

Teaching Second Generation Romanian Immigrants in the Advanced English Module Groups

Roxana Elena DONCU

“Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest

Abstract: *After the 1989 Revolution, as a country in transition from a socialist to a capitalist economy and a free market, Romania has experienced frequent social changes resulting in mass migration to other European states or to the United States and Canada. The children of these Romanian immigrants, some of them with double or triple citizenship return to their parents' home country to study medicine in the English or French language modules now available at most Romanian medical schools. Teaching Romanian to these second generation immigrants has proved to be no easy task, taking into consideration the vastly different cultural backgrounds of the participants and their heterogeneous language skills. Most of them come from countries of the European Union or from the US and Canada. Starting with pronunciation and spelling and ending with an often-impaired capacity to read and write fluently and correctly, the learning process is a difficult one for these multilingual students. Accordingly, the teacher has to become familiar with a host of different cultural backgrounds and resort to teaching strategies which are both inclusive and more specific, adapted to the students' different learning styles. My paper intends to provide an analysis of the makeup of these international groups, highlight the challenges that may arise in the teaching process and offer some suggestions for improving teacher as well as student performance.*

Keywords: *Romanian educational system; English module; international students; second-generation immigrants; multilingualism;*

1. Introduction

That we live in a global village¹ has become an undisputed truth. Sachdev and Giles note that in recent years “[a] variety of interdependent processes associated with globalization, including greater geographical, demographic, social and information exchange and mobility, have enabled contacts and communication between cultures and languages to grow almost exponentially” (353). As a country in transition from a socialist to a capitalist economy and a free market, Romania has experienced frequent social change resulting in mass migration to other European states or to the United States

1 The term global village was coined by Marshall McLuhan (*The Gutenberg Galaxy*, 1962)

and Canada in the first decades after the 1989 Revolution. The children of these Romanian immigrants, some of them with double or triple citizenship often return to their parents' home country to study. As medicine is one of the top professions in the world, tied to higher social status and better pay, it is no wonder a large portion of them choose to enroll in the English or French language modules now available at most Romanian medical schools.

Initially, the English and French language modules were designed to accommodate foreign students desiring to study medicine in Romania, most of whom traditionally came from Israel or the Arab countries. Like their parents or older relatives who had been enrolled to study medicine during the Socialist/early post-communist period, when Ceaușescu's policy had ushered in relations with the countries in the Middle or Far East, these students held the Romanian school of medicine in high regard, at the same time feeling “at home” in a country where several of their family had known and lived in. Starting with the 2000s, the English and French language modules began to accommodate a new category: the children of the first wave of Romanian migrants. The reasons for their choice were mixed: Romanian education is still cheaper than that of most European or Western countries, and so are housing and accommodation. What also seemed to matter was that most of the immigrant Romanian children are bilingual (some, whose parents had changed jobs in more countries, even trilingual and quadrilinguals), and so education in Romania was facilitated by an already existing degree of fluency in the Romanian language, though formally the language of instruction was English.

One of the main aims of my paper is to highlight the complexities involved in working with multilingual students and to present a few strategies which have proven useful in class. As François Grosjean noted, “working with bilinguals is a more difficult and challenging enterprise” (32). An effect of globalization and mass migration, the phenomenon of multilingualism in the Romanian higher education system will undoubtedly rise, so academics should be prepared to face the challenges and devise adequate methods for interacting and teaching multilingual classes.

I began teaching the advanced groups of the English language module roughly a decade ago, and as years passed, the ratio of second-generation Romanian immigrants versus the naturalized Arab citizens slowly increased. Ten years ago their numbers were roughly equal, whereas now the percentage of second-generation Romanian immigrants is almost 90%. As their number rose, there was also an increase in the number of countries they came from, and so the difficulties of teaching (medical) Romanian to a class of mixed culture students also increased.

English module students were enrolled in the advanced groups based on a preliminary questionnaire about their educational history² and a placement test which confirmed or invalidated their self-assessed language skills. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, their levels are generally B2 and C1, with the occasional B1 or C2 student, who cannot be placed in a separate group (a group has to be made up of at least 5 students). A class usually comprises between 20 and 30 students.

