

www.initonline.it

supplemento alla Rivista
Init n° 22

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per conto di Guerra Edizioni - Guru s.r.l.

Pubblicità
Guru S.r.l.
Via Manna, 25 - 06132 Perugia
tel +39 075 5270257 - 8
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Autorizzazione
Tribunale di Perugia
n° 12 del 04/03/2000

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To All Educators of Italian



Stefano Gabbana
imprenditore e stilista

May 12, 2008

To All Educators of Italian

We write to you first as teachers of Italian and second as members of the AP Italian Development Committee. Our hope is to respond to some of the issues that have arisen since the announcement that AP Italian may come to an end, and to clarify some misconceptions about the AP Italian Language and Culture Course and Exam.

We have every reason to believe that we can build and sustain the AP Italian program which is, admittedly, in an early stage. We ask your support in going forward. You can best demonstrate your support by continuing your work with students and acting affirmatively so that AP Italian will continue well beyond 2009.

Now allow us to address matters related to the exam.

The Development Committee

The Development Committee is made up of an equal balance of high school and college educators representing diverse regions of the United States from coast to coast, and a combination of native and non-native speakers. This has been the case since the inception of the AP Italian Task Force in 2003, which convened during the academic year 2003-2004. It was represented by six high school and six college/university members. The first Development Committee was appointed in 2004-2005 with three high school and three college members. In addition, a representative of the College Board sits on the Development Committee. Likewise, the Chief Reader is an ex-officio member. The membership on the DC regularly rotates.

The AP Italian Language and Culture Course and Exam

AP courses in all fields represent the equivalent in college work. The level tested depends upon the definition provided by the Task Force. In the case of Italian, an AP course should represent 4th semester college work (Intermediate High as articulated by ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines). A student who passes the AP Exam with a 5 should be ready to take a third year, upper division content course. Definitions vary for different courses. French, German, and Spanish are more stringent, and

require 5th and 6th semester competencies, while the new Chinese course has the same requirements as Italian.

AP courses by their very nature are difficult, challenging, and prestigious. AP courses are designed for students who are prepared for advanced work in high school. These courses serve as a bridge to college. The AP exam verifies that students are prepared to perform in higher level college courses.

Comparability Studies

ETS regularly conducts comparability studies to determine whether or not college students can pass the AP Italian exam. Portions of the exam are administered at a variety of higher education institutions so that a fair sample of students is represented. These exams are equally challenging for college students. The results of these studies verify that the AP Italian Exam does represent the level it claims to establish.

The College Board website states: "The AP Program periodically conducts college grade comparability studies in all AP subjects. These studies compare the performance of AP students with that of college students in the courses for which successful AP students will receive credit. In general, the AP composite score cut-points are set so that the lowest composite score for an AP grade of 5 is equivalent to the average score for college students earning grades of A. Similarly, the lowest composite scores for AP grades of 4, 3, and 2 are equivalent to the average scores for students with college grades of B, C, and D, respectively.

Students who earn AP Exam grades of 3 or above are generally considered to be qualified to receive college credit and/or placement into advanced courses due to the fact that their AP Exam grades are equivalent to a college course grade of "middle C" or above. However, the awarding of credit and placement is determined by each college or university and students should check with the institution to verify its AP credit and placement policies. Students can find this information by using the AP Credit Policy search."

AP Italian Grade distributions 2007:
http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/exam/exam_questions/185563.html

AP Italian Grade distributions 2006:
http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/exam/exam_questions/151249.html

AP Grade setting process:
http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/exgrd_set.html

Grade Setting

The AP Italian exam has questions ranging from easy to difficult so that all students' abilities are tested. Students may have found parts of the exam to be very difficult, but the student who earns a 3 has still mastered the equivalent of first year college Italian. As students and teachers become more familiar with the content and exam format, and as teachers are able to create a four-year plan for AP Italian, we expect our scores to rise.

College Acceptance

Statistically, in part because of the results of the comparability studies, universities have widely accepted AP Italian and awarded college credit. Although policy varies from institution to institution, most universities recognize the importance of AP examinations and place students accordingly. A number of colleges and universities across the United States received 15 or more grade reports for AP Italian and the feedback from many of these institutions has been positive. A list of acceptance of AP credit is available at AP Central:
<http://collegesearch.collegeboard.com/apcreditpolicy/index.jsp>.

AP Italian at a National Level

As we know, AP Courses and Exams drive college admissions. One of the benefits of having an AP Italian course is the inherent status that it achieves. Another is that it promotes the expansion of Italian programs at all levels of instruction. Ultimately, however, the real benefits are that we examine Italian instruction throughout the United States, make efforts to improve our own teaching and enrich our own courses, and strive to have our courses reflect the National Standards. It also promotes the study of Italian language at all levels, so that ultimately all schools profit from it, from elementary to college levels. Because Italian just recently broke the ranks of being a less commonly taught language, the resources and attention necessary to developing

Italian programs had not been previously available. Since the inception of AP Italian, we have enjoyed both financial support and professional development opportunities paid for by both by the College Board and the Italian government. These opportunities have helped us all improve our approach to teaching.

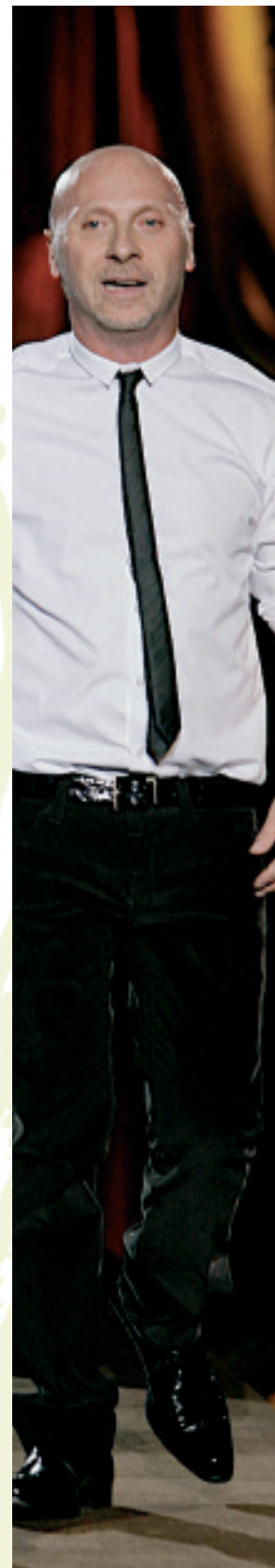
What You Can Do

It was your enthusiasm initially that made the AP Italian program possible. The continuation of AP Italian is fundamental. **We ask you to remember that AP Italian is not dead.** The College Board has a plan in place to convert the exam to a format which is more economically feasible to correct the exams. However, since the College Board has already exceeded its budget for AP Italian by 400%, it is unable to make this investment without a large amount of external funding. There are many organizations working diligently, as we write this communication, to secure the funding necessary to keep AP Italian going. We ask you not to lose hope, to continue your fine work, to encourage others to do the same, and to communicate to administrators that the Italian and Italian American communities are doing everything in their power to make sure that AP Italian will continue for many years to come. Enrollments for Italian are on the increase since 2002 as indicated by the most recent MLA Enrollment Survey data:
http://www.mla.org/pdf/release11207_ma_fe_b_update.pdf;
http://www.mla.org/pdf/06enrollmentsurvey_final.pdf.

These enrollments point in favor of our programs growing and in favor of increased numbers of students taking the AP Italian exam. We ask you to keep the faith, and we are doing the same.

Sincerely,

*Patricia Di Silvio
Irene Marchegiani (former member)
Emilio Mazzola
Paola Morgavi
Frank Nuessel
Carmela Pesca
Teresa Picarazzi
Paola Scazzoli
Elissa Tognozzi*



Domenico Dolce
imprenditore e stilista



Cultura? Sì, grazie. Una riflessione e

A DIFFERENZA DEGLI

AP French Language, German Language, Spanish Language, dove la componente culturale non viene esplicitata, l'Advanced Placement Program di italiano sin dalla sua definizione può essere considerato una dichiarazione d'intenti: Italian Language and Culture.

Nell'introduzione a *Italian Language and Culture. Course description 2008-2010* si afferma che

[...] the Italian Language and Culture course and exam have been designed to provide instruction and assessment in not just language proficiency but cultural understanding as well, all within the framework articulated in the Standard for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century.

Un programma come l'AP richiede una preparazione a largo respiro, che supera la dimensione temporale dell'anno di *High School* in cui viene impartito e coinvolge gli studenti sin dal primo approccio con l'italiano, puntando ad una adeguata preparazione sia sugli aspetti linguistici che culturali.

In questo articolo l'attenzione viene posta sugli aspetti culturali e in particolare su conoscenze socioculturali, competenza comunicativa e competenza comunicativa interculturale così come promosse nel *Common European Framework* (CEF). Questa scelta è dettata dal fatto che nell'introduzione sopra citata si dichiara che:

The course reflects the most current thinking regarding second language instruction and acquisition

e che

its aim is to develop student's reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills within a cultural frame of reference reflective of the richness of the Italian language and culture. AP Italian teachers should focus on the structural aspects of the language while interweaving cultural content throughout the course by using authentic resources, such as films, literature, audio recordings, the Internet, newspapers and magazines. (Italian Language and Culture. Course description 2008-2010)

Negli *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* una sezione viene dedicata alla cultura (*Cultures: Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures*) e una agli *Standards for Learning Italian*.

Presupposto di questo articolo sugli aspetti culturali legati all'insegnamento dell'italiano sono gli *Standards* e in particolare Standard 2.1, 2.2, 3.2, 4.2.

Gaston Caperton, Presidente del College Board, nella sua lettera di presentazione afferma che nell'ambito del programma AP gli insegnanti godono di autonomia e flessibilità, dando così spazio alla loro creatività in riferimento alla progettazione di sillabi e lezioni. Obiettivo di questo saggio è integrare le indicazioni contenute negli *Standards* con l'approccio del *Common European Framework*, al fine di presentare agli insegnanti un diverso punto di vista e degli strumenti che rispondono all'affermazione di Caperton e che possono essere utilizzati a integrazione di quanto già presente nella loro didassi quotidiana.

In questa sede proponiamo una riflessione sulle implicazioni culturali legate all'insegnamento dell'italiano a studenti AP; saranno volutamente tralasciate riflessioni specifiche riferite all'insegnamento e all'acquisizione delle lingue straniere, date per prerequisite nell'ambito di questo programma e si proporrà un modello di analisi in relazione alle implicazioni metodologiche che coinvolgono la sfera comunicativa e socio-culturale, un utile strumento da utilizzarsi nell'ambito dell'autonomia e della flessibilità degli insegnanti AP. Le indicazioni che forniremo cercheranno quindi di rispondere a tali ambiti tracciando un percorso verso la competenza comunicativa interculturale, competenza che nella sua attuazione include le linee guida dell'APP di italiano.

Presupposto di questo intervento è l'affermazione che insegnare italiano a stranieri significa insegnare a comunicare in una lingua straniera e, come più volte avremo l'occasione di sottolineare, comunicare va al di là della conoscenza e dell'uso di un sistema linguistico: implica la capacità di saper interagire con successo all'interno della cultura oggetto. Imparare una nuova lingua non significa solo padroneggiare il sistema linguistico della lingua oggetto (nel nostro caso l'italiano), ma piuttosto comunicare efficacemente nella cultura oggetto (Byram e Morgan, 1994,



Arthur "Fonzie" Fonzarelli
meccanico

Kramersch, 1993); significa anche entrare in contatto con una nuova cultura, quindi apprendere una lingua straniera deve necessariamente essere inteso come simultanea acquisizione di competenze comunicative e culturali.

L'approccio comunicativo sposta l'attenzione dalle abilità puramente "linguistiche" allo scenario ben più ampio dell'insegnamento delle lingue nelle varie dimensioni socio-culturali; il suo oggetto è la comunicazione, il ruolo centrale è attribuito all'allievo e ai suoi bisogni comunicativi.

