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**STUDIA  
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# STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS BABEŞ-BOLYAI PSYCHOLOGIA-PAEDAGOGIA

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# THE ROLE OF EMOTION-REGULATION STRATEGIES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AND DEPRESSION TENDENCIES

ÉVA KÁLLAY<sup>1</sup>, SEBASTIAN PINTEA<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** The drastic changes characteristic to our times force individuals to face rapidly changing life conditions, resulting in an increasing number of individuals who cannot adequately adapt. There is a plethora of research indicating differences in depression tendencies between gender differences and educational levels. However, the cognitive and emotional mechanisms that may explain such differences are understudied. Our study investigates which cognitive emotion-regulation strategies mediate the relationship between gender/education, and depressive tendencies. Our results indicate a significant relationship between gender and depression tendencies; women having higher levels of depressive symptoms. We also found a significant relationship between education and depression; lower levels of depressive symptoms for participants with higher levels of education. Female participants use to a higher degree strategies as self-blame, acceptance, rumination, putting into perspective, and catastrophizing. Concerning mediational models, the relationship between gender and depression tendencies is mediated by self-blame, acceptance, rumination and catastrophizing, while the relationship between education and depression tendencies is mediated by acceptance, catastrophizing, and others blame. In conclusion, even if social factors are more intuitive and easier to identify in the

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form of social categories (gender/education groups), behind these categories stand different psychological profiles, generated by differences in using psychological mechanisms such as emotion-regulation strategies. Our study points out the need to identify such subtle mechanisms that can explain the unequal distribution of distress in the population.

**Keywords:** *depression, emotion-regulation strategies, age, gender, education, mediation.*

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG. Die Rolle der Emotion-Regelstrategien in der Beziehung zwischen demographischen Faktoren und Depression Tendenzen.** Die drastischen Veränderungen, die für unsere Zeit charakteristisch sind, zwingen die Individuen dazu, den schnell ändernden Lebensbedingungen gegenüberstehen, was zu einer steigenden Anzahl von Individuen führt, die sich nicht adäquat anpassen können. Es gibt eine Fülle von Untersuchungen, die auf Unterschiede in den Depressivitätstendenzen zwischen Geschlechterunterschieden und Bildungsniveau hinweisen. Die kognitiven und emotionalen Mechanismen, die solche Unterschiede erklären könnten, sind jedoch zu wenig erforscht. Unsere Studie untersucht, welche kognitiven Emotionsregulationsstrategien die Beziehung zwischen Geschlecht/ Bildung und depressiven Tendenzen vermitteln. Unsere Ergebnisse zeigen eine signifikante Beziehung zwischen Geschlecht und Depression Tendenzen; Frauen zeigen höhere depressiven Symptomen. Wir fanden auch eine signifikante Beziehung zwischen Bildung und Depression; niedrigere Niveaus von depressiven Symptomen für Teilnehmer mit einem höheren Bildungsniveau. Weibliche Teilnehmer Weibliche Teilnehmer nutzen in höherem Maße Strategien als Selbstschuld, Akzeptanz, Wiederkauen, Relativieren und Katastrophieren. In Bezug auf Mediationsmodelle wird die Beziehung zwischen Geschlecht und Depressionstendenzen durch Selbstbeschuldigung, Akzeptanz, Wiederkauen und Katastrophisierung vermittelt, während die Beziehung zwischen Bildung und Depressionstendenzen ist durch Akzeptanz, Katastrophisierung und andere Schuldzuweisungen vermittelt. Abschließend, auch wenn soziale Faktoren intuitiver und leichter in Form von sozialen Kategorien (Geschlecht / Bildung

Gruppen) zu identifizieren sind, stehen hinter diesen Kategorien unterschiedliche psychologische Profile, die durch Unterschiede in der Anwendung psychologischer Mechanismen wie Emotionsregulationsstrategien entstehen. Unsere Studie weist auf die Notwendigkeit hin, solche subtilen Mechanismen zu identifizieren, die die ungleiche Verteilung von Distress in der Bevölkerung erklären können.

**Schlüsselwörter:** *Depression, Emotionsregulationsstrategien, Alter, Geschlecht, Bildung, Vermittlung.*

## **Introduction**

Over the past century, the entire world has witnessed fast and drastic demographic, social, technological, political, and economic changes (Amundson, 2006; Hidaka, 2012). These changes have created an environment significantly different from what humans have been used to efficiently adapt to (Eaton, Strassman, Nesse, Neel, Ewald, Williams et al., 2002). The considerable discrepancy between present and past lifestyles constrain individuals to deal with a constantly growing body of challenges, which frequently lead to impairing symptoms of stress (affecting cognitive, behavioral, physiological, emotional, social, etc., functioning), further hindering the complex processes of adaptation. Consequently, the number of individuals who experience high levels of distress and cannot function at their best is constantly increasing (Cuijpers et al., 2007; Cunningham et al., 2006; European Commission, 2005; Wittchen & Jacobi, 2005). This tendency is reflected by the growing number of adults and children suffering from diagnosable mental disorders (Flett & Hewitt, 2013; Hidaka, 2012), trend aggravated by an equally important phenomenon, namely, the case of those who do not develop clinically significant and diagnosable symptoms, but still cannot efficiently adapt to these highly stressful life challenges (Cuijpers et al., 2007; da Silva Lima & de Almeida Fleck, 2007).

Research has allocated increased interest to the investigation of strategies and mechanisms that affect individuals' emotional reactions to the demands of the environment (Johnson, Carver & Fulford, 2010). The review of several studies conducted by Suveg, Morelen, Brewer, and Thomassin (2010) indicate that the way one responds to adversity (stress, daily hassles, negative life events) is more predictive of mental health or psychopathology than the nature of the negative event itself, and that emotion-regulation strategies play a significant role in the process of (mal)adaptation.

Emotion regulation has been defined as "*the range of activities that allow an individual to monitor, evaluate, and modify the nature and course of an emotional response, in order to pursue his or her goals and appropriately respond to environmental demands*" (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012, p. 163, as cited in Cole et al., 2004; Johnson et al., 2010). Emotion dysregulation is considered as one of the central mechanisms involved in the development of different forms of psychopathology (Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema & Schweizer, 2010; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012). Several theoretical approaches indicate that individuals who cannot use appropriate emotion regulation strategies to manage their exacerbated emotional reactions are prone to develop more intense and longer lasting periods of distress, which may aggravate and lead to clinically diagnosable disorders (Aldao & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2010; Nolen-Hoeksema & Aldao, 2012). According to approaches which emphasize the functional differentiation of emotion regulation strategies, rumination, suppression, avoidance, catastrophizing, other-blame, and self-blame are associated with maladaptive emotional reactions (Aldao et al., 2010; Aldao & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012), especially with depression and anxiety (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012). On the other hand, emotion regulation strategies as acceptance, cognitive reappraisal, problem solving, putting into perspective, positive refocusing, planning, were found to be associated with positive emotional (reduction of negative emotionality), behavioral (effective interpersonal functioning), and physiological reactions (cardiac reactivity) (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012).

Different theories have proposed that emotion dysregulation may occur in several distinct ways: (i) the failure to down-regulate negative emotions by using adaptive emotion regulation strategies (e.g., problem solving, reappraisal, acceptance) (Aldao et al., 2010); (ii) the tendency to engage in emotion regulation strategies that exacerbate negative emotions (e.g., rumination) (McLaughlin & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2011), and (iii) excessive attempts to downregulate negative emotions (e.g., suppression, avoidance) (e.g., Kashdan & Breen, 2007; Wenzlaff & Wegner, 2000).

One of the major directions in the scientific investigation of emotion regulation has focused on the conscious cognitive mechanisms involved in the adaptive and maladaptive processes. An important advantage implied in investigating cognitive emotion-regulation strategies lies in the possibility to change them, either through personal experiences or psychotherapeutically (Garnefski, Kraaij & Spinhoven, 2002). Garnefski et al.'s (2002) approach identified nine specific conscious cognitive emotion-regulation strategies, as: *self-blame, acceptance, rumination, positive re-focusing, refocus on planning, positive reappraisal, putting into perspective, catastrophizing, and other blame*. Positive reappraisal, acceptance, problem-solving have long been associated with adaptive emotional reactions, while rumination, catastrophizing, self and other blame with maladaptive reactions (Aldao & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012).

### **Gender and education differences in maladaptive emotional reactions and emotion regulation**

Literature has documented that across different nations and cultures, twice as many women develop depression than men (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012; Parker & Brotchie, 2010). Theories hypothesize that besides sex roles, social factors, biological determinants, differences in the use of emotion regulation strategies may significantly contribute to these discrepancies (Nolen-Hoeksema & Aldao, 2012). Furthermore, research also indicates that overall, women have a greater tendency to use

more (both adaptive and maladaptive) emotion regulation strategies than men do (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012). These approaches suggest that women have a more passive reaction towards their emotions and are prone to analyze them (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012), being more likely to use emotion-regulation strategies as rumination for example (Cox, Mezulis & Hyde, 2010; Lopez, Driscoll & Kistner, 2009). Men are more action oriented, and in order to control the emotion eliciting situation, they engage more frequently in problem solving or reappraisal (Tamres, Janicki & Helgeson, 2002).

Aldao and Nolen-Hoeksema (2010), Aldao et al. (2010) have shown that the use of maladaptive emotion regulation strategies (rumination, suppression, avoidance, worry) are systematically, more strongly associated to psychopathology than adaptive strategies (problem solving, reappraisal, etc.) (Aldao & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012). These findings have significant practical utility, considering the fact that prevention and intervention of emotional disorders heavily capitalizes on teaching clients how to use adaptive strategies efficiently (Roemer, Orsillo & Salters-Pedneault, 2008). Beside gender, level of education has also been found to be a significant predictor of depression. Thus, lack or lower levels of education are consistently associated with the selection of adaptive emotion regulation strategies across different cultures and nations (e.g., Ohayon, 2007; Pikhart, Bobak, Pajak, Malyutina, Kubinova, Topor et al., 2004). People with higher levels of education have better access to information, possess a larger pool of options regarding emotion regulation strategies, which increases their chances to select the group of strategies that best suit the contextual demands of the situation, as well as facilitates the adherence to prevention and intervention (Gotlib & Hammen, 2009).

Based on the scientific documentation regarding gender and educational differences in both depression and emotion regulation strategies, the major objective of our study was to explore which cognitive emotion-regulation strategies mediate the relationship between gender and education on one hand, and depressive symptoms on the other.

## **Study**

### ***Participants***

In our study we included 962 healthy participants from the general population, 338 males and 624 females, with a mean age of 40 years (SD=9 years). Regarding level of education, the mean was 14 years of schooling with a standard deviation of 3 years. After providing informed consent, participants completed the questionnaire packets that took 45 minutes to fill, in a face-to-face assessment session with the researcher.

### ***Measures***

***Demographic variables*** are: age, gender, and level of education.

***Depression tendencies*** were measured with the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI, Beck, Rush, Shaw & Emery, 1979; Romanian adaptation David & Dobrean, 2012). The BDI is a 21-item, multiple-choice format inventory, designed to measure the presence of depression in adults and adolescents. Each of the 21 items assesses a symptom or attitude specific to depression, inquiring its somatic, cognitive and behavioral aspects. By its assessments, single scores are produced, which indicate the intensity of the depressive episode. Scores ranging from 0 to 9, represent normal levels of depression. Scores situated between 10 and 18 represent mild to moderate depression; values between 19 and 29 represent moderate to severe depression, while scores above the value of 30 represent severe depression. Internal consistency indices of the BDI are usually above .90. In our study we did not use clinical cut-off points for analysis or selection of participants, but treated depression tendencies as a continuum ranging from minimal to maximal scores obtained by participants on the BDI scale.

***Emotion regulation strategies*** were measured with the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ) (Garnefski, Kraaij & Spinhoven, 2002; Romanian adaptation, Perte & Tincas, 2010). The CERQ is a

self-report questionnaire designed to measure cognitive coping strategies, assessing what people think after confronting specific negative events, or to assess the way people generally react after confronting negative events. The scale is comprised of nine sub-scales: self-blame, acceptance, rumination, positive refocusing, refocus on planning, positive reappraisal, putting into perspective, catastrophizing, other blame, each subscale containing four items. Subjects have to indicate on a five-point Likert scale (almost never – to – almost always) the frequency with which they use the specific cognitive emotion regulation strategy. The internal consistency of the original subscales for adult population range from .75 to .86.

## **Results**

### ***Descriptive statistics***

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the main variables included in the analysis. One of the main information that can be identified from table 1 is the level of depression of women ( $M=8.73$ ,  $SD=8.27$ ), significantly higher ( $p= .006$ ) than the one identified for men ( $M=7.20$ ,  $SD=8.00$ ), but with a small effect size (Cohen's  $d=0.17$ ). Also, as the coping strategies are concerned, the results show that women use with a significantly higher frequency cognitive emotion regulation strategies as self-blame, acceptance, rumination, putting into perspective and catastrophizing with effect sizes that vary from small to medium.

In the next step, we analyzed which of the coping strategies used most frequently by women are significantly correlated with depression. In Table 2 we present the correlation matrix between depression and cognitive emotion regulation strategies, along with the level of education, which will be analyzed in the second part of the results section.

As Table 2 shows, among the coping strategies more frequently used by women (self-blame, acceptance, rumination, putting into perspective and catastrophizing), only self-blame, acceptance, rumination

and catastrophizing were significantly correlated with depression. As a consequence, only these four coping strategies were tested as mediators of the relationship between gender and depression.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics for the main variables of the study

Variables	Male (N=338) M ±SD	Female (N=624) M ±SD	p value	Cohen's d
Age	40.48 ± 9.09	39.90 ± 8.95	0.340	-
Education	14.27 ± 2.89	13.95 ± 3.29	0.133	-
Depression	7.20 ± 8.00	8.73 ± 8.27	0.006**	0.17
Self-blame	8.99 ± 2.50	9.49 ± 9.74	0.005**	0.07
Acceptance	10.97 ± 3.95	11.76 ± 3.27	0.001**	0.21
Rumination	10.15 ± 2.86	10.73 ± 3.15	0.005**	0.19
Positive refocusing	10.81 ± 3.92	11.21 ± 3.76	0.121	-
Refocus on planning	13.78 ± 3.16	14.15 ± 3.44	0.097	-
Positive reappraisal	13.58 ± 3.47	13.83 ± 3.70	0.311	-
Putting into perspective	11.86 ± 3.43	12.79 ± 3.57	0.001**	0.26
Catastrophizing	7.59 ± 2.99	8.08 ± 3.26	0.024*	0.15
Others blame	7.86 ± 2.87	7.81 ± 2.81	0.798	-

\*Statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 2.** Correlation matrix between education, coping strategies and depression symptoms

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Education	1										
2. Depression	-.19**	1									
3. Self blame	.02	.39**	1								
4. Acceptance	-.08*	.20**	.44**	1							
5. Rumination	-.02	.30**	.52**	.46**	1						
6. Positive re- focusing	-.10**	.00	.06	.18**	.06	1					

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
7. Refocus on planning	-.02	-.05	.24**	.31**	.31**	.46**	1				
8. Positive re-appraisal	.04	-.10**	.20**	.31**	.26**	.49**	.73**	1			
9. Putting into perspective	-.05	.02	.24**	.38**	.25**	.43**	.50**	.59**	1		
10. Catastrophizing	-.18**	.47**	.41**	.24**	.42**	.06*	.05	-.02	.12**	1	
11. Other blame	-.14**	.36**	.27**	.14**	.31**	.07*	.03	-.09**	.08*	.58**	1

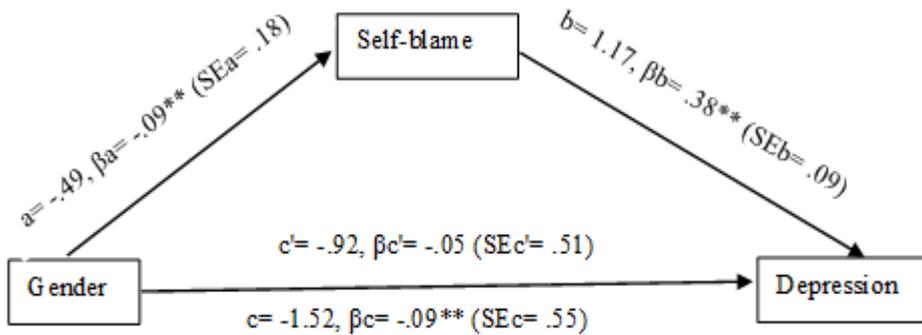
\* Statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*at  $p < 0.01$

### Mediators of the relationship between gender and depression

For all the mediation models, we analyzed the regression equations used to assess mediation following MacKinnon (2008), in which we calculated the effect of the predictor upon the mediator (a), the direct effect of the mediator upon the criterion (b), the total effect of the predictor upon the criterion (c), the direct effect of the predictor upon the criterion (c'), and the mediated effect (a\*b or c-c'). In each of the mediation diagrams presented below, we also included the standard version for each effect ( $\beta$ ) and its standard error (SE). For testing the statistical significance of each mediation effect, we calculated the Z test in which the standard error of the mediated effect was calculated following the recommendations of Sobel (1982). Also, for each analysis, we calculated the effect size of the mediation effect, which is the percent of the total effect, explained through the mediator, calculated by dividing the mediation effect to the total effect and multiplying the result by 100.

### Self-blame

In Figure 1, the mediation diagram of self-blame is presented in relationship between gender and depression.

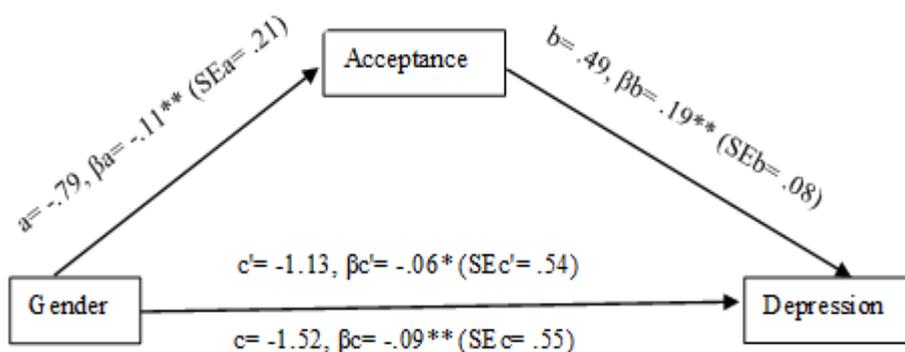


**Figure 1.** The diagram for the mediation of self-blame between gender and depression

As Figure 1 shows, there is a significant but small total effect of gender upon depression ( $\beta_c = -.09$ ,  $p = .006$ ). When controlling for the mediator, the predictor has no significant direct effect ( $\beta_{c'} = -.05$ ,  $p = .072$ ). The mediation effect ( $c - c' = a * b$ ) proved to be statistically significant according to the Sobel test ( $Z = -2.66$ ,  $p = .007$ ). The proportional effect size of the mediation effect indicates that 39% of the total relation between gender and depression is mediated by self-blame.

