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The creative use of Italian in trademarks, advertising slogans and shop signs

Conference by Prof. Joseph Brincat in occasion of the 16th week of Italian language worldwide

Nicosia, Thursday 20 October 2016, 20.30, *Cultural Centre of the University of Cyprus, Manor House on Axiotheas Street, Old Nicosia.*



"Il buon vino non ha bisogno di frasca" is an old Italian saying that goes back to the days when, in small towns, villages or districts people knew where to buy genuine goods. Consequently, shops did not need to put up signs outside their doors. In those days very few people knew how to read and write, and shops used to put up readily recognizable symbols: in the instance I quoted a wine-seller would put up a branch of wine-leaves. The proverb therefore means that good wine does not need a branch to attract customers.

This is no longer the case, for two reasons: first of all, nowadays advertising is indispensable and we all know how persistent it can be. We are bombarded with adverts in the streets, on TV, in all sorts of publications, including spam in our letter-boxes. Secondly, today almost everybody is literate, and advertising needs words to carry, or emphasize, the manufacturer's message. Competition is so keen these days that marketing has become very creative, conjuring up brand names, slogans and shop signs that do their very best to attract our attention.

In his talk, Prof. Brincat will try to show the tricks of the trade, and distinguish between the various linguistic stratagems that marketing managers resort to: rhetorical devices like hyperbole and euphemisms, as well as wordplay. He shall deal mainly with shop signs and slogans created in Italy, but also explain how the slogans of international brands are translated, modified or rewritten in the Italian language. The presentation will also include references to Switzerland, where Italian is one of the official languages and is widely spoken in various Cantons.

