

AN INTERCOMPREHENSION-BASED APPROACH AND TEACHING METHOD ACCESSIBLE TO STUDENTS WITH SLN (SPECIFIC LANGUAGE NEEDS): A FIRST EXPLORATION OF THE POINTS OF CONVERGENCE

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1. THE TERMS OF THE RESEARCH

1.1. *What are SLN?*

By Specific Language Needs (which we shall henceforth refer to as SLN) we understand:

A combination of the permanent or temporary operational evolutive difficulties in an educational and or learning environment, caused by the interaction of various health factors, according to the ICF² model, which is concerned primarily with the development of communicative competence in both language and the mother tongue and significantly affects learning other languages (second, foreign and classical) upto the point where intervention is required for the adaptation, integration or restructuring of the process of language teaching (Daloiso, 2013: 644).

SLN can stem from problems in the following areas:

- *Communication*, for example, a social communication disorder (Semantic- Pragmatic disorder);
- *Language*, for example, difficulties with the phonetic-phonological elements, or in general with *receptive and expressive ability*;
- *Learning difficulties*, for example, individuals with Specific Learning Difficulties (henceforth referred to as SpLD) which present constant learning difficulties in basic scholastic abilities , specific reading, writing and numeracy skills.

From a pedagogical point of view, SLN are part of the unlimited macro-category of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (henceforth referred to as SEND). Interventions for students with SLN are not those of a clinical nature, but an *educational and language learning* nature (foreign language teaching).

1.2. *What is neurodiversity?*

Toward the end of the 90's, among those studying autism, an educational movement was born, which was known as “neurodiversity” (Blume, 1998; Singer, 1999). Since then,

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² ICF, International Classification of Diseases.

the neurodiversity movement has gained members, and has spread to include other disability “labels” such as learning disabilities, emotional disorders, behavioral problems, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Hendrickx, 2010; Pollak, 2009).

The aim of this educational movement is to extend the positive attitude which 21st century society has towards other differences, such as cultural differences, or biodiversity, which are seen as cultural treasures, because they are “exceptional”, to all of these “labels”.

The theory of neurodiversity (Daloiso, 2016: 207) does not ignore the existence of specific disorders, but suggests reinterpreting the abnormalities as individual differences at a cerebral and cognitive level.

Combining the theory of neurodiversity and the definition of SLN, it can be seen that the problem is more the environment than the individual. According to Armstrong (2012), confirming the principles of neurodiversity means trying to understand the *strengths* of each learner in order to develop the most efficient and effective teaching strategies.

Once the strengths of students with SEND have been identified, the educator needs to find a way to create “positive niches”, namely favourable environments, where the students can flourish, playing down their weaknesses and emphasising their strengths.

This way of thinking also includes the philosophy of the *Universal Design for Learning* (Rose, Meyer, 2002), a process which aims to remove the barriers to learning for students with disabilities in a way which promotes all students’ ability to learn (not just those with disabilities).

1.3. *What is the intercomprehension approach?*

In language teaching four *plural approaches* have been developed:

1. *Péveil aux langues (Awakening to languages)*;
2. *intercomprehension* between related languages (henceforth IC);
3. *the intercultural approach*;
4. *the integrated teaching* of languages learnt.

These approaches share the following characteristics (Candelier *et al.*, 2012):

- The *psycholinguistic dimension*, which allows the learner to build on their existing knowledge, whether this is of a linguistic nature or not, in order to develop new skills;
- The *linguistic dimension*, in which the learner is encouraged to consider linguistic phenomena in a holistic way, instead of learning isolated language points, which leads to a better understanding of how languages work in general;
- The *psycho-cognitive dimension*, this method allows the learner to detach himself from his L1 and enter into other languages more easily thanks to this detached attitude;
- The *socio-linguistic dimension* which favours the recognition of linguistic and cultural diversity, and as a result, a better integration of non-native language learners, whether these are immigrants, or speakers of ignored or unpopular regional languages.

With IC, a communicative situation can occur in which interlocutors understand each other even though they are speaking different languages.

