

TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION: INSIGHTS FROM TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND  
TECHNIQUES

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FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN

LICENCIATURA EN LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS

RIONEGRO

2021

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Trabajo de grado optar por el título de:

Licenciado en Lenguas Extranjeras

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UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA DE ORIENTE

FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN

LICENCIATURA EN LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS

RIONEGRO, ANTIOQUIA

2021

Nota de aceptación

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## 1. ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the beliefs and techniques that teachers implement to teach English pronunciation in higher grades at public and private schools covering urban and rural areas in the altiplano of the East of Antioquia.

This study integrated a qualitative research approach that at the same time used quantitative instruments to collect data. In order to gather the necessary information, a survey was carried out through the Google forms platform, as well as two focus groups in the Microsoft Teams platform.

The findings presented in this study show that most of the participants consider that the English pronunciation teaching plays an important role in the process of learning a foreign language but it should be more enhanced in different contexts since it can lack time, different resources along with teachers' training since not all teachers have previous knowledge of English pronunciation. Likewise, some participants affirmed that the techniques more useful for them were minimal pairs, students' video and voice recordings, presentations, and students reading aloud.

With this research project it was possible to understand in a deeper manner the teachers' perceptions about English pronunciation and its value in all participants' realities, the limitations or to the contrary the freedom they have once they enter a classroom to practice English in all its aspects.

Key words: Pronunciation Teaching, Teachers' Beliefs, Teachers' Practices, Pronunciation Techniques.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Considering that the aim of this research project was to gather information about teachers' beliefs and techniques in terms of teaching English pronunciation to higher level students; it was possible to have a general view of different scenarios in which our main objective has been explored. That is why five studies were considered since they served us as a model and gave us steps to guide the present study.

The first study held in Poland by Szyszka (2016), explored the teachers' beliefs and actions concerning pronunciation teaching at Polish state schools. The aim was to find out whether teachers teaching at three educational levels (primary school, lower secondary and higher secondary) differ in their beliefs about pronunciation teaching and in the pronunciation teaching techniques they use in their classrooms. The participants included sixty-four teachers in an online survey, which was addressed based on three research questions regarding pronunciation (teachers' beliefs about pronunciation, pronunciation teaching, and the most frequent teaching techniques); the instrument used to elicit the data was a questionnaire distributed through an e-mail network of EFL teachers in Poland consisting of four parts.

The results of the study demonstrate that teachers' beliefs in primary, low and higher secondary school focused their attention on the importance of teaching English pronunciation and how their students pronounce English. Thus, the technique more used for all teachers in the three levels of education is repetition after the teacher and recordings, meanwhile the majority of teachers considered themselves competent enough to teach English and with a very good pronunciation.

The second study was implemented in Lombok Timur, Indonesia by Moedjito (2016), with the aim of exploring teachers' and students' perception of pronunciation teaching in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Participants in this study were 110 school teachers and 230 university students with whom the data was collected by means of a written questionnaire, additionally to 6 teachers and 10 students selected by simple random sampling who were interviewed. In view of the questionnaire, it evidenced that the main techniques used by teachers and students for teaching and learning English pronunciation are teacher explanation in L1 and teachers' demonstration. The majority of participants considered that pronunciation was difficult, introducing some reasons why it is demanding such as some sounds that have different distribution, some English sounds that do not exist in students' L1 and teachers that are reluctant to teach pronunciation. On the contrary, only two teachers and seven students considered pronunciation easy, therefore, both students and teachers considered it necessary to include pronunciation in an EFL classroom.

The third study was developed by Baker (2013), in an intensive English program in North America, with the objective to explore some of the intricate connections between the cognitions (beliefs, knowledge, perceptions, attitudes), and pedagogical practices in relation to pronunciation techniques. The investigation had a data triangulation method in which 63 students and 5 English teachers participated and were chosen taking into account three sets of beliefs such as listening perception towards a comprehensible speech, the kinesthetic practice in relation to phonological improvement and pronunciation instruction. The instruments used for data collection were semi-Structured interviews, classroom observations, and stimulated recall interviews.

The results revealed that the majority of techniques used by the teachers are production practice, repetition drill, testing and visual identification where two teachers highlighted that listening discrimination activities are crucial to the development of comprehensible English. On



the other hand, the observation and interviews showed that the rest of the teachers considered the use of kinesthetic/tactile techniques are beneficial to the development of learners' comprehensibility and together these five teachers expressed that comprehensible speech is relatively easy for listeners to understand.

The fourth study was carried out in seven European countries by Henderson et al. (2015), the aim was to comprehend, from different teachers' perspectives, their comments about their pronunciation, teaching training, learners' goals and reflections upon general aspects as motivation and aspirations to perform with the language in a more a native speaker manner. The participants of this study were 640 teachers who participated through an online questionnaire consisting of 57 questions with multiple choice and Likert-scale, with a quantitative approach and open-ended questions with a qualitative approach, follow-up interviews were also done with 10 of the respondents in France.

Taken together, the results of this study suggested that some practical techniques like working in the language lab, listening and repeating exercises and ways of introducing new words with their pronunciation are used by teachers. According to some participants, pronunciation is not seen as a necessary part of communication skills; besides, the teachers surveyed could be referred to as novice in terms of teaching pronunciation due to the fact that they did not have a suitable training process along with the teachers that are self-taught or have searched for further training after starting teaching.

The fifth study held in Brazil was reported by Buss (2015), in which the purpose was to investigate the beliefs and practices concerning pronunciation of Brazilian EFL teachers. This research took into consideration 60 participants from public and private schools, university and

particular classes who completed an online survey on pronunciation teaching and learning. The instrument used was a questionnaire written in Portuguese to facilitate understanding and in total there were 74 open and closed ended questions.

