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RARAE AVES. TWO RFL-TEXTBOOKS IN THE 1940S

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Abstract:About half a century prior to the issuance of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and within the context of the gloomy times of the Second World War, two textbooks of Romanian As A Foreign Language (RFL) were in print in Germany (1941) and, respectively, in the UK (1945). Although they are not the first ones of their kind, both '30 Stunden Rumänisch' by Ernst-Erwin Lange-Kowal and 'Colloquial Rumanian' by Grigore Nandriș may be viewed as classic textbooks for the study of the Romanian language, in particular, and more broadly, for the study of languages in general. The present article aims to contrastively survey the two above-mentioned RFL-textbooks, not only in terms of their structure, text-selection, vocabulary presentation and grammar introduction, but also as related to the complexity and the degree of difficulty pertaining to the facts depicted and the lexis employed throughout these studies. In addition, they are examined as noteworthy samples of the tormented society of the 1940s, owing to how they accurately illustrate its social and cultural features, as reflected in the vast array of lexemes as well as in the selection of the type of texts chosen for study.

Keywords: context, grammar, Romanian language, textbook, vocabulary

Motto:
The content of most textbooks is perishable,
but the tools of self-directedness serve one well over time.
(Albert Bandura)

In a rather poetical, yet realistic interpretation, "languages themselves are – diachronically described – genuine history museums" (*my translation*, Tornow 2001: 32). The Romanian language is no exception to the rule. As an Eastern Romance language, yet arguably geographically and linguistically isolated from other Romance languages, it has developed singularly, by gradually adding to both its Thraco-Dacian (or Thraco-Illyrian) substratum and its Latin basis, several major influences, including from the Slavic, German, Greek, Hungarian and Turkish languages. At times, vocabulary items originating from various languages coexist, a case in point being *frontieră* (Romance influence), *graniță* (Slavic influence) and *hotar* (Hungarian influence), all terms meaning *frontier* and quite equally used across Romania. In addition, 21st-century Romanian has been shaped by a series of technological innovations, most of which are of English origin and have been adopted into Romanian as such (the now famous *mouse*, which, as a technical term, does not have any other Romanian counterpart, and thus distinguishes itself from its animal-term, *șoarece*), or as modern parallels to the existing Romanian words: *user* for *utilizator*, *printer* for *imprimantă*, *computer* for *calculator*, *gadget* for *dispozitiv* and so on). As a result, although Romanian is a Romance language, due to the variety of linguistic influences it has accepted (willingly or not, particularly because of its history) throughout time, it has represented a genuine challenge to both linguists and non-linguists.

Among the *rarae aves* of the field of Romanian As A Foreign Language (RFL), two textbooks are taken into consideration for the scope of the present article: *30 Stunden Rumänisch* by Ernst-Erwin Lange-Kowal, printed in Germany in 1941, and *Colloquial Rumanian* by Grigore

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Nandriș, published in the UK four years later. Although they did not pioneer the RFL-domain, they were written within the same social and political context – the forties and, more specifically, during the Second World War – which can be viewed as a traumatic experience lingering throughout the pages of these texts, explicitly, via vocabulary items, or implicitly, by the message conveyed. The year of 1941, when Lange-Kowal's textbook was printed, is closely related to the attack of the Soviet Union by Germany and the Battle of Pearl Harbour, two representative historical events marking the climax of hostilities, whereas 1945, with the exception of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, embodies more appeasing times, such as the Yalta Conference and the surrender of Nazi Germany. However, throughout these two textbooks, references to war and death are, now and then, counterpoised by a glimpse of hope or a witty short text, a tendency meant both to render optimism and make readers smile.

A. Some historical considerations

As compared to the long tradition of languages systematically taught and learned worldwide as distinct fields of foreign languages, such as English, French, German, Spanish or Italian, to mention only a few, Romanian As A Foreign Language has been approached differently and irregularly over a period spanning more than 230 years.

In the 18th century, by various cultural means, the Transylvanian School was fighting against inequality and for the social and political rights of Romanians, so their endeavours resulted in, among many others, a highly significant linguistic outcome: *Elementa linguae daco-romanae sive valachicae*. According to Zdrenghea (in Micu & Şincai 1980: 235), "[t]he first published study on the Romanian language, a fundamental contribution by Samuil Micu, written in collaboration with Gheorghe Şincai, *Elementa linguae daco-romanae sive valachicae*, was published in 1780 by Joseph de Kurzböck's Publishing House in Vienna", followed by a second edition, in 1805, authored by only Gheorghe Şincai. It is worth pointing out that, in fact, the first Romanian grammar, nevertheless in the form of a manuscript, relates to the year of 1757: *Gramatică rumânească* (Romanian Grammar), written by the Brașov-based author Dimitrie Eustatievici (in Bochmann 1989: 244).

