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Culture as the Foundation of Communicative Italian Instruction:

Pedagogical Strategies Aimed at Proficiency in Italian

A Dissertation Presented

by

Angelo Giulio Musto

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Angelo Giulio Musto

We, the dissertation committee for the above candidate for the

Doctor of Arts degree, hereby recommend

acceptance of this dissertation.

**Irene Marchegiani, Professor of Pedagogy and Italian Studies
Department of European Languages, Literatures and Cultures**

**Andrea Fedi, Associate Professor of Italian
Department of European Languages, Literatures and Cultures**

**Sarah Jourdain, Assistant Professor of French and Pedagogy
Department of European Languages, Literatures and Cultures**

**Lois Mignone, Chairperson, Department of Foreign Language/ESL
Suffolk County Community College**

This dissertation is accepted by the Graduate School.

Lawrence Martin
Dean of the Graduate School

Abstract of the Dissertation

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The purpose of this dissertation is to offer strategies for the integration of culture in the secondary Italian curriculum, while maintaining the assertion that all competent language instruction is rooted in sound cultural objectives. As illustrated in the subsequent review of pedagogical literature, there are two essential components to the philosophy behind this study: the efficacy of employing cultural concepts in the classroom in order to enhance interpersonal communicative instruction, and the vital role that cultural awareness and sensitivity play in today's world.

Since their inception in 1996, the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language) National Standards, with their strong emphasis on culture in the World Language classroom, have brought about a necessary change in the discourse concerning the challenges teachers face with regard to incorporating culture into their lessons. There continues to be, for example, a lack of consensus among language instructors on *what* culture to teach and *how* to assess it. This academic work addresses these questions, as well as offers potential solutions.

In addition to the aforementioned concepts, I discuss the need to confront negative stereotypes and ethnocentric behavior in the classroom. In terms of secondary Italian classes in the United States, much of the work lies in addressing the depiction of Italian-Americans, by the mass media, as either criminals or half-witted narcissists. Furthermore, I have considered a number of issues regarding linguistic sensitivity and, in particular, the dichotomy of language versus dialects within the Italian paradigm.

Film, music and visual art serve as the backdrop for the practical portion of this dissertation. In these final sections, I provide strategies for the integration of culture into the secondary Italian curriculum by means of communicative activities. It is the underlying conviction of this study, that these strategies will enable the student of Italian to simultaneously

improve proficiency in the language, and attain greater cultural awareness

and sensitivity.

For Magalie and Beatrice

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Acknowledgements

I owe my deepest gratitude to all those who have supported me along my journey through graduate school and who have made this dissertation possible. I am particularly grateful to my advisor Professor Irene Marchegiani for her articulate research direction, invaluable guidance, and constant encouragement. I would also like to thank Professors Andrea Fedi, Sarah Jourdain, and Lois Mignone for having served on the defense committee and for their invaluable suggestions and advice. In addition, I'd like to acknowledge my friends and colleagues who have contributed in various ways to this work: Timothy Watkins, David Rose, Frank Pepini, Gina Cappellino, Timothy Clements, and Lance Johnson. I also wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to my loving family who, whether they are aware of it or not, played an important role in the completion of this project. Most importantly, this dissertation would not have been written without the unrelenting support, love and patience of my beautiful wife Rose.

Introduction

During the last half-century, World Language teachers have begun to recognize the value of culture in their instruction. In addition, there has been a widespread acceptance of the notion that language and culture are inseparable; in fact, language itself is indeed a major expression of a given culture. As Dale L. Lange points out in his introduction to *Culture as the Core*, "culture is the most authentic way to connect the individual language learner to the broader target community."[1] Despite a general consensus on the essential role of culture in language instruction, teachers at all levels continue to disagree on a variety of issues regarding its integration in the classroom. Many instructors express a desire to increase the degree to which they employ cultural activities in their lessons, but are not confident in their capacity to do so. Hence, it is the focus of this research to illustrate effective communicative strategies that promote the integration of culture in the Italian classroom.

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[1] Lange, *Culture as the Core: Perspectives in Second Language Education*. xi.

It is widely accepted that language is best learned when it is taught in context: the vocabulary of a given unit is introduced in support of an authentic cultural context, while the necessary grammatical/syntactical structures are interwoven within that topic. The diagram below illustrates the notion of how the cultural context represents the foundation of language learning, on which vocabulary and grammar are based:

Figure 1

Grammar

Lexicon

Cultural Context
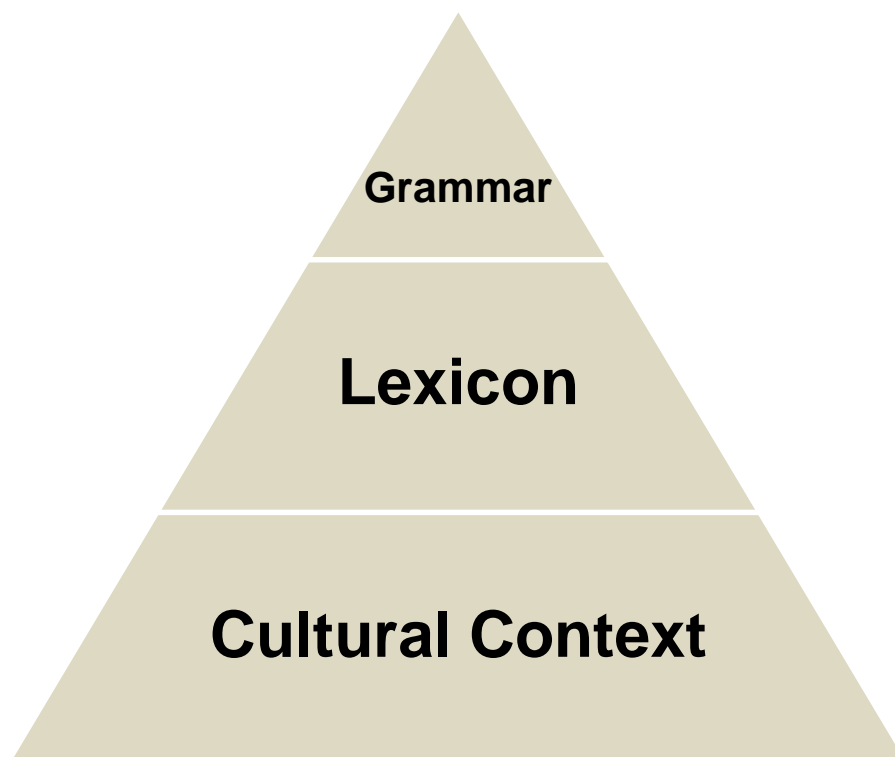
One of the invaluable outcomes of approaching Italian language instruction from a cultural foundation is the acquisition of greater awareness and sensitivity. When students of Italian are engaged in culturally based communicative activities, they begin to consider the ways in which Italian lifestyles and values may differ from their own. This sort of cross-cultural pedagogy encourages young people to reflect on their own prejudices, and to question the validity of stereotypes to which they have been exposed. More often than not, when students undertake the arduous work involved in self-reflection, they arrive at higher levels of acceptance and empathy for others. The subsequent paragraphs lay out the general format of this dissertation.

Chapter one presents an in-depth review of the pedagogical literature concerning the past, present and future roles of culture in World Language curricula. The chapter begins with an examination of the difficulties teachers have faced in terms of instruction and assessment of culture, and culminates with a proposal of solutions to these issues.

The second chapter of this dissertation is devoted to the concept of cultural sensitivity and how it can be enriched in a World Language classroom. It also sheds light on questions of stereotyping and ethnocentrism, and how communicative language instruction can aid in the reduction of these behaviors. Furthermore, in this chapter, I have

included a section on linguistic sensitivity and how it adheres to an Italian curriculum.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5, provide a pragmatic approach to the integration of culture in communicative Italian lessons. These chapters employ media that facilitate the consistent use of the target language, and allow for the inclusion of contextualized grammar instruction.

- Chapter three presents strategies that employ film in the classroom.
- Chapter four utilizes Pop music as a way to integrate culture.
- Chapter five includes strategies that make use of the visual arts.

Motivating one's students to communicate in the target language often presents a significant challenge to the teacher. One must consider, however, whether or not instructors are supplying their classes with the tools that allow the students to truly discuss and experience another culture in a meaningful way. Italy is a country with a history and culture that are unrivaled in their complexity and appeal. From the Roman Empire to fashion, from the Renaissance to Opera, Italian culture provides a wealth of topics about which to converse in the classroom. Equally important is the need to address the many changes taking place among Italy's population, geo-political status, and language. For instance, most

American students of Italian know that Italy is famed for its food, art, and architecture. They are acquainted with its culinary traditions, Michelangelo's *David* and the Vatican, but they should also be aware that Italy is home to many migrant workers from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia. American students will see that many Italians are finding it more and more difficult to continue with certain traditions, as the pace of daily life around the country accelerates, and that Italy is becoming an increasingly multicultural society whose citizens are as diverse as its political ideologies. The intention of this document is to demonstrate how such aspects of Italian culture constitute the foundation on which communicative Italian instruction is most effectively taught.

Chapter 1

An Examination of the Literature

1.1 Why Teach Culture?

Posing this question within the present pedagogical framework for strategies aimed at culture instruction may strike some as being odd or, to say the least, superfluous. Shouldn't the author (as well as the perspective audience) already know the answer to this question? It is with confidence that this author affirms the absolute necessity to consider it. In fact, the motivation behind this thesis has, in part, come from a degree of frustration incited by, what seems to be, a majority of language teachers' struggle with the implementation of culture in the classroom.

One way of approaching this problem is by attempting to understand why there is an apparent aversion by some to teach culture. Kramsch, Cain and Murphy-Lejeune in their article entitled "Why Should Language Teachers Teach Culture?" assert that "the prospect of having to teach culture in language classes often makes language teachers nervous."[2] They go on to point out that "teachers are reluctant to go

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[2] Kramsch, A. Cain and E. Murphy-Lejeune 99.

beyond language training. There are, of course, many reasons for this, not the least being that non-native teachers often don't know enough about the target culture."[3] I am inclined to agree with these statements; however, I also believe that there are other factors to consider.

Dale L. Lange reminds us in his publication "Planning for and Using the New National Culture Standards" that "culture as an element in the language learning curriculum, in instructional practice, and in assessment of learning cannot be denied. It is a truism in language teaching that language cannot be taught without cultural content."[4] In fact, despite the reluctance of some language instructors to include culture in their lessons, few deny the inseparable nature of language and culture, which will be investigated further in this chapter. In other words, whether teachers are aware of it or not, they are all addressing culture in their language lessons; however, whereas many teachers' instruction of culture may be more implicit, the goal must also be to include instruction that is explicit.

A more pragmatic response to the question of "Why teach culture?" can be obtained in an explanation of successful communication found in the ACTFL Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century:

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[3] Kramsch, Cain, and Murphy-Lejeune 99.
[4] Lange, "Planning for and Using the New National Culture Standards." 57.

Formerly, most teaching in foreign language classrooms concentrated on the *how* (grammar) to say *what* (vocabulary). While these components of language remain crucial, the current organizing principle for language study is communication, which also highlights the *why*, the *whom*, and the *when* (the sociolinguistic and cultural aspects of language).[5]

The task force responsible for the new national standards (a topic which I will also discuss at greater length in this chapter) clearly recognizes the importance of teaching culture. In the ACTFL Statement of Philosophy, it is acknowledged that "the United States must educate students who are equipped linguistically and culturally to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad."[6] In fact, the authors of the National Standards go on to state that "the true content of the foreign language course is not the grammar and the vocabulary of the language, but the cultures expressed through that language."[7]

Ultimately, the vehement dedication to the inclusion of culture in my own Italian lessons comes from a belief in greater cultural awareness for all of my students. Alice Omaggio Hadley apparently shares this zeal for cultural sensitivity and tolerance:

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[5] National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project 11.
[6] *Ibid.* 7.
[7] *Ibid.* 47 – 48.

Reports of "ethnic cleansing" in Eastern Europe, evidence of "hate crimes" against various ethnic and social groups both in this country and abroad, and continued strife among warring factions throughout the world reveal the crying need for understanding and mutual acceptance among the world's people. The valuing of ethnic and cultural diversity must continue to be a high priority in education as our students learn to live in an increasingly interdependent world.[8]

Coming to consensus on the importance, as well as the inevitability, of including culture in a language curriculum leads us to the next question: What type of culture shall one teach? This topic will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

1.2 Arriving at a Definition of Culture

Despite the notable frequency with which the term arises in the field of language education, culture remains a relatively nebulous concept. Certainly, if asked to give an actual definition of it, most individuals would be at a loss for words. Vicki Galloway of the Georgia Institute of Technology accurately points out that "describing a culture, like describing a language, is fraught with problems."[9] Although most educators agree that the instruction of culture in a language classroom is both crucial and inevitable, there seems to be little consensus on what specific forms of

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[8] Hadley, A. O. 346.
[9] Galloway 89.

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culture to address. In her article entitled, "The Challenge of Assessing Cultural Understanding in the Context of Foreign Language Instruction," Renate A. Schulz notes that "despite a vast body of literature devoted to the teaching of culture, there is no agreement on how culture can or should be defined operationally in the context of foreign language learning or in terms of concrete instructional objectives."[10]

When speaking to teachers of Italian at the secondary level (or any other language, for that matter) about the ways in which they incorporate culture into their curricula, the most common ideas often relate to the inclusion of topics such as the fine arts or geography. These are excellent tools from which all language classes may benefit and are, in part, the subject of this thesis; however, culture does not limit itself to such concepts. In fact, the majority of what is taught in the Italian language classroom addresses some aspect of culture, including the fundamental lessons on grammar and vocabulary.

R. Michael Paige of the University of Minnesota affirms that culture is not a static concept: it is a "process of acquiring the […] knowledge, skills and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other countries."[11] This explanation of culture as a process is an essential component of this thesis. It purports that the

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[10] Schulz 10.
[11] Paige, Michael R., 177.

learning of a language that is in a constant state of flux, is an ongoing pursuit of intercultural awareness, as well as a journey towards personal discovery in terms of one's own culture and consciousness. In simple terms, as the student of language performs the painful work of breaking down cultural barriers and processing a reality that differs from his or her own, he or she also begins to make better sense of his or her own existence.

In aiming to understand the essence of culture from a more pragmatic perspective, the ACTFL *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*[12] offer a very functional explanation from which Italian teachers at all levels may benefit. Culture, according to these national standards, is one of the five categories, broken down into two sections:

> **Standard 2.1:** Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied
>
> **Standard 2.2:** Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied

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[12] National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project 9.

Culture is, therefore, narrowed down to products and practices, and the underlying perspectives that foster them. An Italian teacher may introduce a lesson on "*il bar"* as a way to discuss coffee's role as a product within Italian society, as well as consider the perspectives that may accompany its consumption. In reference to cultural practices, an instructor of Italian may choose to address the concept of the *mammone* (a 'mamma's boy') and the impact that he has on Italian society, where the man is reluctant to separate from the security and luxury of his childhood home.

Despite the progress initiated by the ACTFL Standards, a lack of agreement as to the definition of culture continues to persist within the context of language instruction. The subsequent section will attempt to minimize this disagreement by addressing the dichotomy between high and popular culture.

