

ITALIAN

COUNTRIES: Italy
Southern Switzerland
Eastern Sicily

POSTS: Vatican
Milan
Rome

For a long time the Italians used only their vernacular languages to communicate with each other. But in the 20th century the regional language became an intermediary instrument between the vernacular idioms and the national language.

Italian is derived from a Florentine model, a number of flourishing dialects (Sicilian, Lombard, Romagnese, Apulian and the language of the borderlands), and from the adoption of a third language (French, Spanish or German). Of all the European languages it has retained the deepest imprint of its Latin origins. It has also exhibited the least amount of variation in morphology, vocabulary and syntax over the centuries.

One remarkable feature of Italian is that most of its words end in a vowel. There are many forms for the most commonly used verb meanings, tenses and persons. Synonyms abound: where French or English would have only one word, Italian will have three or four perfectly equivalent ones.

Since it is possible to play on articles, possessive pronouns, verb forms and nouns, stylistically and semantically there is no appreciable difference between a dozen or so different renderings.

Certain forms of social activity are unknown or can only be expressed using dialect. Thus there is often no word to refer to certain feelings or to describe certain animals and forms of vegetation, certain handicraft activities or certain aspects of daily life.