

# GIUSEPPE

COMES  
TO THE  
UPC



## Read the story and answer the questions you'll find at the end

In the last decades, hundreds of international students arrived at the UPC without knowing what was going on with Catalan and Spanish. Of course, they knew about Spanish, a language spoken by more than 300 million people worldwide, but they didn't seem to have a clear idea of what Catalan was...

- Is it a dialect?
- Is it a secret language?
- Is it only spoken in the countryside?



Luckily, today things are different: the lovely youngsters who come to study at our university are well informed and know everything about the use of languages in Barcelona. Let's take a closer look. This is Giuseppe, a handsome, brown-eyed man from Rome, Italy. Imagine a cross between Valentino Rossi and Tiziano Ferro and you'll get an idea. Before our main man embarked on his Erasmus adventure he did his homework and found out about Catalan and Spanish. He discovered some interesting facts:

- Catalan is the native language of Catalonia.
  - Spanish was introduced later on.
- Both languages are spoken in all spheres of society.
- And hey, English and lots of other languages brought by people from many parts of the world are spoken too.



Giuseppe's research didn't stop there. He googled a little bit and worked out what he could expect in language terms on the first day of class. Not only was he handsome, he was a hardworking student too. He summarised the situation like this:

- Official languages at the UPC: Catalan and Spanish.
- Professors: free to use either of the two languages.
  - Students: as above.
  - Exams and theses: Catalan or Spanish, regardless of the language the classes are taught in.
- English: increasingly used (especially in postgraduate education).



So when that first day came and his professor started speaking in Catalan, he wasn't surprised. In fact, he already knew that some lectures are taught in the native language.

Let's take a break. Are you wondering what proportion of classes are taught in Catalan and Spanish? It's OK. Everybody wants to know that.

There isn't just one answer, but it is safe to say that around 60 per cent of classes are in Catalan and 40 per cent are in Spanish. It depends on each school. You got it? Good. Let's continue.

As we said before, Giuseppe is a very enterprising young man, so the next thing he did was to enrol for a Catalan course. To his surprise, it was quite cheap. Just 20 euros. How cool is that?

There's a reason for it (there are always reasons in life): the course was subsidised by the Catalan government. Attending a Catalan course was much better than he thought. It not only allowed him to learn the language locals were speaking while they were partying at the weekend, it also gave him the chance to meet people from all over the world.



- A boy from Frankfurt
- A girl from Lisbon
- A boy from Glasgow
- A girl from Paris

One day, after class, Giuseppe and his new international friends went to a restaurant for dinner and, taking a look at the menu and trying to guess the meaning of the word “vi”, they realised that Catalan was much more familiar than they first thought. What was happening?

Oh, it's very simple! Italian, French, Portuguese...they all came from Latin and have a lot in common.

Experts say that they share 80% of the vocabulary. You don't believe them?  
Take a look at this table:

- Catalan: VI
- French: VIN
- Italian: VINO
- Portuguese: VINHO



A month later, Giuseppe felt confident enough to start speaking Catalan and asked a girl out on a date. He had heard that locals really appreciate foreigners who speak to them in the native language and wanted to give it a try.

- **Hola, em dic Giuseppe.  
Tens plans per a aquesta nit?**

She accepted, so the handsome, brown-eyed man and the local girl hung out together and one thing led to another. Love was born!

Let's take a second break (it's the last one, I promise!). You might be thinking that I'm kidding, but I'm not. According to official statistics, the Erasmus programme is a good matchmaker. The numbers speak for themselves.



- **People who met a romantic partner while on Erasmus:  
one in four.**
- **Babies born from Erasmus couples since 1987:  
more than one million.**

Now Giuseppe and Carla, the local girl to whom he spoke his first words in Catalan, are living together. Speaking Catalan helped him to find work.

They don't have a child yet but they're working on it, so as not to let down the statisticians. They're committed European citizens, after all.

Of course, this isn't a true story. International students who come here to study know a little bit more about how languages work in Catalonia but sometimes they still don't have the full picture.

If this story has helped you to fill in the blanks, we're happy with that.

## QUESTIONS

1. What is Catalan?
2. What languages are spoken in Catalonia?
3. How widely are Catalan, Spanish and English used in the classroom?
4. Are professors free to choose the language they teach in?
5. If a professor speaks in Catalan, should I speak Catalan too?
6. Can I choose the language in which I take my exams?
7. Is Catalan hard to learn?
8. If I know Spanish or another Romance language, will that help?
9. Do people speak English?
10. What do I gain by learning Catalan?
11. Is it true that all Erasmus students go out with someone?
12. Did Giuseppe and Carla get married?

