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“Development of Pronunciation Activities regarding American English Vowel Sounds
and –ed Ending Sounds of Verbs and Adjectives for Eighth Grade Students”

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RESUMEN

Dado que la pronunciación del inglés como idioma extranjero en colegios públicos de Cuenca ha sido un problema para la mayoría de los estudiantes y siendo una adecuada pronunciación de este idioma necesaria para comunicarse, las técnicas para mejorar la pronunciación de los estudiantes deben ser revisadas y mejoradas.

El presente trabajo de investigación provee información acerca de la enseñanza y práctica de la pronunciación del inglés como idioma extranjero y propone, como su principal objetivo, veinte actividades creadas o adaptadas para trabajar la pronunciación en Octavo Año de Educación General Básica en dos categorías: sonidos vocálicos y la pronunciación del sufijo *-ed*, presente en distintas categorías gramaticales.

Las diferentes actividades propuestas son el resultado de una investigación significativa sobre Fonética y Fonología, metodologías de la enseñanza del idioma extranjero, estudios recientes sobre el tema y un análisis del currículo de inglés de octavo EGB. Además, información acerca de la práctica existente y deseada de pronunciación se recolectó a través de dos entrevistas a profesores de inglés y una encuesta a ciento siete estudiantes de octavo EGB de instituciones públicas.



Aprender a pronunciar adecuadamente los sonidos de la lengua extranjera y practicarlos regularmente, ayudará a los estudiantes de inglés a mejorar su pronunciación y, por consecuencia, su forma de comunicarse.

Palabras clave: pronunciación, actividades, sonidos vocálicos, sufijo –ed, octavo EGB.



ABSTRACT

Given that the pronunciation of English in foreign language learning environments in Cuenca's public high schools has been an issue that troubles most learners, and being an accurate pronunciation of English words necessary for communicating in the target language, techniques to improve learners' pronunciation skills should be revised and improved.

This research paper provides information on the teaching and practicing of pronunciation in EFL [English as a Foreign Language] classrooms and proposes, as its main purpose, twenty developed/adapted activities for working on pronunciation in eighth grade in two main categories: vowel sounds and the sounds of the *-ed* suffix of different parts of speech.

The different activities proposed follow a substantial research on phonetic and phonological knowledge, foreign-language teaching methodologies, current studies on the topic, and an analysis of the eighth grade EFL curriculum. In addition, information about existing and desired foreign language pronunciation practice was gathered from interviews to two public high school English teachers and a survey to one hundred and seven eighth graders from public institutions of the city of Cuenca.

Learning to pronounce the sounds of the target language accurately and practicing them on a regular basis, will help EFL learners improve their pronunciation skills and, consequently, their communicative skills.



Key words: pronunciation, activities, vowel sounds, -ed suffix, Phonetics, eighth grade.



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family,
near or far away,
who have supported me along the way.



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I would like to thank the University of Cuenca for giving me the opportunity of grasping a different and better future. I enjoyed being part of the university, of its students and classrooms. I am also grateful to the English major and especially to its teachers because they nourished my love for learning.

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INTRODUCTION

An accurate pronunciation of English as a foreign language has proved to be essential for communicating in the target language [TL], and as far as formal observation can tell, a great number of EFL students from public high schools of Cuenca have trouble with this particular feature. The main reason for this to happen remains in the fact that the native and foreign languages present several differences in pronunciation and sounding and learners normally transfer their L1 knowledge to the L2, with some of the former not corresponding to the latter, which causes mispronunciation.

The sounds and pronunciation of English vowels and verbs and adjectives with *-ed* suffix were considered essential for an accurate foreign language communication, this being the reason that this research worked on both features. Vowels in L2 have far more sounds than in L1 and the same letters in spelling do not always represent them. On the other hand, the past tense of regular verbs and some adjectives share the same ending, *-ed*, yet this suffix has three distinct pronunciations according to the final sound of the word it is attached to. It is easy to see why these features represent a problem for EFL learners.

Several methodologies for teaching a foreign language have emerged in the course of history, yet only some of them have taken pronunciation as an important part of it and have included it into their teaching principles. This research paper



considered only those methodologies and agreed with the doctrine that suggests that all methods have their reasoning and are useful yet different principles should be used according to context and needs. Moreover, current research has shown that instruction in pronunciation has the effect of improving it; therefore, it is important that high school students learn and practice some of the most difficult sounds for Spanish speakers.

In conclusion, this research paper demonstrates the importance for EFL learners to acquire an accurate TL pronunciation. This work contributes with activities designed for this purpose; these activities are available for teachers and they can include them in their class planning. Being able to propose twenty Phonetics-based activities directed to Ecuadorian EFL eighth grade classes, the aim of this study, was possible by gathering information from different sources, including bibliographical research on TL pronunciation teaching and learning aspects, an analysis of the current TL instruction in public institutions in Ecuador, a survey to students, and an interview to teachers. All these led this study to comprise a methodology based on both qualitative and quantitative approaches. While the qualitative data were unfolded and analyzed in several chapters, percentage pies with their respective interpretation comprehend the quantitative data. It is important to mention that some of the data collection techniques involved points of view from both EFL eighth grade teachers and students. Likewise, an analysis and interpretation of the foreign language instruction from the eighth grade curriculum guided the content and vocabulary of the pronunciation activities proposed.



CHAPTER I

The Problem

1.1 Topic

The main goal of this research consists in developing/adapting twenty pronunciation-practice activities based on the features of the sounds of American English vowels and the *-ed* suffix attached to different parts of speech, and are aimed for eight grade students of public high schools of Cuenca. These activities have been created from the analysis of the eighth grade English curriculum along with its respective guidelines. They are available for public high school teachers to include them in their foreign-language class planning.

1.2 Delimitation of the problem

This research aims at analyzing and contributing with a solution to the problem of pronunciation that most EFL learners present. According to Bell (2011), an EFL student learning the target language in a country where it is not the used or is not the official language, the classroom is generally the only environment where the student is exposed to the language; there is no communicative need and few opportunities for the learner to use the target language outside the classroom because friends and family share the same mother language and culture as him/her. This EFL learning reality particularly influences on the speaking skill, especially fluency. Consequently, to learn English in an EFL class presents a difficulty in its own.



Furthermore, another difficulty that EFL learners may have to confront is the difference between their mother tongue sounds and their pronunciation and those of the target language. Spanish-speaking learners of English present this problem for the reason that the majority of English sounds differ greatly from the ones of their mother tongue. Therefore, many English utterances cause trouble among Ecuadorian EFL learners.

As part of the curriculum of the English Language and Literature Major at the University of Cuenca, students have to fulfill documented observations in EFL classes in a public high school. These observations show that EFL learners present a great difficulty in pronouncing the target language accurately. In addition, the sounds of English vowels and the pronunciation of the *-ed* suffix present most of these difficulties, and, according to Allen (2011), the first are the ones that give more trouble to EFL learners. This occurs because many English consonants have Spanish equivalents in written as well as in spoken language, while the sounds of the English vowels differ considerably from the Spanish ones. Youman (2014) explains two rules about the English language. First, each letter of the alphabet can correspond to more than one sound. Second, more than one letter can represent each speech sound (p. 2). This is especially true for vowels. Therefore, there is a vast difference between the number of vowel sounds of Spanish and those of English, since the former has five vowels (letters) with one sound each and five diphthongs while the latter has five vowels (letters) yet twelve vowel sounds plus three diphthongs (Youman, 2014). This means that each vowel is represented by



more than one sound, which makes the learning of the pronunciation of English sounds difficult and confusing for Spanish speakers.

Likewise, the different sounds the *-ed* ending has troubles learners of English. The *-ed* suffix makes words into adjectives, i.e., *bored*, and also shows the simple past and past participle of regular verbs, i.e., *looked*. This suffix has three different pronunciations and they depend on the final sound of the word it is attached to. The reason this happens may be explained by the principles of coarticulation. As said by Ohala (1993), coarticulation occurs when two following sounds are articulated together, thus creating a phenomenon of phonetic variation of a given sound due to the assimilation of the features of other immediate sounds (p. 156). Nevertheless having learned the rule for pronouncing the three sounds of the *-ed* suffix, most EFL learners tend to pronounce words including the ones with *-ed* ending, as they are written, in the same way as it is in their mother tongue, Spanish.

O'Connor (1998) explains that the mother tongue sometimes interferes in the learning of a foreign language and it does not allow learners, both adults and young adults, acquire a native-like pronunciation of the target language. In addition, the same author explains that EFL learners have a small number of sound-units in their own language that they arrange in many different combinations to form words and sentences. By the time the learner is an adult, these sound-units become fixed into strong habits, making it difficult to break them to form new ones (O'Connor, 1998). Because of those fixed language habits, learners overgeneralize the rules of their



own language into the target language. This becomes a significant obstacle for acquiring an accurate English pronunciation, because learners have to break the arrangement of the Spanish sound-units and form new units that correspond to the sounds of the English language (O'Connor, 1998). Notwithstanding, O'Connor (1998) points out that with children things are different since they have the gift of imitation that makes them suitable to learn any language perfectly, yet this ability lasts until the age of ten years old, and, after that, it diminishes.

In addition, EFL learners experience difficulty in positioning the speech organs used in speech production in the right point of articulation for the creation of English sounds and words. Therefore, EFL learners' mother tongue, Spanish, interferes with the production of English since sometimes students make an English sound placing the speech organs in the position they would use to produce a similar sound in Spanish rather than the required foreign language position (Esling and Wong, 1983). This situation strengthens the difficulty of acquiring an accurate pronunciation.

After observing carefully and determining all the above-mentioned reasons or problems, this research tries to find a solution. Pronunciation activities regarding phonetic practice of vowel sounds and the different sounds of the *-ed* ending of verbs and adjectives have been developed/adapted to be included in eighth grade lesson plans. These activities are meant to be used from the first day of class in order to improve the pronunciation of high school learners of English.



1.3 Justification of the Research

Researchers, teachers, and linguists agree that an accurate English pronunciation challenges learners when studying this target language. Celce-Murcia et al. (1996) emphasize that “given the ability of many adults second language learners to attain targetlike proficiency in morphology and syntax, their apparent inability to attain nativelike proficiency in pronunciation has often intrigued linguists and nonlinguists alike” (p. 15). This statement easily finds an application in Latin American learners of English as a foreign language.

It is well known that most Latin Americans have a “Spanish accent” when speaking English, and documented observation shows that this reality occurs in Cuenca, Ecuador, as well. In Cuenca, public high school teachers usually focus on teaching only the grammatical part of the target language (Calle et al., 2012); this is one of the reasons why the teaching of English in public institutions of Cuenca has traditionally emphasized on grammar rather than the acquisition of spoken communicative skills, including accurate pronunciation. This emphasis on grammar has created a teaching environment in which the pronunciation of the target language is somewhat neglected. As Calle et al. (2012) found in their research, deficiency in the mastery of the language from EFL students occurs by “the use of traditional teaching strategies, the teacher-centered approach, the lack of interaction with and among students in the target language, and the confusion of teachers when applying different communicative strategies” (p. 1). Consequently, since the focus is on grammar, pronunciation errors do not get much attention and they are not



efficiently corrected during the first years of learning. As time passes, these errors grow difficult to correct.

In addition, another feature that troubles EFL learning are errors. Errors are very common in EFL environments and have always been considered as unwanted aspects of the learning situation that must be avoided (Carrillo, Maicusi, & Maicusi, 1999). Also, it should be taken into consideration that error is not a synonym of mistake, at least in the acquisition of a foreign language. According to Corder (1967) “an error takes place when the deviation arises as a result of lack of knowledge. It represents a lack of competence [while] a mistake occurs when learners fail to perform their competence” (as cited in Feltsen, 2013, p. 5-6). This means that errors result from the absence of knowledge on a particular point of the target language, leading to a deficient competence from part of the learners. On the contrary, mistakes have to do with poor performance of the learners since they know a target language rule but fail to apply it when needed. Nevertheless, Ellis (1994) argues that sometimes errors occur because of partial knowledge of the language by EFL learners (as cited in Feltsen, 2013, p. 6); in these cases learners know the rule but not all the contexts in which the rule applies, therefore they fail to perform it correctly.

Furthermore, production and pronunciation errors can also be caused by wrong input in the EFL learning environment. Teachers of English in public institutions of Cuenca, and the rest of the country as well, are usually the only model students have to learn the foreign language and its features. The problem is that most of the time they do not provide a good model of it. To begin with, according to



Vargas (1995), these non-native teachers used not to have an appropriate instruction in the teaching of the foreign language and it has been verified by the fact that they used their mother tongue for teaching and English only in decontextualized ways (Calle et al., 2012). Further ahead, a study made by Criollo and Pulla (2000) threw the results that only 41% of EFL teachers in Cuenca's public institutions had a degree on teaching English and proved also that at the time of their research the target language was still almost not used by the teachers (Calle et al., 2012). Therefore, if the English teacher, who is a model for learners, fails to provide accurate input, students will make mistakes whenever using the target language because they had learned it incorrectly.

With some of the general problems stated above, this research sees as an imperative to provide tools to improve Cuenca's EFL high school students' pronunciation of English so that they can be competent when communicating in the before-mentioned target language.

1.4 Research Question

What are the features of effective Phonetics-based activities for pronunciation practice for EFL eighth grade students?

1.5 Objectives

1.5.1 Aim



To develop/adapt Phonetics-based activities for pronunciation practice of American English vowel sounds and *-ed* ending sounds of verbs and adjectives for eighth grade EFL students of public high schools of Cuenca.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

- To analyze the pertinent literature which deals with the improvement and teaching of English pronunciation in EFL Spanish speaking learners.
- To identify the English speaking skill teaching guidelines established by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education for eighth grade in order to link the pronunciation practice activities to them.
- To design and carry out two interviews to public high school English teachers about their methods and strategies for teaching pronunciation.
- To design and apply a survey to fifty eighth-graders who are part of English classes in public high schools about the target language pronunciation practice.
- To identify the topics to include in the activities through the analysis of public education eighth grade English book and curriculum.
- To develop/adapt twenty Phonetics-based activities for pronunciation practice of vowels and *-ed* ending sounds to be available for eighth grade English teachers, with the corresponding guidelines.



Speech. The American Heritage dictionary (2012) defines speech as “the capacity to speak” (p. 792). This capacity is the reason that people are able to communicate their ideas, feelings, and necessities.

Speech occurs when the flow of air coming from the lungs passes through the larynx, then up through the vocal tract where it gets changed or modified by the different muscles, and finally is expelled unto the environment (Roach, 2009, p. 8). The positions of the different speech organs, when they come in contact with each other, affect the production of sounds. Trujillo (n.d.) emphasizes that speech sounds are distinguished from one another by means of the place and manner in which they are articulated by the different organs of speech.

Speech Organs. The definition of speech organs in Dictionary.com (2016) says that they are “any part of the body [. . .] that participates, actively or passively, voluntarily or involuntarily, in the production of the sounds of speech.” Their location is simple; the vocal tract, containing the “buccal, oral, nasal, and pharyngeal cavities” (Dictionary.com, 2016), and neck comprise the organs used in the production of speech.

As claimed by Roach (2009), the vocal tract comprises the following speech organs: the pharynx, the soft palate, the hard palate, the alveolar ridge, the tongue, the teeth, and the lips (p. 8-9). The same author describes them starting from the lower parts. First comes the pharynx, a tube of seven to eight centimeters long that



is divided in two, one part goes into the oral cavity, and the other into the nasal cavity. The soft palate, also called velum, is at the back of the mouth; it allows the air to go through the nasal or the buccal cavities, and, during speech, it rises so air does not escape through the nose. Next, there is the hard palate or roof of the mouth; it has a tender and curved surface. At its edge, there comes the alveolar ridge that consists of a crest between the upper teeth and the hard palate. Then the tongue, which moves into different positions, touches many places in the mouth, and folds into different shapes. The tongue also comes in contact with the upper and lower teeth for the production of certain sounds. Finally, in the outer part of the mouth, there are the lips which can take different shapes and move in various directions. They can also be pressed together or touch the teeth.

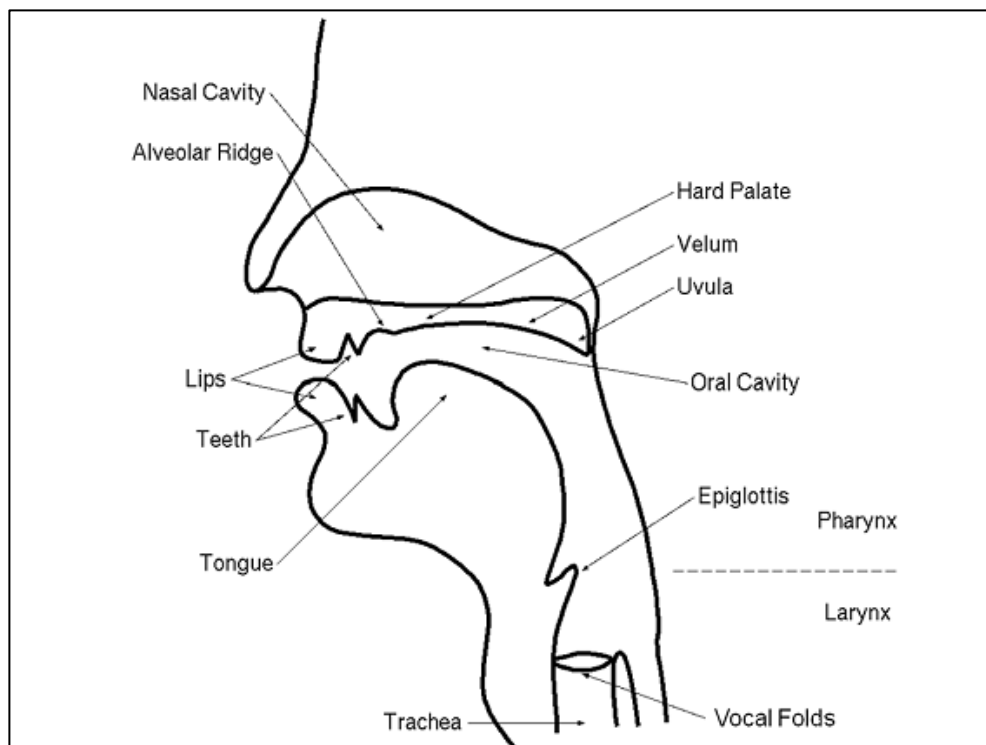


Figure 1. The Organs of Speech. This figure illustrates the location of the speech organs. (Kent and Read, 2001).

In addition, Roach (2009) explains that the nose and nasal cavity as well as the jaws are involved in speech because there exist some nasal sounds and the lower jaw moves when speech is produced (p. 10). Moreover, Mohalawi (n.d.) explains that the organs of speech do not serve only the purpose of speaking but others like breathing, chewing, and swallowing.

Besides from the speech organs, in a person's throat there exist some muscles that also make speech possible. They are called vocal cords. The vocal cords consist of elastic membranes located in the throat that produce noise when vibrating together (Youman 2014, p. 14). Youman (2014) explains that these muscles can



come together and close the air duct; thus, when the air expelled from the lungs passes through the closed vocal cords a vibrating noise is produced; on the contrary, when the air passes freely through the open membranes, no noise is made (p. 14-15).

Articulators and Points of Articulation. The above-mentioned organs of speech do not share the same function; they can either be articulators or points of articulation. According to Youman (2014), an articulator consists of a speech organ that moves in order to produce different sounds, while a point of articulation, an unmovable organ, is the place the articulator touches during the production of speech (p. 16).

In English, the lower lip and the tongue act as articulators (Youman, 2014, p. 16). The former touches other organs of speech to produce different sounds; for instance, if pressed together with the upper lip, the sounds of /b/ and /p/ are created, or it touches the upper teeth for the production of /t/ and /d/ (Youman, 2014, p. 21). On the other hand, the tongue is the major speech organ, the most movable and foldable one. Mohawali (n.d.) divides it into five sections, according to the parts that are involved in utterance production. The author explains that the tongue comprises (a) the apex or tip of the tongue, (b) the front that is the part between the tip and the middle of the tongue, (c) the center, (d) the dorsum or back of the tongue, and (e) the root, which is the furthest part of the organ (p. 1). The same source also mentions that the apex can touch the alveolar ridge to produce /t/, can curve back to make /d/, or can go



between the teeth to produce /t/ and /d/. Additionally, the dorsum touches or approaches the velum in /k/ or /g/ production and the front section approaches the palate to make /tʃ/ (p. 1).

Moreover, Youman (2014) states that the five points of articulation of the English language include the alveolar ridge, the upper lip, the upper teeth, the palate, and the velum (p. 16) into which the two articulators position or approach in order to make speech sounds.

Voiced and Voiceless Sounds. Sounds of speech can vary depending if they are produced with closed or open vocal cords. The resonance of the vibrating vocal cords that occurs when air passes through closed cords makes speech sounds voiced; and the opposite is true, the speech sounds produced without this resonance are voiceless (Youman, 2014, p. 20). For example, /t/ stands as a voiced sound because the vocal cords vibrate when it is produced while the cords do not vibrate in the /tʃ/ sound.

Place of Articulation. The different places of articulation represent the location unto which the articulators place or approach and the points of articulation that are involved when producing a speech sound (Youman, 2014, p. 21).

As stated by Gasser (2006), only two places of articulation involve the lips as articulators:



- Bilabial: the two lips are brought together and make contact. This position happens with /p/, i.e. *pet*, and /b/, i.e., *Bob*.
- Labiodental: the lower lip and the upper teeth make contact when producing a sound. This can be seen in the pronunciation of /v/, i.e., *vase*, and /f/, i.e., *focus*.

With the tongue as articulator involving any of its parts, Youman (2014) explains the other six places of articulation (p. 21-23):

- Dental: when the front of the tongue positions between the teeth or against the upper teeth. The two sounds resulting from this place of articulation are the ones in *thing* and *those*.
- Alveolar: The front of the tongue touches or approaches the alveolar ridge. The consonant sounds /d/, /t/, /s/, and /z/ are produced in this place of articulation.
- Alveopalatal: The front of the tongue touches the space between the palate and the alveolar ridge. The last sound in *garage* /ʃ/ and the first in the word *children* /tʃ/ are alveopalatal placed consonants.
- Palatal: The front of the tongue approaches the palate producing the sounds heard in the words *shoe* /ʃ/ and *measure* /ʒ/.
- Velar: The back of the tongue touches the velum, like in /k/, i.e., *cake*, and /g/, i.e., *goat*.
- Glottal: This place of articulation creates a sound in the throat, “with enough friction between the vocal cords to produce a barely audible



sound” (p. 23). The back of the tongue touches the furthest part of the mouth. */h/* is produced by this manner, as in *happy*.

As can be seen, the classification of the various sounds of speech of the English language result from the places of articulation in which they are produced, although they can be further classified by the noise or absence of noise the vocal cords make during their production.

Manner of Articulation: Stops, Fricatives, and Affricates. A further classification of consonant sounds is made by the degree of obstruction of the air as it passes through the larynx and the mouth whenever they are produced (Youman, 2014, p. 27). This is referred to as ‘manner of articulation’ and it includes three possible levels in the amount of air obstruction: stop, fricative, and affricate.

As stated in Youman (2014), six stops exist in the English language: the sounds */p/ /t/ /k/ /b/ /d/ /g/* and */ŋ/*. The same author explains that a stop sound occurs when there is complete but brief obstruction of the airflow; the lips, teeth, and/or tongue block the air momentarily (Battenburg and Swamson, 2000). On the contrary, a fricative sound results from partial obstruction of the airflow, causing a hissing sound that can be prolonged (Youman, 2014, p. 27). Therefore, the nine English sounds that belong to this category are the ones of the consonants */f/ /v/ /s/ /z/ /ʃ/ /ʒ/ /h/ /r/ /l/* and */ŋ/*. Finally, Battenburg and Swamson (2000) report that an affricate is a sound composed by a stop and a fricative uttered together. Consequently, Youman (2014) shows that the first sound in



the word *church* is an affricate made up by /tʃ/ and the last sound in *garage* comes from the combination of /dʒ/, resulting in the two affricate sounds of English: /tʃ/ and /dʒ/.

