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Intercomprehension, Attitudes and Metacognitive Awareness among Plurilingual Speakers

Supervisor

Ch.ma Prof.ssa Marcella Menegale

Assistant supervisor

Ch.ma Prof.ssa Michela Gronchi

Graduand

Sofia Troietto

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888615

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“The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled.”

Plutarch, On Listening to Lectures (Moralia)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS **3**

ABSTRACT **4**

INTRODUCTION **6**

CHAPTER 1: Conceptual Framework **8**

1.1 Plurilingualism in the European Union: Policies, Objectives, and Identity 8
1.1.1 Distinguishing Multilingualism from Plurilingualism 10
1.1.2 Language and Citizenship: Constructing "Europeanness" through Linguistic Diversity 11

1.2 English as a Lingua Franca (ELF): Sociocultural Advantages and Risks 12

1.3 Intercomprehension as a Democratic Alternative to a Single Vehicular Language 15

1.4 Plurilingual Competence in the CEFR 2020: Descriptors Adapted from the MIRIADI Project 16

CHAPTER 2: Intercomprehension as a competence for European Citizenship **24**

2.1 Operational Definitions of Intercomprehension 24
2.1.1. Receptive and Interactive Intercomprehension 25
2.1.2. Spontaneous and Taught IC 27

2.2 Intercomprehension Projects and Methodologies for Adults 28
2.2.1. The EuroCom Project: EuroComRom, EuroComGerm and EuroComSlav 29
2.2.2. EuRom5: the Sensed Transposition and "Bridge Language" Methodology 31
2.2.3. Digital Platforms for written interaction: Galanet, Galapro and MIRIADI 32
2.2.4. EU&I: European Awareness and Intercomprehension beyond Language Family Boundaries 33
2.2.5. Specialized Domains: Maritime and Technical Intercomprehension (Intermar, CINCO) 34

2.3 Intercomprehension Projects for Children and Teenagers 35
2.3.1. Euromania, Chainstories and Limbo 36

2.4 The Cognitive and Digital Dimensions of Intercomprehension 37
2.4.1. Metacognitive Awareness and MLLARS (Multi-language and Learning Awareness Raising Strategy) 38
2.4.2. Translanguaging and the Shift from Face-to-face to Digital Intercomprehension Environments 40

CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology **42**

3.1 Research Design and Methodological Approach 42

3.2 Research Questions 44

3.3 Research Instruments 44
3.3.1. The Questionnaire 45
3.3.2. The Interviews 46

3.4 Data Collection Procedures 47

3.5 Participants 50

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures 55

3.7 Results *56*
3.7.1 Questionnaire Results 57
3.7.2 Interview and Think Aloud Results 69
3.7.3 Integration of Questionnaire, Interview and Think Aloud Results 75

CHAPTER 4: Intercomprehension as a Model of Communication for a Plurilingual Europe 81

4.1 Analysis of Results in Relation to the RQ1 ..... *81*

4.2 Analysis of Results in Relation to the RQ2 ..... *84*

4.3 Study Limitations *87*

CONCLUSION 89

References 93

Appendix 1 99

Appendix 2 111

Appendix 3 114

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates intercomprehension as a plurilingual competence that may support everyday communication in multilingual European contexts beyond formal educational settings. Situated within current debates on plurilingualism, English as a lingua franca and European language policy, the study frames intercomprehension as a communicative model in which speakers rely on their own language while understanding that of their interlocutors, thereby mobilising their existing linguistic repertoires and partial competences. The present study intends to examine attitudes towards intercomprehension and their possible relationship with mutual understanding, communicative asymmetries, and a sense of belonging to a multilingual European citizenship. The research adopts an exploratory mixed-methods design, structured as a convergent parallel study in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected in overlapping time windows and subsequently related through triangulation. The quantitative component consists of an anonymous online questionnaire administered via Google Forms, which collected 59 valid responses from participants residing in Italy and other European and non-European countries. The qualitative component comprises 8 semi-structured interviews accompanied by a Think Aloud protocol. Closed-ended questionnaire items were processed in Microsoft Excel, whereas open-ended questionnaire items and the interview/Think Aloud data were analysed through manual inductive thematic coding. Questionnaire, interview and Think Aloud results were then integrated at the level of individual participants to identify convergences and divergences between self-reported tendencies and observed comprehension strategies. The main findings show that most participants reported recognising comprehensible words or expressions in related languages, formulating hypotheses based on similarities with known languages, and relying on contextual clues. The Think Aloud tasks corroborated these self-reports by revealing genuine bottom-up and top-down transfer strategies and recognition of international vocabulary. Overall, the findings suggest that, within the contexts represented by this sample, intercomprehension may function as a spontaneously

practised communicative resource that coexists with the instrumental use of English rather than replacing it.

INTRODUCTION

In a Europe that continues to promote its linguistic diversity as an identity value, intercomprehension (IC) emerges as one of the most relevant plurilingual competences for everyday communication between speakers of different languages (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 2). It consists in the ability to understand a foreign language not formally learned, by exploiting linguistic similarities, contextual cues, and spontaneous cognitive strategies, without this requiring full productive competence in that language (Dzik, 2019, pp. 157-158). The present study situates itself within this line of research but explores an aspect of it from an empirical perspective: how European speakers perceive and concretely use intercomprehension in everyday life and how aware, at a metacognitive level, they are of the strategies they deploy when confronted with a language they do not know.

Unlike other studies that focus on structured instructional contexts or on specific age groups, the present research adopts a broader and cross-sectional perspective, addressing a heterogeneous sample of adult speakers, predominantly but not exclusively Italian, with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Specifically, the study involved 59 participants through an anonymous online questionnaire, distributed in English to reach also non-Italian-speaking respondents. In addition, 8 participants took part in semi-structured interviews conducted in Italian. These interviews included a Think Aloud protocol, during which subjects read aloud two short texts in unfamiliar or little-known languages (Romanian and Portuguese), verbalising in real time their own comprehension process.

Regarding the structure of this research thesis, in the first chapter the concept of plurilingualism and its distinction from multilingualism are described, along with the role of English as a lingua franca in Europe and the related risks of linguistic imbalance, and finally intercomprehension itself as a democratic alternative to a single vehicular language. The second chapter instead delves into the operational definitions of intercomprehension, the main projects and methodologies developed to promote it among adults and among young people, and the cognitive and metacognitive dimension that

characterises it. Starting from the third chapter, the core of the research work is presented: the mixed methodological design, the research questions, the instruments used, the data collection and analysis procedures, and the results obtained are outlined. In the fourth and final chapter, the results are interpreted considering the theoretical framework presented in the preceding sections, before discussing the study's methodological limitations and future research perspectives.

Finally, it should be noted that artificial intelligence tools were employed at specific stages of this research: NotebookLM (Gemini) was used to organise and cross-reference the primary and secondary literature sources collected during the review process, while Perplexity Pro was used to support the linguistic and grammatical revision of the written text and to assist in the design of Excel-based data tables. A full statement on the use of these tools is provided at the end of this thesis.

CHAPTER 1: Conceptual Framework

This first chapter establishes the theoretical and policy foundations for examining plurilingual competence and intercomprehension in European language education. It begins by situating plurilingualism within the EU's language policies, anchored in the motto "Unity in diversity" and the Barcelona Objective, which promotes plurilingual competence alongside intercultural dialogue and mobility. The chapter then clarifies the conceptual shift from multilingualism to plurilingualism, emphasizing the CEFR (2020) dynamic, learner-centred model where individuals mobilize an unbalanced but flexible linguistic repertoire (paragraph 1.1).

Building on this foundation, the chapter addresses the dominance of English as a global lingua franca, exploring its functional advantages for employability and mobility while critically examining the asymmetries it generates, including linguistic inequality and "hegemonic multilingualism" (paragraph 1.2). This analysis highlights the tension between communicative efficiency and the preservation of linguistic diversity, particularly concerning minority languages. Intercomprehension is then introduced as a democratic alternative that enables mutual understanding across languages without requiring full productive mastery, thereby supporting linguistic rights and counteracting hierarchical language structures (paragraph 1.3).

The final section examines how the CEFR Companion Volume (2020) operationalizes these concepts through updated descriptors on mediation, plurilingual comprehension, and repertoire deployment, many adapted from the MIRIADI project (paragraph 1.4). The chapter also situates intercomprehension within contemporary contexts of super-diversity, underscoring its relevance for communication in professional and everyday life. Together, these sections provide the conceptual framework for the subsequent empirical analysis of intercomprehension in language education practice.

1.1 Plurilingualism in the European Union: Policies, Objectives, and Identity

The linguistic landscape of the European Union constitutes one of the most distinctive and complex features of its political and cultural identity, shaping both institutional policy and everyday communication among its citizens. The European Union's motto "Unity in diversity," formally adopted in 2000, encapsulates a foundational aspiration to reconcile integration with the preservation of cultural and linguistic heterogeneity (Károly, 2008, pp. 125-126). Although the earliest European Communities were primarily established with economic objectives, their evolution has significantly intensified the Union's multicultural and multilingual character. This development was particularly shaped by successive enlargements and by the implementation of the four fundamental freedoms: the free movement of persons, goods, capital, and services (Károly, 2008, pp. 125-126). This shift, however, cannot be sustained by legal and economic frameworks alone; it requires deeper forms of social and cultural integration (Santos Alves & Mendes, 2006, p. 212).

At the time discussed by Károly (2008, pp. 125-126), the coexistence of numerous official, regional, and minority languages reflected long-standing historical processes of population movement and linguistic transformation across the continent. Within this increasingly diverse context, the project of European integration has extended beyond economic coordination to encompass the construction of a shared yet plural civic identity (Károly, 2008, pp. 125-126). In this process, language policy plays a central role.

As Busse (2017, p. 566) points out, European educational agendas have increasingly emphasized plurilingual competence and positive attitudes toward linguistic diversity, in line with the Council of Europe's recommendation that individuals acquire at least two languages beyond their mother tongue. This objective, commonly referred to as the Barcelona Objective, aims not only to facilitate mobility and economic cooperation but also to foster intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, and long-term stability within the region (Busse, 2017, p. 566). At the same time, the European Commission (2012, p. 12) underscores a persistent tension: while certain languages carry greater value in the labour market, linguistic diversity remains essential for both cultural enrichment and individual development. This necessitates a balanced approach that does not sacrifice Europe's linguistic heritage in pursuit of employability.

However, current linguistic practices reveal a gap between policy ambitions and societal realities. As Romaine (2013, p. 121) points out, although public support for multilingualism is widespread, actual proficiency levels fall short of the "mother tongue plus two languages" target, thereby:

> A recent Eurobarometer revealed that 72% of EU-27 citizens agreed with this vision of everyone being able to speak more than one language in addition to their own; just over half (54%) reported being able to speak another language in addition to their mother tongue, but only 25% said that they were able to hold a conversation in their mother tongue and two other languages (European Commission, 2012, as cited in Romaine, 2013, p. 121).

In this context, the principles of plurality, intercultural understanding, and plurilingualism assume not only educational but also political and ethical significance (Santos Alves & Mendes, 2006, p. 212). As argued by Santos Alves and Mendes (2006, pp. 216-217), these elements are fundamental to the realization of a European identity grounded in unity through diversity, reinforcing the idea that linguistic and cultural openness is indispensable for the development of democratic citizenship within the Union. Yet, for linguistic openness to fulfil this democratic function, it is first necessary to understand what multilingualism itself entails.

1.1.1 Distinguishing Multilingualism from Plurilingualism

The notion of multilingualism encompasses a complex and multifaceted reality. As Valdes (2005, as cited in Dolci, 2015, pp. 10-11) explain, multilingualism involves cognitive, social, cultural, and emotional dimensions, as well as varying degrees of proficiency across receptive and productive skills. In this sense, being bilingual or multilingual does not necessarily imply equal mastery of multiple languages; rather, it may range from native-like competence in more than one language to differentiated and uneven abilities distributed across linguistic domains (Dolci, 2015, pp. 10-11).

A more precise conceptual distinction is introduced by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2020a, 2020b), which differentiates between multilingualism and plurilingualism. According to the Council of Europe (2020a, pp. 28-29), multilingualism refers to the presence of several languages within a society or within an individual's linguistic environment, whereas plurilingualism refers to the dynamic and evolving linguistic repertoire of an individual learner. This repertoire is inherently unbalanced and flexible, allowing individuals to mobilize different linguistic resources depending on communicative needs (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 28-29).

According to the description provided in the 2020 CEFR Companion Volume, the CEFR conceptualizes plurilingual competence as the ability to alternate between languages or varieties, draw on partial knowledge to understand texts or interlocutors, mediate between speakers without a shared language, and integrate verbal and paralinguistic strategies in communication (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 28-29). Importantly, pluriculturalism is closely related to, though not identical with, plurilingual competence, as the two typically develop in parallel and draw on the same underlying sociolinguistic and pragmatic resources rather than evolving as separate processes (Council of Europe, 2020a, p. 29).

Together with the notion of partial competences, these concepts were first introduced in earlier versions of the CEFR and have since evolved into a dynamic framework that extends beyond rigid boundaries between languages, functioning both as a pedagogical approach and as a guiding principle for language policy (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 28-29). Therefore, recognizing learners as plurilingual and pluricultural individuals enables them to activate their entire linguistic repertoire, encouraging the identification of similarities and differences across languages and fostering more flexible and inclusive communicative practices (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 28-29).

1.1.2 Language and Citizenship: Constructing "Europeanness" through Linguistic Diversity

Language plays a central role in the construction of individual and collective identities, making it a crucial element in the development of European citizenship. As Bochmann (1999, as cited in Károly, 2008, pp. 127-128), argues, language is deeply embedded in

processes of socialization and is inherently linked to power structures and ideological transmission. Through language, individuals not only position themselves within society but also internalize values and norms shaped by political and institutional forces (Károly, 2008, pp. 127-128). This interconnection is further reflected in the relationship between language, culture, and identity, which, as highlighted in Ján Figel's 2006 speech, constitutes a fundamental dimension of the European project (Károly, 2008, p. 126). In this context, the introduction of Union citizenship by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 marked a significant step toward fostering a shared sense of belonging among European citizens, while simultaneously raising concerns about the potential tension between supranational identity and national linguistic traditions (Károly, 2008, pp. 127-128).

However, contemporary dynamics such as increased mobility and global economic exchange have intensified the demand for multilingual competence, making knowledge of multiple languages increasingly necessary (Dzik, 2019, p. 155). Despite this, achieving high proficiency in several languages remains challenging for many individuals, which has contributed to the growing prominence of English as a common medium of communication (Dzik, 2019, p. 155).

Doyé (2005, as cited in Dzik, 2019, p. 158) suggests that ensuring equal status among languages requires enabling individuals to use their mother tongue, rather than privileging a single dominant language. In this light, the promotion of intercomprehension emerges as a viable alternative, encouraging speakers to draw on the similarities between languages to achieve mutual understanding (Dzik, 2019, p. 158). Ultimately, the interplay between language, citizenship, and identity highlights the complexity of constructing "Europeanness", which must reconcile practical communicative needs with the ethical and political commitment to linguistic diversity (Dzik, 2019, p. 158).

1.2 English as a Lingua Franca (ELF): Sociocultural Advantages and Risks

The prominence of English as a global lingua franca has significantly shaped linguistic practices in international communication and education. English is widely used across domains such as business, diplomacy, aviation, and higher education, functioning as a common medium among speakers of different native languages (Wilkins & Urbanovič,

2014, p. 1). As Dzik (2019, pp. 156-157) observes, intensified cross-border interaction and economic globalization have increased the perceived value of language learning, yet English has emerged as the most viable option for facilitating communication in transnational contexts, especially in areas related to trade, politics, and international cooperation. The centrality of English is further reinforced by its strong association with employability and career advancement. The European Commission (2012, p. 12) explicitly identifies proficiency in English as a fundamental competence that enhances individuals' competitiveness in the labour market, calling for targeted efforts to improve language skills.

However, this growing reliance on English also raises concerns about linguistic equity (Károly, 2008, p. 137). In this configuration, English occupies a leading position, followed by French and German, whereas other official languages remain comparatively marginal in both status and usage (Romaine, 2013, p. 121). Similarly, Károly (2008, p. 132) highlights that, although all official languages are formally recognized, the practical functioning of EU institutions reflects a significant imbalance: English has progressively become the primary working language since the 1970s. Van Parijs (2004, as cited in Károly, 2008, p. 137) argues that a shared lingua franca is essential for the functioning of democratic systems, as it facilitates participation and access to information. At the same time, he highlights the structural imbalance inherent in this model, since native speakers of English benefit from an unearned advantage, while non-native speakers must invest considerable resources to attain comparable levels of proficiency.

From a pedagogical perspective, the dominance of English has also influenced how language learning motivation is conceptualized. As Busse (2017, p. 567) explains, increasing attention has been paid to Dörnyei's (2009) concept of the "Ideal L2 Self," which emphasizes learners' capacity to imagine themselves as competent future users of the language. In this framework, motivation is driven not by identification with a particular national culture, but by the aspiration to participate in a global, interconnected community characterized by mobility, technological advancement, and cosmopolitan values. Thus, the primacy of English can be understood not only in functional and economic terms, but also as a powerful symbolic resource that shapes learners' identities and future-oriented self-perceptions (Busse, 2017, p. 567).

The widespread use of English as a lingua franca nevertheless raises critical questions regarding linguistic equality and the preservation of Europe's multilingual character (Dzik, 2019, p. 155). As Romaine (2013, p. 121) observes, while the EU hosts an exceptional concentration of world languages, actual communication within its institutions tends to rely on a limited set of dominant languages, giving rise to what Krzyżanowski and Wodak (2010) in Romaine (2013, p. 121) define as "hegemonic multilingualism". According to Dzik (2019, pp. 156-157), the widespread reliance on English may inadvertently exclude individuals who lack sufficient proficiency, thereby limiting their participation in transnational communication.

Moreover, the prioritization of a single dominant language risks undermining Europe's cultural diversity, given the close interdependence between language and cultural identity (Dzik, 2019, pp. 156-157). This dynamic may also contribute to forms of linguistic imperialism, reinforcing existing inequalities in economic and political domains and deepening the divide between those who can access global communication and those who cannot (Dzik, 2019, pp. 156-157). In addition, reducing the incentive to learn multiple languages may have unintended cognitive consequences, as multilingualism is widely associated with enhanced cognitive flexibility and critical thinking (Dzik, 2019, pp. 156-157).

These tensions are also reflected in learners' attitudes toward English, particularly in contexts where local or minority languages are at stake (Busse, 2017, p. 578). While many learners recognize the instrumental value of English for employment and mobility, its growing dominance can generate resistance, especially when it is perceived as a threat to local identities (Busse, 2017, p. 578). This ambivalence is particularly evident among speakers of minority languages (e.g. in Spain), who may display less favourable attitudes toward English compared to speakers of majority languages (Busse, 2017, p. 578). In response to such challenges, Otheguy et al. (2015, p. 283) argue that translanguaging practices can help dismantle rigid language hierarchies by validating speakers' full linguistic repertoires, thereby supporting the inclusion and visibility of minority languages.

1.3 Intercomprehension as a Democratic Alternative to a Single Vehicular Language

The preservation of linguistic rights constitutes a fundamental dimension of democratic citizenship within the European Union, where the principle of equality is closely tied to language use (Santos Alves & Mendes, 2006, p. 212). As emphasized in the drafting of the proposed European Constitution, the Union aspires to foster an inclusive and pluralistic form of citizenship grounded in shared values such as justice, respect, and non-discrimination (Santos Alves & Mendes, 2006, p. 212). Within this framework, ensuring that all citizens can access legal and institutional information in their own language is not merely a practical necessity but a democratic imperative (Károly, 2008, p. 131). As Károly (2008, p. 131) notes, the legitimacy of legal systems depends on their comprehensibility, since individuals cannot be held accountable for norms expressed in a language they do not understand. This requirement underpins the extensive translation practices of the European Union, where legislation is systematically rendered into all official languages, reflecting the idea captured by Umberto Eco that translation itself functions as a unifying medium across Europe (Károly, 2008, p. 131).

Therefore, intercomprehension emerges as a complementary approach that aligns with the EU's commitment to linguistic diversity (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 2). It facilitates access to groups of related languages, supports the development of plurilingual competence, and reinforces multilingualism, particularly in contexts where language policies aim to valorise both major and minority languages (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 2). Moreover, as Santos Alves and Mendes (2006, p. 213) argue, intercomprehension encourages recognition of all languages and empowers speakers of less widely used varieties, thereby contributing to the safeguarding of linguistic and cultural diversity.

Beyond its political dimension, intercomprehension can be understood as a communicative approach that enables individuals to interpret and negotiate meaning across languages without requiring full productive proficiency (Dzik, 2019, pp. 157-158). Drawing on Capucho's definition (2004, as cited in Dzik, 2019, pp. 157-158), Dzik describes intercomprehension as the co-construction of meaning in multilingual encounters, in which speakers rely primarily on receptive skills to achieve effective communication. This perspective challenges traditional expectations of language mastery

by proposing more attainable and functional objectives, particularly in contexts where speakers of related languages, for example Swedish and Norwegian, can rely on shared linguistic features (Dzik, 2019, pp. 157-158). While especially effective within language families, intercomprehension is not limited to them; rather, it offers a flexible model that can be extended to broader multilingual interactions, thereby reducing the need to resort systematically to a single dominant lingua franca (Dzik, 2019, pp. 157-158).

In this respect, as the European Commission (2012, p. 12) acknowledges, certain languages hold greater economic value in the labour market, and an exclusive focus on these languages risks undermining linguistic diversity and intercultural dialogue. According to the Council of Europe (2020a, p. 133), learners should be regarded as social agents capable of mobilizing their entire linguistic and cultural repertoire to engage in meaningful interaction, access knowledge, and foster mutual understanding. Intercomprehension operationalizes this vision by encouraging learners to draw on their existing competences and experiences, thereby facilitating more inclusive and dynamic forms of communication (Council of Europe, 2020a, p. 133). Therefore, the following section examines how these principles are translated into specific CEFR descriptors, with particular reference to those adapted from the MIRIADI Project.

1.4 Plurilingual Competence in the CEFR 2020: Descriptors Adapted from the MIRIADI Project

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was developed as part of the Council of Europe's broader efforts in language education, initiated in the 1970s and 1980s. Its primary aim was to enhance transparency and coherence across curricula, teaching practices, and assessment, both within and across educational systems (Council of Europe, 2020a, p. 25).

In its updated version, the CEFR expands the scope of language education by conceptualizing learners as social agents engaged in the co-construction of meaning through interaction. It places particular emphasis on mediation and on plurilingual and pluricultural competence (Council of Europe, 2020a, p. 21). This reconceptualization is

grounded in the understanding that linguistic knowledge is not compartmentalized but forms an interconnected and dynamic repertoire.

As outlined in the CEFR framework and further developed in the 2020 Companion Volume, languages interact within the individual's competence, and communicative ability emerges from the integration of diverse linguistic and cultural experiences (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 133-134). From this perspective, the goal is not to achieve balanced mastery across multiple languages, but rather to develop the capacity to mobilize and adapt one's linguistic resources according to specific communicative contexts (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 133-134). This framework includes the ability to navigate cultural differences, identify similarities across languages, act as an intercultural mediator, and use partial competences strategically to access meaning in unfamiliar linguistic input (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 133-134).

Such an approach also entails openness, flexibility, and critical awareness, encouraging learners to actively draw on their entire repertoire and to engage with linguistic diversity in a reflective manner (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 133-134). Within this framework, the CEFR 2020 introduces a set of descriptors that operationalize these principles in concrete terms (Council of Europe, 2020a, p. 256). As shown in Table 1, the descriptors for *Building on pluricultural repertoire* focus on the ability to interpret and negotiate cultural meanings, manage ambiguity, and interact appropriately across diverse sociocultural contexts (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 134-135).

