

Teletandem and Intercomprehension

Teletandem e Intercompreensão

Paola, LEONE (Unisalento)¹

ABSTRACT

Teletandem is implemented in several universities, and different learning scenarios are designed for meeting the manifold needs of a changing society. Intercompréhension Orale et Teletandem (IOTT), a telecollaboration project developed by University of Lyon 2 and University of Salento, responds to this challenge by aiming to develop the receptive, productive, and interactive skills required when communicating with a speaker/writer of a different but related language to one's own (e.g., speakers of Spanish and French: romance languages). IOTT also develops theoretical knowledge and metacommunicative skills necessary to highlight and analyse strategies for solving communication problems - that is, how concepts and meanings can be mediated. This is accomplished using a macrotask named MINTT, i.e., a sequence of tasks promoting students' reflectivity, encouraging a propensity for formative critical thinking. After discussing the notion of Intercomprehension, IOTT learning design is described, highlighting areas of potential learning of this Teletandem-based Learning Scenario. Video recordings of Teletandem Oral Sessions and learner diaries, written by students after each session, are mentioned to show how students perceive such a challenging experience, how they resolve communication problems during Teletandem Oral Sessions and how they analyse processes of meaning negotiation.

Keywords: Teletandem, Telecollaboration, Plurilingual education, Intercomprehension approach, Reflective practice

RESUMO

O Teletandem é implementado em várias universidades e diferentes cenários de aprendizagem são projetados para atender às múltiplas necessidades de uma sociedade em mudança. Intercompréhension Orale et Teletandem (IOTT) é um projeto de telecolaboração desenvolvido pela Universidade de Lyon 2 e pela Universidade de Salento que responde a este desafio, visando o desenvolvimento de habilidades de recepção, produção e interação necessárias para se comunicar com alguém que fala / escreve por meio de línguas diferentes, mas próximas (línguas românicas, tais como espanhol e francês, por exemplo). A IOTT também desenvolve conhecimentos teóricos e habilidades metacomunicativas necessárias para evidenciar e analisar estratégias para resolver problemas de comunicação. Isso é

¹ Università del Salento, Lecce, Italy, Department of Human Studies; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0273-4724>; e-mail: paola.leone@unisalento.it

realizado graças a uma macrotarefa chamada MINTT, uma sequência de tarefas que promovem a reflexividade dos alunos, incentivando a propensão ao pensamento crítico formativo. Depois de discutir a noção de Intercompreensão, o projeto de aprendizagem IOTT é descrito neste artigo, destacando áreas de aprendizagem potencial deste Cenário de Aprendizagem baseado em Teletandem. Gravações de Sessões Oraís de Teletandem e diários, escritos por alunos após cada sessão, são mencionados para mostrar como esses percebem uma experiência tão desafiadora, como resolvem problemas de comunicação durante Sessões Oraís de Teletandem e como analisam processos de negociação de significado.

Palavras-Chave: *Teletandem, Telecolaboração, Educação plurilíngue, Intercompreensão, Prática reflexiva*

1. IOTT (*Intercomprensione Orale e Teletandem*)

The current paper presents a Teletandem project named IOTT (*Intercomprensione Orale e Teletandem*) and describes the task sequence that characterizes it. IOTT combines teletandem learning context and intercomprehension. By teletandem we mean a model of telecollaboration in which two speakers of different languages are involved (TELLES; VASSALLO, 2006; LEONE; TELLES, 2016; LEONE; ARANHA; CAVALARI, submitted). Intercomprehension is the communication process among people who speak different languages. A primary concern of IOTT is the development of skills and strategies necessary to accommodate language and social practice to the needs of people with different social, cultural and language backgrounds. There is a pressing need of such expertise in a globalised world where people are involved in communicative activities using their L1 alongside with English. In the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), in the Framework for Pluralistic approaches (CANDELIER; CAMILLERI GRIMA; CASTELLOTTI; DE PIETRO; LORINCZ; MEISSNER; SCHROEDER, 2010) and in the CEFR Companion volume (2018; hereafter CEFR-CV) this communication activity is named mediation and it is one of the four communicative activities together with reception, production, and interaction. Although the three mentioned volumes published by the Council of Europe give importance to mediation, there is little published information and research on how mediation skills could be developed in institutional contexts. By presenting a pedagogical experience that has been carried out in an Italian university, University of Salento, we aim to contribute to the field.

IOTT is a learning scenario that combines class and online activities. Thus, it is a hybrid instruction solution (OLIVER; TRIGWELL, 2005). The notion of learning scenario is essential when dealing with the pedagogical employment of information and communication technologies. Pernin and Lejeune (2004, p. 409) define a learning scenario as follows: “the description, carried out a priori or a posteriori, of the course of a learning situation or learning unit aimed at the appropriation of a specific

set of knowledge, specifying the roles, activities and resources for handling the knowledge, tools and services necessary for the implementation of activities.”²

Aranha and Leone (2017) believe this definition fits also the teletandem experience in institutional context. Hence, the two authors define teletandem based learning scenarios (TTLS) as a "coherent and complex activity framework" (p. 179) in which Teletandem oral sessions is the pillar of a more complex system of different pedagogical and didactic collaborative events (MANGENOT, SOUBRIE 2008, FOUCHER 2010), aimed at developing students' plurilingual and pluricultural competences. Some events take place in teletandem mediation session.

Hence, a learning scenario includes the description of different events implemented for developing knowledge or skills. It reflects a methodological choice, preferring a learning design which shows phases and activities that support learning.

IOTT has the aim of developing students' ability to interact in intercomprehension settings, involving the ability: a) to facilitate communication in their L1 and b) to understand an L2 which is typologically related to their L1. The IOTT learning scenario also aims to develop "usable knowledge", which means going beyond the situated experience of learning, in our case Teletandem Oral Sessions, and trying to transform it into knowledge that will help the student to face other similar situations. This is a consequence of deep reflection on the communication process enabling learners to identify communication and language patterns also in relation to situation and language use (BRANSFORD; BROWN; COCKNEY, 2000). According to Moon (2004), deep reflection consists of knowledge, learning approach and emotional factors. For the current learning scenario, 'knowledge' is the student's conception of language use and language learning, which is different from 'learning approach', which refers to attitudes and strategies employed to language learning (LEONE; ARANHA; CAVALARI, submitted). Emotional factors are the positive, negative, strong, or weak feelings which students experience and express in their reflective activity. Hence, language practice is accompanied by tasks aimed at developing reflection and metacommunicative skills.