Sibilants. Aside from the place and manner of articulation, some consonant sounds can be grouped under two other categories because of particular sound features. Sibilants, the first group, involve the characteristic of a hissing sound (Youman, 2014, p. 29); in its production, the air escapes through a narrow passage between the tongue and roof of the mouth creating turbulence (FangFang Li, 2008, p. 10). Youman (2014) explains that English has six sibilant sounds: /s/ /z/ /ʃ/ /ʒ/ /tʃ/ /dʒ/. The first four are fricatives while the last two are affricates (29). FangFang Li (2008) explains that as affricates are created with the sibilants /s/ and /z/, they constitute sibilant sounds as well (p. 10).

Fluency. The American Heritage Dictionary (2012) defines this term as “having facility in the use of a language” (p. 326). Thornbury (2005) also explains some features that characterize fluency. Speed of speech and the number of syllables uttered between pauses determine fluency in a user of the language (p. 6). Pausing is important as well; it should occur at meaningful transition points, as the intersection of clauses or after a meaningful group of words; the frequency of the pauses, related to the former, and the filling of pauses with vague expressions and repetition (p. 7).



Segmental and Suprasegmental Features. In terms of Hussain and Sajid (2015), segmental is “any discrete unit that can be identified, either physically or auditorily, in the stream of speech” (p. 1). As Smolcic (n.d.) explains, segmentals are the individual speech sounds, the vowel and consonant sounds that constitute a language.

On the other hand, as explained by Hussain and Sajid (2015), suprasegmental refers to “a vocal effect, which extends over more than one sound segment in an utterance” (p. 1). They are specific features that go beyond the segmental level, extending over groups of segmentals (p. 1-2). That is, how the voice is used in speech beyond the pronunciation of single sounds (Smolcic, n.d.). Suprasegmental features of a language include stress, length, tone, and intonation.

Stress refers to “the relative force with which a word or sound is spoken” (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2012). Youman (2003) depicts that stress has the functions of giving emphasis to a particular word, e.g., ‘I want *you* to do it;’ of contrasting words or ideas, e.g., ‘One *or* the other;’ and of indicating grammatical category of words, e.g., ‘*an address*’ [noun] / ‘*to address* someone’ [verb] (p. 70).

As Kamalani (1996) explains, length refers to “the amount of time it takes to produce a sound” (par. 5). According to Youman (2003), English vowels can always be prolonged; depending on their surroundings, vowel sounds can be lengthened and this contributes to the rhythm of the language (p. 73).



Tone refers to “a variation in the pitch of the voice while speaking” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2016); *pitch* being the highness and lowness of a speech sound (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2012) that depends on the tension or vibration of the vocal cords (Youman, 2003, p. 74). As explained by Youman (2003), tones in speech convey different linguistic and non-linguistic information; for instance, changing the meaning of words and their grammatical category, marking boundaries in syntactic units and utterances, and conveying a particular meaning from the speaker (p. 74-75).

Finally, as stated by Youman (2003), intonation “is the pattern of pitch changes that occur” in an utterance (p.75). These pitch patterns that extend over a group of words or sentences are called *tone groups* and they convey differences in meaning (p. 75).

Allophone. As explained by Youman (2003), allophones refer to the variations on the pronunciation of phonemes (p. 15). These variations happen because of the immediate phonetic environment of a phoneme; the other sounds that occur around a particular phoneme influence it, creating, sometimes, different pronunciations or allophones (Youman, 2003, p. 16). For example, the -s of plural nouns has two allophones: /s/ when the word ends in a voiceless sound, i.e., *pets*, and /z/ when it happens after a voiced sound, i.e., *pens*.



Morpheme. As for the linguistic and grammatical part of the English language, the morpheme is its basic unit of meaning. A morpheme is “a linguistic unit that has meaning and cannot be divided into smaller meaningful parts” (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2012). The Rochester Institute of Technology (2014) lists the main features of a morpheme; for instance, it is a word or part of a word that has meaning by itself; it cannot be separated into smaller parts without changing its signification or leaving a fragment with no meaning, and it has almost the same meaning in any environment.

Packer (2001) states, as further characteristics of morphemes, that they can vary in length because they may have one, two, or more syllables and still constitute a single morpheme (p. 2), i.e., *albatross* and *I*; and also, different morphemes can be spelled and/or pronounced in the same manner (p. 2); for example, the morpheme *-er* in the word *gardener* means “the one who” while in the word “smaller” means “to a greater degree than.”

Moreover, linguists have established some categories under which to classify morphemes. Packer (2001) explains that the first classification settles the difference between morphemes that have meaning with sense, called lexical morphemes, and the ones that establish a relationship between morphemes, named grammatical (p. 3). The former usually constitute nouns, verbs, and adjectives, i.e., *cat*, *go*, *big*; and the latter are prepositions, articles, and conjunctions, i.e., *at*, *the*, *and*. In addition, this classification can be narrowed by a further difference within the lexical and



grammatical morphemes. Under each category, morphemes can be free or bound units. Free morphemes can stand alone and have complete meaning while the bound ones do not have meaning when standing isolated; they are parts of words and always occur in combinations (Rochester Institute of Technology, 2014). For example, in lexical morphemes, *see* is a free morpheme and *vert* in the word *convert* represents a bound morpheme; for the part of grammatical morphemes, *of* is free yet *-s* in *sees* is bound because it only has meaning if attached to the word *see*, denoting the third person singular of the verb.

In relation to this, morphemes and their pronunciation can change according to their surrounding environment.

Allomorph. Having explained the meanings of a morpheme, it is important to mention that it can take variations depending on context. Allomorphs are the different manifestations of a morpheme; for instance, two or more phonetically representations of a single morpheme (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2016). For example, the three distinct sounds of the noun's plural morpheme *-s*, ^{/s/} as in *cats*, ^{/tʃ/} as in *dogs*, and ^{/əz/} as in *churches*.

Vowel. Vowels are speech sounds that involve obstruction of the flow of air when it passes through the larynx to the mouth and out (Roach, 2009, p. 10). In addition, Youman (2014) presents the main characteristics that make vowels unique; for instance, vowels form the core of a syllable because consonants are attached to or around them; they can stand alone as words, i.e., the pronoun *I*; their sound can



always be prolonged, as in the word *bed*; and they constitute voiced sounds, produced with closed vocal cords (p. 33).

The word *vowel* comes from the Latin *vocalis*: sounding (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2012), meaning that vowels always constitute voiced sounds because they involve the vocal cords tightening and vibrating in some manner. The production of vowels does not involve points and places of articulation but only concern the main articulator, which is the tongue (Youman, 2014, p. 33). The tongue does not place or touch any point of articulation, but, as Roach (2009) states, the shape and position of the tongue differentiates the distinct vowels, their sounds, and establish their classification (p. 11).

Furthermore, according to Youman (2014), in the American English language exists twelve vowel sounds, each represented by a symbol in the phonetic alphabet of the American Heritage dictionary. They are *long e* /eɪ/, *short i* /ɪ/, *long a* /ɑ:/, *short e* /e/, *sheep a* /i:/, *unstressed schwa* /ə/, *stressed schwa* /ɜ:/, *Spanish a* /a:/, *long u* /u:/, *short u* /ʊ/, *long o* /o:/, *aw of law* /ɔ:/. The phonetic symbols do not represent the vowel characters but their sounds, being they represented or not by the respective characters in the written language. Gasser (2006) also states that the English vowel system is far more complicated than the Spanish one for the reasons that its sounds differ greatly among dialects and it is more likely to change over time; and Youman (2014) completes the thought by saying that each vowel letter of the alphabet does not have one corresponding speech sound, but can have more than one (p. 2).



As mentioned before, vowel sounds can be prolonged in particular contexts. Vowel lengthening refers to stretching the sound of a vowel, and it happens whenever a vowel occurs before a voiced sound, e.g., in the word *bag* the *sheep a* sound is lengthened because it precedes a voiced consonant, and in word final position, when a vowel sound ends a word, e.g., *pay* (Youman, 2003, p. 22). In many instances, the length of a vowel distinguishes a word from a similar one.

On the other hand, vowel sounds can also be reduced or weakened. Payne (2007) declares that the sounds of vowels are reduced in unstressed syllables; therefore, changing into unstressed schwa. This happens because the syllable, and specially its vowel, is weakly articulated (Gasser, 2006); for example, the word *letter* has its last syllable unstressed and its pronunciation involves unstressed schwa rather than the full quality of the vowel.

Diphthongization. The American Heritage dictionary (2012) defines diphthong as complex vocalic sounds that start with one vowel utterance and then change to another (p. 241). The word diphthong comes from the Greek *díphthongos* [*di* two + *phthóngos* sound], meaning two sounds (Dictionary.com, 2016). Youman (2014) also explains that diphthongs are complex sounds because during their production the tongue moves from one position into another in height or advancement, like in complex vowels, although, in diphthongs the tongue's location changes more drastically for the reason that it moves from the position of one full vowel to



articulating another (p. 52). One main feature is that, in diphthongs, the tongue moves with great speed from two vowel positions, making the utterance one compact sound.

Subsequently, having analyzed the features of vowels and their sounds, they must be classified in order to comprehend them better.

2.2. Classification of Vowels

Since vowels cannot be classified by place of articulation because they are not produced in any, linguists have developed other labels under which to classify the twelve English vowel sounds. Most authors classify vowels according to their degree of complexity, tongue position and tenseness while others also classify them by lip position.

Starting with tongue position, within the mouth this organ can advance forward and backward or go up and down. Payne (2007) explains that there are nine possible positions the tongue can move to, three in height and three in advancement. The same author describes the three levels of tongue height: (a) high, a position near the top or roof of the mouth, (b) mid, the middle area, and (c) low, the lowest part of the mouth (p. 3). In addition, the levels of advancement consist of (a) front, near the anterior part of the mouth, (b) center, between the front and the



velum, and (c) back, near the velum (Payne, 2007, p. 3). As explained by Youman (2014), in the high front position the vowel sounds of *long e* /e/ and *short i* /i/ are produced, as in *sheep* and *ship*, respectively; in the mid front position the vowel sounds of *long a* /a/ and *short e* /e/, e.g., *age* and *edge*; and in the low front position only the vowel sound of *sheep a* /ɪ/ is produced, e.g., *fat*. Next, no high center vowel sound exists in American English; the mid center position is a relaxed one, for the reason stressed and unstressed *schwa*, /ə/ and /ɑ/, are produced, as in *cut* and *above*; low center has the production of the vowel sound called *Spanish a* /a/, e.g., *car*. Finally, the high back position of the tongue creates *long u* /u/ and *short u* /ʊ/, e.g., *pool* and *pull* respectively; mid back position has the sound of *long o* /o/, e.g., *go*; and low back produces *aw of law* /ɔ/, e.g., *call*.

Table 1

Youman’s (2014) Chart for Tongue Position in Vowel Production

	Front	Central	Back
High	e i		ʊ u
Mid	ɛ ɜ	ɚ ɻ	ɔ
Low	ə	ɑ	ɔ

Furthermore, in order to recognize among the vowels produced in the same tongue position, they are classified under simple or complex. As stated in Youman (2014), the main feature regarding simple vowels consists in the tongue remaining in



the same position during their production while with complex vowels it is the other way around, “the tongue moves during the production of the sound” (p. 47). Simple vowels tend to be shorter; therefore, their name of “short vowels,” and they constitute pure sounds because the position of the tongue does not change; on the contrary, complex or long vowels involve movement of the tongue during their creation and its root pushing forward (Gasser, 2006). Correspondingly, Youman (2014) mentions that *short i*, *short e*, *sheep a*, *Spanish a*, *short u*, *aw of law*, *stressed* and *unstressed schwa* form the group of simple vowels, whereas *long e*, *long a*, *long u*, *long o* are complex vowels (p. 46-47).

The third classification, tongue tenseness, refers to how flexed or relaxed the tongue muscles are during vowel production (Payne, 2007, p. 4). The two possible dimensions in the scale, clarified by Payne (2007), consist of (a) tense vowels, that are produced with strong rigidity of the tongue and an advanced root or base position, and (b) lax vowels, which involve little rigidity of the tongue muscles and a retracted root. In addition, the first dimension concerns complex vowels while the second one implicates simple vowels.

Finally, lip position also distinguishes the different vowel sounds of the English language. Payne (2007) suggests that the lips can take three shapes during the pronunciation of vowels; first, they can be rounded, the corners of the lips get closer and the lips pushed forward (Roach, 2009), as in all vowels produced in the back position of tongue advancement, i.e., the *long o* sound of *go*; second, lips can be



spread or stretched out as in high front vowels, i.e., the *long e* sound of *sheep*; and neutral position, in which lips are placed in their natural position; for instance, low vowels are usually neutral, i.e., *Spanish a* in *car*.

The four mentioned labels help linguists classify, recognize, and organize the twelve vowel sounds of English; nevertheless, English has three vocalic sounds that go under the category of diphthongs. Youman (2014) explains the three diphthongs or combinations of vowel sounds of English: $/ɪə/$, as in *line*, $/eɪ/$ as in *boy*, and $/aʊ/$ as in *now*. The first one is the combination of *Spanish a* with *long e*, $/aɪ/$, so the tongue starts the utterance in low center position and then moves to high front position. The second one originates in low back position and changes to high front, from a *w* of *law* to *long e*, $/oʊ/$. Finally, $/aʊ/$ combines the low center sound of *Spanish a* and then the high back position of *long u*, $/aʊ/$.

2.3. Sounds of the *-ed* suffix in verbs and adjectives and the plural of nouns

As mentioned above, morphemes are classified into lexical, grammatical, bound, and free units. Besides, grammatical bound morphemes, known as *affixes*, are divided into *derivational* or *inflectional* affixes (Packer, 2001, p. 4). An affix is a bound morpheme that attaches itself to a root or free morpheme before or after it (Rochester Institute of Technology, 2014); the ones that occur in front of the root are called *prefixes*, while the ones that go after are *suffixes*.



Derivational affixes are either suffixes or prefixes and there exist an enormous number of them in the English language (Packer, 2001, p. 4). Additionally, the Rochester Institute of Technology (2014) explains that derivational affixes alter the meaning or the grammatical category of words; for instance, the prefix *un-* in the word *unhappy*, changes the meaning of 'happy' to 'not happy,' and the suffix *-ly* in the word *manly* changes the grammatical category of 'man' from noun to adjective. Some of the derivational prefixes of English are: *un-*, *dis-*, *a-*, and *pre-*, as in *unhealthy*, *disconnect*, *atypical*, and *prehistoric* respectively; and some derivational suffixes: *-ly*, *-ize*, *-ful*, *-ism*, *-ness*, like in *friendly*, *socialize*, *useful*, *feminism*, and *kindness*.

Additionally, inflectional affixes consist of suffixes exclusively. Unlike derivational morphemes, they do not change the syntactic categories or meaning of words but rather indicate grammatical relationships between them (Burbano, 2014, p. 33-34). The Rochester Institute of Technology (2014) states that the number of inflectional suffixes in English is limited, consisting of only eight, each one of them serving a different and specific grammatical function: (a) *-s* denoting the plural of nouns, (b) *'s* expressing possession in nouns, (c) *-s* showing the present tense of verbs in the third person singular, (d) *-ing* denoting the present participle or gerund, (e) *-ed* showing verb past tense, (f) *-en* conveying past participle of verbs, (g) *-er* expressing the comparative form of adjectives, and (h) *-est* showing the superlative form of adjectives.



The number of inflectional suffixes of English was not always so reduced. The English language, as we know it today, is very different from the language that started in England in the fifth century A.D. English has undergone many changes during its history, making it possible for linguists to distinguish three periods, according to their characteristics and developments: Old English, from 450 to 1150 A.D.; Middle English, from 1150 to 1500 A.D.; and Modern English, from 1500 until today (p. 50). One of the most important and noticeable features of language change is the loss of inflections. The same authors explain that Old English was a very inflected language, denoting a grammatical relation between words by means of inflections, which is called a *synthetic language* while Modern English appears to be an *analytic language*, which means that it relies on prepositions and word order to show grammatical relations (p. 54).

One of the categories that shows loss of inflections throughout time is the noun. During the Middle English period, the inflections denoting the plural of nouns had been so simplified as to establish a general formula, *-s*, to show almost all plural forms (Baugh and Cable, 1997, p. 156). On the other hand, Baugh and Cable (1997) explain that Old English verbs suffered massive changes as well; they lost almost all personal endings and the distinctions between the singular and the plural (p. 10). In addition, the authors state that most verbs changed their strong conjugation, varied forms of the past and past participle, to weak forms characterized by a consistent pattern (p. 159). Consequently, most Modern English verbs belong to the weak or regular group, showing the past and past participle forms by adding the *-ed* suffix.



Another main feature about the inflectional suffixes for the plural of nouns and the past tense of regular verbs is that they are determined by the rules of *coarticulation*. In the words of Ohala (1993), coarticulation refers to “the variation in the phonetic manifestation of a given sound due to its taking on some of the features of nearby sounds” (p. 156). In addition, Youman (2003) claims that this interaction among phonemes can occur in anticipation of a sound, named *anticipatory coarticulation*, or it can happen because of a preceding sound (p. 6-8). The latter is called *perseverative coarticulation*, which means that the features of a sound persevere or stretch onto its following immediate sound, thus changing it (Youman, 2003, p. 8). This phenomenon is easily recognized in the pronunciation of plural nouns that take an –s and in the past form of regular verbs.

Aside from some nouns that are the exception to the rule and have different plural forms, the general rule for making the plural of nouns determines the addition of the morpheme –s at the end of a word. Although one form is expressed in the written language, in speaking, the plural suffix has three sounds or pronunciations represented phonetically as /s/, /z/, and /əz/, meaning that the plural morpheme has three phonologically conditioned allomorphs (Burbano, 2014, p. 38). Because of perseverative coarticulation, the production of this morpheme depends on the sound preceding it, that is, the final sound of the noun. Consequently, Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (1996) explain that when a noun ends in a sibilant sound, the phonetic representation of the inflectional suffix becomes /əz/, i.e., *dresses* /drɛsəz/, *buses*,



kisses; when a noun ends in a voiced non-sibilant sound, the plural –s is produced as /z/, i.e., *words, dreams, bags*; and if a noun finishes in a voiceless non-sibilant sound, the plural morphemes is pronounced as /s/, i.e., *hats, books, pants* (p. 248). This rule also applies to the pronunciation of –s in the third person singular of verbs.

A similar phenomenon happens in the pronunciation of the inflectional suffix for the simple past and past participle forms of weak verbs. As stated by Marslen-Wilson and Tyler (1998), the majority of English verbs, about ten thousand, are regular since they form their past tenses by adding the inflectional suffix –ed to the, most of the time, unchanged verb stem; in contrast, only about a hundred and sixty verbs have irregular past tense forms, which are “idiosyncratic and phonologically unpredictable” (p. 428). On the other hand, Taatgen and Anderson (2002) claim that in spite of English regular verbs having a high *type-frequency*, numerically greater, they have a low *token-frequency*, meaning that they do not occur very often in spoken or written language (p. 125).

As mentioned above, despite English regular verbs forming their past and past participle forms in a predictable way, by adding –ed, it does not represent their different pronunciations. According to Youman (2014), the –ed morpheme has three allomorphs that are produced in the following instances: /s/ is pronounced when the verb stem ends in a voiceless sound other than *t*, e.g., *talk**ed**, walk**ed**, finish**ed**, hop**ed***; /z/ when the verb ends in a voiced sound other than *d*, e.g., *clean**ed**, play**ed**, liv**ed**, achiev**ed***; and, /ɪd/ when the verb ends in *t* or *d*, e.g., *need**ed**, want**ed**, end**ed***,



decided (p. 55-56). As can be seen, this corresponds to the phenomenon of coarticulation.

2.4. English-Spanish Contrastive Analysis

Baugh and Cable (1997) state that “the history of a language is intimately bound up to the history of the people who speak it” (p. 1). English and Spanish are languages that come from different paths throughout history, although it can be said that they share many similarities.

English comes from the *Germanic* family of languages; it specifically belongs to a subgroup called West Germanic. The West Germanic family is divided into two branches: High and Low German (Baugh and Cable, 1997, p. 30). Old English, the antecessor of Modern English, comes from the Low German subdivision, which differentiates itself from the other branch by a change in the pronunciation of the consonants *p*, *t*, *k*, and *d* (p. 31).

According to Baugh and Cable (1997), the English language arrived to England by the middle of the fifth century A.D. (p. 45, 49). The Germanic tribes from the areas of Denmark and the Low Countries, the Jutes, the Angles, and the Saxons, brought their Germanic dialects with them by the time they invaded the island from 449 onwards (p. 45). Therefore, Cable and Baugh (1997) state that “the English language of today is the language that has resulted from the history of the dialects



spoken by the Germanic tribes who came to England” (p. 49). The inhabitants of the island at that time were the Celts, who had lived under Roman control for more than three hundred years, and they called their new conquerors *Saxons*, indistinctly of the tribe they belonged to, and later *Anglia*, which prevailed into the names *Angles*, *Englisc*, and *Englaland* (p. 44, 49).

As mentioned above, three periods of the English language can be distinguished from the moment it started in England up until modern times. One of the major influences that changed the language’s vocabulary was Latin and some of its derived languages, especially French. Cable and Baugh (1997) outline that the greatest influence of the Latin vocabulary on the English language happened with the conversion of the island to Christianity, which occurred in the seventh century (p. 80-82). From that time, several borrowed words were introduced into the language, words that had to do with religion, of course, but also words about domestic life, education and learning, and plants (p. 84). Later, by the time the French-speaking Normans conquered England in 1066, a plethora of new vocabulary came into the language as well (p. 105). French, a Latin-derived language, coexisted side by side with English for a long time, but then, when the latter predominated upon the Normans’ language, hundreds of French words entered English (Youman, 2004, p. 112). Along with all the borrowed words, the Great Vowel Shift and neologisms entering the language by the hundreds shaped English to the form it has today. This history of Latin-derived loan words explains why English and Spanish share some similarities.



On the other hand, Spanish is a Romance language, for the reason that it developed from Latin, the language of the Roman Empire. As stated in Cable and Baugh (1997), Spanish belongs to the *Italic* family of languages; it comes from a branch named Latin, which was the language of Latium, now central-western Italy, and specifically its capital city, Rome (p. 26). The same authors explain that as the Roman Empire expanded throughout many regions of Europe and Africa, its language expanded as well (p. 26). With the decay of the Roman Empire after the fourteenth century (Youman, 2008, p. 12), the Latin language remained to be used in the different conquered regions, although they evolved into distinct dialects and languages. Cable and Baugh (1997) state that the Romance languages, namely French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian, developed from Vulgar Latin, which was the language spoken by the masses. In the Iberian Peninsula Latin developed into Spanish and Portuguese, which resemble each other immensely, and yet have significant differences in vocabulary and pronunciation (p. 26-27).

This language called Vulgar Latin developed into distinct languages for two main reasons. Cable and Baugh (1997) explain the first reason as follows:

Vulgar Latin, like all languages, was constantly changing, and because the Roman provinces were established at different times and the language carried into them would be more or less the language then spoken in the streets of Rome, there would be initial differences in the Vulgar Latin of the different colonies (p. 28).



The same authors explain that the original languages spoken in the Roman provinces before the conquest would have influenced on the adopted Latin (p. 28). Therefore, several languages flourished from the Roman's language, each one with unique features.

As mentioned above, the Latin-derived side of English results on it having about thirty percent of its vocabulary being cognates with Spanish (Lapo, 2008, p. 2). Cognates, as Lapo (2008) explains, are “words that have similar meaning, spelling and pronunciation in two languages” (p. 3). Youman (2004) completes the meaning of cognates by saying that they consist of words from different languages that are related “by being derived from the same root” (p. 31). For example, the words *difícil-difficult*, *confusión-confusion*, and *sociedad-society* are Spanish-English cognates. Moreover, Lapo (2008) shows that there exist many cognates in Spanish and English that are unreliable for the reason that some of them have an extra different meaning in only one of the languages; for instance, the word *historia* in Spanish means *history* of course but also *a story* or *a tale*. There can also be the case of cognates having a different connotation; for example, the word *inferior* in English has the same meaning as in Spanish yet with a negative association (p. 3). In addition, the two mentioned languages share false cognates, which are spelled and sound similar but are not actual cognates, i.e., *carpet-carpeta* (folder), *library-librería* (book store), *reunion-reunión* (meeting), and *sensible-sensible* (sensitive), among others.