The exchange may be written or oral, face to face or at a distance, synchronised or unsynchronised. In practice, in this form of plurilingual communication, each person understands the language of the others and expresses himself in the language or languages which he has mastered, thus establishing equality in the dialogue, while at the same time, on different levels developing knowledge of the languages in which the interlocutors have receptive competence (that is understanding), and not productive competence.

With the diversity of the aims and adopted techniques, the various intercomprehension methodologies tend to be identified by the following *principles* which constitute the minimum common denominator of teaching:

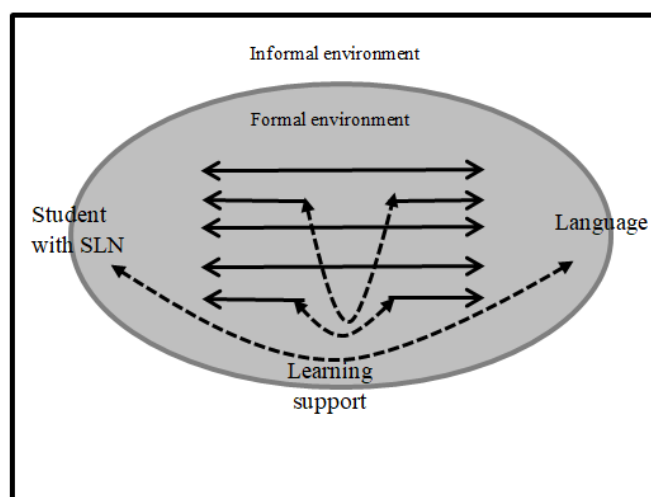
- *Plurilingual approach*, as IC ability can be developed simultaneously in more than one language in the context of just one teaching programme;
- *Recourse to partial competence* as indicated in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001);
- *Focus on understanding*, in which the learners are required to become aware of the way it is necessary to express themselves in order to be understood; adapting to each other, to the different ways languages work, to different levels of language, and to different kinds of text;
- *Analysis of the language* conducted first in an inductive way, and later more explicitly;
- *Developing strategic and metacognitive understanding and competence.*

1.4. *What is accessible language teaching?*

The difficulties which a student with SLN encounters while learning languages at school depend not only on his disability, but also on the way in which the language is taught. In contrast with how the L1 is spontaneously learnt, language teaching is done in a formal and structured context, and planned and run by specialists, using specific materials and their chosen methodological choices.

The formative success of a student with SLN depends on the level of accessibility encouraged by the language teachers and included in the didactic pathway. Figure 1 shows a representation of the “fragmented” relationship between a language and student with SLN, and the role of mediation which is necessary, in the form of help and support, either in a formal environment (at school) or an informal environment (studying at home).

Figure 1. *Model of accessible language teaching (Melero Rodriguez, 2012: 516)*



By accessible language teaching (Daloiso, 2016), we mean the process leading to the development of a language learning environment for students with SLN which is free from barriers. Accessible language teaching is important in all phases of language teaching, and it is accomplished by language teaching on two levels:

1. The *macro* level which involves basic theoretical language education choices (the choice of learning objectives, from the general framework of methodology, and evaluation criteria) and the continuity of language teaching on a horizontal and vertical level;
2. The *micro* level which involves strategies for increasing accessibility to individual segments of the language teaching pathway and the instruments necessary in order to achieve language education.

Interventions on a macro and micro level should be put into a specific *learning context*.

2. LANGUAGE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH SLN

Having defined the terms of the research, we need to highlight the characteristics of students with SLN, and how they may be helped in their language learning.

2.1. *Typical issues for students with SLN*

It can not be taken for granted that learners with SLN will have the required language skills or automatically reach any objectives (for example, writing skills or metalinguistic analysis) where their disability means that mental processes do not correctly translate into ability, concrete activities, or correct and/or efficient actions; this can have a very serious effect on a student's ability to socially interact with language in the world.

The first step that a teacher must make is to create a *functional language learning profile for the student*, by systematically observing the difficulties, interpreting the specialist diagnosis, and discovering the student's learning style. There are specific tools dedicated to completing this task (Daloiso, 2015: 133 ss.). A fundamental analysis should also specify the context in which languages are taught and in which they are learnt as L1, L2 (second language), FL (Foreign Language) or CL (Classical Language)³, determine the differences in methods used, the students' requirements, and the teaching objectives that the teachers pursue.

