



# Reviewing the Canon: Teaching Chicano Literature in the Bilingual Classroom

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## ABSTRACT

The implementation of bilingual programs in the Spanish teaching curriculum has led to the importance of teaching English language and culture as one of the main aims of this new curriculum. As one of the key competences, cultural awareness and expression can be approached in the bilingual classroom to know, understand, and appreciate the different cultural and artistic demonstrations in the English-speaking countries. English varieties of the language and culture can be taught in the bilingual classroom, but there is no trace of teaching the bi-culturalism that exists in the US regarding US-Latino culture. Nowadays over 40 million people speak Spanglish in the US, and Chicano Literature reflects this reality that faces bilingualism and biculturalism. This paper shows the importance of teaching to our bilingual students how Spanglish is used in order to improve their cultural awareness by including a model on how to teach biculturalism through Chicano Literature.

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## KEYWORDS:

Bilingual classroom; CLIL;  
Spanglish; Chicano literature

## TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Jiménez Villanueva, Beatriz.  
“Reviewing the Canon: Teaching  
Chicano Literature in the  
Bilingual Classroom”. *Anglo  
Saxonica*, No. 21, issue 1, art. 10,  
2023, pp. 1–12. DOI: [https://doi.  
org/10.5334/as.128](https://doi.org/10.5334/as.128)

One of the realities students in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes face when coming to the US is that English is not spoken entirely as they learn in their school classes. In fact, depending on the state they visit, they will be exposed to different linguistic varieties, and even the use of the so-forbidden Spanglish. That is the case of states like New York, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Florida, and more. The use of Spanglish is so widespread in this twenty-first century that even scholars are designating new fields of research to approach this linguistic reality. At the [University of California – Santa Cruz](#) there is a course for Linguistics Majors on Spanglish. The class is described as a “synchronous online class [in which] students investigate Spanglish as a linguistic and cultural phenomenon. Students learn linguistic tools to describe, analyze, and destigmatize Spanglish, and explore the ways that it is used to establish identity. Additionally, students compare Spanglish to ways of communicating in other bilingual contexts”.

The fact that the use of Spanish was forbidden in the United States (US) for many years with policies like English Only applied in schools has led to Spanish and English becoming important tools for Latino and Chicano writers. For that reason, there are several literary works we can introduce to our students for them to see the reality of the use of Spanglish, at the same time as we teach the historical and cultural components of the US.

In another order of things, recent changes on the education laws in Spain, following the European Union guidelines, emphasize the importance of teaching competences more than content, and promote eight main competences, from where we will focus on two for their connection with this topic: the plurilingual competence and the competence on cultural awareness and expression. On the one hand, the plurilingual competence implies the use of different languages for a successful learning and communication. This specific competence implies historical and intercultural dimensions focused on the learning, valuing and respect of the linguistic and cultural variety of our world to promote a democratic coexistence. On the other hand, the competence on cultural awareness and expression implies the understanding and respect of the ways ideas, opinions, feelings, and emotions are shown and communicated in different cultures through a wide variety of artistic and cultural expressions.

For these reasons, it is important to explain to our students the reality about Spanglish in the English-speaking world, and how to approach this cultural reality when they face the real use of the language. That is why I propose to introduce some Chicano works into our classes to increase our students' awareness on the importance of Spanglish in American culture and to offer a better picture of the complex cultural reality of the US.

This article starts with a description of the current situation on Latino and Chicano culture in the US, emphasizing the importance of biculturalism and the use of Spanglish in the country. Then there will be a review of the history of Chicano Literature and the use of Spanglish in this context, continued by the discussion on the use of Spanglish in the ESL classroom. Spanish legislation will be mentioned to prove the relevance of the matter in our classes, highlighting the importance of the intercultural competence. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) will be developed as the main approach to introduce these literary works in the classroom and some examples of texts and activities will be offered.

## HISPANIC REALITY IN THE US

According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2022, of the total US population of 331,893,745, an estimate of 62,529,064 people identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. That implies that one in every five US citizens is of Hispanic origin. The importance of these population in the US is seen in the culture and language varieties. If we review the history of Hispanic population in the US, we realize the significant role the Hispanic community has played in shaping the social, economic and cultural landscape of the country. The history of Hispanics in the United States dates back to the sixteenth century with the arrival of Spanish explorers and conquistadors, including figures like Hernán Cortés and Juan Ponce de León. These explorers established settlements in areas that are now part of present-day Florida, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. The blending of Spanish, Indigenous, and African cultures laid the foundation for what would become the diverse Hispanic identity in the country. The nineteenth century saw

the incorporation of vast Mexican territories into the US as a result of the Mexican-American War. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo marked the end of the war and led to the acquisition of present-day California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas and Oklahoma. This event brought a significant number of Mexican residents under US jurisdiction, contributing to the expansion of the Hispanic population.

During World War II the Bracero Program was created, lasting until the mid-1960s. This program allowed Mexican laborers to temporarily work in the US agricultural sector and it played a significant role in addressing labour shortages during the war and post-war periods. However, it was also criticized for exploitative conditions and unfair treatment of workers. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act marked a turning point by ending the discriminatory quota system and establishing more inclusive immigration policies that facilitated the entry of Hispanic immigrants (Craig). The low pay and inhuman labour conditions on the fields led to the protests of the United Farm Workers with the upcoming of the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. This movement provided a platform for Hispanics to advocate for equal rights and opportunities. Figures like Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta led the labour and civil rights movement of farmworkers, focusing on improving conditions for agricultural laborers. This era also saw the emergence of influential Hispanic artists, writers, and musicians who contributed to American culture (Rosales).

The late twentieth century marked a period of significant population growth and diversification within the Hispanic community. Immigration from various Latin American countries, including Central and South America, contributed to this growth. Hispanics have become the largest minority group in the United States, with diverse cultural backgrounds and languages. The Hispanic population in the US continues to face challenges related to socioeconomic disparities, educational attainment, healthcare access, and immigration issues. At the same time, Hispanics have made substantial contributions to American society, politics, art and culture, and Chicano literature is a good example of that.

## HISTORY OF CHICANO LITERATURE

Chicano literature stands as a powerful statement to the complex and diverse experiences of Mexican-Americans in the US. This literary tradition is a mirror reflecting the struggles, triumphs, and aspirations of a vibrant community that has enriched the American cultural landscape. From its humble beginnings to its contemporary expressions, Chicano literature offers a compelling narrative of identity, social justice, and cultural heritage.

Some authors (Gurpegui; Tatum; Kanellos) trace Chicano history back to the fifteenth century and the colonial literature, but it is commonly accepted in the Chicano community that the roots of their literature should be dated back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period marked by both Mexican immigration to the United States and the Mexican-American War. Early literary works often focused on bilingualism and biculturalism, reflecting the tension between maintaining Mexican traditions and assimilating into American society.

The 1960s and 1970s were pivotal decades for Chicano literature, coinciding with the height of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. Authors like Rudolfo Anaya and Tomás Rivera gained prominence during this era, emphasizing the need for cultural pride and social justice. Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972) and Rivera's *Y no se lo tragó la tierra* (1971) addressed issues such as land rights, labour exploitation, and the struggle for equality. Chicano literature expanded its horizons in the late twentieth century, embracing various genres, themes, and styles. Authors like Sandra Cisneros explored gender dynamics and identity in works like *The House on Mango Street* (1984), while Gary Soto delved into coming-of-age narratives in *The Elements of San Joaquin* (1977). These works not only celebrated the complexities of Chicano life but also resonated with broader audiences, bridging cultural divides.

Chicano literature of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has continued to evolve by incorporating intersectional perspectives. Writers like Gloria Anzaldúa examined the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and sexuality in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). This marked a shift towards more nuanced explorations of identity, challenging conventional notions of the Chicano experience (Jiménez-Villanueva). Chicano literature in the twenty-first century is a mosaic of voices, genres, and perspectives. Writers like Luis Alberto

Urrea, author of *The Devil's Highway* (2004) and *Into the Beautiful North* (2010) and Alejandro Morales, known for *The Rag Doll Plagues* (1992) continue to push boundaries and redefine the parameters of Chicano literary expression.

## THE USE OF SPANGLISH IN CHICANO LITERATURE

In the realm of Chicano literature, Spanglish emerges as a linguistic tapestry that intricately weaves together English and Spanish, reflecting the multifaceted cultural identities and experiences of Mexican-Americans. This linguistic phenomenon, which exists at the crossroads of two languages, has become a potent tool for authors to convey the complexities of biculturalism, migration, and identity. Spanglish is not merely a haphazard blend of English and Spanish but a creative fusion that incorporates elements of both languages to craft a distinct linguistic identity (Stavans). Authors like Sandra Cisneros, in her seminal work *The House on Mango Street* (1984) expertly wield Spanglish to mirror the daily conversations and inner thoughts of characters negotiating between two cultures. The incorporation of Spanish idioms, phrases and colloquialisms in English narratives captures the essence of lived experiences and the dynamic interplay between languages.

Chicano literature often employs Spanglish to communicate cultural nuances and emotions that transcend language boundaries. Writers like Junot Díaz, in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2008) infuse their prose with Spanglish to evoke the immigrant experience, offering readers an intimate connection to the protagonist's journey. Through the seamless integration of Spanglish, these authors bridge the gap between languages, providing a window into the feelings of displacement, nostalgia, and belonging.

Spanglish serves as a form of resistance against linguistic hegemony, challenging the notion that English is the sole medium of expression. In works like Ana Castillo's *So Far from God* (1993) the incorporation of Spanglish becomes an act of asserting cultural identity and autonomy. This linguistic defiance echoes the broader sociopolitical struggles of the Chicano community, illustrating the resilience to preserve linguistic heritage in the face of cultural assimilation.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Spanglish in Chicano literature is its ability to capture authentic dialogue. By reflecting the way people naturally switch between languages in conversation, authors create a sense of immediacy and relatability. The bilingual conversations become a reflection of the dynamic lives and relationships depicted in the stories, offering readers a genuine connection to the characters and their surroundings.

Spanglish has evolved from being a mere linguistic novelty to an integral aspect of Chicano literary aesthetics. It adds a distinct rhythm and cadence to narratives, enhancing the storytelling experience. This fusion of languages invites readers to engage with the text on multiple levels, enhancing their appreciation of both the cultural and linguistic dimensions of the work.

## THE USE OF SPANGLISH IN ESL CLASSES

The purpose of this paper is not to stand up for the teaching of Spanglish in our bilingual classes, but to make our students understand that Spanglish is a linguistic reality with no negative connotations that they might face one day if they move to the US. The intrinsic mechanics of Spanglish require expert analysis; therefore our goal is not to teach how to use it.

Language and cultural diversity are set in the centre of the European Council's language policies. This has created a need for plurilingualism to exist not only in the real world but also in the classrooms. The shift between compartmentalizing languages to advocating for their interrelatedness and interconnectedness is at the very heart of language teaching in a globalized world. The Council of Europe stresses the dynamic process of language acquisition and use, in contrast with coexistence and balance mastery of languages. This need for a dynamic language acquisition requires educators and lawmakers alike to recognize that the mother tongue should also be a part of the language learning process. This means that in a curriculum for foreign language learning there must be a place for the L1 to also coexist (Piccardo). Piccardo explains how separating languages should be reconsidered:

The idea of a curriculum for each language taken in isolation should be replaced by consideration of the role of languages in general language education, where knowledge, skills, and the ability to learn are transversal and transferable across languages. Synergies would be created between languages with the purpose of reaching a common higher goal. (604)

This use of a mother tongue allows learners to also understand concepts and competences which will help them later acquire the second language. Therefore, when educators are contemplating the curriculum, it is important to note it is fine to use both languages in the classroom, because by doing this they contribute to emphasizing language diversity, exchange, contact and the coexistence of different languages and cultures, which occurs outside of the classroom walls (Piccardo).

On the same note, the Common European Framework for Languages emphasizes the importance of language learning, expanding the experience of languages from classrooms to cultural contexts to everyday interactions. This approach is called the plurilingual approach, which is explained as follows by the Council of Europe:

[A]n individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. (4)

From that way of thinking we can deduce that the use of both languages, L1 and L2, should occur as something natural in the bilingual classroom, and teachers should transmit that idea to our students, not avoiding or reprimanding them when they slip a word in their first language. We can also affirm that showing examples of the use of Spanglish as a natural production of the language in bilingual (and bicultural) contexts would contribute to the naturalization of this idea in our bilingual classes.

## TEACHING CULTURE AND CLIL

There is an intrinsic connection between language and culture that is implicit in the teaching of a second language. In the bilingual classroom we need to be aware of that connection and implement the learning/teaching of both. According to Stern, as seen in McLaren and Madrid, there are several factors to consider when planning, executing and evaluating the curriculum in FL class: linguistic, social and cultural, historical setting and the national political situation, geographical aspects, economic and technological development, and educational framework in the region/autonomous community. The most relevant ones we are addressing when introducing the Chicano literature texts in the bilingual classroom would be:

- Linguistic factors. That would be the linguistic uniformity and diversity in the community, the relationship between L1 and L2. Introducing our students to the use of Spanglish will imply the ability to understand different perspectives, and different realities in the American culture. This opens the door to new knowledge and allows for possible communication with more individuals.
- Social and cultural factors, referring to the attitudes of learners towards L2, language differences and social groups. The teaching of Chicano texts would invite the acceptance of different cultures and learning to co-exist in a globalized world.
- Historical setting and the national political situation. This implies the choice of particular L2, political relations with the L2 countries. Through the introduction of the Chicano reality into our classes we will present Spain's relationship or political issues with America throughout history.

In another order of things, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an innovative pedagogical approach that intertwines language acquisition with subject matter learning. When applied to teaching Chicano literature in a bilingual classroom, CLIL not only enhances

language skills but also deepens cultural understanding and literary analysis. This section explores the benefits of using CLIL to teach Chicano literature in a bilingual setting, highlighting its potential to foster critical thinking, cross-cultural competence, and linguistic proficiency.

CLIL can be defined as “any dual-focused educational context in which an additional language, thus not usually the first language of the learners involved, is used as a medium in the teaching and learning of non-language content” (Marsh and Frigols Martín). Its dual-focused nature stems from the fact that it deals both with subject-content and language acquisition. Therefore, CLIL is an educational approach that aims to teach both subject content and a second language simultaneously. In the context of teaching Chicano literature, CLIL entails using English as the medium of instruction to explore the nuances of Chicano culture, identity, and social issues through the study of literature. This approach leverages literature as a vehicle to engage students in meaningful language practice while immersing them in the cultural context. We can identify three basic principles in CLIL:

- The target language is used to learn subject-specific content, but the former must also be learned with the aim of understanding and communicating.
- The subject-specific content determines the kind of language to be learned.
- Fluency is more important than linguistic accuracy.

Coyle and colleagues outline the different principles which must be followed when designing CLIL units and lessons: content, communication, cognition and culture. Content refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject which is of paramount importance in the learning process. When referring communication, the authors explain that language is learned in real-life situations, and in order to do so, the teacher will provide scaffolding, from simple to more complex tasks. Cognition is involved because CLIL represents a cognitive challenge for students so that they can develop their thinking and interpersonal skills simultaneously. Finally, culture is addressed because CLIL offers students the possibility of considering different cultures, thus fostering multiculturalism.

CLIL teaching is based on two main concepts: Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). The former refers to the abstract and academic language, not necessarily supported by the context, while the latter is mainly conversational language and supports meaning by gestural, intonation and body-language strategies.

As we have already reviewed, Chicano Literature is deeply rooted in the experiences and history of Mexican-Americans. By using CLIL, educators can facilitate a deeper exploration of cultural contexts, enabling students to connect with the stories, characters and themes on a more profound level. Through the analysis of Chicano literary works, students can gain insights into the struggles, triumphs, and complexities of this vibrant community, fostering cross-cultural empathy and understanding.

Teaching Chicano literature through CLIL encourages students to engage in critical thinking and textual analysis. By discussing the literary techniques, symbolism, and narrative structures present in the works, students develop analytical skills that extend beyond language proficiency. They learn to decode cultural subtexts, interpret metaphors, and explore the socio-political themes embedded in the narratives.

In a bilingual classroom, language proficiency is a crucial goal. By using CLIL, educators provide students with immersive language practice within a meaningful context. As students read, discuss, and write about Chicano literature, they naturally enhance their vocabulary, syntax, and communication skills. CLIL facilitates language acquisition by requiring students to engage with the language authentically, as they would in real-life situations.

As previously mentioned, Chicano literature often incorporates Spanglish, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references that challenge traditional language norms. Teaching these linguistic variations within the CLIL framework encourages students to become multiliterate, capable of navigating various language registers and understanding the cultural nuances embedded in the text. This skill is essential in a globalized world where diverse forms of communication are the norm.

CLIL promotes an interactive learning experience that encourages student engagement and collaboration. Through group discussions, debates, and projects centered around Chicano literature, students actively participate in constructing knowledge and sharing perspectives. This approach fosters a sense of ownership over their learning process, making it more engaging and memorable.

Among the benefits of teaching Chicano literature through CLIL we can mention the development of linguistic competences, cultural connection and empathy, critical thinking and analysis, and identity and self-expression:

1. Linguistic competences are developed through the analysis of literary texts in two languages, encouraging the development of student's vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension, and consequently improving their fluency in the first and second languages.
2. Cultural connection and empathy are praised in Chicano literature because they allow students to explore the experience of a marginalized community, fostering empathy and intercultural understanding.
3. Critical thinking and analysis are acquired and developed while students learn how to analyze and question topics, symbols and messages from the literary works.
4. Identity and self-expression are brought to the class because Chicano literature invites students to think about their own identity and cultural expression, and consequently relate their own experience with the characters of the stories.

New trends in education emphasize inclusivity, diversity, and cultural relevance. Teaching Chicano literature within the framework of the new education laws presents a unique opportunity to engage students with the narratives, experiences, and perspectives of Mexican-Americans while aligning with the educational principles of those laws. In Spain, for example, the new Organic Law of Education (LOMLOE) places a strong emphasis on diverse cultural perspectives and heritage, striving to create an inclusive educational environment that reflects the varied backgrounds of students. Teaching Chicano literature aligns perfectly with this vision, allowing educators to expose students to narratives that might otherwise be overlooked. By presenting stories of Mexican-American experiences, educators can expand students' horizons and encourage empathy for people from different backgrounds.

Chicano literature provides a rich platform for cultural exchange and understanding. Through stories that highlight the struggles, identity challenges, and resilience of Mexican-Americans, students can gain insights into a world beyond their immediate context. This exposure nurtures empathy, broadens worldviews, and helps students appreciate the significance of cultural diversity in shaping societies.

The narratives in Chicano literature often delve into complex social issues such as identity, discrimination, and social justice. Integrating these works into the curriculum encourages students to think critically about these themes and their relevance in contemporary society. By analyzing characters' motivations, societal contexts, and outcomes, students can develop the skills necessary for evaluating multiple perspectives and forming well-informed opinions.

We have already pointed out how Chicano literature frequently employs bilingualism and Spanglish. This reality aligns with the multilingual nature of Spain and some other European countries. Studying these linguistic features enhances students' language proficiency while exposing them to diverse linguistic registers. Additionally, as students engage with the cultural context of Chicano literature, they develop intercultural competence, an essential skill in an increasingly interconnected world.

This literature often highlights historical experiences and events that are not commonly covered in traditional curricula. By incorporating these narratives, educators can address historical gaps and enrich students' understanding of the complexities of history. This aligns with some laws' emphasis on providing a comprehensive and accurate portrayal of history.

Integrating Chicano literature into the curriculum can inspire project-based learning initiatives. Students could engage in research projects, creative writing exercises, or multimedia presentations that explore the cultural, social, and historical contexts of the literature. This

approach aligns with these laws' emphasis on student-centered learning and promotes active participation and collaboration.

## TEXT SELECTION

There are different strategies we can apply for an effective teaching of the literary works. Among them we should consider the following ones:

1. Choose significant texts: the selection of the works to read must reflect the diversity of voices and topics in the Chicano literature, allowing students to explore different perspectives.
2. Cultural comparisons: compare Chicano works with different kinds of literature, promoting the understanding of cultural similarities and differences.
3. Guided discussion: promote discussions in both languages about the topics and messages of these works, promoting an active use of the language and a deep understanding of the texts.
4. Bilingual literary creation: invite students to write their own bilingual stories and poems, allowing them to explore their creativity and to improve their linguistic skills.

In order to choose a significant text to work in our classes it is important to be aware of our students' interests, current situation, and background. According to Munby, as cited in McLaren and Madrid, when writing the curriculum for a group of students it is important to know as much as possible about their age, background in L2 learning, how many students will be included in the class, if there are any students with difficulties or learning disabilities. It is also important to have a clear purpose of the class and what is the intention of teaching the L2 in that year. We also should consider the interaction that will take place in the classroom, if there will be cooperative learning groups, if there are sessions with language assistants, and how the students will be interacting with the language and each other.

Once we have identified the group of students we will be teaching, and we are aware of their situation and interest, there is a selection of works we can use in our classes. The following list contains some of the works we could use, along with a short summary of its content:

- Alma Flor Ada, *I Love Saturdays y Domingos* (2002): This is a heartwarming children's book that celebrates cultural diversity and family traditions. The story follows a young girl who spends Saturdays with her English-speaking grandparents and Sundays with her Spanish-speaking grandparents. Through these visits, she learns about different languages, foods, and customs while cherishing the unique bond with each set of grandparents. The book beautifully illustrates the richness of multicultural experiences and the love that transcends language barriers. Ada's captivating narrative promotes unity, acceptance, and the value of heritage, making it a delightful read for young readers and families.
- Marisa Montes, *Los Gatos Black on Halloween* (2006): This is a captivating children's book that casts a spell of poetic enchantment. As Halloween night descends, darkly imaginative felines embark on eerie escapades, dancing with skeletons and spooking through moonlit streets. Montes' lyrical prose weaves an atmospheric tapestry, painting vivid imagery that evokes the mysterious spirit of the holiday. With stunning illustrations by Yuyi Morales, the book blends bilingual text and bewitching art to create a uniquely immersive experience. *Los Gatos Black on Halloween* entralls readers with its magical celebration of the macabre, making it a bewitching choice for young and old.
- Pat Mora, *The Rainbow Tulip* (1999): This is a touching children's book that blossoms with themes of inclusivity and kindness. Maria, a young girl, tends to her garden with dedication, but her grandfather worries that the tulips won't grow diverse colors. Through a heartwarming lesson, Maria learns that nature, like people, thrives in diversity. Mora's gentle narrative and Elizabeth Sayles' vibrant illustrations display the power of embracing differences and nurturing relationships. The story cultivates empathy and the beauty of unity, making *The Rainbow Tulip* a timeless tale that inspires children and adults to appreciate the richness of our varied world.

- Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (1991): This is a poignant coming-of-age novel that delves into the life of Esperanza, a young Latina girl navigating the challenges of growing up in a poor neighborhood. Through a series of vignettes, Cisneros masterfully crafts a narrative that explores identity, dreams, and the longing for a better life. Esperanza's observations of her community reveal complex stories of women and their aspirations. The book's lyrical prose captures the essence of cultural identity and the desire for self-discovery, making *The House on Mango Street* a powerful exploration of femininity, heritage, and the pursuit of belonging.
- Francisco X. Alarcón, *Angels Ride Bikes and Other Fall Poems* (1999): This is a lyrical collection that celebrates the beauty and rhythms of autumn. With vivid imagery, Alarcón crafts poems that capture the essence of the season, from falling leaves to pumpkin patches. Through bilingual verses, he honors his Mexican-American heritage and invites readers to embrace cultural diversity. The book's vibrant language and evocative themes encourage a deeper connection with nature and the changing world. Alarcón's poetic prowess paints a vivid portrait of fall, making *Angels Ride Bikes and Other Fall Poems* a delightful exploration of the magic within the changing of the seasons.
- Francisco X. Alarcón, *Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems* (1997): This is a joyful collection that welcomes the renewal of spring. Through bilingual verses, Alarcón captures the essence of the season, from blooming flowers to playful animals. His poems reflect his Mexican-American heritage, offering a cultural tapestry for readers to appreciate. With vivid imagery and rhythmic language, the collection fosters a connection with nature and the world's vibrant rebirth. Alarcón's poetic finesse celebrates the beauty of spring.
- Pat Mora, *Water Rolls, Water Rises* (2014): This is a contemplative bilingual collection of poems that flow like water, reflecting its elemental beauty and power. Mora's verses explore water's various forms and its role in human lives across cultures. The poems touch on themes of connection, resilience, and shared experiences, inviting readers to ponder nature's ever-changing presence. With eloquent words and evocative imagery, Mora crafts a homage to the life-giving essence that unites us all. *Water Rolls, Water Rises* is a lyrical journey that prompts reflection on our relationship with water and the profound ways it shapes our world.
- Francisco Jiménez, *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* (1997): This is a poignant memoir that traces the author's journey as a migrant worker's child. Jiménez shares a series of powerful vignettes capturing the challenges, sacrifices, and dreams of his family's life as they labor across California fields. With honesty and compassion, he illuminates the complexities of identity, education, and the pursuit of a better future. Through the lens of his own experiences, Jiménez sheds light on the broader issues faced by migrant communities. *The Circuit* is a moving narrative that resonates with themes of resilience, family, and the pursuit of the American Dream.
- Gary Soto, *Baseball in April* (1990): This is a collection of short stories that vividly captures the challenges and joys of growing up in a Mexican-American neighborhood. Through the lens of relatable characters, Soto explores themes of friendship, family dynamics, and cultural identity. Set against the backdrop of baseball games, these stories reveal moments of triumph and vulnerability, as well as the complexities of navigating adolescence. Soto's writing beautifully weaves together the everyday and the extraordinary, creating a heartfelt and authentic portrayal of life's ups and downs. *Baseball in April* offers readers a window into diverse lives and the universal experiences of youth.
- José Antonio Villarreal, *Pocho* (1970): This is a groundbreaking novel that delves into the struggles of Richard Rubio, a young Mexican-American navigating his identity in a world divided by cultural boundaries. Set during the Great Depression and World War II, the story follows Richard's journey as he grapples with his dual heritage and strives for acceptance. Villarreal's narrative sheds light on the challenges faced by immigrants and their descendants, addressing themes of language, belonging, and societal expectations. *Pocho* is a compelling exploration of the complexities of cultural assimilation and the resilience required to forge a path in a multicultural society.

Reading activities are more often than not based on meaning or centred on developing learners' abilities to understand the meaning of a text. To work from meaning-focused approach, teachers usually use extensive reading. Contrastingly, if the focus is on language, intensive reading is more suitable. It means that students are required to pay attention to particular language features and this makes them aware of the structural levels of a language and how these levels operate in a text. There are different opinions as to the proportion of class time students should spend on language-focused reading. What is important to remember is they should have both an understanding of the features of a particular language and fluency. Teachers should also help learners to discover the joy of reading in a foreign language. In this way, reading should also be a source of motivation.

Nation distinguishes three typical techniques to teach reading to young native speakers, which can effectively be used with young ESL learners: shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading. The examples below illustrate these three techniques.

In shared reading, students read together a text or a book while guided by the teacher. In this kind of activities we are supposed to model the skills we want our students to achieve, including reading fluently, with the right pronunciation. We can choose a book of poems like Marisa Montes' *Los Gatos Black on Halloween* (2006). This reading activity can be used to introduce the celebration of Halloween and to activate some descriptive vocabulary like adjectives and active verbs we use to describe the festivity. The class can use some Halloween decorations to set the mood and students can be seated in a circle with lights off. We can use a flashlight to illuminate the reader's face while reading. The teacher can start reading the cat's section and then pass the light to another student to read the following section (pumpkins). While reading, the teacher should set the rhythm and intonation that students need to imitate when it is their turn. Once all sections are read, the teacher can ask students for translation of the words in Spanish and some explanation from the students on why those words are in Spanish. After explaining a little bit of the Spanglish phenomenon in the US, we can ask our students to create their own short poem on Halloween using the same pattern as in the book. Once the poems have been created, we can invite students to share their work with the class.