### Acceptance

Figure 2 describes the mediation diagram of acceptance in the relationship between gender and depression.



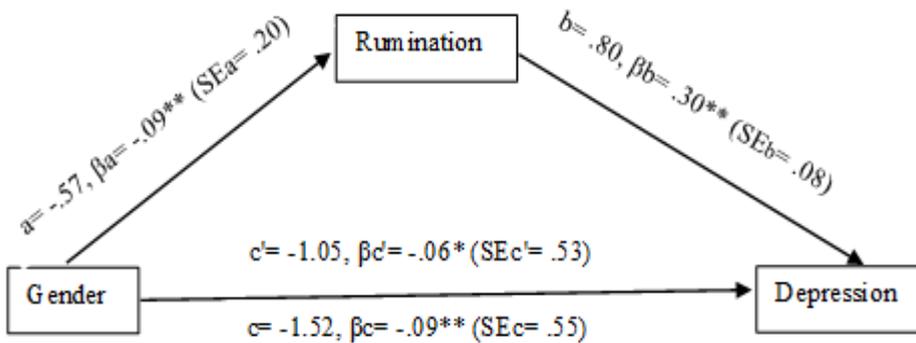
**Figure 2.** The diagram for the mediation of acceptance between gender and depression

As Figure 2 shows, when controlling for the mediator, the predictor still has a significant direct effect ( $\beta_{c'} = -.06$ ,  $p = .038$ ). The mediation effect ( $c - c' = a * b$ ) proved to be statistically significant according to the Sobel test ( $Z = -3.20$ ,  $p = .001$ ). The proportional effect size of the mediation effect indicates that 26% of the total relation between gender and depression is mediated by acceptance.

### Rumination

Figure 3 describes the mediation diagram of rumination in the relationship between gender and depression.

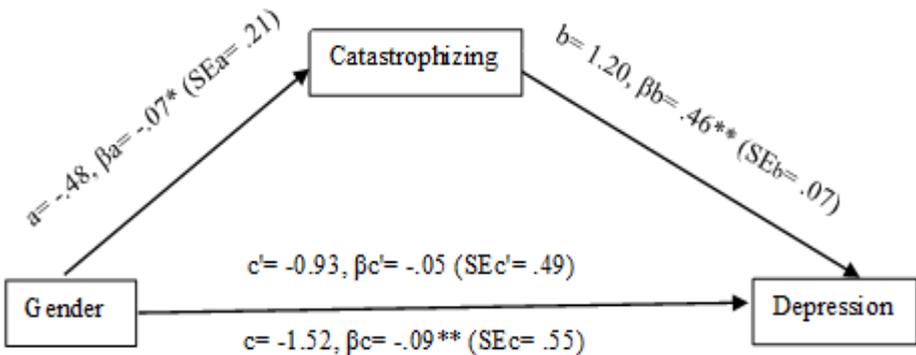
As seen in Figure 3, when controlling for rumination, gender still has a significant direct effect ( $\beta_{c'} = -.06$ ,  $p = .048$ ). The mediation effect ( $c - c' = a * b$ ) proved to be statistically significant according to the Sobel test ( $Z = -2.74$ ,  $p = .006$ ). The proportional effect size of the mediation effect indicates that 31% of the total relation between gender and depression is mediated by rumination.



**Figure 3.** The diagram for the mediation of rumination between gender and depression

### Catastrophizing

Figure 4 describes the mediation diagram of catastrophizing in the relationship between gender and depression.



**Figure 4.** The diagram for the mediation of catastrophizing between gender and depression

As Figure 4 indicates, when controlling for catastrophizing, gender has a no significant direct effect ( $\beta c' = -.05, p = .058$ ). The mediation effect ( $c - c' = a * b$ ) proved to be statistically significant according to the Sobel test ( $Z = -2.26, p = .023$ ). The proportional effect size of the mediation effect indicates that 39% of the total relation between gender and depression is mediated by catastrophizing.

### **Mediators of the relationship between education and depression**

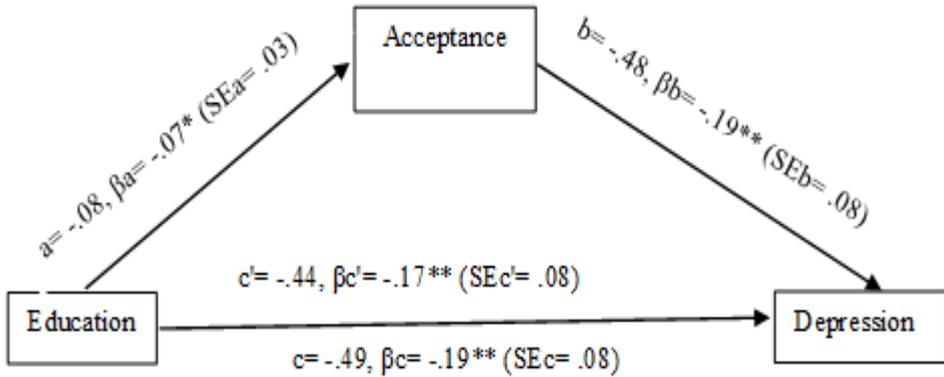
As Table 2 indicated, there is a negative and significant small to moderate relationship between education and depression. The same correlation matrix indicates also that education is negatively associated with acceptance, positive refocusing, catastrophizing and other blame. In turn, among these four coping strategies only acceptance, catastrophizing and other blame were significant correlates of depression.

As a consequence, we tested all these three cognitive strategies as mediator of the relationship between education and depression, following the same steps of analysis as mentioned previously.

### **Acceptance**

Figure 5 describes the mediation diagram of acceptance in the relationship between education and depression.

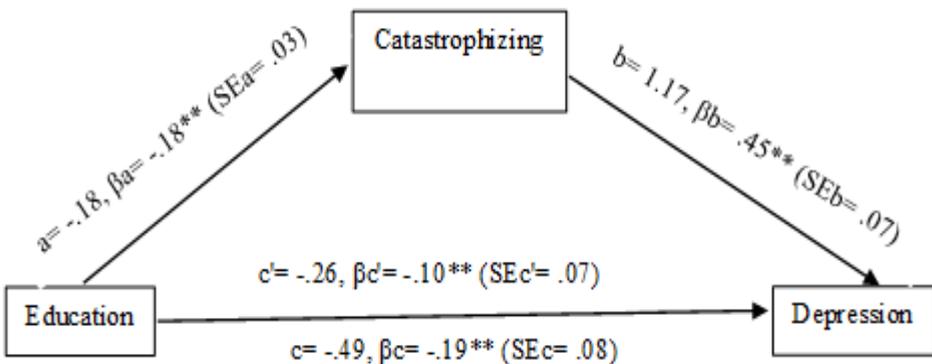
As Figure 5 shows, there is a significant but small to moderate total effect of education upon depression ( $\beta c = -.19, p = .001$ ). When controlling for positive refocusing, education still has a significant direct effect ( $\beta c' = -.17, p = .001$ ). The mediation effect ( $c - c' = a * b$ ) proved to be statistically not significant according to the Sobel test ( $Z = -2.43, p = .014$ ). The proportional effect size of the mediation effect indicates that 10% of the total relation between education and depression is mediated by acceptance.



**Figure 5.** The diagram for the mediation of positive refocusing between education and depression

### Catastrophizing

Figure 6 describes the mediation diagram of catastrophizing in the relationship between education and depression.

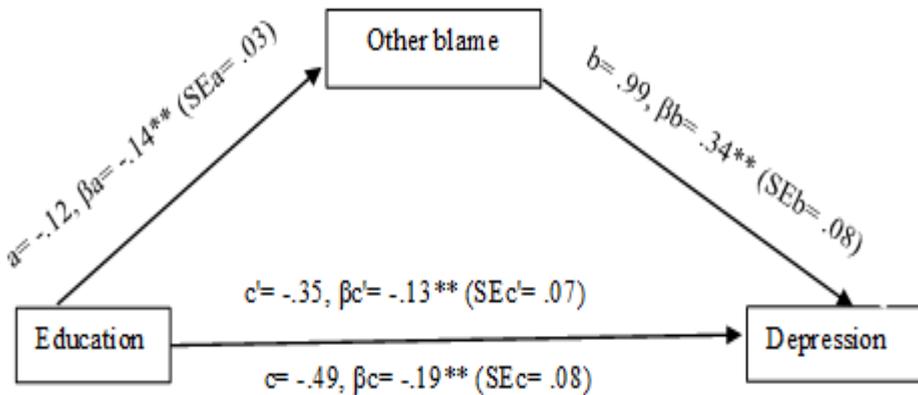


**Figure 6.** The diagram for the mediation of catastrophizing between education and depression

As Figure 6 indicates, when controlling for catastrophizing, gender has a no significant direct effect ( $\beta c' = -.10, p = .001$ ). The mediation effect ( $c - c' = a * b$ ) proved to be statistically significant according to the Sobel test ( $Z = -5.64, p = .001$ ). The proportional effect size of the mediation effect indicates that 47% of the total relation between education and depression is mediated by catastrophizing.

### Other blame

Figure 7 describes the mediation diagram of other blame in the relationship between education and depression.



**Figure 7.** The diagram for the mediation of other blame between education and depression

As Figure 7 shows, when controlling for other blame, education has a no significant direct effect ( $\beta c' = -.13, p = .001$ ). The mediation effect ( $c - c' = a * b$ ) proved to be statistically significant according to the Sobel test ( $Z = -3.80, p = .001$ ). The proportional effect size of the mediation effect indicates that 28% of the total relation between education and depression is mediated by other blame.

## **Conclusions and Discussions**

Our study is based upon several main premises. First, the fast and drastic demographic, social, technological, political, and economic changes over the past century generate high levels of distress in population. Second, distress is not equally distributed in the population, such variations being easily identified as a function of gender and education. Third, there is scientific literature confirming that emotion regulation strategies are highly involved in distress in general and specifically in depression, and those strategies are differentially used by gender or education categories. Based upon these premises, our study aimed at exploring precisely which emotion regulation strategies mediates the relationship between gender and education on one hand, and depressive symptoms on the other.

First of all, our study has identified a significant effect of small magnitude of gender upon depression, with women having higher levels of depressive symptoms. These results are in accordance with the literature (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001; 2012; Parker & Brotchie, 2010), indicating that women in general are more prone to develop and report significantly higher levels of depression than men.

Also, our results confirm the findings of previous studies, which indicate that there are significant differences in depression depending on the level of education (e.g., Ohayon, 2007; Pikhart et al., 2004). Thus in our sample we found a significant effect of small to medium magnitude of education upon depression, with lower levels of depressive symptoms for participants with higher levels of education. Such differences are usually attributed to the fact that those with higher levels of education have better access to information, possess a larger pool of options regarding emotion regulation strategies, which increases their chances to select the group of strategies that best suit the contextual demands of the situation, as well as facilitates the adherence to prevention and intervention (Gotlib & Hammen, 2009).

Exploring gender differences in using emotional regulation strategies, our results show that women use to a higher degree than men strategies as self-blame, acceptance, rumination, putting into perspective, and catastrophizing. It seems that we cannot talk about a predominance of rather functional or rather dysfunctional strategies for women. As scientific literature confirms (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012), women use emotion-regulation strategies to a higher degree than men, irrespective of their functional (adaptive) or dysfunctional (maladaptive) value.

Concerning mediational models, our results proved that the relationship between gender and depression is mediated by self-blame, acceptance, rumination and catastrophizing, with relative mediational effect sizes between 26% and 39% of the total effect. What is worth mentioning here is the fact that functional strategies have lower mediational values (26% of the total effect) while dysfunctional strategies have higher mediational values (31% - 39% of the total effect).

Analyzing the mediators of the relationship between education and depression, we brought empirical evidence for acceptance, catastrophizing and others blame, with relative mediational effect sizes ranging from 10% to 47% of the total effect. Again, it is worth mentioning that functional strategies play a less important role (10% of the total effect), while dysfunctional strategies seem to be of greater importance (28% - 47% of the total effect).

These results may be interpreted in the light of the relationship between adaptive and maladaptive emotion-regulation strategies to psychopathology. Research has repeatedly indicated that maladaptive emotion regulation strategies are more strongly related to pathological reactions than adaptive strategies (Aldao & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012; Aldao & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2010; Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema & Schweitzer, 2010), since the use of dysfunctional strategies may narrow the individual's attentional focus, thus hindering his/her ability to select and use more adaptive strategies. The finding regarding the relatively weak mediational value of adaptive strategies is also important especially when individuals receive recommendations of how and when to use specific emotion regulation strategies (Roemer, Orsillo & Salters-Pedneault, 2008).

As an overall observation, even if social factors are more intuitive and easier to identify in the form of social categories (gender/education groups), behind these categories stand different psychological profiles, generated by differences in using psychological mechanisms such as emotion-regulation strategies. Our study points out the need to identify such subtle mechanisms that can explain the unequal distribution of distress in population.

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# TEACHING LEGAL ENGLISH TO LAW SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH VOCABULARY PRACTICE TASKS

CRISTINA PIELMUŞ<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** The paper aims to demonstrate that students can learn and reinforce Legal English vocabulary through practical tasks developed based on authentic materials. The arguments to support such a demonstration consist in showcasing a variety of examples of practical vocabulary tasks that we have developed and used in class with our students. Yet, before shifting to the practical facets of teaching Legal English to law school students, the article debuts with a clarification of some concepts related to English language teaching, as well as with language teaching approaches, which is further followed by a brief analysis of the teaching resources available for Legal English and their advantages. As previously mentioned, the final section of the paper is devoted to the extensive exemplification of the possibilities a language instructor can use in a Legal English class based on the practical tasks he/she may design and develop starting from authentic materials. The teaching practice, however, has revealed that, though students can as well acquire legal English terminology while being engaged in and as a result of vocabulary-based practical tasks, the degree of effectiveness of their learning of English legal concepts is higher if learning is contextualized.

**Keywords:** *English for Specific Purposes, English for Legal Purposes, CBI, CLIL, Legal English teaching resources, LE vocabulary*

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**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG.** Das Papier zielt darauf ab, zu demonstrieren, dass Studenten Legal English Vokabular durch praktische Aufgaben, die auf authentischen Materialien basieren, lernen und verstärken können. Die Argumente, die für eine solche Demonstration sprechen, bestehen darin, dass wir eine Vielzahl von Beispielen praktischer Wortschatzaufgaben zeigen, die wir im Unterricht mit unseren Schülern entwickelt und angewendet haben. Bevor jedoch auf die praktischen Facetten des juristischen Englischunterrichts für Jurastudenten übergegangen wird, beginnt der Artikel mit einer Erläuterung einiger Konzepte, die sich auf den Englischunterricht beziehen, sowie auf Sprachunterrichtsansätze, auf die eine kurze Analyse folgt Unterrichtsmaterialien für Legal English und ihre Vorteile. Wie bereits erwähnt, widmet sich der letzte Teil der Arbeit der extensiven Veranschaulichung der Möglichkeiten, die ein Sprachlehrer in einem Legal English-Kurs nutzen kann, basierend auf den praktischen Aufgaben, die er / sie aus authentischen Materialien entwerfen und entwickeln kann. Die Unterrichtspraxis hat jedoch gezeigt, dass, obwohl die Schüler sowohl legale englische Terminologie erwerben können als auch als Ergebnis vokabularbasierter praktischer Aufgaben, der Grad der Effektivität ihres Erlernens englischer Rechtskonzepte höher ist, wenn Lernen stattfindet kontextualisiert.

**Schlüsselwörter:** *Englisch für spezifische Zwecke, Englisch für juristische Zwecke, CBI, CLIL, Rechtsenglischunterricht, LE-Vokabular*

## **1. Introduction**

As a rule, law school students who have Legal English included in their syllabus have the advantage of possessing the knowledge of the legal field, which usually allows them to acquire a better understanding of the English counterparts of the legal concepts they regularly operate with in their chosen profession, provided that they are proficient in English as well.

The aim of the present paper is to showcase a facet of teaching Legal English to Law School students by the use of vocabulary-based practical tasks. We are using for exemplification tasks that we have developed starting from authentic materials, which have been administered in our Legal English language classes, where the students have a B2 to C1 level of proficiency in English. In the end, we shall draw conclusions on the effectiveness of the teaching and learning approach employed that has been based on vocabulary practice tasks.

## **2. Concepts in English language teaching: ESP, EAP, ELP/EALP/ELAP**

**ESP** (English for Specific Purposes) involves CBI in various disciplines such as economics, medicine, technology, law etc. Thus, *Legal English* as a form of ESP has its specific vocabulary which is distinguishable from both GE (General English) and other branches of ESP, such as BE (Business English), EAP (English for Academic Purposes), EOP (English for Occupational Purposes), EMP (English for Medical Purposes), EVP (English for Vocational Purposes) and such.

Some words are common to BE and LE (e.g. case, sentence, trial etc.), which may cause confusion among L2 learners, whereas some other belong to LE only and their meanings have to be carefully looked up in legal dictionaries (e.g. *attorney/lawyer, defendant, caselaw, prosecutor, verdict, judge, witness* etc.).

The Internet may be used to teach LE terminology as it is a source of authentic texts and a pathway to language platforms (online legal dictionaries, interactive legal vocabulary exercises). Eastman (1996:34) states that the web will become more and more important given its ease of use and wide accessibility.

### ***Legal English as EAP***

English for General Purposes (EGP) or TENOR (Teaching English for No Obvious Reason) is founded on the principle of achieving a high standard of everyday English communication skills (such as reading, writing, listening and speaking). Usually, the General English language course syllabus is based on a conception of the kind of reality students have to deal with in English (Holme, 1996).

In contrast, ESP involves “education, training and practice, and it draws upon three major realms of knowledge: language, pedagogy, and students’ specialist areas of interest” (Robinson, 2001). As its name suggests, ESP is an extension of what is learnt in EGP and it focuses on specific knowledge.

There are two main strands of ESP, which are EOP and EAP. EOP involves the preparation for the professional occupations students are likely to go into when they graduate (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001:11). EAP refers to English teaching that relates to a study purpose, which is taught generally within educational institutions to students needing English for their academic courses (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

English for Legal Purposes (ELP) is also known as English for Legal Academic Purposes (ELAP) or English for Academic Legal Purposes (EALP) and is “an established sub-section of EAP” (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998: 48). It has its specific jargon and complex language, which are most often familiar only for the specialist community.

### **3. Language teaching approaches in teaching Legal English** ***Content-based instruction (CBI)***

CBI is an integrated pedagogical approach in language education, which a double focus on language skills and content mastery.

