

## ITALIANISMS IN CULTURE AND ART

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**Abstract.** *By presenting the process of borrowing words from Italian, the paper analyzes the influence that the Italian language and culture had on European languages and culture. Borrowing is explained by the historical and cultural context, and special focus is placed on art as one of the manifestations of spiritual culture. The process of borrowing is presented chronologically and thematically from the 10th century to the present day, and Italian is presented as the language that transferred the first Arabisms to European soil. For the sake of ease of operation, the term Italianism also includes words created even before the standardization of the Italian language. The examples found in the paper have an illustrative character, with no pretension to list either all Italianisms or most of them.*

**Key words:** *Italianisms, culture, art, Humanism and the Renaissance, maritime states, opera*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

From the Middle Ages and the setting of the first maritime states on the Apennine Peninsula, through undisputed cultural and artistic dominance in the Renaissance, until today, Italian culture has essentially determined everything we call European culture and, along with other factors, has determined the course of its development. Traces of the cultural dominance are best visible in the language, that is in the huge number of Italian words that are today incorporated into other European languages. They arrived there together with the novelties that other nations took over from the Italians. The supremacy of a nation or a cultural environment in relation to another, in a certain area of human activity and at a certain historical moment, is a prerequisite for language borrowing to occur (Popović 2005, 24). It is considered that the Italian language, after English, exerted the strongest influence on European languages. Today's reader might be surprised by this

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information, because Anglicisms are loanwords of a relatively recent date and have not been completely incorporated into the recipient language, which is why they are easily recognized as words of foreign origin, while many Italianisms, having been present in the host language for centuries, have been thoroughly assimilated and are not perceived as foreign words. Another reason why Italianisms are often unrecognizable is the fact that they reached many European languages through intermediate languages, so their form resembles those more than the source itself. The most common intermediates when it comes to Italianisms are French and German.

Trying to indicate the dimensions of the Italian language presence in his native language, the French writer Jean Loup Chiflet wrote two sentences with as many as 27 Italianisms. As an example, here is a sentence containing 15 Italianisms: "On y accédait via une *Esplanade* (spianata) si vaste qu'elle aurait pu accueillir la *Cavalcade* (cavalcata) d'une *Brigade* (brigata) à cheval ; sa *Façade* (facciata); au rez-de-chaussée tout en *Arcads* (arcata), ornée de *Balustrads* (balaustra; balaustrata) et de *Balcons* (balcone); se prêtait à l'*Escalade* (scalata) d'un amateur de *Sérénades* (serenata); dédiées à une belle sous une *Ombrelle* (ombrello), prête à se faire marcher à la *Baguette* (bacchetta), avant de regagner ses *Appartements* (appartamento) pour échapper à cette *Mascarade* (mascherata) et y réaliser une *Esquisse* (schizzo) de celui qui n'était peut-être qu'un *Bandit* (bandito), voire un *Brigand* (brigante)" (Stammerjohann 2013, 9).

All of the 15 Italianisms in French also exist both in Serbian and English. Words borrowed from the Italian language since the 10th century to the present day concern the most diverse areas of material and spiritual culture: from seafaring and trade, through fashion and cookery, to art – literature, architecture, painting, sculpture, music.

## 2. FROM EAST TO WEST

Italian maritime cities and Sicily, which was under Arab rule from 827 to 1091, represented an important meeting place of Eastern and Western cultures. In the Middle Ages, Bari was a famous port where pilgrims from the Holy Land maintained vivid contact with the culture of the Middle East. Italian merchants traveled to the East and from there delivered goods first to the maritime cities of Venice, Genoa, Pisa and then further to other parts of Europe. Venice was an important intermediary on the route of silk and spices from the Far East. Customs officers controlled the flow of goods even outside their ports and collected taxes (tariffs). Through these contacts, a certain number of words passed from Persian to Arabic, from it to Italian, and then to other European languages:

