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TEACHING ITALIAN LANGUAGE THROUGH SONGS: A PROPOSAL FOR FOREIGN LEARNERS

Annotation. The work presented was born as a teaching proposal for teaching a second language for foreign learners based on an approach defined in humanistic-affective language teaching. This involves the learner in his meaningful learning process, so as to favor a deep and lasting assimilation that takes into account the weight of the emotional component in the acquisition process with the aim of eliminating the components of stress and anxiety. It is believed that a learning proposal based on the use of the song in the classroom can be useful in order to involve the learner in his meaningful learning process. We want to propose a type of teaching that favors learning, but which, at the same time, is pleasant to follow in line with the passions and interests of the class group. This proposal focused on the use of the song to be systematically included in the weekly activities.

Keywords: teaching; Italian language; second language; foreign learners; songs; authentic material; language acquisition; advantages; criticalities; language learning.

Introduction

For a long time, in language teaching, teaching was considered capable of determining learning, for which the choices of linguistic and pedagogical nature were considered priority over the way of learning [1; 119]. With the consolidation of the conception of language as a means of social interaction, there has been a convergence of interest in users, who as social actors employ the language in specific domains and in specific contexts, carrying out tasks that allow to achieve communicative purposes based on acquired skills. The focus has shifted to the learner, to their motivations, to the internal factors that affect the learning outcomes and to the mental processes implemented in language acquisition, which are assumed as central elements in the planning of the didactic action. From these considerations, various learning theories have been developed, based on different methodological solutions for language teaching [1; 119].

Materials and methods of research

In this affective humanistic approach, the use of the song as authentic material in the teaching of modern languages represents a fundamental element in experiential learning and in the active construction of the subject. The song, in fact, among the various authentic materials, lends itself in particular to a strong motivation in the context of playful teaching [2; 173], possessing great potential in a humanistic-affective perspective to be explored and proposed in an Italian class. This reference to the playful dimension is essential for the use of song as a tool for didactic learning in line with an inductive type of approach to language based on humanistic-affective teaching. In this type of humanistic-affective approach, ludic language teaching is positioned, where the game,



understood as a human dimension that refers to ludic language teaching [3; 9], is a complex and engaging experience, because it allows learners to participate actively and learn constantly, thus becoming central protagonists in the construction of their knowledge according to the principles of constructivism. Therefore, the use of playful activities in teaching can prove to be an effective mediator in the acquisition of knowledge, where the student learns the language through a highly motivated global experience that also involves the cognitive, social, and affective spheres [3; 9].

To make playful activity feasible, it must be playful and cognitively challenging, in such a way that learners do not perceive it too childish and demotivating. This activity will have to act on what Lev Vygotskij defines as "zone of proximal development", that is, the distance between the current level of development and the level of potential development, which can be reached under the guidance of the teacher or in collaboration with one's peers with higher skills [3; 7]. Learning in the ZSP (short for "zone of proximal development") taking place in collaboration with others, refers to the scaffolding ("support") and the tutoring ("tutoring") functions, which can be explained by the teacher, or by the same peers who support the learning of others through peer tutoring activities ("peer tutoring") or in small groups [4; 83]. The criticality that is found in the classroom is that there is no single ZSP for all learners, but there are multiple ZSPs [4; 83]. Therefore, for the development of these innumerable ZSPs, it will be essential that the teacher foresees tasks in which there is cooperation between various students, or proposes activities that are stratified according to different levels of difficulty [4; 83].

In the humanistic-affective approach, the teacher's task will be to create stimulating learning contexts and present the disciplinary contents through methodologies and teaching materials that capture the attention of students [4; 83]. The administration of complex tasks to learners will allow students to use various skills and abilities, involving what Gardner in his theory of various forms of intelligence defines as "multiple intelligences", thus expanding the "range" of social skills required in the world [4; 83]. The song, being a stimulus linked to multiple intelligences, and due to its nature as an authentic text in literary form, lends itself to use as a complex text.

Research results

The use of authentic material in teaching, i.e. the use of a text produced by native speakers for native speakers [5], is based on a type of teaching modeled on a communicative approach, where the concept of competence is not linked only to grammatical correctness, but also to communicative appropriateness in various social situations [4; 80]. In this communicative approach, at the basis of what the Common Framework of Reference for the Knowledge of Languages (CEFR) defines "action-oriented approach", the use of authentic material becomes an object of great interest, since, in addition to language, it gives us a sociocultural insight into which language develops.

