



TEACHING ITALIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE THROUGH DANTE'S *INFERNO*ⁱ

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Abstract:

Italian theorists have developed an inductive text-centred approach to L2 language learning that encourages students to be more autonomous and active in the language-learning classroom than traditional language learning approaches. This method contrasts with traditional language-teaching methodologies, which use teacher-centred approaches that focus solely on grammar fundamentals and the variety of rules that describe mainstream language-learning procedures. It is well known that language students can benefit from learning about the culture and the literature of the target-language nation because it leads to the heightened curiosity and a deeper understanding of the various rules and truths associated with the language. Significantly, this exercise draws the inference that links cultural awareness, language learning, and development and creates a strategic learning platform that emphasises the learner's contribution to learning. This paper puts theory into practice by proposing a contextualised learning unit in which students learn about culture, literature, and language through the lens of Dante's *Inferno*. The proposed didactic unit is framed upon six instances of inductive learning: motivation, globality, analysis, synthesis, reflection, and verification. This paper also discusses teachers' considerations when selecting authentic texts and highlights the benefits of teaching literary texts to language students.

Keywords: authentic texts; inductive approach; literary texts; teaching methodology; text-centred approach

Riassunto:

I teorici italiani hanno sviluppato un approccio induttivo centrato sul testo per l'apprendimento della lingua L2 che incoraggia gli studenti ad essere più autonomi e attivi nell'apprendimento della lingua in classe rispetto agli approcci di apprendimento linguistico tradizionali. Questo metodo contrasta con le metodologie tradizionali di insegnamento delle lingue, che utilizzano approcci centrati sull'insegnante i quali si concentrano esclusivamente sui fondamentali grammaticali e sulle varietà di regole che

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descrivono le procedure convenzionali di apprendimento linguistico. È ben noto che gli studenti di lingue possono trarre beneficio dall'apprendimento della cultura e della letteratura della nazione della lingua di destinazione, perché questo porta a una maggiore curiosità e a una più profonda comprensione delle varie regole e verità associate alla lingua. In modo particolare, questo esercizio formula l'inferenza che collega consapevolezza culturale, apprendimento linguistico e sviluppo, e crea una piattaforma di apprendimento strategica che enfatizza il contributo dello studente all'apprendimento. Questo elaborato mette in pratica la teoria proponendo un'unità di apprendimento contestualizzata in cui gli studenti imparano la cultura, la letteratura e la lingua attraverso la lente dell'*Inferno* di Dante. L'unità didattica proposta si basa su sei esempi di apprendimento induttivo: motivazione, globalità, analisi, sintesi, riflessione e verifica. Questo elaborato discute anche le considerazioni degli insegnanti nella scelta di testi autentici e mette in evidenza i benefici dell'insegnamento di testi letterari agli studenti di lingue.

Parole chiave: testi autentici; approccio induttivo; testi letterari; metodologia di insegnamento; approccio centrato sul testo

1. Introduction

Language teachers are being dissuaded from adopting “*old-fashioned in-class recitation of grammar fundamentals*” (Savoia, 2000). They have now accepted culture's indispensable role in teaching a language (Balboni, 1989). Students can learn a new language through an inductive approach developed by Italian theorists and linguists (Balboni, 1989; Freddi, 1993; Porcelli, 1994). In this way, students become active participants in learning grammar and language. Instead of traditional language learning platforms, they can “*hone their curiosity, research and teamwork skills, and autonomous development*” (Sabato & Hughes, 2017). One way that this pedagogical methodology ethos can be used to teach culture is through the use of a literary text as the primary text for inductive learning purposes (Vedovelli, 2010), thereby facilitating the participation of learners in a way that helps them focus on personal experiences and the knowledge of their culture to decipher meaning and a structure to understand a language (Babae & Yahya, 2014). Balboni (1989), one of the significant contributors to the inductive approach to language learning, is also in favour of using literature as a way to help students explore the historical and cultural values of the targeted language country to understand the standpoint of their language as it uniquely develops from these cultural and historical settings (Babae & Yahya, 2014). Balboni (1989) argues that within cultural history lies a literary history. In a language classroom, students get introduced to the literature of the target language to facilitate their understanding of the cultural and historical predisposition of the new language. This preparative measure triggers personal motivation to learn their language. Literature, culture and language have developed together in a mix that shapes linguistic characterisation. Therefore, both literature and culture play significant roles in language learning. This platform thus embodies a hypothetical learning unit where deductive

language interpretation is employed based on the cultural predisposition identified through literary texts, which function as motivational elements. The hypothetical lesson provided in this paper is part of a learning unit. It draws upon the Italian theorists' findings, adopting Freddi's (1993) six moments of learning acquisition—motivation, globality, analysis, synthesis, reflection, and verification—and also incorporating Vedovelli's (2010) unit of work model, which contains four phases: contextualisation, work on textual input, communicative output and centrality of the text. This lesson takes a portion of the current curriculum of teaching Italian. As such, the lesson is scheduled as a didactic unit across the Italian learning course through an academic semester. The hypothetical lesson takes place within the following classroom criteria:

