

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES



ASSESSING THE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION OF STUDENTS
FINISHING THEIR THIRD YEAR AT THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE
DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR,
SEMESTER II, 2014

PRESENTED BY:

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CP08010
MC03131
SM02017

FINAL RESEARCH REPORT IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ENGLISH WITH EMPHASIS IN TEACHING

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APRIL 30TH / 2015

MAIN UNIVERSITY CAMPUS, SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR

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ABSTRACT

The research project is aimed at studying and analysing the different factors that influence English pronunciation of third year students at the Foreign Language Department. For carrying it out the research, the team based their theoretical framework on important and relevant books, findings, studies of experts on the field for example: Judy Gilbert, Janet Goodwin, Barrera Pardo, and others. In order to achieve the objectives of this work, the research team designed two instruments: an oral interview to analyse segmental and suprasegmental aspects, and a set of sentences with specific vowels and consonants sounds for students to pronounce. The tests were administered, recorded and analysed by professional TEFL instructors. The results are represented in graphics with their own analysis and then the conclusions and recommendations are presented.

INTRODUCTION

What are the most common pronunciation mistakes that 3rd year students from the B.A. in English teaching, from UES, present at the time they communicate?

This research project is aimed in finding out the kind of English pronunciation of English Didactics III students; it is focused on describing the most common pronunciation mistakes of students. Besides that, it mentions the main factors that influence on pronunciation and also to provide some suggestions and recommendations for those students. In addition, the literature review is composed by several researcher and findings that experts on the field have made and also it includes different areas on English pronunciation, though questions such as why to teach pronunciation, when and what to teach?, the Lingua Franca Model, the globalization that English has and the teaching English pronunciation according to the Prosody Pyramid and the musical signals as well.

Furthermore, the instruments were assembled by different pronunciation books. To sum up, the obtained results were carefully analyzed by professional instructors and by two of the members of the team, after gathering all that information the conclusions and recommendations were made based on the results.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the present day at educational field and labor field having command of another language is very important. It is not only about knowing grammar rules, writing proficiently. It also involves good pronunciation. And what do we need in order to have not a good, but outstanding pronunciation? And more important, is the lack of intelligibility an undefeatable obstacle for the students at the Foreign Languages Department, at UES?

What is the place of pronunciation in English language teaching today? In the last decade of the twentieth century, Judy Gilbert described pronunciation as “something of an orphan in English programs around the world” (1994: 38) and, a decade and a half later, she wrote that “pronunciation continues to be the EFL/ESL orphan” (Gilbert, 2010: 1).

The research team studied the main factors that influence in pronunciation, what can be done for that and that is when our research area emerges Assessing the English pronunciation of students finishing their third year at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador, semester II, 2014.

At the moment of learning a second language, having a good pronunciation could be at the end of our purposes. What usually comes first to our minds is just to learn about grammar, speaking or writing, also for teachers may not be the main objective when teaching a second language, things that have to do with pronunciation. Learning a second language, in this case English goes beyond sitting in the classroom and spend time listening to a teacher for hours. In order to speak English like a native or to get closer to the target language, it is fundamental to pay attention to other factors that can help us to imitate exactly the model of speaking.

Stress, intonation and rhythm lead the learners to succeed and get confidence in a second language acquisition. The points mentioned before, could have a level of difficulty for a non-native learners, reason why a learner has less attention and focus in general speaking habits.

By the other hand, there are some factors that influence the learning and teaching of pronunciation skills, for example, the age that is related to the functions of the brain hemispheres. Prior pronunciation instructions, for the ones who have a higher English experience is easier to succeed with current efforts. The aptitude has to do with the capacity of learning; every individual is capable to acquire new information. Also, the motivation toward the target language it is important to determine goals in pronunciation. And the last one, the native language of the learner can influence the pronunciation of the learning of a foreign language.

Research Question

What are the most common pronunciation mistakes that 3rd year students from the B.A. in English teaching, from UES, present at the time they communicate?

Hypothesis

The lack of intelligibility of third year students (from English Didactics III) of the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador does not allow them to have an accurate and effective communication at the time they have a conversation.

OBJECTIVES AND AIMS

Overall Objective

To describe English pronunciation of English Didactics III students, at the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, 2014.

Specific Aims

- To find out the factors influencing English pronunciation.
- To describe the most common English pronunciation mistakes made by English Didactics III students.
- To describe the speech intelligibility of English Didactics III students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework.

What is the place of pronunciation in English language teaching today? In the last decade of the twentieth century, Judy Gilbert described pronunciation as “something of an orphan in English programs around the world” (1994: 38) and, a decade and a half later, she wrote that “pronunciation continues to be the EFL/ESL orphan” (Gilbert, 2010: 1). The view that pronunciation is a neglected aspect of ELT has been expressed by many scholars and researchers in the field of phonology and/or ELT as well as by many EFL/ESL language educators and materials’ writers to such an extent that Barrera Pardo (2004) stated that “for those committed to pronunciation teaching and research, it has become a common place topic to acknowledge the underdevelopment of pronunciation within the EFL profession” .

Unfortunately, the word pronunciation tends to make people think exclusively of sounds that get confused, which has traditionally led to dependence on minimal pair drills. Both because this is inherently an unengaging activity, and because the results tend to be discouraging, it takes enormous effort on the part of the teacher to keep a class enthusiastic. Also, teachers tend to think the subject is very technical, since it is often presented that way in teacher training courses. Some teachers try hard to teach pronunciation as if it was a course in phonetics, and this also tends to discourage both teachers and students. Some course books present impractical stress and intonation rules, further burdening the teacher. Actually, the core prosodic structure of spoken English is quite simple and requires little technical terminology. If teachers become aware of the importance of discourse intonation as a simple foundation system, pronunciation becomes

much more rewarding for both teachers and students. At best, the place of pronunciation practice in language courses is uncertain; for example, it “may or may not form part of regular classroom activities or student self-study” (MacDonald, 2002: 3) and “training in pronunciation skills (perceptive and productive) does not have a secure place in most language curriculums” (Setter and Jenkins, 2005 cited in Gilner, 2008: 93). At worst, pronunciation is “the aspect upon which least time is spent” (Fraser, 2000: 8), “more a supplementary activity rather than a central part of the syllabus” (Cenoz and Lecumberri, 1999: 4) and “something of a ‘poor relation’ among course components” (Hughes, 2002: 68).

According to Hughes (2006: 22), “there is no doubt that pronunciation plays second best to other aspects of language teaching in the classroom” and, according to Barrera Pardo (2004: 6), “pronunciation teaching has often been relegated to a subsidiary role of broader language performance skills such as speaking and listening”.

At this point, it is important to note that pronunciation has not only been neglected in EFL/ESL classroom settings; it has also been neglected in teacher training courses, course books and applied linguistics research. Baker and Murphy (2011: 30) recognize that “an overall neglect of pronunciation teaching has been observed in teacher preparation programs (Breitkreutz, Derwing and Rossiter, 2002; Derwing and Munro, 2005; Gilbert, 2010)” and Gilner (2008) writes that “even when included in course books, pronunciation is marginalized and treated superficially” (:94). Indeed, as far as EFL/ESL course books are concerned, “all too often, pronunciation appears at the end of a unit, in the bottom right-hand corner of a page, which only serves to reinforce its lowly status as the thing most likely to be omitted if time is short” (Marks, 2006: 35).

Furthermore, the study of pronunciation has been marginalised within the field of applied linguistics and remains marginalised; “there is relatively little published research on pronunciation teaching” (Derwing and Munro, 2005: 383). Cook (2001) and Lightbrown and Spada (2006) recognise that research on the acquisition of pronunciation generally lags behind research on the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary. As Madden and Moore (1997: 5) put it: “research on pronunciation is relatively scarce compared to that on other components of language learning, such as grammar, communicative competence, and sociocultural awareness”. Baker and Murphy (2011) are concerned with the limited number of research studies on pronunciation in classroom-oriented research; however, they mainly focus on the lack of studies that address pronunciation teaching in the realm of teacher cognition (e.g., teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and understandings).

It is striking that despite the efforts of those committed to pronunciation either from a theoretical/academic point of view or from a practical point of view, pronunciation continues to be the area of foreign language teaching first described by Kelly (1969) as “Cinderella” (cited in Yeou, 2006: 2). Nearly two decades ago, Samuda (1993) wrote that “despite the best efforts of well-known pronunciation specialists such as Joan Morley, Judy Gilbert, and Rita Wong, the teaching of pronunciation can probably claim the dubious title of ‘most likely to fall between the cracks’” (: 757 cited in Barrera Pardo, 2004: 7). Unfortunately, it seems that this continues to be the case even nowadays that we have entered the new millennium. The following quotes will serve to illustrate this point:

Pronunciation teaching has often been relegated to a subsidiary role of broader language performance skills such as speaking and listening, but in the past few years instruction on specific features of the spoken language have been reassessed and consequently fostered in many programs. Many teachers, nonetheless, remain sceptical about the

teachability of pronunciation, and in consequence continue to consider explicit pronunciation instruction of relatively little importance in their practice. Barrera Pardo, 2004: 6 Despite teachers' increased interest in pronunciation in recent years, as evidenced by the establishment of a TESOL interest section and a proliferation of pronunciation materials for learners, it remains a very marginalized topic in applied linguistics. Derwing and Munro, 2005: 382 Pronunciation has been enjoying something of a renaissance in the publishers' catalogues in recent years, which hopefully indicates that this aspect of English is being taught and learned more thoroughly and enthusiastically than previously. But ready-made material specifically for testing pronunciation is relatively thin on the ground. Marks, 2005: 54

What makes the situation regarding the place of pronunciation in the English language curriculum particularly problematic is not only that the low status of pronunciation has persisted over the years but, also, that this seems to be the case worldwide (see Gilbert, 2010). Pronunciation is important for EFL/ESL learners' perception and production of oral discourse and, thus, it is disappointing that pronunciation is neglected in all areas of EFL/ESL; from research and teacher training courses to teachers' practices and course books used in class. Brown (1991) maintains that "no one would deny the importance of pronunciation as a contributor towards learners' proficiency in English" (: 1), and goes on to write that "learners are clearly aware that poor pronunciation represents a considerable barrier to their success in English" (Brown, 1991: 1). For Madden and Moore (1997: 3), "pronunciation is the most obvious and unavoidable marker of a language learner's proficiency", and for MacDonald (2002: 3), "pronunciation is a key element of the learning of oral skills in a second language". Gilner (2008: 93) describes the place and role of pronunciation in the context of ELT very succinctly: "pronunciation is an integral aspect of communicative competence (Morley, 1991) that can influence the desire to use the

language (Guiora, 1972) as well as the quantity and quality of input received and output produced (Fraser,2002)". Furthermore, Pennington (1996) argues that "whether or not they choose to teach phonology explicitly, second language teachers are in a sense always teaching phonology whenever they teach anything at all" (: 6). Indeed, the very same argument has been delineated in Brown's (1991) anthology entitled 'Teaching English Pronunciation: A Book of Readings', as follows:

One can claim, as do Abercrombie and Stevens among many others that all language teaching involves pronunciation teaching. As soon as the English language teacher begins to teach English, the learners are 'thrown in at the deep end' as far as pronunciation is concerned, whereas in terms of grammar and vocabulary, they can be gradually immersed. Brown, 1991: 3 Gilbert 16 (1994) provides a different reason to the aforementioned ones by writing: "Why has pronunciation been a poor relation? I think it is because the subject has been drilled to death, with too few results from too much effort" (: 38). Vassilakis (2004) agrees with Gilbert (1994) and writes that "most pronunciation activities found in course books are based on a behaviourist drill-and-kill paradigm, which inevitably leads to boredom among students and teachers alike" (Vassilakis, 2004: 30). Unfortunately, the current problematic situation regarding the status and role of pronunciation in ELT also pertains to other matters related to the instruction of pronunciation. For example, the use of effective pronunciation techniques as well as the choice of appropriate pronunciation models and performance targets are not only complex issues but also controversial ones; they have engendered heated discussions among researchers and teachers in various ELT settings and despite the considerable body of published literature that exists on those issues, they have not been resolved yet.

Besides that, students should know and learn more about pronunciation to have better English. They have to learn more about phonemes which consists of voice and unvoiced consonants, single vowels and diphthong. Moreover, they also should know about the suprasegmental features such as intonation and word/sentences stress. One way in which the teacher can help the students improve the English pronunciation is by ensuring that they aware of all of the important aspects stated above. We find that the major keys in having the better English pronunciation are the accurate pronunciation of sound and how to stress the word/ sentences itself.

The necessity of teaching English pronunciation on the international ground.

As the significance of the English language grows and its status of a global language is strengthened every day, a lot of people start realizing that the only knowledge of English grammar and vocabularies is becoming not to be sufficient. In today's increasingly international world, it is not only necessary to understand what other English speakers say but it is also essential to make your own speech intelligible for the others. But even though the global character of English language makes many English learners and teachers realize the necessity of improving the pronunciation skills, many English students still cope with mispronouncing sounds, misplacing stress in sentences and misusing intonation patterns. Why is it so? O'Connor (1980, 1-3) explains this problem as a matter of habits that our native tongue strongly incorporated into our language patterns. He adds that the ability to imitate the language perfectly weakens with the age as children of ten years or less are able to gain excellent knowledge of any language they are exposed to but children who are older than ten are more likely to struggle with a difficulty in mastering the pronunciation. The question is how to overcome these native language predispositions that prevent English learners from acquiring the English sounds properly. As Hewings (1993, 2) says, the point is to expose English learners to as many pronunciation activities

as possible in order to make them realize what their English pronunciation is like in comparison with the pronunciation of native English speakers. Following O'Connor and Fletcher (1989, 6), strengthening English speech habits requires a diligent practice. The assimilation of sounds that do not exist in speaker's native language is a long term process. O'Connor and Fletcher put it in this way: *The performance of a new contrast, once it can be heard, involves a new orientation of the motor control center in the brain to produce unfamiliar muscular movements. The first stage must be to concentrate on minimally different pairs of words exhibiting the contrast which the student can produce, and which an English speaker can recognize, in adequate. The sounds may not be exactly what a native speaker would produce, but fine tuning of the actual sounds can be done gradually. It is not enough for the students to produce the contrast satisfactorily once or twice or three times. (O'Connor and Fletcher 1989, 6)*

The problem is that in English courses there is usually little or no time allocated to teaching pronunciation and the majority of lesson planning is devoted to vocabulary and grammar progress. (Baker 1990, 1) As Kelly (2007, 13) claims, when planning a timetable of English lessons, teachers naturally neglect to include any pronunciation issues and they put the most emphasis on organization of grammatical structures and lexical syllabus. In fact, however, the responsibility of the educational system for English spoken skill development is as much significant as its responsibility for focusing on the written form of the language. (Anderson et al. 1984, 6) Pronunciation, in comparison with the grammar rules, cannot be simply inculcated in a student's mind. On contrary, it rather needs to be assimilated. Learners need to perceive the new sounds as babies who hear the language for the first time (Laroy 1995, 5-12). Just as children need support for developing their writing skills, so learners of English need guidance in acquiring the appropriate English pronunciation. Some of the learners have no difficulty in pronouncing English sounds; the other ones

need to be given special help and encouragement. It is the accountability of English teachers for supervising the basic problems of English pronunciation. (Anderson et al. 1984, 6) Following Laroy's ideas (1995), these are not only phonetic drills that can help students to master their pronunciation but these are mostly and preferably fun pronunciation activities that help students to acquire the right pronunciation skills. The fact that teaching English pronunciation is usually neglected may not always be the result of teachers' indifference but it can rather express teachers' doubts of not being able to teach English pronunciation in the right way. (Kelly 2007, 13) As stated by Kenworthy (1990, 69), English teachers should firstly realize that they do not necessarily need to be expert phoneticians. What really matters is a basic knowledge of phonetics and a kind of sensitivity in giving students guidance and hints when necessary. As Tennant (2007, 2) claims, the important thing in teaching English as a second language is to help students make their speech to sound intelligible for the others.

One argument here is that English is now a Lingua Franca and it is more likely to be used as the means of communication between two non-native speakers than between a non-native speaker and native speaker. (Tennant 2007, 2) According to Crystal (2010)¹, if teachers want their students to be prepared well for encountering the English speaking world, it is necessary to strengthen their confidence. This can be achieved by incorporating global English straight into the classroom. But what does the term "global English" actually refer to? And how can bringing "global English" into the classroom help students in the process of acquiring the English language accurately?

The Relationship Between Speaking and Listening Comprehension

While it may be easy to see the benefit of good pronunciation instruction for increasing intelligibility, it is just as useful for increasing listening comprehension. Students who are taught about English prosodic patterns often report improved understanding of speech on TV, in movies, and in face-to-face conversation. Why is this? One reason is that prosodically-trained students have learned to understand how rhythmic and melodic cues are used to organize information and guide the listener. Another reason is that these students have learned to notice how prosody changes how words sound. Most English learners who suffer from inadequate training in listening comprehension complain that “native speakers talk too fast.” What this often means is that learners are unable to process important grammatical signals, (e.g., past tense markers) or effectively process contracted speech. Contractions and reductions are a normal part of spoken English. Furthermore, difficulty keeping up with what was said also occurs from the inability to recognize the intonational signals of “what goes with what” or “what disagrees with what.” These signals are an important part of helping the listener to follow (i.e., creating cohesion). An example of missing the signals of grouping would be failing to recognize who is being spoken about in a remark like “John,” said the Boss, “is lazy.” This is a quite different sentence than “John said, ‘The Boss is lazy’.” Aside from intonational thought grouping signals, another reason to miss the point of what the speaker just said is the inability to recognize the implications of emphasis. Emphasis signals what is new, or especially important, as opposed to what is already understood. Cohesion in English conversation depends both on signals of grouping and on the pitch contrast between new information and old information.

In addition to helping learners understand words in context and to recognize prosodic “road signs” in spoken English, instruction about prosody also helps learners develop

improved ability to clear up misunderstandings in the middle of a conversation. This is because when learners understand how prosody affects sounds and meaning, they are made more aware of potential sources of confusion in conversation. When there has been a breakdown, instead of focusing strictly on pronouncing individual sounds correctly and not making grammatical mistakes, they are able to identify prosodic elements that may have sent a wrong signal. Further, students can make adjustments to rhythm and melody and correct the sounds in the most important syllables in order to correct the confusion. Since correction of a conversational breakdown has to be rapid, knowledge of the prosody system gives students the tools to efficiently scan what was just said and make a quick repair.

Pronunciation as orphan: what can be done?

Marginalized: the spoken language

In 1987, Morley wrote:

“Beginning in the late 1960’s and continuing into the 1970’s there was a significant decrease in the amount of time and explicit attention devoted to pronunciation teaching in English programs for second and foreign language learners. While publications of textbooks in a wide variety of other ESL/EFL areas mushroomed, very few new pronunciation books appeared on the market, and those most widely circulated can be counted on the fingers of one hand.”

Clearly, pronunciation has not been integrated into ESL/EFL teaching. In 1986, Marks had commented ‘Few teachers, probably, would claim that they do not teach grammar or vocabulary, on the grounds that they are either too difficult or else not sufficiently important. Yet these are the kinds of comments which many teachers make with regard to

the teaching of phonology (p 9). Five years later, Brown said much the same thing: 'Pronunciation has sometimes been referred to as the 'poor relation' of the English language teaching (ELT) world' (p 1). And eleven years later, Macdonald surveyed teachers about their reluctance to teach pronunciation and listed their reasons: [T]he absence of pronunciation in curricula...a lack of suitable teaching and learning materials of a high quality...an absence of a skills and assessment framework with which to map student ability and progress in this area...In short, pronunciation does not appear to have a central and integrated position within the ESL curricula of the teachers interviewed.

