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Book Review: Perspectivas (7th edition)

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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Perspectivas* by Mary Ellen Kiddle, Branda Wegmann and Sandra Schreffler

Review by: Lina Lee

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conversation by smiling and showing that you are glad to be with him/her. This technique utilizes a traditional mnemonic device to improve the capacity to memorize and retain information. TRELI offers the challenge of how: 1) to translate an idea in a concise form, 2) to find three words with the same initial for the formulation of an idea or principle, and 3) to find the maximum number of examples possible to develop the theory, and consequently to promote the proposed communicative peace.

Gomes de Matos's philosophy and method is distinctly PC—politically correct, as well as being an attitude and a way of life. It teaches how to be positive and avoid being offensive or destructive. But being politically correct has been over-emphasized and is even ridiculed in such a way that an Anti-Politically Correct Brown Ribbon Campaign has been created. Gomes de Matos's plan is to start with a positive language so that one doesn't have to undo social misunderstandings. It might be a harmonious utopia, as in John Lennon's lyrics in "Imagine," but undoubtedly a necessary one in the present century.

Monica Rector

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Kiddle, Mary Ellen, Branda Wegmann and Sandra Schreffler. *Perspectivas* (7th edition). Boston: Heinle and Heinle, 2002. Pp. 372. ISBN 0-03-033936-7

This text, accompanied by an audio CD, is designed to be used as a reader for college-level Intermediate Spanish courses. It contains six chapters and each chapter presents a cultural theme along with a collection of six to eight readings including poems, stories and authentic articles taken from newspapers or magazines of Spanish-speaking countries. In this new edition, several changes are made based on the comments and suggestions from the reviewers. Twenty-five to thirty percent of the readings have been changed to include new cultural topics. A new section titled *¡Conectémonos!* provides students the opportunity to explore the Hispanic world. Perhaps the most significant change of this new edition appears in Chapter 6, where—in addition to the Hispanic population in the United States—the content has been expanded to include the Hispanic population in Canada. The new audio CD includes pre-listening exercises and the answers are offered after each listening activity. The authors also wrote a new *Tips for Teachers* section in the preface (xiv–xv) to offer instructors ideas of how to use the material presented in each chapter effectively. It is recommended that the videocassette titled *Videomundo* published by Heinle and Heinle be used as a supplement to this book. Information for correlating materials according to the theme of each chapter of *Perspectivas* can be found in the preface (xvii) of the text. The entire text is written in Spanish with the exception of some unfamiliar lexical items translated into English. One of the strengths of this text is the wide variety of well-thought-out activities to provide students many opportunities to develop their reading and speaking skills. Importantly, as knowledge of lexical items is crucial for successful communication, a variety of vocabulary exercises throughout each chapter are offered to develop students' L2 vocabulary proficiency. Many attractive visual aids such as pictures, photos and comic strips help students to understand the material. However, the text font in several drawings is too small to read (e.g., 35 and 112). The quality of those drawings could be improved for future editions.

Each of the six chapters is organized similarly. Readings focus on both cultural and literary works that allow students to advance their cultural awareness and knowledge. The chapter opens with a list of preliminary vocabulary with definitions in Spanish, and then a couple of exercises follow. Each reading section offers *Antes de leer* as pre-reading and *Después de leer* as post-reading activities. In the *Antes de leer* section, "Para abrir el tema" uses personalized questions related to the reading to activate student background knowledge which will facilitate reading comprehension. "Vocabulary" practice follows using different formats such as synonyms, definitions or matching to guide students to read the text. The traditional approaches of numbering lines, glossing words and expressions are used in the reading itself. However, one of the most effective techniques found in many readings is the use of extra exercises of "Comprensión" and

“Interpretación” between sections to guide students through the reading process. Students will benefit from using these exercises to build up their analytical reading skills.

In the *Después de leer* section, different activities such as answering direct comprehension questions, discussions, debates, performance in mini-dramas or dialogues not only allow students to build on ideas together with a partner or in a small group but also involve them actively in communicative tasks. *¡Conectémonos!*, one of the new features in this seventh edition, includes many web-based and library research activities which allow students to choose activities that interest them most and later to share their point of view with their peers in class. Writing practice is limited to the *Composición* section. Although the main goal of this text is not to practice writing, more writing activities could be incorporated into the text to balance the two productive skills—writing and speaking.

Overall, “Perspectivas” is a well-designed reader covering an ample context in which students not only will develop their communicative skills but also gain cultural knowledge through the use of well-selected readings, audio CD, Internet resources and an abundance of well-constructed task-based activities. It would be a good choice as a reader for a college-level Intermediate Spanish course.

Lina Lee

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Olivella de Castells, Matilde, Elizabeth Guzmán, Paloma Lapuerta, and Carmen García. *Mosaicos*. 3rd Edition. Upper Saddle Creek, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002. Pp. 524. ISBN 0-13-031480-3

The third edition of *Mosaicos*, with the substitution of co-author Paloma Lapuerta for Patricia Rush of the second edition, continues to nurture Spanish language acquisition by means of practical applications, lavishly-illustrated language contexts, and engaging activities.

New to this edition is its specially-produced video *Fortunas*, about four contestants striving to solve cultural mysteries that correspond to the three great eras of Mexican history. Assignments within the text encourage students to solve the mysteries for themselves, to communicate with the video characters by writing and voice-recording on the accompanying CD-ROM, and to influence the outcome by awarding the contestants points through viewer polls on the website.

Culture has been more thoroughly integrated into the third edition. Each chapter now boasts its own *enfoque cultural* on a separate country with color photos, flashy realia and maps and even dialect samples, such as *cuate*, *chavalo*, *cipote* for “kid” in Mexico, Nicaragua and El Salvador respectively. Also new are electronic versions of the Lab Manual and Workbook so students can access these tools on the internet as well as an interactive facility on the *Mosaicos* website (<www.prenhall.com/mosaicos>) which provides hotlinks to relevant Spanish language websites all over the hemisphere and Spain.

Evident as well are more frequent boxes in the margins to highlight the finer points of accentuation, culture and grammar. *A investigar* boxes now appear in every lesson to suggest research topics, and pepper students with questions such as how long did the Arabs occupy Spain, what are the primary exports of Chile, who founded the city of Veracruz. Also more regularly included are *Lengua* boxes for grammatical idiosyncrasies (e.g., *ningunos* before the defective noun *viveres* that exists only in the plural) and *Acentos* boxes explaining syllable stress, which in other texts might be given footnote status, if indeed that.

Of the four skills, it is perhaps the writing portion that has been most amplified, with its profusion of letters, journal entries, memos, postcards, paragraphs and essays. Brainstorming, outlining, control of tone and peer-editing are encouraged to an impressive degree. There is even appended a page of correction codes with such notations as N/E (*no existe*) and S/E for *ser/estar* confusion so students can critique each other’s compositions.

Besides correction codes, the appendix contains five pages of irregular verbs; Spanish and English dictionaries; and a subsection on word formation giving examples of prefixes, suffixes,