In common with other Teletandem Learning Scenarios, IOTT has an action-oriented approach (CEFR Companion volume 2018; hereafter CEFR-CV): learners are seen as language users and social agents, and language is considered as "a vehicle for communication rather than as a subject to study" (CEFR-CV, 2018, p. 27). Hence, IOTT implies telecollaborative and purposeful tasks, which enable language users "to act in real-life situations, expressing themselves and accomplishing tasks of different

² la description, effectuée a priori ou a posteriori, du déroulement d'une situation d'apprentissage ou unité d'apprentissage visant l'appropriation d'un ensemble précis de connaissances, en précisant les rôles, les activités ainsi que les ressources de manipulation de connaissances, outils et services nécessaires à la mise en oeuvre des activités.

natures” (ibidem). Tasks are organized and sequenced in a macrotask, which is a task with a larger scale and scope (MANGENOT; SOUBRIE, 2010).

In the following pages, I will discuss how teletandem can become an interesting learning experience for developing communicative and metacommunicative skills and an attitude towards reflection in preliminary teacher training. The reasons for which IOTT has been included in my course “Second language acquisition and teaching methodology” will be illustrated. The learning design of a Teletandem Learning Scenario (ARANHA; LEONE, 2017), particularly a macrotask named MINTT (Mediation, Interaction, Negotiation and Teletandem) will be discussed.

The notions of intercomprehension, mediation and negotiation of meaning are the theoretical framework of the current paper. They are described in par. 2, 3, and 4. From par. 6-12 the IOTT learning scenario will be illustrated. Finally, a short summary of main areas covered in the writing and some comments close the paper (par. 13).

2. Intercomprehension

Intercomprehension is an approach that developed during the 1990s. It builds on partial competence in an L2, that is, receptive in the written or in the spoken modality of the language. When related to interactive language activity, it implies speakers’ ability to understand a person who speaks in another language; it implies also that each person tries to make themselves clear in order to be understood by the interlocutor. Normally, the languages involved are typologically related (e.g., Romance languages such as Italian, French, Spanish) Intercomprehension is strongly related to the notion of mediation, which is an essential language activity. As stated in the Common European Framework (2017, p. 14): “Mediation makes communication possible between persons who are unable for whatever reason to communicate with each other directly”. Thus, mediation helps to construct or convey meaning and “creates bridges” (CEFR, 2017, p.99) among people and interlocutors speaking different languages.

3. Why is intercomprehension relevant?

Intercomprehension is a common practice in our daily life. In a survey, Garbarino (2015) asked university students if they were used to reading languages different from those studied. Students’ replies showed how common reading in an unknown language was. For instance, some of them mentioned that they usually read fruit juice and shampoo labels that are sometimes in Spanish. They also reported that during trips, they met friends who spoke a different language from their own. One of the interviewers highlights that, in specific research fields, some texts are written in different languages (e.g.,

anthropology). The vision of “English only” as the language to be spoken in multilingual settings is too restrictive and does not give relevance to how people communicate in those situations. Different investigations, for instance those carried out within the Dylan project (BERTHOUD; GRIN; LÜDI, 2013), highlight that in professional workplaces, such as in companies and EU institutions, communication is carried out using different languages (e.g. for organizing professional activities; MARKAKI; VASSILIKI; MONDADA; OLOFF; TRAVERSO, 2013). As stated by Melo-Pfeifer (2018):

Whether speakers resort to two or more languages in a communicative event in order to solve communicative problems, achieve shared meaning or play with words and repertoires, the truth is that multilingual interaction challenges a common (mis)conception: that communication, in order to be efficient or to promote equality between speakers, should be monolingual (MELO-PFEIFER, 2018, p. 574)

Hence, intercomprehension is inherently an ethical approach in the service of social inclusion and global citizenship. According to the intercomprehension epistemology, all languages are important: speakers of different languages have equal opportunity to take part in a conversation. The choice of just one language as *lingua franca*, on the other hand, strongly discriminates against certain participants by virtue of their low competence in the vehicular language. This discrimination can also be grounded in social factors. The assumption that English is an international language is not completely true since it is predicated on the experience of relatively privileged people in our societies. For example, in British colonies people who do not speak English do not have access to high quality education, which remains a privilege of a small, selected group. Hence, English is “the most powerful means of inclusion into or exclusion from further education employment, or social positions.” (PENNYCOOK, 2017, p. 14) Even in the academic field, either the reader or the writer of a scientific paper might be fairly or unfairly treated merely on grounds of knowledge of English.

A socially inclusive attitude is a key element of global citizenship. Communication in a globalized world (AKKARI; MALEQ, 2020) cannot be in only one language. The development of intercomprehension strategies allows the adoption of positive feelings and behaviours towards speakers of different languages and ultimately towards world *super-diversity*. The notion of *super-diversity*, introduced by Vertovec (2007), describes a peculiar feature of our globalized and interconnected societies, in which individuals and communities are differentiated by a wide array of social traits (e.g., immigration status, labour market experience, discrete gender and age profiles, patterns of spatial distribution) hidden behind people’s rich linguistic repertoire (VERTOVEC, 2007).

Intercomprehension skills are part of people's plurilingual repertoire. Intercomprehension competence also functions in defence of minority languages which highlight the diversity and the richness of our world. Many less used and less learned languages are in danger while more powerful languages are increasingly being used. The intercomprehension approach maintains that communication is possible even when people speak different languages. When the spoken languages are genealogically related, the exchange is made easier by shared vocabulary and grammatical features. The ability to understand a language related or unrelated to the ones we know can be practised and developed.

4. Intercomprehension as a pedagogical approach

The intercomprehension approach emerged in the mid-90s in Europe. It is one of the four pluralistic approaches to language and cultures and it is described in the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (FREPA, 2010). Pluralistic approaches are contrasted to singular approaches in which teaching aims at developing competencies in just one language or one culture, considered in isolation. Singular approaches exclude the use of L1, and the focus is just on one variety of language. No attention is given to different accents and pronunciation, and they are based on the model of a "prototypical native language speaker". They do not consider all different linguistic varieties.

The intercomprehension approach develops "partial competence", comprising receptive skills in more than one language. Normally several languages of the same linguistic family are studied. For instance, the Eurom5 manual proposes activities for developing reading skills in five romance languages (Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, Italian, French; BONVINO; CADDÉO; PIPPA; VILAGINÈS SERRA, 2011). Eurom5 is used at University of Roma Tre as the main book for intercomprehension courses. The approach works also with two or more languages of the other linguistic families (Germanic, Slavic languages, etc.).

