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The Teaching and Learning of English Pronunciation in a Multilingual Context

Realizado por Olesya Krynytska

Tutorizado por

Pedro Ángel Martín Martín

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Abstract

In recent years, the phenomenon of English as *lingua franca* or 'Global language' has made English the most frequently taught foreign language in Spanish secondary schools. Moreover, the multilingual context of many Spanish schools has influenced on how Spanish secondary school teachers approach the teaching of English as L2. Nevertheless, not all aspects of the English language are given the equal importance when being taught. The teaching of pronunciation is particularly left aside compared to other aspects of the language such as grammar and lexicon, and this tendency hinders Spanish students from acquiring fluency and intelligibility.

The main purpose of this project is to examine the pronunciation teaching methodologies employed by teachers in EFL classes, in relation to their effectiveness in accomplishing the communicative purpose of a foreign language required by the CEFR (Common European Reference Framework) and the needs of L2 learners who study in a multilingual context in a Spanish school.

The effectiveness of the methodologies employed by the EFL teachers and the students' opinions concerning the integration of pronunciation activities into EFL classes were examined by means of continuous class observation and questionnaires. The analysis of the empirical data has revealed that the majority of students in a multilingual context, with both Spanish and non-Spanish speakers, face similar difficulties when dealing with English pronunciation. Moreover, students whose first language is either English or whose L1 facilitates the acquisition of EFL contribute to motivate other learners to practice more often their speaking and pronunciation skills outside school.

These findings indicate that the best way to make students practice their pronunciation skills in a multilingual context is by means of the implementation of activities based on the Communicative Teaching Learning approach in which students can learn autonomously from each other.

Keywords: *English language teaching, English pronunciation, teaching methodology, multilingual context.*

Resumen

En los últimos años, el fenómeno del inglés como *lingua franca* o ''Global language'' ha hecho que el idioma inglés se haya convertido en la primera lengua extranjera más enseñada en la etapa de secundaria de la enseñanza en España. Además, el contexto multilingüe de muchos colegios e institutos de España ha influido en cómo los profesores de secundaria de inglés abordan el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés como primera lengua extranjera. Aun así, no todos los aspectos del idioma inglés reciben la misma importancia en la hora de enseñarlo. Con frecuencia, la enseñanza de la pronunciación se deja de lado en las aulas frente a otros aspectos del idioma como la gramática y el vocabulario, lo que impide que los estudiantes de secundaria en España adquieran fluidez e inteligibilidad al usar el inglés oralmente.

El objetivo principal de este trabajo es examinar las metodologías de enseñanza de la pronunciación empleadas por los profesores de esta asignatura, en relación con su eficacia para lograr el propósito comunicativo de la lengua extranjera requerido por el MCER (Marco Común Europeo de Referencia) y las necesidades de los estudiantes de inglés como segunda lengua.

La eficacia de las metodologías empleadas por los profesores y las opiniones de los estudiantes sobre la integración de las actividades de pronunciación en las clases de inglés se examinaron mediante la observación de las clases y la implementación de cuestionarios. El análisis de los datos empíricos ha revelado que la mayoría de los estudiantes en el contexto multilingüe, tanto hispanohablantes como no hispanohablantes, comparten dificultades similares a la hora de abordar la pronunciación del inglés. Además, los estudiantes cuyo primer idioma es el inglés, o cuya L1 facilita la adquisición del inglés como segunda lengua, contribuyen a motivar a los demás a practicar más a menudo sus habilidades comunicativas y su pronunciación fuera del centro educativo.

Los resultados obtenidos indican que la mejor manera de hacer que los estudiantes practiquen su pronunciación en un contexto multilingüe es mediante la implementación de actividades basadas en la metodología del Método Comunicativo en las que los estudiantes pueden aprender de manera autónoma unos de otros.

Palabras claves: *enseñanza del inglés, pronunciación del inglés, metodología de enseñanza, contexto multilingüe.*

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1. Introduction

In order to comprehend and produce a second language (L2) properly and effectively, an individual has to acquire at least six main basic communication skills: listening, spoken interaction, spoken production, reading and writing (expression and interaction).

Generally, in the context of first language (L1) acquisition, the four communication skills are acquired in the following order: listening first, then speaking, then possibly reading and writing. However, the order of the four language skills is usually different in the context of the second language acquisition, where more emphasis is generally put on writing and reading skills (Pavón, 2006). Unfortunately, the preference for these two skills is due to the fact that in many contexts the second language acquisition differs from the first language acquisition, especially in the context of traditional grammar-based classroom, where the main goal is language teaching and not communication. In addition, in the context of the Spanish educational system, it is worth noting that the high school teachers mainly concentrate on reading and writing since they are the only two skills evaluated in the Spanish University Access Exams (*EBAU*).

Nevertheless, according to Krashen (1985), speaking cannot be taught directly because good speaking skills are the result of language acquisition, not its cause, because this competence emerges on its own as a result of the building competence with the help of comprehensible input. Throughout this input process, second language learners have to become familiar with other aspects of speaking such as pronunciation, sentence structure, vocabulary and fluency. Therefore, L2 learners in the first place have to concentrate on developing their listening skills to allow themselves to receive comprehensible input. However, in the context of most public schools in Spain and in other countries where students only receive input for 45 minutes per day during their English classes (see Alonso, 2014), it is impossible to imagine the students acquiring English proficiency as suggested by Krashen. It is not surprising to find that most English teachers prefer to maintain their focus on teaching English grammar and lexicon, rather than following the input process propounded by Krashen.

Regarding the importance of developing oral communication skills, in recent years, English has become the most frequently taught foreign language in schools and language academies around the world. And, even though the aspect of English

pronunciation is found as one of the most challenging among the L2 students, the teaching of English pronunciation is not given the same importance compared to other aspects of the language (Underhill, 2010).

In general, as mentioned above, learners and traditional teachers pay more attention to grammatical problems and lexicon knowledge whereas the aspect of speaking as pronunciation remains without much attention, which leads learners to consider work on pronunciation as worthless and unnecessary to become fluent in this language. As a result, many acquires of English as L2 have pronunciation problems, which in many cases can cause miscomprehension and become an obstacle to successful communication. Moreover, many learners feel embarrassed to talk in English because they do not consider their pronunciation as good and clear enough to maintain a conversation (Pavón, 2006).

One of the main reasons why many non-native speakers of English have problems with pronunciation is because of the spelling and phonetic inconsistencies in English, since the English spellings do not match the sounds they are supposed to represent. As Brunori claims (2016), even when the learners of English language do not have difficulty to deal with the aspects of English language such as reading, writing and listening, they still find it complicated to deal with the aspect of pronunciation.

Moreover, up to the present day, it is not clear what pronunciation goals should be acquired by the EFL learners when the majority of L2 speakers use English to communicate with other non-native speakers of English. Due to today's reputation of English as being *lingua franca* and *global language*, many people and EFL learners have started to question the minimum standards of mutual intelligibility existing today (Jenkins, 2014). However, some scholars, such as Kachru et al. (2006), continue to believe that EFL countries are *norm-dependent* from the ENL (English as a Native Language) countries such as the UK and the USA, who are in charge of providing the norms; therefore, EFL (English as Foreign Language) countries cannot establish any autonomous rules regarding pronunciation and other aspects of English. Nevertheless, regarding Kachru et al.'s (2006) model, The Three Circles of English, the *outer circle* mainly consisting of ESL (English as a second language) countries with colonial past, as India, Singapore, Nigeria, who learn English almost at the same time as their mother tongue, are the speakers who can develop standards already provided by the ENL countries.

Countries like China, Japan, non-Anglophone Europe, Russia or Indonesia represent the expanding circle of Kachru et al. (2006). As it has been mentioned, these speakers have to follow the rules already established by countries where English functions as a first language or at least as second language, since in these countries English is used for limited purposes, usually in commercial or business context. As to Spanish speakers of English as L2, they may also represent this expanding circle since the majority of them use English for commercial purposes, therefore, they should allocate their attention to the pronunciation of ENL and ESL countries and not try to develop their own autonomous rules regarding pronunciation.

This paper presents the account of necessary theory concerning one of the main aspects of English language, pronunciation. The first theoretical part of this paper will analyze English pronunciation from the point view of prescriptive linguistics whereas the second part of this paper will focus on the main problems with English pronunciation in the real context, from the point of view of descriptive linguistics.

On the one hand, the aim of this dissertation is to study English pronunciation and its prosodic features as intonation, stress and rhythm in terms of its importance for intelligible proficient communication. On the other hand, the purpose of this paper is to analyze different pedagogical methods concerning the teaching of English pronunciation and apply the most efficient methodologies in the real classroom. Therefore, the ultimate aim of this work is to help real secondary school students to improve their pronunciation in English and show them how they can work on it autonomously using different learning approaches.

The second part of this paper will describe the effectiveness of teaching intelligible pronunciation of English by using techniques and methodologies of both the Communicative Language Teaching and the Silent Way Approaches. In other words, the students will first be taught using some of the techniques developed by the linguists of the Silent Way Approach and then the students will apply these techniques in the interaction with their classmates into the cooperative autonomous work in the context of real secondary school classrooms. This method seeks to enable students to learn from each other and develop learner's autonomy by having the teacher only as the observer and facilitator.

2. Key aspects of English pronunciation

Regarding phonology, it is not only an aspect of language but also a name given to one of the core areas of linguistic theory that explains how sounds of speech are represented in our minds (The Cambridge Handbook of Phonology, 2007). To put it another way, phonology is the theoretical study of sound patterns and their meanings within one particular language, such as exploring the difference between the English phonemes that can completely change the meaning of a whole phrase or a sentence by only changing one phoneme. For example, theoretically speaking, phonology can explain why minimal pairs as *bed* and *bad* differ in their meanings if their only difference consists out of one phoneme.

In addition to phonology, phonetics can also contribute to a better understanding of English pronunciation since this language requires a certain degree of physical work implying different organs of speech. Phonetics is a study of human speech as a physical phenomenon that explores how different sounds can be produced by using human vocal apparatus, mainly consisting of a tongue, teeth, nasal cavity, nostril, lips, vocal folds, epiglottis, velum, uvula, hard palate, glottis and alveolar ridge (see Roach, 2001; Hancock, 2003)

Gick et al. (2013) define articulatory phonetics as the branch of phonetics which deals with the basic anatomy and physiology of speech, how different kinds of speech sounds are made, and how to measure the vocal tract to learn about these speech sounds is called articulatory phonetics. Articulatory phonetics can help the acquirers of English as a second language to be aware of what happens in their mouth when they produce certain sounds in English. As for instance, phonetics can show the difference between the English labiodental /v/ and Spanish bilabial /v/ sounds by explaining that in order to produce the English labiodental we have to involve the lower lip and upper teeth coming into contact with each other, whereas to produce the Spanish bilabial /v/ sound we only have to bring together our lips. Moreover, a production of sounds does not start with the vocal tract but with our brain that sends the message to nerves, the nerves activate muscle fibers that expand and contract our lungs, allowing to move air. This air is shaped with the vocal tract that allows us to produce sounds. As Gick et al. (2013, p. 6) state, 'by changing the shape of our vocal tract, we can block or release airflow,

create vibrations, change frequencies or resonances, all of each produce different speech sounds'.

Jenkins (2014) emphasizes one of the main errors of the learners of a second language when they approach pronunciation without paying attention to articulatory settings of L2. This author argues that languages radically differ in general differences in tension, in tongue shape, in pressure of the articulators, in lip and cheek and jaw posture and movement. Therefore, the learner may find serious problems with articulation if their L1 articulatory settings do not correspond to those of the L2. For example, one of the problems for English learners can be the focus of the tongue-tip on the alveolar-ridge, whereas in many L1 it is elsewhere.

As regards prosodic or suprasegmental features which typically represent a difficulty for L2 learners, we have to consider that English is characterised by being a stress-timed language as opposed to syllable-times languages such as Spanish, Italian or French (Roach, 2001; Jenkins, 2014). This means that the stressed syllables in English occupy more time than the non-stressed syllables that are usually squashed together, causing speakers of English to employ the features of connected speech (reduction or elision of sounds). However, usually only L1 and bilingual L2 English speakers are capable to control the use of connected speech properly and naturally.

As to the stress pattern, it refers to strong and weak syllables in a word or a sentence, the unstressed syllable in a word or the unstressed word in a sentence are not pronounced strongly (Brunori, 2016). Regarding word stress in English, the majority of two-syllable nouns have stress on the first syllable, as in *dinner, mice, window*, and two-syllable verbs on the second syllable, as in *discuss, apply, suggest.* Nevertheless, according to Jenkins (2014), teaching word-stress is a difficult task since there are many exceptions, therefore, it is better to teach students how to find the word-stress in a dictionary.

In addition, in English, it is important to divide a message into speech units or pieces. Therefore, as to intonation an English speaker typically puts a main stress on one particular word in each speech unit when they consider this word as the most important and meaningful according to their context. Usually, speech units are divided by means of punctuation, and when the speaker wants the listener to pay attention to every word, they can divide their message into smaller speech units.

Generally, the main stress is on the tonic syllable of the last content word in the speech unit, or one of the syllables if it is a longer word. For instance, we can see that the main stress in the example 1 goes on <a> in the tonic syllable of the last content word *wardrobe.* Sometimes, the main stress is not on the last content word as in the example 2 where the last word in the second speech unit is not as essential to the meaning as the adverb *not* that the speaker wants to emphasize in this context.

Example1: //I want this w**a**rdrobe//

Example 2: // S**o**rry, for n**o**t calling you //

Moreover, the speaker can put a main stress on any word inside the speech unit with intention of creating a special meaning or for the sake of emphasis.

In summary, the English teacher, when trying to develop their students' pronunciation skills, has to take into consideration certain segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation features mentioned in this section and not teach them as separate pronunciation features.

3. Different methods and approaches on teaching English pronunciation as L2

Many Spanish speakers find English pronunciation as the most challenging aspect related to L2 learning due to the differences between the English and the Spanish phonological systems. Despite this fact, due to a series of factors (e.g. lack of knowledge of phonetic symbols), teachers of English as an L2 do not generally give the same importance to pronunciation compared to other aspects as grammar, reading, vocabulary or writing (Alonso, 2014). We have also to consider that, using the appropriate approach, the teaching of pronunciation should not be more complex than the teaching of other skills, and that a good command of pronunciation is one of the most important aspects of language that help non-native speakers sound fluent and intelligible when communicating in English. Therefore, it is extremely important for teachers to acquire a suitable teaching methodology regarding pronunciation.

For the reasons mentioned above, in this section we are going to look at the most relevant pronunciation teaching methodologies and analyze their effectiveness throughout history.

According to Richards and Rodgers (1986, p. 76), the first standards of pronunciation started to appear during the mid of the 18th century when the dictionaries of Samuel Johnson (1755), Thomas Sheridan (1780), and John Walker (1791) started to include information concerning pronunciation of the English language.

Before the mid of the 19th century the most common method for teaching English was the Grammar-Translation method that was also known as the Prussian Method, mainly focused on teaching grammar and vocabulary, in which the teaching of pronunciation was not taken into account at that time (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). However, as these authors argue, the necessity for intelligible communication among Europeans by the end of the 19th century started to prioritize the speech and the oral approaches over the methodologies based on memorizing the grammatical rules and lexical items of the second language.

