

Mosaic

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The language graduate who never reads a professional journal and participates only minimally, if at all, in professional meetings, will stagnate. There is an onus on the profession in all areas to upgrade and keep abreast of current developments in the field.

- Peter Heffernan

Paolo E. Balboni

Operational Models for Class Work: Module, Teaching Unit, Learning Unit

The article deals with the most common model used to plan language teaching, i.e. the "teaching unit". In fact most teaching materials are divided into teaching units, which show that the teacher is the focus of the teaching activity; focussing on the learner requires a different model, the "learning unit", which is described in the essay.

History has bequeathed two teaching models that have been sanctified over the centuries,

- the *maieutic conversation* and
- the *lecture (lectio ex cathedra)*.

In the first model, Socrates assisted (in the mid-wife sense of this term) in the maturation of the cognitive and critical autonomy of his pupils; travelling from the porticos of Athens to the present time, this form of conversation-based teaching may be used in the metalinguistic reflection of the mother tongue or at very high levels of competence in other languages, it can episodically be part of a course, but it can not constitute its pivot.

The second model, the *lecture (lectio, "to read aloud")* is typical of religious education: it places the sacred text at the centre of attention and the priest-teacher, at the front of the class, communicates and interprets it directly to the pupils, who accept it on faith. It is a gratifying position for the teacher and this explains why lecture-based teaching survives even when the text is no longer a "sacred" one and the students are no longer disposed to take on faith the words of their teacher...

These two ancient models are inapplicable to contemporary language teaching. Counter wise, the 20th century has bequeathed three operational models, one of

them developed at the University of Venice, that are synthesized in the following section.

1. Three models inherited from the 20th century

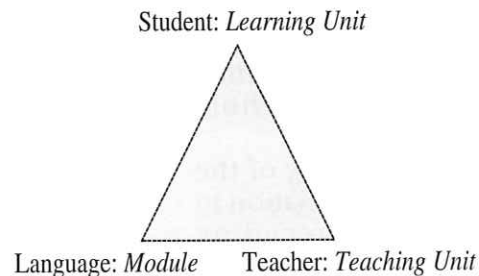
The "Teaching Unit" (hereafter, TU) has been part of tradition since the sixties: the name focuses on the teaching process. In point of fact, a TU, as we know it and as it is used in manuals, requires many hours and comprises a series of single "lessons," or individual work sessions, that from the student's point of view can be perceived as an unitary block, a "Learning Unit" (hereafter, LU).

In more recent times, the emerging importance of the certification processes, connected to the exchange value of knowledge, has required the development of another model of didactic organization, the "Module", that makes it possible to identify certain blocks of competence or knowledge and to accredit them to a personal portfolio. It is therefore a model centred on the object of study, on disciplines.

The didactic model described in the pedagogical literature is made of a three pole "space" defined by

- the roles of student,
- teacher
- and the subject to be taught;

it is readily evident that each of the just mentioned models focuses the attention on one of the three poles of the didactic action. (See Diagram).



The TU, proposed in 1931 in Winnetka for the education of immigrants and children with learning difficulties, has its origins in the activist pedagogy of John Dewey and there is a consolidated critical literature about it.

The LU was developed by the Venetian School of language teaching methodology in 2000.

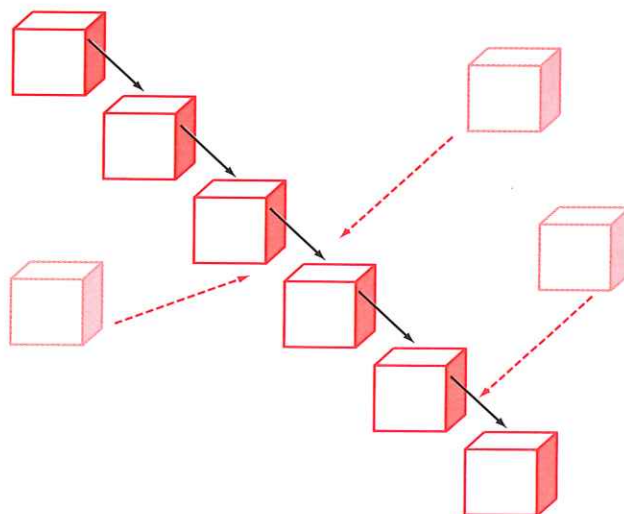
The Module, in its turn, has theoretical, but not practical applications in accordance with the European Language Portfolio, and also has concrete applications in certain sectors of language education.

2. Learning Unit and Teaching Unit

The LU (putting aside for the moment Krashen's distinction between "acquisition" and "learning") originates from the interaction of two components:

- a *neurolinguistic* consideration grounded in two functional principles:
 - **"bimodality"**: the functional division of the two brain hemispheres, the right one assigned general, holistic and analogical activities, and the left one assigned rational, sequential and logical activities;
 - **"directionality"**: although there is a continuous cooperation between the two brain modalities, the emotion-

- *Presentation* of the Contents of the unit that is about to commence
- basic *Motivation* for the whole unit
- *Positioning* of the unit in relation to the preceding and succeeding
- *Operative Instructions*



- *Testing*
- *Catch-up activities* and *review exercises* for slower students
- *Enrichment* specifically for students that excel
- *De-conditioning activities* detached from TU contents.

al and holistic activities precede the rational and analytical ones; b. a *psychological* consideration, derived from the Gestalt psychology, that defines perception as a sequential process of globalizing → analyzing → synthesizing.

Based on these two components, particularly the psychological one, Renzo Titone (1976) and Giovanni Freddi (1970, 1979: specifically devoted to language teaching) defined the TU as a "unit" involving a certain number of hours, and characterized by three phases that recall the three moments of perception described above in point "b," plus an initial motivational phase and a concluding one of testing and evaluation.

In the Nineties, the tendency to shift the attention to the learning process as a base from which to develop teaching methodologies lead the Venetian School (Balboni 2000 and 2002) to dismembering the TU into a series of LUs, each one lasting for a single session (or lesson/period: usually between 45 and 90 minutes); this learning unit is where the student perceives his/her own learning: "today I studied..., I learned to..." Conversely, a teaching unit is a more complex linguistic-communicative tranche, realized

by bringing together cultural models, communicative acts, language expressions and language structures, all linked by a situational context (TUs in language textbooks usually have situational titles: "At the station", "At the restaurant", and so on) or by a grammatical context (manuals for an extensive study of the mother tongue have such TUs as "The subject:", "The predicate", "The gender", etc.)

The TU is represented in the diagram.

This idea of TU is characterized by its extreme flexibility in organising the teaching; its structure is articulated in three phases, analytically described in the following three paragraphs.

2.1 Introductory Phase of the TU

It is during this introductory phase (which can last as little as ten minutes, yet is the keystone of the whole TU) that the basic motivation of the students is revived, as it has to last for a longer period of time than that of a single lesson, and furthermore, is not connected to what will occur during the single hour of each lesson or LU.

This phase introduces the

contents of the TU that is about to commence, and they are partly negotiated with the students: on the one hand, the teacher explains the logic of the TU that he or she is proposing (usually supported by a manual), on the other hand, the students themselves propose possible changes or request integrations. The teacher can further propose to the students that they search, during the TU, for materials with which to construct and integrate the LUs they have previously proposed (represented faintly in the above diagram because they can also be absent).

In the typical model of group work analysis, this introductory phase corresponds to the "chaos" and the "rules negotiation" phases that begin the work of every productive group.

This is also the moment to give specific instructions for activities that need to be programmed in advance: finding authentic documents, establishing contacts with a foreign school for future chat-line sessions, etc.

2.2 The Net of LUs

The LUs are available to the teacher from manuals or from his personal data bank of activities, and he/she can use (with the entire

class or only some of the students) all the ones he has planned to present, or part thereof, based on the initial negotiation or on his evaluation of the level of the class, postponing some of them until later or recalling other from previous TUs.

Teachers usually follow the LU sequence recommended by the teaching material or they can opt for different sequences, suggested by his analysis of class-needs, by his students reactions, and so on. In self-learning courses the student himself can decide, at least in part, on the sequence, aided by advice from the tutor.

As language learning follows acquisitional patterns and most LUs imply the knowledge of lexicon, acts, structures presented in previous LUs, a TU usually has a pre-ordinal sequence of LUs, but it can also be thought of as a “net” of LUs, and therefore it acquires a flexible structure that uses the original sequence as a scaffolding and can unexpectedly expand into non-didactic materials (internet sites, videos, newspapers, etc.), or supplementary LUs that are created ad hoc by the teacher, by a group of colleagues, or by a group of excellent students while the teacher is engaged with the slower members of the class, and so on: these LUs are represented faintly in the diagram because they can also be absent.