Language: Italian

Level: Intermediate Plus/Advanced: B2+/C1+ (d'Europa, 2002)

Students' age: 16–25.

Estimated Number of students: 15–25.

Learning objective: To learn about Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*

Primary focus: Understanding Dante's *Inferno*

Secondary focus: Understanding different registers of Italian

2. Literature background

In Italy, the didactic unit for the Italian language classroom has been widely researched and developed over the years by multiple theorists and linguists (Balboni, 2008; Danesi, 1988; Freddi, 1993). Within a didactic unit, learning units follow a network (rather than a sequence) that helps students obtain a more global understanding of the topic (Balboni, 2008). Didactic learning thus observes a specific education style defined by a scientific approach. Danesi (1988) informs that this method or approach has been researched and approved by many teachers since it allows student engagement and stimulates a worthy knowledge transfer and learning process regardless of the study field. Moreso, a deductive approach to learning entails teachers providing instructions to students through planned lectures and lessons that incorporate students' inquisitions and areas of difficulty to develop strategic methodologies of knowledge transfer and learning. Freddi (1993) took a particular interest in the didactic unit and developed an operating model guided by the philosophy that suggests that lessons need to have a coherent and complete structure that comprehensively contributes to the utility to learn a language with significance. Therefore, Freddi (1993) intends that didactic learning requires a comprehensive approach that catalyses the learning spectrum to have a comprehensive utility of strategic learning. Balboni (1989) and Porcelli (1994) elaborate on Freddi's (1993) findings on the moments that a lesson comprises. Each theorist has developed a unique variation to the names of the operating models' phases. Still, the underlying philosophies and methodologies have many commonalities that bind these theories to a single platform of ideology.

Further, Ciliberti (2012) discusses the *nesso lingua-cultura* [language-cultural link] and how sociolinguistic and sociocultural contexts intertwine continuously; this link

needs to be presented when a language is being taught as a representation of the culture. Culture and language share a homologous and complex relationship (Kramersch, 1995), where the complexity of language is compositely entangled with culture in that these elements have advanced together, inducing one another through the process and, in due course, shaping the unique meaning of humanity. Kramersch (1995) informs that culture sprung from establishing speech from this perspective. The two have evolved symbiotically where the improvement of either element derives from the enhancement of the other. From this perspective, Ciliberti (2012) argues that language teachers focus mainly on linguistic competence and not on intercultural communication, whereas, in reality, the two aspects need to be taught simultaneously. The idealism that culture springs from human interaction signifies that communication manifests culture adopted by distinct speech communities. Kramersch (1995) notes that the summate of messages exchanged during communication using a specific language forms a speech community where the society in its entirety is framed from the speaking perspective. Kramersch (1995) clarifies that children learn their language by interpreting social and cultural phenomena from their societies. They advance their cognitive abilities and learn their culture during language-learning progression. Significantly both culture and language communicate through each other. Irvine (1996) proposes the ideology that the communicative power manifested by culture functions to represent elements of reality and also connects understanding between different contexts where communication surpasses the employment symbols which represent feelings, beliefs, events, or identities, but also as a means of carrying forward these elements into a contemporary context. Therefore, people learn languages through exposure to authentic texts allied to the targeted language's cultural context (Young, 1999). The authentic text employs a living language that engages subjects in the form of persuasion, entertainment, or information to catalyse active reading, in-depth analysis, and robust problem-solving following its inclusion of theoretically rich and compelling language and ideas that resonate with real-life societal occurrences (Young, 1999). Therefore, students can reflect on different cultures and link the language to a context that encourages them to achieve situational competence and understand the rationale and syntax of the language from a more profound real-life platform (Danesi, 1994).

