

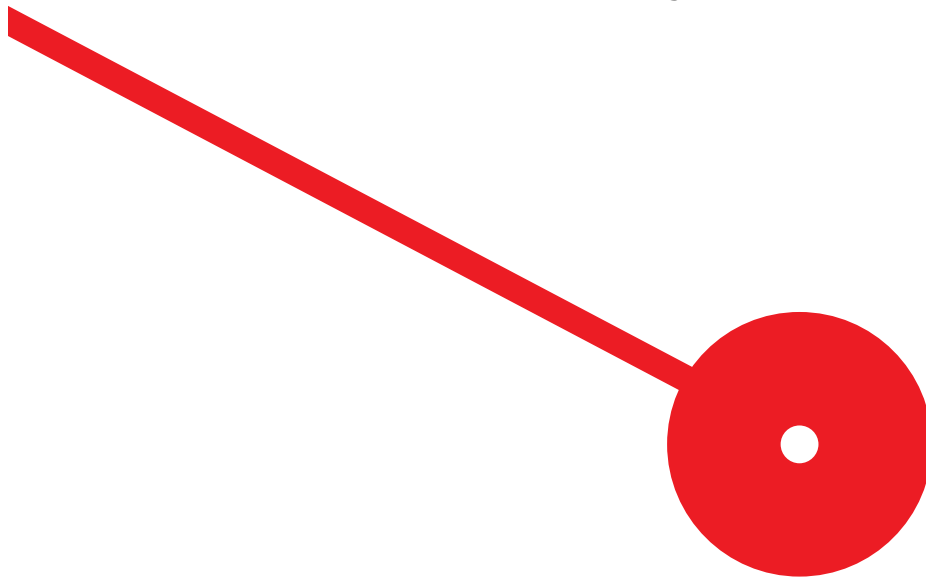


Cultural Immersion for Language and Intercultural Competences Acquisition - A Case Study

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Before the first idea for this dissertation was moulded in my mind, I already knew I wanted to try and connect my academic path thus far with the knowledge I had gained during the Master's Degree in Intercultural Studies for Business. It was a challenging road, but I hope I have reached this destination with a valuable contribution to this field of research.

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Lastly, I would like to acknowledge myself, as the present work is a testament to my own willpower, hard work, resilience and growth capabilities. I would like to leave in writing, so that in the future I might never forget, that all the sacrifices made were worth it and that I can only depend on myself to accomplish the objectives that I set for myself.

Abstract:

This dissertation examines the effects of cultural immersion experiences within the bachelor's degree in Translation and Interpretation Portuguese/Chinese-Chinese/Portuguese exchange program offered by the Polytechnic of Leiria. The research sought to determine whether these cultural immersion experiences improve linguistic and cultural competence and provide graduates with an edge in the labour market.

The present dissertation starts by doing a theoretical framework, followed by a cultural context of the relations between Portugal and China, which serve as the foundations for the research conducted in this dissertation. The research findings show not only a robust positive association between cultural immersion and language and intercultural competences acquisition but also shows rising interest in Chinese language learning in Portugal.

With its integrated exchange programmes to China, the bachelor's degree in Translation and Interpretation Portuguese/Chinese-Chinese/Portuguese has helped students develop linguistic skills and intercultural competence, thereby meeting the broader societal need for individuals with the ability to engage effectively in a globalized world.

As a result, this research highlights the positive influence that cultural immersion experiences have on the career prospects of graduates and accentuates the importance of such experiences in fostering language and intercultural competence. It also acknowledges the wider societal ramifications of advocating for intercultural competency and language proficiency, while emphasising the need of educational initiatives in preparing individuals for an increasingly interconnected global community. This study promotes the investigation and advancement of efforts aimed at recognizing the impact of cultural immersion in the acquisition of such competences, with the goal of deepening our understanding of the benefits associated with these experiences.

Key words: Cultural Immersion; Intercultural Competence; Language Acquisition; Employability

Resumo:

Esta dissertação analisa os efeitos das experiências de imersão cultural no âmbito do programa de intercâmbio da licenciatura em Tradução e Interpretação Português/Chinês-Chinês/Português oferecida pelo Politécnico de Leiria. A investigação procurou determinar se estas experiências de imersão cultural melhoram a competência linguística e cultural e se proporcionam aos licenciados uma vantagem no mercado de trabalho.

A presente dissertação começa por fazer um enquadramento teórico, seguido de uma contextualização cultural das relações entre Portugal e a China, que servem de base à investigação efetuada nesta dissertação. Os resultados da investigação mostram não só uma associação positiva robusta entre a imersão cultural e a aquisição de competências linguísticas e interculturais, mas também um interesse crescente na aprendizagem da língua chinesa em Portugal.

Com os seus programas integrados de intercâmbio com a China, a licenciatura em Tradução e Interpretação Português/Chinês-Chinês/Português tem ajudado os estudantes a desenvolver competências linguísticas e interculturais, indo assim ao encontro da necessidade social mais alargada por indivíduos com a capacidade de se envolverem eficazmente num mundo globalizado.

Consequentemente, esta investigação realça a influência positiva que as experiências de imersão cultural têm nas perspetivas de carreira dos licenciados e acentua a importância dessas experiências na promoção das competências linguísticas e interculturais. Reconhece também as ramificações sociais mais vastas da defesa das competências interculturais e linguísticas, enquanto sublinha a necessidade de iniciativas educativas para preparar pessoas para uma comunidade global cada vez mais interligada. Este estudo promove a investigação e o avanço dos esforços destinados a reconhecer o impacto da imersão cultural na aquisição de tais competências, com o objetivo de aprofundar a nossa compreensão dos benefícios associados a estas experiências.

Palavras chave: Imersão cultural; Competência intercultural; Aquisição de línguas; Empregabilidade

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Abbreviation List

BLCU – Beijing Language and Cultures University

ESECS – School of Education and Social Sciences of the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria

IPL - Polytechnic Institute of Leiria

MPU – Macao Polytechnic University (former Macao Polytechnic Institute)

TIPC/CP – Translation and Interpretation Portuguese-Chinese/Chinese-Portuguese at the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria

Intercultural studies are essential for today's business contexts because their understanding improves communication, supports diversity and inclusion, lowers risks, and encourages creativity. Businesses that value intercultural studies and intercultural competency will be more likely succeed in today's globalized and culturally diverse marketplace.

As the Chinese economy has grown in the last few decades, the importance of the Chinese language and culture has also been increasing worldwide. Portugal is not an exception, and the political, economic, and cultural exchanges between the two countries are happening more often because of their ongoing cooperation in these areas.

Although language is essential in these interactions, simply speaking the other party's language fluently is insufficient to improve communication between parties. The ultimate goal of communication is for both groups to understand each other. Understanding other countries' cultures, customs, and habits becomes essential to this process, making intercultural competence and communication vital and beneficial. So, as one learns a language, one also needs to learn about its people's culture and social norms.

Despite Portugal's growing interest in the Chinese language, there are currently few studies and research on its instruction to Portuguese speakers. This dissertation seeks to advance the field of research by doing a case study of the bachelor's degree in Portuguese-Chinese / Chinese-Portuguese Translation and Interpretation at the Polytechnic of Leiria, along with an analysis of documental data regarding Chinese language instruction in Portugal, to support the study.

The case study within this dissertation possess the following hypothetical questions: Does the exchange program integrated within the course plan of the bachelor's degree in Portuguese-Chinese / Chinese-Portuguese Translation and Interpretation at the Polytechnic of Leiria provide an advantage in acquiring language and cultural competences? How do cultural immersion in language learning through exchange programs with China impact the students? Does cultural immersion influence the acquisition of a second language and intercultural competences? Does this cultural immersion experience benefit students' future career prospects? Is it a differentiating element for potential employers? The intention is to obtain students' perceptions.

As a bachelor's graduate in Portuguese-Chinese/Chinese-Portuguese Translation and Interpretation, from the Polytechnic of Leiria, I had the opportunity to be an exchange student in Beijing and Macao. Hence, I want to try and discern if cultural immersion helps in the language and cultural competence acquisition process and investigate if students who were part of exchange programs believe that it is a factor that also impacts their career paths. Furthermore, I hope to understand how exchange programs may benefit students in today's globalized world and how they might help students to acquire valuable skills. Meanwhile, it is also my intention to contribute to the research of this theme within Portuguese academia, in hopes that in the future there might be more research about it.

The present work is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the theoretical framework. In this first chapter, the main concepts are presented and analysed, namely intercultural competence, intercultural communication, and cultural immersion for language and culture acquisition. These concepts help contextualise and support the research conducted. Chapter 2 explains the main cultural context between China and Portugal, offering a timeline of events and moments in these two countries' bilateral relations. The contextualisation done in this chapter will help understand some peculiarities of the case study and the environment surrounding it. Both of these two first chapters work as foundations for the research conducted for this dissertation's case study.

The third chapter of this dissertation describes the research methodologies. This is an important chapter that explains how the research and analysis presented in this dissertation were done, which methodologies were used, and why they were implemented. Moreover, it constitutes a vital component of the current study as the comprehensive descriptions may elucidate methods for their replication.

Next, the fourth chapter contains the research findings. This chapter discusses possible answers to the hypothetical questions posed drawing on the analysis of the data and possible interpretation. The findings will provide a more profound comprehension of the research subject. Furthermore, this chapter addresses challenges or constraints that were encountered throughout the research process and proposes possible paths for future research.

The last chapter, chapter five, is the conclusion of the present dissertation. This chapter summarises and discusses critical findings and insights derived from the analysis of the data in connection to the study questions.

1 Intercultural Concepts

The present chapter, as the title suggests, depicts the concepts that are the basis for the work developed in this dissertation. Important literature and previous research will be discussed regarding the significance of intercultural competence, intercultural communication, and cultural immersion for language and culture acquisition. This theoretical framework will support the research question and hypothesis, guiding the data collection and analysis in the present dissertation, in order to establish a theoretical foundation for the case study and, ultimately, lead to informed conclusions based on empirical evidence.

1.1 Intercultural Competence and Intercultural Communication Competence

There has been a longstanding assumption that studying abroad in a country where the language one (L1) being learned is an official language will lead to greater proficiency for foreign language students. However, it is crucial to remember that sociocultural and intercultural competence are equally important aspects of attaining proficiency. Without intercultural competence, students cannot adopt authentic behaviours and attitudes in their contacts with the “host” country, thereby enhancing and advancing their communication skills (Velliaris, 2018, p. xiv).

Consequently, concepts such as intercultural communication competence, and its connection with intercultural competence shall be presented before looking into cultural immersion’s impact on second language learning.

Deardorff (2011) states that there is no consensus regarding the definition of the concept of intercultural competence, as it varies according to the sphere in which it is being used or the approach that is given to it.

The overall external outcome of intercultural competence is defined as *effective* and *appropriate* behavior and communication in intercultural situations, which again can be further detailed in terms of indicators of appropriate behavior in specific contexts. (...) As a result, assessing global perspectives and the ability to understand other worldviews becomes an important consideration as well. This deep cultural knowledge entails a more holistic,

contextual understanding of a culture, including the historical, political, and social contexts. Thus any assessment of culture-specific knowledge needs to go beyond the conventional surface-level knowledge of foods, greetings, customs, and so on (Deardorff, 2011, pp. 66–68).

Essentially, intercultural competence is comprehending, valuing, and successfully negotiating cultural differences. Intercultural competence is a complex set of mechanisms that includes the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that allow people to interact effectively across cultural boundaries. Understanding diverse groups' cultural norms, values, and beliefs, as well as being able to change one's conduct to fit the situation, constitute intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006, 2009).

As a matter of fact, intercultural skills are becoming increasingly critical in today's globalized world, where people from different backgrounds often interact. It is crucial for collaboration, problem-solving, and personal and professional exchange and entails appreciating and valuing the variety of ideas and experiences that come from various cultural backgrounds. These characteristics are by no means universal, but they are increasingly important (Hennings, 2018, p. 20).

Although there is general agreement on what intercultural competence entails, the specifics of what is meant by the term vary from definition to definition. A recent review of theoretical and empirical developments regarding intercultural competence covers more than 30 intercultural competence models and over 300 associated constructs. Some of these models are specific to a particular domain (Leung *et al.*, 2014, p. 490). Additionally, the literature concedes that developing intercultural competence is a lifetime process that calls for continuous learning and introspection. It begins with becoming conscious of one's cultural background and prejudices, followed by learning how to communicate effectively with those from other cultures (Deardorff, 2006, 2011).

All of this is especially important for students because they need to be able to act in a world that is becoming more globalized. For students of a second language specifically, intercultural competence is a skill that must go hand-in-hand with their language learning process (Sobkowiak, 2019). Learning about diverse cultures' history, customs, and values is a way of acquiring intercultural competence. We can also acquire it by reading or even

traveling, which ultimately is a form of cultural immersion. Still, respecting and not stereotyping diverse cultures is also crucial, according to these authors.

Moreover, Deardorff (2009) states that intercultural competence requires effective communication, like respecting nonverbal clues and indirect communication in some cultures. Gudykunst & Kim (1997) also mention that this includes learning to speak effectively and respectfully, listen actively, and comprehend others' viewpoints.

Along with being open to learning from others, intercultural competence also involves being willing to examine one's own presumptions and biases. It can also help businesses build better relationships with customers, business partners, and employees from different cultures (Gudykunst, 2004). As a result, there may be more mutual trust, better coordination, and cooperation, and, eventually, more success with foreign business partners. These are other reasons why students of foreign languages must strive to perfect such competence. Hence, intercultural competence is an intricate combination of skills that helps people interact with individuals from other cultures. It demands continuous learning and self-reflection. In today's international world, it is crucial for successful communication, problem-solving, and collaboration, even more so for foreign language students, who need it in order to navigate and engage with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

This crucial successful communication leads us to another important concept that is connected to intercultural competence: intercultural communication competence. However, intercultural competence refers to an ability or more profound understanding of cultural differences. In contrast, intercultural communication refers to the actual exchange of information and ideas between people from different cultural backgrounds, either verbally or nonverbally. Fundamentally, intercultural communication involves two individuals encoding and decoding verbal and nonverbal communications while considering their respective sociocultural, microcultural, environmental, perceptual, and cultural settings. (Neuliep, 2018). Understanding various cultural norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that influence communication is necessary to attain intercultural communication competency (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997).

As abovementioned, in today's globalized world, people from all walks of life and backgrounds are increasingly interacting with one another in their personal, professional, and educational lives. An awareness of cultural differences and the flexibility to adjust one's

own communication style are essential for successful intercultural communication (Chen & Starosta, 2007).

In their description of intercultural communication competence, Gudykunst and Kim (1997) explain how this skill is viewed in a manner comparable to that of communication competence in general, but with a stronger emphasis on contextual elements. Intercultural communication competence stresses effective and acceptable engagement between people who identify with particular physical and symbolic contexts, whereas communication competence is defined as effective and appropriate interaction between people. Nevertheless, there is uncertainty and confusion in the definitions of communication competence. Therefore, intercultural communication competence can be described as the capacity to negotiate cultural meanings and execute appropriately effective communication behaviours that recognize the interactants' different identities in a particular situation. This definition emphasizes the significance of understanding how to communicate clearly and politely while also respecting and affirming the multidimensional cultural identities of individuals with whom one encounters (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997, pp. 358–359).

Furthermore, Stier (2006) also corroborates that intercultural communication is a complicated process that involves the attribution of meaning between individuals from various cultures. He also emphasizes the importance of intercultural communication education in achieving internationalization. According to him, in the end, those interested in intercultural communication are better prepared to deal with the difficulties of a multicultural, global environment.

When asked what they value most in a new hire, most modern employers value software proficiency, problem-solving abilities, the ability to study independently, the ability to have a good relationship with others, and good communication skills. That is partly because domestic and international cultural differences have made it more challenging to communicate effectively with others in recent years. Employers today value not just graduates with strong interpersonal skills but also those who can work effectively with people from a wide range of cultural and social backgrounds (Lantz-Deaton & Golubeva, 2020, p. 2).

Therefore, nowadays, the need to achieve intercultural communication competence is ever-growing. However, how can one attain it? Chen and Starosta (2007) propose a model to attain intercultural communication competence:

The model aims at promoting interactants' ability to acknowledge, respect, tolerate, and integrate cultural differences, so that they can qualify for enlightened global citizenship. The model represents a transformational process of symmetrical interdependence that can be explained from three perspectives: (a) affective, or intercultural sensitivity; (b) cognitive, or intercultural awareness, and (c) behavioral, or intercultural adroitness (p. 221).

Chen & Starosta (2007) state that, according to the "affective perspective" or "intercultural sensitivity", interculturally competent people can project their personal emotions before, during, and after intercultural interactions. Furthermore, four aspects must be considered when analyzing the "affective perspective": "self-concept", "open-mindedness", "nonjudgmental attitudes", and "social relaxation". Simply put, "self-concept" is how people perceive themselves. Self-esteem is essential to one's "self-concept", and "open-mindedness" is the willingness to accept other people's perspectives. Having "nonjudgmental attitudes" reduces misinterpretation and promotes active listening, while a sign of "social relaxation" is showing signs of nervousness or anxiety in conversation.

Intercultural communication competency relies on the four underlying qualities previously outlined. Taking them into account makes one more sensitive, allowing them to see and appreciate cultural differences in intercultural interactions (Chen & Starosta, 2007, p. 223).

As for the "cognitive perspective" of intercultural communication competence, it entails understanding individual and cultural traits. In intercultural exchanges, this approach lowers the level of uncertainty and fosters intercultural awareness, which involves self-awareness and cultural awareness. Self-awareness means knowing oneself, and cultural awareness is the ability to understand how one's own and others' cultures affect interactions. Critical aspects of cultural awareness that affect intercultural communication skills are social values, customs, social norms, and social systems. Studies have shown that intercultural communication skills require an understanding of these cultural elements. Thus, self-knowledge and cultural awareness improve intercultural communication competency (Chen & Starosta, 2007, pp. 224–225).

The "behavioral perspective" or "Intercultural Adroitness" of intercultural communication competence defines appropriate behaviors to display in intercultural exchanges. Intercultural ability is comprised of verbal and nonverbal behaviors that are

skillfully applied in interactions. “Such behaviours include message skills, appropriate self-disclosure, behavioral flexibility, interaction management, and social skills” (Chen & Starosta, 2007, p. 225).

Message skills include the capacity to communicate in a language other than one’s own and the usage of descriptive messages during interactions. The willingness of people to disclose information openly and responsibly about themselves to others can be referred to as self-disclosure. The capacity of an individual to exhibit appropriate behaviors in various contexts is referred to as behavioral flexibility. The power to effortlessly start and end conversations, talk in turns, and effectively arrange and maintain conversations is referred to as interaction management. Essentially, intercultural adroitness improves intercultural communication. The behavioral view on intercultural communication competency emphasizes the capacity to act in a way that advances the global village’s objective of multicultural interdependence and interconnection (Chen & Starosta, 2007, pp. 226–227).

In general, the model stresses how crucial it is to cultivate intercultural competence as a vital component of global citizenship. By encouraging intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness, and intercultural adroitness, people can be better prepared to interact with and contribute to a worldwide community defined by variety, mutual respect, and understanding.

Thus, the three perspectives of the model proposed by Chen and Starosta (2007) are all equally significant and interconnected, giving a comprehensive picture of intercultural communication competence. Nonetheless, one may wonder why intercultural communication is so crucial for students of foreign languages.

With the geopolitical changes in the last decade of the 20th century, new higher education ideologies and policies prevailed. In the case of the European Union, there was a stress on using skills strategically, enhancing the quality of higher education, and stressing the significance of higher education in promoting human sustainability and quality of life, while emphasizing the necessity of preparing future workers with proper intercultural competences (Stier, 2006).

In the framework of education for sustainable development, some authors believe that intercultural communication competency should be considered a necessary skill for each aspiring professional, regardless of major or educational program (Nikiforova & Skvortsova, 2021).

Regarding language learning, more specifically, language proficiency might be assumed to be equivalent to effective and successful intercultural communication. However, Neuliep (2018) states the following:

To be sure, proficiency in a foreign language expedites the intercultural communication experience, but intercultural communication is primarily and fundamentally a nonverbal process. The expression of intimacy, power, and status among communicators is typically accomplished nonverbally through paralinguistic cues, proxemics, haptics, oculosics, and olfactics. In Korea, for example, one's hierarchical position is displayed via vocal tone and pitch. When a subordinate is offered an important piece of paper, such as a graded exam from a respected professor, he or she grasps it with both hands (not just one) and accompanies this action with a slight nod of the head and indirect eye contact—all nonverbal signs of deference (p. 71).

Fundamentally, the ability to communicate effectively between cultures can be facilitated by language proficiency, but it is not the sole element for success. As vital as verbal communication can be in establishing relationships and transmitting messages, different cultures have their own nonverbal communication codes and cues. Consequently, in addition to language proficiency, it is crucial to comprehend and effectively use nonverbal communication in order to engage in intercultural communication.

Moreover, Neuliep (2018) mentions that we experience a great deal of uncertainty when interacting with people from different cultures. We might not be familiar with the person's culture, values, habits, behaviour, attire, and so on. In such situations, we might not know what to say or how to act. To some extent, in order to communicate effectively with people from different cultures, we need to be able to anticipate their behaviour and choose the right verbal and nonverbal cues in response.

According to authors William Gudykunst and Young Kim, when we deal with people from other cultures, we tend to treat them as strangers (Neuliep, 2018, p. 66). In addition, we are predisposed to not see the individual but rather the groups to which the individual belongs. The issue with this is that the data from the group might not be a reliable source from which to build our messages. It is not always the case that a person will adopt the views, behaviours, and attitudes that are typical of a particular racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, or

age group simply due to the fact that they are a member of that specific group. As a result, there is a high probability of misunderstandings occurring.

Hence, in the first stages of intercultural communication, we need to remember that even though the person with whom we are communicating belongs to a different cultural group than ourselves, he or she is still an individual.

It is essential to keep in mind that our typical methods of communicating with people from our own culture may not work when we are trying to connect with people from other cultures. Due to this, we need to learn to change how we express ourselves. We must acknowledge that we will make errors, learn from them, adapt, and carry on. The bottom line is that people of various cultural backgrounds are, essentially, different. Once we understand this, we will be able to communicate effectively through both verbal and nonverbal cues. (Neuliep, 2018, p. 74).

For foreign language students, effective communication is, perhaps, the final goal. Hence, intercultural communication competence, within the broad concept of intercultural competence, is a crucial skill to be attained as it can improve language skills, fosters empathy and understanding, helps avoid misunderstandings, and makes it simpler to engage in cross-cultural interactions. As mentioned above, it is a skill that must be part of students' repertoire, despite their field of study, as it is crucial for their educational and professional path. As companies and academic institutions become increasingly diverse in today's globalized society, such competences have taken on even greater significance. In order to succeed in both their personal and professional life, students must have these skills.

1.2 Cultural Immersion for Language and Culture Acquisition

Cultural immersion is a technique for learning a new language and culture that involves fully integrating oneself into the target language and culture. Cultural immersion can be accomplished in several ways, including studying abroad, participating in a language exchange program, or relocating to an area where the target language is widely spoken.

Immersion is considered an excellent technique of language acquisition because it enables students to experience the language and culture in a natural and realistic environment, as opposed to a classroom. The goal of immersion programs is to provide substantial exposure to the target language in context, along with high-quality instruction, to facilitate the acquisition of a proficient level (Johnson & Swain, 1997). Besides, immersion in the target culture is usually believed to significantly impact sociolinguistic skill acquisition (Freed, 1995, p. 22).

One could argue that the reason it is such a successful language acquisition technique is directly related to the fact that learning a language involves learning about the target language's culture, social norms, and non-verbal cues. It is widely acknowledged that language is a component of culture and crucial to it. According to some social scientists, culture cannot exist without language. Language both reflects the culture and is shaped by it at the same time. In the broadest sense, it is also the symbolic portrayal of a group of individuals because it includes their historical and cultural roots, as well as their outlook on life and their ways of thinking (Jiang, 2000, p. 328).

Language and culture are two language items symbolic systems. Everything we say in language has meanings, designative or sociative, denotative or connotative. Every language form we use has meanings, carries meanings that are not in the same sense because it is associated with culture and culture is more extensive than language. (Nida, E., 1998, as cited in Jiang, 2000)

In this sense, one can argue that achieving fluency in a language is nearly impossible without studying its culture.

According to Velliari (2018), in the early 1990s, researchers began conducting controlled empirical studies in earnest to investigate the effects of studying abroad on a student's ability to acquire the language that has been the focus of their studies. Since then,

research into how a foreign environment affects the acquisition of a second language and concerns from program managers about the need for a thorough documentation of the linguistic advantages of their educational initiatives have increased interest in study abroad options.

For instance, study abroad programs such as the Erasmus+ program sponsored by the European Union have grown in popularity (*From Erasmus to Erasmus+*, 2017). Erasmus is a prime example since it allows students to study abroad for a semester or more at a foreign university, granting students with opportunities to expand their knowledge, develop foreign language proficiency, and learn more about the host country's culture and people (Sobkowiak, 2019, p. 682).

Student mobility appears to be an opportunity for students to regularly immerse themselves in different cultures, negotiate meanings and navigate this new reality, or even reinvent themselves (Simpson, 2008; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, as cited in Sobkowiak, 2019). Nevertheless, learners are not all the same in terms of how ready they are linguistically and mentally to take advantage of the chance to study abroad and benefit from it. Velliaris (2018) goes on to say:

Human discourse is complex and influenced by situational and affective factors, such as academic major, age, cognitive ability, socioeconomic status, initial language proficiency level and learning style. The particular context of a study abroad experience is also key, notably its duration and the degree of cultural immersion and integration that is achievable. Opportunity for integration may be constrained by student accommodation arrangements and other considerations aimed at ensuring student safety while abroad. (p. xiv)

Indeed, the process of language learning and even the cultural immersion technique can produce vastly different results depending on various factors, "including where the students are in their study abroad experience, their out-of-class contacts, and their needs of the moment." (Freed, 1995, p. 26) For instance, if a student stays abroad for only a few months, they may not have enough time to learn the language and adapt to the culture.

Even so, the study abroad experience for foreign language learning is a subject of increasing importance in language education. Unquestionably, every effort should be made to ensure that language students who travel abroad have access to and involvement in the

rituals and traditions of the communities in which they are residing, as well as guidance in their efforts to learn from and make sense of their experiences (Velliaris, 2018).

These exchange programs ought to be considered as part of a broader picture. Learning a second language incorporates, but is not limited to, the development of skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, as well as the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence. Cultural immersion benefits the students because it enables them to acquire various skills and knowledge about not only the target language but also the target culture in a setting that is as authentic as possible.

The anticipated benefits of studying abroad include elevated proficiency with spoken language, enhanced speed, and ease of communication, which might all be characterized as fluency. Cultural immersion, in particular, enables students to comprehend and appreciate the traditions, beliefs, and values of the target culture, which can enhance cross-cultural understanding and communication. This helps develop capabilities for observation, tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, and successful adaptation to new cultural settings, allowing them to grasp, reason, and behave appropriately and effectively in culturally diverse circumstances (Ang *et al.*, 2007; Earley & Ang, 2003, as cited in Sobkowiak, 2019).

The results of Sobkowiak's (2019) research are in line with previous research on student exchange, which demonstrates that it can be a generally pleasant experience for those who participate, helping them acquire sensitivity to cultural differences as well as a sense of intercultural awareness and competence.

In that sense, cultural immersion can be seen as a means to acquire intercultural competence and intercultural communication. Hannigan (1990, as cited in Paige *et al.*, 2003) discovered a significant link between effective intercultural communication and particular personality attributes such as cultural empathy, flexibility, organizational skills, and outstanding linguistic competence. However, unlike many other studies, his was unable to show a connection between the development of these qualities and the intercultural experience.

The exchange program's length is also relevant. The length of the exchange program should be considered, as it may impact the degree of linguistic and cultural immersion. Also, more extended programs might offer greater chances for developing intercultural competence and intercultural communication competence, as well as opportunities for

personal growth. Carlson *et al.* (1991, as cited in Paige *et al.*, 2003) undertook a longitudinal study of the long-term effects of undergraduate study abroad, and they found that:

In addition to the language gains correlated with length of stay, that (1) students who chose to study abroad differ in predictable ways from non-study abroad students by showing greater cultural interest and a lower domestic orientation; (2) social and personal development are important parts of the international experience; and, (3) participants in the study abroad program scored higher than the comparison group on cultural interest and peace and cooperation indicators. (p. 185)

According to Paige *et al.* (2003), research demonstrates that the influences of studying abroad on cultural learning are complex in scope. Generally, it appears that studying abroad increases self-confidence, self-esteem, and positive attitudes toward language and culture acquisition (2003, p. 185).

