

Teaching and learning intercomprehension: a way to plurilingualism and learner autonomy

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One consequence of the replacement of behaviourist learning theory (...) by the cognitive theory was to view the language learner as an intelligent, discriminating decision-maker, matching means and ends in learning and in communicating; he became a strategy user.
(James 1990: 209)¹

1 The situation

Over the last decades, intercomprehension (henceforth IC) has widely been discussed as a method of acquiring receptive skills in various languages (see Lutjeharms 2005; 2006; Meißner 2005b) – especially in France with Eurom4 and Galatea and to a certain extent in some other countries too. In the German context, *The seven sieves* (McCann et al. 2002) describe bases of transfer between the Romance languages. Hufeisen et al. (2007) adopted the sieves-model to the Germanic languages from a linguistic perspective. A lot of empirical studies were published – too numerous to be enumerated in this paper. Most of them deal with adult learners who already knew different languages before making use of IC systematically. All these publications prove that ‘expert learners’ can develop multilingual reading comprehension very quickly². The encouraging French experiences with the simultaneous acquisition of receptive skills in various Romance languages (Courtois 1993) led to the construction of the electronic GALATEA-net platform which offers university students of different countries and continents the possibility to define common projects and to work together in their languages. The web-based multilingual communication and acquisition work in accordance with the principles of reciprocal learning between Romanophones and with ‘content and language integrated learning’ (CLIL) (see Degache 2003). The potential in the field of intercultural learning is remarkable. In addition, there are several internet addresses for distance learning which combine IC with multimedia and the advantages of blended learning. – If the IC-way optimises language learning in general, then it should be used as soon as possible. A certain number of experiences made in German secondary schools between 1992 and 2007 confirm that IC is ‘teachable’ to learners of the secondary level (Sekundarstufe I) and that it leads to good results (Hülk 2001; Böing 2004; Bär et al. 2005; Behr 2007). At present, an interdisciplinary school-project (‘language learning across the curriculum/Common curriculum’) uses IC with Dutch as target language (henceforth TL) as a ‘multi language and learning awareness raising strategy’ (henceforth MLLARS). The project concerns ten and eleven years old pupils and the subjects are German (mother tongue), English, French and Spanish. It refers to some results of the Eulang-project (Candelier 2003) and tries to capitalize the pupils’ primary school experiences in the context of the beginning of secondary school learning.

The German projects focus on TLs which do not belong to the same family as the learners’ mother tongue. They are of interest for the development of IC beyond linguistic family boundaries.

¹ We found this quotation in Düwell (1992: 39).

² Mißler (1999: 33) lists a great number of studies where positive inferencing between languages is treated.

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The 'IC method' (Meißner et al. 2004) shows itself consistently to be not only an efficient way of (a) developing multilingual receptive skills, but of (b) getting insight into (one's own) mental processing with new foreign language(s) in interaction with the idioms mentally activated, as well as (c) of sensitising to linguistic questions in general (see Hawkins 1999). Therefore, it must be considered as an effective MLLARS (Martinez 2008; Morkötter 2005; Meißner 2005a). Nevertheless, most authors, who wrote on learner autonomy, ignore the strong link between IC and their subject. Vice versa, IC courses and learning materials often neglect the impressive potential of intercomprehensive strategies for making pupils more autonomous in learning. The right way to IC is decisive for the development of learning awareness. Teachability of learning autonomy through IC is a question of methodology. It is a pity that IC-methods obviously follow *Transmission* principles more than those of *Interpretation*. Little (1999: 4) observes:

The Transmission view assumes that knowledge is available 'out there', and that the teacher's task is to transfer appropriate knowledge to the learners. Communication is conceptualized as a one-way process in which authorities (teachers and textbooks) propound, and learners receive (by listening or reading). The Interpretation view arises from a different understanding of how communication proceeds. It does not deny that knowledge is 'out there' and to that extent must be transmitted to learners, but it recognizes that new information can be understood and assimilated only in terms of what we already know.

In short, IC-based autonomy can not successfully be taught through simple linguistic descriptions of interlingual correspondence-rules. The increase of learning competence follows the insight into the processing of language acquisition and learning. The focus of IC-method is therefore on the learner, on his processing and on (self-)guidance.

