

Redefining ‘Cultural Importance’ in the Italian Classroom: Languages Across the Curriculum via MADE IN ITALY¹

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INTRODUCTION

As the landscape of academia continues to evolve, so must we as faculty; by its very nature, our programs, course offerings, and teaching methods must expand. Students and parents alike are centered on job prospects (whether we like it or not!); increasingly, students enroll in the university with the primary goal of being hired after four years (four years being a pertinent timeframe) rather than focusing on their education and the process of learning. As such, it is time for language programs to pivot and reconsider their position within the Humanities and the university. While numerous Spanish programs, in particular, have added sections, courses, and certificates concerning Spanish for translation, for the medical field, and others, most other language programs have been remiss to adopt these tracks and concentrations, whether due to the lack of interest of faculty or administration.² What once was a language that attracted students interested solely in Culture with a capital “C” has now been broadened to include Italian for the Professions, and justly so. Thus, as professionals training the next generation to be global citizens with true intercultural competency skills, we must seriously consider tracks outside of traditional literary studies within our degree programs. This contribution explores just that aspect and argues for a new series of courses offered in language programs, specifically Italian. In particular, I will discuss the significance of creating a MADE IN ITALY course as the first step to something larger: a certificate or minor in Italian for International

¹ Many thanks to Roberto Dolci for the kind invitation to participate in the webinar “Insegnare la lingua e la cultura italiana. Proposte operative per un approccio mediatico e plurilingue” hosted by the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute of CUNY/Queens College virtually in December 2023.

² Faculty trained in literary studies often do not feel comfortable offering courses in business or sectors outside of traditional aspects of literary and cultural studies. While we may not necessarily be experts, I have and continue to argue that these courses are important to provide our students and faculty have a wealth of knowledge about the business world through their knowledge of the culture. At first, the course may seem challenging to teach, but after the first time, it becomes much easier. Students enjoy both the business knowledge learned and the cultural component. Often, students are already aware of the various business terminology from courses on business/economics they have taken in high school or college.

Business. By the end, I hope to provide enough motivation and ideas to easily launch a course of this type.

ITALY AS AN ECONOMIC LEADER

When one considers Italy’s economy, its international global place is much stronger than people usually assume, the 8th largest in the world and 3rd in Europe.³ Its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased by .07%/.09% in 2023 and is anticipated to grow the same in 2024.⁴ While many consider Italy a tourism hub, this sector only amounts to 10.2% of Italy’s GDP.⁵ Conversely, Italy maintains its position as a grand exporter, number seven globally for exported products. Italy’s most requested products include packaged medicaments (\$34.4 B), refined petroleum (\$24.6 B), motor vehicles, parts, and accessories (\$14.8 B), and vaccines, blood, antisera, toxins, and cultures (\$11.8 B). In 2002, Italy claimed to be the largest exporter of unglazed ceramics (\$5.35 B), pasta (\$4.16 B), recreational boats (\$3.5 B), tanned equine and bovine hides (\$2.7 B), and processed tomatoes (\$2.55 B). All this is to say that Italy holds a critical seat at the economic table of Europe and the world.

Italian companies are rather different from U.S. ones, which is the major focus of study at our institutions. For example, 95% of Italian companies are considered “small” companies, employing 50 employees or fewer.⁶ In 2018, there were six Italian companies on the list of Fortune 500 in the U.S.: Exor, Eni, Enel, Assicurazioni Generali, Intesa Sanpaolo, and Poste italiane. Italy has five Italian Trade Agencies (Agenzia ICE: Agenzia per la promozione all’estero e l’internazionalizzazione delle imprese italiane) in the U.S.: New York, Miami, Chicago, Houston, and Los Angeles representing roughly 3,519 Italian companies with offices throughout the U.S. There are also six Italian Chambers of Commerce’s: New York City, Miami (Southeast) with an additional chapter in Atlanta, Los Angeles (West), Houston, Texas, Macomb, Michigan, and Chicago

³ See, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-investment-climate-statements/italy/>. 18 March 2024.

⁴ In 2022, Italy’s GDP was actually the 10th largest in the world. Previously, it was actually in the 8th position globally. See <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/ita>. 18 March 2024.

⁵ See, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/628849/tourism-total-contribution-to-gdp-italy-share/#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20travel%20and%20tourism,percent%20of%20the%20country's%20GDP.> 18 March 2024.

⁶ This is of importance in general when we think of family-owned companies and the role of a company in the local economy. Additionally, this aspect of Italian society also had an impact on the catastrophic reach of the Covid-19 pandemic.

(Midwest). Thus, Italian business and trade are noteworthy and should be celebrated not only in Italian Studies programs, but also across the university, allowing us as faculty to collaborate with engineering, fashion, architecture, and business. In this way, Italian will assume a more central role across our campuses and society.

