MASTERING

ITALIAN 2

Italian Life and Language

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MASTERING
ITALIAN 2
Italian Life and Language

ROBERT C. POWELL
and
ROBERTA TOZER

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT
BETTY PARR

M
MACMILLAN

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SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

MASTERING ITALIAN 2

Mastering Italian 2 is intended for students working, with or without a teacher, to extend their command of spoken and written Italian and to learn more about Italy and her people. When *Mastering Italian* was published in 1983, it was described as 'a carefully planned introduction to the language and . . . a secure foundation for further study'. The present course is a sequel to the first, and will surely be welcomed by thousands who have studied *Mastering Italian* and by many others who have a good basic knowledge of the language and seek a stimulating and well organised programme to support more advanced work, with or without an examination in view.

In the first Course, the main emphasis was placed on understanding and using the spoken language, although reading and writing were given due attention. In *Mastering Italian 2*, the ready comprehension and effective use of the written language are important objectives, though listening and responding to spoken Italian are also vital elements. A glance at the table of contents will give a hint of many individual features, though it will not reveal the lively teaching and sensitive understanding that characterise the Course. A selection of authentic passages from contemporary sources gives an insight into aspects of life in present-day Italy. Some of these form the basis for recorded conversations, which provide a further source of information and opinion, and an excellent demonstration of the language as spoken by well-educated Italians. The last chapter contains a small anthology of literary extracts, from Dante to the present day; it is hoped that the student may be stimulated by this glimpse of Italian literature to embark on further reading in this rich field.

The authors' most helpful and informative introduction gives an account of the contents of the book and its accompanying cassette, and suggests ways of using them effectively. Helpful notes on each extract should assist the student to develop a measure of linguistic

PREFACE

independence and a sense of style. The grammatical explanations which follow the chosen passages ensure that grammar is learnt in the context of familiar material, not in theoretical isolation. A comprehensive and comprehensible Grammar Section in the Appendix of reference material gives fuller information in an accessible form. Exercises carefully planned to provide practice in all the language-skills are accompanied by a key, placed in the Appendix, which should instil confidence and facilitate self-assessment.

To work with this Course is to embark on an enjoyable voyage of discovery which should lead to increased mastery of the Italian language and a deeper understanding of Italy and her people.

BETTY PARR
Editorial Consultant

INTRODUCTION

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

THE STUDY MATERIAL

Mastering Italian 2 is intended for people who already have some basic knowledge of Italian and who wish to extend their understanding of the language. This second-stage book includes a range of spontaneous conversations recorded with Italian native speakers from several different parts of the country. It also offers a wide variety of authentic reading material taken from newspapers, magazines, information brochures and literature. The range of registers of the various texts, together with the topics developed in the ten chapters, provide fascinating insights into the language, society and culture of contemporary Italy.

In selecting the material for study, we have borne in mind the needs of several types of language learner.

- ★ Adult learners working independently who want a varied diet of authentic reading and listening material, helpful notes of clarification and a guided programme of self-checking exercises to assess their own performance.
- ★ Students attending classes on second- or third-stage courses in adult education centres or institutions of further education. *Mastering Italian 2* will be a useful addition to the list of course books available to the teacher. It could also be a useful supplement for students' work at home.
- ★ Students preparing intermediate or advanced-level certificates set by the various regional and national examination boards.
- ★ Students who have completed an intensive beginners' course in Italian at school, polytechnic, university or in Italy itself, and who need to develop further their reading, listening and writing skills and knowledge of structure and vocabulary.

INTRODUCTION

- ★ Business people whose knowledge of spoken Italian may be quite extensive but who have had no formal learning experience. *Mastering Italian 2* will develop their reading and writing skills and explain some of the more formal aspects of language usage.
- ★ People of Italian origin whose mother-tongue may be a dialect form but who now wish to formalise their understanding of the national language. This book offers a coherent programme of study to enable them to develop their reading and writing skills in standard Italian.