As long as the focus of this research is on pronunciation, a comparison between the sounds and pronunciation of Spanish and English should be made. To begin with, a difference must be established between the total number of sounds in both languages. As stated by Youman (2014), there exist thirty-nine sounds in the English language (p. 5), consisting of twelve vowel sounds, three diphthongs, and twenty-four consonant sounds; while Spanish possesses twenty-eight sounds, from which five are vowel sounds and twenty-three are consonant sounds (Real Academia Española, 2016). Besides, as said by Lapo (2008), the English sounds that Spanish does not possess consist of: vowel and consonant digraphs, which are combinations of two letters representing one sound, like *ea* in *read* and *ph* in *photo*; consonant clusters in initial, middle and final position, as in *wr* in *write* or *gh* in *enough*; endings without a vowel, like *-ts* in *adults*; and contractions, e.g., *I'd* (p. 6).

According to Smith and Swan (2001), the main differences between the sounds of English and Spanish rely on vowel sounds and sentence stress (p. 90). As mentioned in a previous section, the number of vowel sounds in Spanish differs greatly from that of English; therefore, some sounds of English do not exist in Spanish; for example, *stressed schwa* /ə/, making it difficult for Spanish speakers to pronounce words like *cut*. Nevertheless, there exist similar vowel sounds in the two languages; among them, the difference relies on the fact that English vowels have the feature of length to characterize them (Youman, 2003, p.22), which differentiates them from one another and also distinguishes similar words. All these can lead Spanish speakers to pronounce two or more English vowel sounds that are alike by



one common Spanish equivalent. As Smith and Swan (2001) explain, it can happen that in some cases “two English vowels share the ‘phonetic space’ occupied by one Spanish vowel” (91); for instance, English /e/ and /ɛ/ correspond to the Spanish phonetic space of the *i* vowel (p. 91). The same happens with Spanish vowel *a*, which is used by speakers of the language interchangeably for English sounds *sheep a* /ɛ/, *stressed schwa* /ə/, and its equivalent *Spanish a* /a/; also, Spanish *u* representing English *long* and *short u*, /u:/ (p. 91). In addition, Lapo (2008) mentions that Spanish vowels are always pronounced the same regardless of their position within a word, while English vowels pronunciation and length vary according to their place in words, specially in vowel pairings or combinations; for example, the combination ‘ou’ sounds different in the words *thou*, *thought*, and *tough* (p. 5-6). Also, as stated above, English vowel sounds are weakened in unstressed syllables, as the *u* in *suppose*, which do not happen in the Spanish language, where all vowels are fully pronounced every time they appear. According to Smith and Swan (2001), diphthongs are similar in English and Spanish, although in the latter the second element of the diphthong combination is pronounced with more emphasis than in English (p. 91-92).

As for the stress and rhythm of the languages, Smith and Swan (2001) claim that in Spanish all syllables are pronounced with the same length of time, except for occasional emphasis, which results in no greater distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables; in English, the pronunciation of stressed syllables involves pitch change in contrast with unstressed syllables that include a reduced vowel sound (p. 95). Moreover, in English, content words, like nouns, verbs, adjectives,



and adverbs are stressed, emphasizing them over grammatical words, like prepositions, articles, etc., which are unstressed (p. 95). This combination of stress and rhythm within English sentences indicates structure and meaning (p. 95). Additionally, the position of the stress within a word can change its grammatical category or part of speech; for example, the word *record* with initial stress is a noun, whereas the same word with final stress is a verb; the same happens with words like *object*, *progress*, and *address* (Marian, n.d.).

Another major difference consists in the relation between spelling and pronunciation. These two features in the Spanish language are closely related (Smith and Swan, 2001, p. 94), while in English the pronunciation does not represent the spelling of words and vice versa. In English, the way in which the language is written does not match how it is spoken or how each word is pronounced. This phenomenon arises because the spelling system was not original of the language (Knowles, 2014, p. 8). In the old days, Christian monks who spoke Latin were the first to write down the English language (Youman, 2008, p. 19). They, of course, used the Latin spelling system they knew to put England's language in paper (Youman, 2008, p. 20). These monks also undertook the task of teaching English people to read and write using the same spelling system for English as it was used for Latin. As time passed, English also adopted many writing and spelling conventions from French and other world languages (Knowles, 2014, p. 8). As a result, English spelling does not represent its pronunciation.



Regarding consonants, Smith and Swan (2001) claim that most English consonants have equivalents and near equivalents in Spanish; although, there exist some consonant sounds in the former that the latter does not present (p. 92). The letter *v* exists in Spanish yet its pronunciation does not differ from that of the letter *b*, while in English the mentioned consonant has a distinct and marked pronunciation, /v/, as in *vase* or *Victor*. Also, the sounds /s/ /z/ /v/ and /v/ are not present in the Spanish language (p. 92). The /v/ sound is equivalent to the sound of the letter *z* used by Spanish speakers from Spain. Furthermore, as Smith and Swan (2001) claim, initial and final consonant clusters are not very common in Spanish as they are in English, causing therefore trouble in their production (p. 93). Additionally, the same authors explain that the most common feature about consonant transfer is the devoicing of final strong consonants by Spanish speakers, as in using /v/ for /b/, /v/ for /β/, and not aspirating initial position plosives /t/ /k/ /p/ (p. 91-92).

Lapo (2008) explains that “phonemic and phonological differences between Spanish and English can result in interference from Spanish [speakers] during English acquisition” (p. 6). The author explains that interference or transfer refers to the cross-linguistic influence between a person’s native and target languages (p. 2). Interference can be positive or negative: positive transfer happens when knowledge of the native language facilitates the learning of the target language’s features because they resemble L1 (p. 2), whereas negative transfer is the opposite and it occurs when the learner uses native language features that do not exist or do not have equivalents in L2. Moreover, Goswami and Chien (2010) claim that second



language learners tend to transfer their entire native language sound system into the target language, which includes phonemes, allophones, syllabic patterns, and intonation (p. 31). This phenomenon visibly occurs in foreign language learners as well.

Related to the above, as Lim (n.d.) explains, it can happen that when learners are not able to recognize a specific sound in the target language, they tend to use a Spanish sound, the most similar yet different, in exchange for the one not present in L1. Therefore, learners substitute some English sounds that have no equivalent in Spanish by those more or less alike. It follows then that an accurate English pronunciation is a hard task for foreign learners to accomplish.

2.5. A Historical Overview of the Teaching and Practicing of Pronunciation throughout EFL Methodologies

Throughout history, various second or foreign language-teaching methodologies have emerged, although not all of them included or emphasized the teaching and practicing of pronunciation of the target language [TL]. This section will cover the main principles behind the methodologies that involve only L2 pronunciation teaching or practicing, and not all the principles regarding L2 instruction in the presented methods. They will be presented in chronological order.



To begin with, according to Richards and Rodgers (2002), a method or methodology refers to putting in practice a language learning theory and making choices “about the particular skills to be taught, the content to be taught, and the order in which the content will be presented” (p. 19). A teaching method is based on a particular approach, a set of beliefs about language learning, and it is applied with the help of techniques that are the classroom procedures (p. 19).

Language teaching has a long trajectory in history. Richards and Rodgers (2002) state that long ago, classical Latin was taught based on the language’s grammar and literature, which became a model for foreign language study during the eighteenth century when other languages started to be learned, and this methodology became standardized in the nineteenth century (p. 3-4). It consisted in presenting grammar rules of the target language by means of decontextualized examples and sentences for the learners to translate into their native language (p. 4). Also, as Richards and Rodgers (2002) explain, “speaking the foreign language was not the goal, and oral practice was limited to students reading aloud the sentences they had translated” (p. 4).

This approach was known as the Grammar-Translation Method and it was recognized and used all over Europe from the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. In spite of that, scholars and linguists who did not agree with the Grammar-Translation Method looked for and proposed other approaches for teaching a foreign language. In the late nineteenth century, the same scholars



proposed that the training of phonetics was necessary in second/foreign language teaching in order to assure accurate production of TL; the reason was that speech patterns were considered the basic elements of a language. This, along with the emergence of the discipline of applied linguistics, created a path for the development of naturalistic principles, which attempted to make the learning of a second or foreign language more like first language acquisition (p. 9-11).

The most recognized of the natural methods is the so-called Direct Method. According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), the main principle of this teaching method relies on the fact that meaning in the target language must be conveyed directly through demonstration and visual aids; hence, translation is not allowed, and therefore, L1 is not used at all in the classroom (p. 25). Richards and Rodgers (2002) claim that this method is based on a monolingual approach, for the reason that the target language is used actively in the class and the speaking skill is emphasized from the start (p. 11). Most importantly, the authors point out that the Direct Method pays systematic attention to pronunciation (p. 11). Correspondingly, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) state that a correct pronunciation is emphasized from the beginning of TL instruction because this method sees language as principally speech (p. 28-29). In addition, the method deals with learners' errors by prompting self-correction (p. 31), which allows them to think in the target language and look for accurate ways to perform it. The Direct Method functions well for giving students full immersion in TL.



In the mid-twentieth century, the Audio-Lingual Method emerged based on the Aural-Oral Approach and on the theories of structural linguistic and behaviorist psychology (Richards and Rodgers, 2002, p. 53). According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), this method sees language learning as a *process of habit formation* (p. 42); therefore, learning relies on overlearning the language's structural patterns with the help of drills. Also, foreign or second language learning is considered to follow the natural order of acquiring the native language, which is listening, speaking, reading, and finally writing. Speech or the speaking skill is seen as the very basic form of the language, for the reason that practicing spoken patterns of everyday speech is emphasized. Since pronunciation is part of the speaking skill, it must be taught right from the beginning, with the teacher as a model for imitation. Lastly, this method views the learners' native language as a source of habits that must be overcome in order to learn the target language, and the students' learning errors are perceived as issues that must be avoided (p. 42-46). The Audio-Lingual Method serves for teaching fixed patterns and accurate pronunciation, yet not for teaching how to communicate in real situations.

The next method to be explained is the Silent Way. The basic principle of this method is that "teaching should be subordinated to learning" (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 52). Richards and Rodgers (2002) explain that this involves the teacher to be silent during the class, which is meant for the learner to produce as much language as possible (p. 81). The main goal of the Silent Way method is for students to acquire a native-like fluency in the target language, by means of



emphasizing on the correct pronunciation and rhythm of the language (p. 83). It was considered that sounds are the basic features of a language, thus the importance of working on pronunciation from the beginning (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 63). In addition, Richards and Rodgers (2002) describe the Fidel Charts, one of the main materials of this method; they consist of charts that contain colored symbols of every vowel and consonant sound of the target language (p. 86). It must also be mentioned that, according to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), the Silent Way is a structural method, although it does not present grammar rules, thus students' errors are treated as a natural part of the learning process (p. 64). Finally, it must be considered that one main problem of this method consists in the inconsistency between gaining native-like pronunciation and its instruction when there is no actual TL modeling by the teacher.

During the second part of the nineteenth century, second language teaching was asking for a change in approach and methodology to its instruction, which led to a kind of teaching-learning process that focused on acquiring the skills to communicate in the target language. In consequence, according to Richards and Rodgers (2002), there appeared the Communicative Language Teaching method [CLT], which is now considered by linguists as a language teaching approach (p. 155). The main objective of this method is for students to obtain communicative competence in the target language, in other words, to “acquire both knowledge and ability for language use” within a speech community (p. 159). The method emphasized the functional side of a language as well as its structural part (p. 155),



because it was considered that acquiring linguistic aspects aided students to perform different types of functions in the target language and using language for different purposes led to communicative acts (p. 160). Since communicative competence is the goal of this method, only comprehensible, not native-like, pronunciation is required (p. 156). Moreover, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) state that students' errors are tolerated when learning with CLT, because they are seen as a natural outcome of the learning process (p. 120). The main problem of this method remains in the fact that it is too broad as in not having established techniques or concrete principles to follow, yet the presented principles can be interpreted and applied by each particular teacher (p. 115). Other current communicative based methods have similar principles and goals as those of CLT.

By the end of the nineteenth century, language-teaching methods were highly criticized because they narrowed the teaching situation with their established principles, techniques, and activities (Richards and Rodgers, 2002, p. 247). Additionally, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) claim that an eclectic practice could be adopted in language teaching, which means the combination of parts of different methods, for the reason that some value can always be perceived in each and every one of them, specially in particular contexts (p. 229). Teachers must determine their beliefs and analyze their particular teaching situations in order to establish their own eclectic method, with mixed principles and/or parts of a variety of methods (p. 229).



This research agrees with the eclectic method of language teaching because methodologies deal with the teaching of a target language as a whole, involving the four main skills and proposing techniques and activities to teach the language per se while the purpose of this paper is to teach only one feature of the speaking skill, trusting itself on different techniques that serve the best in each context. This research took advantage of the most relevant beliefs according to its purposes; therefore, it relied on the principles that referred to pronunciation in the target language, its teaching and practicing, and used them as starting points for the development of the pronunciation activities.

Table 2

Comparison of Pronunciation Principles from TL Teaching Methods

Method	Pronunciation Principles
Grammar-Translation Method	Oral practice of TL was regarded only to reading decontextualized sentences aloud.
Direct Method	Pronunciation of TL is emphasized and errors are immediately corrected.
Audio-Lingual Method	The teacher is the model for correct TL pronunciation and it is emphasized from the beginning.
Silent Way	Working on particular sounds of TL emphasizes its pronunciation and rhythm.
Communicative Language Teaching	Comprehensible pronunciation is the goal and errors are seen as part of the learning process.



2.6. Recent Articles and Studies concerning Teaching Pronunciation in EFL Environments

Non-native accent and incorrect pronunciation are regarded as recurrent themes of discussion in EFL research. However, it is nowadays accepted that a native-like pronunciation is not necessary for mastering the target language. As Derwing and Munro (2005) state, there is “no study documenting a link between pronunciation instruction and the elimination of a foreign accent” (p. 384). Also, Jenkins suggests that with the great number of non-native speakers of English, teaching pronunciation should be viewed in terms of English as a Lingua Franca concept, thus focusing on speaking for intelligibility among primarily non-native users of the language (as cited in Tergujeff, 2012, p. 600). Nowadays, it is considered that foreign learners’ pronunciation must improve in terms of intelligibility. Intelligibility, as explained by Derwing and Munro (2005), refers to “the extent to which the speaker’s intended utterance is actually understood by a listener” (p. 384). In spite of native-like accent not being the goal anymore, teaching pronunciation is still necessary. Therefore, having a foreign accent is not seen as a barrier if the overall pronunciation is accurate for the listener to understand the message.

In addition, Llisterri states that there exist three types of pronunciation problems; the first one consists of problems that obstruct communication; the second one makes the process of communication difficult but does not impede it; and the third regards the sounds that are not native-like but do not affect communication



(Morin, 2007, p. 349). Therefore, for the purpose of reaching intelligibility in foreign language learners, only the first two problems should be addressed.

Research on EFL pronunciation instruction/practice has been neglected over studies about other aspects and skills of the target language. Nevertheless, in recent years, more research has been done on this subject in order to provide information regarding the effects teaching pronunciation has over learners and their speaking skills. M. Hismanoglu and S. Hismanoglu (2013) concede that the issue about whether pronunciation instruction helps foreign language learners in their pronunciation skills has appeared recurrently in present studies, revealing “a significant relationship between formal instruction and L2 learners’ pronunciation improvement” (p. 508). Likewise, Derwing and Munro (2005) declare that some studies about target language pronunciation instruction show that this action can actually improve L2 learners’ oral production (p. 387). For instance, in a study carried out by Couper (2006), the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction was confirmed with high-intermediate English class participants from New Zealand, who were mostly from Asian origin. The results showed that pronunciation error rate decreased 14.4% in a post-instruction test (p. 46). Likewise, Lord found in his research an improvement in learners’ pronunciation after explicit Phonetics instruction (M. Hismanoglu and S. Hismanoglu, 2013, p. 508). Finally, M. Hismanoglu and S. Hismanoglu (2013) assert that since research has corroborated that pronunciation training improves learners’ performance, an entire class dedicated to pronunciation, Phonetics, and Phonology should be ensured in EFL environments (p. 508). In spite



of the truth this statement carries and the need to improve pronunciation teaching in Cuenca's EFL environments, it is not possible to devote an entire high school class to pronunciation teaching/practice for the reason that the National Curriculum guidelines for foreign language instruction involve and specify an exit profile and proficiency level of the four main skills; namely, listening, reading, speaking, and writing (Ministerio de Educación, 2014). Nonetheless, teacher trainees in University of Cuenca are entitled to take explicit pronunciation classes for several semesters in order to become EFL teachers.

As Marzá (2014) indicates, teaching pronunciation in EFL contexts is important due to its being "related with the development of students' communicative competence and thus to language proficiency and comprehensibility" (p. 262). Pourhosein (2012) emphasizes that limited target language pronunciation skills decrease learners' self-confidence and confidence in their abilities, which leads to a restriction in social interaction and a disruption in the EFL process (Marzá, 2014, p. 263). Aside from the unintelligibility poor pronunciation can provide, Morley (1994) adds that this issue can lead to a breakdown in communication, negative opinion of personal qualities, and negative stereotyping from native speakers (Morin, 2007, p. 345). In the same direction, several studies show that target language production deficiencies are related to perception, and perceptual training results in production improvement (Derwing and Munro, 2005, p. 388). In a study conducted by Fraser, mentioned by M. Hismanoglu and S. Hismanoglu (2013), the results showed that perceptual training in phonological differences influences production (p. 508).



Nevertheless, research findings have not yet been applied onto pedagogical material, making it difficult for teachers to take advantage of them. For example, Levis observes that “present intonational research is almost completely divorced from modern language teaching and is rarely reflected in teaching materials” (as cited in Derwing and Munro, 2005, p. 382). So far, EFL, as well as ESL teachers, have relied on intuition in order to address their learners’ pronunciation problems and difficulties (Derwing and Munro, 2005, p. 379). In spite of that, almost every language-teaching book has activities focused on pronunciation, like for example, the Cambridge *Super Minds* Series and the McMillan *Inspired* Series. Derwing and Munro (2005) indicate that the limited attention and research on pronunciation teaching has resulted into only a vague knowledge of how to treat pronunciation instruction inside the target language classroom (p. 383). Also, some research findings that are indeed available cannot be applied directly to the classroom because they were carried on under “strict laboratory conditions” (p. 382). In addition to not having much reliable information about the matter, a great number of teachers have never received formal instruction in pronunciation teaching (p. 389); therefore, they are not prepared to teach pronunciation. As Morin (2007) assures, there exists a lack of pronunciation training among foreign language teachers in general (p. 343), which is itself a problem.

Another important aspect mentioned in recent research, consists of focusing on suprasegmental features of the target language rather than on other aspects.



Tergujeff, (2012) explains that this comprises a broader approach to teach pronunciation, which sees it as part of the oral skill (p. 599). Tergujeff (2012), using Derwing et al.'s ideas, claims that “the suprasegmental approach is more effective in terms of comprehensibility, accentedness and fluency” (p. 605). However, segmental or narrow features are also taught alongside the broader ones because both features are considered important for pronunciation training (p. 600). Current research on foreign language pronunciation instruction agrees with Pennington’s view, which states that segmentals must be contextualized by suprasegmentals, and these by different discourse types (Morin, 2007, p. 349).

In addition, Marzá (2014) declares that pronunciation, concerning both segmental and suprasegmental features, affect communicability as much as correct grammar and vocabulary do. Sometimes, as Burns (2003) states, pronunciation, as well as intonation, is more important in terms of effective communication than other aspects of the target language (Marzá, 2014, p. 262), which can be noticed by the example of ‘tag questions.’ As explained by Murphy (2006), ‘tag questions’ carry different meanings depending on the intonation with which they are articulated; if the voice goes up, the speaker is asking a question in order to get unknown information, but if the voice goes down, the speaker wants the listener to agree with him (p. 98).

Also, Marzá (2014) assures that most Spanish-speaking countries overlook the teaching of pronunciation in EFL environments under a strong focus on grammar, reading, and writing skills (p. 263). She did research on how a group of first-year Spanish students of an English undergraduate degree perceived the



teaching of pronunciation and its features in formal instruction. The majority of the participants thought pronunciation was a key aspect for communication; almost all of them agreed that they would feel more confident if they had a better English pronunciation and most of them disagreed about their mother tongue affecting in a negative way the improvement of pronunciation (p. 265-266). Similarly, the results showed that all the participants agreed that English videos and audios can improve their pronunciation; a majority of them agreed that singing songs in English can help them with their pronunciation; also, most of them consented that imitation and repetition were important to learn pronunciation (p. 266). Additionally, vowel sounds were ranked as third among eight items they thought needed to be emphasized and worked on while consonant sounds were number six on the list (p. 268).

As a conclusion, it can be said that research has shown that there exists a correspondence between direct instruction and an improvement of the target language's pronunciation of students. Also, researchers have proved that a low level of pronunciation in the target language can lead to a low level of communicative competence because it affects intelligibility, learner's confidence when speaking the target language, and social interaction. More attention to pronunciation instruction should be therefore paid, especially as part of the oral and communicative skills of the TL. Finally, target language pronunciation must be taught including both segmental and suprasegmental aspects.



CHAPTER III

Methodologies

3.1. Research approach

To begin with, the two main and more frequently used research approaches are the quantitative and qualitative studies. On the one hand, Patten (2009) claims that a quantitative research is an objective approach that seeks to determine the causes or explanations of a certain phenomenon, and it is characterized by deductive reasoning, in which the researcher infers from theories or literature possible hypothesis to be tested and confirmed (p. 19). Also, the quantitative research uses data collection instruments that provide numerical or statistical results, which can be generalized to a group or population because they are tested on large and random sample groups (p. 19-20). On the other hand, qualitative research seeks to understand a specific phenomenon usually by describing and interpreting it (McGill, 2016). In addition, Patten (2009) explains that this type of approach is based on inductive reasoning, in which the researcher first collects the necessary data in order to build hypotheses, concepts, or theories; the qualitative approach uses data collection tools that are open-ended and suitable for interpretative analysis, and that may vary according to the background; also, this kind of research carefully selects a sample group that would serve its purposes (p. 19-20).

Besides, some studies require both a quantitative and a qualitative approach for a better development of the study, in order to satisfy the problem statement, data,



and results analysis (Bulsara, n.d., p. 6). A study that includes both types of approaches is said to be based on a *Mixed Methods Approach*. According to Terrell (2012), the mixed methods approach is a kind of study that “combine[s] the qualitative and quantitative approaches within different phases of the research process” (p. 256). As Bulsara (n.d.) explains, this type of method involves gathering, analyzing, and integrating data corresponding to qualitative and quantitative approaches in one single research (p. 6).

Accordingly, since the objectives of this research required the gathering of both qualitative and quantitative data, a mixed-method approach was used. Specifically, this research relied on qualitative data collection tools like bibliographical research, interview, and text analysis, while it also used survey, which is a quantitative tool.

Furthermore, Terrell (2012) claims that four factors shape a mixed-method approach: theoretical perspective, priority of strategy, sequence of data collection implementation, and the point of integrating the data (p. 260). Relating this particular research to what Terrell mentions, it comprises an implicit theoretical perspective because it is indirectly based on a theory; also, it gives priority to the qualitative approach because it involves more qualitative data collection techniques. The sequence for the collection of the data was a mixed one because it started with qualitative bibliographical research, meanwhile the quantitative survey was developed based on the bibliography and carried out in different schools; after that,



the qualitative study emerged again with the development of the interview and the interpretation of the eighth grade teaching guidelines. Finally, this research integrated all the data collected at the point of interpreting the results and proposing the pronunciation-practice activities.

3.2. Beneficiaries and Participants

The potential beneficiaries of this research and of the pronunciation-practice activities that were its result will be eighth grade students of public high schools, for the reason that the study provides information for the practice of English pronunciation and also the activities developed give means to learn and rehearse this speaking feature of the foreign language.

