

## NEW PERSPECTIVES IN LEARNING ROMANIAN LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS AND SECTIONS TAUGHT IN HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE

**Mariana NOREL, Ph.D.**  
**Transilvania University of Braşov**  
**mariana\_norel@unitbv.ro**

**Abstract:** *Since September 2017, the new curricula for the 5th grade are valid (Annex 2 of OMEN no. 3393/28.02.2017), based on the framework plan approved by OMEN 3590/05.04.2016. For Romanian language and literature subject, there are two curricula: Romanian language and literature, 5th to 8th grades, and Romanian language and literature for schools and sections taught in Hungarian language, allowing pupils to use alternative textbooks. The secondary school curriculum, as well as alternative textbooks in order to study Romanian language and literature in schools and sections taught in Hungarian language continue the ones for primary school. This article highlights the importance of studying the Romanian language as the official and day-by-day communication language, by the students having a different mother tongue, and the opportunity which is offered to these students by the textbooks, through applying the communicative-functional model and through the pragmatic perspective of language study.*

**Keywords:** *curricula, communicative-functional model, textbook, language competence*

### 1. Introduction

Since September 2017, the new curricula for the 5th grade are valid (Annex 2 of OMEN no. 3393/28.02.2017), based on the framework plan approved by OMEN 3590/05.04.2016. For Romanian language and literature subject, there are two curricula: Romanian language and literature, 5th to 8th grades, and Romanian language and literature for schools and sections taught in Hungarian language. This led to creating different textbooks, for the two curricula.

The beginning of the 2017-2018 school year has been marked by numerous discussions regarding the textbooks, the time the students should

receive them, the necessity of either a unique textbook or alternative ones, the need to train teachers in order to implement the new curricula, and so on.

One of the few textbooks the children benefited from, since the first day of school, was *The Romanian Language and Literature for Schools and Sections Taught in Hungarian Language*. The teachers had two options to choose from: the Corint Publishing House textbook (authors: Maxim Andreia-Nicoleta, Kibédi Nemes Ildikó, Militar Adela, Bărbos Liana-Cecilia), and the textbook from Corvin Publishing House (author Bartolf Hedwig).

The opinions of the teachers and students, regarding the textbooks which were chosen and used for teaching, we will only find out about by the end of the 2017-2018 school year, but at this moment, with the start of the new curricula and textbooks, we are interested in the way these textbooks are complying with the valid curricula.

## **2. The study of Romanian language and literature in schools and sections taught in Hungarian language. An analysis of the alternative textbooks used for the 5th grade, in 2017-2018**

The new alternative textbooks for teaching Romanian language and literature to the 5th grade children, in schools and sections taught in Hungarian language, generated various reactions in press, which led us to proceed to this study.

In order to complete the study on the new perspectives in learning Romanian language in schools and sections taught in Hungarian language, of great importance was the analysis of the curricular documents, as well as an opinion poll (by a self-managed questionnaire) applied, at this moment, only to the textbooks authors.

One of the new perspectives in teaching Romanian language and literature in schools and sections taught in Hungarian language comes from the *Learning Framework for the Secondary School*, approved in OMENCS no. 3590/05.04.2016, which „proposes a new approach to the subject Romanian language and literature in schools and section taught in national minorities languages. Therefore, if, to this date, the secondary school students were studying according to a sole Romanian language and literature curriculum, without concern to the school section they belonged to, the only difference being in terms of textbooks and auxiliary teaching materials, as well as teaching approaches, the new framework offers the possibility to elaborate Romanian language and literature curricula which are differentiated in accordance to the language children are being taught in, the mother tongue specific, as compared to the specific of the Romanian language.” (Norel, 2017)

Even in the *Presentation note of the School curriculum for the subject Romanian language and literature in schools and sections taught in*

*Hungarian language. 5th to 8th grades* there are highlights on the aspects we are considering important and relevant (Norel, 2017):

