

COMMUNICATION IN A DIDACTIC CONTEXT. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Monica PĂTRUȚ^{a *}

^a “Ion Creangă” State Pedagogical University of Chișinău, Ion Creangă Street, 1, MD-2069, Chișinău, Moldova

Abstract

This article approaches the didactics of communication from a theoretical point of view. Based on the distinction between educational communication and didactic communication and then analyses the forms of didactic communication according to several criteria, the principles based on which school practice is performed and the effects it has on the parties involved in the didactic act. Our work is intended to be (also) a plea for placing didactic communication in a (much more) visible position in the educational process; a status that drives the teacher to continuously adapt to all challenges and thus contribute to its efficiency.

Keywords: Didactic communication; education; effects; forms; principles of didactic communication

1. Communication and didactic communication - theoretical clarifications

Providing a single definition of communication is an impossible task. Communication has already been analyzed through the lens of linguistics, psychology, (psycho) sociology, pedagogy, mathematics, philosophy. Practically, as Lohisse points out, each field of knowledge “has its definition or definitions which emphasizes, as the case may be, exchange, contract, transfer, transport, energy, information...” (Lohisse, 2002, p. 12). Studying the multiple definitions given to the communication, McQuail, by referring to Dance, considers that fifteen synthetic formulations can be identified, each of them thus underlining a component or an aspect considered essential: 1) symbols, speech, language; 2) understanding-receiving, not transmitting messages; 3) interaction, relationship - active exchange and co-orientation; 4) reducing the

* Corresponding author: Assoc. Prof. Monica Pătruț, PhD
Email: patrut.monica@ub.ro

uncertainty which leads to the search for information in order to adapt; 5) process - the entire sequence of transmission; 6) transfer, transmission - connotative movement in space or time; 7) connection, union - communication in the form of a connector; 8) common features - amplification of what is shared or accepted by both parties; 9) channel, carrier, route - an extension of the transfer with reference to the path or vehicle (signal system or technology); 10) memory, storage - accumulation of information and communication with these information repositories; 11) discriminatory response - emphasis on selective attention and interpretation; 12) stimuli - the message is the main cause of the response or reaction; 13) intention - emphasizes the fact that communicative acts have a purpose; 14) the moment and the situation - paying attention to the context of the communicative act; 15) power - communication approached as a means of influence (McQuail, 1999, pp. 15-16).

The difficulty of choosing a single theoretical model comes both from the diversity of communicative events and from the different ways in which they can be conceptualized. To elaborate a typology of communication models, McQuail intersects two axes: a) the perspective on the role played by the sender and receiver in the communication process (active/passive) and b) the communication situation; based on the combination of the four situations he obtains the models presented in the table below. The first situation (active transmitter-passive receiver) illustrates the model of intentional transfer of information for informational and/or persuasive purposes. It is unidirectional and unbalanced in favor of the transmitter, corresponds to one-to-many communication, and is illustrated by political speech, conference, or discourse/lecture.

Table 1. Typology of communication models (McQuail, 1999, p. 216)

	SENDER		
R E C E P T O R	Active	Active Exchange/ Interaction	Passive Search/ Research
	Passive	Addressing / Dissemination/	Filling up the time / Monitoring

The second situation, active sender-active receiver, was also called the model of exchange or interaction, offering those involved in communication symmetrical and equal positions. Examples for this model are conversation, negotiation, dispute, debate, learning situations in which the

receiver is motivated and stimulated. The third situation, passive sender-active receiver, allows an active search for information that pursues a clearly defined purpose. The individual has a high degree of freedom, chooses from the available messages and meanings, forms his point of view, and finds the solutions to solve problems on his own. In the last situation, passive sender-passive receiver, we refer to a random communication, undirected, aimless, unstructured, and lacking a clearly defined meaning, especially specific to entertainment.

