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# **Simple tasks to integrate English Pronunciation in Primary School**

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**Enlace vídeo: <https://youtu.be/ZrG1byAi1A0>**

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## **Resumen**

A pesar de ser defendida y requerida por muchos autores, la pronunciación sigue siendo un elemento del inglés que a penas toma valor en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE) debido a la actitud reacia del profesorado. El objetivo de este trabajo es mostrar la necesidad de integrar la enseñanza de la pronunciación en aulas IFL desde edades muy tempranas, como las son en Educación Primaria. A través de un análisis de diferentes estudios y observaciones sobre la enseñanza y adquisición de la pronunciación, se mostrarán tanto los beneficios de la pronunciación para el desarrollo de la inteligibilidad y una adecuada comunicación, como de la instrucción en edades tempranas por la facilidad de adquirir e imitar sonidos en comparación con edades más adultas. Por otra parte, teniendo en cuenta la influencia de la lengua materna en la pronunciación del inglés y de las variables individuales de los estudiantes, se desarrollarán tareas sencillas que puedan ser introducidas en el aula por cualquier maestro, independientemente de su nivel de formación o de pronunciación.

*Palabras clave:* Educación Primaria; pronunciación; integración; inteligibilidad; tareas sencillas.

## **Abstract**

Even though it is defended and required by several authors, pronunciation still is an element of English that barely has any value in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom due to the reluctance of teachers. The objective of this paper is to show the need of integrate pronunciation instruction in EFL classrooms since early ages, as in Primary Education. Through an analysis of different studies and observations about the teaching and acquisition of pronunciation, the benefits of pronunciation for the development of intelligibility and an adequate communication will be shed light onto, as well as of the instruction in early ages because of the ease to acquire and imitate sounds in comparison to adults. Moreover, taking into account the influence the mother tongue and the individual variables of the students have on English pronunciation, simple tasks will be developed that can be introduced in the classroom by any teacher, independently from their formation or pronunciation level.

*Keywords:* Primary Education; pronunciation; integration; intelligibility; simple tasks.

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## INTRODUCCIÓN

Desde hace varios años el inglés es considerado como una lengua internacional, una lengua vehicular que permite la comunicación entre personas que no comparten la misma lengua materna. Tal es su valor que su enseñanza es incluida en el Sistema Educativo Español a través de la asignatura obligatoria de *Inglés*, en donde los estudiantes adquieren las diferentes habilidades de esta lengua y aprender aspectos culturales de los países angloparlantes. No obstante, hay un elemento de esta lengua que no posee el mismo valor que el resto para los maestros del inglés.

La pronunciación es defendida por varios autores, Burns (2003), Pourhosein (2016a), y Silfiani (2017), como necesaria y requerida para una adecuada comunicación. No obstante, la enseñanza de esta tiende a ser considerada como innecesaria e incluso una pérdida de tiempo por varios maestros, debido a que, por ejemplo, la gramática y el vocabulario son considerados por la comunidad educativa como los determinantes de un alto nivel de inglés y una comunicación inteligible. Por otra parte, una gran cantidad de maestros consideran la enseñanza de la pronunciación demasiado complicada para instruida por ellos, en parte por la falta de formación en esta área, y de un nivel de pronunciación cercano al nativo (Calvo, 2016).

Como se puede observar, existe una dicotomía entre las visiones de los maestros y las de varios autores. Estos defienden la enseñanza de la pronunciación en el aula de inglés, sobre todo desde edades muy tempranas, debido a que es un elemento indispensable para una correcta comunicación, transmisión de ideas y para ser considerado inteligible. Esta visión es defendida y demostrada mediante los resultados obtenidos en varios estudios, los cuales serán comentados en el apartado *1.2.1. Teachability*.

Si nuestro objetivo como maestros es ayudar a que nuestro alumnado adquiera la competencia comunicativa, la cual es recogida en el Currículum de Primaria en Navarra, la enseñanza de la pronunciación debe formar parte del aula de inglés y tomar el mismo valor que tienen el resto de los elementos y habilidades de esta lengua. Los objetivos de este trabajo son mostrar que la pronunciación es necesaria para una adecuada comunicación, mejorar la transmisión de información y para ser entendidos; además de solventar el rechazo que genera la enseñanza de esta área a través de la visibilización de sus beneficios y de actividades para ser introducidas en el aula sin necesidad de una formación extensa.

La primera parte de este trabajo consistirá en entender qué es la pronunciación y cuál es su valor en la lengua inglesa. Después, analizaremos si se puede enseñar y en el caso de que sea posible, los beneficios que presenta ser instruida en el aula de Primaria. Seguidamente, se observará su situación actual en el Curriculum de Primaria en Navarra, y los factores a tener en cuenta debido a la lengua materna de los estudiantes, en este caso el castellano, y las variables individuales. Como solución se propondrán diferentes actividades que pueden ser incluidas y usadas diariamente en el aula de inglés por un profesorado sin alta formación en el aula, con el objetivo de introducir la pronunciación de una manera más sencilla e integrada. Estas estarán recogidas en un manual para el profesorado, que contará con los pasos a seguir para el correcto desarrollo de varias actividades junto con materiales que pueden ser usados en el aula.

## 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 1.1. The role of pronunciation in English Teaching

#### 1.1.1. *What is pronunciation?*

In this section, an analysis of several definitions of pronunciation will be conducted to help us grasp a comprehensive understanding of this complex concept. For example, Yates (2002) stated that pronunciation is the production of sounds that is used for making meaning. When we deal with the pronunciation of a specific language, phonology is the scientific discipline that studies how meaning is achieved by means of the combination of sounds in a given system. McMahon (2002) defines phonology in relation to English as follows:

When we turn to the characteristics of the English sound system that make it specifically English, and different from French or Welsh or Quechua, we move into the domain of phonology, which is the language-specific selection and organisation of sounds to signal meanings. (McMahon, 2002, p. 2).

In another definition, Trask (1996) defines pronunciation as “the manner in which speech sounds, especially connected sequences, are articulated by individual speakers or by speakers generally” (p. 291). This interpretation of pronunciation sheds light onto how pronunciation is comprised of other elements besides phonemes, which are small units of sounds that distinguish words from each other as stated by Delahunty and Garvey (2010). According to Pennington and Richards (1986) pronunciation involves a complex interaction of perceptual, articulatory, and interactional factors, which are described in terms of three types of features:

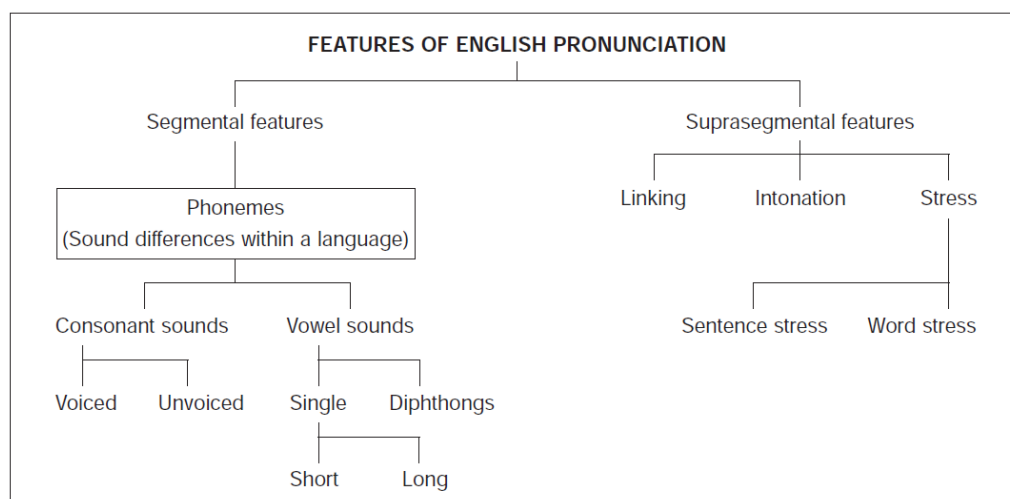
- Segmental features: the minimal units of sound defined in phonetic terms, that is, phonemes.
- Voice-setting features: general articulatory characteristics of stretches of speech, which result in a characteristic voice quality.
- Prosodic features: stress and intonation. Stress refers to the degree of effort involved in the production of individual syllables or combinations of syllables making up a word or longer utterance, whereas intonation refers to the making of connected stretches of speech coherent and interpretable by the listener.