In altri approcci, adottati in precedenza, la cultura era di solito rappresentata da produzioni 'tangibili' di una determinata società e utilizzata per praticare la lingua; con l'approccio comunicativo la cultura entra invece come indispensabile completamento alle abilità linguistiche: essa è inseparabile dalla lingua e si considera che ogni interazione con un parlante di un'altra lingua rappresenti un atto culturale (Kramersch 1993). Oggetto dell'insegnamento diventano quindi anche le forme linguistiche appropriate alla situazione comunicativa e gli aspetti non verbali delle interazioni interpersonali.

Nella letteratura glottodidattica italiana sull'educazione linguistica si identificano tre mete educative che, in ordine di acquisizione, sono: culturizzazione (io e il mondo), socializzazione (io e te) e autopromozione (io) (Balboni 2002). Spostando l'attenzione all'insegnamento della cultura, si potrebbero identificare tre aspetti che costituiscono la culturizzazione:

- l'inculturazione (la lingua e i modelli culturali acquisiti nel paese in cui si nasce),
- l'acculturazione (i modelli culturali del paese in cui si parla la lingua che si studia),
- il relativismo culturale (aspetto che può essere considerato una sintesi dei precedenti) viene raggiunto quando si riesce a guardare ai modelli altrui astenendosi da qualsiasi giudizio e rispettando risposte ai bisogni di natura diverse da quelle della propria cultura.

Va ricordato inoltre che la competenza culturale è una condizione necessaria per la socializzazione (Pavan 2000) e, dato che ogni individuo appartiene contemporaneamente a più culture (che corrispondono alle diverse identità) alle quali attinge a seconda della situazione in cui si trova, sarà importante offrire agli studenti uno spaccato della cultura italiana che rappresenti anche queste molteplici co-culture e il loro costante cambiamento.

La competenza comunicativa

Nel CEF (2.1.2) si afferma che la competenza linguistico-comunicativa comprende diverse componenti: linguistica, sociolinguistica e pragmatica e che ciascuna di queste componenti comprende, in particolare, conoscenza, abilità e saper fare.



Amedeo Peter Giannini
banchiere

Le competenze linguistiche includono conoscenze e abilità riferite al lessico, alla fonologia, alla sintassi e ad altre dimensioni del linguaggio visto come sistema, indipendentemente dalla valenza sociolinguistica delle sue variabili e dalle funzioni pragmatiche delle sue realizzazioni.

Le competenze sociolinguistiche si riferiscono ai fattori socioculturali dell'uso linguistico. Le competenze pragmatiche riguardano l'uso funzionale delle risorse linguistiche, basandosi su scenari e copioni di scambi internazionali, oltre alla padronanza del discorso, coesione e coerenza, ironia e parodia. Vediamo ora come la competenza comunicativa possa essere inserita in ambito glottodidattico.

In Balboni (2002) si sottolinea come le mete glottodidattiche da considerare per l'insegnamento di qualsiasi lingua, si articolino in due blocchi: lo sviluppo della competenza comunicativa e lo sviluppo della competenza glottomatetica, cioè imparare ad imparare l'italiano in maniera autonoma, anche al di fuori del corso, utilizzando le *authentic resources* indicate nell'*AP Course Description*.

Riprendiamo da Balboni (*ibidem*):

La nozione di competenza comunicativa rimanda alla necessità di:



- a. **saper fare lingua**, cioè la capacità di padroneggiare le abilità linguistiche;
- b. **saper fare con la lingua**, cioè la capacità di utilizzare l'italiano come strumento di azione: si tratta della **competenza pragmatica o funzionale** e della **competenza socio-culturale**;
- c. **sapere la lingua**, cioè la capacità di usare le grammatiche: fonologica, grafemica, lessicale, morfo-sintattica, testuale;



Frank Capra
regista

- d. **saper integrare l'italiano con altri codici disponibili per la comunicazione**:
 - la **competenza cinesica**, che riguarda la capacità di comprendere e utilizzare i gesti, le espressioni facciali, i movimenti del corpo, integrandoli con la lingua;
 - la **competenza prossemica**, relativa all'uso dello spazio interpersonale, alla vicinanza e al contatto con l'interlocutore, cui sono spesso legate le scelte di registro di lingua: parlando da una cattedra e con un microfono un registro colloquiale non è adeguato, così come non è adeguato un registro formale camminando a braccetto;
 - la **competenza vestemica**, secondo l'accezione di Roland Barthes, intesa come capacità di padroneggiare il sistema della moda: divise, uniformi, abiti più o meno formali, ecc.; tale competenza è stata inclusa nella elencazione dei modelli socio-culturali;
 - la **competenza oggettuale**, che rimanda all'uso di oggetti come strumenti per comunicare uno status sociale (**status symbols**), una funzione sociale, e così via. Anche questa competenza è inclusa nell'elenco dei modelli socio-culturali.

Le varie componenti della competenza comunicativa non sono isolate ed indipendenti. Al contrario, la loro realizzazione richiede l'interrelazione di tutti e quattro i saperi sopra descritti.

Conoscenza socioculturale e consapevolezza interculturale

Come abbiamo anticipato, in questo articolo l'attenzione viene posta sugli aspetti culturali e in particolare su conoscenze socioculturali, competenza comunicativa e competenza comunicativa interculturale così come promosse nel *Common European Framework (CEF)*.

Riportiamo le dichiarazioni iniziali del CEF in cui è possibile cogliere la dimensione, anche metodologica, in cui si inserisce il documento. Si noterà che la lingua è intesa come uno strumento per la comunicazione e il percorso che porta al suo apprendimento viene inescandibilmente legato allo sviluppo delle conoscenze del contesto culturale descritto nel *Quadro Comune Europeo* (Mezzadri 2004).

The Common European Framework provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. (CEF 1.1)

Nel *Common European Framework* si distinguono le competenze di chi apprende e usa la lingua in competenze generali e linguistico-comunicative (5.1 e 5.2).

Tra le competenze generali appare la conoscenza del mondo (5.1.1), la conoscenza socioculturale (5.1.1.2), che rientra nella conoscenza del mondo ma viene considerata importante e per questo trattata a parte, la consapevolezza interculturale (5.1.1.3); appaiono inoltre le abilità pratiche (5.1.2.1), interculturali (5.1.2.2) e relativi saper fare.

Riportiamo qui di seguito le descrizioni presenti nel CEF a riguardo della conoscenza socioculturale e della consapevolezza interculturale e lasciamo alla riflessione personale l'individuazione di quali possono essere gli elementi da sviluppare in riferimento alla cultura italiana, del nord e, ove differenti, del sud.

