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INTERCOMPREHENSION: A REFLEXIVE METHODOLOGY IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Marion Dufour

Fin dagli anni '90 la didattica dell'intercomprensione costituisce una nuova prospettiva di educazione alle lingue e di apprendimento, particolarmente in Europa, dove è stata messa in atto fra lingue appartenenti ad una stessa famiglia (lingue romanze, scandinave, germaniche). I ricercatori del progetto EUROCOM hanno mostrato come l'inglese, una delle più importanti lingue franche del mondo, possa essere usato anche come passerella verso una qualsiasi lingua romanza, compreso il francese, altra importante lingua franca. Tuttavia l'intercomprensione come metodo sembra quasi sconosciuta nei Paesi anglofoni, laddove essa potrebbe contribuire a promuovere l'educazione alle lingue straniere e al plurilinguismo. Questo articolo presenta quindi la didattica dell'intercomprensione, sulla base di esempi concreti d'applicazione dell'intercomprensione fra inglese e francese, allo scopo di mettere in luce la potenzialità di questo metodo, mezzo per gli allievi di appropriarsi della loro competenza bilingue e per diventare allievi riflessivi.

Parole chiave: *intercomprensione, EUROCOM, strategie cognitive e metacognitive, allievo riflessivo, transfert, coscienza interlinguistica, repertorio linguistico, rappresentazioni sociali.*

Depuis les années 90, la didactique de l'intercompréhension constitue une nouvelle perspective d'éducation/apprentissage aux langues, principalement en Europe, où elle a été mise en œuvre entre les langues appartenant à une même famille (langues romanes, scandinaves ou germaniques). Les chercheurs du projet EUROCOM ont montré que l'anglais, une des plus importantes lingua franca du monde, pouvait aussi être utilisé comme passerelle vers n'importe quelle langue romane, y compris le français, autre importante lingua franca. Cependant, l'intercompréhension comme méthode semble quasiment inconnue dans les pays anglophones, alors qu'elle pourrait servir à promouvoir l'éducation aux langues étrangères et au plurilinguisme dans ces pays. Ainsi, cet article présente la didactique de l'intercompréhension, des exemples concrets d'application d'intercompréhension entre l'anglais et le français à l'appui, dans le but de mettre en lumière la potentialité de cette méthode, moyen pour les apprenants de s'approprier leur bilinguïté et devenir des apprenants réflexifs.

Mots-clés: *intercomprehension, EUROCOM, stratégies cognitives et métacognitives, apprenant réflexif, transfert, conscience interlinguistique, répertoire langagier, représentations sociales.*

Intercomprehension (henceforth IC) can be defined as a communicative process which refers to the communication strategies used more or less consciously by speakers who do not speak the same languages, yet they are languages that provide sufficient transparency to understand each other.

While interacting socially or reading a text, speakers mobilise their linguistic repertoire weaving together all their linguistic resources, *représentations sociales* (1), as well as cognitive and metacognitive strategies, to make the most of the communication situation and deduce as much information as possible. In other words, they map cues simultaneously on verbal and non-verbal levels: lexical, phonological, morphosyntactic, morphological, (ortho) graphical, semantic and discursive (types and genres of discourse), visual cues, such as body language, gestures, facial expressions, etc.

Since the 1990s, IC as a language learning method has been implemented in language learning programmes as both a means and methodological principle for developing communicative competence (mainly receptive skills) in one or several target languages of the same linguistic family.

This implementation focuses on the transfers of linguistic features between the target language(s) and those of the learners' linguistic repertoire. While the very first learning projects aimed at reading texts by comparing and contrasting languages belonging to the same language family, and conceived IC processes in written reception activities, more recent ones have included situations of oral and written interactions (cf. Degache & Garbarino 2017) and implemented IC methods between languages belonging to different families (ICE, EU&I) (2).

