
King, Larry D. and Margarita Suñer. *Gramática española: Análisis y práctica*. Third Edition.

New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008. ISBN: 13: 978-0-07-351313-3. \$79.87.

The learning of language and grammar can be compared to assembling a huge puzzle. Authors Larry D. King and Margarita Suñer in *Gramática española: Análisis y práctica* indicate in their Preface their intention “to provide the opportunity to discover the pieces of the Spanish language puzzle and solve exercises to reinforce each discovery” (xv).

With this target in mind, the authors have presented a third edition of *Gramática española* in which chapters 3 through 6 have been extensively revised. Written entirely in Spanish and taking a theoretical approach, this grammar is designed for both the advanced student and the native or semi-native speaker of Spanish. The approach is traditional and formal and would be of help to the very devoted student of the intricacies of Spanish grammar and linguistics. A less motivated learner could easily become lost in the elaborate and sometimes convoluted explanations of more subtle points of grammar. An example of this tendency would be the comments on the use of the impersonal *se* and the passive voice constructions on pages 204-206. The distinction between *Se necesitan médicos anestésistas* and *Se necesita médicos anestésistas*, for instance, is not easily understood.

On the other hand *Gramática española* has many positive features. Among these are the presentations of some rules not regularly found in grammars, for instance, the two sets of explanations for the use of accents: one prosodic,

addressed to non-native speakers, and the other graphic, addressed to natives, found on pages 276-277.

In addition, the text contains a wealth of exercises, which, though traditional in nature, greatly enhance the learning opportunities provided by *Gramática española*. By “traditional,” I mean that they consist of unrelated sentences and do not take into account the important relationship between context and meaning. However, the exercises do serve to achieve the stated goal of the authors to “reinforce the grammar explanations.” After some preparatory exercises titled *Para empezar*, the format of the questions follows the subtitle of the text: *Práctica* and *Análisis*. These two categories progress in difficulty and can be differentiated as follows:

1. The *Práctica* exercises are mechanical and basic in nature and serve as helpful review. These examples are from Chapter 8. 3. 7, dealing with the uses of the indicative vs. the subjunctive.

PRÁCTICA (p. 119)	Answers on R-18
<i>Avísame si (descubrir)_____una solución.</i>	<i>descubres</i>
<i>Me dicen que conduzco como si (ser)_____piloto.</i>	<i>fuera</i>

2. The *Análisis* exercises are more difficult. The example below (118) calls for the learner to give an explanation of the underlined verbs.

Si supiera la verdad, te lo decía.

Si hubieras llegado a tiempo, hubieras visto a tu tío.

Students will find the answers to the majority of the exercises at the back of the book. A “user-friendly” and helpful feature is the symbol **R** next to the exercise directing the student to *Respuestas para los ejercicios*. A subject index, glossary of linguistic terms, and a bibliography are also included. There is no vocabulary at the end of the volume, however, which many students would have found useful.

Without question the authors possess a sound knowledge of the Spanish language, and their explanations are usually precise. The book could benefit from improved graphics, though. A few appropriate illustrations, advertisements, etc. that would help demonstrate the grammatical points could be interspersed to make the text more visually attractive and appealing. I write this comment from Spain, where today I noticed a drawing in a Spanish newspaper with the use of the subjunctive.

Furthermore, some examples, such as: *A José le queda una boja para pasar a máquina* (23, B. 4), probably come from a previous edition; they are quite dated and give the book an old-fashioned ring. In addition, there is a discrepancy: the readings *Las once mil vírgenes* and *Guanina* appear on pages 124-125 and not on pages 134-136 as indicated on page iv of the third edition. Finally, *bacer una siesta* (Práctica on page 84) could be replaced by the more commonly used *echarse una siesta*.

Gramática española: Análisis y práctica can be a useful text for advanced Spanish grammar courses at the university level, as well as a good reference tool for those seriously interested in the intricacies of the Spanish language. To remain faithful to the metaphor used by the authors to express their intention, this text will serve as an effective aid in putting together the pieces of the complex puzzle that is Spanish grammar.

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Publisher's Response

McGraw-Hill is glad to have the opportunity to respond to Professor Cussen's review of the third edition of *Gramática española*, which he describes as "A useful text... as well as a good reference tool for those seriously interested in the intricacies of the Spanish language." This advanced Spanish grammar text, written from a strong linguistic perspective, is intended both for upper level grammar courses as well as for introductory courses in Spanish linguistics. It focuses on the rules of the Spanish language that explain syntax and its components, especially those that are traditionally difficult for students of Spanish.

While Professor Cussen feels that less motivated learners may struggle with the grammar explanations, he likes the fact that the text provides unique explanations of rules not typically covered. He also finds the exercises, while "traditional," to be effective in their reinforcement of the grammar explanations. We are grateful for Professor Cussen's feedback on these points and others in his review, and we're pleased that *Gramática española* is described as "an effective aid in putting together the pieces of the complex puzzle that is Spanish grammar."

McGraw-Hill World Languages is committed to publishing high quality foreign language print and digital materials, and we are proud to include *Gramática española* among our many titles. We again thank Professor Cussen for sharing his review of *Gramática española* with the readership of *The NECTFL Review*.

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