

Ivana IVANIĆ, Ema DURIC, Ludmila BRANIȘTE

INTEGRATING CULTUROLOGICAL DIMENSIONS IN ROMANIAN LANGUAGE COURSES IN SERBIA: AN INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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Rezumat

Integrarea aspectelor culturologice în predarea limbii române în Serbia: o abordare interculturală

Această cercetare analizează integrarea elementelor etnologice și culturologice în predarea limbii române în Serbia dintr-o perspectivă interculturală, evidențiind disjuncția frecventă dintre predarea lingvistică și contextualizarea culturală. Studiul investighează 38 de manuale de limba română utilizate în 12 țări, concentrându-se pe includerea conținutului cultural relevant, având un corpus de 1.160 de elemente culturale identificate. Cercetarea utilizează o abordare mixtă, combinând modelul competenței comunicative interculturale (ICC) al lui Byram cu analiza discursului cultural (CuDA). Elementele sunt analizate prin cele cinci dimensiuni ICC și clasificate în cinci tipuri de discurs: descriptiv, intercultural, neutru, normativ și stereotipic. Rezultatele indică o predominanță a discursurilor descriptive și normative, mai ales în tematici precum gastronomia, geografia și istoria, în timp ce dimensiunile interculturale sunt subreprezentate. Studiul subliniază nevoia unor activități reflexive, centrate pe elev și bazate pe conținut multimedia, pentru a stimula conștiința și implicarea interculturală. Se recomandă o integrare mai echilibrată și intenționată a dimensiunii culturale în predarea limbii române, în special în contexte multilingve și multiculturale, precum cel sârbesc, unde predarea limbilor minoritare joacă un rol educațional și social esențial.

Cuvinte-cheie: limba română, predarea limbilor minoritare, competență interculturală, pedagogie interculturală, analiza discursului.

Резюме

Интеграция культурологических аспектов в преподавание румынского языка в Сербии: интеркультурный подход

В данном исследовании рассматривается включение этнологических и культурологических элементов в преподавание румынского языка в Сербии с интеркультурной точки зрения с учетом существующего разрыва между лингвистическим обучением и культурным контекстом. Проанализированы 38 учебников по румынскому языку, используемых в 12 странах, с акцентом на культурно-релевантном контенте; в корпусе было выявлено 1160 культурных элементов. Авторы статьи применяют смешанный метод, сочетающий модель межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции (ICC) Байрама и Культурный дискурсивный анализ (CuDA). Элементы классифицированы по пяти измерениям ICC и типам дискурса: описатель-

ный, интеркультурный, нейтральный, нормативный и стереотипный. Преобладают описательный и нормативный дискурсы, особенно в темах, связанных с гастрономией, географией и историей, в то время как интеркультурные аспекты представлены слабо. Подчеркивается необходимость более рефлексивных, ориентированных на учащихся и мультимедийных заданий, способствующих развитию межкультурной осведомленности. Авторы выступают за более справедливое и целенаправленное внедрение культурного компонента в обучение румынскому языку, особенно в такой полиязычной и мультикультурной среде, как Сербия, где преподавание языков меньшинств играет важную роль в образовательных и социальных структурах.

Ключевые слова: румынский язык, преподавание языков меньшинств, межкультурная компетенция, интеркультурная педагогика, анализ дискурса.

Summary

Integrating culturological dimensions in Romanian language courses in Serbia: an intercultural perspective

This study explores the integration of ethnological and culturological elements in Romanian language education in Serbia from an intercultural perspective, highlighting the common disjunction between language teaching and cultural contextualization. The research investigates 38 Romanian language textbooks utilized in 12 countries, identifying a corpus of 1160 cultural elements. A mixed-method investigative approach combines Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) framework with Cultural Discourse Analysis (CuDA). Cultural elements are examined across five ICC dimensions and classified into several discourse types: descriptive, intercultural, neutral, normative, and stereotypical. The findings show a strong prevalence of descriptive and normative discourse, especially in topics like gastronomy, geography, and history, whereas intercultural dimensions remain underrepresented. The study underscores the necessity for more reflective, student-centered, and multimedia-based activities to promote intercultural competence and awareness. It calls for a more balanced and purposeful integration of culture in Romanian language teaching, particularly in multilingual and multicultural settings like Serbia, where minority language education plays a vital societal and educational role.