Most of the language learning programmes using IC have underlined the fact that cross-linguistic and cross-cultural comparisons raise learners' interlinguistic and intercultural awareness and foster their language learning strategies (Meissner 2011). Although it is undeniable that regular intercomprehension practice has the effect of spurring cognitive strategies, on the other hand this might not foster a spontaneous development of learners' comprehension monitoring strategies (planning and self-regulation). Yet, these not only enhance the comprehension processes but also improve learners' autonomy. Hence, as well as cognitive strategies, comprehension monitoring strategies need to be trained consciously and require specific work for learners to reflect systematically on their own comprehension.

This article aims at discussing and providing guidance on how to help Anglophone learners develop such metacognitive strategies while learning the French language by using the IC method (Meissner & al. 2004). It is based on the simplified reference framework for learning strategies built by Christian Bégin (2008) and reflects on a few intercomprehension activities I have proposed to different groups of English speaking students enrolled in French courses at complete beginner and false beginner levels (having benefited from about 30

BEING AWARE OF
INTERLINGUISTIC
CORRESPONDENCES
IS NOT ENOUGH

hours of French) at the university of London.

The apparent proximity between two languages, whether or not they belong to the same language family, opens up the possibility of implementing an IC approach. This is the case for English and French whose lexical and morphosyntactic resemblances make reading comprehension of French texts possible to a certain extent for proficient English speakers, even those who have never studied French. This is the result of historical developments which will not be broached here (cf. Walter 2001). Thus, “as much as 50%-60% of all loan words in English are of Latin-Romance origin, out of which some 28-38% are French (Braun, 1990: 29)” (Hemming & al. 2011: 11).

By systematically comparing English and French through the so-called “Seven Sieves” (Klein and Stegmann 2000), Horst G. Klein (2008) of the EuroCom research group listed the sound, spelling, syntactic, morphosyntactic and morphological correspondences. This is a real milestone for French teachers wishing to develop their own interlinguistic awareness as well as their learners’ and build a bridge between French and English, emphasising their likenesses rather than their differences. Being aware of the presence of analogies between languages is in fact the essential condition to set off on an intercomprehension adventure. While reading, learners start noticing and then researching cross-linguistic and cross-cultural analogies. To this end, they implement *cognitive processing strategies* such as:

- Repeating, rereading or rewriting words, sentences, paragraphs.
- Breaking them down into parts to deduce their meaning and classifying them into different grammatical categories or levels of importance.
- Comparing items, linguistic features to make connections, deduce meaning.
- Elaborating information by developing, transforming it, *i.e.*, stating it differently, providing examples, also substituting unknown items to clarify a sequence, or using gestures/mimics to express a word/idea difficult to express in words
- Organising information to get a coherent overall view.

So, this interlinguistic awareness conveys to the learners a very positive and active attitude towards new languages and language learning. However, it is not enough to become a proficient reader. This implies that the learner could combine these cognitive processing strategies with *cognitive execution strategies* such as:

- Appraising one’s current state of comprehension, being critical of one’s knowledge to review one’s choice.
- Verifying the coherence of one’s findings, using contextual information, tallying information.

- Performing by speaking or reading out loud, drawing.
- Translating *i.e.*, transforming information into a more explicit or symbolic one, or a complementary form (figures into words, symbols into words, etc.), to clarify it.

Though the use of these strategies fosters readers' autonomy, to become reflexive learners they still need to reflect on the strategies they use as well as on the *représentations sociales* that underpin their learning and interpretations. This process implies that they are capable of implementing metacognitive strategies:

- Planning (anticipation): trying to predict the resources, knowledge, procedures and actions a task and situation might require, mind-mapping future events, generating a plan to approach a text or rectify the comprehension problem and adjusting one's performance/production.
- Self-regulation and self-reflection: getting a better understanding of one's own knowledge, *représentations sociales*, cognitive process, strategies used; monitoring and controlling one's thoughts, emotions and behaviour in view of the activity to perform, assessing objectives with respect to the resources and strategies mobilised and reconsidering them if necessary; getting informed about the tasks, situations, how to use one's knowledge given the needs and objectives.

According to Christian Bégin (2008) who built this taxonomy of the metacognitive and cognitive strategies, they are all part of the *learning strategies* a learner needs to develop, to act and learn efficiently and effectively. Learning strategies can be defined as "a category of metacognitive and cognitive actions deployed by learners in a learning situation while performing a task or classroom activity, which helps to process knowledge in relation to clear objectives" (Bégin, 2008: 53, my translation).