- emphasise the role of Romanian language as the second communication language for the Hungarian minority, as means of expressing thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences;
- substantiate the communicative-functional model, which targets the integrated study of the language, of the communication (oral or written), and of the literary/nonliterary text;
- covering, in an integrated manner, the three components: linguistic, interrelational, and esthetic and cultural;
- facilitate the learning approach from an inter- and trans-disciplinary perspective;
- promoting the personal development of the student in an enlarged socio-cultural environment;

Through the 5 general competences, the pillars of personal development are sustained – *to learn to know, to learn to do, to learn to live together with the others, to learn to be* (Delors, 2000):

1. Oral text reception in different communication situations;
2. Oral text production in different communication situations;
3. Written text reception, of different types;
4. Written text production, of different types;
5. Manifestation of the multi- and intercultural sensitivity, through values promoted in different cultural and social contexts.

According to the *Presentation note*, „this subject of study builds coherently the relation between culture, as an artifact, and school, as an instrument of transmitting it, by providing a secondary school curriculum which is rich, recursive, interconnected, and rigorous, valuing the theory of multiple intelligences and learning through cooperation, in an approach both intercultural and integrated into the curriculum” (*Programa...*, 2017, 3)

How should the curriculum provisions be found in the school textbooks? The answer is based on The Methodology of quality evaluation for the 5th grade textbooks projects (Annex no. 3 of OMEN no. 3411/03.03.2017, regarding the elaboration of the 5th grade textbooks, for 2017-2018). We emphasise here several relevant aspects, which fall, first of all, in the responsibility of textbooks authors:

- the school textbook respects strictly the domains and contents in the curriculum: there are no extra or less themes/contents as compared to the curriculum;
- the organisation of textbook themes/contents respects the inherent logic of the subject;
- the information transmitted through text is scientifically accurate;
- the presentation of contents is accomplished wholly and coherently;

- the textbook project must have an ethical, moral and not discriminatory character: to respect the principles which do not differentiate by race, nationality, ethnicity, language, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental challenge, chronic non-contagious disease, HIV, or belonging to a disadvantaged group;

- the textbook project should not contain information that might impede on the national values and identity, elements of racism, xenophobia, or promoting a nationalist-extremist ideology.

The permanent relation to the students, taking into account their linguistic background, their possibilities to use Romanian language outside institutional environment, the frequency of communicating with native Romanian speakers, is a major challenge for the textbooks authors, because the textbook should address all students belonging to the Hungarian minority. Tódor Erika Mária, in *Școala și alteritatea lingvistică. Contribuție la pedagogia limbii române ca limbă ne-maternă/School and linguistic alterity. Contribution to the pedagogy of Romanian language as second language* differentiate three bilingual categories within the Romanian education system, which „get an institutional context in types of specific school structures” (Tódor, 2005):

1. cultural bilingualism – in structures of first-language education;
2. cultural bilingualism, by natural learning, but predominantly organised and additive – in structures of partially first-language education;
3. predominantly natural bilingualism, accomplished also in an organised and subtractive way – in structures of Romanian-language education, with study also in Hungarian.

The alternative Romanian language and literature textbook for schools and sections taught in Hungarian language should be so created, as to form a quality and useful curricular document, regardless of the education structure which would make use of it, being instrumental for the students in the first two bilingual categories, while for the third one, there are Romanian language and literature textbooks, specific for teaching in Romanian language.

Table 1 presents an analysis of the two alternative Romanian language and literature textbooks presently in use in schools and sections taught in Hungarian language (in alphabetical order), proving the utility of both, as well as their formative-educative value, and their multiple ways of benefiting the teachers and students in curricular and extracurricular activities, while being a support for parents when following the development of their child's linguistic competences.

