


3-1997

Review of: Basic Spanish Grammar, Getting Along in Spanish, and Spanish for Communication

Joan M. Hoffman

Western Washington University, joan.hoffman@wwu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://cedar.wwu.edu/mcl_facpubs

 Part of the [Modern Literature Commons](#), and the [Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hoffman, Joan M., "Review of: Basic Spanish Grammar, Getting Along in Spanish, and Spanish for Communication" (1997). *Modern & Classical Languages*. 2.

https://cedar.wwu.edu/mcl_facpubs/2

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Humanities at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Modern & Classical Languages by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.

una propuesta para la presentación generativa de la gramática francesa en los libros de texto y M. Gagnon describe un proyecto de redacción para edificar la autoestima de alumnos inmigrantes en Quebec. Finalmente, dos estudios presentan resultados estadísticos: uno sobre la influencia positiva de las lenguas extranjeras en la redacción en lengua materna por alumnos húngaros (I. Kecskés y T. Papp) y el segundo sobre una posible relación entre la tipología Myer Briggs y las estrategias de comprensión auditiva usadas por alumnos (predominantemente hispanohablantes) de inglés (Mary E. Call).

El epílogo (V. Galloway), que se enfoca en lo prometedor de la teoría del caos para futuras investigaciones en lenguas extranjeras, desentona en su función, ya que ni unifica ni recapitula lo tratado en la colección. Siguen un índice de temas y una bibliografía general de veintisiete páginas que sacrifica el acceso al conglomerado de fuentes de cada estudio.

Carmen M. Lizardi-Rivera
San José State University

Jarvis, Ana C., Raquel Lebrede, and Francisco Mena-Ayllón. *Basic Spanish Grammar*. 5th edition. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1996. ISBN: 0-669-35451-x. 342 pp.

Jarvis, Ana C., and Raquel Lebrede. *Getting Along in Spanish*. 4th edition. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1996. ISBN: 0-669-35457-0. 310 pp.

Jarvis, Ana C., and Raquel Lebrede. *Spanish for Communication*. 4th edition. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1992. ISBN: 0-669-24292-6. 346 pp.

The *Basic Spanish Grammar* program offers a highly adaptable introduction to Spanish grammar and communication for students or professionals in either one- or two-semester courses or continuing education programs. To this end, the series features a broad range of components including a core grammar text, an accompanying workbook, various communication and career manuals, a cassette program, and a testing package. The core text (*Basic Spanish Grammar*) the workbook (*Getting Along in Spanish*), and one manual (*Spanish for Communication*) are reviewed here.

As outlined in the preface of *Basic Spanish Grammar*, changes in the fifth edition were implemented with an eye toward making the

text more communicative. Consequently, essential communicative concepts—such as greetings, numbers, personal information, *hay*, telling time, present indicative of *ser*, and *se* are presented earlier—within the first two preliminary chapters and through Chapter 6. There is also greater emphasis on personalized and open-ended questions. Grammar explanations are clear and concise and are accompanied by useful definitions of fundamental grammar terminology. For the most part, grammar points are well-sequenced, and within each lesson, exercises progress from the mechanical to more open-ended communication. Lessons have been more closely correlated between the core text and the workbook, and *realia* and cultural awareness are given more importance in the workbook and manuals.

Despite an increased emphasis on communication in the new edition, *Basic Spanish Grammar* is highly grammar centered. Each of the twenty lessons, following two introductory chapters, presents from three to six succinct grammar points. Each of these lessons also includes a vocabulary list, *Práctica* exercises, and a laboratory section to be used in conjunction with the tape program. By way of review, a self-test appears after every five lessons.

Precisely due to its strong grammar base, the stated communicative goals of the text suffer to some degree. Pronunciation is handled in an appendix. Each lesson of the core text begins with a vocabulary list with no accompanying contextual dialogue; any attempt at context comes as an illustration of the grammar. There is extensive use of English translation, including translation of cognates, grammar explanations, and examples. Pair activities are emphasized, but many depend, as well, upon translation. For example, the exact words of a dialogue are often given in English and students are asked to act out the situation in Spanish with a partner. The core text includes many substitution drills and translation, with little open-ended writing practice. Small group activities, explicit cultural material, *realia*, and photographs are all but absent in the core text, and drawings are used sparingly—with *tener* expressions, telling time, weather, the use of demonstratives, and preterit/imperfect contrasts. More often than not, students are told rather than shown.

