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Learning strategies in pluralistic approaches to language learning.

A study of "Intercomprehension between Romance languages" university students

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ABSTRACT

Language learning strategies are one of the most fruitful fields of research in glottodidactics. While the vast majority of experimental studies have examined the strategies employed to learn one language in isolation, strategy issues related to pluralistic approaches to language teaching were not explored as thoroughly. The present study was designed to address this research gap by examining strategy use in the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* course, based on a pluralistic approach and held at the University of Verona. The purpose of this work was to (1) identify the strategies used by the *Intercomprehension* students and to (2) compare their strategy pattern with those of other language learners, not enrolled on the *Intercomprehension* course. To collect perceptions of strategy use, we administered a questionnaire composed of the SILL (Oxford, 1990) and an additional section based on the strategies reported in the FREPA (2012). Besides, we used a think-aloud procedure to detect the strategies used by the Intercomprehension students as they were faced with a comprehension task in an unfamiliar Romance language (Galician). Results showed that the students of intercomprehension were high strategy users, thus used strategies more frequently than their counterparts, who were medium strategy users. Similarly, the former participants owned a greater amount of theoretical knowledge of strategies than the latter. The think-aloud procedure revealed that students experienced in intercomprehension used a wide range of strategies drawn from the cognitive, compensation and metacognitive categories. The most interesting result was that subjects

were able to combine several strategies to tackle non-transparent words.

INTRODUCTION

Since the pioneering studies of Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975), language learning strategies have received an increasing amount of attention in glottodidactics. Among the various fields of research, one area has raised the interest of scholars: the analysis of the strategies employed by language students in different learning contexts. Since the devising of the SILL (Oxford, 1990), language learning strategies have been studied mostly in relation to ordinary language courses, that is, courses where one language is taught in isolation. However, the advent of plurilingualism has led to the creation of pluralistic approaches - such as intercomprehension- that take into account more than one language simultaneously. So far, no study has been found that used the SILL to examine the strategic pattern of intercomprehension students. Therefore, this thesis was designed to address this research gap by examining strategy use in the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* course, held at the University of Verona. The purpose of this thesis is to use the SILL to understand how frequently intercomprehension students use language learning strategies, both on the whole and with respect to the six categories comprised in the SILL. Also, the theoretical knowledge of strategies is assessed through a self-designed questionnaire called SKILL. The data gathered from these instruments are then compared to those of other language learners, not enrolled on the *Intercomprehension* course. In addition, this study uses a think-aloud protocol concurrent to a comprehension task in an unfamiliar Romance language (Galician). This procedure is conducted to identify the actual selection and

implementation of strategies by the students of intercomprehension only.

This thesis is organised as follows. The first chapter is intended as an introduction to the notion of language learning strategies. Specifically, it includes the definition of strategies, their theoretical framework and classification, and the review of the studies that used the SILL to examine strategy use. Then, chapter 2 describes the principles of intercomprehension, focusing on the EuroComRom method, since it is the method adopted in the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* course of the University of Verona. The present case study is described in rich detail in chapter 3, while the results are presented in the fourth chapter. Finally, the last chapter answers the three research questions of this thesis, discussing the results in light of previous strategy studies. The closing chapter also includes the implications that can be drawn from the findings. Specifically, the possibility of introducing intercomprehension strategies in ordinary language courses is suggested, as well as the need for explicit and integrated strategy instruction.

1. LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Although almost fifty years have passed since the earliest studies on language learning strategies, to date, there still are “no consensus” and a great deal of “confusion” in this field (O’Malley *et al.* 1985a*,* p. 22). Therefore, this chapter will first clarify the notion of language learning strategies, providing the definition that will be used throughout the present case study (section 1.1). Subsequently, the theoretical framework of strategies will be discussed in section 1.2. Then, we will describe the strategy classification adopted in this thesis, explaining why it is the most relevant for the purposes of this case study. Finally, section 1.4 will report a brief overview of SILL-gauged studies, as we will later refer to these researches as the benchmark for our work.

1.1 Defining language learning strategies

As previously mentioned, the beginning of the studies on language learning strategy dates back to the mid-seventies. In those years, the cognitive view of language learning imposed, raising the awareness that every student learns languages in a unique, different way (Yang 1992, p. 15). This is the epistemological context whereby the “Good Language Learner” studies thrived (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975; Naiman *et al.* 1978).

In these studies, the definitions of learning strategies were broad and, to a certain extent, ambiguous. In one of the earliest works of this field, Rubin defined learning strategies

as “the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge” (1975, p.43). However, some of the seven strategies mentioned in her work could be labelled as learner’s personal characteristics (e.g. “having a strong drive to communicate” and “not being inhibited”). The same applies to Stern’s work (1975). In fact, the first strategy of his list is the rather vague statement that a good language learner has “a personal learning style or positive learning strategies” (p. 316). In a later work (1992, p.261), the same author described strategies as “broadly conceived intentional directions”. Nonetheless, as Griffith pointed out (2004, p. 3), this definition can easily overlap with what other scholars have called *learning styles* (Nunan, 1991; Willing, 1998).

Ten years later, with the second wave of strategy studies, scholars were able to provide more precise definitions. For example, O’Malley *et al.* (1985a) drew upon Rigney’s definition (1978) and identified strategies as “operations or steps used by a learner that will facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval or use of information” (p. 23). However, also this definition, though clearer than others, focuses exclusively on the cognitive aspects of language learning.
It was only with Oxford’s work that the affective and social aspects of strategies were included in a comprehensive definition. In her cornerstone text *Language learning strategies. What every teacher should know* (1990), the author built on previous definitions and stated that “learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (p. 8). To date, Oxford’s definition appears as one of the most exhaustive, to the extent that it was used as the theoretical underpinnings of several strategy studies. Consequently,

this is the definition of language learning strategies that will be used throughout the whole thesis.

Having identified the definition of language learning strategies, it is now pertinent to define their theoretical framework, that is, learner autonomy.

1.2 The theoretical framework of strategies: learner autonomy

Interest in learner autonomy has increasingly grown in the past decades. It is not within the scope of this study to provide an overview of the definitions proposed by the scholars of this field. It suffices to say that Oxford used several formulations of learner autonomy (Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1981; Allwright, 1990; Littlewood, 1996) as a basis for her own definition. In Oxford's words,

> "Learner autonomy is the (a) ability and willingness to perform a language task without assistance, with adaptability related to the situational demands, with transferability to other relevant contexts, and with reflection, accompanied by (b) relevant action (the use, usually conscious and intentional, of appropriate learning strategies)" (1999, p. 111).

This definition is summarised in the "five A's" model:

Ability, attitude, + action = autonomy → achievement.

At this point, it seems apparent that strategies are an indispensable step to reach autonomy, which in turn leads to achievement. Note that, in the language learning field, this can be seen as the development of proficiency. Therefore, it can be claimed that the appropriate use of

language learning strategies, joined with ability and willingness, is tied to improved performance in a given language task. In sum, it can be claimed that “language learning strategies do indeed make a significant difference in language proficiency” (*ibidem*).

So far, we have examined the definition and the theoretical framework of language learning strategies. In the next section, we will turn to the classification of strategies.

1.3 Strategy classification

What has been said concerning the definition of strategies is also true with respect to their classification: there is no single, universal solution. In fact, it could be claimed that strategy definitions and classifications went hand in glove, as the latter is clearly dependent on the former. Since there are numerous classifications of strategies and a full discussion of them is beyond the scope of this study, we will limit ourselves to three important classifications. Then, we will introduce the strategy classification that will be used throughout this case study.

The first categorisation was proposed by Rubin (1981, pp. 124-126), who identified two major kinds of strategies. The first encompasses those strategies that directly contribute to language learning, including *clarification/verification, monitoring, memorization, guessing/inductive inferencing, deductive reasoning*, and *practice*. By contrast, the strategies that provide an indirect contribution constitute the second category, for example *creating opportunities for practice* and *production tricks*. Note that the distinction between direct and indirect strategies must be born in mind,

since it is a major feature of the classification adopted in this case study.

Bialystok (1981) devised the second strategy classification reported in this brief overview. Observing secondary language students, the author classified strategies on the basis of their nature: in her view, strategies can be divided into formal and functional. The former category is used to master the language form, thereby it includes strategies such as memorizing and reciting various sounds. On the other hand, functional strategies are related to language use. Thus, these strategies are meant to "derive meaning from the target language rather than to infer formal or structural features" (p. 27).

The third strategy categorisation is highly significant, since it is the first that took into account the social aspect of strategies. In fact, O'Malley *et al.* (1985a) divided strategies into three categories: the first comprises the strategies related to the learning process (metacognitive), the second encompasses those strategies that are used in specific language activities (cognitive), while the third regards social strategies.

While these classifications are equally valid, in this study we will refer to Oxford's work (1990). Before explaining why Oxford's categorisation is the most relevant for this study, we will first describe it.
The scholar took up Rubin's division of direct and indirect strategies and created a six-groups model that comprises a total of 62 strategies. Under the direct class, we can find the *memory, cognitive* and *compensation* categories. Memory or mnemonic strategies are those that enable learners to store and retrieve information. This class consists of ten

strategies, that can be subdivided into four sets: “creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing action” (*ibidem*, p. 38).

The strategies belonging to the cognitive category are numerous and variegated, since cognitive processes have various manifestations, ranging from taking notes to analysing contrastively. Still, they all serve one specific goal, that is, to allow students understanding, manipulating, and producing new language. Here too, there are four different sets: “practising, receiving and sending messages, analysing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output” (*ibidem*, p. 43). Each set ranges from a minimum of two to a maximum of five strategies. On the whole, in Oxford’s view, fifteen cognitive strategies exist.

Finally, the strategies that enable learners to use the language in spite of their gaps in knowledge fall into the compensation category, which consists of ten different strategies clustered into two groups. The first one is “guessing intelligently in listening and reading”, while the second one is “overcoming limitations in speaking and writing” (*ibidem*, p. 47).

Figure 1 visualises the list of direct strategies.

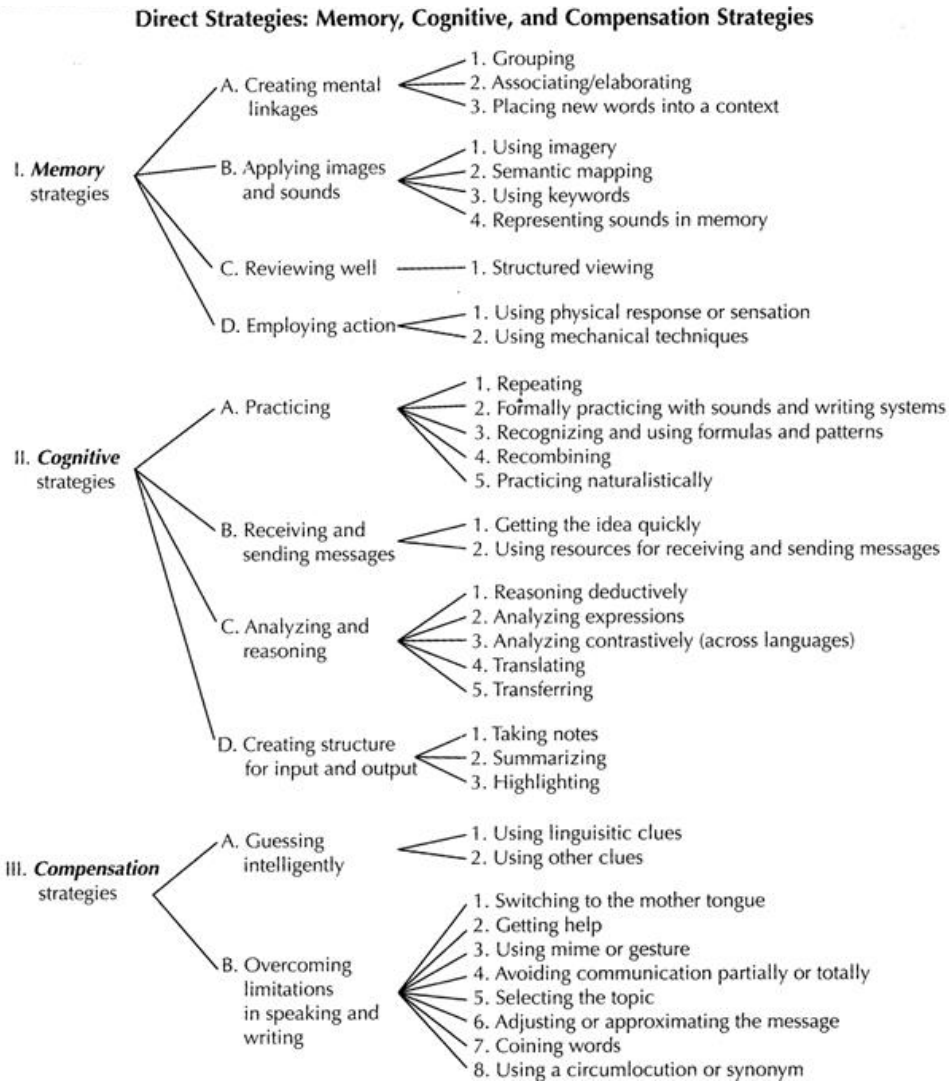

Figure 1. Direct Strategies in Oxford's model.

The indirect group of strategies can be divided into the *metacognitive, social* and *affective* categories.

Learners can rely on metacognitive strategies to manage and coordinate their learning process. Specifically, the strategies belonging to this group can be grouped into three sets: “centering your learning, arranging and planning your learning, and evaluating your learning” (*ibidem*, p. 136). These eleven strategies play a pivotal role when it comes to enhancing one’s learning process, as will become clear throughout this study.

Every kind of learning, including language learning, is influenced by emotions and motivations. In this sense, the

strategies belonging to the affective category (10 in all) enable learners to regulate these factors. This group consists of three sets: “lowering your anxiety, encouraging yourself, and taking your emotional temperature” (*ibidem*, p. 140).

Finally, since language is a means of communication between people, it is also important to take into account social strategies, which allow students to enhance their social interaction and learn from others. There are six social strategies, clustered in three specific sets: “asking questions, cooperating with others, empathising with others” (*ibidem*, p. 145).

The diagram of indirect strategies is represented in Figure 2 below.

