

A GUIDE TO BOOKS AND MATERIALS FOR ITALIAN (August 2014)

Finding the level of your group

Books and other teaching materials are often marked with a level, such as A1, B2, C2, etc. This refers to the language levels as described by the Common European Framework of Reference. It has a description of what you should know and be able to do in a language at each level and will help you select materials. You will find this information on the National Website under Advice/Languages General/leaflet/Language levels. Paper copies can also be posted to you. Call Heather Westrup on 01923.283577 with your postal address.

Useful bookshops and the u3a Resource Centre

You can get access to a vast range of books from a couple of bookshops in London who will send you their catalogue of materials for ages over 11 and adults and post items to you. (Or you could then order them through Amazon which may be cheaper) They have separate catalogue for each European language.

1. The Italian Bookshop is a separate department at The European Bookshop, 5 Warwick Street, London, W1B 5LU Tel: 020 7240 1634 email: italian@esb.co.uk or direct@esb.co.uk www.italianbookshop.co.uk

Their catalogue contains details of courses with CD's, for self-study and classroom use at all levels, study books about Italian civilisation and films with accompanying activities, graded readers, books with parallel text, grammars and dictionaries.

You may be able to get inspection copies by mentioning the University of the Third Age. Speak to the marketing department on 01242 245252.

2. Grant and Cutler is the department of Foyles Bookshop which deals with all languages. 113-119 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H OEB Tel: 0207437 5660 (You must persevere to get the department you want!) grantandcutler@foyles.co.uk www.grantandcutler.com They also do a fully comprehensive catalogue of Italian learning materials and will send you one. They also do a special New Fiction catalogue.

Many books or materials these days are based on a functional approach. This means learning to use the language to do various things, like introducing yourself or asking for information or through ideas like "booking accommodation". There is an emphasis on learning "chunks" and phrases through listening and repetition. This is known as a "Functional" approach to language learning (These materials are marked F below) For those who like a more structured approach there are some books based on a step-by-step knowledge of grammar and learning vocabulary. (These are marked G) Nowadays, many books use both approaches

Materials marked * below can be borrowed from the u3a Resource Centre (020 8315 0199) for inspection. They only stock courses with CD's or video, not books alone. Ask for their catalogue which is also online on the National Website, u3a.org.uk then go to Resources.

COURSE BOOKS

These are complete courses which groups can work through from beginning to end. They cover all four language skills (Speaking, Reading, Writing and Listening) with activities for groups and pairs and give you all the materials you might need. They usually have an accompanying CD, and sometimes a separate workbook for homework and a teachers' guide.

This kind of whole package can be expensive but parts can be bought separately. Some examples are:

*** Talk 1 and Talk 2** BBC Active (2007)

Small attractive, inexpensive books with or without CD covering areas you might need if visiting Italy. Some reference to grammar. Beginners to Elementary (F)

***Take off in Italian** (Tania Batelli-Kneale and Anna di Stefano) OUP An excellent small book with CD's Good combination of (F) and (G) Particularly good for self-study groups

Italian for Beginners (Angela Wilkes & John Shackell Usborne) 2001

A real beginners book, ostensibly for children but fun to use with amusing drawings, good speaking practice and useful simple everyday topics. A book you will refer back to constantly when more advanced.(F)

The Italian Project (Marin, T., S. Magnelli)2009 Edilingua

A multi-media language and civilisation course which alternates communication and grammatical elements. Students' book and workbook are in one volume with grammar appendix and glossary. Accompanying CD Beginners and intermediate (F and G)

*** Buongiorno Italia** (Joseph Cremona) BBC Active1996

Attractive course with CD's with plenty of listening activities and texts. Grammar set out at the back of the book but little focus on it in body of the book. Good background to life and culture of Italy. Progresses fast. Useful and interesting accompanying DVD will be available soon. (Beginners to intermediate).(F)

***Quickstart Italian** Audio only course Beginners (F) Slow paced.

*** Italian with Michel Thomas** Audio only. (F and G) Hodder & Stoughton Educational) Beginners to Advanced. Very useful for clarifying grammar and learning phrases.

