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SUMMARY
The purpose of this topic, as indicated in its title, is to describe the phonological system of the English language. Furthermore, we must also discuss the models of pronunciation that foreign language instructors have available, together with the most effective techniques to teach learners how to perceive, discriminate, and produce English sounds, rhythms, and intonations. To conclude, we should also specify how to correct foreign language learners’ pronunciation.

For studying this topic, you should first pay attention to its table of contents. In it, you will be able to find the main sections into which it is divided and, thus, obtain a general idea of the structure of the topic. Then, you should read the introduction, for it will explain the purpose of the topic and its essential elements. You will see that this topic develops four main issues: (i) the description of the phonological system of the English language, i.e. consonant sounds, vowel sounds, and suprasegmental features (stress, rhythm and intonation); (ii) models of pronunciation available; (iii) techniques to teach foreign language learners to perceive, discriminate, and produce sounds in English; and (iv) correcting foreign language learners’ pronunciation of English. Together with the reading and underlining of the different sections of the topic, pay special attention to the guidelines introduced in the remember boxes. They will help you discriminate the essential contents of the topic. Similarly, the paragraphs highlighted as important will guide your study towards the elements that you must particularly pay attention to.

You should start by memorising and summarising the topic developing the first section previously presented: the description of the phonological system of the English language. In order to do so, start by describing the consonant system by examining the two main criteria for classification: the place and the manner of articulation. Next, follow a similar procedure to describe the vowel sounds in English, analysing the way in which they are articulated and their length or quantity. Finish this first section describing the suprasegmental features of pronunciation of the English language: stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns. The essential elements to be memorised have been highlighted in remember boxes and important sections to facilitate their identification.

Then, you should concentrate on the second section of the topic: models of pronunciation available. In order to develop this section, you should describe the two most widely-used models of pronunciation and explain which one you would use in your classes and why. You can find the essential elements of this section in the remember boxes and in the sections highlighted as important.

Continue learning the topic by addressing its third section: techniques to teach foreign language learners to perceive, discriminate, and produce sounds in English. In order to follow a coherent progression in language acquisition, students will first receive pronunciation input before being asked to produce any output. Thus, the structure of this section moves from perception and discrimination to production and assessment. Again, support will be given in the remember boxes and in the elements underlined as important.

The last section of the topic, correcting foreign language learners’ pronunciation of English, must be addressed by indicating the problems that Spanish language learners will find with vowel
sounds, consonant sounds, stress, rhythm, and intonation. It would be interesting to learn which problems are considered high priority problems and which ones are low priority, for this will help us decide which pronunciation mistakes should be corrected in the earlier stages. Once more, do not forget that the paragraphs highlighted as important will guide your study towards the elements that you must particularly pay attention to.

Connection with other topics
This topic is very much related to topic 43 in which a general presentation of the components of a language are described. Topic 43 argues that any language has several components. The section of topic 49 that has to do with the teaching of English pronunciation could also be related to those topics describing different methodologies of foreign language teaching, particularly topics 50, 52, 54, 57.

INTRODUCTION

Phonetics and Phonology are (often loosely) used to refer to linguistic disciplines studying that part of the linguistic sign which de Saussure called the acoustic image. The importance of sounds as vehicles of meaning is something people have been aware of for thousands of years. However, systematic studies on the speech sounds only appeared with the development of modern sciences. The term phonetics used in connection with such studies comes from Greek and its origins can be traced back to the verb phōnein, to speak, in its turn related to phōnē, sound. The end of the 18th century witnessed a revival of the interest in the studying of the sounds of various languages and the introduction of the term phonology. The latter comes to be, however, distinguished from the former only more than a century later with the development of structuralism which emphasizes the essential contrastive role of classes of sounds which are labelled phonemes. The terms continue to be used, however, indiscriminately until the prestige of phonology as a distinct discipline is finally established in the first half of the 20th century.

Though there is no universally accepted point of view about a clear-cut border line between the respective domains of phonetics and phonology as, indeed, we cannot talk about a phonological system ignoring the phonetic aspects it involves and, on the other hand, any phonetic approach should take into account the phonological system that is represented by any language, most linguists will agree about some fundamental distinctions between the two.

Phonetics will be almost unanimously acknowledged to be the linguistic science which studies speech sounds: the way in which they are produced (uttered, articulated), the way in which they are perceived, their physical characteristics, etc. Therefore, it is these more “palpable”, measurable aspects of the phonic aspects of language that constitute the domain of phonetics. On the other hand, it is obvious, however, even for those whose perception of linguistic phenomena is rather of an empirical and not of a very scholarly kind, that when communicating verbally, though they are producing a wide variety of sounds, people are actually “aware” of using a comparatively drastically limited set of
sounds, in other words that they tend to disregard the obvious (more or less important) differences between the way in which sounds are uttered and have in mind only classes of sounds that perform a certain function in language. From this new perspective, it is not the sounds as such that are important, but rather the role they have in linguistic communication.

Different languages operate different distinctions and structure in different ways the more or less common stock of sounds that can be found in various idioms. It is precisely this aspect of sounds that is of interest for phonology, which is thus understood to study not so much the sounds as such, but rather classes of sounds that have a certain function in the structure of a given language. We have already said that phonetics is concerned with various aspects relevant for the physical characteristics of sounds. Several branches of phonetics can further be distinguished, depending on the narrower domain of interest of the respective field. Thus, one of the most important branches of phonetics is articulatory phonetics which studies the way in which human beings articulate or utter the sounds they make use of in verbal communication.

Both sciences require as their source of data a human being with an intact auditory mechanism and a functioning speech apparatus. As the most widely used descriptions of speech sounds are articulatory, we will more carefully study the latter.

We can divide the speech mechanism organs and cavities in:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPEECH MECHANISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lungs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Resonators:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. pharynx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. nose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Articulators:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1. tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. palate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3. teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4. lips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5. vocal folds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now that we know the parts of the speech mechanism we may attempt an articulatory definition of both segmental and suprasegmental features. The first term includes vowels and consonants. The second refers mainly to stress or accent, rhythm and intonation. Then, we will move on to present the most widely-used models of pronunciation. In the third section of the topic, we will analyse different techniques and strategies to teach students how to perceive, discriminate, and articulate sounds, stresses, rhythms, and intonations in the foreign language. We will conclude this topic examining the problems that the phonological system of the English language poses for Spanish students.
1 PHONOLOGICAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH

CONNECTION: Before analysing the phonological competence in one of its most important manifestations, i.e., vocalic sounds, we need to define clearly the concepts of competence first and then, that of phonetic competence.

1.1. Definition of Competence.

We can define the concept of competence (also termed competencency) as the quality of being adequately or well qualified physically and intellectually. In linguistics, competence is closely related to the idea of linguistic competence as it was devised by Chomsky, i.e., the system of linguistic knowledge possessed by native speakers of a language. It is in contrast to the concept of Linguistic performance, the way the language system is used in communication.

Nowadays, the concept of linguistic competence has been superseded by that of communicative competence, which refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately (Dell Hymes).

Following the European guidelines for Foreign Language Teaching and Learning, in order to carry out the tasks and activities required to deal with the communicative situations in which they are involved, users and learners draw upon a number of competences developed in the course of their previous experience. In return, participation in communicative events (including, of course, those events specifically designed to promote language learning) results in the further development of the learner’s competences, for both immediate and long-term use.

All human competences contribute in one way or another to the language user’s ability to communicate and may be regarded as aspects of communicative competence. It may however be useful to distinguish those less closely related to language from linguistic competences more narrowly defined:

1) General competences. Here we include:

a) Declarative knowledge (savoir): knowledge of the world; sociocultural knowledge and intercultural awareness
b) Skills and know-how (savoir-faire)
c) Ability to learn (savoir-apprendre)
2) **Communicative language competences**

For the realisation of communicative intentions, users/learners bring to bear their general capacities as detailed above together with a more specifically language-related communicative competence. Communicative competence in this narrower sense has the following components:

- linguistic competences
- sociolinguistic competences
- pragmatic competences.

### 1.2. Definition of Phonological Competence

Within the linguistic competence we can distinguish the following sub-competences:

- a) lexical competence
- b) grammatical competence
- c) semantic competence
- d) phonological competence
- e) orthographic competence
- f) orthoepic competence.

*The Phonological competence involves a knowledge of, and skill in the perception and production of:*

- the sound-units (phonemes) of the language and their realisation in particular contexts (allophones);
- the phonetic features which distinguish phonemes (distinctive features, e.g. voicing, rounding, nasality, plosion);
- the phonetic composition of words (syllable structure, the sequence of phonemes, word stress, word tones);
- sentence phonetics (prosody)
- sentence stress, rhythm and intonation
- phonetic reduction
  - vowel reduction
  - strong and weak forms
  - assimilation
  - elision.
REMEMBER:
THE CONCEPTS OF COMPETENCE AND PHONOLOGICAL COMPETENCE.

- DEFINITION OF COMPETENCE.
  
  • In linguistics, competence is closely related to the idea of linguistic competence (Chomsky): the system of linguistic knowledge possessed by native speakers of a language.
  
  • Communicative competence refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately (Dell Hymes).
  
  • Specific linguistic competences according to CEFR are:
    - **General competences:**
      - Declarative knowledge (savoir): knowledge of the world; sociocultural knowledge and intercultural awareness
      - Skills and know-how (savoir-faire)
      - Ability to learn (savoir-apprendre)
    - **Communicative language competences**
      - linguistic competences
      - sociolinguistic competences
      - pragmatic competences

- DEFINITION OF PHONOLOGICAL COMPETENCE
  
  • The Phonological competence involves a knowledge of, and skill in the perception and production of:
    - the sound-units (phonemes) of the language and their realisation in particular contexts (allophones)
    - the phonetic features which distinguish phonemes
    - the phonetic composition of words
    - sentence phonetics (prosody)
    - phonetic reduction

2 THE PHONOLOGICAL MECHANISM AND SOUND MECHANISM.

**CONNECTION:** We will start by describing the phonological system of the English language.

*From a phonetic point of view, vowels and consonants are distinguished by their articulation and the associated patterns of acoustic energy.* In the production of vowel sounds, the air stream comes out relatively unimpeded, meeting a stricture of open approximations. Consonants, on the other hand, may meet a stricture of:

a) Complete oral closure (plosives, nasals and affricates).
b) Partial oral closure (lateral).

c) Close approximation (fricative).

In a phonological definition we distinguish vowels and consonants in terms of how these units are used in the structure of spoken language. Vowel sounds are generally syllabic while consonant sounds are non-syllabic, i.e. vowel sounds are central and consonant sounds are marginal in the structure of the syllable.

Our description of the phonetic inventory of English will be further limited by the model we choose to teach. The adoption of RP (Received Pronunciation or General British) has the following advantages:

1. its wide intelligibility in all English-speaking communities.
2. it represents no regional characteristics.
3. it enjoys social prestige (though some young people reject it).
4. it has been described thoroughly and we have much more material to teach it.