The use of authentic text has also been employed in adult language learning, where a constructivist approach has been highlighted to induce learners' cultural awareness to activate their interests in deciphering the language starting from the cultural context and spreading to cover the overall spheres of the language. For instance, the Provincial Centers for Adult Education and Training (CPIA) offer foreign adult education in Italian to inspire social, economic, cultural, and personal growth for learners (Tonelli, 2020). This source highlights that inductive learning aids to shift the cultural predisposition of adult learners to adopt a novel perspective of interpreting diction framed in a different cultural context through heightened degrees of contact and motivation framed from the use of authentic texts.

Garotti (2004) states that authentic texts need to be recognisable by the language native speakers as texts created for them rather than for non-native speakers following

the congruence in the presented facts. Additionally, Danesi (1994) posits that the term 'authentic text' refers to texts that exemplify the culture in its different modalities: "*il testo autentico mette in evidenza un aspetto della vita quotidiana di un popolo*" "[an authentic text highlights an aspect of the daily life of a population]". Thus, it is the work of the language teacher to choose the appropriate authentic text by evaluating each of the above considerations. Even though these could be considered abstract and subjective criteria, the language teacher needs to choose a text that will help students learn more about the target language's culture to encourage active discussion and reflection. This ideology is supported by Kramersch (1995) that the linguistic relativity principle holds that language describing a society's reality determines the standpoint of perceiving the world. Significantly "*The real-life world is, by a significant context, unconsciously derived from the group's language habits. Therefore, culture and language are homologous psychological realities where cultural products represent and interpret the real world and transcend to the future through the communication of authentic texts.*" (Kramersch, 1995)

2.1 Literature and cultural competence

Carroli (2008) argues that literature holds *the potential to promote language and culture learning. The pedagogical premises are that the object of learning, in this case, literary texts, is inseparable from the approach taken to teaching and learning; in the same way, that language is inseparable from culture, of which literature is a part of.* This mix is ideal for language students because learning the culture and literature, in part or not, of authentic texts allows effective language learning (Canto et al., 2013). The idealism that the connection between language and culture associates effective language learning when the culture in the form of authentic texts as associated literature becomes the centre stage of didactic inductive learning (Canto et al., 2013). The same scenario holds the same for a different approach of language learning, L2, where the powerful connections between language, culture, and literature can motivate students to explore the complexities of a literary text through a constant shift between focusing on the words and focusing on the text's literal meaning (Danesi, 1988). This language-learning process is also present in Danesi's (1988) findings on bimodality in his seminal neurolinguistic studies, which show that the brain's two hemispheres cooperate to produce complex thinking and confirm that, the left hemisphere is the prime point for language.

Employing literature as a tool in language learning is a practical approach to learning a language since it offers learners an authentic framework of understanding following the outlay of employed enriched cultural syntax that induces learners to participate as active theoretical societal members that use the language (Singh & Richard, 2006). Collie and Slater (1987) hold that the same holds for L2 learners, positing four factors supporting the use of literature: (1) it is valuable and authentic, (2) it provides an opportunity for cultural enrichment, (3) it promotes language enrichment through increased understanding of syntax and discourse structures, and (4) it cultivates personal involvement through the storytelling element and by developing connections with characters. Magnani (2009) argues that literary texts are rich, and since they can be placed outside of time, they are always relevant or can be recognised as part of a precise

historical moment. Babae and Yahya (2014) add that “*universality, non-triviality, variety, interest, and creativity are other factors for using literature in language teaching*”. With considerations to cultural predisposition of the language society subject.

In addition to these considerations, there are other ways teachers can help students to broaden their cultural competency and ultimately language learning as highlighted by de Beaugrande and Dressler's (1984) seven standards of textuality:

- a. **Cohesion:** The links between concepts must be mutually connected and focus on the substituent forms and the connectives so that the text is fluid, effective, and consistent.
- b. **Coherence:** The topic presented must be well connected and accessible and must follow a logical and relevant thread.
- c. **Intentionality:** The text must make it clear that it was created intentionally in a way that fulfils the producer's intentions.
- d. **Acceptability:** The message recipient must be considered when evaluating the text's context, content, and message.
- e. **Informativity:** A text should always be informative without being so complicated that it could inhibit or endanger learning.
- f. **Situationality:** The text must be relevant to a communicative situation or occurrence.
- g. **Intertextuality:** The text must establish different relationships with others to broaden the understanding of the subject.

Suppose any of the above seven standards of textuality are lacking. In that case, the text may not be considered acceptable to facilitate cultural awareness and language learning in a didactic language learning framework (de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1984). Thus, it is not enough to simply find an authentic text; instead, the content must be evaluated, and the didactic choice remains a crucial factor in choosing the appropriate text. Therefore, a teacher must think and consider the structure of the teaching unit, taking into account the current predispositions of learners regarding the educational or cultural purpose they wish students to achieve.

