

Paul Nanu and Emilia Ivancu (Eds.). Limba română ca limbă străină. Metodologie și aplicabilitate culturală. Turun yliopisto, 2018. Pp. 1-169. ISBN: 978-951-29-7035-3 (Print) ISBN: 978-951-29-7036-0 (PDF)

Abstract:

Increasing preoccupations and interest manifested for the Romanian language as a foreign language compose a focused and clear expression in the volume “Romanian as a foreign language. Methodology and cultural applicability”, launched at the Turku University publishing house, Finland (2018).

The editors, Paul Nanu (Department of Romanian Language and Culture, University of Turku, Finland) and Emilia Ivancu (Department of Romanian Studies of the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań, Poland) with this volume, continue a series of activities dedicated to the promotion of the Romanian language and culture outside the country borders. This volume brings together a collection of articles, previously announced and briefly presented at a round table organized by the two Romanian lectors, as a section of the International Conference “Dialogue of cultures between tradition and modernity”, (Philological Research and Multicultural Dialogue Centre, Department of Philology, Faculty of History and Philology, “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia). The thirteen authors who sign the articles are teachers of Romanian as a foreign language, either in the country or abroad. The challenge launched by the organisers pointed both at the teaching methods of Romanian as a foreign language – including the authors’ reflections upon the available textbooks (Romanian language textbooks) and the cultural implications of this perspective on the Romanian language.

It is probably no accident that the first article of the aforementioned volume – “Particularities of teaching Romanian as a foreign language for the preparatory year. In quest of “the ideal textbook” (Cristina Sicoe, University of the West, Timișoara) – brings a strict perspective upon that what should be, from the author’s point of view, “the ideal textbook”. The fact that it does not exist, and has little chances ever to exist, could maybe be explained by the multitude of variables which appear in practice, within the didactic triangle composed by teacher – student – textbook. The character of the variables is the result of particular interactions established between the components of the triad.

A concurrent direction is pointed out by the considerations that make the object of the second article, “To a new textbook of Romanian language as a foreign language” (Ana-Maria Radu-Pop, University of the West, Timișoara). While the previous article was about an ideal textbook for foreign students in the preparatory year of Romanian, this time, the textbook in question has another target group, namely Erasmus students and students from Centres of foreign languages.

Considering that this kind of target group “forms a distinct category”, the author pleads for the necessity of editing adequate textbooks with a part made of themes, vocabulary, grammar and a part made of culture and civilization – the separation into parts belongs to the author – that should consider the needs of this target group, their short stay in Romania (three months to one year) and, last but not least, the students’ poor motivation. These distinctive notes turn the existent RFL textbooks[1] in that which the author calls “level crossings”, which she explains in a humorous manner[2].

Since the ideal manual seems to be in no hurry to appear, the administrative-logistic implications of teaching

Romanian as a foreign language (for the preparatory year) should be easier to align with the standards of efficiency. This matter is addressed by Mihaela Badea and Cristina Iridon from the Oil & Gas University of Ploiești, in the article “Administrative/logistic difficulties of teaching RFL. Case study”. Starting from a series of practical experiences, the authors are purposing to suggest “several ideas to improve existent methodologies of admitting foreign students and to review the ARACIS criteria from March 2017, regarding external evaluation of the ‘Romanian as a foreign language’ study programme”. Among other things, an external difficulty is highlighted (common to all universities in the country), namely the permission to register foreign students until the end of the first semester of the academic year, meaning around the middle of February. The authors punctually describe the unfortunate implications of this legal aspect and the regrettable consequences upon the quality of the educational act. They suggest that the deadline for admitting foreign students not exceed the 1st of December of every academic year.

The list of difficulties in teaching Romanian as a foreign language is extremely long, reaching sensitive aspects from an ethical perspective of multiculturalism. This approach belongs to Constantin Mladin from Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Macedonia, who writes about “The role of the ethical component in the learning process of a foreign language and culture. The Macedonian experience”. Therefore, we are moving towards the intercultural competences which, as the author states, are meant to “adequately and efficiently round the acquired language competences”. In today’s Macedonian society, that which the author refers to, a society claimed to be multiethnic, multilingual and pluriconfessional, the emotional component of an intercultural approach needs a particular attention. Thus, reconfigurations of the current didactic model are necessary. The solution proposed and successfully applied by Professor Constantin Mladin is that of shaking the natural directions in which a foreign language and culture is acquired: from the source language/culture towards the target language/culture. All this is proposed in the context in which the target group is extremely heterogeneous and its “emotional capacity of letting go of the ethnocentric attitudes and perceptions upon otherness” seem to lack.

When speaking about ‘barriers’, we often mean ‘difficulty’. The article written by Silvia Kried Stoian and Loredana Netedu from the Oil & Gas University of Ploiești, called “Barriers in the intercultural communication of foreign students in the preparatory year”, is the result of a micro-research done upon a group of 37 foreign students from 10 different countries/cultural spaces, belonging to different religions (plus atheists), speakers of different languages. From the start, there are many differences to be reconciled in a way reasonable enough to reduce most barriers that appear in their intercultural communication. Beneficial and obstructive factors – namely communication barriers – coexist in a complex communicational environment, which supposes identifying and solving the latter, in the aim of softening the cultural shock experienced within linguistic and cultural immersion. Several solutions are recommended by the two authors. An optimistic conclusion emerges in the end, namely the possibility that the initial inconvenient of the ethnical, linguistic and cultural heterogeneity become “an advantage in learning the Romanian language and acquiring intercultural communication”.

