

PREFACE

Welcome to the first edition of *Épocas y avances: Lengua en su contexto cultural*. Designed to present a broad spectrum of content-rich materials for the study of the language and culture of the Spanish-speaking world, *Épocas y avances* offers a communicative-humanistic approach to second language acquisition. *Épocas* will provide every student with a better understanding of the cultures and events that have influenced the social and political landscapes of these regions. By encompassing a multi-disciplinary approach, this course emphasizes and outlines particular aspects of the history, literature, art, society and geography of Spain and Latin America through a series of original readings and content-based activities that are specifically designed to encourage and enhance linguistic proficiency.

FEATURES

While *Épocas y avances* strongly values the use of history as a teaching tool for language learning, it is not intended to be a history text per se. Rather, the interdisciplinary content and activities have been designed to:

- provide specific and simplified tools to generate optimized language production;
- further emphasize the basic skills of language learning;
- enable students to induct, examine, acquire and reinforce Spanish linguistic structures;
- show the importance of some of the major civilizations and social processes throughout history that have been influential in shaping the language and culture of Spain and Latin America as we know them today;
- offer a complete, intellectually stimulating and academically challenging interface to awaken a general interest in the humanities and enrich the student's personal interaction with other cultures;

- give students ample opportunity to explore the diversity of other peoples and cultures in more detail, thus preparing them for their role as global citizens.

Épocas y avances progresses chronologically through the centuries, from the height of tenth-century Mayan civilization in the Yucatan Peninsula to modern-day Spain and Latin America. Based on original texts and carefully selected images, the course is structured to give students a general understanding of a designated time period or geographical area, as well as a more specific portrayal of the cultural heritage of the regions where Spanish is spoken today. Cultural and linguistic content is organized following historical and thematic parameters. Grammatical and lexical sections expand into communicative activities that are designed to enhance language production, while exercising all main language skills. Moreover, a series of literary selections (passages from short stories, essays, poetry and novels) will provide the student with authentic material to broaden his or her knowledge and understanding of the language and civilization.

Flexibility

Épocas y avances offers all the necessary tools to successfully develop students' linguistic proficiency in the four main skills (oral/written comprehension and oral/written production). With a variety of activities to choose from, the instructor will gain a certain level of control by custom tailoring the text to individual class needs and demands. This flexibility provides for an eclectic range of teaching styles, allowing the instructor to use the majority of activities as in-class communicative exercises or as homework, based on the number of available instruction hours.

Graduated Activities

The activities in the text are organized gradually, beginning with simple vocabulary-building exercises and expanding to thought-provoking cultural reflections. Grammar exercises are planned according to their level of difficulty, starting with a straightforward practice of grammatical structures and progressing to more elaborate syntactic production. Throughout the text, grammar topics are continually reinforced and recycled to help substantiate these important building blocks in the learning process.

Functional Images

Épocas y avances offers an innovative approach to the use of visual aids. Rather than being employed only as content description tools, images in the text function as cues for oral and written production, as well as for structure analysis and grammar induction. These images also serve as catalysts that lead students to form hypotheses, draw conclusions and make inferences.

Multiple Learning Styles

Épocas y avances allows for various analytical and global approaches where every student is given the best chance for success. Activities are designed to appeal to multiple learning styles and intelligences. Whether the student is more visual, oral or kinetic, she or he will find ample opportunity to participate and learn at all levels.

PHILOSOPHY AND RATIONALE

The Communicative-Humanistic Method

Épocas y avances offers a novel approach to second language acquisition by emphasizing a communicative-humanistic perspective on foreign language teaching and learning. While its humanistic content provides students with a solid cultural background, it is important to stress the pragmatic and functional nature of the text, which in its entirety serves as an active stimulus for language production.

