



Il Centro



Museo Italiano Resource Centre Newsletter
199 Faraday Street, Vic 3053 Tel: 9349 9022 Fax: 9349 9091

www.coasit.com.au, email: rose@coasit.com.au Vol.19, Issue 1, February 2011

SATURDAY OPENINGS FOR 2011

(Open 10.00 a.m. – 2.00 p.m.)

5th March, 14th May,
13th August, 12th November

Opening hours :

Mon **CLOSED**

Tues 9.00am- 8.45pm*

Wed 9.00 pm- 5.00

Thurs 9am-5pm

Fri 9am-5pm

Note: Late night opening on Tuesday applies only during the school term, and not during the holidays.

Geelong Italian Language Resource Centre

Belmont High School,
108 Gieromoghan Street,
Geelong, 3220

Phone : 5243 5355

This edition of "Il Centro" is published by Museo Italiano Resource Centre, Carlton and is compiled by Rose Patti.

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Appunti : When, in October last year, the Resource Centre re-located to its new premises at 189 Faraday Street, numerous titles were weeded, namely, videos, cassettes and outdated materials. The collection may now be diminished but space has been created for growth with new resources being added to the collection regularly.

Our new location has the advantage of being in close proximity to the **Museo Italiano** exhibition, which, this year will be offering targeted staff led language programs for Primary and Secondary students of Italian. There is always the option of teachers conducting their own self-guided visit with free admission. However, in order to avoid overcrowding all school groups must be booked in prior to the visit (Museo Italiano Cultural Centre **9349 9080.**) Full details are in the "Spazio Aperto" section of this newsletter.

The content of the three issues of *Orizzonti* for 2011 has been selected being :

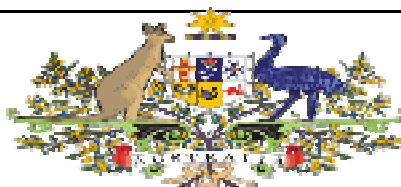
Edition 1 : **I Giovani** (2011 being the International Year of Youth)

Edition 2 : **Terra e Mare**

Edition 3 : **Informatica**

This educational magazine comprising activities Year Prep to VCE is only available via hyperlink to subscriber schools / teachers.

Included in this Newsletter is a current subscription form for the teachers / schools who have not yet renewed their membership for 2011. Remember that one benefit is the free postal service (one way only) comprising of 2 mailouts to metropolitan schools and unlimited mailouts to country schools. Please contact us at anytime if you require resources and our best wishes for a happy and productive year.



Congratulations to Anna Cavadon, LOTE Italian Teacher at St Fidelis, Moreland and St Anthony's, Alphington and former secretary for 27 years of The Dante Alighieri Society Melbourne, who this Australia Day received the award OAM (Medal of Australia) for honorary service to the Italian Community.



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School Subscription Conditions for Italian Resource Centre

I, the undersigned, hereby apply for subscription of Co.As.It. Italian Resource Centre Library for the person/s named above.

Whilst a subscriber of the Library I agree to:

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Conditions for viewing material at the Italian Historical Society

1. The IHS reserves the right to refuse access to its collection
2. Smoking, eating and drinking is not permitted in the IHS.
3. No ink may be used in the archive, use pencil only. Computers may be brought in and used at the discretion of the IHS.
4. All archival material must be handled with care. Do not write on the material or trace illustrations or maps. Do not fold documents or place books face down. Do not lean on material or place other documents or objects on the material.
5. No material may be removed from the archive.
6. It is the responsibility of persons requesting a copy of material (Other than small amounts for the purposes of research) to first have permission from the creator of the document.
7. Use of cameras or scanners in the IHS is forbidden.
8. Copying and reproduction of materials in the IHS archive are subject to charges.
9. The material is not to be absorbed into another repository nor added to any database without the written consent of the Italian Historical Society.

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Dimmi, Dimmi



The Victorian Languages Strategy initiative will provide the basis for future LOTE programs in Victorian Schools. The following article is from Shine Magazine (November 2010, Issue 10) the official publication of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and is reproduced with permission from the editor.

“The recently launched Languages Learning for the 21st Century The Victorian Languages Strategy aims to increase student participation, engagement and achievement in languages education through to 2020. It outlines the key elements of an effective guidance on how effective programs can be delivered.

A key feature of the strategy is a new framework, developed by languages education expert Professor Joseph Lo Bianco in consultation with the Department, which supports school leaders to deliver effective languages programs.

“The framework is designed to broaden understanding of what constitutes an effective program,” Prof. Bianco says. “Evidence suggests that effective programs include four key elements: teaching the language, exploration of themes and subjects (such as geography or maths) using the language, application of the language in real world contexts, and using assessment, including corrective feedback, to enhance learning,” he explains.

The strategy supports schools to include all of these elements in their languages programs. It also encourages schools to tap into a wide range of resources, in and beyond the classroom, which support languages learning. These resources promote greater flexibility in the delivery of language assistants, sister schools, the Victorian School of Languages, community language schools and numerous resources offered by ICT.

One Victorian school already harnessing the power of ICT for languages education is Point Cook P-9 College, where students use iPods, voice recorders, flip cameras, CartoonLife software, electronic whiteboards and music, all of which LOTE coordinator Jennifer Hayes also uses for assessment.

“The students love using these resources and the engagement is unbelievable,” she says. “We have a LOTE wiki space for Indonesian and we upload the students’ written and spoken work so that they can share it with each other and their families. They also create their own avatars and write the text to go with it.

“They especially love making movies with the flip cameras and using the iPods as they can watch clips of themselves and listen to their pronunciation, so it’s great for self-assessment and feedback.”

The strategy provides support for the revival and reclamation of Aboriginal languages, including funding for the development of the Mirimaa database, a repository of Aboriginal languages. In addition, the strategy will provide teachers with opportunities for in-country immersion and professional learning, and a number of scholarships will be offered for new languages teachers. A peer-mentoring program will introduce university students studying languages into school language classes to promote student engagement and language use. A pilot project will also bring schools together to plan languages programs within their school

network. This will enable schools to provide greater continuity in their languages programs and to share ideas and resources.”

To download the strategy, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/teaching/resources/lote/languagesstrategy

Also, from the same source, ***Shine Magazine*** (November 2010, Issue 10) is the following advice from the Victorian Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat.

How learning a language can improve literacy skills

- Learning a language improves literacy skills, including English literacy skills.
- Importantly, teaching and learning of languages does not reduce the time spent developing literacy skills but rather enhances it.
- International research has demonstrated that learning a second language enhances and enriches children’s language experience, and offers them unique insights and opportunities for the development of cognitive skills that are unavailable to the monolingual learner.
- Languages learning improves children’s reading readiness due to the enhancement and acquisition of metalinguistic awareness, a key preparatory skill for reading.
- Children and young people in bilingual programs show higher levels of word awareness than those who are monolingual, which also assists in reading.
- Learning another language also provides opportunities for children and young people to develop their skills in making meaning from texts, a key component of literacy which is common to, and transferable between, all languages.
- In addition, children and young people who study a language learn to understand language as a system and have the ability to :
 - recongise the relationship between the form of a word and its meaning
 - talk about a language as an object
 - think about the different components that make up a language
 - compare different language systems and so gain a better understanding of English
 - make better guesses on unfamiliar words.

This information can be found in Promoting the Benefits of Language Learning – Sue Fernandez at

www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/teachlearn/student/promobenefitslangleaming.pdf

Teaching and Learning Languages Other Than English (LOTE) in Victorian Schools

www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/publ/research/publ/language-learning-report.pdf

For more visit

www.education.vic.gov.au/researchinnovation

www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/litnum

www.education.vic.gov.au/vlms

Spazio aperto

Italian Language Assistants for 2011

You will find the application form and other information pertaining to this program on the COASIT website : <http://www.coasit.com.au/education.php> under the heading: **Italian Short Term Teachers/Language Assistants.**

Applications close 21 February 2011. As in previous years, Assistants should be here for the start of term 2.