1.2.1 Big C versus little c

As the struggle to clarify the significance of culture within the context of foreign language learning continues, we look towards a conflict which surfaces frequently within this debate: The distinction between high culture and popular culture. Nelson Brooks has classified these two in terms of "culture as *everything* in human life and culture as the *best* of

everything in human life."[13] It is commonly referred to as Big **C** and little **c**, as I have noted in the title of this section. From what I have witnessed as a teacher of Italian at the secondary level, the majority of instructors, when considering the inclusion of culture in their lessons, are referring to art, literature, music, film, etc… (predominantly big **C** or high culture), despite the reality that little **c** concepts are also an essential, as well as, an inevitable component of language instruction. As mentioned earlier in this section the National Standards for Foreign Language have concluded that culture learning comes by way of products, practices and their underlying perspectives; therefore, as an instructor of language, I am also compelled to include the "stuff" of everyday life into my Italian lessons.

June K. Phillips, in her article entitled "National Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Culture, the driving force," recognizes that up until recently "the inadequacy of this division meant that instruction in little **c** topics often became trivialized or over generalized in ways that perpetuated stereotypes, while the big **C** remained on the level of facts, such as names, places, and historical periods."[14] Taking this debate a step further is Dale L. Lange and his work on "Planning for and Using the New National Culture Standards." He believes that, thanks to the birth of the ACTFL Standards, language instructors can now "[avoid] the

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[13] Brooks, "The Analysis of Language and Familiar Cultures." 20.
[14] Phillips 162.

overworked conflict between **C** and **c** by interweaving the formal and informal aspects of daily life as one normally lives it in any culture."[15] As I agree with Professor Lange on the way in which the National Standards have been a positive force on the manner with which culture will now be treated in the classroom, I can say with relative certainty that the big **C**, little **c** dichotomy will continue to "show its face" in language classrooms.

1.3 The Relationship between Language and Culture

Up until this point, language and culture have been referred to, for the most part, as separate entities. In the following paragraphs, however, I will touch on the need to break away from the language/culture dichotomy and illustrate, what Vicki Galloway refers to as, "the inseparability of language and culture,"[16] Fortunately, one can look to Galloway for a more comprehensive approach to integrating culture in the language classroom. She asserts that "[e]fforts to promote cross-cultural understanding must begin by recognition of the role of culture in the use of language for communication. Language as a codifying instrument for the negotiation of meaning is referenced to its cultural context."[17] Therefore as language teachers, we must possess a better understanding of the

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[15] Lange, "Planning for and Using the New National Culture Standards." 60.
[16] Galloway 97.
[17] *Ibid.* 97.

relationship between these two manifestations of a society as we aim for their synthesis in the classroom.

It is difficult to ignore the inseparability of language and culture when one considers the degree to which culture has been included in the Nations Standards for Foreign Language. In fact, Dale L. Lange weighs in on the significance of this relationship and how "the direction set by […] the National Standards Project […] points directly away from culture as information toward culture as an integrated aspect of language learning."[18] The next portion of this section will take a more in depth look at the connection between these two phenomena.

1.3.1 Kramsch and Her Perspective on Language and Culture

One particular individual who has done significant research on the relationship between language and culture is Claire Kramsch of the University of California at Berkeley. In her work entitled *Language and Culture*, she affirms that "language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways."[19] Kramsch also makes mention of how language is a symbol for one's social identity and how "the prohibition of its use is often perceived by its speakers as a

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[18] Lange, "Planning for and Using the New National Culture Standards." 61.
[19] Kramsch, *Language and Culture*. 3.

rejection of their social group and culture."[20]   Nothing could be more evident of this intolerance than the calls for "English only" in the United States by certain far-right political groups expressing their xenophobic positions. Many Latin Americans, among others, are given the message that their language is not valued in this country, and, therefore, neither is the ethnic minority to which they belong.

Another insight into the complex relationship between language and culture can be understood with the aid of Kramsch's concept of "discourse communities."   From her perspective, "common attitudes, beliefs and values are reflected in the way members of the group use language – for example, what they choose to say or not to say and how they say it."[21]   Within all linguistic communities, one can easily discern examples of idiosyncratic language and behavior that give insight into one's culture. On a personal note, during a brief stay in Dakar, I noticed how frequently the Francophone people of Senegal used the expression *inch 'Allah* before alluding to a future event. This expression, although belonging to the Arabic language, clearly represents a devotion to Islam, and can be heard anywhere on the planet where there are Muslims. These nuances of language are often taken for granted, but they do reflect the concepts illustrated by Kramsch.

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[20] Kramsch, *Language and Culture*. 3.
[21] *Ibid.* 6.

Kramsch also alludes to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which claims that "the structure of the language one habitually uses influences the manner in which one thinks and behaves."[22]   That is to say, language precedes and even impacts one's thoughts and behavior. This hypothesis has been the subject of debate for decades.   Ultimately, however, Kramsch has arrived at the conclusion that

> [t]he stronger version of Whorf's hypothesis, therefore, that posits that language determines the way we think, cannot be taken seriously, but a weak version, supported by the findings that there are cultural differences in the semantic associations evoked by seemingly common concepts, is generally accepted nowadays.[23]

Despite particular incongruities that exist between Kramsch's theories and the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, one constant is that the relationship between language and culture is extremely complex and merits further attention and linguistic scholarship.

1.4 Culture and the National Standards

The National Standards and their influence on the inclusion of culture in the foreign language classroom have been mentioned on a few

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[22] Kramsch, *Language and Culture*, 11.
[23] *Ibid.* 13.

occasions in this academic work. At this time, I believe that it is necessary

to take a closer look at this topic, which continues to be a crucial one

within the foreign language pedagogical community. It was in 1996 that

the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project gave birth

to the five C's: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and

Communities. Along with them came a vital realization that culture was to

play a greater role in the foreign language classroom than it had had prior

to that date. This is echoed in the rationale of the Cultures section

included in the 3rd edition of the National Standards:

> American students need to develop awareness of other
> people's world views, of their unique way of life, and of the
> patterns of behavior which order their world, as well as
> learn about contributions of other cultures to the world at
> large and the solutions they offer to the common problems
> of humankind. Such awareness will help combat the
> ethnocentrism that often dominates the thinking of our
> young people.[24]

These words send a strong message to the education community as a

whole that cultural awareness is a matter that cannot be taken for granted

in today's global climate.

The task force that generated these new standards has also

recognized that "in the past, classroom instruction was often focused on

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[24] National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project 47.

the memorization of words and grammar rules."[25]   This assertion is corroborated by my own observations as an instructor of Italian at the secondary level. It constitutes a great deal of this thesis and remains the driving force behind the research.   Despite the seemingly innovative nature of this emphasis on culture in the language curriculum (for which these standards are partially given credit), June K. Phillips argues that there is nothing new under the sun in this regard: "The standards […] do not propose anything radically new in terms of culture; they do attempt to refocus teachers' attention upon culture as the core so that it may become the central outcome of student learning, long espoused but seldom achieved."[26]   In other words, instructors of language have always known the significance of culture; however, now, with the aid of the National Standards, teachers are reminded of its importance and given tools with which to approach its inclusion in the curriculum.

To what extent, one might ask, do these standards aid in the practical application of culture in the foreign language classroom, beyond what we already know?   Dale L. Lange weighs in on this question by pointing out that the National Standards provide a guide for teachers in "arranging the curriculum, assessing student learning, and conducting

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[25] National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project 32.
[26] Phillips 163.

instruction."[27] In the same article entitled "Planning for and Using the New

National Standards," Lange goes on to point out that

> [t]he National Standards (1996) provide both goals and standards for culture in both Culture and Comparisons goals categories […]. The standards set both content and a general level of performance. In essence, students are to *demonstrate an understanding* of the **practices, products, and perspectives** of the culture being studied, as well as *demonstrate an understanding* of the **concept of culture** *through comparison* of the culture studied *and* their own.[28]

That is to say, the standards provide clear examples of what students

need to know and be able to demonstrate in terms of culture learning. In

as far as specific content is concerned, the revised 3rd edition of the

Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century informs

teachers that "[students] will need to learn about everyday life and social

institutions, about contemporary and historical issues that are important in

those cultures, about significant works of literature and art, and about

cultural attitudes and priorities."[29]

Beyond its function as a guide, however, the revised 3rd edition of

the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* offers

very specific tasks for each of the 10 included languages. This is done by

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[27] Lange, "Planning for and Using the New National Culture Standards." 70.
[28] *Ibid*. 85.
[29] National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project 34.

way of furnishing detailed samples of progress indicators for each individual standard, for each language, at various levels. Here are a few select examples of these progress indicators for Culture Standards 2.1 and 2.2 at the 12th grade level:

- Students learn about and/or participate in cultural practices enjoyed by Italians, such as games, sports, and entertainment (e.g., *Briscola, Scala 40, Giro d'Italia, Carnevale, Palio, calcio, calcetto*).[30]

- Students demonstrate a knowledge of the various contributions in architecture, art, music and literature accomplished by Italians (e.g., read plays/short stories, attend an opera).[31]

These samples unequivocally demonstrate the extent to which the National Standards emphasize the vital role of culture in the foreign language classroom. They also clear a path for the implementation of very specific goals and objectives regarding culture in Italian curricula.

1.5 The AP Italian Language and Culture Course and Exam

Effective fall of 2011, high school students around the country will begin preparing for the AP Exam in Italian language and culture; it will take place in May of 2012. After having been suspended for insufficient

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[30] National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project 340.
[31] *Ibid.* 341.

participation, the course has been reinstated with the help of the Italian Embassy, Italian-American organizations, and others. The Advanced Placement Italian language and culture course is significant to this doctoral study in that it is structured thematically. These themes function as a backdrop for the cultural contexts within which communicative instruction takes place. There are six themes[32] in all, which are broken down into various contexts:

- Global Challenges

- Science and Technology

- Contemporary Life

- Personal and Public Identities

- Families and Communities

- Beauty and Aesthetics

In the following section I will describe a number of potential approaches to assessment that include goals and objectives similar to those mentioned

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[32] The entire AP Italian language and culture course and exam description can be found at http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/repository/AP_ItalianCED.pdf

in the previous paragraphs, as well as examine directions for future evaluation of cultural competence.

1.6 Assessing Culture Competence

Demonstrating cultural understanding and/or awareness can be a challenging task for students of language at any level. In terms of formal assessment, teachers often struggle with finding methods to gauge skills, knowledge and attitudes that reflect the learning of culture. Prior to embarking on this research, my personal encounters with assessment of cultural knowledge came, for the most part, in the form of "multiple choice" or "true/false" quizzing. Many instructors, as pointed out by Renate A. Schulz, do not even give "much weight in the assessment process (88.5 percent of teachers weigh culture learning as 20 percent or less of students' grades).[33] One certainty is the need for improved methods of evaluating culture in the foreign language classroom. In the paragraphs that follow, I will examine a number of academic and scholarly perspectives dealing with the need for a more meaningful evaluation of students' understanding of culture.

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[33] Schulz 11-12.

1.6.1 The Six Instructional Goals of H. Ned Seelye

In H. Ned Seelye's *Teaching Culture: Strategies for Intercultural Communication*, the reader is presented with six goals. They act as a working foundation for assessing student learning of culture in the foreign language classroom. According to Seelye, these goals are a modified version of the Nostrand[34] approach to testing cultural understanding. They enable a teacher to present virtually any aspect of culture during a lesson with various perspectives on which to focus. As shown below, the goals are worded in terms of student achievement as opposed to teacher process. This student–centered approach reinforces the importance of allowing the class to arrive at conclusions and benefit from the overall process of cultural learning, and avoids the superficial relaying of facts that often comes about in more teacher–centered instruction. Here are Seelye's six instructional goals:

> **Goal 1** – *Interest*: The student shows curiosity about another culture (or another segment or subculture of one's own culture) and empathy toward its members.
>
> **Goal 2** – *Who*: The student recognizes that role expectations and other social variables such as age, sex, social class, religion, ethnicity, and place of residence affect the way people speak and behave.

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[34] See Nostrand, "Testing Understanding of the Foreign Culture." (1970).

Goal 3 – *What*: The student realizes that effective communication requires discovering the culturally conditioned images that are evoked in the minds of people when they think, act and react to the world around them.

Goal 4 – *Where and When*: The student recognizes that situational variables and convention shape behavior in important ways.

Goal 5 – *Why*: The student understands that people generally act the way they do because they are using options their society allows for satisfying basic physical and psychological needs, and that cultural patterns are interrelated and tend mutually to support need satisfaction.

Goal 6 – *Exploitation*: The student can evaluate a generalization about the target culture in terms of the amount of evidence substantiating it, and has the skills needed to locate and organize information about the target culture from the library, the mass media, people, and personal observation. [35]

These goals function as general objectives from which the instructor must generate specific tasks. It is in demonstrating mastery of the specific tasks that students will be evaluated. If I were, for example, to address "Goal 2 – *Who*," I might ask my students to identify five Italian dialects and the region in which they are spoken. Ultimately, the teacher is responsible for creating lessons that would enable students to show a command of the objectives. I find Seelye's goals to be useful to a certain degree; however, they do not address the more elusive aspects of

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[35] Seelye, T*eaching Culture: Strategies for Intercultural Communication.* 31.

quantifiably evaluating students at the secondary level. Therefore, I turn to the next body of research that I investigate in this thesis, which is that of Michael Byram.

1.6.2 Byram's Objectives for Assessment

Professor Michael Byram of Durham University in his work *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* presents the reader with a number of cultural objectives that, from a certain perspective, resemble those of Ned Seelye; nonetheless, these objectives can add to an instructor's repertoire of pedagogical tools. In reading his ideas, I have found one perspective, in particular, to be significantly poignant in the way it addresses the goal of culture education: the learning process should be the focus of a lesson rather than simply the final product. In addition, he affirms that the ideal learning of culture is "structured according to principles developed from sociological or cultural anthropological analysis and linked to the acquisition of language."[36] I strongly agree with Bryam's assertion that the goal of cultural learning is directly connected to the communicative goals of language proficiency; this concept is, in essence, the focus of this academic study.

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[36] Byram 65.

Within his work on Intercultural Communicative Competence, Byram presents five elements (as he refers to them) to his readers. They define the necessary behaviors or skills, establishing a basis on which to assess students' cultural understanding and/or awareness. Here are his five elements:

- **Attitudes**: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.

- **Knowledge**: of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.

- **Skills of interpreting and relating**: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own.

- **Skills of discovery and interaction**: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

- **Critical cultural awareness/political education**: an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries.[37]

For each individual element, Byram includes numerous examples that define what behaviors or knowledge a learner must demonstrate in

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[37] Byram 57 – 64.

order to exhibit mastery of each one. I find Byram's concepts to be useful

from a theoretical point of view; however, they can, at times, be redundant

and even elusive. He does conclude, towards the end of his work, that a

portfolio is perhaps the best method of assessment, but he does not go far

enough into explaining what that would actually entail. In the next section,

will address a number of specific challenges of assessing culture in the

World Language classroom and R.A. Schulz's proposed solutions to them.

1.6.3 Renate A. Schulz and Assessing Cultural Understanding

The concepts described in "The Challenge of Assessing Cultural

Understanding in the Context of Foreign Language Instruction," by Renate

Schulz, have influenced this thesis in a substantial way. I share her belief

"that a comparative approach is the most beneficial in gaining cross-

cultural understanding..."[38] In considering that every individual learner of

a language is bringing his or her own experiences into the classroom,

comparison between the native and target cultures is inevitable. Schulz

has also comprised a list of five objectives for cultural learning and

assessment in the foreign language classroom:

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[38] Schulz 16.