Armstrong (1984) and Hansel (1985) showed that a study abroad experience positively influences later language study, promotes favourable attitudes toward other cultures, and brings about a greater level of cultural awareness. Armstrong (1984) studied 126 high-school students participating in a seven-week language study and homestay program in Mexico. He found that study abroad impacted career choices and positively influenced attitudes toward the host culture. In addition, students said that they acquired independence, self-confidence, and maturity through the study-abroad and home-stay experiences. (Paige *et al.*, 2003, p. 185)

Paige *et al.* (2003) assert that research generally supports the hypothesis that cultural immersion enhances second language proficiency but demonstrates that the process is more complex than previously believed. Some of the studies mentioned show that there were vocabulary gains, owing to factors such as the availability of native speakers, increased motivation for learning new words, and a variety of settings in which to practice new vocabulary. Other findings showed that there was a development of speech speed and oral skills, but that grammatical proficiency and the complexity of sentence structures had not developed as much. These findings imply that exposure to native speakers and various practice environments may benefit language learners' vocabulary development and oral

proficiency. Therefore, further focus may be required to address sentence complexity and grammatical competency in language learning programs.

Some other studies mentioned by Paige *et al.* (2003) found that the benefits of cultural immersion depended on the type of contact students had during their experience in the target language country and their language level.

In general, those individuals who had interactive encounters (i.e., socializing with host culture persons) gained more than those who engaged in non-interactive behaviors (i.e., watching TV or reading in the second language). However, the author also found that non-interactive contact was more beneficial to upper level students (Paige *et al.*, 2003, p. 185).

Those same studies cited by Paige *et al.* (2003) found that, for students still at an elementary or intermediate level of language proficiency, cultural immersion can benefit their language development. However, there is growing evidence that opportunities for study abroad should not be restricted to students at the intermediate and advanced levels. Also, proof supports the notion that students with beginning language competency make the most significant improvements in an immersion context (Freed, 1995, p. 27). Finally, studying abroad can also provide students with opportunities to network and make connections globally, which can benefit future career prospects and personal growth.

In conclusion, cultural immersion is a highly effective method for learning a new language and culture since it entails total immersion in the target language and culture. Immersion programs combine high-quality education with extensive exposure to the target language and culture, two interconnected symbolic systems, in context to help students reach proficiency. The fact is that proficiency in a language is practically impossible without learning its culture. The outcomes of such programs can vary depending on the duration and level of cultural immersion. However, it is important to note that cultural immersion experiences foster observational skills, tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, and successful adaptability to different cultural environments. These skills can help students gain a competitive edge in the job market, as employers are increasingly looking for candidates who can work effectively with diverse teams.

In this research, the focus will be placed on the cultural learning aspect allowed by cultural immersion instead of focusing on the language learning aspect and will also focus

on these competitive skills that are valued by businesses, thus connecting the present dissertation with the relevance of intercultural studies for businesses.

2 Cultural Context

In today's globalized era, there is a growing imperative to cultivate intercultural exchange and understanding among countries. The relationship and cultural context between Portugal and China holds significant relevance in the framework of this dissertation. The diplomatic relations between these two nations have been shaped by their distinct cultural identities, unique traditions, and rich history that spans several centuries.

This chapter aims to examine the intricate connection between Portugal and China, scrutinizing their historical foundations and current patterns of diplomatic interaction. Through comprehending the cultural context between the two countries in question, it is anticipated that we will acquire a greater understanding of their shared conjuncture in various fields and how it is related to the research of this dissertation.

2.1 Portugal and China – History of Diplomatic and Economic Relations

2.1.1 The Early History

The diplomatic ties between Portugal and China have a long and fruitful history, dating back to the 16th century when Portuguese traders first arrived in China. The foundation of Macao as a Portuguese colony during the middle of the 16th century further enhanced the relations between the two countries, leading to cultural and commercial exchanges that are still ongoing to this day (Mongiardim, 2019).

The role of Macao as a bridge between the two nations has been unquestionable. According to Mongiardim (2019), the relationship between the two countries has been “characterized by a peaceful disposition for dialogue”. Such calm demeanour contributed to a practical appraisal of bilateral relations, “which determined that People's Liberation Army had never decided to invade Macao, during about thirty years of the last century, the period marked by the antagonistic leadership of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar and Mao Tse-Tung (p.1)”.

This kind of disposition - and the negative reminiscences of the Hong-Kong's negotiation process - was also responsible for the Portuguese peaceful transfer of Macau's administration to Beijing. It gave to the world a responsible image of the two countries, of their mutual understanding, and of positive perspectives to their bilateral relations, and to an indication

of the Macau's future, under the Chinese sovereignty as a Special Administrative Region of China, since December 1999. (Mongiardim, 2019, p. 1)

Nevertheless, before the transfer of Macao to China, the official diplomatic relations between Portugal and China only resumed a few years after the end of the Portuguese dictatorship. During the dictatorship, Portugal maintained a neutral stance towards China, mainly due to divergences in political ideologies.

As a consequence of the worldwide changes that took place during the latter half of the 20th century, Portugal was compelled to adapt its foreign policy. The phenomenon of globalisation has broadened Portugal's perspective on the world, resulting in the emergence of new powers such as China occupying a prominent position in the country's external agenda. Despite this, Portugal has remained committed to upholding its longstanding priorities of preserving structural alliances in the West and the "lusophone" space (Mongiardim, 2019, p. 4).

In 1979, Portugal was one of the first nations in Europe to recognize the People's Republic of China. This recognition has contributed to the evolution and strengthening of the relationship. 1979 also marks the year Portugal and the People's Republic of China re-established diplomatic relations, and the subject of Macao dominated their dealings until 1999 (Pereira, 2015, p. 65).

According to Pereira (2015), the 1979 agreement, which was kept secret until 1987 (Hook & Neves, 2002, p. 112), laid the groundwork for future negotiations about the territory's legal status. After that, in May 1985, during Ramalho Eanes' visit to Beijing, the Chinese side declared, for the very first time, its desire to begin negotiations with that purpose in mind. After that, in April 1987, they would sign the Joint Declaration. Up until this period, according to Carlos Frota, Portugal's first Consul General in Macao, the diplomatic ties between the two countries can be characterized as somewhat lethargic, given that China was still a relatively closed country up until then.

Carlos Frota, which arrived in Macao in 1996, followed closely the process of transition and the negotiations between Portugal and China. He stated that between 1979 and 1999 the diplomatic relations between the two nations went from purely political, to more economic, with Portuguese companies naturally increasingly interested in the Chinese market. At the time the Chinese community in Portugal was also expanding, and the Chinese

in Macao also started to take interest in Portugal (Fernandes & Chan, 2019, pp. 1–2). On December 20, 1999, there would be a ceremony to transfer power, officially marking the transition process's conclusion. With the conclusion of this process, which had commanded the full attention of both nations, a new era of more open and inclusive ties between them began. This new era coincided with a period of remarkable affirmation by China on the international stage (Fernandes & Chan, 2019, p. 65).

China's rising economic power, entry into the WTO in 2001, and rising political assertiveness have effectively made China ubiquitous and inescapable at the international level. During this time, China also started to show that it was a significant economic and political force in the world by becoming increasingly agile and robust.

The effects of globalization brought new challenges and threats worldwide and the rise of China as a new power as challenged the idea of a unipolar world. The truth is that today's world is marked by interdependence and multilateralism in most fronts. Despite the present global uncertain and dangerous situation, "Portugal has been a strong defender of multilateralism, assuming a constructive approach to the world governance. Besides, Portugal has demonstrated its political will on the redesign of the global equilibrium" (Mongiardim, 2019, p. 5).

In current times, it is an inescapable reality that China's influence will progressively bear greater significance on the foreign policy of all nations, and Portugal is not an exception to this rule.

2.1.2 Portugal – China's "Door" to Europe

Notably, the bilateral relations between Portugal and China are subject to the influence of the bilateral relations between the European Union and China. The diplomatic ties between the People's Republic of China and the European Union are officially designated as a "strategic partnership". The European Union (EU) aims to dialogue with China on significant global matters comprehensively. However, in reality, economic interests tend to take precedence (Pereira, 2015, p. 66).

The significance of these interests can be ascertained by noting that China presently holds the position of the European Union's largest trading partner, followed by the United States. Additionally, according to Chinese data, the European Union is considered to be

China's primary trading partner. This indicates that the trade balance increasingly favours China (BBC News, 2021).

Although economic concerns are inevitable, it is imperative to approach European Union relations with China from a comprehensive perspective that encompasses principles, values, and political conduct rather than solely focusing on pragmatic interests. The discussion regarding China's increasing political influence and its consequential impact on the global stage is deemed essential.

It is important to note that China perceives the European Union as a comparatively less troublesome ally in contrast to the United States. Sensitive matters exist within Sino-European relations, with the EU's imposition of an arms embargo on China following the Tiananmen (天安门) events in 1989 being the most sensitive according to the Chinese. Regarding Europeans, the subjects that tend to elicit the most concern are commercial competition and matters pertaining to freedom and Human Rights. Within the EU, Portugal is identified as one of the nations that supports the lifting of the arms embargo (Pereira, 2015, p. 66). José Sales Marques noted that this favourable position taken by Portugal within the EU context is mainly due to development of "Fórum Macau" and the strategic partnership signed between the two countries in 2004 (Fernandes & Chan, 2019, p. 2).

The significance of Portugal's trade and investment ties with China is paramount, particularly in light of its membership in the European Union. Portugal has been proactively attempting to enhance its economic connections with China, which has emerged as one of its primary trading allies outside the European Union.

2.1.3 China-Portugal Bilateral Relations in Recent Times

The bilateral relations between Portugal and China are characterized by a notable discrepancy concerning the scale between the two nations. Notwithstanding, the significant imbalance is seemingly mitigated by Portugal's adeptness in engaging in discussions with China, going beyond its magnitude and global influence. It is evident that the Chinese authorities are keen on establishing relations with Portugal and that they are inclined towards affording Portugal a status and treatment that is, if not identical, then at least comparable to that granted to the key European nations (Pereira, 2015, p. 66).

Pereira (2015) provides instances of the release of documents that were previously exclusive to significant partners. For instance, a Joint Press Release was published during President Jorge Sampaio's visit in 2005. Additionally, during Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's visit to Lisbon, a Joint Declaration was signed, which established a "global strategic partnership" between the two nations (pp. 66-67).

One of the factors that might explain this perceived privilege in comparison to other nations of similar dimensions is the importance given by China to showcasing the Macao transition as a success case (Pereira, 2015, p. 67).

Due to Macao's historical background, the Portuguese influence, and the diverse cultural, economic, and social composition of the region, it has the potential to serve as a pivotal point for both Portugal and China.

In the case of Portugal, it could expand its global reach, particularly through the cultural aspect of the "Lusophone" community. Macao continues to embody a significant historical legacy for Portugal, despite its responsibilities within the European Union and its established relationship with China, the sovereign state governing Macao. The region has served as a globally recognized platform for the dissemination of Portuguese cultural influence. Numerous states in the Asia-Pacific region continue to acknowledge the impact of Portugal on the initial wave of globalization, and many Asian communities still strongly identify with Portuguese culture.

As for China, it could be seen as a gateway to extend its influence overseas, particularly in Africa and Latin America. These are two regions which have captured the attention of China. Through Macao, and the Portuguese language in particular, China expects to facilitate relations with countries from the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPSC). Many of these countries are poor and underdeveloped but abundant in natural resources, particularly energy resources – the true engine of economic growth over the past few decades (Mongiardim, 2019, pp. 1–2). Mongiardim (2019) further states that:

This Community represents nine important entrance doors in four different continents and also nine sea bastions, where rich natural resources can be caught and easily moved. Thus, they could easily assist Beijing to push for the country's growth and for the strengthening of its political regime and economic model, in order China become a world power. (p.2)

Hence, one can interpret that it is in China's interest to further develop and maintain its amicable diplomatic relations with Portugal due to the opportunities that it might bring, which might allow China to further develop its' economy and influence. Not only can Portugal continue to aid China in regard to Europe, but it can also cooperate with it to establish strong relations with nations that were its former colonies.

Therefore, Macao can be seen as a tool to reinforce Portugal's relationship with Portuguese-speaking countries and to continue to strengthen its relations with China. Macao, with its cultural legacy, contributes to the promotion and strengthening of the lusophone pillar, being an important crossroads to the Portuguese economic diversification plan. All things considered, Macao can provide Portugal with chances for both economic expansion and cross-cultural interaction.

The bilateral relations between China and Portugal are also influenced by Portugal's desire to continue its good diplomatic performance. The Portuguese dedication to multilateralism is consistent with China's own strategy for global governance, establishing a foundation for mutual understanding and collaboration. Furthermore, Portugal is a desirable partner for China in the pursuit of common objectives and interests because of its political determination to alter the global equilibrium, which indicates its desire to have a major influence in international affairs.

2011's external financial intervention led to strategic Chinese investment in some of the most important Portuguese enterprises at the time. Additionally, the "Golden Visa Scheme," initiated in Portugal in October 2012, which provides residence authorizations to international individuals who make investments of 500,000 euros or higher within the country, was also a catalyst for Chinese investment. China has emerged as a prominent recipient of the programme, as evidenced by the allocation of nearly 4,000 permanent visas to its citizens. The Portuguese passport is widely regarded as one of the most powerful globally due to its extensive travel privileges, granting access to 186 out of 199 nations worldwide. Additionally, being an official document of the European Union further enhances its desirability (Le Corre, 2018).

According to Mongiardim (2019), on political and economic matters, the bilateral relations between the two countries have come to be in a state of "normality". The cooling of previous enthusiasm, along with other situations in the world stage, has led to a decrease of Chinese investment in Portugal's economy over the past few years. The fact is that

Chinese investment has to be a sensitive topic within politics in recent years. Even though there are still various sectors that could benefit with Chinese investment, the fact is that there have been complaints risen about China's influence in strategic Portuguese sectors. Such complaints not only criticize their growing influence, but also the small effect of such investment on the Portuguese labour market.

The latest state visits of Xi Jinping to Portugal in December 2018 and Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa to China in April 2019 were significant, specifically as during Xi Jinping's state visit, Portugal formally signed on to the Belt and Road Initiative (Albert, 2019, para. 5). Hence, economic relations between Portugal and China have improved but are presently slowing. Due to the international juncture and political criticism from the public and its allies (some European nations are re-evaluating the Chinese investment strategy), Portugal appears to be more wary about China and Chinese investments (Mongiardim, 2019, pp. 14–17). Mainly, the idea is that Portugal must adopt a balanced strategy that reaps the fruits of Chinese prosperity, seeing it as an opportunity rather than a threat.

Despite the growing uneasiness towards China by some western countries, Portugal's current government continues to try and maintain good bilateral relations between the two nations. The inclusion of Portugal in China's Vice-President first foreign tour in May 2023 can be perceived as a sign of the importance of the friendship between Portugal and China. Prime Minister António Costa mentioned that during said visit they discussed deepening bilateral relations in areas such as energy transition, tourism and agri-food, bearing in mind the need to find a better balance in their trade (Renascença, 2023).

In conclusion, indeed, China does not need Portugal to forge relationships with Latin America, Africa, or even Europe. On the other hand, Portugal's reputation in the political, cultural, and economic spheres around the world, along with its pacific characteristics, guarantees the improvement of relations and the development of new opportunities. The bilateral relations between China and Portugal somewhat bolster China's credibility in the international arena (Mongiardim, 2019, p. 11).

2.2 Culture and Language as a Bridge Between China and Portugal

Culture and language are two of the most powerful and engaging factors that can serve as bridges between nations, transcending geographical boundaries and encouraging a deeper understanding between people from various parts of the world. They are also two of the most important elements that can serve as a bridge between individuals. When viewed in the context of China and Portugal, language and culture also play a significant role as catalysts for building strong bonds between these two nations, facilitating not only interpersonal connections but also economic and political collaborations.

Mongiardim (2019) mentions that, in the cultural field, it is essential to understand that “the lusophone policy is structural for the comprehensive Portuguese foreign policy (p.17)”. The Portuguese language holds significant recognition as a crucial means of communication in numerous African, Latin American, and Asian nations, as well as within their respective diasporic communities. The Portuguese language and education have a significant role in the strategic dimension of bilateral ties between Portugal and China (including Macao).

Therefore, Portugal is undertaking substantial efforts to foster the dissemination of the Portuguese language in China. The instruction of the Portuguese language in China has experienced significant growth in the past ten years, with Macao serving as the predominant catalyst. According to Mongiardim (2019), forty-eight Chinese universities have incorporated Portuguese language instruction into their curriculum (pp.17-18).

More recently, a Chinese state television, the Guangdong Radio and Television (GRT), set up a centre to subtitle programmes in Portuguese in order to show Portuguese-speaking countries the real and three-dimensional China. During the ceremony for unveiling the centre, the chairman of TDM's General Assembly made a commitment to enhance the translation of Portuguese-language programmes on Macao public television. The objective of this initiative is to provide a greater understanding of the Portuguese-speaking countries among Chinese citizens (Lusa, 2023).

2.2.1 Chinese in Portuguese Education Institutions

Mirroring the efforts undertaken in China to promote Portuguese, the promotion of Chinese has been an equally important endeavour in Portugal. The desire in studying

Chinese has skyrocketed in Portugal in recent years. Many reasons contribute to this increase in interest, such as China's growing economic power, its rich cultural legacy, and its growing global influence. This dissertation focuses on such demand for the Chinese language, the existing educational offer of said language in Portuguese higher education institutions, and more specifically, the impact that said educational offers, aligned with exchange programmes, could have on students' intercultural competences. Hence, it is essential to contextualize the existing educational offer of the Chinese language in Portugal until now, before delving into the case study in question.

In Portugal, the number of colleges and language schools offering courses and programmes in Chinese language and culture has been increasing over the years, contributing to the country's educational offer in Chinese. The Director of the Confucius Institute in Lisbon, Wang Jincheng, believes that Chinese language teaching in Portugal is going through the best phase in its history. "In the last ten years, the teaching of this language [Chinese] has grown abruptly, and more and more institutions are adopting the teaching of Mandarin, the official Chinese language" (Ni Hao Portugal, 2020, para. 2). The observed rise in Chinese language instruction in Portugal can be attributed to the interconnectedness between China and Portuguese-speaking nations. Moreover, the deepening ties between Portugal and China are evident in the advancements made in the domain of Chinese language instruction.

Wang Jincheng further states that there are two periods that divide the development of Mandarin teaching in Portugal: a first period from 1979 to 2000 and later from 2000 to the present.

In 1979, Chinese language teaching began at the Confucius Institute in Lisbon. At the time, demand was low, and teaching was restricted. The following year, the course was opened up to anyone interested, but demand was still low and those enrolled were mainly young Portuguese studying oriental or Asian studies at universities (Wang Jincheng, 2020, as cited in Ni Hao Portugal, 2020, paras. 8–9).

Then, in 2000, things started to change, and Mandarin instruction in Portugal took off. Along with the opening of new Confucius Institutes at Minho University in Braga and at Coimbra University, several colleges and institutions also made Mandarin instruction available at several levels, including beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Besides the

above-mentioned Confucius Institutes, two more institutes have been established, namely the Confucius Institute at Aveiro University and the Confucius Institute at Porto University.

[...] enrolment in the various programmes provided by the various institutes is thought to exceed 6,000 students annually. Aveiro, Minho, Leiria, Évora, Setúbal, the Algarve, and Madeira are among the higher education institutions that offer yearly language learning programmes and the chance to complete a scholarship-funded semester-long internship in China (Wang Jingcheng, 2020, as cited in Ni Hao Portugal, 2020, paras. 11–12).

In 2013, a collaborative initiative between São João da Madeira City Council, the University of Aveiro, and the three school groups within the municipality led to implementing a pilot programme to teach Mandarin Chinese in schools. The primary objective of the pilot programme was to incorporate Mandarin Chinese as an elective foreign language in the educational curriculum, thereby affording students the chance to enhance their linguistic proficiency and broaden their cultural awareness. Subsequently, this endeavour has witnessed a notable growth, as an increasing number of students have been incorporated into Mandarin Chinese courses as an integral component of their standard academic curriculum (Direção-Geral da Educação, 2020).

In October 2015, the Curriculum Guidelines for the instruction of Mandarin, Foreign Language III, in the Scientific-Humanistic Courses of Secondary Education in Portugal were officially endorsed by Nuno Crato, the Minister of Education and Science of Portugal at the time. During that academic year, five hundred students began their Mandarin language learning journey in Portuguese schools. The objective was to allow students to learn the language and become familiarized with several cultural elements of Chinese culture.

Those involved with these projects, both in Portuguese schools, language institutes, and Confucius institutes, have noted a growing interest in the Chinese language and culture. This interest has various catalysts, but the future career prospects are highlighted. Students understand the growing Chinese influence globally, are curious about the country, and are optimistic about the importance of understanding Chinese and its people (Curto, 2019).

Several Portuguese universities have established collaborations with Chinese institutions in order to facilitate language and cultural exchange initiatives. These projects serve to facilitate student exchanges, providing opportunities for Portuguese and Chinese

students to engage in immersive experiences inside each other's cultural and linguistic contexts (Politécnico de Viseu, 2019; Santos, 2015; Universidade de Coimbra, 2019; Universidade de Lisboa, 2014). These interactions function as effective mechanisms for enhancing the connections between these two countries, cultivating intercultural comprehension, and equipping forthcoming generations for cooperative endeavours in the international arena. In addition, these experiences facilitate the cultivation of mutual understanding and respect among students from Portugal and China, thereby dismantling stereotypes and cultivating a common awareness of global citizenship. Simultaneously, these endeavours enable the exchange of expertise and insights within their respective fields of study.

In Portugal's public higher education institutions, the bachelor's degrees that stand out for their offer of exclusive focus on the Chinese language and culture within their study programmes are the bachelor's degree in Oriental Studies: Chinese and Japanese Studies at Minho University and the bachelor's degree in Translation and Interpretation Portuguese/Chinese - Chinese/Portuguese (TIPC/CP) at Polytechnic of Leiria, the latter being the focus of this dissertation research.

These bachelor's degrees offer students a broad knowledge of the Chinese language and culture, equipping them with the necessary skills for diverse professional prospects in areas such as international relations, tourism, and translation. They are also the two bachelor's degrees with the greatest number of weekly hours dedicated to the instruction of the Chinese language and culture. The academic programme at Minho University also provides students the chance to pursue the study of Japanese as a minor in conjunction with Chinese as a major (*Estudos Orientais*, 2023).

The programme offered at the Polytechnic of Leiria places a particular emphasis on the development of practical language skills and intercultural communication. This curriculum is designed to equip graduates with the essential competencies required to pursue careers as professional translators or interpreters specialising in the Portuguese-Chinese language pair. The Polytechnic of Leiria's degree stands out as it is the only one in Portugal to focus solely on the instruction of the Chinese language and culture. Besides that, it is the only one at the present moment that includes two years of exchange experience in China within its study programme. Students pursuing a bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP have the opportunity to study one academic year at Beijing Language and Culture University and

another academic year at Macao Polytechnic University (Politécnico de Leiria, 2023). In addition to the aforementioned bachelor's degrees, there are other undergraduate and master's programmes that provide the opportunity to study the Chinese language as an optative. The Master's in Intercultural Studies for Business at Porto Accounting and Business School is one of these examples, as it also offers the study of the Chinese language and culture as an optative for three semesters besides Arabic. However, the limited number of weekly hours dedicated to the study of the Chinese language and culture hinders students from attaining a satisfactory proficiency level throughout the term of such programmes.

Even though these courses, along with courses from the language institutes and Confucius Institutes offer a good foundation for comprehending Chinese, Wang Jingcheng (2020) feels they fall short. He also mentions that the weekly hours offered by most courses are not enough to understand a language and its culture, let alone one so different from Portuguese.

According to Wang Jingcheng, it is even more essential to comprehend the culture, experiences, and habits of the Chinese people than to solely focus on studying Chinese characters. This comprehension can only be achieved by gaining insight into the culture and psychology of the Chinese community. He also advises his students to consider embarking on a trip to China for a minimum duration of one month after completing their language courses as a means of applying and reinforcing the foundational knowledge they have acquired. The mastery of the language will commence solely at that point (Ni Hao Portugal, 2020, paras. 14–16). Students can acquire a deeper understanding of the language and its nuances by immersing themselves in Chinese culture and society. This first-hand experience will not only enhance their comprehension but also enable them to practise their language skills in real-life situations. In addition, being exposed to the daily interactions and customs of the Chinese culture will further strengthen their comprehension of the language, allowing them to achieve true mastery.

In conclusion, it can be observed that the Portuguese language has established a presence within China's cultural and educational context. Simultaneously, the Chinese language has emerged as a noteworthy component of Portugal's linguistic and cultural repertoire. The ongoing reciprocal endeavours that foster language and cultural exchange between China and Portugal contribute to establishing robust relations, enabling both interpersonal relationships and advantageous economic and political partnerships that

mutually benefit both nations. The world's growing interconnectedness underscores the significant role that language and culture play in fostering international relations, as seen in the cases of China and Portugal. Understanding the cultural context before delving into the research methodologies also aids in constructing a solid foundation for the present dissertation's research and contributes to a more comprehensive analysis of the hypotheses studied. By studying the cultural context of China and Portugal, we can gain insights into the unique dynamics that shape their relations.

3 Research Methodologies

Research methodologies play a vital role in every dissertation, as it helps establish a structured framework for research and analysing data. These methodologies enable one to methodically collect, analyse, and assess data in order to address their research questions or support their hypotheses. Moreover, one can enhance the robustness and credibility of their results by carefully choosing a suitable research methodology.

In unravelling the complex relationship between cultural immersion and the acquisition of language and intercultural competences within this dissertation's case study, the present chapter emerges as a crucial intersection where theory and empirical realities intersect.

3.1 Research Methodology Chosen

Research in academia and science mainly uses two types of research methodologies: quantitative and qualitative. Their application is contingent upon the nature of the research questions and the study's objectives, and they reflect different methods of gathering, analysing, and interpreting data. In the present dissertation, the qualitative research method was the primary research methodology used. However, it is essential to understand why this was the primary method chosen and the difference between qualitative and quantitative research.

Qualitative research entails the investigation and comprehension of phenomena within their natural environments, emphasising the production of comprehensive and meticulous insights. The approach places emphasis on subjective experiences, meanings, and interpretations, enabling researchers to comprehensively capture the intricate and abundant nature of human behaviour (Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 2) as cited in McLeod, 2022, paras. 8–10). In contrast, McLeod (2022) states that:

Quantitative research collects numerical data and analyzes it using statistical methods. The aim is to produce objective, empirical data that can be measured and expressed in numerical terms. Quantitative research is often used to test hypotheses, identify patterns, and make predictions. (para. 3)

Although both approaches possess their own merits and limitations, the decision to employ qualitative research in this dissertation was motivated by the objectives established for this dissertation's research. Said objectives were to acquire an in-depth comprehension of how cultural immersion might promote better language and intercultural competences acquisition by delving into the experiences and viewpoints of the individuals involved in this dissertation's case study.

Qualitative research facilitates a more profound investigation of the topic matter, offering comprehensive and intricate insights that quantitative research may fail to encompass. Therefore, through the use of qualitative research methods such as interviews and the examination of personal narratives in the present dissertation, qualitative research can reveal distinctive viewpoints as well as factors or motivations that may be overlooked by quantitative data alone. In addition, qualitative research allowed for the adaptation of the research design and the investigation of emerging themes, which ultimately resulted in a more thorough analysis and more meaningful conclusions.

The choice of interviews as a qualitative research method was based on the potential data that could be extracted, as well as the degree of detailed empirical knowledge that this method would provide. Interviews possess the inherent benefit of enabling researchers to interact directly with participants, therefore facilitating a more profound assessment of their experiences and opinions. The interactive nature of interviews makes it easier to gather detailed and intricate data that may be difficult to obtain using other research methodologies, improving the overall validity and credibility of the study's findings. Moreover, interviews allow participants to articulate their personal narratives and affective experiences, thus facilitating an in-depth understanding of the research topic in question.

