

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN ENGLISH AND SPANISH GRAMMAR

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**Abstract:** *This research is a descriptive one that tries to find the differences and similarities between English and Spanish grammar. The data of this research are the English and Spanish grammar. The sources of the data are English and Spanish printed texts in the form of books, magazines, newspapers, etc. The data are collected by using jotting down technique. Then, the data are analyzed by using the model suggested by Mile and Huberman. The model is called interactive model. This model has three steps. They are as follows: (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing.*

**Keywords:** *comparative, English, Spanish, grammar*

**Abstrak:** *Penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif yang mencoba menemukan perbedaan dan kesamaan antara tata bahasa bahasa Inggris dan bahasa Spanyol. Data penelitian ini adalah tata bahasa bahasa Inggris dan bahasa Spanyol. Sumber data adalah teks cetak dalam bentuk buku, majalah, surat kabar, dan lain-lain. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan teknik catat. Kemudian, data dianalisis dengan menggunakan model yang disarankan Mile dan Huberman. Model ini disebut model interaktif. Model ini mempunyai tiga langkah, yaitu: (1) reduksi data, (2) penyajian data, dan (3) penarikan simpulan.*

**Kata kunci:** *komparatif, bahasa Inggris, bahasa Spanyol, tata bahasa*

### INTRODUCTION

Richards (1986:1) says that it has been estimated that some sixty percent of today's world population is multilingual. Both from a contemporary and historical perspective, bilingualism or multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception. It is fair, then, to say that throughout history foreign language learning has always been an important practical concern. Whereas today English is the world's most widely studied foreign language, five hundred years ago it was Latin, for it was the dominant language of education, commerce, religion, and government in the Western

world. In the sixteenth century, however, French, Italian, and English gained in importance as a result of political changes in Europe, and Latin gradually became displaced as a language of spoken and written communication.

While it is the case that even speakers of a single language control various styles and levels of the language, it is very common that many people develop some knowledge and ability in a second language and so become bilingual. The simplest definition of a bilingual is a person who has some functional ability in a second language. This may vary from a limited ability in

one or more domains, to very strong command of both languages, which is sometimes called balanced bilingualism.

Bilingualism as a concept has open-ended semantics. Definitions are numerous and are continually being preferred without any real sense of progress. If we turn to just a few definition their inadequacies immediately become apparent. For example, the definition of bilingualism proposed by Bloomfield (1935 55-6) creates a clear contradiction between what is said in the first sentence and that of in the last sentence.

*“in...cases where ... perfect foreign-language learning is not accompanied by loss of the native language, it results in bilingualism, native-like control of two languages. After early childhood few people have enough muscular and nervous freedom or enough opportunity and leisure to reach perfection in foreign language yet bilingualism of this kind is commoner than one might suppose, both in cases like*

English and Spanish are two internationally spoken languages which are used in many countries. Therefore, it is necessary to have a research that describe the differences and similarities between the two languages.

Dulay (1982: 9) said that over a billion people in the world speak more than one language fluently. In the Philippines, for example, many people must speak three languages if they are to engage fully in their community's social affairs. They must speak the national language, Filipino; one of the eighty-seven local vernaculars; and English or Spanish. In small countries, such as the Netherlands or Israel, most children are required to study at least one foreign language in school, and sometimes several. Most adults in the Netherlands speak German, French, and English in

addition to Dutch. Even in the United States, whose inhabitants are notoriously unconcerned about languages other than English, about 10% of the residents usually speak at least one language in addition to English in the course of their daily lives (National Center for Education Statistics, 1978).

In business affairs foreign language needs loom large. Economic futurists say that knowledge of a foreign language will be among the most sought after skills for business people from the 1980's on into the twenty-first century. A 1979 editorial by Grace Hechinger of *The New York Times* reminded American business people that most Japanese merchants bring fluent English to their transactions in the United States. Americans doing business in Japan, on the other hand, are often encumbered with the need for translators. This, according to Hechinger, may be one reason that Japanese companies are so often more successful in the United States than American companies are in Japan.