We will now see how the IC method can be a means to engage students in both cognitive and metacognitive operations.

BECOMING A REFLEXIVE LEARNER

A key step for the language teachers who are willing to implement the IC method with this end in view is to analyse how their learners approach a text written in a foreign language and proceed to understand it. Among the 8 different French classes for complete beginners I taught over 4 years (2014-2018) at the University of London, I observed 5 attitudes. Before mentioning them, I will say a word about the context.

The lesson plan of the very first 2-hour French class for a group of 6 MBA students at complete beginner level in French (3), consists of a very simple presentation of myself in French using the most transparent words I could find, followed by the students' presentations in French, while English remains a welcome crutch, based on the exam-

ple I provided and wrote on the board, and finally an English “presentation” of the French language in relation with English, in which I encourage my students to 1) list the French words and expressions they already know, heard (*Déjà vu*, ‘oh la la’, ‘un je ne sais quoi’, ‘c’est la vie’, etc.) 2) explain how they are aware that these words or expressions are French by relating their experiences with this language (travel, family experiences, etc.) 3) express what they know about the relationship between the French and English people: they usually mention the story of William the Conqueror which is part of their school programme, the Hundred Years War, the *Entente Cordiale*, or other stories which contain stereotypes about the French. Once this relationship has been exemplified through lexical similarities, students’ knowledge, experiences and perceptions of French and the French, I have them read a text with about 75% of transparent items. I instruct them to underline the words which look familiar and get the gist of the following text (my own production):

«Si on *compare* le français et l’anglais, on *observe* beaucoup de *similitudes*. Ceci s’explique en particulier par les *relations* historiques, politiques, commerciales et culturelles que la *France* et l’Angleterre entretiennent depuis des siècles. Remarquons cependant que les Français n’ont pas le monopole du français. Leurs *cousins* canadiens, leurs voisins suisses, belges, luxembourgeois, nord africains et de nombreux pays d’Afrique de l’ouest le parle aussi. L’*organisation internationale* de la francophonie (OIF) estime le nombre de francophones dans le monde à 284 *millions* de *personnes* en 2015, ce qui en fait la 5^e langue la *plus* parlée au monde».

Over these four years, I have noted five attitudes (Moore 2005: 13) towards this activity:

1) Only once, did a learner not even glance at the text. This Chinese learner explained that she felt clueless about French, unable to do the task, since she had never learnt, heard and read it before. She did not see any relation between the tasks/discussion occurring during the first part of the lesson and the reading comprehension task. Overcome with emotion, she could not face the text.

It is thus sometimes even not enough to make students aware of the relationships between languages for them to use this information as a springboard for discovering a new language. Other factors may prevent them from taking the plunge. For example, facing a learning method far too different from those they internalized within their own school system.

2) Some learners just skim the text underlining only words whose spelling is exactly the same in French and English (as I did myself in the text above: words in italics). French spelling makes them feel insecure: one

explained that he felt stuck because of all the little signs floating around: accents, cedillas, apostrophes; another student wondered if “historique” had something to do with “historic” because both pronunciation and spelling are quite different even if close. Another student asked me what “canadien” means (Canadian). He explained that he remained stuck because this word had no capital letter.

In the above situations 1) and 2), learners could not complete the task at all. They are blind linguistically speaking and find transparency suspicious, imagining a trap rather than a possibility. This attitude leads learners to linguistic insecurity and prevents them from thinking about any particular strategy to achieve the task. I am tempted to compare them with the *tacit learners* David Perkins (1992) described as unaware of their metacognitive knowledge, who do not think there are any particular strategies for learning and merely accept they know something or not.

□ 3) Some learners underline lexical items whose written form suggests a word in English, even if the French spelling is not exactly like the English one. However, once they have underlined their words, they don't sustain their effort by asking themselves: “can I deduce more information from those I found out”, or setting a new goal by asking themselves “how can I combine these words to get the gist of the text?”. They seem to lack self-reliance and perseverance to understand further and fully achieve the task.

