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CONTENTS

PAGES FROM THE HISTORY OF THE POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE OF IAŞI. THE 1940's -1950's

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Abstract. The history of higher technical education in Romania begins in the second decade of the 19th century, with the creation of schools of land surveyors in Iaşi and Bucharest. The capital of Moldavia opened the way for this type of education and was one of the major centres of the Romanian academic life. The establishment of the third polytechnic school in 1937 crowned the efforts of academics and specialists in this region to establish a higher education institution that could prepare solely engineers for the Romanian industry. The beginning and the early years did not stand under favourable conditions. The institution was first exiled to Chernivtsi and then to Turnu-Severin, which would jeopardize the future of the engineering school of Iaşi. The present study is an investigation of the past of the institution and an attempt to revive a part of its history, focusing on the situation of the School in the 1940's-1950's – a world that was unsettled in many ways.

Keywords: Polytechnic School; Gheorghe Asachi; postwar period; engineering education; faculties.

1. Introduction

The beginning of Romanian technical higher education is closely linked to the establishment of schools of land surveyors by Gheorghe Asachi in Iaşi in

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1813, and Gheorghe Lazăr in Bucharest in 1818. Their short-termed existence could not ensure the continuity needed to build the institutional education that could train young people for the engineering profession. Making this type of education official at the beginning of the 19th century in Romania was an audacious, pioneering attempt. The two Romanian scholars had the right intuition regarding the importance of technical education and followed the French model: in 1794, in Paris, the first higher education institution was established that aimed to train engineers; its name was *École centrale de travaux publics* (Central School of Public Works)*,* later renamed the *École Polytechnique* in the following year. The French example was adopted by other European states: a similar institution was founded in Vienna in 1797 and an industrial Academy was established in Berlin in 1821. Schools for training engineers were founded on other continents, too, in Tokyo in 1864, for example. In the United States of America, the training of future specialists in industry was left to the military schools which offered their trainees thorough knowledge of mathematics and physics (Cornelia Neagu, 1996, p. 21*).*

The industrial revolution triggered an extensive process of development, of increased interest in applied sciences and implicitly in technical education. Thus, educational institutions started to emerge, focusing solely on training specialists for the industry. In Romania, the idea of setting up a "class of engineers and land surveyors" (A.D. Xenopol, 1885, p. 4) belonged to Gheorghe Asachi, who, with the support of the ruler Scarlat Calimachi, established a course for engineers and land surveyors taught in the Romanian language in the autumn of 1813; the school was associated with the Royal School of Iaşi (V. A. Urechia, 1892, p. 85; Cornelia Neagu, 1996, p. 23; *Istoria oraşului Iaşi*, 1980, p. 591). Unfortunately, young Asachi's initiative was only partly successful and the school had a short-lived existence. Only one class graduated in 1818.

The development of technical education was interrupted by the political unrest in Moldavia, by the absence of a minimal infrastructure required for the smooth running of quality education, an indifferent or even refractory attitude of the policy makers, but also by the lack of academic staff who could teach the applied disciplines. The creation of the Mihăileană Academy in 1834 represented an important moment in the process of revitalizing the "geometry-related practical" disciplines (Gabriel Bădărău, 2010*,* p. 119 ; Cornelia Neagu, 1996, p. 27; *Istoria oraşului Iaşi*, 1980, p. 593). The Mihăileană Academy character was specific of an eclectic institution, where both new forms, characteristic of a modern university, and old forms that reminded rather of medieval colleges, were merged (More extensively discussed in Gabriel Bădărău, 2010, p. 109). By founding and operating the Mihăileană Academy, the ground was prepared for the creation of the first modern university in Romania, which was duly noted by the great historian A. D. Xenopol (A. D. Xenopol, 1885, p. 141). The creation of the University of Iaşi on 26th October

1860 was the crowning of the Romanians' efforts to found a modern higher education institution. The main merit lies with the then Prime Minister Mihail Kogălniceanu, but Vasile Alexandrescu Urechia's role should not be neglected, either; at that time, he was a director in the Department of Education of Moldavia; nor should the professors 'contribution to the institution be ignored (Florea Ioncioaia, *Înfiinţarea şi începuturile Universităţii* , p. 138 ff.).

In the first years when the University was operational the applied disciplines were neglected. However, courses such as mathematics, physics and chemistry were delivered at the Faculty of Physical Sciences. The professors who taught these disciplines and the students who attended the courses were faced with many difficulties, mainly generated by the lack of equipment necessary for the experiments and the lack of suitable premises in which to carry out the tutorials and laboratory work. A physics laboratory was established within the Faculty of Sciences as late as the academic year 1898-1899, on the initiative of Professor Dragomir Hurmuzescu; the laboratory was equipped and had the facilities required to carry out the experiments necessary for a quality learning process. Gradually, small steps were taken towards introducing some applicative courses. Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century students at the Faculty of Sciences could attend the following courses: *The Chemical Study of Oil*, taught by Petru Poni; *Oil Technology*, delivered by Anastasie Obregia; *Oil Geography*, tenured by I. Simionescu. Those who studied these disciplines quickly found a job in the oil industry that was incipient in Romania starting with the second half of the 19th century.

An important step in the development of the technical and applied sciences education at the University of Iaşi was the creation of the department of agricultural chemistry and the implementation of the course of chemistry for technology, beginning with the year 1906. The creation of the School of Electricity in 1910 was a major gain for the education in applied sciences. Thus, at the beginning of World War I in the former capital of Moldavia there were three departments of technical education: electrical engineering, technological chemistry, and agricultural sciences (For details on the establishment and activity of the departments of life sciences starting with the period before the first world war see Gabriel Asandului, 2006, pp. 111-124; Constantin Cloşcă, 1996, pp. 40-53).

2. The Polytechnic School of Iaşi from the Establishment to the Education Reform in 1948

The need to establish higher education institutions with a technical profile became increasingly imperative after the end of World War I. The idea was appropriated by a part of the political decision makers, so that it was materialized with the establishment of polytechnic schools in Bucharest and Timişoara in 1920. In Iaşi, engineering education remained within the

University until 1937, when the Gheorghe Tătărescu government decided it should be concentrated in polytechnic schools (details about the way in which the legislation was adopted regarding the centralizing of technical higher education only in polytechnic schools can be found in *Memoriu relativ la concentrarea învăţământului tehnic superior*, 1937, pp. 5-19). While in Bucharest the existing departments of applied sciences were transferred relatively easily and were merged with the already existing Polytechnic School, in Iaşi a new institution had to be created; it took over the departments of electrical engineering and technological chemistry that were active within the Faculty of Sciences. Thus, by Decision No. 2015660 of the Ministry of National Education, on December 3rd, 1937, published in the "Oficial Gazette" on 8th December 1937, the third Polytechnic School in Romania was created, named after the illustrious Moldavian scholar Gheorghe Asachi ("Monitorul Oficial". Partea I, nr. 284, 8 decembrie 1937, p. 9370 ff.). The regulations of the new institution were sanctioned and promulgated on 4th March 1938, so that starting with 1st October the same year the students of the polytechnic school could attend courses within the new institution.

The decision to create the Polytechnic School in Iaşi established that it would operate with two sections: technological chemistry and electro-technical chemistry. On 9th November 1938, according to a special law, polytechnic schools were placed on equal footing with the universities, so that the departments of the new institutions were transformed into colleges. At the same time, the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, located in Chişinău, was transferred administratively from the University of Iaşi to the newly established Polytechnic School.

The first rector of the new institution was the eminent Professor Cristea Niculescu-Otin, who managed the school between 1938-1944. In these early years, the teaching staff of the Polytechnic Institute of Iaşi were highly reputable members of the academia; their reputation was established at national and international level. Their list included, among others: Petre Bogdan, Radu Cernătescu, Ion Plăcinţeanu, Ştefan Procopiu, Constantin V. Gheorghiu, Mircea Savul.

The separation of the departments of applied sciences at the Faculty of Sciences within the University of Iaşi was far from easy because the new entity did not have its own premises. Therefore, the management of the Polytechnic School undertook to raise its own building. In the first stage, a plot of 40.000 m^2 on the plateau Copou was granted by the central authorities; this had initially been intended for the building and annexes of a teacher training college. The municipality of Iasi contributed 5000 m^2 to this area (Constantin Cloşcă, 1996, p. 98). The foundation stone of the new building was laid on 2nd June 1940, during a ceremony attended by the then minister of National Education, Professor Petre Andrei. On this occasion, the rector of the Polytechnic School, Cristea Niculescu-Otin, said:

"We have the great honour and boundless joy to lay the foundation of the great edifice that will stand on Copou Hill (...). Here we will raise the Palace of the Polytechnic School; when completed with the building of the School of civil engineering, it will be the source that anyone thirsty for technical knowledge and the highest technical teachings (sic!), the sharpest and most gifted sons of Romania, will turn to" (Revista Ştiinţifică „V. Adamachi", p. 54).

In his speech, the Minister of Education expressed his hope that the Polytechnic School of Iaşi would "become a place of intellectual achievement and a great factory that will work for the country" („Opinia", Iaşi, 5th June 1940).

Unfortunately, when Romania entered World War II as a belligerent country on 22nd June 1941, the Polytechnic School of Iaşi was deprived of the much-needed governmental financial support. It was left to the management of the institution to raise the necessary amount for the project to materialize. In this respect, loans were sought and financial support from private or state institutions and enterprises was obtained, some even from private individuals. The institution named Casa Şcoalelor donated no less than 500.000 lei, the National Bank of Romania and the "Reşiţa" Works donated 50.000 lei each, the Buhuşi Factory, the "Malaxa" Plant in Bucharest and other private entities also donated 5.000 lei each (Revista Ştiinţifică „V. Adamachi", p. 140).

The fate of the Polytechnic School of Iaşi during World War II was marked by two events. The first consisted in the relocation of the institution to Chernivtsi, as stipulated by the Decree-Law no. 2874/17th September 1941. The decision had political reasons and was made without consulting the teaching staff or the students. The inconveniences generated by the relocation caused delays in the beginning of classes in the 1941-1942 academic year. Because of this, the teaching process was resumed late; this took place on the University premises in the capital of Bukovina in the first month of 1942. The number of faculties increased, as the Faculty of Constructions was created by Decree-Law no. 989/13th November 1941 (Gabriel Asandului, 2001, pp. 5-10). The Regulation of the new faculty stipulated that the general specialization was that of civil engineer; it also stipulated the creation of six new joint chairs (where general disciplines were taught), six joint conferences (where the specialised disciplines were taught), four speciality departments and five speciality conferences (see above) (*Istoricul Institutului Politehnic Iali*, vol. **I**, p. 44). In the same period when the School was active in Chernivtsi, in 1942, the Faculty of Electrical Engineering changed its name to Electromechanics to highlight the changes that had taken place along with the setting up of new departments and the hiring of new staff members who, in time, contributed to the status of the institution (Nicolae Irimiciuc, *Învăţământul ingineresc ieşean de-a lungul timpulu*, 2001, p. 123). The Chernivtsi period coincided with the increase in the number of students at the Polytechnic School. Thus, while in the academic year 1941/1942 the number of young people attending the four faculties was 712, in

the following year their number increased to 970 and it reached 1039 in 1943/1944 (Constantin Cloşcă, 1996, p. 101). The increase in the number of students triggered additional efforts on the part of the teaching staff who, during the years when the Polytechnic School was located at Chernivtsi, proved their full commitment to the new educational institution.

The second event occurred in the early 1944 when the realities of the war forced the Romanian state to withdraw all institutions from Bukovina. Thus, the "great refuge" began, in which the staff and assets of the institution were evacuated at Turnu-Severin. The process took place during March and involved a huge effort on the part of the school employees as well as students. Bombing raids over Turnu-Severin city by the Anglo-American aviation forced the management of the Polytechnic School to move the institution to the village of Deveselu, where a part of the students of the institution and the entire teaching and administrative staff were located. In addition to specific academic activities, the students and teachers were involved in related activities, such as: road works, repair and construction of houses, agricultural activities, etc.

The declaration of August 23rd, 1944 brought back the hopes of returning the school to the former capital of Moldavia. The decision to return was taken in the autumn of 1944 but could not be carried out until the following year. The students and teachers of the Iaşi Polytechnic School played an important role in taking this step. Their cause was backed by a large part of the population of Iaşi, as well as a number of professional organizations. Thus, the *Union of engineers from Iaşi* campaigned for the return of The Polytechnic School to the former capital of Moldavia (Constantin Cloşcă, 1996, p. 106). The Professorial Council of the Polytechnic School also decided to return to Iaşi and place the institution again "in its natural environment".

The debate about the institution's return to Iaşi coincided with the retirement of Rector Cristea Niculescu-Otin, who was succeeded by the distinguished Professor Cezar Parteni-Antoni, the dean of the Faculty of Electromechanics. Professor Parteni's position was filled by his colleague, Professor Alexandru Cişman.

In the spring of 1945, the students of the Polytechnic School, the members of the teaching and administrative staff returned to Iaşi, where they found the learning areas and the School's accommodation in a state of ruin. The teaching aids were missing entirely. The teaching process was resumed in rooms provided by the Military High School, the Orthodox High School and "Queen Oltea" High School. The official opening of the academic year 1945-1946 took place on 13th May 1945, in the presence of the minister of National Education, Ştefan Voitec, the minister of National Propaganda, Petre Constantinescu-Iaşi, as well as of some important personalities of the Romanian culture, close to the new communist regime, such as Mihail Sadoveanu and C. I. Parhon. (Constantin Cloşcă, 1996, p. 109).

The rehabilitation of the school's facilities took long and involved huge efforts by the management of the institution, professors, and students. In the first stage the 6730 m^2 administrative and educational spaces were renovated

and a student dormitory to accommodate 200 people was put into service. Also, in the autumn of 1946, the Polytechnic School was equipped with its own lithography printing workshop that was meant to print courses for the students (Constantin Cloşcă, 1996, p. 111).

The Romanian society between 1944 and 1948 was dominated by suspicion and political exposure. During these years, the communists and their allies, supported by their mentors, the Soviets, were paving the way to impose the Bolshevik view onto the Romanian higher education, higher technical education included (Mihai Dorin, 1995, pp. 59-67). At the same time, an extensive purging process was carried out that targeted the teachers and students who held anti-communist political beliefs. The law that legally established the implementation of the Soviet model in the Romanian system of education and that generated profound changes in the organizational structure of Romanian educational institutions was Decree no. 175/3rd August 1948 (Ştefan Bârsănescu *et al*., 1978, p. 146).

3. The Polytechnic Institute of Iaşi in the 1950's

This implied major changes for the Polytechnic School of Iaşi. First of all, the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences was separated from the Polytechnic School and was established as an independent education institution, under the name of "Ion Ionescu de la Brad" Agricultural Institute. The name of Polytechnic School was considered bourgeois by those in charge of the Romanian education and was changed to the Polytechnic Institute. The fact that a faculty separated from the rest was compensated by the creation of a new one, the Faculty of Mechanics by Decree-Law no. 263327 of the Ministry of Public Instruction, published in the "Official Gazette" on 26th October 1948 (for further details on the creation of the Faculty of Mechanics within the Polytechnic Institute in Iaşi see N. Irimiciuc, I. Ibănescu, C. Oprişan, D. Olaru, 2008, pp.17, 46-47). Thus, in the academic year 1948-1949 the Polytechnic Institute of Iaşi had four faculties (Industrial Chemistry, Civil Engineering, Electromechanics and Mechanics). The educational areas amounted to no less than 6,631 m^2, of which 589 m^2 were occupied by auditoria, while 47 m^2 were occupied by the library (*Istoricul Institutului Politehnic din Iaşi*, vol. **II**, p. 26). 811 students studied in the institution and the teaching staff consisted of 144 teachers, grouped in 23 departments or chairs (*Ibid*., vol. **I**, p. 55).

Political purging was also the disguised reason why some members of the teaching staff were dismissed; this, together with rationalization resulted in the discontinuation of chairs and conferences, the dismissal of valuable teachers under various pretexts. Extremely valuable professors who became undesirable for the new regime were removed, such as: Eugen Pavelescu, Flor Rădulescu, Arsenie Oprea, Ştefan Popescu, N. Pătrăşcanu, Anton Crihan, a.s.o. (Mihai Dorin, 1996, pp. 117-118).

The "Education reform" that started with the publication of Decree no. 175/3rd August 1948 continued through a long series of orders, decrees and directives, all aiming to educate the youth in the spirit of the people's democracy. Students were to be recruited especially from among the children of peasants and workers. The entire Romanian education system was disturbed by the new regime's desire to change the social pool from which students were selected. To ease their access to higher education, as well as the young workers' access, workers' school were organised with evening classes or part time education classes to give learners who did not have secondary education the opportunity to pursue various forms of higher education, engineering in particular, after graduation, (Mihai Teodor Nicoară, 2014, p. 171). In fact, the introduction of these new forms of education had a political purpose, that of creating a nursery of employees devoted to the new regime of people's democracy.

Technical higher education operated in accordance with the provisions of the law of 1948, among the polytechnic institutes which depended on the Ministry of Public Education, along with the universities (art. 17). Graduates of high schools, pedagogical schools or technical schools that passed the entrance examination (art. 19) could attend these schools. Universities and polytechnic schools were privileged compared to other higher education institutes, as they could also grant the title of doctor (art. 22). The duration of the doctoral studies was established by law to three years (art. 23).

After 1948, the higher education system in Romania had an upward trend from a quantitative point of view, as there was a severe need for engineers, who were supposed to contribute to the industrialization undertaken by the Romanian Workers' Party (R.W.P.). Thus, in the academic year 1954/1955 there were ten academic centres in Romania, with 48 higher education institutions that included 134 faculties, many of them technical (*Ibidem*). With a desire to increase the number of specialists in industry, the party considered it necessary to grant students who had not passed the graduation exam the same rights as those who had passed it. Decision no. 1009/13th September 1949 of the Council of Ministers passed this "anomaly", but only for the pupils who graduated in 1947/1948 and 1948/1949.

The Soviet influence grew in all areas of activity, including education, and in particular in higher education. Thus, an important step forward towards the ideologization of higher education was made when a block/package of ideological disciplines and the Russian language were introduced in the curricula of higher education institutions. The Polytechnic Institute of Iaşi went through this process of politicization, so that, in the academic year 1949/1950, the political disciplines were studied throughout the four years of study: Marxist-Leninist ideology (year I), Political economics (year II), Dialectic materialism (III year), Marxist-Leninist ideology (year IV) (Mihai Dorin, 2006, p. 223). This process had consequences not only on the students' activity, but

also on the teachers', who had to attend ideology classes. Over time, the number of courses increased, and the teaching staff had to attend the entire range of ideology courses and seminars. In the academic year 1959/1960, ideology education for the teaching staff at the Polytechnic Institute of Iaşi was held within the framework of the eight ideological seminars and courses in which no less than 275 academics (Serviciul Judeţean Iaşi al Arhivelor Naţionale – SJIAN, Arhiva Institutului Politehnic din Iaşi. Prorectoratul ştiinţific, file 5/1959, f. 68-77) took part, of which 25 attended the University's evening classes in Marxist-Leninist ideology. Another example of political interference in Romanian education is the official notification of the Minister of Public Education of July 8th 1950, that stipulated the new conditions for the staff selection and promotion. According to this document, scientific criteria lost ground at the expense of the candidates' political commitment to the regime of people's democracy, which became a priority in the selection and promotion of the teaching staff.

The Soviet influence on the Romanian education system became increasingly powerful regarding, among other things, the way of granting scientific titles and higher didactic degrees. Starting with the academic year 1952/1953, the system of post-graduation was introduced, following the Soviet model, "to create wide possibilities of training" (*Ibid.*, file 2/1955, f. 1) for those who wanted to complete their scientific education after graduating a form of higher education. This training cycle ended with mandatory examinations. Those who managed to meet this requirement could defend "the dissertation, on a topic in line with the specialty" (*Ibidem*, file 4/1953, f.25) and were granted the title of candidate of sciences. The Romanian education officials, advised by the Soviet specialists, introduced the system of post graduateship, by an order of the Ministry of Education no. 39.468/September 1953; the postgraduate internship was reduced to just one year, thus decreasing the duration of training and disrupting the whole system. The categories covered by this order were: teaching staff in higher education (professors, associate professors, lecturers, assistants), who had been employed in this form of education for at least two years; teachers in secondary education who had at least three years seniority in this form of education.

The process of registration for short-term post-graduate studies implied obtaining a recommendation from the scientific Council of the institution of higher education, in the case of the teaching staff coming from higher education, or a recommendation from the department of education of the Popular Regional Committee, in the case of teachers coming from secondary education (*Ibidem*, f. 43). Often people who did not meet the political requirements were denied this indispensable document for the application file. The higher education institutions took over the files of the teaching staff employed, while the teachers from secondary education had to submit their files to the higher education institutions that had the speciality they wanted to train

in. Those who were accepted, *i.e.* were considered adequate both scientifically and politically, had to sit for their exams in due course; they had one year since the passing of the last exam to write and defend their dissertation paper in sciences (*Ibidem*, f. 45).

At the Polytechnic Institute of Iaşi, the various specialities organized post-graduate studies and graduates were able to defend the dissertation for the title of "candidate in sciences" starting with the academic year 1954-1955; there were a total of 25 specialities where the degree could be obtained, but they were distributed unevenly among the four colleges in the Institute. Thus, there were eight specialities at the Faculty of Constructions, four specialities at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, six specialities at the Faculty of Industrial Chemistry and seven at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering (*Ibidem*, f. 36-40).

The Ministry of Education, through the Higher Diploma Commission, stipulated the Higher Education Institutions and specialities where "dissertations of candidates in sciences and compulsory examinations of candidates" could be defended (*Ibid.*, file 2/1955, f. 104). During the academic year 1953-1954 in the Polytechnic Institute of Iaşi dissertations of candidates in technical sciences were defended in the following specialities: The Technology of Inorganic Industries; The Technology of Organic Industries; Internal Combustion Engines; Electrical Measurements; Building Materials; Pulp and Paper; Leather and Raw Fat Materials (*Ibidem*, f. 107).

As regards teaching degrees in higher education, Decree no. *529*/1953 established the hierarchy within the system: Assistant, Associate Professor and Professor in Higher Education (*Ibid.*, file 4/1953, f. 34). Through the Diplomas Higher Committee, the Ministry of Education awarded these academic degrees depending on the work done and the demonstrated scientific-didactic abilities. Politics often interfered with the process of granting didactic degrees. Often the political past, the commitment to the new regime mattered more than the candidate's scientific value and didactic abilities. The policy of promoting staff began to be increasingly controlled by the Party.

The development of the Romanian industry, through the (in)famous annual and later five-year plans, devised by the leadership of the party, implied a severe need for specialists in various sectors. Thus, under the circumstances, the number of positions in higher education increased, particularly in technical higher education institutions. At the Polytechnic Institute of Iaşi, the number of students increased steadily, so that in 1955 this number was 143% higher compared to 1948 (Mihai Dorin, 2006, p. 232). At the same time, the square footage of educational premises increased significantly. Starting with the academic year 1955-1956 a faculty of Textile Industry started to function within the Polytechnic Institute of Iaşi, as a consequence of the termination of the Institute of Textile Industry. While the department of *Mechanical technology and organization planning of textile industry* was reorganized as a faculty within the Institute, the department of *Chemical technology* was incorporated within the Faculty of Industrial Chemistry.

4. Conclusions

The 50's of the last century came with a broadly reaching legislation aimed at creating uniformity and introducing the collectivist spirit, intended to eliminate peculiarities, individualism and traditionalism from the Romanian school. Suspicion, fear, political exposure turned into weapons deftly manipulated by the new regime, with the aim of controlling inter-human relations. The absurd desire to control all the social instruments influenced even the manner of employing graduates of higher education institutions; this was offered under the noble pretext of caring for the human being. In the field of education, the party took over the work of supporting students, too. In this respect, the communists established a system of state scholarships, ranked in three categories awarded to students with acceptable origin (*i.e.* from working class or peasant families), so that the selection criteria became political above all. In the late '40s and early '50s, the selection of students and members of the teaching staff on political grounds became a common practice at the expense of meritocracy. The teaching staff of the Polytechnic Institute in Iaşi were subjected to a vicious policy of ideologization, censorship and political purging. The quality of education degraded during this period, especially after 1952, when part-time education was introduced; it was an experiment that had calamitous consequences for the Polytechnic School of Iaşi. Although it was terminated in 1962, it provided the party with personnel with technical training who were also devoted to the new regime.

The presentation of the history of the Polytechnic School of Iaşi in the first years after World War II cannot be concluded without recalling the academics who, during this troubled period tried, from their teaching platforms, to keep awake the students' interest in education in general, and in the technical disciplines in particular. Many of them were models for the young people who studied at the Polytechnic Institute, and contributed to their specialist training and not only. The works they published contributed to the scientific prestige of the institution at national and international level. Some of the prominent personalities of the Technical School of engineering of Iaşi in the 40s-50s of the last century, are: Cristea Niculescu-Otin (1879-1954), Cezar Parteni-Anton (1900-1956), Alexandru Cişman (1897-1967), Vasile Petrescu (1899-1977), George Alexa (1891-1985), Constantin Gheorghiu (1894-1956), Ilie Matei (1895-1956), Mihai Dima (1899-1982), Emil Gaiginschi (1904-1969), Dumitru Mangeron (1906-1991), Gheorghe Caşler (1922-1979), Aurel Cernătescu (1890-1967), Cornel Anton (1895-1957), Dimitrie Atanasiu (1906-1977), Anton Şesan (1916-1969), Matei Botez (1923-1972), Virgil Focşa (1923-1987), Tudor Silion (1924-2000), Cristofor Simionescu (1920-2007), etc. (Elena Hodorogea, 2006, pp.263-309).

The political pressure in the Romanian society during these first post-war years had effects on the Romanian education. This stage, after 1965, was one of relative relaxation during the so-called *small cultural revolution*. In fact, the politicization of Romanian education continued, but it entered the new stage of national-communism. However, the academics at the Polytechnic Institute unstintingly fulfilled the noble task of training specialists for the Romanian industry that developed at a fast rate in the years that followed.

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PAGINI DIN ISTORIA ÎNVĂŢĂMÂNTULUI TEHNIC IEŞEAN. ANII 1940-1950

(Rezumat)

Istoria învăţământului tehnic superior din ţara noastră începe în cel de-al doilea deceniu al secolului al XIX-lea, odată cu înfiinţarea şcolilor de hotărnicie de la Iaşi şi Bucureşti. Capitala Moldovei a deschis drumul acestui tip de învăţământ şi a fost unul din centrele importante ale vieţii universitare româneşti. Înfiinţarea celei de a treia şcoli politehnice, în 1937 a încununat eforturile profesorilor şi specialiştilor din această parte de ţară de a înfiinţa o instituţie de învăţământ superior care să pregătească, exclusiv, ingineri pentru industria românească. Începutul şi primii ani n-au stat sub auspicii favorabile. Exilul instituţiei, întâi la Cernăuţi şi apoi la Turnu-Severin, aveau să pună în pericol viitorul şcolii inginereşti ieşene. Studiul de faţă face o incursiune în trecutul instituţiei, încercând să reînvie o parte din istoria acesteia, punând accent pe situaţia şcolii din anii '40-'50 ai secolului trecut, perioadă extrem de tulbure.

PERSPECTIVES OF THE MENTORSHIP PROCESS: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

BY

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Abstract. Mentorship is a form of individual learning that contributes to the institutional development as well. From this perspective, the organization of the activity needs support from the management of the institution. Organizing activity means planning in accordance with a set of objectives: the novice teacher's personal objectives, the mentor's professional objectives and the institutional objectives (referring to the human resource from school and the expected results). Frequently, novice teachers consider the first year of activity as being demanding and stressful. We can have more perspectives for analysis. Does the institutional context provide no support for newcomers? Is the support provided unofficially, at collegial or structural level in an official, well-structured program and in accordance with the institution's needs regarding the development of human resources? Do the novice teachers show willingness to ask for or to receive support? We believe that the ability of the novice teachers to cope with the professional demands must be considered as a priority at the level of school management board. When the mentorship program is supervised by the school management board, the novice teachers will consider the work environment as a positive learning experience; they will be more motivated *to do things well*; they will receive permanent feedback from the mentor.

Keywords: professional learning; novice teacher; mentor teacher; institutional development.

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1. Introduction

In this context, an educational mentorship is a relationship of collaboration between two teachers, based on the experience of the most experienced one and the novice's need to receive information, procedural and emotional support. Mentorship is primarily a planning activity of the beginning teacher's professional development process in agreement with his/her perceived and conscious needs, with those identified by the mentor and mandatory with those of the school. From this perspective, it is important for the teachers to understand the multidimensional aspect of professional development. (Blankenship, 2018).

Planning is a forward-looking activity, representing the process of setting objectives and actions to be accomplished. The mentor will be the one who decides what must be done, how to do, and who to do (Gliga, 2002). Thus, planning is a process through which the mentor tries to anticipate the changes. If a mentor has no plans, he/she will be forced every day to cope with the events as they occur. From a different perspective, the mentors, given the existence of planning, have the opportunity to focus on the objectives they have to pursue as well as on the actions to be taken to achieve them.

The dimensions of planning have in view several plans, such as: time, domain (type of activity), the frequency of activities of a certain type. Careful writing can be reviewed at any time; the analysis of the current situation can be easily done (Carter, 2001). Careful planning should include assumptions about what you expect to happen, how long you think it will be necessary, anticipating possible obstacles, identifying remedial solutions, if any.

When a long-term plan is drafted (for instance a school year), a much longer period is anticipated in fact – what will happen after a school year as well. Depending on this "projected image," some instant decisions related to different proposed activities may be considered appropriate, others are less recommended. Therefore, the best plans are the perspective ones - where the beginning teacher will have to get to, nowadays, after few years of activity. The studies highlight the fact that if the long-term perspective is used to decide what should be done today, the important issues that must be clarified at present are identified.

What is the connection between planning and viewing? Planning is a visualization tool because it allows the mental projection of a model for the expected future. A written plan has the role of keeping that consistent pattern. Each plan is inaccurate in a certain way, because we do not really know what will happen in the future. The success of an implementation depends on proper planning. To achieve an implementation of quality learning at the workplace, we must focus on the planning stage, including supporting tools for this stage.

The mentor plans the mentorship activity after analyzing the results of

the initial assessment, obtained from the analysis of needs. The plan of mentorship activities is discussed with the trainee and these ones are reviewed together. The purpose of the planning activity is to establish the objectives, as well as the working methods, the necessary resources and their allocation, the way of achieving it.

There are different models of *personal planning*: from present to future, from future to present, the Grow model, etc. Some authors claim that when we plan, we report to more models and that the thinking process uses different analysis strategies for the facts. In the following, we present some examples of planning, which can be taken in the mentorship process as well.

Planning to the Future in Mentorship Activity: when the team mentor-novice teacher know where they are and where they should go. Metaphorically, we are talking about a map of the actions that will be made by the two.

Planning to the future starts from where you are, and you set a point where you want to get to. You write your objectives in order of priorities and apply the plan of action. You have to ask yourself constantly: what is the most important objective and what is the best action I can take right now? When we are planning our future, each of us has a different implementation horizon. So different that for some it may be days, and for others it may be months, years. It is important when we decide to plan what short, medium and long-term means to us personally. In our case, the mentor will also consider the beginning teacher's perception on these time intervals. The setting of the goals will maximize the confidence that the mentor-novice teacher team can achieve and will strengthen the skill of choosing the most appropriate strategies, because mentally there is a configuration of the anticipated result.

Planning from the Future in Mentorship Activity: within this type of planning, the most important results that the mentor-novice teacher team think necessary to accomplish are fragmented, and later they identify sub-fields of action for them. It is recommended to note all those results that they considered relevant at the time of the mentorship relationship. The dreams are aspirations for which you do not currently have a clear plan of action. Over time they will turn into objectives, which can be specifically defined and a plan of action can be associated to.