- kush (Persian) → kosk (Turkish) → chiosco (Italian) → kiosque (French), kiosk (Serbian – through French)
- dulband (Persijski) → tulbent (Turkish) → turbante (Italian) → turban (French), turban (Serbian – through German)
- khag-aviar (Persian) → hayvar (Turkish) → caviaro (Venetian) → caviar (French), kavijar (Serbian – through French)
- taftah (Persian) → taffetà (Italian) → taffetas (French), taft (Serbian – recorded like a Turkism)

## 3. MARITIME, COMMERCIAL AND MILITARY TERMS

The journey of Italian words outside the Apennine peninsula begins with the rise of maritime republics in the 10th and 11th centuries. Venice, Pisa and Genoa experienced accelerated economic and cultural development and from there Italian influence would spread intensively in the following centuries. In the 16th century, the Venetian influence was so strong that Venetian (the language spoken in the Republic of Venice) became the lingua franca for the entire Eastern Mediterranean. The Adriatic Sea was also called the Gulf of Venice, and the Venetians even called it "our channel". The economic and cultural dominance of Italian cities was reflected on the linguistic level too:

Maritime terms			
<i>Italian</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>English</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Serbian</i>
barca	barque	boat	barka
bussola	boussole	compass	busloa
fregata	frégate	frigate	fregata
laguna	lagune	lagoon	laguna
pilota	pilote	pilot	pilot
regata	régate	regatta	regata
rimorchiatore	remorqueur	tugboat	remorker

By the 13th century, Italian bankers were present throughout Europe. In Paris even today, there is a street called *des Lombardes* that speaks of the time when rich Italian merchants inhabited these parts.<sup>2</sup> An internationalism - *the bank* - originates from that period. The Italian word *banco*, which means counter, denoted a stall where merchants displayed their products and made merchandise transactions. The word *banca rotta* – *bankruptcy* literally means *a broken counter*, because for traders who were insolvent, the counter was symbolically broken (Walter 2014, 138).

The word *ducat* is also an Italianism. It is a Venetian monetary unit that was first minted in silver around 1202, and then in gold in 1284. The ducat was later accepted by other Italian states, and from 1559 to 1857, it was the most valuable monetary unit in the Germanic countries. The word otherwise means *duchy* in Italian, the coin is actually a symbol of the Venetian Duchy – *Ducato di Venezia* (Stammerjohann 2013, 23).

In the 16th century, Italians were widely known for their war skills and weapon manufacturing, and they were also renowned as ballistic experts and military leaders. Hence, Italians were invited to other countries, which is why Italian military terms reached other European languages. A special contribution to the spreading of military terminology was made by Niccolò Machiavelli with his work *The Art of War (Dell'arte della guerra)*, which was published in 1521 and enjoyed great popularity.

<sup>1</sup> The words *Boat*, *compass* and *tugboat* are not Italianisms.

<sup>2</sup> Although these merchants were not from Lombardy but from Venice, Genoa and the ports of Tuscany.

Military terms			
<i>Italian</i> <sup>3</sup>	<i>French</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Serbian</i>
allarme –	alarme	alarm	alarm
attacare	attaquer	attack	atakovati
battaglione	bataillon	battalion	bataljon
bomba	bombe	bomb	bomba
brigata	brigade	brigade	brigada
cantina	cantine	canteen	kantina
caporale	caporal	corporal	kaplar
cavaliere	chevalier	cavalier	kavaljer
squadrone	escadron	squadron	escadron
staffetta	estafette	staffette	šafeta

#### 4. TERMS FROM THE FIELDS OF LITERATURE, THEATER AND ARCHITECTURE

By the end of the 16th century, Italian theater was very popular in European courts. This significantly contributed to the spreading of the Italian language: the comedies of Machiavelli, Ariosto, Aretino were translated, there was a great interest in comedy del arte (Commedia dell'arte); this is the period when Italian becomes the metalanguage of the theater.

