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La fonética del inglés y su incidencia en el desarrollo de la habilidad de hablar

English Phonetic and its incidence in the development of speaking skill

Fonética do Inglês e sua incidência no desenvolvimento da habilidade de falar

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### Resumen

El estudio de este trabajo permitirá averiguar la repercusión de la enseñanza de la fonética para mejorar las habilidades orales enfocadas en el aspecto de pronunciación a través de la opinión de los estudiantes de la carrera de Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros. Además, se entrevistará a cuatro profesores de inglés para que demuestren cuál es su punto de vista sobre el desarrollo de la enseñanza de la fonética para mejorar las habilidades del habla. Los resultados de esta investigación confirman que la enseñanza de la fonética es beneficiosa para la habilidad para hablar de los estudiantes.

Palabras claves: habilidades para hablar; hablante inglés; hispanohablante; enseñar fonética.

#### **Abstract**

The study of this paper will figure out the repercussions of teaching phonetics for improving speaking skills focused on the pronunciation aspect through the opinion of students of the Language major of the Universidad Técnica de Manabí. In addition, four English professors will be interviewed to demonstrate their view about the development of teaching phonetics for enhancing speaking skills. The results of this research confirm that teaching phonetics is beneficial for students' speaking skills.

**Key words:** speaking skills; English speaker; Spanish speakers; teaching phonetics.

#### Resumo

O estudo deste artigo buscará compreender as repercussões do ensino de fonética para o aprimoramento das habilidades de fala focadas no aspecto da pronúncia através da opinião de alunos do curso de Letras. Além disso, quatro professores de inglês serão entrevistados para demonstrar sua visão sobre o desenvolvimento do ensino de fonética para aprimorar as habilidades de fala. Os resultados desta pesquisa confirmam que o ensino de fonética é benéfico para os alunos que falam.

Palavras-chave: habilidades de fala; falante de inglês; falantes de español; ensino de fonética.

#### Introducción

Every faith in the world is based on fabrication. That is the definition of faith—acceptance of that which we imagine to be true, that which we cannot prove. Every religion describes

God through metaphor, allegory, and exaggeration, from the early Egyptians through modern Sunday school. Metaphors are a way to help our minds process the unprocessable. The problems arise when we begin to believe literally in our own metaphors . (Brown, D, p. 59)

In the above paragraph, there are approximately 18 vowel sounds and 22 consonant sounds. Priyar and Kumar (2020) explain that ''The twenty-six letters of English do not have a reliable sound. Not all words in English can follow a certain pattern of pronunciation''(p. 669). Barrera (2009) also referred to the above mentioned ''English, is a language that does not make any correlation between phonemes and graphemes'' Which implies that English is a non phonetic language; generally, we can not read English as it is written'' (p. 2). Thus, speaking English could be an arduous task for Spanish learners, because most Spanish words are read as they are written, and many of native speakers of Spanish get confused when they attempt to speak it.

Halles (2017) explains clearly that phonetics create an idea of the sounds of human language, because phonetics are mainly focused in the production of sounds and how these are heard by human ears. Adding to this, Santa María (2013) claims the following.

To know the articulatory adjustments result is fundamental for students, because they can "adapt" and "accommodate" to a new way to perform the phonic emisión. It should be considered that this adaptation does not only influence the speech production, but occurs even in the previous moment, such as the full pause, since at that moment the speaker also "reveals" a phonetic interference of his own language. (p. 32)

Sweet (1887) in his book'' Handbook of phonetics '' explains how phonetics works along with the human speech system, and how vocals and consonants are pronounced correctly, as well as how the breath, whispers, voice and throat put in the correct position, it performs English words most fittingly articulated. (p. 4). In simple words, phonetics is the linguistics branch in charge of oral production. According to these authors, phonetics is the linguistic branch in charge describing the language's sounds. Therefore, to learn phonetics is a viable way to acquire English sounds. Due to phonetics having an impact on the acquisition of speaking, various aspects of speaking are involved in its repercussion.

To Sharp English features' speaking that expose the speaker's speaking competence of managing English. Swarna and Kumar (2019) indicates Speaking skill gives the grade of knowing a language. It fulfills the basic need for using a language. (p. 670). Speaking is the ability that demonstrates

that you can manage a language, through an adequate pronunciation, intonation and word stress, easily you will be able to know how to express your ideas, share feelings, argue about a topic and so on. (Nunan and Miller, 1995) in his book "New Ways of Teaching English" expresses the following "to be able to produce a conversation is one of the advantages that provide oral comprehension". When we understand a conversation, a video, a movie or any oral reproduction, as a consequence we will be capable of responding accurately and following the main idea of what we heard before.

