

Carmen Luján García 2013: *The English Language and Anglo-American Culture: Its Impact on Spanish Language and Society*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars. xiv+103 pp. ISBN: 9-781443-842105.

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This book, by Carmen Luján García, is one of the first attempts at providing a comprehensive picture of the presence and importance of English in Spanish society at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The author tries to provide a sociolinguistic-oriented account of the impact of English in Spain in key social fields by examining a variety of data, more precisely, advertising discourse, textual data from media sources, film titles, and questionnaire-elicited attitudinal and self-report data. She approaches data analysis from a quantitative perspective mostly, but also draws on qualitative discourse-analysis tools to gain a wider understanding of the theme discussed. One of the merits of this publication is that it goes beyond traditional scholarship in the field of English-Spanish language contact, which has tended to focus either on the influence of English upon Spanish lexis (Görlach 2001; Oncins-Martínez 2009) or on attitudes towards English of the Spanish population (Lasagabaster and Huguet 2007). This book is, in fact, a compilation of different pieces of research conducted by the author and previously published separately elsewhere. The publication is intended for a broad audience of students, scholars and the general public.

In the introduction, the author offers the rationale for the publication, which she frames within the increasing presence of English worldwide as a result of globalisation and international trade. She situates this book within current debates about the nature of English. In particular, she draws on both the *World/New Englishes* and the *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF) paradigms. She aims to provide evidence on the impact of English in Spain, where, like in other southern European states, the presence of this language has traditionally been rather limited, but is now on the increase (see *Special Eurobarometer* 386 [2012], published by the European Commission).

Chapter One is devoted to the analysis of the use of English in advertising, and more specifically, in shop window messages. The data was collected during the Christmas season in seven major shopping centres located in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The author compares her results with similar studies of the use of English in shop signs conducted in other non-English speaking areas of Europe. She concludes by delving into some of the social, cultural and psychological factors that may trigger the presence of English in the

discourse of advertising. On the one hand, she claims that English works as an attention-catcher, because it forces readers to put more effort into deciphering the commercial messages, and thus, pay more attention to them. On the other, she points out that English conveys key social indexicalities, such as coolness, modernity and cosmopolitanism, that certain shop chains, products and brands may want to be associated with.

Chapter Two tackles the analysis of another social field where the penetration of English is becoming ever more noticeable, i.e., the translation of film titles. The author undertakes the analysis of the titles of all Anglo-American films premiered in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria from January to September 2008 and the ways in which these titles were (not) translated into Spanish. The comparison of her findings with previous studies in this area throws light on the abundance of original titles in English present in Spanish cinemas. Some explanations, such as the increasing familiarity of cinema goers with English, the fact that English allows for greater compactness in film titles, and issues of global distribution and advertising, are put forward to explain the high number of untranslated film titles. Finally, the pragmatic and cultural aspects that play a role in translating film titles into Spanish are examined.

In Chapter Three the field of media discourse is explored, with particular reference to the use of Anglicisms. Twelve issues of a renowned film magazine are subject to both a quantitative and a qualitative type of analysis. The findings are then compared to those of previous studies of similar types of magazines. As in Chapter Two, an increase in the number of Anglicisms is observed if compared with earlier work. The author then embarks on a qualitative assessment of each of the instances of use of English lexis in one of the categories, namely technical words in the field of cinema. She concludes that half of the English lexical items used have corresponding Spanish equivalents. This leads her to claim that the motivations for choosing to employ English are extra-linguistic, to do with the prestige and modernity associated with the English language, the global primacy of the US film industry, and the self-construction of cinema critics as experts in a field dominated by English. This is, for the author, a further index of the impact of Anglo-American culture on Spanish society.

Chapter Four intends to address the growing presence of English in the Spanish educational system. Data comes from a survey carried out in different parts of Spain aimed at finding out (a) the opportunities students have for contact with English outside of school; (b) the attitudes they hold towards English; and (c) their self-assessment of language proficiency. The results show that opportunities for extra-curricular contact with English come mainly from the media and ICT, that attitudes towards English are generally positive and that students consider their proficiency levels to be fairly satisfactory. The author moves on to provide some pedagogical advice for teachers of English regarding speaker models and varieties.

Chapter Five is the only chapter that is not based on research data. Instead, it contains the author's reflections on the changing status of English in Spain and whether this is having an impact on people's sense of identity. In the first part, Luján García centres once again on

language use. She addresses the use of English in the workplace, and examines how English is now a must to be able to secure a highly qualified job in the Spanish labour market. She also dwells on the key role of English in the powerful tourist industry. In the second part, issues of identity, and legitimate varieties and speaker models are addressed. The growing presence of English leads the author to posit that English should be considered a second rather than a foreign language in Spain. With regard to legitimate language models and speakers, she frames her position theoretically within globalization-sensitive approaches to the nature of English, such as the ELF paradigm. The author emphasizes the need to move towards a more flexible, heterogeneous perspective on English and its ownership that is acceptant of locally-inflected varieties and accents.

