

## THE IDEA OF PROGRESSION IN DESIGNING THE CURRICULUM OF ROMANIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (RFL)

ELENA PLATON<sup>1</sup>

*LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE STUDIES: foreign language learning,  
language studies, applied linguistics  
SOCIAL SCIENCES: education*

**ABSTRACT.** *The idea of progression in designing the curriculum of Romanian as a foreign language (RFL).* Although it constitutes a constant reality in teaching foreign languages and, even more, in the process of designing the curriculum, the idea of progression has been, in turn, glorified, marginalised or even crucified by didacticians, especially during the heyday of the communicative methods and the action-perspective on teaching. Lately, the theoretical debates from the outside medium have been trying to rehabilitate it, starting from the idea that a natural language is, practically, infinite and that, in the didactic context, it is required to find an “end” in order to establish accurately the fundamental reference points for a teaching-learning-evaluating path that is as efficient as possible. In the case of the RFL, grammatical progression has remained a central point of interest for specialists for over three decades. However, the echoes of communicative methods, though perceptively diminished in intensity in the Western world, have lately determined them to increasingly favour *communicativeness* and *authenticity*, at least at the declarative level, considering that in this way they will guarantee the “modernity” of the discourse. Yet, the resurrection of enthusiasm for the two concepts has sometimes led to exaggerated attitudes that disapproved of the proposals of progressive description and organisation of the teaching contents, because of too rigid and inadequate an understanding of the notion of progression. In our study, we intend to sensitise Romanian specialists to the need of looking at the idea of progression with more flexibility, without which designing a didactic process that is coherently articulated is inconceivable, especially in the first stages of RFL acquisition and, especially, when one does not resort to any other contact language while teaching it.

---

<sup>1</sup> **Elena PLATON**, Ph.D, is an associate professor within The Department of Romanian language, culture and civilisation at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. Her areas of interest are Romanian as a foreign language (see *Manual de limba română ca limbă străină. A1, A2*, Cluj-Napoca, 2012), but also ethnology and anthropology, more exactly, aspects on the mentality of archaic and traditional Romanian societies (*Frăția de cruce*, Cluj-Napoca, 2000, or *Biserica mișcătoare*, Cluj-Napoca, 2006). Contact: elenaplanton99@yahoo.com.

**Keywords:** *Romanian as a foreign language, progression, macro-progression, micro-progression, inter-language, micro-language, input, intake, output, curriculum.*

**REZUMAT. Ideea de progresie în proiectarea curriculară a limbii române ca limbă străină (RLS).** Deși constituie o realitate mereu prezentă în practica predării limbilor străine și, cu atât mai mult, în procesul de proiectare curriculară, ideea de progresie a fost, rând pe rând, glorificată, marginalizată sau chiar crucificată de către didacticieni, mai ales în perioada de vârf a metodelor comunicative și a perspectivei acționale asupra predării. În ultimul timp, dezbaterile teoretice din mediul extern încearcă să o reabiliteze, pornind de la ideea că limba naturală este, practic, infinită, și că, în context didactic, se impune găsirea unui „capăt” pentru a putea stabili cu precizie reperele fundamentale ale unui parcurs cât mai eficient de predare-învățare-evaluare. În cazul RLS, progresia gramaticală a rămas vreme de mai bine de trei decenii principalul centru de interes al specialiștilor. Însă, în ultimii ani, ecurile metodelor comunicative, deja sensibil atenuate în intensitate în lumea apuseană, i-au determinat să privilegieze tot mai mult *comunicativul și autenticitatea*, cel puțin la nivel declarativ, considerând că, astfel, vor avea asigurată „modernitatea” discursului. Reînvierea entuziasmului pentru cele două concepte a condus însă, uneori, la atitudini exagerate, care dezaprobau propunerile de descriere și de ordonare progresivă a conținuturilor de predat, din cauza unei înțelegeri prea rigide și inadecvate a noțiunii de progresie. În studiul nostru, ne propunem să sensibilizăm specialiștii români în legătură cu nevoia de a privi cu mai multă flexibilitate ideea de progresie, fără de care este de neconceput proiectarea unui parcurs didactic coerent articulat, mai ales în primele stadii de achiziție a RLS și, în special, atunci când nu se apelează la nicio limbă de contact pentru predarea acesteia.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *româna ca limbă străină, progresie, macroprogresie, microprogresie, interlimbă, microlimbă, input, intake, output, curriculum.*

## 0. Argument

Although the concept of *progression* has been present for a considerable amount of time in foreign language didactics, while in external academic environments it has been the subject of numerous theoretical studies<sup>2</sup>, in the

---

<sup>2</sup> We find significant, for instance, the fact that in 1974, in the French perimeter, the journal *Études de linguistique appliquée* devotes an entire number to progression (n<sup>o</sup> 16), following the “funereal eulogy” (Coste and Ferencz) of the year. However, the discussion on progression will be revived in 2000 and published in a volume coordinated by Daniel Coste and Daniel Véronique (cf. Coste and Véronique 2000), where the attitude towards the idea of progression has become more open, and the opinions of the researchers, perceptively nuanced.