The range of explanatory models of communication is very wide. Abric (2002, pp.13-16) considers that this theoretical continuum regarding the explanation of communication is dominated by two major analysis models. The first of these, the technical model developed by Shannon in 1952 and then revised several times, brings to the fore the already known components (sender, channel, message, receiver, encoding-decoding, feedback) and considers communication as a transmission of the message from one place to another. This model treats communication as a linear and sequential process and ignores the fact that the individuals involved in the communication process can be influenced or constrained by psychological or social factors. The second model, the one that focuses on encoding or decoding messages, on the disruptive factors of communication, is the psychosociological model that values the exchange of information and meanings between people in a certain social situation. According to this model, any communication is an interaction, a transaction between two interlocutors.

Communication is a social act that underlies all social connections, always has an explicit, implicit, or unconscious objective and takes place on several channels. To communicate means to understand and to be understood, to send a message, and to receive feedback from the one for whom it was intended, to regulate, adapt and transform the relationship between sender and receiver. Communication thus becomes intercommunication, a “circular process where each message, each behavior of a protagonist acts as a stimulus on its recipient and requires a reaction which, in turn, becomes a stimulus for the first” (Baylon, Mignot, 2000).

In the ever-expanding space of forms of communication, the concept of didactic communication does not meet the consensus of specialists. We can find two more similar concepts in specialized literature: educational communication or pedagogical communication.

Iacob (1998, p.190) defines didactic communication as “an instrumental communication, directly involved in supporting an authentic learning process”. The author considers that this form of communication does not refer to the teacher-student relationship, but the legitimacy imposed by a learning activity. It can also exist outside the educational process and refer both to the transmission of knowledge and the formation of skills and abilities, attitudes, and motivations.

Cristea (2002, p.47) defines pedagogical communication as “an axiomatic principle of education that implies an educational message, elaborated by the subject (teacher), able to provoke the formative reaction of the object of education (preschooler, pupil, student), evaluable in terms of external and internal inverse connection”. Cucuș (2002, p.38) presents the didactic communication as “a complex, multifacial and multi-channel transfer of information between two entities (individuals or groups) that simultaneously and successively assume the roles of transmitters and receivers signifying desirable contents in the context of the teaching-learning process”. Sălăvăstru (2004) explicitly introduces the obligation of conditions valid simultaneously for a communication to be called didactic communication: a) to be an act which intends to produce changes in the knowledge, affectivity, behavior, or action of the recipient of the communication; b) to take place in an organized framework and to respect certain principles of efficiency; c) to take place in specialized institutions (school, university); d) to be subject to evaluation concerning an ideal set by the host institution.

Starting from the finding according to which we are subject to educational influences also outside the organized school framework, it is clear that these acts of communication fall into the wider sphere of educational communication. Any form of didactic communication is also a form of educational communication. Nevertheless, the reciprocal is not true: “we are constantly subject to educational discursive interventions, but we are subject to didactic interventions only in certain periods of personality formation.” Didactic communication is the basis of the teaching-learning-assessment process, educational communication is fundamental to the process of permanent (self) education to which the individual is subjected (Sălăvăstru, 2004, p.191).

The teacher transmits the educational message and thus facilitates the pedagogical intervention to change/modify the student’s behavior. Having a pronounced explanatory character, the didactic communication is mainly focused on understanding the message and is performed especially verbally. It fulfills several pedagogical functions: informative, by transmitting the didactic message; formative, by stimulating thinking and training/developing the learner’s communicative behavior; evaluative, by regulating the didactic process; conflict resolution (Hadîrcă, 2017, p.13). Cristea (2002) defines it as “an educational reality situated at the level of normativity and didactic action”, highlighting two basic functions in the design and realization of the educational process: a) as a principle in pedagogical design, valid for all levels of the education system and process; b) as an efficient didactic action, conceived by the teacher as a teaching act.

Frumos (2018, pp. 124-126) pleads for the understanding of didactic communication as a process of social relationship that takes place in a broad context in which what matters is also the objectives pursued by the teacher and student, the context in which they relate, the way they perceive this interaction and concrete communication actions.