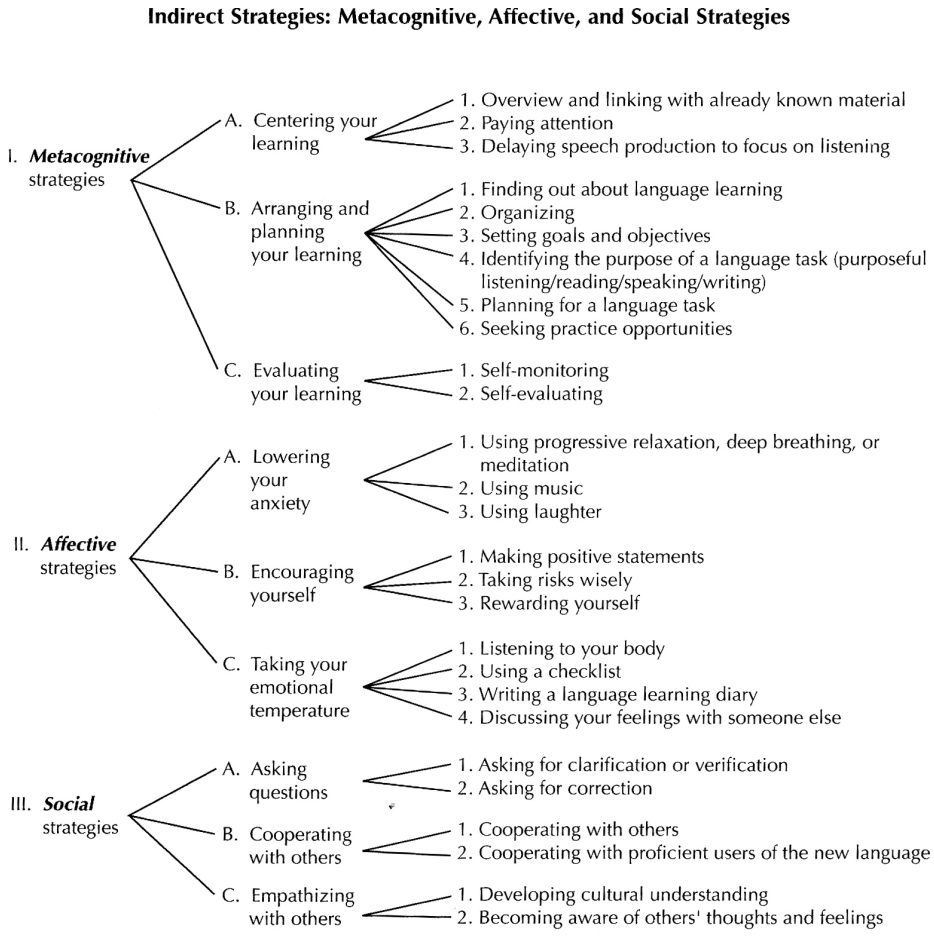

Figure 2. Indirect strategies in Oxford's model. Source:

It is important to highlight that Oxford's classification is not a taxonomy, that is, there is not a system of hierarchical relationships between the strategies. Rather, strategies are mutually supportive and constantly interacting with each other (*ibidem*, p. 14).

The previous paragraph described Oxford's strategy classification in rich detail. This paragraph, instead ,is meant to explain why this model is the one adopted throughout the present case study. Specifically, there are three main motivations.

First, Oxford's work appears as one of the most comprehensive in the language learning strategy field. Secondly, her system is the theoretical reference for many pieces of research, both theoretical and experimental. Third, the strategies identified by Oxford are the same that constitute the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* or SILL (Oxford 1990). The SILL is a self-report survey that will be employed in this work since "is the most widely used language learning strategy-assessment instrument in the world" (*ibidem*) and, also, is the only tool checked both for reliability and validity (*ibidem*). Further information on the SILL will be provided in the third chapter (section 3.2.1). Therefore, it is crucial to adopt a univocal benchmark: using the SILL will allow us to compare the results of this thesis with the findings obtained by other SILL-gauged studies. An overview of such pieces of research is provided in the following section.

1.4 Previous strategy studies based on the SILL

Over the past decades, a considerable amount of studies has examined the strategies used by foreign and second language learners. Despite the great interest raised by ordinary language courses, strategy-issues related to pluralistic approaches to language learning have not received the same degree of attention. In particular, no research has been found that used the SILL to survey strategy use neither in intercomprehension courses in general nor in intercomprehension between Romance languages specifically. Therefore, this work will consider as a basis for comparison those studies that examined strategy use through the SILL, independently of the teaching method adopted in the setting of the studies.

Before proceeding to review the findings, it must be highlighted that the SILL provides two types of data: the general frequency of strategy use and that of the six categories that constitute the questionnaire. The Likert-scaled scores, ranging from 1 to 5, are classified according to Oxford's indications (1990): a mean of 3.5 and higher indicates a "high" level of strategy use, a mean ranging between 3.4 and 2.5 a "medium" level, and 2.4 or lower scores correspond to a "low" level. These levels apply to the frequency-rate of single categories as well. For the purposes of this work, the overview will report both the general frequency and the most- and least-used SILL categories of the following studies.

Several researchers highlighted a consolidated pattern: participants of their studies generally used strategies at a medium level with the metacognitive category being the most used and memory or affective the least. This was found to be the case for the 43 students of the Pennsylvania

State University participating in Oxford, Talbott and Halleck's study (1990) and for the 213 Puerto Rican English learners of Green's work (1991). Likewise, similar results were reported by Oh (1992): his subjects, 59 Korean university students learning English, used strategies at a medium level on the whole. With respect to single categories, metacognitive was the most preferred, whereas cognitive and memory categories were the least-frequently selected by the students. A later work investigating Korean students' strategy use was conducted by Park (1997). His results replicated those of Oh (1992), indicating that all strategy categories were used with a medium frequency, but the highest frequency-rate belonged to the metacognitive category, followed by compensation, memory, cognitive, social, and affective strategies. Similarly, Bremner (1999) analysed the strategies used by Hong Kong university students: the participants turned out to be moderate strategy users, who reported selecting metacognitive and compensation strategies most frequently and affective and memory least. Another SILL-gauged study is Shamis (2003). The results of his research showed that Arab students majoring in English use strategy at a medium level: among the SILL categories, metacognitive was the most used and compensation the least. Iranian (Riazi and Rahimi, 2005; Rahimi, Riazi and Saif, 2008) and Saudi English-majors (Aljuaid, 2010) reported the same strategy pattern.

By contrast, other scholars found that metacognitive strategies were not always the most frequently used by their subjects. An example is Peacock and Ho's study (2003), in which the highest frequency reported by 1006 Hong Kong students belonged to the compensation category, followed by cognitive and metacognitive groups; then social, memory, and affective strategies. These results

corroborated Yang's findings (1994). The subjects of Yang's work were 68 Taiwanese university students, who reported using all strategy categories at a medium level, except for compensation strategies, which were employed slightly more frequently. Similarly, compensation strategies turned out to be the most used also by Chinese students of Chang's study (1991) and Korean secondary school students involved in Ok's research (2003). Interestingly, Wharton (2000) found a different result investigating strategy use of 678 Singaporean learners of Japanese and French. Using an earlier version of the SILL, he discovered that it was the social category that received the highest frequency of use. This was the only diverse finding of Wharton's work since the least used strategies (affective) and the overall mean of use (medium) were in line with previous studies.

While the results of these studies cannot be overgeneralised, the emerging picture still provides some valuable data. First, the majority of learners estimate using strategies with a medium frequency. Secondly, a vast number of studies shows that metacognitive strategies are the most used. This result is encouraging because these strategies enable learners to manage, monitor, and eventually revise their learning process (Oxford, 1990). In fact, O'Malley *et al.* (1985a) investigated the strategy use of beginner and intermediate learners of English, finding that, while strategies were used across all students, more advanced pupils used metacognitive strategies more frequently than their less proficient companions. Similarly, Park (1997) found that metacognitive strategies are more strongly tied to language proficiency than any other category of the SILL. This result matched Psaltou-Joycey and Kantaridou's work (2009): the researchers found that trilinguals use more strategies, more frequently than

bilinguals. And not only that: more advanced trilinguals employ metacognitive strategies far more frequently than their less advanced companions. This led the authors to conclude that it is the metacognitive strategies that make a significant difference concerning language proficiency (p. 467). Nevertheless, few studies found that compensation strategies were the most used by their participants: this finding suggests that, while managing one's learning process is important, being able to make up for missing knowledge is equally crucial. Finally, cognitive and social strategies are generally used moderately, whereas affective and memory category are systematically the least-employed in all studies.

This chapter allowed us to understand the notion of language learning strategies and how the SILL has been used to identify the strategic skills of numerous students. The next chapter will introduce the concept of intercomprehension. Also, it will describe the basic guidelines of the EuroComRom method, since it is the method adopted in the lessons of the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* course at the University of Verona. In this way, we will be able to understand the linguistic background of the subjects of the present case study.

2. INTERCOMPREHENSION AND THE EUROCOMROM METHOD

The first goal of this chapter is to introduce the notions of plurilingual competence and pluralistic approaches to language learning (section 2.1). The next sections (2.2 and 2.3) will focus on the pluralistic approach of interest for this thesis, that is, intercomprehension. Section 2.4 will report the underpinnings of the EuroComRom method, allowing us to understand how the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* course is structured. Finally, the language learning strategies promoted by this method will be described and classified according to Oxford's classification. In this way, it will be possible to understand which strategic skills are owned by the participants of this case study.

2.1 Pluralistic approaches as a response to plurilingual competence

In recent years, pluralistic language-teaching approaches have been created as a response to the development of plurilingual competence. This is described by the CEFR (2001) as:

> "The ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures" (CEFR 2001, p. 168)

This definition highlights that an individual develops a linguistic repertoire whereby all linguistic varieties are relevant but, at the same time, not equally developed. The main feature of linguistic knowledge is that, despite the level of proficiency owned in a given language, all languages are interrelated and can contribute to the accomplishment of linguistic tasks. Therefore, it becomes crucial for learners to be aware of the connections between languages and exploit them (*Companion Volume* 2018, p. 53). A good way to do so is to employ pluralistic approaches, namely those that simultaneously involve more than one language or culture (FREPA 2012, p. 6).

The authors of the FREPA identified four major pluralistic approaches (*ibidem*). While all of them aim at implementing the holistic understanding of languages as one intertwined system, few differences distinguish one approach from another. For example, the *integrated didactic approach* links together only the limited number of languages taught at school. Following this guideline, numerous projects of *German after English* use the latter language as a springboard to learn the former. By contrast, the a*wakening to languages*, often described as the most extreme of all pluralistic approaches, considers all the languages that are in the process of being learnt by pupils. This implies that no linguistic variety is disowned, thus languages not being taught at school are also included in learning activities. The third approach has a less linguistic orientation and focuses on cultural phenomena as a basis for understanding people from diverse areas of the world: for this reason, it is called the *intercultural approach*. In what follows, we will focus on the approach relevant for this thesis, that is, intercomprehension.

2.2 Intercomprehension: definition

The approach named *Intercomprehension between related languages* is of particular interest for this dissertation and will, therefore, be described in rich details.

First, it is necessary to clarify what the term *intercomprehension* means, since other terms are often used interchangeably with it (e.g. *lingua receptiva*, *receptive multilingualism,* and *semi-communication*). According to Doyé (2004, p. 61), intercomprehension is

> "a form of communication in which each person uses her or his own language and understands that of the other. This definition *includes* both spoken and written communication and *excludes* using the other language - qualities that are important for the sake of clarity." (author's italics).

The outcome of intercomprehension, namely the acquisition of linguistic competence, draws on two major concepts. First, the consideration that humans have an innate ability for language. Secondly, the fact that learners possess "funds of knowledge" (*ibidem*) that can help the process of intercomprehension. It is important to highlight that not only linguistic, but any kind of knowledge can bring benefits when it comes to interpreting foreign languages. Note that other scholars have defined intercomprehension in different ways, for example focusing only on written texts (e.g. Marx, 2012). However, since the students of the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* course considered in this study are faced with both oral and written texts, Doyé's definition will be adopted throughout the current thesis.

Having clarified the meaning of the term intercomprehension, the dissertation will now describe the functioning of the teaching approaches based on this process.

2.3 Teaching intercomprehension: the guidelines

At this point, we will narrow our discussion to what is relevant for this present work, that is, intercomprehension between related languages in a formal educational context.

This specific approach is characterized by one distinguishing feature: whole linguistic families (Romance, Germanic, Slavonic, etc.) are the object of learning activities. The only pre-condition needed is that one of the languages must be already mastered by the learners, either being their mother tongue or a second language (FREPA 2012, p. 7). Receptive skills are the main focus because similarities between languages are easier to notice on a written page than in oral discourse. Nevertheless, this does not mean that productive skills cannot equally profit from this approach (Giudicetti *et al*. 2002, p. 16).

According to Doyé, the achievement of linguistic competence in intercomprehension is strictly tied to three notions: transfer, inferencing, and the role of teachers (2004, p. 62).

The first concept refers to the transfer of preexisting knowledge that occurs when learners are faced with texts or sentences in a new language (*ibidem*). Note that, as Doyé is discussing the development of competence through intercomprehension, he is only referring to positive or facilitating transfer. Still, it must be reminded that negative or debilitating transfer should also be taken into

account. Also, note that transfer is only one of the numerous processes that occur when more than one language come into contact. In fact, according to Sharwood Smith and Kellerman (1986), it would be more accurate to refer to transfer as one of the multiple phenomena that can be included under the umbrella term *cross-linguistic influence* (*ibidem*, p.1). Nevertheless, since processes such as *interference, avoidance,* and *borrowing* are not within the scope of this thesis, they will not be treated in this work. Instead, we will now turn on to inferencing.

This notion is quite close to the notion of "optimised deduction", which is the pivotal principle of the EuroCom method (McCann, Klein and Stegmann 2003, p. 9). With this term, Doyé alludes to the fact that language learners tend to interpret unknown languages on the basis of what they have already learned. Again, "funds of knowledge" appear as the most prominent resources that learners have at their disposal when they tackle text in new language. Nevertheless, learners must be guided and supported through the process of intercomprehension. In the previous lines, we repeatedly referred to the "funds of knowledge" naturally owned by every learner. Still, learners are not necessarily aware of their existence. This is the reason why the scaffolding provided by teachers assumes crucial importance in intercomprehension, as much as the strategies that can be used to enhance and regulate intercomprehension (see section 2.5 for more detail on intercomprehension strategies).

The above-mentioned guidelines apply to all courses based on intercomprehension. Nonetheless, several different methods have been developed within the this approach (e.g. EU-I, ILTE, IGLO, *Galatea*). The one relevant for this case study, namely the EuroComRom method, will be described in the following section.

2.4 The EuroComRom method

First, it must be highlighted that EuroComRom is one of the three branches belonging to the EuroCom method: the abbreviation *EuroCom* means eurocomprehension, i.e. intercomprehension in one European language group, and *Rom* stands for Romance languages. The equivalent methods for Germanic and Slavonic families are called *EuroComGerm* and *EuroComSlav* and were respectively designed by Hufeisen and Marx (2007) and Zybatow (2002). In the next paragraph, we will refer to McCann, Klein and Stegmann's textbook in English (2000) and its Italian translation (Giudicetti *et al.*, 2002) to describe the features of the EuroComRom method. Clearly, the same principles are valid for EuroComGerm and EuroComSlav as well (Internet address: http://www.eurocomprehension.info/).

This method revolves around one major notion: "no foreign language is a virgin land" (Giudicetti et al. 2002, p. 16; our translation). This expression means that any learner owns preexisting knowledge that can be used to facilitate the learning of new languages belonging to the same linguistic family. In order to take full advantage of such knowledge, learners are taught to rely on three related processes: optimised deduction, the rational use of context, and analogical reasoning (*ibidem*, p. 22). Particularly, the EuroComRom system is based on the so-called "Seven sieves", which are the pragmatical application of the aforementioned principles. The EuroComRom authors compare intercomprehension learners to gold seekers: as the latter use sieves to seek gold among soil, the former must sift new languages to find precious funds of

knowledge. Every sieve focuses on one specific aspect, as it can be seen below:

1. *The first sieve, internationalisms:*
either with a Greek or Latin guise or coined with English morphemes, these words are easily recognisable among all languages, either belonging to the addressed linguistic family or not. (Giudicetti *et al.* 2002, p. 33).

2. *The second sieve, pan-Romance vocabulary*:
Romance languages share a rich number of common words. They can be divided into groups: words that appear in all Romance languages (n= 39), in at least nine (n= 108), eight (n= 33), and seven or fewer Romance languages (n= 227). On the whole, five hundred words can be understood thanks to this sieve (*ibidem.*, p. 35).