LINGUISTIC GOALS

Reading Skills

All of the Italian language presented for study and enjoyment in this book is authentic – that is to say, it has been published in its original form, if not always in its original format. It is inevitable, therefore, that some of the passages may appear rather difficult on first reading. With practice, however, and developing confidence gained through an increasing vocabulary, you should find things becoming much easier. You should not be put off if you do not understand every single word immediately. The tasks set on each text will take you through various stages, from gist comprehension – which involves gaining a grasp of the general ideas – through more detailed understanding of the arguments presented and appreciation of the style and purpose of the writing. For the vocabulary and idiom of the texts to become part of your own ‘repertoire’, you will need to read and re-read each passage and conversation several times. Reading aloud can help speed up the process of assimilating a new language. By and large, material has been chosen from publications that are widely available outside Italy, thus encouraging you to continue your discovery of the language and society of that country.

Listening Skills

The cassette which accompanies this book contains recordings of the **Conversazioni**, examples from the **Pronunciation Guide**, answers from some of the **Exercises** and readings of some of the literary extracts. There are also some items from an Italian local radio station. All items on the cassette are marked in the text with the cassette symbol . As well as using the cassette as an essential tool during formal study time, why not listen on your way to work, or while you peel the potatoes? It is worth talking along with the native speakers, reproducing their pronunciation and intonation. Some

people claim to learn a great deal by listening to the foreign language cassette last thing at night, just before dropping off to sleep!

Communication Skills

In addition to the notes clarifying the expressions contained within each passage, idiomatic phrases of spoken Italian have been singled out for special attention. These are primarily intended to help the traveller to Italy cope with typical, everyday situations. Some of the exercises are designed especially to practise oral skills and a number of these exercises have been recorded on the cassette.

Grammatical Skills

An understanding of the underlying structure of a language is essential if you are to develop fluency and accuracy in all the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each chapter contains sections entitled **Explanations** which, as well as providing vocabulary lists to assist comprehension, include grammatical details based on examples taken from the texts. Studying grammar in context is the best way to increase your ability to manipulate language. You should always study the relevant parts of the **Grammar Section** at the end of the book to supplement the notes in the chapters. This summarises the main grammar points of the book and provides further examples.

EXERCISES

Exercises are set after each passage or conversation to help you check your understanding of the ideas and your linguistic competence. We have tried to make the exercises as varied and as interesting as possible. Some involve role-play and test oral skills, while others focus on written skills such as summarising, translation or letter-writing. You should check your progress regularly by referring to the **Key to the Exercises**, also to be found at the back of the book – after attempting the exercises, of course!

TYPEFACES

Throughout this book, words in Italian are printed in a different typeface from English words. This approach, it is hoped, will avoid any confusion, particularly in the **Explanations** and **Exercises**. Most Italian words have the stress on the *penultimate syllable*; words which do *not* follow this pattern have the stressed syllable shown in italics in

INTRODUCTION

the **Select Vocabulary** lists. (See also the discussion of *l'enfasi* (stress) on p. xxv below.)

INFORMATION ABOUT ITALY

There are several passages headed **Informiamoci** which are designed to increase your awareness and appreciation of modern Italian society. Some offer practical advice to the traveller or holiday-maker. Topics such as geography, politics, health, cinema and the mass media are also included.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

No single text book can cover all aspects of the foreign language and culture. The serious student of Italian will need a good dictionary and the support of a fuller description of the language. A list of suggested titles appears at the back of the book, together with some useful addresses for obtaining more information about Italy, courses in Italian, and Italian life and culture.