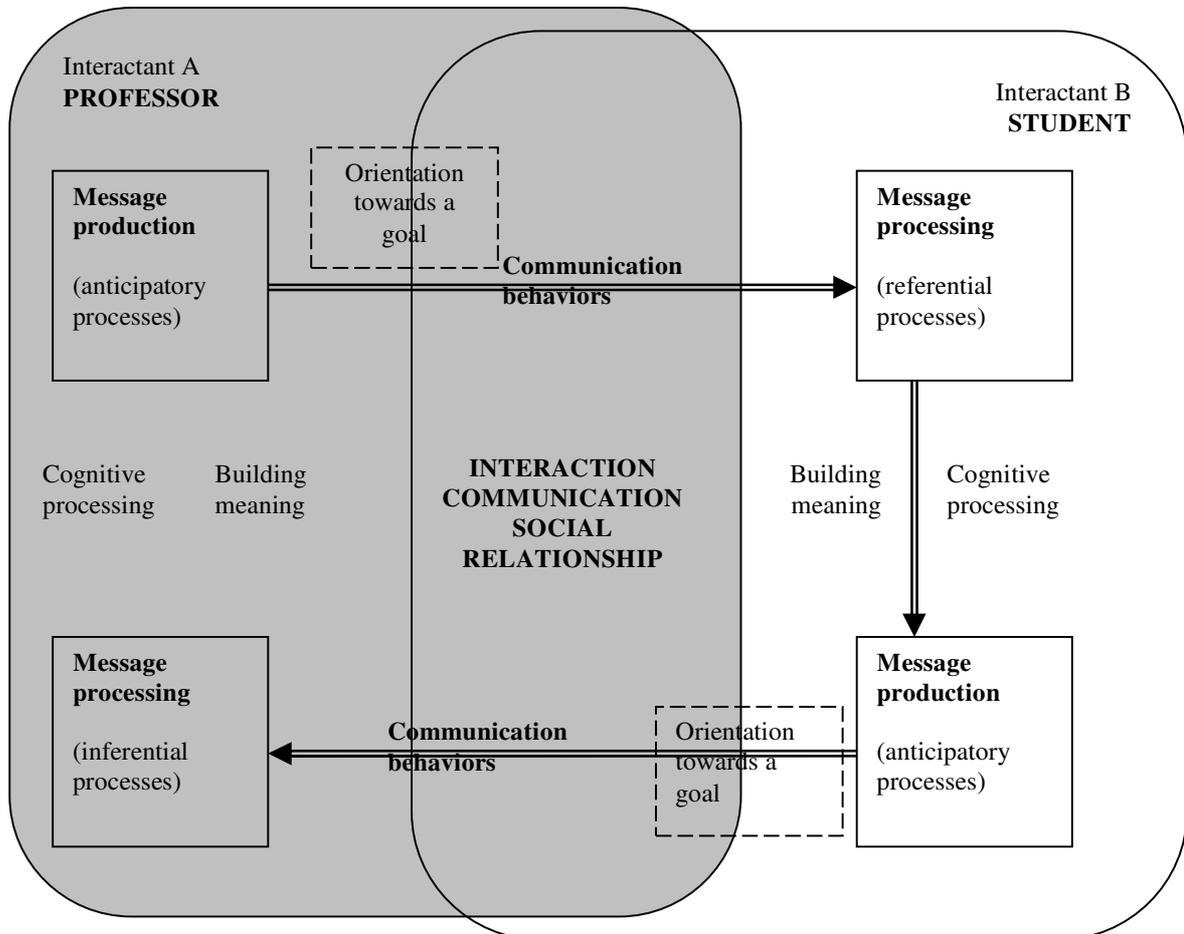


Figure 1. Social relationship from the perspective of producing and processing the (didactic) message

As can be seen in Figure 1, the author insists on understanding communication and relationships in a didactic context as a result of overlapping the processes of message production and processing. The transmission of the message involves anticipatory processes for the one who produces the message and inferential processes for the one who receives it. The cognitive messages are selected and structured logically by the teacher in accordance with the logic of the science taught, with the provisions of the school curriculum, and with the age peculiarities of the students. These messages have a pronounced explanatory character because they aim, first of all,

at an understanding of what is transmitted. The particularization of this type of communication allows the same institutional framework, the same human potential (student/class of students) to be approached differently, with different results by different teachers. (Pătruț, Cmeciu, Miron, 2011, p.32).