The main objective of this study is to demonstrate the English phonetic incidence in the development of speaking skills. Likewise, the author will discuss which factors affect students' speaking development, also to explore methodologies of teaching phonetics proposed previously for scientific studies, finally to make evident students and professors viewpoint related to amelioration of Spanish interference with the help of phonetics.

The main problem is the low level of the management of speaking skill of language students. O'Connor, (1980) considered that the main problem of English pronunciation is to build a new set of boxes corresponding to the sounds of English. (p.1). Due to the low level of the management of the speaking skill of university students, most of them are not able to produce an oral reproduction successfully. Many researches demonstrate the effectiveness of the phonetics for improving speaking and pronunciation -a huge part of speaking- by assessing students' speaking, summary sheet, questionnaire survey, interviews and others. However, students' perspectives have not been taken into specifically in speaking, equally the objective opinion of teachers who have taught phonetics is important for examining the development of students' speaking skills. This research will gather students and teacher's opinions for the purpose of obtaining their personal assessment, and teachers will explain their view of teaching phonetics and its results according to their own experience.

## **Review Literature**

At any such influential language like English, which is involved in many scenarios, for instance, in Education, you must take English as a subject such as on education levels whether in high school, university or college. For tourism, it is essential that guides are able to speak English in order to get familiar with visitors. For business, sellers need to offer their products or services with international customers for greater communication.

Suhardi (2018) in his research '' The Effectiveness of Using Phonetic Method in Improving Students' Speaking Ability'' analyzes the students' speaking ability in a class B with a total of 20 students. The author uses a scale for scoring speaking students which consists of grading to 36.80 as a very poor level of speaking, and 65.5 as an average level of speaking. Also, the method consists of six meetings where the author will qualify all the phonetics aspects. They were divided into one meeting for pre-test, four meetings for treatment, and one meeting for post-test.

The phonetics aspects evaluated were: pronunciation, grammar and fluency.

The results of the pronunciation pre-test demonstrated the lack of grammar, because half of the students were qualified as very "low level". After the treatment meeting, the results of the pronunciation pre-test show that 20 students got better results qualified as "average" and good qualification of improvement in their pronunciation ability. For the grammar pre-test, 10 students were qualified as "very poor" and also as "poor level", and the other 10 of them as "average". For the grammar post-test, 10 were labeled as "average", and the other 10 students as "good". The results indicated that students assuredly improved their grammar.

Finally, For the fluency pre-test, 15 students were qualified as "very poor level", 3 students were qualified as "poor level", and only 2 of them were qualified as "average level". For the fluency post-test, 17 students were qualified as "average", and 3 students as "good". The author concluded that based on the results given after the treatment, there is definitely an important difference between the pre-test and post-test. In other words, phonetics classes made a positive impact on students' speaking ability.

"La importancia de enseñar fonética en el aula de ingles" covers three main reasons for teaching phonetics. "First, phonemes and graphemes identification, when learners determine the main phonetic essence of the target language, they absorb mentally new sounds rapidly. Second, to improve pronunciation, due to the relation between the graphemes and phonemes of English, students might be confused about the proper pronunciation. Teaching phonetics, students learn different English like rhythm or intonation and others in line with the speech.

Third, Distinction of dialects and varieties of English, to tell apart different accents of English, either British, American or others, it helps to know how varied English is according to the country". Barrera considerates that teachers should include phonetics in their English classes, because it is important that students learn how to speak accurately and create an effective communication environment. (Barrera, 2009, p. 2-8)

Escobar et al. (2018) In Ecuador, 4 professors have carried out an investigation over university students and their development throughout the experiment and conducted tests for improving their pronunciation, oral communications skills and speaking skill. The results clearly states that the experimental group whose was prepared with articulatory phonetics have better results in the post tests than the group that was prepared with English contents for example: grammar, listening, and writing. The features of pronunciation taken into account were vowels, consonants, stressed and intonation.

Based on the ways of grading that researchers implied, in the pre-test, the control group, in the pre-test obtained a score of 5,68, after the post-test 5,85 on average of the four features. And, the experimental group, in the pre- test obtained a score of 5,68, and after the post-test 11,43. (p.152-165)

Rajab (2013), made an exploratory study of teaching phonetic transcriptions through visual symbols, the purpose was to investigate how EFL students could improve their speaking skill (also writing skill, but for this article it is considered only the speaking skill) if they learn phonetic. The author took 169 students of the University-level Preparatory Year Program (PYP) male Saudi EFL students. At the beggining of the phonetic classes, Learners hesitated if the phonetic classes would ameliorate their speaking skill.

