

Un análisis a la metodología implementada por el profesor en el curso de fonética y fonología para la enseñanza de pronunciación inglesa y la percepción de los estudiantes hacia ella

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RESUMEN

La presente investigación tiene como objetivo identificar y analizar la metodología de enseñanza que el profesor utiliza para enseñar fonética y fonología, así como también conocer la percepción que los estudiantes universitarios tienen hacia esta. La investigación fue conducida con un enfoque mixto en la cual participaron 50 estudiantes de una universidad localizada en el sureste del país. Se implementaron cuatro instrumentos como técnica de recolección de datos: 1) una hoja de observación de clases, 2) un cuestionario con preguntas cerradas, 3) una entrevista a los estudiantes y 4) una entrevista dirigida al docente a cargo del grupo. De la entrevista dirigida a los estudiantes surgieron tres categorías, referentes a 1) la importancia del curso para desarrollar una buena pronunciación, 2) la percepción de los estudiantes hacia la metodología empleada por el instructor en el curso, y 3) su percepción hacia el éxito de la metodología utilizada por el profesor en la mejora de su pronunciación. Dos categorías surgieron de la entrevista dirigida a los instructores de cada grupo: 1) metodología utilizada en el curso y 2) la eficacia de la metodología empleada en el curso de acuerdo con la percepción de los instructores. Se concluyó que la metodología empleada por el profesor del curso de fonética y fonología tiene un impacto fundamental en la adquisición y mejora de la pronunciación del idioma inglés y que esta es un factor importante para que los estudiantes se sientan motivados en el aprendizaje de la pronunciación inglesa.

Palabras clave: metodologías de enseñanza de la pronunciación; técnicas de enseñanza de la pronunciación; herramientas para la enseñanza de la pronunciación; percepción; fonética y fonología.

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An analysis of the teachers' methodology used in the phonetics and phonology course to teach english pronunciation and the student's perception towards it

ABSTRACT

This research aims to identify and analyse the teacher's methodology used in the phonetics and phonology course as well as to know the students' perception towards this. A mixed approach research was conducted in which 50 students from a South-eastern university participated. Four instruments to collect feasible data were implemented: 1) an observation guide, 2) a closed-ended questionnaire, 3) a interview addressed to students, and 4) an interview addressed to each instructor. Three categories emerged from the interview addressed to the students, referring to 1) student's perception towards the importance of this course to enhance their pronunciation, 2) their perception towards the teacher's methodology, and 3) their perception towards the success of the teacher's methodology on the improvement of their pronunciation. Two categories arose from the teacher's interview: 1) the methodology employed in the course, and 2) the success of the methodology used in the course according to the instructors' perception. It was concluded that the methodology utilized by the teachers in the phonetics and phonology course has a fundamental impact in the acquisition and improvement of the English pronunciation. Moreover, this is an important factor for students to feel motivated in the process of learning English pronunciation.

Keywords: *teaching pronunciation methodologies; techniques to teach pronunciation; tools to teach pronunciation; students' perception; phonetics and phonology.*

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INTRODUCTION

“Pronunciation is the action of producing sounds of speech to communicate a message” (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994, as cited in Tlazalo & Basurto, 2014, pp. 153). And the good development of this skill is something that students find difficult during the processes of learning a second language. It is a basic requirement of learners’ competence and is an important feature which language teachers have to pay considerable attention to. Pourhosein (2012) agrees that a good pronunciation conducts to learning whereas bad pronunciation causes great difficulties in language learning. Tlazalo and Basurto (2014) believe that having a good pronunciation is vital for an adequate process of communication, since without intelligible pronunciation it would be difficult to get our message when interacting with others. Even though a lot of second language acquisition research has been conducted on L2 speech learning (Best, 1995; Best et al., 2001; Flege, 1995; Flege et al., 1997; Gass & Selinker, 2001; Kuhl et al., 1992) grammar and vocabulary have been studied much longer than pronunciation and this is the reason why they have been much better understood by most language teachers than pronunciation (Kelly, 1969).

There are two fields or sub-disciplines in linguistic concerned with pronunciation and sound, namely phonetics and phonology. Both describe and analyse speech from a different perspective. Phoneticians strive to find ways of describing and analysing the sounds humans use in language in an object way. Knight (2012) defines phonetics as “the study of speech sounds” (p.3). In other words, the way humans produce speech and what speech sounds like. On the other hand, phonology is one discipline of linguistics, which is defined as the scientific study of language structure. Its focus is put on the mental representation or knowledge of sounds and sound patterns by speakers.

Similarly, students have to know about pronunciation to interpret speech accurately and how speech is organized. Thus, learning about pronunciation develops the learners’ abilities to comprehend spoken language. Hismanoglu (2006) agrees that pronunciation instruction is very important for oral communication since it has shown to improve L2 production accuracy (Neufeld, 1977; Piske et al., 2001, as cited in Kissling, 2013). Some researchers suggest that most adult L2 learners do not achieve native-like pronunciation without the help of explicit instruction (Kissling, 2013). Traditionally, the use of explicit lessons in L2 phonetics has aimed at reducing the differences between learners’ speech and the target speech with moderately successful results. The central part of such instruction is the use of explicit

L2 phonetics with an emphasis on the phonetic parameters relevant to segmental such as place and manner of articulation (Kissling, 2013).

Many techniques have been used in order to teach phonetics and phonology, regarding the segmental and suprasegmental aspects of English pronunciation. Segmental features include the study of vowels and consonants whereas suprasegmental features consist of stress, intonation, pitch, and rhythm. Researches like Jenkins (2004) agrees that segmental phonology instruction has been traditionally emphasized, whilst other authors argue that this is because it is easier to teach (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994). According to Fraser and Perth (1999), most L2 teachers now feel that explicit pronunciation teaching is essential.

There are three main approaches to pronunciation instruction proposed by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (1996). These are the intuitive-imitative approach, the analytic-linguistic approach, and the integrative approach. According to Hashemian and Fadael (2011) “these approaches combine traditional methods and modern techniques” (p.969).