PLANNING TO USE THE BOOK AND CASSETTE

In the first two or three chapters of the book, some of the basic elements of Italian have been isolated for special attention – e.g. noun and adjective formation and use of tenses. Beyond this, however, there is no attempt to create an artificial progression from ‘simple’ to ‘complex’ language. What some language learners find difficult, others may find easy. You are therefore free to choose the sequence in which the chapters are to be read and studied. You may follow the chronological order, taking each passage in turn and completing the work set; you may decide to concentrate on listening first and spend more time with the conversations on the cassette before working on your reading and writing skills. Having looked at the themes of the chapters in the **Contents**, you may select one that particularly appeals and study those units of work first. Whichever route you take, we hope you will find the topics interesting and the tasks challenging and rewarding. **Buon Lavoro!**

GUIDE TO PRONUNCIATION

The first volume of *Mastering Italian* included a very brief guide to the pronunciation of the Italian language. This section takes the student of Italian as a foreign language several steps further along the road to developing a perfect accent: Italian is not really a difficult language to pronounce well. It is sometimes called a 'phonetic' language; this means simply that what you see written on the page is pronounced more or less as it is written, with every single part of each word having its importance in the sentence. In order to make the most of this section, you should read it in conjunction with the cassette. The examples have been recorded for you. Listen to them carefully and copy the native speakers. There are many regional accents in Italian but the pronunciation of the national language, as opposed to the regional *dialects*, remains fairly constant throughout Italy.

L'ALFABETO (the alphabet)

If you need to give your name on the telephone to an Italian who does *not* understand English, it is as well to adopt the system of providing a place name for each letter of the alphabet. A list of the towns used in this way is given below.

If your name was Powell, for example, you would spell it out thus:

P come Padova – O come Otranto – W come Washington – E come Empoli – L come Livorno – L come Livorno

PRONUNCIATION

There is no Italian town beginning with W. Similarly, if your name contained H or Q, you would say:

H (acca) come Hotel, Q come quaranta

A (a)	Ancona	O (o)	Otranto
B (bi)	Bologna (or Bari)	P (pi)	Padova (or
C (ci)	Como		Parma)
d (di)	Domodossola	Q (cu)	quaranta
e (e)	Empoli	R (erre)	Roma
F (effe)	Forlì	S (esse)	Savona
G (gi)	Genova	T (ti)	Torino
H (acca)	Hotel	U (u)	Udine
I (i)	Imola	V (vi)	Venezia (or
L (elle)	Livorno		Vicenza)
M (emme)	Milano	W (vi doppia)	Washington
N (enne)	Napoli	Z (zeta)	Zara

(note that we have marked where the *stress falls when it is not on the penultimate syllable* – Domodossola)

The letters J, K, X and Y are not really part of the Italian alphabet, but are referred to in the following way:

J = i lunga

K = cappa

X = ics

Y = ipsilon

LE VOCALI (the vowels)

1. Italian vowels are mostly 'pure' sounds. The voice should not slur over the sounds as often happens in English. Any comparison between the two is only a rough approximation, as the cassette will indicate.

English word

Italian word

a bar

un bar

e Fred

freddo

i chips

cipria

o port

porto

u cube

cubo

Note that in some words the vowel *o* is pronounced with an ‘open’ sound, as in the English word ‘pot’:

ottimo, costo, ho

In others, it has a more ‘closed’ or narrow sound, as in the English word ‘closed’:

molto, dopo

Similarly, the vowel *e* has two kinds of sound: an ‘open’ *e*:

espresso

and a ‘closed’ version:

nero, sera, meno, etc.

These vowel sounds do vary slightly from region to region. The vowel *i* placed between *c* or *g* and *a*, *o*, *u*, is hardly pronounced at all, but *changes the sound of the consonant* from a hard, guttural one to a soft, palatal one:

chocolate = cioccolata, everyone = ciascuno,
John = Giovanni, jacket = giacca

2. Diphthongs (i dittonghi) usually occur when a *hard* vowel (*a*, *e* or *o*) combines with a *soft* one (*i* and *u*). In these cases, the stress always falls on the *hard* one:

fiore, fianco, pieno, riunione, poi, noi, paio, laico, dieta, chiesa, etc.