Romanian academic perimeter there have not been important scientific debates dedicated to it. This is not at all due to the absence of the idea of progression in teaching or designing the curriculum or to any generalised attitude of disregard. On the contrary, grammatical progression in particular was, for a long time, the focus of RFL specialists. Yet, maybe it is precisely because it constitutes a notion that is so banal, a part of the *short list* of didactic fundamental notions (Coste 2000, 9), that progression has not enjoyed rightful attention at the theoretical level as well. In what we are concerned, even though over time progression has been, in turn, glorified or crucified by various methodological orientations, or listed as a notion that is downright “embarrassing” (Coste 2000, 9), we consider that it cannot be eliminated from the concerns of foreign language teachers or, even more, of authors of curricula or didactic materials. As long as in the process of designing a didactic process (i.e. *curriculum*) it is necessary to establish stages, called “pillars of progression” by Serge Borg (Borg 2004), through which, firstly, teaching contents are selected and listed in order to then be organised and gradated for their planning in time (i.e. *syllabus*), progression has every chance of further remaining a *superior entity*, a genuine *dynamogen* and *driving force*, described by Borg as having the capacity of connecting all the pillars of the curricular scheme proposed by him, by animating, guiding and modelling them (Borg 2011, 49).

Considering the recognition of this essential status attributed to progression, we intend to follow how it was approached, through time, in external academic contexts, in order to then reflect, backed by knowledge, on the destiny of progression on Romanian soil, based on certain materials from the RFL field (analytical syllabi, textbooks, tests, scientific descriptions etc.). In addition, during our teaching experience and that of training specialists in the field, we have often been put in the situation of answering certain fundamental questions related to progression, such as: can progression be considered today as one of the pillars of didactic wisdom?; is it compatible with communicative, notional-functional and action teaching, with the rigorous organisation and structure of linguistic contents?; is it necessary to respect a *unique progression* of contents in teaching RFL for academic purposes? In order to formulate pertinent answers to such questions, we will try to identify below some essential data related to progression.

### **1. The concept of *progression* in teaching foreign languages**

After Comenius had launched the idea of progression in didactics, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, speaking of the necessity of rigorously structuring any teaching content, the first didacticians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, preoccupied with

identifying the principles of content organisation required in the efficient learning of foreign languages, remained faithful to this notion as well. For instance, in 1917, in the Anglo-Saxon medium, Palmer listed among these principles<sup>3</sup> *the frequency* of the appearance of certain linguistic units in the process of communication, but also *the urgency* of its teaching, counselling ourselves, with complete lucidity, to take into account as well the *ease* with which it can be explained and understood (*correctness*), respectively. Lastly, Palmer invokes the necessity of also taking into account *the power of syntagmatic combination of the linguistic units* selected in the first stages of learning a language since, as it is well known, this characteristic can determine a decreased or increased level of linguistic productivity. We could say that the last two listed principles – ensuring a *balance between different linguistic categories* that is as good as possible and the possibility of *teaching a certain element in advance*, with the condition that it allows to supplement a paradigm – are responsible for the resistance of the model proposed by Palmer, as well as for the modernity of its inception (classified today, somewhat unfairly from our point of view, as being traditionalist).

In fact, the need to stress the rigorous organisation and structure of linguistic contents was clearly dictated by an extremely simple reality: that the language constitutes a practically infinite reality, for which, in the didactic context, we need to find an end. As any teaching-learning activity takes place in time, according to a process “that is organised from a beginning towards an end”, the idea of *progression* inevitably appears, being the only one that, from one end to another, allows us “to proceed through organisation” (Coste and Ferencz 1974, 5). For these reasons, until around the 80s, when the wave of communicative methods reached a peak, progression went through a genuine era of royalty (possible also because, as it emerges from the last principle invoked by Palmer, it was not understood in too rigid a manner, but allowed some deviations if this was required by the needs of communication). The model under which progression was represented during this time – and for which it was later on rejected – was a *linear* one, that was easy to visualise, accept and circulate: from simple to complex, from easy to difficult, from regular to irregular, from similar to different, from frequent to rare and, finally, from “useful” to less useful or even to the status of simple “accessory”. The stress was on linguistic contents and their organisation on a calendar, an aspect that made Serge Borg talk about a “product”-type syllabus, centred on the taught subject, respectively on the grammatical axis (Borg 2004, 117-146). In the 60s-70s, it was difficult to imagine scientific teaching without a clear

---

<sup>3</sup> H.E. Palmer, *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages*, University College, London, 1917, p. 86, apud Véronique 2000, 152.

circumscription of some “preliminary content”, whose logic had to be founded on the postulated correlation between, on the one hand, “an observable linguistic aspect”, centred on the unequal frequency of using lexical units and morpho-syntactic structures, and, on the other hand, a didactic imperative, related to the degree of urgency for students to master them (Lehmann 2000, 157).