Each LU largely follows the *Gestalt* path mentioned above and, in turn, is constituted by a tripartite formation that on the surface coincides with the “three Ps” of the English model,

- presentation,
- practice,
- production,

but underneath is profoundly different: the “three Ps” model was the product of very traditional teaching whereby the teacher introduces the contents or the input, the student performs the

exercises and then demonstrates what he has learned. Conversely, the model globalising / analysing / synthesising / reflecting does not originate in pedagogy but in psychology and it concerns the human mechanisms of perception and mental representation. In different terminology but substantially parallel to the *Gestalt* one, the model globalizing / analyzing / synthesizing / reflecting has been described by Chomsky as the functioning mechanism of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in terms of observation / creation and verification of hypotheses about what has been observed / fixation and use of the “rules” that have been observed, hypothesized and confirmed.

A LU is centred on a text (dialogue, authentic material, publicity, literary text, reading, song, video, e-mail, web page, etc.), that is tackled.

- a. first of all globally, with comprehension tasks, graded from the simplest to the most complex, that involve the right hemisphere of the brain and are mainly based on strategies such as the maximum exploitation of text redundancy and the formation of socio-pragmatic hypotheses that are based on the person's own knowledge of the world;
- b. then analytically, in terms of both a profound comprehension of the input and by creating linguistic, socio-cultural, pragmatic hypotheses: this can include some phases of explanation by the teacher, however constructive and cooperative teamwork is what leads the students toward discovering the mechanisms of the language; recalling Chomsky: it is the Language Acquisition Device that creates hypotheses, and the purpose of the teacher is not to replace the students' LAD but, according to

Bruner, to provide them with a Language Acquisition Support System (LASS). This procedure turns students from listeners into protagonists and puts them at the summit in the triangle shown above;

- c. next, by a synthesis, by a consolidation of what has been discovered (point “a”) and analysed (point “b”), and which is now applied in exercises and creative activities of problem solving, simulation, creation of texts, etc.;
- d. and finally, by a reflection that is metalinguistic and - in order to pursue the objective of learning to learn – also metacognitive in character: a reflection on what has been done, on how the discovery of the meaning of an unknown word, or a grammatical mechanism, or an implicit cultural item, has been achieved; a reflection on the interactions within the class, on why a certain group performed well or badly, on why an activity has required too long a time to be organized, and so on. Whenever the occasion arises, this phase can also be employed at different moments in the LU, however, it is worth stressing that it is precisely this phase of reflection that overcomes the “three Ps” model by pursuing educative purposes (self-promotion, learning to learn) and not only instrumental ones.

2.3 Conclusive Phase of the TU

This section has a “Y” shape: the part in common is the phase of testing of the objectives set at the beginning of the TU; then two paths emerge:

- a. the group of students with medium-low results can lift their respective levels through “stratified and differentiated” LUs: this is the model

elaborated by three young Venetian scholars, Fabio Caon, Barbara D'Annunzio and Francesca Della Puppa (published in Caon 2006) which pays particular attention to foreign students attending Italian schools and put into classes on the basis of their age, independent of their level of mastery of the Italian language, but it can also be applied to all language education contexts. One of the characteristics of the "stratified and differentiated" LU is that activities are collocated in degrees of difficulty and therefore each student carries out activities autonomously up to a certain point, and from that point on he/she then works together with whomever can reach the higher levels; at the end of the process, and under the guidance of the teacher, it is only by working all together, rather than in pairs or small groups, can the students complete the path. This is an attempt to operationally realize a path based on Vygostky's zone of proximal development or, in more familiar terms, to recuperate the sequences $i+1$ missing from the natural order constituting Krashen's version of the acquisitional sequences;

b. the group of students with medium-high results can improve its excellence with activities of further study: language games, webquests, research of materials that can eventually be proposed to the class in the interlude phase described in 4.2.4.

In this remedial work phase the class is therefore divided into two parts which, with regard to the respective levels therein, can in turn be divided into couples or small work groups. It is an operative response to the necessity, always felt but rarely responded to, of adapting the teaching procedures to the different levels

of acquisition and performance.

2.4 Interlude Phase

In the diagram of the TU, above, this phase is depicted, solely for graphic convenience, as inside the TU. However, in point of fact, this work session is external to the TU even if the teacher easily links it, and even if the excellent students find materials and propose activities during the phase that follows the test (cf. 2.3.b).

This interlude phase between the just concluded TU and the one starting in the succeeding session is actually an hour without (an explicit) teaching purpose, is one whose sole purpose is taking pleasure in using the language: the pleasure of observing oneself learning, the pleasure in playing with the language, in listening to a song or watching a scene in a film, in chatting with foreign classes, and so on.

3. Module

Since the nineties, the increasing mobility of people, the complexity of formative paths that are becoming ever more personalized, and the necessity of having these paths recognised by certification, has led to the development of a model of "modular" planning, wherein every section is self-sufficient and can be certified.

It will be of value at this point to describe separately these two qualifiers so as to understand if and how the "module" is an operational model adequate for language education:

a. A module is self-sufficient, conclusive in itself.

In second, foreign, classical, and ethnic languages we cannot speak of "self sufficient" portions if we want to avoid falling into the arbitrariness of "survival", "waystage", "threshold" modules, etc.; namely, constructions that are deprived of socio-pragmatic, linguistic, and cultural

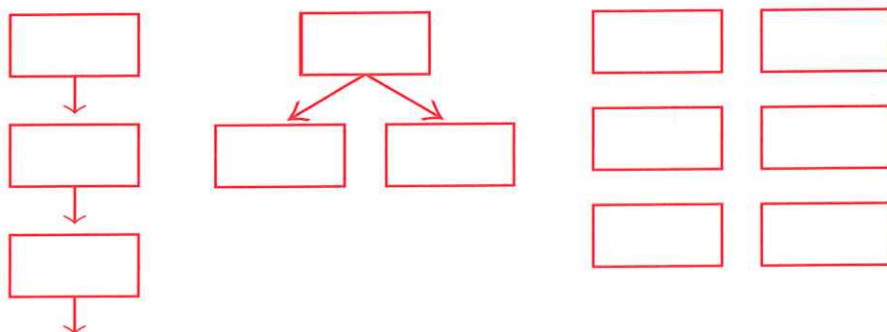
foundations. This does not mean that it is unnecessary to establish a threshold of language mastery that is indispensable for all concerned (the lower section of the columns comprising the curriculum), but we have to be aware that such thresholds are arbitrary and conventional decisions (see point "b").

Modularization, in the sense of identifying "self-sufficient" sections of knowledge and competence, becomes possible in some aspects of language education once a high enough level of mastery is reached, high enough to be able to work on particular language varieties or on the metalanguage description. For instance, a modular organisation is possible,

- in languages for specific purposes: i.e., there can be a basic module of the microlanguage of economics, followed by specific modules for the microlanguages of banking, importing-exporting, marketing, etc.;
- in the language of literature: i.e., a basic module of analysis for literary texts can be given as a starting point, followed by modules for genres or authors or historical periods, depending on the formulation of the course (for an example, see point 4);
- in language analysis of the mother tongue or at very high levels of other languages: i.e., modules of the "morphosyntax of the verb," "pronouns", etc., can be carried out;

b. A module can be certified and therefore accredited.

The fragmentation of competences on the one hand, along with globalisation and the mobility of people on the other, require a sort of "common currency" with which to exchange information on competences and knowledge: the concept of "credit,"



based on the Bologna process that homogenizes advanced education in the European Union, is an example of a common currency that affirms knowledge. Just as a coin must be certified by a Central Bank, so too a "credit," to have international circulation and recognition, has to be certified according to shared logics: the European Language Portfolio is one possible forms of certification. However, to then propose as the next logical step a full module organisation of the language curriculum based on the levels of the Portfolio is unjustified: to say that there are six levels (or ten or four) is very useful, but to confuse the certification levels with modules that are self-sufficient and able to be certified is ill-advised.

Linguistic competence is a continuum, therefore it cannot to be put into modules, even if it is divided into levels for the convenience of certification.

It was noted in point "a" that in mother tongues and at high levels of other languages it is possible to have modular organisation.

That being the case, the problem is how to guarantee the continuity of the curriculum, how to join the modules to each other, as well as respecting their self-sufficiency and accreditation. The connections can be of three types (See illustration, above).

In the left-hand graph, the modules are in obligatory succession: in mathematics it is

possible to plan an "arithmetical" module (operations and fractions), an "algebraic" module (literal calculation and equations), a "functional" module (integrals, derivatives, etc.). They are self-sufficient modules that are separated into the familiar school stages of primary, secondary, and high school, and they can be certified (whoever advances from primary school to secondary school is certified as able to perform additions, subtractions, divisions and multiplications). In language education this model is not applicable.

In the central schema, a succeeding module can be chosen after having developed a basic, propaedeutic module, that must be accredited to the student before he can progress to the next one. A case in point is the above mentioned LSP teaching: after having been accredited a basic module on economic-commercial Japanese, the student can choose, according to his or her needs, to progress to a module on commercial correspondence, or on banking Japanese, or on insurance Japanese, etc.