	Building on pluricultural repertoire
C2	Can initiate and control their actions and forms of expression according to context, showing awareness of cultural differences and making subtle adjustments in order to prevent and/or repair misunderstandings and cultural incidents.
C1	Can identify differences in sociolinguistic/-pragmatic conventions, critically reflect on them and adjust their communication accordingly. Can sensitively explain the background to and interpret and discuss aspects of cultural values and practices drawing on intercultural encounters, reading, film, etc. Can deal with ambiguity in cross-cultural communication and express their reactions constructively and culturally appropriately in order to bring clarity.
B2	**Can describe and evaluate the viewpoints and practices of their own and other social groups, showing awareness of the implicit values on which judgments and prejudices are frequently based. **Can explain their interpretation of the cultural assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices of their own community and of other communities that they are familiar with. **Can interpret and explain a document or event from another culture and relate it to documents or events from their own culture(s) and/or from cultures with which they are familiar. **Can discuss the objectivity and balance of information and opinions expressed in the media about their own and other communities. Can identify and reflect on similarities and differences in culturally determined behavioural patterns (e.g. gestures and speech volume or, for sign languages, sign size) and discuss their significance in order to negotiate mutual understanding. Can, in an intercultural encounter, recognise that what one normally takes for granted in a particular situation is not necessarily shared by others, and can react and express themselves appropriately. Can generally interpret cultural cues appropriately in the culture concerned. Can reflect on and explain particular ways of communicating in their own and other cultures, and the risks of misunderstanding they generate.
B1	Can generally act according to conventions regarding posture, eye contact and distance from others. Can generally respond appropriately to the most commonly used cultural cues. Can explain features of their own culture to members of another culture or explain features of the other culture to members of their own culture. Can explain in simple terms how their own values and behaviours influence their views of other people's values and behaviours. Can discuss in simple terms the way in which things that may look "strange" to them in another sociocultural context may well be "normal" for the other people concerned. Can discuss in simple terms the way their own culturally determined actions may be perceived differently by people from other cultures.
A2	Can recognise and apply basic cultural conventions associated with everyday social exchanges (e.g. different greetings, rituals). Can act appropriately in everyday greetings, farewells and expressions of thanks and apology, although they have difficulty coping with any departure from the routine. Can recognise that their behaviour in an everyday transaction may convey a message different from the one they intend, and can try to explain this simply. Can recognise when difficulties occur in interaction with members of other cultures, even though they may not be sure how to behave in the situation.
A1	Can recognise differing ways of numbering, measuring distance, telling the time, etc. even though they may have difficulty applying this in even simple everyday transactions of a concrete type.
Pre-A1	*No descriptors available*

Descriptors marked with asterisks (**) represent a high level for B2. They may also be suitable for the C levels.

Table 1. Descriptors for Building on pluricultural repertoire
Source: Council of Europe (2020b)

Complementing this, as illustrated in Table 2, the scales relating to *Plurilingual comprehension* emphasize the capacity to exploit linguistic similarities, contextual cues, and multilingual resources to understand texts across languages, even when knowledge is incomplete (Council of Europe, 2020a, p. 136).

	Plurilingual comprehension
C2	*No descriptors available, see B2*
C1	*No descriptors available, see B2*
B2	Can use their knowledge of contrasting genre conventions and textual patterns in *languages in their plurilingual repertoire* in order to support comprehension.
B1	Can use what they have understood in *one language* to understand the topic and main message of a text in *another language* (e.g. when reading short newspaper articles in different languages on the same theme). Can use parallel translations of texts (e.g. magazine articles, stories, passages from novels) to develop comprehension in *different languages*. Can deduce the message of a text by exploiting what they have understood from texts on the same theme in *different languages* (e.g. news in brief, museum brochures, online reviews). Can extract information from documents in *different languages* in their field (e.g. to include in a presentation). Can recognise similarities and contrasts between the way concepts are expressed in *different languages*, in order to distinguish between identical uses of the same word/sign and "false friends". Can use their knowledge of contrasting grammatical structures and functional expressions of *languages in their plurilingual repertoire* in order to support comprehension.

	Plurilingual comprehension
A2	Can understand short, clearly articulated announcements by piecing together what they understand from the available versions in *different languages*. Can understand short, clearly expressed messages and instructions by piecing together what they understand from the versions in *different languages*. Can use simple warnings, instructions and product information given in parallel in *different languages* to find relevant information.
A1	Can recognise internationalisms and words/signs common to *different languages* (e.g. haus/hus/house) to: - deduce the meaning of simple signs and notices; - identify the probable message of a short, simple text; - follow in outline short, simple social exchanges conducted very slowly and clearly in their presence; - deduce what people are trying to say directly to them, provided the articulation is very slow and clear, with repetition if necessary.
Pre-A1	*No descriptors available*

Table 2. Descriptors for Plurilingual comprehension
Source: Council of Europe (2020b)

Finally, the scale concerning the construction and deployment of a *Plurilingual repertoire*, shown in Table 3, highlights the learner's ability to flexibly combine languages, adapt communication to interlocutors' competences, and facilitate understanding in multilingual settings, particularly in situations requiring mediation (Council of Europe, 2020a, p. 138).

	Building on plurilingual repertoire
C2	Can interact in a multilingual context on abstract and specialised topics by alternating flexibly between *languages in their plurilingual repertoire* and if necessary explaining the different contributions made. Can explore similarities and differences between metaphors and other figures of speech in *the languages in their plurilingual repertoire*, either for rhetorical effect or for fun.
C1	Can alternate between languages flexibly to facilitate communication in a multilingual context, summarising and glossing in *different languages in their plurilingual repertoire* contributions to the discussion and texts referred to. Can participate effectively in a conversation in *two or more languages in their plurilingual repertoire*, adjusting to the changes of language and catering to the needs and linguistic skills of the interlocutors. Can use and explain specialised terminology from *another language in their plurilingual repertoire* more familiar to the interlocutor(s), in order to improve understanding in a discussion of abstract and specialised topics. Can respond spontaneously and flexibly in the appropriate language when someone else changes to *another language in their plurilingual repertoire*. Can support comprehension and discussion of a text spoken, signed or written in *one language* by explaining, summarising, clarifying and expanding it in *another language in their plurilingual repertoire*.
B2	**Can recognise the extent to which it is appropriate to make flexible use of *different languages in their plurilingual repertoire* in a specific situation, in order to increase the efficiency of communication. **Can alternate efficiently between *languages in their plurilingual repertoire* in order to facilitate comprehension with and between third parties who lack a common language. **Can introduce into an utterance an expression from *another language in their plurilingual repertoire* that is particularly apt for the situation/concept being discussed, explaining it for the interlocutor when necessary. Can alternate between *languages in their plurilingual repertoire* in order to communicate specialised information and issues on a subject in their field of interest to different interlocutors. Can make use of *different languages in their plurilingual repertoire* during collaborative interaction, in order to clarify the nature of a task, the main steps, the decisions to be taken and the outcomes expected. Can make use of *different languages in their plurilingual repertoire* to encourage other people to use the language in which they feel more comfortable.
B1	Can exploit creatively their limited repertoire in *different languages in their plurilingual repertoire* for everyday contexts, in order to cope with an unexpected situation.
A2	Can mobilise their limited repertoire in *different languages* in order to explain a problem or to ask for help or clarification. Can use simple words/signs and phrases from *different languages in their plurilingual repertoire* to conduct a simple, practical transaction or information exchange. Can use a simple word/sign from *another language in their plurilingual repertoire* to make themselves understood in a routine everyday situation, when they cannot think of an adequate expression in *the language being used.*
A1	Can use a very limited repertoire in *different languages* to conduct a very basic, concrete, everyday transaction with a collaborative interlocutor.
Pre-A1	*No descriptors available*

Descriptors marked with asterisks (**) represent a high level for B2. They may also be suitable for the C levels.

Table 3. Descriptors for Plurilingual repertoire
Source: Council of Europe (2020b)

These descriptors were partly informed by parallel work done by a network of scholars and experts in intercomprehension and collaborating within the MIRIADI European project. Launched on 1st December 2012 and completed on 30th November 2015, the MIRIADI project was formally titled *Coopération et Innovation pour un Réseau d'Intercompréhension à Distance*. It aimed at reshaping language teaching and learning by mainstreaming intercomprehension-based training delivered through digital environments *(The MIRIADI Plan*, n.d.). Over the course of three years, this ambition was translated into three concrete outcomes: the construction of a collaborative network, the development of an online resource centre, and the creation of a dedicated working platform designed to support the preparation and implementation of new training programmes. The project drew extensively on the expertise accumulated through earlier initiatives and existing platforms. It integrated both face-to-face and online modes of interaction, including the formation of initially monolingual groups that were subsequently reorganized into multilingual clusters based on shared interests and affinities *(The MIRIADI Plan*, n.d.).

Although the project was initially rooted in the Romance language family and oriented toward higher education, its scope progressively expanded to encompass a wider range of languages and audiences, including schools, professional associations, and non-academic institutions. The collaborative online work undertaken throughout the project generated a substantial body of shared resources, among them a competence framework, prototype teaching scenarios, an activity inventory, and a set of guidelines for curriculum integration *(The MIRIADI Plan*, n.d.). Two reference frameworks emerged directly from this collective effort, each addressing a distinct dimension of intercomprehension. The first, the *Framework for Plurilingual Communicative Competence in Intercomprehension*, is intended as a planning and assessment instrument for learning pathways, outlining the knowledge, skills, strategies, and attitudes that educators and trainers aim to develop in their learners (De Carlo, n.d.). The second, the *Framework for Competences in Intercomprehension Teaching*, functions as a theoretically grounded practical guide for teachers and trainers seeking to build professional expertise in this pedagogical approach, specifying the competences required to integrate intercomprehension effectively into their practice (De Carlo, n.d.).

Despite their different orientations, both frameworks converge on a shared purpose: equipping those involved in language education with the tools needed to design and implement training programmes in which intercomprehension is promoted as both a communicative practice and a pedagogical model (De Carlo, n.d.). This shared pedagogical logic is not incidental: according to the Council of Europe (2020a, pp. 27-28), one of the most distinctive contributions of the CEFR lies in treating language not as a subject of academic study but as a medium through which real-world action is accomplished. Within increasingly diversified societies, meaning-making can draw on multiple languages simultaneously, mobilising the plurilingual and pluricultural repertoires that speakers bring to any given interaction (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 27-28).

CHAPTER 2: Intercomprehension as a competence for European Citizenship

This second chapter examines intercomprehension as a key competence for European citizenship, situating it at the intersection of linguistic awareness, plurilingual education, and intercultural dialogue. It begins by presenting intercomprehension as a pedagogical and social resource that supports communication across languages and fosters a more inclusive European linguistic space. The discussion is then organized to move from definition to application, so that the concept is first clarified in its operational sense and then developed through its main didactic and methodological implications.

It opens with the basic definitions of intercomprehension, including the distinction between receptive and interactive forms, before moving to the difference between spontaneous and taught intercomprehension (paragraph 2.1).

The chapter then broadens the perspective by presenting major projects and methodologies that have shaped intercomprehension in adult education, with particular attention to the EuroCom framework, the EuRom5 approach, and digital platforms for written interaction such as Galanet and MIRIADI (paragraph 2.2).

The final sections further expand the scope by considering intercomprehension in relation to younger learners (paragraph 2.3), the cognitive and digital dimensions of the competence, and the role of metacognitive awareness in language learning (paragraph 2.4).

2.1 Operational Definitions of Intercomprehension

Having emerged from didactic reflection in the early 1990s, the notion of intercomprehension initially lacked a stable definition, as scholars proposed several competing formulations without reaching immediate consensus on its essential features (Doyé, 2005, p. 7). Over time, however, a shared understanding has gained wide acceptance, generally describing intercomprehension as a communicative situation in which each participant relies on their own language while understanding that used by

others (Doyé, 2005, p. 7). As stated by Doyé (2005, p. 7), this formulation proves particularly useful because it accounts for both spoken and written interaction and, at the same time, excludes the requirement to produce utterances in the interlocutor's language. Furthermore, the exclusion of productive competence highlights that effective communication does not depend on the ability to speak the other person's language (Doyé, 2005, p. 7).

Doyé (2005, p. 7) proposes a further refinement by distinguishing between the performance and competence dimensions of intercomprehension. From the first standpoint, intercomprehension manifests itself as an interactional practice among speakers of different first languages who communicate by using their own language while understanding that of their interlocutors (Doyé, 2005, p. 7). Viewed instead as competence, it corresponds to the underlying capacity to understand languages that have never been formally studied (Doyé, 2005, p. 7).

A closely related definition is offered by Bonvino et al. (2018, p. 2), who describe intercomprehension as a form of plurilingual communication in which participants understand, without necessarily speaking, the language of their interlocutors, relying instead on the language or languages they themselves master. Intercomprehension also underpins a specific pedagogical orientation aimed at fostering individual plurilingualism and sustaining language policies that favour multilingualism (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 1). Despite considerable variation in objectives and techniques across methodologies, several principles are shared by IC-based teaching. These include a plurilingual orientation, reliance on partial rather than complete linguistic competences, and a strong focus on comprehension processes. They also encompass reflection on the languages involved and the development of strategic and metacognitive skills (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 1).

2.1.1. Receptive and Interactive Intercomprehension

When arguing about receptive intercomprehension, it can be understood as an extension of the general process of comprehension, defined as the capacity to construct a mental representation of meaning from written or oral input (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 3). When this ability is applied across several languages, it develops into a specific competence

built primarily through guided or autonomous exposure to reading and listening activities in foreign languages (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 3). Such competence relies on the interaction between an individual's existing linguistic repertoire and new, often related, languages, thereby strengthening awareness of structural and lexical connections among them (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 3).

In this sense, Bonvino et al. (2018, p. 3) state that receptive intercomprehension can be described as a form of communication between a receiver, equipped with prior linguistic and cultural knowledge, and a text produced by an author through a different language and set of cultural references. The same authors stress that this dimension of intercomprehension is fundamentally anchored in receptive language processing rather than productive skills (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 3). From a pedagogical standpoint, Bonvino (2015, p. 37) notes that receptive competence can meet the needs of specific learner groups. It may also be particularly useful for professionals such as journalists, who need to consult sources in different languages. Moreover, it can be acquired relatively quickly when instruction focuses simultaneously on receptive skills in more than one language.

While receptive intercomprehension centres on the individual's capacity to understand linguistic input, interactive intercomprehension shifts the focus toward genuine exchange between interlocutors (Bonvino et al., 2018, pp. 3-4). It refers to communicative situations in which at least two speakers understand one another despite each using a different language, relying on the language they know best rather than resorting to a common lingua franca. A typical example would involve an Italian speaker and a Spanish speaker each communicating in their native tongue while understanding the other's (Bonvino et al., 2018, pp. 3-4).

Furthermore, this form of communication allows speakers to convey nuanced meaning through languages they master deeply. They can adapt their discourse to their interlocutor and remaining attentive to the particular dynamics that arise from the encounter between different languages and cultures (Bonvino et al., 2018, pp. 3-4). Interactive intercomprehension therefore constitutes a process of co-constructing meaning, in which participants negotiate explicitly or implicitly the use of multiple languages while drawing on shared linguistic and cultural resources (Bonvino et al., 2018, pp. 3-4).

2.1.2. Spontaneous and Taught IC

Research on intercomprehension has also increasingly drawn attention to the distinction between its spontaneous and taught manifestations, reflecting a broader shift in how this phenomenon has been approached over time. In its spontaneous form, intercomprehension emerges without deliberate instruction, arising instead from speakers' ability to draw on existing linguistic resources when confronted with related languages (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 2). This evolution, as the authors note while drawing on Ollivier (2011, p. 28), marks a conceptual turning point: intercomprehension is no longer regarded solely as a spontaneous competence but is increasingly framed as a skill to be deliberately cultivated, particularly among learners for whom such practices are not habitual (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 2).

This shift toward instructed intercomprehension cannot be fully understood without considering the ideological assumptions underlying language education more broadly. According to Escudé (2015, pp. 88-89), the way languages are taught is deeply shaped by prevailing political conceptions of linguistic identity: when languages are presented as fundamentally foreign, learners are implicitly encouraged to treat them with caution. Recognizing instead that many languages share historical, cultural, and linguistic continuities allows intercomprehension to be adopted as a coherent and dynamic pedagogical practice (Escudé, 2015, pp. 88-89).

At the methodological level, however, fostering intercomprehension as a taught competence requires more than the transmission of formal rules describing correspondences between languages (Meißner, 2011, p. 2). Meißner (2011, p. 2) argues that meaningful progress in this area depends on a deeper understanding of how language acquisition and processing actually occur, placing the learner and their cognitive engagement and capacity for self-regulation at the centre of instructional design.

Drawing on Hosenfeld (1984), Bonvino et al. (2018, pp. 7-8) observe that more proficient second-language readers tend to process larger portions of text while focusing on global meaning rather than isolated details. They also display a more positive and reflective attitude toward reading, and are better able to monitor, adjust, and articulate their own

comprehension strategies. Therefore, the transition from spontaneous to taught intercomprehension ultimately depends on helping learners make their implicit strategies explicit, thereby transforming an incidental ability into a consciously developed competence (Bonvino et al., 2018, pp. 7-8).

2.2 Intercomprehension Projects and Methodologies for Adults

Over the past two decades, intercomprehension has attracted considerable attention within European cooperation frameworks. This interest has led to numerous initiatives ranging from the production of teaching materials to the establishment of institutional networks such as REDINTER, MIRIADI, and EVAL-IC. It has also resulted in dedicated training programmes including Euroforma, FORMICA, and Intermar (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 2).

The roots of this field, however, extend further back, to research conducted in France, Germany, and Denmark during the 1970s and 1980s (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 2). This foundation paved the way for a series of influential projects developed in the 1990s, which are now regarded as milestones in the field. These included Eurom4, coordinated by Claire Blanche-Benveniste; Galatea, led by Louise Dabène; and EuroComRom, developed in the German context by Franz-Joseph Meißner, Horst Klein, and Tilbert Stegmann. Another Danish initiative, directed by Jørgen Schmitt Jensen, resulted in comparative grammars designed to facilitate cross-linguistic understanding (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 2).

Methodologically, these pioneering projects concentrated primarily on written comprehension, establishing reading as the principal gateway into related languages (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 3). Although subsequent research has expanded into oral intercomprehension, focusing largely on receptive listening skills, didactic applications have generally treated orality as secondary rather than central (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 3). Jamet and Hosenfeld (2011, as cited in Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 252) observe that, even where oral elements are incorporated into instructional systems, they rarely constitute the primary learning objective. This is evident in programmes such as EuRom4 and EuRom5, where oral input functions mainly as a supporting resource.

More recently, advances in digital communication have enabled a shift beyond purely receptive practices. Projects such as Galanet and MIRIADI have extended learners' engagement from comprehension alone toward written interaction, using tools such as forums and chats to encourage genuine exchange among speakers of different languages (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 3). In parallel, initiatives such as Euroforma, FORMICA, and Intermar have created pedagogical contexts specifically designed to foster oral interaction (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 3). Nevertheless, even within these more interactive frameworks, reading competence remains fundamental, since distance-based communication – whether through emails, chats, or forums – continues to rely heavily on written comprehension (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 5).

2.2.1. The EuroCom Project: EuroComRom, EuroComGerm and EuroComSlav

Among the initiatives that have contributed most substantially to the practical implementation of intercomprehension in Europe, the EuroCom project stands out for its scope and methodological coherence. Its central aim is to foster what has been termed "eurocomprehension", namely the ability to access languages within the same family – be it Germanic, Romance, or Slavic – by capitalizing on structural and lexical similarities among related languages (Grzega, 2005, p. 2). As Grzega (2005, p. 2) explains, sound command of one language within a given group substantially facilitates the acquisition of others belonging to the same branch, since prior linguistic knowledge reduces the need to approach a new language as entirely unfamiliar territory. This principle applies, for instance, to speakers of Dutch, who can draw on structural parallels to access Swedish more readily, given their shared Germanic origin (Dzik, 2019, p. 160).

Underlying this approach is the broader conviction, articulated by McCann, Klein, and Stegmann (2002, as cited in Grzega, 2005, p. 2), that European languages have far more in common than what separates them, and that genuine linguistic integration across Europe depends on citizens developing competence in several related languages rather than relying predominantly on a single dominant one.

Structurally, the EuroCom project is organized into three main branches corresponding to the major European language families. EuroComRom, initiated through the pioneering

work of Horst G. Klein, addresses Romance languages such as French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romanian, using French as a bridge language to enable rapid access to reading competence in the others (Grzega, 2005, p. 2). Notably, this branch also embraces a positive stance toward multilingualism by explicitly valuing minority languages such as Catalan (Dzik, 2019, p. 160). EuroComSlav, coordinated by Lew Zybatow, extends the same logic to Slavic languages including Czech, Polish, Slovak, Serbian, and Russian, with particular attention to shared internationalisms, phonological correspondences, and syntactic parallels (Dzik, 2019, p. 160; Grzega, 2005, p. 2). EuroComGerm, directed by Britta Hufeisen, represents the most recently developed branch and faces the additional challenge of accommodating the comparatively greater internal diversity of Germanic languages. The project builds in part on earlier work carried out within the IGLO project, which had already explored analogies among seven Germanic languages beginning in 1999 (Dzik, 2019, p. 160).

Methodologically, all three branches rely on a shared framework known as the Seven Sieves, a set of transfer techniques designed to help learners recognize recurring patterns across related languages. As described by Grzega (2005, p. 1) and further detailed by Bonvino (2015, p. 48), these sieves guide learners progressively through international vocabulary, family-specific lexicon, phonological correspondences, spelling and pronunciation conventions, shared syntactic structures, morphosyntactic elements, and recurrent prefixes and suffixes. Dzik (2019, p. 162) likens this process to prospecting for gold, whereby learners sift through unfamiliar material in search of recognizable elements, moving gradually from the most transparent features to those requiring greater linguistic sophistication.

Interestingly, the hybrid nature of English – historically shaped by both Germanic and Romance influences – means that it can serve as a resource within both branches of the project (Grzega, 2005, p. 3). As McCann, Klein, and Stegmann (2002, as cited in Grzega, 2005, p. 2), observe, English speakers can draw on a substantial reservoir of Romance-derived vocabulary, which may in some respects make learning Romance languages more accessible to them than acquiring other Germanic languages such as German or Swedish. As Grzega (2005, p. 16) suggests, teachers are encouraged to help learners mobilize their existing knowledge of English, its historical development, its dialectal variation, and the

broader evolution of European languages as a strategic resource when approaching new languages.

2.2.2. EuRom5: the Sensed Transposition and "Bridge Language" Methodology

As for the EuRom5 project, it can be referred as one of the most widely disseminated and practically tested approaches. It offers learners a structured pathway toward reading comprehension across five Romance languages: Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, Italian, and French, arranged according to their geographical and linguistic proximity (Donato & Oliva, 2015, p. 64). One of the most distinctive techniques employed within this methodology is known as "sense transposition." It requires learners to verbalize their thoughts while silently reading a text in the target language. They provide an approximate rendering in their first language and do so aloud in front of the class (Bonvino, 2015, p. 39). This procedure draws on the logic of the think-aloud protocol, a technique traditionally used in experimental research despite ongoing debate regarding its methodological reliability. Nevertheless, its pedagogical value within the EuRom5 framework appears considerable, particularly insofar as it encourages learners to become explicitly aware of the cognitive and metacognitive strategies they mobilize while reading in an unfamiliar, though related, language (Bonvino, 2015, p. 39).