Table 1. Analysis of the alternative Romanian language and literature textbooks for schools and sections taught in Hungarian language

Analysis criteria	Corint Publishing House textbook	Corvin Publishing House textbook
Following the themes in the curriculum (three, compulsory, one, at choice)	The themes order: <i>Friends in the animal world</i> <i>Games and toys</i> <i>Personal identity</i> <i>My values</i>	Themes are included in the learning units titles: <i>Mountains, Păcală, The book, Visits, The child, The sparrow, Mother, Fairytales</i> , while the teachers decide how they classify them.
Application of the communicative-functional model	In order to develop the four themes, in two learning units, the following algorithm is followed: reading, oral communication (only first unit) written communication (only second unit), elements of communication construction, elements of interculturality. At the end of learning units, a lack of summarising and summative evaluation exercises is noticed.	The algorithm is as follows: oral communication, reading, written communication, elements of communication construction, elements of interculturality, summative evaluation, at the end of learning units. A lack of summarising and organising of aspects studied in the learning units.
The pragmatic perspective of studying the language	The given examples and proposed exercises contribute to approaching the language issues, using curriculum ways of working with the content: intuitive, applicative, and theoretical approach, in this order.	The given examples and proposed exercises contribute to approaching the language issues, using curriculum ways of working with the content: intuitive, applicative, and theoretical approach, in this order.
Comprising, in an integrated manner, of the three components: linguistic, interrelational and esthetic and cultural	The four themes, approached in two learning units, favours the integrated approach of the three components. The support texts (fictional/ nonfictional, literary/ nonliterary) respect the criteria of accessibility, attractiveness, formative character, adaptation to age particularities and linguistic specific of students with Romanian as second language.	By combining types of proposed learning activities, the integrated approach of the three components is favoured. The support texts (fictional/ nonfictional, literary/ nonliterary) respect the criteria of accessibility, attractiveness, formative character, adaptation to age particularities and linguistic specific of students with Romanian as second language.
Facilitating the approach to learning from an inter- and transdisciplinary perspective	The selected texts prove the preoccupation to approach to learning from an inter- and transdisciplinary perspective, e.g. <i>The Bicycles, The Legend of the North Wind</i> etc.	The selected texts prove the preoccupation to approach to learning from an inter- and transdisciplinary perspective, e.g. <i>The Ice Hotel in the Carpathians, The Book</i> etc.

Analysis criteria	Corint Publishing House textbook	Corvin Publishing House textbook
Promoting the student's personal development in an enlarged socio-cultural environment	The proposed learning tasks, for activities on groups, pairs or individual, support the pillars of personal development – <i>to learn to know, to learn to do, to learn to live together with the others, to learn to be</i> (Delors, 2000)	The proposed learning tasks, for activities on groups, pairs or individual, support the pillars of personal development – <i>to learn to know, to learn to do, to learn to live together with the others, to learn to be</i> (Delors, 2000)

### 3. The results of the opinion poll

In order to find out the point of view of the textbook authors, we used an opinion poll (by a self-managed questionnaire). There were five questions, transmitted by email to the authors of the two textbooks. The answers were transmitted back, also by email. To preserve the confidentiality of the answers, we consider useful mentioning them without indicating the respondents.

***Question no. 1. What do you consider as being the strongest point of your textbook? Please bring arguments.***

The strongest points of the two textbooks are: availability of the theoretical information, coherence and diversity of the exercises, which follow the principles of general and specific Didactics; the exercises and support texts target the formation of the oral and written communication skills; using oral and written communication to help students to achieve relatively easy new language knowledge, but also to strengthen the ones taught during primary school; the literary texts belong to Romanian, Hungarian and universal literature, selected by the principle of esthetic relevance in different literary times; the texts follow the specifics of age and psychopedagogy of bilingual students; the theoretical approach and exercises are relevant for the contrastive grammar (in one of the alternative textbooks), the theoretical explanations on grammar themes are missing, as they would have increase the difficulty of the textbook, on the other hand, it offers grammatical models and different paradigms, to ease the use of the textbook by the students, by creating the impression they have nothing new to learn, but only to apply models/paradigms (in the other alternative textbook).

***Question no. 2. If you had the possibility to improve the textbook, which aspects would you target? Please, detail.***

The answers highlight the same topic: choosing more varied, more attractive and accesible texts, using a range of contemporary literary texts, close to the students' interest, should the publishing house solve the copyright issues, to publish selected texts proposed by the authors.

***Question no. 3. In case you worked in teams, how did you set the work strategy, how did you assign the personal input?***

Each team member focused on a part of the curriculum, according to their professional experience and graduated post-universitary studies, continuous teachers' training through teaching levels. In the same time, offered feedback to the colleagues over the proposed materials. This way, the integrated teaching, the teaching coherence, and the wholly character of the requests were insured – this was the answer given by the team of four textbook authors.