2.2. *The methodological dimension*

As explained in 1.4, language teaching interventions to help students with SLN can be divided into two types, macro accessibility interventions and micro accessibility interventions.

2.2.1. *Macro accessibility*

At a macro accessibility level, language teachers who want to support students with SLN should pay particular attention to the *general framework of methodology*. This influences the vision of language⁴, and the role given to *language analysis*, where it is necessary to

³ For L2 see Celentin (2016), for LC see Grasso (2017).

⁴ Each educational approach can present advantages and disadvantages for students with SLN: the teacher needs to be aware of this in order to make the best choices according to the student's learning style and the goals they need to achieve. The grammar-translation approach, for example, does not require students to

consider the position of the language analysis phase on the language teaching pathway and the place of grammar inside a “question of meaning” which helps students recognise the rules, besides the need to explicitly teach the rules of the language system and strategies (which does not exclude an inductive approach).

It is also important that teachers focus students’ attention on the *basic components of the language*, in particular phonology, and spelling, and always keep the *centrality of the processes* regarding their content in mind, with the final aim being learner autonomy.

Still on the macro accessibility level, *language teaching continuity* is fundamentally important both in a horizontal sense, providing parallels between L1, FL and CL, through sharing any general methodology guidelines achievable across different languages, and in a vertical sense, during the various school years, sharing the functional language teaching profiles and the individual learning plans of each student.

2.2.2. *Micro accessibility*

At the micro accessibility level, language teachers should pay particular attention to the *delivery of lessons* as certain elements may be especially challenging for students with SLN because language is the only instrument of communication which is able to describe itself, and as a result, language becomes both the object studied and the means of communication.

The versatility of skills and knowledge required for LS lessons happens in a series of activities and exercises. A SLN student often struggles to follow this pattern and train of thoughts of the person delivering the class: LS lessons should, therefore, be systematic and structured following language teaching routines.

It is vital to remember that some teaching practices (such as students reading out loud, dictation, copying, especially from the white or black board, doing activities with no scaffolding) may result in problems for SLN students who do not have the skills necessary to complete these tasks. In addition, it is also important to grade *language* manuals based on their accessibility.

Interventions for both macro and micro accessibility are always done in a specific *context* where many different dimensions should be considered. For SLN students the *emotional dimension* is particularly sensitive; these students often have a psychological profile characterised by low motivation and fragile relationships with adults and classmates. The *physical characteristics of the work environment*, in particular multimedia resources which often come with books (for example digital books, interactive whiteboards, voice synthesizers etc.) can become useful instruments to help compensate for these problems.

2.3. *Difficulties understanding written texts and their treatment*

As we have emphasised in the previous paragraphs, difficulties with understanding written texts result in the larger issue of limiting the school careers of learners with SLN, as these difficulties limit the resources they are able to use for studying.

immediately produce language and allows them to gradually understand language structures, however it suppresses the phases of experience and production (typical to L1 learning) and is more demanding on students with Semantic-Pragmatic disorder. On the other hand, a functional approach can provoke anxiety about learning languages different from the student’s L1 and can be problematic for students with verbal dyspraxia and phonetic- phonological deficit. However this approach focuses on effective communication without the need for grammatical accuracy and requires less language analysis.

Factors causing understanding difficulties are many and can be *endogenous or exogenic*.

In the first group are factors involving *body functions and structures* and it therefore includes *reading difficulties*, (dyslexia and specific problems with understanding written texts), *speech and language difficulties* (students with delayed speech, and deaf students), and *limited cognitive function*.

Whereas the second group deals with *environmental conditions* among which are the *family situation* (sometimes including language deprivation), the *quality* of teaching received, and “the Matthew effect”⁵.

