



EVOLUTION OF ITALIAN LANGUAGE IN INDIA: FUTURE SCOPE AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract: India and Italy are two ancient civilizations with a long amicable relationship since centuries. The year 2023 is marked as 75 years of diplomatic relations between India and Italy which is a very significant milestone in the history of bilateral ties. Italian language always played a key role in strengthening the healthy relationship between two nations. Today Italian has become fourth most studied language in the world. In India, it is being taught as a foreign language for the past several years and now found various Universities and in other related academic fields. The present paper tries to explore the evolution, future scope and opportunities of Italian language in India.

Keywords: Italy, India, Relationship, Italian Language, Scope, Opportunities

Introduction

Italy or *Italia* officially known as Italian Republic is situated in the heart of Mediterranean Sea in the Southern Europe. Southern Europe is also known as Mediterranean Europe which includes other known countries such as France, Spain, Croatia, Greece etc. Italy is a peninsula surrounded by Adriatic Sea on the east, Tyrrhenian Sea on the west and Ionian and Mediterranean Sea in the south. In north it shares open land borders with France, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia. It has two main islands: Sicily and Sardinia, the shape of the country is like a boot. With around 61 million inhabitants, it is the fourth-most populous European Union member state and the most populous country in Southern Europe. As far as cultural heritage is concerned, Italy has 54 World Heritage Sites highest in the world followed by China (53), Spain (47), France (44), Germany (44), India (37) and Mexico (35). It is one among five most visited countries in the world. Rome or *Roma* is the capital city of the country which is home to the Vatican as well as ancient

ruins and landmark art of ancient history and civilization of the western world. It is situated on the bank of river Tiber in the Lazio region of the Central Italy. According to Roman mythology the city was founded by two brothers and demigods Romulus and Remus in 753 BC. It is known as The Eternal City or *La Città Eterna* and is also called as *Caput Mundi* which means Capital of the World. Today Rome has the status of global city and it is the most popular tourist attraction in Italy as well as in entire European Union countries. There are many tourists' attractions such as Colosseum, St. Peter's Basilica, Roman Forum, Trevi Fountain, Pantheon, Castel Sant'Angelo, Piazza Navona, Centro Storico & the Spanish Steps etc. Other major Italian cities are Florence, Venice, Milan and Naples etc. Florence is situated in Tuscany region. It is the birthplace of the European Renaissance of the 14th – 17th centuries, and has been called the Athens of the middle Ages. It is home to many masterpieces of Renaissance art, architecture and monuments. The Cathedral of *Santa Maria del Fiore*, also known as *Duomo*, is one of the most iconic sights and symbol of the city. The cathedral is with terracotta – tiled dome designed by Brunelleschi and a bell tower by Giotto. The Gallery of the Academy is an art museum which has a large collection of paintings and sculptures by great Florentine artists among which Michelangelo's *David* is the most famous. It is considered as masterpiece of Renaissance sculpture. The Uffizi Gallery is also a prominent art museum which exhibits Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* and Vinci's *Annunciation*. Venice is known as the city of canals situated in Veneto region of northeastern Italy. The city has no roads. It has only canals and it is famous for Gondola rides. Milan is a metropolis situated in Lombardy region of northern Italy. It is known as the fashion capital of Italy. It is the center of the financial hub and national stock exchange of the country. Naples is the third largest city after Rome and Milan situated in Campania region of southern Italy. It is full of historical sites, monuments, buildings, squares etc. Naples is famous for the varieties of pizza as it is originated from here.

History of Italian Language

Italian is the official language of the country. Through a long and gradual process, it is derived from Latin language after the fall of Roman Empire in the 5th century. Latin is the classical language belongs to Italic group of Indo – European language family. Apart from Italian the major languages belong to the family are French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romanian. Latin was originally spoken in the area surrounding Rome, also known as Latium region situated in Central western Italy. Latin is mainly divided in two different languages: Classical Latin and Vulgar Latin.

Classical Latin was mainly literary language to conserve the glorious history, literature and culture of the Roman Empire. The written work of Marcus Tullius Cicero, a Roman statesman, writer, philosopher and orator is a very important source of information for the entire world. Whereas Vulgar Latin was the colloquial language widely spoken by common people is the combination of vernacular dialects and varieties of Latin.