Teacher training gone missing

In 1991, Bradford and Kenworthy asked 33 British ESL teachers 'How well did your EFL teacher training prepare you for teaching pronunciation?' Over half the responses were negative. The dissatisfaction mainly related to the emphasis on theory instead of practical application (p 14). In 1997 Murphy surveyed MA programs in TESL in the US and described considerable variation in course offerings related to phonology. He commented: "In sum, the survey findings illuminate instructors' tendencies to focus on how segmental and suprasegmental features operate within and across phonological systems. Some attention was given to pedagogical considerations, though such efforts seem relatively low on instructors' lists of priorities."

Psychology of pronunciation

When teachers manage to find time to address pronunciation, the instruction often amounts to the practice of a series of tedious and seemingly unrelated topics. Drilling sounds over and over often leads to discouraging results; discouraged students and teachers alike end up wanting to avoid pronunciation altogether.

There are psychological factors that affect the learning of pronunciation in ways that are not so true of studying grammar or vocabulary. For one thing, the most basic elements of speaking are deeply personal. Our sense of self and community are bound up in the speech-rhythm of our first language (L1). These rhythms were learned in the first year of life and are deeply rooted. Therefore, it is common for students to feel uneasy when they hear themselves speak with the rhythm of the L2.

A teacher can help overcome this psychological barrier by thinking of the goal of pronunciation instruction not as helping students to sound like native speakers but as helping them to learn the core elements of spoken English so that they can be easily understood by others. In other words the frustrations and boredom often associated with the subject can be avoided by focusing attention on the development of pronunciation that is 'listener friendly.' After all, English pronunciation does not amount to mastery of a list of sounds or isolated words, but to learning the specifically English way of making a speaker's thoughts easy to follow. Teachers should be taught to think of providing 'accent addition' rather than 'accent reduction'.

English teachers also need to be helped to understand that other languages rely on different concepts. For instance, all languages must have a means of showing emphasis, but few depend on the conversational signals of pitch and timing as much as English. These prosodic signals act as 'road signs' for the listener and are crucial to helping the listener to follow. Teachers, who may use prosodic cues automatically, need to understand that these are not natural, but learned. Also, teachers need to know that the abstract conventions of languages are different, so learners have to do more than just listen to the sounds. Teachers generally recognize the social and workplace consequences of poor

intelligibility, but are often uncertain about what to do about it. Following are suggestions to help the teachers guide their students.

Teacher educators must help ensure that teachers get the training they need. There are currently too few TESOL programs which offer a *practical* phonology course—a bridge between linguistics and pronunciation teaching. Understanding which elements are most crucial would help teachers prioritize their efforts instead of using up available time and effort struggling to ‘cover’ all the independent sounds.

Why to teach pronunciation?

A great number of EFL teachers neglect teaching pronunciation and they rather focus on grammar and vocabulary (Harmer 2005). But how can mastering grammar rules and vocabulary perfectly help students make their speech intelligible? It is proved that speakers whose pronunciation is listener friendly are able to lead a successful conversation even with their grammatical mistakes better than speakers whose grammar obeys all the rules. (Gilakjani 2012, 1) Pronunciation teaching so proves to be an essential part in every English lesson. Pronunciation activities do not only help students to be confident of different sounds and sound features, but it most importantly helps students to improve their spoken skills. Focusing on where the sounds are in the mouth and which syllables are stressed in the words fortifies students’ comprehension and intelligibility. (Harmer 2005, 183) In connection with this, Gilakjani (2012, 8) claims that teaching pronunciation should be more than just training individual sounds or isolated words. Pronunciation needs to be viewed as an essential part of communication. Therefore, in order to consolidate pronunciation skills (both comprehension and production), it is crucial to incorporate pronunciation activities into classroom through various materials and tests.

Good pronunciation skills do not only bring speakers confidence to communicate but it also improves their listening comprehension, the basis of an accomplished conversation.

Pronunciation has traditionally been taught with a goal of “speaking like a native speaker,” but this is not practical. In fact, it is a recipe for discouragement both for teachers and for students. This has been referred to as “the perfection trap” (Morley 1992). A more practical approach is to aim for “listener-friendly pronunciation” (Kjellin 1998). This aim makes sense to a student who hopes to achieve something through conversations with native speakers, whether in the social or business sense. If the listener finds that it takes too much effort to understand, the speaker loses out. So mastering the basics of English communication is sensible. Refinements can come later if the student wants to put more effort and time into learning nuances of spoken English. Here are some of the main reasons why incorporating pronunciation activities into every English class should take a key role:

- Using wrong sounds in words or wrong prosodic features in sentences may lead to misunderstanding as it is very difficult to work out what the speaker is saying.
- Even though it is clear what the speaker is saying, his/her pronunciation makes listeners feel unpleasant as speaker’s accent is distracting or too heavy.

It can undermine speaker’s confidence as well as it can make the listener think that the speaker lacks proper knowledge of English language. (Gilakjani 2012, 3)

The only image of some of these unpleasant situations happening at some international meeting advocates the fact that teaching pronunciation has its inherent part in English language teaching (ELT). Following Gilakjani (2012, 3), only communications where

speaker's English is pleasant to listen to and where it is clear what the speaker is saying are the goals of pronunciation trainings.

In connection with this, Harmer (2005,185) claims that the way how to achieve clear communication is not getting students to produce correct sounds or intonation, but it is rather the way to show them how English is spoken in the real world. The more students get exposed to some audio or videotape materials, the greater chance that their intelligibility gets improved.

Teaching Pronunciation

In "Teaching Pronunciation", the goal of instruction is threefold: To enable our learners to understand and be understood, to build their confidence in entering communicative situations, and to enable them to monitor their speech based on input from the environment. To accomplish these goals, Goodwin describes the tools we need to teach pronunciation in a systematic and principled way.

In the past, pronunciation instruction usually focused on the articulation of consonants and vowels and the discrimination of minimal pairs. In recent years, the focus has shifted to include a broader emphasis on suprasegmental features, such as stress and intonation. However, many teaching materials still do not make clear that pronunciation is just one piece of the whole communicative competence puzzles. As Seidlhofer (1995) states, "pronunciation is never an end in itself but a means of negotiating meaning in discourse, embedded in specific sociocultural and interpersonal contexts". Indeed, pronunciation instruction needs to be taught as communicative interaction along with other aspects of spoken discourse, such as pragmatic meaning and nonverbal communication.

1 David, Crystal, *Should English be taught as a "global" language?* (Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 18. 04. 2010, accessed August 4, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLYk4vKBdUo/>)

2 David, Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

The segmental / Suprasegmental debate

Pronunciation instruction historically has emphasized mastery of individual sounds. With the advent of Communicative Language Teaching, the focus shifted to fluency rather than accuracy, encouraging an almost exclusive emphasis on suprasegmentals. However, just as ESL teachers have acknowledged that an emphasis on meaning and communicative intent alone will not suffice to achieve grammatical accuracy, pronunciation has emerged from the segmental/suprasegmental debate to a more balanced view, which recognizes that a lack of intelligibility can be attributed to both micro and macro features. It is clear that learners whose command of sound deviates too broadly from standard speech will be hard to understand no matter how targetlike their stress and intonation might be. Thus, it is no longer a question of choosing between segmentals and suprasegmentals but of identifying which features contribute most to lack of intelligibility, and which will be most useful in the communicative situations in which our learners will need to function.

Dalton and Seidlhofer list six communicative abilities related to pronunciation:

Prominence: How to make salient the important points we make.

Topic management: How to signal and recognize where one topic ends and another begins.

Information status: How to mark what we assume to be shared knowledge as opposed to something new.

Turn-taking: When to speak, and when to be silent, how (not) to yield the floor to somebody else.

Social meanings and roles: How to position ourselves vis-à-vis our interlocutor(s) in terms of status, dominance/authority, politeness, solidarity/separateness.

Degree of involvement: How to convey our attitudes, emotions, etc. (1999, p. 52)

When to Teach Pronunciation

According to Harmer (2005, 186), the first thing teachers need to do is to decide when to include pronunciation teaching into an English lesson. There are some possibilities to choose from:

- **Whole lessons:** if teachers decide to devote the whole lesson to teaching pronunciation, it does not necessarily mean that the entire lesson needs to be based just only on training pronunciation. Students may be asked to deal with listening skills or vocabulary stock before aiming on pronunciation tasks. In addition to this, it is no sensible to focus on pronunciation of sounds only, it is rather advisable to practice connected speech, sentence stress and intonation.

- **Discrete slots:** Inserting short, separate pronunciation parts into English lessons can prove extremely beneficial as it can refresh every English lesson. These short pronunciation sections, where one week phonemes and another week intonation can be practiced, are very popular among students as they welcome being not bothered with pronunciation tasks too long. However, pronunciation is not a separate skill; it is an essential part of our communication. That is the reason why longer sequences or even the entire lessons should be devoted to its teaching.

- **Integrated phases:** Making pronunciation tasks an integral part of lesson activities seems to be a successful way of dealing with pronunciation. Pronunciation tasks may be drawn e.g. in almost every listening activity as students may pay attention to pronunciation features they listen to or they can just imitate intonation.

- **Opportunistic teaching:** Pointing out a pronunciation problem when it has just arisen in the course is a good way of introducing pronunciation into the class. It is enough to devote a minute or two to some pronunciation issue so that fluency of the lesson is not interrupted a lot. (Harmer 2005, 186 - 187) It is worth noting here that the suggested ways of

introducing teaching pronunciation into a classroom do not necessarily need to be engaged separately. A lot of teachers mix the possible ways altogether according to the syllabus and timetable flexibility. (Harmer 2005, 187)

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

There is no doubt that the English language has gained the status of a global language. Its significance is being noted in almost every sphere of everyday life and its knowledge is becoming more and more essential. Wherever you travel, you see English signs and advertisements. Whenever you enter a hotel or restaurant in a foreign city, they will understand English, and there will be an English menu. (Crystal 2003, 2)

Communication in English on the international basis has turned into a worldwide phenomenon. (McArthur 1996, 11) Following Phillipson (2003, 5), the significance and importance of lingua franca on the international basis is not only considerable in the fields of politics, commerce, technology and media but it is mostly irreplaceable in the spheres of professional qualifications, education systems and economy as it brings vigour to all its aspects. Gubbins and Holt (2002, 7-15) add that the basic English language knowledge has been steadily becoming a necessity also on the business ground as it helps not only to bound good business and public relations but it also makes the communication with business partners and competitors easier. In connection with this, Phillipson (2003, 5) claims that without English, the processes of globalization and internationalization would be impossible. As a result of the English language worldwide impact, more than a quarter of the world's population is nowadays fluent or competent in English. (Crystal 2003, 6) The number of speakers who use English as their second language heavily surpasses the amount of speakers who use English as their mother tongue. (Lichtkoppler 2008) This means that an English conversation is most often held by participants who share neither a common first language nor a common culture and for whom the English language is the

foreign language they have chosen for their communication. (Seidlhofer 2005, 339) It is not surprising then that the claim for international intelligibility is more than apparent. (Crystal D.3 2003, 113) International travel, satellite broadcasting, world press and television, world stock markets, multinational corporations, intergovernmental agencies and many other institutions have guaranteed a situation of daily contact for hundreds of millions of English speakers who together represent every major variety. (Crystal D. 2003, 113) English language, like Latin in Europe in the Middle Ages, has penetrated in almost every field of the globe.

A great number of English words have entered lexicons of very many languages and a great deal of such borrowings is used not only for the purposes of communication on the international level. Even people who do not speak English know.

English as a Lingua Franca Development

As noted by Crystal (20024, 1), during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558 – 1603), it was believed that between five to seven million speakers in the world have used English as their mother tongue. These figures have been increasing since these days, as the desire for colonization grew. Following Harmer (2005, 2), English language was brought to the colonies of the New World where, even after Americans had withdrawn from English rule, the English language has remained the official language. As the British Empire was broadening its borders, the English language influence had been spread in many of its colonies, e.g. in Australia, India and Africa.

3 David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

Even after breaking away from the British rule, some of the former English colonies still keep English language as a main language or as a language used for institutional purposes it is evident that the power of language goes hand in hand with the power of its people, the power of their political and military expansion. (Crystal 2003, 9) In 1952, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, 250 million speakers used English as their mother tongue and the next 100 million people had learned it as a foreign language. In 2002, the number of 400 million people had been estimated as the number of speakers who use English as their mother tongue and at least 500 million speakers had been reckoned to learn English as a foreign language. (Crystal 2002, 1-2) The expansion of English language through the world has been tightened by growing economic power of the United States, as the spread of its international commerce has introduced English to many international conferences and meetings. (Harmer 2005, 3) Taking all these improvements into account, three main groups of English language have been formed on the basis of their usage. The first group is represented by speakers who use English as their mother tongue; these are e.g. Americans, British, Irish, Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians and South Africans. The second group is made by those speakers who use English as their second language. Though these speakers possess their mother tongues, they use English as the main language for dealing with the affairs of education, commerce, government.

This is the case in Ghana or Nigeria where people need to acquire English as their second language in order to lead an adequate life. English is chosen as the most suitable language for communication between different tribes whose languages completely vary. The third group is created by those people who learn English as a foreign language at schools or from so called “self-help” materials. It is very difficult to state how many people have acquired a reasonable fluency or standard of English as the figures differ a lot.

(Crystal 2002, 1-4) As each group is differently usage-defined, tensions between its users are flourishing.

Whereas one part of speakers who use English as their mother tongue is proud that it is English that has been chosen to represent the global status; the other part does not agree (these are especially the global influences that change the English language that these speakers perceive very negatively). (Crystal 2002, 10) It is worth noting here that the call for international intelligibility is a bit overshadowed by the influence of national identities.

In order to strengthen their nationalities, some countries establish distinct language characteristics, especially their vocabulary and prosody. In addition to this, local features of fauna, flora and culture strongly influence the character of words spoken. Whether these words become a part of world Standard English depends on the extent to which they are important to be used, e.g. when there is no counterpart expression on the world level for them. This is how the South African word *apartheid* entered the Standard English vocabulary stock. (Crystal D. 2003, 113) In addition to this, as different people from all the corners around the world use English, a great number of varieties in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar is created. (Harmer 2005, 6) These days, there are about 60 varieties of English language which comprise for example pidgins, creoles, “new Englishes” and many other standard and nonstandard options.(Graddol et.al. 2005, 3) Concerning teaching English as a foreign language, the question is which variety is the best to be taught at schools.

Is pronunciation necessarily an important element?

Indeed, pronunciation is often what is being perceived as redundant and is therefore often neglected and avoided by many teachers of second language (L2) (Brown, 1991: 1; Piske, 2007: 308). Why do some still claim the importance of native-like L2 pronunciation? What

is it that makes pronunciation vital for the L2 learner? It is the accent. And accent can have a number of negative effects:

“Foreign accents ... may make non-natives difficult to understand, especially in non-ideal listening conditions.... They may cause listeners to misjudge a non-native speaker’s affective state ..., or provoke negative personal evaluations, either as a result of the extra effort a listener must expend in order to understand, or by evoking negative group stereotypes....”(Flege, 1995: 234)

We could also turn this argument around by looking at what mastering native-like pronunciation can contribute with. First of all, native-like pronunciation allows a L2 learner, who also is a speaker, to be “understood by a listener at a given time in a given situation”, or in other words makes the speaker *intelligible* (Kenworthy, 1987: 13). Secondly, intelligibility contributes to *effective communication*, that is to say the kind of communication that is not a source of irritation and frustration caused by numerous repetitions and attempts to rephrase what has been said (Kenworthy, 1987: 15). According to Crystal (2010)¹, if teachers want their students to be prepared well for encountering the English speaking world, it is necessary to strengthen their confidence. This can be achieved by incorporating global English straight into the classroom. But what does the term “global English” actually refer to? And how can bringing “global English” into the classroom help students in the process of acquiring the English language accurately? The aim of this paper is to show the reasons why teaching English pronunciation should take an essential part of every English lesson and to present some of the possible methods that can help teachers to incorporate phonetic activities into English classes.

Furthermore, the practical part also comprises an analysis of recorded dialogues with the aim to reveal whether students cope with pronunciation problems even after undertaking various pronunciation activities. Jennifer Jenkins aimed on finding out which aspects of pronunciation can be considered as troublemakers from the view of language intelligibility. (Guardian, 2001) In connection with this, she introduces so called *Lingua Franca Core* (LFC) model. In her model, Jenkins suggests that pronunciation mistakes of NNS should be tolerated. In other words, regional accents of NNS should not be viewed as deviations from standard norms used by native speakers (NS). The disadvantage of non-native speaking teachers is that they tend to lack confidence in their own model. They often don't realize that native speaker teachers have quite a different disadvantage: they are unaware of what kinds of elements are difficult. Native speakers tend to assume that all aspects of spoken English (e.g., the uses of pitch and timing) are simply a natural part of human language, so they sometimes hurry over important matters. Non-native speakers, on the other hand, know from their own experience what aspects of spoken English require extra care. If the non-native speaking teacher has good listening recognition skills and a grasp of the Prosody Pyramid structure of English, then remaining elements of an L1 accent are of little importance. The key factor of LFC lies in the concept of sorting out such pronunciation features which might threaten intelligibility between NNS and NS. (Spicer, 2011) *The core features* whose mispronunciations might endanger the intelligibility in a conversation between NNS and NS:

- The importance of aspiration after word initial sounds of /p/, /t/, /k/, so that speakers produce the word pen like /p^hpen/ not like /b^hen/
- It is crucial to differentiate the length of vowel sounds, e.g. 'beans' /bi:nz/ not /b^hÁnz/

- The necessity to pronounce the intervocalic '-nt-' if it appears before an unstressed syllable, e.g. like in the word 'winter' /wɪntə(r)/ not /wɪnə(r)/
- Consonants in word initial clusters are necessary to be pronounced, e.g. the word 'strong', is crucial to be pronounced as /strɒŋ/ not as /srɒŋ/
- An additional sound in words with consonant cluster is perceived more accurate than erasure of a consonant sound, e.g. 'street' is accepted like /sɛtə'ri:t/ rather than like /s_ri:t/
- Within tone units, tonic stress should be placed
- Rhotic variation is supposed to be pronounced with /r/, e.g. in the word 'here' pronouncing /hi: r/ not /hɪə/ (Spicer, 2011) *The non-core features* whose mispronunciations do not affect the intelligibility in a conversation between NNS and NS in a great extent:
- Mispronouncing /θ/ sound, e.g. in the word 'think' /θɪŋk/ resulting in 'tink', 'sink' or 'fink'
- Mispronouncing /ð/ sound, e.g. in the word 'this' /ðɪs/, resulting in 'dis', 'zis' or 'vis'
- Pitch movement on the nuclear syllable
- Mispronunciations of weak forms, e.g. 'to' pronounced /tu:/ not /tə/
- Mispronunciations concerning vowel quality, e.g. 'cake' pronounced as /kaɪk/ instead of /keɪk/
- Misused word stress, e.g. in the word 'perfectionist' when putting the stress on the first syllable 'perfectionist' rather than on the second syllable 'perfectionist'
- Taking not into account features like assimilation ('good girl' /gʊd gɜ:l/ pronounced /gʊd gɜ:l/) and elision ('facts' /fæks / pronounced /fækt/) (Spicer, 2011)

Following Walker (2001), introducing LFC into a classroom would definitely bring a reduction of pronunciation exercises focusing on vowel quality, whose pronunciation training sometimes seems to be redundant. One argument here is that being intrinsically engaged in the context of an international conversation, it is not much likely to confuse between 'hat' and 'hut'. In addition to this, gone are the pronunciation activities for word stress, sentence stress, rhythm and intonation. What really matters in terms of pronunciation teaching is good quality of vowel length, well pronounced consonant sounds and clusters and good tonic stress.