Planning from the future is useful, because in most cases, the goals are set impulsively, on short term and then abandoned at the first obstacle. In this way the trap is avoided (Covey, 2011). Sometimes, the achieving of a dream is planned, and in time you find that it is not exactly what you wanted. What are you doing? Are you abandoning or re-planning for later? Planning from the future avoids the loss of time resulted from testing and failure.

Grow Model – developing and planning our own career through the mentorship process: In principle, we discuss the development of the mentor's career and the beginning teacher's career. To plan and develop a career, you need to be aware that not only the organizational environment matters. If we

rely solely on what others can do for us and what tools they can put at our disposal, we cannot develop ourselves in real terms. Ideally, we should make an effort to realize what we want to achieve, what interests, strong points, and skills we still need to develop. From this point of view, this model of planning determines the mentor to realize that the formation of the working team starts from the moment of planning the activities that need to be integrated into the mentorship program. GROW model is a simple tool of analysis, which is a simple way to approach the change as follows: G = goal (goal); R = reality (reality); O = options; W = way forward (future route). This reflective exercise can help the mentor-novice teacher team to create formulations as specific as possible related to the objectives of the mentorship program and to their own careers respectively. By emphasizing the Reality factor, it will be easier for the debutant teacher to clarify his/her options, and what is not possible to achieve.

2. Presentation of the Mentorship Program Planning

In order to be effective, a mentorship program involves teamwork at institutional level. Therefore, it must be an objective of school development. Possible targets to follow: presentation of the validity of mentorship in school; context analysis; definition of relevant activities; monitoring; assessment; improvement for the next year of activity.

The context analysis is useful to understand the specific features of the context a mentorship program will be implemented in. Examples of questions that can be addressed informally to teachers: How to support the integration of the debutant teachers, of the newcomers? Is there a ritual, any practice among colleagues? What is their perspective on this topic? How do I feel about mentorship?

The planning of the intervention has in view the selection of those who will benefit from the mentorship activities and the definition of the activities to be carried out. The number of mentors and the mentorship form can vary from one school to another: *one-to-one* (a mentor and a mentored teacher) or *group mentorship* (a mentor and several mentored teachers). All depends on the number of people who need to be mentored.

To define the activities, it is important to clarify the needs of the mentored person and to establish the following targets: what will be the objectives in relation to each person's personal vision; making a list of objectives ordered by priorities; setting a priority learning objective around which the mentorship program will be developed; setting a calendar; setting timeframes for assessment and progress monitoring, etc.

The monitoring of the mentorship program is done both by the mentor teacher in direct relationship with the mentored person, but also at the institutional level where the school management board is directly interested in the results obtained by the mentor-beginning teacher team (Davies & Ellison,

1999). Participants can contact the school management board to discuss any difficulties or different opinions on how to run the program (Dalin, 1998). The school management board should be aware of the interpersonal problems that may occur, having in view the fact that the mentor-mentored person relationship strongly influences the results. The program can be assessed by analyzing the evolution of the mentored teachers, capitalizing the information gathered from journals, questionnaires, discussion groups, interviews. The choice of the means and tools of assessment belongs to the mentor and the school management board. The assessment may also take into account comparisons between the performance of the mentored teachers and the teachers who have not benefited from mentorship, based on variables such as teaching, absenteeism, and relationship with pupils. The primary goal is to improve the school environment, not to punish the teachers who have more difficulties in improving their skills during the start-up phase.

3. Conclusions

At school level, we find different mentorship practices that can be taken, adapted and capitalized.

Peer or informal mentorship (at department/curricular level) based on trust, mutual respect and the desire to do better (Ciascai & Secară, 2001). It can be considered a peer-to-peer activity because it involves two people of the same level/status who work together and rely to get good results.

The technical/formal mentorship based on the transfer of what teachers have learned during different workshops. This form of activity allows teachers to work together to share what they know, what they understand and decide how to use this information /workflow in the classroom (Mahlangu, 2018). By working and discussing, they have to identify a common point of understanding the subject and the necessary skills and can be part of the interviewing strategies based on the model of organizations that provide support for the development of the staff and provide the necessary context in this respect.

Mentorship at school level has in view a group of teachers who are working together to solve a specific aspect of professional nature, usually analyzing a dysfunctional situation and propose its optimization.

Group mentorship, which can be practiced in a variety of ways depending on the participants - a group of colleagues who work together and support each other, a mentor who works with a group of mentored persons, several mentors who work with several mentored persons and all these people are connected in a single group.

E-mentorship is based on computer mediated communication, such as electronic and e-mail communication technologies, on-line collaboration platforms, etc.

It is important to reflect on the following aspects: How does mentorship work in school? Do we consider it a complementary activity? Do we consider it a necessary activity?

Mentorship for beginner teachers has the role of contributing to a better understanding by the novice of the teaching profession, to a better knowledge of the specifics of the school, of the environment and the other teachers in the school he/she will collaborate with (Hobson *et al.*, 2008). It is considered an opportunity because it facilitates the professional insertion process of the beginning teacher who, although having completed the training process, still does not feel comfortable with the teaching activity.

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PERSPECTIVE ALE PROCESULUI DE MENTORAT: ÎNVĂȚARE PROFESIONALĂ ȘI DEZVOLTARE INSTITUȚIONALĂ ?

(Rezumat)

Mentoratul este o formă de învăţare profesională individuală care contribuie şi la dezvoltarea instituţională. Din această perspectivă, organizarea activităţii are nevoie de crearea unui context favorabil din partea conducerii instituţiei. Organizarea înseamnă

planificare în acord cu un set de obiective: personale ale debutantului, profesionale ale mentorului şi instituţionale (referitoare la "resursa umană din şcoală" şi rezultatele aşteptate). Frecvent, profesorii debutanţi consideră primul an de activitate extrem de solicitant şi stresant. Putem avea mai multe perspective de analiză. Contextul instituţional nu oferă sprijin în acest sens noilor veniţi? Sprijinul este furnizat neoficial, la nivel colegial sau structurat într-un program oficial, bine structurat şi în acord cu nevoile instituţiei privind dezvoltarea resursei umane? Profesorii începători manifestă disponibilitatea de a solicita sau de a primi sprijin? Considerăm că abilitatea profesorilor debutanţi de a face faţă solicitărilor profesionale trebuie considerată prioritate la nivelul conducerii şcolii. Când programul de mentorat este supervizat de conducerea şcolii, profesorii debutanţi vor considera mediul profesional o experienţă de învăţare pozitivă la locul de muncă, vor fi mai motivaţi de a "face lucrurile bine", vor beneficia de feed-back permanent din partea mentorului.

THE SELF-MANAGEMENT OF LEARNING (II)

BY

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Abstract. We describe the self-management of learning in underachievers and high-achievers (Negovan, 2009) to identify the criteria for a good self-management of learning: *1. efficient time management; 2. establishing their own specific and immediate goals; 3. more frequent monitorization 4. higher satisfaction standards; 5. long-standing persistence of goals; 6. intrinsic motivation; 7. performance control; 8. environment structuring and selection; 9. seeking help.* The presence of these criteria in their entirety (9) in the students' responses confirms a good self-management of learning in the students of the research sample, and their total absence or the partial presence of a number of criteria identifies managerial difficulties in students, for one of the three sub-components of management. This is also the research hypothesis. To test this hypothesis, we developed a questionnaire consisting of 30 questions divided in three sub-components: learning self-knowledge, self-motivation for learning, learning self-assessment. Based on the results, we developed a profile of the self-management of learning in the students in the sample selected. We found that all nine criteria are met by the students, but with two observations to each component. These observations and their interpretation can be found in the conclusions of this article.

Keywords: learning self-knowledge; learning self-motivation for learning; learning self-assessment; questionnaire; a profile of the self-management.

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1. A Model for the Self-Management of Learning

For the present research dedicated to students of a technical field, at the same time participating in the psycho-pedagogical program, we developed a model for self-managerial competencies consisting of the three synthetic dimensions skills: learning self-knowledge, self-motivating learning, self-assessment of learning. Each component was determined by answers to the following questions, which will be found in the questionnaire applied to these students.

Learning self-knowledge**:**

1. When do I learn better, in the morning or in the evening?

2. How do I learn: by reading, writing, solving problems, in all these situations?

3. Alone, in groups, both?

4. What is my learning style: visual, auditory, motor?

5. How many hours a day do I study: 1, 2, 3, more than 3?

6. During the exam session or during the whole year?

7. Do I use a plan or not?

8. At the table, in the library, in bed?

9. Theoretically, practically, both?

Self-motivation for learning:

10. Do I start studying easily or with difficulty?

11. Do I work with disruptions or continuously?

12. Do I learn with pleasure or difficulty?

13. If I find it hard to learn, what I do, do I quit or continue?

14. Do I encourage myself or turn to others for help?

15. Am I generally satisfied or dissatisfied with how I learn?

16. What do I do when I am dissatisfied?

17. What do I do when I am satisfied?

18. Why do I study? For grades, for my parents, for my profession, for myself?

19. Are the learning objectives set by the teacher or by me?

20. Do I expect to be successful or to fail?

Self-assessment of learning

21. Do I control learning from each lecture or at the end of all lectures?

22. How many times a day do I do that?

23. How demanding am I when learning?

24. How many methods of self-control do I use?

25. Do I acknowledge my mistakes?

26. Do I punish myself if I make mistakes?

27. Do I reward myself when I am successful?

28. Do I listen to other people's opinions or not?

29. Do I know/realize if I made progress in learning?

30. Do I know/understand when I am wrong?

Through the interaction among these three components rendered in Fig. 1 a common area results, which can be called learning self-management characterized by:

- the degree and type of learning self-knowledge;
- self-motivation for learning: intrinsic, extrinsic, both, high, low;
- high or low degree of learning self-assessment.
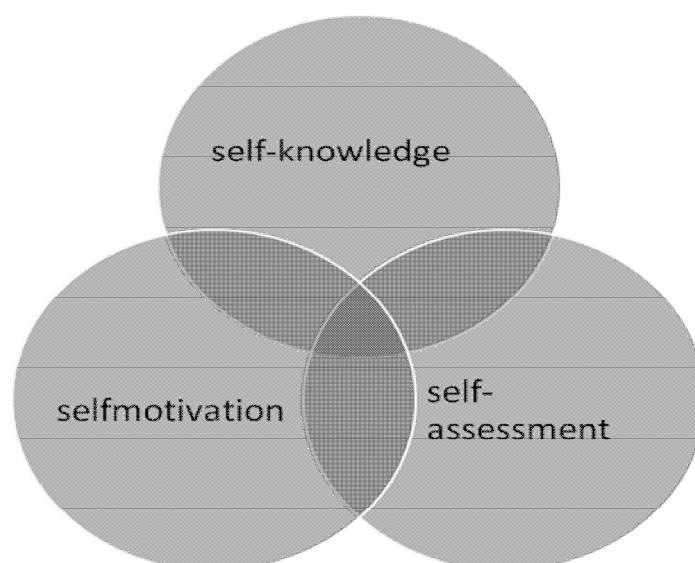
Fig. 1 − The interaction among self-management competencies.

Viewed in terms of the learning outcomes of the students with superior results in comparison with those of the underachievers, *self-regulated, self-determined learning* is materialized by:

1. efficient time management;
2. setting specific and immediate personal goals;
3. more frequent monitoring;
4. high satisfaction standards;
5. long-standing persistence of goals;
6. intrinsic motivation;
7. performance control;
8. structuring and selection of environment;
9. seeking help;
10. use of relaxation strategies.

In Table 1 below we render these self-regulated processes presented contrastingly for the two categories of students.

Table 1

Self-regulated Processes of Learning (by Negovan, 2004)

Process	Underachievers	High achievers
Use of time	They are more impulsive	They organize their study time better
Objective	They set lower academic targets	They set specific and immediate targets
Self-regulation	They monitor themselves less clearly	They monitor themselves more frequently and more clearly
Self-efficacy	They are less efficient	They are more efficient
Motivation	They give up faster	They insist despite obstacles
Process	**Underachievers**	**High achievers**

From a conceptual standpoint academic self-regulation can be rendered in Table 2 below (Negovan, 2004).

Table 2

Size Conceptual Academic Self-Regulation (by Negovan, 2004)

Scientific question	Psychological dimension	Task conditions	Attributes of self-regulation	Processes and opinions on self-regulation
Why?	Reason	Choose to participate	Intrinsically or self-motivated	Personal goals, self-efficacy
How?	Method	Control Method	Planned or routine	Strategy use, recreation
When?	Time	Control of time limits	Timely and effective	Time management and planning
What?	Performance	Performance control	Aware of results and personal performance	Self-monitoring, self-judgement
Where?	Environment	Control of physical setting	Environmentally sensitive	Environment structuring and selection
With whom?	Social	Social control	Socially sensitive	Model election, looking for help, etc.

Participants

I have selected third-year students because they are more mature, have gained experience during the previous years and study classroom management, thus having extra knowledge about management. Of the 11 faculties of our

technical university the students who responded to the questionnaire were from the Faculty of Automatic Control and Computer Engineering, Electronics, Telecommunications and Information Technology, Civil Engineering and Building Services, Chemical Engineering, Machine Manufacturing and Industrial Management, Hydrotechnical Engineering, Architecture, Mechanical Engineering and Textiles, Leather and Industrial Management.

The research sample, based on the faculties and number of students, is shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Number of Students in the Research

Faculty	AC	ETTI	IEEIA	CI	IC	CMMI	HI	AR	MEC	DIMA	Total
No. of questionnaires	22	16	12	14	14	10	6	4	3	1	**101**

Instrument

The elaborated questionnaire contains 30 questions organized in three modular sub-components: self-knowledge of learning (1-9) self-motivation of learning (10-20) and learning self-assessment (21-30) and the 9 criteria presented in the research hypothesis (Tables 4,...,6).

The results obtained for the three subcomponents can be seen in Tables 4,...,6 below.

Table 4
Learning Self-Knowledge

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Average	3.7	3.1	5	5	2	5.6	6	7.3	7.1

Table 5
Self-Motivation for Learning

Question	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Average	5.5	7	6.4	6.5	5.6	7	7.6	6.3	8.4	6.3	8.7

Table 6
Learning Self-Assessment

Question	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Average	8	6	7	5.9	9.5	5.8	5.9	7.6	8.6	9.1

Procedure

According to scientific research, (Siebert, 2001; Negovan, 2009), students having a good learning management system are characterized by:

1. efficient time management (questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9);
2. setting their own specific and immediate goals (3, 5, 19);
3. more frequent monitorization (22, 29, 30);
4. high standards of satisfaction (15, 16, 17, 20, 23);
5. long-standing persistence of goals (10, 11, 13);
6. intrinsic motivation (12, 18, 28);
7. performance control (21, 22, 24);
8. selecting and structuring of the environment (8);
9. seeking assistance (13, 14).

The presence of these criteria in their entirety (9) in student responses confirm a good self-management of learning in the students of the research sample and their total absence or the partial occurrence of a number of criteria identify the managerial difficulties of students, in one of the three managerial sub-components.

Data analysis

Learning self-knowledge

Most students with an average of 3.7 study both in the morning and in the evening, solving problems (3.1) alone (5), with a visual learning style (5) study several hours a day (2) during exam sessions (5.6) following a plan (6), at the desk (7.3), both theoretical and practical aspects (7.1).

Self-motivation for learning

Most students have a slower start, study with disruptions, but with pleasure; when they meet difficulties, they resume later, seek help, are satisfied with learning, ask for help, reward themselves, learn for themselves, have self-established goals, expect to be successful.

Learning self-assessment

Most students control their own learning at the end of the lecture, using only one method of self-control, are demanding with themselves, acknowledge their mistakes, do not penalize themselves, reward themselves, listen to their peers' opinions, are aware of their mistakes, they understand when they are wrong.

