

Spanish Fluency: Twin Words and Essential Vocabulary

Susan Elizabeth Nus

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Nus takes the stress out of learning with easy and fun language activities.

Learning Spanish, one of the world's most beautiful and commonly spoken languages, becomes easy and fun with *Spanish Fluency: Twin Words and Essential Vocabulary*. Susan Elizabeth Nus reveals how English speakers can take advantage of what they already know and offers efficient study methods and lots of fun resources to make learning Spanish easy.

Thousands of English cognates, or "twin words," closely resemble their Spanish counterparts, making them a springboard to fluency. Nus affirms that as soon as some common and predictable Spanish suffix changes are understood, beginning speakers' "vocabulary will multiply, comprehension will soar (both reading and auditory) and whole aspects of the language will open up."

Stressing about grammar and fear of making mistakes puts a damper on students' enthusiasm, but Nus takes the stress out of learning with her friendly, encouraging tone and suggestions for language activities that are easy, accessible, and fun. These include using technology; taking on another persona to lose yourself in the spirit of the language; and the many resources she includes at the end of the book, such as apps, blogs, books, courses, film, and music to make study a pleasure.

Nus makes it clear that it's necessary to learn grammar and correct pronunciation, but she advises taking these in smaller doses while enjoying the rapid progress that awareness of cognates provides. She points out that the one thousand most commonly used Spanish words enable about eighty percent of everyday speech, and she groups these "essential" but "more foreign" words into categories like "The Nine Verbs You Can't Live Without" and "Essential Adjectives," making them feel more manageable.

Especially important is Nus's warning to be aware of "false cognates," words that appear to mean one thing but actually mean something totally different. For example, the Spanish word "molestar" means "to bother," not "to molest"; "embarazada" means "pregnant," not "embarrassed"; "estar constipado" refers to having a cold, not to a bowel problem; and "preservativo" is the term most commonly used for "condom." With these, Nus proves that a knowledge of false cognates can prevent some very awkward and embarrassing moments.

The book's bright red cover is attractive, and the cover copy, front and back, presents its contents and purpose adequately. The table of contents is comprehensive and shows the logical manner in which the author presents her material, but the use of all caps, bold print, italics, and different font sizes gives it a disorganized feel. Spacing and layout issues are also evident in the index, and the three "orphan" quotes that appear after the author's bio, each on its own page, seem out of place. Thorough proofreading is suggested to correct errors including: "Embarazado mean pregnant"; "they don't always mean what they appear"; "phontic" (should be "phonetic"); and the repetition of words.

The author, who grew up in Europe and holds degrees in Spanish and Italian, is to be commended for bringing the

similarities between all the Romance languages to light in such an enjoyable manner. Students of Spanish will be encouraged to see their progress to fluency rapidly increased using her methods.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July 21, 2014)

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