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Universidad de Cuenca

Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y Ciencias de la Educación

Carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros

The Effects of Teaching Phonetics to EFL Students


Trabajo de titulación previo a la
obtención del título de Licenciada
en Pedagogía del Idioma Inglés

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2023-08-30

Resumen

La instrucción de la fonética a estudiantes de una lengua extranjera es un tema sumamente importante en el campo de la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera. Al estar la fonética estrechamente relacionada con la pronunciación, esta síntesis de investigación se ha enfocado principalmente en analizar los efectos que esta instrucción puede tener, los mismos que pueden ser tanto positivos como negativos. De acuerdo a lo que se ha observado en los estudios considerados para el desarrollo de este análisis, los resultados en su totalidad presentan efectos positivos en la pronunciación de los estudiantes. Además, otro factor importante que se considera en esta síntesis de investigación son las metodologías y herramientas utilizadas para la enseñanza de la fonética a los estudiantes de una lengua extranjera, en donde los resultados muestran que en su mayoría se utiliza una instrucción explícita de la fonética y que la herramienta principal es la tecnología, ya que, en los estudios analizados se puede observar el uso de un software y una aplicación móvil. Finalmente, en esta síntesis de investigación se consideran también las perspectivas tanto de los estudiantes como de los profesores sobre la implementación de la fonética en las clases de inglés como lengua extranjera, dando resultados favorables y aceptación de la misma.

Palabras clave: pronunciación, estudiantes de inglés, estrategias, percepciones



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Abstract

Instructing students of a foreign language in phonetics is an extremely important topic in the field of teaching English as a foreign language. As phonetics is closely related to pronunciation, this research synthesis has focused mainly on analyzing the effects that this instruction can have, both positive and negative. According to what has been observed in the studies considered for the development of this analysis, the results present positive effects on the students' pronunciation. In addition, other important factors that are considered in this research synthesis are the methodologies and tools used for teaching phonetics to students of a foreign language, where the results showed that explicit instruction of phonetics is mostly used, and that the main tool is technology, since the analyzed studies use software and a mobile application. Finally, in this research synthesis, the perspectives of both students and teachers regarding teaching and learning phonetics in EFL classes are also considered, showing approval and acceptance of it.

Keywords: pronunciation, English students, strategies, perceptions



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Acknowledgments

I want to express my sincere gratitude to my professor Lcda. Juanita Argudo, Ph.D., my thesis tutor who with her wisdom and patience has guided me in this process. I couldn't be more grateful for her support and encouragement. I would also like to thank all my professors of the degree who have been part of my professional development and thanks to whom today I am presenting my degree work.

Dedictory

To God and the Virgin to whom I have entrusted myself since the beginning of my university studies, thank you for listening to me five years ago when I told you about my dreams.

To my parents, Carlos and Eugenia who have always supported me in meeting my academic and personal goals, a bright future awaits me and it is all thanks to you.

To my sister Gabriela and my brother Juan Carlos, thank you for your advice whenever I needed it, your experience helped me create my own.

To my grandparents, Alfonso † and Laura, to my family and friends who always supported and trusted me, thank you for giving me your love and support.

To my little four-legged friend who is no longer with me, Pulgas, thank you for having been here in the best and worst moments of my life. Although it has been difficult to let you go, I know that you fulfilled your mission in this world. I dedicate this work to you, my little ball nose.

Introduction

The appropriate development of various skills is essential to learning a second or foreign language. Among them, spoken communication is of pivotal importance (Rao, 2019). Considering the need for English language learners to communicate appropriately, pronunciation is a branch of language that helps people develop more comprehensible speech (Gilakjani and Saubori, 2017). Moreover, scholars have begun to analyze the different approaches, perceptions, and effects of teaching and learning phonetics. Consequently, research has found that teaching phonetics has effectively increased students' oral proficiency in an EFL environment by means of motivation and production (Khamkhien, 2010).

This research synthesis aims to analyze the effects of teaching phonetics in EFL students by evaluating different methodologies and tools used to teach phonetics. Also, this research analyzes the perceptions of teachers and students about teaching phonetics in the classrooms, as well as the possible effects, either positive or negative, that teaching and learning phonetics in EFL classrooms can have. To reach these goals, this research synthesis analyzes several empirical studies that contribute information required to understand the topic. Furthermore, this study addresses the following research questions: 1) What are the effects of teaching phonetics on EFL learners' pronunciation? 2) What are the most effective phonetic approaches to improve EFL students' pronunciation? 3) What are the students' and teachers' perceptions of implementing phonetic strategies in EFL classes?

