

## Compensatory Strategies in Intercomprehension

Sarah JERVIS, Hong Kong

**Mots-clés :** skills, communication, strategies, cultural, intercultural, foreign language, mother tongue, group, working language, compensatory

**Axe thématique :** Développement du répertoire de compétences plurielles et leur évaluation

**Langue de la communication :** anglais

**Langue du support visuel :** français

This presentation aims to answer the question of the first theme: What skills are involved: language, cultural or intercultural, communicative, professional, technical? It is based on the findings of my master's dissertation which explored the subject of whether students develop or use compensatory learning strategies in intercomprehension when their mother tongue is not from the family of languages being studied. I conducted my research in a Romance language intercomprehension workshop made up of French as a foreign language speakers mostly of whose mother tongues were Asian or Germanic.

Many of us are familiar with the strategies that intercomprehension sets about to develop: identifying transparencies, hypothesizing, predicting and associating words and knowledge through the context of the documents. Students are encouraged to think out loud or verbalize, compare languages and use semantic inference to guess the meaning of seemingly opaque passages (Castagne, 2005 : 5). These strategies can be referred in terms of transfer as well as low-level to high-level cognitive strategies (Degache et Masperi, 1995 : 6) (Harmegnies et Piccaluga, 2008 : 171) (Meissner, 2008 : 246).

The skills and compensatory strategies that participants with an unrelated mother tongue develop are found in three areas: within the group dynamic, within the intercomprehension strategies referenced above and with the working language being a foreign language for the participants.

In my presentation, I will explore the role of the group setting for employing transfer and forming intercultural and communication skills. On the whole, I observed that participants showed respect to the individuals and were not concerned about simply finding the correct answer but rather allowing others the time to test strategies and work through problems.

Finally, we will look at what strategies students fall back on when their mother tongue is unrelated to the family being studied. From my observations and interviews, I was able to confirm that this group of participants was indeed using the intercomprehension strategies as referenced above but to different degrees. Moreover what these students were doing was actively confronting, accepting and managing the unknown whereas monolingual or beginner language learners may become unsettled or completely blocked by this feeling of uncertainty. As E. Castagne points out, intercomprehension classes are not foreign language classes and unless the participants ask, they will not be provided with detailed definitions or explanations (2002 : 9). These learners are faced with managing the double task of learning intercomprehension strategies and apprehending a language they may not fully master. Nevertheless, they do progress by employing evaluation, philosophy and active learning as compensatory strategies.

### Bibliography

Castagne, E. (2002). Comment accéder à l'intercompréhension européenne : quelques pistes inspirées de l'expérience EuRom4. In Actes du congrès international *Deutschen Romanistentag in München*, oct 2001, intitulé *Ein Kopf – viele Sprache : Koexistenz, Interaktion und Vermittlung*, Aachen, Shaker-Verlag, série 'éditiones EuroCom' n° 9, pp. 99-107. Consulté le 02/03/2010 <http://logatome.eu/publicat/Munich2001.pdf>.

Castagne, E. (2005). Le programme 'InterCompréhension Européenne' (ICE) ou comment utiliser la linguistique contrastive pour mieux se comprendre en Europe. Consulté le 02/03/2010 <http://logatome.eu/publicat/Leipzig2003.pdf>.

Degache, C., Masperi, M. (1995). Pour une dissociation des objectifs. Un programme d'enseignement / apprentissage de la compréhension des langues romanes : Galatea. In Candelier, M. ed. *Jalons pour une Europe des langues, Lidil n°11*, Grenoble : PUG, 141-159. Consulté le 14/03/2010 [www.galanet.eu/publication/fichiers/dc-mm1995.pdf](http://www.galanet.eu/publication/fichiers/dc-mm1995.pdf).

Harmegnies, B., Piccaluga, M. (2008). Aux sources de l'intercompréhension. In V. Conti, F. Grin eds. *S'entendre entre les langues voisines : vers l'intercompréhension*. Chêne-Bourg, Suisse : Editions Médecine et Hygiène, 169-195.

Meissner, F. (2007). Didactique du plurilinguisme et développements scolaires. In Capucho, F. et al. eds. *Diálogos em Intercompreensão*. Lisboa : Universidade Católica Editora. Consulté le 10/04/2010  
[http://fss.plone.uni-giessen.de/fss/fbz/fb05/romanistik/didaktik/Mitarbeiter/mitarbeiter\\_meissner/meissner/externeveranstaltungen/meissner\\_lisboa-preprint.pdf/file/Meißner\\_Lisboa%20\(preprint\).pdf](http://fss.plone.uni-giessen.de/fss/fbz/fb05/romanistik/didaktik/Mitarbeiter/mitarbeiter_meissner/meissner/externeveranstaltungen/meissner_lisboa-preprint.pdf/file/Meißner_Lisboa%20(preprint).pdf).