Duolingo Says It's Seen '216% Growth in New Chinese (Mandarin) Learners' as TikTok Users Try Out a Competing App

As millions of U.S. TikTok users flock to Chinese-language social app RedNote in light of a possible TikTok ban, more Americans are trying to learn Chinese than ever.

Duolingo, a language learning app used by millions, reported on Wednesday that it had seen a 216% growth in new Mandarin Chinese learners in the U.S. this week compared to last year.

"Learning Mandarin out of spite?" Duolingo stated in a post on X. "You're not alone."

> *Learning Mandarin out of spite? You're not alone.*
>
> *We've seen a ~216% growth in new Chinese (Mandarin) learners in the US compared to this time last year. https://t.co/9hzwBxfTgD pic.twitter.com/qWM9f5oFYA*
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> *— Duolingo (@duolingo) January 15, 2025*

The organic push to learn Mandarin arrives at a time when a Chinese-language app is burgeoning in popularity. Reuters reported on Thursday that in just one day, from Sunday to Monday, nearly 3 million new users joined RedNote.

The app is a Chinese TikTok alternative that includes short videos, images, shopping, and more. While TikTok is owned by

ByteDance, RedNote is owned by Xingyin Information Technology.

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Data obtained by Reuters from research company Sensor Tower showed that U.S. downloads of RedNote were up 200% year-over-year. As of Wednesday, RedNote was the top social app on the Google Play store, up from its position of number 162 last year.

RedNote’s influx of new users, and Duolingo’s uptick in Mandarin Chinese learners, can both be explained by TikTok users looking for alternatives when faced with a possible TikTok ban.

A U.S. law passed in April ordered ByteDance to sell TikTok by Jan. 19 or face a ban on the platform. Though the Supreme Court could halt the law before the Jan. 19 deadline, as of Thursday, it had not yet released a decision.

Related: Is TikTok Considering Selling Its U.S. Business to Elon Musk? Here’s What TikTok Says.

TikTok’s 170 million U.S. users are now trying to find other social media avenues, including RedNote. The move from one Chinese app to another is a clear message that there is demand in the U.S. for Chinese social media apps, per TechCrunch.

TikTok stated in a court filing last month that a ban would cost U.S. creators and small businesses an estimated $1.3 billion in one month.

U.S. use of TikTok was down 2.1% week-over-week ahead of the possible ban, down to about 82.2 million daily active users, according to Reuters.

Related: ‘Sent Ripples Through the Marketing World’: What Businesses Can Do Now to Prepare for a Possible TikTok Ban, According to a CEO

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