3. *The third sieve, sound correspondences:*
a small set of rules helps to identify what Giudicetti *et al.* term “lexical kinship” (*ibidem,* our translation). In other words, this sieve detects systematic sound correspondences across Romance languages, which can, in turn, lead to the recognition of related words.

4. *The fourth sieve, spelling and pronunciation*:
since pronunciation differs significantly among languages, it can sometimes hinder the relatedness of cognate words. Therefore, the fourth sieve examines the relationship between spelling and pronunciation and trains learners to recognise phonetic and graphemic relations across Romance languages.

5. *The fifth sieve, pan-Romance syntactic structures*:
Klein and Stegmann listed nine core sentence-types and seven minor (subordinate) syntactic structures recurring

across all Romance languages. Learners are taught how to recognise syntactic similarities through the use of this sieve.

6. *The sixth sieve, morphosyntactic elements*:
here, several morphological elements are parallelly examined to detect similarities and differences across languages. Examples of morphological items include the formation of plural, forms of comparison, adverbs formation, etc.

7. *The seventh sieve*, *affixes:*
this sieve is strictly related to the first (internationalisms). Focusing its attention on both Latin- and Greek-based prefixes and suffixes, this sieve is crucial to understand compound words. Still, it is not demanding since the whole number of affixes is minimum (approximately 40 from Latin and 40 from ancient Greek).

In the beginning, learners are taught to scan a given text seven times, using each time one specific sieve. Once learners become aware of the functioning of every sieve, they can employ them simultaneously. In general, all the sieves are different declinations of one main process, namely the detection and transfer of similarities across languages. Figure 3 shows how learners can apply the seven sieves when they are faced with a text in an unknown language.

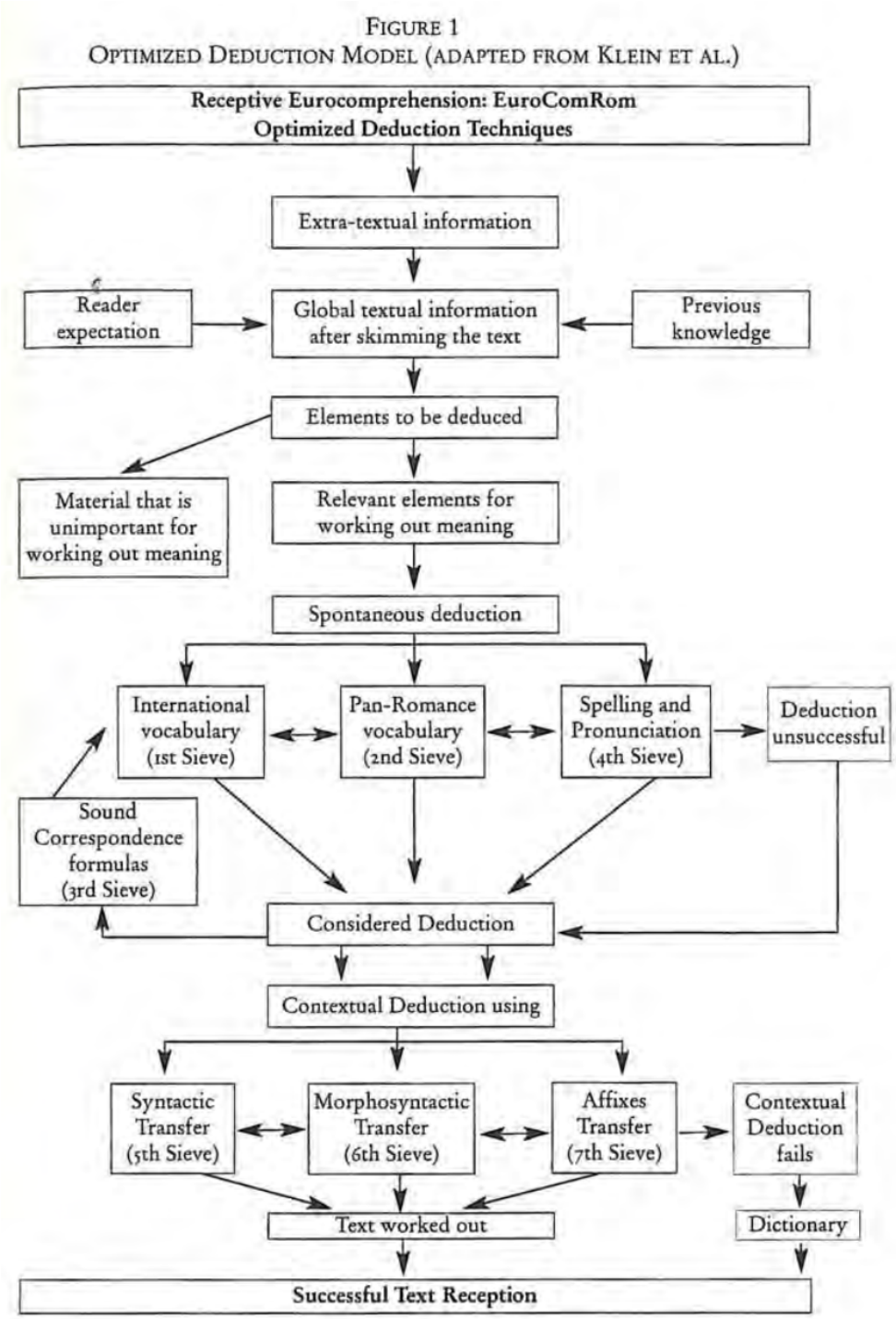

Figure 3. EuroComRom, Optimised Deduction Model.

This flowchart clearly shows the steps to follow according to the EuroComRom authors. Interestingly, the first techniques make recourse to kinds of knowledge that are not necessarily linguistic. In fact, learners can extrapolate useful information also from the format of the text, as well as the use of punctuation, capital letters, and paragraphs

(Klein and Stegmann, 2000). Also, learners are encouraged to draw upon their expectations and their previous knowledge when they first read the text. Note that, as Doyé pointed out, several typologies of knowledge are involved in this phase: general, cultural, situational, behavioural, pragmatic, graphic, phonological, and, only ultimately, grammatical and lexical knowledge (2004, pp. 62 - 67). Besides, it is apparent from the flowchart that, at first, it is crucial to read for meaning, that is, to leave out the words that do not contribute to the preliminary understanding of the text.

At this point, the spontaneous deduction has already occurred. Now, the first four sieves can be used to better understand the text. The first and second sieves allow learners to understand a good number of words, while the third and fourth sieves can ease the recognition of related words which might have a different spelling in the new language. It is important to point out that learners are not required to understand the exact meaning of every word. In fact,

> "the comprehension of a noun makes it unnecessary to understand the adjective that goes with it exactly, [...] Similarly, comprehension of an adjective sheds some light on a noun that the speaker may not have understood" (Clua 2007, p. 160.)

This observation leads us to the contextual deduction phase, where the remaining sieves are used to fill in the comprehension gaps.

Despite the successful outcomes envisaged by Klein and Stegmann (2000), it is crucial to highlight that learners are not expected to perfectly understand the text. In fact, in the event that the contextual deduction was unsuccessful, the dictionary can be used as the last resort to translating non-transparent words. Still, though learners are required to

grasp only the general meaning of a given text, the seven sieves are conclusive in the vast majority of the cases.

At this stage, it is possible to summarise the language learning strategies fostered by the EuroComRom method.

2.5 Language learning strategies in the EuroComRom method

This concluding section is meant to summarise the strategies taught in the EuroComRom method and to classify them in alignment with the categories comprised in Oxford's model (1990). In this way, it will be possible to make reasonable hypotheses concerning the strategic skills owned by the subjects of this case study.

In sum, we have seen that optimised deduction, analogical reasoning and transfer are the main principles underlying the EuroComRom method. Also, it is vital to use all funds of knowledge that one owns, including non-linguistic knowledge, to better understand the new language. Although it is not being explicitly mentioned, it seems apparent that the ability to compare new and old data is crucial for the purposes of intercomprehension as conceived by the authors of EuroComRom.

Having reminded the guidelines of this method, we will now refer to Oxford's classification of strategies to see whether there is any correspondence. Analysing the strategies listed by Oxford, it is apparent that the majority of the EuroComRom principles belongs to the so-called cognitive strategies. In fact, the cognitive category comprises, among others, the following strategies: "Getting the idea quickly", "Reasoning deductively", "Analysing expressions,

“Analysing contrastively (across languages)”, and “Transferring”. In addition, few compensation strategies also coincide with the steps provided by the “optimised deduction model”. Particularly, we are referring to the strategies called “Using linguistic cues” and “Using other cues”. Therefore, it can be concluded that the EuroComRom method is mostly based on cognitive strategies, but it also draws upon few compensation strategies.

This being said, now I would like to add a personal consideration. We have just claimed that cognitive and compensation strategies are crucial in this method. Still, it can be stated that students need to be able to exercise great control over their funds of knowledge to regulate their learning process. Therefore, it can be said that also metacognitive strategies and linguistic reflection have a major role in the EuroComRom method.

These observations are pivotal for the formulation of the hypotheses of this case study, which will be described in rich details in the following chapter.

3. THE STUDY

This case study, briefly described in the introduction, will be presented in minute detail in the current chapter. As previously mentioned, this thesis addresses a specific field of research, that is, language learning strategies and pluralistic approaches to language learning. Particularly, this work analyses the strategies used in a language course based on the principles of intercomprehension. The next sections will illustrate the research methodology of this case study as follows. First, the research questions and hypotheses will be reported (section 3.1). Then, the next sections will outline the subjects' characteristics (3.2), the materials (3.3), data collection procedures (3.4), and data analysis procedure (3.5).

3.1 Research questions and hypotheses

This thesis examines three main research questions:

1. What is the pattern of strategy use, as measured by the SILL (Oxford, 1990), reported by the students of the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* course? Is this strategy pattern different from that of other language learners who have no experience in intercomprehension?

2. What knowledge do the *Intercomprehension* students have of strategies, their implementation and their importance in language learning? Is their knowledge more accurate than that of other language learners who are not enrolled on the *Intercomprehension* course?

3. What strategies are actually implemented by the *Intercomprehension* students as they are coping with a comprehension task in an unfamiliar Romance language?

Concerning the first research question, the expectation underlying this case study is that the strategy pattern of the *Intercomprehension* students will be different from that of other language learners. Specifically, it is expected that the difference will not only lie in the frequency of strategy use, but also in the kinds of strategies employed by the two groups of students. In fact, the *Intercomprehension* students are expected to exercise greater metacognitive, cognitive and compensation skills than their counterparts, due to the vast amount of linguistic knowledge gained through the *Intercomprehension* course. Besides, it is expected that the memory and the affective categories of the SILL will be the least-used by both groups of subjects. This expectation stems from the review of the studies that used the SILL to analyse the use of language learning strategies. As mentioned in the first chapter (section 1.4), both the memory and the affective categories were systematically reported as the least-used in the vast majority of all strategy studies, independently of the context and the target language being learned by the participants. With respect to the overall frequency of strategy use, both groups of participants are expected to be medium strategy users, that is, to score a mean strategy frequency ranging between 2.5 and 3.5 on the five-point Likert scale adopted by the SILL. The reason for this expectation is that this finding was reported by all strategy studies included in the literature review of the present thesis. Nevertheless, we expect the participants enrolled on the *Intercomprehension*

course to report a higher mean than that of the other language learners.

Turning now to the second research question, we expect the *Intercomprehension* students to possess a greater amount of strategy knowledge than the other subjects. The reason for this expectation is twofold. First, language learning strategies are implicitly taught in the method adopted by the *Intercomprehension* course, namely the EuroComRom method. Secondly, these students are accustomed to applying strategies. Therefore, although they may not be consciously aware of strategies, they are still likely to have developed a kind of consciousness on this topic.

Finally, the expectation concerning the strategies implemented in the comprehension task is that the participants will be able to employ several kinds of strategies. In particular, it is expected that students will mostly use deductive strategies, since the EuroComRom method is mostly based on optimised deduction and analogical reasoning. For the same reason, subjects are also expected to relate the features of the new language with what they have already learned in the *Intercomprehension* course. However, we expect that compensation and metacognitive strategies will be used as well, as we have already identified these strategies as the underpinnings of the teaching approach relevant for this case study (see section 2.5).

Based on these expectations, the hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

1. Subjects who are enrolled on the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* course will report a different strategy pattern from

that of other language learners who are not following the same course. To be more specific:

a. concerning the overall use of strategies, we expect that the *Intercomprehension* students will report a higher mean than that of the other participants. Nevertheless, it is expected that both groups will be categorised as medium strategy users, according to Oxford's guidelines (1990);
b. with respect to strategy categories, the *Intercomprehension* students are expected to use metacognitive, cognitive, and compensation strategies more frequently than their counterparts;
c. despite the aforementioned expectations, the two groups are expected to agree on two points, namely the strategies they use the most and the least. Specifically, we expect the metacognitive strategies to be the most used, as opposed to memory and affective strategies, which will be the least-used.

2. The *Intercomprehension* students are expected to have a greater strategy knowledge than their counterparts (the knowledge being measured through the self-designed questionnaire called SKILL). In particular, the subjects with experience in intercomprehension are expected:
    a. to be aware of various strategies, how to implement them, and how to select them accordingly to one's learning objectives. By contrast, we do not expect the subjects of the control group to have an equally developed amount of knowledge on strategies;

b. to employ strategies deliberately, advisedly, and accordingly with the language task, as opposed to the components of the control group;
c. to be aware that strategies can enhance language learning especially in those contexts where several languages are simultaneously taken into consideration. We do not expect the other subjects to have developed this kind of awareness since they have no experience in intercomprehension.

3. Concerning the comprehension task in an unfamiliar Romance language, participants with experience in intercomprehension are expected to employ several kinds of strategies. Specifically:
    a. the subjects are expected to take advantage of the knowledge of other Romance languages accrued through the *Intercomprehension* course;
    b. besides, the subjects are expected to rely mostly on deductive reasoning, that is, cognitive strategies, because these are the underpinnings of the EuroComRom method. Nevertheless, we expect also compensation and metacognitive strategies to be part of the overall strategy range of our subjects.

3.2 Subjects

Twenty students from the University of Verona participated in this case study. In alignment with the purposes of this

work, two kinds of subjects were recruited for this research. The first group of subjects (hereinafter IC group) included ten students enrolled on the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* course. By contrast, the control group was formed by ten language learners who did not follow the *Intercomprehension* course. The subjects of the first group were 8 females and 2 males, ranging between 21 and 37 years in age, with an average age of 24. Nine of them were enrolled at the University of Verona for the entire duration of their career, whereas one student was spending a mobility period of six months at the same university. The mother tongues of the students were Italian (7), Czech (1), Romanian (1), and Portuguese (1). Subjects spoke a minimum of four foreign languages up to a maximum of six. It is important to point out that the *Intercomprehension* course was not a graduation requirement for these students. In fact, the course, delivered by the University Language Center, provides a special kind of credits, namely the "F" credits (F standing for formative). These credits can be earned in several ways, for example, attending lectures or seminars. Note that there are plenty of less challenging alternatives to the *Intercomprehension* course, which, on the contrary, requires a certain amount of dedication. This entails that all the students voluntarily chose to follow the course, driven by their personal interests. Five subjects were following the base level of the *Intercomprehension* course and the remaining five were enrolled on the advanced level. The base level is open to anyone who has zero or very limited proficiency in one of the five target languages (Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Catalan). Attending the base course is the only requirement to access the advanced level, which also includes Romanian and Romance dialects.