The following tables (taken from Finch and Ortiz Lira [1982]) illustrate the sound oppositions operating in the RP system:

The phonemes of English and Spanish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The English vowel phonemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ei</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Spanish vowel phonemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ei</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table The English and Spanish vowel phonemes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plosive</th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Post-alveolar</th>
<th>Palatovelar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>k</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>k</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 The terminology Received Pronunciation was coined by Daniel Jones to try to "label" that pronunciation which was "socially acceptable" among the highly educated (especially those who studied at Public Schools). So, it is a term inherently socially restrictive. That is the reason why some phoneticians, such as Windsor Lewis, reject this terminology on account of the implicit disregardness of the accent of the common man.
### Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affricate</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>tr</th>
<th>dr</th>
<th>tS</th>
<th>Ù</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
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<td>J</td>
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<td>Roll</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tap/Flap</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
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<td></td>
<td>S</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lateral</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>l</td>
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<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>l</td>
<td></td>
<td>λ</td>
<td>h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>ð</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>È</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approximant</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td></td>
<td>S</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semivowel</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>j</td>
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<td></td>
<td>S</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The English and Spanish consonant phonemes.

Segmental features are discrete units, which may be identified in the stream of speech. Their **articulatory phonetic description** may make reference to six main factors:

- **a) Air stream.** The source and direction of the air stream identifies the basic class of sound. The vast majority of speech sounds are produced using pulmonic egressive air. Non-pulmonic sounds include clicks, implosives and ejectives.

- **b) Vocal folds.** The variable action of them must be considered –in particular, the presence or absence of vibration. Voiced sounds are produced when the vocal folds vibrate; voiceless sounds are produced when there is no vibration, the folds remaining open. Other vocal fold actions are sometimes referred, e.g. the closed glottis used to produce a glottal stop.

- **c) Soft palate.** Its position indicates either a sound is nasal (lowered position) or oral (raised position):

- **d) Place of articulation.** It refers to the point in the vocal tract at which the main closure or narrowing is made, such as at the teeth, lips, etc. Secondary articulations may need to be taken into consideration, e.g. /w/ which is velarized-bilabial.

- **e) Manner of articulation** refers to the type of constriction that takes place at any place of articulation.

- **f) The position of the lips** is especially important when describing vowels (rounded or spread).
3.1. **Consonant system. Criteria for consonant classification**

**CONNECTION:** Our analysis of the phonological system of the English language will begin with a presentation of the consonant sounds.

Traditionally, the three basic criteria used in the articulatory description of a sound are vocal cord vibration (voicing), the place of articulation and the manner of articulation. As far as voicing is concerned, mention has been made in the topic describing the articulatory organs that the vocal cords represent a key element in the articulation of speech sounds. If the cords vibrate when we produce a sound, the sound thus uttered is called a voiced sound. If, on the contrary, the sound is uttered without vocal cord vibration, then we are talking about a voiceless sound. We have already said that all vowels are voiced, while as regards consonants, they fall into the two categories mentioned above.

Voicing is not, however, the only parameter that can be used to classify consonants and other criteria will also be used to cross-classify this pretty numerous and heterogeneous class of sounds. If vibration of the vocal cords constitutes an important criterion for differentiating among various sounds, the outgoing airstream may make the two cavities (oral or nasal) vibrate. This generates an acoustic phenomenon we are familiar with from everyday life, namely *resonance.*
The higher or lower level of resonance produced when a sound is uttered results into a higher or lower degree of prominence or sonority and leads to a major distinction between two classes of consonants: sonorants and obstruents. Sonorants will, of course, be called those sounds having a higher degree of sonority and resonance, while obstruents will be those consonants characterised by a comparatively lower sonority and involving a much lower resonance (if any). The level of sonority being higher in the case of sonorants (the vowels themselves will hold the highest position on a sonority scale), they will consequently be vowel or vowel-like sounds. The obstruents will be those sounds having predominantly consonantal features, the class including the so called genuine or true consonants. In English, all sonorants are voiced, while obstruents may be voiced or voiceless.

In English, it is important to distinguish between lenis and fortis consonants. The difference between them seems to be related to that between voiceless and voiced. However, it is better to use the former terms because lenis consonants are devoiced after and before pauses and after and before fortis consonants but even in this case of devoicing they do not shorten the previous vowel.

### 3.1.1. Place of articulation

Once the air has passed through the larynx, it comes up and out though the mouth and/or nose. Most consonant sounds are produced by using the tongue and other parts of the mouth to constrict, in some way, the shape of the oral cavity through which the air is passing. The terms used to describe many sounds are those which denote the place of articulation of the sounds, that is, the location, inside the mouth, at which the constriction takes place.

To describe the place of articulation of most consonant sounds, we can start at the front of the mouth and work back. We can also keep the voiced/voiceless distinction in mind and begin using the symbols of the phonetic alphabet to denote specific sounds.

#### Bilabials. The articulators are the two lips.
(We could say that the lower lip is the active articulator and the upper lip the passive articulator, though the upper lip usually moves too, at least a little.) They are represented by the symbols [p], which is voiceless, and [b] and [m], which are voiced. The [w] sound found at the beginning of way, walk, and world is also a bilabial.

#### Labio-dentals. The lower lip is the active articulator and the upper teeth are the passive articulator.
The initial sounds of the words fat and vat and the final sounds in the words safe and save are labiodentals. They are represented by the symbols [f], which is voiceless, and [v], which is voiced.

#### Dentals. Dental sounds involve the upper teeth as the passive articulator. The active articulator may be either the tongue tip or (usually) the tongue blade—diacritic symbols can be used if it matters which. Extreme lamino-dental sounds are often called interdental. The initial sound of thin and the final sound of bath are both voiceless dentals. The symbol used for this sound is [θ]. The voiced dental is represented by the symbol [ð] and is found in the pronunciation of the initial sound of thus and the final sound of bathe.

#### Alveolars. Alveolar sounds involve the alveolar ridge as the passive articulator. The active articulator may be either the tongue blade or (usually) the tongue tip—diacritic symbols can be
used if it matters which. The initial sounds in top, dip, nut, sit, and zoo are all alveolars. They symbols for these sounds are quite easily remembered - [t], [d], [n], [s], [z]. Of these, [t] and [s] are voiceless, whereas [d], [z] and [n] are voiced. Other alveolars are the [l] sound found at the beginning of words such as lap and lip, and the [r] sound at the beginning of right, write, and rip.

**Post-alveolars or Alveo-Palatals.** Post-alveolar sounds involve the area just behind the alveolar ridge as the passive articulator. The active articulator may be either the tongue tip or (usually) the tongue blade —diacritic symbols can be used if it matters which. Examples are the initial sounds in the words shoot and child, which are voiceless. Although there are two letters in the spelling of `sh´ and `ch´, the sounds are represented by the single phonetic symbols [ʃ] and [tʃ] respectfully. One of the voiced post-alveolar sounds, represented by the symbol [ʒ], is not very common in English, but can be found as the middle consonant sound in words like treasure and pleasure, or the final sound in rouge. The other voiced alveo-palatal sound is represented as [dʒ] and is the initial sound in words like joke and gem.

**Velars.** Even further back in the roof of the mouth, beyond the hard palate, you will find a soft area which is called the soft palate, or the velum. Sounds produced with the back of the tongue against the velum are called velars. There is a voiceless velar sound, represented by the symbol [k], which occurs not only in kid and kill, but is also the initial sound in car and cold. Despite the variety in spelling, this sound is both the initial and final sound in the words cook, kick, and coke. The voiced velar sound to be heard at the beginning of words like go, gun, and give is represented by [g]. This is also the final sound in words like bag, mug, and despite the spelling, plague. One other voiced velar is represented by the symbol [ŋ]. In English, this sound is normally written as the two letters `ng´. Thus, the [ŋ] sound is at the end of sing, sang and, despite the spelling, tongue.

**Glottals.** There are two other sounds which are produced without the active use of the tongue and other parts of the mouth. One is the sound [h] which occurs at the beginning of have and house. This sound is usually described as a voiceless glottal. The glottis is the space between the vocal cords in the larynx. When the glottis is open, as in the production of other voiceless sounds, but there is no manipulation of the air passing out through the mouth, the sound produced is that presented by [h]. When the glottis is closed completely, very briefly, and then released, the resulting sound is called a glottal stop. This sound occurs in many dialects of English, but does not have a written form in the Roman alphabet [ʔ]. You can produce this sound if you try to say the words butter or bottle without pronouncing the –tt- sound in the middle. In Britain, this sound is considered to be a characteristic aspect of Cockney speech and, in the United States, of the speech of many New Yorkers.

3.1.2. **Manner of articulation**

So far we have concentrated on describing consonant sounds in terms of where they are articulated. We can also describe the same sounds in terms of how they are articulated. Such a description is necessary if we wish to be able to differentiate between some sounds which, in the preceding discussion, we have placed in the same category. For example, we can say that [t] and [s] are both voiceless alveolar sounds. How do they differ? They differ in their manner of
articulation, that is, in the way they are pronounced. The [t] sound is one of a set of sounds called stops and the [s] sound is one of a set called fricatives.

**Stops or Plosives.** Of the sounds we have already mentioned, the set [p], [b], [t], [d], [k], [g], [ʔ] are all produced by some form of complete ‘stopping’ of the airstream (very briefly) and then letting it go abruptly. This type of consonant sound resulting from a blocking or stopping effect on the airstream is called a stop. For instance, plosives occur at the beginning of the following words: paw, bee, toe, day, key, guy.

**Fricatives.** The manner of articulation used in producing the set of sounds [f], [v], [s], [z], [θ], [ʃ], [ʒ], and [tʃ] involves blocking the airstream, and having the air push through the narrow opening. As the air is pushed through, a type of friction is produced and the resulting sounds are called fricatives. If you put your open hand in front of your mouth when making these sounds, [f] and [s] in particular, you should be able to feel the stream of air being pushed out. For instance, fricatives occur at the beginning of the following words: far, vat, sea, zoo, thin, this, she, and church

**Affricates.** If you combine a brief stopping of the airstream with an obstructed release which causes some friction, you will be able to produce the sounds [tʃ] and [dʒ]. These are called affricates and occur at the beginning of the words cheap and jeep.

**Nasals.** Most sounds are produced orally, with the velum, with the velum raised, preventing airflow from entering the nasal cavity. However, when the velum is lowered and the airflow is allowed to flow out through the nose to produce [m], [n], and [ŋ], the sounds are described as nasals. These three sounds are all voiced. Words like morning, knitting, and name begin and end with nasals.

**Liquids.** The initial sounds in the words led and red are generally described as liquids. The [l] sound is formed by letting the airstream flow around the sides of the tongue as it makes contact with the alveolar ridge. The [r] sound is formed with the tongue tip raised and curled back behind the alveolar ridge.

**Glides.** The sounds [w] and [j] are produced very much as transition sounds. They are called glides, or semi-vowels. In pronunciation, they are usually produced with the tongue moving, or ‘gliding’, to or from a position associated with a neighbouring vowel sound. They are both voiced. Glides occur at the beginning of we, wet, you, and yes.

3.2. **Vowel system. Criteria for classification**

**CONNECTION:** After having described the consonant sounds in English, we will now move on to describe the vowel sounds.

3.2.1. **Place and manner of articulation**

The section before has examined the consonant phonemes of English from an articulatory perspective. After trying to establish a general borderline between the two major classes of
sounds —consonants and vowels respectively— by postulating some major articulatory distinctions between them, an attempt was made to analyse English consonants in detail. We will remember then that if consonants are distinguished from vowels precisely on the basis of an articulatory feature that all of them arguably share —a place along the speech tract where the airstream meets a major obstacle or constriction— it would be very difficult to describe vowels in the same terms as it will no longer be possible to identify a “place of articulation”.