2. Didactic communication - Forms and guiding principles

In her synthesis on different theoretical perspectives of communication, Ezechil (2002, pp.38-40) also extracts some “valuable consequences for the educational field”:

- Each of the partners of the educational relationship is involved in an interaction with their whole personality (particularities derived from age, background, life experience, degree of culture, stereotypes, and prejudices)
- The didactic communication relationship is characterized by the inequality of the partners (as age, experience, power, level of knowledge, etc.).
- The pedagogical relationship is centered as tasks on the student and as power on the teacher. Because of this, the educator tends to assume the dominant role of the sender and the student a passive role of receiver.
- The partners of the didactic dialogue produce, concerning each other, both messages with informational content (knowledge) and messages with interpersonal content (emotions, moods, attitudes). The interpersonal messages accompany, define, and nuance school messages.
- For establishing an authentic communication, it is necessary that the didactic interaction offers possibilities of feedback and feedforward and work by respecting the principle of circularity.
- The educator must demonstrate communicative competence and, at the same time, must cultivate in his/her students the ability to communicate.

The specialized literature presents a variety of forms of communication that logically derive from the diversity of classification criteria (Pânișoară, 2015, p.74). In this article, we will refer only to those forms of communication encountered in school practice, forms classified by Iacob, and briefly presented in the table below.

Table 2. Forms of communication (adapted from Iacob, 2004, p. 35)

Criteria	Forms of communication	Observations
Partners	a) intrapersonal b) interpersonal c) in a small group d) in mass	- with self (inner or verbalized monologue) - between two people - in the case of a face-to-face group relationship - the audience is a wide public in a direct (conferences) or indirect (newspaper, tv) relation with the source
Status of the interlocutors	a)vertical b) horizontal	- between partners who have unequal status (student-teacher, parent-child), ascendant or descendant - between partners with equal statutes (student-student, teacher-teacher)
Used code	a) verbal b) nonverbal c) paraverbal	-oral or written, the information is logically coded and transmitted by word (phonetic, lexical, morpho-syntactic) - the information is coded and transmitted through signs related to posture, movement, gestures, the appearance of partners-elements that join the words (tone, speed or intensity of speech, pauses, accent, volume, quality and rhythm of speech)
The finality of the communicative act	a)accidental b)consumer c)instrumental	-the sender provides information without intending/realizing it -exchanges of information made by expressing an emotional state -responds to a specified purpose/goal or effect
Self-regulation ability	a) unidirectional b) bidirectional, multidirectional	- without feedback (film, radio, magnetic tape communication, forms that do not allow interaction in the construction of the message) -with feedback determined by the presence of the sender-receiver interaction
Content nature	a)referential b)operational/ methodological c)attitudinal	-aims at a certain truth (scientific or otherwise) - aims at understanding that truth, how it must be operated, mentally or practically, for the transmitted truth to be deciphered - values the transmitted information (the referent), the communication situation, and the partner
Message transmission technique	a)direct b)indirect	- involves the face-to-face presence of the interlocutors and uses primary means of expression - involves printing (book, newspaper, poster), recording (disc, movie, CD, DVD), or wire/waves (phone, radio, internet).

