

## Review of “Español Básico Para Alumnos Chinos”

<b>Title</b>	Español Básico Para Alumnos Chinos: Gramática y Recursos Comunicativos (Basic Spanish for Chinese Students: Grammar and Communicative Resources)
<b>Author</b>	Maximiano Cortés and Shuru Fang
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### Reviewed by Cristina Gonzalez Ruiz

*Español Básico para Alumnos Chinos* is a basic bilingual (Spanish-Chinese) grammar specifically written for Spanish beginners of Chinese origin. It is particularly useful to Mandarin-speakers with a very basic or almost non-existent command of the Spanish language and who need to understand not just the grammatical rules, but also to develop communicative competence in the language.

Written collectively by various members of the Department of Spanish as a Foreign Language at the University of Salamanca (Spain) and supported by the *Instituto Cervantes* of Spain, this grammar of Spanish includes all the relevant areas for competency at a ‘Basic User’ level (A1+A2) according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) of the Council of Europe (2001), while highlighting specific aspects that need more attention due to the specific difficulties arising from differences in the grammars of Spanish and Mandarin, and in the contextual use of the grammatical structures of both languages.

Hence, besides covering aspects of grammatical competence (the mastery of phonological, lexico-grammatical and syntactic rules), this grammar also focuses on aspects of the other three areas of knowledge and skills, as described in Canale’s (1983) framework for communicative competence: sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. For Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence is understood as “the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication” (cited in Canale 1983, p. 5). Thus, the view of this grammar is that, in learning Spanish, students need to acquire not only phonological and lexico-grammatical knowledge but also skills and know-how on ways to communicate appropriately in different contexts and with different people in the target language. In order to be able to do that, it is very useful for learners of a foreign language to be exposed to examples of real use of the target language in different situations such as asking for and giving the time, asking for directions, apologizing, ordering at a restaurant etc. These communicative resources are also included in this manual, in an integrated manner together with the systematic rules of grammar.

This easy-to-read basic grammar of Spanish is divided into two main distinctive parts: A first part that focuses on linguistic aspects such as pronunciation, orthography, grammatical categories and its use within the sentence, and a second part that offers a number of communicative resources to be used in different contexts and situations.

Part One comprises Chapters One, Two and Three. Chapter One focuses on aspects of pronunciation (phonemes, syllables and prosody). First, this chapter starts by defining key terms of phonology such as vowels, consonants, consonant clusters, word stress, intonation and phonemes. Then, it presents the vowels, diphthongs and consonants in Spanish from the perspective of its articulation and in opposition to Mandarin. Using examples of words, each with a particular consonant, this chapter includes a table with all the different types of consonants and their respective phonetic symbols together with their equivalent phonemes in Mandarin. In addition, this chapter briefly covers the prosodic aspects of intonation and stress, something that does not receive much attention in other Spanish grammar manuals for Chinese students.

Chapter Two concentrates on the basic aspects of orthography. It starts with the alphabet (including the spelling in Spain and Latin American countries), followed by the rules on when to write capital or small letters, the accents (visual stresses), the numbers as well as the use of punctuation marks and abbreviations.

Chapter Three focuses on aspects of morphosyntax. After a brief introduction that informs learners of the lower level of versatility of Spanish morphosyntax compared to that of Mandarin, the chapter is divided into thirteen sections covering aspects such as nouns, articles, adjectives, demonstratives, possessive adjectives, cardinal and ordinal numbers, indefinites, subject pronouns, interrogatives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, agreement in gender and number and the verbs (tenses, moods and verb declination). For each aspect, this chapter includes a definition and numerous examples of use, highlighting main difficulties or oppositions with Mandarin.

Part Two comprises only one chapter, Chapter Four. This is a long chapter divided into 38 sections under the title “Communicative Resources”. This chapter addresses all those communicative resources needed to be able to communicate appropriately in a given context with regard to different common notions and functions at a basic user level. Thus, it covers areas such as expressing agreement and disagreement, asking for and giving personal information, forming standard sentences that can be used to develop skills such as speaking or listening, expressing obligation, need, prohibitions, greeting, farewells etc. This part concentrates mainly on developing the discursive, sociocultural and strategic competencies of the student.

In sum, *Español Básico para Alumnos Chinos* is a valuable new addition to the existing collection of Spanish grammars for students of Chinese origin. It constitutes an essential basic manual of reference that is clear, brief and easy to use, and focuses on the essential areas needed to develop communicative competence in the Spanish language at a basic user level.

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## References

- Canale, M. (1983). From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy. In J.C. Richards & R.W. Schmidt (Eds.), *Language and communication* (pp. 2–27). New York: Longman.
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