5.1.1.2 Sociocultural knowledge

Strictly speaking, knowledge of the society and culture of the community or communities in which a language is spoken is one aspect of knowledge of the world. It is, however, of sufficient importance to the language learner to merit special attention, especially since unlike many other aspects of knowledge it is likely to lie outside the learner's previous experience and may well be distorted by stereotypes.

The features distinctively characteristic of a particular European society and its culture may relate, for example, to:

1. Everyday living, e.g.:
 - food and drink, meal times, table manners;
 - public holidays;
 - working hours and practices;
 - leisure activities (hobbies, sports, reading habits, media).
 2. Living conditions, e.g.:
 - living standards (with regional, class and ethnic variations);
 - housing conditions;
 - welfare arrangements.
 3. Interpersonal relations (including relations of power and solidarity) e.g. with respect to:
 - class structure of society and relations between classes;
 - relations between sexes (gender, intimacy);
 - family structures and relations;
 - relations between generations;
 - relations in work situations;
 - relations between public and police, officials, etc.;
- Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:
- what knowledge of the world the language learner will be assumed/required to possess;
 - what new knowledge of the world, particularly in respect of the country in which the language is spoken the learner will need/be equipped to acquire in the course of language learning;
- race and community relations;
 - relations among political and religious groupings.
4. Values, beliefs and attitudes in relation to such factors as:
 - social class;
 - occupational groups (academic, management, public service, skilled and manual workforces);
 - wealth (income and inherited);
 - regional cultures;
 - security;
 - institutions;
 - tradition and social change;
 - history, especially iconic historical personages and events;
 - minorities (ethnic, religious);
 - national identity;
 - foreign countries, states, peoples;
 - politics;
 - arts (music, visual arts, literature, drama, popular music and song);
 - religion;
 - humour.
 5. Body language (see section 4.4.5). Knowledge of the conventions governing such behaviour form part of the user/learner's sociocultural competence.
 6. Social conventions, e.g. with regard to giving and receiving hospitality, such as:
 - punctuality;
 - presents;
 - dress;
 - refreshments, drinks, meals;
 - behavioural and conversational conventions and taboos;
 - length of stay;
 - leave-taking.
 7. Ritual behaviour in such areas as:
 - religious observances and rites;
 - birth, marriage, death;
 - audience and spectator behaviour at public performances and ceremonies;
 - celebrations, festivals, dances, discos, etc.



Giada de Laurentiis
cuoca e presentatrice TV



Italo Scanga
"Figure holding the sun"

5.1.1.3 Intercultural awareness

Knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the 'world of origin' and the 'world of the target community' produce an intercultural awareness. It is, of course, important to note that intercultural awareness includes an awareness of regional and social diversity in both worlds. It is

also enri-

ched by awareness of a wider range of cultures than those carried by the learner's L1 and L2. This wider awareness helps to place both in context. In addition to objective knowledge, intercultural awareness covers an awareness of how each community appears from the perspective of the other,

Nel CEF inoltre tra le abilità pratiche e saper fare (5.1.2) si enumerano le abilità interculturali e il saper fare (5.1.2.2):

5.1.2.2 Intercultural skills and know-how

These include:

- the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other;
- cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures;
- the capacity to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary between one's own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations;
- the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships.

Riconosciamo nei Goals definiti nell'*Italian Language and Culture. Course description 2008-2010* la considerazione di tutti questi aspetti, anche se focus dell'esame è la stesura di una composizione scritta su temi generali in cui si richiede

[to] write compositions in Italian on cultural topics with clarity and accuracy, demonstrating an introductory knowledge of aspects of Italian geography, contemporary life in Italy, the arts and sciences, social customs and traditions, and contributions of Italians and Italian Americans to the world.

Students are able to compare Italian culture with their own.

Competenza comunicativa interculturale

La letteratura sulla competenze comunicativa interculturale è cresciuta in maniera esponenziale a partire dagli anni Ottanta. La maggior parte della letteratura sul tema della competenza comunicativa interculturale riguarda il *management* ed il commercio internazionali, il problema dell'integrazione dei migranti, la politica linguistica e interculturale dell'Unione Europea.

Pochi studi focalizzavano l'attenzione sulla natura semiotica della competenza comunicativa interculturale e sul problema della comunicazione interculturale nell'apprendimento/insegnamento delle lingue seconde e straniere, tuttavia recentemente si è notato un interesse crescente per la competenza comunicativa interculturale per sé e in ambito glottodidattico, sia nei sistemi scolastici sia, soprattutto, nelle aziende multinazionali, dove il problema della comunicazione interculturale è quotidiano e si iscrive in una prospettiva di formazione permanente del personale.

In questo senso il Consiglio d'Europa e i suoi ricercatori hanno giocato un ruolo fondamentale (si vedano ad esempio Byram, Zarate 1997; Byram 1997; Byram, Béacco 2003).

Per competenza comunicativa interculturale si intende la capacità di interagire efficacemente in più culture, dimostrando una comprensione a livello generale in termini di cultura 'altra' e una capacità di interazione a livello comunicativo e di conoscenza del mondo. L'attenzione agli aspetti culturali nell'ambito dell'insegnamento di una nuova lingua non sono una novità e se ne trova traccia già nel

XVII secolo nell'opera di Comenio *Orbis Pictus*. Tuttavia una attenta riflessione sulle implicazioni legate alla presentazione di aspetti culturali nella classe di lingua va accuratamente condotta, soprattutto in un programma come l'AP in cui ai docenti viene chiesto di

[...]focus on the structural aspects of the language while interweaving cultural content throughout the course.

