

Curricular integration of intercomprehension:

possibilities, constraints, recommendations

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This document was prepared in the ambit of the work package *Curricular Integration of Intercomprehension* of the European project MIRIADI (*Cooperation and Innovation for an Online Intercomprehension Network* - www.miriadi.net).

This work package, which aimed to understand the permeability and resistance of the contexts and of educational actors concerning distance Intercomprehension (IC) as a practical concept with professional relevance, was developed in a perspective of praxeological (since it is oriented towards intervention), collaborative because it joined researchers, trainers, (future) teachers and students in joint actions and plurilingual and intercultural (since the team members came from various countries and used their mother tongues) Education.

The team's work was developed in three phases. Within the first one, several educational settings were characterized in order to identify opportunities and constraints related to the curricular integration of IC. Secondly, a teacher education program was organized within which educational activities were planned, implemented and evaluated, following a action-research methodology. The third phase involved project's dissemination actions.

This brochure is part of those actions and presents a summary of the results, addressed to a wide audience, obtained over three years of work. Relying on these results, some recommendations are set out.

Identity card

Project title	Miriadi - Cooperation and Innovation for an Online Intercomprehension Network
Funding Agency	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)
Work Package title	Curricular integration of intercomprehension
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Synthesis

This work package aimed to foster processes of curricular integration of distance intercomprehension in plurilingual groups, from experimental work carried out in educational settings (from primary school to university) and performed in a logics of action-research, in order to understand the "feasibility conditions" of this didactic approach in the learning and training curricula.

Products

> *Atouts et possibilités de l'insertion curriculaire de l'intercompréhension* (<http://hdl.handle.net/10773/14642>)

> *Histórias em Intercompreensão: a voz dos autores* (<http://hdl.handle.net/10773/14700>)

> Araújo e Sá, M. H., & Pinho, A. S. (Orgs.) (2015). *Intercompreensão em contexto educativo: resultados da investigação*. Aveiro: UA Editora

> Pedagogical and scientific meeting *Educação plurilingue e intercultural: percursos e possibilidades em contexto educativo português. Um enfoque na intercompreensão* (<https://educast.fccn.pt/vod/channels/hnwtjstzb>)

Potencial and possibilities

Society

- Intercomprehension (IC) as a way of promoting equality, respect for Otherness (their languages and cultures) and collective responsibility, contributing to build more cohesive, welcoming and democratic societies.
- IC in the formation of citizens who are aware, critical and enthusiasts of multilingualism and of contemporary societies' interculturality.
- IC as ethics of human communication (multilingual and intercultural).
- IC as a possibility to promote relationships and projects between society, as a whole in its diversity, and the educational community, understood in a broad sense.

Educational settings

- IC as a way to make pedagogical innovation available, comprising it into daily education.
- IC as an approach that fosters human and social dimensions of education, understanding students in their individuality and integrity (relationship between cognition, emotion and action), but also as people among people, interacting with others and learning in multiple interaction contexts.
- IC as an approach to education in a holistic perspective, developing global, transversal and specific competencies.
- IC as education for citizenship, for the relationship with Others and with the world, promoting openness attitudes towards other ways of knowing, being and living.
- IC as education for plurilingualism and for intercultural communication, encouraging contact actions and projects within diversity.
- IC as a means of strengthening the sense of belonging to national and transnational communities.
- IC to motivate for languages, their contact and learning.

- IC as a learning strategy in foreign language classroom promoting greater efficiency, durability and transferability of the knowledge acquired and to be acquired.
- IC as a possible answer to curricular management of diversity in schools.
- IC to encourage exchanges between students and teachers from various educational, linguistic and cultural settings.
- IC to certify verbal and intercultural competencies.

Teachers and methodological approaches

- IC as an opportunity to integrate collaborative work in school routine (between language teachers, between different subjects, with tutors, with other educational institutions ...).
- IC as a possibility to work in an interdisciplinary way, developing specific and transversal learning.
- IC as a supporter of a more holistic and integrative curriculum.
- IC as an integrated approach to languages, favouring the construction of plurilingual and intercultural education activities.
- IC as a way to make students aware of their profiles and linguistic biographies and define projects of linguistic and communicative learning.
- IC as a concept that can be used with great flexibility: (i) in school projects; (ii) in the classroom of a particular language; (iii) in modules, whether or not related to the language lessons; (iv) in self-learning opportunities.

- IC as a framework for planning and carrying out activities aimed at raising awareness of languages, their operation modes and interrelationships: observation, comparison, experimentation and manipulation of language units, inference, activating prior knowledge...
- IC as a framework for planning and carrying out activities aimed at raising awareness of the learner and of the language speaker: communication observation (particularly plurilingual and intercultural); (self and hetero) reflection on learning and communication strategies; (self and hetero) evaluation, ...