Total immersion (linguistic and cultural), as well as the advantage it represents as far as exposure to language is concerned, is the subject of the article entitled “Cultural immersion and exposure to language”, written by Adina Curta (“1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia). Considered to be a factor of rapid progress and effectiveness of acquisition, exposure to language that arises from the force of circumstances could be extended to that what may be named orchestrated exposure to language. This phrase is consented to reunite two types of resources, “a category of statutory resources, which are the CEFRL suggestions, and a category of particular resources, which should be the activities proposed by the organizers of the preparatory year of RFL”. In this respect, we are dealing with several alternating roles of the teacher who, besides being an expert, animator, facilitator of the learning process or technician, also becomes a cultural and linguistic coach, sending to the group of immersed students a beneficial message of professional and human polyvalence.

A particular experience is represented by teaching the Romanian language at the Sapienza University of Rome, Italy. This experience is presented by Nicoleta Neșu in the article “The Romanian language, between mother tongue and ethnic language. Case study”. The particular situation is generated by the nature of the target group, a group of students coming, on the one hand, from Romanian families, who, having lived in Italy since early childhood, have studied in the Italian language and are now studying the Romanian language (mother tongue, then ethnic language) as L1, and, on the other hand, Italian mother tongue students who study the Romanian language as a foreign language. The strategies that are used and the

didactic approach are constantly in need of particularization, depending on the statute that the studied language, namely the Romanian language, has in each case.

In the area of teaching methodology for Romanian as a foreign language, suggestions and analyses come from four authors, namely Eliana-Alina Popeți (West University of Timișoara), "Teaching the Romanian language to students from Romanian communities from Serbia. Vocabulary exercise", Georgeta Orian ("1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia) "The Romanian language in the rhythm of dance and hip-hop music", Coralia Telea ("1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia), "Explanation during the class of Romanian as a foreign language" and Emilia Ivancu (Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań, Poland), "Romanian (auto)biographic discourse or the effect of literature upon learning RFL".

The vocabulary exercise proposed to the students by Eliana-Alina Popeți is a didactic experiment through which the author checked the hypothesis according to which a visual didactic material eases the development of vocabulary, especially since the textual productions of the students, done through the technique that didactics calls "reading images", were video recorded and submitted to mutual evaluation as well as to self-evaluation of grammar, coherence and pronunciation. The role of the authentic iconographic document is attested in the didactics of modern languages, as the aforementioned experiment confirms once again the high coefficient of interest and attention of the students, as well as the vitality and authenticity of interaction within the work groups. It is worth mentioning that these students come from the Serbian Republic and are registered in the preparatory year at the Faculty of Letters, History and Theology of the West University of Timișoara. Most of them are speakers of different Romanian patois, only found on the territory of Serbia. The activity consisted of elaborating written texts starting from an image (a postcard reproducing a portrait of the Egyptian artist Eman Osama), imagining a possible biography of the character.

In the series of successful authentic documents in teaching-learning foreign languages, there is also the song. The activities described by Georgeta Orian were undertaken either with Erasmus students from the preparatory year at the "1 Decembrie 1989" University of Alba Iulia, or with Polish students (within the Department of Romanian Studies in Poznań), having high communication competences (B1-B2, or even more). There were five activities triggered by Romanian songs, chosen by criteria of sympathy with the interests of the target group: youngsters, late teenagers. The stake was "a more pleasant and, sometimes, a more useful learning process", mostly through discovery, through recourse to musical language, which has the advantage of breaking linguistic barriers in the aim of creating a common space in which the target language, a language of "the other", becomes the instrument of speaking about what connects us.

The didactic approach, when it comes to Romanian as a foreign language taught to students of the preparatory year cannot avoid the extremely popular method of the explanation. Its story is told by Coralia Telea. With a use of high scope, the explanation steps in in various moments and contexts: for transmitting new information, for underlining mechanisms generating new rules, in evaluation activities (result appreciation, progress measurements). Still, the limits of this method are not left out, among which the risk of the teachers to annoy their audience if overbidding this method.

Addressing (Polish) students from the Master's Studies Program within the Romania Philology at the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań, Emilia Ivancu crosses, through her article, the methodological dimensions of teaching Romanian as a foreign language, entering the curricular territory of the problematics in question by proposing an optional course entitled Romanian (auto)biographic discourse". Approaching contact with the Romanian language as a foreign language at an advanced level, the stakes of the approach and the proposed contents differ, obviously, from the ones only regarding the creation and development of the competence of communication in the Romanian Language. The studied texts have been grouped into correspondence/epistolary discourse, diaries, memoirs and (auto)biography as fiction. Vasile Alecsandri, Sanda Stolojan, Paul Goma, Neagoe Basarab, Norman Manea, Mircea Eliade are just a few of the writers concerned, submitted to discussions with the help of a theoretical toolbox, offered to the students as recordings of cultural broadcasts, like *Profesioniștii* or *Rezistența prin cultură* etc. The consequences of this complex approach consisted, on the one hand, of the expansion of the readings for the students and, on the other hand, in choosing to write dissertations on these topics. A "tangible" result of Emilia Ivancu's course is the elaboration of a volume entitled *România la persoana întâi, perspective la persoana a treia* (Romania in the first person, perspectives in the third person), containing seven articles written by Polish Master's students. Master's theses, a PhD thesis, several translations into the Polish language are also "fruits" of the initiated course. Of all these, the author extracted several conclusions supporting the merits and usefulness of

her initiative.

The volume ends with a review signed by Adina Curta (1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia), “The Romanian language, a modern, wanted language. Iuliana Wainberg-Drăghiciu – Textbook of Romanian language as a foreign language”. The textbook elaborated by Iuliana Wainberg-Drăghiciu (“1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia) respects the CEFRL suggestions, points at the communicative competences (linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic) described for levels A1 and A2, has a high degree of accessibility through a trilingual dictionary (Romanian-English-French) which it offers to foreign students and through the phonetic transcription of new vocabulary units.

Keywords: N/A