A volte esistono stereotipi pittoreschi, arcaici e folcloristici (gli zoccoli e i mulini olandesi, o i boccali di birra tedeschi, i calici di vino e la gondola nel nord est d'Italia, a Venezia) che facilmente emergono dalle pagine dei libri: essi possono corrispondere al modo tradizionale in cui determinati gruppi si riconoscono, tuttavia per sviluppare un'adeguata competenza socioculturale e abilità interculturali è meglio basarsi su un modello quale quello presentato in Balboni (2006)

- a. il software of the mind
- b. il software di comunicazione
- c. il software di contesto

Il *software of the mind* si riferisce a tutti quegli aspetti e fattori culturali che toccano la comunicazione durante lo scambio di messaggi tra due o più persone che stanno cercando di soddisfare precisi obiettivi attraverso la comunicazione. Si tratta di un software che opera come quello dei computer: l'utente è inconsapevole che stanno avvenendo determinate operazioni e se ne accorge solo quando sullo schermo appare un segnale di avviso o di errore. Si potrebbe pensare a questo software in qualità di valori culturali.

Il *software di comunicazione* si riferisce ai codici che vengono usati in un atto comunicativo, siano essi verbali o nonverbali.

L'attenzione del comunicatore è molto sbilanciata verso la comunicazione verbale, e poco si fa caso alla comunicazione nonverbale, che troppo spesso viene considerata universale.

Il *software di contesto* riguarda gli aspetti sociopragmatici che regolano inizio, svolgimento e conclusione di un evento comunicativo.

In questo quadro gli aspetti legati agli stereotipi possono avere ben scarsa adesione alla realtà del momento, per questo l'obiettivo del docente di italiano lingua straniera deve essere un adeguato sviluppo nell'apprendente di una competenza pluriculturale (e interculturale).

Imparare una nuova lingua non significa solo padroneggiare il sistema linguistico della lingua oggetto, ma comunicare efficacemente nella cultura oggetto, padroneggiare le conoscenze socioculturali, sviluppare intercultural awareness.

Ecco perché anche in un programma come l'AP all'offerta di un uso diffuso di materiali autentici, di contatti diretti con l'Italia di oggi, della massiccia presenza di elementi culturali e di una adeguata conoscenza socioculturale, così come descritti nel *Common European Framework* e sviluppati in maniera coerente in programmi che si rifanno all'autonomia e flessibilità dei docenti statunitensi, in un percorso che dalla competenza comunicativa porta alla competenza comunicativa interculturale, l'unica risposta valida è: "Sì, grazie!!"



Giuseppe Mario Bellanca
ingegnere aeronautico
e imprenditore

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L'italiano: Scope and Sequence, S

ADVANCED PLACE- MENT,

aka AP - two letters that mean everything to college-bound students as well as American high school report cards - has finally made its way into the Italian curriculum. After years of conversations, research, planning, and preparation on both sides of the coin, the AP College Board and the Italian

teachers, AP Italian at last became a reality. But now there is a threat to eliminate the exam after just a few years. Before discussing the threatened elimination, let us examine what the exam means to the high school Italian program.

At the very beginning teachers of Italian realized the tremendous amount of work entailed in preparing students for the AP exam. Luckily for the teachers in Illinois, this task became a challenge - a challenge to assess curriculum and revise areas that perhaps needed to be looked at more closely. In collaboration with college professors and members of the AP Italian team, workshops developed in order to prepare teachers to begin preparing students for the exam. In my case, it afforded me the opportunity to revisit my curriculum and take a closer look at my scope and sequence. Realistically, one does not begin to prepare for the AP exam in the fourth year or in the AP course. In order for students to be successful on the exam, they need to begin acquiring the skills necessary for success in the first year of Italian. What the workshops with my colleagues and the AP exam preparation team taught me was to look at all of the critical

skills of the exam and to include them in my courses. So many teachers began to think that they needed to reinvent the wheel. But that was not the case. As I began to look at my program I noticed that, while my teaching of the language and the culture provide the necessary skills for communication and knowledge of the history and culture of Italy, I realized that I was not including all facets of language and culture in a logical or cohesive manner. The jewels of *la bell'Italia* are not individual pieces to be looked at separately or by chapter or by unit; they must be presented as part of a coherent, integrated plan.

I began to look at what I was teaching in the various levels. I immediately began examining the required materials in the first-year course. And then I went one step further. I began to look at the subject matter of each unit and include Italian film, literature, people, geography, history, traditions, and realia to coincide with the grammar and the vocabulary of each chapter. While I had always included those components to some extent into each chapter, I now began to include them in a much more coherent way that tied everything together. One of my favorite lessons in Italian 1 is the lesson on "il bar." This is chapter two in our book and the grammar includes masculine and feminine nouns, indefinite articles, *mi piace/ti piace, ecco, c'è, and ci sono*. The vocabulary for chapter two consists of words and functional expressions related to the cultural milieu of the Italian bar. But I also initiate here our study of the regions of Italy by integrating a unit on Lazio. We learn about



Enea Bossi
ingegnere aerospaziale

The Advanced Placement examination in Italian Language and Culture (AP Italian) was introduced in academic year 2005-2006 after years of research and preparation. Advanced Placement exams allow students to take college-level courses and in some cases earn college credit while still in high school. The existence of an Advanced Placement exam in the American secondary school curriculum is a general indicator of academic rigor and prestige for a given discipline. The exams are administered by the College Board, an association that oversees a variety of services and standardized tests related to college admissions. In April 2008, the College Board announced its intention to discontinue AP Italian after academic year 2008-2009 (along with exams in Latin Literature, French Literature, and Computer Science) due to what it claims has been low interest and enrollments. In the case of Italian, the Board allowed that the exam might survive if an outside financial backer (or backers) were to step forward. A task force has since formed to lobby for AP Italian.

Given these recent developments, which have been perceived as something of a crisis, particularly among secondary school teachers, the North American editors of In.it have invited several high school teachers of Italian with long experience in the field and first-hand involvement in AP Italian to offer their personal perspectives.

kills and Components

di Linda M. Scolaro

its location, the physical geography of the region, commerce, agriculture, and tourism. We talk about the food. I ask the students to go home and prepare *spaghetti all'amatriciana* and report back the reviews from their family. They love it!

From there we begin a discussion about Rome. While one could easily spend eternity talking about *la città eterna*, I focus on my favorite street and bar (thus reintegrating the chapter theme), via dei Condotti and l'Antico Caffé Greco. We then discuss the history of this extraordinary venue as well as Piazza di Spagna, la Scalinata della Trinità dei Monti, la Fontana della Barcaccia, and of course - for some contemporary perspective - all the designers in the area. Through the use of PowerPoint, this popular Roman neighborhood and the offerings of the Antico Caffé Greco come alive in the classroom. And what would a trip to the Antico Caffé Greco be without a taste of what is offered? After a trip to the local Italian supermarket, a discussion of the euro, and how to order in an Italian bar, I transform the classroom into l'Antico Caffé Greco II.