Beyond this specific technique, EuRom5 is conceived as an innovative tool for developing plurilingual competence through the simultaneous acquisition of receptive skills in five Romance languages. Rather than aiming at full mastery of each additional language, the methodology allows speakers of one Romance language to develop a broader receptive competence that extends, at least partially, even to Romance languages not directly included in the course (Bonvino et al., 2011, pp. 52-53). As Bonvino et al. (2011, pp. 52-53) point out, this process fosters reflection on learners' native language and its relationship to cognate languages.

Additionally, it promotes a form of linguistic awareness grounded in the recognition of systematic correspondences and family-based regularities. In doing so, EuRom5 offers learners direct experience of processes of linguistic change and variation, while also challenging the traditional conception of languages as isolated systems to be studied

separately, with comparison typically limited to a single L1-L2 pairing (Bonvino et al., 2011, pp. 52-53). The primary aim of EuRom5 remains the development of written comprehension: participants are generally able to read newspaper articles independently in the target languages, relying on a dictionary only for occasional unfamiliar terms. However, this outcome does not amount to full command of the languages involved; instead, learners attain what can be described as an "imperfect" competence, grounded in partial rather than comprehensive linguistic knowledge (Bonvino et al., 2011, p. 53).

2.2.3. Digital Platforms for written interaction: Galanet, Galapro and MIRIADI

The emergence of digital communication tools has significantly expanded the scope of intercomprehension, allowing it to move beyond purely receptive practices toward genuine written interaction. As noted by Bonvino et al. (2018, p. 3), projects such as Galanet and, more recently, MIRIADI have played a central role in this transition, shifting the focus from the comprehension of written texts to collaborative exchanges conducted mainly, though not exclusively, in written form. As Bonvino (2015, p. 44) explains, Galanet and Galapro, together with related environments such as Babelweb, serve distinct yet complementary functions. Galanet fosters collaborative projects among students from different Romance-speaking countries, whereas Galapro focuses on training teachers involved in intercomprehension-based instruction.

The Galanet experience, in particular, has generated a substantial body of research on written interaction, since the exchanges taking place on the platform constitute a rich corpus documenting how participants negotiate meaning across different Romance languages (Bonvino, 2015, p. 40). These interactions often give rise to considerable metalinguistic activity, occurring both within a single language and across different languages, as interlocutors adjust their communication to be understood by others while simultaneously working to understand them.

From a methodological standpoint, this dynamic is embedded in what Bonvino (2015, p. 45) describes as a hybrid approach, situated between action-oriented learning and a technology-driven pedagogical project. Thus, groups of students from different countries collaborate on a shared task over successive work sessions, each conducted in a virtual

environment equipped with multiple communicative spaces, including forums, chat rooms, and both group and individual notice boards. This model of web-based plurilingual collaboration builds on earlier experiences with the simultaneous development of receptive competence in several Romance languages, which, as Meißner (2011, p. 1) recalls, informed the creation of the Galatea-net platform.

2.2.4. EU&I: European Awareness and Intercomprehension beyond Language Family Boundaries

A significant step in broadening intercomprehension research came in 2003 with the launch of the EU&I project (European Awareness and Intercomprehension). Unlike earlier initiatives such as EuroCom and EuRom5, it extended plurilingual investigation beyond languages belonging to a single family. Its overarching aim was to enhance language awareness across Europe by developing a methodology for teaching intercomprehension skills. This involved producing learning materials and highlighting the practical relevance of intercomprehension in everyday situations, such as understanding a weather forecast in Dutch or booking accommodation in Portugal (Bonvino, 2015, p. 50).

From a theoretical standpoint, EU&I grounds plurilingual and pluricultural competence firmly within intercomprehension practices, with particular emphasis on receptive skills (Santos Alves & Mendes, 2006). As Santos Alves and Mendes (2006, p. 213) explain, this perspective assumes that individuals confronted with languages they have not formally studied are nonetheless able to draw on heuristic and interpretative strategies to construct meaning. What distinguishes EU&I most notably from previous approaches, however, is its attention to the textual and sociocultural dimensions of intercomprehension, recognizing that successful comprehension depends not only on linguistic transfer but also on broader cultural knowledge and experience.

Funded under the Lingua1 programme, EU&I brought together fourteen institutions from eleven countries including Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. This project therefore encompassed eleven languages originating from distinct, and at times historically unrelated, language

families or subfamilies. Unlike earlier projects confined to a single linguistic family, EU&I incorporated languages of countries considered likely future members, marking a deliberate expansion of the field's traditional boundaries (Santos Alves & Mendes, 2006, p. 215). The project pursued three interconnected objectives: fostering greater language awareness across Europe, strengthening intercultural understanding, and promoting both multilingualism and receptive plurilingualism more broadly. In doing so, the project reaffirmed the broader significance of intercomprehension as, in Doyé's words (2005, p. 7) «one of the most remarkable and challenging ideas for the realisation of plurilingual education». At the same time, the project demonstrated that its principles could be meaningfully applied even across languages with no direct genealogical relationship (Santos Alves & Mendes, 2006, p. 215).

2.2.5. Specialized Domains: Maritime and Technical Intercomprehension (Intermar, CINCO)

Beyond general educational settings, intercomprehension has also been applied to more specialized professional contexts, as illustrated by Intermar and CINCO, both oriented toward maritime communication (Bonvino, 2015, pp. 51-52).

Intermar, developed within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme, seeks to foster plurilingualism among naval professionals by integrating intercomprehension into training courses offered at military and merchant naval academies.

CINCO, for its part, pursues a related but distinct objective, namely embedding intercomprehension within professional training so as to facilitate cooperation among speakers of Romance languages operating in maritime settings (Bonvino, 2015, pp. 51-52). The rationale behind both projects stems from the specific communicative demands of maritime work, where professionals routinely interact with individuals of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, whether on board vessels or in port environments. While such communication is traditionally supported through general and specialized Maritime English, Bonvino (2015, pp. 51-52) suggests that learning Maritime English can be combined with the development of intercomprehension competences. This

approach could facilitate access to additional languages through targeted tasks and activities.

2.3 Intercomprehension Projects for Children and Teenagers

Extending intercomprehension to younger learners has raised the need for instruments capable of adapting existing frameworks, particularly the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, to the specific characteristics of children and adolescents (Council of Europe, 2020a, p. 250). Rather than developing entirely new descriptors for these age groups, the Council of Europe (2020a, p. 250) opted to compile and organize existing descriptors already used in European Language Portfolios. It distinguished between two age brackets: seven to ten and eleven to fifteen years, the age groups for which most portfolios had originally been designed and validated.

Beyond this framework-oriented work, Meißner (2011, p. 1) reports that a series of experiences conducted in German secondary schools between 1992 and 2007 demonstrated that intercomprehension can indeed be effectively taught at the lower secondary level, yielding positive learning outcomes. Building on this premise, several projects have specifically targeted children and adolescents, including Euromania, Chainstories, Itinéraires Romans, and Limbo (Bonvino, 2015, p. 50). As Bonvino (2015, p. 50) observes, these initiatives differ considerably in their objectives and methodologies. Nevertheless, they share a common focus on younger learners, distinguishing them from most intercomprehension practices, which have traditionally targeted university students.

As Escudé (2015, p. 99) argues, intercomprehension relies fundamentally on trusting pupils' intelligence and their ability to identify connections, manipulate linguistic elements, and grasp both the overall structure and specific features of related languages. From this perspective, recognizing the inherently multilingual nature of the contemporary world implies that multilingual competence should be cultivated from an early age, as the main challenge lies not in learners' capacities, but in developing appropriate teaching strategies (Escudé, 2015, p. 99).

2.3.1. Euromania, Chainstories and Limbo

Among the projects developed specifically for younger learners, Euromania occupies a particularly significant place, reflecting the pedagogical vision of its creator, Pierre Escudé. As Escudé (2015, p. 17) explains, effective language teaching should prioritize learners' awareness of what different languages share rather than emphasizing their differences.

Building on this conviction, Euromania was designed as a structured, comprehension-oriented tool aimed primarily at children. As Bonvino (2015, p. 50) notes, it combines the principles of content and language integrated learning with those of intercomprehension, an approach whose potential extension to adult learners the author suggests would be similarly desirable. Developed between 2005 and 2008 through a dedicated university programme, Euromania resulted in the creation of the first European textbook conceived for pupils aged eight to eleven, freely accessible online together with audio recordings, a teacher's manual, and an interactive forum (Escudé, 2015, p. 89). The initiative responded to the observation that, across Romance-speaking countries such as France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Romania, school curricula typically rely on monolingual textbooks even when addressing shared subject matter (Escudé, 2015, p. 89). Euromania proposed instead a model whereby pupils acquire common knowledge through texts written in several Romance languages simultaneously (Escudé, 2015, p. 89). This age group was deliberately chosen, as Escudé (2015, p. 98) clarifies, both because children at this stage possess sufficient reading competence and because primary education still allows a single teacher to integrate language learning with other subject areas.

A related, though methodologically distinct, initiative is represented by the Chainstories project, which similarly targets younger learners through activities involving comprehension in a second language. As Bonvino (2015, p. 43) describes, this project invites – together with certain L1 production tasks integrated into EuRom5 reading activities – learners to collaboratively compose a narrative in their first language based on content initially understood in a second, related language. This process, according to the author, yields clear benefits both for learners' command of their native language and for their broader capacity for cross-linguistic reflection (Bonvino, 2015, p. 43).

A further contribution comes from Limbo, a digital game developed in Uruguay and made freely available through the Union Latine website (Chazot, 2012, p. 43). As Chazot (2012, p. 43) explains, Limbo is specifically designed to support the learning of Spanish and Portuguese through a cross-linguistic access mechanism, allowing players to engage with the game starting from either language. Drawing on Alvarez's (2007) notion of the serious game, Limbo combines playful, video-game-like features with more structured linguistic objectives centred on vocabulary comprehension, framed within a coherent narrative scenario (Chazot, 2012, p. 43). Players assume the role of a character who must complete a series of missions and challenges within an unfamiliar city in order to progress and ultimately return home. This structure embeds language-comprehension activities within an immersive and motivating fictional context (Chazot, 2012, p. 43). Beyond its narrative and technological design, however, this type of tool may also raise the question of which cognitive resources learners mobilize when confronted with unfamiliar linguistic input.

2.4 The Cognitive and Digital Dimensions of Intercomprehension

Investigating intercomprehension also requires attention to its underlying cognitive dimension, particularly regarding how learners process linguistic input and mobilize learning strategies when confronted with related languages. Drawing on Oxford's influential taxonomy, Meißner (2011, p. 11) distinguishes between direct and indirect strategies relevant to language learning.

Among direct strategies, memory-based techniques support the formation of lexical and grammatical associations. Cognitive strategies enable learners to transfer rules or correspondence patterns within and across languages. Compensatory strategies, in turn, help learners overcome gaps in their knowledge, for instance by bypassing unfamiliar vocabulary (Meißner, 2011, p. 11).

Indirect strategies, by contrast, encompass several complementary processes. Metacognitive strategies enable learners to monitor and evaluate their own progress. Affective strategies help them manage anxiety and maintain a positive self-image, while social strategies involve empathy and active engagement with the target language in intercultural exchanges (Meißner, 2011, p. 11). As Meißner (2011, p. 11) observes, the

fact that previously acquired learning experiences are naturally transferred to new linguistic tasks suggests that intercomprehension-based learning inherently reinforces and develops these broader language-learning strategies.

This cognitive perspective is further substantiated by research into how the mind processes linguistic input more generally. Drawing on Rivas Navarro (2008), Ilina (2022, p. 83) explains that comprehension involves comparing incoming information with knowledge stored in long-term memory. This process unfolds through three successive stages: perception, comprehension, and reaction. In the specific case of language processing, the decoding of a written word activates a corresponding concept within the semantic network, which in turn generates a ripple effect across related concepts. This activation allows the reader to construct a contextual framework that subsequently guides the interpretation of surrounding input (Ilina, 2022, p. 83).

Notably, this cognitive mechanism does not appear to be limited to adult learners. Ilina (2022, p. 91) reports that experimental data, particularly from inference-based tasks, confirm that children engage the same cognitive processes as adults when practicing intercomprehension. This finding reinforces the idea that intercomprehension relies on fundamental, developmentally stable cognitive operations. It also indicates that the strategies and mental processes identified in adult learners can inform the design of intercomprehension-based instruction for younger audiences. In this way, the cognitive foundations of intercomprehension can relate to its diverse pedagogical applications across age groups (Ilina, 2022, p. 91).

2.4.1. Metacognitive Awareness and MLLARS (Multi-language and Learning Awareness Raising Strategy)

A central element of intercomprehension pedagogy is the cultivation of metacognitive awareness, with the aim of helping students recognize and consciously use the cognitive strategies underlying comprehension (Bonvino, 2015, pp. 39-40). This approach differs significantly from conventional language teaching, which typically prioritizes the acquisition of a target language and the strengthening of related linguistic skills (Bonvino, 2015, pp. 39-40).

As Menegale (2022, pp. 164-165) observes, intercomprehension courses instead focus primarily on developing linguistic and metacognitive awareness, enabling students to exploit the similarities between known and new languages and to activate effective comprehension and, occasionally, production strategies. These processes require considerable autonomy, reflection, and self-analysis, skills that students, whether young or old, have not always adequately developed through previous language learning experiences (Menegale, 2022, pp. 164-165). Consequently, teacher guidance and a supportive learning environment become essential to activate the necessary cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective mechanisms (Menegale, 2022, pp. 164-165).

Within EuRom5, as we saw in paragraph 2.2.2., learners are asked to verbalize, during silent reading, an approximate rendering into their first language of the text being processed, a technique reminiscent of the think-aloud protocol (Bonvino, 2015, p. 39). A related emphasis on strategic awareness underlies the EuroCom project, which distinguishes five types of transfer: intralingual transfer within the source, bridge, and target languages, interlingual transfer, and, crucially, transfer of learning (Bonvino, 2015, pp. 39-40). According to Meißner and Klein (2004, as cited in Bonvino, 2015, pp. 39-40), this last category, being inherently metacognitive, functions as a kind of internal monitor that regulates and oversees the deployment of other transfer strategies during the learning process.

A further illustration is provided by written interaction on the Galanet platform. As Degache (2004, as cited in Bonvino, 2015, pp. 39–40) explains, participants use various strategies to negotiate comprehension and production across languages. These include rephrasing words to verify understanding, adapting their language use to their interlocutors' receptive competence, and providing mutual assistance in accordance with the principles of tandem learning.

These examples converge with Meißner's (2011, p. 9) broader theoretical framing of intercomprehension as a Multi-Language and Learning Awareness Raising Strategy, or MLLARS. This label is justified by the inherently complex, plurilingual, and multidirectional nature of transfer processes, which require sustained awareness of how languages interact mentally and how this interaction must be consciously guided (Meißner, 2011, p. 9). To operationalize this awareness, Meißner (2011, p. 11) proposes

an open-ended set of pedagogical tasks that prompt learners to reflect explicitly on their own strategies. These tasks include describing how a particular discovery was made, identifying the causes of linguistic or behavioural difficulties, comparing analogous structures across languages, and analysing personal errors from both linguistic and strategic perspectives. These practices and theoretical contributions converge on a fundamental insight, further systematized by Menegale (2022, pp. 164-165): effective intercomprehension learning depends on the simultaneous development of three interconnected forms of awareness. These include awareness of one's own learning processes, awareness of oneself as a learner, and awareness of languages already known and those newly encountered.

2.4.2. Translanguaging and the Shift from Face-to-face to Digital Intercomprehension Environments

Before examining how digital environments shape intercomprehension practices, it is useful to clarify the theoretical frame of translanguaging. As Otheguy et al. (2015, p. 281) argue, translanguaging does not describe bilingual speakers as switching between separate grammatical systems; rather, it conceives of their mental grammar as a single, unified repertoire of linguistic features, from which speakers select elements according to communicative needs. According to the same authors (2015, p. 297), translanguaging thus adopts an internal, speaker-centred perspective grounded in lexical and grammatical categories, in contrast to the external, group-based perspective. As Otheguy et al. (2015, p. 283) further note, by exposing the constructed nature of named languages, translanguaging offers a more coherent framework for challenging linguistic hierarchies that have historically contributed to the marginalization of minority languages, speakers, and educational communities.

As Fiorenza and Zini (2022, pp. 143-144) observe, technological innovation, further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has significantly increased the use of digital tools in language teaching. It has also stimulated scholarly interest in their effects, prompting closer examination of how traditional face-to-face IC workshops differ from online and hybrid modalities. Their study focuses specifically on how such differences

affect the development of learners' competences, individual factors such as motivation and autonomy, and the methodologies and materials employed in Romance-language IC laboratories (Fiorenza & Zini, 2022, pp. 143-144).

Building on this concern, Menegale (2022, p. 163) situates the discussion within the broader context of ongoing pedagogical transformation. The widespread adoption of distance learning, particularly in its synchronous form, has prompted renewed reflection on how established language-teaching approaches should be adapted to new instructional modalities. Menegale (2022, p. 174) reports, for instance, that the difficulty of organizing group activities differentiated according to learners' linguistic backgrounds significantly constrained the development of socio-affective strategies, which are otherwise essential in fostering the collaborative reflection central to intercomprehension pedagogy. Moreover, the sense of interactional distance inherent in online environments was often intensified by less spontaneous dialogue and technical difficulties. These difficulties could transform technology from a facilitating tool into an obstacle, particularly when participants had limited self-regulatory skills for managing digital materials and instruments (Menegale, 2022, p. 174).

CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology

This chapter is organised according to the progressive stages of the research process. It first outlines the overall research design and methodological approach, including the rationale for combining an online questionnaire with interviews and for adopting a convergent parallel structure (paragraph 3.1).

It then defines the general and specific objectives of the study and presents the research questions that guide the empirical investigation (paragraph 3.2). The instruments used to collect the data are subsequently described, distinguishing between the questionnaire administered to a broader sample and the semi-structured interviews, which also incorporated a Think Aloud protocol to explore participants' comprehension strategies and metacognitive awareness (paragraph 3.3).

The following section explains how the data were collected, including the distribution of the questionnaire, the organisation of the interviews, the recruitment procedures, and the ethical principles followed throughout the research process (paragraph 3.4). The characteristics of the two participant groups are then presented in order to clarify the composition and contextual background of the samples involved in the quantitative and qualitative phases (paragraph 3.5).

Then, the chapter describes the procedures adopted for analysing and triangulating the data, combining descriptive statistics for the questionnaire responses with qualitative content analysis of the interviews (paragraph 3.6). The chapter closes with the presentation of the findings themselves, organised so as to first report questionnaire outcomes, then interview and Think Aloud results, and finally an integrative reading that brings the different data sources into dialogue with one another (paragraph 3.7).

3.1 Research Design and Methodological Approach

For the purposes of this research, a mixed methods research design was adopted, defined by Creswell and Clark (2007, p. 36) as an approach that integrates the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data within a single study, in order to obtain a

more complete understanding of the phenomenon than would be attainable through the use of a single method. This approach is consistent with the dual nature of the research questions guiding the present chapter. RQ1 requires an examination of the extent to which, and the conditions under which, participants perceive intercomprehension as a practicable communicative resource in multilingual encounters. By contrast, RQ2 focuses on the role of metacognitive awareness and requires more direct access to individual cognitive processes, which are by their nature less standardizable and more appropriately explored through in-depth qualitative instruments. Specifically, the design adopted can be classified as a convergent parallel design, according to the typology described by Creswell and Clark (2007, p. 67), since the two components of the research, the quantitative one and the qualitative one were collected in overlapping rather than sequential time windows.

In this research, the two phases were conducted with a degree of mutual independence during data collection and were subsequently related during the analysis phase through a process of triangulation. According to Denzin (2017, pp. 26-27), triangulation involves combining multiple methods to investigate the same phenomenon to strengthen the validity of conclusions beyond what could be achieved through a single method of inquiry. This approach makes it possible to examine whether the trends emerging from the questionnaire responses at the aggregate level correspond to, diverge from, or offer further insights when compared with the individual accounts of the interviewees. The inclusion of participants from various European and non-European countries allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon than would be possible through a single method.

As discussed in paragraph 2.1.2, the literature on intercomprehension distinguishes between a spontaneous dimension, which manifests without deliberate instruction, and a taught dimension, subject to progressive pedagogical systematization. The questionnaire, applied to a relatively large sample not necessarily exposed to specific training on intercomprehension, is the instrument best suited to detecting the possible presence of spontaneous strategies. By contrast the interviews, especially the Think Aloud protocol described in 3.3.2, enable the real-time observation of the cognitive processes and transfer strategies (bottom-up, top-down, recognition of international vocabulary) referred to in

paragraph 2.2.1. Similarly, the construct of metacognitive awareness, discussed in paragraph 2.4.1 in relation to the MLLARS model, supports the combined use of quantitative and qualitative measures. The quantitative items examine attitudes towards English as a lingua franca (paragraph 1.2), while the qualitative questions explore whether and how participants became aware of their own strategies only after encountering the term "intercomprehension".

Lastly, the present research is situated within a pragmatist paradigm, following the approach proposed by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 15). They argue that research methods should be selected according to their ability to provide the most complete answers to the research questions, rather than through exclusive adherence to either a quantitative or qualitative epistemological paradigm.

3.2 Research Questions

This exploratory study investigates participants' perceptions of intercomprehension as a communicative resource and the strategic and metacognitive processes involved in approaching unfamiliar languages. From this general objective derive two research questions guiding the empirical investigation:

RQ1. To what extent, and under what conditions, do participants perceive intercomprehension as a practicable communicative resource in multilingual encounters?

RQ2. What role does metacognitive awareness play in participants' use of intercomprehension strategies when approaching unfamiliar languages?

3.3 Research Instruments

This section describes the instruments used to collect the quantitative and qualitative data analysed in this study. Consistently with the mixed-methods design, the research relied on two complementary instruments: an anonymous online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews accompanied by a Think Aloud protocol.

3.3.1. The Questionnaire

The main instrument used for the collection of quantitative data was an anonymous online questionnaire, designed and distributed through the Google Forms platform. This choice was made to reach a geographically diverse sample, including both participants residing in Italy and participants from other European and non-European countries, while at the same time ensuring maximum accessibility and ease of completion.

The questionnaire called "*You speak yours, I speak mine… and yet we understand each other?"* was drafted entirely in English, a deliberate choice intended to enable participation by international respondents, consistently with the objective of investigating linguistic attitudes in a plurilingual European context.

The questionnaire was structured into four logically sequential sections. The first section, entitled "General information", collected demographic and contextual data, including age, gender, country of origin, current country of residence and length of stay, any experience of living in countries other than the country of origin and the country of residence, and the highest level of education attained.

The second section, "Personal linguistic repertoire", aimed to outline each participant's linguistic profile by asking them to indicate their mother tongue, the other languages they knew, and their perceived level of proficiency in each skill (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), according to a scale inspired by the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The third section, "Personal intercomprehension strategies", comprising questions 10 to 15, constituted the central core of the questionnaire. It presented a series of items aimed at assessing the frequency with which respondents adopted intercomprehension strategies in real-life contexts, their preferred ways of approaching unfamiliar languages, and the specific strategies used to make interaction with speakers of other languages effective. More specifically, questions 10-12 examined how frequently participants used intercomprehension strategies in real-life contexts. They also explored whether participants perceived these strategies as useful for connecting with other cultures and interacting effectively with people from different linguistic backgrounds. The questions

employed five-point frequency scales, ranging from “almost never” to “always,” with an additional “I don’t know” option. Perceived usefulness was measured using five-point scales ranging from “not at all” to “a lot.” Questions 13-14 asked, respectively, which elements facilitated comprehension in face-to-face interaction (e.g., gestures, facial expressions, similar words, context) and which elements supported the immediate comprehension of a written text (e.g., similarity between familiar words, title and layout, grammatical patterns, general context).

