of self and other (section 5.4), I have confronted the problematic of an unknowable other in Levinasian ethics. In doing this, I have refined the idea of dialogic interaction establishing a parallel with Bakhtin's notion of answerability (section 5.5.2), meaning the participation of both self and other in interaction.

4) To formulate intercultural engagement in terms of dialogism.

In Chapter Six I have formulated intercultural engagement in terms of dialogism. In sections 6.2, 6.2.2 and 6.2.3, I have proposed a critical reading of two competence frameworks, the Pyramid model and the ICOPROMO project, and I have highlighted the power dimension that emerges in both frameworks, particularly in reference to language as symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) and to the relation between knowledge and power (Fairclough, 1989, 1995 and Foucault, 1977). After a productive confrontation with Phipps' idea of dwelling in section 6.3, I have delineated the features of dialogic interaction informed by the philosophical engagement with Levinasian ethics in section 6.4.

5) To apply dialogic engagement in the context of macro-practices of othering.

In Chapters Seven I have applied the dialogic framework of the preceding chapter in reference to the debates between proponents of liberal universalism and

multiculturalism (see section 4.2) in the context of macro-practices of othering. This shift from the traditional emphasis on the collection of empirical data at the micro-level of interaction between individuals in small group settings is illustrated in Chapter Eight. I have proposed a discursive analysis of patterns of interaction that emerge in wider contexts between different groups in multicultural societies, framing the discussion with the distinction between the idea of an abstract other, i.e. the bearer of rights according to the liberal universalistic notion of the individual, and the concrete other, i.e. the unique self.

9.3 Positioning the thesis

With this thesis I have engaged theoretically with the field of intercultural communication, and I have endeavoured to make an original contribution by elaborating a problematizing perspective of its epistemological and ontological underpinnings. My intellectual debt in formulating this contribution is primarily to the philosophical thought of Levinas, and his thinking on otherness in particular. One aspect that has proved especially challenging was the attempt to reconcile the idea of the otherness of the other while maintaining the character of reciprocity in interaction between self and other, an issue which I have framed in the context of dialogism.

In Chapter Five, section 5.4, I have identified in the distinction between the *saying* and the *said* the concept that has proved crucial in attempting this reconciliation. Rather than focusing on the idea that is most associated with Levinasian ethics, namely the face of the other, I have instead emphasised the intersubjective connotations that emerge in the dynamic relation between the two modes of discourse of the *saying* and the *said*. In that dynamic relation I have identified the key for a conceptual description of interculturality in terms of reciprocal engagement that avoids essentialist

generalizations while preserving alterity, i.e. the separation of self and other, or asymmetry.

In this sense, the quotes at the beginning of the present chapter illustrate the ethical tension that I have experienced while writing this thesis, which I summarise as the attempt to reconcile the idea of the radical otherness of the other as it is expressed by Levinas, with the intersubjective dimension of communication that underpins dialogism. In that respect, I have endeavoured to challenge the idea of autonomy of the self in favour of a reappraisal of the role of the other in intercultural engagement.

The relation of alterity proposed in this thesis reflects Levinas's preoccupation with temporality, an aspect that I have illustrated in relation to the *saying* and the *said*. Temporality in this context is divided into the two modalities of synchronicity, i.e. the flow of time, and diachrony, i.e. the event (see Chapter Four, section 4.6). As belonging to a diachronic dimension of temporality, according to Levinas the other represents the future, which I interpret as the unfolding of communication in interaction and the deferring of understanding from the idea of completeness and final harmony. From this perspective, as I have explained in this thesis, interaction with the other is not immune to the perils of conflict and misunderstanding. However, ethical interaction is defined by the acceptance of uncertainty and the fact that the other remains exterior to us.

I suggest that giving account of this exteriority of the other, which for Levinas means the radical otherness of the other, represents one of the ethical and methodological challenges in intercultural communication. The critical frameworks described in Chapter Two, namely perspectivism (section 2.3), liquid interculturality (section 2.4), the critical cosmopolitan potential and critical intercultural citizenship (section 2.5), focus on the hybrid and changing nature of the self, while reasserting the power of

critical thinking to demystify false and distorted representations of the other. With this thesis, I have added the perspective that the self initiates an intercultural journey only after encountering the other, in line with the Levinasian description of the ethical as stemming from outside the self. Given the loss of autonomy of the self that this conception of the ethical entails, intercultural experiences cannot be predicted in advance through the imposition of outcomes and the definition of competences. Rather, the intercultural is best described in terms of an existential disposition characterised by embodiment and incompleteness.