While many might say "this is nothing new" or "I teach this all the time", the fact that the components are added to the scope and sequence of the chapter make each chapter more enjoyable, the grammar more palatable, and the culture more alive in the classroom. What I have found over the past few years is that as a result of this integration of materials, students then include realia, culture, geography and history in other projects or oral dialogues and skits without being asked to. Students begin to make connections between and among chapters rather than learning just chapter to chapter. Even at this early stage, I include authentic reading materials from Italian newspapers and magazines, even if it is a mere advertisement. Because cognates truly make Italian a little easier to navigate, students become excited about how much they can understand. Also in the beginning levels, we have included much more listening, reading, writing, directed and free response than ever before. I encourage my students to start speaking from day one and this conversation is contagious: before long the entire class is chiming in.

To this end, we have taken a closer look at the skills students need to succeed not only on the AP exam but in their classes as well. These skills, along with the College

Readiness Standards, are integral to high student achievement first within the classroom, and then on ACT, SAT, AP, and/or college placement exams. These skills and standards are also relevant across the curriculum and help students succeed in other classes. Students are able to identify the main idea, support details, establish sequence of events, make comparative relationships, provide cause and effect relationships, recognize the meaning of words, make generalizations, recognize the author's point of view, and appreciate cultural elements. In writing, students become well-versed in task completion, control of grammar, sentence structure, register, vocabulary, paragraph organization, topic development, supporting ideas, use of information from sources, and inclusion of cultural elements. All of this overflows into their speaking and listening as well.



Lacuna Coil
gruppo musicale gothic metal

It may sound like heaven, but there are still many challenges. I am fortunate to have a very successful middle school feeder program that provides approximately 15-30 first-year students in Italian 2 each year. This affords me the opportunity to offer an AP course in the fourth year in which we work primarily on the skills that the students will



L'italiano: Scope and Sequence, Skills and Components

need to be comfortable at and successful on the AP exam. By this point, these students have learned basic grammar and vocabulary and can focus entirely on the AP. Thus offering an effective AP Italian course is a greater challenge for those Italian programs that do not have middle school feeder programs. Those programs must complete the four-year curriculum as well as prepare students for the intensity of the exam.

are greater than ever. And Americans are still eager to learn Italian. Judging from a quick search on the Internet for Italian exchange and study abroad programs, interest in Italian seems to be at an all-time high for students at all levels. I have personally escorted over twenty adult and student tours to Italy over my twenty-six year career through an exchange relationship with the DalCero School in San Bonifacio (Verona).



The Sopranos

Additionally, we are constantly challenged by the lack of materials in all four of the domains: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Italian teachers are forced to create PowerPoints, find pictures, record television and radio programs, and research readings as supplementary materials. It is a daunting task and one that often takes more time than actual lesson planning. Authentic materials are sometimes difficult to come by. Luckily many teachers share materials and ideas with each other thus creating a greater repertoire of activities for the language classroom. The creation of a community of teachers with a shared bank of resources and experience helps enormously. We should do everything possible to facilitate this sort of communication in our efforts to allow AP Italian to flourish.

With the threat of the elimination of the AP exam, the challenges increase for all of us. The incredible energy and focus of those who lobbied for and created the Italian AP might suggest that its possible fall in such a short time betrays a real lack of interest or enthusiasm in the student population - that Italian's popularity is on the wane. Nothing could be further from the truth. In my experience and the experiences of most of my colleagues, Italian remains as popular as ever. Opportunities to study Italian at US middle schools, high schools, and colleges

Additionally, Italian programs have competed successfully for enrollment against other popular languages like French, German, and Spanish, even where those other languages enjoy the advantage of larger and more numerous middle school feeder programs. This has been possible because of the passion that Italian teachers have for a very rich culture that is an everyday part of American life. Italy is a constant point of reference in American popular culture and on American television, from UPS commercials to a variety of sitcoms to the food network.

In conclusion, the demands of teaching Italian these days can seem overwhelming. Pressures to maintain enrollment, research and create authentic materials, and, most recently, work towards successful AP scores keep Italian teachers forever on alert and on the lookout for effective materials and best practices. However, in my experiences with colleagues across the country and in Canada and Italy, more often than not these challenges are transformed, cocoon-like, into dazzling success stories - stories that move us well beyond the textbook, the monument, or the work of art or literature. To that end, whatever challenges we Italian teachers may currently find in our path, I am confident that we will rise above and beyond.



“Rome Wasn’t Built in a Day”

di Dorina Spiering

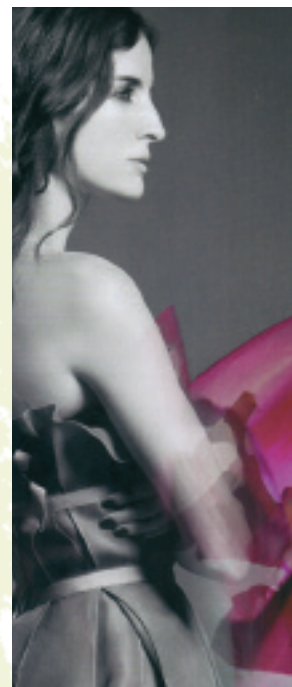
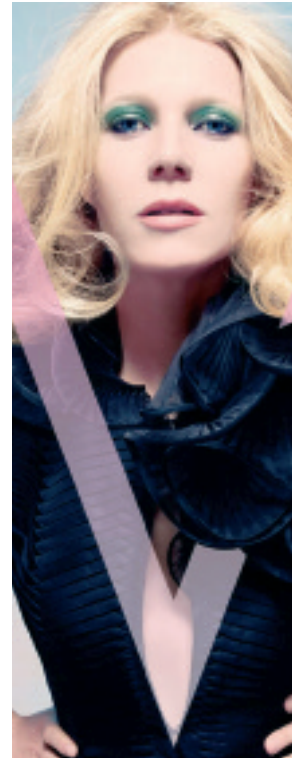
“ITALIAN” IS A BUZZ

word these days! It’s hot! Every time I turn around I see the media, marketers, and society in general attracted to the sounds and musicality of the Italian language and the sights and beauty of the Italian culture and civilization. To illustrate this observation from the vantage point of a teacher who has been teaching Italian for 35 years, I could point out the inordinate number of television commercials or magazine ads that use an Italian words like “latte” or “buon appetito” or Italian music in order to entice the public into buying a product that, often times, has nothing to do with Italian. In addition, at present Italy is the number one travel destination. Almost weekly, I fondly act as a sort of travel agent for my friends, colleagues, students, and community in assisting them with their travel questions about Italy. Clearly, this is not a propitious moment to abandon AP Italian! It is an auspicious moment to promote it with heart and soul!