Therefore, as a response to the perceived inability of the Grammar-Translation Method to teach non-native speakers the second language, the new method known as the Direct Method emerged in the 1890s. This method is based on prioritizing the speaking skills, rather than focusing on explanations and memorizing. Because of the lack of correspondence between spelling and pronunciation in the English language a group of phoneticians under the leadership of Paul Passy developed the International Phonetic Association and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) in early 1886. According to the International Phonetic Association (1999), IPA allowed the accurate phonetic representations of English words and pressed the case for phonetic notation to be used in schools as a method helping children to acquire a realistic pronunciation of foreign language. It was IPA that assigned that there should be a separate sign for a distinctive sound and that the same sign should be used to represent sounds of several languages so that anyone could understand the phonetic representations of words from different languages. The majority of phonetic symbols were taken from the Roman alphabet and few new symbols were introduced to the phonetic chart.

This association exists even nowadays and its aim is to 'promote the scientific study of phonetics and the various practical applications of that science' (International Phonetic

Association, 1999, p.3). The association is being in continuous development, therefore, this phonetic resource can be considered as one of the most reliable and updated to be used by language teachers and students.

According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), after the Second World War, in the end of the 50s, a new teaching approach was developed by the two structural linguists, Leonard Bloomfield and Charles Fries. It was named Audiolingual method and it advocates the aural training that consists predominantly in listening and repeating after the informant, usually represented by the recorded voice, the native speaker or the teacher. The main strategies of this teaching methodology included repetition, inflection, replacement and restatement; therefore, the aspect of pronunciation played a very important role in this method because students were continually involving their pronunciation skills and speech organs. Basically, the students in order to achieve an intelligible pronunciation had to imitate or repeat sounds, a word, or a whole sentence out of the model provided by the recorded voice or by the teacher, also by making use of the phonetic representations to understand the articulation.

In spite of its popularity in the 40s and 50s, this method was attacked and criticized by some linguists. Richards and Rodgers (1986) in their work state that this method is a teacher-centered method in which the teacher has an active role and, on the other side, it offers very limited roles available to learners that are seen as stimulus-response mechanisms who have to produce the correct responses. Moreover, Rodgers and Richards (1986) explain in their work why this method was declined by Noam Chomsky. Chomsky argued that such a learning theory could not possibly serve as a model of how humans learn language, since humans do not acquire the language by imitating but by using an innate set of constraints for organizing language and by generating new utterances based on obtained knowledge of abstract rules of this language.

Another teaching method that Richards and Rogers (1986) mention is the Silent Way introduced by the European educator Caleb Gattegno in the early 1970s. It is a student-centered method that pays remarkable attention to the aspect of pronunciation. The main aim of this method is to encourage the students to produce a foreign language as much as it is possible while the teacher is playing the role of the silent listener and observer.

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This method is known for its unique pedagogical materials such as colour pencils, the pointer, colour-coded wall charts, coloured fidel, reading and writing exercises that help students to make direct associations between sounds and the actual meanings in the L2.

Figure 1. Fidel chart to represent vocabulary containing the same phonemes.
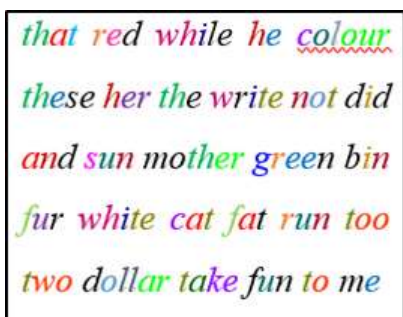
The teacher can use the pointer either to indicate stress and intonation, by touching some sounds and words more forcibly, or to indicate the sound symbol necessary to be produced by the students. While the wall charts are used to display the colour-coded vocabulary containing the main sounds of a language, the fidel chart can show all the possible spellings for each phoneme, as in figure 1.

Figure 2. Wall chart to represent symbols of sounds.

/m/	/u/	/ð/
m, mm, me, gm, mn, im	u, o, ou, oo, oe	The, th, t, phth

In figure 2 we can see the example of the vocabulary wall chart where the symbols of different sounds are coloured in one specific colour and different symbols for the same sound are coloured alike so as the students can distinguish between the spellings and the actual sounds.

The method that can be considered as the most modern and that really draws our attention is the Communicative Language Teaching Approach. It was a response to the Situational Language Teaching Approach where the teacher played the role of a skillful model and conductor, and the method was based on the oral practice of structures that had to be linked to situations, such as the use of objects, picture, or realia (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). As the authors argue, the Communicative Language Teaching Approach was created by the British linguists during the changes in the British language teaching tradition, who believed that the main function of a language is the interaction and communication. This method is dating from the late 1960s emphasizing the need of focusing in language teaching 'on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures as in previous approaches' (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 64).

This approach emerged as a necessity for a more efficient method of teaching the major European languages because of the increasing interdependence of European countries in the early 70s. For this reason, the Council of Europe was one of the participants who incorporated in the development of this method by working on the theoretical basis for a communicative approach to language teaching. Even today, the Council of Europe emphasizes the necessity of teaching a foreign language by means of methods mainly focusing on communicative proficiency. This new approach is a learner-centered and experienced-based method that no longer demanded memorization of long syntactic structures and utterances but focused on communication and cooperation from the beginning, where comprehensible but not necessarily native-like pronunciation was sought. In other words, using this method we use English to learn it more proficiently, and not only learn how to use it properly, developing at the same time communicative skills. Moreover, this method enables students to learn from each other and to develop learners' autonomy by working in pairs and groups, while the teacher facilitates the communication process, motivating L2 learners to use a target language. According to Littlewood (quoted by Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p.76), the major activity types of this method are 'functional communication activities', as making comparisons and giving instructions, and 'social interaction activities', such as dialogues and role plays.

In 1977, The Natural Approach, a new theory about teaching, appeared as result of Tracy Terrell's experiences teaching Spanish and Stephen Krashen's *Input Hypothesis.* The priority of this approach was on input, rather than on practicing the second language and oral communication (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). In spite of the variety of approaches for L2 teaching, according to Krashen (1985, p.1), "acquisition is a subconscious process identical in all important ways to the process children utilize in acquiring their first language and 'learning' is a conscious process that results in 'knowing about' language". In other words, the scholar tries to convey the idea that the second-language learners should go through the same language acquisition process as native speakers of that language, by obtaining enough comprehensible input via listening and reading tasks. In addition, as Krashen (1985) states, the second-language learner has to be open to the input, because this mental block can retard or even stop the language acquisition process. To sum up, according to Krashen and his theory, we can assume that the second language acquirer can obtain the correct intelligible

pronunciation only after going through the natural process of acquiring language, similar to the one of first language acquisition.

After this brief review of the main approaches to teaching languages, we can sum up that before the 70s students were playing secondary roles in the classroom and the main attention was paid to the teacher that was perceived as a skillful controller. As a result, the pronunciation has been taught in isolation on a segmental level, in other words, the emphasis was put on the correct pronunciation of separated decontextualized words and not on the autonomous oral production in real context; therefore, the learners did not know how to apply their obtained knowledge in the real context. However, in the 70s the new approaches have demonstrated the effectiveness of contextualized learning paying attention to other features of pronunciation such as rhythm, stress and intonation, as in the Communicative Language Teaching Approach. The new methods allowed the students to practice their second language in a discourse context using the teacher as the observer, listener and adviser, but not as central figure in the second language acquisition process. As a result, nowadays teachers try to balance both segmental and suprasegmental levels and use different methods depending on the level and demand of the student (Underhill, 2018).

Moreover, it is important to note the fact that in the present day the language teachers who work in any of the countries of the European Union have to follow the Common European Reference Framework for the learning of foreign languages and, therefore, they have to carry out an obligatory series of communicative tasks established by the Council of Europe (2018). As to the CEFR, the method chosen by a teacher has to ensure quality inclusive education corresponding to the level of other EU citizens learning in the EU.

The CEFR sees the promoting and learning of languages as a means of communication that can contribute to stronger cultural, professional, touristic, business and educational relationships among the EU members and their citizens. For this reason, today the CEFR emphasizes co-operation among educational institutions in different countries and offers a variety of educational programs, especially the exchange programs as *Erasmus* that allow educational exchanges all over Europe and provide students with real speech and authentic input. According to the CEFR, a learner is no longer a machine that has to memorize the grammatical rules and a series of lexical items, but a

social agent that has to be able to act in the social world and have sufficient language proficiency to solve the problems in the real context.

Regarding pronunciation, an intelligibility and an accessibility of meaning for listeners is the key factor among the six CEFR reference levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2). The focus has not to be only on the correct sound articulation but also on the prosodic features as control of stress, intonation and rhythm, ability to exploit and/or vary stress and intonation to highlight the particular message.

In spite of the strong CEFR requirements clearly explained in the section of Phonological control provided by the European Council (2018), it is worth noting that the reality of the 21st in the developed countries has provided learners with a such an environment that allows them to practice their pronunciation daily and autonomously since the teacher is no longer the only authority and source. It is more than evident that the recent technological developments have changed the reality of language teaching today, as today's students can achieve intelligibility according to all CEFR standards not only by means of accurate instructions and educational programs promoted by the CEFR, but also by making use of online sources and electronic aids that can provide learners with audiovisual aids and even feedback from both native and non-native speakers.

4. "Global English" and its implications for teaching English pronunciation

Even though English today counts with around 360-400 million native speakers around the world, there are currently more non-native speakers than native speakers (Jenkins, 2014). This is because English has become to be considered as a Global language or International language. In the recent years, the majority of people have realized the necessity of knowing English for their future careers. It is very possible, for example, that scientists, writers or Information Technology workers who have English as their mother tongue or have a high command of it, share much bigger chances to succeed on the international stage and become important figures of their international community than those who do not have a good command of this language.

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Although English as a Global Language did not appear until 1997, the idea of English acquiring international language status had already been mentioned in the early 1995 by the British linguist Chris Brumfit. This author (as quoted by Jenkins, 2003, p. 33) stated that 'we are no longer a language community which is associated with a national community or even with a family of nations such as Commonwealth [...] We are an international community'.

The reason for this internalization is not English melodicism or its linguistic merits and not the number of people who speak it but the influence of these speakers on the rest of the world. In other words, since nowadays-native speakers of English are on the international stage, their language also succeeds.

As Crystal (1997, p.7) argues, 'without a strong power-base, of whatever kind, no language can make progress as an international medium of communication'. Crystal (1997) gives the example of Latin being an international language during the time of the Roman Empire's prosperity and the reason for this internalization was not the big number of Romans but the power of different sort of the Roman Empire at those ancient times. As consequence of their influence on the rest of the world, Latin became the language of education and communication and maintained its importance for centuries, even today many scholars make use of the corpus of Latin literature when they cannot find an answer in more modern resources.

Moreover, Crystal (1997) says that many people may think that English became as popular because of its language merits, since this language seems to have less grammar than other languages, as for example it has no many verb endings nor we have to remember the difference between masculine, feminine or neuter gender as in German, Spanish or Russian. It is true to some extent that many European non-native speakers of English may find English lexicon familiar to other European languages. This is because English has borrowed throughout its long history thousands of words from other European languages, especially with which it has been in long contact. The biggest influences on English were made by the two European languages, French and German, and by the two dead languages like Latin and Greek.

French from its side was even considered as the official language in the courts of England from the 9th century until the 14th, and from this language, English has borrowed words like *lingerie, renaissance, rendezvous, genre, entrepreneur*.

German and English also share a long list of the same or at least similar words that are still used by native speakers today. It is also important to mention that both German and English are West Germanic languages, and this means that both sprang from a common language in the past and share a great amount of linguistic background concerning vocabulary, pronunciation and even grammar. In the following examples, we can observe the examples of similarities between these two languages as in the words like Haus |haʊs| and House |haʊs|, Gras |grɑːs| and Grass grɑːs|, Arm |ɑːrm| and Arm |ɑːrm|.

Therefore, because of the reasons mentioned above about similarities between German and English, we can assume that native speakers of German have less boundaries in the process of acquiring English grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. However, we cannot say the same about native speakers of French simply because it belongs to a branch of Romance languages and it has rather more similarities with Spanish and Italian than with English, but still there are many French borrowings in English that sound to them very familiar but not the same. In fact, many non-native speakers of English who do not know French struggle the most with these French words in English since their spelling is so different to their pronunciation (Crystal, 1997). In the examples below, taken from the online dictionary Collins, we can see how different is the spelling of some French borrowings to the actual pronunciation in English:

1. <u>Gorgeous</u> (Comes from the Old French word *gorgias)*

EngEng |ˈgɔːdʒəs| or NAEng|ˈgɔːrdʒəs|

2. <u>Entrepreneur </u>(comes from the French word *entrependre*)

EngEng |ˌɒntrəprəˈnɜː| or NAEng |ˌɑːntrəprəˈnɜːr|

However, despite some English language qualities such as its easiness of grammatical construction, its paucity of inflection, its almost total disregard of the distinctions of gender, and its vast number of borrowings from the other languages, we cannot consider these arguments reasonable enough for granting the English language with the status of the Global language. If we again compare English with Latin, we know that Latin did not become popular for its easiness, it had many inflectional endings and complicated gender differences, but because of its importance and popularity on the international market scene in the ancient times.

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Therefore, it is more probable that English became considered as Global or International Language for the number of the socioeconomic and technological changes around the world. As for instance, British colonial power, the status of United States of America as the leading economic, military and scientific power of the both 20th and 21st centuries and the increasing need for international communication as a result of modern technology and spread of social media.

Consequently, English today no longer only functions as a mother tongue for English speaking countries, but it can also be used for a number of other purposes. Therefore, nowadays we can distinguish among the following functions of the English language: English as a Second Language (ESL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English as an Additional Language (EAL), English as an International Language (EIL), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and English as a World Standard Spoken Language (WESSE).

As regards the most suitable variety of English that should be used to teach this language, the prevalent idea has been that Received Pronunciation (RP) is the variety of English that should to be taught in schools and universities to non-native speakers of English (Trudgill and Hannah, 2017). These authors argue (2017, p.1) that this variety of English was chosen "because it has undergone standardization, which means that it has been subjected to a process through which it has been selected, codified and stabilized in a way that other varieties have not" (p.1). This variety is often referred to as British English or EngEng and it is normally written and spoken by educated speakers in England but with certain differences in Wales, Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Ireland and Northern Ireland.

RP originated in the south-east of England. Regardless of its origin, RP is spoken throughout the United Kingdom because it is not the accent of one particular region, but as Trudgill and Hannah (2017, p.14) state 'it is a social accent associated particularly with the upper-middle and upper classes'. Therefore, there are people from north to south using RP, and more than that, the RP distinguishes three different varieties: Conservative RP, mainly spoken by aristocracy, Mainstream RP, a kind of neutral accent, and Contemporary RP, associated with younger users of RP.

