

This .pdf accompanies the blog post [Spanish Film for Spanish Students](#). Use it without reference to the post, expect to be badly misled.

Table heading abbreviations:

ID = Intelligible dialogue. My subjective take on how easy it is for a Spanish student to understand what the characters are saying, from "1" for toughest to "5" for easiest.

Subtitles = Does the DVD or Blu-Ray offer subtitles in Spanish, English or both? I must mark '?' for films seen on RTVE's play CINE [page](#) (available free to viewers inside Spain), for films "checked out" for online viewing through my Madrid library card, and for first-run movies seen in theatres.

(Determined film buffs also may hunt for subtitles at [opensubtitles.org](#). The .srt files may or may not sync with the disc, but at least can be viewed in a text editor.)

CS = Do I think the movie is culturally significant? I might add a check mark for 'yes' because Spaniards regard the film as a classic, or because the film sheds light on an important aspect of Spain history or culture. My subjective, debatable, frequently uninformed opinions.

Table row highlighted in light blue = I liked the movie. Tastes differ. Many of the movies I didn't highlight were well-made and would appeal to others.

Movies in both sections are listed roughly in order of their potential value to language learners. Intelligible dialogue matters most, followed by inclusion on the disc of subtitles, especially subtitles in Spanish. "Did I like it?" is a factor in the second section, not the first.

I indulge myself by finishing the second section with a few movies unlikely to improve anyone's Spanish. Two Madrileños complained that they couldn't understand *Trinchera infinita*. *Blancanieves* is a modern silent movie.

9/2021: I added a section to include two exceptional made-for-television miniseries, which are at least the equal of two-thirds of the movies in this round-up. Amazon.com warns that the discs available in the U.S. market may not play on U.S. DVD players. I bought the discs in Spain, and had no trouble loading them on the DVD player of the computer I assembled in the U.S. in 2014. Your mileage may vary.

TITLE	YEAR	COUNTRY	ID	SUBTITLES	CS	ABOUT/NOTES
Truman	2015	Spain	5	Spanish, English		A Spain expat returns to Madrid to visit an old friend dying of cancer.
Handia	2017	Spain	5	Spanish, English	✓	Historical film on nineteenth century circus performer <i>Giant from Altzo</i> . See note below.
Competencia oficial	2021	Spain	5	Spanish		An eccentric director crafts psychodramatic movie rehearsals for two contentious stars.
El ciudadano ilustre	2016	Argentina, Spain	5	Spanish		A Nobel Prize winner returns to his home town in rural Argentina.
Loreak (Flores)	2014	Spain	5	Spanish		Ana receives weekly bouquets from a mysterious admirer. See note below.
Crimen ferpecto	2004	Spain	4	Spanish, English		A handsome, narcissistic salesman is blackmailed into marriage.
100 metros	2016	Spain	4	Spanish, English		Based on the life of Ramón Arroyo, who ran a triathlon despite multiple sclerosis.
Campeones	2018	Spain	4	Spanish, English		A pro basketball coach trains disabled adults as community service after a DUI arrest.