Consequently, the careful and deliberate decision to use qualitative research in this dissertation was driven by the inherent necessity to investigate the research question from an extensive and immersive perspective. This has led to a more profound and thorough knowledge of how language acquisition and intercultural competences might be improved by cultural immersion.

3.2 Data Collection and Organization

Constructing a theoretical framework was the first step that needed to be taken in order to carry out the proposed research. In the first step of the process, research was conducted to uncover pertinent information. The objective was to identify and comprehend which concepts were vital foundations upon which the dissertation's case study might rely. Academic papers, books, and studies were scrutinised to gather relevant information on the importance of intercultural communication competence within the broad concept of intercultural competence, and cultural immersion for language and culture acquisition. This comprehensive data collection allowed for a thorough understanding of the existing literature and theories surrounding these crucial concepts, as well as helping contextualise their significance within the case study.

Additionally, a cultural context was established between Portugal and China. This second phase resulted from additional research concerning the relationship between these two nations. In order to provide a timeline of pertinent events and to comprehend the dynamics of their interactions, relevant data was collected from newspapers and academic articles, which were subsequently analysed and reorganised. This cultural context facilitated insights into the historical, social, cultural, and economic factors impacting Portugal and China's relationship. Critical moments of cooperation, trade agreements, and diplomatic exchanges that have shaped their bilateral ties were also identified by scrutinising this timeline of events, which also enhanced comprehension of this dissertation's case study. This was an essential part, as the case study in question is the bachelor's degree in Translation and Interpretation Portuguese/Chinese - Chinese/Portuguese (TIPC/CP) by the Polytechnic of Leiria. Thus, this chapter provided an additional solid foundation upon which the case study was built on.

Afterward, the research findings part would encompass the condensed data pertaining to the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP and its exchange programmes as outlined in the study plan of the aforementioned degree. The comprehensive data was acquired by thorough research, as well as through informal personal communications and interviews. A total of six interviews with current and former students of TIPC/CP were conducted. The interviews in question would be the source of the primary qualitative data gathered, specifically through the interview transcripts generated from them. Interview transcripts are verbatim accounts of what the interview participants said. They enable researchers to derive

conclusions and identify common themes and patterns from the data. Additional uses for interview transcripts include providing examples and direct quotations to support research findings (McLeod, 2022, para. 21).

It is also important to highlight that the interviews done for this dissertation, at first, followed a structured methodology, that later changed to a semi-structured methodology. This implies that in addition to answering a predetermined set of questions present in the interview script, participants were also motivated to provide further details and elaborate on anything else that they considered pertinent. This methodology facilitated a deeper examination of the subject matter under study and provided ample and detailed data for assessment.

As previously stated, initially, interview scripts were made in order to follow a structured methodology. This methodology would help see patterns among answers and easily compare answers between participants while mitigating research biases and fostering higher reliability and credibility. However, a semi-structured methodology was ultimately used, as participants were encouraged to elaborate on their answers as much as they felt needed. Hence, the questions were often open-ended, unlike most structured questions that tend to be closed-ended, and still followed an order that was present in the interview scripts. Even though this process was time-consuming, the use of this method allowed for a better collection and organization of data (George, 2022). The interviewees were chosen according to their graduation year, in order to give different temporal perspectives on the programme.

As for the data collected through informal personal communication, it came mainly to complement the data gathered through research, as frequently, it was not possible to find accurate data needed for the dissertation's subject matter. In other words, after data collection through research, any missing information needed to organize logically the data gathered until then would be later collected through informal personal communications with primary sources.

3.3 Data Interpretation

The process of interpreting the data collected during the research conducted for this dissertation case study was complex and divided mainly into two sections. The first section meant interpreting the data collected for Chapter One, the Theoretical Framework chapter, and Chapter Two, the Cultural Context chapter. After collecting data in the first reading, the information gathered went through a second reading, during which the most pertinent data was filtered and analysed in order to connect it with the research question. By filtering and analysing the data in this manner, a more profound comprehension of the cultural factors and theoretical concepts that impacted the research topic was achieved. Furthermore, this methodology guaranteed the utilisation of solely the most pertinent and significant data to investigate the research inquiry adequately.

The second section presented the research findings on the case study's object. After initial research on online sources, research articles and the existing data from the National Institute of Statistics (INE), additional personal communications were established with primary sources from the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP. These personal communications, done either through e-mail or through video conference, helped gather the missing data needed to comprehensively analyse and present the case study, offering significant insights and knowledge regarding the subject matter.

Additionally, a comprehensive examination of a research article authored by TIPC/CP bachelor's degree programme professors concerning the curricular internship incorporated into the curriculum was conducted. An analysis was rendered concerning the potential correlation between the intercultural competences attained throughout the degree exchange programme and the graduates' entry into the labour market.

Furthermore, the data gathered in the interviews went through a process of interpretation, analysis, and correlation before being presented. After collecting all the transcriptions of the interviews, these were organised by question and corresponding theme. A colour scheme was drawn, with each colour relating to a recurring theme or topic mentioned by the participants. This way, it was possible to see patterns between the different answers given and analyse and coherently present them. The utilisation of a colour scheme facilitated a prompt and effective identification of essential themes and patterns inside the collected data. Moreover, the examination of correlations among various responses facilitated the acquisition of an in-depth understanding of the dynamics within the exchange

programme experiences while also shedding light on any shared viewpoints or contrasting ideas among the participants.

Ultimately, these research findings facilitated a comprehensive analysis of the cultural immersion experiences of the case study and how they can impact language and intercultural competences acquisition, ensuring their precision and credibility. The joint integration of various research methodologies and sources of information proved advantageous in facilitating the thorough examination and subsequent presentation of the present case study.

4 Research Findings

The present chapter delves into the research findings gathered from direct sources concerning the focus of the case study in question, the bachelor's degree in Portuguese-Chinese/Chinese-Portuguese Translation and Interpretation at the Polytechnic of Leiria and its' exchange programs.

Detailed data regarding the bachelor's degree was obtained through direct sources of the course, to help establish a more comprehensive picture regarding the bachelor's degree. Within this collection of data, interviews were conducted as part of the case study's research. Such interviews were intended to give first-hand valuable insights and perspectives regarding the cultural immersion experience offered within the bachelor's degree study programme.

The primary objective of these interviews was to gather and analyse key information, opinions, and experiences directly from two main sources: from individuals that were or are students of the bachelor's degree and had the opportunity to immerse themselves in the Chinese culture through the exchange programs; and from the current course director, who is a representative of the bachelors degree's teacher's point of view as well as the representative of the institutions behind the degree in question, allowing for a deeper knowledge of matters that tend to only be known to those "behind the scenes".

The research findings presented in this chapter provide a comprehensive understanding of the nuances surrounding the bachelor's degree. By gathering detailed data and interviewing individuals with experienced knowledge, this research aimed to gather reliable information that would contribute to the analyses of the research hypothesis of the present dissertation. These interviews captured a range of perspectives, which might help represent different perspectives regarding the research hypothesis and provide valuable insights to those interested in further researching the topic of this dissertation.

Hence, this chapter serves as a platform for presenting and discussing the significant findings gathered. The findings will be divided by themes, drawing connections and identifying links between various aspects of the case study of this dissertation.

4.1 TIPC/CP – Bachelor’s Degree in Translation and Interpretation Portuguese-Chinese/Chinese-Portuguese

The bachelor’s degree in Translation and Interpretation Portuguese-Chinese/Chinese-Portuguese is part of IPL – Polytechnic of Leiria (ESECS – Escola Superior de Educação e Ciências Sociais) and MPU – Macao’s Polytechnic University (Faculdade de Línguas e Tradução) education offer since the academic year of 2006-2007. The bachelor’s degree aims to train translators and interpreters with an adequate command of the Portuguese/Chinese languages to translate and interpret from and into Portuguese/Chinese while equipping them with a comprehensive understanding of both languages’ cultural and societal dynamics, providing a parallel formative pathway for students entering Portugal and Macao. “This degree was a natural outcome of the links that existed between the IPL and the MPU, which already allowed for the exchange of some students on an isolated basis” (Barbeiro L., as cited in Lusa, 2016).

The focus of the case study of this dissertation is the bachelor’s degree offered by IPL. The bachelor’s degree from this Portuguese higher education institution has a duration of 4 years, similar to most Chinese bachelor’s degrees. The first year is spent at the home institution in Leiria, followed by a two-year exchange program in the partner country, China. In addition to IPL and MPU, BLCU – Beijing Language and Culture University also participates in the exchange program protocols, being the first exchange university students attend, followed by MPU the following year. The degree program is completed again (fourth year) at the home institution – IPL (Caels *et al.*, 2023, p. 226).

During the exchange program in China, students have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the language and culture of the country, enhancing their understanding and fluency in Mandarin while developing their intercultural competences. The second year of the bachelor’s degree at BLCU has a study plan that is more structured around the language and cultural learning process. BLCU, renowned for its expertise in language education, provides this strong foundation for students before they continue their studies at MPU in the subsequent year. In MPU, students follow a study plan which focuses more on translation and interpretation’s theoretical and practical aspects. This structure enables students to simultaneously develop their linguistic abilities and increase their comprehension of cultural nuances, consequently equipping them for potential careers in the field of translation and interpretation. Moreover, the MPU presents a multitude of opportunities for students to

actively participate in practical translation and interpretation endeavours due to the existing professional equipment and the adapted infrastructure, thus offering students invaluable experiential occasions, comparable to what they might find within the industry (Gillain R., personal communication, April 24, 2023, Appendix I) .

It is also important to mention that, although students could not go on exchange to China during the COVID-19 pandemic years, the exchange years in Beijing and Macao were compulsory. According to Romain Gillain, the current coordinator on the bachelor’s degree, although most students had both classes at ESECS and online during the last few semesters, he is sure that the exchange years in China will return as of the academic year of 2023/2024 (Appendix I, 2023).

4.1.1 Data About the Bachelor’s Degree

The factual data gathered for this dissertation regarding the bachelor’s degree in TIPC/CP allows for a better understanding of its evolution throughout the years and some of its implications.

Figure 1 illustrates the cumulative number of students enrolled in TIPC/CP between the academic year of 2006/2007 and 2021/2022. This shows the total, along with a separation by genders of the number of students. It demonstrates a steady growth in student enrolment

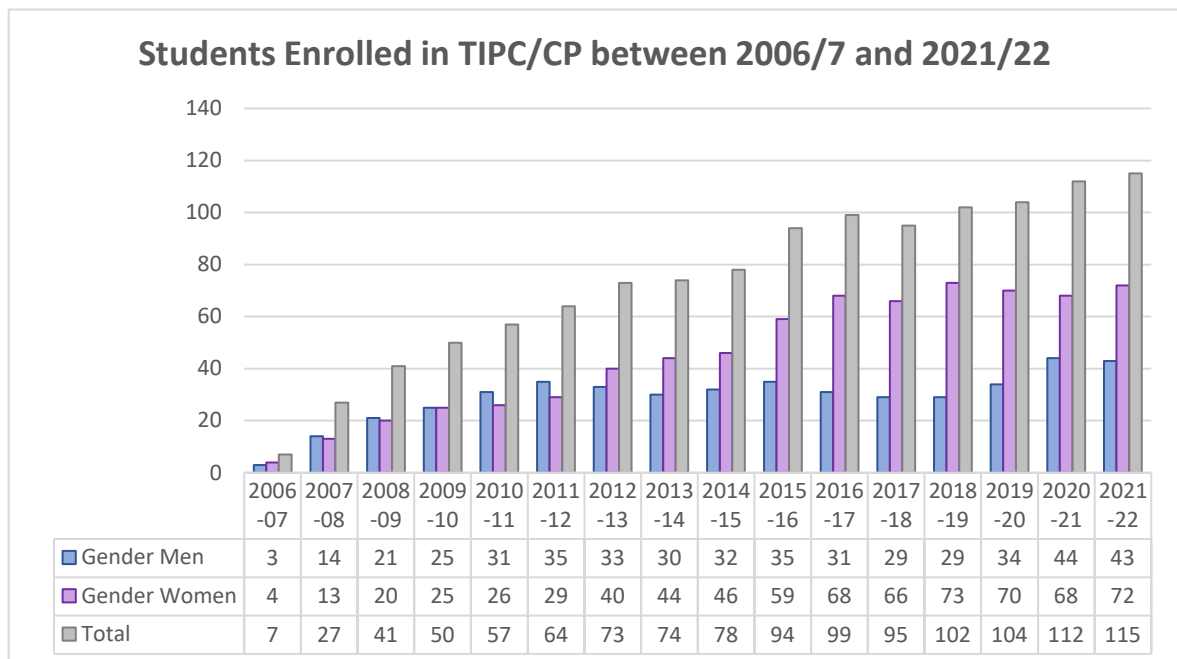


Figure 1 - Cumulative Number of Students Enrolled in TIPC/CP between 2006/7 and 2021/2 by Gender

over the years, indicating a growing interest in the Chinese language and the TIPC/CP programme. According to Luís Barbeiro, although demand was low during the first years, they kept the degree and today, the available spots are always filled (Lusa, 2016).

Additionally, it highlights the program’s ability to attract and retain students, suggesting its relevance and appeal within the academic community and its potential impact on the industry as more students are equipped with relevant skills and knowledge. It is also noteworthy that the bachelor’s degree has had more female students than male students in eleven out of the sixteen years of its existence. Only in the academic years of 2007/08, 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2011/12 do we see more male students than female, possibly due to various reasons that one can speculate about. These gender variations in enrolment could be linked to reasons such as cultural shifts, changing career preferences, or even specific recruitment attempts, among other possible explanations. Nevertheless, the ongoing popularity of the bachelor's degree programme shows that it is able to accommodate the demands of students of varying backgrounds and orientations, independent of their gender.

Aside from the cumulative number of students enrolled in TIPC/CP throughout the years, additional relevant data gathered in the research looks into the nationality of said students. As can be seen in Figure 2, although, compared to the vast majority of Portuguese students, the number of foreign students enrolled in the bachelor’s degree is still considered low, the tendency of growth seen in the graphic below can be perceived as a good indicator.

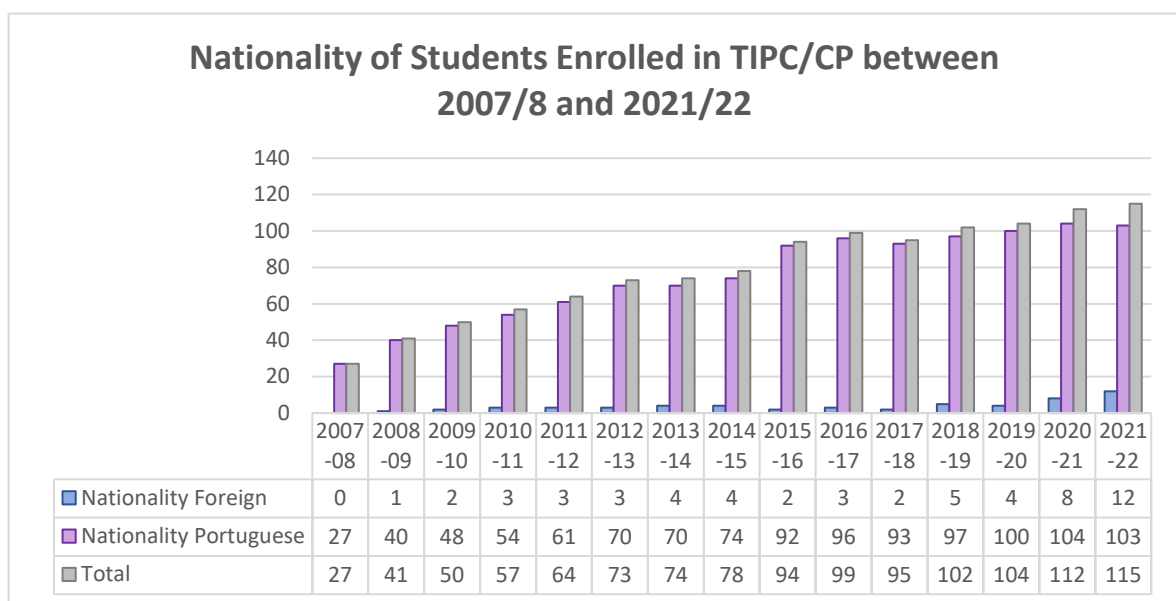


Figure 2 - Nationality of Students Enrolled in TIPC/CP between 2007/8 and 2021/22

The increasing number of international students that enrolled in the bachelor's degree in the past few years offers valuable perspectives on the program's potential and power in attracting students from various backgrounds and societal contexts. Moreover, it may suggest the program's ability to foster cultural exchange and promote mutual understanding among students originating from different countries.

Romain Gillain (Appendix I, 2023) mentioned that this increase in students from other nationalities might be related to previous intercultural relations between these students' countries and China, Chinese heritage, and expectations regarding career prospects that the bachelor's degree might offer. He also mentioned that the governments of certain countries, such as Cabo Verde's, help outstanding students who wish to come to Leiria in order to study Chinese. He emphasized that this may be interpreted as a strategic wager on the part of those governments. By supporting their students' pursuit of Chinese studies, these governments will likely strengthen diplomatic ties and foster cultural exchange between their countries and China. This strategic investment in education suggests the recognition of China's growing global influence and the potential benefits that can arise from closer intercultural relations.

4.1.2 The Curricular Internship – A “Door” to the Labour Market

It is also relevant to mention that during the last semester of the fourth and final year, students who enrolled in the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP must enrol and complete either a Curricular Internship or a Project. The option of a curricular internship was added in the academic year of 2010/2011 with the intent of “providing a connection to the labour market and [facilitate] career opportunities” (Barbeiro L., 2016, as cited in Caels *et al.*, 2023, p. 226). In the case of the option of Project, it has a more research-oriented approach. Either way, both options have the status of "Final Work" and confer 30 credits (ECTS) that allow the finalists to graduate.

Regarding the Curricular Internship, it entails the student's active involvement in the selection of an internship entity and followed by the establishment of a formal agreement with said entity. Subsequently, it is required the design of a comprehensive work plan which will be executed accordingly. The primary objective of this internship is to foster the development of research, analysis, and critical thinking capabilities. The duration of the internship is 420 hours, which includes a mentoring component of 20 hours. During the

internship, students are provided with supervision from a least one supervisor at the internship entity, as well as guidance from two lecturers at ESECS. It is worth mentioning that one of the lecturers must possess multilingual proficiency in both Mandarin and Portuguese (Caels *et al.*, 2023, p. 226). The mentoring part of the internship programme is vital because it gives students the chance to get personalised advice and help from professionals in their field of study. Paired with the mentors from ESECS it can improve the students' study and analysis skills, especially since one of them must be able to speak both Mandarin and Portuguese. This requirement is vital, as graduates will, ideally, also work with this language pair in the future and can learn from their mentors experience.

The fact is that research extensively supports the notion that internships offer significant advantages for students. Several key advantages emphasised, include the application of acquired skills and knowledge in real-world settings, the expansion of students' skill set and knowledge base through engagement in practical experiences, the exploration of potential career paths, an assessment of strengths and areas in need for improvement, and the cultivation of a more realistic understanding of professional expectations and opportunities (Caels *et al.*, 2023, p. 227). In addition, internships offer students significant networking prospects, enabling them to forge relationships with industry experts within their chosen sector. Moreover, internships frequently result in enhanced job opportunities and potential work offers upon completion of one's academic programme.

These benefits are corroborated by a national study that surveyed 1158 bachelor's degrees. It stated that the introduction of internships in the first cycle of higher education, particularly in polytechnic education, clearly promotes students' employability and allows them to develop and perfect multiple skills. It also claims that internships yield favourable outcomes for higher education institutions by facilitating a stronger connection between these institutions and the adjacent economic and social fabric. Furthermore, there are implications regarding a deeper understanding of the requirements of the aforementioned fabric, which could potentially affect the possible improvements of the provided training as well as transcend to other aspects of higher education's objectives, including applied research, knowledge dissemination, and service provision (Dias *et al.*, 2015, p. 51 as cited in Caels *et al.*, 2023, p. 227).

Caels *et al.* (2023) state that the selection of internships by the students of TIPC/CP can provide insights into several parameters, such as their preference for national or

international entities, their inclination towards entities that have previously hosted students versus “new” entities, and the specific areas of interest that students possess. In their paper, the authors also want to know which competencies these organisations help students develop; in other words, are these entities focused on translation, bilateral economic, political, or other types of relations between China and Portugal, or are they centred on other areas?

Furthermore, the characterization of the internship entities seeks to spark a more extensive reflection on the interconnection between academia, namely the TIPC/CP degree, and the surrounding economic and social fabric. Their paper titled “Internships in the degree in Translation and Interpreting Portuguese-Chinese / Chinese-Portuguese of the Polytechnic of Leiria: Choice of participating entities” (2023) aims to investigate the potential employability of Portuguese-Chinese specialists. Additionally, it seeks to identify the vital expertise and abilities these specialists are expected to possess, projected from their basic training and the chosen internships (pp. 227-228).

Firstly, Caels *et al.* (2023) sought to gather factual data regarding the number of students who chose to do the internship as opposed to those who chose to do the project. The data showed that there have been 162 internships (79.4 percent) and 42 projects (20.62 percent) completed since the 2010–2011 academic year. Figure 3 is used by the authors as an illustration of this (p. 229).

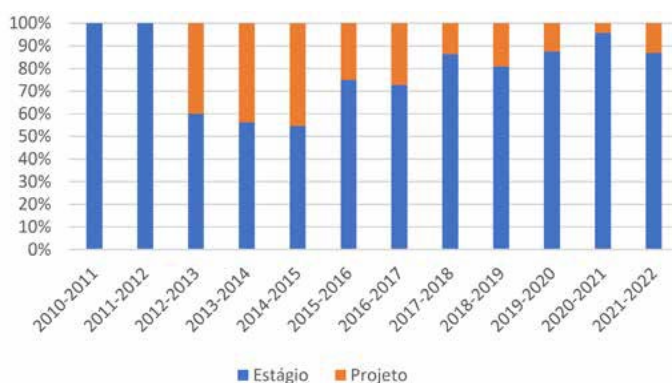


Figure 3 - Percentage of Students Who Chose Internships vs. Project (2010/11-2021/22)

By analysing the graph above, one can see that in the last twelve years, there has usually been a clear preference for doing internships. The authors highlight the first two academic years they were implemented, which show that in those years 100 percent of the students opted for internships. In the following years, however, there was a decrease; only around 55 to 60 percent of students chose the internship over the project. However, since the

academic year 2016/2017, there has been a steady growth in the percentage of students who chose internships (rising from 72,7% to 95,7%). At the time of the study, the data gathered by the authors showed that the percentage of students choosing internships was still higher than that of those who chose to do a project, with internship rates being more than 85%. Caels *et al.* (2023) point out that the fact that most entities offered remote or partially remote internships contributed positively to this scenario.

Another aspect that is worthy of analysis is the geographic localization of the internship entities thus far. The authors point out that the data shows there is a preference for entities based in Portugal at 68%. As expected, entities in China, including those based in Macao and Hong Kong, come in second with a rate of 27.5%. Last but not least, with not very representative indices, the authors mention the existence of chosen entities within other European countries, such as Luxembourg, Spain, Scotland, and Germany, and non-European countries, such as the case of an entity in Mozambique.

The authors state that the preference for Portuguese entities can be due to the fact that the students are responsible for the costs inherent in the internship, such as travel expenses, rent, and so on. They highlight, however, that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some foreign entities might allow for remote internships, such as in the case of the Machine Translation Laboratory of Macao Polytechnic University in 2020/2021 and 2021/2022.

Caels *et al.* (2023) further emphasise the significance of contextualising Chinese entities within the borders of China. The majority of these entities are situated in Beijing (28.6%) and Macao SAR (28.6%), regions where academic exchanges occur throughout the second and third years of the bachelor's degree. These are also, more generally speaking, the areas where Portugal and China's political, cultural, and economic ties are most active. Additionally, there were also internships in eight other regions of China, including some localities in proximity to the aforementioned two (pp. 230-231). The authors of this paper also highlighted the entities that received interns more than once. From the data collected, they concluded that most of these entities are governmental and public organisations. This is mainly due to the demand for professionals who not only master the Chinese language but also have the intercultural skills to ensure the development of several activities in economic, financial, political, and commercial fields. Also notable is the Confucius Institute's intern intake. Due to their versatility, they attract student interns as a complete internship entity

that offers interlingual translation and interpretation, teaching, Chinese culture dissemination, and organisation of cultural events.

In sum, the internships promote the development of initiatives associated with the cultural, historical, political, commercial, economic, and educational domains. The inclusion of translation within the interns' responsibilities is dependent on certain factors. In the aforementioned circumstances, the acquisition of mediation and intercultural communication competences is crucial (Caels *et al.*, 2023, pp. 232–233).

These competences enable interns to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, facilitating efficient communication among individuals with diverse backgrounds. Moreover, the interns acquire significant practical knowledge in supporting cross-cultural exchanges. Overall, internships offer an all-encompassing education that combines hands-on skills development with a deeper understanding of international relations dynamics.

According to Caels *et al.* (2023), from the various fields in which the internship entities operate, the most surprising field is the education field, more specifically the teaching of the Chinese language or Portuguese as a foreign language. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the shared interest in teaching Portuguese in China and teaching Chinese in Portugal. Additionally, the authors emphasise the ongoing pilot project that commenced in the academic year 2015/2016, aimed at providing Mandarin language instruction in high schools. The diverse age distribution among Mandarin learners gives rise to a growing educational supply and demand dynamic, which explains the interns' interest in this field, despite it not being a focal topic of the TIPC/CP bachelor's degree (p. 237).

In conclusion, the authors have noticed a trend where some organisations, despite not operating in fields directly related to the bachelor's degree, are investing in – or wish to invest in – commercial ties between China, Portugal, and other Portuguese-speaking nations (Caels *et al.*, 2023, p. 238). This reflects an acknowledgement of the possible economic and cultural advantages associated with attaining this bachelor's degree. Moreover, it underlines the significance of multidisciplinary skills and expertise in the contemporary globalised society, whereby intercultural communication and business opportunities are becoming more interconnected.

4.2 Interviews With Current and Former Students of TIPC/CP

To better understand the possible impact cultural immersion has on acquiring intercultural competences, along with developing language skills, a series of interviews were conducted with students who participated in a study abroad program during the bachelor's degree in Portuguese-Chinese/Chinese-Portuguese Translation and Interpretation. The interview questions focused on their perception of the bachelor's degree study programme, their experiences with cultural immersion, and how it affected their ability to communicate and interact with people from different cultures. The results of these interviews will be presented in this section of the dissertation. Such results will be analysed later, providing valuable insights into the benefits of cultural immersion for developing intercultural competences.

Concerning the interview script that was applied for these interviews, it comprised a total of thirteen questions, plus one extra question. The extra question was directed to a participant who was part of the group of students most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore did not experience the exchange experiences provided by the study programme in their entirety. As the research methodologies chapter mentioned, such questions were separated into categories. Such categories, their questions and respective answers given by the participants will be presented below.

I – Impact of the Exchange Program Protocols on TIPC/CP and on ESECS/IPL

The first category presented in this section of the dissertation contains questions regarding the impact these exchange program protocols between MPU and the Polytechnic of Leiria had on the bachelor's degree and on ESECS (School of Education and Social Sciences of the Polytechnic of Leiria).

In the first question of the interview, participants were asked how they had gotten to know the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP (Portuguese-Chinese/Chinese-Portuguese Translation and Interpretation). More than half of the participants mentioned that they were already interested in learning the Chinese language or Asian languages in general. This interest in learning the language led some participants to research and find this bachelor's degree as one of the few bachelor's degree programmes currently available in Portuguese public higher education institutions. The remaining participants mentioned that they were

introduced to the bachelor's degree through acquaintances. One participant stressed that he learned about the bachelor's degree when he was in Beijing, completing a one-year Chinese language programme sponsored by a scholarship obtained through the Chinese government. There, he met students from the second year of TIPC/CP, and they were the ones who introduced him to the bachelor's degree programme (Appendix C, para. 4). Another participant mentioned that the acquaintance who introduced the bachelor's degree programme to them was a friend who lived in Macao (Appendix E, para. 1).