In the intuitive-imitative approach described by Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (1996), the student needs to imitate and listen to the rhythms and sounds of the target language without any previous explicit explanation; On the other hand, in the analytic-linguistic approach there is an explicit instruction, and tools like a phonetic alphabet, articulatory descriptions and charts of the vocal apparatus are used to teach. In this approach students are firstly informed of and pay attention to the sounds and rhythm of the target language. In the integrative approach according to Lee (2008) pronunciation is viewed “as an integral component of communication, rather than an isolated drill and practise sub-skill” (p.1). Pronunciation is practised with task-based activities and pronunciation-focused listening activities. There is more focus on the suprasegmental aspect of pronunciation (stress, rhythm and intonation) that are practised in extended discourse, beyond the level of phonemes and word level. Pronunciation is taught to meet communicative goals.

For many years teachers have made use of phonetic alphabet and activities, such as transcriptions, practice, diagnostic passages, detailed description of the articulatory systems, recognition/discrimination tasks, developmental approximation drills, focused production tasks (e.g., minimal pair drills, contextualized sentence practice, reading of short passages or dialogues, reading

aloud/recitation), tongue twisters, and games (e.g., Pronunciation Bingo). Other trendy methods are listening and imitating, visual aids, practice of vowel shifts, and stress shifts related by affixation, and recordings of learner's production (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996). All these techniques are still applied in phonetics and phonology courses where students practise pronouncing each sound until they do it properly.

Some research has been done related to the effectiveness of explicit phonetics instruction (Hashemian & Fadaei, 2012; Rojas & Serano, 2013; Kissling, 2013; Morales & Izquierdo, 2011) but little has been conducted to the students' perception towards the teacher's methodology applied in the instruction of phonetics and phonology. So, it is crucial to keep in mind what the position of learners is in pronunciation. For instance, there are some students who like to be corrected every time they make a mistake and there are teachers who consider doing so unsuitable. So, here is a discrepancy regarding teacher's and students' perceptions as to how acquiring pronunciation should be handled (Tlazalo & Basurto, 2014). In accordance with Yunus, Salehi and Amini (2016) language teachers might be unaware of the different techniques and approaches for teaching this sub-skill. Thus, without any preparation teachers are left on their own to decide how to teach pronunciation and how to deal with their learners' characteristics. Besides that, studies done by Brown (1992), Claire (1993), Fraser (2000), and Yates (2001), revealed that curricula, methodology and the lack of appropriate materials, all gave rise to inadequacies of the teaching and learning in this field. Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (1996), establish some of the knowledge and tools that ESL/EFL teachers require to address pronunciation issues, these include the complex network of linguistics considerations that they must consider when teaching pronunciation, the linguistic knowledge they need to impart to their students, and the range of techniques that they must be able to draw on to function effectively. However, there are FL teachers who would admit their lack of pronunciation knowledge and that they may need to improve this skill themselves so that they can teach it (Tlazalo & Basurto, 2014). Consequently, teachers need to have a very good knowledge of what pronunciation entails so that they can help their students with their pronunciation problems (Kelly, 2000).

Considering the above, this research was chosen since it has been noticed that there is a close relationship between the teacher's methodology to teach pronunciation and the development of learners'

pronunciation. Therefore, this study aims to find out how English pronunciation is taught at an English Phonetics and Phonology course and accordingly describe the students' perception towards the methodology implemented by the professor. Four research questions have been formulated to conduct this study:

- 1) Which methodology does the professor use to teach Phonetics and Phonology?
- 2) What techniques and tools does the professor use more frequently to teach pronunciation to their students?
- 3) What techniques and tools do language students think help them most to develop their pronunciation skill?
- 4) How is the students' perception towards the methodology used for the language teacher in the course?

Literature Review

What is a Methodology?

According to the Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, methodology is defined as follows:

- 1) The study of the practises and procedures used in teaching, and the principles and beliefs that underline them.

Methodology includes:

(a) Study of the nature of LANGUAGE SKILLS (e.g., reading, writing, speaking, listening) and procedures for teaching them; (b) Study of the preparation of LESSON PLANS, materials, and textbooks for teaching language skills; (c) The evaluation and comparison of language teaching METHODS (e.g., the AUDIOLINGUAL METHOD).

- 2) Such practises, procedures, principles, and beliefs themselves.

Methodology in language teaching has been characterised in a variety of ways. Methodology is the one that links theory and practise. Theory statements include theories of second language acquisition (SLA) which are linked to various design features of language instruction. These design features might include stated objectives, syllabus specifications, types of activities, roles of teachers, learners, materials, and so forth (Rodgers, 2001). There has been a tendency historically to equate methodology with method, since a method, on the other hand, is “an organized, orderly, systematic, and well-planned procedure

aimed at facilitating and enhancing students' learning (Hasanova et al., 2021, p. 371). It directs and guides the teacher and the students in undertaking any class lesson or activity.

Teaching methods are the procedures, techniques or ways of teaching especially in accordance with a defined plan. In other words, teaching methods give birth to teaching strategies from which we are defined by specific teaching techniques.

Teaching pronunciation: Methodological variation.

The following methods are concerned with the teaching and learning of pronunciation (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996).

The Direct Method

The Direct Method first appeared in the late 1800's and early 1900s. The characteristics of this method include teaching pronunciation through intuition and imitation where students repeat or imitate a model (the teacher or a recording) doing their best to approximate it. The main focus of this method is on accuracy, relative tolerant to pronunciation errors where the instructor corrects through repetition.

Total Physical Response and natural approach

TPR method was created by James J. Asher in 1977 and the Natural Approach by Krashen and Terrel in 1983. In both methods production is delayed until learners are ready to speak, which gives them time to internalize the sounds of the new language; thus, good pronunciation is assumed to come naturally despite they have never received explicit pronunciation instruction.

The Audiolingual method

The Audiolingual method emerged during the 1940's and 1950's. For this method, pronunciation is very important, and it is taught explicitly from the start. Similar to the Direct Method, students imitate or repeat a model (the teacher or a recording). The teacher makes use of information from phonetics, such as visual transcription system (IPA) or charts that demonstrate the articulation of sounds. Furthermore, the teacher uses techniques of contrast in structural linguistics: minimal pair drill which are used for both listening practise and oral production.

