



# Observing Strategies in Intercomprehension Reading. Some Clues for Assessment in Plurilingual Settings

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The practice of teaching intercomprehension (IC) aims to promote plurilingualism in the individual and maintain language policies supporting multilingualism. It proposes a communicative model in which people communicate using their own language by encouraging the development of the competences required for successful communication. Most of the projects on IC that have been developed in recent years target developing written comprehension, especially among Romance languages. Although there is great diversity in objectives and techniques, all methodologies based on IC share the following principles, which represent the common denominator of teaching IC: plurilingual approach, use of partial competences, attention to comprehension, reflection on language(s), development of strategic and metacognitive knowledge and competences. Most of the teaching paths based on IC aim to raise learners' awareness of comprehension processes, therefore allowing students to develop specific strategies connected with analogy, approximation (or "ambiguity tolerance"), association, transfer, inference and metalinguistic knowledge. One of the main challenges of IC studies is to describe the individual competences that allow people to understand—or to learn to intercomprehend—texts in several related languages. Such a description would allow us to propose reflections in order to elaborate an assessment tool. The assessment in IC has been focused by several works, it is the main objective of the European Project EVAL-IC (Evaluation des compétences en intercompréhension: réception et interactions plurilingues) and is certainly crucial for the institutional insertion. The objective of this paper is to present, within the topic of IC, some insights gathered by the authors through the EuRom5 methodology. In particular, we focus on the subtopic of the use of strategies as observed during EuRom5 sessions putting them in relation to the descriptors of different frameworks of reference related to plurilingualism (MAGiC, FREPA, REFIC, and New CEFR). As for the methodology adopted in this paper, we propose a description and a comparison of data from EuRom5 and the frameworks mentioned above. The main findings of our analysis show that the four frameworks here considered only partially account for the complex picture characterizing the EuRom methodology.

**Keywords:** multilingualism, plurilingualism, reading strategies, assessment, intercomprehension, Romance languages

## INTERCOMPREHENSION

Intercomprehension (IC) is a form of plurilingual communication in which those who participate in the event do not speak the languages of their interlocutor but understand them and speak the language(s) they know. It is a widespread practice for millions of speakers, especially of related languages.

Over the last twenty years, the interest for this practice has been growing since it is considered an entry gateway (Donato, 2017) toward plurilingualism and the mechanisms that allow it to be learned/taught. In this paragraph, we will briefly describe the state of the art of IC, taking into account also the many works produced recently.

Studies on IC investigate this spontaneous phenomenon<sup>1</sup> and attempt to make a detailed description of the comprehension processes, with the aim of proposing operational models in order to carry out instructional interventions, which should increase not only comprehension skills but also the ability to interact in IC. The turn of studies in IC implies that it has changed from an observable spontaneous phenomenon into an objective to be achieved or a skill to be developed in those people for whom IC is not a habitual practice (Ollivier, 2011, p. 28) by means of an instructional programme.

IC studies is a wide field of research that has, in part, common objectives with other related studies like mutual intelligibility, semi-communication and receptive multilingualism, on one side, and on the other with second language acquisition, studies on multilingualism and plurilingualism, studies on bilingualism and heritage language learners (Cortés Velásquez, 2015a; Bonvino and Cortés Velásquez, 2016). In this sense, research on IC provides a privileged point of view and highlights some of the phenomena being studied from the fields mentioned above. In particular, IC is able to offer interesting data and reflections on:

- language (however not limited to) comprehension processes
- input processing on interlanguage development
- social representation of:
  - o language learning
  - o languages and linguistic varieties
  - o monolingualism and bilingualism vs. plurilingualism and multilingualism

Some essential and interesting features of the instructional IC are:

- IC proposes rapid access to groups of languages, promotes plurilingualism, and preserves multilingualism<sup>2</sup> It is an approach that is particularly suitable for multilingual contexts in which there are targeted language policies, aimed at promoting the languages present on the territory, including minority languages that are not often studied. It is therefore an approach in line with the language policies hoped for in Europe.

<sup>1</sup>By spontaneous we mean a phenomenon that does not happen as a result of explicit teaching.

<sup>2</sup>For the distinction between multilingualism and plurilingualism see CEFR [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Division\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Division_en.asp).

- IC can be useful in multilingual contexts linked to immigration, e.g., in the case of “heritage learners”<sup>3</sup>.
- IC highlights the importance of the mother tongue in the learning/teaching of languages.
- IC develops learners’ cognitive and metacognitive strategies.<sup>4</sup>
- IC develops the ability to resort the pre-knowledge of individuals and, from a constructivist point of view, it favors the development of skills in other languages (that is other than those already spoken by learners) by exploiting the knowledge learners already have.
- IC blends with other existing approaches, such as CLIL, and can offer valid tools for professions in which the use of more than one language is vitally important.
- Last but not least, it improves comprehension skills, develops metacognitive skills and favors interaction, but it can also be the first phase of a programme for the global learning of languages (Ollivier, 2011).

## HISTORY/EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT

In the last twenty years, IC has been the focus of several European cooperation projects ranging from financing for the production of teaching materials to the establishment of a pool of universities and organizations involved in IC (REDINTER, MIRIADI, EVAL-IC) and the creation of training courses on IC (Euroforma, Formica, Intermar).

The first research began in France, Germany, and Denmark between the 1970s and 1980s. In the French field, it gave rise to the idea of developing a dialogue on Latin intercommunicability, analyzing both linguistic and cultural aspects. In the 1990s some European teams then began to work more or less independently and in parallel on projects dealing with didactics and applied linguistics now considered to be IC milestones: the team coordinated by Claire Blanche-Benveniste for the Eurom4<sup>5</sup> project, the team coordinated by Louise Dabène for the Galatea<sup>6</sup> project, Franz Joseph Meissner, Horst Klein and Tilbert Stegmann for the German Eurocomrom project and finally the Danish project launched by Jørgen Schmitt Jensen, which concluded with the publication of some comparative grammars developed in order to facilitate intercomprehension.

The increase in the number of projects with European financing and the interest of the European Commission in IC have ensured a certain continuity in the research and supported the development of didactic tools. Over the years, we have witnessed a conceptual evolution of the notion of IC, directly related to the communicative aims of the processes to be

<sup>3</sup>By “heritage learner” we mean an individual who is raised in a home where a language is spoken that is different from that of the context in which he/she lives (adapted from Valdés, 2000, p. 1).

<sup>4</sup>See section Language Strategies in Reference Frameworks: Clues for Describing IC Use of Strategies in this paper.

<sup>5</sup>It involved four main universities: Université d’Aix en Provence (FR); Università degli Studi di Roma Tre (IT); Universidad de Salamanca (ES); Universidade de Lisboa (PT).

<sup>6</sup>They then merged into Galanet, Galapro, and now Miriadi.

developed, the developments in technology and the availability of teaching materials (Capucho, 2012).

