

UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI

School of Italian Language for Foreigners-ItaStra

University of Palermo, ItaStra and its students



University of Palermo and School of Italian Language for Foreigners

The University of Palermo was established in 1806, when Ferdinand III of Borbone, King of Naples and of the Two Sicilies, transformed the Palermitan Academy of Studies into a University. In doing so, he gave it the power to award degrees in Theology, Medicine, Law and Philosophy: an achievement for which the city had been waiting centuries. The University of Palermo, nowadays, is amongst the 11 mega Universities in Italy. According to the 2017-18 Censis ranking, it is in 6th place for general score and services offered, in 2nd place for its structure and in 1st place for communications and multimedia services.

UniPa is also the main institution for culture, science and training in Central and Western Sicily, with its 1521 Teachers, 5 Schools, 20 Departments and 125 degree courses. It has a population of 50.000 among students, teachers and administration personnel and every year recruits 8.000 new students in 1st level degree courses and 1.900 in 2nd level courses. The University is also found in other areas of Sicily, thanks to its 3 decentralized educational sites in Agrigento, Caltanissetta and Trapani. UniPa has been given the HR Excellence in Research and Recognition Certificate by the European Commission.

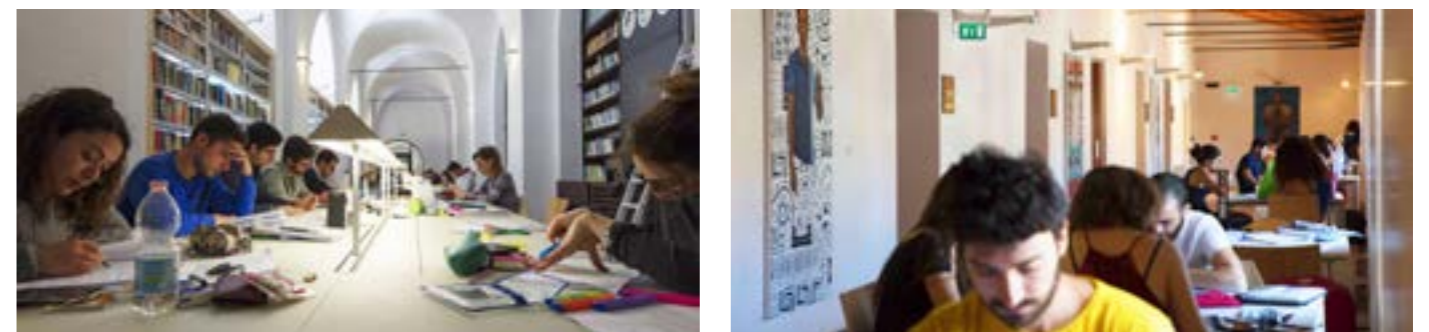
Amongst other services for students and teachers, it offers: the ERSU (accommodations, canteens, scholarships), the COT (orientation and tutoring centre), the CUS (sports centre: swimming, volleyball, basket, football, rugby, tennis, various sports specialties and gymnastics). All University buildings have free wi-fi.



The process of internationalization of the University of Palermo and the contribution of the Department of Humanities

The School of Italian Language for Foreigners (ItaStra), which operates within the Department of Humanities, is an enormous contribution to the process of internationalization of the University. Besides promoting collaboration with foreign universities (amongst others: Universidad Nacional de Rosario in Argentine; Sichuan International Studies University in China), the group carries forward some international projects of international training and research, such as the International Seminary of Formation for teachers Stra(N)italiano; some European projects such as the LLP Grundtvig Learning for living and the Erasmus+, *Language acquisition within democratic citizenship* (LADECI), the international project of research funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), *The protective role of language in global migration and mobility: language policies and practices in refugee settings*, and others; some international conferences such as the Forum *Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults* (LESLLA, 4-6 October 2018) whose goal is to share studies and research on the development of expertise in the second language of migrant adults with low or zero schooling. Among ItaStra's publications we may underline the recent manual for the learning of Italian as a second and foreign language *Ponti di Parole* (alfa, alfa1 and beginner A1 levels), and the volumes *Verso una didattica linguistica riflessiva. Percorsi di formazione iniziale per insegnanti di italiano come lingua non materna* (*Towards a reflective linguistic teaching. Initial training paths for teachers of Italian as a non-mother tongue*); *Dai barconi all'università. Percorsi di inclusione linguistica per minori stranieri non accompagnati* (*From the boats to the university. Linguistic inclusion paths for unaccompanied foreign minors*); *Odisseo arriving alone; Fra cinese e italiano. Esperienze didattiche* (*Between Chinese and Italian. Teaching experiences*).

Teaching, training and research. The School of Italian language and its areas



The old Convent of St. Antonino is the site of the CLA (the Linguistic Centre of the University), of the Library of the Department of Humanities and of ItaStra (the School of Italian Language for Foreigners, since 2007).

