

Câteva aspecte privind dificultățile de comunicare în limba română ale studenților străini

Some aspects regarding the communication difficulties of foreign students in Romanian

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Abstract:

În învățarea limbii române de către studenții străini aceștia se pot lovi de diferite probleme gramaticale dificile, pentru că greșelile de limbă sunt parte integrantă a procesului de învățare a unei limbi străine. Printre modalitățile eficiente de abordare a dificultăților limbii române studenților străini se numără și dialogul structurat pe o anumită tematică, exercițiile țintite pe baza problemelor gramaticale, compozițiile libere ca bază a dezvoltării vocabularului. Comunicarea orală și scrisă este o componentă importantă a realizării actului discursiv și a actului de comunicare, cu atât mai mult cu cât se introduc noțiuni legate și de actele de vorbire și uneori de comunicarea non-verbală sau anumite competențe culturale (formule de politețe, registre ale limbii, modalități de comunicare în funcție de mediu/context). Organizarea procesului de predare-învățare a dificultăților limbii române ca limbă străină este una dintre problemele principale care persistă în fața specialiștilor din domeniu.

Cuvinte cheie: dificultate, comunicare, limba română, lingvistic, studenți străini

Abstract:

In the process of learning the Romanian language the foreign students may encounter various difficult grammatical problems, because language mistakes are an integral part of the process of learning a foreign language. Among the effective ways to approach the difficulties of the Romanian language for foreign students are the structured dialogue on a certain theme, targeted exercises based on grammatical problems, free compositions as a basis for vocabulary development. Oral and written communication is an important component of the realization of the discursive act and the act of communication, all the more so as notions related to speech acts and sometimes non-verbal communication or certain cultural skills are introduced (politeness formulas, registers of the language, ways of communication depending on the environment/context). The organization of the teaching-learning process of the difficulties of the Romanian language as a foreign language is one of the main problems that the specialists in the field still have to deal with.

Keywords: difficulty, communication, Romanian language, linguistic, foreign students

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Introduction

Linguistic education is a pedagogical training process oriented towards the formation of the communication culture of foreign students capable of communicating and interacting with natives, expressing their thoughts, moods, feelings, opinions, etc., for the solution of concrete problems in everyday life, in the life of student or in the life of future professionals integrated on the labor market in Romania.

Therefore, the reason for the interest of foreign students in learning the Romanian language is different: integration into the social environment, facilitating communication in various spheres, employment in the field of work, completing bachelor's / master's studies in Romanian, etc. The communicative competence of foreign students is formed gradually, because the communication process is complex and subject to gradualness by identifying the levels of communication competence.

Currently, all areas of life, the entire cultural universe gravitate around communication, it becoming a vast and passionate field of reflection, studies and achievements. Education is constantly expanding its scope, but communication will always be at its center. The didactic process must become for foreign students a communication experience, an experience of interpersonal relations, dialogue and collaboration, instead of a one-way knowledge transmission process. Moreover, it must become a means of removing the obstacles that stand in the way of communication between individuals, classes and social groups, between nations. Moreover, communication is made up of the fusion of all skills, but also of linguistic phenomena (phonetic, lexical, grammatical) that are utilized within the same learning unit. Linguistic communication activities represent concrete ways of implementing communication skills. Communicative activities are reception (oral and/or written), production (oral and/or written), interaction (exchange of messages, the interactive activity being more than reception + production, it means the construction of a common discourse) and mediation (translation and interpretations), accessible rewording of the text for one person upon request, etc.). Communication strategies must be acquired and put into practice by the user, in this case the foreign student, to make communication more efficient (Curta, 2013: 11). Motivation is also the cornerstone in the process of studying the Romanian language and literature as a foreign language, being the foundation on which educational success is built.

The use of communicative or interaction techniques in learning the Romanian language as a foreign language, in support of increasing the



degree of learning efficiency, is a really important source. Interaction methods increase the involvement and motivation of foreign students; the activity becomes deeper, the content is no longer offered "ready-made", but the student is the one who participates in the joy of discoveries through contact with others, becoming a part of the evolution of knowledge of any type. Communication becomes - both for the person in the chair and for the person being trained - more than a tool for the development of personal and social efficiency, it becomes a new philosophy of modern man's existence (Pânișoara, 2006: 406-409).

Language mistakes in the communication of foreign students in Romanian

According to language learning studies, the level of difficulty of a newly learned language depends on several factors. For example, how close the new language is to the native language or other known ones, how complex it is, how many hours are allocated each week to its study, as well as the motivation. Both for those who use Romanian as a second language and for those who study it as a foreign language, a series of difficulties may arise related to the specific grammatical structure.