We must not forget that, since the song is authentic material, its use for didactic purposes can present various critical issues, such as the presence of terms and expressions belonging to different registers, the coexistence of different stylistic levels. Furthermore, since it is not didactic, it requires careful work by the teacher to select the texts so that they are not too demotivating or too complex for the target of learners [4; 80].

Despite these criticalities, the song, precisely because of its status as an authentic material, has a strong challenging and motivating component, placing the learner in a likely real everyday situation, in contact not only with the language, but also with the culture cultured in its dynamism and in its various sociolinguistic aspects [4; 80]. In this context, the extrapolation of information and knowledge from an authentic text by the student can be highly motivating, making the learner assume a positive attitude towards his skills and abilities, the latter fundamental for the learner to be the active protagonist during his learning path. In addition, the song, compared to other means of communication, enjoys greater diffusion thanks to its storability and repeatability [2; 173], especially when a piece of music is particularly catchy and pounding - a typical aspect of summer hits. In fact, when the song has these characteristics, it may happen that students remember some



words of the text or entire phrases of the songs without actually knowing the meaning, which are fixed in the mind [6]. Scholars have defined this manifestation song-stuck-in-my-head-phenomenon, and is related to the involuntary verbal repetition studied by Krashen known as Din in the head (lit. "resonate in the head") [5]. From this juxtaposition it was assumed that the song could function as an involuntary activator of the Lad¹ (Language Acquisition Device (lit. "linguistic acquisition mechanism"), a mechanism of the universal brain postulated by Noam Chomsky) that transforms the input (in this case also the incomprehensible one) into intake [5]. From this we deduce that the authentic material, especially the song, can exert a strong attraction as new material and different from the teaching material traditionally used in the classroom [4; 82]. It will be essential that the novelty factor of the song is enhanced by the language teacher through the use of various teaching techniques and methodologies useful for working on authentic materials and which make the lesson possibly interesting and dynamic [4; 82].

1.2. Advantages and criticalities

As already explained in the first paragraph, the song, due to its strong emotional value and the many possibilities of using the text, favors the significant learning of a language [7; 4]. Where in order to clarify the concept of meaningful learning Fabio Caon takes up the words of the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers [7; 4], who affirms this form of learning must:

- "be based on experience and capable of arousing the vital interests of the learner";
- "involve a global participation of the personality of the subject, who in the learning process" must be engaged not only on the cognitive level but also on the affective and emotional one".

This underlines the multiple advantages of the use of the didactic song, which is no longer inserted within the learning path as a moment of leisure and relaxation from a type of traditional teaching, but is used in a systematic way within the various teaching units.

Having ascertained the countless advantages of using song in teaching, the advantages illustrated by Caon [7; 4] are reported:

a. Facilitates the activation of a motivation based on pleasure

This motivation is deeper and more stable by binding to affective emotional factors, and allows to act on intrinsic motivation, which generates significant language learning [8; 55].

b. It can be taught in many ways

The song, being an authentic material, presents countless ideas for the teaching of the language and for the introduction of cultural aspects, guaranteeing ample scope for exploration of its uses during the lesson [7; 4]. Furthermore, as the scholar [5] states, not being a didactic text, it has an authentic content, thus making it more interesting on a cognitive and affective level.

c. It can be used in self-learning

The song, by its nature, lends itself to various plays and repetitions even outside the classroom environment. Precisely because of the natural pleasure that its listening causes, it represents a pleasant activity even outside the school environment.

d. It allows you to develop mental connections with other songs on both the synchronic and diachronic axis

The song, as Caon suggests [7; 6], allows comparisons to be made both on the synchronic axis, that is, with contemporary songs, and on the diachronic axis, or on songs from other eras.