I have been a teacher of Italian since 1973. I have taught Italian IV Honors for about 28 years and for the last three years I have had the pleasure and privilege of teaching AP Italian. With pride I can say that teaching AP Italian Language and Culture is truly the best thing I do as a teacher. This course, which allows the students to take the College Board AP Italian Language and Culture exam, has been a very rewarding experience for my students and for me. Truly advanced students take AP Italian in the fourth and final year of high school in place of the standard fourth-year program. The design of the fourth-year program of Italian, which in large part reflects my graduate work in Italian, has always been a very advanced and intense study of the rich Italian language and culture for my students. However, now with the AP level offering, the course truly represents a level of rigor and quality of curriculum and assessment which my students are very proud to reach.

Many of my colleagues and I have worked passionately to help promote the study of Italian and especially of AP as educators, officers, and as members of foreign language organizations such as the AATI (American Association of Teachers of Italian).

Although anything “Italian” seems to be attractive these days, the inception of an AP Italian course at my high school has contributed even more to desire for people to learn Italian. This year was a signature year for our Italian program with over 40 students applying to participate in our exchange program in Bologna, Italy; next year increased enrollments in Italian will allow us to teach two AP Italian classes for the first time. I know logically that the provision of an AP Italian course encourages many students to want to pursue Italian as their elective foreign language. Along with Italian, other AP languages such as Latin, French and German have been threatened with elimination, but they have been managed to survive thanks to outside support that helped preserve the offering of their College Board language exams. As Italian educators, we too need to give a sound argument for maintaining the AP Italian program and College Board exam; we need to continue working vigorously to increase enrollment in the AP Italian exam; we need to receive outside support from organizations that have a vested interest in the promotion of the Italian language and culture. How can our Italian high school programs rightfully compete with other foreign language high school programs that offer AP credit if the College Board decides to cancel the exam after just three years? How can we possibly abandon this endeavor so prematurely? AP Italian has been available to our students for such a short time after years of preparation. Clearly, this is an insufficient time span in which to judge the validity of the existence of an Advanced Placement Italian Exam; “Rome wasn’t built in a day” - or for that matter in a year or three or four. We need more time for AP Italian to become established. With more time and continued serious commitment (both from individuals and interested groups), the AP Italian program can be preserved and sustained. Thus, my plea would be to have a few more years to promote and to continue to develop and fine tune our AP Italian programs; in this way, we can encourage more students to enroll in AP. Additional time would also allow us to create a network of support and publicity throughout the community and ultimately throughout the country for this great opportunity to study college-level Italian at the high school level. According to our high school surveys as well as those of



Mario Sorrenti
fotografo



“Rome Wasn’t Built in a Day”

other professional organizations, Italian continues to be in high demand among students and is still very popular. We have the momentum, but we have to unite and work together to save the AP Italian program. I was elated to receive the AP Italian update from Molly Conti which summarized that with hope and determination a task force has been formed to work on the continuation of the AP Italian exam. As educators we need to support this task force vigorously and show our appreciation for their efforts and financial support.



Andrea Bocelli
cantante

Lastly, on a positive note, I would like to describe to my fellow teachers of Italian how rewarding it has been to teach Italian, and particularly AP Italian, throughout my career and why it is so very important to safeguard this most precious curriculum. In my last lecture in Italian to my AP students this year, I expressed to them in a heartfelt way my gratitude to them for allowing me to teach them the rich and beautiful Italian language and culture these past four years. I urged them to continue studying Italian in college if possible so as not to lose touch with the rich language and culture. As I reflected on the long list of cultural topics covered throughout their four years of deepening scope and sequence, I shared with them one last time a compendia of some of the themes that we had covered:

- Hope: a timeless theme embodied in Italy’s complex past that we had encoun-

tered in the stories of Italian emigration and in the struggles of antifascist partisans during World War II as represented in neorealist films like *Rome, Open City*.

- Love: from love as a literary theme as studied in the works of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio (to name just a few of the world famous writers students of Italian are privileged to read) to the Italian love of family.
- Beauty: from the natural beauty of Italy’s geography and the architectural beauty of its famous cities to the love of and appreciation for beauty evident in Italian art and contemporary design.
- “La dolce vita”: in our discussions of the Italians’ reputation for enjoying everyday life, preparing and eating good food, and celebrating traditions and holidays.
- Humanity: a culminating theme apparent only after four years studying a language, culture, and civilization that revere and ennoble the human experience.

It is evident to me that as a teacher of Italian I am able to impart so much more than the spoken and written language. My students through the years have expressed in so many different, caring ways how appreciative and grateful they have been to study “la bellissima lingua italiana”. Leaving this noble profession will be perhaps the most difficult thing I will have to do in my life. AP Italian has been in many ways a kind of crowning achievement: it is an invaluable course of study that must go forward.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to do all that we can to preserve the offering of the AP Italian exam as a way to encourage students to choose Italian as a foreign language and also to encourage them to study Italian all four years in high school. Ultimately, the future of Italian studies is with our students who will pursue the study of Italian in college only if we are able to inspire them with the appreciation of the Italian language and culture during their secondary school education. We must level the playing field with other major languages by continuing to offer AP Italian at the high school level.

Just as “Rome wasn’t built in a day”, we cannot expect the AP Italian program to be an overnight success! AP Italian will be successful in due time with everyone’s hard work and support!