The Silent Way

The Silent Way method was devised by Gattegno in the 1970's. It is characterised by the attention paid to accuracy of production of both the sounds and the structures of the target language from the very

initial stage of instruction. The focus of this method is in accuracy first, then fluency. Moreover, learners' attention is focused on how words combine in phrases (stress and intonation). There is no need of learning the phonetic alphabet or explicit linguistic information. The teacher speaks as little as possible indicating through gestures what students should do. This include tapping out rhythmic patterns with a pointer, holding up fingers to indicate the number of syllables or stress, or model proper position of the articulators by pointing to their own lips, teeth, or jaw.

The Community Language Learning

Communicative Language Learning (CLL) is a method developed by Charles A. Curran in 1976. Several tool and techniques are employed in this method, like for example a tape recorder and the human computer technique. The teaching approach is intuitive and imitative as in the Direct Method, but its exact content and the extent in which practise take place are controlled by the learner rather than the teacher or textbook. Furthermore, learners decide what degree of accuracy in pronunciation to aim for.

The Communicative Approach

Communicative Approach took hold in the 1980's. Its primary purpose is using language to communicate. The goal of this method is not to make students sound like native speakers. The goal is to enable learners to surpass the threshold level so that their pronunciation will not detract from their ability to communicate. Communicative adequate pronunciation is generally assumed to be a by-product of an appropriate practice over a sufficient period. The emphasis is mostly in the suprasegmental features of language (i.e., rhythm, stress, and intonation) in a discourse context rather than the segmental features (vowels and consonants). Moreover, fluency is obligatory, and accuracy is optional. Teacher uses authentic listening and speaking tasks.

Grammar -Translation

The Grammar Translation method appeared in the 1840's. This method is characterised by its little, and sometimes null, attention to pronunciation. Oral communication in the target language is not a primary instructional objective.

What is phonetics and phonology?

According to Knight (2012) "phonetics is the study of speech sounds, it means the way humans produce speech and what speech sounds like, rather than the written form of language" (p. 3). For Roach (2009)

phonetics is “the comparatively straightforward business of describing the sounds that we use in speaking” (p. 35). On the other hand, phonology is “the abstract side of the sounds of language”. However, once we start to think about how sounds function in a language we are in the realm of phonology.

Why is English phonetics and phonology important to teach?

“Only by studying both the phonetics and phonology of English it is possible to acquire a full understanding of the use of sounds in English speech” (Roach, 2009, p. 35). Learning how this branch of Linguistics of the English language works is of great advantage to polish our pronunciation skill. According to Harmer (2001) “through pronunciation instruction, students not only learn different sounds and sounds features but also improve their speaking skill”. Teaching phonetics and phonology has some aims that must be emphasised in order to develop communicative competence: 1) functional intelligibility-developing spoken English that is easy to understand for listeners; 2) functional communicability-developing spoken language that meets communicative needs; 3) increased self-confidence-developing a positive self-image; and 4) speech-monitoring abilities and speech-modification strategies-that will allow students to develop intelligibility, communicability and confidence outside the classroom (Wrembel, 2002, as cited in Pourhosein, 2016). As stated by Butler-Pascoe and Wiburg (2003), teaching phonetics and phonology helps learners feel more comfortable in using English, develop a positive self-awareness as non-native speakers in oral communication, develop speech consciousness, personal speech monitoring skills and speech adjustment strategies that help learners develop in and out of the class.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted through mixed research method due to the characteristics of the topic analysed. According to Lodico (2006) it involves the use of procedures for collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data. In order to gather the data a triangulation design was followed since qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously. In addition, the type of descriptive study was used, since this allows a detailed analysis of different characteristics, properties and important features within the phenomenon being studied, for which questionnaires are normally used and starting from observation to be able to analyse a problem. The participants of the research belonged to the second

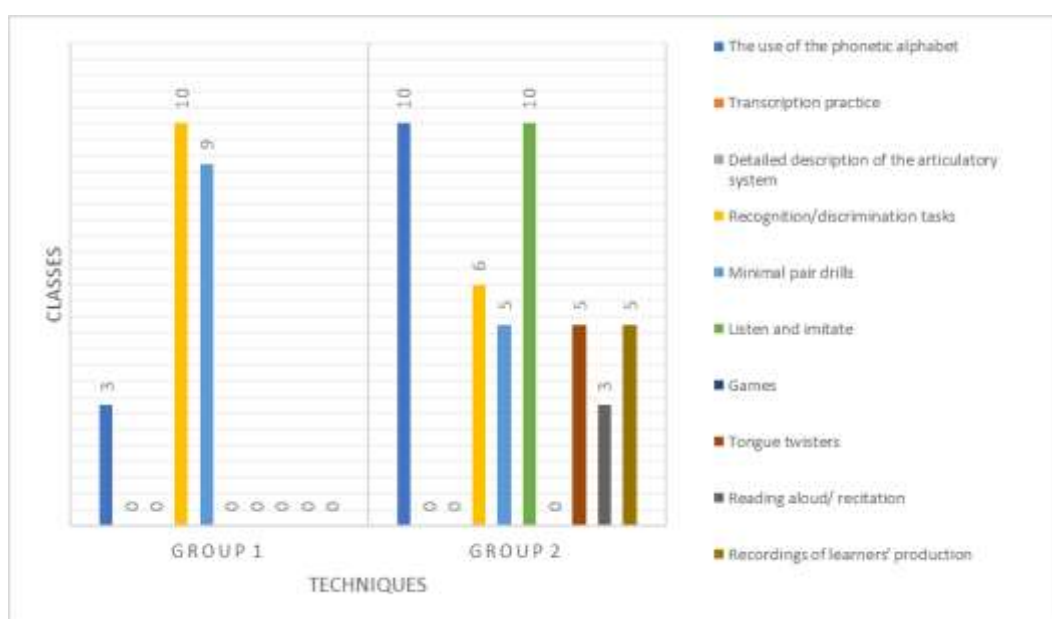
year of the Bachelors' Degree in Modern Languages at the Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco. To be able to reach the aims of this project, the sample was made up of a total of 50 university Spanish students from 19 to 20 years old enrolled in the phonetics and phonology course (an EFL class focused on English pronunciation). Two groups were observed during a period of six weeks. Therefore, from the 50 students taking part in the study, 28 belonged to Group 1, and 22 to Group 2. Each group with a different teacher, methodology and assessment system. To cover the mixed approach, instruments whose design allowed collecting quantitative and qualitative data were used. Accordingly, to collect quantitative data a structured observation was implemented to collect feasible data related to the techniques and tools that the professor used mostly to teach Phonetics and Phonology, as well as a questionnaire addressed to students to know the techniques and tools students think help them the most to improve their pronunciation. In order to collect qualitative data, two semi-structured interviews were conducted, one to the students, to know their perception towards the teacher's methodology, and one to the instructor in charge of each group, to know the methodology used to teach pronunciation. The first instrument, the observation, was applied in the classrooms at the beginning of the course 2023-1 as an observer as participant, 2 hours per class, three days per week during 6 weeks in total. The instructors and the students were informed of the objective of the research and the procedures for the application of the instruments. When the period of the observations ended, the student's survey was applied in both groups; in the same way, the space between class hours was requested for the application of the questionnaire to the students. Once the researcher obtained the information from the survey, participants were selected through convenience sample in order to answer the interview. Five participants from each group were interviewed to know their perception towards the teacher's methodology. Finally, the interview addressed to the instructors were conducted. The instructors from both groups were asked to attend the interview in a convenience time and place. No notes were taken during the interviews. Instead, the data collected from both interviews, the ones from students and instructors, was recorded and transcribed in order to be analysed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Observations results

