WAYS OF IMPROVING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES WITHIN ROMANIAN LANGUAGE CLASSES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract: The paper highlights the theoretical and practical importance of various methods used during Romanian language and literature classes in primary education, most of them seen as a normal continuation of the ones used in pre-school education, taking into account the integrated approached used in primary education nowadays as well. Some methods that prove their efficacy in kindergarten in order to improve the communicative skills of children can successfully be used in primary education as well.
The conclusion reached at the end of the study can be of real help to both pre-school and primary school teachers especially nowadays when the primary school curriculum for the curricular area Language and Communication has in view the same integrated approach as in kindergarten in order to develop and to improve students' native language communication skills

Keywords: primary education, language skills, communication, Romanian language and literature, research.

Introduction

Developing oral and written competences, which represents a prerequisite condition in training and educating students to form their personality, in preparing their future participation in social life, finds its highest expression in the subject *Romanian language and literature* of the curricular area, suggestively named *Language and communication*. Although language formation contributes to the whole social and cultural environment in which the child develops, a special role in improving speech is occupied by the study of language.

Since language, as a means of communication, is a system, it is not taught as separate phonetic, lexical, grammatical components, but as communication units, in statements, which are, at the same time, phonetic, lexical and grammatical. Children do not learn language spontaneously, by itself, but through the formation and acquirement of concepts and ideas, enhancing knowledge in literary culture through vocabulary enrichment and refinement and through learning proper grammar structures.

Interpersonal communication brings into this so-called equation some features that

take into account the inter-subjective character of this relationship. Thus, at the interpersonal level "any action affecting another person or the one who initiates it represents communication, whether the person had or not this intention" (Şoitu, 1997, p. 201). Thus, the central objective of Romanian language teaching and learning aims at developing verbal communication ability and at using literary Romanian, improving language skills and training the oral and written expression.

Oral communication plays a key role. It affects relationships with others, because if one knows how to communicate, he/she is easier to be understood. It also has influence on written communication because those who do not speak correctly can neither spell accurately.

Written communication is distance communication, the sender and the receiver are separated temporally and spatially. The written message has to overcome all the problems in order to be received. Written texts have the great advantage that they act beyond the time of issue.

A new curriculum for primary education

The Romanian language curriculum for primary education, a fundamental component of learning offered to pupils in the context of compulsory education, insist on the development of basic oral and written communication skills, as well as on the structuring of a system of attitudes and motivation that will encourage and support further study of Romanian language and literature on the one hand; on the other hand, the students will have civilization communication skills developed, establishing an harmonious personality in terms of attitudes and behaviors.

The new curriculum, in which the subject is divided into three arbitrarily set areas, spelling, reading and communication, proposes a new communicative – functional model, adapted not only to the specificity of this subject, but also the ways of adequate structuring of children's proficient communication skills. Thus, it is particularly important to achieve, through appropriate teaching strategies, the integrated development of receiving and expressing oral messages, the written reception of messages (spelling/reading) and written expression skills.

The present curriculum of Communication in Romanian "proposes a flexible *offer* that allows the teacher to modify, supplement or replace learning activities. (...) The inclusion of the preparatory class in the compulsory general education involves a nuanced perspective on

the curriculum at this age level. It requires a specific approach of early education, essentially based on *encouraging learning through games*, while offering a wide range of differentiated teaching strategies, depending on the various levels of students' acquisitions." (The curriculum of Communication in Romanian, preparatory grade, 1st grade, 2nd grade, 2013, p. 2)

For the 3rd and 4th grades, the curriculum of *Romanian language and literature* besides unequivocally connecting to the current trends in teaching the mother tongue at international level, proposes a consolidation of the approach educational centered on students' needs in the contemporary society." (The curriculum of Romanian Language and literature, 3rd and 4th grades, 2014, p. 2)

Regardless of the educational level, however, communication is a fundamental competence, aiming at developing reception skills and oral and written skills. It tries to rebalance the weight given to oral expression as well as the reproductive processes of messages. Thus, according to the new curriculum, "everything going on during Communication in Romanian classes would be run as a suite of games or funny activities, both for the preparatory grade, and in the case of 1st and 2nd grades. Class space should not be missing toys. Also, focus will be on spontaneity and creativity of responses and not on their scientific rigor." (The curriculum of Communication in Romanian, preparatory grade, 1st grade, 2nd grade, 2013, p. 20)).

