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The Evaluation - an Essential Component of the Teaching Approach in the Romanian Language and Literature Classes

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Abstract

The curricular reform that changed the paradigm of teaching and learning in teaching-learning-evaluation/assessment adds a new connotation to the evaluation process. A lesson of romanian language and literature it's not fully completed unless we place in it the evaluation. Whether it is about the several appreciations of the teacher at the end of each activity, whether it's about an formative evaluation or the one that ends an cycle of acquired knowledges, the evaluation techniques must come to suport perfecting the learning activities of students or to improve the teaching activity. The informations provided by the evaluation represent a landmark not only for students but also for teachers. The results obtained by students may require the teacher to improve certain aspects of his teaching technique, also it indicates to the teacher what must be done to stimulate and motivate the students in order to obtain better results. In this paper, we aim to highlight the importance of the evaluative approach in the romanian language and literature classes, that becomes increasingly more pronounced and recognized throughout the educational reform undertaken at the moment, and also to exemplify some of the used methods especially at this stage of teaching. What we want to emphasize is that the evaluation methods and techniques must be used in order to achieve the necessary correlations to make more efficient the teaching-learning-evaluation process and to achieve our wishes – the formation of autonomous, free and creative personalities.

Keywords

Evaluation, methods, teaching, romanian language.

Motto: "There are no failures, only lessons" (Nietzsche)

A lesson it's not fully completed unless we place in it the evaluation. Whether it is about the several appreciations of the teacher at the end of each activity, whether it's about an formative evaluation or the one that

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ends an cycle of acquired knowledges, the evaluation techniques must come to support perfecting the learning activities of students or to improve the teaching activity. The informations provided by the evaluation represent a landmark not only for students but also for teachers. The results obtained by students may require the teacher to improve certain aspects of his teaching technique, also it indicates to the teacher what must be done to stimulate and motivate the students in order to obtain better results. The evaluation contains several forms and methods of examination:

- the current observation of the students learning behavior;
- different types of tests (oral, written and practical);
- analyzing the results of various activities of the students;

An objective evaluation involves the design of some comparison criteria appearing under the name of performance indicators. They relate to: curriculum standards of performance, performance descriptors, operational objectives of teaching, evaluation objectives and evaluation criteria. Between all these elements exist close interdependencies.

The curricular standards of performance- bring to the fore the teaching process quality having in mind that it's about synthetic statements, reported to knowledge, abilities, skills and behaviors. They describe the performance which the student must reach and are the starting point for the development of the performance descriptors and of the grading criteria.

The performance descriptors- are qualitative criteria targeting an objective evaluation, providing relevant information about the level of student performances. In the romanian education system, at primary classes I-IV, the grading is done through scores (Very Good, Good, Sufficient, Insufficient) being developed performance descriptors for each capacity and undercapacity.

The evaluation objectives- are derived from the frame and reference objectives, specifying what, how and how much it's evaluated. But they should not be confused with operational objectives.

The evaluation criteria - can be absolute (maximum grade / minimum grade) or comparative (comparing the answer by reference to: the entire class, the theoretical potential of the student. in relation to school performance, the initial level of school performance).(according to Mogonea, 2010, p.201)

The professor Ioan Cerghit (2002) considers that an evaluation must be prepared so that

answers the following questions:

- What is evaluated? – the object of evaluation
- Why evaluate? - the meaning of evaluation

- What steps should be taken? - the operations of evaluation
- In relation to what it's made the evaluation? - evaluation criteria
- When we evaluate? – the moment of evaluation
- How to evaluate? - Methods, techniques, tools/instruments
- Who evaluates? – who applies the evaluation tools/instruments

In what follows, we will focus on the essential theoretical coordinates to which the evaluation system is reported, to return toward the end of the chapter on its customization for Romanian language and literature classes.

Evaluation as it is perceived today, appears in three forms:

1. The initial evaluation whose purpose is to determine the level of students knowledge before starting a certain stage or a year of education, an education cycle, an curricular cycle. The professor findings on this type of evaluation represent a starting point for him in designing future activities and also a level of comparison in children's development.

