

Book Review

Ackerlind, S. & R. Jones-Kellogg, **Portuguese. A Reference Manual**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011. Pp. 340

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1. General overview

Authored by Sheila Ackerlind and Rebecca Jones-Kellogg, *Portuguese. A Reference Manual* is a comprehensive guide on the functioning of oral and written Portuguese, designed to support the study of Portuguese as a foreign language. Originally conceived for university-level students, this book, which presents an extensive description of different domains of knowledge of the language, is a useful support tool for students of various levels of education, teachers of Portuguese as a foreign language and other specialists interested in consulting updated and well-founded information on Portuguese. In different sections of the manual, the contents are presented following a methodology of contrastive analysis with Spanish and English. Therefore, it is expected that the users of this manual have background knowledge of these two languages.

The description of grammatical and lexical categories and of the writing system focuses on Brazilian Portuguese (BP), but information on European Portuguese (EP), fairly complete at different levels, is also included.

Although the presentation of the contents and the examples manifest a clear pedagogical concern, and didactical materials, such as tables and lists of verbal paradigms, are included, the manual is not tied to a specific didactic approach, and should be understood as a consultation tool useful to

supplement textbooks. No matter how complete textbooks are, with authentic materials and stimulating interactive activities, the contact with communication practices always raises doubts. A great amount of these doubts, some about dialectal differences in varieties or registers of language, may be clarified by detailed explanations offered in this book, which is divided into four major chapters: (i) Sound System, (ii) Writing System and Accentuation, (iii) Portuguese, Spanish and English Cognates and (iv) Grammatical Categories.

One of the most innovative aspects of this book is the inclusion of a small section on the Portuguese orthographic reforms and the new «Orthographic Accord» (from 1990 and in effect since 2010). The care in explaining the spelling conventions that guide the written system in the two varieties of Portuguese is present in all sections.

2. Sound System

The organization of this chapter is very well structured, giving a very detailed description of oral and nasal vowels, following their stress position, of oral and nasal diphthongs and of the consonant system. This description includes phonetic transcriptions and is illustrated with examples in Portuguese. In some cases, it includes examples of similar sounding words in English and Spanish, which is very useful to clarify doubts of pronunciation. In footnotes, the reader will find, among other details, information on different realizations of some sounds in European Portuguese and in Brazilian dialects.

3. Writing System and Accentuation

Based on the knowledge of the alphabet and the establishment of links between words and sounds, in this chapter the rules of graphic representation of Portuguese are explained. To facilitate this explanation, Portuguese written words are put in contrast with their Spanish and English equivalents. Some conventions of the writing system, such as capitalization, punctuation signs and diacritics, are also discussed. Some sections of this chapter are noteworthy: the sections on «Syllables and Word Division» and on «Stress and Accentuation», in which relations between the oral and written systems are explained, are very useful for achieving a high level of proficiency in Portuguese.

4. Portuguese, Spanish and English Cognates

Considering the definition of «cognates» as words that «are related through derivation from the same ancestral root» (p. xxv), this chapter

introduces an interesting lexical enlargement strategy based on the awareness of the internal structure of words.

First, through the methodology of contrastive analysis, lists of Portuguese, English and Spanish words that were formed from a common root are presented, as well as explanations of their meaning. For the different lexical items considered, the common lexical patterns are highlighted and phonetic aspects are differentiated. Secondly, lists of correspondences between prefixes and suffixes in Portuguese, Spanish and English are offered and detailed. Finally, there is a short section on true, partial and false cognates, in which the meanings of lexical items in Portuguese, Spanish and English are compared. In this section, one can find a very complete approach to the typical cases of *false friends*, which must be learned by those who are studying Portuguese as a foreign language.

5. Grammatical Categories

The longest chapter of the manual includes fourteen sections describing the lexical, syntactic and semantic functioning of grammatical categories: (i) Articles, (ii) Nouns and Adjectives, (iii) Numbers and Numerals, (iv) Adverbs, (v) Comparatives and Superlatives, (vi) Personal Pronouns, (vii) Possessive Adjectives and Pronouns, (viii) Demonstrative Adjectives and Pronouns, (ix) Relative Words, (x) Interrogative Words, (xi) Affirmative, Negative, and Indefinite Words, (xii) Prepositions, (xiii) Conjunctions, (xiv) Verbs. Although the description offered in some sections (such as the one on Conjunctions) is quite traditional, the sections on «Subjunctive Mood» and «*Ser* versus *Estar*», «*Ficar*», «*Ter e Haver*», «*Haver e Fazer*», «*Acabar*» and «*Saber* versus *Conhecer*» are very suitable for those who are learning Portuguese as a foreign language and, once again, include relevant information about the differences between language varieties.