Understanding MADE IN ITALY

What exactly is MADE IN ITALY? The MADE IN ITALY label surpasses a simple mark of origin; rather, it represents and transcends a blend of quality, tradition, and innovation that characterizes Italian products.⁷ MADE IN ITALY is a certification of authenticity that aims to confirm the value and process of Italian-made products. The MADE IN ITALY mark has and continues to encompass various sectors, including fashion, automotive, food and beverage, and design, which are rooted in a rich history of craftsmanship, design, and industrial prowess. Historically, the concept of MADE IN ITALY can be seen in the modern age with the creation and marketing of the Vespa, one of the first “big hits” in America. Yet, how was the Vespa introduced to the American public, you may ponder? For those not actively traveling to Italy, this introduction occurred with William Wyler’s 1953 masterpiece *Roman Holiday*, starring Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck. In one of the most memorable scenes, Princess Ann (Audrey Hepburn) jumps on the Vespa, completely ignorant of how to drive it, and Joe Bradley (Gregory Peck), the American journalist stuck in Rome, jumps on the back of it and helps her control it as they cruise through the most “MADE IN ITALY like” area of Rome, Piazza di Spagna, around the Via Veneto.⁸ Beyond introducing the Vespa, however, the film itself served as an example of a MADE IN ITALY product as it is the first-ever American film to be shot, cut, and edited in Italy. While I teach this aspect of the film, although maybe a stretch from the official insignia, it maintains a critical voice in the discourse because it also sells Rome/Italy as *la dolce vita*. Thus, when exploring the various layers, its significance shines.

⁷ See Riccardo Illy, *The Art of Excellence* (2022).

⁸ After the release of the film, Vespa hit record sales of 100,000. Many American actors/performers were then seen with a Vespa, including John Wayne, Dean Martin, and Charlton Heston. If you are unaware of the area, one can find numerous noteworthy tourist monuments as well as MADE IN ITALY shops and posh bars/caffès in this area of Rome.

The MADE IN ITALY official certification requires rigorous protocols; the entire process must begin and end in Italy. Thus, the product must adhere to a series of parameters required by current Italian regulations, including respecting procedures for creation, advertising, packaging, etc. The Istituto Tutela Produttori Italiani issues the certification according to Law 166 comma 16 of November 20, 2009. The Italian Ministry for Economic Development has solidified and co-funded the certification process.⁹

In the hopes of becoming a MADE IN ITALY product, the producer can request certification as long as the product conforms to the general standards: completely produced in Italy with Italian manufactured parts, use of top-quality materials, unique Italian design, and traditional Italian methodology. Then the manufacturer applies, demonstrating evidence of the above-mentioned characteristics, and then the Istituto will conduct a formal on-site audit to verify proof of the application. Regular visits are conducted to maintain a certified product. The Promindustria Spa handles all inspections on behalf of the Istituto.¹⁰ Why is the certification so sought after by agencies and consumers alike? First and foremost, the MADE IN ITALY name, even more so the 100% Made in Italy Certification, is founded on seven main principles:

1. Guarantee
2. Labelling
3. Traceability
4. Anti-fake
5. Scouting
6. Accreditation
7. Incentives¹¹

These seven points protect the integrity of the product, confirming its value and underscoring an appeal to customers. As Riccardo Illy mentions in his marvelous book *The Art of Excellent Products: Enchanting Customers with Premium Brand Experiences*, the creativity associated with MADE IN ITALY is what shines brightest for the agencies, customers, and individual products alike. Illy’s English and Italian versions of the work serve as an important means to organize a course on MADE IN ITALY

⁹ See, “100% Made in Italy.” <https://madeinitalycert.it/en/>. 1 December 2023.

¹⁰ See, “100% Made in Italy.” <https://madeinitalycert.it/en/>. 1 December 2023.

¹¹ See, “100% Made in Italy.” <https://madeinitalycert.it/en/>. 1 December 2023.

because the entire work centers around the idea of excellence based on a variety of criteria.

While the philosophy behind MADE IN ITALY products and the general concept of excellence in Italian goods is illustrated in Illy’s work, the concept of MADE IN ITALY traditionally manifests itself through the 4 “A”: *agroalimentare* (food and wine), *abbigliamento* (fashion and accessories), *automazione* (machinery), and *arredo* (design). I regularly add a 5th “A” to the equation, *artigianale* (artisanal), when teaching MADE IN ITALY. Although artisanal products can fall into the other four “A”s, I argue that they should be considered on their own for various motives, one being their clear connection to the local and often having a unique history connected with migration and space. Moreover, many of these artisans are retiring, and Italy will soon face a crisis concerning artisanal production. The gauntlet of artisanal products includes musical instruments; fountain pens and stationery; ceramics and porcelain; puppets and marionettes; baskets; marble, alabaster, and gemstones; textiles, leather, silk, and lace; blown glass; and many others. The added layer of beauty with artisanal products includes the fact that the same item can be studied in diverse contexts depending on where it is developed. For example, *pupi*, which is neither a puppet nor a marionette, has two different schools, Palermo and Catania, on the same island, with unique history and traditions that, of course, intertwine on some level. Another perfect example is the field of ceramics. Many Italian regions claim to have “the” school of ceramics; in reality, most regions have a tradition, and the product slightly differs according to geographical location, usually because of topography, temperature, etc. In this manner, business, culture, and language all intersect organically.

No matter their background, students have seen or heard of a MADE IN ITALY brand. Although we enter a subtext of “privileginess,” most have at least a working idea of what the MADE IN ITALY concept refers to. If the instructor is in doubt, one can immediately introduce the diverse types of productions, stereotypically, by country, underscoring to some extent which products are particularly famous from which countries. With many products, such as automobiles, students can see a wide range of options. Then, to further the conversation, you can discuss why the various countries are known for certain types of vehicles or aspects of the vehicles. For example, Volvo, launched in 1927 in Gothenburg, Sweden, has been considered one of the safest cars on the road ever since. On the flip side, Italy boasts some of the most noted automobiles of all time for

their sexy design and speed. Italy is not just emblematic of one or two celebrated companies, but four: Alfa Romeo, Ferrari, Lamborghini, and Maserati, to highlight a few.¹² In this manner, students see a product and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of various brands, a task important not only for preparing for the ACTFL OPI and WPT exams and the AP Examination but also for real-world situations.

