

Parole, parole

Stefano Albertini (September 21, 2017)



Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò at NYU is producing its own in house web series dedicated to the Italian language. Each episode of Parole Parole features a special guest presenting an Italian word that is dear to them for literary, linguistic, historical or purely personal reasons.

Parole, parole. No, we are not talking of freeing a convict after the trial of the century. Parola (plural parole) in Italian means word. And ParoleParole is also the title of a famous Italian song from the 70's made famous by the popular star Mina, and Alberto Lupo, an actor and TV personality with the most impossibly deep and sexy voice. Mina sang and Lupo responded almost in about his woman. to which Mina replied, disenchanted, that they were just... words... Parole Parole.

Now I can tell you a bit more about the series of short videos (around a minute each) conceived, shot, and edited entirely at Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò and distributed and promoted for free on our



social media. Despite the fact that we feature hundreds of video recordings of our events, this is the first time we've produced original web-based content not connected to a specific event. The idea of presenting an Italian word, explaining its origin, usage, and different meanings was born in part as a way of responding to a need that emerged in the last survey of our members and friends. About one third of them are native or fluent speakers of Italian, one third are somewhat conversational but not fluent and one third have no proficiency at all. But an overwhelming majority of people would still like to see more events in Italian and improve their knowledge of the language.

So our series was born. Taking advantage of the presence on our staff of Eugenio Pizzorno, a young videographer, we started our adventure. We bought a green screen, and with a few ingenious technical solutions Eugenio turned a classroom into a makeshift TV studio. I started an aggressive recruitment of speakers, typically by asking "ci regali una parola?" (Would you donate a word?). The words could be funny, strange, unusual, common, ancient, brand new, impossible to translate, misleading. Our guests naturally include the usual suspects: professors, teachers, and students of Italian, and translators, but also tour operators, musicians, writers, film critics, and businesspeople both Italian and American. The pilot episode, featuring the word "Ciao", reached more than 20,000 people and was seen by 7,000 in just a few days. But what my staff and I liked more than the numbers was the wave of excited participation we got from our viewers. They suggested words, volunteered to come and record, planned to use the series in the classes they taught.

The series is first a lot of fun for all involved and I can say that there is always something I learn from these short videos. In future episodes you'll find the same mix of the high and the low, and the funny and the serious. Words ranging from 'sprezzatura' to 'mutande'. Not only can English speakers broaden their vocabulary and deepen their knowledge of Italian but even native Italian speakers can also learn to use their language better. For example did you know that there is an Italian verb that perfectly translates the English 'to scan' and no, it's not the Italianized form of the English verb, the horrible 'scannerizzare.' Want to know the answer to these and many more questions, doubts and curiosities?

Stay tuned to Parole Parole. And help us make it even more fun and rewarding.

[>> Visit the Parole Parole YouTube channel](#) [2] to find all the currently available episodes.

*Stefano Albertini is the director of [Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò at NYU](#). [3]

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