From Episodic to Symbolic Teaching and Learning

We borrow the term “episodic” from evolutionary psychology to describe the present reality, every-day, functional skills that constitute the basics of language learning. Episodic language learning focuses on the kind of knowledge that students will need in their interaction with the target culture (meeting people, traveling, ordering food and getting by in general). While those skills are necessary and important, our students need more than just a language survival kit in order to comprehend and be fully integrated in Hispanic language and culture.

The concept of “symbolic” not only alludes to the semiotic use of symbols, but also refers to the cultural background of the human race. In this sense, “symbolic” and “humanistic” are interchangeable terms. A “symbolic approach to teaching and learning” means an educational philosophy that takes into account the human needs beyond pragmatic, instrumental uses. Life does not simply consist of ordering food at the restaurant but includes being able to engage in fruitful human interaction at the table, ponder the world—its history, current state and future—talk about our species’ cultural achievements and its protagonists, theorize about the nature of things, empathize with other fellow human beings, in sum, to participate in intelligent, human communication, to co-construct human symbolic meaning. As such, this approach is consequently based on an array of disciplines, including history, literature, art, sociology, anthropology and other essential areas of the humanities.

OBJECTIVE AND USAGE

Épocas y avances is designed for the intermediate to advanced level student. It contextualizes language learning in relation to the current standards for foreign language learning (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons and communities). Furthermore, *Épocas* promotes the development of critical and analytical thinking through basic cognitive skills, such as seeking and organizing information, analyzing, inferring, justifying and persuading.

Épocas y avances has been created to be used as the main text for a full academic year but can easily be adapted to a one-semester course or other time frames and contexts. Depending on class needs and individual teaching styles, each unit will require approximately three to five hours of in-class time to fully explore a sufficient number of texts, activities and grammar study. The number of activities used in class can be determined according to the needs of each specific group. The instructor may choose to assign certain exercises (longer readings, grammar study, written assignments) as out-of-class work, while gearing class time more towards the particular skills that he or she wishes to emphasize.

Although *Épocas y avances* is designed primarily for intermediate to advanced level language courses, it could also fit very well as the main text for a course on Hispanic culture and civilization or for advanced grammar review. For bilingual students it will provide an organized and functional review of essential grammar in addition to a deeper understanding of Hispanic culture and society.

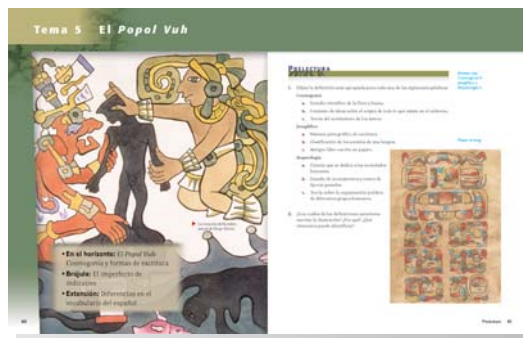
ORGANIZATION AND CHAPTER COMPONENTS

The course is divided in twenty-two individual chapters, or *Temas*, each covering a specific aspect of language and civilization, framed within a particular time period in Latin America or Spain. The text is organized in two major sections: the first, including *Temas* 1 to 11, presents more specific topics related to the culture and civilizations of the people who inhabited what is now known as the Spanish-speaking world; the second, *Temas* 12 to 22, offers a more panoramic view of the social, political and economic functioning of these populations, beginning with the contact between Europe and the Americas in the fifteenth century.

In each chapter you will find the following components:

Chapter Opener

- *Prelectura*: Images offer an active cue for language production. Questions serve as an advanced organizer to help students approach the main text.