Similarly, Burns (2003) illustrates in her diagram (see Figure 1) that pronunciation involves features at a segmental and a suprasegmental level. The segmental features relate to sounds at a micro level, how these sounds are pronounced individually. Meanwhile, suprasegmental features relate to sounds at the macro level, meaning, during speech. Three aspects need to be considered at the suprasegmental level:

- Linking: the way the last sound of one word is joined to the first sounds of the next word.
- Intonation: refers to the melody of the language, the way the voice moves in order to provide meaning according to the context.
- Stress: the prominence given to certain words or syllables according to the meaning and context of communication.

**Figure 1.**

*Diagram of features of English Pronunciation*



*Note.* Adapted from Features of English (p. 6), by A. Burns, 2003.

Despite the fact that pronunciation is comprised of several features that study sounds as both individual sounds and connected speech, pronunciation is still perceived as the articulation of individual sounds: “For most language teachers, pronunciation is largely identified with the articulation of individual sounds and, to a lesser extent, with the stress and intonation patterns of the target language” (Pennington and Richards, 1986, p. 208). Contrary to this widely spread view, Burns (2003) argues that albeit segmental features are important, teaching suprasegmental features can enhance the learner’s intelligibility.



In short, pronunciation is defined by several authors as the way sounds are articulated by the speaker in connected speech. It involves certain features that can be grouped mainly into two categories: segmental features, which take into account individual and isolated sounds, and suprasegmental features, which entail elements that are present during speech.

### **1.1.2. Significance of pronunciation in English**

“By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century English was already well on its way to becoming a *lingua franca*, that is a language used widely for communication between people who do not share the same first language” (Harmer, 2001, p. 13). In recent years, learning English has become a necessity due to the benefits a *lingua franca* provides, which can range from gaining access to a great variety of information to allowing people with different vernaculars to share and exchange ideas. Owing to the importance of English as a global language, throughout the years the number of non-native speakers of English has increased, even surpassing the number of native speakers: “There are currently around 1.5 billion speakers of English worldwide, of whom only some 329 million are native speakers” (Harmer, 2001, p. 13). In sum, English has taken over our lives. It has become a valuable language needed for us to communicate with other people, and English teaching methodologies have rapidly developed. In this section we will discuss the specific relevance of pronunciation in the acquisition of English.

Language teaching methodologies usually offer activities to deal with the four skills that conform a language: listening, reading, writing and speaking. Listening and speaking, both part of the oral skills, are closely connected to pronunciation, as stated by Silfiani (2017): “Pronunciation is part of the speaking skill, which is truly important to make the communication run well” (p. 3). However, Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu (2011) declared that many teachers tend to teach grammar, vocabulary, and the four language skills to their learners without incorporating English pronunciation into their curriculum (as cited in Pourhosein, 2016a, p. 3). This awareness of pronunciation instruction being neglected in favour of grammar and vocabulary, among others, was also noticed by Guisarre (2018), who affirmed that many English teachers prefer to invest time in teaching grammar and vocabulary than pronunciation.

Nonetheless, grammar and vocabulary, which are the focus of most English lessons, may not have the same significance as pronunciation has in communication, that is, in understanding and being successfully understood. Celce-Murcia and Goodwin (1991) stated the following: “There is a threshold level of pronunciation in English such that if a given non-native speaker’s pronunciation falls below this level, no matter how good his or her control of English grammar and vocabulary might be, he or she

will not be able to communicate orally with native speakers” (as cited in Hismanoglu, 2006, p. 104). Pronunciation seems to be critical for successful communication to happen, a major asset in oral communication, qualifying the belief that grammar and vocabulary are not the only elements needed for one to be understood. Harmer (2001) enunciates that pronunciation is the first element noticed by a native speaker during a conversation, whereas grammar and vocabulary are futile components of the language when not pronounced accurately (as cited in Pourhosein, 2016a, p. 3). It is more important for English speakers to achieve intelligibility, comprehensibility and interpretability as commented by Burns (2003, p. 5). These elements are pivotal for effective communication, in addition to clear pronunciation, as they allow meaning and interpretation to happen in a conversation, which would not occur with only the possession of proficient levels of grammar and vocabulary:

For example, a speaker might say *It's hot today* as *IS ho day*. This is unlikely to be intelligible because of inaccurate sound, stress and intonation patterns. As a result, a listener would not find the speaker comprehensible, because meaning is not available. Because the speaker is incomprehensible, the listener would also not be able to interpret the utterance as an indirect request to open the window. Clear pronunciation is essential in spoken communication. Even where learners produce minor inaccuracies in vocabulary and grammar, they are more likely to communicate effectively when they have good pronunciation and intonation. (Burns, 2003, p. 5)

Moreover, Gilbert (1984) states that pronunciation and listening comprehension skills are intertwined, meaning that if the receiver cannot comprehend what the sender is saying, their communication is hindered, thus prompting the conversation to an end (as cited in Hismanoglu, 2006, p. 104). This idea is supported by Nootboom (1983) who suggests that speech production is affected by speech perception, as the hearer is an important factor in communicative discourse (as cited in Hismanoglu, 2006, p. 105).

Pronunciation is a crucial factor in oral communication, which tends to be neglected by the focus of most English lessons. Frequently, English as foreign language (EFL) lessons focus on grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, English teaching should aim towards pronunciation instruction, specifically, intelligible pronunciation, as it is an essential component of communicative competence (Morley, 1991, as cited in Pourhosein, 2016a, p. 1). However, according to Kenworthy (1987), some teachers imply that teaching pronunciation cannot be useful because only a few learners will achieve native-like pronunciation (as cited in Pourhosein, 2016a, p. 3). Albeit perfect pronunciation may seem an objective learners should aspire to, as stated by Morley (1991), “One of the primary goals of teaching

pronunciation in any course is intelligible pronunciation, not perfect pronunciation. Intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence” (as cited in Pourhosein, 2012, p. 119). Harmor (2010) identifies that some learners may want to keep their foreign accents in order not to lose their identities, whereas other learners will not be able to achieve a perfect pronunciation. Thereby, native-like pronunciation is an inappropriate objective for most learners, and realistic aims should be sought for pronunciation instruction regarding the communicative needs of the learners, as expressed by Morley (1991, as cited in Pourhosein, 2012, p. 119). These ideas will be thoroughly discussed in the next section.

In this section the relevance of pronunciation as a key element in successful communication has been highlighted. In particular, this section has shed light onto the relevance of pronunciation to achieve intelligibility by English learners. An issue which has been discussed by several authors and is supported by empirical findings.

## **1.2. Teaching pronunciation**

### ***1.2.1. Teachability***

Pronunciation is one, if not the most, underdeveloped aspect of the English language in EFL classrooms: “Pronunciation has sometimes been referred to as the poor relation of the English language teaching world. It is an aspect of language which is often given little attention, if not completely ignored, by the teacher in the classroom” (Brown, 1991, as cited in Barrera-Pardo, 2004, p. 7). Pourhosein (2016b) explains that English teachers consider achieving pronunciation a process of significant difficulty in comparison to other aspects of English. Moreover, pronunciation is also seen as the least useful language skill, thereby, many teachers decide not to teach it so to spend time on other language aspects. In this section, it will be discussed whether pronunciation can be taught or not, and if possible, what the real outcomes of introducing pronunciation instruction are through the findings of various studies.

The belief that pronunciation instruction is a waste of instructional time is shared by several researchers. Pica (1994) defends her view on pronunciation teaching being an unrealistic goal by saying that there is no evidence that proves the effectiveness of giving emphasis to accurate pronunciation. According to her, students are unable to attain precise control of the English sound system as accent is unteachable and accent acquisitions only happens in real-life linguistic interaction. Dalton and Seidlehofer (1994) addressed the existence of an inverse relationship between what is teachable and what is important for communication. This is because there are aspects that are considered teachable

for being easy to describe, whereas others, such as intonation, are dependent on individual factors and impossible to isolate for teaching.

As we have seen in the previous section, pronunciation is a crucial factor for proper communication and achieving an intelligible pronunciation should be the primary focus of English lessons. Though pronunciation is deemed as an important element in teaching for many authors, few others see the instruction of it as ineffective due to the lack of teachability. In this section we will review the outcomes of several studies that research the effects of pronunciation instruction to determine the teachability of pronunciation and the effectiveness of its instruction.