The subjects of the second group were 8 females and 2 males, ranging between 21 and 36 years in age, with an average age of 23,7. All students were Italian native speakers, enrolled at the University of Verona for the entire duration of their career. Also, all subjects were undergraduate students of the bachelor's degree in "Foreign languages and literatures", majoring in at least two foreign languages (English, French, Spanish, and German). For this reason, this group will be referred to as FLL group. On the whole, the subjects of the second group reported knowing four or five foreign languages.

3.3 Materials

This study combined both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection. The quantitative data were gathered through a questionnaire composed of the SILL (Oxford, 1990) and the SKILL. While the former provides a general framework of the strategies usually employed by the students, the latter explores the participants' awareness of strategies. Concerning qualitative data, these were collected through a think-aloud protocol concurrent to a language comprehension task. This procedure gave us insights into the actual selection and implementation of on-line strategies by participants. The following paragraphs elaborate further on the technical specifications of these materials.

3.3.1 Materials providing quantitative data

The instrument used to collect quantitative data was a questionnaire composed of three measures: Individual Background questionnaire, *Strategy Inventory for*

Language Learning or SILL (Oxford, 1990), and a self-designed section called *Strategy Knowledge and Importance in Language Learning* or SKILL. All three sections were drawn up in English since all students reported a high-level proficiency in this language (C1-C2).

Section one of the questionnaire was designed by the researcher to gather background information on the students and their linguistic knowledge. This section included both open- and close-ended items regarding subjects' gender, age, mother tongue, known foreign languages and levels of proficiency. Besides, students were asked to indicate whether they were enrolled on the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* course (base/advanced) or undergraduates of the bachelor's degree in "Foreign languages and cultures". Finally, the participants were asked to specify whether they were spending a mobility period at the University of Verona.

The second section consisted of the 50-item version of the SILL (version 7.0), devised by Oxford (1990). This self-report questionnaire includes 50 statements on language learning strategies (e.g. "I try not to translate word-for-word"). Students were asked to express the frequency of use of each strategy through a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("never or almost never true of me") to 5 ("always or almost always true of me"). The SILL was chosen for four reasons. First, it is quick for administration and instructions are easy to understand. Secondly, it is the most-used strategy questionnaire: Oxford reports that the SILL has been used in more than 50 major studies and administered to approximately 10000 students (1999, p. 14). Besides, the SILL is the only questionnaire that has been checked both for reliability and validity (*ibidem*). Finally, it is based on Oxford's six-groups strategy

classification, which is one of the most comprehensive categorisations available to date. Therefore, the SILL allows drawing a comprehensive picture of a learner's typical use of strategies. It is crucial to outline that the questionnaire was designed for students of English as a second or foreign language. This implies that the original statements were targeted to these specific subjects (e.g. "I practice the sounds of English"). Therefore, a fundamental change was made to tailor the survey to the participants of this research, that is, the replacement of the word "English" with "the new language" (e.g. "I practice the sounds of the new language").

The last section is called *Strategy Knowledge and Importance in Language Learning* or SKILL. This section was designed by the researcher to obtain further information on language learning strategies. In fact, while the SILL evaluates how frequently language learners apply strategies, the SKILL examines the relationship between learners and strategies. Particularly, the SKILL addresses three specific topics: the awareness of language learning strategies, the actual strategy implementation, and the importance of strategies in learning foreign languages. The SKILL consists of 8 statements on strategies. Subjects were asked to value their degree of agreement with the statements using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("I strongly disagree") to 5 ("I strongly agree"). The SKILL draws on the strategies included in the *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* or FREPA (2012). The descriptors of the FREPA provide a large number of language learning strategies, most of which are equivalent to the ones included in the SILL. However, the authors of the FREPA point out that, in language courses based on a pluralistic approach, the implementation of strategies is not sufficient. Rather, a

learner must also have theoretical knowledge of the strategies. This notion is mirrored by statements such as “[the learner] knows that there are different strategies for learning languages and that their relevance varies according to the learner’s objectives”, “[the learner] is familiar with various learning strategies and how they can be applied”, “[the learner] can identify one’s own reading strategies in the first language (L1) and apply them to the second language (L2)”, “[the learner] can deliberately apply learning strategies” (*ibidem*, pp. 30- 59). These statements were adapted into the SKILL. The remaining items of the survey were constructed by the researcher, in order to explore the students’ awareness of these topics.

3.3.2 Materials providing qualitative data

The questionnaire used in this research provides quantitative data based on the participants’ self-perceptions. As highlighted by several researchers (e.g. Oxford, Lavine and Amerstorfer, 2019), these kinds of data may be influenced by students’ interpretation and rationalization. Thus, qualitative data was gathered through a think-aloud procedure concurrent to a language activity. Think-aloud protocols produce a verbal report of subjects’ cognitive activity as they complete a task (Lawson and Hogben, 1999). This research method was particularly suitable for this study because it allowed us to detect the actual selection and implementation of language learning strategies. The language activity selected for this study was a comprehension task of a Galician text. The choice of this Romance language stemmed from two considerations: first, Galician is characterised by phonological, morphological and syntactic features similar to those of Spanish and

Portuguese. Hence, students could draw on their previous linguistic knowledge to cope with the task. Secondly, this language was neither specifically taught nor considered in the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* lessons, therefore, participants were not likely to know it.

The text, drawn by the promotional website of tourism in Galicia, is made of fifteen lines and describes a tourist trail called “The route of the camellia”. This kind of text is frequently used in intercomprehension courses because it does not require specialised knowledge. On the contrary, it provides students with contextual clues that can trigger strategy use.

3.4 Data collection procedures

The data were collected over a period of one month in spring 2020. This study took place in Italy, during the state of emergency due to COVID-19. Hence, data collection procedures took place exclusively online. First, the researcher presented her project to the *Intercomprehension* students and invited them to participate in the research. A notice with the same information was published on the online platform of the bachelor’s degree in “Foreign languages and cultures” to recruit participants for the control group. After one week, the participants were sent the questionnaire, created through Google forms, via e-mail. In the following weeks, the subjects of the first group, namely only the IC group, were interviewed according to the think-aloud protocol described above. The video conferencing platform Zoom was used to conduct the interviews. The subjects were asked the permission to record the audio of the interview and were guaranteed that all the data would be kept

confidential. All the interviews, conducted in Italian, proceeded as follows. After being reminded of the general purpose of the research, the subjects were informed that they were going to perform a comprehension task in an unfamiliar Romance language. The participants were asked to render a full report of their thoughts as they were coping with the task. The researcher did not give any clue on the meaning of the text and confined herself to prompt the students as seemed necessary (examples of prompts are “Keep talking”, “How did you figure that?”, “I am interested in your reasoning”). The recordings were subsequently transcripted verbatim, translated into English, and analysed.

3.5 Data analysis procedures

The data analysis was performed on a Macintosh using Excel and the *Statistical Package for Social Science* (SPSS) program. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and graphic representations, were employed to analyse the quantitative data obtained through the questionnaire. Concerning the results of the SILL, statistics were calculated both for the overall frequency of language learning strategies and for the six groups of strategies. The results were then analysed according to Oxford’s guidelines (1990), to determine whether the participants were low, medium, or high strategy users. The data obtained from the two groups of subjects were first analysed separately and then compared. The transcriptions of the think-aloud protocol were analysed for any strategic behaviour made by the members of the IC group. To identify strategies, the researcher used the definitions and theoretical guidelines provided by Oxford (1990) and the

principles underlying the EuroComRom method (Giudicetti *et al.,* 2002). The resulting strategies were integrated into a single coding scheme, which consists of twelve strategies and includes descriptions and illustrative transcript excerpts. Analysing the transcripts, it became clear that, at times, the majority of subjects combined several strategies together to cope with non-transparent words or complex sentences. Such strategy combinations were first included in the overall count of strategies, to have a general framework of the strategy pattern of the subjects. However, strategy combinations were then analysed separately. The choice of following this procedure stemmed from the fact that every strategy combination was different, therefore it seemed necessary to analyse each combination in-depth.

4. RESULTS

The results of the case study will be reported in this chapter, which is organised as follows. Section 4.1 will refer to the first research question and will report the results of the SILL. Then, the results of the SKILL will be described, as they provide the data needed to answer the second research question (section 4.2). Finally, section 4.3 will address the third research question and, thus, reports the qualitative data emerged from the think-aloud protocol. Each section will be subdivided according to the hypotheses that were formulated in the previous chapter. The proper response to the research questions will be provided in the fifth chapter.

4.1 SILL results

Before proceeding with the results, the first research question is recalled:

> What is the pattern of strategy use, as measured by the SILL (Oxford, 1990), reported by the students of the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* course? Is this strategy pattern different from that of other language learners who have no experience in intercomprehension?

In the previous chapter, three hypotheses were formulated with respect to this question. The following sections will present the results in accordance with these hypotheses.

4.1.1 Overall use of strategies

This section refers to the following hypothesis:

> Concerning the overall use of strategies, we expect that the *Intercomprehension* students will report a higher mean than that of the other participants. Nevertheless, it is expected that both groups will be categorised as medium strategy users, according to Oxford's guidelines (1990).

Results of the descriptive statistics showed that the mean frequency of strategy use reported by the IC group was 3,55 with a standard deviation of 0,26. In alignment with Oxford's guidelines, this result indicates that the *Intercomprehension* students can be categorised as high-strategy users, in contrast with our expectations. With respect to the subjects of the FLL, they were identified as medium-strategy users, since the mean of the overall strategy use was 3,42 (standard deviation = 0,47). The average scores of the groups are visualised in Figure 4. It can be seen that, even though the two groups fell within different categorisations, there is a very minor difference between the means of the two groups. Still, the IC group reported a higher mean than that of the FLL group.

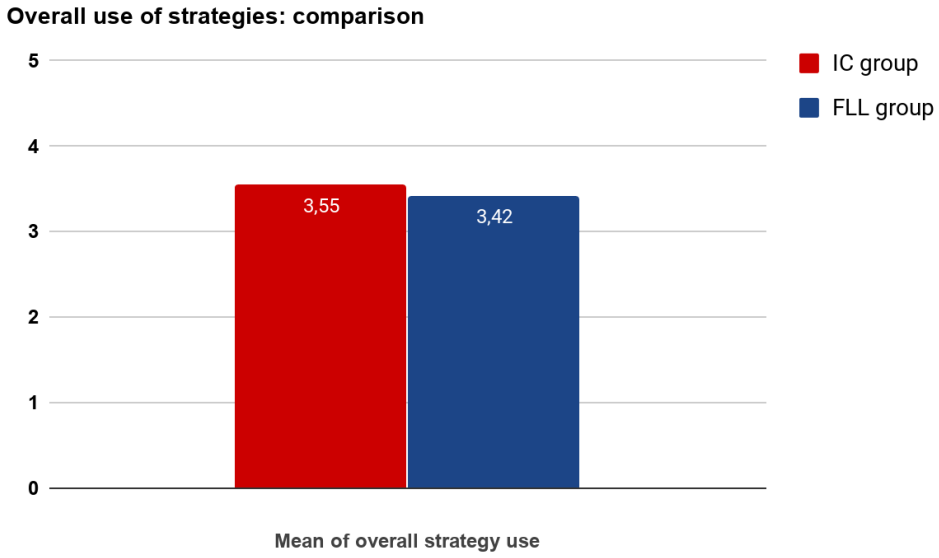

Figure 4. SILL results: comparison of overall strategy use.

4.1.2 Strategy categories

Having found the overall strategy use reported by the two groups, we will now focus on the SILL categories. The related hypotheses are the following:

- with respect to strategy categories, the *Intercomprehension* students are expected to use metacognitive, cognitive, and compensation strategies more frequently than their counterparts;

- despite the aforementioned expectations, the two groups are expected to agree on two points, namely which strategies they use the most and the least. Specifically, we expect the metacognitive strategies to be the most used, as opposed to memory and affective strategies, which will be the least-used.

First, the results of the IC group are reported. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for each strategy group. The categories are reported in descendent order by frequency of mention. As displayed in the table, four strategy categories - namely social, metacognitive, cognitive, and compensation- fell within a high level of strategy use. By contrast, memory and affective strategies were reported by the subjects with a mean of medium strategy use.

RANK	STRATEGY CATEGORY	MIN.	MAX.	MEAN	SD	LEVEL OF USE
1	Social	2,66	5	4,04	0,63	High
2	Metacognitive	3,22	4,22	3,99	0,31	High
3	Cognitive	3,21	4,21	3,81	0,31	High
4	Compensation	2,5	4,33	3,51	0,53	High
5	Memory	2,11	3	2,87	0,43	Medium
6	Affective	2,16	3,66	2,81	0,46	Medium

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for IC group scores. SILL categories.

Turning now to the FLL group, the results are as follows. On the whole, these subjects are medium-strategy users, since the mean of the overall strategy use was 3,42 (standard deviation = 0,47). Table 2 illustrates the means of all six strategy categories. It can be seen from the data that, in this case, three categories fell into the high level of strategy use and three into the medium level.

RANK	STRATEGY CATEGORY	MIN.	MAX.	MEAN	SD	LEVEL OF USE
1	Metacognitive	2,88	4,88	3,84	0,63	High
2	Social	2,83	5	3,71	0,71	High
3	Cognitive	2,57	4,35	3,61	0,56	High
4	Compensation	2,66	3,83	3,44	0,62	Medium
5	Memory	2,33	4,33	3,07	0,57	Medium
6	Affective	1,16	4,33	2,57	0,92	Medium

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for FLL group. SILL categories.

The histogram below (figure 5) shows the comparison of the results of the two groups. Concerning the first hypothesis, it can be seen that the IC group reported using all strategies with a higher frequency than the FLL group, not just metacognitive, cognitive, and compensation strategies as expected. The only exception is represented by memory strategies, which were selected by the FLL group more frequently than the IC group. With respect to the second hypothesis, Figure 2 shows that the IC group used social strategies the most, while metacognitive strategies were the most frequently employed by the FLL group. As expected, memory and affective strategies were the least-used by both groups.

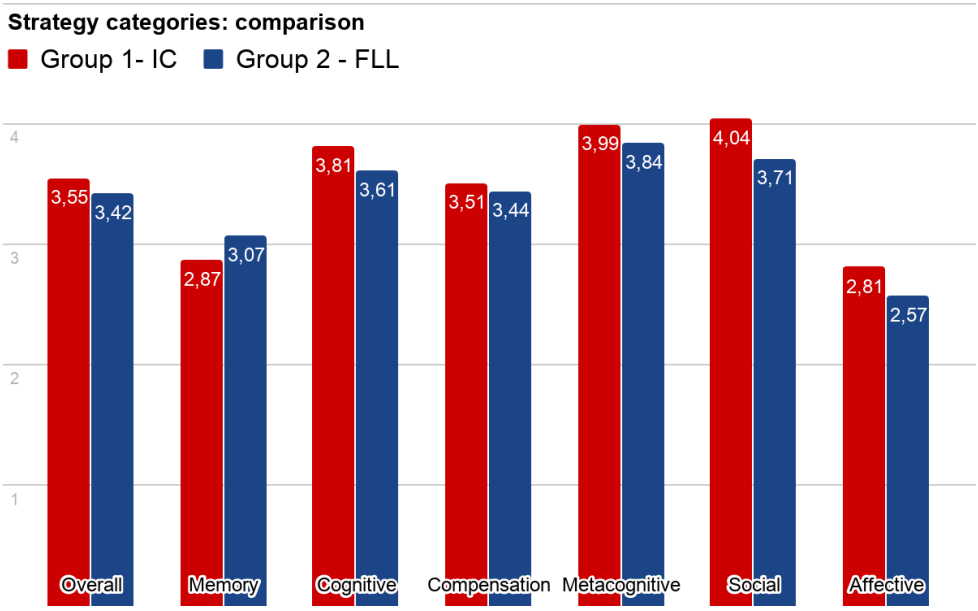

Figure 5. SILL results. Comparison of single strategy categories.