Thus, in grades 0-2, teachers shoulf keep in mind the development of general skills, specific to language and communication, in turn divided into specific competencies generally formulated from simple to complex. It is worth mentioning that, no matter the specific or general competence aimed at, the emphasis on teaching with games comes as a continuation of activities from the nursery system. The skills formulated in the national curriculum for preparatory, 1st and 2nd grades are synthetically shown below.

Table 1. General and specific skills for preparatory, 1st and 2nd grades

General skills	Specific skills	
1. Receiving oral messages in familiar communicational contexts	Preparatory grade	1.1. Identifying the meaning of a short message on familiar topics, clearly and slowly spoken
	1st grade	1.1. Identifying the meaning of an oral message, on accessible topics, clearly spoken
	2nd grade	1.1. Identifying the meaning of an oral from various

		accessible texts
	Preparatory grade	1.2. Identifying varied information in a short message, clearly and slowly spoken
	1st grade	1.2. Identifying varied information in a message clearly delivered
	2nd grade	1.2 Identifying various information from a heard text
	Preparatory grade	1.3. Identifying the initial and/or final sound of a word, syllables and words from sentences clearly and slowly spoken
	1st grade	1.3. Identifying sounds, syllables, words in utterances clearly spoken
	2nd grade	1.3. Identifying sounds and syllables in words, and words in sentences clearly spoken
	Preparatory grade	1.4. Showing interest in receiving oral messages in familiar communication contexts
	1st grade	1.4. Showing interest in receiving oral messages in familiar communication contexts
	2nd grade	1.4. Showing interest in receiving oral messages in familiar communication contexts
2. Expressing oral messages in various communicational situations	Preparatory grade	2.1. Clear pronunciation of sounds and words in simple sentences
	1st grade	2.1. Formulating own statements in various communicative situations
	2nd grade	2.1. Formulating own statements in concrete communicative situations
	Preparatory grade	2.2. Transmitting information about themselves and the close environment through short messages
	1st grade	2.2. Transmitting information through simple messages
	2nd grade	2.2 Transmitting information through a series of logically linked sentences
	Preparatory grade	2.3. Participating with interest in short dialogues, in usual communicative situations
	1st grade	2.3. Participating with interest in simple dialogue in different contexts of communication
	2nd grade	2.3. Participating with interest in simple dialogue in different contexts of communication
	Preparatory grade	2.4. Expressing personal ideas in familiar contexts, showing interest for communication
	1st grade	2.4. Expressing personal ideas about familiar contexts, showing interest and confidence
	2nd grade	2.4. Expressing expressive ideas in familiar contexts showing interest and confidence
3. Receiving various written	Preparatory grade	3.1. Recognizing common words, in the near universe, written in capital and small letters

messages in familiar communicative contexts	1st grade	3.1. Reading words and short sentences, written in capital or small letters
	2nd grade	3.1. Reading text messages encountered in the familiar environment
	Preparatory grade	3.2. Identifying the significance of an image/some images showing happenings, events, familiar events
	1st grade	3.2. Identifying the message of a short text presenting happenings, events, familiar events
	2nd grade	3.2. Identifying the message of a short text presenting happenings and phenomena in the familiar universe
	Preparatory grade	3.3. Identifying the meaning of some symbols that transmit messages of immediate need, from the familiar universe
	1st grade	3.3. Identifying the significance of some symbols that convey simple messages
	2nd grade	3.3. Identifying the significance of some symbols in familiarcontexts
	Preparatory grade	3.4. Expressing in personal words visual or auditory messages, showing interest in working with books
	1st grade	3.4. Expressing interest for reading simple texts, supported by images
	2nd grade	3.4. Expressing interest in reading age-appropriate books
4. Writing messages in various communicative situations	Preparatory grade	4.1. Drawing graphics and letter contours using various resources
	1st grade	4.1. Writing small letters by hand
	2nd grade	4.1. Writing messages in different contexts of communication
	Preparatory grade	4.2. Writing simple messages in common contexts of communication
	1st grade	4.2. Writing short messages, made up of words written in small letters using different materials
	2nd grade	4.2. Writing simple messages, respecting basic conventions
	Preparatory grade	4.3. Expressing ideas, personal experiences and information through unconventional language
	1st grade	4.3. Expressing some ideas and feelings through conventional and unconventional language
	2nd grade	4.3. Expressing ideas, feelings, opinions through conventional languages