Articulatory criteria can be, indeed, used to classify vowels but they will be less relevant or, in any case, of a different type than in the case of consonants. Acoustic and even auditory features on the other hand will play a much more important role in accurately describing vowels as vowels are sonorous sounds, displaying the highest levels of resonance of all speech sounds. Vowels, like consonants, will differ in terms of quality —the acoustic features will differ from one vowel to another depending on the position of the articulators, but in a way which is distinct from what we have seen in the case of consonants where there is another type of interaction between the various speech organs— and in terms of quantity or duration —again in a way distinct from consonants as vowels are all sonorous, continuant sounds.

The quality of a vowel is given by the way in which the tongue —the main articulator, as in the case of consonants— is positioned in the mouth and by the activity of the lips. This position of the tongue modifies the shape of the resonating cavities above the larynx and decisively influences the quality of the resulting sound. The great mobility of the tongue and the absence of any definite place of obstruction —as in the case of consonants— accounts for the great variety of vowels that can be found in any language and for the fact that vowels rather than consonants are more intimately linked to the peculiar nature of each and every language.

Vowel quantity —duration, length— combines with stability of articulation to make the distinction between simple or “pure” vowels or monophthongs on the one hand and diphthongs on the other. Monophthongs are comparatively shorter vowels that preserve the same quality throughout the entire duration of their articulation. A diphthong combines two different vocalic elements joined together in a unique articulatory effort and consequently being part of the same syllabic unit. In any diphthong one of the vocalic elements will be stronger than the other, from which or towards which the pronunciation glides.

Three will be then the criteria that can be used to distinguish among vowels on an articulatory basis: the position of the tongue in the mouth —high or low on the vertical axis and fronted or retracted on the horizontal axis— and the position of the lips:

1. **Tongue height.** If we consider the position of the tongue in the mouth we can identify two extreme situations: one in which the body of the tongue is raised, almost touching the roof of the oral cavity and in this case we will be dealing with high or close vowels —the name clearly refers to the position of the tongue high in the mouth or close to the palate— and the opposite position when the body of the tongue is very low in the mouth leaving the cavity wide open as in the case when the doctor wants to examine our tonsils and asks us to say “ah”. The vowels thus produced will be called open or low vowels since the tongue is lowered in the mouth and the oral cavity is open. If the tongue is placed in an intermediate position, raised only halfway against the palate, we shall call the vowels mid vowels. A further, more refined distinction will differentiate between two
groups of mid vowels: close-mid/mid close or half-close or high-mid/mid high vowels and open-mid/mid open or half-open or low-mid/mid low vowels.

2. **Tongue frontness/backness.** If we consider the position of the tongue along the horizontal axis we can identify three classes of vowels: *front* vowels – uttered with the front part of the tongue highest, *central* vowels – if it is rather the central part of the tongue that is highest, modifying the shape of the articulator and *back* vowels – the rear part of the tongue is involved in articulation.

3. **The position of the lips.** As mentioned earlier, the position of the lips is another major criterion that is used to distinguish among vowels. When we pronounce a vowel, our lips can be *rounded*, and then the resulting sound will be *rounded*, or they can be *spread* and then we shall say that the vowel that we have articulated is *unrounded*. As we are going to see later, roundness may be more or less relevant, depending on the particular language we are talking about.

In the following diagram, you can see the organisation of vowel sounds in English depending on their articulation, as previously explained:

3.2.2. **Length: monophthongs and diphthongs**

Using the three dimensions of frontness, height and rounding, we may define the vowel in *fleece* as high, front and unrounded; that in *goose* as high, back and rounded; and the unstressed vowels of *about*, schwa as mid, central and unrounded. However, our elementary descriptions would class the *kit* vowel as high, front and unrounded, and the *foot* vowel as high, back and rounded; these labels make them indistinguishable from the clearly different vowels of *fleece* and *goose* respectively. British speakers very readily perceive the *fleece* and *kit* vowels, and the *goose* and *foot* vowels, as different. This distinction is usually made in terms of vowel length. The vowels in (1) are consistently produced as longer that those in (2)
(1) Long vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long Vowels</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>əː</td>
<td>NURSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɪː</td>
<td>FLEECE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɔː</td>
<td>THOUGHT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʊː</td>
<td>GOOSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʌə</td>
<td>START</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) Short vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short Vowels</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ɪ]</td>
<td>KIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[θ]</td>
<td>DRESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[æ]</td>
<td>TRAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʌ]</td>
<td>LOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʊ]</td>
<td>FOOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ə]</td>
<td>ABOUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʌ]</td>
<td>STRUT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is not to say, however, that the only difference between [iː] and [ɪ] is one of length: the quantity difference goes along with a difference in quality. [iː] is higher and fronter than [ɪ]. In general, long vowels in English are more peripheral, or articulated in a more extreme and definite way, than their shorts counterparts. Some phonologists use a feature [+ tense] rather than length to express this difference, with the long, more peripheral vowels being [+ tense], and the short, more centralised ones being [- tense], or lax.

All the vowels we have considered so far have been monophthongs, in which the quality of the vowels stays fairly consistent from the beginning of its production to the end. However, there are also several diphthongs in English. Diphthongs change in quality during their production, and are typically transcribed with one starting point, and a quite different end point; as might be expected from this description, diphthongs are typically long vowels. In English, all diphthongs have the first element as longer and more prominent than the second, and are known as falling diphthongs.
Let us present each and every of one of them:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>[ei]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>[ai]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>[ɔi]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>[əʊ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>[əu]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>[iə]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>[ɛə]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>[ʊə]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.3. Suprasegmental features of pronunciation

**CONNECTION:** In order to conclude this description of the phonological system of the English language, we will now describe its suprasegmental features: stress, rhythm, and intonation.

We have already studied the segments of spoken language. At the same time as we pronounce these segments, our speech is altered in some other ways. The voice force may change producing a whole range of effects. The basic psychoacoustic properties of sound are the source of the main linguistic effects: pitch and loudness. These effects combine with those arising out of the distinctive use of speed and rhythm and are called prosodic or suprasegmental features.

When we speak we give more prominence to some parts of an utterance than to others. Accent or stress, rhythm and intonation have to do with the perception of this emphasis.

We speak of accent/stress when we are considering the prominence with which one part of a word or of a longer utterance is a starter of pitch movement or has the potential to be one.

We speak of rhythm when we are considering the pattern formed by peaks of prominence as they are distributed in an utterance.

We speak of intonation when we associate relative prominence to a series of factors such as pitch movement, loudness, rhythmicality and tempo.

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2 Strictly speaking suprasegmental features would also cover paralinguistic features such as breathy or husky voice but tradition makes these terms synonymous.
3.3.1. Stress/accent

Stress is a complex auditory impression which the listener perceives as making one syllable more prominent than its neighbours. A number of different things, either individually, or in combination—greater loudness, higher pitch, greater length—contribute to the perception of stress. A stressed syllable in English often has all three of these characteristics. In other languages, stress may be created by using just one or two of the characteristics.

Native speakers of English are intuitively aware that certain syllables in each word, and one syllable in particular, will be more phonetically prominent than others. In father, the first syllable seems stronger than the second; in about, it is the other way around; and in syllable, the first syllable stands out from the rest. These more prominent syllables are stressed; and stress is a culminative property, signalled by a number of subsidiary phonetic factors, which work together to pick out a stressed syllable from the unstressed ones which surround it.

There are three important factors which combine to signal stress. First, the vowels of stressed syllables are produced with higher fundamental frequency; that is, the vocal folds vibrate more quickly, and this is heard as higher pitch. Secondly, the duration of stressed syllables is greater, and they are perceived as longer. Thirdly, stressed syllables are produced with greater intensity, and are thus heard as louder than adjacent unstressed syllables.

The interaction of these phonetic factors produces an effect which is clearly audible, but crucially relative: that is, we cannot distinguish a stressed from an unstressed syllable if each is spoken in isolation, but only by comparing the syllables of a word, or a longer string, to see which are picked out as more prominent. Indeed, within the word, there can be more than one level of stress.

Levels of stress. A word like telegram has three levels of stress. You can easily hear that the first syllable has the strongest stress. The last syllable is not so strongly stressed as the first one, but it has stronger stress than the middle syllable. We mark the strongest or primary stress with a short raised stroke [’], the middle level or secondary stress with a short lowered stroke [,]. These strokes are placed before the onset of the affected syllable. The weakest level of stress, as in the middle syllable, is not marked.

Strong and weak form. Read the following sentence aloud emphasising the italicised word:

That is the book that I wanted

You probably pronounced the first that as [ˈðæt], and the second one as [ˈðæt]. Many words in English are pronounced both with and without stress depending on the structure of the sentences.

The presence or absence of stress changes the quality of the vowel. With stress, either primary or secondary, we get a full vowel, such as in [ˈðæt]; without stress, we get one of the unstressed vowels. The main words with weak forms in Received Pronunciation are:

a, am, an, and, are, as, at, be, been, but, can, could, do, does, for, from, had, has, have, he, her, him, his, just, me, must, of, shall, she, should, some, than, that, the, them, there, to, us, was, we, were, who, would, you
A characteristic of formal speech is that it is slower than colloquial speech. In slow speech the phrases are smaller, and thus more words are stressed and fewer are left without stress. Thus, an utterance spoken in a formal style has more strong forms than the same utterance spoken in a colloquial style. Some people think that the weak forms are wrong or inferior. This is not the case. Native speakers of English from all social classes regularly use weak forms. Not to use weak forms when they are appropriate gives English a stilted, artificial sound.

Though the stresses are normally in a fixed position in a word their position is unpredictable in the sense that there is no single position where the main stress of a word can be expected to fall. Compare, for instance: ‘answer a’ bove mana’ gerial ‘micro,second. Thus, to a large extent, the accentual patterns of a word must be learnt separately. However we can make some useful generalizations about endings in word stress and compound accentual patterns, for example:

- Abstract nouns ending in -ion: syllable preceding the ending.
- Stress before adjectival -ic: ‘phoneme pho’ nemic
- Stress before nominal -ity: u’nanimous una’ nimity
- Unchanged with -ite: ‘Reagan ‘Reaganite

On the other hand, words formed by adding to a word in common use a prefix having a distinct meaning of its own very usually have two stresses, e.g., ánti’climax, archi’bishop. Some common wordds in English have two stresses (e.g. amen, hullo, thirteen.). These numbers and a few words are subject to rhythmic variation, for example:

,thir’teen but ‘thir,teen ‘shillings
,after’noon but ‘after,noon ‘tea
,Princess Vic’toria but a ,royal prin’cess

3.3.2. Rhythm

Variations in tempo provide our second suprasegmental feature. It is possible to speed up or slow down the rate at which syllables, words, and sentences are produced, to convey several kinds of meaning from urgency to emphasis. Pitch, loudness, and tempo together enter into a language’s expression of rhythm. Languages vary greatly in the way in which rhythmical contrasts are made. English makes use of stressed syllables produced at roughly regular intervals of time and separated by unstressed syllables; what Pike termed a “stress-timed” or isochronous rhythm. This means that when two accented syllables are separated by unaccented ones, these tend to be compressed and quickened, so that the time between each beat will be approximately the same as the time taken by two consecutive accented syllables.

Closely connected with rhythm is pause. We must teach our students to use a vowel of central quality or a lengthened “m” to fill these gaps.