In the right-hand schema, the student can start from any module and progress to any other: this is possible, for instance, in a physical education curriculum where different modules correspond to different sports. The curriculum can ensure that each student follows one module of team-playing and one of individual athletics, leaving to the student

the choice of which sport in each category to practice intensively during that academic year; this model:

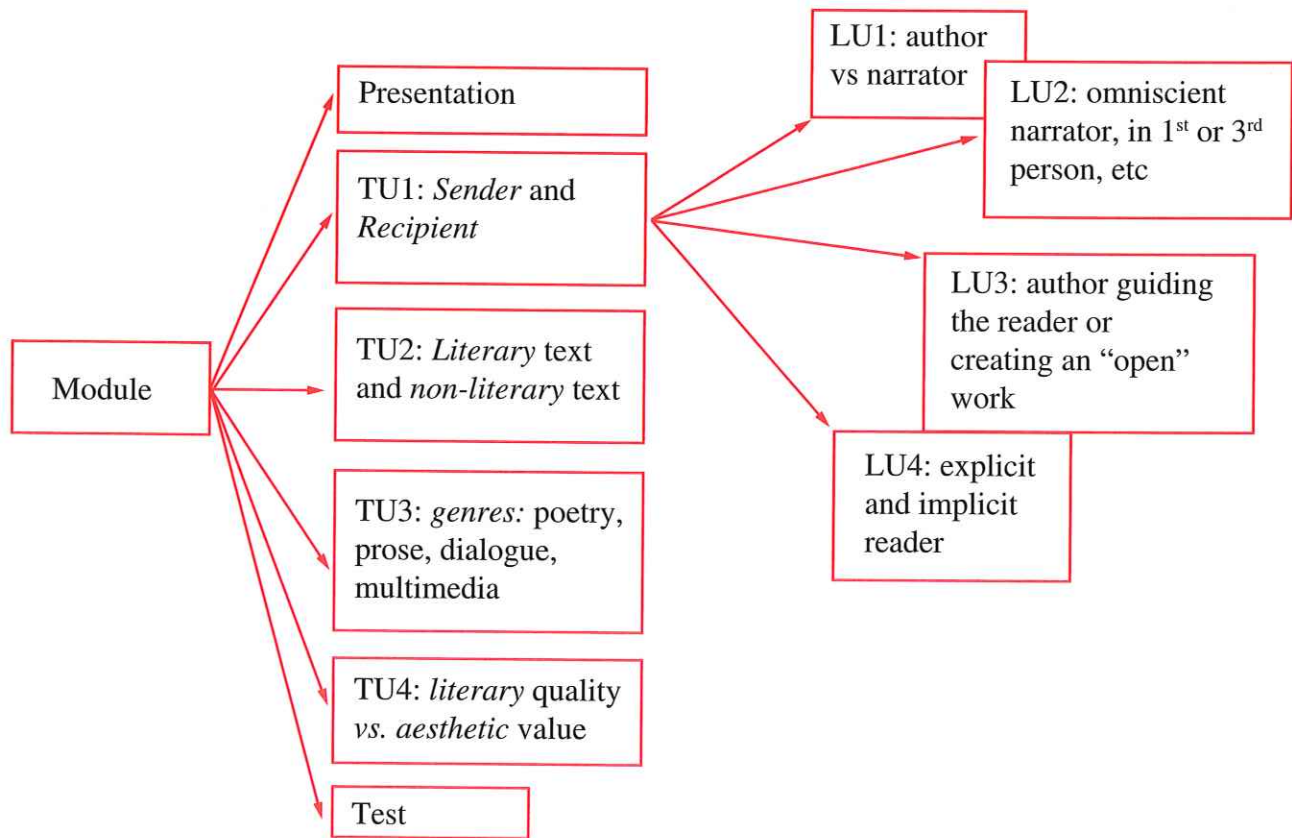
- cannot be applied to a continuum, such as the acquisition phase of a language by beginners and intermediates;
- can be applied to language analysis for advanced students: for instance, certain academic courses require a socio-linguistics module (leaving the student free to choose, for example, among "diachronic varieties of German", "geographical varieties of German," or "juvenile German"), or a metalinguistic module (to chose, for example, between "French verbal system", or "French pronouns", "French lexical system"= and so on).

In conclusion, a module is a self-sufficient, meaningful, self-enclosed thematic block that gathers together contents that were traditionally distributed among many TUs; for the acquisition of such contents a "module" is articulated in a series of TUs, each one based on a net of LUs.

4. The Hierarchy Among Modules, Teaching Units and Learning Units

In this essay three models have been presented with which to organize teaching, to plan the implementation of a curriculum.

In point 2 a hierarchy was proposed between TU and LU: a TU is the context wherein there is a net of LUs, which can be presented sequentially or, sometimes, non-sequentially, with the possibility of postponing a particular LU to a future date, or to eliminate it for a group of students, or to integrate LUs that were not part of the original plan but were based on students'



requests and proposals or based on extra-scholastic events that, due to their authenticity, can contribute to the motivation, to the pleasure, to further studying by the group of students (or part thereof).

It is obvious that the Module is hierarchically situated in relation to the TU: whatever the nature of the Module, it is articulated in a series of TUs, that in turn are composed of a series of LUs.

To exemplify the hierarchy we can ponder a context wherein all the three operational models can be applied, including the Module; an example can be an introductory module to a literature course, specifically, the analysis of literary texts. A typical introductory module of this kind is the following. (See illustration).

The above diagram is only complete in the TU column, whereas the LUs shown are only for TU1; the LUs of the TU2

concern the phonological, morphosyntactical and lexical characteristics of a literary text; the LUs of the other TUs are easy to imagine.

The opening presentation of the Module has to arouse motivation, has to let the fact emerge that the students need to know how to analyse a text before starting a literature course, etc.

At the conclusion of the Module there is a test that "certifies" the acquired competence in the procedures relating to textual analysis: with this credit the student can access literary education modules (that relate to Literary Education but that are outside the sphere of the LTM; a special Document will be dedicated to this subject in order to deepen the understanding regarding the above mentioned introductory module for reading a literary text).

The following diagram can easily make the operational model hierarchy clearer to the reader.

MODULE

- self-sufficient with reference to its contents;
- able to be certified and therefore accredited;
- cannot be used in a continuum such as the language acquisition phase;
- can be used for metalinguistic analysis at high proficiency levels for LSPs and for literacy.



TEACHING UNIT

- initial phase of motivation and presentation;
- net of Learning Units, based on a sequential scaffolding, not obligatorily presented to everyone, can be integrated

- with more LUs;
- conclusive phase of evaluation;
- phase of detachment, inter-lude between the concluded TU and the one that follows;
- a sequence of TUs can be conjoined within a single Module.



LEARNING UNIT

- self sufficient with reference to its contents;
- possibly concluded in a single session;
- based on the *Gestalt* sequence: globalizing, analyzing, synthesizing/reflecting;

- a group of LUs constitute the corpus of a TU.

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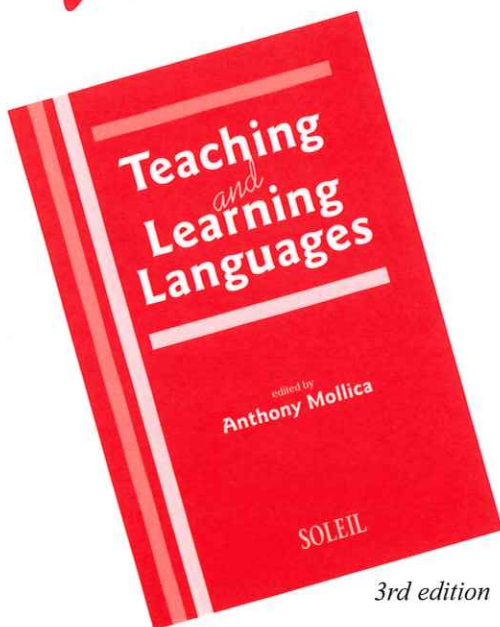
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Proverbial Language in the French, Italian, and Spanish Classroom: Pedagogical Application

Proverbial language, an important component in knowing a language and its culture, Since proverbs are an important indicator of a person's overall linguistic competence, their inclusion in the second-language curriculum is imperative.

Introduction

The *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Morris 1979: 1053) defines a proverb as

a short, pithy saying in frequent and widespread use, expressing a well-known truth or fact.

Norrick, whose linguistic analysis of the proverb is a basic reference, proposes two definitions of the proverb. The first is ethnographic, and states that a proverb is

a traditional, conversational didactic genre with general meaning, a potential free conversational turn, preferably with figurative meaning (Norrick 1985: 78).

The second is a supercultural definition of this genre which holds that a proverb is

a typically spoken conversational form with didactic function and not associated with a particular source (Norrick 1985: 79).

In his critical review of previous discussion of the proverb, Norrick (1985: 31-51) analyzes the sizable literature on this genre, and he demonstrates that the following elements are essential features of the conventional proverb:

1. Self-containment (propositional statements, grammatical sentences).
2. Pithy statements.

3. Traditional nature.
4. Didactic component.
5. Fixed form.
6. Poetic nature (prosody, figurative language).

Proverbial language, an important component in knowing a language and its culture, is replete with metaphor. The ability to exploit this form of popular speech necessitates at least some knowledge of metaphor in order to decode its significance and appropriateness to the context of a given discourse.