However, even though texts can aid culture teaching in the language-learning classroom, Balboni (2008) argues that teachers cannot teach interculturality. Still, they can offer a modality through which students can enter into the other culture and learn about different ways of thinking and living through five canons: (1) knowing others, (2) tolerating differences, (3) respecting difference without questioning morality in such a way that the teacher can protect the different stories from the various cultures, (4) accepting the fact that certain aspects of other cultures can be better than their own and (5) questioning the culture in which they grew up. Hofstede (1991) states that “*l'acquisizione delle abilità di comunicazione interculturale passa attraverso tre fasi: consapevolezza, conoscenza e abilità*”. [*the acquisition of intercultural communication abilities passes through three phases: awareness, knowledge and skills*]. This can offer the student a model “*in modo che ciascuno si costruisca giorno per giorno, esperienza per esperienza, contatto per contatto, incidente per incidente la sua competenza comunicativa interculturale*” (Balboni & Caon, 2015) [in such a way that each person constructs their intercultural communicative

competence day by day, experience by experience, contact by contact, incident by incident, and contact by contact]. This model contains three types of software:

- 1) *The software of the mind*: All cultural elements impact communication. We are not aware of the existence of this software because it is simply innate in communication within the individual's culture.
- 2) *The communication software*: All codes are used to communicate verbally and non-verbally. The problem is that many speakers focus on verbal languages, and as a result, non-verbal ones are often overlooked.
- 3) *The context software* refers to the factors that govern a communicative event's beginning, pathway, or conclusion.

Simply choosing an authentic text is not sufficient; ensuring that the text offers the students opportunities to enhance their linguistic and cultural competence is also necessary. The teacher needs to ensure that the text communicates to students in a way that is authentic and able to teach interculturality to impact their language learning significantly.

2.2 Six moments of learning

The proposed didactic unit will follow six moments of learning that can help motivate students to heighten their autonomy and cultural understanding. The sequence of the proposed lesson can be found in Figure 1.

Motivation → Globality → Analysis → Synthesis → Reflection → Verification

Figure 1: Six moments of learning

In the motivation phase (Appendix A, Appendix B), students develop curiosity and the ability to make hypotheses on the lesson's content (Muzzolon, 2019). Activating their interest can be achieved in a variety of ways: through paratext (images and illustrations), context (understanding the scenario or the situation), and comprehending the text (Balboni, 2008; Vedovelli, 2010). Grassi (2003) strongly advocates allowing students to read silently in all reading phases. She claims that reading aloud can detract from the comprehension of the text and that students should be allowed to read without distractions.

The use of authentic text is paramount in this stage since motivating students' inclination towards developing interests in another culture is the objective. Novello (2016) informs that this phase serves as a warm-up to activate the student's perspective about the language and the culture speaking it. The fact that students get to think from the cultural perspective of it makes it easy to learn the language following the heightened interest in the cultural, linguistic predisposition of the native speakers (Learn, 2018).

Motivation functions as a condition that triggers and sustains a subject's behaviour toward an intended goal, thus making it critical for students to learn and achieve across the platform of both their formal learning sphere and other informal settings (Krashen, 1976). For instance, motivated students are inclined to engage, endure for long, understand better the associated learning results, and score better when compared to

other students based on the set standardised attainment tests ([Learn](#), 2018). There are distinguishable characteristics between motivation and the overall cognitive functioning, which aids to elucidate the improvements in independent attainment scores based on intelligence tests (Braver et al., 2014). The difference between motivation and the overall cognitive functioning can also be distinguished from the perspectives of interest, engagement, grit, goal orientation, and tenacity following the difference in the implications and antecedents of these factors of achievement and learning (Braver et al., 2014). Appendix A shows the projection of Dante Alighieri;

Guarda l'immagine su PowerPoint e rispondi alle domande.

- *Riconosci l'uomo nell'immagine? L'hai mai visto?*
- *Hai mai incontrato un suo testo?*
- *Qual è la sua importanza in Italia?*

[Look at the image on PowerPoint and answer the questions.

- Do you recognise the man in the image? Have you ever seen him?
- Have you ever come across any of his texts?
- What's his importance in Italy?]