Completed applications should be sent to :

Ferdinando Colarossi
COASIT Education Programs Manager
189 Faraday Street
Carlton 3053.

Applications close 21 February 2011

Any queries contact Ferdinando Colarossi

t.+61 (0) 3 93499000

f.+61 (0) 3 93499091

e:ferdinando@coasit.com.au

www.coasit.com.au

Museo Italiano Cultural Centre Educational Programs

The Museo Italiano will be offering targeted staff led language programs for Primary and Secondary students of Italian. The Programs offered include :

***La storia in valigia* – Exploring Italian migrant stories using material culture Years 5 – 9**

A student centred program that explores, through hands-on exploration of objects, the stories of Italian migrants and their contribution.

Students use comprehension, reading, writing and speaking skills in Italian throughout the workshop. The workshop will cater for all levels of comprehension. Presented in Italian and English.

Museo Italiano Introductory Talk for Advanced level of Italian Years 10 – 12

An introductory talk in Italian about the exhibition with a focus on the contribution and identity of Italians in Victoria and the intercultural exchange between Australians and Italians. The session will focus on key migrant stories and themes within the exhibition and will be followed by a visit to the *Museo Italiano*.

School groups must be booked into the exhibition. Teachers can arrange this by calling the Booking Office at Museo Italiano Cultural Centre on 9349 9080 between 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday to Friday.

*Museo Italiano exhibition is open for school visits from Tuesday – Friday at the following times : 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 12 midday, 1 p.m. & 2 p.m. **Bookings essential, 9349 9080.***

*Staff led programs, **La storia in valigia** and **Museo Italiano Introductory Talk** are available on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at 10 a.m., 11.30 p.m. and 1 p.m.*

Cost of session : \$66 (up to 30 students) or \$33 (1–10 students)

Viva Verdi!

10% off A Reserve tickets for Victorian Opera's Viva Verdi!

18 & 19 February
Melbourne Town Hall

Get a touch of Italian in your life when Victorian Opera presents the much loved works of Giuseppe Verdi in concert - with **Viva Verdi!** These two spectacular concerts will feature the impassioned arias, eloquent choruses and dramatic ensembles of Verdi's great operas including **II Trovatore** and **La Traviata** as well as a few surprises. Hear the grandeur of Verdi's music in concert, sung by the much acclaimed 60 voice Victorian Opera Chorus, with Orchestra Victoria.

For 10% off full priced A Reserve Tickets use the password VICTORIAN when booking Sung in Italian. Translation supplied.

[Ticketmaster](https://www.ticketmaster.com.au) 1300 723 038
www.victorianopera.com.au

Italian Interior Book



Emilia Toia is compiling a book "*Italian Interior Book*" and is looking for Italian migrant interiors to photograph and be included in a book on the subject. This idea follows on from the success of a recent self published book, "Sempre Con Te", on Italian migrant women's stories of separation and reunion in Australia.

This new book aims to showcase migrant interiors from the following countries ; Australia, Canada, North America, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico.

She is interested in showing Italian furniture and furnishing mixed with interior styles, furniture and or objects from the new country. This includes all types of interiors from old style, classical, marble and contemporary, from owners who are young, old, semi famous or regular, outside style (architecture) of the house may also be featured. The only pre-requisite is that the inhabitants must be originally from Italy.

If you are aware of any interiors that could fit the theme and be included into this book, please contact

Emilia Toia
Email : emilia.toia@gmail.com
Phone : 0410 647 374
Website : www.sempreconte.com

La Dolce Italia Festival

27th February, 2011

Inspired by "La Dolce Vita" (the sweet life), this festival celebrates the Italian way of life and this year will be showcasing the regional areas of Campania (Naples), Lombardia (Milan), Toscana (Tuscany) and Calabria.



