Errors in the acquisition of Romanian as second language. A case study.

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Abstract

Problem Statement:
Teaching Romanian as a second language has always been of great interest in the Petroleum Gas University of Ploietsti, as many foreign students are interested in getting a degree mainly in Petroleum Engineering. Coming from various countries of the world, their cultural background is very different, this leading to various problems related to Romanian language acquisition.

Purpose of Study:
The purpose of the present study is to analyse the errors made by students coming from Turkmenistan, Bulgaria, Angola and the Ivory Coast who learn Romanian as a second language, that is classifying errors into categories, identifying causes of error production and ways of avoiding making them by using remedial teaching strategies. We will also in view a comparison between the students’ errors taking into account their mother tongue and other specific factors connected with language acquisition. We will focus on written errors revealed by students’ activity during classes, as well as by the progress tests they take during the semester.

Research Methods:
The research methods used by the study consisted in error analysis applying quantitative methods in order to identify the types of errors the students make.

Findings:
Depending on the students’ background, there were identified different types of errors (spelling, discourse coherence, vocabulary, morphology and syntax ) and causes of error production (mother tongue, interference with English, students’ level of understanding and acquisition of Romanian as a second language etc.)

Conclusions:
Such a case study proves to be useful for teachers from different perspectives: they obtain a more rapid and effective feedback, they correct errors progressively, and they can lay emphasis on different categories of errors. At the same time, remedial teaching strategies may be improved once the teachers become aware of the students’ errors.

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1. Introduction

In order to attend the university in Romania, foreign students receive scholarships from the Romanian state or are integrated within bilateral agreements between Romania and other countries, and, according to Romanian legislation, they must study in Romanian. To do this, they have to attend intensive Romanian language classes during their first year in Romania, before getting enrolled in any university of the country.

In the past, most of the students accepted in our university had good knowledge of English and they generally came from Asian and Arabic countries; the teaching process of the Romanian language was done through English, as a support language.

Nowadays, the majority of students who do their preparatory year in our university are from different parts of the world, therefore, their native languages are different, not to mention the fact that, some of them have poor knowledge of English, which has still remained the support teaching language.

The reason for conducting research on error analysis (EA) within The Petroleum – Gas University of Ploiesti is the situation we have faced during the past few years when groups of foreign students coming to study mainly in technical faculties started to become less and less homogenous.

Moreover, Romanian teachers in the university have to take into account the resolution of the European Union Council from 2001, which recommends using the CEFR to validate students’ language abilities. Thus, foreign students studying Romanian in the university have to reach at least B1 level at the end of the preparatory year in order to be able to further obtain a Bachelor’s and a Master’s Degree.

2. Methodology of Research

2.1. Corpus description and participants in the study

The corpus consists in error-tagged Turkmen sub-corpus (15 learners), error-tagged Portuguese sub-corpus (15 learners), as native language for the students from Angola error-tagged Bulgarian sub-corpus (7 learners) and error-tagged French sub-corpus (3 learners) as mother tongue for the students from Ivory Coast. All of the learners study Romanian language as part of their preparatory year within the Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti and the data were collected during two semesters of intensive Romanian classes, meaning approximately 20 hours/week, from October 2011 to June 2012.

The samples are made up of descriptive and narrative written compositions, grammar and vocabulary exercises, as well as translations from English to Romanian, taking into account the fact that the teaching language is English, as the group is heterogeneous as far as the language is concerned.

Useful conclusions on the learning process of Romanian can be drawn out of the participants’ in the study errors as the corpus is homogenous as regards the samples used in analyzing learners’ errors.

Prior to developing the EA we selected three types of exercises aiming at monitoring the students’ level of acquisition, their capacity of applying the Romanian language rules in an effective way (meaning the actual usage of Romanian language – understanding and communicating in daily real situations). We took into consideration the fact that the diversity and the complexity of the selected exercises could offer to the teachers a proper idea about the learners’ stage of knowledge, assimilation and consolidation on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the possibility to notice the most frequent errors, to identify their causes and to find the appropriate methods and strategies to correct them.

We considered that exercises focused on different grammar problems (phonetics, morphology, syntax) could help us discover learners’ gaps, make them realize the errors they make and, by means of mutual effort, find solutions for each problem. Our specific interest in grammar exercises was also required by the fact that Romanian grammar structures are more difficult and complex compared to the support language, English.