In this regard, Arewa and Dundes (1964: 71) note that proverbs serve to

sum up a situation, pass judgment, recommend a course of action or serve as secular past precedents for present action.

Since proverbs are an important indicator of a person's overall linguistic competence, their inclusion in the second-language curriculum is imperative.

Proverbs are an ideal form for introducing language in the second-language classroom for several reasons:

- A proverb is short, often rhymes, and is easy to remember.
- Proverbial language is generally understandable and it complements the basic vocabulary of the elementary and intermediate second-

language course.

- These popular sayings make up an important component of any language.
- The ability to use proverbial language teaches the student an important discourse strategy – the indirect speech act. Indirect speech acts, as Norrick (1985: 27) points out, permit the speaker to disguise his true feelings, to leave himself an escape route, to offer his hearer choices and to indicate real or imagined consensus.
- These popular linguistic forms possess a literal meaning and a secondary, figurative meaning that must be inferred from context. In this sense, proverbs are a special kind of indirect speech act that requires the speaker and the hearer to draw an inference or appropriate parallel between the action or description embodied in the aphorism and the subject of the conversation in which the communicants are engaged.

This latter ability corresponds closely to the notion of metaphorical competence because the student must make an appropriate analogy between the inventoried unit (proverb) and the specific situation (Nuessel and Cicogna 1995: 317-319).

The rationale for the introduction of proverbs into the language curricula includes the following justifications:

1. Their essential brevity facilitates easy recall.
2. Their frequent use of rhyming patterns contributes to the student's ability to remember them.
3. The use of proverbial language in classroom activities, exercises and testing materials helps the student to develop a mental inventory of these authentic French, Italian and Spanish linguistic texts.

4. The use of idiomatic and rhetorical (metaphorical) language provides students with an opportunity to learn to apply these linguistic sayings in appropriate and meaningful contexts.
5. The use of proverbial language also facilitates what Danesi and Mollica (1998: 3) call "conceptual fluency" (see also Nuessel and Cicogna 1995), *i.e.*, how a "language 'reflects' or encodes concepts on the basis of metaphorical reasoning. This kind of knowledge, like grammatical and communicative (pragmatic) knowledge, is by and large unconscious in native speakers."

Incorporating Proverbial Language into the Elementary and Intermediate Classrooms

The following suggestions are general recommendations for the introduction of proverbs into the language classroom.

1. Acquire several anthologies of proverbs for reference purposes (see suggestions in the Bibliography section).
It should be noted that many other anthologies of French, Italian and Spanish proverbs are available. Consult your local university library or public library to determine what resources are available. Books printed in France, Italy, Spain and Latin America are available from specialized bookstores in large cities, or from mail-order catalogues.
2. Consult basic references on proverbs for additional information.
3. Familiarize students with proverbs from English through the introduction of appropriate examples. Once again, numerous collections are available. The Arthaber (1989) collection provides a multilingual listing of common proverbs, and it is, therefore, useful for cross-linguistic examples.
4. Illustrate the literal and figurative meanings of several proverbs in English.
5. Introduce French, Italian and Spanish proverbs and find corresponding English proverbs (use Arthaber (1989) for this task).
6. Discuss the "literal" meaning of selected proverbs and ask students how these meanings may be applicable to a particular circumstance.
7. Specify correlations between a proverb and a related situation by showing how analogical correspondences may be made.
8. Avoid stereotypic or negative proverbs.
9. Be prudent in your introduction of proverbs into the curriculum. Avoid excessive reliance on these forms since moderate usage of these forms will prove more productive over time.
10. Include proverbial language in your normal evaluation procedures so that students know that they are responsible for acquiring this important part of the French, Italian and Spanish languages.
11. Share your ideas and results with your colleagues at faculty meetings, local language teaching conferences, or at other suitable professional meetings.
12. Review your materials periodically to ascertain which exercises and activities have been effective. Eliminate unsuccessful materials, or revamp them to see if they function better in some other format.

Classroom Activities for Proverbial Language

This section of the paper will discuss the following points:

1. phonetics (vowels and consonants);
2. orthography;
3. derivational patterns (morphology);
4. grammar (syntax) (gender agreement, negation, passive constructions);
5. vocabulary (animals, kinship terminology, months, seasons);
6. and antonyms and synonyms;
7. reading comprehension; and
8. culture.

1. Phonetics

Proverbs provide an excellent opportunity for the practice of pronunciation in the target language with a specific context rather than with isolated and disconnected words.

Their brevity and frequent use of rhyming patterns noted above facilitate their recollection. Sounds not encountered in the first language may be practiced in a sequenced approach.

The following sections provide examples of phonetic activities and exercises for students of French, Italian and Spanish as a second-language. In this and all following sections, the collection and the specific page number will be noted in parentheses where available.

1.1 Vocalic Sounds

The vocalic sounds in French, Italian and Spanish are distinct from English and merit practice to illustrate these differences.

FRENCH

Proverbial language allows Anglophone speakers to practice the oral/nasal vowel distinctions that are sometimes problematic. Valdman (1976: 48) notes that four nasal vowels need to be posited to account for contrasts

between *saint* [sɛ̃] and *sang* [sã] and *son* [sɔ̃], as well as for other vocalic sounds.

Comme on connaît les *saints*, on les honore. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 651)

Bon *sang* ne peut mentir. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 137)

À petite cloche, grand *son*. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 160)

ITALIAN

Simple vowel-consonant combinations which focus on the differences between the English and Italian sound systems are effective for oral practice. The following proverbs demonstrates the non-diphthongal nature of Italian and Spanish vowels.

L'avarò è sempre povero. (Selene, 1990: 27)

SPANISH

Quien más sabe, más duda. (Rovira 1984: 57)

1.2. Consonantal Sounds

The use of proverbs that contain sounds that do not exist in the first language is another practical way of learning French, Italian and Spanish phonology. The following proverbs demonstrate this usage.

FRENCH

Valdman (1976: 40) points out that

[t]he allophone realization of /R/ varies greatly depending on the geographical location, social status of the speaker, and the style. In standard French, /R/ is realized by light contact between the back of the tongue and the wall of the pharynx – its is a (dorso) – pharyngeal. Sometimes /R/ is produced by vibration of the uvula and is then termed a uvular trill."

Il n'y a qu'un *rouge-gorge* par *jardin*. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 27)

ITALIAN

The following examples demon-

strate these sounds:

1. palatals;
2. geminates; and
3. single and geminate /r/.

Palatal Sounds

Meglio poco che nulla. (Mertvago 1997: 92)

Gli amici sono buoni in *ogni* piazza. (Selene 1990: 15)

Geminate Sounds

L'*apparenza* inganna. (Selene 1990: 20)

Venezia la bella, e Padova sua sorella. (Selene 1990: 48)

Italian [r] (Single and Geminate)

Imparare, ritenere, ripetere, sono i tre cardini dello studio. (Selene 1990: 135)

Errore non fa pagamento. (Selene, 1990: 93)

SPANISH

The following examples demonstrate two problematic sounds for Anglophones:

1. tap /r/; and
2. trilled /r/

Tap /r/

La buena estatura es media *hermosura*. (Rovira 1984: 168)

Peral que no tiene *peras*, pocas visitas *espera*. (Rovira 1984: 161)

Trilled /r/

La *r*isa es del último que se *r*ie. (Rovira 1984: 61)

Perro ladrador, mal mordedor, pero buen avisador. (Rovira 1984: 94)

2. Orthography

Orthographic representation may differ slightly or enormously from the phonetic pronunciation of a language. In general, the orthography of a language has certain predictable aspects called spelling rules. In this section, we provide selected examples and we also show how to use proverbial language to practice this aspect of French, Italian and Spanish.

FRENCH

Valdman (1976: 131) points out that

[t]he teacher of French as a foreign language has no choice but to teach French spelling as it now exists, for better or worse.

Nevertheless, Valdman (1976: 131-136) observes that there is regularity in the French orthographic system, and these regularities must be noted. One example is the use of qu before front vowels (e, i) and the use of c elsewhere.

Orthographic "qu" (qu = [k])

Quand on parle du loup on en voit la *queue*. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 151)

Orthographic "c" (c = [k])

Perdrix qui *c*ourt étend les ailes. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 27)

Orthographic "c" (c = [s])

Ce qu'*art* ne peut, hasard *achève*. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 131)

Orthographic "s" (s = [z])

Petit à petit l'*oiseau* fait son nid. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 25)

Orthographic "ç" (ç = [s])

Qui crache en l'*air* reçoit le crachat sur soi. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 66)

ITALIAN

Danesi (1984) points out that certain orthographic symbols create major problems for the Anglophone student who is learning Italian. The following letters of the Italian alphabet cause most neophyte students difficulties because the native speaker of English will tend to transfer previously acquired English speech habits to these written symbols when reading a written passage aloud. Moreover, these same students may learn vocabulary

with these problematic letters with an English pronunciation. This predictable reading interference may be addressed by introducing written proverbs that contain these orthographic forms.