2. Formative or continuous evaluation aims, as its name reveals, to contribute at the students training throughout all the teaching-learning process and to closely monitor their entire development.

3. Summative or final evaluation it is the way in which, at the end of a stage from the learning process, the teacher evaluates the level "of learning outcomes and the processes involved" (Manolescu, Marin, 2004: 19). This tipe of evaluation takes the form of a note or a score, as an recognition of the level reached by the student.

The evaluation, to be properly designed and applied must meet certain functions:

□ the control function, of finding and appreciating the results in relation with the set objectives or with other results previously recorded. It's the ideal time to detect the causes that have influenced the results that were reached;

□ the adjustment function, aims to improve and optimize the results. It leads to certain adjustments, necessary changes in the organization of the teaching-learning process, in the teacher style, in the relationship with the students;

□ predictive and anticipation of results function;

□ classification and selection function that contributes to a hierarchy of students, making a clear distinction between those with poorer results and those with superior results. Also, the teacher knows who he

should provide more help and how much each child should be exploited in the activities;

□ the stimulating and motivating students function absolutely necessary at every stage of the educational process. If they are not motivated, the students will hardly start in the discovery of the news that every romanian language class bring to them, sometimes they will even refuse to do so;

□ the information for the parents/colleagues function, about the results of children. It should be noted, however, that we can make collective judgments/appreciations in meetings with parents that have a more general character.

Thanks to the motivational function is very important that at the class level to be applied evaluation tests with different difficulty levels. So, each child discovers that he also can meet the demands of school. Applying the same assessment test to the whole class, it would mean that some of the children will be demotivated regarding the subsequent teaching approaches. The evaluation loses so one of its essential functions, the motivational one.

It has been proved very clear that a test at the class of romanian language, that has an increased difficulty level, has led to a setback which could demoralize and demotivate students. Even the students with better results, come to treat these tests with complete detachment and indifference. Which is why most times we hear our children say - I can not We must not forget that not all children evolve in the same way, that they have different stages of development and, consequently, we must be patient and not to create a stereotype of the pupil based on our standards. The teacher must avoid categorical the pejorative appreciations or the labels put on certain students who are learning with difficulty. It is well known the influence that teachers have on children at this age and a word thrown in a moment of anger can trigger antipathy that will hardly be repaired.

I. T. Radu (2000, p. 26) considers that the evaluation involves making certain operations:

□ the operation of measurement in which the evaluating instruments have in regard the quantification of the school results, the performances of the students - the collection of certain information;

□ the operation of interpretation the data obtained as a result of the evaluation. It is time the teacher make value judgments in relation to student performance;

□ the operation of making decision about improvement that involves drawing conclusions as a result of the interpretation of the results. Now are also set the measures to be taken to achieve better results.

But the evaluation not only stops on learning outcomes but also on the relationship established between teacher and student, that, assume the specialists, should be in 4 ways (Molan, Vasile, 2010, p. 194-195):

- the communication relationship involves the transmission of objectives evaluation modality from teacher to student. The communication becomes the watchword in the relationship between the two actors in the act of learning, both at the time of data analysis, and afterwards. The teacher shows the student where the problems are and shows him what should be done?

- cooperative relationship appears both between teacher and student, but also within the group of students who has to solve a certain task;

- the working relationship occurs in various stages of the learning process when the student needs the support of the teacher. This collaboration can not be established if the student doesn't feel the teacher open and honest;

- the relationship of self-evaluation becomes effective if the student is able to objectively analyze his results, performance that can be achieved by the student with the teacher help.

From the traditional evaluation methods we will focus on the docimologic test as it is an complex evaluation tool which is formed from set of tasks questions - called items), allowing the measuring and appreciation of the level of students training and also the level of formation and development of some skills and competences in various fields. The docimologic test result highlights the progress /regress registered by the pupil in a certain period of time, bringing to the teacher pertinent informations regarding on how to achieve the teaching objectives that he has set in order to improve and / or optimize the educational approaches.

Any docimologic test consists of the following parts:

- educational objectives, established in conjunction with the educational content;

- the items contents;

- the items solving and the way of giving the scores;

- specific maximum performance (SMP), which represent the maximum behavioral level that can be achieved by the student;

□ minimum allowable performance (MAP) which designate the acquisition by student of the required knowledge to move into the next stage of training.

Very important, in the realization of such a test, is the number of questions to be put. They must be representative and relevant for the field of study from which the evaluation is made. The questions should be made very clear and concise so as to be removed any ambiguity and the student to know clearly what to do. The difficulty level of the questions must be spread and to correspond to the real intellectual possibilities of the students.

Among the types of items used in tests docimologic we mention:

□ Objective items, designated also as closed items, that put the student in a position

to select one correct answer from all proposed variants. Therefore, to the student it's not given the opportunity to create something, but he is forced to recognize and identify possible correct answers.

• Dual-choice objective items assume a workload that allows the student to choose the correct version from alternatives like true or false, right or wrong, correct or incorrect. For example it can be formulated a statement such as:

Choose the correct form:

- Migrating birds are leaving for hot countries. True / False.
- The subject is a secondary part of sentence. True / False
- Nică a lui Ștefan a Petrei is one of the characters of Ion Creanga. True / False

• Objective items with multiple choice assume a workload whose solution is chosen by the student out of a list of alternative answers.

For example, in the statement - He will play the piano.- the predicate is at:

- a) the singular number, IIIrd person, present;
- b) IIIrd person, singular number, future;
- c) IInd person, singular number, future.

In this case, students must choose the best alternative.

•The objective items pair type asks students to establish a correlation between certain elements (words, phrases, letters, sentences or other types of symbols) distributed in two parallel columns. The column A

is the question (the premise) and the column B are the answers. The two columns are unequal as number of elements.

For example: Match predicates with the subjects: Column A (the children, the flowers), column B (bloom, runs, flourishes).

The semi-objective items materialize in several forms:

- The items with an short answer involve formulating a response, by the student, in its entirety or only as a part of an incomplete statements. The student response is limited in form, space or content by the nature of the task.

For example: Why did the bear tail was broken in the Bear tricked by the fox story? What happened with Mr. Goe beret?

- Structured questions items bring to the fore workloads based on several sub-questions, linked by a common element. It starts from a stimulus material (text, data, charts, maps, etc.), on which is delimited a set of sub-questions which offers the frame for developing the answer.

For example: Read carefully the text Their hive by Tudor Arghezi and answer the following questions:

1. Who lives in the hive?
2. Who guards the hive?
3. What do the bees in winter time? But in other seasons?
4. What can you say about the life of bees?

- Completing items assume as task the presentation of a lacunar text to be completed/filled with the correct answer. For example: Write down on the dotted space the correct verb version: a beautiful photo album for the school. (to create, at the future)

Subjective or open response items represent the traditional form of evaluation in our country. They allow the evaluation of some complex learning objectives, aiming at originality, creativity and personal character of students, evocation skills, organization and integration of ideas, interpretation and application of the acquired information.

For example: Make up the text of an invitation addressed to class colleagues in order to invite them to your birthday. Use as many verbs in the future tense.

Essay items (Used mainly in II-nd and IV-th classes) emphasize the ability to evoke, to organize and integrate the ideas, the ability of personal

expression in writing and the ability to perform or produce the interpretation and application of acquired data. Depending on the type of response expected items essay can be:

a) structured or semi-structured essay:

For example: Imagine that you guide a group of tourists and create a composition in which you propose the visit of some cultural sites. In organizing the text you will follow the requirements in making a composition (introduction, middle and end), the presence of the following verbs - to show (future tense), to see (in the past tense, II-nd person), to exhibit (present tense), using at least 5 adjectives.

b) unstructured or free essay:

For example: Setup a text to show what it means for you the winter season.

Measuring and marking (appreciating) the school performance is made on the ground of the findings made during oral or written examination. The correct notation is characterized by objectivity (accuracy, fairness, responsibility, and competence), validity and reliability.

Although important to test basic knowledge and skills, traditional assessment methods (oral test, written test, practical test) are not effective in all situations. Evaluation methods should be used to call on student creativity, divergent thinking and teamwork. Modern evaluation strategies seek to emphasize that dimension of evaluative action which will give students sufficient and varied opportunities to demonstrate what they know and, especially, what they can do. From the alternative methods was considered that the ones which values the best the children competences are the following:

1. Systematic observation of the activity and behavior of the students has essential contributions, by the information they provide in improving the relationship of the teacher with the student, in improving the learning process. This method involves several steps: the application of the evaluation form, making the classification scale, setting up a checklist or verification list. The teacher makes an observations sheet with clear objectives in which he notes children's behavior found in various situations. He obtains in this way informations which he process them, analyze them and interpret them. For this work to be as objective as possible, observations must be recorded as accurately as possible.

2. The investigation involves objectives which aim: understanding and clarification of the tasks; finding methods for finding information; collecting and organizing of the data or the required informations; formulating and testing work hypotheses; the change of the work plan or other data collection if is necessary; writing a short report on the results of the investigation. It gives the student the opportunity to apply creatively the acquired knowledge and to explore new learning situations during a class period.

3. The project involves the development of some products by the pupil or by the group of pupils by harnessing skills. It's realization requires a continuing cooperation between teacher and pupil, ending with the evaluation made by the teacher. The project can be individual or for a group, and the title or the topic will be chosen by the teacher or by the students.

Among the advantages of using this method we can mention:

- the opportunity to find out in what extent the student appropriate uses the knowledge previously assimilated, the tools, the available materials in order to achieve the proposed aims/finalities;

- putting the students in a position to act and perform tasks individually or in groups, self-testing their cognitive, social and practical capacities;

For the fixing and evaluating the knowledge, the teacher can use: especially after the stage of gathering, organizing, processing and evaluating the information- at an criterial test; this it will contain a number of objective and semi- objective items, but also an approximate number of subjective items enabling students to reflect systematically on the learning process and on the obtained products.

4. The portfolio is " the visiting card" of the student, through which the teacher can follow his progress - the cognitive level, attitude and behavior - in a particular subject, over a longer period of time (one semester or a school year). It includes a selection of the best works or the student's personal achievements. All these represent the student and provides a means to emphasize the progress, the personal contributions, allowing at the same time the realization of some appreciations for the aptitude, talents and passions owned by the student.

The composition of the portfolio is a unique opportunity for the student to evaluate oneself, to discover the value of his competencies, to detect and to correct the eventually mistakes. In other words, the portfolio

is a tool that combines the learning process with the continuous progressive and multilateral evaluation of the activity process and of the final product. This can only lead to increase learning motivation.

The portfolio evaluation usually starts by explanation by the teacher, at the beginning of the period, of learning objectives in the period for which it will receive a score. The teacher and the students agree on the products which the portfolio should contain and which will be a clear proof of the fulfillment of the learning objectives (many teachers remind almost daily to the students to put in the portfolio samples to remind them later about their work).

5. The computer assisted examination - is carried out using the computer which allows a closer and faster contact with all the students; the computer facilitates a more thoroughly and rapidly control, representing a special technique, that complements the classic one, which will be available to every teacher in the near future. For this purpose the computer is equipped with appropriate terminals, through which is established a dialogue with the student; the informations are presented, is checked the knowledge assimilation, exercises are proposed, and predominates the transmission of knowledge, the verification or the formation of skills and abilities.

Each of the above methods has its advantages and disadvantages of which the teacher should be aware. From the foregoing, in the body of work, clearly emerges the need to correlate any evaluation methods with elements of the context in which the assessment activity will take place. And when we say context we refer to the students level - who the evaluation is addressed, the framework in which it will take place, the material resources which will be available to students.

Under any circumstances the technical conditions of the evaluation, if we can call them that, should not be ignored - the objectivity, the loyalty, the fairness. Therefore remains to the task of the teacher to alternate the traditional assessment tools, with the alternative ones to improve his evaluation practice in romanian language and literature class.

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