This research focuses on the comparison between English and Spanish grammar. It is intended to identify the similarities and differences between English and Spanish grammar. This research is hoped to be one of the references on the comparison between the two internationally-spoken languages.

## RESEARCH METHOD

Nancy Chism (in Moleong, 1990: 236) says that the research design is the strategy used to collect and analyze the data which the researcher needs to solve. Descriptive research is used in literal sense of describing situations or events. It is the accumulation of a data base that is solely descriptive- it does not necessarily

seek or explain relationship, test hypothesis, make predictions, or get at meanings and implications, although research aimed at these more powerful purposes may incorporate descriptive methods. One of the purposes of the descriptive research is to collect detailed factual information that describes existing phenomena. The descriptive method is a method used to describe and interpret what is observed by the researcher.

The data of this research are the English and Spanish grammar. The sources of the data are English and Spanish printed texts in the form of books, magazines, etc. To obtain the data, the researcher uses the jotting down technique.

To analyze the data the researcher uses the model suggested by Mile and Huberman (in Sugiyono, 2010: 336). The model is called interactive model. This model has three steps. They are as follows: (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing.

When the data are read from the printed texts, the researcher reduces the data. The data that are necessary are taken and written down on the data cards; the unnecessary data are not written down. And then, the data are arranged in accordance with the categories. The data are commented. Sugiyono (2010: 341) said that the most frequent form of display data for qualitative research data in the past has been narrative text.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Penalosa (1981: 109) said that one of the most widespread and most interesting of all sociolinguistic phenomena is multilingualism. In many societies of the world, we find large numbers of people who speak more than one language. Generally, those who

speak two languages are called bilingual, although there is no reason why the term multilingual cannot be applied to all persons speaking more than one language. It is a moot point whether there is a qualitative rather than a mere quantitative difference between the speakers of two languages and those who speak more than two.

It is rare to find an individual in any society who speaks more than one language with native-like fluency. Halliday (1968:140) calls such a speaker, who has completely mastered two languages and makes use of both in all situations, *ambilingual*. Most bilingual people restrict one of their languages to certain uses. One tends to predominate. Halliday furthermore considers any language learned by a child before school age as a native language, so it is possible to have more than one native language. An interesting fact is that native bilinguals, including ambilinguals, ordinarily cannot translate between their native languages, although they can learn to do so.

Since almost all bilingualism is asymmetrical, the question can be raised: How asymmetrical can a person's control of two languages be, such that we can still classify the person as bilingual? There is no unanimous agreement among scholars on this issue, although perhaps the most widely accepted definition of a bilingual is a person who can produce spontaneous meaningful utterances in two languages. Such a minimal definition may appear to be too generous in classifying persons as bilingual, but it is a sociolinguistically relevant one. Any case where there is a person producing spontaneous meaningful utterances in more than, one language, there is potentially a sociologically interesting situation.

Francis (1958) says that the term *grammar* is a word in the general

vocabulary, which means that it is used not only by linguistic specialists and students but also by many people whose knowledge of the subject is relatively sketchy, inaccurate, or even erroneous. Milroy and Milroy (1985:70) says that grammar, in the popular sense (and this is based on the standard ideology), is believed to consist of a number of 'rules' that are imposed on usage from outside, for example by some authority on correctness. These rules are largely a set of prohibitions against particular expressions (such as *different to*) that are recurrent and persistent. The grammar of a language or dialect is actually something much more wide-ranging than this. It is a complex and abstract system inherent in the language and not imposed by overt prescription. All native speakers have implicit knowledge of the grammar of English : it is this knowledge that enables speakers to use and understand their languages.

Fromkin (2000:7) says that linguistic knowledge as represented in the speaker's mind is called grammar. A grammar includes everything one knows about the structure of one's language – its lexicon (the structure of words), its syntax (the structure of phrases and sentences and the constraints on well-formedness of sentences), its semantics (the meaning of words and sentences) and its phonetics and phonology (the sound and the sound system or patterns). Alwasilah (1993) says that grammar deals with morphology and syntax.