Borrowing again from Perkins's terminology, I would consider these students as *aware learners* who know about some of their kinds of thinking such as generating ideas, finding evidence, etc. However, thinking is not necessarily deliberate or planned.

□ 4) Some learners underline words whose written forms suggest a word in English. They can connect items strategically, deduce words using contextual information to make assumptions about the text and spontaneously get going on a partial translation including gaps. Besides, they pick up some recurrent forms, for example, the “final ‘s’”, articles (l' and le).

These *strategic learners* feel confident and seem to organise their thinking by using problem-solving. However, they don't test their hypotheses systematically before performing and struggle to get beyond the lexical level. For example, they make spontaneous assumptions about words without sufficiently considering their form (morphology) which may be related to a specific function. For instance, a student provided the following translation of line 2, where letter X stands for a missing/unknown word: “X explains in particular the historical relations, politics, commercial and cultural X between France and England”. She spontaneously placed ‘historical’ before the first noun, which suggests that she more or less consciously analysed it as an adjective, however she considered ‘politique’ as a noun because of its form. Deeper

monitoring would have made her see “*historique, politique, commerciales et culturelles*” as a series of adjectives. So, although they can repair meaning when it is disrupted, connect their findings and get the gist of the text, their performance is not always consistent due to a lack of comprehension monitoring.

□ 5) Finally, a few learners underline similar words, spot recurrent prefixes and suffixes, classify words, monitor their hypotheses out loud, take the time to reread and reflect upon their learning while it is happening: “‘ique’ (*historique/politique*) suggests ‘ical’ (historical/political), they say ‘commerciales’ like in English but ‘Culturelle’ not ‘cultural’, it seems that adjectives are placed after the noun... ‘organisation internationale’”.

These *reflexive learners* are fully autonomous and achieve the task successfully.

Thus, understanding a text in a foreign language is a complex process involving *représentation sociales* of languages and how languages are learnt, affect, cognition and metacognition. So first, teachers need to consider their learners’ attitudes to offer them different types and degrees of guidance so that they can achieve the tasks while adjusting their representations, processing their emotions and developing their skills.

We will now give concrete examples of how to implement IC effectively by adjusting an intercomprehensive task to learners.

The IC method and action-oriented approach fulfil complementary needs, so the former needs to be embedded into the latter in order to set up a socio-cognitive approach highlighting the cognitive processes involved in language learning and use, as well as the role of social context in how language is learned and used.

The intercomprehension tasks we are going to present are part of the following communicative activity: “You would like to invite a peer to watch a film at the cinema. Before contacting him/her, you decide to find out more about the two films recently released: *French Connection* and *Paddington*. You will read the documents provided about them and then call your peer to report on the films currently running. You will then discuss with him/her and make up your mind which film you are going to watch”.

This instruction can be accommodated to weaker learners as follows: “You would like to invite a peer to watch a film at the cinema. Before contacting him/her, you decide to find out more about one film from those which have been suggested, *French Connection* or *Paddington*. So, you will read the document you have chosen and then call your peer to report on this film.”

We will implement the IC method step by step following the top-

STAGE ONE:
PLANNING

down model established by Klein and Stegmann (1999: 23) in relation to the seven sieves method, for optimizing deduction. This model includes a series of mental processing from extra-textual information to successful text reception, which help learners structure their approach, take and reflect on all the necessary steps to perform the task successfully.

The first step of the Klein and Stegmann model consists of a planning phase: learners skim the written document (look at its presentation, structure, title, subtitle, source, author(s), date) with the view to picturing which type of text/speech, which information or type of information they might find in it, and how they will approach the comprehension task. This stage implies that the learner work at the *symbolic, lexical and discursive levels*. At the planning stage, learners can ask themselves: “What do I know about the topic? What type of text is it (scientific article, film review, testimony, technical document, literary work, etc.) and what are the main formal and stylistic features of this type of text? What might the text be about given the current affairs or what we covered in class, etc.?”