One argument for substituting the non-core features by that one's which are more speakers-friendly is that English on the international basis needs to be taught for making communication clear. That is why some deviations from native sounds do not necessarily need to be corrected as far as the conversation proves to be intelligible. On the other hand, the fact is that the majority of fluent speakers of ELF do not approve with these substitutions or they do not use them at all. In addition to this, there are no figures at all which could prove that LFC includes the most common and the most acceptable forms worldwide. As a result of this, a great number of teachers, learners and material writers oppose the idea of raising the teaching model on LFC. (Ur 2009, 2-3)

Accents of English & Listening Comprehension NNS

Listening to and processing the pronunciation of speakers of different English native and non-native varieties is a challenge for many learners (Saville-Troike, 2006; Buck, 2001). Nevertheless, the existence of different regional varieties of English in one country as well the emergence of World Englishes, creates the need for learners to be able to understand a wide variety of accents. Thus, the general consensus among authors of ELT handbooks

is that accent is a very important variable in listening comprehension and teachers need to embrace the presence of various accents of English and use listening material that will help learners become aware of different accents and dialects of English (Harmer, 2007; Flowerdew and Miller, 2005; Bailey, 2005; Riddell, 2003; Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000; Hedge; 2000; Wharton and Race; 1999).

Pronunciation & Intelligibility

The important role that pronunciation plays in terms of the intelligibility of L2 oral production is recognised by the majority of ELT authors: Saville- Troike, 2006; Bailey, 2005; Scrivener, 2005; Luoma, 2004; Baker and Westrup, 2003; Riddell; 2003; Burns and Seidlhofer, 2002; Hebert, 2002; Harmer, 2001; Seidlhofer, 2001; Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000; Wharton and Race; 1999. The authors agree, that unless L2 speakers pay attention to their pronunciation, they may convey unintended meanings, misunderstandings may occur and communication breakdowns may take place. As Thornbury (2006: 185) put it: “faulty pronunciation is one of the most common causes of misunderstanding”. Thus, English language learners need practice in all areas of pronunciation (sounds, sounds in connected speech, word stress, sentence stress and intonation) if they are to become fully effective communicators.

The ‘**intelligibility**’ concept. Unfortunately, providing a definition for ‘intelligibility’ is a challenge because “much discussion of the construct has suffered from a failure to arrive at a clear consensus” (Field, 2005: 400). Bearing in mind that, there is “no broad agreement on a definition of the term ‘intelligibility’: it can mean different things to different

people” (Jenkins, 2000: 71) and, that, “researchers have employed various definitions of intelligibility”, I will make the reader aware of my interpretation of the concept. Since this thesis explores the place and practice of *pronunciation* teaching and, as such, places great emphasis on the acoustic signal of L2 speech, it is sensible to adopt Smith and Nelson’s (1985) definition of ‘intelligibility’ (also endorsed by Jenkins, 2000), and use the term in its narrow sense; that is, in order to denote the recognition of the phonological form of a word or utterance. For a detailed discussion of the concept of intelligibility including the definition provided by Smith and Nelson (1985), For Jenkins (2000) ‘intelligibility’ is the most important level of meaning because it is a prerequisite for successful communication. Given the reciprocal dimension of speech, it is essential for EFL/ESL learners not only to understand but also to be understood. And, since learners cannot be intelligible on their own, it is important to ask ‘intelligible to whom?’. As the reader can see, we cannot have a context-independent definition for ‘intelligibility’. Generally, it is helpful to distinguish between four kinds of situation⁴²: 1. when a non-native speaker (NNS) of English is talking with a NS of English with a standard accent, 2. when a NNS of English is talking with a NS of English with a non-standard accent, 3. when a NNS is talking with another NNS with a different first language (L1) and, 4. when a NNS is talking with another NNS with the same L1. It is interesting to note that Jenkins (2000) is concerned with the productive and receptive intelligibility of speakers’ discourse only among NNSs of English. She justifies her position by writing that nowadays NNSs of English outnumber NSs and English is mainly used for international communication rather than for communication with its NSs (Jenkins,2000.)

The LFC has opened a great debate on pronunciation models and targets; according to Szypra-Kozłowska (2005: 151), it is “one of the most hotly debated and controversial

recent proposals in the area of English pronunciation pedagogy". Indeed, it has divided scholars, researchers, phoneticians, applied linguists and teachers into two camps; those that support the LFC and those that object to the LFC. In other words, there are those who argue that NS models should no longer be used in teaching English pronunciation (and as point of reference against which to judge English language learners' pronunciation) and embrace the LFC. For example, Keys and Walker (2002: 298) write that they "feel strongly in favour of the general principles that are contained in Jennifer Jenkins's work". McKay (2002: 28) maintains that "a 47 Please see the section entitled 'Features of the Lingua Franca Core' of Jenkins's (2000) book (: 134-157) for a detailed description of the elements that make up the Lingua Franca Core. native-speaker norm in English language research and pedagogy is not relevant in many contexts in which English is used as an international language" and considers Jenkins's (2000) work to be "one of the most balanced discussions of how to resolve" the conflict "between the need to preserve international intelligibility and respect for the desire of some bilingual users of English to preserve their own identity" (McKay, 2002: 71). And, there are those who reject the LFC and argue for the relevance of NS models and the importance of attempting to approximate to NS norms. For example, Sobkowiak (2005: 144) writes that "in my whole teaching career I have not met a Pole who would not like to sound like a native, or who would fear to step on this 'road of no return' leading him to perfect his English accent" and Wells (2005a: 102) points out that his "own aspiration in learning languages is NS-like proficiency... if it were suggested that I should not even aim so high, I should feel short-changed".

Thus, while bearing in mind the two main different viewpoints on the debate on pronunciation models and targets (i.e. Gimson's NS model and Jenkins's sociolinguistic model), one of the aims of this research was to discover which pronunciation models and

targets are followed in TEFL in Greece and whether or not they are appropriate in relation to the contexts in which the learners intend to use English. Thus, the learners were asked in which context(s) they anticipate to use English so that we could decipher who the interlocutors would be and make appropriate recommendations as to models to be adopted and targets to be aimed at.

Lingua Franca Model

Following Tennant (2007, 2), the very first thing teachers need to realize is what they want to teach. Do teachers want their students speak RP perfectly or do they rather want their students sound intelligible? If teachers try to aim the first target, they should better reconsider it. Taking into account the small amount of people who really do speak RP, the first target proves pointless. Teachers should rather focus on helping students to be able to communicate effectively. In connection with this, Walker (2001) claims that with the growing role of English language in the world, the necessity of measuring speaker's success in an international conversation according to his/her degree of intelligibility rather than according to his/her ability to acquire the dominant accents of RP or GA is becoming more and more essential.

Here, it is important to clear up the concept of the many varieties of English language. According to Seidlhofer (2005, 339), there are many terms that refer to this perception, e.g. English as an International Language (EIL), English as a World Language, English as a Global Language, English as a Lingua Franca, World Englishes and many others. Following Farrell and Martin (2009, 2 -3), World Englishes comprise all the varieties of English language that exist around the world, with all their cultural and language diversities. Crystal D. (2003, 113) contemplates about the matter of English language varieties and he suggests some ways of its unification:

- 1) A current variety of English could be adopted by the most influential international institutions and could be established as the world Standard English.
- 2) The English varieties could merge and they could found a completely new form of English, different from those already existing. As an example of this situation, "Euro-English" can be named, a variety that has already been employed in the European Community.
- 3) A new variety of English could be created, based on the most communicative features and vocabulary that are, according to some assumptions concerning this issue, most essential for the international communication.

In order to help two non-native speakers sound intelligible, Tennant (2007, 2) mentions the possibility of setting up a kind of *lingua franca model* which would include the most important pronunciation aspects. In connection with this, Seidlhofer (2005, 339- 340) notes that a number of researches in the fields of phonology, pragmatics and lexicogrammar have been already carried out. The fact, however, is that these are the native speakers who are the righteous ones to set up a kind of a model, even though the majority of conversations is led by speakers of EFL. Despite this, it is agreed that the most important mission of the model targets on setting up such features which are crucial in making the international communication effective and intelligible. A Finish scientist coming to Vienna for a conference on human genetics; an Italian designer negotiating with prospective clients in Stockholm; a Polish tourist chatting with local restaurateurs in Crete: they all communicate successfully in "English", but which English? (Guardian, 2001)

As the widespread usage of English grows, a kind of a European variety of English, sometimes labeled as "Euro-English", is emerging in the role of English as a *Lingua Franca* in Europe (ELFE). However, as ELFE is in its early incipience, its future

development remains a question of speculations. In order to find out the optimal way for setting up a model for teaching pronunciation, Jennifer Jenkins and Barbara Seidlhofer have decided to analyse recorded dialogues that have been led by non-natives speakers (NNS) of various origins. (Guardian, 2001) Jennifer Jenkins aimed on finding out which aspects of pronunciation can be considered as troublemakers from the view of language intelligibility. (Guardian, 2001) In connection with this, she introduces so called *Lingua Franca Core* (LFC) model.

Teaching Production and Teaching Comprehension

Crystal (2010) envisages the matter from another point of view. He claims that the most important thing in teaching EFL is to bring global English into the classroom. It does not mean that teachers necessarily need to stop teaching according to the materials that include e.g. RP. That is right the opposite. If teachers set up a teaching model on an English course book including RP, they can carry on. The point is that these study materials need to be complemented with such substances which include as many various English varieties as possible. In other words, teachers need to expose their students to as many varieties as possible in order to make them realize that the English variety included in their books is not the only variety which exists in the world. The sooner students get exposed to these varieties; the better. Crystal (2010) adds that it does not mean that students have to be exposed to all the varieties existing; the aim is just to make the students familiar with the language which they can really encounter in the streets.

Here, Crystal (2010) highlights the idea, that it is not only the factor of pronouncing the sounds accurately which contributes to conversation effectiveness, but this is most importantly the ability to distinguish what the others are saying. In accordance with this, he

mentions two possible ways how teachers can bring global English into the classroom, namely *teaching production* and *teaching comprehension*. In terms of teaching production, teachers need to realize that introducing only one variety, e.g. RP, is not a good way of making students be exposed to the existing varieties. However, Crystal (2010) claims that it is not as for production where global English has such a great impact, but it is rather in terms of comprehension where a misunderstanding can change everything. Regarding this, it is more than advisable that teachers expose their students to as many comprehension activities as possible. This applies to reading comprehension (introducing written materials into the classroom, e.g. a variety of international newspapers, journals and internet sites) as well as to listening comprehension (incorporating a variety of listening activities).

Exposure to Authentic Spoken English

The importance of exposing learners to authentic spoken English through listening activities is recognised in ELT PRON handbooks (Kelly, 2000; Celce-Murcia et al, 1996; Pennington, 1996; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994). For example, Pennington (1996: 237) suggests encouraging learners “to listen extensively – e.g. to the radio, television or special tape series – to gain experience with different voice qualities or accents of English”. Attention is also directed to problems often associated with this approach to pronunciation teaching and practice; Celce-Murcia et al (1996) point out that in EFL settings, especially those where learners have little opportunity to surround themselves with native input in the target language, “the burden will fall more on the teacher to... ascertain that students have opportunities... to experience samples of the authentic oral discourse of native speakers” (: 17) and “it is impractical for teachers to use such material all the time, as not only one has to find suitable materials, but also to design tasks that go with them” (Kelly, 2000: 21).

'Production' Activities (imitation, reading aloud, choral & individual responses)

Moving on to techniques aimed at improving the learners' productive competence in pronunciation, imitation activities are prevalent in many ELT PRON manuals. I ought to point out that writers do not tend to distinguish between 'imitation' and 'repetition' (the two words are often used interchangeably) and the technique which involves the teacher saying a word and getting the learners to repeat it can be referred to as 'drilling in its most basic form'. Kelly (2000) includes 'drilling/ repetition/ imitation' activities for the practice of pronunciation and so do many other authors: Gilbert (2005a, 2005b), Hancock (2003), Hewings and Goldstein (1999), Celce-Murcia et al (1996), Pennington (1996) and Fitzpatrick (1995). For example, Celce-Murcia et al (1996: 147) recommend for students to become comfortable with typical word stress patterns "to repeat lists of words (all of which share a rhythmic pattern) in unison after the teacher, often tapping out the rhythmic pattern or clapping as they practice". While Gilbert (2005a, 2005b) includes traditional 'listen and repeat' activities, she also advocates the use of the 'quality repetition' technique as follows:

Quality Repetition is based on a neurologically well-founded approach to learning the rhythm, melody, and sounds of language. Used primarily with Music of English activities, this approach depends both on highly varied encouragements to repeat a short chunk of language at fluent speed and on the psychological support of a choral setting. By repeating a short sentence or phrase in chorus, students learn the phrase "like a little song", fixing it in solid memory. Gilbert, 2005a: xiv-xv Furthermore, 'reading aloud' tasks are encountered in quite a few ELT PRON handbooks (for example, see Kelly, 2000 or Bowen and Marks, 1992). Kelly (2000) believes that the 'reading aloud' technique "has its place when it comes to working on 26 For example, lists of words with typical two-syllable patterns may be: 'table/ language/ window/ teacher' and 'begin/ arrive/ select/ around'.

Please see Celce-Murcia et al, 1996: 147 for further details for this particular activity. any aspect of pronunciation, and is particularly useful for working on stress and intonation” (: 81). Teachers may seek choral responses from all learners in class together or individual responses from each learner to help improve the learners’ productive competence in pronunciation. The general consensus among authors of ELT PRON handbooks seems to be that items (e.g. minimal pairs or sentences) should be drilled or repeated by learners chorally as well as individually (see Kelly, 2000; Hewings and Goldstein, 1999; Celce-Murcia et al, 1996; Pennington, 1996). At this point, I would like to note an exception; Gilbert (2005a: xiii) believes that it is hard “for students to be courageous when called on to recite words or phrases alone” and “such nervousness has an especially negative effect on pronunciation”. For this reason, choral repetition should be preferred. Moreover, for a couple of writers choral repetition should precede individual repetition (e.g. Hewings and Goldstein,1999); “choral drilling can help to build confidence, and gives students the chance to practice pronouncing the drilled item relatively anonymously, without being put on the spot” (Kelly: 2000: 16) and “individual drilling... gives the teacher the chance to ascertain how well individuals are able to pronounce the item being drilled” (ibid: 16).

An Overview of Teaching Models

To sum it up, according to Ur (2009, 2-5), teachers of ESL have the following ways to choose from in order to introduce a teaching model in their classroom:

- 1) Teachers can base their English lessons on the *Standard English model* which includes comprehensible and acceptable features recognizable worldwide. It is usually based on one or two predominant native varieties (British English, American English). Introducing only the Standard form, however, eliminates the

possibility to encounter the great number of idioms, vocabulary, grammar and spellings that are included in many English varieties.

- 2) Teachers can also decide for a *native model* which is favoured by many students and teachers as it is well defined and codified. The question is which variety of native model to choose from as there are many native model varieties around the world.
- 3) Another option to elect from is the *diverse model*, which enables to teach also some of the local variations. This model is probably the most ideologically embraceable, even though it requires some kind of codification. As this way presents a very flexible way of teaching, it is difficult to design a syllabus for it.
- 4) In order to improve student's intelligibility, teachers can introduce so called *common core model* into the classroom. This method should be universally comprehensible and easily achievable. However, it is not proved whether this model includes all the most common language features used worldwide or not. (Ur 2009, 2-5)

Factors influencing pronunciation

The fact that some students are able to acquire a reasonable knowledge of English in few months and the others are not able to reach the same level within some few years leads this paper to the topic of factors which influence attaining English pronunciation. As noted by Shoebottom (2012), some of these factors can affect acquiring pronunciation skills prosperously (e.g. determination and hard work in training pronunciation skills), some of these factors are far beyond human control. Generally, we can distinguish two main groups of the factors, internal and external.

Internal Factors

These are the factors which are incorporated into student's individual language.

Age: It is proved that children are the most talented ones in terms of acquiring EFL. However, adults can achieve a reasonable progress in obtaining pronunciation skills successfully if they are well motivated and determined.

Personality: Students who are of introvert character are usually afraid of expressing themselves orally; they do not rather look for any opportunities to speak. On the other hand, students who are of extrovert character are usually seeking for taking part in every conversation possible, ignoring their mistakes.

Motivation: It is important to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Students who are intrinsically motivated exhibit greater interest enjoyment in their English language development. Students who need to study English in order to take a better job or to communicate with relatives who live in an English speaking country (so they are extrinsically motivated) are also likely to achieve better results.

Experiences: Students who have already been exposed to some foreign language have greater chances to acquire a new language easier than students who have never encountered one.

Cognition: It is believed by some linguists that the cognitive abilities that are stronger with some students than with some others can lead to faster language progress.

Native language: Students who try to acquire a foreign language which belongs to the same language family as their native language have greater chance than those students who try to master a language from a family group that is different from their native tongue.

(Shoebottom 2012)

External Factors

These factors characterize the particular language learning situation.

Curriculum: It is important to expose students of ESL to such a workload which is appropriate for their studying needs.

Instruction: It depends also on teacher's teaching skills and abilities how successful students are in terms of their language development. In addition to this, students who are exposed to some ELT also in other subjects reach greater progress.

Culture and Status: It has been noticed that students whose culture possesses a lower status than the culture whose language they are exposed to achieve the language skills slower.

Motivation: It is proved that students who are continually supported to better their language skills by their families or teachers reach a greater success.

Access to native speakers: Students who have the possibility to meet with native speakers lose the fears to communicate. Native speakers provide a linguistic model and an appropriate feedback for students. (Shoebottom 2012)

Introducing the functions of the Prosody

Communication in spoken English is organized by "musical signals." There are two aspects to these signals – rhythm and melody – and the combination of these two aspects may be called *prosody*. Often, the term *prosody* is used to mean rhythm alone, while the term *intonation* is used to refer specifically to melody (or pitch patterns). However, in this booklet, *prosody* will refer to the combination of both rhythm and melody. The reason is that for the purposes of teaching pronunciation, the teacher needs to understand that both these aspects of spoken English work together and are vitally linked. The term *prosody* provides us with a handy way to refer to the interconnected aspects of rhythm and melody with a single label.

Rhythm and Melody as Road Signs

In English, rhythmic and melodic signals serve as “road signs” to help the listener follow the intentions of the speaker. These signals communicate emphasis and make clear the relationship between ideas so that listeners can readily identify these relationships and understand the speaker’s meaning. Unfortunately, when English learners speak in class, they are typically not thinking about how to help their listeners follow their meaning. Instead, they are often thinking about avoiding mistakes in grammar, vocabulary, and so on. Native speakers also commonly make this error when delivering a presentation or when reading aloud in a classroom, a business meeting, or in some other setting. They become preoccupied with making “mistakes” and may ignore their listeners altogether. But it is particularly important for English learners to think about their listeners and master the rhythmic and melodic signals essential to “listenerfriendly” pronunciation. Learners typically do not use or recognize the cues that native listeners count on to help them follow meaning in a conversation. As a result, conversational breakdowns occur. Emphasis that conveys the wrong meaning, or thought groups that either run together or break in inappropriate places, cause extra work for the listener who is trying to follow the speaker’s meaning. If the burden becomes too great, the listener simply stops listening. The principle of “helping the listener to follow,” therefore, is a vital one. It is so central to communication, in fact, that time spent helping students concentrate on the major rhythmic and melodic signals of English is more important than any other efforts to improve their pronunciation.

Melody

All languages have some way to highlight the most important piece of information in an utterance. They all have a way to help listeners distinguish between old information and new information and thereby draw the listener’s attention to that piece of information that is

new, and therefore, more important. But few languages rely on melody for this function as much as English. In English, changes in pitch help listeners follow the speaker's meaning because these melodic signals provide cohesion and contrast. Not only do they tell listeners what is new information, but they also tell listeners how ideas relate to each other. They help listeners to understand how the speaker intends to make connections with what came before (orientation) and what will follow in the conversation (prediction). Efficient listening comprehension, therefore, depends on the ability to "read" melodic cues in order to sort out these aspects of the incoming language. The orientation aspect helps listeners to clue into what must have been assumed, and the prediction aspect helps listeners to find out quickly if they have misunderstood the point of the conversation. In addition, these aspects are similar to the skills needed to be an efficient reader (e.g., to recognize the significance of *furthermore* or *on the other hand* which are "road signs" for the reader). But in spoken English, the "road signs" are prosodic! Consider the following example sentences.