When *two soft vowels* combine, the stress falls on the *second* one:

piuma, Luisa

Learn the *exceptions* as you come across them in the recordings and in talking to Italians:

poema, platea, qualsiasi

PRONUNCIATION

LE CONSONANTI (the consonants)

1. **c** and **g** in front of the vowels **e** and **i** have a soft sound, similar to that found in the English words 'chair', 'cheer', 'jug', 'gin', 'gem':

centocinquanta, gengiva

In some regions of Italy you will hear the soft **c** pronounced even 'softer', bordering on the English 'sh' sound.

Before the vowels **a**, **o**, **u**, **c** and **g** are hard, guttural sounds, like the English **c**, **k** and **g**:

cocoa = cacao, cuddle = coccolare, gargle = gargarismo, government = governo, etc.

2. **ch** and **gh** are found *only* in front of **e** and **i**. Think of the **h** making the **c** and **g** *hard*:

chiesa, chilo, perché, ghiaccio, ghisa, ghetto

3. **g** followed by **l** and the vowels **a**, **e**, **o**, **u** has a hard, guttural sound:

globale, Gloria, inglese, etc.

But **gl** before the vowel **i** is usually a soft palatal sound, like -li- in 'million':

foglio, figlia, gli

In a few instances, however, it retains its *hard* quality:

anglicano, negligenza, glissando, glicerina

4. The sound of **g** followed by **n** and any of the vowels is always *soft*, similar to the English -ni- in 'onion', or ne- in 'newt':

gnocchi, agnello, bagno, Ignazio

5. **h** is *always silent*, for example in parts of the verb **avere**:

ho, hai, ha, hanno

6. *qu* followed by another vowel is pronounced as in the English words ‘qualm’, ‘quest’, ‘quick’:

quaderno, quercia, quindi, quotidiano

7. *r* is ‘rolled’. To achieve this sound, the tip of the tongue has to flick back, curling towards the roof of the mouth. Try, literally, getting your tongue around this sentence:

Il treno numero trentatrè è arrivato da Trieste con tre ore di ritardo

8. *s* has *two* sounds:

- (a) *Unvoiced*, like the English ‘soap’, in several instances. When it is the *first* letter of a word and followed by a vowel:

salute, senza, sicurezza, solo, sugo

When it is *doubled*:

rissa, rosso, influsso

When it is *followed* by *c, f, p, q, t*:

scacco, sfondo, speciale, studente

- (b) *Voiced*, like the English ‘pose’. When it is at the *beginning* of a word and followed by the consonants *b, d, g, l, m, n, r, v*:

sbaglio, sdraio, sgradevole, smarrire, snello, sviluppo

and generally when it is *within* a word:

esercizio, quasi

9. *sc* has *two* pronunciations.

- (a) Similar to the English ‘shoot’ in front of *e* and *i*:

sci, sciopero, scemo, lascerò

PRONUNCIATION

- (b) Similar to the English 'scheme' in front of *a*, *o*, *u*:

scatola, scoglio, scusi

10. **sg** also has *two* pronunciations (as in 1 above), namely a palatal soft sound before *e* and *i*:

sgelare

and a guttural, hard sound before *a*, *o*, *u*:

sgabello, sgonfiato, sguardo

But **sc** and **sg** are followed by *h* only in some instances, and *only* in front of *e* and *i* to give a guttural, hard sound:

schema, schiaffo, schiena, pesche, fischio, sghembo, funghi, aghi

11. **z** has *two* pronunciations.