2. The overall makeup of the advanced English language module group

I will begin by giving readers a rough idea about the cultural and linguistic background of the students who participate in this class. Though the proportions vary with each year, it would be fair to state that there are two main groups in the advanced class. One, which is gradually declining, is composed of students from mostly Arab countries (Iran, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, etc.) who had been either naturalized or have been living in the country for several years, going mostly to Arab or international schools. Their knowledge of Romanian is dependent less on the program they have studied in school and more on their degree of socialization with Romanian students. They were born to a mixed Romanian-Arab family, with the (usually) Romanian mother passing on to her children basic Romanian language skills like listening and speaking. The other group, currently on the increase, is composed of second-generation Romanian immigrants to Western Europe or the U.S., with the odd second-generation Moldovan immigrant, whose parents decided that Romania is a far better option for medical education than the Republic of Moldova, and whose knowledge of Romanian comes from Moldovan-born parents. These are really what one may safely call international students: some of them still born in Romania and having completed primary education here, others born in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Greece and returning to study to their parents' native country. As mentioned before, all are multilingual, with most of them being bilingual and trilingual a few quadrilingual.

With this in mind, it is easy to imagine how complicated the cultural, racial and ethnic background of this group is. To this one may add their complex educational history and the familiarity with quite diverse (and often diverging from the Romanian) systems of education. Thus, apart from

2 At first, students were enrolled in the beginner/advanced groups on the basis of their former education. Students who had completed at least primary and secondary school in Romanian were automatically enrolled in the advanced groups.

multilingualism, what characterizes these students is a multilingual and multicultural academic communication competence³.

The European Union has developed various projects which take into account the urgent need to assess and develop multilingual and multicultural experience. One of these, MAGICC, a project of the EU Lifelong Learning Programme had as its main objective the integration of “multilingual and multicultural academic communication competences into graduate learning outcomes at BA and MA levels” (Neuner-Anfindsen and Meima 343). It aimed to be useful for teachers desiring to understand and integrate multilingual and multicultural competences into their long-term teaching strategy, as it helped define and identify these competences. The project also comprised a set of “action-oriented pedagogical scenarios” which could be employed to develop “students’ multilingual academic or professional communication skills and competences and lifelong learning skills and competences” (Neuner-Anfindsen and Meima 344).

Next, I will try to provide some general data about their Romanian language skills, and also about their cultural and educational background.

3. The Romanian language skills of the advanced English language module group

The general overview I provide is the result of my 10 year teaching experience with these groups, including class work and assessment: placement and control tests, projects and presentations, various assignments and of course final exams.

The most well-developed language skills of all the students in this group seem to be listening and speaking, though for different reasons and in various degrees. The students from mixed Arab-Romanian families, as well as those from mixed Romanian-German, French, etc. families have acquired Romanian early, usually from their mother or grandmother. Mothers, as evidenced by various social linguistic researchers, have a seminal role in language acquisition as a feature of preserving ethnic or national identity (Piller and Pavlenko 499)⁴. In a discussion with one of the mothers of these

3 The MAGICC conceptual framework defines multilingual and multicultural academic communication competence as “an individual's communicative and interactive repertoire, made up of several languages and language varieties including first language(s) at different levels of proficiency, and various types of competence, which are all interrelated” (sepia2.unil.ch)

4 Piller and Pavlenko, analyzing gender in bilingual parent-child relationships, note that “language maintenance efforts in immigrant and minority communities are often seen to stand and fall with the community’s women. In many cultures, parenting practices are strongly gendered and mothers spend significantly more time socializing their children

students, she actually confessed that she had forced her husband to speak Romanian at home during the first years of their daughter's life in order for her to acquire Romanian as her first language, though her whole formal education was conducted in English. However, in families where both parents are Romanian, students have been exposed to spoken Romanian quite extensively at home. Sometimes, the parents' decision to transmit identity values to the next generation (among which knowledge of the mother tongue is regarded as essential for preserving national identity) also prompted them to attempt some kind of home-schooling, as they provided their children with reading material in Romanian. Some Romanian second-generation immigrants mentioned the church as the place where they were able to practice and learn Romanian.