Generally, the RP accent can be heard in the television broadcast or on the radio, but only 3-5% of British speakers use the RP accent, even teachers of English do not use RP. This means that those who acquire this accent may have difficulty of understanding

other accents, and many native speakers may assume that you pretend to sound like an upper class that might provoke negative reaction and change their attitude towards foreign speakers of their language, by perceiving them as being *posh* and *snobbish.* Another inconvenience of this particular accent is that it is quite difficult to master, as it has so many diphthongs, and in addition, there are many irregularities and inconsistencies between RP pronunciation and the actual spelling, comparing to other varieties. As for example, the same word *poor* is pronounced as *[pɔːr] in* NAmEng, but as [pʊə (r)] in RP.

There is another popular form of Standard English and it is known as General American English or NAmEng, and this variety of English is widely spoken by the educated people of United States of America and Canada. Until recently, many European educational institutions only accepted the variety of EngEng but this restriction is no longer legitimate.

Nowadays, the emergence of so many new varieties of English and the status of English as lingua franca has made many English teachers and linguists to question the use of Standard English pronunciation and its other language aspects in the process of teaching English as a second language. It is no longer accurate to say that there is just one or two standards of English since English is no longer only a language of native speakers in the United Kingdom, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Nowadays, it is also a useful communicative tool among speakers of different first languages, who use English as lingua franca at the international business meetings or cultural events or simply when they need to speak to someone who speaks another foreign language they do not know. This last argument reveals the necessity of revaluation of the importance of native English pronunciation since the native accents are not always intelligible or appropriate when two non-native speakers are having a conversation in English. Why should Spanish speakers spend hours in mastering some of the English sounds such as /ð/ or /tʃ/ if they will be having intercultural conversations with Chinese or Italian learners of English who share the same difficulty with these English consonant sounds?

Of course, it is fundamentally important for any English teacher to decide on the variety of English they want to teach their students before actually starting the course, as the combination of more than one variety in teaching this particular foreign language can confuse the students and ruin the entire learning process. However, in reality in many

schools, teachers do not separate clearly these two entirely homogeneous and separate varieties because there are relatively few differences in grammar and spelling between these two main varieties. Perhaps the most noticeable differences between British English and North American English involve vocabulary and pronunciation. There is a number of words that can have additional meanings in one of the varieties but it is especially difficult for both foreign and native speakers of one particular variety to memorize the same words but with completely different meanings in the two varieties.

Moreover, there are so many differences in pronunciation that on many occasions they are capable of causing degrees of comprehension problems, especially between speakers of different ages and social backgrounds. In example 1 we can observe some of the differences between RP and GA pronunciation. The most noticeable difference between RP and GA accent is the rhoticity; British standard is largely non-rhotic whereas American standard is rhotic in which non-prevocalic /r/ sound is pronounced as in *star /staːr/, winter /ˈwɪntər/, doctor /ˈdaːktər/.*

However, it is interesting to mention the observation that 'there is also considerable influence of the one variety on the other, particularly of NAmEng on EngEng; thus, what is NAmEng usage for older English people may be perfectly normal EngEng usage for younger English people' (Trudgill and Hannah, 2017, p.60).

However, the question is not only to decide on one particular variety, but also to choose the most suitable and versatile model of English concerning diverse factors about their students' interests and environment. The aim of any English teacher is to look for the variety that will benefit the students the most.

Nowadays, it is difficult to determine the ''correct'' and the most beneficial variety for teaching English due to the fact that the well-known Standard English such as the BBC is weakening and losing its popularity, and a wide range of social media has revealed that the American and Global English have been recently gaining more importance (Jenkins, 2014).

Nevertheless, in the case of Spaniards learning English, we have to keep in mind that the business and social relations between the UK and Spain, especially regarding tourism, are much stronger than with the USA, therefore, from my point of view, it is more appropriate for Spanish students to learn British English and then become familiar with the features of American English and other varieties.

5. Common pronunciation difficulties for Spanish speakers

Due to the fact that the Spanish and the English language share a big number of words that have the same Latin roots, many Spanish native speakers in the early stage of acquiring English as a second language rely heavily on their previous cognitive experience in order to process the new language (Martínez and Fernández, 2007). As a result, they tend to produce many English phonemes in the same way as they do in their first language. However, it seems that it is more difficult for them to learn sounds similar to those in the L1 precisely because learners analyze them as identical and as a result mispronounce English words.

According to Jenkins (2014, p.114), 'the problem is that phonemic equivalence does not necessarily imply allophonic equivalence'. In other words, the phonemes in two languages can belong to the same phonemic category but phonetically can be realized differently in different environments. For example, the phoneme /a/ is phonetically realized as /ɑː/, in words like *car, scarf,* and it sounds nearly identical as in Spanish words like *el mar, el garaje, el barco,* but at the same time the phoneme /a/ can be phonetically realized as /ɔː/ as in *water* |ˈwɔːtə| and it has no resemblance with the Spanish phoneme /a/ as in *el mar.* So, for many Spanish speakers it is difficult to distinguish between so close sounds, but Jenkins (2014, p.114) believes that sounds which are new are likely to be acquired more accurately than those which have a counterpart in the L1 because they escape 'the limiting effect of previous phonetic experience'. But still this is not always the case, many Spanish speakers face difficulties with some new sounds like /ʃ /, that may come out sounding more like "s" in "seep" (sheep), /z/ is pronounced as "s" or "th" in 'soo' (zoo).

Therefore, as we can observe from the former arguments and examples, the similarity may facilitate the receptive pronunciation but may become a barrier for the productive pronunciation. For instance, Spanish speakers may guess the meaning of the lexical term in English but pronounce it with Spanish accent during the spoken interaction when they will need to produce the message and not only perceive it.

Examples:

    1) The word *communication* may be pronounced as /ko.mu.ni.ˈka.sjõn/

2) The word *literature* may be pronounced as /lɪtərat`urə/

To get a clearer understanding of why Spanish speakers erroneously pronounce English, it is important to look at where these errors come from; therefore, it is necessary to analyze more in detail the main pronunciation difficulties Spanish speakers may face while producing the language and not only perceiving it.

So, even though Spanish and English share the same number and kind of five vowel letters (*a, e, i, o, u*), the phonemic vowel inventory of English is more than twice as large as that of Spanish. Therefore, the five vowel letters can represent twelve different vowel sounds in English, and only five in Spanish, without taking into account the diphthongs and triphthongs (Martínez and Fernández, 2007). In order to differentiate these twelve vowel sounds it is necessary to analyze them in terms of their quantity (long or short vowels) and quality, determined by the position of the tongue (back, front, open, central, etc.).

As to vowel quantity, it refers to an important phonemic factor in English that describes the length of a vowel sound. The long vowels involve longer duration and they are usually indicated in phonetic transcription by a colon /:/ as in /ɑ:/. In the table below, we can observe the distinction between the long and short vowels in English.

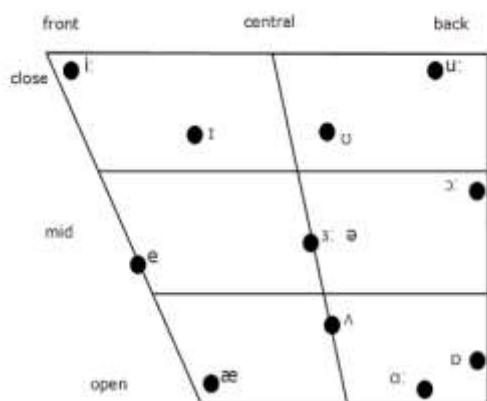| Type of quantity	Phonetic symbols	Examples
Short	**/ ɪ/, /ʊ/, / ɒ/, /æ/, /e/, /ʌ/, /ə/**	hit |hɪt|, put /pʊt/, pot /pɒt/, flat /flæt/, pet /pet/, cut /kʌt/, about /əˈbaʊt/
Long	**/i:/, /ɑ:/, /ɔ:/, /ɜ:/, /u:/**	week /wi:k/, park /pa:k/, walk /wɔ:k/, word /wɜ:d/, boot /bu:t/

Diagram 1. Sound quality of vowels.

As for another phonetic feature, sound quality, we can see in diagram 1 the distribution and position of open, middle and closed vowels, as well as the position of front, center and back vowels. This diagram is a representation of the 'vowel space' in the centre of the mouth where

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sounds are articulated.

The sound quality is a term in phonetics for the property that differentiates one sound from another. For instance, the front close /iː/ as in *heat* from more central less close /ɪ/ as in *hit*.

The quality of a vowel is determined by the main organs of speech and their position during the speaking production. In general, the main articulators are the tongue, the two lips, the nasal cavity, the lower jaw, the alveolar ridge, the hard palate and the soft palate, the glottis and the pharynx. Vowels are produced when airstream is voiced through the vibration of the vocal cords in the larynx, and then shaped using the lips and the tongue to modify the overall shape of the mouth (O'Connor, 1980).
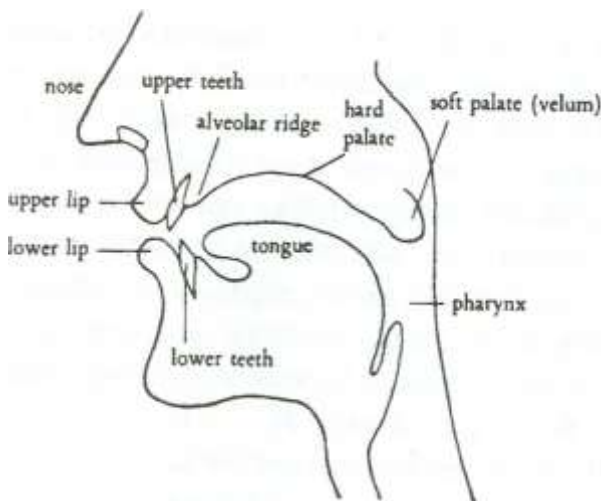

Figure 1. Organs of speech

In the figure 1, we can see more clearly the positioning of the main organs of the vocal tract, the configuration of the different organs of speech is what changes the air flow, which makes it possible to produce different sounds, both vowels and consonants.

After becoming familiar with these phonetic features and the phonetic chart, Spanish learners of English will realize that there are three types of [a] sound, three types of [e], two types of [i], two types of [o], two types of [u], and that two dots like this /ː/ after a vowel symbol mean that it is a long single vowel.

However, according to some different scholars (Jenner, 1989; Morley, 1991; Clanfield, 2007; Brown, 2015), these two previously mentioned phonetic features are not equally important. As Jenner (1989, p.3) argues, 'native accents show such enormous differences in vowel quality that it cannot be claimed that these are vital for mutual intelligibility'. For example, RP speakers pronounce Dublin as |ˈdʌblɪn| while Northern Americans say |ˈdəblən|, the same happens with |dɒg| and |dɔːg|. Therefore, according to the scholar, these quality differences are not problematic for the speakers of different English varieties since they still can understand each other.

Nevertheless, what really matters is the diversity of vowel quantity, vowel length, among different varieties of English, since these differences are not as popular among varieties of English. Jenner (1989, p.3) states that 'they all have some long vowels contrasting with some short vowels, and the loss of these contrasts seriously impairs intelligibility'.

It is possible to observe vowel quantity differences among Scottish, New Zealand and Australian varieties of English. For instance, Scottish vowel length is different to the Standard English pronunciation, known as the "Aitken's Law", the Scottish vowel length rule. According Aitken (1981), in Scottish English all vowels are short unless followed by /v/, /ð /, /z/, / r /, but at the same time /ɪ/ and /ʌ/ are always short. As for instance, the word *moon* is pronounced as /muːn/ with long /u:/ in Standard English, whereas in the Scottish English it is pronounced as /mun/, with short phoneme /u/ because it is not followed by /v/, /ð /, /z/, / r /.

In spite of Jenner's arguments regarding quantity and quality in terms of the phonetic features, Jenkins (2014) disagrees with Jenner (1989) about prioritizing quantity over quality since she considers that there are also many examples of quantity differences. But, she agrees with Jenner that not many words among different varieties present this feature so these words can produce some sort of intelligibility among native speakers of English.

The other fact concerning vowels that is worth mentioning are English diphthongs. There are eight different diphthongs in the English language, as displayed in table 1.

Table 1. English diphthongs

Diphthong	Examples
/aʊ/	town: |taʊn|, down: |daʊn|, round: |raʊnd|
/aɪ/	fight: |faɪt|, right: |raɪt|, guide: |gaɪd|
/eɪ/	ray: |reɪ|, pay: |peɪ|,Monday: |ˈmʌndeɪ|
/eə/	air:|eə|, rare: |reə|, fair: |feə|
/ɪə/	peer: |pɪə|, deer: |dɪə|, mere: |mɪə|
/əʊ/	low: |ləʊ|, show: |ʃəʊ|, willow: |ˈwɪləʊ|
/ɔɪ/	toy: |tɔɪ|, coin: |kɔɪn|, cowboy: |ˈkaʊbɔɪ|
/ʊə/	sure: |ʃʊə|, pure: |pjʊə|, lure: |lʊə|

Although there are in total eight diphthongs in English, not all of them are represented in all existing varieties of English. After analyzing the phonetic representations of words of both the rhotic and the not-rhotic varieties, it can be deduced that in the rhotic varieties of English in the three centring diphthongs /ʊə/, /ɪə/, and /eə/, the schwa is replaced with /r/.

Examples:

Non-rhotic varieties: pure: |pj**ʊə**|, fair: |f**eə**|, mere: |m**ɪə**|

Rhotic varieties: pure: |pj**ʊr**|, fair: |f**er**|, mere: |m**ɪr**|

Nevertheless, in fact, as Jenner (1989, p.145) states 'only three diphthongs are common to all English varieties and they are the following wide closing diphthongs: /aʊ/, /aɪ/ and /ɔɪ/.' Therefore, it is important to pay attention to these three common diphthongs since they are the only ones present in all varieties and so are necessary for phonemic distinction and general intelligibility.

As regards Jenner's (1989) conclusions, diphthongs, like monophthongs, differ widely in quality among different varieties; therefore, it is difficult to consider them as priority in English teaching.

However, in case of Spanish learners of English, the problem is not only the number of diphthongs and their phonetic distinctions among different varieties, but the fact that Spanish students tend to look for straightforward relationship between spelling and pronunciation and as a result they sound incorrect and incomprehensibly to others. This mainly happens to Spanish students because the diphthongs that exist in the Spanish language always contain two letters as in *aire, Europa, piano, tierra*, and are always composed out of pure five vowels sounds existing in Spanish. So, in Spanish we can find a combination of a strong vowel (**a**, **e**, or **o**) and a weak vowel (**i** or **u**), as in *reina, radio, aula*, or a combination of two weak vowels, as in *viuda, fuimos, etc*. In English, on the other hand there are a lot of diphthongs that can be represented by only one vowel as in t**o**wn, sn**a**ke, f**i**ght, b**o**y, etc., but also there are combinations of two vowels as in *toy, guide, fair, etc*. (Brunori, 2016).

Moreover, English has five triphthongs that are usually formed by already known diphthongs mainly ending in /ɪ/ and /ʊ/ plus the sound schwa /ə/. In the table 2 below, there is the list of five existing triphthongs in English and some words containing them.