Stevens (1989) designed drama activities in which learners had to mirror the speech of American students by repeating words and imitating suprasegmental features, like intonation and rhythm. Students were evaluated through SPEAK tests, and the scores showed a gain of 36 points in average from pre- to post- SPEAK tests.

Perlmutter (1989) compared intelligibility ratings of International Teaching Assistants for pre- and post- intervention speech samples. These samples were evaluated by undergraduate students in terms of intelligibility of the sample and the identification of the topic and showed a significant improvement on both variables. The results lead the author to conclude that there is a correlation between intervention and improved intelligibility.

Derwing and Rossiter (2003) carried out an experiment in which English students were divided into three groups: one group was taught with a segmental focus during their EFL lessons, another group was taught with a more global focus, and the last groups paid no specific attention to pronunciation during their lessons. Their speech samples were then evaluated by ESL teachers, who were asked to identify errors and classified as mistakes that interfered with comprehensibility or merely salient mistakes. The group taught with a segmental focus had fewer phonological accuracy errors, but their overall performance showed no improvement. Meanwhile, the global focus groups rated higher in comprehensibility and fluency by the end of the experiment. The group that did not focus on pronunciation showed no improvement. These findings made the authors conclude that “if the goal of pronunciation teaching is to help students become more understandable, then this study suggests that it should include a stronger emphasis on prosody” (p. 14).

Missaglia (1999) compared two groups of adult Italian learners of German. The first group received a suprasegmental-centred phonetic training, while the second group received a segment-

centred training. Albeit this study focuses on German pronunciation, the results can be applicable to the English language, as the focus of the study is to see what type of pronunciation instruction provides better outcomes. The group who had received a suprasegmental-centred training had improved their pronunciation significantly in comparison to the other group, meaning that focusing on suprasegmental features improves the overall pronunciation of students.

Through the findings of these studies, we can conclude that pronunciation can be taught as learners showed an improvement, that is a change, in their pronunciation through mere intervention and instruction. Moreover, it is important to note that the type of instruction is a determining factor on whether the learners improve their performance or not. Training focused more on suprasegmental features, such as intonation, stress and rhythm, yielded better results than when instruction focused more on segmental features, like individual sounds. Thereby, pronunciation instruction should be included in EFL lessons in order to promote the intelligibility of the students, without forgetting to focus on suprasegmental features during the teaching.

### ***1.2.2. Teaching pronunciation in Elementary School***

Primary students' age ranges from 6 to 12 years old. These students, due to their young age, may present certain advantages when learning a new language. "The age of our students is a major factor in our decisions about how and what to teach. People of different ages have different needs, competences and cognitive skills" (Harmer, 2001, p. 81). Age is an element that cannot be dismissed when teaching second and foreign languages. According to Harmer (2001), it is commonly believed that young children learn a new language faster and more effectively than adults. However, this is not always the case, especially in foreign language contexts: "The optimal age of second-language learning appears to depend partly on which aspect of L2 performance is being measured. Morphology and syntax are mastered more rapidly by adults than by children, and more rapidly by older than by young children" (Tahta et al., 1981, p. 363). Grammar, which as we have mentioned in the previous sections, is usually the main focus of EFL lessons, but this may not be the most appropriate approach to teaching as young children have more difficulties to acquire grammar than adults.

Pronunciation acquisition, on the other hand, is excelled by children. As stated by Harmer (2001), children that learn a new language early on their lives acquire pronunciation more easily in contrast to their older counterparts. This is due to children having particular aptitudes for phonological acquisition, for instance, phonological awareness, and being superior at imitative activities in comparison to older learners (Pourhosein, 2016b). Nonetheless, the main reason for children having

facility to learn pronunciation is because of the existence of a critical period in language development. According Celce-Murcia et al. (1996) this critical period can explain the ease through which children acquire pronunciation which is a determined period of life during which maximal conditions for acquiring the language exist (as cited in Pourhosein, 2016b, p. 317). Once learners overcome this critical period, they will face several difficulties that hinder the learning of pronunciation. Kenworthy (1987) indicates that this critical period for pronunciation acquisition is between the ages of ten and thirteen, which corresponds to the ages of the students of in the later years of elementary school and first years of high school.

A study conducted by Tahta et al. (2005) sought to find whether age differences affected on the replication of intonation and pronunciation. The results showed that the ability to replicate pronunciation declined with age, whereas the ability to replicate intonation was maintained till the age of 8 but declined exponentially until 11.

In sum, the ability of learners to acquire pronunciation and intonation decreases with age, creating difficulties to learn these features at an older age. Providing students with pronunciation instruction at a younger age can help them achieve higher levels of pronunciation proficiency before they reach the critical period, which is around the age when they start high school. English lessons at elementary school change their teaching focus from grammar-centred to pronunciation-centred lessons, as young learners of these ages have more advantages when acquiring pronunciation features than grammar ones.

### **1.3. Current situation of pronunciation instruction in the Spanish Educational System: A brief analysis of the Primary Education Curriculum of Navarra**

A brief analysis of the Primary Education curriculum of Navarra will be carried out in this section to see how pronunciation is integrated and instructed in the Spanish Educational System. It can be seen that the contents of the subject of English are divided into 4 main blocks: *Comprensión de textos orales*, *Producción de textos orales*, *Comprensión de textos escritos* y *Producción de textos escritos*. Each of these blocks can be associated, correspondingly, to the 4 main skills of any language: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The block of *Producción de textos escritos*, which englobes the speaking skill, is comprised by the following sections:

- *Estrategias de producción: Production strategies*
- *Aspectos socioculturales y sociolingüísticos: Sociocultural and linguistic aspects*
- *Funciones comunicativas: Communicative functions*
- *Estructuras sintácticas: Syntactic structures*
- *Léxico oral de alta frecuencia: High frequency oral lexicon*
- *Patrones sonoros, acentuales, rítmicos y de entonación: Sound, stress, rhythmic and intonation patterns*

(Translated by Fernández, R.)

The last section references pronunciation, and when compared to the previous sections, the content found in it seems to be minimal. Although the contents that appear try to deepen into the areas of imitation of rhythm, stress, and intonation, there is a lack of presence of the instruction of phonemes, and the phonemes that are said to be taught by the curriculum are ones that are similar and suppose no difficulty for Spanish speakers.

The learning of the English alphabet is repeated throughout all Primary courses, even though the alphabet is not an accurate representation of the English phonetic system, as there is not a one-to-one correspondence between a letter and a phoneme, especially in the case of vowels. As we have said before, imitation of suprasegmental features is present in the curriculum. However, this is done only through the use of songs, not real-life situations or conversations. Even though songs can be an adequate way to introduce students to English pronunciation, sometimes the suprasegmental features found in songs, such as intonation, differ from real-life conversations.

To sum up, pronunciation is developed with the speaking skills, alongside other elements that conform this skill, such as the lexicon and the sociocultural aspects of speech. Nonetheless, pronunciation contents seem to be minimal in comparison to the other speaking elements, in addition to departing themselves from a contextualized instruction.

#### **1.4. The challenges of English Pronunciation for Spanish speakers**

Learners of English whose mother tongue is Spanish face several difficulties when it comes to the pronunciation of the English language. Owing to the phonological differences between these two languages, Spanish students may find it complicated to articulate specific sounds that are non-existent in Spanish as well as to replicate the suprasegmental features of English, such as intonation, stress and

rhythm, as they differ from one language to another. According to Swan & Smith (2001), Spanish-speaking learners of English, European Spanish speakers in particular, find English pronunciation harder than the speakers of other European languages due to the differences between these two vernaculars.

Guisarre (2018) states that Spanish speakers will encounter a great number of difficulties when pronouncing English phonemes because part of them do not appear in Spanish, thus, to help students acquire the key linguistic competences to achieve intelligibility teachers must properly instruct them. As a means to help students communicate efficiently in English, EFL teachers have to recognize the problems derived from having Spanish as a mother tongue that students may face when learning English pronunciation. With a focus on tackling them through the creation and adaptation of classroom materials and methodologies. In the following sections, we will discuss the challenges that Spanish speakers have when speaking in English.