2. Results

Reporting the results of the hypothesis we can say that:

1. For the first component only the visual learning style and the learning activities prevalent in the exam sessions raise questions about effective management of learning. The practical learning style, not the visual one, would have been more effective for students in technical universities. Moreover,

learning throughout the year gives better results than learning during exam sessions. Therefore, the first criterion of the effective use of time is low.

2. For the second component of self-motivation for learning, we also have two observations about the students' slow, difficult start of the studying process and learning disruptions. However, the students' motivation is predominantly intrinsic. Therefore criterion 5, intrinsic motivation, has certain malfunctions.

3. For the third component, studying at the end of the lectures period and using only one method of learning self-assessment are prevalent. Learning self-assessment meets with the other criteria. Therefore, some disturbances appear in the case of criteria 4, persistence of goals, and 6, performance control.

3. Discussion and Conclusions

1. Third-year students from the technical faculties mentioned are aware of their learning style, positively motivate themselves, but their learning is not thorough and deep. This conclusion stems from the fact that they mainly study during the exam session, with disruptions and assess themselves only at the end of the lectures period;

2. The highest averages were obtained for question 8 (learning environment), question 20 (high standards of satisfaction), question 30 (error awareness), which demonstrates unity in the students' responses to these questions. The fact that they expect to succeed, they are pleased with the results and are aware of their mistakes shows that these students' learning drive is lively and dynamic, their motivation for learning is positive, corrective and progressive;

3. The lowest averages (only two) were obtained for question 5, the number of hours a day learners study, which looks like only two students do so on a daily basis.

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SELF-MANAGEMENTUL ÎNVĂŢĂRII (II)

(Rezumat)

Se descrie self-managementul învăţării la persoanele realizate în grad înalt şi cele slab realizate (Negovan, 2009) pentru a identifica criteriile unui bun self-

management al învăţării: *1. organizarea eficientă a timpului; 2.   stabilirea unor obiective proprii, specifice şi imediate; 3. monitorizarea mai frecventă; 4. standarde inalte de satisfacţie;5. persistenta îndelungată a scopurilor;6. motivarea intrinsecă;7. controlul performanţei;8. structurarea şi selectarea mediului;9. caută ajutor*. Prezenţa acestor criterii în totalitatea lor (9) în răspunsurile studenţilor confirmă un bun self-management al învăţării la studenţii din eşantionul cercetării iar absenţa lor, în totalitate sau al unui număr de criterii identifică dificultăţile manageriale ale studenţilor, pe una dintre cele 3 subcomponente manageriale. Aceasta este şi ipoteza cercetării. Pentru a verifica această ipoteză am elaborat un chestionar alcătuit din 30 de întrebări şi l-am structurat pe cele 3 componente: autocunoaşterea învăţării, automotivarea învăţării, autoevaluarea învăţării. Pe baza rezultatelor obţinute am elaborat un profil al self-managementului învăţării la studenţii din eşantionul ales. Am constatat că toate cele 9 criterii sunt atinse de studenţi, dar cu două observaţii la fiecare subcomponentă. Aceste observaţii şi interpretarea lor se regăsesc în concluziile articolului.

A CASE STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL PROXIMITY ON SITUATIONAL WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE

BY

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Abstract. Willingness to Communicate (WTC) has been the focus of a number of studies in recent years. The construct of WTC is seen as a combination of trait and state (situational) variables. This paper reports on a preliminary investigation into the effect of social proximity on the communicative interaction of a learner with low WTC interacting with learners of varying levels of WTC and varying degrees of social proximity. The learners' output was quantified by word count and turn-taking. Recordings of interaction were analysed and a post-activity interview conducted to provide additional insights into the learners' situational WTC. Results suggest that for learners with low WTC, social proximity is an important variable in situational WTC. Further research is needed to address the limitations of the study.

Keywords: Willingness to Communicate; situational WTC; social proximity; learner beliefs; learner self-confidence.

1. Introduction

Researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) emphasize the importance of meaningful communication in facilitating language acquisition (Long, 1985, cited in Ellis, 1999). Thus, active interaction between learners in the classroom for the purposes of obtaining comprehensible input results in an input to the listener that is more valuable for language learning purposes than

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input obtained without interactive work. In addition, several studies (*e.g.* Pica, 1994; Skehan, 1991; Swain and Lapkin, 2002) have shown the benefits of peer work in obtaining both comprehensible input and output. In order to benefit from communicative interaction, learners need to engage in interactive tasks. Researchers have investigated the circumstances under which learners are willing to engage in oral communication, referred to "Willingness to Communicate" (WTC). MacIntyre *et al*. (1998) defined WTC in L2 as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (p. 547). If the pedagogical goal of the L2 classroom is to enable learners to express their intended meaning in L2, both inside and outside the classroom (MacIntyre *et al*., 2003), then an understanding of the factors that influence WTC is fundamental to fostering L2 communication in the language classroom.

2. Literature Review

WTC is viewed as consisting of two complimentary factors, trait and state characteristics (Dörnyei, 2005). Trait variables are those related to the personality of the learner and their general tendency to initiate communication, while state refers to situations in which communication actually occurs (Cao and Philip, 2006).

MacIntyre *et al*. (1998) propose that WTC is an interaction between cognitive affective variables and social factors. Researchers have investigated the relationships of L2 WTC and found that a number of variables have a significant effect on WTC. These include motivation and attitude (MacIntyre *et al*., 2001; Peng & Woodrow, 2010), anxiety (MacIntyre *et al*., 2003;), self-confidence (Clément *et al*., 2003; Cao & Philp, 2006), linguistic self-confidence (Clément *et al*., 2003; Yashima, 2002), perceived linguistic competence (Clément *et al*., 2003; Hashimoto, 2002; Yashima, 2002), and age and gender (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre *et al*., 2002).

Recent research has suggested that in addition to learners' trait variables, L2 learning situations, such as conversational context and classroom interaction provide for the emergence of situational WTC. Kang's study (2005) suggested that the interaction of personality traits and situational variables combined to show situational WTC to be a "dynamic construct that could change moment to moment" (p. 277). Cao's study (2014), investigating the dynamic and situated nature of students' WTC in L2 classrooms similarly concluded that the L2 WTC construct is depicted as a dynamic situational variable rather than a trait disposition. Thus, situational L2 WTC is the result of the interdependence among individual students' personalities, learning environment conditions, and linguistic factors. Cao (2014) suggested that "these three strands or factors independently exert either a facilitative or inhibitive effect on an individual student's WTC in class at any point in time" (p.789).

3. Classroom WTC

Recent qualitative analysis has provided further insights into the factors that affect individual learners' WTC behaviour in the classroom situation. Group size, familiarity with interlocutor(s) and interlocutor participation were most commonly identified as factors contributing to or reducing WTC. Kang's study of four learners (2005) found that lack of familiarity with interlocutors, group work with four or more interlocutors, the fluency of other non-native English speakers and topic unfamiliarity resulted in a lack of ideas and poor linguistic performance.

Cao and Philip's study of eight learners with differing cultural backgrounds (2006) revealed similar findings. Factors that were perceived by learners to influence WTC classroom interaction were group size, familiarity with the interlocutor(s), interlocutor participation, familiarity with topics under discussion, self-confidence, medium of communication and cultural background.

Dörnyei (2002) found that the interlocutor's motivational disposition was closely related to the individual's speaking interaction. The interlocutor effects served as a "pulling force" to the extent that the speaking interaction of an individual with a low task attitude would improve if he/she was paired up with a more motivated peer. Therefore, if one talked more, his/her interlocutor may also produce more speech "simply by reacting to complete adjacency pairs" (Dörnyei, 2002, p. 152). Yu's 2015 study of Chinese learners, prompted by Dörnyei (2002) compared student output in mixed dyads of learners with low, medium and high WTC. Results showed that dyads of high WTC group were more active in word production and turn-taking than the medium and low groups. Interestingly, low WTC learners did not show an increase in output when paired with medium and high WTC learners, which ran counter to Dörnyei's idea of a "pulling effect" on low WTC learners by high WTC learners. Yu found that learners with low WTC produced more language and more active communication behaviour when paired with learners of a similar WTC than when paired with learners with a higher WTC. Yu concluded that the changes in communication behaviour of individuals when they worked together with interlocutors of different WTC levels suggest that WTC is dynamic and jointly constructed by the interlocutors during a communication task. Thus, the evidence revealed by recent empirical studies of classroom WTC have suggested that WTC is a multi-layered construct dependent upon individual and contextual factors (Cao, 2014; Yu, 2015).

4. Motivation for This Study

This study draws on the results of previous studies into classroom WTC behavior (Dörnyei, 2002; Kang, 2005; Cao and Philip, 2006; Cao, 2014; Yu,

2015). It reports on the effect of dyad pairings in a speaking class. All learners in the class took part in the research, which consisted of three sessions with three different interlocutors. However, this paper focuses on the effect of dyad pairings of an individual learner (referred to as Learner 1) who in informal discussion with the teacher had professed a dislike of engaging in speaking activities. The part of the study reported in this paper differs from Yu's study in that it investigates the effect of social proximity (Kang, 2005) on communication behavior of a learner with low WTC (Learner 1) when paired with interlocutors of differing WTC and differing social proximity.

5. Setting and Participants

The study was carried out in a speaking class in a university in Taiwan. The participants were all English majors in the same class and had studied in the same class for two years (with one new student). They were all native speakers of Chinese. All the participants agreed to be part of the research and agreed to have their conversations recorded for research purposes.

6. Procedure

Data collection occurred during two class sessions. All the learners were paired, and rotated two and three times in each session, making a total of five pairings. Each paired session lasted ten minutes. All of the dyads were videotaped. While dyads were paired according to WTC self-report results (see below), particular attention was given to ensure that Learner 1 was paired with learners of different WTC self-report scores and degree of social proximity. In total there were five different pairings for Learner 1. Table 1 shows the WTC self-report score, language proficiency (TOEIC score) and social proximity to Learner 1.

Table 1
Learner profile

Participants	WTC score	Proficiency TOEIC score	Social proximity rating
Learner 1	Low	425	–
Learner 2	Low	450	4.5
Learner 3	Low	650	0
Learner 4	Medium	450	0
Learner 5	Medium	500	2.5
Learner 6	High	725	0

7. Task

As part of required course assessment, learners have to record a 2-3-minute response to a prompt that requires them to provide an opinion on a

question and to provide reasons or examples to support their opinion. As preparation for this, the teacher assigned pair-work (on five different questions, Appendix 1). To provide additional motivation, learners were told they would be given a graded recorded test on one of the task questions. Learners could make notes during the discussion.

8. Instruments

The degree of social proximity was measured for all learners using a five-point scale for two measures of social proximity, degree of contact within class and degree of contact outside of class, resulting in an average for both situations (see Table 1). Trait WTC was measured using a 25-item questionnaire used in previous research (Cao and Philips, 2006). Situational (or state-level) WTC was measured using a word count production and number of turns (Dörnyei, 2002; Yu, 2015).

The learner's perceptions of factors informing his/her WTC behavior in pair-work were elicited through a post-activity interview (Kang, 2005; Cao and Philip, 2006). Learner 1 was shown the video recordings of his task interaction and asked to comment and respond to questions from the researchers. All the interviews and stimulated recalls were conducted in Chinese and English and digitally recorded.

9. Analysis and Results

The results of the WTC behavior of Learner 1 in each of the five pairings are shown in Table 2. The results demonstrate variations in WTC behavior across pairings. As can be seen, the highest amount of WTC (word production and turn-taking) occurred in the pairings with the two learners with whom Learner 1 has a social relationship, Learners 2 and 5. The least interaction occurred with Learners 3, 4 and 6. This result shows that for this learner the degree of social connection impacted WTC behavior. Results also suggest that degree of social proximity may have an impact on interlocutor communication, in contrast to Yu's findings that low WTC pairings resulted in greater communication behavior. Yu (2015) suggested low WTC pairings resulted in increased word production and turn-taking as they are "under less pressure and communication apprehension" (p.17). However, in this case study, social proximity appears to be a factor contributing to communicative interaction. Qualitative analysis of learner interaction may provide further insights into the nature of L2 linguistic interaction. In the next section we provide an analysis of Learner 1's communication interaction.

Table 2
Learner 1 Participation Score on Class Observation Chart

Participant	Learner 1 total words	Learner 1 turns
Learner 2 WTC Low (Friend)	88	40
Learner 3 WTC Low (No relationship)	51	27
Learner 4 WTC Medium (No relationship)	27	12
Learner 5 WTC Medium (friend)	63	31
Learner 6 WTC High (No relationship)	38	21

10. Discourse Analysis

Comparison of the discourse between Learner 1 and Learner 2 (close relationship) and Learner 3 (no previous communication) reveals a greater willingness to ask questions, provide opinions and confirm understanding by Learner 1 when paired with Learner 2, as the following example illustrates:

7: L2: So.. we.. we… say a human can eat meat. Not everyone should to be a veg…er.... a vegetarian. Do you agree with……
8: L1: Yeah, I agree. Why…What reasons do you know?
9: L2: Persons like meat. You like beef steak? Right?
10: L1: Yeah, I like. So what we… we ..we   say…write?
11: L2: Many people like to eat meat..because..it is delicious..
12: L1: err.. Many.. people like meat…because it…delicious.
13: L2   Many people like to eat meat because it is delicious.
14: L1   What…you say again?
15: L2   Many people like to eat meat because it is delicious.
16: L1 ..err..is delicious…Many people like to eat meat because it is delicious.
17 L2: Yeah, you got it.

In this excerpt, Learner 1 asks two questions (Lines 8 and 10) and checks understanding by asking Learner 2 to repeat what he had said, (Line 14). They also relate the task to personal knowledge when, in Line 9, Learner 2 refers to Learner 1's liking of beef.

When Learner 1 was paired with Learner 3 a different dynamic resulted, with considerably less interaction in communication and less active turn-taking, punctuated by long periods of silence as the following excerpt shows:

1: L3: Start now.
2: L1: Ok.

3: L3:   (reads prompt) Do you think young people spend too much time on social media? Give reasons to support your opinion.
(silence 32 seconds: both learners look down at paper)

4: L3:   So you opinion. You think….?

5: L1   No…

6: L3:   I agree. Communication with family.

7: L1:   Yeah

8: L3:   What…we say? (silence 24 seconds) We say young people must to communicate with family. We write…..(silence 45 seconds) …..   OK . next one.

9: L1:   err.. (silence 37 seconds)

10: L3:   Maybe ….emergency (silence 22 seconds) Ok I write emergency.
Next one. (silence 18 seconds) You have opinion? (Silence 15 seconds)

11: L1: Yes.

12: L3: I got it …..information. Yes I write that. Ok we got communication with family and errr…. get information……(silence 14seconds) make date with friends…I write that.

In this excerpt Learner 3 has almost complete control of the discourse, imitating discussion and offering points. Learner 1 makes only minimal responses and appears unwilling to extend the discourse by either checking understanding or offering ideas. However, toward the end of the task, Learner 1 did initiate a turn:

28: L1: Young people is …. err… play games … so waste their …. time.
29: L3: I agree. We..we.. write…..

It is suggested that this exchange may provide a glimpse into the dynamic nature of situational WTC and represents a shift in Learner 1's WTC due to growing familiarity with his interlocutor. It is further suggested that for a learner with low WTC interlocutor familiarity may be a major contributing factor to WTC.