The first projects (Eurom4, EurocomRom and so on) concentrated on developing written comprehension abilities. There are some more recent and promising research on oral IC that concentrate mostly on pure reception (cf. for example Jamet, 2005a,b, 2007, 2008, 2009; Murillo and Harmegnies, 2005; Blanche-Benveniste, 2009; Jamet and Hosenfeld, 2011; Martin Kostomaroff and Di Vito, 2011; Cortés Velásquez, 2012, 2015a). Even though the research has progressed, from a strictly didactic point of view, the oral dimension is present in the systems created for IC training, although this is rarely the primary objective (Jamet and Hosenfeld, 2011, p. 252). In didactic systems the oral is often used as a support, as in the case of EuRom4 and 5 and other educational practices (Bonvino and Caddéo, 2008; Escudé, 2008; Blanche-Benveniste, 2009). The Fondelcat approach to orality stands out, the premises of which favor the aspects of face to face communication by means of comprehending audiovisual materials (Martin Kostomaroff, 2008, 2012). Attention to the development of comprehension and in particular to written comprehension have contributed to the creation of the epistemological basis of IC. All of these initiatives hold great promise for developing written and oral skills and will make an important contribution to L2 comprehension.

The development of new technologies such as chats and discussion forums has made it possible to go beyond pure reception. Some projects, especially Galanet and lately MIRIADI<sup>7</sup>, have gone from comprehension of written materials to mainly, but not only, written interaction.

The educational experiences (Euroforma, FORMICA, and Intermar) have also created contexts and developed teaching practices for oral interaction.

In 2011 the European IC network REDINTER (*LLP*—[www.redinter.eu](http://www.redinter.eu)), coordinated by Filomena Capucho, became one of the most important projects realized in IC so far. REDINTER gathered together the most important institutions active in this field of research, favoring and increasing contacts among researchers from various countries. The main aims of this network included the surveying and assessment of good practices in IC, the creation of a bibliographical corpus and a census of educational interventions through IC.

The most recent research, and in particular the project EVAL-IC, an ongoing project on assessment of plurilingual competences (<http://evalic.eu/>), has brought to light the necessity of distinguishing two different research and teaching branches in IC: receptive IC, prompted by the early projects' founders of the concept of IC, and interactive IC, which is more recent but closer to the definition of IC as a form of communication.

As for receptive IC, comprehension corresponds to the ability to construct, from the data of a written or an oral medium,

a mental representation of what is evoked by the medium. Subsequently, receptive intercomprehension corresponds to the same capacity of comprehension, but it is an expanded competence in several languages that has been built up almost exclusively through guided or autonomous learning of reading and listening in foreign languages. It is based on the interaction of one's own linguistic repertoire(s) with other languages and allows for the development of a strong awareness of linguistic links between related languages. Receptive IC is thus a form of receptive communication between a subject, with his or her knowledge (cultural, linguistic, etc.), and the author through the text, a written or an oral text produced by an author through his or her language, knowledge, etc.

Receptive IC and any form of comprehension of one/more languages share some common features:

- progressive development may take place and the subjects can have different levels of competence;
- they are based on the same cognitive principles;
- at the highest level of proficiency, competence is probably comparable to that of monolingual/multilingual comprehension.

Upon further examination, some remarkable differences exist between any form of multilingual/monolingual comprehension (by which, we mean being able to understand one or more languages) and receptive IC, since the latter shows the following peculiar features:

- it is a competence that features over several languages;
- in general terms, in the IC communication model, oral/written production in the subjects' preferred language is expected; in the specific situation of receptive IC, production does not take place;
- the learner does not have/does not aim for productive capacity;
- positive transfer is a major process;
- comprehension skills are acquired more quickly;
- the learner's linguistic-cultural repertoire(s) interacts with that of the text;
- the languages of the learner's repertoire interact with each other;
- reflection on languages in a comparative approach.

Since the present paper focuses on aspects and strategies of receptive IC, we believe it is important to underline that receptive IC draws heavily on the receptive dimension of communication.

Interactive IC can be defined as a form of communication in which at least two people understand each other, while each of them uses a different language. In other words, each subject speaks a language he/she knows enough and understands his/her interlocutor who uses his/her own language, for example an Italian speaker and a Spanish speaker communicating using their own native languages.

Such competences in IC allow the speakers to express shades of meaning in languages they know in depth (instead of using a "lingua franca") in order to adapt their communication to the interlocutor and consider the specific phenomena originating

<sup>7</sup>Within the project MIRIADI, various resources have been created. Among those, the international project Lecturio+ aims at encouraging young non-readers to develop their desire to read and learn through intercomprehension and other pluralistic approaches in a plurilingual context.

**TABLE 1** | Intercomprehension projects presented by common features.

Characteristics	Projects/Materials
Reading and understanding other languages	<i>Galatea, EuRom4, EuRom5, Euromcom, Interlat, Interrom, Eurom.Com.Text, ICE, IGLO</i>
Written interaction on a platform	<i>Galanel, Galapro, Babelweb, MIRIADI</i>
IC beyond language families	<i>EU&amp;I, Intercom, Intermar, CINCO</i>
Oral IC through audiovisual materials	<i>FontdelCat</i>
IC for children and teenagers	<i>Euromania, Chainstories, Itinéraires Romans, Limbo</i>
IC for specific audiences	<i>Intermar, CINCO</i>
French/Italian through IC	<i>Juntos</i>

from the meeting between languages and cultures. It is, therefore, a communicative process that allows the co-construction of meaning in a situation of communication characterized by the use of several negotiated languages (implicitly or explicitly) by the interlocutors, taking into account their common linguistic and cultural repertoires.

## TEACHING INTERCOMPREHENSION: MATERIALS AND PRINCIPLES

The projects and the approaches to teaching IC are very diverse. In **Table 1**, we present some practices described by REDINTER project. To give an idea about the typology and variety of the existing tools, the list groups together some practices based on some common features. All the practices labeled in the table have in common the same principles that distinguish them from L2 reading or listening courses.

The principles that typify IC-based practices can be summarized as follows: plurilingual approach, partial competences, attention to cognitive and metacognitive strategies (see section Language Strategies in Reference Frameworks: Clues for Describing IC Use of Strategies in this paper), learning transversality, reflection on languages and the role of L1.

Plurilingual approach in IC means dealing with more than one language in one course. One of the most interesting characteristics shared by most of the approaches is the idea that IC competence can be developed in more than one language at the same time. As a matter of fact learning a language means learning something of other languages or at least paving the way for learning them (Simone, 1997, p. 32).

IC is therefore part of the framework of the plural approaches defined by FREPA (2010) as those teaching approaches that set up activities that include more linguistic and cultural varieties.

According to the Common European Framework of Reference (from now on referred to as CEFR), a plurilingual person has a repertoire of languages and language varieties, and competences of different kinds and levels within that repertoire. Another fundamental idea for language education, closely linked to the conception of plurilingualism, is that languages and the learning of languages are not to be considered as watertight

compartments to be tackled and learned separately. Finally, it should be underlined that the work carried out on several languages simultaneously is extremely useful from a didactic point of view as it promotes linguistic comparisons.