From there, diverse options exist for a more in-depth analysis of these car companies. The instructor can create a complete didactic unit based on one Italian car company, a case-study project. The instructor could create materials that include a variety of aspects: history (text e/o timelines), mission and vision information, marketing, a bit about finances (presented via text or an infographic), racing, partnerships, philanthropy, etc. Moreover, one can easily include an interview from either a former racer or the CEO of the company to include an authentic audio source for the students to engage with. Finally, marketing tactics of the company can be introduced into the unit, considering both print marketing and video/commercial. No matter the student’s background, everyone engages with marketing, and it becomes a crucial moment within the didactic unit because those with a business background bring unique, pointed aspects to the discourse that students of the Humanities may not. Yet, students in the Humanities and Communication provide their own original readings, which complement the unit and discourse. Commercials are a win-win for all. With a company like Ferrari, the instructor can also bridge one “A,” *automazione* to a second “A,” *abbigliamento*, as it currently boasts a healthy clothing line and other merchandise items. Once students are introduced to an entire didactic unit, so much could possibly occur. For example, students can work collaboratively on a case study of their own and present it to the class. This activity encourages students to engage in research, which is a main objective at institutions of higher learning while improving their understanding of the topic and their ability of formal presentational oral production. Another approach to initiate a unit, lesson, or course on MADE IN ITALY having students brainstorm brands via a Word Cloud activity or some sort of survey. This activity serves as a motivational starting point to launch the discourse.

Branding and logos are key to the success of MADE IN ITALY products. Students often recognize a logo and may not even truly know the

¹² See <https://www.authenticvacations.com/italy-the-hottest-cars-from-the-coolest-place/>.

product. This is especially true with creative logos that stick out and remain fresh in one’s memory. To introduce companies, a variety of activities exist to assist students in creating connections. Some good warm-up exercises include the formation of a Word Cloud, as previously stated, and MADE IN ITALY Bingo, in which students need to recognize a company’s logo. Easily conducted in English or Italian, the learning outcomes are slightly different depending on the audience. In Italian, the activity could introduce/review the MADE IN ITALY sectors and study shapes and colors. The activity can be conducted as either Bingo or Guess Who. To scaffold the activity, you can teach Italian geography using logos, helping students connect the company to its home city or region.¹³ This activity advances as then one can introduce the concepts of *La questione meridionale* as well as the context of both industrialization and capitalism within the Italian landscape.¹⁴

Plenty of English and Italian readings support a discussion on a higher linguistic proficiency and incorporate intercultural competency. If the linguistic level is lower, one can present the history of the “Industrial Revolution” in Italy via a timeline, with the year and one or two simple statements. If hosting online through a Digital Humanities page, one can even easily add a deck of photos or videos representing the historical moment.

Another way to introduce the concept of MADE IN ITALY is by discussing shopping habits the students may have. You can begin by asking students when and how they shop and what characteristics they look for while shopping. As our student body has evolved, so too have their shopping practices. Once discussed, you can scaffold the exercise to include a period of journaling around shopping practices; ask students to chart their purchases for a one-week period. They need to keep a tab of what they purchase, from where, the cost of the items, where they find them within the store, etc. This consumer assignment aids students to become more conscious shoppers, often leading them to investigate the product itself in more detail. If conducting a study abroad experience, have students do the same activity while in Italy and then have them conclude with a comparative analysis of the two experiences. In this regard, students under-

¹³ These ideas came from Enza Antenos (Montclair State University) or our discussions and collaborations on MADE IN ITALY and Italian for International Business.

¹⁴ Depending on the level, of course, you can pair this with various fiction films, documentary films, or even literature.

stand various cultural differences related to shopping, cost, inventory, marketing (where the product is found within the store), etc.

As students fine-tune their shopping habits, they can also be introduced to an important Instagram site: “Stop Italian Sounding.” “Italian Sounding” is one of the diverse categories of Brand Confusion, according to Riccardo Giumelli. Giumelli, in his book, *Post-Made in Italy: Nuovi significanti, nuove sfide nella società globale*, dedicates his second chapter to the “Il problema dell’origine.” In this chapter, he explores various aspects of country marketing through a sociological lens. He argues that “La brand origin è strettamente connessa con la brand image, definita, generalmente come quell’insieme di attributi e associazioni che il consumatore connette con il nome del brand (Biel 1993) e, successivamente, come maggior precisione come: ‘un set di percezioni su un brand, riflesso delle associazioni di brand tenute dal consumatore’” (Giumelli 61). In the following section of Chapter 2, Giumelli considers the importance of the perception of country of origin. Here he considers two main aspects attached to perception: the concept of value/quality and affective/emotional connection to the perception (Giumelli 61-63). Giumelli addresses the ideas of Brand Confusion and Hybrid Brands.

Brand Confusion is the general term for playing with the perception of a product. The example Giumelli proposes is one that we encounter regularly: Starbucks Coffee. One type of roast that has become extremely famous and available both in their stores and the grocery store is “caffè Verona.” On first thought, one may assume that the beans or style of brewing reflects something from Verona, the city, or, at the very least, Italian. While in reality, it has nothing to do with Italy and is simply part of the American branding. While not a brand per se, Starbucks loves to play off Italian images. When we reflect on the sizes available at Starbucks, we have three; two of them are Italian words: tall (not Italian), grande (Italian), and venti (Italian), which refers to the ounces in the cup. Another example includes another blend, Veranda. Moreover, the company has adopted an entire repertoire of Italian diction for their drink titles and has been pushing the term “panino” for their sandwiches. Thus, Starbucks plays on Italy’s coffee history to entice consumers to support them.