Table 2. English triphthongs

Triphthong	Examples
[aʊə]	tower: |ˈtaʊə|, hour: |ˈaʊə|, flower: |ˈflaʊə|
[aɪə]	fire:|ˈfaɪə|, tire: |ˈtaɪə|
[eɪə]	player: |ˈpleɪə|, stayer: |ˈsteɪə|
[əʊə]	mover: |ˈməʊə|, widower : |ˈwɪdəʊə|
[ɔɪə]	employer: |ɪmˈplɔɪə|, destroyer: |dɪˈstrɔɪə|

Here again Spanish students learning English can face the difficulties with pronouncing these triphthongs since they are not always fully pronounced due to the weakening of the second element in the triphthong, this process is called *smoothing*. So, as a result of this smoothing process we are left with the particularly affected triphthongs /aʊ/, /aɪ/ and /eɪ/, which in the end become diphthongs such as / aə/, / aə/ and / eə/.

Fortunately, there is less difference between the English and Spanish consonants than between the vowels, but there are still some important inconsistences to mention. In total, there are 24 consonants among the two main standards of English, RP and General American English. In spite of the number of consonant sounds, they are represented by only 21 letters in spelling. These 24 consonant sounds can be divided into two main groups: voiced consonants and voiceless consonants. The voiced consonant sounds are /b, d, g, v, ð, z, r, ʒ, dʒ, l, m, n, ŋ, j, w/, whereas the voiceless consonant sounds are /p, t, k, f, Ɵ, s, h, tʃ, ʃ/.

The good thing about the English consonants is that many of them already exist in other languages what makes their comprehension and articulation easier to acquire for many L2 learners. Spanish is one of these several languages that shares several consonant phonemes with English, but there are still some challenges to be found.

For instance, English plosives /b, d, g/ become fricatives in the middle of English words. This occurs because Spanish speakers tend to produce these sounds in the middle position by forcing air through a small passage in the mouth, whereas L1 English speakers do not allow air to escape from their vocal tract by pronouncing these three plosive sounds. As a result, English words that have these plosives may resemble Spanish words, as shown in the example below.

Example: *abuse /abuso, adder/hada, eager/higa*

Many Spanish speakers tend to introduce /g/ after the nasal /ŋ/ at the end of words, where < ng > is pronounced without /g/, as in the words like sing |sɪŋ| , ring |rɪŋ| , king |kɪŋ|, hang |hæŋ|. In spite of this mistake, Spanish pronounce < ng > correctly in the middle of words, where < ng > is pronounced as /ŋg/, as in England /ˈɪŋglənd/, finger |ˈfɪŋgə|, mingle |ˈmɪŋg(ə)l|, etc.

Moreover, it is very common among Spanish to introduce /g/ at the beginning of words starting with /w/ sound. This happens because /w/ sound in Spanish is spelt as < gu > and it is usually pronounced as /gw/ as in Guatemala, guacamole, guanche. Therefore, Spanish speakers may pronounce English words like world, went, would, with /g/ sound before the initial /w/ sound. For instance, watermelon is often pronounced as if it was spelt *guatermelon*.

Some Spanish speakers do not differentiate between English labiodental and Spanish bilabial /v/ (vote/votar, for instance). Moreover, there is a great deal of confusion with the fricative dental pair, the voiceless /Ө/ and the voiced /ð/, as in many cases both are produced as /s/ sound. But, as stated by Jenkins (2014), the substitutions of these two phonemes usually do not cause intelligibility, as Spanish speakers are not the only ones who substitute them by other sounds.

Also, another common problem among Spanish students, that Brunori (2016) highlights, is the dropping of consonant sounds at the end of the words, this mainly happens with words ending in two consonant letters called *consonant clusters*. As for instance, the tendency to pronounce |ˈbrekfəst| as |ˈbrekfəs| without final phoneme /t/, or pronouncing |wɜːld| as |wɜːd|. Besides, there is a common tendency among Spanish users of English to add <e> before the combination of <s> plus a consonant, as in the words like e-*Spanish, e-school, e-sky.* This is due to the fact that Spanish words never start with initial /s/ clusters, and for words which may have the same etymological roots as in English but have initial "es" sound instead, as in escuela (school), escanear (to scan), esquiar (to ski), etc.

Also, it is important to note that Spanish students tend to make the mistake of pronouncing the suffix –ed as a new syllable in the Past Simple verb form. In English, this suffix can be produced in three different ways: */t/, /d/, or /id/,* as in the corresponding words like *worked, played,* and *started.* However, Spanish speakers tend to pronounce this suffix as /ed/.

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Spanish students may also have some problems with English minimal pairs when two words vary by only one minimal distinctive unit of sound, as in the case of /f/ and /v/ (van/fan), /i:/ and /i/ (eat/it), /o/ and /u/ (cob, cub). This substitution of one phoneme for another illustrates how one single sound in English can alter the meaning of a word. Even though, we also can find minimal pairs in the Spanish language as in words like *coma/toma, casa/taza, rama/fama, etc.*, English minimal pairs very often vary by very similar phoneme sounds as in cat/cut, hard/heart, too/to, etc. Therefore, the difficulties come when minimal pairs have very similar pronunciation and when L2 speakers do not distinguish vowels in terms of their quantity (Brunori, 2016).

Moreover, many Spanish students make a mistake when they transfer the intonation patterns of their mother tongue into English, which is a stressed-time language that means that the amount of time it takes to say something in English does not depend on the number of syllables as it does in the Spanish language. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that English speakers only stress and emphasize words that convey important information; therefore, the unmarked positions in the sentence have to be pronounced with less intonation and less volume. According to Jenkins (2014), English word stress is highly rule-governed, and many learners of English as a second language have similar problems as the Spanish students. This is the case for Finnish, Spanish and Polish students who have relatively fixed word stress patterns in their mother tongues.

Also, Spanish students find it difficult to involve features of connected speech and assimilatory processes to produce unstressed syllables with more speed as native speakers of English. In fact, when they try to achieve the speed of a native speaker this causes over-articulation and attracts too much attention to what they are trying to say (Brunori, 2016).

These assimilatory processes involve elision, the omission of one or more sounds (for instance, going to/gonna), assimilation, when one sound becomes more likely a nearby sound (for example, that zoo | ðæzzuː|, catenation, linking of the last sound of the word with the first sound of the next word (run away|rʌnəˈweɪ|), linking of /r/ (for instance, far way / |fɑː əˈweɪ|), and intrusion of /j/, /w/, /r/ , when an extra sound is placed between two words (the sound /j/ is placed between *I* and *am* in the utterance *I (j) am a girl* (Brunori, 2016).

More difficulties concerning English pronunciation will be analyzed in the second part of this paper in which I will analyze the main problems of real secondary school students.

To sum up, in spite of all the differences between Spanish and English pronunciation, there is a lot of common ground between these two languages. Spanish students just need to be taught to pronounce the most challenging sounds by means of different activities and involve modern effective teaching methodologies regarding pronunciation.

6. The integration of pronunciation in ESL classes

Even though understandable pronunciation is an important part of communicative competence, as we have mentioned above, it is usually ignored or considered as a secondary language skill by many ESL teachers who pay more attention to other language aspects like English grammar and lexis, and devote less time to spoken skills and less than five percent of their class time to teaching English pronunciation (Alonso, 2014). Yet, pronunciation work and practice should be integrated into the ESL teaching, as a language lesson that disregards factors of pronunciation is considered as incomplete.

As a result of this deficit, the majority of students of all ages, even those exposed to English for many years, continue having problems with English pronunciation causing intelligibility when they communicate. Therefore, it is important to take into consideration by both teachers and learners that the accurate pronunciation is an equally important aspect as grammar and lexis because it is the ability that allows speakers to be understood by other speakers, therefore, it has to be comprehensible and not detract listeners from the understanding of the main message.

According to Kelly (2000), the fact that pronunciation tends to suffer neglect may not be due to the teachers lacking interest in this language aspect but rather to their own doubts as to how to teach English pronunciation because even experienced teachers would admit to have a lack of knowledge of the theory of pronunciation. However,

according to this author, L2 learners tend to show interest and enthusiasm to improve their English pronunciation.

Kelly (2000) states that both students and teachers are aware of the need to improve their knowledge of pronunciation and he suggests that to do that the ESL teachers have to acquire an advanced theoretical knowledge, practical skills and access to good ideas for classroom activities.

The relative ignorance of teaching English pronunciation in the L2 context is particularly common in most high schools in Spain, where teachers find it difficult to dedicate enough time to spoken skills because of the high number of students in the classroom and time constrains. Unfortunately, only a few students have opportunities to practice their spoken skills and pronunciation outside the classroom, while the majority of the ESL learners do not have possibilities to compensate this lack of attention to their oral skills in the English classroom (Alonso, 2014).

In addition, if we look throughout the Spanish National Curriculum for Obligatory Secondary Education (Currículo de la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria en la Comunidad Autónoma de Canarias, 2016) we can find a few requirements and recommendations regarding pronunciation assessment in the spoken interaction and spoken production evaluation criterion. Furthermore, we can observe that learners are expected to achieve more or less the same objectives concerning their pronunciation in English in the four years of secondary school, ''pronunciando y entonando de manera inteligible'' (Decreto 83/2016, p. 89), however, we do not find in the curriculum any explanations regarding what intelligibility means for this regulation. Perhaps it stands for the ability of pronouncing in a way that other Spanish students will be able to comprehend them, or in a way in which both native speakers and non-native speakers can understand them when they express orally in English.

With regard to the post-obligatory secondary education phase, *Bachillerato,* students are expected to pronounce English with relative ease, also paying attention to prosodic features of pronunciation and to be able to reproduce the pronunciation patterns of one of the standard varieties of English (Decreto 83/2016). Nevertheless, it is very difficult for students of *Bachillerato* to reach all the mentioned pronunciation objectives, and especially to assimilate properly one of the varieties of English since, as Alonso (2014) argues, many Spanish teachers of ESL tend to use a pronunciation model in the

classroom that is usually similar to their first language since they find this model easier to understand for their students. Kelly (2000, p15.), explains in his work that many ESL teachers 'modify their accent slightly for the benefit of their students, but few could consistently teach with an accent significantly different from their own, even if they wanted to'. He also underlines the necessity for teachers to be aware of different variations of English since learners need to have at least one target model in mind, whether this be RP, American, Irish or any other variety of English.

Notwithstanding the common tendency among the secondary schools regarding pronunciation teaching, it should be pointed out that, as Alonso (2014) states, over the last few years this tendency has begun to change due to the recommendations of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The Council of Europe (2018, p.27) emphasizes that L2 learners have to imply extensive use of the target language in the classroom 'in order to learn to use the language rather than just learning about the language (as a subject) since the criterion suggested for assessment is communicative ability in real life, in relation to a continuum of ability (Levels A1-C2)'. In other words, over the last years we can observe that ESL teachers try to integrate more pronunciation practice to oral communication than in the past years.

7. Methodology

The methodology that I have applied in this practical investigation regarding pronunciation learning and teaching is based on the empirical approach known as action research (Burns, 2009). I have started my research by observing students' behavior and the teacher's pedagogical method used during the English classes, and by collecting data of the main students' pronunciation difficulties and mistakes that could interfere with their oral communication.

Once I have accomplished sufficient amount of data and observation regarding the teacher's approach to English pronunciation and the main obstacles to students' pronunciation, I proceeded to design and implement a pronunciation activity in class that could help ESL students to improve their pronunciation and enrich their knowledge about English phonology and phonetics.

Moreover, in order to collect more precise and objective data regarding students' pronunciation difficulties, I have designed a questionnaire for the students (see Appendix 1), and another questionnaire for the teachers of the English department (see Appendix 2) where I included questions related to the importance given to pronunciation in their English classes, as well as questions about their opinions about the pronunciation activities they plan for their classes and the activities included in the textbook they usually use in classroom.

The questionnaire for the students was carried out by 33 students from three different first year *Bachillerato* groups during my internship. 50% of the students constitute foreign students whose L1 is neither Spanish nor English. Aside from the Spanish students, there were students from Germany, France, Italy, Romania, China, Serbia, Netherlands, Russia, and United Kingdom. Also, it is important to point out that I had several native English students in my internship groups who were all originally from the United Kingdom, as well as some students with one of their parents being a native English speaker, such as the case of one girl whose mother is Australian, while her father is Spanish. In general, the school where I was doing my internship embraces students from all over the world, as it is located in Los Cristianos, the town situated on the south coast of the Canary island of Tenerife, where the majority of residents come from Europe and Asia. Moreover, it is important to mention that 10% of the total number of all students constitute Chinese students whose first language is one of the varieties of Chinese.

The questionnaire for the teachers was implemented to the four English teachers from my internship who all teach in both levels, *ESO* and *Bachillerato*. Of the four teachers, one is the head of the English department with 5 years of teaching experience, two have been teaching for 2 years and one has been teaching for more than 10 years. The data collected from the two questionnaires played a significant role in the designing pronunciation activities and in choosing the appropriate teaching approach for the classes that I entirely devoted to helping students to improve their English pronunciation and work on their common mistakes.

The questionnaire for teachers of the English department contained 30 questions that were addressed to the four teachers with the aim of analyzing the assigned role of pronunciation in their ESL lessons. It was administered on-line via Google forms guaranteeing confidentiality, anonymity and non-traceability to the teachers' responses.

As regards the questions, they were linked to the following areas: a) general information of the English teachers, b) questions that were supposed to investigate the way each teacher teaches pronunciation in English classes, c) questions about the main students' obstacles and problems concerning pronunciation, d) the teachers' frequent materials (textbooks, online tools) and tasks used to teach English pronunciation.

Furthermore, to have a better understanding and analysis of the pronunciation activities implemented in class by the teacher, I had to study the activities concerning English pronunciation practice, proposed by the student's textbook *Advantage for Bachillerato*, written by E. Grant and S. Carter and edited by Burlington Books. This textbook is used every day in class and it is the only material the teacher uses when dealing with the pronunciation of English.

Fortunately, I had opportunity to implement my designed activities in three different groups of the first year of *Bachillerato.* To be more precise, I was given the opportunity to prepare two lessons to practice English pronunciation using the prepared material and activities for the classes.

The results of the designed pronunciation activities were evaluated mainly by observing students' participation during the sessions and by analyzing the responses to one questionnaire. In addition, the students were invited to give their opinion and assess the success of the pronunciation activities by answering a few open questions prepared by myself in the Google forms (see Appendix 3).

8. Results and Discussion

During several sessions, I have been observing and analyzing the participation and behavior of the three different groups of first year of *Bachillerato*. I find it important to mention that a number of students per group had been reduced at the beginning of this academic year due to the social distancing restrictions caused by Covid19; therefore, this academic year each group consists of about 15 to 17 students. This reduction has resulted in better academic results and has motivated students to participate more in the class because they have commented that when there are fewer people they feel themselves more confident when it comes to spoken expression or interaction. As for

the teacher, she has more possibilities to devote time to each student during the lesson time and give more feedback to the students' doubts and mistakes.

On the one hand, I have focused mainly on how students participate in oral activities in class and how they apply their knowledge of the English language to express their ideas, arguments and opinions. On the other hand, I have also been paying much of my attention to the teaching methodology used by the teacher and to the way she organizes oral activities where students could operate all their language knowledge and practice their English pronunciation. I was also interested in the strategies and techniques the teacher was using to correct and assess the students during spoken production and spoken interaction.

