Contrastive Phonetic Study of Spanish, English, German, and Chinese, and Its Application for Teaching Pronunciation

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《Abstract》

The present paper is a contrastive description of phonology and phonetics between the Spanish, English, German and Chinese languages. Compared with other branches of linguistics, like syntax or to some extent semantics, phonology is rather technical and requires the concepts, terminology and notations of phonetics almost from the start. Namely, one can not do phonology until she/he has a solid background in all aspects of phonetics.

We know that it is probably impossible to write a satisfactory paper on a contentious and evolving subject like phonology, but we are sure that this paper can provide readers, especially those teachers and students of foreign languages, a clear idea about the phonetic differences between the mentioned four languages.

After all, we would like to emphasize the importance of “international phonetic transcription”. It is a useful way to let learners distinguish, for example, [t] and [d] in English or tell the differences from Spanish [t] to English [t]. But as we mentioned before, the difficulty is that the learner must come into phonology and phonetics with a previous knowledge of, for example, concepts like the meaning of stops and fricatives.

Key Words: phonetics, contrastive, Spanish, German, Chinese, English