Orthographic "z" (z = [ts])

Marzo nuvoloso, estate piovosa. (Selene 1990: 179)

La scienza viene dallo studio. (Selene 1990: 276)

Orthographic "c" (c = [k])

Le cose rare sono le più care. (Selene 1990: 254)

Orthographic "ch" (ch = [k])

Chi non ha libertà, non ha hilarità. (Selene 1990: 158)

Orthographic "c" (c = [ch])

Cento cervelli, cento cappelli. (Selene 1990: 139)

SPANISH

Dalbor (1980: 261) points out that

[a]lthough Spanish orthography is far more regular and informative than that of English and most languages North Americans commonly study, it does have certain inconsistencies. These irregularities sometimes cause you to mispronounce words that you are familiar with and also to misspell them.

A typical orthographic problem for neophyte Anglophones is the sound [k] which has two representations in Spanish (see Dalbor 1980: 261-267). These are predictable based on the vowel that follows, i.e., *qu* appears before high front vowels (i, e), while *c* appears before back vowels (a, o, u).

Orthographic "qu" (= qu = [k])

Quien una vez se quema con la sopa, otra vez la sopla. (Rovira 1984: 61)

Orthographic "c" (c = [k])

Carne y pescado en una comida, acorta la vida. (Rovira 1984: 83)

2.1. Assessment of Pronunciation and Orthography

The assessment of pronunciation and the related problem of interlingual orthographic interference present a continuing challenge to the French, Italian and Spanish instructor. The following strategies that employ proverbs are conventional but effective.

Oral dictation remains the single most effective way to evaluate a student's listening comprehension. Proverbs are useful in this type of exercise since they are succinct and often rhyme which facilitates recall. By writing what they hear, students must demonstrate aural comprehension, as well as their knowledge of the orthographic conventions of the each language.

One variation of the dictation drill involves the inclusion of proverbs on a sheet of paper with selected blanks where orthographically problematic letters occur. This type of activity combines aural comprehension with discrete points of interlingual orthographic interference. The following drills are exemplary. They may be prefaced by the following set of instructions:

In the following exercise, you will hear several proverbs read aloud. Fill in the blanks with correctly spelled form of the words that you hear.

FRENCH

Il y a _____ et _____. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 20)

[Answers: *raine, reine*]

Qui crache en l'air _____ le crachat sur _____. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 66)

[Answers: *reçoit, soi*]

ITALIAN

_____ diritto è _____ un dovere. (Selene 1990: 75)

[Answers: *ogni, anche*]

_____ è _____ è dubbioso. (Selene 1990: 210)

[Answers: *Chi, ozioso*]

SPANISH

_____ no hará _____ hijos no ha. (Rovira (1984: 113)

[Answers: *casa, quien*]

_____ no dice nada. (Rovira 1984: 170)

[Answers: *quien, calla*]

2.2. Regional Dialects

Regional dialects are an important of the contemporary linguistic scene in France, Italy and Spain and Latin America. One way of exposing the student to this significant aspect of French, Italian and Hispanic cultures is to introduce selectively proverbs in a regional dialect to be compared and contrasted with the standard language. In more advanced classes, this approach allows a discussion of the historical factors that have contributed to this linguistic diversity. At the same time, such proverbial comparisons permit the instructor to discuss the formal processes that have led to this linguistic heterogeneity.

3. Derivational Patterns (Morphology)

In an excellent and very useful essay on the pedagogical aspects of derivational morphology, Vizmuller-Zocco (1987: 720) states that

due, perhaps to the unclear theoretical situation, it is not surprising that methodologists, textbook writers and language educators have not given derivation the full attention that it deserves.

Moreover, she states that, with regard to derivation,

at the introductory level, no attempt is made consciously and organically to show regularities of derivation except for some indications of how to separate the

base from the a particular prefix or suffix.

Proverbs offer opportunities for vocabulary exercises that focus on derived forms. Prior to a discussion of derivational morphology in Italian, it is often helpful to demonstrate this common grammatical phenomenon in English. The following pattern converts a noun to an adjective, and then to a noun again:

thought → thoughtful → thoughtfulness

The following activity shows an exercise that may serve as both a classroom activity, and, subsequently, an instrument for evaluation. The instructions for this type of exercise, applicable to French, Italian and Spanish, follow:

In the following proverbs, certain words appear in italics. Provide a word that is related to the word in italics in both form and meaning.

FRENCH

Au besoin l'*ami*. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 100)

[Answers: *amitié, aimable, aimablement*]

Le temps est cher en *amour* comme guerre. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984:)

[Answers: *aimer, amoureux*]

ITALIAN

Chi porta *fiori*, porta *amore*. (Selene 1990: 17)

[Answers: *fiorifero, fiorire, fiorista; amare, amante*]

La *dolcezza* acqueta l'*ira*. (Selene 1990: 80)

[Answers: *dolce, dolcemente, dolcificare; irato, iracondia, irascibile, irascibilità*]

SPANISH

Sin conocer, *amor* no puede haber. (Rovira 1984: 127)

[Answers: *amar, amoroso, amable, enamorado*]

Alegría belleza *cría*. (Rovira 1984:

60)

[Answers: *alegre, alegrar(se)*]

Exercises that focus on vocabulary building including antonyms and synonyms increase a student's ability to communicate in French, Italian and Spanish. The following exercise exemplifies this practice. With this type of activity, the teacher may decide to include a list at the bottom of the page with the exact number of lexical items, more lexical items than are necessary, or even no vocabulary at all.

The following set of instructions are applicable to this type of activity:

Fill in the blanks of the following proverbs with the appropriate vocabulary from the list below.

FRENCH

Le _____ des uns fait le _____ des autres. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 165)

Trop de _____, peu de _____. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 70)

Le _____ meurt, le _____ oublie. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 71)

[Answers: *bonheur, malheur; docteurs, médecins; vieil, jeune*]

ITALIAN

Oggi in _____, domani in _____. (Selene 1990: 230)

Maggio _____, anno _____. (Selene 1990: 170)

È meglio _____ due volte, che _____ una. (Selene 1990: 260)

[Answers: *canto, pianto; ventoso, bondanzioso; ricordare, dimenticare*]

SPANISH

El _____ hace la _____. (Rovira 1984: 117)

La _____ es la madre de la _____. (Rovira 1984: 61)

La _____ no tiene _____. (Rovira 1984: 128)

[Answers: *tono, música; experiencia,*

ciencia; amistad, edad]

4. Grammar (Syntax)

Many of the important and frequently used grammatical constructions of the target languages appear in its proverbial language. Careful selection of French, Italian and Spanish proverbs to exemplify the different features of their respective grammars enhances retention, increases vocabulary and augments command of the idioms of the language. Nevertheless, certain proverbs contain archaic grammar and vocabulary that may not appear in contemporary standard Italian. Therefore, some judgment in their selection is necessary. The examples illustrate some of the grammatical possibilities.

4.1. Gender Agreement

The agreement of adjectives with the nouns they modify in French, Italian and Spanish is a problematic grammatical point for Anglophones since their language does not have this syntactic property. The use of proverbial language to demonstrate this phenomenon is helpful.

FRENCH

Mieux vaut *bon* fuir que *mauvaise* attente. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 130)

Des soupes et des amours, les premières sont les *meilleures*. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 99)

ITALIAN

Meglio un *buon* re che una *buona* legge. (Selene 1990: 255)

SPANISH

De padres *sanos*, hijos honrados. (Rovira 1984: 68)

Hecha la ley, *hecha* la trampa. (Rovira 1984: 174)

4.2. Negation

The placement of negative lexical items in French, Italian and

Spanish is distinct from the English pattern, therefore, it presents difficulties for the Anglophone learner. The use of proverbs to illustrate the placement of negative particles facilitates their recollection and proper usage.

FRENCH

Gagnage *n'est pas* héritage. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 150)

Le gibet *ne perd jamais* ses droits. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 151)

ITALIAN

Dove *non c'è* amore, *non c'è* umanità. (Selene 1990: 311)

Chi *non* ha giudizio, perde la cappella e il beneficio. (Selene 1990: 124)

SPANISH

En martes, *ni* te cases *ni* te embarques. (Rovira 1984: 37)

La salud *no* es conocida hasta que es perdida. (Rovira 1984: 76)

4.3. Assessment of Grammatical Structures

Fill-in-the-blank exercises permit discrete point testing of a particular grammatical point. Specific grammatical problem areas will vary among languages. Prepositions constitute one area of difficulty in most languages.

4.3.1. Fill-in-the-Blank Exercises

Fill-in-the-blank exercises that focus on the use of prepositions, a particularly challenging part of the French, Italian and Spanish grammar for the Anglophone student, are useful pedagogical activities.

FRENCH

On ne donne rien _____ rien. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 110)

Qui est loin _____ son écuelle est près _____ son dommage. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 88)

[Answers: *pour, de, de*]

ITALIAN

The use of *da* and *di*

Write the appropriate preposition (*da* or *di*) in the blank provided.

Guardati _____ chi giura in coscienza. (Selene 1990: 130)

Maiale _____ un mese, oca _____ tre, mangiar _____ re. (Selene 1990: 171)

[Answers: *da; di, di, da*]

Write the appropriate form of the preposizioni articolate (*in, di, da*) in the blank provided.