The observation guide had two sections. The goal of the first section of the observation sheet was to know the techniques that the instructor used more frequently to teach phonetics and phonology. The second section was to know the tools that the instructor used to teach phonetics and phonology. A total of 10 classes were observed. The total of each technique was obtained by counting the classes were the teacher used it. Figure 1 and Figure 2 summarises the information graphically.

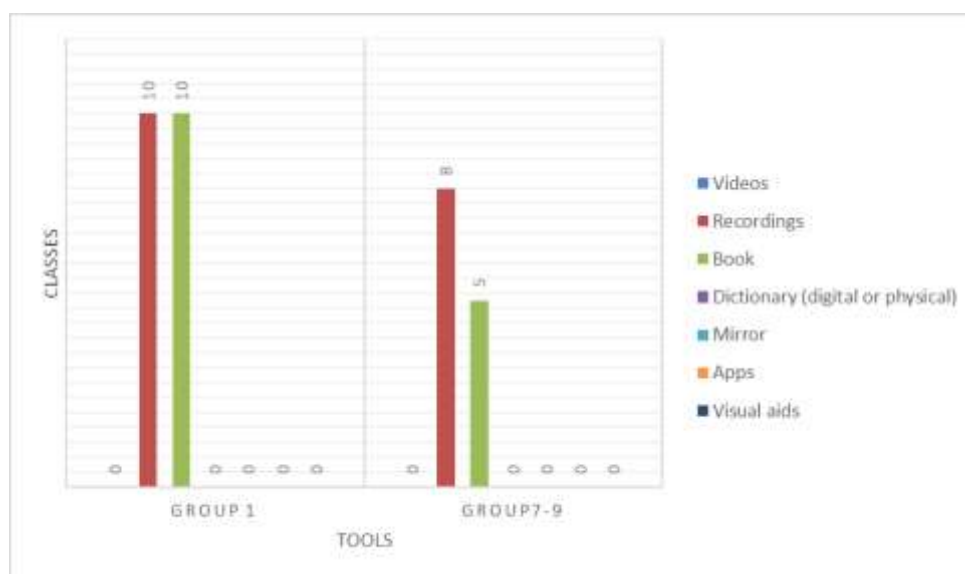
Figure 1 *Techniques to teach pronunciation used by the instructor*



Source: Own elaboration

According to the results, the use of the IPA (International Phonemic Alphabet), the use of recognition/ discrimination tasks, and the use of minimal pair drills exercises were the only three techniques that the instructor in Group 1 used during the ten classes observed. The use of the IPA was used only in 3 classes, the use of recognition/ discrimination tasks in 10 classes, and the use of minimal pair drills exercises in 9 classes. In Group 2, the instructor made use of different techniques, namely, the IPA (International Phonemic Alphabet) in 10 classes. The use of recognition/ discrimination tasks in 6 classes. Minimal pair drills exercises in 5 classes. Listen and imitate in all the 10 classes observed. Tongue twisters, 5 classes. Reading out loud/recitation, 3 classes. And finally, the recording of learner's production, was used in 5 classes.

Figure 2 *Tools to teach pronunciation used by the instructor*



Source: Own elaboration

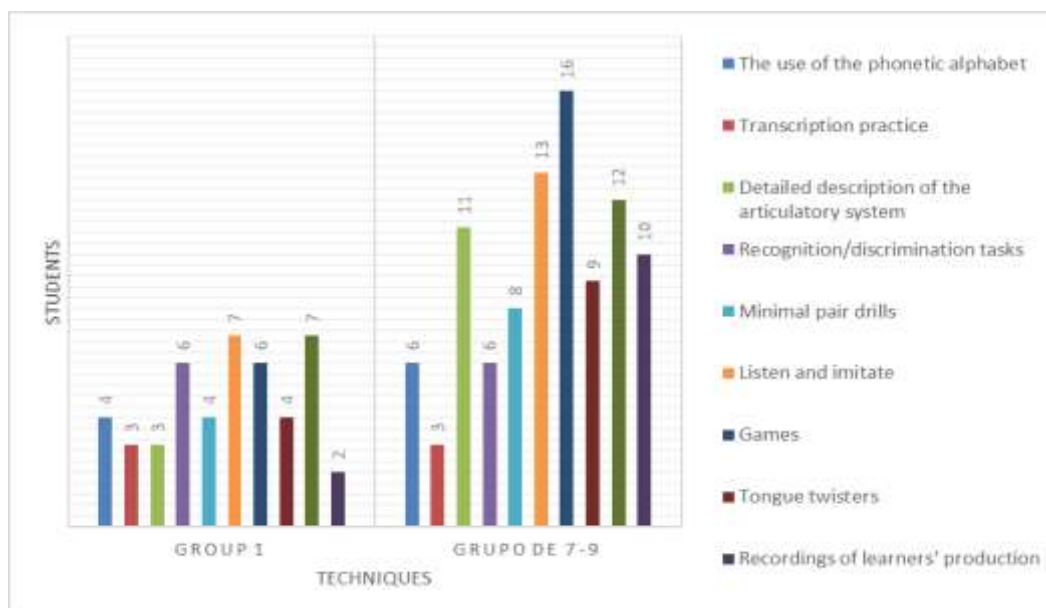
Recordings and the book *English Pronunciation in Use* by Marck Hancock (2003) were mainly the two tools used during all the 10 observed classes by the instructor from Group 1. In the same way in Group 2, recordings, used in 8 classes, and the book *English Pronunciation in Use* by Marck Hancock (2003), used in 5 classes were the main tools used to teach phonetics and phonology by the instructor.