Overall, I can say that I was quite surprised by the way some students use the target language in the L2 lessons. A number of them have demonstrated reasonably good oral skills and have even tried to simulate nativelike performance and pronunciation. I suppose that the reason for a notable number of students with good oral skills and pronunciation is their foreign origin, since most of them come from European countries where students tend to acquire English faster and with less language obstacles than in Spain, due to the similarities between their mother tongue and English. In my internship groups, there were students from such European countries like Germany and Netherlands, and it is well known that these nations usually feature at the top of the English Proficiency Index since the languages of these nations share a common Old Germanic origin together with English.

Moreover, I have noticed that students, who get along well with such students as mentioned in the previous paragraph or with the native speakers in their class, perform better in the oral activities than those who do not try to use this opportunity to use English outside of the school and the English sessions.

I have to add that not all foreign students have demonstrated notable oral and pronunciation skills. For instance, students from China, Italy, Romania, and France have shown similar language difficulties to those of Spanish students. Moreover, in the student's survey, in spite of a number of students with good pronunciation skills, 25 students out of 33 responded that it is difficult to master English pronunciation, while 2 students find it relatively difficult and 6 students consider English pronunciation easy to acquire.
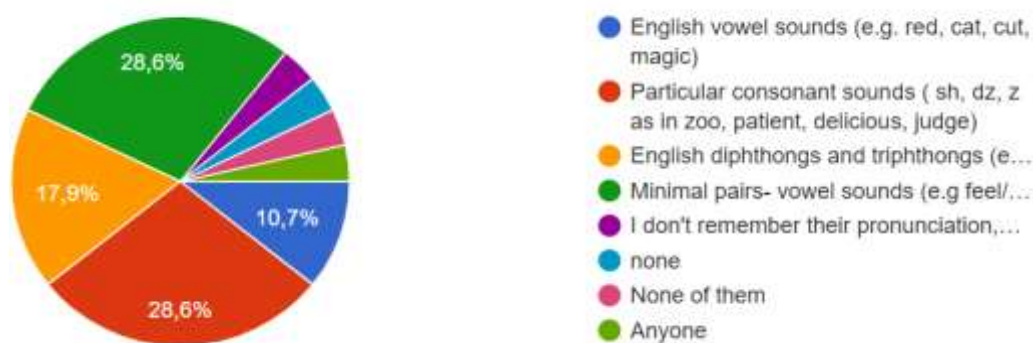
As regards Chinese students, I have tried to understand why the majority of them face such difficulties when it comes to expressing themselves orally, so I have asked some of them to explain the main pronunciation constraints they face when they speak English. I have found it important to pay particular attention to their problems because Chinese students constitute 10% of the total number of students in the entire school and at least 19% of my three internship groups. Therefore, an analysis of their common pronunciation difficulties was necessary for the preparation of the pronunciation activities because my aim was to employ activities that would work not only with Spanish speakers, but also with other majorities in the three groups.

As to the main obstacles for the Chinese students, they have commented me that the Chinese language, the same as Spanish, is a syllable-timed language, that is, in Chinese and Mandarin every syllable takes the same amount of time so the rhythm of language depends on the syllable and not on the context as in English. Moreover, Chinese students have difficulties with giving a correct stress to English words because all Chinese symbols are monosyllabic, for this reason Chinese students tend to stress the last sound of a word what makes their spoken English sound unnatural and Chinese-like. In similar way as the Spanish students, Chinese have difficulties to acquire all English diphthongs and triphthongs.

Actually, I found it curious that a big number of foreign students in the three groups contributed to a more relaxed environment in the English lessons, because everyone knows how challenging is to learn a foreign language and how significant is to feel support and motivation from the people next to you, the classmates in this particular case, who stand for your first audience.

Regarding Spanish students, I would say that some of them were trying to participate regularly, but there were also students with a passive and sometimes reluctant behavior who were not showing a lot of interest to improve their level of English.

In spite of the cultural and background differences among the students, for most students, there were two main aspects that seemed to cause quite a lot of problems to their speaking fluency. These two aspects are the production of certain vowel and consonant sounds, and the intonation, the latter being the most ignored aspect by both teachers and students.

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- English vowel sounds (e.g. red, cat, cut, magic)
- Particular consonant sounds (sh, dz, z as in zoo, patient, delicious, judge)
- English diphthongs and triphthongs (e...
- Minimal pairs- vowel sounds (e.g feel/...
- I don't remember their pronunciation,...
- none
- None of them
- Anyone

28,6%   17,9%   10,7%   28,6%

Graph 1. Students' responses concerning their main pronunciation problems.

Apart from my own observations, we can clearly see in graph 1 that 28,6%, namely 8 students, have alike difficulties with certain English consonant sounds and minimal pairs. As to the vowel sounds, only 3 students find the pronunciation of English vowel sounds problematic, although 17.3 % (8) of the students have problems especially with English diphthongs and triphthongs.

While observing the English lessons during my internship, my attention was also drawn to how students especially struggle to pronounce English diphthongs and triphthongs, as they tend to pronounce them in a way similar to when they produce diphthongs and triphthongs in their L1. This happens mainly because they get very confused when the same letter can be pronounced in several ways depending on its environment, as in words like *fill*, *like* and *fire*, where the same letter <i> is pronounced as monophthong /i/, diphthong /ai/ and triphthong / aɪə/.

This problem causes a great deal of misunderstanding during spoken interaction and production, even among students whose first language is Spanish, because each student has their own understanding of how the diphthongs and triphthongs should be pronounced, especially in the context of the groups that have students from other countries and with another L1 different to Spanish. As to all this, I decided to include practice on the most problematic diphthongs and triphthongs to my pronunciation activity to draw students' attention to the two-sound nature and three-sound nature of this kind of sounds.

The production of certain consonant sounds is also found challenging by many students, however, the mispronunciation of some of them does not cause miscomprehension on part of the receivers. Mainly students mispronounce sounds that they do not have in the Spanish language, as /dʒ/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /θ/, /ð/, while the rest of the consonant sounds does

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not cause as much difficulty. In order to help the students to assimilate better these new consonant sounds, I have also included some work on these sounds to my oral activities and created some practice sheets that could be used autonomously at home in their free time (see Appendix 4).

The lack of intonation patterns was another common problem that I noted when I was observing students in the speaking and reading activities. Only a few students out of the three groups were paying attention to basic falling and rising intonation patterns while the rest were always transferring the intonation patterns of syllable-timed language, as it is Spanish. As a result, the majority of the students were sounding flat devoting an equal time and emphasis to important and unimportant words in their utterances.

Nevertheless, despite this common difficulty among the students, most of them were not aware of this prosodic feature in English because the teacher was neither integrating any activities on this aspect nor correcting students' intonation in her lessons.
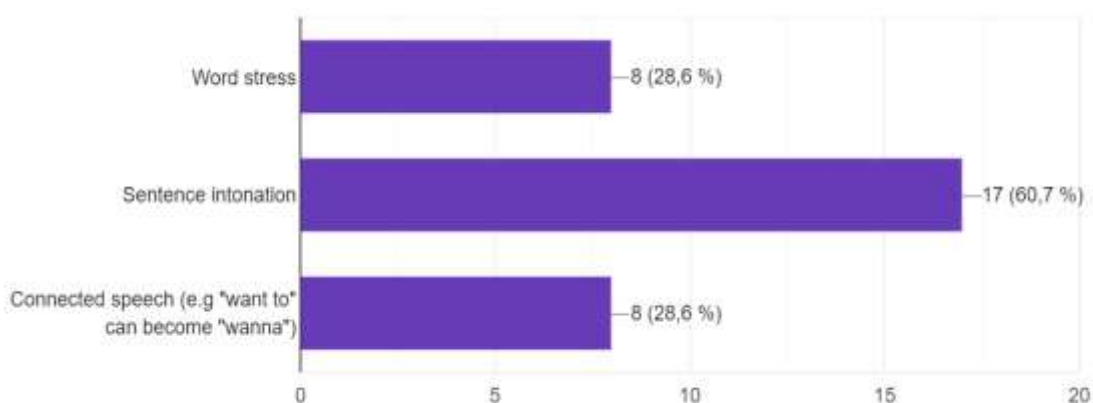
Graph 2. Students' responses concerning their difficulties with prosodic features.

When the students were asked about their difficulties with prosodic features of the English pronunciation, we can see in graph 2 that 60.7% of the students, namely 17, also conceded that their main weakness is the lack of practice and knowledge of the English intonation stress-timed patterns, and eight students consider that they need more practice on word stress patterns and connected speech processes.

To help students understand English stress patterns and make them realize how intonation can add any attitude or emotion to their message, I have also included some oral practice on these particular features in my designed activities.

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In spite of the common difficulties I have mentioned and the international environment of the three groups, when I asked students about the difficulty of understanding each other in the English lessons, students from the three groups responded to the questionnaire in the following way: 56,3% (18 students) understand each other most of the time when they express themselves orally in the English lessons, even when a considerable number of students, namely 10, acknowledge that it is challenging sometimes to comprehend everything that is said by other classmates, and 2 students even claim that they find it difficult to understand each other most of the time.

When I asked if other L2 learners find challenging to understand them when they speak English, 48.5 % (16) answered that they understand with little difficulty, while 51.5% (17) claimed that they understand without any difficulty.

Graph 3. Students' responses concerning the ways they practice English outside school.

When asked if they practice their speaking skills outside the L2 lessons, the results of the questionnaire, as seen in graph 3, have revealed that the only two activities they admit doing outside their English lessons are: listening to music and watching movies. Unfortunately, only 2 students practice speaking in informal situations outside the classroom what explains one of the main reasons why students tend not to have fluency when speaking in English and lack of exposure to L2 outside their school.

Regarding the teacher's pedagogical methodology concerning the aspect of pronunciation, the English teacher of the three groups combines both the traditional and more modern principles of pronunciation teaching, making her students work on their L2 pronunciation primarily by completing the fill-in the gaps or listen-and-repeat

exercises included in the students' textbook, and sometimes by implementing oral activities during the class time.

Even though the exercises included in the textbook use phonetic symbols to differentiate phonemes, the teacher herself does not use a phonetic chart as a technique when practicing pronunciation with students. As a result, students get confused when they discover phonetic symbols before practicing the physicality of making target sounds. Also, when I asked students if they know how to use phonetic symbols and if they know how to consult word pronunciation using the pronunciation dictionary with phonetic transcriptions, only 21, 9% (7) of the students responded that they know how to use this type of dictionary and only 37,5 % (12) of the three groups master the phonetic symbols, while the rest of the students responded that they do not master them.

As to integrating pronunciation teaching within other language skills, a method mainly promoted by the Communicative approach, most of the time the teacher teaches pronunciation in isolation, especially when implementing textbook exercises on pronunciation issues. However, the aspect of pronunciation is assessed and taken into consideration when students practice spoken production and spoken interaction during the oral tasks.

Unfortunately, the teacher designs oral tasks rarely, only a few times per trimester after finishing a new unit of the book. As a result, this frequency does not allow students to practice their speaking and pronunciation skills enough to sound intelligible and acquire fluency in L2.

As to mispronunciation by the students, the teacher seeks to correct pronunciation errors only when they are repeated several times during the lesson, focusing mainly on the mispronunciation of vowel and consonant sounds and, unfortunately, totally ignoring the incorrect use of intonation and stress patterns.

When selecting materials to practice pronunciation with students, the teacher uses quite a limited range of teaching activities since she mainly relies on the exercises included in the textbook that are based on the mechanical modelling promoted by the Audio-lingual method. Nevertheless, at the end of each unit, the teacher asks students to record a short video talking about a topic related to the last unit taught, and when she corrects their works, she provides students with feedback on their pronunciation errors, although the

teacher does not devote any time in class to work on the most common students' problems after listening to all their recordings.

In relation to the efficiency of the exercises provided by their textbook, only 5 out of 32 students believe they are enough effective and 4 students consider them regular, whereas the rest of the three groups consider that they need more complementary material to improve their pronunciation.
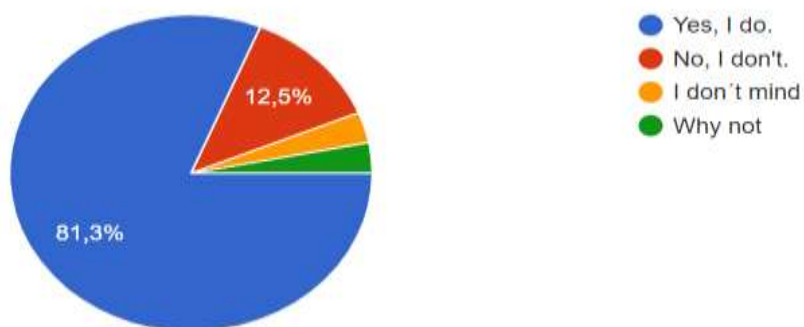

Graph 4. Students' responses regarding their longing for more pronunciation activities.

Furthermore, concerning the lack of activities for pronunciation practice, in graph 4 it is clearly seen that the majority of the students (81.3%) long for more activities regarding this language aspect in order to improve their pronunciation in English. These results are in my view extremely positive, since they indicate that the students, despite acknowledging having problems with pronunciation, still regard it as an important and necessary skill to sound intelligible in L2.

8.1. Analysis of the teachers' survey

The analysis of this questionnaire made it possible to draw the following conclusions regarding the teaching and learning processes of English pronunciation.

From the questions about the teachers' background, we can see in graph 6 that the English department includes both novice teachers with their teaching practice of 2 years or less (2 teachers), as well as very experienced teachers who have been teaching for 5 years (1 teacher) and for more than 10 years (1 teacher).
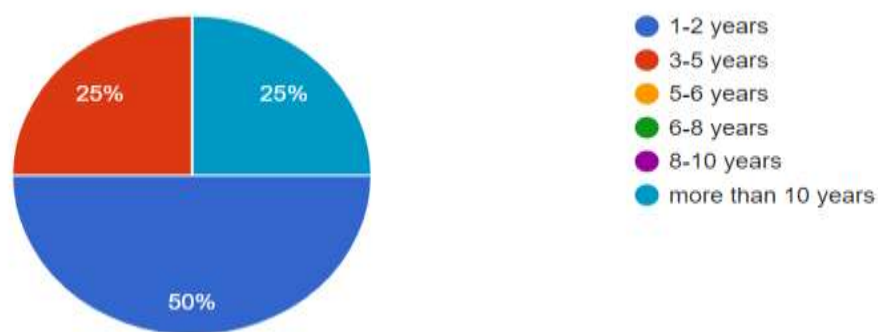
Graph 6. Teachers' responses regarding how long they have been teaching English.

The four teachers consider teaching English pronunciation as an important feature of language acquisition since it is the key to effective communication, although all of them find it quite difficult for the L2 learners to master.

Regarding the necessity for teachers to have a native-like pronunciation in English, a 75% opted for a 'neutral' answer and only one teacher totally disagreed. From this I can deduce that teachers believe that there is no need to sound native-like, and for the same reason they consider unreasonable to ask learners to acquire a native-like pronunciation.