Chi erra (*in*) _____ elezione, erra (*in*) _____ servizio. (Selene 1990: 93)

Il mattino è l'amico (*di*) _____ studio. (Selene 1990: 295)

Chi ha paura (*di*) _____ legno, sarà colpito (*da*) _____ ferro. (Selene 1990: 221)

[Answers: *nell', nel; dello; del, dal*]

SPANISH

The appropriate uses of *por* and *para* in Spanish are problematic for Anglophones. The construction of fill-in-the-blank exercises that focus on these prepositions. Moreover, these are authentic texts in context.

Write the appropriate form of *por* or *para* in the blanks provided.

Un candado _____ la bolsa, y dos _____ la boca. (Rovira 1984: 105)

_____ los hijos se conocen los padres. (Rovira 1984: 48)

[Answers: 1: *para, para*; 2: *por*]

4.3.2. Rewrite Exercises

Rewrite exercises are also suitable for determining a student's ability to phrase statements in alternative, yet acceptable forms. The following examples demonstrate this possibility.

The following is another type of "rewrite" exercise. The set of instructions for this type of activity follows:

"Rewrite the following sentences. Change the sentence to its

corresponding negative form."

FRENCH

S'il gèle à la Saint-Maur, la moitié de l'hiver est dehors. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 187)

[Answer: *S'il ne gèle pas à la Saint-Maur, la moitié de l'hiver n'est pas dehors.*]

Si mars est beau, avril fait la mine. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 199)

[Answer: *Si mars n'est pas beau, avril ne fait pas la mine.*]

ITALIAN

Chi fa bene trova bene. (Selene 1990: 32)

[Answer: *Chi non fa bene non trova bene.*]

Chi si sacrifica, si santifica. (Selene 1990: 32)

[Answer: *Chi non si sacrifica, non si santifica.*]

SPANISH

Quien ríe y canta, sus males espanta. (Rovira (1984: 60)

[Answer: *Quien no ríe y no canta, sus males no espanta.*]

A quien se ayuda, Dios le ayuda. (Rovira 1984: 60)

[Answer: *A quien no se ayuda, Dios no le ayuda.*]

4.3.3. Scrambled Word Exercises (Grammar/Syntax)

Mollica (1979, 1981) and Danesi (1985a,b) advocate the element of fun as a sound pedagogical strategy in the second-language classroom. Puzzles provide a useful function for review and reinforcement in the acquisition of new concepts and materials. One example of such an activity is the use of scrambled words. Crossword puzzles exist in French (Mollica 1987), Italian (Mollica 1991, 1995), and Spanish (Mollica 1988).

Scrambled word exercises provide the instructor with another indication of the student's

knowledge of the syntactic structures that govern target languages. The following is exemplary of this type of activity. The set of instructions for this type of exercise follows:

"Take the scrambled words and formulate a meaningful proverb."

FRENCH

mort/le/médecin/après/la

[Answer: *Après la mort, le médecin.* (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 70)]

pouvait/jeunesse/savait/si/si/vieillesse

[Answer: *Si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait.* (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 71)]

ITALIAN

quand'è/annoia/e/scherzo/troppo/riso/gioia.

[Answer: *Scherzo, riso e gioia, quand'è troppo annoia.* (Selene 1990: 276)]

campagna/la/non/tempesta/montagna/di/bagna.

[Answer: *Tempesta di montagna non bagna la campagna* (Selene 1990: 301)]

SPANISH

no/reduce/oro/todo/es/lo

[Answer: *No es oro todo lo que reluce.* (Rovira 1984: 155)]

vale/cuanto/hombre/nombre/tanto/el/su/vale

[Answer: *Tanto vale el hombre cuanto vale su nombre.* (Rovira 1984: 162)]

5. Vocabulary

Proverbial language is an excellent way to introduce new vocabulary in a meaningful context. Various frequently encountered semantic domains included in first-year language courses may be highlighted with these popular sayings.

Mauguashca (1984) has developed a systematic semantic strategy for vocabulary enhancement

through semantic fields or clusters of naturally related domains (kinship terminology, the household, money, and so forth). In her methodical approach to lexical development and enrichment, Maiguashca demonstrates a number of innovative techniques and strategies for acquiring vocabulary contextually to facilitate retention. Proverbial is an excellent medium to expedite lexical enhancement and recollection.

The following sections will demonstrate the use of proverbs designed to assist in the recall of specific semantic domains.

Animals

FRENCH

Tel *loup* tel *chien*. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 23)

La belle cage ne nourrit pas *l'oiseau*. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 24)

ITALIAN

Volpe che dorme, vive sempre magra. (Selene 1990: 334)

Il *lupo* perde il pelo; non il vizio. (Selene 1990: 166)

Cavallo tanto va, tanto vale. (Selene 1990: 47)

SPANISH

El *gato* y el *ratón* nunca son de una opinión. (Rovira (1984: 93)

En su casa, un *perro* es un *león*, en la ajena, un *ratón*. (Rovira 1984: 94)

Kinship Terminology

FRENCH

Tel *père* tel *fiils*. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 80)

Fille cachée, *filie* cherchée. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 78)

ITALIAN

Tra *moglie* e *marito*, non metter dito. (Selene 1990: 187)

Una *figlia*, una meraviglia. (Selene 1990: 108)

SPANISH

Hermano mayor, *padre* menor. (Rovira (1984: 70)

Suegra y *nuera*, *perro* y *gato*, no comen bien en plato. (Rovira 1984: 71)

Months of the Year

FRENCH

Janvier sec et sage est un bon présage. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 185)

Décembre prend, il ne rend. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 241)

ITALIAN

Maggio no ha paraggio. (Selene 1990: 170)

D'aprile i fiori, a *maggio* gli onori. (Selene 1990: 22)

SPANISH

En *enero*, bufanda, capa y sombrero. (Rovira 1984: 38)

Agosto todo lo seca menos el mosto. (Rovira 1984: 40)

Seasons of the Year

FRENCH

L'hiver mange le printemps, *l'été*, *l'automne*. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 244)

ITALIAN

L'inverno è l'inferno dei poveri. (Selene 1990: 148)

Se non c'è *inverno*, non c'è *estate*. (Selene 1990: 96)

SPANISH

En *primavera*, la sangre corre ligera. (Rovira 1984: 42)

Si quieres vivir sano, madruga en *el verano*. (Rovira 1984: 42)

6. Antonyms

In addition to vocabulary building, proverbs offer a contextually-based source for antonyms and synonyms. This is another way of enriching vocabulary (see Nuessel and Cicogna 1994a for detailed discussion and related references; see also Aitchison 1994).

FRENCH

On oublie plutôt *le bien* que *le mal*. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 167)

Qui a fait *la guerre* fasse *la paix*. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 152)

ITALIAN

I *poveri* hanno la salute e i *ricchi* le medicine. (Selene 1990: 260)

Se vuoi *pace* prepara la *guerra*. (Selene 1990: 130)

SPANISH

La *riqueza* es la madre de la *pereza* y abuela de la *pobreza*. (Rovira 1984: 154)

Un buen *morir* honra un largo *vivir*. (Rovira 1984: 180)

7. Reading Comprehension

Psychological research on metaphoric language in proverbs exists to determine how and if subjects paraphrase proverbial language (see Honeck, Voegtler, Dorfmueller, and Hoffman 1980 and references cited therein). Current experimental research has yet to determine with total precision the age at which the acquisition of proverbial competency. Honeck, Voegtler, Dorfmueller, and Hoffman (1980: 143) cite empirical evidence that

the ability to understand proverbs does not appear until the age of 11 or so.

At this juncture, the only certain claim about proverb understanding is that

receptive comprehension precedes interpretation and explication, and the latter increase with age (Honeck, Voegtler, Dorfmueller, and Hoffman 1980: 144).

Since most language students enrolled in post-secondary institutions are old enough to comprehend proverbial language, their introduction into the curriculum is entirely appropriate.

Proverbial language has important implications for second-language instruction. Seitel (1976: 137) states that such language must be taught to children deliberately by the

application of an imaginary (proverb) situation to a real (context) situation through a process of correlation.

Proverbial communication and comprehension are thus capable of being analyzed, formalized, and taught to students in a second-language classroom environment (Seitel 1976: 141).

The interpretation of a proverb involves the classic semiotic "stand for" relation. This tripartite semiotic process involves an object (sign), what the object stands for (referent), and the user of the sign, or the encoder or decoder of the sign (Sless 1986: 5-6). Moreover, the acquisition of a proverb inventory in the target language enhances a student's knowledge of pragmatics, i.e., how to express admonitions, promises, and so forth through indirect speech acts. Likewise, a familiarity with proverbial language provides an understanding of certain aspects of the Italian popular culture.

In their insightful analysis of proverb comprehension, Honeck, Voegtler, Dorfmueller, and Hoffman (1980: 150-157) enumerate four ordered phases in understanding proverbial language:

1. a preparatory or problem-solving phase.
2. a literal transformation phase.
3. a figurative or theory transformation phase.
4. an instantiation phase.