Another type of Brand Confusion is Italian Sounding. “Stop Italian Sounding” is an Instagram site, and a podcast series created and executed by Robert Campana, a high school teacher in New Jersey with a Master’s

degree from the *Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore*. Campana wrote his Master’s thesis on “Economic Impact on Italian Sounding Cheeses in the US.” From his research, he learned the importance of marketing, good and bad, and decided to, at first playfully and later more seriously, celebrate true Italian brands and products and to disclose those that are not. His Instagram page is very lively and lighthearted; he posts, presents, and provides quizzes, all to help celebrate true Italian products and create awareness about those that are not. Students love following him and interacting with his materials. In my MADE IN ITALY course, after following “Stop Italian Sounding” for a few weeks, the course launched our own Instagram, where we post pictures of real Italian products found in Fayetteville, Arkansas. In this vein, students become active with the material they are learning, which assumes more direct consequences in their studies.

In general, most Italian-sounding products come from the world of food and wine. As Campana’s Master’s thesis illustrates, first and foremost, we see Italian sounding brand names e/o advertising in the realm of cheese: “garganzola” or something similar instead of “gorgonzola” or “reggianito” instead of “Parmigiano Reggiano.” These are two examples within a sea of possibilities. Still, in the “A” of *agroalimentare*, we have “Prisecco” instead of “Prosecco,” and the world of olive oil introduces another set of problems.¹⁵ Another example that can be explored is the question of San Marzano tomatoes, which are canned. In the United States, the San Marzano tomatoes found in the grocery store are rarely truly from the Campagna region. Beyond the “A” of *agroalimentare*, Italian sounding appears in other arenas. Within *automazione*, the Korean-made car KIA has an Italian-sounding model: Sorrento. While the average American may not notice, Sorrento, the city considered part of the Amalfi coast, has two “r”s instead of one.

Besides the concept of Brand Confusion, there is also Hybrid Branding. Although a bit more complicated because the consumer is often unaware, these products have roots or relationships in two countries. Although not an Italian example, Moët & Chandon Champagne is a relevant one. Since 1973, they have been producing sparkling wine in Napa Valley (Giumelli 74). Another case within *agroalimentare* is the situation of Banfi wines. Banfi wines were actually born in New York by John Mariani under the name

¹⁵ See Tom Mueller, *Extra Virginity: The Sublime and Scandalous World of Olive Oil*.

Banfi Vintners, an importation company of wines. Mariani returned to Italy at the age of nine and worked with his aunt, Teodolinda Banfi, to learn the trade. In 1978, the Mariani family purchased what became Castello Banfi, bearing life to the wine production in the Montalcino area of Tuscany (Giumelli 74-75).

Giumelli’s book can be a useful addition to a MADE IN ITALY or Italian for International Business course taught in Italian, as it is accessible to students with four to five semesters of Italian. The work can be adopted in various modes: 1) staple for a MADE IN ITALY course in which students question the contemporary validity of the “truest” definition of MADE IN ITALY, as Giumelli’s book calls into question the reality of the MADE IN ITALY certification in today’s global world, 2) a chapter or two to discuss Brand Confusion, Italian Sounding, and the foundation of MADE IN ITALY, 3) assigning chapters to groups of students to present to the entire class, asking students to research their own examples either from the Italian market or that of their native culture. This third suggestion is useful for both the high school and university curricula to consider cultural comparisons.¹⁶

WHERE TO TEACH MADE IN ITALY?

Now that we have explored a bit of the vastness of the concept of MADE IN ITALY, it is prudent to consider how and where MADE IN ITALY can be used within the curriculum. MADE IN ITALY can be introduced into language courses, even at the high school level. As mentioned earlier, instructors can use Italian brand logos as a model or activities for studying when introducing colors and shapes. One can also create an entire AP course revolving around the 5 “A”s of MADE IN ITALY. When reflecting on the AP themes – Personal and Public Identities, Science and Technology, Global Challenges, Families and Communities, Beauty and Aesthetics, and Contemporary Life – one can easily devote the entire year, a quarter per “A,” and touch on each of the six main themes with ease. Students can also actively participate as they will prepare case studies as a final project for each “A”/quarter. I will share an example later.

MADE IN ITALY can serve numerous functions at the college and university level. First and foremost, the instructor can insert aspects of

¹⁶ I’m thinking in particular as a preparation for the Cultural Comparison question on the AP Italian Language and Culture Examination.

MADE IN ITALY products from the first semester, as previously suggested. Talking about products and shopping habits lends itself well to the subjunctive tense when teaching students to share opinions, discuss likes on a more intellectual level, and give advice. MADE IN ITALY also serves well as a bridge course, connecting the language sequence to the content courses within the program. In fact, I have taught it as a conversation course once, and MADE IN ITALY incorporates various types of research that help students get into more advanced content. As a bridge course, the curriculum combines a mix of academic articles (like chapters from Giumelli), newspaper articles, websites, interviews and presentations on products (realia audio input), case studies, etc. The balance of written and audio input types is not overwhelming, and the materials can be scaffolded so students can fully engage with both input and output expectations. Moreover, a cultural-based rather than a literary course generally attracts a larger enrollment.