Key words: Romanian language, minority language teaching, intercultural competence, intercultural pedagogy, discourse analysis.

Introduction. All educational tiers in Serbia include foreign language instruction, mandating proficiency in a minimum of one foreign language. Foreign languages are available as elective courses to students in higher education, irrespective of their primary field of study. Regardless of the goals of foreign language instruction contextualization is essential in the acquisition of any language, be it a first, second, or foreign language. Language, as per cultural heritage, constitutes a unique theoretical and practical framework grounded in experiences and knowledge pertinent to a specific culture and its development within particular sociocultural contexts. It also examines the historical continuity of changes within a specific language and society concerning the degree of civilizational achievements.

Culture is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, serving as a theoretical and practical framework for comprehending language, which can be dissected into distinct components (Durić 2022: 75). Our perspective is influenced by culture via deeply embedded, socially acquired knowledge, much of which remains obscured (Hinkel 2005). Byram (1989, as cited in Jedynak 2011) posits that teaching culture involves introducing students to a novel array of meanings and corresponding symbols. This fundamental comprehension allows foreign language learners to analyze cultural artifacts, values, and behaviors with greater efficacy.

Cultural artifacts and behaviors, as posited by Byram (1989), are important expressions derived from intersubjective meanings and shared social norms. These prevalent meanings constitute the bedrock of culture, articulated and conveyed predominantly through language, which is pivotal in shaping and expressing cultural identity – especially significant in foreign language education. Palmer and Sharifian (2007) contend that language is deeply interconnected with culture, influencing and reflecting discourse practices, metaphors, and cultural knowledge. Utilizing cognitive linguistics and anthropology, they emphasize the interrelation of language and culture termed *languaculture* or *linguaculture* by scholars and advocate for cultural linguistics as a framework to comprehend language as both a cultural artifact and a mechanism for structuring cultural experience.

Romanian Language and Culture – Accessible to a Global Audience. Romanian is one of the languages spoken by national minorities in Vojvodina, predominantly by Romanians in the Serbian Banat region. In Vojvodina, Romanian is taught at all educational tiers as both a foreign language and a native language. (Durić 2024: 24) The Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina allows the official use

of minority languages in provincial administration, alongside Serbian in both Cyrillic and Latin scripts. Romanian is officially used in several municipalities such as Alibunar, Kovačica and Plandište, including villages within the municipality of Vršac. Vojvodina is home to 37 educational institutions, comprising two high schools that offer instruction in Romanian, along with two higher education establishments. In regions predominantly inhabited by ethnic Romanians, four educational institutions in Grebenac (*Grebenaf*), Nikolinci (*Nicolinf*), Kuštilj (*Coștei*), and Lokve (*Sân-Mihai*) provide instruction exclusively in Romanian.

The differentiation between Romanian as a foreign language and Romanian as a native language in Serbia must be underscored for pedagogical, pragmatic and cultural purposes. Romanian is instructed as a native language in primary and secondary education predominantly in Vojvodina, although it can also be studied as a foreign language at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad and the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade. This paper examines the Romanian language as a foreign language, consistent with the authors' previous works, indicating that our students acquire the language without any prior formal education in Romanian.