In the second question of the interview, participants were asked if they were familiar with the exchange program protocols between MPU, IPL, and Beijing Language and Cultures University (BLCU) prior to applying for this bachelor's degree. Participant A mentioned that they already knew about the possibility of doing an exchange program in China but erroneously thought that the exchange program only included Macao. This was due to the fact that they had found old news coverage regarding the first years of existence of the bachelor's degree (Appendix B, para. 5). In the initial years of the bachelor's degree, the exchange program was only established between MPU and IPL. However, MPU later signed a supplementary protocol with BLCU, which allowed for an additional exchange program that included Beijing in the exchange program.

Except for Participant A, all the other participants' answers pointed out that they already knew of the protocols with both the MPU and IPL and the MPU and BLCU. Participant B stressed that the same colleagues that had introduced him to the bachelor's degree had also explained the existence of both protocols. Later, the participant further researched this information, proving they were already aware of the exchange program protocols. Similar to Participant B, Participant C also mentioned that they knew of the protocols' existence through previous research on the bachelor's degree (Appendix D, para. 5).

The third question asked the participants whether the presence of Chinese students, who were also on exchange programs at the IPL, had any impact on the bachelor's degree or the learning environment at ESECS, and if it contributed to their experience of intercultural exchanges. The answers provided by the participants, although with some variations, ended with the same conclusion: the presence of Chinese colleagues during their years studying at ESECS significantly impacted their learning journey, be it of the language or intercultural competences.

Participant A pointed out that, for them personally, the most significant impact was felt during the fourth year. During the last semester of classes, they had the opportunity to share the same classroom with Chinese colleagues during "Interpretation" class. Aside from that, they pointed out that during their internship, they also had close contact with Chinese colleagues and had to give them some Portuguese lessons. Participant A goes on to stress that, although they previously had contact with Chinese colleagues during their first year at ESECS, their Chinese level did not allow for many opportunities to interact with them on a deeper level. The few chances of interactions that occurred were very superficial and mainly done through a third language, English (Appendix B, para. 7).

Another participant, Participant B, mentioned that either during their first year or during the fourth year of the bachelor's degree, the contact, and interactions with Chinese exchange students at ESECS had a tremendous impact on their language learning process and acquiring intercultural competences. Participant B emphasizes that the primary driving force behind this significant impact was the initial assignment of a language partner to students in their first year, and the opportunity for them to teach Portuguese as a foreign language in their fourth year.

The remaining participants also reiterated that the possibility of having contact with Chinese students from the "get-go" was a factor that greatly impacted students in general. The presence of Chinese students at ESECS was a small window into the Chinese language and culture, which allowed for a first contact with its people and culture in a familiar environment. Participant D further stated that this first contact allowed them to establish new friendships with people they would later meet again in China in either personal or professional settings in various areas (Appendix E, para. 7).

The fourth and last question in this category questioned the participants being interviewed whether or not the bachelor's degree's provision of an exchange program to China affected their choice, and if so, in what manner. Except for Participant E, who mentioned that the fact that the bachelor's degree provisioned two years of exchange studies in China did not influence their decision to choose the bachelor's degree but did influence their decision to continue with the bachelor's degree (Appendix F, para. 9), all other participants said that the exchange program was the main factor in applying for the bachelor's degree in the first place. Participants A, B, C, D, and F all stress that the cultural immersion allowed by the exchange program to both Beijing and Macao was a decisive element in

applying for the degree or even, in the case of Participant D, changing from another bachelor's degree to the degree in TIPC/CP (Appendix E, para. 9). Participant B further stresses that if it were not for the exchange program within this bachelor's degree, as well as the financial aid given to students through free in-campus accommodations and a monthly stipend, they would not have applied to this bachelor's degree in the first place (Appendix C, para. 9).

II – Demand and Interest for the Chinese Language

This category contains questions connected to the demand and interest that exists for the Chinese language. The first question of this category, and the fifth in the overall interview, questions the participants on what motivated them to apply for the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP.

Except for Participant F, all the participants mentioned that they had a previous interest in either Asian languages or Chinese language and culture in particular. Participant B (Appendix C, para. 13) and Participant E (Appendix F, para. 12) also stressed that having experienced studying the language before was a motivating factor for applying to the bachelor's. Aside from this, another common factor, also emphasized by Participant B (Appendix C, para. 13) and Participant D (Appendix E, para. 12), that motivated the participants to apply for this bachelor's degree was the existence of financial aid in the form of a stipend during the time the students were on the exchange program in both Beijing and Macao.

The next question, question number six, asked participants if they had prior knowledge of the Chinese language and culture before being admitted to the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP. In this question, participants were encouraged to reflect and compare the knowledge they had or did not have to the knowledge they currently possess.

Participant A stated that the previous knowledge they had was obtained mainly through Chinese TV series, but that it was a very basic level of knowledge compared to the knowledge that they gained while on the exchange program in China (Appendix B, para. 14). Participant B stressed, again, that, since they previously had the opportunity to be in a one-year exchange language program in Beijing, they already had, to a certain extent,

acquired language and cultural knowledge before being admitted to the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP (Appendix C, para. 16).

Both Participant D (Appendix E, para. 14) and Participant E (Appendix F, para. 14) mentioned that they had minimal knowledge of both the Chinese language and the culture, mainly due to both of them having studied the basics of the Chinese language before being admitted to the bachelor's degree. In this particular question, Participant D expresses that the previous knowledge acquired about the Chinese language and culture, although very limited, was an advantage when entering the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP. Still, the first year of the degree, in their experience, only provided very elementary knowledge of both the language and the culture, which left the impression that they had stagnated in their learning process during that year.

As for both Participant C and Participant F, they both stated they had no prior knowledge of the Chinese language. Participant F specifically mentioned that the cultural knowledge they possessed prior to being admitted to the bachelor's degree was mainly what is seen as common knowledge and stereotypes shared within Portuguese society concerning Chinese culture and its people (Appendix G, para. 14).

III – Perceived Effects of Cultural Immersion on Acquisition of Language and Intercultural Competences

Opening the category that discusses the effects that cultural immersion might have on the acquisition of language and cultural competences, the seventh question of the interview asked participants if they believe that the study programme, which includes two years of exchange studies in China, was a factor that contributed to greater competence in Chinese language and culture. All of the participants interviewed agreed that the two years of exchange program included in the study programme of the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP contributed to a greater competence in both linguistic and cultural skill and knowledge.

Participant A mentioned that, even though they cannot attest for the exchange year in Macao, since they did not have the opportunity to complete the exchange experience there due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they did perceive the cultural immersion resulting from the exchange experience in Beijing had a great impact on their learning journey. They further stated that being immersed in the culture pushed them to use the language in their daily

routine, meanwhile through those language exchanges they learned knew language skills and acquired more cultural knowledge. To finish, Participant A also stressed that they also saw a greater development in their language and intercultural competence while in contact with classmates from different nationalities that had been studying in Beijing for a longer time period (Appendix B, para. 17).

Participants C, D and F answers go in hand with what Participant A stated. All of them mention that the exchange years in Beijing and Macao are, without a doubt, what allows students to acquire such high levels of language and cultural knowledge in the span of the bachelor's degree completion. Participant C stated that the level of knowledge that can be acquired in an environment where you absorb the language and culture in all of one's waking hours is unrivalled. They believe that no matter how much dedication, time, and work one puts into studying a foreign language in Portugal – especially Chinese – the results will always be more effective in the destination country – in this case, China (Appendix D, para. 17).

However, both Participant B and E added that the greatest impact they felt was during the exchange year in Beijing. For both of these participants, the exchange year in Macao did not produce such high results as in comparison to the exchange year in Beijing. Participant B further stated that, although they did enjoy the exchange year in Macao, in terms of language and culture learning it was as if they had slowed down their learning journey. They pointed out that, although Macao shares some cultural aspects with mainland China, the main language used is Cantonese. This led to fewer opportunities for language and cultural immersion and greater obstacles in their daily encounters with locals. To them cultural immersion was an essentially steppingstone in their growth. They see language and culture as something which is meant to be shared and acquired and that they took advantage of every encounter with locals to further develop their skills and knowledge. Besides these factors, Participant B also stressed that cultural immersion is a great way to get deeper knowledge of a culture and its language, since books and CD's can allow us to learn only to a certain extent (Appendix C, para. 19-22).

The next question, question eight, asked participants about their opinion in how the bachelor's degree programme promotes students' intercultural skills. Participant A, once again, stressed that the fact that in Beijing the students of TIPC/CP are placed in classrooms with classmates from various nationalities, which, along with the fact that they also are

culturally immersed and have contact with locals daily, promotes a prosperous environment to develop, acquire and master intercultural competences. They further state that in the case of the BLCU they also promoted various group activities with their students throughout the semesters, which allowed for even more opportunities for intercultural exchanges (Appendix B, para. 19).

As for Participant B, besides the classmates of various nationalities that they encountered in Beijing, they also pointed that the fact that both in the first year and the fourth year at IPL students have some classes with Chinese teachers which promotes a good environment for students to develop their intercultural skills. They state that, as a matter of fact, these teachers are often the first step in the process of developing intercultural skills that the students of TIPC/CP encounter. They stress that developing and acquiring intercultural competences is something that naturally happens within this bachelor's degree due to these intercultural exchanges. Besides that, the opportunities that they had to travel to some cities within China also helped them develop further their intercultural competences, since China is a big country with various ethnicities, cultures, customs, and dialects.

However, Participant B also stresses that the fact that in Macao the Portuguese students are, again, in the same classroom, is in their opinion, another factor that might be seen as an obstacle for personal development. They discuss that they would see it as more beneficial to be in a mixed classroom with either Chinese students or the students of CPLP countries that also study at MPU (Appendix C, para. 24-27).

As for Participant C, the fact that the two years exchange programs are mandatory pushes students into new environments that enrich their knowledge of the sociocultural reality of China in an active way. Not only are they developing their language competences, which is the ultimate objective, they are also developing their cultural knowledge. Participant C also referred the notion that language and culture are the reflection of one another, and that the experience of going from living in Beijing to go live in Macao is also part of the process of acquiring intercultural competences.

They further stress that individuals who experience the phenomenon of being transported to an entirely unfamiliar and distinctive environment, such as those originating from Portugal/Europe who arrive in China/Asia, rapidly possess the innate ability to effortlessly unravel the enigma surrounding this unfamiliar place. In doing so, they dismantle prejudices that have never before been put to scrutiny, and come to the realization that,

notwithstanding the dissimilarities, there exist numerous shared characteristics that foster a sense of human connection. Consequently, we are thus left with the role and responsibility of being the "bridge" between people, cultures, businesses, etc., with a mission to avoid misunderstandings, react against discrimination, and work towards growing tolerance and greater knowledge about "the other" (Appendix D, para. 19).

Another participant, Participant D, reflected that having the opportunity to live in Beijing and Macao tremendously opened their horizons and radically transformed them into the person they are today. Both experiences helped them not only to develop their language skills, which are essential for their work as translator and interpreter, they also offered great insight into the social and cultural nuances of both places. They, alike Participant A and B, mention that these exchange programs allowed them to, literally, meet people from all over the world. The experiences intensified the development of intercultural competence and cultural awareness, since, in their words, one never simply translates words, they also translate and interpret cultural aspects that are integrated in language (Appendix E, para. 19).

Participant E stressed that, the fact that the bachelor's degree study programme allows for students to experience living in both Beijing and in Macao brings tremendous benefits to their skillset. The experience of living in such two different places offer different cultural immersion experiences that are essential to understand the various facets of Chinese culture (Appendix F, para. 19).

Finally, Participant F reiterates that these skills are promoted at various levels throughout the bachelor's degree. They point out that the class on Chinese Culture taken in the first year can be seen as the basis for the initiation of the students' intercultural experience, providing a first contact with cultural, artistic, social, geographical and demographic elements of China, such as handicrafts, music, gastronomy, folk tales and legends, different languages and dialects of the country, different ethnic groups, etc.. The second year in Beijing, in their opinion, is seen as the peak of the intercultural experience and students, bombarded with information from various angles, acquire linguistic and intercultural competences in a faster pace. There are a number of reasons for that, the most obvious being the experience of daily life in the Chinese capital, with all the elements of cultural interaction that it brings, from communicating with the locals, eating, using services and getting to know traditions, customs, art and architecture. In addition, all the teaching during the year consists of total immersion in the Chinese language, as classes are all in

Chinese and English is rarely used. The year in Macao offers the same experience with some variations. Like other Participants mentioned above, Participant B stresses that Macao offers an insight into cultural differences that exist, as well as allowing for a better understanding of the social realities of both cities (Appendix G, para. 19-21).

An extra question was asked to Participant A, as they are the only participant in the group that whose exchange program experiences were greatly impacted because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the travel restrictions that existed to China until the beginning of 2023. Participant B, E, and F were also impacted, but Participant F was still able to experience the full exchange year in Beijing and the first semester of the exchange year to Macao, only needing to finish, through online classes, the second semester, and Participants B and E only felt the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic during their fourth year, when they were about to start their internship. Participant A, however, only experienced the first semester of the exchange year in Beijing, the second semester, as well as the exchange year in Macao were all completed through online classes and in-person classes back at IPL.

The extra question asked to Participant A was: what differences, if any, do they notice in their language and intercultural skills compared to the colleagues that completed the two exchange years? They answered that, in their case, they did not perceive many language differences as the online classes also allowed them to immerse themselves in the Chinese language through other methods, such as reading Chinese books, which they could not do in Beijing due to lack of time. They also stated that they felt that the biggest improvement they made in terms of language was during the online classes. On a cultural level, however, they admit believing they do not have as much knowledge as the students who did the full exchange programme, as they were in direct contact with the culture and not just through books or series (Appendix B, para. 21).

IV – Impact of Acquired Intercultural and Linguistic Competences on Students' Integration into the Workforce

The present category aims to gather data regarding the perceived impact of acquired intercultural and linguistic competences on students' later integration into the workforce. The ninth question of the interview opens this category by asking participants to what extent do they reckon that the language and intercultural competences acquired during their bachelor's degree are a factor that makes recent graduates stand out in the labour market.

Participant A answered that the linguistic and intercultural competences acquired during the bachelor's degree will always be an outstanding factor for the simple fact that these are still competences in the labour market (Appendix B, para. 24).

Participant B states that possessing linguistic and intercultural competences, acquired during their degree, as well as international experiences like living in Beijing and Macao, are, surely, components that might allow recent graduates, and even themselves, to achieve success in the job market. However, these attributes are not the only determinants of success. They proceed to give an illustrative example: If an employer were faced with two candidates with similar profiles but differing levels of intercultural experience, one can be almost certain they would likely choose the candidate who has experience in China or another foreign country as this could indicate to the employer that the candidate has the ability to adapt to different environments, which is an important attribute in today's globalized business world.

However, Participant B believes that the recent graduates that did not experience the exchange programs should not feel inferior if they haven't had the chance to study in Beijing or Macao. Simply being in China doesn't necessarily make one's language skills better. They stress that some individuals who have had the opportunity to do the exchange years have not made good use of these experiences. It is possible for a student who has never been to China but has studied a lot and had a language partner or frequent contact with Chinese culture to be an excellent speaker of Chinese. Therefore, Participant B thinks that those who haven't had the opportunity to study in Beijing or Macao should not feel inferior to those who have, as long as they put in the effort to try and develop themselves these competences.

They go further in stating that they themselves have fell into the trap of doubting their skillset. They recall an experience after graduating and the fear they felt when applying for jobs that required fluency in Chinese. They mention that most of the graduates are not fluent when graduating. They acknowledge that fluency in Chinese is a continuous process and that one that may never reach the level of a native speaker. Because of this, they express that they felt uncertainty and hesitation when faced with job requirements that demanded fluency in this particular language. But they also assume that if they had a company they would also require for a candidate with fluency in Chinese, as they wish to obtain the best candidate possible. Still, the job they would offer might not even need a fluent level to successfully complete it and someone with a good level of the language would suffice. As

proof of that, they recall a job interview that had done right after graduating. Before the interview started, they were in the waiting room and next to them was a Chinese woman. They thought that they would choose her due to the fluency requirement. But, contrary to this believe, a week later they received a call saying that they had been accepted for the job. So, the fluency requirement, or even the fact that they were not Chinese, were not exclusion factors. The employer must have liked their profile, and the fact that they speak Portuguese fluently too, even though the advert asked for someone who was fluent in Chinese. In conclusion, Participant B mentions that, when it comes to language skills, although it is preferable to have a higher level, not being fluent does not mean they might be excluded. Of course, to them, if one lacks a specific skill, they must be able to compensate on the other, but they believe that the intercultural competences that students acquire, as well as their exchange experiences can play in their favour when trying to enter the job market, as employers today tend to value good intercultural competences paired with other skillsets (Appendix C, para. 30-32).

As for Participant C, they answered along the lines of the previous participants. They also agreed that recent graduates, when facing the labour market, have several advantages over their peers. Those advantages are the exchange experiences in China, the higher language level they might have obtained, the intercultural competences they have acquired, and the notions of Chinese culture. To them, these are all skills and knowledge that are valued when comparing CVs or considering candidates for certain positions (Appendix D, para. 21).

Participant D statement also went along the line of thought of the above-mentioned participant. They stress that these skills, when well applied, can open doors to several opportunities. They further state that such experiences allowed them to later have the chance to teach Portuguese to Jackie Chan, to do translations an interpretation work of great importance and even allowed them to author their published book about the Chinese language (Appendix E, para. 22).

As for Participant E, they stressed that the exchange programs give recent graduates an increased level of credibility within the labour market. However, they also state that this credibility can be narrowed to the translation, interpretation, and education fields, hence why they sought to continue their academic path by applying for a Master's in Chinese Studies (Appendix F, para. 22).

Lastly, Participant F pointed out the fact that there is a global increase in the presence and influence of Chinese companies and Chinese investors. This means that recent graduates of TIPC/CP, who have knowledge regarding the Chinese language, culture and costumes are, generally, more prone to stand out in the labour market, as they can be seen as the bridge between the Chinese market and the western market. They further underlined that, in their personal case, they were able to get job positions in education, translation and interpretation, both in Portugal and overseas (Appendix G, para. 24-25).

The next question of this category, the tenth question of the interview, asked participants if they could reflect on the impact of the curricular internship that students can do on the second semester of the fourth and final year of the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP.

Participant A stated that their internship was conducted on IPL library and involved the creation of information sheets and exercises to support Chinese students with learning difficulties, as well as developing fact sheets and summaries to facilitate the placement of Chinese books on library shelves. This experience proved influential in enhancing their professional prospects, as it strengthened their CV and enabled them to secure a position as a Mandarin teacher since they had some experience in education acquired during the internship (Appendix B, para. 26).

Participant B mentioned that their internship was going to be at MPU in Macao, but about ten days before it started, in the end of February 2020, them and other four students received a message saying that they couldn't go because of the pandemic. So, Participant B and their colleagues had to start looking for other places to do their internship. This was obviously a difficult task because they were ten days away, two weeks at the most from the date in which they need to start their internship. Even so, they knew that (interning) in China was out of the question, because the country was closing down, or was going to close down very soon. This meant that Participant B had to look for internships in Portugal. They thought that they would have greater chances to find an internship in Lisbon and decided to look for something there. They ended up interning in a small company. During their internship they had the opportunity to teach Portuguese as a Foreign Language to a Chinese student, as well as do translation work into Chinese and proofreading texts in Portuguese.

In their point of view, they do not believe the internship had a great impact in their career prospects. But it did help them understand they did not see themselves teaching Portuguese as a Foreign Language, although they enjoyed it. Another thing they point out is

that, maybe due to the circumstances, they ended up not doing a whole lot of things related to the bachelor's degree during that internship, namely interpreting or even translating. The number of translations done were very low, compared to what they expected to have done. In conclusion, although they saw it as a good experience, they did not see great career results out of said internship (Appendix C, para. 34-38).

Participant C answered the question by mentioning that although there was a lack of support from the IPL in finding and advising organisations that can take on trainees and with a track record of training good recent graduates, the fact that the bachelor's degree study programme includes the possibility to do a curricular internship adds value to the degree itself by proving, through work experience, what has been learnt over the three and a half years of the course. Regardless of the nature of the internship and the area of work, they state that students, when transitioning to the labour market, do it with a concrete idea of what their duties might be, as well as the sense of responsibility and autonomy needed to carry them out. This stage can also serve as a fast track to a professional career that one wants to achieve or, on the contrary, to realise the alternatives available, academically and/or professionally (Appendix D, para. 24).

In the case of Participant D, they state that the curricular internship was their first important official professional moment and, as such, essential in applying knowledge on a practical level. They did their internship at the Portuguese Embassy in Beijing, and it was an extremely enriching few months, where they created important professional links and developed work skills. They stress that this practical aspect of the bachelor's degree is incredibly relevant and an excellent way to finish the course (Appendix E, para. 24).

Participant E, much like Participant B, was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic right when they were about to leave for Macao to start their internship at MPU. They state that they also had to find an alternative in Portugal, which ended up being an internship at a translation company. However, they rarely dealt with the Chinese language, and they express that they only accepted that internship due to the circumstances and time constraints. They also stress the lack of support by the IPL in finding internships, mentioning that some students ended up going through the project route, as they did not find internships in the degree's study area. They point out that the students at the time only received a list of entities with which previous students had done internships at, besides the internship at MPU, which select the students based on their grades. They conclude by stating that there should be an

effort by the IPL to arrange more protocols with entities for students to have the opportunity do internships (Appendix F, para. 24).

As for Participant F, they mention that their internship took place in Lisbon, in a real estate agency that deals mainly with the Chinese market. They believe that their internship had an impact mainly because it provided a multicultural and multilingual working environment, with the advantage of socialising, communicating and working with native Chinese speakers on a daily basis. In another respect, it provided some further opportunities to put into practice and develop their translation and interpreting skills (Appendix G, para. 24).

The last question of the category, question eleven, asked participants if they believe the exchange programs and the curricular internship had a direct impact on them entering the labour market. Participant A mentioned that, as they had previously stated, their internship had a direct impact on them entering the labour market, as they are now working as a Mandarin teacher. Regarding the exchange programs, they mentioned that they have not noticed a direct link, but they believe that it must be something that stands out in their CV (Appendix B, para. 28).

In the case of Participant B, they stated that they do not feeling as though their curricular internship had a significant impact in entering the labour market. They mention that they were accepted to a work position in June, but as a result of the pandemic lockdowns and restrictions they were only able to start in that position in late august. However, this position was not related to the curricular internship they completed, hence why they feel there was no direct impact in the start of their professional path. The same cannot be said for the exchange programs, has they believed that these must have been seen by the employers as something of great value when evaluating their CV, and they hope was what made them stand out against other candidates (Appendix C, para. 40-42).

For Participant C the curricular internship was very positive and did directly impact their career path, as they continued to work with the same entity. They also stress that their internship entity and later employer did end up opening them other doors in their professional path (personal communication, 2023, Appendix D, para. 26). The same was stated by Participant D, stressing that the internship was important for their development of professional skills (Appendix E, para. 26).

Participant E also placed great importance in the internship and the exchange programs experience. They state that they chose to follow the path of academic research. Although their masters, and now PhD, are not in the translation area, the exchange programs experience was something that was essential for this career, as it offered them a perspective which is only possible to attain with direct contact and cultural immersion in China. They also point out that the internship was important for them, as it gave them a clear insight into the way the translation market works in Portugal. Even though they did not proceed into the translation area, they highlight that it would have been a good start to follow on that career path (Appendix F, para. 26).

For Participant F the impact of both the internship and the exchange programs was definitive, although if only indirectly. By this they meant that these experiences allowed them to deepen their knowledge of the Chinese reality and promoted the development of various skills. However, they also mention that the internship itself did not promote a direct path into a job position after graduating (Appendix C, para. 26).

V – Further Relevant Data

The final category of the interviews delved into other relevant information that might help comprehensively compile the data collected thus far. The first question of the category, question twelve, asked participants if they continued their academic path after graduating from the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP. The responses gathered showed that about half of the participants continued their academic path, whereas the other half did not find the need to pursue further higher education or that it was something they aspired to do as of the moment of the interview.

Participant A was one of the participants that mentioned to not pursuing further higher education. They sought to first evaluate the labour market and the opportunities available at the moment of graduation, and later analyse if, according to the labour market demands and their personal views, they should decide to gather more knowledge and pursue a higher academic title (Appendix B, para. 31).

In the case of Participant B, they highlight the fact that they had already obtained a masters and also completed the first year of the masters in Chinese Studies by University of Aveiro, having the equivalent of a postgraduate, before applying and graduating with a BA in TIPC/CP. They reference that they did enrol again into the Chinese Studies masters after graduating the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP, with the intent to finish the masters, but due to schedule conflicts and lack of availability as a result of already working full time, they ended up not being able to pursue it (Appendix C, para. 45).

As for Participant C, they stress that they decided to enrol on a master's degree. The master's chosen was the masters in Chinese Studies at University of Aveiro in partnership with ISCTE-IUL (Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa). They stress that the study programme offered by this master's degree seemed like a logical choice from the point of view of complementing the bachelor's degree, delving into areas such as economics, politics, society, management, among others, with professors who possess significant knowledge, impressive professional curriculum and concrete experience in this field of study (Appendix D, para. 29).

Another participant that sought to continue their academic path was Participant E. They stated that they not only attained the title of Master in Chinese Studies, also by University of Aveiro, but they also sought to pursue a PhD. Participant E stresses that they were able to seize an opportunity to attain a research grant in the field of Chinese relations,

and that both the bachelor's degree and the exchange programs within its study programme were essential in the admission process, as they were elements that made them stand out when applying for the research grant (Appendix F, para. 29).

The remaining participants, Participant D and Participant F, both express that they did not feel that continuing further higher education was something beneficial for the time being. Participant D stated that after graduating they did a specialization in Chinese Economics and Business at Fudan University in Shanghai, and that up until the moment of the interview they have had plenty of interesting job opportunities. Still, they do not exclude that in the future they might feel the need to attain higher education in order to develop and acquire more skills or open more doors (personal communication, 2023, Appendix E, para. 29). In the case of Participant F, they state that due to their age (as they entered the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP already near their thirties) they thought that it was best to prioritize starting their professional career and attain working experience (Appendix G, para. 29).

The last question of this category and of the interview itself, question twelve, sought to gather the participants final impressions and reflections regarding the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP. In general, the significance of exchange programs within the bachelor's program, along with the curricular internships, was emphasised by all participants.

Participant B (Appendix C, para. 47-51), going in line with what they previously mentioned, reflected further on possible changes that could be made to turn the exchange programs more fruitful. They imagined that if they had the chance of having two years in Beijing, or even the second year in Macao and the third in Beijing (reverting to the order that was used years prior) they might develop even more both their linguistic skills and their intercultural competences. This later suggestion, in their opinion, could foster a deeper learning process for students. They also stated that, although there are various positive points regarding the bachelor's degree, there are also points that could be improved, such as reviewing how some classes are structured and the content taught. Participant B also highlighted the cultural exchanges that are facilitated by the presence of Chinese students at ESECS, mentioning that having language partners can also be seen as a positive occurrence within the bachelor's degree study period.

Overall, Participant B stated that this is indeed a good and appealing bachelor's degree, and they only lament that the financial aid that formerly existed is no longer available to all students. They also reflect that, although every year one sees around 25 to 30 new

students entering the bachelor's degree, the fact is that, by experience and word of mouth, they know that there are always people that give up mid-bachelor's. So, in a sense, the number of graduates every year might not reach those same numbers, either because those students find that they do not enjoy this path or because of other variables. In fact, they also signal that there are even graduates that end up not working within the area of Translation and Interpretation. Still, they see TIPC/CP has a full of potential and well-structured bachelor's degree.

Participant C emphasised that the TIPC/CP degree's uniqueness in Portugal makes it valuable when considering the current job market. They also point out the fact that, on average, a little over twenty students enrol in the course each year; however, only a small number of these choose to pursue further education or employment in fields directly related to the translation and interpretation of the Portuguese and Chinese languages as a result of the unique aspects of the language, culture, and experiences, particularly during the years spent in China. They speculate that perhaps as China has become more and more important in the world, there are more and more graduates working in this industry nowadays. They speculate that, even though there may be enthusiasm and curiosity at the beginning of the course, this aspect may change as not everyone ends up appreciating or seeing their expectations as aligned with learning and practising the craft of translation and interpreting, which results in a low supply for a high demand in this market.

On the other hand, Participant C also points out that despite the fact that there are several bachelor's and master's degrees of equal value and relevance throughout the country, they believe that it would be beneficial to replicate this particular model, which focuses on the practice of translation and interpreting and in which partnerships and exchanges are signed with Chinese universities – not just on an optional basis, but as part of their structure, and subsidized by the various institutions which are capable of training more and better students who aspire to know and learn the Chinese language and culture, providing both the labour market, which needs qualified professionals and specialists in these areas and others that involve these skills, and national and international academia, which despite the centuries-old historical links between Portugal and China, still has so much to explore and make known (Appendix D, para. 31-32).

Participant's D opinion also aligns with the opinions previously stated, highlighting that the richness of the experiences lived within the bachelor's degree, the equilibrium

between theory and practice and the support shown to students are some of the qualities that make this degree stand out (personal communication, 2023, Appendix E, para. 31). Participant E also highlighted the exchange experiences and the fact that having both Portuguese and Chinese teacher enriches the student's learning process (Appendix F, para. 31).

Finally, Participant F also highlights the presence of native and highly qualified Chinese teacher's throughout the bachelor's degree, the existing protocols with MPU and BLCU which allow for the students exchange experiences, and ultimately the constant endeavour on the part of the course's scientific committee to implement intra- and extra-curricular initiatives and activities that promote interaction and learning between Portuguese and Chinese students (Appendix G, para. 31).

4.3 The Institution's and Its Students' Points of View – Linked Perspectives

After analysing the research data, several key findings emerged. Firstly, it was evident that the interest and demand for Chinese language learning, specifically the interest in a bachelor's degree in which Chinese has a focus, as is the case of the present case study's bachelor's degree, has increased over the course of the last decade and a half.

The surge in interest and demand can be attributed to a multitude of factors, including the effect of globalisation, the escalating prominence of China in the global economic panorama, the expanding cultural exchange between China and other nations, and the acknowledgement of Chinese as a pivotal language for business and diplomacy. Furthermore, the results from this research findings also demonstrated that the participants who undertook the four-year undergraduate programme with a specialisation in the Chinese language and incorporated exchange programmes such as the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP exhibited elevated levels of intercultural competence. Moreover, these individuals displayed enhanced abilities to interact successfully in intercultural communication within professional contexts, as well as greater prospects for employment and access to international career opportunities.

The demand for the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP also aligns with the increasing demand for studying Chinese in Portuguese schools. Romain Gillain points out that "the national demand (...) is growing... Some students, for example, have already studied Mandarin at their previous schools" (Appendix I, 2023). He also highlights that he feels that students growing curiosity for other Asian cultures, aside from Chinese culture, attracts more students. He stresses that he is also aware of students who previously had been in bachelor's degrees related to Asian studies at either the University of Minho or the University of Lisbon, who felt they had not studied enough Chinese in those programmes.

This increasing interest and demand is not exclusive to Portuguese students. As research previously mentioned, it is also possible to see an increase in the number of foreign students who chose this bachelor's degree to continue their academic education. This might also be seen as a sign of the growing positive reputation of this study programme. Besides the exchange years, the possibility of having Chinese students also on exchange programmes at ESECS is another peculiarity of this bachelor's degree. According to Romain Gillain, there is an ongoing effort to re-adjust the course's study programme to allow for more interactions

between Portuguese and Chinese exchange students at ESECS, allowing for cultural exchanges and a certain level of cultural immersion (Appendix I, 2023).

Henceforth, some participants' observations regarding areas where the study programme could be revised are currently under review. There is an ongoing effort to adjust the classes according to the Chinese level that students already possess before being admitted to the bachelor's degree. This was a necessity noticed in recent years, primarily due to the growing number of students who had already had previous contact with the language through Confucius Institutes and through elementary or secondary school lessons. A clear result of growing interest in the language and the perceived attractiveness of this bachelor's degree can be seen. Furthermore, the appeal of the study programme is further enhanced by the potential for cultural immersion facilitated by the inclusion of the exchange programmes within the bachelor's degree.

The possibility of doing a curricular internship to graduate with a bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP is also highlighted by the participants, as is in the article written by Fausto Caels, Flávia Coelho and Romain Gillain (2023), professors at the Polytechnic of Leiria. Both of these sources provide insights on the potential effects of curricular internships on the professional growth of students. Internships offer students the opportunity to gain practical experience and apply their theoretical knowledge in practical settings, thus providing them with excellent experiential learning opportunities. Furthermore, these experiences provide opportunities for networking and establishing professional relationships within the respective field, hence potentially enhancing one's future employment possibilities. Additionally, the IPL stands to gain substantial benefits through broadening its network of connections with other organisations and enterprises, which might potentially have a profound influence on career prospects of future graduates.

Romain Gillian, however, highlighted that most of this year's finalists (2022/2023) opted to go forward with the Project option instead of the curricular internship. He believes this was an exceptional year, as the norm is that most students recognize the power the curricular internship has on future career prospects (Appendix I, 2023). Still, these finalists were the most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, making the circumstances very complex and leaving most students more insecure.

Some participants interviewed also highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their internships and entrance into the labour market, such as losing previous set internships

or having to choose an internship in different areas from the ones they had initially intended or having to wait months to be able to assume job positions that were restricted due to presential work restrictions. Some also stressed that the internships did not produce job offers or a job position.

Still, it is worth mentioning that some graduates of TIPC/CP have had the opportunity to impart their knowledge and expertise to their junior peers at ESECS. Romain Gillain states that they believe these graduates have the profile, capacities, and experience to teach in higher education. They are often hired to aid with classes related to teaching Chinese language and culture, as well as translation and interpretation. Other graduates who end up in the education sector teach at public schools or international schools, where they often not only teach but also act as mediators between parents and the school administration. He points out an example of a graduate who, aside from being a teacher, was often asked to mediate between Chinese parents and the school's administration to facilitate communication between these two (Appendix I, 2023).

Another example given by Romain Gillain, where graduates work with intercultural mediation, is a graduate who works for a company that deals with financial assets, and this specific graduate deals with mainly Chinese clients. Since then, this particular company in the financial sector has also been the entity of some curricular internships and has sought the school for more talent ever since. The graduate's role usually involves bridging the cultural and language gaps between the company and its Chinese clients, ensuring effective communication, and understanding (Appendix I, 2023). Such collaborations provide valuable experience for the finalists and graduates and strengthen such companies' reputation in handling international clientele.

Still, regarding the education sector, it is essential to highlight that, until recently, the tendency was that Chinese teachers were hired and allocated to Portuguese elementary and secondary schools through the Confucius Institutes. However, as of the academic year 2022/2023, this is no longer the case for some "pilot" public schools, meaning that the Portuguese state hires teachers through a public servant admission process (Appendix I, 2023). This change in the hiring process allows for a more thorough evaluation and selection of teachers based on their qualifications and expertise, allowing graduates of the bachelor's degrees above-mentioned to be able to go into the public educational career and not be solely able to work in the private education sector.

Participants' observations on career prospects also align with Romain Gillain's statements. They also see various career possibilities out of this bachelor's degree that go beyond translation and interpretation and stress the importance of the exchange programmes' cultural immersion experiences in broadening their worldviews and their skillset. They believe the bachelor's degree gives them transferable skills like critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving, which are appreciated in many fields. Internships and practical experiences from the programme boost employability and provide doors to numerous career pathways, they say. These also align with the research hypothesis of the present dissertation, which suggests that cultural immersion experienced in such exchange programs fosters higher language and intercultural competences and can positively impact graduates' career prospects. By immersing themselves in different cultures and engaging in real-world scenarios, students are also able to enhance their adaptability and intercultural communication skills. In addition, the practical experiences acquired through internships can confer a competitive advantage in the labour market, rendering individuals more appealing to prospective employers. In general, the research findings provide evidence in favour of the proposition that cultural immersion is beneficial in a practical sense.

In conclusion, the present dissertation has examined the effects of cultural immersion experiences provided by exchange programmes in Beijing and Macao, China, as part of the bachelor's degree in Translation and Interpretation Portuguese/Chinese-Chinese/Portuguese study programme provided by the Polytechnic of Leiria. The research objectives of this study were to evaluate the potential impact of these experiences on the acquisition of language and intercultural competence, as well as to determine if they conferred a competitive advantage to graduates in the labour market.

Despite the limited sample size of the interviewed participants, the research findings reveal that the exchange programmes' provision of cultural immersion opportunities greatly enhances students' acquisition of language proficiency and intercultural competences. Individuals who have completed this particular educational journey not only demonstrate enhanced linguistic abilities, but also exhibit the essential intercultural competences that are increasingly prized in an interconnected global society.

The influence of these competences extends beyond the boundaries of translation and interpretation, propelling graduates towards other career trajectories where intercultural competence and intercultural communication competence are held in high esteem. The range of professional opportunities highlights how important the intercultural competences developed in this programme are.

Moreover, this case study demonstrates the increasing demand and interest in the acquisition of the Chinese language in Portugal. The significance of programmes such as the bachelor's degree in TIPC/CP, which incorporates exchange programmes, is highlighted in its assistance of intercultural competence development. These programmes not only fulfil the educational and vocational requirements of students, but also address the wider societal need for intercultural abilities and proficiency in languages.

This study serves to confirm the significance of cultural immersion experiences in boosting language and intercultural proficiencies, while emphasising the beneficial effects it bestows upon graduates' professional opportunities. The significance of such programmes in equipping individuals for a society characterised by globalisation and interconnectivity is apparent.

The current dissertation focused on the examination of the cultural immersion facilitated by exchange programmes. However, research on other forms of cultural immersion provided by today's technology is suggested for future research. The means that

allow for cultural immersion without leaving our comfort zone are still limited, although the role of technology cannot be denied in the appearance of new forms of cultural immersion. The emerging methods of cultural immersion, such as virtual reality experiences, language-centred mobile applications and online language instruction, possess the capacity to overcome geographical constraints and offer individuals tangible advantages. Through active participation in these technological innovations, individuals have the opportunity to cultivate their intercultural communication skills, acquire a more profound comprehension of global perspectives, and augment their adaptability within an ever more interconnected global landscape. One participant noted that while these may not be sufficient, they remain a viable alternative for individuals who are unable to participate in exchange experiences. The research on the influence of these emerging technologies on cultural immersion is already a reality. This field of study might be chosen by future colleagues as a focus for their academic research, thus contributing to the collection and analysis of the ever-growing data that steams from it.

Furthermore, if one can also combine such a degree with a master's which places great emphasis in intercultural competences such as is the case of the Master's in Intercultural Studies for Business at Porto Accounting and Business School, one can obtain a deeper understanding of all those first-hand experiences and how they are an increased value in today's markets. In other words, one can obtain better grasp of one's intercultural competences and learn the important, but often forgotten, role such competences play in today's business world.

In conclusion, the aforementioned findings also indicate a requirement for additional research and development in the areas of curriculum design and teaching approaches in order to address the growing demand for Chinese language instruction. In the future, it would be advantageous to investigate the effects of integrating immersive language learning experiences and technology-based tools into the acquisition of the Chinese language and intercultural competences. Still, it is essential to recognise the enduring significance of cultivating intercultural competences along with language proficiency within educational curricula. This dissertation makes a valuable contribution to the existing knowledge on the possible career benefits and wider societal impacts of educational initiatives that promote intercultural competences and language abilities. It also highlights the need for additional study and the ongoing advancement of programmes in this area.

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Appendix A – Interview Script

The purpose of this interview is to collect data for my master's thesis in order to attain a master's in "Intercultural Studies for Business" at the Porto Accounting and Business School.

The master's thesis in question is a case study on the bachelor's degree in Tradução e Interpretação Português/Chinês - Chinês/Português from the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria.

This case study aims to investigate the following hypothesis: does the exchange program incorporated into the bachelor's degree course plan provide an advantage in acquiring language and cultural competence? Moreover, during this exchange program, which provides a cultural immersion experience, can students improve their language abilities and better understand the target language and culture?

The following interview is an attempt to learn more about the pros and cons of the exchange program through the eyes of those who have experienced it first-hand. The information gathered will help better grasp how the exchange program and cultural immersion experience foster linguistic and cultural growth.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed and share your insights as part of the above research project. Your answers to my questions are tremendously appreciated, and I know they will help shape the findings of my thesis.

All the answers will be used for academic purposes only.

Questions:

Protocolos e impacto da Licenciatura na ESECS/IPL	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Como conheceste a licenciatura?2. Sabias da existência do protocolo com a MPU e a BLCU antes de te candidatares?3. O facto de alunos chineses também fazerem intercâmbio no IPL teve impacto no teu percurso ou no ambiente de aprendizagem na ESECS? (podes refletir se a presença de alunos chineses na ESECS contribuiu para experienciare trocas/intercâmbios interculturais)4. O facto de a licenciatura proporcionar intercâmbio para a China influenciou a tua decisão? Como?
Procura/Interesse pela língua chinesa	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. O que te motivou a candidatares-te à Licenciatura?6. Tinhas conhecimento prévio da língua e da cultura chinesa? (podes avaliar/comparar com o nível de conhecimento da língua e da cultura que tens neste momento)
Efeitos da imersão cultural na aquisição da língua e da cultura	<ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Consideras que o facto de o plano de estudos contemplar dois anos de intercâmbio para China contribui para uma maior competência da língua e culturas chinesa?8. De que forma é que consideras que o plano de estudos da licenciatura promove competências interculturais dos alunos? Podes falar sobre a tua experiência pessoal? (Podes falar sobre o impacto da experiência de imersão cultural tanto em Pequim como Macau.) <p>Impacto do COVID-19 – alunos que não conseguiram fazer todos os anos de intercâmbio para a China</p> <p>Que diferenças, se algumas, notas nas tuas competências linguísticas e interculturais em comparação com os colegas que fizeram intercâmbio?</p>

Impacto das competências culturais e linguísticas adquiridas na entrada no mercado de trabalho

9. Em que medida é que considera que as competências linguísticas e interculturais adquiridas ao longo da licenciatura são um fator que destaca os recém-licenciados no mercado de trabalho? (Experiência pessoal?)
10. *A licenciatura contempla um estágio curricular realizado no 2.º Semestre do 4.º Ano.* Consegues refletir sobre o impacto do estágio curricular? Podes falar da tua experiência?
11. Consideras que o intercâmbio e o estágio curricular tiveram impacto na entrada no mercado de trabalho? Porquê?

Outros dados/informações relevantes sobre a Licenciatura

12. Continuaste o teu percurso académico (mestrado, doutoramento, pós-graduação)? Porquê?
13. O que considera ser boas práticas do curso? (nesta pergunta podes refletir sobre a licenciatura e aspetos que queiras destacar)

Appendix B – Interview Transcript of Participant A

Protocolos e impacto da Licenciatura na ESECS/IPL

1. Como conheceste a licenciatura?

R: Conheci porque estava à procura de cursos com línguas asiáticas e acabei por encontrar este curso juntamente com os cursos de Lisboa e do Minho.

2. Sabias da existência do protocolo com a MPU e a BLCU antes de te candidatares?

R: Sabia que existia a possibilidade de ir para a China, mas pensei que o intercâmbio seria apenas em Macau pois na altura encontrei uma reportagem sobre os primeiros anos do curso, quando o intercâmbio ainda era apenas em Macau.

3. O facto de alunos chineses também fazerem intercâmbio no IPL teve impacto no teu percurso ou no ambiente de aprendizagem na ESECS? (podes refletir se a presença de alunos chineses na ESECS contribuiu para experienciare trocas/intercâmbios interculturais)

R: Eu penso que só teve mais impacto no quarto ano, durante as aulas de interpretação e quando realizei o meu estágio curricular na ESECS e tive que lecionar aulas aos alunos chineses. No primeiro ano, apesar de ter conhecido alguns amigos chineses, não conseguia comunicar com eles em chinês (por causa do quão pouco ainda tinha aprendido na altura), acabando sempre por comunicar noutras línguas.

4. O facto de a licenciatura proporcionar intercâmbio para a China influenciou a tua decisão? Como?

R: Sim, esse foi um dos grandes fatores decisivos na escolha desta licenciatura porque eu queria experienciar a cultura chinesa em "primeira mão".

Procura/Interesse pela língua chinesa

5. O que te motivou a candidatares-te à Licenciatura?

R: Principalmente o meu gosto e interesse por línguas e culturas asiáticas.

6. Tinhas conhecimento prévio da língua e da cultura chinesa? (podes avaliar/comparar com o nível de conhecimento da língua e da cultura que tens agora)

R: Tinha conhecimento através dos *C-dramas* mas nada comparado com aquilo que fiquei a conhecer depois de ir à china.

Efeitos da imersão cultural na aquisição da língua e da cultura

7. Consideras que o facto de o plano de estudos contemplar dois anos de intercâmbio na China contribui para uma maior competência da língua e cultura chinesa?

R: Sim. Quanto ao ano em Macau não posso falar pois não estive lá e sei que o chinês que falam não é igual ao que aprendemos. Quanto ao ano de Pequim, é sem dúvida uma experiência importantíssima para a aprendizagem da língua. Quando estava em Pequim era "forçada" a usar expressões do dia a dia que não se aprendiam nas aulas e aprendia bastante com os colegas de turma que já estavam a estudar na china há mais tempo.

8. De que forma é que consideras que o plano de estudos da licenciatura promove competências interculturais dos alunos? Podes falar sobre a tua experiência pessoal? (Podes falar sobre o impacto da experiência de imersão cultural tanto em Pequim como Macau.)

R: Mais uma vez, o facto de as aulas serem com alunos de outros países e o facto de ter que comunicar diariamente com o chinês, foram cruciais. Além disso, a BLCU tinha vários programas que fomentavam a comunicação entre alunos de várias nacionalidades através da realização de atividades de grupo.

Que diferenças, se algumas, notas nas tuas competências linguísticas e interculturais em comparação com os colegas que fizeram intercâmbio?

R: No meu caso acho que não fiquei com muitas diferenças linguísticas porque as aulas online também me permitiram imergir na língua chinesa através de outros métodos como por exemplo a leitura de livros chineses (coisa que não podia fazer em Pequim por falta de tempo). Até acabei por sentir que a maior evolução que tive a nível da língua foi durante as aulas online. A nível cultural acredito que não tenho tantos conhecimentos como os alunos que fizeram o intercâmbio na totalidade pois eles estiveram em contacto direto com a cultura e não apenas através de livros ou séries.

Impacto das competências culturais e linguísticas adquiridas na entrada no mercado de trabalho

9. Em que medida consideras que as competências linguísticas e interculturais adquiridas ao longo da licenciatura são um fator que destaca os recém-licenciados no mercado de trabalho? (Experiência pessoal?)

R: Eu penso que as competências linguísticas e interculturais vão sempre ser um fator destacante pelo simples fato de serem competências raras no mercado de trabalho.

10. A licenciatura contempla um estágio curricular realizado no no 2.º Semestre do 4.º Ano. Consegues refletir sobre o impacto do estágio curricular? Podes falar da tua experiência?

R: O meu estágio foi realizado na biblioteca do IPL e consistia na realização de fichas informativas e com exercícios para dar aulas e ajudar os alunos chineses com mais dificuldades, e na criação de fichas técnicas e pequenos resumos para os livros chineses poderem ser colocados nas prateleiras da biblioteca. Considero que o meu estágio teve um grande impacto na minha vida profissional pois permitiu-me ter um currículo mais apelativo quando me candidatei para uma posição de professora de Mandarim, uma vez que já tinha alguma experiência em educação adquirida no estágio.

11. Consideras que o intercâmbio e o estágio curricular tiveram impacto na entrada no mercado de trabalho? Porquê?

R: Como referido anteriormente, o meu estágio curricular (em particular) teve uma grande importância na minha entrada no mercado de trabalho. Quanto ao intercâmbio, no meu caso, não notei uma ligação direta com a minha entrada no mercado de trabalho, mas penso que é certamente uma "carta" importante a colocar no currículo.

Outros dados/informações relevantes sobre a Licenciatura

12. Continuaste o teu percurso académico (mestrado, doutoramento, pós-graduação)? Porquê?

R: Não continuei o meu percurso académico porque achei que seria mais benéfico avaliar primeiro o mercado de trabalho e, mais tarde, dependendo das necessidades profissionais que viria a sentir, decidir então se seria ou não necessário continuar com os meus estudos.

13. O que considera ser boas práticas do curso? (nesta pergunta podes refletir sobre a licenciatura e aspetos que queiras destacar)

R: N/R

Appendix C – Interview Transcript of Participant B

Protocolos e impacto da Licenciatura na ESECS/IPL

1. Como conheceste a licenciatura?

R: Eu estava na China quando conheci a licenciatura. O meu trajeto académico é ligeiramente diferente. Eu comecei por estudar, licenciiei-me e fiz um mestrado em Design e só depois é que comecei a estudar chinês. Então eu estava a fazer um mestrado em Design quando comecei a estudar chinês numa escola privada de línguas. Eu não estava a gostar nada daquilo que estava a fazer, do mestrado em si e então dediquei-me bastante à língua chinesa. Entretanto soube que havia um mestrado em Estudos Chineses na Universidade de Aveiro e candidatei-me. Eu estava a acabar o mestrado em Design e candidatei-me ao mestrado em Estudos Chineses. Entretanto, acabei o mestrado em design e iniciei o mestrado em Estudos Chineses. Fiz o primeiro ano e no final do primeiro ano houve a hipótese de ir para a China estudar através de uma bolsa de estudo que foi paga pelo Governo chinês.

Então assim foi, eu fiz o primeiro ano de mestrado, o segundo ano de mestrado, na realidade, não o fiz porque fui para a China estudar apenas mandarim, tal como se pode ir, por exemplo, para Inglaterra fazer um curso de inglês ou então para Itália fazer um italiano etc. Eu fui para a China fazer um curso de chinês, neste caso, que não tinha equivalência a licenciatura ou a grau de mestre, o que fosse, era só mesmo um curso de línguas. Então estive lá um ano e quando lá estive durante esse ano, fiquei exatamente BLCU. Quando eu lá estava conheci pessoas que estavam exatamente a fazer a licenciatura de Tradução e Interpretação Português-Chinês/Chinês-Português através do IPL, que estavam no segundo ano, estavam lá em Pequim no segundo ano, no ano seguinte iam para Macau e então eu conheci-os nesse ano que eu lá estive também e foram eles que me falaram sobre esta licenciatura. Então foi assim, foi já depois de eu estar na China, que fiquei a saber da existência desta licenciatura.

2. Sabias da existência do protocolo com a MPU e a BLCU antes de te candidatares?

R: Sim, sabia da existência do Protocolo que a MPU tem com a BLCU e sabia também do protocolo que existia entre a MPU e o IPL. Fiquei a saber quando estive em Pequim e conheci as tais pessoas que estavam na licenciatura, foram elas que me falaram. Eu depois fui investigar mais também, mas já sabia sim.

3. O facto de alunos chineses também fazerem intercâmbio no IPL teve impacto no teu percurso ou no ambiente de aprendizagem na ESECS? (podes refletir se a presença de alunos chineses na ESECS contribuiu para experienciare trocas/intercâmbios interculturais)

R: Eu diria que que o facto de haver alunos chineses que estavam a fazer intercâmbio no IPL, fosse quando eu estava no primeiro ano no IPL ou fosse quando eu estava no último ano no IPL, diria que teve um impacto ligeiramente significativo, na medida em que, pelo menos no último ano, eu, inclusive, fui monitor, dei umas aulas onde era uma espécie de professor auxiliar de português - língua estrangeira para os alunos, mais concretamente, os alunos que vieram de Macau e que estavam no IPL a estudar. Então eu conheci alguns alunos no último ano, e no primeiro ano, também cheguei a ter um *language partner*. Assim, foi devido a estas duas situações que se deveu esse impacto.

4. O facto de a licenciatura proporcionar intercâmbio para a China influenciou a tua decisão? Como?

R: Sim, penso que que sim. O facto de a licenciatura proporcionar intercâmbio, fosse na China continental, fosse em Macau, influenciou a minha decisão. Eu não sei até que ponto é que eventualmente não teria decidido fazer a licenciatura caso não houvesse este intercâmbio, caso não estivesse disponível. Se calhar, teria pensado melhor, se calhar não

teria feito de todo licenciatura. Talvez teria procurado outras licenciaturas ou então mestrados ou então outras bolsas de estudo que dessem ou possibilitassem ir novamente para a China, porque eu já lá tinha estado um ano, mas que me possibilitassem ir novamente. Mas sim, o saber que um ano (da licenciatura) era em Pequim, um ano em Macau, influenciou, obviamente, a minha decisão. Atualmente sei que, nos últimos anos, tem sido diferente, mas quando eu fui, nós (alunos) tínhamos o alojamento pago, tínhamos uma bolsa também, que era uma espécie de uma de uma “mesada”, e, à exceção dos voos, tínhamos tudo pago. Por isso, sim, tanto o intercâmbio como essas condições, influenciaram bastante a minha decisão.

Procura/Interesse pela língua chinesa

5. O que te motivou a candidatares-te à Licenciatura?

R: Bom... O que é que me motivou a me candidatar a esta licenciatura? Eu já tinha estado/estudado um ano na China, tinha estudado chinês em Pequim, na BLCU durante um ano e tinha uma bolsa de estudo. No final desse ano letivo tentei candidatar-me a uma segunda bolsa de estudo. Não era uma segunda bolsa de estudo, mas sim uma tentativa de prolongar a bolsa de estudo, mas não foi possível. E porquê? Porque o programa no qual eu estava era só um programa de língua, apenas. Não era uma licenciatura, não é mestrado, não era nada disso. E nestes programas de línguas não era possível renovar a bolsa, porque eram programas apenas de 1 ano letivo. Se fosse uma licenciatura completa, neste caso a bolsa ser-me-ia renovada todos os anos, se eu cumprisse terminados requisitos, nomeadamente passar em HSK, penso que era 5 etc. Mas como era só um programa de línguas, não havia essa possibilidade.

Então eu cheguei à conclusão e é uma conclusão muito óbvia, que muito embora eu estivesse num ambiente de língua e que muito embora estivesse desenvolvido o meu chinês

enquanto estava na China, mas 1 ano não era suficiente para, depois de voltar para cá, poder trabalhar com a língua. Necessitava de muita mais experiência, muito mais aprendizagem, estudar muito mais, muitos mais anos a aprender chinês. E assim foi, eu vim para cá, estive cá há 1 ano e não fiz nada relacionado com design, tive só a trabalhar numa outra área. Durante esse ano, preparei-me e fiz o exame nacional, o exame nacional de acesso depois à universidade e assim foi. Iniciei depois, passado um ano de ter voltado, iniciei a licenciatura em tradução e interpretação. Por isso, o que me motivou, concretamente, foi o facto de saber que eu necessitava de mais formação, de mais conhecimento em relação à língua, em relação à cultura, de forma a depois, no futuro, poder trabalhar com o idioma.

6. Tinhas conhecimento prévio da língua e da cultura chinesa? (podes avaliar/comparar com o nível de conhecimento da língua e da cultura que tens agora)

R: Sim, eu tinha conhecimento prévio da língua e da cultura chinesa, porque, lá está, eu estive lá um ano letivo antes de iniciar a licenciatura em tradução e interpretação. Por isso, durante o ano que lá estive, não só desenvolvi ou adquiri conhecimentos em relação à língua e também em relação à cultura. Por isso, sim, antes de iniciar a licenciatura, já tinha conhecimentos prévios de tanto da língua como da cultura chinesa.

Efeitos da imersão cultural na aquisição da língua e da cultura

7. Consideras que o facto de o plano de estudos contemplar dois anos de intercâmbio na China contribui para uma maior competência da língua e cultura chinesa?

R: Sim, sem dúvida que o facto de o plano de estudos contempla dois anos de intercâmbio na China contribui para uma maior competência da língua e da cultura chinesa.

Se calhar, eu diria que de facto sim, adquirimos uma maior competência em ambas as situações.

No entanto, penso que muito embora eu tenha gostado muito de Macau e senti-me bastante bem em Macau, mas acho que Macau foi uma espécie de um retrocesso para quem vinha de Pequim e esteve um ano em Pequim. Chegar a Macau foi um pouco um retrocesso em relação, não necessariamente ao nível da cultura, mas mais concretamente ao nível da competência linguística. Isto porque, como todos nós sabemos, em Macau, muito raramente se fala mandarim, então utilizávamos mais inglês. Por isso, o facto de ter um ano em Macau, penso que, como é lógico, não causa/ traz problemas, mas acho que não melhora necessariamente o nível da competência linguística e cultural. Por isso, se fossem 2 anos em Pequim, tanto melhor, mas compreendo que o protocolo é feito entre o IPL e a MPU, e a ida para a BLCU é apenas um extra desse protocolo.