4.2 SKILL results

This section will focus on the second research question, namely:

> What knowledge do the *Intercomprehension* students have of strategies, their implementation and their importance in language learning? Is their knowledge more accurate than that of other language learners who are not enrolled on the *Intercomprehension* course?

The corresponding hypothesis was formulated as follows:

> The *Intercomprehension* students are expected to have a greater strategy knowledge than their counterparts (the knowledge being measured through the self-designed questionnaire called SKILL).

This hypothesis was split into three sub-hypothesis. Each sub-hypothesis refer to one section of the SKILL, that is, the first sub-hypothesis relates to strategy awareness, the second to strategy implementation, and the third to strategy importance. The following sections will report the results corresponding to the three sections of the SKILL.

4.2.1 Strategy awareness

This section reports the results of the SKILL section that focuses on strategy awareness. In the previous chapter, we hypothesised that the subjects of the IC group would

> be aware of various strategies, how to implement them, and how to select them accordingly to one's learning objectives. By contrast, we do not expect the subjects of the control group to have an equally developed amount of knowledge on strategies.

The results are set out in Table 3, which displays the means of response (and standard deviations) provided by both groups for the three items of this section. It can be seen that both groups acknowledged that the relevance of language learning strategies varies according to the learner's goals. Surprisingly, the FLL group reported a higher degree of agreement than the IC group (Group 1 mean= 4,4; Group 2 mean = 4,6). This finding is interesting since it is contrary to our expectations. However, this data must be interpreted in light of the following items.

The second statement showed that the *Intercomprehension* students were more aware of strategies and their implementation than other language learners. Similarly, the *Intercomprehension* students agreed on the usefulness of learning about strategies to

adapt them to one's specific goals with more conviction than their counterparts (Group 1 mean= 4,6; Group 2 mean= 3,9). Therefore, it can be supposed that the FLL group is aware of the existence of strategies. Nevertheless, these subjects are not equally confident when it comes to implement strategies and adapt them to one's specific objectives. All the data are visualised in Figure 6 as well.

No.	STATEMENT	IC GROUP	SD	FLL GROUP	SD
1	I know that there are different strategies for learning languages and that their relevance varies according to the learner's objectives.	4,4	0,69	4,6	0,75
2	I am familiar with various learning strategies and how they can be applied (listening and repeating, copying several times, translation, trying to produce utterances independently by myself).	4,6	0,51	3,9	0,73
3	I know that it is useful to know about learning strategies one uses in order to be able to adapt them to one's specific objectives.	4,6	0,69	3,9	1,19

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the SKILL - Strategy Awareness Section.

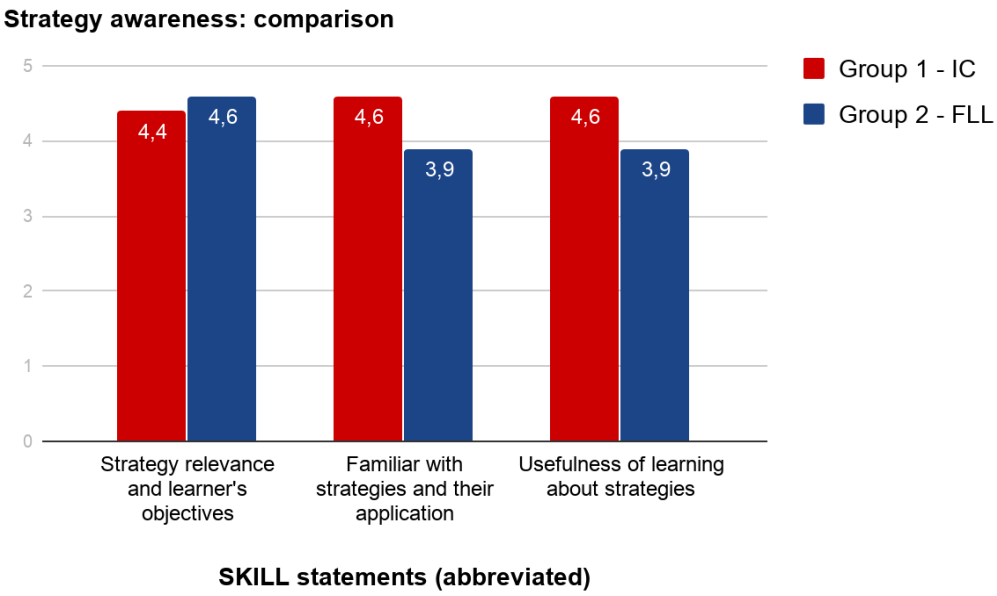

Figure 6. SKILL results - Strategy Awareness Section: comparison.

4.2.2 Strategy implementation

Turning now to the second section of the SKILL, we will focus on the items of the questionnaire that concern the implementation of strategies. As already mentioned, we expect the IC group

> to employ strategies deliberately, advisedly, and accordingly with the language task, as opposed to the components of the control group.

Table 4 illustrates the responses given by the two groups.

No.	STATEMENT	IC GROUP	SD	FLL GROUP	SD
4	I can deliberately apply learning strategies.	3,6	0,96	2,8	1,03
5	I self-question on comprehension strategies when faced with an unknown language.	3,4	0,84	2,9	0,87
6	I tend to use the learning strategies I am more familiar with, independently of the task that I am faced with.	3,8	0,91	4	0,81

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the SKILL - Strategy Implementation Section.

As the table illustrates, both groups did not strongly agree on the first statement. It can thus be deduced that all of the subjects are not sure whether they apply strategies deliberately, although the mean reported by the IC group is higher than that reported by the FLL group. Similarly, the average scores in response to the second statement fell within the range of the answer "I am undecided". Here too, the IC group reported a higher mean than the FLL group, suggesting that allegedly the *Intercomprehension* students self-questioned on comprehension strategies to a greater extent than their counterparts. Finally, the FLL group generally agreed on using learning strategies independently of the task, suggesting that these subjects tend to stick to the strategies they are more familiar with. The same can be affirmed with respect to the IC group, even though these subjects agreed to a lesser extent than the FLL group. A graphic representation of these data is provided in Figure 7.

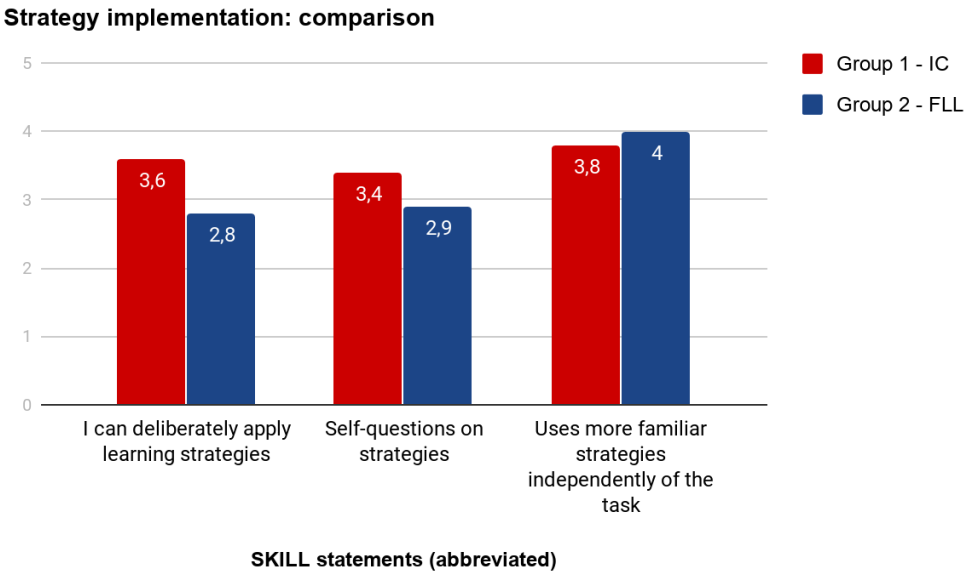

Figure 7. SKILL results - Strategy Implementation Section: comparison.

4.2.3 Strategy importance

The last section of the SKILL focuses on the importance of strategies are in a specific context of language learning, that is, plurilingual learning settings, where several languages are simultaneously taken into consideration. Previously, we hypothesised that the IC subjects would

> be aware that strategies can enhance language learning especially in learning contexts where several languages are simultaneously taken into consideration. We do not expect the other subjects to have developed this kind of awareness since they have no experience in intercomprehension.

The average scores of the final two statements of the SKILL can be founded in Table 5.

No.	STATEMENT	IC GROUP	SD	FLL GROUP	SD
7	I think that learning strategies are always important, but they make a significant difference when several languages are simultaneously learned (as in Intercomprehension between languages courses).	4	1,15	3,3	1,25
8	I think that learning strategies are important, but they do not make a significant difference when several languages are simultaneously learned.	1,7	1,05	2,4	1,34

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of the SKILL - Strategy Importance Section.

It can be seen from the data that the subjects with experience in intercomprehension endorsed the importance of strategies in learning contexts where several languages are simultaneously learned. The average scores given by their counterparts indicate that the subjects with no experience in intercomprehension were not equally sure on the role of strategies in plurilingual learning settings. Figure 8 shows the averages for the two statements of the last SKILL section.

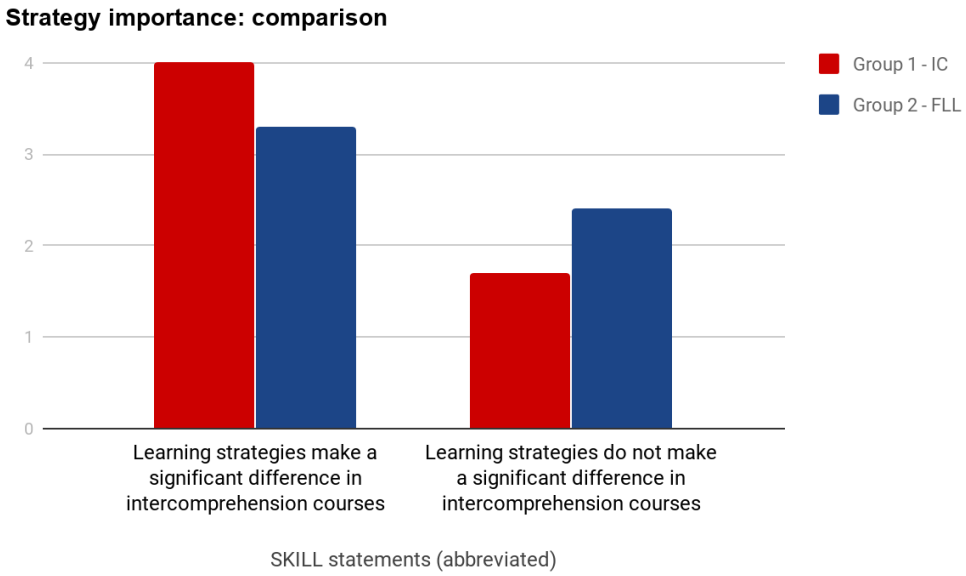

Figure 8. SKILL results - Strategy Importance Section: comparison.

4.3 Think-aloud protocol results

This section is dedicated to the last research question, which is now repeated:

> What strategies are actually implemented by the *Intercomprehension* students as they are coping with a comprehension task in an unfamiliar Romance language?

The corresponding hypothesis is also restated:

> Participants with experience in intercomprehension are expected to employ several kinds of strategies. Specifically:
>
> a. the subjects are expected to take advantage of the knowledge of other Romance languages accrued through the *Intercomprehension* course;

b. besides, the subjects are expected to rely mostly on deductive reasoning, that is, cognitive strategies because these are the underpinnings of the EuroComRom method. Nevertheless, we expect also compensation and metacognitive strategies to be part of the overall strategy range of our subjects.

Turning now to the results, the analysis of the transcripts revealed that the *Intercomprehension* students were able to report their thoughts in rich detail, allowing the researcher to get insights on their use of strategies. For example:

> S1: "ata"… I think that this is a preposition…yes, it is probably introducing a final clause.
>
> I: Great, how did you figure that?
>
> S1: Well, at first I did not figure that then I kept on reading the sentence and then I came back to "ata"…reading the whole sentence helped me to deduce the meaning.
>
> - - -
>
> S3: [translating] Nowadays the community "atesoura"… I am not sure.
>
> I: What are you thinking of?
>
> S3: I don't know the meaning but, looking at the whole sentence, this is the only word that can be a verb … therefore I think it probably means something like amounts.

As can be seen from Table 6, on the whole, participants used strategies 111 times, with a mean of 10,8 strategies per student (minimum= 7, maximum = 14, SD = 2,69). What is interesting in this data is that strategies were used in two

different ways: individually (N= 102, 93%) and in combination (N= 9, 7%).

RANK	STRATEGY TYPE	FREQUENCY OF USE	STUDENTS USING STRATEGY	%
1	Guesses contextually	27	10	24,32%
2	Uses knowledge of other Romance languages (morphosyntactic features)	25	10	22,52%
3	Skips words	14	10	12,61%
4	Uses combinations of strategies	9	8	7,2%
5a	Identifies grammatical category of words	7	7	6,3%
5b	Analyses unknown words	7	4	6,3%
6	First skims the passage in his/her mind	6	6	5,4%
7	Reads title (makes inferences)	5	5	4,5%
8a	Recognises internationalism	4	4	3,6%
8b	Uses knowledge of the world	4	3	3,6%
9	Keeps meaning in mind	3	3	2,7%
10	Uses textual clues to identify the text typology	1	1	0,9%
	TOTAL	111	10	100%

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of the Strategies Emerged from the Think-aloud Protocol.

The next two sections will describe in great detail individual strategies and strategies combinations.

4.3.1 Individual strategies

As for strategies used individually, subjects partially confirmed our expectations. In fact, they employed a wide range of online strategies to cope with the comprehension task. In particular, eleven different strategies were detected. It is interesting to note that, as expected, subjects took advantage of their previous linguistic knowledge and, at the same time, relied on their cognitive skills to comprehend the Galician text (e.g. “Identifies grammatical category of words”, “Analyses unknown words”). Interestingly, though, the think-aloud protocol revealed that the participants used compensation strategies more than we expected. Specifically, there were several manifestations of compensation strategies, ranging from “Skips words” to “Guesses contextually”. The pie chart below (Figure 9) shows the degree to which each individual strategy was used in the comprehension task. It can be seen that the most-used strategies were “Uses knowledge of other Romance languages (morphosyntactic features)” and “Guesses contextually”, both employed several times by each of the ten subjects. All subjects skipped words at least one time and seven students first skimmed the text in his/her mind and identified the grammatical categories of words. Fewer participants provided evidence of using the strategies named “Reads title (makes inferences)”, “Recognises internationalism”, “Analyses unknown words”, “Uses knowledge of the worlds” and “Keeps meaning in mind”. Finally, only one student used textual clues to

deepen his understanding of the text, as illustrated by the following excerpt:

> S1: “This text always uses the first plural persons and describes a route, I think that it could be a touristic report or the transcription of a promotional speech”

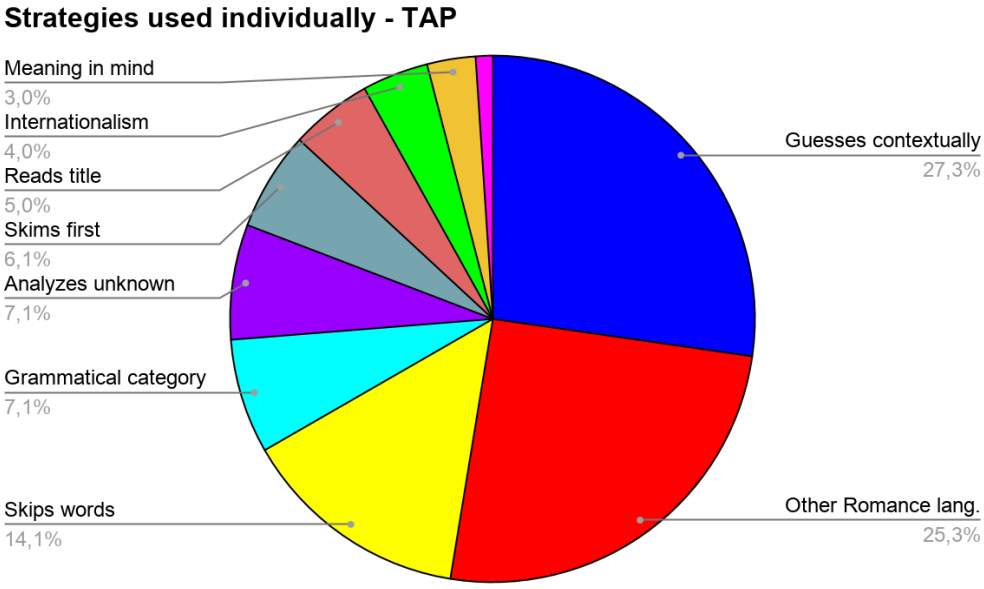

Figure 9. Percentages of the Strategies Used Individually.