After Romania became a member of the European Union in 2007, the nation enacted substantial reforms to its educational system to align with European standards and foster intercultural communication (Grosu-Rădulescu 2018: 3). The instruction of Romanian as a foreign language has been institutionalized across all faculties in Romania, serving as a mandatory component of preparatory courses for international students, together with fulfilling additional purposes such as citizenship and social integration, following the country's increased accessibility to Europe and the global community for study and residency in Romania (Bârlea 2018: 111). Romanian is not a prevalent European language; therefore, it is imperative for the state and society to preserve its cultural and linguistic integrity while adapting to the new societal demands that have, unfortunately, been overlooked for an extended period (Sonea 2018: 100).

There remains potential for enhancement in Romanian language acquisition, especially considering that the culture is often segregated from language education. The existing cultural repertoire for learning Romanian as a foreign language is overlooked and lags behind contemporary cultural achievements, especially in Romanian cinema (Bârlea 2018: 116), which could be effectively integrated into foreign language education, including artistic works, relevant media and innovative technological resources.

The reality of cultural representation in textbooks: Methodology. In 2023, a study was conducted on a corpus of 38 Romanian language learning books, stemming from innovative research aimed at identifying cultural elements in globally utilized materials for learning Romanian as a foreign language. The objective of the study was to ascertain the presence and frequency of cultural elements in Romanian language textbooks; thus, our analysis primarily focused on form. The qualitative and quantitative representation of culture is a primary challenge faced in teaching Romanian as a foreign language. The results of this comprehensive study are significant and unequivocally indicate that there are challenges in this domain, although they are certainly resolvable. The subsequent analysis evaluates 1160 cultural elements identified in 38 textbooks utilized across 12 distinct countries, employing Byram's model of intercultural competence (ICC) alongside Critical Discourse Analysis (CuDA). Discursive representation and intercultural implications delineate five principal thematic categories, according to Byram's model: intercultural attitudes (*savoir être*), knowledge (*savoirs*), interpretative and relational skills (*savoir comprendre*), discovery and interaction skills (*savoir apprendre/faire*) and critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) (Byram 2000; Griffith et al. 2016, Nguyen 2022). A four-step methodological framework was employed (Ivanić, Durić 2023):

1. A comprehensive initial analysis of the textbook to identify overarching structural and thematic patterns.
2. A thorough thematic analysis of lesson plans to discern both explicit and implicit cultural representations.
3. We meticulously cataloged all recognized cultural elements in an organized database, specifying their location, duration, description, and format (text or image).
4. Every cultural component is categorized based on two primary analytical dimensions: (a) Discourse Type (Descriptive, Intercultural, Neutral, Normative, or Stereotypical) and (b) Content Category (e.g., Geography, History, and Traditions etc.).

Each entry was indexed and classified into one of five primary thematic categories based on Byram's model and one of eight thematic classifications influenced by the CuDA model framework. The allocation was confirmed via intersubjective comparison among coders to guarantee consistency and reliability. Based on our foundational study, we also aimed to examine the cultural discourse types derived from the gathered cultural forms, thus categorizing them according

to four distinct yet complementary analytical modes: descriptive, interpretive, comparative and critical study (Carbaugh & Cerulli 2017). This enabled proportional representation and a more accurate analysis of trends and disparities in cultural coverage, which will be addressed in the subsequent section.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CuDA) Framework. CuDA is a communication approach that examines culturally specific communication practices within their daily contexts, the meanings participants derive from these practices and cross-cultural comparisons of these everyday practices and their significances (Carbaugh, Cerulli 2017). The theory posits that communication entails localized modes of expression, which encapsulate a complex process of meaning-making (Carbaugh, Cerulli 2017). The process is examined through five discursive centers centered on interpretations of identity, action, relationships, emotion and habitation in nature. The research methodology based on the theory encompasses four distinct yet complementary analytical modes: descriptive, interpretive, comparative and critical analysis (Carbaugh 2007; Carbaugh, Cerulli 2017). The CuDA-inspired research utilized our sample through the systematic collection, categorization, and assessment of cultural content integrated into lessons, illustrations, ancillary texts, and reading exercises in textbooks for learning Romanian as a foreign language. Initially, we categorized all cultural elements into eight arbitrary classifications, which were subsequently analyzed using the CuDA model.