It is within walking distance from the Central train station, the historical market of Ballarò and the Foro Italico seafront, in a well served area with shops, supermarkets and good public transport (trains, tram, underground, buses including airport connection).

The available areas for the students and the teachers of the School are spacious, comfortable during the whole year and well furnished with audio and audio-video equipment, library, reading rooms for independent studies, air conditioning and vending machines.

The administrative and secretary personnel are friendly and ready to meet even the most demanding of needs: from searching for accommodation to assistance in obtaining a study visa or the organization of a tour to discover the territory and every aspect of Italian arts and culture.



The Italian language and culture courses are active all year, even though they may change in intensity and frequency. The intensive courses (4 hours per day from Monday to Friday) are held in the summer, between July and September (Summer School) and in March during the winter (Winter School), and include a total of 40 hours of lessons in two weeks or 20 hours in one week. From October to February and from April to June the courses become semi-intensive, with a frequency of two or three lessons per week for a duration of four to five weeks.

Every course lasts 40 hours. The "resident" students can access longer and more articulated programmes lasting 6 months ("Six months of Italian") or a whole academic year ("A year of Italian"). For groups of students or for specific study programmes, it is possible to agree to ad-hoc courses anytime throughout the year. In June and December it is possible to take the exams of "CILS Certificate" for every level of knowledge of the language. The School has, in fact, a convention with the

CILS CENTRE of the University for Foreigners in Siena.

ItaStra also offers in-presence and on line training courses and a 2nd level Master in "Theory, Planning and Teaching of Italian as a Second and Foreign Language", addressed to in-service and aspiring teachers of Italian as a second and foreign language. In 2014, the Master received the *European Language Label*. Amongst the free services offered by the School, there are many extra activities (university seminars, book presentations, cine-forums, theatre special events, creative laboratories, and so on) and educational walks with teachers and tutor trainees, to discover the surrounding territory.

The presence of Italian mother tongue tutors is one of the strong points of the study programmes of the School. These tutors are young Italian undergraduates in Italian Studies or Language Teaching courses at the University of Palermo, carrying out guided training in the ItaStra classes (observation of teaching) or outside them (organization of tourist, cultural and recreational itineraries and activities, and study help).

ItaStra is not just a School of Italian Language and Culture: it is a meeting place for students, teachers and support staff who grow together, both as humans and professionals, it is a research centre on innovative teaching, where you can study not only the language and culture of the "Bel Paese", but also plurilingualism and multiculturalism, solidarity and participation, friendship and search for the most suitable instruments to satisfy everybody's needs.

The School has been engaged for years in the research of the best teaching and training paths for the linguistic and cultural inclusion of the most varied student profiles, even the most disadvantaged, by using innovative models and instruments that put the student at the centre of the teaching.



A successful didactic

Throughout the year, ItaStra proposes different courses suitable to every linguistic competence, from A1 to C2 of the European Common Framework Reference for Languages. As part of the intensive programs, it also offers special advanced courses in Literature, Advanced-Grammar and Sociolinguistics of Contemporary Italian, plus some special mini-courses on Cooking, Photography, Cinema and Theatre which can be combined with a standard course on Language and Culture.

All the necessary materials and teaching instruments are provided by the School. ItaStra teachers have many years of experience and are specialized in teaching Foreign Languages and Italian as a Second and Foreign Language. They keep up-to-date periodically, thanks also to the several training activities offered by the research group of the Department and the Master in "Theory, planning and teaching of Italian as a second and foreign language". They also have personal skills in other fields (literature, cinema, theater, art, history and so on) with which they enrich their lessons, making the learning of the language a cultural experience of great quality and interest as well. In the classrooms it is common to use audio-video materials, films, music, theatrical and ludic activities, images, colours and painting brushes, video cameras and smartphones to document and verify, computers to make collaborative projects of collective writing.



It is not uncommon to perform part of the lesson outside the classroom, in a market, a museum or St. Antonino's surroundings, looking for native speakers for a poll or an interview or to deepen some of the aspects of language and culture, in a highly motivating atmosphere of "immersion".

Students often have the occasion to participate to special projects promoted by their teachers or tutors: writing projects such as the collective interclass magazine *Tracce* (Traces); project works having as a goal the insights of some aspects of Italian culture (food, art, history) or simply the participation to a Festival, like the Sole Luna Doc Film Festival, with which ItaStra has been collaborating for many years.

The class tutors, young Italian mother-tongue undergraduate trainees, are, in such context, an important resource next to students and teachers. In the classroom they are discreet but participatory testimonies of the language and of the culture studied, whilst out of the classroom they are "equals" with whom students discover and get to know other native speakers, the territory, the arts, the culture, the food, the music, the traditions and the "in motion" language-culture, making the study experience in ItaStra unique.



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