Questionnaire results

The questionnaire had two sections as well as the observation guide. The goal of the first section of the questionnaire was to know the techniques that the students think help them the most to improve their pronunciation, and the techniques that they prefer their instructor to use more. The second section was to know the tools that students consider help them the most in the process of learning phonetics and phonology, and to know the tools that students prefer their teacher to use more frequently. The questionnaire, due to students' attendance to the class, was conducted only to 17 participants in Group 1 and to 23 in Group 2.

Figure 3

Techniques that students think help them the most to improve their pronunciation

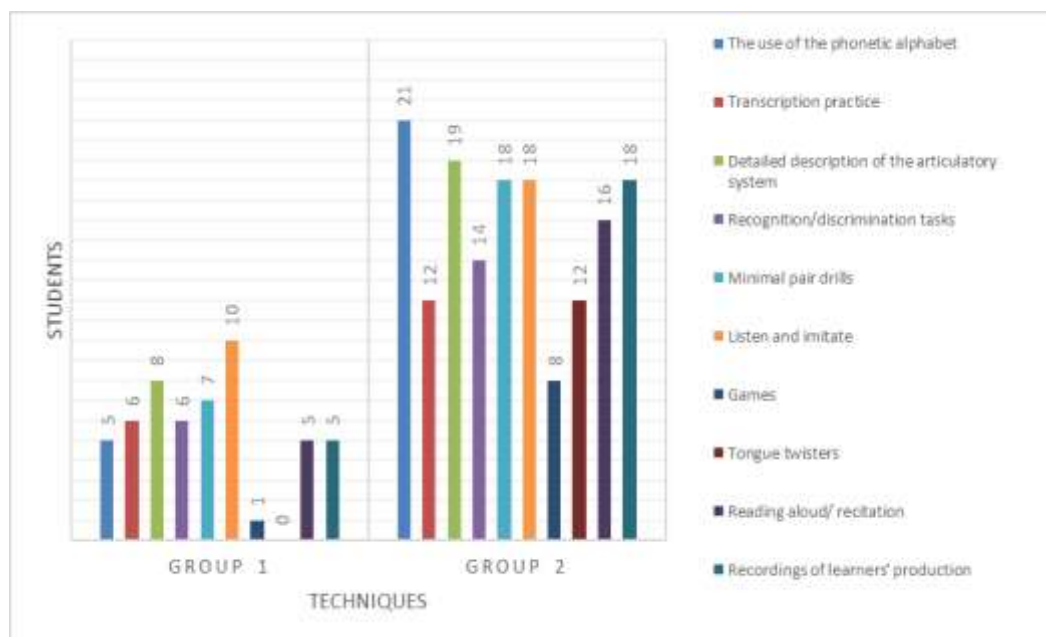


Source: Own elaboration

In Group 1, according to the data obtained through the questionnaire, listen and imitate, chose by 10 students was the technique that students think help them the most to improve their pronunciation. Secondly, 8 of them selected detailed descriptions of the articulatory system; 7 participants chose minimal pair drills; 6 selected transcription practise and recognition/discrimination tasks; 5 agreed that the use of the IPA, read out loud/ recite and the recording of their sounds production are the techniques that help them the most to improve their pronunciation. Only 1 student decided that the use of games is a technique that help him the most; 21 students coincided in the Group 2 that the use of the IPA is the technique that help them the most to improve their pronunciation; 19 students agreed that detailed descriptions of the vocal tract help them as well to improve their pronunciation; 18 participants chose minimal pair drills, listen and imitate and recording of sounds production; 16 of them selected reading out loud/ recitation; 14 participants went for recognition/discrimination tasks; 12 students chose transcription practise and the use of tongue twister; and only 8 participants chose games.