Mas sem dúvida que sim, por isso diria que se calhar mais em Pequim, que trouxe mais competência linguística e também cultural, não só pelo facto de estar a estudar num ambiente de língua, como também (num ambiente de) muitas atividades. Eu fui fazendo até alguns trabalhos por fora também, de forma a ganhar algum dinheiro, que fazia com que eu interagisse com os chineses, com todo o tipo de pessoas da sociedade que me trouxeram, sem dúvida, maiores competências, não só interculturais, competências também profissionais e no campo também da língua.

Eu inclusive, durante o primeiro ano que estive na China, isto ainda antes da licenciatura, eu tinha um colega que era o Noah, que é de Chicago, nos Estados Unidos, e eu lembro uma vez que eu estava em casa a estudar, na minha secretária, e entretanto o Noah chega, nós estávamos ali na época dos exames, e, sem qualquer tipo de julgamento, ele entra, eu pergunto-lhe apenas se ele não tinha que estudar ou então, se não se ia ter exames ou se

ia ter testes etc. Isto porque eu nunca via o Noah a estudar em nenhum momento. Ele era, de facto, um aluno muito bom e estava apenas em Pequim durante meio ano, eu ia lá estar no ano letivo completo, e ele estava apenas meio ano, e eu nunca o via a estudar. Então, eu queria também tentar entender como é que ele era tão bom se não estudava, de forma até também aprender com os melhores. E o que ele me disse e que, ainda hoje me lembro, e que faz todo o sentido, é que estudar pelos livros, ele podia fazê-lo quando estivesse em Chicago e podia colocar um CD no computador ou onde fosse ouvido uma gravação de áudio, fazer exercícios de audição e fazer exercícios de compreensão oral, expressão oral, etc. A possibilidade de estar sentado num restaurante ou então ir a um supermercado ou então ir a um sítio qualquer na cidade e ouvir pessoas constantemente a falar mandarim, era algo que ele não tinha em casa, neste caso em Chicago. Muito embora em Chicago tivesse também a *Chinatown* e fosse relativamente simples. Mas nada se compara com o estar, concretamente, em Pequim e ouvir diariamente, constantemente, alguém a falar mandarim. Por isso ele dizia que era muito mais útil estar no sítio, estar no local do que necessariamente estar a estudar agarrado aos livros, num quadro fechado, na secretária. Por isso, o facto de lá estar, no caso dele, e também no meu, obviamente, contribuiu para a minha competência linguística e também intercultural, porque aprender uma língua não é só aprender vocabulário, não é só aprender a gramática dessa língua, é também aprender a cultura. A língua é apenas uma pequena percentagem da cultura de um povo. É necessário saber estar, saber como é que a pessoa daquela determinada cultura seja cultura chinesa, seja outra cultura qualquer, como é que pensa? Como é que reage em determinadas situações? Por isso, este intercâmbio, mais uma vez, foi bastante benéfico, diria, no caso de Pequim, muito mais do que Macau, mas em ambas as situações foram bastante benéficas.

8. De que forma é que consideras que o plano de estudos da licenciatura promove competências interculturais dos alunos? Podes falar sobre a tua experiência pessoal? (Podes falar sobre o impacto da experiência de imersão cultural tanto em Pequim como Macau.)

R: Que penso que só o facto de termos professores seja no primeiro ano, pelo menos no meu ano foi assim, seja no último ano, cá no IPL, seja no segundo, seja no terceiro ano, só facto de termos professores que não têm a nossa nacionalidade, que não tem a nossa cultura, que são concretamente, são chineses, só aí já temos uma experiência intercultural com os professores em si. E, muito mais temos, quando, por exemplo, chegamos a Pequim e temos uma turma que somos 25 ou 26 alunos e, se calhar, somos de 8, 9, 10 países diferentes. Então esta é, se calhar, é o momento onde mais desenvolvemos competência intercultural que adquirimos.

Como é lógico, também temos que desenvolver competências interculturais, neste caso, entre a cultura portuguesa e a chinesa, porque a licenciatura é essa, mas não só entre estes 2 países, mas com colegas de outras nacionalidades, de outras realidades totalmente diferentes das nossas.

Eu felizmente, tive a hipótese de testar o primeiro ano em Pequim e depois tive mais um ano em Pequim e depois um ano em Macau. Como eu disse anteriormente, (em Macau) não houve necessariamente um grande desenvolvimento das competências interculturais porque, no meu ano nós éramos todos (alunos de TIPC/CP) colocados na mesma turma e não havia misturas entre nós de TIPC/CP, estávamos todos na mesma sala, todos juntos a ter aulas, o que de alguma maneira também dificultava, de alguma maneira, o nosso progresso, porque tínhamos pessoas com vários níveis, com competências linguísticas diferentes e estávamos todos ali confinados no mesmo espaço e tínhamos todos o mesmo objetivo e

estávamos a ser todos tratados como tendo todos o mesmo nível de chinês. E não era o caso. Mais uma vez, estávamos todos juntos na mesma turma, muito embora houvesse pessoas na MPU que eram de outros países, nomeadamente dos países CPLP, etc. Por isso, eu quando digo que houve de facto um grande desenvolvimento a nível de competências interculturais e refiro-me quando estive em Pequim.

Mas não foi apenas o facto de ter estado em Pequim, foi também o facto de ter tido a possibilidade de viajar pela China também, ou seja, não é necessariamente uma competência intercultural entre alunos, mas entre mim próprio e a cultura do local ou das cidades onde eu estive. Isto porque a China é um país muito grande e não tem uma única cultura, têm muitas culturas, tem muitos povos e os povos são todos diferentes. Muito embora haja uma etnia maioritária, eles depois são diferentes ao nível do estar, das tradições, etc. Por isso, não só o facto de estar em Pequim a estudar, mas o facto também poder viajar pelo país, trouxe-me, como é lógico, benefícios ao nível de competências linguísticas e também ao nível de competências interculturais.

[Impacto das competências culturais e linguísticas adquiridas na entrada no mercado de trabalho](#)

9. Em que medida consideras que as competências linguísticas e interculturais adquiridas ao longo da licenciatura são um fator que destaca os recém-licenciados no mercado de trabalho? (Experiência pessoal?)

R: Bom, eu penso que que o facto de termos competências linguísticas e interculturais e que foram adquiridas durante a licenciatura e o facto de ter estado fora, de ter estado em Pequim e em Macau, que não só para mim, como para os recém-licenciados se torna num fator de destaque, como é lógico, mas acho que é um fator de destaque, sim,

mas acho que existem muitos outros fatores que contribuem também para, se calhar, para a pessoa conseguir vingar no mercado de trabalho. Eu dou um exemplo muito simples, eu não tenho nenhum contrato com ninguém, nem tenho uma empresa, mas se eu tivesse uma empresa, como é lógico, se eu tivesse dois candidatos que tivessem perfil semelhante, o que é impossível, porque as pessoas são diferentes, então não existem pessoas iguais, mas perfis semelhantes, mas se um deles tivesse estado na China, tivesse tido essa experiência intercultural ou então noutra país qualquer, e se os perfis deles fossem iguais exceto esse detalhe, como é lógico, eu iria escolher alguém que tivesse estado na China. Porque pressupõe-se que a pessoa esteve lá de livre e espontânea vontade, que se lá esteve um ano é porque as coisas devem ter corrido minimamente bem para lá ter estado um ano, a pessoa conseguiu melhor ou pior ambientar-se ao país também, então é uma pessoa que alguma maneira consegue adaptar-se a situações e ambientes diferentes. Por isso, sim, eu acho que estas competências linguísticas e interculturais são um fator de destaque.

No entanto, penso também que, se calhar, não devemos ter receio pelo facto de, atualmente existem alguns licenciados desta licenciatura que não tiveram hipótese de estar em Pequim ou Macau, mas não devem ter receio ou sentirem-se menos capazes do que os que tiveram a hipótese de estarem em Pequim e em Macau. Muitas das vezes, há pessoas que simplesmente estiveram na China e que não é o facto de lá terem estado que fez necessariamente com as suas competências linguísticas fossem trabalhadas, fossem desenvolvidas. Houve pessoas que lá estiveram e que, se calhar, aproveitaram menos bem. Quer dizer, aproveitá-la outras maneiras eventualmente, de maneiras diferentes, mas a nível linguístico, se calhar não, não fez grande diferença. Alguma diferença deve ser feito, como é lógico, de estar imerso na cultura e língua influencia, obviamente que sim, mas, se calhar, até algum estudante que não tenha ido para Pequim ou para Macau e que tenha estudado bastante e tenha tido cá em Leiria, eventualmente, um *language partner* ou o que fosse, ou

então alguém que que tenha contato frequente com a cultura chinesa, muito embora nunca tenha estado na China e que seja uma ótima pessoa ao nível da língua chinesa, se calhar até, eventualmente, terá mais hipóteses do que alguém que já tenha estado em Pequim e tenha feito a licenciatura que tenha passado por Pequim e por Macau. Por isso, acho que essas pessoas que não tiveram hipótese de irem para Macau e para Pequim, acho que não se devem sentir inferiores às que foram. Até porque isso passou-se exatamente comigo, nós às vezes temos um bocado de receio de nos candidatarmos aquele emprego que diz que querem alguém que seja fluente em mandarim. Como é lógico, nós quando nos licenciámos, eu licenciéi-me vai fazer 3 anos, quando nos licenciámos não somos fluentes.

A fluência é uma coisa que se calhar nós nunca chegamos a atingir ao nível, se calhar, de um chinês. É uma coisa, ou então é algo que é um trabalho contínuo, um trabalho constante, mas se calhar nós temos receio de nos candidatar aquele emprego que diz “requisitos - fluência em chinês”. Eu depois também penso, se eu tivesse uma empresa e estivesse à procura de alguém um requisito que eu colocaria era fluência em chinês, porque eu prefiro ter alguém que seja fluente em chinês do que alguém que seja bom em chinês, como é lógico. Nós queremos sempre o melhor candidato, mas se calhar até para aquelas funções ou para as funções que eu procuro preencher o cargo, se calhar nem é necessário alguém que seja fluente em chinês, se calhar basta alguém que seja bom em chinês e, no meu caso concreto, eu tive uma experiência de emprego, neste caso de uma candidatura e entrevista em que eu estava na sala, antes de iniciar a entrevista, eu estava na sala de espera sentado no sofá e ao meu lado estava uma cidadã chinesa. Foi em Lisboa e eu pensei, OK pronto foi muito bom, vim até cá, conheci a empresa, estou a conhecer este espaço está a ser muito bom, mas como é lógico, vão escolher a chinesa porque é chinesa e fala chinês fluentemente e eu não sou chinês e não falo chinês fluentemente. Mas fui aceite. Passado uma semana ligaram-me a dizer que eu fui aceite para o cargo, porque não era o facto de ser

chinês ou não, ou que era um fator de exclusão, que gostaram do meu perfil, gostaram de facto de saber que eu falo chinês e o facto de também saber que sou português e falo português fluentemente também, e muito embora no anúncio dissesse alguém que fosse fluente em chinês. Ainda assim eu consegui o emprego e assim foi. Por isso, ao nível das competências linguísticas que são adquiridas na China, são fundamentais, como é lógico, mas acho que não é fator de exclusão também, se calhar o facto de termos competências linguísticas foram adquiridas cá sem nunca termos ido à China também são bastante válidas, como é lógico. Se tivermos alguém que seja muito bom e que tenha estado na China e eu pessoalmente de alguém que tenha estado na China ou noutro país qualquer.

10. A licenciatura contempla um estágio curricular realizado no no 2.º Semestre do 4.º Ano. Consegues refletir sobre o impacto do estágio curricular? Podes falar da tua experiência?

R: Relativamente ao estágio curricular, eu fiz o estágio curricular no segundo semestre do último ano. Inicialmente, eu iria estagiar na MPU em Macau, mas uns 10 dias antes mais ou menos, eu e as restantes 4 pessoas (que éramos 5) recebemos uma mensagem a dizer que simplesmente não podíamos ir por causa da pandemia, porque foi exatamente naquela altura em que situação se agravou na China continental e em Macau também. Foi ali no final do mês de fevereiro.

Então fomos avisados que não podíamos ir para Macau, tinham muita pena, mas que que não nos podiam acolher. Então começamos a procurar, porque lá está, fui eu e mais pessoas, mas eu pessoalmente comecei a procurar outros locais para estagiar, e não foi fácil porque estávamos a 10 dias de iniciar o estágio, a duas semanas no máximo de iniciar o estágio.

Ainda assim, eu sabia que (estagiar) na China estava fora de hipótese, porque o país estava-se a encerrar, ou ia se encerrar muito brevemente.

E a minha hipótese era estagiar cá. Então eu pensei, eu sou de Vila Nova de Gaia, eu não quero ficar aqui em Vila Nova de Gaia, porque possivelmente as hipóteses que eu tenho são muito inferiores àquelas que possa ter em Lisboa e assim foi, fui para Lisboa. Estagiei numa empresa relativamente pequena, uma empresa que tinha, porque a empresa depois do primeiro confinamento, a empresa fechou durante o primeiro confinamento e depois nunca mais chegou a abrir. Por isso, digamos que a empresa foi à falência, mas foi então nessa empresa que eu estagiei.

O que é que eu fiz no estágio? Basicamente, eu tinha um aluno que era chinês, mas que estava a viver nos Estados Unidos e que estava a aprender português. Então o que eu fazia? Eu lecionei PLE – português como língua estrangeira e também fiz algumas traduções também para chinês. Fiz também revisão de textos em língua portuguesa também. Por isso, ao nível do estágio, eu diria que o estágio não teve um grande impacto, sinceramente, não. Se calhar ajudou-me de alguma maneira a entrar pelo caminho do ensino de PLE ou ajudou-me a entrar, na medida em que atualmente não faço isso, mas ainda assim, foi algo que eu gostei de fazer. E também não é o facto de sermos nativos na nossa língua, que nos dá necessariamente as ferramentas para a lecionar. Eu cheguei exatamente a essa conclusão durante o estágio, porque, eu para ensinar a minha língua e eu tinha antes de estar a aprender as regras gramaticais e tudo mais da minha língua, para depois poder ensinar na aula que ia dar. Então foi útil nessa questão, mas de resto, acho que não fiz grande coisa, muito relacionado com a licenciatura propriamente dita, nomeadamente a interpretação ou mesmo tradução. Fiz alguns trabalhos, pequenas coisas de tradução para chinês durante o estágio, mas não foi, digamos, que não teve um grande impacto, o estágio curricular que fiz.

11. Consideras que o intercâmbio e o estágio curricular tiveram impacto na entrada no mercado de trabalho? Porquê?

R: Se considero que o estágio ou o intercâmbio tenham tido impacto na entrada do mercado de trabalho? Eu penso que o estágio não teve impacto na entrada no mercado de trabalho, porque eu quando comecei, eu licenciei-me a meio de junho e comecei a trabalhar no final de agosto, mas, entretanto, eu tinha feito uma entrevista, exatamente aquela entrevista que eu já referi anteriormente, na qual estava também uma pessoa chinesa e eu fui aceite e essa pessoa chinesa não. Eu fui aceite para esse emprego logo ali no final de junho, mas depois houve ali um tempo por causa da pandemia também, e esta empresa para onde eu iria trabalhar estava sujeita a várias restrições e só pude mesmo começar no final de agosto.

Mas penso que o estágio curricular que nada tinha a ver com esta empresa, com a empresa para onde depois eu iniciei o meu trajeto profissional. Penso que o estágio curricular, então, não teve qualquer relevância, qualquer importância para a minha entrada no mercado de trabalho.

Em relação ao intercâmbio, possivelmente. Eu não sei exatamente, não recebi necessariamente um feedback por parte de quem me entrevistou, mas ao nível, se calhar, ao nível da do facto de eu ter estado na China, por acaso, isso não foi... Eu referi que tinha estado na China, mas não me foi dito se era algo bom ou se... como é lógico, devem ter valorizado. Imagino que tenham valorizado, sim, mas, sinceramente, não sei se foi ou não um fator ou um critério de escolha, um fator de seleção, o facto de ter feito um intercâmbio, mas quero acreditar que sim. Quero acreditar que tenham valorizado o facto de ter estado em Pequim e Macau e que tenham que tenham ponderado também essa situação para me terem aceiteado depois.

Outros dados/informações relevantes sobre a Licenciatura

12. Continuaste o teu percurso académico (mestrado, doutoramento, pós-graduação)? Porquê?

R: Em relação ao meu trajeto académico, ao meu percurso académico. Como eu já referi anteriormente, antes desta licenciatura, em tradução e interpretação, eu tinha feito o primeiro ano de mestrado em Estudos Chineses na Universidade de Aveiro e que completei apenas o primeiro ano. Por isso fiquei com os créditos. Fiquei com 60 créditos, que é o equivalente a uma pós-graduação. E depois é que fiz a licenciatura ainda TIPC/CP e, recentemente, há aproximadamente um ano atrás, mais ou menos, eu inscrevi-me novamente para concluir o mestrado que tinha iniciado em Aveiro e inscrevi-me no segundo ano de mestrado, mas não continuei por falta de tempo e disponibilidade. Por isso, neste momento, concretamente ao nível de TIPC/CP propriamente dito de Tradução e Interpretação, tenho licenciatura e tenho depois, digamos, que os 60 créditos de Aveiro que corresponde a uma pós-graduação em Estudos Chineses.

13. O que considera ser boas práticas do curso? (nesta pergunta podes refletir sobre a licenciatura e aspetos que queiras destacar)

R: Em relação às em relação às boas práticas da licenciatura... A melhor prática de todas, é a hipótese que temos exatamente de ir para Pequim e de irmos para Macau, mas se eventualmente Macau não fosse opção, se fossem 2 anos em Pequim, acho que seria bem melhor. Ou então, eventualmente, fazerem como faziam antigamente, que era o que acontecia há uns 10 anos atrás ou mais que era o segundo ano, era em Macau e o terceiro ano era em Pequim. Se calhar, acho que isso seria, possivelmente, seria melhor assim. Termos algumas competências em Macau e depois desenvolvê-las muito mais

aprofundadamente em Pequim do que ao contrário, do que estávamos em Pequim e temos aquele impacto da cultura chinesa e depois chegar em Macau e quase que regredirmos em tudo aquilo que aprendemos. Mas é, sem dúvida, a melhor prática da licenciatura.

Também o facto de termos contato, não só no primeiro ano, como no último ano, com alunos chineses também, muito embora haja pessoas, ou que tiveram mais contato, ou pessoas que tiveram menos contato... Eu, se calhar, não fui das pessoas que tive um maior contato de todo, mas o facto de podermos, exatamente, contactar e temos esta experiência também com alunos chineses que estão a passar o mesmo que nós, só que a diferença é que eles estão a estudar português e nós estamos a estudar chinês. É também uma mais-valia para a licenciatura. Penso que estas de facto são estas as duas mais-valias que a licenciatura tem.

Depois, como é lógico, tem aspetos menos positivos que não é o que está a ser perguntado nesta pergunta, mas, eventualmente, se calhar, às vezes tentar adaptar a um pouco o currículo, eventualmente, em Macau também, porque se calhar houve coisas que correram menos bem ao nível de algumas cadeiras em Macau.

Mas lá está, isto é baseado na experiência que eu tive. Não sei se atualmente o currículo se mantém exatamente igual, suponho que sim, não passou muito tempo desde que me licenciiei. Suponho que esteja maioritariamente semelhante, mas de forma geral, penso que é uma boa licenciatura. Muito embora atualmente não haja, e sei que não há, o apoio financeiro mensal, que havia antigamente, há apenas o pagamento do alojamento, mas ainda assim continua a ser uma licenciatura bastante apelativa.

E que forma todos os anos forma cada vez mais alunos, muito embora, e atendendo àquilo que eu sei de anos anteriores, não só no meu, mas em anos anteriores, também há muita gente que desiste ao longo da licenciatura. Por isso, muito embora as vagas sejam 25 a 30 vagas, nunca há 25 a 30 pessoas que são finalistas desta licenciatura. Há sempre

alguém que que acaba por desistir pelo caminho e depois também há sempre as situações de pessoas que acabam licenciatura e que simplesmente não querem trabalhar na área. O que é normal, acontece. Mas ainda assim, acho que é uma licenciatura que tem bastante destaque, que é bastante apelativa e fico impressionado pelo facto de a média ser relativamente baixa. A média para este ano é 13 valores e eu fico um pouco admirado como é que a média ainda é relativamente baixo e não é mais alta. Mas de forma geral, penso que é uma licenciatura que está bem estruturada.

Appendix D – Interview Transcript of Participant C

Protocolos e impacto da Licenciatura na ESECS/IPL

1. Como conheceste a licenciatura?

R: Através de uma pesquisa sobre cursos que envolvessem a língua chinesa em Portugal.

2. Sabias da existência do protocolo com a MPU e a BLCU antes de te candidatares?

R: Sim, através das informações sobre o curso na página web da ESECS - IPL.

3. O facto de alunos chineses também fazerem intercâmbio no IPL teve impacto no teu percurso ou no ambiente de aprendizagem na ESECS? (podes refletir se a presença de alunos chineses na ESECS contribuiu para experienciare trocas/intercâmbios interculturais)

R: Definitivamente! Não só pela paridade de oportunidades entre alunos das três instituições de ensino parceiras, como pela possibilidade de convivência logo no primeiro ano do curso, em que, naturalmente, a curiosidade pela China e pela língua chinesa é enorme.

4. O facto de a licenciatura proporcionar intercâmbio para a China influenciou a tua decisão? Como?

R: Sim - foi o fator principal de escolha desta licenciatura em particular, em detrimento de outras igualmente interessantes.

Procura/Interesse pela língua chinesa

5. O que te motivou a candidatares-te à Licenciatura?

R: Os já mencionados dois anos de intercâmbio na China, a curiosidade sobre uma língua e cultura completamente diferente da portuguesa, e ainda a mais-valia de saber um idioma altamente procurado a nível do mercado de trabalho, certamente capaz de abrir diferentes portas no futuro.

6. Tinhas conhecimento prévio da língua e da cultura chinesa? (podes avaliar/comparar com o nível de conhecimento da língua e da cultura que tens agora)

R: Nenhum.

Efeitos da imersão cultural na aquisição da língua e da cultura

7. Consideras que o facto de o plano de estudos contemplar dois anos de intercâmbio na China contribui para uma maior competência da língua e cultura chinesa?

R: Sim, é incomparável o nível de aprendizagem que se pode atingir se esta for feita num ambiente em que absorvemos a língua e cultura 24/7. Por mais dedicação, tempo e trabalho que se empenhe no estudo de uma língua estrangeira em Portugal - sobretudo de chinês -, os resultados vão sempre ser mais eficazes no país de destino - neste caso, na China.

8. De que forma é que consideras que o plano de estudos da licenciatura promove competências interculturais dos alunos? Podes falar sobre a tua experiência pessoal? (Podes falar sobre o impacto da experiência de imersão cultural tanto em Pequim como Macau.)

R: O facto de os dois anos intermédios da licenciatura serem obrigatórios, proporciona uma bagagem de noções da(s) realidade(s) sociocultural/ais chinesa(s) de forma ativa, presente, e de certa forma inevitável. Para além do desenvolvimento de competências e fluência linguística que são, em termos práticos, a meta final, e sendo que a própria língua reflete a cultura e vice-versa, o contraste que se vivencia após viver durante um ano em Pequim, para depois viver outro ano em Macau, é igualmente fundamental. Quem se vê transportado para um "mundo" completamente novo e singular, como amiúde acontece para quem vem de Portugal/Europa para a China/Ásia, espontaneamente consegue desmistificar este "lugar estranho", desconstruir preconceitos que nunca questionou, bem como compreender que, apesar das diferenças, são também bastantes as semelhanças que nos aproximam enquanto seres humanos. Ficamos assim com o papel e responsabilidade de sermos a "ponte" entre pessoas, culturas, negócios, etc., evitando desentendimentos, reagindo contra discriminações e trabalhar em prol de uma crescente tolerância e maior conhecimento sobre "o outro".

Impacto das competências culturais e linguísticas adquiridas na entrada no mercado de trabalho

9. Em que medida consideras que as competências linguísticas e interculturais adquiridas ao longo da licenciatura são um fator que destaca os recém-licenciados no mercado de trabalho? (Experiência pessoal?)

R: Ao encarar o mercado de trabalho pela primeira vez, os recém-licenciados têm logo várias vantagens em comparação com os seus pares: 1) experiência de viver no estrangeiro durante 2 anos (em oposição aos habituais 6 meses de Erasmus); 2) fluência em chinês (em oposição às línguas tradicionais); 3) noções da cultura chinesa, procuradas por uma grande variedade de entidades. Todas estas competências são altamente valorizadas quando se comparam currículos ou se consideram candidatos a determinados cargos/funções.

10. A licenciatura contempla um estágio curricular realizado no no 2.º Semestre do 4.º Ano. Consegues refletir sobre o impacto do estágio curricular? Podes falar da tua experiência?

R: Apesar da falta de apoio por parte do IPL na procura e aconselhamento sobre entidades passíveis de admitir estagiários e com um historial de formar bons recém-licenciados, este estágio valoriza a licenciatura ao comprovar na prática, através da experiência laboral, aquilo que foi aprendido ao longo dos três anos e meio de curso. Independentemente da natureza do estágio e área de atuação, parte-se para o mercado de trabalho com uma ideia concreta daquilo que podem ser as funções a exercer, bem como o sentido de responsabilidade e autonomia necessários para as concretizar. Também esta etapa pode servir de via rápida para uma carreira profissional que se pretende alcançar ou, pelo contrário, perceber as alternativas à disposição, académica e/ou profissionalmente.

11. Consideras que o intercâmbio e o estágio curricular tiveram impacto na entrada no mercado de trabalho? Porquê?

R: A minha experiência foi muito positiva, uma vez que continuei a trabalhar naquela que foi a minha entidade de estágio. E daí surgiram outras e novas oportunidades.

Outros dados/informações relevantes sobre a Licenciatura

12. Continuaste o teu percurso académico (mestrado, doutoramento, pós-graduação)? Porquê?

R: Sim, optei por fazer um mestrado em Estudos Chineses, na Universidade de Aveiro em parceria com o ISCTE-IUL. O plano de estudos deste mestrado fazia sentido numa ótica de complementaridade com a licenciatura, mais teórica e formal, aprofundando áreas como economia, política, sociedade, gestão, entre outras, com professores dotados de conhecimentos, currículo profissional e experiências "no terreno" significativas.

13. O que considera ser boas práticas do curso? (nesta pergunta podes refletir sobre a licenciatura e aspetos que queiras destacar)

R: Por um lado, o facto de a licenciatura em TIPC/CP ser inédita em Portugal torna-a numa mais-valia quando olhamos para o mercado de trabalho. Em média, pouco mais de duas dezenas de estudantes ingressam o curso por ano; dentro destes, e devido às especificidades da língua, cultura e experiências, sobretudo nos anos passados na China, são (em média) metade aqueles que prosseguem quer estudos, quer a nível profissional, um caminho diretamente relacionado com a tradução das línguas portuguesa e chinesa. Talvez atualmente sejam cada vez mais aquelas e aqueles que prosseguem neste setor, uma vez que o centro do mundo se tem vindo a deslocar para a China. Isto para referir que, ainda que haja

entusiasmo e curiosidade no início do curso, estas podem vir a ganhar outros contornos, pois nem todos acabam por apreciar ou ver as suas expectativas alinhadas com as aprendizagens e a prática do ofício da tradução e interpretação - o que leva a uma pouca oferta para bastante procura.

Por outro lado, apesar de existirem diversos cursos pelo país de igual valor e relevância - sejam licenciaturas ou mestrados -, creio que seria vantajoso a replicação deste modelo em particular, focado na prática da tradução e da interpretação e em que são firmadas parcerias e intercâmbios com universidades chinesas - não só de carácter opcional, mas como parte da sua estrutura, e subsidiados pelas diferentes instituições -, capazes de formar mais e melhores estudantes que aspiram conhecer e aprender a língua e cultura chinesa, dotando tanto o mercado de trabalho que necessita de profissionais qualificados e especialistas nestas áreas e noutras que envolvam estas aptidões, como a academia nacional e internacional, que apesar das ligações históricas seculares entre Portugal e a China, ainda tem tanto para explorar e dar a conhecer.

Appendix E – Interview Transcript of Participant D

Protocolos e impacto da Licenciatura na ESECS/IPL

1. Como conheceste a licenciatura?

R: Fui aluna da licenciatura em TIPC/CP (IPL) e conheci o programa através de uma amiga que vive em Macau há muitos anos.

2. Sabias da existência do protocolo com a MPU e a BLCU antes de te candidatares?

R: Sim, foi esse o fator diferencial que me levou a mudar de curso e ingressar no IPL. Eu completei um ano da licenciatura em Estudos Asiáticos, na Universidade de Lisboa antes de decidir candidatar-me à licenciatura em Leiria.

3. O facto de alunos chineses também fazerem intercâmbio no IPL teve impacto no teu percurso ou no ambiente de aprendizagem na ESECS? (podes refletir se a presença de alunos chineses na ESECS contribuiu para experienciare trocas/intercâmbios interculturais)

R: Sim, foi um bom primeiro contacto à China e ao povo chinês e permitiu-me estabelecer contactos com pessoas que vim a rever na China e nos círculos profissionais, não só de tradução como de outras áreas laborais.

4. O facto de a licenciatura proporcionar intercâmbio para a China influenciou a tua decisão? Como?

R: Sim, foi o fator mais determinante, penso que não teria ingressado em Leiria se este curso não possibilitasse o intercâmbio. Como mencionei, foi esse fator que me levou a fazer a mudança de Lisboa para Leiria.

Procura/Interesse pela língua chinesa

5. O que te motivou a candidatares-te à Licenciatura?

R: O facto de esta licenciatura ser única no panorama nacional no enfoque que dá à língua chinesa. Outras licenciaturas e programas disponíveis são mais gerais e colocam a Ásia "no mesmo saco", e isso acaba por dificultar o foco em competências valorizadas no mercado como, por exemplo, a língua chinesa. Para além disso, o intercâmbio e o facto de este ser financeiramente apoiado foram também fatores de elevado peso.

6. Tinhas conhecimento prévio da língua e da cultura chinesa? (podes avaliar/comparar com o nível de conhecimento da língua e da cultura que tens agora)

R: Sim, mas muito básico. Tinha estudado um ano, em Lisboa, a par com outras disciplinas, incluindo a língua japonesa. Ter bases de chinês aquando do início da licenciatura em TIPC/CP facilitou a aprendizagem, mas sinto que não foi uma vantagem muito grande, pois o primeiro ano de TIPC/CP fornece apenas, também ele, bases elementares da língua. Senti que estagnei um pouco no primeiro ano da licenciatura.

Efeitos da imersão cultural na aquisição da língua e da cultura

7. Consideras que o facto de o plano de estudos contemplar dois anos de intercâmbio na China contribui para uma maior competência da língua e cultura chinesa?

R: Sem dúvida. São anos fundamentais do curso e que devem ser mantidos a todo o custo para garantir a progressão na aprendizagem da língua e outros fatores associados como a cultura etc.

8. De que forma é que consideras que o plano de estudos da licenciatura promove competências interculturais dos alunos? Podes falar sobre a tua experiência pessoal? (Podes falar sobre o impacto da experiência de imersão cultural tanto em Pequim como Macau.)

R: Viver em Pequim e em Macau abriu imensamente os meus horizontes e transformou radicalmente a pessoa que sou. Sou profundamente grata por esses dois anos de intercâmbio. O curso proporciona experiências únicas e acesso a pessoas e geografias diversas, que não se limitam exclusivamente à China. Viver em Pequim e viver em Macau é, já por si, uma experiência muito diferente, mas em cada uma destas experiências, eu tive oportunidades de conhecer pessoas de todo o mundo (Literalmente). Como tradutora e intérprete, conhecer as nuances culturais e sociais é fundamental. Nunca se traduz apenas palavras.

[Impacto das competências culturais e linguísticas adquiridas na entrada no mercado de trabalho](#)

9. Em que medida consideras que as competências linguísticas e interculturais adquiridas ao longo da licenciatura são um fator que destaca os recém-licenciados no mercado de trabalho? (Experiência pessoal?)

R: A língua chinesa é uma competência muito valiosa e, se bem utilizada, pode abrir muitas portas a recém-licenciados. Eu tive oportunidade de dar aulas de Português ao Jackie Chan, tive oportunidade de realizar trabalhos de tradução e interpretação de grande relevo, escrevi um Livro sobre a língua chinesa, entre muitas outras oportunidades que a aprendizagem da língua me proporcionou ou facilitou.

10. A licenciatura contempla um estágio curricular realizado no 2.º Semestre do 4.º Ano. Consegues refletir sobre o impacto do estágio curricular? Podes falar da tua experiência?

R: Foi o meu primeiro importante momento profissional oficial e, como tal, essencial na aplicação de conhecimentos a um nível prático. Eu realizei o meu estágio profissional na Embaixada de Portugal em Pequim e foram meses extremamente enriquecedores, onde criei laços profissionais e competências laborais importantes. Esta vertente prática do curso é muito relevante e uma excelente forma de concluir o curso, na minha opinião.

11. Consideras que o intercâmbio e o estágio curricular tiveram impacto na entrada no mercado de trabalho? Porquê?

R: Foram muito importantes porque me providenciaram sólidas competências linguísticas, de tradução e interpretação, sociais, culturais, etc.

Outros dados/informações relevantes sobre a Licenciatura

12. Continuaste o teu percurso académico (mestrado, doutoramento, pós-graduação)? Porquê?

R: Não. Não senti necessidade, até ao momento, pois tenho tido oportunidades de trabalho muito interessantes desde que terminei o curso. Chegará o momento, quando assim for oportuno. Após o último ano da licenciatura, realizei um ano de especialização em Economia e Negócios da China na Fudan University em Shanghai, o que foi um complemento interessante à licenciatura.

13. O que considera ser boas práticas do curso? (nesta pergunta podes refletir sobre a licenciatura e aspetos que queiras destacar)

R: A riqueza de experiências proporcionadas, o equilíbrio entre teoria e prática, o apoio dado aos alunos durante todo o percurso.

Appendix F – Interview Transcript of Participant E

Protocolos e impacto da Licenciatura na ESECS/IPL

1. Como conheceste a licenciatura?

R: Através de amigos.

2. Sabias da existência do protocolo com a MPU e a BLCU antes de te candidatares?

R: Sabia da existência do protocolo.

3. O facto de alunos chineses também fazerem intercâmbio no IPL teve impacto no teu percurso ou no ambiente de aprendizagem na ESECS? (podes refletir se a presença de alunos chineses na ESECS contribuiu para experienciare trocas/intercâmbios interculturais)

R: Sim. No primeiro ano de licenciatura tivemos oportunidade de aprender a língua com os alunos de intercâmbio chineses.

4. O facto de a licenciatura proporcionar intercâmbio para a China influenciou a tua decisão? Como?

R: Não influenciou a minha decisão de entrar no curso, mas influenciou a minha decisão de continuar no curso. Se não fosse para a China no segundo ano não continuaria no curso.

Procura/Interesse pela língua chinesa

5. O que te motivou a candidatares-te à Licenciatura?

R: Tive aulas de chinês no ano anterior e tinha um grande interesse em continuar a aprender a língua. Também me atraíam as saídas profissionais.

6. Tinhas conhecimento prévio da língua e da cultura chinesa? (podes avaliar/comparar com o nível de conhecimento da língua e da cultura que tens agora)

R: Um pouco. Tive aulas extracurriculares no meu último ano de secundário. O meu nível era de HSK 2 quando entrei no curso.

Efeitos da imersão cultural na aquisição da língua e da cultura

7. Consideras que o facto de o plano de estudos contemplar dois anos de intercâmbio na China contribui para uma maior competência da língua e cultura chinesa?

R: O ano em Pequim foi essencial para os meus conhecimentos de língua e cultura. O ano em Macau não surtiu o meu amo efeito na aprendizagem da língua.

8. De que forma é que consideras que o plano de estudos da licenciatura promove competências interculturais dos alunos? Podes falar sobre a tua experiência pessoal? (Podes falar sobre o impacto da experiência de imersão cultural tanto em Pequim como Macau.)

R: O plano de estudos baseado no intercâmbio tem imensas vantagens na promoção de competências. Pessoalmente, gostei de estar em ambos os sítios e ofereceram experiências culturais diferentes, mas necessárias para conhecermos as várias facetas da cultura chinesa.

No caso de Macau, a carga horária excessiva não permitia que realmente existisse muito tempo de imersão cultural.

Impacto das competências culturais e linguísticas adquiridas na entrada no mercado de trabalho

9. Em que medida consideras que as competências linguísticas e interculturais adquiridas ao longo da licenciatura são um fator que destaca os recém-licenciados no mercado de trabalho? (Experiência pessoal?)

R: Destaca os recém-licenciados na experiência de ter estudado na China, o que por si já aumenta a nossa credibilidade quando procuramos emprego e de alguns conhecimentos linguísticos. Não penso que apenas a licenciatura nos concedeu muitas oportunidades de emprego sem ser no ensino e na tradução. No final da licenciatura decidi fazer mestrado na área dos estudos chineses (mais virada para as relações internacionais) e desistir da tradução.

10. A licenciatura contempla um estágio curricular realizado no no 2.º Semestre do 4.º Ano. Consegues refletir sobre o impacto do estágio curricular? Podes falar da tua experiência?

R: No meu caso pessoal, ia estagiar na China, mas coincidiu com o início da pandemia e arranjei um estágio em Portugal. Penso que o meu estágio curricular numa empresa de tradução não foi benéfico pois raramente lidava com a língua chinesa e apenas aceitei porque foi dos poucos sítios que me aceitou a curto prazo. A organização do curso não ofereceu qualquer tipo de apoio na procura de estágios, sendo que alguns alunos acabam por optar pela modalidade de projeto porque não conseguiram encontrar estágio na área. Foi apenas dada uma lista de locais desatualizada e vagas no Politécnico de Macau que iriam apenas para os 3 melhores alunos que se candidatassem. Entendo que seja difícil coordenar

estágios para todos os alunos, mas penso que poderiam ser feitos protocolos com mais locais para que todos tenham a oportunidade de estágio.

11. Consideras que o intercâmbio e o estágio curricular tiveram impacto na entrada no mercado de trabalho? Porquê?

R: No meu caso, escolhi seguir a investigação. Apesar de não ser na área da tradução, o intercâmbio foi essencial para esta carreira porque me ofereceu uma perspectiva que só é possível obter através da imersão cultural e do contacto com a China. Isto não seria possível sem o intercâmbio. O estágio foi importante para entender o funcionamento da Tradução em Portugal e deu-me a experiência de trabalhar numa empresa de tradução, o que penso que poderia ser benéfico se tivesse seguido o caminho da tradução.

Outros dados/informações relevantes sobre a Licenciatura

12. Continuaste o teu percurso académico (mestrado, doutoramento, pós-graduação)? Porquê?

R: Continuei o percurso académico em doutoramento porque surgiu a oportunidade de obter uma bolsa de investigação na área das relações com a China. A licenciatura e o intercâmbio foram essenciais no processo de candidatura pois foram elementos que me destacaram.

13. O que considera ser boas práticas do curso? (nesta pergunta podes refletir sobre a licenciatura e aspetos que queiras destacar)

R: A melhor parte do curso são realmente os intercâmbios e as experiências que proporcionam. Também se destaca por ser um curso com professores chineses e portugueses, o que acrescenta muito à aprendizagem.

Appendix G – Interview Transcript of Participant F

Protocolos e impacto da Licenciatura na ESECS/IPL

1. Como conheceste a licenciatura?

R: Pesquisa no site da DGES.

2. Sabias da existência do protocolo com a MPU e a BLCU antes de te candidatares?

R: Sim.

3. O facto de alunos chineses também fazerem intercâmbio no IPL teve impacto no teu percurso ou no ambiente de aprendizagem na ESECS? (podes refletir se a presença de alunos chineses na ESECS contribuiu para experienciare trocas/intercâmbios interculturais)

R: Teve um grande impacto. A possibilidade de poder interagir, comunicar e conviver com falantes nativos da língua chinesa, logo a partir do primeiro semestre, revelou-se uma vantagem no que toca ao desenvolvimento linguístico e à imersão cultural

4. O facto de a licenciatura proporcionar intercâmbio para a China influenciou a tua decisão? Como?

R: Foi o fator decisivo na escolha do curso como primeira opção, dado que o meu propósito principal ao ingressar num curso com vertente de língua chinesa era a possibilidade de viver na China.

Procura/Interesse pela língua chinesa

5. O que te motivou a candidatares-te à Licenciatura?

R: Honesta e simplesmente, foi a possibilidade de estabelecer contacto com cristãos chineses que sofrem perseguição religiosa na China.

6. Tinhas conhecimento prévio da língua e da cultura chinesa? (podes avaliar/comparar com o nível de conhecimento da língua e da cultura que tens agora)

R: Não tinha nenhum conhecimento da língua. A nível cultural, penso que apenas os estereótipos comuns partilhados pela população portuguesa de um modo geral.

Efeitos da imersão cultural na aquisição da língua e da cultura

7. Consideras que o facto de o plano de estudos contemplar dois anos de intercâmbio na China contribui para uma maior competência da língua e cultura chinesa?

R: Sendo que considero que o fator decisivo para adquirir essas competências linguísticas e culturais é a dedicação com que se aprende, sem dúvida que o tempo de intercâmbio na China aliado à dedicação contribui para tal.

8. De que forma é que consideras que o plano de estudos da licenciatura promove competências interculturais dos alunos? Podes falar sobre a tua experiência pessoal? (Podes falar sobre o impacto da experiência de imersão cultural tanto em Pequim como Macau.)

R: A promoção dessas competências acontece a vários níveis ao longo do curso. Começa pela unidade curricular de cultura chinesa que frequentamos no primeiro ano e serve

de base à iniciação da experiência intercultural, proporcionando um primeiro contacto com elementos culturais, artísticos, sociais, geográficos e demográficos da China, como artesanato, música, gastronomia, contos e lendas populares, diferentes línguas e dialetos do país, diferentes grupos étnicos, etc.

Diria que o segundo ano é depois o auge da experiência intercultural por diversas razões, a mais óbvia sendo a vivência do quotidiano na capital chinesa, com todos os elementos de interação cultura que isso proporciona, desde a comunicação com os locais, a alimentação, a utilização dos serviços e o contacto com as tradições, costumes, arte e arquitetura. A isto acresce todo o ensino nesse ano consistir numa total imersão na língua chinesa. O ano de Macau proporciona um contacto da mesma natureza e nos mesmo moldes, sendo uma expansão desse conhecimento em todas as áreas referidas.

Por fim, em ambos o segundo e terceiro anos as visitas de estudo a outras localidades na China permitiram ainda um maior aprofundamento da experiência de contacto com a realidade linguística, cultural e social locais.

Impacto das competências culturais e linguísticas adquiridas na entrada no mercado de trabalho

9. Em que medida consideras que as competências linguísticas e interculturais adquiridas ao longo da licenciatura são um fator que destaca os recém-licenciados no mercado de trabalho? (Experiência pessoal?)

R: Dada a crescente e cada vez mais vasta e influente presença de empresas e investidores chineses a nível global, considero que recém-licenciados com conhecimentos de língua, cultura e costumes chineses, de um modo geral, possuem um fator de atratividade e diferenciação que os destaca dos restantes, na medida em que servem como ponte de

ligação entre a entidade empregadora e o mercado chinês (cliente, investidor, parceiro comercial).

Pessoalmente, abriu-me portas para o ensino de língua chinesa e para trabalhos de tradução e interpretação, tanto dentro como fora do país.

10. A licenciatura contempla um estágio curricular realizado no no 2.º Semestre do 4.º Ano. Consegues refletir sobre o impacto do estágio curricular? Podes falar da tua experiência?

R: O meu estágio foi realizado em Lisboa, numa agência imobiliária que lida maioritariamente com o mercado chinês. Creio que este tempo de estágio teve impacto sobretudo por proporcionar um ambiente de trabalho multicultural e multilinguístico, com a vantagem de conviver, comunicar e trabalhar diariamente com falantes nativos de chinês. Num outro aspeto, proporcionou algumas outras oportunidades de pôr em prática e desenvolver as minhas capacidades de tradução e interpretação PT<>CN.

11. Consideras que o intercâmbio e o estágio curricular tiveram impacto na entrada no mercado de trabalho? Porquê?

R: O impacto de ambas as experiências foi concreto, ainda que apenas indireto, no sentido em que me permitiram o aprofundar do conhecimento da realidade chinesa e promoveram o desenvolvimento das minhas capacidades linguísticas, mas não foram a causa direta de ingressão em nenhuma vaga de emprego.

Outros dados/informações relevantes sobre a Licenciatura

12. Continuaste o teu percurso académico (mestrado, doutoramento, pós-graduação)? Porquê?

R: Não. Dada a minha idade no final do curso (>30 anos), considerei ser prioritário investir na carreira profissional e na aquisição de experiência profissional.

13. O que considera ser boas práticas do curso? (nesta pergunta podes refletir sobre a licenciatura e aspetos que queiras destacar)

R: Destaco como mais-valias e pontos fortes do curso as parcerias com a UPM e BLCU que permitem aos estudantes o período de intercâmbio; a contratação de professores nativos para o ensino da língua e da cultura chinesas e a sua elevada qualificação; o constante esforço da parte da comissão científica do curso por implementar iniciativas e atividades intra e extracurriculares que promovem a interação e aprendizagem entre estudantes portugueses e chineses.

Appendix H – Interview Script for Professor Romain Gillain

The purpose of this interview is to collect data for my master's thesis in order to attain a master's in "Intercultural Studies for Business" at the Porto Accounting and Business School.

The master's thesis in question is a case study on the bachelor's degree in Tradução e Interpretação Português/Chinês - Chinês/Português from the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria.

The objective of this case study is to verify whether the exchange program incorporated into the bachelor's degree course plan provides an advantage in the acquisition of language and intercultural competence. Moreover, if the experience of cultural immersion benefits students' future career prospects.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed and share your insights as part of the above research project. Your answers to my questions are tremendously appreciated, and I know they will help shape the findings of my thesis.

All the answers will be used for academic purposes only.

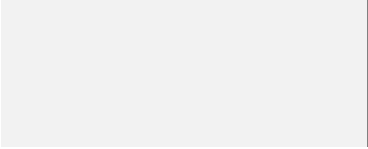
Questions:

Fundação, Protocolos e impacto da Licenciatura na ESECS/IPL

14. Quando foi fundada a licenciatura?
15. Como surgiu esta licenciatura? Que necessidade no mercado é que procuravam suprir?
 - a. Que protocolos foram criados? E com que instituições? (O porquê destes protocolos)
 - b. O intercâmbio para a China esteve "em cima da mesa" desde o início? Porquê?
 - c. A licenciatura tem a duração de 4 anos – isto foi um detalhe que também foi pensado desde o início? Porquê?
2. Numa entrevista em 2016, Luís Barbeiro mencionou que *“Foi todo um mundo novo que se abriu. Numa altura em que a atividade tradicional da escola, que era no domínio da educação, entrou em regressão, esta acabou por ser uma via em que se passou a apostar e tornou-se numa das marcas fortes da formação da ESECS, até porque a ida dos alunos para Macau e Pequim é parte integrante do currículo”* – De que forma considera que a licenciatura TIPC/CP e o seu programa de intercâmbio impactou a ESECS, e consequentemente, o Politécnico de Leiria?

<p>Procura/Interesse pela língua chinesa</p>	<p>16. Havia procura pelo estudo da língua chinesa aquando da formação da licenciatura?</p> <p>a. Como descreve a evolução da procura pelo estudo da língua chinesa?</p> <p>i. Têm dados que possam disponibilizar (número de alunos por ano, número de candidaturas etc.)?</p>
<p>Efeitos da imersão cultural na aquisição da língua e da cultura</p>	<p>17. Considera que o facto de o plano de estudos contemplar dois anos de intercâmbio para China contribui para uma maior competência da língua e culturas chinesa?</p> <p>18. De que forma é que considera que o plano de estudos da licenciatura promove competências interculturais dos alunos?</p> <p>19. Relativamente aos alunos que não puderam fazer os dois anos de intercâmbio devido à pandemia do COVID-19, que diferenças, se algumas, nota nas competências linguísticas? E nas competências interculturais?</p>
<p>Impacto das competências culturais e linguísticas adquiridas na entrada no mercado de trabalho</p>	<p>20. Em que medida é que considera que as competências linguísticas e interculturais adquiridas ao longo da licenciatura são um fator que destaca os recém-licenciados no mercado de trabalho?</p> <p>a. Exemplos?</p> <p>21. O estágio curricular realizado no 2º. Semestre do 4º. Ano foi implementado em 2012. Consegue refletir</p>

	<p>sobre o impacto da implementação do estágio curricular?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Por que é que não foi implementado antes? b. O que motivou a incluir o estágio no plano de estudos? <p>22. Têm dados referentes a saídas profissionais de recém-licenciados?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> b. Podem especificar? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Onde trabalham (país)? ii. Em que áreas? iii. Exemplos (podem destacar algum caso)? c. Como recolhem estes dados? Como acompanham os licenciados? Os licenciados procuram a instituição? Se sim, para quê?
<p>Outros dados/informações relevantes sobre a Licenciatura</p>	<p>23. Quantos estudantes já se licenciaram até à data?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Podem facultar dados como nacionalidade, género, idades? <p>24. Quantos continuam o seu percurso académico (ingressaram em mestrado, doutoramento, pós-graduação)?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Destacam algum exemplo? <p>25. Existe alguma colaboração entre o Politécnico de Leiria e o Instituto Confúcio?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Qual o objetivo do protocolo? <p>26. O que considera ser boas práticas do curso?</p>



27. Se tivesse de construir novamente o curso, faria igual?

Porquê?

Appendix I – Interview Transcript of Professor Romain Gillain’s Interview

Interviewer

Pronto, professor, eu ia começar então a entrevista.

Eu vou começar pela parte da fundação da Licenciatura. Eu não sei se o professor se já estava na ESECS ou se esteve envolvido na fundação da mesma...?

Interviewee

É, eu na altura estava já estava na ESECS, mas só que não... estou na ESECS desde 2003, o curso começou em 2006/7. Sei que foi o Professor Eduardo Fonseca criou o curso.

Interviewer

Sim... vi também que, lá está, foi lançado no ano 2006/2007. Eu queria perguntar se o professor sabe como é que surgiu a ideia para esta licenciatura e se tem ideia que procura é que tentavam suprimir?

Interviewee

Eu acho que isto tem a ver com os contactos que tinha, na altura, o Presidente do Politécnico, que era o Luciano Almeida. Ele tinha contatos no Instituto Politécnico de Macau, porque isto começou com o Instituto Politécnico de Macau. E foi a partir de lá que foi criado o curso. Os dados que eu te enviei, essa tabela que aparece é cumulativa, ou seja, nós se reparaste, por exemplo 2006/2007 corresponde ao primeiro ano, no ano seguinte, é o primeiro mais o segundo... é assim até chegar ao quarto ano.

Interviewer

Eu ia perguntar, lá está, eu também ia vi que isto surgiu num protocolo entre a agora Universidade Politécnica de Macau e o Politécnico de Leiria. Eu ia perguntar se o intercâmbio, no caso, os anos em Pequim e em Macau, esteve nos planos desde o início da criação da Licenciatura?

Interviewee

Eu penso que no caso dos alunos de Macau, sim, ou seja, os alunos de Macau vinham no segundo e no terceiro ano, eram 2 anos. Isto porque o protocolo funciona como um “sistema de compensação”

A questão do financiamento, dos valores que são pagos pelos alunos ou pelas instituições variam muito. No início, os alunos não pagavam a viagem, por exemplo. Depois houve uma auditoria do Estado e o Estado disse que não se podem apagar a viagem dos alunos porque, digamos, comparativamente com outras licenciaturas do ensino superior, não era justo. E então o que se passa é que existe aqui uma troca de “favores”, digamos assim. É que normalmente um alojamento não é pago pelos alunos das instituições envolvidas. E isso é, digamos que é visto para as 2 turmas, ou seja, os alunos portugueses que ingressam (em digo portugueses, mas é uma expressão) que ingressam em Leiria. É bom que sejamos rigorosos porque também temos alunos brasileiros (de outras nacionalidades). E eram só os alunos do UPM que vinham 2 anos (para Portugal). Depois os alunos do UPM só vieram um ano, mas 2 turmas. Porquê? Para compensar um bocadinho os 2 anos dos alunos que ingressam em Leiria, porque a realidade dos alunos que ingressam em Leiria... é verdade que posteriormente começaram a ir para Pequim e depois para Macau. Se tu reparas bem, são 2 vezes, ou seja, é uma mesma turma 2 anos, e Macau é 2 turmas um ano, ou seja, é o mesmo valor, ou seja, a mesma despesa. Normalmente, quem paga o alojamento dos alunos na BLCU é Macau.

Interviewer

E neste caso, a ida para Pequim também esteve incluída desde o início ou...?

Interviewee

Desde o início não, foi posterior...

Interviewer

Não sei se se recorda o ano?

Interviewee

É assim, eu posso procurar essa informação porque tenho aí os protocolos. Eu não te posso facilitar os protocolos, mas se colocares perguntas eu respondo. Depois por escrito podes enviar a pergunta para saber quando foi assinado. Em realidade, o Protocolo foi assinado

entre a BLCU e Macau. O Protocolo entra em nós e Macau e depois apareceu a BLCU de uma maneira indireta, ou seja, os nossos alunos vão ao à BLCU mas quem paga é Macau (UPM), porque Macau tem que pagar para 2 turmas, como nós pagamos para 2.

Interviewer

Sim, porque, pelo que eu percebi, depois, os alunos chineses também passaram a ir 1 ano para a BLCU se não me engano.

Interviewee

Exatamente, há uma troca de alunos, por exemplo, dos alunos da BLCU, chineses... há um curso que chama língua e cultura portuguesa - estes alunos da língua cultura portuguesa vão no segundo ano a Macau e no terceiro a Leiria, e depois eles fazem o quarto e o primeiro ano em Pequim. Mas o curso não se chama tradução e interpretação português-chinês, é a língua e culturas portuguesas. Estás a entender?

Interviewer

Pois, eu sei que era um bocadinho diferente do nosso.

Interviewee

É diferente. Eles têm alguma UCs de tradução, por exemplo, no terceiro ano, quando estão aqui em Leiria, têm uma UC no primeiro semestre e outra no segundo, mas basicamente é a língua portuguesa, literatura, história... Mas é um curso que se cruza com um curso de até TIPC do lado Macau e do lado de Leiria.

Interviewer

Sim, eu percebi. Eu ia perguntar também se relativamente aos 4 anos de duração da nossa licenciatura, que eu acho que é um bocadinho diferente da maior parte que está sob o Tratado de Bolonha, se também estava pensado desde o início? Eu tenho uma ideia da razão pela qual se deve, mas eu queria que me confirmasse se era para ser idêntico às licenciaturas chinesas?

Interviewee

Exatamente, é isso que eu queria dizer, é para ser idêntico às licenciaturas chinesas. Para não criar aqui assimetrias, estás a ver? Se Macau defendesse que a licenciatura tinha de ser como

Bolonha, de 3 anos, acho que o Governo chinês ou do território Macau não ia aceitar. E a nós não nos custa nada porque em Bolonha são 3 anos, mas há cursos que têm 4 ou 5 aqui na Europa. Por isso era mais fácil.

Interviewer

Exato. A minha próxima pergunta tem a ver com uma entrevista que eu consegui apanhar em que Luís Barbeiro, em 2016, mencionou, e eu vou citar “a licenciatura foi todo um mundo novo que se abriu numa altura em que a atividade tradicional da ESECS era no domínio da educação. Nessa altura entrou em regressão e esta licenciatura acabou por ser uma via que se passou a apostar e tornou-se numa das marcas fortes da formação da ESECS”.

O que me leva a perguntar se o professor realmente sentiu que houve um impacto do facto de haver estes intercâmbios entre as 2 instituições ou neste caso, até Pequim, se houve um impacto na ESECS...? se houve alguma mudança ou até no próprio Politécnico de Leiria em geral?