### THE DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ENGLISH AND SPANISH GRAMMAR

#### *Infinitives in English and Spanish*

A verb in the purest form is called an infinitive. The infinitives in English are

words like *to go, to run, to see, to move*. The Spanish infinitives are identified by the "r" ending. This ending can be seen in the following infinitives: *necesitar* = to need, *amar* (to love), *practicar* (to practice), *aprender* (to learn), *beber* (to drink), *comer* (to eat), *abrir* (to open), *admitir* (to admit).

From the infinitives above it can be seen the infinitives in Spanish end with "r".

#### *Present Tense of English and Spanish*

In English simple present tense is used to indicate habitual action, natural action and repeated action. Verbs other than *be* have two forms in the simple present tense a simple form and an-s form. The -s form is used with third person singular subjects (he, she, it, John, Mary, the book, etc.) Otherwise, the simple form is used.

All Spanish verbs are "regular" and "irregular." Spanish verbs undergo conjugation. Conjugation is the change of verbs. The verbs in Spanish change in accordance with the pronouns that serve as the subject of a sentence. Here is the complete list of Spanish subject pronouns.

**Singular:** *yo* (I), *tu* (you familiar), *usted* (you formal), *el* (he), *ella* (she)

**Plural:** *nosotros/as* (we), *vosotros/as* (you-all familiar), *ustedes* (you-all formal), *ellas* (they/feminine), *ellos* (they/masculine).

When one of the pronouns above is used as a subject of a sentence, verb conjugates. The conjugation can be seen in the following

Yo hablo = I speak

Tu hablas = You speak

El habla = He speaks

Ella habla = She speaks

Vosotros/as habláis = You-all (familiar) speak

Ellos/ellas hablan = They speak  
 Nosotros/as hablamos = We speak

From the sentences above it can be seen that verb “hablar” conjugates. If the subject is “yo” (I), the verb “hablar” changes into “hablo”; if the subject is “tu”, the verb hablar changes into “hablas” if the subject is “el”, the verb hablar changes into “habla”; if the subject is “ella”, the verb hablar changes into “habla”; if the subject is “usted”, the verb “hablar” changes into “habla” if the subject is “nosotros/as”, the verb “hablar” changes into “hablamos”; if the subject is “vosotros/as”, the verb “habla”r changes into “hablais”; if the subject is “ellos”, the verb “hablar” changes into “hablan” if the subject is “ellas”, the verb “hablar” changes into “hablan”; if the subject is “ustedes”, the verb “hablar” changes into “hablan”.

The simple rule can be made. To conjugate –ar verbs, drop the ending and add –o, –as, –a, –amos, –ais, –an.

The data of verbs presented above show that Spanish verbs can be divided into three kinds (1) –ar verbs, (2) er verbs and (3) –ir verbs. To conjugate the –er verbs, drop the ending and add –o, –es, –e, –emos, –eis, –en.

To conjugate –ir verbs, drop the ending and add –o, –es, –e, –imos, –is, –en.

### **English and Spanish “to be”**

To be in English can be categorized as verbs. Here is the English verb, fully conjugated: *I am, You are, He/she is, We are, You-all are, They are.*

In Spanish “ser” and ‘estar” can be both translated as “to be.” Both “ser” and “estar” are conjugated. The following is the conjugation of the verb “ser.”: *soy, eres, es, somos, sois, son.*

The following is the conjugation of the verb “estar.”: *estoy, estas, esta, estamos, estais, estan.*

However, both “ser” and “estar” have different meanings in English.

The apple is green.

(Meaning the apple is not ripe.)

The apple is green.

(meaning the color of the apple is green.)

In the first case, one speaks of the condition of the apple. The apple is green because it has not yet ripened. When the condition of the apple changes, that is, when it has ripened, it will no longer be green, it will be ripe. In the second case, one speaks of the essential characteristics of the apple. The apple is green in color. This apple remains green even after it has ripened.

*La manzana esta verde.*

*(The apple is green. (condition)*

*La manzana es verde.*

*(The apple is green. (essence)*

“Ser” is also used to express the hour day, and date.

