The 4th Edition of the International Conference:
Paradigms of the Ideological Discourse 2012


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Abstract

In the general context of globalization and in the particular one of integrating the Romanian educational system in the European normative framework, the status of Romanian literature as secondary school subject suffered major modifications. Some of them had positive effects, especially in terms of increasing the flexibility of the didactic processes and this subject’s degree of interest and agreeability with the pupils at this level of studies. On the other hand, these modifications contributed to literature’s departure from its natural functions and, implicitly, to the unspecific formation of young generations by means of this subject. Constructed almost exclusively under the mark of the communicative-functional model, the literature curricula downplays to the extreme the condition of aesthetic existence for this particular field of creation and it dramatically diminishes its role in the aesthetic education of the pupils.

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Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of Dunarea de Jos University of Galati.

Keywords: European integration, Romanian literature, curricular modifications, aesthetic function, aesthetic education

Introduction

Starting with the 90s, but especially in the last decade, in almost all the member states of the European Union, the necessity of bringing decisive changes to the national educational systems was greatly stressed. A considerable number of the arguments brought in favour of these changes come from the need to accommodate the educational system, the policies concerning the development of human resource with the new parameters of economic, social and cultural existence that the knowledge society presupposes in the context of an increasingly “globalized” world. In almost any Romanian study dedicated to these issues, the matter of the new policies concerning the changes in the educational system is formulated in clear and solid terms: “The educational policies of our century imply the analysis of the paradigm changes introduced by the informational society type, in which the predominant feature is represented by knowledge and creativity, which is the vector of personal and institutional development, as well as by the investment in human capital, which becomes a priority
that is to be assumed at an educational policy level. The study of specialized literature and European programmatic documents will lead to the identification of the principles and priorities of contemporary education committed at a global level and will determine their impact within the domain of the reconsideration policy, models and strategies for human resource training development, which encourage competitiveness and cooperation, contributes to the promotion of innovation, change, flexible training, as well as to the improvement of new information and communication technologies”[1].

Naturally, out of this general perspective on the educational systems in their entirety come the exigencies regarding the necessity to modify school syllabi, in accordance with the contemporary conditions.

Another set of arguments, this time specifically concerning the necessity to modify the curricular documents, is provided by the various normative acts or those who stand as recommendations and which are elaborated by the specialized institutions of the European Union. Among them, the most important one for our case in point is Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning. After all, the first sentence of the annex in which the mentioned competences are defined also makes reference to the necessity of adapting the educational goals to the circumstances of globalization: “As globalisation continues to confront the European Union with new challenges, each citizen will need a wide range of key competences to adapt flexibly to a rapidly changing and highly interconnected world [2].

On the basis of such documents [3], [4], [5] and argumentative statements, as well as of certain national circumstances, significant curricular modifications were carried out for the past few years, especially in regard to the educational status of Romanian literature.

**Specificities of curricular policies in Romania**

After 1990, Romanian literature suffered a double impact. On the one hand, the escape the pressure of the totalitarian political-ideology emphasized the need for a revision of the post-war canon. On the other hand, Romania’s integration in the sphere of the globalizing phenomena determined a reconfiguration of the aesthetic, socio-cultural and educational status of literature in keeping with the requirements resulting from the expansion of the values under the sign of globalism.

The didactic existence of Romanian literature after 1990 is characterized by several phenomena generated, on the one hand, by the damaging closeness of the aesthetic criterion to the political one, facilitated, on the other hand, by the too great liberties allowed by the curricular documents.

Some of these consist in the replacement of one political-ideological action (communism) with another which, even though it is opposite (anti-communism) runs the risk of having similar effects to those specific to the years before 1989. The (political) biography, evaluated in terms of the “collaboration” with the communist regime (or with the political authorities immediately after December 1989), becomes, in certain cases, selection criterion that leads to the exclusion from school textbooks of some important writers with remarkable aesthetic contributions to post-war literature (D. R. Popescu, Fănuș Neagu, Eugen Barbu etc.). Alternatively, following to the belief, that we consider utterly fallacious, that everything accepted by the communist regime is invariably bad, and everything that the regime persecuted in automatically good, some textbooks after December 1989 register the presence of names which are at least debatable, for example that of Radu Gyr [6] or paradoxically-hilarious situations as, for instance, the criticism brought to communism by means of a text signed by Nina Cassian [7] (in the lesson “Case Study: The literature subservient to communist ideology. A Writers’ Congress”).

