Using Authentic Resources for ALL Students
Goals:

Learn how to identify and use authentic resources in the language classroom
Determine effective strategies to use with authentic resources in the classroom
Determine ways to make these materials and strategies work for you and your students
Using Authentic Materials in the Language Classroom
Focusing on the Interpretive Mode of Communication

Choose the right material

It can be difficult to choose level-appropriate authentic content for students in the earliest stages of language learning. While students at the beginning levels will not understand everything, encountering some familiar vocabulary will help them access the content and increase their confidence in their ability to understand native speakers. Choosing video, audio, and texts that are thematically related to what students are already learning will offer a sense of familiarity and provide students with a connection to the material.

Prepare students

Preparing students before watching an authentic video, listening to audio, or reading authentic content is essential to success.

• **Activate background knowledge** — Ask questions to uncover what students already know about the topic in the authentic material. This will help students connect their prior knowledge to the new content

• **Provide context** — Before watching the video, give students an overview of the type of content that they will be viewing. Talk about cultural elements that would be commonly understood by a native speaker viewing the material but that may be unfamiliar to language learners

• **Introduce key vocabulary** — Pre-teach vocabulary that is key to understanding the content

Tailor the viewing or listening task

One of the most important aspects of using authentic material with language learners is to make sure that the task is level appropriate so students can succeed. Tasks that are appropriate for early learners include:

• **Write** down cognates — ask students to write down any cognates that they hear as they listen or see as they read

• **Circle** words they hear encounter from a list — provide students with a list of words related to the theme of the video, audio, or reading and ask them to circle the words they hear or read

• **Focus** on common features of genre — ask students to guess the meaning of new vocabulary by considering what type of information is expected, for example, when reading a web page, students can
reasonably guess that the “Buscar” button next to the search box probably means search because they are familiar with navigating web pages

- **Ask** students to predict what they might see, hear, or read based on the type of reading or the general topic

- **Discuss** cultural elements that are a background part of the video, audio, or reading, but are not the subject of the authentic material

- As students become more comfortable with authentic materials, let them **work as a group** to dissect a video, discuss with their partners, then present what they learned to the class

- **Show** the video first without audio and have students focus on the visuals, ask them to write words they think they might hear, then put a checkmark next to any they hear when you play the video with sound

- **Have** students watch the video or listen to the audio alone on a computer where they can pause and rewind as many times as they like

- **Make** a list of words they heard or saw that they didn’t know and want to learn; and teach them how to find words they may not know how to spell

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**After viewing or listening**

Take the time after working with authentic materials, either as a class or as homework, to reflect on the content

- **Consider cultural perspectives** — Ask students to consider the relationship between the products and practices in the authentic material and the perspectives of the culture where the video was filmed

- **Personalize understanding** — Give students the opportunity to think critically about the content and to personalize their understanding

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**Examples used in this session are from Pearson’s Auténtico 2018**