

ELEMENTS OF SPOKEN FRENCH

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Elements of Spoken French by Maurice N. Kuhn

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MAURICE N. KUHN

**ELEMENTS OF
SPOKEN FRENCH**

A SERIES OF
HANDBOOKS OF PRONUNCIATION
BASED ON PHONETICAL PRINCIPLES

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ELEMENTS OF SPOKEN FRENCH
ELEMENTS OF SPOKEN SPANISH
ELEMENTS OF SPOKEN GERMAN
ELEMENTS OF SPOKEN ENGLISH
(For Spanish-speaking Students)

ELEMENTS
OF
SPOKEN FRENCH

BY
MAURICE N. KUHN

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ED. OF SP. FRENCH.
W. P. F.

PREFACE

THE books of this series aim at completing to some extent, and in a special direction, the grammars and readers now used with such good results by teachers and students of modern languages. No one would now dispute the fact that the teaching of pronunciation is one of the main tasks of a modern language teacher, and one in which grammars, ordinary text-books, or any books at all indeed can afford but little help, as such teaching must be essentially oral. With this difficulty in mind, and without insinuating in any way that this book will exempt a student from the necessity of receiving from a living voice the living sounds of the languages he wishes to learn, we have thought that a book might considerably shorten the way to right pronunciation by suggesting and realizing a progressive study of the sounds to be found in any given language.

Such is the object of the series of handbooks of pronunciation we are now editing. We have tried to analyze as carefully and accurately as possible all the elementary sounds in French, Spanish, English, and German, endeavoring to begin with the sounds that are common to most languages, and gradually introducing those sounds that are peculiar to the language under consideration. Furthermore, we have grouped the words that are more generally used, according to their phonetic similarities, thus relieving the teacher of the necessity of giving a new lesson in pronunciation whenever a new word appears.

This grouping of similar sounds must also prove of great assistance to the student, who will find an opportunity of drilling his vocal organs to utter a certain sound which he will have to repeat a great number of times in succession and in as many different words.

Phonetic principles have been observed in the grouping of sounds; similar sounds being placed in the same group even though presenting the most radical differences in spelling. The

student will thus be led to understand that spelling is only a ready-made garment, — very badly cut in most cases, — in which the only living part of the word, *i.e.* its sound, has been clothed. The first part of each lesson is devoted to the study of a few of these groups of words, each of them forming an exercise in illustration of one particular sound. This is followed by a short lesson in reading, in which the sounds studied before become parts of sentences as closely related as possible to everyday life. In our first lessons, the limited supply of words has obliged us to use many sentences which their phonetic value alone may justify. With the eighth lesson, however, the number of words already given has made it possible to attempt a somewhat higher standard. Under such titles as "At dinner," "The house on fire," etc., we have endeavored to bring together, according to their natural affinities, the words considered in the earlier lessons in relation to their phonetic structure. We have tried to incorporate in these readings vivid traits of French, or Spanish, or English life and customs, with which we hope to awaken the student's interest in the people whose language he is learning.

We do not pretend to set up a standard of pronunciation. There are many words in every language which may be and are pronounced in two or more ways by equally well educated people, and we do not mean to exclude all other pronunciations by giving our preference to one. Our rule has been to choose the pronunciation which, we think, is more generally used among the educated classes of such representative cities as Paris or Madrid.

In conclusion, we wish to express our most sincere thanks to many members of the Harvard faculty who have been kind enough to encourage and direct us in our work. We are particularly indebted to Professors F. C. de Sumichrast, C. H. Grandgent, E. S. Sheldon, and P. B. Marcou, Mr. Irving Babbitt, Dr. J. D. M. Ford, Mr. Brun, and Mr. A. M. La Meslée for their valuable suggestions and kind help.

C. V. C.

M. N. K.

HINTS TO TEACHERS

In most cases, this handbook will be used in classes where the pupils have studied French for a certain length of time, as a means of improving their pronunciation and increasing their vocabulary. The exercises, therefore, should be read distinctly by the teacher, and repeated by the pupils. The reading lesson may be memorized or at least carefully studied from the phonetic as well as from all other points of view. It may be well, however, to suggest here one of the means of adapting the book to the needs of a class of beginners.

In this latter case, the teacher will find it advantageous to consider this book primarily as a collection of words to be committed to memory, and destined to serve as a basis for the subsequent studies in grammar, translation, composition, and conversation. The whole book includes about 1800 words, among which will be found the most common French words, unavoidable omissions being taken into account. The apparent disorder in which the words are given will furnish the teacher an opportunity, as soon as the thirteenth lesson is completed, to set such review exercises as the following: "Make a list of all the words studied which are related to school life, or outdoor life, or home life, etc., and be prepared to read it aloud correctly."

The study of the words may be taken up with the first recitation of a class of beginners. One or two exercises repeated and explained in class will be sufficient at first, and may be taught with such fundamental grammatical facts as the French genders and numbers, the manner in which they are indicated by the articles, the formation of the plural, the agreement of the articles and adjectives with the nouns they accompany, etc.; examples being

drawn from the words and sentences found in the lessons under study at the time.

Teachers may be tempted, in going over the book with their pupils for the first time, to leave out a certain number of the words given, in order to arrive sooner at such important sounds as the nasals; we advise them, however, to avoid this method, even if their grammatical teaching is thereby somewhat delayed. Pupils are not going to gain much, for instance, by using the indefinite article *un* from the start, if they are allowed, as they almost inevitably must at that time, to pronounce it in the same way as the letters *un* in *dun*, and thus to form a bad habit. A word is hardly worth knowing when it is not pronounced accurately, and in learning words, as in other apprenticeships, the only sensible way is to proceed slowly from the easy to the difficult, even though the difficult may seem more attractive to the tyro.

The mere perusal of our reading lessons will show, moreover, that neither the want of the 1st person plural of the verbs, nor the absence from the first eleven lessons of such words as *en*, *on*, *un*, has prevented us giving the teacher ample matter for grammatical explanation and comment. A more methodical study of the grammar may be profitably begun after the thirteenth lesson, and will find its application in the last seven lessons of the book, which are intended to serve as a recapitulation of its contents.

A school term will be quite sufficient, in most cases, for a first study of the whole book. It will be used to advantage afterward for constant reviews of the words, and for conversations and compositions based upon the subject-matter of the reading lessons from the eighth to the last. Its vocabulary will serve, moreover, the purpose of a handy pronouncing dictionary.

I need not add that all suggestions tending to widen the range of usefulness of this book will be gratefully received.

M. N. K.