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Camino	2008	Spain	4	Spanish	✓	Based on true story of a teen canonized by her church after death from spinal cancer.
V.O.S.	2009	Spain	4	Spanish, English		Actors play actors playing Barcelonians in this surrealistic film. See note below.
Los girasoles ciegos	2008	Spain	4	Spanish, English	✓	A lecherous deacon pursues a young mother hiding her husband from Francoist police.
Lasa y Zabala	2014	Spain	4	Spanish	✓	Kidnapping of Basque separatists by state-sponsored GAL death squad. See note below.
El día de la bestia	1995	Spain, Italy	4	Spanish, English		Comedy. A priest plots to kill the antichrist by converting to satanism.
El método	2005	Spain	4	English		Intrigues between seven candidates vying for an executive slot with a multinational.
La mano invisible	2016	Spain	4	English, other		Laid-off workers practice past crafts in a mysterious "human zoo" improvisational theatre.
La soledad	2007	Spain	4	English		Story of two families and a terrorist attack. Slow-paced, often grim, not for everyone.
La caza	1966	Spain	5	none		Friction between Civil War veterans on a rabbit hunt.
Las heridas del viento	2017	Spain	5	?		David seeks out the mysterious gay man who sent love letters to his late father.
Viridiana	1961	Spain, Mexico	5	none		Moral turmoil of a novice nun after moving onto her wealthy uncle's estate.
Muerte de un ciclista	1955	Spain	4	none		Lovers deal with moral aftermath of a hit-and-run. Dubbed voice of actress Lucia Bosé.
Calle Mayor	1956	Spain	4	none	✓	A handsome bachelor cruelly baits a naive spinster. Dubbed voice of actress Betsy Blair.
Historias de Lavapiés	2014	Spain	4	?	✓	A teacher's life and trials in Madrid's famed Lavapiés district. Realistic school scenes.
¡Ay, Carmela!	1990	Spain	4	none	✓	Trials of a musical troupe during the Spanish civil war.
23-F	2011	Spain	4	?	✓	Story of the attempted 1981 coup d'état by Spain Civil Guard officers.
En la Ciudad	2003	Spain	4	none		Loves and infidelities of thirty-somethings in turn-of-the-millennium Barcelona.
El verdugo	1963	Spain, Italy	4	none		An undertaker marries an executioner's daughter and is lured into her father's business.
Calabuch	1956	Spain	4	none		A rocket scientist disappears in a coastal village. Significant dubbing.
Amanece, que no es poco	1989	Spain	4	none		A comic look at small-town life in Spain.
La lengua de las mariposas	1999	Spain	4	none		Coming-of-age story of a boy in Galicia during the Spanish civil war.
SPECIAL MENTION: <i>(I work in a plug for less-easily-understood movies that I liked, or think are important.)</i>						
Te doy mis ojos	2003	Spain	3	Spanish, English		A young mother contends with her abusive spouse in residential Toledo, Spain.
Mientras dure la guerra	2019	Spain	3	Spanish, English	✓	Mostly-accurate history of Unamuno's Civil War travails with Franco's nationalists.
Hombre de las mil caras	2016	Spain	3	Spanish, English	✓	International espionage highjinx of a Spanish secret agent; based on a true story.
Las distancias	2018	Germany	3	Spanish, English		Spanish thirty-somethings visit Berlin to surprise an old friend. See note below.
Anacleto, agente secreto	2015	Spain	3	Spanish, English		Comedy; secret agent Anacleto strives to protect his deadbeat son from the evil Vázquez.

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El buen patrón	2021	Spain	3	Spanish		A factory owner whitewashes workplace conflicts while competing for an industry award.
Superlópez	2018	Spain	3	English		70s Superman parody comes to the silver screen in this family-friendly comedy.
Abre los ojos	1997	Spain	3	English		Rich, handsome César contends with life after disfigurement in a car crash.
Abracadabra	2017	Spain	3	English		Comedy; a Carabanchel laborer is possessed by the spirit of an urbane psychopath
Ocho apellidos vascos	2014	Spain	2	Spanish, English	✓	Comedy; a light-hearted look at Basque nationalism and regional stereotypes.
Ocho apellidos catalanes	2015	Spain	2	Spanish, English	✓	Sequel, this time with a focus on Catalan nationalism.
Toc Toc	2017	Spain	2	Spanish, English		Comedy: interplay between OCD patients who meet in a psychiatrist's office.
Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios	1988	Spain	2	Spanish		Comedy about the jealousies of Madrileñas enamored of the same man.
Biutiful	2010	Spain	2	Spanish		Grim portrait of a terminally ill street hustler in Barcelona.
Vivir es fácil con los ojos cerrados	2013	Spain	2	Spanish		Two runaways accompany a Beatle-crazed teacher on his quest to meet John Lennon.
El reino	2018	Spain	2	English	✓	Thriller: a political operative refuses to be made the fall guy in a purge of his party.
Ventajas de viajar en tren	2019	Spain	2	English		Stories within stories in this original, artistic, guaranteed-to-offend-some-viewers movie.
Carmen y Lola	2018	Spain	1	English	✓	Lesbian love story set in gypsy communities of Madrid's <i>suburbios</i> .
Operación concha	2017	Spain	1	English		Comedy; a crooked film producer recruits a lookalike to impersonate a famous actor.
Solas	1999	Spain	1	English		Conflict and intimacy between a rural mom, her alcoholic daughter and a lonely neighbor.
Torremolinos 73	2003	Spain	1	English		Comedy; a 70s encyclopedia salesman is lured into making porn for Scandinavia.
Atraco a las tres	1962	Spain	3	none		Clerks conspire to rob their bank after a favorite manager is dismissed.
Nacida para ganar	2016	Spain	3	?		Comedy; a Móstoles mattress saleswoman is lured into a USA-style pyramid scheme.
El sur	1983	Spain	3	none		Coming-of-age story of a girl affected by her father's emotional problems in 1940s Spain.
Un cuento chino	2011	Argentina	3	?		Argentine comedy. A bitter Falklands war veteran shelters a monolingual Chinese refugee.
La buena estrella	1997	Spain	2	none		A butcher rescues a homeless woman, contends with her abusive boyfriend.
¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!	1953	Spain	2	none	✓	A small town in Spain dreams of a Marshall Plan windfall in this well-known comedy.
Mar adentro	2004	Spain, France, Italy	2	none		Based on life of quadriplegic Ramón Sampedro, who fought for the right to euthanasia.
Familia	1996	Spain	2	none		An eccentric recluse celebrates a birthday with actors hired to play family members.
La herida	2013	Spain	2	none		The day-to-day life of suicidal, self-harming Ana. Not a cheery movie.
También la lluvia	2010	Spain, Bolivia	2	?		Moral crisis of a film crew shooting a Columbus epic during civil unrest in Bolivia.
Ispansi	2011	Spain, Switzerland	2	?	✓	A Francoist single mother falls in love after joining Spain Loyalists fleeing to Russia.