Analysis of the discourse between Learner 1 and Learner 5 (greater social proximity) reveals a similar pattern to that with Learner 2 (close friend). The exchange consisted of greater interaction, more turn-taking and increased linguistic production than that between Learner 1 and Learner 4 (low WTC with no social contact), as the following extract shows:

1: L5:   OK. We start. Do you have a suggestion?
2: L1:   Errr

3: L5:   The ..the.. question.. What is more important, family or friends?
            You think.. What is your answer?
4: L1:   I..I think friend……
5: L5:   Yes, I think friend too. Why?
6: L1:   Friends know your problem….. they.. errr listen well….
7: L5:   Yes, they listen more and understand your problem. So we
            write… err……friend is more important comparing to family…..
8: L1:   Ok. I write down. …..
9: L5:   Now we write … reason…
10: L1:   Yes, ok.
11: L5: They listen to your problem ……
12: L1:   {and make suggestion}
13: L5:   Yes right… They can give you a suggestion.
14: L1: Ok.
15: L5: Do you have example?
16: L1: Errr.   I think…..err.. no You have ?
17: L5: err no, but I know X (Chinese name of student in class) ask his
            friend about ……. problem with girlfriend.
18: L1: What problem?.... You know…..?
19: L 5: Errrr argument… I think.. how to say sorry…., We can write
             down … .friend give advice on how to say sorry to girlfriend.
20: L1: Ok I write it.

In Lines 11 and 12, there is an overlap in which Learner 1 adds an
additional reason to support Learner 5's point, suggesting familiarity with
Learner 5 allows Learner 1 to feel more "relaxed" and willing to initiate topics.
Also, in Line 18, Learner 1 asks a question and comments positively on Learner
5's suggestion. These examples suggest a more positive interaction leading to a
negotiated outcome.

Learner 1's interaction with Learner 4 (a similar WTC to that of Learner
5, but with no social interaction with Learner 1) produces a somewhat different
outcome, as the following extract reveals:

1: L4: The question…… we begin…Do you think it is a good idea for
            students to …have a part-time job? Give reason to support your
            opinion. Do you have a..an suggestion?
2: L1: ….Err……..
3: L4: (Silence)…… OK. We can say student have part-time job meet
            the real world … and .. know information on work and
            communicate with the customer. Er.. You agree me?
5: L1: Yes.
6: L4: OK You have a suggestion…. idea?

    7: L1: Errrr we we

    8: L4:   [ok] we can say they learn how to solve problems about real world. So we say students learn ….the real world…Two: they get some life skills for example they learn to deal with customer…. And solve some problems…. (Silence, learners write down points).

       In this extract we see Learner 1 does not really respond to Learner 4's question in Line 1, and very quickly Learner 4 assumes control of the conversation and in Line 8, when Learner 1 does not immediately respond to Learner 4's question, Learner 4 interrupts Learner 1 and summarises the discussion. There is a period of silence while Learner 4 writes down the points. It is suggested that this interruption is an indication of Learner 4's lack of patience with Learner 1. Perception of an interlocutor's "unfriendly" attitude may serve to further inhibit WTC (Kang, 2005). It is suggested that Learner 1's perceived attitude of Learner 4, compared to that of Learner 3, provides some indication of the effect of perceived "friendliness" on WTC, and as noted above, resulted in the lowest number of words and least number of turns produced by Learner 1.

       Analysis of Learner 1's interaction with the high WTC, Learner 6, reveals that while Learner 6 took control of the exchange, he/she demonstrated a willingness to encourage Learner 1 to speak by asking questions, and although receiving only minimal responses to her questions, he/she persisted in trying to draw out responses from Learner 1. This is in contrast to Learner 4, (above) who seemed to lose patience with Learner 1 and stopped asking questions.

    10: L6: Do you know an advantage?

    11: L1: errh

    12: L6: How about "health"?

    13: L1: (Silence)……

    14: L6: How about "health"?

    15: L1: Yes. life

    16: L6: People having pets live longer.

    17: L1: Yes.

    18: L6: Maybe we write down… "people having pets live longer".

    19: L1: Ok

    20: L6: Do you have another errr.. point err…idea…. reason?

    21: L1: (Silence)

    22: L6: Why they live longer? Mmmm What reason?

    23: L1: Errrrr.

    24: L6: Do you think they live longer…. er.. because they happy…. are happier…

    25: L1: Yes.

26: L6: …we write that… They live longer ….because they
          are …happier.
25: L1: Ok.

The exchange also illustrates how Learner 6 was trying to help L1 to complete the task as is indicated by Line 16 when L7 suggest they write down the point. Learner 6's co-operative approach is illustrated in Line 18 where he/she rephrases vocabulary and in Line 20 as he/she prompts the learner into giving an answer. When no answer is given, he/she asks a Yes/No question, allowing Learner 1 to respond. However, Learner 1's responses were minimal. Thus, it is suggested that although Learner 6 adopted a highly co-operative attitude, it did not result in a greater quality of linguistic output by Learner 1. This supports the findings of Yu (2014).

11. Post-Task Response and Interview

Following the classroom activities, Learner 1 took part in a post-task interview in which he was asked to comment and respond to questions posed by the researchers. The response was conducted in Chinese. In fact, Learner 1 volunteered few comments on his interaction and mostly responded to questions.

At the beginning of response/interview Learner 1 was asked to expand on his WTC. He reported an aversion to engaging in communication in the L1 as well as the L2 and described his personality as introverted. He described experiencing anxiety when having to use L2. Learners with a high degree of communication apprehension have weak communication skills (McCroskey and Richmond, 1987) and will lack the motivation to actively participate in group work.

Learner 1 also expressed a lack of confidence in L2 due to perceived linguistic problems. He reported: "I get nervous when I have to speak in groups, so I try not to speak. I avoid producing sentences because I know I will make mistakes and feel embarrassed" (Translated from the Chinese).

This learner's anxiety and lack of confidence is not unusual for a Chinese learner. Peng (2007) reports that Chinese EFL learners' WTC behaviour in the classroom consisted of their linguistic, cognitive, affective, and cultural readiness and concluded that their reluctance to engage in L2 communication could be attributable to the lack of one or more such readiness factors and lack of self-confidence resulted in low participation in whole class activities. It is suggested that lack of self-confidence may influence not only class participation, but also group/pair work (Kang, 2005)

The two pairings that resulted in the least communication from Learner 1 were the pairings with Learner 4 and Learner 6. Learner 1 reported apprehension when paired with both learners as he had never spoken to them

before and knew that they both had good English. Kang (2005), reports that the English fluency of other nonnative English-speaking interlocutors, whether or not they were more fluent than the participant, also played a significant role in the participants' feelings of security.

In addition, Learner 1 mentioned that both Learner 4 and Learner 6 were female (all his other interlocutors were male), which he said increased his apprehension…. "I am not used to talking to female classmates" (Translated from Chinese). Previous research on gender effect on WTC (MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002; Valadi *et al.,* 2015) has focused on trait WTC rather than state (situation) WTC. Learner 1's response in the interview suggests that gender pairings may have an effect on WTC communication, at least for certain individuals. The researchers have observed that class groupings tend to be based on gender, suggesting that further research is required to determine gender effect on situational WTC compared to trait WTC. However, it should be noted that Learner 1 also expressed apprehension when paired with a male interlocutor (Learner 3) whom he did not know.

"I did not know (Learner 3) so I did not know how well he spoke English and if he would be easy to talk to, but he looked friendly but nervous …..like me" (Translated from Chinese). The two interlocutors with whom Learner 1 was familiar were both males, although he also expressed some apprehension when engaging with Learner 5: "I know (Learner 5), but not so well and I know his English is good, so I was a little worried about how he would talk…but I knew he was friendly …and after a while I relaxed….." (Translated from Chinese).

Learner 1 also expressed apprehension when communicating with Learner 6 (high WTC) because he knew her "…English ability to be the best in the class" (Translated from Chinese). However, he also reported that she had a "friendly" attitude. In reviewing his interaction with Learner 3 (low WTC –no previous contact), he confirmed that as their interaction progressed, he felt more confident. When asked who he preferred as an interlocutor, Learner 1 replied that he preferred to be paired with Learner 2," …because he was his friend".

Generally speaking, Learner 1's interaction can be characterized as a follower of the discourse. In all pairings he allowed his interlocutors to initiate discussion and dominate the interaction. Only when paired with a close friend did he initiate topics (ideas) and responded to his partner at greater length, but this was only to a limited extent. Although more comfortable when paired with a partner he knew, analysis of the discourse shows only a limited increase in the quality of Learner 1's interaction compared to his other pairings. Learner 1 appeared willing to allow his partners to complete the discussion and come up with the ideas.

12. Discussion

Previous research (Yu, 2015; Cao, 2014; Macintyre *et al*., 1998) has suggested that variables such as trait WTC, motivation and social dynamic can

influence communication behavior. This case study of one language learner investigated the impact of the degree of social proximity with an interlocutor on WTC behaviour. Results suggest that social proximity proved to be an important factor in determining active communication, supporting the findings of Kang (2005). The objective data (Table 2) shows that the highest output was with the two participants with greater social proximity to Learner 1. Of the two low WTC pairings, Learner 1's word production with a friend was twice as much as that with a low WTC learner whom Learner 1 did not know (Learner 3 was new to the class). Turn-taking showed a similar pattern (Table 2). Similarly, word production with a friend with medium WTC was just over twice that with a medium WTC whom Learner 1 did not know (Table 1), and had never worked with before. Learner 1's turn taking was nearly three times that with the medium learner who Learner 1 did not know.

Previous studies (Yu, 2015) concluded that pairings of low WTC learners are likely to result more active communication due to compatibility and thus experience less communication apprehension. This study suggests that familiarity with one's interlocutor is also a factor in determining communication behavior. Further research is needed to determine the effect of close social proximity on classroom groupings in particular cultural contexts that value social relationships and avoid conflict (Hall, 1990; Hofstede, 1984).

The study also provides some evidence of the dynamic nature of situation WTC. As part of the dynamic of the situation, learners continually evaluate the process and respond to that evaluation (Yu, 2015; Kang 2005). For Learner 1 it was based on the degree of social proximity. Learner 1 decided that Learner 4 did not have a friendly attitude compared to Learner 3. We suggest that this appraisal influenced his response, which in turn served to further increase the distance experienced by the interlocutors and affected Learner 1's situational WTC. In contrast, after an initial reticence based on lack of familiarity with Learner 3, Learner 1 found Learner 3 to be friendly and changed his approach and engaged in more communication. Yet, while Learner 1 believed Learner 6 (high WTC) to be friendly, this did not seem to affect his communication behaviour, perhaps because his belief about Learner 6's English ability took precedence.

It is suggested that the variation in Learner 1's communication behavior in different pair settings may be closely related to his self-perception of his linguistic confidence and his reaction to his interlocutors' linguistic abilities, social proximity and his perceptions of his interlocutors' attitude. However, Learner 1's beliefs about his interlocutors' attitude were subject to change, pointing to the dynamic nature of language learners' communication behavior, which is co-constructed by the participants. Thus, it is hoped that this study will contribute to understanding the factors that contribute to group communication and assist instructors in creating an environment conducive to creating a successful participatory structure.

13. Conclusion

While this case study has provided some insights into the effects of social proximity, previous task-based research has demonstrated that participants' WTC in classroom interaction is influenced by a range of individual and situational factors (Yu, 2015; Cao, 2014; Kang, 2005). Variables such as language proficiency, trait WTC, motivation, and the social dynamic can affect the interaction between interlocutors in their communication behavior. Therefore, this study provides initial insights into one of the factors affecting situational WTC. Clearly further research is needed to investigate the effect of social proximity on situational WTC and its relationship to other variables. However, the study may be of some value in guiding language instructors in devising their own communicative language teaching activities, specifically, in learner pairings for task-based language teaching.

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APPENDIX 1

Task 1:

Do you think people should keep pets? Give reasons to support your opinion.

Task 2:

Some people argue that everyone should be a vegetarian. Do you agree with this point of view? Give reasons to support your opinion.

Task 3:

Do you think young people spend too much time on social media? Give reasons to support your opinion.

Task 4:

Do you think it is a good idea for students to have a part-time job? Give reasons to support your opinion.

Task 5:

Who do you think are better at giving advice, parents or friends? Give reasons to support your opinion.

STUDIU DE CAZ REFERITOR LA EFECTUL PROXIMITĂȚII SOCIALE ASUPRA DISPONIBILITĂȚII DE COMUNICARE

(Rezumat)

O serie de studii apărute în ultimii ani s-au concentrat pe analiza disponibilității de comunicare (DDC), care este văzută drept o combinație între variabile specifice şi de stare (situaționale). Lucrarea prezintă o investigație preliminară referitoare la efectul proximității sociale asupra interacțiunii comunicative caracteristice unui cursant cu o disponibilitate de comunicare scăzută care interacționează cu alți cursanți având grade diferite de DDC şi grade variate de proximitate socială. Output-ul cursanților s-a cuantificat prin calculul numărului de cuvinte şi al situațiilor în care au preluat conducerea dialogului. S-au analizat înregistrările, iar după activitate s-a condus un interviu menit să aducă informații suplimentarre referitoare la disponibilitatea de comunicare a cursanților. Sunt necesare cercetări suplimentare pentru a depăși limitările acestui studiu.

MOTHER FIGURES IN OSCAR WILDE'S COMEDIES

BY

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Abstract. Three of Wilde's comedies – *Lady Windermere's Fan, A Woman of No Importance* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* present mother figures that explore and exploit gender and melodramatic convention stereotypes. Apparently, the feminine characters seem to conform to conventional stereotypes: thus, Mrs Erlynne (*Lady Windermere's Fan*) seems the perfect embodiment of the 'woman with a past' and of the unmotherly mother; Mrs. Arbuthnot (*A Woman with No Importance*) on the other hand, appears to be the prototype of the sacrificial mother; Lady Bracknell (*The Importance of Being Earnest)* can be seen as the symbol of the guardian parent, with roots in Roman comedies.

A more attentive reading of the plays, however, will reveal meanings that tend to undermine the labels we are tempted to attach too fast, thus offering Wilde's plays and his *dramatis personae* multiple, sometimes contradictory interpretations.

Keywords: mother figures; the woman with a past; the unmotherly mother; the sacrificial mother; patriarchal society.

1. Introduction

In the late 18th century throughout the 19th century, England, America and other parts of the world were dominated by the ideology of the separation of spheres, according to which the man, the breadwinner, was attributed the

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public/social sphere, while the woman, the 'angel in the house', responsible with household activities and childcare, was restricted to the private/domestic sphere.

Women's roles were generally defined through their relationship to men. The ideal woman was the perfect daughter, wife and mother, characterized by purity, kindness, submissiveness, sensibility and self-sacrifice. Both in real life and in the literary works of the time women were supposed to conform to the high standards imposed on them by a conservative, patriarchal society, as can be seen from this idealized image presented by William Acton in 1865:

"... a perfect ideal of an English wife and mother, kind, considerate, self-sacrificing, and sensible…" (William Acton, 1865, p. 14, quoted in Nead, 1988, p.18).

The sense of duty, self-sacrifice and moral purity were the main characteristics of the ideal woman whose place was in her home. Women who adhered to this ideal were praised in real life, in the printed media and in the literary works of the time, while those who disrupted the well-established gender roles of the patriarchal English society were seen as a danger and were cast off from high society.

Once lost, a woman's good reputation could hardly, if ever, be re-established. Such a woman would lose her identity, becoming a 'fallen woman', a 'lost woman', a 'woman of the streets' or at least a 'woman without character.' Those who truly repented had to show their sincerity by going to a convent, doing good deeds for the poor (like Mrs. Arbuthnot in Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance*) or making restitution for those they had wronged. Mrs Erlynne, the 'fallen woman' in Lady Windermere's Fan, mocks at these staple punishments 19th century literature thought proper for women who deviated from the established norms: "I suppose, Windermere, you would like me to retire into a convent, or become a hospital nurse, or something of that kind, as people do in silly modern novels" (Wilde, 1990, p. 425).

2. Mother Figures in Wilde's Comedies

Lady Windermere's Fan, Wilde's first successful play, opened at the St. James's theatre in London in February 1892 and ran for 197 performances. The play introduces three different hypostases of maternity: Mrs. Erlynne, the Duchess of Berwick and Lady Windermere.