A strong influence on other European literature was exerted by the collection of poems *Canzoniere* by Francesco Petrarca and the collection of stories *Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the thematic repertoire and stylistic expression of the *Canzonier* was imitated in Europe, which turned into a broad poetic tradition called *Petrarchism*, known in many European languages and cultures.

Terms from the field of literature and theatre			
<i>Italian</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Serbian</i>
petrarchismo	pétrarquisme	petrarchism	petrarkizam
sonetto	sonnet	sonnet	sonet
novella	nouvelle	novel	novela
scena, scenario,	scène, scénario,	scene, scenario,	scena, scenario,
scenografia	scénographie	scenography	scenografija
balletto	ballet	ballet	balet
maschera	masque	mascara, mask	maska
costume	costume	costume	kostim
intermezzo	intermezzo	intermezzo	intermecco

When it comes to architecture, Italian masters were widely known as excellent builders, especially of fortifications, and were often invited to European courts. There are many documents about their involvement abroad, however, the professional architectural language itself remains in the realm of oral transferring for a long time, so merchants' letters and orders are the main source of information on the borrowing of Italian words in this period.

<sup>3</sup> *Allarme* from the war cry *all'arma* – to arms, *caporale*, *capitano* from *capo* – head, main, *cavaliere* from *cavallo* – horse, *squadrone* – augmentative of *squadra* – team, crew, *battaglione* – from *bataglia* – battle.

The intensive documented spreading of Italian architectural terms begins with the translations of Sebastiano Serlio's *Treatise on Architecture (Trattato di architettura)* (1537). It is an extensive theoretical work consisting of 7 books<sup>4</sup>, rich in illustrations and precise architectural vocabulary of the time. Serlio becomes one of the most translated Italian authors in the 16th century and his contribution to the spreading of Italian architectural terms is invaluable.

The dimensions of the Italian linguistic influence in the field of architecture are also explained in a text by an anonymous French author from the 18th century, in which he states that: "Fortification terms in all languages prove that this art comes from Italy, because all these terms are Italian."<sup>5</sup> He illustrates the above sentence with twenty Italianisms from the field of architecture (Stammerjohann 2013, 38).

Architecture terms			
<i>Italian</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Serbian</i>
loggia	loggia	loggia	lođa
balcone	balcon	balcony	balkon
arcata	arcade	arcade	arkada
facciata	façade	facade	fasada
cupola	coupole	cupola	kupola
galleria	galerie	gallery	galerija
cittadella	citadelle	citadel	citadela
bastione	bastion	bastion	bastion
parapetto	parapet	parapet	parapet

## 5. PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

What Serlio's treatise represents for the spreading of Italian architectural vocabulary is what Giorgio Vasari's work, *The Life of the Most Brilliant Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (1550) (*Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori*<sup>6</sup>) represents in the domain of painting and sculpture. Although the emphasis in the work is on the lives of the authors and their creativity – description of the work and biographical data (the work is considered the first history of art), Vasari uses and formulates many terms from art theory for the first time; he names and describes in detail materials, techniques, styles (Motolese 2012, 181).

While the European reader became acquainted with Italian architectural terms through translations necessarily, because those texts were not intended only for architects, but also for a wider and not very educated circle of people – masters and craftsmen in workshops; texts about painting and sculpture were mostly read in the original, because they were intended for a narrow educated circle of people - the artists themselves. This was also the case with Vasari's work, which was read in the original throughout Europe for almost a century.

<sup>4</sup> The work is also known as *Seven Books on Architecture (Sette libri dell'architettura)*

<sup>5</sup> "Les termes de fortification reçu de toutes les Nations prouvent que cet Art vient de l'Italie, car tous ses termes sont italiens, tel sont, par exemple, ces mots: *ingénieur, citadelle, forteresse, bastion, boulevard, orillon, merlon, cavalier, parapet, gabion, casemate, caserne, banquette, lunette, contrescarpe, palissade, esplanade, bombe, artillerie* et plusieurs autres."

