



Teaching Italian through Film

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Abstract

In today's world of total immersion video games and online virtual worlds teaching a foreign language using books and paper is so last century that I am certain it is done only when technology is not available. Learning only happens when it is either shared or applied. By using wonderfully interesting classical Italian Films it is possible to both immerse the students within the world of the film and its language, and to provide the opportunity to both use the language and share it.

Classical films, such as Giuseppe Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso* draw the students in and some scenes are so dramatic the students can guess the meaning without the subtitles. I can rewind and turn on the subtitles and they see how close they got. Throughout the term I use one or two films, and maybe a documentary, if there is special interest, as with my culinary students who enjoy Jamie Oliver. I play short clips in class for discussion and practice, and a number of different activities, then assign some for home watching. Often beginners are surprised they understand so much. When students stretch their minds this way they are learning by discovery, just as young children learn their first language.

I use classic films and documentaries, showing scenes that are appropriate to the vocabulary. Some scenes are very rich in props and the students can identify the vocabulary words. I can pause and freeze frame so we can pick out all the things we know. Then I use short clips for the verbs. I do keep the film linear, to keep their interest in the story. What makes this exciting is, as the students gain in ability, they become able to discuss what they're seeing in Italian. Slowly throughout the term I am able to eliminate English completely.