Psychological basics of homework in Romania today

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Abstract
This article examines the homework making explicit new ways of improving educational practices in Romania. While all over the world are delineated clear policies of homework, in Romania the lack of such guidelines in this area has a negative impact on learning. Findings from this qualitative research indicate three themes related to homework: persist the terminological confusion about homework, the totalitarian practices diminish the structure of the lesson, it is necessary to rethinking homework as part of learning. From the vantage point of semiotics the wording about 'homework' in Romania today must be studied in its social context.

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1. Introduction

'Homework' in Romania reveals a mental map perceived as a result of the communist period. Ours decision concerning the use of the qualitative analysis was generate by several complaints of the students concerning homework in Romania. Because of the diversity in qualitative research and because "how we see the world depends upon the concepts through which experience is organized, object identified as significant, descriptions applied and evaluations made" (Pring, 2000: 24) we consider ours investigation both descriptive (offer a picture of what happened with wording about 'homework' in Romania) and inferential (in sense to draw implications for improving the Romanian practices). This study aim to explore the meaning of the 'homework' in Romania, to compare the Romanian experience in this field with the international practices and to infer about new ways of improving educational psychology from the vantage point of the 'homework'.

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2. Wording about homework in Romania

All over the world different researchers have different opinions about the term 'homework', but in Romania all the definitions (from the vantage point of etymology, dictionaries, referenced books, mass media meanings, day to day understanding, and so on) treat it as an exercise. Given the longstanding practice of Romanian education, pedagogy was inspired by the Russian model of the '40s – '50s-homework being taken as exercise. In fact it is about a reflex of social events or 'best practices' of the totalitarian age. 2.1) We consider the most important issue the news coverage given for the term 'homework': scholarly studies in the Romanian field do not discern between the variety of the activities involved in homework-doing, and do not point out the role of 'homework' in creating an autonomous learner. This error is due to violating 'best practices' in the mental of Soviet education: 'topic is not discussed, it runs', 'work creates man' hence the large number of exercises to be done (Trif, 2011: 78).