Harnessing the learner's interest in the sociocultural fixation of the subject inspires the learners to fathom the cultural and linguistic predisposition of the subject's setting and thus draws their interests to the texts by the subject. Bull and Ma (2001) support that the heightened interests in the cultural standpoint of a subject aid in gaining the heightened interest to understand the literal perspective of the subject's cultural standpoint to gain significant traction to the subject's language.

In the globality phase (Appendix C), students engage in a global comprehension task, activating the right hemisphere of their brains, which is linked to analogies. Often students are asked to complete true or false questions, provide multiple-choice responses and do matching exercises (Grassi, 2003). Here the teacher can check to see whether the students have an overall understanding of the concept of the text.

The analysis phase (Appendix D) is inductive. Students are asked to resolve their communicative, grammatical, or linguistic needs through the text at the didactic unit's centre (Pona, 2015). The teacher in this phase asks the students to complete cloze passages, do joining exercises or dictation, or highlight or underline critical features of the text (Balboni, 1989; Grassi, 2003; Porcelli, 2004).

Analytical questions are employed to trigger the student's language comprehension from the language's cultural perspective. For instance, Appendix D prompts students to fathom authentic texts that point to the subject's cultural standpoint and thus gain a transparent platform towards understanding the language following the highlight on culturally inspired diction.

3. Leggi il canto nuovamente e rispondi alle domande.

- a. Cosa pensate sia una "selva oscura"? Cosa rappresenta?

- b. Cosa trova?
- c. Sa come arrivò nella "selva oscura"? Spiega perché.
- d. C'è speranza? Spiega perché.

English translation:

5. Read the verse and answer the questions.
- a. What do you think a "selva oscura" is? What does it represent?
 - b. What does he find?
 - c. Do you know how he ends up in the "selva oscura"? Explain why. Is there hope? Explain why.

The principal objective of the analysis phase is to enable the learner to develop an analytical platform that has the proper contextual alignment to the knowledge. Dörnyei and Skehan (2003) informs that the motivation phase triggers learners to sink deeper to focus on the text, allowing them to identify conjugation and grammar patterns by understanding the rules left to deduce.

In the synthesis phase (Appendix E), tasks are introduced that ask the students to practise and manipulate the text at different levels (Porcelli, 2004). This is where students are asked to reuse an element that was previously studied to reinforce it, usually through a fill-in-the-gaps activity or grammar exercises that are realistic and open. Porcelli (1994) encourages teachers in this phase to have students use language more creatively and realistically, for example, in the form of role-playing or open dialogues. In the proposed lesson in this paper, this will be achieved through a fill-in-the-gaps with modern or more familiar synonyms of the original words, as shown in Figure 2.

3. Completa le righe con i sinonimi delle parole originali nel riquadro.

difficoltosa - entrai - foresta - persa - scoperte - vera

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una _____ oscura
ché la diritta via era _____. 3
Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura
esta selva selvaggia e _____ e forte
che nel pensier rinova la paura! 6
Tant'è amara che poco è più morte;
ma per trattar del ben ch'ì' vi trovai,
dirò de l'altre cose ch'ì' v'ho _____. 9
Io non so ben ridir com'ì' v' _____,
tant'era pien di sonno a quel punto
che la _____ via abbandonai. 12

(Alighieri, 1960, Canto 1)

Figure 2: Cloze passage with modern synonyms

Porcelli (1994) encourages teachers to avoid introducing metalanguage when teaching grammar in the reflection phase (Appendix F, Appendix G, Appendix H). Instead, they encourage students to fill out tables, graphs, schemas, or other forms that reinforce the grammatical rule and its exceptions. Vedovelli (2010) supports the idea of communicative output, which comes from a communicative activity from and about the text.

In this concluding verification phase of the lesson (Appendix I), students give their feedback on the lesson and clarify any doubts (Balboni, 1989; Freddi, 1993; Porcelli, 1994; Vedovelli, 2010). This can also serve to assess how much students have learned in class. Vedovelli (2010) states that this phase represents the exit from the communicative context for didactic purposes without teacher direction or help.

3. Hypothetical didactic unit

3.1 *La Divina Commedia: Inferno*

It would be an impossible task to discuss the importance of Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* (1960) in Italian culture, but its level of prestige and influence is undeniable.