The intercomprehension approach also aims at enhancing the ability to manage communicative events in which more than one language is used. This implies the ability to solve communicative problems and to negotiate meanings. Different projects have been carried out, some of which are still in progress on the web platform MIRIADI (*Mutualisation et Innovation pour un Réseau de l'Intercompréhension à Distance*), created by the APICAD (*Association Internationale pour la Promotion de l'Intercompréhension à Distance*) (Fig.1). For example, to develop the ability to interact with other speakers, in 2017 the project "Romanofonia e cinema" was started by Christian Degache

(DEGACHE; SILVA, 2020).³ The project also aims to enhance intercultural competence, starting from the scenes of five movies in different romance languages. In 2021, ten Universities from five countries (including University of Antioquia, Colombia; Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain; Federal University of Campina Grande and University of Campinas, Brazil), joined the project, with the participation of 198 people.

Important research, carried out within the above mentioned MIRIADI project, financed by the European Commission, developed a first edition of the *Référentiel de compétences de communication plurilingue en intercompréhension* (hereinafter REFIC; Competence framework for plurilingual communication in intercomprehension). REFIC consists of descriptors which can be used as guideline for teachers and teacher trainers who wish to implement an intercomprehension course. It is also a good resource for formative assessment of competences involved in intercomprehension settings. The REFIC descriptors concern knowledge, know-how, and the most effective attitudes and strategies that an intercomprehension course should enhance. Regarding plurilingual interaction, the language activity carried out in teletandem, in REFIC it is maintained that this communicative activity requires different general skills, among which identifying conversational acts. More specifically, in IC speakers must use other languages, to solve communication problems and to accommodate production to the alloglot interlocutor.⁴

Different strategies are required for interacting, one of which is the ability to use different languages to adapt the discourse to alloglot speakers' competences. As mentioned above, language contact is the key to success in communication from this perspective. REFIC is accompanied by another important document for teaching: REFIDIC (*Référentiel de compétences en didactique de l'intercompréhension*; Competence framework in Didactics of the Intercomprehension), which, for its part, proposes pedagogical recommendations for good teaching practice.⁵

In contrast to REFIC, EVAL-IC (*Évaluation des compétences en intercompréhension*; Evaluation of intercomprehension competences)⁶ reports general and detailed descriptors for six competence levels in receptive, interactive, and inter-productive oral and written comprehension.⁷ It also

³ <https://www.miriadi.net/3729-romanofonia-e-cinema-2-amours-desamour>

⁴ “La situation de l’interaction plurilingue exige, pour sa part, la maîtrise de compétences communicatives générales, comme par exemple savoir identifier les actes conversationnels pour saisir la dynamique interactive, mais en IC il sera plus particulièrement pertinent de disposer d’une capacité à solliciter le recours à d’autres langues, à débloquent des ruptures de communication et à adapter sa production à l’interlocuteur alloglotte.” (DE CARLO; AQUENTIL, 2019, p. 170)

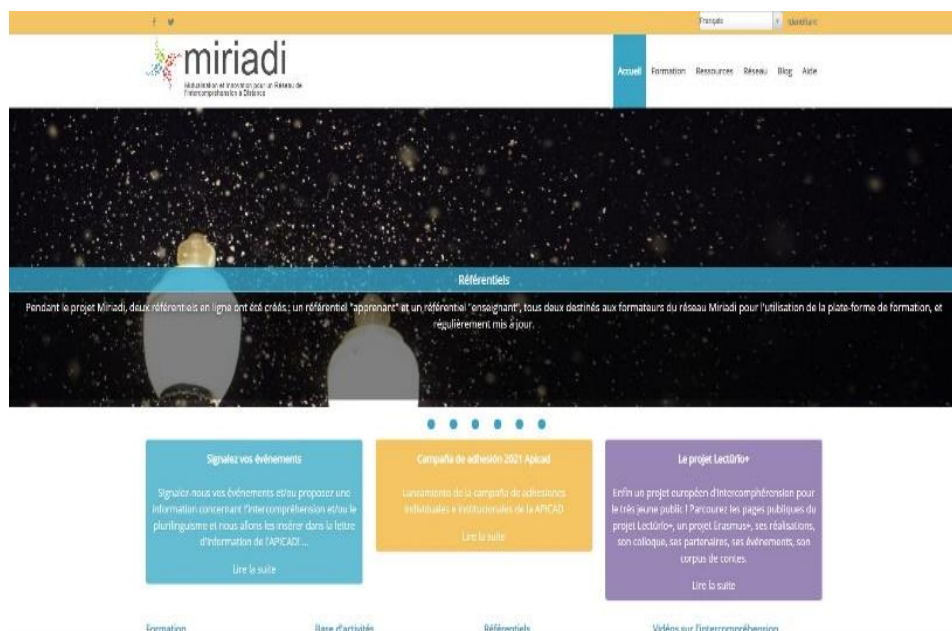
⁵ “afin de mettre les enseignants en mesure de mener avec succès des formations en intercompréhension auprès de leurs publics” (DE CARLO; AQUENTIL, 2019, p. 164).

⁶ EVAL-IC project has been financed by the European Commission. <http://evalic.eu/>

⁷ Descriptors can be downloaded in five languages (Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese and Romanian) from the following website <http://evalic.eu/productions/produits/>

gives recommendations of how testing and assessment should be carried out. Some resources are offered to make testing easier. Suggestions are also offered to the test candidate. As far as interactive competences are concerned, different dimensions are considered: linguistic, paraverbal and verbal, intercultural and finally pragmatic. Each dimension is then described according to three closely intertwined assessment indicators: availability, adequacy, breadth. Availability is defined as the test-taker's skill at showing openness to contact with people speaking different languages in multilingual and intercultural communication situations. This term also encompasses the ability to find linguistic and/or cultural strategies related to proximity in Romance languages and, in general, the ability to address communication difficulties in a multilingual context. Adequacy is competence in adapting and activating one's own repertoire according to the communication goals and considering the characteristics of situation, mainly interlocutors' general skills and competences. Finally, breadth refers to participation in the communication situation, observable in the activation of linguistic-communicative repertoires for meaning co-construction. This latter indicator also encompasses the ability to use different resources in other languages^[OBJ:FOBJ].

Fig. 1 The MIRIADI project website.



