

U.S. and Italian Homes

Classroom at a Glance

Teacher:	Marylee DiGennaro
Language:	Italian II
Grade:	9
School:	North Haven High School, North Haven, Connecticut
Lesson Date:	October 9
Class Size:	11
Schedule:	Block schedule, 82 minutes every other day

Video Summary

In this lesson, students practice vocabulary relating to homes, furnishings, and directions. First, they compare typical U.S. and Italian homes, using their own drawings and a PowerPoint presentation by Ms. DiGennaro. Next, they practice vocabulary words as they match labels to pictures of furniture, play a card game, and even dance! Students then use the vocabulary in two final activities: They follow classmates' directions to place pictures of furniture on a floor plan on the board, and then work in pairs to draw a picture of a home described by their partner.

Standards Addressed

- Communication: Interpersonal
- Cultures: Practices, Products
- Comparisons: Cultural
- Communities: School and Community

Read about these standards at the end of this lesson.

Key Terms

- negotiation of meaning
- thematic units

Definitions for these terms can be found in the Glossary located in the Appendix.

Class Context

“Students are very curious about culture. Making connections to that culture and comparisons between theirs and ours is very important for them. The language that they’re learning right now might not continue with them for the rest of their lives, but information about the culture and an appreciation for the culture might.”—Marylee DiGennaro

School Profile

Marylee DiGennaro teaches Italian II–V at North Haven High School in North Haven, Connecticut. The community’s 24,000 residents are mostly professionals, and a large percentage are Italian American. As a result, many of North Haven High School’s 1,045 students choose to study Italian. The school also offers Spanish, Latin, and French as part of its college-preparatory curriculum.

Lesson Design

The World Languages Department at North Haven High School uses a thematic curriculum based on the Standards. Ms. DiGennaro sequences these thematic units for her class based on her students’ interests and events that occur at particular times of the year (for example, holidays). Using a textbook as a springboard, she designs each lesson to include cultural issues and to address different learning styles. Ms. DiGennaro also offers students multiple opportunities to communicate with her, with each other, and with students

Year at a Glance

Going to School in Italy

Living in Italy: Dwellings and Furnishings

Living in Italy: Family

Living in Italy: Daily Activities in the Home

Family Gatherings

- Birthdays, celebrations, and holidays

Gift-Giving and Receiving; Shopping

Food Shopping

Italian Restaurants/Bars and Meals

Going Out To Eat

Planning for a Vacation

Class Context, cont'd.

from other countries. “It’s not just having them learn something,” she says, “but also be able to use it in a situation that might happen in another country in real life.”

The Lesson

In the videotaped lesson, students participated in multiple activities using vocabulary about the home. To reinforce the lesson and further explore cultural connections, the students prepared to use their new vocabulary in an ongoing email exchange with students in Cagliari, on the island of Sardinia, Italy. Prior to this school year, Ms. DiGennaro searched online for Italian high schools with email addresses. She contacted several schools and found Cagliari had a high school class whose students were studying English and were interested in corresponding. As a regular part of their lessons, Ms. DiGennaro’s students correspond one-on-one with the Italian students, who give them information about the topic they are studying. “I think it was nice for them to have that input from someone other than me,” she says.

Key Teaching Strategies

- **Appealing to Multiple Intelligences:** The teacher incorporates different nonverbal approaches, such as bodily/kinesthetic and musical/rhythmic, into lessons.
- **Providing Interactions With Native Speakers:** The teacher designs opportunities for students to use the target language with native speakers, either in person, over the phone, or via email.
- **Visualizing Vocabulary:** The teacher uses visuals to establish concrete images of vocabulary and to help students remember the terms.

Analyze the Video

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

Before You Watch

Respond to the following questions:

- When teaching large sets of vocabulary, how do you sequence and vary activities?
- How do you demonstrate the cultural meaning of words when translation is not sufficient?
- How do you ensure that learning new vocabulary leads to communication? How do you ensure that you are drawing on students' multiple intelligences when teaching vocabulary?
- What are some advantages of establishing an email relationship with a school from another culture?

Watch the Video

As you watch "U.S. and Italian Homes," take notes on Ms. DiGennaro's instructional strategies, particularly how she structures and sequences multiple vocabulary activities. Write down what you find interesting, surprising, or especially important about the teaching and learning in this lesson.

Reflect on the Video

Review your notes, and then respond to the following questions:

- Describe students' progress as they learn the vocabulary during the span of this class period.
- What is the value of the PowerPoint presentation to the lesson?
- How does Ms. DiGennaro lead students to make cultural comparisons without overgeneralizing?
- What is the benefit of the dance for students? How do students react?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

Look Closer

Take a second look at Ms. DiGennaro's class to focus on specific teaching strategies. Use the video images below to locate where to begin viewing.



Video Segment: Comparing Homes

You'll find this segment approximately 3 minutes after the video starts. Watch for about 4 minutes.

Students share drawings of a typical American home exterior, and then discuss some similarities and differences between American and Italian homes.

- What tasks does the homework assignment set up?
- How does Ms. DiGennaro have students explore the Comparisons standard?
- After students work in pairs to compare American and Italian houses, Ms. DiGennaro brings them together to share insights. Observe the language of the three students who respond, beginning with Viviana. How does each student's response illustrate individual growth using language in interpersonal communication?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

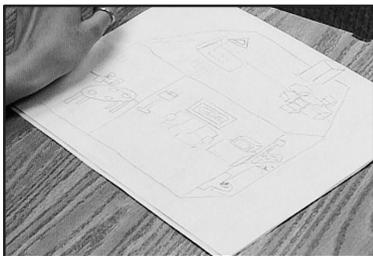


Video Segment: Identifying Furniture

You'll find this segment approximately 9 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 5 minutes.