In our case, a first obstacle can be represented even by the phonetic system of the Romanian language, because here we have some sounds (and letters) specific to our language, which can make it difficult for foreign students to communicate. So, to begin with, the sounds corresponding to certain letters and groups of letters (ă, î, â, ș, ț, ce, ci, che, chi, ge, gi, ghe, ghi, etc.) should be studied very well. Among the sounds specific to the Romanian language, it is not the consonants that present difficulties. The vast majority of errors are committed in pronouncing and writing vowels. Thus, to a greater or lesser extent, there appears the confusion between "ă" and "î" that does not exist in the mother tongue (especially in Arabic). In some cases, there are difficulties in the correct pronunciation of the diphthongs *ia* and *ea*, which result from the fact that in the Arabic language there is only one equivalent of the first. Another example of error is "i" - the sign of the plural, in phonetic realization it is confused with "î" - the definite article. Thus (*niște*) *pomi* [(some) trees], where "i" only softens the preceding consonant without constituting a separate syllable, is often pronounced by students in the same way as *pomii* (the trees). Another phonetic error is the mobile, unstable, irregular accentuation in the Romanian language of the full *i* - umbli, intri, afli; niște codri, niște miniștri; *i* short - see, sit, pour; trees, chickens, etc.; pronunciation of diphthongs - grass, leaf, dew; tasty, shady; and triphthongs - aripioară, soseau, creioane, etc.; phonetic alternations: he learns - to learn, he goes - to go, he speaks - to speak; young - young people,



word - words, saint - saints, etc. Unlike other languages, the position of the accent varies - diploma, driver, bus. It can be at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the word without any precise rule. For an Arabic speaker, for example, such a displacement of the accent produces many difficulties. In conclusion, it can be said that phonetic errors are caused in a very high percentage by the influence of the phonetic system of the mother tongue.

Oral communication has two values when it comes to studying a foreign language: conversation, respectively oral presentation. Because, as Ludmila Braniște points out, "the main objective of our activity is not to make foreign students learn, mechanically, the forms and rules of the Romanian language system, but to help them become able to extrapolate the acquired knowledge regarding how to functioning of the Romanian language system" (Braniște, 2005: 48) in real-life communication situations, and images, video materials (where possible) and games are extremely useful and effective means.

Although it is considered that the use of graphic support from the beginning of a course is a necessity, repeated experiences have proven that students who mastered the written text very well, being able to read it, identify different structures, were still not able to operate spontaneously with the skills of the language, in particular, they could not speak freely, or hold a conversation. This fact proves that the emphasis must still be placed on the communicative aspect.

Experience has shown that for Arab students the difference between b and p, for example, both in speaking and in writing, it was a difficulty (bread / băine), and for the speakers of Slavic languages a real test stone was the sound groups ce, ci, che, chi, ge, gi, ghe, ghi. After an oral period, the habit of acoustically distinguishing the sounds automatically led to the correct reproduction of the graphemes in the words that contain them. Also from the auditory point of view and the displacement of the accent, differentiations can be made between words, which, although they look the same (homographs), can confuse foreign students a little in correct communication, only the context managing to emphasize the true meaning. E.g:

- **haină** – El purta o **haină** frumoasă. (coat – He was wearing a nice coat.)
haină – Era o ființă **haină**. (wicked – He was a wicked being.)
- **voia** - Voia să vină și el la întâlnire. (wanted - He wanted to come to the meeting too.)
voia - Nu se poate face totul după **voia** ta. (will - Not everything can be done according to your will.)



- **veselă** - Este o fire foarte **veselă**. (cheerful - She is a very cheerful character.)
veselă - Și-a cumpărat **veselă** nouă. (crockery - He bought new crockery.)
- **umbrele** - Umbrele copacilor se oglindesc în apa lacului. (the shadows - The shadows of the trees are reflected in the water of the lake.)
umbrele - Când a plouat am avut nevoie de **umbrele**. (umbrellas - When it rained I needed umbrellas.)
- **acele** - Am observat târziu **acele** priviri semnificative. (those - Lately I noticed those meaningful looks.)
acele - Acele de cusut sunt pe masă. (needles - The sewing needles are on the table.)

In this type of contexts it is quite difficult for foreign students to understand that the same word can not only have different meanings but also be pronounced slightly differently depending on the accent. Another problematic aspect of foreign students' communication in Romanian is related to the use of the article or the agreement of the noun with the adjective, especially for Arabic speakers, where this agreement does not exist. So, expressions like: the boy is beautiful, the car is new, etc. are common at first. Regarding the erroneous use of the article, it is much too difficult for a foreigner to learn the agreement of the genitive article, especially when starting from explanations that show the connection between the possessed object and the possessor through the theoretical exposition of all relational possibilities. It is natural for the student to get lost in the multitude of situations and agreements. Everything seems much simpler if they are offered a practical learning solution, illustrated by examples, through application exercises and group dialogues, and after the students have mastered these usage formulas, we will continue with the situations in which the genitive article is used or not.