After the fall of Roman Empire, Vulgar Latin slowly and gradually drifted into Romance languages. Like other romance languages such as French, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian also Italian has varieties of regional differences, accents and dialects. Some of the most known dialects of Italian language are Tuscan or Florentine, Sicilian, Romanesco, Venetian, Milanese, Neapolitan etc. Before the unification, Italy was divided into various independent autonomous states and each state had its own dialects and cultural identity. But after the unification in 1861, Tuscan dialect particularly Florentine dialect became the vehicle of cultural, literary and linguistic promotion throughout Italy due to extensive literary works done by Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Machiavelli. Dante Alighieri was a poet, writer, political thinker and philosopher best known for his epic poem The Divine Comedy or *La Divine Commedia*, is considered as the father of Italian language.

Italian Speaking Population in the world

Today Italian is spoken by over 85 million worldwide. It is an official language in Italy, Switzerland, Vatican City, San Marino, Istria Country in Croatia and Slovene Istria in Slovenia. It is also one of the 24 official languages of the European Union. There are many Italian speaking communities across the world including France, Brazil, Argentina, Romania, United States, United Kingdom, Malta, Libya, Somalia, Australia, Albania and Venezuela. It is one of the most widely spoken non – official languages in Europe.

Diffusion of Italian Language in India

In India, Italian is being taught as a foreign language for the past several years and now found its place in various Indian Universities and in other related academic fields. There are many Colleges, Universities, and many public or private language institutes offer Italian language course in Hyderabad, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Varanasi, Kolkata and others parts of India. Details of the Universities and Colleges where one can learn Italian language are as follow:

1. The English and Foreign Languages University

The English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) is located in Hyderabad, a city that is more than four hundred years old. The University was founded in 1958 as the Central Institute of English and became the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) in 1973. In 2006, CIEFL became a Central University by an Act of Parliament.

The Department of Italian Studies was established in the year 2010 to promote research and teaching of Italian language, literature and culture under the School of European Languages. This is the unique department which introduced Italian language courses for the first time in South India. It's a new emerging department which currently offers B.A(Hons. /Research) in line of NEP – 2020, Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma courses in Italian. The duration of the part – time courses for each level is one year which is divided into two semesters. Department also offers Italian as an optional paper for BA & MA students as per NEP – 2020 guidelines. Moreover, it offers 80 hrs. Non – Formal proficiency course in

Italian which is open for all those who know basic Italian and wants to brush up their Italian. It's a vibrant, thriving intellectual center for Italian Studies with its continuous upgradation of curriculum and research program. In future Department is planning to offer M.A and Ph. D in Italian Studies. Additionally, the Department caters to needs of wider population by offering Italian language proficiency courses through e – Content offered by the CEC, UGC. Less than fifteen years of its existence, it has trained hundreds of students in Italian language, literature and culture. The alumni of the Department have 100% placement in public and private sectors. They have also been placed successfully in Multinational Companies. The Italian Department has MoUs with prestigious Italian Universities such as University for Foreigners Perugia and Siena, Sapienza University of Rome, Ca'Foscari University of Venice, University of Turin, University of Bologna etc.

2. **Delhi University**

Delhi University is one of the oldest Universities in India which offers Italian language courses at two levels, one is at University level and other is at college level. Daulat Ram College, Ramjas College and St. Stephen's College which are considered the premium most colleges of Delhi University offer Italian language courses in part – time mode.

Whereas, at University level the Department of Germanic and Romance Studies in Arts Faculty of Delhi University is the full – fledged Department which offers regular programs such as B.A (Hons. /Research), M.A. and Ph. D in Italian Studies. It is the unique department in India which offers Ph. D in Italian Studies. The Department has its origin in the Modern European Languages which was established in 1948. The Department came into existence in 1988 when the original department was divided into two separate departments. Since the introduction of MA programs in 1988 in French, German and Hispanic Studies, the focus of teaching and research is on cultural studies with an emphasis on an interdisciplinary perspective. This focus has been enhanced through the restructuring of MA and MPhil in Italian Studies in 1995 and 1998 respectively and introduction of BA (Hons) in Italian in 2002. Over the more than two decades of its existence, the Department regularly organizes extension lectures by eminent scholars in the field of Italian literature, culture and language teaching.

3. **Jamia Millia Islamia University, Delhi**

The Centre for European and Latin American Studies has been established to promote research and teaching on Latin American, Caribbean and different European countries such as Spain, Portugal, Italy, France and Russia. The Centre offers Italian language proficiency programs in part – time mode. It also has collaboration with other institutes and universities not only in India but also in Italy.

