LADINO, LANGUAGE OF THE SEFARDIC JEWS

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**Grade of class**: middle and junior high

**Course lesson taught in**: transversal during Spanish language and English language lessons

**Category of lesson**: Jewish Identity/preparation for family root project

**Grades**: middle and junior high

**Age**: 12 – 17

**Required time**: 3 lessons, 50 min each (if you follow through the same lesson parts as described further below)

**Material to prepare**:   
- white board (to save time)

- TV screen with connected to a computer or other multimedia devices (forehand preparation of the links for the Ladino song on Youtube and the video from the Centropa website)

- pencils and paper to give out for group work

- printed copies of the text of the ladino song

- printed copies with guiding questions to help write the homework

- I recomend as well to prepare the written text of the summary video lesson by Eliezer Papo

—> the teacher should have at least a brief idea of what the Ladino language is.

**Summary of goals**: Awaken curiosity for their family roots; broaden their perception of themselves and their cultural heritage; “tearing down” of the virtual walls of their “virtual Ghetto” -> see explanation at the bottom about Roman Jewish comunity in order to understand what is intended.

**Background information**

A. **The context** :

1. *Reason*: Most members of our Roman Jewish community are of sefardic

origins, but are without any knowledge about their roots.

2. *Reason*: The second required European foreign language at our school is Spanish - but is disliked by a great part of our students. In Italy the choices for second European language are Spanish, French and German — the first mandatory foreign language being English.

3. *Goals*:

- gaining knowledge which will help build their identity

- creating emotional ties towards the argument

- exercising the work in groups since teamwork is a very important skill

- exploring their roots should help the students to be proud of who they are even if their personal family background is a poor and simple one.

4. *Centropa resources*:

- video lesson of Eliezer Papo

- the biography resources on the Centropa website

5. *Background skills*: no specific background skills needed

—> actually on the contrary: these lessons require only basic use of all the human senses and in doing so offer equal possibilities to all students specially for the weaker students because of the group work, use of multimedia and the homework guide by questions thus not only addressing their interlectual comprehension.

**THE LESSON ITSELF**

**I. First lesson (Spanish language lesson - but the discussions were held in Italian)**

*1. Motivation* : awaken their curiosity by letting them listen to a song in Ladino. Any Ladino song will do — I used the following: “El Rey Nimrod” by Yehoram Gaon. Song link on youtube : <http://youtu.be/W7LCM1DaStI>

After listening to the song I asked the students if they understood the song —all of it or only parts. I asked for examples of what they remember of having understood. Then every students gets the songtext and we take turns in reading the text aloud.

**The songtext**:

*Cuando el rey Nimrod*

*Kuando el Rey Nimrod al kampo salía mirava*

*en el syelo i en la estreyería vido una luz santa*

*en la Djuderíake avía de naser Avraham Avinu.*

*coro:*

*Avraham Avinu, Padre kerido*

*Padre bendicho, luz de Yisrael Avraham Avinu,*

*Padre kerido Padre bendicho, luz de Yisrael.*

*Luego a las komadres enkomendava*

*ke toda mujer ke prenyada kedasse si no pariera al punto,*

*la matasse ke avía de naser Avraham Avinu. (coro)*

*La mujer de Terah kedó prenyadai de diya en diya el le demandava¿*

*De ké teneish la kara tan demudada?*

*eya ya sabía el bien ké tinía.(coro)*

*En fin de mueve meses parir kería iva kaminando por kampos i vinyas,*

*a su marido tal ni le dishkuvríatopó una meará i ayí lo pariría (coro)*

*En akeya ora el nasido favlava*

*"Andávos mi madre, de la mearáyo ya topo ken me alejasse*

*mandará del syelo ken me akompanyará*

*porke só kriado de El Dio Baruh."*

*(coro)*

*Saludemos agora al kompadrei tambien*

*al mohelke por su Zehut nos vengael*

*Goel i Rihma a todo Yisrael,*

*sierto loaremos al Vedradero,*

*al vedradero de Yisrael*

Then we start analysing the words. I divided the students in groups of 4-5 since it gets them more involved.

**Guiding questions**:

* What is Spanish?
* What did or did you not understand?
* Did you understand the entire text or only parts of it?
* Did you like the song and the sound of the words?