#### **1.4.1. Phonemes**

The phonological system of RP English is constituted of 44 phonemes, 24 of which are consonants and 20 are vowels. Spanish language is formed by 24 phonemes, 5 vowels and 19 consonants in total. According to Tapia (2017), around 15 phonemes are present in both languages, 5 of them appear only in Spanish, and 9 are exclusive to English. This creates certain difficulties for Spanish speakers as they have to pronounce sounds that they are not used to hearing because they are non-existent in their mother tongue.

In Figure 2, Swan & Smith (2001) illustrate the consonants Spanish speakers of English have challenges with. The shaded phonemes have equivalents or near equivalents in Spanish, and are pronounced without serious difficulty, although some complications may arise. One of them being that near equivalents are sometimes difficult to acquire as we are unaware of them. The unshaded phonemes, on the other hand, are consonants that cause problems because they are inherent of the English language. We could not provide an inventory of this comparative analysis here, but we will provide some examples to illustrate the challenges of English phonemes for Spanish speakers. For instance, the phoneme /z/ does not exist as a phoneme, so Spanish students tend to /s/ instead as is the most approximate consonant sound to it. Thereby, the word lazy /'leɪzi/ is pronounced the same as lacy /'leɪsi/, which inevitably would cause accentedness and, might also cause confusion as the change in the phoneme changes the meaning. According to Tapia (2017), when there is a change in the pronunciation of consonants in English, the meaning of the words is changed, but students



pronounce certain phonemes interchangeable without being aware of the alteration to the meaning of the word because they are unable to identify the differences between the articulation of these sounds. It is important to notice that the unshaded phonemes in Figure 2 correspond to voiced phonemes, which use vibration of the vocal folds in order to be articulated. Tapia (2017) states that in Spanish, the use of voicing consonants is not so frequent. Hence, Spanish learners of English may have difficulty perceiving and producing them.

**Figure 2.**

*Table of English consonants.*

p	b	f	v	θ	ð	t	d
s	z	ʃ	ʒ	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
m	n	ŋ	l	r	j	w	h

Note. Adapted from Table of Consonants (p. 91), by M. Swan & B. Smith, 2001.

According to Swan & Smith (2001), Spanish has five pure vowels and five diphthongs, but length is not a distinctive feature of the Spanish vowels. Consequently, learners struggle differentiating and identifying English vowels, in particular, vowel qualities. Furthermore, Spanish speakers cannot make one-to-one correspondences between English and Spanish vowels because “at least two English vowels share the phonetic space occupied by one Spanish vowel” (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 91).

In addition to the above, it is important to underscore that spelling and pronunciation are closely related in Spanish as sounds are pronounced the way they are written, which affects how English is pronounced by Spanish speakers: “beginning learners tend to pronounce English words letter by letter” (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 94). Therefore, spelling has a significant influence on how Spanish speakers pronounce English words, as certain phonemes may be mispronounced because they are articulated as their corresponding letter. For instance, /ə/ is an unstressed phoneme that does not exist in Spanish and tends to be pronounced with the written vowel. In the word teacher /'ti:tʃə/, the /ə/ is dropped and changed to an /e/ because the phoneme /ə/ corresponds to the letters e and r, and it is consequently pronounced as /'ti:tʃer/.

#### **1.4.2. Intonation, stress and rhythm**

Swan & Smith (2001) defined Spanish as a syllable-timed language, in which all syllables are pronounced with the same length, making no distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables. In English, on the other hand, stressed and unstressed syllables are distinguishable from each other because they are pronounced differently as they provide information about the structure and meaning of the sentence:

Since content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs) are stressed in English, they are therefore relatively prominent as compared with the unstressed grammatical words (articles, pronouns, prepositions, auxiliary verbs). So, the stress and rhythm of an English sentence give a lot of acoustic clues to structure and meaning. When Spanish speakers pronounce an English sentence with even stress and rhythm, these clues are missing, and English listeners find it difficult to understand because they cannot so easily decode the structure. (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 95)

Spanish learners of English tend to use the same stress pattern they use in their mother tongue when speaking in English, which causes intelligibility problems and inevitably hinders communication. Kenworthy (1987) states that when native speakers mishear a word, it is usually because the foreigner speaker has stressed the wrong syllable, not because they have mispronounced the phonemes of the word. This implies that stress and rhythm have a hefty impact on communication and being proficient in those features may help one be better understood than pronouncing every phoneme correctly.

According to Kenworthy (1987), intonation is needed for intelligibility, because through the pitch of the voice we express intentions: "A speaker can show that he or she is asking for information, seeking agreement through the intonation of the voice" (p. 19). Swan & Smith (2001) state that "European Spanish tends to use a narrower pitch range than English, and emphatic stress is expressed in extra length rather than in extra pitch variation. Thus, some speakers may sound unenthusiastic or bored to the English ears" (p. 96).

Spanish speakers are prone to be misjudged due to their limited pitch range and are subjects of the cumulative effect of intonation exposed by Kenworthy (1987): "The effect of intonation can be cumulative: the misunderstandings may be minor, but if they occur constantly then they may result in judgements about the attitudes of a particular speaker" (p. 19). In addition, deviations in intonation not only result in one being misjudged but also lead to be misunderstood: "an inappropriate intonation pattern can lead to misunderstanding just as a mispronounced sound can" (Kenworthy, 1987, p. 19).

Overall, Spanish speakers face several challenges when trying to pronounce and speak English due to the differences between these two language systems. On one hand, Spanish is constituted by less phonemes than English, difficulting Spanish speakers the recognition and imitation of phonemes that do not exist in their mother tongue. On the other hand, learners may apply their language suprasegmental patterns when speaking English, resulting in intelligibility issues, as intonation, stress and rhythm vary from language to language.

### **1.4.3. Individual variables**

Besides the overt effects that the mother tongue of learners of English has on the learning of pronunciation, individual factors play a crucial role on whether a student achieves intelligible pronunciation or not. In this section, we will discuss several individual variables that have to be considered when devising classroom materials and activities.

#### **1.4.3.1. Identity**

“Pronunciation is a central component of face-to-face interaction and is consequently part of the process by which speakers present an image of themselves to others” (Pennington & Richards, 1986, p. 215). Pronunciation is another tool used by learners of English to create a sense of personal identity. Some students may want to retain certain phonological features of their first language to make their accent more prominent or salient because those features are part of their identity, as stated by Harmer (2001). Nevertheless, a person’s identity should not be exclusively associated with the presence of foreign phonological features in their speech. Aiming towards perfect pronunciation and presenting native-like features when talking should be considered elements of one’s identity. Some groups of learners actively seek to integrate themselves in the target culture and want to be identified with those speakers, so they try to attain a native accent when speaking English (Pennington & Richards, 1986). Harmer (2001) defends that whether the objective of our students is to sound like a native speaker or to keep their foreign accent, intelligibility should still be the goal in pronunciation instruction.

#### **1.4.3.2. Motivation**

Motivation is widely considered one of the most important factors of language learning, and can yield positive results when used positively (Dörnyei, 1998). According to Shaaban (2002), it determines the success of developing skills when learning a new language. Motivation is explained by Harmer (2001) as “an internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something” (p. 98). Having

a personal or professional goal for learning English can influence the desire for achieving native-like pronunciation (Pourhosein, 2012). When talking about motivation, a distinction is made between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation:

Extrinsic motivation is the result of any number of outside factors, for example the need to pass an exam, the hope of financial reward or the possibility of future travel. Intrinsic motivation, by contrast, comes from within the individual. Thus, a person might be motivated by the enjoyment of the learning process itself or by a desire to make themselves feel better. (Harmer, 2001)

Students have defined different goals when learning English. Some students are driven by the enjoyment of learning a new language and may want to achieve almost perfect pronunciation, whereas others may want to achieve the bare minimum skills to pass the English subject. It is highly rewarding to identify the reasons for which students pursue learning English in order to create activities that meet their needs:

It is hence positive to know the reasons why our students study a foreign language because it will help us in the organization of our classes, in our daily behaviour towards our students and in the selection of teaching activities and materials (Palacios, 2014, p. 23)

Albeit motivated students are more likely to learn a language efficiently, their level of motivation can vary throughout the course due to internal and external reasons, such as personal problems or the degree of enjoyment of the classroom activities (Calvo, 2016). Palacios (2014) contends that teachers are able to detect those students with high motivation and those who do not present it. Teachers should try to identify when and why the students are unmotivated and find solutions to overcome this situation. When learning English pronunciation, students may feel demotivated due to the difficulties that arise from being a Spanish speaker, however, we should pursue motivating our students because it will increase their chances of learning to pronounce English properly (Calvo, 2016).