The fourth and final section, “Personal perceptions and opinions”, comprised questions 16 to 20. It collected respondents’ opinions and attitudes regarding the role of English as a lingua franca and their prior knowledge of the term intercomprehension. Participants were also asked to indicate their level of agreement with four statements concerning the exclusive use of English and its potential risks to European linguistic and cultural diversity. Responses were collected using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Finally, the section included two open-ended questions. These explored situations in which participants would have preferred not to use English and the potential contribution of intercomprehension to the preservation of linguistic diversity in Europe. An optional field was also provided for additional comments.

3.3.2. The Interviews

For the collection of qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted and conceived as a complementary instrument to the questionnaire. The interviews aimed to explore, in greater detail than closed-ended items allow, the cognitive and metacognitive strategies participants used when approaching unfamiliar languages. They also examined participants’ perceptions of the value of intercomprehension as a communicative practice. The interviews were guided by a common outline consisting of eight open-ended questions. These questions progressively explored the participants’ linguistic backgrounds, their concrete experiences of intercultural communication, and their spontaneous reactions when faced with input in unfamiliar languages. They also addressed the repair strategies participants adopted in cases of incomprehension. In addition, the interviews explored participants’ awareness of the concept of

intercomprehension and their views on when this practice might be preferable to using English. Finally, participants were asked about any educational or professional experiences involving intercomprehension.

Each interview was also accompanied by a Think Aloud protocol, applied in a standardized manner to all participants, in the same order and according to the same procedures. The protocol required participants to read independently two short texts in unfamiliar or little-known languages, respectively Romanian and Portuguese, while verbalizing their cognitive process in real time. They were asked to report the words they recognized, the associations they established with languages they already knew, the doubts that arose, the hypotheses they formulated regarding the overall meaning of the text, and the contextual or structural elements they used to support comprehension. At the end of the reading, two debriefing questions were asked, aimed at eliciting the participant's metacognitive awareness of the strategies used. They also explored whether participants felt they had activated previously acquired competences without having formally studied the languages in question. The two texts were selected because they were representative of Romance languages not necessarily studied by the participants, but potentially accessible through positive transfer strategies from Italian or from other Romance languages already known.

The complete text of the twenty questionnaire questions, including all the items and their respective response options, as well as the outline of the interview questions and the Think Aloud protocol, are reproduced in full in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. Readers interested in consulting the research instruments in detail and in their original wording are referred to these appendices.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The questionnaire was distributed through a link shared via digital and physical channels. Specifically, the link was sent through the WhatsApp messaging application to personal contacts and acquaintances, published as Instagram stories by the author of the research and some of her contacts, and made available in QR code format at the Istituto Venezia,

where the author completed her internship. This multi-channel distribution strategy made it possible to reach a sample diverse in terms of age, linguistic background, and life context, while maintaining a non-probability sampling approach based on the participants' availability.

Responses were collected between 6 March and 1 August 2026, yielding 59 valid responses. All responses were anonymous and contained no direct identifying information, in accordance with the data-protection information provided to participants at the beginning of the questionnaire. No specific inclusion or exclusion criteria were established for participation, apart from knowledge of English sufficient to understand and complete the questionnaire. The instrument was therefore open to anyone, with particular interest in people who had no prior knowledge of the term intercomprehension. During the administration phase, no particular difficulties were encountered either by the researcher in the technical management of the instrument or by the participants in completing it overall. However, some respondents reported, through oral comments, that they had been unable to complete the questionnaire in its entirety because of limited knowledge of English, which may have represented a limiting factor in the collection of a larger number of responses. No partial or incomplete responses were recorded in the mandatory sections of the questionnaire.

Although all 59 questionnaire responses were collected anonymously, the responses of the eight participants who subsequently took part in the interviews were identified retrospectively for the purposes of linking the two components of the study. Because the questionnaire had been distributed through personal contacts, WhatsApp networks, and acquaintances, the researcher was present when these eight participants completed it and was therefore able to note manually the position of each response within the dataset. The correspondence between each participant and the relevant questionnaire response was then checked in the Excel file by considering non-sensitive characteristics, such as nationality and age, as well as the content of the responses provided. This procedure made it possible to associate the eight anonymous questionnaire responses with the corresponding interview and Think Aloud data while preserving the anonymity of the participants' names and other direct identifiers.

The data collected through the questionnaire were subsequently exported in tabular format and analysed using descriptive statistical procedures, as detailed in paragraph 3.7. This procedure was adopted in accordance with the ethical principles of respect for participants' autonomy, confidentiality, and protection of personal data, as required by the legislation in force concerning research involving human participants.

In parallel with the questionnaire, the qualitative component of the research was conducted through interviews carried out entirely in Italian, since all participants possessed Italian-language competence at either a native-speaker level or an advanced level (B2). The interviews were conducted within a timeframe spanning from 27 July 2026 to 9 August 2026 and involved eight participants, five of whom were Italian native speakers, two French native speakers, and one Arabic native speaker.

The interviewees were recruited through different procedures. Two participants (B and C) contacted the researcher spontaneously after completing the questionnaire, expressing interest in the topic and willingness to take part in the interviews. Five participants (A, E, F, G, and H) were recruited from among the researcher's acquaintances and were invited to participate after completing the questionnaire. Finally, one participant (D) was recruited through word of mouth by interviewee B, who put the researcher in direct contact with them.

For the purposes of the qualitative component, participants were assigned the alphabetical codes A-H according to the order in which they became available for the interviews: participant A was the first to be interviewed, whereas participant H was the last. These codes were used to refer to the participants throughout the interview notes, the Think Aloud data, and the subsequent analysis. No participants' names or surnames were included in the research files or in the presentation of the results.

The geographical distribution of the participants consequently influenced the organisation and format of the interviews. The interviews were conducted using a mixed format: three interviews (with participants B, C, and D) took place via video call on Google Meet, owing to the geographical distance between the researcher, located in Italy, and the participants, located in France and Jordan, respectively. The remaining five interviews (A, E, F, G, H, all Italian participants) took place in person in the form of face-to-face

conversations. All interviews were conducted in an informal setting, while maintaining a common protocol.

During the interviews, some participant-specific difficulties emerged. Although participants B, C, and D were highly proficient in Italian, they were non-native speakers. Therefore, the researcher used a simplified register, provided concrete examples, and avoided overly complex syntactic structures to ensure that the questions were fully understood. With participants A and E, both Italian native speakers, content-related difficulties were encountered, requiring repeated explanations to ensure that they fully understood the meaning of some questions. No particular difficulties emerged with the remaining participants.

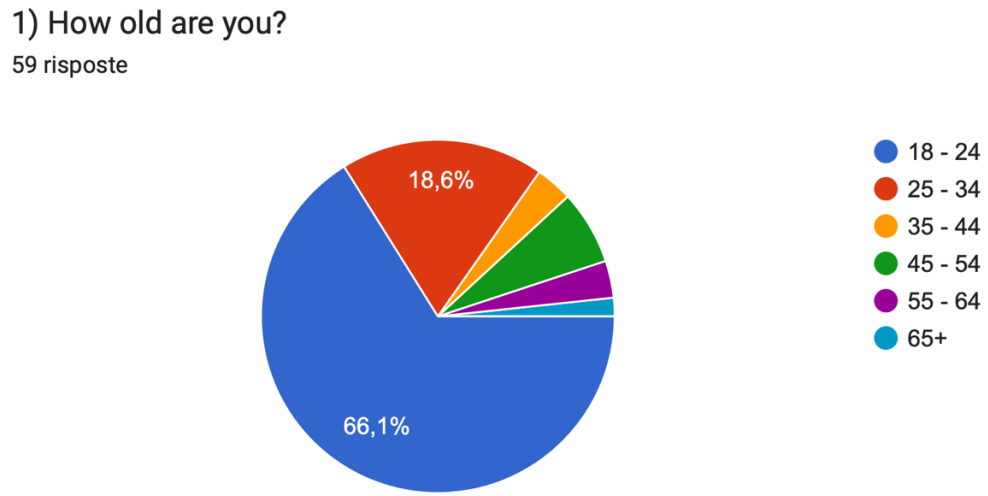
The duration of the interviews ranged from a minimum of 18 minutes and 20 seconds to a maximum of 53 minutes and 57 seconds. The latter corresponded to a joint interview conducted simultaneously with participants B and C, whose responses may have influenced each other. The remaining interviews fell within an intermediate range of approximately 25 to 35 minutes. The interviews were documented through notes on participants' answers rather than complete verbatim transcripts of audio recordings. The resulting qualitative data were analysed using a manual thematic coding procedure, as described in paragraph 3.7.

The conduct of the interviews followed the same ethical principles previously described for the questionnaire. Participants' confidentiality was ensured through the use of alphanumeric codes (A-H) instead of their real names obtaining prior informed consent concerning the voluntary nature of participation and the use of the data for academic research purposes. They were also guaranteed the possibility of withdrawing at any time without consequences.

3.5 Participants

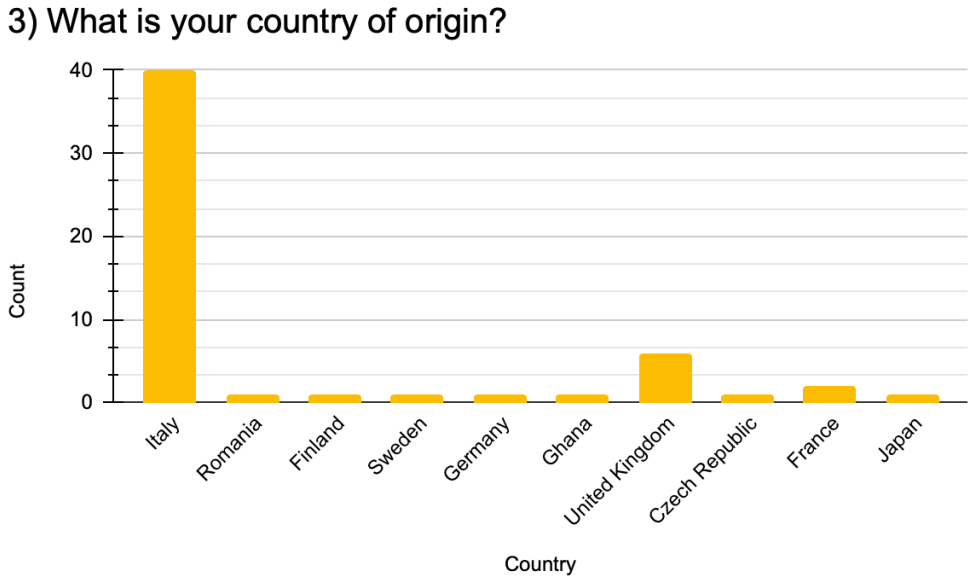
The overall sample of the present research consists of two distinct groups of participants, corresponding respectively to the quantitative and qualitative components of the study: 59 respondents to the online questionnaire (34 women and 25 men) and 8 interviewees (3

women and 5 men) in the qualitative phase. Regarding the questionnaire sample, the age distribution shows a clear prevalence of young participants, as Graph 1 shows.



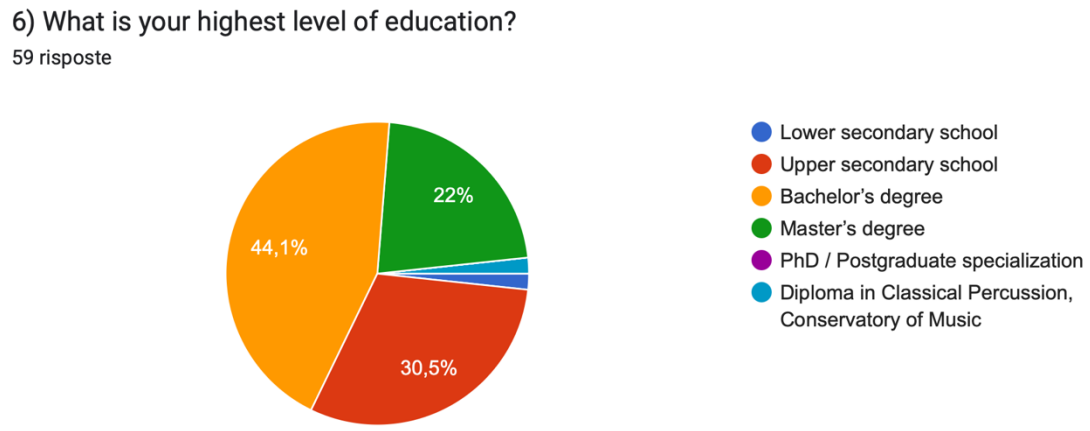
Graph 1: Age distribution of participants

Concerning geographical origin, most respondents come from Italy, but also other nationalities were represented, as Graph 2 shows, demonstrating a heterogeneous geographical composition that includes both European and non-European countries.



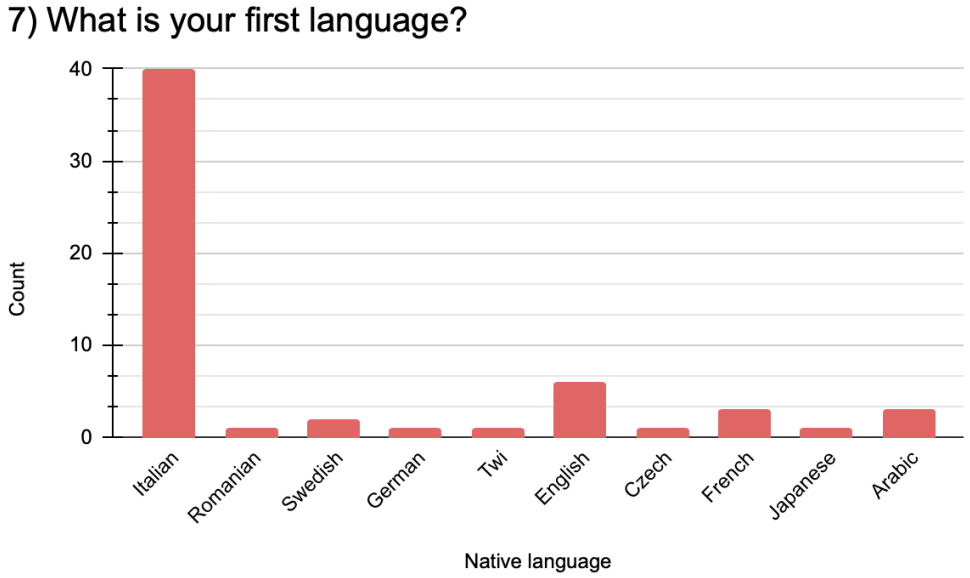
Graph 2: Country of origin of participants

As for the level of education, Graph 3 shows a similarly clear pattern: the majority of respondents hold a university qualification, suggesting a sample with a relatively high educational background overall.



Graph 3: Educational level of participants

In addition to these socio-demographic characteristics, respondents' linguistic background was also investigated, as illustrated in Graph 4.



Graph 4: Native language of participants

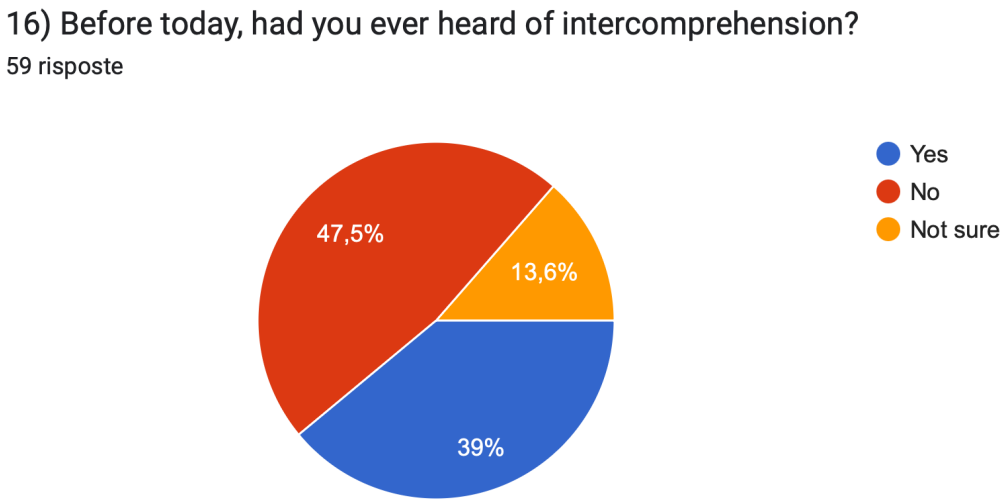
With regard to the number of foreign languages known in addition to the mother tongue, the data collected are cumulative in nature, since each respondent could indicate knowledge of several foreign languages simultaneously. The Table 4 here below indicates that almost the entire sample possesses plurilingual competences, although the number of languages known tends to decrease progressively as the threshold considered increases. Within each group of respondents reporting the same number of foreign languages, the table is organized in descending order of frequency. Thus, among those who reported knowing only one foreign language, languages are listed from the most to the least frequently mentioned. The same criterion applies to combinations of two, three, four, and five foreign languages.

Foreign Language	**Count**
English	10
Italian	1
English and German	6
English and Spanish	5
English and French	4
Italian and French	3
German and Italian	1
Italian and English	1
English, German and Spanish	5
English, Italian and Spanish	3
English, German and French	2
English, French and Spanish	1
French, Italian and Spanish	1
English, Italian and French	1
English, Italian and Cambodgian	1
Arabic, English and Italian	1
English, Italian and German	1
Italian, Polish and English	1
English, Spanish, Japanese, German	1
English, Spanish, German, Russian	1

English, German, Russian, Czech	1
Italian, German, Spanish, English	1
English, Spanish, German, Portuguese	1
English, Ladin, French, Arabic	1
Finnish, English, German, Italian	1
English, French, Spanish, Italian Sign Language (LIS)	1
English, German, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese	1

Table 4: Foreign languages known by participants

Finally, Graph 5 illustrates respondents' prior familiarity with the term intercomprehension, showing that a relative majority of the sample had not previously been exposed to an explicit definition of the concept under study.



Graph 5: Prior knowledge of the term intercomprehension

Having outlined the main characteristics of the questionnaire respondents, the analysis now turns to the participants involved in the interviews. Regarding this group, it consists of eight participants with heterogeneous ages and professional profiles, as shown in Table 5 below, who were recruited according to the procedures already described in paragraph 3.4.

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Employment	Native language
A	woman	48 years old	Kindergarten teacher	Italian
B	woman	21 years old	Undergraduate Philosophy student	French
C	woman	22 years old	Undergraduate Languages student	French
D	male	22 years old	Graduated in linguistics, specializing in Italian	Arabic
E	male	54 years old	Long-haul driver	Italian
F	male	20 years old	Undergraduate Design student	Italian
G	male	24 years old	Graduate student in Management	Italian
H	male	28 years old	Technical Assets Manager	Italian

Table 5: Sociodemographic characteristics of interviewees

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

For this research, it was decided to proceed with a triangulation of the data collected through the aforementioned (a) anonymous questionnaire shared via Google Form and (b) interviews conducted both in person and on the Google Meet platform. As explained in paragraph 3.4, the eight questionnaire responses corresponding to the interview participants were identified retrospectively to enable the integration of the two datasets.
As for the closed-ended items of the questionnaire, they were processed using Microsoft Excel. For each item, the raw responses exported from Google Forms were organised in a Google Sheets spreadsheet, with rows representing individual participants and columns corresponding to specific questionnaire items. Percentages for each response option were calculated by applying the COUNTIF function to the full cell range associated with a given item, using the exact label of the response category (e.g. “never”, “sometimes”, “always”) as the search criterion. The resulting frequency was then divided by the total number of valid responses for that item, obtained through the COUNTA function applied to the same range. The result of the division was then converted into percentage format,

and this procedure was applied identically to each closed-ended question of the questionnaire.

For the open-ended questions (specifically 15, 18, 19, and 20), however, a manual thematic coding procedure was implemented. The coding process was inductive in nature, as thematic codes were not predefined but emerged directly as the responses were read in their entirety. Each textual response was treated as a distinct unit of analysis, with the individual sentence serving as the unit of coding. Salient keywords and expressions were identified through careful reading, and codes were generated based on the actual content of each response. Responses exhibiting similar substantive content were then grouped into broader categories or themes; for instance, references to "gestures" and to "body language" were both subsumed under the overarching theme NON-VERBAL. Additionally, one or more thematic codes were assigned, as a single response could refer to multiple themes. After coding all responses to a given question, the frequency of each thematic code was calculated by recording the number of participants who expressed each theme at least once out of the total number of valid responses for that question.

As for the interviews, they were analysed following a procedure analogous to that adopted for the open-ended questionnaire items. Given that this research does not have verbatim transcriptions of the interviews, the analysis drew on the notes taken in real time by the researcher during each of them. These notes were subsequently examined to identify the themes judged most salient in relation to each interview question. In line with the approach used for the open-ended questions, inductive codes were generated to capture the content of participants' accounts, and these codes were organised into a thematic table. To facilitate a clearer overview of theme distribution across participants, a binary matrix was then constructed, indicating which themes had been mentioned by each interviewee.

3.7 Results

This section presents the empirical findings of the study. It begins with the questionnaire results, which provide an overview of participants' self-reported intercomprehension strategies and their perceived usefulness for intercultural connection and effective interaction. The section also examines participants' attitudes towards the exclusive use of

English in European communication. The subsequent subsection turns to the qualitative data from the interviews and Think Aloud tasks, offering a detailed account of the strategies declared by participants and those actually mobilised when confronted with unfamiliar written texts in Romanian and Portuguese. A final integrative subsection triangulates the quantitative and qualitative evidence at the level of individual participants, highlighting patterns of convergence and divergence between self-reported tendencies and strategic resources mobilised. Throughout this section, numerical data are presented in tabular form, while the accompanying text focuses on identifying dominant orientations, residual practices and meaningful co-occurrences across the different instruments.

3.7.1 Questionnaire Results

This paragraph presents the results relating to strategies and perceptions regarding intercomprehension, corresponding to the third and fourth sections of the questionnaire. It begins with the third section entitled “Personal intercomprehension strategies”.

The results relating to question 10 reveal a particular consolidation in the recognition of words or expressions belonging to related languages: in item 10b, presented in Table 6, in fact, most participants report perceiving comprehensible elements in related languages. An equally recurrent practice concerns the interpretation of signs, menus, and written information during travel, as highlighted by item 10d, and the attempt to formulate hypotheses on the basis of similarities with already known languages, detected in item 10a. Item 10c also shows a certain positivity towards the use of contextual clues, familiar words, and roots to reconstruct the overall meaning of a text or discourse. With respect to these practices, item 10f highlights a less consolidated orientation in the systematic comparison of words and sounds to comprehend unfamiliar languages. The most marginal element, instead, concerns item 10e, relating to the ability to derive the overall meaning of a text or discourse in a new European language. Responses concentrate more on an intermittent recourse to the strategy and show a more limited presence of frequent or consistent use of this strategy.

Item	never	almost never	i don't know	sometimes	often	always
10a	0%	8%	2%	14%	41%	36%
10b	0%	3%	2%	20%	39%	36%
10c	0%	2%	5%	29%	25%	39%
10d	2%	7%	7%	10%	42%	32%
10e	7%	10%	15%	49%	12%	7%
10f	2%	3%	14%	25%	32%	24%

Table 6: Frequency of use of intercomprehension strategies in contact with unspoken European languages (Question 10, N=59)

For question 11, the recognition of familiar words or international expressions emerges as the most established strategy, as highlighted by item 11a in Table 7, in which the responses are predominantly concentrated at the higher levels of the scale. A similar tendency, although slightly less pronounced, emerges in item 11b, concerning the perception of similarities in the sounds or roots of words across different languages. The observation of gestures, tone of voice, and lip movements, also considered in item 11d, proves to be a frequently employed resource and displays a particularly consistent orientation towards positive responses. The search for written or visual clues, such as context, images, and signs, identified in item 11e, confirms this tendency. However, this strategy appears to be adopted mainly on a situational basis, as it is less consolidated than strategies involving word recognition or the interpretation of non-verbal elements. Item 11c, concerning requesting repetitions or simpler words, instead represents the relatively least consistent area, since the responses show a more cautious orientation and greater variability.