In the ESP literature there are various definitions of CBI. For instance, Mohan (1986) argues that language and content should be learned simultaneously, while Briton et al. (1989) views CBI as the “integration of particular content with language-teaching aims”, where content refers to “regular subject matter that students are currently learning such as mathematics, geography, and history etc.”. On the other hand, Williams (1995) states that an integrated approach provides a basis for language teaching and increases the chances of L2 acquisition success.

CBI refers to contextualized learning, which means that students are thought useful language in given discourse contexts, not in isolated language sequences, which may keep students motivated and interested.

English for legal purposes runs in parallel with law courses, which allows students to associate the legal knowledge with the legal English contexts and language. Usually, Legal English is included in the curriculum of students enrolled in law studies, whose evaluation consists of formative and summative tests administered at the end of each semester.

Teaching English for Legal Purposes can be centered on teaching specialized terminology in legal contexts by integrating all four language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking. Thus, teachers might use authentic materials as teaching resources as the target students’ proficiency is adequate enough (usually B2 to C1 level).

### ***Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)***

CLIL is a methodology similar to, but distinct from CBI or *language immersion*, which refers to learning context through a second foreign language, thus teaching both the subject and the language.

Language immersion is a method is a method of teaching a second language in which the learners’ second language (L2) is the medium of classroom instruction. Thus learners study school subjects through L2 (such as mathematics, geography, science, law etc.).

The purpose of such an approach is to foster *bilingualism* by offering learners the opportunity to develop their communicative competence or language proficiency in L2.

According to D. Marsh (2002), CLIL has a dual focus as it “refers to situations where subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content, and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language”.

In teaching legal English it is important to take into account the learners’ level of L2 skills and their language competence. Teaching legal English as a second language brings about some challenges such as the peculiarities and particularities of legal vocabulary and the cultural differences between the national and the L2 legal systems.

Usually, the purpose of teaching legal English is to prepare students to practice law in international contexts, to facilitate their acquisition of specialized terminology and prepare them to meet the requirements of a law degree program.

David Mellinkoff (1963:11-29) argues that legal English lexis includes Latin, French and Anglo-Saxon words and phrases, rare words from Old and Middle English, professional jargon and formal expressions, which makes it difficult to understand not only to foreign learners or L2 learners, but also to native speakers.

The aim of legal English teaching will be to train students in practicing specific skills so as to be able to use it with ease in professional legal contexts. Therefore, a good teacher of legal English must possess the required qualifications and experience in teaching English for specific purposes and sufficient knowledge of relevant legal topics. Teaching materials and resources used in legal English classes are mainly based on authentic texts displaying legal matters, contexts and systems of the US and the UK. That is why instructors teaching legal English to L2 students should primarily focus on the cultural differences that arise from the learners’ L1 culture and the L2 legal contexts they are studying. Thus, teachers should be aware of this specificity and be able to provide a cul-

tural balance and cross-cultural comparisons (for instance, when teaching topics such as “the legal profession”, “sources of law” or “branches of law”, teachers of English for law may resort to comparisons between L1 and L2 legal systems so as to make the legal notions more accessible and comprehensible).

In legal English classes students are usually exposed to legal contexts or topics in the target language (L2). Such exposure can be provided by asking students to carry out certain documentation or research on a certain legal issue, which implies the students’ availability to work independently and to carry out individual information gathering, as well as their competence in computing. In addition, students should possess an adequate communicative ability which is ensured by an advanced level of L2 and a deep knowledge of legal matters in L1. Such competence and knowledge will allow students to draw comparisons between L1 and L2 legal systems and thus extract the proper meaning of L2 legal vocabulary items or legal concepts.

Another alternative to enhance students’ acquisition of the legal terminology is to assign translation exercises from L1 to L2, and the other way around. *Translation* of legal terminology is not merely a process of finding the equivalent in L1 (mother tongue), but it requires a great deal of cognitive effort and a deep understanding and solid knowledge of the legal matters, doubled by an utter awareness of the cultural differences between L1 and L2 legal systems. In support of this idea Walker (2001) argued that “a legal concept is an abstract general notion or idea which serves as a category of legal thought or classification, the title given to a set of facts and circumstances which satisfies certain legal requirements and has certain legal consequences”.

#### **4. Legal English teaching resources: textbooks, authentic legal texts/resources**

##### ***Legal English Textbooks***

Legal English textbooks usually contain reading, listening texts on various legal issues and their aim is to make students familiar with language and structure of the legal texts. They also include practice tasks focused on specific vocabulary, grammatical structures and functional language. The additional purpose of such tasks is to prepare students for real-life situations.

The textbooks are also centered on oral communication skills through activities such as discussions, oral debates, making presentations, delivering arguments, communicating with clients, moot courts, representing a client etc.

One of the most important issues that arise in teaching Legal English is that the language specialist has to be able to understand and explain the matters of law so as to appropriately teach students legal terminology. For this reason, the language teachers have to keep in contact with specialists in the legal field to inform them on various legal issues that need clarification and can only be understood within the whole legal system. This sort of collaboration is most often necessary as there are major differences in the organization of the judicial system in UK and Romania, for instance.

Usually, the best approach in teaching, for instance, the structure of the courts, the legal profession, the branches or sources of law is to resort to a comparative approach between the legal systems in L1 and L2 cultures. Thus, besides being able to more easily understand the legal issues by resorting to comparisons, the students also become aware of the cultural differences between L1 and L2 contexts.

### ***Advantages of legal textbooks***

Indisputably, textbooks are an essential tool for both teachers and students in teaching and learning a language, in general, and legal English, in particular. According to A.A. Samad (Noorlen, Samad 2011:1) textbooks represent a major source of contact the students have with a language except for the information provided by the teachers.

The advantages of textbooks consist in the fact that they provide a clear structure and organization of the subject matter into units of study, sections and subsections. Furthermore, each unit usually includes inputs that allow students to practice the four language skills and tasks designed to facilitate the practice and acquisition of specialized legal vocabulary. They are also a resource for students' development of language competences and skills by providing a variety of tasks such as: matching exercises, gap-fill activities, cross-word puzzles, matching terms with definitions, translation of specialized contexts, legal expressions etc. Moreover, textbooks allow continuity and coherence in the study of Legal English and also an integrated learning as it introduces various legal topics and contexts.

### ***The use of authentic legal texts as alternative teaching resources***

There is a wide range of authentic legal texts that can be extracted from pieces of legislation, statutes, legal contracts, legal journals or articles, in legal cases or websites, where legal glossaries can also be found.

The Internet is the most valuable source of authentic legal texts, which offers a great variety of materials for teachers of Legal English. As compared to the printed sources (such as journals, newspapers, scientific magazines etc.) offering a limited amount of legal materials which date swiftly, the Internet makes available resources that are "continually updated, more visually stimulating and interactive", thus "promoting a more active approach to reading" (Berardo, 2006:62).

The authentic legal resources on the Internet have the advantage of offering students the opportunity of using computers and finding this learning method motivating and attractive. Students have access to cases of the European Courts of Human Rights or the European Court of Justice etc., law school websites, legislative acts, law professionals web pages, legal documents – contracts, court proceedings, judgments, EU legislation, legislative matters etc.

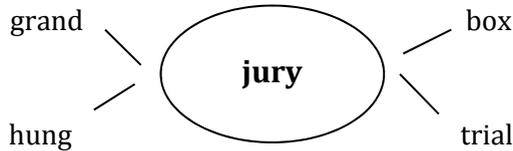
### **5. Designing effective Legal English vocabulary practice tasks for law students**

According to Krois-Lindner (2008:57) the Internet can offer the possibility to develop coherent and fully integrated authentic materials. Thus, in order to facilitate the students' acquisition of legal terminology, a variety of tasks can be developed by the teachers starting from authentic texts or resources such as: gap-fill exercises, matching activities, collocation exercises, matching word with definition, word formation, word puzzles or crosswords, exercises with opposites or synonyms, translation tasks, exercises with legal idioms etc. Examples of such Legal English language activities that we have developed for our law students are shown in the tables below. We shall briefly discuss the purpose of each type of task we have exemplified. For instance, the aim of the exercises with legal collocations and legal idioms (tables 1 and 2 – Pielmuş, 2013:42-44, 97-98, 104-105) is to teach the students learn how to associate various terms around a legal word or phrase, thus facilitating the acquisition of new vocabulary in the form of collocations and idioms.

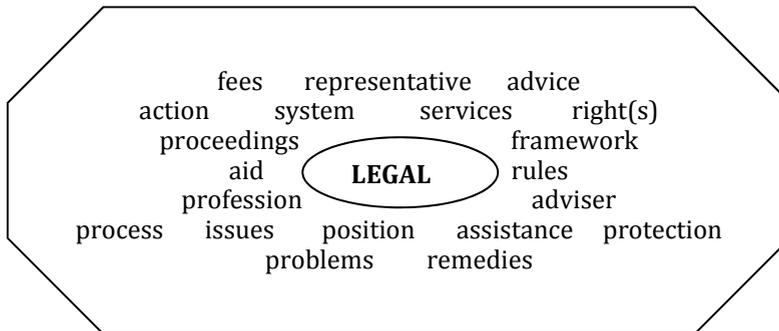
Both types of tasks can be used to encourage students to find the best equivalent of the legal words and phrases in L1 as they already have a legal background in their mother tongue, which can allow them to equate the English and Romanian versions of those terms. The tasks mentioned can also be a lead-in to further vocabulary exercises such as

**Table 1. Collocations**

1. Fill in each box below with the missing word that collocates with the ones already given. Then give the correct translation of each collocation.



2. Here are some words that collocate with the adjective "legal". Find the best translation for each collocation and then use some of them to complete the sentences below.

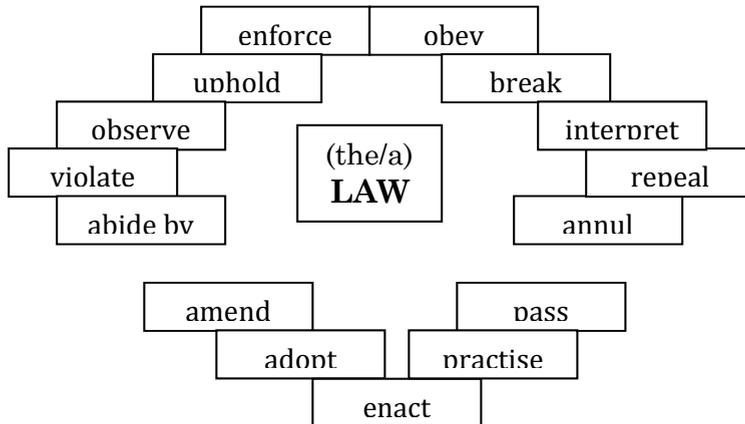


1. A career in the ...**legal profession**.... can be intellectually challenging, personally fulfilling and financially rewarding.
2. Every lawyer can provide pro bono ....**legal services**.... to victims.
3. Under civil law, a person who has been injured or suffered a financial loss can seek .... **legal remedies**....

gap-fill in the sentences or in larger texts (table 3 - Piemuş, 2013:50-51). Usually, the purpose of a gap-fill exercise is to test the students' understanding of the overall context the legal words are used in and their ability to fit the appropriate words in the right blanks depending on their meaning or the grammatical category that is missing. Next, the word-formation tasks (table 4 - Piemuş, 2013:52-53) represent both an opportunity to exercise and learn new vocabulary and to revise grammatical categories, as well as word derivation with prefixes and suffixes. Such a task may be followed by a fill-in exercise, which may allow the use of the newly acquired terminology in short contexts such as sentences.

**Table 2. Legal idioms**

Look at the diagram below. It contains idioms with the word "**law**". Match each idiom with its appropriate translation from the list below.



- |                         |                                      |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a) a interpreta o lege  | g) a promulga/pune în vigoare o lege |
| b) a practica avocatura | h) a amenda o lege                   |
| c) a vota o lege        | i) a aplica legea                    |
| d) a abroga o lege      | j) a încălca legea                   |
| e) a respecta legea     | k) a aproba legea                    |
| f) a adopta o lege      | l) a anula o lege                    |

**Table 3. Gap-fill**

Use the words in the box to fill in the blanks in the text below.

<i>adjudication</i>	<i>legislatures</i>	<i>guilty party</i>
<b><i>enforced</i></b>	<i>constitution</i>	<i>lawsuits</i>
<i>jurisdictions</i>	<i>litigant</i>	<i>codifies</i>
<i>legal remedy</i>		<i>precedents</i>

**What Is Law?**

Law is a system of rules and guidelines which are (0) **enforced** through social institutions to govern behavior. Laws are made by governments, specifically by their (1) *\_legislatures\_*. The formation of laws themselves may be influenced by a (2) *\_constitution\_* (written or unwritten) and the rights encoded therein.

A general distinction can be made between civil law (3) *\_jurisdictions\_*, in which the legislature or other central body (4) *\_codifies\_* and consolidates their laws, and common law systems, where judge-made binding (5) *\_precedents\_* are accepted.

The (6) *\_adjudication\_* of the law is generally divided into two main areas. Criminal law deals with conduct that is considered harmful to social order and in which the (7) *\_guilty party\_* may be imprisoned or fined. Civil law (not to be confused with civil law jurisdictions) deals with the resolution of (8) *\_law suits\_* between individuals or organizations. These resolutions seek to provide a (9) *\_legal remedy\_* (often monetary damages) to the winning (10) *\_litigant\_*.

**Table 4. Word-formation**

*Complete the chart, where possible, with corresponding verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs as in the example below.*

<b>Verb</b>	<b>Noun</b>	<b>Adjective</b>	<b>Adverb</b>
<i>to defend</i>	<i>defense defendant defender</i>	<i>defenseless defensive defendable</i>	<i>defenselessly</i>
to legalize	.....	.....	.....

Another task that can be used in a Legal English class in order to check the comprehension of various legal terms is matching words with their definitions or matching words with their L1 equivalent, or even matching words in order to build up collocations or verb phrases. Table 5 (Pielmuş, 2013:91-92) exemplifies a matching activity which has as aim to match the legal concepts with their definitions. Such a task require students to rely on their L1 legal knowledge in order to be able to infer what the legal term referred to is and make the right association between the

terms and their definitions. However, this task might pose a certain degree of difficulty if it is not a follow-up of a larger contextual discussion about a legal issue, as the L2 legal concepts may hardly indicate an L1 correspondent.

**Table 5. Matching**

<i>Match the legal idioms (a-l) in the right column with their correct definitions (1-12) in the left one.</i>	
1 - an event or accident due to natural causes for which no human is responsible and which could not have been avoided by planning ahead (a storm, an earthquake, a volcano etc.)	<b>a) burden of proof</b>
2 - causing a disturbance, violent or disorderly behavior	<b>b) examination for discovery</b>
3 - the necessity to prove a disputed fact as required by the laws of evidence	<b>c) power of attorney</b>
4 - a case where you incorrectly identify someone	<b>d) contempt of court</b>
5 - the breaking of a promise which may also be a breach of contract	<b>e) a breach of promise</b>
6 - a lawsuit that is made on behalf of a group of persons in a similar situation or who have suffered a similar wrong	<b>f) penalty clause</b>
7 - property belonging jointly to a married couple or acquired during their marriage	<b>g) a breach of the peace</b>
8 - a cause or reason for legal action such as a lawsuit	<b>h) case of mistaken identity</b>
9 - disobedience of the orders and authority of the court, disrespect for the court process	<b>i) grounds for (something)</b>
10 - an oral examination that is taken under oath in which each side to a lawsuit has the right to examine the other side's witnesses before a trial or hearing	<b>j) an act of God</b>
11 - a section in a contract specifying an amount of money to be paid if the contract is not fulfilled	<b>k) community property</b>
12 - a legal document granting authority for one person to act as another's representative	<b>l) class action lawsuit</b>

**Key : 1 j, 2 g, 3 a, 4 h 5 e, 6 l, 7 k, 8 l, 9 d, 10 b, 11 f, 12 c**

A different and effective approach to learning legal vocabulary consists in tasks that allow learners to practice and learn legal terms by associating them in pairs of opposites and synonyms (tables 6 and 7 - Pielmuş, 2013:62-65). Not only is such a task effective in terms of the general goal of our Legal English class, which is to facilitate the students' acquisition of legal terminology and encourage them to use it confidently in legal contexts, but it is also an opportunity to revise parts of speech, by associating words around grammatical categories, such as nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs.

**Table 6. Opposites**

*Arrange the words in the box below in opposite pairs.*

<i>lawful</i>	<i>peaceful</i>	<i>unlawful</i>
<i>capture</i>	<i>innocence</i>	<i>guilt</i>
<i>dangerous</i>	<i>safe</i>	<i>acquittal</i>
<i>escape</i>	<i>deterrence</i>	<i>punishment</i>
<i>legality</i>	<i>release</i>	<i>imprisonment</i>
<i>reward</i>	<i>unlawfulness</i>	<i>indictment</i>
<i>encouragement</i>		<i>violent</i>

lawful - unlawful  
innocence - guilt  
peaceful - violent  
dangerous - safe  
punishment - reward  
legality - unlawfulness  
release - imprisonment  
indictment - acquittal  
encouragement - deterrence  
capture - escape

**Table 7. Synonyms**

*Arrange the words in the box below in pairs of synonyms.*

<i>punishment</i>		<i>constraint</i>
<i>guilty</i>		<i>irresponsibility</i>
<i>unlawful</i>		<i>exoneration</i>
<i>legality</i>		<i>dreadful</i>
<i>clemency</i>		<i>penalty</i>
<i>charge</i>	<i>acquittal</i>	<i>restriction</i>
<i>culpable</i>		<i>abominable</i>
<i>recklessness</i>	<i>legitimacy</i>	<i>criminal</i>
<i>accusation</i>		<i>leniency</i>

leniency - clemency  
punishment - penalty  
guilty - culpable  
criminal - unlawful  
legality - legitimacy  
abominable - dreadful  
charge - accusation  
exoneration - acquittal  
irresponsibility - recklessness  
restriction - constraint

In addition, tasks such as word-puzzles and multiple choice questions might also be used in legal English classes to improve learners' vocabulary (tables 8 and 9 - Pielmuş, 2013: 23-26, 74-78). Multiple choice questions is based both on the students' comprehension of the context and the legal terminology. This type of task may check the knowledge of certain legal collocations, as in the first example in table 8, or the understanding of the context as in the second example in the same table. This

exercise format might be appealing to the students as it does not involve a lot of creative effort on their part, similarly to cross-word puzzles, which require them to discover the legal term that corresponds to a certain definition, while having an indication of the number of letters the term they are looking for has. A word puzzle may test how well the students have assimilated the legal concepts from previous content-based classes.