The day will be filled with an abundance of cultural and memorable experiences, including roving entertainers, stylish fashion parades, cooking demonstrations and celebrity chefs, Italian vintage cars, children's activities and "Italian Stars" singing competition.

One of the most exciting events is the attempt to make the Guinness Book of Records World's Longest Pizza at 1.2 km long. Come along and support the attempt which will commence at midnight Saturday 26th February and is expected to be completed by 6.00 p.m. on Sunday 27th February.

Details : info@dolceitalia.com.au
www.dolceitalia.com.au

La Comica Variety Productions
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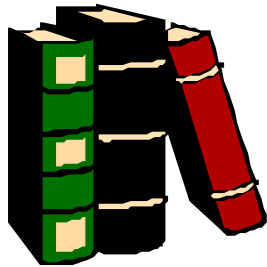
Phone : (03) 9495 1980

info@makeascene.com.au

www.makeascene.com.au



Special Offer for Carnevale! Book a Performance & workshop combination for Term 1 and receive a 10% discount.



Biblio e Teca

Masks ! Masks! Masks!

The entire existing collection has been replaced with pristine new masks. The current masks are sturdier, more colourful and appear more authentic...simply gorgeous. A great resource when developing a unit of work on *Carnevale* or integrating mask making through the art program.

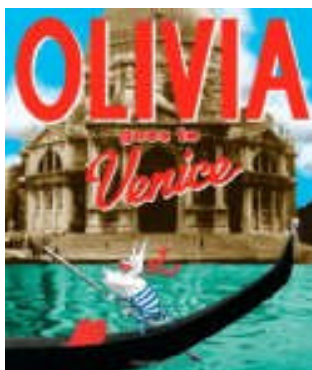


Sempre Con Te (Always with you) : stories of separation & reunion of Italian women from the Northern Beaches of Sydney (1920 – 1970), by Silvana Toia, NSW Migration Heritage Centre, NSW, 2009

Sempre con te was born from a desire to document the Italian migration of ordinary Calabrian women who had lived humble lives, before the stories were lost. It documents the history of these women, and through photographs and text depicts females as they lived, shopped, prayed and entertained. Bilingual text.

Journeys of Melbourne's Coffee Pioneers : trailblazing passions by Sandra Makris, Culture Collection, 2010

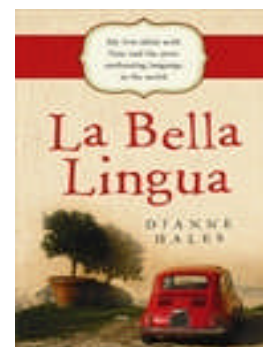
Sip coffee as you read this book, and read story after story and you will be transported back to where Melbourne's coffee culture began. It was the coffee pioneers, many of whom were migrants, who by taking risks, contributed to the café culture we have today. Sepia photographs.



Olivia Goes to Venice by Ian Falconer, Simon Schuster, United Kingdom, 2010

Olivia (the pig) and her family go on a vacation to beautiful Venice. They gorge themselves on *gelato*, sigh under the *Bridge of Sighs*, dodge pigeons in the *Piazza San Marco* and barely stay afloat in a *gondola*. Illustrations are delightful and include some scenic photographs. English text. A "laugh out loud book."

Cultura in Briciole



Adapted from *La Bella Lingua : my love affair with Italy and the most*

enchanting language in the world. by Dianne Hales, HarperCollins Publishers, 2009

“Centuries before there was an Italy, there was Italian.

Its roots date back nearly three millennia. According to legend, in 753 B.C., Romulus, son of the god Mars and a vestal virgin, after killing his twin brother, Remus, founded a settlement for his band of itinerant shepherds and farmer on the hills above the Tiber. Their utterances evolved into the *volgare* (from the Latin *sermo vulgaris*, for the people’s common speech), the rough-and-ready spoken vernacular. Scrappy street Latin, not the classical, cadenced rhetoric of Caesar and Cicero, gave rise to all the Romance Languages, including Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian.

