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ITALIANS LOVE *ITANGLESE*: THE USE OF ENGLISH WORDS IN WRITTEN ITALIAN HAS INCREASED BY 773%

According to a recent survey carried out by translation agency Agostini Associati, between 2000 and 2008 there was a 773% increase in the use of English terms in Italian written texts. As a response to this growing trend, the company has produced the 'Itanglese Code' in a bid to restore the Italian language to its former glory!

The early 21st century has been marked by the international **growth of the English language**: it is the most commonly studied language, the most **widely used business language** (even when the parties are not English mother tongue) and probably the language that **exports the greatest number of words** to other markets (sorry, languages!). Whatever the reasons and consequences for such growth, the Italian language seems to be one of the biggest direct importers of English terms and acronyms, and this has resulted in the propagation of a kind of mangled combination of the two languages known as "Itanglese", which the highly-respected Hoepli dictionary defines as: "the Italian language used in certain contexts and settings, characterised by the frequent and arbitrary use of English terms and expressions".

According to a recent survey we carried out at Agostini Associati, the **number of English terms** employed in **mainstream Italian has grown by 773%** in 8 years! This research was carried out by comparing a series of documents translated in 2000 with a similar size batch of documents from 2008. In terms of content, all of the documents were business related, and the **most commonly used English terms** in the sample were: Look, Business, Fashion, Performance, Competitor, Annual Report, Mission, Buyer, Brand, Switch.

Further analysis of the data revealed that the quantity of imported English terms can vary greatly depending on who produces the content: sometimes the percentage of English terms in an Italian marketing text or presentation for translation into other languages can be as high as 35%. It is also interesting to note how often we Italians change or modify the original meaning of some of the English terms we 'import' into Italian; in effect, these words undergo a kind of 'Italianisation', a fact that can often cause confusion among mother tongue English translators.

Our next step was to take this study and integrate it with a survey on the Itanglese phenomenon, commissioned to Global Market Insight (GMI) and targeted at users of translation services, which confirms the increasing use of Itanglese in Italian companies.

31% of interviewees noted a huge increase in the use of English terms in spoken and written Italian, and a considerable 53% perceived the phenomenon of 'Anglicisation' in their company.

53% of interviewees confirmed that their companies use English terms on a daily basis, and almost 30% consider this to be completely normal, if anything a sign of just how 'modern' one's company is.

The 'Itanglese Code'

Given the potent growth of 'Itanglese', our goal at Agostini Associati this Valentine's Day was to instigate the rebirth of Italian, traditionally regarded as the international language of love. To do this, we have drafted the "Itanglese Code" – a series of rules designed to stem the tidal wave of English terms and sayings that has flowed unabated into the Italian language.

Our aim is to give back the Italian language some of its lustre, to encourage Italians to say "Ti amo" rather than "I love you", to talk about "baci" rather than "kisses", to book their tables at "ristoranti di moda" rather

than “fashion(sic.) lounge food restaurants”. This year we want Italians to fall back in love with their native language and to limit the growing influence of ‘Itanglese’ by using the ‘Itanglese Code’, a short guide with a specially produced logo, which aims to encourage Italian communicators - particularly those that speak to a large audience or work as educators - to be a little more sparing in their use of Anglicisms (www.agostiniassociati.it/itanglese-code.php).

Alessandro Agostini has operated as a marketing executive in several FMCG businesses, and comes from a career across Europe as a marketing specialist with leading European firms such as Ferrero and Campari. Alessandro holds a degree in Business Administration, has been a speaker at over 24 sessions including Iulm University, Radio Rai e Bocconi University. He has been quoted in Finanza e Mercati, E-conomy, Corriere, Il Sole 24 ORE, MarketScope and other publications. He is partner of Agostini Associati, leading Italian translation service provider, and of Bruce Clay Europe, leading provider of Internet Marketing services with an emphasis on Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

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