Collins Italian Grammar and Practice

Very well organised grammar-based course book with exercises and tests. (G)

Living Italian Hodder Educational

Traditional Grammar-based course book with short exercises, texts and model answers. (G)

GRAMMAR AND PRACTICE BOOKS

Oxford Italian Grammar & Verbs

Small book with clear simple descriptions of grammar and verb lists No tests or exercises.

BBC Active Italian Grammar

Good small grammar well structured and sequenced. Good explanations, very detailed. Checkpoints to test you have understood with answers A good companion to BBC Talk series.

Italian Grammar Drills Paola Nanni-Tate McGraw Hill

This is one of a series of grammar exercise books. (See below) There is explanation of grammar followed by lots of rather mechanical exercises. Useful for reinforcement and homework.

Italian Verb tenses (as above)

Italian Pronouns and Prepositions (as above)

Italian Sentence Builder (as above)

Italian Vocabulary (as above)

READERS, MAGAZINES

Easy Italian Reader (Riccarda Saggese McGraw Hill) A book in three parts with texts from elementary to advanced, with comprehension questions and vocabulary lists. Excellent introduction to Italian history and literature.

Read and Think in Italian McGraw Hill Excellent topical texts, Audio CD's of native Italian speakers reading some of the texts. Tests to check reading comprehension of each text. Intermediate

Tutto Italiano A magazine specially written for learners of Italian which comes out every two months, with interesting annotated articles about Italian life today, some history and culture. Each issue comes with a CD of native speakers reading some of the texts at their normal speed (fast!) Some comprehension exercises with answers. 6 issues + 6 CDs £99 Intermediate to advanced

Italia This magazine (in English) about living in Italy (available from Smiths) comes out every month and has an interesting "parallel text" article in each issue about current topics in Italy in English and Italian

On LINE

Think Italian Online monthly magazine from America with interesting up-to date texts. Subscription fairly expensive www.thinklanguage.com/Italian/

BBC Active Language Italian Follow a story through several episodes. Gain access to Italian TV programmes and news (Free) www.bbc.co.uk/languages/italian

Italian Cultural Institute Based in London, Films, lectures and lots of other information www.icilondon.esteri.it

Italian Newspapers These can be seen online through Google. Il Repubblica, Corriera della sera, Osservatorio Romano, Il Messaggero

Slow news in Italian A daily offering of the latest news in Italy for a reasonable subscription

Duo Lingua A free "accelerated" self study on line course for beginners. Has been used by some "leaderless" U3A language groups. Contact Ian Searle for details

Yabla Another on line course for self study. Expensive.

Graded Readers

These are books in which the vocabulary used has been limited to a certain level, eg. 600 words, 1200 words, 2000 words etc. Some are specially written and some are short versions of classics. Some have accompanying CD, activities and exercises. See bookshop catalogues.

FILMS IN ITALIAN

- * **Il Postino** Charming film about a poet's influence on a postman
- * **Fratello Sole Sorella Lune (Brother Sun Sister Moon)**
- * **Dear Diary**
- * **La Terra Trema**
- * **L'Avventura**
- * **Cinema Paradiso** Gentle film about a village getting a cinema and the boy whose passion it becomes
- * **Pranzo de Ferragosto (Mid-August Lunch)** Amusing film about a loving son looking after his demanding mother and other elderly folk.
- * **Salt of Life** Sequel to above. The son looks for love
- * **Io no ho paura (I'm not scared)** A gentle start in rural Italy later leaves you hiding behind the sofa! But alls well that ends well! Language is easy to follow.
- * **La Vita e Bella (Life is Beautiful)** Gentle but disturbing film about a father and son in a concentration camp
- * **Loose Cannon** Amusing film about 2 gay sons coming out to their family.
- * **Padre Padrone** About a country boy's rise to power. Not for the squeamish!
- * **Habemus Papem (We have a Pope)** A colourful and not too serious expose of one's cardinal response to being elected Pope. Slow paced.
- Il Gattopardi (The Leopard)** Easy to follow, visually stunning epic starring Burt Lancaster (dubbed!)
- La Strada** Classic about life in a circus
- Montalbano** - amusing, addictive TV series of detective tales in Sicily. Dialect is sometimes challenging.
- The Tiger and The Snow** - a quirky, bitter-sweet comedy film about a series of mishaps in Italy and Iraq.
- Caesar must Die** A fascinating and well-made docu-drama about prisoners preparing to take part in a performance of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar

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