



## ORIGINAL PAPER

# The Simple Perfect Indicative in the Romanian Language – Teaching and Evaluation

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### Abstract:

The Simple Perfect Indicative in the Romanian Language – Teaching and Evaluation is a research study conducted based on our didactic experience in teaching Romanian as a foreign language. It primarily focuses on the methods used to teach and evaluate the simple perfect indicative in Romanian for international students at the University of Craiova. This tense is not common in standard speech but is still actively used in contemporary speech in the southwestern part of Romania, particularly in Oltenia and in Craiova, the most important city in this region. Learning Romanian provides students with the opportunity to interact and engage with their peers in discussions, reflection exercises, self and peer review, and group work.

The findings from this study emphasize the effectiveness of integrating theoretical instruction with practical exercises, utilizing modern educational tools, and fostering an environment conducive to active learning and self-assessment. These practices are essential for achieving linguistic proficiency and ensuring the success of foreign students in mastering the Romanian language.

**Keywords:** *communication, teaching the Romanian language, international students, the simple perfect indicative, testing and evaluations.*

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To conduct this study, the research is based on teaching experience gained from the Preparatory Year of Romanian Language for Foreign Citizens program offered by the University of Craiova. This program aims to facilitate the acquisition of the Romanian language by international students, enabling them to pursue higher education studies in Romanian (The specific standards for the Preparatory Year of Romanian Language for Foreign Citizens, online: [https://www.aracis.ro/wpcontent/uploads/2019/07/Mari\\_Standarde\\_specifice\\_-\\_An\\_prega\\_titor\\_Maril.pdf](https://www.aracis.ro/wpcontent/uploads/2019/07/Mari_Standarde_specifice_-_An_prega_titor_Maril.pdf), accessed on January 9, 2025).

According to the curriculum, the courses are structured over an academic year and include both foundational subjects, such as Introduction to the Study of the Romanian Language and Romanian Culture and Civilization, as well as specialized courses. The specialized courses include:

- *Practical Romanian Language Course–Phonetics, Vocabulary, Grammatical Structures*
- *Practical Romanian Language Course–Oral and Written Communication*
- *Practical Romanian Language Course–Reception of Written and Oral Texts*
- *Practical Romanian Language Course–Writing and Composition.*

In addition, the program offers elective courses focused on specialized language for various fields, including mathematics and natural sciences, engineering sciences, biological and biomedical sciences, social sciences, humanities and arts, and sports science and physical education (The specific standards for the Preparatory Year of Romanian Language for Foreign Citizens: [https://www.aracis.ro/wpcontent/uploads/2019/07/Mari\\_Standarde\\_specifice\\_-\\_An\\_prega\\_titor\\_Maril.pdf](https://www.aracis.ro/wpcontent/uploads/2019/07/Mari_Standarde_specifice_-_An_prega_titor_Maril.pdf), accessed on January 9, 2025.) The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) sets certain requirements: to reach level B1, the student must surpass levels A1 (introductory or discovery) and A2 (intermediate or survival).

Our study aims to observe the progress made by students after completing exercises designed to master the correct use of the simple perfect indicative and to evaluate the knowledge they have acquired. The case study for the simple perfect tense was conducted during the 2024–2025 academic year, drawing on the experience of teaching Romanian to foreign students in the Preparatory Year of Romanian Language program. The study involved a group of 15 students—7 girls and 8 boys—comprising one student each from Saudi Arabia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Albania, three from Morocco, and eight from Serbia.

All students in the group participated in both the teaching and assessment phases. Notably, the eight Serbian students were able to communicate orally in Romanian at a dialectal level at the beginning of the academic year. However, none had attended schools where Romanian was the primary language of instruction, and their proficiency varied depending on how frequently they used dialectal Romanian within their families.

The proficiency in Romanian among these students is influenced by several factors, including the presence of Romanian-speaking communities in Serbia, the availability of Romanian language education, and the extent of language use within their family environments. This context explains why some students demonstrated oral communication skills in Romanian at a dialectal level despite lacking formal education in the language.

In teaching the simple perfect indicative, we utilized several Romanian language textbooks designed for foreign learners (Eleonora Olivia Bălănescu, 2017: 153; Cristina-Eugenia-Burtea-Cioroianu, 2019: 205).