#### **1.4.3.3. Aptitude**

Aptitude is defined by Harmer (2001) as “an ability which helps an individual perform any task, such as acquiring appropriate pronunciation of the second language” (p. 41). Zhang (2009, as cited in Khan, 2019, p. 8) observed that in ESL classrooms, some students made higher progress in acquiring pronunciation as compared to the others. This was the result of the possession of these students of a

set of characteristics, known as aptitude, that facilitated the learning of pronunciation. Calvo (2016) indicated that students who obtain a proficient level of pronunciation have better inherent phonological and phonetic abilities.

#### **1.4.3.4. Anxiety**

Horwitz et al. (1986, as cited in Calvo, 2016, p. 43) defined anxiety as “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry”. It is very common for learners to present a certain degree of anxiety in any language class. Horwitz et al. (1986) named this type of anxiety as foreign language anxiety and poses a negative influence on language learning. “It causes students on such occasions to frequently fail to give their best, obtaining grades which do not fully show their knowledge in the language, which may make them become unmotivated and with a low self-esteem” (Rubio, 2002, as cited in Calvo, 2016, p. 43).

Horwitz et al. (1986, as cited in Calvo, 2016, p. 44) distinguished between three situations in which students feel anxiety in language classes:

- Communicative apprehension: fear to communicate with other people
- Test anxiety: fear of failure when taking an exam
- Fear of negative evaluation: it englobes test anxiety alongside with other situations in which students are evaluated, for instance, when speaking in a language class

Calvo (2016) identified several reasons that may account for the that Spanish learners of English feel anxious when communicating orally during an English lesson. According to this author, student may fear that their classmates will laugh at them when making mistakes or speaking with a native-like accent. Another reason for students presenting anxiety during the English class is that speaking entails more people being involved in the test, meaning more people is going to evaluate and judge the student, whereas writing tends not to directly involve other people.

In sum, students’ individual variables have to be taken into account by the teachers when creating activities, due to the influence that they have on the acquisition of an intelligible pronunciation. These variables, such as anxiety or motivation, can determine the students’ view on English and whether improve their pronunciation or not.

## **2. PEDAGOGICAL PROPOSALS TO INTEGRATE PRONUNCIATION INTO THE EFL CLASSROOM**

### **2.1. Objectives**

The main objective of this paper is to improve student's pronunciation by explicitly focusing on this aspect via the integration of pronunciation activities in the regular EFL lessons. As discussed in previous sections, pronunciation can be exponentially developed when taught as another content of the lessons. So, the thought of including this area of the language in EFL lessons is not far-fetched, however, not all activities or pedagogical proposals are suited to improve pronunciation. The corresponding research question would be the following: Can we teach pronunciation with simple activities in Primary School? In the following sections I will develop a pedagogical proposal to integrate pronunciation activities in the classroom.

I decided to focus on developing simple activities because pronunciation instruction is thought to require a good knowledge and training in order to be properly taught. Calvo (2016) states that "not everyone can teach pronunciation and one needs to have received some type of training prior to teaching this language are to EFL students" (p. 428). Despite pronunciation training being needed to teach this area, there seems to be a lack in training in degrees or courses for future teachers of English. In a study carried out by Calvo (2016), most teachers denied having received specific training on how to teach pronunciation.

However, it cannot be expected for teacher to receive a specific training in this area if it is widely considered across all the Educational System as an element of English without any value. Thereby, in the subsequent sections I will present various activities to integrate pronunciation into the daily practice. These activities will be characterized by their simplicity and the lack of phonological formation needed by the teachers to apply them in their English lessons. By introducing these simple activities, a shift on how pronunciation is viewed can be induced, as students will be able to improve their intelligibility and overall pronunciation progressively. Each activity will focus on developing different features of pronunciation, such as stress, intonation, etc., while tackling certain difficulties students may have due to their mother-tongue or in connection to some of the individual variables explained in the theoretical framework.

## **2.2. Proposals for developing suprasegmental features**

In this section, I will be presenting different activities that aim to develop the suprasegmental features of English, those being intonation, rhythm and stress. These activities try to make students imitate these features as they are found in real life contexts, and by using mainly authentic materials.

### **2.2.1. Dramatization**

According to Cárdenas & Robayo (2001), dramatization activities improve speaking skills “as students use language in communicative situations related to their lives.” (p.12). With these activities, pronunciation is practiced in a contextualized and meaningful way. Dramatization is particularly good for students to improve and develop the suprasegmental features of English (stress, rhythm, and intonation) through the imitation of native conversations in real life situations. The students are provided with a model of how native speakers pronounce in several contexts. Students try to imitate the speech of the scene and can also recreate the scenery, which will help them make their imitation in a more authentic manner. In turn, the activity will be more achievable and entertaining.

Therefore, dramatization activities are a tool that should not be disregarded by English teachers due to the several benefits for improving pronunciation. Hence, in this subsection a dramatization activity is devised with the aim that Primary teachers can include it in their English lessons as a tool to promote pronunciation. This activity follows a structure so that it can be carefully controlled by the teacher, albeit it can be adapted according to several factors, such as the students’ level, goals of the teacher, etc.

The dramatization activity consists of the recreation of a scene of a film or a TV show. Some students may prefer to create their own scene, rather than replicate an existing one. However, this poses several drawbacks, because of the lack of a real reference for acquiring and developing suprasegmental features, such as intonation. Nonetheless, if students create their own scenes, they can showcase their creativity and imagination skills, which are usually concealed when recreating an existing scene. Thereby, in this dramatization activity, besides the recreation of a scene of a film, we will include at the end a brief segment of improvisation. In this segment, students will use their creativity skills to add continue the story of the scene they are recreation. This can be beneficial because students may feel more in control of the activity, as they can create and image new conversations and situations for the scene. Moreover, it can serve as a tool to see whether students are able to apply the suprasegmental features they have imitated in the existing scene or not.

The first step of this activity is the selection of the scene. Providing all groups with the same scene to recreate may demotivate some students due to the lack of freedom and individuality, as they are not able to choose the scene to dramatize. Moreover, comparisons are bound to be made, which can develop anxiety or demotivation in some students. They may compare themselves with the rest of the students and feel their pronunciation level or development progress is lower than their classmates. When a list with various scenes is provided, some of these issues may be solved. Students can choose the scene they want from the list. As these scenes are different, comparisons are reduced, and students may feel more interested in their classmates' final product. Furthermore, the teacher has to assure that the scenes recreate real-life situations so that students learn how to communicate effectively in these contexts.

After selecting the scene, it is required to identify the important elements for imitating the scene. A script of the scene will be provided, which will be used as a draft to identify and annotate all the suprasegmental features that make the scene pleasant to hear, that is, native-like. For instance, students may highlight when the sound in a sentence goes up or down, how certain sounds may disappear when said in a sentence, etc. This process is needed to be controlled by the teacher, because some students may not be able to identify the elements that provide native-likeness to the scene.

Recreating the scenery is an indispensable step needed if we want students to get into characters or feel more part of the scene. Designing the costumes and props provide students with a feeling of control, autonomy and creativity, as they make the activity their own. This step can be done in coordination with the subject of Arts & Crafts.

The last part of the activity is to perform the dramatization to the class. Some pupils may feel uncomfortable or anxious to show their scene due to fear of public speaking or fear of being judged by their English level. A solution could be to have the scene recorded previously and then presented to the class. This could be a preferred solution for some students due to the lack of public, providing them with a feeling of security that may not have been achieved in a normal context.

Furthermore, positive reinforcement cannot be dismissed by the teacher. As stated by Cárdenas & Robayo (2001), children value being noticed: "The positive attitude of the teacher and the classmates was of vital importance for children to feel that they were doing things well and that their job was recognized" (p. 14). Students feel more motivated and become interested in participating when their output is recognized and valued. Therefore, teachers must create a positive and safe



environment in the class where students feel comfortable enough to present their work to the teacher and their classmates without being afraid of being judged. Dramatization activities can help students become more confident in their skills, but this only occurs when they are supported. Shy students or students with anxiety benefit from these types of activities as they are able to step outside of their comfort zone and face disliked situations that are common in their daily lives, like talking in public. However, this is only achieved if the teacher and the students support each other constantly throughout the whole activity.