Figure 4

Techniques students prefer their teacher to use more to teach pronunciation

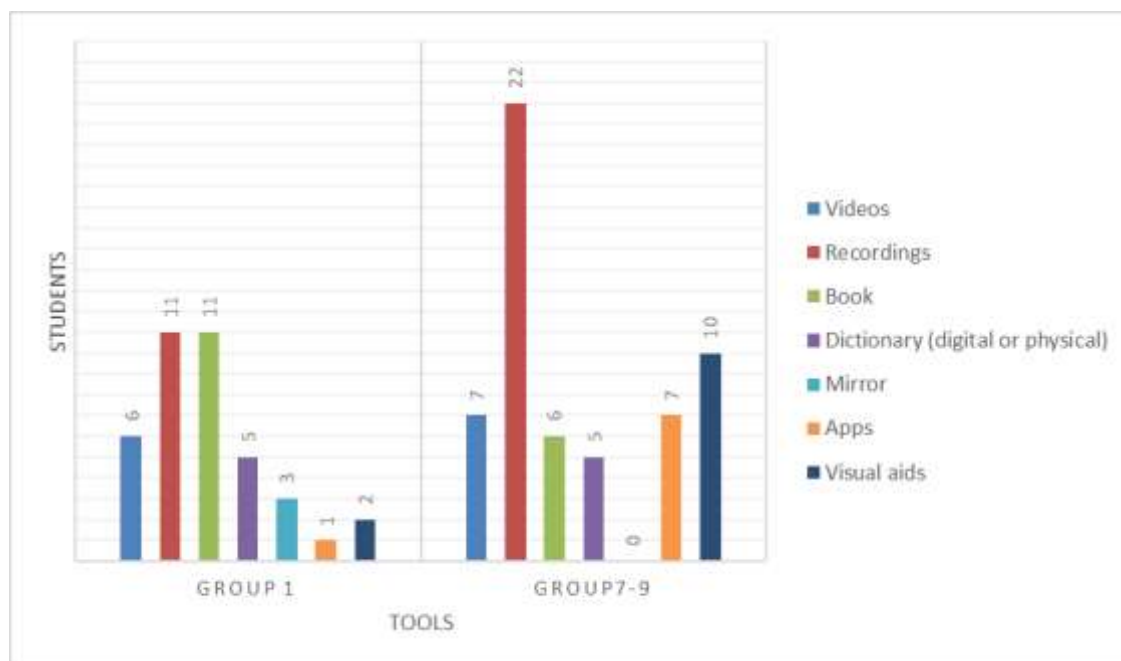


Source: Own elaboration

The results from Group 1 show that 7 participants indicated that listen and imitate and reading out loud/ recite are two of the techniques that they prefer their teacher to use more to teach pronunciation; 6 of them selected recognition/ discrimination task and games; 4 selected the use of the IPA, minimal pair drills as well as the use of tongue twisters; 3 chose transcription practise and detailed description of the vocal tract; only 2 of them went for the recording of their sounds production. In Group 2, students results show that 16 of them prefer their instructor to make more use of games; 13 favoured the listen and imitate technique; 12 of them selected reading out loud/recite; 11 agreed that detailed descriptions of the vocal tract is a technique they prefer they instructor to use more to teach phonetics and phonology; 10 participants chose the recording of sounds production; 9 the use of tongue twisters; 8 the use of minimal pair drills; 6 the use of the IPA and recognition/discrimination tasks; only three students decided that they prefer their professor to use transcription practise.

Figure 5

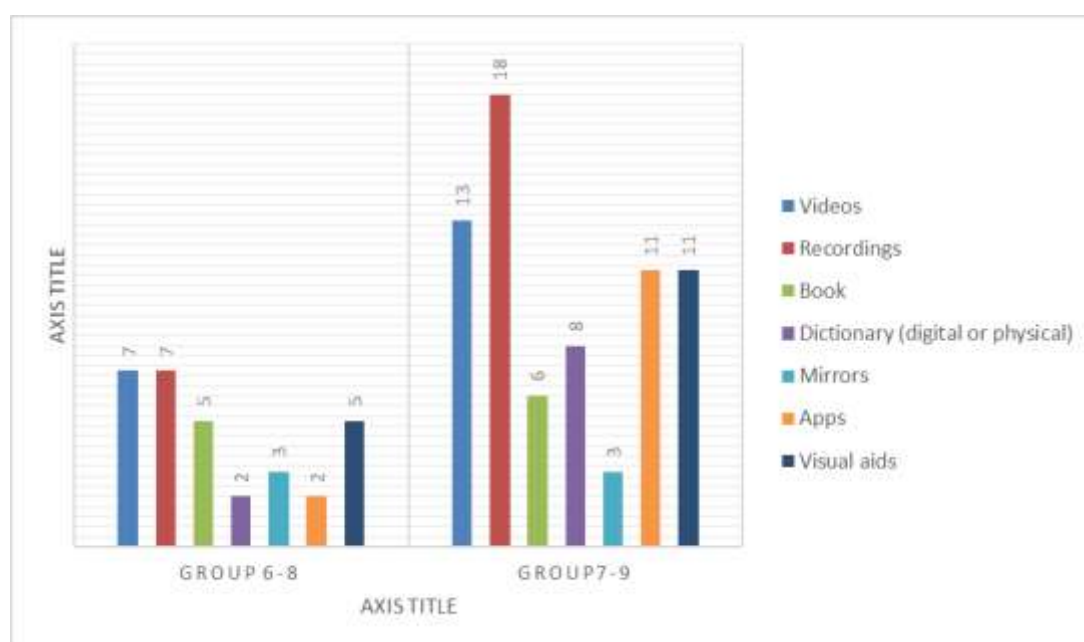
Tools that students consider help them the most in the process of learning phonetics and phonology



Source: Own elaboration

From the information obtained from Group 1, 11 students acknowledged that the use of recordings and the use of the book *English Pronunciation in Use* by Marck Hancock were the two tools they consider help them the most to learn phonetics and phonology; 6 of them choose the use of videos; 5 dictionaries; 3 the use of mirrors; 1 chose digital apps and only 2 of them the use of visual aids. In Group 2, 22 students agreed that the use of recordings help them the most to learn English pronunciation; 10 of the participants selected the use of visual aids; 7 the use of videos and digital apps; 6 of them chose the use of the book and only 5 the use of a digital or physical dictionary.

Figure 6 *Tools that students prefer their teacher to use more frequently*



Source: Own elaboration

The data demonstrate that in Group 1, 7 of the participants preferred that the instructor uses videos and recordings more frequently to teach pronunciation; 5 of them determined on the use of the book and visual aids; 3 the use of mirrors; and only 2 the use of dictionaries and digital apps respectively. In Group 2, 18 students chose the use of recordings as a tool they prefer their teacher to employ more frequently to teach pronunciation; 13 the use of videos; 11 the use of digital apps and visual aids; 8 of them went for the use of a digital or physical dictionary; 6 the use of the book, and only 3 opted for the use of mirrors.

Students' interview results

The instrument was used to gather data about the students' perception towards the teacher's methodology to teach phonetics and phonology. The interview was therefore semi-structured. Thus, a data collection analysis was carried out to analyse the information that was collected from the interview, from which three categories emerged referring to 1) the importance of the course to develop a good pronunciation, 2) the students' perception towards the teacher's methodology, and 3) their perception towards the success of the teacher's methodology on the improvement of their pronunciation.

1)Students 'perception towards the importance of the course to develop a good pronunciation

This category refers to the students' perception related to the importance of the phonetics and phonology course and how this course helps them to develop a good pronunciation. Most of the students interviewed from both groups, Group 1 and Group 2, were on the same wavelength on the importance of this course to enhance their pronunciation. One participant argued that this course "is of paramount importance" since they are studying a bachelor's degree in Modern Languages to become English teachers or Interpreters. Moreover, they mentioned that polishing this subskill will give them fluency and accuracy as well as confidence when speaking to native speakers.