In portraying Mrs. Erlynne as both a woman 'with a past' and a sacrificial mother capable to compromise herself in order to save her daughter, Wilde adheres to the 'fallen woman' stereotype and departs from it significantly, thus questioning the arbitrary division of people into 'good' and 'bad', as well as the rigid norms and traditional gender roles of the Victorian society. She is, it is true, a self-centred person who abandoned her husband and daughter twenty years before the beginning of the action in the play for a lover;

she visits her daughter (who is never revealed Mrs. Erlynne's real identity) only to blackmail her son-in-law for money that might help her re-enter high Society. On the other hand, she is capable of genuine maternal feelings for Lady Windermere and convinces her not to repeat the mistake she has made in the past: "You don't know what it is to fall into the pit, to be despised, mocked, abandoned, sneered at - to be an outcast! (…) One pays for one's sin, and then one pays again, and all one's life one pays" (Wilde, 1990, p 413).

The two traditional stereotypes of the epoch attributed to the feminine gender, that of the fallen woman and of the sacrificial mother seem to be combined forming a strange mixture. However, as it happens in Wilde's plays, things are rarely (if ever) what they seem. Mrs. Erlynne seems to conform to both stereotypes, while sneering at them at the same time. The fallen woman does not conform to the prescribed denouement, which involves a fatal illness followed by death or at least retirement in a convent. Although regretting what she did in the past, she declares to Lord Windermere that she will neither retire into a convent, nor will she show her repentance by doing charity work: "you would like me to retire into a convent, or become a hospital nurse, or something of that kind (…) in real life we don't do such things…"(*Ibid.*, p. 425). Mrs. Erlynne will leave England as a victor, as a result of her prospective marriage to Lord Augustus, which will bring her both money and status. On the other hand, although once in her life she has compromised her entrance into Society in order to save her daughter, Mrs. Erlynne admits in the course of the same final conversation with son-in-law that the mother role does not fit her:

"Only once in my life have I known a mother's feelings (…) For twenty years I have lived childless (…) Besides, my dear Windermere, how on earth could I pose as a mother with a grown-up daughter? Margaret is twenty-one, and I have never admitted that I am more than twenty-nine, or thirty, at the most" (*Ibidem*).

The second mother figure in the play is the Duchess of Berwick. She is the dutiful, responsible mother of 19th century upper class English society, the one who, just like some of Henry James' characters (Mrs Osmond, Madame Merle) is concerned with 'selling' her daughter to the highest bidder. Rodney Shevan regards her as "the Establishment mother, who exemplifies the prevailing *laissez-faire* morality (1977, p. 160). Skilled in what might be called "the marriage market" (Smith-Rosenberg, 1985), the Duchess is aware that in the patriarchal society of the time a woman is regarded as a commodity and her 'duty' as a mother is to find an eligible young man for Agatha, her daughter: "A mother who doesn't part with a daughter every season has no real affection" (Wilde, 1990, p. 393). Her strategy works perfectly: by the end of the ball, Lady Agatha, whose cues throughout the play are reduced thirteen yesses, is paired off with Mr. Hopper, a wealthy Australian. As a mother, the Duchess fits the traditional role assigned to women in her position by the Victorian society. However, she departs completely from the role assigned by the same society to

wives, who, according to the norms of the time were supposed to stay at home and take care of the domestic duties. Contrary to such expectations, the Duchess is the one who goes out into the world and socializes, while her husband stays at home. Sir George, The Duchess' husband is just an object-of-discourse, a character spoken about, but absent from the stage throughout the unfolding of the play.

The third mother is Lady Windermere herself. Her son, Gerard, about six months old, is also just a mere object-of-discourse, for he never appears in on the stage. Interestingly enough, Lady Windermere speaks very little about him. In fact, she speaks less about Gerard than other characters in the play – the Duchess and Mrs Erlynne. When Mrs. Erlynne finds out that Lady Windermere, her unknowing daughter, wants to leave her husband and child she appeals to lady Windermere's maternal feelings, using repeatedly the directive "you must stay with your child" (*Ibid.*, p. 413). In Act Four, it is the same Mrs. Erlynne who asks Lady Windermere to give her a photo of herself with her son, Gerard. Nothing more natural from a woman who cannot reveal her identity to her own flesh and blood than to keep a photo with her daughter and grandson.

Oscar Wilde's next society play, *A Woman of No Importance*, produced at the Haymarket Theatre on 19th April 1893, introduces another mother figure: Rachel Arbuthnot. Mrs. Arbuthnot, the 'woman with a past' in the play, may be regarded as the opposite of Mrs. Erlynne: a stern, rigid person, she has dedicated her life to the poor and needy and has taken good care of her son, Gerald, whom she "brought up to be a good man" (*Ibid.,* p. 457). Unlike Mrs. Erlynne, who is looked upon by many of those around her as an adventuress and a predatory representative of the female gender, Rachel Arbuthnot is regarded as a virtuous woman and a sacrificial mother. Lady Hunstanton, for example, declares sententiously that "Mrs. Arbuthnot doesn't know anything about the wicked society in which we all live... She is far too good" (*Ibidem*, p. 471). In her pathetic confession to her son, Gerald, Mrs. Arbuthnot depicts herself as the embodiment of the sacrificial mother: "Gerald, when you were naked I clothed you, when you were hungry I gave you food. Night and day all that long winter I tended you" (*Ibid.*, pp.474-475). Yet the sacrificial mother is also an extremely possessive one: she refuses her son the prospects of a better future offered by Lord Illingworth, Gerald's father, only because the man who is offering him a good position, money and properties is the one who seduced her in her youth. Gerald himself is bewildered by the fact that the only person who objects to his having a bright future, the only person who puts an obstacle to his career is his own mother: "It is very strange that when I have had such a wonderful piece of good luck, the one person to put difficulties in my way should be my own mother" (*Ibid.*, p. 467). She is a possessive mother, who forbids Lord Illingworth, Gerald's biological father, any claim on their son: "The boy is entirely mine, and shall remain mine" (*Ibid.*, p.455). Rachel Arbuthnot reiterates her refusal to let Gerald have anything to do with Lord Illingworth towards the end of the play, even if her refusal will substantially reduce her son's financial

independence. In spite of Lord Illingworth's attempt to convince her to let Gerald stay with him part of the year by offering instead money, properties and finally (after reading Gerald's letter) his hand in marriage as signs of 'repair', Rachel declares her unwillingness to 'share' her son with his biological father: "There is no room in my boy's life for you" (*Ibid.,* p. 479). In the end, Gerald's future is totally at the mercy of two women: Rachel, his biological mother and Hester, Gerald's fiancée, the other mother figure in his life.

In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, produced at St. James's in 1895, gender and family roles are turned upside down: the play displays a reversal of patriarchal values that pervaded the Victorian society of the time: "women who take over the position of the head of the family, girls who reprimand their mothers, self-possessed young women and effeminate young men" (Iftimie, 2018, p. 10).

Lady Bracknell, the mother figure in the play has similarities with the Duchess of Berwick from *Lady Windermere's Fan*. Just like the duchess, she intends to 'sell' her daughter into the marriage market, being convinced that "[a]n engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be" (Wilde, 1990, p. 331). Lady Bracknell echoes in fact the traditional view on the matter of marriage according to which daughters were obliged to obey mercantile marriage arrangements settled by their parents. She is a comic reflection of the 'motherly' mother, who considers it her duty to marry her daughter with an 'eligible' young man, a man with good financial prospects and high position in society. That is why she is shocked to find out that Jack, Gwendolen's suitor and would-be-fiancé is a foundling. Like the duchess, Lady Bracknell flouts the Victorian gender norm according to which a woman's place is at home, in the private sphere. In fact, the spheres traditionally attributed to men and women are reversed: Lord Bracknell, who seems to suffer from some permanent illness, is the one to stay at home, in the domestic sphere, while Lady Bracknell is out into the world, making courtesy calls, visiting her nephew, questioning her daughter's suitors, following Gwendolen into the countryside. She is the type of the guardian parent, with roots in Roman comedies and in Commedia dell'Arte. Although she constantly tries to impose her will and stop her daughter from forming "an alliance with a parcel" (*Ibid*., p. 334), her efforts are in vain. On account of Jack's being a foundling Lady Bracknell forbids any further communication between him and her daughter, but Gwendolen ignores her mother's interdiction and decides to go by herself to Jack's countryside manor. A stubborn, self -possessed and pragmatic young woman, Gwendolen departs from the submissive daughter role attributed by the society of the time, and turns widely accepted clichés into their opposite: "The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out (*Ibid*., p. 338).

In *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *A Woman of No Importance* some characters seem to be deprived of normal family relationships, missing at least one parent: Gerald seems to have no father, while Lady Windermere has

apparently lost both her parents. This situation seems to be reiterated in *The Importance of Being Earnest*: Jack is apparently a foundling and the absence of both biological parents is the main obstacle to his future marriage with Gwendolen. Just as in the case of Gerald and Lady Windermere, in the unfolding of the play the spectator/reader finds out who Jack's parents really are. The obstacle is thus overcome and Jack can marry the woman he loves.

3. Conclusions

In all the three plays mentioned above Wilde approaches the relationship between parents, especially mothers and their children, only to turn upside down common beliefs regarding gender and family stereotypes, thus expanding the technique of paradox to dramatic development. Mrs. Erlynne, the 'woman with a past', the adventuress who abandoned her family for a lover and resorts to blackmail in order to be again admitted into Society is also a sacrificial mother, able to endanger her prospects for a better future in order to save her daughter who is about to make the same mistake she did some twenty years before. Rachel Arbuthnot, on the other hand, the apparently pure woman and perfect mother thinks she is entitled to endanger her son's future prospects of prosperity only because she wants to be revenged on Lord Illingworth, the man who seduced her in her youth. Lady Bracknell, the guardian parent and authority figure in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, is tricked by the other characters and her authority as a parent is undermined by her own daughter. Convention, both social and theatrical is sneered at by Wilde who gave his contemporary audience more than was expected.

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FIGURI DE MAME ÎN COMEDIILE LUI OSCAR WILDE

(Rezumat)

Trei dintre comediile lui Wilde – *Evantaiul doamnei Windermere*, *O femeie fără importanţă* şi *Ce înseamnă să fii Onest* prezintă figuri de mame care explorează şi exploatează stereotipurile convenţiilor dramatice şi de gen. În aparenţă, personajele feminine par să se conformeze stereotipurilor convenţionale: astfel, d-na Erlynne (*Evantaiul doamnei Windermere*) pare întruparea perfectă a femeii cu un trecut întunecat şi a mamei denaturate; d-na Arbuthnot (*O femeie fără importanţă*) pare, pe de altă parte, prototipul mamei gata să se sacrifice pentru fiul ei; Lady Bracknell (*Ce înseamnă să fii Onest*) poate fi văzută ca un simbol al părintelui-gardian, cu rădăcini în comedia latină.

O citire mai atentă a pieselor va releva sensuri care subminează etichetele pe care am fi tentaţi să le ataşăm prea repede, oferind astfel pieselor lui Wilde şi personajelor sale interpretări multiple, uneori contradictorii.

DIFFICULTÉS LIÉES À L'USAGE ORAL DU FRANÇAIS CHEZ LES DÉBOUCHÉS DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT PUBLIC MAROCAIN

BY

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Abstract. In Morocco, while the graduates of private education generally master the basic rules of French, the graduates of public education, for their part, speak most often a very bad French. They often mix it with dialectal Arabic. However, in this mixture, French sometimes undergoes lexical and morphological alterations.

What is the level of oral fluency in French by young public education opportunities? What are their language difficulties? Which are the consequences for their professional future? What steps must be taken to remedy their linguistic and communicative shortcomings in French? These are the questions this study attempts to answer.

Keywords: Morocco; public education; French; oral communication; difficulties.

1. Introduction

La communication orale est d'autant plus importante dans une classe de langue que la communication écrite : de nombreux messages sont véhiculés oralement, notamment lors des séances d'interaction et de confrontation. Beaucoup de pédagogues et de formateurs ont reconnu l'intérêt d'une bonne ambiance pédagogique grâce à l'échange oral.

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Au Maroc, alors que les lauréats de l'enseignement privé maîtrisent en général les règles élémentaires du français, les débouchés de l'enseignement public, quant à eux, parlent le plus souvent un très mauvais français. Ils le mélangent souvent à l'arabe dialectal. Or, dans ce mélange, le français subit parfois des pertes lexicales et morphologiques.

Quel est le niveau de maîtrise du français à l'oral par les jeunes débouchés de l'enseignement public ? A quoi sont dues leurs difficultés langagières ? Quelles sont les conséquences sur leurs cursus universitaires et avenirs professionnels ? Quelles démarches faut-il entreprendre pour remédier à leurs lacunes linguistiques, langagières et communicatives en français ?

Telles sont les questions auxquelles tente de répondre la présente étude dont l'objectif à atteindre serait de faire un état des lieux sur le niveau de maitrise du français à l'oral par les jeunes marocains et de jeter un regard analytique sur l'impact de ce handicap linguistique sur leur cursus universitaire et leur réussite professionnelle.

Par ailleurs, avant de présenter l'état des lieux relatif au niveau de maitrise du français par les débouchés de l'enseignement public marocain, il semble à nos yeux judicieux de faire le point sur l'oral dans sa relation avec l'écrit du point de vue historique, morphologique et pragmatique.

2. L'oral diffère de l'écrit

La communication verbale met à la disposition de l'individu deux types de codes appropriés pour interagir avec l'autre, à savoir : la langue parlée et la langue écrite. Lorsqu'on communique au moyen des phonèmes ou des sons verbaux, on utilise le langage parlé, alors que lorsqu'on communique au moyen des lettres et des signes graphiques, on utilise le langage écrit.

L'oral et l'écrit n'ont pas la même morphologie, ni la même grammaire, ni les mêmes moyens expressifs et ne s'utilisent pas dans la même situation. C'est ainsi que l'opposition entre l'oral et l'écrit demeure fondamentale car elle oppose l'individuel au social. En effet, du point de vue des usagers, la langue parlée révèle de l'exécution individuelle tandis que la langue écrite révèle du système social. L'usage écrit de l'arabe moderne, servant de base à l'enseignement et à l'administration, constitue une norme qui permet à tous les arabophones scolarisés de se comprendre. Mais de l'arabe moderne, dérivent plusieurs arabes dialectaux et « régiolectes », propres à chaque pays et à chaque région arabe, distincts dans la plupart des cas les uns des autres.

Jadis, la culture humaine était à base orale en ce sens que la parole a bel et bien devancé l'écriture. « A l'origine de toute communication fut le langage, l'homme a pu émettre des sons en faisant vibrer l'air, il a fallu des milliers d'années pour que l'écriture à la main et non plus de la bouche, l'organe de commande de nouveaux messages ainsi susceptibles d'être utilisés de façon répétée et mémorisée » (Sfez, 1993, p. 9).

De même, certains chercheurs confèrent à la langue parlée un caractère naturel. « En tant que mode d'expression, la langue orale apparaît plus naturelle que la langue écrite » (Bidaud et Megherbi, 2005, p. 22).

Ceci dit, l'écrit requiert également son importance en communication car les mots écrits sont permanents, sont censés être précis, peuvent être reproduits, peuvent être organisés pour faciliter la découverte de l'information spécifique et peuvent surtout être révisés et corrigés avant que quelqu'un ne les voie. Ainsi, on recourt à l'écrit lorsque :

-     On veut garder une trace du passé ;
-     Le message a une portée importante sur l'avenir ;
-     La communication orale ne suffit plus, ou n'a pas eu d'effets ;
-     On adresse un écrit qui demande une réponse précise et engageante.

En conclusion, le langage articulé peut être écrit ou oral. On l'utilise, selon les circonstances, parfois à l'écrit, parfois à l'oral, parfois à l'écrit et à l'oral à la fois. Le langage parlé et écrit partagent en commun le fait qu'ils soient les meilleurs codes de communication et de compréhension entre individus appartenant à la même communauté linguistique.

3. Niveau de maitrise du français à l'oral des jeunes marocains: état des lieux

Au Maroc, la langue française bénéficie d'un statut avantagé, celui de langue seconde après l'arabe. La place qu'elle occupe dans le concert des langues en présence la dote d'un rôle instrumental, voire culturel. Il s'agit d'une langue fonctionnelle qui continue d'intervenir dans plusieurs champs de la vie socio-économique ainsi que dans la diffusion du savoir scientifique et technologique. D'ailleurs, dans l'imaginaire de l'esprit marocain, la langue française serait associée à des images valorisantes ayant trait à la réussite, à l'intelligence, au pouvoir, au prestige et à toutes les valeurs superlatives qui en découlent.