In some instances, grammar that would facilitate communication is presented late in the text. One common exercise style, especially in the self-tests, asks, "How would you say the following in Spanish?" and then presents a series of

English sentences. The question “¿Cómo se dice?” is not introduced until Lesson 6, and then, seemingly, only as a discrete vocabulary item, which is not practiced and not used in the following lessons in the student instructions. In fact, students are never explicitly introduced to common classroom expressions. Furthermore, *gustar* constructions are withheld until Lesson 13. Conversely, the personal *a*—arguably unimportant to pure communication—is presented in Lesson 3, but direct objects are not fully explained until Lesson 7.

There is only a covert correlation between the core grammar text and the workbook. Indeed, the workbook is much more thematic and contextual than the grammar and thus helps to contextualize the latter to some extent. The topics of the various lessons in the workbook foster practical communication. Some examples include: “En un restaurante elegante,” “¡Buen viaje!,” “Hoy tenemos mucho que hacer,” and “Elisa está enferma.” Because the core text does not title its lessons, however, the opening photograph accompanying each of its chapters is almost the only indication of a relation between that lesson and the theme of the like-numbered lesson in the workbook. The vocabulary lists do correlate between the two texts, but are often repetitious. The workbook presents more extensive vocabulary and also offers some practice of the grammar presented in the corresponding lesson of the grammar text.

At times the association between the two texts falters. For example, whereas the present tense of *ser* is presented in Lesson 2 of the grammar, it is withheld until Lesson 3 of the workbook, where it is accompanied by a footnote explaining its irregularity. Family vocabulary is presented in Lesson 3 of the workbook and Lesson 4 of the grammar. Likewise, *cerrar* appears in Lesson 5 of the grammar (with e-ie stem-changing verbs) but does not appear in the workbook until Lesson 6.

Like the workbook, the communication manual is more highly contextualized and communicative than the core grammar text; in fact, the two corollary texts share many features. Both the workbook and the manual are vocabulary-based, highly dependent upon drawings, cultural notes, and realia, and both open each lesson with a clear theme illustrated by a lesson title and a contextual dialogue. The workbook translates dialogues in an appendix while the manual does so within the lesson. Both texts do a fine job of representing the diversity of the Hispanic world. Neither text includes specific

grammar explanations.

The themes of the communication manual do not overtly correlate with those of the text or the workbook, but, like those of the workbook, can facilitate effective communication in everyday situations. Some examples include: “El primer día de clases,” “En una agencia de viajes en México,” “¿Qué hacemos este fin de semana?” and “¡A trabajar!” Through the dialogues, both give the student more opportunity to read and write more extensively than does the core grammar text.

The manual and workbook offer a good mix of manipulative comprehension and open-ended communicative practice. In both cases, the *situaciones* exercises provide for creative original use of the language, the *Una actividad especial* exercises give students the opportunity for group interaction, and the *¿Qué dice aquí?* exercises offer *realia*-based practice.

Like the core text, both the workbook and the manual translate into English instructions to the student, vocabulary with cognates, and even open-ended communicative activities. Additionally, in both cases, cultural notes are listed rather than integrated. The workbook presents these in English through the first half of the text and in Spanish thereafter, while the manual presents them in English throughout. The workbook offers no oral or reading comprehension exercises; the manual does so only in the *Repaso* sections.

Despite some clear weaknesses, the greatest strength of the *Basic Spanish Grammar* program is its flexibility and varied practical applications. The career manuals cover a broad spectrum of practical topics such as conversation and communication, business and medical Spanish, and Spanish for teachers, law enforcement, and social service personnel. If, as is to be expected, the other career manuals are similar in format to *Spanish for Communication*, the elements of this program can best be used in combination with a specific career manual providing the context and the basic core text and workbook serving more as grammar reference material. In this way, the instructor may take advantage of the program's ample adaptability in the service of diverse community needs, counterbalancing any contextual lack in the core text with the more communicative corollary manuals.

Joan M. Hoffman

Western Washington University

Rusch, Debbie, Marcela Domínguez, and Lucía Caycedo Garner. *Fuentes:*