Example

a. Jane said, "Is that Mister Fogg?"

b. Jane said, "Is that mist or fog?"

Question: What was Jane talking about?

(Gilbert 2005, 136)

In sentence (a), Jane is asking about a person. In sentence (b), she is asking about something altogether different, the weather. In terms of pronunciation, however, the only difference between the two utterances is a melodic one. The pitch pattern of each sentence distinguishes it from the other and makes the meaning clear for the listener.

Rhythm

Children learn the rhythm of their L1 very early in life. By the time they reach the age of one, that rhythm is deeply familiar to them, and they will unconsciously apply it to any L2 that they learn (Aoyama et al. 2007). Since English learners will be predisposed to use the rhythm of their L1, it is highly important that they be made consciously aware of the English system of rhythm. The basic unit of English rhythm is the *syllable*. A syllable is most simply explained as something with a vowel sound at its center. And while the number of syllables in a word is usually obvious to a native speaker of English, learners accustomed to different phonological rules may not hear the syllable divisions in the same way. Since this seriously affects both intelligibility and listening comprehension, time must be spent training students' ears to notice the number of syllables in the words they learn. For instance, students should be taught to count syllables and thereby notice the rhythmic difference between words in pairs, such as *ease* and *easy*, or *wait* and *waited*. Listening comprehension is increased when students learn to notice the rhythmic effect of the number of syllables, including small words such as articles, auxiliaries, and affixes (e.g., *the*; *do*; *-er*; etc.). In easily confused words like *this is/this* and *late/later* the number of syllables is different, so the rhythm is different. These small words and affixes are typically difficult to hear in spoken English because of the systematic use of contrastive highlighting/obscuring, which is essential to the English stress and emphasis system. For this reason, these small words are often missing from students' speech (and writing), and this indicates that they are not hearing them well.

Example

1. Yest'day I rent' 'car. (Yesterday I rented a car.)
2. Where' 'book? (Where is the book?)

3. We' been here' long time. (We've been here a long time.)

But an understanding of English rhythm involves more than the ability to identify and count syllables. It also involves an ability to hear and produce the *word stress patterns* of English. English speakers tend to store vocabulary items according to their stress patterns (Brown 1990; Levelt 1989). Therefore a stress error is particularly damaging to communication. Brown puts it this way:

The stress pattern of a polysyllabic word is a very important identifying feature of the word . . . We store words under stress patterns . . . and we find it difficult to interpret an utterance in which a word is pronounced with the wrong stress pattern – we begin to “look up” possible words under this wrong stress pattern. (1990, 51)

Only a little imagination is needed to realize that the failure to hear and produce stress patterns accurately could cause confusion between words such as those in the following pairs: *dessert/desert foreign/for rain his story/history*

It might seem that context would clarify any confusion over words like these, but in fact stress errors rarely exist in isolation from other pronunciation or grammatical problems. The combination of stress errors with other types of errors can seriously disrupt communication. For example, the following instance of confusion actually occurred during an English language learning class in the workplace, when a student took the teacher aside and asked for private advice.

Example

Student: Mrs. Stiebel, can you help me with comedy?

Teacher: Comedy?

Student: Yes, comedy is big problem.

Teacher: I don't quite follow.

Student: (Patiently) Problem – this is worry.

Teacher: Yes, a worry. Um . . . you mean you have a problem with comedy on TV?

Student: TV? (Trying again) The boss put me on department comedy. Everybody on comedy, all the time argue.

Teacher: Oh, you mean committee!

Student: Yes, what I told you, comedy.

Although good will and patient attempts to clarify may often help speakers and listeners overcome this sort of disruption, wrong stress is an added burden for listeners and can, in many cases, lead to conversational breakdown. Unfortunately, learners tend to ignore stress patterns when they learn vocabulary. Not only can this lead to pronunciation problems, as in the example above, but it can also lead to problems with comprehension. After all, if learners have failed to learn the stress pattern for a new word, they may also fail to recognize that word when it occurs in spoken form. Brown makes this observation:

From the point of view of the comprehension of spoken English, the ability to identify stressed syllables and make intelligent guesses about the content of the message from this information is absolutely essential.

(1977, 52)

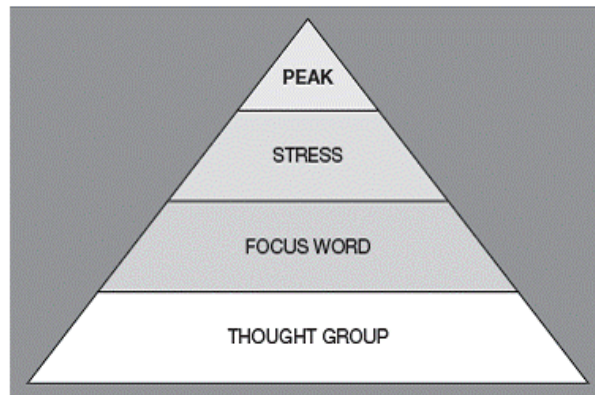
The importance of prosodic instruction is further supported by the findings of Derwing and Rossiter. In 2003, they conducted a study on the effects of different types of English pronunciation instruction. As part of that study, a group of students was instructed in segmentals (i.e., individual consonant and vowel sounds). They were taught to distinguish between English sounds and produce these sounds as accurately as possible. Another group was primarily taught the prosodic features of English. They learned about the rhythm and melody of English and practiced using the prosodic signals that native speakers use to guide their listeners. The authors comment on their findings:

We do not advocate eliminating segment-based instruction altogether, but, 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. (2003, 14)

The Prosody Pyramid

The English prosodic system can be illustrated visually with a pyramid shape. We will call it the Prosody Pyramid. The base of the system is the *thought group*. This is a group of words that may be a short sentence, a clause, or a phrase within a longer sentence (Chafe 1970, Bolinger 1989, Brown 1990, Cauldwell 1992). Within that base unit, there is a *focus word* – the most important word in the thought group. Within the focus word, one syllable is given the main *stress*. That syllable functions as the peak of information within the thought group. It is sometimes called the *nucleus*, or the *peak*. The sounds in this syllable must be clear and easily recognized, because this is the center of meaning of the thought group. All the processes of spoken English work together to make this syllable easy for the listener to notice and recognize. While the various levels of pronunciation are interdependent, they will be more easily understood if separated and presented one step at a time. In the

sections that follow, we will consider each level of the Prosody Pyramid in turn and explain how each level relates to the others.



Suprasegmentals versus Segmentals

The suprasegmental level of pronunciation is perceived as more important than the segmental level for the comprehensibility of spoken language; for example, Hebert (2002) states that the suprasegmental level “causes the most communication breakdowns between ESL learners and native speakers” (: 199). Thus, most ELT writers argue that there is a greater need for learners to master the suprasegmental features of pronunciation (see, for example, Lightbrown and Spada, 2006). The general consensus among authors of ELT manuals is that stress and intonation are instrumental in terms of information and conversation management and, consequently, most manuals explore the functions of stress and intonation and recommend activities for their practice: Bailey (2005), McDonough and Shaw (2003), Cook (2001) and Wharton and Race (1999) concentrate on intonation, Anderson et al (2004) and Rost (2001) explore stress at word and sentence level and Thornbury (2005), Luoma (2004), Riddell (2003), Hebert, (2003), Burns and Seidlhofer (2002), Buck (2001) and Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) focus on both. As for Harmer (2001), he emphasises connected speech.

The Thought Group

Perhaps the most important way that English speakers help their listeners to follow their meaning is by grouping words so that they can be more easily processed. The stream of talk in English does not flow smoothly; it is composed of a series of brief spurts. Interestingly, when native speakers listen to English speech, they do not generally notice this intermittent quality. Rather they get an impression of smooth continuity. But this seeming stream is really made up of longer and shorter chunks. These chunks of speech are the organization of the speaker's thoughts into groups. As mentioned earlier, a thought group of words can be a short sentence, a clause, or even a phrase. While, the English system for grouping words seems logical to native speakers of English, many languages either do not rely on the same signals to indicate thought boundaries, or they put the boundaries in different places (Ballmer 1980). In written English, punctuation is used to help readers separate thought groups.

Prosodic Markers for Thought Groups

Thought groups generally start on a higher pitch and then drop at the end. To clearly mark the end of the group, there are several prosodic signals:

- (a) a pause
- (b) a drop in pitch
- (c) lengthening of the last stressed syllable (the most subtle signal)

In slow speech, the pause is the most obvious indicator that a thought group has ended. But during rapid speech, there is no time for pauses, so pitch drops are essential signals. In general, a pitch drop means "the end," and there is a relationship between the degree of finality and the size of the drop. For instance, a slight drop in intonation typically marks the

end of a thought group within a sentence; a bigger drop marks the end of a sentence or an entire comment; a major drop indicates, “I have finished my remarks, and it is now your turn to speak.” In a more subtle (but equally systematic) way, spoken English uses the lengthening of the final stressed syllable in a thought group to signal the end of that group. This lengthening may exist in order to give time for the pitch drop (Lehiste 1977, 260), which helps the listener to notice that the thought group is finished. Teachers sometimes ask for rules to give their students about how to decide where to begin and end a thought group. Although linguists have been studying this question for decades, no one seems to have developed rules that are sufficiently simple and practical for language learners. Instead of attempting to teach complex rules, it is far more useful to help students learn to hear the signals of thought grouping and think about grouping in their own speech. One way to build awareness of thought group boundaries is to have students analyze a piece of recorded speech to determine where the thought groups begin and end. When students work in pairs or in small groups to analyze a dialogue or a paragraph, their individual choices about grouping will likely be different. Nevertheless, awareness of the concept is raised when they have to explain their choices about how the words are grouped.

The Focus Word

Every English thought group has a focus word. This is the most important word in the group. It is the word that the speaker wants the listener to notice most, and it is therefore emphasized. To achieve the necessary emphasis on the focus word, English makes particular use of intonation. The basic principle at play when emphasizing a focus word is contrast.

Emphasis and De-emphasis

Since other languages use other signals to call attention to the important idea in an utterance, learners of English as an L2 often do not notice this specifically English system for signaling emphasis. Because the English system of sentence emphasis may be quite foreign to student intuition, it helps to present a set of basic rules about how this system works. Several simple focus rules are presented in *Clear Speech* (Gilbert 2005), and those rules are reproduced in Appendix 2 of this booklet. Among these rules is the basic principle that the focus word in a thought group is usually a *content word* (i.e., a noun, verb, adverb, or adjective). Content words carry a great deal of information, and are therefore more likely to be the most important word in a thought group. On the other hand, *structure words* (i.e., pronouns, prepositions, articles, “to be” verbs, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs) are usually not the focus word in a thought group. In fact, these less information-heavy words are usually *de-emphasized*. English speakers usually *reduce* (or weaken) them and as a result they are hard to hear. For instance, many structure words are often contracted (e.g., *she is* becomes *she’s*). Reductions like this help to intensify the contrast between the focus word and the words that surround it.

The fact that structure words are commonly reduced explains why learners often do not notice these words when they listen to others speak. Reduction obscures the words, making them difficult for learners to hear. This is true of affixes as well. Because English speakers reduce affixes (i.e., they are not pronounced loudly and clearly), learners will often miss them and even omit them from their own speech. For instance, learners might pronounce a past tense verb like *rented* as *rent* because they have not noticed the reduced *-ed* ending. Learning to reduce structure words is a challenge for learners. Part of the challenge arises from the logical contradiction involved in asking students to “pay

attention to the words that need to be obscured.” However, practice with emphasizing the focus word will help them to grasp the contrast between the highlights and shadows of a sentence. When students have a good command of these aspects of sentence rhythm and melody, they will be prepared to understand why some words are reduced and what it means when they are *not* reduced (e.g., “I will NOT loan you the money” is much stronger than “I won’t loan you the money”). It is common for students to emphasize every word when they are anxious to be understood. This gives an impression of agitation or insistence that they may not intend, and it certainly diminishes the effectiveness of the prosodic “road signs” that the listener needs. The same is true if they speak in a monotone, another common way of dealing with uncertainty in a new language. Furthermore, many English learners are suspicious of reductions, including contractions, because they regard them as substandard usage. This feeling can produce a covert resistance to exercises that practice these aspects of spoken English. Students must be helped to understand that reduction is a necessary part of the system to provide contrast for the highlighted words. In fact, efficient listening comprehension depends in part on the ability to recognize important grammatical information even when it is in a reduced form. How can teachers overcome students’ reluctance to take reductions seriously? A well-learned template sentence can help reassure them about the function of reduction (e.g., “How d’you spell . . .”). Also, it is useful to use light poetry, or chants, which require reduction in order to make the rhythm fit.

Stress and the Peak Syllable

Every English multi-syllabic word has a syllable that receives the main stress. This is part of each word's signature, so to speak. But in the focus word, this stressed syllable gets special attention, because it represents the peak of information in the thought group. It is the most important syllable within the most important word, and, therefore, the sounds in the peak syllable must be heard clearly. As mentioned in the previous chapter, English learners tend to ignore stress when they learn vocabulary. And failure to learn the stress pattern of new words often leads to an inability to recognize those words in spoken form. Earlier, we considered this and other reasons *why learning stress patterns is important?* But the present discussion of peak syllables, and the role they play in thought groups, leads us to a more crucial reason why learners should develop a familiarity with English word stress: When students learn a new word, they need to know which syllable in that word will be the peak syllable when the word is chosen as the focus of a thought group. In other words, learners need to know the stress pattern of a word if they are going to use it as a focus word.

We saw earlier that the stress pattern of a word as shown in the dictionary is actually only a "potential" stress pattern. That is, the stress pattern shown in the dictionary is only realized in certain prosodic contexts. To be more specific, the dictionary stress pattern is only really used when the word is chosen as a focus word. So, although the dictionary stress pattern is not the only way that the word is ever pronounced, students need to have that pattern available in order to emphasize the word in speech. Brown expresses the importance of recognizing English word stress patterns this way:

It is essential in English to learn to pay attention to the stressed syllable of a word, since this is the best and most stable feature of the word's profile, and to those words in the stream of speech which are [emphasized], since these mark the richest information-bearing units. Listeners who fail to distinguish these are likely to flounder. They are likely to lose even more information if they do not know how to identify information peaks and how to use the information encoded in this distribution. (1990, 151)

At the same time, learners need to be able to notice when a word is being deemphasized, and recognize the significance of that de-emphasis (e.g., it marks the word as old information that has been previously established or stressed). The fact that a word is deemphasized tells the listener something about the relationship between that word and the central idea of the thought group. It also sends signals about the relationship between that word and what has come before in the conversation. But if learners are going to recognize when a word is being de-emphasized, and what the significance of that de-emphasis is, they will first have to be familiar with the word's basic stress pattern.

The Signals of Stress

Because the identification of stress is so important for communication in English, native speakers use a combination of signals to make clear which syllable is stressed; these are loudness, contrastive vowel length, contrastive vowel clarity, and pitch change. Extra clarity and length also happen to give the impression of loudness, so many teachers assume that loudness is the essential lesson element to teach. But it is more pedagogically powerful to focus students' attention on the systematic use of length, clarity, and pitch as they are less common signals of stress in other languages. These signals occur together, but it is best to teach them separately so that the student can focus on one aspect at a time.

Vowel Length

The vowel at the center of a syllable may vary in length for a number of reasons (e.g., what kind of consonant sound follows the vowel), but stress is the most important reason for the vowel in an English word to be lengthened or shortened.

Dalton and Seidlhofer explain the importance of vowel length as a signal of stress this way:

What are the decisive cues we should look for in the perception of stress? . . . Experiments with speakers of other languages have corroborated the importance of pitch as a cue in the perception of stress, but they have also shown that the relative weight of the factors involved is definitely language specific. As far as English is concerned, for instance, the duration of syllables seems to be a more important cue than in other languages. (1994, 34)

Brown, likewise, identifies vowel length as a particularly important stress signal in English:

Any syllable which is markedly longer than the surrounding syllables will also be perceived as stressed. From the point of view of teaching production of stress, length is the variable that most students find easiest to control, and is a reliable marker of stress. (Brown 1990, 46)

Some languages do not lengthen vowels. The vowels in these languages always have the same duration. If the L1 has a characteristically variable duration of vowels, students may hear differences in length very well, but they may fail to connect the difference in length with stress because their own L1 uses length in different ways. For instance, some languages distinguish “double vowels” from a single-length version.

Pitch Changes

All languages have one or more ways to show the difference between new and old information, but English relies on intonation for this purpose more than most other languages. When a word becomes the focus of meaning, the stressed syllable of the word (the peak syllable) is marked by a major change in pitch. Notice how pitch changes in the following exchange mark the new information in each utterance.

Each speaker has a natural baseline pitch for speaking, and varies from this baseline (either up or down) in order to call attention to the focus word. Patel makes the following observation about the direction of pitch changes:

In intonation languages such as English (in which pitch does not distinguish lexical items, as it does in tone languages), the direction of the pitch change is seldom crucial to understanding. For example, if a pitch movement is used to signal focus on a word, it may matter little to a listener if the movement is upward or downward, as long as it is salient and detectable. (2008, 234)

In English, pitch changes are the most important signal of new information, or special importance (Bolinger 1986, 21). The stressed syllable is lengthened in order to make the pitch change easier to hear. If there has been adequate practice of recognizing lengthened syllables in previous course work, adding pitch should be a manageable task at this point. However, unless students have been trained to pay attention to the contrastive signal, they are apt to fail to notice it and therefore miss the point. For that reason, students should be taught to listen for the acoustic emphasis given to focus words. This helps them learn to listen “selectively,” rather than giving equal attention to every word they hear. Listening for emphasis guides listeners to the essence of the message (Brazil et al. 1980, McNerney and Mendelsohn 1992). It is terribly inefficient to teach individual sounds without

establishing some basic understanding of the English system of rhythm and melody. For one thing, without an understanding of English prosody, students will end up practicing English sounds in their L1 rhythm. This is a common problem in many ESL/ELT classrooms. The rhythmic structure of each language supplies a timing context that makes it easier to reach the target sound. So, learning about the L2's rhythm will make it easier for students to pronounce L2 sounds. Conversely, not learning about the target L2 rhythm will make the task more difficult. It has been said, for instance, that it is hard to make clear Spanish consonants if you are speaking in a Portuguese rhythm. So rhythm training is a precondition to good, clear target sounds.

Many other exercises and techniques could be used to teach each of these pronunciation elements. The main idea is to use as many visual, kinesthetic, and auditory tools as you can, and to encourage the most realistic interactive use possible of the components of the Prosody Pyramid. All these parts of pronunciation work together to make a speaker comfortably intelligible. Students who gain confidence through practice with "listener-friendly pronunciation" will find English an easier pathway to whatever goals they want to achieve with the language.

Without a sufficient, threshold-level mastery of the English prosodic system, learners' intelligibility and listening comprehension will not advance, no matter how much effort is made drilling individual sounds. That is why the highest priority must be given to rhythm and melody in whatever time is available for teaching pronunciation. If there is more time, then other lower priority topics can be addressed (e.g., the sound of the letters *th*, the difference between the sounds associated with *r* and *l*, etc.), but priority must be given to prosody. Teachers are often hesitant to tackle rhythm and melody in class because these topics are perceived as complicated and full of nuance. Textbooks on the subject tend to

be intimidating because they present so many rules. However, while intonation analysis can get very complicated, teaching a threshold level of understanding of the core system is actually quite simple at its most basic level.

