



Spanish prime ministers are not renowned for their language skills



Rajoy turns down free English classes

English academy highlights education cuts by offering Spanish leader a course in UK

- catch:** a hidden problem or disadvantage in an apparently ideal situation
- to scrap:** to get rid of
- to turn down:** to refuse and not accept an offer.
- up to scratch:** to reach an acceptable level or standard.
- overseas:** in or to a foreign country.
- self-defeating:** meant to solve a problem but actually causing the same or another problem
- predecessor:** person who held a post or job before present holder

Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy sent a rejection letter to a language school that offered him a free language course in the UK.

Speak & Go Idiomas sent a letter to the Spanish leader offering him a free course at a language school in England. The offer was about giving Rajoy the chance to see first-hand the benefits of learning a language in a country where it is spoken, the Madrid-based language school said at the time.

But there was a **catch**: to take up the chance, the prime minister would have to reinstate language scholarships that had been **scrapped** as part of his government's cuts to education spending. Rajoy replied to the school with a letter politely **turning down** the opportunity.

In the letter, the Spanish leader, who publicly admits his English is not **up to scratch**, stressed the importance of learning languages, especially English. He also took the chance to highlight his government's push towards bilingual education in public schools as a way of equipping students for the future.

"We never expected that Rajoy would take up the offer of our course. He's in a position of enormous responsibility and probably doesn't have two free days in a row," Speak & Go Idiomas Managing Director Silvia García said.

"But what we really wanted to do is highlight the value of studying languages in the place where they are spoken."

García described the current situation in Spain as "poorly organised" and a "disaster", with the funding situation varying from region to region.

And while students used to get money to go **overseas** and learn foreign languages, funding cuts meant they were now attending summer camps within Spain.

From 2012 to 2013, the number of scholarships in Spain fell by nearly 25,000 and public schools lost nearly the same number of teachers, according to official data.

"Learning a language in situ and studying it in Spain are completely different things and you can't compare."

García was critical of former Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero's comments that Spanish heads of state didn't need to speak English.

"All politicians need to learn English, and if they don't, they'll always be on the outside and come across as uncultured," she said.

"It's polite to make an effort to speak another person's language, but learning languages also opens doors. It enriches your understanding of the world," she added.

Spanish leaders have a poor reputation for foreign languages. Zapatero spoke no English, and his **predecessor** José María Aznar also had a poor command of the language when in office, but he later got his head down and now gives speeches in English.

Adapted from The Local

"Let's chat about that!"

Write your answers in an email and send them to your ECP coach!

Give reasons for your answers.

- Do you agree with the article?
- Should Spanish political leaders speak English?
- How have education cuts affected language learning in your area?
- Do you have any solutions?
- How do you feel about having to pay for language classes?
- Should there be a single global language that every child around the world learns at school?

Weekly English Practice

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“iLook, iThink, iSpeak”

“YOU LEARN BY DOING.”

Language Learning Quotes

Which ones do you agree with?

“You can never understand one language until you understand at least two.”

Geoffrey Willans

“Those who know nothing of foreign languages know nothing of their own.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

“Older acquirers progress more quickly in early stages because they obtain more comprehensible input, while younger acquirers do better in the long run because of their lower affective filters.”

Stephen D. Krashen, The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications

“A different language is a different vision of life.”

Federico Fellini

“A man who knows two languages is worth two men.”

French Proverb

“Our language is the reflection of ourselves. A language is an exact reflection of the character and growth of its speakers.”

Cesar Chavez

“To have another language is to possess a second soul.”

Charlemagne

“Language is power, life and the instrument of culture, the instrument of domination and liberation.”

Angela Carter

“Learning a new language, just like opening a new window, allows you to see the world with intimacy.”

Pearl Zhu

“You live a new life for every new language you speak. If you know only one language, you live only once.”

Czech proverb

“Language is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages, not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning.”

Stephen D. Krashen, The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom

Language is not a genetic gift, it is a social gift. Learning a new language is becoming a member of the club -the community of speakers of that language.”

Frank Smith

WHERE?

BAR THE BOOK C/NIEVES CANO

WHY?

TO CHAT AND SOCIALISE IN ENGLISH

TO FEEL MORE CONFIDENT

TO HAVE A GOOD TIME!

WHEN?

SATURDAY 4TH MARCH

WHAT TIME?

5PM (AFTER LUNCH/SIESTA)

“Socialising is learning”

Student Socials

Come and speak English!

Saturday 4th March

Let's get **social!**



Here are some Spanish politicians speaking English, plus Xabi Alonso in German. How good or bad are they? Click on 'Video' to find out!



Video



Video



Video



Video