

Margarita Rigal Aragón and José Manuel Correoso Rodenas. *La enseñanza del inglés en España (ss. XIX–XX): análisis contrastivo de manuales empleados en los centros de Bachillerato*. Editorial Académica Española, 2019. Pp. 116. €54.90. ISBN: 978 3841768551.

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English as a Second Language (ESL) has become more important in the Spanish education system than ever. Among other goals, the system aims to provide bilingual training from a very early age; therefore, students are exposed to English for many hours in different subjects. However, as teachers, we cannot settle for quantity but must strive for the quality of teaching (Sevilla-Vallejo, *Elaboration of ESL* 422–23). Therefore, the methodology and the materials used in the classroom should be a priority in the teaching process. Moreover, there are some significant challenges to defining a comprehensive frame for the curriculum, not least of which is the continuity between primary and secondary education: what is taught at primary level must create a foundation for that which is learnt at secondary (Brewster and Ellis 10). In this regard, the practical nature of primary teaching is seen as highly beneficial, since active learning, wherein students “do” rather than “listen,” attaches “real meaning” to the lesson content (*Cambridge Primary English Guide* 38). It is debatable as to what extent the Spanish education system has built a comprehensive and participatory model of English teaching. In order to find out, it is essential to know the history of the manuals that have been used.

La enseñanza del inglés en España (ss. XIX–XX): análisis contrastivo de manuales empleados en los centros de Bachillerato is one such text which provides that history. It gives a thorough review of the way English has been taught in Spain and the manuals which were available to teachers during this time period. It is interesting how it contextualizes both the interest in English culture and language, and the changes that have occurred in how the learning of English has been understood. The book consists of three main chapters: firstly, the authors offer a historical development of English teaching in Spain, beginning with the Middle Ages and going into more depth regarding the situation in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the second



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chapter provides an analysis of the policy of teaching English in Spain from the nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth century; and the third chapter presents a detailed analysis of the didactic texts and dictionaries used to teach English. While the authors only study the spectrum of Spanish education up until the second half of the twentieth century, this book accounts for an important contribution to understanding the development of English teaching, the circumstances in which it was taking place, and the contextual framework from which the teaching process has been unfolding in the past seventy years.

Of particular interest is the analysis in the second chapter which details the policy of teaching English in Spain in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. During this period, the education system in Spain was being defined at the same time as the foundations of public and compulsory education were being established. The teaching of English could be developed only within the general teaching framework, since the educational landscape, according to the authors, “ha[d] undergone sometimes slow and beneficial changes and, at other times, great setbacks” (78; our translation). Margarita Rigal and José Manuel Correoso point out that, although no great progress was made, there were theoreticians who proposed changes —the problem was that these new ideas were not sufficiently disseminated. The authors also reflect on the changing face of English teaching in Spain — specifically, the necessity of differentiating between the traditional scholastic approach and the grammar-translation method. This change reflected the fact that teaching a language such as English clashed with the traditional methods teaching dead languages. What is more, the foundations of educational approaches continued to change. While the scholastic method was initially aimed at adults already familiar with grammar, it began to be retargeted to adolescents who then needed additional grammatical instruction in order to acquire the language.

The aforementioned chapter is then coherently followed by an exhaustive analysis of selected works, specifically grammar books, dictionaries and other didactic manuals, which the authors consider were most important for the teaching of English in Spain during this period. They also establish in this chapter a link between current teaching practice and that of the past. The assumption that the structure of the teaching manuals used in the nineteenth century coincide with those used today would be false. However, they do reflect a tendency towards teaching focused on grammar and traditional linguistic structures, opposed to manuals based on emerging methodologies and advancements in the field of foreign language acquisition.

Current teaching looks for ways to involve the student or, in the words of Krashen and Terrell, materials and methods should propose “activities as meaningful as possible by supplying ‘the extra-linguistic context that helps the acquirer to understand and thereby to acquire’” (55). In this respect, it is interesting how Margarita Rigal and José Manuel Correoso’s book shows that the materials evolve towards an approach which, in beginning to propose effective practical activities, opposed the predominant academic theories of the time, since the Spanish education system has continued to emphasize grammar in the teaching process. This is considered to be to the detriment of a more fully communicative approach that could foster an “early and continuous exposure to language” (Sevilla-Vallejo, *Development of Linguistic Skills* 63). The state of this process indicates that there is still considerable room for improvement and that new strategies need to be implemented in order to remodel the teaching of English. This is also reflective of the fact that the Spanish education system has lacked stability in the last two decades due to the passing of numerous laws, a fact which rarely benefits steady progress. The accuracy of the analysis in this chapter is remarkable due to the wide corpus of grammar books, dictionaries and teaching materials considered in this study.

What can be understood from this book is that while there have been advancements in the teaching of English in Spain, they are closely dependent on the period in which it has been studied. Since methodologies used in the teaching process in the analysed period seem to have much in common with the methodologies currently applied, it can be said that little progress has been made regarding the didactic reality of today’s classrooms. In its conclusion, this book presents a testimony of the teaching practices in the past that maintain links, to a greater or lesser extent, to contemporary practices. Margarita Rigal and Manuel Correoso conclude that the situation of teaching English improved very little from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, vernacular languages acquired a greater importance in the nineteenth century and scholastic grammar books, consequently, included explanations in addition to translations.

The authors, within their thorough analysis of the complex process of foreign language teaching, encourage the reader to continue the research of both the teaching methods and the manuals. This would enable an examination of the actual connection between the practices in the past and those of the second half of the twentieth and twenty first centuries. It would be not only interesting, but necessary, to contextualize the state of the question and offer continuity to the significant work carried out by these two

researchers. The current situation is very complex because of the multiplicity of approaches and methods in contemporary language teaching—a constant invention and revision of practices which suggests a commitment to improving language education (Richards and Rodgers vii). While this allows us to conclude that the teaching of English as a foreign language has been intensively studied in the last decades, according to the authors of the reviewed text, the specific analysis of grammar books, manuals, dictionaries and other materials for teaching language has not been studied broadly.

Ultimately, *La enseñanza del inglés en España (ss. XIX–XX)* is especially relevant due to the lack of rigorous research on the subject prior to English becoming a lingua franca. The diachronic study of educational materials is essential to understanding the Spanish educational framework, since it can help us to better assess the progress and difficulties of teaching English in contemporary Spain. Although *La enseñanza del inglés en España (ss. XIX–XX)* is a brief book, its contribution to the understanding of the historical factors that define English language teaching in Spain is extremely valuable. The study of various teaching sources provides a solid assessment of the materials used across the centuries, which can help a more thorough research of a specific period; it would be of considerable value to continue the analysis comprised in this book and put it into a contemporary perspective and thereby enhance the progress that is so necessary in the teaching of English in Spain.

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