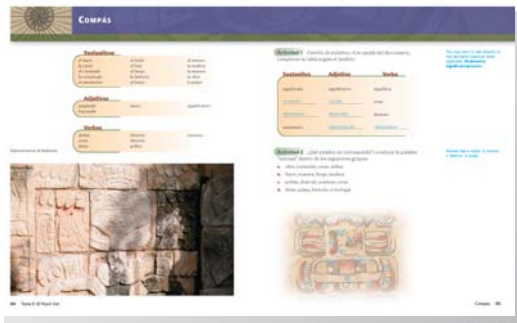
En el horizonte

- *En el horizonte*: In this main reading, students will be presented with the necessary cultural foundation to navigate through the chapter. Vocabulary is introduced in context and grammatical structures correlate in difficulty with the graded presentation of these topics throughout the book. Students are provided with the opportunity to induce these structures before they are formally presented in the following *Brújula* sections.
- *Preguntas de comprensión*: These questions are designed to provide a structured review of the material presented in the main reading, facilitating the assimilation and long-term potentiation of the information.



Compás

- *Vocabulary*: A list of the key words extracted from the main reading that will be repeatedly activated throughout the chapter. This semantic material is classified according to function. No translation of the vocabulary is provided in order to stimulate the recovery of the context in which the word was previously found, thereby facilitating the subsequent semantic retrieval.



- **Actividades:** A variety of practical strategies utilized to compare, classify, analyze and infer meaning.

- **Práctica gramatical:** A progression of contextualized and communicative exercises that are graduated from specific structure practice to open-ended production.

Un poco más lejos

- A series of communicative activities designed to encourage more sophisticated oral and written production. Through open dialogue, debate and investigation students actively collaborate to incorporate language skills and cultural content.

Itinerarios

- Contextualized images and activities to stimulate oral and written production. Provides additional vocabulary practice and inductive grammar exercises that serve as an introduction to the *Brújula* section.

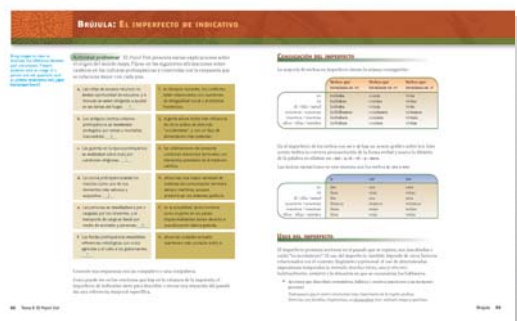


Extensión

- This section provides a review of complementary grammatical structures and socio-linguistic perspectives on linguistic variation, emphasizing the diversity and richness of the Spanish-speaking communities. Practice activities reinforce the material presented.

Brújula

- A concise review of major grammatical structures with clear and contextualized examples. The grammar and introductory activities are presented entirely in the target language in order to avoid linguistic interference.



Escala literaria

- Authentic literary selections from a variety of historical periods and genres expose students to a diachronic view of the Spanish language, from its origins in medieval times to the present.
- *Reflexiones*: These activities encourage appreciation and a broader understanding of the literary aspects of culture through analysis, critical thinking, drawing inferences and creating linkages.
- *Perspectivas*: Creative, open-ended exercises based on the literary selections stimulate discourse through advanced oral and written production.



TO THE STUDENT

Regardless of your reasons for choosing to study Spanish you will soon find yourself at a level where you are not only able to fully comprehend what is being said to you but ready to produce coherent, stimulating conversation. By studying with *Épocas y avances*, you will find yourself quickly improving your control of more advanced grammar structures, broadening your vocabulary retention and advancing your knowledge of other cultures and civilizations that we hope will fascinate and inspire you to continue your study of the language, culture and literature of the Spanish-speaking world for many years to come.

It is important to remember that *Épocas y avances* is not designed to be used as a history text, nor will you be required to study it as such. The primary focus of this program is to increase your language proficiency through more precise linguistic comprehension and production. By providing a detailed study of various aspects related to the culture, history, literature and geography of what is now known as the Spanish-speaking world, we are providing you with what we believe will be an interesting, thought-provoking framework in which to practice and perfect your newly acquired language skills.

It is the goal of this text to excite your intellect and enhance your knowledge of topics related to the Spanish-speaking world of the past and present. This is truly language learning in a meaningful context.

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