**Learning Italian Through Singing and Pop Culture**

Learning a foreign language takes a lot of time, a lot of skills, and a lot of help. To learn a foreign language, you need to keep in mind your end goals – to better understand the society of the country that speaks this language, and to be able to contribute to and participate in that society. There are two things that can improve the process of learning a foreign language - the use of singing as a learning tool and the analysis of pop culture to better understand that society.

Italian is phonetic, which means that the way that you pronounce it is very similar to the way that you write it. Italian is also recognized for its rhythm and musical cadence. So, singing can help you learn Italian because the sounds made by singers such as Luciano Pavarotti and Andrea Bocelli are like the sounds made by normal Italian speakers. One of the big differences between these singers and an Italian speaker is that the singers extend all the sounds of the language when they sing, and the extension of these sounds could help a language student. A student could listen to these singers to develop a clearer idea of how to pronounce Italian words.

An Italian student could learn to sing Italian songs with a recording of the melody, for example, and while practicing, he could record himself singing. Then, the student could listen to both recordings and compare himself to the Italian singer. This activity would focus on distinguishing different sounds in Italian and correctly reproducing them, not on learning perfect classical vocal music technique.

Singing in Italian can teach you to start listening more attentively to the language and to reproduce it correctly. Extending each syllable when you sing teaches you the difference between correct and incorrect pronunciations, and it helps you make your accent closer to that of a native Italian. Then, listening to a recording of yourself shows you the things that you do very well when you sing and the things that need to be improved.

However, evidence confirms that singing can help you learn a foreign language by improving other important skills as well. For example, singing and music in general can help you remember more vocabulary with higher accuracy.

I have found articles in newspapers that support my opinion that singing can improve language learning, such as Jonross Swaby's "Saved by Song: Can Singing Improve Your Language Skills" (Swaby: "Saved by Song "). I also found academic articles and research that confirm this description of music as an effective tool for teaching and learning foreign languages. I would like to describe one of these articles, a study written by researchers at the University of California at Davis entitled "Singing Can Facilitate Foreign Language Learning" (Ludke, Karen M. et al.) It is the first evidence provided by an academic study that suggests that singing can facilitate the learning of words and phrases in a foreign language (Ludke, Karen M., et al, 1).

In this article, the authors summarize and explain a study on the use of singing to teach a foreign language. The researchers chose Hungarian as the foreign language to teach the participants and created five exams to measure their learning (Ludke, Karen M., et al, 1-3). They chose Hungarian because most English speakers do not know this language and it does not have strong historical, cultural, grammatical or linguistic ties to English (Ludke, Karen M., et al, 3). The five exams concentrate on the ability to recognize Hungarian vocabulary, remember and reproduce Hungarian phrases, find the English equivalents of Hungarian phrases, recognize and remember the correct order of syllables in Hungarian phrases that participants have already heard, and make a short conversation entirely in Hungarian (Ludke, Karen M., et al, 5-6).

The researchers measured the differences in the results of three different groups of participants (Ludke, Karen M., et al, 1-7). The first group, for example, learned spoken Hungarian words and phrases. The second group learned Hungarian words and phrases spoken with a rhythm. The third group learned Hungarian words and phrases that were sung to them (Ludke, Karen M., et al, 3-7).

The results of this research confirm that singing could serve as a useful tool for learning foreign languages. The group that listened to words and phrases sung to them did particularly well on the test judging their ability to reproduce Hungarian words and phrases (Ludke, Karen M. et al, 7-9). For the written exam judging the recognition of Hungarian words and phrases, the group that listened to spoken Hungarian words and phrases and the group that listened to sung Hungarian words and phrases obtained similar results (Ludke, Karen M., et al, 7- 9).

This study also complemented Swaby's article in the Guardian newspaper, "Saved by Song: Can Singing Improve Your Language Skills?" This article tells the personal experience of journalist Jonross Swaby. He had learned Spanish and Portuguese, but native speakers could not understand him because of his strong accent (Swaby, "Saved by Song"). Then, he started to sing in Spanish and Portuguese, and he found that singing in these languages improved his linguistic ear and his accent (Swaby, "Saved by Song"). Now, he communicates with ease (Swaby, "Saved by Song").

I have described how singing could be an effective tool for learning foreign languages, including Italian. Now, I would like to describe how you can reinforce and extend this learning by analyzing pop culture. I will start with the example of the Italian singer-songwriter Lucio Battisti.

Lucio Battisti is one of the greatest Italian musicians of the twentieth century. The New York Times newspaper writes that even decades later, Battisti remains a major figure in Italian pop culture. He defined the music of the Italian youth of the Sixties and Seventies (The New York Times, "Lucio Battisti"). For his influence on Italian culture, you can compare Battisti to the American musician Bob Dylan (The New York Times). Battisti serves as an ideal example of popular culture and Italian music, and so, he plays a significant role in the cultural history of modern Italy.

Battisti is famous as an entertainer who sang and played the guitar. However, he is also famous as a prolific singer-songwriter (The New York Times). He composed most of his own songs, such as "Il mio canto libero," but he also composed many successful songs for other Italian and international musicians such as The Hollies and Gene Pitney (The New York Times).

Lucio Battisti was a very mysterious person who influenced Italian culture not only with music but also with his private and reserved nature. He stopped doing concerts for Italian television in the Sixties – early in his career. His reasons were not very clear (Libero Quotidiano, "Mogol svela il motivo "). For years, he also fought in secret against a very serious disease, liver cancer, before losing his battle. He made his illness known only towards the end, before dying in 1998 at 55 years old (The New York Times).

An Italian teacher could use Lucio Battisti's music to create effective language-learning activities and lessons. When I studied in Florence during the fall semester of 2017, one of my teachers created an activity that used Lucio Dalla's songs to help the class learn Italian. She removed several of the lyrics and we listened to the song to find the missing words. In my opinion, this type of activity can significantly improve listening and comprehension skills.

You can use Battisti’s music this way to facilitate better language learning. You can also use it to learn the cultural history of modern Italy, with lessons in which you accompany one of his songs with an explanation of its cultural and historical context. Groups of students in the class could discuss the song and its cultural and historical contexts.

In conclusion, singing can serve as an effective tool for learning Italian. Many different activities and lessons use singing and music in general to help improve language learning. Then, a teacher can reinforce and extend this learning by analyzing Italian pop culture, with examples such as the music and history of the singer-songwriter Lucio Battisti.