However, this deeply grammaticalised model of *progression* representation was precisely the reason for which, especially in the 80s, voices that were extremely vehement against it appeared. These voices, based on research results from the field of second language acquisition (SLA), namely on cognitive theories, moved the stress from contents to the students’ needs, taking into consideration the role of individual variables, specifically, cognitive and emotional factors. Along with the emphasis on the major role held by *the situation of communication* (the physical place, the status of the interlocutors, age, the relationships between them etc.), but also *the purpose of communication* (for instance, the desire to *ask for permission, to identify objects* etc.), the revolt against the excessive preoccupation for the rigorous organisation of linguistic contents will reach high points. Furthermore, interactional theories bring to the scene as well the idea that *the meaning* circulated in the process of communication is nothing more than the product of a *social interaction*, meaning of a *negotiation* between two interlocutors, so that the speaker who intended to transmit this meaning is overshadowed. The aversion against grammatical progression is not foreign either to the fact that, during the communicative trend, grammar was overthrown, with the explicit teaching of grammar, the use of structural exercises for fixation or the correction of mistakes being proscribed (Lehmann 2000, 164).

Nevertheless, progression was not definitively eliminated from curricular design, understood, in a wide sense, as a process through which the elements of a teaching-learning path are defined and organised and, thus, through which a curriculum is conceived. In fact, only one such model of representation of progression was produced, one in a spiral, influenced by cognitivism, thus allowing the constant return to previously taught contents. Moreover, tasks and procedures are organised instead of linguistic contents. This is how the *process syllabus* (Borg 2004, 117-146) is born, which tends to replace the *product syllabus*. The most known example in procedural projection is represented by the model adopted by the Lancaster School, which, out of the ambition to eliminate any attempt at organising linguistic contents, made certain exaggerations, reaching the quasi-disappearance of the programmes. The refusal to accept any pre-established content determined the construction of textbook units not on “linguistic categories”, but on “organised ensembles of communicative tasks”, which elicit the use of the target language (Véronique 2000, 164). It turns out that the planning was limited, in fact, to a progressive repetition of

these tasks. The new orientation quickly found many supporters, convinced that, no matter the morpho-lexical complexity or frequency, what should be taught first is what is assumed to correspond to the L2 needs expressed by the students (Besse 1995, 47). Certainly, not all didacticians have embraced this perspective, some of them ironically commenting that it is not always the case to cede to the “needs” expressed by students (Goes 2004, 52). In addition, the heterogeneity of the group of students brings with itself a comparable heterogeneity of their needs and interests, which are often impossible to manage. However, beyond the exchange of ironies regarding the necessity of favouring the students’ needs, the arguments of the detractors of the procedural curriculum are worth mentioning here, especially since, in the case of the RFL as well, there have been some controversies among specialists – especially in the past two decades, after the appearance of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) – on the topic of the necessity to impose a progression of linguistic contents.

For instance, the ones who doubt the possibility of establishing a communicative progression assert that it is almost impossible to logically organise the situations of communication and to foresee who will the student first encounter in real life: the baker or the chimney sweeper? (Plas and Lavanant, 9). According to this perspective, the option for the “urgency” criterion would not simplify things either since it would be difficult to make a choice between certain potentially competing situations, such as *the ambulance, the fire-fighters* or *the police*. In fact, even if we could make a decision to this end, what intervenes is the lack of convergence between the urgency of a situation of communication and the linguistic difficulty in communicating in the given situation. In order to create a procedural planning, we would have to “deconstruct” a social being in a “constellation of abilities” related to each situation in order to then reconstruct a so-called social capacity. Or, such an endeavour would determine numerous “juxtapositions of situations, tasks or statements”, which would constitute, in the student’s view, a type of catalogue of expressions that can be used in certain situations, however without leading to “a global capacity expressed in random situations” (Plas and Lavanant, 10). In order to prove how changing the situational field of communication is, the cited authors offer us the scenario of the student who goes to buy bread, but who, noticing that the vendor changed her hair colour, wants to give her a compliment. For this reason, the student will exit the basic catalogue related to the “bakery” and will enter the one of “person descriptions”. And if the student will want to formulate an invitation to a romantic dinner in the city, things will become more complicated, since another catalogue will have to be accessed, namely that of “dinner invitations” etc. As a result, since the linguistic competence

represents precisely the innate capacity that a speaker-listener has to produce new statements that they have never heard before, it means that what is needed is a minimum *linguistic autonomy* on which the acquisition of pragmatic and cultural knowledge is founded.