<sup>6</sup> In Italian literature it is often found under the name of *Vite*.

The dominance of Italian art began with Humanism, the rediscovery of antiquity and adopting of new models in art. The first center of the spreading of Italian Humanism was Avignon, the temporary seat of the papal curia, where Petrarca also spent a significant part of his youth. From 1309, this city became one of the most important European centers; church dignitaries, bankers, writers, artists, architects from all over Europe gathered there; altars, decorative objects, paintings were ordered. According to the inventories and census lists from the period, it can be seen that Italian artists and craftsmen were engaged in these ventures to the greatest extent, that there was an intense flow of people, things, letters, and documentation. However, there is nothing like some more extensive documentation on the presence of Italian words in other languages in that period, everything remains at the level of inventories and census lists. Matteo Motolese notes that the total number of recorded direct loanwords from Italian to French in the 13th and 14th centuries is no more than 150. In other languages, that number is even smaller (Motolese 2012, 58). After the 14th century, their number grew rapidly, and in the 16th, Italian became the main language for everything related to painting, sculpture and architecture.

<i>Italian</i> <sup>7</sup>	<i>French</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Serbian</i>
acquarello/acquerello	aquarelle	aquarelle	akvarel
arabesco	arabesque	arabesque	arabeska
caricatura	caricature	caricature	karikatura
schizzo	esquisse	sketch, esquisse	skica
guazzo	gouache	gouache	gvaš
affresco	fresque	fresco	freska
grotesco	grotesque	grotesque	groteska
mosaico	mosaïque	mosaic	mozaik
pasticcio	pastiche	pastiche	pastiš

From the 16th century onwards, many artists came to Italy to learn new techniques, and to master linear perspective, one of the most significant innovations in the 15th century that would crucially influence European art in the following decades. Many of these artists were good connoisseurs of the Italian language and true ambassadors of Italian culture, as such they significantly contributed to Italian cultural and linguistic prestige. Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), Claude Lorrain (-1682) created and died in Italy; Pieter Brueghel the Elder (Pieter Brueghel) lived in Italy from 1552 to 1555 and learned from Italian masters. The Flemish painter Anthonis van Dyck (1623) visited almost all major Italian cities<sup>8</sup> as he wanted to study Italian techniques and models, and on that occasion he left many comments in Italian along with his drawings. El Greco<sup>9</sup> was also a master of the Italian language, he collaborated with Vasari, Titian, Palladio and many others; out of the 129 books that were found in his legacy, at least 80 were in Italian.

However, the most famous Italian foreigner was the Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens. He stayed in Italy on several occasions, studying with enthusiasm the works of classical art and the Italian masters Michelangelo, Raphael, Leonardo, Titian... He was a perfect

<sup>7</sup> *Acquarello/acquerello* – from the word *acqua* – water, *arabesco* from the word *arabo* – arbian, *caricatura* – from the verb *caricare* – to load, *affresco* – *dipingere a fresco* – to paint on fresh plaster, *grotesco* - from *grotta* – cave, *pittoresco* – from *pittore* – painter.

<sup>8</sup> Genoa, Padua, Venice, Rome, Florence

<sup>9</sup> The real name of the painter was Domenikos Theotokopoulos.

connoisseur of the Italian language, and out of over 250 letters he wrote in his lifetime, about 200 were in Italian.<sup>10</sup> In Italy, he was also remembered as Pietro Polo Rubens.

## 6. MUSIC

While Italian art generally reached its greatest peak in the period of Humanism and the Renaissance, in music, a more serious attempt to imitate ancient models would come only in the second half of the 16th century. A group of intellectuals from Florence known as Camerata de' Bardi<sup>11</sup>, i.e. Camerata Fiorentina, begins to be interested in the possibility of creating a new art form in which music and poetry would be closely related. They begin to experiment with singing as a function of dramatic text, as they wanted to revive and modernize the models of Greek tragedies using sung dialogues. These experiments represent the basis and the introduction to a new musical and scenic genre – opera. This genre will become the biggest promoter of Italian music of the Italian language.