Then, they will have to assess their hypothesis, being critical in order to adjust their expectations and reduce their misgivings about the task. They can ask: “Are my expectations relevant given the sociocultural-political-economic context, the type of text, the situation of communication?” They also will have to *monitor* their thoughts, emotions and behaviour, asking themselves: “Do I have sufficient knowledge? Do I need to investigate it before reading? Have I done a task like this before? What strategies worked last time? Which strategies will be appropriate considering the document and task?”

Thus, planning is a very important step which implies actions and procedures underpinning *cognitive strategies as well as self-regulation* for learners to approach the task favourably. To encourage learners to question themselves, the document comes with a reflexive table they will fill in prior to reading. Learners are encouraged to work with their peers.

To make *tacit learners* feel more confident with transparency, and encourage them to rely on their English repertoire, I have highlighted all the *directly transparent words*, Éric Castagne (2008: 33) defined as lexical items whose oral or/and written forms and meanings suggest words in the 1st language having the same or nearly the same forms and meanings.

FRENCH CONNECTION

Date de sortie 3 décembre 2014 (2h 15min)

De Cédric Jimenez

Avec Jean Dujardin, Gilles Lellouche, Benoît Magimel plus

Genres Action, Policier, Thriller

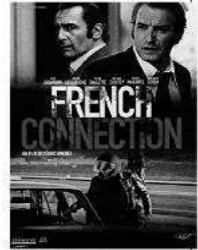
Nationalités Français, Belge

SYNOPSIS ET DÉTAILS

Marseille. 1975. Pierre Michel, jeune magistrat venu de Metz avec femme et enfants, est nommé juge du grand banditisme. Il décide de s'attaquer à la French Connection, organisation mafieuse qui exporte l'héroïne dans le monde entier. N'écouter aucune mise en garde, le juge Michel part seul en croisade contre Gaëtan Zampa, figure emblématique du milieu et parrain intouchable.

Mais il va rapidement comprendre que, pour obtenir des résultats, il doit changer ses méthodes.

http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm_gen_cfilm=221419.html



Observe the document and fill in the table below:
(The text is a sample of answers provided by learners.)

Planning	Expectation 1	Expectation 2	Appraising expectations	Verifying hypotheses	Self-regulation
What do I know about the topic? <i>French connection</i>	Fashion: a well-known, design-led British brand, everywhere in London, mens' and womenswear.	Crime: The French connection is also an American movie with Gene Hackman.			Need to find out more about the brand on the internet. Since 1972.
What will it be about?	Some words in the text support this hypothesis: <i>Héroïne, organisation, emblématique, Femmes, enfants</i>	Some words in the text support this hypothesis: <i>Attaque, bandits, magistrat Intouchable</i>	More likely a crime because of the photo, dark colours: white, red black	Vocab drawn from text: crime, armed robbery Hypothesis is supported by the description: <i>Genres: action, policier, thriller</i>	1-I Focused all my attention on the image, can't find what these colours are symbolising, brief look at the text. 2. Talked with peers, shared information on the title. 3. Look for hint (vocab) to verify. 4. Did not look at the small print under the title.
What type of text is it?	Movie pitch?	Film review?	More likely a movie pitch	No signature, no "je" Formal No personal view, narrative	Looked for a signature, researched striking words: "croisade", "emblématique"
What are the main formal features of this type of text?	Short, Emotion Attractive Narrative	Formal or very informal, signature, short, striking words Opinion, "je"?			

The second step consists of a global comprehension of the text. The aim is to identify the main pieces of information and getting the gist. As Clua (2007: 160) reminds us: “the most advisable strategy may be not to read word by word, skip obstacles, not to feel tied by the position of the words, not to worry about unknown grammatical details, not to look words up in a dictionary, not to become blocked.”

Klein and Stegmann observed that textual analysis proceeds mainly *from the lexical level* and consists in the learner’s ability to select lexical items (underlining, circling, writing, saying them) which look familiar to them and comparing/contrasting them on the phonological and orthographic levels with those of their linguistic repertoire. These familiar words can be *directly or indirectly transparent*. *Indirectly transparent words* refer to words which look familiar to the learner to some extent only (cf. Castagne, 2008: 33). These words encompass:

- Words in the target language which evoke lexical items whose meaning can be the same or different depending on the circumstances.