A legitimate avowal of the Latin origin of the Romanian language and of the people's Roman roots, Micu and Șincai's research can be viewed "not only [as] a descriptive grammar book, but also a theoretical and historical study of the Romanian language" (Zdrenghea, in Micu & Şincai 1980: 235).

Structured into three parts: orthography, morphology and syntax, both editions end with a *Romanian and Latin Vocabulary* and five *Dialogues on most common topics* (Rom. *Forme de vorbit despre lucrurile cele ce mai adeseori vin în cuvîntare*). The very explanation sought by the present article lies in the following quotation:

> *Both chapters have a well-marked practical character, that of giving those who would learn Romanian the most usual words, as well as the most common constructions used in Romanian. They make this work* ***the first text-book*** (*using a present-day term*) ***for foreigners who want to learn Romanian*** (Zdrenghea, in Micu & Şincai 1980: 237, emphasis in the original).

Thus, the five practical dialogues tackle the topics of health (asking about one's health and their family's health – Micu & Şincai 1980: 207, 209), inviting guests (paying a visit, laying the table, eating and drinking – Micu & Şincai 1980: 209, 211, 213), time and weather (Micu & Şincai 1980: 213, 215), accommodation (eating supper, drinking, negotiating a carriage-ride, costs – Micu & Şincai 1980: 215, 217, 219) and giving directions (Micu & Şincai 1980: 219-220). What pervades all these dialogues is the respect and politeness paid to the interlocutor(s), even between those sharing the same social status, as well as the gratitude towards God, as a recurring greeting or thanks.

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Micu and Şincai's inspiring study was followed, in the next 100 years (between 1836-1945) by some scarce, yet worth mentioning Romanian grammars and readers, most of which were written in German, one in Italian, one in French, one in Hungarian and two in English, as pointed out in *The Bibliography of Romanian as a Foreign Language* (*2012*) - RLS, a publication coordinated by Victoria Moldovan:

Clemens, Andreas (1836). *Walachische Sprachlehre. Nebst einem walachisch-deutschen und deutsch-walachischen Handwörtenbuch*, Hermannstadt (RLS: 19).

Blajevici, Teoctist (1855). *Theoretisch-praktische Taschengrammatik zur leichten und schnellen Erleinung der românischen* (*walachischen*) *Sprache. Mit einer Wörtersammlung, Gesprächen Sprichnvörterm und Leseübungen*. Von Theoktist Schoimul, Wien (RLS: 16).

Barcianu-Popovici, Sava (1858). *Theoretisch-praktische Grammatik der romänischen Sprache*, Hermannstadt (RLS: 16).

Cionca, Ion (1888). *Praktische Grammatik der Romänischen Sprache für den Schulund Selbstunterricht.* Vierte verbesserte und vermehrte Auflage, Bucarest: Alexander Dagenmann (RLS: 19) – a fourth revised edition.

Wechsler, Theophile (1890). *Praktisches Lehrbuch der rumänischen Sprache zum Selbstunterricht für Anfänger, welche die Sprache in kurzer Zeitmöglichst gut erlernen wollen: grammatische Theorie, praktische Übungen, Chrestomathie und diverse Anhänge*, Wien; Leipzig: Hartleben (BSZ - Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig).

Lovera, Romeo (1906). *Grammatica della lingua rumena, colliaggi anche d'un vocabolario delle voci piú usuali*, Editura 2, carretta e ampliata, Milano (RLS: 28).

Hughes, Annie (1920). *Romanian conversation grammar*, Heidelberg (RLS: 26).

Teutsch, Michael und Baciu, Ioan (1920). *Rumänisches Sprachbuch. Ein Leitfaden zur leichten Erlernung der rumänischen Sprache zum Schulund Selbstunterricht*. 4-te erweiterte und verbesserte Auflage, Kronstadt: Verlag der Buchhandlung H. Zeiduer (RLS: 34) – a fourth revised edition.

Tagliavini, Charles (1924). *Lectures roumaines. Morceaux choisis de prose et poésie roumaine avec des notes en français*, Heidelberg: J.Groos (RLS: 34).