2)Their perception towards the teacher's methodology

First, in Group 1 students coincided that their instructor demonstrated a deep knowledge of the English language. However, they argued that having a deep understanding of the English language does not mean that he knows how to teach it. Even though the instructor has a good pronunciation, which is important for this course, students believe he lacks techniques to teach the content of this course. Students agreed that the fact that the instructor uses the book *English Pronunciation in Use* by Marck Hancock (2003) and the recordings from this is a good tool to recognize and discriminate sounds, and they find it appropriate for the course. Even so, the participants feel that using only the book leads to boredom because of the way the instructor covers the units. The five students interviewed in Group 1 agreed that the instructor only teaches theoretical information related to phonetics and phonology. There were null opportunities to participate and to speak, therefore, the teacher did not pay attention to their pronunciation errors, and there was no attention to the accurate way of sounds production. Students said that something they really would like their teacher to do is to allow them to put into practice all the theoretical information; that the class should be dynamic, engaging, and interesting with different activities, apart from the ones the book proposes. They recommended activities focused on listen and imitate, so the teacher can identify their pronunciation errors and correct them. They finally concluded that the fact that the instructor pays more attention to their pronunciation development is important, because they would like to know their weaknesses in order to avoid doing the same thing and improve. In Group 2, students described their instructor as a teacher that not only has a deep understanding about the English language, but as someone who knows how to teach it as well. Participants defined their

teacher's methodology as excellent, engaging, dynamic, and interesting. Students agreed that they like that their instructor not only uses the book *English Pronunciation in Use* by Marck Hancock (2003) and the recordings but activities from different sources too. They said they like the way their teacher approaches the topics. Although he used English language most of the time to explain, he made the explanations easy and understandable. They also mentioned their instructor explained everything in detail and is always making sure that everybody has understood the topic. Additionally, the instructor allows students to practise on their own, in pairs, trios and groups; she focuses mainly on students' production, correct errors on pronunciation and apply different techniques like the recording of students' production, reading out loud or recite, the use of tongue twisters, listen and imitate. Students explained that their instructor also gives them individual feedback on their pronunciation problems, and this help them to improve. With all of this, students remarked they were glad about their teacher's methodology since he is always attentive, encourage, and motivates them to continue learning and practising to enhance their pronunciation.

3) Their perception towards the success of the teacher's methodology on the improvement of their pronunciation

All the students interviewed from Group 1 concluded that even though the teacher's methodology mainly focuses on theoretical information about phonetics and phonology and the use of recordings from the book *English Pronunciation in Use* by Marck Hancock (2003), this helped to develop their intelligibility and comprehensibility skills. They also agreed that now that they have learnt how to use the International Phonetic Alphabet it is easier for them to find out how other words are pronounced. In other words, even though do not feel they had improved significantly their pronunciation, they finally learnt how to use the theoretical information by their own. According to the students' perception from Group 2, they agreed that the methodology employed by their instructor was effective. The fact that he was always remembering students about the correct way of producing sounds helped them a lot. Now, they feel more confident and make a contrast when they began the course and at this point of the study; they said they have improved considerably.

Teacher's interview results

Two categories emerged from the interview addressed to the teacher 1) the methodology employed in the course, and 2) the success of the methodology used in the course according to the instructors' perception.

1) The methodology employed in the course

Teacher from Group 1 said she followed the principles of the audiolingual method, because of the aim and content of the course. Moreover, because of the objective of the course is for students to get familiar and to be able to recognize the sounds patterns of English language. Consequently, for doing so, the instructor mainly worked with recordings and the use of the IPA, so that students could listen, recognize and so they can practise, producing the sounds by themselves. According to the observations done in this group with this instructor, it was possible to find out that this instructor works with the audiolingual method as well. The teacher employed the IPA to teach all the sounds of English language and made use of recordings and theoretical information. However, in the interview addressed to him, he clearly explained that he does not follow a specific methodology since he prefers working with didactic sequences, it is, a group of activities systematically organized within a class project.

2) The success of the methodology used in the course according to the instructors' perception.

In accordance with the answers from the instructor from Group 1, he personally stated that due to his lack of experience teaching English pronunciation in the phonetics and phonology course, he cannot affirm that his methodology was effective. Also, because she noticed that there is an absence of motivation from students when they came to the classroom. He concluded that the success of the methodology not only depends on the teacher's job. Students' commitment, self-motivation, and involvement in the process of learning is of vital importance to reach the main goal of the course, to help students enhance their pronunciation. In contrast with Group 2, the instructor clearly affirmed that in her perception and experience, his methodology has been effective since students show interest and participation during the activities. Moreover, students demonstrate clarity when completing tasks and projects.

DISCUSSION

The goal of the present study was to identify the teacher's methodology in the phonetics and phonology course, to know the techniques and tools the professor uses, the techniques and tools students think help them the most to learn pronunciation, and to describe students' perception towards the methodology the instructor uses. It was argued at the beginning that the inadequate use of methodologies, materials and techniques used in teaching pronunciation gave rise to deficiencies in learning in this field. It was also stated some research questions and expected to obtain negative results due to the ineffective use of a methodology, techniques and tools by the instructors in the courses. This was believed owing to some previous student's experiences with different teachers in the same course who indicated a low level of preparation regarding methodology, techniques and tools. However, it was obtained positive results after applying the instruments. Firstly, the main finding in this research project was that teachers approach the course contents similarly. Both followed the principles from the audiolingual method, in which pronunciation is taught explicitly from the beginning with the help of visual transcription like the use of the IPA and diagrams of the vocal tract. They started focusing on segmental features of English language, which consists on teaching consonant and vowel sounds, and lastly, they covered the suprasegmental feature of English language, stress, rhythm, and intonation. However, each instructor used different techniques and tools to teach pronunciation in this phonetics and phonology course. Secondly, with the help of the observations, it was possible to answer to the second research question of this study, which was aimed at recognizing the techniques and tools the instructor used to teach pronunciation. The instructor from Group 1 used only three techniques to teach pronunciation: recognition/discrimination exercises, minimal pair drills and the use of the IPA. Different from Group 1, the instructor from Group 2 made use of more techniques, the use of the IPA, listen and imitate, recognition/discrimination tasks, minimal pair drills, tongue twisters, reading out loud/recitation, and the recording of learners sounds production. On the other hand, in Group 1 and 2, both instructors employed only the use of the book *English Pronunciation in Use* by Marck Hancock (2003) and the recordings from this. After obtaining these results, it was of key importance to know students' perception towards the methodology employed by the instructors as well of the techniques and tools they think help them most. So, with the help of the survey and the interviews was possible to reach this aim. In Group

