# *THE INTERPRETATION OF A ROMANIAN SPECIALTY TEXT BY FOREIGN STUDENTS*

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*Abstract: Romanian as a foreign language is rather difficult to approach in the context of the foreign speakers' different cultures and languages. Therefore a re-expression imposes itself in the target language of some landmarks of the text, of the message in the source language. An understanding of the sense and the context that wrap the primary text in Romanian must be accomplished through a thorough understanding of all the semantic, grammatical, stylistic and orthographical aspects. There must be a certain dexterity of the speaker of Romanian as a foreign language to filter the information collected from a text, most of the times a specialty one, through a good bilingual-cultural correlation of two different linguistic systems.*

*Keywords: specialty language, text, Romanian, interpretation, technique*

## 1. Introduction

In the process of teaching Romanian as a foreign language, the specialty languages approached after a thorough assimilation of the grammar and the basic vocabulary tend to become through diverse practices and applied programs a perpetual interpretative act of the languages-cultures. Therefore, a good translation and textual and contextual interpretation may serve as a means for acquiring the necessary competences for the usage and knowledge of Romanian as a foreign language by the students. The thorough knowledge of the source culture of the text, or of the domain, in the case of the specialty texts, even in the absence of a perfect knowledge of the source language, offers a supplemental advantage, a warranty that not only the words but also the ideas reach the Romanian version unaltered.

There are pro and con arguments against the usage of the less coherent translations and interpretations in the process of learning Romanian as a foreign language and as a specialized language in a certain field. Unfortunately, in the case of Romanian as a foreign language the translation of the meanings of some words or contexts under the circumstances of a superficial knowledge of Romanian can only be done with the help of a foreign language as transition language and here resides the very difficulty - in the preservation of the basic meaning, often finding ourselves in situations where artifices are used for better explaining the terminology specific to a certain domain. The academician I. Coteanu considered that language is "a linguistic system more or less specialized in rendering the contents of ideas specific to a professional activity, to one or more fields of the social-cultural life, such as art, literature, science or technology, philosophy, literary or artistic critique, history, family life etc., all of which have, or tend to have, words, expressions and proper rules of organizing resulted from different restrictions imposed to the language."[1]

[1] Ion Coteanu, *Stilistica funcțională a limbii române*, Editura Academiei Române, București, 1973, p.45



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A text whose specialty languages id medicine, for example, should be approached bot from the perspective of the knowledge of the specific terminology and his communicative value. Generally, the difficulty of an accurate translation of some mostly polysemantic words appears in the case of mixed groups who study Romanian as a foreign language, for example in the case of the specialty terminology belonging to medicine, engineering, IT, philology, economy, law, etc., when the same term can be found in different domains with senses stylistically and contextually specialized.

**2. The approach and the interpretation of a specialty text in Romanian**

The approach and the interpretation of a specialty language by the foreign speakers of Romanian supposes first of all an accessing of the codes specific to the respective domain and an incursion in the recognizable data of their own language and culture. So ”According to SFL theory all texts exist in the context of culture (Butt et al., 2000). Learning to write in English (in our case in Romanian) as a second language means also learning how to function in a new culture.”[2]

The interpretation of a specialty text is a difficult, pretentious exercise, accessible especially to those with an advanced level of competence in the foreign language. Thus, students need to resort, except the specialty and lexical knowledge, to the lexical, grammatical, stylistic ones as well.

If we were to compare the Romanian vocabulary with that of any Romanic language, we may observe that many of the words of some language strikingly resemble those of another language. In this very context Reformatski stated that: “the translation from related language hides many traps for the translators. Often the resemblance of the languages, such as Romanian and French or Italian, basically facilitate the process of approaching and interpreting the text, but most of the times these similarities determine a lot of decryption mistakes. ” The knowledge of any language supposes the mastering of the basic vocabulary, the knowledge of the orthographic, orthoepic and morphological norms and the knowledge of the syntactic patterns for building the discourse: “The topic of the text can be influenced by culture. Some students find it difficult to write about something that they have learned in another language, or that they associate with a particular culture.”[3]

In the usage of the medical language by the foreign students, for example, besides the assimilation of a specific terminology, one must also pay attention to the accuracy of the approach on the information contained in the text in order not to lose the primary meaning. This medical information like the one in the following text: “The epidermis is a pavement-like multilayered epithelium, keratinized, 0.007-0.12 mm thick. The basic layer is made of living cells, keratinocytes (they produce keratin – a protein impermeable to water and gases), melanocytes (they synthesize melanin – a pigment which colors the skin and protects it from the ultraviolet radiations of the sun), and granular non-pigmented cells (they phagocytize foreign bodies and have a defensive role). The basic layer is set on the basic membrane, through which nourishing substances come from the dermic blood vessels. The last layer is made of keratinized cells which exfoliate.”[4], must be explained using a common language, which generally is English, in case one encounters terms and situations less decipherable or harder do understand.

[2] Maria Estela Brisk, Learning to Write in the Second Language, în Handbook of Research in Second Language. Teaching and Learning, vol. II, Editura Routledge, New York, 2011, p. 43.
[3] Maria Estela Brisk, Learning to Write in the Second Language, în Handbook of Research in Second Language. Teaching and Learning, vol. II, editor Eli Hinkel, Editura Routledge, New York, 2011, p. 44
[4] Gabriela Biriș, *Limbaj medical. Anatomie*, Editura Universității din București, București, 2015.,p. 31-32



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There is, of course, the risk of a deterioration or loss, through the usage of the transition language, of the original meaning of the specialized terms and of the clear and well outlined context.

The exactness of a textual interpretation depends on several factors. It is influenced by the existence of an adequate relationship between the communicative intention and the target text, that is by the identification of a finality, of a purpose. Though one should not ignore or minimize the reporting to the conditions of receiving the sense or to the situation of approaching and interpreting the given text taking into account the effect and the dependent reactions and the cognitive luggage of the receiver, the foreign student.

Unlike other type of texts, the ones that have a medical content need, where there are issues in understanding the text, an easily understandable development for the receiving persons – the foreign students – of the ideas recognizable also in larger contexts, not necessarily medical, through the usage of comparisons, synonymies, antonymies, thus keeping the information accurate. For example, the more we exemplify by synonyms and explanations the meanings of some terms the more they become clearer for the foreign students speaking Romanian: "*to alter* – to decompose, to break, to degenerate; *atherosclerosis* – degenerative chronical disease characterized by deposits of fat and cholesterol on the inner lining of the arterial walls, followed in time by their sclerosis; *atrophy* – the decrease in volume, the reduction of the dimensions of an organ or member, following a deficiency in alimentation, the diminution of the metabolism, the decrease of the sanguine circulation or the immobilization; *hereditary* – genetically inherited; *geriatrics* – branch of medicine dealing with the affections favored by aging; *precocious* – timely, premature; *senescence* – growing old, aging; *senility* – pathological aging; *therapeutics* – treatment; etc."[5]

This way one can reach an exact understanding of the meaning and the medical context aimed at, with a translation as close to reality of the specific terms and with a clear approach of the transmitted message without an immediate interpretation imposed by other texts such as literary ones, for example. In the case of the juridical texts or those dealing with laws one must firstly consider the interpretation of the text of law and its receiving by the foreign Romanian speakers as a result of studying the approached legislative system. The juridical language, as a specific way of expression, is made up of elements of common language and its own specific elements. It presents the paradox of being very elaborate, but at the same time very hermetic and apparently ambiguous. As Jean-Claude Gémar remarks, „jurist often practice an obscure discourse and apparently deliberately inextricable".[6]

Gérard Cornu observes the existence of a „linguistic shield" in the case of the juridical language, showing that it can only be understood by the field specialists and its very own existence is due to the fact that it is not accessible to the majority of the members of the linguistic community.[7]On the other hand, clarity is among the fundamental requirements of the law language.[8]

Therefore, it is not at all easy to approach a juridical text, neither for Romanian law students, nor for foreign students coming to study law in Romania, and which most of the times

[5] Marilena Velican, Adrian Mateescu, Elisabeta Şoşa, *Limba română. Manual pentru studenţii străini, profil medical*, ediția a II-a, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1990, p. 80-84

[6]J.-C. Gémar, *Les fondements du langage du droit comme langue de spécialité*, « Revue générale de droit », Université d'Ottawa, Faculté de Droit, vol. 21, no 4, 1990, p. 719

[7] G. Cornu, *op. cit.*, p. 18–19.

[8]H. Batiffol, *Observations sur la spécificité du vocabulaire juridique*, in « Mélanges dédiés à Gabriel Marty », Université des Sciences Sociales de Toulouse, 1978, p. 29.



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belong to some juridical systems completely different from the Romanian one. The errors in this case are obvious taking into account that we deal with the explanation of the juridical notions, in general, in a transition language, English in most of the cases, and the juridical terms can only be equivalents most of the times and not identical: "Romanian legal terms reflect concepts and practices of the civil law system, rooted in Roman law, later known as civil law or continental law; consequently, they are not always exact equivalents of English terms, which are articulated in the common law system, adopted by American countries and those of Anglo-Saxon background."[9]

**3. Conclusions**

The study of the specialty languages, medical, literary, economic, juridical, offers the occasion for the formulation of some new ideas and observations regarding the stylistic structure of Romanian, of the linguistic and cultural relationships between different peoples. One should take into consideration that for the foreign students who speak Romanian there are however difficulties in the process of receiving and adequate usage of the specialty language, as "in the receiving process, the significance, decoded under the same circumstances as the elaboration of the text can only be accepted or rejected".[10]

The approach on and the interpretation of the texts belonging to some specialty domains by the foreign students who speak Romanian implies, along a good knowledge of all the semantic, grammatical, stylistic, orthographic aspects of Romanian also a good bilingual-cultural correlation of two different systems. As a consequence there must exist a certain dexterity of the speaker of Romanian as a foreign language for filtering the information extracted from a text and for exposing them accurately, unfaltering their meaning.

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[9] Simina Badea, *ESP Landmarks: Strategies for teaching English to law students,* Editura Universitaria, Craiova, 2016, p. 147.
[10] D. Irimia, *Structura stilistică a limbii române contemporane*, Bucureşti, EŞE, 1986, p. 216.



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