Galdi, László (1940). *Gyakorlati romannyelvkönyv*, Füzet 1, 3, 5.Budapest (RLS: 24).

It is on the last two textbooks, cited in Moldovan's RLS, that the present study focuses on:

Lange-Kowal, Ernst-Erwin (1941). *30 Stunden Rumänisch für Anfänger*. Zweite verbesserte Auflage. Berlin-Schöneberg: Langenscheidtsche Verlagsbuchhandlung (RLS: 27) – a second revised edition.

Nandriș, Gr. (1945). *Colloquial Rumanian*. London (RLS, p. 30).

Although further textbooks printed after 1945 are beyond the scope of the present research study, it should be mentioned that since the 1970s, RFL has gradually become an area of study, yet still subordinated to applied linguistics. Due to certain economic circumstances and political directives issued by the Communist regime in that period, university teaching staff began to adapt their native language to the restrictions applied to foreign language learning, thus progressively introducing the vocabulary and simplifying grammar explanations, in an attempt to make Romanian teachable and learnable. As a result, tens of books and hundreds of articles were written between the '70s and '80s, not only on the general RFL, but also on Romanian for special purposes: agriculture, chemistry, economics, medicine and veterinary medicine, sports, social and technical sciences, even wood industry (see RLS 2012: *passim*). Moreover, a RFL-textbook published in Bucharest in 1978, penned by Grigore Brâncuş, Adriana Ionescu and Manuela Saramandu, *Limba română contemporană. Manual pentru studenţii străini I*, is nowadays, 40 years later, still a reference RFL-textbook – with a fifth edition (however, lacking the speaking and the listening competences, but

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being thoroughly efficient in the theory and practice of grammar), widely used both in Romania and abroad.

It was not until the 2000s that RFL discreetly turned into a distinct domain, due to the printing of the Romanian counterpart of the Threshold Level: *Nivel prag pentru învăţarea limbii române ca limbă străină* (Strasboug, 2002), written by Victoria Moldovan, Liana Pop and Lucia Uricariu, and following the translation into Romanian of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): *Cadrul european comun de referinţă pentru limbi. Învăţare. Predare. Evaluare* (Chişinău, 2003), coordinated and revised by George Moldovanu.

B. A German RFL-Textbook

The aim of *30 Stunden Rumänisch für Anfänger* (30SR) – *30 Lessons of Romanian for Beginners* is to acquaint the German speakers with the modern Romanian language, in terms of its pronunciation, writing, vocabulary and grammar, and also with its culture. As the author claims in the introduction, "he who has worked on the vocabulary presented here will be able to make conversation with the Romanians about the major issues concerning their practical and spiritual life" (*my translation*, 30SR: III). In addition, the basic vocabulary is accompanied by various morphological and syntactical explanations, presented in a clear form and in contrast with the German language. Lange-Kowal wittingly concludes with an old saying, and thus provides readers with a piece of advice or rather a warning about the difficulty of learning Romanian: *He conquers who endures* or, in a literal translation, only with perseverance will one reach set goals (Germ. *Nur Beharrlichkeit führt zum Ziel*).

As the title suggests it, Lange-Kowal's textbook is structured into 30 lessons for beginners, each accompanied by a translation exercise and a specific grammar issue, with explanations in German. The topics range as follows:

1. Casa lui Gheorghe Popescu (Gheorghe Popescu's house)
2. O zi din viața d-lui Popescu (A day in Mr. Popescu's life)
3. Viața la țară (Life in the countryside)
4. La birou (At the office)
5-6. România (Romania)
7. E vreme rea (The weather is bad)
8. La restaurant (At the restaurant)
9. O scrisoare (A letter)
10. La cinematograf (At the cinema)
11. Despre sport (On sports)
12. La librar (At the bookshop)
13. Un caz de boală (A sickness case)
14. Pregătire la plecare (Departure preparation)
15. La brutărie (At the baker's)
16. Despre navigație (On navigation)
17. La poștă (At the post office)
18. La farmacie (At the pharmacy)
19. La croitor (At the tailor's)
20. La băcan (At the grocer's)
21. La măcelar (At the butcher's)
22. Fructe și zarzavaturi (Fruit and vegetables)
23. Bucureștii (Bucharest)
24. Natura (Nature)
25. Despre aviație (On aviation)
26. La defilare (At the parade)
27. Despre învățământ (On education)
28. Limba română (The Romanian language)
29-30. Literatura română (Romanian literature)