1. Students develop and demonstrate an awareness that geographic, historical, economic, social/religious, and political factors can have an impact on cultural perspectives, products, and practices including language use and styles of communication.

2. Students develop and demonstrate awareness that situational variables (e.g., context and role expectations, including power differentials, and social variables such as age, gender, social class, religion, ethnicity and place of residence) shape communicative interaction (verbal, nonverbal, and paralinguistic) and behavior in important ways.

3. Students recognize stereotypes or generalizations about the home and target cultures and evaluate them in terms of the amount of substantiating evidence.

4. Students develop and demonstrate an awareness that each language and culture has culture-conditioned images and culture-specific connotations of some words, phrases, proverbs, idiomatic formulations, gestures, etc.

5. Students develop and demonstrate an awareness of some types of causes for cultural misunderstanding between members of different cultures.[39]

As I compare and contrast the objectives of Seelye, Byram, and Schulz, I cannot help but notice an evolution of ideas. All of the concepts, nonetheless, offer the language instructor unique potential solutions to issues of cultural assessment. On a personal level, I do find Schulz's emphasis on awareness in her goals to be most in line with my own philosophy, which has guided the generation of this dissertation.

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[39] Schulz 17.

Schulz seems to comprehend the limitations of objectives when they stand alone, and asks a number of relevant questions: "How does one demonstrate cultural awareness or understanding as defined in the objectives? What forms of assessment should and could be used to obtain a meaningful measure of desirable knowledge, attitudes, and skills at the foreign language course and program levels?"[40] She answers her own questions in her description of "The Culture Learning Portfolio."[41]

It is evident in her writing, that Renate Schulz believes that the most effective method of assessing cultural awareness is by way of portfolio. In her article, Schulz clearly affirms that "if cross-cultural understanding is indeed to be a byproduct of foreign language learning, and if [...] language should be taught as an explicit cultural practice, let us provide learners with systematic opportunities to develop such understanding, and let us collect through assessment evidence that we are achieving our goals."[42]

An attribute of the portfolio that makes it so practical in assessing something as elusive as culture, is that it focuses as much on process as it does on product. Concurrently, it allows students to be reflective and self-evaluative. It also gives the instructor the opportunity to give

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[40] Schulz 17.
[41] *Ibid.* 18.
[42] *Ibid.* 18.

continuous feedback. This will allow for student-to-student and teacher–to-student discussion, collaboration, revision and elaboration. The use of the portfolio as a means to gauge cultural learning and awareness is not, by any means, ubiquitous at this point in time; however, I am cautiously optimistic that it will become a tool that foreign language teachers around the United States will be implementing on a regular basis.

1.6.4 Future Considerations for the Assessment of Culture

A common thread in the literature that I have examined in the above sections pertaining to the assessment of culture is the importance of coming up with objectives that allow for the demonstration of cultural competence or awareness. These objectives "set the stage" for additional means of assessment. According to Colleen Ryan-Scheutz and Frank Nuessel, both of whom were part of a larger ad-hoc task force that met in Sicily in 2008 to deal with the topic of culture in the Italian curriculum, "the usual design for the assessment of cultural proficiency appears in the form of rubrics, that is, a brief set of guidelines for gauging proficiency in a particular academic domain (in this instance cultural awareness/competence)."[43] They later go on to say that "to date, and to our knowledge, there exists no one, succinct rubric for cultural learning (in

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[43] Ryan-Scheutz 52.

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any language) that enjoys widespread classroom application in the United States."[44] More work does need to be done in the field of cultural assessment (in Italian as well as in other languages); however, I am optimistic that, thanks to new research done in this area, language instructors are moving in the right direction.

In my level five Italian course, I have begun to implement a cultural portfolio accompanied by a rubric.[45] The rubric that I have generated has been influenced, to a certain extent, by the concepts of Renate Schulz. I do maintain, nevertheless, that a multi-faceted approach is the most comprehensive way of gauging cultural learning. Implementing a multi-faceted approach to assess cultural literacy would include

- Tests and quizzes to assess factual knowledge: names, events, geography, etc…

- Oral and/or PowerPoint presentations to assess broader cultural knowledge and awareness

- Dramatic / theatrical presentations to assess nuanced linguistic behavior: idioms, gestures and mannerisms

- Cultural Literacy Portfolio to assess the culmination of writing and other assignments, and to gauge the growth of the student from the beginning to end of the semester

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[44] *Ibid.* 52.
[45] See Appendix A

All of the above approaches to assessing student progress in terms of cultural literacy, aside from the tests and quizzes, would be graded by way of a rubric.

1.7 Summary

In our perpetually shrinking world, the plea for cross-cultural understanding has never been louder. The need for continued widespread discussion on the subject matter of culture in the foreign language classroom is clear. Thanks to the National Standards and the research of a number of mentioned scholars dedicated to its inclusion in the curriculum, there has been significant progress in this area. A significant amount of work remains to be done pertaining to strategies and assessment; nevertheless, the vast majority of teachers are interested in improving their strategies to better integrate culture in their lessons. I hope this thesis constructively adds to the discussion and perhaps offers a degree of clarity on a number of these items. In the subsequent chapter, I will go beyond the aforementioned concepts of cultural learning and explore the role of cultural sensitivity in an Italian classroom and the degree to which the instructor may facilitate the promotion of it.

Chapter 2

Moving from Awareness to Sensitivity

2.1 Introduction

The ideas articulated in the previous chapter address an array of concerns related to culture and its role in the World Language classroom. They also take into account the many challenges teachers face in its instruction and assessment. One of the highlighted concepts found in the first section of this thesis is the importance of equipping students with the necessary tools to obtain self-awareness through interpersonal communicative activities; the paradigm is such that as the students gain understanding of the target language and culture, so do they acquire a certain degree of personal insight.

The purpose of this chapter is to acknowledge the possibility of going further along the acculturation process, and to consider the high school student's potential to attain greater sensitivity and an overall appreciation for diversity. There are teachers who conclude that such objectives are beyond the scope of the World Language curriculum. Much to the contrary, this thesis maintains that not only does the potential for cultivating greater sensitivity and tolerance exist in a language classroom,

but it is precisely in that environment where such growth should take place. These convictions are sustained by Bennett, Bennett, and Allen (as presented in Durocher) who assert that

> the foreign language classroom [is] a logical place for teaching sensitivity to cultural difference because intercultural communication constitutes a distinct yet complementary set of skills with respect to foreign language proficiency. Without these skills, without an understanding of what it is that informs culturally characteristic behavior, individuals from different cultures will continue to misunderstand one another, even when they speak each other's language fluently.[46]

Before examining the skills associated with sensitivity to cultural differences, one must take into account the negative attitudes that World Language instructors encounter in their students, with the potential goal of minimizing or perhaps even eliminating such attitudes.

2.2. Addressing Stereotypes and Ethnocentric Perspectives

It is inevitable that World Language teachers will have some students in their classrooms, each academic year, who harbor negative attitudes toward the target culture(s). It is also likely that some students will express an ethnocentric superiority (most often translating to

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[46] Durocher 144.

condescension) over their peers, or over other unique groups of people. These attitudes are not only potentially offensive, but often impede the student's capacity to learn another language and culture. As indicated in the following observation by C. Mantle-Bromley, "attitudes affect not only the students' motivation to learn the language, but also their willingness to learn about and participate in acculturation."[47] These attitudes, to which Mantle-Bromley often alludes, manifest in terms of cultural stereotyping.

The most common stereotypes encountered by teachers of Italian language and culture in an American classroom come from contemporary images of Italian-Americans. Frequently, Italian-Americans are associated with the Mafioso or gangster caricature seen in films like Coppola's *Godfather* and Scorsese's *Goodfellas*, as well as on the television series *The Sopranos*. More recently, the MTV reality show *Jersey Shore* has evoked outrage among organizations such as NIAF and UNICO, by portraying Italian-Americans as "violent, aggressive buffoons."[48] Beyond what is adopted through the media, however, is the way in which stereotypes are often passed on from generation to generation. Mantle-Bromley, in a study of secondary-level language students, "found that the

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[47] Mantle-Bromley 118.
[48] http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2009/11/25/italian-american-group-asks-mtv-cancel-jersey-shore/

students tended to adopt stereotypes held by the adult community."[49] Although these ubiquitous stereotypes have shown to be quite tenacious, the data regarding Italian-Americans actually points to an ethnic group that enjoys a considerable majority belonging to a white-collar middle class.[50]

Another significant problem is that most adolescents in American classrooms who study Italian (first year students in particular) have never been to Italy and often fail to differentiate between Italian and Italian-American culture; I have had to address this concern numerous times teaching at the high school level. In addition, many young Italian-American high school students, in attempting to compensate for adolescent insecurity, often glamorize and replicate certain stereotypical behaviors. This in turn frequently translates into an ethnocentric superiority, most often to the detriment of the class.

An Italian language and culture class is likely to contain students who purport that Italian (including Italian-American) culture is superior to others. This is especially true in the New York Metropolitan area where there are large Italian-American communities. It may begin with relatively acceptable comments such as "Italian cars are the best in the world," or "Italian food is better than Mexican." If left unchecked, however, this seemingly harmless attitude can bring about an incendiary atmosphere in

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[49] Mantle-Bromley 121.
[50] http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/ancestry/Italian.txt

the classroom. In her article entitled "Cross-Cultural Awareness in the Foreign Language Class: The Kluckhohn Model," Marian Mikaylo Ortuño asserts that

> [u]ncontrolled ethnocentrism has often led to prejudice, hatred, oppression, and war. Would it not then be vitally important for educators, especially for those in the field of foreign languages and literatures, to instill in their students a sense of cross-cultural awareness by providing them with the tools for identifying their own cultural value orientations as well those of others?"[51]

Ortuño's well-articulated remarks are a welcome addition to the convictions expressed in this thesis. Far too often, ethnocentric attitudes are tolerated in our society and public schools are not an exception. Teachers of World Languages have a responsibility, as they engage their classes in lessons that utilize the target language for the purpose of acculturation, to direct the students away from the oversimplifications of stereotyping and ethnocentrism. In doing so, students will "be enriched with a global perspective and the ability to recognize the diversity of methods by which different peoples attempt to solve humanity's common problems."[52]

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[51] Ortuño 449.
[52] *Ibid.* 449.

The model laid out by Milton Bennett provides an excellent framework for the acquisition of sensitivity needed in today's World Language classroom to challenge the abovementioned ethnocentric attitudes. The subsequent section will examine the various stages through which language students progress, as proposed by Bennett, in moving away from ethnocentrism in the direction of ethnorelativism.

2.3 Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

The most coherent and comprehensive program to address the need for cultural sensitivity in World Language curricula belongs to Milton J. Bennett. This perspective is affirmed by Dennis Durocher of Nicholls State University who, in his article, "Teaching Sensitivity to Cultural Difference in the First-Year Foreign Language Classroom," asserts that Bennett's "theory lends itself to integration in the foreign language curriculum because it targets appropriate knowledge, attitudes, and skill sets at each stage of the foreign language curriculum, including the earliest ones."[53]

In his Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, Bennett presents a six stage progression that is divided into two vast categories: ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism. The following diagram illustrates

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[53] Durocher 144.

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these stages of development through which an individual advances toward more empathic frames of mind.

Figure 2[54]

Development of Intercultural Sensitivity						
Experience of Difference →						
Ethnocentric Stages			**Ethnorelative Stages**		
1	2	3	4	5	6
Denial	Defense	Minimization	Acceptance	Adaptation	Integration
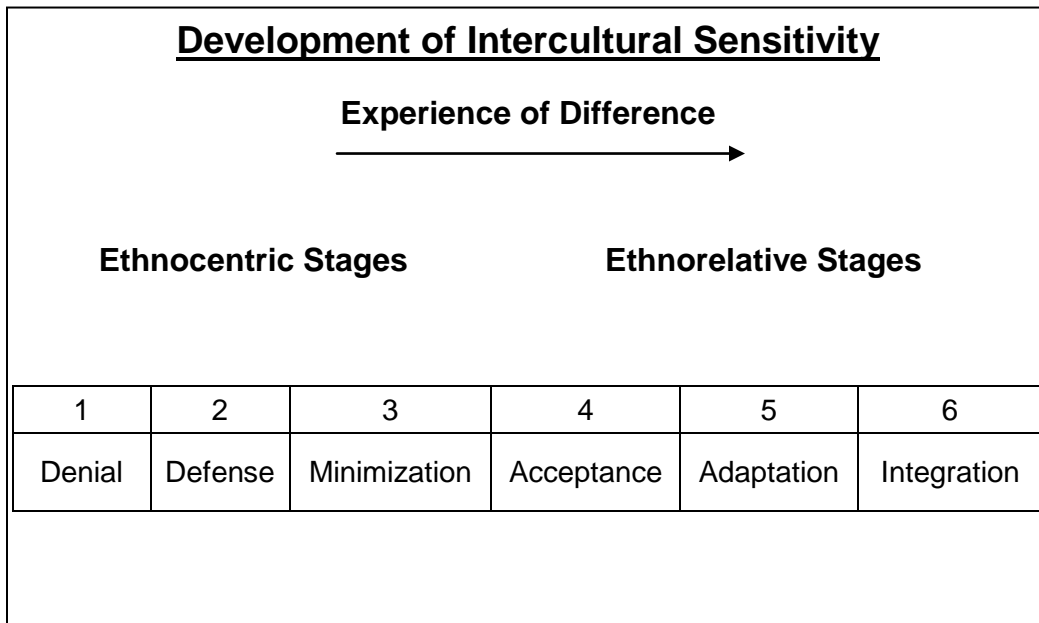
2.3.1 The Ethnocentric Stages

The first stage of the Bennett model, which represents the highest degree of ethnocentrism, is denial. In terms of a high school student, he or she would not, at this stage, even recognize the existence of cultural differences. Individuals at this stage usually have not begun the formal

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[54] Diagram is based on Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, (1993).

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study of a language, or are at the very beginning of language learning, and fail to recognize difference. According to Durocher, "[w]hen individuals in the denial stage are exposed to cultural difference, they tend to perceive it as a threat to the integrity of their own world view…"[55] In practical terms, the beginner language student who is "in denial" of cultural difference, may exhibit inappropriate behavior as he or she is initially exposed to cultural concepts that may provoke anxiety within him or her. This acting out on the part of the student is characteristic of the next stage of development: defense.

Defense differs from denial in that there is a beginning awareness of cultural differences and these differences are perceived by the individual to be threatening. This often leads to significant insecurity and can manifest in terms of negative attitudes. Within the context of a first or second year language class, a student may create broad, inaccurate stereotypes for members of the target culture, or of any another unique group based on race, gender, or sexuality. One might also encounter students who posture cultural superiority over others. "Individuals in the defense stage divide the world in to 'us' and 'them,' and believe that 'we' are superior to 'them.'"[56] These defense mechanisms manifest as the

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[55] Durocher 146.
[56] *Ibid.* 146.

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language student attempts to flee from what seems to be an inevitable loss of identity.