At the end of the lesson I collected the discussion notes from every group. I brought them back to class for the third lesson.

**HOMEWORK**:

A brief research summary about the Ladino language.

**II. Second lesson (English lesson)**

* Viewing of Eliezer Papo’s video in English. The videolink can be found on the Centropa website: <http://youtu.be/>L7kAhnzkNT0

I usually show the video twice - once non-stop from the beginning to the end and then during the second time we’re watching it in parts explaining vocabulary (while I explain the students are suposed to take notes).

* Hand out of printed homework questions.

**HOMEWORK**:

Short essay based upon the information they got from the video.

**III. Third lesson (English lesson - but part of the discussion is in Italian, depending on the level of knogwgledge of the english language).**

* reading aloud in class of several of the essays written as homework
* followed by reading aloud parts from the notes which had been written during the first lesson in the diffrent groups
* discussion in class: what do you know about your families and their sefardic roots. Whose grandparents/ancestors know Ladino?

**HOMEWORK** :

- Take your Ipad and do a short video interview with your grandparents. Ask them about their sefardic roots and listen to what they have to tell you.

- If you don’t want to or can’t interview your relatives choose a biography and one of its photographs from the Centropa website and do an imaginary interview of that person or describe the photo based on the information form the biography.

**REFLECTIONS**

**My experience teaching this lesson**: my students got interested in a subject they never thought about before.

**What worked well**: grouping up the class during the first lesson worked very well and preparing all the material beforehand was essential.

**What I might do different**: I would prepare a hand- out of the text of the video for more efficent comprehension.

In order to elaborate the contents of the video, I would use group work as well during the second part of the third lesson using the written text of the video - instead of me explaining it, I would rather move among the groups and give explanations where needed.

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**:

I am a teacher in the Jewish school of the Jewish comunity of Rome, teaching in middle and junior high. The age range of my students goes from 11 to 19 years of age I teach hebrew language and I am a trainer teacher for special education

I am also involved in diffrent extra curricular afternoon activities in our school

some additional historical information about our jewish comunity here in Rome

Historicaly the jewish comunity of Rome has very ancient roots and had

always lived a very particular situation because of the dominant presence of the Vatican . Because of vatican laws jews living in Rome spent some 315 years ( from 1555-1870) in a closed Ghetto .The Ghetto was established by

Pope Paul IV. Jews in the Ghetto lived in incredible poverty and cramped conditions, which only grew worse and worse as the population grew. (The community counted some 7,000-9,000 by the time the Ghetto walls were finally opened in 1870.) The area on which the Ghetto was built-, marshy, flood-prone land that backed up directly against the Tiber River-- was the least desirable land in the city.

Jews were allowed to leave the Ghetto during daylight hours, but outside the Ghetto they had to wear clothing that identified their religion--yellow hats with bells for men, and two blue stripes across the chest (the same mark given to indicate prostitutes) for women. Like in other countries, Jewish men were largely restricted to two types of work--money lending and peddling clothes. This is a very significant element because it left such a deep psicological “sign” on people which is notabile even until today.

I will mention only few examples

1.Because being confined to the Ghetto and not being allowed to interact with the catholic part of the population ,jews could only marry among themslves which meant the inhabitants of the Ghetto - and as a result of this nowadays everyone is bloodrelative to everyone —one big family ,not only in a figure of speech . Even after the opening of the Ghetto this did not stop right away and until today a lot of marriges are made among cousins. Most members of the comunity describe themselves and their fellow comunity members as “still living in a virtual Ghetto “

2.Because of the Ghetto only very few professions had been allowed to be exercised and were maintained until today which means the a large number of comunity members are merchands - mostly of clothing.

3.The closed Ghetto conditions ( not only the real walls ) as well as great poverty resulted in low cultural creativity or unadequate cultural preservation . As a result the roman jewish comunity was always considered as an uneducated one -and this prejustice somehow is still quite present in everybodys mind - in part because - looking at the actual facts -even today a lage number of our student’s parents have a very low educational bachground.These comunity structures changed only in the 1960 ’s helped by the large influx of Lybian Jews who fled their country after the israeli 6 day war .As a result of this historic past it is easier to talk about Israel than about family roots with some of the student ’s parents .—> and that’s why a family root project is so important.