The author used four textbooks, one for each skill) and, an IPA table sheet made of codes chosen by the author ( $/\Box$ /,  $/\Box$ /, /f/,  $/\Box$ /, /s/, /p/, /b/, /b/, /k/, /g/, /dz/, four long and short vowel codes: /i:/, /I/, /a:/, /æ/ and two diphthongs codes /av/ and  $/a\Box$ /), adding several activities and examples for each code. These materials were used to test and grade students' responses, oral production, pronunciations, comprehension and writing. Students received 50- minutes IPT lessons over the period of 6 weeks, then they were assessed in order to obtain results.

The outcome of the IPT classes yielded an average of high grades. An exception of ten students, the rest of them do not know about phonetic codes. After the IPT classes, most of the students become acquainted with phonetics symbols, additionally they clarify the information on dictionaries about pronunciation. (p. 653-659)

Diverse reasons implicated to learners have them avoid talking and improving their english during the class. Tahe, (2020) found out that most Thai students considered English speaking as the most harduos skill. The majority of Thai students have a Thai accent, so that they find it difficult to pronounce the words with an English accent, because their mother tongue influences them when

they are speaking this foreign language. That phenomenon is called ''Language Interference''. Additionally, students expressed their feelings about English speaking, most of them feel shy or distrustful of pronouncing any word in english. Some other problems are faced by Thai students, the author classified them as the linguistic factors and non- Linguistic factors. The Linguistic factors that were considered here are vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Non-linguistic factors that may influence language learners include teachers, methods, material, motivations, facilities, students, and etc. (2085-1383)

Likewise, Castillo (2016) in his study "Mejoramiento de la pronunciación de la lengua inglesa de los estudiantes de primer semestre del programa de lenguas extranjeras de la universidad Santiago de Cali a través de la enseñanza de la fonética" defined:

Debido a que la lengua materna ejerce una gran interferencia que impide que se identifiquen los sonidos de la lengua inglesa, estos estudiantes presentan grandes dificultades de escucha y habla y por lo tanto, se les dificulta y retrasa el aprendizaje de la misma. El proceso se hace traumático. Se necesita entonces diseñar un plan de acción para resolver los problemas generados en gran parte desde la lengua materna para el aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa. (17)

Calvo (2013) argued in his article about ''advanced Spanish university students' problems with the pronunciation of english vowels, identification, analysis and teaching implications Spanish speakers have severals issues with the target pronunciation, due to the differences in the phonological system between the language mentioned recently. The vowel sounds have more sounds in English than in the Spanish language, learners get confused in the differentiation of long and short vowels, concretely in the following sounds: schwa and the strut vowels, and by a number of diphthongs, such as  $\langle \partial \nabla \rangle$  and  $\langle \nabla \partial \rangle$ , or  $\langle \wedge \rangle$ ,  $\langle a \rangle$  and  $\langle a \rangle$ . After of recollecting data of students pronunciations, the author found out a highly quantity of mistakes with ( $\langle \partial \rangle$ ,  $\sigma$ :,  $\sigma$ :,  $\sigma$ :,  $\sigma$ :. To refer to the schwa sounds, students attend to articulate it as a full vowel related to the spelling of the word. Neither of the mentioned sounds exist in Spanish, as a result, students struggle with the correct pronunciation. (p. 45-50)

Because of the challenging that it takes to pronounce properly English words, in the process of teaching and learning is necessary to implement a motivated, participated and varied didactic to propose in the classroom, for this reason, it is essential to use different styles as a means of teaching, since it performs as an important role in the process of the class. Fernando E. Macías-Mendoza,

Methodological strategies to improve the speaking and listening skills in English language at the elementary school of Eloy Alfaro de Manabí.

Taking into account the difficulty to improve speaking as one of the most harduos abilities, several authors have proposed methodologies for learning how to speak English more easily.

Christlin & Gopinath (2017) authors of the paper '' Effective methodologies to teach phonetics and phonology to improve pronunciation in second language learners and professional communication in engineers' posed the following methodologies:

- Rhymes and recitation: To articulate many vowels and consonants as a habitual pattern create an idea of the correct way to pronounce them.
- Pronunciation drills (miming, mimicking, role play and others): Especially for those students who are recited, teachers have to pay attention to their performances. The mentioned activities encouraged students to participate in their classes.
- Cards with letters: The physical representation of the words help students to remember the figure when they are trying to recognize the word that they need.