Gobis and Legler (2015) claim that it is still a highly relevant text since not only does it talk to us about culture, religion, science, poetry, music, and politics, but it also talks about our sins and feelings. Montale explains:

« Che la vera poesia abbia sempre il carattere di un dono e che pertanto essa presupponga la dignità di chi la riceve, questo è il migliore insegnamento che Dante ci abbia lasciato. Egli non è il solo che ci abbia dato questa lezione, ma fra tutti è certo il maggiore. E se è vero che egli volle essere poeta e nient'altro che poeta, resta quasi inspiegabile alla nostra moderna cecità che quanto più il suo mondo si allontana da noi, di tanto si accresce la nostra volontà di conoscerlo e farlo conoscere a chi è più cieco di noi. » (Mura, 2017)

[That true poetry always has the character of a gift, and therefore it presupposes the dignity of who receives it, this is the best teaching that Dante has left us. He is not the only one who has given us this lesson, but of all, he is certainly the greatest. And if it is true that he wanted to be a poet and nothing other than a poet, it remains almost inexplicable to our modern blindness that the more his world moves away from us, the more our will to know him and make him known to those who are more blind to us increases.]

Even though reading and analysing content and language in literary texts can be one of the most challenging tasks (Brandt, 2017), a small extract from literature can be a powerful tool (Magnani, 2006). This lesson aims to introduce students to the complexities and meaning of the *Inferno* (Alighieri, 1960) to learn about Italian culture and as a way for them to self-reflect through the first 12 lines of the *Inferno* (Alighieri, 1960).

3.2 *Mickey's Inferno*

To ease the complexity of Dante's *Inferno* for the students, this didactic unit introduces students to this text through another Italian text, *Mickey's Inferno* (Martina, 2006). This parody is considered one of the most accepted and appreciated satirical takes on Dante's *Inferno* and is also known as 'x' [a masterpiece of Italian comics]' (Emmer, 2003)

Even though Mickey Mouse has been recognised as an American character, since 1937, Disney stories in Italy have been created by Italian cartoonists for an Italian audience (Stajano, 1997), thus rendering Disney made in Italy an Italian phenomenon. Marrone (2005) posits that:

"i Classici Disney creano un'atmosfera di comicità e di allegria intorno a personaggi o fatti storici che offrono una divertente alternativa alla complessità di un avvenimento. [...] un fumetto che richiama temi classici può diventare una buona occasione per introdurre lo studio di un periodo storico."

[Disney Classics create an atmosphere of comedy and joy around characters or historical facts that offer a fun alternative to the complexity of an event. [...] a comic that recalls classic themes can become a good opportunity to introduce the study of a historical period]

This is why this didactic unit contains the Disney comic in the motivational phase of the lesson that introduces students to Dante's *Inferno*. The objective is always to bring students closer to the main text to teach them about Italian comic culture.

3.3 Roberto Benigni (1997): *Tutto Dante*

To conclude the unit of study, another great Italian icon was chosen: Roberto Benigni when he reads the first canto of *La Divina Commedia* (Alighieri, 1960) in front of the Basilica di Santa Croce in Florence. Because of his role in *La vita è bella* (Benigni, 1997), Roberto Benigni may be recognisable to a foreign audience, and if not, may serve as a way of introducing students to yet another essential Italian cultural icon. This comes towards the lesson's end, once students have comprehended the content of the first canto, as a way to assess their comprehension. Students also learn about the importance of the Basilica as the place where many Italian vital figures have been buried. This is another example of an authentic text being used to teach culture and language.

3.4 Hypothetical summary of the lesson

The proposed lesson will follow a structure that gradually introduces students to Dante's *Inferno* while helping them to expand on their cultural and linguistic competence. It is recommended that a teacher adopt the methodologies evidenced in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposed unit of learning