1 participants concluded that the fact that the instructor always used three techniques, was monotonous for them. Nonetheless, they admitted that the way their instructor approached the contents of the course was beneficial for them, since the theoretical information made them aware of how to use the IPA. The constant use of the recordings enhanced their listening skills, as well as intelligibility and comprehensibility. Since the main goal of this course is to develop students' pronunciation, little attention was put to students' errors during the classes observed in Group 1. Because of this, students suggested more activities focused on speaking, like listen and imitate, reading out loud/recite and as well as more attention to their errors of pronunciation. Constant feedback was also suggested. With the help of the interview addressed to the instructor from Group 1 was possible to understand why he did not make use of other techniques and tools and why he did not put closely attention to students' progress. The instructor mentioned that although he had more than twenty years of experience teaching English language, this was the third time he was teaching pronunciation in this course. He pointed out that he mainly teaches Italian courses, since he belongs to this field of teaching, and that he does not consider himself an expert in teaching phonetics and phonology. So, this could be one of the main causes which he lacks of some knowledge related to techniques and tools for teaching phonetics and phonology. He also mentioned that even though he would follow the best methodology, used the best material, and the class were the most dynamic, if students are unwilling to learn, lack of motivation, and are not committed with learning, it is difficult for them to learn. Moreover, class size is another negative factor for the process of learning in this course since class number sometimes reaches up to forty students per group and this impeded the teachers to put attention to each student progress.

In Group 2, students perception revealed that the teacher's methodology for them was appropriate for the course and the contents. The way in which teacher covered the topics, gave feedback to students on their pronunciation, used different techniques and tools, arranged the classroom and students to work create a confident environment that allow students to participate and get involved in their own learning process to make this a significant knowledge. In contrast from the instructor from Group 1, teacher from Group 2 said that he has 27 years of experience teaching English language and over 16 years teaching phonetics and phonology. This instructor let out that apart from following the principles of the audiolingual method, he works with didactic sequences in his classes. The fact that this instructor works

with didactic sequences to teach pronunciation in this course, gives her an advantage since students feel more confident and motivated when performing the activities in the classroom. Some characteristics of didactic sequences include the connection to the syllabus or course program, the focus on a specific skill, the adaptability to the context and students' progress, and the intended sequence in which every piece must fit and match appropriately to reach a solid, logical, and effective, but adjustable structure (Tobón et al. 2010). With the use of this strategy implemented, instructor from Group 2 try to include both, segmental and suprasegmental features of English language from the very beginning of the course, little by little, so students can recognize, get familiar with, and assimilate it easily. From the point of view of participants belonging to Group 2, they consider the work of their instructor has been effective, since they truly feel how everything is connected; they feel they has progressed and how their pronunciation has improved.

The present study had some limitations, perhaps the most notorious was the fact that only ten classes were observed, and that during this period only one two parts of the course program were covered. The content of the course is based in three units. The first unit is about consonant sounds, the second unit covers vowel sounds, and the third unit is about stress patterns, rhythm and intonation. Only the two first units were analysed, and this limited the scope of the research, since this study is intended to analyse and describe students' perception towards the methodology used by the instructor in the phonetics and phonology course. It would be very helpful to have observed all the course, so the analysis would be completed in terms of content, that is to say, how the teacher approaches the contents of phonetics and phonology, and to know if all this contents at the end of the complete course help students to improve their pronunciation.

CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of this study was to find out if the methodology used by the instructors in the phonetics and phonology courses had an impact in students' development of English pronunciation. The findings in the literature review confirmed that in some cases when teachers lack of knowledge, strategies, an effective methodology, materials and so on, can trigger difficulties in the process of developing second language skills, as in this case, pronunciation. It is important to emphasize that English teachers have to be well prepared in order to teach efficiently the contents of this phonetics and

phonology course since pronunciation is one important skill English students have to master in order to become fluent speakers and at least to acquire a native-like pronunciation. From the findings related to students' perception towards the instructors' methodology, it can be said that both instructors' methodology was effective. However, the way they approached it was different. The fact that both followed the contents of the course program allowed students to build the basics of what is phonetics and phonology, and this help them to find out their new strategies of learning. The theory students learnt from both instructors benefited them and now they say it is easier for them to apply this in new contexts. Another aspect of this study was to know the techniques and tools teachers use to make the process of learning pronunciation easier. Students emphasized the importance of a variety of techniques and tools, as not all students learn the same way. Some students preferred their instructor to use audiovisual materials because they are more visual and because they would like to know in depth how the vocal tract works when producing different sounds. In the other hand, another important aspect arisen in this research was the value and efficacy of feedback on learners' pronunciation. As it has been said previously, students are different and they learn differently, some of them prefer to be corrected every time they make a mistake, others prefer not to be corrected, while some of them wish to be corrected alone. Students like variation in class activities as well as being provided with real and natural language models to imitate (together with the more traditional didactic approach offered by the coursebook). They do also need fun activities which help them to more naturally deal with pronunciation issues, helping them to forget a bit about the stress of consciously or unconsciously being subject to evaluation on the part of their peers and the teacher. In this way, students appreciate the effort devoted by teachers in order to devise activities specifically addressed to the particular needs detected in class. This involvement on the part of the teacher makes them feel more confident and valued and this positively affects their attitude to the subject. Finally, with the help of this research we can conclude that the teachers' experience is another important aspect for this course to be effective. According to the findings students from Group 1 disagreed with their teacher methodology and this was because their instructor lacked of experience teaching pronunciation in this course. Opposite to Group 2 where the instructor had more than 16 years of experience teaching phonetics and phonology ad due to this, students felt more confident, motivated and engaged in the classes. So, it is necessary to emphasize that having a deep understanding, not only

about the English language, and a native-like pronunciation, but also of teaching methods, materials and tools is necessary to assure learning in this important subject.

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