Each type of grammar-centered teaching activity included gradually designed various tasks, starting from simple ones, to more complex ones (on verb: voice, tense, mood, person; noun: gender, number, case; adjective: gender, number, order, degrees of comparison; pronoun; adverb: order, degrees of comparison).

The final tests have been designed starting from the grammar problems which had already been taught during their preparatory year, taking into consideration the teaching materials used during the whole year.
An important amount of time was dedicated to the verb, as an essential and at the same time difficult part of speech which plays an essential role in communication. The students’ level in getting familiar with the correct Romanian verbal forms was monitored not only by means of exercises containing precisely oriented tasks on the use of the verb (put the correct form of the verb, choose the correct form of the verb), but also by means of inserting the verbal forms in communicative structures or other types of discourse (narrative, descriptive).

The necessity of combining grammar exercises with written composition and translation derived from the students’ need to deal with the diversity of genuine communicative situations in their daily life. At the same time, multiple tasks exercises such as written compositions and translations require simultaneous use of all grammar structures, vocabulary and even stylistic knowledge, such as coherence and cohesive devices. Moreover, the translation exercises implied an additional difficulty for the learners i.e. the use of two foreign languages, the support language and the target language. We used such a task as an experiment, our assumption being that we can make useful observations on students’ skills of framing an English text into the Romanian language framework.

2.2. Error Collection

The error search was conducted using the error manual (Dagneaux et al., 1996) that explains the different codes, which were adapted to the needs of the present research.

The list of codes and the type of error according to the taxonomy used by the error manual, together with their alterations is shown in the table below:

Table 1. Error codes (adapted from Dagneaux et al., 1996)

| Error code | Type of error                     |
|------------|----------------------------------|
| FS         | form- spelling                   |
| FM         | form – morphology                |
| GA         | grammar- articles                |
| GN         | grammar – nouns                  |
| GNC        | grammar - noun case              |
| GNG        | grammar noun gender              |
| GNN        | grammar - noun number            |
| GP         | grammar – pronouns               |
| GADJ       | grammar adjective                |
| GADJO      | grammar - adjective order        |
| GADJN      | grammar - adjective number       |
| GADJG      | grammar - adjective gender       |
| GADJCS     | grammar - comparative/superlative |
| GADV       | grammar adverb                   |
| GADVO      | grammar - adverb order           |
| GADVCS     | grammar - comparative/superlative |
| GV         | grammar verb                     |
| GVN        | grammar - verb number            |
| GVC        | grammar - verb conjugation       |
| GVV        | grammar - verb voice             |
| GVT        | grammar - verb tense             |
| GVM        | grammar – verb mood              |
| GVP        | grammar - verb person            |
| VWC        | vocab - word class               |
| XVPR       | vocab-grammar – verbs used with  |
| XNUC       | vocab-grammar - nouns:           |
| VSF        | vocab-false friends              |
| VLP        | vocab-lexical phrase             |
| VCLS       | vocab-single logical connector   |
| VCLC       | vocab-complex logical connector  |
The students’ samples offered a wide range of error lists; therefore, percentage rates were used in order to compare the type of errors that learners of Romanian speaking learners are more likely to make when expressing written Romanian. The statistics are provided in the results section.

3. Data Analysis and Results

Our analysis was carried out using S.P. Corder’s (1974) studies in the field of EA: recognition, description and explanation. Taking into account his suggestions, the stages of our research were the following:

1. Collection of the sample to analyse;
2. Recognition of errors;
3. Description of errors;
4. Explanation of errors.

Our target was collecting error, mainly taking into consideration Libuše Dušková’s classification (as shown below) and also, when possible, using the following four types of errors: transfer (as the result of the mother tongue influence), intralingual (influence coming from the target language), developmental (reflecting strategies by which the learner acquires the language), as reflected by Richards (1990) and, interlingual (due to the heterogeneity of the group). “If transfer errors are caused by the structure of the first language (that is why they are also called interference problems), intralingual errors do not have an origin in the first language but in the target language itself.” (López, 2009) The same opinion is stated by Els, Bongaerts et al. when admitting that intralingual errors “relate to a specific interpretation of the target language and manifest themselves as universal phenomena, in any language learning process. (1984:51).

Regarding developmental errors, Richards (1990) suggests that the learner makes false hypotheses about the target language, based on limited exposure to it. According to the linguist, a major justification for labeling an error as developmental comes from noting similarities to errors produced by learners who are acquiring the target language as their mother tongue, fact proven by the charts exemplifying such type of errors.