Interest in the intercomprehension approach is strong not only in Europe but also in South America (e.g. Argentina, Brazil). The intercomprehension approach has also been used to develop teaching materials for primary school students (e.g. Lectūřor+).

5. Two notions for the future: mediation and negotiation

Mediation is deeply associated with interaction. Both are language activities based on speakers' ability to co-construct meaning. The notion of mediation connotes much more the shared process by which speakers define meaning and content, "by underlining the constant link between the social and individual dimensions in language use and language learning" (NORTH; PICCARDO, 2016, p. 4). Thus, mediation is also essential for developing language knowledge. The theoretical perspective is socio-constructivist (VYGOTSKY, 1978), and it is based on two central ideas: the co-constructed communication process and the speaker as a social agent. In CEFR – CV (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2017, p. 99), language mediation activity is defined thus: "In mediation, the user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, sometimes from one language to another (cross-linguistic mediation)."

The CEFR – CV stresses the importance of considering the learner as a language user and a social agent, that is, although the learner lacks a fully developed competence in L2, he/she is still someone who uses the language for social purposes and he/she is not just a "defective communicator" (FIRTH; WAGNER, 1997, p. 285), as a cognitive SLA acquisition perspective would put it (LONG, 1996). Mediation is seen as a multimodal collaborative communicative activity undertaken "with the intention of bridging communication gaps between interlocutors" (STATHOPOULOU, 2015). Although most literature refers to mediation as a cross-language practice (interpreters, mediators), which implies the selection and transfer of information from one language into another, for the current study we analyse mediation sequences that can be in the same language as the source text/concept (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2017), as the CEFR companion volume would aptly put it. To limit our focus, just one type of mediation is considered: mediating concepts (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2017), which include also meaning negotiation, i.e. scaffolding side-sequences in which interlocutors assume the role of expert and/or novice speaker in relation to a specific topic to solve communication problems (CAPPELLINI, 2016). In the CEFR – CV (2018), negotiation of meaning is a mediation activity (i.e. mediating concepts), which contributes to facilitate "collaborative interaction with peers and to overcome communication difficulties" (p. 115).

6. IOTT- *Intercomprensione Orale e TeleTandem*

IOTT is carried out by two speakers of different languages. Each student has a low or no competence in his/her partner's L1. It is different from the well-known and established Teletandem alternate monolingualism in which students speak alternatively in their own L1 and L2. The teletandem must be realized in compliance with some fundamental principles, namely reciprocity, collaboration,

and autonomy. Reciprocity implies that both students must benefit from the teletandem interactive language activities. In alternate monolingual, the use of the native or study language as a vehicular language is alternated: for half the expected time, students speak in one language, the other half in the second language. Normally, in teletandem separation of languages (VASSALLO; TELLES, 2006) is also suggested to avoid creating the predominance of one language over the other, and to encourage students to use the target language (RAMPAZZO, 2021). This principle was not mentioned in tandem learning (BRAMMERTS, 1996) and has been marginalized in more recent literature on teletandem (LEONE; TELLES, 2016; CAPPELLINI, 2016; LEWIS; HEIDRUN, 2019)⁸ since it is anyway included in the reciprocity principle. The principle of collaboration maintains that students must work together for a successful exchange. The principle of autonomy suggests that students should control and manage the activity, in part, and independently, involving the teacher/mediator only when required (LEONE; TELLES, 2016). This implies that the students learn to plan the different meetings, to control various devices and applications they use, in compliance with the commitment made with the partner, thus enhancing various components of their self-regulation capacity (ZIMMERMAN, 1998).

These principles have been adapted to develop intercomprehension abilities. At the University of Salento teletandem has become a learning environment in which learners practise intercomprehension strategies (GARBARINO; LEONE, 2020). IOTT flouts the original Teletandem “non-mixture of two languages” principle (VASSALLO; TELLES, 2006) which, in the alternate monolingual teletandem, aimed to encourage students to use the target language (RAMPAZZO, 2021). This principle was not mentioned in tandem learning (BRAMMERTS, 1996) and has been marginalized in more recent literature on teletandem (LEONE; TELLES, 2016; CAPPELLINI, 2016; LEWIS; HEIDRUN, 2019). “Non-mixture of two languages” is not a feature of teletandem intercomprehension in which each student talks using his/her own language throughout the session and language contact is the common behaviour. IOTT aims at developing a) interactive skills in intercomprehension settings; b) strategies for the mediation of concepts. IOTT draws on various teaching experiences in classroom contexts, such as those carried out at Lyon 2 and other projects (MIRIADI, Eurom5, REFIC, EVAL-IC), already mentioned. It also draws on a number of studies, some of which regard oral interaction *in praesentia*. For instance, Piccoli (2015) investigated interaction strategies in intercomprehension settings when many speakers are involved. Following a Conversation Analytics theoretical framework, she conducts an empirical study for discussing specific interactional microphenomena when Romance language speakers are involved. She highlights how participants negotiate the language to be used. Although

⁸ Some literature on teletandem considers this principle as an essential one. The principle is also name of “equality” or “bilingualism” (see RAMPAZZO, 2021 for a review).

sometimes this is English as *lingua franca*, speakers very often switch languages and use Romance languages as in intercomprehension settings. Piccoli (2015) also describes strategies by which one speaker aligns to his/her interlocutor by using his/her language. The author underlines a type of heterorepetition which she calls “plurilingual repetition”, which consists of one speaker saying a word in language A, to which the interlocutor replies translating that word into a language B which is anyway known by both interlocutors. In addition, speakers’ attention towards addressees is shown in some metalinguistic sequences. Thus, Piccoli’s study gives a picture of communication in multilingual situations. Other relevant studies are those carried out by Jamet (2009) and Cortés Velasquez (2015). Both authors investigate reception skills in intercomprehension settings. Intercomprehension strategies during computer-mediated interaction is quite a new field. Prior studies that have noted the importance of this communicative activity are Leone (2015), who highlights negotiation strategies. More recently, Garbarino and Leone (2020) describe the IOTT learning scenario, focusing on its innovative treats. A well-developed field of research is the intercomprehension competence assessment grid for evaluating students’ intercomprehension strategies, the already mentioned REFIC and EVAL-IC frame of reference.