If there is only time to teach awareness of the core system and practice these vital rhythmic and melodic cues, as well as certain critical sounds (e.g., the grammar cues at the end of words), students will have achieved a great deal of communicative competence. But if these prosodic cues are not taught, then efforts at achieving communicative competence by drilling individual sounds will prove frustrating. After all, practicing pronunciation by focusing only on individual sounds is like using only part of the language. As one teacher trainee put it after training course, "Practicing pronunciation without prosody is like teaching ballroom dancing, only the students must stand still, practice without a partner, and without music."

METHODOLOGY

This project was a combination of qualitative and quantitative research supported by a field research to collect the necessary information related to English pronunciation. In order to carry out this type of research the undergraduate students followed the steps listed below:

First, the topic was selected it was very relevant to come up with a suitable interest to be investigated. In addition it needed to have this requirement; to present a daily issue that needs to be addressed not only to know the root of the problem, but also to provide some suggestions that can be followed up in order to get a great result in a future.

Second, the literature review was researched, theoretical framework, articles related to this topic as well as some authors that have made important researches on the field, for example: Judie Gilbert, Jennifer Jenkins, Paul Shoebottom; just to mention some of them.

Third, the facts to support the research project were organized, it was decided to start from the simplest to the complex, that way it could be covered step by step and in a depth way all the different areas that it was included in this work.

Four, the instrument was designed, for this it was decided to make an oral interview and a set of sentences (vowel and consonant sounds). These books were taken into consideration, English pronunciation for Spanish speakers (both vowels and consonants) by Paulette Dale and Lilian Poms.

Fifth, the interview and survey were administered, recorded, analyzed and studied by professional instructors.

Sixth, the data was carefully processed and analyzed and also the results were presented in graphics and explained the obtained results.

Seventh, the results were gathered in order to carry out conclusions and recommendations for this research.

RESEARCH DESIGNED AND METHODS

Population and Study Sample

The universe was 65 students from English Didactics III from the FLD at the University of El Salvador in the semester II, 2014.

Sample Size and Selection of Sample

Our population studied was 45 (70% of the universe) students from English Didactics III, they were asked to have an interview by the graduates with some experience in foreign languages and at the end of the interview students were asked to read the set of sentences of vowel and consonants sounds. The time estimated for carrying this out was 45 minutes (one hour class).

Socio demographic information of the sample.

General information. The universe was composed of 65 students from English Didactics III; but the sample for both groups was 45 students, 40 students in the morning and 25 in the afternoon. From the universe mentioned before, the sample taken was 75%, that means 45 students from English Didactics III; finishing the third year of English teaching major in the second semester of the year 2014 at the FLD at the University of El Salvador.

Registration. The ones that could be described as people who were studying in the university since the year 2005. During that time, (2005 to 2012) just eleven students changed major, they came from the Department of Psychology, Philosophy and Foreign Languages; others from the School of Engineering, Medicine and Economy.

Previous knowledge and high school. Before taking this major, just sixteen students had studied English before coming to the UES, twenty nine had not. By the other hand, nine students studied high school in a private institution, thirty three in a public one. Three students did not answer the question about high school institution.

Gender and marital status. Another characteristic of the population is that twenty eight are women and seventeen are men. Just four students are married, forty one are single. From students who are married, one is a man and the rest, three are women.

Age and working area. Twenty nine students are in the ages of 20 to 25 years old, ten of them are working. Nine students are in the ages of 15 to 20, just one of them is working. There are three students of 25 to 30, and two are working; besides, there is one student of 30 to 35 years old, who also has a job. Three students are in the category of other, that means older than 35 years old, and just one of them is working. Moreover, from the fifteen students who are working, four of them have jobs as teachers, three are working in call centers, and eight are in another area.

Place of residence. The majority of students. twenty five, are from the main city San Salvador, the rest come from other departments, as La Libertad, La Paz, Sonsonate, Cuscatlan, Santa Ana, and Cabañas. There are two students that did not answer this question.

The research strategy was based on a qualitative project. Supported by interviews, which were taken from some students from English Didactics III, in order to assess their level of pronunciation

Data collection techniques

In order to have accurate results, it was managed the following techniques:

First, a rubric at the moment of making general questions that contained suprasegmental aspects as stress, intonation, fluency, intelligibility, linking, etc.

Second, at the moment of asking students to read some sentences, the researchers were checking the results in the teacher's key of vowel and consonant sounds, for testing segmental aspects.

Third, the forty five interviews were recorded, so at the moment of revising the data that information could be reliable.

Methodological process

Our project was based on qualitative research. Therefore, it was focused on assessing the English pronunciation of students, the quality of pronunciation students have now they are about to finish their third year of the major, also at the moment they are going to become teachers performing the teaching practice of English

The research team applied different techniques based on qualitative research as mentioned below:

- a. Interviewing
- b. Reading

The diagnostic test was administered to twenty students from English Major Specialty: Teaching in the semester II /2014. First, they were warmed up to answer some general questions like: how do you do? What do you do in your free time? Tell me a little about the last movie you saw. Then, they were required to read a couple of sentences about vowel and consonant sound. Students took about ten minutes to develop both activities.

The real interview was administered to forty five students from English Didactics III, the ones who are about to start their teaching practice. They were asked to answer several questions, in order to check some suprasegmental aspects.

Besides that, they were also asked to read sentences that include vowels and consonants sound. This activity carried out the objective to test pronunciation on segmental aspects, vowels and consonants sounds.

Limitations

As researchers during the development of the project, there were some limitations experienced, for example:

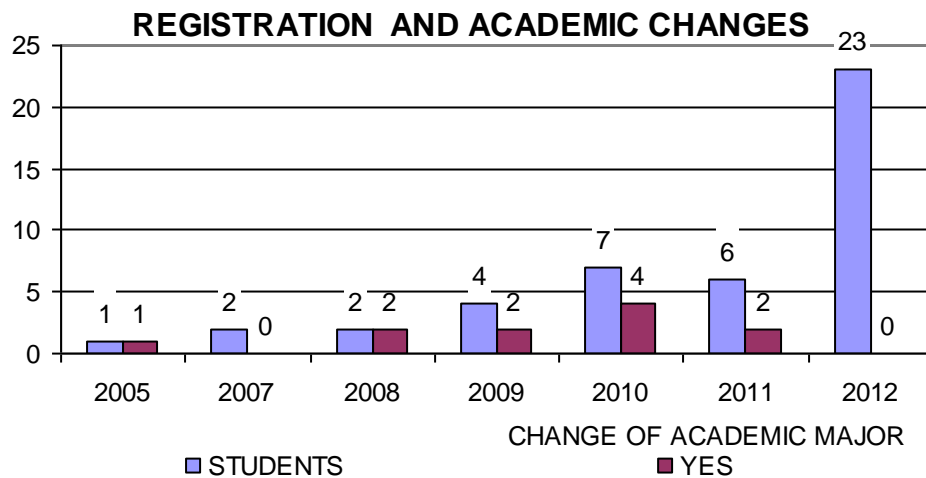
1. Some students did not collaborate willingly.
2. The quality of the recordings were not high (in some of them) because of the noise.

Field research analysis

As researchers, we asked to the sample, forty five students from English Didactics III at FLD at the University of El Salvador in the semester II, 2014, to answer some questions to get socio demographic information. Questions as:

- If they studied English before coming to the university.
- If they studied high school in a public or private institution.
- Gender
- Marital status
- Age, if they are working or not, also for the ones who has a job, which is the area of working
- The place of residence, if they come from the city or from the countryside

Graphic 1. Year of registration and change of academic major



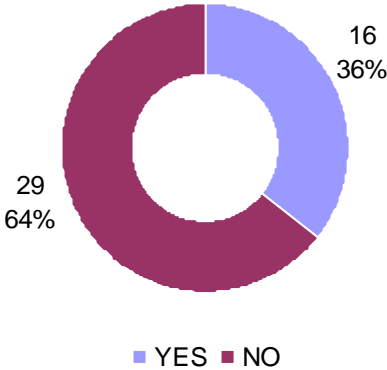
There are twenty three (23) students who made the registration at the university in the year 2012, there is one (1) student who entered at the university In 2005, two (2) in 2007, two (2) in 2008; in 2009 four (4) students, in 2010 seven (7) and six (6) in 2011.

No one of students that began the university in 2012 had changed major; the opposite occur with students who started in 2010: four (4) students had changed major. In general,

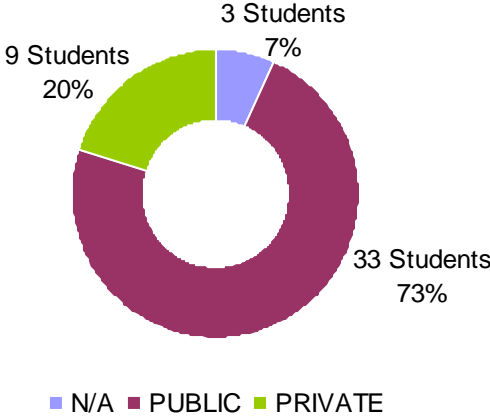
thirty four (34) students kept their studies on English teaching major from the beginning, but eleven (11) not, they came from the Department of Psychology, Philosophy and Foreign Languages; others from the School of Engineering, Medicine and Economy.

Graphic 2. Students who studied English **Graphic 3. Public or private high school**

STUDIED ENGLISH BEFORE



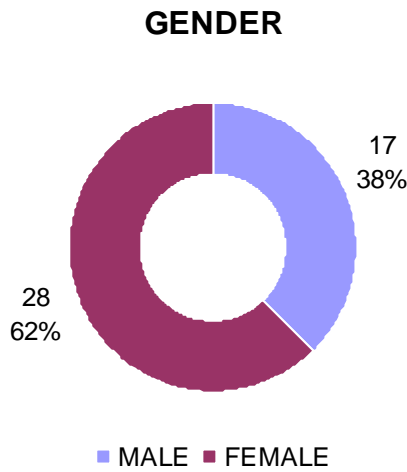
HIGH SCHOOL



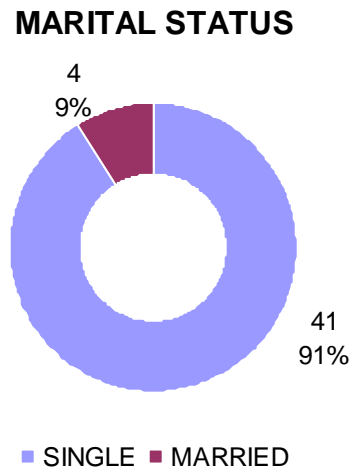
Graph. 2. Just sixteen (16) students have studied English before taking this major, the rest have not (twenty nine (29)).

Graph. 3. Regarding students who studied high school, thirty three (33) of the sample was in public schools. Just nine (9) students came from private institution that is nine (9) people of the sample.

Graphic 4. Gender of students students



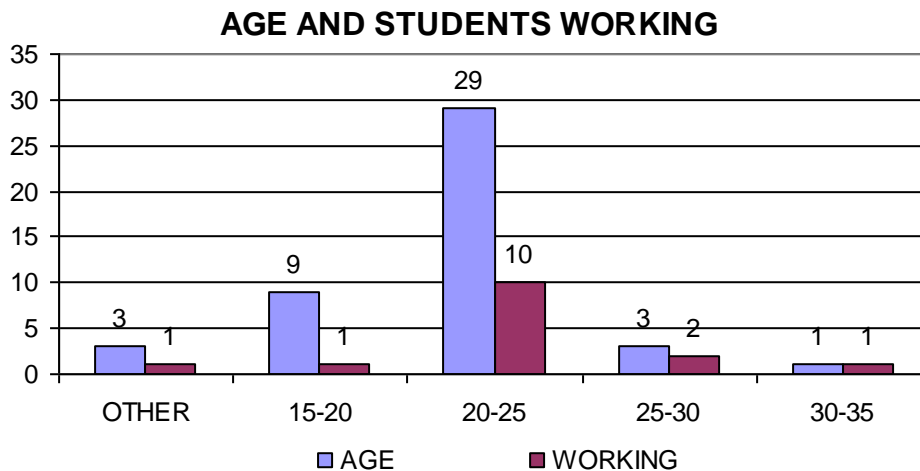
Graphic 5. Marital status of



Graph. 4. Regarding the gender, the majority of the population we took as a sample are women twenty eight (28), just seventeen (17) are men.

Graph. 5. Just four (4) students are married; forty one (41) students are single. From students who are married, one (1) is a man and the others are women, three (3).

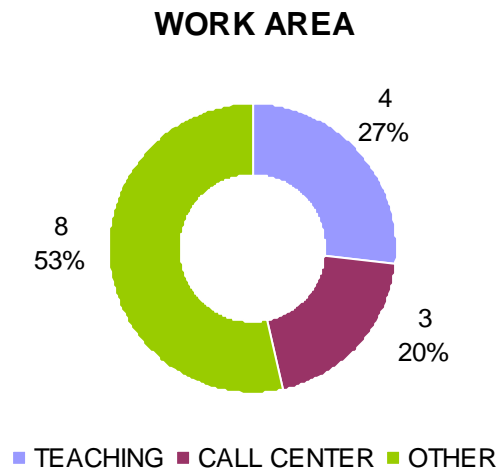
Graphic 6. Age and students who are working



Talking about age, twenty nine (29) students are in the ages of 20 to 25 years old, the majority of the population is in this category. Then, there are nine (9) students in the ages

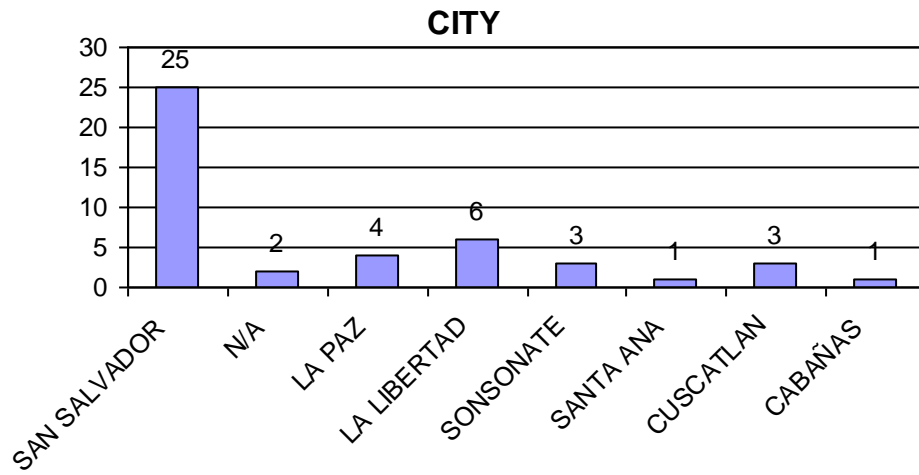
of 15 to 20; between 25 to 30, there are three (3) students. Just one (1) student is considered between the age of 30 to 35, and there are three (3) students who are older than 35 years old (other). A significant number of students thirty (30), are just studying, that means that fifteen (15) students are doing both, studying and working at the same time. From the twenty nine (29) students in the ages of 20 to 25 years old, just ten (10) of them are working.

Graphic 7. Work area of students



Related to students who are working, four (4) of them work in areas that have to do with teaching, three (3) of them work in call centers and eight (8) students have jobs in other areas.

Graphic 8. Place of residence



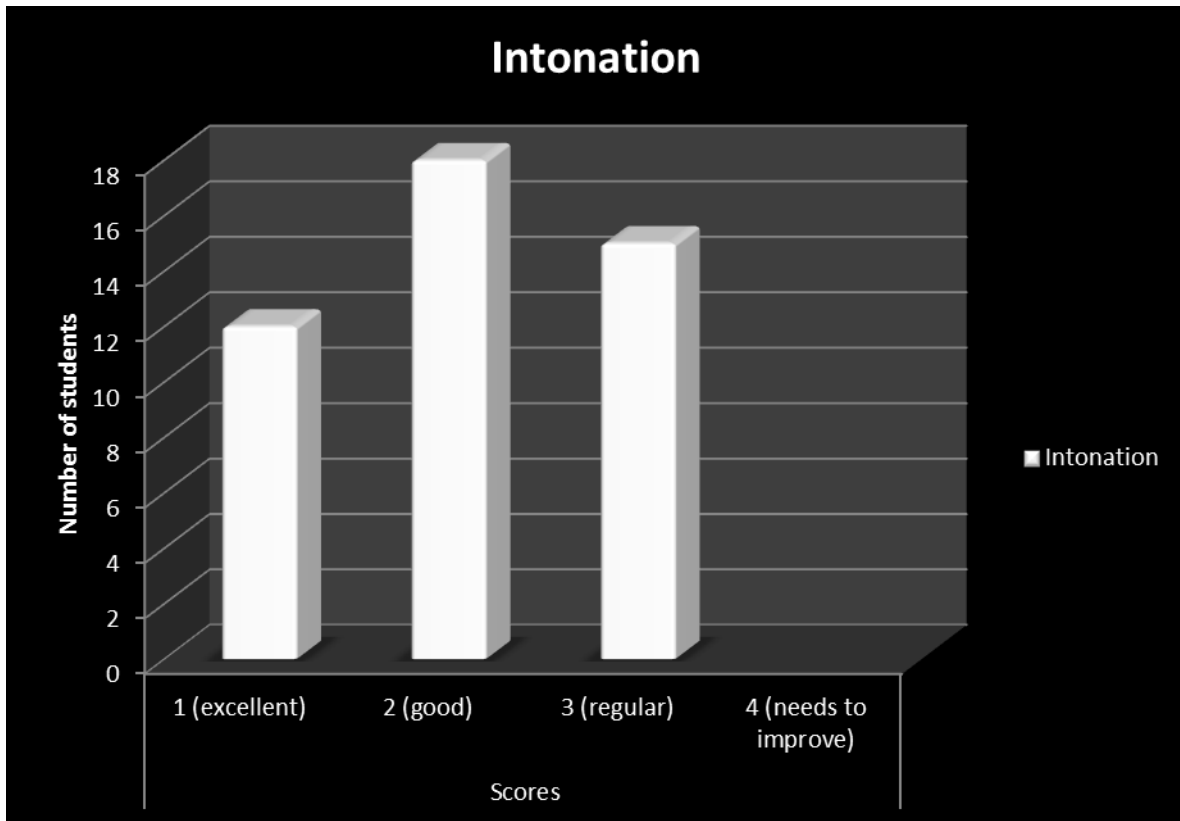
Twenty five (25) students, are from the main city San Salvador, the rest come from other departments, as La Libertad (6), La Paz (4), Sonsonate, (3) Cuscatlan (3), Santa Ana (1), and Cabañas (1). There are two (2) students that did not answer this question (N/A).

Rubric Tabulation.