Rosa Alonso Alonso (1997:8) defines interlingual errors as “grammar or vocabulary errors students make because a word distinction, either lexical or grammatical, which is made in the L2 does not exist in their native language.” On the other hand Lott (1983) uses the label interlingual/intralingual for this type of errors to refer to all types of interference errors. In our study, we made a clear-cut distinction between intralingual and interlingual errors, due to the fact that Turkmen learners who do not have good knowledge of English, most of the time use both Russian and Turkmen explanations among them.

Another source for identifying and classifying students’ errors is Libuše Dušková’s paper from “Second Language Learning: Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis and Related Aspects” (1990). In her opinion, errors can be classified into the following categories and subcategories:

1. Errors in pronunciation
2. Orthographic/spelling errors
3. Grammatical errors, namely morphological and syntactic errors, which can be classified according to the structures used incorrectly
4. Vocabulary/lexical errors

In our study we did not intend to focus on pronunciation errors, as all of the samples collected from students were written.

The table below shows the inventory of students’ errors, taking into consideration Libuše Dušková’s classification and Dagneaux et al error codes adapted to Romanian language.

| Code  | Description               |
|-------|---------------------------|
| VCC   | vocab-coordinating conjunctions |
| VCS   | vocab-subordinating conjunctions |
| WR    | word redundant            |
| WM    | word missing              |
| WO    | word order                |
| R     | register                  |
| S     | style                     |
| SI    | style - incomplete        |
| SU    | style – unclear           |

The students’ samples offered a wide range of error lists; therefore, percentage rates were used in order to compare the type of errors that learners of Romanian speaking learners are more likely to make when expressing written Romanian. The statistics are provided in the results section.
Table 2. Inventory of students’ errors

| Error code | Composition | Grammar exercises | Translation exercises |
|------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
|            | no. of errors/category | percentage/ category | no. of errors/category | percentage/ category | no. of errors/category | percentage/ category |
| FS         | 88          | 9.02%             | 168                   | 18.92%              | 104                   | 15.66%              |
| FM         | 552         | 56.56%            | 720                   | 81.08%              | 512                   | 77.11%              |
| GA         | 112         | 11.48%            | 24                    | 2.70%               | 72                    | 10.84%              |
| GN         | 104         | 10.66%            | 48                    | 5.41%               | 80                    | 12.05%              |
| GNC        | 40          | 4.10%             | 40                    | 4.50%               | 8                     | 1.20%               |
| GNG        | 40          | 4.10%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 8                     | 1.20%               |
| GNN        | 24          | 2.46%             | 8                     | 0.90%               | 64                    | 9.64%               |
| GP         | 56          | 5.74%             | 104                   | 11.71%              | 8                     | 1.20%               |
| GADJ       | 120         | 12.30%            | 40                    | 4.50%               | 56                    | 8.43%               |
| GADJO      | 24          | 2.46%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| GADJN      | 16          | 1.64%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 8                     | 1.20%               |
| GADJG      | 32          | 3.28%             | 40                    | 4.50%               | 24                    | 3.61%               |
| GADICS     | 48          | 4.92%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 24                    | 3.61%               |
| GADV       | 40          | 4.10%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 40                    | 6.02%               |
| GADVO      | 32          | 3.28%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 8                     | 1.20%               |
| GADVCS     | 8           | 0.82%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 32                    | 4.82%               |
| GV         | 120         | 12.30%            | 504                   | 56.76%              | 256                   | 38.55%              |
| GVN        | 0           | 0.00%             | 48                    | 5.41%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| GVC        | 8           | 0.82%             | 120                   | 13.51%              | 48                    | 7.23%               |
| GVV        | 0           | 0.00%             | 56                    | 6.31%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| GVT        | 72          | 7.38%             | 264                   | 29.73%              | 104                   | 15.66%              |
| GVM        | 0           | 0.00%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 96                    | 14.46%              |
| GVP        | 40          | 4.10%             | 16                    | 1.80%               | 8                     | 1.20%               |
| VWG        | 120         | 12.30%            | 0                     | 0.00%               | 48                    | 7.23%               |
| XVPR       | 104         | 10.66%            | 0                     | 0.00%               | 32                    | 4.82%               |
| XNUC       | 0           | 0.00%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| VSF        | 0           | 0.00%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 16                    | 2.41%               |
| VLP        | 16          | 1.64%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| VCLS       | 0           | 0.00%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| VCLC       | 0           | 0.00%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| VCC        | 0           | 0.00%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| VCS        | 16          | 1.64%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| WR         | 0           | 0.00%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| WM         | 0           | 0.00%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| WO         | 0           | 0.00%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| R          | 0           | 0.00%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| S          | 216         | 22.13%            | 0                     | 0.00%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| SI         | 72          | 7.38%             | 0                     | 0.00%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |
| SU         | 144         | 14.75%            | 0                     | 0.00%               | 0                     | 0.00%               |