MADE IN ITALY can also be a complete didactic unit within an Italian for International Business course. If a business/professional-oriented course already exists in your catalog, adding a unit on MADE IN ITALY can be beneficial. It can be helpful to ease into a new course while exploring the breadth and depth the theme of MADE IN ITALY offers students and the curriculum. If this unit is successful with your students, you can then consider a “specialized” program for Italian for Business. For example, we are working towards creating an Italian Business micro credential at the University of Arkansas. We are asking students to complete the language sequence, take MADE IN ITALY, Italian for International Business, and then have an experiential learning experience with an Italian company either in Italy or the U.S. This experiential learning experience can be an internship with an Italian company in Italy or the U.S., a service-learning experience in Italy with an agency or a research-ship in Italy exploring a business/economical themed project. In this regard, we are attempting to train students for a pathway to international business using the language which many other programs on campus ignore.¹⁷

¹⁷ It is important to note that at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, students in the International Business and International Economics track need to take five semesters of the same language. MADE IN ITALY is positioned as the fifth course in the sequence, and Italian for International Business is the sixth. This is for two purposes: 1) scaffolding and ease into the difficulty of the material and 2)

Another program we are attempting to launch with the help of an NEH grant is a dual-degree program. Mirroring what our colleagues in German have already positively succeeded in doing with the College of Engineering, the language sections of German, Italian, and Spanish are creating a double major program with the College of Business. The program will be a 5-year endeavor in which students complete three years of study in both the language and business on the Fayetteville campus. Then, students will go abroad for their fourth year, studying business courses in a language of choice in the fall semester. In the spring semester, students will embark on an international internship with a business corporation in the country. For our Italian program, we will have options in both Rome and Milan. In their fifth year, students will return to the Fayetteville campus and finish up any remaining major requirements. The Italian program uses ePortfolios as an assessment method; as such, students will finish up their fifth year and have a portfolio available to utilize on their CVs when they begin applying for jobs.

MADE IN ITALY courses still have other options. In the past, I have taught a MADE IN ITALY course both in Rome and in Taormina, Sicily. In Rome, we had lessons at the first ever McDonald’s in Piazza Spagna, at Cinecittà, on wine with an olive oil tasting in Orvieto, at a dubbing studio, with the only licensed and contracted jeweler with Bulgari, at the Fendi building, and at the Gucci and Ferragamo museums,¹⁸ as well as others. While in Sicily this May, students visited a pistachio factory, a designer jeans factory, a yacht building company, Mariella Ferrara’s fashion museum, Cucina dei colori (vegan, chilometro 0 restaurant), Sicilian Cart Museum, Kattuni (produces furniture out of cardboard), Villa Casale of Agrigento, and many others. One special guest for the Sicily trip was Giovanni Onorato, a Global Client PR for Alta Moda, Alta Sartoria, and Alta Gioielleria with Dolce & Gabbana. He offered three lectures for the students on various topics, from Dolce & Gabbana’s history, evolution, and relationship with Sicily, to the importance of being multilingual in his role with Dolce and before with Armani. Both sets of trips provided

Business students, in theory, want and need to take the course in Italian, pushing them to stay within the program.

¹⁸ Both museums are lovely. The Gucci Museum has an interesting presentation of its history and evolution in the Piazza della Signoria. The museum/boutique has also partnered with Massimo Bottura for the restaurant. The Ferragamo Museum has a small section dedicated to its history but hosts an annual, everchanging exhibit. Both are worthwhile trips for students of any type.

students with unique experiences bridging language, culture, and business skills.

When organizing the course, first and foremost, you must develop a new vocabulary for the students; otherwise, they cannot fully enter the visit. Obviously, we cannot prepare our students for everything, and some things they will understand within context, and others they will need to ask. However, the basic vocabulary from our U.S. textbooks no longer suffices. Next, it helps to share a newspaper article with students on the “A” that is being covered. Here, they connect the vocabulary recently taught with real-world scenarios. Next, students should prepare for a visit/encounter with a company or someone from a company. When taught in the U.S., unless you teach in an area with Italian companies (There are more Italian companies throughout the U.S. than one would think. The Italian Trade Agencies are the first stopping point for information on companies.), it may be challenging to organize a visit. However, students love interacting with Italians who represent their companies. During the pandemic, Dott. Cesare Verona, President and C.E.O. of Aurora, the pen manufacturing company, gave a 1.5-hour presentation via Zoom on the history and evolution of the corporation, and the students were truly engaged. Thus, whether attending in person, virtually, or not at all, you can do the following activities with your class. Students should study the company in question. Based on learning outcomes, you should create a rubric and guide to help students find information that you deem important for the class, their formation, or in general. The backgrounds and training of the students might present themselves in this stage: Business students can tackle more numbers-centered data (financial, import/export, etc.), while Communications, Journalism, and Marketing students may explore more marketing-centered information; Humanities students understand the overall picture, think about the mission and vision as well as the philanthropy of the company.

