

Alba Royuela: Europe's North-South Divide on English

English proficiency in South Europe, and specifically in Spain, should be improved to help to the unity of Europe. Only 22% of population in Spain is able to hold a conversation in English.

Getting these figures, the question came to my mind: Why?

English became primary foreign language at school at 1975, replacing French. Although English learning at school has changed significantly, results have yet to be seen in the adult population.

The importance of mastering a foreign language is not rated any higher at work than at school, 70% of Spanish executives do not speak English, and only 40% were disadvantaged in their careers because of that.

The fact is that speaking English well is not really important in Spain, as Spanish is the second most spoken language in the world. Therefore, Spaniards do not really need to speak English to travel abroad or go to the cinema (all films are dubbed into Spanish).

Yet it's a matter of time that English will become more popular. Starting in school, English proficiency is being improved, so there will be a change seen in the next generation.