### **2.2.2. Shadowing**

There are different techniques and activities that can be introduced in English classes of Primary Education. Shadowing was a technique introduced in Japanese EFL contexts and has since been used in English classrooms to improve the learners' listening and speaking skills. As defined by Hamada (2018), shadowing is "a paced, auditory tracking task which involves the immediate vocalization of auditorily presented stimuli" (p. 387). Learners follow and repeat an audio they have to listen, usually without a script. Nonetheless, the use of a script, especially with beginner learners, produce a change in the cognitive processes of the learners, as they focus on both the sounds and the letters. Owing to this, the students' reading skills and pronunciation can simultaneously improve, as stated by Hamada (2018).

Not only can shadowing be used in classrooms, but it can also be used for improving English outside the class. Students can practice and imitate audios at their home and at their own pace. Thereby, becoming a supporting tool for students to improve their pronunciation skills outside the school context. The teacher can provide the students with different audios of real-life situations, making the activity feel more authentic and meaningful, as students imitate natives in their daily lives.

Learners can practice by repeating these audios several times a week and can upload after each week their audio to a shared folder in Google Drive or Dropbox. The teacher would then gather the audios of their students, seeing the improvement and controlling whether the students are practicing or not shadowing. Furthermore, as this work is done individually at home, students who suffer from social anxiety or fear of being judged by their classmates can benefit from this activity. Mainly because they can participate in the activity without any of the factors that can cause that anxiety, such as comparing their pronunciation skills to their classmates or possible laughter after making a mistake. Moreover, the activity is developed at their home, which usually is a comfortable

and safe space for students. Students will also be able to compare the audios they have recorded and see their progress, which can motivate them as they can see their English level is improving.

### **2.2.3. Songs**

Integrating songs into the English classroom may conduce learners to improve their overall pronunciation while developing other areas of the language, including listening comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary among others. According to Ghanbari & Hashemian (2014), songs can support the progression of listening, reading, and speaking, as well as of pronunciation, rhythm, grammar, and vocabulary. Besides the improvements on language skills, including songs in the EFL class provides other benefits that should not be underestimated by English teachers. Conventional techniques tend to be monotonous, tedious, or unattractive to young learners. Therefore, using songs, especially songs that are enjoyed by the students, can increase their motivation, and encourage students to participate in the lesson.

Moreover, as stated by Ghanbari & Hashemian (2014), students feel more fluent singing to songs than speaking in any other context, thus becoming more confident. As they sing along to the song lyrics, they can only focus on pronouncing and imitating the voice patterns of the singer, rather than thinking about the vocabulary and grammar they need to use in another communicative context.

The suprasegmental features of the language can be developed and improved through the integration of songs at any time of the lesson. Teachers can guide students to analyse and appreciate how these features appear when singing. Nonetheless, segmental features can also be improved when singing to songs, such as identifying and differentiating various phonemes. In the subsection 2.2.3., an activity to develop segmental features through the use of songs is designed.

Songs can be used at the beginning of the lesson, to both introduce a new topic, for instance, animal farms, and as a warm-up activity. After singing a song they enjoy, students may feel more motivated to pay attention to the lesson and to participate in it. Using songs at the end of the lesson, on the other hand, can serve to establish the learned knowledge of the lesson and to wrap up the class with a fun and enjoyable activity that requires minimum cognitive skills. The use of music also requires teachers to select songs according to their students' level. Students with a lower level of English benefit from using songs that are slow and short, contrary to advanced students, who may feel enjoyment through the use of challenging songs. Moreover, when using songs, adding movement, such as

dancing, can help kinaesthetic learners, as they can associate the rhythm or intonation on a song through moving their bodies.

#### **2.2.4. Recognizing intonation**

Intonation is a feature of pronunciation that can cause difficulties for Spanish speakers. According to Swan & Smith (2010), Spanish speakers use a narrower pitch range than English speakers, resulting in expressing emphasis through length rather than pitch variation. This leads them to sound unenthusiastic. meaning they may sound unenthusiastic. Spanish speakers tend to project their mother tongue features into the language they are learning, thus speaking English by applying Spanish characteristics, such as the narrow pitch range in intonation.

Intonation is needed for intelligibility, as stated by Kenworthy (1987), because intentions can be expressed through it. Hence, Spanish speaking learners need to acquire an intelligible intonation to reduce misunderstandings when communicating. Therefore, English teachers must take this issue into account and provide opportunities for students to recognize their mistakes and to achieve an intelligible pronunciation.

The following activity seeks to improve students' intonation by being able to recognize how pitch varies in a sentence. We will focus on identifying and learning rising and falling intonation. Different sentences will be provided as examples, such as statements and questions. It is important to exaggerate the intonation on those sentences, whether it is rising or falling, so that students are able to recognize the movement of the pitch. Moreover, the different types of intonations must be explained. Statements have a falling intonation, that is that it sounds lower at the end of the sentence; yes/no questions have a rising intonation, the pitch sounds higher at the end; and wh- questions have a rising-falling intonation, which means the pitch starts higher but lower at the end of the sentence.

To better illustrate this intonation variation, the sentence examples will be portrayed in some flashcards or posters in which the size of the letters increase or decrease according to the movement of the intonation. These materials can be placed around the class so that students have a reference when not knowing how to change the intonation. By repeating these examples out loud daily, students will get accustomed to use the proper and correct intonation in every situation and improve their overall pronunciation.

### **2.2.5. Identifying stress**

According to Swan & Smith (2001), stress provides clues about the meaning of the sentence. Depending on the stressed syllable or word, the message of the sentence will vary. Similar to the relevance of intonation in pronunciation, stress is another element that needs to be taken into account when learning English and its pronunciation, as a wrongly stressed word can change the meaning of the message.

The activity proposed for acquiring stress will consist of recognizing how stressing words in a sentence can change the understanding for the listener. A sentence will be used as an example. Each time the sentence is said, a word will be highlighted or exaggerated to depict the stress on it. For instance, in the sentence *Jack will cycle to the restaurant tonight*, when the word Jack is stressed, it will mean that that person is going to the restaurant, not another one. However, the meaning of stressing different words may not be logic or intuitive for students, therefore not understanding how stressing a word can affect the overall meaning of the message.

The role of the teacher is to help the students understand that different languages have their own systems, and that trying to seek logic in another language through our own lenses based on our mother tongue will deter us from learning that language. Due to that, the meaning of the sentence after stressing a word has to be thoroughly explained, so that students understand these changes of meaning. In order to practice this feature, students will get into pairs. Each person of the pair will read the sentence while stressing a word. The other student must guess what word was stressed and the meaning of stressing it in that sentence.

## **2.3. Proposals for developing segmental features**

In this section, the activities proposed will tackle the identification, recognition and articulation of English phonemes that pose a difficulty for Spanish speaking learners.

### **2.3.1. Tongue twisters**

Tongue twisters are phrases or series of words that contain phonemes that are difficult to pronounce or articulate properly. These oral games widely used across all language systems use difficult phonemes or sounds that tend to be confounded by the speaker, which result in a humorous situation when the speaker mispronounces the phonemes. The entertaining factor of tongue twisters, alongside

the practice of difficult or confusing phonemes, makes these game a useful tool to integrate in the English classroom of Primary Education.

There are different activities that can be done with tongue twister, one of them being the most obvious, which is reciting them. Students can recite well-known tongue twisters in class, such as *Peter Piper* or *She sells seashells*. Besides reciting them the usual way, students can say them in various ways. For instance, instead of individually saying a tongue twister, it can be done in groups. Each person of the group would recite a word or groups of words of the tongue twister. This can be beneficial to do with younger students, as some tongue twisters can be very difficult for them to articulate, due to both the length of it and the complexity of the phonemes. By reducing the number of words each student says, they can focus on correctly pronouncing a small number of words.

Not only can we use widely-known tongue twisters, but we could also create our own ones. Students could create their own word games with the phonemes they get most confused with. This would help students become more motivated and enthusiastic, as they could use their creativity skills to produce a fun game that can be enjoyed by the whole class. In order to make this activity more meaningful, students could compile their tongue twisters into a book. This would be used not only by them, but also by other Primary classes, which would help them practice the acquisition of difficult phonemes. Students may feel more committed and invested in the creation of word games that can be enjoyed by their classmates.

