

Guide to Intercomprehension – understanding across languages

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Adapted from *Eurom5 Intercomprehension* textbook

The primary objective of intercomprehension is to develop an approximated understanding of Spanish texts that is progressive and refined with practice. These techniques, which can be used by students who have studied Spanish or any Romance language (eg. French, Italian, Portuguese), allow language learners to achieve a greater degree of independence.

1. If available, look at images, pictures, logos, or graphs first.

- What can you infer from the images?
- What feelings, mood, or tone can you infer from the pictures?
- Is it a governmental or institutional logo, or flag?
- What type of genre is this reading?

2. Identify the main idea.

- Start by reading the text or a portion of it, such as a group of sentences or a short paragraph, without stopping at every word you do not understand.
- Accept that you may only have an approximated understanding for some time.
- Assume that each text is really only about one main topic. This will bring you a sense of liberation.

3. Read the text aloud.

- Especially the first time that you read a text.
- By listening, instead of reading silently, one can more easily infer meanings and contexts based on intonation; such as questions. Sounds often reveal similarities between words in different languages (eg. between Spanish and English and/or French) that spelling obscures.

4. Use the “transposition technique.”

- Say aloud or write a sentence of the main idea you have identified from the text.
- This will never be a literal translation! It is a measurement that demonstrates the extent to which you have achieved general comprehension.

5. Look for “transparent zones.”

- These are parts of the text that have very similar words (sometimes identical) morphologically (i.e. biblioteca=biblio=book), or syntactical arrangement (subject+verb+object).
- To better use this technique divide words and/or sentences in parts.

6. Use “phantom words”

Phantom words can aid in intercomprehension by substituting a “possibility” for a word that you do not understand.

i.e. El director _____ un contrato

El director (signs) un contrato

El director (signed) un contrato

El director (will sign) un contrato

7. Practice a lot and keep trying!

And ENJOY the process of understanding each time more and more.