According to the CEFR, “plurilingualism” does not necessarily mean a complete mastering of all the abilities, but rather the integration of various repertoires. Plurilingualism therefore, starting from the integration of various repertoires, becomes a multiple competence, which is functional to a specific and limited objective (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 8). It is in this sense that the CEFR introduces the notion of partial competence that is a fundamental concept in IC epistemology. This idea of partial competence implies the possibility of separating various linguistic abilities by isolating, for example, the written and oral comprehension skills. An example of partial plurilingual competence in this context is that which allows a Spaniard to possess a productive competence in Castilian but a purely receptive competence in Italian.

Although it is not always easy to isolate the different elements of linguistic competence, which are closely interdependent, it is clearly possible to have different degrees of competence in the various linguistic abilities; for example, it is well known that there is a gap between receptive and productive abilities, with the former being of a higher level. Indeed learners acquire comprehension skills much more rapidly than production skills.

Every linguistic repertoire is composed of different linguistic varieties, partial or otherwise, and has above all the great advantage of diverging from monolingualism, taking steps toward plurilingualism. Possessing receptive skills in more than one language can answer the needs of some groups of learners (for example journalists who need to gather information from various authentic sources) and it can be achieved in a short space of time, if the learning process involves more than one language and concentrates on receptive skills.

As indicated above the approach to IC ascribes great importance to the understanding process. Within this approach, the various methodologies aim at developing cognitive and metacognitive strategies through different practices that contribute to learners becoming aware of how to use such strategies and of their importance. We will fully discuss this point below (section Language Strategies in Reference Frameworks: Clues for Describing IC Use of Strategies).

Transversality and linguistic features allow comprehension between closely related languages<sup>8</sup>. As is well known, the Romance languages share a common origin: their variations are located along a continuous space that makes a mutual comprehension in neighboring areas (apart from the discretionary limits introduced by modern state borders) possible. From a typological point of view, too, these languages are very similar, with the partial exception of French, which differs from the other Romance languages because of some well-known characteristics, such as the stricter word order and the overt expression of the subject, which makes it more similar

<sup>8</sup>Intercomprehension is obviously easier for languages belonging to the same family, such as the Romance languages which come from Latin, even though affinities between languages can be found and exploited in unrelated languages too.



to a Germanic language. The similarity between Romance languages covers all aspects of the organization of the language (especially the lexicon) and facilitates mutual understanding<sup>9</sup>.

The CEFR highlights more than once the fact that an individual's linguistic repertoire, like the rest of his/her network of knowledge, is not divided into watertight compartments. Instead, there is a transferability of knowledge: whatever is learned in one sector of experience can be transferred to other sectors. This transferability is also found in learning languages: what is known in general about languages by those who speak a language, together with specific knowledge of their L1 and other knowledge that may also be partial, all guide and facilitate the comprehension of linguistic input from other L2s (cf. Klein, 1986, p.64).

In order to understand a text in a language, learners speaking a language that belongs to the same linguistic group may use various elements (lexical, phonological, morphological and syntactic) that are analogous in the different languages. In the concrete case of the Romance languages, the similarity is evident at all language levels, starting from the lexicon. In **Table 2** we present a title from a EuRom5 text (see section Strategies in Written Intercomprehension) translated into five Romance languages. As it is clear in this example, the languages vary in just a few aspects: writing forms (use of diacritics), use of prepositions, forms of conjunction (F “car” vs. the other languages), null-subject languages (PECI) vs. explicit subject language (F). But most of all, the content words are cognates that allow a high degree of transparency (e.g., P: taça E: taza C: tassa I: tazzina F: tasse).

By exploiting positive transfer, the plurilingual approach makes the best use of L1. The use of L1 during the learning process has three effects: it reassures learners, facilitates access to other languages and above all provides space for reflection, since, thanks to the discovery of how other languages function, learners also better discover their L1 (Bonvino, 2012; Caddéo and Jamet, 2013).

## READING AND UNDERSTANDING OTHER LANGUAGES

Reading is the key feature in the teaching approach based on IC. Attention to development of comprehension skills, and in particular understanding written texts, has always been a distinguishing feature of the approach and has contributed to the creation of the epistemological basis.

The early projects aimed at developing written comprehension, and also in the later projects focused on the interactive dimension of communication, distance communication (mails, chats, forums) revolves around reading ability.

In this paper, we will focus only on the project EuRom5, not only because its materials and methodology are widely spread across Europe and beyond, but also because great attention

is given to the development of language understanding and learning strategies.

## EuRom Methodology

EuRom (see Blanche-Benveniste et al., 1997; Bonvino et al., 2011a) is an IC-based methodology aiming at developing reading ability in Romance languages, namely Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, Italian, and French to users of one of these languages<sup>10</sup>.

The EuRom methodology is based on five factors:

- (a) Similarity among Romance languages.
- (b) Approach to simultaneous learning of languages.
- (c) Transfer and exploitation of a learner's personal knowledge as an important contribution in the classroom.
- (d) Exposition to authentic input.
- (e) Attention to the reading process.

Factors presented in bullets a) to c) have been discussed above. The authentic input (bullet d) is represented by a corpus of 100 newspaper articles (20 for each language), included in the EuRom5 (Bonvino et al., 2011a) handbook, to which the learner is exposed. The attention to the reading process (bullet e) is crucial for the EuRom methodology, as for many other IC-based methodologies. As is widely known, reading is a complex combination of linguistic-cognitive processes, and it involves the reader's use of various strategies, in order to reconstruct the meaning of a text in a flexible and interactive way. The specific objective of EuRom is to train the learner to understand texts dealing with general topics in a short time (approximately 35/40 h). At the end of the course, the students are able to read newspaper articles—or different texts related to their interest areas—by themselves. In this sense, the aim of EuRom is not the linguistic production in the four languages, and not even the comprehension of every kind of text (e.g., novels, letters, etc.), since, in such a limited time, only a partial competence is possible. This incomplete competence is however perfectly adequate to many communicative tasks (e.g., extract information to use it in a new text) and encourages beginners to be more self-confident, as it helps learners to develop reading strategies (Bonvino et al., 2018).

Subsequently, the EuRom methodology assists learners on interpreting a text by using a global approach to the meaning and learning how to reutilize those reading strategies that they already use when comprehending a text in their mother tongue.

Furthermore, it should be underlined that one of the pivotal points of EuRom is what has been defined as “the right to approximation” in comprehension, as argued by Blanche-Benveniste (2008, p. 58). She states that those who are good readers in their L1 are able to understand a text without being interrupted in their reading by the words they do not know. They do not proceed “word by word,” but rather by sets of words. They base their reading on inferences of various levels, before guessing some of the unknown words. Good readers therefore accept, for more or less a long period of

<sup>9</sup>For a wider treatment of the aspects of affinities among languages and the exploitation of lexical transparency, see Bonvino (2010).

<sup>10</sup>For a more detailed description of the EuRom methodology, see for example Cortés Velásquez (2015b) and Bonvino et al. (2011b).

**TABLE 2** | Lexical similarities in Romance language, title from a EuRom5 text.

P	Uma	taça	de	café	por	Dia	ajuda	porque	∅	protege	o	cérebro
E	Una	taza	de	café	al	Día	ayuda	porque	∅	protege	el	cerebro
C	Una	tassa	de	café	al	dia	ajuda	perquè	∅	protegeix	el	cervell
I	Una	tazzina	di	caffè	al	giorno	aiuta	perché	∅	protegge	il	cervello
F	Une	tasse	de	café	par	jour	aide	car	ça	protège	le	cerveau

time, that they have areas of approximate comprehension. They use different types of comprehension for the same text, some of which are very approximate, while others are more precise.