7. IOTT: learning scenario and design

IOTT is institutionalized and integrated in a course (ARANHA; CAVALARI, 2014; CAVALARI; ARANHA, 2016) in both academic institutions. At Lyon 2 this is an advanced course of intercomprehension, attended by students who have different university backgrounds (GARBARINO; LEONE, 2020). At Unisalento, students take a course in Foreign Language Teaching Methodology as a part of an MA course for preliminary teacher training. Participation in IOTT is on a voluntary basis. As we can see in table 1, an increasing number of students are expressing interest in the program. In AY 2019-2020, out of 30 students, 22 asked to join IOTT, take part in the Teletandem experience and practise comprehension.

In AY 2020-2021 speakers of Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Corsican, a Romance language spoken in a French island, were involved. Apart from Lyon 2 and Unisalento students, people joining IOTT are students from other universities (e.g., UNESP) and non-academic partners who we call “friends of friends”, who are not part of an institution and ask to join the program for personal interest.

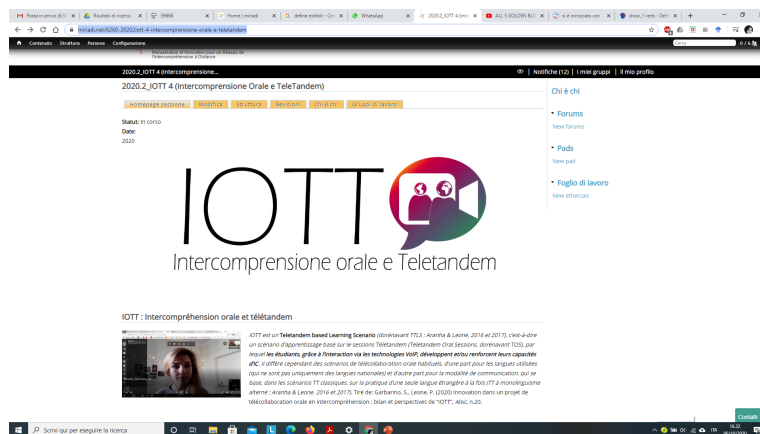
Table 1. Nr of Students participating IOTT (Intercomprensione Orale e Teletandem)

University	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021

Lyon 2	5	7	5	12
Salento	5	9	10	22

In the two universities, two different learning scenarios (PERNIN; LEJEUNE, 2004) are developed since goals, activities and teaching resources are partially shared as well as the *ingénierie pédagogique* (learning design), which includes the methodology and different steps of activities in support of learning (PAQUETTE, 2002). These are in line with each course in which IOTT is integrated in the two European institutions.

Fig. 2 IOTT Webpages in MIRIADI website.



The following digital resources are used: IOTT forum, which appears in the MIRIADI web platform (Fig. 2), and of course VoIP App for teletandem sessions. Students use the forum to introduce themselves before the teletandem oral sessions. In the learning diary, which students write after each session (LEONE; ARANHA; CAVALARI, submitted), students are asked to report feelings and to reflect upon communication strategies. Students' analysis will become more specialized when they study the theoretical framework for describing sequences of mediation, which also include negotiation of meanings for explaining and clarifying concepts.

At a transnational level, my colleague Garbarino and I share suggestions on the learning design as well as teaching materials. The following elements are common to both: 1) Answering an initial and a final questionnaire; 2) Carrying out tasks during Teletandem Oral Sessions. At the local level, in each course, activities differentiate (GARBARINO; LEONE, 2020).

The initial questionnaire focuses on students' language repertoire and motivation for taking or not taking part into the program. Almost all Unisalento students speak more than one language and one

dialect, a competence which is highly appreciated since it is in most cases a Romance dialect.⁹ As regards motivation, some students say that their interest in experiencing bi/pluri-lingual interaction, and testing to extent communication is possible when speakers interact in different related languages, prompted their participation in IOTT (GARBARINO; LEONE, 2020). The final questionnaire aims to elicit anonymously how students evaluate the experience. The survey results show a positive consensus and highlight that IOTT students consider teletandem intercomprehension sessions a ground-breaking experience, in which they develop relevant skills, as the comment below illustrates:

I think I developed two main skills: to put myself to test in relation to my socio-communicative background and to have developed mediation strategies.¹⁰

Whereas the above-mentioned questionnaires are in common with Lyon 2, the activities which will be described in the following paragraphs (8-10) are carried out only at Unisalento. Particularly during these tasks students are asked to 1) write learner diaries after each Teletandem session to report feelings and to reflect upon communication strategies; 2) study the theoretical framework for analysing sequences of mediation and negotiation of meanings (LINELL; GUSTAVSSON; JUVONEN, 1988; LINELL, 2009; VARONIS; GASS, 1985) (Based on their studies, students are also asked to comment on their interaction during their final oral exam); 3) transcribe, analyse, and discuss interaction sequences in which students mediate contents, focusing on communication strategies, particularly negotiation of meanings in which concepts are explained and clarified.

8. IOTT at Unisalento: the MINTT macrotask

IOTT has an action-oriented approach. The learning design comprises four steps: 1) interacting, 2) reflecting, 3) studying, and 4) analysing and reflecting. The first step, interacting, consists in experiencing the plurilingual interaction. The second step involves writing learning diaries. The third step allows for developing a theoretical framework, stemming from key studies on mediation and negotiation of meaning (VARONIS; GASS, 1985). In the fourth step, students are asked to analyse some sequences of mediation and negotiation of meanings and to reflect on communication strategies.

IOTT is based on some tasks carried out during Teletandem Oral Sessions and on one macrotask, named MINTT (Mediating, Interacting and Negotiating in TT; LEONE, 2018), which takes place as homework (i.e., learning diaries) and during face-to-face meetings with the mediator. The macrotask MINTT is mostly a sequence of tasks which promote reflection on the interaction process and one's own

⁹ In South Puglia, apart from Romance dialects also Griko, a Greek dialect, and Arbëreshë, an Albanian dialect, are spoken.

¹⁰ Credo di aver continuato a sviluppare due principali abilità: mettermi in discussione rispetto al background socio-comunicativo; aver rafforzato le capacità di mediazione

production - which in IOTT is in L1, on one's ability to cooperate in different communicative situations, and on learning needs. The macrotask, which is a task sequence, is built by proposing the same activity but with increasing complexity: initially students must reflect on the mediation sequences just describing how they perceive teletandem sessions, following some guiding questions (i.e., Which parts of the speech sounded complex? What strategies did you put into practice to clarify the concepts? What strategies to understand? Are there any specific comprehension and interaction difficulties related to the type of task?) (LEONE; ARANHA; CAVALARI, submitted). Afterwards, students analyse mediation and interaction (cooperation) strategies during negotiation of meaning, reflecting on communication strategies (e.g., use of vocabulary, pragmatic skills). The input that is provided to students to carry out the activity is a selection of video recordings of teletandem sessions (max. 2-3 video clips per student), which students bring in class to share and discuss with colleagues and the teacher/mediator. Hence, IOTT enables learners to practise communication and to develop the ability to analyse the communication and the learning process. MINTT can be adapted to the learning goals of different learning scenarios.