This methodology broadened the overall framework to include five dimensions (descriptive, intercultural, neutral, normative, stereotypical) enhancing the understanding of arbitrary categories, now focused on cultural content rather than form. Table 1 delineates the types of cultural discourse across various thematic categories in Romanian language textbooks. The total number of elements is distributed unevenly among the categories, with more precise percentage values presented to two decimal places (Table 1).

Interpretation of Results. The distribution of discourse types among the examined cultural categories indicates subtle trends in the presentation of cultural content in Romanian language textbooks for foreign learners. The previously mentioned dimensions can be regarded as discursive positions or discourse categories utilized to depict or contextualize culture and communication within the scope of CuDA. Brief overview of all five discursive stances will be provided to guide the findings across the suggested categories. *Descriptive discourse* conveys factual or observable information regarding a cultural practice devoid of interpretation, judgment or comparison. *Intercultural*

discourse recognizes and promotes the comparison, contrast or interaction among cultures, frequently prompting reflection and personal involvement, rendering it a highly valuable reflection. *Neutral discourse* conveys information in an ostensibly objective manner, frequently devoid of emotional, evaluative, or interpretive components, while eschewing cultural judgments or involvement. *Normative discourse* delineates cultural behaviors or practices regarding what ought to be done, frequently implicitly positioning one cultural perspective as the benchmark or ideal, thereby implying values, regulations, or etiquette. Ultimately, *stereotypical discourse* offers reductive, generalized or essentialized perspectives on cultural groups, frequently disregarding individual differences, contextual factors, or power relations. In the realm of textbook analysis for intercultural language education, these categories enable the evaluation of cultural representation, the conveyed values or assumptions, and the positioning of learners in their interpretation and interaction with cultural material. The analysis will encompass arbitrary categories of frequency and cultural content elucidated through five discursive dimensions, accompanied by the most prevalent examples for each category.

Descriptive discourse:

- Holiday meals and recipes are often delineated, encompassing traditional dishes such as *mămăligă*, *sarmale*, *cozonac*, *salată de vinete*, and *tocăniță* (Gastronomy);
- Geographical maps, climate charts, and roadways are frequently depicted illustratively (*Delta Dunării*, *Munții Carpați*), incorporating references to orientation within the city (locations, institutions, landmarks) and explanatory texts that furnish learners with descriptive details (e.g., purchasing train tickets or interpreting travel brochures) (Geography and Regions);
- Concise texts (biographies, critiques, reports) and illustrative history (historical figures, *Dacians*, *Romans*), frequently accompanied by explanatory text, constitute the predominant descriptive discourse (History and Symbols);
- Visual depictions of traditional attire and instruments (photo collage of regional *ie* blouses accompanied by descriptive tasks) (Traditional Clothing & Customs);
- Succinct explanatory texts regarding traditional dance and music (profile of a traditional instrument – *cobza* – with a brief description) (Music and Folklore);
- Holidays and customs are frequently depicted through images (celebration of *Crăciun*, *Mărțișor*, *Dragobete*, and *Paște*) accompanied by concise explanatory texts concerning national cuisine and traditions (Christmas or Easter meals, gifts for *Mărțișor*) (Traditional Holidays);
- Dialogues, comics, and realistic texts that depict rural and urban life; services such as post offices, schools, and pharmacies, besides bureaucratic institutions; news articles, blog excerpts, and television guides depicting daily routines, including shopping, food preparation, interpersonal relationships, and public conduct; Textbook authors typically emphasize athletes such as *Nadia Comăneci*, football, the Olympics, and national stadiums (Family Values, Contemporary Culture).