The first miracle of Italian is its survival. No government mandated its use. No mighty empire promoted it as an official language. No conquering armies or armadas trumpeted it to distant lands. Brutally divided, invaded, and conquered, the Mediterranean peninsula remained a patchwork of dialects, often as different from one another as French from Spanish or English from Italian. Sailors from Genoa couldn’t understand – or be understood by – merchants from Venice or farmers from Friuli. Florentines living in *il centro*, the heart of the city, couldn’t speak the dialect of San Frediano, my favourite neighborhood, on the other side of the Arno.

As a national spoken tongue, Italian, practically born yesterday, is *nuovissimo* (very, very new), says the noted linguist Giuseppe Patota. Rallying for one nation united by one language, Italians won their country’s independence in 1861, almost a century later than the United States. At the time four in five of its citizens were illiterate. Fewer than 10 percent spoke Italian exclusively or with greater ease than a local dialect. Not until 1996—135 years after unification—did more than half of Italians report using *italiano standard* (the national language) rather than dialect outside their homes. Word by word, generation by generation, village by village, the people of the peninsula became Italian speakers.

Ever-growing numbers of people around the world are trying to do the same. English maybe the language everyone *needs* to know, but Italian is the language people *want* to learn. With only an estimated 60 to 63 million native speakers (compared to a whopping 1.8 billion who claim at least a little English, (Italian barely eclipses Urdu, Pakistan’s official language, for nineteenth place as a spoken tongue.) Yet Italian ranks fourth among the world’s most studied languages—after English, Spanish, and French. In the United States, Italian has become the fastest-growing language taught in colleges and universities. So why do so many people want to study Italian?

“I suspect it is because Italy and the Italian language are perceived as beautiful, fun, and sexy,” observed Stephen Brockmen, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University, in a recent essay called “A Defense of European Languages.” The Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, reporting on the boom in Italian courses at American universities, cited the soaring popularity of Italian food, fashion, art, architecture, music, and culture and noted that Americans see Italian *come una lingua polisensoriale capace di aprire le porte al bello* (“as a multisensory language able to open the gates to beauty”).

Luca Serianni, a renowned professor of the history of the Italian language at Rome’s *La Sapienza University* and one of the Società Dante Alighieri’s *consiglieri*, tells me that the foreigners thronging to Italian classes around the globe are seeking more than vocabulary and grammar. “You cannot separate our language from our culture,” he explains. “When you learn Italian, you enter our history, our art, our music, our traditions.” In fact, you enter the Italian soul. Acclaimed as the most musical of tongues, Italian is also the most emotionally

expressive. Its primal sounds—virtually identical to those that once roared through Roman amphitheatres and forums—strike a chord in our universal linguistic DNA.

“*Pronto!*” (“Ready”), Italians say when they answer the telephone. And ready they are—to talk, laugh, curse, debate, woo, sing, lament. Their native tongue conveys a sense of something coming alive. Its sinewy verbs flex like *muscoli* (muscles), from a Latin word for “little mice”, scampering under the skin. In Italy the ubiquitous @ in e-mail addresses mischievously curls into a *chiocciola*, or snail, just as a spiral staircase spins into a *scala a chiocciola*.

Even ordinary things—such as a towel (*asciugamano*) or handkerchief (*fazzoletto*)—sound better in Italian. The reasons start with its vigorous *vocali*, or vowels, which look like their English counterparts but sound quite different. Sounds of all sorts take on different accents in Italian. Rather than with a sloppy “ah-choo,” an Italian sneezes with a daintier “*eccì*.” Italian distinguishes between the sound of swallowing water (*glu glu glu*) and chewing food (*gnam gnam gnam*). Bells ring *din don dan*. Trains *ciuff-ciuff*. Motors *vrum vrum*. Clocks *tic-tac*. Guns fire with a *pimp pum pam*. A telephone’s busy signal stutters *tuu tuu tuu*. Over the years I’ve been awakened by little birds that *cip cip cip*, dogs that *abbaiano*, roosters that go *chicchirichì*, and crickets that *cri-cri-cri*.

