VERB CONJUGATIONS LESSON PLAN

1. Il professore entra in classe et mette sei problemi di matematica alla lavagna (The instructor enters the classroom and puts seven multiplication problems on the board).

2 x 7                                       5 x 3

3 x 4                                       8 x 2

6 x 2                                       7 x 10

2. Il professsore domanda agli studenti di rispondere (in italiano) a questi problemi (The instructor asks students to solve the problems in Italian thus introducing 1-10 in italian and the word “to multiply”).

3. Spiega alla classe che non sono in una classe de matematica, ma d’italiano, e devono cercare di rispondere a un altro tipo di problema, cioè (he explains that this is an Italian class, and, besides being able to multiply in Italian, they must solve problems of another sort) :

Io x parlare =?                                   Noi x toccare = ?

Tu x amare = ?                                   Voi x tornare = ?

Lei, lui x spiegare = ?                   Loro x comprare = ?

Mettiamo il tempo necessario per stabilire la coniugazione dei verbi regolari del 1o  gruppo e sottoliniamo l’aspetto “modello” della coniugazione (The class devotes the necessary time to understand thoroughly the pattern of conjugation of regular verbs of the first group, learning a number of them along the way.

3. Lo stesso esercizio può essere fatto per gli verbi regolari dei 2o e 3o gruppi, è tuttavia probabile che non ci sia abbastanza tempo in una classe per farli (The same exercise can be applied to verbs of the second and third groups, but more than a single class is required).

4. Qualche classe dopo il professore mette alla lavagna (Several classes further along, the instructor puts the following on the board):

 Io x andare = ?                                 Noi x andare = ?

Tu x andare = ?                                 Voi x andare = ?

       Lei, lui x andare = ?                                   Loro x = ?

Gli studenti si sbagliano con la coniugazione di andare e scoprono cosi il verbi irregolari (Students mistakenly apply the pattern they have thus far learned, and thus become aware of its limitations, as well as discovering irregular verbs).

5. Il professore scrive le forme giuste alla lavagna e introduce altri verbi irregolari fra cui volere, potere, dovere, stare, e fare (The instructor puts the correct conjugation of andare on the board and juxtaposes it with a number of other irregular verbs—having students write them on the board).

6. Il professore distribuisce un foglio con venti verbi e domanda agli studenti di combinarli in gruppi secondo come si assomigliano le coniugazione (The instructor distributes a sheet with twenty verbs of all types and requests students to organize them by pattern).

The above constitutes a lesson plan for one class as well as the direction intended for further study of verb conjugations in Italian. Students are immediately confronted with Italian numbers in a way that forces them not to consider the subject of numbers as an “aside” or parenthesis in the language program but as an integral part that yields dividends in the form of pattern recognition. Pattern recognition is the main object, and, by returning to the “mathematical” model whenever we are learning verbs, students will form a habitual attitude to language learning that will take them beyond rote memorization. Rather than making a list of verbs or assigning a number of pages in the book, students will be asked to venture into the unknown, using only the patterns formulated by them, and thus try to bring order to chaos. With language-learning it’s often hard to see the forest for the trees, but the more pattern recognition we accomplish the more we grasp the big picture; with pattern to guide us learning moves away from memorization towards reasoned calculation. Quantitative reasoning can also be applied successfully to gender. Usually gender is taught as a number of fixed rules which must be memorized and then applied slavishly. The problem is nobody can memorize them all and of course there are exceptions: in the end one feels damned to go through a dictionary and memorize them one by one. On the other hand gender can be approached as a series of probabilities. In this scenario we abandon perfection for most of the time, and thus patterns once again smooth the way.

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