When asked about the variety of English they teach their students, all four teachers responded that they use British English most of the time.

As to the exposure to English during the L2 classes, most of the teachers (75%) stated that they teach and express themselves orally in L2 most of the time and only one teacher uses it always. This finding is highly positive since it indicates that, according to these teachers, their students receive comprehensible input in L2 at least during their lessons listening to the language teachers. With regard to the students' expression in L2 during the lessons, 100% agreed that only some students express themselves in English and this indicates that their students lack speaking practice since they employ L1 too often. According to the gained results, when teaching English pronunciation, 75% of teachers believe that it is necessary to have a good knowledge of English phonology and phonetics in order to teach English and only one respondent considers these skills to be neutral and not as essential to teach English pronunciation.

As shown in graph 7, the majority of the teachers consider that the Spanish educational system does not pay enough attention to the aspect of pronunciation, as it is largely

underestimated as a language skill in the curriculum across the current educational programs. Moreover, one respondent opted for a very low mark on the ranking scale to state that it requires an urgent improvement.

The current programs in the Spanish educational system pay attention to pronunciation
4 respuestas
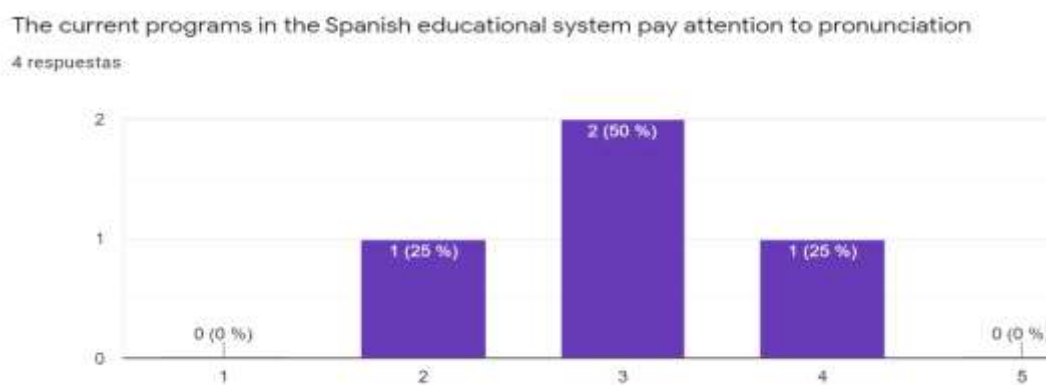
Graph 7. Teachers' opinions regarding the Spanish educational system.

50% of the respondents, more precisely 2 of them, agreed that Spanish students tend to have difficulties when it comes to pronunciation, one teacher even opted for a *strongly disagree* option indicating that it is a common problem in the context of ESL classroom. Three teachers also added the following comments concerning their students' most common problems:

1) Vowel sounds.

2) The pronunciation of endings (e.g.: final s, final -ed)

3) They don't practice enough time at home; they don't copy the way the word sounds so that later they can remember it.

The teachers differ in how much time they devote to pronunciation in their lessons, 50% consider that they dedicate enough time to this aspect of language, although the other half of the respondents thinks the opposite, believing that more time should be devoted to this language aspect in the ESL lessons.

In spite of the fact that 50% consider that they do not devote enough time to this language problem, 75% of the teachers feel confident teaching English pronunciation and only one teacher believes that she/he has to acquire more skills and knowledge concerning pronunciation teaching.

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Regarding the frequency with which teachers carry out pronunciation activities in class, 50% of the teachers hardly ever prepare this type of activities; one teacher does them sometimes whereas the last teacher prepares pronunciation activities only a few times per semester.

In relation to the types of teaching activities and techniques they use for teaching English pronunciation, the teachers were asked to select activities and techniques they most often use in their lessons from the offered list of commonly used techniques for teaching this aspect. As we can observe in graph 8, 75% make their students practice English pronunciation by listening to the textbook CD and by implementing role-plays and dialogues in the classroom. 50% of the English department selected listening and repeating words or sentences after a teacher, doing reading aloud tasks, and focusing on students' oral production during the lesson assignments. It is important to point out that no one has selected the use of phonetic transcriptions as a technique to teach pronunciation and as a way of accurately recording the pronunciation of words and utterances.
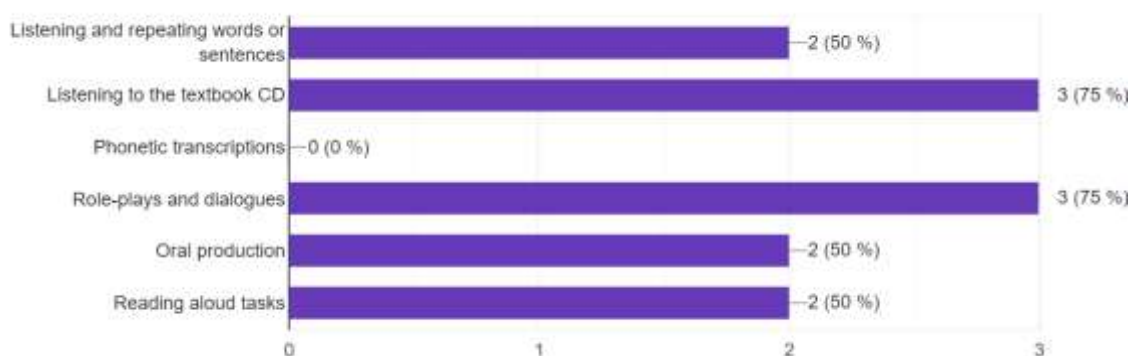
Graph 8. Teachers' responses on the techniques and activities used to teach pronunciation.

Additionally, the teachers were asked to select the more traditional activities they implement to practice speaking and English pronunciation in their lessons. Each teacher only selected one activity: one has selected games, another only uses songs, the third uses a phonetic chart and the last one uses a dictionary with transcriptions. It is interesting that nobody has selected *computer programs and internet sources* despite the variety of free online sources that can be found on online educational platforms today such as online dictionaries or tools for pronunciation practicing as SpeechAce or Youglish.
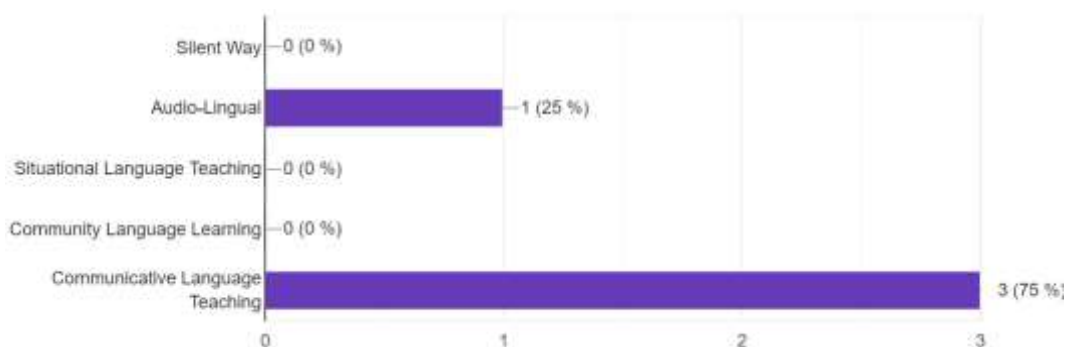
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When asked if they correct the pronunciation errors of their students, 1 out of 4 teachers claimed that he/she corrects students' pronunciation always whenever he/she hears them making a mistake, 50% answered that they often correct mispronunciations and only one teacher answered that she/he only sometimes pays attention to the pronunciation errors of their students. As to students who like to be corrected, the answers of teachers split into two categories of students, those who like to be corrected and those who do not feel comfortable with it.

50% of the respondents stated that the textbook they use for their lessons does not have enough exercises and activities to work common pronunciation difficulties, and the other 50% doubt whether it has enough activities dedicated to this problem.

Regarding additional didactic material, 50% of respondents only rely on the pronunciation activities included in the textbook, the other two teachers added that one of them uses a website called *Naturalreaders* to practice students' speaking before performing the task, and the other teacher sometimes makes her students listen to their own recorded presentations so that they notice the mistakes they make.

As to the ways in which teachers correct their students' mistakes, 50% of the teachers hardly ever use phonetic transcriptions with phonetic symbols to provide students with correct pronunciation of a certain word, and the majority of the teachers apply audio-lingual method and make students listen and repeat the correct pronunciation after a teacher.

When asked about the principal methodology used to teach English pronunciation, in graph 9 we can see that the majority of the teachers agree that the Communicative Language Teaching method is the most effective method to work this aspect of language, however, one teacher believes that the more traditional Audio-lingual method is better and she/he uses it more regularly than other methodologies.

8.2. Analysis of the textbook activities on English pronunciation

The textbook students use in class, edited by Burlington Books, includes in each topic-based unit at least one or two small sections related to the aspect of pronunciation. These sections can appear on the page together with reading, listening or speaking activities and are usually related somehow to those activities.

For instance, if this pronunciation section appears together with a speaking activity it usually appears with useful language that has to be used in this particular activity and the pronunciation section itself draws attention to the problems with the new vocabulary of the unit that students have to employ in their speaking task.

When the pronunciation section appears next to a reading activity, it includes both explanations and a few exercises related to the possible pronunciation issues that students might face when reading the text.

The textbook starts with units where the pronunciation section explains the smallest phonological structures as the individual vowel and consonant phonemes, gradually progressing to the units where more complex structures as stress and intonation patterns are explained and practiced.

As for instance, in Unit 2, the pronunciation section deals with the letter /o/ and the three different phonemes /ʌ/, /ɒ/, /əʊ/ represented by this letter in spelling, where students have to listen and repeat the words containing these phonemes. While Unit 4 includes a section that has exercises, where students have to pay attention to the rhythm and word stress patterns.

This separation of different features of English pronunciation creates a false notion for the students that all phonological structures function separately and not as a whole. Therefore, when dealing with word stress patterns, students simultaneously have to learn that the placement of the tonic syllable depends on the context of the intended message and not only on the word stress rules.

As to the exercises on different varieties of English, the textbook offers a few exercises on the difference between American and British varieties of English, however, it only

offers exercises where students have to differentiate between lexical items of EngEng and NAmEng, and there is no practice on pronunciation variations.

Regarding the extension of the pronunciation sections and their exercises, I have found them quite short, lacking explanations and rules regarding problematic phonological structures in English. The majority of the pronunciation sections mainly focus on repeating sound models by means of listen and repeat exercises without providing students with any context, therefore, this way students only acquire the pronunciation of certain sounds without paying attention to the prosodic features as rhythm, intonation. In the same way students work on prosodic features, as rhythm, for instance, without taking into consideration that the rhythm itself is closely related to vowel quantity and quality.

At the end of the student's textbook, in the appendix, students can find more pronunciation practice with exercises similar to those found in the units of the book. On the one hand, there are exercises related to the problematic vowels and consonant sounds and, on the other hand, there are separate exercises for practicing rhythm and word stress patterns, as well as one in which students have to identify silent letters.

In spite of all pronunciation sections included in the textbook, in my opinion, their number is not enough to develop intelligibility for those students who do not have the opportunity to practice their pronunciation outside the English classroom. Furthermore, these exercises are executed only once per month as students usually only see one unit per trimester. Unfortunately, as a result, this infrequency allows students to practice a little number of phonological aspects and, what is worse, they are often practiced in isolation.

These types of exercises provided by the textbook could perfectly work as additional material for speaking tasks but not as the only material for pronunciation issues. The teacher should complement the lack of activities by adding supplementary material of their own selection or by planning more speaking activities where communication with other classmates or native speakers could be involved.

To sum up, pronunciation learning and teaching is a complex process that requires a constant and systematical practice in the English lesson. Moreover, the activities and exercises used for teaching this language aspect have to approached in context to enable

students to generate and practice acquired pronunciation in unlike contexts and utterances.

8.3. The design and implementation of pronunciation activities

Regarding my previous discussion concerning the activities included in the student's textbook, I believe that any pronunciation learning and teaching task has to involve context and as many phonological structures as possible, focusing mainly on the most problematic areas of the students.

In total, I was given the opportunity to design two lessons to work with three groups of the first year of *Bachillerato* on their pronunciation skills. To prepare the material and the main activity for these two lessons, I had previously studied the students' survey and their responses, and my own observations of their last English lessons.

Furthermore, before preparing the pronunciation activity where students could practice their pronunciation skills, I had prepared another lesson with the aim of introducing and explaining to the students the main features and difficulties of the English pronunciation, as I had observed that many students lacked basic knowledge of the phonological structures, since little attention had been paid to it during the lessons.

For the first lesson, to introduce the topic of the lesson, firstly, I had prepared a short episode of the movie *My Fair Lady* with Audrey Hepburn, where she mispronounces the following phrase *The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain.* After playing this video, the students' task was to detect and explain the kinds of errors made by the actress in this utterance.

Afterwards, to provide students with some complementary knowledge about the origin of the English language, I had prepared for them a list of English words from Latin, French and Old Germanic origin to make them think about the possible development of the English language. Apart from the list of words, students were provided with the historical maps showing the invasions of British Isles throughout the history.

This activity helped me to draw students' attention and get them interested in the topic of this lesson; moreover, many students found this introductory part informative as nobody in all the three groups knew anything about the history of the English language.

In addition, it gave students some ideas concerning the discrepancy between the written representation of many English words and their actual pronunciation.

After drawing the students' attention to the aspect of pronunciation, by means of a presentation in PowerPoint, I displayed the examples of errors I had detected in their previous classes to make them aware of their common errors. Using the wall chart technique promoted by the Silent Way method (see, for example, Stanton, 2002), I worked with them their errors mainly in terms of their problems with vowel and consonant sounds, including triphthongs and diphthongs.

The wall chart I used included colour-coded vocabulary containing the phonemes with which they have more difficulties. The idea was to show students how different phonemes can be represented in spelling, and by pointing to different words containing the same sound, coloured alike, make them practice the pronunciation of certain problematic sounds, as well as teach them to identify spelling variations of the same phonemes.

Moreover, after introducing this technique to the students in class, I have submitted to their Google classroom, a practice sheet with the fidel (see Appendix 4) that includes all the possible spellings for each phoneme in the English language. The fidel chart can be used as a guide by those students who find it challenging to use and understand the phonetic transcriptions when checking pronunciation in a dictionary and it also helps them better visualize problematic sounds of the English language.

The rest of the lesson was devoted to brainstorming their knowledge of such features as intonation and rhythm. Firstly, I asked students if they understood the difference between a stress-timed language and a syllable-timed language. After a small discussion, I explained them the difference by giving examples in both languages, Spanish and English, and then I asked some volunteers to read some sentences in English and their translation to Spanish, paying attention to the irregular rhythm in the sentences written in English and regular rhythm in Spanish. In this brief practice, apart from the rhythm, they had to control their intonation paying attention to the words they emphasize the most in relation to the degree of importance they convey in the sentence.

Actually, this first lesson served as a necessary pre-instruction to the pronunciation activity I had designed for the three groups of the internship. My main concern was to

engage students in an activity where they could practice and generate the pronunciation patterns they had acquired during the first lesson I had prepared.

