
Dansereau, Diane. *Savoir Dire: cours de phonétique et prononciation.*

New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006. ISBN: 9-78-0618512881. Pp. 288. Includes: 14 audio CDs.

Savoir Dire: cours de phonétique et prononciation, originally published in 1990 and now in its second edition, is designed as an introduction to French phonetics and pronunciation and, in my opinion, is best suited for third-year university-level students without an extensive background in linguistics. Because it was written primarily for Anglophone students at American universities, it adopts a contrastive French-English approach and explores all of the major features of standard French pronunciation clearly and accessibly.

The book is divided into seven chapters devoted successively to the study of speech organs and of phonetic symbols, prosody, oral vowels, nasal vowels, the mute “e,” semi-vowels, and consonants. One of the most important aspects of this book is its thorough explanation and application of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The IPA symbols are presented at the very beginning of the book, allowing students to learn and memorize them quickly, and consequently to be able to pronounce correctly the transcriptions of sounds found in dictionaries. The description of French sounds is clear and concise, and the author avoids lengthy theoretical explanations or the excessive use of jargon.

The first chapter is based on four sentences, which include all the sounds of standard French. The sentences, gradually increasing in both length and difficulty and read by both a male and a female French native speaker, are recorded on a CD. The rendition is slow and very clear, and there is enough time left in between the sentences for students to repeat them without being cut off by the sentence that follows. The goal of these exercises is to show students the relationship between French sounds and the phonetic symbols representing them. Throughout the book, there are numerous transcription exercises from English to French and vice versa. By the end of the course, students should have an excellent knowledge of the French sound system and be able to transcribe words, expressions, and full sentences.

The second chapter is entirely devoted to prosody and its components: *la joncture (la syllabisation et l'enchaînement)*, *l'accentuation (l'accent et le rythme)*, *l'intonation*, and *la liaison*. Again, the theoretical explanations are easy to follow and are kept to a minimum. In order to practice all the elements of prosody, Dansereau has included a number of excellent expressions, sentences, and passages to repeat, most of which are recorded on CDs.

The five remaining chapters provide a detailed description of particular sounds, starting with vowels (oral and nasal), and then moving to semi-vowels and consonants. The chapters have the same structure, beginning with various spellings of the sound in question and its articulation. Incorrect pronunciation is indicated in order to point out and work on eliminating common interferences from English. Each section includes a variety of written and oral exercises.

Occasionally, the author establishes links between pronunciation and grammar which underscore and drill certain sounds in important grammatical contexts. Examples of various dialectal variations make students aware of the different pronunciations they will often hear in the Francophone world.

Although the basic organization of the second edition follows the first edition closely, there have been several important changes. The layout of the pages and the font have been slightly altered to make the book more user-friendly. The audiocassettes have been replaced by fourteen CDs of excellent sound quality. A new Website has been added with answer keys, translations of proverbs, idioms, sample syllabi, class activities, exams, and more thorough presentations of certain topics as well as MP3 files for audio CD 1. As of early March 2008, the work on the instructor Website was still in progress, with several links soon to be added. The author decided to omit certain phonetic features covered in the first edition, such as the fourth nasal vowel [œ̃] in words like *un* and *lundi*, and the open vowel [ɛ] in open syllables (including in *mais*, *après*, the verb *est*, as well as in imperfect and conditional endings). The second edition of *Savoir Dire* also includes many new exercises, both oral and written, such as transcription (from phonetic symbols) of children's rhymes, proverbs, and proper names, repetition and transcription (into phonetic symbols) of everyday French, auditory discrimination exercises, and other oral exercises. Several new sections have also been added to the description of individual sounds: *tendances à éviter*, *son et la grammair*, and *variations dialectales*.

At the end of the book, the author includes a complete list of the linguistic studies on which the information in *Savoir Dire* is based. Supplementary readings are also listed at the end of chapter sections. These are meant as a starting point for students and instructors who wish to broaden their knowledge of French phonetics.

Savoir Dire has several strengths that set it apart from other phonetics manuals. First, it is written entirely in French. Second, the book limits to a minimum the number of rules and exceptions, making theoretical explanations concise and clear. Third, it provides a great variety of oral and written exercises. However, many of the examples are taken from literature: poems by Charles Baudelaire, and Arthur Rimbaud, passages from Molière, and longer excerpts from André Gide and Marcel Proust. While these are very important texts, they may not necessarily be the best choice for a phonetics course. My own experience teaching this course suggests it may be difficult to spark students' interest by having them repeat line after line of a French poem, especially if it is a morning class. An inclusion of more contemporary examples from the French press and perhaps some tongue-twisters or lyrics of French songs with which students can easily identify would have greatly enhanced the quality of this book.

These observations should be taken into consideration in the preparation of the next edition of this book. In the meantime, *Savoir Dire* remains one of the best phonetics programs available for American students.

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