However, the students' acquisition of Romanian is highly uneven and context-related. Some of them can be said to be still in the process of acquisition, if Romanian was acquired only at an early age, and its acquisition was interrupted by the process of second or third language acquisition/learning. Furthermore, as they have never undergone formal education in Romanian during their childhood and adolescence, their Romanian language skills are based on informal discussions, and sometimes on regional dialects (Five years ago I had a student from a mixed Romanian-Israeli family, who spoke a dialectal variation of Romanian from Maramureș, where he had learned the language from his grandmother). Their pronunciation is influenced both by the dialectal version spoken by the mothers or grandmothers (this is often the case of the Moldovan second-generation immigrants) and by their second-language acquisition (students from mixed German-Romanian families speak Romanian with a heavy German accent, those from the U.S with a pronounced American accent, etc.). Moreover, they often resort to code-switching⁵ between Romanian and their second language, or, if they understand a question in Romanian, feel more at ease to respond either in English or their second language, assuming that the teacher is a polyglot able to understand at least five or six languages. This is, of course, an effect of bilingualism⁶. Code-switching may occur

than fathers do. If that is the case, it is not surprising to find that minority languages are better maintained if the mothers are the minority speakers or choose to transmit the minority language” (499).

5 Altaribba and Morier provide the following definition for code-switching: “In code-switching and language mixing, an individual substitutes a word or phrase in a given language with a counterpart in another language. This can occur within phrases or across sentences” (256-257).

6 For more information on bilinguals and code-switching between language modes, see Francois Grosjean, "Studying Bilinguals: Methodological and Conceptual Issues", in *The*

because of two reasons: a deficit of knowledge in either of the two languages (Grosjean 1982) or because of the speaker's inability to access "the appropriate word in the base language one is speaking in, in a timely fashion" (Altarriba and Morier 257).

The least developed skills, by comparison, are reading and writing. Most students have never or very seldom been exposed to texts in Romanian. They have difficulty writing letters and reading fluently, finding the appropriate tone for statements, questions or orders, and, like their colleagues in the beginner group, they have difficulty either pronouncing or spelling the *che, chi, ghe, ghi* groups of letters, and distinguishing between *ă* and *â*, *t, ț, s* and *ș*. The same difficulties arise in writing, which, again, they have never had the opportunity to practice. Writing vowel sounds proves especially challenging, because of the Romanian diphthongs and triphthongs. As they have never undergone formal education in Romanian, their Romanian writing skills are often influenced by their secondary/tertiary language education. German-Romanian students, for example, often capitalize nouns, like in German. Arab-Romanian students do not capitalize the first word in the sentence, and they do not use a full-stop or another punctuation mark at the end of the sentence. American-Romanian students invariably write *ph* instead of the Romanian *f*.

Romanian grammar presents another difficult set of matter. The gender and plural of nouns are often confusing, as are the genitive/dative forms. Verb conjugation is usually easy, except for the subjunctive, where some practice is needed. Students find it quite difficult to use compound sentences, as they are unsure of how to formulate objectives, causes and consequences. Relative and circumstantial clauses are not that problematic.

Handbook of Bilingualism, Blackwell, 2006. Trying to define language modes and how bilinguals use language, he writes that: "A mode is a state of activation of the bilingual's languages and language-processing mechanisms. This state is controlled by such variables as who the bilingual is speaking or listening to, the situation, the topic, the purpose of the interaction, and so on. At one end of the continuum, bilinguals are in a totally monolingual language mode in that they are interacting only with (or listening only to) monolinguals of one – or the other – of the languages they know. One language is active and the other is deactivated. At the other end of the continuum, bilinguals find themselves in a bilingual language mode in that they are communicating with (or listening to) bilinguals who share their two (or more) languages and where language mixing may take place (i.e. code switching and borrowing). In this case, both languages are active but the one that is used as the main language of processing (the base or matrix language) is more active than the other. These are end points but bilinguals also find themselves at intermediary points depending on the factors mentioned above" (40).