Intercultural discourse:

- Examples of suitable tasks for this discourse included the formulation of a Romanian festive menu for *Crăciun* (Christmas) and a visual comparison of traditional dishes from Romania and Moldova (e.g., *ciorbă* and *cozonac*) (Gastronomy);
- The comparative analysis of various regions in Romania (e.g., interactive maps enabling learners to recall the locations of distinct landmarks) (Geography and Regions);
- Activity on analyzing the Romanian flag and coat of arms through semiotic interpretation (History and Symbols);
- Examples from literature including texts on *Mărțișor* customs accompanied by cultural reflection prompts and an interactive map showcasing various folk costumes throughout Romania (Traditional Clothing & Customs);
- Listening exercise featuring a *doina* performance that encourages discussion on emotion and structure and an illustrated guide to folk dances like *hora*, complete with step-by-step instructions (Music and Folklore);
- Texts on *Mărțișor* customs with accompanying cultural reflection prompts, *Obiceiuri de iarnă* illustrated with cultural annotations, and *Obiceiuri de Crăciun* that include cultural notes and tasks enabling learners to identify parallels with their own traditions (Traditional Holidays);
- Effective starting points in textbooks, such as a newspaper cover addressing youth emigration for classroom discussions and the *Campionii României* campaign, which showcased national sports achievements via posters and articles aimed at foreign language acquisition (Family Values, Contemporary Culture).

Neutral discourse:

- Frequently evident in phrases such as „authentic Romanian cuisine”, „traditional Romanian dishes” and „sarmale are commonly served during Christmas” (Gastronomy);

- Commonly expressed in statements like „the longest road in Romania is the *Transfăgărășan*”, „the highest mountain in Romania is *Vârful Moldoveanu*” or „the most renowned Romanian ruler is *Mihai Viteazul*” (Geography and Regions, History and Symbols);
- Encompasses general information regarding traditional garments of women or men, various forms of traditional dance, or observations about customs, including religious practices, social etiquette, and folk traditions (e.g., „People in Romania usually go to church on Sundays”) (Traditional Clothing & Customs, Music and Folklore);
- Information about Christmas and Easter traditions, together with spring celebrations associated with *Mărțișorul* in early March (Traditional Holidays);
- General information about money and how it is used in Romania, frequently occurring shopping and gift-giving customs, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and brief, colloquial, humorous forms of speech (Family Values, Contemporary Culture).

Normative discourse:

- Briefly illustrated in examples of how food should be prepared, consumed, and preserved, particularly during holidays (Gastronomy);
- Typically articulated regarding appropriate attire for winter or summer in Romania (such as at the mountain resort of *Poiana Brașov* or *Mamaia* beach), the routes one should follow to reach a tourist destination in Romania, or the perception of specific dates (holidays, celebrations, significant national anniversaries, etc.) (Geography and Regions, History and Symbols);
- Concise universal standards of etiquette in Romania, typically illustrate weddings, christenings, or festive celebrations (e.g., Brief account of wedding customs in the Maramureș region) (Traditional Clothing & Customs, Music and Folklore);
- Learners can observe the appropriate expressions for wishing Merry Christmas or Happy Easter, in addition to the desired etiquette for *Mărțișorul* (Traditional Holidays);
- Appropriate behavior in various situations in Romania: „La oficiul poștal” exemplifies routine administrative interactions, „O zi la piață” demonstrates local grocery shopping practices and „La Gara de Nord” depicts typical train travel activities, including ticket purchasing and luggage management (Family Values, Contemporary Culture).

Stereotypical discourse:

- Stereotypes manifest through picturesque village imagery, wooden implements, and ceramic ves-

sels, set against a conventional ethnic backdrop (tapestries, antiquated stoves, etc.) (Gastronomy);

- Stereotypes emerge by linking geography to personality traits (e.g., „individuals from mountainous regions are robust”) or by correlating character traits with historical contexts (e.g., „Romania is the residence of Dracula”) (Geography and Regions, History and Symbols);
- Images that lack additional cultural context include women in traditional blouses, depictions of instruments (such as the *violin*, *nai* (*pan flute*), *cimbalom*, and *cobza*), or Romani individuals performing with these instruments (Traditional Clothing & Customs, Music and Folklore);
- Certain elements are showcased devoid of adequate context, exemplified by images of holiday gifts lacking further explanation or portrayals of an idealized family unit, inclusive of great-grandparents, celebrating an event in a rural setting (Traditional Holidays);
- Regardless of the setting (city or village) or time (modern-day Romania or Romania decades ago), certain elements are positioned to illustrate the idea of favoring one idea over another, such as football, excessive spending, or cooking home-cooked meals every day (Family Values, Contemporary Culture).