Common traits which characterise these learners are deficits in the processes linked to understanding difficulties categorised into *three areas*; each of these areas may be the focus of a targeted remedial learning intervention seen below:

1. *Technical competence*, which controls micro processes necessary for decoding written texts (a competence which is only affected by dyslexia);
2. *Strategic competence*, which gives control to macro processes and refers therefore to the integration of information by activating strategies (for example checking the mechanisms of textual cohesion and coherence), “grammatical anticipation” and text reconstruction (summary, paraphrasing and translation);
3. *Meta- strategic competence*, which involves meta processes and therefore combines the understanding the reader has about the understanding process, allowing them to choose the best strategy to complete a task, to monitor understanding and tackle obstacles in a strategic way.

In literature *poor readers* are defined as those who have mastered the technical ability to decode texts but struggle with understanding what they have read.

There is no clear border between dyslexic students and poor readers, especially in a school context, where dyslexic students improve (slowly) in decoding and in switching between macro competence and micro processes. At the same time, the academic level of the texts required to be read increases, and the student therefore needs to activate both macro and micro processes to affront the new academic demands and consequently academic performance drops.

This difficulty has been highlighted recently in the context of FL learning, because FL teaching does not normally require specific and systematic teaching of phonics and how they correspond to spelling in the target language. In addition, teaching comprehension is often focused on understanding the whole text, and not on the development of reading strategies.

In special language teaching, instead of the term *good reader* vs *poor reader* (a distinction based on results) the term *expert reader* vs *inexpert reader* is preferred (a distinction based on the learner’s experience and ability to activate strategies and processes).

Whatever the reasons for their difficulties, students who struggle to understand written texts, fall into the category of *inexpert readers*, and can be identified by the following characteristics in their approach to reading (Klingner, Vaugh, Boardmann in Daloso, 2015):

⁵ In sociology the “Matthew effect” means that in certain situations, new resources are distributed among the entitled, in a way which is proportional to what they already have, and so the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. This expression comes from verse 25-29 of the Gospel of Matthew which says «For whoever has will be given more and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have shall be taken from them». In pedagogy, we use this effect to refer to the stigma which often accompanies certain students, starting with poor results and the attitude of low motivation which they demonstrate. Often, SpLD is mistaken for laziness, listlessness, lack of attention, and even when recognised, it remains a social stigma.

- *A passive approach to the text*: all the content is treated in the same way because the learner lacks the ability to recognise a reading objective;
- *Focus on decoding instead of on the meaning of the text*;
- *Difficulty forming hypotheses about the text*;
- *Using one single method of reading*, which is normally linear and sequential;
- *Difficulties in making use of, or recognising contextual, cotextual and paratextual clues*;
- *Lack of knowledge of their own level of understanding* (the student does not realise that s(he) is not understanding);
- *Difficulties organizing and summarising content read*.

Faced with a LS text, an inexperienced reader therefore encounters *technical competence* difficulties (in decoding opaque language, processes which are different from those activated for transparent language are activated) and also meta strategic and strategic difficulties (unknown words, idiomatic expressions, implicit cultural references etc).

A remedial language teaching intervention should therefore prioritise focusing on improving meta strategic competence, as this is the only way a teacher can help a student remodel and improve their own strategic competence (of which the student is often unaware). We will deal with this point more thoroughly in the following paragraph.

2.4. *Key points in special language teaching*

Even though it is a new idea, special language teaching already has a very detailed methodology (see Daloiso, 2015 for a summary). In this paragraph we will examine two essential aspects which are particularly important in comparing special language teaching with the IC approach.

2.4.1. *The central role of meta strategic competence*

As discussed in the previous paragraph, it is essential for students with SLN to work in a way that focuses on meta strategic competence in order to achieve academic success.

Figure 2 highlights the differences between language teaching focused on the product (ie comprehension of a text) and language teaching focused on the process (ie developing the reader's meta strategic competence).

There are already suggestions remedial work on this meta strategic competence, but they largely focus on L1 teaching. (an example can be found in Cisotto and Gruppo RDL, 2015). Despite the fact that it is true that understanding written texts in L1 and FL these are interdisciplinary competences, the processes for understanding an L1 and FL text draw upon different kinds of specific experiences.

It is therefore vital to work with students who have understanding difficulties on macro and meta processes in the LS.