The word opera itself is an abbreviation of the Italian term *opera in musica* – a musical work (literally a work in music), while the term *melodrama* is used for the same genre in Italy from the Greek words *melos* – song (singing) and *drama* – performance<sup>12</sup> (stage performance). From then on another internationalism is also the Italian word *libretto*, which is used for the text of an opera, while it literally means booklet.

The first opera was performed in Florence at the very end of the 16th century, for the narrow circle of the already mentioned Camerata Fiorentina<sup>13</sup>. It was the opera *Daphne*, the music of which was written by Jacopo Peri, and the libretto by Ottavio Rinuccini, performed in the house of Jacopo Corsi, who also contributed to this project as a composer. The music for the opera *Daphne* is unfortunately lost (only fragments have remained) while the libretto is preserved. The next opera *Eurydice*, whose authors were also Jacopo Peri and Ottavio Rinuccini, was performed immediately after the first one (1600) and has been preserved to this day (Ferroni 2008, 420).

The opera started in Florence, but in a short time it conquered all major Italian cities<sup>14</sup> and as soon as 1614 it had its first performance abroad, originally at the court in Salzburg, and then, between 1614 and 1619, the performances in Prague, Vienna, Innsbruck followed. Italian opera rapidly conquered Europe and made an outstanding contribution to the spreading of the Italian language in Europe. The operas were most often performed in the original, while the libretto with a translation in the language of the country where the opera was performed was distributed to the audience for easier follow-up. Since it was sung in Italian, the main roles were most often entrusted to Italian singers, while the supporting roles were often sung by local singers in their own languages. In some countries, such as Spain, even operas written in other languages (French, German) were sung in Italian (Bonomi 2010, 13).

It is not difficult to assume that all the terms related to opera are Italian (*opera, soprano, mezzosoprano, basso...*), and that, together with other Italian musical terms, they are actually internationalisms. Although opera represents the greatest pinnacle of Italian music, borrowing of musical terms from this language concerns all segments of classical music: names of musical

<sup>10</sup> The first letter in Italian was written in 1603, and the last in 1640, just before his death.

<sup>11</sup> They were named after the Count Giovanni Bardi in whose house they gathered; one of the leading members of the group was Vincenzo Galilei, the father of Galileo Galilei.

<sup>12</sup> Greek *dran* – to work, to do

<sup>13</sup> The composition of the group Camerata Fiorentina at that moment was significantly different from the initial one

<sup>14</sup> The richest production and the largest audience was in Venice and Rome.

instruments, compositions, terms from the field of music theory are borrowed. The Italian language is absolutely dominant in the domain of classical music, which is why it is also called the official language of classical music

<i>Italian</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Serbian</i>
virtuoso	virtuose	virtuoso	virtouz
concerto	concert	concert	koncert
violino	violon	violin	violina
sinfonia	symphonie	symphony	sinfonija
quartetto	quartette	quartet	kvartet
opera	opéra	opera	opera
soprano	sopran	soprano	sopran
basso	basse	bass	bas

Italian words are also found on musical scores, they convey to the performer the information about the volume, speed of performance and emotional character of the composition.

#### 7. FASHION, COOKING, PEJORATIVE TERMS

In general, these terms have been borrowed from the Italian language for centuries, and they are still being borrowed today, so among Italianisms we find words from the most diverse areas. During the Renaissance period, a certain number of pejorative terms from Italian reached other European languages: *bandito*, *ciarlatano*, *sbirro*, *spione* – *bandit*, *charlatan*, *swindler*, *spy*...