While working out exercises, students are busy and have no more time to think. In other words, techniques of Stalinist ideological manipulation were replicated in education, society becoming a school of political propaganda and ideological mechanisms covered school homework, tailoring the future busy working man. Romanian society had been deliberately saturated with values while school stood as a tool for totalitarian practices; the result is to have instilled a series of cultural stereotypes to the students. Our argument, otherwise plausible, is the meaning given the word 'homework' (into Romanian it is equivalent of 'theme' – 'temă') by the 'Explanatory Dictionary of Romanian Language' (1996: 1089) which, beyond the meaning of literary and musical fields, explores the meaning of the word grammar teaching as 'writing exercises given to children, students, etc..., for application of acquired knowledge'. This definition ignores the possibility of recommending homework as an excellent opportunity of developing communication and of managing learning (Trif, 2002). Causality in science remains positive as long as groundless- the most prestigious Romanian language is still indebted to totalitarian practices of formulating educational homework. Lessons emphasize the gap between their extension outside the school timetable and the mass media; many media types do not develop compensatory education programs with which to break the cliché of post-communism that have became the nowadays habits. The principles of psychology and Marxism- Leninism- Stalinism reached their goal: students, parents and teachers cannot conceive that lesson is processed and sequenced according to other models of instruction (except those used excessively), so that homework can be solved in class or it is impossible to accept that the typology of homework can be very rich: it is still seen as only an exercise. It is possible that the proximity to Russia to have impressed Romanian educational system including innovations in science and in the technology perspective. As such, there is a hypothesis that totalitarian mechanisms were excessively replicated in the education system, promoted the Russian education system. Currently the same educational and pedagogical practices as in the medieval period are still present –Russian specialists think they are good now and axiologically validated. Vicinity of the former Soviet block is not only a landmark mapping, it impacts the political culture, and in particular, the evaluation culture in Romania. In this context it is natural to ask what 'homework' is actually here. All the other dictionaries value, exponential for British English, American English or French customizing pedagogical purposes homework. The first example is taken from French (Le Petit Larousse 1993: 337) because our expectations about the academic treatment period were converging Romanian inspiration of French model (several generations of Romanian intellectuals had been trained in the French school), the term 'devoir' has the sense of 'burden imposed on a student's writing'. In English, the word 'homework' is forged purely for pedagogical aims- its beneficiaries would not have benefited from it otherwise: homework is consistently linked to work done outside the classroom by a student, as in the Oxford English Dictionary, the Webster's Encyclopedia Dictionary or the Macmillan English Dictionary. We note the superiority of the English word approaches are highlighted as the added value offered by them: a) homework has an evaluative role and b) homework
is structured in relation to learning. 2.2) These dictionaries cited above, as well as many others do nothing else but to offer an inventory of educational and marketing of the ideas already understood to advance a negotiated and agreed by experts idea, and their newest discoveries in the field of self-study basis, assumed by the target population who perform these topics (e. g. we mean the cognitive representation of pupils and students on the issues), objective and subjective needs of parents and local community real parties in the meaning of homework (for example, the educational community can be focused on the relationship between the educational discourse and the social reality promoted). If within the strongly formalized disciplines dictionary analysis are reduced to the application of templates for analysis, in the social sphere, text interacts with the human context for which a term's meaning is torn between encoding and decoding. Epistemological perspective analysis of dictionary definitions related to unformalized disciplines reveals predication of the scientific truth in its own manner: knowledge about communication functions of the homework, etc.), which reconstruct the truth in terms of correlating relationships for which the context, regardless of the type of constituent elements (co-text, paralinguistic features, other texts – for example, intertext, locating cultural, social and concrete-spatial) requires new theories about the relationship between homework cognitive and emotional effects are generated by affective, interpersonal and convergences between caste solidarities, which in their turn supply a maybe new report between the Romanian term 'homework' as a linguistic structure at a peculiar type of mental, etc (Trif, 2011:80). If set theory correspondence relationship can be anticipated, correspondence education philosophy is reflected many times as an intent to propose a rather personal interpretation of reality- as it is quite impossible to see the immediate reality: differences in learning experiences explain the various axiological systems and their differences. Culture on its own homework, atypical cases encountered, etc refine the meaning given to conceptualizing the field. In terms of differentiation learning tasks, homework might be rethinking. Lesson planning holds two major categories of differentiation of learning tasks: differential treatment in the classroom and differential treatment imposed on students outside the classroom, as a result of the wording – in differentiated manner – to achieve objectives. The verbs in English ('must', should', 'could') which mark the specific objectives (Halliday, 1994) might be used in the Romanian educational practices for the differential treatment, discriminate main strategies: 'all students must', 'many students will do / be...', 'certain students could'.

3. Conclusions

The study's results from reflexive theoretical plan and from practical aplicative plan has shown that Romanian wording about homework denies any connection to totalitarian practices, emphasizes uncommunicativeness, contradicts the international practices and diminishes the structure of the lesson as a cyclic process. In fact, the examinations of the Romanian discourses prove that the notion 'homework' contradicts creative and personalized meaning. Our suggestion is to promote new ways of development as from the vantage point of methodological view (the academic understanding of 'homework') as from the part of linguistics findings (Trif, 2002).

As homework is learning, it is necessary to delineate Romanian policies, taking into account the new meanings of learning (Trif, 2010): a) learning in terms of quantity – learning is acquiring information or 'knowing a lot', b) learning as activating memory – learning is storing information, c) learning as acquiring facts, skills and methods that can be retained and used whenever needed, d) learning as a hermeneutical process – learning involves interpreting and reinterpreting world and knowledge, e) learning as making sense or abstracting meaning – learning as whole understanding of the reality. In this sense, the most important issues of researching and rethinking homework might be concentrated as follows: establishing departmental policies concerning homework, accommodating the principles guiding homework to meet student needs and student diversity, allowing resources by which school might
formally support homework, motivating students to learn by using independent study, reflecting about the myth of homework.

To conclude, this narrative analysis cannot offer a Paradigm of homework in terms of opinions, attitudes, conditions of school life but make transparent a new way for rethinking and researching homework as part of learning, as extended classwork and as piece to monitor progress.

References