The results showed that the majority of teachers teaching pronunciation in the classroom focused on suprasegmental features like stress, intonation and rhythm. Moreover, the teachers presented the most effective pronunciation activities used in their classes including imitation and repetition as well as their beliefs and opinions about pronunciation suggesting that teaching pronunciation should make students comfortably intelligible to the listeners and that pronunciation teaching is often necessary.

In conclusion, the aforementioned studies supported the notion that pronunciation has had an important role in the language learning and teaching in different contexts, but it is strongly necessary to continue bringing meaningful and more sufficient training to the teachers that consider themselves as novice in terms of pronunciation teaching, since the majority of them do not have previous studies about pronunciation, for this reason they direct their classes based on their own beliefs and common techniques.

### 3. JUSTIFICATION

This research project aimed to identify relevant information regarding teachers' beliefs and techniques at the moment to teach English pronunciation at higher secondary grades (10 - 11) in different municipalities in the East of Antioquia in order to comprehend the different scenarios in which pronunciation is taught.

Firstly, in the field of language teaching it is strongly necessary to raise more awareness of teaching English pronunciation in the classroom in terms of time, resources, and teachers' training. Therefore, in our position as teachers we have to bring the importance that pronunciation has in our English language teaching and learning environments in order to let students perform with the language in a more intelligible way and always keeping in mind the students' learning styles and rhythms as well as the motivation as the inner force that allow them to learn meaningfully.

Secondly, it is necessary to highlight that the idea of this study is not to criticize or judge the participants' perceptions about the object of study but to help teachers reflect upon their own perceptions and teaching techniques bearing in mind the pronunciation as an essential component of English language teaching. Further, it is a contributory process in which researchers and participants could analyze how the pronunciation is worked in their classroom.

#### 4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In our Colombian context English pronunciation has been taught in different manners depending on the proficiency of the teachers by the time of learning, performing and teaching the language. It is essential to highlight that as there are teachers that had adequate training in this main component of a language, there are other teachers that focus their attention to other language teaching elements and do not teach pronunciation as it is necessary, or work with techniques that they acquire once they face their teaching experience and their context needs.

In Colombia, it has been studied how pronunciation is taught and which methods are implemented by teachers to teach it. In a study carried out by Bastidas and Muñoz (2011), in primary schools in Pasto they explored how teachers teach English keeping in mind its pronunciation and it was evident that the majority of the teachers made use of the time to work on

it to reinforce other areas because they are not familiar with the English language and their classes are not focused on communicative practices that allow the pronunciation improvement with their primary school students. This study has supported our research since it has highlighted the idea that the lack of pronunciation teaching might be also a problem in other educational contexts in Colombia, where teachers due to their little knowledge of this main English component, they avoid working on it and use their class time for other purposes.

Taking into consideration the importance of pronunciation in the language teaching and learning processes, it was possible to establish a main objective in order to realize about what teachers reflect upon pronunciation significance from their own teaching techniques and their experience with their students' learning needs specifically at higher secondary level in the altiplano in the East of Antioquia. In the same way, the specific objectives are directed to bring the deeper insights of the teachers in terms of pronunciation techniques, perspectives about teaching pronunciation and its role at higher level education.

## 5. OBJECTIVES

### 5.1. General Objective

To identify teachers' beliefs and techniques to teach English pronunciation at higher secondary level in 4 municipalities of the East of Antioquia.

### 5.2. Specific Objectives

- To analyze the most common techniques used in the classroom to teach pronunciation.
- To describe teachers' beliefs about teaching English pronunciation.

## 6. RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the teachers' beliefs and techniques concerning teaching English pronunciation at higher secondary level (grades 10th – 11th) in 4 municipalities of the East of Antioquia?

## 7. CONCEPTUAL REFERENCES

In order to address our research question, it is necessary to highlight several theoretical aspects that allow us to have a more accurate understanding of the role of the English teacher at the time of teaching pronunciation. This study focused on identifying teachers' beliefs and techniques to teach English pronunciation at a higher secondary level, for this reason it is important to define terms such as pronunciation teaching, teachers' beliefs and teachers' practices and teachers' techniques.

### 7.1. Pronunciation Teaching

Bearing in mind an effective communication, pronunciation teaching plays an important role in every language teaching and learning environment not to make students and teachers native-like speakers but to be more aware of different pronunciation components in order to have a comprehensible speaking for all the listeners. For that reason, it is essential to consider what Aufa (2017) states “Teaching pronunciation is teaching about aspects that influence meanings of sentences through segmental phonemes. It is important to teach, because pronunciation is a basic sub skill in speaking. Therefore, good pronunciation avoids misunderstanding in communication” (p. 18).

## 7.2. Pronunciation Techniques

Regarding the teaching techniques used by language teachers in order to improve their students' pronunciation, there are diverse materials, resources and activities considering aspects such as the phonetic alphabet, sounds as well as fluency components relevant for a language teaching and learning process. Hismanoglua and Hismanoglub (2010) manifested that "All these techniques are based on teachers having their students learn each sound and then apply them in real speech. Some students benefit from these techniques; however, others do not learn the pronunciation of the other language easily from them. For this reason, new techniques are being developed to supplement the learning of English pronunciation" (p.3).

## 7.3. Teachers' Beliefs

In the process of teaching a new language, pronunciation is an essential part to achieve a good understanding of a language. This teaching experience is mainly guided by teachers' own ideas, feelings, or expectations of their own classes, students and what they want to do or not in and outside the classroom. As Philipps and Borg (2009) explain, in the previous two decades, second language studies have progressively concentrated on educator perceptions, especially the connection between instructors' beliefs and their educational practices. Thus, authors like Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) explain that teachers' beliefs form part of the process of understanding and how teachers shape their work which is significant to the comprehension of their methods and their decisions in the classroom.