## **2. The idea of progression in the field of the RFL**

### **2.1. The period prior to the CEFRL**

In the Romanian university medium, teaching Romanian to non-native speakers was institutionalised in 1974, once the first departments of Romanian for foreign students appeared within the Faculties of Philology. For such students, who came to Romania for their university education, a new study programme was launched, called *preparatory year*, which entailed, first of all, intensive practical courses in Romanian. The programme thus emerged during the heyday of communicative methods, bringing to the scene a new philological domain, that of teaching Romanian for academic purposes. Nevertheless, the communicative wave was to reach the RFL field late, due to reasons that will be succinctly presented in what follows.

Considering that the appearance of the preparatory year was due to a directive from the socialist party of the time, and not to an intention of promoting Romanian in the world (Moldovan 2006, 8), the RFL field did not benefit, at the beginning, from a scientific foundation: first, specialised departments were founded, where the process of RFL teaching was launched, and only then did the training *per se* of specialists<sup>4</sup>, the creation of methodologies and of the first variants of didactic instruction design take place. Moreover, in regards to research, one cannot speak of a tradition *per se* in the Romanian perimeter before this date<sup>5</sup>. In the first years of existence of specialised departments, each collective drafted their own analytical programme of study<sup>6</sup>, while respecting the

---

<sup>4</sup> In fact, most often, the training consisted in self-training, done through the personal efforts of teachers to become specialized even during the RFL teaching through individual reading from the specialized literature for other languages or through debates organized at conferences and roundtables with colleagues from other universities, who were dealing with the same problems.

<sup>5</sup> Although even before 1974, there were Romanian classes for foreign students, at medical or technical universities, for which textbooks or readers of the type mentioned in Moldovan 2012 were published (for example, *Romanian Basic Course*, Vol. IV, Lessons 40-51, published in 1964 at Defense Language Institute, Foreign Language Center, *Culegerea de texte de limba română pentru studenții străini*, published in 1966, at Institutul de Construcții din București, or *Manualul de limba română pentru studenții străini* from 1968, edited by Tipografia Universității din București), the coordinated and coherent efforts of curricular design and of scientific foundation of the RFL field appeared only after 1974.

<sup>6</sup> The term *programme of study* was the only one being circulated during the era, those of *curriculum* and *syllabus* being introduced later, long after 1990.

subjects imposed by the *minister* in the curriculum, a practice that stood at the basis of the first textbooks<sup>7</sup>. For example, in the archive of the Department of Romanian language, culture and civilization (DRLCC) from the Faculty of Letters, BBU, there is the programme of study for the preparatory-year students, drafted by the Cluj collective in 1979 (Programa 1979), as well as the programme outline drafted the same year by the University of Craiova, under the coordination of Flora Şuteu (Şuteu 1979). Here one can additionally consult the programme of study issued by the *minister* (Programa 1981), which attempted to homogenise and “standardise” the teaching process of the RFL, by imposing not just a unique syllabus, but also a unique textbook for all universities, known under the name of *the minister’s textbook* or *Brâncuş’ textbook* (after the name of the coordinator – cf. Brâncuş et al. 1978).

A short analysis of these programmes of study prove that the efforts of the specialists were focused, at that time, especially on searching a new order for the introduction of linguistic contents, after a logic specific to non-native speakers, according to frequency and the degree of urgency. Thus, in *Cuvântul explicativ (The explanatory word)* that precedes the Cluj programme, it is mentioned that what is aimed at is “the assimilation of grammatical structures and lexical elements in an active and simultaneous progression”, which will be “arranged according to the criterion of frequency or interest, will be revisited and developed in the second semester, where one will differentially insist on grammatical issues of various specialised languages” (Programa 1979, 1). As for the vocabulary of fundamental Romanian, it is specified that it will be assimilated “situationally, on points of interest”, which will “progressively increase both quantitatively and through the unveiling of the mechanism of word-formation” (Programa 1979, 1). The rest of the linguistic activities (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are not targeted explicitly, although they are understood from the manner in which the general purpose of the didactic process is formulated: “for the student to be able to become, in the shortest time period, a conversational partner, as well as to be able to follow a discourse in Romanian” (Programa 1979, 1). The methodological remarks from the closing of the explanatory word still focus on grammar, yet such grammatical structures are “conditioned” by the situational context, communicative by “excellence”, teachers being advised to introduce each grammatical element in a “dialogue structure”, but also in an “indirect style”. Noteworthy is the urgency to establish grammatical progression, a fact that is reflected further in the document as well, in the presentation of the contents pertaining to each week, where, beside the specified grammatical structures – often with examples of “dialogues” that are structurally marked, of the type:

---

<sup>7</sup> For example, the textbook coordinated by George Sanda was issued in 1975; among RFL teachers, it was known as “the pink textbook” (Sanda 1975).

*Where are you from?* (Programa 1979, 4) –, only the lexical spheres associated with these structures appear, such as *public transport, interior (house, room, hotel)*, for week III (Programa 1979, 14).