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Such a list would normally seem more than comprehensive for this level. Lessons 16, 25 and even 26 are rather odd for a beginners' textbook, since the topics of navigation and aviation would be rather suitable for a specialised textbook, whereas the parade topic in Lesson 26 abounds in references to army troops and rankings. However, the fact that this book was published in 1941, as a second revised edition (the first probably printed in the 1930s), should rule out the principle of gradually introducing the vocabulary (from frequent to less frequent/specialised, from general to particular, and from simple to complex) or the topic-adaptation to the language level, which both teachers and learners are so much aware of nowadays. So vivid was the distressing war experience to both the author and the learners that it permeated the majority of the reading-comprehension texts, deeply anchored in the immediate reality. Thus, terms of military preparedness can be found from the very first lesson (L1): *adăpost antiaerian* (bombproof shelter), *ecluză antigaz* (gas sluice) – p. 1, continue in Lesson 8 with *Soldatul trage cu mitraliera.* (The soldier fires his machine-gun.) – p. 42 and with a classification of war ships: *canoniere* (gunboats), *distrugătoare* (destroyers), *crucișătoare* (cruisers), *cuirasate* (battleships), etc. – L16, p. 81, and end with the description of bombing planes releasing bombs – L25, p. 115 and two war-references – L26, p. 121.

Although a brilliant mind or a connoisseur of agriculture, biology, geology or even cyclist- and car-related language would take delight in specialised terms from the very beginning of a textbook, such as *secerătoare* (mower) – p. 12, *siloz* (silo) – p. 18, *potârniche* (partridge) – p. 25, *mistreț* (boar) – p. 25, *zăcământ de petrol* (oil deposit) – p. 31, *ghidon* (handlebar) – p. 54 or *lanț* (drive chain) – p. 54, *șasiu* (underframe) – p. 58, *caroserie* (car body) – p. 58 or *piston* (piston) – p. 59 (the exercise coming after Lesson 11 entirely focuses on car parts and its functions – p. 59) and, after all, their difficulty exclusively lies in their being foreign expressions attached to familiar concepts, the complex sentences in RFL should hardly ever appear in a fourth lesson for beginners:

e.g. *Cartea pe care am cumpărat-o, nu-i place sorei* (modern: *surorii*) *mele*. – L4, p. 19
Trimite-i-o! (Send it to her!)
Ție ți s-au dat scrisorile pe care le-am expediat cu avionul. (You were given the letters that we had sent by plane.) – L4, p. 19
1. pe care - relative pronoun, Acc.
2. –o - personal pron., resuming the fem. noun "cartea"
3. –i - personal pron., Dat., required by the verb
4. surorii mele – fem. noun + adj. Dat.

Moreover, formal words are juxtaposed to quite informal, familiar words: *Când biletele sunt epuizate, sala e tixită* (modern *ticsită*) *de lume*. (When the tickets are consumed, the (cinema) hall is overfull). – L10, p. 52, or poetical to rather geographical language: *Acolo jos se vedea satul nostru brăzdat de râul Teleajen.* […] *ne înviora mirosul de ozon răspândit de brazii cei înalți.* (Down there lay our village furrowed by river Teleajen. […] the ozone smell effused by the tall fir-trees refreshed us.). – L9, p. 46, and probably newly introduced English sports terms are rendered in a quite *Englanian* (English-Romanian) form: *football, match, footballist* (footballer), *goal* – L10, p. 53, *skior* (ski runner)– L10, p. 54. All these slight inadvertencies could point to a structure or lesson translation from a German model, yet not adapted to the peculiarities of the Romanian registers.

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The rather archaic lexis: *putină de baie* for *cadă/vană* (bathtub) - L2, p. 7, *recipisă* for *chitanță* (bill) – L17, p. 85, *galoși* or *șoșoni* (gaiters) - L7, p. 35, no longer in use; the terms *băcan* (grocer) and *băcănie* (a grocer's shop) in Lesson 20, even the later Romanian quasi-equivalent, *aprozar* (a greengrocer's shop), already turning obsolete, nowadays being replaced with the more general *magazin* (shop, store or supermarket) or even *supermarket*, and the old writing style (*dela* instead of *de la*, *s'a spălat* instead of *s-a spălat*, *într'o* instead of *într-o*), together with certain cultural and historical facts (smoking cigarettes after breakfast – L2, p. 6 or after a copious meal at the restaurant while listening to the fiddler orchestra – L8, p. 40; peasants eating mostly *mămăligă* – Engl. polenta – L3, p. 13 and making their own shoes – *opinci* and blouses – *ii* – L6, p. 31; the king – probably King Carol II or already his son, King Mihai of Romania – loving his country – L5, p. 26; meat being sold and bought by ration books – L21, p. 100) give zest to the entire book.

