

Italian

Italiano

Spoken in: Italy and 29 other countries

Region: Southern Europe

Total speakers: 70 million

Genetic Classification: Indo-European Italic Romance Italo-Western Italo-Dalmatian Italian

Official language of: Italy, Switzerland, San Marino, Slovenia, Vatican City, Istria county of Croatia

Italian is a Romance language spoken by about 70 million people, most of whom live in Italy. Standard Italian is based on Tuscan dialects. The long-established Tuscan standard has, over the last few decades, been slightly influenced by the variety of Italian spoken in Milan, the economic centre of Italy. Italian has double (or long) consonants, like Latin.

Italian has always had a distinctive dialect for each city; Italians generally believe that the best-spoken Italian is *lingua Toscana in bocca Romana*. The Romans are known for speaking clearly and distinctly, while the Tuscan dialect is the closest existing dialect to Dante's now-standard Italian.

Italian is written using the Latin alphabet. The letters J, K, W, X and Y are not part of the standard Italian alphabet, but are seen in imported words (such as jeans, whiskey, taxi).

Italian alphabet

The Italian alphabet consists of 21 letters from the modern Latin alphabet:

a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, z

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, Z

Currently SSWAHS Health Care Interpreter Service employs 1 FTE Italian interpreter and 8 sessional interpreters.