Each form of communication presented in the table above has its characteristics and these must be known by each teacher to continuously improve communication in school. Within the communication in the school context, the two verbal forms of communication are permanently combined: oral and written. In this case, there are particularities of content (reduction or disappearance of the affective-attitudinal dimension in the case of written communication), of the form (emphasis of the paraverbal dimension in teacher communication when students take notes and lose some nonverbal information), and of rhythm (writing is six times slower than speaking) (Șoitu, 1997, p.137). Verbal communication expresses the cognitive-intellectual competence of

the sender, while nonverbal and paraverbal communication expresses the person's psychosocial competence to relate optimally with interlocutors and to manage situations during the exchange of messages (Dumitriu, 1998; p. 114, Mălureanu, 2017, p. 98). Research estimates that 65% of the meaning of communication is determined by nonverbal communication, 28% by paraverbal communication, and only 7% by verbal messages. Besides, nonverbal and paraverbal communication pave the way for the verbal messages transmitted by the teacher (Cristea, 2016, p. 49).

The specificity of didactic communication also comes from the fact that it is the meeting place between the active/passive repertoires of teachers and students. The efficiency of this type of communication is given by the common denominator of the interlocutors. The teacher's repertoire includes competence in scientific, psycho-pedagogical, communication, and characteristics resulting from personality traits or belonging to certain social groups (Cerghit, 2008, p.53). The student's repertoire consists of mental, attitudinal-affective structures, (non) verbal means, linguistic experience, aspects related to physical and mental peculiarities, age, and individual influences coming from the external environment. The fundamental condition for the success of didactic communication comes from the congruence or compatibility of the interlocutors' repertoires (Cojocariu, 2007, p.74). The didactic process is in itself a process of communication (Pătruț, Pătruț, Cmeciu, 2013, p.116).

3. Didactic communication - effects and purposes

To ensure the success of didactic communication, of the message exchange between teacher and student/group, it is necessary the analysis of the semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic elements of communication as well as of the personal, psychosocial, and situational ones. Examining the interactive relationships between the elements of the communication process and the mediated variables of the subjects or the communication context, Dumitriu (1998) synthesized the three types of effects (cognitive, affective, behavioral) in the figure below.

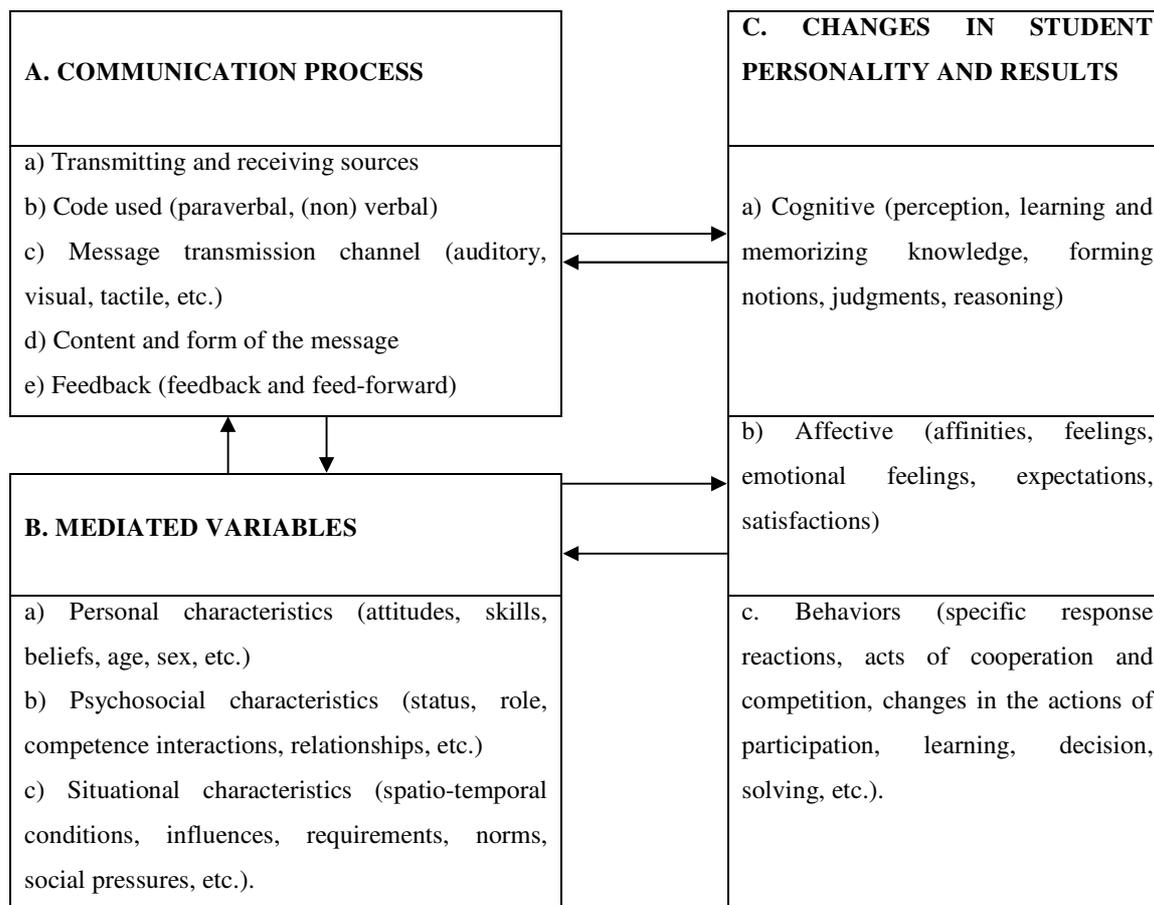


Figure 2. The effects of the interaction between the communication processes and the mediated variables on the students' results (Dumitriu, 1998, p. 113)

The same idea regarding the effects of didactic communication is found in Cerghit (2008, p. 57) who adds that the effects or influences are exerted not only on the students but also on the teachers. This fact contributes to the reinforcement of the idea that a condition for the good development of the educational process is given by the optimization of communication, that organizing the learning conditions is equivalent to organizing the communication flow in the classroom, to controlling the exchanges of meanings between teacher and student (Modrea, Silvaș, 2016, p. 102).

The aims or intentions of didactic communication are those that orient it towards a double perspective: cognitive and formative-educational. From a cognitive perspective, didactic communication is generating knowledge/learning, building the meaning of knowledge acquired

by students. From a formative-educational point of view, it produces a continuous exercise of intellectual functions, the formation of attitudes, beliefs, and personality traits.

Chiș considers teaching as an act of pedagogical communication, then mentioning that “the object of pedagogical communication, of school learning, is represented by the general principles, categories, and notions that once mastered become instruments of mental activity” (2005, 176). Not coincidentally, modern pedagogy pays special attention to the interactive methods, the collaboration between teacher and student, making teaching communication a complex and dynamic process (Bocoș, 2013, p.54-55).

A teacher who is capable to fully make use of the sender-receiver interaction reaches what S. Cristea (2017) called the art of pedagogical communication. In the same theoretical position, Ezechil (2001) argues for the design of each lesson as a communication laboratory that uses special techniques for sending and receiving didactic messages, perfectible in the context of the methodology specific to the training activity in the educational process.

4. Conclusions

Didactic communication is an area of interdisciplinary study which has drawn the attention of specialists in several fields belonging to the socio-human and educational area. Besides the greater or lesser differences between their theoretical approaches, they share the claim for a full understanding of the communication phenomenon by all actors involved in the school institution. We also have the common support of the need to streamline the didactic communication because its quality directly influences the quality of teaching-learning-assessment within the education system.

References

- Abric, J.C. (2002). *Psihologia comunicării. Teorii și metode* [Communication psychology. Theories and methods]. Iași: Polirom.
- Baylon, C., Mignot, X. (2000). *Comunicarea* [Communication]. Iași: „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Publishing House“.
- Bocoș, M.D. (2013). *Instruirea interactivă. Repere axiologice și metodologice*. [Interactive training. Axiological and methodological landmarks]. Iași: Polirom.