Time	Phase	Goal	Methodology	Social Form
15 min	Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To heighten curiosity - To introduce students to Dante Alighieri - To introduce students to Disney made in Italy and Dante's <i>Inferno</i> 	<p>1. The teacher projects an image of Dante Alighieri on the board. The teacher asks students questions to check for comprehension and gather their knowledge level. The teacher then provides some brief information on Dante Alighieri.</p> <p>2. The teacher projects the Disney version of the first 12 lines of Dante's <i>Inferno</i>. Before analysing the text, the students are asked to read the text in silence and look at the image before analysing it. After this, the students are asked questions. The teacher can then introduce the importance of Disney made in Italy to the students.</p>	<p>All together</p> <p>Individual</p> <p>All together</p>
20 min	Globality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To read and understand the general meaning of the <i>Inferno</i> 	<p>3. <i>Silent reading</i>: The students are asked to read the 12 lines of Dante Alighieri's <i>Inferno</i> in silence without making notes.</p> <p>4. <i>Global comprehension</i>: The teacher asks the students what they think of the extract and answers a series of questions. After this, the teacher checks for understanding.</p>	<p>Individual</p> <p>All together</p>
20 min	Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be able to answer comprehension questions 	<p>5. <i>Analytical comprehension</i>: The teacher gives the students analytical questions on the extract and then checks these questions with the whole class.</p>	<p>Individual</p>
30 min	Synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To analyse the language - To modernise the register of language 	<p>6. <i>Cloze passage</i>: The students are asked to fill in the blanks with the modern synonyms for Dante's original text.</p> <p>7. <i>Elocutio</i>: Students are asked to transform the register of the entire canto from Dante's language into a more modern language. The students then read the responses of other students for comparison.</p>	<p>Individual</p> <p>In pairs</p>
25 min	Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To introduce students to the history of the Basilica di Santa Croce 	<p>8. <i>Basilica di Santa Croce</i>: The teacher finds the Basilica di Santa Croce images and the people buried there. First, an image of the church is projected, and then the other pictures are revealed gradually, with the teacher providing more information. The teacher asks the students questions.</p> <p>9. <i>Roberto Benigni</i>: The teacher projects some images of Roberto Benigni,</p>	<p>All together</p> <p>All together</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To introduce students to Roberto Benigni - To listen to a reading and explanation of Dante's <i>Inferno</i> 	<p>including a photo of him wearing a crown similar to that of Dante Alighieri, a poster of the film <i>La vita è Bella</i>, and a photo of him from the video <i>Tutto Dante</i>. The teacher asks the class whether they recognise him and whether they know any more details about him. The teacher asks a series of questions.</p> <p>10. <i>Tutto Dante</i>: The teacher shows the video of Roberto Benigni reading out the first passage of <i>Inferno</i>, specifically at 0:00–06:30, 11:00–18:00, 53:45–55:20, and 1:01:43–1:03:36). The students are asked to observe the video setting and listen to the reading of the text.</p>	All together
10 min	Verification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To form connections to their own culture - To verify understanding 	<p>11. The teacher then asks the students what their reflections are on the unit, including Dante, Disney in Italy, and Roberto Benigni, and to reflect on the learnings in the unit.</p>	All together

3.5 Didactic Implications of the hypothetical learning unit

The hypothetical learning unit employs the six phases of the inductive learning model, where it differentiates from traditional language learning models. The use of authentic texts such as Dante's *Inferno* and the rest motivates learners to shift their perspective of thoughts to employ the ones employed in the reading texts. Significantly, such allows them the ability to understand the meanings of the new texts through the heightened curiosity of how the new language and its cultural predisposition fits within a language context they are familiar with, such as Mickey's *Inferno*. The second stage pushes learners to understand the lingual and cultural meanings and implications of the authentic text from their cultural background, enabling them to answer comprehension questions based on their newly acquired knowledge and cultural backgrounds. Significantly, having the ability to link the two cultures with the language knowledge at their disposal aids learners to comprehend the similarities and differences of the two languages. Therefore, inductive learning through authentic text is a significantly proven tactic of improving language learning compared to traditional language learning models.

4. Conclusion

Italian theorists have spent many years promoting this methodology of teaching through texts. It is evident that it can be used to promote student autonomy while also building their capacity to learn about Italian culture and the Italian language. Using Dante's *Inferno* as the main text offers a unique introduction to Italian literature, and supplementing this text with Mickey's *Inferno* and Roberto Benigni's reading also provides the students with an opportunity to explore Italian culture in more depth. Students need to be motivated,

and part of this motivation can be derived from their learning experience throughout a language-learning lesson. Adopting an inductive approach to language learning can empower students to take more charge of their learning and can also heighten their curiosity and engagement, thereby creating more of a learning culture in a classroom.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

About the Author

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Appendices

Appendix A: Projection of Dante Alighieri

Original document:

1. Guarda l'immagine su PowerPoint e rispondi alle domande.

- *Riconosci l'uomo nell'immagine? L'hai mai visto?*
- *Hai mai incontrato un suo testo?*
- *Qual è la sua importanza in Italia?*

English translation:

1. Look at the image on PowerPoint and answer the questions.

- Do you recognise the man in the image? Have you ever seen him?
- Have you ever come across any of his texts?
- What's his importance in Italy?

Appendix B: Mickey's Inferno

Original document:

2. Guarda l'immagine su PowerPoint, leggi la terzina, e rispondi alle domande.

- a) Conosci il personaggio?
- b) Dove si trova?
- c) Qual è il tono del fumetto?