The programme of the University of Craiova does not go beyond the circle of grammar, although in the *Foreword* the main “differences” from other analytical programmes of study are enounced: “the exhaustive character of the indications regarding vocabulary”, “the very detailed description of phonetics and grammar, chapters structured on the vocabulary established as compulsory for the intensive course in Romanian...” etc. On the first page of the *minister's* programme of study there are some objectives that specifically refer to the four competences of oral and written communication: “the understanding of the language spoken in a normal rhythm, the formation of skills in spontaneous oral and written expression in a clear and intelligible form, respectively, current reading, understanding and reproduction of a text” (Programa 1981, 8). Unfortunately, the week-planning completely ignores the proposed objectives, focusing, this time as well, exclusively on linguistic contents (for instance, for Week III, there are 8 hours set aside for phonetics and phonology, 15 for grammar and 7 for vocabulary, where only the semantic field and the topic of the two texts proposed for reading are specified: *The City of Bucharest* and *The schedule of a working day*). Thus, no proposal for listening exercises, absolutely nothing about writing and, chiefly, no suggestion regarding the activities intended for speaking, these being exclusively left to the imagination and creativity of the teacher. The discrepancy between the proposed objectives and contents makes us presume that the model for formulating the objectives was taken from the programmes of study for teaching other foreign languages, without making any adaptation of the contents to Romanian. In conclusion, the programmes were some “product” rather than “process” types of syllabus (Borg 2004, 117-146), the procedural progression, focused on communicative tasks, being entirely omitted.

In order to check the faithfulness to the ministerial programme of study, we have analysed some examples of calendar planning of the DRLCC teachers from that period as well. Although most of the planning offered space almost exclusively to grammar, some tried, however, to reserve a minimal area to other linguistic activities, such as “dictations”, which, together with exposing the students to the teacher’s discourse in Romanian, worked as the sole “listening” exercises<sup>8</sup>. The phenomenon is clearly explained through the specificity of the stage in which the RFL field was found at that time. The specialists trained in elaborating the first programmes were, above all, linguists – involved or not in the RFL process of teaching – naturally preoccupied with

---

<sup>8</sup> We should mention that the listening exercises per se will appear in RFL didactic materials after around three decades, more precisely in 2008, along with the drafting, at the DRLCC, of the first volume of tests for the evaluation of communicational competences in Romanian, according to the CEFRL (cf. Medrea et al. 2008).

searching for another formula of approaching and presenting the grammatical structures of Romanian, which had not yet been realised. After a period of various experiments and of taking up some models practiced in teaching international languages, in which some textbooks – entirely ignoring the principle of frequency or urgency (stated not just by Palmer, but also through empirical experiences related to RFL teaching) – paradoxically presented, on the very first page, words such as “needle” and “thread” (Sanda 1975), we have nevertheless reached a grammatical progression that has been universally accepted and respected until today.

A factor that has determined this maximum faithfulness towards the initial distribution of linguistic contents is constituted not only by the large scale use, up to the present, of the Brâncuș textbook – despite its overt structuralist character and the lack of relevancy of the texts proposed for reading – but also by the recognised and declared efficiency of RFL teaching according to the scheme proposed here. In fact, this textbook has played, as previously specified (Platon 2012, 11), the role of the true trainer of RFL teachers, deprived of the possibility of a specialisation at the undergraduate or graduate level. The appearance of the first communicative textbooks, such as *Româna cu sau fără profesor (Romanian with or without a teacher)* (Pop 1991), did not succeed in dethroning the Brâncuș textbook, which inspired and still inspires both curricular designs and many of the recent RFL textbooks (for instance, Dafinoiu and Pascale, 2013). From our discussions with the teachers working when the DRLCC began, it results that the reason for which the curricular design according to communicative tasks was not adopted – in fact it actually raised plenty of suspicions – is that the majority of them felt safer respecting the traditional grammatical progression, which had been practiced for a long time. In their view, only this formula was offering the guarantee of the scientific character of the didactic process, communicativeness being catalogued as “playful”, “slippery”, “difficult to control” and, as a result, hard to accept as an essential principle in curricular design. This opinion is widely spread today as well among those who consider that progression is applicable only in the field of linguistics, where it can lead to a “progressive and coherent” learning, essential in order to form a vision of the language “as a system” (Plas and Lavanant, 7), since it is not operational in communicative approaches or in the action perspective.

## **2.2. The period after the CEFRL**

After the appearance of the CEFRL, most of the Romanian universities that organised a preparatory year, being eager to standardise and modernise their RFL teaching/evaluation process according to the model of other

languages, did their best to adapt their linguistic policy to the principles promoted in this document. Furthermore, there were increasing demands for internationally recognised certificates of linguistic competence for Romanian as well, so that the authors of didactic materials and evaluation instruments increasingly directed their attention on communicative competences as well, especially on the oral ones, which had been neglected during the first stage. It could be said that the need to test oral competences is the one that imposed, with more stringency, the planning of certain special activities aimed at training these abilities. Practically, the first theoretical instrument that drew attention to notional-functional aspects was *Nivelul Prag*, published in 2002, more than three decades after the descriptions for French and English: *Le Niveau Seuil* and *Threshold Level*. However, being published in Strasbourg, in a limited edition, the volume was scarcely accessible to specialists from Romania and did not succeed in significantly influencing either the curricular design or textbook authors, although, in the foreword, the authors had signalled the intention to offer a genuine scientific basis for their work (Moldovan et al. 2002). Nevertheless, some more recent textbooks, which went beyond the traditionalist perspective, took on the communicative approach in a programmatic manner (Kohn 2008 or Platon et al. 2012), by including activities meant for listening and speaking as well.