(Source: http://programe.ise.ro/Actuale/Programeinvigoare.aspx)

The curriculum of *Romanian language and literature* for 3rd and 4th grades was designed based on *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, from June to August 2014, in formal terms, continuing the advanced model curriculum for preparatory, 1st and 2nd grades approved in 2013. Along with its unequivocal connection to the current trends in teaching the mother tongue internationally, the present document gives great importance to students' learning needs. The new curriculum recommends formulations rooted in everyday life, offering students quality acquisitions in communication, in meaningful learning contexts. In designing the new curriculum the following European documents were taken into consideration: *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning - a European Reference Framework, Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006, Literary Framework for Teachers, LiFT, PIRLS Assessment Framework*, and *The European Language Portfolio.* So, naturally, the curriculum addresses the same general skills covered by the previously presented one, from which specific skills are derived. These skills are summarized below.

Table 2. General and specific skills for 3rd and 4th grades

General skills		
1. Receiving oral messages in various communicational contexts	3rd grade	1.1. Extracting detailed information from an accessible informative or literary text
	4th grade	1.1. Making simple inferences based on listening an accessible informative or literary text
	3rd grade	1.2. Inferring meaning of a word in relation to the listened message in familiar communication contexts
	4th grade	1.2. Inferring meaning of a word in relation to the listened message in predictable communication contexts
	3rd grade	1.3. Noticing regularities of language in relation to a listened messages
	4th grade	1.3. Noticing deviations in the listened messages to correct them
	3rd grade	1.4. Showing curiosity about various types of messages in familiar contexts
	4th grade	1.4. Showing attention to various types of messages in predictable contexts
	3rd grade	1.5. Showing an open attitude towards

		communication even when misunderstanding a listened message
	4th grade	1.5 Showing interest in receiving oral messages regardless of the channel disruption
2. Expressing oral messages in various communicational situations	3rd grade	2.1. Describing an object/a being of the near universe based on a simple plan
	4th grade	2.1. Description of a character in a book/a film/an imaginary character following a set of guidelines
	3rd grade	2.2. Re-telling a familiar story based on adequate support from the teacher
	4th grade	2.2. Telling an imaginary happening based on support questions
	3rd grade	2.3. Presenting an activity carried out individually or in groups
	4th grade	2.3.Presenting logically and chronologically a project/an activity conducted in school or out of school
	3rd grade	2.4. Participating in interactions for finding solutions to problems
	4th grade	2.4. Initiating and maintaining interaction in order to solve individual or group problems
	3rd grade	2.5. Adapting discourse to different situations of speech communication depending on the dialogue partner
	4th grade	2.5. Expressing interest for participating in oral interactions
3. Receiving written messages in various communicative contexts	3rd grade	3.1. Extracting detailed information from literary or informative texts
	4th grade	3.1. Concluding based on reading informative or literary texts
	3rd grade	3.2. Formulating an emotional response to the literary texts
	4th grade	3.2. Associating elements discovered in read texts with personal experiences
	3rd grade	3.3. Formulating an opinion about a story/its characters
	4th grade	3.3. Extracting significant elements from a text to support an opinion on the read message
	3rd grade	3.4. Evaluating the content of a text to highlight keywords and other important aspects
	4th grade	3.4. Evaluating textual elements that lead to the depth understanding of reading
	3rd grade	3.5. Noticing some regularities of language based on the read text
	4th grade	3.5. Noticing deviations from the read text to correct them