This analysis indicates that Romanian language textbooks for foreign learners prioritize descriptive and normative discourses, especially in areas such as gastronomy, geography and history. Although these provide vital cultural insights, they frequently overlook chances for intercultural interaction. Categories like *Music and Folklore* and *Traditional Clothing & Customs* exhibit a blend of admiration and stereotyping, underscoring the necessity for more analytical and comparative methodologies. The limited representation of family values and contemporary culture indicates a lost opportunity to engage with relevant facets of Romanian life. The discursive framing generally portrays culture as unchanging and folkloric. To improve intercultural competence, textbooks ought to incorporate additional reflective and student-driven activities, such as cultural comparisons, personal narratives, and multimedia content that link cultural elements across traditions. This would assist learners in transcending superficial facts to achieve a more profound and dynamic comprehension of Romanian culture within its context. Moreover, it would underscore the necessity of incorporating additional tasks that promote intercultural awareness and critical cultural comparison, especially in accordance with Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence.

Byram Framework Analysis (ICC). This analysis utilizes Michael Byram's (1997) framework of intercultural communicative competence to examine a corpus of 1160 identified cultural elements present in 38 Romanian language textbooks. The objective is to assess the alignment of these elements with the aforementioned five fundamental dimensions of the framework: intercultural attitudes, knowledge, interpretative and relational skills, discovery and interaction skills and critical cultural awareness, which we will address briefly (as cited in Harper 2023: 228; Byram 1997, 2000; Griffith et al. 2016; Nguyen 2022).

- *Intercultural attitudes (savoir être)* involve a genuine inquisitiveness and receptiveness toward other cultures, along with a readiness to question one's own assumptions and embrace unfamiliar perspectives.
- *Cultural knowledge (savoirs)* is associated with an informed understanding of social groups, their customs and cultural outputs with an awareness of broader social and interpersonal dynamics.
- *Interpretive and comparative abilities (savoir comprendre)* entail the skill to examine and make sense of cultural texts or events from another society and relate them meaningfully to one's own cultural experiences.
- *Skills of exploration and engagement (savoir apprendre/faire)* highlight the ability to seek out and absorb new cultural information and to effectively apply this understanding in interaction with others.
- *Critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager)* signifies the ability to evaluate cultural viewpoints, practices and artifacts through a well-reasoned, reflective and principled lens.

Harper (2023) asserts that Byram's model functions as a pedagogically inclusive framework suitable for various classroom environments, suggesting that language educators, despite frequently lacking specialized ICC training, can proficiently integrate intercultural objectives into their instruction via organized activities aimed at fostering intercultural attitudes, cultural knowledge and critical interaction skills. Harper emphasizes that critical cultural awareness is essential and attainable through deliberate pedagogical methods, even without physical intercultural exchange, which is frequently pivotal in foreign language learning contexts. Our database analysis indicates that all of the cultural elements that were identified were recognized using Byram's model and that a certain percentage of them even fall under the ultimate category of critical cultural awareness (See: Table 2).

This section will succinctly outline the pertinent categories of cultural elements accompanied by exam-

ples to facilitate a clearer understanding of the more abstract aspects of intercultural competence analysis for Romanian language learners, based on the current resources available for learning Romanian as a foreign language.

