

BOOK REVIEW
ENGLISH AND SPANISH IN CONTRAST
(2008, I. DE LA CRUZ CABANILLAS)

CARMEN NOVO URRACA
UNIVERSIDAD DE LA RIOJA

This book provides a contrastive study of English and Spanish. It can be considered a contribution to the field of language teaching and learning as well as to the field of translation, but it is not a *grammar* or a *handbook* in the sense that it assumes previous knowledge of, at least, the basics of the two languages.

In a nutshell, the book can be broken down into two parts. The first one is devoted to the theoretical principles underlying the study of languages, while the second contains exercises that allow the reader to take practice in the areas presented previously.

The first part, which consists of five chapters, provides a theoretical overview of contrastive linguistics and its applications. In this way, the first section presents a summary of the origins and foundations of contrastive linguistics and the second sets the aims and objectives of this work. In general, contrastive linguistics is understood by the author as the study and the search for solutions for the problems that arise from a combined study of both languages. This section offers an overview of the linguistic situation of comparative studies and brings into the discussion the kind of studies (historical linguistics, typological linguistics, and applied linguistics) involved in this branch of linguistics. Special attention is devoted to the question of bilingualism (section 3), since contrastive studies focus precisely on people understanding and communicating in two or more languages. Section 4 deals with language universals, taking into account that all languages have some common features which make them comparable, or, as the author puts it, "*they are comparable because they are similar*" (p. 26). To close this part, section 5 is devoted to the applications of contrastive studies, including language learning, intercultural communication problems, translation problems and bilingual lexicography.

The next four chapters carry out a contrastive analysis of different areas of the languages under scrutiny at the phonographic, grammatical, lexical and semantic, as well as sociolinguistic and pragmatic level. Within the phonographic level the phonological systems of the two languages are included, as well as their spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Focusing on the grammatical level, the questions in point include the kind of words used as well as other differences between the languages, such as *se values* in Spanish and their possible equivalences in English; or the verbs *ser* and *estar*, among other aspects. Chapter 4 deals with some topics of the lexical and semantic level of both languages. The author considers, above all, the lexical restrictions and the semantic relations that hold in each language. It may be the case that in this part the contrastive study is not as evident as in the others since this kind of relations not always translate into the other language or have a direct counterpart in the other language, as is the case with collocation restrictions or relations such as homonymy or synonymy. As the author remarks, these problems are more likely to arise in translation, notably in what has to do with idioms or fixed expressions. In chapter 5, the author stresses "*the importance of transmitting language in its right cultural setting*" (p. 15) and adds: "*the configuration of a language takes centuries that are loaded with particular ways of living, historical events and distinctive ways of interpreting reality*" (p. 15). Since a language is a system of communication, it can't be properly used without considering the cultural setting that surrounds it. The author's position in this respect is, in the tradition of pragmatics and socio-linguistic studies, that mastering the rules is not enough. Additionally, a minimum knowledge of the cultural pragmatics of the language is required on the part of the speaker in order to fulfill their communicative objectives.

In the second part of the book a number of exercises follow devised for providing some practice on the topics of the book. The organization of exercises, in consequence, reflects the chapter structure found in the first part of the book. Different types of exercises have been introduced, including tasks such as "true or false", phonetic transcription, fill in the blanks, find the equivalent, etc.

Finally, there is a last part entitled *Suggested Answers* in which the author not only provides the answers to the exercises of the previous sections but also includes some specific explanations relating to the linguistic examples discussed in the exercises.

Overall, the book is written with a clear style, its argumentation is convincing and it illustrates clearly all the points that arise throughout the discussion. Given the scope of the topics covered by the author, this book is useful both for applied and theoretical questions related to the contrastive linguistics of Spanish and English. Moreover, the richness of the linguistic evidence that has been selected as well as the accuracy of the terminology that has been used advise the reading of this work.