According to these authors (Honeck, Voegtler, Dorfmueller, and Hoffman 1980: 157),

the four phases, although independent, are strictly sequential, at least for initial attempts at solving a proverb. The solution may automatize and become more parallel as experience with a particular proverb (and proverbs in general) grows, and with relevant context.

It this process-oriented approach to proverb comprehension that is important in the develop-

ment of teaching metaphoric competence because proverbial language provides a discrete means for learning how to relate one situation to another that it suggests. This form of thinking is capable of being taught in a logical and orderly fashion.

It is useful to exemplify a few common proverbs in order to see that they convey a literal meaning that must be interpreted figuratively in order to apply to a particular situation or context. The proverbial expression "you can't tell a book by its cover" means that appearances may be deceiving. An additional example would be "barking dogs seldom bite" which means that a loud and obstreperous person is usually not dangerous.

7.1. Reading Comprehension (Interpretation)

Proverbs may be considered as "mini-texts" to be read and interpreted as freestanding entities or in a context that provides them with meaning (Norrick, 1985: 5). From this point of view, several interesting exercises intended for their comprehension are useful. One activity involves the use of a single proverb on a sheet of paper together with questions related to its meaning.

FRENCH

La pomme ne tombe jamais loin de l'arbre. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 15)

ITALIAN

Il ramo somiglia al tronco. (Selene, 107)

SPANISH

De tal palo, tal astilla. (Rovira 1984: 69)

The following are appropriate questions concerning the proverb cited in the previous section.

1. This proverb has a literal sense. Draw an image that illustrates this meaning.
2. Explain the rhetorical sense of

this proverb.

3. Is there a similar proverb in English.

7.2. Reading Comprehension (Matching Exercise)

In this type of exercise, students demonstrate their knowledge of proverbial language and their reading comprehension abilities by matching two segments of a single proverb to form a meaningful whole. The set of instructions for French, Italian and Spanish follows: "Match the appropriate half of the proverb in column B with its first half in column A. Place the appropriate letter from column B in the blank in column A." (Figure 1).

7.3 Exercises to demonstrate the appropriate application of proverbs relevant sociolinguistic contexts

The following example illustrates how a proverb's literal and figurative meanings may be taught. A series of general questions may be proposed to discuss this proverb.

1. What is the meaning of this proverb?
2. What are the differences in allusions between the target language proverb and the English proverb? Does this difference reveal something about the two cultures?
3. In what situations may this proverb be used?
4. Is the use of a proverb a more courteous form of communication? Why? How?
5. Do you use proverbs in your own conversations? Provide an example of one that you use.

FRENCH

En bouche close n'entre mouche.
(Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 61)

ITALIAN

Proverb: Chi parla semina, chi tace raccoglie. (Selene, 299)

SPANISH

Proverb: En boca cerrada, no entran moscas. (Rovira 1984: 105)

FRENCH

Column A

- __ 1. Nulle montagne
- __ 2. A qui a faim
- __ 3. Argent changé
- __ 4. Qui veut la fin

Column B

- a. tout est pain.
- b. veut les moyens.
- c. sans vallée.
- d. argent mangé.

[Answers: 1. c (9); 2. a (82); 3.d (115); 4. b (130). All citations from Monreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984]

ITALIAN

Column A

- __ 1. Chi troppo comincia
- __ 2. Chi tardi si pente
- __ 3. Traduttori
- __ 4. Chi patisce

Column B

- a. compatisce.
- b. traditori.
- c. si pente invano.
- d. poco finisce.

[Answers: 1. d (Selene, 108); 2. c (Selene, 226); 3. b (Mertvago, 111); 4. a (Selene, 108).]

SPANISH

Column A

- __ 1. El pan por el color
- __ 2. No hay atajo
- __ 3. A lo hecho
- __ 4. De lo que no sabes

Column B

- a. no hables.
- b. pecho.
- c. El vino por su sabor.
- d. sin trabajo.

[Answers: 1.c (Rovira 1984: 84); 2.d (Rovira 1984: 154); 3.b (Rovira 1984: 157); 4.a (Rovira 1984: 105)]

Figure 1

All three proverbs correspond to English proverb: *Speech is silver, silence is golden.*

Another exercise designed to teach proverbial usage and, by implication, metaphoric usage would involve a verbal description of a situation, or a kind of scenario, to which a particular proverb might be applicable. The following is an example of a matching exercise. The following set of instructions may be use for this type of exercise: "In the following exercise, match the proverb in column 2 that best encapsulates the situation described in column 1. Then provide a corresponding proverb in English." (Figure 2).

An interesting variation of the

preceding activity may be formalized in the following way.

1. Provide small groups of students with a master list of Italian proverbs that they have never seen before.
2. Give each group one of the proverbs from the master list.
3. Instruct each group to decipher the aphorism and to think of an appropriate situation to which the proverb might be applicable.
4. Advise the students to write a script of the specific situation which they then dramatize.
5. Challenge the other groups of students to indicate which proverb from their master list best encapsulates the scenario just enacted.
The exercise just described can

FRENCH

Situation:

1. Jean likes to go to bed early so that he can get an early start the next day.
2. Anne has not had a chance to eat all day and she eats a day-old sandwich which she finds delicious.
3. Marie shouts at her friends a lot but she always reconciles with them the next day.
4. Paul has friends who drink to excess, gamble, and get into trouble with the police. He is doing the same thing.

Proverb:

- a. *Dis-moi qui tu fréquentes, je te dirai chi tu es.* (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 102)
- b. *Chien qui aboie ne mord pas.* (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni (1984: 54)
- c. *À qui a faim, tout est pain.* (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 82)
- d. *Coucher à dix, lever à six.* (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 67)

[Answers: 1-d ("Early to bed, early to rise"); 2-c ("Hunger whets the appetite"); 3-b ("A barking dog doesn't bite"); 4-a ("Birds of a feather flock together")]

ITALIAN

Situation:

1. Giovanni is always bragging about his accomplishments. However, he recently failed his bar examination.
2. Maria complains a lot, but she never does anything about her complaints.
3. Carla never prepares in advance for tests, and, as a result, she always fails her classes.
4. Mario has been tricked by confidence men on several occasions and he distrusts everyone now.
5. Carlo is very talkative and he often says things that offend people.

Proverb:

- a. *In bocca chiusa non entrano mosche.* (Selene 1990: 36)
- b. *Chi è stato scottato dall'acqua calda, ha paura della fredda.* (Selene 1990: 8)
- c. *Can che abbaia, non morde.* (Selene 1990: 42)
- d. *Si raccoglie ciò che si semina.* (Montvago, 97)
- e. *La superbia andò a cavallo e tornò a piedi.* (Selene 1990: 296)

[Answers: 1-e ('Pride goes before the fall'); 2-c ('Barking dogs seldom bite'); 3-d ('What you sow, you must mow'); 4-b ('A scalded person fears even cold water'); 5-a ('Silence is golden')]

SPANISH

Situation:

1. A friend talks a lot and frequently makes foolish statements.
2. Marta attends college but has no desire to be there and she receives failing grades.
3. Pablo observes a friend who is doing an unethical act and he does nothing.
4. Pilar takes a trip to the U.S. and she makes an effort to adapt to the local customs.

Proverb:

- a. *Por donde fueres, haz como vieres.* (Rovira 1984: 156)
- b. *Quien calla ortoga.* (Rovira 1984: 105)
- c. *Para aprender, lo principal es querer.* (Rovira 1984: 56)
- d. *Quien no habla no yerra.* (Rovira 1984: 105)

[Answers: 1-d ("The person who says nothing, makes no mistakes"); 2-c ("To learn, there must be desire"); 3-b ("The person who is silent gives consent"); 4-a ("When in Rome, do as the Romans do")]

Figure 2

also be used as an in-class or out-of-class writing assignment (Nuessel and Cicogna 1993b, 1994b). This type of assignment may be formalized in the following manner:

1. Provide all students with one proverb, or, alternatively, provide a different proverb on a separate sheet of paper to every student in the classroom.
2. Prepare a list of questions on a single sheet of paper exemplified by, but not limited to the following enumeration:
 - a. What does the proverb mean?
 - b. Is there a corresponding English proverb.
 - c. Describe a situation to which this proverb might apply?

Another exercise adds additional components to the scrambled-word exercise discussed in section above discussed above.

In the following exercises, the student must

- a. unscramble the proverb,
- b. interpret its meaning,
- c. provide an equivalent proverb in English.