The following table shows the results for the interview administered to English Didactics III, in it you will see the different features that English pronunciation involves, please see the details below:

Categories	Scores				Total of students
	1 (excellent)	2 (good)	3 (regular)	4 (needs to improve)	
Comprehensibility	13	25	7		45
Pronunciation	9	25	11		45
Fluency	12	21	12		45
Intonation	12	18	15		45
Intelligibility	12	18	14	1	45
Communicate ideas and thoughts	12	18	14	1	45
Phrasing	7	19	18	1	45
Thought groups	9	16	20		45
Stress	9	20	16		45
Vowel sounds	8	15	13	9	45
Consonants sounds	8	13	14	10	45
Linking	5	12	23	5	45

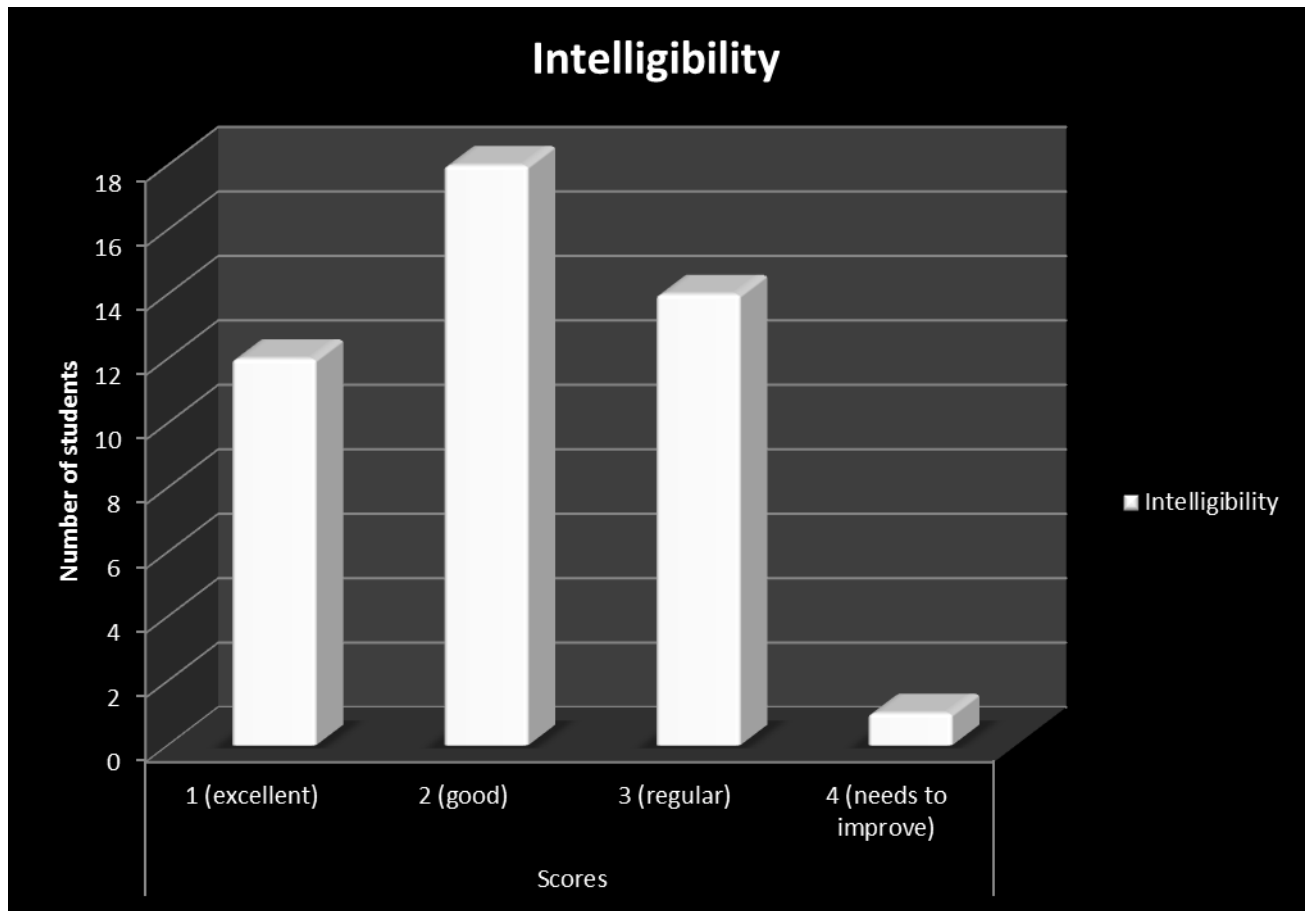
Figure 1.



It was noticed that out of 45 students, 18 of them frequently made an acceptable intonation whether it was falling or rising intonation. Nevertheless, 15 of the students got confused with rising and falling intonation.

In intonation is really important to know the two types of it (rising and falling) because if you do not make the correct intonation in a conversation the message might lose its meaning.

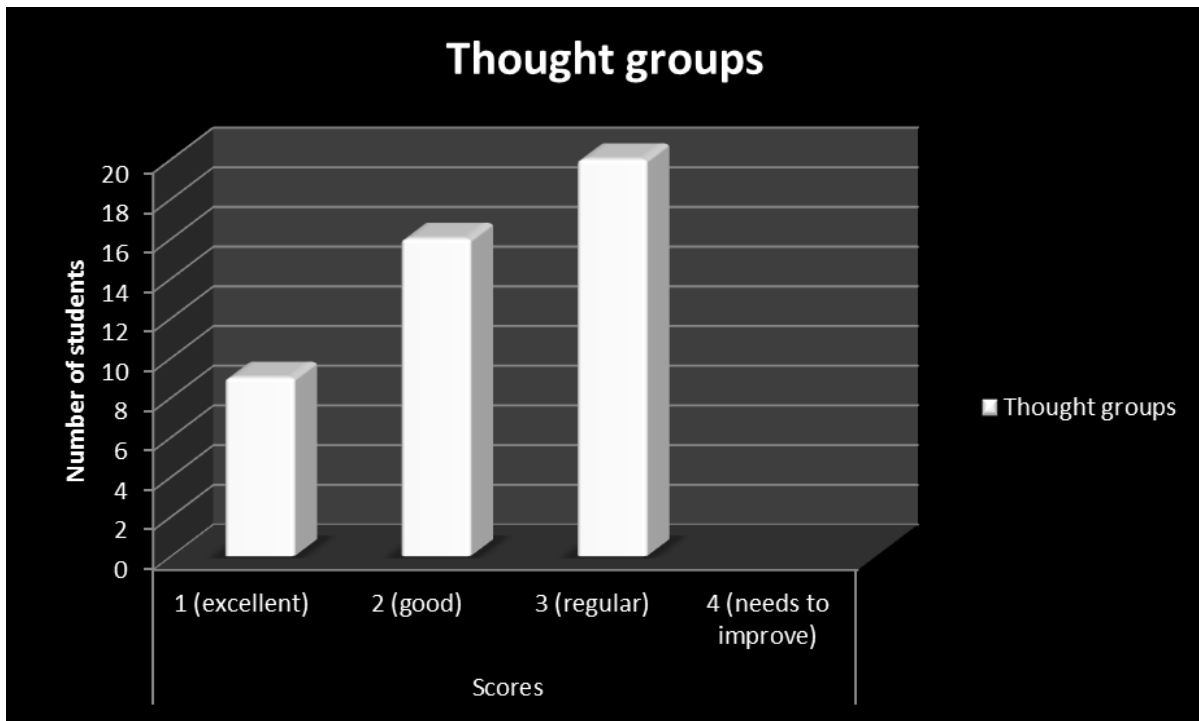
Figure 2.



It was observed that 18 of the students were able to understand and be understood with minimal errors, they showed certain domain of intelligibility.

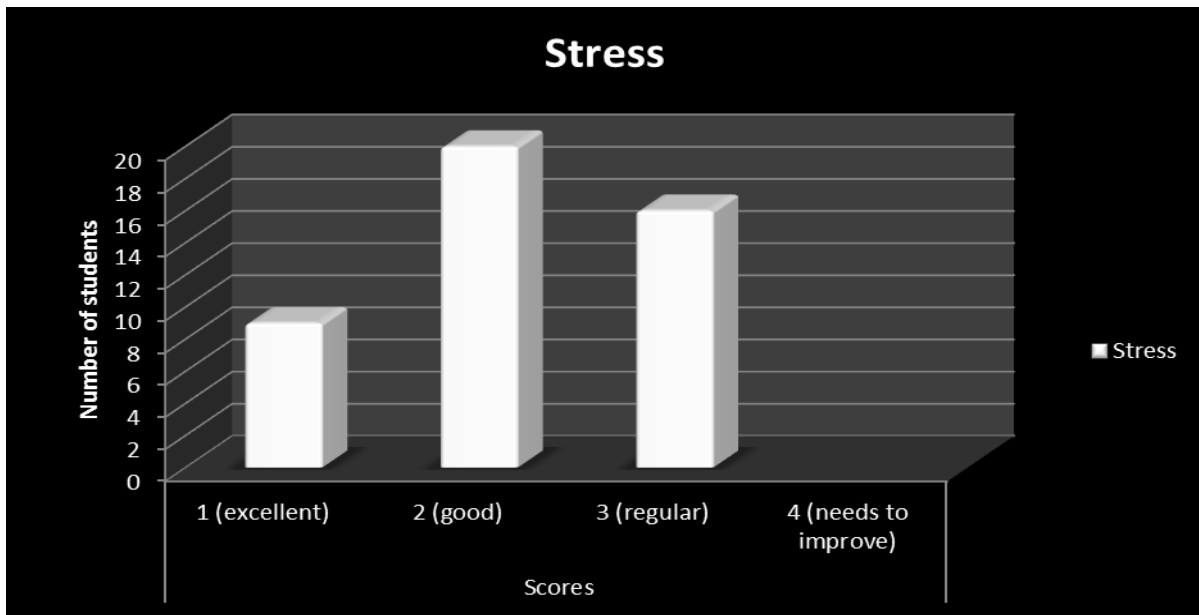
And 14 of the students have difficulties with intelligibility due to it was not easy to understand what they were eat to sat. One of the reasons might be that these 14 students think in Spanish before they start taking in English.

Figure 3.



It was noticed that 20 of the students make too any pauses and also low pitch in order to mark the end of a thought group, as a result this overload our instructors with too many breaks to process the discourse effectively.

Figure 4.



It was noticed that students sometimes made the correct stress in the right syllable; it might be because students do not know the difference between the sounds, remember that there are three types of stress in English, the primary, the secondary or almost no stress. And depending on the stress we give to a word, the meaning will change, because we have nouns and verbs that spell the same, but what makes difference in the meaning is the way we pronounce them, if it is as a verb or as nouns, for example: **Reject** /rɪˈdʒɛkt/ as a verb and as a noun it is pronounced: **Reject** /ˈrɪ dʒɛkt/

Tabulation in vowel sounds.

The following table shows the results for the listed vowel sounds that were included in the set of sentences that English Didactics III students were asked to read. In the table you will find how many students pronounce each sound correctly, please see the details below:

Target Vowel Sounds

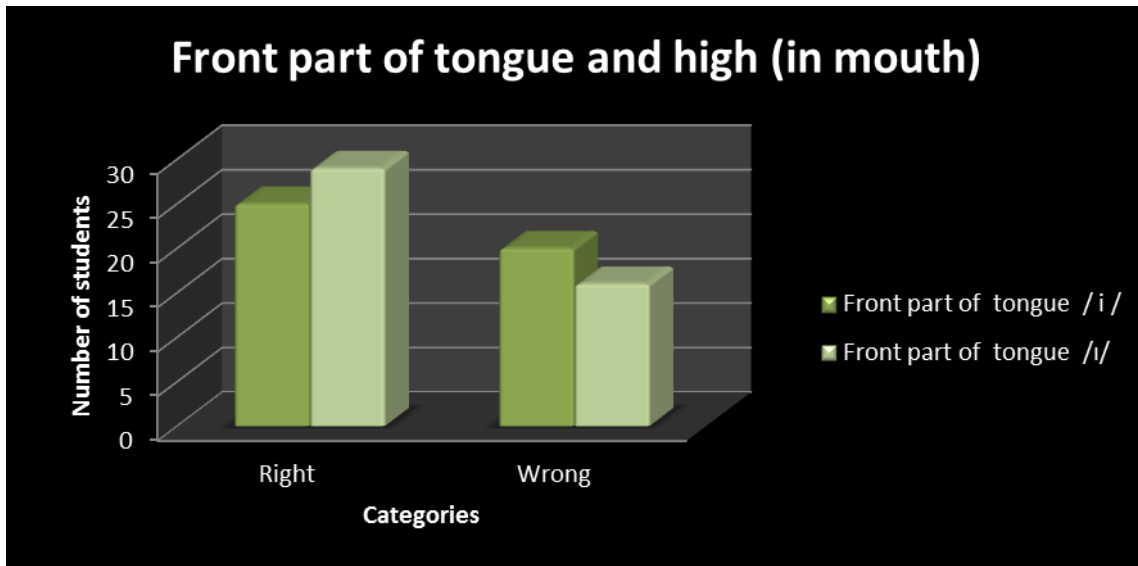
Vowel Sounds	Right	Wrong	Total of students
/ i /	25	20	45
/ ɪ /	29	16	45
/ æ /	15	30	45
/ a /	9	36	45
/ u /	8	37	45
/ ʊ /	7	38	45
/ ʌ /	9	36	45
/ ɔ /	17	28	45
/ ɜ /	16	29	45
/ aɪ /	11	34	45

For this section the research team decided to group vowel sounds into place of articulation and consonant sounds into manner of articulation.

Figure 1. (Vowel sounds)

Vowel sounds, Frontal.

Front part of tongue	High (in mouth)	Right	Wrong
	/i/	25	20
	/ɪ/	29	16



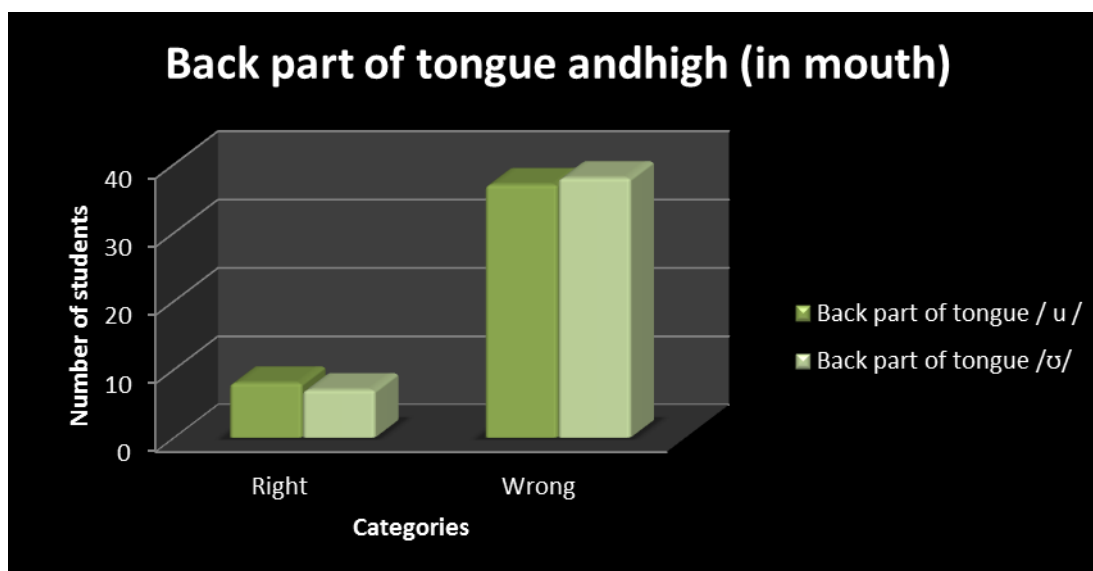
For these particular sounds /i/ and /ɪ/, it can be noted that out of 45 students 20 of them pronounced /i/ incorrectly because they tended to pronounce it the same as this sound /ɪ/. It is strongly believed that students get confused because of the similarity of the spelling on that sound. Also, most of them mispronounced the sound /i/ when it is at the beginning of a word and when it is in the middle as well, and the /ɪ/ sound they tended to mispronounce it when it was at the end of a word.

For example:

/i/	IPA pronunciation	Student's pronunciation
Initial: Each	/itʃ/	/ɪtʃ/
Medial: receive	/rɪ'si:v/	/rɪsɪv/
/ɪ/	IPA pronunciation	Students' pronunciation
Initial: little	/'lɪt l/	/'lit l/
Medial: Sit	/sɪt/	/ sit/

Figure 2. (vowel sounds)

	High (in mouth)	Right	Wrong
Back part of tongue	/ u /	8	37
	/ʊ/	7	38

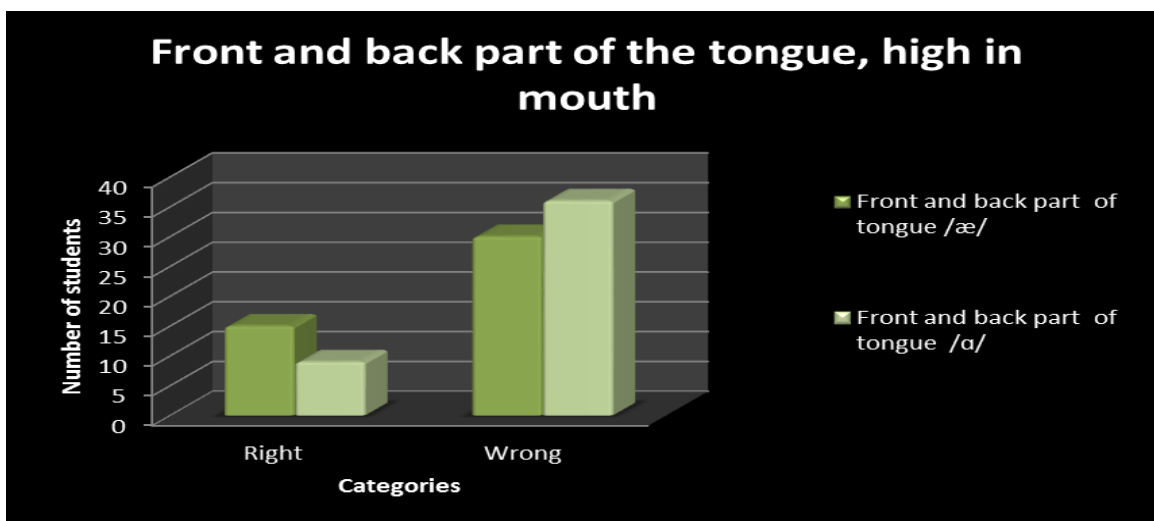


In the sounds /u/ and /ʊ/, it was noticed that 37 students have difficulty with /u/ sound and 38 students with /ʊ/sound, it did not matter if the sound was in an initial, medial or final position. It is suggested this is caused by the spelling of the words because students tended to pay more attention to the spelling and not to the phonetic symbol. For example:

/u/	IPA pronunciation	Students' pronunciation
Initial: who	/hu/	/hʊ/
Medial: ruler	/'ru lər/	/rələr/
/ʊ/	IPA pronunciation	Students' pronunciation
Medial: pudding	/'pʊd ɪŋ/	/pudɪn/
Medial: Book	/bʊk/	/buk/

Figure 3. (vowel sounds)

Front and back part of tongue	Low (in mouth)	Right	Wrong
	/æ/	15	30
	/ɑ/	9	36



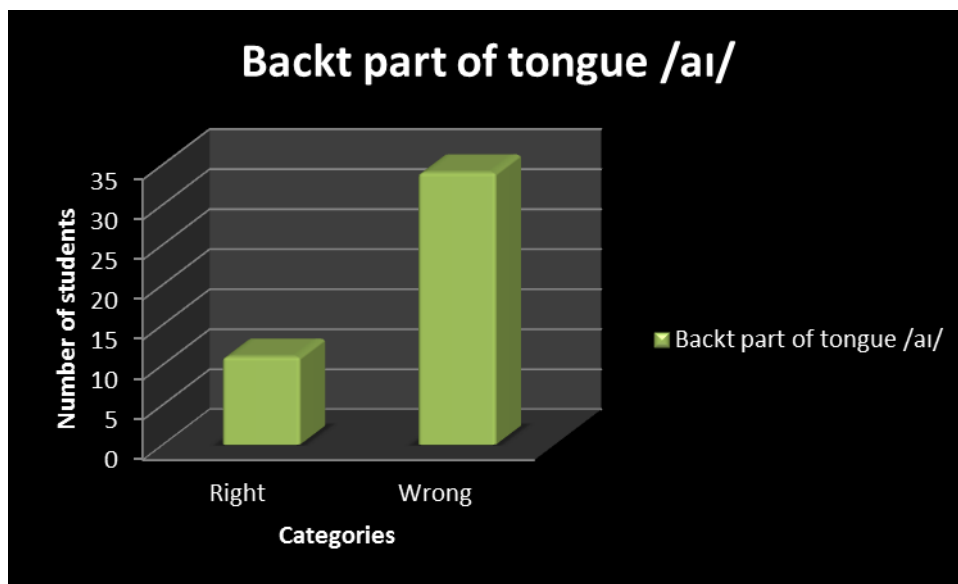
It was noticed that students instead of producing both sounds in the following positions suggested for the articulators; front part of tongue and low (in mouth) they did it high in mouth, like /ow/ sound, they also had some trouble when pronouncing /æ/ because it is low (in mouth) position, front part of the tongue. In addition, out of 45 students 30 of them do not know how to produce each sound correctly. They produced it the same and it was wrong anyways. It was noted that 36 students have problems with the pronunciation of that sound /æ/ and it occurred when the sound is in the middle of a word or when it has another vowel next to it.