In addition, the participants of this research were eighth grade students at two public high schools of Cuenca; they completed the survey and provided information about pronunciation practice during EFL classes. On the one hand, fifty-eight students at public school *Escuela Básica Panamá* completed the survey questionnaire. They attended two classrooms in the afternoon shift: thirty students in classroom 'A' and twenty-eight in classroom 'C.' There were twenty-eight girls and thirty boys, with ages varying between twelve and fourteen years old. On the other hand, the participants of the morning shift at the public school *Escuela de Educación Básica Federico Proaño* were in two classrooms as well, 'A' and 'B,' with a total of



forty-nine students. From the total of students who completed the survey, nine were girls and forty were boys, aged between twelve and fourteen years old.

Likewise, the two teachers selected were interviewed about their teaching practice and they count as participants of this research as well. The first interviewed teacher taught all the school grades of the afternoon shift in the public institution *Escuela de Educación Básica Federico Proaño*. She was a thirty-five year-old teacher, with a degree of Educational Sciences with a major in English Language and Literature. At the moment of the interview, she had eight years of experience of teaching at primary and high school levels. Also, this teacher had just returned from the United States, after spending seven months there. She was in that country participating in an Ecuadorian government-sponsored training program called 'Go Teacher.' The second interviewed teacher was a female of thirty-two years old with a degree on Educational Sciences with a major in English Language and Literature. At the moment the interview took place, she had eight years of experience in teaching EFL, the first four years at elementary school level and the remaining four years at high school level.

3.3. Data Collection Techniques and Tools

The data collection techniques employed in this research included bibliographical research, survey, interview, and an analysis of the teaching



guidelines of English as a foreign language for the eighth grade of Ecuadorian education.

Bibliographical Research. This technique involves reviewing pertinent literature and research conducted by others (Patten, 2009, p. 29) in order to find and report relevant information for the topic being developed or investigated. The first phase of the research was related to carrying out bibliographical research by reading and analyzing pertinent bibliography in order to explain basic definitions and to report how to teach and improve English pronunciation in EFL students. This was accomplished by reading on books and web sites related to the topic.

In order to avoid plagiarism, bibliographical index cards were used to register all the bibliographical entries needed for this research. As explained by Lycoming College (2016), index cards consist of three by five centimeters cards in which all the information of a bibliographical source is written down: the author's name, the date, and the publisher, along with the place or web URL where it could be found.

Survey. A survey designed for eighth grade students was developed and completed. "A survey is a data gathering method that is utilized to collect, analyze and interpret the views of a group of people from a target population" (Mae, 2012). The designed survey relied on the principles of validity and reliability. Validity refers to the extent a measuring instrument "measures what it is designed to measure and accurately performs the function(s) it is purported to perform" (Patten, 2009, p. 61).



On the other hand, reliability refers to an instrument throwing consistent results every time it is applied (Patten, 2009, p. 73). Consequently, both principles are important for the efficiency of a measuring instrument.

The applied survey included eight closed-ended questions that looked for information about eighth grade students' pronunciation practice during English classes. The survey was developed in Spanish for the reason that EFL classes start in eighth grade in public education; therefore, students have a very basic understanding of the foreign language. The first section of the survey included an explanation of its objective, which was to get to know the opinion of eighth grade students regarding the practice of English pronunciation in their EFL classes. Also, it explained that the collected data would serve the purpose of developing an undergraduate monograph project and that the survey was anonymous. After that, clear instructions were given for completing the survey: according to what was true for them, students had to write an X in only one of the options for each question, except for questions seven and eight, where the selection of more than one option was required.

Below the instructions, there was a box for filling in the students' age and gender. Under that, the survey questions were listed. The first question looked for information about how students perceived English pronunciation, its level of difficulty. The second question asked how each student perceived their current English pronunciation level. Then, the third question inquired how important it was for the



students to have a good English pronunciation. The fourth question wanted to know who or what was the students' principal model or referent of English pronunciation, which could be chosen among the options of teacher, relative, music, TV programs, or video games. The fifth question asked if the EFL teacher corrected English pronunciation in class and how often it happened. The frequency of practice of pronunciation in their English classes was the data looked for by the sixth question, which had the following options: every class, one to two times a week, never, or another frequency that in case of being selected had to be specified. If students chose 'never' on the sixth question, they had to go straight to question eight and not answer number seven. On the contrary, if students selected an option other than 'never,' they had to answer question seven. This question referred to the methods of practicing English pronunciation in EFL classes, in which students could choose more than one option. Finally, question number eight inquired about ways or methods in which students would like to practice English pronunciation in their EFL classes; it also allowed the selection of more than one option. The survey ended with a thankful note. (The survey template is available on Appendix A.)

Description of the survey's process of application. The first set of surveys was applied in Cuenca's public institution called *Escuela Básica 'Panamá'*. On May 6th, 2016, the principal of the school received the petition form and gave his consent for the researcher to apply the survey in two eighth grade classrooms of the afternoon shift. In each classroom, the researcher explained to eighth grade students the purpose of the survey and told them that it was anonymous, that they had to



write only their age and choose their gender. Also, the researcher explained that students had to choose only one of the given options in each question, except for questions seven and eight. Additionally, extra care was put in explaining that if students selected 'never' in question number six, they did not have to answer question seven but rather go straight to question number eight. The survey questionnaires were handed in to the students and they filled them out. The researcher explained some doubts students had and after all the students had filled out the questionnaire, the researcher collected the forms, thanked them, and left.

The second set of surveys was completed by students of eighth grade of the morning shift of the public institution called *Escuela de Educación Básica 'Federico Proaño.'* On May 25th, 2016, the researcher arrived to this institution at eighth o'clock to present the required petition to the principal, who gave his consent and asked the researcher to be back at eleven-thirty in the morning in order to administer the surveys. Later the same day, the researcher proceeded to carry out the surveys in classrooms 'A' and 'B' of eighth EGB. Clear instructions were given to the students while showing them the questionnaire, making emphasis on choosing only one option in each question, that questions seven and eight allowed more than one option to be chosen, and that if students chose 'never' in question six, they had to skip number seven and go directly to question eight. Students completed the questionnaire without problems and after everyone had finished, the researcher collected the forms, thanked them, and left. The same procedure occurred in both classrooms.



Interview. An interview is a qualitative research method that involves “one person asking another person questions on a particular topic or issue, and the other responding” (Edwards and Holland, 2013, p. 1). This means that interviews involve social interaction (McLeod, 2014). Edwards and Holland (2013) add that qualitative interviews can be of two types: semi-structured and unstructured (p. 29). In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer has a list of questions or topics to cover during the interview. Although, the prepared list is not fixed because the questions or topics can be asked in any order, some of them can be omitted, or others can be added (29). The same authors explain that in an unstructured interview the aim is “to allow the interviewees to talk from their own perspective using their own frame of reference and ideas and meanings that are familiar to them” (p. 30); the interviewer can ask a leading question at the beginning of the interview or have a list of themes or ideas that should be covered (p. 30).

The interview developed and carried out in this research was semi-structured, with a list of questions that public-institution teachers answered in a, more or less, pre-determined order. It had ten questions referring to the teaching and practicing of pronunciation in EFL classes and it was carried out in English, since EFL teachers were interviewed. The first question inquired the teachers if they thought that teaching English pronunciation to EFL students was important and the reasons for their answers. The second question asked if the teachers actually taught pronunciation in their EFL classes. The third question was adapted from McKay



(2003, p. 141), and it referred to what methodology teachers believed was most appropriate for teaching English pronunciation. The fourth question asked specifically for the techniques and activities used to teach pronunciation. In relation to question four, the fifth question, which was adapted from Ohata (2005, p. 143), inquired which were the activities that students liked the most. Then, the sixth question wanted to know how the teachers corrected pronunciation in their EFL classes. The next question asked for the procedures used by the teachers to assess their students' progress in pronunciation. The eighth question asked which they believed were the models students had for learning pronunciation of English. The ninth question referred to the obstacles the teachers faced when teaching English pronunciation, and, in relation to that, the last question inquired about the obstacles EFL students faced when practicing pronunciation in class. (The interview template is available on Appendix B.)

Description of the interview's process of application. The first interview was made to a female teacher in the public school *Escuela de Educación Básica 'Federico Proaño'*. On May 25th, 2016, the researcher asked the principal of the institution for permission to interview the EFL teacher and his consent was given for it to be carried out next day at noon. Therefore, on May 26th, at one o'clock in the afternoon, the researcher and the EFL teacher got together in an empty classroom. The researcher explained the teacher about the topic of the interview, which was conducted in English, that it was going to be anonymous, with only some personal and educational information needed. The interviewee granted her permission to



record the exchange. Then, the interview started, with the researcher asking the questions yet in the manner of a conversation by prompting longer answers. At the end of the interview, the researcher thanked the teacher for her collaboration.

The second interview was made to a female teacher at *Escuela Básica 'Panamá'*. On June 7th, 2016, the researcher asked the principal for permission to carry out an interview to the EFL teacher of the afternoon shift of the institution. At three-forty in the afternoon, after the researcher had explained the topic of the interview, she let it know that it was going to be recorded, and assured that it was anonymous. The EFL teacher gave her consent and the interview started. The interview developed with no inconveniences apart from some noise. After all the questions were fully answered, the researcher thanked the interviewed teacher and the application process ended. (The transcriptions of the interviews are available on Appendix C.)

Analysis of Teaching Guidelines. Reading the pedagogical material and information available in the official web site of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education fulfilled the corresponding analysis of the teaching guidelines for foreign language instruction of eighth grade. The analysis included the study of the eighth-grade curriculum of English as a foreign language and of the objectives and topics included in the English Students' Book for the mentioned school year. It consisted in analyzing all the present elements for later synthetizing the most relevant principles needed for the research. Ritchey (1996) explains that analysis involves the breaking



downs of a whole into substantial components, while synthesis refers to the combination of separate components in order to form a whole (p. 1).

Furthermore, the teaching guidelines of the speaking skill for eighth grade, found in the National Curriculum Specifications of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, and the English Students' Book guided this research in the development of the pronunciation-practice activities, in accordance with the objectives and the topics proposed for eighth grade.



CHAPTER IV

Results: Analysis and Interpretation of Data

4.1. Survey Results

This section presents the results of the survey filled by eighth grade students of the institutions mentioned in the previous Chapter. It shows each question's results in numbers and percentage of every option and also a pie chart to visualize percentages. Likewise, an interpretation of the results and their connotation follows the numerical data.

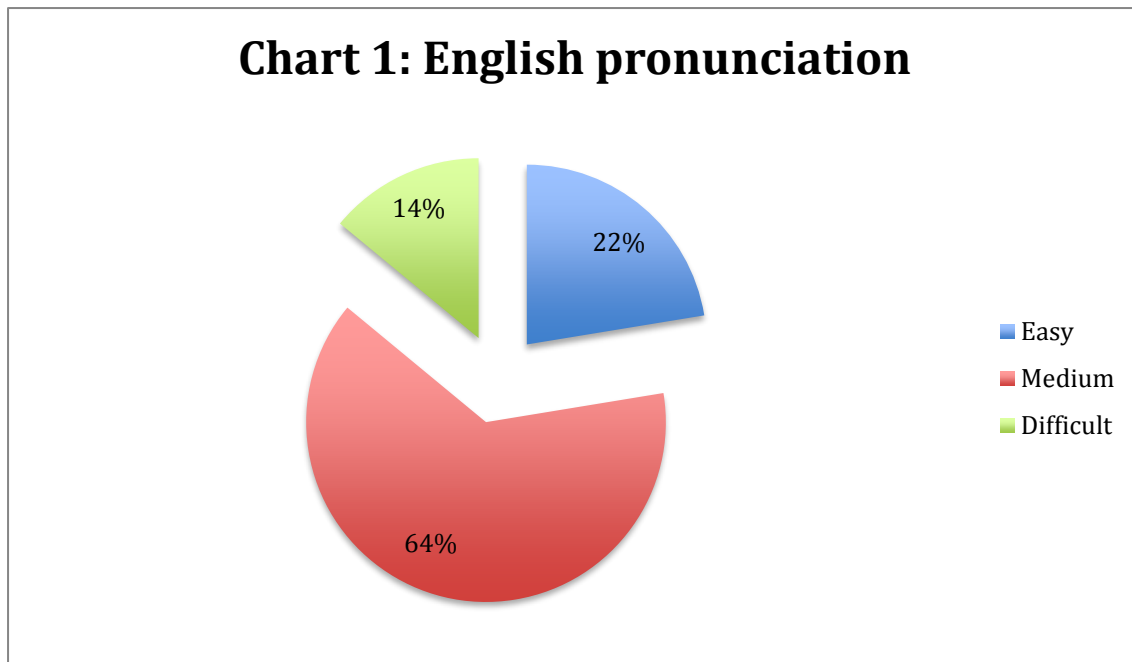
As stated above, the survey was written in Spanish; nevertheless, questions and their options were translated into English in this section.

Question 1: How do you consider the English pronunciation to be?

- a. Easy
- b. Medium
- c. Difficult

Results:

Option	Response	Percentage
Easy	24	22.4%
Medium	68	63.55%
Difficult	15	14%



According to the numbers and percentages shown above, the majority of participants consider the pronunciation of the English language to be of medium difficulty. On the one hand, this difficulty can rely on the difference between the number of sounds English and Spanish have, specially on the number of vowel sounds and the major differences in pronunciation such as vowel length and sentence, word, and syllable stress, as Smith and Swan (2001) claim. These authors also mention that the relation between spelling and pronunciation of English represents a fairly difficulty for learners because it is different from their L1.

On the other hand, perceiving English pronunciation as somewhat difficult leads to the fact that the participants may consider some features of the language as easy. This could be confirmed by what Smith and Swan (2001) state, that English and Spanish share many consonant equivalents, in writing as well as in



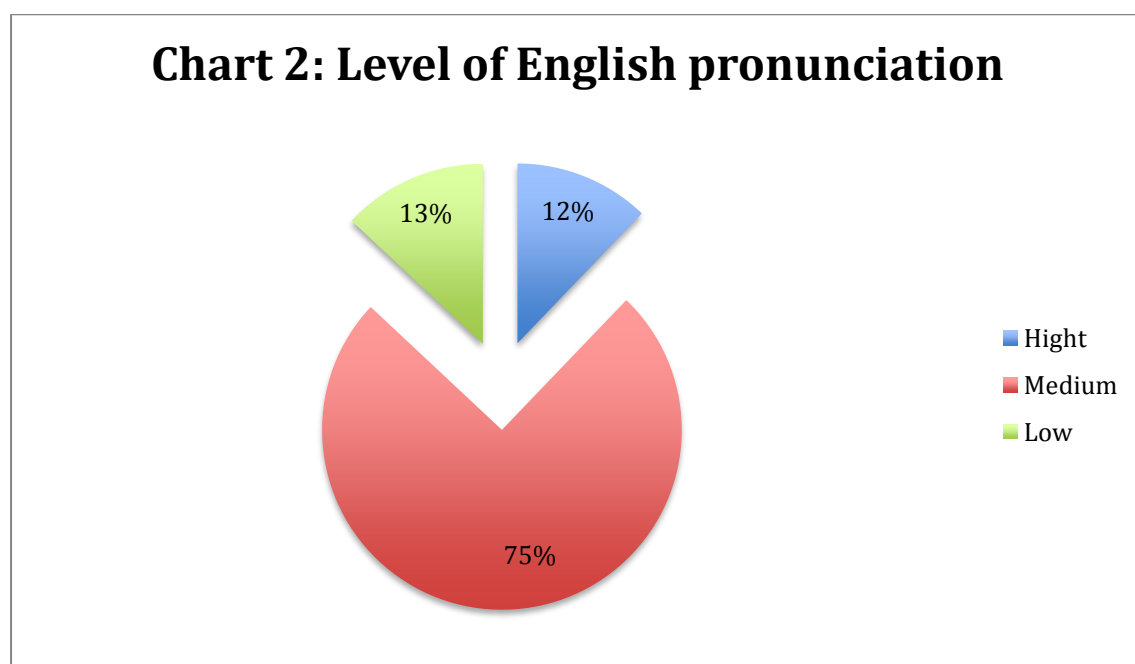
pronunciation, and, as mentioned by Lapo (2008), that there exists a great number of cognates between both languages. Thus, students can transfer some of their L1 knowledge unto the target language.

Question 2: How do you consider your pronunciation level to be?

- a. High
- b. Medium
- c. Low

Results:

Option	Response	Percentage
High	13	12.14%
Medium	80	74.7%
Low	14	13%





The results of this question show that the majority of the participants consider their current target language pronunciation to be in a medium level, meaning not excellent yet not bad either.

The participants may acknowledge their level of TL pronunciation based on their teacher's modeling, which may not be as accurate as it must be. For instance, a research done by Criollo and Pulla in the year 2000 showed that only 41% of EFL teachers at public institutions in Cuenca had a degree for teaching a foreign language (as cited in Calle et al., 2012, p. 5). Besides, in the year 2014, only 2% of all the Ecuadorian EFL teachers passed the TOEFL examination (GamaTV, 2014). This leaves a doubt about how accurate was the pronunciation of the participants' models.

Furthermore, this question's results can also be understood by what Radford (2008) states, that one of the features that distinguish today's youth is their overconfidence about themselves and their abilities. He explains that this feature is generational and he compares this behavior to former generations who lacked it. Similarly, Stankov and Lee (2015) declare that most young students tend to be overconfident about their skills and abilities, yet there exists a discrepancy between this self-confidence and their actual assessment results. The authors also affirm that the impact overconfidence has on learning is low performance levels. Therefore, it must be noted that if EFL learners are overconfident about their TL pronunciation level, they might not try to improve it.

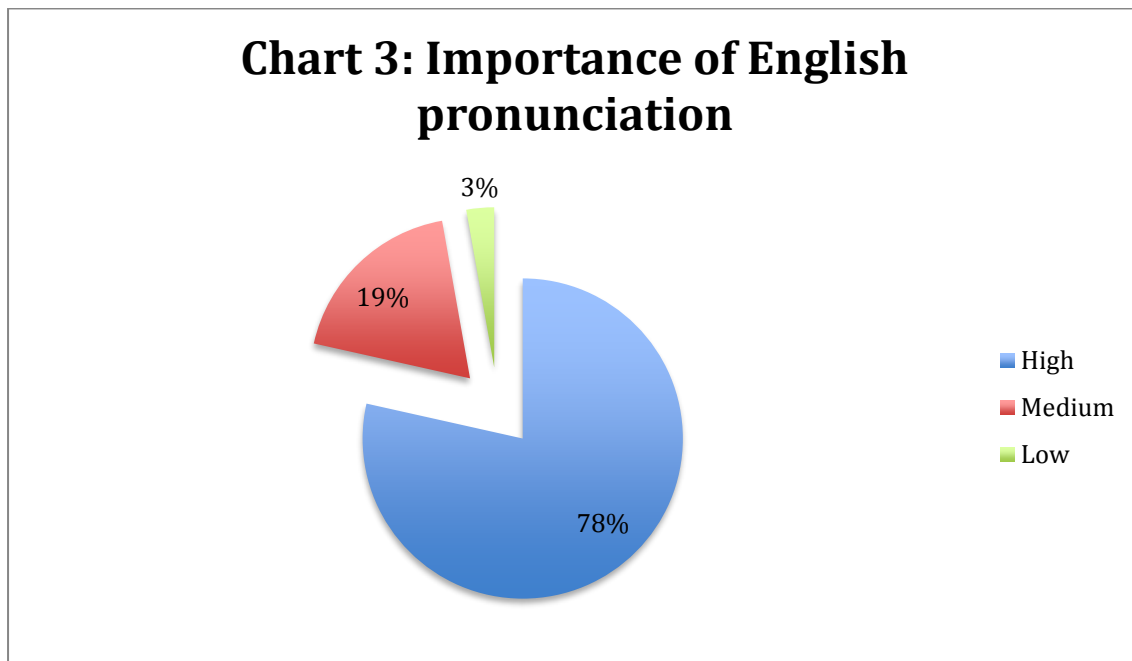


Question 3: How important do you think it is to have a correct English pronunciation?

- a. High
- b. Medium
- c. Low

Results:

Option	Response	Percentage
High	84	78.5%
Medium	20	18.7%
Low	3	2.8%



Regarding this third question, a great majority of the participants consider it is important to have a correct English pronunciation. This result is supported by the last



part of Chapter II; for instance, Pourhosein highlights the level of the target language pronunciation influencing on the learners' self-confidence and their feelings towards their abilities (Marzá, 2014). Likewise, Morley states that pronunciation deficiency leads to a breakdown in communication (Morin, 2007). And finally, the result relates to Marzá (2014), who assures that pronunciation accuracy is associated to the learners' proficiency and comprehensibility of the target language and to the improvement in communicative competence.

Question 4: What is your principal referent of English pronunciation?

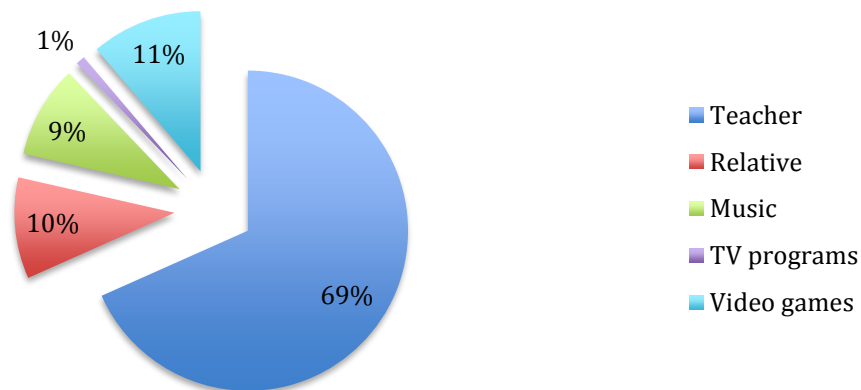
- a. Teacher
- b. Relative
- c. Music
- d. TV programs
- e. Video games

Results:

Option	Response	Percentage
Teacher	73	68.2%
Relative	11	10.2%
Music	10	9.3%
TV programs	1	0.9%
Video games	12	11.2%



Chart 4: Referent of English pronunciation



The results in question number four show that the principal referent in whom the participants rely on for pronunciation modeling is their EFL teacher, which seems accurate given the fact that they live in a Spanish speaking country. However, as mentioned in previous chapters, Morin (2007) claims that foreign language teachers do not usually receive formal instruction in target language pronunciation (p. 343); thus, they cannot be able to act as accurate models for their students. Nevertheless, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2012) has established quality standards for EFL classes in schools, among which some requirements for EFL teachers are included. One of the general standards for teachers involves their understanding of the target language as an integrated system, which comprises the knowledge of the TL components, such as Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Pragmatics, and Semantics; and the use of that knowledge to nurture in their students the four main skills (p. 3).



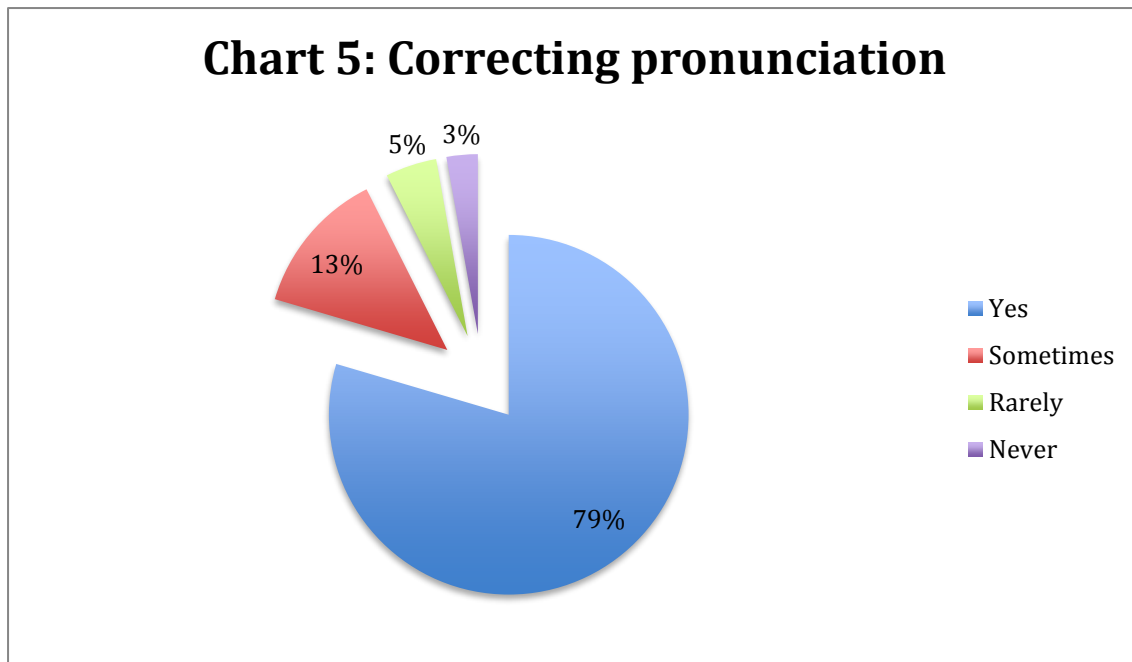
In addition, as experience and informal observation show, most public institutions in Cuenca possess only limited facilities, which make it difficult to implement other TL pronunciation models, such as recordings, videos, and dialogues. This contrasts with Marzá's (2014) research, in which the results showed that EFL students used videos and audios to improve their pronunciation.

Question 5: Does your English teacher correct your pronunciation and that of your classmates?

- a. Yes
- b. Sometimes
- c. Rarely
- d. Never

Results:

Option	Response	Percentage
Yes	85	79.4%
Sometimes	14	13%
Rarely	5	4.6%
Never	3	2.8%



The answers to this question show that EFL teachers correct students' pronunciation in class; therefore, an association should be established between this result and what the interviewed teachers said about the topic. Both teachers explained that they corrected their students' pronunciation every time an error or mistake occurred by means of modeling the correct pronunciation of the utterance.

This result can also be contrasted to what was mentioned above about teachers not being prepared for imparting EFL pronunciation. Similarly, it relates to what Derwing and Munro (2005) state, regarding the fact that not much research has been done about teaching foreign language pronunciation, and that the little research available has not yet been applied to classroom reality (p. 383). All these facts have resulted in EFL teachers having to rely on their intuition for teaching and correcting pronunciation in TL instruction (p. 379), which is not always beneficial for learners.



In addition, Lane suggests that learners should be given the opportunity to self-correct their pronunciation, and teachers should establish a cue word or signal that notifies learners when they are mispronouncing (as cited in Tergujeff, 2012, p. 603). Tergujeff (2012) also signals that correcting learners should not lead to feelings of rejection and disapproval (p. 603), one of the reasons for teachers to be prepared for such a responsibility.

Question 6: How often do you practice pronunciation in your English classes?

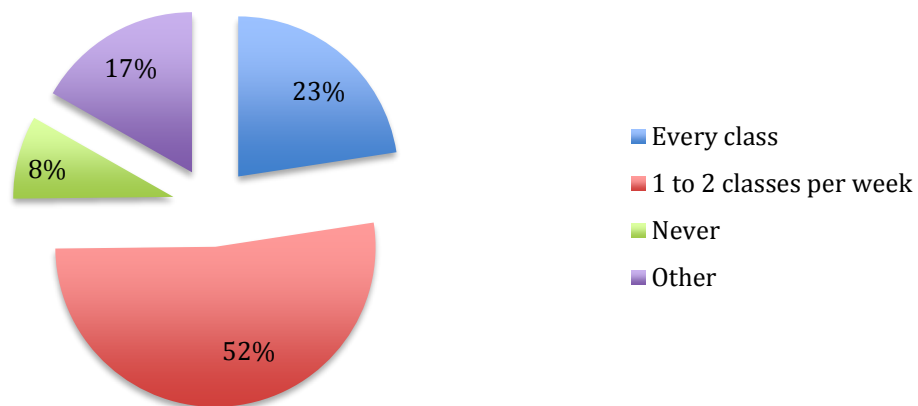
- a. Every class
- b. 1 to 2 classes per week
- c. Never
- d. Other _____

Results:

Option	Response	Percentage
Every class	24	22.4%
1 to 2 classes per week	56	52.3%
Never	9	8.4%
Other	18	16.8%



Chart 6: Frequency of pronunciation practice



Considering that foreign language instruction in public institutions is imparted within five hours a week at high school level (Espinosa, 2016, p. 3), usually distributed into three sessions, the option with the highest score in this question (practicing pronunciation one to two classes per week) represents a good digit. Nonetheless, as experience shows, this number of class hours for English instruction is low compared to private education in Cuenca, where five to ten hours a week are assigned to TL teaching, demonstrating an emphasis on EFL instruction.

In spite of M. Hismanoglu and S. Hismanoglu's (2013) opinion that an entire class should be dedicated to teaching TL pronunciation, it is not possible to apply it in these institutions' reality, because the four skills of the target language must be taught in the limited time per week assigned to foreign language instruction.



It must be mentioned that the option named “other,” regarding another frequency of pronunciation practice, shows a substantial coincidence in scores: a rate of three times per week in which students work on TL pronunciation in class.

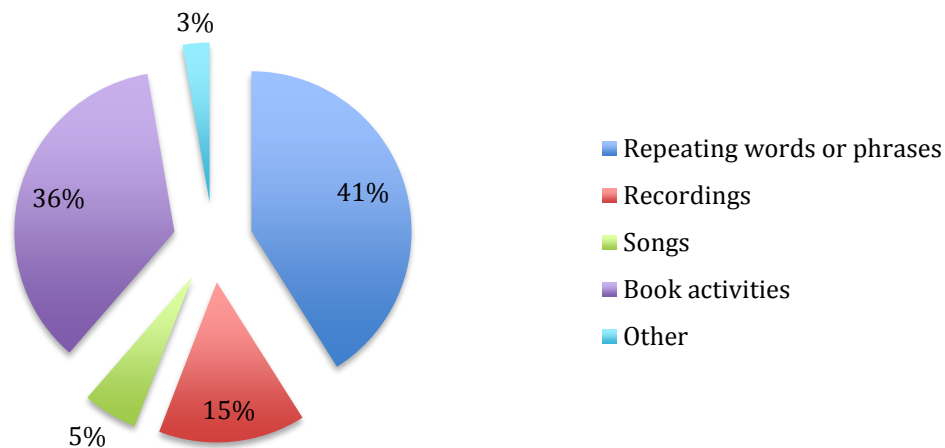
Question 7: How do you practice pronunciation in your English classes?

- a. Repeating words or phrases
- b. Recordings
- c. Songs
- d. Book activities
- e. Other _____

Results:

Option	Responses	Percentage
Repeating words or phrases	88	40.9%
Recordings	32	14.8%
Songs	12	5.5%
Book activities	77	35.8%
Other	6	2.7%

Chart 7: Actual pronunciation practice activities



The results in question seven show that the participants' two most common activities used for practicing and/or learning EFL pronunciation consist of repetition and exercises from the book. For the first part, Thornbury (2005) points out that repetition or drilling is good for “gaining articulatory control over language” and for enhancing fluency, since students can memorize and then easily retrieve chunks of language along with their intonation patterns (p. 64-65). In addition, it is important to highlight that both segmental and suprasegmental features of the target language should be included in repetition activities, because, as Tergujeff (2012) explains, both features are important for pronunciation training (p. 600).

As for the second option, Derwing and Munro (2005) explain that relying too much on textbook activities might not be a smart decision for the reasons that, first,



teachers may neglect their students' problems and necessities in pronunciation and, second, "most material has been designed without a basis in pronunciation research findings" (p. 389).

Question 8: How would you like to practice English pronunciation?

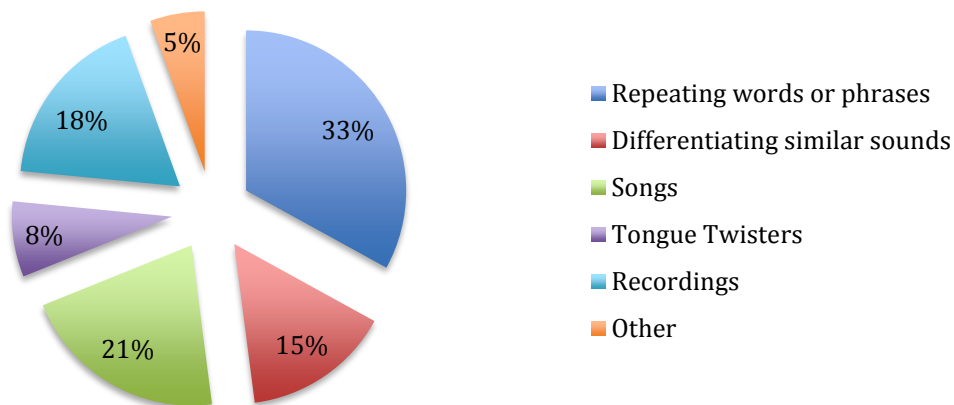
- a. Repeating words or phrases
- b. Differentiating similar sounds
- c. Songs
- d. Tongue twisters
- e. Recordings
- f. Other _____

Results:

Option	Responses	Percentages
Repeating words or phrases	77	32.9%
Differentiating similar sounds	35	14.9%
Songs	49	20.9%
Tongue Twisters	18	7.6%
Recordings	42	17.9%
Other	13	5.5%



Chart 8: Desired pronunciation practice activities



Regarding the results of this last question, the participants' two most preferred activities to practice pronunciation in EFL classes are repeating words and phrases and songs. This relates to the findings of Marzá's (2014) study, in which repetition and songs are among useful activities for learning and improving TL pronunciation (p. 266).

Recordings were voted as the third preferred option for practicing TL pronunciation. It is well known that listening materials should be authentic in terms of having native models and real language features; although, as Wilson (2008) claims, it is difficult to find authentic material for low level students because of the speed of speech, difficult vocabulary and sentence structure, fillers, hesitation, among others (p. 32). The same author states that listening materials, such as recordings, should be at least authentic-based, which means that they must include authentic speech



features like hesitation and fillers yet be scripted and have a teaching purpose (p. 33). Moreover, students should be exposed to different TL accents, not just to native-like pronunciation, in order to become proficient listeners and be ready for real-life communication (p. 29); thus, recordings must include accented models as well as native ones.

Finally, the activity in the fourth position by scores is differentiating similar sounds, which represents phonetic instruction. Lord declared that the participants in his research improved their pronunciation after direct phonetic instruction (as cited in M. Hismanoglu and S. Hismanoglu, 2013, p. 508); this normally includes teaching students the particular sounds of the target language and their written phonetic representation and minimal pair instruction.

4.2. Interviews Interpretation

After interviewing two high school teachers from public institutions in Cuenca, the responses must be interpreted according to the goals of this research. An account of the most relevant matters will be presented in the paragraphs to follow.

To begin with, both interviewed teachers considered that teaching English pronunciation in their EFL classes was highly important; however, they explained a series of difficulties that appeared when trying to teach and make their students practice pronunciation, for the reason they were not able to work on it repeatedly. Nevertheless, both teachers expressed that they corrected pronunciation errors and



mistakes as soon as they occurred, so that students listen to the correct pronunciation of English words.

They normally used speaking activities to emphasize on pronunciation; for instance, by means of homework correction or group-work activities. The same happened when assessing students' progress on pronunciation, which was done as part of the speaking skill. On the other hand, their students enjoyed when teachers performed dynamic activities for practicing pronunciation; for example, singing songs and learning through pictures.

Both teachers remarked that students faced some obstacles when learning pronunciation in the foreign language, which included nervousness, shyness, and laughter from peers. The teachers also faced obstacles when teaching pronunciation, especially because of the lack of resources and material for the purpose, a fact supported by Derwing and Munro (2005) who explain that most of the time EFL teachers have to rely on their intuition when teaching TL pronunciation because there is little research about the subject and almost no consolidation of the findings into material or books.

Finally, one of the most relevant matters resided on the fact that the interviewees were not able to differentiate between teaching methodologies and techniques; when they were asked about which of the former they considered most appropriate for teaching pronunciation, they recalled techniques they normally used,



for example, drills. When the interviewer put emphasis on the word ‘methodology,’ they looked puzzled and mentioned class activities.

4.3. Curriculum Analysis

Current foreign language education in Ecuador is supported and guided by the English Language Learning Standards [ELLS] established by the Ministry of Education (2012, p. 2). These standards involve three proficiency levels: A1, A2, and B1, which are based on the parameters of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR] (p. 8). These international levels, which guide the teaching of English as a foreign language, have been adapted to suit Ecuadorian education.

By adapting the established levels to the national reality and conditions, they were subdivided into two ranks, each of which comprise two high school grades and determine the progress of the language competence being developed.

Correspondingly, for the purposes of these levels, A1 is the framework for both eighth and ninth grades, thus A1.1 and A1.2 respectively; A2 is the framework for tenth grade and first year of baccalaureate, A2.1 and A2.2 accordingly; and B1 is the framework for second and third years of baccalaureate, hence B1.1 and B1.2 (Ministerio de Educación, 2014). These subdivisions also determine the proficiency standards for the four skills in each year: listening, reading, speaking, and writing.



The A1 proficiency level involves basic users of the target language; they can understand and use everyday language in order to satisfy basic needs (Ministerio de Educación, 2014, p. 6). Eighth grade fits in this level, specifically in the sub level A1.1; therefore, it and its speaking component are fundamental to this research.

As explained by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2014), the proficiency level of A1.1 in the speaking skill claims that by the end of eighth grade, students must be able to:

- Produce slow, hesitant, planned monologues with frequent pauses to search for expressions, backtracking, errors, etc.
- Interact in a simple way by asking and answering simple questions about the learners' personal and educational background. Communication, therefore, is highly dependent on repetition at a slower rate of speech, rephrasing, and repair (p. 13).

In addition, the Ministry of Education (2014) explains that to ensure progression and proficiency in the speaking skill, the specific objectives for eighth grade comprise personal and educational backgrounds because they constitute the immediate surroundings of students (p. 11).

After carefully reading and analyzing of the National Curriculum Guidelines and the speaking skill segment of the Curriculum Specifications for A1.1 level corresponding to eighth grade, it was noticed that pronunciation of the foreign



language is not mentioned at all, which can mean two possible explanations. First, that it is not considered important in the production of the language, as long as students can produce it. Second, that it is understood that the teaching of pronunciation goes along with the speaking skill. In spite of not showing any specifications for pronunciation in the speaking field, in the assessment indicators of the segment, the A1.1 level requires students to pronounce the target language intelligibly by differentiating words phonetically, and also to place stress correctly upon words and sentences (Ministerio de Educación, 2014, p. 15). This shows disruption between the teaching and assessing requirements; for this reason, it is hard to know if students would be able to fulfill the assessment specifications successfully.

It is interesting to know that the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2014) expresses that developing listening skills helps students improve pronunciation in terms of “intonation, accent, individual word sounds, and connected speech” (p. 10), which shows that listening activities could be used for teaching pronunciation of the target language.

Nevertheless, students’ English Book for eighth grade, which was equally analyzed in order to compare the two pedagogical references, presented a detailed list of specific pronunciation and intonation features to be emphasized on some of the vocabulary the textbook contains. These features were presented as pronunciation activities in each Chapter of the book. They consisted of number



stress, linking sounds, the voiced *th* sound in ‘this’ and ‘that,’ intonation patterns in information questions, rising intonation in *yes/no* questions, and the */r/* sound (Abbs et al., 2013, p. 5). This shows concern in pronunciation and production of the target language.

Finally, for the purpose of this research, the different items of the curriculum and the students’ book of eighth grade of public institutions will be unfolded below.

Table 3

Detailed Eighth Grade’s EFL Curriculum

Unit	Topic	Structure	Vocabulary	Skill Focus
# 1	Personal information and profiles; meeting new people; countries and nationalities.	Simple Present tense with Verb To Be	Related to greeting, asking and saying the age, nationality, and professions.	Reading and Listening: specific information. Speaking: imitating a model.
# 2	Family members, physical appearance, and parts of the body.	Simple Present tense	Related to family members and the human body.	Reading: identifying specific information. Writing: Connecting similar ideas. Listening: getting familiar with new words. Speaking: questions and answers.



# 3	Leisure Activities and Entertainment: movies, cultural events and festivals.	Simple Present tense; 'wh' questions, and prepositions of time.	Words related to movies, festivals, and time; days of the week, months of the year, ordinal numbers.	Reading: using images and key words. Writing: using mind maps. Listening: specific information. Speaking: showing interest.
# 4	Street life, famous neighborhoods and clothing.	Present Progressive tense	Words related to activities, clothing, and the weather.	Reading: classifying information. Writing: consequences of an action. Listening: creating mental images. Speaking: using pictures to make descriptions.
# 5	Places in a city, touristic places, and maps.	Simple Present tense with 'there is/are;' imperatives.	Places in a city and touristic places; professions. Words related to giving directions.	Reading: inferring the meaning of unfamiliar words. Writing: contrasting ideas. Speaking: using new language in authentic situations.
# 6	Daily Routines and Lifestyles	Simple Present tense: affirmative and negative statements	Words related to personality, lifestyles, and daily routine.	Reading: identifying context clues. Writing: organizing and connecting ideas. Speaking: asking



		and questions.		questions.
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As can be noticed in the detailed table above, the past tense is not included in the eighth grade curriculum. Nevertheless, to meet the aim and objectives of this research, activities will deal with this tense, in accordance with the different topics and vocabulary reviewed in the curriculum.



CHAPTER V

Activities for Pronunciation Practice

This final Chapter presents twenty activities aimed at pronunciation practice of English vowels and the *-ed* suffix of the past tense of regular verbs and some adjectives. As mentioned in Chapter one, these two groups were chosen for this research because of the trouble they represent to Spanish EFL learners. One of the main reasons vowel sounds were selected was, as stated in Chapter II, the great difference that exists between these sounds in English and Spanish, which causes difficulty to native speakers of the latter and leads them to pronounce the target language with foreign, not corresponding, sounds. A related phenomenon happens with the *-ed* suffix, being the issue the lack of correspondence between the written and spoken forms, which leads TL learners to a deficiency in pronouncing this suffix accurately.

In order to work on TL pronunciation from the beginning of the school year and considering that the eighth grade English Book provided by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education comprises six units, the pronunciation activities were divided among all the units and contain vocabulary related to the topics while focusing on the practice of pronunciation of vowels and the *-ed* suffix. Additionally, the first activity presented is not related to any particular unit for the reason that it works on rhyming, an important element for starting with the sounds of TL.



The activities contain detailed information about the eighth grade units and topics of the curriculum, the grammar structure used, the main skills focus, and the approximated time needed. They are unfolded in sequential steps for a better understanding of how to put them in practice and they also mention and provide the materials needed.

**Activity 1****Name:** Memory (adapted from *Rhyming Pair Memory Game*, Pesce, n.d.)**Unit:** --**Topic:** --**Objective:** Pairing words that rhyme**Grammar Structure:** --**Skill Focus:** Listening and Speaking**Approximated Time:** 12 minutes**Material Needed:** Memory cards available on Appendix D, board, markers.

Vocabulary: *meet-eat / not-hot / eye-my / three-tree / lock-clock / dance-prance / cool-tool // fest-test / heel-peel / will-fill / bit-it / jump-bump / nine-mine / shell-well / game-name / play-prey / shoe-blue / jazz-has / funny-honey / rain-train*

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. The teacher writes the following words on the left side of the board: <i>meet, not, eye, jazz, will, fest, jump, train</i> ; and these others on the right side: <i>rain, eat, test, my, has, hot, fill, bump</i> .	1 min.		Board Markers
2. The teacher says all the words from the two lists one time; then, she says the words from the list on the left one by one, asking students, after each word is pronounced, which word from the right	3 min.	T → Ss T ↔ Ss	Board



sided list rhymes with it.			
3. Students are divided in groups of four. The teacher gives each group a pack of memory cards.	2 min.		Memory cards: cards with one word written on one side (Appendix D)
4. The teacher gives the instructions of the game: In turns, students turn over two cards, say the words written in them, and decide if they rhyme with each other. If the words rhyme, the student playing keeps the cards and plays another turn; if not, the student turns the cards over again and the turn passes to the next student in the group.	1 min.	T → Ss	Memory cards
5. Students perform the activity.	5 min.	Ss	Memory cards



Activity 2

Name: Counting Indians

Unit: 1 *People Around Us*

Topic: Meeting new people

Objective: Discriminating the *short i* sound - /ɪ/

Grammar Structure: Simple Present

Skill Focus: Listening and Speaking

Approximated Time: 12 minutes

Material Needed: Board, markers; CD: Audio Material track #1 (taken from Muffin Songs, 2011).

Vocabulary:

- *Short i* /ɪ/: *little, six, Indians.*
- /aɪ/ *diphthong:* *five, nine* (for comparing sounds).

Song: Ten Little Indians (taken from Granum, n.d.)

“One, little two, little three,
 little Indians,
 four, little five, little six,
 little Indians,
 seven, little eight, little nine,
 little Indians,
 ten little Indian boys.”

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. The teacher presents the song by	1 min.	T → Ss	CD – track



singing it two times (CD, track #1 for learning the rhythm of the song)			# 1
2. The teacher writes the vocabulary words on the board and asks students to repeat them after him.	3 min.	T ↔ Ss	Board Markers
3. Students, with the help of the teacher, group the words that sound alike, differentiating them by their vowel sound. They group the words on the board in two columns created for the purpose.	3 min.	T ↔ Ss	Board Markers
4. The teacher writes the song on the board, using a different color for each group.	1 min.		Board Markers
5. Teacher and students sing the song several times, putting emphasis on the sounds learnt.	4 min.	T ↔ Ss	

**Activity 3****Name:** Odd one out (adapted from Pesce, n.d.)**Unit:** 1 *People Around Us***Topic:** Meeting new people**Objective:** Discrimination of sounds; pronunciation of the *long e* sound - /e/**Grammar Structure:** --**Skill Focus:** Listening and Speaking**Approximated Time:** 8 minutes**Material Needed:** Board and markers**Vocabulary:**

- *meet, see, then, read, three.*
- *England, Greece, Pete, Ecuador, Greek.*

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. The teacher writes the two vocabulary lists on the board. Then, she says the words from the first list three times and asks students to tell her which word has a different vowel sound; she repeats the procedure with the second list.	3 min.	T → Ss T ↔ Ss	Board Markers
2. The teacher crosses out the words that sound different in each list.	1 min.	T ↔ Ss	Board Markers
3. Students repeat the words from both lists after the teacher.	2 min.	T ↔ Ss	Board Markers



4. Half of the class says the first list and the other half pronounces the second list.	2 min.	Ss	
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Activity 4

Name: Jumping and Bumping

Unit: *2 People I Love*

Topic: Parts of the Body

Objective: Discriminating the *stressed schwa* sound - /ə/

Grammar Structure: Simple Past and Present Continuous

Skill Focus: Listening and Speaking

Approximated Time: 12 minutes

Vocabulary: monkeys, jumping, bumped, one.

Material Needed: Handouts available on Appendix E; board and markers; CD:

Audio Material Track # 2 (taken from Gardner and Belling, 2006).

Song: Five Little Monkeys (taken from Child's Play, 2002)

“Five little monkeys jumping on the bed,
one fell off and bumped his head,
mother called the doctor, and the doctor said,
‘No more monkeys jumping on the bed!’
Four little monkeys jumping on the bed,
one fell off and bumped her head,
mother called the doctor, and the doctor said,
‘No more monkeys jumping on the bed!’
Three ...
Two ...
One ... bed!”



Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. The teacher writes the vocabulary words on the board and teaches them, asking the students for their meanings or giving them herself. Students repeat the words after the teacher.	2 min.	T ↔ Ss	Board Markers
2. The teacher points out that the vocabulary words have the same vowel sound yet two of them are written with an “o” and two with a “u,” and underlines them.	2 min.	T → Ss	
3. Students form groups of four. The teacher gives each group a handout with the song lyrics.	2 min.		Handouts with the lyrics of the song (Appendix E)
4. Teacher models the rhythm of the song by singing it for the first time (CD, Track # 2 for the teacher to learn the rhythm of the song).	1 min.	T → Ss	CD - track # 2
5. Students sing the song along with the teacher. Then the members of the group take turns to sing each stanza.	5 min.	T ↔ Ss Ss	Handouts



Activity 5

Name: The Pumpkin Eater

Unit: *2 People I Love*

Topic: Family members

Objective: Differentiating the *long e* and the *short e* sounds - /e/ /ɛ/ ↔

Grammar Structure: Simple Present and Simple Past

Skill Focus: Listening and Speaking

Approximated Time: 15 minutes

Material Needed: CD: Audio Material Track # 3 (taken from EFlashApps, 2014);
board and markers.