2 Languages, intercomprehension and education

Before defining IC, it may be useful to explain what it is not. It is no way to put a stop to the Babylonian confusion of languages, as far as it does not simply reduce the 'separation' between the 5746 world's languages to that of the 249 language families (Nettle/Romaine 1998: 34). If we consider IC, we always have to take into account several factors, their interaction and the impacts on intercomprehensive processing, i.e. (1) the extent of measurable linguistic distance between languages within a specific set of languages, (2) the psychotypic distance between languages, (3) what a person already knows about these languages, (4) the difference between declarative and procedural knowledge related to the languages involved, (5) the capacity to exploit strategies leading to IC, (6) the motivation or tenacity a person has to understand the TL and to resist frustrating experiences that can be encountered.

To make use of the numerous advantages of IC, it is necessary that learners have at their disposal a certain level of procedural competence in at least one idiom that belongs to the same linguistic family as the TL. Klein (2002) describes from a linguistic point of view why French offers optimal conditions, i.e. bases of transfer, upon which a pan-Romance IC can be constructed. Our own observations confirm this statement as well as the thesis of Castagne (2004) who underlines that in the context of learning and teaching IC only works if the number of opaque schemes doesn't exceed 30 percent of the whole. So Dutch is to a certain extent intercomprehensive to native speakers of German 'at a first glance', whereas Swedish or Danish are not or much less. Thus Schmidely (2001) can discuss whether and to what extent Rumanian can be regarded as intercomprehensive for native speakers of Spanish. The

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intercomprehensibility between languages of a same family explains the development of a *didactique des langues proches* proposed by Louise Dabène in 1975 (2002) to teach Spanish differently to speakers of French than German or Russian (which do not belong to the Romance family). In the German situation, the *didactique des langues proches* has a lot of characteristics in common with the so called tertiary didactics (*Tertiärsprachendidaktik*) or 'didactics for a TLs that belongs to a family of which the learner already knows at least one language'. In the context of DaF (teaching German to students of other languages), Hufeisen (2006) developed what she called DaFnE, German after English (*Deutsch als Fremdsprache nach Englisch*). The DaFnE-method utilises the learners' procedural and explicit knowledge of English as an international language in order to learn German. Therefore it belongs to the intercomprehensive approaches. In Alsace, the Germanic dialect is often used to facilitate the acquisition of English (Adolf 1999).

3 Bridging between which languages?

Recent studies proved that it is less important whether the language which delivers the bases of transfer, is the learner's mother tongue (L1) or not. The decisive facts are the apparent proximity between languages and the TL as well as what language learners have at their disposal and what they think about languages and language learning. That's why native speakers of African or Asians languages who acquire a second European idiom regularly look for bridges between their European languages.

Or own findings affecting mental processing of IC confirm Cenoz' (2001: 9) observation:

... linguistic typology has proved to be influential in the choice of the source language. Speakers borrow more terms from the language that is typologically closer to the target language, or using [the] concept of psychotypology, the language that is perceived as psychologically closer. The effect of psychotypology has been confirmed in several studies (...). For example, learners of French and English who are native speakers of a non-European language tend to transfer vocabulary and structures from other Indo-European languages they know rather than from their first language. (...)

Cross-linguistic influence in second language acquisition has been related to the level of proficiency in the target language, and less proficient learners have been reported to transfer more elements from their first language than learners who present higher levels of proficiency (...).

In the case of the third language acquisition, it is important to consider proficiency not only in the target language, but also in the two other languages known by the speaker. This fact adds complexity to the study, taken into account that multicompetence is not the sum of monolingual competences (...).

It must be said in the context of learning and teaching that these findings neither take sufficiently into account the importance of internal and external mental guidance on the learner's intercomprehensive capacity nor the degree of familiarity with 'his/her' languages and language combinations. Analyses of multilingual use in IC show regularly the construction of interlingual routines related to frequent 'code switching', i.e. the switching from one bridge-language to the next and to the TL. In the setting of IC activities, this means the spontaneous choice of a language A or B for the identification of bases of transfer. Once learners find out that a special language X works quite well as an effective tool to develop

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reading comprehension in a special TL, they have a tendency to use this language again and again for initiating transfer processing. Our experiences made with teaching IC make it quite plain that the choice of the bridge-language can be influenced by external guidance (one teacher, one method) too³.