**Table 8.** *Multiple choice questions*

*Choose the correct answer.*

1. A jury that cannot reach a majority verdict is known as a \_\_\_\_\_ jury.

a) incongruent

**b) hung**

c) divided

d) nonunanimous

2. The accused man proved his innocence in court and he was \_\_\_\_\_.

a) pardoned

**b) acquitted**

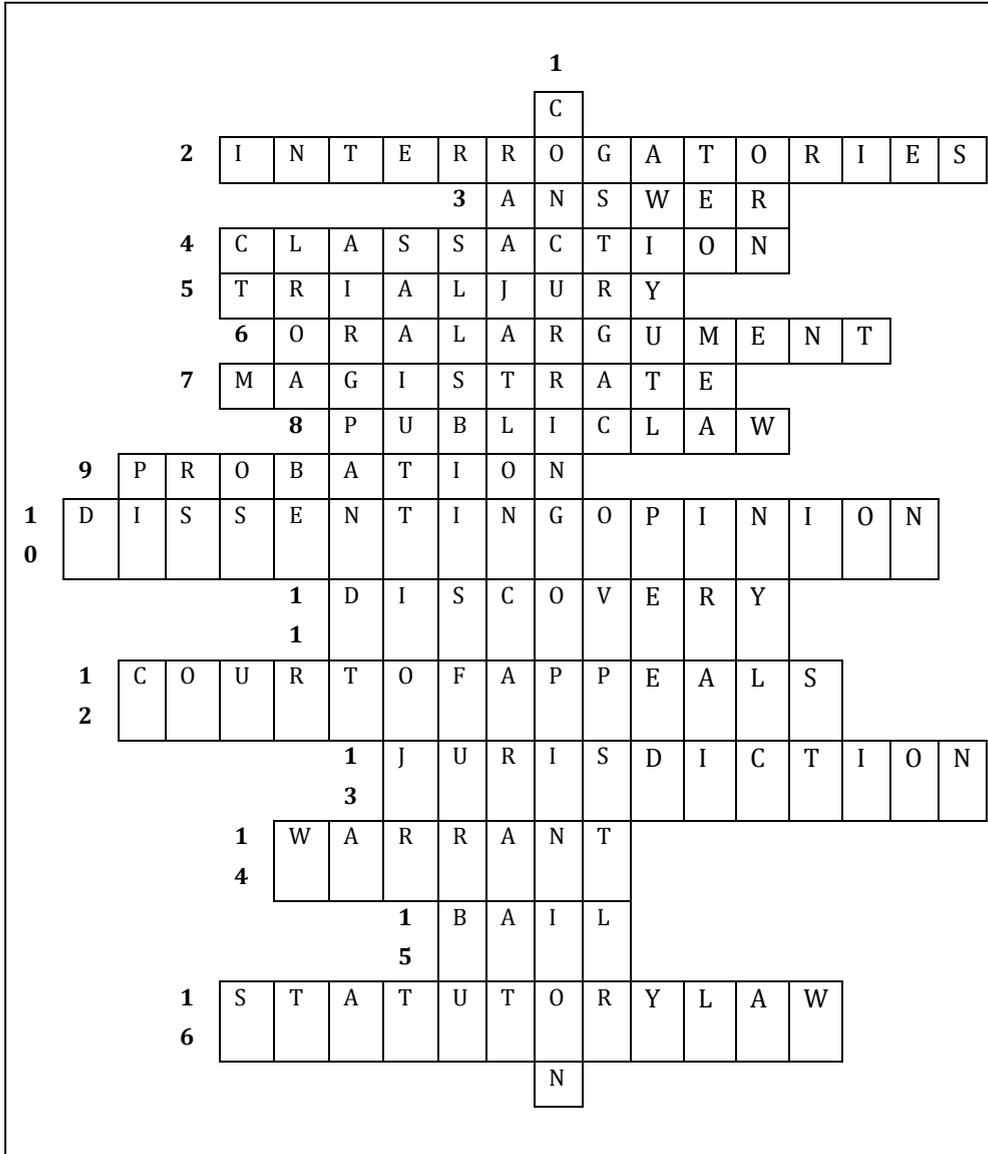
c) exempted

d) absolved

**Table 9.** *Word puzzles*

*Fill in the puzzle with the correct legal terms that correspond to the following definitions.*

1. an opinion by a member of a court that agrees with the result reached in a case but offers its own rationale for the decision (2 words)
2. written questions sent by one party in a lawsuit to an opposing party as part of pretrial discovery in civil cases; the party receiving the interrogatories is required to answer them in writing under oath
3. the formal written statement by a defendant responding to a civil complaint and setting forth the grounds for his or her defense
4. a suit brought by persons having similar grievances against a common entity (2 words)
5. a group of citizens who hear the evidence presented by both sides at trial and determine the facts in dispute (2 words)
6. an opportunity for the lawyers to summarize their position before the court and to answer the judges' questions (2 words)
7. a lower level judicial official to whom the accused is brought after the arrest, who has the obligation of informing the accused of the charges against him/her and of his/her legal rights
8. the relationship that individuals have with the state as a sovereign entity, for example the tax code or the criminal laws (2 words)
9. punishment for a crime that allows the offender to remain in the community and out of jail so long as he/she follows court-ordered guidelines about his/her behavior
10. an opinion by a member of a court that disagrees with the result reached in the case by the court (2 words)
11. the process by which lawyers learn about their opponent's case in preparation for trial by depositions, interrogatories and requests for documents
12. a court that is higher than an ordinary trial court and has the function of reviewing or correcting the decisions of trial judges (3 words)
13. the authority of a court to hear and decide legal disputes and enforce its rulings
14. it is issued after a complaint, filed by one person against another, has been presented and reviewed by a magistrate who has found probable cause for the arrest
15. a sum of money put up with the court by the defendant to ensure that he or she will appear at the time of trial
16. the type of law enacted by a legislative body (2 words)



Last but not least, translations (table 10 - Piemuş, 2013:111) can be used in Legal English classes with a view to enhance the knowledge of vocabulary and also find correspondence between L1 and L2 legal concepts.

Translations still remain a handy method of practicing vocabulary, by allowing students to check both their acquisition and comprehension of the legal terms. This way they might also reinforce the correspondence between L1 and L2 legal concepts.

**Table 10. Translation**

*Use the vocabulary given below to translate the sentences into English:*

*defendant \* trial \* criminal trial \* defence \* prosecution \* the accused \*  
to testify \* court of law \* custodial sentence \* hearing \* witness*

1. Nici o persoană acuzată nu este obligată să răspundă întrebărilor poliției înainte de proces.
2. Într-un proces penal se iau toate măsurile pentru a respinge orice avantaj al acuzării asupra apărării.
3. Inculpatul nu este obligat să depună mărturie într-un proces penal.
4. Instanța poate impune inculpatului o sentință privativă de libertate.
5. Într-un proces penal este foarte importantă audierea martorilor acuzării.

## **6. Conclusions**

The paper has provided an extensive illustration of the possibilities a language instructor can use in a Legal English class based on the practical tasks he/she may design and develop starting from authentic materials. These tasks have been administered in our Legal English language classes, where the students have a B2 to C1 level of proficiency in English. Furthermore, the students present the advantage of being in possession of the legal knowledge in L1, which is usually considered a prerequisite for them to be able to attain a better understanding of the legal English terminology they will be using in professional contexts.

Although the results of the classroom practice in Legal English based on the use of vocabulary tasks, as they have been reflected in the students' final test grades, have been more than satisfactory, due to the fact that the students are both highly proficient in English and in their legal field. However, our long-lasting teaching practice has revealed that, though students can as well acquire legal English terminology as a result of practicing vocabulary-based tasks, the degree of effectiveness of their learning of English legal terminology is considerably higher if the legal English learning is integrated in contexts related to the legal profession. This means that the legal English vocabulary tasks can work better in terms of helping students acquire legal terminology in the second language if these tasks are introduced into the lesson as additional, complementary resources to a content-based instruction.

As we have analyzed at the beginning of this paper, English teaching in general, as well as English for Legal Purposes in particular, as a variant of English for Specific Purposes, has to be circumscribed to a certain teaching approach, which the ESP instructor finds most appropriate for his/her classes. We have described two such teaching approaches, such as CBI and CLIL, in relation to teaching Legal English, which provide the language instructor with the opportunities to focus both on content and language in the language class. Thus, students can more effectively reinforce the English legal terminology, as they can link the legal concepts to a certain professional content (such as legal profession, the branches of law, the sources of law, the organization of law courts etc.), which they already possess knowledge of in L1. As such, additional vocabulary practice that complements the content-based lesson will further build on the students' language competence in the legal field.

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# THE VALIDATION OF PERFORMANCE FAILURE APPRAISAL INVENTORY FOR THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ROMANIA

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**ABSTRACT.** Fear of failure is a concept that has been studied since 1969, but over the years that followed its conceptualization has undergone various changes. Even if the fear of failure is currently being studied extensively amongst athletes, we considered that research is needed in other fields, such as education. Thus, the objective of our study was to validate the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory among the Romanian population, referring to the educational context of adolescents participating in national competitions. Therefore, the internal consistency, the factorial structure, the external validity as well as the gender discriminating power of the questionnaire were analysed. The sample of our study consisted of 541 teenagers, 9th-12th grade pupils from 41 districts in Romania, participating in national Olympiads in various school subjects (Romanian Literature, English, French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Reading as Life Skills, Socio-Human Sciences, Religion, Geography, History, Mathematics, Biology, Informatics, Physics, and Chemistry). The results obtained support the factorial structure represented by the five factors (Fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, Fear of devaluing one's self-estimate, Fear of having an uncertain future, Fear of important others losing interest, and Fear of upsetting

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important others). Also, the results obtained with regard to the psychometric properties of the questionnaire support that it can be successfully used in the educational field. Through the validation of the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory we hope to promote more intense research in the educational domain of fear of failure, which in the last years suffers from a lack of studies in this direction.

**Keywords:** *fear of failure, educational context, factorial structure, psychometric properties*

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG.** *Die Validierung des Leistungsausfall Bewertung Inventars für den Bildungskontext der Gymnasiasten in Rumänien.* Angst vor dem Scheitern ist ein Konzept, das seit 1969 untersucht wurde, aber in den folgenden Jahren hat seine Konzeptualisierung verschiedene Veränderungen erfahren. Auch wenn die Angst vor dem Scheitern derzeit bei Sportlern intensiv untersucht wird, waren wir der Meinung, dass Forschung in anderen Bereichen wie der Bildung benötigt wird. Ziel unserer Studie war es daher, das Inventar der Bewertung von Leistungsausfall bei der rumänischen Bevölkerung zu validieren, wobei auf den Bildungskontext von Jugendlichen, die an nationalen Wettbewerben teilnehmen, Bezug genommen wird. Daher wurden die interne Konsistenz, die faktorielle Struktur, die externe Validität sowie die geschlechterdiskriminierende Aussagekraft des Fragebogens analysiert. Die Stichprobe unserer Studie bestand aus 541 Jugendlichen der 9.-12. Klasse aus 41 Bezirken Rumäniens, die an nationalen Olympiaden in verschiedenen Schulfächern (rumänische Literatur, Englisch, Französisch, Italienisch, Portugiesisch, Spanisch, Lesen als Lebensfähigkeiten, Soziohumanwissenschaften, Religion, Geographie, Geschichte, Mathematik, Biologie, Informatik, Physik und Chemie) teilnehmen. Die erzielten Ergebnisse stützen die faktorielle Struktur, die durch die fünf Faktoren dargestellt wird (Angst davor, Scham und Peinlichkeit zu erleben, Angst davor, die eigene Einschätzung zu entwerten, Angst davor, eine ungewisse Zukunft zu haben, Angst vor dem Verlust von Interesse den wichtigen anderen Personen und Angst davor, andere zu ärgern). Auch

die im Hinblick auf die psychometrischen Eigenschaften des Fragebogens erzielten Ergebnisse bestätigen, dass er im Bildungsbereich erfolgreich eingesetzt werden kann. Durch die Validierung des Leistungsausfall Bewertung Inventars wollen wir eine intensivere Forschung im Bereich der Angst vor dem Scheitern fördern, die in den letzten Jahren an einem Mangel an Studien in dieser Richtung leidet.

***Schlüsselwörter:** Angst vor dem Scheitern, Bildungskontext, faktorielle Struktur, psychometrische Eigenschaften*

## **1. Introduction**

Fear of failure can be interpreted as a self-evaluative framework that influences how the individual defines, orientates, and experiences failure in assessment situations (Heckhausen, 1991). The underlying research on the origins of fear of failure seems to suggest that it has its foundation in social relationships with parents and parent-child relationships. Teevan (1983) indicates that children with a high level of fear of failure had mothers who punished the failure, and responded neutral to success. Smith (1969) showed that mothers with boys with high levels of fear of failure had set high standards for their sons but did not perceive their children as having the ability to achieve these standards. Schmalt (1982) examined in time the expectations of parents regarding the academic behaviors and independence of their children and identified a positive relationship between early expectations and fear of failure. Maternal irritability and addiction (Singh, 1992) and the paternal absence of the family (Greenfeld & Teevan, 1986) have been shown to be positively associated with the child's fear of failure.

In general, existing data indicates that people with high levels of fear of failure seem to have learned to define failure as an unacceptable event that has negative implications for its own value and relational security, which urges them to orient vigilantly and seek to avoid failure in situations of achievement.

Atkinson (1957) defines the concept of fear of failure as the dispositional tendency of an individual to focus on avoiding failure in assessment contexts, for not experiencing the feeling of shame in case of failure. It is not the failure in itself that triggers fear, but the shame that accompanies failure (Atkinson, 1957). Given the acute disappointment of experiencing a failure, in contexts of achievement, the individual is perceptively and cognitively oriented towards information relevant to failure. He/she experiences anxiety before and during work tasks, in which he/she engages and seeks to protect his/her self from failure by either physically (quitting) or mentally (retreating effort), or by forcing himself hard to achieve success with the aim of avoiding failure (Covington, 1992; Elliot & Church, 1997).

In the past, the fear of failure was measured by the scales of anxiety, but Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory by Conroy and collaborators (2002) is currently being used. Since it has been realized, there has been a growing interest in its use by various sports researchers. Thus, we identified studies whose objective was the validation of Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory in other languages or countries, such as Turkey (Kahraman & Sungur, 2016), Portugal (Correia, Rosado & Serpa, 2016) and UK (Sagar & Jowett, 2010). In these studies, we identified that the factorial structure of the inventory was retained by exploratory and confirmatory factorial analyzes, and each scale of the questionnaire obtained a satisfactory internal consistency.

This questionnaire was designed to measure the fear of failure amongst athletes and is often used for this purpose among various sports and is validated in other languages, but this questionnaire has never been used (at least we did not identify studies existing to date) in other contexts than sports. For this reason, the objective of our study is to validate this questionnaire among high school students participating in national competitions in Romania to identify whether it maintains its factorial structure and psychometric properties so that it can be a useful tool in research in the field of education.

In recent years, with the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (Conroy et al., 2002), a multitude of studies in sports have focused on investigating the relationship between fear of failure and other variables such as competitive anxiety (Conroy, 2004; Wilt, 2016), perfectionism (Sagar & Stoeber, 2009), achievement goals (Conroy & Elliot, 2004), behaviour (Sagar, Boardley, & Kavussanu, 2010), etc., but in the educational field no research has been found to use this inventory.

In a study on avoiding sports exercises, Ellis (1994) found that many of the athletes avoided doing physical exercises because of the fear of experiencing a failure in front of the public; thus avoiding them is basically a strategy to avoid shame. For an athlete, the threat of a possible failure and the associated shame may also cause anxiety by the fear of experiencing shame (Spielberger, 1966 apud Elison & Partridge, 2012).

Tangney (2002) argues that perfectionism and emotions such as shame, embarrassment and guilt mix together because these emotions are often caused by self-evaluation, an essential component of perfectionism. Perfectionists can set high standards for themselves or adopt high standards set by others, but also focus on their self-evaluation in relation to these standards, and any imperfection will generate shame or embarrassment. For example, Hewitt and Flett (1991) have identified the existence of moderate positive correlations between perfectionism and shame. Similarly, Tangney explored the relationship between shame and perfectionism in three recent studies, and focusing on socially prescribed perfectionism, a maladaptive dimension, identified correlations from .15 to .33.

In sports, Conroy, Kaye and Fifer (2007) also examined the link between perfectionism and the fear of failure among students enrolled in physical education. Their findings support the link between socially prescribed perfectionism and beliefs that failure will lead to experience negative consequences such as the disappointment of important people. Sagar and Stoeber (2009) also identified that the fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment is the central link in the relationship between

fear of failure and perfectionism, but also in the relationship between certain forms of perfectionism and negative emotional states experienced after a failure.

There is also a possibility that individuals with a high level of perfectionism - because they have excessively high standards and are too self-critical - are particularly vulnerable to failure and react negatively after experiencing a failure in performance compared to those with a low level of perfectionism (Besser, Flett, & Hewitt, 2004).

Frost and Henderson (1991) investigated the relationship between perfectionism and the orientation to success and failure among female athletes. Perfectionism was measured using Frost's Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS, Frost et al., 1990). Two dimensions of perfectionism were used - personal standards and concern over mistakes - which were identified as representing the adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Frost and Henderson indicated that perfectionism as a general score correlated strongly with both orientation to success and failure, supporting the paradoxical nature of perfectionism in athletes (Flett & Hewitt, 2005). However, for each dimension of the analysis, correlations were much more different: while personal standards correlated both with orientation to success and failure, the correlation with the orientation to success was significantly higher. In terms of concern over mistakes, it correlated significantly more strongly with the orientation to failure, indicating that the negative aspects of perfectionism in athletes are more closely related to the fear of failure than to the hope of success, while the positive dimension of perfectionism is more closely related to the hope for success rather than the fear of failure (Flett & Hewitt, 2005).

The relationship between perfectionism in sport and fear of failure is highlighted by findings suggesting that aspects of both dimensions of perfectionism - adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism - indicate positive correlations with the fear of failure, suggesting that fear of failure is associated with all aspects of perfectionism (Kaye, Conroy, & Fifer,

2008). However, in a more detailed analysis, the scales of maladaptive perfectionism are those that mainly correlate positively with the fear of failure.

In their study, Sagar and Stoeber (2009), which aimed to investigate how perfectionism and fear of failure predicted the positive and negative affect resulting from scenarios illustrating success and failure in sports competitions, they were also interested in how the scales of perfectionism and those of fear of failure were related in a sample of 388 athletes. The results of the study have shown that personal standards (the adaptive perfectionism) have a negative relationship with the fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment and a positive relationship with the positive affect resulting from success, while concern over mistakes and parents' pressure (the maladaptive perfectionism) have shown a positive relationship with the fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment and with the negative affect resulting from failure. Moreover, the fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment fully mediated the relationship between concern over mistakes and negative affect and between perceived pressure from the coach and negative affect also.

Sagar, Boardley and Kavussanu (2010) conducted a study among 331 athletic students whose aim was to verify the extent to which fear of failure and sport experience predict antisocial behaviour in academic and sports contexts and whether this prediction is the same for men and women. A second objective of the study was to test the existence of possible gender differences in the manifestation of antisocial behaviour and fear of failure. The results of the study indicate that the fear of failure and sports experience predicts antisocial behaviour in the university and sport, and the power of these predictions was not different between men and women. Also, female subjects reported higher levels of fear of self-devaluation compared to males, who in turn reported higher levels of fear of losing social influence. Similarly, the results showed that male engaged more often than women in antisocial behaviour in both contexts.