4. **Visva – Bharati University, West – Bengal**

Centre for Modern European Languages, Literature and Culture Studies was established keeping in mind Rabindranath Tagore's internationalist vision: *Yatra visva bhavati eka nidam* which means where the world become one single nest. The aim of the center is to promote an understanding of European civilization and its diverse impact on the world through the study of its languages, literatures, cultures and translation. The center offers regular Bachelor and Master's programs in Italian Studies as well as all part – time courses like Certificate of Proficiency, Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Italian Studies.

5. **Italian Embassy Cultural Centre, New Delhi and Mumbai**

Cultural relations between Italy and India find fertile ground in a multifaceted network of partnerships between government, universities, research institutions, cultural associations, schools, and enterprises of the two countries. These are all collaborations which the Italian diplomatic network in India has helped build and strengthen throughout the years. In this regard, The Italian Cultural Centre Mumbai and Delhi acts as a bridge between two countries and plays a key role in the promotion of Italian language and culture in India. It is a part of worldwide network of 83 Italian government offices located in all over the world with the goal of promoting Italian culture, heritage and language. It contributes to the dissemination of Italian language and culture through the organization of cultural events, exhibitions, concerts, food and film festivals, seminars, workshops, symposia, special and intensive teacher training program, need – based courses in Italian language, literature, history, art, traditions and civilization etc. The Italian Cultural Centre offers Italian courses corresponding to different levels such as A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2 as per Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Moreover, different institutes and universities such as Indo – Italian Chamber of Commerce Mumbai, Bangalore Chennai and Kolkata, Deccan College Pune, Ramakrishna Mission Institute, Kolkata, Department of Foreign Languages (Banaras Hindu University), School of Foreign Languages (Mysore University), Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, Mumbai University, Cochin University of Science and Technology etc. offers one-year certificate course in Italian language.

Future Scope and Opportunities

India and Italy are two ancient civilizations with a long amicable relationship since centuries. People of these two ancient civilizations have known, interacted and traded with each other for more than 2000 years. The Venetian merchant Marco Polo, during his travels to the east, also traveled to India in the 13th century and wrote about his experiences. Later in 1925 Professor Giuseppe Tucci came to India to investigate oriental culture and taught Italian language and literature at the universities of Shantiniketan and Calcutta. The year 2023 is marked as 75 years of diplomatic relations between India and Italy which is a very significant milestone in the history of bilateral ties. Both have always had a strong strategic, military, economic and diplomatic relationship. Both have had long standing and time – tested historical, cultural and political ties. As a matter of fact, the relationship between people of both countries goes much

deeper into history. It is evident that both have been connected to each other through centuries. What is important they have always been close and reliable friends whose relationship is solidly based on mutual trust, respect and common values. Over the recent decades the cultural and educational aspects of Italy's ties with India have been marked by a very prolific growth in which Italian language plays a very crucial role in strengthening the ties between the two nations. It is an important tool for facilitating and deepening such ties. In recent years Italian has a very bright future in India as several International Italian companies like Banco, Gucci, Fiat, Llyod, Ferrari, Benetton, Pinnacle, Marconi etc. have set up their business in India. These Italian companies are looking for proficient Italian language speakers. Today there are lots of Italian language specialist jobs in India. After learning Italian one can easily find a job with a very good package in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Pune, Bangalore, Chennai, Gurugram, Noida, Indore, Ahmedabad and other parts of the country. Due to globalization, offshore and outsourcing many Indian and international companies such as Accenture, TCS, Infosys, Amazon, Google, Facebook, HCL, LG, IBM, Genpact, Tech Mahindra etc. are looking for Italian language speakers. There is a very high demand for Italian language translator, interpreter, trainers, content writers, proofreaders, independent freelancer etc. One can also have a very good career in the department of ministry of external affairs, Indian and Italian embassies across the world, tourism and hospitality sector, public relation departments, import or export sector, custom services, media house, medical and agriculture sector, food and fashion industry, diplomatic professional sector, research associates, book editor etc.

Conclusion

The scope of Italian language in India is increasing year by year. Every year the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs awards three, six and nine months' scholarships which give a golden opportunity to study in Italy. These scholarships help to develop and explore rich Italian culture and civilization. Italian is considered as the most musical language of the world. Today due to various reasons many people are learning Italian and it is the fourth most studied language in the world. As Alessandra Bertini Malgarini, former director of Italian Embassy Cultural Centre, New Delhi says "Italian is the language of art, music, film, fashion, design, good food and good wine ... but also of science, technology, industry, football ... and above all is the language of 'la dolce vita'!" (Mezzadri and Balboni, 2009)

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