## 7.4. Teachers' Practices

Teachers' practices refer to several actions that teachers develop in different educational environments in regards to their own teachers' responsibilities with their students, parents,

coworkers and the society in general. According to Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009), they define the teachers' practices as "an integral component of teacher training. It grants student teachers experience in the actual teaching and learning environment" (p. 1).

## 8. METHODOLOGY

In this study directed to comprehend teachers' positions and techniques with reference to teaching English pronunciation, it was fundamental to consider the approach, paradigm, type of research, participants and data collection methods that were useful to gather relevant information.

The qualitative approach is convenient for this study, since it allows us to examine and identify teachers' perceptions, attitudes and positions in public and private schools located in urban and rural contexts in 4 municipalities of the East of Antioquia. Consequently, Creswell (2012) states that qualitative research describes a research problem or necessities based on trends in a specific field about something that occurs. Therefore, this approach could help us to identify, explore and analyze a reality with the intention of comprehending and describing it to the context.

Concerning the type of research that guided this investigation, it was a case study in which it was possible to analyze a specific aspect as the English pronunciation teaching and teachers' reactions, beliefs, and techniques comprehension in view of pronunciation. Sturman (1997) stated that a "case study is a general term for the exploration of an individual, group or phenomenon" (p. 61). In the case of Sammut-Bonnici and McGee (2015), they affirmed that "the distinguishing factor of the case study methodology is that it aims to bring out unique characteristics and interesting differences in the situation under observation" (p. 1). In effect, this type of study is necessary in order to describe the multiple scenarios where pronunciation has been worked on or to the contrary the reason why it lacks implementation.

## 8.1. Data Collection Methods

With the intention to collect the most relevant and necessary information the instruments that were selected for this research are a cross-sectional survey and two focus groups.

### *8.1.1. Cross-sectional Survey Design*

It is feasible for this study to use survey design due to the fact that we can gather accurate information from teachers at the moment about their pronunciation beliefs. As stated by Creswell (2012), in this type of survey the researcher collects data at one point in time and can examine current attitudes, beliefs, opinions or practices. Furthermore, this instrument (see Appendix C) provides information in a short amount of time and in this research study it was divided into three main parts. The first part of the survey comprises general information about the participants, the second part includes how pronunciation is taught and, finally teachers' beliefs about pronunciation.

### *8.1.2. Focus Group*

For this study, the focus group let us communicate with the participants for the purpose of knowing their perceptions about the object of study and contrasting in a deep manner the information gathered from the active interaction of the participants. Morgan (1997), highlighted the importance of the focus group as it gives the researchers "the opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a topic in a limited period of time" (p. 8). With the focus groups (see Appendix B), there were established questions but it was also possible that different questions emerged from the interaction of the participants.



## 8.2. Participants

The participants selected for this research project were ten English teachers from at higher secondary level (10- 11 grades) from different public and private schools covering urban and rural areas of the East of Antioquia, Colombia including municipalities such as Rionegro, El Carmen de Viboral, La Union and Marinilla. The participants were selected due to the fact that they must be teaching in ten or eleven grades since at this stage students have formed some basis in the foreign language and teachers probably could focus on speaking skills during their classes.

## 8.3. Ethical Considerations

The participants involved in this investigation were informed about the intention of the research and that the information gathered was used absolutely for academic purposes and manipulated only by the researcher. Therefore, all participants were given a consent form (see Appendix A) explaining the purpose of the study highlighting that the main objective that directs this study is to identify their perceptions about pronunciation in their own teaching contexts. On the other hand, this consent form explained the instruments for gathering the information from participants and that their identity was protected by using different pseudonyms.

## 9. FINDINGS

This part of this study will classify the relevant elements gathered from the participants that highlight their beliefs and techniques about teaching pronunciation in their own contexts covering public and private institutions in rural and urban areas in 4 municipalities of the East of Antioquia. In order to gather the necessary information, a survey was carried out through the Google forms platform, as well as the implementation participation of two focus groups in the Microsoft Teams platform to collect a wider amount of data and insights from all the participants.

The analysis of data revealed participants' beliefs and techniques about teaching English pronunciation that also led to different factors that somehow improve or delay pronunciation teaching and learning. In order to answer the research question, the information was classified into three pre-existing categories: teachers' profile, beliefs about pronunciation and its teaching, techniques for pronunciation teaching, and one emergent category: materials to teach pronunciation.

The following section provides more details on the above categories.

### 9.1. Teachers' Profile

The educational institutions where the participants of this project currently teach are 80% public and 20% private where, 70% of these institutions are in urban contexts and the other 30% are in rural contexts. The participants develop their classes in higher grades 9th, 10th and 11th, being 11th grade the most common among the participants, followed by 10th and 9th. Moreover, 30% of the participants have side jobs at universities in Medellín, 20% in Universidad de Antioquia and 10% in Universidad de Medellín.

This project involved 10 teachers who aged between 26 and more than 41 years old, including nine women and one man. The academic training of each of the participants was characterized by 80% master's degree, 10% specialization, and 10% bachelor's degree, and during their teacher training programs, they all participated in regular courses related to the teaching of pronunciation such as phonetics and phonology courses. Moreover, 10% of them had any extra significant training related to teaching pronunciation.

As shown in Figure 1, before the pandemic, most teachers dedicated a space in their classes to teach pronunciation, 10% dedicated more than 30 minutes, 60% dedicated between 10 and 30

minutes, another 20% dedicated between 5 and 10 minutes, and the other 10% did not teach pronunciation in their classes.