It is important to underline the fact that apart from the differences determined by context, in L1, LS and LC learning, there are important similarities, such as the cognitive and language processes underlying language learning, and elements which are constant in language teaching. In accessible language teaching, it is necessary to promote the strengthening of linguistic abilities based on an interdisciplinary remedial intervention, which is crucial for the different languages on the academic curriculum. This intervention should be conducted according to the methodologies these languages share.

Figure 2. *A comparison between language teaching focusing on the text and language teaching focusing on the reader*

	LANGUAGE TEACHING FOCUSING ON THE TEXT	LANGUAGE TEACHING FOCUSING ON THE READER
SUBJECT	Activities are focused on the text.	The text is a pretext used for working on comprehension strategies in a detailed and systematic way. It is student centred.
	The teacher is a facilitator for reading the text.	The teacher is a mediator between the student and the text.
OBJECTIVE	To understand the content of the text. The student is evaluated based on how much of the text (s)he has understood.	To develop expert readers who know how to use the correct comprehension strategies for decoding written texts.
PROCESSES ACTIVATED	Micro and macro processes	Micro, macro and meta processes.
	Only students who are already expert readers implicitly activate macro processes.	Processes activated fully by all readers.
EDUCATIONAL PATHWAY	Pre-reading, reading, and post-reading phases.	Pre-reading, reading, and post-reading phases.
	Focused on content (key words in the text, exercises checking comprehension).	Focused on developing meta cognitive ability (knowing how to define a reading objective, formulate a hypothesis, interact with the text, and monitor comprehension).

2.4.2. *Promoting learner autonomy*

Students with SLN often have low levels of motivation, self esteem, and sense of self-efficacy when studying languages. It is therefore important to do remedial work with a strong focus on learner autonomy, that is to say, the ability to take control of their own learning.

Methods of remedial teaching intervention which can encourage this rely on:

- making the student aware of their language learning style, of their limitations and resources available to them;
- promoting metacognitive pathways;
- promoting educating the entire class on the “diversity in language learning” (cfr. § 1.2).

3. INTERCOMPREHENSIVE APPROACH AND ACCESSIBLE LANGUAGE TEACHING: CONVERGENCE POINTS

The dominant trends in the methodology of language teaching are distinguished by avoidance and the fear of L1 interference, research on direct access to the FL, L2, CL objectives, the refusal to support learning with students' previous knowledge because of the fear of "false friends" and other sources of mistakes, (such as fossilisation and L1 transference etc.) .

IC learning instead welcomes all these characteristics as strengths and also aims at the development of transferable, interdisciplinary skills, particularly collaboration, communication, learning strategies, creative thinking and an analytical attitude (Candelier *et al.*, 2012).

In the following paragraphs we are going to try to isolate those methodological ideas which, based on our studies, can be identified as convergence points between the IC teaching approach, and accessible language teaching, taking into consideration the strengths of this approach in the context of language education⁶.

3.1. *Phonological Awareness*

In the field of remedial intervention for language requirements , Daloiso (2015) emphasises the preliminary importance of remedial interventions on phonological awareness in the area of special FL teaching, that is, the process which encourages familiarising the student with the sound structures of the target language. The advantage of these remedial interventions is huge for both students with and without SLN.

There have only recently been in depth studies into the development of phonological competence of students using the IC teaching approach (Escoubas Benveniste, 2016), but without a doubt the hard work done on both oral and written comprehension is inseparable from the phonological sounds of the language studied. Escudé (2014) reveals a type of "hypothetical phonology" in students following an IC course, giving them the ability to construct texts in their own words, enabling them to access authentic phonetics of the languages studied in a faster way.

3.2. *Autonomy*

The right to approximation and not having to understand everything is central to the IC approach: this is a liberating discovery for learners, which thus leads to learner autonomy. Focusing on how language systems function, the learners can draw parallels with language systems which they already know, and gain more independence in their learning by developing, the skill of deduction, amongst others.

Working on authentic texts allows the level of language input received to be increased in a consistent way, and the learner must then try their hardest to resolve problems encountered alone, (even when a teacher is present), with the support of the textbook, or, as a last resort, the teacher.

⁶ The convergence points listed come from a personal study carried out starting from studies on the two areas of investigation (teaching using the IC approach and accessible language teaching). This paper will be mainly dedicated to explaining the theoretical and speculative elements characterising it. In the next study, which is already in process, we intend to deal with methodological aspects which are more orientated to teaching practice.