The third and final ethnocentric stage of the Bennett model is minimization. It represents the individual's last attempt to preserve his or her own world view. "Individuals in this stage tend to minimize cultural difference by subsuming it to their own cultural categories. They operate within the notion that we are all basically the same."[57] In other words, cultural differences are now recognized, but they are seen as being trivial. This category is especially relevant to the language teacher who struggles to move his or her students away from the idea that language learning is simply translating words and phrases from L1 to L2. The concept in this example is as follows: Since human beings are virtually all alike, they must experience the world in identical (or almost identical) ways. This obstacle to effective communicative language instruction is noted in Kramsch. In her article "The Cultural Discourse of Foreign Language Textbooks" she states that "[i]f we want learners to be able to behave appropriately in the target culture, they have to learn not only the dictionary definitions of words, but their social meanings as well."[58] Students at this stage must be given the opportunity in the classroom, by way of intercultural communicative activities, to gain insight and "recognize their own

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[57] Durocher 147.
[58] Kramsch, "The Cultural Discourse of Foreign Language Textbooks." 75.

assumptions and values,"[59] before they are able to achieve the levels of cultural sensitivity that are more commonly found on the ethnorelative side of the Bennett spectrum.

2.3.2 The Ethnorelative Stages

As one moves beyond an ethnocentric world view, he or she arrives at the fourth stage: What Bennett refers to as acceptance. Acceptance belongs to the ethnorelative side of the spectrum due to the understanding that those individuals at this stage recognize the subjective nature of the way in which they see the world and are open to intercultural experiences. Durocher explains the concept of acceptance in the following way:

> Individuals in the acceptance stage operate with the notion that their assumptions about reality are not necessarily shared by members of other cultures. Instead of feeling threatened by this realization, individuals in the acceptance stage are comfortable with it and generally manifest greater interest in cultural difference.[60]

What this means for the World Language class is that students at this phase of intercultural sensitivity now exhibit an openness to learning and exploring the target culture(s). The instructor can, at this point, present

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[59] Durocher 147.
[60] Durocher 147.

material with little or no resistance from the students, and begin to focus on their capacity for adaptation.

When an individual is able to "discern and internalize enough cultural patterns, they will begin to adapt to the target culture, first in their thinking, then in their behavior."[61] One must concede that a primary communicative goal for the World Language student is the modification of his or her thinking and behavior, for the purpose of experiencing the target culture; therefore, adaptation is an invaluable component to one's progress in a language course. Bennett also refers to adaptation as empathy. In alluding, once again, to the World Language class, we can recognize the importance of being able to put oneself in "someone else's shoes" and, to a certain degree, experience the world through their eyes. A key feature of this stage, that differentiates it from the previous one, is the individual's capacity to act in a way that is appropriate to the target culture. This can imply, for example, the accurate employment of L2 idiomatic expressions, as well as the adoption of gestures and mannerisms that are common among members of the target culture. It is my belief, that the adaptation stage is the apex of a high schools student's capacity for sensitivity. As I will illustrate in the next paragraph, the final

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[61] Durocher 147.

phase, in the vast majority of cases, is beyond the reach of an adolescent language student.

The sixth and final stage of sensitivity, according to the Bennett model, is integration. This occurs when an individual's frame of reference is no longer rooted in one specific culture. Values, at this stage, are also taken from a number of different cultural frameworks. This can only come about after having lived for significant periods of time in different locations. Durocher notes that "individuals in the integration stage of sensitivity have been sufficiently transformed by cross-cultural experiences to recreate themselves as distanced from their original ethnocentric identity."[62] As alluded to in the previous paragraph, this degree of cultural sensitivity is virtually nonexistent at the secondary level; therefore, it is beyond the scope of the high school World Language classroom. This assertion does not take away from the intrinsic value of the integration stage, but does maintain that it offers little practical application to a high school language instructor. The next section, conversely, illustrates a number of very pragmatic issues regarding linguistic sensitivity and how this brand of sensitivity can be particularly significant in an Italian language and culture classroom.

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[62] Durocher 148.

2.4 An Appreciation for Italian Linguistic Diversity

I must preface this section by unequivocally acknowledging the necessity for a teacher of Italian in the United States to conduct class in the target language: *L'italiano standard*. All of the didactic materials to which I have (or have had) access focus on Italian and this thesis will not promote any instruction of a non-standard version of the language in a secondary Italian classroom. This section will, however, address a number of concerns related to Italian dialects, and their relevance to an Italian language and culture course in the United States.

As is the truth in many or most nations on the planet, a demonstration of intolerance towards one's language can be read as a rejection of that culture. It is for this reason that instructors of Italian (and of any other language for that matter) need to demonstrate sensitivity and tolerance toward students who may bring dialecticisms into the classroom. Throughout my experience teaching in a suburban New York public school, I have encountered numerous Italian-American students who pronounce the language with a regional accent or who incorporate dialectical terms or expressions in their use of Italian. In fact, I have taught students who, at times, would refrain from speaking due to an anxiety that their use of Italian was "inferior" or "incorrect." It is my firm belief that these students are an enriching component to an Italian

classroom, and should be encouraged to share their connection to Italian culture without feeling intimidated. If a situation were to arise in which a student used a non-standard form of the language, the instructor might simply restate it in Italian without bringing a great deal of attention to it.

In today's world, discrimination based on race, religion, gender and sexuality receives significant attention. The way in which one speaks, however, is often "fair game" for intolerance. In an article entitled "Everyone Has an Accent," Walt Wolfram, Professor of Linguistics at NC State University, maintains that "[t]he societal norm seems to be that attitudes about language differences don't even have to be disguised. Well-intentioned people who would be hesitant to make overt statements about race, gender or class openly mock and disparage language differences."[63] One way in which to incorporate a cultural lesson dealing with linguistic diversity in an Italian language classroom is by way of comparative approach (as indicated in the ACTFL National Standards).

In employing a comparative approach, an instructor may begin by eliciting the students' attitudes toward regional linguistic variation in the United States. This is likely to reveal certain prejudicial points of view that are held in terms of the ways in which some Americans speak English. In turn, the teacher would offer, in a similar manner, various points of view

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[63] Wolfram, "Everyone Has an Accent."

pertaining to Italian dialects (I have included material, further on in this chapter, which addresses this topic). The overall objective is to nurture a degree of sensitivity in the students, by allowing them to observe linguistic diversity from another vantage point. In addition, they may recognize a connection between one's socio-economic class and the *perceived* value of his or her dialect/language. "If people belong to a socially oppressed group, they can count on having their language stigmatized: if they belong to a prestigious group, their language will carry prestige value."[64]

The subsequent section will examine current concerns pertaining to linguistic differences in Italy. The overall scope will be to develop an appreciation for diversity, in our students, within the parameters of Italian language and culture.

2.4.1 *I dialetti e le lingue di minoranza* (Italian Dialects and Minority Languages)

The title of this section alludes to the linguistic dichotomy that exists in Italy between language and dialect. The current situation is such that not all languages/dialects are given equal recognition under Italian law. Recent legislation in the Italian Parliament (Law 482 of 1999) has concluded that certain idioms have earned the right to call themselves

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[64] Wolfram, "Everyone Has an Accent."

languages whereas others remain classified as dialects. Although, linguistically speaking, there is no difference between a language and a dialect, this debate evokes considerable emotion in Italians who feel that their regional tongue is being neglected. In an article published in the Italian newspaper *la Repubblica* entitled *"Unità d'Italia, dialetti alla riscossa e minoranze linguistiche in cattedra,"* it was noted that "*il friulano, il sardo, l'occitano e altri nove idiomi parlati sul territorio italiano sono 'lingue di minoranza' a tutti gli effetti, con tutele ad hoc e piani di valorizzazione previsti da un'apposita legge dello Stato...*"[65] This has generated a great deal of interest within the provinces of Italy. Many Italians want to see their dialect/language formally recognized by the Italian government in the same way the Sardinian or Friuli languages are.

Furthermore, in recognition of the 150th anniversary of Italy's unification, the state owned television network RAI produced a number of commercials whose slogan, *"Se gli italiani fossero quelli di 150 anni fa, probabilmente comunicheremmo ancora così"*[66] was narrated after scenes in which Italians spoke in a local language that was incomprehensible to his or her interlocutor(s). RAI's apparent objective was to show how the television network has played a role in the evolution of Italy and the Italian

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[65] *la Repubblica*, "Unità d'Italia, dialetti alla riscossa ...," 08 Feb. 2011.
[66] The TV spot can be seen at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11TLf2YHyQw

language. These commercials, nonetheless, have provoked the ire of many Italians who believe their languages/dialects should not be mocked, but celebrated as living languages.

In an article published on the 14th of December, 2010, in the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera,* Roberto Ciambetti*,* a member of the conservative political party *Lega Nord,* expressed his disdain for the way in which local languages were treated by the RAI commercial: *"È come sostenere che le lingue locali sono roba da barbari e l'italiano le ha finalmente cancellate."[67]* Within the same article, Italian linguist Tullio Telmon asserts that *"[d]ietro questi spot sembra esserci una falsa idea: e cioè che per imparare l'italiano sia necessario cancellare ogni traccia dei dialetti appresi in precedenza. E invece è vero proprio il contrario: più codici linguistici si conoscono più diventa facile impararne uno nuovo."* On a final note, journalist Giampiero Castellotti, describes the cultural significance of these regional and local languages by asserting that *"[i] dialetti sono come la pasta e il Colosseo, prenderli in giro vuol dire offendere la nostra cultura."[68]*

In illustrating how local languages spoken within Italy are tightly intertwined with regional culture, the instructor can kindle discussion in the target language that will afford students the opportunity to consider their

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[67] "Gli spot dei dialetti incomprensibili / Il caso Rai sull'Unità d'Italia." www.corriere.it
[68] *Ibid.* www.corriere.it

own perspectives, and perhaps prejudices, relating to linguistic regional diversity in the United States. For example, my students in the NY area may no longer find it appropriate to mimic a "Midwestern" accent, after considering how some Italian citizens feel that their regional language/dialect is being devalued by some members of Italian society, media and government.

2.5 Summary

Cultural sensitivity is an essential element of competent communicative language instruction. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, there are many challenges that present themselves in the classroom, which a teacher must address in order to impart sensitivity and tolerance for other cultures to their students. The World Language class is, without question, a logical setting for such instruction. The more often students are exposed to new cultural information, the more likely they are to discard any negative perspectives of the target culture that they might harbor. The expectation is that the student will begin to adapt a greater degree of sensitivity toward cultures overall.

The ensuing chapters of this thesis will present practical communicative strategies for integrating culture in high school Italian curricula. In addition to these pedagogical strategies, there is an

unwavering promotion of cultural awareness and sensitivity that persists

throughout the remainder of this study. The practical material that follows

is presented in three different categories according to media type: film,

music and visual art.

Chapter 3

Strategies for Integrating Film in the Italian Classroom

3.1 An Introduction to the Integration of Film

The use of film in the classroom can give insight into Italian culture in a way that no other medium can. In essence, film offers the student of Italian the unique opportunity to "visit" Italy and to have a glimpse at life there. In addition, students can see the cities and landscapes, "meet" the people and hear them speak the various languages while observing the gestures and facial expressions for which the Italian are known. They can, for example, observe the ways in which Italians interact at home with family, at work, when in love, etc…, as well as gain an insider's view of the socio-political issues that Italians face. In employing film in the Italian classroom, the instructor has the potential to address lexical, syntactical, phonological and cultural aspects simultaneously. As affirmed by E. Tognozzi, when a film is used

> for pedagogical purposes, the vocabulary accent and manner of discourse may vary according to genre or region, and students will therefore be introduced to many forms and aspects of language that they may not find in the classroom. This homogenous language helps further develop advanced listening comprehension, models conversational vocabulary,

and allows students a look at language as cumulative as opposed to   linear.[69]

In fact, there is little doubt as to whether the use of film in language instruction is effective; however, we must ask how it can be MOST productive in the classroom. At one level, the student of Italian becomes acquainted with a product of the culture, and at another, as stated by Prendergast in his article on cinema sociology, "film exposes the viewer to social worlds beyond the orbit of personal experience."[70] As instructors of Italian, it is imperative that we acquaint our students with these social worlds. In reference to concepts introduced earlier on in this dissertation, it is by exposing students to cultural material that they begin to develop greater awareness and sensitivity.

3.2 What NOT to Do When Using Film in a Language Class

Before taking an in-depth look at the methods one may employ when using movies in an Italian classroom, it is necessary to address a couple of pitfalls that should be avoided, so to reap the benefits that film can offer language students. First and foremost, film in the classroom is not a passive form of entertainment. This employment of film invites

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[69] Tognozzi 72.
[70] Prendergast 243.

students to sit back for a few class lessons, with little or no obligation regarding assignments or assessments. It also sends the very clear message that a movie gives the students the option of "turning off," and any future attempt to engage the students in discussion or an assignment will either be met with opposition or will be poorly undertaken. Nor is the inclusion of film in the classroom a reward for good performance or behavior. This too conveys the message that, when a movie is shown in class, the student does not have to actively participate. Equally inadvisable is the use of American movies dubbed or subtitled in Italian. These possess little or no cultural relevance related to Italian society and, therefore, do not offer much to students of Italian.

3.3 Strategies of Implementation

Perhaps the most difficult task in terms of incorporating film in the teaching of a particular unit is finding the right one. This challenge forces the instructor to take a good look at the cultural context of the unit being taught. As illustrated in the introduction to this doctoral thesis, the cultural context of a lesson serves as the basis from which all other communicative activities are derived.

Successfully choosing a film is also contingent upon the instructor's knowledge of Italian cinema. The Italian television network RAI has an

excellent website dedicated to Italian language and culture entitled *Italica*[71], which provides an entire section dealing with Italian cinema. Depending on the level of the Italian course in which the film will be shown, the teacher may need to consider whether or not certain films are appropriate. An additional decision the teacher must make right from the beginning is whether to show the entire film or solely a particular scene relevant to the topic. If the instructor decides the showing of the entire film is not feasible or desirable, the use of a scene can be an extremely effective tool with which one can investigate a number of cultural questions in the classroom. As Elisa Tognozzi astutely points out in her article, "Teaching and Evaluating Language and Culture Through film," "[i]n addition to developing cultural awareness, film clips help students understand meaning as it is conveyed by word choice, stress and intonation patterns, and body language, since the characters in the clips are able to model authentic language for students."[72]

The following activity is an example of how a scene from a film can be used in an anticipatory set to kindle a cultural discourse on the similarities and differences that exist between an Italian *liceo* and an American high school.

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[71] http://www.italica.rai.it/cinema/index.htm
[72] Tognozzi 70.

3.4 *Caterina va in città* [73] (Beginner/ Intermediate)

An effective scene to employ in a first or second year high school Italian class can be found in the movie *Caterina va in Città*. It is a contemporary film, which depicts the conflicts that a young Caterina Iacovoni is constrained to affront after she moves from a small rural town to the heart of Rome, amid the palpable unhappiness of her parents' marriage. Pedagogically speaking, the film has significant potential to address a number of cultural themes; however, the entire second scene of the DVD presents a unique opportunity for American students to consider what it would be like to attend an Italian *liceo*. The scene may exaggerate (as movies often do) the behaviors of the adolescent students; nevertheless, the wealth of cultural perspectives and products that can be observed in the scene renders it unequivocally useful for an Italian language class.