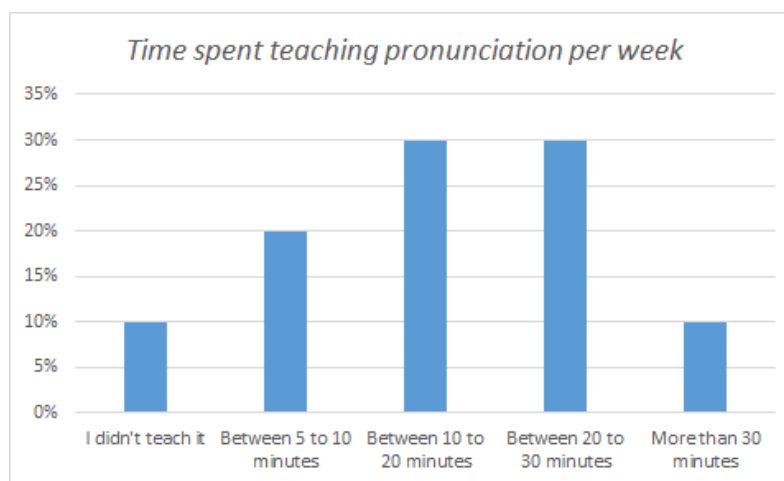


Figure 1. Time spent teaching pronunciation per week.

The focus groups conducted showed what they prioritize when they teach English in the classroom. According to the participants their main objective is to prepare students for the SABER tests which are held at the end of each year and which aim according to the National Ministry of Education (MEN) to evaluate and know the level of learning and domain that students have about specific competences, a participant affirmed that

Mi prioridad para enseñar es reading comprehension, esto debido a que es lo que nos piden las pruebas saber y lo que piden universidades de diferentes carreras. Trabajamos mucho el vocabulario. En once nos prohíben cualquier cosa que sea diferente a las pruebas *SABER*

<sup>1</sup> (Focus group # 2, Participant 5, Oct 28th).

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<sup>1</sup> My priority to teach is reading comprehension because that is what the SABER tests and universities from different degrees ask us. We work a lot on the vocabulary. In the eleventh grade we are prohibited from anything that is different from SABER test.

Most teachers conducting their classes are given greater priority to integral work where the four skills can be developed, always focusing on oral and communicative production since for the participants it is more important that students can understand and be understood in English.

## 9.2. Beliefs about Pronunciation and Its Teaching

### 9.2.1. *Teachers' beliefs about their own pronunciation*

In the survey participants were asked to rate their own pronunciation level between excellent, very good, good, poor, and very poor. In which 40% of the participants declared to have a very good pronunciation and the other 60% declared to have a good pronunciation. Furthermore, they were asked if they considered themselves competent enough to teach pronunciation and the following were the results, 10 % rated themselves excellent to teach it, 70% rated themselves good to teach and 20% rated to teach it.

To teach English pronunciation the participants mentioned which are the models they use the most in the classroom. The results obtained showed that all participants prefer an American accent and then a British accent. This is because the American accent is more familiar to them and it was with which they were taught English, on the other hand, it is easier to find materials and tools in this accent.

The information collected revealed that the way in which the participants pronounce English is very important to them and most agree that their pronunciation should be excellent when speaking English. This is because according to them, they are a model for the students, and the students, especially in the lower grades, imitate the exact pronunciation of the teacher, producing a correct or incorrect pronunciation that becomes difficult to change in a higher age, and that is why participant 1 mentioned that “para mí sería porque los chiquitos son una esponjita y ellos

como aprenden pues eso es lo que ellos van a crecer y van a pronunciar siempre”<sup>2</sup> (Focus group #1, Participant 1, Oct 23th).

For the surveyed teachers, 70% of them highlighted that it is more or less important to sound native-like speaker, 20% answered that it is important and 10% very important due to the fact that they are more confident by the time of teaching their English classes. They consider it is necessary to have a model accent in order to let students learn through imitation, understand and be understood when they perform with the language English in and outside the classroom. On the other hand, the participants were asked about their point of view of having their native Colombian accent when they pronounce English where the responses were divided since 10% strongly disagree, 10% disagree, 20% neither agree nor disagree, 30% agree, 30% strongly agree being satisfied with the way they speak, and others disagreed completely.

### *9.2.2. Teachers' beliefs about students' pronunciation*

The survey also showed that teachers not only care about how they pronounce, they also care about how well students pronounce the target language. Through this survey it was found that for teachers, the teaching of pronunciation in the higher grades is necessary and should be provided continuously until the last year of schooling as well as they affirmed that it should be provided from the first grades of school with younger students. The survey also inquired teachers about the importance of their students following an English pronunciation model, 10% strongly disagree, 50% neither agree nor disagree and 40% agree that it is often important for students to follow a specific pronunciation model or for their students to sound like a native English speaker.

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<sup>2</sup> For me it would be because the little ones are a little sponge and how they learn that is what they will grow and they will always pronounce.

However, 50% agree and 50% strongly of the participants agree that it is important for students to know different models of English pronunciation. For instance, a participant affirms that in the English classes it is important to have meetings with native people from different parts of the world, thus generating spaces of interaction where students can begin to differentiate where someone comes from by identifying their accent.

Todo desde un enfoque comunicativo y todos estos se han enmarcado en un proyecto que tengo desde que llegué al colegio que se llama Colombia World Passion, que es un proyecto en el que yo me comunico con clases de otros países y tenemos un proyecto sobre Colombia y ellos tienen que hablar. No tienen un excelente nivel. Hay muchos estudiantes que tienen un buen nivel, pero el nivel es básico, el nivel promedio es básico. Sin embargo, se trata de que de los estudiantes con este proyecto de cierta manera se obliguen a hablar y ha dado muy buenos resultados.<sup>3</sup>(Focus group # 2, Participant 3, Oct 28th).

### *9.2.3. Difficulties when teaching pronunciation*

Participants agree that pronunciation teaching should be given from the early years of study in children even from Kindergarten. However, some important factors such as lack of materials, lack of trained teachers, lack of time and the curriculum, negatively influence students' development of a high level of English pronunciation. In the educational institutions where the teachers carry out their classes, the lack of all types of materials for teaching pronunciation is evident in both urban and rural contexts, this situation must be faced daily by the teachers and they

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<sup>3</sup> Everything from a communicative approach have been given through a project that I have since I arrived at the school called Colombia World Passion, in which I communicate with classes from other countries and we have a project about Colombia and students have to speak. They do not have an excellent level. There are many students, who have a good level, but the average level is basic. However, the idea is to create in students the necessity to speak and it has given very good results.

are who through their initiative and personal resources can provide their students with the appropriate material for teaching English pronunciation.

Another difficulty faced by teachers in the higher grades is the lack of trained teachers to teach pronunciation in the lower grades. According to the participants, this is due to the fact that the teachers who teach in primary school do not have the suitable skills to teach pronunciation correctly or do not hold a degree in English language teaching. Thus, they generate gaps not only in the pronunciation area but also in the entire language being learned. Another difficulty found is that the English area is put aside and the time that is established for the teaching of English is used for other activities such as, conferences, masses, or meetings.

The results also showed that the time proposed by the institutions for the teaching of English is very short and for that reason sometimes pronunciation is not taught, the teachers must follow a curriculum and some steps to teach their classes of English focused mainly in the preparation for the SABER 11 test which focuses on grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. Participant 2 affirmed that “La intensidad horaria del área de inglés pues no da, no da para sacar así un tiempo específico para pronunciación cierto, sino que uno mira las prioridades. Uno sigue el currículo, sigue, la planeación y no le da mucho énfasis a eso.”<sup>4</sup> (Focus group #2, Participant 2, Oct 28th)

#### *9.2.4. Students' difficulties when learning pronunciation*

The data collected through teachers' voices evidence that the difficulties faced by students when learning pronunciation are mainly due to lack of practice and poor vocabulary in the

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<sup>4</sup> The time for the English classes is not enough even more in case of explaining a specific time pronunciation, we have to organize our priorities. We have to follow the curriculum, the class planning and we do not pay much emphasis on pronunciation.

language. According to teachers, the absence of practice is caused by students not being motivated to learn the pronunciation of English since students are afraid of making mistakes and sometimes they can feel ashamed. It has also been identified that students are lazy to practice their pronunciation and are not interested in trying, this makes what they have learned to be forgotten and this makes the pronunciation part more difficult for them.

The participants mentioned that it is very difficult for the students to remember the pronunciation of new sounds. Sounds that they mispronounce even though they are corrected by the teacher are mispronounced again. Interestingly, students tend to relate their native language sounds with the foreign language sounds and it is difficult for them to distinguish the similarities and adapt to the differences in the foreign language sounds. For most of the participants the classes of grammatical structures are very common in their contexts and it is what the students are accustomed to have in the English classes. Participant 5 explains that:

Ellos están muy acostumbrados a que el inglés es de gramática y ellos están muy acostumbrados a que es el sujeto con verbo complemento, algo muy tradicional y muy como siguiendo la reglita, hacer esto y hacer esto. Entonces la parte comunicativa, la parte de escucha, la parte pronunciación, ellos no tienen esa cultura todavía de que se trabaja y que desde allí se pueden hacer otras cosas<sup>5</sup> (Focus group #2, participant 5, Oct 28th).

Perhaps this is another factor that influences at the moment of motivating the students to learn something new like the pronunciation, because when they do not have grammatical classes

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<sup>5</sup> They are very used to learn English focusing on grammar, following the subject, verbs and complement, something very traditional. Students do not have the culture to work on communicative, listening, and pronunciation components, and that from them they can do other things.



it makes them feel as if they had not learned anything important during the class as participant 3 mentioned:

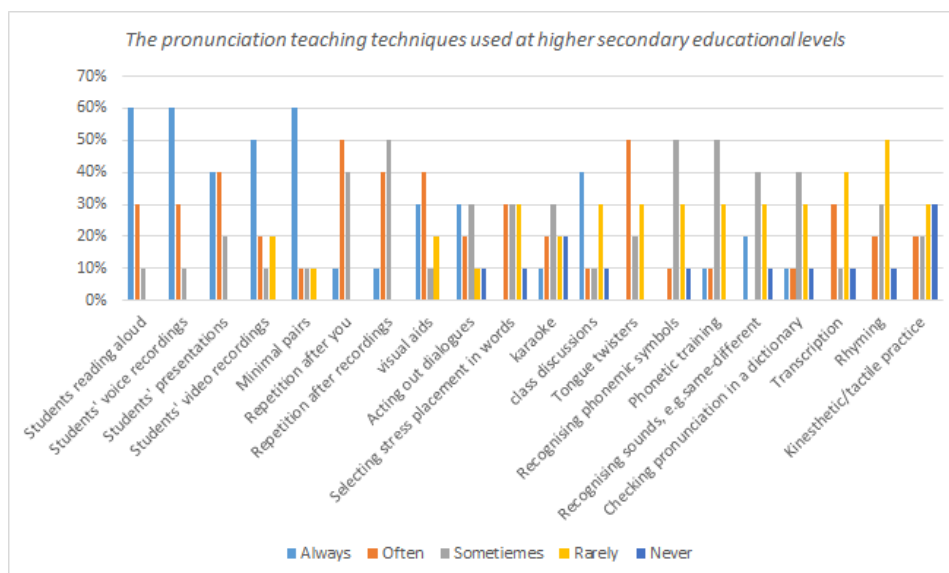
Los estudiantes de los colegios están muy acostumbrados a la estructura y a la parte, pues como muy tradicional. De hecho, cuando uno le da una parte muy, una clase perdón muy práctica, donde se enseña y se explica esa parte gramatical y estructural del inglés de manera muy implícita, ellos sienten que no aprendieron y de hecho dicen, “ay bueno hoy no avanzamos como mucho” porque ellos no sienten que se hizo cómo de manera muy explícita <sup>6</sup> (Focus group #2, Participant 3, Oct 28th).

### 9.3. Techniques for Pronunciation Teaching

The results of the last part of the survey provided the necessary evidence about the most or least frequently pronunciation teaching techniques used by teachers in the higher grades. The frequency in which teachers apply pronunciation techniques in the classroom was calculated. Figure 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the use of the 20 suggested pronunciation teaching techniques in higher grades.

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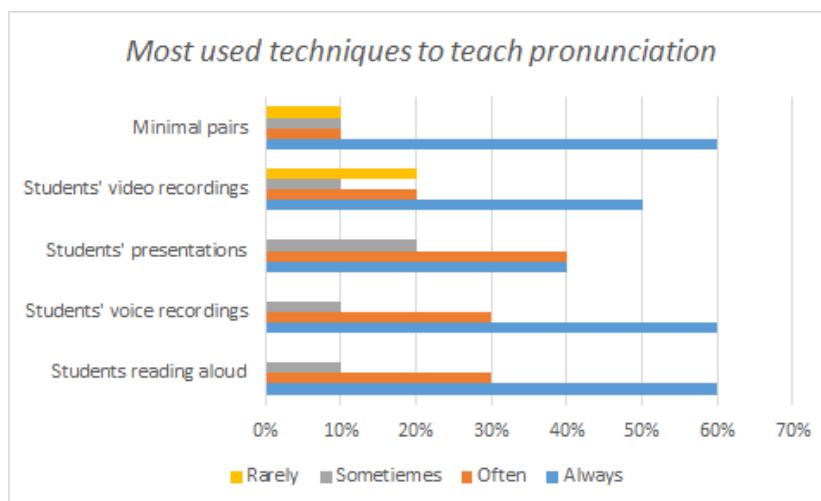
<sup>6</sup> The students of the schools are very accustomed to the structure and the part traditional. In fact, when you give them a very practical class, where we teach and explain the grammar and structure of English in a very implicit way, they feel that they did not learn and in fact they say "ok, today we do not advance much" because they don't feel that it was done in a very explicit way.



*Figure 2.* The pronunciation teaching techniques used at higher secondary educational levels.

In general, teachers stated that they have used most of these techniques when they teach pronunciation in the classroom. However, it was evident that the five techniques that work best for participants when teaching pronunciation are students reading aloud, students' voice recordings, student's presentations, students' video recordings and minimal pair drills.

Figure 3 demonstrates the results from the survey made to the teachers and shows the results of the most used techniques for teaching pronunciation.



*Figure 3.* Techniques most commonly used by teachers to teach pronunciation at the higher grades.

To make use of these techniques, some teachers implement activities such as the presentation of final projects in a face to face manner, video recordings or voice recordings. The students start working on these projects from the beginning of each term and require good preparation to get a good result when showing it to other classmates. This in some way motivates students to perform well and consequently, they are interested in having a good pronunciation at the time of presenting the project. The following testimony from focus group #2 shows how these projects motivate students to have good pronunciation when presenting their work.

Motiva mucho el hecho de tener que presentar al final su proyecto porque ellos quieren hacerse entender, lo quieren hacer de manera correcta, ya que quieren tener en la pronunciación bonita, ellos lo quieren hacer de la mejor manera, entonces esto los motiva a, que tengan una preparación previa interesante<sup>7</sup> (Focus group #2, Participant 3, Oct 28th).

<sup>7</sup> It motivates a lot the fact of having to present at the end their project because they want to make themselves understood, they want to do it in a correct way, since they want to have a beautiful

Another activity frequently used by teachers in the classroom is reading aloud, this is a strategy widely used by participants to teach pronunciation, because it allows them to make corrections at the time by encouraging the students to pronounce correctly each time an error occurs. Although some teachers prefer to make the corrections at the end of the reading and reading aloud strategies vary for each of them. The following testimony taken from focus group #2 evidences another way to teach pronunciation using the reading aloud technique.

Entonces los ubico en círculo y empezamos a leer. Ellos todos tienen el libro y se equivocó, yo doy una palmada en la silla y el otro tiene que seguir, pero tienes que seguir corrigiendo esa última parte que hizo el estudiante. Entonces puede que al principio, claro, por leer rápido, por hacer la actividad, no entiendan lo que están leyendo y lo más probable es eso. Pero esa actividad me funcionaba mucho para trabajar fluidez y pronunciación <sup>8</sup> (Focus group #2, Participant 5, Oct 28th).

Among the less used techniques by the participants were identified the transcription, rhyming, recognizing phonemic symbols, and checking pronunciation in a dictionary. According to the participants, direct pronunciation instruction to the students may seem boring or uninteresting. This generates less motivation to the students when learning pronunciation since the use of phonetic symbols or rhythm is very confusing for them and causes extra difficulty added to how complicated it is for the students to learn another language.

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pronunciation, they want to do it in the best way, then this motivates them to, that they have a previous interesting preparation.

<sup>8</sup> So, I place them in a circle and we start reading. They all have the book and if they make a mistake, I slap the chair and the other student has to go on, but he or she has to keep correcting that last part that the previous student did. In this way, maybe at the beginning, with the intention of reading fast, of doing the activity, they do not understand what they are reading and most likely is that. But this activity was useful for me in order to work a lot fluency and pronunciation.

Lastly, some of these techniques are used by some teachers implicitly, since the aim is that the students learn pronunciation in an easy and comfortable way. Familiarizing these techniques with others that are easier for students can enable them to learn in a way that they are used to without having so many difficulties and without being boring for them.

#### 9.4. Materials to Teach Pronunciation

According to the information provided by the participants the great majority of schools where the teachers teach have limited materials or resources that can be used to teach pronunciation. Most of these materials have American and British accents, which are preferred by teachers at the time of teaching pronunciation. But also, some of the teachers use material with other accents with the intention to show that others exist.

The following testimony from focus group #1 shows how reality is in schools in relation to the support materials for teaching pronunciation.

En la institución hay muy poquito. Habían unos pues muy obsoletos, de hecho eran de VHS y cosas de esas, entonces uno encontraba CD pero no encontraba el libro. Bueno mejor dicho, yo busco canciones. Pues ya afortunadamente la tecnología cierto nos permite muchas cosas. Me toca descargarlas y luego llevar y presentarlas a los chicos<sup>9</sup> (Focus group #1, Participant 1, Oct 23th).

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<sup>9</sup> There is very little material in the institution. There were some very obsolete, in fact, they were VHS and things like that, so you could find a CD but not the book. Well, I look for songs. Fortunately, technology allows us to do many things. I have to download them and then present them to the students.

Only one of the teachers surveyed said he or she had resources to teach pronunciation at the institution where he works stating that “*Todo está dentro de los textos que trabajamos e incluye algunos target sounds, entonces, si los tenemos, tenemos el material*”<sup>10</sup> (Focus group #1, Participant 2, Oct 23th).

The other participants mentioned that they had their own resources because they did not have them at their place of work. Virtual resources are the most common among them, which are taken from pages like Youtube, Duolingo, Engvid, BBC and some game apps. These resources are then printed and carried into the classroom to be worked on with the students.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

This study was conducted with the purpose of identifying the different insights and techniques that a group of teachers has in reference to the teaching of English pronunciation in higher grades.

Interestingly, there were different points of view between the participants in which the majority of them affirmed that pronunciation is something essential in the language teaching and even if they have a good level of English, there is a need for teachers' training with regards to English pronunciation and English in general. The lack of time and resources is another factor that affects teaching pronunciation in higher-level grades caused by the focus on state exams or the time for the class is used for other academic activities and not all institutions have the necessary tools to have more meaningful classes. Bearing in mind the more effective techniques for the

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<sup>10</sup> Everything is within the texts we work on and includes some target sounds, so, we have the material.

participants, they were minimal pairs, students' video and voice recordings, presentations, and students reading aloud.

The results of this study help us to raise awareness of the importance pronunciation has in language teaching and the impact that can have istudents' and teachers' motivation. Even when the participants stated that they pay attention to their speaking and their students, there are some factors that are more related to the impact of pronunciation in learning and teaching a foreign language as it is in the case of our object of study.

With regard to the contributions of this study, it was found the perceptions about a variety of realities that teachers face in their context in terms of teaching English pronunciation, realize about the limitations and freedom that shape their own teaching experiences, know their ideas at the moment of teaching pronunciation. Together, all the aforementioned aspects motivate us to develop our teaching practices professionally, meaningfully and always thinking about doing our work in the best way.

Moreover, the performance of this study was limited due to the pandemic (Covid-19) that affected the world, since we could not move to the participants' institutions face to face or find more participants for the study. Likewise, contacting the participants was done through e-mails and calls which affects the participation of more teachers in the project since not all teachers were able to use technological devices.

For further research studies, it is feasible in order to bring veracity and validity to the project to have more participants in order to contrast in a deeper way the information, as well as use other instruments that allow the researchers have even more contact with the context. For

instance, participant observations where the researchers can identify in more detail the different educational scenarios where pronunciation has been worked on.

Further research could also be conducted to identify the students' insights about pronunciation and the practices they take into consideration in order to perform a language in a more intelligible way in and outside the classroom. A better understanding of students' points of view regarding pronunciation brings the possibility to recognize the bias of having a native or nonnative-like pronunciation in addition to their motivation about learning English.



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## 12. APPENDIXES

### 12.1. Appendix A

#### *Consent Form*

## UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA DE ORIENTE - FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN

### PROGRAMA DE LICENCIATURA EN LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS

Cordial saludo,

Por medio de este formulario le invitamos a ser participante en el proyecto de investigación “Teaching English pronunciation: insights from teachers’ beliefs and practices in the East of Antioquia”. Este estudio busca explorar las prácticas y creencias de la enseñanza de la pronunciación del inglés que tienen los profesores de grados superiores (9,10, 11) en la básica secundaria de las instituciones educativas en el oriente antioqueño.

Se estarán utilizando dos instrumentos para la recolección de información, la encuesta en inglés que encontrará a continuación con una duración aproximada de 10 minutos y una corta entrevista virtual que acordaremos con usted en las próximas semanas en caso de aceptar esta invitación.

#### Acuerdos entre los participantes

- He entendido el propósito de este proyecto de investigación.
- Se me ha dado tiempo suficiente para considerar mi decisión y estoy de acuerdo en participar en el estudio.
- Entiendo que mi participación no representa riesgo alguno a mi integridad personal ni a mi buen nombre.
- Entiendo que en cualquier informe sobre los resultados de esta investigación mi identidad permanecerá anónima.
- Entiendo que mis palabras pueden ser citadas en publicaciones, informes, páginas web y otros productos de investigación.
- Entiendo que la información suministrada será utilizada para fines académicos de mejora dentro de la Licenciatura en Lenguas Extranjeras UCO.
- Entiendo que puedo retirarme del estudio en cualquier momento y que no se me harán preguntas sobre mi decisión de no continuar.
- Entiendo que toda la información que proporcione para este estudio será tratada y almacenada confidencialmente.
- Entiendo que soy libre de contactar a cualquiera de las personas involucradas en la investigación para solicitar más aclaraciones e información.
- Entiendo que no recibiré dinero por participar en este ejercicio y que mi participación es completamente voluntaria.

Investigador:

Sebastian Zapata Echeverry

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Septiembre 10 de 2020

¿Acepta participar en este proyecto? Si responde afirmativamente, ¡Bienvenido/a! Favor continuar con la siguiente sección.

