PROFESORES DE ENSEÑANZA SECUNDARIA · INGLÉS · JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA

TEMA

07

The Phonological System of English I: Vowels. Phonetic Symbols. Strong and Weak Forms. Diphthongs. Comparison with the Phonological System of Spanish

Sistema fonológico de la lengua inglesa I: Las vocales. Símbolos fonéticos. Formas fuertes y formas débiles. Los diptongos. Símbolos fonéticos. Comparación con el sistema fonológico de la lengua o lenguas oficiales de la Comunidad Autónoma correspondiente.

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Material de elaboración propia a partir de las fuentes oficiales que se citan al final del tema. No es un temario oficial ni sustituye a la normativa publicada.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A Spanish teenager learns, at the age of five or six, that the language has five vowels: a, e, i, o, u. Years later, in a secondary school English class, the same teenager discovers that the word "bit" and the word "beat" sound different, that "cut" and "cart" are not the same, and that a language written with the same five letters can distinguish some twenty vowel qualities. That surprise is the starting point of this topic: the gap between the two vowel systems explains many of the mistakes our students make every day.

Welcome to Topic 7: The Phonological System of English I: Vowels. Phonetic Symbols. Strong and Weak Forms. Diphthongs. Comparison with the Phonological System of Spanish. In order to address it, I will divide the topic into six main sections. Firstly, I will define the basic concepts, the phonetic symbols and the cardinal vowels. Secondly, I will describe the pure vowels of English, short and long. Thirdly, I will examine the diphthongs and, briefly, the triphthongs. Fourthly, I will analyse weak syllables, schwa, and strong and weak forms. Fifthly, I will compare the English vowel system with the Spanish one and identify the typical errors of Spanish-speaking learners. Finally, I will reflect on the pedagogical and didactic implications of this content within our educational framework, before closing with a conclusion.

Before moving on, I would like to mention the sources consulted for the preparation of this topic. These include Peter Roach's English Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course, Alan Cruttenden's Gimson's Pronunciation of English, John Wells's Longman Pronunciation Dictionary and Daniel Jones's Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary, edited by Peter Roach, Jane Setter and John Esling, together with Eugenio Martínez Celdrán and Ana María Fernández Planas's Manual de fonética española for the Spanish system. I have also drawn on the LOMLOE (Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, which amends Organic Law 2/2006 on Education), Royal Decrees 217/2022 and 243/2022, and Decrees 110/2022 and 109/2022 of the Autonomous Community of Extremadura.