The activity I designed is interviews in pairs, which is one of the modern techniques promoted by the Communicative Language Teaching Approach that enables students to learn from each other and to develop their own learning autonomy while improving their communicative proficiency and pronunciation.

The activity had to be executed in pairs or in groups of three maintaining the security distance of 1.5 meters, due to the Covid19 restrictions. In each group, one or two students played the role of a foreign tourist while their partner played the role of their new local acquaintance, both carrying out a dialogue about their impressions and opinions on the place they were visiting or live in.

All groups were provided with a flashcard, previously prepared by myself, that included some indications and vocabulary that could help students to organize their dialogue and make appropriate choice of questions to each other.

As to their pronunciation practice, the flashcards included the vocabulary containing the problematic sounds worked in the previous lesson. Moreover, when practicing their dialogues students had to apply their acquired knowledge on the intonation patterns practiced previously. Regarding the indications on the flashcards, they included possible questions the students could make to each other although the responses had to be invented on their own. To exemplify, the local resident could ask the foreigner the following questions: What are your first impressions of this place? What do you like the most of this island? Why did you decide to come here on holiday? Do you like the local cuisine?

Fortunately, this task is closely related to the topic of *Urban Jungle* of their textbook that was seen when this activity was implemented with the three groups. Therefore, students were acquainted with the context of the dialogues and could use the vocabulary and grammatical structures to enrich their dialogues and practice their fluency.

8.4. Analysis of the results of the implemented pronunciation activities in class

Two variables were considered when analyzing the results registered and noticed during the implementation and execution of the pronunciation activity in class: a lesson

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assessment survey for the students (see Appendix 3) and my own observations regarding the students' participation and their progress.

The survey for the students involved both multiple-choice questions to assess students' understanding of general knowledge on English phonology revised in the first lesson, and a series of open questions regarding their opinion on the main designed speaking activity, the interviews in pairs.

As to my own observations from the first lesson, I was extremely surprised by the way in which the majority of the students revealed their real interest in the subject. Even those students who usually participate little in class were actively involved in most of the tasks and enjoyed the discussions concerning the origin of the English language and its lack of correspondence between spelling and pronunciation.

These observations are in my view very positive, since they indicate that most of the students, despite considering English pronunciation difficult to obtain, have started to consider the aspect of pronunciation as an important and useful skill for their speaking fluency that requires a great deal of attention and practice.

The first lesson also drew the students' attention to their common mistakes, and this helped them to better develop their pronunciation skills, by paying attention to the problematic sounds and by making use of correct intonation patterns, in their final interviews in pairs.

The analysis of the responses obtained from the multiple-choice questions in the survey also revealed that a large number of students has enjoyed the introductory lesson and got acquainted with their common mistakes. More than 70% of the students of the three groups had correct answers to the questions dealing with typical problematic sounds in English, although approximately 50% found it struggling to choose the correct option concerning intonation patterns.

When asked to assess the efficiency and planning of the final speaking activity in the format of the interviews in pairs, in terms of planning, most of the students agreed that the first lesson contributed to a better realization and performance of the speaking activity. In addition, there were comments that confirmed that this oral task in pairs made them feel confident when speaking to each other because in small groups they do not feel as embarrassed as when speaking before a larger audience.

Nevertheless, some students also claimed that it was still difficult for them to control the correct and comprehensible pronunciation of certain sounds because they still consider them problematic due to the lack of practice and input.

From my perspective, I can state that I have noticed a certain degree of improvement in all students when listening to their interviews, especially I was surprised that most of them began to better control their intonation and rhythm when producing their utterances by emphasizing the important words they consider essential in the speech units depending on the context of their message.

I also perceived an improvement of the problematic sounds; however, I would agree with the students that they need more practice and comprehensible input to produce them better when speaking.

In general, I believe that all students from the three groups with whom I have put into practice my activities have enough potential to refine their pronunciation skills if L2 teachers integrate more speaking activities in small groups and reflect on their pronunciation problems more regularly during the oral tasks, and when participating in class.

9. Suggestions on how to improve pronunciation skills

In my consideration, it is essentially important for teachers to implement pronunciation activities in a natural and attractive way creating such atmosphere that students realize that making pronunciation errors is only a stage that every L2 learner goes through when learning a new language.

Moreover, second language teachers should keep motivating their students during the learning process, especially when they face language difficulties, since motivation is one of the most important factors to achieve learning success (see, for example, Krashen, 1985).

As I have explained in the theoretical part of this paper, pronunciation in the English language is one of the essential aspects of oral communication. Therefore, it would seem effective for teachers to focus on their students' pronunciation while they are

carrying out different speaking activities, most of them based on the principle of Communicative Teaching Learning where communication and interaction is the main objective.

1.) <u>Describing activities</u>. When students in pairs or individually have to describe an object or person they know or see on a picture, where pronunciation is one of the criteria in the assessment of speaking skills together with fluency and the correct use of grammatical structures and vocabulary.

2.) <u>Oral presentation</u>. Presentations executed in small groups or individually where students prepare a short oral performance. Since students are given time to prepare their presentation, they can rehearse their oral delivery paying attention to pronunciation features in order to sound intelligibly in front of the class.

3.) <u>Drama lesson or role – plays</u>. When students all together or in small groups take part in a performance memorizing their dialogues or monologues. This task may be perceived as more dynamic than the regular practice of dialogues since it involves more creativity and encourages teamwork and collaboration. In addition, it could help students to develop their verbal and non-verbal communication skills and, especially, practice intonation patterns because this type of activity can demand to express a range of emotions and attitudes that could be delivered using intonation.

<div align="center"><u>Games</u></div>

In addition, in order to make this aspect of language more attractive to the students, teachers can teach English phonology implementing games and quizzes as follows.

- **Pronunciation Maze.** The students have to connect words with particular sounds included in these words, this could help learners to memorize the representation of sounds in a spelling, especially it could work effectively with diphthongs and triphthongs. This activity can be edited by the teachers since it only demands a list of words containing pairs of words with the same phonemes.

- **Word stress table**. The teacher provides students with a list of words and asks them in groups of 3 or 4 students to complete a table by putting the words with the same stressed syllable into their corresponding column. The group, which first completes the table correctly, wins and reads their tables before the rest of the class.

- **Follow the instructions drawing.** This game can give students complementary practice differentiating between the short and long vowel sounds. Firstly, the teacher prepares a list of minimal pairs that are easy to draw on a piece of paper, and then she writes the instructions so that students know what they have to draw. By listening to the teacher's instructions, the students have to draw something that can be described by minimal pairs. The example of the instructions could be: *In the middle of the page draw a black ship and next to it draw a sheep, to the right of the sheep, draw a mouth and to the left of the sheep, draw a pink mouse.* When students finish, the teacher should ask students to share their drawings with other classmates and compare their results and, finally, check their works with the correct drawing prepared by the teacher.

- **Quizzes.** With the help of online platforms, as for instance, *Educaplay*, the teacher can create a quiz by herself to check students' knowledge of intonation patterns, by asking students to choose the correct pattern depending on the context of the sentence. As for instance, we can ask students to choose one of the two intonation patterns, like between *THEY don't but WE do* or, *They don't' but we do*, in order to correct this statement *I'm sure they fly to London tomorrow.*

<div align="center">Dictation in pairs</div>

Dictation is another useful way to practice pronunciation when the teacher reads a list of words or sentences, or a short text from a book, blog, magazine, song or speech, adapted to the students' interests and their average English level, whereas the students have to write down everything that they hear. The selected text or list of words should contain words which the teacher has taught the pronunciation of and others which are similar. As for instance, if she has practiced difficult consonant and vowel sounds in class, then examples of minimal pairs could be used. As to actual dictation, the students are the ones who dictate the words and not the teacher. The students are divided into pairs and every student receives part of the text or a few words that they have to dictate to each other. When the first member finishes copying the corresponding text or words, they are allowed to check their mistakes comparing their copy with the original version. When all pairs finish the task, the teacher goes through their main difficulties and problems concerning pronunciation.

Another way to use dictation is to dictate several words to students and they afterwards have to circle the word that has a different sound or word stress. For example, they have

to find an extra word among *shine, fine, bride, line, thick, like*, or *game, green, goose, glide, giraffe.*

<u>Phonetic chart</u>

Even though the use of phonetic transcriptions using IPA is considered as a more traditional way of teaching, it is still considered as an effective method since it allows an accurate representation and symbolization of words containing problematic sounds (see Stanton, 2002).

Nevertheless, according to Underhill (2018), before introducing students to the phonetic symbols, he suggests that it is important to practice with students the target sounds. In other words, once students realize and experience that some L2 sounds require different manipulation of speech organs to the similar sounds in L1, and after receiving the vital feedback from the teacher, as for instance, '' make this vowel shorter'', ''put your lips together'', they will better assimilate the use of the phonetic chart and symbolization of the sounds. As Underhill (2018, paragr. 3) claims, 'the symbol is a kind of mnemonic for a muscular experience'; to put it another way, a symbol is a kind of association we make when we produce a sound.

By means of phonetic symbols from the phonetic alphabet, the teacher can introduce to the students to those symbols, which cause the most difficulty when speaking since it is not suggested that they have to learn the whole phonetic alphabet by heart. Once students consolidate their knowledge of phonetic symbols, the teacher can prepare exercises where students have to identify group of words containing the same phonetic symbol but with different representations in spelling or complete filling in the gaps exercise where students should choose the correct phoneme for each word.

Moreover, this practice should help students to visualize better the problematic sounds and also increase their learner autonomy when checking pronunciation or stress of words in dictionaries.

Nowadays, the practice of the phonetic transcriptions is also available by means of software and websites that can help both students and teachers convert a text or individual words convert into phonetic transcription or viceversa, when any doubts emerge concerning the pronunciation of the certain sounds. As for instance, the online Phonemic Chart Keyboard, the toPhonetics, or the IPA Online Keyboard.

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Songs

Songs is another way to improve pronunciation. The teacher can ask students to vote for their favorite song in English and then provide them with the lyrics of this song. Having the lyrics, students individually should identify words or sentences with the pronunciation features present in the song, afterwards, the teachers plays the song and makes students notice the way the singer pronounces these features. As for instance, we may ask them to look for the long /i:/ sound or for the correct word stress in certain words and then check if their guesses were correct. At the end of this activity, the teacher can ask students to sing the song all together paying attention to pronunciation of the features worked during the lesson.

Movies

Watching movies is definitely an extremely helpful and entertaining way to practice English pronunciation with students; however, it takes a lot of time and requires special technological equipment that not all schools and classes have, nevertheless, this activity may be realized only once per semester when the teacher has access to the limited audio-visual equipment.

By watching movies students can hear dialogues by native speakers in the real context that will help them to remember and memorize the correct pronunciation of certain words and become aware of the prosodic features. In order to use movies in the context of L2 pronunciation classes, the teacher can draw the students' attention to specific episodes when, for example, some sounds in words change in connected speech or when the actor changes the intonation pattern to change the meaning of a message. Moreover, the teacher can ask students to identify the type of accent which is used by the actors and discuss with them its main characteristics and peculiarities.

New technologies

New technological advances and the appearance of the learning platforms and apps have undoubtedly changed our modern society for better providing L2 teachers with more opportunities and techniques for speaking and pronunciation practice. By making use of the ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) the teacher may use different materials for each lesson, combining them with the textbook activities and the designed oral activities. Moreover, as Sharma and Barret (2007) state, ICT tools can become

motivational for the learners and develop their autonomy, however, when using blended learning, face-to-face classroom teaching together with technology, it is essentially important to assign clear roles to the teacher and ICT tools during the task implementation.

The majority of pronunciation teaching materials are available online hence they can be adapted by the teachers according to the circumstances and students' needs during the lesson. Moreover, the students can use some of this material either in class or at home, as additional practical material that could also improve their basic skills in technology.

ICT tools are also advantageous for those teachers who struggle to teach English pronunciation because the access to authentic materials enables teachers to use materials freely available to teach and practice English pronunciation. Example of these materials could be the Macmillan Education YouTube channel that offers a number of videos on pronunciation skills practice by Adrian Underhill, who is a series editor of the Macmillan Books for Teachers and adviser of the new Macmillan Dictionary. Moreover, Adrian Underhill has his own blog, multimedia diary, on pronunciation where he comments on the issues like why pronunciation teaching does not work or, why today's methodology fails, where teachers can search for new tips and techniques. His blog can be found on:

https://www.adrianunderhill.com/the-pronunciation-blog/.

Regarding other blogs carried by the experts in English pronunciation, we can find such useful blogs as *FluentU* and *English Pronunciation Madrid,* which can be found on:

https://www.fluentu.com/blog/english/how-to-improve-english-pronunciation/

http://www.englishpronunciationmadrid.com/pagina-ejemplo/

As to *FluentU,* it is an English language and culture blog that provides its followers with pronunciation techniques and tips that may help them to sound natural and intelligible in English, whereas English Pronunciation Madrid provides an account of posts about the main pronunciation features of English language, and it indicates the list of the common mistakes among the Spanish and other non-native speakers of English.

The suggested pronunciation tasks with the help of ICTs are the following:

- The teacher can record students speaking and then make them listen to their recordings identifying their mistakes with the help of other classmates.

- The teacher can use ICT tools as a vehicle of communication, by organizing an online meeting with a native speaker, in which students can ask to interact with the native practicing their pronunciation skills.

- By using the access to materials on the web, the teacher can use the recorded dialogues and monologues by the native speakers to provide students with more comprehensive and authentic input and examples of correct pronunciation. Meanwhile, when watching these kinds of videos, students can be asked to pay attention to the way native speakers use intonation or connected speech or, even the type of English accent that each speaker has. After finishing the watching, the teacher may open a debate on how these features are employed by natives.

10. Conclusion

As a conclusion, I believe that this project has contributed to show that the aspect of pronunciation plays a vital role when communicating in English.

In spite of the number of common difficulties among the students in Spanish schools, the views of students on these issues, extracted from the analyzed empirical data, have revealed that they are willing to have more practice on their problems to improve their pronunciation skills.

My personal observations during the ESL lessons and analysis of both students' and teachers' surveys have indicated that, unfortunately, little attention is paid to the aspect of pronunciation during ESL lessons and a scarce variety of didactic materials is used to teach this aspect of language, mainly relying on the student's textbook exercises. Moreover, the collected data has revealed that only a few students practice their speaking skills outside the classroom.

This lack of opportunities to work on both speaking and pronunciation skills and lack of exposure to the English language explains the common tendency of Spanish students to

have problems with English pronunciation, even among students with advanced level of other language skills, such as writing, reading and listening.

It is clear that pronunciation is one of the essential components of the speaking skills; therefore, its integration into the all-ongoing oral class activity also enables students to work on their pronunciation problems. But, even though the results obtained from the surveys revealed that the teachers use English most of the time during their lessons and try to involve students to do the same, a limited time of class only allows a few ESL learners to practice their speaking skills. Moreover, four hours a week of L2 classes do not provide students with enough comprehensible input, as argued by Krashen (1985), in the context of monolingual schools where students do not go through a long input process and most of the time are surrounded by their L1 environment.