Thus, readers do not necessarily always need to understand all the words and details of a text. They may accept and be fulfilled with understanding the overall meaning, something which also happens when they read texts in their own L1.

During a EuRom course, right from the first session, learners have to deal with a text in a language they have never studied before and the goal is to try to understand it. In order to facilitate comprehension, the translation of the title and the reading aloud of the entire text are provided. After reading and listening to the text, the learner tries hard to understand the meaning in a completely independent way. This kind of activity concerns languages never studied before by the learners, and since it is based on the *problem solving* methodology, it is experienced as a stimulating challenge, which increases motivation, thus relieving the learner's anxiety. Since the learners have never experienced any explicit teaching of these languages, they generally join in the challenge with enthusiasm.

In order to verify what learners have understood and, most of all, to share the path(s) taken toward the correct or incorrect meaning with the entire class, the so-called “transposition of the text in L1” (Bonvino et al., 2011b) is required. This transposition is not a real translation, it is rather a self-report (known also as a think-aloud protocol, for a description see Chamot, 2005, p. 114)<sup>11</sup>. This transposition using the learner's mother tongue is very interesting to observe: the reader proceeds step by step through gradual adjustments.

During this phase, the learners have the possibility to ask questions about the main differences between the target languages and their mother tongue. Their second choice would be relying on strategies suggested by the tutor or on other contextual aids supplied by the handbook.

During the experimentations, we have noticed that the starting point of the intercomprehension process is the proximity between languages, which is evident in the lexical transparency. Vocabulary is the main factor on which the understanding of a text depends. If it is transparent, from one language to another, it enables comprehension also in the case of complex syntactic structures. This phenomenon is widespread in Romance languages, in which there are many potentially identifiable lexical elements.

<sup>11</sup> Although self-report has received many critics, studying human comprehension is a very complex task and this technique is not less indirect than others.

It has been noticed that comprehension sometimes seems to start from a few key words and then spreads out until it covers or “constructs” the entire text, thanks to inferential processes. Moreover, not understanding a word usually does not impair the comprehension of the general meaning of the text.

The trainer facilitates the processes by intervening only when necessary. A trainer's main task is perceiving the real difficulties in comprehension, as well as encouraging, inciting and stimulating group participation. Above all, one must allow students to set their own pace and guide them along their individual paths for the acquisition of comprehension abilities. His/her main goal is not “to teach” something but to guide the comprehension process. Basically, the student already knows everything he/she needs in order to understand. Some clues can help the learner to draw his/her attention (“look at the title”), to skip information that is not particularly important (“skip that information”) or to provide hints in order to continue the comprehension process. He/she did not need to give any grammatical explanations.

Finally, it can be concluded that the role of the trainers is essentially that of being a guide rather than a teacher. What tutors really need to teach are a few formulas or linguistic facts, which in any case the best students will be able to discover by themselves. Trainers should keep this basic thought in mind every time they lead a session, which is, as Blanche-Benveniste and Valli (1997) stated “students learn what they find out by themselves.”

## STRATEGIES IN WRITTEN INTERCOMPREHENSION

Understanding a written text is a complex activity that requires an interaction between the text itself and the reader. Like the famous Matryoshka dolls, each of these two elements, the text and the reader, consist of some other “pieces”: the text is the product of the choices of the author, who encoded some meanings, linked to specific intentions, in a linear sequence of words. The reader decodes the text, gives his meaning to written words, according to his/her background, the knowledge of the topic and of the language, the expectations and goals of reading. The reader may decide to intentionally activate some procedures to reach a reading goal, that is using one or more strategies, and when reading texts in a different foreign language the process becomes inevitably more complex.

Decades of research in the field of second language learning have shown the pivotal role of the learner's strategies in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies, since a good use of strategies is linked to success in learning (Grenfell and Macaro, 2007).

Following their crucial place in learning, here below, we will discuss some definitions of learning strategies and their main classifications. After discussing how language strategies are considered in various reference frameworks, we will focus on their role in teaching IC, in particular in the EuRom methodology.

## Defining Learning Strategies

Strategies and processes are two different things. As stated in Cohen and Upton (2006: 2), “while processes are general, subconscious or unconscious, and more automatic, strategies are subject to control, more intentional, and used to act upon the processes.” This clearly means that the learner has different degrees of intentionality and control of both of them.

In a well-known definition of Oxford (1990), learning strategies are “behaviors or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable.” Despite early research on learner strategies focused mainly on identifying the features of the good learner (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975; Naiman et al., 1996), that suggests various strategy classifications, in the last forty years, interest in this topic has spread widely, highlighting important problematic issues, such as the degree of the connection between strategy awareness and success in L2, or the real possibility of teaching strategies.

Even though for some researchers entering the learners’ mind remains only a remote possibility (and for others it is something not possible at all), nowadays some claims appear to be generally accepted by the international community of researchers in this field, as stated in Grenfell and Macaro (2007):

- (1) Learner strategies are accessible and can be described.
- (2) A strategy is a construct that can be defined also in practical terms.
- (3) Strategies are important because they are associated with successful learning.
- (4) Some learners are more likely to use strategies or use them more successfully than others.
- (5) Strategies can be taught and learners, as a result, can develop more effective strategic behavior.

In particular, since “strategies are not necessarily good in themselves” (McDonough, 1995, p. 81), growing attention has been paid to analysing the specific contexts of use of different strategies in learning second languages, the quality of the individual’s strategic choices, the metacognitive aspects, as well as the many variables involved, such as working memory, motivation and linguistic resources (Macaro, 2001).

## Cognitive, Metacognitive, and Socio-Affective Strategies

As stated above, in an effort to fulfill a task such as reading a text in a foreign language, readers rely on their own regulating system, by choosing from a variety of strategies, according to their main reading goal. Since the 1980s, a growing number of studies has been focusing on the identification and classification of learners’ strategies, as in O’Malley and Chamot (1990), who suggest that learners’ strategies can be divided into three types: (1) cognitive, (2) metacognitive, and (3) socio-affective. The first type refers to

the mental processing of language, oriented to achieving goals or solving problems; the second type controls the cognitive process; the third type refers to all those strategic actions linked to social and affective aspects.

A different classification is in Oxford (1990), who proposes to distinguish direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies involve the direct usage of the target language(s); indirect strategies support learning, without necessarily involving the target language(s).

About two decades later, in the Strategic Self-Regulation Model (or “S<sup>2</sup>R”) Oxford (2011) defines cognitive strategies as “the construction workers”, since they allow the learner to build “schemas”—internal mental representations—as well as more elaborate, integrated and automatic structures. The author identifies six cognitive strategies: using the senses to understand and remember; activating knowledge; reasoning; conceptualizing with details; conceptualizing broadly; going beyond the immediate data. These strategies should be under the control of metacognitive strategies, since they should be ideally used in a planned and organized way. In the context of reading in one/more foreign language(s), that means being able to classify, underline, transfer, use tools such as dictionaries and glossaries, make inferences to deduce the meaning of a word, simplify (for example, by ignoring optional elements or paraphrasing), or not lose the thread.