4 How does intercomprehension work? Two examples

To explain IC through two examples, we first quote a range of parallel-sentences in different languages. Whereas the Finnish example (a) offers no real base of transfer (that leads to IC) at all, numerous analogies between the Romance languages (d, e, f, g) are self-evident.

- a. *Hän on ammatiltaan lääkäri ja hän on työssä terveyskeskuksessa Haapaniemenkadulla.*⁴
- b. *Er ist von Beruf Arzt und arbeitet im Gesundheitszentrum in der Haapaniestraße.*
- c. *He is a doctor and works in a medical centre in Haapanie-street.*
- d. *Il est médecin et travaille dans un centre médical dans la rue d'Hapanie.*
- e. *E medico e lavora nel centro medicale nella via Hapanie.*
- f. *Es médico y trabaja en el centro (médico) de (la) salud en la calle Hapanie.*
- g. *Es medge i treballa a un centre mèdic al carrer Hapanie.*

The example reveals that we have to distinguish between IC at a first and at a second glance. It is a truism that we succeed in identifying significantly more linguistic structures than it seemed possible immediately after the first impression, when we read a text of an 'unknown' language again and 'intercomprehensively'. Intercomprehensive reading triggers mental processing that differs considerably from reading and listening (Meißner/Burk 2001) in a language which is familiar to us, as Lutjeharms (2001) explains.

As a second example, we quote a Polish text taken from the cover of the *Introduction à la didactique du français langue étrangère* written by Weronika Wilczyńska (2005). Even if we don't know any Slavonic language, we can identify the central message.

1) TEXT-TYPE: book's cover; INTENTION: marketing; SUBJECT: foreign language learning and teaching

2) SOURCE-TEXT

Weronika Wilczyńska jest profesorem Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu. Ma bogate doświadczenie w praktycznej dydaktyce języków obcych. Jej zainteresowania naukowe obejmują psychologiczne aspekty akwizycji języków, z uwzględnieniem wymiaru kulturowego. Opublikowała z tej dziedziny szereg prac o charakterze teoretycznym i praktycznym.

3) INTERTEXT FOUND AFTER INTERCOMPREHENSIVE READING

Weronika Wilczyńska (is) [female?] professor at the University (?) Adam(a) Mickiewicza. Weronika Wilczyńska (at/in) Posen. (?) (?) (?) (in) practical/practice didactical/didactics (language/s) (?). [Her/She] ?interes (?) (?) (?) psychologiac aspect/s

³ In the German context, the didactics of French is the only one that has developed methods to use the TL to 'go beyond', i.e. to acquire at least reading competence in Italian or Spanish (Nieweler 2001; Meißner 2002).

⁴ This sentence is taken from Senja Riekkinen-Gebbert: *Yksi, kaksi, kolme: Finnisch für Deutschsprachige*. Bremen: Hempen 2003.

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acquisition (of language/s) and (?) (?) (?) (?) culture. (?) publish/ed/ (we exclude publication as we know that the international series of *-ation, azione, acción...* is **atie* or something like that) (?) (?) (?) (?) (?) (?) (?) characterized theoretical (and) practical/in theory and practice.

4) INTERPRETATION

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What do these intercomprehensive activities teach us? At first glance, we learn something about the orthography of the TL in comparison to other languages: *Uniwersitet, university, université, Universität, università...* We learn that the Polish community belongs to the Occidental *res publica litterarum* which is documented by the great number of ‘cultisms’, words of the common European tradition, it shares with other European languages. Then we discover some parts of the TL architecture in comparison to the bases of transfer found in other languages. Finally, we identify lacunas (non opaque forms and functions) and develop hypotheses about the non-identified patterns like *unywersitetU, PoznanIU*, the function of pre- and suffixes: *zaINTERESowania...* This step gives us the grounds for putting forward hypotheses about forms (and functions), i.e. the architecture of the TL. It is obvious that these findings give orientations to open a way to construct a plan how to go on with learning to read Polish.

