

The Development of Intercomprehension Skills at University

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Being a teacher of English and French and having Romanian as my mother tongue, I have tried to make my classes interactive while using intercomprehension techniques. Based on Berkeley Language Centre's *Teaching Romance languages Through Intercomprehension. Networking Hearts and Minds in the Language Classroom* (<http://blc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/DonatoBerkeley.pdf>), the purpose of the present paper is to present the scenario, the activities and the results of my intercomprehension activities. For example, one of the activities designed to develop these linguistic abilities is the presentation of an artist in English, French and Spanish, the questions being addressed in English, considered *lingua franca*. Another activity was based on *impromptu*, meaning students were required to express their opinion on topics launched by me in English and French and treated by my students in the foreign language they knew better.

Our theoretical and practical endeavour was based on the following objectives:

1. to measure the impact of this intercomprehension activity on my students, having as criteria the level of comprehension, the amount of information they understood, the interaction among them etc.
2. to identify the possible topics for discussion which engage students in a multi-language debate, taking into account also their specialization
3. to make connections among languages, to build linguistic connections between words belonging to the same linguistic root, being Latin languages (inherent intercomprehension) and to establish also bonds between terms of different origins (acquired intercomprehension)
4. to make learning an ongoing process, taking place outside the classroom (informal education)
5. to make students aware of the possibility of developing their linguistic skills by using platforms for intercomprehension.

What is the role of a foreign language teacher in the context of intercomprehension? Briefly, "to make pupils aware of this knowledge and to enable them to use this knowledge by developing the appropriate strategies" (Peter Doyé, the reference study called *Intercomprehension. Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe: from linguistic diversity to plurilingual education*, Council of Europe, 2005).

The results of my scenarios prove that, irrespective of the language taught in class (it may be of the same linguistic root or not), irrespective of my students' specialization (either realistic or humanistic), the human brain is capable of developing and making use of intercomprehension skills which need to be stimulated by appropriate activities, the final purposes being linguistic and cognitive growth.

Keywords: intercomprehension, inherent and acquired intercomprehension, linguistic cocktail, multiple intelligences, development.