The author places the ability to self-regulate at the center of the model: the metacognitive strategies are defined as “deliberate, goal-directed attempts to manage and control efforts to learn the L2” (Afflerbach et al., 2008, cited by Oxford, 2011) and are considered “the construction manager”: their function is to direct, arrange, obtain resources, coordinate, monitor and evaluate the construction of L2 knowledge. Actually, many studies present the key role of metacognitive strategies in dealing with an L2. For example, Vandergrift et al. (2006) and Vandergrift (2007), show the existence of a positive correlation between the use of metacognitive strategies and proficiency in oral comprehension.

In his “S<sup>2</sup>R” model, the author mentions eight metacognitive strategies: paying attention to cognition; planning for cognition; obtaining and using resources for cognition; organizing cognition; implementing plans for cognition; orchestrating cognitive strategy use; monitoring cognition; evaluating cognition.

The third type of strategy, the socio-affective strategies, refers to how the reader interacts with the text, the professor and the peers, such as asking for explanations, cooperating with peers to solve problems, and getting information.

Although it is the way each reader mixes various strategies that makes the difference, Hosenfeld (1984) identifies some general features characterizing those who perform better at reading in a second language: they usually read large portions of text, keeping in mind their global meaning and ignoring the secondary elements in the text. They show a positive attitude toward reading and are more aware of the reading process, showing a greater ability to control it and adjust it according to their reading goals. They are also more capable of verbally expressing such awareness.

We can observe that these findings once again prove the link between metalinguistic awareness and proficiency.

## LANGUAGE STRATEGIES IN REFERENCE FRAMEWORKS: CLUES FOR DESCRIBING IC USE OF STRATEGIES

The consideration that we present here takes places at a very crucial moment for IC studies. IC-based instruction has developed increasingly in recent years and more attention has been drawn from educational institutions to the need of creating assessment tools so far inexistent (Jamet, 2010; Carrasco, 2011; Bonvino and Faone, 2016; Carrasco Perea and De Carlo, 2016). An important reflection in this direction is represented by the ongoing project EVAL-IC [Évaluation des compétences en intercompréhension (Assessing Intercomprehension Competences)] that aims at creating an assessment tool. Subsequently, a reflection on the use of strategies is needed in order to contribute further elements to the debate around this issue.

Thus, in this section, and considering the theoretical background presented in the previous section, we will take into account four frameworks in order to analyze how they describe the strategies related to the EuRom methodology and to reflect how those frameworks can help in the development of an assessment tool for receptive IC courses. The works taken into consideration are:

1. CEFR—Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Companion volume with new descriptors (Council of Europe, 2017).
2. MAGICC—Modularizing multilingual and multicultural academic and professional communication competence for BA and MA level (Räsänen et al., 2013).
3. FREPA—Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (Candelier et al., 2010).
4. REFIC—*Référentiel de compétences de communication plurilingue en intercompréhension* [Framework of Plurilingual Communicative Competences in Intercomprehension] (De Carlo et al., 2015).

### CEFR—Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The CEFR, in its new edition, describes the communicative language strategies as “a kind of hinge between communicative language competence and communicative language activities” (Council of Europe, 2017: 32). The type of strategies presented in the CEFR are not explicitly—but evidently—metacognitive. The four types of metacognitive strategies (planning, execution, evaluation, and repair) are summarized in three types and correlated to the four types of communicative activities (reception, production, interaction, and mediation) as is shown in this list (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 33):

- Planning
  - Reception
- Execution
  - Reception
    - Inferring
  - Production
    - Compensating
  - Interaction
    - Turn-taking
    - Cooperating
  - Mediation
    - Linking to previous knowledge
    - Adapting language
    - Breaking down complicated info
    - Amplifying a dense text
    - Streamlining a text
- Evaluation and repair
  - Reception
    - Monitoring
  - Production
    - Monitoring and self-correction
  - Interaction
    - Asking for clarification
    - Communication repair

For the purposes of this paper, we will focus on reception and mediation strategies as those are closely related to EuRom activities.

The only scale for reception strategies presented in the CEFR is “Identifying cues and inferring (spoken and written).” It operationalizes the following concepts: exploiting paralinguistic information (illustrations, formatting, headings, subtitles, position in the text, etc.); inferring information from the co-text and linguistic context, and exploitation of linguistic clues (numbers, proper nouns, prefixes and suffixes, temporal and logical connectors). The descriptors for B1 and B2 levels are presented as follows:

“**B2**: Can use a variety of strategies to achieve comprehension, including listening for main points; checking comprehension by using contextual clues (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 66).”

“**B1**: Can exploit different types of connectors (numerical, temporal, logical) and the role of key paragraphs in the overall organization, in order to gain a better understand the argumentation in a text.

Can extrapolate the meaning of a section of a text by taking into account the text as a whole.



Can identify unfamiliar words from the context on topics related to his/her field and interests.

Can extrapolate the meaning of occasional unknown words from the context and deduce sentence meaning provided the topic discussed is familiar.

Can make basic inferences or predictions about text content from headings, titles or headlines.

Can listen to a short narrative and predict what will happen next.

Can follow a line of argument or the sequence of events in a story, by focusing on common logical connectors (e.g., however, because) and temporal connectors (e.g., after that, beforehand).

Can deduce the probable meaning of unknown words in a written text by identifying their constituent part (e.g., identifying word roots, lexical elements, suffixes and prefixes) (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 66)."

In our experience with EuRom, we have observed that IC user's competences, typically well-educated plurilingual students, tend to be—even upon first contact with other Romance languages other than their own—on a level corresponding to upper B1, or even B2, as described in the scale presented in the previous list. That means that a EuRom user, using a top-down approach, is able to infer the meaning of the unknown words, but most words in IC are unknown and known at the same time, this is because transparency allows one to recognize familiarity in words even if those words have never been introduced before. Nonetheless, little can be said about lower descriptors since EuRom texts are not provided with images (illustrations, icons: pre-A1)<sup>12</sup>, the topics are related to shared information but not familiar (A1, A2), nor simple (A1). Moreover, it has been observed that logical and temporal connectors (lower B1) are elements that create comprehension difficulties, since they tend to be less transparent from one language to another.

In this exploratory reflection about the relation between EuRom and strategies in CEFR, a brief analysis on mediation strategies is needed. The mediation in the CEFR is conceived as the activity in which the user/learner acts as language user, and "helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, sometimes from one language to another (cross-linguistic mediation)" (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 99). As it was discussed in section Intercomprehension, (inter)comprehension is the process through which a language user constructs meaning from a text. In mediation activities, the meaning is conveyed from an unknown language into the listener's common language. The transposition of sense protocol, adopted by EuRom, allows the learner to face this kind of task in a communicative way, even if the transposition is only a technique to verify the reader's comprehension. The scale "Processing text in speech" refers to the activity of "understanding the information and/or arguments included in the source text and then transferring these to another text, usually in a more condensed form, in a way that is appropriate to the context of situation," and the descriptor for B1 level appear as follows:

"B1: Can summarize (in Language B) the main points made in long spoken texts (in Language A) on topics in his/her fields of interest, provided that standard language is used and that he/she can check the meaning of certain expressions.