This study has six chapters. The first one describes the research and addresses the background, problem statement, rationale, research questions, and objectives. The second chapter introduces the theoretical framework, which presents theories and concepts necessary for comprehending the study. In the third chapter, the literature review provides a synthesis of 15 primary research studies by giving the essential results and findings. The fourth chapter describes the methodology used in the research, including this project's inclusion and exclusion criteria. In the fifth chapter, the findings of the research studies are

analyzed and categorized. Lastly, the sixth chapter encompasses conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 1

1.1 Background

Learners' speaking competence is an important factor in learning a language. As Boonkit (2010) mentions, "Speaking is one of the four macro skills to be developed as a means of effective communication in both first and second language learning contexts" (p.1). Thus, the sub-skills of speaking should be taught in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and/or English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. Methods teachers use to help students to improve them is a matter of discussion.

Throughout the years, experts in the language teaching field have developed many different strategies to improve language instruction. "Speaking strategies have been viewed as first aid devices used for interaction and communication, to address problems or breakdowns, and to remain active in communication" (Chou, 2018, p. 611).

Much research has been carried out to discover more effective means of developing EFL students' speaking skills. Authors such as Srikaew et al. (2015) establish that "English speaking skill assessment is very important and it will hopefully bring about English language teaching improvement" (p.764). However, there is less research that examines improving pronunciation by second language (L2) learners than there is in other disciplines (Baker & Murphy, 2011). According to Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2010), "pronunciation is regarded as an integral component of communication, rather than an isolated drill and practice subskill" (p.984). Also, Arimilli et al. (2016) argue that "Pronunciation refers to the way in which we sound or speak a particular language" (p.108). Both definitions refer to pronunciation as an important part of communication that has to be taken into consideration while learning a language.

It is known that "Phonetics subsumes the physical aspects of speech production and their relation to speech perception" (Levis & Munro, 2013, p.1). Since phonetics is an important

branch of linguistics, teaching this component should be considered in EFL classrooms. Researchers have investigated the possible effects that phonetics can have on classrooms and on students. Some of the research that involves teaching phonetics in the EFL environment showed different results and effects on EFL learners. According to Ghorbani (2019), phonetic transcriptions “can reinforce the recognition of the target language sounds imperfectly received by the learners' ear” (p. 408). This research result, at a glance, seems to show phonetics in the classroom as having a positive effect. However, another study in which a sample of participants were exposed to phonetics “revealed that the participants faced serious phonetic problems regarding their perceptions of English sounds” (Al-Rubaat & Alshammari, 2019, p.65). As seen in the research results previously mentioned, both pieces of research relate to teaching phonetics, and both show different results, which shows not only potential benefits but also challenges. Accordingly, it seems necessary to 1) find out if it is more beneficial or challenging to include phonetics teaching in ESL/EFL classrooms, 2) determine what phonetics teaching techniques and activities are most commonly used, 3) account for teachers' and students' perceptions of phonetics teaching.

1.2 Problem Statement

According to Melitz (2016), "There has never been in the past a language spoken more widely in the world than English is today" (p. 583). It is used as a lingua franca by many people in different countries. That is why speaking English is essential, since by using this language people can communicate all over the world. However, many students face difficulties when speaking English because of their pronunciation (Gilakjani et al. 2011). According to Khaghaninezhad (2013), "One of the major problems faced by almost any ESL/EFL learner is the achievement of an acceptable pronunciation that enables him/her to be understood by native speakers" (p.52). Students have problems while speaking, since native speakers are not able to understand what is being said due to poor pronunciation, which results in miscommunication. Research suggests that teachers pay more attention to mistakes students commit when using phonological systems after various errors in pronunciation have been made (Ghorbani et al. 2016). Many English learners have problems with pronunciation even if they have been learning the language for years (Gilakjani et al. 2011).

Most EFL teachers are usually people whose first language is not English (Moussu & Llurda, 2008). According to Murcia et al. (2010), "teachers of English who are not native speakers of English and who expect to serve as the major model and source of input in English pronunciation for their students usually fail on the attempt" (p. 366).

Nowadays, EFL teachers are in charge of giving pronunciation instruction while teaching English since it is part of the national curriculum of different countries. Nevertheless, teaching pronunciation represents a challenge for EFL teachers. Due to time constraints, pronunciation instruction is sometimes not possible, and even when enough class time exists for such instruction, techniques such as repetition and imitation with students results in pronunciation avoidance (Gilbert, 2008). Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2010) mentioned that it is better to use traditional pronunciation teaching techniques like dictation, reading aloud, and dialogues because teachers often encounter difficulties when teaching phonetics in an EFL environment.

Moreover, EFL learners' low levels of motivation to develop their speaking skill seem to be a significant issue in learning phonetics; some students are not engaged in this process. According to Ghorbani (2019), students see no reason to learn pronunciation since it is not tested in the formal education exams. If learners have little or no intrinsic motivation, students do not see pronunciation classes as important in second language learning. According to Al Rubaatand Alshammari (2019), "The lack of immersed EFL/ESL activities, where speaking practices and pronunciation acquisition are focused can also be considered as another factor affecting EFL learners' communicative competence negatively" (p.63). These problems help to understand that teaching phonetics is important as well as complicated for EFL teachers when considering the effects, it may have.

1.3 Rationale

English as a second/foreign language has been implemented in many educational systems all over the world (Al-Rubaat & Alshammari, 2019). Even though English instruction has been occurring for decades, students' ability to speak English has not been as expected. "Bad pronunciation can confuse persons and lead to an unfavorable talking and misunderstanding even if we use advanced grammar or vocabulary" (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016, p. 968).

Therefore, learning phonetics in an EFL/ESL classroom represents a great challenge for students' oral development; however, teachers encounter difficulties when they try to help students to improve their pronunciation (Derwing, 2008). Pronunciation was not prioritized in second language (L2) classes for a long time based on the belief that it was not important, could not be taught, and could be dealt with by learners themselves (Silveira, 2002). Nevertheless, it is essential to learn phonetics to achieve effective communication.

To improve pronunciation and improve students' spoken communication in EFL classrooms, it is important to understand the benefits and challenges, as well as the preferences, strategies, and perceptions that teachers may have. Students receiving teacher-led instruction assume that they only have to listen to the teacher's pronunciation rules and follow them because the teacher is seen as the unique authority in the class (Shabani & Ghasemian, 2017). According to Wenden (1991), "empowering learners with learning strategies is one of the language teachings goals" (p.401). Phonetics instruction or pronunciation classes should be as attractive for students as other classes are.

Both teachers and students need to understand different factors affecting pronunciation learning, since this understanding can help them reach their teaching and learning goals. Teachers' methodology can be a problem while teaching phonetics. Although explicit pronunciation instruction has not been unanimously endorsed, research has shown that it can improve learning outcomes (Murphy, 2003). This research synthesis attempts to increase EFL

teachers' awareness of challenges teachers have while teaching phonetics. Awareness of these challenges can improve teachers' instructional choices in real time.

1.4 Research Questions

This research synthesis aims to analyze the effects of teaching phonetics to EFL learners. To analyze these effects, this research synthesis has posed the following research questions.

- What are the effects of teaching phonetics on EFL learners' pronunciation?
- What are the most effective phonetic approaches to improve EFL students' pronunciation?
- What are students' and teachers' perceptions of the implementation of phonetics strategies in EFL classes?

1.5 Objective

To determine the effects of teaching phonetics to EFL students on pronunciation

Specific Objectives

- To analyze the advantages and disadvantages of teaching phonetics
- To determine the most effective phonetic approaches to improve EFL students' pronunciation
- To determine student and teachers' perceptions of the implementation of phonetic strategies in EFL classes.

1.6 Methodology

According to Cooper and Hedges (2009), a research synthesis can be defined as

the conjunction of a particular set of literature review characteristics that (...) attempt to integrate empirical research for the purpose of creating generalizations. Implicit in this definition is the notion that seeking generalizations also involves seeking the limits of generalizations. (p. 6)

In order to obtain appropriate sources for this research synthesis, a search will be done with the help of the following online databases: Taylor& Francis Online, ScienceDirect, and ERIC.

The key terms for searching the studies will be the following: 1. Benefits, 2. Phonetics, 3. Challenges, 4. Teaching, 5. Pronunciation, 6. EFL Learners.

In addition, qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods studies will be considered with no restriction related to the design of these studies. Furthermore, the majority of sources will be digital due to the difficulty of procuring studies in print. The criteria to choose the articles will be the following. First, the articles must provide information about the effects of teaching phonetics to EFL students. Second, the articles must be carried out in the last 15 years in order to get current information. Third, the articles must be empirical studies to have a better idea of the field in observation. Fourth, the articles must be related to adult EFL learners. Finally, the articles must be related to EFL learners since this research synthesis looks for the effects of teaching to this specific group.