After conducting research and discussing the various aspects of the company, students then need to prepare for a visit/encounter. This aspect is crucial in the progression of the didactic unit. The impact of the Covid pandemic already struggling with critical analysis and forming quality questions that could/would elicit meaningful output. Every didactic unit e/o visit should end with a student reflection. The reflections are guided assignments, and depending on the student’s background and the visit, the focus, length, and objectives of the activity need to be adjusted. A handful

of themes generally remain consistent, while others slightly change. For example, I generally have students reflect on how the mission and vision of the company have been presented through the visit/encounter. Depending on the agency, however, sometimes the reflection has a more pointed focus, like “What effects do you think Versace’s LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certificate will have on the future of other MADE IN ITALY brands?”¹⁹

Considering the significance of going to Italy and visiting true Italian and MADE IN ITALY companies, another option is teaching the course during the semester and offering the study-tour component of the course either during Spring Break or May Intersession after the semester concludes. In this way, students have the entire semester to seriously study the conceptual framework of MADE IN ITALY, research the agencies ahead of time, and truly embrace the encounters on a realistic level that is not rushed. As illustrated, MADE IN ITALY can easily morph into various configurations: inserted into courses starting in the first semester, a stand-alone bridge course or upper-division course, a study abroad program, or in English as a large core class aimed at building enrollments and enticing students to continue. Many universities offer courses dedicated to foodways in diverse shapes and forms. More recently, institutions have been proposing courses on Italian fashion as “languages across the curriculum.” All of these ideas and methods draw newfound interest in our students.

Before exploring a sample didactic unit, it is important to consider the ACTFL standard guidelines. First, ACTFL promotes the 5 “C”s: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. When considering MADE IN ITALY, most of the 5 “C”s are present. MADE IN ITALY products come from a specific Culture and, as such, represent an aspect of Italian society. MADE IN ITALY products communicate various emotions and ideas in and of themselves, but there is also formal communication, such as advertisements related to the object. When studying various objects within a single “A,” we can draw not only connections but also comparisons. Moreover, students are regularly asked to communicate in both written and oral production cultural comparisons between MADE IN ITALY products and ones found in other parts of the world.

¹⁹ See <https://www.versace.com/us/en/stories/sustainability/sustainable-boutique-wows-london.html>. 15 December 2023.

The most challenging “C” to incorporate is “Communities” because, while the products do reflect a community, which Italian community does it represent? In general, we are addressing a more affluent community which may not always be truly representative of society at large.

Additionally, ACTFL endorses the three “P”s: Practices, Perspectives, and Products. All three “P”s easily mesh with MADE IN ITALY. First and foremost, we are primarily talking about products. Next, we heavily explore the practices people follow when discussing shopping and investing in these types of purchases. Finally, through considering products and practices, one arrives at a perspective, which can be individual or collective, depending on the situation. As we continue to break down the three “P”s, in particular perspectives and Communication from above, ACTFL advocates for three modes of communication: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. As mentioned, students read a lot about companies, their identity, history and evolution, study commercials, etc. Thus, they are constantly using interpretive communication skills in written and oral form. Students read case studies and prepare their own, along with other methods of sharing knowledge learned about products. Finally, students participate in interpersonal communication daily in class, mostly assessed through the participation grade. One can easily understand, thus, how MADE IN ITALY is flexible and stimulates authentic discourse amongst students and often employees in the field. Pedagogically, it lines up smoothly and effortlessly with ACTFL’s principles when assessing according to national standards.

SAMPLE DIDACTIC UNIT: COFFEE

Coffee is a staple of Italian culture. Coffee maintains a culture within Italian society. In fact, Starbucks has played so much with the Italian language within its stores because Italy is celebrated for its rich coffee history. A didactic unit on Italian coffee can evolve in numerous ways. To start I play an “oldie but a goodie” short film, “Europe vs. Italy” video by Bruno Bozzetto, particularly for the brief scene on coffee.²⁰ The five-minute short film is a crash course all about Italian stereotypes. Before moving forward, we study an infographic:

²⁰ See <https://youtu.be/tzQuuoKXVq0?si=gCwILxOxnBSPVI4w>.



This infographic illustrates the different types of coffee available in Italy and reinforces the video mentioned.

From there I move on to discuss the plethora of Italian coffee companies. I provide a variety of Italian coffee logos and have students place the company within its proper region. This activity launches the class into a frenzy of discussion, including how each region has a local coffee and, thus how Italians maintain regionalists rather than nationalists. From there, I spent time reviewing and introducing Italian coffee vocabulary.