Can summarize (in Language B) a short narrative or article, a talk, discussion, interview or documentary (in Language A) and answer further questions about details.

Can collate short pieces of information from several sources (in Language A) and summarize them (in Language B) for somebody else.

Can summarize (in Language B) the main points made in clear, well-structured spoken and written texts (in Language A) on subjects that are familiar or of personal interest, although his/her lexical limitations cause difficulty with formulation at times.

Can summarize simply (in Language B) the main information content of straightforward texts (in Language A) on familiar subjects (e.g., a short written interview or magazine article, a travel brochure).

Can summarize (in Language B) the main points made during a conversation (in Language A) on a subject of personal or current interest, provided that the speakers articulated clearly in standard language.

Can summarize (in Language B) the main points made in long texts (delivered orally in Language A) on topics in his/her fields of interest, provided that standard language is used and that he/she can listen several times.

Can summarize (in Language B) the main points or events in TV programmes and video clips (in Language A), provided he/she can view them several times (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 107)."

This description is close enough to the task requested of students in EuRom courses. In EuRom context, as for every IC-based methodology involving Romance languages, Language A can be one of the four languages targeted, whilst Language B is typically the learner's native language or a bridge language that works as a pivot language. Yet again, the description for the upper B1 seems to correspond to EuRom's goals. The target texts in EuRom's task are narrative articles and texts in several A Languages in a plurilingual approach, and are proposed to the student with the task of extracting the information and re-elaborating it in a new text in Language B. The lower descriptors (lower B1, A2, and A1) do not correspond, since they are related to a familiar domain (lower B1 and A2), and imply the use of paralinguistic elements (A1 and A2) and limited length of the text (A1, A2, and lower B1).

Nonetheless, the scale presented in the previous list cannot perfectly fit into EuRom context since, as we said above, we adopt a plurilingual approach that does not emerge from the scale. Moreover, even if listening is present in EuRom tasks, it is not a target skill.

The scale "Streamlining a text" is also related to EuRom goals. This scale presents strategies related to "pruning a written text to its essential message(s)". The descriptor for B1 level is presented as follows:

"B1: Can identify and mark (e.g., underline, highlight etc.) the essential information in a straightforward, informational text, in order to pass this information on to someone else (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 128)."

<sup>12</sup>For all the descriptors discussed here but not presented, we invite you to see CEFR—Volume with new descriptors URL: <https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989>

Once again, B1 level is the best descriptor for strategies targeted in EuRom, i.e., the learner is able to select the essential information in order to transfer it to someone else. But yet again, the lower descriptors do not fit EuRom activities because they are related to familiar topics or short texts, whilst upper descriptors foresee the manipulation of the text according to the audience and to pragmatic traits (coherence and cohesion), that is never pursued in EuRom's goals.

## MAGICC—Modularizing Multilingual and Multicultural Academic and Professional Communication Competence for BA and MA Level

The MAGICC (Modularizing multilingual and multicultural academic and professional communication competence for BA and MA level) is a project funded with support from the European Commission that considers multilingual and multicultural skills essential for living, studying and working in a globalized world and a multicultural society. It proposes linguistic diversity instead of a single lingua franca and, for that reason, presupposes for receptive intercomprehension (at least) a B2 level in a foreign language(s). It has adopted an (e-)portfolio approach. The general goal of the MAGICC project is to guide the learner into a “use [of] a variety of strategies to manage the coexistence of several languages in reading situation and employ one's own multilingual profile to strengthen, enrich and diversify access to information, processing, retaining and classifying new information” (Räsänen et al., 2013). This framework distinguishes three distinct levels of competence (basic, satisfactory and full) and, as the CEFR, groups the strategies into the metacognitive category: planning, execution (I and II), and assessment.

Regarding the planning category, presented below in **Table 3**, the descriptors refer to the learner's capacity of activating and using their prior knowledge to build hypotheses in order to construct the meaning of the text to be read. This scale fits perfectly to EuRom aims since the scale takes into account some crucial elements: the co-existence of several languages in reading, and attributes a primary role to the top-down process that, as we have observed, is one of the most critical strategies that EuRom readers tend to neglect.

Execution strategies are presented in **Tables 4, 5**. The category in **Table 4** refers to overviewing, decoding strategies, reference tools, and the scale aims at observing whether the language user uses appropriate strategies for rapid access to the text; applies inferring and decoding strategies to retrieve information and meaning; and locates and use appropriate resources for information and assistance (Räsänen et al., 2013). The descriptors seem to be suitable for describing EuRom goals, because they explicitly refers to the use of references tools—in the case of EuRom provided directly in the handbook—and strategies for accessing, overviewing, assessing, inferring and decoding. Nonetheless, the descriptors appear a little vague because it is not clear what is meant by “other inferring and decoding strategies” and “a variety of strategies.”

**TABLE 3 |** Planning strategies in MAGICC project.

Planning	
Full	Knows in depth what way own multilingual and multicultural repertoire and prior knowledge and competences can be useful for effective reading. Fully activates prior knowledge and competences and uses own repertoire for pre-organizational purposes for reading and managing the co-existence of several languages in reading. Is fully able to build hypotheses based on text(s) to read.
Satisfactory	Has some coherent knowledge on how own multilingual and multicultural repertoire and prior knowledge and competences can be useful for effective reading. Generally activates prior knowledge and competences and uses own repertoire for pre-organizational purposes for reading and managing the co-existence of several languages in reading. Is generally able to build hypotheses on text(s) to read.
Basic	Knows that own multilingual and multicultural repertoire and prior knowledge and competences can be useful for effective reading but cannot identify these precisely or only very fragmentarily. Analyses and uses prior knowledge and competences and own repertoire unsystematically and in an improvised manner for pre-organizational purposes for reading and managing the co-existence of several languages in reading. May attempt to build hypotheses on text (s) to read.

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The scale “Effectiveness in execution (II)” refers to the use strategies to optimize understanding and the use of information for further use. As for the latter scale, in these descriptors some primary aspects for EuRom methodology are focused: control of time and checking strategies. Nevertheless, organization of information for further use appropriately is a task-related strategy not easy to observe. One should read only to be informed about a topic or simply to understand the main topic of the article. Additionally, it is not clear what is meant by “a variety of visual techniques” since the term “strategy” and “technique” are not necessarily interchangeable.

The last scale proposed by MAGICC project “Assessment and reflection,” and presented in **Table 6**, refers to the metacognitive capacity of the student of reflecting on his/her own strategies in order to broaden his/her multilingual and multicultural repertoire. Even if the descriptors aim at some very important aspects of the assessing category, their formulation is again too vague and subsequently the scale appears too difficult to be used.