SI  NO

## 12.2. Appendix B

*Focus Group*

1. De acuerdo a su experiencia como docente ¿Desde qué grado considera es importante empezar a enseñar pronunciación ¿Por qué?
2. En la encuesta ustedes dieron los tiempos que dedicaban a enseñar pronunciación semanalmente antes de la pandemia, ¿Ustedes creen que esos tiempos son suficientes para enseñar pronunciación? o ¿Creen que es necesario dedicar más tiempo y cuánto tiempo semanal ¿Por qué?
3. ¿Cuando ustedes están enseñando pronunciación ustedes se dejan llevar por lo que ustedes creen o ustedes se asesoran de un libro o de un experto?
4. ¿Qué dificultades encuentran ustedes al momento de enseñar pronunciación?
5. ¿Qué dificultades encuentran ustedes al momento de enseñar pronunciación por el lado de los estudiantes?
6. Según resultados de la encuesta, las técnicas que ustedes más utilizan para enseñar pronunciación son: students reading aloud, visual aids, students' presentations, students' video recordings. ¿Pueden precisar cómo lo hacen, qué hacen?
7. Según resultados de la encuesta las técnicas que ustedes menos utilizan para enseñar pronunciación son: Kinesthetic/tactile practice, karaoke. ¿Por qué estas técnicas no son comunes al momento de enseñar pronunciación en sus clases?
8. En la encuesta hubo otras técnicas que ustedes nos mencionaron como: pair dialogue, Youtube channels, tv series, English board and listening and reading simultaneously. Nos gustaría conocer ¿Quiénes de ustedes usan estas técnicas y cómo las relacionan con la enseñanza de la pronunciación?
9. ¿En los colegios donde ustedes enseñan inglés creen que cuenta con el suficiente material de apoyo para enseñar pronunciación?
10. ¿Qué es lo que prioriza al momento de dar sus clases?

## 12.3. Appendix C

*Cross-sectional Survey Design*

## General Information

1. Full name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender  
-Male \_\_\_\_\_ -Female \_\_\_\_\_
3. Age  
-Between 26 and 30 -Between 31 and 35 -Between 36 and 40 -More than 41
4. The institution where you currently work is  
-Public \_\_\_\_\_ -Private \_\_\_\_\_
5. Name of the school/institution where you currently work: \_\_\_\_\_
6. The context where the institution is  
Rural \_\_\_\_\_ Urban \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you work in another institution? Which one? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What higher grades do you teach English to in your school? (More than 1 option is possible)  
-9th \_\_\_\_\_ -10th \_\_\_\_\_ -11th \_\_\_\_\_
9. Please select the maximum university studies you have completed:  
-Estudios en Normal Superior \_\_\_\_\_ -Maestría (Master's Degree) \_\_\_\_\_  
-Licenciatura (BA) \_\_\_\_\_ -Doctorado (Doctorate) \_\_\_\_\_  
-Especialización (Specialization) \_\_\_\_\_
10. Please tell us the name(s) of your degrees (eg. Licenciada en lenguas Modernas, Magíster en Educación): \_\_\_\_\_
11. How would you rate your own English pronunciation?  
-Excellent \_\_\_\_\_ -Poor \_\_\_\_\_  
-Very good \_\_\_\_\_ -Very poor \_\_\_\_\_  
-Good \_\_\_\_\_
12. On a scale from 1 to 5, being 1 very poor and 5 excellent, do you consider yourself competent enough to teach the pronunciation of English?  
1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_
13. Before the pandemic, how much time per week did you assign to teach pronunciation in higher grades?

- I didn't teach it \_\_\_\_\_
- Between 5 to 10 minutes \_\_\_\_\_
- Between 10 to 20 minutes \_\_\_\_\_
- Between 20 to 30 minutes \_\_\_\_\_
- More than 30 minutes \_\_\_\_\_

14. Please select the pronunciation model you use (in case you prefer one) to teach English pronunciation (More than 1 option is possible)

- British English      -American English      -Australian English
- Canadian English    -None

### Beliefs about pronunciation and its teaching

Please read each statement carefully and answer according to your own beliefs using the following scale:

1- Strongly Disagree    2- Disagree    3- Neither agree, nor disagree    4- Agree    5- Strongly Agree

15. I care about my pronunciation in English being fully correct.  
1 2 3 4 5
16. I think that it is important to sound like a native speaker of English  
1 2 3 4 5
17. I like to imitate English native speakers' accents.  
1 2 3 4 5
18. I like my Colombian accent when speaking English  
1 2 3 4 5
19. I think it is important the way my students pronounce in English  
1 2 3 4 5
20. I think it is important to teach English pronunciation in higher grades  
1 2 3 4 5
21. I consider important that my students follow a specific pronunciation model in English  
1 2 3 4 5
22. I want my students to sound like a native speaker of English  
1 2 3 4 5
23. It is important for my students to identify different English pronunciation models  
1 2 3 4 5
24. I think that correcting my students' pronunciation can make them feel ashamed  
1 2 3 4 5

### Techniques for pronunciation teaching

Please select how often you used each of the following pronunciation techniques in your pre-pandemic classes:

Part 1.

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Repetition after you					
Transcription					
Repetition after recordings					
Minimal pairs (eg. pie-buy)					
Students reading aloud					
Students' voice recordings					
Phonetic training					
Class discussions					
Visual aids					

## Part 2.

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
karaoke					
Students' presentations					
Tongue twisters					
Students' video recordings					
Selecting stress placement in words					
Recognizing sounds, e.g. same-different					
Acting out dialogues					
Rhyming					
Checking pronunciation in a dictionary					
Recognizing phonemic symbols					
Kinesthetic/tactile practice					

25. Please, tell us about any other r activities you like to use (you can use Spanish).
26. Please, tell us what materials you use to teach pronunciation and where you get those (you can use Spanish).