The teacher is a facilitator who should attempt to intervene as little as possible, their job is to understand the true comprehension difficulties of the learners, encourage and stimulate and group remedial intervention, while respecting the time the learner needs in order to be guided towards learner autonomy, and to develop comprehension skills.

3.3. *Motivation*

When starting to learn a new FL, some students with SLN have little confidence in their ability, while others have unrealistic expectations. It is necessary to raise the self esteem of the first group, whereas it is important to set objectives and give feedback to prevent the second group from losing motivation.

The IC approach changes the students' "wary" attitude to language learning, which is seen as complex: it makes them realise that receptive competence is important and facilitates a "way into" communication, there is less cognitive investment, and it is within reach of more people of any age.

3.4. *Managing language anxiety*

A relaxed learning environment, which accepts evolutive differences is necessary in order to manage language anxiety⁷. Progression in IC means working backwards with compared to traditional language learning approaches: instead of progressing on a parallel level with all skills, IC mainly develops the ability to understand written texts up to a certain level (normally B1). The student can then "go back" and develop the other skills, with stronger foundations, and with a lower level of anxiety.

3.5. *Meta strategic competence*

The IC approach has a strong value in the meta cognitive acquisition of the main comprehension strategies, which are applicable to all languages and allow for a higher level of learner autonomy and the emancipation of the learner into language learning (Garbarino, 2015). When working on comprehension, the reader needs to draw on his encyclopedic knowledge: a word which creates difficulties can be understood because the overall theme of the text suggests a limited number of possibile meanings.

3.6. *Using compensation strategies*

Audio and video resources are useful instruments to help compensate for LS learning difficulties, as they allow for the activation of other learning channels (audio tracks lift the weight of decoding written texts, video clips help with non-verbal communication), provide less tiring activities, provide a correct language model and allow learners to autonomously manage their language resources.

⁷ As well as character anxiety, there is also anxiety linked to FL performance. (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986) which can become exacerbated in students with SLN. This condition can have many consequences on students, for example, difficulties in remembering notions, and well known information, the inability to self-correct, and the lack of ability to receive external information.

However, it is often the case that students with SLN do not willingly use these resources in class, because these emphasise how they are “different” (Daloiso, 2014).

In the IC approach, reading with speech synthesis, or reading out loud is for the benefit of the whole class. Reading out loud permits clarification about the construction of phrases (Bonvino *et al.*, 2011) and provides information on word formation, shows symmetry between certain constructions and how close different languages are to each other when layout is not clear.

3.7. *Induction and explicit teaching*

In accessible language teaching the journey towards the comprehension of written texts is very close to that of the IC approach. Reception is accompanied and guided by the teacher who has to develop continuous comprehension activities (Daloiso, 2016).

Lexis is the first thing to intervene in comprehension (both in the L1 and L2/FL) and transparency and opacity⁸ are particularly important.

The aim of the IC approach is to awaken in the learner the ability to deduce the meaning behind L2 words, using words they already know, following the rules of transition (for example: *chateau* → *castello*, *chapeau* → *cappello*, *chameau* → *cammello*). False friends are in the minority compared to real friends.

The IC approach does not tackle the *grammatical dimension* in an autonomous way: it is presented as part of the reading/ comprehension process, with its role disguised as that of constructing meaning.

There is no specific focus on grammar before reading a text, even if this could provide information which would make the exercise easier.

In fact, to begin with, the reader is not interested in grammar, s/he only becomes interested in this once the exercise of reading has become automatic.

Information is presented in the context necessary for completing the task which is that of comprehension. This process is much easier when it is put into practice starting from the learners’ needs at the moment in which these needs manifest themselves. (Blanche-Benveniste, 2001).

3.8. *Work on separate abilities and understanding written texts*

As we have seen, students with SLN need to do intensive preliminary work on their meta phonological abilities and skills understanding written texts.