In athletics, fear of failure occurs when beliefs about the negative consequences of failure are triggered by situations where this is possible (for example, in a competition, Conroy, 2004). This fear of experiencing a failure has been shown to cause feelings of both cognitive and somatic anxiety, cognitive disorders and worry (Conroy, 2001; Conroy et al., 2002).

In a study by Wilt (2016), on a sample of 77 female participants in the runway, the relationship between anxiety manifested in the competitive context and the five types of fear of failure was analysed, in accordance with Conroy's model (2001). The results of the study showed that the total scores of the fear of failure scale correlated significantly with concern (cognitive anxiety), but did not support any relationship with somatic anxiety, argued by the fact that the scale of the fear of failure does not include items referring to physiological symptoms. The relationship between fear of failure and cognitive anxiety can suggest that subjects who are thinking about failure have more negative thoughts before the competition, which contributes to their level of cognitive anxiety. This study included two factors (age and experience, that is, the number of competitions) considered to have an influence on the level of anxiety experienced. The initial assumption was that with the increase in age and experience, anxiety and fear of failure will decrease. However, age and years of experience did not significantly predict cognitive anxiety or fear of failure scores, although previous studies correlated them with anxiety and fear of failure. Hanton, Neil, Mellalieu and Fletcher (2008) have shown that elite athletes with high levels of experience have reported increased levels of self-confidence and lower levels of anxiety.

Conroy and Elliot (2004) in a study using a sample of 356 students enrolled in sport activities showed that fear of failure has positive relationships with performance-avoidance goals, performance-approach goals and mastery-avoidance goals.

## 2. Measuring the fear of failure

In the past, researchers considered fear of failure as a one-dimensional construct because many aspects of the reasons why people worried and why they fear that they could not be successful were not known (Conroy, 2001). To understand better this construct, Birney, Burdick and Teevan (1969 apud Jackaway & Teevan, 1976) proposed a three-dimensional model in addressing the fear of failure. Model dimensions include: a) fear of self-devaluation, b) fear of punishment, and c) fear of reducing social value. Moreover, Conroy, Poczwardowski and Henschen (2001) have improved this model and defined five aversive consequences of failure: a) experiencing shame and embarrassment, b) self-devaluation, c) the possibility of having an uncertain future, d) the possibility of losing the social interest, and e) the possibility of disappointing the others.

The first dimension of fear of failure is the one of experiencing shame as a result of failure, and refers to the negative self-evaluations of the people themselves, or in other words, they believe that failure brings them shame and embarrassment, and for this reason they try to avoid failure. The second dimension refers to self-devaluation, and to the fact that some people can blame themselves for experiencing a failure and this may lead to a decrease in self-confidence. A third possible consequence of failure is the fear of having an uncertain future. Some people believe their future plans must change after experiencing a failure, and these changes make them see the future ambiguous. Another reason why people are afraid of failure is the possibility that others are losing interest in their person. People who fear losing interest think their value depends on their success and they think that if they fail, their value will drop for some people. According to them, failure has a negative impact that leads to a loss of social influence. The last dimension, as a consequence of experiencing a failure is the possibility to disappoint the important people, such as parents or teachers (Conroy, 2001; Conroy, Willow & Metzler, 2002).

In line with this revised model, Conroy and collaborators (Conroy et al., 2001) have developed the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI) to assess people's beliefs about the consequences of failure. They explain the fear of failure through five sub-scales: fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, fear of self-devaluation, fear of having an uncertain future, fear of losing social influence, and finally fear of disappointing the important others.

PFAI (Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory, Conroy, 2001) was designed to be a useful clinical tool in assessing an individual's motivation to fear failure. Lazarus (1991) stated that an individual's appraisal about a perceived (real or imaginary) change in his relationship with the environment leads to the occurrence of an emotion. In the case of fear and anxiety, the centre of appreciation highlights the threatening or aversive consequences associated with failure. These five types of appreciation are interconnected moderately and strongly with each other, and the relationships between them can be effectively summed up by a single total score, which is a general fear of failure (the belief that failure is associated with threatening or aversive consequences).

In his final development, the author made three preliminary studies. The first one was a qualitative study conducted to identify the aversive consequences of failure that provides the basis for assessments associated with the fear of failure. A second study that describes how PFAI was developed and it included a first attempt to test its psychometric properties also. And a third study analysing the instrument as well as the issues that led to a change in PFAI. Conroy and collaborators (Conroy et al., 2002) did both a version of the 25-item tool (named by them as the long version) and a short version of 5 items.

In his approach to fear of failure, Conroy (in his first qualitative study) conducted the analysis of the themes found in interviews on how respondents see the failure and its consequences. Among the issues listed by the interviewed subjects about what determines an individual to assert that he has experienced a failure were the unfulfilled personal goals, the loss of opportunities, the lost control of aspects that could be

controlled, insufficient or inefficient adaptation, inefficient communication, the perspective on the individual role played in achieving performance, the inefficiency of the control manifested in certain aspects, the creation of situations that have led others to doubt, the disappointment of others, self-devaluation, self-oriented skepticism. With regard to the consequences of the failure found by Conroy in the interviews, the subjects referred to material loss (things, jobs, opportunities, etc.), repeated failures (failure attract other failures), blocked aspirations, improved performance (use of failure as a catalyst experience) by increasing motivation and efficiency of activities, inhibiting motivation by refusing to engage again, using coping strategies, the influence of failure on personal life or relationships with those closest to them, experiencing negative emotions.

During his development, Conroy (2001) tested the original questionnaire among 396 high school students and college students (167 women and 229 men) through a series of factorial confirmatory analyses. Since the original questionnaire contained too many items (41 items), Conroy, Willow and Metzler (2002) revised the PFAI and developed a second version by removing items from the original. The revised version consists of 25 items, according to the original version - placed on five subscales, as follows: fear of shame and embarrassment (7 items), fear of self-devaluation (4 items), fear of having an uncertain future (4 items), fear of losing social influence (5 items), and fear of disappointing important others (5 items). The type of response used is on a 5-step Likert scale, where "- 2" means "I do not believe at all", "0"-"I think 50%" and "+ 2" - "I totally believe". In order to review the inventory, researchers conducted a validation study with 438 students (234 female and 204 male). The internal consistency obtained for each of the scales was: .80 for the shame and embarrassment scale, .74 for the scale of self-devaluation, .80 for the fear of having an uncertain future, .81 for the scale of losing social influence, and .78 for the fear of disappointing the important others scale. The authors also conducted a confirmatory factorial analysis, obtaining the necessary data supporting the existence of a relevant model (GFI = .98, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .09).

### **3. Translation of the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory**

The translation of the questionnaire into Romanian was done by 3 people individually, and the three versions resulted were compared to set the final version. The final version has been back translated into English so that can be compared to the original version. Because there were no differences in the content of the items between the two versions of the questionnaire, the Romanian version was used among high school students to carry out the validation process. In the PFAI validation process, we will use the exploratory and confirmatory factorial analyses, the internal consistency coefficients of each scale, the gender differences, as well as the convergent external validity. According to the author of the questionnaire, the fear of failure is associated with high levels of worry, anxiety, intrusive thoughts and sports anxiety; and with low levels of optimism (Conroy, Willow, & Metzler, 2002).

## **4. Method**

### ***4.1. Participants***

The selected group of subjects consisted of 541 teenagers (357 girls and 184 boys), 9th-12th grade students, aged between 15 and 19 years ( $M= 16.71$ ,  $SD= 1.17$ ) who participated in various national Olympiads. Distribution by gender variable was as follows: 66% girls and 34% boys. In the study were selected students participating in various competitions targeting the following subjects: Romanian Literature, English, French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Reading as Life Skills, Socio-Human Sciences, Religion, Geography, History, Mathematics, Biology, Informatics, Physics, and Chemistry. They were selected from the public lists on the official Olympics websites and contacted online to complete a set of 2 questionnaires.

## **4.2. Measures**

Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (Conroy et al., 2002) made up of 5 scales that refer to the aversive consequences associated with failure: fear of shame and embarrassment (7 items), fear of self-devaluation (4 items), fear of uncertain future (4 items), fear of losing social influence (5 items), and fear of disappointing important others (5 items). The type of response used is on a 5-step Likert scale where “- 2” means “I do not believe at all”, “0” - “I think 50%” and “+ 2”-“I totally believe”. General fear of failure is calculated by averaging the 5 subscales. The internal consistency reported by the authors for each of the scales of the questionnaire is: fear of shame and embarrassment (.80), fear of self-devaluation (.74), fear of uncertain future (.80), fear of losing social influence (.81), fear of disappointing important others (.78), and for entire inventory (.78). The score for each of the five scales is calculated by averaging the items of each scale. And the score for general fear of failure is calculated by averaging the five scales. High scores represent that the person has a high level of fear of failure.

Developed by Spielberger (1980), the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) is according to Chapell and collaborators (Chapell et al., 2005), the most important and often used tool in measuring test anxiety among high school students and university students.

The Test Anxiety Inventory translated and adapted for an educational competition context (Olympiads and Interdisciplinary Competitions) (Holic, 2018) consisting of 20 items, grouped into three distinct dimensions (Worry, Emotionality and Total Anxiety).

Test Anxiety Inventory is a scale of responses that is measured by the 4 steps (Likert scale), the respondents' options for choosing the answer are as follows: “1” - “Almost never”, “2” - “Sometimes”, “3” - “Often”, and “4” - “Almost always”.

### 4.3. Results

#### Exploratory factorial analysis

For the exploratory factorial analysis, the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 20 was used. The extraction method used in this case is Principal axis factoring, through which we will make an initial estimate of the common variance in which communalities have the lower value of 1. Oblimin rotation was used because it is a general form to obtain the oblique rotations when factors are expected to correlate, the aspect considered by performing this analysis. In this case, the exploratory factorial analysis performed by the extraction method generated a structure represented by five factors, using K1 Method (Kaiser), by which we retained the factors whose eigenvalue were  $\geq 1$ .

Following the analysis, the distribution of the 25 items was determined by five factors, thus confirming the five questionnaire scales, but one item (item 16) was distributed differently from the original version, migrating from factor 2 to factor 3. Thus, on Factor 1 were loaded items no. 19, 14, 3, 6, 8; on Factor 2 items 4, 7, 1; on Factor 3 items 24, 16, 18, 15, 20, 25, 10, 22; on Factor 4, items 8, 5, 2, 12; and on Factor 5, items 21, 17, 13, 23, 11.

Table 1 contains the loads of each item of the five factors. The Appendix presents the Romanian items for each scale of the inventory.

**Table 1.** *The Exploratory factorial analysis – distribution of items*

Items	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
Item 19	.909				
Item 14	.721				
Item 3	.622				
Item 6	.472				
Item 9	.443				

THE VALIDATION OF PERFORMANCE FAILURE APPRAISAL INVENTORY ...

Items	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
Item 4		-			
	.809				
Item 7		-			
	.705				
Item 1		-			
	.680				
Item 24			.772		
Item 16			.686		
Item 18			.650		
Item 15			.592		
Item 20			.584		
Item 25			.482		
Item 10			.387		
Item 22			.340		
Item 8				-.771	
Item 5				-.759	
Item 2				-.644	
Item 12				-.471	
Item 21					.876
Item 17					.612
Item 13					.557
Item 23					.522
Item 11					.467

### Confirmatory factorial analysis

In performing the confirmatory factorial analysis, the AMOS version 20 program was used to analyse the five factors. Also, we have used identified data on validated versions in other countries to illustrate the results obtained by us. The fit indices obtained are presented in Table 2.

We mention that in some adapted versions we have not identified all the data analysed by us and for this reason there are missing data in the table below.

**Table2.** *The fit indices for Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (Conroy, 2002) - Romanian version*

Subscales	df	$\chi^2 / df$	RMSEA	CI	CFI	TLI
<b>PFAI (Romanian version)</b>	265	3.05	.06	.05 - .06	.93	.92
<b>PFAI (original version)</b>			.05		.92	
<b>PFAI (UK version)</b>	265	2.96	.06	.05 - .06		
<b>PFAI (Turkey version)</b>			.08		.95	
<b>PFAI (Portugal version)</b>	134		.04		.96	

RMSEA- Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; CIA – Confidence interval for RMSEA;  
CFI – The Comparative fit Index.

### **Psychometric properties of the instrument**

The Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (Conroy et al., 2002) Romanian version is comprised of five subscales as follows: Fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, Fear of devaluing one's self-estimate, Fear of having an uncertain future, Fear of important others losing interest, and Fear of upsetting important others.

As required, the mean, standard deviation and internal consistency coefficient were calculated for both the whole questionnaire and each subscale.

In Table 3 we present the mean, the standard deviation and the internal consistency of the questionnaire Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (Conroy et al., 2002) Romanian version.

In Table 4 we present the mean, the standard deviation and the internal consistency coefficients for each subscale of the questionnaire.

**Table 3.** *The mean, the standard deviation and the internal consistency of the questionnaire Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (Conroy, 2002), Romanian version*

Mean	Standard deviation	Alpha Cronbach coefficient
-13.30	20.63	.85

**Table 4.** *The mean, standard deviation and the internal consistency coefficients for each subscale of the questionnaire*

Subscale	Mean	Standard deviation	Alpha Cronbach coefficient
Fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment	-1.7	8.4	.88
Fear of devaluing one's self-estimate	-1.33	3.26	.82
Fear of having an uncertain future	-1.99	3.08	.81
Fear of important others losing interest	-4.47	4.97	.88
Fear of upsetting important others	-2.52	4.17	.86

### External Validity

In order to achieve external validity, authors findings were used, which claimed that fear of failure was associated with high levels of anxiety, intrusive thoughts and sports anxiety; and with low levels of optimism (Conroy, Willow, & Metzler, 2002). In order to achieve the convergent external validity, we chose to examine the relationship between fear of failure and test anxiety (which is a form of state anxiety), measured by Test Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, 1980).

Thus, the hypothesis from which we started refers to the fact that there is a positive correlation between test anxiety and the scores of the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory, meaning that subjects who obtained high scores at the test anxiety scale will achieve high scores on measuring scales of fear of failure.

Regarding the examination of the relationship between fear of failure and test anxiety subscales, the correlations between them were calculated. The identified correlations are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** *The correlations between fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, fear of devaluing one's self-estimate, fear of having an uncertain future, fear of important others losing interest, fear of upsetting important others, cognitive test anxiety, emotionality test anxiety, general test anxiety, and general fear of failure.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
(1)Shame and embarrassment	-	.598**	.582**	.674**	.624**	.560**	.493**	.584**	.916**
(2)Devaluing one's self-estimate		-	.552**	.419**	.554**	.428**	.367**	.436**	.714**
(3)Uncertain future			-	.490**	.755**	.418**	.392**	.441**	.720**
(4)Losing interest				-	.545**	.385**	.289**	.371**	.830**
(5)Upsetting important others					-	.430**	.403**	.457**	.719**
(6)Cognitive anxiety						-	.678**	.885**	.553**
(7)Emotionality anxiety							-	.923**	.465**
(8)General test anxiety								-	.562**
(9)General fear of failure									-

\*\*p<.01

Thus, in the case of cognitive test anxiety and all five fear of failure subscales the results obtained show that there is a significant positive correlation between them, meaning that subjects with a high level of test anxiety have a high level of fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, fear of devaluing one's self-estimate, fear of having an uncertain future, fear of important others losing interest, fear of upsetting important others.

Also, the correlations between emotionality test anxiety and all five fear of failure subscales the results obtained show that there is a significant positive correlation between them, meaning that subjects with a high level of test anxiety have a high level of fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, fear of devaluing one's self-estimate, fear of having an uncertain future, fear of important others losing interest, fear of upsetting important others. What can be noticed is that the correlations between cognitive test anxiety and fear of failure subscales are higher than those existing between emotionality test anxiety and fear of failure subscales.

In the case of general test anxiety and general fear of failure scores, the results show that there is a significant positive correlation between them, meaning that subjects with a high level of test anxiety have a high level of fear of failure ( $r = .56$ ,  $df = 539$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

### **Gender differences**

To identify the gender differences in the fear of failure among Olympic high school students, we used a multivariate variance analysis (MANOVA). The dependent variables were represented by the five subscales of the questionnaire (fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, fear of devaluing one's self-estimate, fear of having an uncertain future, fear of important others losing interest, fear of upsetting important others). The obtained results supported the existence of significant differences between female and male subjects in terms of dependent variables (Pillai  $F_{5,535} = 4.3$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ).

Each dependent variable was subjected to an ANOVA analysis to demonstrate whether this trend is similar to each of the dependent variables taken separately. When measuring the difference between female and male subjects in terms of fear of shame and embarrassment, ANOVA analysis demonstrated that overall there was a significant difference between means ( $F_{1,539} = 10.28, p < .01, \eta^2 = .02$ ), and also, in the case of the fear of an uncertain future ( $F_{1,539} = 4.6, p < .05, \eta^2 = .008$ ).

As for the fear of devaluing one's self-estimate, fear of important others losing interest, and fear of upsetting important others there were no significant differences between the two groups.

Regarding the differences in the two scales, t tests for independent samples were used to identify differences between female and male subjects. Thus, in the case of fear of shame and embarrassment mean scores for male subjects ( $M = -3.29, SD = 7.92$ ) are significantly lower ( $t = -3.2, df = 539, p < .01$ ) than those of female subjects ( $M = -.86, SD = 8.53$ ).

In the case of the fear of an uncertain future, the mean scores of the male subjects ( $M = -2.38, SD = 2.93$ ) are significantly lower ( $t = -2.14, df = 539, p < .05$ ) than those of female subjects ( $M = -1.78, SD = 3.14$ ).

## 5. Discussions

The current study investigated the validity of the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory in a Romanian sample of high school students who take part to different educational competitions. We considered that the competitive context is relevant to assess the fear of failure of the various Olympics participants, given that this type of competition is a highly important one for the students. So we were concerned with translating the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (Conroy et al., 2002) and investigating both internal and convergent validity, and its power of discrimination.

Translation and adaptation studies have been conducted in other languages, demonstrating both its factorial structure and its psychometric properties (Sagar & Jowett, 2010; Kahraman & Sungur, 2016; Correia, Rosado & Serpa, 2016). In the studies about PFAI validation on other populations, the following results were obtained with regard to internal consistency coefficients: in Turkey (Kahraman & Sungur, 2016) in a first study, the coefficients ranged from .64 to .85, and in a second study from .70 to .86; in Portugal (Correia, Rosado & Serpa, 2016) after the removal of some of the items, the internal consistency coefficients for Fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment was .78, for Fear of devaluing one's self-estimate .75, Fear of having an uncertain future .76, Fear of important others losing interest .76, and Fear of upsetting important others .77; and in United Kingdom (Sagar & Jowett, 2010) the results obtained were .81, .70, .71, .81, and .77. The same procedure we followed in this case, but we used the scale in the context of educational competitions. Based on the exploratory factorial analysis, we found, taking into account the data analysis and guiding us by the results of the communalities of the items, that it was not necessary to give up any of them. Only one item has migrated from one factor to another, and more precisely, from the Fear of devaluing one's self-estimate scale to the Fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment scale. The resulting scale with all five factors is identical with the original version (Fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, Fear of devaluing one's self-estimate, Fear of having an uncertain future, Fear of important others losing interest, and Fear of upsetting important others). And in the case of confirmatory factorial analysis, the fit indices were appropriate compared with the other identified versions so we preserved the initial form that resulted from exploratory factorial analyzes.

We also compared the results obtained with regard to the internal consistency and the fit indices of the confirmatory analysis in the case of several versions translated and found in the researches (Sagar & Jowett, 2010; Kahraman & Sungur, 2016; Correia, Rosado & Serpa, 2016) carried

out on the validation of the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory and it was observed that they are similar to those obtained by us for the Romanian version.

Regarding the convergent validity, we decided that it should be carried out by investigating fear of failure relations with other constructs like anxiety, and more specifically with a situational anxiety, proceeding the suggestions made by the author of the questionnaire, Conroy, who found that fear of failure is associated with high levels of worry, anxiety, intrusive thoughts and sports anxiety; and with low levels of optimism (Conroy, Willow, & Metzler, 2002). In this way we chose the Test Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, 1980) in order to verify the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between fear of failure and test anxiety (and their scales). As expected, relationships between the Romanian version of Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory and test anxiety were significant and in the expected direction. The Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory demonstrated significant positive relationship with the two components of test anxiety (cognitive test anxiety and emotionality test anxiety). Thus, subjects with a high level of fear of failure (Fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, Fear of devaluing one's self-estimate, Fear of having an uncertain future, Fear of important others losing interest, and Fear of upsetting important others) showed high levels of cognitive test anxiety and emotionality test anxiety. What can be noticed, however, is that the relationships between the five types of aversive consequences of failure and cognitive test anxiety are stronger than those with the emotionality component of test anxiety. This puts into question the fact that the items of this inventory evaluate the fear of the aversive consequences of failure by referring to the intrusive thoughts that fear of failure generates and this aspect is similar to the cognitive scale of test anxiety that measures the concern that a student faces during a test. The same aspect was mentioned by the authors of the questionnaire who stated that fear of failure was associated with high levels of anxiety, intrusive thoughts and sports anxiety; and with low levels of optimism (Conroy, Willow, & Metzler, 2002).

The same results were obtained by Wilt (2016) who investigated how competitive anxiety is associated with fear of failure. His results showed that the cognitive component of the competitive anxiety showed very strong relationships with the fear of failure, but did not support any relationship with somatic anxiety, argued by the fact that the scale of the fear of failure does not include items referring to physiological symptoms. The author explained this strong relationship between fear of failure and cognitive anxiety by the fact that subjects who are thinking about failure have more negative thoughts before the competition, which contributes to their level of cognitive anxiety.

The results obtained also revealed that the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory presents a gender-specific discrimination power. Concerning Fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment and Fear of an uncertain future, it has been observed that male participants have much lower levels than females in terms of these aversive consequences. The existing differences between boys and girls regarding the scale of fear of having an uncertain future were not very big, but the same can't be said about the fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment. In this case, the girls obtained much higher scores than the boys. The same results were obtained by Kahraman and Sungur (2016) who identified an existing difference between girls and boys on this scale, but they did not analyse which of the subjects achieved higher scores. In the case of the other three scales, there were no significant differences between girls' and boys' scores. This results can be considered to be consistent with previous findings indicating that there is no difference between girls and boys in terms of fear of failure (Caraway et al., 2003; Conroy, Elliot, & Pincus, 2009).

In conclusion, the findings of the current study are consistent with previous research supporting the five-factor new conceptualization of fear of failure. Through the analyses which we have conducted we obtained the necessary results to support that Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory used in an educational competition context has a solid structure and internal consistency, and it can represent a useful tool to

assess the aversive consequences of experiencing failure in an educational context too and not just in sports. The use of this tool could bring great benefits to educational practice, thus encouraging school counsellors and teachers to identify the necessary measures to improve the well-being of students participating in educational competitions.

This tool can be useful both in knowing the origin of the fear of failure among students, by addressing the five aversive consequences associated with failure, and by putting it in relation with other constructs such as personality factors, achievement goals, or with the symptoms of some various pathologies such as anxiety or depression. One reason why this tool can be used in exchange for others (such as anxiety measurements) refers to the fact that knowing the origin of the fear of failure can represent a starting point in understanding the manifestations of pathologies such as anxiety. PFAI can also be used in examining the role that parents, teachers, or other people in the student environment have in the development of fear of failure in children (for example, in parent-child, teacher-students, coaches / mentors-students relationships, etc.). It can also be helpful in testing various treatments frameworks (e.g., cognitive behavioural therapy, rational-emotive therapy; Sagar et al., 2009). From a clinical point of view, by using this inventory, fear of failure can be identified, treated or prevented by discovering the wrong thinking patterns associated with failure and in this way specialists can propose some types of programs in accordance with the needs of the affected person. What is recommended for the future with regard to the study of this construct refers to its relationship with school performance. Passer (1988) draws attention to the fact that concerns about performance failure and negative social evaluation are the most prevalent sources of competitive stress and worry for youth.

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## Appendix

*The items for each scale of the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (Conroy et al., 2002), translated into Romanian*

<p>Scala <i>Teama de a experimenta rușinea</i></p>	<p>10. Atunci când nu am succes, sunt mai puțin valoros(oasă) decât atunci când reușesc.</p> <p>15. Atunci când nu am succes, acest lucru pare să mă copleșească repede.</p> <p>18. Atunci când nu reușesc, este jenant dacă alții sunt acolo ca să vadă acest lucru.</p> <p>20. Atunci când nu reușesc, cred că toată lumea știe că acest lucru se întâmplă.</p> <p>22. Atunci când nu reușesc, cred că acele persoane care nu aveau încredere în mine simt că aveau dreptate în privința mea.</p> <p>24. Atunci când nu reușesc, mă îngrijorează ce cred alții despre mine.</p> <p>25. Atunci când nu reușesc, îmi fac griji că alții ar putea crede că nu încerc.</p> <p>16. Atunci când nu reușesc, urăsc faptul că nu am controlul asupra rezultatului.</p>
<p>Scala <i>Teama de auto-devalorizare</i></p>	<p>1. Atunci când nu reușesc, se întâmplă adesea pentru că nu sunt suficient de inteligent(ă) pentru a efectua cu succes acea activitate.</p> <p>4. Atunci când nu reușesc, dau vina pe lipsa mea de abilitate.</p> <p>7. Atunci când nu reușesc, mă tem că este posibil să nu dețin suficientă capacitate/abilitate.</p>

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<i>Scala Teama de un viitor incert</i>	2. Atunci când nu reușesc, viitorul meu pare incert. 5. Atunci când nu reușesc, cred că planurile mele viitoare se vor schimba. 8. Atunci când nu reușesc, mi se perturbă „planul” ce urma. 12. Atunci când nu reușesc, nu mă îngrijorează că acest lucru va afecta planurile mele viitoare.
<i>Scala Teama de a pierde influența socială</i>	11. Atunci când nu am succes, oamenii sunt mai puțin interesați de mine. 13. Atunci când nu am succes, oamenii par să vrea să mă ajute mai puțin. 17. Atunci când nu am succes, oamenii tind să mă lase singur(ă). 21. Atunci când nu am succes, unele persoane nu mai sunt interesate de mine deloc. 23. Atunci când nu am succes, valoarea mea scade pentru unii oameni.
<i>Scala Teama de a dezamăgi persoanele apropiate</i>	3. Atunci când nu reușesc, acest lucru îmi supără pe ceilalți. 6. Atunci când nu reușesc, mă aștept să fiu criticat(ă) de persoanele importante. 9. Atunci când nu reușesc, pierd încrederea unor oameni care sunt importanți pentru mine. 14. Atunci când nu reușesc, persoanele importante nu sunt fericite. 19. Atunci când nu reușesc, persoanele importante sunt dezamăgite.

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## EDUCATION IN THE SPIRIT OF ECUMENICAL VALUES

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**ABSTRACT.** The education of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should respond to societal changes, as well as to challenges occurring in line with the unprecedented development of technology, mass migration and globalisation. The principles underlying the current educational policies support the need to promote an axiological education, in harmony with human and social values which should lead to a good co-existence, acceptance and respect between different civilisations and cultures. In this respect, the ecumenical education promotes pro-social attitudes, openness to people, peace and social justice. Near the family, the main agents shaping the children moral character are school and church. The religious education in the Romanian schools aims at the holistic development of the individuals, their spirituality and morality, but also at forming a harmonious personality of a person capable to cohabit, communicate and positively relate to his or her peers. This paper focuses on revealing the formative aspects of the religious education provided to secondary school students, the way they relate to the values and principles of ecumenical education and how specific elements to ecumenical education are applied in particular contexts.

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**Keywords:** ecumenical education, religious education, ecumenical principles and values.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG. *Bildung im Geist der ökumenischen Werte.*** Die Bildung des 21. Jahrhunderts sollte sowohl auf gesellschaftliche Veränderungen, als auch auf Herausforderungen reagieren, die zusammen mit der ohnegleichen Entwicklung von Technologie, Massenmigration und Globalisierung stattfinden. Die Prinzipien, die der gegenwärtigen Bildungspolitik zugrunde liegen, unterstützen die Notwendigkeit, eine axiologische Erziehung im Einklang mit menschlichen und sozialen Werten zu fördern, die zu einer guten Koexistenz, Akzeptanz und Respekt zwischen verschiedenen Zivilisationen und Kulturen führen sollte. In dieser Hinsicht fördert die ökumenische Erziehung prosoziale Einstellungen, Offenheit für Menschen, Frieden und soziale Gerechtigkeit. In der Nähe der Familie sind die Hauptagenten, Schule und Kirche, die den moralischen Charakter der Kinder formen. Die religiöse Erziehung in den rumänischen Schulen zielt auf die ganzheitliche Entwicklung der Individuen, ihrer Spiritualität und Moral ab, aber auch auf die Bildung einer harmonischen Persönlichkeit einer Person, die in der Lage ist, mit Gleichaltrigen zusammenzuleben, zu kommunizieren und sich positiv zu verhalten. Dieser Beitrag konzentriert sich darauf, die formativen Aspekte des Religionsunterrichts für Sekundarschüler aufzuzeigen, wie sie mit den Werten und Prinzipien der ökumenischen Bildung in Beziehung stehen und wie spezifische Elemente der ökumenischen Bildung in bestimmten Kontexten angewandt werden.

***Schlüsselwörter:*** ökumenische Erziehung, religiöse Erziehung, ökumenische Prinzipien und Werte.

## Introduction

The evolution of the human society entails some significant changes both at social, collective level, but also at personal, individual level. Those changes are characterized, among others, by a profound need to search the own identity and sense, as a psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and national existence. The identity construction represents a psychological process, closely interdependent on several factors such: heredity, environment, education, as well as the individual life experiences. Today, almost everybody can have access to worldwide information anytime, can reach any place, can communicate using multiple technological means. People today live a reality which is different from what two or three generations in the past used to live. In this context, the construction of the individual's personality starts considerably earlier and has a unique, different, difficult itinerary, as the selection of information, the variety of stimuli, the lived experiences, the educational and social context, irremediably mark certain structural dimensions of the psychical and social self.

In Romania, education has always had a religious component, being strongly shaped with an important Christian valence. As early as the first schools emerged under the wings of the Church, the first writings, religious printings, traditions, ethos, culture - all have a strong religious nature. Coming to the actual days, the society witnesses a loss of authentic values, having a strong feeling of disorientation, so that those who try to find landmarks and life models appeal to many elements met in the past, when *the first seven years of early childhood* meant the foundation of the life, the basis on which a beautiful harmonious character was built. The traditional family used to convey the spiritual endowment or treasure to their successors, while the school carried on working in fertile land and therefore embedded genuine and real values of mankind into the children mind. But for more and more people, the material values come first in line, *having* becomes more important than *being*, the indifference

and the selfishness replace the good co-existence which relies on respect and acceptance. In this context, education may be the solution for a society in which authentic values should be kept alive and functional.

### **Education and Globalization**

Globalization should be understood as a large phenomenon that requires major changes in the actual education, being defined as a paradigm that imposes the *re-thinking of beliefs and structures in traditional consciousness* (Misra, 2012). In concrete terms, education redefines its frontiers, directions of action, objectives, goals and actors, in strong relation to social demands and changes. The challenge faced up by the education is to lay emphasis mainly on developing of internationally recognized key-skills which help the individuals to succeed in their field of action. Among those possibilities and challenges, temptations and mirages, each person has to remain unique and therefore different from the rest, as globalization may have certain consequences at personal level, such as depersonalization or loss of identity and uniqueness.

In addition to its general and ordinary elements, the education has a series of exceptional features that are linked to the national and cultural specificity, to the local and religious/spiritual ethos and to the perennial values coming from generations. Each country is defined by a thesaurus of particular elements. The phenomenon of globalization has imposed the restructuring of physical country borders and the establishment of an universal standard made up of sets of values which acquire such intensity that tends to go beyond the national boundaries and be therefore recognized on a larger scale (Niculescu & Norel, 2013).

## **Ecumenical Education and Religious Education**

To understand the ecumenical education, it is necessary to explain the meaning of the word: *ecumenism*. The ecumenism comes from the Greek word *oikoumenē*, of which basis are the terms *oikéō* and *oikía*, meaning in the ancient Greek: *land on earth inhabited by humans*, as compared to the uninhabited regions of the earth. Consequently, in a general sense, it means the entire world, but, in a religious sense, it refers to *the Christian world, united under a single church*.

After the *Great Schism* (1054), the division which destroyed the Christian world, the term *ecumenism* designated everything and anything that brought Christians of all churches together, in an increasingly bigger unity of faith, worship, mission and action, towards building the Kingdom of God (Kunuba, 2015). At present, ecumenism means working in cooperation and mutual understanding between different churches and Christian denominations.

The education in the spirit of ecumenical values provides people with vast opportunities to express their model of thinking, which may be achieved in the context of exploration and mutual openness as well as listening to others. Ecumenical education is the education which supports a dialogue-oriented environment, mutual respect, exchange of ideas as enriching the co-existence. One of the principles of the ecumenical education refers to interconnection of knowledge and unity of the diversity of knowledge. Ecumenical educational promotes education for peace by creating some opportunities to overcome religious and ethnical prejudices, in an environment of authentic dialogue, openness and attitudes which are favorable to interaction.

Among the ecumenical education principles, one may find (Kunuba, 2015): (a) tolerance; (b) love for others; (c) acceptance of different thinking and opinions; (d) collaboration; (e) promoting moral values; (f) peace and respect for the environment; (g) promoting social justice and people development.

Through its values, attitudes and paradigms, ecumenical education tries to shape the individual, who should co-exist in a balanced and peaceful manner with his/her peers, accept and respect various ideas, expressions, customs and traditions. Ecumenical education contributes to form attitudes of tolerance for people of different religions and ethnicities, encourages co-existence in diversity, harmony between cultures and people, dialogue and communication between people. In the spirit of the ecumenical values, the religious education develops a series of skills, as follows (Niculescu & Norel, 2013): (a) understanding and further acceptance of specific aspects of different religions and forms of worship; (b) positively analyzing, comparing and valorizing basic concepts, rules and traditions of different religions; (c) tolerant attitude; (d) real capacity to love the human being; (e) positively valorizing the cultural values based on different religions or forms of worships.

All those values, specific to ecumenical education, are promoted with the help of religious education, in reference to which Cucuș (2009) stated that *it is fundamental and necessary for the modern person*. In fact, the religious education was reintroduced as a distinguish discipline in the Romanian national curriculum (part of the common core) in 1990, after a long period when the education was deprived of this dimension. The Christian-orthodox religion is taught in primary and secondary education, and also in high schools and vocational schools, although there are 18 religious forms of worship recognized across the country.

## **Methodology**

The age of adolescence is, by definition, a difficult period, characterized by significant psychological and physical changes, by existential questions that contribute to the crystallization of the *self*, and to the building of the teen-ager identity, including the exploration of the religious dimension seen as part of the individual's spirituality.

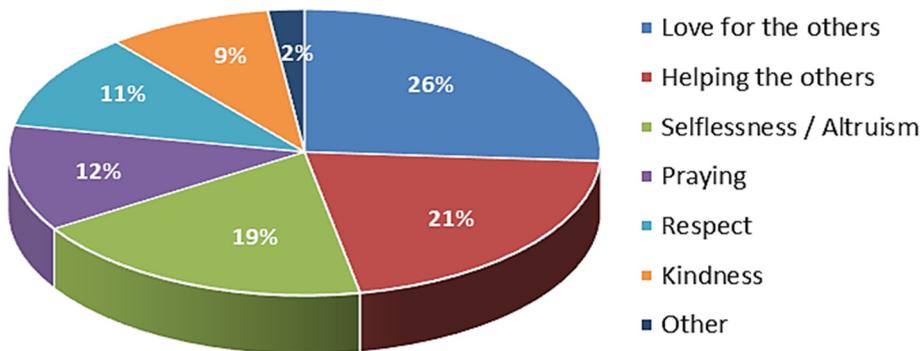
In this respect, we tried to highlight on the formative influence of religious education - concerning its principles and ecumenical values - in the process of formation of the ethical and moral dimension of human personality, by performing a research which was conducted involving high-school students, who are at the delicate age of adolescence, in the period of their psychological and social development stage, generally characterized by the appearance of different problems. The research methodology was based on the administration of a questionnaire with *open items*, from which several items have been selected to be illustrated in this paper. 200 students from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades participated to this research (questioned students). Out of the participating students, 50 were enrolled in the Theological Seminar, and 150 in the “Ienăchiță Văcărescu” National College. All of them attended specific classes of Religious Education.

The designed questionnaire is just an instrument of a broader research that aims to explore more dimensions of the students' religious life: their perceptions, emotions, feelings and attitudes, religious representations, but also the specificity concerning the understanding of religious dimension at the age of adolescence, together with the individual and social implications of religious manifestations. The selected items considered in this paper relate both dimensions of religiosity (internal and external), the last one being applied in social contexts.

## **Results and Discussion**

One of the first issue under research was defined by the individual perceptions of the students concerning what represents being a good Christian, more precisely, the way students internalise and mentally build the psychological portrait of a real Christian. Figure 1 illustrates the results, in which the major options - love for the others (26%), helping the others (21%) and selflessness/altruism (19%) - refer to the social dimension of being religious, in the respect of Scriptural teachings (the

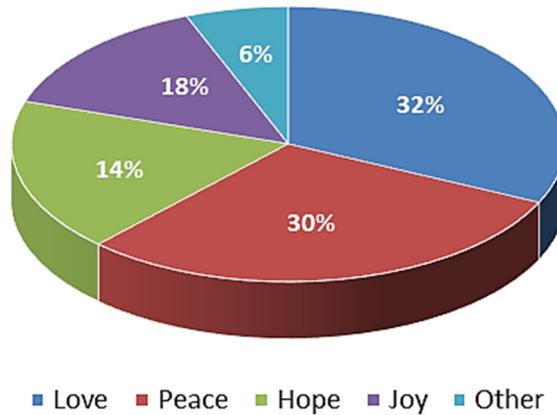
commandment on love - *love your neighbor as you love yourself*), one of the basic Christian precepts, also promoted by the ecumenical education. Other options were: praying (12%) - namely the discussion between the human and God, proof of religious practice; respect (11%); kindness (9%); and others (2%). The students associate religion and its teachings to interhuman, pro-social behaviors, considering that a Christian (a believer) has to have behaviors for the benefit of the others.



**Fig. 1.** Students' individual perceptions concerning the meaning of being a good Christian

Figure 2 illustrates the students' emotions, feelings and experiences in relation to their attendance of the Holy Services of the Church (Divine Liturgy). Thus, love (32%) and peace (30%) are the most frequent emotional states of the students, who go to religious services and pinpoint the therapeutic effects at emotional level. Other feelings were hope (18%) and joy (14%), 6% mentioned admiration, fear, finding oneself, amazement, communion, confidence (grouped as *other answers*). It is important to recognize the emotions generated by attending the religious services, because religion, similar to life, means experiences, emotions, feelings. It is worth mentioning that all emotions that students spoke about are positive, which leads to the conclusion that participation

to the religious life of the community may represent for the young generation a healthy alternative to the chaotic lifestyle, sedentary and excessively technologized life. Young people should be more involved in the life of their parishes, because the effects - at psychological level - can be beneficial for their harmonious development.

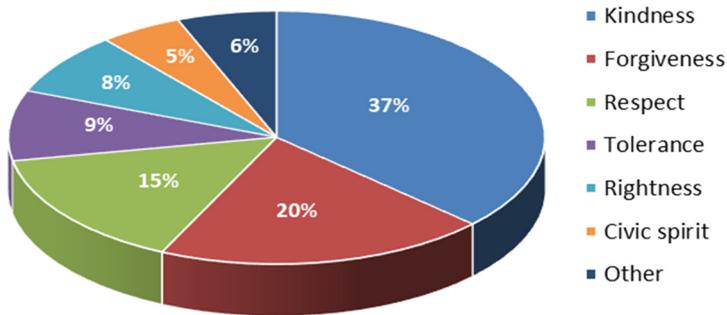


**Fig. 2.** *Students' emotions and feelings related to their participation in the Church Holy Service*

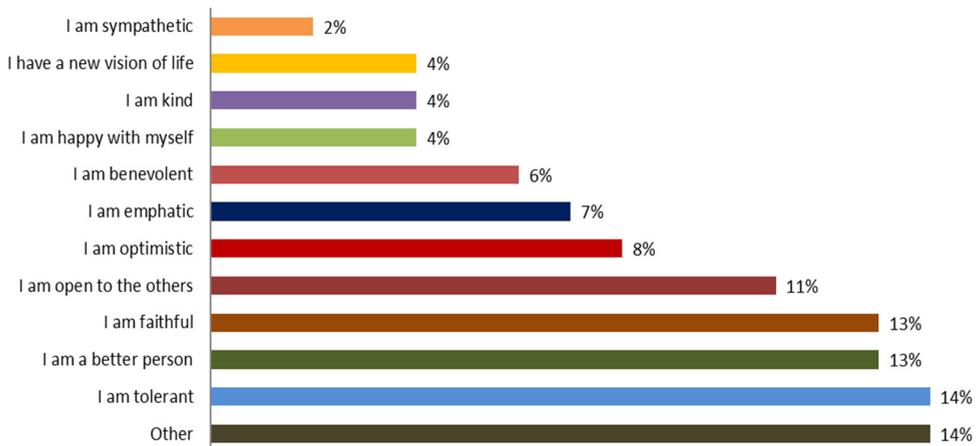
Figure 3 illustrates students' perceptions in relation to the moral qualities of a good Christian. Kindness is again present to a very great extent (37%), which indicates the awareness of being good and kind to other people. Forgiveness (20%) represents another moral feature that a good Christian should have, followed by respect (15%) and tolerance (9%). All those are values promoted and supported by the education in the ecumenical spirit.

To highlight the moral and social values promoted and developed by the religious education in terms of students' personality, the participants completed the responses to the enunciation *Due to the religious education, ...,* synthesized in Figure 4. Here, it can be seen that the students are aware of being tolerant (14%), being better and with more faith (13%), more open to others (11%), more optimistic (8%), more emphatic (7%) and kinder (6%) - all those being found in the principles and

values of the ecumenical education, which balances human relations and facilitates the intercultural dialogue, conditions which are essential in the current social context. In addition, the students appreciate that religious education has positive effects on how they perceive life: they are happier about themselves, accept themselves and consider easier to find the scope of their life, aspects which are very important at this age, when teen-agers go through the age crisis. Other given answers were: I am wise, responsible, free, I find easier to make decisions, I grow. No negative responses were offered and no student avoided to answer.



**Fig. 3.** Students' individual perceptions concerning the main moral quality of a good Christian



**Fig. 4.** Students' individual considerations concerning the character traits developed by the religious education

The final results may constitute the solution to the issue that many teachers and parents are struggling to solve: *How can one help adolescents to overcome this critical period of their life?* The religious education is highly important for the shaping of each moral character, to becoming tolerant, pro-social, moral and to having an ethical behavior, to being open to dialogue, starting with early ages and especially throughout the adolescence period.

### Conclusion

The results of the research highlight that students understand the impact of religious education on their personality and acknowledge the importance of such impact for living in the actual society, pleading for a good co-existence. The resulted data present a gladdening character, but nevertheless, this research has a limit: the participant students are coming from schools considered by the community as of high quality, schools where teachers are clearly devoted to their job. However, another element which indicates how important the religious education is for the development of the students' conscience of local traditions is represented by the *Religion discipline* itself. Despite the fact that, in order for the discipline to be attended by the students, a written expression of interest issued by the students' parents is required, at the national level, out of a total of over 2 million students (in 2015), a percentage of 91.39% made a written request for Religion to be studied in school. In this respect, a study conducted in Dâmbovița County (in 2014) illustrates that to a very great extent (more than 95%), the parents of pre-primary students wanted expressly the introduction of *Religious education* in kindergartens (Santi & Santi, 2014), being aware of its educative significance in relation to shape their children personality.

It is clear that *Religious education* in schools offers *an integrating of the spiritual horizon, a bond which relates and integrates the knowledge acquired in other disciplines, towards building a spiritual landmark which*

*is bright and probative for life, living so in the communion of love and co-responsibility for the common welfare* (Message of His Beatitude Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, March 2015).

In conclusion, we can mention the opinion of a Christian pedagogue - Professor Constantin Cucuș (2009) - who expressed the necessity of a religious education from early ages, taking into account the characteristics of those ages, and further on, during the period of younger development stages, as the benefits of this education are found in the development of the authentic values, in the structuring of one's own personal and social identity, in the setting of some landmarks and life models, in the personal development and in the process of building of relations based on solidarity, communion and responsibility.

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## EFFECT OF INTENSIVE TACT INSTRUCTION ON SPONTANEOUS VERBAL BEHAVIOR IN THREE CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY

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**ABSTRACT.** The present study is a partial replication of the intensive tact instruction tactic, in three students with developmental disability. The dependent variable was tacts emitted in Non Instructional Settings (NIS) prior and after the mastery of sets of 5 different stimuli. The NIS included the toy area of the classroom, lunchtime, and group activity. All probe sessions were conducted daily for a cumulative 15 minutes, 5 minutes in each NIS for three different days. Intensive tact instruction involved increasing the tact instructions to 100-tact learn units above the daily learn units students were receiving daily. The results showed a significant improvement of vocal verbal operants (tacts and mands) emitted by the students in natural environment.

**Keywords:** *Intensive Tact Instruction, Tact, Mand, Disability, Verbal Behavior*

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**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG.** *Wirkung von intensiv Tact Anweisung auf spontanes Verbalverhalten bei drei Kindern mit Entwicklungsbehinderung.* Die vorliegende Studie ist eine teilweise Replikation von "intensive tact Instruction Tactic", in drei Studenten mit evolutionärer Behinderung. Die abhängige Variable war die Nummer von Tacts, die in unstrukturierten Kontexten vor und nach dem Erwerb von Sets 5 verschiedener Stimuli produziert werden. Die unstrukturierte Kontexte schlossen den Spielbereich der Klasse, das Essen und Gruppenaktivitäten ein. Alle Probe-Sitzungen wurden täglich, für insgesamt 15 Minuten, 5 Minuten in jedem Kontext an 3 verschiedenen Tagen, durchgeführt. "Intensive Tact Instruction" umfasste die tägliche Zunahme von 100 Lernmöglichkeiten von "Tact" für jeden Schüler. Die Ergebnisse zeigen eine signifikante Zunahme der verbalen Stimmoperanten (Tacts und Mands), die die Schüler in natürlicher Umgebung produzierten.

**Schlüsselwörter:** *Intensive Tact Instruction, Tact, Mand, Behinderung, Sprache*

## INTRODUCTION

The acquisition of language typically occurs in the first years of life, quickly and spontaneously, as a result of the opportunities for socialising among children with the caregivers (Greenwood, Hart, Walker & Risley, 1994) and the entity of words repertoire present in children with typical development is not attributable to learning through direct teaching (Greer & Ross, 2008). The majority of children with autism spectrum disorders have a delay in language development (Stevens et al., 2000; Tager-Flusberg, 1988; Tager-Flusberg & Sullivan, 1998), the onset and frequency with they reach the different stages of linguistic development are often delayed when compared to children with typical development (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Different studies in literature (Delgado & Oblak, 2007; Greer & Du, 2010) tried to identify the most efficient strategies to stimulate the spontaneous language of children with disabilities and the analysis of verbal Behavior of Skinner (1957) forms the conceptual basis for many effective language training that received attention both in literature and in practice (Leaf & McEachin, 1999; Sundberg & Michael, 2001; Sundberg & Partington, 1998). Skinner (1957) defines verbal Behavior as a Behavior reinforced through the mediation of another person's Behavior. In the text *Verbal Behavior*, Skinner (1957) identified six types of verbal operants based on their function: Echoic, Mand, Tact, Intraverbal, Textual responding and Transcription. Among these verbal operants, Mands and Tacts are particularly relevant for the present study.

Mand is a verbal operant in which the response is reinforced by a specific consequence and is functionally controlled by relevant conditions of deprivation or adverse stimulation (Greer, 2002; Greer & Ross, 2008; Skinner, 1957). Tact is a verbal operant controlled by a nonverbal antecedent stimulus that function as discriminative stimulus (Sundberg, Juan, Dawdy & Arguelles, 1990), and is reinforced by generalized reinforcements (Greer & Ross, 2008; Tsiouri & Greer, 2003). Several studies (Greer & Du, 2010; Greer & Ross, 2008; Pistoljevic & Greer, 2006;) suggest that tact repertoire is critical for verbal development of children, as it is the basis for the acquisition of more complex verbal Behaviors, like naming (Greer et al., 2005; Lowe et al., 2002), conversational units (Lodhi & Greer, 1989) and reading (Greer & Ross, 2008).

Many studies (Delgado & Oblak, 2007; Pistoljevic & Greer, 2006; Schaffler & Greer, 2006) suggest that the Intensive Tact Instruction protocol helps preschool and school age children with typical and atypical development, to increase the number of verbal operants, Pure Tacts and Pure Mands, in natural environments. Most of Tacts that participants in different researches (Delgado & Oblak, 2007; Pistoljevic & Greer, 2006; Schaffler & Greer, 2006) emitted in non-educational situations were not limited to Tacts taught in the Intensive Tact Instruction protocol. This

seems to suggest, as pointed out by Pistoljevic and Greer (2006), that students have learned to emit Tacts to get generalized reinforcement in the form of attention from teachers.

The present study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Intensive Tact Instruction procedure (Pistoljevic & Greer, 2006; Delgado & Oblak, 2007) on the number of Pure Tacts and Pure Mands emitted, in non-educational contexts, by two students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and a student with difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication still in diagnostic assessment phase.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Objective***

The objective behind the development of this research was to elaborate and investigate the benefits, in term of effectiveness and efficiency of an Intensive Tact Instruction in two children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and in a student with difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication still in diagnostic assessment phase.

### ***Research hypothesis***

The application in students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and disability of an intensive tact protocol produced an increased number of verbal operants in natural settings. In this research we focused on the coordinate described as a specific hypothesis: increasing the tact instructions to 100-tact learn units above the daily learn units students improve the emission of pure tacts and pure mands in non-istructional setting.

### ***Research variables***

*The dependent variables* measured in this study was the numbers of pure tacts and pure mands emitted during the 5-minute probes across three non-instructional settings.

*The independent variables* in this study was the Intensive Tact Instruction Procedure. During the intervention the presentation of additional 100 tact learn units were delivered throughout the day (Albers & Greer, 1991; Greer & McDonough, 1999; Greer, 2002).

Four sets of multimedia digital picture of stimuli depicting various objects were used. Five categories with four target stimuli in each category were included in each set. The five categories targeted included food, animals, parts of human body, house objects and community helpers. There were multiple exemplars of each stimuli (at least three) and they were all interspersed in all teaching conditions. Twenty learn units were presented for each of the five categories within a specific set on a daily basis. The target sets were rotated until 100 tact learn units were presented to the participant. The same sets of stimuli were repeatedly presented until the participant achieved mastery for all four sets of stimuli within the targeted five categories.

### ***Procedure***

During the initial probe, and following the mastery of each set, data were collected during 5-minute observation probes conducted across 3 different non-instructional settings; the lunch table, the group activity and the play area of the classroom. We used event recording to record the numbers of tacts and mands emitted by the students during the probes. We counted each tact and mand emitted in the three non-instructional settings, by writing all the utterances students emitted during the designated time period.

During the tact intervention, a correct response was recorded when the participant vocally labelled the target item in the picture accurately and independently within 3 seconds of the presentation of the

stimuli. The antecedent for a pure tact operant is non-verbal and consists in a multimedia digital picture. Positive reinforcement in the form of generalized social praise (i.e. verbal praise such as “Well done”, “Good job” or tickles) was then presented immediately contingent on a correct response. Responses that deviated from the correct response were omitted, or those that occurred outside of the three-second intraresponse time resulted in the delivery of a simple correction procedure by the teacher. In the simple correction, the target antecedent (picture) was re-presented and accompanied by an echoic prompt.

We recorded a plus (+) on a data collection sheet when the student emitted a correct response to a learn unit, and a minus (-) was recorded if a student emitted an incorrect response or no response. Each intensive tact instructional session consisted of 20-learn units delivered per category; therefore, five learn units were delivered per target stimuli in a single category. Criterion was defined as responding correctly with at least 90% accuracy across 2 consecutive sessions. After achieving criterion on one of the training sets, a new set of tacts was implemented. Students mastered a single set, all five categories, before they were taught the next set.

## ***Results***

This study investigating the effectiveness and efficiency of Intensive Tact Instruction procedure (Pistoljevic & Greer, 2006; Delgado & Oblak, 2007) on the number of Pure Tacts and Pure Mands emitted, in non-educational contexts, by two students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and a student with difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication still in diagnostic assessment phase. Figure 1 shows the delayed multiple probe design used in the study.

Student A emitted a total of 1 tact, in the second probe, and 4 mands across 3-probes sessions respectively 0 in the first, 1 in the second, and 3 in the third. Following mastery of Set 1, Student A emitted a total of 16 tacts and 12 mands in a single session. Following the mastery of Set 2 Student A emitted a total of 22 tacts and 15 mands in a single

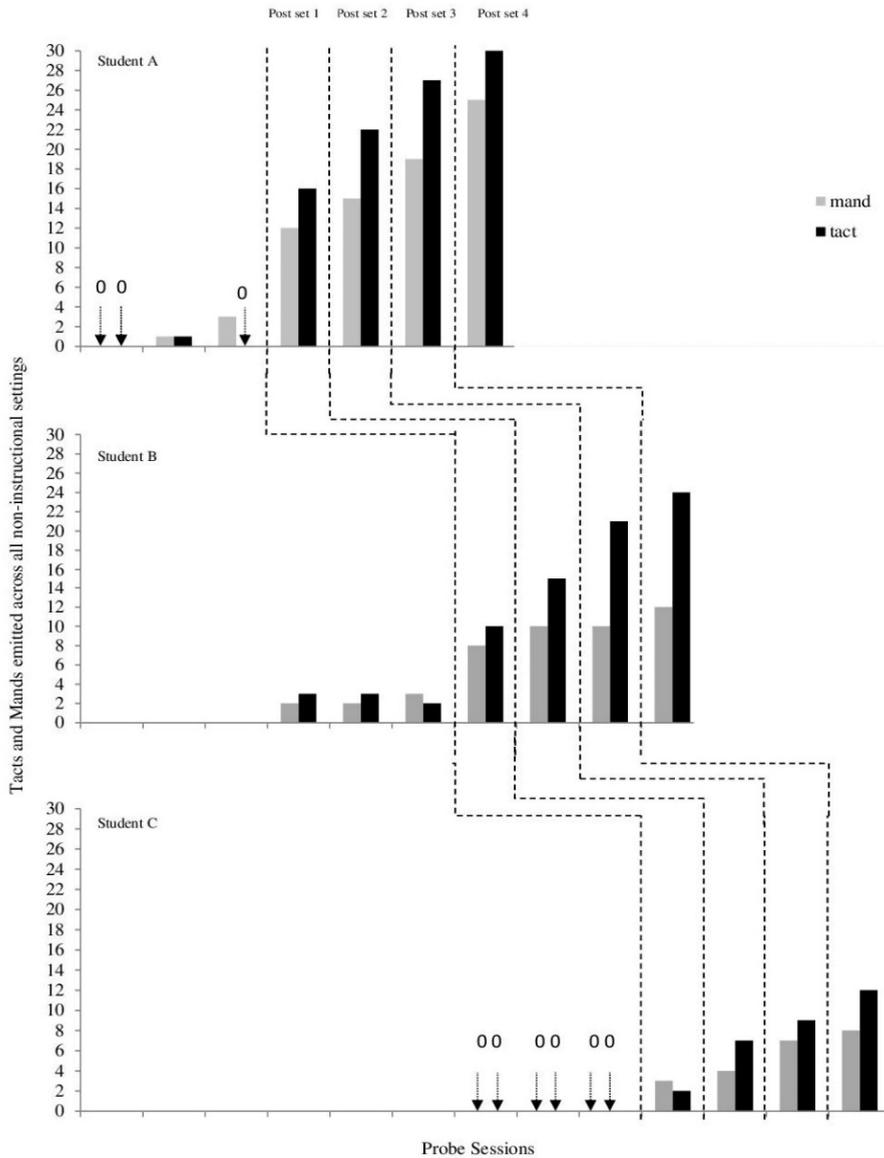
session. After the mastery of Set 3, Student A emitted 27 tacts and 19 mands in a single session. Following the mastery of Set 4, mands in a single session. Following the mastery of Set 2 Student B emitted a total of 15 tacts and 10 mands in a single session. After the mastery of Set 3, Student B emitted 21 tacts and 10 mands in a single session. Following the mastery of Set 4, Student B emitted a total of 24 tacts and 12 mands across all three probes.