Overall, this tool is beneficial because phonemes that are confusing and difficult for Spanish speakers can be practiced in a fun and enjoyable way. Moreover, tongue twisters are not thought to be correctly pronounced the first time one encounters them, because they aim of them is to seek fun through the mispronunciation of sounds. This can make students feel more secure and less anxious to participate and recite them because the fear of wrongly saying something disappears. Every student will make mistakes, thus not demonizing articulating words incorrectly. Furthermore, as tongue twisters are games, some students may use them outside of the English class to have fun, for instance, during recess or at home, even teaching them to their relatives or friends. Due to the use of tongue twisters outside the educational context, students will practice them and improvement on pronunciation will appear eventually.

### **2.3.2. Memory game**

Games can be an interesting tool to use in any language classroom due to its possibilities for learning the language while providing enjoyment and pleasure for the learners. *Memory* is a card game in which the flashcards are upside down and players must find the corresponding pairs without seeing what is behind those cards. Due to the stimulating and challenging aspect of the game, the memory is developed, as the players of the game have to find the correct pairs by remembering where each card was.

This game tends to be used in EFL contexts as an activity to revise and learn vocabulary, as the flashcard can contain words and their corresponding images or the translation in the mother tongue of the learners. Nonetheless, sounds and phonemes can be acquired by playing this game. The flashcards can be composed of words that include phonemes, which pose difficulty for Spanish speaking students. The following activity is a digital *Memory* game, that allows to add sounds to the set of cards. In these flashcards, words that are usually mispronounced by the students are included, as well as their corresponding audio with the correct pronunciation. By reading the word and listening to how it is pronounced, students can progressively recognize the phonemes accurate pronunciation and articulate them.

For advanced students, a variation of this *Memory* game can be played. In this new version, students will have to find pairs by finding words that contain the same phonemes. For instance, a pair of words with the same phoneme would be *safe* and *fan*, as they contain the /f/ sound. However, contrary to the previous activity, this could only be done with students that already have a high phonological awareness and are able to identify and differentiate the sounds in a word. If students possess a low level of phonological awareness, it is preferred for them to first associate the correct sound to the word or letter.

### **2.3.3. Songs**

As explained in the subsection 2.2.3., songs are an adequate tool for acquiring suprasegmental features of English that can be used in the EFL classroom. The segmental features of English can be developed as well through the use of songs. Phonemes can be identified, recognized, and differentiated in the songs that students listen to. By listening and signing to songs, students can differentiate and imitate several phonemes. This is useful because phonemes that pose a difficulty for Spanish speakers can be

learned through the use of this tool. Moreover, the listening skills of the students would improve, which would result in a better aptitude to differentiate different sounds and to imitate them.

The activity that I propose is defined by its simplicity and aims to help students being able to differentiate and learn English phonemes that cause difficulty for Spanish speakers. Students are presented with the lyrics of a song, in which one can find several gaps. In these gaps, learners have to choose the correct word from a set of minimal pairs. In these minimal pairs, students can find two words that contain phonemes that usually cause confusion, because they sound similar although being completely different sounds. In order for students to recognise various phonemes, teachers must have introduced them beforehand, as this gap activity serves as a way to put into practice learned knowledge. Moreover, it is needed to say that depending on the students' level, the complexity and difficulty of the song, the lyrics and the minimal pairs must be chosen according to that factor.

### 3. TEACHER'S MANUAL

In this section, a teacher's manual is provided in order to help English teachers introduce pronunciation instruction in their lessons. This manual contains several examples of some of the activities previously commented on the Pedagogical Proposals section. A description of how the activities can be carried out as well as the corresponding materials for each of them will be included.

#### 3.1. Developing suprasegmental features

##### 3.1.1. Recognizing intonation

1. Three sentences will be read exaggerating the intonation of each one. The first sentence, *It's raining*, will be read with falling intonation. The second one, *Do you like chocolate?*, will have rising intonation; and the last one, *What are you doing?*, will have a rising-falling intonation. A recording of each intonation pattern will be provided so that teachers have a model for reference. Students will be asked to find out how the voice moves in the sentence, that is, how does intonation differ from sentence to sentence.
2. The use of these three types of intonations will be explained. Falling intonations is used in statement, rising intonation is used in yes/no questions and rising-falling intonation in wh-questions.
3. Flashcards that illustrate the different types of intonations will be used. This is done through the use of different fonts. For instance, when depicting a falling intonation, the size of the letters will decrease along the sentence (see Figure 3).
4. In pairs, students will read and properly intonate the sentences according to the font of the flashcards.

**Figure 3.**

*Intonation flashcards*





### 3.1.2. Identifying stress

1. A sentence will be said by the teacher, for example: *Jack will cycle to the restaurant tonight*. This sentence can be invented by the teacher or a sentence that has caused trouble to the students because of the stress. In this sentence a word will be stressed, for instance: *Jack*. Then, the sentence will be repeated by stressing a different word, such as *restaurant*. Students will be asked to find the difference between the way these two sentences are said, and hypothesise about why different words are stressed and the possible meaning it has.
2. The concept of stress will be explained, as a feature of language that contributes to the meaning of a sentence. Different words of the previous sentence will be stressed, and the meaning of these stresses will be explained to the students. For instance, when stressing *Jack*, it is meant that he is the one going to the restaurant, not another person.

3. In pairs, students will say a sentence and stress one of the elements of that sentence. Their classmates must guess which word is the one being stressed, and the meaning of the sentence when stressing that element.

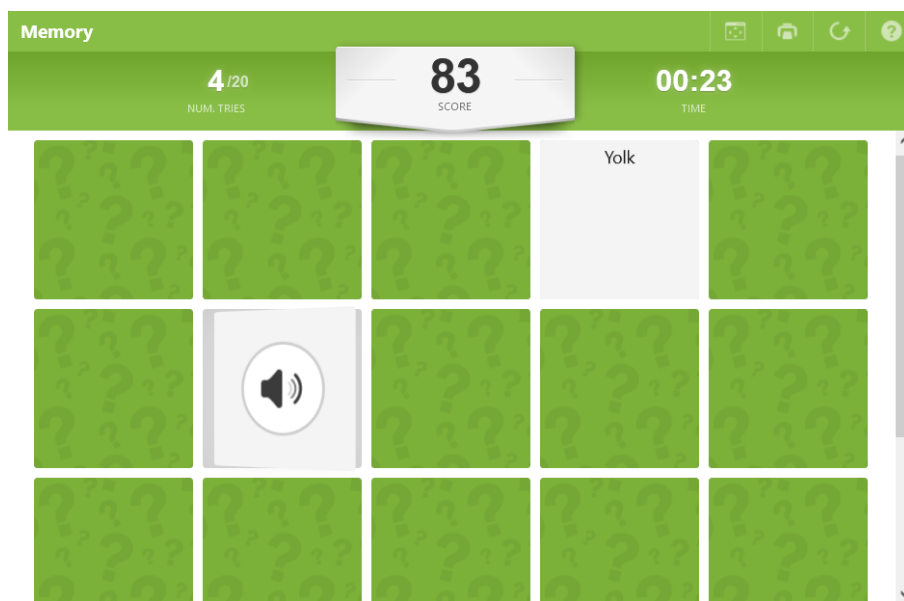
## 3.2. Developing segmental features

### 3.2.1. Memory game

1. Gather mispronounced words by the students. This will be done throughout the previous sessions. These words will be used in the following step to create the Memory game to help students acquire the correct articulation of those words.
2. Play online Memory game. This game has been created with the app *Educaplay*, which allows to include audio and images in the flashcards. In this Memory, students must match the words to the corresponding audios of how those words are pronounced (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4.**

*Online memory game*



Note: Link to the online memory game. [Educaplay](#).

3. Recite the words from the previous game. Without the help of the audio, students have to pronounce the words in order to practice and acquire the correct pronunciation.

### 3.2.2. Songs

1. Introduce the concept of minimal pairs. That is, pair of words that differ in one sound. Use the example of *cat – cut*.
2. Match the correct minimal pairs. Some flashcards with words will be given out. In pairs or groups, students must find the corresponding minimal pairs. This is then corrected as a whole group (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5.**

*Minimal pairs flashcards*

HAND	LAND
BROWN	FROWN
CAT	HAT
MINE	FINE

3. Play a song. In this case, the song that will be used as an example is *Brainstorm – Maybe*. The teacher must select a song according to the level of the students.
4. Read the lyrics. Students will read the lyrics of the song, but the worksheet with the lyrics contains several gaps. In these gaps, students have two words that form a pair of minimal pairs. While listening to the song, students must choose the correct word from the minimal pairs (see Figure 6).