For example: *giraffes, inhabit, heart and lots.*

/æ/	IPA pronunciation	Students' pronunciation
Initial: apple	/ˈæp əl/	/ap əl/
Medial: cat	/kæt/	/kat/
/ɑ/	IPA pronunciation	Students' pronunciation
Medial: starch	/stɑrtʃ/	/stærtʃ/
Heart	/hɑrt/	/hærd/

Figure 4. (vowel sounds)

Backt part of tongue	Middle (in mouth)	Right	Wrong
	/aɪ/	11	34



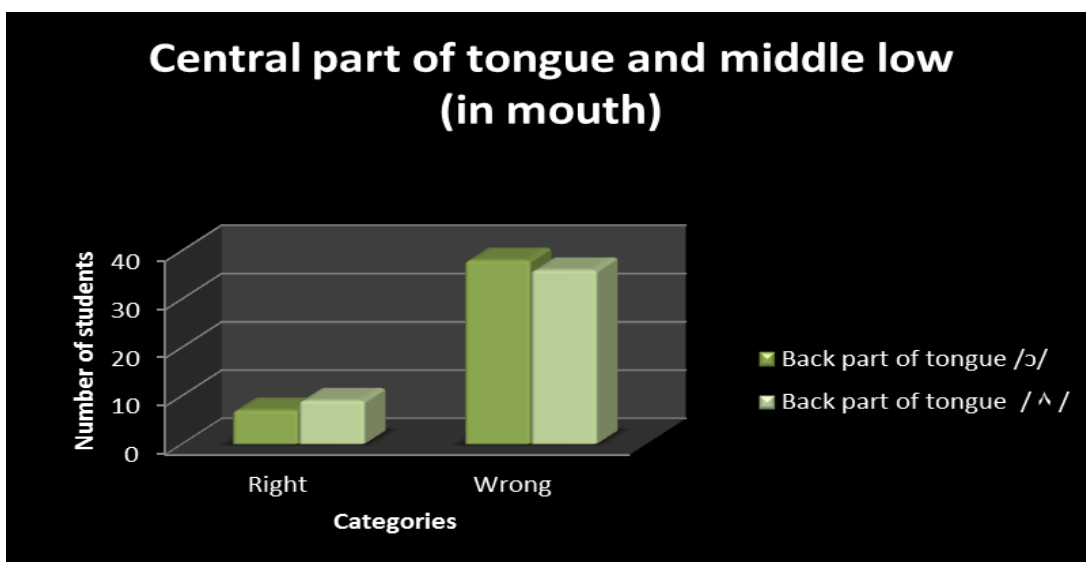
With this sound particularly, 36 students have problems when the sound is in initial and final position of a word. It turns out to be alarming because it is less difficult to pronounce it than the rest of the sounds; however, students tended to have trouble with it, for example with the last word: *highly* at least 20 students mispronounced it.

They also mispronounced the following words:

Word	IPA pronunciation	Students' pronunciation
eyesight	/ˈaɪ,saɪt/	/eysaɪ/
prize	/praɪz/	/preɪz/
highly	/ˈhaɪ li/	/hɪli/

Figure 5 (vowel sounds)

Back part of tongue	Middle low (in mouth)	Right	Wrong
	/ɔ/	7	38
	/ʌ/	9	36



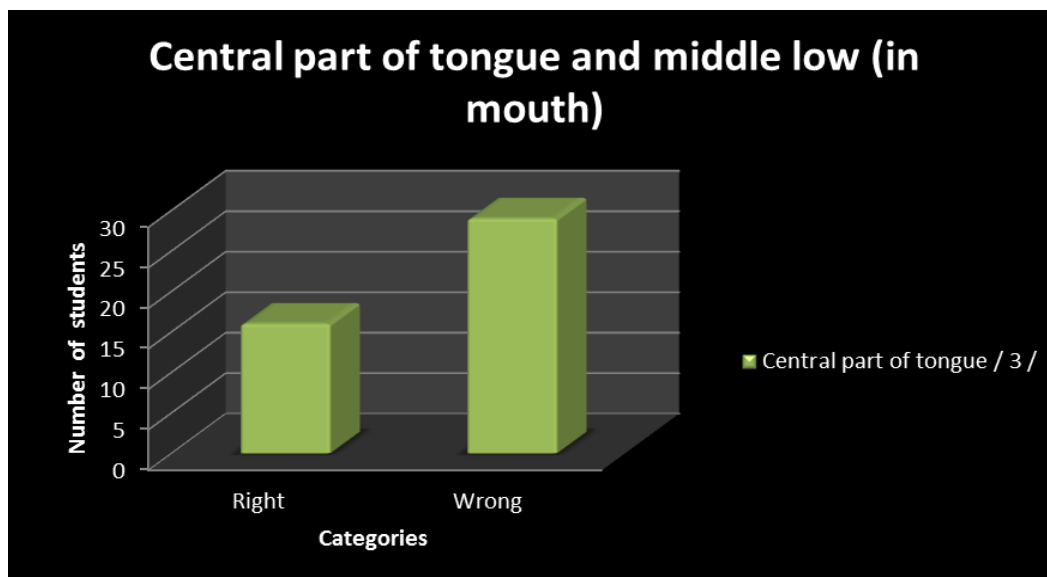
For the sounds /ɔ/ and /ʌ/ it was noted that students tended to pronounce the letter O /ou/ instead of pronouncing the right vowel sounds and since we do not have that sound in Spanish it becomes harder for them to produce the sound correctly, even though they tried on their own way to do it correctly. Besides that, it was observed that 20 students pronounced the words twice in order to make the correct pronunciation, but unfortunately they were not able to do so.

For example:

/ɔ/	IPA pronunciation	Students' pronunciation
Author	/'ɔ θər/	/ouðər/
Audience	/'ɔ di əns/	/ouðiəns/
Thought	/θɔt/	/θout/
/ʌ/	IPA pronunciation	Students' pronunciation
Southern	/'sʌð ərn/	/sɔðərn/
Governor	/'gʌvərnər/	/'governor/

Figure 6. (vowel sounds)

Central part of tongue	Middle low (in mouth)	Right	Wrong
	/ɜ /	16	29



It was noticed that the pronunciation of the students will depend on the spelling of the word. It could be noted that 29 of the interviewed students focused even more on the spelling of the word and not the phonetic symbol. For example, when producing the following word: *nurse* /nɜrs/, they pronounced it like /nurs/, just the way the word is spelled, they pronounced it wrong, reason why it is stated that the students not only get confused by the spelling of a word, but also they have troubles when that sound is in the initial part of a word.

For example:

/ɜ/	IPA pronunciation	Students' pronunciation
Initial: worthy	/ˈwɜrði/	/wordi/
Medial: deserve	/dɪˈzɜrv/	/dɪzərv/

Tabulation in consonants sounds.

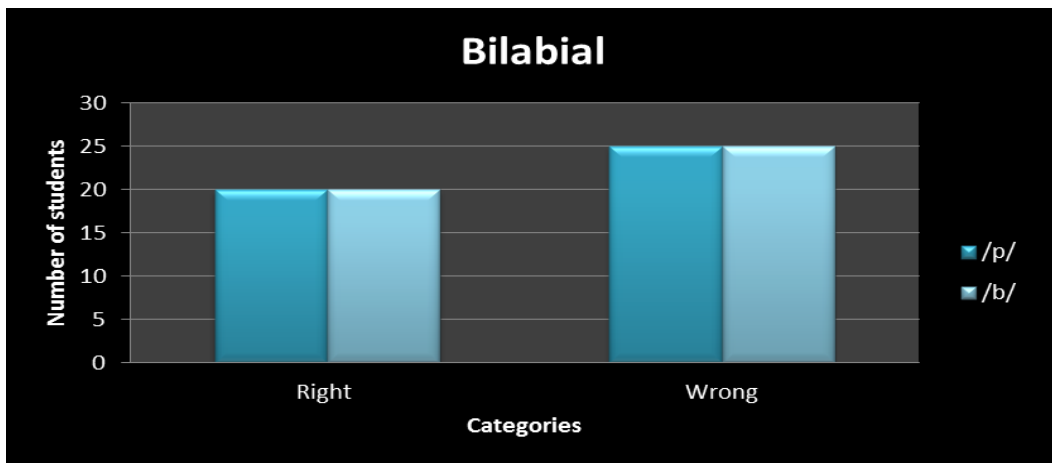
The following table shows the results for the listed consonant sounds that were included in the set of sentences that English Didactics III students were asked to read. In the table you will find how many students pronounce each sound correctly, please see the details below:

Consonant sounds	Right	Wrong	Total of students
/t/	10	35	45
/θ/	9	36	45
/ð/	7	38	45
/f/	27	18	45
/tʃ/	6	39	45
/ʒ/	11	34	45
/dʒ/	16	29	45
/j/	11	34	45
/p/	20	25	45
/b/	20	25	45

Figure 1. (consonants sounds)

Place of articulation

Bilabial	Right	Wrong
/p/	20	25
/b/	20	25



When listening carefully to the interviews for /p/ and /b/ sound, it could be noted that out of 45 students 25 of them have problems with plosive (also known as stops sounds) sounds (**/p/ and /b/**) and it is believed that they do not know the difference between both sounds, and it might be one reason why they produced both sounds as they were the same sound.

For example, when students were asked to read the following words:

/p/	IPA pronunciation	Students' pronunciation
pick up	/pɪk/ /ʌp/	/pɪkʌ/
ripe apples	/raɪp/ /'æp əlz/	/raɪ æpəlz/
apple pie	/'æp əl/ /paɪ/	/'æp əlaɪ/

Students tended to pronounce it as it was a single word and the worst part is that they do not even realize that they mispronounced them. Students did not involve both lips as the articulators.

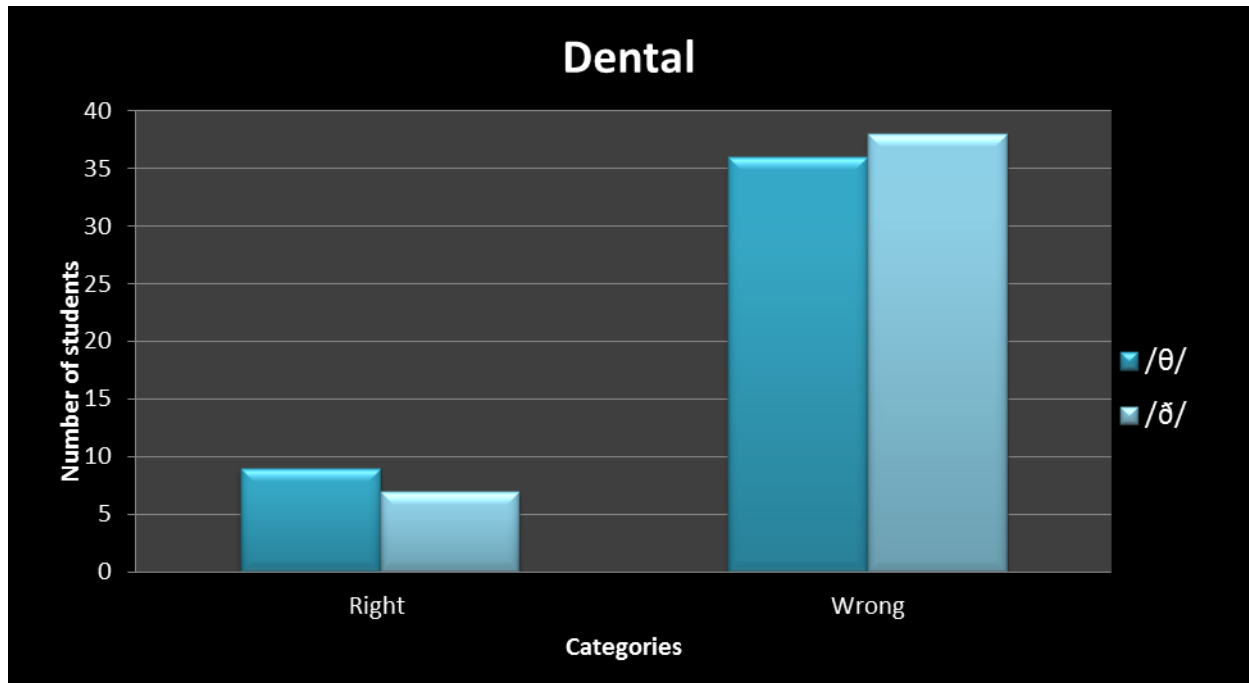
/b/	IPA pronunciation	Students' pronunciation
Lobster	/ˈlɒb stər/	/ˈlɒstər/
Crab	/kræb/	/kræp/

With this sound is pretty much the same, most of them have issues when that sound is located in all the different positions of a word (middle, initial or final part).

*Out of forty five students, fifteen of them mispronounced crab at the end of that word, they replaced the letter b by the letter p.

Figure 2. (consonants sounds)

Dental	Right	Wrong
/θ/	9	36
/ð/	7	38



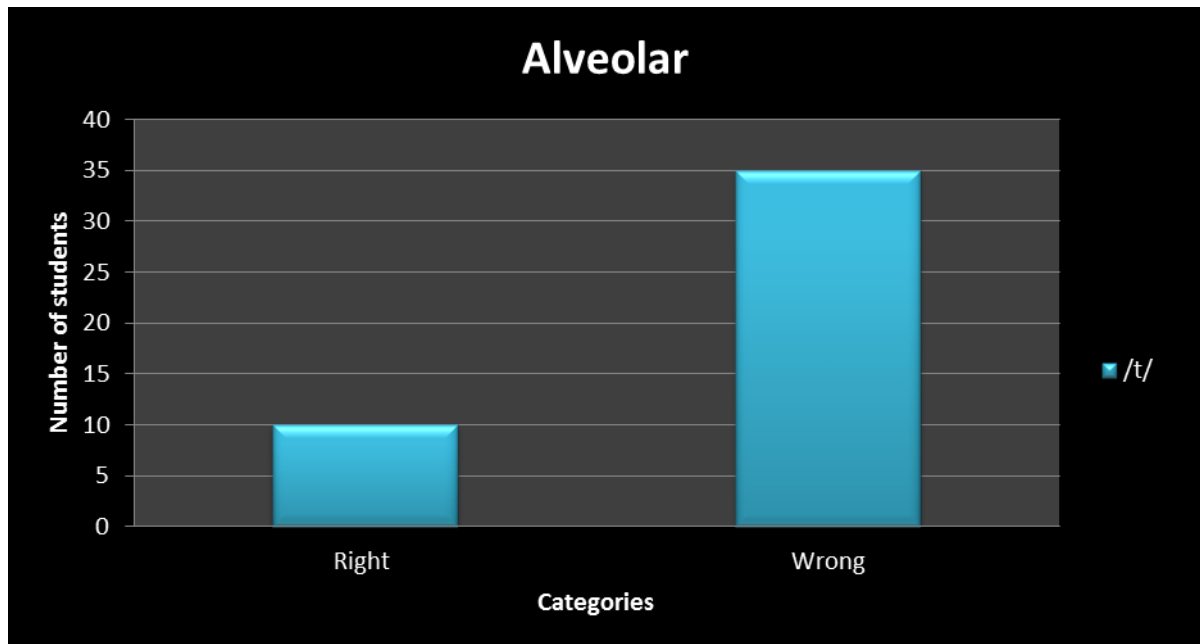
With the gotten results for the sounds /θ/ and /ð/, it was observed that 36 students mispronounced /θ/ and 38 students did not pronounce this sound /ð/ correctly. Since those sounds do not exist in Spanish, it becomes a challenge for the students, and unfortunately we do not even have a similar sound in Spanish so students can relate these consonants sounds.

The most common mistakes by students were the following:

- think /θɪŋk/ and students pronounced /sɪŋk/
- thank /θæŋk/ and students pronounced /sæŋk/
- loathe /lɒð/ and students pronounced /lod/
- weather /wɛðər/ and students pronounced /wɛrər/

Figure 3. (vowel sounds)

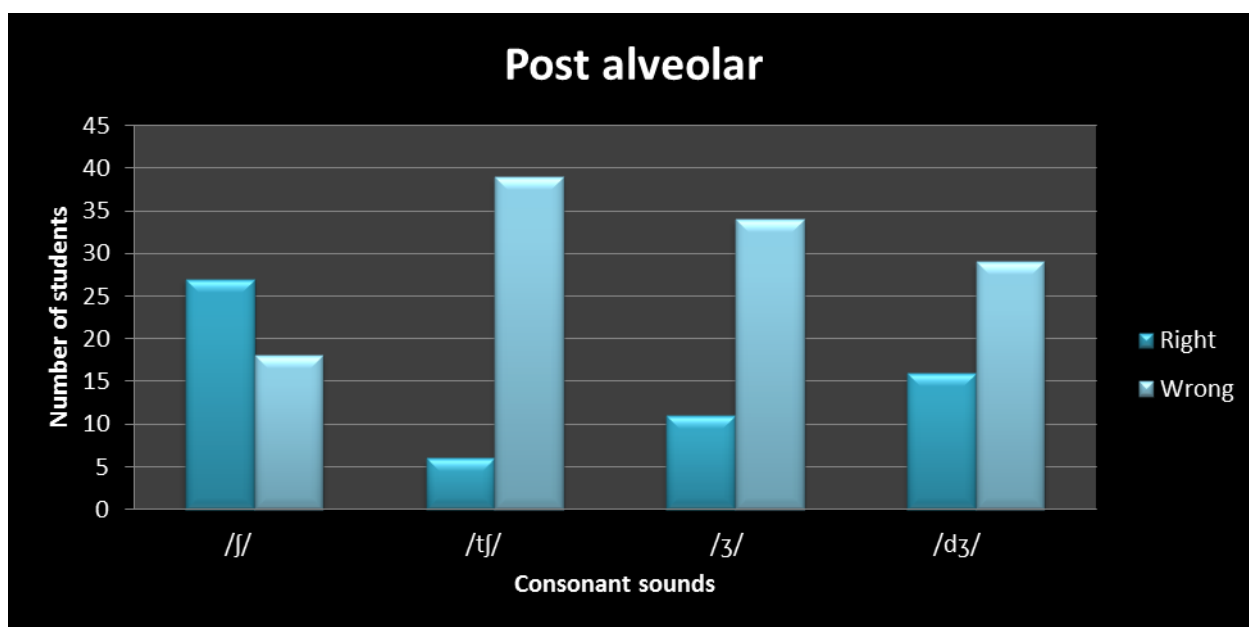
Alveolar	Right	Wrong
/t/	10	35



With the sound /t/ it was noticed that students have serious problems when producing it. Even though we have this sound in Spanish, it seems to be a difficult sound for second language learners, one of the reasons maybe be due to the fact this sound is plosive in English and in Spanish is not.