To briefly summarize the scene, it takes place during Caterina's first two days of school in Rome. On the first day, she is driven to school by her father, whereas on the second she takes the bus. During her ride, Caterina takes in panoramic views of Rome, while also becoming exposed

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[73] Tozzi, R. (Producer) and Virzì, P. (Director). (2003).

to the city's growing multi-cultural society (this is exemplified by the many people of color with Caterina on the bus). Day one begins with the teacher taking attendance and Caterina hesitating to disclose the name of her hometown to the class. When she finally does, a couple of her classmates refer to the town as "hillbilly" country. The second day starts off in what seems to be a History or Social Science class, in which the students are heatedly arguing politics. They are calling each other names: Fascist, Communist, Socialist, Nazi, etc… It is during this segment that notable curiosity often arises among American students, which in turn can lead to a highly engaged lesson where questions of comparison may be implemented to address the cultural elements pertaining to education and politics.

3.4.1 Setting the Stage

Prior to showing the clip, I initiate discussion by asking my students in English about their connection to American politics. The decision to use English in this particular instance is one that is not taken lightly. I do feel, however, that, considering the complexity of the subject matter and the course level, the benefits of the cultural enrichment outweigh the brief absence of the target language. This often highlights, what I have found to be, a stark difference in the interest in politics between American and

Italian adolescents.   Another brief yet suitable activity is to ask the students to make inferences about the meaning of the title and what they might expect to see in the clip. They can write this down so to compare it with what actually takes place in the film. The following terms along with defining images will be handed out to students prior to viewing the film clip, and should be read aloud for pronunciation:

Vocabolario per *Caterina va in città* (Scene 2 of the DVD)[74]

il crocifisso

il banco a due posti

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[74] *Il crocifisso* can be found at www.rnw.nl/english/article/crucifix-ruling-stuns-italy.
I banchi... at www.haisentito.it/articolo/scuola-italiana-le-novita-del-2009/17623/.
La lavagna at www.misterwooditalia.it/g_lavagne.html.
La gomma at www.info2015expo.it/index.php?/plugin/tag/mostre/P9.html. The remaining images are public domain clip art.

la lavagna girevole

la gomma da masticare

il trucco

il telefonino

lo zaino

una lite – *dispute*

il dibattito – *debate*

il centro sociale – *social club/
squat house*

As the students are viewing the film, they must write down all of the words that they recognize. This task serves as a way to keep them focused, as well as an opportunity to develop a sense of accomplishment when they are able to decipher Italian terms. I often notice the way some of them "light up" when they pinpoint familiar words and expressions.

3.4.2 Instruction

This part of the lesson can best be accomplished with the aid of a SMART Board. Many, if not most, schools in the New York Metropolitan area have equipped their classrooms with one. If a SMART Board is not available, the lesson could be equally successful on a chalkboard. The instructor will have already distributed a sheet with the list of the relevant vocabulary to guide students during the lesson; the other side of the handout would include a Venn diagram (which will be the principal cultural activity of the lesson). After the students view the scene, the teacher should encourage them to comment on what they had just watched. The teacher can elicit responses from the students by guiding them with specific questions about the characters in the film. I suggest keeping this in the target language as much as possible. If a student comments in English, I would restate it in Italian. This way, the class is benefiting from the linguistic components of the lesson, while enjoying a forum for personal expression. This is what an example may sound like:

Teacher: *Com'è Caterina*?

Student: *Lei è ... non lo so ...* naive [*sic*].

Teacher: *Allora, Caterina è ingenua.*

This portion of the lesson can also give the students an opportunity to utilize the vocabulary related to the film. It is up to the teacher to guide the students by offering examples of the terms used in context, as well as asking appropriate questions. Considering that the scene from this film takes place in a classroom, many of the questions can be about things the students see around them in their own school. The instructor can check for comprehension of the vocabulary by asking students to point out objects they see in the room.

A logical choice for a grammar mini-lesson is the instruction of the terms "*ambedue*," "*entrambi"* and "*tutti e due*." This will allow students to express the belief that both Italian and American schools have certain things in common, which reflects the overall communicative goal: to state similarities and differences between the students' home school and the one that is represented in the film. The abovementioned Italian terms would be employed in the following ways:

- *In entrambe le scuole ci sono ... **

- *In ambedue le scuole ci sono ...*

- *In tutte e due le scuole ci sono ...**

*(Explanation of gender agreement required)

The instructor can now produce the Venn diagram[75] on the SMART Board, underneath which can be found a list of terms related to school and the classroom. One advantage of the SMART Board is that its software, which allows for the creation of activities such as this Venn diagram, also allows the students to approach the actual Board and manipulate words on it. The goal is to put the terms into the appropriate area of the diagram. An additional benefit is the way this technology involves and engages the students. They come up to the SMART board (one at a time) and decide the category to which they drag a term. This part of the lesson, in which students are determining which objects and concepts are associated with either an Italian *Liceo* or an American High School (or both), encourages them to engage in meaningful, insightful comparing and contrasting of the two cultures.

3.4.3 Wrapping Up

The final stage of the lesson would begin with students writing their own sentences with the information elicited and manipulated on the SMART Board. Well written sentences would look like the following:

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[75] This Venn diagram can be found in the Appendix B.

- *C'è un crocifisso nell'aula Italiana.*

- *Ci sono banchi singoli nelle aule americane.*

- *In ambedue le scuole gli studenti hanno il chewing gum.*

In concluding, all students would voice at least one of their own original sentences, expressing a similarity or a contrast between the Italian and American schools.

3.5 *Pranzo di ferragosto* [76] **(Intermediate /Advanced)**

In a unit on Italian holidays and traditions, the recent film by Gianni Di Gregorio, *Pranzo di ferragosto*, provides a number of cultural topics to investigate in a third or fourth year high school Italian language course. The obvious one is the tradition of *Ferragosto* and the impact that it has on Italy's major cities. A secondary, yet no less important, theme is "Italy and its aging society." In opposition to the lesson on *Caterina va in città*, where only a scene is viewed by the students, viewing this film in its

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[76] Garrone, M. (Producer) and Di Gregorio, G. (Director). (2008).

entirety will be necessary in order to fully explore its cultural topics (it is short in duration: 75 min.).

The film is set in the Trastevere section of Rome during *Ferragosto.* Gianni is a middle-aged man who lives with his elderly mother in a modest condominium. When the condominium's manager Luigi arrives one afternoon he convinces Gianni to take care of his mother for a few days in exchange for the forgiveness of the maintenance and utility bills that were extremely past due. Much to Gianni's dismay, when Luigi arrives the next day with his mother, they are accompanied by an aunt who also ends up staying with Gianni and his mother for the holiday. If things weren't stressful enough for Gianni, his doctor arrives and asks a favor of him: to watch over HIS mother for a few days. After some initial friction, the four elderly women begin to enjoy each other's company, while simultaneously creating a noticeable burden for Gianni. This all unravels in a seemingly empty Rome which, at one point in the film, Gianni traverses in order to acquire a fish for dinner; he ends up purchasing one from an angler who reels it in from the Tiber River. It is in this depiction of a deserted Rome that the lesson embarks on an analysis and discussion of *Ferragosto.*

3.5.1 Setting the Stage

Prior to viewing the film, the instructor will address the tradition of *Ferragosto. S*tudents will read a description of the Italian holiday and discuss whether or not a similar holiday exists in the United States.[77] The instructor will then distribute the following list of vocabulary pertinent to the film:

Pranzo di Ferragosto

Termini rilevanti

- il ferragosto   *August 15th*

- la busta   *plastic bag*

- la varechina   *bleach*

- ammazza   *(dial.) damn*

- accomodarsi   *take a seat*

- l'amministratore   *building manager*

- le grondaie   *gutters*

- cavarsela   *to come through*

- il grembiule   *apron*

- essere in ferie   *to be on vacation*

- fare i capricci   *to throw a tantrum*

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[77] The reading I employ in the classroom on *Il Ferragosto* is taken from an Italian textbook.

- avere fiducia   *to have faith in*

- la badante   *caregiver*

- la compressa   *pill*

- apparecchiare   *to set the table*

- al vapore   *steamed*

- conciliante   *accomodating*

- magnare   *(dial.) mangiare*

- farcela   *to make it*

- i geloni   *chilblain*

- la tovaglia   *tablecloth*

- il cavatappi   *corkscrew*

- spumeggiante   *bubbly*

- il calice   *goblet*

- il brindisi   *toast*

- il patto   *agreement*

Before moving ahead to the viewing of the film, students chorally read this list of vocabulary (repeating after the teacher) to verify and improve upon pronunciation. It is also vital that students know how to use the vocabulary properly. One traditional, yet, effective exercise is to have

the student write sentences with the words. I often give this task as a homework assignment, so that during the following lesson, students can share sentences by writing them on the board. This is an excellent method to invite students to edit their work as a class effort.

Another tool that I often use when introducing new vocabulary is to play the game "Concentration." Each vocabulary word and its definition is written on an individual index card (the larger the better, e.g., 5" x 7"). The cards can lie on a flat surface or be placed in an "old fashioned" pocket chart. The objective of the game is to match the term with its definition. I have found that, regardless of the age group, young people enjoy playing this sort of game and it reinforces their knowledge of the lexicon.

3.5.2 Instruction

Just prior to the viewing of the film, I would include a grammar mini-lesson. One logical choice for a topic, which can be incorporated in a communicative way using the cultural backdrop of the film, is the imperative mood. In taking into consideration the theme of an aging Italian population, we witness, on numerous accounts, the way in which Gianni (a middle-aged, only child) is continuously talking to the elderly women as if they were children (i.e. using commands); therefore, the imperative is a pragmatic selection that can be effectively woven into the

study of this film. This grammar lesson will also aid in the students' overall

comprehension of the film. In the activity that follows, the student will first

attempt to accomplish the task of deciphering the speaker of each quote

from the film. The second, and more grammatically involved, step would

be to replace the *tu* form commands with the formal *Lei*.

Accomodati!

Leggi le seguenti frasi imperative e indica la persona che le pronuncia.
Poi riscrivi le frasi dando del Lei.

> Es.   Accomodati! → Gianni
>   <u>Si accomodi</u>

Gianni	Mamma	il dottore	l'amministratore
	Marina	Grazia	Maria

1. Usalo! →

   _____

2. Segnalo! →

   _____

3. Guarda che bel panorama! →

   _____

4. Stai comoda! →

   _____

5. Tossisci!   →

   _____

6. Non ti preoccupare! →

   _____

7. Sistemati! →

   _____

8. Prendi il televisore e vattene! →

   _____

9. Fammi vedere il bastone del comando! →

   _____

10. Chiamala di nuovo! →

    _____

The film is relatively short and can be viewed in two 40 minute classes. During the viewing of the film, each student will be required to take notes in order to successfully respond to the discussion questions that I will have already given them (these questions are located further along in the chapter). This will assist them not only in successfully completing the questions, but also in being more focused during the film.

3.5.3 Wrapping Up

A logical conclusion to the instructional phase of the film is to have the students generate answers to the discussion questions. These higher level thinking questions are advanced and require the use of a dictionary as well as the guidance of the instructor. The class can be broken up into

groups to prepare the questions, but inevitably each individual student is to furnish his or her own answers. Ultimately, the students are to elaborate on them in a "round table" like discussion. They may read from their written responses, but must also attempt to expand on their answers in a spontaneous fashion. This will give them the necessary foundation on which to begin sharing their ideas and will hopefully lead to a more in-depth analysis of culturally relevant concepts.

One cultural objective of the present lesson is for students to reconsider their own worldview after seeing things from a different perspective (in this case, the treatment and lives of the elderly). This concept of reflecting on one's own worldview is alluded to in the theoretical portion of this dissertation. Here is a set of questions that can be used to initiate the analysis and discussion of *Pranzo di Ferragosto.*

Domande per la discussione

1. Descrivete le strade di Roma durante il Ferragosto così come sono illustrate nel film di De Gregorio.

2. Quale è il problema che ha Gianni con il condominio? Che cosa propone l'amministratore per risolverlo?

3. Come descrivereste Gianni? E la sua mamma?

4. Secondo te, il film si concentra sugli aspetti positivi o negativi della vecchiaia? Spiega!

5. Ad un certo punto nel film, l'amministratore spiega a Gianni che la badante rumena non poteva più occuparsi della zia. Perché questo è un esempio di un cambiamento sociale in Italia nei confronti degli anziani?

6. Fate un confronto fra il modo in cui la vecchiaia è trattata nel film con quello di un film o di un programma televisivo americano.

7. Come finirà questo Ferragosto fra le protagoniste del film? Aggiungete un finale alternativo.

8. Mettendovi nei panni di un anziano, come preferireste passare gli ultimi anni della vostra vita.

3.6 Summary

In short, the examples that I have furnished demonstrate various ways in which the inclusion of film can culturally enrich communicative Italian lessons. The activities provide opportunities to interweave culture, grammar and vocabulary in ways that maintain a core principle of this thesis: effective communicative instruction of Italian is consistently based on an authentic cultural context. In the following section of this thesis, I will further present communicative pedagogical strategies that integrate culture through the medium of music.

Chapter 4

Strategies for Integrating Music in the Italian Classroom

4.1 An Introduction to the Integration of Music

The implementation of music in a World Language classroom is an effective means by which to culturally enrich communicative instruction. In particular, I have found Pop music to be beneficial in that it is a great source of motivation for high school age students of Italian. Young people can often relate to the lyrics in popular songs and have a great deal to say about the themes that these songs often address. In her doctoral research at SUNY Stony Brook, Lucia Ghezzi points out that "songs are […] an integral part of any student's life, helping to connect school experience with real life. [Songs] engage students in class more actively and they lead them to cultivate an interest at home..."[78] The type of interest at home, to which Dr. Ghezzi makes reference, is precisely what ACTFL Standard 5.2, "Students show evidence of becoming lifelong learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment,"[79]

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[78] Ghezzi 6.
[79] National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project.

is stressing; music is a universal language that leads young people to connect with the target culture.

Being aware of the different ways in which young people learn, as well as the various types of intelligences that exist, is vital to a teacher's degree of success with his or her students. Including a song in an Italian lesson allows those musically gifted (or simply interested) students the opportunity to thrive in ways they may previously have not. As an anecdotal reference, in my first year teaching at the high school level, I encountered an enthusiastic young student who enjoyed singing. After hearing the song "*Sei solo tu*" by the popular Italian singer songwriter Nek, he expressed an interest in performing songs in front of his peers during class time. I can recall one particular occasion in which this particular student "serenaded" one of his friends, allowing for an overall cheerful atmosphere in the classroom. This eventually translated into a significant increase in class participation. Beyond this, however, was the superior pronunciation of Italian that this student possessed in relation to his peers by the end of the academic year. Since then, I have had a few other musically gifted students in whom I've witnessed similar outcomes. This experience has led me to the conclusion that singing in the target language can almost certainly lead to improved pronunciation.

As addressed in the theoretical sections of this thesis, there continues to be significant debate, within the World Language community, as to what type of culture to include in the classroom. Should the focus be on high culture or common culture?   The strategies included in this chapter dealing with the integration of music in the Italian curriculum, offer a unique synthesis of big **C** and little **c**, high culture and popular culture. Despite the opinions of some that Pop songs are of poor quality, music as a product of a particular society is, without question, an example of high culture.   The lyrics that these songs contain offer valuable insight into common everyday culture (little **c**), which plays an essential role in the type of communicative language learning described in this academic work. This chapter will focus on these cultural aspects of music, without neglecting the grammatical, lexical and phonological components of language learning that songs provide.