Students match labels to pictures of Italian furniture.

- What is the added value of using pictures of furniture from Italian magazines?
- What strategies does Ms. DiGennaro use to help students understand and remember the vocabulary?
- What example of a student "negotiating meaning" stands out in this segment?
- How do students engage in guessing and active learning while matching labels to pictures of furniture? How does Ms. DiGennaro encourage students without revealing answers?



Video Segment: Drawing From Directions

You'll find this segment approximately 22 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 2 minutes.

Students draw a picture of a house described to them by their partner.

- How does this activity serve as an informal assessment of the lesson?
- How well do students communicate their message?
- What makes this an effective activity?

Connect to Your Teaching

Reflect on Your Practice

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

- What kinds of vocabulary-learning activities do you use?
- How do you maintain a sense of cultural authenticity when focusing on vocabulary learning?
- How do you structure vocabulary study to move students from learning single words to engaging in communicative activities?
- What kinds of bodily/kinesthetic or musical/rhythmic activities do you use? How do you make students feel comfortable enough to participate in these activities?
- How might an ongoing email exchange provide students with communication and cultural experiences?

Watch Other Videos

Watch other videos in the *Teaching Foreign Languages K–12* library for more examples of teaching methodologies like those you’ve just seen. Note: All videos in this series are subtitled in English.

- “Touring a French City” (French) demonstrates multiple activities for learning and practicing vocabulary.
- “Happy New Year!” (Japanese) illustrates the use of visuals and cultural perspectives to teach vocabulary to a class with a strong Japanese heritage.
- “A Place I Call Home” (Arabic) presents a sequence of activities that builds vocabulary and lets students demonstrate their learning in conversation.

Connect to Your Teaching, cont'd.

Put It Into Practice

Try these ideas in your classroom.

- Use multiple activities to encourage students to attach meaning to vocabulary words. Although the teacher is often the source of initial vocabulary presentation, students must be actively engaged in associating words and meanings in a number of formats so that they can recall them short and long term. For presentation, group large vocabulary units into chunks of related words to help students learn terms through association. Students learn and remember new words better if they can organize them into categories. Ms. DiGennaro used the following sequence for her lesson: Housing styles, rooms, furniture, and words of location. To illustrate meaning for individual words, you can match the terms to visuals. Younger students benefit from clear line drawings or illustrations from children's books in the target language. High school students, such as those in Ms. DiGennaro's class, can use photographs and magazine pictures. Some vocabulary can also be taught through actions, such as the directions vocabulary Ms. DiGennaro taught through a kinesthetic activity—the dance. After the initial presentation, practice should be varied and scaffolded from activities that focus on recognition (for example, matching definitions, following directions, or manipulating items or visuals), to activities that focus on recall (for example, a card game or a pair or group competition), and finally to those that focus on usage (describing, expressing preferences, or discussing similarities and differences).

Connect to Your Teaching, cont'd.

- Use authentic images to help students connect language to a cultural context. Direct translation of everyday words conveys their meaning, but images can help evoke a feel for the culture. Photographs, Web sites, and magazine pictures can provide memorable images to correspond with a set of vocabulary terms about homes, villages, cities, clothing, sports, and much more. In Ms. DiGennaro's class, magazine pictures of furniture illustrated a sense of Italian style, and the labels students attached to the pictures served as a vocabulary review. The visuals also aided students in their comparison of U.S. and Italian homes and furnishings by exposing them to visual differences that may not have been obvious otherwise. You can add this cultural authenticity to many units.
- Look for ways to involve students in direct communication with peers from the target culture. Students can write emails or send written or videotaped messages by mail. This exchange allows students to use language in real communication and learn about the target culture from an authentic source. Try to include regular opportunities for your students to communicate with students in the target culture so that their content knowledge and communication abilities can both expand. Successful exchanges require a commitment from both schools. Some teachers have found schools through online sources or professional associations.

Resources

Lesson Materials

Card Game Instructions*

Instructions for the card game played by students to review furniture vocabulary

Email Rubric*

Ms. DiGennaro's rubric for grading student email correspondence with the Italian students (includes English translation)

* These lesson materials can be found in the Appendix.

Curriculum References

Connecticut State Department of Education: World Languages

<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=320936>

Marylee DiGennaro's Recommendations

Web Resources:

Casa.it

<http://www.casa.it>

A real estate Web site that gives descriptions of houses and apartments for sale or rent (available in Italian only)

Google

<http://www.google.com/>

The popular search engine can be used to find images of Italian furniture; click on the "Images" tab and enter the name of a piece of furniture or room in Italian to get images from Italian Web sites

Standards

World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages

The *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* create a roadmap to guide learners to develop competence to communicate effectively and interact with cultural understanding. This lesson correlates to the following Standards:

Communication

Communicate effectively in more than one language in order to function in a variety of situations and for multiple purposes

Standard: Interpersonal Communication

Learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions.

Cultures

Interact with cultural competence and understanding

Standard: Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives

Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the cultures studied.

Standard: Relating Cultural Products to Perspectives

Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the products and perspectives of the cultures studied.

Comparisons

Develop insight into the nature of language and culture in order to interact with cultural competence

Standard: Cultural Comparisons

Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Standards, cont'd.

Communities

Communicate and interact with cultural competence in order to participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world

Standard: School and Global Communities

Learners use the language both within and beyond the classroom to interact and collaborate in their community and the globalized world.