Students and competencies in languages

- IC as a way to develop students' abilities to work with others (including with people from other languages and cultures), actively participating in the processes of meaning construction and learning collaboratively.
- IC as a possibility to develop students' involvement, responsibility, autonomy, self-esteem, the capacity for reflection and self-evaluation.
- IC as a process where the relationship of the students with themselves, with languages and language/cultural diversity is recreated.
- IC as a way of developing plurilingual and intercultural competencies.
- IC as a discovery and appreciation of the value, importance, usefulness and beauty of languages.
- IC as a driving force for mobilizing the students' linguistic, cognitive and socio-affective repertoires in situations of plurilingual and intercultural communication.
- IC as a way to promote students' strategic and metacognitive competencies in diverse learning and language use situations.

- IC as a means of training to (know how to) transfer the knowledge of one's language to the learning of other languages and vice-versa.
- IC as a way of awareness of one's learning profile and of linguistic and communicative possibilities, making students agents of their learning and able to define their development projects in this area.
- IC as a way to develop the awareness and valuation of the role of language partial competencies.
- IC as a means of linguistic and cultural mediation.

Constraints

School organisation and management

- Difficulty of education systems to renew themselves and to accompany the dynamics of contemporary societies.
- Resistance of decision-makers (macro policies) and educational managers (micro policies) to innovation.
- Limited flexibility and autonomy of curricula, of the school cultures and of the teaching work.
- Reduced culture of collaborative work in schools.
- Evaluation very focused on disciplinary knowledge and imposing heavy pressure to teaching work.
- Reduced value of languages in the curriculum.
- Reduced language offer in schools.
- Inadequate pedagogical-didactic resources and workbooks.

Educational actors

- Common understanding of IC activities (by teachers, tutors, students, school managers, wider educational community) as subversions and transgressions to the school and curriculum *status quo*.
- Resistance of language teachers, particularly due to: difficulties in managing time and the pressures imposed by the curriculum, the programs and by the evaluation systems; linguistic insecurity; reduced self-confidence to implement IC strategies; difficulties in pedagogical differentiation; reduced knowledge and experience of plurilingualism; valuation of a single language learning; little experience of working collaboratively with teachers of other subjects.
- Reduced teacher education programs especially oriented to the expansion of teachers' didactic repertoires with regard to forms of mobilizing different languages in a learning situation.
- Representations, shared by the educational actors, on the roles of teachers and subjects, strictly related to the development of isolated subject contents.
- Students' low expectations concerning language learning at school.
- Teachers' low expectations about students' skills, competencies and concerning the learning and contact with different languages and cultures.

Didactics of Intercomprehension

- Poorly consolidated didactic knowledge, hindering its acknowledgement and credibility.
- Practices, knowledge and resources built on the basis of “cases” and “experimentations” which are poorly integrated in the curriculum, not continuous and not systematic.
- Lack of solid, credible and legitimate referential concerning evaluation of competencies in Intercomprehension
- Lack of didactic knowledge concerning IC in oral situations.
- Lack of didactic knowledge regarding the potential of IC in developing mother tongue competencies.
- Inexistence of pedagogical-didactic resources in different languages.

Recommendations

Concerning research

- To develop more rigorous and empirical research about IC, assessing its impact in different areas of development of plurilingual and intercultural competence of students and supplanting possible methodological weaknesses that still characterize the work undertaken so far.
- To build knowledge, whether conceptual or practical, on some less explored topics of IC, such as: (i) IC and orality ; (ii) IC and interaction ; (iii) the assessment of IC competencies; (iv) the influence of IC activities in the development of mother tongue competencies; (v) the influence of IC activities in the development of competences in a specific language.
- To diversify the research contexts in IC, including non-linguistic subjects and other educational spaces beyond school and higher education, including non-formal education contexts (such as migrants' associations, educational centres, adult education, senior universities).
- To explore the possibilities of IC articulation with other language teaching plural approaches, particularly in the development of training courses for students and (future) teachers.

Concerning Teacher Education

- To provide trainee teachers, through different types of activities, the contact with plurilingual and intercultural situations.
- To integrate modules, seminars and other forms of IC training in the curricula of training institutions, focusing amongst other elements, the affective and cognitive potential of IC in the teaching and learning of languages.
- To stimulate the creation of exchange programs (including virtual) for teachers and their students.
- To develop training programs for non-specialists and specialists and other educators and trainers, with systematic and differentiated range (workshops, conferences, workshops, training courses) on the possibilities of working in IC at different educational levels and in different institutions, as well as on the potential and embodiments of collaborative work.
- To develop training programs aimed at the construction and evaluation of teaching - learning resources, including studentbooks (language and others), integrating intercomprehension approaches and eventually linking them with other plural approaches.

Concerning Dissemination

- To invest in the development of teaching-learning resources, including manuals/studentbooks, integrating IC systematically and in articulation with the syllabus, in different languages and for different audiences and varied subjects.
- To produce dissemination texts in different languages and formats, providing detailed information about how IC can be implemented, with examples of resources and activities in order to disseminate the concept and its operationalization near the public in general (decision makers, students, teachers, parents, school principals, ...), either experts, specialists or non specialists.
- To create multiple times and spaces for the discussion of possibilities for implementing IC activities in different contexts and with different audiences.
- To promote the dissemination and public understanding of the concept and of its potential, through media resources and the organization of activities to the general public in non-formal education spaces.



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