- (a) *Unvoiced*, similar to the sound 'ts' in the English word 'bets':

zampa, zeppo, zero, zucchini, forza

- (b) *Voiced*, similar to the sound 'dz' in the English word 'lads':
zona, zigomo, zanzara

12. Double consonants must be pronounced *strongly*, since some words have quite different meanings which depend solely on a single or double consonant (cf. English pen-knife):

pena – penna

sono – sonno

poro – porro

Papa – pappa

Double consonants require the speaker to pause *fractionally longer* on the sounds. Notice the difference between the following:

ha fatto – affatto
 palo – Rapallo
 la porta – rapporto
 il rame – rammarico

L'ENFASI (stress)

Italian words may be divided into *four* groups according to *where the stress falls*. As we have seen, some words are stressed on the *last syllable*. The largest group of Italian words, however, are stressed on the *penultimate* (next to last) syllable:

curva, maniglia, adagio, informale, gradualmente, industrializzazione

Note the *stress points* in a typical Italian sentence:

Trovo l'italiano molto interessante

A number of words have the stress falling on the *antepenultimate* (third last) syllable:

facile, papavero, mutabile, popolo, catalogo, caotico, abito, pubblico, palcoscenico, femmina, portacenere, medico, drammatico, giocattolo, etc.

Listen out for these in speech and in recordings, making a note each time you hear a *new example*.

There are a number of instances where this pattern is *regularly followed*:

- (a) The *absolute superlative* ending -issimo:

bellissimo, interessantissimo, difficilissimo

- (b) *Verb endings* such as the *3rd person plural present tense* (indicative and subjunctive):

possono, trovano, facciano, ammettono

- (c) Some *infinitive* forms:

accendere, trascorrere, rispondere

PRONUNCIATION

- (d) *Verb forms* where pronouns are tagged on to the end, for example *imperatives*:

fermatevi, mandatelo, scrivetemi

and *participles*:

finitolo, essendoci, mangiandone

A handful of words, usually *verb forms*, have the stress on the *fourth last syllable*:

partecipano, illuminano, si accomodino

This will also occur if *two pronouns are added* to the *imperative* or *participle*:

mandategliene, dettomelo

In other words, the stress matches that of the *original form* without the addition of a pronoun.

Words having an ‘unusual stress’ – i.e., other than on the penultimate syllable – will be identified in the Select Vocabulary lists with the stressed syllable in bold type:

pianer**ott**olo – landing

Many words ending in *-io* and *-ia*, etc. have the stress on the *i* of the ending (i.e., the penultimate syllable):

farmacia, mormorio

But there is no hard and fast rule about this. Some words ending in *-io* and *-ia* have their stress on the *preceding* syllable:

ordinario, storia

All words with these kinds of endings will have their stress marked in the Select Vocabulary lists, but you should make a note of others as they occur in the recorded material.

L'INTONAZIONE (intonation)

Italian is frequently referred to as a *musical* language. The purity of the vowel sounds and the interplay of soft and hard consonants certainly add to the beauty of the spoken language. But there is also a lyrical quality to be found in the rise and fall of the voice pitch. Not all Italians seem to sing as they speak, but the overriding impression one gains listening to people from various parts of Italy is that the range of tonality and the differences of pitch are greater than in some other languages.

As you listen to the cassette you should try to echo the way Italian mother-tongue speakers string together their ideas. Notice particularly where the voice rises and falls in the sentence. One way to help develop an ear for intonation is to draw lines above the words in a sentence, rather like a set of musical notes. Below is an example, showing how varied the pitch can be, even when the subject matter is quite mundane – an extract from ‘A day in the life of . . . Roberta.’

Dunque, mi sveglio alla mattina, piuttosto presto, verso le sei e tre
quarti, le sette meno dieci. Faccio colazione che non consiste di
molto perché come tutti gli italiani adoro soprattutto il mio caffè.
Prendo il caffè nero, naturalmente. Mio marito mi chiede spesso:
‘Perché non fai come me? Perché non prendi qualcosa di più: Un
uovo, un po’ di pane magari? Ma io non mi sono mai abituata a
mangiare all’inglese. Almeno non alla mattina. . . Prima di uscire,
metto in ordine qualche cosa nella casa e poi mi avvio al lavoro
verso le otto e mezzo.

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