Figure 6.

Song gap activity.

## BRAINSTORM - MAYBE

<p>My body, my ____ <b>hand/land</b> My heaven, my land My guardian angel is ____ <b>mine/mime</b></p> <p>You say... My dreams, my ____ <b>head/bed</b> My sex, my ____ <b>head/bed</b> And it's my Corona with lime</p> <p>And then I say... Maybe we could divide it in two Maybe my animals live in your zoo Maybe I'm in love with you</p> <p>You say... My hate, my ____ <b>brown/frown</b> My kingdom, my crown My palace and court is ____ <b>mine/fine</b></p> <p>You say... My lights, my ____ <b>show/shoe</b> My years to ____ <b>grow/throw</b> The time that I spend is fine</p>	<p>But then I say... Maybe we could divide it in two Maybe my animals live in your zoo Maybe I'm in love with you</p> <p>But you say... My coat, my ____ <b>cat/hat</b> My bones, my ____ <b>fat/fad</b> My zipper is shut by me</p> <p>You say... My skin, my blood My devil, my ____ <b>god/bod</b> My freedom is what you ____ <b>see/she</b></p> <p>But still I say... Maybe we could divide it in two Maybe my animals live in your zoo Maybe I'm in love with you</p> <p>My beginning, my end My nuclear bomb to pretend</p>
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5. Correct the worksheet. When correcting, we will ask the students why they chose a certain word and not the other one. The answer expected from the students is that one of the words is pronounced the way it is said in the song, whereas the other has a different pronunciation.

## CONCLUSIONES

Con este trabajo se ha querido mostrar que existe una necesidad real de que la pronunciación oral del inglés sea trabajada de manera explícita en el aula ILE, debido a que esta falta de enseñanza de este aspecto de la lengua junto con la preferencia de abordar otras áreas puede estar limitando la competencia comunicativa del alumnado.

A lo largo de este documento hemos podido observar que existe una necesidad de incluir esta área en el aula de inglés. Varios autores han mostrado la importancia de la pronunciación en la comunicación, considerándola uno de los aspectos clave para ser inteligible, e infravalorada frente al valor que se suele dar a una correcta gramática y amplio vocabulario. Esto se debe a que los elementos suprasegmentales de la pronunciación, es decir, ritmo, entonación y acentuación, junto con la realización de los fonemas, son los que determinan que un nativo, o cualquier otro oyente, pueda entender o no al hablante. Es por ello por lo que se debe hacer énfasis en estos elementos a la hora de desarrollar las habilidades comunicativas en inglés.

Por otra parte, una de las dudas que puede surgir con la pronunciación es si se puede enseñar, ya que, cuando somos nativos, adquirimos la pronunciación de nuestra lengua materna a través de la inmersión en la cultura y el idioma, no porque se enseñe de manera explícita. Según una gran cantidad de estudios, la pronunciación sí puede ser enseñada, y principalmente, existe una mejoría cuando esta es integrada en el aula. En este trabajo se ha destacado la importancia de introducir la pronunciación al alumnado de Primaria, ya que en edades tempranas existe una facilidad para aprender, adquirir e imitar sonidos. No solo eso, sino que existe un periodo crítico en el aprendizaje del lenguaje, el cual se sitúa a los 11, es decir, al final de la Educación Primaria. Esto implica que a partir de este periodo el aprendizaje y la adquisición dejan de realizarse de una manera y natural y global y se abordan de manera más explícita. Es por ello que la enseñanza de la pronunciación debe tener un mayor énfasis y valor en esta etapa educativa.

Si el objetivo del trabajo es dar a conocer la importancia de la pronunciación para que sea incluida en el aula y mejorar la pronunciación del alumnado de Primaria, no hay que olvidarse de quién va a recibir esa instrucción. Es por ello que tenemos que tener en cuenta a los estudiantes para asegurarnos de que la educación que reciben es la adecuada. En este trabajo hemos analizado las dificultades que los estudiantes hispanohablantes sufren debido a su lengua materna, como son la dificultad de articulación de fonemas que no existen en castellano como las diferencias entre la

entonación de ambos idiomas, y también se han tenido en cuenta la influencia que tienen las variables individuales, como son la ansiedad o el sentido de identidad, en la adquisición del lenguaje y la pronunciación. Todos estos aspectos influyen en que el alumnado adquiera o no una pronunciación inteligible, por lo que a la hora de diseñar actividades o sesiones, no deben ser olvidados. Las actividades que se han propuesto son actividades que pueden ser adaptadas y que tienen en cuenta estos aspectos, como es en el caso del *Memory game*, en el cual se trabaja explícitamente aquellas palabras que han causado problemas al alumnado en sesiones anteriores. En esta actividad, tenemos en cuenta dificultades que sufren nuestros estudiantes, como son palabras que son difíciles de pronunciar y suelen causar problemas de manera recurrente, y creamos una actividad para mejorar esa pronunciación que use un juego para que el aprendizaje sea más dinámico y entretenido.

Las actividades propuestas trabajan los aspectos segmentales y suprasegmentales de la pronunciación. Estas se caracterizan por su sencillez, lo cual permite que sean aplicadas por maestros con una baja formación en el área de pronunciación, incluso sin formación, además de no requerir una pronunciación muy buena para llevarlas a cabo. Con estas propuestas se trata ofrecer oportunidades para que la pronunciación pueda ser integrada de manera diaria en el aula ILE, teniendo su propio espacio al igual que el resto de las áreas del inglés. Como se ha podido observar, varias de estas actividades usan materiales o situaciones reales, como en el caso de la dramatización o del *shadowing*, porque así el alumnado puede tener un modelo real para imitar los elementos suprasegmentales de la pronunciación. Esto ayudaría ver también al alumnado cómo se usa el inglés en diferentes contextos sociales de la vida cotidiana, generando así un aprendizaje significativo. Por otra parte, otras actividades están desarrolladas para que puedan ser llevadas a cabo en cada, como la actividad del *shadowing*, para evitar que alumnado que sufre de ansiedad o miedo al rechazo social se vea perjudicado en su aprendizaje y adquisición de la pronunciación.

Por otra parte, el manual del maestro ha sido incluido con el objetivo de servir como material de apoyo para que maestros que lean este trabajo puedan usar las actividades expuestas en sus clases de inglés. Aunque las actividades que conforman este manual son pocas y sencillas, la finalidad es mostrar al profesorado diferentes opciones y nuevas oportunidades para empezar a integrar la pronunciación en su aula. La pronunciación lleva años siendo infravalorada y no siendo enseñada, sobre todo en la Educación Primaria, como se puede apreciar en los contenidos del Curriculum, por lo que un maestro sin formación en esta área y con una baja pronunciación de inglés va a rechazar el incluir cualquier actividad que la trabaje porque no se ve capacitado. No obstante, mostrando actividades simples, sencillas pero eficientes, podemos mostrar a ese profesorado que enseñar

pronunciación no necesita de un trabajo exhaustivo y metódico, sino que con pequeñas actividades que se realicen de manera diaria podemos conseguir grandes resultados con nuestros estudiantes.

En conclusión, una buena pronunciación suele ser considerada como una prueba de un alto nivel de inglés, un elemento al cual solo se pueden aspirar los estudiantes de esta lengua que posean un nivel competente, con el objetivo de sonar lo más nativo posible. No obstante, esta área no es exclusiva de estudiantes con un conocimiento extraordinario del inglés, ya que es necesaria para cualquier persona que use el inglés. La pronunciación es lo que va a determinar, en gran medida, que seamos entendidos o no. Por eso no puede ser excluida de la enseñanza del inglés para el alumnado, ya que estamos limitando sus habilidades comunicativas. La instrucción de esta área puede llevarse a cabo mediante actividades sencillas de manera diaria que no requieran una gran pericia para poder ser aplicadas, de manera que cualquier maestro puede ayudar a sus alumnos a desarrollar la pronunciación. La adquisición de esta se basa en un proceso de trabajo constante, por lo que la enseñanza explícita de esta es completamente recomendable. De esta manera, podemos observar la relevancia de la pronunciación en las habilidades comunicativas del alumnado, por lo que su enseñanza no debe ser obviada.

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