## REFIC—Referentiel de Competences de Communication Plurilingue en Intercomprehension [Framework of Plurilingual Communicative Competences in Intercomprehension]

REFIC describes three competence levels: consciousness raising, training and improvement. This framework forms a guide for the programming of training and a basis for the evaluation of acquired skills as part of the multilingual groundwork for the

**TABLE 4 |** Effectiveness in execution (I) strategies in MAGICC project.

Effectiveness in execution I	
Full	Flexibly applies a variety of appropriate strategies for accessing, overviewing and assessing texts. Applies flexibly and appropriately a variety of translanguaging and other inferring and decoding strategies to retrieve information and meaning. Locates and effectively uses appropriate reference tools and other on or off-line references.
Satisfactory	Applies some appropriate strategies for accessing, overviewing and assessing texts. Generally applies translanguaging and other inferring and decoding strategies to retrieve information and meaning. Locates and uses with some ease reasonably appropriate reference tools and on and off-line references.
Basic	Rarely applies appropriate strategies to accessing, overviewing and assessing texts or in a very limited way. Rarely applies translanguaging and other inferring and decoding strategies to retrieve information and meaning. Rarely locates and uses appropriate reference tools and other on or off-line references.

**TABLE 5 |** Effectiveness in execution (II) strategies in MAGICC project.

Effectiveness in execution II	
Full	Fully applies checking strategies to optimize understanding. Effectively uses a variety of visual techniques to strengthen understanding. Fully organizes information for further use appropriately. Shows excellent control of time and affective factors for effective reading.
Satisfactory	Generally applies checking strategies to optimize understanding. Generally uses effectively a variety of visual techniques to strengthen understanding. Generally organizes information for further use appropriately. Shows some control of time and affective factors for effective reading.
Basic	Rarely uses checking strategies to optimize understanding. Rarely or ineffectively uses visual techniques to strengthen understanding. Rarely organizes information for further use appropriately. Shows only little control of time and affective factors for effective reading.

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languages' learning process such as intercomprehension, namely a groundwork that gives priority to receptive skills in order to read, listen or interact each in our own language.

In **Table 7** the descriptors related to metalinguistic and metacognitive strategies are presented. The descriptors are focused on the ability to rely on the language(s) known to reach other languages, to operate the similarities between languages of the same family (or not), to resort to the processes of inference, to discover in an autonomous way the functioning of linguistic systems by the observation of analogies, of the links between the written forms and the sounds, of the lexical transparency.

**TABLE 6 |** Assessment and reflection strategies in MAGICC project.

Assessment and reflection	
Full	Analyses, assesses and reflects in a systematic and principled/criteria/theory-based way on own reading strategies. Effectively exploits reading activity to extend own multilingual and multicultural profile.
Satisfactory	Analyses, assesses and reflects on own reading strategies based on some coherent knowledge and basic strategy. Exploits reading activity reasonably well to extend own multilingual and multicultural profile.
Basic	Shows only some understanding of own reading strategies and assesses and reflects on them unsystematically. Exploits reading activity unsystematically and often inappropriately to extend own multilingual and multicultural profile.

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**TABLE 7 |** Strategies in REFIC framework.

Level	Descriptor
Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal and autonomous management of one's plurilingual-intercomprehensive know-how.</li> <li>• Ability to mobilize diversified strategies according to their adaptation to the situation of intercomprehensive communication.</li> <li>• Ability to understand false friends through context.</li> </ul>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity to implement autonomously the strategies learned at level 1.</li> <li>• Ability to describe, through the comparison, the language systems (understanding semi-transparent words through context, formulating opaque word meaning hypotheses through context).</li> </ul>
Consciousness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of one's own profile as a multilingual learner-user.</li> <li>• Deconditioning in relation to certain prior learning.</li> <li>• Shift from a monolingual paradigm to a plurilingual paradigm.</li> <li>• Discovery of the IC principles/strategies that will be put in place thanks to the guidance of the IC trainer.</li> <li>• Capacity to formulate hypotheses on the functioning of linguistic systems spontaneously, without the use of metalanguage, by comparing them.</li> </ul>

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REFIC's descriptors are undoubtedly a very valid resource. The idea of being able to manage meaning construction, e.g., through the disambiguation of false friends, is a very important ability. However, the descriptors are mostly vague which renders it difficult to operationalize them. For example, it is not clear what kind of IC strategies the learner will activate through the guidance of the trainer and the exact meaning of the "certain" prior learning of which the learner has to be deconditioned. Furthermore, the deconditioning, shift, and awareness should not be considered as strategies but as processes or states. In the same way, the capacity of describing language systems should not be intended as a strategy but as declarative knowledge.

## FREPA—Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures

The FREPA is a document created by the project group ALC (À travers les Langues et les Cultures [Through Languages and Cultures]), that constitutes a tool of fundamental importance for the development of competences, since it identifies a set of skills and resources, in the development of which plural approaches to languages and cultures play a leading role. Pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures involve teaching/learning activities that bring together more than one linguistic and cultural variety at the same time. FREPA is the only framework, taken into consideration in this paper, that is not articulated in levels and presents a repertoire of descriptors organized according to four dimensions: global competences, knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

In this section, we extracted from the FREPA some descriptors that are suitable to describe skills and competences developed through EuRom methodology. In **Table 8**, we present the strategies divided into three main categories proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990): cognitives, metacognitives, and socio-affectives. The formulation of these descriptors is in general clearer and more precise than in the other frameworks analyzed (e.g., divide compound words, isolate units of script, recognize words of different origin, etc.).

As a corollary of this analysis, we can draw some conclusions that will be developed in the next section. In general, as we discussed above, there are numerous helpful elements in the frameworks related to the description of strategies such as the articulation in different types of strategies (cognitive, metacognitive, socio-affective) and in different phases (planning, monitoring, assessing). Moreover, some descriptors provide concrete descriptions of strategies. Nevertheless, none of the existing frameworks in which the receptive skills are considered can be fully satisfactory to describe strategies used in EuRom methodology. Some descriptors take into consideration different text types—in relation to length (typically short texts) or topic (familiar)—that are not covered in EuRom courses.

## TEACHING STRATEGIES IN THE EUROM METHODOLOGY

In section Cognitive, Metacognitive, and Socio-Affective Strategies, we saw the key role of awareness for a good reading performance. It follows that teaching strategies may allow students to be aware of the strategies they use, self-evaluate the strategies used, learn and practice new strategies and use them in new tasks (Chamot, 2004).

Although the positive effects of strategy intervention on the learners' self-management ability are well-known in SLA studies (Rubin, 2005; Rubin et al., 2007) and while using plurilingual teaching materials to simultaneously work on several target languages leads to activating interlinguistic comprehension strategies, research on explicit teaching of strategies in written IC contexts is not very common.

Degache (2001) discusses the results of a study on metalinguistic reflection in the Galatea Project, showing the

advantages this reflection has on enhancing the comprehension ability of the students involved in the project. Chazot (2012) identifies cognitive and metacognitive strategies used by some users of Limbo.

In Bonvino et al. (2018), a EuRom5 Model for teaching strategies is presented in its key features: according to it, knowledge awareness and the use of strategies have a central role. Furthermore, it is crucial to provide students with opportunities to practice the strategies and to learn to use them autonomously. Finally, students should be able to evaluate which strategies to use depending on the task they are supposed to do and whether a strategy works effectively.