For example, the French (FR) word *‘préservatif’* evokes only *‘preservative’* in English (EN) *i.e.* “something that preserves” while in French, it also means *‘condom’*. In this case, the context can suggest to the reader that the meaning of the word might be different from what he first thought.

- Words in the target language whose spelling is not absolutely the same but contains hints which make it possible to clarify their meanings *via* sound transfers:

<p>The French vowel [o] spelt “eau” often evolved from the velarisation process of “r” consonant:</p>	<p>The French acute accent might signal in a certain context the loss of an “s”. Just by inserting an “s” and dropping the “e”, the corresponding words appear:</p>
<p>morsel (EN) <input type="checkbox"/> morceau (FR) peel (EN) <input type="checkbox"/> peau (FR) panel (EN) <input type="checkbox"/> panneau (FR)</p>	<p>épice (FR) <input type="checkbox"/> spice (EN) étage (FR) <input type="checkbox"/> stage (EN) étrange (FR) <input type="checkbox"/> strange (EN)</p>

- Words in the target language which have nothing to do with the equivalent word in the source language but can be deduced with the help of an additional language already known by the learner. In this case the bridging word can be related to the target language by adjusting either its form (formal adjustment), for example:

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<i>Word in French</i>	<i>Bridging word in a familiar language</i>	<i>Word in English</i>
Accueillir	accogliere (Italian)	welcome
ours	orso (Italian)	bear

or by adjusting its meaning (semantic adjustment), for example:

<i>Word in French</i>	<i>Bridging word in English</i>	<i>Word in English</i>
rêve	reverie (US EN)	dream (UK EN)
mort	mortuary	death

Transfer strategies between the source and the target languages are not only efficient to make assumptions and deduce the meaning of words but also to memorise them and rediscover their meaning easily when they reappear in a text/speech later on. Besides, it offers an etymological insight into the vocabulary.

Again in this second stage, learners need to *monitor* their hypotheses regarding the meaning of the selected words by comparing elements and information looking back through the text and looking forward in the text for information that might help to understand; also by restating or rephrasing, reading and rereading out loud, assessing the most important information from secondary information. While carrying out this task, the learner can ask: “How am I doing? Is this meaning relevant given what I know about the context, co-text? Which strategies can I implement to clarify this word? Is this word a noun, an adjective, a verb?”

PADDINGTON

Date de sortie **3 décembre 2014** (1h 35min)

De **Paul King**

Avec **Guillaume Gallienne, Hugh Bonneville, Sally Hawkins plus**

Genres **Comédie, Famille, Animation**

Nationalités **Français, Britannique**

SYNOPSIS ET DÉTAILS

A partir de 3 ans

Paddington raconte l'histoire d'un jeune ours péruvien fraîchement débarqué à Londres, à la recherche d'un foyer et d'une vie meilleure. Il réalise vite que la ville de ses rêves n'est pas aussi accueillante qu'il croyait. Par chance, il rencontre la famille Brown et en devient peu à peu un membre à part entière.



http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm_gen_cfilm=207487.html

1) Which of the strategies have you used to clarify the text?

<i>Repeating</i>	<i>Breaking down</i>	<i>Comparing</i>	<i>Restating</i>	<i>Compensating</i>	<i>Classifying</i>
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2) Provide a concrete example of strategy you used, reporting thoroughly how you proceeded.

Example of compensation strategy:-

“I understood almost everything, but I had trouble finding “raconte”. I eventually found this might mean “bear” since I assumed that the text started with “Paddington bear’s story...” (Adam, 30, British, speaks English and has a limited knowledge of Italian).

STAGE THREE:
DETAILED
COMPREHENSION

Adam failed in his attempts to deduce “raconte”, although he activated semantic schemes and used a syntactic transfer. In fact, he did not select an appropriate strategy given the syntactic differences between English and French. This negative transfer (Perkin 1992) undermined his performance, but his comment was followed by a discussion in which he was encouraged to monitor his comprehension, using other strategies which eventually allowed him to deduce (“raconte”, “tell”). Finally, he was encouraged to reflect on the different strategies he used to achieve his comprehension.