It allows to develop historical and intercultural education paths

The activities of synchronic and diachronic comparison, as already mentioned, allow to relate songs both distant and close chronologically and culturally, so as to grasp the links between

¹ Language Acquisition Device (lit. "linguistic acquisition mechanism"), a mechanism of the universal brain postulated by Noam Chomsky to explain the natural ability of the human being to acquire the syntactic structures of language. Considering this mechanism in an evolutionary psychological key, Bruner affirms that this is insufficient to explain the acquisition if we do not consider the Lass, (Language Acquisition System), consisting of the help of the child by the teacher and his companions (NotzionarioItals) .



song texts considered at first glance distant at a cultural and temporal level. In other words, the song offers ideas for investigating the intercultural dimension as well, promoting intercultural education values.

f. It allows to develop interdisciplinary paths

The comparison can also take place with other artistic forms such as painting, cinema, in order to analyze the possible differences and similarities that may be related to the diachronic and synchronic axis.

g. It allows you to work on cultural content

There are clear ideas that the song can offer to promote linguistic and cultural education [9; 11]. In fact, the song, in addition to being an artistic elaboration, is often also a cultural product of a particular historical moment: therefore it represents a potential stimulus for students to approach the culture, history and politics of another country. Furthermore, the use of the song can contribute to overcoming stereotypes.

An explicit example is the song *Italians* written by Caon with the help of Maestro Francesco Sartori, which aims both to improve the study of Italian and to overcome stereotypes about Italy and Italians.

h. It favors the memorization of phonemes, vocabulary, and structures

As already stated in the first paragraph, the song, thanks to its rhymes, rhythm and melody, favors the memorization not only of certain words, but also of entire idiomatic phrases and entire grammatical structures through the involuntary activation of the LAD [5]. In this situation, the teacher will be able to exploit the lexicon and structures learned unconsciously, proposing systematization and makeshift activities [7; 6].

the. It can allow effective work on pronunciation

The use of the song is useful for learning the pronunciation as it is facilitated by the rhythmic aspects of the song.

j. It can favor the development of positive social dynamics in the classroom, linked to the sharing of interests, knowledge and passions.

Caon [7; 6] states that "the song is a cultural form that unites people not only for factors of social recognition [...] but also for this characteristic of universality". Thanks to its universality, the song lends itself to particular collaborative activities, in such a way as to favor the development of linguistic and social skills, lowering Krashen's "affective filter" [10]. Furthermore, by creating non-anxious conditions, it favors the participation of even the most shy students.

k. It has obvious aspects of playfulness, useful for learning

The song, as it stimulates pleasure, represents, as he says (2003), a "pleasant break". The use of song in teaching therefore has a strong potential, since it allows you to interrupt the routine of the traditional learning path and raise motivation, favoring an inductive work on the Italian language at the basis of the humanistic-affective approach [7; 6].

L. It is a polysemic stimulus, which can be mono- or multisensory, and can therefore allow for complex, multi-dimensional work

The song, in addition to being listened to, can be accompanied by a music video clip, thus also constituting a multisensory stimulus. Furthermore, the song, like poetry, is an ambivalent, polysemic language, which is particularly stimulating and can provoke a discussion in class of its possible interpretations [5].

In addition to these advantages, it is necessary to take into account how the song, which belongs to a certain cultural repertoire, can represent a strong stimulus to the study of that specific language abroad, representing an incentive for its learning [9; 12]. In fact, it is notoriously known as one of the motivational drives to learn a language, in most cases, is linked to economic and commercial reasons, which favor the study of languages such as English and Chinese [9; 12].

Taking these considerations into account, it will be necessary to find the right stimulus for that specific language to encourage your language learning. For example, for the promotion of the



Italian language abroad, one could aim at the enhancement, in foreign countries, of its lyric heritage which always arouses a strong attraction to the study of the Italian language.

As already illustrated, the song has innumerable advantages, but, obviously, due to its authentic nature, its use is not without its criticalities, some of which have already been mentioned in the previous paragraph. Taking up the discourse on the possible criticalities of the song, it is important that this, being an authentic text, is appropriately calibrated according to the target of the students and consciously organized for educational purposes.

These organizational actions will be carried out by the teacher who must, as illustrated by Caon [7; 4]:

to. Carefully organize the material to be administered, in such a way that it is motivating and challenging.

b. Provide yourself with an environment and technological supports that favor and enhance the work on the song.