Or, malgré son statut privilégié, la langue française vit aujourd'hui une ambivalence : valorisée par certains et considérée comme « un mal nécessaire » par d'autres, elle présente quelques ambigüités et contradictions quant à sa maitrise et son importance au sein de notre pays.

En effet, les jeunes marocains issus de l'enseignement public présentent des profils linguistiques de plus en plus problématiques et maîtrisent de moins en moins bien le français. Non seulement ils ne s'y intéressent pas, mais encore ils montrent un certain malaise quant à son usage à l'oral comme à l'écrit. Un désintérêt et une démotivation qui se traduisent par « une baisse de niveau de maitrise » jugée « alarmante » (Sadiq, 2012, p. 41).

Plusieurs facteurs sont à l'origine de ce premier constat. Les plus connus sont: la politique d'arabisation, l'inadéquation des réformes

pédagogiques, la formation des enseignants, la crise de lecture, ainsi que l'hégémonie que commence à exercer l'anglais dans une société multilingue comme c'est le cas de la société marocaine.

3.1. La politique d'arabisation

Durant les premières années succédant à l'Indépendance du Maroc qui date du 27 mars 1956, il va se forger une certaine sensibilité à l'égard de la langue française qui porte en elle le poids lourd de l'histoire et le souvenir douloureux d'une domination humiliante. C'est ainsi que les intellectuels marocains ont entrepris plusieurs démarches pour réhabiliter la langue arabe et la culture arabo-musulmane. Ils étaient animés par le simple souci de préserver le patrimoine socioculturel de la nation. Parmi ces démarches, on note le processus d'arabisation et son corollaire, la marocanisation des cadres, qui ont traversé des étapes importantes.

Au lendemain de l'Indépendance, les Nationalistes du Parti de l'Indépendance, dit « l'Istiqlal », ont fait de l'arabisation leur principale préoccupation. Ils ont entrepris une politique d'arabisation qui devait progressivement remplacer le français par l'arabe classique. Ainsi, en 1961, le Gouvernement a tenté d'arabiser l'Enseignement, puis l'Administration, mais sans succès ; les fonctionnaires y résistaient farouchement ; le Gouvernement a fini par abandonner cette idée d'arabiser l'Administration.

Menée dans la précipitation, cette politique d'arabisation a été soldée par un réel échec du fait qu'elle n'a pas su répondre aux enjeux qu'elle s'est fixés. Nombreux sont ceux qui l'incriminent. Ahmed Assid, Professeur de philosophie et défenseur de la laïcité explique au journal le Monde : "Nous avons perdu trente ans à cause de petits calculs idéologiques. Avant d'arabiser, l'Etat marocain aurait dû d'abord réformer la langue arabe dont le lexique et les structures n'ont pas varié depuis la période préislamique" (Assid, 2016).

En effet, ayant suivi un cursus scolaire depuis le primaire où l'ensemble des matières scientifiques et techniques était dispensé en arabe, les étudiants marocains se trouvaient confrontés à la barrière de langue française, véhiculaire du savoir scientifique et technique au Supérieur.

Les bacheliers scientifiques de la première promotion, datant de l'année scolaire 1990-1991, se sont trouvés ainsi victimes d'un effet pervers de la politique d'arabisation. Beaucoup d'entre eux, ne pouvant facilement suivre des études supérieures dans leurs spécialités, ont opté pour des disciplines qui leur étaient accessibles ; c'est-à-dire les disciplines enseignées en arabe à l'université comme les Sciences Humaines, les Sciences Sociales et les Etudes Islamiques.

Après trente ans d'arabisation, le Maroc a décidé de retourner à l'enseignement du français dans trois disciplines majeures : les mathématiques, les sciences naturelles et les sciences physiques, dès la première année du primaire au lieu de la troisième année présentement.

Cette décision du retour à la langue de Molière a été prise le 10 février 2016 par le Roi Mohammed VI. Derrière cette décision se trouvent d'importants enjeux culturels, religieux, politiques et historiques : « le français par rapport à l'arabe, dans un pays comme le Maroc, c'est tout un symbole », rapporte le journal le Monde (Assid, 2016).

3.2. L'inadéquation des réformes pédagogiques

De réforme en réforme, toutes jugées « inefficaces », le niveau de français au Maroc s'enlise dans la médiocrité. Au fait, après neuf ans d'apprentissage de cette langue, seule une minorité d'élèves la parle correctement (Amargui, 2006, p. 79).

Depuis des années, on ne compte plus les tentatives de réforme : la Charte Nationale de l'Education et la Formation (1999-2005), le Programme d'Urgence pour l'Education (2009-2012) émanant du Ministère de tutelle, la Vision Stratégique de la Réforme (2015-2030) élaborée par le Conseil Supérieur de l'Enseignement. Des dizaines de bilans, rapports et évaluations ont tous été dédiés à la réforme du système éducatif. Or, jusqu'ici, les résultats ne sont pas probants.

Dans les textes de loi de la Charte Nationale et de la Formation, on note : « L'élève qui accède au cycle secondaire qualifiant est déjà capable de s'exprimer de manière correcte et efficace, dans des situations de communication complexes. Il est appelé, durant ce cycle, à consolider ses acquis, à se perfectionner en vue d'une appropriation élargie et progressive des dimensions culturelles, discursives et linguistiques de la langue française ». Pourtant, 18 ans après la mise en vigueur de cette Charte, le constat fait que l'enseignement public n'arrive pas à réussir son arrimage à l'instar des pays méditerranéens.

3.3. La formation des enseignants

L'arabisation a néanmoins réduit l'importance donnée à la langue française dans l'enseignement public, mais le volume horaire qui lui est réservé, en tant que première langue étrangère, demeure important. En effet, un élève marocain totalise aujourd'hui près de 2000 heures de français, du cycle primaire jusqu'au Baccalauréat. Cette masse horaire devrait, en principe, lui permettre de manipuler cette langue sans difficultés. Surtout si l'on tient compte de la présence d'un environnement francophone favorable : les chaines de télévision, les antennes de radio, les salles de cinéma, la presse écrite, audiovisuelle et électronique, les médias et réseaux sociaux, la littérature marocaine d'expression française, les centres culturels…

Seulement, le problème ne tient pas à la langue elle-même. Toute langue, quelle qu'elle soit peut servir de vecteur dans le progrès et l'ouverture

d'un pays. N'est-il plutôt pas du côté de la formation des enseignants et des méthodes pédagogiques qu'il faut s'interroger ?

L'économiste Youssef Saadani estime que la dégradation de la qualité de l'enseignement va s'amplifier, « les élèves de faible niveau devenant eux-mêmes enseignants » (Saadani, 2016).

Au fait, l'école publique est assurée par des enseignants formés dans son enceinte, alors que les débouchés issus des écoles françaises ou des écoles privées ne se destinent jamais à une carrière dans l'enseignement au Maroc. Ils préfèrent entamer des études en Finance, en Commerce, en Management, en Marketing, en Communication, en Ingénierie, en Médecine… Chaque secteur entretient sa propre reproduction, un postulat largement « discutable ».

Quant aux méthodes pédagogiques, elles reposent encore sur la répétition et l'autorité plutôt que sur la découverte et l'épanouissement de l'élève. D'ailleurs, le français est perçu par les élèves comme une matière scolaire parmi d'autres au lieu d'être considéré comme un outil de communication et de transmission de savoir.

Sachant que dans tous les systèmes éducatifs du monde, le choix des enseignants se fait selon des critères rigoureux, car ce métier exige en plus de compétences liées à la discipline enseignée, à la disponibilité, au sacrifice et à la vocation. Au Maroc, le métier d'enseignant est souvent choisi après avoir essuyé des échecs dans des métiers plus prestigieux. Les lauréats suivent souvent une année de formation en alternance avec le stage en situation de responsabilité. Ce qui s'avère insuffisant vu les enjeux éducatifs et pédagogiques à réaliser sur le terrain. Les enseignants de la langue française ne dérogent pas à la règle et un bon nombre d'entre eux puisent dans leur propre expérience pour s'entrainer.

3.4. La crise de lecture

Un bon nombre d'élèves marocains ne pratiquent jamais la langue, le seul espace où ils ont la possibilité de parler en français est en classe de cours. L'entourage joue un rôle primordial. Or, la majorité des parents sont des «arabisants». En conséquence, l'élève ne trouve pas de cadre adéquat pour pratiquer la langue. Il se contente de ce qu'il apprend à l'école, ce qui est inopportunément loin d'être suffisant s'il n'est pas appuyé par d'autres activités culturelles comme la lecture, le théâtre, l'écriture…

En revanche, le constat fait qu'au Maroc, la lecture atteste une nette régression. Le lectorat se fait rare. A vrai dire, le cercle des lecteurs assidus et avisés ne cesse de se rétrécir avec l'avancée envahissante et inquiétante d'autres valeurs et centres d'intérêt. L'écrasante majorité de nos jeunes commencent à délaisser tout ce qui a trait à la culture et à la lecture pour se livrer à d'autres préoccupations comme les jeux multimédia, les médias sociaux, les réseaux sociaux. On compte à présent, 13 millions d'utilisateurs de Facebook au Maroc,

soit 39% de la population dont 15% sont des jeunes âgés entre 13 et 17 ans et 39% sont des jeunes âgés entre 18 et 24 ans (Rapport Medianet, 2016).

3.5. L'hégémonie de l'anglais

L'anglais, dont l'existence n'est liée à aucune histoire coloniale ou à un quelconque passé en commun avec le Maroc, a un statut de pure langue étrangère. Sa présence dans le paysage linguistique, bien que discrète, reste dynamique. Langue étrangère apprise à l'école, l'anglais commence à se construire un espace propre qui concurrence celui du français dans certains secteurs stratégiques de la vie sociale, en l'occurrence : l'enseignement, la formation, la recherche scientifique, les médias, la technologie, l'économie, le commerce, la diplomatie et les affaires.

Au Maroc, nombreuses sont les familles aisées qui n'hésitent pas à placer leurs enfants dans des écoles américaines à Rabat et à Casablanca. L'Université Al Akhawayne d'Ifrane, quant à elle, dispense un enseignement en anglais à l'instar des Universités américaines. De même les Ecoles supérieures privées s'associent à des Universités anglaises, américaines ou canadiennes et proposent des cours anglophones. Cependant, malgré cette situation, le français est loin d'être détrôné, il a encore de beaux jours devant lui dans le système éducatif marocain.

Le constat est le même dans les autres secteurs d'activité, car si l'anglais s'impose comme langue des affaires, il n'est pas encore devenu la langue des clients. L'idée d'un militantisme linguistique n'est donc pas exclue. Elle demeure vigilante chez les opérateurs économiques qui tentent de préserver l'identité socioculturelle du pays.

4. Difficultés des jeunes à parler un français correct: les conséquences

Au vu de tous les facteurs susmentionnés, les jeunes issus de l'enseignement public maitrisent mal la langue de Molière. Ceci ne va pas sans répercussions significatives sur leur cours universitaire ainsi que sur leur insertion professionnelle.

L'une des conséquences directes de cette situation inconfortable de non-maitrise est le développement, parmi les jeunes, du phénomène de l'emprunt et du métissage linguistique.

4.1. Métissage du français et de l'arabe dialectal

Actuellement, les langues en présence dans le champ linguistique marocain se complètent, se métissent et se pénètrent parfois par la phonologie, la syntaxe et la morphologie. Les parlers empruntent souvent au français et à l'anglais, mais également à l'arabe classique et, là encore, il faut distinguer entre usages écrits et usages oraux.

À titre d'illustration, nous donnons l'exemple des jeunes qui dans leurs conversations se trouvent parfois dans l'incapacité de tenir un discours couramment en arabe marocain. Ils éprouvent souvent le besoin de le mélanger au français. Ils développent ainsi une sorte de langue « métissée » où le français subit parfois des altérations lexicales et morphologiques qui sont empruntées directement de l'arabe marocain. C'est le cas du problème des interférences («j'ai coupé la route» pour dire « j'ai traversé la route »), des emprunts-empreintes (/tomobila/ pour dire une automobile, /lasuràs/ pour dire l'assurance), des confusions de genre (« une accident » au lieu d'un accident, «une tribunal » au lieu d'un tribunal)…

De même, dans leurs échanges sur les plateformes interactives, ils font souvent usage d'un français « décousu » qui n'obéit à aucune règle de la grammaire. Ajoutons à cela, que la majorité des jeunes marocains inscrits sur Facebook recourent à la transcription orthographique en lettres latines pour rédiger des messages en arabe dialectal. Citons à titre d'exemple : « *Bghiti N'tlaqaw Ghadda Fi Sbah ?* » Pour dire, « *Veux-tu qu'on se voie demain matin?*». Une pratique assez répandue parmi les jeunes citadins qui alternent souvent le français et l'arabe dans leurs conversations et échanges via WhatsApp, Facebook et Twitter.

4.2. Conséquences sur la réussite universitaire

Il est évident que la plupart des étudiants marocains trouvent d'énormes difficultés à poursuivre leur parcours universitaire à cause de leur faible maitrise du français.

Toutes les difficultés linguistiques répertoriées au niveau du Secondaire, se retrouvent à l'entrée de l'Université où le français est la langue d'enseignement à caractère technoscientifique.

Il s'agit de difficultés liées à la maitrise de la langue dans toutes ses composantes élémentaires (Morphologiques, grammaticales, phonologiques, discursives, communicationnelles, culturelles, etc.) qui empêchent l'étudiant de suivre son enseignement supérieur, de faire des recherches et de consulter la documentation scientifique, disponible essentiellement en langues étrangères (particulièrement en français). Des difficultés qui le handicapent à réaliser son cursus universitaire dans les meilleures conditions. Elles peuvent même parfois, être la cause de son échec, voire de l'abandon universitaire.

4.3. Conséquences sur l'avenir professionnel

Les déficits linguistiques que manifestent les élèves et les étudiants marocains en langue française limitent leurs chances de trouver un travail et donc leurs aspirations à développer une carrière professionnelle. Leur niveau linguistique demeure non conforme au prérequis du milieu professionnel actuel.

Il est clair que la maîtrise du français constitue la condition *sine qua non* de l'insertion dans la vie professionnelle au Maroc.

D'ailleurs, 80% des entretiens d'embauches se déroulent en langue française. Pour Rahma Bourquia, Directrice de l'Instance Nationale d'Evaluation auprès du Conseil Supérieur de l'Education, "Le lauréat qui ne maîtrise pas le français est exclu du marché du travail". Cependant, elle insiste sur le fait que la maitrise du français ne doit pas incriminer les étudiants issus de l'enseignement public. « La question linguistique est une question de justice, car la maîtrise d'une langue ne doit pas être un facteur de discrimination ou d'inégalité. Il faut permettre aux élèves des écoles publiques d'avoir le niveau requis dans la maîtrise des langues étrangères » (Majdi, 2017).

5. Mesures adoptées par le Ministère de tutelle: Le Module «Langue et Terminologie» à l'Université

L'identification des difficultés linguistiques, langagières et communicationnelles ressenties par les bacheliers issus de l'enseignement public a incité le Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche Scientifique et de la Formation des Cadres à créer un nouveau Module de tronc commun intitulé « Langue et Communication», durant les deux premiers semestres de la formation universitaire et ce, afin de les aider à mettre leur niveau et mieux appréhender le changement dans la langue d'enseignement.