4. The cultural and educational background of the advanced English module group

Most students from the advanced English module group are bilinguals or trilinguals who have studied abroad for most of their childhood and adolescence. As a result, although they possess multilingual and multicultural competence, they often experience cultural or educational shock when they integrate into our education system. The Romanian higher education system is different from other education systems not only in terms of administration, academic year structure, examination session and curriculum, but also in terms of the interaction between students and teachers, and also among the students themselves, or among the students and associated academic staff (laboratory assistants, librarians and other personnel).

Between October 2023 – March 2024 I have conducted a survey⁷, consisting of 20 questions about what the students liked or disliked about the Romanian higher education system, and the answers were diverse. Romanian-French students noticed the secularization and openness which came with the more race- and gender-equal French system, yet they appreciated the fact that Romanian teachers were more supportive of their students. A Romanian-Canadian student mentioned that Romanian teachers seem to get more involved in teaching, which makes education more personal. Like other students from more affluent countries (Germany, U.K, U.S), French/Canadian-Romanian students deplored the lack of adequate equipment in the laboratories. One student noticed that the Romanian system provides more freedom to students. Students from Germany and Austria find that the Romanian system suffers from a lack of necessary infrastructure (study rooms for group learning), lack of online services and also that it is not very strict. They appreciated the freedom of organization that exists within student associations, and the fact that they could participate in lots of

7 The survey included approximately 80 students, enrolled in the first and second year (preclinical studies) at the “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest. They were asked to provide information on how many years they studied abroad (and where), how many years they studied in Romania (whether in a public or private school, and whether the language of instruction was Romanian or English), to assess their experience of the Romanian and other educational systems, as well as detail any cultural shocks they experienced when passing from one system to another. The survey was not meant to lead to any definite conclusions about students' experiences of one or the other systems, but to give an idea about individual perception and flexibility when moving across systems, as well as collect some data on how multilinguals respond to cultural and educational environments. I intend to apply the same questionnaire to future generations of multilinguals, and so collect a pool of data which can be used to draw some definite conclusions about their experience of the Romanian education system.

extracurricular activities, such as student workshops on various topics. One Romanian student who had studied in Germany actually complained about the language discrimination in German schools, where non-native speakers are often neglected by teachers and peers, though he also remarked that he had more freedom of choice regarding the topics he wanted to study. Generally, students coming from Germany experience a cultural shock in day-to-day interaction, which is closer and more personal than in Germany, so they often complain about the lack of privacy and data protection at all levels. They also remark that technical infrastructure and know-how are better in Germany than in Romania. Students who have studied in the U.K. U.S. and Canada, who are obviously sometimes more proficient in English than their teachers, often complain about the quality of the learning material for the English module, which is badly translated and also about the English language skills of the academic staff, of whom only a few are considered able to match their proficiency. They also complain about the lack of resources and the structure of the academic year, as in the Romanian system the exam session is limited to certain periods, while in the U.S. and U.K. it is more flexible. However, they also note that the Romanian system is more attuned to the students' needs and interests, which correlates well with the French-Romanian students' observation that they feel more encouraged here. One student from Sweden experienced a great cultural shock which eventually led her to appreciate the Romanian educational system more. She complained that the educational system in Sweden was too loose, as there was no pressure to complete assignments or do homework and there was little respect for teachers. She noted that in middle school they had a pajama day, when both teachers and students came to school in pajamas, which of course made relations very informal. What she liked about the Swedish system was its emphasis on physical education and the overall health of the students, having a lot of P.E. classes and offering free lunches to students. Like the students coming from Germany and Austria, she also noted that the Romanian system is less strict, instruction being more difficult and less clear. Most of the students universally agreed that exams in the U.S., Canada and Western European countries are far easier than in Romania. They also noted that the Romanian educational system seems to provide a more rounded education, with a focus on general knowledge which some of them perceive as an increase in the quality of education. Combined with the low price of education here, it makes the Romanian system very attractive to them.