The sixth and final chapter contains a list of questions for reflection on the topics and issues raised in the first four chapters.

This book is a welcome contribution to the field of the sociolinguistics of English in Spain as it provides empirical data on the presence of English in prominent social fields, such as advertising or the media. One of the strengths of the book is that all research-based chapters (1 to 4) follow the same structure, which facilitates reading and comprehension. Another positive aspect is that, apart from the last, each chapter provides readers with relevant pedagogical material for awareness-raising workshops or seminars in the context of adult education, high school or introductory English courses for general Arts and Humanities university degree programmes. By contrast, the relevance of this publication for researchers in general, and in particular, for English Studies sociolinguists or discourse analysts appears rather limited, mainly because of its descriptive focus and limited analytical findings. Indeed, the analyses presented in most of the chapters come across as fairly superficial, which raises the question of whether some potentially interesting insights have been missed. In my view, the book would greatly benefit from a more fine-grained theoretical discussion of the main concepts (see below for more detail), clarification of where it stands with regard to the relationship between language and culture in the key case of English, and thirdly, the establishment of a dialogue with different pieces of data, as I will suggest later.

As refers to theory, and despite the fact that the author emphasises her wish to make the topic accessible to the general public, there is a need to discuss—even if only briefly and in simple terms—her understanding of the concepts she draws upon. A key example is *globalisation*, which is sometimes described as a ‘fact’ (1), sometimes as a ‘phenomenon’ (75), most often equated with the Anglicisation/Americanisation of the world, and always underspecified. The reader is left wondering what it is that the author has in mind: Compression of time and space (Harvey 1989)?; ease and rapidness of circulation of texts, ideas, values and cultural practices across the globe?; economic interdependence?; processes of downscaling and upscaling of nation-state power?; or perhaps all of the above at the same time? This must be clarified. Also, the relationship between English and ‘globalisation’ is in need of further complexification and more refined explaining, along

the lines proposed/presented by Pennycook (2007) and Saxena and Omoniyi (2010). The author shows that she is acquainted with the relevant literature —she mentions the above scholars, for example— but there is far more of relevance in their writings than is mentioned in this publication.

Linked to the above, there is a contradiction between the theoretical position the author adopts with regard to the nature of English (a *lingua franca*) and her understanding of the relationship between English and Anglo-American culture. While Luján García advocates a decentering of English, away from *inner circle* (Kachru 1990) speaker models and in favour of more hybrid, contingent and localised varieties, in most chapters, the language is still equated with Anglo-American culture; the presence of English, in its various forms, in previously monolingual Spanish spaces, amounts, in the author's words, to evidence of the influence of Anglo-American values and beliefs. This is an analytical leap that contradicts her theoretical stance and is not supported by the data she examines.

This takes me to the third area which would benefit from some rethinking, i.e., the empirical data on which analytical claims are made. There is a mismatch between what the book aims to do and what it delivers. By simply reading the title we observe that the author purports to describe the 'impact' of English on Spanish language and society. Yet the purely linguistic data the author handles does not allow her to make any claims on the societal impact of English in Spain; she can only actually discuss the growing presence of the language in the public sphere. What Luján García ends up doing is claiming that English is having a greater and greater social impact in Spain without there being data to support this claim. She also hypothesises about the reasons why Spanish speakers increasingly resort to English, especially in certain social fields, but this is mere speculation. No matter how plausible her arguments are, they are not supported by the data she examines. In fact, the only way in which she can make any claims as to the 'impact' of English (and maybe, of Anglo-American culture) is by asking the speakers themselves, either directly through interviews and questionnaires, or indirectly, through observing them in action; that is, by means of ethnographic data. A good case study would be, for example, to investigate how advertising campaigns are designed, what the process is for global chains and products, who decides what to say and in what language(s), in short, what the local economy of a text is. This type of data would supplement that presented in Chapter Two nicely. It would also throw light on the multilingual nature of contemporary advertising discourse, a perspective that is missed in the book because of its exclusively focus on English (we do not even get to know how English combines with Spanish in the advertising campaign examined in Chapter Two).

To conclude, despite its limitations, this is a thought-provoking publication. It opens up a whole new line of research in Spanish academia that has the potential to eventually become a major study area. The book may inspire many a new researcher, as it points towards interesting avenues for investigation in the sociolinguistics of English in Spain.

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