Another scientific material that could constitute a useful instrument in curricular design is *Descrierea minimală a limbii române (The minimal description of Romanian)* for the A1-B2 levels (Platon et al. 2014), in which morpho-syntactic structures specific for each level are presented alongside communicative functions, lexical elements and types of texts. Here, even a “progression” of communicative functions is proposed, with examples being offered for each level. For instance, for the function of *demanding the identification of someone/something* there is a series of statements that are proposed, such as: 1. *Cine ești? / Cine este el? / Ce este pe masă?* (“Who are you? / Who is he? / What is on the table?”) (A1); 2. *Cum îl cheamă? / Cine este acel om? / Ce carte citești?* (“What is his name? / Who is that man? / What book are you reading?”) (A2); 3. *Știți cumva cine este acest domn? / O recunoașteți pe această femeie? / Știți cumva ce citește acea femeie?”* (“Do you by any chance know who this gentleman is? / Do you recognise this woman? / Do you by any chance know what this woman is reading?”) (B1). Their analysis determines us to question procedural progression, since the construction of the illustrative statements was, in reality, still done based on certain linguistic criteria, by taking into account the grammatical instruments available in each learning stage in order to understand/build comparable statements. In their absence, the only solution would be memorising them as they are, followed by an introduction

in the potentially specific “catalogues” for each function, mentioned before. Whether we want it or not, we reach the conclusion formulated by Plas and Lavanant according to which only new grammatical notions are based on previous acquisitions, reason for which to build a progression means, in fact, “to deconstruct an ensemble of grammatical, interdependent units, with the purpose of elaborating coherent teaching, which appears to the student as a logical system that is regulated through a rigorous linguistic reflection” (Plas and Lavanant, 16). Even though the organisation of teaching according to different ensembles of tasks (such as doing some *common projects – banners, posters, invitations, debates* etc.) has as well been long promoted, what is shown in the institutional system is the risk of establishing contents based on an amalgam of linguistic facts, which can lead to a complete disorientation of the student, to a juxtaposition of some formulas learnt by heart, in relation to a context. Here it is generally considered that this type of organisation could hinder the student from researching regularities, noticing the logic of arranging the elements in a coherent system, generating an atomized view of language facts, instead of an overall one. To these we can add the risk of the fossilisation of memorised statements that one will not be able to further develop, since they were learnt by heart in a certain form.

The theoretical orientation of cognitive origin shows that memorising communicative formulas cannot be done without “a minimal quantity – and quality – of knowledge” that must be acquired in order for the created mnesic network to be performant. Because, if the phonological representations, the mastery of the morpho-syntactic structures or of the basic vocabulary are not sufficiently well developed and if the access to these formal cognitive networks were not automatized, the student will not be able to make use of the language in real communicational situations (Hilton 2009, 18-19). Thus, repetition, the one that had been thrown to the methodological bin together with grammar, is brought back to the classroom. Specialists now acknowledge its essential role in memorising and automatizing elements specific to the new “linguistic network” that is born in the L2 (Hilton 2009, 18). These elements at the basis of the knowledge hierarchy (phonological chains, lexical associations such as collocations and all “prefabricated” ones, associations that need to be established between different morphological inflections or between different syntactic chains and the meaning of these grammatical forms, as well as all the types of “discriminations between certain structures) are invoked as fundamental arguments by those who refuse to renounce the idea of the rigorous grading of linguistic contents. Thus, shall we see how the dilemmas regarding progression could be resolved?

