

Spanish Literature and Grammar

Dec 2021

In a classification of U3A language courses, *beginner*, *intermediate* and *advanced*, this class would be considered *Intermediate*. The following should explain, and elaborates on the limited description permitted in the Newsletter.

Our group does not have a teacher who is a native speaker of Spanish. Therefore, one cannot expect realistically to develop fluency beyond basic conversational skills. A “core group” of about 9 people, has been together for a long time, originally with Silvia Lang as tutor until she retired many years ago. Being unsuccessful in finding a native-Spanish-speaking volunteer “teacher”, we decided to continue as self-learners, and the “tutor” is more a facilitator of the group than an authoritative teacher. Our interests are similar, and go beyond the title above to embrace all aspects of Spanish Culture, including History, Art, Music, Landscape, Travel and so on. The group is a highly cooperative and interactive one and most seem happy with the way we operate, if the continuity of membership is any criterion. Any member may contribute to the “teaching”, and although we mostly come to agreement, we anticipate and tolerate differences of opinion. Past experience has shown us that even native speakers and textbooks sometimes differ in their opinions.

We welcome new members but recognise that they may or may not find that it is what they want. Some stay for a few years. Some leave. Some come back after a while.

Each year we choose a set book to read, translate, and discuss in class. For example, recently we chose “*Una Historia de España*” by Arturo Pérez-Reverte. (This is quite sophisticated and entertaining, but has proven to be somewhat challenging with its allusions to current life and events in Spain, whose significance we often miss, or find obscure. We realized that we would not finish this in one year, so adopted “*Dónde enterré a Fabiana Orquera*” by Cristian Perfumo as “light relief”.) Over the years, in no particular order, we have read “*El Coleccionista de Flechas*” by Cristian Perfumo, “*Sin Noticias de Gurb*” by Eduardo Mendoza, “*La Aventura de Miguel Littín Clandestino en Chile*” and “*Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada*”, both by Gabriel García Márquez, and in adaptations, “*Los Santos Inocentes*” by Miguel Delibes, “*Pepita Jiménez*” by Juan Valera and the trilogy, “*El Oro de Los Sueños*”, “*La Tierra del Tiempo Perdido*”, and “*Las Lágrimas Del Sol*” by José María Merino.

For added variety in the class, individual members of the group often circulate, (hard copy or email) articles and short stories in the public domain, that they have come across and which they think will be of interest to the class. These usually come from online sources like *XL Semanal* or *El País* or other media.

Spanish Grammar is an interest of the class, many, but not all, of whom have successfully completed year 12, and in one case more advanced level Spanish, albeit some years ago. Thus we are interested in revising and maintaining our knowledge of grammar. As a basic reference, most members have a copy of “*Complete Spanish Grammar*” by Gilda Nissenburg from the Practice Makes Perfect series (McGraw Hill). It doesn’t seem to matter that we don’t all have the same edition. Often we may go deeper into a topic and the leader of the discussion will inevitably have a more detailed authority than Nissenburg’s text. For example, frequently it seems we return to the use of the subjunctive mood and the leader of this discussion happens to have a copy of “*The Spanish Subjunctive Up Close*” by Eric Vogt, which she finds to be useful.

I hope that this gives a more complete explanation of the nature of the class than is it is possible to give in the space of the Newsletter.