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To prevent students from adopting a passive attitude during the theoretical presentation of situations where the simple perfect indicative is used, we combined traditional methods—such as didactic presentations (via PowerPoint), educational conversations, and demonstrations—with modern techniques like games and discovery-based learning. This approach renders theoretical concepts interactive and engaging, enhances practice, accelerates learning, and maintains students' attention for extended periods. By blending these traditional and modern methods, educators can create a dynamic and effective learning experience that caters to diverse student needs and learning styles.

The simple perfect indicative (*perfectul simplu*) in Romanian denotes actions completed in the past. According to the Grammar of the Romanian Language, the simple perfect indicative, a synthetic form composed of R (root) + F (inflection), has the most complex structure among the past tenses (Gramatica limbii române. 2005. vol. I. Cuvântul. București: Editura Academiei Române, p. 420.). Newer grammars (starting from the second half of the 20th century) consider that the position of this tense in the Romanian language has diminished significantly because, in its function of expressing a completed action, it is competed with and replaced in spoken language by the compound perfect. However, this is not the case in the literary system, where it appears consistently, occupying its natural place.

Its usage is predominantly observed in specific regional dialects, notably within Oltenia and parts of southwestern Romania. In contrast, standard Romanian typically favors the compound perfect tense (*perfectul compus*) for expressing past actions. The meaning of the simple perfect forms is similar to that of the compound perfect (Gramatica limbii române. 2005. vol. I. Cuvântul. București: Editura Academiei Române, p. 422.). The simple perfect indicative is rarely used in common speech in standard Romanian. In current speech, it is used regionally, in the southwestern part of Romania, in Oltenia (both in rural and urban areas), but also in Banat and western Muntenia (mostly in rural areas). Since it appears both in the spoken variant of the Romanian language and in literary and non-literary works from different periods of evolution, the simple perfect cannot be considered merely a regional tense.

To explain the use of the simple perfect tense in Oltenia, I have used both historical and linguistic arguments:

In Oltenia, one of the most intense and prolonged processes of Romanization took place, surpassing other regions conquered by the Romans north of the Danube and among the territories that would eventually form modern Romania. Oltenia was incorporated into the Roman Empire as early as 102 AD, following the conclusion of the First Dacian War, and the region did not experience the Aurelian withdrawal of 271–275 AD as acutely as other areas. This is because Roman dominion north of the Danube, particularly in the southern half of the Danube Plain, persisted for centuries through the Eastern Roman Empire.

The linguistic example pertains to the presence of the simple perfect tense in the Oltenian dialect, a feature that has been preserved almost identically to its form in Latin (*fui, fuisti, fuit, fuimus, fuistis, fuerunt* or *fuere*). This form has been perpetuated far more effectively over the centuries in Oltenia than in other regions of Romania. The verbal system is widely recognized as the cornerstone of any fully developed language, and the Romanian verbal system derives directly from Latin, particularly from the vulgar Latin spoken by colonists, irrespective of their origins within the empire. In the Oltenian dialect,

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the frequency of verbs, as well as their moods and tenses inherited from Latin, remains significantly higher compared to many other Romanian regions.

The forms of the simple perfect are made of the stem of the infinitive (unstressed, which leads to phonetic changes), a stressed suffix, that is different in each group of verbs, and the endings -i, -şi, -Ø, -răm, -răţi, -ră, which are the same for all the verbs:

|     |                 |                         |                        |                        |                         |                         |                          |
|-----|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| sg. | 1 <sup>st</sup> | <i>intra<b>i</b></i>    | <i>tăcu<b>i</b></i>    | <i>ceru<b>i</b></i>    | <i>merse<b>i</b></i>    | <i>dormi<b>i</b></i>    | <i>coborâ<b>i</b></i>    |
|     | 2 <sup>nd</sup> | <i>intra<b>şi</b></i>   | <i>tăcu<b>şi</b></i>   | <i>ceru<b>şi</b></i>   | <i>merse<b>şi</b></i>   | <i>dormi<b>şi</b></i>   | <i>coborâ<b>şi</b></i>   |
|     | 3 <sup>rd</sup> | <i>intra<b>ă</b></i>    | <i>tăcu<b>ă</b></i>    | <i>ceru<b>ă</b></i>    | <i>merse<b>ă</b></i>    | <i>dormi<b>ă</b></i>    | <i>coborâ<b>ă</b></i>    |
| pl. | 1 <sup>st</sup> | <i>intra<b>răm</b></i>  | <i>tăcu<b>răm</b></i>  | <i>ceru<b>răm</b></i>  | <i>merse<b>răm</b></i>  | <i>dormi<b>răm</b></i>  | <i>coborâ<b>răm</b></i>  |
|     | 2 <sup>nd</sup> | <i>intra<b>răţi</b></i> | <i>tăcu<b>răţi</b></i> | <i>ceru<b>răţi</b></i> | <i>merse<b>răţi</b></i> | <i>dormi<b>răţi</b></i> | <i>coborâ<b>răţi</b></i> |
|     | 3 <sup>rd</sup> | <i>intra<b>ră</b></i>   | <i>tăcu<b>ră</b></i>   | <i>ceru<b>ră</b></i>   | <i>merse<b>ră</b></i>   | <i>dormi<b>ră</b></i>   | <i>coborâ<b>ră</b></i>   |