At this stage also, the worksheet can be accommodated depending on the students’ abilities. For example, to help learners reflect on their learning strategies, some specific guidance can be provided including:

- a series of questions to foster reflection.
- indirectly transparent words may be highlighted to encourage lexical transfers.
- a reflexive table can be added to make them aware of the cognitive strategies they use and reflect on them.

The third stage consists in examining the text in more detail to deepen comprehension. It involves working on syntactic, morphosyntactic, morphological, and semantic levels with the view to identifying patterns within and across content areas. This stage is the most technical and requests the ability to categorise words on the basis of their meaning; e.g. words denoting people and places, things, or according to their grammatical functions, making a broad distinction between “full words” (nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs) and “grammatical words” (prepositions, determiners, pronouns, conjunctions, etc.). This implies processing *cognitive strategies* such as breaking elements down into morphemes and also researching recurrent forms (suffixes/prefixes/affixes) with a view to identify and deduce the meaning of these forms. Here again, some specific guidance can be provided to encourage learners to broaden the scope of their learning strategies. For example highlighting indirectly transparent words that can be deduced via morphological transfers seems beneficial. At a semantic level, teachers can encourage them to compensate gaps by activating semantic schemes and/or using compensatory words like “stuff/whatsit” where the understanding of a text is incomplete, elaborate information restating and rephrasing ideas, summarising paragraphs, giving a title to each of them. Thus they progressively organise the segments of information in such a way for the text to increase its semantic value. Again, throughout this stage, learners will have to monitor their actions and progress, asking themselves: “How am I doing? Does this

STAGE FOUR: INTERPRETING

make sense? Do these ideas fit with previous information? What should I do next? Should I try a different strategy? What has been clarified? How? What is still to be clarified?"

The fourth step involves mainly *cognitive execution strategies*: being critical and reviewing one's choice, verifying the coherence of one's findings, using contextual information, performing by saying or reading out loud, translating and transforming information into a more explicit or symbolic one, etc. So it implies processing a semantic analysis by relating syntactic structures, from the levels of phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs to the level of the text as a whole. It also may involve the ability to research recurrent elements, forms and structures with a view to establishing connections and comparisons between the different parts of a text at inter-discursive and intra-discursive levels.

Once the final interpretation is delivered, learners will appraise their performance and reflect on their learning. They can ask: "How well did I do?", "Did I get the results I expected?", "Is there anything I still don't understand?", and "What could I do differently next time?"

As a conclusion, I have tried to describe IC method as a reflexive process, including systematic monitoring and self-regulation at every stage of the comprehension process. This implementation requires language teachers to encourage learners to question themselves throughout the process and routinely monitor their progress. This suggests that teachers adjust tasks according to their learners' abilities, guide them to become familiar with their learning strategies and become reflexive learners. So, embedding the IC method into an action-oriented approach seems to be a very effective way for learners to learn how to learn, transform their representations and finally internalise their bilinguality (Hamers & Blanc 2000: 25).

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FOOTNOTES

(1) The French notion of *représentations sociales* includes "attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes, frames of reference, connotations, social norms, values, discursive constructions, categories and categorizations, schemata which enable social actors to interpret situations, take appropriate action and manage conflicts." (Kramsch 2008: 320).

(2) Some of the most important IC programmes launched in Europe are: Eurom4-5 (1997-2011), Galatea (1991-1999), IGLO (1999-2003), Euromania (2006-2008), Galapro (2008-2010), Galanet (2001-2004), EuroCom launched in 2000; in the U.S: Long Beach French program launched in 2007.

(3) ICE (2001): "*Intercompréhension européenne*", directed by Éric Castagne at Reims University, and EU&I (2005): "European Awareness and Intercomprehension", coordinated by Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

(4) Students were Chinese, Indian, South African, Nigerian, Kenyan, Tanzanian, American, Canadian, Australian and British nationals, including native and non-native English speakers; all possess a high level of proficiency in English.