Macias, F (2017) wrote a scientific article about methodologies and he expound the idea of each person learn in any of the four basic moments of the basic cycle of learning: The experience is acquired through feelings and emotions; the reflection, through the observation; and, abstract conceptualization that is learned through; and the experimentation through actions. (p.222-223) The author describes that '' a good management of learning styles is useful for improving the effectiveness of learning and improve their motivation for get educated in english to people'' Furthermore, He recommend to not become enmeshed on instruction in a certain model of teaching, because each learner is different and absorb information differently, and the suitable option is combined several activities that work for learners.

# Methodology

The methodology applied in the present study is the quantitative approach, it is carried out through an online survey to 55 students of the 8th semester of the language major of the Universidad técnica de Manabi, Additionally, the author planned an online interview about teaching phonetics and the students' development of English skill to 4 English professors in the major mentioned above. The professor which participated in the online interview taught phonetics and phonology for the major. In fact, they were English professors of the surveyed students.

The present study is exploratory type, by cause of teaching phonetics and speaking is a topic taken little into consideration in the teaching of the English language, and the author considered that it would be innovative for the bilingual community of the Universidad técnica de Manabi, located in Manabi, Ecuador.

### **Results and Discussion**

The first step for gathering information about the topic was to ask students to complete the online course based on their personal perspective of their development of English skill throughout the learning of phonetics. The results will be explaining in the next paragraphs:

The first question of the survey is:

Do your consider that since you learning phonetics help you to improve your speaking skill?



No



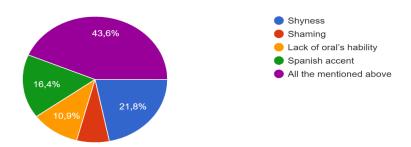
This graphic demonstrated that 98,2% of students consider that learning phonetics has a positive impact in the development of their speaking skill.

The second question of the survey is:

Which of the following factors do you consider affect in the development of speaking skill?

- Shyness
- Shaming
- Lack of oral's hability

- Spanish accent
- All the mentioned above

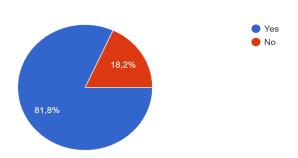


This graphic demonstrated that 43,6% of students consider that all the mentioned factors(shyness, shaming, lack of oral ability) affect their development of speaking skill. 21,8% of students choose that shyness is an obstacle for improving their speaking skill. 16,5% of students choose that their Spanish accent is affecting their development of speaking skill. 10,9% of students deal with lack of oral ability. And, 7,3 of students choose shaming as a factor to block their development of speaking skill.

The third question of the survey is:

Do you consider that learning phonetic has helped you to overcome the above mentioned factors?

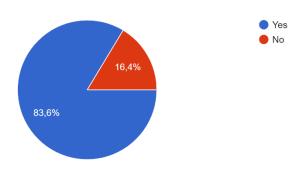
- Yes
- No



The graphic demonstrated that 81,8 of students consider that phonetic has helped you to overcome the above mentioned factors. 18,2% of students consider that phonetic does not help to overcome the above mentioned factors.

The fourth question of the survey is:

Do you consider that your professor has applied the right methodology (activities, exercises, methods) for teaching phonetic?

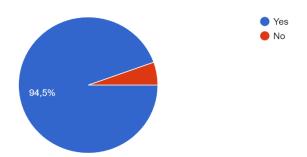


This graphic demonstrated that 83,6% of students consider their professor applied the right methodology for teaching phonetic. 16,4 students consider their professor did not apply the right methodology for teaching phoneticS.

The fifth question of the survey is:

Language interference is the transference of your mother tongue to another language. Do you find that learning English phonetics help you to improve your Spanish accent and to enhance English speaking features?

- Yes
- No



This graphic demonstrated that 94,5% of students consider that learning English phonetics help them to improve their spanish accent and to enhance English speaking features.

Online interview for English professors.

For interviewing the 4 English professors, the authors used Google Meet, the meet had not a limit of time, hence English professors were able to share their teaching phonetic experience to university students. The questions of the online interview are:

- 1.- What benefits do you think that a language student could get through learning phonetics?
- 2.- When we talk about of the development or improvement of English speaking. |There are some external or internal factors (shyness. Embarrassment, lack of oral ability,) could affect the speaking activity. Base on your teaching experience, which of the mentioned factor affect student's speaking
- 3.- Do you consider that learning phonetics could help to overcome these factors?
- 4.- Throughout your teaching phonetics experience, what methodologies, activities do you use for captivating or catching student's attention and improving their speaking skill?
- 5.- For so many students, English has difficult phonemes that do not exist in Spanish, and as a consequence they fail in the attempt to pronounce them properly. Language interference is also a product of failing in oral production. Students replace some English phonemes for Spanish phonemes. Based on your teaching experience, do you consider that teaching phonetics help to learn English phonemes and to avoid Spanish language interference?

Table 1. Results of the first question

	Professor 1	Professor 2	Professor 3	Professor 4
To master a good pronunciation	X	Х	X	X
To pronounce correctly english features such as English phonemes, phonetic symbols	X	Х	X	Х
To correct our own pronunciation	X	X	X	
To recognize Spanish words to English words		Х		Х

# Commentary

According to the professors' answers, students could get various benefits for their development of speaking skills such as pronunciation, English sounds and words, to correct themselves, their mistakes and others. Professor Loor mentioned that in Ecuador, there is a big issue related to teaching speaking, due most of english teachers focus in teaching grammar, writing or vocabulary. Therefore, phonetic can be a great tool for teaching English pronunciation.

Table 2. Results of the second question

	Professor 1	Professor 2	Professor 3	Professor 4
Interference	X			
Spanish				
(spanish				
accent)				
Lack of -	X	X	X	X
interest,				
practice and				
confident)				
Shyness		X	X	
embarrassment		X		X
Afraid of			X	X
making				
mistakes (fear)				

# Commentary

The factors mentioned by the English professor assure that a numbers of problems affect students' speaking skill. Professor Suhm mentioned an specific problem of ecuadorian education, when kids are in school, teachers make afraid to students to make mistakes, hence students grow up with fear of participating and making mistakes. Therefore, he makes a relation between shyness, embarrassment and making mistakes as the big problems of speaking english in Ecuador. Also, professor Loor Cevallos made an aclaration about Spanish accent, he said that accent is not a problem, it is not wrong, however it is a huge problem when students do not want go more into pronunciation, so they do not like to study phonetics and improve pronunciation. They just feel it is enough to speak English as they learned it, but English has different sounds than Spanish, and sometimes students need to pronounce them correctly for effective communication.

**Table 3.** Results of the third question

	Professor 1	Professor 2	Professor 3	Professor 4
Yes	X	X	X	X
Teacher				X
responsibilities				
Students				X
responsibilities				

# Commentary

The four professors who agreed in the statement that phonetics help to overcome the above mentioned factors. Professor Rivadeneira explained how he observed in his phonetics classes that practicing with phonetics actually works. '' If we know phonetics, we are going to feel more confident in our speaking. Students would stop thinking that their classmates would laugh at their speaking''. What Rivadeneira proposed to do to their students is if learn a new word in english, first you should check the word in english, then review the phonetics, finally look for the spanish or english definition''

Table 4. Results of the fourth question

	Professor 1	Professor 2	Professor 3	Professor 4
Pattern of	X	X		X
repetitions				
Flashcards	X	X	X	
with words,				
also including				
images				
Drillings		X		
Illustration of		X		X
phonetic				
symbols				
Songs				X
Dictation			X	

# Commentary

In the opinion of the interviewed English professor. They coincide that as a teacher you can different activities for teaching phonetic. Professor Gregg justify that most of the methodologies for teaching speaking are focus on pattern of repetition, and it works, but it is important that as a

teacher to make an impact on the students repetition, due a lot of students just open their mouth and talk, without any purpose of improvement. As he stated, for him, it is essential to create an impact of what students are learning, to make things interesting for students, in other words, to captivate students' attention.

**Table 5.** Results of the fifth question

	Professor 1	Professor 2	Professor 3	Professor 4
Yes	X		X	X
Yes, if it is taught correctly		X		

# Commentary

Based on the interviews, phonetics is an effective tool for avoiding language interference and learning English phonemes. Professor Loor, '' it is the only way to reduce language interference, students need to learn English phonemes, for example in English, vowels have two or three sounds each, therefore it has different and new sounds for Spanish learners. And, if students want to improve their speaking, they should know how to recognize them''

## Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the impact of English phonetics is effective learning for learners if their goal is to upgrade their speaking skill. Other aspects are taken into account such as pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary and even grammar in the development of speaking skill through English phonetics. Among students, teachers and experts of the language area consider that learning English phonetics has advantages for enhancing students' speaking, it should be taken seriously as a part of learning any language.

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