Among the cultural shocks experienced by the international students coming to study here are: ethnic racism (prejudice or discrimination of people on grounds of race/ethnicity), a different cultural norm regarding punctuality (in Romania people are usually late for appointments or class),

the habit of some professors to shout at students (yes, unfortunately, that still happens), at the same time coupled with a more personal relationship between teacher and student, subjectivity in assessments, the lack of privacy and data protection in communicating grades, lack of digitalization at the administrative level, outdated materials for certain core subjects like anatomy, where they use textbooks from the 50s and 60s (one student humorously remarked that the book he had to learn from was older than his grandfather, and that the information was so outdated that every page had corrections on it). The only students who reported not having experienced a cultural shock (or at least not a great one) were the Arab-Romanian and Greek-Romanian students. The Greek-Romanian students noted that the Romanian educational and cultural background is quite similar to the Greek one and noticed that the Romanian system is more flexible regarding the university admission examinations. The Arab-Romanian students, who come from a more traditional, patriarchal environment, complain about the lack of politeness in student-student interaction, and although some of them write better in Romanian than the second-generation Romanian immigrants, they perceive their acquisition of Romanian as being an extremely difficult process. They often complain about being discriminated against, but they perceive it as unjust not on account of discrimination being an unjust practice at core, but because they have a Romanian parent and so they consider themselves part Romanian⁸.

5. Some ways to improve student and teacher performance for the advanced English module groups

As it has been seen, the makeup of the advanced English module classes is highly heterogeneous, with students coming from all parts of the world, most of them multilinguals with a wide experience of learning in various educational systems. What they have in common is multilingualism and a multicultural academic competence, which supports self-directed learning.

As some of them have been born and raised in affluent Western societies, they are highly sensitive to all kinds of discrimination, and to gender and race prejudice. In the more traditional Romanian educational system (however, more liberal than in Arabic-speaking countries) where gender and ethnic prejudice still persists, despite visible efforts to eliminate it, they often develop what may be called 'an intolerance to intolerance',

8 This is an interesting phenomenon which deserves to be studied in more detail: why the students coming from mixed families in which one parent is American or Western European are perceived as retaining a Romanian identity, while students coming from families in which one of the parents is Arab, Asian or African is perceived as a foreigner.

meaning that they develop a negative opinion of teachers and colleagues who are perceived to engage, directly or less directly, in acts of discrimination.

Though highly intelligent and adaptive, these international multilingual groups, some of them exhibiting a high degree of multicultural competence are 'unofficially' dubbed as 'difficult to deal with', mostly on account of what is perceived as an autonomous learner behaviour and self-reliance. This may be the special case of education at a medical university, where the majority of professors are also doctors, and so they expect the same degree of compliance from students as from their patients. Also, the Romanian higher education system does not exhibit what Claudia McCalman calls “global awareness”, an interest in world affairs and in studying foreign languages in order to provide students with the skills they need to become part of the global workforce, which prepares both young people and teachers to be part of a multicultural classroom (73).

On the other hand, classroom climates are partly influenced by the cultural values of the respective society. As McCalman explains, students from individualistic societies tend to speak up easily in class, while those from more collectivistic, or patriarchal societies think that they should first listen and learn (76). This difference in learning styles is also visible among the members of the advanced English module group, with most being educated in individualistic societies of the West, and a few in more traditional societies.

