

Preface

As its name implies, this book contains only the prime essentials of Spanish grammar; its one and only purpose is to serve as a textbook for those beginning the study of Spanish. Its chief objectives are to identify, explain, and exemplify the high points of Spanish Grammar, and through persistent repetition in abundant reading and translation exercises, to implant a basic vocabulary of 620 words. The fundamental keynotes of this book are simplicity and repetition.

Mature, well-prepared students, reciting three times a week, can easily master the thirty-six lessons of this text in one semester; in my judgment, however, students will eventually lose nothing in time or accomplishment if they devote one and a half semesters, or even a whole year to the beginning grammar.

This Spanish grammar is not the result of a capricious impulse to add one more book to an already overcrowded field, but is rather the outgrowth of several ideas that have insistently forced themselves upon me in my seventeen years of experience teaching beginning Spanish with various excellent and mediocre textbooks. These ideas, which, I trust will conduce to simplification and clarification in presenting Spanish grammar, and which I have tried to emphasize in this book, are:

- (a) Topical or unitary lessons
- (b) Very small vocabulary (620 words)
- (c) Simplified treatment of the verb
- (d) Complete one-page conjugations of verbs.

TOPICAL OR UNITARY LESSONS. All Spanish texts must contain the prime essentials of Spanish grammar, whether they be distributed over sixty lessons or compressed into sixteen. The sixteen-lesson book must, obviously, crowd several grammatical themes into one chapter. As to grouping of units, it seems to me far more effective strategically and pedagogically to divide the grammar into its unitary difficulties and to attack these units individually, rather than in combinations of four, three, or even two. Hence the thirty-six lessons in this book, each devoted to one prime unit of Spanish grammar.

620-WORD VOCABULARY. Individual views on the ability of students to acquire vocabulary in a foreign language vary mostly widely, probably because of a confusion in the use of the terms *active vocabulary* and *passive vocabulary*. It is axiomatic, however, that words are learned and retained largely in proportion to the number times they are encountered, whether audibly or visually, and especially in proportion to the number of times they are made use of in a conscious effort to express a complete thought or idea. The vocabulary herein suggested consists of 620 (650, if numbers are included) different words selected on the basis of *Buchanan's Graded Spanish Word List* (1927). Some 84% of these words are found in the basic first thousand of Buchanan's Word List, and nearly 15% in the second thousand, a very few words have been introduced arbitrarily. These 620 words are meant to be a working, active vocabulary. I believe that a student, who in one year acquires and uses with facility both in composition and conversation the 620 words herein suggested, accomplishes all that we can reasonably expect and demand of him in the field of active

vocabulary. This book, however, because of its small vocabulary, can be used effectively by those desiring to complete the grammar in one semester.

LOGICAL SEQUENCE OF PRESENTATION. Any sequence of grammar lessons that ever has been, or ever can be, devised, will be subject to harsh criticism, since practically every unit of grammar has its proponents who demand for it a position at the first part of the book. The whole problem consists in putting main things first and in relegating things of lesser importance to the latter part of the book, -- a problem that cannot be solved to the satisfaction of everyone. Lessons one and two, by common consent, seem to be the proper area for presenting the present tense of *estar* and *ser*; and the very end of the grammar, by almost universal agreement seems to be the proper place for the passive voice. But who will decide where the present subjunctive should be introduced? In lesson five, as in one book, or in lesson twenty, as here? Shall the possessive adjectives be assigned to lesson twenty-seven, as in one book, or to lesson seven, as here? Shall the present, past, and future tenses be treated in one lesson, as in one book, or individually, as here? Shall the perfect tenses be combined in one lesson, as in some books, or treated individually as here? This problem is indeed so difficult that probably no two teachers could come to total agreement as to what constitutes perfect sequential arrangement of the Spanish grammar. The writer of this book lays no claim to having formulated the one definitive grammatical sequence, but does insist that he recognized this problem and, at least, consciously endeavored to solve it from the points of view of natural development, and of relative importance of individual units.

SIMPLIFIED TREATMENT OF VERBS. The simplified treatment of verbs, as herein suggested, is, if not entirely an innovation, at least, novel. Instead of loading the student down with lessons of dry and confusing explanations on the various mutations of the radical-changing verbs, it seemed sufficient to give examples of these verbs. Moreover, only fifty-two verbs that can be classified as irregular or radical-changing are used in the whole book; complete conjugations of twenty-eight of these verbs, and outlines of the other twenty-four will be found in a special section.

COMPLETE ONE-PAGE CONJUGATIONS, in which the structural relationships and beautiful symmetry of the various moods and tenses are shown, are, I believe, something entirely new in Spanish grammar. Many students have assured me that they never understood the structure, or appreciated the symmetry, of the Spanish verb until they had carefully written out the complete conjugation of several verbs on the plan suggested. These twenty-eight complete one-page conjugations of various types of verbs are indeed one of the main impulses in the making of this book.

In conclusion, I wish to express my hearty gratitude and deep indebtedness to my dear friend and colleague, Professor Edin Brenes, who has so conscientiously read and corrected my manuscript, and made many helpful suggestions.

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About the Author: Erick V. Greenfield received his A.B. degree from Colgate University and his A.M. degree from Harvard University, and then studied intensively abroad, in Spain, France, and Germany. After holding various teaching posts he joined the faculty of Purdue University where he taught for more than forty years, and holds the rank of Professor Emeritus of Modern Language. He is the author of numerous textbooks, including *Technical and Scientific German*; *Industrial and Scientific French*; and *German Grammar* (another volume in the College Outline Series.). From the 1943 edition of *Spanish Grammar* by Eric V. Greenfield.

About This Book (from the back cover)

This book presents the basic principles of Spanish grammar in clear and simplified form. While intended to be primarily a textbook for beginning students, it also is helpful for advanced students and those wishing to review their knowledge of the Spanish language.

The book is divided into thirty-six lessons, each lesson covering one unit of Spanish grammar with vocabulary, exercises, reading selections and a short quiz to provide necessary drill and study aids. An outstanding feature is the simplified treatment of verbs, with complete one-page conjugations of twenty-verbs illustrating the structure of Spanish verb forms. "Professor Greenfield...has discovered the importance of the verb and has dedicated a very high proportion of the book to a scientific presentation of this very difficult part of speech. Some other especially valuable points of this text are: a) daily short tests, b) provision for oral drill, and c) (last six lessons) assignment for copying complete conjugations." – *Modern Language Journal*.