Vocabulary:

- *Long e* sound: *Peter, eater, keep, he.*
- *Short e* sound: *shell, there, kept, very, well.*

Song: Peter, Peter Pumpkin Eater (taken from Granum, n.d.)

“Peter, Peter pumpkin eater,
had a wife but couldn't keep her;
he put her in a pumpkin shell
and there he kept her very well.”



Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. The teacher writes down the song on the board and models it a few times (CD, Track # 3 for learning the rhythm of the song).	2 min.	T → Ss	Board Markers CD - track # 3
2. Students sing along several times.	4 min.	Ss	
3. The teacher writes the vocabulary words on the board, in disorder.	1 min.		Board Markers
4. Students repeat each one of the words after the teacher.	2 min.	T ↔ Ss	
5. Students, with the help of the teacher, group words according to the sound of the “e” vowel, /e/ or /E/.	3 min.	Ss	Board Markers
6. Teacher and students sing a few more times, putting emphasis on the sounds learnt.	3 min.	T ↔ Ss	



Activity 6

Name: Gus the Astronaut

Unit: *2 People I Love*

Topic: Members of the family

Objective: Discriminating the *stressed schwa* sound - /ə/

Grammar Structure: Simple Present and Present Perfect

Skill Focus: Listening and Speaking

Approximated Time: 16 min.

Material needed: CD: Audio Material track # 4, CD Player, Handouts available on Appendix F, highlighters, board, and markers.

Vocabulary: *Gus, mum, up, just, lovely, plums, covered, honey, lunch, son, hungry.*

Recorded Dialogue:

- *Gus: Hi, Mum, It's Gus. What's up?*
- *Mum: Well, I've just had some lovely plums covered in honey for lunch. How are you son?*
- *Gus: Hungry!*

(taken from Puchta, Gerngross, & Lewis-Jones, 2013)

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. Students listen to the recorded dialogue two times.	1 min.		CD - track # 4 CD Player
2. The teacher writes "Gus" on the board and pronounces the word several times. Then she	3 min.	T ↔ Ss	Board Markers



asks students if they have heard other words that sound similar to “Gus;” for example, <i>cut, sun, love, up</i> . The teacher writes them on the board. If students do not provide examples, the teacher provides them herself.			
3. Teacher plays the recording again and writes all the vocabulary words on the board, if some of them are missing.	2 min.		Board Markers
4. Students repeat the words after the teacher.	2 min.	T ↔ Ss	
5. Students are grouped in pairs. The teacher gives each pair a handout with the transcription of the dialogue. Students highlight the vocabulary words.	2 min.	Ss	Handouts: transcription of the dialogue (Appendix F). Highlighters
6. Students listen to the recording two more times while reading the transcription.	2 min.		CD CD Player Handouts
7. In pairs, students act out the dialogue. Then, two pairs of students voluntarily act out the dialogue in front of the class.	4 min.	Ss	Handouts

**Activity 7****Name:** Entertainment Today!**Unit:** 3 *Leisure Activities***Topic:** Entertainment**Objective:** Differentiating the *sheep a* and the *long a* sounds - /ɪ/ /eɪ/ ↔**Grammar Structure:** Simple Present**Skill Focus:** Listening, Reading and Speaking**Approximated Time:** 10 minutes**Material Needed:** Poster available on CD [Visual Material] and Appendix G, masking tape, board, markers.**Vocabulary:**

- *Sheep a:* Action, animated, dancing, jazz, January, Saturday.
- *Long a:* April, skating, famous, game, play.

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. The teacher puts up the poster on the board and elicits the vocabulary words from students by asking if they know what they mean.	2 min.	T ↔ Ss	Poster (CD - Appendix G) Masking tape Board Markers
2. Teacher makes two columns on the board and puts <i>January</i> on the top of one	2 min.	T → Ss	Board Markers



and <i>April</i> on the other, underlining the first “a” in each word, emphasizing its sound when she says them.			
3. Students, with the help of the teacher, group the words from the board under <i>January</i> or <i>April</i> according to their sounds.	3 min.	T ↔ Ss	
4. Students repeat the vocabulary words after the teacher, by list first and then in disorder, mixing words from both lists.	3 min.	T ↔ Ss	



Activity 8

Name: Dominoes (adapted from *Four-sided Dominoes*, Hancock, 1996)

Unit: 3 *Leisure Activities*

Topic: Movies, Cultural Events, and Festivals

Objective: Differentiating the pronunciation of adjectives that end in *-ed*.

Grammar Structure: --

Skill Focus: Listening, Reading, and Speaking

Approximated Time: 14 minutes

Material Needed: Domino cards available on Appendix G, board and markers.

Vocabulary:

- /ɪ/: *shocked, relaxed, touched, pleased.*
- /ə/: *bored, surprised, amused, inspired, tired, amazed, thrilled.*
- /ɪəd/: *interested, disappointed, excited, fascinated.*

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. The teacher writes one adjective from each list provided in the vocabulary on the board. She pronounces the words, underlines the last two letters (-ed), and asks students if they notice any difference in pronunciation.	2 min.	T → Ss T ↔ Ss	Board Markers
2. The teacher asks students for words that sound similar to each of the three words on the board and writes the	3 min.	T ↔ Ss	Board Markers



examples next to them. If the students do not provide examples, the teacher suggests and writes a few more words from the vocabulary.			
3. Students get together in groups of four. The teacher gives each group a pack of dominoes.	1 min.		Cardboard dominoes (Appendix H)
4. The rules of the game are explained: The domino cards are divided among the players and one domino card is placed in the center of the table to start the game. Students take turns to place dominoes on any side of the laid cards by matching words that have similar ending sounds.	5 min.	Ss	Dominoes: 45 cards containing 2 vocabulary words on each side, with a division line in the middle.
5. When all groups have finished playing, one member of each group reads aloud the words following the track they built.	3 min.	Ss	Dominoes



Activity 9

Name: Pass on the word!

Unit: 3 *Leisure Activities*

Topic: Types of Movies

Objective: To practice pronunciation of the *-ed* extra syllable in simple past tense of verbs.

Grammar Structure: Simple Past

Skill Focus: Speaking and Listening

Approximated Time: 13 minutes

Material Needed: Board and markers.

Vocabulary: *acted, awarded, posted, started, ended, hated, shouted, invited, needed, wanted, repeated, completed, invented, contacted, pointed.*

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. The students in the class are divided into three big groups and they sit in circles.	1 min.		
2. The teacher writes the words from the vocabulary list on the board, in distinct order. Then she pronounces the words out loud, pointing at each one of them and placing emphasis on the extra syllable (<i>-ed</i>).	2 min.	T → Ss	Board Markers
3. The teacher chooses a leader in each group.	1 min.		



<p>4. The rules are explained: The leader in each group chooses and pronounces one word from the vocabulary listed on the board, paying attention to pronunciation. Next, the student to his/her right repeats the word and pronounces another one. Students on each group continue the chain of words, repeating the words in order from the beginning and always adding a new word. If a student fails to remember the words or enumerates them in disorder, the chain breaks and the game starts again.</p>	<p>1 min.</p>	<p>T → Ss</p>	<p>Board</p>
<p>5. Students perform the activity. The teacher monitors the activity.</p>	<p>8 min.</p>	<p>Ss</p>	



Activity 10

Name: Put on your suit!

Unit: 4 *Street Life*

Topic: Clothing

Objective: Discriminating the *long u* sound - /u/

Grammar Structure: --

Skill Focus: Listening and Speaking

Approximated Time: 8 minutes

Material Needed: Flashcards available on Appendix I, masking tape, board, and markers.

Vocabulary: *shoe, boot, blue, suit, zoo.*

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. The teacher shows the flashcards, one by one, saying the pictures' names.	1 min.	T ↔ Ss	Flashcards (Appendix I)
2. Students repeat after the teacher shows the flashcards again in the same order, pronouncing the words several times.	3 min.	T ↔ Ss	Flashcards
3. The teacher sticks all the flashcards on the board and asks students for the names of the pictures.	1 min.	T ↔ Ss	Flashcards Masking tape
4. The teacher writes the words on the board.	1 min.		Markers Board



5. Students read the words a few more times as the teacher points at them in distinct order.	2 min.	Ss	
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Activity 11

Name: I Scream 'Ice Cream!'

Unit: 4 *Street Life*

Topic: Street Life

Objective: Discriminating the *long i* sound - /ɪ/

Grammar Structure: --

Skill Focus: Speaking

Approximated Time: 12 minutes

Material Needed: Board and markers

Vocabulary: *ice, rice, mice, bike, night, dice, idea, line, ice cream, slice (of pizza).*

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. The teacher writes the vocabulary words on the board and teaches their meanings.	1 min.	T → Ss	
2. The teacher explains to the students the rules of the game: one student has to draw the meaning of one of the vocabulary words, e.g., <i>ice cream</i> , and the rest of the students have to guess what it is.	1 min.	T → Ss	
3. Some students take turns to go to the board and draw images while their classmates guess the word they are representing with the drawings. The	10 min.	Ss	Board Markers



teacher monitors the activity, correcting pronunciation if necessary.			
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Activity 12

Name: Street Maze (adapted from *Simple Sound Maze*, Hancock, 1996)

Unit: 4 *Street Life*

Topic: Street Life

Objective: Discriminating minimal pairs: *long e* and *short i* - *iel* *in* ↔

Grammar Structure: --

Skill Focus: Listening, Reading, and Speaking

Approximated Time: 10 minutes

Material Needed: Maze Handout available on Appendix J, board and markers.

Vocabulary: Minimal pairs

Eat – it / sleep – slip / steal – still / cheap – chip / reach – rich / sheep – ship / ease – is / feel – fill / heat – hit / seat – sit / wheel – will / beat - bit

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. The teacher writes the first two minimal pairs on the board (<i>eat - it, sleep - slip</i>); then she pronounces the words and asks students if they notice a difference in the vowel sound.	1 min.	T → Ss T ↔ Ss	Board Markers
2. Students get together in pairs and the teacher gives each pair a sheet of paper containing a maze with the vocabulary words.	1 min.		Maze handout: a path-finding puzzle containing



			words with similar sounds. (Appendix J)
3. The teacher explains the goal of the game: students must find a path from the entrance, on the top, to the exit of the maze, on the bottom, going from one square to another, by horizontal or vertical movements, only if they contain words that sound similar to <i>eat</i> and <i>sleep</i> . As they go, students have to pronounce the words out loud trying to pronounce them correctly.	2 min.	T → Ss	
4. Students perform the activity (maze).	3 min.	Ss	Maze handout
5. Teacher and students check the route together.	1 min.	T ↔ Ss	
6. The teacher writes the words students followed on the maze on the board; then she asks students to find their minimal pairs and writes them on the board as	2 min.	T ↔ Ss	Board Markers Maze handout



well, opposite the other words.			
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Activity 13



Name: Bingo! (adapted from *Bingo*, Hancock, 1996)

Unit: 4 *Street Life*

Topic: Clothes

Objective: Listening to the pronunciation of the simple past participle *-ed*

Grammar Structure: --

Skill Focus: Listening and Speaking

Approximated Time: 15 minutes

Material Needed: Bingo Cards and Bingo Vocabulary cards available on Appendix K.

Vocabulary:

- /t/: *checked, dressed, disliked, liked, matched, washed, shopped, undressed.*
- /d/: *changed, claimed, cleaned, described, grabbed, labeled, tried, compared, owned.*
- /ɒd/: *afforded, attended, decided, folded, wanted, hated, mended, suited.*

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. Game instructions are given: each student will receive a Bingo card; the teacher, and then some students, will say out loud the vocabulary words one by one, repeating them twice; the students have to look in their cards for the word they listen to and cross them out if they have them. The student that	2 min.	T → Ss	



crosses out all the words in his/her card, wins.			
2. Each student receives one Bingo card.	1 min.	T → Ss T ↔ Ss	Bingo cards: six different cards containing 16 words out of the 25 words from the vocabulary lists. (Appendix K)
3. The teacher reads five words from the vocabulary cards, repeating them twice and pausing between each word.	2 min.	T → Ss	Vocabulary cards: 25 cards containing one word from the lists on one side. (Appendix K)
4. Five volunteer students read five words from the vocabulary cards each. They have to say them out loud,	10 min.	Ss	Vocabulary cards



repeating them twice and pausing between words. The teacher checks pronunciation.			
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Activity 14

Name: Holiday!

Unit: 5 *Amazing Places*

Topic: Touristic places

Objective: Differentiating the pronunciation of verbs that end in *-ed*.

Grammar Structure: Simple Past

Skill Focus: Listening and Speaking

Approximated Time: 7 minutes

Material Needed: Dialogue on CD: Audio Material track # 5, board, and markers.

Vocabulary: *shouted, screamed, chased, panicked, petrified.*

Recorded Dialogue:

- A: *How was your holiday?*
- B: *Well... everywhere I went, people shouted and screamed. They chased me all the way home.*
- A: *Were you panicked?*
- B: *Panicked? I was petrified!*

(taken from Puchta et al., 2013)

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. Students listen to the recorded dialogue two times.	1 min.		CD - track # 5 CD Player
2. The teacher writes the vocabulary words on the board, writing with different	1 min.		Board Markers



colors the <i>-ed</i> endings, according to their pronunciation.			
3. Teacher pronounces the words and students repeat them several times.	2 min.	T ↔ Ss	
4. Students, with the help of the teacher, group the words together by their final sound.	2 min.	Ss	Board Markers
5. Students listen to the dialogue two more times.	1 min.		

**Activity 15****Name:** They Hopped and Jumped (Adapted from *Stepping Stones*, Hancock, 1996)**Unit:** 5 *Amazing Places***Topic:** Places in a city; touristic places**Objective:** Discriminating the pronunciation of the simple past of regular verbs**Grammar Structure:** Simple Past**Skill Focus:** Listening and Speaking**Approximated Time:** 13 minutes**Material Needed:** Handout available on Appendix L, board and markers.**Vocabulary:**

- /ɪ/: *walked, watched, looked, danced, stepped, worked, stopped, jumped, hopped, liked.*
- /aɪ/: *lived, phoned, waved, arrived, opened, moved, wondered, traveled, stayed, discovered.*
- /eɪ/: *waited, wanted, started, visited, painted, recommended, created, invented, decided, attended.*

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. The teacher divides the board in three columns and writes one word from each vocabulary list on each column. She reads the written words, putting emphasis on the pronunciation of the simple past particle.	1 min.	T → Ss	Board Markers



<p>2. The teacher randomly reads all the vocabulary words from the lists, one by one, asking students in which column to put them.</p>	<p>3 min.</p>	<p>T ↔ Ss</p>	<p>Board Markers</p>
<p>3. Students get together in pairs. The teacher gives each pair one handout.</p>	<p>1 min.</p>		<p>Handout (Appendix L)</p>
<p>4. The instructions to complete the handout are given: There is a river that should be crossed by jumping over the rocks that have words with the same ending pronunciation. Students can jump from one rock to another by horizontal, vertical, or diagonal movements only if the rocks are close to each other (they cannot jump over any rock).</p>	<p>2 min.</p>	<p>T → Ss</p>	<p>Handout: a path-finding puzzle containing words with similar sounds</p>
<p>5. The teacher provides each pair with a goal: to cross the river by stepping on words like <i>walked</i>, <i>lived</i>, or <i>visited</i>.</p>	<p>1 min.</p>		
<p>6. Students work their way to the other side of the river and the different routes are checked as a class.</p>	<p>5 min.</p>	<p>Ss T ↔ Ss</p>	<p>Handout</p>



Activity 16

Name: The Bus Ride

Unit: *5 Amazing Places*

Topic: Places in a City

Objective: Discriminating and learning the pronunciation of the /u/ diphthong

Grammar Structure: Simple Present

Skill Focus: Listening and Speaking

Approximated Time: 9 minutes

Material Needed: Song Handout available on Appendix M, highlighters, CD: Audio Material track # 6 (taken from Raffi, 2009).

Vocabulary: *round, town, around, down.*

Song: “Wheels on the Bus” (adapted from Troubadour Learning, 1998)

“The wheels on the bus go round and round,
round and round, round and round.

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
all around the town.

The people on the bus go up and down,
up and down, up and down.

the people on the bus go up and down,
all around the town.

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
round and round, round and round.

The wheels on the bus go round and round,



all around the town.”

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. Students are sorted into groups of four. One handout with the lyrics of the song is given to each group.	1 min.		Handouts with the lyrics of the song (Appendix M)
2. The teacher sings the song one time and then asks students to sing along. They sing “Wheels on the Bus” several times (CD - Track # 6 for learning the rhythm of the song).	3 min.	T → Ss T ↔ Ss	Handouts CD - track # 6
3. Teacher pronounces the /u/ sound numerous times, gesticulating as she does it, and commands students to highlight words from the song that have that sound. If students have difficulty to find the words, the teacher provides them one by one.	2 min.	T ↔ Ss Ss	Handouts Highlighters
4. Students and teacher sing “Wheels on the bus” a few more times.	2 min.	T ↔ Ss	

**Activity 17****Name:** Baking Cakes**Unit:** 6 *Daily Routines***Topic:** Routines**Objective:** Discriminating the *long a* sound - /a/**Grammar Structure:** Simple Present**Skill Focus:** Listening and Speaking**Approximated Time:** 8 minutes**Material Needed:** Images available on CD [Visual Material] and Appendix N, projector, board.**Vocabulary:** *Jane, snake, cake, make, rainy day.***Phrase:** (taken from Puchta et al., 2014)

“Jane and a snake bake cakes on a rainy day.”

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. A girl, a snake, a cake, and a window with rain falling outside are projected on the board/screen. If there is no projector available, the teacher draws these images on the board.	3 min.		Projector Images (CD) Board
2. The teacher repeats the phrase three times, pointing at the drawings.	1 min.	T → Ss	
3. Students repeat after the teacher the words represented by the drawings.	2 min.	T ↔ Ss	
4. Students repeat the phrase several times.	2 min.	T ↔ Ss	



Activity 18

Name: How hot is the pot?

Unit: 6 *Daily Routines*

Topic: Lifestyles

Objective: Discriminating the *Spanish* a sound - /m/

Grammar Structure: --

Skill Focus: Listening and Speaking

Approximated Time: 10 minutes

Material Needed: Flashcards available on Appendix O, masking tape, board, and markers.

Vocabulary: *lock, clock, box, pot, hot, socks, bottle, fox.*

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. The teacher sticks the flashcards on the board and under each image writes the first letter of the corresponding word and leaves a number of blank spaces needed for every word.	1 min.		Flashcards (Appendix O) Board Masking tape Markers
2. Students guess the words by relating them to the images on the flashcards. The teacher asks some students to come to the board and fill in the blanks.	3 min.	Ss	Flashcards Board Markers



3. The teacher asks students to repeat the words after her, <u>underlining</u> the “o” and emphasizing the <i>Spanish a</i> sound.	2 min.	T → Ss	Markers
4. Students read all the words in order, from left to right, faster each time, and then backwards, from right to left.	2 min.	Ss	
5. Some volunteers go to the front of the class and repeat the words really fast, putting emphasis on the worked sound.	2 min.	Ss	



Activity 19

Name: A Big Old Owl

Unit: 6 *Daily Routines*

Topic: Lifestyles

Objective: Differentiating the *long o*, the *aw of law*, and the *ou* sounds -

/ɔ/ /o/ /u/

Grammar Structure: Simple Past

Skill Focus: Listening and Speaking

Approximated Time: 9 minutes

Material Needed: Song Handout available on Appendix P, board, markers, and CD:

Audio Material Track # 7 (taken from Little Baby Bum, 2016).

Vocabulary:

- *Long o* sound: *old, oak, spoke.*
- *Aw of law* sound: *saw, more.*
- *Ou* sound: *owl, now.*

Song: A Wise Old Owl (taken from Granum, n.d.)

“A wise old owl lived in an oak,
 The more he saw, the less he spoke
 The less he spoke, the more he heard,
 Now, wasn't he a wise old bird?”

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. Students get together in groups of three. The teacher gives each group a piece of	1 min.		Song handout



paper with the lyrics of the song.			(Appendix P)
2. The teacher sings the song several times, gesturing to students to sing along (CD, Track # 7 for learning the rhythm of the song).	3 min.	T ↔ Ss	Board Markers CD - track # 7
3. The teacher makes three columns on the board and puts <i>spoke</i> , <i>now</i> , and <i>saw</i> on top of each column.	1 min.		Board Markers
4. Students search for words in the lyrics that sound alike to each one of the words of the board; first words like <i>spoke</i> , then <i>now</i> , and finally <i>saw</i> . The teacher writes the words on the columns.	2 min.	Ss	Board Markers
5. Teacher and students sing the song several times, putting emphasis on the sounds learnt.	2 min.	T ↔ Ss	



Activity 20

Name: All those Books

Unit: 6 *Daily Routines*

Topic: Lifestyles

Objective: Discriminating the *short u* sound - /u/

Grammar Structure: Simple Present

Skill Focus: Listening and Speaking

Approximated Time: 6 minutes

Material Needed: Board and markers

Vocabulary: *look, books, room*

Phrase:

“Look at the books all over the room!”

(taken from Puchta et al., 2014)

Procedure	Time	Interaction	Materials
1. The teacher writes the phrase on the board, writing with a different color the words from the vocabulary list.	1 min.		Markers Board
2. The teacher reads the phrase two times and gestures to the students to join her.	3 min.	T ↔ Ss	
3. The teacher points to the vocabulary words several times for the students to say them aloud.	2 min.		Board
Extension: two or three volunteer students			



<p>direct the activity by pointing and saying the vocabulary words for their classmates to repeat after them.</p>			
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CONCLUSIONS

After having analyzed the results and information gathered in this research paper, it can be concluded that the correct pronunciation of English words is necessary to speak this language appropriately in EFL classes. The activities suggested in this work for eighth grade students of Cuenca, Ecuador, will help them accomplish communicative competence in this important language.

One of the main issues to be aware of in teaching TL pronunciation is the differences that exist in the sounds both English and Spanish have, which often lead EFL learners to poor performance in the field if they do not practice the pronunciation of English sounds. Moreover, it has been proved that a low performance level of pronunciation contributes to a breakdown in communication and to a decrease in learners' self-confidence. However, it must be noted that nowadays, TL pronunciation training is seen in terms of intelligibility, suggesting that it should promote and allow communication yet there is no need for it to be native-like.

Additionally, research findings showed that pronunciation is nearly not taken into consideration inside EFL classes because of multiple reasons, such as lack of research on the subject, lack of material, and deficiency of teachers' knowledge of the topic. Nevertheless, studies also proved that TL pronunciation instruction, by means of explicit or implicit training, improves learners' performance, which means it should be regarded as an important goal.



Furthermore, based on the results of the survey, we can conclude that eighth grade students of the schools of Cuenca think of EFL pronunciation as an essential part of their foreign language instruction and they also feel positive upon their current pronunciation, which represents that they are eager to be good at it. They prefer learning pronunciation by repeating words and phrases, singing songs, and listening to recordings. In the same line of thinking, the interviews showed that, commonly, EFL teachers of public high schools considered teaching pronunciation as a hard task to accomplish, leading them not to pursue it as a TL goal, yet, it is worked on once or twice a week.

In accordance with the findings and results, twenty Phonetics-based activities meant for pronunciation practice on vowel sounds and pronunciation of the *-ed* suffix were developed after the compilation of phonetic knowledge, information on TL teaching methods, a comparison between L1 and L2, the results from surveys and interviews, and detailed information of the Ecuadorian eighth-grade curriculum. These activities are available for EFL teachers of eighth grade and have the purpose of facilitating the teaching of pronunciation.



RECOMMENDATIONS

To teach English pronunciation in EFL classes in public institutions of Cuenca, Ecuador, can be a hard task for teachers if it is not regarded as important among the four main language skills, if there is no available material, and if students feel discouraged about the subject. Therefore, this research paper, along with the research findings, results and conclusions, recommends the following:

1. Teaching and practicing EFL pronunciation must be gradually enriched by interesting activities directed to students' age and interests, which must be created around TL knowledge and available material and equipment.
2. EFL teachers must take into consideration the distinctions among English and Spanish in order to avoid possible negative transfer from students and take advantage of positive one.
3. EFL teachers must also contemplate the fact that they are the main referent for their students in the TL (English), especially in pronunciation, which leads to a great responsibility.
4. The twenty proposed pronunciation activities are meant for EFL teachers to include them in their unit/term planning, so as to work regularly on the TL sounds.



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APPENDICES



APPENDIX A
SURVEY TEMPLATE

ENCUESTA

La presente encuesta tiene por objeto conocer el criterio de estudiantes de octavo de educación general básica con respecto a la práctica de la pronunciación del inglés como idioma extranjero. Los datos recolectados por medio de esta encuesta servirán para la realización de una tesis de pregrado de la Universidad de Cuenca.

INSTRUCCIONES: Esta encuesta es anónima, por lo que no es necesario incluir tu nombre. En cada pregunta, marca con una **X** la respuesta que sea cierta para ti; solamente debes marcar una (1) de las respuestas proporcionadas.

Edad:
Género:
<input type="checkbox"/> Masculino
<input type="checkbox"/> Femenino

1. ¿Cómo te parece la pronunciación del inglés?
 FÁCIL
 MEDIO
 DIFÍCIL
2. ¿Cómo consideras que es tu nivel de pronunciación de inglés?
 ALTO
 MEDIO
 BAJO
3. ¿Qué tan importante te parece tener una buena pronunciación de inglés?
 ALTO
 MEDIO
 BAJO
4. ¿Cuál es tu principal referente de pronunciación de inglés?
 PROFESOR
 UN FAMILIAR
 LA MÚSICA
 PROGRAMAS DE TV
 JUEGOS DE VIDEO
5. ¿Tu profesor de inglés corrige la pronunciación cuando tu o tus compañeros hablan en inglés?
 SI



- A VECES
- RARA VEZ
- NUNCA

6. ¿Cuántas veces a la semana practicas pronunciación en tus clases de inglés?

- TODAS LAS CLASES
- 1 A 2 CLASES POR SEMANA
- NUNCA
- OTRO _____

SI ESCOGISTE LA OPCIÓN “NUNCA” PASA A LA PREGUNTA #8

7. ¿Cómo practican pronunciación en tu clase de inglés? (Puedes escoger más de una opción)

- REPITIENDO PALABRAS / FRASES
- GRABACIONES
- CANCIONES
- ACTIVIDADES DEL LIBRO
- OTRO _____

8. ¿Cómo te gustaría practicar la pronunciación del inglés? (Puedes escoger más de una opción)

- REPETIR PALABRAS / FRASES
- DIFERENCIAR SONIDOS SIMILARES
- CANCIONES
- TRABALENGUAS
- GRABACIONES
- OTRO _____

GRACIAS POR TU COLABORACIÓN



APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

Gender / Age / Academic Degree / Experience

1. Do you think it is important to teach pronunciation to EFL students? Why?
2. Do you teach and practice English pronunciation in your EFL classes? How often?
3. What methodology do you believe is most appropriate for teaching English pronunciation?
4. What techniques and activities do you use to teach accurate English pronunciation to your students?
5. Which are the activities for pronunciation practice that your students like the most?
6. How do you correct pronunciation in your EFL students?
7. What procedures do you use to assess students' progress in English pronunciation?
8. According to your experience, what are the models students have for learning and practicing pronunciation?
9. What obstacles do you as teacher face when teaching pronunciation?
10. What obstacles are more significant for EFL students in the practicing of pronunciation?



APPENDIX C
TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEW #1

Institution: Escuela de Educación Básica 'Federico Proaño'

Gender: Female

Age: 35 years old

Academic Degree: Bachelor degree on Educational Sciences with a specialization in English Language and Literature

Experience: 8 years of teaching school and high school levels

1. Do you think it is important to teach pronunciation to EFL students? Why?

Yes, I think that one of the tools that the teacher needs to improve in the students because some students know how to write in English but they don't want to speak in English, they feel bored, they feel shy to speak in English. And so the teacher needs to improve the speaking skill in the students to get a high level to practice the speaking with the students. Some students don't have the correct pronunciation, they try to pronounce in a bad way and so they make mistakes.

2. Do you teach and practice English pronunciation in your EFL classes? How often?

I try to teach pronunciation but some students laugh when their classmates pronounce in a bad way and so we have to be patient with this kind of situations. I try to get the students pronunciation but sometimes is really difficult.



I think that we have to practice all the time. Sometimes I put in practice pronunciation, not everyday, because I think that the students need to listen the real pronunciation, and some vocabulary that we have in the book I think that I can't pronounce correctly, some words, and I don't like that the students learn the bad pronunciation. I think that they need to learn the correct pronunciation listening to the CD but we don't have the material. I try to practice when they went to the audiovisual room, so they can listen songs, they can listen some exercise that they can practice the pronunciation and some words that I try to get students to pronounce some words correctly.

3. What methodology do you believe is most appropriate for teaching English pronunciation?

Maybe the drills, the drills, the repetition drills. So I repeat a sentence and the students repeat after me, so they can listen and repeat. It's the best way, I think.

4. What techniques and activities do you use to teach accurate English pronunciation to your students?

Maybe when they try to complete, they have to listen the words and so they can complete. So in listening activities, the students have, the students need to complete the sentence, so they need to hear the word so they can complete the sentence, so they can practice pronunciation, because they have to listen and they have to need to have in mind that the word isn't the same that how they can write. The write and the pronunciation is different, completely different, and so maybe they can get this.



When we correct a homework, I need students to raise their hands and they have to tell me the answer and they can practice pronunciation when we check homework, when we check exercise of the book.

5. Which are the activities for pronunciation practice that your students like the most?

Through pictures, I show them pictures and they have to tell me, for example in daily activities, they look at the picture and they have to tell me, to describe, and they practice pronunciation.

6. How do you correct pronunciation in your EFL students?

All the time I correct them when they have a bad pronunciation. I correct pronunciation all the time, when they make a mistake I correct pronunciation. I tell them the correct pronunciation. First I let students to finish the sentence, after that I correct the words that they don't have the correct pronunciation.

7. What procedures do you use to assess students' progress in English pronunciation?

When I ask questions, I ask questions and students answer these questions and I can evaluate the students' pronunciation, and I can, if students having problems I can correct them.

8. According to your experience, what are the models students have for learning and practicing pronunciation?

Listening songs, listening songs. I think that they can listen their favorite music so they can improve their pronunciation.

9. What obstacles do you as teacher face when teaching pronunciation?



When the students laugh, the students feel shy, they don't want to talk, they know the answer but they don't want to talk, they feel shy. It's the problem with the students; some students laugh and some students feel shy.

10. What obstacles are more significant for EFL students in the practicing of pronunciation?

The material. We have to go to the audiovisual room once a week. It's difficult; it's a short time that they can practice pronunciation.



INTERVIEW # 2

Institution: Escuela Básica Panamá

Gender: Female

Age: 32 years old

Academic Degree: Bachelor degree on Educational Sciences with a specialization in English Language and Literature

Experience: 8 years as EFL teacher in school and high school level

1. Do you think it is important to teach pronunciation to EFL students? Why?

Yes, it's very important but is so difficult, is extremely difficult that the students practice pronunciation, because they are, it's difficult for they speak in Spanish and I don't believe talking in English and they sometimes say "please in Spanish teacher; don't say in English; don't use English" and is so difficult for them.

2. Do you teach and practice English pronunciation in your EFL classes? How often?

I practice English pronunciation with dialogues, with projects from the book, the government's book, but it's limited, the pronunciation is so limited. If a student say the wrong word they repeat again, again the same way, don't change the pronunciation. For example *people* [pEoplE], *people!*, no, *people*.

How often? I think in five hours, I think two hours class, but depends of the topic of the lesson.

3. What methodology do you believe is most appropriate for teaching English pronunciation?



For me it's better songs, songs, for me its better songs. But the dialogues become boring for the students and also they practice dialogues and also they, they read, reading, read, but it's, it's boring. But I, it's better for me songs.

Methodologies? Well, I practice here with repetition, with repetition, but it is mechanic, it is so boring, but when, I try to improve my class in the best way and try the students understand the things, but it's so difficult.

4. What techniques and activities do you use to teach accurate English pronunciation to your students?

A variety of techniques, but not for pronunciation, it's a variety of techniques in the way that I learned when I was in the United States, because I am a Go Teacher, I was in the Go Teacher program. I learned different techniques but in pronunciation only work in groups, and practicing, and share projects in the whole class, but in pronunciation no.

Activities, for example mini books, magic books, foldable, vocabulary quilt, umbrellas.

5. Which are the activities for pronunciation practice that your students like the most?

Songs. Keep in mind the lyrics of the song and practice, repeat, repeat, repeat, but they don't understand the whole song, but try to practice.

6. How do you correct pronunciation in your EFL students?

In this moment I say, don't say [pEoplE] say 'people' but they again repeat. But I try all the time to suggest: improve your pronunciation. But in public schools is so difficult, the students are very, very, very busy, lazy.



7. What procedures do you use to assess students' progress in English pronunciation?

I think, I use rubrics to know the advance of the students, but sometimes it's not real because they, in a lesson they memorize the words for the lesson but not for the practice but they try. I say the students: read, read more, don't be shy, speak in English, not only inside the classroom, practice outside the classroom, watch movies, listening English songs. But the level of pronunciation is low, but in English, general way English is low.

8. According to your experience, what are the models students have for learning and practicing pronunciation?

Maybe the... they practice pronunciation asking questions. I say: ask a question and say it in English, don't write, say me. And they practice pronunciation.

9. What obstacles do you as teacher face when teaching pronunciation?

I think the TICS, because I don't have the enough material and enough technology to practice the students' pronunciation. Technology for English is the best way to teach. But they try to use the things that I have in my hands with the material but it is more effort for me because I have to organize my time, to make a flashcards, to make a dialogue, make a...something like that.

10. What obstacles are more significant for EFL students in the practicing of pronunciation?

Nervous, they are very nervous all the time, they are shy, they are quiet. Students, they don't like to practice, they don't like to use English in the classroom. Only talk in Spanish all the time.



APPENDIX D

Activity # 1: Memory Cards

Instruction: Copy, paste on cardboard and cut out a set of memory cards for each group of four students in your class.

meet

eat

not

hot

eye

my

three

tree

lock

clock

dance

prance

cool

tool

fest

test

heel

peel

will



fill	bit	it
jump	bump	nine
mine	shell	well
game	name	play
prey	show	blue
jazz	has	funny
honey	rain	train



APPENDIX E

Activity # 4: Song Lyrics

Instruction: Make a copy of the song for each group of four students in your class.

“Five Little Monkeys”

Five little monkeys jumping on the bed,
one fell off and bump his head,
mother called the doctor, and the doctor said,
‘No more monkeys jumping on the bed!’

Four little monkeys jumping on the bed,
one fell off and bumped her head,
mother called the doctor, and the doctor said,
‘No more monkeys jumping on the bed!’

Three little monkeys jumping on the bed,
one fell off and bump his head,
mother called the doctor, and the doctor said,
‘No more monkeys jumping on the bed!’

Two little monkeys jumping on the bed,
one fell off and bumped her head,
mother called the doctor, and the doctor said,
‘No more monkeys jumping on the bed!’

One little monkey jumping on the bed,
one fell off and bumped his head,
mother called the doctor, and the doctor said,
‘No more monkeys jumping on the bed!’

Taken from Child’s Play, 2002

APPENDIX F

Activity # 6: Dialogue Transcription

Instruction: Copy and cut out the dialogue transcription for each pair of students in your class.

Gus the Astronaut

- **Gus:** Hi, Mum, It's Gus. What's up?
 - **Mum:** Well, I've just had some lovely plums covered in honey for lunch. How are you son?
 - **Gus:** Hungry!
-

Gus the Astronaut

- **Gus:** Hi, Mum, It's Gus. What's up?
 - **Mum:** Well, I've just had some lovely plums covered in honey for lunch. How are you son?
 - **Gus:** Hungry!
-



APPENDIX G

Activity # 7: Poster

Instruction: Print the poster in A3 size from the CD.





APPENDIX H
Activity # 8: Domino Cards

Instruction: Copy, paste on cardboard and cut out a set of domino cards for each group of four students in your class.

fascinated	thrilled	fascinated	tired	fascinated	amused
fascinated	bored	fascinated	disappointed	fascinated	surprised
shocked	inspired	shocked	relaxed	shocked	bored
shocked	amused	shocked	tired	shocked	thrilled
relaxed	pleased	relaxed	surprised	relaxed	inspired
relaxed	amazed	relaxed	interested	excited	interested
excited	amazed	excited	inspired	excited	surprised



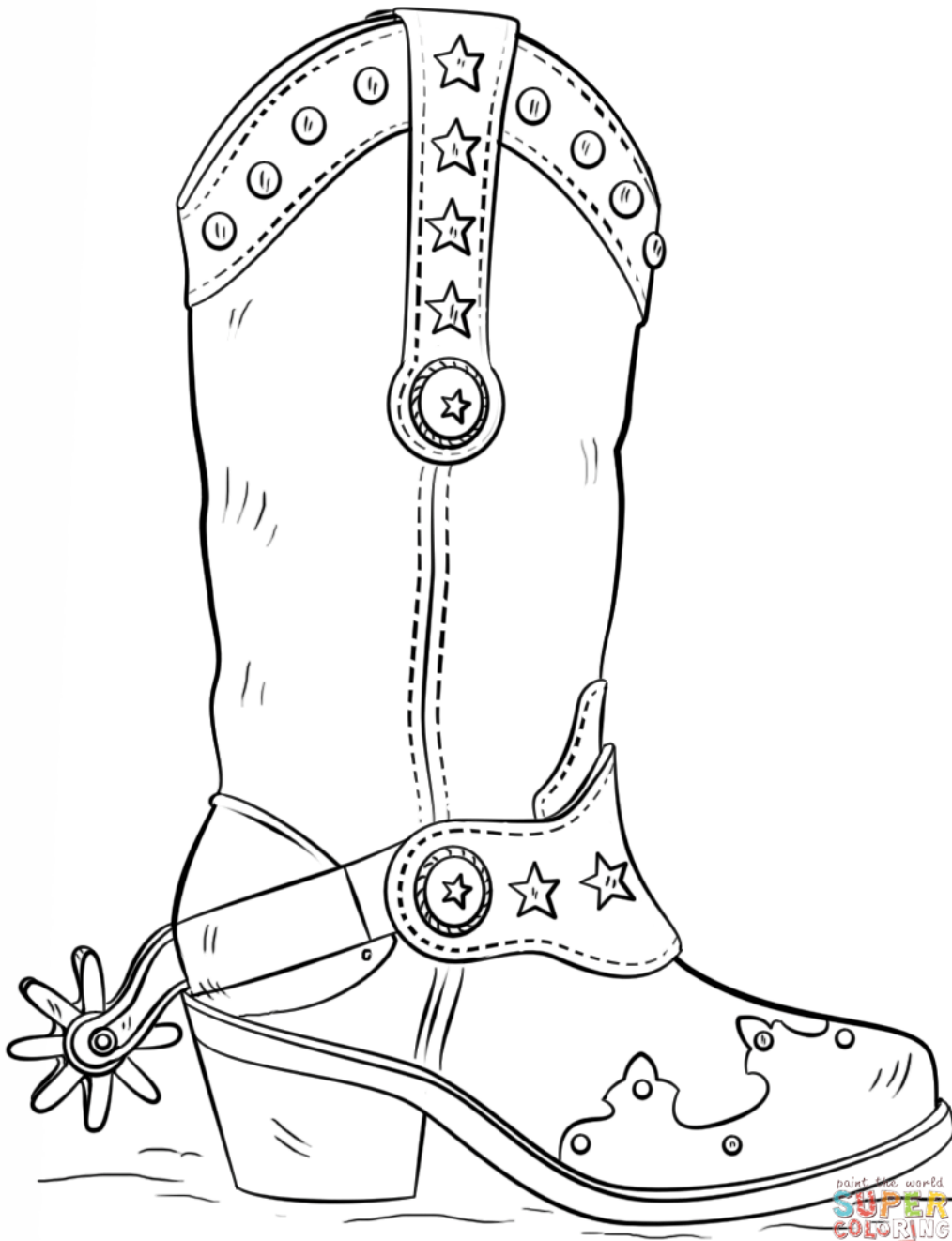
excited	pleased	excited	bored	touched	bored
touched	amused	touched	tired	touched	thrilled
touched	pleased	touched	surprised	disappointed	interested
disappointed	thrilled	disappointed	pleased	disappointed	bored
disappointed	surprised	amazed	tired	amazed	inspired
amazed	amused	amazed	pleased	interested	thrilled
interested	inspired	interested	tired	pleased	bored
surprised	amused	inspired	tired	thrilled	amused



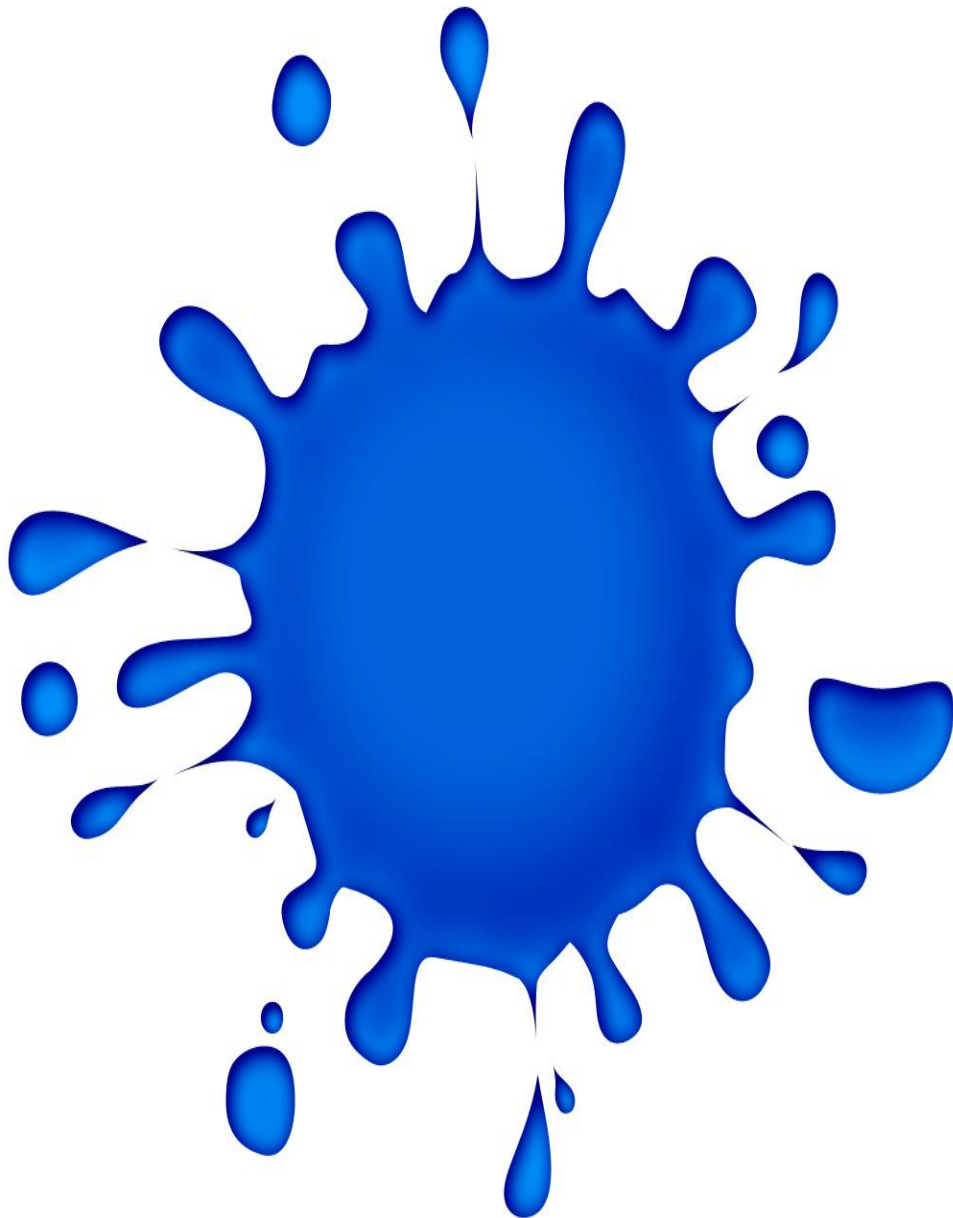
APPENDIX I

Activity # 10: Flashcards

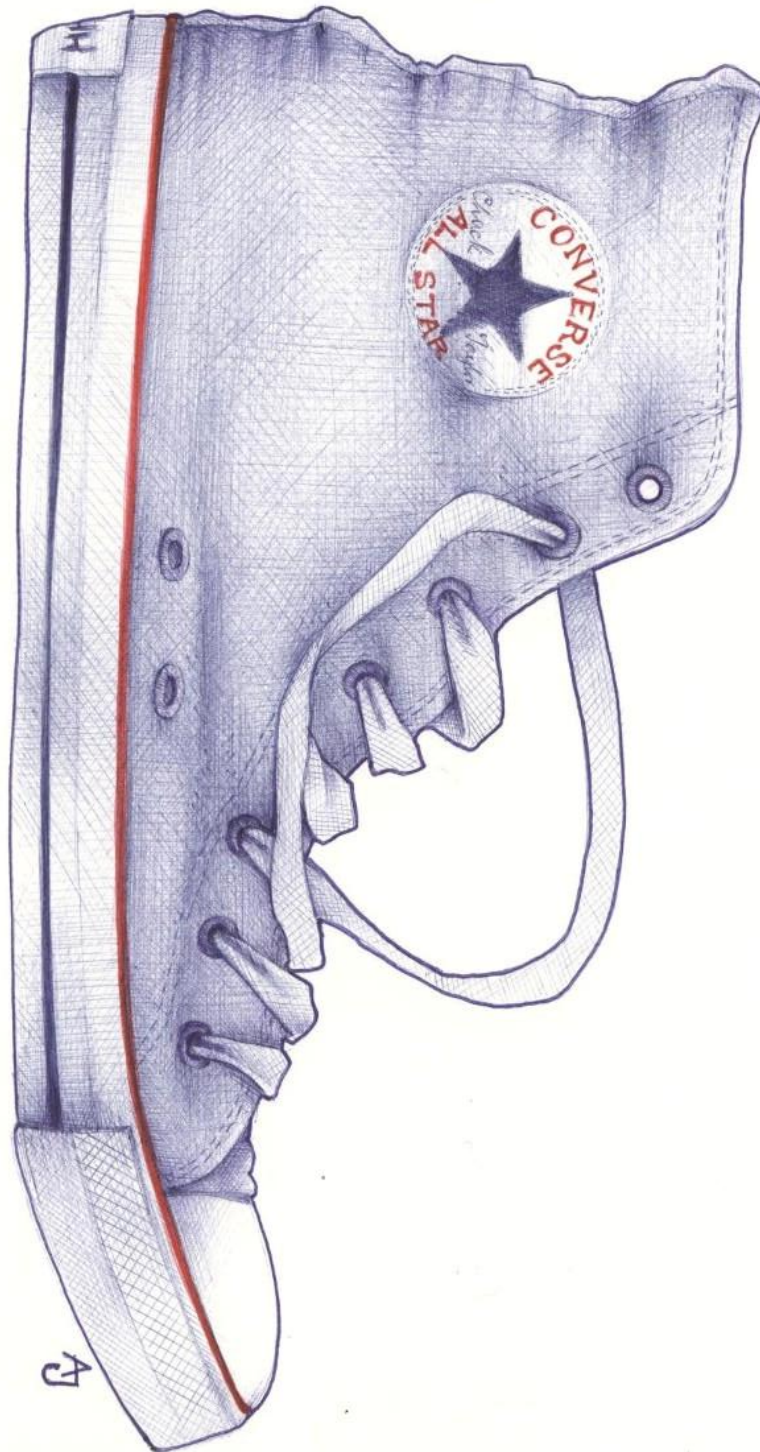
Instruction: Make a copy of all the activity's flashcards.