Item	never	almost never	i don't know	sometimes	often	always
11a	3%	5%	8%	14%	47%	22%
11b	3%	3%	10%	17%	41%	25%
11c	2%	5%	14%	31%	27%	22%
11d	2%	5%	5%	27%	34%	27%

11e	3%	3%	10%	24%	31%	29%

Table 7: Role of intercomprehension strategies in the sense of intercultural connection (Question 11, N=59)

Regarding Question 12, the results show that the strongest tendency concerns adapting one's discourse to the interlocutor's potential comprehension difficulties (item 12b). Simplifying sentences, using gestures, and modifying one's way of expressing oneself emerge as widely adopted practices. Linked to this tendency is the use of alternative expressive modes to clarify or render an idea more accessible (item 12e), for example through simple examples and descriptions. Participants also reported asking questions, repeating key words, or reformulating their messages when communication breakdowns occurred (item 12c). Considerable significance is also attached to attention to nonverbal signals, such as tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language (item 12d). Willingness to remain patient and open in the presence of communicative difficulties (item 12f) completes this picture, highlighting the importance attributed to the relational dimension and to the interlocutor's attitude in sustaining the continuity of the exchange. By contrast, recourse to words that present phonetic similarities or common roots across different languages (item 12a) appears relatively less stable and more dependent on the communicative situation.

Item	never	almost never	i don't know	sometimes	often	always
12a	3%	3%	10%	31%	39%	14%
12b	0%	2%	3%	19%	37%	39%
12c	0%	8%	2%	27%	37%	25%
12d	0%	0%	3%	19%	41%	37%
12e	0%	3%	3%	19%	37%	37%
12f	0%	3%	3%	27%	31%	36%

Table 8: Role of intercomprehension strategies in effective interaction with other cultures (Question 12, N=59)

Questions 13, 14, and 15 complete the third section of the questionnaire, using, however, different response formats each: a multiple-choice question, a single-choice question, and an optional open-ended question.

For question 13, since the response options were more extensive in their original wording (visible in full in Appendix 1), it was decided to assign each of them an abbreviated title, reported in Table 9. Given that each participant could select more than one option, the sum of the percentages exceeds 100%. As can be seen in Table 9, a prevalent tendency emerges to rely on contextual and non-verbal cues to understand an interlocutor who is speaking one's native language. The item Non-verbal cues, indeed, represents the strategy most frequently endorsed by participants. Alongside this practice, participants frequently relied on another resource: paying attention to words that display formal or phonetic similarities to terms in other languages they already knew. This highlights the use of recognizable linguistic elements during interaction. Assistance from another person able to clarify meaning and usage, as well as the use of electronic translators or translation applications, also emerge as relatively widespread strategies, although less dominant than the interpretation of non-verbal and contextual cues. No further strategies emerge under the residual category "Other," which does not add distinctive elements beyond the modalities already identified.

Option	*%*
Electronic translators	49%
Non-verbal cues (gestures, context)	85%
Help from another person	51%
Words similar to known languages	64%
Cannot understand without formal study	5%
Other	0%

Table 9: Elements that facilitate understanding of the interlocutor in face-to-face interaction (Question 13, N=59)

Unlike question 13, question 14 required the selection of a single option, thus producing mutually exclusive percentages. In this case too, an abbreviated title was chosen for each option. Table 10 was organized in descending order of percentage, from the most selected option to the least selected one, to make the prevailing strategy immediately visible. The results show a predominant tendency to rely on similarity between familiar words

belonging to different languages, as can be seen in Table 10. This orientation constitutes the dominant theme of the distribution and is clearly distinguished from the other strategies considered, which appear less consolidated. In particular, the use of the title, layout, and general context to formulate hypotheses about meaning represents a strategy adopted by a more limited portion of participants, while reference to grammatical similarity or sentence structure appears further marginal. Even less frequent is the recognition of correspondences in sounds or orthographic patterns, as well as the choice to disregard difficult words in order to focus on the main idea. The latter thus emerges as a residual practice.

Option	*%*
Similarity between familiar words	47%
Using the title, layout, and general context	17%
Similar grammar or sentence structure	10%
Recognizing sound or spelling patterns	5%
Ignore hard words	5%
Other	0%

Table 10: Prevailing element in the immediate comprehension of a written text (Question 14, N=59)

Question 15, the last of the third section, differs from the previous ones due to its entirely open-ended and optional format, and therefore this question received 32 responses out of 59 total participants, as can be seen in Appendix 3. Thus, in Table 11, each response was read as a whole and assigned one or more thematic codes manually. After assigning the different codes to each response, the number of times each code (and therefore that theme) was mentioned within the 32 responses received was calculated. The following list emerges:

- SIMILARITY: 11/32
- CONTEXT: 10/32
- NON VERBAL: 10/32
- APPS: 5/32

- KEYWORDS: 5/32
- SYNTAX: 3/32
- REPEAT: 2/32
- DIALECT: 1/32
- GUESSING: 1/32
- NO STRATEGY: 1/32
- SOCIAL CONNECTIONS: 1/32

The most recurring theme is that of linguistic similarity, invoked primarily through the recognition of roots, familiar words, or similarities with Italian and with other known languages. This strategy is expressed, for example, in R9's response, "Try to link with italian", and in that of R29, who refers to words with "similar roots to my native one". Alongside this orientation, with comparable frequency, are attention to context and the use of non-verbal cues. Several participants reported focusing on the overall meaning of a sentence or situation rather than on individual elements they did not understand. This approach is reflected in responses such as "Mostly I try to understand the context" (R13) and "I focus on the shortest, simplest sentences and from there I broaden my understanding once I understand the context" (R12).

In parallel, gestures, body language, tone of voice, and other situational signals constitute a recurring practice, especially in face-to-face interactions: R6 responds simply "Gestures", while R32 states that they focus on "body language". The responses also show that these strategies tend to co-occur: recourse to linguistic similarity is often integrated with the observation of non-verbal signals and with the reconstruction of context. This is clearly illustrated by R2's response, which combines similar words, general meaning, tone of voice, gestures, and communicative situation. This is also evident in R5's response, in which the use of context and word similarities is accompanied by attention to tone and gestures and, in the case of persistent difficulty, using Google Translate.

Less consolidated, by contrast, is recourse to digital applications and resources, mentioned in some cases through references to Google Translate, Duolingo, YouTube, the Internet, or films. Similarly, attention to key words and simplification of the message appear as circumscribed strategies, sometimes associated with the use of gestures, as in

R24's response, which invokes "verbs" and "key words" together with "expressive gestures".

References to syntax and morphology are relatively limited and mainly concern the recognition of structures belonging to languages already known. Other strategies such as repeating words, using dialect, hypothesizing about meaning, or reporting no explicit strategy appear only occasionally. Reference to social and cultural connections is also residual and appears in R25's response, which considers social interactions, glances, laughter, and cultural events, such as the "aperitivo", as useful elements for understanding the overall meaning of the communicative situation.

The fourth and last section of the questionnaire was dedicated to the participants' personal perceptions and opinions and comprises questions 16 to 20. Question 16 asked participants whether they had already heard of the term intercomprehension before answering the questionnaire, and the related results have already been illustrated in paragraph 3.5 through a pie chart, to which the reader is referred.

Question 17, on the other hand, reveals an overall favourable orientation towards recognising the risks associated with the exclusive use of English, although the degree of agreement varies according to the dimension considered. The most firmly established concern, as shown in Table 12, relates to the possible devaluation of other European languages and the resulting risk to cultural and linguistic diversity. This is highlighted by item 17c, for which agreement is predominant, and the strongest levels of agreement are particularly significant. The risk of excluding citizens who are not fully proficient in English, referred to in item 17a, is recognized by a relative majority, although the responses show a less uniform orientation and a substantial proportion of participants who maintain an intermediate position. A similar, but slightly more nuanced, pattern emerges in item 17d, concerning the possible cultural impoverishment of Europe and the form of linguistic imperialism. Here too, agreement prevails, whereas disagreement represents a minority orientation. The relatively less firmly established issue, by contrast, is that concerning the discouragement of learning other European languages, indicated in item 17b, where, although agreement with the statement remains predominant, the neutral position assumes greater importance. Positions of disagreement are, overall, residual.

Item	1 = strongly disagree	2 = disagree	3 = neutral	4 = agree	5 = strongly agree
17a	5%	15%	36%	22%	22%
17b	3%	12%	27%	32%	25%
17c	3%	15%	19%	24%	39%
17d	5%	7%	34%	25%	29%

Table 12: Level of agreement with statements on the risks of the exclusive use of English (Question 17, N=59)

Questions 18, 19, and 20 conclude the questionnaire with an entirely open-ended format. Question 18 required a mandatory response field, and therefore all 59 participants provided an answer, the full set of which is available in Appendix 3. As this was an open-ended question, the data were analysed using manual thematic coding, as explained in paragraph 3.6. The totality of each code was then obtained by identifying the number of responses in which each code appeared at least once, thus obtaining these results:

- NEVER: 24/59
- ENGLISH CONTEXT: 16/59
- L1: 12/59
- FRUSTRATION: 8/59
- ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGES: 7/59
- IC: 6/59
- ENGLISH PREFERENCE: 4/59
- GESTURES: 2/59
- INCLUSION: 2/59
- NO ANSWER: 2/59
- AVOIDING ENGLISH: 1/59
- REPEAT: 1/59
- YES: 1/59

Table 13 reveals a divided pattern. Some participants reported never having experienced situations in which they would have preferred not to use a common vehicular language. Others, however, described such experiences, particularly in international, university, professional, or mobility contexts.

The most recurrent theme is in fact that of the described experience not occurring (NEVER), and for a smaller subset of these respondents, the absence of such experiences was accompanied by an explicit preference for English. Some participants state, for example, “No, I always use English” (R9) or explain that English has always been preferable because it was the only language they fully mastered (R50).

Among the positive experiences, the predominant reference is instead to contexts in which English is used as a common language (ENGLISH CONTEXT) to enable the participation of people with different linguistic backgrounds. In such circumstances, the use of English is described as a choice determined by the context and by the need to include all participants. One respondent observes, for example, that they spoke English “to include my deutsch friends” (R8), while another reports that, when a non-Italian-speaking person joins a conversation among Italians, the group must switch to English “so that everyone could participate and understand each other” (R55). Alongside this inclusive function, however, a substantial proportion of the responses highlights the limitations of English in expressing complex, precise, or emotionally connoted ideas.

The theme of the first language (L1) recurs frequently, often co-occurring with that of the English-speaking context, and is associated with the possibility of expressing oneself with greater clarity, naturalness, and immediacy. Some participants state that “Mother tongue may help expressing more frankly an idea or a concept” (R22), or that using the first language would make it possible to communicate not only through words, but also to “explain my person” (R29). The same pattern is particularly evident in professional contexts, where English is often adopted by convention or organisational requirement. However, using the language one knows best may be perceived as more direct and appropriate, especially when communicating with clients, colleagues, or foreign interlocutors.

In several cases, the obligatory use of English is also accompanied by frustration or by a perception of communicative difficulty. One participant describes the situation as “very frustrating” after the interlocutors abandoned Japanese to switch to English (R2), while others report having felt limited in expressing their ideas (R26) or insecure when they were unable to find the appropriate words (R49). Some participants observe that “each person could speak their own language and still understand the others” (R7), or that

intercomprehension could “resolve this kind of problem” (R51). This nevertheless represents a less widespread orientation than the general references to the first language, to English as a language imposed by the context, and to frustration. Among the marginal strategies, the use of gestures, attempts to avoid switching to English, requests for repetition, and a simple affirmative response not accompanied by a description of the experience emerge.

Question 19 also required a mandatory response field and codes also emerged from the reading of the responses to this question, and their total is therefore as follows:

- ENGLISH VS IC: 17/59
- PRESERVATION: 13/59
- CULTURAL DIVERSITY: 7/59
- EDUCATION: 7/59
- MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING: 7/59
- DON’T KNOW: 6/59
- EUROPEAN UNITY: 6/59
- CULTURAL DISCOVERY: 5/59
- CULTURAL IDENTITY: 4/59
- VALORIZATION: 4/59
- NO ANSWER: 3/59
- VAGUE BUT POSITIVE: 3/59
- DECENTRALIZATION OF ENGLISH: 2/59
- MULTILINGUALISM: 2/59
- IDENTITY NOT AFFECTED: 1/59
- INTEGRATION: 1/59
- LINGUISTIC HOMOGENIZATION: 1/59
- PRIMACY OF ENGLISH: 1/59

Table 14, reproduced in full in Appendix 3, shows that the most recurring theme is the comparison between the two communicative modes. Several participants note that intercomprehension would enable communication while allowing each person to retain

their own language, whereas the dominance of English could diminish the visibility and use of other languages.

From this perspective, one participant observes that it would allow people to "communicate without abandoning their own language" (R1), while another states that "people can use their own languages instead of switching to English" (R7). Closely associated with this orientation is the theme of preservation, referring both to the survival of minority languages and to the conservation of specific cultural elements. The responses recall, for example, the risk that "terms and specific words" and "ways to express things that are specific of different cultures" might disappear (R34) or highlight the possibility of keeping alive the languages spoken by small communities (R15). The co-occurrence between the comparison of English and intercomprehension and the theme of preservation is particularly significant. These dimensions are presented as complementary: intercomprehension is described as a practice that facilitates communication without requiring the replacement of native languages (R6; R19).

A second relevant cluster concerns cultural diversity, identity, and the discovery of other cultures. Some participants link the maintenance of one's own language to the possibility of expressing identity, ideas, and cultural nuances more fully (R2; R13; R26), while others emphasize that understanding the language of another country also allows one to grasp its "small nuances of the culture" (R35). In several cases, the valorisation of individual languages and mutual understanding appear together with the construction of greater European unity. Languages are considered tools to "forge relationships between countries" (R44) and to strengthen the sense of connection among different cultures (R22; R52).

Less central, but still recurrent, is the reference to education, especially the need to introduce the learning of multiple languages early and to pair English with other languages in school curricula (R25; R39; R46; R47). The responses also mention, in a more circumscribed way, the decentralization of English (R16; R47), multilingualism (R30; R55), integration (R36), and the use of intercomprehension in specific contexts, such as settling in a new country or everyday communication in small towns (R36; R56).

In parallel, a minority of participants express uncertainty through responses such as "Don't know" (R9; R18; R41) or "Idk" (R11; R28), while some responses remain

generically positive without specifying the possible mechanisms of preservation (R3; R20; R45).

As for question 20, the last of the questionnaire, it presents an open-ended and entirely optional format, and it was therefore answered by 8 participants out of 59. As in the previous question, the codes emerged from the responses and the total sum of them is the following:

- PRESERVATION: 3/8
- ELF: 2/8
- EMPATHY: 2/8
- DISCOVERY: 1/8
- IC VS ENGLISH: 1/8
- L1: 1/8
- LIMITS: 1/8
- MULTICULTURALISM: 1/8
- PERSONAL DISCOVERY: 1/8

As visible in Appendix 3, in Table 15 a predominant tendency emerges to link intercomprehension to the preservation of languages and of linguistic-cultural diversity. This perspective is particularly evident in R1's responses, which associate intercomprehension with empathy and with the discovery of works and cultural dimensions that translations do not always adequately convey. R1 also links it to the recovery of cultural elements that are "hidden or forgotten." Similarly, R2 maintains that "the recognition and maintenance of each language is fundamental" and that diversity represents a "symbol of strength rather than weakness."

Alongside preservation, intercomprehension is recognised as a complementary rather than necessarily substitutive practice in relation to English as a lingua franca. R2 observes that English will remain "the main language used for communication at the EU level," while R3 argues that intercomprehension can "complement the use of English," particularly when speakers of related languages can understand one another more easily by using their own languages.

A second relevant thematic cluster concerns empathy and the willingness to build understanding through linguistic and non-linguistic strategies. R1 emphasizes that intercomprehension facilitates putting oneself "in other people's shoes", while R4 describes the attempt to understand each other through similar words, listening, and observing gestures.

The remaining themes appear more selectively and have a residual or situational character. R7 highlights multiculturality, describing intercomprehension as "the engine that leads to multiculturalism." R6, by contrast, presents it as a personal discovery, explaining that they learned the term through the experience of being able to understand a Spanish friend. R5, instead, introduces a limit of applicability, specifying that intercomprehension appears more immediate between Romance languages, but may result "difficult and different" between more distant linguistic groups.

3.7.2 Interview and Think Aloud Results

The following section, instead, presents the results that emerged from the eight semi-structured interviews, conducted with a group of participants selected based on their availability for an in-depth qualitative exploration. After reviewing the interview notes, seventeen recurring macro-themes were identified, emerging both from the answers to the interview questions and from the Think Aloud protocol. Each macro-theme was identified with a short code, reported together with its full name and the textual elements that compose it, to facilitate the construction of the coding matrix. The results are therefore presented through a set of thematic and participant-related tables, which make it possible to describe the distribution of the macro-themes both across the interviews and in relation to the participants' linguistic repertoires. The coding framework used to identify the thematic areas is summarised below in Table 16.

Code	Macro-theme	Included items
LEX	Lexical similarities and language transfer	Similar words, common roots, cognates, connections with Italian, French, Spanish, or English
SYN	Syntactic and grammatical similarities	Sentence structure, prepositions, verbs, conjugations, morphology

CTX	Use of context and overall meaning	Title, images, situation, general content, video topic
NVR	Non-verbal and prosodic cues	Gestures, facial expressions, tone, intonation, punctuation
MED	Media and technological strategies	Subtitles, online translations, comments, videos, social media
REP	Repair strategies	Asking for repetition, rereading, re-listening, asking for rephrasing, checking
MIX	Combined use of languages	Mixing Italian, English, Spanish, or other languages to construct meaning
L1	Mother tongue as a resource	Use of one's own language to better understand or express a concept
ENG	English as a bridge language	English used for communication, but also perceived as a dominant or limiting language
EMO	Emotional and cultural precision	Emotions, idioms, dialects, untranslatable concepts, cultural nuances
IDN	Identity and cultural closeness	Appreciation of people, European closeness, linguistic and cultural identity
MOT	Motivation and interest	Personal interest, relevance of content, curiosity, perceived usefulness
AVO	Avoidance or blocking	Scrolling past, changing video, disengaging, giving up when the language seems too difficult
UNC	Uncertainty and partial understanding	Doubts, provisional interpretations, understanding of the general sense without absolute certainty
SIT	Situational usefulness	Travel, work, university, restaurants, daily activities, international encounters
EDU	Learning and education	Study, exposure to videos and podcasts, practice, familiarization, indirect learning
DID	Didactic experience	School or training activities based on intercomprehension and plurilingual reading

Table 16: Coding of the macro-themes emerged from the notes of the interviews

Before examining the thematic distributions, the linguistic repertoires of the interviewees are presented below. The table 17 provides the relevant background for the comparisons that follow, including participants' first languages, their first foreign language and level of competence, and the presence of one or more additional foreign languages, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). No comparison between L1 groups is attempted here, and the differences should be read as descriptive observations emerging from individual configurations of repertoire, rather than as group-level findings.

Participant	L1	Foreign language 1	Level FL1	Foreign language 2	Level FL2	Foreign language 3	Level FL3
A	Italian	English	A1	French	A1	/	/
B	French	English	B1	Italian	B2	Cambodgian	A1
C	French	English	C1	Italian	B2	/	/
D	Arabic	English	B2	Italian	B2	/	/
E	Italian	English	B2	French	B1	/	/
F	Italian	English	C1	/	/	/	/
G	Italian	English	C1	German	A2	/	/
H	Italian	English	C1	French	A2	/	/

Table 17: Linguistic repertoire of each participant to the interviews (N=8)

Furthermore, for the construction of the matrix, a binary coding was adopted, according to which the value 1 indicates that the theme is present in the participant's interview, the value 0 indicates that the theme does not emerge. The interview and Think Aloud results show that participants' reflections were primarily centred on the resources used to construct meaning from unfamiliar multilingual input.

The most recurrent themes, as shown in Table 18, were lexical similarities and language transfer (LEX), the use of context and overall meaning (CTX), the mother tongue as a resource (L1), English as a bridge language (ENG), and situational usefulness (SIT). These themes frequently occurred together because participants described comprehension as a combination of recognising familiar words, interpreting the broader context, and drawing on languages already present in their repertoire.

Macro-theme	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
LEX	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
SYN	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
CTX	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
NVR	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1
MED	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
REP	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
MIX	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1
L1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
ENG	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
EMO	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1

IDN	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
MOT	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
AVO	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
UNC	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
SIT	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
EDU	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
DID	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 18: Binary coding matrix of the macro-themes by interviewee

This pattern is particularly clear in the Think Aloud protocols. Participant A, for example, reported using Italian to interpret the unfamiliar text and associated the words with Italian and other Romance languages, while participant D explicitly connected terms relating to medicine and pharmacy with Italian. Similarly, participant E stated that he mainly associated Italian words with the corresponding words in the unfamiliar language, whereas participant F combined Italian and English and proceeded “a logica” to infer the meaning. These observations provide direct support for the recurrent LEX and L1 themes. Contextual interpretation also represented a central and closely connected resource. Participants referred to titles, images, punctuation, sentence structure, gestures, facial expressions, comments, and the general topic of the material when lexical recognition alone was insufficient. Participant A explained that the context of a video and the gestures of the person speaking could help her understand content in English, while participant B reported that the title helped her establish the general context of the text. Participant D similarly referred to comments on Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok as a means of reconstructing the meaning of a video, and participant E described understanding a video in Ukrainian through the images and the actions shown, even when the language itself was not understood. During the Think Aloud protocol, participant H combined lexical analogies with the structure of the sentence and the general context, while participant G used the surrounding words and subsequent sentences to interpret passages that were not immediately transparent. Participants did not rely on a single source of information but combined textual, visual, prosodic, and technological cues in the same comprehension process.

The role of the linguistic repertoire is further illustrated by the way participants mobilised different languages simultaneously. Participant B stated that she could not identify one specific language involved in the interpretation but was using a mix of all the languages she knew. Her protocol therefore exemplifies the connection between LEX, L1, and MIX, also evident in her account of combining Italian and English when communicating with international friends. Participant D likewise described mixing Spanish and Italian while travelling, whereas participant H reported combining English and Italian when English alone was insufficient for communication. The matrix presented in Table 18 shows that MIX occurred in fewer interviews than LEX or L1. However, the interview notes indicate that it functioned as a situated strategy, particularly in multilingual encounters or when the available bridge language did not ensure effective communication. This is also evident in participant B's example of communicating with her Cambodian grandmother, for whom English represented an obstacle and to communicate with her, Cambodian was necessary.

The data also highlight that ENG was one of the most recurrent themes in the binary coding matrix, and the interview notes show that participants did not attribute a single function to English. Participant A described English as a bridge when she could recognise some words, but as well as a barrier when it was incomprehensible. Participant C reported that English sometimes helped communication but could also interfere with her use of Italian, since English words came to mind first. Participant D expressed a preference for using Italian rather than English in interactions with Italian speakers, while participant H described a work-related situation in which repeated explanations in English were necessary because he was uncertain that his intended meaning had been understood. English was therefore connected not only with communication but also with uncertainty, perceived limits, and difficulties in expressing meanings as precisely as in the mother tongue.