Al bar



il barista,
il cameriere al banco

una birra alla spina

il bicchierino, il goccio

il cocktail

il drink

il banco,
il bancone

 Impariamo l'italiano
www.impariamoitaliano.com

Prendere il caffè



un chicco di caffè

una tazzina di caffè

un pacchetto di caffè

l'arbusto del caffè

il macinacaffè

un caffè da portare via

il caffè

la cùccuma o il bricco

la macchinetta del caffè

la caffettiera a stantuffo

la moka, la caffettiera moca

Irish coffee o caffè irlandese

un frappuccino

i bastoncini di cannella

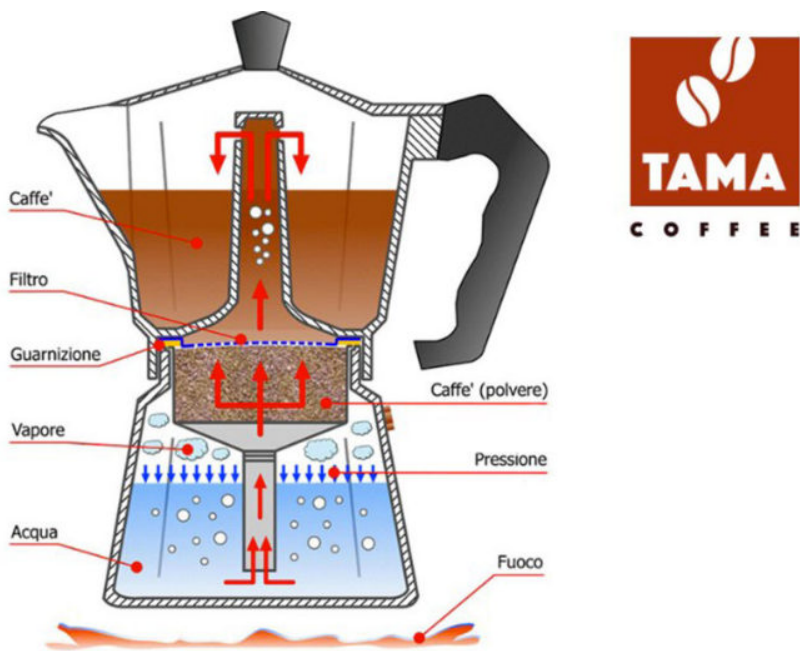
un cornetto

del caffè macinato

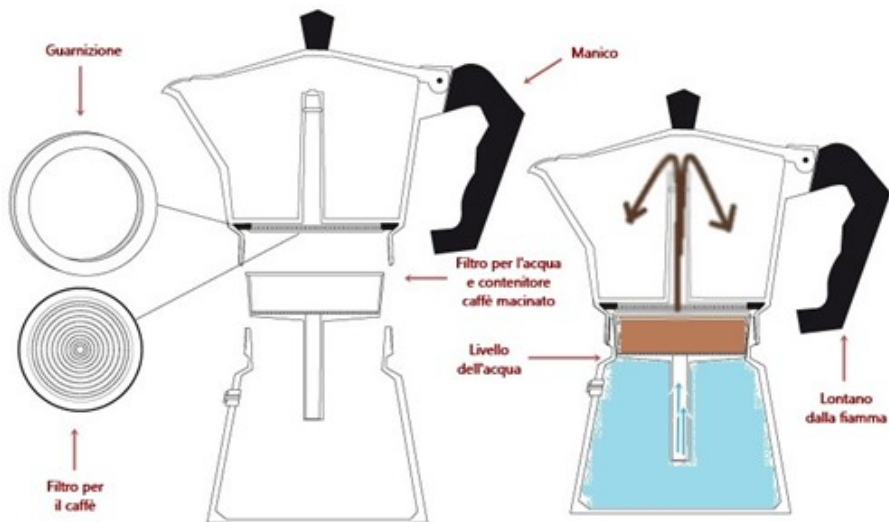
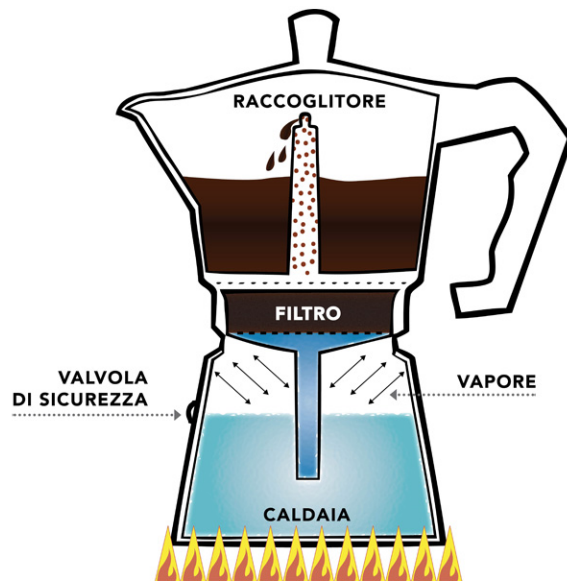
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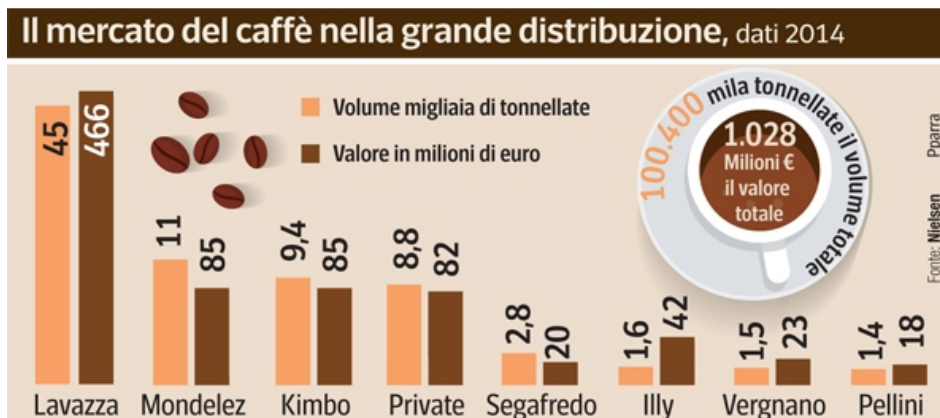
After learning some general vocabulary about coffee, one can move into more specifics, especially revolving around the moka. Moreover, students can make coffee with a moka pot. With today’s online shopping options, one can easily find an electric moka or bring in a hot plate to make it. Preparing the moka is a great review or introduction to the imperative tense. Having students take turns preparing the moka and then actually making coffee is a great example of Total Physical Response (TPR) pedagogy.²¹



²¹ Although disputed a bit in recent pedagogy research due to limitations for certain challenges for those with ablebodiedness issues, pairing students in couples or groups of 3-4 students would alleviate any issues and still allow all students to actively participate in completing the task successfully.



