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¿Qué tal?: An Introductory Course.

New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007. Student Edition with Bind-in OLC passcode card (Hardcover) and Instructor's Edition, \$109.69 each. ISBN: 0-07-304850-X and ISBN: 0-07-320799-3. Includes Workbook/Laboratory Manual, Testing Program, Overhead Transparencies, Instructor's Manual and Resource Kit, Adopter's Audio Program, Student Audio CD Program, Interactive CD-ROM, Video on CD, and DVD.

¿Qué tal? is an introductory textbook for Spanish students that aims to develop learners' language skills by presenting real-life situations fostering communicative language. The textbook's philosophy is reflected in the language it presents through meaning-focused activities, encouraging students to access form from meaning. *¿Qué tal?*, like most modern textbooks, is accompanied by a

multitude of multimedia ancillaries, including CD-ROMs, audio CDs, DVDs, and an online learning center Website (<http://www.mhhe.com/quetal7>).

The book consists of 18 chapters plus an introduction. Each chapter presents four major sections, color-coded for easy reference. These are called *Pasos* (steps) and deal with different aspects of language. *Paso 1* presents and practices the chapter's thematic vocabulary through conversation. *Paso 2* and *Paso 3* address grammar, which is presented in Spanish through communicative components such as mini-dialogues, realia, and drawings that make the grammatical forms more salient, thereby allowing students to preview implicitly what will later be made explicit through grammar explanations in English. This color-coded structure is repeated throughout the book, providing students and teachers with a very effective and user-friendly outline of the content.

To reinforce grammar explanations, the textbook includes paradigms and sample sentences that serve as a good summary and preview of the topics taught. Two activity sections follow each grammar explanation: *práctica* (controlled activities) and *conversación* (open-ended), which guide students from comprehension to production. *Paso 4* integrates grammar and vocabulary presented in the previous *Pasos*. This is accomplished by including a video interview, titled *Videoteca*, and a section devoted to the development of listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills, which alternate with each chapter. The reinforcement of grammar explanations and the various activities found make *¿Qué tal?* very effective and useful.

The reinforcement of the language taught by the completion of enriching activities is one of several interesting features of *¿Qué tal?*. A first reading of the textbook can leave readers with a feeling of not having much opportunity to practice what they have learned. However, the different *Pasos* activities can be practiced, enhanced, or reviewed by the use of the ancillary package that accompanies *¿Qué tal?*. This package offers the possibility of supporting grammar instruction with visual representations of the mini-dialogues: *Minidramas*, which situate the grammar being taught in a true communicative context. Each chapter is accompanied by these video segments, as well as by *En contexto*, a selection of functional video vignettes shot in Mexico, Costa Rica, and Peru that illustrate high-frequency usage. The inclusion of grammar in a real-life context and in these original vignettes enriches students' learning, by going beyond grammar and showing the use of the language in true Latin American contexts.

In addition to the video instruction, the Workbook accompanying *¿Qué tal?* creates more opportunities for students to practice their Spanish. The Workbook features a variety of activities that can be used to reinforce the language, as does the accompanying video. The Workbook coincides perfectly with each *Paso* by carefully correlating each activity with the readings found in the text. Instructors will also find the transparencies and the Instructor's Manual very helpful. Each offers a plethora of ideas and different ways to use *¿Qué tal?* in the classroom. The Instructor's Manual provides lesson plans that accompany the textbook, illustrating several ideas that could assist the instructor as needed. In essence, the textbook is accommodating both to students and instructors: it helps students review and practice what is being taught and it improves instructors' knowledge of the textbook's materials, facilitating their use in the classroom.

One of the most striking features of this text is the presentation of different expressions of culture. In between *Paso 3* and *Paso 4*, one finds *Voces de...*, a surprising selection of literature and music from various Hispanic countries. Although this is a very attractive and intriguing section, the student finds in it only a short sample that can easily be overlooked. Including some integrating activities to increase cultural awareness would be a good way of improving this section. Seeing that culture offers such an important element of the National Standards for Foreign Language Teaching, this section offers a great opportunity for teachers to draw on their own cultural background and experiences in order to help students interact with the information presented.

Another section of *¿Qué tal?*, namely *Paso 4, Enfoque cultural*, further strengthens the cultural information presented. Not only does it present products like music and literature, it also explores specific characteristics of Spanish-speaking countries: their political, geographic, and sociopolitical realities. This section of the textbook could be improved by the inclusion of activities to internalize the information presented, as the textbook does not include activities other than those found in the complementary CD-ROM.

To underscore the importance of culture in this book, let us highlight two additional sections found in *¿Qué tal?*. The first section, *Nota cultural*, is integrated within the different *Pasos* and presents a sample of everyday culture including typical products, different habits, and various explanations of behavior in Latin American culture. The second section, *En los Estados Unidos y Canadá*, is an entertaining part of the textbook that fulfills the National Standards and also engages the reader through the comparisons it makes between cultures found in the United States and Canada and those in Spanish-speaking countries. Thanks to these additional sections, students reinforce their cultural instruction in an engaging way, while meeting the National Standards.

Beyond *¿Qué tal?*'s extensive coverage of culture, it is gratifying to find another important strength related to a different aspect of the language, specifically the development of the four skills found in *Paso 4*. Depending on the chapter, students will encounter either a listening, speaking, reading, or writing activity. *A leer*, *A escribir*, and *A conversar* are divided into two sections each. The first of these provides students with a strategy, which can then be practiced in the second section. Again, an interesting range of activities aimed at the development of these skills is included in the CD-ROM and the online site. Strategic competence is thereby improved, providing students with a full development of language use and knowledge. Thus *¿Qué tal?* not only affords students an enriching look into the culture of many Spanish-speaking countries, but also helps increase their language proficiency by developing their speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills.

Overall, *¿Qué tal?* could very well be used in a university classroom setting because of its suitable themes and compliance with the National Standards for Foreign Language Teaching. However, while presenting language in an engaging and communicative way thanks to appealing visuals and interesting cultural information, the main text does not include many activities and, as a result, the ancillary support is indispensable. Nevertheless, as long as instructors are aware

of the need to supplement the textbook with activities of their own, we believe that *¿Qué tal?* meets the needs of today's FL classroom.

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Publisher's Response

McGraw-Hill Higher Education is pleased to respond to Ms. Saum-Pascual and Ms. Abbruzzesse's favorable review of the seventh edition of *¿Qué tal? An Introductory Course*, a comprehensive Introductory Spanish program that has enjoyed a long tradition of excellence. As Ms. Saum-Pascual and Ms. Abbruzzesse point out, the underlying philosophy of *¿Qué tal?* is firmly rooted in communicative language teaching methodology and fosters the development of skills that support real-world communication.

As Ms. Saum-Pascual and Ms. Abbruzzesse mention, the ancillary materials that accompany the seventh edition of *¿Qué tal?* are a rich source of additional activities and input. The *¿Qué tal?* program is designed to provide instructors and students in a typical introductory Spanish sequence with the appropriate amount of material for use in class, in the laboratory, and at home. The activities in each component of the *¿Qué tal?* program are carefully crafted to ensure that they are appropriate for these respective settings and that they provide students with the most effective activities possible to develop their language skills.

McGraw-Hill World Languages is committed to publishing high quality foreign language textbooks and multi-media products, and we are proud to include *¿Qué tal?* and its rich package of ancillary materials among our many titles. We are delighted that Ms. Saum-Pascual and Ms. Abbruzzesse have shared their review of *¿Qué tal? An Introductory Course*, Seventh Edition, with the readership of *The NECTFL Review*.

Christa Harris
Executive Editor, World Languages
McGraw-Hill