c. Program both individual and group activities, which favor global and analytical perception, in such a way as to stimulate the two cerebral hemispheres while respecting the natural neurological directionality for processing the input. Studies of the processes that allow the brain to learn, store and process information have defined how the brain and its two hemispheres receive and process language and its meaning. The two hemispheres, in fact, are delegated to different tasks, and interpret the input in two different ways: the processing of the input takes place from the right hemisphere, which analyzes the input in a general and global way, to the hemisphere left, which analyzes the input logically and sequentially. From this bimodal function of the hemispheres it follows that the input processing takes place not only in the left hemisphere in the areas of Broca and Wernicke responsible for language processing, but through the contribution of the two cerebral hemispheres. The double way of processing information is the basis of the bimodality principle (Notionary of language teaching) [11]. The principle will be partly taken up by Krashen in the concept of opposition between "acquisition", which implies long-term memory and the integration of the two hemispheres, and "learning", which implies medium-term memory and is based on left hemisphere. These considerations, therefore, lead to the assumption that by supporting the mechanisms of an inductive nature, it is also possible to have a facilitation in learning a language. This concept of input processing has been supported by psychological studies that have led to the formulation of Gestalt theory, a cornerstone of modern language teaching, which proposes a vision of human perception, sensory exploration of the world and knowledge marked by different moments. and characterized by different brain responses according to a three-phase sequence of Globality-Analysis-Synthesis (GAS) [12; 24]. The theory has made an important contribution to the re-evaluation of the teaching approach to be adopted, considered essential for the development of language learning processes [13; 11]. It should be remembered that the role of music in the teaching of modern languages was mainly dealt with within the humanistic-affective methods [14; 6]. According to this humanistic-affective approach, music can create neuropsychological and psychological conditions capable of improving language learning. One of the affective humanistic methods that uses music to improve language learning is the suggestopedic method of the Bulgarian psychotherapist Lozanov [14; 6]. In the method devised by Lozanov, music plays a fundamental role: didactic texts are proposed with a musical background, with the aim of activating both the logical-analytical processes of the left hemisphere and the global and emotional processes of the right hemisphere [14; 6].

d. Also pay attention to the development of social skills, through cooperative learning activities, which develop positive interdependence between the members of the work group, in such a way as to favor the learner's leadership in his or her learning path.

e. Do not excessively prolong the time of work on the song, risking to demotivate the students.



f. Choose the song based on the level of linguistic competence and the interests of the learners, so as not to demotivate them with tasks that are too simple or too complex for their language skills.

Caon [7; 6] also illustrates two intrinsic characteristics that can represent a great difficulty for the learner.

The first criticality concerns the implicit cultural aspects present in the text of the song, which, if not properly introduced by the teacher, can prevent the understanding of the contents, so as to make the authentic text incomprehensible in the eyes of learners. In fact, in choosing the song, it is important to take into account the cultural background of the learners, choosing general and universal themes that can be part of their encyclopedic knowledge. In this way we try to get as close as possible to their interests and passions, which are important to stimulate their motivation.

The second criticality, which could in a more problematic way create difficulties in understanding the piece of the song, concerns the rhythmic component, that is the possible difference between the rhythm of the spoken and the sung one. In fact, the sung language according to the needs of the melody has profound phonological and rhythmic changes, which combined with the accompanying melody could cause problems of understanding while listening [5]. Therefore, considering these possible implicit criticalities of the song, in the phase of choosing the musical piece, the teacher, in addition to taking into account the level of competence and the linguistic needs of the learners, will opt for songs in which the pronunciation is clear and well marked, that is a type of song in which the accentuation and length of pronunciation of the words are similar to those of the spoken language. Furthermore, the content, based on the student's encyclopedic knowledge, must be accessible to everyone and not create possible misunderstandings or damage the cultural values of the learners. The teacher must then prefer songs in which there are high-frequency lexical terms, especially for the initial levels. Finally, it must be remembered that the success of the song in teaching is favored by the quality of the technological supports and the acoustic characteristics of the classroom, which can make listening more motivating and enjoyable [7; 8].

In conclusion, we want to propose a type of teaching that favors learning, but which, at the same time, is pleasant to follow in line with the passions and interests of the class group. This proposal focused on the use of the song does not want to represent an activity that [5] defines for Friday only, or activities proposed on the weekend or the day before the holidays, but to be systematically included in the weekly activities. Of course, the decision on the systematic use of the song will depend on the interests of the student, the type and duration of the course, the objectives to be achieved, the presence of technological supports, and so on.

From what has been said, what we are trying to propose here is the potential of the song in teaching foreign languages for the purpose of working on inductive language in a communicative context and on the basis of a humanistic-affective brand teaching [7; 6].

In the light of these considerations, we want to state how it should no longer be considered a break from the "traditional" learning routine, but as a full-fledged entry into teaching materials.

Conclusion

The song in the teaching of a second language plays an important role because it evokes stories, socio-cultural periods of a country, arousing emotions that maintain and stimulate students' motivation by predisposing them to learning the language and culture. Motivation is a fundamental element for the purposes of language learning, and for this reason it must always be kept high throughout the teaching activity.

Where it is precisely the motivational dimension that directs towards the use of the song in teaching. Due to its universal character, the latter represents an element of social identification, thus promoting interpersonal but also intercultural relationships.

Among the various advantages of the song we must also remember its playful dimension. In fact, it has been widely demonstrated how playful activities can promote learning without its effort being perceived, activating what is defined by the Krashen rule of forgetting.



It should be borne in mind that the song being an authentic material, i.e. produced by native speakers for native speakers, its use must be carefully planned by the teacher, who will take into account in the choice of the piece the objectives to be achieved, the possible criticalities of the text, the student interests. The goal of using authentic material, in this case the song, is to create a motivating yet challenging environment in order to work in the defined area of "proximal learning".

In this type of inductive approach it will be the student who will gradually be guided by the teacher in the discovery of the language, thus becoming the protagonist of his / her linguistic path.

From this we deduce the actual potential of the use of the song in teaching, where in order for these skills to be exploited, the active participation of both the student and the teacher is required.

With regard to the latter, in order to create educational activities that favor the active participation of the student, he will have to support the brain processes of processing external input. Therefore proposing didactic activities that support the principle of bidirectionality of the brain.

The song in teaching, having refuted its innumerable advantages, should therefore be used systematically within the teaching program and not represent a break from the canonical lesson but rather be an integral part of a didactic action based on the effective participation of students according to an action-oriented approach.

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Вирджи Эмилисал Ферранте

ИТАЛИЯН ТІЛІН ӘНДЕР АРҚЫЛЫ ОҚЫТУ: ШЕТЕЛДІК ҮЙРЕНУШІЛЕРГЕ ҰСЫНЫС

Аңдатпа. Ұсынылған жұмыс тілді гуманистік-аффективті оқытуда анықталған тәсілге негізделген шетелдік студенттерге екінші тілді үйретуге арналған оқыту ұсынысы ретінде дүниеге келді. Бұл стресс пен алаңдаушылықтың құрамдас бөліктерін жою мақсатында меңгеру процесінде эмоционалдық құрамдастың салмағын ескеретін терең және ұзақ ассимиляцияға қолайлы болу үшін үйренушіні оның мазмұнды оқу процесіне тартады. Әнді сабақта қолдануға негізделген оқу ұсынысы үйренушіні оның мазмұнды оқу процесіне тарту үшін пайдалы болуы мүмкін деп саналады. Біз оқуды ұнататын, бірақ сонымен бірге сынып тобының құмарлықтары мен қызығушылықтарына сәйкес ұстануға жағымды болатын оқыту түрін ұсынғымыз келеді. Бұл ұсыныс әнді апта сайынғы іс-шараларға жүйелі түрде енгізуге бағытталды.

Кілт сөздер: оқыту; итальян тілі; екінші тіл; шетелдік үйренушілер; әндер; шынайы материал; тілді меңгеру; артықшылықтар; сындар; тіл үйрену.

Вирджи Эмилисал Ферранте

ОБУЧЕНИЕ ИТАЛЬЯНСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ ПО ПЕСНЯМ: ПРЕДЛОЖЕНИЕ ДЛЯ ИНОСТРАННЫХ УЧАЩИХСЯ

Аннотация. Представленная работа родилась как педагогическое предложение по обучению второму языку для иностранных учащихся, основанное на подходе, определенном в гуманистически-аффективном обучении языку. Это вовлекает учащегося в его осмысленный процесс обучения, чтобы способствовать глубокому и длительному усвоению, которое учитывает вес эмоционального компонента в процессе усвоения с целью устранения компонентов стресса и беспокойства. Считается, что предложение по обучению, основанное на использовании песни в классе, может быть полезным для вовлечения учащегося в его осмысленный процесс обучения. Мы хотим предложить тип обучения, который способствует обучению, но в то же время приятно следовать в соответствии со страстями и интересами группы класса. Это предложение было сосредоточено на использовании песни для систематического включения в еженедельные мероприятия.

Ключевые слова: преподавание; итальянский язык; второй язык; иностранные учащиеся; песни; аутентичный материал; овладение языком; преимущества; особенности; изучение языка.