*Que hora es?*

*What time is it?*

*Son las dos.*

*It’s two o’clock.*

*Que dia es hoy?*

*What day is today?*

*Hoy es lunes.*

*Today’s Monday.*

*Que fecha es hoy?*

*What’s the date today?*

*Es el cinco de mayo.*

*It’s May fifth.*

“Ser” is used to express place of origin.

*De donde eres tu?*

*Where are you from?*

*Soy de Lamongan.*

*I’am from Lamongan.*

“Ser” is used to express occupation.

*Cual es tu trabajo?*

*What do you do?*

*Soy carpintero.*

*I’m a carpenter.*

When the verb “to be” is followed by a noun, the verb “ser” is always used. In this instance, it might be helpful to think of the verb as equivalent to an “equal” sign, such as  $a = b$ . This type of sentence is always referring to essential characteristics, since the verb is “linking” what comes before the verb to what comes after the verb.

*John is a doctor.*

*John = doctor*

*John es medico.*

### **English and Spanish Past Tense**

The English simple past indicates that an activity or situation began and ended at a particular time in the past.

Spanish has two past tenses: preterite and imperfect. Most verbs can be put into either tense, depending upon the meaning. Generally speaking, the preterite is used for actions in the past that are seen as completed. Use of the preterite tense implies that the past action had a definite beginning and definite end.

*Alice hablo de la una hasta las dos.*

*Alice spoke from one until two o’clock.*

clearly stated beginning and end)

Generally speaking, the imperfect is used for actions in the past that are not seen as completed. Use of the imperfect tense implies that the past action did not have a definite beginning or a definite end.

*Las chicas hablaban en ingles.*

*The girls used to speak in English.*

(no definite beginning or end)

Preterite regular –ar verbs

-e (*hable*)

-aste (*hablaste*)

-o (*hablo*)

-amos (*hablamos*)

-asteis (*hablasteis*)

-aron (*hablaron*)

Imperfect: regular –ar verbs

-aba (*hablaba*)

-abas (*hablabas*)

-aba (*hablaba*)

-abamos (*hablabamos*)

-abais (*hablabais*)

-aban (*hablaban*)

### **Future Tense of English and Spanish**

In English “will” and “be going to” are used to express future time. When the speaker is making a prediction (a statement about something s/he thinks will be true or will occur in the future), either “will” or “be going to” is possible.

*According to the weather report, it will be cloudy tomorrow.*

*According to the weather report, it is going to be cloudy tomorrow.*

There is no difference in meaning between the first and the second sentence above. When the speaker is expressing a prior plan (something the speaker intends to do in the future because in the past, s/he has made a plan or decision to do it), only “be going to” is used.

In Spanish the future tense endings for regular verbs are formed by adding the endings below to the infinitive: -e, -as, -a, -emos, -eis, -an.

The conjugation of the verb consists of –ar, –er and ir conjugations.

-ar conjugation

*estudiar*      *estudiaremos*

*estudiaras*    *estudiareis*

*estudiara*     *estudiaran*

**Present Perfect Tense**

In English, the present perfect tense is a construction made up of the auxiliary have + the past part form of the main verb. It is used to indicate an action that took place at an indefinite time or over a period of time in the past, but still has relevance in the present. The time of the action is not mentioned and it is not implied.

*I have seen the movie.*

*Usman has read that book.*

*They have submitted theirs.*

The present perfect of English is often used with the word *just* to show that an action was completed in the very recent past.

*They have just arrived.*

*They have just finished dinner.*

The present perfect is also used to show that action began in the past and has continued up to the present.

*We have studied English for three years.*

*I have known him since 2010.*

Certain adverbial time expressions are often used with the present perfect tense. Of these, the most common are prepositional phrases beginning with *for* and *since*.

In Spanish, the present perfect tense is formed by using the present tense of the auxiliary verb *haber* (conjugated in the present indicative) + past participle (regular or irregular form).