In this sense, the idea that "*the Other is the sole being I can wish to kill*" (Levinas, 1969, p.198), describes the conundrum that has characterised this thesis: if the self does not renounce the solipsistic practice of categorisation of the other, the experience of intercultural encounters remains devoid of ethical significance. However, encounter does not equate to harmony and reconciliation, because the other remains exterior to the self, meaning that the ethical here is intended as unfolding in interaction. In Levinas's words, refusal to recognise this exteriority and independence of the other in respect to the self represents the ultimate form of annihilation: *"To kill is not to dominate but to annihilate; it is to renounce comprehension absolutely*" (ibid). Thus, I understand that essentialist practices of othering preclude any possibility of engagement and comprehension. From this perspective, the illustration of this refusal of engagement has been the focus of the concluding two chapters of this thesis.

In the concluding section I suggest three methodological implications of this understanding of alterity in intercultural communication research.

9.4 Conclusion. Future directions

The problematic described in Chapter Two in regard to the methodological difficulty in researching intercultural communication has been the underlying challenge in the completion of this thesis. On the one hand, I have employed a philosophical line of inquiry that problematizes assumptions and positions intercultural communication within a theoretical paradigm that is indebted to the continental philosophical tradition. Thus, I have framed the notion of the intercultural self in the context of a wider philosophical discussion concerned with the constitution of subjectivity and with the role of the self in the world in relation to the other, which creates the aforementioned ethical tension that characterises alterity. On the other, I have engaged with the current political climate of hostility toward the figure of the immigrant as the undesirable other within modern, liberal European societies, employing other disciplinary perspectives such as sociolinguistics and research in second language acquisition.

In the exploration of the ethical conditions of intercultural engagement, I have raised the question of methodological approaches that include attentiveness to the other in shaping a post-methodology based on the decentring of the researcher. In this sense, it is necessary to maintain an interdisciplinary effort that enables different perspectives to emerge in research. In concluding this thesis I suggest three future directions for the development of this post-methodological perspective.

First, I share Todd's (2002) invitation to approach research as the practice of listening. According to Corradi (1990), our use of language is characterised not only by expression, but also by our ability to listen. The type of listening that I envision in intercultural research is that of enabling the other to speak through decentring of the self, meaning that *"the listener provides opportunities for further speech, for further*

elaboration to occur, where what matters is not the listener per se, but the speaker being able to speak" (Todd, 2002, p.406). In other words, I see the practice of listening as the endeavour to let the *saying* emerge in communication. As I have argued in Chapter Eight (section 8.2), this attentiveness can extend to engaging with the other at a distance via images, events and narratives that elicit an ethical call and invite a response.

Second, in line with the more critical perspectives in intercultural communication I envisage a turn in research that is increasingly concerned with the sense of precarity and insecurity that permeates the current political climate. I place the questioning of the practice of othering conducted in this thesis in this wider context, which is characterised by political discourses that pursue a neo-liberal agenda in which uniformity and sameness become totalising narratives that marginalise the other as undesirable. In this respect, the analysis of the ways in which the other is framed, silenced and marginalised represents a challenge for intercultural communication, because firstly it problematizes the role of researchers engaged in intercultural research, and secondly it reveals the dangers of unreflective essentialism in perpetrating othering.

Third, and connected to the above two points, I argue that attention to alterity in terms of letting the otherness of the other emerge in interaction, while considering power differentials between self and other, remains one the principal challenges in the definition of the pedagogical principles of interculturality. As I have highlighted in Chapters Six, section 6.7, dialogism offers an alternative to the emphasis placed on culture in foreign language education. Moreover, dialogism addresses the issue of a powerful legislating self that I have related to the idea of emancipation in critical intercultural awareness in Chapter Two, section 2.5.3. As I have argued in that

chapter, emancipation rests on the centrality of the self in relation to the world which, in accordance to a Levinasian ethical framework, constitutes a form of totalisation (see Chapter Four, section 4.5). In this regard, the question of translating intersubjectivity into an educational project remains an endeavour that warrants further exploration. I refer in particular to the role of singularity and asymmetry between self and other in redefining interculturality as a process of sojourning and translation of the self (Chapter Six, section 6.3).

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