

INTERCOMPREHENSION IN THE DIDACTICS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Abstract: *This work aims to show that an integrated approach to language teaching based on the principles of intercomprehension is applicable to educational institution, on the one hand with regard to the study plan, and on the other hand by adaptation of teaching methods. We have therefore attempted to delineate the pillars of an intercomprehensive approach by examining the concepts of intercomprehension and didactics of languages in order to analyze the English-speaking study plan, the means of teaching English in educational institution and propose ways to adapt the tasks proposed in these resources when necessary.*

Keywords: *interlinguistic, intercomprehension, didactics, cognitive resources*

Contact between the languages taught is often avoided for fear of confusing students. The use of interlinguistic comparison is not researched properly and students frequently learn language structures by “chunks”, that is to say by “pieces” learned by heart and which can be reused in different contexts. The emphasis is not on observing the structure of the language, but on communicating. However, it seems easier for us to learn a language by forging links with our previous knowledge and more particularly with our linguistic knowledge in other languages. Moreover, it is not uncommon to hear that the more languages you know, the easier it is to learn new ones. It therefore seems difficult to us to learn a language without taking an interest in its structure and its similarities with other languages.

Given the multilingual context of classes, of Switzerland and Europe, intercomprehension could provide interesting tools for language teaching. This can take several forms in the school environment: “raising awareness, initiation, learning. However, it would seem that for the moment only the first two levels of this scale are implemented in the classes, in particular through learning activities. awakening to languages:

“But once you have become aware of the diversity of languages, what do you do with it? After the awareness and initiation stages, what practices does the school offer? It is clear that the landscape is terribly monocoloured. (Escudé&Janin, 2010: 111)

Even if the languages concerned - L1 (UZ), L2 (RU) and L3 (EN) - do not belong strictly speaking to the same family of languages, we believe that an integrated approach to the teaching of these languages on the principles of intercomprehension is applicable to schools, colleges, and universities, on the one hand with regard to the plan of studies and on the other hand by an adaptation of the means of teaching. To answer our research question, we first looked at the scientific literature in order to try to clarify the concepts of intercomprehension and didactics of foreign languages; to outline the pillars of a methodology based on mutual understanding; and to explain the didactic relevance of such an approach.

Our intention is to integrate the principles of this approach into current practices in order to accelerate language learning through thoughtful observation of the language. The purpose of this article is to show that interlinguistic comparison is a powerful lever for learning that makes it possible to reconsider language as an object of study in itself and not to be limited to its purely communicative aspect.

In the case of linguistic proximity, the student does not need to completely reconstruct the linguistic system of the language studied. He will be able to pass from one language to another by superimposing the language studied on his mother tongue: he will remain on the surface of the language studied with often at the beginning several interlinguistic interferences.

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The method described by Doyé (2005) seems to us to constitute a good theoretical synthesis of the different approaches encountered in the literature. For Doyé, the role of teachers is above all to carefully examine the needs of students because, in general, they often already have considerable cognitive resources that can be easily exploited. Teachers should therefore:

help students become aware of these valuable resources;

empower students to use these resources using appropriate strategies.

Doyé emphasizes the fact that each student has different cognitive resources. It is therefore not necessary to start from a common base for the whole class. It is more relevant to help students identify the various categories of knowledge that can lead them to identify the meaning of the message.

Based on the writings of several authors (Klein & Stegmann 2000, Pencheva & Shopov 2003, Rieder 2002), Doyé proposes a classification of the categories of relevant knowledge in the intercomprehensive approach: general knowledge; cultural knowledge; situational knowledge; behavioral knowledge; pragmatic knowledge; scriptural knowledge; phonological knowledge; grammatical knowledge and lexical knowledge. According to Doyé, all students benefit from a certain cognitive background in each of these areas and teachers are there to help them acquire strategies allowing them to draw on these resources to understand the meaning of messages expressed in a foreign language. We believe that it can be difficult in elementary school to use this category of knowledge as a pillar of an intercomprehensive approach. Nevertheless cultural knowledge can be a great help in understanding for an adult, but much less so for a child who is just beginning to build their cultural baggage.

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