***Question no. 4. What would you recommend for the alternative textbooks authors?***

The recommendations for the authors of the alternative textbooks: teamwork, because extra-specialisation in a certain field of curriculum results in a balanced product; enough time allocated to write the textbook; not to go over the requests of the curriculum; to try and think from curricula evaluators and authors perspective; if working in teams, to build a team of teachers from different country areas, representing different types of bilingualism.

***Question no.5. Give three competences/qualities, in order of their importance (1 – the most important) which you consider indispensable for an author of Romanian language and literature alternative textbooks for students with another first language.***

Teaching competence – classroom experience with the focus-group; knowing, from inside the system, the problems/difficulties encountered by the students; offering viable solutions to gradually eliminate these problems – is considered the most important competence, essential for an author of Romanian language and literature alternative textbooks for students with another first language. The second place is taken by creativity, respectively by empathy towards students when new notions are introduced, when creating each request/task, exercise, test, etc, always taking into account the students's reaction when solving them. Cultural and intercultural empathy, respectively exploitation/application of the school curriculum in student's favour, takes the third place in the questioned authors' opinions. We consider that the point of view exposed by the textbooks authors offers an image from the inside of alternative textbooks conception, justify the choices made by the authors for ordering the themes and learning contents, to form/develop specific competences, valueing examples of learning activities and methodological suggestions offered by the curriculum.

### **3. Conclusions**

The results of curricular documents analysis show that both the curriculum and the 5th grade alternative textbooks create opportunities to apply the communicativ-functional model and to value the pragmatic perspective on language study, contributes to a complex education, and promotes the student's personal development.

## References

- \*\*\* *Programe școlare pentru disciplina Limba și literatura română pentru școlile și secțiile cu predare în limba maghiară. Clasele a V-a – a VIII-a.* Approved by OM no. 3393/28.02.2017
- Bartolf, Hedwig. (2017). *Limba și literatura română pentru școlile și secțiile cu predare în limba maghiară. Clasa a V-a.* Deva: Corvin Publishing House
- Delors, Jacques. (2000). *Comoara lăuntrică. Raportul către UNESCO al Comisiei Internaționale pentru Educație în secolul XXI. (Learning: the Treasure Within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century).* Traducători Radu Andriescu și Radu Pavel Gheo. Iași: Polirom Publishing House
- Maxim, Andreia-Nicoleta; Kibédi Nemes, Ildikó; Militar, Adela; Bărbos Liana-Cecilia. (2017). *Limba și literatura română pentru școlile și secțiile cu predare în limba maghiară. Manual pentru clasa a V-a.* București: Corint Publishing House.
- Norel, Mariana. (2008). *Studiul limbii române ca limbă nematernă. Implicații asupra politicilor educaționale și a dialogului multicultural, în Horváth István-Tódor Erika Mária. (ed.) O evaluare a politicilor de producere a bilingvismului,* Cluj-Napoca: Limes Publishing House
- Norel, Mariana. (2017). *Abordarea interculturală și integrată a curriculumului de limba și literatura română, în Tódor, Erika-Mária (editor). (2017). Ghidul profesorului de limba și literatura română pentru școlile și secțiile cu predare în limba maghiară.* Cluj-Napoca: Abel Publishing House
- Sâmihăian, Florentina. (2014). *O didactică a limbii și literaturii române. Provocări actuale pentru profesor și elev.* București: ArtPublishing House
- Tódor, Erika Mária. (2017). *Noi paradigme în programa de limba și literatura română pentru școlile și secțiile cu predare în limba maghiară, în Tódor, Erika-Mária (editor). (2017). Ghidul profesorului de limba și literatura română pentru școlile și secțiile cu predare în limba maghiară.* Cluj-Napoca: Abel Publishing House
- Tódor, Erika Mária. (2005). *Școala și alteritatea lingvistică. Contribuție la pedagogia limbii române ca limbă ne-maternă.* Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință