

***DESCRIPTION OF THE RESULT OF A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE THE
PRONUNCIATION OF EFL IN THE STUDENTS 10-3 GRADE OF VIRTUAL ANDINOS
COLLEGE***

ANA CECILIA PEREA



UNIVERSIDAD SANTO TOMAS
PRIMER CLAUSTRO UNIVERSITARIO DE COLOMBIA

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ANA CECILIA PEREA

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Counselor:

MANGELY LONDOÑO GUTIERREZ

UNIVERSIDAD SANTO TOMAS

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	8
Resumen	8
1. Contextualization	9
2. Research statement	12
2.1 Research question.....	13
2.2 Objectives.....	13
2.2.1 General Objective:	13
2.2.2 Specific Objective:.....	13
3. Theoretical framework	14
3.1 Phonetics.....	16
3.1.1 Phonetics in relation to other aspects of language	18
3.1.2 Branches.....	19
3.2 Phonology	20
3.2.1 Pronunciation.....	22
3.2.2 The meaning of pronunciation	24
3.3 Factors Influencing English pronunciation learning.....	25
4. Design.....	27
4.1 Context Description	27

4.2	Instruments.....	28
4.2.1	Direct observation.....	28
4.2.2	Semi structured interview.....	29
5.0	Data Analysis.....	30
5.2	Grounded Theory.....	32
5.3.1	Grounded Theory Procedure	32
6.	Results and Discussion	33
6.1	Category 1: Students improve fluency in making sentences sound when pronouncing the English language.	34
6.2	Category 2: Students enhance the imitation of words sounds when pronouncing the English language.....	35
7.	Conclusions	37
	References	38
	Annexes.....	42

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Title	Description of the result of a strategy to improve English pronunciation of EFL in the students 10-3 grade of virtual Andinos College
Author	Ana Cecilia Perea
Adviser	Mangely Londoño Gutierrez
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Abstract

The group of 10-3 students of Virtual Andinos College, are having trouble in pronouncing the words correctly in English during their lessons. Although they know the meaning of many terms, they find it difficult to pronounce them correctly. The idea is to describe the result of a strategy based on listening practice and imitation of sounds that will help them to enunciate properly in the foreign language. Correct pronunciation as some researchers have said, facilitates communication and helps the learner to gain confidence during the learning process.

Key words: Phonology, pronunciation, strategy.

Resumen

El grupo de estudiantes del Colegio Virtual Andinos, están teniendo problemas al pronunciar las palabras en inglés de manera correcta durante sus lecciones. Aun conociendo el significado de muchos términos, se les dificulta su pronunciación. La idea es describir el resultado de una estrategia basada en la escucha e imitación de sonidos de la lengua extranjera para que ellos logren enunciar las palabras apropiadamente. La pronunciación correcta como algunos investigadores lo sugieren, facilita la comunicación y ayuda a ganar confianza durante el proceso de aprendizaje.

Palabras claves: Fonología, pronunciación, estrategia.

1. Contextualization

The following project is been carried out in order to improve the English language pronunciation of the 10-3rd grade night students of Virtual Andinos Educational Institution of the Municipality of El Cerrito Valle. The idea is to propose a strategy based on listening practice and imitation of sounds that will help the learners to improve their pronunciation in way that they feel more confident and also able to participate actively during the conversational practice and so progress in their learning process.

Virtual Andinos School is an Institution that deals with elementary and middle school students. The communicative method is generally applied in English lessons and through reading and writing the grammar structure is taught. On the GSCE exams, most of the students stand out for getting high marks in the area of English. Night students, on the other hand, do not have this luck because most of them, for one reason or another, have left their studies and then resumed them. The learners are mainly a mix of middle age adults and teenagers between 15 and 17 years old who want to finish their high school. The schedule on the night shift is made by fewer hours compared to the day shift. Students sometimes cannot attend the lessons because they all work at day time. For this reason, students are entitled to level their subjects when they have trouble in completing their schoolwork. Even so, some of them manage to reach good grades in English subject in terms of reading comprehension and writing. Even so the researcher has noticed that their pronunciation is very poor as they struggle to pronounce words during reading and speaking activities. This leads to poor participation in speaking performance because they tend to feel embarrassed of their classmates and teacher when trying to pronounce words and phrases.

The above mentioned demonstrate the significance of doing this study for various reasons: the first one is based on the fact that the purpose of learning a language is in order to communicate with others through the target language and that pronunciation plays an important role. The Utterance is all about making sure the speaker sounds clear and easy to understand. The second reason is because in addition learners won't get embarrassed in front of their classmates, will feel better and be more confident when talking to their teacher and classmates. Eventually, practicing listening, will help them to understand what others say in audio or in person. In short, listening practice can lead to many positive things during the learning process as learners will have a lot of fun after they have seen their progress. Students will learn more easily, that is, because this technique forces the learner to listen more carefully. Focusing on how he or she makes the right sound when they speak. By listening to how natural sentences sound the learner is more likely to make him or her, himself or herself. Besides the more the learner listen to those sentences the easier it becomes for the student to understand because the words are going to be more familiar for the student.

The researcher seeks that through listening and sound mimic practice the students manage to improve their utterance in the target language. Through listening comprehension students should achieve, to discriminate between the significant sound and intonation patterns of the language. Chastain in his theory of Listening Comprehension states that learner's attention is on speaking, so they underestimate the importance of listening comprehension. However, the development of listening comprehension is an essential requirement to develop speaking skills because without understanding there is no communication. (Chastain's Theory Of Listening Comprehension, n.d.).

Most of the tenth-grade night students are selected as those who have stopped their school and later decide to continue it. The fact that they left their studies for a period of time, has made them

forget what they have learnt. What the teacher has been able to observe is that they can handle with grammar rules, writing and reading comprehension so far, but they find it difficult to pronounce words and phrases when the lessons are taking place. An issue that worried the teacher, because she wanted to hold simple conversations in English with her pupils and also get responses; besides having regular speaking practice will help them to progress in their learning progress.

Pronunciation then shouldn't not leave aside by future teachers of English, on the contrary it should be put into practice in the classrooms, because it is part of the initial stage of communication. The learner who produces good utterances in the foreign language can emit a message with less difficulty, furthermore it helps with the fluency since it helps to gain confidence when sending a message that is, and they won't need to repeat a phrase or word to the listener twice, especially when they talk to a native speaker.

It is worth to mention that this study makes its contribution to the undergraduate students of LLEI of Santo Tomas University in the sense that it can be understood that teachers can face various scenarios in the classroom during the teaching and learning process of EFL. Each group of students varies in its characteristics since their learning needs are not always the same. That each situation or context is different and the instructors should know and choose the right methodology and techniques to meet their needs. In this matter, for example, the topic is pronunciation, but teaching pronunciation to a group of students who attend face-to-face English lessons is not the same as teaching a group of learners that attend virtual lessons. Teachers and students can have barriers such as not enough time to spend in the lesson, the voice sound of the teacher is not the same. The instructor must make sure to vocalize properly, so that learners can understand well what she says in the foreign language. In short, a teacher who has not experience in the subject should resort to methods, techniques and strategies that best suit each group of

learners. In addition, nowadays there is a lot of material focused in teaching English that helps to live up to date with the latest teaching means, either virtually or in person. It cannot be forgotten that learning English means to develop on the students the 4 skills such as writing, reading, listening and speaking that is the final goal of the learning process. But in order to be able to send a message correctly it is necessary to produce well the word's sounds. In additions to this, pronouncing well will allow the learner to gain fluency more easily since it helps the student to gain confidence. On the other hand, currently there are more job opportunities with companies from other countries and if someone can pronounce correctly the foreign language, it indicates being able to hold telephone conversations, to speak without difficulty with natives, that is to say, more job opportunities.

2. Research statement

This project evaluates a group of students belonging to a private school in Valle del Cauca in Colombia called Virtual Andinos and aims to propose a strategy to improve the pronunciation of the English language in these students based on listening and imitation of sounds. The group of students evaluated in the study correspond to 5 individuals from the tenth grade of high school who study at night once a week between 6:30 and 8:30 p.m. m in virtual modality, their ages are within the range of 15 to 30 years, all of them have Spanish as their mother tongue and most of them are people who work during the day. Despite the fact that the classes taught do not represent a significant number of hours, the students generally obtain good grades in grammar and reading, but show a great deficiency in their oral expression, causing the students no to take the initiative

to participate in class due to the shyness they feel. This generates to miss the opportunity of learning to communicate in the foreign language. Therefore, this project aims to show how by increasing the practice of listening and imitating sounds in class, students will be able to obtain better results and progress in their learning process.

2.1 Research question

Which is the result of the learning process of English as a foreign language in the group Students of Virtual Andinos College after having applied the strategy proposed in this study?

2.2 Objectives

2.2.1 General Objective:

To analyse the result of a strategy implemented to improve the pronunciation of English as a foreign language of the students of 10-3 of Virtual Andinos College.

2.2.2 Specific Objective:

To design the strategy to improve the pronunciation on EFL lessons

To implement the strategy to improve the pronunciation on EFL lessons

To determinate the finding as part of the implementation design for the EFL lessons

3. Theoretical framework

English or any other language may develop a native or nearly native mode of pronunciation with the right method in one way or another. Everyone in the student community is learning a language with an international reach. Despite the fact that a teacher or guide knows the aspects that could affect the learning of the pronunciation of English as a foreign language such as age, and exposure to the language that is, learners don't have contact at all with native speakers or people who speaks the foreign language. Other aspect is the influence of the mother tongue language as well as other negative theories. Even so, the guide or English teacher can disapprove these myths and instead encourages learners to take their first steps in learning the sounds of the language. There are many procedures for obtaining the perfect pronunciation. One of the direct observation strategies is to listen to and to imitate the speaker or teacher's mouth motions. Another option is to listen to a sound model recorded sound.

A lot of discussions have been carried out in order to find the strategies that can be used to truly teach pronunciation. One the most controversial matter is whether to teach pronunciation by

imitation or awareness raising. Jones¹ emphasizes that students should practice pronunciation by imitating native speakers in videos or recordings, especially after the growth of communicative language teaching. The use of phonemes and minimal pairings seems to be one of the most used strategies for teaching pronunciation. The notions of phonemes and minimal pair, according to Cook (2008): “have been useful in organizing information for teaching this skill”.

Phoneme in linguistics, is the smallest unit of speech distinguishing one word or (word element) from another, as the element P in tap, which separates that word from tab, tag and tan. A Phoneme may have more than one variant, called an allophone (q.v.), which functions as a single sound; for example, the p’s of pat, “spat”, and tap differ slightly phonetically, but that difference, determined by context has no significance in English. In some languages, where the variant sound of p can change meaning, they are classified as separate phonemes –e.g., Thai the aspirated p (pronounced with an accompanying puff of air) and unaspirated p are distinguish one from the other. (Souza, 2012).

Phonemes are based on spoken language and may be recorded with special symbols, such as those of the International Phonetic Alphabet. In transcription, linguists conventionally place symbols for phonemes between slash marks: /p/. The term phoneme is usually restricted to vowels and consonants, but some linguists extend its application to cover phonologically relevant differences in pitch, stress, and rhythm.

¹ Jones, R. (2002). Beyond ‘Listen and Repeat’: Pronunciation Teaching Materials and Theories of Second Language. *researchgate*, pp.178-187).

Nowadays the phoneme often has a less central place in phonological theory than it used to have, especially in American linguistics. Many linguists regard the phoneme as a set of simultaneous distinctive features rather than as an analysable unit.

3.1 Phonetics

Ghosh (2019) defines: “phonetics as the study and classification of speech sounds”. He acknowledges it, as an important branch of linguistics, since humans are able to segment a continuous stream of speech into distinct parts and recognize the parts in other words, that everyone who knows a language knows how to divide sentences into words and words into sounds. He also states that linguistics knowledge allows people to ignore non-linguistics differences in speech and be capable of making sounds that are not speech sounds in English but are in other languages. For him phonetics helps the speakers to pronounce the words clearly using the vocal cords followed by the respiratory system that includes the speech, pitch, tone language, stress and intonation. Whereas for the listener phonetics focuses on the perception of sounds or the way in which sounds are heard and interpreted.

Phonetics describes the sounds using symbols of IPA which is INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET that helps people to study a language especially languages that use letters that are silent or have multiple pronunciation. With phonetic languages, there is a direct relationship between the spelling and the sound. It is important to understand that English is not a phonetic language. That is because speakers often do not say a word which is spelled the same way as it is written. Three categories of sounds should be recognised at the outset which are

phones, phonemes allophones. English phonetics looks at the various sounds used when pronouncing certain letters or words, and is typically broken down into two categories of pronunciation: consonants and vowels. Within each category exists specific terms that describe exactly how a person manipulates his or her tongue, vocal cords, lips and other parts of the mouth and throat to pronounce the desired sound. The physical body parts used to create these sounds are referred to as articulators.

Consonants in English phonetics are further broken down into three distinct categories of pronunciation known as manner, place and voice. Manner is how the sound is pronounced, place refers to how a person moves the articulators to produce that sound, and voice looks at whether or not the vocal cords must vibrate to make a specific sound. (The Voice Foundation, n.d.)

Each category of consonants is further divided into sub-categories. Subcategories of manner include categories such as stop, nasal and glide, which describe how the articulators and the air stream are manipulated to form a sound. The letter “B” is an example of a stop while the letter “W” is an example of a glide. Place includes terms such as bilabial and labiodental, which refer to touching the lips together and touching the bottom lip to the top teeth, respectively. Voice includes only two sub-categories: voiced and voiceless. Voiced consonants cause vibrations of the vocal cords while voiceless letters, like letter “P”, do not require any vibration of the vocal cords to pronounce. Vowels in English phonetics consists of fewer categories than consonants due to how many fewer vowels exist in English alphabet. The primary categories for vowel pronunciation include monophthongs and diphthongs. Monophthongs indicate the sound of one individual vowel and are categorized as front, central or back. These categories indicate the position of the tongue when forming the vowel sound. The 2nd category, diphthongs indicate the

pronunciation of two vowels together almost as one sound and is not divided into any sub-categories.

As in many other languages, stressed syllables also play a crucial role in English phonetics. Desert and dessert, for example are two words that are pronounced the same but place emphasis on different parts of the word. Desert which means a hot dry region, places the stress on the front of the word while dessert a sweet treat, places the stress on the end of the word. This allows listener to understand which word the speaker is referring to. To the above it can be said that although two words sound the same in English, the right stress made by the speaker in each syllable will help the listener to understand and this highlights how important is phonetics when learning pronunciation.

3.1.1 Phonetics in relation to other aspects of language

Learning to speak is natural for neurologically typical infants, with no formal instruction necessary for the process. Just how this process takes place depends on phonetic findings, so that the acoustic output of early productions can be compared with the target values in the adult language. Whether or not linguistic categories are “innate,” the development of links between what the learner hears and what s/he speaks is a matter of ongoing debate that would not be possible without phonetic analysis.

“Much if not most of the world’s population is bi-or multilingual, and the phonetic effects of the foreign language learning have received a great deal of attention” (Meyer & N. Schiller, 2003). The phonetic character of a first language, usually has a great influence on the production and

perception of the foreign one. The effects are smaller when the FL is acquired earlier in life than later, and there is a great deal of individual variability. “The degree of FL accent has been shown to be amenable to improvement via biofeedback” (d’Apolito et al., 2017). What can be deduced from the above is that phonetics plays an important role in speech since it deals with the sounds of language, which are those that help to produce speech. Children learn to speak naturally by perceiving the different sounds that adults make. In the learning of a foreign language the same thing happens, only that the sounds of the first language will influence the production of the sounds of the foreign language but the effects will be less if the person learns the foreign language at an early age.

3.1.2 Branches

According to Nesaab², phonetics is subdivided into four main branches. Articulatory phonetics that is concerned with the study of sounds as the result of the activities of speech organs. It deals with the speaker’s voice-producing mechanism and the way they produced sounds and prosodic phenomena. It studies respiration, phonation (voice-production), articulation and also the mental processes necessary for the mastery of the phonetic system.

² Nesaab. (2022, 8 18). *englopedia*. Retrieved from englopedia: <https://englopedia.com/main-branches-of-phonetics/>

In the articulatory phonetics three kinds of organs are implicated to produce the articulated sound. The lungs, bronchi and trachea for breathing, the phonation organs (vocal cords, larynx, resonators, and the articulation organs (tongue, palate, lips. Teeth and glottis).

The air passes from the lungs to the bronchi and then to the trachea, in whose upper part the larynx is located. In the larynx, the vocal cords are located, two flexible muscles that vibrate with the passage of breathing time. If the vocal cords approach and vibrate sounds are produced. On the contrary, if the vocal cords do not vibrate and let the air pass freely, deaf sounds are produced.

Acoustic phonetics is the area of phonetics dedicated to the acoustic properties of speech sounds, analysing the types of sound waves that compose it, their production and propagation, the filters that modify them, the resonators that amplify it, etc. This field of phonetics studies physical properties such as durations, types of formant frequencies, tone, the intensity with which sounds are produced, wave amplitude and energy.

Auditory phonetics is the area of phonetics dedicated to the study of the processes of hearing human speech and the processing of its characteristics by the human brain. It also studies the anatomy and physiology of the human ear, the way sound waves are received and how they are carried by neurons to the brain, where they are finally processed and recognized.

3.2 Phonology

Phonology is the branch of linguistics concerned with the study of speech sounds with reference to their distribution and patterning or the ability to process and integrate the individual

sounds in words. (Quoted by AbdAlgane in 2021). A short explanation of phonology is that it is the study of sound structure in language that is how speech sounds are made. Sound structure is not the same as sentence structure (syntax, word structure (morphology) or how language change over time (historical linguistics). Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (2001) said: “Phonology and phonetics both involve sound in natural language but differ in that phonetics deals with sounds from a language-independent point of view, while phonology studies the way they are distributed and deployed within particular languages”

According to (Lieberman & Whalen, 2000) “anatomy, physiology and acoustic of the human vocal tract are the key topics that helps to understand the sound structure of language”. As well as the International Phonetic Alphabet which is the nomenclature for the vocal articulation; hypotheses about the nature of phonological features and the way they are organized into segments, syllables and words; the way like features like tone align and spread relative to consonants and vowels; the often extreme changes in sound of morphemes in different contexts; the way that knowledge of language sound structure unfolds as children learn to speak; the variation in sound structure across dialects and across time among others.

Three categories of sounds must be recognised at the outset: phones (human sounds), phonemes (units which distinguish meaning in a language), and allophones (non-distinctive units). Sounds can be divided into consonants and vowels. The former can be characterised according to 1) place, 2) manner of articulation and 3) voice (voiceless or voiced). For vowels people use a coordinate system called a vowel quadrangle within which actual vowel values are located. Language is produced by humans using a number of body parts known as “speech organs” or articulators. The variety and combination of these articulators is possibly what really makes human language more diverse and more complex than animal communications.

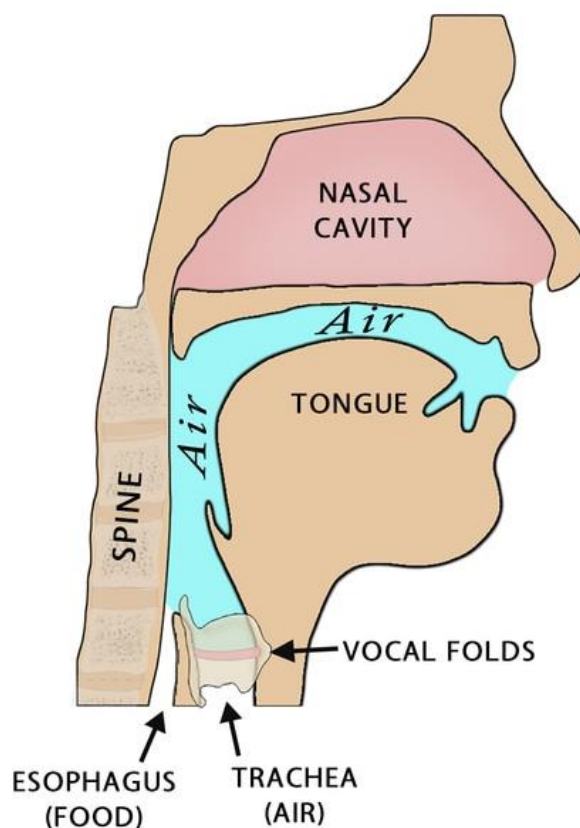


Figure 1: the vocal tract or the speech organs that is used to describe and classify sounds.

Tomada de (VoiceScienceWorks, n.d.)

3.2.1 Pronunciation

(Seidlhofer, 2001) defines this skill as the production and perception of the sounds as well as the stress and intonation. It needs to be said at the outset that the aim of pronunciation improvement is not to achieve a perfect imitation of a native accent, but simply to get the learners to pronounce accurately enough to be easily and comfortably comprehensible to other speakers.

When students can discriminate among the sounds features of language they are learning, and when they received specific suggestion about how to produce certain sounds and sound combination, they must be given the opportunity to practice, their pronunciation, the memorization of basic sentences or al dialogue already furnishes on of these opportunities but frequently additional pronunciation practice is needed”. Some oral exercises do not lend themselves well to pronunciation practice because their main stress is on structure. In communication exercises the emphasis is on fluency of expression and a teacher highly critical attitude toward pronunciation may stifle the student’s willingness to speak. (Damati, 2007).

Some English teachers of Elementary, Junior High and Senior High Education tend to place stress on lexis and grammar and consider pronunciation a less important matter. Hence when the learners start the Higher education face up with pronunciation problems. Besides oral production of Spanish-speaking students is influenced by their already formed pronunciation habits. (Austin et al., 2015). In this sense there are two factors that affect pronunciation in English learners as a foreign language. The first one is that the pronunciation habits of the first language greatly influence the difficulties that arise when is time to produce the foreign language. The second factor is that most teachers put pronunciation teaching aside and focus more on the grammatical and lexical parts. Eventually, the interlingual pronunciation especially of Spanish-speaking students is influenced by their already formed pronunciation habits. The interlingual error is caused due to the interference of the native language L1 (also known as interference, linguistic interference, and cross-linguistic influence), whereby the learner tends to use their linguistic knowledge of L1 on some linguistic features in the target language, however it often leads to making errors. The issue of this negative transfer is that it causes problems in the learner’s pronunciation and the student’s

accent won't sound like a native speaker which may hinder understanding and production of spoken language.

3.2.2 The meaning of pronunciation

The pronunciation as the production of English sounds. (Quoted by Pourhosein, 2016). Another definition is from Otlowski (1998) that defined pronunciation as “the way of uttering a word in an accepted manner”. Yates, et al. (2014) said that “pronunciation is the production of sounds that are used for making meaning”.

According to Yates, et al.³ much attention to English pronunciation indicates that it has a key role in learning English. If teachers do not present the general rule and principles toward comprehensible pronunciation to their EFL learners, nobody will certainly do it. This is the responsibility of EFL teachers to do this by teaching the new sounds, words, sentences, and phrases and arranging appropriate materials for understandable pronunciation in their EFL lessons. EFL teachers should explore new ways of indicating, practicing and giving feedback to pronunciation that are actually appropriate for learners to pick up English pronunciation easy and effectively.

Hismanoglu⁴ stated that instruction of this skill is very important for oral communication. Although the role of the foreign language pronunciation is important in English learning, many

³ Yates, Terraschke, Zielinski,, 1SZPS, Wang, Major, . . . Williams. (2014). *Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)*. Sydney.

⁴ Hismanoglu, M. (2006). Curent Perspectives on Pronunciation Learning and Teaching. *ResearchGate*.

teachers do not pay enough attention to this important skill. The problems of pronunciation instruction have been demonstrated by some researches.

According to Harmer (2001): “the lack of high quality, suitable teaching and learning material, and the lack of time to practice pronunciation are the major reasons that cause teachers no to pay enough attention to this skill. Teachers believe they have too much to do and pronunciation instruction just wastes their time”.

Harmer⁵ also emphasized that through pronunciation instruction, students not only learn different sounds and sound features but also improve their speaking ability.

Pourhosein (2016) said: “concentrating on sounds causes learners to become aware of where the words should be stressed and they give them more information about spoken English and help them get the goal of comprehension and intelligibility”.

3.3 Factors Influencing English pronunciation learning

Indisputable different problems with pronunciation teaching and learning have been found in different contexts and it is not unusual that teachers and students find difficult to overcome English pronunciation. Nevertheless, Kenworthy⁶ said there are several key elements that influence in pronunciation learning summarizes the most important learner variables that influence pronunciation learning such as native language, age, exposure, innate phonetic ability, identity and language ego and motivation and concern for right pronunciation.

⁵ Harmer, J. (2001). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. London.

- **Native language:** The learner's mother tongue language is one of the major factors that influence in pronunciation and it can define whether the learner is prosperous or not in the pronunciation of English. There are a wide set of phonological elements from the foreign language that will cause some difficulties for the learners to pronounce the target language well, but also the effort that they will make to overcome these difficulties and their familiarity with the sound system of their mother tongue will help them enormously so that they can enhance their English pronunciation. (quoted by Seom in 2021)
- **Learner's age:** Children under the age of 12 have fewer difficulties in pronouncing of the foreign language and will be able to pronounce like native speakers if they stay in contact with the language with accent-free speech while from this age onwards they will have more difficulty in pronunciation, tending to pronounce with some degree of accented ness in speech. (quoted by Seom in 2021)
- **Learner's exposure:** Some theories maintained that learners acquire language through input and they must receive numerous comprehensive input, defined as whatever of foreign language/target language that learners are exposed to before they are able to speak. Someone that is permanently speaking and practicing the language can easily learn to pronounce words and sentences in English or a selected language. (quoted by Seom in 2021)
- **The learner's innate phonetic ability:** Innate phonetic ability is sometimes called phonetic coding ability. Some people tend to distinguish more easily between one sound and another and also imitate them precisely. When the learners are born and settle in an English-speaking environment, the possibility to acquire and being exposed to native-like pronunciation is more than those who are not. Nonetheless not all learners that are born and live in native speaking environments are able to accomplish native pronunciation. (quoted by Seom in 2021)

4. Design

The current research is based on the "Research in Action" relating to the study of the English language and its contexts as a part of the macroproject research 2 of Santo Tomas University. The study is based in the experience of a female teacher with a certain group of students; therefore, the study is called **case study**, the type of information collected is qualitative since the level of learning acquire by the students is categorized when the teacher who is the researcher, monitors the students during the lessons' sessions.

4.1 Context Description

The study was carried out in a private school of El Cerrito, Valle del Cauca's county in Colombia called Virtual Andinos, with 5 students of the 10th grade of the night shift. The English lesson's sessions imparted to the students were defined in the amount of 2 hours a week within a whole period of 8 weeks corresponding to the lasting of the study carried out in the first semester of the year 2001. The students' profile that enrolled the selected group were young adults and youngsters of Colombian nationality. 4 of them resident in Colombia (3 women and 1 man) and of them resident in Canada (man). Spanish was their first language.

The main reason for choosing this group was due to identifying a dominant flaw in their pronunciation of the foreign language, this causing that the students showed a minimum participation in the activities where they were exposed to speak in front of their classmates and

teacher, reflecting in them a fear of criticism; even so the students showed the teacher a genuine interest in learning the foreign language since they successfully completed the rest of the grammar and reading comprehension activities. In depth of the case, the teacher managed to identify in the group that their interest for learning the language derived from the job expectations that they had for the future and those expectations could be added to their motivation to learn to communicate in the target language; the above was one of the factors that motivated them to stay in the school to obtain a bachelor's degree as a requirement for accessing better jobs opportunities, despite the fact that most of them spent most of their time in their livelihood job.

4.2 Instruments

Given that this research is based on the teacher's experience and criteria with a selected group of students and that the goal was to know the results in a qualitative way the effect in the learning process of these students after applying a strategy of improvement in the pronunciation of the same. It was decided to obtain the information through direct observation and interview methods which at the time they were implemented, could promise a quality of flexible, logical and profound information of the student's behaviour.

4.2.1 Direct observation

Direct observation is the elemental empiric procedure of science that has as object of the study one or several facts, objects or phenomena of the current reality (**Quoted by Campus and**

Covarrubias & Lule Martinez in 2012). According to Cajal⁷, direct observation pretends to know the behaviour of the observed objects in a way that the researcher does not alter or change the normal scenery of the context in analysis, that is, the analysis is collected whilst the observed objects flow in their natural behaviour without having to be pressured by the observer.

The observation was made from the fourth to the eighth week of lessons for two hours a week, the information was taken out from the observation made to the students during the lessons and was registered in a note book in which the student, the day and the results were specified at the time they participated in the proposed activities, as a strategy to **enhance** pronunciation of the target language. Such as results were classified in two categories: fluency to make sounds and imitation of sounds. The details of this strategy will be added later in this research paper.

4.2.2 Semi structured interview

According to Lazaro⁷, through interview the researcher seeks to access the perspective of the subject studied and thus understand his or her interpretations, perceptions and feelings, as well as his or her way of explaining and categorizing his or her actions. This is how the interview consist of the interaction between the researcher and the participant in which the interviewer asks the participant some questions. Therefore, the semi –structured interview collect participants information through open questions that can be formulated without a predefined order during the utterance and their amount must be minimal to avoid the time extension during the interview. This means that the flow in the interview is necessary since the researcher knows something about the area of interest and it doesn't set off from the unknown.

The interview was carried out in the final stretch of the semester with three students. The interrogation had five open questions. The details of this strategy will be added later in this research document.

5.0 Data Analysis

Data analysis in the type of qualitative research, presents information simplified and integrated, obtained from instruments and means of observation. In it, Prevails a coherent descriptive analysis that pretends to achieve a thorough and detail interpretation of the matter or research problem. (Vera Velez, 2015). According With Franke et al 1, there are five basic characteristics that describe the particularities of this type of study.

- The natural environment and in the context in which the issue or problem occurs that is the direct and primary source, and the work of the researcher, is to be the key instrument in the study.
- Data collection is mainly verbal than quantitative.
- The researchers emphasize the process as well as the results
- The analysis of the data is given more in an induced mode.
- It is very important to know how the subjects think in a research and what meaning do their perspectives have in the matter that is researched.

Likewise, for Monje⁷ it is important to highlight in this sort of study that the actors in the question not only are simple objects but they also mean, talk and reflect.

This type of research is interested in understanding the meaning of the phenomena and not only is interested in understanding the meaning of the phenomena and not only the cause of the same having into account the intentions, motivations, expectations, the reasons, believes of the individuals.

Therefore, the present study is based in the framework of qualitative research addressing in a general way the process of improving pronunciation of the English language in the students in a flexible an open way that characterize the nature of the type of qualitative research.

5.1 Case study

The research strategy used in this project is a case study.

case study consists in understanding a circumstance or phenomena or a specific group from which more information is requires. On the other side refers to empirical research that studies a contemporary phenomenon within the context of a real life, especially when the boundaries between the phenomena and its context are not Clearly evident. (...) A research of case study successfully deals with a technically distinctive situation in which there are many variables of interest than observational data; and, as results it is based on multiples sources of evidence, with data that must converge in a triangulation style; and also, as a result, benefits from previous development of theoretical propositions that guide data collection and analysis. (Quoted by Jiménez Chávez & Comet Weiler in 2016).

In the **case study** presented here, it is intended to analyse in depth the improvement of the pronunciation of the English language in Virtual Andinos students of the tenth grade of the night shift based on observation and semi –structured interview.

5.2 Grounded Theory

According to Hernandez et al⁷, after gathering all the material in form of recordings, as a result of lessons' sessions and interview with the students, it is intended to categorize the meaning of the data as a result of the material information collected, this information is called: Detail data analysis or grounded theory.

5.3.1 Grounded Theory Procedure

In this study, the **analysis log instrument** was used to keep record the grounded theory procedure, this log was completed for each class session, where reflections were collected about the learner's progress in the pronunciation of the foreign language and also ideas that arose during each lesson.

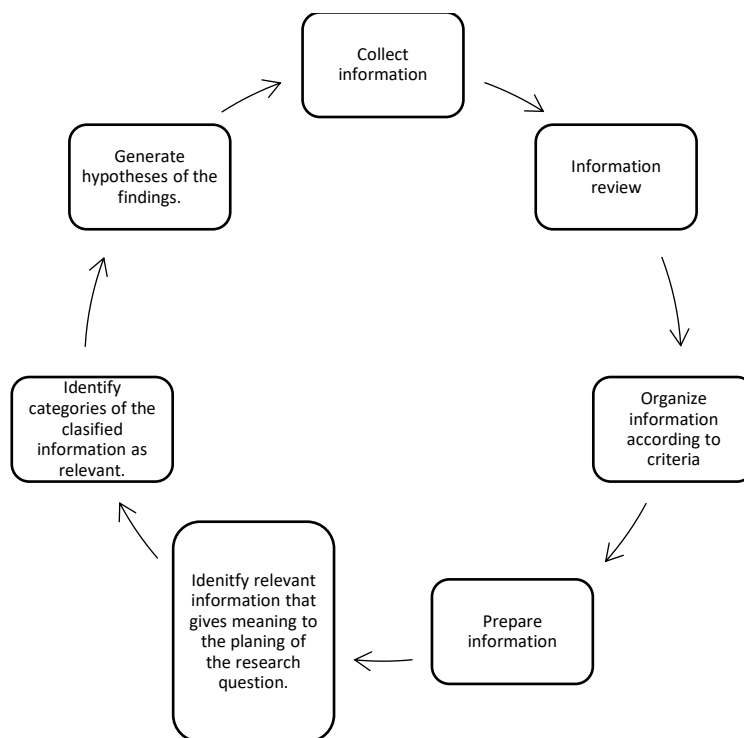


Figure 2: Qualitative analysis procedure to generate categories or themes

6. Results and Discussion

At the moment of applying qualitative analysis procedure, information of recorded videos from lesson's sessions and the interview made in a chronologically way and identifying the key aspects in which students improve their pronunciation in English language after putting into practice the strategy to improve pronunciation based in listening and sound imitation.

This strategy was landed in the classroom as exercises projected on the screen of the virtual room through a presentation with a didactic design using multimedia resources such as images that alluded to the meaning of the written text with bright colours and friendly fonts in sight of

the students at the time they needed to read. All the presentations that were made through the semester were in accordance with the recent topics that had been taught in the lessons.

The content of the presentations was characterized by being brief and orderly and an attempt was also made to show the following information in the text: original English grammar, pronunciation in English and the explanation of the pronunciation rule corresponding to the exercise carried out.

Finally, two categories of results were formed, which are shown below.

6.1 Category 1: Students improve fluency in making sentences sound when pronouncing the English language.

Short text reading exercises such as sentences and paragraphs are proposed in class. Each student who participated in reading short texts was encouraged to read freely according to their belief in the pronunciation. In each attempt of the students who carried out the proposed initial reading process, the teacher took note of the difficulties evidenced in them, the most relevant problems that were identified throughout the sessions were: leisurely reading without connection between one word and another in each sentence.

Insecurity to emit one sound after another and difficulties in pronouncing the combination of vowels with ease.

Immediately after the student made his or her first attempt at the exercise and that simultaneously the teacher took note of their observations, the teacher read the text with the

correct pronunciation, emphasizing the connectivity of words and sounds that were emitted to achieve that connectivity. Finally, the students had to repeat the reading of the text after hearing the teacher's example, whilst she was taking notes of the improvements observed.

The most relevant conclusion of the notes collected during the sessions was that the students linked the words better when reading, thus achieving greater agility in this skill.

Additionally, the improvement in the students' pronunciation fluency level was expressed by them when they answered the question: Do you consider that the pronunciation exercises carried out in class can contribute to improving your pronunciation of EFL? To which one of the students replied: "by doing pronunciation exercises... one learns more in order to be more fluent when speaking English" (the full transcripts of the interviews are presented in Annexes 1 and 2), another student referred regarding her evolution in learning English pronunciation as "I feel a little more confident... the exercises we have done in class have helped me a lot." The previous answers of the students are a sample that becoming fluent in EFL is a very important advantage not only to understand it more easily in communication but also to gain more confidence when expressing yourself in this language.

6.2 Category 2: Students enhance the imitation of words sounds when pronouncing the English language.

Diphthong pronunciation exercises are proposed in class.

Each student who participated in the reading of diphthongs were motivated to participate in reading them when the teacher took the initiative in the exercise by explaining both the meaning and the correct pronunciation of each word because many words represented a challenge for the students especially because of unfamiliar vocabulary.

After the teacher's intervention, each student made his first attempt to imitate the sounds of the explained diphthongs while the teacher took note of the difficulties evidenced in them, such as difficulty suppressing some letters when pronouncing each word and the presence of wrong vowel sounds in some syllables.

Afterwards, the teacher gave feedback on the attempt carried out by the student until finally asking him to repeat the imitation of the sounds of the proposed exercise a second time, while he took note of the improvements observed in the students. On some occasions these exercises were repeated more than two times with some students.

The most relevant conclusion of the notes collected during the sessions in which the strategy was applied throughout the semester was that students improved the pronunciation of vowel sounds and managed to emit the sound of letters with less difficulty.

In the same way, the students shared their satisfaction in their improvement of the emission of sounds of words when answering the question: Do you feel that you can now more easily recognize the correct sound of these words in another context such as a reading or even an audio? To which one of the students expressed that "I did not know these sounds before, but I feel that I already recognize some with the practice we have done, now it is easier for me." Another of the students answered that "you remember the words... and by reviewing them you learn them." Both answers corroborate that with the practice of mimicking sounds, students are able to incorporate more and

more the ability to pronounce the correct sound of words of EFL as a pattern to be followed when learning more and more advanced vocabulary.

7. Conclusions

According to the results, it can be determined that the strategy proposed in this project is suitable to improve the pronunciation of English language learners in response to the query proposed in the research question. In addition, the results came from the painstaking application of the procedure “The grounded theory” to ensure the quality of the results. On the other hand the research results suggest that the learning of a foreign language involve a set of variables not only cognitive as the one exposed in this study but also emotional so that the learner can go forward satisfactorily in the acquisition of the ability in pronouncing the foreign language. When a teacher implements the practice of exercises to their students to improve their pronunciation of EFL at the previously learned grammatical level, in a virtual didactic environment and with the appropriate frequency, they manage to improve their pronunciation skills as a result of a habit raised and subsequently acquired in the classroom. In addition, involving a strategy in the exercises proposed in class focused on improving the fluency of word compounds and the correct mimicking of word sounds, makes it possible to more easily identify and classify opportunities for improvement in students and therefore satisfactory results are generated. The importance of presenting the two categories identified in the results is consistent with the research by Angarita Santiago (2021) and Beltrán Rojas (2021) who support that listening to EFL and the subsequent mimicking of the learned sounds produce promising results to improving the pronunciation of this language.