We should mention that Radu Gyr is the author of the text “Sacred Legionary Youth,” which became the unofficial hymn of the movement, while Nina Cassian was one of the poets who were most “subservient to the communist ideology” in the 50s.

The almost exclusive character of the “communicative-functional” principle (valid for the second half of the primary school cycle, but debatable to say the least for the secondary school level) around which the school syllabus is organized dims the historical perspective and, implicitly, the understanding of the specific development of Romanian literature, in contexts, with influences and representations which all have their own specificity.
The generational conflict, associated with the tendency towards a “moral-ideological purge” (identical to the one registered in the fifth and sixth decades), resulted, on the one hand, into a completely distorted image of the post-war literature which, it results from the above mentioned textbooks and not only from it, would mostly be represented in terms of value by the generation of the 80s.

**A few observations on the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning**

Defined “as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment”, the eight competences established by the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council in 2006 are the following:

1) Communication in the mother tongue;
2) Communication in foreign languages;
3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
4) Digital competence;
5) Learning to learn;
6) Social and civic competences;
7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and
8) Cultural awareness and expression.

For the short discussion we propose at this point, competences 1 and 8 are particularly important, especially the latter which refers to “cultural expression” and which is defined as “Appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature, and the visual arts”. Among the “essential knowledge, skills and attitudes related to this competence” mentioned in the text of the Recommendation, we extract a few significant fragments: “Cultural knowledge includes an awareness of local, national and European cultural heritage and their place in the world. It covers a basic knowledge of major cultural works, including popular contemporary culture. It is essential to understand the cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe and other regions of the world, the need to preserve it and the importance of aesthetic factors in daily life. Skills relate to both appreciation and expression: the appreciation and enjoyment of works of art and performances as well as self-expression through a variety of media using one’s innate capacities. Skills include also the ability to relate one's own creative and expressive points of view to the opinions of others and to identify and realise social and economic opportunities in cultural activity. Cultural expression is essential to the development of creative skills, which can be transferred to a variety of professional contexts. A solid understanding of one’s own culture and a sense of identity can be the basis for an open attitude towards and respect for diversity of cultural expression. A positive attitude also covers creativity and the willingness to cultivate aesthetic capacity through artistic self-expression and participation in cultural life”.

We notice two aspects, in these definitions and specifications, which we consider positive.

Firstly, although mentioned last among the eight key competences, Cultural awareness and expression correctly and firmly establishes the role played in the formation of the individual’s complex personality by the cultural background, by the awareness of the local and national cultural heritage as well as by the sound understanding of one’s own culture and identity – a condition for the conscious placement in the European cultural context.

Secondly, it is to be observed that none of these determinations is imperative or restrictive, but they rely on the natural goals the study of literature at different stages of the educational process should follow. We make this statement since, as we shall try to show in one of the following sections of this paper, the way in which the organization of the Romanian literature syllabus was understood in Romania is, to a great extent and in relation
to the recommendations included in this European document on the “key competences”, mistaken and at the margins of their letter and spirit.

**The French literature syllabus – and example and a term for comparison**

Although based on the same documents that establish the curricular frame of the educational systems in the member states of the European Union, the French language and literature syllabus in use at this time reveals a philosophy quite different from the one that supported the drafting of the Romanian language and literature syllabus, as we shall see below.

It is obvious from the very opening of this syllabus that the study of national literature has, within the French educational system, two major priorities: placing the works, genres and literary phenomena in a historical context, as well as forming and developing a solid aesthetic consciousness, meant to provide the individual with the cultural support and code necessary for existing in a modern society, one with strong and well assimilated moral-ethical values: “Les programmes de français et littérature en classes de seconde et première répondent à des objectifs qui s’inscrivent dans les finalités générales de l’enseignement des Lettres au lycée : l’acquisition d’une culture, la formation personnelle et la formation du citoyen. Les finalités propres de cet enseignement sont :
- la constitution et l’enrichissement d’une culture littéraire ouverte sur d’autres champs du savoir et sur la société ;
- la construction progressive de repères permettant une mise en perspective historique des œuvres littéraires ;
- le développement d’une conscience esthétique permettant d’apprécier les œuvres, d’analyser l’émotion qu’elles procurent et d’en rendre compte à l’écrit comme à l’oral ;
- l’étude continuée de la langue, comme instrument privilégié de la pensée, moyen d’exprimer ses sentiments et ses idées, lieu d’exercice de sa créativité et de son imagination ;
- la formation du jugement et de l’esprit critique ;
- le développement d’une attitude autonome et responsable, notamment en matière de recherché d’information et de documentation” [8].