Thus, the role of the mother tongue was especially visible in relation to emotional, cultural, and idiomatic meaning. Participant A stated that she could express an emotional concept more richly in Italian because her mother tongue offered many ways to explain it. Participant B referred to the French expression "Savourer l'instant present", which she considered difficult to translate into English or Italian because its meaning was not fully

represented by an equivalent expression in those languages. Participant G similarly noted that Italian or Veneto dialect expressions could lose part of their cultural value when explained in English, using the example “non si giudica il libro dalla copertina”. Furthermore, the codes LEX, CTX, L1, ENG, and SIT appeared across the various L1 groups. By contrast, references to IDN were associated with participants’ existing knowledge of and familiarity with other languages, rather than functioning as an isolated marker of first-language background. Participants B and C, for example, described feeling closer to other European speakers and emphasised the possibility of understanding people without learning every language. In this sense, IDN was not an isolated reference to linguistic identity but appeared alongside comments on cultural proximity and interpersonal understanding.

The themes concerning uncertainty, avoidance, and repair were present in a more selective and situational manner. Participant C reported scrolling away from videos in languages that were too difficult, while participant A stated that she would not continue trying to understand content that was not personally interesting. Participant H similarly indicated that his first reaction to unfamiliar multimedia content was often to change the video. UNC emerged when participants understood the general meaning without being completely certain of individual details. Participant C described accepting a degree of doubt when using intercomprehension, and participant H reported questioning whether his interlocutors had fully understood him in English. REP was more restricted, but it is supported by participant H’s reference to asking others to repeat themselves and by participant G’s indication that repetition or replaying a video would be an initial response to difficulty.

Moreover, REP and EDU were concentrated among participants with C1 English, while AVO was also particularly recurrent within this group. By contrast, LEX, L1, ENG, and SIT were distributed across all English-proficiency levels. SYN, MED, and MIX followed a less uniform pattern, appearing across different levels without forming a single dominant distribution.

The presence of additional foreign languages also provides a descriptive perspective on the thematic distribution. In fact, the core themes LEX, CTX, L1, ENG, and SIT were represented among participants with an additional foreign language, as were emotional

and cultural precision (EMO), motivation and interest (MOT), and uncertainty and partial understanding (UNC). However, given that only one participant did not report a second or third foreign language, the distribution does not support a direct comparison between two equivalent groups. Finally, participant F referred to watching videos in German to familiarise himself with the language and learn indirectly, and participant C described improving English and Italian through films, series, and university study. These examples correspond to EDU as exposure, practice, and indirect learning, thus reflecting its presence in only a limited number of interviews. By contrast, none of the participants described a specific school or training activity based on intercomprehension or plurilingual reading, confirming the residual position of DID in the dataset and the interview notes support this distinction.

3.7.3 Integration of Questionnaire, Interview and Think Aloud Results

This section of paragraph 3.7 concerns the integration of each interviewee's questionnaire responses with what they reported in the semi-structured interviews and demonstrated during the Think Aloud protocol. The purpose of this triangulation is to examine whether participants' self-reported tendencies and declared strategies correspond to those that emerge when they are confronted with unfamiliar written texts. It also aims to identify possible convergences and divergences before and after the Think Aloud task with respect to intercomprehension. The results, presented in Table 19, bring together the information collected through the three instruments along five dimensions.

The first column summarises each participant's responses to the key questionnaire items. These include the frequency with which participants reported using intercomprehension strategies (Q10), the perceived usefulness of these strategies for feeling connected to other cultures and for interacting effectively (Q11-Q12), and the element they considered most useful for the immediate comprehension of written texts (Q14). It also records the strategies mentioned in the open-ended question (Q15), participants' prior knowledge of the term "intercomprehension" (Q16), and their level of agreement with four statements concerning the risks associated with the exclusive use of English (Q17).

The second column synthesises the orientation expressed in the questionnaire, particularly in Q17 and in the open responses, together with the more articulated accounts given during the interview regarding the role of English as a lingua franca and the perceived value of intercomprehension.

The third column reports the strategies that participants explicitly stated they use when faced with unfamiliar languages. The fourth column describes what each participant actually mobilised while reading the Romanian and Portuguese texts. The fifth and final column highlights points of convergence or discrepancy among the questionnaire responses, interview statements, and observations from the Think Aloud. It also incorporates the post-protocol responses when these clarify or modify the initial picture.

Participant	Relevant questionnaire responses	Attitude towards English / IC	Declared strategies (interview)	Observed strategies (Think Aloud)	Convergences / divergences
A	Q10: mixed (almost never to always; low for overall meaning/comparing words); Q11: mainly always; Q12: mainly often; Q14: main idea / ignore difficult words; Q15: gestures; Q16: No; Q17: 5, 5, 5, 5.	English described as a barrier when incomprehensible, but as a bridge when some words are understood; intercomprehension viewed positively for travel and linguistic diversity.	Uses video context and gestures when interested; otherwise tends not to persist; proposes using known/similar languages.	Italian-based lexical comparison; comparison with Spanish; contextual inference; immediate written-text comprehension.	**Divergence**: Q10 reports limited use of comparison/overall-meaning strategies, whereas TA shows sustained lexical comparison and contextual inference. Post-protocol confirms awareness of these strategies.
B	Q10: generally often; Q11: generally often; Q12: generally often; Q14: main idea / ignore difficult words; Q15: verbs, keywords, gestures; Q16: No; Q17: 4, 4, 5, 5.	English is experienced as limiting participation in some settings; intercomprehension is associated with cultural closeness and alternative ways of understanding.	Lexical comparison, verb forms, rereading, subtitles, video context; gestures.	Mixed-language lexical transfer; title-based contextual inference; direct translation of both texts.	**Convergence**: questionnaire, interview and TA all foreground lexical cues, contextual support and gestures. Post-protocol explicitly identifies similar words and title as supports.
C	Q10: generally sometimes; Q11: mostly sometimes; Q12: mixed, mainly sometimes; Q14: title/layout/general context; Q15: social and non-verbal cues; Q16: No; Q17: 3, 2, 3, 2.	English is described as the most natural choice when travelling, while intercomprehension is positively associated with an ideal of mutual understanding; English had also interfered with Italian production.	Lexical comparison, titles, images, subtitles and general context; limited persistence with unfamiliar languages.	French- and Italian-based lexical transfer; title/context; prior cultural knowledge; comparison of word similarity.	**Partial divergence**: Q17 indicates relatively limited concern about English-only use, while the interview reports preference for a Europe based on intercomprehension and identifies English as interfering with Italian. TA confirms active use of French/Italian resources.

D	Q10: generally often; Q11: mixed (often/sometimes/I do not know); Q12: generally often; Q14: title/layout/general context; Q15: body language, gestures, examples; Q16: No; Q17: 4, 5, 5, 4.	Explicit preference for Italian over English; English is seen as overly dominant. Intercomprehension is considered useful in travel and encourages learning local languages.	Lexical comparison across Arabic, English and Italian; video context, facial expressions, gestures and comments.	Italian-based lexical transfer; English/Italian comparison; sentence structure, prepositions and punctuation as cues.	**Convergence**: strong questionnaire concern about English-only use aligns with interview preference for Italian and TA reliance on Italian and related-language cues. Post-protocol further identifies structural and punctuation cues.
E	Q10: mixed, with low use of lexical comparison/word guessing and high use of contextual cues; Q11: mainly often; Q12: mainly often, but lexical-similarity use marked never; Q14: main idea / ignore difficult words; Q15: online search and videos; Q16: No; Q17: 5, 5, 5, 5.	Intercomprehension is viewed as an alternative to English, especially where English is not shared; English can be a barrier in practical encounters.	Translations, subtitles, visual context and gestures; communication through similar L1 words and gestures in encounters with non-English speakers.	Italian-Romanian lexical comparison in both texts.	**Divergence**: Q10 and Q12 indicate low/absent use of lexical similarity and word-comparison strategies, but interview and TA show Italian-based lexical comparison. Post-protocol confirms reliance on similar words.
F	Q10: generally sometimes/often; Q11: mostly sometimes; Q12: mixed, including uncertainty about lexical similarity; Q14: title/layout/general context; Q15: no specific strategy reported; Q16: Yes; Q17: 3, 3, 4, 3.	English is described as highly proficient and generally unproblematic; intercomprehension is considered more useful for travel and less effective in business contexts.	Subtitles, online translation, intentional exposure to German through films/videos; little explicit valuation of intercomprehension.	Italian- and English-based lexical transfer; logical inference.	**Partial divergence**: the questionnaire reports no specific strategy and limited valuation of intercomprehension, whereas TA shows lexical comparison and logical inference. Post-protocol explicitly recognises both.
G	Q10: generally sometimes/often; Q11: generally often; Q12: mixed, with low lexical-similarity use and high clarification/repetition; Q14: main idea / ignore difficult words; Q15: Not sure; Q16: No; Q17: 3, 4, 5, 4.	English is given primary importance, but intercomprehension is valued for short-term travel, work and exchange contexts; usefulness is seen as greater among related language groups.	Repetition, requests for clarification, intonation, keywords; intercomprehension for temporary contexts; English remains central.	Italian-based lexical transfer; English support; sentence-structure comparison; contextual inference; direct translation.	**Divergence**: Q15 gives no stated strategy and Q12 reports low use of lexical similarity, while TA shows Italian/English lexical transfer and structural comparison. Post-protocol identifies similarity and context as supports.
H	Q10: predominantly I do not know/sometimes; Q11: predominantly I do not know; Q12: mixed, mainly I do not know/sometimes; Q14: similar grammar/sentence structure; Q15: no strategy example; Q16: No; Q17: 3, 4, 4, 4.	English is usable but may not ensure precision or mutual understanding; intercomprehension is presented cautiously and mainly for brief interactions.	Requests repetition; in a Spanish travel context, blends English and Italian and uses gestures; no prior direct experience of intercomprehension claimed.	Italian-based lexical transfer; syntactic/sentence-structure comparison; contextual inference; Spanish/Italian comparison; English used for one lexical cue.	**Divergence**: questionnaire expresses uncertainty and provides no strategy example, and interview reports no direct experience; TA nevertheless shows sustained Italian-based lexical and structural comparison. Post-protocol confirms awareness of analogies and sentence structure.

Table 19: Comparison of participants A-H's responses across the questionnaire, interviews and Think Aloud protocol

The comparison across participants A-H, presented in Table 19, shows the relationship between the declared repertoire and the repertoire actually activated. In particular, Italian functions as the main bridge language for all Italophone participants (A, E, F, G, H), whereas for the two Francophone participants (B and C) the transfer base is shared between French (L1) and Italian (L2). Moreover, participant D, despite declaring Arabic as his L1, relies almost exclusively on Italian and, to a lesser extent, English when interpreting the Romanian and Portuguese texts. However, his case is treated as an illustrative, not a representative, instance of how a speaker whose mother tongue is typologically distant from the target languages may nonetheless activate an Italian-based

bridge when a solid plurilingual repertoire is already in place. As for participant B, she includes Cambodian in her repertoire but does not mobilise it as a distinct resource.

Moreover, the questionnaire points to generally frequent use of intercomprehension strategies. The interview identifies lexical comparison, attention to verb forms, contextual support, and gestures, while the Think Aloud reveals the mobilisation of a mixed linguistic repertoire drawing on French, Italian, and English.

During the first text, participant B reported being unable to identify a single dominant language but was using a mix of all the languages she knows to reconstruct meaning. The post-protocol response explicitly identifies similar words and the title as supports, confirming the strategies observed.

Participant D likewise shows convergence across the three sources: the questionnaire indicates a generally frequent orientation, the interview expresses an explicit preference for Italian over English and a positive evaluation of intercomprehension, and the Think Aloud confirms consistent reliance on Italian-based lexical and structural correspondences. He indeed inferred the meaning of *medical* and *farmaceutic* directly from Italian and, in the second text, associated *popular* and *especialidade* with both English and Italian. The post-protocol answer further specifies the use of sentence structure, prepositions and punctuation, reinforcing the convergence among the three instruments.

For participants A, E, G and H, by contrast, the most salient feature is a divergence between self-reported strategies and those observed during the Think Aloud. Participant A's questionnaire responses present a mixed and relatively low orientation towards word comparison and overall comprehension, whereas the Think Aloud shows sustained use of Italian-based lexical comparison and contextual inference. She was notably surprised to learn that the first text was written in Romanian, stating that she had found it easy to understand because she had continuously relied on Italian as a bridge language. This discrepancy is clarified by the post-protocol response, in which the participant explicitly acknowledges the association of similar Italian, Romanian and Portuguese words and the use of context. A comparable pattern emerges for participant E: although the questionnaire indicates limited or absent use of lexical similarity in the relevant items, both the interview and the Think Aloud show Italian-Romanian lexical comparison, and

the post-protocol answer directly confirms reliance on similar words. Participants G and H provide further examples of divergence between uncertainty or absence of a stated strategy in the questionnaire and active use of intercomprehension resources in the Think Aloud. Participant G reported no specific strategy in the relevant questionnaire item and gave lexical similarity a relatively minor role. Nevertheless, during the Think Aloud, he relied explicitly on Italian, drawing on forms such as *superior*, *medical*, *farmaceutic*, *noastră*, and *colaborare*. In the second text, he identified *ranking* through English while observing that the sentence structure itself felt distinctly Italian. The post-protocol answer identifies similarity and context as supports. Participant H likewise selected uncertainty-oriented responses and reported no specific strategy in the questionnaire. However, the Think Aloud revealed repeated use of Italian-based lexical and syntactic analogies: he noticed the recurring Romanian forms *învățământul* and *învățământului* and used Italian to infer the underlying pattern, while drawing selectively on English to interpret the lexical item *ranking*. The post-protocol response confirms awareness of analogies and sentence structure.

Participants C and F occupy an intermediate position, characterised by partial convergence and partial divergence. Participant C's questionnaire indicates a moderate orientation towards intercomprehension strategies and relatively low concern about English-only use in Q17, whereas the interview expresses a preference for a Europe based on intercomprehension and identifies English as interfering with Italian production. The Think Aloud shows on the other hand active use of French- and Italian-based lexical transfer, title-based contextual inference and prior cultural knowledge as she immediately recognised the word *istoric* as identical to French. Participant F shows a similar configuration: the questionnaire reports no specific strategy and limited valuation of intercomprehension, while the Think Aloud demonstrates Italian- and English-based lexical transfer and logical inference, as he explicitly stated that he was associating Italian and English words with the Romanian text in both readings. The post-protocol answer explicitly recognises both strategies.

These results also define the function of Chapter 4 that will not reproduce all questionnaire percentages or simply add personal commentary but will select the most

significant results for each research question, interpret them in relation to the relevant literature, and integrate the evidence provided by the different instruments.

CHAPTER 4: Intercomprehension as a Model of Communication for a Plurilingual Europe

This final chapter interprets the study's empirical findings considering the theoretical and research framework developed in the preceding chapters. This chapter offers a critical discussion of how participants' perceptions and strategic behaviours align with, extend, or challenge existing conceptualisations of intercomprehension. The first section examines the conditions under which intercomprehension emerges as a practicable resource (paragraph 4.1), while the second section focuses on the role of participants' metacognitive awareness (paragraph 4.2). The chapter concludes with a reflection on the study's methodological constraints, situating its contributions within the boundaries imposed by the sample composition, instrument design, and the researcher's role in data collection and analysis (paragraph 4.3).

4.1 Analysis of Results in Relation to the RQ1

This section discusses the findings in relation to RQ1: To what extent, and under what conditions, do participants perceive intercomprehension as a practicable communicative resource in multilingual encounters?

The findings presented in paragraph 3.7 converge in showing that intercomprehension is perceived by most participants as a communicative resource that is effectively practicable; however its activation depends on specific linguistic and contextual conditions, rather than constituting an unconditional or universally available strategy. Data from the questionnaire and interviews indicate that this perception is primarily grounded in the recognition of lexical similarities and the exploitation of contextual and non-verbal cues, while more systematic or analytical forms of interlinguistic comparison prove comparatively marginal. Questionnaire responses highlight the recurrent reliance on gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, and visual elements such as titles, layout, and images to support comprehension both in face-to-face encounters and written communication situations. Similarly, interviewees describe situations in which

understanding a menu, a sign, or a short message was facilitated by the combination of lexical similarity, situational context, and paralinguistic information. These aspects suggest that intercomprehension does not function as a deliberately applied method, but rather as an emergent and largely automatic response, activated by the actual or perceived proximity between the unfamiliar input and the participant's linguistic repertoire. This pattern is consistent with the distinction between spontaneous and taught intercomprehension discussed in paragraph 2.1.2. Participants who had never been formally exposed to the term intercomprehension, nonetheless mobilised strategies that closely resemble those systematised in EuroCom's "Seven Sieves", especially the recognition of international vocabulary and language-family-specific lexicon (Grzega, 2005, p. 2). For example, in the Think Aloud tasks these strategies become observable in real time, as participants verbalise the recognition of cognates, the activation of semantic networks associated with known words, and the construction of a contextual frame that subsequently guides the interpretation of surrounding input. Even participants who reported low or elementary competence in a given Romance language used elements of that language as points of comparison during the Think Aloud, suggesting that partial or passive knowledge can function as a resource for intercomprehension.

The prevalence of reliance on lexicon and context indicates that comprehension here operates through a combination of bottom-up and top-down processes, rather than through grammatical or phonological analysis alone. Comprehension appears to result from the interaction of these two processes, rather than being reconstructed piece by piece from isolated linguistic detail. The data also reveal that linguistic proximity to the Romance languages appears to determine the practicability of intercomprehension. Participants indeed frequently reported that comprehension is supported by the recognition of international vocabulary, shared roots, and recurrent morphological patterns, as well as by the possibility of drawing on a bridge language such as Italian, French, or Spanish to access meaning in Romanian or Portuguese. Where such proximity was absent or perceived as insufficient, participants tended to resort to English or to disengage altogether. However, since the Think Aloud data involved only Romanian and Portuguese, both Romance languages, these findings can speak to how the resource

operates within a context of typologically related languages but cannot support claims about its applicability across typologically distant language families.

A recurrent pattern in the interviews is the switch to English when participants perceive marked linguistic asymmetries, high content complexity, or a lack of sufficient contextual support. Several participants explain that, although they value intercomprehension in principle, they resort to English in professional or high-stakes situations, in which efficiency and precision are priorities, or when interacting with speakers whose linguistic repertoire appears too distant from their own. These findings support the theoretical framework presented in Chapters 1 and 2. In particular, they align with Doyé's (2005, p. 7) definition of intercomprehension as the ability to understand previously unlearned languages without requiring productive competence (participants derived meaning from the input in Romanian and Portugese despite their lack of competence in these languages). Similarly, findings foreground that comprehension often relied on the interlocutor's willingness to simplify discourse and adapt to comprehension difficulties. This aspect echoes Bonvino et al.'s (2018, pp. 3-4) characterisation of interactive intercomprehension as a process of co-construction of meaning. From this perspective, participants continuously negotiate linguistic accommodation, rather than merely decoding a fixed input. Moreover, the persistence of English as a parallel or complementary resource, rather than as a fully substitutive default, can be read alongside the notion of hegemonic multilingualism discussed by Krzyżanowski and Wodak (2010, as cited in Romaine, 2013, p. 121). Participants appear to reject the idea that English must be the only vehicular language, without however abandoning it, instead treating it as one resource among others available within a broader plurilingual repertoire. Questionnaire data on attitudes towards the exclusive use of English further suggest that participants are aware of the potential risks of linguistic inequality, while at the same time recognising the instrumental value of English as a common medium in transnational contexts. This indicates a more fluid coexistence between English as a lingua franca and intercomprehension (Dzik, 2019, pp. 156-157; Busse, 2017, pp. 567-578; Károly, 2008, pp. 132-137), since the two are not necessarily experienced as mutually exclusive, but rather as functionally complementary depending on the communicative situation. Moreover, this coexistence aligns with Dzik's (2019, pp. 157-158) observation that intercomprehension offers a flexible model that can

be extended to broader multilingual interactions, thereby reducing the need to resort systematically to a single dominant lingua franca. Rather than presenting intercomprehension as an integral substitute for a lingua franca, initiatives could more realistically emphasise its value as a complementary and situationally activated resource, particularly valuable in contexts of linguistic proximity in which it can preserve the visibility of languages that would otherwise be set aside in favour of English.

4.2 Analysis of Results in Relation to the RQ2

This section discusses the findings in relation to RQ2: What role does metacognitive awareness play in participants' use of intercomprehension strategies when approaching unfamiliar languages?

The interview data and Think Aloud protocols show that metacognitive awareness plays an ambivalent and largely retrospective role in participants' use of intercomprehension strategies. Most participant were able to name and describe their own strategies only after being prompted to reflect on them, rather than recognising such processes as they were unfolding. This specific outcome may suggest that intercomprehension, at least in its spontaneous form, relies more on automated cognitive processes than on deliberate metacognitive regulation. However, the limited number of Think Aloud protocols means this interpretation should be treated as tentative rather than conclusive. The recurrent divergence between what participants reported in the questionnaire and what they actually mobilised during the Think Aloud protocol is particularly revealing. In fact, several participants, who reported limited or uncertain use of lexical comparison, displayed sustained and effective transfer strategies once confronted with an unfamiliar text, acknowledging this mobilisation only when invited to reflect on it explicitly. In particular, while questionnaire responses indicated moderate, uncertain or even absent use of lexical and syntactic comparison strategies, the Think Aloud tasks showed that these same participants engaged in lexical analogies, contextual inference and attention to sentence structure. During the debriefing, some noted that they had not previously associated these practices with any specific strategy, and only through verbalisation began to label them as forms of intercomprehension. This suggests that metacognitive awareness functions

less as a precondition for activating intercomprehension strategies and more as a mechanism that emerges *a posteriori*, converting an already functioning implicit competence into an object of conscious reflection. Participants who reflected spontaneously during the task appeared to use transfer strategies more consistently and consciously. This suggests that awareness may not only help participants describe their strategies but also support their effective use during communication.

The Think Aloud protocols do not show only immediate recognition of familiar words or international vocabulary, but they also include sequences in which participants express doubts, formulate provisional hypotheses, return to the context or to subsequent sentences to verify an interpretation, and accept a degree of uncertainty without abandoning the task. Some participants described understanding the general meaning without being completely certain of individual details, while others indicated that they would reread or replay a video as an initial response to difficulty. This interpretation aligns with Menegale's (2022, pp. 164-165) observation that intercomprehension pedagogy depends on the cultivation of three intersecting dimensions of awareness: awareness of one's own learning processes, of oneself as a learner, and of the languages involved. Participants who showed convergence between declared and observed strategies, could also articulate the most explicit post-task reflections on their own reasoning. This corroborates Meißner's (2011, p. 9) characterisation of learning transfer as an intrinsically metacognitive category that functions as an internal monitor overseeing other transfer processes.

Additionally, the findings support Ilina's (2022, p. 83) view that comprehension unfolds through a sequence of perception, understanding, and reaction. For several participants, however, this process appeared only during post-task reflection rather than while they were performing the task. The findings also provide preliminary support for the MLLARS framework, suggesting that metacognitive awareness is not always present during intercomprehension. Instead, it seems to emerge to different degrees, being more evident among participants with greater multilingual experience than among those with a limited linguistic repertoire.

The interview notes and Think Aloud records also indicate qualitative differences in how metacognitive awareness is mobilised. Some participants, particularly those with more

extensive declared repertoires or with prior experience of language learning, display more articulated monitoring. They explicitly mark moments of uncertainty, compare alternative hypotheses and refer back to textual or contextual clues in a systematic way. Others, including some who reported lower confidence in their linguistic abilities, tend to adopt a more global orientation, focusing on grasping the overall meaning and showing less verbalised reflection on the steps leading to that understanding. After being exposed to the Romanian and Portuguese texts, several participants reported being struck by the fact that they could understand them without significant difficulty and that this experience made them feel less linguistically incapable than they had assumed.