9. Step 1. Interacting: Teletandem Oral Sessions

During teletandem oral sessions, students carry out different tasks that are normally information gap activities, like the well-known map task, or finding a solution to a problem (problem-solving activity). For instance, during the first meeting, using pictures, each student describes his/her town and hobbies. In intercomprehension settings, if personal and situational conditions (e.g. state of anxiety, personality, desire to communicate with a specific person, interest in the topic under discussion) are met (MACINTYRE; CLÉMENT; DÖRNYEI; NOELS, 1998), speakers endeavour to find linguistic and non-linguistic strategies in order to convey meanings. The following extract is taken from a Teletandem session carried out by an Italian (I) and a French speaker (F). The Italian speaker is talking about stereotypes and about the fact that Italian people are believed “to talk with their hands” (line 1). The French speaker does not understand and asks for clarification focusing on the problem, pointing out what was not clear and saying, “so I am not sure I understood the last sentence” (line 4). (I) replies that “he will repeat” (line 5) and paraphrasing but also using gestures to explain what he means. Thus, the indicator of non-understanding (GASS; SUSAN, 1997) is specific and facilitates communication problem resolution that is made explicit by “yes, ok, it’s perfect for me” (line 6).

1. I: [...] come hai visto gesticolo molto da italiano
as you can see I make many gestures
2. F: ((laughs))

3. **I:** quindi gli...gli stereotipi sono veritieri
So stereotypes are true
4. **F:** (...) alors je ne suis pas sûre d'avoir compris la dernière phrase
so I am not sure I understood the last sentence
5. **I: ah ok ripeto ehm** (.) come si dice ehm (.) come noi italiani gesticoliamo (.) usiamo molto queste (he moves hands) espressioni
oh well, now I repeat how do you say Italians make a lot of gestures, we use a lot these (he moves hands) expressions
6. **F:** oui ah d'accord c'est parfait pour moi
Yes, I agree, it's perfect for me
7. **I:** è vero
It's true
8. **F:** ((laughs)) [...]

The reported extract shows a conversation that proceeds fluently. The French speaker performs a high-level pragmatic ability: her contribution to the interaction is particularly active when she addresses the communication problem. Using gestures which support his production, the Italian speaker shows abilities in the paraverbal and non-verbal dimension of the communication process.¹¹

10. Step 2. Reflecting: writing learning diaries

Learning diaries are used as an activity for making students reflect on the teletandem experience. After an in-class discussion of what learning diaries are and following the above reported guiding questions, students write learning diaries after each session. Here follow some extracts in which a student highlights the positive feature of the communication process:

Once again it seemed to me that conversation was very natural. Sometimes I forgot that we were speaking two different languages.¹²

In the above extract the student reports that conversation was smooth although her partner and she were using two languages. In the following short passage, the author emphasizes the social impact of the experience which allowed her/him to become friends with her/his partner.

It has been an experience that made me understand that not always unknowing another language is an insurmountable problem but that through the help of one's own linguistic background and using strategies such as intercomprehension to understand the message

¹¹ Following EVALIC descriptors, the French speaker shows a good pragmatic competence, particularly in relation to the "availability" dimension. The Italian speaker shows appropriate non-verbal strategies since his gestures display words that he deems opaque to the interlocutor

¹² Ancora una volta avevo la sensazione che la conversazione fosse molto naturale a volte quasi dimenticando che stessimo parlando effettivamente due lingue diverse. (IOTT_201920_UNISAL_DRM3_NFIT_; GARBARINO, LEONE 2020)

of other people or employing multimodality to help the other interlocutor understand our message, friendships can be made that go beyond spatial, cultural and linguistic limits.¹³

In the above extract, the author tells what the experience showed her/him; particularly, she/he maintains that being ignorant of your partner's language is not necessarily "an insurmountable problem". By employing different communication strategies, mutual understanding is possible. For instance, multimodality, referring probably to gestures, helps your interlocutor to understand your message and it's possible to make new friends beyond spatial, cultural, and linguistic limits. This is a very interesting point: this speaker helps the interlocutor to understand what he/she is saying, thus she/he feels that communication is successful, she/he makes her/his contribution, thus she/he is responsible for making the exchange work. In intercomprehension settings, communication breakdowns challenge all people involved since no speakers are in the privileged position of being an expert in the language used for communicating, as happens in native/non-native interaction. In intercomprehension settings, there is no language competence gap which might inhibit speakers' participation. Each speaker is perceived as good when speaking her/his own L1.

11. Step 3. Studying: studying the theoretical framework

Step 3 guides learners towards a more complex vision of reflection by developing knowledge related to communication processes, and language learning according to recent theories and learning approach. This phase can be adapted to the learning needs of different courses. For instance, in the intercomprehension course held by Garbarino at Lyon 2, students analyse their production using REFIC and EVAL-IC (GARBARINO, 2019). Conversely, in my course in SLA and Foreign language teaching for preliminary teacher training, this step consists of reviewing the theoretical framework for analysing teletandem interactions, particularly negotiation of meaning. Students study key contributions by the interactionist theory (VARONIS; GASS, 1985; LONG, 1996;), which gives relevance to interaction in second language and maintains that participating in communicative exchanges, particularly negotiation of meaning, promotes "noticing" which is a mental activity extremely important for language learning. Interactionist theory grounds task-based language instruction (ROBINSON, 2001). Varonis and Gass's model proposes a framework for analysing negotiation of meaning, which consists of four primes: trigger, which is the cause of negotiation of meaning; indicator, which is the signal of non-

¹³ È stata un'esperienza che non solo mi ha fatto capire che non sempre non conoscere un'altra lingua è un problema insormontabile ma che attraverso l'aiuto di un proprio background linguistico e utilizzando delle strategie come l'intercomprensione per comprendere il messaggio dell'altro, oppure la multimodalità per aiutare a far comprendere il nostro messaggio all'altro interlocutore si possono creare amicizie che vanno al di là dei limiti spaziali, culturali e linguistici.

understanding; response, i.e. interlocutor's attempt to resolve the communication problem. Finally, the fourth prime, reply to response, might be a confirmation of understanding (VARONIS; GASS, 1985). Primes can be produced in different forms, also according to a student's ability to accommodate his/her talk to the partner's knowledge and language competence. Studying the interactionist model means developing awareness of teaching strategies which are different from those normally employed in classroom teaching, which, in Italy, unfortunately, is still grammar translation, with the production phase not playing an important role in the lesson plan. In step 3 also metacommunicative skills, which are essential for language teaching, are developed.