One of the unfortunate realities regarding the ways in which language teachers employ music in their lessons, is that the focus on grammar far outweighs language and discourse as a whole. This seems to be equally valid in terms of the resources available to Italian teachers that contain music related activities.   One in particular is *Canta che ti*

passa,[80] which includes a CD with fifteen songs and an accompanying workbook with various activities. Regrettably, the activities focus predominantly on grammatical structures, with some vocabulary. Unfortunately, there is little reference to the songs' cultural richness. Current practices pertaining to the use of music in the classroom focus almost exclusively on the structural aspects of Italian and often neglect their cultural value. From what I have witnessed, most teachers of Italian, when choosing a song to employ in the classroom, search for one that addresses the grammatical structure(s) that coincide(s) with those proposed in the unit of the course textbook. This approach fails considerably in reaping the cultural richness of the lyric.

On a larger scale, I find it necessary to point out how, far too often, Italian teachers at the high school level neglect a holistic approach to teaching language and culture, in exchange for less communicative instruction that focuses predominantly on the grammatical structures. It is my aim throughout this thesis to encourage strategies that promote communicative language learning for the purpose of greater cultural awareness and sensitivity.

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[80] *Canta che ti passa,* (2001).

4.2 Planning

The initial step in choosing a song to incorporate in a lesson is to establish a cultural context. A solid cultural context allows for more effective language instruction, as described in the theoretical chapter of this thesis. Once the instructor has determined the cultural context, the next step is to find a song that includes a supportive lexicon; the lyrics must include enough vocabulary to allow for adequate discussion of the topic. The objective is to incorporate a song that will enhance overall communication of the subject matter. If the context is "family life in contemporary Italy," for example, the lyrics should include terminology that will assist students in expressing themselves regarding this specific topic. In the following paragraphs I offer some examples of how to go about choosing the right song.

Depending on one's own familiarity with contemporary Italian music, actually finding an appropriate song can be the most time consuming component of the planning stage of the lesson. There are a number of contemporary artists that I have found to work well in the classroom with adolescents. Some of these singer-songwriters include

- Lorenzo (Jovanotti) Cherubini
- Nek

- Eros Ramazzotti

- Fiorella Mannoia

- Laura Pausini

- Alex Britti

- Carmen Consoli

- Lucio Dalla

Once the instructor has designated a song to support the cultural context, he or she can then search for conspicuous and/or reoccurring syntactical structures. This will allow for the seamless inclusion of grammar, while maintaining the communicative and cultural focus. The ideal situation is to find a lyric that addresses the cultural component of the lesson as well as the grammatical structure that fits into the unit or chapter. That said, I strongly believe that the cultural component should be the predominant factor when selecting a song to use in a lesson.

4.3 "*La vasca*" [81] **(Beginner/Intermediate)**

One song that provides a re-occurring grammatical structure that also lends itself to a particular cultural context is "*La vasca*" by Alex Britti. The lyrics effectively support the topic of "personal hygiene" (or even "daily

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[81] *"La Vasca"* from the album *La Vasca* by Alex Britti. Universal Music Italia (2001).

routine"), while the presence of reflexive verbs and pronouns is seen throughout the song. Reflexive verb structures are used often when referring to bathing and personal grooming: *mi bagno, mi lavo, mi pettino*, etc… Britti's tune lends itself well to beginner-intermediate level students, which corresponds to Italian II or III at the secondary level.

4.3.1 Preparing the Lesson

During the planning stage of this lesson, one must listen to the song to determine which clearly annunciated words should be omitted from the lyric sheet that will be distributed to the student. Here is an example wherein the underlined words were first omitted and then written in by the student as he or she listens to the song:

> Voglio restare tutto il giorno in una __**vasca**__ / con l'acqua calda che mi coccola la __**testa**__ / un piede fuori che s'infreddolisce appena / uscire solo quando è pronta già la __**cena**__ / mangiare e bere

sempre e solo a dismisura / senza dover cambiare

buco alla cintura / e poi domani non andrò neanche

al   **lavoro**   / neanche avvertirò perché il silenzio è

d'oro[82]

I have included a number of relevant terms in the chart below so the students may possess a firm grasp of the song's meaning.

una vasca - *bathtub*	bagnarsi - *to bathe*
l'acqua calda - *hot water*	tuffarsi - *to dive*
Infreddolirsi - *to get cold*	asciugarsi - *to dry off*
una piscina - *pool*	la sabbia - *sand*
stare a mollo - *remain soaked*	il mare - *sea/ocean*
un bagno - *a bath*	

4.3.2 Pre-listening Instruction

I would begin the lesson by introducing Alex Britti as the singer-songwriter and guitarist. This is the first step in addressing a cultural aspect of the lesson and it allows students to connect with "real-life" Italian

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[82] Britti, (2001). Entire lyric with omitted words can be found in the appendix C.

celebrities. I do this by showing a picture of him on the SMART Board with basic biographical information as well. This also presents an opportunity to incorporate the map of Italy by way of asking students to point out the location of the artist's birthplace (in Britti's case it would be Rome). Before moving on to the next step, I would ask students to speculate on what they believe the song is about. These predictions could be written on the board so that we could compare them to what the song is actually about after listening to it. The next step is to show the video of the song by streaming it from the Internet onto the SMART Board. In doing this, the students observe a comical depiction of an Italian way of life. The video may even spark debate on its stereotypical portrayal of Britti who is seen eating spaghetti while taking a bath.

As a cultural pre-listening activity, students would be required to read the discussion questions. It is during this time that the class will be able to let the teacher know if they do not understand any of the questions. Ensuring that the students possess a more accurate comprehension of the questions will promote concentration both during and after the listening of the song. I may also ask the students to describe what they think a "typical" young Italian may do to get ready in the morning. We can then compare our expectations with what they actually

learned from the song.   These are the questions that I use in the classroom with students of Italian level 2:

Domande per la discussione

1. *All'inizio della canzone, dove è il personaggio principale e che fa?*

2. *Che cosa diventa la vasca?*

3. *Secondo la canzone, al mattino si festeggia "con cornetti e cappuccino" (una colazione tipica Italiana). Cosa mangiate voi a colazione negli Stati Uniti?*

4. *Descrivete il narratore?*

5. *Questo personaggio cambia o afferma la vostra idea di un giovane Italiano? Spiegate!*

The questions were generated according to the ACTFL Standards for Foreign Language Learning. In reference to question three, by asking the student to replace "*cornetti e cappuccino*" with two things that he or she might eat in the morning, the student is demonstrating an "understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own (Standard 4.2)."[83]   The final question, in which the student is asked to consider whether or not the subject of the song changes or confirms his or her image of a "typical" young Italian

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[83] National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project.

man, challenges the student to consider how he or she envisions Italians and can potentially lead to rejecting any preconceived notions of them. The desired outcome, according to Professor Michael Byram of the University of Durham, as explained in his work on cultural learning, is an attitude of "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own."[84] When successfully implemented, this activity does meet Byram's cultural objective.

At this point in the pre-listening portion of this lesson, it is advisable to have the students chorally read the aforementioned terms on washing and water for accurate pronunciation. As the students learn to correctly pronounce the vocabulary words, they aurally recognize them with greater facility. I would also have the students write a number of sentences with them to check for understanding. This will allow for greater facility when working with the more challenging aspects of the lesson.

4.3.3 Listening Activities

The listening stage of this activity would include the prior mentioned task of replacing the omitted words while the song is playing. On the lyric sheet, the student would also have the English equivalents for some of the less common words and expressions. This too supplies the student with

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[84] Bryam 56.

the necessary tools in order to be actively engaged in the lesson. During this time, I would also have the students underline examples of reflexive verbs and pronouns. This activity now includes lexical, cultural and grammatical activities. As illustrated below, the reflexive verbs can be clearly identified throughout the chorus of the song:

> mi bagno, mi tuffo, mi giro e mi rilasso
> mi bagno, m'asciugo e inizia qui lo spasso
> e mi ribagno, mi rituffo, mi rigiro e mi rilasso,
> mi ribagno, mi riasciugo e ricomincia qui lo spasso[85]

4.3.4 Post-listening Tasks

After the students have listened to "*La vasca*" for the second time, the instructor will elicit the missing terms. I often roam the classroom at this point and check to see how many of the words the students were able to find. The following step is to ask the class to cite examples of the reflexive verbs and pronouns. They would then rewrite the chorus of the song in the 3rd person singular: *mi bagno → si bagna, mi tuffo → si tuffa,* etc… This part of the lesson reinforces the ability to write, as well as speak, about other people, making this grammatical task communicative.

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[85] Britti, (2001).

The culture intensive work for this lesson is contained in the questions. Students work in pairs to discuss and generate their answers. After the class has satisfied all of the questions with coherent written responses in the target language, it is then up to the instructor to guide the students in a communicatively productive discussion of them. A logical approach is to begin with questions of comprehension and end with those that would ideally promote greater cultural awareness and empathy in the student.

4.4 *"La vita vale"* [86] (Advanced)

In an upper level high school Italian class, the song *"La vita vale,"* by Lorenzo (Jovanotti) Cherubini can be implemented in support of a chapter on "Social Consciousness." It would allow the students to become familiar with the music and activism of Lorenzo (Jovanotti) Cherubini. In this particular song, Jovanotti touches on societal problems such as social and economic injustice. These complex global issues will present a challenge to a language class; however, if done properly, students will be motivated to express their views regarding the highly controversial issues that this song addresses.

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[86] "La vita vale" was published in *Il quinto mondo* by Lorenzo (Jovanotti) Cherubini. Universal Music Italia (2002).

4.4.1 Preparing the Lesson

There are a number of terms in the lyric dealing with global issues, which must be reviewed before the students can properly comprehend the song and react to it in a productive manner. The following list contains important vocabulary in bold on the left, along with synonyms[87] on the right:

"La vita vale"

il consume	l'utilizzo
finanziare	sponsorizzare
la Guerra	il conflitto
insanguinato	bagnato di sangue
la povertà	la miseria
un brevetto	un attestato
il commercio	la vendita
la libertà	l'indipendenza
il diritto	un ordinamento giuridico
l'ambiente	la natura

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[87] This list of synonyms was generated with the aid of the search engine Virgilio: http://sapere.virgilio.it/home/index.html

una multinazionale	un'impresa globale
il narcotraffico	la vendita della droga
inquinare	contaminare

4.4.2 Pre-listening Instruction

I would introduce this song with the video clip of a very recent conference with Jovanotti speaking about the relationship between music and human rights at Harvard University entitled "Music and Human Rights: Success and Limits"[88] with Lorenzo Jovanotti. The entire conference is available to view on the internet. Jovanotti does speak English during the interview (an important detail that some instructors may need to consider); however, I feel strongly that the contemporary, authentic nature of it is far too valuable to pass up, despite the lack of Italian being spoken. It actually can be quite interesting to casually discuss Jovanotti's English pronunciation and overall proficiency. He does, at times, struggle to pronounce words correctly and, on occasion, cannot find the right term or expression, but the larger message that the students will take away from

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[88] "Music and Human Rights: Success and Limits" with Lorenzo Jovanotti can be found on the Web at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzG504m0uEU&feature=related

this, is that a successful Italian singer-songwriter is making a valiant effort to speak their language. A certain level of empathy can be gained by seeing an Italian struggle with English, similar, perhaps, to the way in which the student may be having difficulty with Italian. Another factor that may have an impact on an American student of Italian is the vision of Jovanotti speaking in front of a large image of Bob Marley. Marley is mentioned in the lecture (as well as a few American recording artists such as Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen) for having established a voice of

social and political consciousness in his music. Jovanotti must be pretty "hip" if he is making reference to these universally well known singers, is a perspective that some students will hopefully take away from this interview.

Once the class has had their "initiation" into the world of Jovanotti, the next step would be to choral read the relevant vocabulary for accurate pronunciation. I did not include English equivalents in the chart above; instead, I offer synonyms. As a way of verifying whether or not students have obtained an adequate understanding of the terms, I would quiz them

using the synonyms. This allows more advanced students to begin to rely less on the English definitions.

Just prior to the listening of the tune, I would distribute two things: The lyrics with certain words omitted (as seen in the prior lesson) and the discussion questions. The class would read through the questions for general comprehension. Once again, this will give the class a clear focus as they listen to the song. As too was the case with *"La vasca,"* the questions start off on a factual/comprehension level and work their way towards higher level thinking such as synthesis and evaluations. The final question asks the students to consider what aspects of Italian society or history may have influenced Jovanotti's ideology. In this case, the students are not necessarily arriving at a black and white conclusion about Italian culture; they are given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of Italian society and history. Below are the questions for *"La vita vale."*

Domande per la discussione

1. Secondo Jovanotti, per tenere alto il consumo, che cosa bisogna fare?
2. Perché il succo d'ananas è insanguinato?
3. Quale è il rapporto fra diversità e l'ambiente?

4. Chi sono "li" nella parola convincerli?

5. Secondo voi, una vita vale più di una multinazionale? Perché?

6. Quali altri problemi o cause sociali aggiungereste alla lista di Jovanotti?

7. Come definireste lo stato d'animo di Jovanotti in questa canzone?

8. Quali aspetti della società e della storia italiana hanno influenzato Jovanotti?

4.4.3 Listening Activities

As "*La vita vale*" is playing, students would be listening for the omitted words and writing them on the lines as seen below. Their comprehension of the song will improve as they refer to the list of synonyms, as well as the comprehension questions. A song such as this, with a high level of difficulty, may be replayed in order to accomplish the necessary tasks.

> Cosa succede che succede in giro / chi vede bianco chi vede **nero** / chi resta in casa chi se ne va in **strada** / che cosa conta che cosa è vero? Mi hanno detto che per tenere alti i consumi / è necessario far **morire** i fiumi / ho letto che le marche dei diamanti / han provocato guerre devastanti[89]

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[89] Jovanotti, *(2002)*. Full lyric with omitted text can be found in the Appendix D.

As with the Britti song, it is necessary for the teacher to roam the classroom as the song is playing to gauge whether or not the students are able to find the missing words.

4.4.4 Post-listening Tasks

After listening to the song, I usually read through the lyric with the students to verify whether or not they were able to catch the missing words. The instructor may want to mention what student found the most omitted terms. This adds a bit of competition to the lesson and can have a positive impact on the overall degree to which students are engaged. The teacher may even decide to classify it as a competition right from the beginning. This would be a decision for the teacher to make, based upon the types of students in the class.

The culminating activity is to answer and discuss the questions. In the case of *"La vita vale,"* the cultural content is relatively challenging in that it deals with complex social issues; therefore, a good decision is to have the students work in pairs in order to facilitate the process. This works best when the students are seated in a differentiated manner, so that ideally the stronger and the weaker students are working together. After the entire class has furnished their responses to the questions, it is in

the instructor's best interest to encourage students to express their opinions on the socio-political issues mentioned in the song.

4.4.5 Extension: *Una lettera di richiesta*

As an extension to the lesson on Jovanotti's song, students would be asked to do a writing assignment. This segues naturally from the discussion questions and allows the students to express their ideas to a much greater extent on this complex topic. The song's theme of social consciousness lends itself well to writing a letter of request for a volunteer position. I have narrowed the options so that the choice is not so overwhelming and I've used actual names of organizations so to give a more authentic experience to the student. In actuality, this letter could lead to increased self-awareness and could even motivate the student to become involved in some sort of social activism or volunteerism.