### **3. A few saving concepts: *macro-* and *micro-progression*; *integrated progression***

Our experience in RFL teaching and curricular design entitles us to agree with Bailly, who states that the rejection of the idea of progression is the expression of an ideology of non-steering, of the refusal of any type of authority, and it is rather related to a meta-didactic level of discourse (Bailly, 128). Since, in the practice of teaching and in projecting the didactic instruction, one cannot permanently renounce the idea of progression, in order to not reach an exaggerated relativization of the teaching contents. This is the reason why the methodological dispute related to the acceptance / rejection of the idea of progression must be resolved. From our point of view, there are two useful operational concepts, proposed by Cicurel, that can help us: those of *macro-* and *micro-progression* (Cicurel 2000, 112). Despite the lack of a perfect correlation between the progression of teaching and that of learning, it is clear that we still need to schedule learning contents in order to ensure a systematic and coherent character to the didactic instruction. Or, *macro-progression* refers precisely to the scheduling according to different institutional constraints. Curricula reflect the directory lines of this macro-progression, according to the linguistic policy promoted by the organising institution, as well as that of the accreditation authority (the case of ARACIS for RFL), for an as rigorous as possible control of the evolution of knowledge. In curricular decisions one must take into consideration both the *micro-language* profile of each level (Platon 2016), and the *interlanguage* profile of the students, since it is known that there is no perfect correspondence between *input* and *output*. This rigid macro-progression is not the only one that models those micro-grammars or communicational sub-ensembles (Véronique 2000, 147) that allow the student to communicate in each stage of language acquisition, with the rudimentary means at hand. Because, according to the individual variables of the learning (rhythm, memorising capacity, mother tongue, known languages, motivation, contact with native speakers, the influence of technology (the real “enemy” of the macro-progression that is too severe)) or to the fixed phrases that the student takes and integrates from another colleague or from the extra-didactic speaking environment, the professor will make some compromises, that constitute themselves in small “loops” or deviation from the curricular design, in order to answer the immediate communicative needs of the students. This is how *micro-progression* appears (Cicurel 2000, 109-110), which will perceptively change macro-progression, which constantly updates itself under the influence of micro-progressions.

Regarding the option for grammatical or procedural progression, one must start from the premise that any grammatical progression can be “registered” in a communicative purpose and that the option for the communicative does not exclude a minimum ordering of the linguistic contents. Linguistic progression does not mean holding some major grammar classes or listing some rules in order to define the system. On the contrary, it presupposes a careful analysis of the linguistic means in order to see which of them can better serve some communicative purposes of maximum urgency. Thus, the teacher can design their course in a communicative optics, while basing it on a systematic progression of the language facts necessary to fulfil a communicative function. For instance, when we design an RFL course meant for communication on the topic of hobbies, it is normal for us to take into account the fact that managing the verb forms in the conjunctive mood and knowing the verbs that demand the conjunctive are vital for students to be trained in communicative tasks on this topic.

In conclusion, although grammatical progression no longer represents today the sole key-element in curricular design and we avoid fabricated dialogue models for the lower levels of the language, because of their artificial character, progression is not longer considered by any means a “harmful” notion for language teaching, since harmful is only the “excess of rigidity” (Bailly, 119). However, the idea of progression must go beyond the limits of bipolarity traced by the classic linear representation or the spiral one, where only one axis has been followed. Thus, what appears is the idea of an *integrated* or *polycentric* progression, as Borg (2000, 141) called it, tied in a *multidimensional* ensemble (simultaneously grammatical, notional-functional, action), that minimises the too strong an emphasis placed on the contents being taught, by taking into account the needs of the student as well. In this manner, the complementarity between declarative and procedural can be ensured, the communicative purposes can be correlated with the linguistic means, without either the grammatical correctness of the statements or their plausible character being affected. This seems to us as a viable and useful solution in order to create a supple didactic scheduling, which would articulate the *grammatical progression* in a coherent and dynamic approach with that of *speech acts* necessary for solving some common *macro-tasks* that are as similar as possible to those from the natural medium.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bailly, Daniel. 2000. Fallait-il tuer la progression en classe de L2? In *La notion de progression*, ed. Daniel Coste and Daniel Véronique, 119-133. Saint-Cloud: ENS-Éditions.
- Besse, Henri. 1995. *Méthodes et pratiques des manuels de langue*. Paris: Éditions Crédif-Didier.
- Borg, Serge. 2000. Pour une lecture polycentrique de la notion de progression. In *La notion de progression*, ed. Daniel Coste and Daniel Véronique, 133-144. Saint-Cloud: ENS-Éditions.
- Borg, Serge. 2001. *La notion de progression*. Paris: Éditions Didier.
- Borg, Serge. 2004. Parcours didactiques et cohérences curriculaires ou la notion de progression au service de l'ingénierie de l'éducation. In *Nouvelle donne pour les centres universitaires de français langue étrangère: des profils d'étudiants aux réponses pédagogiques et institutionnelles*. Actes du 1er Colloque international de l'ADCUEFE, 117-146. Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble.
- Borg, Serge. 2011. Identité curriculaire du français sur objectifs universitaires. Approches linguistiques, didactiques et éducatives. *Synergies monde*. 8 (1): 43-55.
- Brâncuș, Grigore (coord.), Adriana Ionescu, Manuela Saramandu. 1978. *Limba română contemporană. Manual pentru studenții străini I*. București: Universitatea din București.
- Cicurel, Francine. 2000. La progression, entre l'arbitraire et l'utopie raisonnable. In *La notion de progression*, ed. Daniel Coste and Daniel Véronique, 103-118. Saint-Cloud: ENS-Éditions.
- Coste, Daniel, and V. Ferenczi, ed. 1974. La notion de progression en didactique des langues. *Études de linguistique appliquée*. 16. Paris: Éditions Didier.
- Coste, Daniel. 2000. Le proche et le propre: remarques sur la notion de progression. In *La notion de progression*, ed. Daniel Coste and Daniel Véronique, 9-21. Saint-Cloud: ENS-Éditions.
- Coste, Daniel, and Daniel Véronique, eds. 2000. *La notion de progression*. Saint-Cloud: ENS-Éditions.
- Dafinoiu, Cristina Valentina, and Laura Elena Pascale. 2013. *Limba română. Manual pentru studenții străini din anul pregătitor (Nivel A1-A2)*. București: Editura Universitară.
- Goes, Jan. 2004. *Une initiation à la didactique du FLE*. Craiova: Editura Sitech.
- Hilton, Heather. 2009. Théories d'apprentissage et didactique des langues. *La Clé des Langues*, Lyon, ENS de LYON/DGESCO, (November 2009), <http://cle.ens-lyon.fr/plurilingues/langue/didactique/theories-d-apprentissage-et-didactique-des-langues> (accessed January 2, 2019).
- Kohn, Daniela. 2008. *Puls (A1+)*. Iași: Editura Polirom.
- Lehmann, Denis. 2000. Pour ne pas finir avec la notion de progression. In *La notion de progression*, ed. Daniel Coste and Daniel Véronique, 155-179. Saint-Cloud: ENS-Éditions.
- Medrea, Anca, Elena Platon, Ioana Sonea, Dina Vilcu, and Viorica Vesa. 2008. *Teste de limba română ca limbă străină - A1, A2, B1, B2*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Risoprint.