Figure 4. (consonants sounds)

Post alveolar	Right	Wrong
/ʃ/	27	18
/tʃ/	6	39
/ʒ/	11	34
/dʒ/	16	29



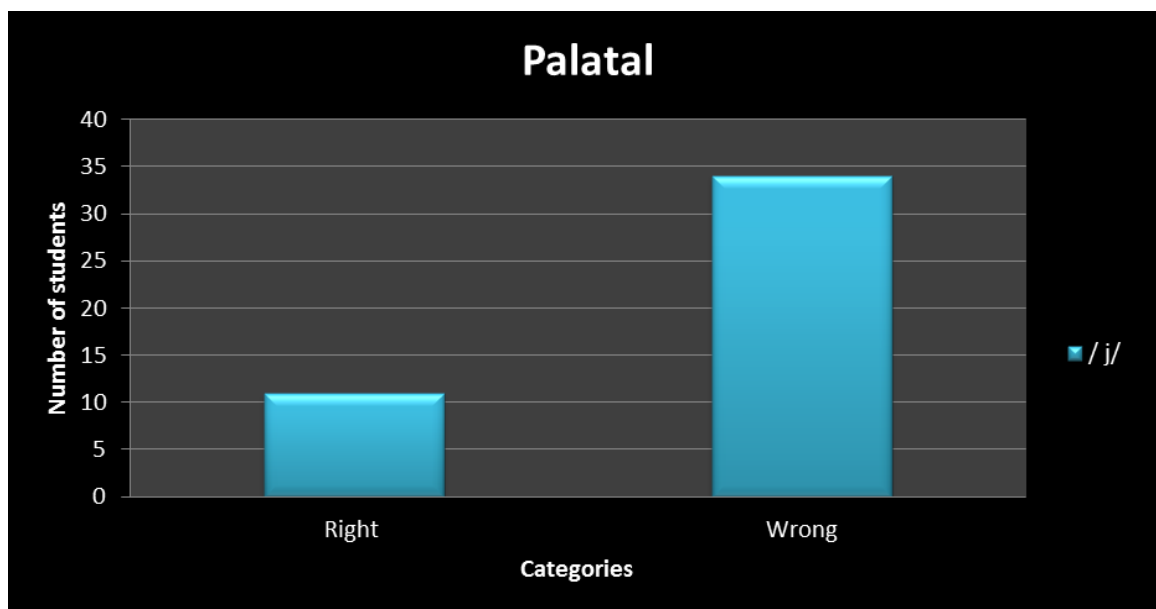
Regarding these sets of sounds /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /ʒ/, and /dʒ/ it could be observed that the students have a lot of problems when pronouncing them, especially with these ones: **/tʃ/**, **/ʒ/** and this one as well **/dʒ/**.

For this one /tʃ/ students have problems with the sound is in the initial of a word, for example: **China /tʃajənə/** instead of /tʃ/ they said **/ ʃajənə/** they tended to relate both sounds and it at the end they use them the other way around, because when they were about to say the word, **decision /dɛsɪʒən/** they pronounced it with this sound **/dɛsɪ tʃən/**.

It was also noted that students also relate this sound **/dʒ/** with the one **/ʒ/** at the end they mixed voiced and voiceless sounds as one single sound.

Figure 5. (consonants sounds)

Palatal	Right	Wrong
/j/	11	34



Regarding this sound /j/, it was easy to identify that students tended to relate and pronounce this sound /j/ with the consonant Y as in **yeso** (Spanish). It is important to mention that this sound /j/ is voiced, which means it has vibration when pronouncing it, but students do not make any vibration when producing that sound and it might be because we barely have sounds with vibration in Spanish and those ones we do not even pronounce them correctly. They have more difficulties when this sound is in the initial and in the middle part of a word.

For example:

Word	IPA pronunciation	Students' pronunciation
Year	/jɪr/	/dʒɪr/
Yes	/jɛs /	/dʒɛs/

Conclusions

1. Reviewing socio-demographic information of third year students, we can state that: the 64% of the sample had not studied English before coming to the English teaching major, as a result they had difficulties at the moment of speaking because they did not have previous knowledge or basis about this new language. Also, the 73% of the sample, studied high school in public institutions where maybe English was not a mandatory subject and where the quality of education can vary depending on the institution.

2. According to the oral interviews administered, the most common pronunciation mistakes made in vowel sounds by third year students from the FLD at the University of El Salvador, were:

/ i / 45 %	/ʊ/ 85%
/ ɪ / 36%	/ ʌ / 80%
/ æ / 67%	/ ɔ / 63%
/ɑ/ 80%	/ ɜ / 65%
/ u / 83%	/aɪ/76%

3. Regarding the most common mistakes in consonants sounds made by the interviewed students, were the following sounds:

/t/ 78%	/dʒ/ 65%
/θ/ 80%	/ j/ 76%
/ð/ 85%	/p/ 56%
/ʃ/ 40%	/b/ 56%
/tʃ/ 98%	
/ʒ/ 76%	

4. Regarding suprasegmental aspects among fifteen to twenty three students have difficulties with linking, thought groups, phrasing, stress and intonation as well. It could be noted when the students were interviewed by two members of the research team and also by the two graduated students who helped us to carry out this.

5. Another aspect is that almost the 50% of the students have Spanish strong accent and that is one of the external factors that influence in English pronunciation and nowadays is a common issue at the FLD.

6. The lack of exposure to nativelike accent influences on students pronunciation.

7. One of the disadvantages is that 64% of the sample had not studied English before coming to this major and that makes it more difficult for them.

Recommendations

1. It is advised to improve the lab conditions where students can listen to native like accent materials, by listening to music, watching movies, videos, etc. Also, it would be better, as a matter of primary situation, if the Foreign Language Department provides the students other resources such as cable, conversation clubs and a direct interaction with native speakers in a way of a permanent and constantly activity. Phonetic symbols are considered very important aspect of a language and when these ones are not mastered properly, the result is poor pronunciation and intelligibility. Also, it is stated that the phonetics symbols are difficult to pronounce and to learn for second language learners, sometimes because of lack of explanation or because the information given it is not clear. By the other hand, teachers need to be well prepared in advance and manage everything that involves teaching pronunciation properly. Moreover, students need to spend more time practicing phonetics symbols, not only in the classroom but also in daily activities and look for opportunities to acquire the standard pronunciation.
2. Besides that, it would be excellent to have every semester some speeches given directly by native speakers of English where students can interact with them by making questions and expressing their ideas. Not only as an extra activity but also as a mandatory subject, where future professionals in a foreign language can, in a deep way, study beyond this area.
3. Furthermore, it is highly recommended to add variety at the moment of teaching pronunciation by making it easier, funny, and interesting and also to help students become motivated to learn as much as they can about English pronunciation. English pronunciation is considered difficult and boring, so it is a challenge for the masters in this field in order to call students attention and make this area attractive to students.
4. To begin with, it is suggested to modify the study plan by including subjects such as Advanced English Pronunciation or English Pronunciation II. It is evident, by the obtained

results, that just one semester for teaching and learning everything about English pronunciation it is not enough time. Also, these kinds of subjects need be included not only in the middle of the major but also and the end, that way students get a good and an acceptable pronunciation before taking the teaching practice and also by the time they finish the major.

5. Reviewing socio-demographic information of third year students, we can state that: the 64% of the sample had not studied English before coming to the English teaching major, as a result they had difficulties at the moment of speaking because they did not have previous knowledge or basis about this new language. Also, the 73% of the sample, studied high school in public institutions where maybe English was not a mandatory subject and where the quality of education can vary depending on the institution.
6. Despite English pronunciation subject is the one that helps students to be intelligible, it is kindly suggested to include another pronunciation course, that way students can develop a better pronunciation and also a better background on the IPA and the different aspects that involves pronunciation.
7. Also, the lack of access to native speakers makes more difficult to reach a better and acceptable English pronunciation in second language learners.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE STUDY

The present work, like most thesis reports, has both strengths and weaknesses. After seriously analysing the data, methodology and implications, the following strengths are presented:

- The sample was big enough in order to collect the information needed; actually it was 70% of the Universe, which was composed by 65 students from English Didactics III of the Foreign Language Department and the sample was 45 students from the mentioned course.
- The research topic is not so common an object to study; it is quite interesting and also is based on useful and important findings on the field by experts and relevant authors.
- It is a broad topic to analyse and also it contains different areas such as segmental and suprasegmental aspects, vowel and consonant sounds. In addition, it includes other important aspects of English pronunciation.
- Professional instructors led the interviews and helped the research team to analyse the recordings, that way the instruments and the results are reliable and valid and also carefully analysed.

Regarding the weaknesses of this research, please see below:

- A couple of audios were not well recorded due to the noise and interference in the classroom, where the research team and the professional instructors carried out the instruments.
- Also, a couple of students did not collaborate willingly; it might have been for several reasons, they were lacking of time, they were rushing for their next class or simply they were not in the mood for helping us out nor answering questions.

GLOSSARY

1. **Accent:** the way in which people in a particular area or country pronounce words. a special emphasis given to a syllable in a word or to a word in a sentence. To give special emphasis to a syllable in a word or to a word in a sentence.
2. **Assessment:** The process or means of evaluating academic work; an examination or test.
3. **Communication:** the process by which messages or information is sent from one place or person to another, or the message itself. the exchange of information and the expression of feeling that can result in understanding.
4. **Comprehension:** a test to find out how well students understand written or spoken language. the ability to understand completely and be familiar with a situation, facts, etc.
5. **External Factor.** It characterizes the particular language listening situation.
6. **Influence.** The capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behavior of someone or something, or the effect itself.
7. **Intelligibility.** To understand and to be understood. Of speech and writing clear enough to be understood.
8. **Internal Factor.** It is incorporated into student's individual language.
9. **LFC.** Lingua Franca Core.
10. **Melody.** The way to help the listener to distinguish between old information and old information.
11. **Mistake.** An action or judgement that is misguided or wrong.
12. **Motivation:** the act or an instance of motivating, or providing with a reason to act in a certain way. the state or condition of being motivated or having a strong reason to act or accomplish something.
13. **NS.** Native speaker.
14. **NNS.** None native speaker.
15. **Orphan:** a child who has lost both parents through death, or, less commonly, one parent.
16. **Outstanding:** very much better than usual; excellent. not yet done, solved, or paid.
17. **Peak Syllable.** It is sometimes called the nucleus. It is the center of meaning of the thought group.
18. **Phonetics Symbols:** a written character used in phonetic transcription of represent a particular speech sound.
19. **Pitch:** to throw something, esp. forcefully. To fall suddenly. The degree to which a sound or a musical note has a high or low quality. The degree of height or depth of a tone or of sound, depending upon the relative rapidity of the vibrations by which it is produced.

20. **Pronunciation:** the way in which a word or letter is said, or said correctly, or the way in which a language is spoken.
21. **Prosody:** The combination of rhythm and melody. The pattern of rhythm and sound in poetry.
22. **Qualitative Research:** Qualitative research is designed to reveal a target audience's range of behavior and the perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics or issues. It uses in-depth studies of small groups of people to guide and support the construction of hypotheses. The results of qualitative research are descriptive rather than predictive.
23. **Rhythm:** a regularly repeated pattern of sounds or beats used in music, poems, and dances. It is also a regular pattern of change.
24. **Rubric:** a set of instructions, especially on an exam paper, usually printed in a different style or color.
25. **Segmental:** It includes vowel and consonant sound. Relating to or forming segments or parts. Noting or pertaining to the discrete elements of sequential speech, as consonants and vowels.
26. **Stress:** emphasis in the form of prominent relative loudness of a syllable or a word as a result of special effort in utterance.
27. **Suprasegmental:** It includes stress, intonation, linking, thought groups, phrasing. pertaining to or noting features of speech, as stress, pitch, and length, that accompany individual consonants and vowels and may extend over more than one such segmental element; pertaining to juncture and prosodic features.
28. **Syllable:** The basic unit of English rhythm. a single unit of speech, in English usually containing a vowel, consisting of either a whole word or one of the parts into which a word is separated when it is spoken or printed.
29. **Thought Group.** Group of words that may be a short sentence, a clause, or a phrase within a longer sentence.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Survey



**University of El Salvador
School of Arts and Sciences
Foreign Language Department**

What are the most common pronunciation mistakes that 3rd year students from the B.A. in English teaching, from UES, present at the time they communicate?

General objective:

- To assess English pronunciation of students about to start their fourth year from the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, 2014.

Specific objective:

- To recognize the social and workplace consequences of poor intelligibility in the Foreign Languages Department.

Instructions: Please, provide the following personal information.

ID Number: _____ Year you entered at UES _____ Have you changed major before? _____ Previous major: _____
High School institution: _____ Private: _____ Public: _____
Have you studied English before? _____ For how long: _____
Place of residence _____ Gender: _____
Are you working now _____ Which area? Teaching _____ call center _____ other _____
Work schedule: Full time: _____ Part time: _____ Other: _____
Age: 15-20 _____ 20-25 _____ 25-30 _____ 30-35 _____ other _____ Marital Status: _____

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

A. Interview questions for English Didactics III students.

1. Hello there, how you've been up to?
2. Do you have a job?
3. What kind of job would you like to have?
4. Who do you admire? And why?
5. Why did you decide to study this major?
6. If you were an animal, which one would you be? And why?
7. Tell me, what do you do in your free time?
8. What did you do in your last vacation?
9. What type of music do you listen to?
10. Do you like movies? What's your favorite and why?
11. How do you see yourself in 5 years from now?
12. If you had the chance to have super powers, which one would you like to have?
Why?
13. What would you do if today was your last day?
14. What would you do if you won the lottery?
15. Have you ever traveled to another country? How was your experience?
16. What can you tell me about your family?

Appendix 3: Rubric



**University of El Salvador
School of Arts and Sciences
Foreign Language Department**

What are the most common pronunciation mistakes that 3rd year students from the B.A. in English teaching, from UES, present at the time they communicate?

Interview Rubric

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

Category / Scores	4	3	2	1
Pronunciation	Speaker always pronounces every word perfectly (use the correct pronunciation with no significant errors)	Speaker often pronounces words perfectly (use the correct pronunciation with no minimal errors)	Speaker rarely pronounces words perfectly (use the correct pronunciation with some errors)	Speaker never pronounces the words in a correct way (accurately) (many errors in pronunciation)
Intonation	Speaker always produces the correct /proper intonation whether is falling or rising intonation	Speaker frequently makes the correct use of intonation whether is falling or rising intonation	Speaker rarely make correct use of intonation whether is falling or rising intonation	Speaker never makes the correct intonation nor falling or rising intonation
Intelligibility	Speaker pronounces all words well producing an intelligible speech	Speaker pronounces most words well, but pronounces some words incorrectly	Speaker mispronounces several words and communication is sometimes interrupted due to lack of intelligibility	Speaker mispronounces most of the words and communication is often interrupted due to lack of intelligibility
Phrasing	Speaker always apply phrasing when needed to	Speaker sometimes apply phrasing when needed to	Speaker rarely apply phrasing when needed to	Speaker never apply phrasing
Thought groups	Speaker always makes pauses and low pitch in order to mark the end of a thought group	Speaker frequently makes pauses and low pitch in order to mark the end of a thought group	Speaker rarely makes pauses and low pitch in order to mark the end of a thought group	Speaker never makes pauses and low pitch in order to mark the end of a thought group
Stress	Speaker always makes the stress in the correct syllable	Speaker sometimes make the stress in the correct syllable	Speaker rarely makes the stress in the correct syllable,	Speaker never makes the stress in the correct syllable (zero stress)
Vowel Sounds	Speaker produces every vowel sound properly (voiced) with no difficulty	Speaker produces some vowel sound properly (voiced) with no difficulty	Speaker produce several vowel sound properly (voiced) with some difficulty	Speaker produces none vowel sound were properly (voiced)
Consonants Sounds	Speaker produces every consonant sound properly voiced and voiceless as well with no difficulty	Speaker produces most of the consonant sound properly voiced and voiceless as well with a little difficulty	Speaker produce some consonant sound properly voiced and voiceless as well with some difficulty	Speaker produces none consonant sound properly
Linking	Speaker always links one sound to another.	Speaker frequently links one sound to another.	Speaker often links one sound to another.	Speaker hardly ever links one sound to another.

Total _____

Appendix 4: Set of sentences. (*Vowel sounds; this one was provided to the English Didactics III students*)

Accent analysis sentences

Target Vowels.

1. Please believe that sweet peas and beans are good to eat. Eat them at least twice a week.
2. Tim's sister swims a little bit. It keeps her fit, slim and trim.
3. Many animals inhabit Africa. Africa has camels, giraffes, parrots and bats.
4. Doctors say jogging is good for the body. Lots of starch causes heart problem.
5. Who flew to the moon? Numerous lunar flights are in the news. We'll soon put a man on Jupiter and Pluto.
6. Would you look for my cookbook? It should be full of hints for good cookies and pudding.
7. The southern governor is Republican. The public election was fun. He won by one hundred votes.
8. The author gave a long talk in the office. The small audience thought it was boring.
9. Nurses do worthy work. They certainly deserve a word of praise.
10. Eyesight is vital for a normal life. I prize mine highly.

Teacher's key from (this one was provided to the professional instructors for the, to check each sound)

Part I. Accent Analysis Sentences Target Vowels.

/ i / **Please believe** that **sweet peas** and **beans** are good to **eat**. **Eat** them at **least** twice a **week**.

/ I / **Tim's sister swims** a **little bit**. **It** keeps her **fit**, **slim** and **trim**.

/ æ / Many **animals inhabit Africa**. **Africa has camels, giraffes, parrots** and **bats**.

/ a / **Doctors** say **jogging** is good for the **body**. **Lots** of **starch** causes **heart problems**.

/ u / **Who flew to** the **moon**? **Numerous lunar** flights are in the **news**. We'll **soon** put a man on **Jupiter** and **Pluto**.

/ u / **Would** you **look** for my **cookbook**? It **should** be **full** of hints for **good cookies** and **pudding**.

/ ʌ / The **southern governor** is **Republican**. The **public** election **was fun**. He **won** by **one hundred** votes.

/ ɔ / The **author** gave a **long talk** in the **office**. The **small audience** **thought** it was **boring**.

/ ɜ / **Nurses** do **worthy work**. They **certainly deserve** a **word** of praise.

/ al / **Eyesight** is **vital** for a normal **life**. **I prize mine** **highly**.

Appendix 5: Accent Analysis Sentences. (*consonat sounds; this one was provided to the English Didactics III students*)

Target Consonants

1. A tale of Two Cities was written by Charles Dickens. Today is taught through the world.
2. Is there a threat of World War Three? After a war, many think there will be nothing left on earth. We must be thankful for peace.
3. My mother and father loathe Northern weather. They prefer the climate of the Southern states.
4. Sherry took a short vacation to Washington. She went fishing and found shells along the ocean shore.
5. China has a culture which changes each year. But Chinese teachings and rituals are very charming.
6. I made a decision to paint the garage beige. I usually paint or watch television in my leisure time.
7. George is majoring in education. He will graduate from college next June.
8. Year after year, millions of people visit New York. Young and old enjoy familiar sights.
9. Pick up a pack of ripe apples. Mom will bake apple pie for supper.
10. Bob built a big boat. He finds lobster and crab and cooks them in the cabin below.

Teacher's key from (this one was provided to the professional instructors for the, to check each sound)

Part II. Accent Analysis Sentences. Target Consonants

1. / t/ A Tale of Two Cities was written by Charles Dickens. Today it is taught throughout the world.
2. / θ/ Is there a threat of World War Three? After a third war, may think there will be nothing left on earth. We must be thankful for peace.
3. / ð/ My mother and father loathe northern weather. They prefer the climate of the southern states.
4. / ʃ/ Sherry took a short vacation to Washington. She went fishing and found shells along the ocean shore.
5. / tʃ/ China has a culture which changes each year. But Chinese teachings and rituals are very charming.
6. / ʒ/ I made a decision to paint the garage beige. I usually paint or watch television in my leisure time.
7. / dʒ/ George is majoring in education. He will graduate from college next June.
8. / j/ Year after year, millions of people visit New York. Young and old enjoy familiar sights.
9. / p/ Pick up a pack of ripe apples. Mom will bake apple pie for supper.
10. / b/ Bob built a big boat. He finds lobster and crab and cooks them in the cabin below.