Culinary and fashion are areas in which words have always been borrowed from the Italian language, and that trend continues today.<sup>15</sup>

<i>Italian</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Serbian</i>
perla	perle	pearl	perla
pomata	pommade	pomade	pomada
pantaloni	pantalon	pantaloon, pants	pantalone
broccoli	brocoli	broccoli	brokoli
maccheroni	macaroni	macaroni	makarone
spaghetti	spaghetti	spaghetti	špageti
parmigiano	parmesan	parmesan	parmezan
pizza	pizza	pizza	pica
cappuccino	cappuccino	cappuccino	kapučino

A recent study talks about the most common Italianisms in 21 countries: *pizza*, *ristorante*, *pizzeria*, *espresso*, *pasta*, *cappuccino*, *italiano*, *caffè*, *trattoria*, *bello goccia*, *casa*, *latte*, *panino*, *piccolo*, *cucina*, *saldo*, *arco*, *primo*, *moda*<sup>16</sup> (Stammerjohann 2013, 116). More than half of them are in the field of cooking and catering facilities.

<sup>15</sup> Italian cuisine had a great reputation even before French and was first accepted at court, so words from the field of cooking arrived in French and that process continues to this day.

<sup>16</sup> The words for which there is no confirmation of Italian origin in *Veliki rečnik stranih reči i izraza*, I. Klajn i M. Šipka are also listed here.



## 8. CONCLUSION

As much as the Italian cultural heritage is great, so is the Italian linguistic heritage, but it is often more difficult to notice because Italian words reach many languages through an intermediate language and accept its characteristics, while many words, being present for a long time in the host language, are completely assimilated. Various words have been intensively borrowed from the Italian language from the 10th century to the present day. The oldest loans concern shipping and trade, and are related to the development of the maritime cities of Venice, Genoa, Pisa, and Amalfi. The largest number of words arrived in other European languages in the period of Humanism and the Renaissance when Italian art played a leading role in Europe. Italian was then the most popular language and the literary works of Italian authors were widely read and served as a model. Italian was also the language of international correspondence.

Italian artists, as top masters, designed and painted palaces in Europe, built fortifications. On the other hand, European artists came to learn from the great Italian masters Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian. The consequence of the intense cultural exchange is a large number of Italian words from the fields of architecture, painting and sculpture that we find today in other European languages. In the 17th century, when the Italian influence in the field of fine arts was waning, music entered the scene. Then terms from the field of music theory, names of musical compositions and instruments arrived in other languages. The pinnacle of Italian linguistic influence in the field of music is certainly the discovery of opera and its expansion. Audience across Europe flock to theaters to hear operas performed in Italian. Linguistic terms related to classical music are almost entirely Italian and are considered internationalisms. They are poorly assimilated and easily recognizable in all languages. Even today, terms have been borrowed from the Italian language in a wide variety of fields, mostly in the culinary field.

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## ITALIJANIZMI U KULTURI I UMETNOSTI

*Kroz prezentovanje procesa pozajmljivanja reči iz italijanskog jezika u radu se analizira i uticaj koji su ovaj jezik i njegova kultura imali na evropske jezike i kulturu. Pozajmljivanje je obrazloženo istorijskim i kulturološkim kontekstom, a poseban fokus stavlja se na umetnost kao na jednu od manifestacija duhovne kulture. Proces pozajmljivanja prikazan je hronološki i tematski od 10. veka do danas, a italijanski je predstavljen i kao jezik prenosilac prvih arabizama na tlo Evrope. Radi lakše operativnosti pod pojmom italijanizam podrazumevaju se i reči nastale i pre standardizacije italijanskog jezika. Primeri koji se nalaze u radu ilustrativnog su karaktera, bez pretenzije da budu navedeni svi italijanizmi, niti većina njih.*

**Ključne reči:** *italijanizmi, kultura, umetnost, Humanizam i Renesansa, pomorske države, opera*