In guided reading, the teacher introduces the book and might give some information about its sociocultural and historical context. Any of the selected books included in the previous section would be suitable for this activity, as all of them provide the possibility to teach different aspects of the language, and their topics and plots provide food for thought and transmit universal values. If we plan to teach narrative tenses, we should make sure the book contains enough examples.

Guided reading usually includes three stages: 1. before reading, 2. during reading, and 3. after reading, and teachers would spend more time on the last stage. In the before-reading stage, teachers can ask students to relate the topic of the text to their personal experience and make predictions about the plot, characters and other important elements of the story (these features vary depending on the text type). We can use this stage to introduce the use of Spanglish and the reality of Chicano communities in the US. In the during-reading stage it is very important to define teacher's role. The teacher should anticipate students' difficulties and provide help whenever necessary. The goal of this stage is that students understand the text to generate some critical thinking afterwards.

In the after-reading stage, students can discuss the topic, relate the topic with their own living experience, and investigate about the topic online. We can use this guided reading to create a CLIL project on the topic of the chosen book. For example, if we choose Francisco Jiménez's *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* (1997), students can compare the migration situation in the US with the migration situation in Europe. Students can research on the similarities and differences on both continents. After that they can prepare an interview for an immigrant person. They can find someone in their community who has come from another country or someone who has been living in another country. It would be interesting for them to interview these people to better understand the complexity of immigration. Once they finish their research and carry their interviews, they can share their experience with the whole class.

The last type of reading activity would be independent reading. This kind of reading implies a period of silence in the classroom while students read on their own a previously selected text. They might have to finish reading the text at home, so it is essential that the teacher set clear objectives before an activity of independent reading. Students choose a book to read, which means that 1) they should have access to a variety of works, and 2) the teacher should have taught students what strategies they can adopt to choose a suitable book. Learners should see independent reading as purposeful and feel that they can apply those skills they developed in shared or guided reading. For this kind of activities, we can introduce students to the topic of Spanglish and the Chicano reality in the US. Then we can ask students to search for Chicano literature books and ask them to choose one they might find interesting. They can write or share some expectations on the book and, once they finish, they can discuss if those expectations were met or not, and why.

We can use any of these activities all along the academic year to introduce our students to the cultural reality in the US. Teaching Chicano literature through CLIL in a bilingual classroom is a powerful pedagogical strategy that combines language acquisition with cultural exploration and literary analysis. This approach not only enhances language proficiency but also nurtures cross-cultural awareness, critical thinking, and multiliteracies. By immersing students in the vibrant world of Chicano literature, educators can inspire a new generation to appreciate the richness of language, culture, and the transformative power of literature.

## CONCLUSION

Teaching Chicano literature in our bilingual classes offers an enriching educational experience as it combines literary analysis with the development of linguistic skills. By exploring the works of Chicano authors, students dive into a culturally rich narrative that promotes empathy, critical thinking, and cultural identity.

In the realm of Chicano literature, Spanglish is more than a linguistic quirk; it is a vehicle for expression that encapsulates the intricate dance between cultures and languages. Through its use, authors effectively communicate the myriad of emotions, challenges, and triumphs of Mexican-American life. Spanglish serves as a bridge connecting two worlds, a tool for resistance against linguistic assimilation, and a testament to the enduring power of language to shape narratives that resonate with authenticity and depth.

Teaching Chicano literature within the framework of current educational laws embodies the spirit of inclusivity, diversity, and cultural appreciation. By exposing students to narratives that reflect the experiences of Mexican-Americans, educators not only promote intercultural understanding but also foster critical thinking, language proficiency, and historical awareness. Through the lens of Chicano literature, students can explore the intricacies of identity, discrimination, and resilience, preparing them to become informed and empathetic global citizens in an ever-evolving world.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Chicano literature and bilingual programs.

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**TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:**

Jiménez Villanueva, Beatriz. "Reviewing the Canon: Teaching Chicano Literature in the Bilingual Classroom". *Anglo Saxonica*, No. 21, issue 1, art. 10, 2023, pp. 1–12. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/as.128>

**Submitted:** 31 August 2023

**Accepted:** 02 November 2023

**Published:** 22 December 2023

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