4.3.2 Strategy combinations

If we now turn to strategy combinations, it seems apparent that the subjects used them to cope with non-transparent words and sentences of the text. Specifically, the most difficult words for these subjects were the verbs “atesoura” and “deterémonos”, the adjective “cheos”, and sentence introduced by the preposition “ata”. The number of strategies constituting each combination varied from subject to subject, ranging from a minimum of two to a maximum of five. Interestingly, though, the typologies of strategy involved in the combinations were always the

same. In particular, the participants combined together the following strategies: “Uses knowledge of other Romance languages (morphosyntactic features)”, “Guesses contextually”, “Identifies grammatical category of words”, and “Analyses unknown words”. Besides, few subjects reiterated the use of one strategy within the same combination. The following excerpt demonstrates how the strategy “Guesses contextually” was used twice in the same sequence:

> S9: The community “atesoura”...this one does not remember me of anything I have ever heard before. But…
>
> I: Please keep on talking.
>
> S9: Yes, well I looked at the whole sentence and it does not help me a lot on the meaning but what I get is that this must be a verb, it is the only possibility.
>
> I: All right, and what are you going to do with this information now?
>
> S9: Well know looking at the word, if I take off the initial “a”, it reminds me of “tesoro” (*Italian word meaning “treasure”*)
>
> I: Great.
>
> S9: Well I think that… if I now look at the whole sentence again, the community and then blank space and then almost 8000 varieties of camelia….well I suppose that it could mean something like “fare tesoro” thus something like “has a number of” (*Italian expression that can be translated as to “capitalise” or “take stock”. The expression “fare tesoro” is quite close to the actual meaning of the word “atesoura”*)

Table 7 below shows how strategies were combined together by each subject.

Strategy sequence Subjects	Strategy 1	Strategy 2	Strategy 3	Strategy 4	Strategy 5
S. 1	Uses knowledge of other Romance languages	Guesses contextually	/	/	/
S. 3	Uses knowledge of other Romance languages	Guesses contextually	Identifies grammatical category	Guesses contextually	/
S. 4	Uses knowledge of other Romance languages	Guesses contextually	Identifies grammatical category	Guesses contextually	/
S. 6	Uses knowledge of other Romance languages	Guesses contextually	Identifies grammatical category	Analyses unknown words	/
S. 7	Uses knowledge of other Romance languages	Guesses contextually	/	/	/
S. 8	Uses knowledge of other Romance languages	Guesses contextually	Identifies grammatical category	Guesses contextually	/
S. 9 - First sequence	Uses knowledge of other Romance languages	Guesses contextually	/	/	/
S. 9 - Second sequence	Uses knowledge of other Romance languages	Guesses contextually	Identifies grammatical category	Analyses unknown words	Guesses contextually
S. 10	Uses knowledge of other Romance languages	Guesses contextually	/	/	/

Table 7. Strategy Combinations: Sequences and Typologies of Strategies.

What emerges from Table 7 is that all subjects first relied on their knowledge of other Romance languages, next tried to guess from the context and then identified the grammatical category of the non-transparent word. In the event that the first three strategies were not enough to understand the word, some subjects reused the strategy "Guesses contextually" (S. 3, S. 4, S.8) and some went deeper into the word by analysing it (S. 6 and S. 9). In one case, one subject used the information gained through the fourth strategy to went back to the context and eventually guess the meaning of the word. Figure 10 outlines this process in flowchart format.

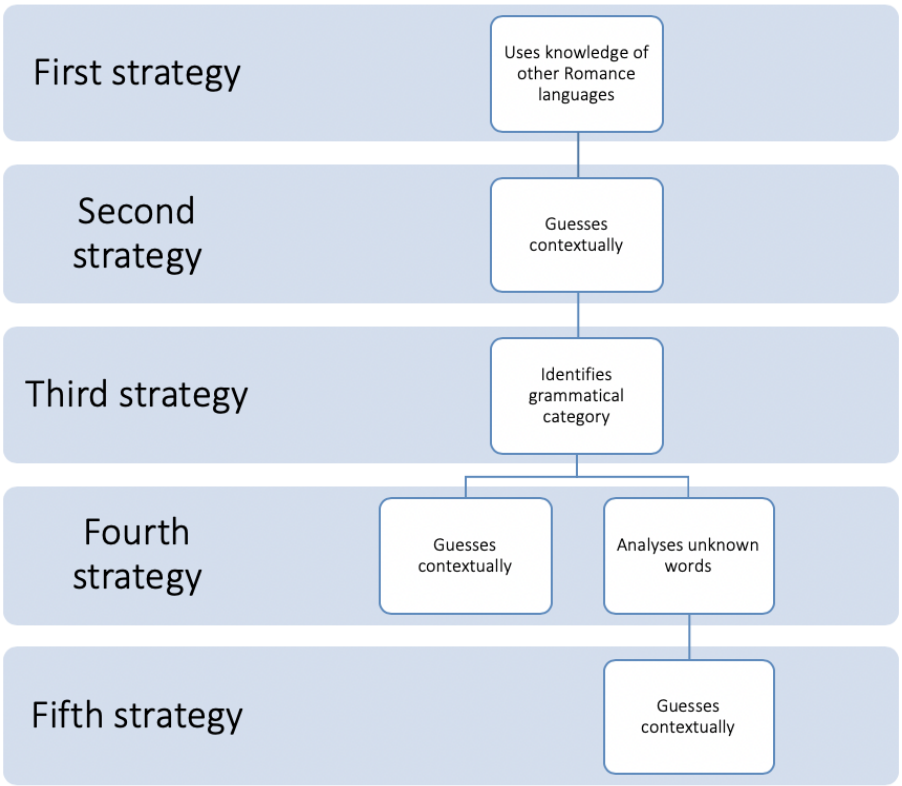

Figure 10. Pattern Underlying Strategy Combinations.

Note that those strategy combinations were successful in all cases, suggesting that metacognitive awareness is a pivotal component of language learning, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

The concurrent chapter reported all the data of this case study. The proper answers to the research questions and the implications arising from these findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

5. DISCUSSION

This chapter is organised into four parts. The first one will summarise the main findings and answer the research questions of this case study (from section 5.1 to 5.3). The results will be discussed in light of previous studies in the fields of language learning strategies and intercomprehension. Subsequently, the dissertation will continue with the implications emerging from the results of this case study. In particular, two specific topics will be discussed: the integration of intercomprehension strategies into ordinary languages courses (section 5.4) and the essential features for effective strategy instruction (section 5.5).

Section 5.6 will focus on the limitations of this work and the aspects to be improved. Finally, the concluding section will discuss future directions of research in the fields of language learning strategies and intercomprehension.

5.1 Is experience in intercomprehension leading to a different pattern of strategy use?

This section discusses the result of the SILL in order to answer the first research question. The findings of the IC group and the FLL group were compared on three distinct levels: the overall frequency of strategy use, the average scores of the six categories comprised in the SILL, and the most- and the least-used strategies. Both groups were expected to fell into the medium level, though the IC group was expected to report a higher mean than the FLL group. In addition, it was expected that the participants with experience in intercomprehension would use

metacognitive, cognitive, and compensation strategies more frequently than their counterparts. Finally, we expected the two groups to agree on which strategies they use the most (metacognitive) and the least (memory and affective). The data shows that the strategy pattern of the groups differs in some respects, as explained in the next few sections.

5.1.1 Overall strategy use

As descriptive statistics showed, the mean strategy use by the components of the IC group was 3,55, indicating that they were high strategy users. On the other hand, the mean reported by the FLL group was 3,44, thus these subjects were categorised as medium strategy users. What is interesting in this data is that, although there is a very minor difference between the two groups, they still fall into two different levels. In fact, the mean reported by the control group, that is, the mean of subjects with no experience in intercomprehension, is consistent with the means found by a vast number of strategies studies. Specifically, all the studies mentioned in the second chapter found that participants were medium strategy users (e.g. Aljuaid, 2010; Riazi and Rahimi, 2005; Ok, 2003; Shamis, 2003; Wharton, 2000; Bremner, 1999; Park, 1997; Yang, 1994; Oh, 1992; Chang, 1991; Green, 1991; Oxford, Talbott and Halleck's, 1990). It is crucial to highlight that these studies examined the use of strategies by language learners who were not experienced in intercomprehension, just as the control group of the present case study.

To the best of our knowledge, no earlier study used the SILL to identify the strategy pattern of subjects with

experience in intercomprehension, thus, the results of the IC group cannot be compared to any similar finding. Still, it is striking that only the *Intercomprehension* students of this case study were categorised as high strategy users. It is plausible to assume that this finding is the result of both the linguistic and strategic knowledge gained by these subjects through the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* course. In fact, the course is mostly based on the guidelines of the EuroComRom method, which strongly emphasises and encourages the use of strategies to facilitate intercomprehension between related languages. Besides, another element that could have affected this result is the fact that the components of the IC group reported knowing at least four different foreign languages. Therefore, it can be assumed that these subjects were accustomed to learning foreign languages and, allegedly, using language learning strategies.

5.1.2 SILL categories

The analysis of the average scores of the SILL categories revealed some unanticipated results. As previously mentioned, we expected the IC group to use metacognitive, cognitive, and compensation strategies more frequently than the FLL group.

Surprisingly, the results exceeded our hypothesis. In fact, not only metacognitive, cognitive, and compensation, but also social and affective strategies were employed by the subjects of the IC group more frequently than the FLL group. The only exception was represented by memory strategies. To be more accurate, the *Intercomprehension* students used four SILL categories with a high frequency

(social, metacognitive, cognitive, and compensation), whereas the control group employed only three categories with the same rate (metacognitive, social, and cognitive).
These results have interesting implications. First, it can be deduced that the IC group uses almost all strategies more frequently than the FLL group. Secondly, it is noteworthy that the compensation category was used with a high frequency by the IC group, while it was only used moderately by the FLL group. This result is allegedly stemming from the fact that the EuroComRom method is partially based on compensation strategies (see section 2.5) and, in fact, this finding was mirrored by the results of the think-aloud protocol concurrent to the comprehension task. Third, it is highly significant that the only strategies used more frequently by the FLL group were memory strategies. This implies that subjects with no experience in intercomprehension tend to use memory to learn foreign languages, as opposed to the subjects enrolled on the *Intercomprehension* course. Rather, these learners intertwine several kinds of strategies to grasp the features of new languages and relate them with what they already know.

5.1.3 Most- and least-used strategies

It was expected that the only point of contact between the two groups would be the most- and least-used strategies. This hypothesis was partially confirmed by the results.
In fact, the two groups agreed only on the least-used strategies, that is, memory and affective strategies. This result matches those of earlier SILL-gauged strategy studies (e.g. Peacock and Oh 2003, Wharton 2000,

Bremner 1999, Green 1991, Oxford, Talbott and Halleck, 1990).

With respect to the most-used strategies, the results of the two group differ. In fact, while the IC group used social strategies most frequently, the FLL group reported preferring the metacognitive category. The literature review showed that two strategy categories were consistently reported as the most used in earlier strategy studies. On one hand, some researchers found that the metacognitive category received the highest frequency rate (Aljuaid, 2010; Rahimi and Riazi, 2005; Shamis, 2003; Bremner, 1999; Oh, 1992; Green, 1991; Oxford, Talbott and Halleck, 1990). On the other, compensation strategies were the most used in other studies (Ok, 2003; Peacock and Ho, 2003; Yang, 1994; Chang, 1991). Only the 678 Singaporean learners of French and Japanese who participated in Wharton's study (2000) reported using social strategies the most. Therefore, the result relating to the FLL group is consistent with some earlier strategy studies. By contrast, the IC group's result is, to some extent, unusual, as the same result was reported in only one circumstance.

With respect to this case study, there are two possible explanations for this result. First, this finding might be related to the activities that the IC subjects usually do during the intercomprehension course. In fact, classes often involve language activities based on cooperation between participants. Therefore, it can be said that not only are these students used to work together in general, but also, they are accustomed to cooperating to cope with foreign languages. The second explanation refers to the nature of intercomprehension itself. In other words, this approach to language learning encourages learners not to resort to English as a *lingua franca*. Rather, the ultimate goal is not grammatical correctness, but the successful outcome of

communication. This means that learners are strongly encouraged to communicate with their interlocutors in whatever language allows the communicative exchange. In fact, during the *Intercomprehension* classes, it is not unusual that one student speaks one Romance language and his/her interlocutor answers in another Romance language. Therefore, it can be supposed that the preference for social strategies stems from two factors. First, the habit of working with others for the sake of communication and, secondly, the fact that these subjects are not inhibited and are accustomed to interacting with other learners, independently of the language being used.

5.1.4 Answer to the first research question

The combination of the aforementioned results allows us to answer the first research question. Since almost all our hypotheses were confirmed, it can indeed be claimed that the strategy pattern of the IC group is different from that of the FLL group. Specifically, the difference can be observed on three levels: the overall frequency of strategy use, the frequency of use of the SILL categories, and the most-used strategies. The fact that the subjects of the IC group were categorised as high strategy users, while their counterparts were labelled as medium strategy users, is very likely to be the consequence of the *Intercomprehension* course. This observation is also underpinned by the average scores of the SILL categories. The difference in score between the two groups suggests that the *Intercomprehension* students employ almost all strategies more frequently than the subjects of the control group. By contrast, language learners with no experience in intercomprehension seem to rely more frequently on their memory skills. The emerging

picture shows that the FLL group's results are in alignment with the strategy pattern of other language learners (e.g. Aljuaid, 2010; Rahimi and Riazi, 2005; Green, 1991, Oxford, Talbott and Halleck, 1990). On the other hand, the results of the IC group suggest that these subjects apply strategies more frequently than other students. Besides, these subjects present some of the features that Rubin (1975) attributed to "Good language learners". For example, the high use of compensation strategies suggests that these students are not inhibited and, at the same time, they are "willing and accurate guessers" (*ibidem*, p. 45): concerning the precision of their guessing, the think-aloud protocol will try to cast some light on this topic (see section 5.3). Besides, the *Intercomprehension* students are likely to have "a strong drive to communicate" (*ibidem*, p. 46), as it can be deduced by these students' preference for social strategies. On the whole, it can be affirmed that the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* course provided students with a good understanding of language learning strategies. The implications of this statement will be further discussed in this chapter.

5.2 Theoretical knowledge of language learning strategies

Turning on to the second research question, it is first necessary to make a preliminary remark. The instrument used to test the amount of knowledge of language learning strategies was a questionnaire called *Strategy Knowledge and Importance in Language Learning* or SKILL. Since this questionnaire was specifically designed for this case study, it is not possible to make a comparison between the results of our participants and other language learners. In addition,

not many experimental studies focused on what language learners know about strategies. To be more precise, it has become clear that metacognitive knowledge is directly related to the activation of language learning strategies (Rubin, 1987). It is also well established that the beliefs one has on learning languages have a strong effect on strategies, as demonstrated by Yang (1999). A line of research explored the correlation between the perceived usefulness and the actual implementation of strategies. As an example, Zhang and Goh (2006) found that Singaporean language learners generally reported knowing several strategies and endorsed their importance; still, they ended up applying only a limited number of them. However, no previous study has examined the theoretical knowledge of strategies as reported by language learners. In addition, the data gathered through the SKILL must be interpreted advisedly. In fact, the questionnaire evaluates the amount of strategy knowledge through a five-point Likert scale. In other words, students were asked the extent to which they agreed on eight statements concerning this topic. This means that the SKILL does not provide absolute data on the strategy awareness owned by the participants. Still, this instrument supplies some interesting data that will be discussed in the next sections.

5.2.1 The knowledge of strategies

Concerning the first section of the SKILL, we expected the IC group to have a greater knowledge of strategies than the FLL group. On the whole, our hypothesis was confirmed, though one result was unexpected.

In fact, the average scores of the first statement showed that the control group was more aware of the existence of strategies than the *Intercomprehension* group. This result was contrary to our expectations. At this point, two remarks are in order. First, it must be highlighted that the difference between the two average scores was very little and both means were extremely high (over 4,4/5). Secondly, it is worth reminding that the FLL group was made up entirely of foreign languages students, who were, to a greater or lesser extent, familiar with the process of learning languages. By contrast, the subjects of the IC group were undergraduates from different faculties, including non-language majors. Therefore, this finding does not imply that the IC group was not aware of strategies. Rather, it can be claimed that both groups were familiar with the notion of language learning strategy. However, the FLL subjects reported a higher score allegedly because of their cultural and academic background.

The next two statements helped us clarify this data. In fact, the average scores of the other two items showed that the IC group was more confident with the implementation of strategies. Similarly, the control group was not as sure as the IC group that the relevance of strategies varies according to one's specific goals. Hence, it can be assumed that the components of the control group are indeed aware of the existence of language learning strategies. However, they are not equally sure about how strategies can be implemented and managed to be in alignment with one's learning goals. By contrast, it is legitimate to infer that the high degrees of agreement reported by the IC group are the result of the knowledge gained through the *Intercomprehension* course.

As previously mentioned, the guidelines adopted in this course are inspired by the EuroComRom method, thus, strategies are both implicitly and explicitly taught in several lessons. Also, five Romance languages are taken into consideration in this course, but students are not forced to learn all these languages with the same depth. Rather, they are taught how to understand languages on the basis of what they already know. This being said, students are indeed free to further their knowledge of one specific language, but only if they are interested in doing so. This implies that these subjects are aware of their learning goals and consciously decide which strategies are the most relevant for the achievement of their objectives.

5.2.2 The implementation of strategies

It was hypothesised that the IC group would show more competence in the implementation of strategies than the FLL group. First, it is interesting to note that almost all the averages of this SKILL section fell into the range of the answer “I am undecided”, irrespective of having experience in intercomprehension or not. Therefore, we can assume that no subject felt totally comfortable with the actual use of language learning strategies. Still, the differences in score between the groups suggest that the IC group self-questions on and deliberately applies strategies with greater confidence than the control group.

Another interesting point is that, generally, the control group agreed on using the same strategies independently of the language task, whereas this was not always the case of the IC group. What can be deduced from these findings is that, again, the experience in intercomprehension seems to lead to greater confidence in the use of language learning

strategies. Specifically, the IC group appears to be more deliberate when it comes to applying strategies in a purposeful manner. At this point, we must remind that these students face new languages more often than their counterparts. Therefore, it can be assumed that they are able to reason about strategies and, consequently, they do not apply them only on the basis of their habits.

Nevertheless, it has to be reminded that the differences between the groups are small. This can indicate two things: either that these explanations are not true to all subjects or all participants were on the fence concerning strategy implementation.

5.2.3 The importance of strategies

Finally, the participants were asked to assess the role of strategies in plurilingual contexts of language learning. Since the FLL subjects had no experience of such settings, we expected that they would report a lower average than the IC group.

The data confirmed this expectation. It is noteworthy, though, that the participants experienced in intercomprehension only agreed with this assertion, while they were expected to strongly agree. On the other hand, the control group did not have a strong stance on this topic but still acknowledged that strategies can play a significant role in courses where several languages are simultaneously taught. These results can be interpreted in two way. The first one implies that the participants were not completely sure about the role of strategies in courses based on pluralistic approaches. The second option suggests that the subjects had a clear idea on this topic.

However, it was their opinion that strategies make only a moderate difference in such learning environments.

5.2.4 Answer to the second research question

Based on these results, the answer to the second research question is that the IC group had a deeper theoretical knowledge of language learning strategies than the FLL group. As expected, attending the *Intercomprehension* course allowed these students to develop knowledge of strategies and their role in language learning. Besides, these subjects were aware that strategies are subordinated to the objectives that one has established for his or her learning process. Nevertheless, it is worth reminding that all participants reported being unsure about the implementation of strategies, regardless of whether they had experience in intercomprehension or not. This observation leads us to assume that being aware of the existence of strategies on a theoretical level is not sufficient. Rather, it is also crucial for students to be informed on how strategies can be concretely applied. From what has been said, it follows that strategy training can play a vital role in this respect. Therefore, this topic will be furthered in the second part of this chapter, which discusses the implications of the present case study. Nevertheless, what can be deduced is that the students who had experience in intercomprehension and, consequently, were at least implicitly aware of strategies, reported higher scores than the subjects who did not attend the same course.

Finally, it is interesting to make a comparison between the SKILL and the SILL results. Note that it was beyond the

scope of this dissertation to conduct an analysis of variance to determine whether the knowledge of strategies had an influence on the choice of strategies, as measured by the SILL. Still, a preliminary analysis was conducted to find whether there was a correspondence between the awareness of strategies (SKILL) and the frequency of their use (SILL). It can be claimed that the data of the SKILL confirmed the scores of the SILL. In fact, the IC subjects, who were categorised as high strategy users through the SILL, demonstrated a good deal of theoretical knowledge on strategies, according to the SKILL. On the other hand, the components of the FLL group, who were defined as medium strategy users, also reported lower scores in the SKILL. This implies that, again, strategy training is crucial to provide students with information on strategies and the opportunity to practice them.

5.3 The actual usage of strategies: the role of metacognition

The goal of the last research question was to detect the selection and implementation of strategies during a comprehension task. It was expected that the *Intercomprehension* students would use a wide range of strategies, but, at the same time, would prefer the cognitive strategies most.

First, it is notable that the subjects were able to describe thoroughly their thoughts and, consequently, the strategies they were using. This demonstrates that these students have developed a kind of metacognitive awareness that allows them to reason about their strategic skills. As Singhal pointed out (2001, p. 3), metacognitive awareness is vital for two reasons: first, it allows learners to understand whether or not they are understanding the target text.

Secondly, learners can regulate their cognitive processes on the basis of what they know about their skills and cognitive resources. In fact, “if a reader is aware of what is needed to perform effectively, then it is possible to take steps to meet the demands of a reading situation more effectively” (*ibidem*). Indeed, our subjects took several steps to accomplish the comprehension task effectively.

That being said, we can answer the third research question by saying that our participants employed a range of twelve strategies. As the data shows, our expectations were met and actually overcome. In fact, not only was the strategy array wide, but it was also quite variegated, as will be discussed in the next section.

5.3.1 Answer to the third research question: beyond individual strategies

In this case, the expectation was that subjects would take advantage of what they had learned in the *Intercomprehension* course, namely other Romance languages and a reading method based on optimised deduction. Specifically, it was expected that the majority of strategies would belong to the cognitive category. Nonetheless, we expected compensation and metacognitive strategies to play a minor role throughout this language task.

It is uncontested that these hypotheses were met, but there were also surprising results. In fact, of the twelve strategies detected, only half of them belonged to the cognitive category: “uses knowledge of other Romance languages -morphosyntactic features-”, “identifies grammatical category of words”, “analyses unknown words”, “first skims the passage in his/her mind”, “recognise internationalism”,

and “keeps meaning in mind”. The remaining six either fell into the compensation group (“guesses contextually”, “skips words”, “reads title - makes inferences”, “uses knowledge of the world”) or the metacognitive one (“uses combinations of strategies”). The picture that emerges from this analysis provides us with remarkable results. First, cognitive strategies, including the knowledge of other Romance languages, represent only half of the total number of strategies. In fact, compensation strategies played a pivotal role in the comprehension activity, to the extent that the most used strategy was “guessing contextually”. This result was partially unanticipated, as we expected cognitive strategies to represent the biggest part of the strategic skills employed by the subjects.

At this point, consulting the literature demonstrated that the above-mentioned pattern was actually consistent with what has been reported with respect to reading strategies in second language learning. Brantmeier (2002) reviewed a dozen studies on this topic and found several commonalities. For example, successful readers keep meaning in mind (Hosenfeld, 1977), read for meaning, use their general knowledge (Block, 1986), and take the context into consideration (Barnett, 1988). Interestingly, Hosenfeld found that successful readers of her study also “skipped words unimportant to the meaning of the sentence, read in ‘broad phrases’, used context to determine word meaning” (Brantmeier 2002, p. 5). Note that, up to this point, these features perfectly match those of the participants of this case study.

However, the most striking result of this case study was that participants were able to combine several strategies together to cope with non-transparent words or sentences.

As can be seen from above, it seemed appropriate to consider this strategic behaviour as a manifestation of metacognition. In fact, the analysis of the transcripts revealed that participants did not accumulate several strategies together hoping that one of them would work. Rather, the subjects reasoned on non-transparent words and progressively deployed strategies to gather as much information as possible on the target word. In fact, it can be claimed that students proceeded in steps. First, they tried to connect a given term with what they had previously learned. Then, they relied on the context to guess the possible meaning, and subsequently identified the grammatical category of the word. At this point, few subjects had already solved the comprehension problem. The remaining students either returned to the context or dug deeper to analyse the structure of the word itself and then went back to the whole sentence. At this point, it is clear that this strategic behaviour is not casual for two reasons. First, even though the sequences were reported by different subjects, they were actually based on the same individual strategies. More importantly, these combinations are characterised by a spiral movement that mostly goes from general to analytic but also from analytic to general. In our view, this complex process is undoubtedly purposeful and can only be driven by metacognitive awareness. It is important to highlight that metacognition includes three different aspects: knowledge of the task, knowledge about oneself, and knowledge about the strategies that one can use efficiently in a precise context (Singhal, 2001). It is likely that these subjects developed metacognitive awareness thanks to the comprehension activities they had faced during the *Intercomprehension* course.

So far, we have discussed the results of this case study, in order to answer the three research questions. In light of what has been said, the dissertation will now move on to discuss the implications of these findings. Two topics will be tackled. First, we will discuss the possibility of introducing the strategies and theoretical principles of intercomprehension in ordinary language courses. Then, we will consider the need for integrating explicit strategy instruction into any kind of language class.

5.4 Intercomprehension as a potential source of enrichment for ordinary language courses

It is now clear that the main goal of this study was to understand whether there was a difference between the language learning strategies employed by students who have experience in intercomprehension and those who have not. This question was born from a precise observation: intercomprehension, as other pluralistic approaches to language learning, adopts some theoretical guidelines that differ from ordinary language courses. To be more specific, it is the extensive use of strategies that distinguishes, among other aspects, intercomprehension courses from the ordinary ones. The results of this case study showed that the students enrolled on an intercomprehension course were more aware of strategies and, at the same time, used them more frequently than other language learners who did not follow the same course. It is increasingly accepted that strategies are crucial to succeed in language learning since numerous studies proved that they make a significant difference between successful and unsuccessful language learners (e.g. Rubin, 1975; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Dörnyei

and Skehan, 2003). This being said, it seems natural to claim that the benefits of intercomprehension, among which there is the development of strategic skills, should be extended to all language learners. Consequently, the first implication of this case study is that ordinary language courses should consider teaching language learning strategies in their curricula.

At this stage, it is necessary to make some clarification. First, we acknowledge that the objectives of the intercomprehension courses are quite different from those of other courses that teach one language in isolation. In fact, intercomprehension focuses mainly on receptive skills to understand various languages of the same linguistic family. By contrast, ordinary courses aim at constructing an all-around competence in the target language, which means developing comprehension and production skills (both written and oral). Secondly, it cannot be claimed that learning strategies are not present in traditional approaches to language learning, as it was demonstrated by the components of the control group of this case study. In fact, the strategy patterns reported by these language learners can serve as an example. As it has already been mentioned, the subjects of the control group used memory strategies more frequently than the *Intercomprehension* student, while the opposite was true for all other kinds of strategy. This shows that the strategies present in traditional language courses seek to focus learners' attention on the target language, with the goal of memorising it. By contrast, intercomprehension does the opposite: strategies are the tools that can bring languages closer to learners and what they already know, both from a general and linguistic point of view. Taking the EuroCom method as an example, this process of rapprochement is

accomplished through compensation, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. It is undoubtedly true that intercomprehension requires a specific prerequisite, that is, learners must know at least one of the languages that belong to the linguistic family targeted by the course. By contrast, it is not always the case that students who learn a foreign language have prior knowledge of languages belonging to the same linguistic family. Nevertheless, the first sieve of the EuroCom method addresses internationalism, namely those words that are present in the vast majority of modern languages. Besides, the authors of the method pointed out that “no foreign language is a virgin land” (Giudicetti *et al*. 2002, p. 16; our translation). These claims intend to suggest that the strategies typical of intercomprehension can also be useful in other learning contexts.

Up to this point, the advantages of introducing intercomprehension strategies in ordinary language courses have been highlighted. Now, we would like to emphasise one last point. Another feature of intercomprehension could be transferred into ordinary language courses: the method used in the initial stage of learning. In fact, the strong point of the EuroCom method is that students “extract from the new language what they already know, inasmuch it is part of their native language” (*ibidem*, p. 17; our translation). This offers a great advantage: at the beginning, learners encounter only what they already know and, consequently, what they do not have to study. Besides, students are only required to develop a passive competence, since receptive skills are the main focus. This allows learners to remain consistent and, above all, ensure the continuous motivation that is crucial for language learning, as it has been claimed by

several researchers. A necessarily limited list includes, among others, Escudé (2010, pp. 22-23), Gardner and Lambert (1972), Rubin (1975), Ehrman and Oxford (1989), Skehan (1989), Schumann (1999), Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013), and Daloiso (2011).

In sum, the guidelines of intercomprehension could improve and accelerate every student's learning process through the acquisition of appropriate strategies and the preservation of motivation. This is moreover the view of Doyé (2007), who advocated that intercomprehension is consistent with the fundamental principles of any educational system. These basic notions are the exploitation of students' prior knowledge ("matching", *ibidem*, p. 57), the raising of awareness, and two principles that we have already met in this dissertation: motivation and learner's autonomy. The latter is, according to Oxford, the theoretical framework of language learning strategies (as reported in the second chapter).