As both examples prove, intercomprehensive reading (and guessing) reveals also what we still need to know to be able to understand a language with more ease: (1) the most frequent opaque words, (2) the “function words” which bridge the lexically full elements and give structure to the sentence: prepositions, conjunctions, articles as well as morphemes; (3) the structure of different types of sentences: indicative clause, conditional clause, interrogative... Finally we realize that (4) knowing interlingual ‘rules’ which describe regularities and irregularities ‘between’ comparable phenomena of the languages in regard to the TL would be useful. Then we need to know, where and how we can verify our hypotheses (grammars, dictionaries, personal support). When we go to a text very concretely, the questions we ask will be very concrete and they demand very concrete answers too. Looking at the Polish text, one of the main questions is how to find reliable answers to ambiguities in the area of morphemes and ‘suffixes’ (*psychologiczne aspekty akwizycji psychologiczne aspekty akwizycji*). – In the case of the Slavonic languages, we obviously need more than this; for example, the way these idioms express the functions of the ‘missing’ articles in comparison to Romance or Germanic languages. The last argument already goes beyond the mere dimension of passive skills. This shows how intercomprehensive reading usually leads from one lexical and grammatical question to the next. This is another reason why IC works as a good teaching or learning tool. If we would turn from Polish to Russian, other difficulties would appear, beginning with the Cyrillic alphabet. – If we decide to ‘learn’ a TL more than incidentally, we need some kind of guidance or at least a pedagogical framework that gives orientation. The IC method demands that learners define their objectives and make clear their ways of learning by putting forward and examining (modifying or refuting) didactical hypotheses about learning behaviour. In contrast to traditional methods in the field, the IC method makes learners face ‘unstructured input’ from the very start. This means that the language has not been adapted to the objectives of a given TL curriculum. Unstructured input demands implicitly or explicitly the categorisation of the different phrasal elements by decomposition and (re-)composition of

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a syntagma or of the whole sentence. As intercomprehensive reading requires the discovery of significations, forms, functions and structures, it triggers deeper and broader mental processing than inductive operations usually do.

5 The intercomprehension method: some essentials

What do we know about the mental activities related to IC and self-guidance? – There are several models to explain intercomprehensive processing (Hufeisen 2004). Most of them give insight into the mental activities at the very moment when IC takes place. Only a few take into account the dimension of IC teaching and learning and that learning processes must be ‘collectively’ (i.e. in the classroom) organised, controlled and integrated into class-room management. The ‘IC method’ (see Meißner 2004a) joins empirical psycholinguistic foundations to those of external and self-guidance methods. With regard to the psycholinguistic implications, the empirical basis was given by the ‘Giessen IC Data Corpus’ (GIDaC) which collected more than 30 cases of IC with unknown Romance languages. The data were elicited from case-studies with German university students of all disciplines. The students had to ‘understand’ a Romance TL they had not learnt formally. The data-corpus contents included (a) as far as reading comprehension was targeted the ‘translations’ of the text given in the TL (mostly into the bridge-language), (b) simultaneous thinking aloud protocols, (c) notes taken by the students while listening to the original text of the TL and (d) observation data noted by the researchers controlling the IC-operations. The possibility of retrospective interviews was given. The data reveal largely identical mental operations (as we performed them when reading Polish). They concern the different parts of the TL architecture as well as the bridge-languages, i.e. lexicon, morphology, syntax, etc. (Meißner 1997; Meißner/Burk 2001). The results of the case-studies approve the findings reported by Maspero (2000), Cenoz (2001), Müller-Lancé (2003), Jessner (2004) and Jamet (2007). As IC is based on transfer processing, the traditional model of transfer types could be enhanced (Meißner 2007). This deals with the differences between the direction of interlingual transferring (pro- and retroactive transferring between a language A and B⁵), the location where transferring takes place (within the system of the bridge-language of the TL or ‘between’ the languages), and the objective of transferring transfer of identification vs. transfer of production. Thus the GIDaC delivered the first part of the empirical basis of the IC method. The second step, to gain empirical grounds for a teaching method of IC, was provided by experiences with IC involving teacher training and classroom-studies during teaching IC (Caparelli 2003; Böing 2004; Bär et al. 2005, Behr 2007). This work has not been finished yet, as it took more time than scheduled. It became apparent that teaching IC needs a special teacher training (Meißner 2005a). Teaching and learning materials have been developed. Recent papers show that the IC-method is in harmony with the principal findings of the psychology of learning (Doyé 2005; 2006).

