

Intercomprehension and language teacher education: a study about a higher education institution

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Langue du support visuel : français

In the context of pluralistic approaches (Candelier et al., 2007), intercomprehension (IC) has been considered a key notion in the development of language teacher education curricula that prepare teachers to cope with, manage and foster linguistic and cultural diversity in their teaching (Andrade & Araújo e Sá, 2008; Pinho, 2008). Yet, as Luke (2008) stresses, "curriculum sits within context" and should be understood as such. In fact, curriculum management to the integration of IC in teacher education courses is not independent from local and institutional micro-politics (Alderson, 2009), that is from the personal agendas and motivations of individuals within organizations and, consequently, from organizations itself. Such personal politics, which make of educators policy makers (Menken & García, 2010), can be very influential in innovation, change and developments in language education.

In this setting, the present study intends to understand how politics towards IC in teacher education curricula were appropriated on the local level, on an institution of higher education (the University of Aveiro). Former studies of meta-analysis in Language Didactics in Portugal (Alarcão et al., 2004; Alarcão et al., 2009; Pinho et al., 2009) indicate that intercomprehension is a milestone both in research and teacher education in such institution. Our aim is then to portray the state-of-the-art of teacher education curricula in the domain of IC developed within a time span of about 10 years. Resorting to the database of the European Network of IC (Redinter, <http://www.redinter.eu/web/formacions/viewone/14v>), the study will analyse the 13 courses belonging to such institution. Bearing in mind an analysis grid, focus will be firstly dedicated to the: target-public, course type, objectives, strategies and activities, competences, languages considered, training methodologies, and evaluation modalities. Secondly, the analysis will trace the main tendencies in terms of education trajectories to the development of teachers' professional competence on and about IC.

The findings of these two steps will be crisscrossed with the conclusions of a former exploratory study (Pinho, 2011) about the knowledge of/about IC of educational actors (mainly teachers), who participated in a local colloquium about the theme and responded to a questionnaire. Such study highlights that IC as concept, communicative practice and didactic approach is still neither much disseminated nor integrated in daily language teaching practices.

Ultimately, considering the results of both the courses' and questionnaire's analysis, the present study concludes with a critical reflection regarding the work developed so far, with the intent to delineate future approaches not only in terms of institutional micro-politics, but also in view of the involvement of other potential actors, partners and education contexts in language teacher education policy and curriculum development towards IC.

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