3.3.3. Intonation

Intonation is the use of pitch distinctively over a phrase and generally conveys different sorts of meaning. Intonational differences may distinguish statements from questions or commands; intonation may add a meaning such as doubt, politeness, or boredom. Even in a language as widely studied as English, research into intonation has not produced a clear understanding of
how it works. Nevertheless, Cruttenden (1986) showed that various intonational languages use intonations that have an overall falling patterns for certain purposes and intonations with an overall rising pattern for others. Students will have to learn three main tunes in English:

a) Tune 1: Falling. **It is used in:**
- **Statements:** Paris is the capital of France.
- **Question tags which merely seek for confirmation:** You know him, don’t you?.
- **Commands:** Shut the door!.
- **Wh-questions:** Where does he live?
- **Alternative or dual questions take rising intonation on the first element and falling on the second.** E.g. Do you want back or white coffee?.

b) Tune 2: Rising. **It is used in:**
- **Yes/No questions:** Have you been here long?.
- **Polite requests:** Do shut the door. Pass me the bread, please.
- **Utterances containing an element of protest or surprise:** That was not my idea. Be quiet.
- **Echo questions.** They’ve won. Really?

c) Tune 3: Falling-rising. **It is used in sentences where something is left unspoken (warning, threat, contrast, etc.).**
- **Contrast:** I cannot do it now (perhaps later).
- **To denote a warning or a threat:** Do not be so sure. And if you don’t...

**Different levels of pith (tones) are used in particular sequences (contours or tunes) to express a wide range of meaning. Intonation performs a wide range of functions:**

- **Emotional.** Intonation works with attitudinal meanings, from excitement to boredom. On the other hand, prosodic and paralinguistic features are seen to provide the basis of all kinds of vocal emotional expression.

- **Grammatical.** Intonation plays an important part in the identification of major units such as clauses and sentences, and several contrasts, such as questions and statement may rely on intonation.

- **Information structure.** Intonation conveys a great deal about what is already known in an utterance.

- **Textual.** Prosodic coherence is an important element in the construction of larger stretches of discourse.

- **Psychological.** It helps to organise a language units into “chunks” which are more easily perceived and memorised.

- **Indexical.** Intonation helps to identify people as belonging to different social groups and occupations.
There are two standard, widely accepted pronunciations: Received Pronunciation and General American. They are however somehow artificial systems in many respects, because they gloss over a great many differences based on the class, gender, age, and even the region of the speakers.

On the one hand, Received Pronunciation (RP) is a form of pronunciation of the English language which has been the prestige British accent. RP is a form of English; it is often believed to be based on Southern dialects, although it was actually based on the south-east Midlands: south Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire (now in Cambridgeshire). It is often taught to non-native speakers globally. In the UK it is used as the standard for English in most books on general phonology and phonetics; and represented in the pronunciation schemes of most dictionaries.

According to Fowler’s Modern English Usage (1965), the term is “the Received Pronunciation”. Received Pronunciation was also sometimes referred to as the Queen’s English, because it is spoken by the Queen, or BBC English because it was traditionally used by the BBC. The term BBC English remains in use today, but it is less common than in past decades, as many other accents are now to be heard on the BBC.

The adoption of RP (Received Pronunciation or General British) has the following advantages:

1. its wide intelligibility in all English-speaking communities.
2. it represents no regional characteristics.
3. it enjoys social prestige (though some young people reject it).
4. it has been described thoroughly and we have much more material to teach it.

On the other hand, General American (sometimes called Standard Midwestern or American Broadcast English) is the accent of American English perceived by Americans to be most “neutral” and free of regional characteristics. The General American accent is not thought of as a linguistic standard in the sense that Received Pronunciation (RP) has historically been the standard, prestige variant in England, but its speakers are perceived as “accentless” by most Americans. Although General American is commonly identified with the Midwest, it did not originate there, but is the accent of the farmers who first settled there, from Pennsylvania, Upstate NY and other rural areas of the Northeast.

In the last decades, our education system has asserted the value of British RP or General British. For many years, the use of Received Pronunciation has been considered a mark of education. The lowest requirement can be described as one of minimum general intelligibility, i.e. one which possesses a set of distinctive elements which correspond in some measure to the inventory of the RP phonemic system and which is capable of conveying a message efficiently, given that the context of the message is known and that the listener has had time to tune in to the speaker’s pronunciation. At the other extreme we have high intelligibility, i.e. a form of speech whose acceptability is so high that the native listener may not identify it as non-native. Though the latter seems a bit idealistic we must

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3 The terminology Received Pronunciation was coined by Daniel Jones to try to “label” that pronunciation which was "socially acceptable" among the highly educated (especially those who studied at Public Schools). So, it is a term inherently socially restrictive. That is the reason why some phoneticians, such as Windsor Lewis, reject this terminology on account of the implicit disregardness of the accent of the common man.
make our pupils become as near-intelligible English speakers as we can. We as foreign teachers must set our aims at the highest possible level. Gimson (1985) says:

“The foreign teacher (...) has the obligation to present his students with as faithful a model of English pronunciation as is possible. In the first place, and particularly if he is dealing with young pupils, his students will imitate a bad pronunciation as exactly as they will a good one.’

We will now study how to reach our aims.

**REMEMBER:**

- Vowel and consonant sounds are differentiated by both phonetics and phonology.
- Consonant sounds are mainly described with reference to the place and manner of articulation. As regards the place of articulation, consonant sounds can be: bilabial, labiodental, dental, alveolar, post-alveolar, velar, and glottal. Taking into account the manner of articulation, consonant sounds can be: plosives, fricatives, affricates, nasals, liquids, and glides.
- Vowel sounds are normally described depending on the position and height of the tongue and the position of the lips. Depending on the position of the tongue, vowel sounds can be front, central, and back. Depending on the height of the tongue, vowel sounds can be close, open, mid-close, and mid-open. Vowel sounds can be articulated with either round or spread lips. Vowel sounds also differ in quantity, some being longer than others. Monophthongs can be short or long; diphthongs are always long.
- All vowel sounds are voiced (articulated with vibration of the vocal folds), but consonant sounds can be voiced or voiceless.
- There are three suprasegmental features of pronunciation. Stress is the prominence with which one part of a word or of a longer utterance is a starter of pitch movement or has the potential to be one. Rhythm is the pattern formed by peaks of prominence as they are distributed in an utterance. Intonation refers to the association of relative prominence to a series of factors such as pitch movement, loudness, rhythmicality and tempo.
- In English, words can have a main and a secondary stress. Some words have a strong and a weak form depending on whether they are articulated with emphasis in the sentence or not.
- English is a stress-timed language, the rhythm marked by the number of stresses in a sentence.
- In English there are two main intonation patterns: falling intonation (statements, commands, and wh-questions, for instance), and rising intonation (yes/no questions, polite requests, and echo questions, for example). Intonation performs several functions: emotional, grammatical, information structure, textual, psychological, and indexical.
- There are two standard models of pronunciation: RP and General American. RP has some advantages and is the most widely used in Spain.
- The lowest requirement can be described as one of minimum general intelligibility.
We have already stressed the need to provide a good model of pronunciation in primary school. This is important because children are good at imitating and will pick up our model of pronunciation in those cases where there are differences between the Spanish and the English pronunciation. Though some remedial work may be needed, pronunciation teaching and learning will form an integral part of language teaching and learning. We must use activities, such as songs and rhymes, which appeal to the children. Generally speaking, pronunciation drills are not appropriate for our pupils. Meaning and contextualized practice activities which involve repetition are more useful. As learning to pronounce a language is a very complex task we must structure the process to facilitate it to our pupils.

We must first make our pupils aware of the English pronunciation features. They must be able to perceive and discriminate. They must also develop a concern for pronunciation. This will be important because of the role that self-evaluation and monitoring will play in their production improvement.

3.4. Perception and discrimination

The first step is to teach students to perceive and discriminate pronunciation features.

Our pupils should be aware that the sounds they are hearing or producing are English. As people tend to hear the sounds of a new language in terms of the sounds of their mother tongue we must first ear-train them. We can use exercises such as:

- Listening for a specified word
- Write the word you hear
- Same or different?
- How many times did you hear it?
- Which order?
- Which sound?
- Odd one out?

It is important that pronunciation teaching does not concentrate only on the production of individual sounds. It is also important to give our pupils training in suprasegmental features.

English word stress patterns correction importance may be demonstrated by showing concern for the correct pronunciation of the names of class members or the names of well-known places and people. Once they recognize word stress we may begin with rhythm and intonation.
regardless of how many syllables there are between each beat. We can show this by clapping the strong beats in songs, rhymes and jazz chants. We can also stress different words in the same sentence to see the effect, e.g.:

A. What do you do?
B. I’m a computer programmer. What do you do?

Intonation awareness can be developed by telling our people to hum rather than say dialogues. Another way to develop awareness of the role of intonation is to exploit the use of various sounds used in spoken language which are not words. Such sounds are often used to express approval, disapproval, interest... We may also use games. Getting warmer! is a finding game where one member of the class is chosen to try to find one hidden object. Other pupils may help the finder by saying “warmer” or “colder”. The use of pitch, tempo and loudness contrast must be highlighted by the teacher. They are using intonation to help their classmate more efficiently.

3.5. **Production and assessment**

**CONNECTION:** Once students are able to perceive and discriminate different pronunciation features, we can ask them to produce those features so that assessment can take place.

We know that it is impossible to restrict pronunciation work to particular lessons. Whenever a new word appears our pupils must learn how to pronounce it; when one of our pupils says something we do not understand, the intended message must be discovered and its real pronunciation showed; when our pupils misinterpret a speaker’s intentions because they have missed some features of intonation or stress, we must draw their attention to it. This may lead to think that the inevitability of pronunciation work means that pronunciation learning is automatically integrated within our lessons. This is not true in account of two reasons.

The first reason is that real integration must be consistent and planned. The mere repetition of a correction does not lead to a perfect production. If we correct everything, we may be wasting our time in things which do not affect intelligibility.

The second reason is that no matter how hard we work towards integration in our teaching, unless our pupils integrate pronunciation in their learning, little positive change can be expected. Learners must be encouraged to accept the role of self-monitor.

In the early stages of learning, learners are dependent on us for information about the critical sounds of English. However this information is not going to take the form of rules with our primary pupils. The selection of materials will enable us to present them with correct examples of those features they must learn. As their exposure to English increases, and as they acquire the necessary discriminatory skills, pupils begin to develop their own internal criteria of what is acceptable and what is not. This exposure must be enjoyable and motivating: games, songs, rhymes, short dialogues on interesting topics will provide the necessary input. The output, their production, must be evaluated. We know it is difficult to evaluate someone else’s speech; it is even more difficult to evaluate one’s own. The pressures of speaking leave little mental energy for paying attention to how the sounds come. Therefore we must teach our pupils to learn how to learn pronunciation. One way of helping them is to make acts of monitoring and self-evaluation
an integral part of work inside and outside the classroom. Kenworthy (1983) gives us three possible ways of doing this.

*We can either record or ask for a repetition of a speaking activity. The record can be of a whole activity and pupils will listen to them evaluating their own speech. Repetition is probably best used for short exchanges or chunks of speech (sentences, songs, rhymes). As our pupils already know what they have to say they have more energy available for self-monitoring. This type of technique will ensure that self-monitoring and evaluation skills are developed.*

*Once our pupils have become familiar with self-monitoring and self-evaluation activities in the classroom they can be introduced to the idea of oral homework.* We can ask them to record a description of a place or a person, or to speculate about what happened next with a photograph or to give their opinion.