Below we summarize the distinctive aspects of the EuRom5 Model for teaching strategies in IC context:

- Exposure to a text: Learners are exposed to a text in a language never studied before; learners use their own strategies for understanding it.
- Transposition of meaning: Trainer asks a student to translate the text into his/her L1. By doing so, teacher and other students observe the strategies used by the learner.
- Think aloud: While translating to L1, the learner is asked to explicitly state his/her strategies for understanding the text.
- Alternating top-down/ bottom-up: When in trouble, teacher asks student to use inferencing strategies.
- Eliciting through questions: Teacher continuously asks the student to use metacognitive strategies to plan, monitor and evaluate comprehension.
- Resourcing: When necessary, teacher asks the learner to use tools for incomprehensible elements (dictionary, grammar explanation, etc.).
- Focused practice: Students apply strategies to reading new texts in other target languages.

As indicated above, the approach to IC gives great importance to the understanding process and the development of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. In the EuRom5 methodology, worthy of note is the technique of the “transposition of meaning into L1”: learners are required to put the flow of their thoughts on record during a silent reading and make a sort of “translation” at the same time, even approximate, of the text in front of the class. This technique recalls the *think-aloud protocol* (or *verbal report*) and prioritizes careful observation and the class sharing of the strategies used by readers while reading, with the objective of highlighting the cognitive process carried out. Although some researchers have criticized this technique<sup>13</sup>, the EuRom5 experience shows the positive effects (even partial) of recording everything for teaching purposes, especially regarding the learners' eventual awareness/recognition of the cognitive and metacognitive strategies for reading.<sup>14</sup>

In this regard, Fiorenza (2017) offers a mapping of the learners' and tutors' strategies that emerged during various courses in IC with the EuRom5 materials and methodology,

<sup>13</sup>For a debate on the usefulness of the *Think-aloud* protocol in L2, see the review by Bowles (2010).

<sup>14</sup>Another example of how strategies for comprehension are implicit in IC training is the description of the EuroCom project (see Meissner et al., 2004).



**TABLE 8** | Comprehension and learning strategies in FREPA<sup>15</sup>.

Reference	Descriptor
<b>COGNITIVE STRATEGIES</b>	
S-1.1.3.	Can resort to a known language/culture with a view to development of analysis of another language/culture
S-1.3.1	Can isolate units of script (/sentences/words/minimal units/
S-1.3.2	Where these exist, can establish correspondences between script and sound
S-1.4.1	Can divide compound words into their constituent words
S-1.4.2	Can analyze a syntactic structure in an unfamiliar language once it is repeated using different lexical units
S-1.4.3	Can accede, at least partially, to the meaning of an utterance in a little known or unknown language by identifying words and by analysing the syntactic/morphosyntactic structure of that utterance
S-1.5.1	Can analyze the links between pragmatic forms and functions [speech acts]
S-1.5.2	Can analyze the relationship between form and context/situation
S-2.3	Can make use of linguistic evidence to identify [recognize] words of different origin
S-5.1	Can construct a set of hypotheses/a « hypothetical grammar » about affinities or differences between languages
S-5.2	Can identify « transfer bases » <features of a language which allow a transfer of knowledge between languages [interlingual]/within a language [intra lingual]>
S-5.3	Can make interlingual transfers (/transfers of recognition <which establish a link between an identified feature of a known language and a feature one seeks to identify in an unfamiliar language>/transfers of production <an activity of language production in an unfamiliar language>/) from a known language to an unfamiliar one
S-7.6.1.1	Can make use of linguistic tools of reference {bilingual dictionaries, grammar manuals ... }
<b>METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES</b>	
S-5.5	Can check the validity of transfers which have been made
S-5.6	Can identify one's own reading strategies in the first language (L1) and apply them to the second language (L2)
S-7.7.1	Can identify his/her own learning needs/objectives
S-7.7.2	Can deliberately apply learning strategies
S-7.7.4	Can observe/check his/her own learning process
K-7.5	Knows that there are different strategies for learning languages and that the different strategies are not equally relevant in view of the learning objectives of the learner
K-7.5.1	Knows about different strategies and their relevance {listening and repeating, copying out several times, translating, attempting to construct utterances...}
K-7.6	Knows that it is useful to be well aware of learning strategies one uses in order to be able to adapt them to one's specific objectives
<b>SOCIO-AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES</b>	
S-7.6.1.2	Can resort to other persons in order to learn (/can ask an interlocutor to correct mistakes/can ask for information or explanations/)

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showing encouraging results in terms of raising the participants' ability to use self-management strategies. In particular, nine different strategies could be traced, and they are: *repetition*, *global approach*, *approximation*, *listening*, *transparency*, *context* (extra-textual and textual), *guessing*, *resourcing* and "meta" (metalinguistic and metacognitive strategies). In addition, a kind of "profile of the good learner" of EuRom5 has been traced. The main features that emerged were a high "tolerance of ambiguity" (Cyr, 1996), as the ability to accept partial understanding for a long time; attitude of problem-solver, which refers to using a wide assortment of strategies, considering various possibilities, before giving up; mindful and repeated movements on the syntagmatic and paradigmatic levels, intended as the ability to consider a varied range of relations holding between elements; awareness of loose and porous boundaries among languages. This last feature is also the bridge that usually leads learners to acquire a new, more open perspective on foreign languages.

<sup>15</sup>In references, "S" stands for "Skills," and "K" stands for "Knowledge."

## CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, in order to propose some reflections about the use of strategies in the multilingual setting constituted by IC-based methodologies, we presented the definition of this vast field of studies (section Intercomprehension), its principles (section History/Evolution of the Concept) and the principal methodologies to teach it (section Teaching Intercomprehension: Materials and Principles). Among these tools, we focused on EuRom methodology since we participated in the elaboration of the EuRom5 handbook as coordinator and scientific collaborators. EuRom is a widely known IC-based methodology that allows learners to rapidly reach a high level in reading skills in four Romance languages (section Reading and Understanding Other Languages). At the same time, it leads the users to train, and—possibly—acquire something we can call a "strategic toolbox", that is a variety of strategies, of paths to choose among and transfer to various contexts. Developing this complex competence in more than one language

means equipping oneself for solving almost any reading issues.

We then presented some considerations related to the research of second language strategies (section Strategies in Written Intercomprehension) and how those strategies have been operationalized in four frameworks for language teaching (section Language Strategies in Reference Frameworks: Clues for Describing IC Use of Strategies). As a conclusion of the analysis, we observed that none of the frameworks fully accounts for the multifaceted picture proposed in the EuRom methodology. This complex picture is confirmed also in the most recent research on the topic, where nine different strategies have been defined and a kind of “profile of the good learner” of EuRom5

has been traced (section Teaching Strategies in the EuRom Methodology).

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The paper is the result of the close collaboration of the authors; however, for academic purposes, EB is responsible for sections Intercomprehension to Teaching Intercomprehension: Materials and Principles; EF for sections Reading and Understanding Other Languages to Language Strategies in Reference Frameworks: Clues for Describing IC Use of Strategies; DC for sections CEFR—Common European Framework of Reference for Languages to Conclusion.

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