Haber (present tense)

*he*                      *hemos*

*has*                     *habeis*

*ha*                      *han*

*he estudiado la leccion.*

*I have studied the lesson*

*Has comido la ensalada*

*You have eaten the salad.*

*Ha dormido bien.*

*He/she has slept well.*

*Hemos escrito la carta.*

*We have written the letters.*

*Han hecho la tarea.*

*They have done the homework.*

Both languages conjugate their verbs. But, Spanish has many inflections of verbs. *Haber* becomes *he, has, ha, hemos, habeis, and han*. The conjugated verb depends on the subject of the sentence. If the subject is “yo” (I) *haber* changes into “he”. English has only two conjugated auxiliaries verb. “Have” and “has”.

*I have*                      *We have*

*You have*                *He has*

*They have*               *she has*

**English and Spanish Past Perfect Tense**

Past perfect tense in English is a construction made of had + the past participle form of the verb. The past perfect is used in connected discourse in conjunction with the past tense and shows that an activity was completed at or before some definite time in the past.

*I did not teach you until everyone had come.*

In Spanish the past perfect is formed by using the imperfect tense of the auxiliary verb “haber” + past participle (regular or irregular form).

Haber (imperfect tense)

*habia*                      *habiamos*

*habias*                    *habiais*

*habia*                      *habian*

*Habia estudiado la leccion*

*I/He/She had studied the lesson.*

*Habias comido la ensalada.*

*You had eaten the salad.*

*Habia dormido bien.*

*I/He/She had slept well.*

*Habiamos escrito la carta.*

*We had written the letter.*





in an affirmative statement with one verb, the indirect object pronoun comes immediately before the conjugated verb.

*John me compra un regalo.*

*John buys me a gift*

*John buys a gift for me.*

*John te compra un regalo.*

*John buys you a gift.*

*John buys a gift for you.*

*John le compra un regalo.*

*John buys her a gift.*

*John buys a gift for her.*

*John nos compra un regalo.*

*John buys us a gift.*

*John buys a gift for us.*

## DISCUSSION

Both English and Spanish have an infinitive. The infinitives in English are characterized by preposition “to” + “verb form”. The Spanish infinitives are known by the “r” ending. Verbs in Spanish end in –ar, er, and ir (hablar, comer, and dormir).

In English, verbs other than be have two forms in the simple present tense (a simple form and an-s form.) The –s form is used with third person singular subjects (he, she, it). Otherwise, the simple form is used.

Both English and Spanish have “to be”. In English the use of “to be” can be found in many kinds of sentences. One of them is in the construction of NP + BE + N P. In Spanish “ser” and ‘estar” can be both translated as “to be.” Both “ser” and “estar” are conjugated. In the first case, one speaks of the condition. In the second case, one speaks of the essential characteristics. *In Spanish* when the verb “to be” is followed by a noun, the verb ser is always used. In this instance, it might be helpful to think of the verb as equivalent to an “equal” sign, such as a = b. this type of sentence is always

referring to essential characteristics, since the verb is “linking” what comes before the verb to what comes after the verb.

English and Spanish have tenses, such as simple present tense, past tense, future tense, present perfect, past perfect tense, etc. English and Spanish have conjugated verbs, but there are a lot of conjugation in Spanish.

Direct object pronouns are used when a person or thing receives the action of the verb directly. Both languages have direct object pronouns. But, the position of the direct object in a sentence may be different. In English direct object pronoun is put after the verb. In Spanish in an affirmative statement with one verb, the direct object pronoun comes immediately before the conjugated verb. If the subject of the sentence changes, this does not affect the direct object pronoun.

## CONCLUSION

The research shows that English and Spanish have similarities and differences. The similarities can be seen in the existence of tenses, the conjugation of verbs, the use of to be. The differences can also be found in the aspects mentioned above. The conjugation of verbs in Spanish is more complicated in Spanish. In English, for example, the verb “do” will change into “does” when it is used with the third person singular subject in simple present tense. However, in Spanish, for example, the verb “hablar” (speak) will change into hablo, habla, hablas, hablamos, etc. In the use of to be English and Spanish are different. To be in Spanish has two meanings:

The researcher suggests that learners of Spanish have to pay attention to the conjugations of verb that exists in Spanish.

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