6 Towards a syllabus for teaching intercomprehension as a multi-language and learning awareness raising strategy

As far as decoding an ‘unknown’ language is concerned, the points 1 to 6 list operations that can be found in nearly all analyses of mental proceeding related to IC. The points 7 to 12 affect the elaboration of learning competence through IC. – The points (and the tasks) focus on the macro- as well as on the micro-level of knowledge building.

⁵ The terms *pro-* and *retroactive transfer* had been used by the didactics of the 1970th, but they had not been linked to interlingual processing (Coste & Galisson 1976: 569).

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It is evident that any kind of teaching IC has to consider these phenomena.

1. *Constructing a semantic frame on the basis of a text type.* In the Polish example, a scientific author is presented; her work and interests are described. The message is addressed to a very special group of people and the intention is to promote the product 'book in matters of applied linguistics' (in terms of marketing). Obviously, the text type, the fundamental intention and the context lead to a mental activity that can be described as a sort of mind mapping and top down processing, oriented to the question: What can the text deal with? The answer demands skilful guessing.
2. *Choosing the bridge-language(s).* The degree of intercomprehensibility neither exclusively depends on the countable characteristics that measures linguistic proximity between different languages nor on the subjective impression of linguistic 'psychotypology', but on the text type as well as on 'expectations' and attitudes that exist on the learner's side towards the TL, a text and its subject. It must be said that there are two fundamentally different ways of IC-operation: the perceptible formal data and the concept driven type. Concept driven IC can be systematically exploited in contexts of language for special purpose teaching, when pupils have a concrete idea of what is communicated. In that case they know the contents but still have to identify the forms. In the field of lexicon, the fundamental determinant of intercomprehensibility concerns the relationship between transferable and opaque forms as well as the logical arrangements of arguments transported by the text. As to the first point, computational studies comparing the use of cognates in various Romance languages and text-types show that oral lexicon differs more from one language to another because of the frequent use of *mots populaires* and non international words in oral speech than it is the case between written texts in the same languages (Meißner 2004c). It is also self-evident that a well structured text is easier to understand than a kind of gibberish leading to confusion. Another determinant of intercomprehensibility is cultural distance. People who belong to neighbouring cultures are more at ease in understanding each other than those who have a very limited knowledge about the target culture and whose own cultural background is quite different from it. These points must be taken into account by the intercomprehensive approach. They deal with the choice of texts with which IC can be trained.
3. *Connecting verbal form with content.* In any case, the first attempt at identification reveals proper nouns, toponyms, dates and cognates. Here lexical and morphological transfer takes place. In a second step, IC goes to the identification of syntactical patterns. In the range of listening IC, the word order is decisive for understanding. In regard to the Romance languages, the rule is that new information is always given in a 'following position' (anaphoric versus cataphoric dislocation):

(a) *Paul aurait dû faire le nécessaire*

1 2 3 4 5

(b) *Pablo habría debido hacer lo necesario*

1 2 3 4 5

(c) *Paolo avrebbe dovuto fare il necessario*

1 2 3 4 5

(d) *Paul hätte das Notwendige tun sollen*

1 2 5 4 3

(e) *Paul should have done what was necessary*

1 3 2 4 5

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As the structure of these sentences show, French learners listening to German will have to tackle the difficulty that information units are given in an order they do not expect. As Jamet (2007) could show, the obstacles do not exist for Italian learners listening to French. The example explains why the syntactical dimension can be decisive for understanding a language spontaneously. Obviously, it is necessary to consider the syntactic dimension too when teaching IC. Unfortunately most exercises remain in the lexical field. If in the classroom listening comprehension is targeted, this is an appropriate moment to explain to the learners how listening comprehension works and how it can be trained and tested (for auto-evaluation).