Durant l'année universitaire 2014/2015, le Module a changé d'intitulé, il s'appelle désormais « Langue et Terminologie ». Ce nouveau Module tente de répondre aux attentes et aux besoins des étudiants en matière d'apprentissage de la langue française dans son aspect fonctionnel. Autrement dit, l'étudiant se doit d'être capable de comprendre un texte scientifique, produire un texte narratif et argumentatif, prendre des notes, préparer et présenter un exposé, travailler en groupe, interagir avec les professeurs…

Le projet parait trop ambitieux et manque de réalisme, si l'on considère le volume horaire consacré à l'enseignement de ce module « Langue et Terminologie » (Deux heures de cours et deux heures de travaux dirigés hebdomadaires par semestre de quatorze semaines d'enseignement et d'évaluation). Au fait, les besoins ne sont pas les mêmes : alors qu'un étudiant inscrit en Semestre 1 a besoin de renforcer son niveau en langue, celui qui est inscrit en Semestre 6 a besoin d'être préparé à la vie active. Or, dans l'actuel système LMD, l'enveloppe horaire totale consacrée au Module LT est de 96 heures, étendues uniquement sur le semestre 1 et le semestre 2 du cycle de Licence.

6. Conclusion

Au Maroc, où plusieurs langues sont en contact, les facteurs d'évolution d'une langue peuvent être liés aux comportements langagiers et identitaires, aux

perceptions ainsi qu'aux représentations que les locuteurs se construisent à l'égard de cette langue. Si les images sont positives, cette langue sera valorisée. Si par contre, elles sont négatives, cette même langue sera rejetée.

Il est vrai que le statut du français a bien changé au fil des années. Mais avec le retour de la francisation de l'enseignement public, conçue dans la dernière réforme de 2016, la langue de Molière est bien partie pour se repositionner dans le concert des langues en présence. Qu'en sera-t-il du niveau de maitrise de cette langue, par les générations futures, à l'aube de 2030 ? L'avenir nous le dira….

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DIFICULTĂȚI LEGATE DE UTILIZAREA LIMBII FRANCEZE ÎN COMUNICAREA ORALĂ DE CĂTRE ABSOLVENȚII ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI PUBLIC MAROCAN

(Rezumat)

În Maroc, în vreme ce absolvenții învățământului particular stăpânesc regulile de bază ale limbii francize, absolvenții învățământului public vorbesc în general limba

franceză la un nivel foarte scăzut. Adesea ei folosesc o combinaţie între limba franceză şi limba arabă dialectală. În acest amestec, franceza suferă uneori modificări lexicale şi morfologice.

Care este nivelul fluenţei comunicării în limba franceză al tineretului din sistemul public de educaţie ? Care sunt dificultăţile lor în învăţarea limbii? Care sunt consecinţele pentru viitorul lor profesional ? Ce trebuie întreprins pentru remedierea dificultăţilor lor lingvistice şi de comunicare în limba franceză ? Acestea sunt întrebările la care încearcă să răspundă prezentul studiu.

SYMBOLS AND CONCEPTS AS INSTRUMENTS OF METAPHORICAL MEANING IN IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS: THE FIGURATIVE VALUE OF *HONEY*, *FIRE* AND *SAND* IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

BY

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Abstract. Idiomatic expressions carry metaphorical meaning, which is achieved by means of stylistic and semantic instruments such as symbols and concepts, that are functionally subordinated to the metaphor. This paper emphasizes the difference between the three notions and illustrates the relationship between them, using idiomatic expressions from different languages as examples. The selected expressions are centered on three entities that acquire figurative value – *honey*, *fire* and *sand*, which are analyzed from a comparative point of view, for the purpose of distinguishing symbolic load and conceptual meaning. Another focus is on achieving a multilingual perspective on the realization and perception of metaphorical meaning in idioms.

Keywords: metaphor; symbol; concept; figurative value; idiomatic expressions.

1. Introduction

Metaphorical meaning is achieved through different semantic and stylistic instruments which create connections between the concrete and the abstract. In that sense, symbols and concepts are subordinated to metaphors, in

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that they create its figurative foundation. The difference between symbols and concepts resides in the origin and nature of denotative meaning: symbols create a conventional connection between a concrete entity and an abstract idea, while concepts represent associations based on factual contexts and specific reasons. For example, the fact that the shamrock is the symbol of Ireland is a matter of conjecture; this association only makes sense to those who are aware of it and the same plant might as well be the symbol of another country, had it not been established as such. On the other hand, a four-leafed clover is conceptually associated with good luck, due to the tangible fact that it is rarely found.

Idiomatic expressions are tightly related to metaphors, as they are used to figuratively express ideas and the metaphorical meaning is often created by means of symbols and concepts. In what follows, we will analyze the figurative value of *honey*, *fire* and *sand* in idiomatic expressions, observed in terms of symbolic load and conceptual meaning.

The idiomatic expressions that have been used for this comparative analysis belong to five languages – English, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian, and they have been selected from dictionaries and collections of idioms which also offer information about their meaning and origin: J. Siefring, *The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*; R. Köster, *Duden-Redensarten: Herkunft und Bedeutung*; A.B. Jiménez, *Diccionario de dichos y frases hechas*; J. J. Almeida, *Dicionário aberto de calão e expressões idiomáticas*; S. Dumistrăcel, *Expresii româneşti. Biografii – motivaţii.* The selection of two Germanic languages and three Romance languages creates a multilingual perspective on the realization and perception of metaphorical meaning in idioms.

2. The Figurative Value of *Honey*

Honey acquires conceptual value due to the fact that it is sweet and pleasant to eat; this can be observed in many idiomatic expressions, some of which have full lexical equivalents in different languages: English ***honeymoon***, German ***Honigmond***, Spanish ***luna de miel***, Portuguese ***lua de mel***, Romanian ***luna de miere***; Romanian ***a fi de miere/de zahăr*** (to be made of honey/sugar), meaning to be very kind-hearted and generous; English ***milk and honey***, Romanian ***a înota în miere*** (to swim in honey), referring to abundance, wealth and well-being; German ***jemandem Honig ums Maul schmieren*** (to smear someone's mouth with honey), Romanian ***a unge cu miere pe cineva*** (to smear someone with honey), with the English correspondent ***to butter somebody up***, meaning to flatter someone in order to gain certain advantages and benefits.

The Romanian phrase can also allude to the act of offering bribe; in English, the money used for bribery is metaphorically called "soap" in informal language and slang, while in Spanish, soap is the central element of two expressions that are almost identical, but have completely different meanings: ***dar jabón a alguien*** (to give soap to somebody), a correspondent of the

expressions that were discussed above, meaning to flatter someone in pursuit of personal interests, and *dar un jabón a alguien* (to give a bar of soap to somebody), meaning to give someone a lecture, to discipline someone in a harsh, unpleasant way. The second expression is most likely related to the phrase *jabón de Palencia* (Palencia soap), which ironically and thus humorously refers to a paddle used by washerwomen to beat the laundry in order to clean it and consume less soap at the same time; figuratively, the phrase designates a good smacking and the same association is also present in the Romanian expression *a-i da cuiva o săpuneală* (to soap someone up).

The analyzed expressions illustrate a multilingual perspective on the metaphorical meaning of words, showing on the one hand that different words can be used figuratively to express the same idea, and on the other hand that the same word may have contrasting significance in different languages. We also notice the fact that small, apparently insignificant lexical differences may produce meaningful semantic variation. A visual representation of resemblance and discrepancy is presented below in Table 1.

Table 1
Similarity and Contrast

	Romanian	English	Spanish
Corresponding idioms	*honey*	*butter*	*soap*
	a unge cu miere pe cineva	*to butter somebody up*	*dar jabón a alguien*
Conceptual contrast		*soap* = money offered as bribe	
Conceptual similarity	*soap* = smacking		*soap* = a harsh lecture
	a-i da cuiva o săpuneală		*dar un jabón a alguien*

3. The Figurative Value of *Fire*

Fire as an abstract notion stands for a number of feelings and situations that can be logically associated with burning and heat. Here, there is a fine line between symbols and concepts, the two notions being almost interchangeable; we can argue, however, that fire symbolizes feelings and emotions on the one hand, and conceptually stands for other concrete notions and situations on the other hand.

Following the model of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), but reversing the association in order to illustrate symbolism and conceptualization, it can be said that FIRE IS RUSH (concept): English *where's the fire?*, Romanian *unde arde?* (where is it burning?); FIRE IS PASSION AND INTENSITY (symbol): Romanian *a iubi cu foc* (to love with fire); FIRE IS DANGER (concept): English *to play with fire*, German *mit dem Feuer spielen*, Romanian *a se juca*

cu focul, Spanish *jugar con fuego*, Portuguese *brincar com o fogo*; German *die Hand für jemanden/etwas ins Feuer legen* (to put one's hand in the fire for someone/something), Romanian *a băga mâna în foc pentru cineva/ceva*, Spanish *poner la mano en el fuego por alguien/algo*, Portuguese *pôr as mãos no fogo por alguém/algo*; FIRE IS ANGER (symbol): English *to breathe fire*, German *Feuer speien* (to spit fire), Spanish *echar humo* (to emanate smoke), with smoke implying the presence of fire, Romanian *a se face foc și pară* (to become fire and flames), *a scoate flăcări pe nas* (to throw flames out of one's nose); FIRE IS TORMENT (concept): English *to go through fire and water*, German *durchs Feuer gehen* (to go through fire), Romanian *a trece prin foc și sabie* (to go or to put someone through fire and sword); FIRE IS A TEST (concept, with reference to fire as judgment of God in the case of trial by ordeal, or fire as a way to validate the genuineness and value of precious metals): German *die Feuerprobe bestehen* (to pass the fire test), Spanish *pasar la prueba de fuego*, Romanian *a trece proba de foc*. By extension, burning coals carry the same connotations as fire; in this case, it can be said that FIRE IS EXCITEMENT, TENSION or ANXIETY (concept): English *to be sitting on hot coals*, German *wie auf glühenden Kohlen sitzen*, Spanish *estar sobre ascuas*, Portuguese *estar sobre brasas*, Romanian *a sta ca pe jar*. An illustration of the metaphorical load of *fire* as a symbol and as a concept is presented in Figure 1.

Leaving symbolism and conceptual meaning aside, the word "fire" can also be used in the denotative sense, with neutral implications: English *to add fuel to the fire*, German *Öl ins Feuer gießen* (to add oil to the fire), Spanish *echar leña al fuego*, Portuguese *botar lenha na fogueira* (to add wood to the fire) or *deitar azeite no fogo* (to throw oil into the fire), Romanian *a pune paie pe foc* (to add straw to the fire) or *a turna gaz pe foc* (to pour gas into the fire), meaning to cause the worsening of a situation that is already tense; English *there's no smoke without fire*, German *wo Rauch ist, da ist auch Feuer* (where there is smoke, there is also fire), Spanish *no hay humo sin fuego*, Portuguese *não há fumo sem fogo*, Romanian *fără foc nu iese fum*, implying that there is always some truth behind every rumor; English *to spread like wildfire*, German *sich wie ein Lauffeuer verbreiten*, referring to something that becomes widely-known in a very short period of time; these expressions acquire connotative meaning not due to the abstraction of one word, but based on the particular association of words they comprise.

Also, the following partially equivalent idiomatic expressions owe their metaphorical meaning not to the symbolism of "fire", but to their provenance from one of La Fontaine's fables – *The Monkey and the Cat* (arguably adapted after one of Aesop's fables): English *to pull someone's chestnuts out of the fire*, German *für jemanden die Kastanien aus dem Feuer holen* (to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for someone), Spanish *sacarle las castañas del fuego a alguien* (to pull someone's chestnuts out of the fire) or *sacar las castañas del*

fuego con la mano del gato (to pull the chestnuts out of the fire with the cat's paw), Portuguese *tirar as castanhas do fogo com a mão do gato* (lexically identical to the second Spanish phrase), Romanian *a scoate castanele din foc cu mâna altuia* (to pull the chestnuts out of the fire with someone else's hand), all translated or adapted after the original French phrase *tirer les marrons du feu avec la patte du chat* (to pull the chestnuts out of the fire with the cat's paw). In these examples, the metaphorical meaning of the phrases is achieved due to conceptual associations which rely on a specific context.

symbol	**feelings emotions**	*love* **passion intensity anger**	
fire			
concept	**context situation literary reference**	**rush danger torment the ultimate test excitement anxiety**	**burning playing with fire going through fire sitting on hot coals**

Fig. 1 – *Fire* as a symbol and as a concept.

4. The Figurative Value of *Sand*

Sand is both a symbol and a concept and it carries different significations. It can be seen as a symbol of time, in association with a particular conventional context, for example in the English expression ***the sands are running out***, meaning that the available time is close to an end, based on the image of sand in an hourglass, which creates a metaphorical connection between sand running and time flow.

But sand also has conceptual implications in association with different contexts. It can be a concept of biblical origin, referring to unreliability, from a parable about a wise man building his house on rock, where it is safe, and a fool building his on sand, making it vulnerable and susceptible to collapse; this meaning is illustrated in expressions such as: English ***to build on sand***, German ***auf Sand bauen***; Spanish ***castillos de arena*** (sand castles), Portuguese ***castelos de areia***, Romanian ***castele de nisip***.

In German, sand is associated with failure or stagnation by means of other conceptual connections: ***auf dem Sand sitzen*** (to be sitting on the sand), meaning to be unable to go on, from the image of a ship that is stranded on a sand bank; ***jemanden auf den Sand setzen*** (to put someone on the sand), referring to the action of eliminating an opponent, inspired from medieval knight tournaments; the very similar expression ***etwas in den Sand setzen*** (to put something in the sand) has a different meaning – that of having no success

and failing; ***im Sande verlaufen*** (to dissolve into the sands), meaning to come to an end or to surrender, based on the image of a watercourse disappearing in sandy soils. The figurative value of sand is illustrated in Figure 2 in terms of symbolic and conceptual significance.

Apart from observing the difference between symbolism and conceptualization, we also notice once again the importance of small lexical differences in altering the meaning of an idiom.

Fig. 2 – *Sand* as a symbol and as a concept.

5. Conclusions

The metaphorical meaning of idiomatic expressions can be based on associations of pragmatic nature, or it can rely on symbols or concepts which are either empirically derived from reality, or conventionally established by means of contextual association. Symbols and concepts are functionally subordinated to metaphors, as instruments that create figurative value in different ways, through convention, association with particular contexts, or literary connections (see Fig. 3). The analyzed idiomatic expressions show a certain degree of universality in the mechanisms of metaphorical association, but also highlight a number of differences and unique ways of figuratively expressing ideas.
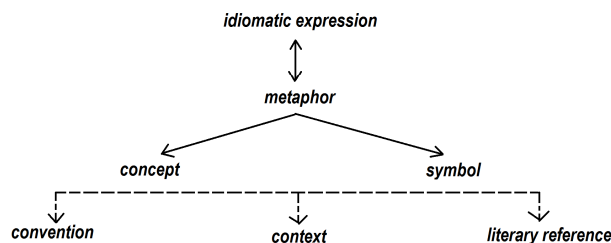

Fig. 3 – Instruments of figurative meaning.

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SIMBOLURILE ŞI CONCEPTELE CA INSTRUMENTE ALE SEMNIFICAŢIEI METAFORICE ÎN EXPRESIILE IDIOMATICE: VALOAREA FIGURATIVĂ A MIERII, A FOCULUI ŞI A NISIPULUI ÎN DIFERITE LIMBI

(Rezumat)

Expresiile idiomatice sunt încărcate cu semnificaţie metaforică, aceasta fiind realizată prin intermediul diferitelor instrumente semantice şi stilistice ale limbii, între care amintim simbolurile şi conceptele, care îi sunt subordonate metaforei. Această lucrare evidenţiază diferenţa dintre cele trei noţiuni (metaforă, simbol, concept) şi ilustrează relaţia dintre ele, utilizând expresii idiomatice din diferite limbi pentru exemplificare. Expresiile selectate sunt centrate în jurul a trei entităţi ce dobândesc valoare figurativă – *mierea*, *focul* şi *nisipul*, care sunt analizate din punct de vedere comparativ, cu scopul de a distinge şi reliefa încărcătura simbolică şi semnificaţia conceptuală. De asemenea, studiul are în vedere şi obţinerea unei perspective multilinguale asupra realizării şi percepţiei înţelesului metaforic în expresiile idiomatice.