Taken from London (n.d.)



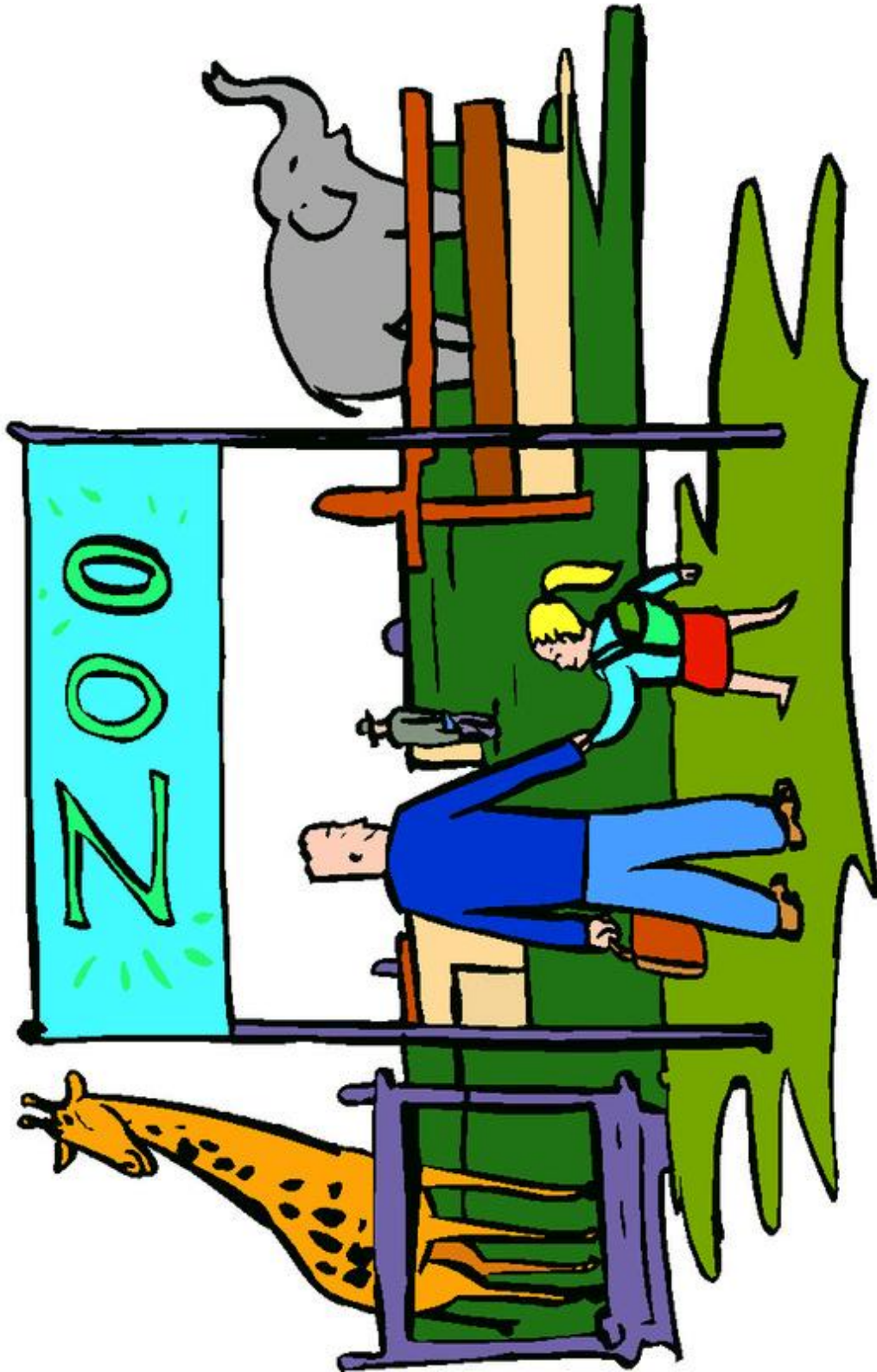
Taken from PSD Graphics (2010)



Taken from Joseph (2010)



Taken from Jhonson (2011)



Taken from Clipart Panda (2014)



APPENDIX J

Activity # 12: Street Maze Hangout

Instruction: Make a copy of the maze for each pair students in your class.

			eat ↓
is	sit	seat	ease
reach	heat	wheel	slip
cheap	rich	chip	ship
sheep	beat	hit	bit
still	feel	sit	it
sleep	steal	will	fill



APPENDIX K

Activity # 13: Bingo Cards and Words

Instruction: Copy and cut out the Bingo cards so there is one card for each student in your class.

BINGO			
checked	disliked	matched	shopped
changed	cleaned	grabbed	tried
owned	attended	folded	hated
suited	dressed	liked	washed

BINGO			
undressed	claimed	described	labeled
compared	afforded	decided	wanted
mended	checked	matched	changed
grabbed	owned	folded	suited

BINGO			
liked	undressed	disliked	described
shopped	compared	cleaned	decided
tried	mended	attended	matched
hated	grabbed	dressed	folded

BINGO			
checked	dressed	disliked	liked
changed	claimed	cleaned	described
afforded	attended	decided	folded
shopped	grabbed	tried	washed

BINGO			
wanted	hated	mended	suited
labeled	tried	compared	owned
matched	washed	shopped	undressed
cleaned	attended	dressed	claimed

BINGO			
liked	matched	described	grabbed
labeled	folded	wanted	undressed
changed	suited	dressed	claimed
attended	compared	decided	mended



Instruction: Copy and cut out the cards with the vocabulary words for the Bingo game.

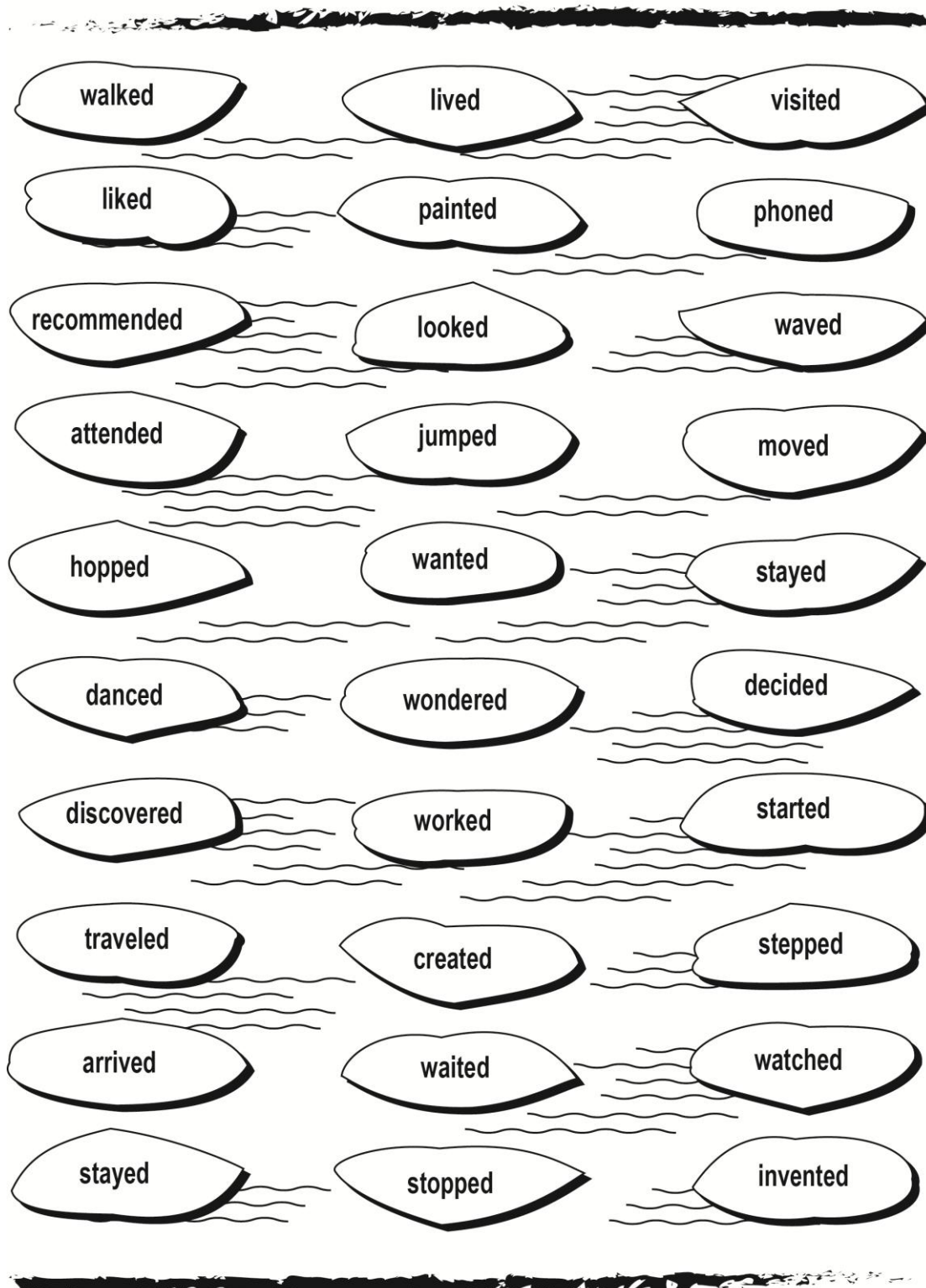
		checked
dressed	disliked	liked
matched	washed	shopped
undressed	changed	claimed
cleaned	described	grabbed
labeled	tried	compared
owned	afforded	attended
decided	folded	wanted
hated	mended	suited



APPENDIX L

Activity # 15: The Hopped and Jumped Hangout

Instruction: Make a copy of the maze for each pair students in your class.





APPENDIX M

Activity # 16: Song Lyrics

Instruction: Make a copy of the song for each group of four students in your class.

“Wheels on the Bus”

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
round and round, round and round.

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
all around the town.

The people on the bus go up and down,
up and down, up and down.

the people on the bus go up and down,
all around the town.

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
round and round, round and round.

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
all around the town.”

Adapted from Troubadour Learning, 1998



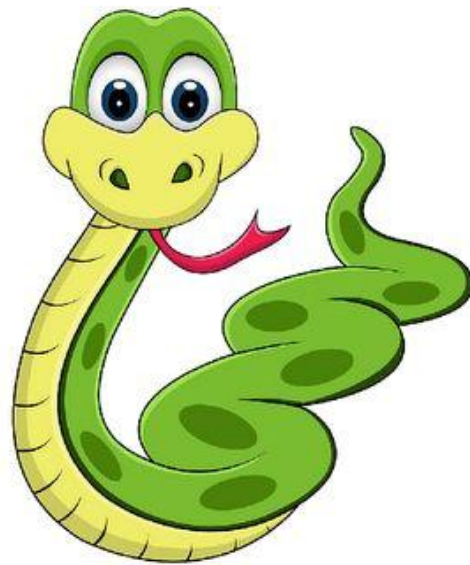
APPENDIX N

Activity # 17: Images

Instruction: Project the images from the CD onto the board.



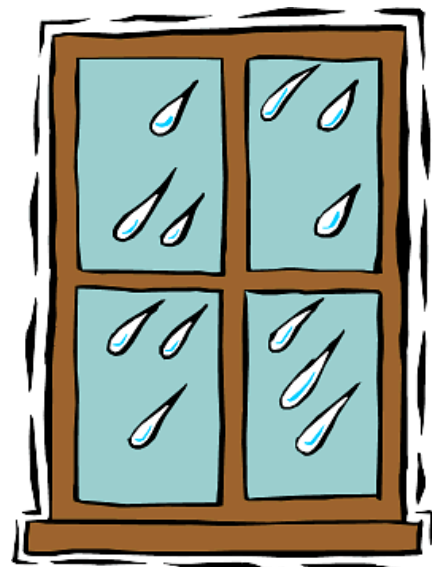
Taken from Classroom Clipart (2016)



Taken from Clipart Panda (2014)



Taken from Clipart Kid (2016)



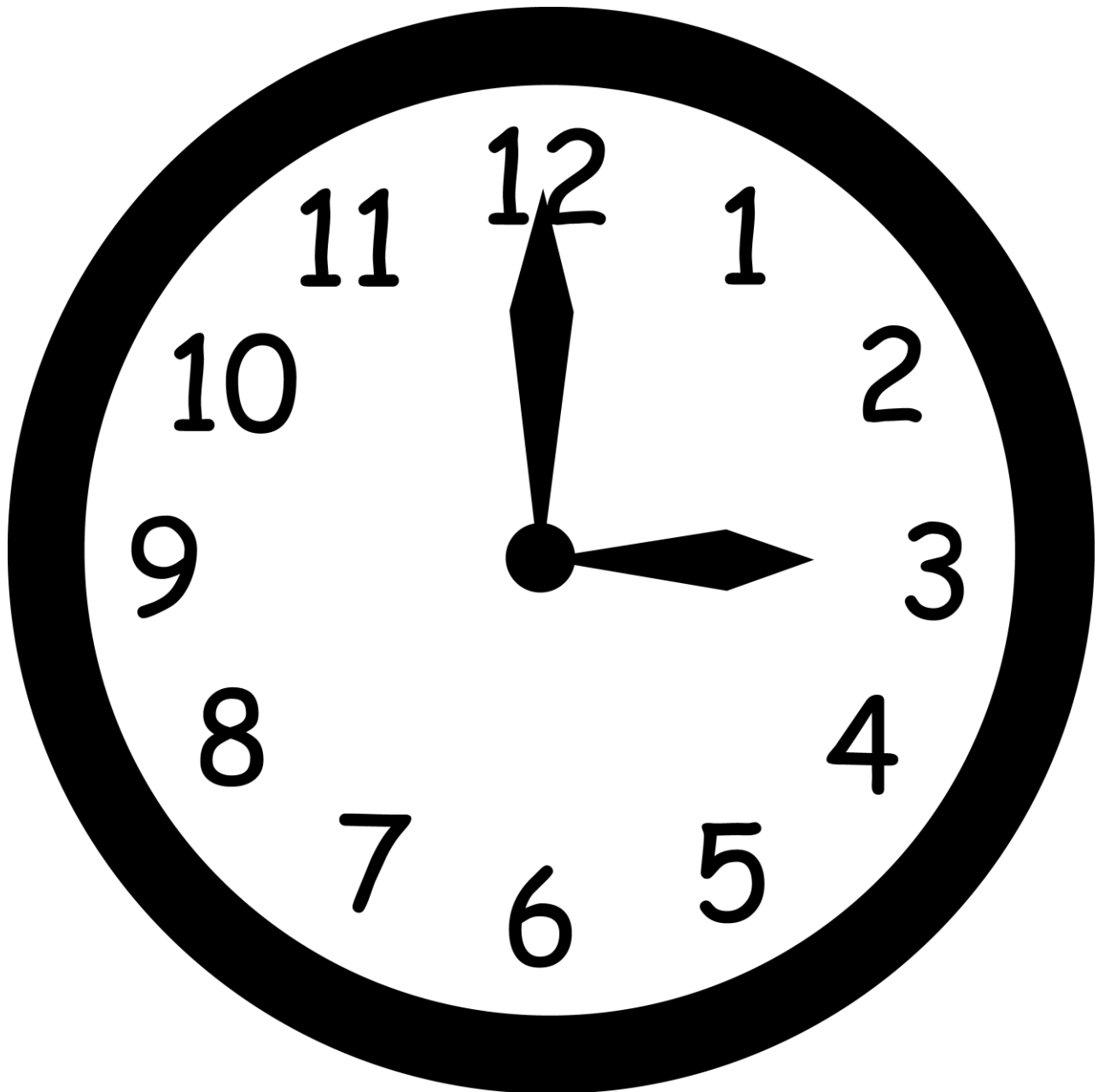
Taken from EnglishExercies.org (n.d.)



APPENDIX O

Activity # 18: Flashcards

Instruction: Make a copy of all the flashcards.



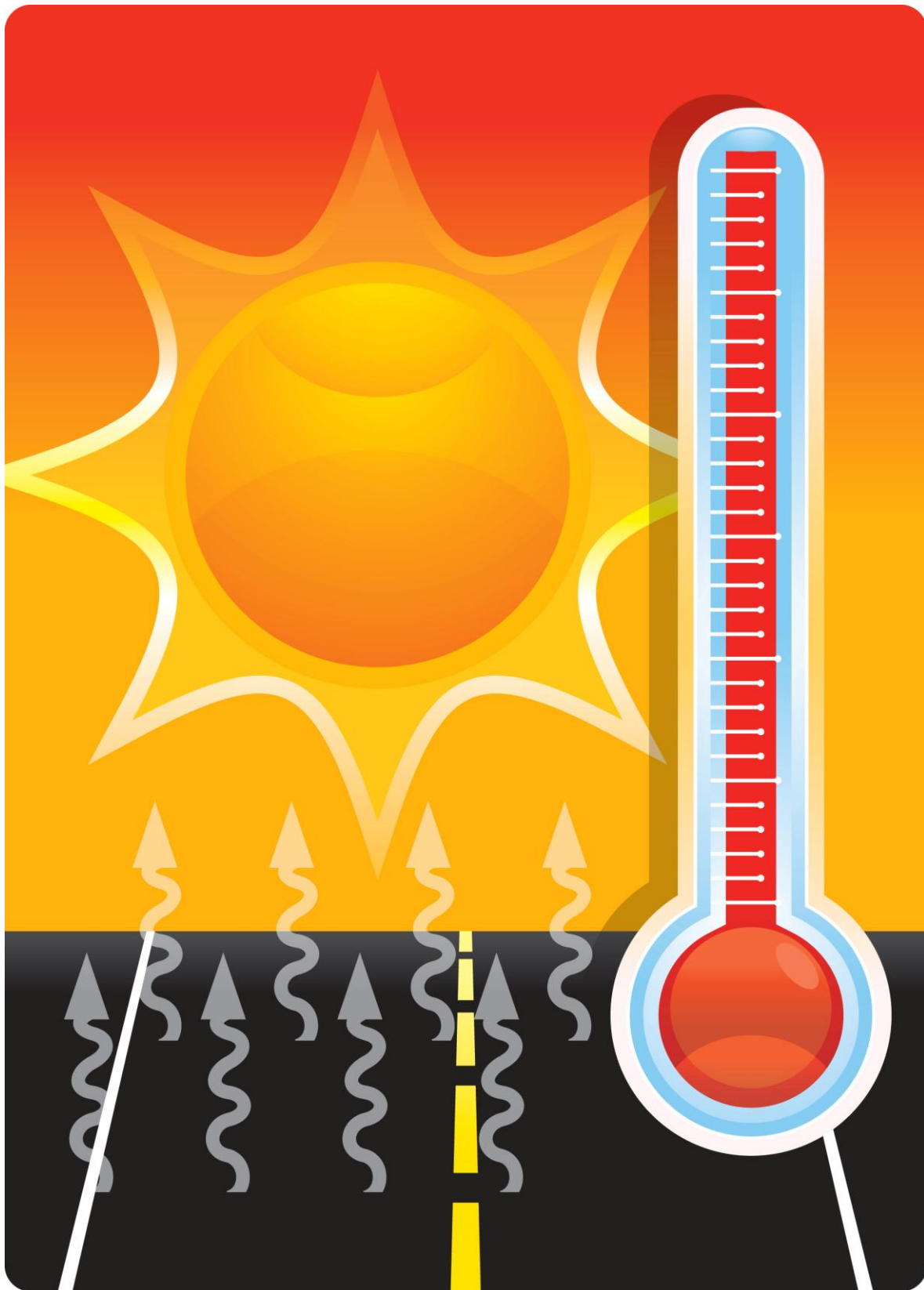
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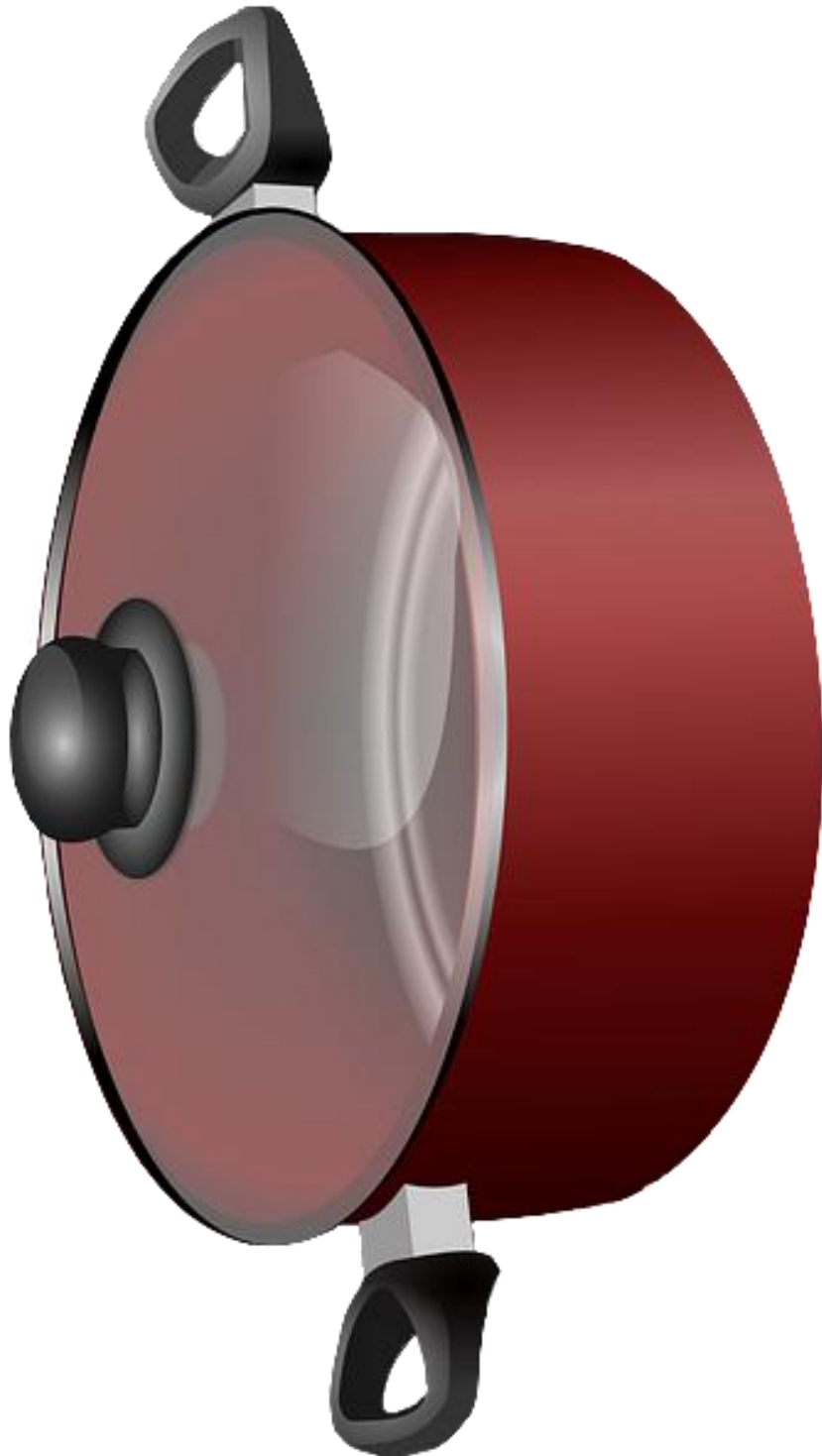
Taken from Clipart Kids (2016)



Taken from Clipart Panda (2014).



Taken from Energy Newsroom (2015)



Taken from Clipart Kids (2016)



Taken from Clipart Kid (2016)



Taken from Clipart Kid (2016)



Taken from Clipart Kid (2016)



APPENDIX P

Activity # 19: Rhyme

Instruction: Copy and cut out the rhyme for each group of three students in your class.

“A Wise Old Owl”

“A wise old owl lived in an oak,
The more he saw, the less he spoke
The less he spoke, the more he heard,
Now, wasn't he a wise old bird?”

“A Wise Old Owl”

“A wise old owl lived in an oak,
The more he saw, the less he spoke
The less he spoke, the more he heard,
Now, wasn't he a wise old bird?”