A colour becomes more than a hue in Italian. A *giallo* (yellow) refers to a mystery – in life, literature, or movies—because thrillers traditionally had yellow covers. A *telefono azzurro* (blue telephone) is a hotline for abused children: a *settimana bianca* (white week), a ski holiday in winter; and a *matrimonio in bianco* (white wedding), an unconsummated and ostensibly unhappy marriage. While Americans who overspend their budgets wind up in the red, Italians go to the green (*al verde*), an expression that dates back to the time when the base of a candle was painted green. When the flame burned down to the green, people, presumably out of money to buy another, ran out of light as well. According to another etymological explanation, *al verde* refers to the hapless state of a gambler who has lost everything—*il proprio gruzzoletto*, his hard-earned life savings—and sees only the bare playing table, traditionally green, in front of him.

Prince Charming always appears as *Principe azzurro* (the blue prince). *Viola* (purple) triggers so much apprehension that the wife of the Italian consul in San Francisco stopped our interview to ask me to switch to a different pen. Italians, she explained, associate purple with Lent, when drapes of that colour shroud church statues. For many centuries, theatres closed during this penitential season so actors and singers lost their jobs and incomes. Because of their misfortune, unlucky purple became a colour to avoid.

Italian’s basic word chest, as tallied in a recent dictionary, totals a measly 200,000, compared to English’s 600,000 (not counting technical terms). But with a prefix here and a suffix there, Italian words multiply like fruit flies. *Fischiare* (whistle) sounds merry enough, but *fischiettare* means “whistling with joy.” No one wants to be *vecchio* (old), but *invecchiare* (to become old) loses its sting—anyway, according to an Italian proverb, no one does so *al tavolo* (at table).

Vento (wind) melts into *venticello* (a nice little breeze) : *caldo* (hot) snuggles into *calduccio* (nice and warm). When an Italian stuffs cash in appreciation or anticipation of a favour into an envelope, a *busta* becomes a welcome *bustarella*. A tiny tail at the end of the word transforms the coarse *culo* into *culetto* (a sweet little baby bottom) or *culoni* (big butts). The Italian physicist Enrico Fermi (1901 – 1954) added the term *neutrino* (little neutral one) for a particle even smaller than the neutron, to the scientific lexicon. In music *prestissimo* means a little faster than *presto* (fast) and *andantino* not as slow as *andante* (slow).

Although endings such as *-ino*, *-otto*, or *-ello* are generally endearing, my Italian friends warned me to beware of anyone asking for a little anything, whether it’s a tiny little moment of your time (*attimino*), a peck of a kiss (*bacino*), or a bit of help (*aiutino*). Bigger (indicated with *-one* as in *torrione* for big tower) isn’t necessarily better. Italians mistrust a *parolone* (a big meaningless word) in the mouth of politicians and scoff at *sporaccioni* (dirty old men). Suffixes such as *-astro*, *-ucolo*, or *-accio* also spell trouble. No one wants to hire an *avvocatuccio* (small-time lawyer), read the works of a *poetuolo* (untalented poet), wear a *cappellaccio* (ugly hat), or drive on a *stradaccia* (bad road).

Italians’ irrepressible wit sparkles in word like *trucco* (trick) for makeup and *bugiardino* (little liar), the term doctors use for the patient information insert for a prescription drug. Friends encapsulate the fourteen-inch height between my husband and me by describing us as an *il* – the combination of a short *i* and a tall *l* that translates into “the.” Neapolitans’ invention of a word for a man who painted the eyes of day-old fish in markets so they appeared fresh crystallized the ingenious survival skills of the locals. Would-be buyers of Tuscan villas might take heed of a new meaning for the word *falsificatore* to refer to a craftsman who makes new furniture look antique and sell it at exorbitant prices to gullible foreigners. “To trust is good,” says an old Italian proverb my friends like to quote. “Not to trust is better.”