Although the study does not include pre- and post-measures of confidence or self-efficacy, the interview notes and debriefing responses indicate that giving a name to the strategies and observing their effectiveness prompted a retrospective re-evaluation of participants' repertoires. In particular, some participants, who had not previously associated their occasional practices with the term intercomprehension, began to describe their own linguistic behaviour in terms of mobilising known languages to access unfamiliar ones. This explanation resonates with Menegale's (2022, pp. 164-165) definition account of awareness of oneself as a learner and awareness of the languages already known and newly encountered. Findings also suggest that the mother tongue and the existing linguistic repertoire shape how awareness is articulated. For instance, participants with Romance's mother tongues (Italian, French) often frame their strategies in terms of lexical and morphological similarity within the Romance family, and their monitoring frequently refers to cognates, shared roots and bridge languages. On the other hand, the participant with Arabic as a mother tongue, while also drawing on international vocabulary and contextual cues, tends to emphasise the role of English and of global textual features (titles, layout, images) as mediating resources. These differences do not imply a hierarchy in the level of awareness but rather highlight that metacognitive reflection is grounded in the specific configuration of each participant's plurilingual repertoire. This variability also resonates with Otheguy et al.'s (2015, p. 281) conception of translanguaging as drawing on a unified repertoire of linguistic features, suggesting that speakers may mobilise resources from their repertoire without necessarily being able to articulate which specific languages or strategies are at play in any given moment.

4.3 Study Limitations

Although this study offers valuable insights into participants' perceptions of intercomprehension, its findings should be considered in light of several limitations related to the study design, the data collection instruments, the characteristics of the sample and the researcher's role.

The study's cross-sectional design provides an overview of participants' perceptions and strategies at a single point in time but does not allow for the establishment of causal relationships nor does it allow tracing how intercomprehension strategies may develop or change with increased exposure or instruction. The study also did not measure or control for several potentially relevant variables, such as participants' prior explicit training in language learning strategies, the frequency of exposure to multilingual media, or the specific contexts in which they most frequently engage in intercultural communication. All these factors could influence both self-reported tendencies and actual strategic behaviour.

Further constraints arise from the questionnaire, as it was administered exclusively in English, which may have excluded potential respondents with lower competence in it, despite their relevance to the research questions. Regarding the qualitative phase, all interviews were conducted in Italian, regardless of participants' first language. Although all interviewees possessed at least advanced competence in Italian, this choice may have influenced the accuracy or depth of responses, particularly for non-native speakers. Moreover, two interviews were conducted jointly, creating the possibility of mutual influence between the participants' responses. Additionally, all interviews were recorded in the form of real-time notes, rather than as verbatim transcriptions from audio. Consequently, some nuances in participants' accounts may not have been fully captured and may thus reflect the researcher's selective attention and interpretation during the interaction.

As regards the composition and recruitment of the sample: participants were recruited through convenience sampling, via personal contacts, social media channels, and the researcher's internship. This resulted in a sample that, although geographically diversified

in terms of origin, was predominantly composed of young adults with higher education qualifications and substantial plurilingual repertoires. This limits the generalisability of the findings to populations with different educational backgrounds, age distributions, or linguistic competences.

Finally, the researcher's own role in data collection and analysis introduces potential sources of bias, foremost among them the thematic coding, which was conducted manually by the researcher. Likewise, triangulation of questionnaire, interview, and Think Aloud data was always performed by the same researcher who designed the instruments and recruited the participants, creating the possibility of confirmation bias in identifying convergences and divergences across data sources. Therefore, these limitations do not invalidate the findings but situate them within the specific methodological and contextual boundaries of the study.

CONCLUSION

This thesis examined whether intercomprehension can function not only as a theoretical or pedagogical concept but also as a feasible communicative strategy in multilingual speakers' everyday lives. Starting from the tension between the need for a common language and the desire to preserve linguistic diversity, the study analysed how individuals mobilised the linguistic resources already at their disposal when they meet languages they do not fully know.

Intercomprehension was therefore not considered as a direct replacement for English; instead, it was examined as a possible component of a broader and more flexible model of communication in multilingual Europe (Bonvino et al., 2018, pp. 1-2; Dzik, 2019, pp. 157-158). The results suggest that intercomprehension may already be present, often in implicit form, in the communicative practices observed among the participants in this study. It does not necessarily require formal training or a conscious decision to adopt a specific method (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 2). Rather, it can emerge when speakers are willing to rely on partial knowledge, to accept a certain degree of uncertainty, and to establish connections between languages, contexts, and previous experiences.

In this sense, intercomprehension appears, in the accounts examined here, less as a specialized skill possessed exclusively by highly trained language learners and more as a potential that may be present within multilingual repertoires (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 28-29). The participants in this study appeared able to draw on this potential without having a precise term to describe it or without considering themselves particularly competent in languages other than their own.

This observation is particularly relevant because linguistic competence is often interpreted in terms of complete mastery. Normally, speakers are expected to know a language sufficiently before "using" it; however, the findings of this study indicate a different perspective, in line with the literature of intercomprehension. Comprehension does not always depend on the ability to produce grammatically perfect sentences or to control the entire linguistic system of another language (Doyé, 2005, p. 7; Dzik, 2019, pp. 157-158). In many situations, communication can develop through fragments of

knowledge, recognisable forms, contextual information, gestures, previous experiences, and the interlocutors' willingness to collaborate (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 133-136; Santos Alves & Mendes, 2006, p. 213; Bonvino et al., 2018, pp. 3-4). Intercomprehension therefore draws attention to what speakers can do with "incomplete knowledge", rather than focusing exclusively on what they are not yet capable of doing (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 28-29, 136; Bonvino et al., 2011, p. 53).

At the same time, this study does not advocate an idealized view of intercomprehension, as it cannot be considered equally effective in every context, nor can it automatically resolve all the difficulties that arise in multilingual communication. Its usefulness depends on several factors, including the relationship between the languages involved, the complexity and importance of the interaction, the degree of contextual support available, and speakers' attitudes (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 133-138; Santos Alves & Mendes, 2006, p. 213). In situations requiring precision, speed, or institutional authority, participants continued to prefer English or another shared language. This does not invalidate the potential of intercomprehension; on the contrary, it indicates that its role should be interpreted in a realistic and situated manner.

These findings also have broader implications for the relationship between intercomprehension and English as a lingua franca. The findings do not suggest that English should be rejected or that its practical importance should be underestimated, because in this study it remained a valuable resource in international, professional, and academic contexts. However, relying exclusively on English could create unequal communicative conditions, especially when speakers possess different levels of competence or when they are called upon to express complex ideas, emotions, or personal meanings in a language that is not their own (Romaine, 2013, p. 121; Dzik, 2019, pp. 156-157). Intercomprehension could therefore contribute to a more balanced model, making it possible for speakers to maintain a stronger connection with their first language and with the linguistic resources that are part of their identity. From this perspective, the choice is not necessarily between English and intercomprehension, since a more inclusive model could envisage the complementary use of both, according to the needs of the situation and the resources available to the participants (Bonvino et al., 2018, pp. 1-2; Dzik, 2019, pp. 157-158).

Concerning the attitudinal dimension of the findings, participants' responses indicated that language choices are not perceived as neutral instruments of communication; instead, they are linked to a sense of belonging, cultural identity, inclusion, and power. Deciding whether to speak in one's own language, switch to English, simplify one's speech, or attempt to understand another language can affect speakers' perceived confidence, visibility, and legitimacy within an interaction. Therefore, the findings suggest that allowing different languages to remain present may contribute to a more plural conception of communication and European citizenship. This implication, however, would require further investigation in more diverse contexts.

It is also worth noting that, in this study, participants did not always recognize the strategies they were using at the very moment of use; this suggests that intercomprehension could operate before being formulated as an explicit skill. However, when speakers understand that they can use similarities, context, and partial knowledge to approach unfamiliar languages, they can develop greater confidence in their linguistic repertoires (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 133-136; Meißner, 2011, p. 11). From this perspective, metacognitive reflection does not necessarily create the ability to understand unfamiliar languages, but it can help speakers to recognize, organize, and extend a capacity that is already present (Bonvino et al., 2018, pp. 7-8; Meißner, 2011, pp. 9-11; Menegale, 2022, pp. 164-165).

Consequently, teaching intercomprehension should not be limited to transmitting correspondences between languages or acquiring isolated comprehension techniques. It should encourage learners to reflect on their own linguistic experiences, to identify the resources present in their repertoires, and to reconsider the very meaning of linguistic competence (Bonvino et al., 2018, p. 1; Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 133-138; Menegale, 2022, pp. 164-165).

Nevertheless, this research has several limitations. Convenience sampling, the relatively small qualitative sample, the overrepresentation of highly educated and multilingual participants, and the use of English in the questionnaire all limit the generalisability of the findings. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design does not fully allow establishing how attitudes or strategies may change over time. The use of Italian during the interviews and the central role of the researcher in data collection and analysis may also have

influenced the findings. Such limitations do not, however, compromise the exploratory value of the study, but indicate that these conclusions must be understood as situated findings, not as universal claims.

Future research could involve socially and linguistically more diverse participants, compare different age groups and educational contexts, and analyse whether explicit training produces lasting changes in confidence, awareness, and communicative behaviours.

Ultimately, this study offers a modest but suggestive contribution to the idea that intercomprehension could be considered part of the communicative repertoire of a multilingual Europe. Its potential value lies in the possibility of addressing communicative difficulties not by assuming that understanding is possible only when everyone uses the same language, but by recognizing that it may also develop through the interaction between different languages, partial competences, and shared efforts. From this perspective, the findings tentatively suggest that unity does not necessarily have to be built based on linguistic uniformity. It could instead emerge from speakers' willingness to understand the other, to recognize the value of diverse linguistic resources, and to cooperate despite differences. While this remains an implication to be explored further rather than a demonstrated outcome, it points toward the possibility of building a more authentic and inclusive mutual understanding.

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Appendix 1

The Questionnaire

You speak yours, I speak mine… and yet we understand each other?

Hello! My name is Sofia, I am 23 years old, and I am a Master student in Language Sciences at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. I am currently working on my master's thesis, which focuses on the topic of *intercomprehension*, a phenomenon that describes the ability of speakers of different but related languages to understand each other without relying on a common vehicular language, such as English.

Intercomprehension is based on linguistic similarities, contextual cues, and cognitive strategies that we often use without realizing it. The aim of my thesis is to explore how European citizens experience these situations in their daily lives, and to understand the potential role of this ability in fostering inclusion, identity, and intercultural communication.

This questionnaire collects personal experiences, perceptions, and opinions related to these themes. It does not require any specific linguistic skills and can be completed by anyone, regardless of how many languages they speak. **All responses will be collected anonymously and used solely for academic purposes**.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to contribute to my research!

* Indica una domanda obbligatoria

PRIVACY NOTICE ON THE PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA pursuant to Article 13 of Regulation (EU) 2016/679

PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA (ref. art. 13 of GDPR): please check how personal data will be processed before completing the form: https://www.unive.it/pag/41256/
The personal data collected in this survey will be used only for research purposes. Participation is voluntary, and responses will be anonymous. By continuing, you consent to the use of your data in this way.

1. I have read and understood the privacy information. *

Select only one option.

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

General information

1) How old are you? *

Select only one option.

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65+

2) What is your gender? *

Select only one option.

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say
- Altro:

3) What is your country of origin? *

4) In which country do you currently reside, and how long have you been living there? *

5) Have you lived in countries other than your current one and your homeland? *

6) What is your highest level of education? *

Select only one option.

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ◯ Lower secondary school
- ◯ Upper secondary school
- ◯ Bachelor's degree
- ◯ Master's degree
- ◯ PhD / Postgraduate specialization
- ◯ Altro: _____

Personal linguistic repertoire

7) What is your first language? *

_____

8) Apart from your first language, what other languages do you know? *

_____

9) Following the order in which you listed the additional languages you know in the previous answer, specify the level of efficiency you perceive.

Foreign language 1

Select only one option per row.

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	A1 - Beginner level	A2 - Elementary level	B1 - Intermediate level	B2 - Upper-intermediate level	C1 - Advanced level	C2 - Native speaker level
Speaking	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Listening	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Reading	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Writing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Foreign language 2

Select only one option per row.

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	A1 - Beginner level	A2 - Elementary level	B1 - Intermediate level	B2 - Upper-intermediate level	C1 - Advanced level	C2 - Native speaker level
Speaking	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Listening	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Reading	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Writing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Foreign language 3

Select only one option per row.

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	A1 - Beginner level	A2 - Elementary level	B1 - Intermediate level	B2 - Upper-intermediate level	C1 - Advanced level	C2 - Native speaker level
Speaking	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Listening	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Reading	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Writing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Foreign language 4

Select only one option per row.

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	A1 - Beginner level	A2 - Elementary level	B1 - Intermediate level	B2 - Upper-intermediate level	C1 - Advanced level	C2 - Native speaker level
Speaking	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Listening	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Reading	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Writing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Personal intercomprehension strategies

10) When you come across other European languages that you don't speak, to what extent * do you try to understand them using what you already know?

Select only one option per row.

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	never	almost never	I don't know	sometimes	often	always
When talking to speakers of other European languages, I try to guess what they say based on similarities with languages I know.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I notice that I can understand some words or expressions in related languages (e.g., Spanish ↔ Portuguese; Italian ↔ Spanish; German ↔ Dutch; Danish ↔ Norwegian).	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
When I read or hear a language I do not speak, I try to use clues such as context, familiar words, or roots to understand the general meaning.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
When travelling in Europe, I try to interpret signs, menus, or information written in other languages even if I do not speak them.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I can get the overall meaning of a text or speech in a new European language.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I try to guess and/or compare words and sounds to understand unfamiliar languages.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

11) How much do these strategies help you **feel connected** to other cultures and global society? *

Select only one option per row.

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	never	almost never	I don't know	sometimes	often	always
Identifying familiar words or international expressions helps me feel connected to people from other cultures.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Listening for similarities in sounds or roots between languages helps me feel connected to the speaker.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Asking for repetition or simpler words helps me feel connected to others.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Observing gestures, tone of voice, or lip movement helps me interpret meaning when I don't know the language.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Looking for written or visual clues (e.g., context, images, signs) helps me understand people from different linguistic backgrounds.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

12) How much do these strategies help you **interact effectively** with people from other cultures? *

Select only one option per row.

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	never	almost never	I don't know	sometimes	often	always
I use words that sound similar or share roots across languages to make my message more understandable.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I adjust my speech, for example by simplifying sentences or using gestures, when I think the other person might not fully understand.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
When communication breaks down, I ask questions, repeat key words, or rephrase ideas to clarify meaning.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I pay attention to the speaker's tone, expressions, or body language to interpret meaning and keep the conversation going.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I try different ways to express an idea, such as giving examples or using simple descriptions.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I remain patient and open even when communication is difficult.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

13) In face-to-face interaction, what helps you understand your interlocutor who is speaking their mother tongue? You can choose more than one option. *

Select all options that apply.

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- [ ] Using electronic translators or translation apps
- [ ] Using non-verbal cues (gestures, facial expressions, body language, context)
- [ ] Getting help from another person who can explain the meaning
- [ ] Paying attention to words that look or sound similar to words in other known languages
- [ ] I cannot understand at all if I haven't formally studied the language
- [ ] Altro: _____

14) When trying to understand a written text in a language, which element do you rely on the most for immediate comprehension? *

Select only one option.

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ◯ Similarity between familiar words across languages (e.g., colore in Italian, couleur in French, color in Spanish)
- ◯ Using the title, layout, and general context to guess the meaning
- ◯ Similar grammar or sentence structure between the two languages (e.g. subject-verb or verb endings)
- ◯ Recognizing sound or spelling patterns that match across languages (e.g., English ship, German Schiff, Dutch schip)
- ◯ Ignore hard words and focus on understanding the main idea
- ◯ Altro: _____

15) More generally, what strategies do you use to make sense of languages you do not fully understand? Please provide examples.

Personal perceptions and opinions

16) Before today, had you ever heard of intercomprehension? *

Select only one option.

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

17) Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements *

1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree

Select only one option per row.

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	1	2	3	4	5
Using only English creates a risk of excluding citizens who are not fully proficient in it.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Using only English threatens Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity by devaluing national and regional languages.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Using only English discourages people from learning other European languages, as they may seem unnecessary or less valuable.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Using only English could lead to cultural impoverishment in Europe and contribute to a form of linguistic imperialism.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

18) Have you ever taken part in a conversation (social or professional) in which you would have preferred not to use the common vehicular language, but felt obliged to do so? Describe the situation and explain why, in your opinion, intercomprehension (i.e., using your first language) would have been a better alternative. *

19) In your opinion, how could intercomprehension contribute to preserving linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe, compared to the use of English as a common language? *

20) Do you have any additional comments or reflections you would like to share? *(optional)*

Appendix 2

The Interviews

DOMANDE INTERVISTE

1) Raccontami brevemente il tuo percorso con le lingue straniere: quali parli, a che livello, e come le hai imparate.
2) Puoi descrivermi un momento specifico in cui la tua lingua madre o quella del tuo interlocutore esprimeva un'emozione o un concetto che in inglese sarebbe andato perduto? Ad esempio, esiste questo concetto della silhouette linguistica, che è un'attività didattica ed esplorativa in cui si disegnano o colorano le lingue parlate su una sagoma umana, dove di solito la testa è associata alla lingua della scolarizzazione mentre il cuore alla lingua madre o al dialetto, o la lingua della famiglia.
3) Quando incontri oralmente una lingua che non conosci, qual è la tua prima reazione: provi a capirla o ti blocchi subito? Ad esempio, quando guardi un video su Instagram, YouTube o TikTok, seppur è in un'altra lingua che non capisci, come reagisci? Ti fermi lo stesso a guardarlo e cerchi di capire oppure scorri via subito?
4) Quando non capisci qualcosa in una lingua straniera, che cosa fai per correggere il tuo primo tentativo di interpretazione? Ad esempio, mentre stai leggendo o ascoltando un video su YouTube, cosa fai se non capisci subito una frase o il discorso che stanno facendo al primo tentativo?
5) I dati mostrano che il 49% dei rispondenti non conosceva il termine "intercomprensione" prima della somministrazione del questionario. Sapere che esiste una parola definita per questa capacità ha cambiato il modo in cui percepisci le tue attitudini linguistiche o il modo in cui pensi e usi le lingue?
6) Secondo te, **quando** vale la pena di cercare di intercomprendere (comprendere altre lingue senza passare per l'inglese)?
7) Hai mai vissuto o assistito a una situazione in cui l'inglese è stato una barriera invece di un ponte/un aiuto?
8) Hai mai sperimentato, come insegnante/lavoratore o come studente, un'attività didattica basata sull'intercomprensione (es. leggere un testo in una lingua romanza sconosciuta usando l'italiano/la tua lingua madre/altre lingue che conosci come lingua ponte)? *[sotto domanda: Come è andata?]*

PROTOCOLLO "Think Aloud"

Spiegazione:
Ora ti chiederò di leggere per conto proprio alcuni brevi testi in una lingua che magari conosci poco o non conosci affatto. Mentre leggi, prova a dire ad alta voce tutto quello che ti passa per la mente: cosa riconosci, cosa ti fa pensare una parola, dove hai dubbi, come provi a capire, quali parole o elementi ti hanno aiutato. Non cerchiamo la risposta giusta, ma il tuo processo di ragionamento.

TESTO nr. 1

Istoric UMFCD

Învățământul superior medical și farmaceutic din București datează de mai bine de un secol. **Carol Davila**, medic român de origine franceză, în colaborare cu **Nicolae Kretzulescu** a pus bazele învățământului medical din țara noastră, înființând, în 1857 *Școala națională de medicină și farmacie*. În războiul pentru independență (1877-1878) a condus serviciul militar al armatei.

Fonte: https://umfcd.ro/despre-umfcd/biroul-rectorului/istoric-umfcd/

TESTO nr. 2

Pastel de nata

Artigo Discussão

Pastel de nata é uma popular especialidade da doçaria portuguesa, de inspiração conventual. Terá sido criado pelos monges jerónimos no Mosteiro de Santa Maria de Belém e possui origem certificada. A receita original é denominada **Pastel de Belém**, produzida exclusivamente na Fábrica dos Pastéis de Belém, em Lisboa, e tem como base ingredientes como ovo, leite, açúcar, limão e canela.[1][2][3]

A receita ganhou diversas versões em Portugal e em outros países e territórios, como Brasil, Macau, Hong Kong, Singapura e Taiwan, sendo difundida globalmente.[4][5][6]

Em 2011, o Pastel de Belém foi eleito uma das 7 Maravilhas da Gastronomia de Portugal.[7] Em 2023, as duas principais versões do doce lideravam o *ranking* de avaliações na seção "pastelaria" do site *TasteAtlas*.[8]

Fonte: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pastel_de_nata

Post protocollo - domande di debriefing:
“Ti sei accorto di usare qualche strategia precisa?”
“Ti sembra che tu abbia usato competenze che già avevi, senza dover studiare la lingua?”

Appendix 3

Questionnaire Results Tables

All responses are reported verbatim, with transcription errors and non-standard language retained.