- **Cultural knowledge:** Approximately 68% of the 1160 elements are classified within this category. This includes factual information about Romanian geography, history, traditions, cuisine, arts, and public life, as depicted in various images showcasing specific moments, locations, and individuals (images of national dishes: *sarmale*, *mămăligă*, *cozonac*, *tocaniță*; images of national treasures: churches and monasteries such as *Voroneț*, *Biserica Sf. Mihail*, *Biserica Neagră*; images of nature and tourism: *Vama Veche*, *Delta Dunării*, *Poiana Brașov*; images of significant figures: *Vlad Țepeș*, *Mircea Eliade*, *Constantin Brâncuși*; images featuring customs and celebrations: weddings, christenings, decorating a Christmas tree or Easter eggs, singing carols). This dominance affirms the textbooks' function in transmitting cultural knowledge; however, the representation often lacks depth, providing scant context or comparative analysis.

- **Interpretative and comparative abilities:** Approximately 14% of discovered and later analyzed cultural elements prompt learners to juxtapose Romanian cultural practices with their own. These predominantly represent implicit opportunities identified in lessons pertaining to celebrations, cuisine, and familial traditions. Nevertheless, the pedagogical framework frequently fails to include tasks that explicitly encourage such comparisons or reflections, particularly in the analysis of these textbooks; thus, this contribution exceeds expectations, if not surpasses them.

- **Skills of exploration and engagement:** Merely 7% of the elements potentially facilitate active cultural learning or interaction. These are predominantly found in open-ended tasks or visual prompts in select contemporary textbooks, including interactive gradual tasks that encourage students to independently uncover cultural patterns, distinct from grammar yet closely associated with standard language tasks. The pervasive absence of this component indicates that learners are infrequently inspired to critically interact with culture, which constitutes a primary drawback of the examined textbooks.

- **Intercultural attitudes:** Approximately 8% of the content pertains to the dimension of attitude. Although certain texts exhibit receptiveness and admiration for cultural diversity, particularly in urban or modern settings, the majority of materials represent culture from a monocultural and idealized perspective. Consequently, these materials only marginally support learners' emotional engagement.

- **Critical cultural awareness:** The synthesis of all other knowledge, in this case, constitutes the least represented dimension, comprising only 3% of the corpus. These elements comprise discrete examples of critical commentary, such as caricatures, contrasts between rural and urban values, allusions to social norms and political structures, and references to customs in daily life and their practical significance. In this particular case, the lack of explicit critical tasks or discussions constrains learners' ability to contemplate cultural ideologies or societal issues.

In conclusion, although the Romanian language textbooks examined in this study offer a substantial foundation of cultural content, their correspondence with overarching intercultural competence objectives is constrained. Future textbook designs should enhance the frequency and depth of content corresponding to the remaining four dimensions of Byram's model to better foster intercultural competence, particularly in the areas of interaction skills, attitudinal openness, and critical cultural engagement.

Conclusion. This study aimed to investigate the culturological aspects in Romanian language education in Serbia from an intercultural perspective, driven by an increasing recognition that linguistic proficiency alone is inadequate in multilingual and multicultural environments. This research, based on Byram's ICC model and CuDA framework, analyzed 38 Romanian language textbooks from 12 countries, identifying and categorizing 1160 cultural elements by discursive types and intercultural dimensions. The findings indicated a notable prevalence of descriptive and normative discourse, especially in the domains of gastronomy, geography and history. While these content areas do succeed in transmitting cultural information, they often lack opportunities for learners to engage in interpretive thinking, cross-cultural comparison, or critical reflection. Key intercultural aspects, especially the abilities to explore and interact with other cultures and to critically evaluate cultural perspectives, are notably limited or largely absent. Moreover, content pertaining to contemporary culture and familial values is scarce, perpetuating a static and folkloric representation of Romanian culture that could impede the advancement of intercultural sensitivity and dynamic cultural comprehension.