4. *Microscopic reiterative reading and listening.* It is self-evident that the full identification of bases of transfer demands ‘microscopical (reiterative) reading or listening’ which entails a mental processing far beyond the word-to-word identification and deep and large mental processing. It seems that learners employ top-down operations “compensatorily to plug gaps where their understanding of a text is incomplete” (Field 1999: 338). Stanovich (1980) calls this phenomenon the “interactive-compensatory mechanism”. In the case of IC, it must be added that top down-operations activate semantic schemes related to concepts of words and morphemes as well as to grammatical patterns which can potentially be found in all languages mentally activated. This stresses the importance of procedural knowledge in the bridge-languages concerning the different skills, which is decisive for listening comprehension. The lack of procedural knowledge in the field of listening comprehension and of deep processing initiated by encoding the TL as well the structural syntactical distance explain why Latin does not work very well in IC processing with modern Romance languages. The fact that good intercomprehensive readers and listeners can make regular use of routines of decoding/(encoding) located ‘between’ languages already explains that plurilingual microscopic reading is an effective way of interlingual routine building too. But IC does not only depend on ‘concept driven’ top down operations. It interacts with ‘data driven’ bottom up processing at the various levels of lexical form and content identification, going from the phon-level (*b-o-*) to the phonem/graphematic level (*book-ing*), to the lexematic (*booking*) identification and grammatical qualification (*noun, function...*) and even beyond.
5. *Plausibility control concerning semantics.* Learners succeed in decoding a message as far as they can give sense to it and their interpretation is supported by the identification of verbal forms. Tacit questions are: Is my interpretation of the message plausible? Does it really correspond to the situation where it is produced? Whereas this kind of controlling affects the communicative level, grammatical control goes to the formal side of the language data and to the grammar of hypotheses (see below).
6. *Control of our linguistic hypothesis.* The identification of formal, functional and semantic TL schemes leads to the construction of an instantaneous ‘grammar of hypotheses’ (GH) that reflects ‘systematicity’ in the way it is produced by the student’s *plurilingual interlanguage*.
 - a. Unlike the original concept of *interlanguage* (Selinker 1972), the IC approach stresses its plurilingual and ephemeral composition. Whereas interlanguage is pictured as systematic and dynamic, the GH actually is systematic and ephemeral, because it is modified by nearly each intercomprehensive procedure. Of course, the cognitive schemes of the GH cannot correspond to the linguistic norms of the TL. Further work must be done to win productive competence. When IC is used systematically and over a time span, students must continually adapt their

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hypotheses interacting with the linguistic schemes found in the bridge-language(s). This concerns all the languages activated as well as the interlingual correspondence rules. New cognitive schemes must be adapted to other contents of the GH and, vice-versa; 'old' schemes will be conformed to the more recent ones or will be extinguished. The cognitive operation model of Rumelhart/Norman (1978) seems suitable to describe the operations. The key-words are *accretion*, *tuning* and *structuring*.

Although this paper does not intend dealing with concrete methodological questions, the IC method has developed a special type of productive exercise which is worth mentioning. It consists of making the learner write texts in the TL. The pedagogical intention is not to increase or to test the learner's productive competence, but to use this text as a document that reflects his/her plurilingual interlanguage and that invites speaking about it. This kind of activity can be used for the construction of reports that document the increase of IC competence. This gives a basis upon which the GH can be built.

- b. A second kind of 'systematicity' affects interlingual correspondence-rules. It is obvious that each finding potentially modifies what a learner can exploit in order to construct new schemes or to identify bases of transfer. Thus we can say that retroactive transferring leads to an improvement of the knowledge in the bridge-languages too. It stabilises activated mental schemes in the plurilingual lexicon.

The consequences for the teaching of IC seem clear: They demand the organisation of pro- and retroactive interlingual transferring.