5.5 The importance of explicit training

The previous section discussed the benefits that intercomprehension can bring to ordinary language courses. This section, instead, will discuss the improvements that could be made when it comes to teaching strategies in any context of language learning, including intercomprehension.

The difference in the strategy patterns reported by our subjects is very promising. In fact, it can be deduced that attending the intercomprehension course leads the students to develop a considerable amount of strategic knowledge. Nevertheless, the same subjects proved not to

be totally confident with respect to the deliberate implementation and selection of strategies. Therefore, the second implication of this thesis is that an appropriate strategy training must possess two specific features: it must be both explicit and integrated into mainstream classroom activities.

With respect to explicitness, Oxford made clear that there are four possible levels of information concerning strategies (1990, p. 257). Proceeding in crescent order of clarity, the "encouragement of strategy use in general without special training" (*ibidem*) promotes strategies but does not provide any clue on how to use them. Next, "blind training" (*ibidem*) prompts the use of one specific strategy. Nonetheless, students apply the strategy only in the concurrent activity and they are not able to transfer it into a new context. Some, but not complete, information on a given strategy is provided in the "informed training" (*ibidem*) level. However, it is only with the "completely informed training" (*ibidem*) that students are able to transfer strategies into new contexts, thanks to the exhaustive amount of information that they receive on the nature and the implementation of strategies.

Note that Oxford is not the only scholar who tackled the topic of strategy instruction, to the extent that "it is now possible to refer to commonalities, if not consensus, on an agreed sequence of steps for strategy instruction" (Harris and Grenfell 2004, p. 122). Language teachers should enforce the following phases:

- make students aware of the strategies they already know;
- model the strategies and persuade students to enlarge their strategic repertoire;

- provide opportunities for practising, favouring cooperative activities;
- identify students' strengths and select the most useful strategies accordingly;
- gradually decrease scaffolding until students become autonomous;
- assess students' progress and determine new goals concerning strategies (*ibidem*).

It is now natural to turn to the second feature that strategy training should have. In fact, the notion of "completely informed training" is strictly tied to the integration of strategy instruction within the mainstream language program. When strategies are complemented with meaningful language activities, learners can comprehend the usefulness of a specific strategy in a real task and, consequently, remember it and transfer it to another context with ease (Oxford 1990, p. 206). It is necessary to point out that training programs matching this description already exist. As an example, in the *Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach* or CALLA (Chamot and O'Malley, 1994), academic language, language learning strategies, and specific subject areas (e.g. science, mathematics, social sciences, etc.) are taught simultaneously. However, this program specifically addresses students of English as a second language who attend American schools. Therefore, this program can be taken as a reference for learning contexts where the pupils are not native speakers of the language in which mainstream courses are taught. Concerning foreign language courses, the *Styles- and strategies-based instruction* or SSBI (Cohen and Weaver, 2005) might serve as an example. The underpinnings of this program are the combination of explicit strategy training, learning styles assessment, and everyday classroom

language instruction. In this way, students are “given the opportunity to understand not only *what* they can learn in the language classroom, but also *how* they can learn the language they are studying” (*ibidem*, p. 5, authors’ italics). The SSBI, already field-tested in several institutes and countries, has given encouraging results that certainly deserves to be investigated.

5.6 Limitations of this case study

This case study made an interesting contribution to the field of research of language learning strategies by targeting a specific typology of pupils, namely intercomprehension students. Still, it has indeed some limitations that require us to treat the results carefully.

First, the total number of participants was small, thus the data are not representative and must be supported by further studies. Secondly, it is crucial to highlight a feature of few of the subjects who participated in the concurrent study. The components of the control group and few subjects of the experimental group were majoring in foreign languages or training to become language teachers at the University of Verona. This means that they might be defined as language experts, as they had already accrued a fair amount of experience in learning languages. Therefore, it is important to bear in mind the possible bias of these subjects’ responses. For this reason too, the findings cannot be extrapolated to all language learners.

A difficulty that must be pointed out lies in the data collection procedures, which took place exclusively online. This means that the researcher was not present when the

questionnaire was completed and, consequently, was not able to answer possible questions. With respect to the comprehension task, the think-aloud protocol was relatively unaffected by the online mode. Nonetheless, if the interview had been conducted live, the research would have had the possibility to observe subjects' movements and gestures as indicators of the students' attitude towards the comprehension task.

Concerning the materials, the SKILL might represent a weakness of this case study. As mentioned, this tool was designed by the researcher to investigate the theoretical knowledge of the strategies. This implies that this instrument has no scientific reliability. Further studies are needed to construct an instrument that provides reliable results on this topic.

The final critical reflection concerns the Galician text that was selected for the comprehension task. If the same study could be repeated, two aspects might be improved: the language and the text. First, the Galician language presents great similarities with Spanish and Portuguese. It must be taken into account that 70% of the subjects were Italian native speakers and one participant was Portuguese. Note that the researcher made sure that none of the students was familiar with Galician. Still, it can be claimed that this language was quite straightforward to the majority of the subjects. Hence, a possible continuation of this case study could use a Romance language that is more distant from the mother tongue of the participants (including Romance dialects).

The final observation regards the type of text. The text used in this case study neither included several international

words nor concerned familiar topics. Therefore, it did not provide clues that significantly eased reading. However, future studies could use texts of increased difficulty, for example, narrative passages. Also, the graphic appearance of the text might be changed, since the layout of the text can facilitate or inhibit comprehension.

5.7 Suggestions for future research

Language learning strategies received a great deal of attention in the last few decades. Similarly, intercomprehension has been studied with increased interest. Still, plenty of research is required to establish with greater clarity the links between the two fields. Specifically, greater samples of subjects are needed to cast light on the relationship between strategies and learners experienced in intercomprehension. As it has been said in the previous section, future studies should focus on learners who are not accustomed to learning languages, as opposed to this case study. Also, possible continuations of this work should investigate four specific areas. The first is the use of strategies to facilitate intercomprehension between unrelated languages. Secondly, it might be interesting to conduct a think-aloud protocol or a retrospective interview referred to different kinds of language tasks: written and oral production, oral comprehension, and oral interactions. Third, this study could be repeated with a difference: students not experienced in intercomprehension could also participate in the think-aloud protocol concurrent to a comprehension task in an unfamiliar language. In this way, it will be possible to understand whether the strategies used by subjects experienced in intercomprehension differ from those of inexperienced participants. Finally, it would be interesting to understand whether the number of known

languages acts as a significant variable on the choice of language learning strategies.

Concerning language learning strategies only, an instrument to assess the theoretical knowledge of strategies is needed. Future studies could design a test to verify strategy knowledge in a pragmatic fashion. For example, students could be asked to indicate which strategy, from a list, is the most suitable for a given language task. However, since strategy use is strictly tied to learning styles, this aspect needs to be taken into consideration as well.

Finally, taking into account the intercomprehension field only, research questions that could be asked include whether students experienced in intercomprehension report higher levels of motivation than other language learners. We also suggest conducting studies to broaden our knowledge of the development of strategies before and after an intercomprehension course. Finally, we recommend studying how students of intercomprehension approach the learning of one single language, that is, how they take advantage of the strategies learned throughout the intercomprehension course to go beyond receptive skills and develop an all-around competence in the language being learned.

CONCLUSIONS

As revealed by the data of the SILL, the SKILL and the think-aloud protocol, we can conclude that there is a difference between the language learning strategies used by students who attended the *Intercomprehension between Romance languages* course and subjects who did not. Our hypotheses were confirmed: subjects experienced in intercomprehension used strategies more frequently than the control group, both on the whole and with respect to almost all strategy categories. Besides, the *Intercomprehension* students demonstrated to be more confident about the existence of strategies, their implementation and their importance in plurilingual contexts than their counterparts. Finally, the think-aloud protocol showed that the students of *Intercomprehension* were able to deploy a wide range of strategies, mainly belonging to the cognitive and compensation categories. Nevertheless, a significant component of the students' strategy pattern was represented by the combination of strategies, which were used by the vast majority of the participants to tackle non-transparent words. In our view, strategy combinations can be regarded as an expression of metacognitive awareness, as demonstrated by the fact they were used purposefully and accordingly to the strategic skills owned by the students. Interestingly, although the combinations were reported by different subjects, all of them were composed of the same individual strategies. The commonalities revealed a precise pattern, that goes from general to analytic and then back to general. In fact, the students initially relied on their linguistic knowledge and on the cues provided from the context. Then, they resorted to grammatical information and broke down the words. Eventually, having acquired specific information on the

target word, all subjects returned to the context and successfully guessed the meaning of the non-transparent word. Taken together, these results suggest that it was the *Intercomprehension between Romance language* course to make a difference in the strategies employed by the experimental and the control group. Specifically, it can be claimed that the strategic knowledge accrued through the course allowed students to develop both a theoretical and practical awareness of language learning strategies, which were successfully employed in a comprehension task. This conclusion must be interpreted advisedly, in that, the data do not indicate that language learners not experienced in intercomprehension do not use strategies. Similarly, *Intercomprehension* students proved to be not completely confident when it comes to the deliberate application of strategies. Nonetheless, the difference in scores showed that the students who were exposed to strategies in the *Intercomprehension* course proved to use them more frequently and to be more aware of them than other language learners.

The results of this case study prompted us to suggest the introduction of intercomprehension strategies into traditional language courses. Also, we suggested that strategy training should have two qualities, independently of the nature of the language course (traditional or based on a pluralistic approach). First, strategy training should provide complete information on a given strategy, including its nature, its implementation, and its use in different contexts. Finally, strategies should be integrated into mainstream language activities, so that students could learn about them in a meaningful context and, then, transfer them to new language activities.

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APPENDIX A – Questionnaire (Individual Background, SILL, SKILL)

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in an educational research study. This study concerns the strategies people use to learn foreign languages. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to fill out three sections. The first asks questions on your background, focusing on the languages you know. The second and third sections investigate the strategies you employ when you are faced with a language task.

This is not a test: there are no right or wrong answers. This study should be an interesting experience for you and will provide an opportunity to reflect on the techniques you currently use to learn Romance languages. Your name, contact information and any identifying information will be kept private: all of the research data gathered will be kept strictly confidential and your individual answers will not be made available to anyone. You may withdraw your decision at any time if you wish to.

I agree that my answers can be used for the purposes of the research.

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SECTION ONE: INDIVIDUAL BACKGROUND

The following questions are for research purposes only. Please answer the following questions or check the proper answer:

- Your name: _____
- Your sex: Male/Female/Other
- Your age: _____ years old
- You are:

  spending a mobility period at the University of Verona and coming from a foreign university/enrolled at the University of Verona for the entire duration of your university career.
- What language course are you currently attending?

  Intercomprehension base/Advanced/ other (please specify)
- Why are you taking the Intercomprehension between Romance languages course?

  Interest/Requirement/Usefulness/Other (please specify)
- What is your native language? (If you are bilingual, please indicate both languages)
- Do you know other foreign languages?
- What is your L2?
- How did you learn it?

  At school or formal courses/self-study/other (please specify)
- How do you rate your overall proficiency in the L2?

  A1 - C2 (A1 being the lowest level, C2 the highest).
- The same applies to L3 to L7.

- - - - -

SECTION TWO: STRATEGIES INVENTORY FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING (OXFORD, VERSION 7.0)

You will find statements about learning foreign languages. Please read each statement and mark the response that tells how true of you the statement is.

1 = I never do this
2 = I rarely do this
3 = I sometimes do this
4 = I usually do this
5 = I always do this

PART A

1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in the new language.
2. I use new words in a sentence so I can remember them.
3. I connect the sound of a new word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.
4. I remember a new word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.
5. I use rhymes to remember new words.
6. I use flashcards to remember new words.
7. I physically act out new words.
8. I review language lessons often.
9. I remember new words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.

PART B

10. I say or write new words several times.
11. I try to talk like native speakers.
12. I practice the sounds of the new language.
13. I use the foreign words I know in different ways.
14. I start conversations in the new language.
15. I watch TV shows or go to movies spoken in the new language.
16. I read for pleasure in the new language.
17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in the new language.
18. I first skim a passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in the new language.
20. I try to find patterns in the new language
21. I find the meaning of a word by dividing it into parts that I understand.
22. I try not to translate word-for-word.
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in the new language.

PART C

24. To understand unfamiliar words, I make guesses.
25. When I can' t think of a word during a conversation in the new language, I use gestures.
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in the new language.
27. I read the new language without looking up every new word.
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in the new language.
29. If I can' t think of a word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.

PART D

30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use the new language.
31. I notice my mistakes and use that information to help me do better.
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking the new language.
33. I try to find out how to be a better language learner.
34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study the new language.
35. I look for people I can talk to in the new language.
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in the new language.
37. I have clear goals for improving my language skills.
38. I think about my progress in learning the new language.

PART E

39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using the new language.
40. I encourage myself to speak the new language even when I am afraid of making a mistake.
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in the new language.
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using the new language.
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning the new language.

PART F

45. If I do not understand something in the new language, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
46. I ask foreign speakers to correct me when I talk.
47. I practice the new language with other students.
48. I ask for help from native speakers.
49. I ask questions in the new language.
50. I try to learn about the culture of new language speakers.

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SECTION THREE: THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

You will find statements about the role of learning strategies in learning foreign languages. Please read each statement and mark the response that tells how true of you the statement is.

1 = I strongly disagree
2 = I disagree moderately
3 = I am undecided
4 = I agree moderately
5 = I strongly agree

1. I know that there are different strategies for learning languages and that their relevance varies according to the learner's objectives.
2. I am familiar with various learning strategies and how they can be applied (listening and repeating, copying several

times, translation, trying to produce utterances independently by myself).

3. I know that it is useful to know about learning strategies one uses in order to be able to adapt them to one's specific objectives.
4. I can deliberately apply learning strategies.
5. I self-question on comprehension strategies when faced with an unknown language.
6. I tend to use the learning strategies I am more familiar with, independently of the task that I am faced with.
7. I think that learning strategies are always important, but they make a significant difference when several languages are simultaneously learned (as in Intercomprehension between languages courses).
8. I think that learning strategies are important, but they do not make a significant difference when several languages are simultaneously learned.

APPENDIX B – Comprehension task (Galician text)

Ruta da camelia

Galicia posúe as características óptimas para o cultivo da camelia. Un clima húmido, temperaturas suaves e solos fértiles e acedos fan que o crecemento destas plantas sexa espectacular e sorprenda a expertos de todo o mundo.

As camelias chegaron a Galicia a finais do século XVIII, procedentes de países afastados como China e Xapón. Nun principio instaláronse nos xardíns dos pazos e casas señoriais da nobreza galega, pero co tempo introducíronse nos xardíns e terreos, tanto públicos como privados, de toda a nosa xeografía, ata converter Galicia nun referente internacional no cultivo e produción desta planta. Na actualidade a comunidade atesoura case 8.000 variedades diferentes de camelia.

Propoñémosvos varias rutas por algúns dos xardíns máis espectaculares de Galicia.

Deterémonos nos fascinantes espazos verdes que albergan os pazos máis singulares das provincias da Coruña e Pontevedra. Coñeceremos todos os segredos que ocultan tanto as pedras como as especies botánicas destes lugares cheos dun encanto particular. Os produtos típicos e os viños de cada territorio intensificarán a exquisitez da nosa viaxe.

Source: https://www.turismo.gal/que-facer/ruta-da-camelia?langId=gl_ES