<u>Una lettera di richiesta</u>

Immagina di essere uno studente/una studentessa universitario/a in Italia. Sei una persona ambiziosa ed altruistica e vorresti dare una mano in un paese straniero. Scegli fra le seguenti organizzazioni:

- CRI (Croce Rossa Italia)
- Amnesty International
- CIAI (Centro Italiano Aiuti Infanzia, adozioni, aiuti a distanza)
- Medici senza frontiere

Usando l'esempio,[90] scrivi una lettera ad una di loro chiedendo un lavoro di volontariato all'estero.

Includi:
- Dove vorresti andare
- Quando saresti disponibile e per quanto tempo
- Quale lavoro saresti disposto/a a fare
- Lingue parlate
- Perché vorresti fare quest'esperienza

Intestazione: (*Scegli una delle seguenti.*)
- Egregi Sig. ri,
- Gentilissimi Sig. ri,

Frase di chiusura: (*Scegli una delle seguenti.*)
- La prego di gradire i miei migliori saluti.
- Gradisca i miei più distinti saluti.
- Con i migliori saluti.

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[90] An example of a letter of request can be found in the Appendix E.

4.5 Summary

Music is an engaging tool and should be exploited by language teachers at all levels. With the aid of songs, I have provided strategies that offer a means by which an instructor can address both high and common culture in effective communicative ways. This is done without the exclusion of grammar and acknowledges the importance of the target language in the classroom. In the next chapter of this thesis, I illustrate strategies for the instruction of Italian by employing another cultural medium: visual art.

Chapter 5

Strategies for Integrating Visual Art in the Italian Classroom

5.1 An Introduction to the Integration of Visual Art

Among the various media with which one may approach the instruction of Italian, the visual arts offer great potential to encourage communication in the target language. One might ask, is it even possible to teach Italian without alluding to, or be questioned about, the great artists of the Renaissance such as Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. As Dianne Hales indicates very astutely in her memoir *La bella lingua*, which describes her "love affair" with the Italian language,

> [f]or centuries "Italy" has been synonymous with art. An estimated 60 percent of the world's designated art treasures resides within its borders, and Italian paintings and sculptures grace museums and collections around the globe. But Italy did more than inspire masterpieces: it developed the visual language of Western culture and changed forever our concepts of beauty and its creators.[91]

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[91] Hales 142.

This "visual language," to which Ms. Hales alludes, can be as effective as the spoken idiom in terms of communicating ideas and feelings. In addition, it exemplifies the sort of complex interwoven relationship between language and culture that has been discussed throughout this study.

In agreeing that a picture is worth a thousand words, we as language instructors would be remiss in neglecting the use of paintings, drawings, watercolors, sculptures, architecture etc…, in our lessons. Presenting examples of such art forms is an effective method by which the teacher can question his or her students in Italian, relying almost completely on visual materials and avoiding the use of English. Young students of Italian will be increasingly engaged in the language lessons as they acquire an appreciation for the aesthetic (although this may be contingent upon the level of enthusiasm and expertise with which the instructor presents the works of art), while improving their proficiency in the language. The implementation of art in the Italian classroom offers the spatial-visual learner a pedagogical arena in which to thrive. This type of student, feeling "at home" with the material and enjoying a newly roused interest in the language and culture, may even find him or herself improving in other facets of Italian where there may have been prior difficulties.

As I have discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the big **C** and little **c** dichotomy is of constant concern for the World Language Instructor. I must reaffirm that the distinction between the two "types" of culture is not a hierarchical one. In this chapter, I have chosen to illustrate examples of big **C** culture by employing a visual art medium. There are, however, various ways to also include little **c** culture within the high culture context of visual art. As illustrated further on in this chapter, the paintings of Cimabue exemplify Italy's celebrated tradition of visual art, yet when used in a context such as "*il mercato all'aperto"* for the instruction of food lexicon, it addresses common culture as well.

Including visual art into the Italian classroom appropriately addresses a number of the ACTFL Standards for Foreign Language. Introducing a work of art, for example, clearly promotes "an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied"[92] (ACTFL: Cultures 2.2). When presenting new vocabulary for virtually any topic, works of art can be used in a culturally significant way to introduce new lexicon without resorting back to English. Teachers can, for example, present vocabulary for food, clothing, the house, animals, etc…, all within a cultural context.

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[92] National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project.

Visual art allows the teacher of Italian to explore colors at a deeper level; students are often (if not always) taught the primary colors in a first year language course. In an upper level high school Italian class, however, the instructor should not be afraid to offer a more nuanced list of colors that includes less commonly taught shades and hues. Referencing a wider variety of colors in the explication of a work of art can promote much desired debate in the target language. For example: "*Questo cielo non è azzurro, è piuttosto celeste*", or "*Se io fossi Modigliani, avrei dipinto i suoi capelli d'oro?*" This type of discourse is the aim of the lessons that I am about to introduce. Whether a lesson requires a single work of art to introduce vocabulary and increase student involvement, or an instructor decides to teach an entire unit on Italian art, the following concepts will be beneficial in achieving one's goals.

5.2 *Le stagioni di Arcimboldo*[93] (beginner/intermediate)

Within the context of "*Il mercato all'aperto,*" the paintings of Giuseppe Arcimboldo, with their elaborate profiles composed of fruits and vegetables, supply the instructor of Italian with a wealth of vocabulary to

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[93] Giuseppe Arcimboldo (Sometimes referred to as Arcimboldi) was born in Milan in 1527, the son of Biagio, a painter who worked in the *Duomo*. "The Four Seasons," which depict human heads made up of vegetables, fruit and tree roots are mesmerizing works that lend themselves to the sort of cultural instruction promoted in this study. http://www.giuseppe-arcimboldo.org/biography.html

share with students; in particular, *Estate* and *Vertumnus* offer significant opportunities for engaging Italian lessons, entirely within a cultural context.

5.2.1 Setting the Stage

Prior to the actual lesson involving Arcimboldo's paintings, the students would benefit from a review of vocabulary relating to colors, as well as the necessary terms included in a unit on the Italian *Mercato all'aperto.* This will provide the relevant lexicon in order for the students to describe the fruits and vegetables in the paintings. The need to review relevant vocabulary prior to introducing a communicative activity is an important aspect of language instruction that is too often neglected. Teachers frequently feel "pressed for time" and, therefore, fail to address this indispensible work. This should not be the case.

5.2.2 Instruction

Once the vocabulary has been reviewed, the principal component of the lesson should be initiated by showing one of the aforementioned works on the SMART Board and eliciting reactions from the students. Out of the two works, *Estate* (as seen below) is the better choice with which to begin, as it is slightly easier to decipher the fruits and vegetables. The

following questions serve as a guide for the instructor to elicit student reaction to the painting:

Domande per la discussione

A coppie, discutete e rispondete alle seguenti domande!

- Vi piace questo quadro? Perché o perché no?

- Secondo voi, è bella o brutta quest'opera?

- Elencate i diversi tipi di frutta e le varie verdure nel quadro.

- Quali sono i colori evidenti?

- Date un titolo all'opera!

After each student has been afforded the opportunity to speak about the painting, the next step would be to ask the class to read a paragraph about the life of the artist.

This segment of the lesson (when planned carefully) adds an historical component, which, in a natural way, reinforces the importance of making connections with other subjects, without having to sacrifice the use of the target language. In order to ensure that students are adequately focused during the reading of the passage, they are required to underline examples of the *passato prossimo* and circle examples of the *imperfetto,* found within the text. Although the use of the *passato remoto* is more commonly seen in the writing of historical documents, I have re-written the selection in the *passato prossimo* for the purpose of rendering the lesson grade-level appropriate. This task is not the grammatical focus of this lesson; nevertheless, it serves as an excellent review of two very important verb tenses. Here is a model of the brief reading on the life of Arcimboldo:

<u>Giuseppe Arcimboldo</u>[94]

Giuseppe Arcimboldo è nato a Milano nel 1527.
Suo padre Biagio era un pittore che ha contribuito
artisticamente alla costruzione del Duomo di Milano.

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[94] Factual information was taken from the following website.
http://www.artinthepicture.com/artists/Giuseppe_Arcimboldo/Biography/

All'età di 22 anni, Giuseppe ha esordito (*debuted*) come artista. Secondo i documenti, sia lui che suo padre sono stati pagati per aver progettato le vetrate colorate (*stained glass windows*) del Duomo di Milano. Nel 1551 Arcimboldo ha dipinto cinque stemmi (*coats of arms*) per il duca Ferdinando di Boemia. Fra tutte le sue opere, *Le quattro stagioni* – quadri che raffigurano teste umane di profilo con lineamenti di flora – sono le più famose. Oggigiorno, si possono osservare nel Museo del Louvre a Parigi. Arcimboldo è morto l'11 luglio del 1593 a Milano. Aveva 66 anni.

The primary grammatical component of the lesson is the definite article within the framework of lexicon for parts of the body. The logic behind this choice of grammar topics derives from the communicative need to express what features of the figures in Arcimbolo's paintings are being replaced by fruits and vegetables. In recognizing the number of "exemptions to the rules" in words such as *le labbra*, one acknowledges the value of this lesson. This grammar mini-lesson can be taught utilizing a SMART Board or an over-head projector. The instructor can, in a traditional yet effective way, elicit the correct articles for the terms relating

to the human body. The following list will lead to the culminating writing segment of the lesson:

Il corpo umano

1) _____ capelli   5) _____ labbra

2) _____ naso   6) _____ fronte

3) _____ occhi   7) _____ guancia

4) _____ orecchie   8) _____ sopracciglia

After the students have been exposed to the Italian definite articles as they are related to parts of the body, and as a way to incorporate kinesthetic learning, I would include a game of "Simon Says" as a quick way to review the human body lexicon. This is a fun way to get students out of their seats and to increase their knowledge of the vocabulary.

5.2.3 Wrapping Up

The following step is to pass out a copy of Arcimboldo's *Vertumnus* and ask them to write descriptive sentences using the expression: "*al posto di".* Each student would ideally generate at least five original

sentences following the teacher's example: *Ci sono dei piselli al posto delle sopracciglia.*

Vertumnus

1.___**Ci sono dei piselli al posto delle sopracciglia**_____

_____

2._____

_____

3._____

_____

4._____

_____

5._____

_____

5.2.4 Extension

As an extension to this lesson, which could be given as a homework assignment, the student would draw, paint or create a collage of a profile, in the style of Arcimboldo, by replacing the facial features with fruits and vegetables of his or her own choice. The student would then, instead of describing his or her own work, write a minimum of five questions about his or her creation. During this follow-up lesson, students would share their "Arcimboldoesque" artistic profiles with their peers and pose their prepared questions (either in pairs or in front of the entire class), e.g., *"Quale verdura c'è al posto della bocca?"*

Overall, the assignment will permit the artistic student of Italian to thrive in the course, while maintaining the necessary cultural and communicative objectives. For those students that do not possess the ability to draw something in the tradition of Arcimboldo, I would recommend that they create a collage using pictures from magazines or other printed materials. Despite the rapid growth of digital technology, it is still useful to keep old magazines, catalogues and supermarket circulars for this specific purpose.

5.3 *Dodici artisti italofoni* [95] **(Intermediate/advanced)**

In an Italian level V, College, or AP course, the in-depth instruction of Italian artists and their works provides an engaging context in which target language discourse can range from description and opinion to historical content. This too is a chapter in which various topics overlap within the Italian language and culture course; Italian, Art, and Social Studies come together in a cohesive way that engages quite a few different types of learners. An important additional element to this unit on art is a field trip to an art museum. As a teacher of Italian in the greater New York area, I am fortunate to have, within a very reasonable distance, several of the world's finest museums housing some of the world's most important and beautiful works of art. In particular, I accompany a group of 12th grade students of Italian into Manhattan to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art once a year. This is the culminating component of this unit on art, and it includes a scavenger hunt for works created by Italian artists (including Swiss born Alberto Giacometti). This field trip to the Met has become somewhat of a tradition of mine at the high school where I am

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[95] The inclusion of Swiss-born Surrealist Alberto Giacometti in this list of artists compelled me to use the term "*Italofoni*" in lieu of "*Italiani.*" I do not regret this decision, as it offers the unique opportunity to remind students that Italian is an official language of Switzerland; an instructor may even exploit this factor to bring a lesson on Swiss Italian culture in this unit.

employed, and is an excellent source of motivation and enjoyment for both teacher and student.

The initial step towards attaining success with this unit lies in the choice of what artists and works to introduce to the students. One must attempt to find a balance between classic and modern art. Another key aspect of the planning stage of this lesson is in choosing a number of works the students will already know, i.e. *L'ultima cena*, *La pieta,* along with those they most likely won't know, i.e. *L'Annunciazione* di Fra Angelico.

5.3.1 Input: A PowerPoint Presentation[96]

This lesson is derived from a PowerPoint presentation that I use with my level V students as an introduction to the unit on *Le belle arti*. This lesson has proven to be very successful in the way it evokes reaction from the class and arouses commentary and discussion. At this level the instructor must make every attempt to properly direct comments and questions in the target language. Students must also take notes on the names of the artists, their works, as well as the years of their births and deaths. Incorporating note-taking allows for a more directed lesson.

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[96] The PowerPoint presentation can be seen in the Appendix F.

In observing the works of Medieval and Renaissance artists, the topic of Christianity is one that often arises. Much in line with the underlying philosophy of this dissertation, as illustrated in its theoretical chapters, students will gain increased awareness of the role Christianity has played in Italy during those eras.

5.3.2 Instruction

Contextualized communicative instruction of these artists and their works calls out for the *passato remoto.* Taking the historical nature of the content into consideration, the Past Absolute is a logical choice of tenses to interweave within this unit. The grammatical instruction of the *passato remoto* may, however, guide the lesson(s) in the direction of written communication as opposed to verbal. This is an acceptable outcome, which is due to the nature of the material, and should not be cause for concern. Young learners of Italian will benefit from the memorization of commonly used verbs and their conjugations in the Past Absolute. *Nacque, morì, fece*, etc…, are examples of this verb tense that will reappear to the more serious students of Italian as they continue on with their study of the language and begin to read important works of literature. Aside from the abovementioned verbs that are commonly found in literature conjugated in this tense, terms such as *dipingere, scolpire,*

disegnare, will also prove to be necessary in describing art and its creators. Students of Italian will benefit from their application of the *passato remoto* within the context of famous artists.

It may be necessary to consider that some students who fall into the category of heritage speakers of Italian, may be familiar with the *Passato Remoto* in hearing it used at home in a Southern Italian regional dialect/language. As I have emphasized in the second chapter, which addresses linguistic sensitivity, students should not be discouraged from bringing these regional variations of Italian into the classroom. The teacher should clarify, nonetheless, that the *passato remoto*, in as far as standard Italian is concerned, is most frequently used in a literary or historical context.