FRENCH

The following list of words contains a scrambled proverb. Unscramble the words to form a French proverb. This common saying has an English equivalent. In the space provided, write a very brief interpretation of this proverb.

ne/la/l'arbre/loin/jamais/tombe/pomme

[Answers: *La pomme ne tombe jamais loin de l'arbre* (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 15); People behave according to their upbringing and education; English proverb: 'Like Father, Like Son']

ITALIAN

The following list of words contains a scrambled proverb. Unscramble the words to form an Italian proverb. This common saying has an English equivalent. In the space provided, write a very

brief interpretation of this proverb.

il/al/somiglia/ramo/tronco

[Answers: *Il ramo somiglia al tronco* (Selene 1990:, 107); Meaning: "People behave according to their upbringing and education"; English proverb: 'Like Father, Like Son']

SPANISH

The following list of words contains a scrambled proverb. Unscramble the words to form a Spanish proverb. This common saying has an English equivalent. In the space provided, write a very brief interpretation of this proverb.

tal/tal/de/astilla/palo

[Answers: *De tal palo, tal astilla* (Rovira 1984: 69); Meaning: "People behave according to their upbringing and education"; English proverb: 'Like father, like son']

8. Culture

Because proverbial language is said to reflect the value system of a specific culture, it is useful to discuss this concept in the classroom. Personalized questions (oral or written) are useful to elicit individual student opinion on the topic of proverbs. The following questions are representative:

1. How many proverbs do you know?
2. Where did you learn them?
3. Who taught them to you?
4. Remember at least one.
5. What does this proverb mean?
6. Whom do you know that knows proverbs?

A second activity is to discuss a single proverb in the classroom. In this approach, the instructor may employ a proverb in a regional dialect and contrast it with one in standard French, Italian or Spanish. This type of introduction can lead to a discussion of the regions of where French, Italian and Spanish are spoken. Furthermore, it may lead to a

discussion of local and regional differences (cuisine, language, dress, and so forth).

The following proverbs are typical of those that can provide a stimulating point of departure for some interesting discussions related to culture. The cultural significance of death, contained in the following proverbs, demonstrates this possibility.

FRENCH

Contre *la mort* point de remède. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 72)

La mort n'a pas d'ami. (Montreynaud, Pierron and Suzzoni 1984: 72)

ITALIAN

Temer *la morte* è peggio che morire. (Selene 1990: 188)

Ogni cosa è meglio della morte. (Selene 1990: 189)

SPANISH

La muerte es siempre traidora: no dice el día ni la hora. (Rovira 1984: 180)

Morir es volver a vivir. (Rovira 1984: 181)

Activities related to the thematic approach include guided compositions in which the instructor provides one proverb with a number of open-ended questions to be answered by the student.

Another possibility is to write individual proverbs on separate sheets of paper. Subsequently, each student draws one of these proverbial sayings from a container. The student then responds orally or in writing to a series of generic questions provided by the instructor. This activity works well with pairs of students or small groups. Nearly all of the suggestions for written assignments in the sections on grammar, reading comprehension and culture may also be adapted as writing exercises.

Conclusion

Proverbs constitute an excellent resource for these curricula. They provide examples of wisdom, humour, culture while teaching and/or reviewing basic vocabulary.

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John J. Janc

L'Onomatopée et la langue française

L'onomatopée est la création de mot suggérant ou censé suggérer par imitation phonétique la chose dénommée. Dans cet article, l'auteur dresse une liste partielle des onomatopées les plus courantes que l'on entend en France et un exercice qui permet aux étudiants de les insérer dans une phrase.

L'onomatopée est la création de mot suggérant ou censé suggérer par imitation phonétique la chose dénommée. Elle existe en français comme dans toutes les autres langues. Il incombe aux professeurs d'en expliquer quelques-unes à leurs étudiants. Ce qui suit est une liste partielle des onomatopées les plus courantes que l'on entend en France et un exercice qui permettra aux étudiants de les insérer dans une phrase. Nous avons décidé de ne pas inclure les onomatopées qui imitent les sons des animaux, et de ne pas tenir compte des onomatopées anglaises utilisées très souvent dans les bandes dessinées (BD).

atchoum

[le «m» se prononce]:
son que l'on émet quand on éternue

badaboum

[le «m» se prononce]:
son de quelque chose de lourd qui tombe, qui s'écrase

b(j)oinng

son des ressorts

clap clap

[les «p» se prononcent]:
son des applaudissements

crac(k)

[le «c» se prononce]:
bruit sec imitant un choc, une rupture

ding

[ding] [il s'agit d'une consonne nasale]:
un tintement, un coup de sonnette

ding, ding, dong

[Dans le premier mot, il s'agit d'une consonne nasale, dans les deux autres, il s'agit de voyelles nasales. Les «g» se prononcent.] :
la sonnerie d'un carillon

dring

[dring] [il s'agit d'une consonne nasale]:
son d'une sonnette, surtout électrique

flic-flac

[les «c» se prononcent]:
un clapotement, un bruit d'eau

froufrou

bruit léger que produit le froissement des tissus

glouglou

bruit que fait un liquide qui coule dans un conduit ou qui coule d'un récipient

hip! hurra!

[le «p» se prononce]:
cri qui exprime l'enthousiasme. Le «hip» est en général répété trois fois.

miam-miam

[les «m» se prononcent]:
exclamation qui exprime le plaisir de manger

pan

[il s'agit d'une voyelle nasale]:
un bruit sec

pif paf

[les «f» se prononcent]:
exprime un bruit sec

pin-pon

[il s'agit de voyelles nasales]:
bruit des avertisseurs à deux tons

plouf

[le «f» se prononce]:
bruit que fait un objet en tombant dans un liquide

pouet pouet

[les «t» finals se prononcent]:
son d'un klaxon d'une vieille voiture

pouf

[le «f» se prononce]:
bruit sourd de chute

tacatac

[le «c» final se prononce]:
bruit de tir ininterrompu

tagada

son des sabots du cheval

teuf-teuf

[les «f» se prononcent]:
bruit d'un moteur à explosion d'une vieille voiture

tic tac

[les «c» se prononcent]:
bruit sec et uniformément répété, surtout d'un mécanisme d'horlogerie

toc

[le «c» se prononce]:
bruit d'un heurt, souvent répété

tut tut

[les «t» se prononcent]:
bruit de klaxon

vlan

[il s'agit d'une voyelle nasale]:
bruit violent, en particulier celui d'un coup

vroum

[le «m» se prononce]:
accélération d'un moteur

Activité

Choisissez l'onomatopée qui complète le mieux chaque phrase.

- Et _____! il a claqué la porte en partant.
- _____! allez! allez! on va gagner le match.
- _____! _____!
_____! tiens! j'entends les cloches de Notre-Dame.

4. _____! _____!
Cette moto fait un bruit
infernale. Le motard doit être
pressé.
5. Bien qu'elle ait essayé d'entrer
sans attirer l'attention sur elle,
tout le monde s'est retourné en
entendant le _____ de
sa robe.
6. _____! Ça y est! le bébé
vide son biberon.
7. _____! Ça y est! je suis
enrhumé.
8. _____! va ouvrir!
quelqu'un frappe à la porte.
9. _____! _____!
vite! décroche! le téléphone
sonne.
10. _____! _____!
Zut! les déménageurs ont laissé
tomber la table dans les
escaliers.
11. _____! _____! c'est un
chasseur qui tire sur du gibier.
12. _____! _____!
ce n'est pas vrai! les enfants
sautent sur le lit!
13. _____! j'entends une
vieille voiture qui passe.
14. _____! Ça y est! Il a reçu deux
coups de poing dans le nez.
15. _____! _____! va
ouvrir! quelqu'un sonne à la
porte.
16. Le _____ du réveille-
matin m'a empêché de dormir.
17. _____! _____!
les enfants pataugent dans
l'eau.
18. _____! _____!
les spectateurs expriment leur
satisfaction.
19. _____! et voilà la chaise
qui se casse!
20. Avant que le monsieur dans la
vieille bagnole ne me double,
j'ai entendu _____!
_____!
21. _____! _____! le
gâteau a l'air délicieux.
22. _____! le bébé est
tombé sur son derrière.
23. _____! _____!
_____! Tiens! les
militaires s'exercent à tirer.
24. _____-_____! ce
sont les pompiers qui passent.
25. _____! _____!
quelqu'un fait du cheval dans
le coin.
26. _____! les automobilistes

s'énervent toujours quand il y
a des embouteillages.

27. Et _____! la pierre est
tombée dans l'eau.

Voici le corrigé de l'exercice.

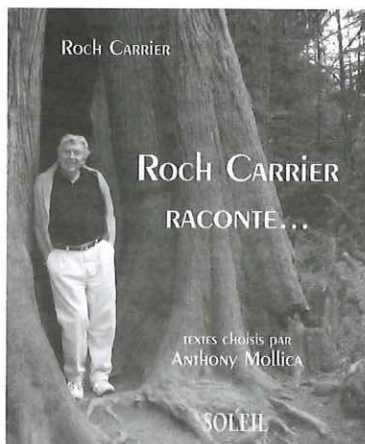
1. vlan; 2. hip! hurra!; 3. ding,
ding, dong; 4. vroum; 5. froufrou;
6. glouglou; 7. atchoum; 8. toc; 9.
dring; 10. badaboum; 11. pan; 12.
b(j)oinng; 13. teuf-teuf; 14. pif paf;
15. ding; 16. tic tac; 17. flic-flac;
18. clap clap; 19. crac(k); 20. pouet
pouet; 21. miam-miam; 22. pouf;
23. tacatac; 24. pin-pon; 25.
tagada; 26. tut tut; 27. plouf

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