Reflection on a year of teaching AP Italian Language & Culture di Ida Giampietro Wilder

ALLOW ME TO SOUND

a bit like Matteo Scuro in Tornatore's classic film "Stanno tutti bene", but ask me the question: Why would a thirty year, veteran teacher of Italian take on the challenge of a new

course, curriculum, book and all the other work that comes along with a new course at this point of her career? Answer: for the love of the Italian language and culture, for a matter of pride that Italian finally achieved AP status like other languages, and hopefully, for a guarantee for future Italian language programs in this country. In this short article, I would like to share some thoughts and reflect on probably one of the most rewarding, yet challenging years of my career.

A Bit of History

In 2006, the first year that AP Italian was offered, I was not teaching level 4 in my school, so the opportunity to offer the course was not available. In 2007, I did teach a level 4 course, but it was not classified as AP because there were not enough students who requested it as such. So instead, it was a regular level 4. However, of those students, I did have three students who decided to take the AP exam. We prepared after school once a week for about eight weeks before the exam. One student did all the work that I suggested and came religiously; the other two did not do much work and only came for review sporadically. The first student scored a 3 and the other two a one.

From last year's level 4 class I was able to recruit 13 students and this year (2007-2008) the first AP course in ANY language was scheduled in my high school. I was thrilled and proud that it was AP Italian!! As a College Board Consultant, I had prepared other teachers to teach the course and have given them many strategies for instruction, but I was not exactly sure how I was going to go about it for myself. However, I chose my materials got my program together and in this article, I'm going to explain the challenges, the opportunities, the activities and the students' performance of the past year.

Materials

During the summer, before the school year began, I went to school and prepared two binders to give each student. One contained the AP rubrics, useful websites, a list of adjectives, and a list of transitional words. The other contained reading passages, listening passages and most importantly, lists of strategies for all the skill areas: reading, writing, listening, speaking, culture, i.e. all the parts of the exam. I wanted to give the class the student version of what I give teachers in the summer institutes. I thought the students would refer to this indispensable source of information outside of class often!! They seemed grateful. However, I was forgetting that high school seniors, even if enrolled in AP courses, are still high school seniors, not always motivated and in many cases overburdened with other AP courses. I am sure they looked at the binders only when we did it together in class. I will probably create only one binder next year, and I will definitely streamline the material contained in it.

I also distributed an avalanche of material: Ponti textbook and workbook, Ace the AP, Schaum's Outlines: Italian Grammar, short stories, articles, grammar worksheets, etc. At times, the students would almost make fun at all the materials they had, but maybe it made me feel better. I finally realized I had given too much and that there wasn't time during the year to use so much material. Today I have a more realistic expectation of AP students because AP Italian is certainly not the only AP course they take.

Activities

The year started off well. We reviewed the summer work (which everyone had done - a very promising sign!) Some did better than others; we established the fact that we had to work hard to succeed in this course. We promised to speak the language more and to practice everyday. Then the real work came: new tenses (the imperfect and pluperfect subjunctive, if clauses, sequence of tenses), new readings, new vocabulary! We covered some chapters in Ponti (wow they spoke fast on the listening practices and the quizzes and tests were challenging! We used parts of "Ace": short readings, the verb and grammar completions, the directed dialogues, the "ascolto" sections. The students



Luigi Risotto
cuoco



Reflections on a year of teaching AP Italian Language & Culture



Tenente Colombo

had a chuckle or two listening to the speaker with the “funny” accent give directions!

The speaking skill was probably the most challenging for my students. For the directed dialogue practices, using the Ace book, sometimes I paired two students together to practice. After a couple of weeks, I would choose one dialogue out of the five practiced at random, I called each individual student up to my desk to have the conversation with me. I graded it using the AP rubric. Other times, as a warm up, I would choose a topic and using a bell to time the 20 seconds, I would have the conversation with an individual student or the whole class. Taping days were especially chaotic. I only had five tape recorders, so half of the class taped while the other half worked on something else. Sometimes the narration was prepared at home, sometimes it was at random. It was also a struggle to get the students to speak to each other in Italian in class. I know next year we have to practice this skill even more. We also read quite a bit, either in class or for homework: some short stories (ex: Buzzati, Marcovaldo), newspaper articles, the short readings in ACE and Ponti. Towards the end of the year when College Board released the 2006 and the practice exams, we read the reading passages from both sources. Students had to look up words and answer the questions. This work counted as quiz grades. The students found them particularly challenging. There were additional quizzes on the new vocabulary words.

Challenges and Opportunities

There never seemed to be enough time to cover all the material; there was just so much. This is where vertical teaming is crucial! The AP teacher can't do it all in the AP course. More topics must be incorporated in the lower courses to cover the necessary curriculum. There was also a period of time during third quarter when students complained about the difficulty of the material, the amount of work and their grades. Since most were taking other AP courses, I'm sure they were loaded with work. We did have a few tense days. Some students were not completing assignments and their grades were slipping. I saw this as an opportunity to teach about the challenges they would face in the future and assured them that life would be much more difficult than AP Italian.

Connections

An important strategy that I used was praise, and I really meant it. I constantly let these students know how special they were. Not only because they were the very first class of AP Language students at the school, but I reminded them that few students made it to this level. Occasionally, on Saturdays, I picked up inexpensive treats at the public market to bring on Mondays. The students were very excited about this little extra incentive! One night we had dinner with the AP Italian students from a sister high school and we took two trips to the public market as a class. One day we did cook pasta alla carbonara; we also occasionally played vocabulary games and occasionally listened to current popular music. I emphasize “occasionally”.

Somewhere during the second half of the year, something magical started to happen. Despite the challenges, their Italian was improving and the students were developing close friendships. They were becoming a family. They were (almost) always present, even though it was the first class of the day starting at 7:20 am. There were some occasional tardy students, but they enjoyed each other's company, they joked with me and each other. After the exam, we relaxed a little and we spent some time making a class yearbook (in Italian of course). It was a beautiful, lasting masterpiece, a testament of the year spent together: the ups, the downs, the joys, the frustrations, the accomplishments.

Conclusion

On the last day of class, we signed each other's yearbooks; we took many pictures and exchanged many hugs. A farewell dinner at my house culminated the year. This is a year that I will never forget. I hope one day that my students will not ever forget it either. We do not know the results of our efforts yet. We have to wait patiently until July, but I am hopeful!