THE LANGUAGE OF SOCIAL WORK – COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN ROMANIAN AND AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the terminology of social work with reference to the reality existing in Romania and to a general extent in the United States. We highlighted the most important examples of excessive synonymy, exemplifying eleven such situations that are created in certain activities in the professional social work environment. Also, we wanted to identify the elements of common terminology, but also the different terms in the social work language of the United States and Romania. The conclusions of the paper show that on both the theoretical and the methodological side, in Romania the social work language is loaded with English words, excessive inconsistencies and synonymy.

Keywords: terminology of social work, excessive synonymy, semantic inconsistencies

Introduction

The motivation of this paper starts from the fact that the study of the social work language is insufficiently analyzed from the scientific point of view, both internationally and especially in Romania. (Hall, Slembrouck, Sarangi, 2006)

In Romania, the specialized terminology in the field of social work is called specialized language, jargon or social work vocabulary and this

terminology has some important features:

a. There are terms borrowed from English;

b. There are concepts taken from the legal, medical or psychological field

c. There is a differentiation of language depending on the geographic areas of the country or the practice domain.

An important work in the field of social work language is the study made by Goian (2010), "*Zece categorii de inconsecvenţe semantice prezente în limbajul asistenţei sociale din spaţiul românesc*" (Ten cathegories of semantic inconsistencies present in the social work language in Romania) and also *Ethical dimensions of the social work language reflected in mass-media* (Goian, 2010). Thus, the author identified various fields where the language is marked by various inconsistencies:

- Semantic inconsistencies due to differences in the language of practitioners.
- Semantic inconsistencies present in the literature.
- Semantic inconsistencies present in the relevant legislation.
- Semantic inconsistencies present in specialized papers.
- Semantic inconsistencies present in the context of public presentations.
- Semantic inconsistencies developed by translators of specialized works.
- Semantic inconsistencies due to the different understanding of the specialized language by the beneficiaries.
- Semantic inconsistencies determined by concepts/phrases that may enhance the social exclusion status of beneficiaries.
- Semantic inconsistencies caused by ad hoc concepts created in certain academic areas by members of the academic body in the field.
- Semantic inconsistencies caused by the assumption and use by social workers of concepts in the medical, legal field, etc.
- Semantic inconsistencies present in the media.

Methodology

The aim of the present study is to analyze the language (terminology) of social work between Romania and the United States of America. The specific objectives of the study are the following:

1. To make a terminological inventory of the social work language of the two states.

2. To identify the role of Anglicisms in the terminology of Romanian social work.

The following hypotheses underpin the study:

- Comparatively, the language of social work in Romania has less specialized terms than the language in the United States of America.

- The dictionaries of social work published in Romania contain a large number of Anglicisms taken from the United States of America.
- The number of American dictionaries is more numerous, given the years of existence of social work in the United States.

To test the aforementioned hypotheses, we conducted a qualitative research on various works of dictionaries in Romania and the United States.

Results

Following an inventory of Robert Barker's Social Work Dictionary (+9000 social work concepts), edited by NASW in 2014, the Encyclopedia of Social Work (200 concepts) published at Polirom in 2016 and the Terminology Guide on Social Work (700 concepts) published in 2007 in Alba Iulia, we identified a number of 1109 social-work specific concepts that are common to the three papers, which clearly show a predominance of those who come from the work published in the United States of America. Under these circumstances, we can assert that hypothesis 1 is confirmed, as the language of social work in Romania has less specialized terms than the language in the United States.

In a comparative analysis of the three dictionaries used in the qualitative study, we have found the presence of a large number of anglicisms that can be divided into two categories: anglicisms taken with a correct filter that have been imposed in the literature and even in the Romanian Language Dictionary (*genogram, interview, ecomap, community*, etc.) and a second category, that of concepts taken without a correct filter, consisting of words that had a correspondent in Romanian (*client*, which has a commercial connotation and is more or less suitable than the concept of *beneficiary* or *assisted)*, or the concept used predominantly in the 1990s, which had a better correspondence in the already used *assessment.* We also note the inappropriate use of the *case-work*. The use of this concept has diminished as a result of finalization the process of preparing the *case management* syntax in Romania (management de caz). In these circumstances, we can assume that the second hypothesis is confirmed, due to the existence in the Romanian literature of concepts taken from English, especially from the North American literature.

For the third hypothesis, we used the Google Books search engine and obtained the following results: in the United States, we have identified three bibliographic reference sources: Robert Barker's Social Work Dictionary (which reached the 6th edition), a more comprehensive dictionary by the University of Montana and the Encyclopedia of Social Work, published by the National Association of Social Workers. In Romania, we have only two reference works, the Social Work Encyclopedia coordinated by George Neamţu and the Terminology Guide on Social Work. By conducting a comparative analysis we can conclude that there is some balance in quantitative terms

regarding the specialized dictionaries between the two states and therefore the hypothesis is partially confirmed, but it is relevant to say that the works in Romania are recently published and only in one edition, whereas the North American ones are high visibility works, known in the social workers' professional community and published in numerous editions (NASW Encyclopedia of Social work has reached the 20th edition).

Conclusions

The terminology of social work in the United States is much more varied than the one in Romania (we have inventoried over 9,000 words in Barker's dictionary as opposed to the 700 words in the Terminology Guide, or about 200 words in the Encyclopedia of Social Work). Also, the language of social work in Romania has a number of concepts that are anglicisms taken with a correct filter or others that are useless as there already are corresponding words in Romanian.

The comparative analysis of the number of dictionaries between the United States and Romania showed that there are no relevant quantitative differences (eg, three dictionaries of social work in the USA and two in Romania) but the element that makes up the difference lies in the number of added editions printed in the two countries. In Romania, both are published in one edition, and in the United States, in addition to much higher circulation, we have discovered that Barker is at the sixth edition, and the Encyclopedia of Social Work published by NASW is at the twentieth edition.

There is a difference in terminology between academics and practitioners, the latter using more concepts present in social work legislation, and those in the academic environment use English-language words.

Also, the ambiguity of language in social work can contribute to reducing the recuperative effects of a social intervention, thus it is a deontological responsibility for social workers in all areas of activity to always use the „cleanest" concept when referring to their beneficiaries and their situations. (Tomiță & Goian, 2009)

Also, by not using a proper and coherent language, we can enhace the stigma felt by the beneficiaries, which may create negative attitudes that can lead to discrimination and prejudice. (Gavrila-Ardelean, 2016)
The situations where the social worker refers to the same reality by excessive synonymy may cause the emergence of professional difficulties.

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