In our opinion, the manner in which these goals for the study of French language within the French school are formulated shows not only a correct understanding of the European documents which regulate and establish the general work frame for the educational systems, but also a natural perspective on the specific functions of literature, in general, and of its educational values, in particular. We should also add that, as it results from the information mediums, these syllabi were created (and revised) following public debates involving a significant part of the French cultural-educational community. The French Ministry of National Education clearly took into consideration the observations made by these mediums despite the fact that they were not always convenient.

**The priority of the communicative-functional component in the Romanian literature syllabus**

By comparison with the example presented above, the Romanian language and literature syllabus is almost exclusively organized, in any priority case, around the communicative-functional component of this fundamental discipline of the educational system. The observation is almost completely valid especially for the first part of the secondary school cycle. For example, the syllabus for the 10th grade established the following competences for the study of Romanian language and literature at this school level:

1. The correct and appropriate use of Romanian language in the reception and production of messages, in various situations of communication;
2. The use of the thematic, structural and stylistic means of analysis in the reception of various literary and non-literary texts;
3. The written and oral argumentation of opinions in various situations of communication” [9].
For the 11th grade, therefore in the second half of the secondary school cycle, two of these competences are kept identically, one of them on the same privileged position, and two more are added, regarding literature to a somewhat greater extent, without emphasizing, however, the specific values and functions of this field:

“1. The correct and appropriate use of Romanian language in the reception and production of messages, in various situations of communication;
2. The comprehension and interpretation of texts;
3. Placing the studied texts in the appropriate context by relating them to the age or to the literary/cultural trends;
4. The written and oral argumentation of opinions in various situations of communication” [10].

The table of these competences displays significant differences from the documents presented in the previous sections of this paper. On the one hand, it should be noted that the philosophy behind the drafting of the Romanian language and literature syllabus employs to the greatest extent the first key competence formulated by the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006, the one regarding communication in the native language. Thus, literature takes second place, the literary text being used more as a pretext for developing certain abilities of communication. In other words, goals are transferred on the subject of Romanian language and literature that should be achieved by the entire educational system: by means of subjects such as history, geography, natural sciences, mathematics, physics... Naturally, so as to facilitate the fulfilment of this mission, the Romanian language and literature syllabus will pay more attention to communication in different circumstances and less to the study of literature itself as well as of its specific values, among which the aesthetic one is primary.

On the other hand, nowhere within the syllabus is there any reference made to the historic criterion for the organization of the literary and cultural subject matter, as was the case of the French syllabus. The references to contextualization are vague and they do not render an image of the Romanian cultural personality and of its identity specificities structured along its historic development.

Conclusions

By comparison with the European documents from the field of education and with the curricular documents of other European countries, the Romanian language and literature syllabi for the secondary school level display significant departures from the formers’ spirit and letter. On the one hand, there is an excess registered at the level of the communicative-functional component, against the function which is specific to this field of study: the aesthetic one.

On the other hand, disconsidering the historic criterion in the study of the literary phenomena, in their general context – cultural, economic and social, diminishes the identity component referred to by the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006. The losses suffered at the level of the national conscience and of the cultural individualization under conditions of multicultural cohabitation and cooperation are obvious. Consequently, we believe it is necessary for the current syllabi of Romanian language and literature to be revised with the contribution of all the involved factors, in keeping with the spirit and the letter of European documents and following the example of other countries from the same space.

References

[5] European Parliament resolution on the Special European Council to be held in Lisbon on 23/24 March 2000, Official Journal of the European Communities, 29.12.2000 (Under point 8 of this document we find the following: Believes that employability must be enhanced by a greater and more innovative investment in education, training and life-long learning, by intensified language learning and by the full and
mutual recognition of academic and vocational qualifications, and calls on the Member States to transform their education and vocational training systems so as to meet the demand for skilled staff in sectors with a promising future).