Some journals that will be used for this study will be the following: *International Journal of Science Technology and Management*, *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, *ELT Journal*, *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*. These journals are relevant for this research since free scholarly articles can be found there. Subsequently, a coding process will classify data according to different criteria that will emerge through the analysis.

Chapter 2

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This chapter of the research synthesis is considered essential to provide the conceptual basis for the topic. Due to this, different concepts and approaches are defined below: pronunciation and phonetics, segmental and suprasegmental. Additionally, some explanations about different approaches to teaching phonetics in an EFL environment, essentially analytical and synthetic phonetics, will be covered. These definitions are taken from academic sources and help to understand this chapter.

2.2 Pronunciation and Phonetics

According to Yang and Gamble (2013), “with globalization and the spread of English, EFL instruction is ever more important” (p.398). Gilakjani (2011) mentions that one important aspect of EFL/ESL classes is the development of pronunciation; however, “pronunciation is often poorly covered in such courses” (Brown, 2014, p.3). This is why the development of this aspect of the language should be taken into account in today’s classrooms, and the implementation of phonetic instruction might be helpful for the pronunciation of the learners.

Schmidt (2002) defines pronunciation as “a term used to capture all aspects of how we employ speech sounds for communication” (p. 219). Brown (2014) defined instruction in pronunciation as “the term usually given to the process of teaching learners to produce the sounds of a language” (p.5). Both definitions demonstrate that pronunciation is an important tool that can lead to good communication, and for this reason, it is important to develop it.

The implementation of explicit phonetic instruction in the classroom can improve second language pronunciation (Gordon et al., 2012). According to Brown (2014), “Phonetics can be defined as the scientific study of all aspects of the spoken form of language” (p.3). For authors such as Levis and Munro (2012), “Phonetics subsumes the physical aspects of speech production and their relation to speech perception” (p.1). These definitions show that phonetics

plays a crucial role in the pronunciation of the foreign language, which leads to good communication, the same reason for which this aspect has to be developed.

2.3 Segmentals and Suprasegmentals

Another important aspect to be considered in this chapter is the definition of segmentals and suprasegmentals. Lee and Nusbaums (1993) mentioned that segmental information refers to the consonants and vowels, and suprasegmental information refers to acoustic properties, such as intonation contours or stress patterns that extend over more than one segment. Similar to what was explained above, Soto-Faraco et al. (2001) define segmental information as “the phonemes” and suprasegmental information as “information in the pitch contour, amplitude contour, or timing which varies with lexical identity: lexical stress, lexical tone, or lexical pitch accent” (p.413). For Malovrh and Benati (2018), segmentals refer to “individual consonantal and vocalic sounds in a target language, whereas suprasegmentals are defined as the structure that organizes sound” (p.283).

“Studies from English suggest that suprasegmentals play little role in human spoken-word recognition; English stress, however, is nearly always unambiguously coded in segmental structure (vowel quality)” (Koster & Cutler, 1997, p.1). Thus, at the time of teaching, debates arise about whether to teach segmentals or suprasegmentals. According to Zielinski (2015), segmentals and suprasegmentals are not independent entities and both should be taught together. On the other hand, authors such as Tanner and Landon (2009), argued that suprasegmentals should have priority since they have a greater impact on the understanding capacity of individuals. Wang (2020) found out that there is no evidence that one feature is more important than the other, and the debate of which one is more important has no fundamentals; both segmentals and suprasegmentals are necessary depending on the needs of the learners.

2.4 Approaches to teaching phonetics

As mentioned before, the instruction of phonetics is strongly related to pronunciation learning. Teaching English phonetics has been a difficult task for teachers; however, there are some ways in which they can facilitate or understand this process better. As Dilshoda and Kudratbek (2020) mention, the use of different approaches is essential while actually teaching. For this reason, approaches that can be useful while actually teaching phonetics are presented below.

2.4.1 Analytical Phonetics.

According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology (2022), the analytical approach is defined as a method in which the whole element is needed to be separated into small parts in a process to analyze it completely and understand it better. According to Jessen (2008), the analytical approach to phonetics is one of the most used approaches in phonetics and it consists of dividing “entire speech events into constituent parts, such as sounds, sound features or prosodic properties, and then to investigate some of these components separately or concerning the way in which they influence each other” (p.686).

