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French Grammar in Context: Analysis and Practice

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A French Grammar Workbook

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This companion volume to *A Comprehensive French Grammar* should be welcomed by every undergraduate student of French. With a key supplied at the back, it offers a range of exercises which test major areas of grammar explained in Glanville Price's rewritten textbook. The order in which problems are set broadly shadows that followed in *A Comprehensive French Grammar*, and the principal claim is that the exercises may be completed either with or without reference to it.

It is questionable to what extent the manual may be used independently, i.e., without tutor guidance. The early chapter on "basic concepts and technical terms" is a starting point crucial in making familiar the rudiments of French syntax (the difference between "parts of speech" and their **function** in a structure; simple vs compound/complex sentences). Explanations provided in the key ("A phrase is a group of words which go together but do not contain a subject and a verb") are surprisingly absent from the reference grammar, and students may need greater clarification.

Throughout the manual, exercises present considerable extremes of difficulty (they could be usefully graded): translation of specific points of grammar, particularly into French, creates as many problems as it may solve (*He has adopted a strategy which consists of developing his international sales network tests consister à faire!*); the section on gender (for example) sets basic tests [15(2)] alongside demanding "review" exercises [21] whose objective risks tiring even the most determined student. Additionally, being asked to place, say, 25 prepositions [71(4)] in the relevant gaps of a series of sentences amounts more to solving a puzzle than facilitating preposition manipulation. A second point is that some areas of grammar covered (e.g. tenses) might give rise to confusion: a student finding the *passé composé* and "preterite" examined under "past tenses" [53(2)] should, working independently, find instruction on verbal aspect, yet cross-reference to the grammar book finds the label "perfect tense" used.

Selective criticisms aside, *A French Grammar Workbook* has much to recommend both it and the grammar it shadows. The latter need no longer be read in a vacuum. The occasional requirement to explain grammatical choices ([61(2)]: “What conclusions do you reach about subjunctive equivalents in English?”) should encourage reference to *A Comprehensive French Grammar*. Particularly appealing is the Appendix, which tests basic but perennially challenging areas of measurement, duration, price, etc. Once accustomed to the dense layout of the key, where the eye strains to pinpoint an answer sought, both tutor and student will find *A French Grammar Workbook* a useful and comprehensive tool.

Les *Cahiers* signalent que

Advanced French Grammar de Monique L’Huillier
est parue aux Presses universitaires de Cambridge
(juin 1999, ISBN 0 521 48425-1, pp. x + 706, au prix de £19.95)