On the other hand, there is a determining variable in the profile of each student so that the process of improving the pronunciation of the EFL, obtains results in the highest level of satisfaction, that is, motivation. In the research addressed here, it was possible to identify that despite the fact that the students improved their pronunciation skills, it is believed that these results could be even better if the teachers implement some strategy to increase the motivation of the students to participate in classes and perform the strategy proposed here in extramural hours of the virtual classroom, which is related to the research of Larrenua Vegara (2014). Therefore, this project can serve as a basis for areas such as psychology or sociology to carry out in-depth research on the motivation factor of students in their process of learning EFL.

In summary, it can be determined that the strategy proposed in this project is adequate to improve students' pronunciation of EFL by answering the question posed in the research question. In addition, the results were the product of the careful application of the grounded theory procedure to ensure the quality of results. On the other hand, the results of the research suggest that learning a foreign language involves a set of variables that are not only cognitive, such as those presented in this paper, but also emotional ones so that each student can improve satisfactorily in the acquisition of skills to pronounce this language.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Video recordings of interviews

- Student 1

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UJIGvrqEIX0ie3_Q5WKYJOp8N5zj2AG2/view?usp=share_link

- Student 2

https://drive.google.com/file/d/19NRJf-L-cyBo8gcgDi4ZMvh3K7nlJwAR/view?usp=share_link

Annex 2: Transcripts of the interviews.

Nombre del entrevistado: Student 1	Nombre del entrevistador: Ana Cecilia Perea
Lugar: sala virtual de clases	Fecha:17/11/2021
Preguntas	Respuesta del participante
Después de realizar ejercicios para emitir sonidos de palabras, ¿sientes que puedes reconocer con mayor facilidad el sonido correcto de estas palabras en otro contexto como por ejemplo una lectura o inclusive un audio?	Si porque pues a uno se le van grabando las palabras... y pues al repasarlas uno pues las aprende ¿no?
Después de realizar ejercicios acerca de imitar sonidos en oraciones y párrafos, ¿sientes que puedes reconocer con mayor facilidad el sonido correcto de las combinaciones de palabras en otro contexto como por ejemplo una lectura o inclusive un audio?	Si gracias a que pues como ya decía uno.. los diptongos, los que son como ch, cho, bueno, todo eso es mas como ya cuando uno lo sabe es más fácil reconocerlas y entenderlo
¿Consideras que los ejercicios realizados en clase pueden contribuir al mejoramiento de	Si porque pues uno al realizar ejercicios de pronunciación pues va aprendiendo más para poder ser más fluido al hablar el inglés

tu pronunciación de la lengua extranjera inglés?	
¿Tu crees que al comienzo se te dificultaba un poco y ya luego eso te va a ayudar?	Si, gracias a que uno las practica pues eso le ayuda con el tiempo también
¿Consideras que los ejercicios realizados en clase pueden aumentar tu confianza a la hora de pronunciar la lengua extranjera inglés?	Si porque a veces uno no sabe como más pronunciar algo, pero si uno practica por ejemplo en clase pues es más fácil para decir las palabras, inclusive ah, una conversación con alguien
¿Piensas que practicar con frecuencia estos ejercicios fuera de clases pueden contribuir a mejorar tu pronunciación de la lengua extranjera inglés?	¡Claro!, cuando uno esta aprendiendo una ah otro idioma por ejemplo inglés hay que practicar todos los días para poder así aprender porque si practica una sola vez a la semana o algo pues no.

Nombre del entrevistado: Student 2	Nombre del entrevistador: Ana Cecilia Perea
Lugar: sala virtual de clases	Fecha:17/11/2021
Preguntas	Respuesta del participante
Después de realizar ejercicios para emitir sonidos de palabras, ¿sientes que puedes	Si, la verdad yo antes no los conocía, pero siento que ya reconozco algunos con la

reconocer con mayor facilidad el sonido correcto de estas palabras en otro contexto como por ejemplo una lectura o inclusive un audio?	práctica que hemos ido haciendo ya se me hace más fácil
Después de realizar ejercicios acerca de imitar sonidos en oraciones y párrafos, ¿sientes que puedes reconocer con mayor facilidad el sonido correcto de las combinaciones de palabras en otro contexto como por ejemplo una lectura o inclusive un audio?	Si claro, como sabemos, no lo vamos a aprender de una, pero con las clases que hemos ido teniendo ya me sentiría un poco más segura a la hora de hacerlo
¿Consideras que los ejercicios realizados en clase pueden contribuir al mejoramiento de tu pronunciación de la lengua extranjera inglés?	Si claro, antes como sabemos yo no sabía mucho inglés pero ahora puedo atreverme a pronunciar algunas cosas eh... que usted me ponga ¿no? En actividades o ejercicios que hemos ido haciendo, ya me siento un poco más suelta... me han ayudado muchísimo los ejercicios que hemos hecho en clase
¿Consideras que los ejercicios realizados en clase pueden aumentar tu confianza a la hora de pronunciar la lengua extranjera inglés?	Si, al yo saber como se pronuncian los ejercicios me van a ayudar un poco más a la hora de aumentar la confianza ¿no?

¿Piensas que practicar con frecuencia estos ejercicios fuera de clases pueden contribuir a mejorar tu pronunciación de la lengua extranjera inglés?	Si claro, además de lo que uno hace en clase uno afuera de casa puede ayudarse también con ejercicios que usted nos pone a escuchar los audios que usted nos manda, eso la verdad a mi me ha ayudado mucho
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