In the Romanian language, the simple perfect is formed using suffixes:

- Verbs from the first conjugation in -a take the suffix -a- (that turns into -ă in the third person singular): a lucra - lucră; a alerga - alergă; The verbs in -a with the stem ending in a vowel (except -u) take the suffix -e in the third person singular: a se apropia - se apropie; a copia - copie; a studia - studie; a întârzia-întârzie.

- verbs from the second conjugation in -ea take the suffix -u- verbs in -i (the fourth conjugation) take the suffix -i- verbs in -i (the fourth conjugation) take the suffix -d- (-i-);

- verbs from the third conjugation in -e form the simple perfect with the suffix -u- (the verbs that form the past participle in -ut) or with the suffix -se- (the verbs that form the past participle in -s). Before the suffix -se- the final consonant of the stem may disappear (a prinde -prinsei, prinseşi, prinse, etc.) or change into a different consonant (a frige - fripsei, fripseşi, fripse, etc.). The emphasis falls on the final vowel of the verb stem, except for the verbs in the third conjugation, with participles ending in –s or –t, which have the stress on the penultimate syllable of the stem: merséi, merséşi, dar mersé, merserăm, merserăţi, merseră; rupséi, rupséşi, dar rúpse, rúpserăm, rúpserăţi, rúpseră.

The simple perfect of the verbs a fi (to be) and a avea (to have) is limited to one form, the second being regional:

| <i>a fi</i>              | <i>a avea</i>              |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>fui / fusei</i>       | <i>avui / avusei</i>       |
| <i>fuşi / fuseşi</i>     | <i>avuşi / avuseşi</i>     |
| <i>fu / fuse</i>         | <i>avu / avuse</i>         |
| <i>furăm / fuserăm</i>   | <i>avurăm / avuserăm</i>   |
| <i>furăţi / fuserăţi</i> | <i>avurăţi / avuserăţi</i> |
| <i>fură / fuseră</i>     | <i>avură / avuseră</i>     |

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In the Dicționarul ortografic, ortoepic și morfologic al limbii române (DOOM3), Editura Univers Enciclopedic, Gold, 2021, the form "fusei" is eliminated, and only the form "fui" remains.

In the Dicționarul ortografic, ortoepic și morfologic al limbii române (DOOM3), Editura Univers Enciclopedic, Gold, 2021, the form "avusei" is eliminated, and only the form "avui" remains.

The simple perfect of other irregular verbs is:

|                        |                         |                         |                          |                          |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>a da</i><br>to give | <i>a lua</i> to<br>take | <i>a sta</i><br>to stay | <i>a bea</i><br>to drink | <i>a vrea</i><br>to want | <i>a ști</i><br>to know |
| <i>dădui</i>           | <i>luai</i>             | <i>stătui</i>           | <i>băui</i>              | <i>vrui</i>              | <i>știui</i>            |
| <i>dăduși</i>          | <i>luași</i>            | <i>stătuși</i>          | <i>băuși</i>             | <i>vruși</i>             | <i>știuși</i>           |
| <i>dădu</i>            | <i>luă</i>              | <i>stătu</i>            | <i>bău</i>               | <i>vrui</i>              | <i>știu</i>             |
| <i>dădurăm</i>         | <i>luarăm</i>           | <i>stăturăm</i>         | <i>băurăm</i>            | <i>vrurăm</i>            | <i>știurăm</i>          |
| <i>dădurăți</i>        | <i>luarăți</i>          | <i>stăturăți</i>        | <i>băurăți</i>           | <i>vrurăți</i>           | <i>știurăți</i>         |
| <i>dădură</i>          | <i>luară</i>            | <i>stătură</i>          | <i>băură</i>             | <i>vrură</i>             | <i>știură</i>           |

Difficulties for foreign students arise in:

- In the third person singular, many verbs with the infinitive ending in -a have a simple perfect form that is identical in writing to the present form. In pronunciation, the forms are differentiated by accent: (el) ascultă (present) vs (el) ascultă (simple perfect). Usually, the context (of present or past) helps in recognizing the form.