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La vida era eso	2020	Spain	2	?		A grandmother bonds with a terminally ill youth, seeks to return her ashes to her family.
Los santos inocentes	1984	Spain	1	none	✓	Tenant farmers suffer at the hands of rich landowners in Franco-era Extremadura.
Barrio	1998	Spain	1	none	✓	The lives of three teenagers in a poor neighborhood in Madrid.
Surcos	1951	Spain	1	none	✓	Rigors of urban Madrid life lead a rural family astray. Escaped Francoist censorship.
Los lunes al sol	2002	Spain	1	none	✓	The lives of unemployed shipyard workers in Vigo, Spain.
La enfermedad del domingo	2017	Spain	1	?		A socialite is asked to spend 10 days with the adult daughter she abandoned in childhood.
El año de la furia	2020	Spain, Uruguay	1	?		A military torturer in 1970s Uruguay falls in love with a prostitute linked to guerrillas.
Mundo grúa	1999	Argentina	1	none		A former rock musician struggles to find blue collar work in 90s Argentina.
Carancho	2010	Argentina	1	none		Romance between crooked lawyer and addicted doctor in hellishly portrayed Buenos Aires
Josefina	2021	Spain	1	?		A prison guard develops a crush on the mother of a juvenile in a youth detention center.
A puerta fría	2012	Spain	1	?		An embittered salesman fights for a career-saving sales quota at a Sevilla trade show.
Marco, la verdad inventada	2024	Spain	1	?		Psychological portrait of concentration camp imposter Enric Marco. Portions in Catalan.
La trinchera infinita	2019	Spain	½	English	✓	A topo hides in a secret basement for 30+ years after the Civil War.
El agua	2022	Spain	½	?	✓	Documentary-style portrait of rural youth living by an enchanted river. Not for everyone.
Blancanieves	2012	Spain	NA	silent movie		A Spanish version of Snow White, set in 1920s Andalucia.
MADE-FOR-TELEVISION MINISERIES						
La línea invisible	2020	Spain	4	Spanish, English	✓	The origins and first assassination of E.T.A. See second note below.
El día de mañana	2018	Spain	3	Spanish	✓	The life of Justo: from yokel to Napoleon Hill to political informer to right-wing guerrilla.

Note for *Handia*, *Lasa y Zabala*, *Loreak (Flores)*, *Las Distancias* and *V.O.S.*: The original dialogue for these movies is mostly or entirely in Euskera or Catalan. Fortunately (at least for me), each DVD offers the option to watch a dubbed, all-Spanish version.

Note for *La Línea Invisible*: This look at ETA's origins could offend Spaniards who remember the Cafetería [Rolando](#) and [Hipercor](#) bombings, Yoyes' [murder](#) and the many other atrocities committed by this terrorist group in later years. It occasionally offended me, and I'm not even Spanish. An [article](#) offers a contrary view.