Student A emitted a total of 30 tacts and 25 mands across all three probes. Student B emitted a total of 8 tacts, respectively 3 in the first, 3 in the second and 2 in the third, and 7 mands across 3-probes sessions respectively 2 in the first, 2 in the second, and 3 in the third. Following mastery of Set 1, Student B emitted a total of 10 tacts and 8

Student C emitted no tact and no mand across 3-probes sessions. Following mastery of Set 1, Student C emitted a total of 2 tacts and 3 mands in a single session. Following the mastery of Set 2 Student C emitted a total of 7 tacts and 4 mands in a single session. After the mastery of Set 3, Student C emitted 9 tacts and 7 mands in a single session. Following the mastery of Set 4, Student C emitted a total of 12 tacts and 8 mands across all three probes.

This procedure did demonstrate a functional relationship between Intensive Tact Instruction and the frequency of Pure Tacts and Pure Mands emitted by the students in the non-instructional setting. These findings are consistent with the results of Pistoljevic & Greer (2006) and Pereira-Delgado & Oblak (2007) in that the Intensive Tact Instruction facilitated the acquisition of mands and tacts. In several occasions the tacts emitted by the students during post probes was different from the tact learned during the training, that can support the thesis of Tsiouri & Greer (2003) and Pistoljevic & Greer (2006) that Intensive Tact Instruction enhanced the acquisition of reinforcement for social attention.

Future studies may target the long-term effects that the intensive tact protocol has on students with and without this type of training. Further research is necessary to test other positive effects that the intensive tact protocol may have on other verbal operants with other populations of learners.



**Figure 1.** Student A, B, and C's frequency of tacts and mands emitted across all non-instructional settings, blocked into 15-minute session.

## Conclusion

Our data suggest that increasing the number of pure tacts and mands children are taught could lead to a greater number of verbal behavior and interaction with others. By learning to emit more tacts and mands, young children with autism can recruit more attention from adults and peers in their environment, thereby creating more opportunities for verbal exchanges.

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# ACTIVE LEARNING - THE CONDITION OF OBTAINING QUANTIFIABLE SCHOOL RESULTS IN NATIONAL EVALUATION TESTS

IOANA-MARIA CÂMPEAN<sup>1\*</sup>, OLGA CHIȘ<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** Our research analyses in detail significant aspects that are specific to active learning with the purpose of optimizing school performance in primary school. In this respect, the scientific approach follows the current methodological directions the main focus of the specialist's being the interest in activation and participatory strategies. The work depicts learning aspects in the following subjects: Romanian, Mathematics and Science, following a heuristic approach, a discovery- and problem-based learning, in teaching and in the acquiring of the specific content. The main focus was to observe to what degree the use of these teaching strategies can lead to obtaining superior school results that are quantifiable in National Testing.

**Keywords:** *active learning, discovery-based learning, heuristic approach, problem-based learning, National Tests.*

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG. Aktives Lernen-Voraussetzung für das Erhalten Quantifizierbarer Schulergebnisse in nationalen Evaluationstests.** Das aktive Lernen stellt eine Herausforderung und einen Aufruf zur Selbstreflexion aufseiten der Interessierten dar, die Anteil an die Innovation und Effizientisierung des didaktischen Vorgehens nehmen. Das Syntagma *aktive Belehrung* wurde sich durch die Stärkung der positiven

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Rolle von der sozialen Dimension im Falle vom Lernen verschrieben. In der Theorie und Praxis der heutigen Didaktik kennt das Problem der aktiven Belehrung neue, komplexe, interdisziplinäre wissenschaftliche Ansätze, die von Argumenten unterstützt werden, die eine aktive und nachdenkliche Teilnahme von dem Schüler an Lern- und Bewertungsverfahren erfordern.

***Schlüsselwörter:** aktives Lernen, entdeckendes Lernen, das heuristische Verfahren, problemorientiertes Lernen, Nationale Prüfungen.*

## **1. Introduction**

In the theory and practice of the contemporary Didactics, the problem of active teaching follows new, complex and interdisciplinary scientific approaches that require an active and reflective participation of the pupil in the learning and evaluation process. From this perspective the pupils become active participants in their own training, exceeding, through their personal effort the level of empirical, partial, incomplete knowledge that is limitative and sometimes even wrong, succeeding in building and modelling their own personality in a favourable direction and in a positive way (M. Bocoș, 2013). The role of the teacher is to make the pupils responsible, to help them in their development, help them develop their personality and trust their own strengths. Educators adapt their educational speech on the basis of cultivating a new understanding in their pupils, one that is based on their own life experiences that pushes them to take an active part in the suggested activities, with the purpose of reaching the stated educational objectives.

Cognitive and constructive theories are considered fundamental in the process of active learning. The training process is very well carried out when the learning experiences start from the pupils' basic needs and expectations. As long as the pupils get the chance to reflect upon their

own experiences, they discover that ideas develop further in terms of influence and complexity and they learn to acquire superior abilities with the purpose of integrating new pieces of information. One of the most important roles of a teacher is to encourage this learning and self-reflection process.

The contemporary direction of the Romanian school is guided by some landmarks such as: "decentralization/ autonomy, accessibility, creativity, flexibility, quality and performance" (V. Chiş, 2005). The modern school imperatively requires the development of active and efficient educational structures that could be rendered permanent, offering the individual the necessary support in learning throughout their entire life.

The education law in force clearly sets up the educational finality: "shaping competence, viewed as a functional and transferable ensemble of knowledge, skills/abilities and aptitudes", all being necessary in one's one development and fulfilment, in the ability to integrate in the society, to develop interpersonal communication skills, to form conceptions about the world and life based on humanistic and scientific knowledge and on the national as well as the universal culture.

The curricular reform begun in the 90's, proposes a rethinking of the educational plans, of the school programmers and course books, incites the reorganization of the national curriculum from a European perspective and the integration of learning experiences into complex cognitive structures (M. Bocoş, D. Jucan, 2008). Starting from this premise, the process naturally led to the necessity of content correlation as a result of the intersection of different disciplinary areas. As a result the primary school curriculum sets as a goal the physical, socio-emotional and cognitive development of language and communication, as well as the development of learning capacities and attitudes, providing bridges for the development of the eight key competencies. Starting with 1998, within the space of the new curricula the term of "integrated teaching" is imposed. Learning and teaching are viewed in a holistic approach, having as purpose the reflection of reality and more precisely, an interactive reality.

Integrated teaching doesn't have as a reference just a single subject of study, but a homogenous theme that is common to several disciplines. The success of such an activity depends on the structuring degree of the projected content, always following the desired finalities, as well as on the result of combining the natural process of transmitting and acquiring information with the rigorous mental structures of the learning process. Integrated teaching targets the activation that leads to the pupils' articulation of "the reflective, logical, critical, imaginative, evaluative and creative thinking processes" (M. Bocoș, 2013).

## 2. General Research Coordinates

The aim of the present pedagogical experiment is to study the advantages and the limits of the heuristic approach, of the discovery- and problem-based learning in achieving high quantifiable school results in National Testing, in primary schools.

The general objectives of the research are:

1. Achieving high quantifiable school results in National Testing;
2. Optimization of the learning process in Romanian language and Mathematics and Science subjects;
3. Increase the pupils' active and conscious involvement in the process of acquiring new knowledge;

In order to be able to postulate the research hypothesis, our starting point was the following researched question:

*Which are the coordinates of the heuristic approach, of the discovery- and problem-based learning in achieving quantifiable school results in National Testing, in primary schools?*

Looking for answers to these questions, the research hypothesis was identified:

Achieving active learning by promoting the heuristic approach, discovery- and problem-based learning when studying for the subjects of Romanian, Mathematics and Science in the 3rd and 4th grade, contributes to a significant *improvement* of quantifiable school results in National Testing.

Thus, the *research variables* can be identified as follows:

- The independent value: - the valorisation of active learning by promoting the heuristic approach, discovery- and problem-based learning when studying for the subjects of Romanian, Mathematics and Science in the 3rd and 4th grade.
- The dependent variable: - the quality of the quantifiable school results in National Testing.

The research took place over a period of 2 school years, on an experimental group of 90 pupils, part of "Nicolae Bălcescu" High school, in Cluj-Napoca, and on a control group that included 132 attending the following schools from Cluj-Napoca: "Avram Iancu" Theoretical Highschool, "Emil Racoviță" Theoretical Highschool, "Gheorghe Șincai" Theoretical Highschool and "Ioan Bob" Secondary School.

The selection of the control group was carried out starting from the potential of these indices to valorise the interactive connections of the didactical methods and strategies (primarily the heuristic approach, the discovery- and problem-based learning). The research methods applied in the investigation, as well as the instruments that have been used, are presented in the table no.1.

**Table1.** *Research methods and instruments used*

<b>Research Method</b>	<b>Research instrument</b>
Didactical experiment	Didactical activities
The method of systematic observation	Observation sheet Psych pedagogical characterization sheet
The Quiz Method	My own drawn-up quiz
The method of analysing the activity results	The results of the pupils' activities

The statistical analysis of data	Microsoft Office Excel IBM SPSS Software
The method of curricular and legislation research	Legal documents currently in force
The method of testing and written try-outs	Standardized tests My own drawn-up quiz
Methods of measuring research data	Diagrams T Student Testing
The method of organizing, presenting and research data processing	Tables Diagrams
The method of verifying the statistical hypothesis	IBM SPSS Software

The pedagogical experiment went through 4 different stages:

- **the preparation stage** - in which the specific conditions of the carrying out of the experiment are being established and the strategy applied in the experiment is being indicated. This stage has coincided with the running, evaluation and interpretation of the tests within the National Testing in May 2015.

- **the formative stage** of the experiment - which consists of the actual carrying out of the experiment, this being a stage that takes place over a longer period of time, because the issuing of results doesn't represent an immediate consequence. The pedagogical research was carried out throughout a period of two school years: 2015-2016 and 2016-2017.

A relevant group of activities were made through applying the heuristic strategies in the study of Romanian language and literature, mathematics and sciences, in the third and fourth experimental classes

For example, in Romanian language and literature, activities were carried out on thematic areas such as the literary text; the lyrics; the book - the reading journal; the word - the meaning of the words; the oral and written narrative of fragments; composition based on given words; quotes; suspension points, etc.

- **the post-test stage** - which consists in registering and measuring the results of the experiment. In this stage the control group pupils, as well as the ones in the experimental group, were subjected to the final examination.

- **the retesting or remote verification stage** is carried out within a certain time frame. In our case this stage took place after one month and the durability of the knowledge acquired by our pupils confirmed, once again, the research hypothesis.

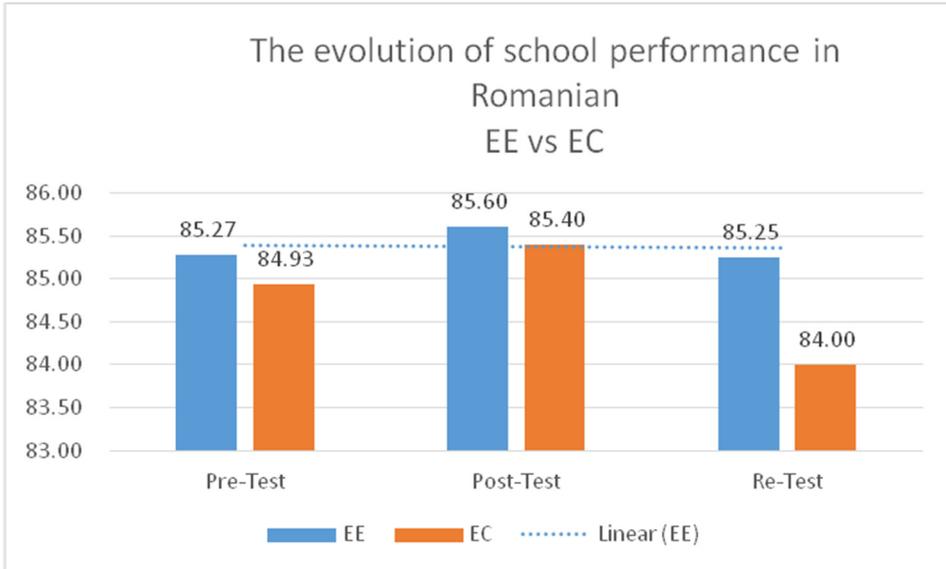
**The carrying out of the formative experiment** compresses the didactical activities that have taken place in the experimental classes. The teaching and learning activities have been influenced by the independent variable proposed, which represented the whole formative pedagogical assessment.

The dynamic of the school performance throughout the assessment targeted the pupils' evolution, school performance being quantified based on the continuous formative evaluation.

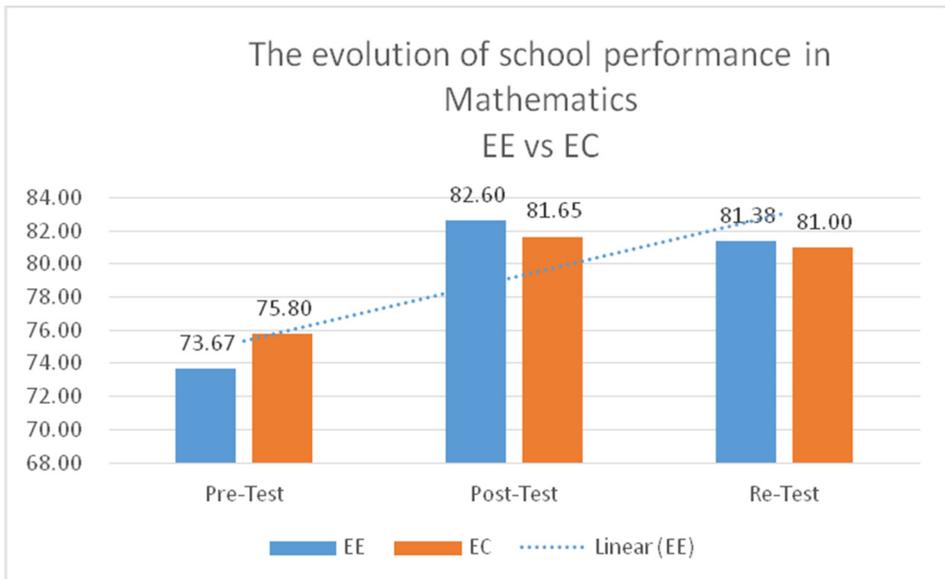
The comparative analysis, throughout the assessment, has been carried out by comparing the experimental and the control group, by using the criteria of class average, a vertical analysis being drawn. At the same time a horizontal analysis has been achieved by comparing school performance tendencies within the experimental group.

**The post-test stage** coincided with the running, evaluation and interpretation of the tests within the National Testing in May 2017. The analysis of the post-test stage and its comparison with the other results are relevant for the evolution of the experimental and control groups. This comparative analysis allows us to establish the significant differences between the results achieved by the two groups and their relation to the efficiency of the methods used in the formative period, therefore confirming our hypothesis.

**The retest stage** registered a difference of 1.25 points in favour of the results achieved by the experimental group in Romanian (Fig.1) and 0.38 points in Mathematics (Fig.2).



**Fig. 1.** *The evolution of school performance in Romanian (test scores)*



**Fig. 2.** *The evolution of school performance in Mathematics (test scores)*

### **3. Conclusions**

The quantitative and qualitative comparative analysis of the achieved results of the experimental and control group, allows us to draw the following conclusions:

**1.**In the post-test and retest stage the average of the experimental groups is significantly higher in comparison with the control group.

**2.**The performance of the pupils in the experimental group is superior to the results achieved by the pupils in the control group, due to the heuristic approach, the discovery- and problem-based learning in teaching Romanian, Mathematics and Science.

**3.**The results achieved by the experimental group during retesting, prove the long-lasting acquisitions achieved through active learning.

**4.**Teaching the content from the perspective of active learning give pupils the chance to become key players in their own intellectual development, while taking upon themselves roles and responsibilities.

The formative experiment represents the central part of pedagogical research, a stage addressing the experimental intervention, in accordance with the intervention project. The experiment's data processing and interpretation, based on the elaborated hypothesis, allow us to draw the following conclusions:

**1.** Systematic use of the heuristic approach, of the discovery-based learning and problem-solving learning, significantly influence the formation and development of the competencies that are specific to the Romanian subject, namely the ability to receive an oral message, the ability to express oneself orally, the ability to receive a written message (reading/perusing), the ability to express oneself in writing.

**2.** Systematic use of the heuristic approach, of the discovery-based learning and problem-solving learning, significantly influence the formation and development of the competencies that are specific to Mathematics, namely knowing and using the concepts that are specific to

Mathematics and that are applicable to every-day life and the development of exploration/investigation capacities as well as problem-solving abilities.

3. Systematic use of the heuristic approach, of the discovery-based learning and problem-solving learning, significantly influence the formation and development of the competencies that are specific to Science, namely understanding and using, when communicating, terms and concepts that are specific to Natural Sciences, developing experimenting and exploration/investigation capacities and abilities, while using specific instruments.

4. Systematic use of the heuristic approach, of the discovery-based learning and problem-solving learning, significantly influence the efficiency of the didactical activities' management.

The research that has been carried out proved, through its registered results, that the heuristic approach, the discovery-based learning and problem-solving learning, presented in the teaching-learning process, significantly improve the quantifiable results of pupils in National Testing. At the same time it has been shown that the benefits of such an approach have not been reduced to the cognitive level, but have been sensed in terms of motivation and emotion, behaviour and attitude. The success of didactical activities has been measured through the implication of the pupils in the proposed tasks and through the durability of the acquired knowledge. The dynamics of the classes led to the setting of a lively atmosphere and a motivating environment, thus contributing to the creation of an efficient learning style, the pupils developing their own active style of intellectual work.

The general conclusions of this active and integrated teaching and learning research prove without a doubt that the heuristic approach, discovery- and problem-based learning contribute significantly to the improvement of school performance, while bringing a plus in terms of the motivational-affective and the behavioural-attitude component.

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