THE PRONUNCIATION
OF
SPANISH

BY
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CONTENTS

Preface ........................................ page vii
I On the Use of Phonetic Symbols ........... 1
II On the Making of Speech-Sounds .......... 3
III Front Vowels ................................ 9
IV Back Vowels ................................ 15
V Additional Notes on Vowels ................. 19
VI Plosive Consonants ......................... 27
VII Nasal Consonants ......................... 33
VIII L-sounds and R-sounds .................. 38
IX Fricative Consonants ...................... 43
X Semi-Vowels ................................ 52
XI Additional Notes on Consonants .......... 55
XII Stress and Length ......................... 58
XIII Intonation ................................ 62
XIV Phonetic Texts ............................ 72
Index ........................................... 85
PREFACE

This book is intended to fill a gap in Spanish studies. So far as I know, there is no book which deals with Spanish pronunciation, in a manner which is particularly adapted for the use of English people. Indeed, it is the need for a book of this kind which has led me to collect my notes, taken in conversation with educated Spaniards. These I hope will be of assistance to English people who travel in Spain; but the principal object of the book is to enable English students of the Spanish language to acquire a good Spanish pronunciation, particularly if they contemplate teaching it.

In Spain, four languages are spoken—Galician, Basque, Spanish and Catalan. Spanish is divided into two main dialects—Castilian and Andalusian. Andalusian differs from Castilian chiefly in pronunciation. The mother-language, which originated in the north-east of Castile, is Castilian or Spanish. The Spanish pronunciation dealt with in this book is educated Castilian, such as is spoken in Madrid to-day.

For representing speech-sounds, two systems of notation, or rather, two varieties of the same system, are employed: an approximate or “broad” transcription, obtained by using the minimum number of phonetic symbols without causing ambiguity, and a more minute or “narrow” transcription, which aims at expressing the sounds of spoken Spanish with the greatest possible exactitude. Generally speaking, I have used the system of phonetic notation adopted by the International Phonetico Association, but I have ventured to introduce a few innovations, in cases where it seems to me the learner will be
PREFACE

helped thereby. For instance, members of the same phoneme, that is sounds which do not change the meaning of a word when substituted for each other, like b and ñ, require only one symbol in a broad transcription (b), since the difference in their pronunciation is due solely to their position in a word or word-group. In my view, this gives insufficient guidance to the learner, particularly when he sees words like basta and habla, where b is plosive in the first case but fricative in the second, transcribed with the same symbol for b. In the opinion of many teachers, rules are not enough; the difference must be expressed visually. For this reason, many sounds which are members of the same phoneme are transcribed with different symbols throughout this book, although the transcription is broad in other respects. Whether one symbol shall be used to represent all the sounds comprised in a phoneme is a matter for the individual teacher to decide; some manage better without differentiating the two members of the b phoneme, while others find such differentiation a help for distinguishing the two sounds they represent.

There are two features of Spanish pronunciation which should be mastered by the English learner as soon as possible. Without them, he will always appear to Spanish people to be speaking with a strong “foreign accent”. These two features are (1) the peculiar Spanish “intonation”, the rise and fall of the voice, and (2) the characteristic Spanish omission of the “glottal stop”, that slight consonantal sound before words which begin with a vowel, which, if used in Spanish, prevents the syllables of a group of words or “word-group” from running fluently together. Intonation is a subject which many consider to have been inadequately treated in the past, even by phoneticians; it needs a book to itself, illustrated by examples in musical notation. But since it is essential for a foreigner learning
PREFACE

Spanish to have some idea of what intonation implies, the outlines of Spanish intonation, based on personal observations, have been included in a chapter at the end of the present volume. There, intonation has been shown by a system of dots, stressed syllables being marked by bigger dots than unstressed syllables.

As to the glottal stop and the means for avoiding it (for most English people, when they begin to speak Spanish, use the glottal stop at every opportunity, although they are quite unaware of the fact), I have used a linking-mark to signify that final consonants must be joined to initial vowels. This should help beginners, by reminding them visually, that the words are not spoken separately but are run together. Thus the two words

Un hombre

are run together so as to sound like unombre, transcribed in this book as

u'n_ombre.

A bracket like this is generally used to show the occurrence of "synaloepha" (see § 69 (b)) or elision. Its use, in each of these three ways, impresses on the learner’s mind the fact that two vowels joined by a bracket form part of one syllable only. Thus eso es is transcribed el'so_es, two syllables (the stroke before s, and before n in the preceding example, shows that the following syllable is stressed).

The following list of books will be of interest to students of Spanish pronunciation and of phonetics in general:

x

PREFACE

7. Publications of the International Phonetic Association, obtainable from the Secretary, Professor Daniel Jones, University College, London.

I am under personal obligation to Professor Daniel Jones, both for permission to use Diagram No. 1, from his Outline of English Phonetics, and for the invaluable assistance which he has so generously given me in preparing this book for the press. I am also indebted to Miss Lilias Armstrong, who has given me permission to use several diagrams which I have adapted from those in her book The Phonetics of French (Bell, 1932).

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# Table of Spanish Speech-Sounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonants</th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plosive</td>
<td>p b</td>
<td>t d</td>
<td>c (ɟ)</td>
<td>k g</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m (ɱ)</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n (ŋ)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral</td>
<td>l (ɬ)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolled</td>
<td></td>
<td>rr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flapped</td>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>(ב)</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>θ (θ) (ð)</td>
<td>s (ʂ)</td>
<td>[ç]</td>
<td>x (ɡ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-vowel</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>{w}</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowels</th>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-close</td>
<td>e (ɛ)</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-open</td>
<td>a (ɑ)</td>
<td>(ɔ)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

( ) indicate subsidiary members of phonemes.
[ ] indicate an alternative sound.
{ } indicate a secondary articulation.