Finally it is important to realize that, as language learning is an extended process, we must not lose track of our pupils’ progress and neither must they. *Recording our pupils from time is an ideal way of giving them feedback: they need to know what they have accomplished and what they still have to do.* It is equally important that learners feel that attention is being paid to their progress, and that they are indeed progressing. We must also involve them occasionally in activities which require them to use their best pronunciation, such as voicing-over a short video or film sequence. These opportunities to excel give our pupils knowledge of their progress while motivating them.

**REMEMBER:**

- The integration of pronunciation in English lessons must be consistent and planned, and it requires that students integrate pronunciation in their learning.
- Students must make acts of monitoring and self-evaluation an integral part of work inside and outside the classroom by: recording or asking for a repetition of a speaking activity, introducing oral homework, and tracking students’ progress.

5 **PHONETIC CORRECTION**

**CONNECTION:** Once I have dealt with the teaching and learning of pronunciation, I will consider the last part of the topic, problems for Spanish speakers and correction.

We have already discussed some self-correction techniques as we think that a continuous assessment of our pupils’ pronunciation is so important in these initial stages that we must teach our pupils to self-monitor their productions as much as possible. But we as teachers obviously have the responsibility of making them concentrate their efforts in those problems which are considered to be more important. The following list of problems is based on Windsor Lewis, O’Connor and Kenworthy. We will distinguish between high priority, low priority problems. In
primary education we must obviously concentrate in high priority problems, *i.e.* those which may cause low intelligibility.

5.1. **Consonant sounds**

*CONNECTION:* First, we will identify the problems Spanish speakers have with consonant sounds.

### High priority problems:
1. /b/ and /v/ are confused.
2. /d/ and /ð/ are confused.
3. /g/ must always be plosive and not fricative.
4. /s/ and /z/ are confused.
5. /h/ is pronounced as /x/.
6. /ʃ/ is pronounced as /s/.
7. /p, t, k/ are not aspirated in initial position.
8. /t/ is dental in Spanish.

Low priority problems.

1. /ʒ/ and /dʒ/ are replaced by /ʃ/ or /tʃ/.
2. /r/ is not dropped in final position and it is pronounced with a trill.
3. /l/ is always clear.
4. /ŋ/ is pronounced as /ng/. If your pupils only pronounce /n/ then it is high priority.
5. /s/ instead of /z/ in plurals.

5.2. **Vowel sounds**

*CONNECTION:* Similarly, Spanish speakers find great difficulties with the pronunciation of English vowel sounds.

If we examine the full inventories in both languages we can see the first striking difference: 12 pure vowels in English and only five in Spanish. This proportion is reversed with diphthongs: 8 in English and 13 in Spanish. Furthermore, we have to say that no Spanish vowel coincides exactly with an English one.

As to diphthongs, the central qualities of the second element of all the English ones cause them to be in general much narrower than the Spanish ones. A final confrontation of vowel quantity reveals that although length variations are allophonic in both languages, in Spanish they do not actively influence meaning, as they do in English.

### High priority problems:
1. /i:/ and /ɪ/ are confused. We use the former.
2. /æ/, /ʌ/, /a:/ are all confused. We use /ʌ/.
3. /ɔ/, /ɔɪ/, /ɔː:/ are all confused. We use /o/.
4. /ɔː/ is replaced by its spelling.
5. We have no quantity distinction.

Low priority problems.
1. Pronunciation of Spanish vowel + /r/: /ar/, /or/... Though foreign they will understand you.
2. /uː/, /oʊ/. You will sound Scottish but they will understand you.
3. /aː/, /æ/. If you use the latter before /s/ and nasals they will understand you though you may sound American.

5.3. Suprasegmental features

CONNECTION: Finally, we will discuss the problems that Spanish speakers have with the pronunciation of suprasegmental features: stress, rhythm, and intonation.

The problems that Spanish learners encounter when it comes to suprasegmental features of pronunciation are always regarded as high priority problems.

4.2.1. Stress

1. We are not used to accentuate three- and four-syllable words on their first syllables.
2. English derivatives do not always follow the patterns of their roots, e.g. 'person but personification'.
3. We do not have secondary stresses.

4.2.2. Rhythm

1. Rhythm in Spanish is roughly syllable-timed and so there is none of the variation in length which results in English from the grouping of syllables into rhythm units.
2. Use of weak forms.
3. Use of gap fillers.

4.2.3. Intonation

1. We tend to use a very narrow pitch range.
2. Our final falling pitch movement is not low enough.
3. We do not use rise-fall tunes.

REMEMBER:
- Spanish speakers have high and low priority problems with consonant and vowel sounds in English. Instructors must focus on the correction of high priority problems.
- The problems Spanish learners of English have with suprasegmental features of pronunciation (stress, rhythm, and intonation) will be regarded as high priority problems, and efforts will be made to correct mistakes.
CONCLUSION

 CONNECTION: To conclude, we can point out that...

...the phonological system of the English language (including consonant and vowel sounds, as well as stress, rhythm, and intonation) is very different from the Spanish one. In order to teach it, we must select the most adequate model of pronunciation, and use the most effective techniques and strategies so that students learn to perceive, discriminate, and produce correct pronunciation. Finally, we should focus on the correction of high priority problems, for those are the ones that may cause misunderstanding in the daily-life use of the foreign language.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Organic Law of Education 2/2006, the Royal Decree 1513/2006 that establishes the Minimum Teaching Requirements for Primary Education nationwide, and B-CURRI indicate that, among the general objectives of Primary Education, is the acquisition of a basic communicative competence in a foreign language. Students will thus have to be able to understand and convey messages in a variety of daily-life communicative situations (in both writing and speech). The acquisition of adequate pronunciation is essential to manage these daily-life communicative situations, for mistakes in pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings.

The acquisition of pronunciation features is part of the Primary Education curriculum of foreign languages (both RD 1513/2006 and B-CURRI), for they are included in the third block of contents (linguistic knowledge and reflections on learning) but can also be related to the first block (listening, speaking and oral interaction).

Furthermore, the acquisition of pronunciation features that are specific of the foreign language are essential for correct oral expression in English, which is one of the common elements of the curriculum, that is, contents that must be dealt with in all areas, and which are (LOE, art. 19.2; RD 1513/2006, art. 4.5; and B-CURRI):

- reading comprehension
- oral and written expression
- audiovisual communication and ICT
- education in values

Since this topic is related to pronunciation, it is clearly connected to oral communication, and therefore, to the second common element.
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY


  *This book provides enjoyable practice in the pronunciation of English sounds, word stress and intonation for beginner-level students.*


  *This is a revised and updated edition of the classic pronunciation title Ship or Sheep? This new edition of Ship or Sheep?, an accessible intermediate-level pronunciation course in full colour for students of English, provides systematic practice of English pronunciation, with an emphasis on minimal pairs, through a wide variety of interesting exercises and activities. The course is suitable for classroom use or for self-study and is available accompanied by a set of 4 audio CDs in a pack or separately as a book.*


  *This book provides teachers with all the information and guidance they need to use Tree or Three? and Ship or Sheep? enjoyably and successfully in the classroom. Detailed notes are provided for each unit of both books, incorporating suggested teaching procedures and ideas for additional practice. One chapter lists the errors likely to be made by students of different mother tongues and, for students not included in this list, a diagnostic pronunciation test is included.*


  *This book is for upper-intermediate and advanced learners of English who want to improve their intonation. It aims to make learners aware of the main features of intonation and provides enjoyable activities for both controlled and freer practice in a range of conversational situations. Intonation is presented as a system which has an important communicative function in any interaction between speaker and listener. Learners first explore the meaning conveyed by the parts of this system before going on to a variety of production exercises. The book is intended to be used alongside any general coursebook to provide a systematic and accessible introduction to this often neglected area of pronunciation. The easy-to-follow explanations assume no specialist knowledge of the subject and the accompanying CD provides clear models, making this an excellent choice for both classroom use and self-study.*

The new edition of this definitive guide for primary teachers, teacher trainers and trainees covers the most recent developments in language learning theories and approaches. It offers you lots of practical suggestions on selecting materials, lesson planning, managing the classroom and using resources effectively.


Book with useful ideas to practise oral skills in class, such as meaningful drills.


The second edition includes updates and insights on current research and pedagogical practice that have developed over the last decade. This new edition of Teaching Pronunciation —undoubtedly the gold standard for pronunciation methodology texts— has been revised to reflect recent research into the sound system of North American English, as well as new practices in pronunciation pedagogy. Audio CDs with additional examples are now packaged with the book.


This seventh edition has been revised throughout, with particular emphasis on those areas which have seen rapid change in recent years. A new Introduction gives an overview of phonetics, examines the notion of a standard English accent and outlines key concepts in the learning of English as a first language and as an additional language. All the central chapters have been updated, notably by the inclusion of revised articulatory diagrams based on recent MRI scans. This new edition considers the developing status of English as an international language and discusses the current debate about the idea of a global pronunciation standard as an alternative to Received Pronunciation and General American. The layout of the book is now more user-friendly with the use of text boxes to summarise key information and an accompanying website, www.hodderplus.com/linguistics, contains exercises for learners; fMRI scans of English phrases, including all the vowels and consonants; and recordings by the author of part of the book. Since its first publication, Gimson’s Pronunciation of English has been the essential reference book for anyone studying or teaching the phonetics of English. It includes comprehensive coverage of individual vowels and consonants together with their variation and history; their articulation and acoustics, their rhythm and intonation, and how they develop in young children and foreign learners. All this ensures that Gimson’s Pronunciation of English will remain the most authoritative introduction to English phonetics for many years to come.


With a friendly writing style and abundant illustrations, Pronunciation Made Simple (formerly English Pronunciation for International Students) helps students understand and achieve the pronunciation patterns of native English speakers. Appropriate for both classroom use and self-study, this confidence-building text motivates students to practice their skills outside the classroom.

*Designed to reduce foreign accents that interfere with effective communication, these two programs, one concentrating on vowels and the other on consonants, include a complete treatment on each as well as diphthongs, stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns of American English. Although planned especially for Spanish speakers, the material is applicable to all non-native speakers.*


*Designed to reduce foreign accents that interfere with effective communication, these two programs, one concentrating on vowels and the other on consonants, include a complete treatment on each as well as diphthongs, stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns of American English. Although planned especially for Spanish speakers, the material is applicable to all non-native speakers.*


*Revised to cover modern instrumental techniques, recent research and publications, current terminology, and changes in present-day Received Pronunciation (RP), this edition retains the characteristics that have made it a standard reference text on the pronunciation of British English. A new section on stylistic variation in RP has been added and there is clarification of various rules concerning connected-speech processes.*


*A straightforward primer on the theory and teaching of pronunciation, this text offers detailed analysis and teaching techniques for vowels, consonants, stress and intonation, and the features of fluent speech. An enclosed Audio CD provides spoken examples of the material in the text.*


*Easy to read, easy to understand, and easy to apply to different groups of students. It takes you step by step through all those difficult symbols for the phonetic alphabet and explains in detail everything that is needed for you to start integrating pronunciation work into your already planned classes. The book has two parts—the first goes deeply into every aspect of pronunciation (isolated sounds, linking sounds, stress, etc.) making it clear for teachers what really counts when teaching it. The second part is a list of difficulties foreign students have while learning English. A wonderful add-in is that she categorises their common mistakes into “high priority” and “low priority” and suggests techniques and strategies you may use to overcome those problems.*


*This volume shows English language teachers how to teach the North American sound system. This practical reference book provides practical tips, clear explanations, diagrams, and sample classroom activities. Each chapter covers one of the five main areas of*
pronunciation -- vowels, consonants, stress, rhythm, and intonation. The companion audio CD in the text provides listening material for select activities.

  This book: (i) Helps students with over 225,000 pronunciations in both British and American English using the International Phonetic Alphabet; (ii) Helps students with intonation by showing the stress patterns of thousands of compounds and idioms; (iii) User-friendly graphs show the preferred pronunciations of British and American speakers, based on extensive research by Professor Wells. Now with the Longman Pronunciation Coach CD-ROM students can listen to the pronunciation of all entries in British and American English, then record and check their own pronunciation. Self Study Lab —Students can learn the International Phonetic Alphabet and practise their pronunciation with thousands of interactive exercises and feedback from Professor Wells. Teachers’ Resource Centre provides you with downloadable exercises for use in class.

WEBGRAPHY

  Monolingual dictionary of the English language to be used online.

- http://teflbootcamp.com/teaching-skills/teaching-efl-pronunciation/
  Basic concepts and practical tips to teach pronunciation in the EFL classroom.

- http://usefulenglish.ru/phonetics/
  Guide to English phonetics and pronunciation.

- http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/esl/pronunciation.cfm
  Practical ideas for teaching pronunciation to foreign language learners of English.

  The sounds of English and the International Phonetic Alphabet.

- http://www.btinternet.com/~ted.power/phon00.htm
  Phoneme chart: English vowel and consonant sounds.

  Guide to English pronunciation (vowel sounds, consonant sounds, and suprasegmental features).
  *Analysis of English consonant sounds.*

  *Analysis of stress and intonation in English.*

  *Analysis of English vowel sounds.*

  *A free online talking dictionary of English pronunciation. You type in a word and you hear how it is pronounced.*

- [http://www.wordreference.com/](http://www.wordreference.com/)
  *Website where you can translate from English to Spanish and from Spanish to English. In the forum discussions you can also find the translation of complex collocations and phrases.*
GLOSSARY

- **B-CURRI**: Development of the curriculum of Primary Education in each autonomous region. It is an arbitrary code set by MAGISTER to focus on the development of the RD 1513/2006 (establishing the minimum teaching requirements for Primary Education nationwide) in each community.
- **Common elements**: contents that all areas of Primary Education must develop. They include: reading comprehension, oral and written communication, audiovisual communication and ICT, and education in values.
- **Communicative competence**: ability to understand and convey messages in a variety of daily-life communicative situations.
- **Curriculum**: it includes objectives, basic competences, contents, pedagogical methods and assessment criteria of each area in each stage of education.
- **EFL**: English as a Foreign Language.
- **ESL**: English as a Second Language.
- **FLL**: Foreign Language Learning.
- **FLT**: Foreign Language Teaching.
- **Fortis**: consonant sound pronounced with considerable muscular tension and breath pressure, resulting in a strong fricative or explosive sound.
- **Glottis**: the opening at the upper part of the larynx, between the vocal cords.
- **ICT**: Information and Communication Technologies.
- **Lenis**: consonant pronounced with relatively weak muscular tension and breath pressure, resulting in a weak sound effect.
- **Phonetics**: the science or study of speech sounds and their production, transmission, and reception, and their analysis, classification, and transcription.
- **Phonology**: the study of the distribution and patterning of speech sounds in a language and of the tacit rules governing pronunciation.
- **Pitch**: the degree of height or depth of a tone or of sound, depending upon the relative rapidity of the vibrations by which it is produced.
- **Prescriptive curriculum**: it is established by educational administrations and is, therefore, compulsory. In Primary Education, it is established by RD 1513/2006 and by B-CURRI.
- **RD 1513/2006**: Royal Decree that establishes the minimum teaching requirements nationwide.
- **RP**: Received Pronunciation, BBC English, Queen’s English, or Standard English. The most neutral type of British accent or pronunciation.
- **Stricture**: a contraction of any passage or duct of the body.
- **Velum**: or soft palate, the posterior muscular portion of the palate (roof of the mouth) that separates the oral cavity from the nasal cavity.
INTRODUCTION

• Phonetics and phonology.
• Speech mechanism.
• Vowels and consonants.
• RP/GB as model: 4 reasons.
• EPD14/Gimson’s simplified as transcription system.

1. PHONOLOGICAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH

• Communicative competence, defined as refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately (Dell Hymes).
• The Phonological competence involves a knowledge of, and skill in the perception and production of:
  • the sound-units (phonemes) of the language and their realisation in particular contexts (allophones);
  • the phonetic features which distinguish phonemes
  • the phonetic composition of words
  • sentence phonetics (prosody)
  • sentence stress, rhythm and intonation
  • phonetic reduction: - vowel reduction   - strong and weak forms   - assimilation
    - elision.

2. THE PHONOLOGICAL MECHANISM AND SOUND MECHANISM

3. PHONOLOGICAL SYSTEM IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. MODELS AND LEARNING TECHNIQUES

3.1. Consonant system. Criteria for consonant classification

• Place of articulation.
• Manner of articulation.
3.2. Vowel system. Criteria for classification

- Place and manner of articulation
- Length: Monophthongs and diphthongs

3.3. Suprasegmental features of pronunciation

- General definition and classification.
- Particular definitions.

3.3.1. Stress/Accent

- Fixed but unpredictable.
- Affixes stress rules.
- Double accented words and rhythmical variations.
- Compounds: first element stress: six cases
double stress: ten cases
- Distinctive function: with quantity variation
  with quality variation.

3.3.2. Rhythm

- Pause.

3.3.3. Intonation

- Functions.
- Main tunes (3).

4. PERCEPTION, DISCRIMINATION AND ELOCUTION OF SOUNDS, INTONATIONS, RHYTHMS AND ACCENTS

- Concern for teaching and learning pronunciation.

4.1. Perception and discrimination

- Ear-training before accurate production.
- Not only segmental features.

4.2. Production and assessment

- Integrated pronunciation work: factors of real integration.
- Motivating activities.
- Continuous self-assessment and monitoring.
- Track of progress: necessary and motivating.
5. PHONETIC CORRECTION
   - Distinction between high and low priority problems.
   - Every aspect of pronunciation.

REMEMBER
In MAGISTER platform (area students) can respond to basic questions of the present topic.

REVISION QUESTIONS

1. DEFINITION OF DIPHTHONG.
2. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY
3. COMPARE ENGLISH AND SPANISH RHYTHM.
4. IMPORTANCE OF EAR TRAINING.
5. WHEN CAN A PRONUNCIATION PROBLEM BE GIVEN OPTIONAL ATTENTION?
1. DEFINITION OF DIPHTHONG.

A diphthong is a vowel sound where the tongue glides from one vowel position in the direction of another, within the same syllable.

2. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY

Phonetics is the science concerned with the study of speech processes, including the perception, transmission and reception of speech sounds from both an acoustic and a physiological point of view. Phonetic categories can be applied to language analysis, but, strictly speaking, exclude linguistic considerations. By contrast, the main aim of phonology is to discover the rules which organize sounds into a language system. To use Pike’s words: “Phonetics gathers raw material, phonology cooks it”.

3. COMPARE ENGLISH AND SPANISH RHYTHM.

Spanish rhythm has some characteristics in common with English, e.g. content, as opposed to structural words, are liable to be accented. We also reduce the number of accents in an utterance if tempo is quickened. However, although Spanish rhythm is determined by rhythmic beats, their occurrence is not so regular as in English. English has a stress-timed rhythm because accented syllables tend to occur at fairly regular intervals. Spanish can be said to have syllable-timed rhythm because it the syllables, whether accented or not, which tend to occur at more or less regular intervals.

4. IMPORTANCE OF EAR TRAINING.

Ear-training is based on the assumption that the ear will not function effectively and reliably without training. In other words, no matter whether the student speaks some English or none at all at the start, they must be taught to listen. This must be done carefully and systematically, and should be carried out prior to any drills in the production of sounds.

5. WHEN CAN A PRONUNCIATION PROBLEM BE GIVEN OPTIONAL ATTENTION?

When it will not lead to intelligibility problems. This may occur because:
- native listeners are used to this foreign feature.
- regional varieties of English have this feature.
- the feature is close enough to English.
- few words are kept apart by this feature.
The writing of the topic must give a balanced answer to all the elements included in its title. It should be written in the first person singular or passive voice, with adequate vocabulary, and clear and concise sentences. You can formulate questions that you will later answer so that the discourse becomes more attractive and appealing. Follow the recommendations below to make sure that the information you provide is complete and that it can be easily assessed by the board of examiners.

First of all, you must include an introduction. It should contain two paragraphs:
- In the first paragraph you should identify a general idea, a basic principle related to the topic: the difference between phonetics and phonology. Moreover, you could identify the speech organs and mechanisms. You could also synthesise the introduction we provide in the topic.
- In the second paragraph, you should identify the key components of the topic, that is, the development that you are going to follow. You can find an example in the last paragraph of our introduction to the topic. The purpose of this paragraph is to let the examining board know what you are going to be writing about and in which order.

Secondly, you should start by developing the first component of this topic: the description of the phonological system of the English language.
- Tell the examining board that you are going to start developing the first section of the topic. You can use the connection that we include at the beginning of this section.
- Start by a classification of consonant sounds from an articulatory point of view. Then, write about the vowel sounds in English classifying them attending to the height and position of the tongue and the position of the lips. Then, focus on the analysis of the suprasegmental features of pronunciation: stress, rhythm, and intonation. Whenever possible, quote significant scholars in this field to support your arguments and the information given. You can use the paragraphs highlighted as important and the remember boxes as guidelines.

Thirdly, you should continue by discussing the second part of the topic: the choice of a model of pronunciation.
- Start by establishing a connection with the previous point. You can use the one provided in the topic as example.
- Then, write briefly about the existing models of pronunciation that are considered most neutral in English. Explain which one you are going to use and why. Do not forget that in the important and remember sections you can find useful information.

Next, focus on the third part of the topic, that is, the teaching and learning of pronunciation features to foreign language learners.
- Remember to write a connection with the previous point, as indicated in the sample topic.
- Explain the techniques and strategies to be used to help students perceive and discriminate pronunciation features, for the acquisition of input must precede the production of output. Then, focus on students’ production of pronunciation features. You should also make some comments on the assessment of students’ pronunciation. Again, support will be given in the remember boxes and in the elements underlined as important.
Finally, develop the last section of the topic: correcting pronunciation mistakes and the problems that Spanish speakers have with English pronunciation features.

- Do not forget to write a connection with the previous section of the topic. You may want to use the one we provide.
- Next, explain which kind of pronunciation features should be corrected in the EFL classroom (high priority) and which pronunciation problems are secondary (low priority). List some high and low priority problems related to the pronunciation of English consonant and vowel sounds. Then, present some problems that Spanish speakers have with the suprasegmental features of pronunciation. Remember that in the important and remember sections you can find the most relevant information of this part of the topic.