In the IC approach these are focused on separately, and the effort put into one skill can have an equally positive effect on the other skills and abilities. The advantages of this, according to Caddéo e Jamet (2013: 29) are undeniable and:

Pour preuve, dans le cas d'élèves en difficultés, par exemple, les “diagnostics” se font plus précis (troubles de l'écriture, trouble de la lecture, trouble de la parole, etc.) et le travail de renforcement n'est mené que sur une compétence.

The first step in the process of understanding a text is to ask the learner for its “transposition” into their L1, this is not a translation, but a *thinking out loud exercise* which

⁸ *Transparent*: a word that is understood without having ever been seen and for which we can deduce the meaning. *Opaque*: a word whose meaning remains inaccessible both in and out of context. Grammatical words are often opaque, and have very different forms from one language to another.

not only takes into account the meaning but also the process activated in order to decode it and the progressive adjustments that are made. The IC method is based on the *transfer principle* and aims at making it possible for the learner to be able to match sounds to spelling and thus decode a word, a phrase, or an entire text, understand its meaning (global or objective) with or without the help of contextualised images.

Language transfer works at both a linguistic and extralinguistic (the interpretation of cultural phenomena and situations) level. Comprehension activities accompany students toward the *process of inference* (establishing the relationship between the semantic propositions which are being worked on, those which have been previously dealt with, and knowledge retained in the long term memory). This process allows implicit information conveyed in the text to be made explicit and to enrich the mental image of the content of the text, and by consequence, for a model of the situation evoked in the text to be made (Bougé, Cailliès, 2004: 80).

3.9. *The role of the L1 in learning a FL*

In the IC approach, the teacher plays the intermediary between the text and the learner, using the learner's L1: if the teacher used the target language, the learner would have to manage more levels of understanding and this could slow down completion of the target exercise, and change the objectives. Using the learner's L1 at the start of the learning process has a *reassuring facilitating* effect (Caddéo, Jamet, 2013): the learner is an observer of how the language works, while also beginning to gain valuable knowledge which will be useful when the time comes to work on language production. This also has a *reflective* effect: by discovering how other languages work, the learner rediscovers his own L1.

During the comprehension of an L2 text, recalling what has been previously understood, and the overall theme of the text occurs more frequently than when reading an L1 text. This retroactivation process supports memory, which can rapidly become saturated by reading exercises due to the effort required⁹.

3.10. *The IC approach as a “positive niche”*

The IC approach coincides with accessible teaching as far as it proposes classroom practices which make learning accessible to all (not only those who have “special needs”) it also promotes strategies which are useful to all language learners.

Each of us has a “different brain”, as underlined in the paragraph on *neurodiversity* (§ 1.2). The larger the range of strategies put into practice in the classroom, the more inclusive teaching becomes, the less distinctions the teacher makes, the less anxiety is felt by those who already feel uncomfortable for other reasons¹⁰.

As previously stated, it is the learning environment which has a greater effect on learning not the person who has to learn: «disability is a social phenomenon produced by a society's failure to respond adequately to impairment» (Titchkosky, Michalko, 2014: 101).

The IC approach stimulates a *modus operandi* in which cooperation is the basis of success: everyone knows something and everyone needs to learn something, and the need of every classmate is felt since none can be ignored. The IC approach does not suggest

⁹ For application in a teaching environment for students with SLN, see Melero Rodríguez and Jiménez Pascual (2018) for Spanish and Celentin, Raschini (c.d.s) for French.

¹⁰ We would like to thank our colleague Susana Benavente Ferrera for this reflection.

“compensatory measures”, such as those set out for students with SEND, but instead offers the possibility to create a democratic and equal society in which each member uses his own knowledge to help others and to the benefit everyone.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have attempted to combine two approaches, which have not been linked until now. What unites them, in our opinion, lies in putting our heart into teaching processes, instead of focusing solely on the product, thereby providing a variety of “ways in” and “ways out” for students, which are appropriate to their ability and level of knowledge.

We are convinced that inclusion does not happen by multiplying the labels which students are given in class, but with the creation of “open” learning tasks (Celentin e Luise, c.d.s) which give incentives for the assumption of diversified roles and the development of strategic knowledge.

We intend to further develop our reflections on this argument, seeking to create a proposal for the inclusion of the IC approach in school language education.

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