7. *Prophylaxis of errors.* As interlingual transfer processing makes the learner discover interlingual correspondence-rules as well as differences constantly, the IC method is a powerful tool to avoid interferences. Reproaches that this method produces regular interferences and false friends are wrong, because they are not based upon experiences with IC-learning and teaching (that implies very strong prophylactic strategies). They say much more about the lamentable results of traditional methods that did not focus on plurilingualism, than about the real risks linked to the systematic use of inferring techniques.
8. *Dictionary and grammar competence.* The points one to six tell learners what kinds of support they need to find good answers to the hypotheses triggered by the identification of lacunas and ambiguities. This concerns dictionaries, grammars, social support. Therefore the plurilingual approach demands and entails a certain ability to use dictionaries, grammars, etc. Experiences show that dictionary use entails an enhancement of auto-input.
9. *Monitoring of learning and learning processes.* Plurilingual and pluri-directional transferring is complicated and requires continuous awareness of the processes related to mentally interacting languages as well as to mental guidance. This point explains why the IC method must be considered as a MLLARS. The following points will explain this argument. They affect the macro-level of knowledge creation whereas micro-level strategies belong in our view to the more methodological sphere.
10. *Noticing and input enhancement.* Monitoring leads to a *controlled processing* which is relevant for successful multi-language learning. This argument is frequently advanced in relation with the so called 'interface-hypothesis' (see Schlak 1999). As a method that demands permanent controlling of interlingual pluridirectional as well as learning

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behavioural activities, the didactics of plurilingualism optimises input processing and can produce a kind of “self-generated input enhancement” (see Morkötter 2006: 46). In the context of didactics of plurilingualism or IC, the ‘input enhancement-hypothesis’ must therefore be modified and extended to plurilingual acquisition models. Analogically to the findings about ‘monolingual’ foreign language learning processing, it can be said that plurilingual activities generate a *plurilingual auto-input*. It seems that *noticing* works very strongly within the setting of acquiring plurilingualism too. Riemer/Eckerth (2000) rightly stress it as a strong link between the “distinguishable, but inseparable” (Schumann 1994: 234) cognitive and affective factors of language learning. “The noticing-hypothesis states that what learners notice in input is what becomes intake for learning.” (Schmidt 1995: 20; quoted by Riemer/Eckerth 2000: 230) It is self-evident that this aspect has a plurilingual dimension.

Regarding language learning in practice and task-construction, the findings of Riemer/Eckerth plead for task based interaction and not instruction.

11. *Revision of motivation and of attitudes.* Already in his early works about motivation of learners of a first and a second foreign language, Düwell (1979) underlines the importance of motivational transfer (“interference”) and of transferring language learning experiences. In 2003, he states that research about *plurilingual motivational interference* will be one of the most important tasks in plurilingual didactic research (2003: 348). Recent studies about language learners’ subjective theories (Kallenbach 1996; Mißler 1999; Morkötter 2005) prove that pupils continuously compare the impressions, feelings and experiences with different foreign languages, their use in intercultural communication and their acquisition in the class-room.

As the intercomprehensive method differs significantly from traditional, learners who took part in IC courses, regularly show a remarkable positive reaction. The reasons repeatedly quoted by these pupils are:

- the astonishing speed with which learners succeed in developing reading and listening competence in the new TL;
- plurilingual processing (looking for bases of transfer in different bridge-languages; controlling the learning steps) that leads regularly to new activities as well as to a new experience with languages and language learning. Several indices could be found that learners changed their learning related self-concept towards a more positive interpretation. As the intercomprehensive method focuses on the learner, its first basic principle is *learning by doing*, (i.e. reading a text in the TL, construct the sense and the HG). But differently to former approaches, the second principle is to make learners themselves evaluate the reasons why they forwarded explicitly or implicitly a certain linguistic or learning hypothesis.
- analysing the own learning processing puts the learners in the centre of class-room interests and activities. Pupils appreciate that they are no longer in a receptive, but in a very active position. They say that they became ‘researchers’ in matters of their own learning;
- pupils state that they learnt better. They realise this as encouraging. They ask why the IC-method is not present in “normal” foreign language lessons;
- the new experience with languages entails a revision of the pupils’ subjective theories about language learning and about the importance of foreign languages in general. To give an example, we quote the case of French. The experience that this language facilitated the understanding of Spanish entailed a new view of the

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bridge-language. Pupils were 'grateful' to French which gave reading competence to Italian and Spanish. In this case, the plurilingual approach could neutralise negative attitudes towards prior learned foreign languages and changed what psychologists call "causative attributions".