2.4.2 Synthetic Phonetics.

According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology (2022), the synthetic approach is defined as the combination of different components into a more structured whole for a better understanding. Also, for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000), the synthetic approach related to phonetics is defined as a program where students turn graphemes into phonemes and then blend the sounds into recognizable words. Strang (1962) explained that the importance of this synthetic approach is that it allows stressing certain features for one person and other features for a different person. Both definitions presented show the importance of this feature in the research synthesis.

Chapter 3

3.1 Literature Review

The literature that undergirds this project is divided into three categories. First, the effects of teaching phonetics on EFL pronunciation; second, students' and teachers' perceptions of the implementation of phonetic strategies in EFL classes; and third, strategies, techniques, and activities used for teaching phonetics. Several researchers have tried to describe the effects, perceptions, strategies, techniques, and activities that are involved in the teaching of phonetics in EFL pronunciation. All these considerations are needed for this research synthesis since they show different perspectives that are important to get a better result at the end of the research.

3.2 Effects of Teaching Phonetics on EFL Pronunciation

Pronunciation is an important aspect of learning a language. However, many EFL teachers do not know how to incorporate it into class (Levis & Grant, 2003). According to Yakout and Amel (2019), students have other pronunciation habits where the sound of certain words can be confused due to knowledge of the mother tongue. Hence, students tend to replace the correct sound with similar sounds from their native language. This is one way learning phonetics in EFL classrooms is useful for improving pronunciation.

Many researchers have studied the effects of teaching phonetics on EFL. Saito (2007) carried out a study about explicit phonetic instruction which results demonstrated that "explicit phonetic instruction enhanced learners' pronunciation of the target language" (p.19). Also, Kissinglin (2013) showed that phonetic instruction is very useful for improving learners' pronunciation.

The results of other studies about teaching phonetics in EFL classrooms carried out by other authors such as Sadeghi and Mashhadi (2016) confirmed that phonetics "is very useful and enables the language learners to obtain precise and explicit information on pronunciation"

(p.36). These authors also mentioned that teaching phonetics “is effective because it can improve the pronunciation ability and intrinsic motivation of the students as well” (p.36). Most research that has been explored for this synthesis showed that phonetic instruction is beneficial and it “can contribute to a more comprehensible and intelligible speech.” (Bouchhioua, 2016, p.79). Also, Gordon et al. (2012) show in their study that phonetic instruction improves EFL students’ pronunciation since it helps to improve their speaking skills.

3.3 Students’ and Teachers’ Perceptions of Implementing Phonetic Strategies in EFL Classes.

Lintunen (2013) expressed that “phonetics teaching is an essential part of EFL teaching as it raises the learners’ awareness of the target language sound system and the phonological forms of words” (p.55). However, it is important to study the different perceptions that teachers and students can have about phonetics implementation in EFL classrooms.

Nguyen et al. (2001) conducted a study analyzing teachers’ and students’ different opinions about the implementation of phonetic strategies in the classroom. Teachers in this study believed it is very important to include phonetic strategies in EFL classrooms to improve different skills, especially for developing English oral communication. The students also found phonetic instruction an important feature of EFL classes, since they reported believing it will help them improve their pronunciation and feel more confident while speaking in English.

Alghazo (2015) researched learners’ belief in the benefits of pronunciation teaching. She found that they liked learning different aspects of pronunciation by receiving explanations from the teachers. In this case, the implementation of phonetics is again shown to improve learners’ pronunciation. Other authors, such as Bai and Yuan (2018) found that teachers consider the implementation of this feature interesting for their students. They report that learners enjoy this kind of instruction by “playing with sounds” (p.137).

Thus, both teachers' and students' perceptions indicate that implementing this feature in English classes is judged beneficial not only for improving pronunciation skill but also for making students feel more confident while using the language.

3.4 Strategies, Techniques, and Activities Used for Teaching Phonetics

For Gilakjani (2011), it is important to develop pronunciation in EFL/ESL classes. To accomplish this, it is important to use the correct strategies and tools. Dilshoda and Kudratbek (2020) also mention that using correct approaches is necessary for achieving instructional objectives and improving learners' language level. Wrembel, (2001) showed that "current approaches to the teaching of practical phonetics have become concerned with developing a more authentically native like 'voice quality' or 'setting', which cannot be achieved through mastering sound segments alone" (p.63). This is why employing the correct strategies, techniques, and activities for teaching phonetics is very important.

Saito (2007) talks about explicit phonetic instruction, and she mentioned that "explicit phonetic instruction contributes to pronunciation pedagogies in EFL situations" (p.16). For other authors such as Gordon et al. (2012), "explicit phonetic instruction benefits L2 learners overall" and "can lead to beneficial results in production for learners" (p.201).

Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) researched the using pronunciation software for teaching pronunciation in EFL classrooms. The authors explained that the software showed students the phonetic features where they mistakenly used similar but incorrect sounds. In this way, using the software helped teachers solve some of these problems. On the other hand, Jing (2017) investigated the using a mobile learning system for phonetics teaching as a new strategy. She reported that if there is not enough class time for teaching phonetics, since it is usually combined with oral and listening classes, this technology could be useful for EFL students. The results showed that implementing this system improved learners' pronunciation.

In conclusion, it is important to state that there are different strategies, techniques, and activities for implementing and teaching phonetics in EFL classrooms. Furthermore, technology should be considered one of the tools that make it possible to include phonetics in the classrooms.

Chapter 4

4.1 Methodology

4.1.1 Collection Procedure

According to Cooper and Hedges (2009), a research synthesis can be defined as

the conjunction of a particular set of literature review characteristics that (...) attempt to integrate empirical research for the purpose of creating generalizations. Implicit in this definition is the notion that seeking generalizations also involves seeking the limits of generalizations. (p. 6)

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In addition, qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods studies were considered with no restriction related to the design of these studies. Furthermore, the majority of sources were digital due to the difficulty of procuring studies in print. The criteria to choose the articles were the following. First, the articles must provide information about the effects of teaching phonetics to EFL students. Second, the articles must be carried out in the last 15 years in order to get current information. Third, the articles must be empirical studies to have a better idea of the field in observation. Fourth, the articles must be related to adult EFL learners. Finally, the articles must be related to EFL learners since this research synthesis looks for the effects of teaching to this specific group.

Some journals that were used for this study were be the following: International Journal of Science Technology and Management, International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research. ELT Journal, Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics. These journals are relevant

for this research since free scholarly articles can be found there. Subsequently, a coding process that classified data according to different criteria emerged through the analysis

Chapter 5

5.1 Data Analysis and Results

In order to answer the research questions of this synthesis, 15 studies were collected and analyzed. These studies were classified into the following categories: pronunciation development, effects of teaching phonetics on EFL learners' pronunciation, phonetic approaches to improve EFL students' pronunciation, and students' and teachers' perceptions of the implementation of phonetic strategies in EFL classes. Data were organized in tables with their corresponding analysis and discussion.

5.2 Pronunciation Development Importance

Table 1

Pronunciation Development		
	N° of Studies	Authors
Pronunciation Development	4	Dilshoda & Kudratbek (2020); Gilakjani (2011); Levis & Grant (2003); Wrembel (2001); Yakout & Amel (2019).

N = 4

Table 1 shows the analysis of the development of pronunciation in the EFL classrooms category. For this section, 4 studies were chosen since they focused on describing the importance of pronunciation.

Dilshoda and Kudratbek (2020), Gilakjani (2011), and Levis and Grant (2003), found that the development of pronunciation in EFL classrooms is considered of pivotal importance while learning a language since it is useful for communicative purposes. Their research also found that for learners to develop correct pronunciation, it is necessary to focus on other aspects

such as the needs, abilities, and levels of the students. They also found that implementing segmental and suprasegmental features can help improve pronunciation. Wrembel (2001) also mentioned that developing pronunciation is necessary and it must be done with the correct approaches. This author also mentioned that factors found in the science of the brain are also important and advantageous for improving pronunciation. Also, Yakout and Amel (2019) expressed that even if pronunciation is a very important aspect that must be developed, learners still have to pay more attention to this feature since most of them replace certain sounds with sounds from their mother tongue. Besides this, the teachers' guidance is an important aspect as well, since they should recognize these kinds of mistakes and correct them to help learners to enhance their English pronunciation level. Thus, it is seen, all the articles expressed the importance of the correct development of pronunciation for learners to upgrade their English level.

5.3 Effects of Teaching Phonetics on EFL Learners' Pronunciation

Table 2

Effects of Teaching Phonetics on EFL Learners' Pronunciation		
Effects	N° of Studies	Authors
Positive	6	Bouchhioua (2016); Gordon, et al. (2012); Kissling (2013); Lintunen (2013); Sadeghi & Mashhadi (2016); Saito, (2007).
Negative	0	

N = 6

Table 2 analyzes the effects of teaching phonetics on EFL learners' pronunciation. For this part, 6 relevant studies were analyzed. Also, in this section, it was necessary to divide the chart into positive and negative effects reported in the different articles.

