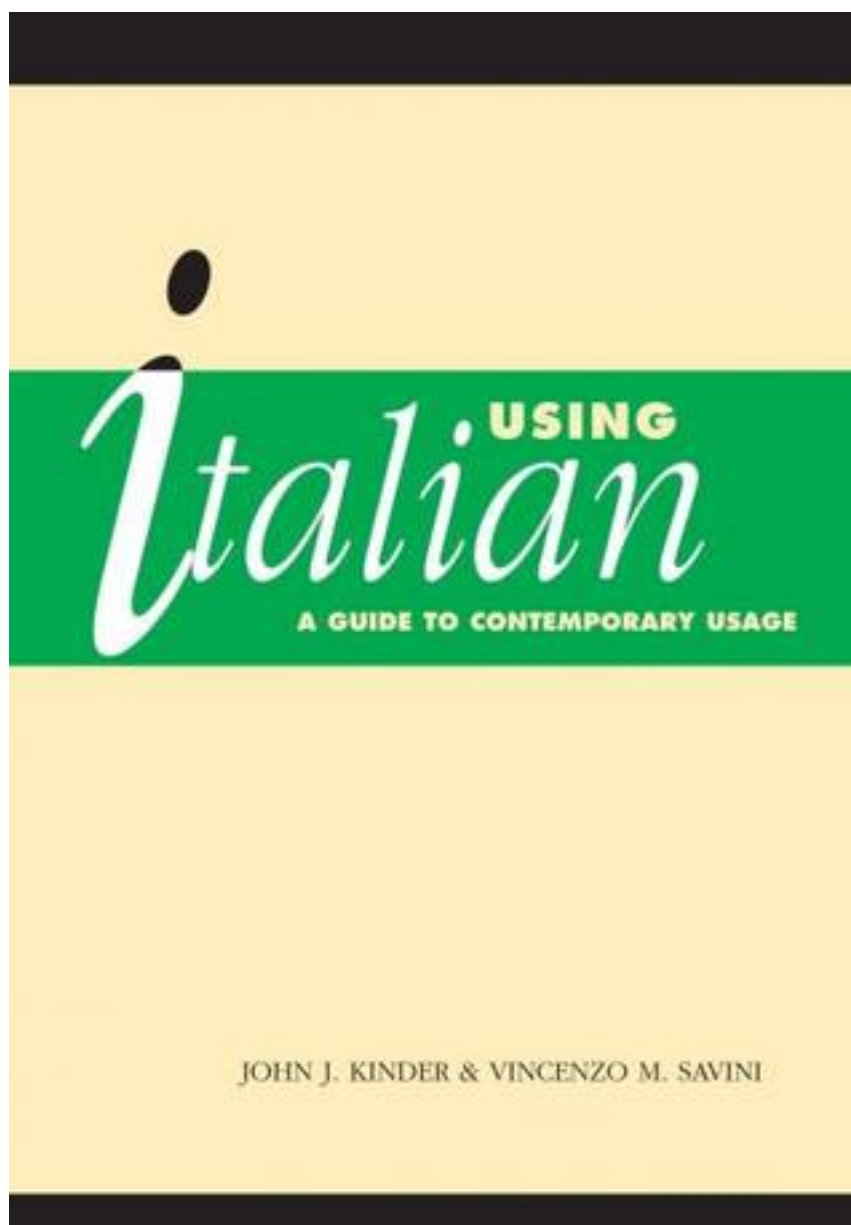




Using Italian: A Guide to Contemporary Usage

Traci Andrighetti (August 14, 2014)



A forward-thinking grammar book with local and regional flavor



As an ex-instructor of Italian, I often get asked to recommend grammar books for students at all levels of learning. My favorites tend to be those that contain information about authentic Italian language; in other words, the ways in which Italian is really used in speech and in writing.

John Kinder and Vincenzo Savini's [Using Italian: A Guide to Contemporary Usage](#) [2] (Cambridge, 2004) is one of the best examples of this type of text. Besides providing a concise review of Italian grammar, this book presents a fascinating overview of how standard Italian has evolved and interacted with the many dialects of Italy since its adoption as the national language in 1868, as well as analyses of the varieties of Italian and differences in register with respect to region and form (written or spoken).

Some of the more interesting aspects of *Using Italian* involve the analyses of regional variation in lexical items and the so-called **falsi amici** (**false friends**), i.e., Italian words that look similar to English terms but have different meanings (sometimes radically so!). But the most entertaining part of the text is the spellings of animal and other noises.

REGIONAL VARIATION

English Meaning / North / Center / South

bad luck / sfiga / scalogna, scarogna / jella, iella

chair / sedia / seggiola / sedia

cheese / formaggio / cacio / cacio

melon / melone / poppone / mellone

nice / carino / belluccio / caruccio

FALSE FRIENDS

Falso Amico / English Meaning / English Cognate / Italian Meaning

attico / penthouse / attic / soffitta

contento / happy / content / soddisfatto

lussuria / lust / luxury / lusso

retribuzione / remuneration / retribution / castigo, punizione

triviale / vulgar, obscene / trivial / banale, futile

ANIMAL NOISES

Animal / Verb / Noun / Noise

asino (donkey) / ragliare / raglio / hi-ho; i-o

gallo (rooster) / cantare / canto / chicchirichì



gatto (cat) / **miagolare** / **miagolìo** / **miao**

mucca, vacca (cow) / **muggire** / **muggito** / **muu**

topo (mouse) / **squittire** / **squittìo** / **squit-squit**

OTHER NOISES

Source / Verb / Noun / Noise

arma da fuoco (firearm) / **sparare** / **sparo** / **pim, pam**

campana (large bell) / **scampanare** / **scampanìo** / **din don**

campanello (small bell) / **scampanellare** / **scampanellìo** / **drin, drindrin**

orologio (clock, watch) / **ticchettare** / **ticchettìo** / **tic-tac**

telefono (telephone) / **suonare, trillare** / **suono, trillo** / **drin, dring**

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