12. *Transfer of learning strategies.* This paper doesn't intend to give an overall survey of the abundant literature about learning strategies (see Düwell 1992; Little 2004; Morkötter 2005). If according to Oxford's influential taxonomy (1990)⁶, we distinguish six major direct strategies, i.e. (1) memory strategies (to build up lexical or grammatical associations; repeat things systematically, etc.), (2) cognitive strategies (intra- or interlingual transfer of rules or interlingual correspondence schemes) and (3) compensatory strategies (to describe a word that is not retrievable or fuzzy; to avoid a subject because it cannot be coped with), it goes nearly without saying that the transfer of available learning experiences to further learning tasks is 'normal'. If we go to the indirect strategies, i.e. (4) meta-cognitive strategies (to control learning processes or to evaluate the own learning progress at regular intervals), (5) affective strategies (control anxiety; maintain positive self-perceptions) and (6) social strategies (empathy, using the TL in intercultural communication as often as possible, etc.), it becomes apparent that intercomprehensive learning fosters strategies of learning languages. – Unfortunately, we do not have enough data.
13. *The compensating factor of strategy use:* There is little doubt that one factor can, to some extent, compensate deficits in neighbouring sectors. It could be observed that an eighteen years old bilingual German-Russian girl who had learnt English and Spanish at school for only three years succeeded more quickly in reading Italian than her monolingual classmates, although they knew French and Latin in addition and had spent considerably more time learning English and Spanish than Tatjana who came to Germany at the age of fourteen. An interview revealed that Tatjana made regular use of monitoring strategies.
14. Here is an open list of 'pedagogical key-tasks' in the area of MLLARS-competence – from A to Z:
 - b. Describe the way you found out that...
 - c. Can you expand this method to other phenomena of the language X or Y?
 - d. Why did you fail in your attempt to... linguistically?
 - e. Why did you fail in your attempt to ... behaviourally?
 - f. Compare the functions of analogical forms you could identify in a TL to the extent of functions related to its basis/bases of transfer in language X.
 - g. Compare your latest findings concerning the phenomenon X to the correspondent findings of your last session and explain what all these phenomena have in common/what is different.
 - h. What is in your opinion comparable in comparing (your) languages? What is not? Give some examples and explain your point of view.
 - i. What are your strategies to avoid the risk of false friends?
 - i. When speaking or when writing
 - ii. When reading or listening
 - j. Describe your behavioural strategies which conduced to successful transferring.
 - k. Compose a list of your errors and discuss their reasons: (a) linguistically and (b) concerning learning behaviour.

⁶ Little's (2004) critical remarks focus on the lack of unambiguousness of the categories.

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- l. How can you explain the following errors in DaF linguistically?
Endlich konnten die Eltern ihr Kind wieder in die Arme schlingen.
Give further examples.
Der Mensch muss essen, um mit dem Leben davonzukommen.
- m. What do these errors say about learning?
- n. Discuss these sentences with your teachers of English, French, Spanish.
- o. List the consequences for (your) further learning (and teaching).
- p. Define your needs to improve your learning.
 - i. Note the questions that appear when you are working with foreign languages involving words.
 1. when translating to your mother tongue
 2. when translating to a foreign TL
 - ii. Note the questions which appear when you are working with foreign languages involving grammar.
 1. What kind of information is needed?
 2. How must information be communicated for it to be understandable?
- q. List the questions and check several dictionaries and grammars.
- r. What are your criteria for the choice of a dictionary? For translating into your mother-tongue, for writing in the TL?
- s. Describe your attitudes towards learning foreign languages
- t. Do you believe that speaking foreign languages is a valuable addition to your life?
- u. What levels of competence, defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, have you achieved up to now? What will you achieve in what language?
- v. List the ten words in each of the languages you like best and give the reasons.
- w. List five words in each of your languages you always tend to forget.
- x. Discuss how you can learn best...
- y. What can you do to “have fun with languages”?
- z. What do you think about the IC-method? How can you make it profitable for you to learn ‘your’ languages?

7 Perspective

There are very strong indices that IC-teaching and learning as a multi-language and learning awareness raising strategy lead to a deeper and broader processing of foreign language data as well as to better learning. It is in the general interest that IC be integrated into foreign language teaching as it is practised day after day in school contexts as well as in adult education.

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