Therefore, the basic approach of the teachers trying to educate these groups should be openness to diversity coupled with the adoption of a less intrusive teacher position in class, where the teacher should act more like a facilitator of learning. Teachers should not react to what they perceive to be different student behaviour. Most of the teachers expect these groups to be silent and take notes during lectures. They usually do neither, and not because they disregard the teacher or the subject being taught, but because they have not been used to it. They discuss and debate among themselves, exchanging experience and vocabulary, and this is the way they deepen their knowledge. Most of them have been exposed to more modern, more interactive strategies of learning, and coming to the Romanian medical school, where prestige is still the capital word and teachers expect students to conform to the status quo, they experience a disruption in their learning habits. Some of the international students told me that they refused to go to the lectures of a famous professor (the Romanian students, on the other hand, fight to find a free seat at his lectures) just because he kept talking continuously and they could not express their opinion. Unlike Romanian born and raised students, they do not look for information, but for debate and

argument. Obviously, their critical thinking skills are more developed, even if their background knowledge does not match that of the Romanian students.

Thus, the teacher should stop acting as a provider or dispenser of knowledge, take a step back and give them plenty of opportunity for talk and discussion. They work well in groups and according to the tasks they are given, these groups can be either made up of students with similar or dissimilar backgrounds. When the task involves deep cognitive processes, it is better to group students according to the countries/regions they come from, because this will ease their communication and help them understand and solve the task at hand. When the tasks are easier, or more interactive, the teacher should mix students with different educational and cultural backgrounds.

The overall approach to the process of teaching/learning ought to be a constructivist one, meaning that most forms of knowledge should be constructed by learners, rather than being explicitly taught, or 'transferred' to them (Singh 295). In such an approach, the role of the individual “is recognized as being central in the process of learning” (Singh 295), thus matching most of the advanced groups' learning styles.

With first year students who are still getting to know one another, the teacher should organize, at least during the first semester, two or three seminars/lectures centering on or utilizing an active intercultural approach to some aspect of the subject being taught. This will give them the necessary room for negotiating identity in the new multicultural environment, by bringing in aspects of their past experience. Inter-cultural activities, though not focused primarily on content-learning, are useful for bridging cultural, communicational and generational gaps (Morozova and Gabdrakhmanova 210). Once they get acquainted and feel at home among themselves and with the teacher, the classes will become highly engaging, with both students and teacher learning from one another.

6. A case study: the Romanian lesson and the Language Pill

What I found most difficult at first when teaching these groups of multilinguals was that the Romanian they spoke bore the mark of each individual student. While in school Romanian students are exposed to standardized Romanian, each of these second-immigration Romanians spoke a different variety: it was like having all the dialects (sometimes even the older, historical ones, in the case of Moldovans whose vocabulary includes words that have been out of use in Romanian for several centuries⁹) in one class! The good thing was that although I was not able to understand them

9 For example, Moldovans use the word “iatac” for “dormitor”.

because of the way they mispronounced words, they seemed to understand me. It was because of their multilingualism, and I soon started using that as a resource.

Constantly correcting their pronunciation and spelling was not just a tiring and time-consuming task, but also a bit discouraging for most of them. They came from systems where 'keeping face' was an important matter. So I chose a type of exercise intended to raise their awareness about the usual mistakes they made, The Language Pill¹⁰. At the end of each class, they had one or two language pills. The exercise typically consists of a small text (a few sentences) with mistakes they are supposed to discover and correct. The mistakes can be either grammatical, spelling errors or wrong use of words. Below there are a few examples of language pills, for the 1st and 2nd year students: The underlined parts represent the mistakes they have to discover and correct.

1st year

1. Apparatul cardiovascular este alcătuit din inimă și rețeaua de vase sangvine, Compusă aproape în întregime din țesut muscular, inima este responsabilă de pomparea sânge în organism. Sângele transportă substanțe nutritif, oxigen și dioxide de carbon de la o parte a corpului la alta. Sângele ie alcătuit dintro parte lichidă (plasma) în care plutesc o serie de celule specifice sângelui.

2. Thrombocitele, numite și placete sanguine, sunt celule ale sângelui cu rol în coagulare. Proporția elementelor figurate (cellulare) din sânge se numește haematocrit. Valorile normale ale haematocritului variază în funcție de vârstă și sex. La bărbați, valoarea normală a haematocritului este între 44 - 46 %, la femei între 41 - 43 %. La copii variază în funcție de vârstă, la noi-născuți fiind de 60 %, iar la copii până la pubertate de numai de 30 %.

