

USING AUTHENTIC TEXTS TO TEACH SPANISH

When teaching Spanish, the goal of the teacher is to create an environment that allows the students to interact with the language through authentic learning experiences.

This environment helps prepare students for real-world experiences using the target language. Whether you teach non-native speakers or heritage learners, having authentic Spanish texts in the classroom creates an environment for language acquisition that is well rounded and balanced.



A well-rounded lesson or unit in the Spanish classroom includes elements of culture, speaking, writing, and listening. Reading is also a crucial component in the foreign language classroom; however, reading is often put on the back burner in both the primary and secondary levels. This may be because reading in the target language takes time, and because it is challenging to find reading level-appropriate texts in the target language. Due to these factors, a common resource for reading materials in the Spanish classroom becomes the textbook. Textbooks provide reading passages that contain that chapter's essential vocabulary and grammatical structures as well as some cultural components; however, they only provide explicit information. Therefore, they primarily provide the students with the language skills to use only within those specific scenarios.¹ Authentic texts, on the other hand, throw the learner into the deep end by allowing them to see the language being used in real-world contexts.² But what exactly are authentic Spanish texts? According to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, authentic texts are “written by members of a language and culture group for members of the same language and culture group.”³ In short, the text has not been translated in any way.⁴

¹ Daskalovska, N., & Dimova, V. (2012). Why Should Literature be Used in the Language Classroom? *Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences* 46 (2012) 1182-1186. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.05.271

² Daskalovska, N., & Dimova, V.

³ American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ND). Use of Authentic Texts in Language Learning. Retrieved from <https://www.actfl.org/guiding-principles/use-authentic-texts-language-learning>

⁴ Canion Perugini, D. (2017). Core Practices: Using Authentic Texts and Resources. Retrieved from <https://www.kentuckyteacher.org/subjects/global-competency-world-languages/2017/06/core-practices-using-authentic-texts-and-resources/>

In the primary, and even secondary, Spanish classrooms, it can be easy to overlook authentic texts because they may be too advanced for the students' level. However, including these texts as a part of your teaching toolbox can be invaluable to your students' language experience.

Reading “increases the exposure to the target language, reveals unusual and unexpected uses of the language, stimulates language acquisition and provides a motivating and enjoyable way of learning the language.”⁵



If you want to place a strong emphasis on presenting as many communicative experiences in the target language as possible, reading authentic texts can work in tandem with building students' oral skills. **“Reading becomes valued in the communicative classroom, especially when authentic materials can serve the dual purpose of developing reading skills and of fostering cultural insights and understanding.”⁶ Although the best way to learn and “to improve your knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. The next best way is to read extensively in it.”⁷** For most students, a full immersion experience is not available, therefore it is important to provide as many authentic experiences as possible within the classroom. In addition to showing the language in context, this can be a tool for inviting in different cultures and peoples through literature,⁸ while providing your native speakers an opportunity to see themselves in the texts.

Think of using authentic texts in the foreign language classroom just as you would when trying to find the best authentic Spanish restaurant in town. You may have to do some digging, but in the end, you will have found something amazing. **You don't have to do the searching alone, Mackin will help you find the best authentic Spanish titles for your classroom. Mackin partners with thousands of publishers around the globe, and our classroom specialists can find the perfect texts that meet the needs of your students and teachers.**

⁵ Daskalovska, N., & Dimova, V.

⁶ Omaggio Hadley, A. (2001). Teaching Language in Context (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle Cengage Learning.

⁷ Daskalovska, N., & Dimova, V.

⁸ American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages