Italian is the 4th Most Studied Language

I. I. (October 07, 2019)



Surpassing French, Italian becomes the 4th most studied language in the world, after English, Spanish, and Mandarin.

A study by Ethnologue [2], a research center dedicated to language, revealed that Italian is amongst the most studied languages in the world, coming in fourth place after English, Spanish and Mandarin, and right before French. During the 2016-2017 academic year, it counted 2.145.093 students across 115 countries.

Within the European Union, however, the most studied language is by far English, which is part of the program for 97,3% of secondary school students, followed by French (33,8%), then German (23,1%), Spanish (13,6%), Russian (2,7%) and finally Italian (1,1%)

The numbers are also different within Italy, where, after English, the most studied foreign languages are French (72,3%), Spanish (18,8%) and German (8,7%). Although in many schools, the study of

Spanish is rapidly increasing on its way to surpassing French. Interest in studying Mandarin and Arabic is also on the rise, particularly in private schools and universities.

As for the most spoken languages, a rather difficult rating to establish since there is no single way to determine how many people speak a language at a certain time, English is of course number one overall spoken language, (by 190 million people, that is 17% of the global population) followed by Mandarin, which in turn is the most common mothertongue (908,7 million)

Italy comes in 21st place with over 67 million speakers. It is however more diffused as a mothertongue, counting native speakers in 26 different countries as a consequence of widespread Italian emigration.

Overall, it’s quite remarkable that a language such as Italian, which is associated with a restricted geographical area (it is an official language in Italy, San Marino, Vatican City, Switzerland and some areas of Slovenia and Croatia), has such wide-reaching and seemingly growing draw. It certainly speaks to the general appeal of Italian culture worldwide, to the strength and potential of Italian soft power.

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