| Total no. of errors/ category | 976 | 888 | 664 |
| Total no. of errors collected | 2528 |
| Percentage (acc. Dušková, R, S not included) | 38.61% | 35.13% | 26.27% |
As seen from the table, the errors were ranked starting from the highest to the lowest frequency and rates. Thus, the first rank was obtained by the errors collected from the compositions the students had to write (976 errors, 38.61% of the total number of errors collected), followed by the errors from the grammar exercises (888 errors, 35.13% of the total number of errors collected) and the errors resulted from the translation exercises (664 errors, 26.27% of the total number of errors collected).

From reading the table above, one can notice the fact that, when ranking the errors resulted from the students’ compositions, according to the main classes proposed by Libuše Dušková, the highest rate was obtained by morphology errors (56.66%), followed by vocabulary errors (12.30%) and spelling errors (9.02%). Special mention should be made of the fact that, if we do not take into consideration this classification, the second rank is assigned to register errors (22.13%) in the students’ samples.

Regarding the errors resulted from the grammar exercises, the ranking is almost similar to the previous one, the highest rate being obtained by morphology errors (81.08%), followed by spelling errors (18.92%). In this type of exercises students did not make any vocabulary errors, which can be explained by the fact that acquisition of vocabulary is quite good, taking into account the fact that, in their everyday life in the campus they in contact with native Romanian students very often. Moreover, when working on grammar exercises, according to SLA theories, learners mainly focus on grammatical accuracy, not giving too much attention to form and lexis.

As previously mentioned, on the third rank were errors collected from the students’ translations. No errors have resulted on register and style, as the purpose of the exercises was not checking students’ abilities in such language fields. The ranking shows the same positions, that is morphology errors (77.11%), spelling errors (15.66%) and vocabulary errors (7.23%). Again, the low rate of vocabulary errors can be explained by foreign students’ daily contact with Romanian students, which stands for the fact that their speaking skills might be better than their writing skills, but this issue will constitute the focus of a further case study to be developed in the future.

Taking into account the fact that morphology errors were the most frequent ones, we considered their ranking to be very useful, as this provided us a lot of remedial teaching suggestions. Thus, according to Table 2, the most frequent errors were noticed in the use of verb in the grammar exercises that is 56.76%, followed by errors in the use of pronouns, 11.71%, and errors in the use of nouns, articles, adjectives, but we consider their values as not being significant from a statistical point of view, as their percentages are quite low, compared to the other percentages.

The ranking is different in the quite different in the translation exercises, the first position being also held by errors in the use of verb (38.55%), but followed by errors in the use of nouns (12.05%) and pronouns (10.84%). The errors noticed in the use of the other parts of speech are, according to our ranking, articles, adjectives, adverbs and pronouns (their rates are also shown in the table above). An interesting ranking resulted in the students’ composition: most of the errors made by students were in the use of verbs and adjectives on the same position (12.30%), closely followed by errors in the use of articles (11.48%) and nouns (10.66%). Errors in the use of pronouns and adverbs scored low percentage that is 5.74%, respectively 4.10%.

As a result of the error collection process, we made an inventory of the most frequently occurring errors, using the categories shown in Table 2. These errors are:

- **Errors in the use of verb voice**
  - the students’ difficulty in doing the agreement between the past participle of the verb and the subject of the sentence – *Cartea a fost citit* instead of *Cartea a fost citită*.
  - the students’ difficulty in using the correct form of the auxiliary accompanying the past participle: *Fructele este adunate* instead of *Fructele sunt adunate*; *Fructele a fost adunate* instead of *Fructele au fost adunate*. *Fructele va fi adunate* instead of *Fructele vor fi adunate*.
  - the students’ difficulty in distinguishing particular situations when the past participle ends in –*s* instead of –*t* because they overgeneralize the Romanian rule according to which the past participle ends in –*t*.