12. Step 4: analysing negotiation of meaning and reflecting on the experience

Step 4 consists in looking at the experience from a more objective perspective, following the above-mentioned theoretical framework. This task implies the use of video-recordings of the teletandem session (LEONE, 2014, 2016, 2019) and it is implemented during a conversation with the teacher/mediator. Students are asked to select a part of the video-recordings of their teletandem sessions in which there are mediation sequences, i.e., parts of your conversation in which you have explained concepts to your partner and / or parts in which you have solved communication problems (e.g., your partner has asked for clarification: what did you say? Can you repeat, please?); It is a part of the video where you do not understand something and ask your partner for clarification. The analysis has a clear focus on participants' metacognitive knowledge (e.g., what students know, communicative strategies (top down, bottom up), and linguistic features of negotiation of meaning. For instance: Students are asked to answer the following questions: In the current negotiation of meaning what are the communication problems? Is there any specific cultural knowledge that has been explained? If yes, how? What type of indicator is there (e.g., verbal, non-verbal)? Have communication problems been solved? If yes, how (e.g., verbal communication strategies) Has the problem resolution been highlighted? If yes, how? Could you have formulated the indicator/response in different ways?

The teacher/mediator adopts an exploratory perspective with the intention to foster the emergence of learner's "thought processes" (GASS; MACKEY, 2000, p. 1) that took place while that negotiation of meaning was carried out. This classroom task has to be intended as a pedagogical transposition of a stimulated recall (GASS; MACKEY, 2000).

13. Conclusions

As highlighted by Garbarino and Leone (2020), IOTT is an innovative learning scenario for various reasons. First, the innovation consists in merging two traditions of studies: teletandem and

intercomprehension. Second, IOTT has an action-oriented approach, and it is based on tasks aimed at the practice of negotiating meaning and resolving misunderstandings which allow learners to discover and develop their plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Third, the IOTT learning scenario assigns time and educational space for reflection on teletandem interaction, particularly on mediation and negotiation of meaning, and on the learning experience. This is accomplished by a macrotask named MINTT, i.e., a sequence of tasks promoting students' reflectivity, encouraging a propensity for formative critical thinking. Both the situated learning experience of teletandem and the reflection activities are grounded in a multilingual perspective, that is, they are not just geared to enhancing skills in one language, but they point to how people can effectively interact when speaking their own language and listening to other language speakers. Finally, including a reflective stage, IOTT also develops "usable knowledge", which is to say knowledge that enables learners to face new communicative situations.

IOTT is also relevant since it provides data. Video-recordings are useful resources for several purposes. They are fundamental for training, and during meetings with the teacher/mediator (GARBARINO, 2019; LEONE, 2014; ARANHA; LEONE, 2016, 2017). They are essential for the analysis and the reflection phase. Moreover, they can be employed in the research field of reciprocal peer-learning and interaction in intercomprehension settings.

Taken together, these features suggest IOTT is a learning scenario which will contribute to developing, in institutional contexts, a plural approach to communication and deeper understanding of different languages and cultures, which is the key to teaching in a globalized world and to a more inclusive future.

References

- AA.VV. 2019. *Definizione del protocollo e degli strumenti di valutazione dell'intercomprensione*. Erasmus+ Progetto EVAL-IC.
- AKKARI, A.; MALEQ, K. (Eds.). 2020. *Global Citizenship Education: Critical and International Perspectives*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- ARANHA, S.; CAVALARI, S. M. S. 2014. A trajetória do projeto Teletandem Brasil: da modalidade Institucional Não Integrada à Institucional Integrada. *The Specialist*, 35.2: 183-201.
- ARANHA, S.; LEONE, P. 2016. DOTI: Databank of Oral Teletandem Interactions. In: JAGER, S; KUREK, M.; O'ROURKE, B. (Eds.). *New directions in telecollaborative research and practice: Selected papers from the second conference on telecollaboration in higher education*: 327-332. Research-publishing.net.
- ARANHA, S.; LEONE, P. 2017. The development of DOTI (Databank of oral teletandem interaction). In: FISHER, D.; BEIBWENGER, M. (Orgs.). *Investigating computer-mediated communication corpus-based approaches to language in the digital world*: 172-190. University Press, Faculty of Arts.