Respondent	Response	Codes
R1	I look forward to words that have roots that connect to my mother tongue/a language that is or sounds **similar** to the one I'm reading/listening to, I ask for questions if I don't understand, I ask for **gestures** or make gestures to communicate better, I give synonyms of a word I don't immediately understand so that the person I'm talking with can confirm or deny whether I'm understanding correctly or not	SIMILARITY, NON VERBAL
R2	When I don't fully understand a language, I focus on **context** and keywords. For example, in German I recognize words that are **similar** to English or Italian and guess the general meaning. I also ignore small grammatical details and try to understand the main idea of the sentence. Finally, I use **non-linguistic** clues, such as tone of voice, gestures, or the situation, to interpret the message.	CONTEXT, SIMILARITY, NON VERBAL
R3	If it's written text, I try to "break" the sentences apart and focus on words that have **similarities** with my mother tongue. If it's a face-to-face interaction, I try to focus on the words that the speaker **"marks"** more or tends to **repeat** more	SIMILARITY, NON VERBAL, REPEAT
R4	I try to ask questions in English and use words which are normally **widely understood**, especially in English, such as **"top" or "perfect" or "no comment",** which I also use when speaking in Italian.	KEYWORDS
R5	I usually try to understand the **context** by focusing on the whole sentence rather than dwelling on individual words. Then, I look for **similarities** between words, and I pay attention to the speaker's **tone** of voice and **gestures**. If I really can't understand anything or make myself understood, I use **Google Translate** or something similar.	CONTEXT, SIMILARITY, NON VERBAL, APPS

R6	**Gestures**	NON VERBAL
R7	Searching words that is **similar** and familiar in un language and use **Google translate** by the app (using the fotocamera) or **Duolingo.** I use it when I have a trip, so the weeks or months before the trip I can study a new language	SIMILARITY, APPS
R8	**familiar** words, spelling patterns. Also, **dialects** sometimes help when the mother tongue doesn't, it happens rarely but in those cases it helps.	SIMILARITY, DIALECT
R9	Try to **link** with italian	SIMILARITY
R10	I try to understand the **general meaning** by research the **easiest word** that I read or listen and I use them such as a starter point	CONTEXT, KEYWORDS
R11	using **applications** such as Google Translate or similar apps	APPS
R12	I focus on the shortest, simplest sentences and from there I broaden my understanding once I understand the **context**.	CONTEXT
R13	Mostly I try to understand the **context**	CONTEXT
R14	Mostly **context** and **recognizing** the root of the word	CONTEXT, SIMILARITY
R15	In my past experiences I was able to have a conversation in English, so **I don't have an example of strategies** for languages I do not fully understand.	NO STRATEGY
R16	the **context**	CONTEXT
R17	**Pattern Recognition & Repetition** and **Contextual** Inference	REPEAT, CONTEXT
R18	**Similar** words to English or languages I know, same **tense structures** as known languages	SIMILARITY, SYNTAX
R19	I take into account the **context** if there are no words present that have similarities to languages I know	CONTEXT
R20	Looking at the **context** of the situation and **guessing**.	CONTEXT, GUESSING
R21	I try and find **similarities** or **foreignisms** in english that are used in most european languages e.g. social media. It's useful especially when speaking to younger people	SIMILARITY, KEYWORDS

	who are more exposed to english words/slag due to being online.	
R22	I like to stay somewhat educated on different languages, as they interest me a lot, although of course this is only useful with languages that I have researched. For example, despite not speaking any Spanish, out of interest & having learnt from experiences speaking with Spanish people, I have learnt some features of typical **grammatical and morphological structures** in Spanish, which thus helps me when trying to understand it.	SYNTAX
R23	I've studied two Roman languages (Italian and French), usually if I'm in contact with a text written in another Roman language, I am able to recognise the patterns of **syntax** and morphology of words, but that also connects with my field of study (linguistics).	SYNTAX
R24	I use verbs, **key words**, without paying attention on the grammar (which becomes accessory). I also make expressive **gestures**	KEYWORDS, NON VERBAL
R25	I try to fit in the mind of the language and the country because sometimes even the **non-verbal** clues are different from the ones that I know in my language. So, I stay focus on social interactions such as tones, looks, laugh. Even the « **social events** » are helpful. For example, in Italy there is « l'aperitivo » which helped me understand the mood of the city and the rythm of life. For me, a language is not only words, it is a whole way of thinking	NON VERBAL, SOCIAL CONNECTIONS
R26	**Simplifications**	KEYWORDS
R27	**Body language, Gestures**, Examples	NON VERBAL
R28	I always use **gestures**	NON VERBAL
R29	I try to focus on words that have **similar** roots to my native one or that I already know in that language for unknown reasons to grasp the general content of a discourse	SIMILARITY
R30	I watch **youtube videos** or i search something on internet beforehand the conversation	APPS
R31	**Movies**	APPS
R32	Focus on the **body language**	NON VERBAL

Table 11: Assigning codes to each response of Question 15, N=32

Respondent	Response	Codes
R1	I've **never experienced** such a situation	NEVER
R2	During my semester abroad, It happened a lot of times. For example, at the supermarket I've always tried to speak Japanese. However, sometimes I didn't really understand the answer and I asked, talking in japanese, to **repeat** It. After doing so, many people **switched languages and started to speak in English**. After that I always felt **obliged** to speak in English and It was very **frustrating**	REPEAT, ENGLISH CONTEXT, FRUSTRATION
R3	**Never** happen	NEVER
R4	I was in Paris, I asked for some directions in English because **I couldn't speak French but the French person could not or did not want to speak in English** and therefore it was very difficult for me to carry on the conversation and I wished I could speak Italian.	FRUSTRATION
R5	**No**	NEVER
R6	Yes, when I am in a social or cultural context where English is considered a first language but I am speaking with people who are not English/don't have English as mother tongue, and maybe would've understood me better if I spoke Italian with them (e. g. **When an Italian and a Spanish person speak both using their mother tongues** they might understand each other better than when they both speak a not so proficient English, but they speak English anyway because they are in an **English context**/other people around them do not speak a language other than English)	ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGES, ENGLISH CONTEXT
R7	Yes. During international university discussions, everyone used **English as a common language**, even when some of us spoke related languages. Sometimes it was difficult to express complex ideas in English. **Intercomprehension** could have been better, because each person could speak their own language and still understand the others.	ENGLISH CONTEXT, IC

Respondent	Response	Codes
R8	I was with my erasmus friends, they're from Germany, but also with another girl from Italy. I spoke English to **include** my deutsch friends	INCLUSION
R9	**No**, I **always** use **English**	NEVER, ENGLISH PREFERENCE
R10	personally, that **hasn't happened** to me yet	NEVER
R11	Using **First Language**	L1
R12	**No**	NEVER
R13	**Not really**, **I enjoy speaking foreign languages, especially English.** Maybe it is so, because I have a good level of the foreign languages I speak. However, for those people who do not speak fluently for instance English, it could be much more difficult to express themselves and deliver the message they want to convey. For instance, finding the most correct words to use would be more difficult in a foreign language than yours.	NEVER, ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGES
R14	I studied spanish for two years but at my workplace i speak English with Spanish people. **Using Spanish** would be a better alternative because it could help me improve it instead of forgetting it	ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGES
R15	Some tourists were visiting my hometown and asked some questions about its history and some places. It would have been easier to use **Italian** words and names, because the actual translation did not convey the same feelings I wanted to transmit to them.	L1
R16	**no**	NEVER
R17	I'm sorry, I don't think I fully understood the question	NO ANSWER
R18	**No**..	NEVER
R19	Yes, in international contexts where **English** was required. Using one's **first language** could sometimes allow clearer expression through **intercomprehension**.	ENGLISH CONTEXT, L1, IC
R20	**Never**	NEVER

Respondent	Response	Codes
R21	Yes, I had a professional conversation, but **the first person talked in English so I talked in english too.**	ENGLISH CONTEXT
R22	**Mother tongue** may help expressing more frankly and idea or a concept when in English you can't find in that moment (or there are not) the right words.	L1
R23	I have **never** had this experience	NEVER
R24	Yes, in many exchange-related environments I felt like the common language was **English** but maybe I was talking to **French or Spanish** people. The conversation would have been easier in some circumstances but the presence of some other people from different nationalities had forced me to use English.	ENGLISH CONTEXT, ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGES
R25	**no**	NEVER
R26	Yes, during an international meeting I had to use **English**, even though all participants were European and spoke different but **similar languages**. I felt **limited** in expressing myself.	ENGLISH CONTEXT, ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGES, FRUSTRATION
R27	Yes,	YES
R28	No	NEVER
R29	Yes, I have. I was in this situation when I travelled and I understood that **English was the only language to communicate**. I think that using my **first language** is the better way to express myself, not only by using words but explaining my person too.	ENGLISH CONTEXT, L1
R30	no, it's **never** happened to me	NEVER
R31	No	NEVER
R32	.	NO ANSWER
R33	Mai successo	NEVER
R34	Yes, for example, with my job. I work as an employee at a grocery store and sometimes, when I have to deal with a client from abroad there are some specific Italian terms that I'm not able to translate in the	L1

Respondent	Response	Codes
	correct way. In a situation like that I'd feel way more comfortable whit my **first language**.	
R35	Not really	NEVER
R36	During a job interview in Sweden, we spoke **English** because it was more "professional" for the company but I could have also spoke **Swedish** (although my English is now better from living in the US for most of my life) using Swedish beyond the casual conversation in the beginning of the interview would have helped me connect with them better.	ENGLISH CONTEXT, L1
R37	At work, communicating with drivers i use **English** but it doesn't always work. Therefore, I try with **German** and at the end i use **italian** words or **gestures**.	ENGLISH CONTEXT, ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGES, GESTURES
R38	At work I had to interact with people from a Belgian company and sometimes I would have preferred to speak with an **Italian colleague** of them not only to fasten the conversation and to be more direct, but also to make sure that those people understood my point and my requests.	L1
R39	At work if the parents don't fully understand Italian, we tend to speak to them in **English** mixed also with some **gestures**.	ENGLISH CONTEXT, GESTURES
R40	In Norway and Sweden, I would have preferred to use my **first language** because I could understand a bit but I was there with Italian friends so we spoke in **english**	L1, ENGLISH CONTEXT
R41	No, I have never	NEVER
R42	In Venice when I don't know how to properly explain what I am asking for i.e. in the post office or supermarket, but **I don't want to divert back to English** as I don't want to make it clear that I am a tourist, so **I try to get around the issue and ask for something similar instead**.	AVOIDING ENGLISH
R43	Often, I revert to **English** because it is **comfortable** and the other initiates the conversation in that language, even when I can be speaking in Italian perfectly fine with another Italian person	ENGLISH PREFERENCE

Respondent	Response	Codes
R44	Yes, this happens a lot. It just ends up **being easier** if the other person understands **English** and it avoids misunderstanding and allowed clearer communication	ENGLISH PREFERENCE
R45	Yes, in other European languages that I couldn't quite understand	FRUSTRATION
R46	I have **spoken Italian** to multiple people when it would've been easier to speak in English. I think that it is **good practice** to do this though, as not everyone can speak English, and you have to adapt to your surroundings to communicate.	IC
R47	**I'm not sure that I have.**	NEVER
R48	I've **never** been part of such debate.	NEVER
R49	Yes, it happens when I have to talk **English** with **English people** in the B2 Italian class outside the class. I'd prefer to speak Italian with them so we can be on the same difficulty level. My English is not that fluent and good, so **I feel a bit stupid** when I miss some words!	ENGLISH CONTEXT FRUSTRATION
R50	No I **have not** because before today English was the only language that I fully mastered so it has always been **preferable for me to speak in English** rather than other regional languages	NEVER, ENGLISH PREFERENCE
R51	I always prefer to speak in Italian in the Italian course at Ca' Foscari, but **other students have sometimes conversation in English**. In this case I feel so **frustrated** because I don't speak English like native speakers and European students. But I think intercomprehention would resolve this kind of problem.	ENGLISH CONTEXT, FRUSTRATION, IC
R52	Yes, because there are some ideas that can be more meaningful only in our **native languages,** bearer of individual identity.	L1
R53	Yeah, for sure, because I **prefer using Italian more than English**, and here in Europe I can't use my **mother language** because not a lot of people don't know Arabic	ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGES, L1

Respondent	Response	Codes
R54	One time when I was abroad I felt **obliged** to use **English because that was the only language** that everyone was speaking to me.	FRUSTRATION, ENGLISH CONTEXT
R55	In my experience working in international research environments, this situation happens quite often. For example, I have frequently been part of informal or professional conversations where everyone in the group was Italian and communicating naturally in Italian. Then, as soon as a colleague who did not speak Italian joined the conversation, **we had to switch to English** or to another common vehicular language so that everyone could participate and understand each other. At times, this can feel slightly **frustrating**, especially when the discussion is flowing naturally and everyone is contributing comfortably in their **native language**. Expressing opinions, emotions, or even frustrations is often easier and more spontaneous in one's first language. This is particularly true in situations where people are complaining about a problem, discussing something stressful, or trying to communicate subtle nuances and emotions. In those moments, using Italian would probably feel more natural and effective for me personally. However, I also understand that continuing to speak a language that excludes someone from the conversation would not be polite or inclusive. In international contexts, using a common vehicular language is often necessary **to ensure that everyone feels involved and respected**, even if it sometimes requires extra effort from native speakers. Interestingly, I have also experienced the opposite situation. In some international groups, colleagues who spoke little or no Italian allowed the rest of us to continue communicating in Italian among ourselves, even though this partially excluded them from the interaction. While this sometimes made communication easier for the majority of the group, it also highlighted how important language choices are in creating an **inclusive environment**. For this reason, I do not think that intercomprehension, meaning everyone simply using their own native language, would always be a better alternative in professional international settings. Nevertheless, I believe that native languages allow people to express themselves more authentically and comfortably, especially in emotionally charged or informal conversations.	ENGLISH CONTEXT; FRUSTRATION; L1; INCLUSION; IC

Respondent	Response	Codes
R56	When traveling i would like to understand the **different languages** so that i can know better the common words used in everyday life.	IC
R57	Never	NEVER
R58	No	NEVER
R59	No	NEVER

Table 13: Assigning codes to each response of Question 18, N=59

Respondents	Response	Codes
R1	It would allow speakers to communicate **without abandoning their own language**, while English prioritizes efficiency and global communication. A **balanced combination** of both may best support Europe's multilingual identity.	ENGLISH VS IC
R2	It could not only make people feeling **more proud** about their **cultural background** and their language, but also people would be more likely to **embrace cultural diversity** and take a step forward in **understanding the other.**	CULTURAL IDENTITY; MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING
R3	Yes	VAGUE BUT POSITIVE
R4	Intercomprehension is extremely important since it allows to **give value to all the languages** and people can **discover new cultures**.	VALORIZATION; CULTURAL DISCOVERY
R5	The identity isn't touched	IDENTITY NOT AFFECTED
R6	It would push people to **understand other languages and cultures** without using a common one such as English, **preserving** both words and gestures and other ways of communicating which are typical of that place/culture/language	MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING; PRESERVATION; ENGLISH VS IC
R7	In my opinion, intercomprehension helps **preserve linguistic and cultural diversity** because people can use their own languages instead of switching to English.	PRESERVATION; MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING; ENGLISH VS IC

	This allows speakers to express their ideas more naturally and keeps different languages visible and active in communication, while still enabling **mutual understanding**.	
R8	Mantain difference between people	CULTURAL DIVERSITY
R9	Don't know	DON'T KNOW
R10	It could help **maintain cultural identity** and help more people, especially younger kids who aren't very good with english but could potentially be better suited for other languages, to learn and **explore other cultures**	PRESERVATION; CULTURAL DISCOVERY
R11	Idk	DON'T KNOW
R12	I don't know	DON'T KNOW
R13	Intercomprehension maybe useful to **maintain linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe**, compared to the use of English as a common language, because linguistic diversity and visibility maybe maintained better. In this way, own ideas and cultural identity can be **preserved** better. For instance, by communicating through gestures also the **own culture/identity can be preserved and recognized.**	PRESERVATION; CULTURAL IDENTITY; ENGLISH VS IC
R14	it could help people not only to communicate, as English would do, but also **to get to know a new culture**	CULTURAL DISCOVERY
R15	It could **help** dialects and languages that are spoken only by small communities not to disappear	PRESERVATION
R16	by **reducing** the English-ization of every other language	DECENTRALIZATION OF ENGLISH
R17	Because it will refer to the unity among the various **cultures in Europe,** also through the language, which will represent the entire population and be more **inclusive**	EUROPEAN UNITY
R18	Don't know	DON'T KNOW
R19	It allows communication while **preserving** each speaker's language and cultural identity.	PRESERVATION

R20	A lot	VAGUE BUT POSITIVE
R21	On one side, it's nice to think that with **English** we can all understand each other, on the other side, it's nice to think that we can try to **understand each other even if we speak different languages** that have some words in common and try to understand each other and use our minds more, for me it's something that we don't do anymore.	CULTURAL DISCOVERY; ENGLISH VS IC
R22	it gives **values** to each single language by underlying the similarities between languages and therefore endorsing the **european-connection feeling**	VALORIZATION; EUROPEAN UNITY
R23	My position Is that intercomprehension is very important to create a **good feeling between two sides** but also keeping strong a mother language	VALORIZATION
R24	It will certainly flourish **cultural diversity** between each Countries "inside" the common European space. It would have also a **better local (European) communication, therefore an improvement** and a major exchange between internal labour market.	CULTURAL DIVERSITY; EUROPEAN UNITY
R25	teaching other languages from childhood may lead to common use of general phrases	EDUCATION
R26	Intercomprehension could help **preserve linguistic and cultural diversity** in Europe by encouraging people to use and **value** their own languages instead of replacing them with English. When speakers communicate in their native languages, they express ideas, identities, and cultural nuances more fully. This **supports the survival of smaller or less dominant languages and promotes mutual respect** among cultures. In contrast, relying mainly on English can lead to **linguistic homogenization** and reduce the visibility of Europe's rich cultural diversity.	PRESERVATION; VALORIZATION; LINGUISTIC HOMOGENIZATION; ENGLISH VS IC
R27	.	NO ANSWER
R28	Idk	DON'T KNOW

R29	By the necessity of **studying** other languages and **learnig** about other countries	EDUCATION
R30	Intercomprehension can help **preserve linguistic and cultural diversity** in Europe more effectively than relying only on English as a common language. While **English** is practical and widely used for international communication, its dominance may reduce the use and visibility of other European languages. In contrast, **intercomprehension** encourages people to speak their own language while understanding others, especially among related languages. This approach promotes **multilingualism**, **protects local languages, and respects cultural identities**. However, it requires more effort and is not always as immediate as using English. In conclusion, **English is useful for global communication, but intercomprehension is a better strategy for maintaining Europe's linguistic and cultural diversity.**	PRESERVATION; ENGLISH VS IC; MULTILINGUALISM; CULTURAL IDENTITY
R31	/	NO ANSWER
R32	dialogs	MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING
R33	Per **facilitare la comprensione** di lingue soprattutto simili	MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING
R34	In my opinion, **Intercomprehension** could **prevent the loss of a lot of terms and specific words and way to express things that are specific of different cultures**. Whit **English** as the common language it could be way more easier to understand each others, but we would **lose** a lot of characteristic and specific traits of different cultures	PRESERVATION; ENGLISH VS IC
R35	When you **understand a country's language you can also understand the small nuances of the culture**, which helps you to integrate and share and compare cultures	MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

R36	It would help people **settle into new countries**. If you move to a country and try to learn a new language but everyone just speaks **English** you won't be able to learn the actual language of that country and therefore not integrate as well.	INTEGRATION; ENGLISH VS IC
R37	Using different languages can help to **preserve** different languages. Only **English** will be the death of our traditions and culture.	PRESERVATION; ENGLISH VS IC
R38	I don't have a good knowledge of the theme, so my opinion is based only on what I read during this questionnaire. I think that, as long as each Country maintains its **mother language** in every social level, **English** would be relegated to human interactions of brief extent, like work meetings with foreign customers/suppliers, people on holiday, etc.	ENGLISH VS IC
R39	It could contribute to create texts, materials, activities for children and schools as well as for firms.	EDUCATION
R40	Trying to **speak in my first language and trying to understand the similarities** with the language of my interlocutor	MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING
R41	I don't know	DON'T KNOW
R42	Encourage English people to **learn** foreign languages of places they are either travelling in or spending longer periods of time in.	EDUCATION
R43	By exchanging language similarities	CULTURAL DIVERSITY
R44	It would help to **forge relationships between countries** with similar languages and helps to **connect people socially.**	EUROPEAN UNITY
R45	So much	VAGUE BUT POSITIVE
R46	I believe that it could contribute over time, especially starting with **younger people** (elementary school) and schools should take teaching languages more seriously. instead of every school teaching english, **they should teach**	EDUCATION; ENGLISH VS IC

	another language as well as english. English isn't all of a sudden going to stop being the most universal language, therefore it's important to ease into it.	
R47	It would **decentralise** the importance of always learning English as a first foreign language. I think that **learning** foreign languages is extremely important, but if alternative languages were learnt with the same emphasis as we see with English, it would allow for cultural exchange that is not mediated by a third language (English in this case), but rather sees direct contact between the two interlocutors' languages.	DECENTRALIZATION OF ENGLISH; EDUCATION; ENGLISH VS IC
R48	More **cultural diversity** and more diversity in way of thinking.	CULTURAL DIVERSITY
R49	My intercomprehension is positive, I think, because it makes me remember of some words in my own language, while **discovering** some in the other European languages.	CULTURAL DISCOVERY
R50	It could contribute to it to the extent that English would be less used, **preventing us to impose to European languages an English** « mood »	ENGLISH VS IC; CULTURAL DIVERSITY
R51	The distance from English language is not common in every language in Europe. And **cultural** distance is also different from country to country.	CULTURAL DIVERSITY
R52	In my opinion **intercomprehension** can contribute to **preserving** linguistics and **cultural diversity** in Europe, compared to the use of **English** as a common language because it enable speakers or the population to develop intercultural communication competences which is essential to the building of a more solid and **united Europe**.	PRESERVATION; ENGLISH VS IC; CULTURAL DIVERSITY; EUROPEAN UNITY
R53	It encourages people to **learn** the country's language.	EDUCATION
R54	If you know some basic knowledge of the European languages than it'd **preserve** every diversity of each European country	PRESERVATION

R55	I think **intercomprehension** could complement **English** by encouraging **multilingualism** and helping people maintain a stronger connection with their **own language and culture**; however, I believe English is still necessary in many international contexts to make communication inclusive and effective.	ENGLISH VS IC; MULTILINGUALISM; CULTURAL IDENTITY
R56	I think that it would **preserve** a lot the common everyday language used maybe by older people in little villages, outside of big cities... **intercomprehension** would be less effective when introduced in business related events/environments	PRESERVATION ENGLISH VS IC
R57	There would be a major language's development in all Europe	EUROPEAN UNITY
R58	English is first	PRIMACY OF ENGLISH
R59	z	NO ANSWER

Table 14: Assigning codes to each response of Question 19, N=59

Respondent	Response	Codes
R1	I believe intercomprehension also pushes people to be more **empathetic** towards others; it makes it easier to put ourselves in other's people shoes and it goes against the assumption that everyone speaks English. I also think, personally, that using a language other than English is necessary to **discover** literature/art/culture that is misunderstood or misinterpreted due to translations or fight against matters that have been hidden or forgotten throughout history due to colonization and deportation. **Preserving** a language and learning it (both things happen during intercomprehension) help to rediscover what has been lost in a culture and what has been deliberately hidden.	EMPATHY; DISCOVERY; PRESERVATION
R2	I believe Intercomprehension maybe useful, but **English is and will be the main language used for communication at the EU level**. I don't believe that the use of English ruins the cultural identity and diversity of the states, because everyone maintains particular ways of expressing themselves in English which is clear it's not their mother tongue. Of course the	ELF; PRESERVATION

	recognition and **maintenance** of each language is fundamental, speaking different languages indeed is symbol of strength rather than weakness and diversity is synonym for openness and respect of all.	
R3	**Intercomprehension can complement the use of English while supporting Europe's linguistic diversity**. In some cases, speakers of related languages (such as Italian and Spanish) may understand each other more easily using their own languages than communicating through a foreign language that neither fully masters.	ELF; PRESERVATION; L1
R4	I think it's also nice to think that umanity also gives this: trying to understand each other even if we don't speak the same language, looking for similar words, listening to each other, listening to words we can reconize or looking for a gesture that the other person makes, to understand each other.	EMPATHY
R5	I like to make clear that for intercomprehension I meanly think about Latin languages, but **this topic would be a bit difficult** and different with other type of language groups (e.g. Norwegian talking to an Hungarian).	LIMITS
R6	Questo questionario è stato interessante e sono felice di aver **scoperto** questa parola di intercomprehension perché posso capire una Mia amica spagnola così, ma non sapevo Che ci fosse una parola adatta.	PERSONAL DISCOVERY
R7	The topic is very interesting because intercomprehension is the engine that leads to **multiculturalism**.	MULTICULTURALISM
R8	Why it's important for you this intercomprehension instead of speaking only English?	IC VS ENGLISH

Table 15: Assigning codes to each response of Question 20, N=8

Dichiarazione del ricorso a strumenti di Intelligenza Artificiale (IA)

La sottoscritta **Sofia Troietto**, matricola numero **888615**, iscritta presso Ca' Foscari al corso di Laurea magistrale in **Scienze del Linguaggio**, autrice della tesi di laurea magistrale, relatrice **Marcella Menegale**, consapevole delle sanzioni previste dall'art. 76 del Testo unico, D.P.R. 28/12/2000 n.445, e della decadenza dei benefici prevista dall'art. 75 del medesimo Testo unico in caso di dichiarazioni false o mendaci, sotto la propria personale responsabilità ai sensi degli artt. 46 e 47 del D.P.R. 28/12/2000 n. 445,

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☐ di NON aver fatto ricorso a tecnologie di intelligenza artificiale generativa per supportare vari aspetti della ricerca e della scrittura della sua tesi di laurea;

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- *Sono stati utilizzati gli strumenti Gemini Notebook Plus e Perplexity Pro AI con modello Claude Sonnet 5;*
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