A very good person, someone we might praise in English as the salt of the earth, becomes un *pezzo di pane* (a piece of bread) in Italian. Rather than having heart or guts, a brave Italian has *fegato* (liver), while a man in *gamba* (literally “on a leg”) is on top of his game. Italian corrals animals of every sort to describe a person who eats like an ox (*bue*), sings like a nightingale (*usignolo*) cries like a calf (*vitello*), fights like a lion (*leone*), hops like a cricket (*grillo*), or sleeps like a dormouse (*ghiro*). As in English, a *testa dura* (hard head) can be as stubborn as a mule (*mulo*), but an Italian also may be as silent as a fish (*pesce*), crazy as a horse (*cavallo*), or mischievous as a monkey (*scimmia*). And without clothes, an Italian is *nudo come un verme* (naked as a worm.) “*In bocca al lupo!*” “in the mouth of the wolf!”, Italians say to wish someone luck (“*buona fortuna*” is considered unlucky). The correct response : “*Crepi il lupo!*” (“Let the wolf die!”)

Italy’s long past requires four tenses (not counting the subjunctive’s past forms): *passato prossimo*, *trapassato prossimo*, *passato remoto*, and the *imperfetto*, or imperfect – “the most Italian of tenses” one of my teachers contends for unfinished business. Business can remain unfinished a long time in Italy. A researcher tells of requesting a book from the catalogue of the Vatican Library only to receive a notice stating, “Missing since 1530.”

Northern Italians relegate the musty *passato remoto* to historical events such as Dante’s birth. Southern Italians with telescoped sense of time, use it to recount what they had for breakfast. In literary Italian (though not daily conversation) memories of times past can be summoned up in three words and ways—*rammentare* (with the mind, for facts), *ricordare* (with the heart, for feelings) and *rimembrare* (with the body, for physical sensations).

What Italian doesn’t say also is revealing. Italian has no words that precisely translate *lonely* (unthinkable for its gregarious speakers), *privacy* (equally unthinkable in an Italian family), *spelling* (since words generally look as they sound – to Italian, that is). Yet some of the most tantalizing Italian words, such as *garbo*, a pitch-perfect combination of style and grace, and *agio*, a sense of comfort and ease, don’t translate into English.

Even when foreigners learn Italian words, they often miss their hidden meanings. Only after years of visiting Italy did I realize that Italians admire rather than disdain a *furbo*, someone cunning enough to pull off a clever deception. A young *furberetto* shifts the blame for a childish prank to his little brother. A shrewd *furbacchione* obtains a coveted building permit for a rectangular, cement-lined hole in his backyard by describing it not as a swimming pool (prohibited by law) but as a storage vat for water that local firefighters might need to douse a blaze. A more deceitful *furbaastro* somehow manages to make money in the process, while a wheeler-dealer *furbone* reaps big profits by negotiating permits for an entire village.

Perhaps because of this Babel of dialects, Italians cultivated an alternative language : gestures. In Italy, the shrug of a shoulder, the flip of a wrist, or the lift of an eyebrow says more than a *sacco di parole* (sack of words). A clenched fist signifies rage, irritation, anger, or threat; fingers bunched together indicate complexity or confusion. A tug at the corner of an eye means “Watch out!” A tap on the head indicates comprehension, intuition, or idiocy.

After a few hours of careful observation in a piazza, anyone can become fluent in this wordless variant of Italian. Need a favor? Clasp your palms together with fingers extended as if in prayer and press them in front of your chest. Don’t give a damn? Slide your fingers upward from your neck past the tip of your chin. Was the dinner or day absolute perfection? Draw a straight horizontal line in the air. A Neapolitan waiter showed us how he signals the best-tasting dishes on the menu –by corkscrewing an index finger into his cheek, a gesture Italian men repeat on the street when a good-looking girl walks by.

Such silent entertainment is one of the pleasures of Italy that come, as Luigi Barzini observed in *The Italians*, from living in a world “made by man, for man, to the measure of man.” The pleasure of Italian’s man-made language, he noted, comes from teaching “that things don’t have to be exactly what they look like, reality does not have to be dull and ugly.”



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