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**Truscott, Sandra María, José Escribano, and Brian Hill. *Just Listen 'n' Learn Spanish*. 2nd edition.**

**New York: McGraw Hill, 2003. ISBN 0-07-145250-8. Includes 4 CDs. \$34.95.**

*Just Listen 'n' Learn Spanish*, now in its second edition, claims to be able to teach just about anyone to speak Spanish. “Whether you’re planning a trip abroad or just want to take your Spanish conversation skills to an exciting new level, *Just Listen 'n' Learn Spanish* helps you quickly build the skills and confidence you need to start speaking vernacular Spanish right away—with a convincing accent!” This book focuses on speakers of Spanish from Spain, and all cultural items, photos, and readings cover Spain only.

The Audio Package comes as a set of 4 CDs and an accompanying booklet. The booklet is in full color and includes many culturally interesting photos. It is divided into sections, each based on a theme or linguistic function, for example, *Making Friends*, *Coffee and Bar Snacks*, and *In el Corte Inglés*.

Each section generally begins with some words to keep an ear out for, so to speak, and then a short conversation that uses these words. They go by fast and are not repeated. It is up to the user of the program to listen to each conversation again as needed. After each section, there are some written exercises to complete. This practice writing seems a little out of place in a program focused on speaking Spanish, though. An answer key to the written exercises is provided later in the text.

After each practice section, which varies in length, there are grammar sections that explain structures that the user has just been listening to. For example, after the first section on “Making Friends,” we see all the forms of the verbs *ser* and *hablar*, as well as additional information on forming plurals and the use of adjectives.

One-page cultural tidbits, written in English, will be interesting to those who want to know more about Spanish culture. They cover topics such as politics, shopping (including a section on clothing sizes in Europe), “the New Spanish Woman,” and climate. They are current and well written.

This text is intended to be used outside the classroom, mainly by independent learners who want to refresh some high-school Spanish that has grown rusty over the years. It is geared towards the traveler, but could be useful for the businessperson as well. Although it claims to be for the complete beginner, I doubt a total beginner would have the patience to repeat each section as many times as would be needed in order to achieve even minimal mastery of the material. It is much more appropriate for those learners who already have some acquaintance with Spanish, even if it was learned decades ago.

Sharon Grélé  
French/Spanish Teacher  
Westwood High School  
Westwood, MA

### **Publisher’s Response**

We thank Sharon Grélé for her perceptive review of *Just Listen ‘n’ Learn Spanish, Second Edition*. As she points out, the inclusion of complete beginners as the intended audience for this program is perhaps ambitious: notwithstanding the attractive, colorful layout of the supporting course text, a certain degree of persistence is required by the learner, whether studying independently or perhaps in a community college setting. However, a key aim of the program is to acquaint the learner from the start with real Spanish, through extensive and varied recordings made on location in Spain (rather than sanitized scripts from a recording studio). The result is certainly more challenging for the learner, and the audio CDs do, indeed, require users to listen to them more than once. The pay-off, though, is that students are better prepared to interact with native Spanish speakers. With their ears already attuned to Spanish, the sheer pace of native speech in everyday environments such as a street, store, or restaurant, becomes more accessible and less bewildering!

Christopher Brown  
Publisher, Language & Reference  
McGraw-Hill Professional