Regarding the negative effects of teaching phonetics, it is apparent that any of the authors found adverse consequences at the moment of implementing phonetics instruction. On the other hand, the six studies considered for this section presented positive effects on pronunciation thanks to the implementation of phonetic instruction during the classes. Bouchhioua (2016) and Gordon, et al. (2013) supported the idea that phonetics instruction is useful for participating in understandable discourse and improving speaking skill. Thus, positive results depend on improving the comprehensibility and intelligibility of learners' speech instead of only developing native-like pronunciation. Kissinglin (2013) and Saito (2007) mentioned that the implementation of phonetics instruction improved students' pronunciation. However, if the attention of the learners' during instruction is not focused, it is difficult to get good results and improve their pronunciation. For Lintunen (2013), the implementation of phonetic instruction is significantly important since it can raise students' knowledge of the sounds that a certain language can produce; nevertheless, at the moment of teaching and testing pronunciation, the level of the word should be taken into consideration. Sadeghi and Mashhadi (2016) also presented a favorable result about the execution of phonetics classes. They mentioned that students not only had a wide vision of the information on pronunciation but also that learners reported feeling motivated to improve their pronunciation ability.

According to the results obtained in this analysis, the positive effects of teaching phonetics to EFL students predominate and are an indispensable part of the process to improve the learners' pronunciation.

5.4 Phonetic Approaches and Tools Used to Improve EFL Students' Pronunciation

Table 3

Phonetic Approaches and Tools Used to Improve EFL Students' Pronunciation		
Approaches and Tools	N° of Studies	Authors

Approaches	Explicit Phonetics	2	*Gordon, et al. (2012); *Saito (2007)
Tools	Software	1	Gilakjani & Sabouri (2017)
	Mobile Application	1	Jing (2017)

N = 4

Table 3 examines different approaches and tools used in EFL classrooms to improve the pronunciation of the learners by implementing the teaching of phonetics. Four studies were considered for this section, and all the studies focused on analyzing the different phonetics approaches and tools.

The first and most used approach is called “explicit phonetics.” The implementation of this approach was studied by Gordon, et al. (2012) and Saito (2007). Gordon, et al. (2012), reported that implementing this approach for even a short time can generate advantageous results. For Saito (2007), the implementation this approach also resulted in an improvement in the language use of the students. Other authors such as Gilakjani and Saubori (2017) used phonetic software in the EFL classrooms where the students were able to see the different phonetic features and the mistakes they committed while using the language. Thus, they could correct those mistakes concurrently while speaking. The results of this study showed that students improved their pronunciation and that teachers considered this a great tool for making the classes more interesting and enjoyable. In the same vein, Jing (2017) presented the last study considered for this section. It is about the using a mobile application. The author considered the use of this application valuable for students since during classes they did not have enough time for learning phonetics. Furthermore, the author mentioned that the implementation of this system encourages learners and improves teaching effectiveness. Based on the information presented in this section, we can say that the approaches and tools

that are used for phonetics instruction are of pivotal importance since by using them correctly, we can improve students' pronunciation.

5.5 Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of the Implementation of Phonetic Strategies in EFL Classes

Table 4

Perceptions		N° of Studies	Authors
Teachers' Perceptions	Positive Perceptions	2	Bai & Yuan (2018); Nguyen, et al. (2021)
	Negative Perceptions	0	
Students' Perceptions	Positive Perceptions	2	*Nguyen, et al (2021); Alghazo (2015)
	Negative Perceptions	0	

N = 3

*Studies are counted in more than one category

Table 4 analyzes students' and teachers' perceptions of the implementation of phonetics strategies in EFL classes. Three studies were taken into consideration for this section; these studies were considered because they focused on describing the different perceptions of teachers and students. As shown in the table, none of the studies exposed negative perceptions in the students or the teachers; moreover, all the results in the investigations presented only positive perceptions.

Regarding the teachers' perceptions, authors such as Nguyen, et al. (2021) mentioned that teachers consider the implementation of phonetics in the classroom a very important feature that can help to improve students' oral communication. Bai and Yuan (2018) also found that

teachers had a positive perception of the implementation of phonetics in their classrooms, since students reported having fun while learning the sounds that the different letters may have.

Moving on to the students' perceptions, it was also found that students had positive perceptions of the implementation of phonetics in the classrooms. Nguyen, et al. (2001) found that students considered that by learning phonetics they will improve their language skills and feel more confident while speaking and using the language. Alghazo (2015), who researched students' perceptions of pronunciation, found that students are interested and open to studying new aspects of the target language that can help them to improve their language use. Teaching phonetics, in this case, may be very useful and well-accepted by students.