3. Prin duritatea și resistența lor, oasele contribue la determinarea formei corpului și reprezintă suportul părților moi. Ele formează cavitățile de protecție, în care sunt adăpostite organele, de exemplu: cutia cranială, canalul vertebral, cutia thoracică și bazinul osos. Sunt organe ale mișcare, pentru că fac parte la formarea articulațiilor și dau inserții mușchilor.

10 This type of exercise, probably inspired by Radu Paraschivescu's TV show "Pastila de limbă", was suggested to me by a Romanian teacher and friend, Rodica Iacob. The students immediately took to it, on account of the medical-sounding name.

4. Primul ajutor reprezintă o serie de tehnici medicale simple pentru salvarea vieții, care un om obișnuit poate fi antrenat să le folosească în situații de urgență medicală, înainte de intervenția tehnicienilor sau a doctorilor în urgențele medicale. Cea mai bine este să obțineți antrenament în primul ajutor, înainte de o urgență medicală. Resursele necesare în primul ajutor sunt aproape întotdeauna păstrate întro trusă de primul ajutor.

5. Facultatea de medicină este cel mai lungă și grea. Pelângă faptul că durează 6 ani, mai sunt necesar cel puțin alți trei pentru a putea trata correct un bolnav. Îmbinarea studiilor teoretice cu practica de spital nu lasă tânărului student nici o oră liberă. Apoi studentul de medicină vine în contact direct cu suferința umană, ceea ce nu se întâmplă în nici o altă facultate.

This set of 'language pills' contains a range of mistakes that the advanced groups are most likely to make. One category is spelling mistakes which occur as a result of code-switching between multiple languages: *aparatură, nutriție, trombocitele, hematocrit, celulare rezistență, toracică, tehnici/tehnicienilor, correct, resursele*, basically Romanian words 'infected' by English or French spellings of similar words. Other spelling mistakes test the correct use of *ț, ș, ă, î, â (tesut)* and *gh, ch (placete)*, or the correct spelling of words where *e* is pronounced like *ie (contribue, ie)*. Also, orthography is tested through the wrong use of the negative pronouns/adjectives (*nici o*), the dash separating prepositions from articles (*întro, dintr-o*), or the correct spelling of compound prepositions (*pelângă*). Another set are the grammar mistakes, which most often include a wrong use of the plural, with or without a definite article (*noi-născuți, copiii, necesar*), of the genitive form (*sânge, mișcare*), of the superlative degree of adjectives and adverbs (*cea mai bine, cel mai lungă*), and the correct form of the relative pronoun in the accusative (*care*). In example no. 3, what is tested is the students' ability to recognize and differentiate between idioms like *a face parte din* and *a lua parte la*. The only example of a terminological mistake is the use of *cutie cranială* instead of *cutie craniană*. Both *cranial* and *cranian* are adjectives referring to the skull (*craniu*), yet the first is generally used in anatomical terminology to designate something that is situated superior to something else, or in the upper half of the body.

2nd year

1. Astăzi cirurgia a devenit extrem de complexă. Cirurgul trebuie să aibă cunoștințe din toate domeniile chirurgicale, dar și de medicină internă. Dacă este cirurg vascular sau traumatolog și are de tratat o fractură de femur cu

ruptura arterei femurale superficiale, trebuie întăi să reducă fractura, să o imobilizeze, apoi să repare artera, să sutureze pe ea sau să aplice un autotransplant venous. Dacă face chirurgie cardiacă trebuie să fie bine familiarizat cu diagnosticul bolilor cardiace, dobândite sau congenitale, să știe să interpreteze un electrocardiogram.

2. Orice chirurg trebuie a ști să asculte cordul sau plămănu, atât pentru indicațiile operatorii, cât și pentru îngrijirile post-operatori. Trebuie să cunoască pathologia ficatului, a rinichiului, boli gynecologice, bolile urinare. De aceea instrucția chirurgului trebuie a fi de mai lungă durată, iar pregătirea sa foarte complexă.