	3rd grade	3.6. Appreciating the value of books
	4th grade	3.6. Showing interest for literary and informative reading
4. Writing messages in various communicative situations	3rd grade	4.1. Applying hyphenation rules, spelling and punctuation in writing a text
	4th grade	4.1. Recognizing and correcting spelling and punctuation errors in writing a text
	3rd grade	4.2. Writing simple functional texts containing visual and verbal language
	4th grade	4.2. Writing functional short texts on paper or digital support
	3rd grade	4.3. Making a brief description of some elements in the immediate environment starting from support questions
	4th grade	4.3. Writing a portrait description based on a simple plan
	3rd grade	4.4. Summarizing an imaginary/experienced happening
	4th grade	4.4. Summarizing a sequence of a story/a film/a cartoon/ an imaginary/experienced activity/happening
	3rd grade	4.5. Showing availability to put ideas on paper
	4th grade	4.5. Showing interest in creative writing and in writing informative and functional texts

(Source: http://programe.ise.ro/Actuale/Programeinvigoare.aspx)

Students' communication occurs naturally in class and becomes, in the school context, the object of reflection and learning. For this reason, specific skills are steps in structuring oral and written communication.

The teacher should be in a permanent interaction with children, the aim being to meet their interests. In turn, children will be encouraged to inquire, to intervene, to take initiative, to express ideas and feelings about what they learn. Furthermore, teachers should nonverbal communication so that their students predict concepts, be them name of objects or actions, be them communication filters such as language functions/speech acts.

If the teacher mimes the action of standing up/sitting down when he/she states such activities, it will be clearer for the student what the teacher talks about. In the same context, learning will be facilitated if students are stimulated to combine verbal (what they perceive or express) with body, visual or musical language. Special emphasis is on learning in context. Developing communication skills takes place in contexts of communication and, of course,

with a reason intelligible to children. In the absence of a context, students only get to recite memorized words and phrases, without being able to then transfer them in other contexts. Besides, everyone learns better if they understand what they learn as suggested by the curriculum.

Thus, if in the preschool system great emphasis is placed on the use of games, this method should mainly be kept on using in the preparatory, 1st and 2nd grades. Also, story telling, in its various forms, will have great success in primary education as well, whether using it during the reception of oral or written messages, in order to develop general skills. This activity has a special role in the development of producing oral messages, along with image-based reading, which comes as a natural continuation of pre-school education.

Serving the idea of communication, the Romanian language components link deeply, complementing each other through a natural overlap, which retains clearly an obvious dominant feature for each sequence. In achieving the correct exposure, good knowledge of Romanian (all its levels) is crucial, which makes necessary the flexibility in terms of adapting contents to the level of specific development and to children's interests, to the realities of daily communication itself.

Conclusions

The quality of teaching significantly depends on the quality of communicative processes established between the teacher and the students and among students as well. As a result, classroom communication meets certain characteristics that distinguish it from other types of communication. Communication occurs not only as a possibility to interconnect intelligences, but as an opportunity of real complicity. "We are in the era of admiration. If your kids do not admire you, you will not influence them. The real authority and solid respect are born from dialogue. Dialogue is a hidden gem in the heart. It is so expensive and so accessible. It is expensive, because gold and silver can not buy it; it is accessible, because the poorest person can find it. Search it!" (Cury, 2002, p. 120)

Given the four levels of Romanian (utterances, lexical-semantic structures, grammatical structures and fully understood context) and addressing the Romanian language study based on the communicative-functional model provided by the National Curriculum can structure elementary students' communication skills. The specific methodology and the teaching strategies used must provide a correlation between contents- competences-types of

activities-assessment. Flexibility is necessary to adapt contents to specific intellectual and physical children's development, to their interests and desires, and to the realities of everyday communication.

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