According to the aspects presented in this analysis in general, we can infer that implementing phonetics is a practice that teachers would do well to consider using in their EFL classrooms. Implementing phonetics in accordance with the information presented in the articles analyzed in this synthesis can contribute to improving students' language skills.

Chapter 6

6.1 Conclusion

The main purpose of this research synthesis was to analyze the effects of teaching phonetics to EFL students. In order to organize the collected articles, this synthesis was intended to identify the effects of teaching phonetics on EFL pronunciation. The findings of the data analysis were used to answer research questions which were the basis for this conclusion section. Moreover, important concepts from the theoretical framework and information from the literature review were considered while writing the conclusions. The objectives of this study have been accomplished, and the conclusions will be developed further.

Regarding the first research question about the effects of teaching phonetics on EFL learners' pronunciation, the analysis of the different studies provided enough information to conclude that the main effects of teaching phonetics are 1) enhancing learners' pronunciation, 2) enabling learners to obtain information on pronunciation, and 3) contributing to more comprehensible and intelligible speech.

Implementing phonetics instruction helped to improve and enhance learners' pronunciation. According to the articles analyzed, the authors reported that explicit instruction of phonetics helped learners to exhibit better pronunciation of the language they're learning (Kissling, 2013; Saito, 2007).

The enabling learners to acquire information about different aspects of pronunciation is useful for learners, helping them to improve their pronunciation by becoming aware of explicit and precise aspects of articulation and production of different words (Sadeghi & Mashhadi, 2016).

Finally, this research synthesis shows that teaching phonetics helps learners produce more understandable and intelligible speech. This improvement enhances students' speaking skill and contributes to better communication (Bouchhioua, 2016; Gordon, et al. 2012).

According to the second research question about the most effective phonetics approaches and tools to improve EFL students' pronunciation, the studies reviewed for this research revealed that there is one approach that could be most effective: explicit phonetics instruction. Two tools for teaching phonetics proved beneficial for improving learners' pronunciation: a software, and a mobile application.

Explicit phonetics instruction is the most mentioned approach in the articles analyzed for this research synthesis. This approach contributes to improving learners' pronunciation and is also beneficial for second/foreign language learners since it leads to better language production (Gordon, et al. 2012; Saito, 2007).

This study found two useful instructional tools. Instructional software that helped students to see the mistakes they made was an important and beneficial tool to increase the learners' pronunciation. Also, a mobile application that teaches phonetics not only improved students' pronunciation but also assisted in effectively teaching phonetics (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Jing 2017).

In order to answer the last research question regarding the students' and teachers' perceptions of explicitly teaching phonetics strategies in EFL classes, it is important to mention that the studies reviewed in this research synthesis revealed only positive perceptions. Teachers and students reported uniformly positive responses to the instruction of phonetics.

Students' perceptions show that they find the explanation and instruction of this branch of the language very useful, entertaining, and advantageous for improving their English level. Also, learners considered phonetics a necessary feature during their EFL classes, saying that phonetics instruction improves their speech helps them feel more comfortable while they use the language. (Alghazo, 2015; Nguyen, et al. 2001).

The teachers' perception of teaching phonetics strategies is, as mentioned before, uniformly positive. The teachers considered phonetics very useful to improve students' English oral

communication. Also, since students can learn by playing, teachers considered this feature interesting, entertaining, and fun (Bai & Yuan 2018; Nguyen, et al. 2001).

In conclusion, this research synthesis presented positive and advantageous results about the implementing phonetics instruction in EFL classrooms. Moreover, it revealed some beneficial approaches and tools for teaching this feature of the language, as evidenced by the teachers' and students' enthusiastic acceptance of phonetics instruction in order to improve their English level.

6.2 Recommendation

After reviewing and analyzing 15 selected studies, it is apparent that there exists insufficient research about the approaches and tools that can be used to teach phonetics. Further research in this area is called for, since students improve their language skill by learning phonetics, but it is necessary to use effective and motivating processes to obtain good results.

Additionally, more extensive research about the teachers' and students' perceptions should be carried out since only positive perceptions were found in this synthesis. It would be instructive to know about the negative responses to implementing of phonetics in EFL classrooms.

Lastly, deeper research about the effects of implementing phonetics should be done. In this research synthesis, only positive effects were found, but possible negative effects also should be documented and considered to have a broader and more complete view of the topic.

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