3. Peniciline cuprind un grup larg de substanțe, dintre care unele sunt produși naturali obținuți din mucegaiuri, iar altele sunt compuși semisintetici. Toți acești produși au un nucleu chimic comun și un mod comun de acțiune antibacterială. Din cauza acțiunii sale rapide și intense, penicilina rămâne un antibiotic de elecție în formele acute sau în infecțiile grave.

4. O mare parte din medici sustine că terapiile alternative au doar efect placebo și că nu numai că ar fi neutile, ci chiar periculoase deoarece, prin aspectul iluzoriu al unei vindecări miraculous, pacienții sunt îndepărtați de actul medical care, deși uneori este mai costisitor și mai de durată, are eficacitatea verificată prin teste clinice și are la bază fundamentarea științific.

5. pharmacia este locul în care se prepară și se vinde medicamente conform rețetelor medicale și normelor din pharmacologie. pharmacistul are, printre altele, datoria de a explica cumpărătorului și efectele secundare nedorite ale medicamentului, și phenomenul de potențare al două preparate pharmacologice.

The same type of spelling mistakes appear in the language pills for the second year: spelling mistakes which occur as a result of code-switching between multiple languages (*venous, gynecologice, semisintetici, miraculous, eficacitatea, pharmacia, pharmacologie, phenom, pathologia*), test the correct use of *ț, ș, ă, î, â* (*acești, întâi, plămănu*) and the spelling of *x/cs* in certain words (*complexă*). The range of grammar mistakes is larger in the second year and they generally test the correct use of the gender (*un electrocardiogram*), plural (*post-operatori*), articles (*peniciline*), short pronouns (*să sutureze pe ea*), adjectives (*științific, antibacterială*), genitive articles (*al*), of *din/dintre* (o mare parte din medici) and the Dative

prepositions *din cauza/datorită*. The subject-verb concord is also tested (*se vinde medicamente, o mare parte din medici susține*), and so is the use of the subjunctive (*trebuie a ști*). The correct use of negative prefixes is tested in vocabulary mistakes such as *neutile* instead of *inutile*. Another error that the students frequently make regards the name of medical specialists in Romanian: by contagion with English, most of them use the suffix *-logist* instead of *-log* (*traumatologist* instead of *traumatolog*). Example no. 5 makes use of another mistake the Arab-Romanian students are likely to make: not capitalizing the first word in a sentence (the Arabic script does not have capital letters).

Many 'language pills' frequently contain another type of mistake, confusing words (paronyms, in fact: *familial/familiar, original/original, temporar/temporal, a proveni/a preveni, a adopta/a adapta, a evalua/a evolua, speze/spețe, glacial/glaciar, pancreatită/pancreatină, adsorbție/absorbție, elipsă/eclipsă*¹¹, etc.). After taking the 'language pills' for several months, the students showed considerable improvement in their spelling. They found the exercise challenging, and over time their awareness of the mistakes they were likely to make increased, so at least in writing they were able to improve their performance.

7. Conclusion

As can be seen from my analysis, second generation Romanian immigrants returning to study in their parents' native country are usually multilinguals (bilinguals, trilinguals and even quadrilinguals) with a complex educational history and a high degree of multicultural competence. Entering the Romanian education system, they bring with them certain expectations, created by the other systems they have been educated in, and often experience cultural shock. They represent a challenge for most Romanian teachers (teachers of Romanian, and Romanian teachers of other subjects) which gives us the opportunity to learn and improve our teaching skills. In the end, performance as a teacher is measured by the obstacles one meets and the ways one chooses to overcome them. The teachers of these multilingual and multicultural groups should double the efforts to involve them in meaningful and productive activities, and thus contribute to the development of a “global awareness” within the Romanian education system.

11 As a resource for this type of exercise I used Alexandru Graur's *Dicționar al greșelilor de limbă* and „*Capcanele*” limbii române.

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