Summary of Master Degree Thesis

“Italian Language for Specific Purposes. The experience at the Military Institute of Foreign Languages of the Jordanian Army.”

By

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This work is a case study, to be inscribed in a general reflection about humanistic-affective didactics of foreign languages in a particular context and especially about the Language for Specific Purposes (LSS).

The aim is to give a contribution to the theoretic definition of the military micro-language in Italian. In fact, we believe that to define every single micro-language can help to define the concept of Micro-Language in general, so to enable teachers to set the right teaching acts.

The first part of the work is the description of the case, i.e. our direct teaching experience at the “Military Institute of Foreign Languages” of the Jordanian Army. In it are provided all the details about the Institute in general and specifically about the courses of Italian Language: the context of the class, the peculiarity of the learners, teaching approaches, methods and techniques used during the course.

Many practical examples of the above mentioned techniques are described in a gradual order of difficulty according to the linguistic aims and the social competence required. The chosen approach was the “humanistic-affective”, so the Cooperative Learning as method. In the stage of micro-language teaching the Cooperative Learning was also applied between the learners and the teacher, since the students already had the knowledge of the contents while the teacher has the knowledge of the language. As a matter of fact, in front of a class of adults it is indispensable to clarify such kind of choices the teacher made and to remind them quiet often the benefits that we are sure they will experience in a short delay: nevertheless a certain reluctance was perceptible during the first two month of course, until the students themselves were able to realize that they made very good progress. Students were encouraged to work in pairs or in small groups of three and by mixing them very frequently we adopted the technique of “peer tutoring”, but avoiding to declare to the learners who we think will be the guide/teacher of the other/others., not to hurt their sensibility in such a difficult emotional situation like the military hierarchy is. In this way, with a little care, at least at the beginning, avoiding putting together people in evident rivalry, the students acquired soon the social competences that mediate the learning process. Learning activities built as games were
very useful to channel the feelings of (negative) competition, especially if the subject was a member of a team and not a lonely player.

Reaching the stage of micro-language teaching, it is necessary that the Cooperative Learning mechanics are already well established, both between students (horizontal cooperation) and between the teacher and the students (vertical cooperation).

Many of the authentic materials that have been used during the lessons are also presented, but, before this, a large part of the work is consecrated to the explanation of what is meant by LSS and micro-language.

The above mentioned theoretic premises take into consideration the relation between general Italian and the LSS, they also focus on the needs of the students and the role of the teacher, and then they are followed by our proposal of analysis of the Italian military micro-language, starting from the corpus provided for the courses from the Italian Military Attaché (the financer and supervisor of the courses). According to the widely recognized studies on LSS, that we resume and quote in our work, the military language is indeed a Language for Specific Purposes, since it is often scientific (aimed to a scientific knowledge) and professional, because it is often used for the interaction between specialists, with practical purposes, without ambiguities and it is totally non referential.

Also from the sociolinguistic point of view the military language fulfills the characteristics individuated by the linguists. The pragmatic aims come true in the referential field, in the instructional one and in the metalinguistic one (even this micro-language creates his neologisms, makes use of non-verbal representations, etc.). Moreover, the intercultural aspect was taken into consideration since the beginning of the course.

The documents provided for the teaching sessions were from both popular magazines and professional works. Magazines are often misprinted but contain pictures and charts always very useful for the comprehension. It the thesis is shown with many quotations that hypotaxis and non-defining relative clauses characterize both textbooks and magazines and follow the analysis of the verbal tenses and other textual elements always indicated by the linguists as characterizing micro-languages systems.

The last stage was to create study materials to be used during the teaching class, even in a different context, and a glossary in Arabic and Italian of the vocabulary and expressions most used in the corpus above mentioned.