At the end of the first seven lessons, a short list (2-3) of antonyms is provided, deemed as beneficial for vocabulary acquisition and improvement. In addition, the textbook provides a really useful tool for non-linguists – a one-page list of so-called Germanised grammatical terminology, namely a simple alternative to meta-language, indeed characteristic of the German language. For example, an adjective translates as a quality-word, an adverb as a circumstance-word and an article as a gender-word; a conjunction is a linking word, whereas a preposition is a relation-word; the singular refers to one number, while the plural refers to more numbers. With regard to the verb, the infinitive is a naming form (similar to dictionary-form), the indicative stands for the reality-form, the conjunctive for the possibility-form and the imperative is the order-form.

Besides the above-mentioned vocabulary issues, the manner of presenting grammar matters is also atypical for the contemporary mind – for example, the first lesson, on the masculine gender, already provides all the case forms (nominative, genitive, dative and accusative), with a definite and indefinite article, in both singular and plural – a rather complex topic in Romanian, normally taught up to the B1/B2 levels (upper-intermediate), thus undoubtedly triggering the modern linguist' and learner's outrage, so much used to the CEFR procrustean standards:

sg. *domnul, domnului, domnului, pe domnul*; pl. *domnii, domnilor, domnilor, pe domnii*

sg. *un domn,* (*al, a, ai, ale*) *unui domn, unui domn, pe un domn*; pl. (*nişte*) *domni,* (*al, a, ai, ale*) *unor domni, unor domni,* (*nişte*) *domni* – L1, p. 4.

In addition, *perfectul simplu*, a form of past usually employed in literature or regionally, in the southern part of Romania, but tending to be briefly paid attention to in contemporary RFL-textbooks, makes here already the object of Lesson 9, immediately followed by complex and uncommon ordinal numerals, for both masculine and feminine, such as the three thousandth (*al trei miilea*/*a treia mia*) or the millionth (*al milionulea*/*a milioana*) – p. 51.

C. A British RFL-Textbook

Unlike its German counterpart, the British textbook (rather a grammar-book), *Colloquial Rumanian*, first published in August 1945, in fact focuses on grammar and authors a Romanian linguist, Grigore Nandriș, a professor of Slavonic philology at the University of Bucharest and a Visiting Lecturer in Romanian at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at the University of London.

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Structured into four sections:

I. *Pronunciation and Spelling*
II. *Grammatical Forms* (morphology)
III. *Word Formation* (*Composition* and *Derivation*)
IV. *Syntax*,

the study begins with several brief observations on the specificity of Romanian as a Romance language belonging to the Balkan linguistic group, its origin, its dialects, the earliest evidence of the language, as well as the contemporary state of the language and the nation (the quite recent at that time – 1918 – Great Union of the Romanians into one state). Each section tackles a certain grammatical issue which is systematically followed by a reading exercise – the first two being merely words illustrating the vowel-sounds and the diphthongs and vowels in hiatus. What is really helpful in the use of such exercises is the phonetic transcription, as well as the indication of stress on the accented syllable in each and every word:

e.g. **vecin** [ve-'tcheen], neighbour (Nandriș 1945: 5)
a tuși [ah too-'shee], to cough (Nandriș 1945: 6)
a se învechi [ah se în-ve-'kee], to become old (Nandriș 1945: 6)
leopard [le-o-'pahrd], leopard (Nandriș 1945: 9)
zmeură ['zme-oo-ră], raspberry (Nandriș 1945: 10).

Sometimes, the role of the accent is essential, by differentiating the meaning of identically spelt words, as in

deși (*adj.m.pl.*) [deshį], thick (Nandriș 1945: 18)
deși (*conj.*) [de-'shee], although (Nandriș 1945: 18).

Besides the theoretical yet well-structured and typically translated into English descriptions, the reading exercises require excellent command of the Romanian language (except from *Exercise No. 5* – p. 36 and *Exercise No. 6* – p. 40, seemingly adapted to a A1-level), since they abound in proverbs, Bible verses, riddles, and fragments from the Romanian folklore and literature, in prose or in verse, which makes use of archaisms, regionalisms and set-expressions (*Exercise No. 16* is actually entitled *Idiomatic Expressions* and provides all their English counterparts – pp. 153-155, yet *Exercise No. 12* – p. 126 and *Exercise No. 14* – p. 136, entitled *Proverbs*, represent lists of numerous proverbs exclusively in the Romanian language, similarly to *Exercise No. 15* – p. 139-140, on riddles).