Interviewee

Sim é geral o impacto, porque é assim a ESECS foi criada em 1986 e normalmente com concursos da área de educação. Posteriormente, eu tenho as datas exatas e se tu me colocares a pergunta eu depois já te indico as datas exatas porque eu fiz um trabalho recentemente sobre isso. E digamos, uniu-se ao Politécnico de Leiria. Na altura era a ESE - escola superior de educação, que tinha cursos na área da educação. Depois, a partir de 1997, começaram a ser ofertados cursos na área das ciências sociais, turismo, serviço social, RHCT, relações humanas e comunicação, etc. E depois com este curso já começou um declínio, por exemplo, das licenciaturas na área da educação, que tinham aulas de línguas e tinham aulas de literatura... Com esse declínio, o curso de TIPC conseguiu, digamos, criar uma oferta na área das línguas e das literaturas. Neste caso, tanto as estrangeiras como maternas, não é? E a partir daí houve um grande desenvolvimento nesta área. Isto porque nós temos também o curso de língua portuguesa aplicada, que normalmente é um curso que funciona em 3 anos, um curso Bolonha, e que funciona basicamente com alunos chineses que querem aprender português. Eles normalmente fazem o primeiro ano na China em várias instituições chinesas e depois ingressam aqui no segundo ano e depois fazem aqui o segundo e terceiro ano. E nesse curso existe 2 ramos, um ramo ou materiais pedagógicos, um ramo, tradução. O único ramo que está a funcionar é o ramo de tradução, ou seja, em realidade tens 2 cursos de tradução na ESECS neste momento.

A partir daí houve um desenvolvimento dos cursos que recebia alunos chineses. Nós tivemos um curso que se chamava, que tem um nome assim um bocado estranho: Portuguese-English Theories. E esse curso é português e inglês basicamente. É só um ano, não dá grau de licenciatura. Depois temos o curso de Relações Comerciais China Países Lusófonos, que é um curso que funciona também em parceria com a Universidade Politécnica de Macau, mas de outra de outra escola, a escola de Ciências uma coisa assim... E é um curso que tem também 4 anos e funciona o segundo ano funciona aqui. Basicamente é português - língua aplicada à economia, ao comércio.

Interviewer

Relações comerciais.

Interviewee

E isso criou aqui toda uma família, digamos, de cursos ligados à China e ao ensino do português. O curso da LPA e TIPC neste momento estão bastante complementares, porque o que nós fazemos agora, seguramente não funcionava assim na tua altura, é que algumas UCs têm designações muito parecidas e que o que nós fazemos é: nós temos uma turma de TIPC com alunos portugueses e depois uma turma alunos chineses e nós criamos duas turmas mistas...

Interviewer

Sim na minha altura já faziam isso.

Interviewee

É a UC de culturas lusófonas no primeiro ano e a de tecnologias aplicadas à tradução II no quarto ano.

Interviewer

A essa última não, nós tínhamos sozinhos.

Interviewee

Mesmo técnicas de interpretação, aqui no quarto ano, vocês têm 60 horas e há 45 horas de prática que se faz juntamente com os alunos da LPA.

Interviewer

Ah, então é diferente. Eu só acho que só apanhei culturas lusófonas onde estávamos em turmas mistas. OK.

Interviewee

Pronto. E, por exemplo, este curso de LPA tem UCs que não existe em TIPC e que seria interessante implementar que é tradução multimodal especializada, por exemplo, que têm no terceiro ano. Eu acho que a única UC em Portugal que lecionava nessa área, ou seja, houve aqui um desenvolvimento a partir da criação TIPC e também uma tentativa que os planos de estudos fossem paralelos para permitir este tipo de interações entre os alunos portugueses e alunos chineses.

Interviewer

Lá está. Permitir aí os intercâmbios interculturais.

Interviewee

E vou dizer durante todo este período difícil que vivemos com a pandemia, este tipo de cursos tem ajudado bastante, ou seja, a imersão que os alunos não tinham, digamos, na China, nós tentamos criar e multiplicar com estas UCs mistas.

Interviewer

É, mesmo na altura se passou o COVID, eu quando estava no quarto ano, quando nós estávamos a ser impactados com isso. Viu que existia alguma dificuldade? Estou a perguntar porque sei que, pelos alguns colegas de TIPC não conseguiram ir para a China... Não conseguiram ir nem para Pequim e nem para Macau. Acho que houve pelo menos 1 turma, certo?

Interviewee

É assim, em 2020, os alunos que estava a começar o segundo semestre em Pequim, tiveram de sair mesmo à pressa, tiveram de fugir...

Interviewer

Sim, e eu estava no terceiro ano em Macau e também tivemos que vir à pressa.

Interviewee

Exatamente, pronto.

Isso (o intercâmbio) retomamos este semestre. Ou seja, este semestre... estamos já em 2023, ou seja, houve uma interrupção em 2020 e só retomamos agora em 2023. Então fazemos o cálculo...

Interviewer

Exato que já foi, só foi agora em Janeiro (2023) que eles (alunos) tornaram a voltar à China...

Interviewee

Exatamente, não todos... não foram todos, porque nós entendíamos que a situação ainda não estava assim, muito estável, na China... não sabíamos muito como iam funcionar as coisas, desenvolver-se as coisas... e no segundo e terceiro ano, só metade das turmas é que foi para lá. A outra metade das turmas terá aulas parcialmente presencialmente aqui. Algumas UCs são presenciais, com docentes chineses, um grande esforço que fazemos. Eu acho que é a primeira vez, na história do curso, que temos as 4 turmas presencialmente em Leiria. O que é bom, todos ao mesmo tempo na escola... E também com aulas a distância. Mas isto para o ano já estará fora de questão. Já estamos a retomar...

Interviewer

E, nesses casos, foi escolha de os alunos quererem ir ou ficar, ou foi outro fator...?

Interviewee

É assim, no caso de Macau foi bastante calmo pois foi tudo (preparado) com bastante antecedência, e deixamos os pais e os alunos decidirem se queriam ir ou não. Porquê? Está a questão aqui da segurança e de saúde, mas este período também foi mau do ponto de vista económico e muitas famílias não têm meios. Se para alguns alunos foi bom ter aulas online, porque não tinha meios de viajar à China, por um lado, a questão económica está um bocadinho a complicar as coisas e eu espero que a mobilidade retome de uma maneira fluida.

Interviewer

Sobre essa questão financeira... Eu ia referir que fui parte da última turma que recebeu aquele apoio (a bolsa de manutenção) ... que teve oportunidade de usufruir desse apoio, porque acho que a partir daí também foi retirada...

Interviewee

Exatamente. E não é questão de “não querer” é porque não se pode... Numa instituição pública é difícil. Eu devo dizer que sou coordenador desde setembro de 2021 e tenho tentado trabalhar no sentido de ter apoio económico por parte da embaixada chinesa... e neste momento nós temos uma docente, que é a docente Chen chen, que é uma docente paga pela embaixada chinesa. Nós já temos um protocolo assinado com a Embaixada da China para ela ficar como leitora, digamos, na escola. Ela dá-nos muito apoio para o envio de livros e também, por exemplo, agora que abrimos um concurso para a 10 bolsas de ajuda para os alunos.

Interviewer

A minha próxima pergunta tem a ver mais com uma parte da procura e interesse pela língua chinesa. Eu não sei se o professor tem ideia, por exemplo, na altura em que foi lançada a licenciatura, eu percebi que teve só 7 alunos a inscrever-se... Sabe se na altura já se sentia que havia alguma procura ou se acha que houve uma evolução positiva à medida que os anos foram passando?

Interviewee

Eu acho que houve uma evolução. A procura aumentou, mas o curso também não pode aumentar muito, ou seja, não é um curso que precise de 40 alunos todos os anos. Acho que 40 alunos é muito. Eu acho que o curso devia ter no máximo 25 alunos, que é o que é recomendado pelo organismo que avalia o curso no ensino superior. Mas, por exemplo, este ano estive mais ou menos bem, tivemos mais ou menos volta 30 e tal alunos, neste momento, no primeiro ano já temos 20 e tal... pronto já perdemos alguns alunos. Mas nos 2 anos anteriores tivemos quase 40 alunos a entrar, o que é demais... o que nós estamos a sentir, é o seguinte: em termos de procura nacional, eu sinto que é cada vez maior... Existem alunos que, por exemplo, já estudaram mandarim nas escolas. Como tu sabes, desde o ano passado, uma das provas de acesso deste curso é o mandarim, e é o primeiro curso em Portugal que tem mandarim como prova de acesso. E nós já temos alguns alunos a acabar a escola (ensino secundário) com o mandarim. Isto vai, na minha opinião, mudar um bocadinho o curso também.

Interviewer

Exato, vai mudar... já não começam do zero na licenciatura... se calhar já vai haver uma fasquia mais alta...

Interviewee

Sim, já estou a pensar nisso. Ainda não é um fenómeno muito importante, mas temos de pensar nisso. E nós, com a professora Chen chen, temos a possibilidade de dividir as turmas em função do nível. Depois também sinto que há muita gente que está atraída por cultura asiática, ou seja, não é só a cultura chinesa, mas também a coreana, por exemplo. Estou a sentir isso. Também há alunos que fizeram uma licenciatura em estudos asiáticos na Universidade do Minho ou Lisboa e que sentem que não estudaram chinês suficiente...

Interviewer

Eu percebo porque eu na altura mudei, eu estava na Universidade do Minho, só fiz o primeiro ano e depois mudei para o curso de Leiria, precisamente para me focar só no chinês e por ter a oportunidade de fazer o intercâmbio...

Interviewee

Exatamente... Por exemplo, ano passado, ingressou uma aluna que tinha já licenciatura, não sei se era na UMinho ou Lisboa, e de todas as horas de chinês que ela tinha tido durante a licenciatura, eu so consegui creditar o primeiro ano.

Interviewer

É verdade.

Interviewee

Outra coisa superinteressante a nível dos internacionais, nós temos brasileiros, não diria cada vez mais, mas é um número é muito regular, portanto, entre 1 a 3 alunos brasileiros a cada ano... depois alunos de Cabo Verde também. E eu sei que pelo menos temos um aluno de Cabo Verde a cada ano, e eu sei que eles têm apoio por parte do Governo de Cabo Verde, ou seja, aqui por parte do Governo Cabo Verde há uma aposta estratégica, acho eu, de se calhar, financiar um aluno para que estude chinês aqui em Leiria... e são alunos muito bons, aliás.

Interviewer

Eu na minha altura, acho que na minha turma não tínhamos ninguém estrangeiro, éramos todos portugueses, mas lembro-me quando estive em Macau, que realmente havia muitos brasileiros, muitos cabo-verdianos, pelo menos a parte do curso de Macau também atraía muitos alunos desses países.

Interviewee

Exatamente, mas aqui à 3 ou 4 anos que é recorrente, há sempre um aluno de Cabo Verde que entra. Ou seja, eu imagino que é mesmo Governo de Cabo Verde a dizer, temos de ter um aluno. Outra coisa muito interessante, que depois estive a refletir um bocadinho sobre isso... os alunos de origem ucraniana, búlgara... dos países Leste, que estão emigrados aqui em Portugal, alguns já são portugueses, mas que se sintam atraídos pelo curso. E eu acho que é um bocadinho normal, porque nós aqui em Portugal não temos essa noção, mas o ensino de chinês em antigos países do bloco de Leste, se calhar era mais natural, do que para nós no Ocidente. ...faziam parte do mesmo bloco, digamos ideológico.

Interviewer

E mesmo hoje em dia, ainda têm muitas relações comerciais... por isso faz sentido.

Interviewee

É, eu fiquei um bocadinho essa essa ideia. Essa essa história que eles têm, se calhar, no ensino do chinês, muito mais antiga que a nossa aqui em Portugal. O que é um bocado contraditório tendo em conta as ligações que temos para Macau...

Interviewer

É verdade. Por isso é que eu quis pegar um bocadinho neste assunto para fazer a minha tese, para estudos interculturais para negócios. A minha próxima pergunta também está relacionada com os anos de intercâmbio para a China, e eu queria perguntar se, por exemplo, o facto de haver uma inversão cultural nesses 2 anos, se contribui para as competências não só de língua, mas de cultura dos alunos? E se, por exemplo, consegue fazer uma comparação entre os alunos que não conseguiram ir para a China nos do Covid?

Interviewee

Nos anos do Covid é verdade que os alunos sentem... eu acho que é mais psicológico que outra coisa... sentem que não estão preparados, que perderam alguma coisa... certamente perderam alguma coisa. Os alunos que estão agora no quarto ano vão ser os primeiros e os últimos que não foram para a China, ou seja, E vê tu isto... Não sei se na tua altura no 4º ano a tua turma estava dividida?

Interviewer

Não, não.

Interviewee

Chinês VI não estava dividido?

Interviewer

Não, e eu ia perguntar até como é que está a funcionar? Isso porque na minha altura só fomos divididos em Pequim. Depois em Macau, ficamos novamente juntos na mesma turma e no quarto ano igual... estávamos todos juntos, apesar de haver colegas 3 ou 4 colegas que estavam um bocadinho mais avançados...

Interviewee

Claro e eu este ano, por exemplo, quis retomar isso. Tendo em conta que estamos a professora Chenchen e havia alunos que sentiam essa necessidade, nós fizemos essa divisão com os alunos que sentiam que tinham um nível mais alto. E realmente há alunos com um nível muito bom. E há outros com um nível mais fraco, mas eu acho que não tem a ver necessariamente com o facto de ter ido ou não ter ido para China. Outra coisa muito curiosa, Susana, repara nisto. Eu, todos anos que os alunos estiveram assim à distância, eu sempre dizia “não se preocupem, depois vocês fazem um estágio muito bom na China, etc.”

O que é curioso é que eu pensei, seguramente vou ter uma avalanche de pedidos para estagiar fora de Portugal. Mas não, nunca tivemos tantos alunos a fazer projeto. O que é contraditório...

Interviewer

É um bocadinho... por acaso eu fiz estágio no Instituto Confúcio na Universidade do Porto e a professora (porque eu agora estou a dar aulas numa escola aqui em Vila do Conde)

conversou comigo que este ano não teve ninguém do curso de TIPC a estagiar lá e eu achei estranho.

Interviewee

Exatamente, e eu também acho estranho. Por exemplo, Macau, o laboratório de línguas e tradução, estava, digamos, com muita vontade de receber os alunos lá.

Interviewer

Pois, eu lembro que na minha altura foram para lá 5 colegas fazer o estágio com Macau, mas foi online.

Interviewee

Sim, mas este ano podia ser presencial, mas ninguém quis fazer presencialmente. Estás a entender? É assim, eu acho que é contraditório.

Interviewer

É um bocadinho.

Interviewee

Eu acho que sim, mas sabes? Eu acho que é uma questão de que os alunos querem acabar o curso, não tem meios, estão fartos e querem acabar o curso...

Interviewer

Pois, a minha questão até era mais, não só pela parte do nível linguístico, mas mais pelas competências interculturais, porque eu acho que, pelo menos da minha parte, eu acho que há certas regras socioculturais e normas que depois acabamos por só aprender quando estamos lá, e se calhar eles não se sentem seguros nisso.

Interviewee

Isso é verdade, muitos se sentem inseguros. Mas nós, por exemplo, há uma aluna do quarto ano, se Deus quiser, vai receber uma bolsa para fazer um mestrado lá na China e nós estamos a apoiá-la. Estamos a ajudar, quer dizer, qualquer iniciativa dos alunos, nós estamos abertos. Só que eu acho que há uma falta de vontade, não diria desespero, mas um bocadinho vontade de acabar com tudo isto de uma vez.

Interviewer

Eu acho que deve ser consequências do covid e consequências de terem ingressado no curso nessa altura... Uma geração que está diferente...

Interviewee

Claro..., mas acho uma pena, porque é assim, por exemplo, temos uma aluna que fez um estágio muito bom e que, o que eu tenho feito é a criação de uma bolsa de emprego, ou seja, eu peço aos alunos finalistas que me entregue um CV, criamos uma pasta e cada vez que eu tenho aqui pedidos das empresas mando. E nós temos uma aluna que está a orientar um estágio, trabalha na Audita Account, que é uma empresa de tradução aí em Matosinhos. E ela começou a trabalhar com esta empresa porque eu enviei o CV dela e ela ficou. E ela é aluna finalista do ano passado, e já está a orientar um estágio daqui de um colega seu.

Pronto, quer dizer, quer dizer que ela é competente, ou seja, nós temos muita gente que ficou. O Governo chinês, antigamente, colocava docentes chineses nas escolas em Portugal. A partir do ano passado, isto já não acontece, ou seja, é o Estado português que contrata os docentes.

Interviewer

Pois pelo que eu percebi, abriu um concurso, mas foi só para escolas em Aveiro. Porque o diretor do Confúcio de lá chegou até a mandar-me. Eu pessoalmente estou, estou a trabalhar numa escola em Vila do Conde, segundas e quintas, mas é através do Confúcio do Porto. Não é através do Ministério da Educação...

Interviewee

Isto vai mudar, eu acho que vai mudar bastante. Ainda não são docentes, são técnicos de não sei quê...

Interviewer

Pois, eu lembro-me que na altura a professora Cristina Nobre chegou a perguntar se estaríamos interessados se houvesse uma pós-graduação para ensino de chinês. Eu na altura até disse que sim. Mas depois acho que nunca mais avançou, pelo menos do que eu tenho visto... professores de chines são todos chineses e normalmente enviados pelos institutos Confúcio.

Interviewee

Mas nós no ano passado ano, não sei se soubeste? Organizamos uma semana da língua e da cultura chinesa e havia alguns workshops, várias coisas que vamos voltar a organizar. Pronto, eu vou-te enviar o convite se tiveres oportunidade de estar.

Interviewer

Obrigada, sim.

Interviewee

E nós queremos criar assim workshops de ensino do chinês. Vamos ver se conseguimos no próximo ano fazer coisas, formações e não sei quê. Porque eu acho que é importante, porque é verdade que vocês não são docentes de chinês, não é? São tradutores, mas a realidade do mercado também é diferente, então, se calhar isso ajudava. E outra coisa, nós, neste momento, estamos à espera de uma resposta para a ver se são aceites 2 propostas de mestrado que nós enviamos, na área de tradução e na área do português, língua estrangeira ou chinês língua estrangeira.

É um bocado um misto porque nós queremos receber alunos portugueses e alunos chineses ao mesmo tempo...

Interviewer

Porque eu vou ser sincera, eu quando estive para escolher o mestrado estava muito indecisa se escolhia mestrado em ensino de língua portuguesa como língua não materna, por isso, até era uma boa ideia...

Interviewee

Pronto, se for aprovado, já sabes, tens um mestrado para fazer aqui em Leiria.

Interviewer

Eu ia agora perguntar, pela minha pesquisa eu consegui perceber que só implementaram o estágio curricular em 2012, e eu não sei se se conseguiu perceber algum impacto para os alunos? Como o professor falou de uma aluna que, entretanto, já está a trabalhar devido ao estágio. Não sei se consegue tecer uma perspetiva geral do impacto do estágio curricular e o porquê de ter sido implementado?

Interviewee

Eu e o Professor Fausto Caels e a professora Flávia, que também é uma antiga aluna do curso, publicamos um artigo, recentemente, sobre os estágios do curso de TIPC. Já está disponível, mas ainda tem de ser corrigido.

Interviewer

OK, depois se poder disponibilizar, agradeço.

Interviewee

Exatamente daqui a uma ou 2 semanas já te digo alguma coisa, porque realmente eu podia enviar-te o link, já está publicado, mas nós ainda estamos a enviar a alterações. Mas é um artigo que nós já elaboramos sobre os estágios, sobre o impacto dos estágios onde se foram realizados estágios. Seguramente será muito interessante para o teu trabalho, e também seria interessante para nós porque, assim, pode-se citar o artigo.

Interviewer

Sim. Por acaso era muito interessante, porque eu também ia perguntar se sabia para que áreas é que os alunos iam trabalhar, mas se calhar se já mencionam no artigo... depois posso já pegar por aí, não preciso de estar a perguntar.

Interviewee

Sim, nós já fizemos isso exatamente. Pronto, umas das conclusões que nós temos aqui no artigo é que, a nível geral os alunos...

[...]

Interviewer

Olá, Professor, desculpe lá, (o vídeo) demorou um bocadinho converter. Nós estávamos a falar então dos estágios.

Interviewee

Ok. Suzana eu vou enviar pelo chat, vou enviar-te aqui o link. Para o número da revista, onde publicamos o artigo sobre os estágios, OK? Assim vais poder ler o nosso artigo e assim, podes começar a ler e analisar etc. Mas depois, para citar o artigo é melhor esperar aqui 2 ou 3 semanas quando estiver definitivo, está bem, mas pelo menos já até vais ter uma ideia.

Interviewer

OK claro. Sim, já, pelo menos há algum material.

Interviewee

...ou dar algumas ideias.

Interviewer

Claro, pois, eu ia perguntar, penso eu soube as áreas em que depois os alunos acabavam por trabalhar. Não sei se o professor tem assim alguma ideia específica algum ou exemplo de algum aluno que queira destacar?

Interviewee

É assim, eu posso dizer-te que tenho alguma ideia, porque nós ainda de vez em quando chamamos alguns alunos para lecionar aqui na escola. Tivemos situações, por exemplo, em que o docente chega tarde, não sei se te aconteceu, mas é bastante recorrente.

Nós de vez em quando contratamos alguns docentes. Alguns são antigos alunos, para lecionar, o que significa que nós consideramos que eles têm a capacidade e a experiência para lecionar no ensino superior. Lecionar em UCs de tradução, UCs e de ensino do chinês. São essas 2 áreas onde eles trabalham aqui quando nós contratamos os alunos. Eu sei que muitos alunos trabalham como tradutores freelance. E também, como tu, em escolas. Seja escolas internacionais, por exemplo, tinha vários casos de alunos que trabalhavam em escolas internacionais, não só para lecionar, mas também para desenvolver aqui, digamos, um papel de intermediário. Uma aluna, por exemplo, estava numa escola Internacional em Setúbal e ela fazia a ligação entre os pais, chineses, e a direção da escola.

Interviewer

Ou seja, há mais um lado da administração também.

Interviewee

Sim, administração, ou mais do lado da intermediação intercultural. Ou seja, não só no aspeto da tradução/interpretação, mas também tinha esse papel. Eu sei que alguns antigos alunos me disseram que trabalhavam na embaixada da China aqui em Lisboa, mas não sei dizer-te o nome. Nós, por exemplo, ano passado, na semana da Língua da Cultura chinesa, convidámos o

Interviewee

Pelo menos portuguesa, porque eu sei que há uma aluna chinesa que estudou no curso também, que está a fazer o doutoramento também em Lisboa, que é a Emília. Pelo menos que eu saiba, já tens aqui 2 casos de alunos que prosseguiram os estudos.

Interviewer

Para finalizar, queria perguntar se, por acaso, o Politécnico de Leiria tem alguma parceria com os Institutos Confúcio... Se tem parceria com algum? Ou se seria melhor perguntar à professora Chen Chen?

Interviewee

Não porque a professora Chen não te vai responder a essa pergunta. Eu sei que é Confúcio de Aveiro queria e estava a tentar uma sala Confúcio aqui no Politécnico de Leiria, mas o que aconteceu é que nós assinamos um protocolo com outra instituição chinesa, não com o Instituto Confúcio. Neste momento a política cultural da China está a mudar um bocadinho. Já não é para “passar” pelos Institutos Confúcio, mas diretamente com a embaixada.

Interviewer

Ou seja, querem fazer uma via mais direta, não serem os Institutos Confúcio os intermediários...

Interviewee

Sim, sim. Os intermediários, pronto, eu não digo que não seja complementar, mas no nosso caso, no caso do Politécnico (de Leiria), é uma nova maneira de trabalhar. Por exemplo, eu sei que a professora Chen Chen, ela leciona e está a dar apoio para várias iniciativas, por exemplo, no dia 20 de abril organizamos o dia da língua chinesa, no dia 20 de Maio nós vamos ter aqui pela segunda vez, aqui em Leiria, o concurso Chinese Bridge... E vamos ter o embaixador da China. O ano passado também tivemos o Embaixador da China, e o Embaixador da China ficou a gostar do nosso Politécnico e temos aqui um vínculo bastante forte, direto... Não há necessidade de passar pelo Instituto Confúcio.

Interviewer

Sim. Aquela pergunta que eu tinha sobre se o IPL fazia ligação com algumas escolas básicas ou secundárias para ensinar chinês aí em Leiria...? Há algum protocolo...?

Interviewee

Não. Isso mudou um bocadinho com todo o problema que vivemos da pandemia, não é? Mas nós, o Professor Luís Barbeiro, organiza aulas de chinês nas escolas aqui em Leiria, com alunos de língua portuguesa aplicada. Muitas vezes os alunos de língua portuguesa aplicada, também com apoio da Chen chen, preparam umas aulas básicas nas escolas aqui da de Leiria.

Interviewer

Mas é algo recorrente ou só esporadicamente?

Interviewee

Costumava ser uma atividade bastante recorrente, antes da pandemia. Agora temos de retomar no próximo ano. mas era uma atividade bastante recorrente realizada pelos alunos. E eu sei que, por exemplo, uma escola na Marinha Grande, a Rodrigues Lobo aqui em Leiria...São as escolas que nos dão muitos alunos ao curso. Porquê? Porque eles têm chinês e há todo este tipo de atividades é e por isso estamos a continuar nesse sentido, a continuar com esse trabalho que para nós é muito importante.

Interviewer

Professor, eu acho que para já eram as perguntas que eu tinha para lhe fazer. Se, entretanto, surgir alguma coisa, também lendo o artigo, eu depois mando-lhe um e-mail a perguntar.

Obrigada por me ajudar.

Interviewee

Eu vou-te dizer uma coisa. Uma das coisas que eu quero fazer neste curso, também, é que haja cada vez mais artigos, mais reflexão, mais investigação sobre este curso, porque eu acho que falta isso também. Temos que fazer todo um trabalho de reflexão.

Interviewer

Sim, sem dúvida. E pelo menos pela minha pesquisa, há muito pouco sobre o ensino de chinês em Portugal e, no meu caso, como o meu mestrado é interculturais para negócios e pensei que era um excelente tema para pegar. Eu era até para abranger mais... só que decidi-me focar na minha licenciatura e esmiuçar ao máximo.

Interviewee

Sim, se tiveres interessada, eu o ano passado eu pedi à biblioteca que comprasse um livro que foi publicado em Espanha, que analisa o funcionamento dos institutos Confúcio em Espanha. E não há nada feito aqui em Portugal. Eu posso dar-te a referência desse livro, porque eu acho que é interessante.

Interviewer

Agradeço porque eu mesmo na minha tese eu ia mencionar os IC e o que eu conheço mais é o daqui do Porto e de Aveiro... Não conheço muito mais.

Interviewee

OK muito bem, OK, Susana já te envio essa referência para não esquecer, tá bem, tá?

Interviewer

OK, obrigada, professor e bom feriado.

Interviewee

Ok, obrigado. Boa noite.

Appendix J – Data table of TIPC/CP

	Total	Gender		Nationality		Estudante Trabalhador			First time		Bolsheiro		
		Men	Women	Foreign	Portuguese	N	Não questionado	S	No	Yes	N	Não questionado	S
2006-07	7	3	4										
2007-08	27	14	13	0	27								
2008-09	41	21	20	1	40	39	0	2	22	19	41	0	0
2009-10	50	25	25	2	48	50	0	0	35	15	50	0	0
2010-11	57	31	26	3	54	1	56	0	39	18	41	0	0
2011-12	64	35	29	3	61	62		2	41	23	64		
2012-13	73	33	40	3	70	71		2	52	21	53		20
2013-14	74	30	44	4	70	72	0	2	54	20	52	0	22
2014-15	78	32	46	4	74	78	0	0	52	26	65	0	13
2015-16	94	35	59	2	92	94	0	0	66	28	68	0	26
2016-17	99	31	68	3	96	98	0	1	72	27	74	0	25
2017-18	95	29	66	2	93	93	0	2	68	27	64	0	31
2018-19	102	29	73	5	97	100	0	2	71	31	66	0	36
2019-20	104	34	70	4	100	104	0	0	73	31	66	0	38
2020-21	112	44	68	8	104	112	0	0	73	39	70	0	42
2021-22	115	43	72	12	103	115	0	0	79	36	82	0	33

Data retrieved and compiled from DGEEC (Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e da Ciência): <https://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/235/>