After an initial mini-lesson on the *passato remoto,* students will write about each of the aforementioned artists and their works; they are required to look up each of the 12 artists on the internet, in order to gather basic information with which to work. Taking into consideration how rapidly the data is attainable, this portion of the lesson can be done within a brief period of time, allowing students to move on to the next step. Here are a few examples of the type of writing one would expect in this unit:

- *Michelangelo Buonarroti* **scolpì** *il David nel 1504.*

- *Cimabue **dipinse** Le quattro stagioni.*

- *Alberto Giacometti **morì** in Svizzera nel 1966.*

Upon completion of this assignment, the gathered information (including use of the *passato remoto*) would be shared among the class in groups of three or four. This allows all class members to verify their information and proper usage of syntax. The instructor is encouraged to roam the classroom and offer assistance when needed.

The next stage of this lesson is comprised of an aural "True or False" quiz. Due to the overall facility of this sort of assessment, the instructor can feel free to use a significant degree of linguistic complexity, while maintaining high expectations for the students. These ten statements include the *passato remoto*, and can be read aloud to the class for the purpose of comprehension and review of this verb tense:

Storia dell'arte: Vero o Falso

1. Michelangelo Buonarotti scolpì *La pietà*.

2. Giacometti nacque in Svizzera.

3. Botticelli fu un artista moderno.

4. Modigliani dipinse *La Gioconda*.

5. Fra Angelico dipinse *L'annunciazione*.

6. Caravaggio era architetto.

7. *L'Ultima Cena* di Leonardo Da Vinci è un affresco.

8. Giotto fece parte degli artisti del periodo rinascimentale.

9. Un'opera di Boccioni è raffigurata sulla moneta da 20 centesimi di euro.

10. Donatello morì nel 1466.

5.3.3 Extension: *Una gita al museo*

Encouraging students to use the target language outside of the classroom, (in this case, within the confines of a museum), addresses one of the most difficult, and perhaps at times, elusive features of the ACTFL National standards: Communities. Young men and women take what they have learned in the classroom and use it during a field trip to a New York City museum. This excursion may not be feasible for all Italian teachers due to their geographic location; however, one must acknowledge that a large percentage of public schools offering Italian in the Northeastern United States are within a reasonable distance to Manhattan, Boston or Philadelphia (all of which are home to significant art museums). The proceeding activity is the actual scavenger hunt that I use with my own upper-level Italian students. In most cases, a museum's permanent

collection can be found on its website, hence allowing teachers to create their own scavenger hunts prior to visiting the museum.

UNA GITA AL MUSEO

1. Chi ha dipinto il ritratto di Michelangelo Buonarroti?

_____

2. Trova una delle sculture di Giacometti e indica il suo titolo.

_____

3. Quali sono gli strumenti nel quadro *Concerto di giovani* di Caravaggio?

_____

4. Quale genere di arte è *La testa della virgine* di Leonardo da Vinci?

_____

5. Come si chiama il quadro famoso di Paolo Veronese?

_____

6. Nell'opera di Lorenzo Lotto, che cosa sta facendo Cupido?

_____

7. Indica il titolo di un'opera di Botticelli al museo!

_____

8. Quali sono alcune opere di Modigliani che si trovano nel museo?

_____

9. Come si chiama il quadro di Giotto nel museo?

_____

10. Che cosa tiene Perseo nella mano sinistra della scultura di Antonio Canova?

_____

5.4 Summary

To conclude, the implementation of visual art in the Italian classroom, as illustrated in this chapter, furnishes opportunities to observe and investigate high culture while integrating aspects of common culture. The communicative language learning illustrated in this chapter is accomplished by interweaving the grammatical structures within the cultural context. As demonstrated in the communicative activities, high culture can provide a framework for engaging instruction of Italian. The strategies that I have included do take time and preparation on the part of the instructor, but the ensuing results are invaluable in their promotion of proficiency in Italian.

Conclusions

When taught within an authentic cultural context, communicative instruction of Italian leads to greater proficiency in the language. The cultural context serves as the foundation upon which the grammatical and lexical aspects are based. This approach to language instruction is most effective when grammar and vocabulary are interwoven into a culturally focused lesson.

Although many teachers of Italian and other World Languages have begun to acknowledge the importance of teaching within a cultural context, there is still notable incongruity between theory and practice. Instructors of Italian point out a number of reasons as to why culture is not a primary focus of their lessons. Some teachers cite a lack of time as the reason for which they are not able to concentrate on culture as much as they would like. Others have expressed a degree of uncertainty in terms of what type of culture to address and how to approach its instruction. Above all, instructors allude to the challenges they face in terms of properly assessing a student's knowledge of culture, making reference to the notion that such assessment is far too subjective and elusive.

Despite the legitimate challenges that teachers face in terms of integrating culture in Italian curricula, the research presented in this dissertation illustrates the following concepts:

- The inseparable nature of language and culture leaves little doubt regarding the significance of culture in the World Language classroom.

- The employment of culturally rich lessons leads to greater proficiency in Italian.

- Culture is, in fact, the **foundation** on which effective communicative instruction takes place.

Furthermore, this thesis provides strategies that promote the seamless integration of vocabulary and grammar, consistently within an authentic cultural context.

An equally important result of this thesis is the way it illustrates how culturally based language instruction leads to greater awareness and sensitivity in students of Italian. In today's interconnected world, the cultivation of such ideals is essential. In terms of the Italian classroom, this study demonstrates how the teacher can play a unique role in encouraging students to consider different values and ways of life that

differ from their own. This sort of reflection, on the part of the student, will hopefully lead to a rejection of negative stereotyping and ethnocentric behavior, and to an increased tolerance of others.

I am hopeful that the strategies and concepts illustrated in this dissertation will promote discussion and debate on the importance of basing communicative Italian instruction on sound cultural foundations. A significant amount of work remains to be done, especially in areas concerning assessment. The need for a universal rubric in order to more objectively assess cultural literacy will, perhaps, present itself in the near future. Nevertheless, I am optimistic that, in terms of the role culture plays in the classroom, the Italian teaching community is moving in the right direction.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Portfolio of Cultural Literacy Rubric

	4	**3**	**2**	**1**
Task Completion	All tasks completed in full	All tasks submitted but not all in full	One task not submitted	Two or more tasks not submitted
Data Relevance	All data submitted is highly relevant	Most data submitted is highly or somewhat relevant	Some data submitted is relevant	Very little data is of any significant relevance
Language	Very effective use of the Italian language	Effective use of the Italian language	Some effective use of the Italian language	Ineffective use of the Italian language
Organization	Very well organized and presented	Relatively well organized and presented	Weak presentation with little organization	Very poor presentation, completely lacking organization
Cultural Awareness	Superior awareness of target culture	Significant awareness of target culture	Insufficient degree of target culture awareness	Very little awareness of target culture

Appendix B: Venn Diagram

A SCUOLA

IL LICEO   **HIGH-SCHOOL**
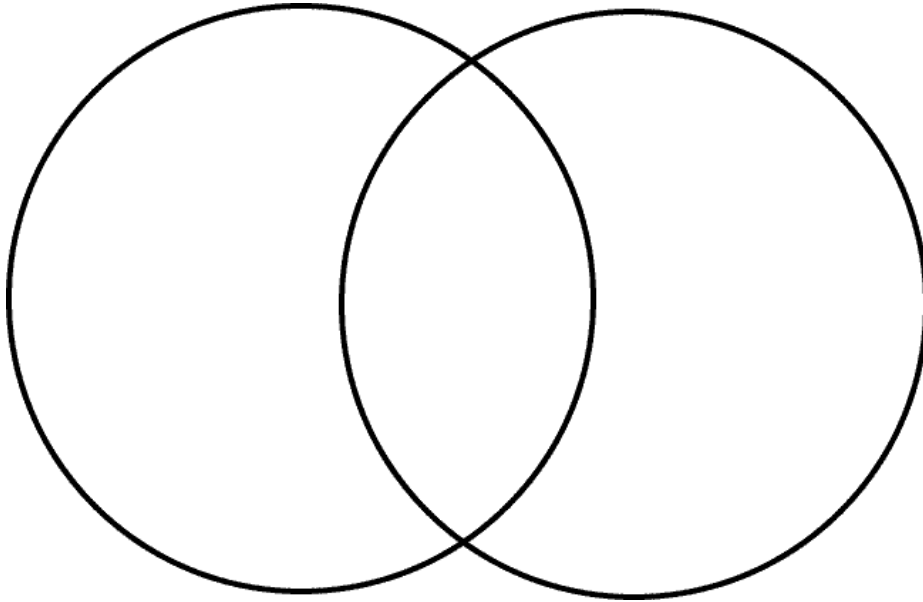
dibattito politico	banchi a due	SMART board
banchi singoli	crocifisso	chewing gum
proiettore	telefonini	mangiare nell'aula

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Appendix C: Lyrics to Britti's *"La vasca"*

La vasca[97] di Alex Britti

Voglio restare tutto il giorno in _____

con l'acqua calda che mi coccola _____

un piede fuori che s'infreddolisce appena

uscire solo quando è pronta già _____

mangiare e bere sempre e solo a dismisura

senza dover cambiare buco alla cintura

e poi domani non andrò neanche al lavoro

neanche avvertirò perché il silenzio è _____

tornerò con gli amici davanti _____

ma senza entrare, solo fuori a far la ola

non ci saranno ripetenti punto e _____

staremo tutti insieme nella stessa vasca

così grande che ormai una piscina

staremo a mollo dalla sera alla mattina

così che adesso è troppo piena e non si può più stare

meglio trasferirci tutti quanti al mare

quando fa buio accenderemo un grande fuoco

attaccheremo un maxi schermo e un maxi gioco

---

[97] *"La Vasca"* by Alex Britti. Universal Music Italia (2001).

e dopo inseguimenti vari e varie lotte

faremo tutti un grande bagno a _____

mi _____, mi tuffo, mi giro e mi rilasso

mi bagno, m'asciugo e inizia qui lo spasso

e mi ribagno, mi rituffo, mi rigiro e mi rilasso

e mi ribagno, mi riasciugo e ricomincia qui lo spasso

saremo più di 100, quasi 120

amici, conoscenti e anche i parenti

con il cocomero e la _____ fresca

con le chitarre a dirci che non è francesca

aspetteremo le prime luci del mattino

festeggeremo con cornetti e _____

e quando stanchi dormiremo sulla _____

le nostre camere scolpite nella nebbia

ma dormiremo poche ore quanto basta

per poi svegliarci e rituffarci nella vasca

mi bagno, mi tuffo, mi giro e mi rilasso

mi bagno, _____ e inizia qui lo spasso

e mi ribagno, mi rituffo, mi rigiro e mi rilasso

e mi ribagno, mi riasciugo e ricomincia qui lo spasso

voglio restare tutto il giorno in una vasca

con le mie cose più tranquille nella testa

un piede fuori come fosse una bandiera

uscire solo quando fuori è _____

ma spero solo questa mia _____

non sia soltanto un altro attacco d'utopia

perché per questo non c'è ancora medicina

che mi trasformi la mia vasca in _____

e tantomeno trasformare tutto in mare

però qualcuno lo dovrebbe inventare

Coro (rep.)

Appendix D: Lyrics to Jovanotti's *"La vita vale"*

La vita vale[98] di Jovanotti

Cosa succede che succede in giro

chi vede bianco chi vede _____

chi resta in casa chi se ne va in strada

che cosa conta che cosa è vero?

mi han detto che per tenere alti i consumi

è necessario far morire _____

ho letto che le marche dei diamanti

han provocato _____ devastanti

che il succo d'ananas è insanguinato

ed il caffè ha un gusto assai salato

che c'è chi vive nella povertà

fabbricando simboli di povertà

che un brevetto di una medicina

vale più della vita di _____

posso capire che così si salvaguarda il lavoro

vorrei vedere fosse figlia loro

la conoscenza e _____

a molte strade hanno aperto la via

_____

[98]Jovanotti, (2002).

il commercio è uno strumento di libertà

ma nel rispetto dei diritti e della dignità

della diversità e dell'_____

allora forza venite _____

che le speranze non si sono spente

allora forza venite gente

noi dobbiamo convincerli che la vita vale

una vita soltanto più di una multinazionale

noi dobbiamo convincerli che la strada buona

è il rispetto totale dei diritti di _____

ho saputo che molte _____

coi risparmi delle persone

ci finanziano l'industria bellica

il narcotraffico e la distruzione

cosa devo fare mammà

cosa devo fare mammà

vi prego signori che state a _____

voi che avete il denaro voi che avete il _____

voi che avete l'accesso che guidate il progresso

voi che state pensando "chi cazzo è questo fesso?"

che fabbricate e vendete prodotti scaduti

che i vostri figli li mandate nei migliori istituti

che inquinate le anime le strade le acque ed i prati

e i vostri _____ sono tutti curati

certe volte io mi sento male

ma le speranze non si sono spente

allora forza venite gente


Coro (rep.)

Appendix E: *Una lettera di richiesta*[99]

Luogo e data → Milano, 8 giugno 2010

Indirizzo del destinatario → Spett. Ditta Pirelli

Via Garibaldi, 17

74100 Taranto

Intestazione → Egregi Sig.ri,

Testo →_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Frase di chiusura → Vi prego di gradire i miei migliori saluti.

Firma → *Roberto Benigni*

---

[99] Model concept taken from <u>Crescendo</u>! Italiano, Francesca and Marchegiani, Irene.
Thomson and Heinle Boston, MA, 2007.

Appendix F: *12 Belle opere d'arte*[i]

Cimabue (c.1251 - 1302)
    Crocifisso
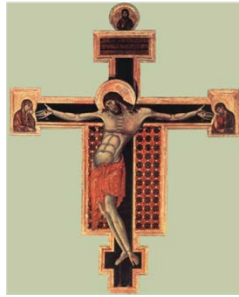
Fra Angelico(c.1395 – 1455)
    L'annunciazione

Giotto (1266/7 – 1337)
Il compianto sul Cristo morto

Donatello (c.1386 – 1466)
Il David

Sandro Botticelli(c.1445 - 1510)
Primavera

Leonardo da Vinci (1452 – 1519)
L'ultima cena

Michelangelo (1475 – 1564)
        La pietà

            Raffaello Sanzio (1483 – 1520)
            La madonna sistina (dettaglio)

    Caravaggio (1571 –1610)
        Concerto di giovani

Umberto Boccioni (1882 – 1916)
Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio

Amedeo Modigliani (1884 – 1920)
Jeanne Hébuterne

Alberto Giacometti (1901 – 1966)
Il gatto

ⁱ The above images were taken from the following sites:

- Cimabue: http://www.artbible.net/

- Fra Angelico: http://engrammi.blogspot.com/2009/05/chiamala-se-vuoi-annunciazione.html

- Giotto: http://www.territorioscuola.com/wikipedia/?title=Giotto

- Donatello: http://www.southallegheny.org/webpages/jbradley/ap.cfm?subpage=1102243

- Botticelli: http://www.florence-gallery.com/monuments/uffizi-gallery.php

- Da Vinci: http://www.miamilan.com/2007_03_01_archive.html

- Michelangelo: http://hubpages.com/hub/MichelangelosPieta

 - Raffaello: http://virtualmuseo.com/2010/01/la-madonna-sistina-dettaglio-dei-geni/

- Caravaggio: http://www.arte.it/opera.php?id=58&q=&show=ope

- Boccioni: http://www.scultura-italiana.com/Approfondimenti/Forme_uniche.htm

- Modigliani: http://www.expressionism-in-art.org/home-5-96-1-0.html

- Giacometti: http://www.deluxeblog.it/tag/gatto