- At the third person singular, many verbs with an infinitive ending in -a have a simple past tense form identical in writing to the present tense form. In speech, the forms are differentiated by stress: (he) listens (ascultă - present) vs. (he) listened (ascultă - simple past). Usually, the context (present or past) helps in identifying the correct form.

- The first person singular and third person singular forms of verbs with an infinitive ending in -i pose orthographic challenges because their endings are identical or nearly identical in pronunciation (a full i sound). Only recognizing the grammatical form allows for correct spelling: with -ii for the first-person singular (the first -i- shared with the infinitive suffix, the second -i- being the first person singular ending) and with -i for the third person singular. Correct spelling can be verified by comparison with verbs from another conjugation class: (I) eu fugi+-i is structured similarly to (I) eu pleca+-i, while (III m.) el fugi+Ø corresponds to (III m.) el plecă+Ø.

After teaching the theoretical part and learning the rule for forming this tense, consolidation followed through practical exercises such as conjugating verbs in the simple past tense, creating sentences with these verbs, and composing short texts that include verbs in this type of past tense. To reinforce the theoretical concepts, we use various types of exercises (substitution, transformation, etc.) aimed at practicing and automating the grammatical phenomenon.

Following the knowledge consolidation stage through various exercises, we observed that several mistakes appeared among some foreign students:

- Confusing perfect simple with present because in writing, the perfect simple and present tense can look identical;

- Incorrect conjugation of irregular verbs because irregular verbs like a da (to give) or a sta (to stay) follow distinct conjugation patterns that differ significantly from regular verbs;

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- Adding extra "i" to endings because the extra "i" is sometimes mistakenly added due to confusion with the rules for other tenses.

After each teaching lesson, I propose a test to the students to assess the degree of assimilation of the newly acquired notion. Thus, for them, evaluation is neither a surprise nor an ad-hoc event but simply a part of the learning process. The test was conducted on the Google Classroom platform. Students were required to use the new grammar knowledge and integrate it into sentences and phrases.

An online test was used in the form of a Quiz with Multiple Choice Questions, featuring three options and only one correct answer. I advocated for this format because it provides feedback through automatic grading, including the correct answers. This testing method requires increased attention from the students. The probability of guessing the correct answer is relatively low. The time limit for completing the 10 items was set at 10 minutes.

One of the advantages of these Quiz tests is that they are short and easy to grade, and another is that the order of the questions and the options can be shuffled, making the test unique for each student.

The test proposed on *Google Classroom*:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Puneți verbele la timpul perfect simplu:</b><br/><b>Precizare: Numai un răspuns este corect!</b></p> <p><b>1.</b>      <i>Indicați seria în care toate verbele sunt la modul indicativ, timpul perfect simplu, persoana I, numărul singular:</i></p> <p>a)      alergă, citea, scriam<br/>b)      alergai, suii, citii<br/>c)      fusei, tăceam, citiră</p> <p><b>2.</b>      <i>Cum ..... cursul la care voi ..... azi?</i></p> <p>a)      fuse, merserăți<br/>b)      a fost, ați mers<br/>c)      fuseră, merseră</p> <p><b>3.</b>      <i>Îți .....mâncarea de la restaurant?</i></p> <p>a)      răspunsei<br/>b)      plăcu<br/>c)      citii</p> <p><b>4.</b>      <i>Când .....de la universitate, Maria ..... un telefon mamei.</i></p> <p>a)      a venit, a dat<br/>b)      veni, dădu<br/>c)      venii, dădui</p> <p><b>5.</b>      <i>Voi .....cheile?</i></p> <p>a)      ați văzut<br/>b)      văzură<br/>c)      văzurăți</p> | <p><b>6.</b>      <i>Mie ..... că ciocolata ..... prea dulce.</i></p> <p>a)      nu mi se păru, fu<br/>b)      nu mi s-a părut, a fost<br/>c)      nu i se părea, ar fi fost</p> <p><b>7.</b>      <i>Când ..... după o oră, nu .....nimic.</i></p> <p>a)      dormii, luă<br/>b)      mă trezii, îmi amintii<br/>c)      m-am trezit, am mâncat</p> <p><b>8.</b>      <i>Când el..... la cursul de limba română, eu .... acasă.</i></p> <p>a)      a venit, am plecat<br/>b)      venii, plecai<br/>c)      veni, plecai</p> <p><b>9.</b>      <i>Mă întreb cu cine ..... (a sta de vorbă) atât. Te ..... (a suna) și ..... (a nu putea) să dau de tine.</i></p> <p>a)      stătuși de vorbă; sunai; nu putui<br/>b)      ai stat de vorbă; am sunat; nu am putut;<br/>c)      stătură, sunară, nu putură</p> <p><b>10.</b>      <i>Voi acum vă ..... de la universitate?</i></p> <p>a)      întorsei<br/>b)      întoarseră<br/>c)      întoarserăți</p> |
|---|--|