- Cerghit, I. (2008). *Sisteme de învățământ alternative și complementare. Structuri, stiluri și strategii* [Alternative and complementary education systems. Structures, styles and strategies]. Iași : Polirom.
- Chiș, V.(2005). *Pedagogia pentru competențe* [Competence pedagogy]. Cluj-Napoca : Casa Cărții de Știință Publishing House.
- Cojocariu,V. (2007). *Fundamentele pedagogiei: teoria și metodologia curriculum-ului: texte și pretexte.* [Foundations of pedagogy: curriculum theory and methodology: texts and pretexts]. Bucharest : V@I Integral.
- Cristea, S. (2002). *Dicționar de pedagogie* [Dictionary of pedagogy]. Chișinău: Litera Internațional.
- Cristea, S. (2004). Educația pentru mass-media și comunicare [Media and communication education].. *Didactica Pro*, 2(24), 68-70.
- Cristea, S. (2016). *Educația. Concept și analiză* [Education. Concept and analysis]. Bucharest: Didactica Publishing House.
- Cristea, S. (2017). *Instruirea/Procesul de învățământ.* [Training / Educational process]. Bucharest: Didactica Publishing House.
- Cucoș,C. (2002). *Pedagogie* [Pedagogy]. Iași : Polirom.
- Dumitriu, G. (1998). *Comunicare și învățare.* [Communication and learning]. Bucharest. Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House.
- Enăchescu, E. (2017). *Comunicarea nonverbală în universul școlar* [Nonverbal communication in the school universe]. Bucharest: University Publishing House.
- Ezechil, L. (2001). *Comunicarea educațională în context școlar* [Educational communication in a school context]. Bucharest: Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House.
- Frumos, L. (2018). *Competența relațională în context școlar* [Relational competence in the school context]. Iași: „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Publishing House “.
- Hadîrcă, M. (2017). Normativitatea pedagogică, comunicarea educațională și profesorul de calitate [Pedagogical normativity, educational communication and the quality teacher]. *Didactica Pro*, 4 (104), 11-16.
- Iacob, L. (1998). Comunicarea didactică [Didactic communication] In Cucoș, C. (Ed.), *Psihopedagogie pentru examenele de definitivare și grade didactice* [Psychopedagogy for final exams and teaching degrees]. Iași: Polirom.
- Iacob, L. (2004). Comunicarea în context educativ și didactic [Communication in an educational and didactic context]. *Didactica Pro*, 2(24), 34-40.

- Lohisse, J.(2002). *Comunicarea: de la transmiterea mecanică la interacțiune* [Communication: from mechanical transmission to interaction]. Iași: Polirom.
- Mălureanu, F.(2017). *Disfuncții în comunicarea educațională* [Dysfunctions in educational communication]. Bucharest: University Publishing House.
- Modrea,A., Silvaș, A. (2016). The Importance of Communication in Educational Process. *Management Intercultural*, 1(35), 99-104.
- McQuail, D. (1999). *Comunicarea* [Communication]. Iași: European Institute Publishing House.
- Pătruț, M., Cmeciu,C., Miron,L. (2011). NGO Annual Reports as a Device to Frame Education in Romanian Public Communication Campaigns. *Public Relations Review*, 37(4), 432-434.
- Pătruț,B., Pătruț, M.,Cmeciu, C.(2013). Framing Non-Formal Education through CSR 2.0. In Pătruț,B., Pătruț, M.,Cmeciu, C. (Eds). *Social Media and the New Academic Environment: Pedagogical Challenges*. Hershey: IGI Global.
- Pânișoară, I.O. (2015). *Comunicarea eficientă. Metode de interacțiune educațională* [Effective communication. Methods of educational interaction]. Iași: Polirom.
- Sălăvăstru, D. (2004). *Psihologia educației* [The psychology of education]. Iași: Polirom.
- Șoitu, L. (1997). *Pedagogia comunicării* [Communication pedagogy]. Bucharest: Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House.