After reviewing vocabulary and making authentic espresso in a moka, students continue their study of Italian through articles and infographics. Here is another example for the coffee unit.



Here, we can explore the coffee market in Italy, scaffolding our original discussions from logos and regions to explore which brands are most drunk. As a brief homework assignment, I ask students to find similar data concerning the country of their choice. We can draw cultural comparisons in the following class, allowing for some significant observations. Students become surprised at the amount of Italian coffee purchased in the U.S., for example. The conversation grows when one examines coffee consumption habits in Italy. At this point in the semester, students conduct their own consumer research: 1) they journal about their habits and 2) create and execute a survey they share about others' habits.



Another fun assignment in the course places students in the driver’s seat. First, I will share the following infographic with the students.



Then, students are grouped and go out to create their own infographic based on a caffè/coffee house. One should consider chains and more local caffès when designing this activity. AP instructors should find a YouTube video that shares instructions or at least advice on making the perfect espresso. Some examples are included in the notes, but find whatever video speaks to you and your students.²² It is difficult to identify good audio for the “Instructions” task for the AP Italian examination, but with this topic, there are tons; take advantage of that in your classrooms.

From this point, I delve into a subunit completely focused on the company Bialetti. Students conduct research on the company, present aspects of the corporation, marketing, etc. We seriously study the evolution of the “omino con i baffi.” There are diverse activities assigned during this subunit of the course. Students compare and contrast past advertisements

²² Here are a few examples of the “Instruction” task: (a) <https://youtu.be/csqvv4qTMP> w?si=9kM4RFhiZW-zk7qQ; (b) https://youtu.be/g_gBfhZxZW0?si=0mSa4SIo_olH6yCa; (c) https://youtube/bHmYUnTcmYk?si=5OqoweN_SfmPpi4T; (d) https://youtube/7wJe24b3XN8?si=XQu-_B2o5XfzbpA2.

with current commercials, for example. They are invited to create memes with the “omino con i baffi” and a new commercial for their generation.

When we conclude the subunit on Bialetti, the unit moves to Starbucks. We explore the recent introductions of Starbucks in Italy (roastery in Milan, Rome), starting in 2018 and continuing to the present. Currently, there are 31 Starbucks in Italy. The reviews have been mixed at times, but overall, they are succeeding. After exploring the opposing perspectives on Starbucks in Italy, students prepare a Cultural Comparison according to the guidelines of the AP Italian examination. Below are some example prompts:

- Fai un confronto culturale tra il caffè americano e il caffè italiano.
- Fai un confronto culturale tra l’esperienza di prendere un caffè in Italia e in un altro posto in cui conosci.
- Fai un confronto culturale tra il ruolo del bar in Italia e in un altro posto che conosci.
- Fai un confronto culturale tra i motivi in cui uno si prende un caffè in Italia e in un altro posto che conosci.

This activity demonstrates the accumulated knowledge students have gained from the entire didactic unit through a presentational-style oral assessment. Whether preparing students for the AP Italian exam or not, role-plays revolving around an experience in a coffee house also prove successful and add a realistic, task-based aspect to the course. Here are a few examples to incorporate in your curriculum:

- Una simulazione tra un cliente e un barista
- Due amici che vogliono prendere un caffè insieme
- Un colloquio di lavoro

These oral assessments allow students to incorporate cultural competency and linguistic skills in a meaningful manner.

Finally, and still following the template of the AP Italian examination, students need to conclude the unit with some written assessments. When considering the Email Response, students could respond to an email message looking for an internship with Starbucks (this could be in various departments) or a contest to redesign the logo for Starbucks. Another useful email could revolve around filing a complaint about a recent

experience at Starbucks. When thinking about the Argumentative Essay, here are a few prompts to contemplate:

- Secondo te, Starbucks potrebbe sopravvivere in Italia, o no?
- Secondo te, Starbucks come un’azienda potrebbe cambiare la cultura di caffè in Italia?
- Credi che Starbucks abbia la capacità di cambiare l’importanza del caffè in Italia?

If you want to follow the AP model, you will need to find three sources for students to read and then utilize in this response. Of course, this depends on your objectives and the timeline of your unit. Although the AP Italian examination is conducted at the high school level, it is written at the fourth-semester university level. Thus, these activities can be adopted for the fifth semester, too.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

In the end, students genuinely enjoy the MADE IN ITALY course. Some comments include the following:

This course is by far one of my favorites that I have even taken...

They provided unique, hands-on opportunities that truly allowed us to gain a sense of Italian culture and lifestyle.

One of the best classes I have taken, mainly due to the mixture of explanation of classroom material and then in-person visits to the places we talked about to help give us a much better understanding of the class making the lesson more tacit.

Thus, students are looking for courses that provide a more experiential language focus, or at the very least, a component. MADE IN ITALY offers that aspect.

CONCLUSIONS

The most important consideration when growing a program is knowing your student population. I have had thought-provoking conversations with faculty who are completely against offering an Italian Business course because it “does not represent their students,” yet this one program maintains extremely high enrollments. The business track

may not be the answer to your program’s situation. Or, it may be extremely difficult to maneuver the creation of a new program in time to assist in building the enrollment numbers. What is for sure, however, is that students love talking about Italian products, and MADE IN ITALY can easily be adopted partially or completely, depending on your institution’s curriculum. While any curricular change is time-consuming and adds a layer of work, I truly believe that any MADE IN ITALY introduction will be successful.

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