E.g:

- Mașina este a fratelui (a Ioanei, a colegilor.... / mașina, f. sg. - a, f. sg.) / The car is the brother's (Ioana's, colleagues'... / the car, f. sg. - a, f. sg.)
- Caietul este al studentului (al Ioanei, al elevilor... / caietul, n. sg. - al, n., sg.) / The notebook is the student's (Ioana's, the students'... / the notebook, n. sg. - al, n., sg.)
- Pantofii sunt ai tatălui (ai Ioanei, ai copiilor... / pantofii, m., pl. - ai, m., pl.) / The shoes are the father's (Ioana's, the children's... / the shoes, m., pl. - you, m., pl.)



- Florile sunt ale mamei (ale Ioanei, ale vecinilor.... / florile, f., pl. – ale, f., pl.) / The flowers are my mother's (Ioana's, the neighbors'... / the flowers, f., pl. – of, f., pl.)
- Jucăriile sunt ale copilului (ale Ioanei, ale copiilor.... / jucăriile, n., pl. – ale, n., pl.) / The toys are the child's (Ioana's, the children's.... / the toys, n., pl. – of, n., pl.)

Given the relatively small number of forms, the agreement of the article with the preceding noun should be simple; "in practice, however, given the close connection between the article and the word it accompanies, speakers are inclined to change the morphological aspect of the article according to the gender and number of the following noun and not according to the previous one" (Ocheșeanu, 1957: 27). The attraction exerted by the form of the attribute preceded by the article is a cause of disagreement: Incorrect - My cousin's two children are students. / Correct - My cousin's two children are students. According to the rule, the genitive article is always agreed with "the noun determined by the genitive and not with the one placed in the genitive, no matter how far from the genitive the determined noun is" (Ocheșeanu, 1957: 28).

In learning the Romanian language as a foreign language, structural exercises are a good way of fixing the grammatical notions learned, but it was found that they cannot overcome the formation of limited automatisms and cannot lead to free expression skills by themselves, being only a kind of exercises of "grammatical virtuosity" (Șerban, Ardeleanu, 1980: 54)

Learning a foreign language is a challenge that requires a lot of resources and effort. However, the use of reading in the study of modern languages is a practical solution that brings many benefits. Leveraging different types of texts can expose foreign students to authentic materials, creating an environment conducive to language immersion. It has already been noted that the primary meaning of the written message can be inferred based on the context, the reader having the opportunity to make pragmatic inferences during the reading, using his knowledge or imagination. In addition, reading is the most important and probably the fastest method of vocabulary enrichment, regardless of the language in which it is done. Even though memorizing lists of words can be done easily, it would not have long lasting results. That is why extensive reading and effective communication through sustained dialogue on different topics during the course hours proves to be an effective strategy for foreign students to ensure long-term language acquisition.

Obviously, learning a foreign language is a journey that involves a lot of effort, determination and motivation. Furthermore, learning styles



differ from student to student, and the claim of finding an ideal learning method might be exaggerated. However, learning a foreign language through reading is a realistic objective, the valorization of texts creating the opportunity to know world views, opinions, ideas through language, as a tool of knowledge. Texts remain an "authentic teaching resource that motivates, provides a real context, reflects the studied language and its culture, and prepares students for real-life situations" (Barnett, Marva, 1989: 145). Terminology specific to certain fields of activity is also very important in the communication of foreign students because, "Advanced communication is defined by terminology and, in fact, it is a general opinion that terminological structures are indeed the building blocks for language for specific purposes." (Chirițescu, Păunescu, 2021: 95)

Beyond terminology, grammatical structures and learning the most correct expression in a foreign language, an important component of communication is nonverbal valences: "Formulating a message based on the desires and expectations of your listener is far more relevant than just basing that message solely and naively on yourself and your gregarious selfish needs." (Lăpădat, L., Lăpădat, M.-M., 2021: 114)

Conclusion

The importance of discovering the mechanisms needed to communicate in Romanian as a foreign language by foreign students is vital to their adaptation in a foreign country. First of all, the teacher must demonstrate to the students that the correct use of grammatical forms is absolutely indispensable for the production of oral and written messages, especially in professional or academic contexts. A conversation lesson can pursue various goals, such as consolidating or updating knowledge, also developing the communicative competence of foreign students. Learning a language involves a lot of uncertainties, such as a new vocabulary discovered from day to day or for every grammatical rule there is a dialectic exception or an irregular verb. Until native fluency in a language is achieved, there will always be some level of ambiguity. Grammar is not the only aspect of a language that needs to be studied. In order to learn, improve knowledge and really use that language, it must, above all, be spoken.



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