These findings highlight an essential requirement for enhanced student-centered, reflective, and multimodal strategies in textbook development and classroom implementation. Applied frameworks underscore the necessity of incorporating culturally rich narratives, comparative activities, and open-ended reflective tasks to enhance intercultural learning. Incorporating multimedia content, such as Romanian

cinema, music and digital narratives, can enhance the connection between learners and the vibrant culture of Romanian-speaking communities. Future textbooks for learning Romanian as a foreign language, encompassing Romanian culture, should deliberately integrate all five dimensions of Byram's ICC model, with a specific emphasis on cultivating intercultural attitudes, discovery-based learning, and critical engagement with cultural norms and representations. Educators and curriculum developers should be provided with the pedagogical resources essential for fostering intercultural dialogue and critical cultural reflection.

In conclusion, although the existing collection of Romanian language textbooks provides a fundamental basis for linguistic and cultural education, there is an urgent need for a more balanced and progressive intercultural pedagogy. By incorporating integrated cultural content and diverse discourse, Romanian language education in Serbia and beyond can more effectively equip learners to communicate and engage meaningfully across cultures with curiosity, empathy, and critical awareness.

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Annex

Table 1

Discourse Distribution Across Cultural Categories

Category	De- scrip- tive	Inter- cultural	Neu- tral	Nor- mative	Stereo- typical	Total	De- scripti- ve (%)	Inter- cultural (%)	Ne- utral (%)	Nor- mative (%)	Stereo- typical (%)
Gastronomy	35	28	23	27	32	201	17.41	13.93	11.44	13.43	15.92
Geography and Regions	25	22	35	29	34	185	13.51	11.89	18.92	15.68	18.38
History and Symbols	22	24	26	36	37	149	14.77	16.11	17.45	24.16	24.83
Music and Folklore	35	27	34	18	31	137	25.55	19.71	24.82	13.14	22.63
Traditional Clothing & Customs	22	19	29	43	32	129	17.05	14.73	22.48	33.33	24.81
Family Values	28	22	26	39	30	117	23.93	18.8	22.22	33.33	25.64
Contemporary Culture	29	25	21	38	32	107	27.1	23.36	19.63	35.51	29.91
Traditional Holidays	34	32	25	34	20	135	25.19	23.7	18.52	25.19	14.81

Table 2

Allocation of cultural components in accordance with Byram's dimensions

Dimension	Number of elements	Contribution (%)
Knowledge (<i>savoirs</i>)	789	67.93
Interpretative and relational skills (<i>savoir comprendre</i>)	162	13.97
Discovery and interaction skills (<i>savoir apprendre/faire</i>)	81	6.98
Intercultural attitudes (<i>savoir être</i>)	93	8.02
Critical cultural awareness (<i>savoir s'engager</i>)	35	3.02

Ivana Ivanić (Novi Sad, Republica Serbia). Doctor în științe filologice, conferențiar universitar, Universitatea din Novi Sad.

Ивана Иванич (Нови-Сад, Республика Сербия). Доктор филологических наук, конференциар, Новосадский университет.

Ivana Ivanić (Novi Sad, Republic of Serbia). PhD in Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, University of Novi Sad.

E-mail: ivana.ivanic@ff.uns.ac.rs

ORCID: 0000-0001-6064-5028

Emma Durici (Novi Sad, Republica Serbia). Doctorand, Universitatea din Novi Sad.

Эма Дурич (Нови-Сад, Республика Сербия). Докторант, Новосадский университет.

Emma Durić (Novi Sad, Republic of Serbia). PhD student, University of Novi Sad.

E-mail: emma.duric@ff.uns.ac.rs

ORCID: 0000-0002-5425-4634

Ludmila Braniște (Iași, România). Doctor în științe filologice, conferențiar universitar, Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza.

Людмила Браниште (Яссы, Румыния). Доктор филологических наук, конференциар, Университет Александру Иоан Куза.

Ludmila Braniste (Iasi, Romania). PhD in Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University.

E-mail: branisteludmila@yahoo.com

ORCID: 0009-0006-8883-7543