- **Errors in the verb conjugation**:
  - as regards the first type of conjugation they make confusions on the inflexion of the verb producing errors when adding the endings: *eu cântez* instead of *eu cânt*Ø, *eu lucr*u instead of *eu lucr*ez.
  - the second type of conjugation requires learners’ attention to solve the problem of phonetic alterations: *eu vede* instead of *eu văd*; *tu vede* instead of *tu vezi* because they overgeneralize the infinitive form of the verb, *a vedea*.
  - the third type of conjugation requires students’ attention, as well, as they make confusions between the 1st person singular and the 3rd person plural, overgeneralizing the rule they learn for the 1st conjugation (3rd person singular=3rd person plural), leading to the production of deviant forms such as: *ei merge* instead of *ei merg/eu merg* (3rd conjugation) due to, for example, *el cânt*ă/*ei cânt*ă.
Errors regarding the tenses of the verb

As regards the Romanian tenses we noticed that the students cannot make accurate analogies with the support language, English. For example the Romanian Past Tense can be translated by Present Perfect Simple or Past Simple in English. The impossibility to find equivalences with the support language confuses them when they have to pay attention to the endings of the Romanian verbs which vary according to the person, while in English, except for the third person singular in the Present Tense Simple and regular forms of the verbs in the Past Tense Simple, all verbal forms are the same, no ending being added.

Errors in the use of nouns:

- the learners’ difficulty in selecting the proper gender of the nouns by means of numbering – masc. un student/doi studenți, fem. o fătă/două fete, neutru un tablou/două tablouri;
- the learners’ problems in generalizing the plural of the nouns where phonetic alterations are involved: un băiat /doi băieți instead of un băiat / doi băieți; o cămașă / două cămașe instead of o cămașă / două cămași.
- the students’ difficulty in the acquisition of the genitive case which, in Romanian language is generally synthetic, requiring specific inflexion depending on the gender and the number of the noun. Due to the students’ low level of English we also noticed that they tried to make use of their native language when taught this grammar point, namely Russian in the case of Turkmen students, to better understand the Genitive in Romanian.
- the learners’ difficulty in acquisition of the dative case with the specific Romanian verbs which impose this type of construction: mă place dansul instead of îmi place dansul.
- the students’ difficulty in acquiring the accusative case with specific Romanian verbs: Mama mi-a învățat matematică instead of mama m-a învățat matematica.

Errors in the use of adjectives:

- in Romanian, adjectives have more than one form depending on gender and number, which is more complex than in English; consequently, we recorded errors such as: bluze albi instead of bluze albe, cămașă roșie instead of cămașă roșu, showing students’ inability to correctly make the agreement between the noun and its defying adjective.
- the comparison degree which allows analogies with English was better understood, except for the superlative form where learners have to make the agreement between the marks cel, cea, cei, cele and the form of the adjective depending on its gender and number. The misunderstanding of this rule led to errors such as: cel mai frumoși ani instead of cei mai frumoși ani.

Errors concerning the pronoun:

- the difficulties in acquiring this part of speech were represented especially by the stressed and unstressed forms of the personal pronoun in Romanian language within different cases. We can mention frequent errors such as: L-am dat prietenului un cadou instead of L-am dat prietenului un cadou; or Mama a dat mie o carte instead of Mama mi-a dat o carte.
- the form connected with the reflexive verbs constituted another test for the learners’ ability in learning Romanian, this leading to incorrect forms such as: Lui spune adevărul instead of Lui i se spune adevărul.
- even if the students were able to enumerate all the forms of the demonstrative and possessive pronouns, when put in the situation to use them in more complex structures they are unable to match the correct form with the required to make the agreement between nouns and adjectival pronouns, their errors were the following: acela colegă instead of acel coleg, prietena tău instead of prietena ta, prietenei ta instead of prietenei tale. In addition, the possessive adjectival raised the problem of agreement with the ending of the noun (most feminine Romanian nouns end in –a) instead of the correct agreement with the gender of the noun: tata mea instead of tatăl meu.

Errors in the use of articles:

- the specific of the Romanian language consists in different forms of the definite and indefinite articles depending on gender, number and case; compared to the support language, this diversity does not exist and this led to the following ungrammatical forms: conferința niște colegi ai mei instead of conferința unor colegi ai mei; Băieți vin în parc instead of Băieți vin în parc; Ani petrecuți la școală instead of anii petrecuți la școală: Primăvara iarbă este verde instead of primăvara iarbă este verde.

Errors in spelling:

- An important step in the acquisition of the Romanian language is to correctly perceive its phonetic inventory. Related to this issue we noticed some problems generated by the opposition voiceless/loud consonants: cald instead of cald, frică instead of frig, pine instead of bine, by the incorrect usage of the diphthongs: plouă instead of plouă.
A distinct category of spelling errors came from the transfer of the pattern provided by the mother tongue (Russian for the Turkmen students), which generated spelling errors such as: vremia instead of vremea.

Free-compositions may constitute an effective evaluation exercise used to measure students’ acquisition, not only in terms of grammar and lexis, but also in terms of language register and style.

We have to mention that we provided the learners with the topics (narrate a personal experience, a description of the spring) offering them the possibility to create their own discourse. As result of the analysis of the students’ compositions we identified grammar errors as detailed above, vocabulary errors and stylistic errors. Due to the fact that the students were in the situation of using their own inventory of content and form familiar terms, the errors from the compositions were less numerous as it is shown in the table.

The compositions offered the students the opportunity to operate with the already familiar grammar structures and lexical acquisition, to deal with an appropriate register and complete and clear style, which we also consider to be important to foreign learners of Romanian.

Therefore, after analysing the students’ composition samples, we identified grammar errors (see above), vocabulary and style and register errors.

Among the most frequent errors made by the learners, the samples revealed that they are also having problems in the correct acquisition of prepositions in Romanian. The main cause of developmental errors’ occurrence (see Richards, 1990) is that they do acquire the Romanian language, but, as prepositions represent a very complex part of speech in our language, they are unable to contextualize them properly. Examples of miscontextualising the prepositions are: Când am coborât de pe tren. Instead of Când am cobărat din tren./ Noi ne-am plimbat la oraș. Instead of Noi ne-am plimbăr prin oraș./ După plimbare am intrat la o cafenea. Instead of După plimbără am intrat în o cafenea./ Mi-e dor cu familie. Instead of Mi-e dor de familie.

The translation task offered us some interesting information on the students’ lack of appropriate usage of some Romanian terms; thus, we noticed especially semantic interferences resulted from several meanings of the same English word(s) in Romanian: Are the years spent at school the best years of your life was translated into Romanian as Anii cheltuiți de tine la școala sunt cei mai buni din viața ta?, because, in Romanian the phrase a petrece timpul is equivalent to spend time in English, while a cheltui bani is also equivalent to spend money. Most of the learners have selected the wrong phrase, as they misunderstood this distinction in Romanian.

An interesting fact occurred when analyzing the students’ translations, as we noticed the same type of vocabulary errors, as far as false friends are concerned, i.e. the errors are similar to Romanians learning English a second language. Thus, most of the students made confusions between library (English) and librărie (Romanian) and college (English) and colegiu (Romanian). In Romanian, the English term library means, in fact, bibliotecă, while college means colegiu, not girl classmates.

4. Conclusions

The main conclusions of our error analysis are the following:

✓ the students inherently make analogies not only with their mother tongue, but also with the support language, English which is an analytical language, compared to Romanian, which is synthetical;
✓ some of the students, especially those from Angola and The Ivory Coast, acquire Romanian more easily than those coming from Turkmenistan and Bulgaria because of the fact that their native languages, Portuguese and French are both of Latin origin, whereas Turkem, Russian and Bulgarian are of Turkic, respectively Slavic origin;
✓ most of the difficulties the students have when learning Romanian, irrespective of their background, come from the fact that Romanian has an inflected character, which, compared to English, may bring to light more errors; it is therefore necessary to spend more time on teaching the nominal categories in Romanian;

As suggestions for further teaching of the Romanian language to foreigners, we can mention:
✓ a homogeneous level of English (B1, acc. to CEFR) should be compulsory for all foreigners coming to do their degrees in Romanian universities;
✓ in teaching Romanian language to foreigners, teachers should not mainly insist on the grammatical categories of the parts of speech too much, as the main purpose of these students is to be able to communicate fluently when they start their degrees after the preparatory year;
✓ teachers should make use of more classes aiming at developing students’ listening and spoken interaction skills, if possible by means of using authentic materials based on real-life communicative situations;
✓ the evaluation of their acquisitions should be done continuously, if possible, using EA which provides useful hints about their staged-acquisition of the Romanian language.
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