Finish the topic with a conclusion that compiles the main aspects developed in the topic or highlighting its main idea. You can use the sample conclusion offered in the topic as a writing guide.

Finally, select four or five texts from the bibliography offered. Focus especially on the authors quoted during the development of the topic and highlight two or three websites from which you may have compiled information to write the topic.

In the writing of the topic, you can use capital letters or underline some words or phrases to facilitate the distinction of its different components. Highlight definitions, essential concepts, etc. so that (once you have finished writing the topic on the day of the exam) you can make sure that you have given response to all its elements by carrying out a quick reading.

GUIDELINES FOR READING THE TOPIC

First, you must remember that the reading of the topic is the only means by which you can fulfil the objective of informing about the topic and of being evaluated by the board of examiners. Do not forget that you must read literally the discourse you have elaborated and which the board has not read in advance. Thus, practice the reading the topics, record and listen to yourself reading the topics, making sure that you allow the listener to understand the information you want to transmit. Show confidence and reliability. Other criteria you must consider are:

- Facilitate the understanding of the examining board by means of an expressive oral reading. It should be the most adequate considering our situation as candidates and the characteristics of the specific expository text. You must take into account that the board of examiners does not know the structure or content of your discourse. Thus, you must emphasise, highlight with your tone of voice, reading speed, etc. the presentation of the topic and the connections between its elements. Your discourse must be similar to that of a journalist in a news programme: the information must be made comprehensible for the examining board. Avoid the abuse of acronyms by using both FLT and Foreign Language Teaching in your reading. Remember that the novelty of some of the contents demands that you carry out a slow reading; do not speed up the reading in the identification of resources or institutions related to the topic. On the other hand, when reading aloud legal documents, remember the
importance of clarifying from the very beginning the meaning of the acronym that represents the document you refer to, for example Organic Law when you refer to the LOE.

- The examining board can only listen to our text once, and at the pace of reading that we set: do not read either too fast or too slowly. You must adjust the reading pace to the contents of the topic. You should read more slowly those aspects in which it is most important to pay attention: the transition to one section to the next (the connections), the introduction and the conclusion, and the definition of phonetics and phonology, for instance. Nevertheless, when you give examples of activities for teaching pronunciation (for instance) you can speed up the reading. You should read emphatically the lists of functions of intonation, the reasons for using RP as model of pronunciation, etc. Say “first”, make a short pause, and read the word or phrase. When you finish, make another short pause, say “second”, make a short pause, and read the corresponding information.

- Articulate clearly every word, with appropriate tone, showing enthusiasm and dynamism. Avoid monotony and exaltation. If you use questions, read them with adequate intonation and make a brief pause before and after formulating the question.

- Emphasise important concepts and ideas by means of pronunciation and intonation, gestures, tone and looking at the board.

- Do not concentrate on the reading and forget about the recipient. It may give the impression of lack of confidence. We must raise our eyes and look at the different members of the examining board so as to keep their attention. We should be careful not to lose track of the written text, however. Use the transition from one section to the next, or the questions you may pose in your writing to look at the board. You can also look at them when you go from the introduction to the development of the topic, when you read a connection, and before and after the conclusion.

- Control your breathing. An adequate rhythm and making pauses (full stops, sections, etc.) will prevent us from feeling breathless, losing voice, and the like. If necessary, you can make a brief pause to drink water. If you make a mistake when reading a word, do not worry: re-read it correctly in a spontaneous manner.

### APPLICATION OF THE TOPIC TO THE SYLLABUS DESIGN

The design of the didactic programme integrates elements that can be developed using some contents presented in this topic. This topic, being about pronunciation, can be related to students’ acquisition of communicative competence to handle daily-life situations in the foreign language successfully, for pronunciation problems might impede understanding by native speakers. The term communicative competence can be connected to our course design in a very global way since its ultimate purpose is to help students increase their communicative competence in English.

More specifically, some of the contents of this topic can be included in the objectives section since the acquisition of appropriate pronunciation patterns must clearly be one of the main aims of our course design. Thus, pronunciation features will also have to be assessed, and will therefore be included among the assessment criteria of our didactic programme.

This topic can also be related to the basic competences section, for one of them —linguistic competence— deals with the development of the most effective techniques and strategies, as
well as with the acquisition of the necessary knowledge to communicate effectively, pronunciation features being included in this category.

The contents section of our course design presents the development of the didactic units. In each of them, we will identify, among other aspects, the pronunciation features students will be working on in each of them.

**APPLICATION OF THE TOPIC TO THE DIDACTIC UNITS**

In the same way in which in the course design we can incorporate concepts and elements from this topic, the didactic units that are developed in our syllabus can develop some contents presented in this topic.

In the objectives and basic competences sections of each didactic unit, we should specify which pronunciation features students will be practising.

The contents will incorporate an indication of the segmental and suprasegmental features of pronunciation students will have to acquire by the end of the unit (block 3: linguistic knowledge and reflections on learning).

The methodology and other didactic resources section can include an explanation of the methodology, strategies, and techniques to be used when teaching pronunciation.

In practical terms, each didactic unit can incorporate specific activities to work on pronunciation features.

Finally, the evaluation criteria can include some reference to the evaluation of students’ pronunciation of English words and sentences.

**APPLICATION OF THE TOPIC TO THE PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

The use of correct pronunciation features is essential for communicating effectively with native speakers of the language. Thus, some ideas of this topic could be used in the development of a practice question related to the acquisition of communicative competence.

Furthermore, this topic and some of the information in it included can be useful to answer any practice question regarding the teaching and learning of pronunciation features at early stages of education.
The present essay aims to study the English phonological system. In order to do so, the topic will be divided into five different parts. The first part will deal with the distinction between phonetics and phonology, focusing on the distinction between vowels and consonants. The second part of the topic will describe the segmental (vowel and consonant systems) and suprasegmental features (stress/accent, rhythm and intonation). Next, I will introduce the importance of a model of pronunciation. Then, I will focus on how to teach and learn pronunciation, considering, on the one hand, perception and discrimination, and, on the other, production and assessment. Finally, some problems for Spanish speakers will be presented.

In order to develop the first part of the topic I will define the concept of phonetics. Phonetics is the science concerned with the study of speech processes, including the perception, transmission and reception of speech sounds from both an acoustic and a physiological point of view. Phonetic categories can be applied to language analysis, but, strictly speaking, exclude linguistic considerations. By contrast, the main aim of phonology is to discover the rules, which organize sounds into a language system. To use Pike’s words: “Phonetics gathers raw material, phonology cooks it”.

THE FIRST POINT OF THE TOPIC CONCERNS THE CONCEPTS OF COMPETENCE AND PHONOLOGICAL COMPETENCE.

Communicative competence refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately (Dell Hymes).

Communicative competence has as its constituents:

- **General competences.**
  - Declarative knowledge (savoir): knowledge of the world; sociocultural knowledge and intercultural awareness
  - Skills and know-how (savoir-faire)
  - Ability to learn (savoir-apprendre)

- **Communicative language competences:**
  - linguistic competences
  - sociolinguistic competences
  - pragmatic competences.
As for the Phonological Competence, it involves a knowledge of, and skill in the perception and production of:

- the sound-units (phonemes) of the language and their realisation in particular contexts (allophones)
- the phonetic features which distinguish phonemes
- the phonetic composition of words
- sentence phonetics (prosody)
- sentence stress, rhythm and intonation
- phonetic reduction

Both sciences require as their source of data a human being with an intact auditory mechanism and a functioning speech apparatus. The speech mechanism organs and cavities can be divided into:

a) Lungs.
b) Resonators: pharynx; mouth and nose.
c) Articulators: tongue; plate; teeth; lips and vocal folds.

From a phonetic point of view, vowels and consonants are distinguished by their articulation and the associated patterns of acoustic energy. In the production of vowel sounds, the air stream comes out relatively unimpeded, meeting a stricture of open approximations. Consonants, on the other hand, may meet a stricture of:

a) Complete oral closure (plosives, nasals and affricates).
b) Partial oral closure (lateral).
c) Close approximation (fricative).

In a phonological definition we distinguish vowels and consonants in terms of how these units are used in the structure of spoken language. Vowel sounds are generally syllabic while consonant sounds are non-syllabic, i.e. vowel sounds are central and consonant sounds are marginal in the structure of the syllable.

RP (Received Pronunciation or General British) has traditionally been the model chosen in order to study English language, due to the following advantages:

a) Its wide intelligibility in all English-speaking communities.
b) It represents no regional characteristics.
c) It enjoys social prestige (though some young people reject it).
d) It has been described thoroughly and there is much material to teach.

After having defined the concepts of Phonetics and Phonology, I will concentrate now on the segmental and suprasegmental features of speech. In order to develop the segmental features, I will examine the vowel and consonant systems. Next, the suprasegmental features will be analysed taking into account the concepts of stress/acident, rhythm and intonation.

Segmental features are discrete units, which may be identified in the stream of speech. Their articulatory phonetic description may make reference to six main factors:

1. Air stream. The source and direction of the air stream identifies the basic class of sound. The vast majority of speech sounds are produced using pulmonic egressive air. Non-pulmonic sounds include clicks, implosives and ejectives.
2. Vocal folds. The variable action of them must be considered—in particular, the presence or absence of vibration. Voiced sounds are produced when the vocal folds vibrate; voiceless sounds are produced when there is no vibration, the folds remaining open. Other vocal fold actions are sometimes referred, e.g. the closed glottis used to produce a glottal stop.

3. Soft palate. Its position indicates either a sound is nasal (lowered position) or oral (raised position):

4. Place of articulation. It refers to the point in the vocal tract at which the main closure or narrowing is made, such as at the teeth, lips, etc. Secondary articulations may need to be taken into consideration, e.g. /w/ which is velarized-bilabial.

5. Manner of articulation refers to the type of constriction that takes place at any place of articulation.

6. The position of the lips is especially important when describing vowels (rounded or spread).

Next, I will introduce the vowel and consonant systems. On the one hand the consonants are normally described with reference to seven criteria: air stream source; air stream direction; vocal folds; soft palate; energy; place of articulation and manner of articulation.

In English, it is important to distinguish between lenis and fortis consonants. The difference between them seems to be related to that between voiceless and voiced. However, it is better to use the former terms because lenis consonants are devoiced after and before pauses and after and before fortis consonants but even in this case of devoicing they do not shorten the previous vowel. Moreover, /p, t, k/ are strongly aspirated in accented syllables, weakly aspirated in unaccented or final positions and totally unaspirated after /s/. The lack of plosion typical of Spanish learners of English may make these phonemes sound as their lenis counterparts to English speakers /b, d, g/.

After having examined the consonant system, I will concentrate on the vowel system. In order to make a complete description of the English pure vowels it is necessary to explain:

a) Height of the tongue.
b) Part which is highest.
c) Position of the lips.
d) Opening between the jaws.
e) Position of the soft palate.
f) Action of the vocal cords.

As the position of the soft palate is always raised and the vocal folds are vibrating, it is not necessary to add these two factors to the following descriptions. A full description for /i:/ would be as follows: “Between close and half-close, centre of front, the lips are spread or neutral and the opening of the jaws s from narrow to medium”.

