

## Two self-published books

general vocabulary notes, e.g. the silent *b* in *doubt*, and each alphabetic letter shows its sign/sound relationship. There are also major entries devoted to phonetic symbols and general pronunciation matters, including stress-timing, assimilation and linking. The information provided is accurate and relevant, only occasionally venturing into rather peripheral points (for example elucidation of the Welsh // sound, p. 229). Phonetic script is used liberally so there should be an IPA chart in the supplementary pages.

Many learners and teachers will appreciate the cultural notes. The potted histories of the four countries in the British Isles (nicely distinguished from Britain, Great Britain and the United Kingdom on p. 80) are particularly useful as compact and coherent summaries of the political and social changes of two millennia. Even more so than with the vocabulary, the selection of items for inclusion and their emphasis is tricky and their reception probably depends on readers' personal interests and needs. Thus, I enjoyed the detailed entry under *police*, at last finding out what the difference between the various ranks – constable, inspector, superintendent, etc. – was. Similarly, I found the exposition of mathematical terms useful for my learners as this is something which doesn't really come up in coursebooks. I didn't really see the point of the entries for *breast*, *cholera*(*a*), *spake* or *lemming*, although the origin of the myth of lemmings committing mass suicide was amusing. Opinions on the merits of individual entries will vary, but the cultural information as a whole is well-presented, colourful and accurate.

Overall, *A Guide to English Language Usage for non-native speakers* achieves its purpose of offering clear and useful directions for learners who want to use standard English with all its idiosyncrasies and cultural overtones. Some of the information provided is a little arbitrary but it is refreshing to find a usage book which goes off the beaten track and away from the same old tired language points. Above all, readers

will be impressed by the range of the language and how it appears in all its sociolinguistic plumage. Harvey delves into the treasure trove that is English and comes up with a gem of a book. I think even he would forgive me for mixing my metaphors at this point.

### REFERENCES

Fowler, H. (2002) *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1926).

Swan, M. (2005) *Practical English Usage* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### Wayne Rimmer

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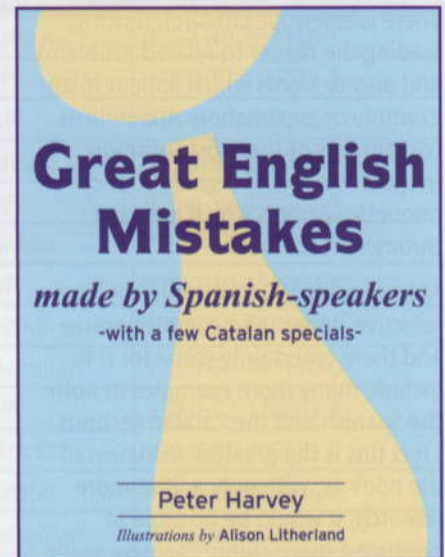
## Great English Mistakes made by Spanish-speakers

Peter Harvey

Barcelona: Lavengro Books 2008

<http://www.lavengro.eu/>

See page 91 for details



While *Great English Mistakes made by Spanish-speakers* is clearly aimed at the Spanish-speaking learner of English it is also valuable for the teacher of English working in a Spanish-speaking environment, preparing them for their students' inevitable misconceptions. It could also be used by English speakers wanting to improve their Spanish, although this is not the book's focus.

This book contains mistakes, ranging from *actually* to *young*, that every teacher of Spanish-speakers will recognise all too well. While all errors do not come from first language transfer, it is often the areas which are similar but not identical in L1 and L2 that are not noticed and so easily become fossilized. This book tries to overcome this problem by highlighting many of the false friends which exist between the two languages.

Arranged alphabetically around certain key words which regularly cause problems for Spanish speakers, the book includes grammatical (such as the perfect tense), phonological (e.g. /b/ and /v/) and cultural (Catholic and Christian) problems as well as

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lexical items. In addition there are descriptions and suggestions for dealing with untranslatable ideas such as *Día de Reyes* and *puente*. Translations are provided throughout to highlight the differences between the two languages and to show the learner what words do, and, equally importantly, do not mean. There is extensive cross-referencing, leading the reader to related problems and also to words which appear in an example or explanation. Appendices contain lists of the most common irregular verbs and a guide to the phonetic symbols which are used throughout the book.

At just under 100 pages this book is selective rather than comprehensive and there is certainly scope for it to include many more examples in both the Spanish and the Catalan sections. I feel this is the greatest weakness of the book as, with only a little more research, it would be possible to produce a more comprehensive guide. The author manages to include many of the most frequent misconceptions, but leaves out many others, including

some quite common problems such as confusions with *ever*, the pronunciation of *live* and the Catalan misconception with *plenty*.

There are also some entries which do not seem to fulfill the book's own criteria for inclusion; for example the mistranslation of *pescadillas* as *nightmares (pesadillas)*. While this example may warn against careless dictionary use, it is not a generalisable mistake. Similarly, there are mistakes committed by English speakers trying to speak Spanish which do not cause corresponding difficulty for Spanish speakers of English.

The book reads as a frustrated teacher trying to explain something for the hundredth time to a slow student and the tone may be considered to be rather lacking in respect for the learner. However, with a wealth of real-life examples which are sometimes humorous, the book is very readable. The variety of Spanish addressed is Peninsula rather than American and this combined with the many cultural

references makes the book clearly aimed at Europeans rather than Latin Americans. It is most suitable for students of intermediate level or above

There is certainly a gap in the market for such a book, as I am unaware of any other with similar aims. Interestingly, of the many English language books I have on my bookshelf, this is the only one that has a long waiting list of Spanish-speaking friends wanting to borrow it.

### Vaila Goodridge

**Vaila Goodridge** has taught both children and adults in Peru, the UK and Lebanon and is currently teaching at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia in Barcelona, Spain. She holds the DELTA and also writes course materials for McGraw Hill.