English translation:

2. Look at the image on PowerPoint, read the tercet, and answer the questions.

- a) Do you know the character?
- b) Where is he?
- c) What's the tone of the comic?
- d) How does the language seem to you?

Appendix C: Global Comprehension

Original document:

4. Rispondi a queste domande e condividi le tue risposte con la classe.

- Dove immagini si trovi?
- Come si sente?
- Ti sei mai sentito così in vita tua?

English translation:

- Where do you imagine he is?
- How does he feel?
- Have you ever felt like this?

Appendix D: Analytical comprehension questions

Original document:

5. Leggi il canto nuovamente e rispondi alle domande.
 - a. Cosa pensate sia una "selva oscura"? Cosa rappresenta?
 - b. Cosa trova?
 - c. Sa come arrivò nella "selva oscura"? Spiega perché.
 - d. C'è speranza? Spiega perché.

English translation:

5. Read the verse again and answer the questions.
 - a. What do you think a "selva oscura" is? What does it represent?
 - b. What does he find?
 - c. Do you know how he ends up in the "selva oscura"? Explain why.
 - d. Is there hope? Explain why.

Appendix E: Elocutio

Original document:

6. In coppia. Trasformate l'italiano del primo canto in un italiano moderno cercando di non cambiare il significato, come nell'esempio. Dopo condividete le risposte con la classe.

"Quando avevo 40 anni, mi sono trovato in mezzo a una serie di problemi e mi ero perso..."

English translation:

6. In pairs, transform the Italian in the first verse into a more modern Italian without changing the meaning, like the example given below. Once completed, share your answers with the rest of the class.

Appendix F: Basilica di Santa Croce

Original document:

- *Come si chiama la chiesa?*
- *Dove si trova? Ci sei mai stato/a?*
- *Riconosci gli uomini nei quadri?*
- *Nel tuo paese, c'è un posto in cui tanti intellettuali sono stati sepolti? Che importanza può avere questa chiesa nella cultura italiana?*

English translation:

- What is the church called?
- Where is it? Have you ever been?
- Do you recognise the other men in the pictures?

- In your country, is there a place where intellectuals have been buried? What importance could this church have in Italian culture?

Appendix G: Roberto Benigni

Original document:

- *Riconosci questo personaggio? Come si chiama?*
- *Hai mai visto il film, "La vita è bella"?*
- *A chi assomiglia nella foto in cui Indossa la corona?*
- *Dove credi che sia nella foto con la chiesa in sottofondo? Cosa presenta/recita?*
- *Qual è il legame tra l'ambientazione e la lettura del canto? Perché lì?*
- *C'è un evento culturale o un personaggio così nel tuo paese?*

English translation:

- Do you recognise this person? What's his name?
- Have you ever seen the film *La Vita e' bella*?
- Who does he look like when he's wearing the crown?
- Where do you think he is in the photo with the church in the background? What is he acting out or presenting?
- What's the link between the setting and the reading of the verse. Why there?
- Is there a cultural event or a person similar to him in your country

Appendix H: Tutto Dante

Original document:

10. Guarda il video *Tutto Dante* in cui Roberto Benigni legge il primo canto de *L'Inferno* e concentrati su cosa dice e sulla grandezza dell'evento.

English translation:

10. Watch the video *Tutto Dante* in which Roberto Benigni reads the first verse of *The Inferno* and concentrates on what he says and the grandeur of the event.

Appendix I: Verification

Original document:

11. Ora rispondi alle domande con l'insegnante.

- *Cosa pensi del canto adesso che l'hai visto in tante forme diverse?*
- *Quando Benigni spiega il significato del canto, cosa dice?*
- *Nella vostra cultura, c'è uno scrittore che è apprezzato da molti? Chi pensate attirerebbe un pubblico così grande quanto quello visto nel video?*
- *Sei d'accordo con il fatto che il canto, pur essendo scritto in un'epoca diversa, continua a parlarci anche oggi? Perché? Come?*
- *Il testo ha parlato a te? Come?*

English translation:

11. Now, answer the questions with the teacher.

- Now that you've seen it in a few different forms, what do you think of the text?
- When Benigni explains the meaning of the text, what does he say?
- In your culture, is there a writer who many people appreciate? Who do you think would attract such a big crowd like the one in the video?
- Do you agree with the fact that the text, albeit written in a different era, still speaks to us today? Why? How?
- Did the text speak to you? How?

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