6. Final comments

This manual has the clear purpose of providing comprehensive linguistic information, covering two varieties of Portuguese. The same holds for the goal of providing examples of both formal and non-formal registers, as well as non-standard registers. However, some crucial ideas about the variation of Portuguese in the world could be more deeply explored. In some way, a deeper understanding of precisely those grammar topics that characterize the differences between BP and EP, dialects and registers of language seems to be missing.

As the authors make clear, in the «Preface and Acknowledgments», throughout this work they attempt to focus on the use of standard Portuguese.

Following the tradition of teaching Portuguese in the United States, preference is given to the vocabulary and the grammar of Brazilian Portuguese (p. xiv), with further information on the Portuguese spoken in Portugal, in East Timor and in the Portuguese-speaking African countries. Such an assumption should imply a more complete explanation of the Portuguese variety that is taken as the privileged object of learning, the Brazilian *norma urbana culta*, and also a greater attention to the dialectal differences in Brazilian Portuguese.

Throughout the manual, both in body text and examples, as well as in footnotes, connections are established between the two varieties of Portuguese considered: BP and EP. In fact, as noted in «Preface and Acknowledgments», «when a European Portuguese variant occurs, we adhere to Brazilian Portuguese usage, but we clearly state the variant either in a footnote or in parentheses» (p. xvi). Despite this network of correspondences, a more systematic treatment of those linguistic subjects that are relevant to the intralinguistic differences seems to be missing. As an example of this, in the section on clitic placement («Placement of object pronouns», pp. 92-94), mainly proclisis contexts, in which the patterns of placement are equivalent in BP and EP, are presented. However, since there are no examples of occurrences of clitics in simple sentences, it never becomes clear that one of the differences between the two varieties is the prevalence of the proclitic pattern in BP, in contrast to the widespread enclitic pattern in EP. Moreover, the generalization made about patterns of clitic placement in complex verbal predicates, where there is ample variation in Portuguese, is imprecise. In those contexts, too, BP pronouns have a more proclitic behavior, in contrast with the enclitic tendencies of EP (Duarte, 2003; Vieira, 2008). Thus, examples on page 93 should be rewritten as in (1).

- (1) a. Eles se vão lavar. (BP)
 b. Eles vão-se lavar. (*preferred in colloquial EP*)
 c. Eles vão se lavar. (*preferred in colloquial BP*)
 d. Eles vão lavar-se. (EP)

The consideration of only two national varieties, BP and EP, is based on the assumption that the European variants of grammar apply to the language of Portuguese-speaking African countries: «we do make the assumption – admittedly problematic – that European variants tend to apply to the Portuguese spoken in Lusophone Africa» (p. xvi). In a manual that intends to contemplate the variation of the Portuguese language in the world, this is an assumption that can generate a poor understanding of the different surface manifestations of the Portuguese language in diverse African territories. The place that the Portuguese-written African literature, such as, for instance, Angolan and Mozambican literature, occupies in readers' minds throughout

the world is one of the arguments in favor of the recognition of the African Portuguese differences. Along with the knowledge of the literary place of these cultures all over the world, studies in linguistics have provided results that reinforce the idea of linguistic diversity within Portuguese language unity (Gonçalves, 2010). It is, therefore, very important in the teaching of Portuguese as a foreign language that it becomes clear that the European Portuguese and the Portuguese spoken in African countries constitute a plural grammar that is worth learning.

In spite of these aspects that could be improved, the overall impression of *Portuguese. A reference manual* is extremely positive. The book meets the goals it proposes to its readers, and it presents very complete and well-substantiated linguistic descriptions (as can be confirmed by consulting the list of academic and reference works). This manual can be seen as a key resource to facilitate the resolution of doubts that typically arise in practicing a language, and that usually require information scattered in different grammars and dictionaries. The strongest points of the proposals made in this manual are, arguably, the updated information about the new Orthographic Agreement, the contrastive methodology (that facilitates the learning of Portuguese by students with background knowledge of Spanish and English), and the detailed information about the differences between BP and EP, dialects and different registers. Finally, we highlight the completeness of the description provided at all levels: sound system, writing conventions and lexical and grammatical knowledge. It is, in fact, a 'reference manual', that we recommend to students, teachers and all those who are interested in learning more about this language that unites different nations.

References

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