- Moldovan, Victoria. 2006. Privire diacronică asupra românei ca limbă străină – 30 de ani de experiență la Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai din Cluj-Napoca. *Lingua. A. Lingvistică.V*: 7-15.
- Moldovan, Victoria. (coord.). 2012. *Bibliografia românei ca limbă străină/Bibliografia RLS*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Efes.
- Moldovan, Victoria, Liana Pop, and Lucia Uricaru. 2002. *Nivel prag. Pentru învățarea limbii române ca limbă străină*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Nonnon, Élisabeth. 2010. La notion de progression au cœur des tensions de l'activité d'enseignement. *Repères. Recherches en didactique du français langue maternelle* 41: 5-34.
- Plas, Mathieu, and David Lavanant. 2010. De l'intérêt de baser une progression sur l'acquisition d'un système linguistique: l'exemple d'un public de niveau A2. In Olga Galatanu et al. (dir.). *Enseigner les structures langagières en FLE*, 7-86. Peter Lang. Bruxelles: Éditions scientifiques internationales.
- Platon, Elena. 2012. Zaparea didactică în predarea RLS. In *Noi perspective în abordarea românei ca limbă străină/româna ca limbă nematernă*, 7-22. Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință.
- Platon, Elena, Ioana Sonea, and Dina Vilcu. 2012. *Manual de limba română ca limbă străină (A1-A2)*. Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință.
- Platon, Elena, Ioana Sonea, and Dina Vilcu. 2014. *Descrierea minimală a limbii române. A1, A2, B1, B2*. Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință.
- Platon, Elena. 2016. Două avataruri ale limbii: interlimba și microlimba. In *The Proceedings of the International Conference Globalization, Intercultural Dialogue and National Identity, Globalization and National Identity. Studies on the Strategies of Intercultural Dialogue*, ed. Iulian Boldea, 634-647. Târgu-Mureș: Arhipelag XXI.
- Pop, Liana. 1991. *Româna cu sau fără profesor. Le roumain avec ou sans professeur. Romanian with or without a teacher*. Cluj: Editura Echinox.
- Programa 1979. *Programa analitică de limba română pentru studenții străini din anul pregătitor*, Uz intern, Cluj-Napoca: Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Facultatea de Filologie.
- Programa 1981. *Programa analitică de limba română pentru anul pregătitor – studenții străini; Ministerul Educației și Învățământului, Oficiul pentru relații externe și studenți străini*, București.
- Puren, Christian. 1997. Que reste-t-il de l'idée de progres en didactique des langues?, *Langues Modernes* 2: 8-14.
- Sanda, George (coord.), Ileana Coste, Eugen Noveanu, Ieronim Precup, George Sanda, and Doru Scărlătescu. 1975. *Limba română pentru anul pregătitor*, Semestrul I. București: Tipografia Universității București.
- Șuteu, Flora. 1979. *Programa cursului intensiv de limba română pentru străini (proiect)*, Universitatea din Craiova: Facultatea de Filologie.
- Véronique, Daniel. 2000. Vers une redéfinition de la notion de progression: la contribution de la recherche sur l'acquisition des langues étrangères. In *La notion de progression*, ed. Daniel Coste and Daniel Véronique, 145-155. Saint-Cloud: ENS-Éditions.