- BERTHOUD, A.; GRIN, F.; LÜDI, G. 2013. *Exploring the dynamics of multilingualism: The DYLAN project*. Benjamins.
- BONVINO, E.; CADDÉO, S.; PIPPA, S.; VILAGINÈS SERRA, E. 2011. *Eurom5. Leggere e capire 5 lingue romanze: português, español, català, italiano, français*. Hoepli.
- BRAMMERTS, H. 1996. Language Learning in Tandem Using the Internet. In: WARSCHAUER, M. (Ed.). *Telecollaboration in Foreign Language Learning*: 121-130. Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center.
- BRANSFORD, J.; BROWN, A. L.; E COCKNEY, R. R. (Eds.). 2000. *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School*. National Academies Press.
- CANDELIER, M.; CAMILLERI GRIMA, A.; CASTELLOTTI, V.; DE PIETRO, J.; LORINCZ, I.; MEISSNER, F.; SCHROEDER, S. 2012. *FREPA/CARAP (Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures)*. CELV (Centre Europeen pour le Langue Vivantes).
- CAPPELLINI, M. 2016. Roles and scaffolding in teletandem interactions: a study of the relations between the sociocultural and the language learning dimensions in a French–Chinese teletandem. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 10: 1-15.
- CAVALARI, S. M. S.; ARANHA, S. 2016. Teletandem: Integrating e-learning into the foreign language classroom. *Acta Scientiarum. Language and Culture*, 38.4: 327-336.
- CORTÈS VELÁSQUEZ, D. 2015. *Intercomprensione orale: ricerca e pratiche didattiche*. Le Lettere.
- DE CARLO, M.; ANQUETIL, M. 2019. Un Referentiel de competences de communication plurilingue en intercomprehension. *REFIC. EL.LE*, 8.1: 163-234.
- FIRTH, A.; WAGNER, J. 1997. On Discourse, Communication, and (Some) Fundamental Concepts in SLA Research. *The Modern Language Journal*, 81.3: 285-300.
- FOUCHER, A.-L. 2010. *Didactique des Langues-Cultures et Tice: scénarios, taches, interactions*. Université Blaise Pascal - Clermont-Ferrand II.
- GARBARINO, S. 2019. Sviluppare competenze in intercomprensione di livello avanzato Il contributo dei descrittori del REFIC: Il contributo dei descrittori del REFIC. *EL.LE*, 1: 39-63.
- GARBARINO, S. 2015. Les avantages de l'entrée en langue étrangère via l'intercompréhension: «j'ai l'impression de lire du français mais écrit différemment donc je me sens puissante !» Dans *Éla. Études de linguistique appliquée*, 3.179: 289-313.
- GARBARINO, S.; LEONE, P. 2020. Innovation dans un projet de télécollaboration orale en intercompréhension: bilan et perspectives de "IOTT". *Alsic. Apprentissage des Langues et Systèmes d'Information et de Communication*, 23.2.
- GASS, S. M.; MACKEY, A. 2000. *Stimulated recall methodology in second language research*. L. Erlbaum Associates
- JAMET, M.-C. (A cura di). 2009. *Orale e intercomprensione tra lingue romanze*. Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina.
- LEONE, P. 2018. Co-costruzione di competenze linguistiche e culturali attraverso la riflessione e la discussion. *TRAlinea*, 20: 1-8.
- LEONE, P. 2016. Collaborare per capirsi nel contesto di apprendimento teletandem. In: GATTA, F. (A cura di). *Parlare insieme*. Studi per Daniela Zorzi: 191-206. Bononia University Press.
- LEONE, P. 2014. Teletandem, Video-Recordings and Usage Based Tasks: Developing a Socially Situated Scenario for Learning. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 9.1: 41-50.
- LEONE, P.; ARANHA, S.; CAVALARI, S. S. Submitted. "Our interaction was very productive": a corpus-based study of learning diaries in Teletandem Learning Scenarios.
- LEONE, P.; TELLES, J.A. 2016. The Teletandem Network. In: LEWIS, T.; O'DOWD, R. (A cura di). *Online Intercultural Exchange: Policy, Pedagogy, Practice*: 241-249. Routledge.
- LEWIS, T.; PETERS, H. 2019. Sprachen lernen im Tandem: Prinzipien & Kompetenzerwerb. In: SPÄNKUCH, E.; DITTMANN, T.; SEELIGER-MÄCHLER, B.; PETERS, H.; BUSCHMANN-

- GÖBELS, A. (Eds.). *Lernprozesse im Tandem –ermöglichen, begleiten, erforschen. GiF'on: Giessener Fremdsprachendidaktik*, 13: 11-32. University of Giessen.
- LINELL, P. 2009. *Rethinking language, mind, and world dialogically: Interactional and contextual theories of human sense-making*. Information Age Publishing.
- LINELL P.; GUSTAVSSON L.; JUVONEN, P. 1988. Interactional dominance in dyadic communication: A presentation of Initiative-Response Analysis. *Linguistics*, 26: 415-442.
- LONG, M. H. 1996. The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In: RITCHIE, W. C.; BHATIA, T. K. (Eds.). *Handbook of second language acquisition*: 413-68. Academic Press.
- MACINTYRE, P. D.; CLÉMENT, R.; DÖRNYEI, Z.; NOELS, K. A. 1998. Conceptualizing Willingness to Communicate in a L2: A Situational Model of L2 Confidence and Affiliation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 82.4: 545-562.
- MANGENOT, F.; SOUBRIE, T., 2010. *Créer une banque de tâches Internet: quels descripteurs pour quelles utilisations ? La tâche comme point focal de l'apprentissage*. Clermont-Ferrand.
- MARKAKI, V.; MERLINO, S.; MONDADA, L.; OLOFF, F.; TRAVERSO, V. 2013. Multilingual Practices in Professional Settings. Keeping the Delicate Balance between Progressivity and Intersubjectivity. In: BERTHOUD, A.; GRIN, C.; LÜDI, F. (Eds.). *Exploring the Dynamics of Multilingualism*: 3–32. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- MELO-PFEIFER, S. 2018. When Non-Romance Languages Break the Linguistic Contract in Romance Languages Chat Rooms: Theoretical Consequences for Studies on Intercomprehension. In: BUENDGENS-KOSTEN, J.; ELSNER, D. (Eds.). *Multilingual Assisted Computer Language Learning. Multilingual Matters*.
- NORTH, B., PICCARDO. E. 2016. Developing Illustrative Descriptors of Aspects of Mediation for the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR): A Council of Europe Project. *Language Teaching*, 49.3: 455-459.
- OLIVER, M.; TRIGWELL, K. 2005. Can 'Blended Learning' Be Redeemed? *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 2.5: 17-26.
- PAQUETTE, G. 2002. *L'ingénierie pédagogique, pour construire l'apprentissage en réseau*. Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- PENNYCOOK, A. 2017. *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. Routledge.
- PERNIN, J.-PH., E LEJEUNE, A. 2004. *Dispositifs d'apprentissage instrumentés par les technologies: vers une ingénierie centrée sur les scénarios*, 407-414.
- PICCOLI, V. 2015. Intercompréhension in praesentia: la reformulation dans une troisième langue comme repair au cours d'une rencontre en langues romanes. In: GARBARINO, S., DEGACHE, C. (Éds.). *Intercompréhension en réseau: scénarios, médiations, évaluations*: 194-207. Travaux du CRTT.
- ROBINSON, P. (Ed.). 2001. *Cognition and Second Language Instruction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- STATHOPOULOU, M. 2015. *Cross-Language Mediation in Foreign Language Teaching and Testing: Multilingual Matters*.
- TELLES, J. A.; VASSALLO, M. L. 2006. Foreign language learning in-tandem: Teletandem as an alternative proposal in CALLT. *The Specialist*, 27.2: 189-212.
- VARONIS, E. M.; GASS, S. M. 1985. Non-native/non-native conversation: A model for negotiation of meaning. *Applied Linguistics*, 6: 71-90.
- VERTOVEC, S. 2007. Super-Diversity and Its Implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30.6: 1024–54.
- ZIMMERMAN, DON H, C. 1998. Identity, Context and Interaction. *Identities in Talk*, a cura di Sue Widdicombe: 87-108. SAGE Publications.