Even though the majority of the teachers agreed that the Communicative Language Teaching method is the most efficient, designed speaking tasks in which students can communicate with each other using L2 are rarely implemented because they require a great amount of time to perform and to provide feedback. Nevertheless, the application of a correct pronunciation is used as one of the criteria to assess the speaking tasks, but it is unfair to require students to have an intelligible pronunciation when this aspect of language is taught in isolation by means of textbook exercises and not taught holistically and in context during the oral communication.

As a final remark, I believe that the educational reality in the recent years has gradually changed for better and the new changes under the requirements of the CEFR (Common European Reference Framework) and the Spanish Educational System will increasingly insist on more modern and efficient L2 teaching methods, mainly promoting language proficiency and interactive learning through communication and interaction.

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Appendix 1

1st year Bachillerato students' views on the teaching of pronunciation in Spain

My name is Olesya Krynytska and as you already know I am currently completing my internship in your school. I am carrying out my Master's dissertation devoted to identifying and analysing the role that pronunciation has in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms and textbooks in Spain. Another aim of my project is to analyse the opinions and observations of students regarding the ways pronunciation is taught by the ESL teachers.

I would be very grateful if you answered the following questions to help me better understand your main problems concerning the aspect of pronunciation, that will be as a help and guide for the activities I would like to implement with you in the class.

Thanking you in advance for your collaboration and responses.

This is my email address, just in case you would like to contact me for any reason: alu0100697926@ull.edu.es

1.) Do you find English pronunciation difficult to master?

   a.) No, I find it easy to master.

   b.) I find it relatively difficult to master.

   c.) Yes, I find it very difficult to master.

2.) Do you want to improve your pronunciation?

   a.) Yes, I definitely do.

   b.) No, I find my pronunciation intelligible enough.

   c.) Maybe, I am not sure if my pronunciation is good enough.

3.) Do you want to sound like a native speaker in English?

   a.) Yes, I do.

   b.) No, I don't.

4.) Do you know the English phonetic symbols, as for example æ, tʃ, dʒ?

a.) Yes, I do.

b.) No, I don't.

c.) I know only some of them.

5.) Do you know how to consult word pronunciation by using the pronunciation dictionary?

a.) Yes, I do.

b.) No, I don't.

6.) How well do you understand English native speakers?

a.) Perfectly.

b.) Most of the time.

c.) Sometimes.

d.) I don't understand most of the time.

7.) How well do you understand your classmates when they speak English?

a.)   Perfectly.

b.)   Most of the time.

c.)   Sometimes.

d.)   I don't understand them most of the time.

8.) How well do other learners understand your pronunciation?

a.) They understand me without any difficulty.

b.) They understand me with a little difficulty.

c.) They understand me with a lot of difficulty.

9.) Which sounds are the most difficult for you to pronounce?

a.) English vowel sounds (e.g. red, cat, cut, magic)

b.) Particular consonant sounds (sh, dz, z as in zoo, patient, delicious, judge)

c.) English diphthongs and triphthongs (e.g. tower, weird, fair)

d.) Minimal pairs- vowel sounds (e.g. feel/ fill; bin/bean/; pen/pan)

10.) Do you have difficulties with…?

 a.) Word stress

 b.) Sentence Intonation patterns

 d.) Connected speech

11.) What is your first language?

12.) How do you work on your English pronunciation?

 a.) I listen to songs in English

 b.) I watch English movies

 c.) I try to copy the experts (English teachers, native speakers)

 d.) I practice my pronunciation and speaking skills with my classmates and friends.

 e.) I take private English classes.

13.) Does your school textbook help you to work on your pronunciation?

 From 1 to 5 (1 not at all - completely satisfied)

Appendix 2

ESL teachers´ views on the teaching of pronunciation in Spain

My name is Olesya Krynytska and I am currently working on my Master's dissertation devoted to identifying and analysing the role that pronunciation has in ESL classrooms and textbooks in Spain. Another aim of my project is to analyse the methods and techniques applied by English teachers used for teaching English pronunciation. Most of the questions follow a Likert scale or multiple choice form.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration and opinions.

If any of the questions do not apply to your current situation, please leave them in blank.

This is my email address, just in case you would like to contact me for any reason: alu0100697926@ull.edu.es

1.) How long have you been teaching?

    a) 1-2 years

    b) 3-5 years

    c) 5-6 years

    d) 6-8 years

    e) 8-10 years

2.) Learning how to pronounce correctly in English is important.

 From 1 to 5, where 1 is *absolutely unimportant* -5 is *very important*

3.) English pronunciation is difficult.

From 1 to 5, where 1 is not difficult all – 5 is very difficult

4.) English teachers should have a native-like pronunciation.

From 1 to 5, where 1 is *absolutely agree* and 5 is *absolutely disagree.*

5.) English teachers should aim at obtaining native-like pronunciation from their students.

a) Strongly disagree

a) Disagree

b) Neutral

c) Agree

d) Strongly agree

6.) ESL teachers should have a good knowledge of English phonology in order to teach English as L2?

 a.) Strongly disagree

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b.) Disagree

c.) Neutral

d.) Agree

e.) Strongly agree

7.) Spanish learners tend to have difficulties with English pronunciation.

a.) Strongly disagree

b.) Disagree

c.) Neutral

d.) Agree

e.) Strongly agree

8.) The current programs in the Spanish educational system pay attention to pronunciation-

From 1 to 5, where 1 don't pay attention at all and 5 is pay enough attention.

9.) As a teacher, I feel confident when teaching English pronunciation.

From 1 to 5, where 1 is *not confident at all* and 5 *very confident.*

10.) Enough time is devoted to pronunciation in Spanish ESL classes.

a.) Strongly disagree

b.) Disagree

c.) Neutral

d.) Agree

e.) Strongly agree

11.) I speak in English to my students during the English lessons.

From 1 to 5, where 1 is *never* and 5 is *most of the time.*

12.) My students speak English in the classroom.

a.) Most of them.

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b.) Some of them.

c.) Unfortunately, they speak Spanish most of the time.

13.) The same degree of importance is given to skills of pronunciation and speaking than to writing, reading, and listening.

a.) Strongly disagree

b.) Disagree

c.) Neutral

d.) Agree

e.) Strongly agree

14.) How often do you carry out pronunciation activities in class?

a.) In every session.

b.) Sometimes.

c.) A few times per trimester

d.) Hardly ever

e.) I never carry out any pronunciation activities in class.

15.) How do you teach English pronunciation?

o I use games

o I use songs

o I use computer programs and the ICT tools

o I use phonetic chart

o I use dictionary with word transcriptions

o Other

16.) I teach pronunciation integrated with other skills.

a) Yes.

b) No.

17.) I correct my students' pronunciation mistakes.

    a) Never

    b) Hardly ever

    c) Sometimes

    d) Often

    e) Always

18.) My students like to be corrected.

    a) Yes.

    b) No.

19.) To correct their pronunciation mistakes, I provide them with phonetic transcriptions.

    c) Never

    d) Hardly ever

    e) Sometimes

    f) Often

    g) Always

20.) How do you usually correct your students' pronunciation?

    o I ask them to look for words in a pronunciation dictionary.

    o I make them listen and repeat the correct pronunciation.

    o Other.

21.) What main problems do your students have with English pronunciation?

    ✓ It is an open question.

22.) Which of the below techniques and activities do you carry in the classroom to teach pronunciation?

    o Listening and repeating words or sentences

- Listening to the textbook CD

- Phonetic transcriptions

- Role-plays and dialogues

- Oral production

- Reading aloud tasks

23.) The textbook we use in class includes enough pronunciation activities.

a.) Strongly disagree

b.) Disagree

c.) Neutral

d.) Agree

e.) Strongly agree

24.) The activities I prepare help my students to improve their pronunciation skills.

a.) Strongly disagree

b.) Disagree

c.) Neutral

d.) Agree

e.) Strongly agree

25.) Do you use any other didactic material to teach pronunciation?

It is an open question.

26.) Do you apply any of these methods to teach English pronunciation?

- Silent Way

- Audiolingual method

- Situational Language Learning

- Communicative Language Teaching

o Other

27.) Are you satisfied with your students' pronunciation skills?

a.) Yes, I do.

b.) No, I don't

28.) What variety of English to do you teach your students?

a) British English

b) General American

29.) Do your students master phonetic symbols?

a) Yes, they do.

b) No, they don't.

c) Only some students know how to use them.

30.) Do you pay attention to the prosodic features of pronunciation when teaching English pronunciation?

a) Never

b) Hardly ever

c) Sometimes

d) Often

e) Always

31.) Courses you are currently teaching.

o 1st ESO

o 2nd ESO

o 3rd ESO

o 4th year of ESO

o First year Bachillerato

o Second year Bachillerato

Appendix 3

Self-assessment after implementing the pronunciation activities in class

Dear students, you are welcome to answer some multiple choice and open questions on the implemented pronunciation activities we did in class the other day.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

1.) In English …

    a) The syllables are not equally stressed

    b) The syllables are of equal duration

    c) The word stress is not important

2.) The majority of English words have a …

    a) Germanic, Latin and French origin.

    b) Latin, Spanish and French origin.

    c) French and Dutch origin.

3.) There is an equal number of consonant letters and consonant sounds in English

a) Yes.

b) No.

4.) The noun ADDICT has stress on the.

    a) First syllable

    b) Second syllable

5.) In English there are …

    a.) vowel letters and 12 vowel sounds

    b.) vowel letters and 5 vowel sounds

6.) Words containing the long vowel sounds

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a) *Feel, meet, need, door, moon, good*

b) *Kill, put, fill, not, pot, hot, cut*

7.) If we stress the pronoun ''HE'' in the sentence ''I don't think he should get that job'', we can interpret it as …

    a) I am not sure he will get that job.

    b) Somebody else should get that job.

    c) In my opinion, it is wrong that is going to get that job.

8.) Did you enjoy the two lessons on pronunciation practice?

9.) Did you find the introduction part and the pre-instruction activities of our first lesson useful?

10.)   How would you assess the efficiency and planning of the final speaking task?

11.)   What did you like the most about the two lessons?

12.)   Do you think that you need more input to sound more fluent in English?

Appendix 4

Fidel Chart

Dear students, the following fidel chart is an extra help for you to practice English vowel and consonant sounds. It includes all the possible spellings for each phoneme in English language. The fidel chart can be used as a guide by those students who find it challenging to use and understand the phonetic transcriptions when checking pronunciation in a dictionary and, it also may help you better visualize the problematic sounds of the English language.

Vowel Sound	Spelling	Examples
/**a**:/ long	A, ARE, AU, EAR	c**ar**, f**a**ther, **are**, **au**nt, h**ear**t
/**æ**/ short	A	m**a**d, d**a**d, h**a**t, p**a**n, l**a**ck, **a**pple, b**a**nk, c**a**sh, c**a**tch
/**ʌ**/ short	U, O	c**u**t, f**u**n, b**u**t; l**o**ve, c**o**ver,
/**i:**/ long	EE, EA, E-E, E, IE	f**ee**t, m**ee**t; **ea**t, l**ea**ve, cr**ea**m, p**ea**s; sc**e**ne; m**e**; p**ie**ce;
/**i**/ short	I	k**i**t, r**i**ch, p**i**tch, sk**i**n, tw**i**n, ch**i**n
/**e**/ short	E, EA, IE, A, AI	m**e**n, p**e**n, ch**e**ck, s**e**ven; d**ea**th, r**ea**dy; fr**ie**nd; m**a**ny; s**ai**d;
/**ə**/ unstressed syllable , weak position	weak A, weak E, weak O, weak U	**a**way, wom**a**n, sug**a**r; gard**e**n, pap**e**r, und**e**r, lett**u**ce; doct**o**r; c**o**rrect; s**u**pport, fig**u**re, col**o**r;
/**ɜ**:/ long	E, U, I, O, EA	p**er**son, n**e**rve, s**e**rve, n**u**rse, c**u**rse, b**i**rd, th**i**rd, w**o**rk, w**o**rd, **ea**rth, h**ea**rd
/**ʊ**/ short	U, O, OO, OU	f**u**ll, p**u**ll; w**o**lf; f**oo**t, l**oo**k, c**oo**k; c**ou**ld, w**ou**ld, sh**ou**ld;
/**u:**/ long	O, OO, U, OE, OU, UI, UE, EW	l**o**se, f**oo**l, c**oo**l; b**oo**t, r**u**le, r**u**de; sh**oe**s; s**ou**p; br**ui**se; gl**ue**, cl**ue**; n**ew**, f**ew**;
/**ɒ**/ short	O, A, OU	f**o**rk, l**o**ck, d**o**g, r**o**ck, g**o**t, f**o**nd; w**a**nt, w**a**sh, w**a**tch; c**ou**gh;
/**ɔ**:/ long	O, OU, OO, AW, A, AR, AU	sh**o**rt, f**ou**r, d**oo**r, s**aw**, w**a**lk, b**a**ll, c**a**ll, b**ou**ght, w**ar**m, w**ar**, c**au**se

English Diphthongs

/aʊ/	town: |taʊn|, down: |daʊn|, round: |raʊnd|
/aɪ/	fight: |faɪt|, right: |raɪt|, guide: |gaɪd|, idea |aɪˈdɪə|, Chinese |tʃaɪˈniːz|
/eɪ/	pay: |peɪ|, Monday: |ˈmʌndeɪ|, entertainment |entəˈteɪnm(ə)nt|, plane
/eə/	air:|eə|, rare: |reə|, fair: |feə|, care |keə|
/ɪə/	peer: |pɪə|, deer: |dɪə|, mere: |mɪə|, weird |wɪəd|
/əʊ/	low: |ləʊ|, show: |ʃəʊ|, willow: |ˈwɪləʊ|, coach |kəʊtʃ|
/ɔɪ/	toy: |tɔɪ|, coin: |kɔɪn|, cowboy: |ˈkaʊbɔɪ|
/ʊə/	sure: |ʃʊə|, pure: |pjʊə|, lure: |lʊə|

English Consonant Sounds

Voiced	Voiceless
B /b/ book, bag, bought	P /p/ potato, penguin
V /v/ van, vanilla, vehicle	F /f/ five, fun, fought
TH /ð/ this, that, they	TH /θ/ think, thought, throw, Thames
D /d/ dish, daughter, dry	T /t/ ten, tram, touch, try
Z /z/ zoo, zero, zoological, crazy, frozen	S /s/ seven, sour, silk, send
S,G [ʒ] pleasure, leisure, genre, usually	SH,T(ion) /ʃ/, shy, relation, shoes, conversation, organization
J, G /dʒ/ justice, giraffe, juice, just, jacket, gear	CH /tʃ/ cheese, choose, check, cherry
G /g/, good, great, goose, green	K,C /k/ king, kitchen, coach, screen
H /h/ , hot, have, his, how, inhabitant	
W /w/, wolf, watch, whale, window	
N /n/, noise, narrow, can, mind	
L,/l/, like, love, listen, clean, fly , live, beautiful	
M /m/ , mice, miracle, melody, America	

R **/r/** , **r**ice, **r**ich, ne**r**ves, **R**omania	
/j/, you |ju|, n**ew** |nju:|, f**ew** |fju:|	
N (final position) **/ŋ/,** si**ng**, ki**ng**, ri**ng**, thi**ng**	