By examining the precise quality and quantity of these twenty vowels four types can be distinguished:

a) Monophthongs-Short: /I, e, ө, ξ, ι, ү /

b) Monophthongs-Between short and long: /æ/. It is long when followed by /b, d, g, d3, m, n, ʡ/.

c) Monophthongs-Long: /i:, a:, Ω, u:, ι:/

d) Diphthongs-Long: /ei, əi, өi, үi, өү; e|; i|; and ү|/.

It can be said that the thirteen long vowels retain their full length: accented open syllables; and when followed by lenis consonants. They are half long when: unaccented; accented and followed by a fortis consonant; and when accented and followed by an unaccented syllable in the same word. Thus the vowels in “see” and “learned” will be fully long, while the last vowel in “seminar”, the diphthong in “lake” and the first vowel in “harder” are half-long ones.

After having developed the segmental features, I will focus on the suprasegmental features. When pronouncing the segments of spoken language, speech is altered in some ways. The voice force may change producing a whole range of effects. The basic psychoacoustic properties of sound are the source of the main linguistic effects: pitch and loudness. These effects combine with those arising out of the distinctive use of speed and rhythm and are called prosodic or suprasegmental features. Next, I will develop all these features in detail:

a) Stress/accent. It is considered the prominence with which one part of a word or a longer utterance is a starter of pitch movement or has the potential to be one. Though the stresses are normally in a fixed position in a word, their position is unpredictable in the sense that there is no single position where the main stress of a word can be expected. E.g. ‘answer above managerial microsecond. However some generalisations about endings in words stress and compound accentual patterns, for example:

- Abstract nouns ending in –ion: syllable preceding the ending.
- Stress before adjectival –ic: ‘phoneme pho’nemic.
- Stress before nominal –ity: u’nanimous una’nimity.

On the other hand, words formed by adding to a word in common use a prefix having a distinct meaning of its own very usually have two stresses, e.g., ánti’climax, archi’bishop. Some common words in English have two stresses (e.g. amen, hullo, thirteen.). These numbers and a few words are subject to rhythmic variation, for example:

,thir’teen but ‘thir,teen ‘shillings
,after’noon but ‘after,noon ‘tea
,Princess Vic’toria but a ,royal prin’cess

b) Rhythm. Variations in tempo provide our second suprasegmental feature. It is possible to speed up or slow down the rate at which syllables, words, and sentences are produced, to convey several kinds of meaning from urgency to emphasis. Pith, loudness, and tempo together enter into a language’s expression of rhythm. Languages vary greatly in the way in which rhythmical contrasts are made. English makes use of stressed syllables produced at roughly regular intervals of time and separated by unstressed syllables; what Pike termed a
“stress-timed” or isochronous rhythm. This means that when two accented syllables are separated by unaccented ones, these tend to be compressed and quickened, thus the time between each beat will be approximately the same as the time taken by two consecutive accented syllables. Closely connected with rhythm is pause. Our students must be taught to use a vowel of central quality or a lengthened “m” to fill these gaps.

c) **Intonation.** Different levels of pith (tones) are used in particular sequences (contours or tunes) to express a wide range of meaning. Intonation performs a wide range of functions:

- **Emotional.** Intonation works with attitudinal meanings, from excitement to boredom. On the other hand, prosodic and paralinguistic features are seen to provide the basis of all kinds of vocal emotional expression.

- **Grammatical.** Intonation plays an important part in the identification of major units such as clauses and sentences, and several contrasts, such as questions and statement may rely on intonation.

- **Information structure.** Intonation conveys a great deal about what is already known in an utterance.

- **Textual.** Prosodic coherence is an important element in the construction of larger stretches of discourse.

- **Psychological.** It helps to organise a language units into “chunks” which are more easily perceived and memorised.

- **Indexical.** Intonation helps to identify people as belonging to different social groups and occupations.

As regards the tunes, I will describe the ones that pupils must know:

a) **Tune 1: Falling.** It is used in:

- Statements: Paris is the capital of France.
- Question tags which merely seek for confirmation: You know him, don’t you?.
- Commands: Shut the door!.
- Wh-questions: Where does he live?
- Alternative or dual questions take rising intonation on the first element and falling on the second. E.g. Do you want back or white coffee?.

b) **Tune 2: Rising.** It is used in:

- Yes/No questions: Have you been here long?.
- Polite requests: Do shut the door. Pass me the bread, please.
- Utterances containing an element of protest or surprise: That was not my idea. Be quiet.
- Echo questions. They’ve won. Really?

c) **Tune 3: Falling-rising.** It is used in sentences where something is left unspoken (warning, threat, contrast, etc.).
Contrast: I cannot do it now (perhaps later).
To denote a warning or a threat: Do not be so sure. And if you don’t...

Once the segmental and suprasegmental features of speech have been considered, I will go on to analyse the third part of the topic, the choice of a model of pronunciation. After having chosen British RP or General British as a basic model, it is necessary to consider the performance targets and pronunciation goals. Some factors are concerned with students’ age, natural ability, motivation and objectives set out by the educational powers-that-be.

The lowest requirement can be described as one of minimum general intelligibility, i.e. one which possesses a set of distinctive elements corresponding in some measure to the inventory of the RP phonemic system and capable of conveying a message efficiently —given that the context of the message is known and that the listener has had time to tune in to the speaker’s pronunciation. On the other hand, there is high intelligibility, i.e. a form of speech whose acceptability is so high that the native listener may not identify it as non-native. It is important to make students become near-intelligible English speakers.

According to Gimson (1985): “The foreign teacher (...) has the obligation to present his students with as faithful a model of English pronunciation as is possible. In the first place, and particularly if he is dealing with young pupils, his students will imitate a bad pronunciation as exactly as they will a good one”.

In order to reach these aims, it is essential to focus on teaching and learning pronunciation. For this purpose, I will point out explain the concepts of perception and discrimination; and, second, production and assessment. As regards teaching and learning pronunciation, teachers must use activities such as songs and rhymes, generally speaking. In the same way, meaning and contextualized practice activities involving repetition will be very useful. However, it is necessary to say that students must be aware of the English pronunciation features. Thus, they must be able to perceive and discriminate sounds. In order to do so, some exercises can be used such as: listening for a specified word; write the word you hear; same or different?; how many times did you hear it?; which order?; which sound?; odd one out?.

It is important that pronunciation teaching does not concentrate only on the production of individual sounds. It is also important to give our pupils training in suprasegmental features. English is a “stress-timed” language, i.e. stressed beats occur at roughly equal interval of time, regardless of how many syllables there are between each beat. This can be shown by clapping the strong beats in songs, rhymes and jazz chants. Moreover, different words can be also stressed in the same sentence to see the effect, e.g. What do you do? I’m a computer programmer. What do you do?.

Another way to develop awareness of the role on intonation is to exploit the use of various sounds used in spoken language that are not words. Such sounds are often used to express approval, disapproval, interest, etc. Games are also interesting like “Getting warmer!””, a finding game where one member of the class is chosen to try to find one hidden object, the rest of students may help him/her to find it by saying “warmer” or “colder”.

After having analysed perception and discrimination, I will develop the concepts of pronunciation and assessment in relation to pronunciation. Firstly, it must be said that pronunciation work does not mean that pronunciation learning is automatically integrated within our lessons in account of two reasons:

a) Real integration must be consistent and planned. The mere repetition of a correction does not lead to a perfect production.

b) Students must integrate pronunciation in their learning. They must be encouraged to accept the role of self-monitor.

In the early stages of learning, learners depend on teachers for information about the critical sounds of English. However, they will acquire some discriminatory skills in order to develop their own internal criteria of what is acceptable and what is not. This exposure must be enjoyable and motivating: games; songs; rhymes; short dialogues or interesting topics will provide the necessary input. The output, their production must be evaluated. Therefore, students must be taught to learn how to learn pronunciation. One way of helping them is to make acts of monitoring and self-evaluation an integral part of work inside and outside the classroom. Kenworthy (1983) suggests three possible ways of doing this:

a) **Record or ask for a repetition of a speaking activity.** Repetition is probably best used for short exchanges or chunks of speech. As students know what they have to say, they will develop self-monitoring and evaluation skills.

b) **Oral homework** can be introduced after the first step. They can be asked to record a description of a place or a person, to speculate about what happened next with a photograph or to give their opinion.

c) **Track students’ progress.** Students will be given activities that require their best pronunciation, such as voicing-over a short video or film sequence. They will be aware of their knowledge and progress while motivating them.

Once I have dealt with the teaching and learning of pronunciation, I will consider the last part of the topic, problems for Spanish speakers and correction. In order to do so, I will follow Windsor Lewis, O’Connor and Kenworthy’s list, distinguishing high and low priority problems. In primary education high priority problems will be the main focus, i.e. problems that may cause low intelligibility. I will distinguish the following aspects:

a) Consonants:

a.1. High priority problems:

- /b/ and /v/ are confused.
- /ð/ and /d/ are confused.
- /g/ must always be plosive and not fricative.
- /s/ and /z/ are confused.
- /h/ is pronounced as /x/.
- /ʃ/ is pronounced as /s/.
- /j/ is pronounced as /dʒ/.
- /p,t,k/ are not aspirated in initial position.
- /t/ is dental in Spanish.
- Consonant clusters in general.
a.2. Low priority problems:
• /θ/ and /ð/ are replaced by /ʃ/ or /ʒ/.
• /r/ is not dropped in final position and it is pronounced with a trill.
• /l/ is always clear.
• /ŋl/ is pronounced as /ŋ/.
• /s/ instead of /z/ in plurals.

b) Vowels
b.1 High priority problems:
• /iː/ and /I/ are confused. The former is used.
• /æl/, /ʌ/, /ʌl/ are all confused. /ʌ/ is used.
• /ɒl/, /ɔːl/, /ɔːl/ are all confused. /o/ is used.
• /ɜː:/ is replaced by its spelling.
• No quantity distinction

b.2. Low priority problems:
• Pronunciation of Spanish vowel + /r/ : /ar/ /or/.
• /uː/, /u/.
• /aː/, /æl/.

c) Stress.
• Spanish students are not used to accentuate three- and four-syllable words on their first syllables.
• English derivatives do not always follow the patterns of their roots, e.g. ‘person but per,sonifi,cation.
• No secondary stresses in Spanish.

d) Rhythm.
• Rhythm in Spanish is roughly syllable-timed, thus there is none of the variation in length which results in English from the grouping of syllables into rhythm units.
• Use of weak forms.
• Use of gap fillers.

e) Intonation.
• Spanish tend to use a very narrow pitch range.
• Spanish final falling pitch movements are not low enough.
• Spanish do not use rise-fall tunes.

To sum up, what I have developed in this essay is the description of the English phonological system. For that purpose, I have dealt with the concepts of phonetics and phonology, examining the vowel and consonant distinction. Secondly, I have considered the segmental features (vowel and consonant systems) and the suprasegmental features (stress/accent; rhythm and intonation) of speech. Thirdly, I have examined the choice of a model of pronunciation in order to develop the students’ skills. Next, I have considered how to teach and learn pronunciation, focusing on perception and discrimination, and production and assessment. And finally, some problems for Spanish speakers have been presented.
In order to develop this topic, the following bibliography has been used:


- [http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/esl/pronunciation.cfm](http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/esl/pronunciation.cfm)
- [http://www.antimoon.com/how/pronunc-soundsipa.htm](http://www.antimoon.com/how/pronunc-soundsipa.htm)
- [http://www btinternet.com/~ted.power/phon00.htm](http://www btinternet.com/~ted.power/phon00.htm)