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Students were encouraged to engage in critical thinking, reasoning, logic, and deductive processes during the test. They could review their incorrect answers and correct themselves. Thus, each student could achieve a maximum score of 100 points for completing the test.

This online test was merely a learning tool for self-assessment, with no consideration given to the grades or points accumulated.

Out of the 15 students who participated in the online test, 6 achieved the maximum score of 100 points, 3 scored 90 points, 3 scored 80 points, and 3 scored 70 points.

The implementation of accurate and equitable evaluation practices, coupled with the timely dissemination of results to students, constitutes a fundamental aspect of the educational process, irrespective of the instructional format. A notable advantage of this testing methodology lies in its capacity to facilitate the interpretation and analysis of data by educators with greater ease and efficiency. Furthermore, the provision of rapid feedback enhances the student experience by transforming online assessments into interactive and engaging activities, resembling games rather than conventional exercises.

### **Conclusions**

This study, grounded in the teaching experiences of the Preparatory Year of Romanian Language for Foreign Citizens program at the University of Craiova, highlights the complexity of teaching and evaluating the use of the simple perfect indicative tense to international students. Several key observations and conclusions can be drawn from the findings:

1. The teaching and evaluation process underscored the progress students made in acquiring the grammatical structures of the simple perfect indicative. However, certain difficulties persisted, particularly for non-native speakers unfamiliar with the linguistic nuances of Romanian. These challenges included: confusion between the simple perfect and present tenses, due to orthographic similarities; errors in conjugating irregular verbs, which follow distinct patterns not encountered in regular conjugations and orthographic issues, such as the incorrect addition of an extra "i" in specific forms.
2. The linguistic background of the students, particularly those from Serbian-speaking regions with exposure to dialectal Romanian, played a significant role in their learning trajectory. While these students exhibited oral communication skills at a dialectal level, their formal grammatical proficiency required targeted interventions. The study emphasizes the need for culturally informed teaching approaches that account for the diverse linguistic contexts of learners.
3. The integration of traditional teaching methods with modern, interactive techniques proved beneficial. Combining didactic presentations, demonstrations, and discovery-based learning fostered engagement and comprehension. The use of games and contextually rich exercises was particularly effective in maintaining student interest and promoting active learning.
4. The implementation of online assessments through platforms like Google Classroom offered several advantages:
  - The structured format of multiple-choice quizzes provided a clear and standardized evaluation framework.
  - Automated grading and rapid feedback enabled students to identify and correct their errors promptly, reinforcing learning outcomes.

- The customizable nature of online tests ensured fairness and minimized opportunities for rote memorization or guessing.

5. The results of the online test demonstrated varying levels of proficiency among the students. While six students achieved the maximum score of 100 points, others scored 90, 80, or 70 points. This distribution highlights the importance of personalized feedback and continuous practice to address individual learning gaps.

The study reaffirms the importance of applying fair, transparent, and error-free evaluation practices. The timely delivery of results not only supports the learning process but also transforms assessments into interactive and engaging activities. Moreover, the ease of data analysis provided by online testing platforms allows educators to adapt their teaching strategies to better meet student needs.

In conclusion, the findings from this study underline the effectiveness of integrating theoretical instruction with practical exercises, leveraging modern educational tools, and fostering an environment conducive to active learning and self-assessment. These practices are essential for achieving linguistic proficiency and ensuring the success of foreign students in mastering the Romanian language.

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