An important exercise in this textbook is *Exercise No. 10* – p. 66,on calculations and measurements, a valuable tool in the British context, whose system of measurement is different from the Romanian one (miles, yards, inches, gallons, pints and pounds, as contrasted to kilometres, metres, litres or millilitres). Another invaluable part of this textbook is the well-organised and exemplified chapter on word-formation (composition and derivation), a topic that is unfortunately quite often neglected in the RFL-textbooks nowadays.

Thus, the four above-mentioned sections are followed by the Reader and the Vocabulary, each of them equally amounting to approximately 65 pages. The Reader raises interest by the diversity of the selected texts, at the same time promoting Romanian culture and civilisation. The Preface is an excerpt from a 17th-century well-known writing by Miron Costin, in which the author laments the hard times enslaving contemporaries and wishes better epochs, favourable for book-reading, would come, as reading is seen as "the most beautiful and worthwhile occupation in the entire human life" (*my translation*, Costin, in Nandriș 1945: 204). Certain conversational phrases (on the journey, in the shop/hotel/restaurant, at the bank, at the post office and at the

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doctor) – pp. 207-214 precede Luke's Parable of the Sower – p. 215, a geography lesson about Romania (adapted from I. Simionescu, 1937) – pp. 215-219, a short fable on the lamb and the wolf – p. 219, a complicated extract on the history of the Romanian literature and art (Sextil Pușcariu) – pp. 219-223, as well as a number of short stories by Eminescu and Ispirescu, historical fragments by Neculce and Negruzzi, a hunting description by Odobescu, treasured childhood memories and a story on the Union between Moldavia and Wallachia by Creangă, ending with several well-known poems written by Alecsandri, Eminescu, Șt.O. Iosif, Coșbuc, Minulescu, Arghezi and Blaga.

Nonetheless, the idea of death looms over most literary fragments, either concretely (the detailed violent death of Alexandru Lăpușneanu, a piece written by Costache Negruzzi – pp. 229-231, the moving death of a quail nestling, by Brătescu-Voinești – pp. 254-258, the death of a lamb eaten by a wolf – p. 219) or implicitly (the parenthetic murder of Dumitru and the suicide of Ion in Caragiale's drama *Năpasta* – pp. 240-242, the plotted murder of a Moldavian shepherd, in the ballad of *Miorița*, in N.W. Newcombe's translation – pp. 260-264, as well as the implacable end of life, philosophically inferred in the poems of Eminescu, Minulescu, Arghezi and Blaga).

D. Conclusions

Although countless RFL-textbooks have been printed in Romania and abroad, appropriate to various levels and domains, and contrasted to different languages, the perfect textbook might not have been written yet. Times and contexts have changed, the former comprehensive textbook has gradually become abridged and pragmatic on the A1-A2 levels, reduced to the basics. The contemporary perspective has steadily simplified chunks of language and the grammar, levelled everything, from words to exercises, to the detriment of the unique language savour, the *languageness*, in a coined term, the specificity of each and every language.

The two *rarae aves* presented here, Lange-Kowal's German RFL-textbook and Nandriș's British textbook, have not seemed perfect, either. They were written and printed in wartime conditions, which deeply influenced the selection of both the vocabulary and the text. Adapted to the mentalities of the times and to the war, these textbooks focus exclusively on reading and grammatical competences, with the writing competence indirectly developed by the translation exercises included in every lesson, yet leaving aside the listening and the speaking competences. Even the reading exercises tend to be a little mechanical, the difficulty of the lexis being rather high, thanks to the consistent use of specialised terms, although most words are explained into German or English. In addition, the British RFL-textbook represents a language (rather a grammar) study, addressing philologists, more than any layperson, since the vast majority of grammar explanations are comprehensive, meta-language is highly employed and specific examples are allocated less space.

Nonetheless, even if not flawless, they have served the needs and interests of probably thousands of students and teachers so far. Besides, they represent invaluable authentic samples of the forties and the Second World War, the language they use and their time-stained pages having a special magic on the modern society. *30 Stunden Rumänisch* and *Colloquial Rumanian* continue to attract attention, especially on the part of the philologists, due to the still valid vocabulary and grammar aspects, but also to the tang of *Romanianness*, which they both successfully share.

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